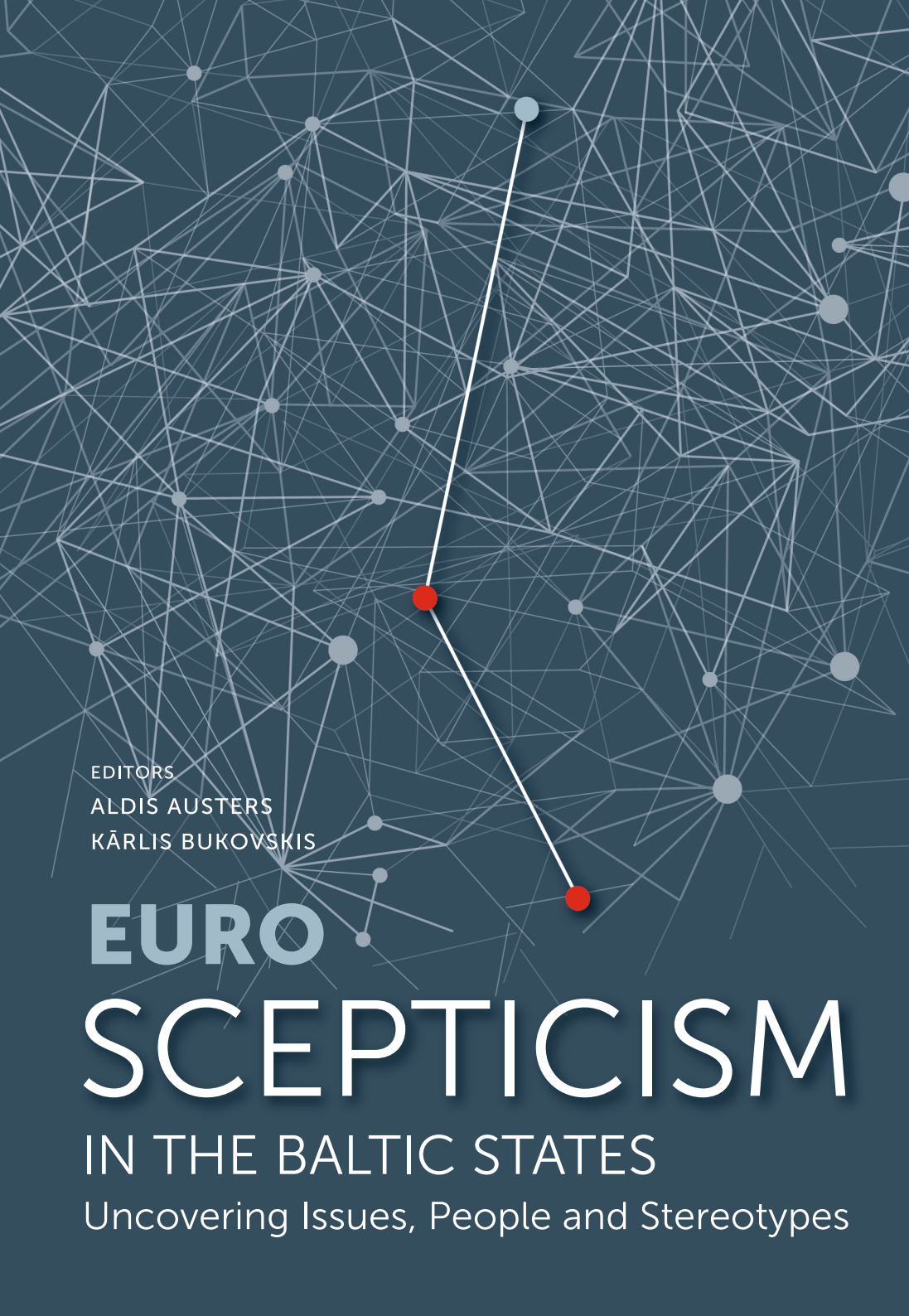

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EURO SCEPTICISM IN THE BALTIC STATES

Uncovering Issues, People and Stereotypes

EURO SCEPTICISM

IN THE BALTIC STATES

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LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS / FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG
RĪGA, 2017

LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

The book **"Euroscepticism in the Baltic States: Uncovering Issues, People and Stereotypes"** explores the neglected issue of Euroscepticism in the Baltic societies. The book consists of a collection of articles from experts in economics, politics and sociology, as well as Eurosceptic politicians. Authors from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia seek to unveil not only the development of criticism towards the European Union in the Baltic politics over the last twenty-five years, but also sceptical opinions among the Baltic entrepreneurs and the sociological profile of Baltic population, looking separately at the Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia. This book is the most recent successful collaboration between the Latvian Institute of International Affairs and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

The opinions expressed here are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs or the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or represent the opinion of any government authority or ministry.

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ZINĀTNE

The book is published in collaboration with the Publishers Zinātne

ISBN 978-9934-567-06-3
UDK 32(474)
Eu600

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INTRODUCTION: IS EUROSCEPTICISM IN BALTIC STATES MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING?

Kārlis Bukovskis and Aldis Austers

Euroscepticism is not a modern phenomenon in Western political discourse. Critical and even anti-European Union attitudes based in sovereignism and anti-globalism have been around for many decades. The rapid federalisation of the European Union (EU)since the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, as well as the more than doubling of the number of member states since the end of the Cold War facilitated not only enthusiasm toward the future of the project, but also its natural opposition in the form of Euroscepticism. The increasing legal, institutional and political complexity of the European project, combined with the hard-hitting economic recession, migration within and into the EU, and consequent emergence of neo-integrovernmentalist and neo-conservativist attitudes have facilitated Eurosceptical populist politicians gaining momentum in the last few years in many EU countries. Even EU countries with traditionally underdeveloped political opposition towards the EU have seen an activation of Eurosceptic politicians and sentiments in the population.

Here, the Baltic states serve as a visible example. Euroscepticism has been a traditionally marginalised issue in parliamentary and ministerial politics in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania due to the lack of geopolitical alternatives in increasingly globalised world. Ideas about an exit from the European Union in the Baltic countries have not gained widespread societal support and a low number of political activists can be categorised as anti-EU. The very Euroscepticism phenomenon is fairly weak in small EU countries due to pragmatic economic, calculative geopolitical or hopeful modernisation reasoning. Nevertheless, critical voices towards the EU have existed in

society, and also continue their presence in these three small states in Northern Europe.

The general, national stances towards the EU and situations with Euroscepticism were analysed in 2016 book "Euroscepticism in Small EU Member States," while this 2017 book "Euroscepticism in the Baltic Countries: Uncovering Issues, People and Stereotypes" delves into discovering the trends, reasons and arguments for critical attitudes towards the EU using the Baltic states as subject of analysis. The book consists of a collection of articles in which authors from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia seek to unveil not only the development of criticism towards the European Union in the Baltic politics over the last twenty-five years, but also sceptical opinions among Baltic entrepreneurs and the sociodemographic profile of Eurosceptics in the Baltic population, separately looking at the Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia.

The research problem of this book is linked to several apparent paradoxes in the Baltic states:

- On the one hand, the Baltic states, being relatively poor, geographically remote and highly dependent on international security guarantees, stand out as major benefiters from the EU and, for this reason, should be the most enthusiastic about the European integration. However, the three countries, but particularly Latvia and Estonia, continuously exhibit disproportionally low levels of popular support for EU membership.
- On the other hand, despite the inadequately low societal support for European integration, none of the Baltic states has a manifest Eurosceptic or anti-European movement or political party, and Euroscepticism has been limited to a few marginal figures.

Therefore, the aim of the book is to reveal the content, breadth and depth of Eurosceptic views in the Baltic countries and to provide an explanation to observable trends. This should help to estimate the political resilience of Baltic societies against the growing tide of Euroscepticism in the EU and to suggest directions for future policy action. To address this aim, the authors of the book concentrated on two major tasks: the identification of major agents or groups of agents

holding Eurosceptic views, including instruments and tactics of these actors; and the identification of the origins and driving forces behind Eurosceptic perceptions in politics, economics and societies. And, although the authors of the chapters were encouraged to uncover the most adequate terminology capturing the people's feelings about the EU, generally this book follows the logic that the term Euroscepticism is understood to imply negative attitude held towards the EU. Namely, Euroscepticism is "a term used to describe the strongly critical or even nihilistic attitude towards the European project."[1]

The book consists of two parts. The first part addresses the political and economic aspects of the phenomenon of Euroscepticism in the Baltic countries. The book starts with Gints Apals addressing the evolution of Eurosceptic attitudes in Latvia since the early 1990s and warns that "the alienation of ordinary citizens from the actual EU agenda may adversely affect public support for decisions on the future of Europe and the reform of the EU," resulting in increasing number of politicians oriented towards Euroscepticism in Latvia. The second article, by Gediminas Vitkus, looks at Lithuania's political arena in the context of Euroscepticism and, among others, draws the essential conclusion that can be observed in all the Baltic countries, that "it is very common that some individuals in the established parties are more pro-European and some are more Eurosceptical." The manifestations of personality and issue-based Euroscepticism in Estonia are discussed in the article by Illimar Ploom and Viljar Veebel – the two authors go even further, arguing about the borrowing of EU-critical ideas from leaders and Eurosceptic politicians of other EU member states, and ties of anti-EU proponents to Russia. Their analysis is followed by article from Solvita Denisa-Liepniece addressing the complicated case of the Russian-speaking population's stance on the EU. The author addresses the influence of the media, especially of Russia's origin, on shaping the current situation, in which the Russian-speaking population is among the most Eurosceptical segment of Estonian and Latvian societies.

Next, the book studies the economic aspects of Euroscepticism and the arguments used by the local businesses to substantiate

their negative attitude towards the EU. While all authors address their respective country's specific economic arguments, they also simultaneously complement each other without overlapping in the identification of problems. Hence Didzis Meļķis looks at the frequent criticisms expressed regarding the downsides of EU funds and the business environment they are creating, as well as the situation in energy sector, transportation, fisheries and the banking sector. While EU funds are claimed to create misbalances and weak economy as a collateral of the overall capitalisation of the Latvian economy, the greatest fears for the rise of serious Euroscepticism are seen in perception "that EU regulations have been used for protectionist purposes at the cost of businesses from the eastern member states." This article is followed by an analysis by Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, where the author, while looking at the most topical issues related to the Euroscepticism in Lithuania stresses two phenomena that are also not unfamiliar in Latvia and Estonia: the agricultural sector and the euro currency. The author not only concludes that "farmers are a group which receives more benefits from the EU than other groups, but they also are the most visible critics of EU policies," but also the fact that critical voices often stem from the attribution of economic problems to the fairly recently introduced euro. Finally, Viljar Veebel highlights yet another trend in the economic dimension of Euroscepticism in the Baltic countries – a project based criticism. While elaborating on the example of Rail Baltica project, the author sees that the failure of the projects or potential scandals surrounding the implementation of large scale projects contribute to critical attitudes of the EU in general.

The first part of the book ends with the unedited views expressed by two authors who are categorised as Eurosceptical. Normunds Grostiņš, a political activist, while deliberately avoiding the term Euroscepticism and using Eurocriticism instead, in his article marks the negative sides of Latvia's membership in the EU, indicating several additional issues that had not been raised by experts in previous chapters. Grostiņš also neatly elaborates on the structural presence of Europe-wide Eurosceptic movements in Latvia, and the ties between

them and Latvian Eurosceptic politicians. The Lithuanian historian Vytautas Radžvilas takes a philosophical approach, seeking to argue "from a strictly theoretical and historical point of view" about the lack of direction of the EU resulting from a spiritual death of the EU, a conceptual exhaustion of the neo-functionalist theoretical stances, the failure of the Maastricht project, and revival of national self-consciousness. Hence, the author engages in an intellectual debate about the demise of the EU based on the many structural, societal and political flaws embedded in this organisation.

The second part of the book is devoted to an in-depth look at the sociological aspects of Euroscepticism in the Baltic states. Based on an opinion poll commissioned with SKDS Marketing and Public Opinion Research Centre in all three Baltic countries, Aldis Austers and Jurijs Ņikišins investigate the longitudinal trends in people's attitude towards the EU in the Baltic states, uncover sociodemographic profile of EU oppositionists, and reveal the most poplar stereotypes and argumentation systems of Eurosceptics. Among a great number of revelations it is also exposed that a "typical Eurosceptical person is middle aged or retired, has Russian as his/her family language, with basic education, unemployed, with low level of income and is living either in capital or in remote regions" and that the Lithuanian population tends to be more diverse in their criticism regarding the EU. In their research, the authors also draw conclusions about the differences in in present and longitudinal stances on the EU between the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and Estonia, drawing clear parallels with argumentation provided by Denisa-Liepniece and Apals in their chapters. The book ends with comprehensive conclusions by Aldis Austers on the character and tendencies regarding the Euroscepticism in the Baltic states.

The book "Euroscepticism in the Baltic States: Uncovering Issues, People and Stereotypes" is the latest example of efficient and timely collaboration, not only among the international collective of researchers from all of the Baltic countries, but especially between the Latvian Institute of International Affairs and the Friedrich-Ebert-

Stiftung, and its Baltic office in particular. The instrumental role of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in supporting this scientific project should not be underestimated, as this book should be of assistance and use not only to decision makers, but also journalists, academicians, think-tankers, businesses, and as well as the general population of the Baltic states. Due to the intrinsic similarities between all of the smaller and larger EU countries in facing the phenomenon of domestic Euroscepticism, this book should be beneficial also for non-Baltic countries and of interest to researchers around the globe.

ENDNOTES

[1] Karlis Bukovskis, "Introduction: Entering the Age of Euroscepticism," in *Euroscepticism in Small EU Member States*, ed. Karlis Bukovskis (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2016), 9, http://liia.lv/en/publications/euroscepticism-in-small-eu-member-states-546.

PART I:

THE POLITICS AND ECONOMICS OF EUROSCEPTICISM IN BALTICS

EUROSCEPTICISM IN LATVIAN POLITICS: TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CHANGE

Gints Apals

Latvia is by no means a country of rampant Euroscepticism. The prevailing positive attitude towards Europe has been shaped by the wish to escape history and geography (as well as the economic difficulties and uncertainty of the early 1990s) through membership in European and Euro-Atlantic structures. A huge majority of Latvia's inhabitants do not necessarily identify Europe solely with the European Union (EU) or think that membership in the EU involves unqualified consent for supranational authority, federalism or the community method. The public perception of Europe is a much broader topic than attitudes regarding European integration or the EU.

The notion of Europe is generally understood as a synonym of the West or, more concretely, a web of international structures that includes the EU and many other governmental or non-governmental organisations. For the ordinary citizen, Europe is an external force that helps Latvia develop, provides security and some prosperity, simultaneously imposing change and suppressing traditional values and prejudices, occasionally doing so against the will of the majority of the population. Hence the premise of this article that Euroscepticism in Latvia is not limited to the subject of membership in the EU – the phenomenon of Euroscepticism has a much wider context and many more aspects.

THE FIRST DECADE – FACING EUROPE AND THE WEST

Acknowledging Europe as the role model for Latvia and subsequent membership in European structures did not immediately follow the restoration of independence in 1991. The first half of the 1990s could be seen as a period of searching for geopolitical, cultural, political and even economic identity. Even though many citizens thought of Latvia as a natural part of the West separated from the community of European nations by the Soviet occupation of 1940, independence did not provide the country with direct economic benefits (apart from humanitarian assistance) or new international partnerships. Consequently, the government had to look for co-operation formats that could compensate for the loss of economic links with the former republics of the USSR.

Latvia never considered the option of remaining part of the reformed Soviet Union or joining the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Instead, Latvia put an emphasis on sub-regional co-operation with Estonia and Lithuania. The formation of Baltic co-operation structures began in 1990, and by 1994 the Baltic Council of Ministers and the Baltic Assembly became fully operational. Latvia also embraced the wider Baltic Sea co-operation format, joining the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) established in 1992. For some time in the early 1990s, economic integration with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) seemed to provide an alternative to dysfunctional post-Soviet markets. However, Swedish and Finnish accession to the EU significantly reduced the effect of the Free Trade Agreement between Latvia and EFTA.

The period of uncertainty about Latvia's foreign policy objectives came to an end with the adoption of the foreign policy guidelines on 7 April 1995. The document, prepared by the Foreign Ministry and approved by the Saeima (the Parliament of Latvia), defined the institutional scope of Latvia's foreign policy for the coming decade. Recognising membership in the EU as the first objective, the

guidelines paid due attention to security and defence considerations, envisaging ultimate accession to NATO through participation in the Partnership for Peace programme and the North Atlantic Co-operation Council.[1]

Nevertheless, during the 1990s Latvia remained quite far from full participation in the process of European integration. Only the official invitation to start the accession negotiations extended by the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 opened a realistic perspective of full EU membership. Therefore, there was little surprise that the general public perceived other international structures as more important representatives of Europe. The very first European institution that admitted Latvia as a full member in September 1991 was the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The role of that organisation in addressing the existential problems of the restored Latvian state cannot be underestimated. The OSCE effectively controlled the implementation of the 1994 agreement on the withdrawal of Russian armed forces from Latvia and monitored the internal situation in Latvia. OSCE institutions, especially the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) significantly influenced the development of legislation and policies regarding persons belonging to national minorities.

Even though OSCE involvement helped establish the political preconditions for Latvia's accession to the EU as far as security and human rights dimensions were concerned, the OSCE intervention in domestic political processes remained highly controversial. Nationalist and right-wing circles suspected the OSCE of promoting the interests of the Russian-speaking immigrant population that moved to Latvia during the Soviet occupation. Another structure widely perceived as the voice of Europe was the Council of Europe. Latvia joined this organisation as a full member in 1995 and chaired its Committee of Ministers in 2001. The Council became the first European structure led by Latvia; a fact that was presented as a major diplomatic victory and a signal that Latvia had reached full equality with other European countries.

Hence for almost a decade, the OSCE and the Council of Europe had high profiles and were perceived as the most active European structures as far as Latvia was concerned in the public domain. The origins of Latvian Euroscepticism date back to that period of time and should be analysed in the context of Latvia's relations with the totality of European structures. During the second half of the 1990s, the scepticism about European intervention in domestic affairs was associated mostly with mainstream nationalist parties and organisations. The Russian-speaking population and its organisations had a more positive perception of Europe's role due to the attention paid by the OSCE and the Council of Europe to the human rights situation.

The high point of public debate on the need to adjust Latvia's legislation and policies to European standards was the 1998 referendum on the revocation of amendments to the Citizenship law that liberalised the process of naturalisation. The referendum was instigated by representatives of several right-wing parties. Even though the supposedly pro-European side won with a small margin (52.54 percent opposed the revocation and 44.89 percent supported that proposal)[2], nationalists never fully accepted the interference of external advisers. The paradox of the 1998 referendum lies in the fact that the liberalisation of naturalisation policies enjoyed the highest support in the eastern provinces of Latvia, yet five years later this region would display the least support for Latvia's membership in the EU.

Perceptions started to change only with the opening of EU-Latvia accession negotiations. The intensity of the talks and wide publicity regarding the progress achieved focused public attention on the role of the EU. It should be noted that the accession negotiations and the approximation of legislation from the point of view of ordinary citizens were politically neutral (at least, compared to the recommendations put forward by OSCE HCNM and ODIHR) therefore the EU was seldom seen as an external force interfering with domestic processes.[3]

The smooth accession negotiation process allowed Latvia to approach the referendum on EU membership in relative tranquillity. The negotiation process was effectively detached from the domestic

political debate and widely regarded as a bureaucratic exercise. From both the EU and Latvian side, the negotiations were conducted by senior civil servants. Political guidance or interference were negligible, which could be explained by the fact that the political elites had already agreed to support the accession to the EU as a strategic priority in 1995. Government institutions did provide detailed information on the results of the negotiations chapter by chapter, interpreting the compromises reached from the perspective of Latvia's self-interest.[4] Nevertheless, the technical nature and complexity of the negotiation process did not allow for an easily understandable interpretation of the results in a way that would appeal to ordinary citizens.

The referendum of 20 September 2003 produced a positive result (66.97 percent voted for and only 32.26 percent against; the level of support was similar to Estonia).[5] The arguments used against Latvia's membership in the EU were mostly of a social and economic nature – fear of migration, rising unemployment, inflation, reduced income and the abolition of the national currency, low competitiveness of the agricultural sector and emigration of the skilled workforce.[6] The loss of sovereignty *per se* in the pre-referendum debate featured less prominently. Influential pro-European opinion leaders argued that Latvia had to share its sovereignty with EU member states in order to survive as a country, therefore membership in the EU was the lesser of two evils, as former Foreign Minister Georgs Andrejevs argued.[7] Interestingly enough, the public discourse during the pre-referendum period made few references to the ultimate objectives of the European integration process (i.e. the ever-closer union) and European values. The emphasis was put on economic interests, security considerations and involvement in the EU decision-making process. Influential academics found that the latter aspect could be the most important achievement from membership in the EU.[8]

Nevertheless, the prospect of the referendum gave rise to the first Eurosceptic organisations that represented the opposite poles of the political spectrum. Eurosceptic views were actively promoted by the political movement "Independence Beyond the EU" led by political activist Jānis Sils. The movement staged several protest marches

but failed to organise significant opposition to EU membership. Surprisingly, though, it managed to join forces with intellectuals arguing against the accession on the grounds of economic considerations.[9] At the other end of left-right political spectrum, EU accession was opposed by the United Social Democratic Welfare party that included many Russian-speaking citizens and stood for close cooperation with Russia.

The referendum revealed a significant gap in the attitudes of the local population. A large majority of ethnic Latvians voted for accession to the EU, presumably accepting the theory that failure to join would expose their country to Russian influence and ruin its independence. The paradox of the outcome of the referendum was in the fact that only predominantly Russian-speaking areas in Eastern Latvia voted against membership in the EU.[10] Remarkably, that part of the population was never exposed to Eurosceptic opinions published in Latvian and was by no means influenced by the nationalist organisations or economists opposing accession.

Apparently, a significant part of the Russian-speaking population perceived EU membership as a factor that would ultimately alienate them from Russia. Opinion polls of 2003 revealed that 44 percent of ethnic Russian citizens of Latvia and only 18 percent of ethnic Latvian citizens voted against accession to the EU. (57 percent of ethnic Latvians and only 20 percent of ethnic Russians supported the accession.)[11] Consequently, the negative vote expressed geopolitical, linguistic and cultural preferences rather than the wish to preserve the sovereignty of Latvia or protect the economic interests of its less developed eastern part.

From the perspective of silent Russian-speaking Eurosceptics, the EU was nothing but an entity competing against Russia and seeking to ruin their usual way of life. In addition, some segments of the Russian-speaking population may have felt that accession to the EU would amount to the recognition of Latvia as a mature European democracy that does not need further adaptation of citizenship and language laws to the benefit of the Russian-speaking community. Interestingly enough, at the height of the debate concerning the

relaxation of the naturalisation policies in 1998, the Russian-speaking community had a much more positive opinion of Europe. At that time membership in the EU was supported by 64 percent of the ethnic Russians and 58 percent of the ethnic Latvians.[12] Five years later the attitude had changed drastically.

Another paradox revealed by the results of the referendum was the fact that many of those Latvian citizens opposing the modification of the Citizenship law in 1998 were prepared to embrace EU membership. The image of the EU in moderate nationalist circles was much more positive compared to those of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. Prior to extending the invitation to start accession negotiations, the EU concluded that Latvia had met the 1993 Copenhagen criteria.[13] This fact was interpreted as a message that membership in the EU would not entail further concessions to the Russian-speaking community or the Russian Federation. From such a perspective, accession to the EU promised Latvia an equal status among other European nations and autonomy in domestic affairs that contrasted with the realities of the Soviet occupation period and the highly asymmetrical relationship with European structures prevailing in the late 1990s.

TEN YEARS AFTER THE ACCESSION – THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE CENTRE OF PUBLIC DEBATE

The platforms of political parties before the parliamentary elections of 2014 did not reveal any substantial criticism of the EU. The only political force that invited the people to reconsider the utility of Latvia's membership in the EU (electoral coalition "Sovereignty" led by Andris Orols) received just 0.11 percent of the votes cast. The traditionally most vocal Eurosceptic party (the Eurosceptic Action Party) did not participate in that election, its founder and former leader Normunds Grostiņš ran on the list of another party that did not question the utility of Latvia's membership in the EU. Thus

the results of the 2014 election displayed a significant decline in the popular appeal and number of Eurosceptic organisations. In comparison, six parties and coalitions ran on openly Eurosceptic platforms in the parliamentary elections of 2002,[14] the aggregate vote for these forces was 2.6 percent. Additionally, in 2002 some of the larger pro-EU or neutral parties allowed Eurosceptic individuals to run on their lists.

The decline of institutional Euroscepticism could be explained by the absence of a viable alternative to membership in the EU, the reliance on EU funding and even the fact that all the major parties participated in the European Parliament elections, had their representatives elected and thus became integrated with European political groups.

Institutional Euroscepticism exists only on the fringes of Latvia's political spectrum. Having failed miserably in 2014 elections, the Eurosceptic organisations tried to use the municipal elections of 2017 to reposition themselves. This time the Eurosceptic Action Party did participate, receiving 0.22 percent of the votes cast in Riga, 0.67 percent in Rēzekne (Eastern Latvia) and 0.98 percent in Daugavpils (Eastern Latvia). Other Eurosceptic parties did even better (albeit these forces did not present Euroscepticism as the central theme of their campaigns) – the Social Democratic Movement for Independent Latvia obtained 0.32 percent in Riga and the far-right National Union Justice 3.18 percent in Liepāja (Western Latvia).

The views and promises of Eurosceptic groups during the local elections once again underscored the fact that the public debate about Latvia's future relationship with Europe could not be focused on the EU alone. During the municipal elections of 2017 Eurosceptic groups tried to capitalise on anti-Western sentiment, indiscriminately denouncing the EU, NATO and Western structures in general. The electoral manifesto of the Eurosceptic Action Party included such slogans as liberation from "servile subordination to the demands of European commissioners that endanger the security of Latvian society and traditional values," refusal to accept any refugees "who should be sent back to their countries or to countries

that provoked the war," demands leaving NATO and closing NATO military installations in Latvia, abolishing the euro and re-introducing the national currency.[15]

The political party "Alternative" in Ventspils (Western Latvia) promised to abandon military alliances and pursue a policy of neutrality.[16] The Social Democratic Movement For Independent Latvia wanted liberation from the "sanction and confrontation games" allegedly played in Brussels.[17] The National Union Justice promised not to accept any "illegal migrants – potential criminals, terrorists and parasites."[18] The full programme of this party blamed EU institutions and the Saeima for the migration crisis – one of the "most important risks for national and regional security."[19]

Intellectual Euroscepticism, however, has been on the rise since the beginning of the financial and economic crisis that struck Latvia in 2008. Critical evaluation of the course of European integration focused on several major topics: the economic and social consequences of austerity policy, the adoption of the euro, security and defence, migration and multiculturalism. Debate on the consequences of the financial crisis to some degree could be seen as an extension of the arguments used by the economists questioning Latvia's accession to the EU in 2002–2003.

Essentially, the alternative ideas suggested by Latvian and foreign economists put in doubt the wisdom of the strategy imposed by the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB). The best-known critics of Latvia's response to the crisis (and therefore also of European recipes) were the Western academics Paul Krugman, Michael Hudson, Jeffrey Sommers and Morten Hansen who inspired local economists Alfs Vanags,[20] Ivars Brīvers,[21] Andris Deniņš,[22] Raita Karnīte[23] and Jānis Ošlejs[24] to promote similar opinions locally.

Even though the worst-case scenarios never materialised and Latvia's economy recovered, the disagreement between globalised free market adepts, pro-European economists and Russia-orientated opportunists formed the basis for continuing debate on Latvia's economic strategy extending beyond the obligations and assumptions enshrined in EU documents.

The global financial crisis certainly changed the perception of the EU as the source of uninterrupted growth and ever-increasing prosperity. The Greek problem put into question the assumption that membership in the euro zone *per se* could provide lasting stability and trigger a significant increase in foreign investment. Negotiations with the Troika made perfectly clear that the ECB and the European Commission were not able or willing to assist Latvia without the participation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the context of the financial crisis was global and European institutions could not provide solutions to all problems.[25]

Security and defence should be regarded as an important dimension of political and intellectual debate about Latvia's relationship with Europe. The EU has never been perceived as the dominant source of hard security in the Baltic Sea region. Influential segments of the military and security community have always held pronounced Atlanticist views based on assumption that the development of the European Security and Defence Policy may take place only in harmony with Euro-Atlantic co-operation; unilateral European moves may alienate the US and therefore undermine NATO.[26]

In the public domain, Atlanticist views are represented mostly by the NGO "Latvian Transatlantic Organisation" (LATO) that remains far from genuine Euroscepticism but clearly prioritises transatlantic co-operation over European defence initiatives, urging caution about any proposals leading towards the creation of a European army.[27] Very similar views have been publicly voiced by senior generals of the National Armed Forces,[28] to some extent also by Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevičs[29] and President Raimonds Vējonis.[30] Surprisingly, 59 percent of the population expressed support for the European Army in a 2017 opinion poll[31], which could be explained by a widely shared disbelief in Latvia's deterrent capacity and media-inspired doubts about the US commitment to Europe's defence after the election of President Donald Trump.

Security concerns among Latvia's population have been on the rise since the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the crisis in Eastern

Ukraine, resulting in a more positive perception of the EU as a major source of stability. The public appreciation of the EU reached its all-time peak in March 2015 (42.2 percent of the Eurobarometer respondents saw the EU as a „good thing"), between January 2008 and December 2013 such an assessment never exceeded the level of 30 percent.[32]

The European migration crisis that started in 2015 amplified the criticism of the EU in Latvian mass media and soon reduced the support level again. This was noticed by the political elites. Due to a divergence of opinions within the ruling coalition, the Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Government adopted in February 2016 used rather cautious language on migration and asylum issues.[33] At the same time, the government supported the mainstream EU line on relocation and resettlement, stopping short of voicing support for positions held by Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The public opinion, however, reflected attitudes broadly similar to those in the Central European countries. A local opinion poll conducted in January 2016 revealed that 78.3 percent of the population had negative views on accepting refugees and migrants.[34]

Several opinion leaders attributed the sense of vulnerability to the supposed failure of European institutions to defend Western civilisation. Professor of History Harijs Tumans spoke of migration from the Middle East and North Africa as a road leading to savagery and the ultimate destruction of Europe.[35] Very similar opinions have been repeatedly voiced also by Professor of Asian Studies Leons Taivāns and others. Another issue for intellectual Eurosceptics is the gap between EU institutions and European citizens as well as the democratic deficit that allegedly prevails in Brussels. As stated by Professor of Journalism Ābrams Kleckins, the EU would disintegrate exactly because it cannot function as a real democracy.[36] Similar views were expressed by Professor of Philosophy Maija Kūle[37] and others. General criticism of Europe and its liberal materialism has been repeatedly voiced by several leading intellectuals, including theatre director Alvis Hermanis,[38] composer Imants Kalniņš,[39] film director Jānis Streičs[40] and others.

THE COMING YEARS – CAN EUROSCEPTIC ATTITUDES FLOURISH?

At the present juncture, the combination of weak institutional Euroscepticism and rising intellectual criticism of Europe cannot substantially change the overall consensus that membership in the EU is indispensable for Latvia's independence and development. Nevertheless, the prevailing attitudes may evolve should the paradigm shift in favour of deeper integration and marginalisation of those member states not willing or able to join the advanced core group of nations.

The pro-European consensus is based on an understanding that Latvia should be able to maintain its autonomy, sovereignty and identity even within the ever-closer Union. The coalition government led by Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis (consisting of centrist party "Unity", the National Alliance and the Union of the Greens and Farmers) has agreed that "We will actively participate in the development of the European Union as a sound union of nation states. By defending national interests, we will support the political and economic unity and efficiency of the European Union. We will promote a single foreign, security, energy, and single market policy, as well as the stability of the euro zone."[41] A very similar message on this topic was delivered by Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs when addressing the Saeima during the foreign policy debate of 2017 – "Do not dream of a federal Europe, but reinforce what has been achieved over these years! I am convinced that shared interests of Latvia and the entire European Union lie in a strong and solid union of nation-states."[42]

All the major political parties, in theory, support the objective of building a Europe of nations. Such a position is included in the 2014 election manifesto of the centrist party "Unity;"[43] other members of the ruling coalition recognise that implicitly. In fact, no political party in Latvia openly advocates the construction of a federal Europe. Unfortunately, preoccupation with domestic issues and mounting security challenges has prevented political forces from substantial debate on the future of Europe. The 2017 European

Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe has not been seriously considered by political parties. Explicit criticism of this document has been voiced by individual MEPs – Roberts Zīle, who dismissed that document as a "tactical game,"[44] and Iveta Grigule, who called to focus on economic growth and cohesion rather than deeper political integration.[45] Leading politicians and parties were equally slow to provide detailed comments on the proposals that President Macron and Chancellor Merkel announced in May-July 2017.

As a general trend, only sitting MEPs are reacting to important EU developments in Latvian mass media quickly enough. When doing so, they do not necessarily act as representatives of their political parties. The most vocal MEPs are Roberts Zīle (National Alliance), Inese Vaidere (Unity), Sandra Kalniete (Unity) Iveta Grigule (until February 2017 – Union of the Greens and Farmers) and Andrejs Mamikins (Harmony). Views on European issues are not determined by party allegiances and rivalries. Surprisingly enough, the individual opinions of MEPs frequently display more common ground than their political parties may ever have on domestic issues. Irreconcilable differences could be detected only regarding EU external relations and the extent of co-operation with Russia, not on the future of Europe or the nature of relations between European institutions and member states. On certain issues related to deeper integration MEPs occasionally express opinions that are not in line with the pronouncements of government ministers representing their own parties.[46]

The dividing line between people prepared to accept deeper integration and those preferring a Europe of nations may intersect party allegiances. The consolidation of politicians sympathetic to the position of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary on the migration problem became evident in June 2017 when 23 members of the Saeima signed a letter urging the European Commission to cease all further action against the above-mentioned countries until the delivery of the judgement of the European Court of Justice on the complaints against the legality of the relocation scheme.[47] 11 of the signatories

represented the National Alliance, 2 – the Union of the Greens and Farmers, 10 – various opposition parties. No parliamentary faction or political party as a whole supported the letter, and the absence of the signatures of the Speaker of the Saeima and chairpersons of its committees as well as certain party leaders may reveal growing disagreement over European policy between the frontbenchers and backbenchers or between party elites and ordinary members.

In all probability, the political parties will soon have to express themselves more clearly on the future of Europe and their preferences regarding EU agenda. However, this is not an immediate challenge as long as the EU remains preoccupied with Brexit negotiations and the migration crisis. The next parliamentary elections in Latvia are scheduled for October 2018. It does not seem likely that the debate on the future of Europe could become a pre-election theme. The political parties may face the need to position themselves *vis-à-vis* the EU when the Brussels-based debate about the future of Europe spills over to become a major media topic in Latvia and the other small member states. To a certain extent, this debate may reflect a change in political paradigm from the traditional left-right cleavage to a new liberal-conservative dichotomy. Naturally, the social conservatives would favour traditional values and hence a Europe of nations, while the liberals would advocate the gradual dissolution of national boundaries to advance the individual freedom and promote a European identity or even to transcend it.

For the time being, however, the ordinary citizens of Latvia are not too much concerned with the debate in European institutions. The prevailing positive attitudes towards Europe are determined by the perception of the EU as a supplier of relative prosperity and development opportunities. The popular concerns about the role of the EU are related to the preservation of identity and traditional values allegedly threatened by migration and multiculturalism. However, this situation may change in the course of a few years. The availability of EU funding after the expiration of the current financial framework in 2020 is already a cause for serious concern for Latvian politicians and economists.

The combination of security concerns related to the continuous influx of migrants and reduced European financial input may diminish the centrality of Europe and undermine the pro-European consensus. It should be taken into account that the prevalent Latvian thinking on Europe is not an entirely pragmatic peacetime calculation of political or economic costs and benefits. The sense of being vulnerable (or directly threatened) stems from the inability of Western democracies to support the Baltic states during World War II and from the unalterable geographical proximity to Russia.

Although the EU has been frequently described as a highly successful peace project that prevents violent internal conflicts and projects stability and security along its borders,[48] European appetite for common defence has certain limits. Even the most ambitious scenario does not envisage the EU accepting full responsibility for defence against large-scale military attack on its territory. At best, the protection of Europe could become a mutually reinforcing responsibility of the EU and NATO sometime after 2025.[49]

Such a vague and distant prospect would not suffice to reassure Latvia's population. It should be kept in mind that security and stability are the ultimate objectives of Latvia's relationship with Europe, but these goals cannot be achieved as long as the EU is not fully committed to territorial defence. The population takes national security rather seriously, expressing concerns by a large margin. An opinion poll conducted in June 2017 revealed that 80 percent of the respondents saw economic and political instability as the most important security concern, 64 percent found that migration could pose a serious risk, 62 percent feared a military conflict affecting the territory of Latvia and 54 percent admitted the possibility of ethnic clashes.[50]

In the future, right-wing Eurosceptics may try to exploit the existing doubts about the European commitment to Baltic security by questioning EU asylum policies and their impact on stability in individual member states. Mass migration combined with recent terror attacks can indeed generate the perception that the EU prioritises values over security (and universal human rights over the legitimate

interests of European citizens). However, as long as individual European countries remain involved in Baltic security through NATO deployments and bilateral arrangements, the EU would be widely regarded as a provider of security. Neither institutional nor intellectual Euroscepticism can change this attitude in observable future.

It seems much more likely that the perceptions of Europe could be influenced by the ability of smaller member states to shape EU decisions on issues of vital importance. At some point in the future, the fortunes of Latvian politicians may depend on their capacity to convince the electorate that EU policies on such sensitive issues as migration or structural and regional funds are in line with the vision of Europe as a union of equal nation-states.

Even though 49 percent of Latvia's population in September 2016 thought that gains from membership in the EU outweighed the losses (29 percent had opposite opinion),[51] better dialogue between the policy-makers and policy-takers is indispensable in ensuring the sustainability of pro-European attitudes. The elites and state bureaucracy are constantly focused on dialogue with international power centres, including EU institutions and the most influential member states. The population, in turn, is much more preoccupied with the appropriation of EU funding for such pressing domestic issues as health care, education and employment.[52]

Statistical data from November 2016 indicates that 42 percent of the population saw health care and social policy as the most important issues to be addressed by the national authorities, while 30 percent found unemployment to be the most pressing challenge.[53] The same opinion poll revealed that Latvians wanted the EU to address the challenges presented by migration and terrorism,[54] implying a certain division of responsibilities between national and European institutions. Regrettably, domestic political priorities and the public discourse do not necessarily reflect the agenda of EU institutions, the gap between the expectations of the electorate and actual priorities of the European policy-making process remains open.

Moreover, the absence of a broad public debate on strategically important issues indicates that political parties constantly fail to build

a link between citizens and the elites involved in European decision-making. EU institutions enjoy a considerably higher level of trust than national political structures. According to the Eurobarometer in November 2016 only 22 percent of Latvia's population tended to trust the Saeima[55] as opposed to 44 percent for the European Parliament.[56] The Government of Latvia was trusted by 32 percent of the population[57] whereas the European Commission by 43 percent.[58]

These figures do not lead to the conclusion that the marginalisation of domestic decision-makers could take place at this stage. Political parties, notably the MEPs nominated by them and elected by the people, provide the only direct democratic link between European institutions and EU citizens in Latvia. The statistical data indicating that 45 percent of Latvian people trust the totality of EU institutions[59] is compromised by the fact that only 8 percent of respondents tend to trust the political parties.[60] This may suggest that from the perspective of ordinary citizens, the EU and its institutions remain an abstraction that embodies the popular desire for better governance. Although the average citizen may harbour grievances against the local elites, elected parliamentarians and members of the government are the only politicians who keep in touch with the electorate on regular basis and therefore can by no means be marginalised by televised images of the European leadership.

The alienation of ordinary citizens from the actual EU agenda may adversely affect public support for decisions on the future of Europe and the reform of the EU. In such a situation the idea of a Europe of nations could become the dividing line between Europhiles and Eurocritics who may find common ground with intellectual Eurosceptics, forming a much wider political platform. It may well happen that the future critics of the EU would have no relation to the institutional Euroscepticism and their attitudes to European integration might depend on the efficiency of the EU in solving the most pressing current problems.

To a large extent, the future debate might be shaped by the development of two-speed Europe and Latvia's status in that process. Presumably, any sort of Euroscepticism could have a chance of

success only if the integration process accelerates and Latvia is accepted as a member of the core group. Should Latvia remain in the outer circle of member states attached to the idea of sovereignty and intergovernmental cooperation, Euroscepticism would almost certainly remain marginal, since the rejection of European intergovernmental cooperation would equal isolationism that in the current geopolitical environment is not a viable option. At the same time, Latvia's participation in the core group necessitates broad public support as deeper integration efforts may involve a treaty change that requires unqualified trust in EU institutions and much more pronounced self-identification with Europe.

ENDNOTES

[1] Saeima, "Latvijas ārpolitikas pamatvirzieni līdz 2005.gadam" [Basic directions of Latvia's foreign policy until 2005], http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/latvijas-arpolitikas-pamatvirzieni-lidz-2005-gadam.

[2] The official referendum results published by the Central Election Commission of Latvia, https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/base.tb1998.tb_vis.

[3] In fact, Latvia's accession to NATO involved much more painful compromises than negotiations on EU membership. In particular, the turning point in the former process was the much debated decision to amend the Election law following pressure from several representatives of NATO countries and an explicit invitation to do so publicly extended by NATO Secretary-General George Robertson during his address to the Saeima on 21 February 2002. See "Robertsons Latvijas izredzes iestāties NATO saista ar vēlēšanu likuma grozījumiem" [Robertson links Latvia's prospects of accession to NATO to the changes in the Election law], *LETA*, 21 February 2002, http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/189371-robertsons_latvijas_izredzes_iestaties_nato_saista_ar_velesanu_likuma_grozijumiem.

[4] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, "Argumenti par Latvijas ieguvumiem no iestāšanās ES" [Arguments on Latvia's gains from the accession to the EU], http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/eiropas-savieniba-arpolitika/arhivs/integracija-es/iestasanas-es-sarunas/sarunu-pozicijas/argumenti-par-latvijas-ieguvumiem-no-iestasanas-es.

[5] The official referendum results published by the Central Election Commission of Latvia, https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/sae8dev.aktiv03er.vis.

[6] Brigita Zepa, Inese Šūpule, Liene Jeruma, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju motivācija un ekspektācijas attiecībā pret Latvijas iestāšanos Eiropas Savienībā* [The motivation and expectations of Latvia's inhabitants in relation to Latvia's accession to the EU] (Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, 5 August 2003), http://providus.lv/article/latvijas-iedzivotaju-motivacija-un-ekspektacijas-attieciba-pret-latvijas-iestasanos-eiropas-savieniba.

[7] "Andrejevs: Neiestāšanās – suverenitātes zaudēšana" [Andrējevs: Missed accession – loss of sovereignity], *LETA*, 13 August 2003, http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/andrejevs-neiestasanas-suverenitates-zaudesana.d?id=6014068.

[8] Three years after the accession Professor of Politics Žaneta Ozoliņa gave a concise analysis of the benefits from Latvia's membership in the EU. She found that the most important one was the opportunity to participate in European decision-making processes, since through the accession to the EU Latvia had become part of the group of developed and influential countries. "Eksperte: Latvijas lielākais ieguvums no dalības ES ir iespēja piedalīties lēmumu pieņemšanā"[Expert: The greatest gain from the participation in the EU is opportunity to participate in the decision making], *LETA*, 1 May 2007, http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/eksperte-latvijas-lielakais-ieguvums-no-dalibas-es-ir-iespeja-piedalities-lemumu-pienemsana.d?id=17693783.

[9] A paper opposing EU accession was published by economics professors Elmārs Zelgalvis and Andris Sproģis, supported by history docent Aivars Straume. The authors drew facts and inspiration from a research paper edited by former Minister of Finance Uldis Osis. See "Zinātnieki: ES – ekonomiskās neatkarības zaudēšana" [Scientists: EU – loss of economic independence], *LETA*, 19 August 2003, http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/zinatnieki-es-ekonomiskas-neatkaribas-zaudesana.d?id=6060298.

[10] 40-50 percent of the votes were cast in favour of EU accession in the counties of Daugavpils, Krāslava and Ludza as well as in Rēzekne town, in the city of Daugavpils less than 40 percent of participants supported the pro-European choice. The official referendum results published by the Central Election Commission of Latvia, https://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/sae8dev.aktiv03er.vis.

[11] Inese Šūpule, *Vēlreiz par referendumu: etniskā* šķelšanās *balsojumā par Latvijas iestāšanos ES. Pētījumu rezultāti* [Once more about the referendum: the ethnic cleavage in the ballot about Latvia's accession to the EU] (Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, 24 February 2004), http://providus.lv/article/velreiz-par-referendumu-etniska-skelsanas-balsojuma-par-latvijas-iestasanos-es-petijumu-rezultati.

[12] Ibid.

[13] European Council declaration of June 1993 provided that "Membership requires that candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union."

[14] Eurosceptic views were expressed by 6 parties and coalitions out of 20 participating in the elections – the Social Democratic Welfare Party, the Russian Party, the Latvian Party, the coalition "The Land of Māra" ["*Māras zeme*"], party "Our Land" ["*Mūsu Zeme*"] and the United Republican Party of Latvia. Election manifestos and programmes published by the Central Election Commission, https://www.cvk.lv/pub/public/27470.html.

[15] Vita Daukste "Nomainīt eiro pret latiem un atcelt karu – ko partijas sola pašvaldību vēlēšanās Rīgā," [To switch from lats to euro and to withrdraw from war – what parties promise in municipal election in Riga], *Delfi*, 25 May 2017, http://www.delfi.lv/news/pasvaldibu-velesanas/zinas/nomainit-eiro-pret-latiem-un-atcelt-karu-ko-partijas-sola-pasvaldibu-velesanas-riga.d?id=48848867.

[16] Vita Daukste, "Ledus takas un piemineklis tautastērpam – ko partijas sola vēlētājiem Kurzemē" [Ice pathways and a monument to national costume – what parties promise to electors in Kurzeme], *Delfi*, 26 May 2017, http://www.delfi.lv/news/pasvaldibu-

velesanas/zinas/ledus-takas-un-piemineklis-tautasterpam-ko-partijas-sola-veletajiem-kurzeme.d?id=48877419&page=9.

[17] Vita Daukste, "Nomainīt eiro pret latiem un atcelt karu – ko partijas sola pašvaldību vēlēšanās Rīgā."

[18] Nacionālās Savienības "Taisnīgums" programma Liepājai 2017. gada pašvaldība vēlēšanās [The Programme of the National Union "Justice" for 2017 local elections in Liepāja], http://www.taisnigums.lv/2017/04/nacionalas-savienibas-taisnigums.html.

[19] Partijas "Nacionālā Savienība "Taisnīgums"" programma [The programme of the party "National Union "Justice""] adopted in 2015, http://www.taisnigums.lv/p/programma.html.

[20] "Alfs Vanags: Devalvācija – vienīgais ceļš, kā stimulēt ekonomiku" [Devaluation – the only way to stimulate the economy], *Diena*, 3 June 2009, https://www.diena.lv/raksts/latvija/politika/alfs-vanags-devalvacija--vienigais-cels-ka-stimulet-ekonomiku-671448.

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[23] Viktors Avotiņš, "Ekonomiste Karnīte: Uzlabojumi būs tad, kad Latvija neļaus sevi mīdīt kājām" [Economist Karnīte: Improvement may come when Latvia stops being a doormat], *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 3 March 2017, http://nra.lv/latvija/202532-ekonomiste-karnite-uzlabojumi-bus-tad-kad-latvija-nelaus-sevi-midit-kajam.htm.

[24] Karina Bērziņa, "Ekonomists Jānis Ošlejs: Mērķis ir kļūt bagātākiem, taupīšanai nav jēgas" [Economist Jānis Ošlejs: Enrichement should be the objective, saving does not make sense], *Apriņķis*, 6 July 2012, http://www.aprinkis.lv/ekonomika/finanses/item/3422-ekonomists-janis-oslejs-merkis-ir-klut-bagatakiem-taupibai-nav-jegas.

[25] In December 2008, in the wake of the global financial crash, Latvia was forced to request international financial assistance. The emergency assistance was delivered first by the IMF and later by the European Commission and a number of bilateral donors.

[26] The fundamental principles of NATO-US relationship have been based on a mutual understanding defined by the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in 1999 as the "3Ds". "The purpose was not to "Duplicate" NATO assets, not to "Discriminate" against non-EU NATO members, and not to "Decouple" the EU from the transatlantic security architecture. As such, the primacy of NATO was guaranteed, while the Europeans were allowed to assume more responsibilities". See Can Buharali, "Better NATO-EU relations require more sincerity," *Centre for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies Discussion Papers Series* 2010/1, January 2010, http://www.edam.org.tr/document/discussion%20paper%20series.pdf.

[27] Sandis Šrāders, "Vai ES militāries spēki ir Latvijas interesēs?" [Are NATO military forces in Latvia's interests?] *Lato*, 18 March 2010, http://lato.lv/2010/03/vai-es-militaries-speki-ir-latvijas-intereses/.

[28] "Graube neredz racionālu pamatu diskusijai par Eiropas armijas izveidi" [Graube does not see a rational ground for discussions on the establishment of a European army], *LETA*, 15 May 2015, https://www.diena.lv/raksts/latvija/viedokli/graube-neredz-racionalu-pamatu-diskusijai-par-eiropas-armijas-izveidi-14098030.

[29] "Ministrs: Ideja par Eiropas armiju šobrīd ir absolūti lieka" [Minister: The idea about a European army is absolutly superflouos at this moment], *LETA*, 20 May 2016, http://

www.tvnet.lv/zinas/viedokli/609416-ministrs_ideja_par_eiropas_armiju_sobrid_ir_absoluti_lieka.

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[32] Results of opinion polls conducted by Marketing and Public Opinion Research Centre SKDS, http://www.skds.lv/?lng=lLat&c=7.

[33] "Respecting the decisions already adopted by the Latvian government within the framework of the European Union's solidarity mechanism, we will ensure practical implementation of the decisions, ensuring that the risks and adverse effects posed by immigration are substantially reduced. In view of the conditions of Latvia's integration and administrative capacity, we believe that, with the previous decisions, Latvia has exhausted its possibilities to host additional asylum seekers within the framework of the European Union's mechanism for relocation of asylum seekers. Therefore, with respect to reallocation of persons between the Member States of the European Union and the reallocation from third countries, we will only support a position that allows the European Union Member States to host asylum seekers on a voluntary basis and does not create an obligation or pressure to do so." From "Deklarācija par Māra Kučinska vadītā Ministru Kabineta iecerēto darbību" [Declaration about the intended activities of Māris Kučinskis' Cabinet of Minsiters], http://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/20160210_mkucinskis_vald_prior_gala_vers_0.pdf.

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[35] Guntars Laganovskis, "Harijs Tumans: varonība nav kolektīvais fenomens, tas vienmēr ir individuāls gribas akts" [Harijs Tumans: Heroism is not a collective phenomenon, it has always been an act of individual will power], *lvportals.lv*, 10 November 2015, http://m.lvportals.lv/visi/viedokli/274982-harijs-tumans-varoniba-nav-kolektivais-fenomens-tas-vienmer-ir-individuals-gribas-akts/.

[36] Viktors Avotiņš, "Ābrams Kleckins: Latvija ir visai tālu no demokrātijas" [Ābrams Kleckins: Latvia is still far away from democracy], *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 6 June 2017, http://nra.lv/latvija/211997-abrams-kleckins-latvija-ir-visai-talu-no-demokratijas.htm.

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[39] "Imants Kalniņš: Valsts bez nākotnes – vai tas ir tas, ko mēs esam izcīnījuši?" [Imants Kalniņš: A country without future – is this what we have achieved?], *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 18 January 2013, http://nra.lv/latvija/87454-imants-kalnins-valsts-bez-nakotnes-vai-tas-ir-tas-ko-mes-esam-izcinijusi.htm.

[40] Elita Veidemane, "Jānis Streičs: tauta ir garīga būtne" [Jānis Streičs: Nation is a spiritual creature], *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 26 September 2016, http://nra.lv/latvija/186049-janis-streics-tauta-ir-gariga-butne.htm.

[41] "Deklarācija par Māra Kučinska vadītā Ministru Kabineta iecerēto darbību."

[42] Speech by Latvia's Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs at annual Foreign Policy Debate in the Latvian Parliament (Saeima), 26 January 2017, http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/latest-news/55904-speech-by-latvian-foreign-minister-edgars-rinkevics-at-annual-foreign-policy-debate-in-the-latvian-parliament-saeima-26-january-2017.

[43] Politiskās partijas "Vienotība" Latvijas Republikas 12.Saeimas vēlēšanu 4000 zīmju programma [The programme of 4000 signs of the political party "Unity" for the elections of the 12th Saeima of the Republic of Latvia], https://vienotiba.lv/augamgudri/4000-zimes/.

[44] "Zīle: Junkera 'Baltā grāmata' nav plāns, bet taktika" [Zīle: Juncker's White Book is not a plan, but tactics], *LETA*, 2 March 2017, http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/zile-junkera-balta-gramata-nav-plans-bet-taktika.d?id=48577851.

[45] Iveta Grigule, "Eiropas pensijas gadi – federālisma zvaigznājā?" [The years of European retirement – in the constellation of federalism?], *Delfi*, 25 March 2017, http://www.delfi.lv/news/comment/comment/iveta-grigule-eiropas-pensijas-gadi-federalisma-zvaigznaja.d?id=48660917.

[46] For example, MEP Sandra Kalniete (Unity) voiced positive opinion about the creation of the European Army, video interview "Kalniete: Eiropas armijas izveide ir nenovēršama; EP tam būs atbalsts" [Kalniete: The establishment of a European army is unavoidable; it will be supported by the EP], *Diena*, https://www.diena.lv/raksts/latvija/viedokli/kalniete-eiropas-armijas-izveide-ir-nenoversama-ep-tam-bus-atbalsts-video-14136505. Another example – in February 2017 MEP Iveta Grigule had to resign from the Latvian Farmers' Union (part of the Union of the Greens and Farmers) following a row over her vote against a 2016 EP resolution condemning Russia's use of propaganda. See "Grigule izstājas no Latvijas Zemnieku savienības" [Grigule is leaving the Union of Latvian Farmers], *LETA*, 8 February 2017, http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/646785-grigule_izstajas_no_latvijas_zemnieku_savienibas.

[47] National Alliance party, "Pēc NA iniciatīvas Saeimas deputāti vēršas EK ar iesniegumu pret plānu noteikt sankcijas par patvēruma meklētāju neuzņemšanu" [Following the initiative from the NA, the members of the Saeima turn to the EC with a petition to forgo the idea of sanctions against those who refused to accept the asylum seekers], 26 June 2017, http://www.nacionalaapvieniba.lv/aktualitate/pec-na-iniciativas-saeimas-deputati-versas-ek-ar-iesniegumu-pret-planu-noteikt-sankcijas-par-patveruma-mekletaju-neuznemsanu/.

[48] The White Paper on the Future of Europe published by the European Commission in 2017 declares that "Our troubled past has given way to peace spanning seven decades ... The images of battles in trenches and fields of Verdun, or of a continent separated by the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall, have been replaced by a Union standing out as a beacon of peace and stability," https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf.

[49] As foreseen by the Reflection Paper on the Future of European Defense published by the European Commission in 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reflection-paper-defence_en.pdf.

[50] "Vairāk nekā puse Latvijas iedzīvotāju baidās no iespējama militāra konflikta valsts teritorijā" [More than half of Latvia's inhabitants have fears from a potential military conflict in the territory of the country], *Apollo*, 4 July 2017, http://apollo.tvnet.lv/zinas/vairak-neka-puse-latvijas-iedzivotaju-baidas-no-iespejama-militara-konflikta-valsts-teritorija/799699.

[51] "Aptauja: Latvijā 49% iedzīvotāju uzskata, ka valsts no dalības ES vairāk iegūst, nekā zaudē" [A survey: In Latvia, 49% of inhabitants believe that country gains more than looses from the participation in the EU], *LETA*, 29 September 2016, https://www.diena.lv/raksts/latvija/zinas/aptauja-latvija-49-iedzivotaju-uzskata-ka-valsts-no-dalibas-es-vairak-iegust-neka-zaude-14156244.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Replies to the Eurobarometer question "What do you think are the two most important issues facing Latvia at the moment?" in November 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/42/groupKy/208.

[54] Replies to the Eurobarometer question "What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?" in November 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/31/groupKy/188.

[55] Replies to the Eurobarometer question "I would like to ask a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?" The Latvian Parliament. November 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/18/groupKy/89.

[56] Ibid. The European Parliament. November 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/9/groupKy/23.

[57] Replies to the Eurobarometer question "I would like to ask a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?" The Latvian government. November 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/18/groupKy/98.

[58] Ibid. The European Commission. November 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/9/groupKy/24.

[59] Ibid. The European Union. November 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/9/groupKy/97.

[60] Ibid. Political parties. November 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/18/groupKy/85.

SMALL IS SMALL: EUROSCEPTICISM IN LITHUANIAN POLITICS

Gediminas Vitkus

It is not without cause that commonly established opinion states that Lithuania is one of the most favourably disposed pro-European states, even compared with the other Baltic countries.[1] This is confirmed by abundant empirical data supplied by continually conducted public opinion polls,[2] research on the opinion of the political and economic elite.[3] However, at the same time, it would not be true to claim that there are no manifestations of Euroscepticism in Lithuania in general. In Lithuania, as in any other democratic state, there exists a great variety of opinions and positions, also including attitudes towards European integration. Of course, taking into consideration the fact that Eurosceptics constitute a minority wielding little influence, they do not enjoy continual or specific attention.

ROUND-UP OF EXISTING STUDIES ON EUROSCEPTICISM

Euroscepticism has been researched a little in Lithuania. It has been explored both in a comparative perspective[4] in the context of regional research and also as a case study.[5] Having been acquainted with the results of research until the middle of 2014 (first and foremost from a study by Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė of 2014), we can see that in Lithuania:

- Most citizens are favourably disposed towards the European Union (EU). And those who treat it critically are still not disposed to oppose it *per se,* but rather to more critically consider its individual aspects. According to Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė: "In measuring Lithuanian

public levels of Euroscepticism we note that Lithuanians do not look at the EU as a bad thing. Instead they agree that membership in the EU brings many benefits for the country (especially for those who receive subsidies (e.g. farmers), for people getting support for the activities from EU funds, etc.). ... The EU institutions are trusted more than national institutions, but people tend not to trust the euro as a symbol of deeper integration. National currency is treated as a symbol of sovereignty."[6]

- There are nearly no influential Eurosceptical political parties. Having surveyed manifestations of Euroscepticism in the activity of political parties between 2000–2012, Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė stated that "only small Lithuanian nationalist and populist parties which are at the extreme political right have an ideological stance that makes it easier for them to use Eurosceptic discourse than other mainstream parliamentary parties. … From this we may conclude that party Euroscepticism tends to be marginalized in the Lithuanian political party system. Major parties are not likely to use Eurosceptic rhetoric. Accordingly, small parties are not popular and have no chance to be represented in major national institutions."[7]
- Only at the level of civil society do there exist public movements that, in spite of the limited influence, are sufficiently active. According to Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, "Lithuania has examples of both soft and hard Euroscepticism. The majority of the movements are quite moderate towards the EU, i.e. they are aware of the EU as an inevitable reality from which Lithuania cannot escape. These movements are likely to stress that Lithuanians should be more active in promoting their interests, and are against losing sovereignty."[8]

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 2014

Some time has already elapsed since the seminal study by Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė in 2014. Therefore, it is possible to supplement and renew some of the results.

Public Opinion

Public opinion is still favourably disposed towards European integration. The latest Eurobarometer data does not indicate essential changes in people's attitudes. The image of the EU in Lithuania remains sufficiently positive. In 2016, less than ten percent of respondents adhered to the "very negative" and "fairly negative" attitude towards the EU.

Lithuanians continue to trust European institutions more than those of Lithuania. This pattern has remained unchanged since the very first year of Lithuania's EU membership. The tendency to trust the EU was always above trust in national institutions, and oscillated between 47 percent (lowest point in April 2012) and 68 percent (peaks in October 2004 and October 2015). At the same time, since 2004, trust in the Seimas (the national parliament) oscillated between 7 percent (lowest point in May 2010) and 22–23 percent (peaks in May 2004 and November 2016). While trust in the Lithuanian government oscillated between 13 percent (lowest point in April 2010) and 38 percent (peak in May 2004).[9] The fact that this pattern has remained unchanged during more than a decade does not allow the conclusion that there exists a causal relationship between EU membership and the population's traditionally low level of trust in domestic institutions. People in Lithuania, first of all, are dissatisfied not with the domestic political system, but with the skills and abilities of local politicians. On the other hand, the EU is considered to be a more efficiently functioning institution, which may (hopefully) positively affect local decision-makers.

Political Parties

The elections to the European Parliament (EP) on 25 May 2014 were a good chance for opponents of the EU to come together. As it is known, these elections were particularly successful for Eurosceptics in many European countries.[10] However, Lithuania did not follow suit. In total, ten parties participated in the elections to the EP. The only openly

Eurosceptical party was the "*Tautininkų sąjunga*" [Nationalist Union] that put forward in its electoral programme truly and undoubtedly Eurosceptical yet hardly implementable objectives, such as "to revoke the pre-eminence of European legal acts over the national legal acts" or "to seek to recognise the Treaty of Lisbon as illegal and void." Members of the Nationalist Union were also categorically against the introduction of the euro that had been planned for 2015.[11]

Programs of other parties also held Eurosceptical ideas. For example, *Lenkų rinkimų akcijos ir Rusų aljanso koalicijos "Valdemaro Tomaševskio blokas"* [the Coalition "Valdemar Tomaševski Bloc" of the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Russian Alliance] urged in their electoral programme to postpone the introduction of the euro.[12] A request to organise a referendum on euro introduction was also voiced by Rolandas Paksas, then-leader of the "*Tvarka ir Teisingumas*" [Order and Justice] party. However, in the final version of the party's electoral programme this demand was absent. The Order and Justice party belonged to the ruling coalition which sought the introduction of the euro by all means; therefore, all that remained to it was to underline that the party stood for the EU as "a community of strong, independent, sovereign national states."[13]

In the elections to the EP, not a single party in Lithuania secured a notable victory. The eleven seats available for Lithuania were distributed evenly among the main parties. The openly Eurosceptical Nationalist Union party received no mandate. However, one of the newly elected MEPs, Valdemar Tomaševski, chose to join the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (moderate Eurosceptics) and another, Rolandas Paksas, the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (radical Eurosceptics). In fact, Paksas currently is the only MEP from the Baltic states participating in this group of radical Eurosceptics, whose chairman is the former leader of the United Kingdom's Independence Party Nigel Farage.[14] However, the influence of both politicians is limited in Lithuania's politics, as Paksas is not a party leader anymore and it was his own decision to join the radical Eurosceptics, while Tomaševski joined the group of moderate Eurosceptics together with Polish conservatives from the Law and Justice party of Poland.

The elections to the Seimas on 9 October 2016 brought no change to the marginalisation tendency of Eurosceptical parties. Taking into consideration the general positive attitude of the electorate towards the EU, the mainstream political parties choose not to include solid Eurosceptical proposals or promises into their electoral programs. For example, a smooth introduction of the euro in Lithuania on 1 January 2015 and the general stabilisation of the euro zone removed the controversy from the changeover to the euro, and, consequently, this issue was withdrawn from the electoral programs and the political rhetoric in general.

The EU issues addressed during the pre-election campaign first of all covered the consequences of the refugee crisis of the summer of 2015 and the decision of the Council of the EU to introduce quotas for the reallocation of asylum seekers among the member states. This decision, which was supported by the Lithuanian government, was harshly criticised by the *Darbo partija* [Labour Party] of the centre-left, which urged following the example of Hungary and Poland.[15] The curiosity is that the Labour Party, by belonging to the ruling coalition alongside the Social Democrats and the Order and Justice party, had formally supported that very decision. A stark change in the party's position on refugees can partly be explained by the change of the Labour Party's leadership, and partly by the beginning of the electoral campaign. The founder and long-standing boss of the party Viktor Uspaskich was replaced by Valentinas Mazuronis, one of the former leaders of Order and Justice party, and a Member of the European Parliament. Paradoxically, in the EP, Mazuronis belongs to the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; however, under his leadership the Labour Party adopted an openly hostile stance towards the European reallocation scheme of asylum seekers.

The elections to the Seimas in 2016 did not bring success to traditionally Eurosceptical parties: neither the *Lietuvos liaudies partija* [Lithuanian People's Party] (1.01 percent) nor the *Tautininkų koalicija* (0.54 percent) crossed the qualifying five percent barrier in the multi-member constituency.[16] Also the Labour Party, in spite of a change in

party leadership installing exceptional Eurosceptical "innovation," polled only 4.68 percent of the vote and did not make it to the Seimas.[17]

Social Movements

As it was already mentioned in the Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė's article of 2014, Euroscepticism is more detectable in the "world" of social movements than of political parties in Lithuania. Perhaps the most striking event in this "world" was the referendum on 29 June 2014 on the prohibition of selling land to foreigners and juridical persons. By joining the EU in 2004, Lithuania accepted the obligation of acknowledging the principle of free movement of capital and to amend accordingly the Constitution by lifting the prohibition for foreigners to obtain land. However, at the same time, Lithuania managed to negotiate a 10-year transitional period until the commitment came into force. The transitional period was to finish on 1 May 2014, but a rallied initiative referendum group collected the required number of signatures for a mandatory referendum in order to maintain the prohibition on selling land to foreigners.

The referendum was a great and unexpected success of all Eurosceptical forces, because the Constitution of Lithuania is strict not only with respect to the land property but also in terms of civil initiatives. Article 9 stipulates that a referendum can be called "if not less than 300,000 citizens with the electoral right so request."[18] This demanding threshold had turned out to be a major obstacle to many earlier referendum initiatives; yet this time, the opponents to selling land to foreigners succeeded. The initiative referendum group, led by journalist Pranciškus Šliužas, belonging to the *Lietuvos centro partija* [Lithuanian Centre Party], was able to submit more than 320 thousand signatures to the Central Electoral Commission, and the referendum, under the decision of the Seimas, was held on 29 June 2014.

The success of collecting the signatures required for the referendum is explained by the fact that this referendum initiative

represented a rare opportunity for a maximum mobilisation and consolidation of all of the Eurosceptical forces that existed at that moment. Despite the Eurosceptics' opportunity to address people at large through the public broadcaster LRT, where special broadcasting was allotted to agitation and discussion-related broadcasts and telecasts, the electorate remained unresponsive and did not turn up to voting polls in sufficient numbers to make the referendum result effective. The Central Electoral Commission acknowledged that the mandatory referendum on the amendment of the Constitution "did not take place; no decision was made." During the referendum only 380,178 or 14.98 percent of voters signified their will,[19] while the total number of voters on the lists was 2,538,430. Out of those who participated, 70.77 percent voted in favour of reinstating the restrictions and 26.40 percent voted against. Interestingly, the number of those who said "Yes" during the referendum was smaller (269,049 citizens) than the number of collected signatures (320,000 citizens) for the referendum to take place.[20]

This referendum result was indicative of the true social base of Euroscepticism in Lithuania. Those who voted "Yes" in the referendum are genuine Eurosceptics, because by voting in favour of restrictions they knew that they were voting against one of the provisions of the Accession Treaty from a decade ago, and could jeopardise Lithuania's participation in the EU. However, the Eurosceptics remained in an obvious minority in spite of fairly intensive debates and the relative concreteness and clarity of the question asked. After the failure, the influence of Eurosceptics notably decreased. There was another initiative to hold a referendum on the introduction of the euro urged in September 2013 by Rolandas Paksas, however, his initiative saw no support.

In the spring of 2015, the Eurosceptical forces of Lithuania suffered a great loss – the demise of Romualdas Ozolas, one of the most consistent Eurosceptics. Ozolas stood for the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990s; he was one of the leaders of the National movement "*Sąjūdis*" and later the founder of the Lithuanian Centre Party. Being a well-known personality, he was simultaneously

a consistent and hard Eurosceptic who openly declared that for him the EU was, in essence, unacceptable.[21] It is true that during his active years Ozolas did not occupy any important public position, while the Lithuanian Centre Party that he led saw no success in elections; therefore, his influence was very limited.

The Eurosceptical social movements in Lithuania actually "do not specialize" in exceptionally Eurosceptical topics, and have no defined objectives, strategy or agenda in this area. For example, in recent years, while conducting its activity, the "Žalgiris National Resistance Movement" has regularly presented video recordings about public discussions where various public figures participate on its website. However, only a relatively small part of them is devoted to European integration issues (until 2015, they mainly dealt with the planned introduction of the euro and, afterwards, with the adoption of refugee quotas) while the major remaining part explores other political actualities and critically assesses the activities of the government.[22] Thus, it is possible to say that the "agenda" of Eurosceptics is dictated by changes in the external environment rather than by a consistent strategy and tactics of local Eurosceptical movements.

The fact that Euroscepticism in Lithuania is not a separate political trend or ideology, but a constituent part of a broader political outlook/position is confirmed by the example of a new, public political movement "Vilnius Forum" rallied only in January 2016. The founding declaration of "Vilnius Forum," boasted by several hundred signatories, including some publicly widely-known persons, states that Lithuania is facing existential challenges such as the extinction of the nation because of the worsening demographic situation and unstoppable emigration, as well as because the threat of losing statehood, caused by growing confusion in the international arena. In the declaration, the responsibility concerning these challenges is first of all attributed to the policy of the government of Lithuania and to the "official propaganda." Though one cannot consider the "Vilnius Forum" movement as specializing in Euroscepticism, a significant part of it still "falls" on the EU, which, according to the declaration, engages in "unnatural Europeanisation," i.e. forced secularisation,

denationalisation and the abolishment of statehood[23]. It also states that the "hitherto existing integration model that has led to a deadlock should be replaced by another vision of the united Europe – the lifeless and ineffective current EU should be reconstructed into a genuinely democratic and enjoying equal rights community of free nations and sovereign states."[24]

CONCLUSIONS

This article provides an update to a seminal 2014 study of Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė on Euroscepticism in Lithuania.[25] The general conclusion is that despite certain developments since 2014, the state of Euroscepticism in Lithuania has not changed and remains "policy marginality."

The established political parties in Lithuania are definitely not populated by European federalists. Instead, as noted by Kārlis Bukovskis,[26] most politicians in small EU states are Eurorealists/ Europragmatists. It is very common that some individuals in the established parties are more pro-European and some are more Eurosceptical. For instance, the former leader of Order and Justice party Rolandas Paksas was more Eurosceptical than his party, which was a part of a pro-European ruling coalition in 2012–2016. Paksas could enjoy the "luxury" of being openly Eurosceptical just because, as the impeached former President of the State, he couldn't occupy any governmental post.

When referring to the criteria for Euroscepticism "to become a force," developed by Taggart and Szczerbiak,[27] one can state that in the case of Lithuania almost all of the criteria do not apply. Thus, in Lithuania, Euroscepticism in general is not enjoying significant levels of public support; the parties expressing Euroscepticism are permanent outsiders in competition for the sympathy of voters; and Eurosceptics managed to achieve a high public level of salience only for one specific issue – they successfully initiated a referendum on the prohibition of land sales for foreigners; however due to low turnout,

the referendum failed to produce a decision. This failure disrupted new undertakings related to other salient issues like the introduction of the euro or the refugee crisis. Finally, none of the salient EU related issues became "a dimension of competition for the parties."[28] During the recent parliamentary elections, Eurosceptical parties tried to attract the attention of voters with promises to oppose refugee quotas. However, this scheme was of no help to them and none of them made to the national parliament.

At social level, the fact that Eurosceptical attitudes are presented not by separate individuals but by a public body like the "Vilnius Forum" makes it possible to state that, in Lithuania, Euroscepticism has become institutionalised to a certain extent. However, at present, there is no reason to claim that the "Vilnius Forum" in its second year of activity would have noticeably expanded its influence or considerably increased the ranks of its supporters. At the same time, the causes of the existing state of Euroscepticism in Lithuania are worth further investigation. In fact, a systemic analysis of the content of Eurosceptical arguments is warranted that would not only provide a fuller picture but also help to understand why its ideas and thoughts do not receive broader support.

The weakness of Euroscepticism in Lithuania can be explained by different factors – history, economics and geopolitics, but in this case, a connection with the size of the state seems fairly persuasive. The fact that Euroscepticism is obviously much stronger in larger and more prosperous EU states, as testified, for example, by the latest European Parliament elections of 2014, which are considered to be the most successful for Eurosceptical political forces, is conducive to thinking along these lines. However, the most notable success of Eurosceptics was seen not in smaller but in larger EU states, first of all, in the United Kingdom and France.[29] Meanwhile, in smaller and less prosperous states (as in Lithuania's case discussed here) more votes were still cast for the traditional political parties. Perhaps, wealthy Denmark could serve as the only exception in this regard. For this reason, it seems worthwhile to supplement the existing studies of Euroscepticism with a broader application of

the "small state" theoretical perspective in the future. The typical challenges of small states, which are determined by the very size of the state, may include more acutely felt territorial and political threats, a greater dependence on foreign markets and investments, and perceived dangers to the cohesion and identity of the society.[30] As stated by Anders Wivel, "European integration project emerged as an almost ideal security organisation for the region's small states after the Cold War."[31] It seems that Euroscepticism offers very little from a small state perspective. There is no doubt that the problem of the preservation of identity for small states in the globalising world is particularly acute. However, having been familiarised with the proposals and ideas of Eurosceptics, the absence of any positive programme is conspicuous.

ENDNOTES

[1] Gediminas Vitkus, "Lithuania: A Case of Confidence in the European Project" in *The European Union in the Fog: Building Bridges between National Perspectives on the European Union*, ed. Vivien Pertusot (Institut français des relations internationales, 2016), 135–142, https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/publications-ifri/ouvrages-ifri/european-union-fog-building-bridges-between-national.

[2] Vladas Gaidys, "25 years of empirical surveys on Lithuania's membership in the European Union: 1991–2016", *Filsofija Sociologija* 27:4 (2016), 312, http://mokslozurnalai.lmaleidykla.lt/filosofijasociologija/2016/4/7327

[3] Irmina Matonytė and Vaidas Morkevičius, *Elitų Europa: tapatybių ir intersų kaleidoskopas* [Elite Europe: a kaleidoscope of identities and intersections] (Firidas, 2013).

[4] *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism, Volume I: Case Studies and Country Surveys* and *Volume II: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart (Oxford University Press, 2008).

[5] Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, "Eurosceptics in Lithuania: On the Margins of Politics?" *European Quarterly of Political Attitudes and Mentalities - EQPAM* 3:4 (2014), 1–21.

[6] Ibid., 10.

[7] Ibid., 13.

[8] Ibid., 16.

[9] Eurobarometer data.

[10] Peter Spiegel, and Hugh Carnegy, "Anti-EU parties celebrate election success," *Financial Times*, 26 May 2014, https://www.ft.com/content/783e39b4-e4af-11e3-9b2b-00144feabdc0?mhq5j=e2.

[11] Tautininkų sąjungos programa [Nationalist Union Programme], http://www.vrk.lt/tautininku-programa.

[12] Lenkų rinkimų akcijos ir Rusų aljanso koalicijos "Valdemaro Tomaševskio blokas" programa [Programme of the Coalition "Valdemar Tomaševski Bloc" of the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and Russian Alliance], http://www.vrk.lt/LLRA-programa.

[13] Partijos "Tvarka ir teisingumas" programa [Programme of the Order and Justice party], http://www.vrk.lt/TT-programa.

[14] Originally the list of the MEPs from the Baltic states participating in the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group was longer and included also Valentinas Mazuronis from Lithuania (Order and Justice party) and Iveta Grigule from Latvia (Union of the Greens and Farmers). Today both belong to the group of liberals and democrats.

[15] Darbo partija, "V. Mazuronis: Lietuva turėtų peržiūrėti jai skirtas pabėgėlių kvotas" [Labour Party, "V. Mazuronis: Lithuania should revise its refugee quotas"], 24 November 2015, http://www.darbopartija.lt/naujienos/partijos-naujienos/v.-mazuronis-lietuva-turetu-perziureti-jai-skirtas-pabegeliu-kvotas/.

[16] Ibid.

[17] The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania, "Elections to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of 9 October 2016: Voting results in the Multi-Member Constituency," http://www.vrk.lt/en/2016-seimo/rezultatai?srcUrl=/rinkimai/102/1/1304/rezultatai/lt/rezultataiDaugmVrt.html.

[18] The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, http://www3.lrs.lt/home/Konstitucija/Constitution.htm.

[19] This is an update of the data provided in Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė's study of 2014, 18.

[20] The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania, "Referendum on the Amendment of Articles 9, 47 and 147 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania: Voting results," http://www.vrk.lt/statiniai/puslapiai/2014_referendumas/output_lt/rinkimu_diena/index.html.

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[22] In 2014, eight videos of the 41 published were about the EU. In 2015, four out of 41. In 2016, five out of 60. See website of the "Žalgiris National Resistence Movement" http://suzalgiriu.lt/.

[23] Į tautos ir valstybės atsinaujinimą (Vilniaus forumo deklaracija) [Towards Renewal of Nation and State (Declaration of Vilnius Forum)], 1 September 2016, http://www.propatria.lt/2016/01/i-tautos-ir-valstybes-atsinaujinima.html.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė (2014).

[26] *Euroscepticism in Small EU Member States*, ed. Kārlis Bukovskis (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2016).

[27] Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, "The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States", *SEI Working Paper* No. 51 and *Opposing Europe Research Network Working Paper* No. 6 (2002), 33, www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/sei-working-paper-no-51.pdf.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Peter Spiegel and Hugh Carnegy (2014).

[30] Michael I. Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (Frank Cass, 1990), 48–54; Dame Eugenia Charles et al., *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability* (report by a Commonwealth Advisory Group, 1997), http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/commonwealth/economics/a-future-for-small-states_9781848596078-en#page1.

[31] Anders Wivel, "The security challenge of small EU member states: Interests, Identity and the Development of the EU as a security actor," *JMCS* 43:2 (2005), 393–412.

EMULATED EUROSCEPTICISM IN ESTONIAN POLITICS

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Analysing the manifold facets of Euroscepticism in the Baltic countries contributes to a better understanding of their role in the European Union (EU), as well as their country-specific interests at the European level. On the one hand, the influence of Eurosceptics in society affects a country's willingness to move forward with European integration. On the other hand, the EU-wide topics that face strong criticism at the national level often reflect country-specific vulnerabilities and challenges. For example, criticism towards the EU institutions could also speak about a country's own limited ability to promote its interests at the EU level, or opposition to cross-border projects could be related to a country's peripheral location or its low competitiveness in the international arena. Thus, a sufficiently profound analysis of the ideas of Eurosceptics has the potential to give the Baltic countries a better understanding of what should be improved and reformed, not only in the EU but also in their own countries.

The first section of this chapter provides a background for the analysis by describing the latest trends in attitudes in Estonia towards European integration compared to the EU and the other Baltic countries. This helps ascertain the extent of potential support for a strong Eurosceptical movement in Estonia. The second section focuses on Eurosceptical views in public debates in Estonia among the elite, i.e. policy-makers, experts, and academic persons. Particular attention is dedicated to the economic argumentation of the groups with Eurosceptical views and the background of these arguments. However, since economic aspects are often intertwined with a critique of EU institutions and decision-making processes,

over-bureaucratisation, lack of reforms, vague long-term visions and other issues, these topics will also be discussed in the second section. The third section analyses some interesting trends among the leading Eurosceptic parties in Estonia, and compares some general patterns of public opinion with the other Baltic states. Overall, the discussion could also give some hints on Estonia's role and strategic interests in the EU as far as the future of the Union is concerned.

THE LATEST TRENDS: ANY GROUND TO EXPECT THE SPREAD OF EUROSCEPTICAL VIEWS IN ESTONIA?

The latest developments in the EU such as the recent European debt crisis, the refugee crisis in the EU, the conflict in Ukraine, uncertainty related to Brexit and constant disagreements between the EU member states have seriously challenged the reputation of the Union.

Against the backdrop of the EU-average, it is somewhat intriguing that in the Baltic countries the attitude towards European integration is rather positive. According to the recent Eurobarometer surveys from 2015–2016, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians tend to trust the EU more than the EU-28 on average. The difference between the Baltic countries and the EU-average is also visible when public opinion regarding economic aspects is analysed. Public support for the European economic and monetary union and the euro is particularly high in Estonia and Latvia compared to the most of the EU countries. The Baltic countries are also in favour of the free movement of EU citizens in the European single market.

In Estonia, the long-term broad public support for EU membership is also reflected in country-specific surveys. Since 2011, the Government Office of the Republic of Estonia has ordered regular surveys to assess public support for EU membership.[1] To date, the results of the surveys have been notably positive. From 2011 on, more than three quarters of respondents have supported the country's EU membership. The peak of the support was in 2014 when 84 percent

of respondents were in support of Estonia's EU membership. In this light, it would be rather unreasonable to expect that a massive wave of Euroscepticism would sweep through Estonia in the coming years. If there exists visible active criticism, then it is connected with certain specific EU related projects (like Rail Baltica) or the ability of the Estonian government to represent societal interests at the EU level (refugee crisis).

From Estonia's perspective, the political climate in Europe has changed significantly since 2007–2008, when it was possible to witness Russia's attempts to create instability, first in Estonia in 2007 and then by provoking the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008. The conflict in Ukraine and the outcomes of the Brexit referendum, as well as the latest US presidential elections have further raised tensions for small eastern member states of the EU and NATO. Under these circumstances it would be definitely reasonable for a small country neighbouring Russia to search for additional security guarantees and not to question EU membership. However, during both the Greek debt crisis in 2012 and the recent European refugee crisis from 2015, public support for EU membership in Estonia has nevertheless showed a slight downward trend.

As indicated by the qualitative survey from 2013,[2] the decrease in support in 2012 can be explained by the fact that respondents felt that some of the EU member states were not willing to take responsibility for their actions and problems, preferring to delegate responsibility to the EU. This viewpoint concerned primarily Greece. Another explanation can be found in people's expectations that the living standard of EU member states should converge faster in the EU. Consequently, especially for low income earners, prices have risen faster than salaries in Estonia, contributing to the outmigration[3]. At the same time, the fact that the country has lost a significant proportion of its labour force to countries with a higher standard of living has contributed to the rise of pay for high income earners. Thus, despite the salaries being significantly lower compared to old member states, the drive for outward migration has yet put a pressure on local wages which are at the higher segments surpassing productivity.

The survey from 2013 also outlines the factors influencing people's attitudes towards the EU. These are internal factors (i.e. what is happening in Estonia and in the EU in general, and how well Estonia's interests are represented in the latter) and external factors (i.e. what is happening in other EU countries and how the domestic media is presenting the topics related to the EU). In this light, both the role of the local political and economic situation and the tone of the public media should not be underestimated in shaping the public attitude towards the EU and thereby spreading or silencing Eurosceptical views. The holders of Eurosceptical views are often described as "confused, narrow-minded or angry people" opposing noble European values and are therefore automatically deemed to represent Russia's interests.

EUROSCEPTICISM AMONG THE ELITE: POLICY-MAKERS AND OPINION LEADERS

When categorising the arguments of agents and groups with Eurosceptic views in Estonia, a distinction must be made between what could be labelled as "hard Euroscepticism" or "anti-Europeanism" (i.e. being against European integration and demanding a prompt exit from the EU), "soft Euroscepticism" (i.e. not fundamentally rejecting the idea of European integration, but being against integration in some policy areas which leads to an expression of opposition), "Europragmatism" (i.e. being still interested in further European integration if it serves the acclaimed national interests) and "Europopulism" (i.e. rejecting mainstream policies, based on the polarization between the national interests and the interests of the EU-elite).

With regard to the Estonian political elite, since the restoration of the country's independence in the early 1990s all Estonian governments have made efforts to preserve the image of Estonia as an open, innovative and pro-European country. The leading party in power in Estonia over the last 17 years has been the Estonian Reform Party (RE). Only in November 2016 was it replaced by the Estonian

Centre Party (KE) and become the biggest opposition party. Especially during its years in power, the RE has constantly stressed the gains and benefits of EU membership and has supported most EU initiatives. The same applies to the conservative party "Pro Patria and Res Publica Union" (IRL) and the left-leaning Social Democrats (SDE) which have previously shared power with the Reform Party and are currently forming the government with the Estonian Centre Party. With regard to the somewhat pro-Russian background of the main coalition party, the Estonian Centre Party, some opposition to EU policies and initiatives has been seen in the past and thus could theoretically be expected in future too. However, this has not materialized in the present-day practice in light of the broad public support for EU membership. Additionally, the Estonian Centre Party is interested in maintaining a pro-EU image, while simultaneously trying not to drive away its Russian-minded electorate. Nevertheless, the new coalition agreement between the KE, the IRK and the SDE includes only a few EU-related topics compared to the previous coalition between the RE, the IRL and the SDE.

At the same time, from a historical perspective, despite overall positive attitude towards the EU, some individual members of the current or previous governmental parties have still expressed relatively radical Eurosceptic views. The most colourful of the sceptics is the member of the RE, Igor Gräzin, who has shared Eurosceptic views for decades. Gräzin could be classified as one of the leading "Europopulists" in Estonia, keeping in mind the conventional meaning of Europopulists tendency to oppose national interests to the interests of the EU-elite. Together with Ivar Raig and Mart Helme, he was also one of the main opponents of EU membership in the early 2000s when Estonia clearly oriented itself towards EU accession. In the early 2000s, they formed a research centre called "*Vaba Euroopa*" [Free Europe] which has allegedly been partially financed by the British think tank Bruges Group.[4] He was also the only Member of Parliament to vote against the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.[5] Recently, Gräzin has publicly raised some thoughts of what will happen after the EU collapses, suggesting that in the future

the leading countries in Europe will be Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Finland, and questioning the balance among the current EU member states. He has also strongly criticized the economic behaviour and financial systems of the Southern European countries and stressed that Estonia has to return to the traditions of the Nordic countries, as far as economic culture is concerned. At the same time, he has also argued that a more loose public debt policy is needed in Estonia, as long as Estonia is a member of the euro zone.[6] The latter is particularly intriguing, as the rhetoric of the leaders of his "home party," the Estonian Reform Party and its official ideology, has been strongly against making debts. He is also concerned that Estonia will remain an economic periphery of the EU unless steps are taken to strengthen the country's role in Europe[7] while at the same time being openly critical of the Rail Baltica project.

It is worth mentioning at this juncture that, historically, Gräzin has not been a lone wolf in the RE in his critique towards the EU. Despite the RE having generally been a staunch supporter of Estonia's membership of the EU, in the 1990s several prominent members had earned Eurosceptic titles, including the later Prime Minister and EU Commissioner Siim Kallas and the later Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland.[8] In fact, one can describe the RE critique in the 1990s as a kind of 'soft Euroscepticism' targeting the EU's over-bureaucratisation and its support-schemes suffocating free enterprise and trade. This main line of critique of the RE party towards the EU has diminished over time. The probable reason is the rise in prominence of neoliberal ideology in the EU. Historically, one can also notice a change in the RE EU-attitudes from UK-orientation towards Germany. This change has been most clearly noticeable with the economic and debt crisis and its responses in the EU, but particularly in Germany. As this change of orientation also characterises the mainstream Estonian politics, the inner change in the RE can thus be said to be parallel to, if not having influenced, the attitudes of society. Although Kristiina Ojuland will be given a closer look in the next analytical section, it is also worth mentioning that after having been expelled from the RE in 2013 she soon established her own People's Unity Party (RÜE) and

has evolved from soft Euroscepticism to Eurooptimism (while serving as Minister) and then eventually to populist Euroscepticism, targeting mostly the EU's immigration policies.

One can also find in Estonia leftist Euroscepticism that still stresses national sovereignty, an element it shares with the more or less radical right-wing parties. Like with RE, one can see a few individual members of the currently leading coalition party, the Estonian Centre Party, having expressed some Euro-pessimistic views. For example, Jaanus Karilaid has argued that Estonia's exit from the EU could be under serious discussion in 4–5 years, assuming that the country's financial balance in the EU will change soon and the refugee crisis in Europe will deepen.[9] Oudekki Loone has stressed that the outcome of the Brexit referendum clearly shows that the EU has failed in uniting European countries and that the stickiness of the EU Commission to the financial regulations, refugee quotas and other issues could cause a domino effect in many EU member states after Brexit.[10] However, at the same time she has often publicly expressed pro-Russian opinions, which raises doubts about her motives when criticising European integration.

However, in the Estonian political landscape, the most radical opinions towards European integration are expressed by the members of the Estonian Conservative People's Party (*Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond,* EKRE), which is one of the two newest political parties represented in the Estonian parliament from March 2015 on. The leader of the party, Mart Helme, is known for his controversial statements where on the one hand, the importance of close economic and cultural ties and security cooperation in Europe is stressed, but on the other hand, a referendum on the Estonia's EU membership has been demanded for years already. This is based on the argument that the government needs a new mandate from the people as the EU has changed radically from 2004 on.[11] He has emphasized the problems related to the economic stagnation of the EU which in his opinion has its roots in the current political structure of the EU, referring to the undemocratic behaviour of the European Commission. He also argues that issues related to fiscal policy and taxation should remain

within the competence of the member states and not of the European institutions.[12]

Hereby, the authors would also like to highlight a paradoxical situation in Estonia where the Estonian pro-independence party, the EKRE, publicly and actively criticises the country's EU membership (also using several rational arguments), but the leaders of the government coalition parties tend to see further debates on the country's EU membership or on the future of the EU as irresponsible or unnecessary. Since the pro-EU forces refuse to engage in further public debates, the public mindset is vulnerable and relatively strongly influenced by the pro-independence party leaders such as Mart and Martin Helme, father and son. Although the credibility of their statements is somewhat diminished because the EKRE seems to fundamentally oppose any of the government's policies and initiatives without suggesting reasonable alternatives, their potential in creating widespread anti-EU sentiments in Estonia should not be underestimated in the future, should circumstances change.

ANALYSING THE TRENDS OF EUROSCEPTICISM IN ESTONIA: IMPORTING THE VISEGRÁD MODEL

Aside from a portion of natural scepticism and criticism, in the views and conduct of the Eurosceptic forerunners in Estonia, there appears to exist a ready-made model to draw from. Namely, the EKRE – the most outspoken radical opposition party in the parliament, and the RÜE – a small non-parliamentary upstart closely following ERKE's model, seem to have followed suit of the Visegrád countries. Not only have they publicly approved of the recent political developments in Hungary and Poland, but they have notably reapplied the agenda that brought radicals and anti-democratic parties of the mentioned Visegrád countries in power. There are several examples in which the EKRE leaders Mart and Martin Helme[13] and the RÜE leader Kristiina Ojuland[14] have shown their sympathies towards the steps taken by Viktor Orbán and Jaroslaw Kaczynski.

There are also the usual EU bashing and anti-immigrant sentiments that are frequently voiced. However, the Estonian model exhibits something of a paradox. More precisely, the strange mix of Euroscepticism shows simultaneously two contradictory vectors. If Orbán has approved of the politics of Putin and brought him as an example[15], Estonian Eurosceptics (like also prominently the Polish ones) have not been able to simply adopt that viewpoint. This is due to Estonia's dramatic past and present relationship with Russia. Such a policy position means that in terms of Russian high politics – such as Russian foreign and military policy – the EKRE and the RÜE are highly critical of Putin.[16] This is their primary card to play which includes the critique of Russia's actions towards the countries formerly occupied by the Soviet Union, both economic and military. Yet, all this does not preclude some notable nods that the RÜE especially has made towards Putin concerning the internal policies of Russia, particularly its defence of what is deemed true Christian values.[17] Or, denying the obvious and self-acclaimed affinity between Orbán and Putin, as the leader of the EKRE has done.[18]

It is also important to note another relevant feature of Estonian Euroscepticism. Despite the basic similarities in their outlook and views, as well as the models they follow, the EKRE and the RÜE have not become fierce competitors. Namely, a closer look shows that the two parties try to target different segments of the population of Estonia. While the EKRE is a pro-Estonian nationalist party claiming the ethnic Estonian primacy in Estonian politics and society, the RÜE promotes a different species of nationalism, one that appears to mimic French civic nationalism. While the RÜE may also appeal to certain ethnic Estonian segments, its primary target seems to be the Estonian Russian-speaking population. This is a high-wire act by Kristiina Ojuland. Since her party cannot prosper with only Estonian votes, due to the high competition in this right-wing conservative segment, she applies the Orbán-model with a further modification, namely appealing to the nationalist and anti-immigrant sentiments of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia. It is in this group that the anti-immigrant sentiments have been particularly strong, even

stronger than among the Estonian-speaking population.[19] It is in this context that the peculiar modification of the Visegrád model by the RÜE makes sense. The French-style non-ethnic concept of citizenship enables the nationalist umbrella to extend to Russian speakers. In order to make this happen, Ojuland has bolstered this brand of nationalism with a sort of pan-Christian ideology which gives substance to the act of inclusion.[20] As is also stated in the party programme, Christian identity includes Russian Orthodoxy, in not so much the active members of the Church but the cultural background.[21]

In a curious way, Ojuland and the RÜE thereby help to integrate the Estonian- and Russian-speaking communities, even if by using an anti-immigration platform. At the same time, whereas the EKRE has become one of the major parties in Estonia both in terms of its support and parliamentary representation gaining rates as high as 10-15 percent in opinion polls, it must be mentioned that the RÜE has not been overly successful as far as popular support is concerned, with polls by TNS Emor showing support rates between 0 and 1 percent.[22] This may in part be due to the relatively young age of the RÜE, as well as the difficulty of executing the high-wire act of balancing criticism against Putin – still a political hero for Estonian Russian speakers – with pronouncing anti-immigrant sentiments in an inclusive form.

Altogether, this brief analysis shows the appeal that the Visegrád model has to the radical parties in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It also explains why the two radical parties are not straightforward competitors. In terms of social and economic policies, both the EKRE and the RÜE are staunch supporters of right-wing economic and social policies.[23] At the same time, whereas both parties are anti-statist in terms of internal policy, they have supported rather non-liberal or radical conservative views of an anti free-trade nature.

As far as the attitude of Estonian Eurosceptics and the Europessimistic parties towards EU institutions is concerned, there is a tendency to see the latter as an obstacle to the national economies in general, and to business people's ambitions in particular. With regard to matters of economic policy, most Eurosceptics in Estonia

have followed the British suit. This goes back to the late 1990s when the most outspoken Eurosceptics like Gräzin and Raig put forward a critique that had been originally stamped by the British. What must have allured the two sceptics were the neoliberal aspects of the critique. It must be admitted, though, that the British model was already generally appealing to the mainstream parties (like IRL and the RE) and the Estonian population in general due to its right-wing character by the 2000s, both before and after EU accession. It is important to stress here that this does not only touch the more radical criticism, but also the moderate Euroscepticism similar to the positions of the UK towards the EU, and for several years served as the model for Estonian EU policy.[24] Later, the more radical strand represented by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) has been a model for EKRE's positions on EU related economic questions.

Thus, the bulk of Estonian Euroscepticism has strong and wide right-wing connotations and this is most probably the reason that the UK has served as an example. Indeed, one can easily widen this comparison and argue that it was also historically Thatcherism that inspired mainstream political ideas in Estonia before and after regaining independence. According to this model, the role of the state needs to be minimal. While this has been the foundation of nearly all Estonian politics since the restoration of independence, nowadays it also forms the core of the arguments of the radical parties. The EKRE is the biggest and most prominent example in this respect. It plays the nationalism card, as is in vogue in CEE. However, this also means that the concept of sovereignty is restricted to the nation state and is interpreted in strictly nationalist terms. According to this viewpoint, the EU retains its value as far as it is kept to the very minimal role of safeguarding free trade and does not restrict the sovereignty and independence of the member states. Against this backdrop, it is understandable why EU institutions are seen at best as the necessary evil but since the recent crisis mostly as obstacles to more beneficial economic arrangements by Eurosceptics in general, as well as the more radical ones. All of this results in a relatively simple basic attitude: Estonia needs to

keep the prerogatives of nation state while taking advantage of EU support schemes as much as possible.

At this juncture, a further ideological aspect can be stressed. While in general, the Western world has witnessed a contraction of the traditional left-right politics and the rise of the cleavage between liberals and conservatives, Estonia has been there already with its right-wing political paradigm. In a curious way, Estonia experiences a slight counter-move. If nearly throughout the post-Soviet era right-wing parties and politics have prevailed, the end of 2016 saw a change when more left-leaning parties and policies have taken the lead.

Finally, addressing popular sentiments, it is worth examining Estonia against the backdrop of the other Baltic countries. Here an interesting paradox appears. Whereas general support for the EU has been much higher in Lithuania, their support for the euro is considerably lower compared to Latvia and Estonia. The relatively stronger support for the euro in Estonia and Latvia can perhaps be explained by way of appreciating the role of the EMU and the European common currency for the two countries. The euro is and has been related to a certain strand of monetary and fiscal policy that has formed the core economic policy for the two countries. With Estonia, one can see the prominence of this policy since regaining its independence. However, it also became a sort of trophy or a prize for Estonia to glorify staying true to its minimal state model throughout its years of independence, to its persistence in keeping extremely low levels of sovereign debt and in particular its bold execution of austerity policies since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008. The latter made the Baltic states, even if somewhat controversially, success stories.[25] Estonia was a clearer case[26]. With Latvia, while it followed a more or less similar economic policy to Estonia, the crisis hit much harder and made the country to undergo the period of IMF-supervised loans and policies. The austerity policies and the possibility of joining the euro zone, therefore, became the symbol of Latvia being able to pull itself out of the debt crisis. Thus, albeit with a somewhat different background, the euro could be argued to have played a similar role in the two northern-most Baltic countries.

But there is more to it. Or, the explanation might be even simpler than the one laid down above. As Lithuania stands out in this comparison with lower support for the euro, the proximity of Lithuania to Poland may play a role. Poland has had a deliberate policy of postponing joining the euro zone if not avoiding it altogether. During the crisis, it managed significantly better than the euro zone countries on average. However, Estonia and Latvia have relatively close relations with Sweden, another prominent showcase of a non-euro country sailing through the stormy weather of the financial and debt crises with ease, showing impressive GDP growth numbers. While here the argument treads speculative grounds, it is probable that the cultural and otherwise proximity of those sample countries plays a crucial role here. In spite of the often problematic relationship that Lithuania has had with Poland, their common history, shared religious background, cultural ties, and the socioeconomic model make the example of Poland an immediate and useful one for Lithuania. This is not the case with Sweden for Latvia and Estonia. There have been historical relations and some common history, especially with Estonia, and there are economic ties represented foremost by Swedish investments in these neighbouring countries. But the ties – cultural and otherwise – are much more limited, and the socio-economic model of Sweden is perceived not only as opposed to the mainstream one in Latvia and Estonia, but actually incomprehensible in its social-democratic dimension.

Hence, if the aforementioned explanation holds, Lithuania has managed to retain a much more neutral perspective on the euro compared to its Baltic neighbours. This has enabled Lithuanians to weigh the benefits and downsides of the common currency more pragmatically. And the euro has stayed a practical matter. Whereas for the Estonians and Latvians the euro has been a symbol, part of the almost religious adherence and pride to the austerity policies and low sovereign debt position.

Ultimately, a still more trivial explanation could be put forward. Compared to Estonia and Latvia, the Russian-speaking population in Lithuania is significantly smaller. After Putin's change of policy with

Georgian and Ukrainian affairs, the local Russian-speaking population has been more strongly influenced by Kremlin propaganda. And one of the items it has brought up as a sign of the weaknesses of the EU is the euro. Therefore, it may be worth looking at the general statistics to see if the Russian-speaking minorities might have played a role here.

CONCLUSIONS

In describing the Eurosceptic views among Estonian policy-makers, entrepreneurs, trade and professional unions as well as in academic circles and public debates in Estonia, a fundamental distinction is made between hard Eurosceptics/anti-Europeans, soft Eurosceptics, Europragmatists and Europopulists.

Although public support for EU membership is strong in Estonia, some Eurosceptic views are also expressed. Most of the agents and groups with Eurosceptic views could be classified as soft Eurosceptics, including some politicians and public figures. However, from time to time Europopulist ideas combined with hard Euroscepticism have emerged too, mostly among politicians, but their overall influence in society is rather modest today. Nevertheless, as shown in the analysis above, the Orbán model has been popular among the Eurosceptic parties and could have a potential to attract followers. Local entrepreneurs, professional unions and trade unions in Estonia have remained neutral in public debates on the EU membership but focused mostly on sector-specific shortcomings. The academic community has also remained neutral, mainly discussing topics related to the division of power between small and large EU countries and their roles in the EU, the risks related to dependence on EU structural funds and the European neighbourhood policy combined with the role of the EU in guaranteeing security and stability in the region. Some EU-related topics such as the Greek bailout packages and the recent refugee crisis were intensely discussed in Estonian society. However, the debates were mostly one-sided, as no room was left for Eurosceptic views and opinions next to the government's official

positions. At the same time, a reverse situation has recently occurred in Estonia, where one of the opposition parties actively criticised the country's EU membership, but the leaders of the coalition parties tend to see further debates on this issue as irresponsible or unnecessary.

Refusing to recognize the role of Eurosceptics on European integration definitely increases the gap between the national/European elite and the hopes and opinions of ordinary Estonians. It is obvious that European integration would fail sooner or later if both the national parliaments and the European Parliament consisted only of Eurooptimists, whereas in real terms there are some ambivalent attitudes towards European integration among the pro-Europeans themselves. Thus, European integration should aspire to a process where the majority of EU citizens (and also of Estonia) understand, recognise and support it on a voluntary and rational basis. To achieve this, even the most sceptical persons need to be engaged and heard. Thus, a "positive programme" is needed where the focus is not on the statements like "we don't need Eurosceptics," but on the question of how Eurosceptics could contribute to a more sustainable European Union.

According to Bukovskis, in small EU countries "the economic and security gains prevail in political calculations and positioning on the EU's membership."[27] Estonia is a good example of this cold-headed weighing of benefits and costs of EU membership, which may be referred to as Europragmatism. Underlying such calculations is a deeply and widely felt need to be and to stay a member of the EU for the sake of security. At the same time, identity politics has made its way to the mainstream political arena in Estonia and – especially in the context of the refugee crisis but also touching other issues related to basic values – at a certain point the relatively immature nationalism characteristic of CEE may nevertheless raise its head and couple the prevailing pragmatic attitude with a tenor of emotional identity-politics.

In this context, it is also interesting to perceive the undercurrents behind the general levels of EU trust in Estonia. Comparatively, trust in the EU – and, by implication, its institutions – have tended to

outweigh trust in domestic political institutions. It might nevertheless be short-sighted to conclude that this straightforwardly signifies, or would immediately cause, the marginalisation of the domestic political system. While there are many complex issues related to this topic, at a fundamental level it tends to boil down to a question of sovereignty. In Estonia, the EU and its institutions are still felt as a necessary bulwark for national sovereignty, not vice versa. This means that national institutions cannot easily be replaced in their basic function of being *national* institutions. In this regard, if domestic political institutions deserve heavy criticism, beyond the relatively low level of trust in specific actions and the particular office holders, it presumably also signifies the high expectations towards national institutions.

It would be appropriate to conclude by evaluating the situation in Estonia by applying a test suggested by Taggart and Szczerbiak.[28] As we have argued above, public support for Euroscepticism remains relatively low in Estonia. Also, the parties expressing Euroscepticism are few, only one of them (EKRE) having reached the Parliament, showing any serious levels of support. Now, while salience for both voters and parties has stayed at similarly low levels, as the refugee crisis and its immediate aftermath has demonstrated, it is not entirely unthinkable that a significant proportion of the public in Estonia may rally around a Eurosceptic slogan. However, in order for the latter to achieve a dominant position, it would also require that the once soft Eurosceptic RE follows the suit of the EKRE. Even if there are smaller EU-related problems causing public criticism (like air and rail connections), in order for Euroscepticism to become truly salient for the Estonian Centre Party, it would need some identity related, or existential issues (such as e.g. heavy outmigration) to arise anew and be directly associated with the fundamental construction of the EU. While this development cannot be ruled out, the authors are of an opinion that salience as a dimension of competition for the parties would presumably not be fulfilled as long as the EU is seen as one of the main guarantors of Estonia's independence.

ENDNOTES

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A CASE OF EUROSCEPTICISM: RUSSIAN SPEAKERS IN LATVIAN AND ESTONIAN POLITICS

Solvita Denisa-Liepniece

The main language of Euroscepticism in Latvia and Estonia is Russian. In general, people who use the Russian language in their family tend to see the membership of their country in the EU in a more pessimistic light than those who speak in native language – be it Latvian or Estonian. Additionally, Russian-language respondents from Latvia show an anti-European attitude in greater numbers than the Russian-speaking respondents from Estonia. Moreover, the response of "hard to say" is also more widespread among the Russian-speaking respondents than among the natives, suggesting a certain state of confusion among the Russian speakers.

Is this lack of enthusiasm about the EU the result of everyday economic, political and social challenges faced by Russian speakers (*the window*)? Or, is this just a demonstration of the hidden "hearts and minds" won by the Kremlin's anti-Western propaganda (*the screens*)?[1] It is useful to take a deeper look into the windows (facts from the statistics) and into some Kremlin screens (interpretations and redefinitions of facts and events). It is no secret that today Russian state media and Kremlin related media depict the Baltic countries with narratives of a "failed state" and "rotten Europe." These narratives are transmitted via both hard and soft media content, and Latvia, according to these narratives, is losing from cooperation with the West: the only possibility to change things for the better is to cooperate with Russia, that is, to come back to their "real home," where, in contrast to a bad life in Europe, the life is more promising.

This article looks at how the objective facts from everyday experiences are twisted by the Kremlin's propaganda, and how that translates into sustained opposition to the EU among Russian-speaking people in Latvia, and also in Estonia. What makes Russian people so easily susceptible to Kremlin propaganda narratives and conspiracy theories? Who are the main channels of transmission of propaganda content? What sort of countermeasures are taken by local and EU authorities and how effective are these countermeasures? This article will seek to answer these relevant questions.

PUBLIC OPINION OF TITULAR AND NON-TITULAR PEOPLE

In November 2005, just one year after Latvia joined the EU, 35.9 percent of non-Latvian respondents said that Latvia's membership in the EU was a bad thing, and only 24.6 percent replied that it was a good thing. In contrast, 36.6 percent of Latvian respondents said that the membership was a good thing, and 22.9 percent said it was a bad thing.[2]

Latvia and Estonia's ten year anniversary as members of the EU coincided with the rapprochement of the EU and Ukraine (the end of 2013), the annexation of Crimea (March 2014), the elections of the European Parliament (May 2014), and the battle of sanctions and counter-sanctions connected to Russia (August 2014). A powerful anti-EU campaign was on the agenda of Russian state TV channels and Kremlin-related platforms in Latvia. Latvia's presidency of the EU Council of Ministers (January-June 2015) also occurred within the period of Russia's active confrontation with the EU.

The data collected by the SKDS demonstrate respondents' substantial changes in attitude towards EU membership in this short but critical period of time (mid 2013 to late 2015). The level of positive evaluation among Latvian non-citizens – the permanent inhabitants of Latvia who have neither Latvian nor another country's citizenship – was continuously dropping until the second half of 2015. The

highest point of support – between February and June of 2014 – was reached during the time of the intensive pre-election campaign in Latvia; the lowest point was reached in July 2015 (see Table 1). On the pessimistic side (see Table 2), the critical point was in February 2014: at that time, four in ten or 40 percent of non-citizen respondents said that the EU was a bad thing. The lowest level of criticism among the Russian speakers was in July 2015; among the non-citizens, it was in November 2014.

The data show that after ten years in the EU, in 2015, when asked the same question, only 19.0 percent of the Russian respondents shared the same view and 24.1 percent evaluated the membership of in the EU as a bad thing. Among Latvians, as it can be seen from Tables 1 and 2, 37.2 percent said that the EU membership was a good thing and 14.2 replied that it was a bad thing. A comparison between the surveys in 2005 and 2015 points to a diminishing resistance from the non-Latvians against the EU, though this has not translated into a substantial increase in support for the EU among the non-Latvians – it seems that most of those who have given up their opposition have preferred to move to the grey zone of the undetermined "hard-to-say" category.

Table 1. The share of respondents believing that the membership of Latvia in the EU is a GOOD thing

	LV citizens	LV non-citizens	Latvian language	Russian language
August, 2013	29.6%	16.9%	30.9%	22.4%
February, 2014	33.7%	18.3%	34.3%	26.3%
June, 2014	38.5%	18.2%	44.1%	22.8%
November, 2014	44.8%	16.2%	50.6%	26.2%
January, 2015	44.0%	16.0%	51.5%	24.4%
July, 2015	38.5%	12.2%	42.1%	22.1%
October, 2015	31.9%	13.0%	37.2%	19.0%

Source: SKDS survey, http://www.es2015.lv/lv/prezidenturas-istenosana/sabiedriska-doma

Table 2. The share of respondents believing that the membership of Latvia in the EU is a BAD thing

	LV citizens	LV non-citizens	Latvian language	Russian language
August, 2013	20.70%	28.00%	20.30%	24.00%
February, 2014	16.90%	40.60%	16.80%	27.20%
June, 2014	15.40%	24.60%	12.20%	23.20%
November, 2014	11.30%	19.90%	8.20%	19.10%
January, 2015	12.50%	24.00%	7.50%	23.40%
July, 2015	9.60%	23.50%	8.60%	16.60%
October, 2015	17.60%	24.60%	14.20%	24.10%

Source: SKDS survey, http://www.es2015.lv/lv/prezidenturas-istenosana/sabiedriska-doma

It is reasonable to believe that the ample anti-EU attitude among non-citizens is not so much linked with unfulfilled expectations from the EU as with dissatisfaction with their status in the country, a lack of knowledge of Latvian (considered to be an obstacle for obtaining citizenship), and strong ideological, cultural and linguistic links with Russia (and the associated benefits of being a non-citizen, e.g. visa-free travel to Russia). This dissatisfaction makes local Russians vulnerable to populist style rhetoric appealing to desirable solutions without focusing on the practical side of implementation.

As shown by the SKDS opinion poll from May 2017, in Estonia, Russian-speaking respondents tended to agree more than to disagree (44 to 37 percent) with the claim that "*Estonian membership in the European Union encourages social cohesion and integration of national minorities in Estonia*." In Latvia, the situation is opposite – the majority of Russian speakers disagreed with this claim (54 to 24 percent). At the same time, the share of "hard-to-say" was relatively high in both countries – 22 percent of the Russian-speaking respondents in Latvia and 19 percent of the Russian-speaking respondents in Estonia. (Full results of the SKDS opinion poll from May 2017 in Annex.)

COMMUNICATING THE "FAILING" STATE AND "FAILING" EUROPE

Russia had been working hard to create the narrative of a "failed state" in Latvia and Estonia long before Latvia and Estonia joined the EU.[3] One of the key elements in this narrative is extensive emigration from Latvia and Estonia, caused by poverty and suffering due to bad relations with Russia (including sanctions and diversification of the energy supply away from Russia) and the historic nostalgia of not being part of the USSR anymore (alleging that the Baltic states have turned from the showcase of the USSR to the backyard of the EU with destroyed production and agriculture sectors).

The latest, and still ongoing, wave of anti-EU propaganda started with the launch of the European Eastern Partnership programme intended to build closer economic and political associations with the states of the former USSR in the proximity of the EU.[4] Although Russia itself is suffering from different problems, including financial crises, falling revenues from low oil prices and the reorientation of funding to military actions and sanctions,[5] in the Kremlin's media agenda,[6] the EU is suffering the most, and Eastern Europe is portrayed as the main loser of the EU's bad relations with Russia. The image of a putrefying Europe caused by the EU has been created from both outside and inside.[7]

As a result, audiences are confused in their perception of the actual state of affairs, in particular, Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia. As shown by the 2017 SKDS opinion poll, for Estonian Russian-speakers, the statement "*Joining the European Union contributed to the economic downturn in Latvia/Estonia*" was one of the hardest to agree or disagree with – 28 percent took the opportunity not to give a direct answer, while confirmative replies were given by 39 percent of the Russian speakers (among the native Estonians support stood at 21 percent). In Latvia, half of the non-Latvian respondents put the blame on the EU for the economic downturn (completely or tend to agree – 51 percent) and another 18 percent returned no specific

answer to these questions. Additionally, the same difficulty in providing a meaningful answer was noticed regarding the other issues included in the opinion poll among the Russian speakers.

Was it "the window" or "the screens" or the mix of images that influenced the responses of Russian-speaking audiences in Latvia and Estonia? In truth, both countries are far from being among the leaders in growth and well-being among EU countries. Some images from "the window" in Latvia are collected in the recently published report written by the European Commission. Here, among other things, findings include a high proportion of people living at risk of poverty or social exclusion, a drop in investment with a negative influence on economic growth and problems with the implementation of EU funds. It was also reported that the growth of GDP in 2016 was sluggish – only 1.6 percent, and that each fifth worker was on a minimum wage. A similar report on Estonia was more positive, although it listed a number of structural shortcomings in this country too.[8] Along with the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also made public its views on the Baltic countries' development in June 2017. According to IMF, Latvia has still not recovered from the crisis, as investments are far from the pre-crisis level; as a result, there is a continuing gap between Latvia and the so called "old Europe" or the "EU-15."[9] Such a critical assessment of the economic situation in the Baltic countries by the European Commission and the IMF are actively used in the media space by pro-Kremlin agents like Russia Today or *RIA Novosti*.

TIMIDITY IN EXPOSING RUSSIA'S PROPAGANDA AND BUILDING THE CASE IN LATVIA FOR EUROPE

A study on media preferences of the Russian-speaking audience shows that the majority of Russian speakers consume information in Russian, making the Kremlin narratives so influential.[10] The most popular TV channels among the Latvian and Estonian Russians are from Kremlin related broadcasters. According to open access data of

Kantar TNS and Kantar Emor, almost no one watches the publicly funded programmes in Russian in Estonia and Latvia. Instead, younger Russian audience, for example, increasingly relies on social media and online services as their main source of information. According to alexa.com, there is a flow of traffic from Latvia and Estonia to Kremlin-related social media (*VKontakte*, *Odnoklassniki*), as well as traffic to Russian internet search platforms and e-mailing systems.

In Latvia, the domestic processes are covered by the national "screens" (including public broadcasters), mainly paying attention to conflicts and problems at both the national and EU level. Traditionally, less attention is paid at clarifying the EU events and gains from it. The Latvian Television news correspondent in Brussels (the European reporter) rarely reports in Russian for the Russian language programmes on LTV7, the Latvian Television channel. In fact, none of the Russian-speaking journalists has a profile of working on EU issues on LTV7, and there is no support from the European Commission for the development of Russian-language content about the EU. The positive agenda created by the EU's public relations specialists is mainly rejected by the news rooms' gatekeepers, and the best chance to get through to audiences is for sponsored content (i.e. special programmes). At the same time LR4, public radio broadcaster working in Russian, is relatively more popular. The news service of *Latvijas Radio* [Latvia's Radio] has two correspondents in Brussels and Strasbourg – Ina Strazdiņa and Artjoms Konohovs, and only Konohovs produces content in both languages, in Latvian and in Russian, for the needs of LR4 (around three stories a week), and from time-to-time in LTV7 and *rus.LSM.lv*, the public broadcaster's news portal.

Russian-content editors and producers are aware of the lack of analytical content about the EU in their media. Therefore, Marina Kovalova, the producer of LR4 news service, and Aleksandrs Krasnitskis, the editor-in-chief of *rus.LSM.lv*,[11] are convinced that getting the right staff is not the problem, as there is enough professional staff in Latvia and in the EU headquarters, but rather there is a lack of financial resources.[12] With more money, they believe,

it would be possible to produce more localised content around the EU agenda and to connect both sides of the EU – the top and the bottom – by observing the premise "*Real people talk to real people about real people*".[13]

Yet, some positive tendencies can be identified too. First, in the light of Brexit, the growing popularity of right-wing populism across Europe and alleged Russian intervention in the US elections, the Kremlin's toolkit and "the dark network" have come into the focus of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (StratCom) all over the world. A special approach has been implemented in the Baltic states and in the so called Russian neighbourhood.[14] Second, the appearance of the EU financed European news in Russian on the most popular TV channel *Perviy Baltiyskiy Kanal* [The First Baltic Channel] in Estonia[15] and Latvia.[16] The programme was scheduled in a prime-time slot after the Kremlin's main domestic tool of propaganda "*Vremya*" [The Time] and after the local news programmes "*Latviyskoe/Estonskoe vremya*"[17] [Latvian/Estonian Time]. However, this EU financed audiovisual project was made for the Baltic states by the Baltic Media Alliance with the aim of increasing the European dimension. However, fulfilling this aim can be questioned, as this project discords with stories about the forthcoming imminent "European disaster" so much popularised, for example, on the talk show "*Vremya pokazhet*" [The Time Will Show].[18] On this channel, the "Failed Europe" narrative is pressed forward in both hard (news) and soft (entertaining shows) content, including humour shows.[19]

Media related to the Kremlin do not even need to obtain any original information from EU management to create their stories. It is enough to get slightly changed or even completely fake-news about Latvia and the EU. For example, the article "*V Latvii stanet esche huzhe, pravitelstvo vseh obmanulo*"[20] [In Latvia it will get worse, the government has us let down] in the Russian version of the popular Latvian internet journal focus.lv is a reprint of an article from *freecity.lv* by Juris Paiders, a local journalist with radical Eurosceptic views.[21] The article got around 400 likes and 361 shares. On Facebook, the

Russian version of focus.lv is followed by 27,509 users,[22] the number of followers of the Latvian version is even higher – 33,551 followers.[23] For comparison, the joint news website of the major public Latvian broadcasters www.lsm.lv has only 12,000 followers on Facebook.

Are there other pro-European voices? The popularity of EU related social media accounts is relatively low in Latvia. The Facebook page of the European Parliament in Latvia is followed by 5,632 people; "*Eiropas māja*" [The House of Europe] has 3,366 followers. Less than a thousand are following the official page of *Eiropas Kustība Latvijā* [The European Movement in Latvia]. All the content here is in Latvian, and it is hard to assess how large the Russian-speaking audience of these pages is.

THE RUSSIAN ADVOCACY IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

It can be argued that the main EU-related opinion leaders for the Russian-speaking audience in Latvia and Estonia are current MEPs representing the political parties of the Russian flank. In the case of Latvia, these are former journalist Andrejs Mamikins (from party "Harmony") and long time politician Tatjana Ždanoka (from the Union of Latvia's Russians), in Estonia – Jana Toom (from Estonian Centre Party). All three Russian-speaking MEPs from Latvia and Estonia, despite their political group affiliations, have been vocal on the unconditional allocation of citizenship to non-citizens.

Through paid content (by the European Parliament) these MEPs communicate their point of view on the processes in Europe in the local Russian media. The three are also frequent guests on Russian TV-shows, where they "represent" Europe. Ždanoka's pro-Kremlin activities and ties are well documented by investigative journalists[24] and researchers.[25]At the same time, Mamikins and Toom should be regarded as web-opinion leaders – they publish and share information on Facebook, the most popular social network in the Baltic states. Among Mamikins' suggested news resources are not only his own interviews on

Kremlin's platforms but also sites that are earmarked by both Estonian and Latvia's Security Service Reports as spreading propaganda in the interests of Kremlin, like *baltnews.lv* and *baltnews.ee*.[26]

The previously mentioned Jana Toom is the most popular EU-related Russian-speaking Estonian politician. Like Mamikins from Latvia, she is active both in local social media and in Kremlin related media. Her popularity on Facebook, with around 7,000 followers, is a match to Mamikins', which is close to 8,000. By scrolling through her news feed, it is possible to find links to articles about a failed Estonia from such sources as nihilist.fm (in this article a metaphor of *shizofreniya* [schizophrenia] is used in connection to the governing elite of Estonia). In her feed, one can also find links to the notorious channel "Russia Today" (for example, a translation by RT of the *Deutsche Welle* news-story about Estonia).

BRUSSELS BOSSES VS. THE COMMON PEOPLE

The SKDS opinion poll from May 2017 reveals some other important tendencies in Latvia and Estonia among Russian-speaking populations (see Annex). Most strikingly, there was a very high level of support for the claim that the "*Management of the European Union does not care about the feelings of Estonian/Latvian people*" among the Russian-speaking respondents (77 in Latvia and 53 percent in Estonia). However, if "hard-to-say" replies are taken into account (10 and 23 percent respectively), the distance between the numbers of Latvia's and Estonia's Eurosceptical Russians largely disappears. Another statement demonstrating a "hard-to-say" or possibly purposefully hidden attitude towards the EU by the Russian-speaking people in both Latvia and Estonia can be seen in relation to the claim about the hypothetical future of the EU – "*The European Union will soon collapse*". 27 percent of Russians in Latvia and 25 percent of Russians in Estonia had difficulty agreeing or disagreeing. Latvian and Estonian speakers in both countries, on the contrary, did not see any risk of the EU collapsing soon.

The pessimistic narrative of the hypothetical future of the EU, as well as of the fall of the Western world/civilisation, is well known for those who deal with Kremlin propaganda.[27] There are a large number of subordinate issues involved, like the attempt to redefine Western values, including human rights (as purification from Western depravity), freedom of speech (as propaganda about countering propaganda), democracy (as right on idiosyncratic national democracy), the model of Western economy (Brexit as another piece of evidence of Western failure and Russia's correctness in building relations with countries such as India or China), history (as reminder about the colonial past of the Western empires and the role of the West in the WWII); and on the top of that even conspiracy theories undermining the trust of leaders of the Western World (anti-elite approach, which lines up with the above-mentioned negative attitude towards the management of the EU).

In fact, according to Ilya Yablokov, these so called conspiracy theories are "*a populist tool of power relations which helps relocate legitimacy and power among different political actors*" and are widely used in Russia's public diplomacy.[28] Eliot Borenstein attributes the popularity of conspiracy theories in post-Soviet countries to the manner of communication in the pre-collapse Soviet time of *Glasnostj* [Transparency]: "*The paucity of reliable information, and the nakedly partisan nature in which information was presented, not only facilitated scepticism about official pronouncements, but also left a knowledge vacuum easily filled by speculation and rumour (far from hard currency, but it was all that people had).*"[29]

One of these theories, which is circulated on media platforms that are both officially and unofficially related to the Kremlin is the so called "Golden Billion". In short, this theory states that the richest part of the world, in search for natural resources, will destroy the poor nations who still have their lands in good natural shape. This is a prime-time story on the *Perviy Kanal* [The First Channel] in Russia and can also be seen in Russian-language media in Latvia.[30] A sub-narrative for the golden billion is that the leaders of Anglo-Saxon civilisation are conspiring to form the new axis of evil (from Russia's perspective, of course).[31]

GRAVITY: THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES VS. THE EU

As noted in this article, the Russian-speaking respondents in both Latvia and Estonia are inclined to give the "hard-to-say" answer to questions more frequently than the national-language speakers. In fact, the most difficult question to answer for the Russian-speaking respondents in both Latvia and Estonia was related to the claim that "*Latvia as a country would do better at the moment if it belonged to CIS, not the European Union*": 33 percent of Russian-speaking respondents from Estonia and 30 percent from Latvia said that it was hard to say. At the same time, the majority of non-Latvians (23 percent completely disagreed and 16 percent tended to disagree) and non-Estonians (22 percent completely disagreed and 26 percent tended to disagree) answered in more EU supportive way.

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has been absent from the Kremlin related media agenda for some time, but now it is back with the focus on two dimensions – the economy and security.[32] Kremlin media shows that the president of Russia, Putin, is the chairman in the CIS: there are reports of his meetings with other CIS leaders, of his official visits, and of his plans to strengthen the CIS.[33] At the same time, deeper running processes such as the disintegration of the CIS Asian flange[34] and the grim state of living standards in the region are left off of the Kremlin's screens. Traditionally the CIS is associated with the rebirth of the USSR, a sense of nostalgia, and the right of Russia to be a natural leader in the region. In other words, Russia is the core state of the CIS, and all its elements are to be in line with Russia's national interests. So, no surprise, the CIS gets good coverage on the Kremlin's screens. It is worth noting that media freedom rankings show an even more depressed situation in some CIS countries than in Russia itself.[35]

What is the image of the CIS in the Latvian and Estonian non-Kremlin related media working in the Russian language? Surprisingly, it is not much different from the Kremlin related media. There is a lack of a correspondent network in these countries and a lack of cooperation

with local journalists working in Russian. As a result, the local Russian-language media in Latvia (for example vesti.lv) are using news mostly selected from Kremlin media platforms (like *RIA Novosti*, *RT*, *Inosmi*).[36] As Russian news agencies are working intensively in the CIS region, especially the Asian part, including *Rossiya Segodnya* [Russia Today] media branch, the Kremlin agenda is entering Latvia's information space through "journalists' filters" by slightly changing articles and news stories, like putting a new title, a bit cleaning, labelling and adding new visualisations.[37] Travelling to the region and getting first-hand information is not a priority for Latvia's newsrooms, and single stories appear mainly when journalists travel to the Asian part of the CIS as part of official delegations (e.g. within presidential visits).[38]

THE CLASH OF NARRATIVES AND COMPETING EXERCISES OF MEDIA LITERACY

The EU's recently established East StratCom Task Force[39] has narrowed its approach to exclusively countering the false narratives created by Russia. Countering misleading information is certainly a step in the right direction. Yet, it is not clear how this can find its way to the Russian-speaking audience who still trusts the TV in general, and the Russian state channels in particular.[40] The Kremlin maintains a leading role here, and the Western "Sherlocks" have already at times caught manufactured images.

The BBC and *Deutsche Welle* in Russian are providing an alternative for covering European events. However, the creation of a proactive agenda about the EU is still lagging behind, as "copy-paste" journalism will continue to dominate over analytical journalism about Europe. EU institutions are making attempts to have more active communication in Russian. For instance, EU representatives have been participating in Russian TV shows. And with the growth of Russian-language "from inside" EU content (European public broadcasters working in Russian), there will be a growing need for expertise in the Russian language, especially for audiovisual content.

Media literacy is often mentioned as the necessary response to disinformation, fake news or post-trust communication. Western donors (e.g. British Council or the Embassy of Germany in Latvia) usually come to the Baltic states calling for strengthened resilience in both the short and long term, focusing on two main directions – working with the general public and journalists. In reality, however, few media literacy projects[41] have been implemented in Russian for any Russian-speaking audience in Latvia, including the Russian-speaking journalists.[42] Few journalists from Russian-language media attend special English language courses and courses on strengthening investigative journalism.

In parallel, the Kremlin media are working on their own media literacy campaign by redefining the notion of high-quality journalism, changing the culture of debating and setting up pseudo-pluralism. Journalists related to the Kremlin media see Russian pupils in Latvia and tell them stories about "real journalism." At the same time, representatives of the Russian-speaking media of Latvia that is unrelated to the state are frequenting special events organised by the Embassy of Russia in Latvia which include giving special awards to the "best" journalists.

CONCLUSIONS

The metaphor of "the window" in part explains the prevailing critical attitude towards the EU among the local Russian population in Latvia and Estonia: outmigration and loss of "brains and hands" are making economies weak and the main reason for this is Latvia's and Estonia's membership in the EU. At the same time, "the screens" are to be blamed too. People still have a lack of information about the processes taking place in the EU: too few Baltic representatives are working in the EU institutions and too few European agencies are operating in the Baltic region. Only a small number of people from EU institutions are potential experts on EU issues and would be prepared to provide their views to the local media in Latvian or in Russian. Just a few

members of the European Parliament talk in Russian and, those who do, do it mainly on Kremlin-related channels where they address the Russian-speaking audience from Kremlin-related "screens."

Despite all of the "windows" and "screens," the opinion leaders and the messages spread, there are even more complex issues at stake, which are left for future studies. These include:

1) The Russian-speaking audience finds it difficult to provide direct answers to questions with a geopolitical inclination. At least, compared to natives, the difference is noticeable. Certainly, in part, it is linked to anxiety about the future; however, psychological uneasiness or even the fear of openly expressing the "wrong or disloyal" opinion cannot be excluded, especially if this involves recognition of past delusions. Alternatively, a profound confusion about the real state of affairs under the "crossfire" of information cannot be dismissed too;
2) While European institutions are supporting delivering hard (i.e. news) content to Russian speakers, they do not have access to the targeted audience, because the latter prefers entertainment over news. Instead, the Russian audience, through their preference for entertainment, is already getting anti-EU narratives in humour-based Russian media content;
3) Given the growing popularity of Russian social media (e.g. *VKontakte* and *Odnoklassniki*) among Latvian and Estonian Russian people, studying the perception of the EU using active users of these social media platforms would be useful;
4) Social media provide users with access to the first source information, without the mediation of journalists. Unfortunately, the accounts of EU related organisations seem to be not very appealing to social media users, as witnessed by the absence of their content from the timelines of social media users. To improve the situation, a better-targeted approach towards the chosen audience needs to be applied, and a generational split or changes in social media use by all age groups need to be taken into account.

ANNEX

The attitude of the Latvian and Russian-speaking population towards the EU in Latvia and Estonia, May 2017, percents

			Completely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Completely disagree	Hard to say/ NA
Membership in the EU should be supported	LV	Latvian	36	41	11	4	8
		Russian	15	39	28	10	9
	EE	Estonian	48	39	6	4	4
		Russian	23	42	14	5	15
In general the EU is a good thing	LV	Latvian	33	44	12	4	8
		Russian	13	41	26	9	9
	EE	Estonian	39	43	8	4	6
		Russian	19	47	14	7	13
Membership in the EU encourages social cohesion and integration of national minorities	LV	Latvian	9	31	31	12	17
		Russian	3	21	32	22	22
	EE	Estonian	20	34	22	11	13
		Russian	11	33	22	15	19
Joining the EU was the only possibility to resist the impact of Russia	LV	Latvian	19	30	23	11	17
		Russian	3	11	28	36	22
	EE	Estonian	28	40	15	9	8
		Russian	6	12	25	31	25
My country as an independent national country cannot exist	LV	Latvian	12	23	27	25	13
		Russian	16	22	28	18	17
	EE	Estonian	14	19	30	31	7
		Russian	12	21	23	31	13
My country would do better at the moment if it belonged to CIS, not the EU	LV	Latvian	2	7	24	48	19
		Russian	11	20	23	16	30
	EE	Estonian	2	4	14	64	15
		Russian	8	13	22	24	33
From the participation in the European Union benefits only a small group of people	LV	Latvian	20	30	27	12	11
		Russian	30	36	18	4	11
	EE	Estonian	9	20	27	30	14
		Russian	18	31	17	9	24
Management of the EU does not care how our people feel	LV	Latvian	27	37	20	4	12
		Russian	41	36	11	3	10
	EE	Estonian	15	25	29	17	13
		Russian	22	31	15	9	23

The EU will soon collapse	LV	Latvian	8	21	32	14	24
		Russian	13	28	24	7	27
	EE	Estonian	6	18	32	24	19
		Russian	10	22	24	18	25
Joining the EU contributed to the economic downturn in my country	LV	Latvian	9	22	31	17	20
		Russian	22	29	23	8	18
	EE	Estonian	7	14	25	36	18
		Russian	17	22	19	14	28

Source: SKDS opinion poll of May 2017, more details in Chapter "Euroscepticism and the Russian Speaking Population of Latvia and Estonia" in this volume.

ENDNOTES

[1] The metaphor of the "window" describes the reality as it is perceived subjectively by a person using his or her own sensory and mental interpretation capacities. The "screen", on the other hand, stands for an imagined, artificially constructed reality with the aim either to entertain or, as in the Russia's case, to manipulate people's perception.

[2] SKDS, "Attieksme pret dalību Eiropas Savienībā: Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja" [Attitude towards the EU: a survey of Latvian inhabitants], November 2005.

[3] *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*, ed. Nils Muižnieks, (University of Latvia Academic Press, 2008).

[4] E.g. „Kto Bolshe vseh poteryal ot antirossiyiskikh sanskciyi" [Who lost at most from anti-Russian sanctions?] *Sputniknewslv.com*, 1 July 2017, https://ru.sputniknewslv.com/infographics/20170701/5206469/samye-bolshie-poteri-sankcii-v-otnoshenii-rossii-kontrmery-germanija.html, or, „Pribaltika, nakonec, vimolila sebe ekonomicheskuyu blokadu ot Rossii" [Pribaltica finally got the economic blockade from Russia], *Regnum*, 28 May 2017, https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2280737.html?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=lentainform&utm_campaign=regnum.ru&utm_term=1254255s8421&utm_content=5418483.

[5] Tatia Dolidze, "EU Sanctions Policy towards Russia: The Sanctioner-Sanctionee's Game of Thrones," *CEPS Working Document* No. 402, January 2015.

[6] Anastasiya Kazun, "Framing Sanctions in the Russian Media: The Rally Effect and Putin's Enduring Popularity," *Democratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 3/24 (2016), 327–350.

[7] By examining "similarities" of the leaders of France, Germany and the UK for becoming popular right-wing populists, a group of the Atlantic Council researchers named some of them Kremlin's "Troyan Horses" and uncovered their relations with the multilevel network that includes media. For more details, see Alina Polyakova et al., *The Kremlin's Trojan horses. Russian influence in France, Germany and the United Kingdom* (Atlantic Council, 2016). Or see also Susi Dennison and Dina Paradijs, *The world according to Europe's insurgent parties: Putin, migration and people power* (European Council of Foreign Relations, 2016), http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_world_according_to_europes_insurgent_parties7055, and Peter Burnell, "International Political

Party Support by "Bad Guys"," *Centre for the Study of Globalization and Regionalisation Working Papers* No. 283/17 (2016).

[8] European Commission, "Country Report Latvia," Commission Staff Working Document SWD (2017) 79 final, June 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-latvia-en.pdf.

[9] IMF, "Republic of Latvia: Selected Issues," Country Report No. 17/195, 7 July 2017, https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2017/07/07/Republic-of-Latvia-Selected-Issues-45051.

[10] According to a survey by *Latvijas Fakti* made for the Ministry of Culture about media consumption among the Latvian inhabitants, the most trusted media among the Russian-speaking respondents are *Delfi*, *Perviy Baltiyskiy Kanal* and *RTR*. See *Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratība* [Media literacy of Latvia's inhabitants] (Latvijas Fakti, 2017), 17, https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/mediju_politika/petijumi/Medijpratiba_petijuma%20rezultati_Latvijas%20Fakti_18_07_2017.pdf.

[11] Personal phone interview with the editor-in-chief of rus.LSM.lv Aleksandrs Krasnitskiys, 3 June 2016.

[12] Personal phone interview with the representative of LR 4 Marina Kovalova, 3 June 2016.

[13] Personal phone interview with the editor-in-chief of rus.LSM.lv Aleksandrs Krasnitskiys, 3 June 2016.

[14] Orysia Lursevych, *Agents of the Russian Worlds: Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood* (Chatham House, 2016).

[15] Share in May 2017 – 5.5 percent according to emor.ee.

[16] Share in May 2017 – 7.9 percent according to tns.lv.

[17] "*Eurologiya: Baltiyskiyi put* " [Eurology: the Baltic way] is a European Commission financed project done in cooperation with the Baltic Media Alliance. It started in January 2017 in all three Baltic countries. Previously there was a project "*Evrosreda*".

[18] For example "Vremya pokazhet" [The time will show], TV show of 20 April 2017, http://www.1tv.ru/shows/vremya-pokazhet/vypuski/mir-segodnya-i-zavtra-vremya-pokazhet-vypusk-ot-20-04-2017, and of 21 June 2017, http://www.1tv.ru/shows/vremya-pokazhet/vypuski/sankcii-komu-vygodno-vremya-pokazhet-vypusk-ot-21-06-2017.

[19] For more details see *StatCom Laughts* (NATO Stratcom COE, 2016), www.stratcomcoe.org/download/file/fid/7890.

[20] "В Латвии станет еще хуже: правительство всех обмануло" [It will get even worse in Latvia: the government has let us down], ukradeno.focus.lv, 2 July 2017, *http://ukradeno.focus.lv/news/v-latvii-stanet-eshe-huzhe-praviteljstvo-vseh-obmanulo?14142.*

[21] Aldis Austers, "The Case of Latvia: Popular Euroscepticism in Impasse," in *Euroscepticism in Small EU Member States*, ed. Kārlis Bukovskis (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2016).

[22] Data of 3 July 2017.

[23] Data of 3 July 2017.

[24] For example, see Sanita Jemberga et al. "Kremlin's Millions," *Re-baltica*, 15 August 2015, https://en.rebaltica.lv/2015/08/kremlins-millions/.

[25] Aleksandta Kuczyńska-Zonik, "Antidiplomacy of Russia's Policy Regarding Russian-Speakers in the Baltic States," *Baltic Journal of Political Science* 5 (2016), 98–104, Douglas Schoen, *Putin's Master Plan: To Destroy Europe, Divide NATO, and Restore Russian power and Global influence (*Encounter Books, 2016).

[26] The last report from the Estonian Security Service, *International Security and Estonia. 2017* (Estonian Information Board, 31 December 2016), https://www.teabeamet.ee/

pdf/EIB_public_report_Feb_2017.pdf, and the Latvian counterpart's report *Publiskais pārskats par Drošības policijas darbību 2016. gadā* [Public report on activities of Security Police in 2016] (Security Police of Latvia, April 2017), http://www.dp.gov.lv/lv/noderigi/gada-parskati/.

[27] *Redefining Euro-Atlantic Values* (NATO StratCom COE, 2014), www.stratcomcoe.org/download/file/fid/7350.

[28] Ilya Yablokov, "Conspiracy Theories as a Russian Public Diplomacy Tool: The Case of Russia Today (RT)," *Politics* V. 35 (3–4) (2015), 301–315.

[29] Eliot Bernstein, "Why conspiracy theories take hold in Russia," *Hufftington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eliot-borenstein/why-conspiracy-theories_b_5626149.html.

[30] "ES stanovitsya ugrozoiyi dlya latisheyi" [The EU is becoming a threat to Latvians], *Telegraf.lv*, 7 July 2017, www.telegraf.lv%2Fnews%2Fes-stanovitsya-ugrozoi-dlya-latyshei&usg=AFQjCNEob05uExIQ8i_acDKByOC6p1BdOw&cad=rja.

[31] "Vremya pokazhet" [The time will show], TV show of 9 July 2015, http://www.1tv.ru/shows/vremya-pokazhet/vypuski/vremya-pokazhet-vypusk-ot-09-07-2015.

[32] For example "O sotrudnichistve v borbe s mirovim terrorizmom govorili Vladimir Putin s glavami razvedok stran SNG" [Vladimir Putin discussed with the heads of CIS countries about cooperation in fight against global terrorism], *Perviy kanal*, 9 April 2017, http://www.1tv.ru/news/2017-04-09/323167-o_sotrudnichestve_v_borbe_s_mirovym_terrorizmom_govoril_vladimir_putin_s_glavami_razvedok_stran_sng.

[33] For example "Vladimir Putin: dlya Rossii odin iz prioritetov – razvitiye i krepleniye SNG" [Vladimir Putin: one of Russia's priorities – development and strengthening of CIS], *Perviy kanal* website, 21 March 2017, http://www.1tv.ru/news/2017-03-21/321975-vladimir_putin_dlya_rossii_odin_iz_prioritetov_razvitie_i_ukreplenie_sng.

[34] Kararzyna Czerewacz-Filipowicz and Agnieszka Konopelko, *Regional Integration Processes in the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Springer International Publishing, 2017).

[35] The 2017 World Press Freedom Index, https://rsf.org/en/ranking.

[36] All are parts of the *Rossiya Segodnya* media giant.

[37] More about the sources of information used in the Latvian portals covering foreign news see *Latvijas plašsaziņas līdzekļu noturība pret citu valstu vēstījumiem* [The resilience of Latvia's mass media against information from foreign countries], ed. Andris Sprūds (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2016).

[38] Data is based on analysing internal LTV archive. News stories of journalists are mainly stored in this archive.

[39] "Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force," European Union External Action website, 14 January 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/2116/%20Questions%20and%20Answers%20about%20the%20East%20StratCom%20Task%20Force.

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[42] Results of the meeting on the media-literacy organised by the Ministry of Culture of Latvia on 20 June 2017, https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/mediju_politika/petijumi/Medijpratiba_petijuma%20rezultati_Latvijas%20Fakti_18_07_2017.pdf.

BETWEEN EUROCRITICISM AND EUROREALISM IN LATVIAN ECONOMY

Didzis Meļķis

This article is an inquiry into the economic aspects of Euroscepticism in Latvia and is based on eight interviews with leaders and experts from business representative organisations, municipalities and trade unions.[1] The business sectors involved in this study include transportation, construction, fisheries and banking – the key areas of Latvia's national economy.

The interviewed representatives, while repeatedly using words like 'realism' and 'criticism,' still stress fundamental support for European Union (EU) membership, participation in the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the commitment to promote functional and effective business and social policies in a united Europe in the future. The "Big Momma's house in Brussels" is found to be hardly impartial to the older and bigger kids. Accordingly, on the one hand, there is a constant necessity for a member state to reassess its economic interests and lobby them through suitable EU legislation and policies. On the other hand, a small country and its industries have to be realistic about the power games played in the EU in the environment lacking a genuinely "single" market or altruistic financial assistance.

The overall perception of the common European economic affairs is one of a big and messy family where members are bound by shared identities like the four basic freedoms – movement of goods, capital, services and labour; however, another matter is the awareness of what this exactly means, or how single the single EU market actually is. As the President of Employers' Confederation of Latvia (ECL) Vitālijs Gavrilovs explains, the system is "unavoidably tangled in conflicting interests, but nothing better has been devised." By definition, the EU

can only wish the best for its nations but "the will has to be found in the member countries themselves – the inner will to work and to prove that you can be a player in the EU."

Are EU wishful policies, e.g. cohesion through EU funds, working to this desired end to promote proactive European will in the member countries? This study, among other things, finds that one has to be very sceptical about it.

EU FUNDS: LOCALLY TRIGGERED SCEPTICISM

In Latvia, the source of persistent Euro-grumble is not as much linked to Brussels as to Riga. After all kinds of laments, at the end of the day, it's still the "local brothers" who are to blame. The usage of EU funds provides a spectacular example in this respect. In fact, the main emphasis of the observable Eurocriticism falls on the inefficiencies of the European grand strategy of greater cohesion through the use of EU funds. Essentially, it is either the inability of fragmented businesses to unite or an overly bureaucratic approach by the public sector that are found guilty of wasteful and degrading use of EU funds in Latvia. What is more, the intended effect of Europeanisation through the use EU funds is lacking. The EU's money is blamed for diverting the attention of Latvian officials away from developing a genuine national economic stance. Both the public and private sectors are deemed to be led astray from the basic economic logic that money has to be earned, and that businesses, as well as the economy in general, must be planned vis-à-vis predictable added value and profit. EU funding allegedly has done the opposite, according to local business representatives.[2]

Thus, the "Latvian economy has become dependent on EU funding, and it works like a kind of narcotic," says the President of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Aigars Rostovskis. "It is pleasant to have cash inflow in a short-run, but it is contrary to the normal logic of value creation. EU funds have caused atrophy over here," he frets.[3] That, in turn, has promoted poor economic

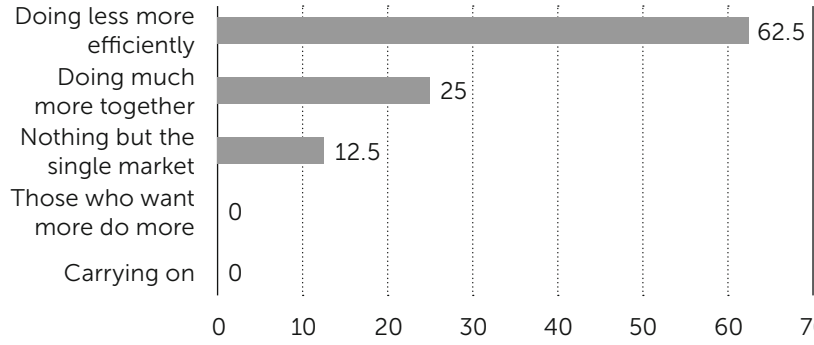
policies and inadequate political stewardship, the consequence of which is huge emigration from Latvia. The responsibility is on those in power during the last twenty years, according to Rostovskis. These undeniably have been the pro-European politicians who had acted according to the prescription from "Brussels."

Like Gavrilovs, also Rostovskis is overtaken by the idea of a need to set up a resolute national will to compete at the EU and global level at par with others. "In order to be honourable members at the table with Europe, Russia, China of whomever, one needs to demonstrate proper independence through genuine national economic action… The size of a country is not so important; however, the elements of a national economic self-dependency need to be demonstrated," admits Rostovskis.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: LESS IS MORE

In response to Jean-Claude Juncker's White Paper on the Future of Europe,[4] the ECL had asked its members to state their position on the proposed five scenarios of the future development of the EU. The results are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Latvian employers' views on the future of the EU



Source: Survey among Latvian businesses about the European Commission's White Book on the Future of Europe by the Employers' Confederation of Latvia

A majority of Latvian employers – 62.5 percent – endorse focusing on a few prioritised EU policies. Namely, doing less together, but much more effectively is a preferred option of Latvian business people. At the same time, practically none of the Latvian employers support the "carrying on" scenario. (Overwhelmingly critical comments received during this study also attest to this critical stance.) Also, Rostovskis espouses little sympathy for much closer EU integration. As an alternative, he proposes maintaining basic common rules such as the four freedoms and diverting the EU-level focus from vertical regulation to promoting horizontal peer-to-peer learning from the best policy examples around. "How exactly countries choose to act, has to be left to them. Harmonisation shouldn't be even tried," Rostovskis emphasises.

However, as mentioned earlier, a refusal of *status quo* doesn't necessarily point to Euroscepticism in the local business community. Actually, a large number of businesses – 25 percent of ECL's members – would prefer to do much more together. Latvian employers' sympathies towards European cooperation in principle are seen also in a zero approval rate of the multi-speed Europe scenario.

In the context of this study, it is important to note that only 12.5 percent of Latvian employers see an exclusive focus on the EU single market as the remedy to European domestic and external problems. This can be explained by many Latvian businesses' shared disenchantment with developments in the single market. This disappointment is caused by the tendencies of protectionism in Europe. According to the ECL, poorly informed economic policy choices and politicians' descent into populist temptation have ignited protectionism. Besides protectionism, some member countries' fears of the EU's eastern enlargement can be seen as forms of harmful Euroscepticism and must be addressed. From its part, the ECL strongly confirms its support for more free trade agreements and more competition at European and global scale. "An entrepreneur knows that competition, after all, motivates also him to invest into development," says Gavrilovs, "even if the big guys are winners from free trade, also SMEs are dragged along and turn out to be beneficiaries as suppliers and subcontractors."

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND ROADS: LET'S BE REAL

Business people's concerns over the debilitating impact of EU funds are also shared by representatives of local governments. Andra Feldmane, an economist at the Union of Local and Regional Governments of Latvia (ULRGL), explains that although she is a supporter of EU structural funds, a normal Latvian economy will begin only on the day when structural funds end. Feldmane admits that she is not a Eurosceptic but Eurorealist. "Yes, we [Latvia] have obtained tremendous things, but it is very unclear at what price. We know about sums that flow in, but the gain is not that certain if we analyse the related economic processes," says Feldmane.

Feldmane points to several examples where, to her mind, EU policies that are well designed in principle have had ambiguous economic and political effects, beginning with the EU's money itself. "European money has demoralised our elites. If cash was not that easily accessible, we would have thought how to earn, and plenty of things would have been different," grumbles Feldmane. Second, there are policy strings attached to EU funding which debilitate the national economic policy-building. "You cannot say 'I got four billion!' No, you didn't, because you lost a lot of things, including possibility of a different framing and choice to start with," considers Feldmane. Among the evils that Feldmane singles out in her criticism are a ready-made policy focus – well intended but not internalised political priorities – and a surprising amount of intellectual capacity invested in getting the "free" EU cash.

Apparently, there is some ground to Feldmane's worries.[5] One aspect concerns the ultimate beneficiaries of the EU's money. For example, in the case of energy efficiency projects, thermal insulation of houses, and modernisation of agriculture, the money has actually flown back to Europe for the materials, goods and machinery obtained. This has strongly affected the situation of local producers. The rapid changes in the market have forced local players out of business. Also the traditional, i.e. cheaper, supplies from Russia and Belarus have been almost completely cut off.

Another aspect concerns the problems of the internalisation of EU policy objectives in Latvia. The first example concerns the energy sector. It is no secret that something has gone quite wrong in this area in Latvia since the industry costs have reached the highest level in EU due to the mandatory procurement component (MPC) related to green energy.[6] Climate change and environmental policies are important, admits Feldmane and Rostovskis, but both also agree on the necessity of a locally tailored implementation and political internalisation of the EU policy objectives, otherwise, these changes are perceived as a pressure from Brussels. "MPC largely is an EU project," points out Feldmane.

The second example is linked to road construction in Latvia. While all of the earmarked EU's money is poured into the reconstruction of Latvia's main roads, which are richly decorated with signs demonstrating EU involvement, the municipal roads are in a catastrophic state. With the arrival of the EU funds, the earlier existing Road Fund – a targeted financial vehicle where the road tax and the fuel excise tax had been diverted to finance road construction in Latvia – was dismantled and integrated into the general state budget. Valdis Trēziņš, the President of the *"Latvijas auto"* international truckers' association, sees no economic logic in it, as drivers now have to finance the salaries of nurses and teachers from their excise tax payments, while businesses are forced to quit regions because it is not possible to bring out the goods due to bad roads. Thus, according to Trēziņš, time and time again, the problem is basically local but the damage comes with the EU's money.

TRANSPORTATION AND CONSTRUCTION: SOBERING EXPERIENCE OF DOING BUSINESS IN THE SINGLE MARKET

The road quality, however, is a minor concern to Trēziņš. Like most of the other businesses, he also speaks highly of his industry's advantages from Latvia's EU membership. "The never-ending queues

on the borders are gone along with the paperwork," stressed Trēziņš. Since 2003, the number of Latvian international trucking companies has grown 2.3 times, the fleet has almost tripled, and the volume of transported cargo has also tripled. Besides, EU membership has also promoted trucking eastwards, as Latvians are using their competence in the neighbouring markets of Russia and Belarus.

Lately, however, eastern transportation has been hit by the exchanges of sanctions with Russia. The sanctions have coincided with a policy change in Western Europe intended to undermine eastern European truckers' competitiveness. This policy shift is interpreted by Trēziņš as protectionism and is a major concern to him. Namely, simultaneously with the sanctions provoked by the Russian occupation of Crimea and the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine, Germany began to regulate Latvian truck drivers as posted workers. The German national regulatory novelty was soon implemented also by Austria, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. In Trēziņš estimates, one reason for this change was a sudden rise of trucking volumes in the West from eastern trucking companies as they were diverted from the recently closed Russian market. The biggest challenge comes from Poland, although a third of Latvia's fifteen thousand trucks had to be shifted from Russia to Europe. Another motive is the growing general European dislike of trucking due to environmental concerns, and related efforts to force a transition to rail and sea modes of transportation. According to Trēziņš, the industry would accept this policy change, except for the suddenness of the change, ambiguity, and unclear prospects, which are so damaging to the industry.

A sort of realism towards EU economic policies is voiced not only by businesses but also by labour representatives. A former long-time president of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia Pēteris Krīgers calls to mind the sobering post-accession experience when due to Swedish union lobbying and prolonged legal proceedings, a Latvian construction company "Laval" was pushed out of the market and consequently went bankrupt. "We were not ready for such processes, neither legally or psychologically," says Krīgers, while

discussing the EU single market realities including the issue of labour emigration from Latvia – in a sense a much larger problem than the fate of a single company like Laval. Emigration was the first problem observed during the participation in the single market. "There was no policy to soften this process, and there is still no serious solution in government how to tackle this problem," admits Krīgers.

Finally, as far as immigration of labour is concerned, Latvian unions have always been supportive of qualified immigrants, according to Krīgers. However, recent EU policies don't seem to be helpful in this. On the one hand, the influx of refugees so far has not positively influenced the labour market as locals "haven't heard them crying for spades; they cry for benefits," according to Krīgers. On the other hand, the political rhetoric, especially towards Russia and Belarus, is unhelpful in enticing workers from there, because "you cannot one day call these people names and then ask them to come to work for you on another, or expect that they'll go on with their transit through your ports."[7]

FISHERIES: BIGGER FISH TO FRY

The Latvian food industry also uses fundamentally realistic language – prioritising national interests in economic policy making. Support for the EU, the EMU, Schengen and other mechanisms is unequivocal. Nevertheless, when it comes to the daily life, "the question is how to manage the EU dictated regulations and apply them wisely according to the Latvian situation", says Ināra Šure, the Chairwoman of the Latvian Federation of Food Enterprises. All rules bend, and in case Latvian business interests cannot be bypassed, the implementation of unfavourable EU regulations should be locally softened, Šure explains.

A mix of criticism and realism is also expressed by the President of the Union of the Latvian Fish Processing Industry Didzis Šmits. He has ample of criticism of such EU policies as reductions of the national fishing fleet by scrapping the ships and the rules supporting

fish processing. He argues that a more efficient approach would entail freedom for member states to develop their own fisheries and fish processing development programmes together with their industries along commercial lines before these programs are negotiated in the European Commission. Until now the approach has been opposite – a "one size fits all" regulation frames an "enormously kerbed framework, and at the end, any national commercial logic is all but impossible", complains Šmits, "You just cannot have the same rules for sprats and dolphins!"

Šmits also denounces the arrogance of European officials and pointed to some illogical applications of EU financial aid. "It sounds nice that a big business has to finance itself, but for a reasonable spurt in the Latvian fish processing industry it is clear that the big companies are the ones to be supported, because they are dragging along them also smaller businesses," explains Šmits. "In my industry, it is a rule that SMEs are following three to five bigger leaders by finding their niches which the big ones don't care about. But if you put emphases only on these SMEs and not on the leaders then there's no sense to talk about global competitiveness."

According to Šmits, there is a "bigger fish to fry" at the EU level than concern about Latvia's fishing industry. In his evaluation, due to the lack of a clear commercial underpinning, even the most generous EU financial support can be quite damaging to an immature industry and the whole economy in general. The problem stems from the task given to state officials to pick the winners; however, "very rarely a state would manage to create a realistic and a just plan to its economy." In Šmits perception, Latvia is not an exception, and in the end, evenly spread financing across the industry has resulted in such anomalies as fish refrigerating capacity exceeding nine times the national fishing quotas. "The clerks' major concern is about correct documentation and not about to whom to sell the product, therefore one cannot expect them to understand the logic of business that investments are about efficiency, not justice."

BANKING: MORE REGULATION, PLEASE

No fully-fledged Latvian economy survey would be complete without a glimpse at its financial sector. This article is no exception, even if the sector is given minor attention here. It is for a good reason though, as highly advanced and globalised Latvian financial circles are Eurocritical for somewhat different reasons – they beg for more regulation.

Nine professional associations ranging from traditional commercial banks to barely understood peer-to-peer (P2P) financing start-ups recently have handed their propositions to the European Commission on how to augment EU's competitiveness in the fin-tech area. "To our own amazement, we came to a conclusion that Latvia needs more EU regulation in order to use the competitive advantages provided by the [European] banking union," summarises Chairwoman of the Association of Latvian Commercial Banks Sanda Liepiņa.

The ratio of banking costs to income is almost twice as low in Latvia as in Germany due to highly digitised services in Latvia. "We are providing competitive services to advanced European customers who are looking for greater efficiency outside their home countries. Competition would be even more effective if the market regulations were more harmonised and with minimal national differences," explains Liepiņa.

As an example, Liepiņa singled out the coming eIDA regulation – a set of standards for electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the European single market. If enacted, in 2018 a German eID would also work in Latvia and vice versa through this notification system, eliminating the national eID monopoly. Unfortunately, not every Latvian official has advanced enough understanding of financial sophistications, and the Latvian ministries continue producing legislation that is not technology neutral. Such national level discrepancies allowed by EU financial regulations are holding back the desired competitive edge of Latvian and European financial companies over their global competitors – a luxury one cannot afford in a rapidly changing industry.

Another example is related to the "regulatory sandboxes" – spaces created by national financial supervisors allowing businesses to test innovative products and business models with real customers in the real market – which have been introduced in some EU member countries and not in others. Latvia has not yet created such regulatory sandbox due to capacity limitations. At the same time, Latvian fintech startups have no access to regulatory sandboxes in other member states. "It would be most useful for the smaller member states with less analytical capacity to have timely and unified policy guidelines about the hottest trends," explains Liepiņa, "but there is hesitance at the EU level due to uncertainty how to regulate these novelties… Smaller states, in their turn, have limited resources for analysis, and are holding back because one has to take into account also what the others are legislating," Liepiņa describs the impeding vicious cycle. "For us it would be much easier to access bigger market if the rules were harmonised."

CONCLUSIONS

In Latvia, one can hardly speak of economic Euroscepticism. Business representatives and also social partners speak favourably of the European project and benefits to their industries from EU membership, the EU single market, the EMU etc. However, respondents are critical of some EU policies and, as they themselves admit, are realistic about certain EU ideals. For this reason, one has to shift the emphasis from Euroscepticism as a lack of faith in effective common policies and practices, to Eurocriticism as a means to correct inefficiencies, and to Eurorealism as a way to interpret common but still nationally centred economic relations between the member states.

Economic Eurocriticism in Latvia has two main points of focus. The first is linked to the presumed inefficient use of EU structural funds. The importance of these funds to Latvia is beyond any doubt: during the economic crisis of 2008, the EU's money provided a lifeline for Latvia's economy. That said, no one is against the

appropriation of EU funds. On the contrary, criticism has been voiced with regard to a too "just" distribution of money, regardless of the economic logic which, if observed, would eventually deliver bigger general gain. The predefined nature of policy objectives attached to EU funding supposedly impedes policymakers from developing genuine national economic interests. Despite good objectives such as environmental protection, a lack of sufficient internalisation of those objectives has caused an unbalanced local implementation and market distortions. The economic policy shortcomings flowing from these ills have been blamed for the shaky business and social environment which in turn have led to mass emigration from Latvia. Combined with growing welfare inequality, despite the cohesion policy aim, the general effectiveness of EU structural assistance policy is in significant doubt.

The second focus concerns the allegations that EU regulations have been used for protectionist purposes at the cost of businesses from the eastern member states. For this reason, several respondents interviewed described themselves as realists with respect to the single market ideals. At the same time, the complaints from traditional industries with markets in the East are muted, as gains from the single European market are considerable too. Yet, the protectionism tendencies are viewed as the biggest actual threat to Latvian businesses in Europe, as in several real-life situations the principles of the single European market are only paid lip-service.

ENDNOTES

[1] Interviews were conducted with Aigars Rostovskis, President of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Vitālijs Gavrilovs, President of the Employers' Confederation of Latvia; Andra Feldmane, entrepreneurship adviser to the Union of Local and Regional Governments of Latvia; Pēteris Krīgers, a former President of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia; Valdis Trēziņš, President of the international truckers' association "Latvijas auto"; Sanda Liepiņa, Chairwoman of the Association of Latvian Commercial Banks; Ināra Šure, Chairwoman of the Latvian Federation of Food Enterprises; Didzis Šmits, President of the Union of the Latvian Fish Processing Industry.

[2] This viewpoint needs to be seen in a wider context of neoliberal economic ideology prevailing in Latvia since the early 1990s. This mode of thinking praises the value of money, which needs to be earned in hard work before it is spent, low corporate and other taxes, thrift in public spending and limited governmental intrusion in private sector, combined with high degree of external economic openness.

[3] Indeed, the existence of strong linkages between the economic fortunes of Latvia and the inflow of the EU's funds has been underlined by numerous studies. E.g., according to Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, the annual increase in real GDP caused by funds in 2002-2020 ranged from 0.5 to 8.7 percent, reaching its maximum in 2011. (For more information see *Evaluation of the impact of EU funds on the economy of Latvia* (SSE Riga, December 2011), http://www.esfondi.lv/upload/Petijumi_un_izvertejumi/2ndStageReportEnglishUltimateFinal15Dec.docx. More recently, in its report from 2017, the Commission concludes that in 2016, economic growth was notably affected by a temporary drop in investment in Latvia, linked to the slow implementation of EU funds. (For more details, see European Commission, "Country Report Latvia 2017," Commission staff working document SWD(2017)79 final, June 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-latvia-en.pdf.)

[4] European Commission, *White Paper on the EU Future. Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025* (March 2017), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/white-paper-future-europe_en.

[5] Although there is a certain grain of truth in Andra Feldmane's bitterness about the way in which the EU's money is spent in Latvia, her criticism has to be seen in the context of political clashes between the central government and municipalities. The latest episode includes the ongoing tax reform which, if enacted, would strip local governments of some part of their revenues.

[6] It must be noted that the main reason for the high cost of Latvian energy is its chosen generous support for heat and power plants which is unrelated to Brussels. Latvia regionally has also the highest distribution tariffs – 30 percent higher than in Lithuania. From August 2017 distribution tariffs are to be lowered with the biggest gain expected for the corporate customers.

[7] In fact, today Ukraine is viewed as a convenient source of necessary labour by Latvian businesses. Also the Foreign Investors' Council in Latvia has continuously emphasized the benefits of labour from Ukraine. In 2016, practically a half of all 6007 work permits issued by Latvia were given to Ukrainians.

THE INVISIBLE ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF EUROSCEPTICISM IN LITHUANIA

Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė

Fourteen years have already passed since the European Union (EU) accession referendum in Lithuania. Although "Lithuanian political elites awaited the referendum results with great anxiety"[1], Lithuania held a successful referendum and became the most Euro-enthusiastic country among the nine candidate countries, with a rather high turnout of 63.4 percent and 91 percent of referendum participants saying "Yes" to Europe.[2] The initial Eurosceptical ideas related to the political aspects of membership (loss of independence) were defeated by the great wish of Lithuanians to have a better economic situation and more opportunities to become a modernised country; expecting social changes providing equal opportunities for all, bridging the gap between various social groups. For Lithuania, as for the other new EU member states from Central Eastern Europe (CEE), EU membership, in general, represented an opportunity to receive sizable financial support and have a fast economic convergence with other EU states. Therefore, Euroscepticism was not popular among economic actors and society in general at the beginning of Lithuania's membership in the EU.

Lithuanian public opinion polls indicate that the population's general attitude towards the EU throughout the past decade remained favourable. A majority of Lithuanian residents are convinced that the EU membership is beneficial for their country, and perspectives for the EU's future are optimistic.[3] As opinion polls conducted by the Lithuanian public opinion research centre *"Vilmorus"* indicate, the positive view of Lithuanian membership in the EU is stable, and has only three insignificant peaks in the margins of 5–6 percentage points of growth from average: the first in 2004 (82 percent), the second in

2007 (75 percent) and the third in 2008 (75 percent). From the last peak in 2008, support for the EU membership among the residents of Lithuania has had the tendency towards slight decrease.[4] The Eurobarometer of Autumn 2016 (No. 86), indicated that already only 55 percent of respondents in Lithuania tend to trust the EU. So, one may state that Lithuanians tend to be optimistic about the EU but the number of pessimists is tending to grow.

In recent years, more and more EU member states, facing immigration issues and EU imposed regulations on refugee quotas, began to look at the EU as an instance of globalisation and a threat to their national identities, instead of treating the EU as a protector. The messages of various Eurosceptics in different old EU member countries, such as the UK and the Netherlands, indicate that they treat the EU as an economic threat, arguing that they give a lot of money to the EU budget but do not receive as much in return.

What is the situation in Lithuania taking into account the aspect of economic Euroscepticism? How does Lithuanian society evaluate the economic changes during Lithuania's membership in the EU? How do economic actors perceive the membership? Are they still enthusiastic about the EU or have some scepticism? This article discusses these questions by concentrating on Eurosceptical ideas and actions taken in Lithuania among various economic actors and interest groups — farmers, entrepreneurs, trade unions etc.

DOES ECONOMIC EUROSCEPTICISM EXIST IN LITHUANIA?

Euroscepticism is formed from the different visions of EU integration and differing evaluation of EU development.[5] Euroscepticism may not only represent an opposition to the EU as a supranational organisation but also a critique of some developments, integration processes and policies. Having this in mind, one may argue that it is possible to find some Eurosceptical ideas and less enthusiasm of EU membership in Lithuania.

During the first decade of membership, there were no active Eurosceptic discussions in Lithuania. The Eurosceptical movements and politicians started actively participating in public discussions and promoting some of their initiatives when Lithuania started its presidency of the EU Council in 2013 (from the 1st of July to the end of December). In recent years, the Eurosceptical ideas have appeared in the public space more often due to the strong positions of Eurosceptics in other EU member states, and the latter's involvement in national election campaigns. However, we cannot argue that Lithuania has a strong opposition to EU membership or policies initiated by the EU. We may list only two initiatives attracting the attention of the public and media which were opposing concrete integration developments and policies.

The first important initiative of various nationalist movements expressing Eurosceptical ideas, supported by strong and rather big economic actor and interest group in Lithuania – the Farmers Union – was presented in early autumn of 2013 when the process of the collection of signatures supporting the referendum on the sale of land to foreigners started. Lithuania's membership in EU was associated with a requirement to set up the same rules for foreigners and Lithuanians wishing to buy land. However, Lithuanian farmers were afraid that foreigners would buy all the land for high prices and that Lithuanian farmers, having less financial possibilities, would not be able to compete with foreign investors. Therefore, the Farmers Union, together with some Eurosceptics, blamed membership in the EU for creating unequal opportunities for all. According to them, farmers receive unequal subsidies in various countries and have unequal opportunities for competition in the market.

The referendum initiative was strongly supported by Lithuanians and more than 300,000 signatures for the implementation of the referendum were collected for the first time in Lithuania. Though the referendum in 2014 was unsuccessful (on the day of the referendum the people were not active – less than 15 percent of all the voters came to the polls) this initiative encouraged the Lithuanian government to make some restrictions on buying land. Accordingly, the European

Commission expressed the opinion that this law on buying land in Lithuania restricts the free movement of capital and discriminates against non-Lithuanian EU citizens. Thus, we may argue that one of the biggest economic groups in Lithuania – farmers – are Eurooptimists as far as the EU subsidies and other financial support from EU funds is concerned, but they also have some scepticism related to some specific EU policies, such as equal rights of buying land.

This success in collecting signatures for the referendum on selling land to foreigners boosted confidence, and the group that initiated the referendum also planned to ask the nation whether it supports the introduction of the euro, which was planned for 2015. However, this referendum initiative was not successful. The initiators were not allowed to start the collection of signatures. The majority of political parties supported the plans to introduce the euro in 2015, although part of the governing coalition members – Labour Party, Order and Justice party and Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – showed no great wish to create favourable conditions for the introduction of the euro. The leaders of these parties were agitating not to speed up the process and first to ask the citizens in a referendum about the introduction date of the euro.[6]

THE PARTICULARLY CONTENTIOUS ISSUES: THE INTRODUCTION OF THE EURO AND EMIGRATION

The European common currency was not positively evaluated in Lithuania before 2015. Although at the beginning of Lithuania's membership in the EU the euro was very positively evaluated by Lithuanians (69 percent of respondents agreed that the euro is a good thing), the Eurobarometer results of 2013 showed a big drop in positive opinion – only 40 percent of Lithuanians positively evaluated the euro (by comparison, 51 percent of all citizens of the EU member states had a positive opinion of the euro, and 62 percent of the euro

zone residents also had a positive opinion of the euro).[7] This indicator shows an increase in Euroscepticism related to deeper integration among Lithuanian respondents. The majority of Lithuanians were satisfied with the status quo of the EU, but likely to reject deeper future integration. Lithuanians were afraid of rising prices and the euro was associated with a worsening of the socioeconomic situation of citizens.

After the introduction of the euro in 2015, the Eurobarometer polls showed a negative opinion among Lithuanians as well. The Flash Eurobarometer No. 446 from 2016 indicated that only 42 percent of Lithuanian respondents had the opinion that having the euro is a good thing (in the euro zone average was 56 percent) while 45 percent thought that the euro is a bad thing (33 percent in the euro zone).[8] So, Lithuania together with Cyprus and Italy became the only euro countries where a minority of population thought the euro has been good for their country.[9] If one compared Lithuanian responses with the other Baltic countries, he or she would see that the Estonian and Latvian respondents have a much more positive view of the euro – 64 percent in Estonia and 56 percent in Latvia.

Yet these results are not coincidental. First, one may relate these results to the different timing of the introduction of the euro in all three countries (in Estonia in 2011, in Latvia in 2014 and in Lithuania in 2015). The earlier introduction of the euro generates a more positive evaluation of the euro. Second, the different results in all three countries may reflect different situations in those countries. In 2016, Lithuanians indicated that the most important issue in Lithuania is rising prices/inflation/cost of living (51 percent) which is associated with the introduction of the euro.[10] If we compare issue importance with Latvia and Estonia, we can see that only 20 percent of Latvian respondents mentioned the same issue, indicating that in Latvia health and social security (42 percent) is the most important issue. In Estonia, the situation is similar – only 18 percent of respondents mentioned the rising prices as the most important issue. Like Latvians, Estonians are mostly concerned with health and social security (41 percent). Different issues generate diverse support for the euro.

Support for the euro does not correlate positively with a general support for the EU in all the Baltic countries. Lithuania, despite being the most pessimistic regarding the euro, has the most positive general support for the EU. For instance, the EU in Latvia and Estonia has more of a neutral image, and there only 33–35 percent of respondents saw the EU in a positive light, while in Lithuania a positive image of the EU is held by 44 percent of respondents.[11] Lithuania is also among the most optimistic countries about the future of the EU – 70 percent (2nd highest country) while Latvia and Estonia are in the middle of optimists – 55–56 percent.[12] Trust in the EU is also the highest in Lithuania – 55 percent, while in two other countries trust is lower by ten percentage points – 44 percent in Estonia and 45 percent in Latvia. This indicates that Lithuanian negative view towards the euro is not associated with the general view of the EU. It has more to do with the performance of national government, economic situation and general expectations before the introduction of the euro.

It is interesting to note that the situation with the population's attitude towards the euro correlates with the issue of emigration in Lithuania. One of the factors influencing Lithuanians' positive attitude towards the EU is the possibility of migration to other EU member states. Citizens value a right of free movement, though emigration is not a positive process for the state. When Lithuania became an EU member, many Lithuanians had a very positive attitude, due to the possibility of immigrating to the UK or Scandinavian countries for a job and better life. Very many Lithuanian citizens treated EU membership as being beneficial for them. According to the Department of Statistics, during the first decade of membership in the EU, from 2004 to 2013, around 440 thousand Lithuanian citizens emigrated from Lithuania;[13] in 2016, about 50 thousand Lithuanian citizens became emigrants.[14] So, Lithuania has seen the largest emigration in relative terms from the CEE states, but the attitude towards the EU has not changed dramatically. Again, Lithuanians blame not the EU, but the Lithuanian government for emigration, thinking that the Lithuanian government is incapable of offering good living conditions and opportunities for citizens.

MAJOR ECONOMIC GROUPS WITH THE EUROSCEPTICAL INCLINATION

A review of the two hotly debated issues – the sales of agricultural land and the introduction of the euro – and referendum initiatives related to them shows that one interest group linked to one of the most important economic sectors – agriculture – has a clearly ambivalent attitude towards the EU. This group is Lithuanian farmers. On the one hand, this group has very good access to EU funded programmes and has more benefits than other groups of the society. They should be most optimistic about the EU membership. On the other hand, farmers still feel that they are treated unequally in different member states. As one of their representatives argued, subsidies and various payments of support vary by a magnitude of two to four times between the old and new member states of the EU. As an example, farmers in Belgium and the Netherlands will receive four time's greater subsidies than Lithuanian farmers in the period 2014–2020.[15] Lithuanian farmers were agitating that it is necessary to smooth out direct payments to farmers in all EU member states immediately, as only then will there be the possibility to talk about equal competition in the market. Their pessimistic evaluations on the EU were also related to the free movement of capital for buying agricultural land. So, the farmers favour less integration and more protectionism in the case of land selling, but at the same time favour more integration in the case of direct payments.

The second business group which is highly integrated into the EU market but criticises some EU policies are transport companies. Lithuania's integration into the EU has an effect on the activities of transport companies in several ways: it is easier for them to work in the EU market; the EU provides technical and other standards which are applied in Lithuania; the EU, as well as Lithuanian authorities, provides funds for modernisation of transport and development of transit infrastructure. Some of these effects have positive results, but some of them, such as higher standards on labour relationships, require more investments and raise business costs. Thus, the

transport sector is optimistic about the major market but pessimistic about unequal rules applied in the member states. Competition was restricted in some EU countries, especially after the closure of the Russian market. Lithuanian companies were dissatisfied by additional obstacles initiated by Belgium and France for being able to work in their markets. They tried to attract the attention of the European Parliament by asking to establish the same requirements in all EU member states, eliminating protectionism of national companies.[16]

Euroscepticism arises from national government policies, and also from the share of integration and liberalisation seeking sectors and those seeking protection. In general, it seems that in Lithuania, the economic groups having a high internationalisation level (industrial sector, transport sector and others), transnational corporations and big companies are more supportive of national market's integration into the single market and, for this reason, have less sceptical views. The companies and economic sectors (e.g. farmers) which are oriented towards national markets and use local raw materials, as well as small businesses, would like to have more protection and are against integration. For instance, the small business companies selling vegetables and fruits are not likely to support integration and opening of markets.

Trade unions in Lithuania are not very popular among the workers and have a low membership. They participate in the negotiations between employers and the government but do not play a very important role. Their evaluation of EU membership and integration is rather positive and optimistic. They expect that EU institutions will impose more regulations favouring workers and will help to gain more benefits for the workers. However, long negotiations on the social model and a new labour code in Lithuania indicated that national policies are more important than the European. Trade unions are sceptical about the possibility of implementing the European social model due to the existing inequalities in various member states. They try to participate in various EU institutions and organisations with the expectation that the EU is an opportunity to solve problems, but the EU itself is not seen as the problem. So, trade unions as many

other interest groups in Lithuania have various reasons to support the EU. One of them is pragmatic seeking benefits from the EU for funding their activities. The other one is related to the social standards introduced by the EU. Though these standards are not so easy to apply, they help negotiation and stand as a guide for the domestic trade unions.

Trade sector has a very close relationship with the EU. It is of great importance to have fewer restrictions on the free movement of goods and services for businesses in Lithuania. Many industrial and sales companies have a positive evaluation of the EU. They enjoy the opening of EU markets and having less bureaucracy. Among the ten most important export partners are the following EU countries: Latvia, Poland, Germany, Estonia, Sweden, the UK and the Netherlands.[17] The growth of the export of Lithuanian goods to EU member states, especially to the Scandinavian region, Poland and the Netherlands was noticeable in 2016. The reasons for growing exports to these markets are various: the Scandinavian market allows charging a higher premium for exports; Poland is important for the size of the market, the growth of the economy and its geographical closeness; the Netherlands, in the meantime, offers access to the EU markets due to the good infrastructure of its ports and intensive international trade.[18] As the Bank of Lithuania statistics inform, having a rather positive trade balance with the core EU countries (Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, and France), Lithuanian businesses have no visible European scepticism.[19]

CONCLUSIONS

The review of the economic aspects of Euroscepticism in Lithuania has revealed that there is no hard line economic Euroscepticism in Lithuania among all the economic actors: businesses, trade unions, farmers. This trend coincides with the generally positive public opinion tendencies. There are some policies of the EU which are criticised by Lithuanian economic actors, but they do not express

general opposition to the EU. All these sceptical ideas and critiques may be classified as soft Euroscepticism. Society, and the different economic sectors, already acknowledge the reality of Lithuania's membership in the EU, and no one questions it.

This paper reveals that Lithuania tends to be a Eurooptimistic country where only a kind of soft Euroscepticism has the potential to grow. Although support for the EU is decreasing, according to the Eurobarometer polls, Lithuanians still have a rather high positive esteem of EU institutions in comparison to other EU member states. The rising numbers of Lithuanian emigrants had no influence on the positive evaluation of the EU. The EU is associated with the opportunity to move for seeking a better life.

Lithuania differs from the other Baltic countries and the core EU states in the evaluation of the euro. Before and after the introduction of the euro Lithuanians expressed a rather negative view of the single currency. The failed referendum on the euro and the results of public opinion reveal that Lithuanian citizens have some economic scepticism and they are not satisfied by deep integration into the EU national currency. After two years as a member of the euro zone, Lithuanian residents still think about the euro as being a factor of their worse life and rising prices.

Farmers are a group which receives more benefits from the EU than other groups, but they also are the most visible critics of EU policies. Lithuanian farmers organised a referendum on selling land to foreigners, and have constantly expressed dissatisfaction with unequal pay-outs from EU funds. The Lithuanian transport companies performing their activities in EU markets have a generally positive evaluation of the EU but have some complaints about national protectionism in some older EU member states. Representatives of other sectors of the Lithuanian economy have no clearly expressed complaints about the EU. Trade unions treat the EU as an opportunity to solve various problems and setting higher labour standards.

In sum, one can state that economic Euroscepticism exists in Lithuania but it is not strong. The clear sign of this scepticism is the negative evaluation of the euro by Lithuanians. However, Lithuanian

public opinion is still among the most optimistic in evaluating the future of the EU and the image of the EU. It is likely that this incongruence of evaluations is associated with a vision of the EU as an opportunity, on the one hand, and the euro as a symbol of diminished independence and national sovereignty, bringing worse living conditions, on the other hand. Lithuanians had many expectations from the EU, and when the expectations were not fulfilled, they began to show some signs of dissatisfaction with deeper integration, in general, and the euro, in particular.

ENDNOTES

[1] Liudas Mažylis and Ingrida Unikaitė, "Euro-referenda: Lithuania's case" in *Central Europe between double enlargement* (2004), 37-51.
[2] Republic of Lithuania Central Electoral Committee, http://www.vrk.lt/.
[3] "National Report Executive Summary Lithuania," *Eurobarometer* No. 72 (2009), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_lt_en_exec.pdf.
[4] Lithuanian Public Opinion and the EU Membership (2013), http://www.euro.lt/en/lithuanias-membership-in-the-eu/lithuanian-public-opinion/.
[5] Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, "Eurosceptics in Lithuania: On the Margins of Politics?" *European Quarterly of Political Attitudes and Mentalities - EQPAM* 3:4 (October 2014), 1-21.
[6] Rolandas Paksas, "Tai ne Lietuva įsiveda eurą – tai Lietuvai įvedamas euras" [It is not Lithuania that adopts the euro – it is the euro introduced to Lithuania], *Delfi*, 2014, http://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/politics/r-paksas-tai-ne-lietuva-isiveda-eura-tai-lietuvai-ivedamas-euras.d?id=64435904.
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[9] "The Euro Area: Country Fact Sheet," *Flash Eurobarometer* No. 446 (2016), 1, http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion.
[10] *Standard Eurobarometer* No. 86 (2016), http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion.
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PRAGMATIC ECONOMIC EUROSCEPTICISM IN ESTONIA

Viljar Veebel

A comprehensive analysis of the economic aspects of Euroscepticism in Estonia requires an understanding of the broader picture of country's internal economic preferences of economic models and attitudes towards the European Union (EU). Estonia has experienced dramatic changes, not only during the transformation process from planned economy to market economy in the 1990s but also during the recent global financial crisis of 2008. Additionally, the Brexit debates in 2015 have started to impact Estonia's development. These changes shape what the country expects from European integration and how Estonia sees its role in the EU.

In this light, the current chapter offers insight into Estonia's views and critics towards the EU from an economic perspective. To give the reader a better understanding of the roots of these views and attitudes, the cornerstones of Estonia's economic model are described, the main EU-related topics in the recent public debates are analysed, and the country's expectations of the future of the EU are discussed.

In Estonia, most economic Eurosceptics can be classified as soft Eurosceptics, on some occasions flavoured with a dose of Europopulism. From an economic perspective, however, the Eurosceptic views and arguments in Estonia are often based on pure economic rationality, which could in principle refer to the origins of "Europragmatism" in Estonia.

THE CORNERSTONES OF THE ESTONIAN ECONOMIC MODEL

After the restoration of independence in 1991, economic openness and liberal ideology were considered cornerstones of Estonia's economic model. Taking inspiration mostly from the ideas of Milton Friedman, the Estonian government launched radical institutional and economic reforms, implemented liberal trade and investment laws, introduced a simple tax system with a low tax burden, carried out high-speed privatisation and introduced the principle of an annually balanced state budget. In this light, Estonia has been often described in economic circles as a good example of the liberal or neoliberal state model, presenting an economic success story in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). After joining the EU in 2004, Estonia started to follow more moderate and conservative EU policies and strategies with a focus on social balance. However, the country has still largely retained its reputation as a small, open economy with a modern business environment.

Additionally, the country is largely characterised by its focus on macroeconomic stability and austerity. The global financial crisis in 2008–2010 hit Estonia very hard – in 2009 the country witnessed a GDP decline by 14 percent.[1] Being mostly motivated by the "shock therapy" of the early years of re-independence, Estonia decided to implement comprehensive austerity measures to overcome the crisis. Moreover, the country was one of the few EU member states that adopted radical austerity measures in 2008–2011, with all of the social and economic consequences that accompany them. With regards to austerity, the Greek debt crisis in 2012–2013 taught valuable lessons to Estonia regarding responsibility and solidarity in the EU. The public debates in Estonia have mostly compared the drastic austerity measures implemented by Estonia during the years of the financial crisis with the measures implemented by the Greek government to get access to the bail-out packages. In this light, the overall public attitude towards supporting Greece was rather negative, and the question was raised of why some EU member states can – intentionally or unintentionally – not comply with their financial obligations.

Estonia itself, however, has experienced some negative aspects of being part of the EU that has had a formative influence on the country's views towards the EU. The sad and controversial case of the Estonian national flag carrier "Estonian Air" is a telling example. From 2009–2014, the company received financial support from the Estonian government several times in the form of rescue loans, interest rate cuts and other benefits. In 2013 and 2014, the European Commission opened investigations to analyse whether this qualifies as illegal state aid and thus violates EU competition regulations. In 2015, the Commission decided that the state-aid given to the Estonian Air was illegal and forced the company to repay public funding. In December 2015, the company was declared bankrupt. This incident has initiated a discussion in Estonia about whether strict EU state aid regulations are simultaneously rational and flexible enough, keeping in mind both the common values of the single European market and the specific needs of small peripheral EU member states.

In sum, these developments and incidents have shaped Estonia's recent economic views and positions in the EU. Over the last two and a half decades the country's economic policy has mostly been pro-cyclic, combined with low level of governmental interference and a low level of public debt. These principles are also reflected in Estonia's views, including criticism, of the EU from the economic perspective. As a member state of the EU, one of the central features of the Estonian government in the EU has been to support deregulation and liberalisation – measures aimed at removing obstacles to the functioning of the internal market.

THE MAIN TOPICS OF ECONOMIC EUROSCEPTICISM IN ESTONIA

Euroscepticism in Estonia is either mostly associated with certain specific EU-related projects or to the country's ability to implement the projects or safeguard its interests at the EU level. The same focus applies also to the economic concerns. Recent debates in Estonia

have mostly concentrated on the role of EU funding in supporting or harming the country's development, and the implementation of the infrastructure projects of the Trans-European Transport Network, including the EU North Sea-Baltic corridor and the trans-Baltic railway project "Rail Baltic".

The current discussion on the role of EU funding in supporting or harming Estonia's economic development is extremely intriguing. Estonia received EU cohesion policy funding amounting to 2.2 percent of GDP in 2004–2006 and to 3.0 percent of GDP in 2007–2013 each year. The funding was mainly used to build infrastructure projects and support enterprises and human resource development.[2] Although these are significant financial resources from Estonia's perspective, the question has been raised by several studies whether the funds have been allocated to projects that adequately facilitate the country's economic development and exhibit high socio-economic returns and whether there exists a risk of aid dependence in Estonia. A review of the use of cohesion policy funds for 2007–2013 concluded that the main weakness in Estonia was a lack of strategic vision at the national level and a shortage of explicitly defined regional and sectoral priorities.[3] An analysis conducted by Kondor-Tabun and Staehr[4] has found that EU cohesion policy funds have significantly contributed to public and private investment. However, the authors also conclude that it remains a challenge for Estonia to limit the extent of substitution for domestic investments with the aim of ensuring that substantial resources are directed in a way that enhances the country's economic growth in the medium and long-term.[5] The same idea is expressed by Varblane,[6] who argues that all three Baltic countries have benefited from EU structural funds; however, during the EU programming period between 2014–2020, governments should prepare exit strategies to be able to finance the projects with significantly lower support from the EU cohesion funds in the future.[7]

Recent public debates on the implementation of the Rail Baltic have been extremely intense in Estonia, and the project has received strong criticism from different sides. Many opinion leaders, economic experts and prominent cultural actors in Estonia have publicly

opposed the project. Their criticism is mainly directed towards the long-term economic viability of the project from Estonia's perspective, criticising the cost-benefit analyses of the project conducted in 2011 by AECOM Limited,[8] and in 2017 by Ernst&Young.[9] Many local experts in Estonia have argued that the AECOM analysis is based on both unreasonable assumptions and unrealistic expectations regarding the volume of passenger and goods transport,[10] questioned the reasonability behind the selection of the particular route of the railway connection[11] and stressed that the results of the assessment are out-of-date.[12] Despite experts' objections, the national government has responded to scepticism and criticism of the Rail Baltic project in Estonia in an elusive and sometimes even arrogant manner. The same applies to the local media which has responded rather aggressively to the criticism raised by local cultural actors. This is a very unfortunate development, as the viability of the EU-financed regional large-scale projects is extremely important in avoiding EU-critical attitudes in the EU member states. In the worst case, this unreciprocated criticism could grow into "Europragmatism" or even turn into a "hard Euroscepticism" in Estonia.

THE AGENTS OF ECONOMIC EUROSCEPTICISM IN ESTONIA

Despite an overall positive attitude towards the EU, some individual experts have expressed relatively Eurosceptical views. Indrek Neivelt, former director of *Hansapank Group*, is the most prominent and visible economic Eurosceptic in Estonia, mainly focusing on the true impact of the EU state aid rules and structural funds on infrastructure development in the Baltic area. He has raised concerns about the economic rationality of the European Commission by prohibiting state aid to Baltic national airlines while sponsoring the construction of Rail Baltica with European public money at the same time.[13] Igor Gräzin is another notorious economic Eurosceptic in Estonia, having already spread Eurosceptic views for decades. He is an ardent

supporter of liberal trade ideas and a full market economy and criticises the centralised market regulations of the EU.

Local trade and professional unions in Estonia have remained mostly neutral in the public debates on the pros and cons of European integration. Their issues of concern brought to the public are mostly sector-specific. For example, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation has expressed its concerns over the ratification of the free trade agreement between the EU and Canada, referring to the potential lowering of social, environmental and consumer protection and other standards.[14] The Estonian Transport and Road Workers Trade Union has stressed the potential social dumping phenomenon, referring to the need to offer equal treatment between Estonians working in Finland and Finns, as well as to maintain the salaries and working conditions guaranteed to Estonians in Estonia, within the context of low-paid foreign workers from other EU countries entering the Estonian labour market. The need to remove EU member state obstacles in the application of the EU-directive that regulates the movement of workers across the EU has also been stressed in the framework of the "Fair Transport Europe" initiative. Among professional unions, the most vocal groups in Estonia are the Central Union of Estonian Farmers and the Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce. Both organisations staged two massive public demonstrations in Estonia in 2015 and 2016 to draw attention to the overproduction of agricultural products in the EU and the lack of local supportive measures for Estonian farmers to overcome the unfavourable market situation. Their criticism is foremost targeted at the unfair EU practice of maintaining direct agricultural support for member states from CEE at significantly lower levels than the EU15. However, their most vocal criticism has been targeted towards the Estonian Ministry of Agriculture and the Government of Estonia, arguing that they are not sufficiently representing the interests of Estonian farmers at the EU. Over the last year, the situation in the dairy sector has somewhat eased in Estonia but remains strained in the cereal sector. Thus, today tensions and dissatisfaction both with the EU and with the Estonian government have not fully disappeared among Estonian farmers.

THE EU-RELATED ECONOMIC ISSUES THAT NEED MORE DISCUSSION IN THE FUTURE

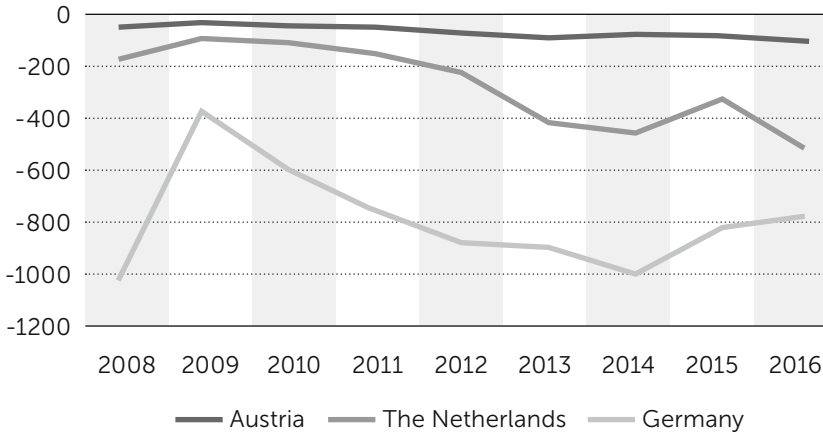
The intense debates on the role of EU funding in supporting or harming Estonia's economy, and on the implementation of the Rail Baltic project have overshadowed some economic issues of fundamental significance in Estonia.

Debates about the future of the EU are currently gaining momentum across Europe in light of the European Commission's "White paper on the future of Europe and the way forward" from March 2017.[15] The Estonian government most likely (currently unofficially) will support the *"those who want more do more"* scenario. When looking for clues in the Commission's recent strategy documents about what areas might fall under the 'doing more' scenario, there are hints about closer cooperation in security and legal issues and cyber security, which suit Estonia well. However, should closer collaboration be expected in the areas of social standards, taxation, or fiscal issues, Estonia will most likely not be interested in closer cooperation in these areas. Intriguingly, the European Commission is most likely expecting all EU member states to support the "*doing much more together*" scenario. If so, this could further increase the gap between EU institutions, national governments and ordinary EU citizens, and contribute to the spread of Europopulist or even anti-European views in Estonia. In this light, the public debate on the future (political, economic and social) expectations of EU citizens is highly welcome in Estonia, and its importance should not be underestimated by local or EU political elites.

The Estonian government has stressed the view that the priority should be the proper implementation of the existing agreements, laws and commitments, and not on the adoption of new regulations and the establishment of new institutions in the economic area. In this context, Estonia has been relatively critical of the establishment of new financing facilities and the transfer of additional powers and competences to the institutions of the Economic and Monetary Union. Considering the background of Estonia's development, this stance will most likely remain unchanged in the future.

Another feature requiring more attention in the public debates in Estonia is the asymmetric economic interdependence among the EU member states. As stated in several studies, mostly from the 2000s, Germany, the Netherlands and Austria have been implementing a neo-mercantilist trade policy by excessively expanding their exports within the EU and the euro zone, thereby challenging the competitiveness of their partners (e.g. Greece, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and many others) and forcing them to sustain huge trade deficits towards Germany and other stronger European economies. Additionally, over the last ten years, the trade balance between Estonia and Austria, Germany and the Netherlands has been consistently negative (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Estonia's economic relations with Austria, the Netherlands and Germany in 2008–2016: Trade balance, million euro



Source: Statistics Estonia, 2017. http://www.stat.ee/34086

CONCLUSIONS

From an economic perspective, Eurosceptic views and arguments in Estonia mostly concern specific EU-related projects (such as the trans-Baltic railway project "Rail Baltic") or the country's ability to

implement the projects or safeguard its interests at the EU level (like the role of EU funding in supporting or harming the country's long-term economic development). The clear gains and overall viability of EU-financed regional large-scale projects are extremely important in avoiding EU-critical attitudes in the member states. In the worst case, these critical attitudes (for example, towards the Rail Baltic project) could grow into "Europragmatism" or even to "hard Euroscepticism" in Estonia.

The scepticism and critics are often very reasonable, based on the perception of the projects' economic rationality and initiatives at stake (e.g. the Greek debt crisis or again the Rail Baltic project). However, despite the rational nature of the Euroscepticism, the Estonian political elite has responded to this scepticism in an elusive and sometimes even arrogant manner. Although overall public support for EU membership is strong in Estonia, such an attitude could potentially transform into a wide gap between EU institutions, national governments and ordinary EU citizens, including Estonians. This also concerns the lack of genuine debate in Estonia about the future of the EU, including the underlying economic framework. Path dependence and "lock-in" situations with respect to Estonia's relations with the EU must be avoided at any cost.

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THE EUROCRITICAL REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

Normunds Grostiņš

Since accession in 2004, Latvia has often ranked as one of the most Eurocritical European Union (EU) member states.[1] This chapter looks at the political, economic and security policy impacts of EU membership and arguments used by both Eurocritical and pro-EU opinion makers. The aim is to show how Euroscepticism in Latvia has evolved over Latvia's years of EU membership. Particular attention will be paid to recent developments, for example, the impact of the immigration crisis. The chapter also takes a short look at the rather chaotic terminology used by both sides, the international cooperation of EU-critical parties and also funding for Latvia's Eurosceptical forces.

WHICH IS THE PROPER TERM?

The Eurocritical movement in Latvia has always developed in the broader context of European political processes. Often, Eurocritical activities in Latvia are described as "Eurosceptical" and there is a lot of confusion about what terminology to use for people who are sceptical or critical towards the development of the EU, especially the activities of many of the EU institutions. Various definitions are used, like EU criticism, EU scepticism, Eurocriticism, Eurorealism, or Eurooppponents, EU-withdrawalists, anti-Eurofederalists, and finally EU-reformers (the last term is also used by Eurofederalists that want to "reform" the EU into one state with single parliament and single president). To complicate things further, parties or movements can be described as "EU-critics" or "EU-sceptics" also "radical EU-sceptics" or "strongly EU-sceptics" or "hard EU-sceptics" and "soft EU-sceptic."

These terms vary depending on how strong the argumentation against the EU is. Those who dislike critics of the EU prefer to use more degrading terms, often describing the EU-sceptics as "anti-European" or "Europhobes" or even "un-European" and "pro-Russian." Yet this is very strange, because, for example, being against the existence of the World Bank does not mean that someone is "anti-world." EU-scepticism is based on criticism of the EU and represents an opposition to the political process of forming an ever more centralised union (those with more positive attitudes about the EU use the term "European integration" instead).

The changing situation has influenced the terminology. When Latvia applied for EU membership, and a public debate coincided with an upcoming referendum, there were clearly those that supported membership and those pro-independence forces that opposed it. But when the country decided to join following the referendum, the situation got trickier. Some of those that opposed membership accepted defeat and favoured staying in. Some other critics continued to criticise the EU as such, requesting changes such as the recommendation that the EU should be governed by the member states to a much greater extent than today (this is currently the position of the parliamentary party "*No sirds Latvijai*" [From Heart for Latvia]). And the rest are those critics that did not admit defeat, and are insisting on a new "in or out" referendum (e.g. the position of non-parliamentary "*Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija*" [Eurosceptical Party of Action]) and, of course, argue for Latvia to leave.

Eurocritics are people who are critical towards how the EU functions and works today, especially with regards to its institutions. They often prefer to use the "EU-critic" or "EU-sceptic," to highlight that the EU is not representative of Europe. For example, the European Parliament has used the term "European" since it renamed itself from "the Common Assembly" to the "European Parliamentary Assembly" in 1958, in spite of the fact that at that time it consisted only of members from six European countries.

EU scepticism today is not confined to a specific flank of political forces existing in the member states of the EU. In the EU, as well as in

Latvia, it exists both to the right and to the left and is an undercurrent in national parties of the centre as well. For example, the EU-imposed quotas of "refugees" are seen negatively by a vast spectrum of politicians in Latvia.

A huge increase of Eurocriticism followed the start of the immigration crisis and the EU-imposed "migrant quotas". According to an opinion poll, 88 percent of Latvian population (both Latvians and Russian-speaking) see "refugees" in the light of increased risk of criminality, infections and terrorism.[2] Immigration from Africa and the Middle East, currently bringing above mentioned terrorism, criminality and infectious disease to Western Europe, is shifting public mood in Eastern Europe from softer versions of Euroscepticism to harder ones. "Hard EU-scepticism" is the opposition to the membership of, or to the existence of, the EU as a matter of principle. The Danish People's Movement against the EU and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) are two examples of movements/parties that take this position.

"Soft EU-scepticism" is supportive of the existence and membership of a certain form of the EU, but with opposition to specific EU policies, and opposition to a federal EU. Opinions vary about how such an EU should be remodelled according to these "soft EU-sceptics." However, the idea that the EU should be something like the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and mainly work with trade issues is quite common. Some add that it should also work with environmental issues, and some – all cross-border issues, though there are varying definitions of what constitutes a cross-border issue.

Examples of "soft EU-sceptics" include national parties in the European Parliament that are members of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, including centre-right parties such as the British Conservative Party, and the European United Left–Nordic Green Left group, consisting of left-wing parties in the European Parliament. The Swedish June List, in the European Parliament from 2004 to 2009, is another example. They sought continued Swedish membership of the EU, but wanted the EU to change into an organisation for interstate cooperation. Sometimes

these "soft" EU-sceptics are referred to as "reformists," due to their goal of reforming or changing the EU. Alternative names for "hard" and "soft" EU scepticism are respectively "withdrawalist or secessionist" and "reformist" EU scepticism.

WHY IS LATVIA SO EUROCRITICAL?

In 1995, four years after regaining independence, Latvia's government signed the Association Agreement with EU, submitted the membership application and the country started its movement towards EU membership. Back then, returning home to Europe was a very romantic dream.

Paradoxically, during the final stages of the EU accession process, Latvian voters were put in a situation of diminished democratic decision making, a worse situation even compared to the late Soviet Union. The government's decision to join the EU was formally approved by a binding referendum in 2003. The campaign funding for the YES side was paid mostly by the state. It was significantly larger than funding available to the NO side (120:1 in favour of YES side), the latter being provided mostly by small private donations of patriotic citizens. The referendum results were 2:1 in favour of joining the EU. Blindly, and without proper discussion, accepting the proposed conditions of the EU Accession Treaty, initially resulted in Latvia receiving up to two times smaller EU funds per capita compared to other Eastern European countries, for example, Poland. The EU demanded the imposition of a value added tax on heating, infant's food and medicine. Agricultural subsidies received by Latvia were initially the lowest in the whole Union.

Now, fourteen years since the EU accession referendum, official arguments in Latvia still are very limited, representing the same basic manipulations which were initially used during the EU accession process, namely, "if we do not join the EU or obey every demand made by Brussels… then Russia will come and eat us," or "Anyone who doesn't want to join the euro wants Russian rubble," or "Latvia's

national currency is a small boat, and because of that we should join the big ship (the euro zone)."

By the way, Eurosceptics in Estonia and Latvia countered the latter argument by giving a name to the "big ship" of the euro zone, stating that the correct name for that big ship is "Titanic." Latvia joined the euro zone on 1 January 2014 without a referendum, despite a large majority of population opposing this step as attested by opinion polls. 50 percent of Latvians opposed the transition from the lats (national currency) to the euro at the end of 2013, a survey conducted by the Latvian polling company SKDS shows. Only 25 percent answered that they were in favour of joining the euro zone.[3] As a result, today the euro zone "stabilisation" payments made by Latvia are used to bail out Greece and stabilise other fragile countries of the euro zone. The ongoing "bail out" contributions of Latvia add hundreds of millions of euro to Latvia's foreign debt, while Latvia is forced to borrow significant amounts to counter for its own expenditure needs. External debt of Latvia averaged 16.2 billion euro from 1995 until 2015, reaching an all-time high of 37.2 billion euro in the first quarter of 2017. It started from a record low of 825.6 million euro in the fourth quarter of 1995 – the year when the EU accession process started.[4]

Experts often compare the euro changeover in Latvia to Latvia's situation in the Soviet Union. In the Soviet times, Latvia also had its own flag, its own constitution, its own parliament, its own anthem. But of course, that was only an illusion of independence and sovereignty. During the Soviet regime, Latvia didn't have its own currency. The difference then is that the Soviet rubble had text in the Latvian language on its notes, but the euro notes do not contain even that minor polite gesture towards national feelings and sentiments of a small Baltic nation.

During the EU's sugar policy reform, the EU-imposed production quotas lead to the closure of both sugar factories in Latvia, thereby contributing millions to Latvia's negative trade balance. The country has been forced to maintain a large negative trade balance with the EU every consecutive year since 1995. Today, Latvia's negative trade balance has stabilised at slightly over two billion euro per year.[5]

THE DOMESTIC POLITICS OF EUROSCEPTIC ACTION

Given the aforementioned facts, it is rather surprising that pro-EU parties manage to keep Latvia's Eurosceptics out of the European Parliament. Denmark, for example, elected its first Eurosceptical members to the European Parliament as early as in 1979. In Latvia, so far, the most significant problem for Eurocritical parties has been the size of their election budgets. Eurocritical parties in most of the cases by far didn't have election campaign funds necessary to cross the five percent barrier to enter the legislature since they were not involved in traditionally corrupted deal-making of "oligarchs" in Latvian politics (currently, the issue of "oligarchs" is under parliamentary investigation).

All of Latvia's parliamentary parties, both representing the Latvian voters and the Russian-speaking minority, supported joining the EU in 2003. Taking into account the popularity of Eurocritical ideas, the political parties often pretended to be rather Eurocritical in the election campaigns over the following years on some of the obviously negative impacts of EU membership, while in reality, they did nothing in this direction. Whatever Eurocritical rhetoric the pro-EU parties, including "*Zaļo un Zemnieku Savienība*" [Union of the Greens and Farmers] and "*Nacionālā Apvienība*" [National Allience], staged during election campaigns, the governing parliamentary coalitions, along with most of the opposition parties, voted in favour of everything proposed by Brussels after elections. This represents a huge difference with the situation of Eurocritics in both Scandinavia and Visegrád group of states.

The oldest Eurosceptical party in Latvia is the Eurosceptical Party of Action, founded in 1998. This party scored roughly 1 percent (0.95 percent) in the 2004 European Parliament elections. A year later, in 2005, the centre-left Eurocritical coalition "*Dzimtene*" [Fatherland], including the aforementioned Eurosceptical party, scored 11.5 percent in the Riga City municipal elections. "*Dzimtene*" is still represented in Latvia's politics in the form of "*Vislatvijas Sociāldemokrātu kustība*

"Par Neatkarīgu Latviju"" [Latvia-wide Socialdemocratic Movement "For Independent Latvia"]. In the 2017 Riga City municipal elections, this party received 799 votes (0.32 percent), while the Eurosceptical party of Action received 549 votes (0.22 percent). Both parties are financed by private donations and their expenses, according to legislation, are controlled by the Latvian state anti-corruption agency KNAB.

After the above mentioned breakthrough in 2005, the mainstream pro-EU parties managed to keep Eurosceptics below the five percent barrier for an impressive nine years. In 2014, the moderate conservative party "From Heart for Latvia", which opposes EU-federalism, was elected to the national parliament (7 percent of MP's). In the 2017 Riga City municipal elections, the party received 1517 votes (0.61 percent) but was successfully elected into ten smaller municipalities. From Heart for Latvia is funded both by private donations and the state funding available to parliamentary parties.

It is worth mentioning that Latvia's Eurocritical movement, despite not being represented at the parliamentary level until 2014, has been active in both Russian and Latvian language media since EU accession. Generally, in Latvia's media, the movement sees a lack of qualified debate about how EU institutions work and how the EU should be shaped in the future.

THE EUROPEAN POLITICS OF EUROSCEPTIC ACTION

In 2014, the huge success of Eurocritical parties in the European Parliament elections dramatically influenced the situation. Despite the fact that no Eurocritical candidate has been elected to the European Parliament from Latvia itself, the Eurocritical movements in Latvia benefited from a close cooperation with all European Eurocritical parties represented in the European Parliament. In fact, since EU accession in 2004, Latvian Eurocritical organisations have been increasingly represented in the Eurocritical political blocs

at the European level. A political party at the European level is an organisation following a political programme composed of national parties, and parliamentarians representing these blocs simultaneously speak on behalf of many member states. As indicated in the Treaty on the EU, "political parties at European level contribute to forming a European awareness and to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union."

Since July 2004, the European political parties have been able to receive annual funding from the European Parliament. The funding takes the form of an operating grant. It can cover up to 85 percent of the eligible expenditure of a party, while the rest should be covered by own resources, such as membership fees and donations. The grant can be used to meet the expenditures directly linked to the objectives as set out in the party's political programme. However, the grant cannot be used, among others, to meet expenditures such as campaign costs for referenda and elections (except for the European elections), direct or indirect funding of national parties, election candidates and political foundations both at national and at the European level.[6]

Among the European political parties, there are those that negatively view the developing centralisation of political processes and decisions in the EU. The European Union Democrats (EUD) were the first political party at the European level with Latvian activists and members of parliament represented since 2004. The development of the EU is a matter of great concern, according to the EUD. To their mind, the EU erodes European democracy in two ways: first, the ever-increasing transfer of power to Brussels widens the gap between citizens and the elites. This transfer makes it more difficult for citizens to control their governments. Second, the treaties of the EU are written to widen the power of Brussels and big corporations at the expense of decision making in democratically elected bodies.

The EUD gathered EU critical parties, persons and movements. Their members took a mixed position, with some being "hard" and some "soft" in their EU scepticism. The EUD believes that decisions regarding the balance of power between the market and democratically elected institutions should be decided in national

parliaments according to the results of national elections, and not by treaties interpreted by a small number of judges in the European Court in Luxemburg. This is a fundamental, undemocratic flaw in the basic construction of the Union. On that EU-critical platform, the EUD campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty and proposals to introduce any forms of an EU tax. During the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty, the EUD was joined in Latvia by a political party "*Jaunie Demokrāti*" [New Demcrats] and their member in the national parliament Māris Gulbis (currently in "*Jaunā Konservatīvā partija*" [New Conservative Party]). In 2014, the EUD was joined by the Latvian MEP Iveta Grigule (back then from the Union of the Greens and Farmers, now independent).

Since 2012, Latvia and Lithuania have also been represented in the European Alliance for Freedom (EAF), initially formed by the Austrian Freedom Party and the National Front of France. The famous French politician and candidate for the post of president Marine Le Pen was the first vice-president of EAF. Since 2004, Latvian representatives have often been elected as board members and to vice-president positions in the mentioned political parties at the European level. For example, Marine Le Pen was later replaced by Normunds Grostiņš, who has been a vice-president of EAF since 2016.

WHAT IS NEXT?

There is no separate "Euroscepticism of small member states." European Eurocritical activism is rather well-connected with the international movement supported by millions of voters in both small and large member states. In Eastern Europe, the EU-critical parties are increasingly represented both in national parliaments and in the European Parliament. The approach of countries in Visegrád group towards immigration, and more generally towards the EU, is gaining more and more traction. In Latvia, the leading national political party supporting the Visegrád-model of politics – active defence of national interests – is From Heart for Latvia. The

party recently publicly expressed its support to Hungary and its Prime-Minister Viktor Orbán.

The EU, if properly organised, can bring a lot of benefits. Conversely, it can bring a lot of problems too, if not properly managed. Eurosceptics have noticed that across the continent, pro-European parties and their policies are losing ground because of undemocratic and often arrogant policy-making, putting at risk the well-being and even the lives of their citizens. For this reason, the EU has to be changed. Yet the time for that change is actually very limited. In 1991, people from Eastern Europe witnessed how a large union collapsed in the span of a few months.

Both in Eastern Europe and Latvia, acts and restrictions such as EU-imposed immigrant quotas often evoke comparisons between the EU and the Soviet Union. The author of this article was on pro-independence barricades in 1991, and 20 years later received the official State Medal of Barricades for that. From history and his personal experience, he knows that people are ready to stand and even to fight for freedom and democracy. The history of Latvia and Europe clearly demonstrates that. It is now necessary to transform Europe into a place where fighting for freedom and democracy is not fighting against the EU. The EU must enhance and contribute both to national democracy and security. For the author of this article, Europe is a home. And he wants to see it flourishing, democratic and secure.

CONCLUSIONS

In Latvia's media, there is a lack of qualified debate about how EU institutions work and how the EU should be shaped in the future. Latvia's Eurocritical movement, despite not being represented at a parliamentary level until 2014, was active in both Russian and Latvian language media since EU accession. Taking into account the widespread popularity of Eurocritical ideas, the mainstream political parties, particularly the National Alliance and the Union of the Greens and Farmers, often pretended to be rather Eurocritical

during election campaigns on some of the obviously negative impacts of the EU membership. But both of them supported the Lisbon Treaty, joining the euro zone without a referendum and accepting EU-imposed refugee quotas.

Since EU accession in 2004, Latvian Eurocritical organisations have been represented in the European level political parties at an increasing rate. The Latvian representatives have often been elected as board members and vice-presidents of these European political parties.

Until 2014, the Eurocritical parties significantly lacked the election campaign funds necessary to compete on par with pro-European parties. In 2014, the moderate conservative party From Hearth for Latvia was elected to national parliament. The party stands against the federalisation of the EU and supports the Visegrád-model politics – the active defence of national interests. Under the influence of the immigration crisis, problems in the euro zone, and the challenges currently facing the EU in different policy areas, Latvia's political landscape is very likely to include a growing Eurocritical element in the future.

ENDNOTES

[1] Teresa Kuechler, "Irish most happy, Brits most unhappy with EU," *Euobserver*, 20 December 2005, https://euobserver.com/news/20597.

[2] Opinion poll by SKDS of 2016.

[3] Sophia Schirmer, "The new currency still whips up feelings in Latvia," *Euroviews*, 30 April 2014, http://www.euroviews.eu/2014/2014/04/30/euro-scepticism/#comment-2908).

[4] „Latvia Gross External Debt," *Trading Economics*, http://www.tradingeconomics.com/latvia/external-debt.

[5] „Latvia – Trade balance," *countryeconomy.com*, http://countryeconomy.com/trade/balance/latvia.

[6] The legal basis is given in Article 10 paragraph 4 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 224 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The rules of funding are laid down by a regulation adopted by the Council and the Parliament. It has been revised in order to improve the conditions for funding. The implementing rules are adopted by the Bureau of the European Parliament. See European Parliament, "Political parties at European level," http://www.europarl.europa.eu/contracts-and-grants/en/20150201PVL00101/Political-parties-and-foundations.

EUROPEAN UNION AT A CROSSROAD: REFORM OR FAILURE?

Vytautas Radžvilas

As we are contemplating the present condition of the European Union (EU), as well as the future of the entire European integration project, it is worthwhile to remember the words of Charles Talleyrand, a political figure from the late 18th and early 19th century France, spoken in response to criticism of his supposed fickleness and lack of loyalty. During that turbulent and erratic period of French history, Talleyrand managed to persistently retain not only the position of the chief of state diplomacy but also several other positions of great importance and responsibility. His opponents believed that the only reason that fortune would persistently smile upon this politician was his apparent tendency to cynically betray his political masters and switch allegiance to a new one with no delay every time the government would change, and his opponents had often reproached him publically for that. Talleyrand himself considered such accusations to be a mere misunderstanding and denounced them as a slander claiming that he had never betrayed anyone. According to him, he was able to distinguish himself from his rivals because of his superior insight, due to which he would recognise the death of his master much earlier than others did, allowing him to begin serving the new master a good time in advance. The point of this small historical deflection is to remind that numerous events of epoch-making significance could not have been immediately recognised as such, even by their direct participants or contemporary observers.

We are now direct participants and contemporary observers of exactly such a global event of immense significance. Just as in numerous cases in the past, this event is still not entirely obvious to the majority of the populace. In spite of that, it has already become

an irrevocable fact: the EU, at least in the form maintained since the Maastricht Treaty, has failed. It is Talleyrand's lesson that allows us to comprehend the actual importance of the two main questions dominating today. The first – will the self-evident structural crisis of the EU culminate in a complete and irreversible collapse? The second – what does Lithuania gain from remaining a part of this union, and what position should it take in the face of a deepening crisis? Both questions, however, are ultimately pointless. Since the Maastricht version of the EU has already failed, there is no need to senselessly argue over the decision of either leaving it or holding onto it by trying to save it. There is nowhere to leave, and nothing to save. From this perspective, the ongoing public and academic debate between "Euroenthusiasts," "Eurorealists" and "Eurosceptics" is a purely ideological (i.e. non-substantive) dispute; one that is not based on theoretically defined concepts, but merely consists of spouting obscure evaluative labels and clichés. The only constructive alternative to these so-called "discussions" is a volitional attempt to contemplate the crisis faced by the EU, and the consequences of it for the entire continent, from a strictly theoretical and historical point of view, and to articulate the resulting insights in the clear and precise language of ideas of political philosophy.[1]

INDISCERNIBLE *SPIRITUAL DEATH* OF THE EU

To many, the notion that the EU is a failure may seem bizarre, untrue, or even seem like an insidious and hasty effort to bury this lively and robust political body. However, such doubts can only arise due to insufficient knowledge of history. Poor understanding of history is the main cause of the widespread perception that the disintegration and ultimate collapse of states must always make itself apparent as a self-evident cataclysm. This has not always been the case. For example, outwardly, the last days of the Soviet Union seemed peaceful and calm: even though the Union itself was practically no longer existent after the putsch of August 1991, its bureaucratic machine did not

stop operating until its formal dissolution continuing to oversee the day-to-day matters of a non-existent state and its populace. One can argue that the larger and richer a state or any other political body is in resources, the longer its parts are able to keep moving out of bureaucratic inertia after the state's demise. Therefore, apart from the cases of domestic revolt, destructive uprising or conquest by a foreign aggressor, political entities may suffer a "spiritual death" without it being immediately evident because of mental and bureaucratic inertia. Such a "spiritual death" most often comes in a gradual, imperceptible manner. It happens when the *governing idea*, or *idée directrice* – a French term coined by a 19th century political and legal thinker Maurice Hauriou to describe the concept of a communal purpose that unites people into a political community and inspires them to work together – becomes "stale," i.e. it loses its appeal and meaning. Without the governing idea, a political community simply dissolves into a loosely-affiliated populace.

The Soviet Union was a vast empire with a tremendous and powerful army, yet it collapsed without firing a single bullet. Due to the slow and indiscernible manner in which the governing idea loses its potential to bind and mobilise the populace, it is difficult to recognise it as such, nor is it any easier to discern the specific moment it happens. Despite this, *its approach is usually anticipated, or even announced beforehand, although rarely without a certain amount of reluctance or disregard of it.* Mikhail Gorbachev's declaration of the "restructuration" of the USSR was a factual admission that the Soviet empire had, for all intents and purposes, ceased to function as a state. *At the very least, a public statement on the necessity for reform was a clear sign that the grand empire, stretching over a sixth of the globe, was already going through its final moments of existence.* The "restructuration" itself was essentially nothing more than a desperate effort to rejuvenate this defunct and inert political body, already stiffening from *rigour mortis*.[2]

Today, it is worthwhile to remember the circumstances and events surrounding the fall of the USSR, seeing how the EU is heading down a worryingly familiar path. Despite the increasingly

intense foreboding of an imminent crisis that seems to linger everywhere these days, Brexit has thus far been the only event of major significance and noticeability in this regard. The bureaucracy in Brussels continues to cook up new directives forwarded to the member states, whose citizens keep on living peacefully in their usual daily rhythm as if nothing is happening. Yet, the declaration on the current condition of the EU agreed upon by the heads of the member states during their meeting in Bratislava in September 2016, is a clear indication of just how delusive and ostensible this superficial tranquillity of everyday life in the EU really is. By declaring a commitment to come up with a new and appealing vision of the Union in a few months' time, the leaders of the EU essentially confirmed that the EU lacks the aforementioned governing idea – the spiritual, moral and political purpose that would bind the populace and provide the desperately needed common feeling that the Union has a *raison d'etre*.

FORGING NEW FOUNDATIONAL BASIS FOR THE EU: THE NEO-FUNCTIONAL FAILURE

It has long been noted in academic literature that the philosophical questions pertaining to the issue of the unity of Europe, widely and fervently discussed during the early decades of the 20th century, were no longer contemplated after 1955 – the very year when the integration strategy and vision, proposed by Jean Monnet and later theoretically conceptualized as a neo-functionalist approach by Ernst B. Haas, essentially pushed all the competing conceptions of the EU integration into obscurity.[3] It should be noted that the author of this strategy himself had insistently advocated the avoidance of conceptual – that is, philosophical and theoretical – questions on integration, suggesting instead to replace them with purely technical research of various aspects of it. In fact, the process of European integration has turned into what is sometimes treated as a type of ordo-liberal high (post)modern governance project.[4] For this reason,

the considerations of the foundational philosophical questions pertaining to EU integration have been abandoned, and the current scientific literature is dominated by a non-conceptual technical analysis of the various aspects of the EU integration processes. In view of the primarily conceptual nature of the crisis that the EU is currently facing, such a focus on technical research contributes nothing truly substantial to attempts at finding a new philosophical basis for EU integration. From a theoretical and methodological standpoint, a more sensible way of acting would comprise, first, a better understanding of the role that the loss of a binding governing idea plays in the disintegration of states and other political bodies (USSR being one of the most recent examples), second, a better understanding of the reasons behind the crisis faced by the EU, and third, predicting possible directions and tendencies of the Union's further development.

It is obvious that the essential question of whether the EU will reform or fail cannot be answered by viewing it through the prism of ideologically equal notions of either "Euroenthusiasm" or "Euroscepticism."[5] This question can only be contemplated dispassionately from an academic perspective, and the analysis should start from the rather basic truth that political entities fail for two types of reasons – foreign or domestic, either due to the inability to resist a foreign aggressor or major issues and faults of the internal regime. Sometimes their fall is determined by an interplay between both factors. Although certain vestiges of such an interplay can be identified in the case of the EU, its inner structural and conceptual problems remain the main threat to the sustainability of the Union. Viewed historically, the EU is in a constant state of formation and therefore it is a perpetually changing entity; because of this feature, the questions of Union's inner structure and internal regime and of the suitability and effectiveness of the selected model of unification are deeply interlinked. It is exactly the indissoluble link between the integration model and the internal regime of the EU that allows us to state precisely (i.e. clearly and specifically) what is really meant when the current condition of the EU is discussed: the Union is

facing a deep crisis in the sense that the decades-old neo-functionalist integration approach has become completely exhausted conceptually.

UNREALISED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC VISION OF THE UNION: LIBERAL AND SOCIAL EXPERIMENTATION

It is quite unlikely that everyone would easily accept such a severe diagnosis. For quite a while, this issue will continue to be savagely fought over in ideological and political battles. After all, diagnosing the philosophical problems of the EU in a sober and honest manner would require an admission that a unified Europe was built on shaky conceptual foundations from the very beginning, and for several decades was mistakenly led down the path that does not resolve the aforementioned foundational issues. However, this might be the only opportunity to save Europe, but most likely not as the conceptually and politically bankrupt neo-functionalist EU integration project. It is important not to forget that the idea of a unified Europe is not the same as the various projects of its unification, and it is exactly this distinction that helps maintain faith in the future of the entire continent.

And yet, it seems impossible to comprehend the true nature and extent of the problems plaguing the EU, as well as to identify its manifestations, without considering an exceptionally important fact of postwar European history and politics, one often forgotten, or at least passed-over in silence – the integration model realised by Jean Monnet, the architect of neo-functionalist integration model, was not the only, or even the original vision of integration. In other words, Monnet, a state official lacking any political background, was not the real father of the idea of a unified Europe. This title actually belongs to a group of prominent statesmen from the three great powers – Italy, France and Germany. These men were Christian Democrats – Alcide de Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman.[6] (Schuman, in fact, played a central role in issuing the famous Declaration of 9 May 1950). An

equitable union of free nations and sovereign states, built upon the spiritual basis of the Christian civilisation of the West, resembling the Swiss confederacy, is one way to briefly describe the vision of a unified Europe as imagined by the postwar Christian Democrats. A few years later, Monnet proposed the neo-functionalist integration plan. The reasons and circumstances that caused this fundamental change – virtually a true revolution – are quite mysterious, and remain so even today, since there have not been any serious attempts to research them thoroughly as of yet.[7] This, however, does not prevent us from seeing the vast conceptual differences that separate the two quite different visions of European unity.

The fundamental difference between the two visions of the Union was made unambiguously evident by a statement in the memorandum of 1950, penned by Monnet himself: "Europe had never existed as such, and it is up to us to truly create it, allowing it to unfold onto itself." The meaning of this statement is absolutely clear and leaves no room for alternative interpretations: Gasperi, Adenauer and Schuman sought to unify a disjointed and divided, yet *existing* Europe, while Monnet's goal was to create a Europe that *did not exist*. In principle, there is only one way to achieve that – to reject the "old" or "untrue" Europe and create a "new" and "true" one in its place. Therefore, to imagine European integration simply as a process of unifying the people, nations and states of a continent would be a significant misunderstanding of this idea. So far, the entirety of the neo-functionalist European integration has been an attempt to create this "new" Europe by destroying the "old" Europe in the process, and using whatever remains as raw building material. This process was never about unification; from the very beginning, it was a permanent revolution of Europeanisation, with the goal of transforming the face of the old continent from the ground up and creating a totally new Europe – one, as has been pointed out before, based on extensive technical expertise but vague conceptual ideas.

On the other hand, certain aspects of this revolution (first and foremost, its philosophical premises) are self-evident and do not raise any doubts or questions. From a philosophical perspective, the

permanent process of Europeanisation, happening under the guise of neo-functionalist integration, is a curious amalgamation of the two great revolutionary traditions of the West, embodied by the political ideologies of liberalism and Marxism, whose foundational ideas can be traced back to John Locke and Karl Marx accordingly.[8] It is therefore correct and accurate to call the neo-functionalist integration a liberal-Marxian project. Because of this, the neo-functionalist integration has the same ultimate goal as all the previous revolutions inspired by the Enlightenment philosophy – to create a "new" man and a new future society, in which all the usual differences of the "old" humanity would disappear for good.[9] However, it was not expected that these ideals would be realised so fast and so easily. Monnet himself was certain that European integration, based on the principles of neo-functionalism, would be an endless process of transforming the consciousness of Europeans, resulting in a perpetual evolution that would never be completed. In this vision, the "new" European in the making represents the "new" man of the future, and serves the same factual purpose as the proletariat in the revolution theory of Marx – that of the class embodying universal humanity.

Generally, the very idea of universal humanity presupposes the possibility of the creation of a new man which could be described, using the title of the book by a famous writer Robert Musil, as *"the man without qualities."* Therefore, the "new" European must be understood as an abstract and fluid man of the future, levelled in all regards, and thus lacking any clearly discernible and permanent traits.[10] A society of such Europeans, or the so-called pan-European demos, would be a population of individuals whose members would have no clearly defined or stable identities and would be related to each other only by ties of common legal norms and instrumental-functional relations. They would gather into temporary cooperative enterprises, designed to perform a single function, and disperse after the given function was completed, just to gather into other such collectives following that. Looking from the civilisational angle in the long-term historical perspective, it becomes clear that such integration is essentially a radical anthropological experiment since

it entails a dissolution of "old" Europe, its cultural tradition, nations and states. For a long time, it has been slow and inconspicuous, due to the neo-functionalist integration, taking place mostly in the plane of economics. In the 1960s, the integration process seemed to have reached an impasse, and Haas himself declared the neo-functionalist interpretation of Monnet's integration strategy void. However, the integration strategy proposed by Monnet did not go away – neither practically, nor theoretically. The integration theories, which emerged since neo-functionalism – liberal intergovernmentalism, the multi-level governance approach and various versions of institutionalism – essentially attempted to provide Monnet's integration approach with a new theoretical justification.

THE REALITY OF THE EU IN EVERYONE'S EYES: A FAILED MAASTRICHT PROJECT

The Maastricht Treaty of 1992, by which the EU was officially founded as a political alliance, became the breaking point of integration. It was signed in the background of triumph over the victory in the Cold War against the USSR. Back then, it seemed that the new Union was heading towards a long period of prosperity. The EU's later expansion into the East, making an entire string of post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe new member states, only helped to strengthen these expectations. These expectations started collapsing, however, after only a few years. The helplessness demonstrated by the EU in face of the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 and the economic crisis that began at around the same time were considered to be the first clear signs of the weakness and vulnerability of the EU as a political and economic union. Signs like that continue to make themselves apparent and validate the question whether Monnet's EU integration project has reached the limits of its development, and consequently, has approached a dead-end.[11]

The main indication of such a dead-end is the huge divergence between the ideals of EU proclaimed by the liberal-Marxian ideology

on which the neo-functionalist integration project is based and by which it is usually legitimised, and the reality of the EU, its current condition and the issues of functionality.[12] This divergence is reflected in four underlying contradictions. The first – a contradiction between the universal human rights postulated by the ideology of the EU and the particular rights of a citizen of a specific and clearly defined political body. This contradiction manifests itself in the clash between the philosophical commitments of the EU and its actual physical, social and economic capabilities in the case of the recent refugee crisis; in principle, the EU is committed to accepting all the potential migrants of the world who seek the protection of their human and socio-economic rights from the EU, yet it is fairly obvious that the Union is socially incapable of doing that. The second – a contradiction between a global ideal of a world without borders and the objective necessity to protect the borders of the EU itself. The third – a contradiction between the declared mission of the EU to spread "European values" and democracy across the world, and the obvious "deficit of democracy" characteristic of the EU, or, to put it simply, an often-criticised lack of democratic transparency and representation of its governance. The fourth – a contradiction between the officially declared goal of the EU to ensure the well-being and safety of the European continent and the economic limitations of its ability to realise these promises.

Despite being the largest economy in the world, the EU generally struggles to compete with other economic powers, such as the United States and China, and so it is not only unable to guarantee a high level of welfare across the populace, but, on the contrary, faces difficulties while maintaining the post-war welfare state model. The promised prospects for peace are becoming increasingly problematic as well, and it is not just the aggressive foreign policy of Russia that is to blame for this. Some of the policies of the EU also played a non-negligible role in the increasing destabilisation of the security architecture in Europe. One of the most recent examples is the Union's attempt to pull Ukraine into its geopolitical space while not ensuring (possibly not even capable of ensuring) the necessary guarantees of military soft security through close economic ties and the prospect of membership in the EU.

RESPONSE TO LIBERAL-SOCIAL INTEGRATION EXPERIMENTATION: REVIVAL OF NATIONAL SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

These contradictions are truly fundamental and attest to the problems faced by the EU, which pose a real threat to the future survival of the Union. A spontaneous response to this crisis has been the resurgence of an idea of national self-preservation, currently noticeable in practically every country of the EU. A reaction to the contradictory processes taking place in the EU manifests itself as a revival and gradual strengthening of the national self-consciousness of the populace in the EU member states. In the Visegrád countries, first and foremost in Poland and Hungary, this revival has already ascended to the level of state policy. This should not be surprising to anyone: The Law and Justice party is led by Catholic nationalists, such as Jarosław Kaczynski, who played a prominent part in the movement against the communist regime in the 1980s, while Hungary was the first country of the communist bloc to stage an open rebellion in an attempt to liberate itself from the geopolitical space dominated and controlled by the Soviet Union in 1956. In Western Europe, Great Britain's referendum on leaving the EU has become a direct political expression of a similar nationalist sentiment.

On an official level, the EU's reaction to these events has been equivocal and contradictory. On one hand, the official position is still to proclaim that some countries of the EU are currently facing a growing surge of an "anti-European" sentiment. What is usually left unsaid is that a resistance to the Monnet's EU integration model, void of an appealing governing idea, does not automatically imply an *anti-European* sentiment. It may be merely a radical expression of a desire for a new form of the Union. In fact, it may create the preconditions for the revival of the idea of a unified Europe, which, as of now, is widely viewed as having lost conceptual credibility and appeal. It is possible, however, that a viable alternative to the current integration model will become an idea that a renewed and reborn Union should be a democratic union of free nations and sovereign states,

as it has been envisaged by the Christian Democrats, not the purely "functional" federation that is currently in the process of formation.

There is a conscious attempt to marginalise by inertia the movements and political powers that are seeking change in the EU, by sticking onto them various labels, such as "authoritarian populism", "radical right", or "radical nationalism". On the other hand, the requests of these "radical" forces, although still publicly condemned relentlessly, are in fact already being officially recognised and granted a place in traditional practical politics. Even the countries that had adamantly criticised Hungary have eventually taken upon themselves the protection of their borders, while Angela Merkel, during her visit in Africa, tried very hard to ensure the governments and the people of this region that the EU has already exhausted its naturally limited capabilities to "hospitably" welcome migrants.

CONCLUSIONS

One can only wager a guess as to how this entire directionless tossing around will end. The obligation to prepare an attractive and inspiring vision of the Union's future in a few months' time, declared during the EU summit at Bratislava, can only mean one of two things. Either a fundamental "restructuring" programme will be declared, or a package of partial and trivial reforms will be deemed to be satisfactory, probably producing no significant changes. In the former case, the idea of a unified Europe would be reborn anew and a long, arduous path of integration conducted on a reasonable conceptual basis would await us. In the latter outcome, however, the EU would proceed to stagnate in a state of crisis, eventually witnessing its member states separate from each other, causing unpredictable consequences for the future of the entire continent.

Will the EU meet a demise of the same nature as the USSR? This is undoubtedly the most important question of today – one of a global scale and epoch-making significance. Comparing the task of the EU leadership to the challenge Gorbachev had faced is hardly

an accepted practice: Even among the members of academia, the thought of comparing the EU and the USSR remains largely a taboo and is often considered sacrilegious. However, under the current circumstances, such a comparison is useful to make, especially from a purely philosophical and scientific-analytical point of view. From a theoretical and methodological standpoint, comparing the EU and the USSR allows for a better understanding of the role that the *governing idea plays in maintaining the stability of a state or any other political body*, and thus illuminates some of the fundamental reasons behind the crisis faced by the EU, as well as predicting possible directions and tendencies of the Union's further development.

ENDNOTES

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PART II:

THE SOCIOLOGY OF EUROSCEPTICISM IN THE BALTIC STATES

Aldis Austers and Jurijs Ņikišins

GENERAL TRENDS AND SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILING OF EU OPPOSITIONISTS IN THE BALTIC STATES

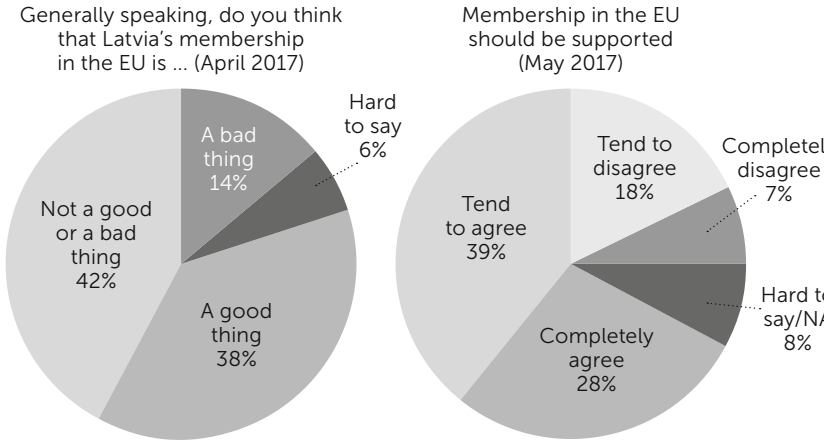
This section is focused on the public attitude in Latvia and the other Baltic countries with respect to membership in the EU, different key EU policies and sociodemographic profiling of people according to their stance on EU membership. The analysis is foremost centred on the data available from the SKDS Marketing and Public Opinion Research Centre public opinion polls. These polls, which are conducted with the regularity of 2–3 times per year, allow (1) longitudinal comparison of opinions among respondents across many years. The results from Latvia are then compared to the data available on Estonia and Lithuania. The next (2) stage provides a look at the public attitude towards different key EU policies like the euro, free movement of people and the image and trust in the EU compared to domestic institutions. Finally, (3) a sociodemographic profiling of those groups of people having essentially negative position towards Latvia's membership in the EU is carried out. In the case of Latvia, the profiling is based on the data from three consecutive opinion polls of SKDS conducted during 2016 and 2017. The results from Latvia are then again compared to those of Estonia and Lithuania based on SKDS opinion poll from May 2017 which was specifically commissioned for the purposes of this study and was conducted simultaneously in the three Baltic states.

THE DYNAMICS OF PUBLIC OPINION WITH RESPECT TO LATVIA'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU

In the case of Latvia, the SKDS has been measuring the public attitude towards Latvia's EU membership using the same approach since May 2004. The question being asked is the following: *"Generally speaking, do you think that Latvia's membership in the EU is...,"* and then respondents are asked to choose between the following four options of answers: "a good thing," "not a good or a bad thing," "a bad thing," or "difficult to say." It is important to note that, as it is shown later in this article, depending on how the survey question is formulated and how nuanced the possible answers are, the results may vary considerably. For example, a public opinion poll on EU membership with three answer options ("support," "don't support" and "don't know") will return different results compared to one with four options (see above) and five options ("completely agree," "tend to agree," "tend to disagree," "completely disagree," "hard to say"). What is more, unlike the Eurobarometer polls, the SKDS accepts responses not only from the citizens but also from the permanent residents of Latvia. As Latvia, along with Estonia, is a country with a sizeable community of Russian-speaking permanent residents, the opinion of those people matters.[1] At last, a comparison of longitudinal tendencies is not possible based on Eurobarometer polls because of changed methodology in 2011. Therefore, for longitudinal studies national polls are used in this study.[2]

As an example, according to the latest regular survey of the SKDS, in Latvia, 14 percent of respondents replied that EU membership was a bad thing, while 38 percent agreed that it was a good thing. At the same time, the SKDS opinion poll from May 2017 returned that a positive attitude towards EU membership was held by 68 percent of people in Latvia (28 percent strongly supported and 40 percent tended to support), while a negative attitude against the country's EU membership stood at 25 percent (18 tended to be opposed and 7 percent were resolutely opposed). (See Figure 1.) These discrepancies cannot be explained by a sudden shift in public

Figure 1. Comparison of general results between opinion polls from April 2017 and May 2017



Source: SKDS opinion polls

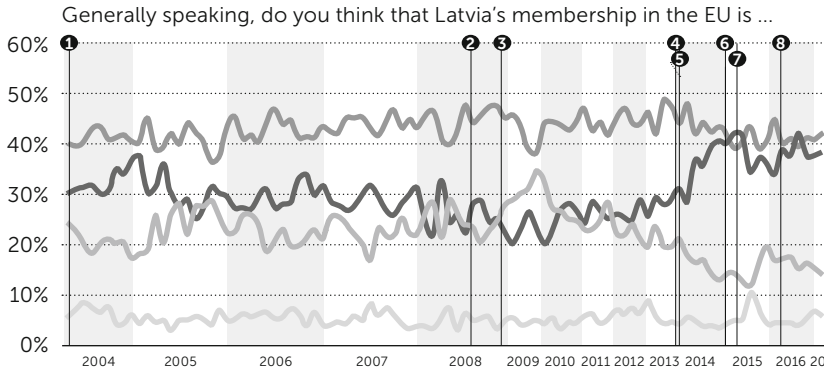
opinion – such a dramatic change in such a short period of time can only be triggered by a considerable social shock; however, no such shock was observed. An alternative and more plausible explanation is linked to the formulation of the questions asked and options of responses given. In fact, the May 2017 poll had more nuanced options for replies and it seems that the set of those people who held neutral views in April 2017 poll (42 percent) effectively were dissolved between the "tend to agree" and "tend to disagree" options in the May 2017 poll (57 percent).

Since 2004, as shown in Figure 2, the level of those respondents holding either neutral view or having no opinion at all (around or slightly above 40 percent and below 10 percent, respectively) has been the most stable. The share of those manifesting a positive or negative attitude towards EU membership has been less stable and have passed through considerable intermittent fluctuations. Notwithstanding that, the positive attitude has somewhat dominated across the whole time span, although there have been moments when the negative attitude gained superiority (e.g. in 2005, 2008, and between 2009

and 2011). Since the end of 2011, the positive gap between supporters and opponents of the EU membership started to grow wider and wider. This attests to the impact of major domestic and international events on public opinion. Thus, in the beginning, in 2004, the positive attitude towards the EU could be attributed to general euphoria stemming from the accession. The Russia-Georgia War of August 2008 also delivered a boost to the supporters' side, although this effect was short-term and quickly faded away in the face of the looming financial and economic difficulties at the end of 2008. The attraction of the EU began to increase again in 2012, and since then has been constantly improving. The initial momentum was provided by improving economic conditions after the economic hardship of 2008–2009 and was later reinforced by Latvia's accession to the euro zone in 2014 and Latvia's presidency of the EU in 2015. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in 2014, has also had a major effect on people's positive regard of the EU which was perceived as a safety shelter against the spillover of the conflict in the direction of the Baltic region. The highest level of the support in favour of EU membership (42 percent) was actually reached in March 2015, at the height of Latvia's presidency in the EU. Since then, the level of support has slightly declined, most likely because of the persistent internal problems of the EU (e.g. the Greek bailout, the refugee crisis and Brexit).

In the other Baltic countries, the level of support for EU membership has been persistently higher than in Latvia, although a direct comparison between the Latvian data and the figures from Lithuania and Estonia is not possible due to differences in the design of the respective opinion polls (see Figures 3 and 4).[3] In both cases, the neutral option (e.g. "not a good or a bad thing") is missing. Despite these differences, however, one can notice that in Estonia, opposition to EU membership has been somewhat more elevated (it has actually fluctuated between 30 and 11 percent) than in Lithuania, where it has never surpassed the threshold of 22 percent. Another relevant conclusion from the comparison is that it seems that public opinion in Estonia and Lithuania has been less exposed to geopolitical tensions

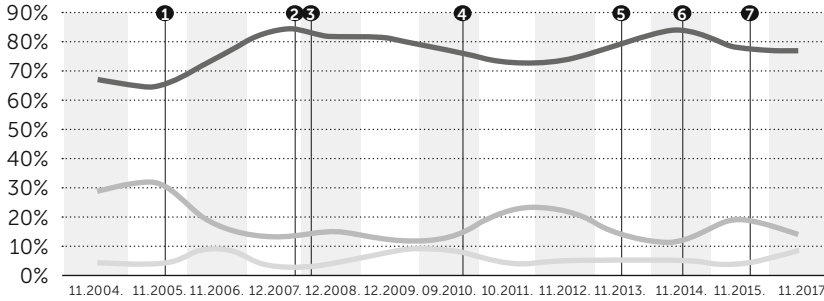
Figure 2. The dynamic of public attitudes regarding EU membership in Latvia, percents



1 EU accession
2 Georgia-Russia war
3 Economic crash and bailout of Latvia
4 Adoption of the euro
5 Ukraine-Russia conflict
6 Latvia's presidency in the EU
7 Refugee crisis
8 Brexit

Source: SKDS opinion polls' data from 2004 until 2017

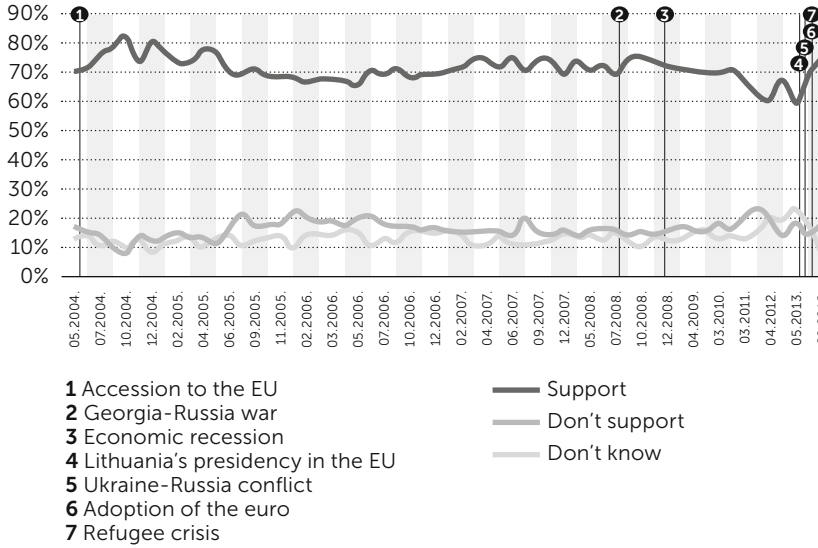
Figure 3. Public attitudes towards EU membership in Estonia, percents



1 Beginning of economic boom
2 Economic recession
3 Georgia-Russia war
4 Adoption of the euro
5 Ukraine-Russia conflict
6 Refugee crisis
7 Brexit

Source: Turu-uuringute AS, "Elanikkonna teadlikkus ja suhtumine Euroopa Liidu küsimustes. Elanikkonna küsitlusuuring" [Personal knowledge and access to the European Union questions. Population survey] (Riigikantselei, January 2017)

Figure 4. Public attitudes towards EU membership in Lithuania, percents



Source: "Lithuanian Public Opinion and the EU Membership," *www.euro.lt,* https://web.archive.org/web/20131225114450/http://www.euro.lt/en/lithuanias-membership-in-the-eu/lithuanian-public-opinion/

between Russia and the West. Also, the timing of the adoption of the euro was different in the three Baltic states (Estonia adopted the euro in 2011, Latvian – in 2014, and Lithuania – in 2015), as was the sequence of the national presidencies in the EU (Lithuania had its presidency in 2013, but Estonia – in 2017). It resulted in the dissipation of the positive impact of these events on public opinion. Thus, Estonia and Lithuania could not benefit from the combined positive effect of these events as did Latvia.

OPPOSITION TO KEY EUROPEAN ASPECTS IN LATVIA, ESTONIA AND LITHUANIA

In this section, four policies/aspects are considered. The actual list, of course, is considerably longer; however, the selected policy areas

concern the core of the European integration processes and have attracted considerable attention in the Baltic states. The aspects to be considered are the euro and full participation in the Economic and Monetary Union, the free movement of people, the image of the EU and trust in the EU. The data are drawn from Eurobarometer Interactive collection and are depicted in Figure 5.

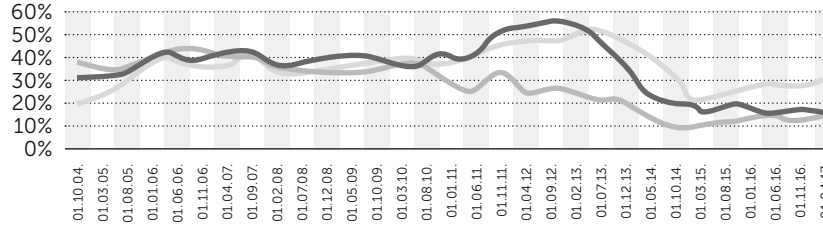
The first thing to note is that in all three countries there has been considerably higher opposition to the euro (on average around 35 percent) compared to opposition to the free movement of people (around 3 percent). Estonians were the first to adopt the euro, and their opposition has been the lowest among the three countries. Since 2013, Lithuanians are in the lead in terms of the opposition to the euro. Their hostility has somewhat eased with the adoption of the euro in 2015, yet the latest data show a reversal again. This is a strange development considering the very high level of support for Lithuania's EU membership.

As far as the image of the EU is concerned, Latvians are the most sceptical, which naturally links to the higher prevailing level of opposition towards EU membership in Latvia. The level of resentment of the EU image has fluctuated around 15 percent in Latvia. Estonia comes next in respect to antipathy towards the EU. Here, the level of opposition can be estimated at 10 percent of respondents. In Lithuania, only a small fraction of people have a bad image of the EU – dislike of the EU has rarely surpassed 10 percent.

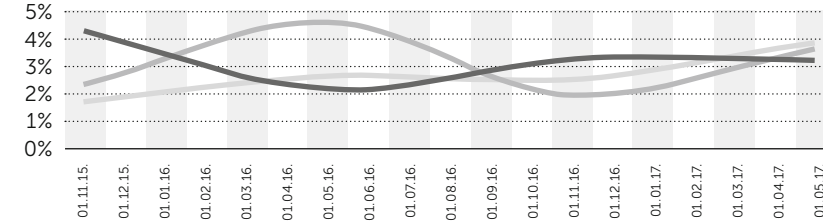
Distrust in the EU is another important aspect to consider. In Figure 5d, instead of a comparison of the level of distrust between the EU and the national governments, a combined result is presented. Namely, the level of distrust in the national government is subtracted from the level of distrust in the EU. Thus, a negative number indicates that the level of distrust in the national government is much higher than in the EU; the higher the negative number, the larger the gap in distrust. A positive number, conversely, testifies to a higher confidence in the national government than in the EU; however, this is not the case in the Baltic countries – all three depict a considerable deficit in trust with respect to national governments. Estonia shows smaller

Figure 5. Opposition to the key European policies and aspects in the Baltic states

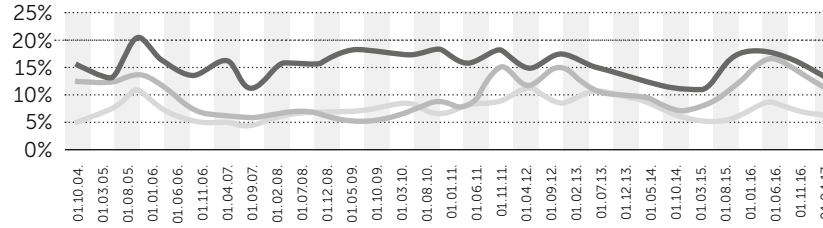
a) Opposition towards the EMU and the euro



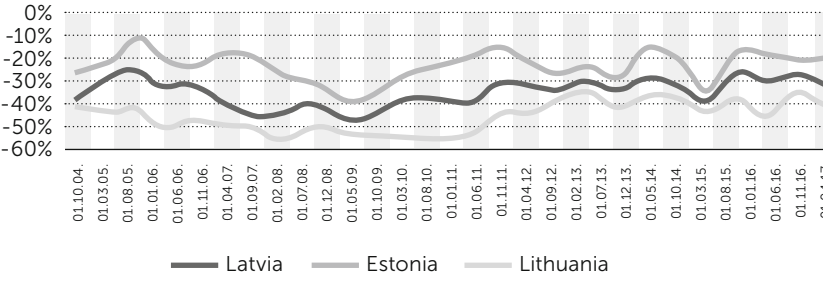
b) Opposition to the free movement of people



c) Antipathy towards the EU (bad image)



d) A gap in distrust between the EU and national governments



Source: Interactive Eurobarometer

imbalance while Lithuania leads from the negative end. For example, in April 2017, 21.5 percent of Lithuanians tended not to trust the EU. At the same time, 65 percent were opposed to the national government, yielding a gap of -43.5 percentage points.

THE SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PEOPLE WITH SCEPTICAL VIEWS OF EU MEMBERSHIP

As previously indicated, the regularity and level of detail of the SKDS opinion polls provide a good base for sociodemographic profiling of respondents according to their attitude towards EU membership. For the purpose of this study, results from three polls December 2016, January 2017 and April 2017 were combined to determine the sociodemographic profile of both optimist and sceptical groups of respondents in Latvia. The following observations can be drawn from the results (see Table 1):

1. In general, out of 3122 respondents, 39 percent were supportive of Latvia's EU membership, while 15 percent believed that it was a bad thing and 41 percent held a neutral view;
2. Gender effect: males tend to have slightly more polar views than females with respect to EU membership (41 percent of males see it as a good thing while 16 percent as a bad thing; for females, the corresponding result was 37 and 14 percent);
3. Age effect: the older the person, the more sceptical he/she is about the merits of EU membership. Thus, only 10 percent of young people (15–24 years) find membership to be a bad thing, while among the eldest cohort (65-74 years) twice as many (19 percent) held such a sceptical view;
4. Ethnicity effect: there is a considerable difference between the two largest ethnic groups in Latvia. Latvians are much less sceptical about EU membership (11 percent) than the Latvian Russians (21 percent). People of other ethnic origin show more moderate attitude;
5. Education effect: a clear correlation can be observed between educational attainment and the level of scepticism towards the EU

membership: people with a higher degree exhibit less scepticism (11 percent), while people with lower attainment – considerably higher (18 percent);

6. Employment effect: unemployed people tend to exhibit a slightly higher level of scepticism (16 percent) than employed people (14 percent) in Latvia. Among those who are employed, those working in the public sector are more optimistic minded (41 percent) and less sceptical (9 percent) about the EU than those in the private sector (40 percent and 16 percent respectively). At the same time, the status of employment matters too. Managers tend to be less pessimistic about EU membership compared to blue-collar workers (11 and 17 percent respectively), while self-employed people have a more moderate attitude;
7. Income effect: it seems that there exists a strong correlation between the level of income and the level of scepticism: the higher the level of income the more positivity towards EU membership. In the lowest income stratum, the share of EU oppositionists equals 20 percent, while at the highest – only 13 percent show discontent with the EU membership;
8. Family effect: families with children tended to show less scepticism towards the EU compared to families with no underage children (13 and 16 percent of negative responses respectively). Interestingly, and somewhat in contradiction to the income effect, the larger the size of the family, the more positive and less sceptical a particular household is about the EU. Among families with one member, 18 percent believe that EU membership is a bad thing. However, among families with 4 and more members, only 11 percent share the view that EU membership is a bad thing;
9. Settlement effect: the level of support for the EU among the people living in the capital, Riga, has been the highest (43 percent), yet also the share of those having an inclination towards scepticism is higher among the people living in the capital (15 percent). It is also a fact that in Latvia, there is a much higher level of scepticism among people living in cities and towns (17 percent) than among rural people (12 percent). This phenomenon is linked to the higher

concentration of Russian-speaking people in urban areas, among whom the scepticism level is much higher than among the natives.

Examining specific regions, the highest level of scepticism is observed in Kurzeme (18 percent) and Latgale (17 percent). Kurzeme is a "stronghold" of conservative nationalism in Latvia, while Latgale is densely populated by Russian people who tilt the public attitude towards scepticism in this region. The unemployment rate is also the highest in Latgale, followed by Kurzeme.

A cross-country comparison of sociodemographic profiles of Eurosceptical people (those who are against EU membership) in the Baltics is possible by exploiting the data from specifically commissioned SKDS opinion poll from May 2017. The list of sociodemographic parameters is not as complete as in regular SKDS polls; however, some common tendencies and discrepancies can be spotted. The comparative results are shown in Table 2.

From these data, it is possible to see that the level of opposition to EU membership is the highest in Latvia (24 percent) – almost double the level in Estonia and Lithuania (12 and 13 percent respectively). Gender seems not to be a factor in determining a person's faith in EU membership. At the same time, divorced or widowed people tend to be more sceptical about membership in all three countries. Age matters too – although in Estonia and Lithuania one cannot observe the same clear trend as in Latvia; nevertheless, there is a tendency to be more critical of EU membership with the age. Education is another important factor: the better educated the person, the less she or he is inclined to oppose the EU. In all three countries, a high level of scepticism is observed among people with vocational or secondary education. Low income level is clearly feeding scepticism in Latvia and Estonia, although in Lithuania the association is less clear. The language spoken in a family, which is a proxy for the ethnic origin of a respondent, makes a stark difference in Latvia and Estonia – Russian speakers are considerably more sceptical of the EU than native speakers. Finally, the unemployed tend to exhibit more scepticism than employed people in Latvia and Lithuania. In Estonia, this does

not seem to be the case, although the specific result may be affected by some unknown confounding factor.

CONCLUSIONS

The design and structure of an opinion poll have a major influence on the results at the level of specific numbers. There exist a variety of polls conducted at the national level and European level, however, a direct comparison is close to impossible because of differences in methodology. Some tendencies can be detected, however. Thus, Latvia seems the most sceptical in terms of EU membership – the distance is considerable to the other Baltic peer countries. Estonia comes second and Lithuania third. The level of antipathy towards EU membership has been declining recently in Latvia, as a result of a combination of factors (e.g. the economic recovery, the euro introduction, the presidency in the EU and growing geopolitical tensions with Russia). These factors have a positive effect on the other Baltic countries too, though the effect is dispersed over time. Finally, Latvia's public opinion seems to be more exposed to developments in geopolitical tensions between Russia and the West than in the other Baltic countries.

Considerable opposition to the euro exists in all three countries, but especially in Lithuania, which seems at odds with the high esteem of the EU within the country. Only a few people object to the principle of free movement of people within the EU. The bad image of the EU has been more prevalent in Latvia, although Estonia has come quite close to Latvia's level. In Lithuania, the number of people who view the EU as a bad thing is rather tiny, correlating with Lithuania's much higher trust in the EU (and respectively, low level of distrust) compared to the national government. In the case of Lithuania, the gap in distrust between the EU and national government is double the level of Estonia, for example.

The analysis of the sociodemographic parameters of respondents reveals that among the factors with the most influence over people's perception of EU membership are age, educational attainment, the

level of income, employment status and belonging to a particular language group in the Baltic countries. Thus, a typical Eurosceptical person is middle aged or retired, has Russian as his or her family language, with basic education, unemployed, with a low level of income and is living either in the capital or in remote regions. Except for the high concentration of sceptics in capitals in Latvia, the sociodemographic profile of Eurosceptical people is very similar to that of other EU member states. A particular observation in the case of Latvia is that large families tend to be less sceptical about the EU membership than small families, which is at odds with the determinant of income level.

Table 1. Public attitude towards Latvia's EU membership in different social demographic cohorts in Latvia, combined data, percents

"Latvian membership in the European Union is..."		A good thing	A bad thing	Not a good or a bad thing	Hard to say
ALL RESPONDENTS (n=3122)		39	15	41	6
GENDER	Male	41	16	38	5
	Female	37	14	43	6
AGE	15–24 years	59	10	26	5
	25–34 years	48	11	36	5
	35–44 years	37	16	41	5
	45–54 years	31	17	47	5
	55–64 years	32	17	46	6
	65–74 years	27	19	46	9
ETHNICITY	Latvian	46	11	39	4
	Russian	29	21	42	8
	Other	30	18	45	8
EDUCATION	Basic	38	18	37	7
	Secondary, professional secondary	35	16	43	6
	Higher	48	11	37	4
SECTOR OF WORK	Public sector	41	9	46	4
	Private sector	40	16	39	5

"Latvian membership in the European Union is..."		A good thing	A bad thing	Not a good or a bad thing	Hard to say
MAIN OCCUPATION	Manager	56	11	31	3
	Clerk, specialist (not physical work)	45	11	39	5
	Worker	33	17	45	5
	Self-employed, has own enterprise	37	13	45	5
	Retired	29	18	44	9
MAIN OCCUPATION	Pupil, student	66	8	21	5
	Housewife	47	12	37	3
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Employed	40	14	41	5
	Unemployed	37	16	39	7
AVERAGE MONTHLY NET INCOME PER ONE FAMILY MEMBER	Low	30	20	46	4
	Medium low	37	15	42	7
	Medium	34	13	47	7
	Medium high	41	14	39	6
	High	49	13	35	4
CHILDREN UP TO AGE 18 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD	Yes	45	13	37	5
	No	35	16	43	6
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS	1	30	18	42	9
	2	36	16	43	5
	3	40	14	40	6
	4 and more	47	11	37	4
REGION	Rīga	43	15	36	7
	Vidzeme	37	15	44	5
	Kurzeme	37	18	38	7
	Zemgale	37	11	49	2
	Latgale	36	17	41	7
SETTLEMENT TYPE	Riga, capital	43	15	36	7
	Other city, town	35	17	42	6
	Rural areas	38	12	45	5

Source: Combined data from SKDS opinion polls from December 2016, January 2017 and April 2017

Table 2. Proportion of Eurosceptical respondents in different sociodemographic groups in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, percents

		Latvia	Estonia	Lithuania
ALL RESPONDENTS		24	12	13
GENDER	Male	24	11	14
	Female	24	13	13
AGE	15–24 years	15	7	8
	25–34 years	15	16	11
	35–44 years	26	15	5
	45–54 years	29	14	15
	55–64 years	32	11	21
	65–74 years	26	14	18
MARITAL STATUS	Married/cohabiting	22	10	13
	Divorced/separated	38	19	18
	Widowed	25	13	19
	Single	20	14	12
EDUCATION	Basic or primary	19	10	14
	Vocational or secondary	29	15	15
	University degree	18	8	9
MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Low	30	16	13
	Medium low	25	10	18
	Medium high	27	11	10
	High	18	10	15
LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE FAMILY	Latvian	15	9	.
	Russian	37	19	.
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Employed	22	13	12
	Unemployed	28	11	15

Source: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017

ENDNOTES

[1] For more details on permanent residents in Latvia and Estonia, see section "Euroscepticism and the Russian-Speaking Population of Latvia and Estonia" in the 2nd part of this volume.

[2] Eurobarometer has stopped collecting data on the public opinion in the member states with respect to EU membership since 2011. Instead, Eurobarometer is now measuring the attitude towards membership from the aspect of security and stability. Hence, the data series provided before and after 2011 are not compatible with each other.

DECIPHERING THE EUROSCEPTICAL PEOPLE AND STEREOTYPES

People hold a certain set of beliefs. Only a few are the result of a careful and thorough personal deliberation. Most people's attitudes reflect popular stereotypes which, like myths, have no rational ground – at least not at a personal level. Believing or disbelieving in certain stereotypes is a question of personal taste, of course, although certain exogenous factors act as triggers for this or that shift in beliefs. Believing in myths, stereotypes and prejudices is very common as it allows saving precious time and resources otherwise wasted on the analysis of every aspect of life, depriving people of possibility to concentrate on the most essential issues of their life. However, by applying the tools of strategic communication, a shift in public perception can be achieved rather easily. The perception of the EU and a country's membership in the EU is also linked to manifold stereotypes. The aim of this section is to look at certain popular stereotypes linked to EU membership and to estimate the existing correlation among those stereotypes.

The data inputs for this section are provided by the SKDS opinion poll from May 2017. This poll was commissioned by the SKDS Marketing and Public Opinion Research Company in all three Baltic countries, specifically for the purpose of this study. The poll included ten statements with five response options given to respondents to choose the one most closely representing his or her attitude towards the specific statement. These options included: "completely agree," "tend to agree," "tend to disagree," "completely disagree," and "hard to say/no answer." The goal was to determine people's attitude both towards the respective country's membership in the EU, the EU as such (Statements 1 and 2) and different popular stereotypes associated with the EU, both positive and negative (Statements 3 to 10). A cross-

country comparison of the results from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania was built, and a matrix of correlations between each pair of statements was computed based on the results from each country, to highlight the strength or weakness of associations between those respective statements.[1]

Unfortunately, due to the limited scope of the opinion poll, the choice of stereotypes was very selective – those which were included are believed to represent the existing major directions of people's attitudes towards the EU. As this study is devoted to Euroscepticism, a slight bias towards negative stereotypes was allowed (in total, there were four positive and six negative types of statements included in the poll). The stereotypes addressed included the positive contribution of the EU to domestic social cohesion and minority integration, the positive role of the EU with respect to national security, general scepticism about the fate of national countries, resentment about the EU and nostalgia towards unity with the former Soviet republics, inequality caused by the EU, disinterest of EU institutions in local people, disbelief in future of the EU, and, ultimately, the contribution of the EU to the domestic economic downturn. Table 1 depicts all the statements included in the poll with relevant substantiations.

Table 1. The set of statements included in the opinion poll on EU attitudes from May 2017

Question: *"I will now read out a number of popular claims. Some people completely agree with them, others tend to agree or tend to disagree, while some others completely disagree with them. Please tell me what you think! One answer per each row"*				
Completely agree	**Tend to agree**	**Tend to disagree**	**Completely disagree**	**Hard to say/NA**
1. [The respective country] membership in the European Union should be supported This is a standard statement used to measure public attitude towards the EU membership. However, in this study, the responses to this statement are compared with responses from other statements, allowing separation of Eurooptimists from those who are radical or moderate Eurosceptics, and to associate each group with a certain set of beliefs over the EU.				

2. [The respective country] membership in the European Union can be evaluated in different ways, but in general the European Union is a good thing
The support for EU membership does not automatically imply a positive image for the EU. A pragmatically oriented person from a small member state from a region caught in geopolitical tensions or economic depression, despite his or her contempt for the EU, may still prefer the see his or her country as EU member. Or, on the contrary, a positive image of the EU in combination with disapproval of EU membership has to be seen as an indication of respondent's alienation from the European project, in particular, and the Westernisation of the country, in general.

3. [The respective country] membership in the European Union encourages social cohesion and integration of national minorities in [the respective country]
This statement has a particular importance to the image of the EU among the Russian-speaking part of Latvia's and Estonia's population. The paradox is that during the late 1990s, before Latvia's and Estonia's accession to the EU, the image of the EU among the Russian-speaking population was higher than that of Latvians and, supposedly, also of Estonians. This is explained by the pressure of the EU (and other European international bodies) on Latvia and Estonia to foster naturalisation of Russian speakers and install friendlier minority protection policies. Since the early 2000s, support for the EU has plummeted among Russian-speaking people. A high rate of positive responses to this statement from both natives and Russian speakers would be an indication of improving inter-communal relations in the course of the country's integration in the EU.

4. Joining the European Union was the only possibility for [The respective country] to resist the impact of Russia
This statement is linked to the prevailing discourse in the Baltic states that membership in the EU (along with membership in NATO) will embody an effective guarantee against the revanchist Russia. The rate of support for this statement would indicate the degree of perceived threat in the Baltic states and also of the perceived vulnerability of those countries.

5. [The respective country] as an independent national country cannot exist
People who agree to this statement doubt the prospects of their own countries. In a sense, this is a state of mind characterised by a deeply rooted syndrome of subjugation, and it is representative of a radical scepticism over the viability of small nation states in the geopolitically troubled Baltic region. Such people may see the country's future in either the EU (as a major power) or, in Russia. But the commonality among such people is a dramatic lack of trust in the capacity of domestic national institutions and denial of any substantial achievements since the reestablishment of independence in the early 1990s.

6. [The respective country] as a country would do better at the moment if it belonged to the CIS, not the European Union
This statement is intended to measure the degree of nostalgic feelings for the past in the Soviet Union that is still observed among people in the Baltic countries. People linked to traditional local industries with markets in the former Soviet republics, or those who despise the modernisation inflicted by the EU and the onslaught of "consumerism" and Western moral decadence, would find this statement appealing. Likewise, the level of support for this statement among the Russian-speaking audience would be indicative of Russian speakers' improved or deteriorated perception of the EU as an alternative to closer relations with Russia.

7. From [The respective country] participation in the European Union benefits only a small group of people
This statement is supposed to resonate with those who believe that the distribution of the gains from EU membership has not been even and that EU membership was a project designed first and foremost by the political and economic elite.

8. The management of the European Union does not care how [The respective country] people feel
The purpose of this statement is to measure the degree of people's perception of the gap supposedly existing between ordinary people and the European elite. In the minds of many, the EU is an alienated body that has little regard for people living in Europe's periphery. Arrogance and detached directions received from Brussels' Eurocrats, be they linked to legislative requirements or appropriations of the EU funds, are some popular examples. Also, the alleged complexity and opaqueness of European decision-making are contributing factors to this sort of scepticism.

9. The European Union will soon collapse
This statement represents radical scepticism about the future of the European construct. People holding such view may either be adherents of radical nationalism seeing the nation state as a unique fortress for the protection of a fragile national civilisation or may even have serious doubts about the prospects of liberal-democratic ideology underlying the European construct.

10. Joining the European Union contributed to the economic downturn in [The respective country]
The Baltic states underwent severe economic recessions in 2008 and 2009, and many blamed the EU for the hardship endured by the countries. In a way, this statement resonates with the prophecy that EU membership would lead to inferior economic performance because of much lower living standards in the Baltic states, an inability to withstand competition in the EU single market, and a lack of political clout to press against the discriminatory policies of the more mature member states. The aim of this statement is to see how the perception has evolved since the crisis years.

GENERAL RESULTS: STATEMENTS 1 TO 4

The general results from the May 2017 SKDS opinion poll from a cross-country perspective are depicted in Figure 1, while the correlations matrix is given in Table 2. One can see that the degree of opposition to Latvia's EU membership (Statement 1) at 25 percent is significantly higher than in the other Baltic states (13 percent in Lithuania and 12 percent in Estonia). Also, Latvians are less favourable towards the EU as such (Statement 2) – 24 percent think of it in negative terms – than Lithuanians (17 percent) and Estonians (15 percent). The correlation between the responses to both statements is positive and very high (in the case of Latvia $r = 0.81$, Lithuania – 0.64, and Estonia – 0.84; all correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$),

indicating that between 37 percent (in Lithuania), 65 percent (in Latvia) and 70 percent (in Estonia) of respondents replied either positively or negatively to both questions.[2] In a broader sense, it suggests that if a person supports membership in the EU, then she or he is very likely to also have a positive view of the EU, and vice versa. The slightly lower correlation in the case of Lithuania points to a greater diversity of public reaction towards the EU. These variations are discussed in detail in the following section.

As for the perception of a positive impact of EU membership on domestic social cohesion and the integration of national minorities (Statement 3), there also exists a stark difference between Latvians, on the one hand, and Lithuanians and Estonians, on the other hand, with Latvians being more sceptical about this impact (in Latvia, 47 percent responded negatively compared to 24 percent and 34 percent in Lithuania and Estonia respectively).

Statement 4, on the indispensability of EU membership from the perspective of resisting the impact of Russia, carries a strong geopolitical connotation. Although more Estonians tended to completely agree with this statement than Latvians and Lithuanians (21 against 13 and 12 percent), taking into account the numbers of reluctantly agreeing to this claim, Lithuanians stand out as the strongest believers in the EU's geopolitical significance (56 against 35 and 53 percent). At the same time, a much higher percentage of Latvians responded negatively (46 percent) to this assertion (in Estonia such negative view was shared only by 34 percent and in Lithuania – by 32 percent of respondents).

The correlation matrix hints to high levels of positive coincidence between responses to the first four statements in all three countries. The correlations vary between 0.39 and 0.81 in the case of Latvia, while in the case of Estonia – between 0.47 and 0.84 percent, and Lithuania – 0.33 and 0.66 (all correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$). The highest positive correlations are observed in Estonia, where people are more optimistic about the EU in different aspects (e.g. membership in the EU, the image of the EU, the EU's role in societal cohesion and indispensability of the membership). In Lithuania,

there are noticeably weaker positive correlations between the positive responses to the indispensability of membership as a means of resisting Russia and other positively expressed statements regarding the EU (between 0.33 and 0.40; all correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$), pointing to a greater variety of opinions. In Latvia, at the same time, a lower correlation is observed between the issue of society consolidation, on the one hand, and the issues of membership in the EU and the image of the EU, on the other hand ($r = 0.48$ and 0.49 respectively; $p < 0.05$).

GENERAL RESULTS: STATEMENTS 5 TO 10

Statements 5 to 10 reflect negative stereotypes linked to the EU. Statement 5, on the unsustainability of the independence of respective national states, returned a rather high level of affirmative responses in all three Baltic states: in Latvia 36 percent, in Lithuania – 34 percent, and in Estonia – 32 percent, suggesting the the syndrome of self-bashing is not linked exclusively to Latvia, where the public trust in domestic institutions has traditionally been weaker than in the neighbouring Baltic countries. However, there are differences among the Baltic countries in terms of correlations between this statement on the unsustainability of independence and the statements of positive nature 1 to 3. In the case of Latvia, there is a very weak association between the responses to this statement and the statements 1 to 3, suggesting that the opinion of those people, who responded positively or negatively to statements 1 to 3, was split over the unsustainability of independence ($-0.1 < r < 0.07$; $p < 0.05$). In the case of Estonia, the association is stronger and positive, but also weak ($0.12 < r < 0.15$; $p < 0.05$). In Lithuania, the association is also almost non-existent ($0.05 < r < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$).

As for Statement 6, in the case of Lithuania, somewhat paradoxically, 28 percent of respondents replied positively to the claim that Lithuania would do better today if it belonged to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), not the EU, which

is considerably more than in Latvia (18 percent) and Estonia (11 percent). This creates a dissonance with the high esteem of the EU as a protector against the Russia's influence in Lithuania (as indicated in the previous section, 56 percent agreed to this claim in Lithuania). Such a contrast can only be explained by the fact that Lithuanians who believe in the strategic relevance of the EU are somewhat less opposed to deny the supposed benefits of CIS membership compared to Estonians and, in particular, to Latvians, as shown by correlations between Statements 4 and 6 (-0.16, -0,28 and -0.41; all correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$). The correlation in the case of Latvia at -0.41 is rather significant. This suggests the much higher presence of pragmatic attitude towards the EU in Lithuania than in the other Baltic states.

In fact, in order to determine the geopolitical orientation of people who felt sceptical about the sustainability of their national states, an additional statistical test was carried out to relate the responses on the sustainability of independence (Statement 5) with the pronounced pro-European statement on the indispensability of EU membership (Statement 4) and the anti-European statement on a preference for membership in the CIS over the EU (Statement 6). In addition, in the case of Latvia and Estonia, separate tests were run for the respondents speaking Latvian (Estonian respectively) and Russian. The results are depicted in Table 3.

In Lithuania, in the perception of people who consider that Lithuania cannot exist as an independent nation state, there is no clear preference for the EU or the CIS – both options are highly valued ($r = 0.33$ and 0.21; $p < 0.05$). Yet, the difference between the correlation coefficients indicates that among the people who agreed that the country as an independent nation state cannot exist, the number of those who also agreed to the statement that EU membership was the only possibility of resisting the impact of Russia was greater than the number of those who were inclined to see the CIS as alternative.

In Estonia, at the same time, the correlations show that concerns over independence are much more strongly linked with the positive estimate of EU membership as a means of withstanding Russia's

impact than the alternative – hypothetical membership in the CIS (0.28 against 0.08; $p < 0.05$). In the meantime, a strong polarisation can be observed between Estonian speakers and Russian speakers. The Estonians who have doubts about the sustainability of the national independence have a strong tendency to see EU membership as a way to resist the impact of Russia ($r = 0.37$; $p < 0.05$), while the Russians, on the contrary, are more inclined to link their scepticism over Estonia's independence to the country's hypothetical membership in the CIS ($r = 0.32$; $p < 0.05$). In Latvia, altogether, the association between the independence issue and the indispensability of the EU is very weak ($r = 0.07$) and not statistically significant, while this association is much stronger in respect to hypothetical membership in the CIS ($r = 0.23$; $p < 0.05$). This is happening due to the fact that Latvian speakers with doubts about Latvia's national chances are split between the two options of either the EU or the CIS (0.17 and 0.09 respectively), while sceptical Russian speakers have a very strong bias towards the CIS (0.43). Yet, it is also important to note that in Latvia, the association between the perception of the fate of national statehood and the attitude towards EU membership is extremely weak and not statistically significant.

In all three Baltic countries, the responses to statements 7 to 10, on the one hand, have high positive correlations with each other, and, on the other hand, have high negative correlations between statements 1 to 4. Such an association is logical, as people with a positive disposition towards the EU normally tend to deny the negative consequences or side effects of membership, and vice versa, those who think negatively of the EU call to attention the negative aspects of membership. Thus, one can notice a very high level of coincidence between the opinion that EU membership serves only a small group of people and that the EU does not care how people feel ($r = 0.6$ in Latvia, 0.69 in Estonia, and 0.66 in Lithuania; all correlations significant at $p < 0.05$), and a correlation between those views and the view that the EU will soon collapse ($r = 0.48$ and 0.5 in Latvia, 0.57 and 0.59 in Estonia, and 0.53 and 0.55 in Lithuania; all correlations significant at $p < 0.05$).

However, some specific differences exist at a country level. In Latvia, people tend to be more inclined to hold critical attitudes towards the EU. For example, 56 percent believe that only a small group of people benefits from EU membership (in Lithuania – 51 percent, in Estonia – 34 percent); A full 68 percent consider that EU management does not care how local people care (in Lithuania – 54 percent, in Estonia – 44 percent); 34 percent agree with the statement that the EU will soon collapse (in Lithuania – 28 percent, in Estonia – 27 percent), and 39 percent are of the opinion that the EU contributed to the economic downturn in their country (in Lithuania – 31 percent, in Estonia – 26 percent).

Moreover, from the correlations matrices it is possible to see that in Latvia and Estonia, among those who are optimistic about the EU and EU membership, there is little support for the idea that the EU might only serve some and would not care about regular people, as suggested by high negative correlations. However, in Lithuania, things are slightly different, and one can spot a greater diversity of opinions. Thus, there EU supporters tend to have a more critical outlook towards the EU than in Latvia and Estonia, and vice versa, the oppositionists to the EU have some positive regards towards specific aspects of the EU.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the relatively weak correlation between statements 5 and 9 (0.17 in Latvia, -0.08 in Estonia, and 0.09 in Lithuania; all correlations significant at $p < 0.05$) suggests that people who have doubts about the viability of national statehood tend to have – with equal probability – both optimistic or pessimistic view about the future of the EU. Although, these correlations suggest also that in Latvia and Lithuania one can detect more people with a fatal inclination (doubts about both national statehood and the future of the EU) than in Estonia.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis provided in this article confirms the general observation that in the Baltic countries the people with a positive disposition towards the EU also tend to rebuff the claims of negative consequences or side effects stemming from membership, and vice versa, those who

think negatively about the EU call attention to the negative aspects of membership. However, some differences can also be seen. People living in Latvia tend to be more sceptical towards the EU than in neighbouring Estonia and Lithuania. However, the fact that people in Latvia, and also in Estonia, are less supportive of EU membership, must be linked with the presence of a sizeable Russian-speaking community living in these countries that tends to be more sceptical of the EU.

At the same time, the correlations between specific issues show that Lithuanians hold more diverse views on the EU and its specific aspects than do Latvians and Estonians. That is, among those Lithuanians who are supportive of the EU membership, a higher percentage is also critical of the consequences of EU membership such as the uneven distribution of rewards from EU membership and the arrogance of EU management, and vice versa, many of those who are critical towards the EU membership, don't always agree to negative statements about the EU.

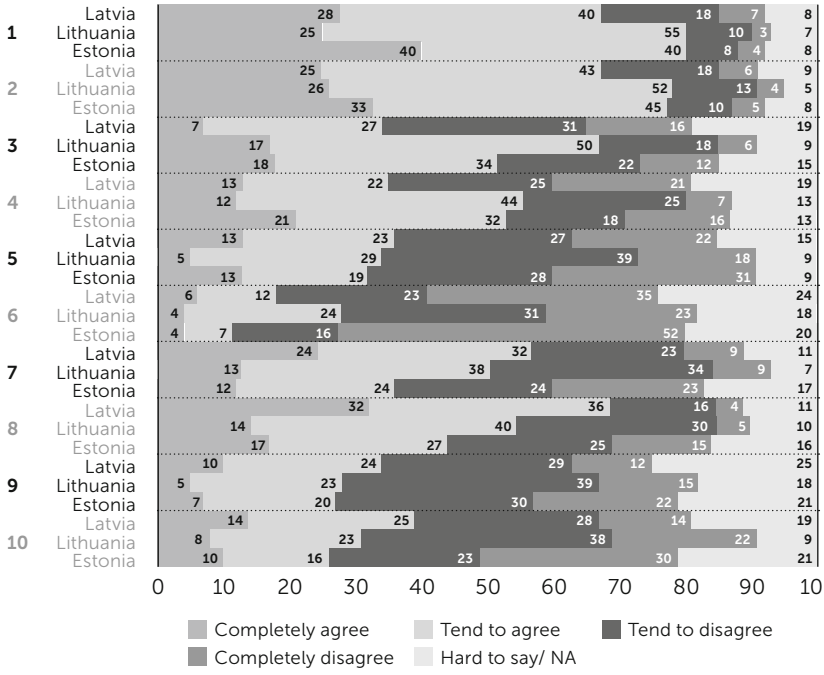
The awareness of the geopolitical significance of EU membership vis-a-vis Russia is most elevated in Lithuania. However, the correlations suggest that the strongest association between support for EU membership and the geopolitical indispensability of EU membership exists not in Lithuania but in Estonia, followed by Latvia. In Lithuania, despite the perceived geopolitical salience of EU membership, the population holds a variety of views regarding the purported benefits of the current EU membership and the hypothetical CIS membership, and many supporters of membership in the EU tend to also think that Lithuania would do better in the CIS, indicating a strong pragmatic inclination.

In Latvia, the situation is somewhat different. Those Latvians who support EU membership tend also to support the view that the benefits that accrue from this membership are superior to those from a hypothetical participation in the CIS. The level of conviction in Latvia regarding the choice in favour of the EU is the highest in the Baltic countries, followed by Estonia. Latvia's situation stands out also from the perspective of the linkages (more precisely – the conspicuous lack of ones) between the perception of the viability of national statehood and EU membership, on the one hand, and the geopolitical salience of the EU, on the other hand. This means that in Latvia, EU membership is not

seen as a solution to the concerns over the sustainability of the national independence in geopolitical terms. Instead, many of those people with doubts about national independence – both Latvians and Russians – think that Latvia would do better today in the CIS. This worrying tendency signals that, in the mind of many people of Latvia, the EU is failing to deliver on security that many people in Latvia long for.

In Estonia, on the contrary, people with a positive stance towards the EU show little doubt about the geopolitical significance of the EU and the benefits it delivers compared to the CIS. Even despite Russian speakers' negative opinion, the high degree of conviction of native Estonians balances out this negative effect and, therefore, in sum, Estonia stands out as the most consistent pro-European country in the Baltic region.

Figure 1. The popularity of EU linked stereotypes in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, percents



Note: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017

Table 2. Correlation matrixes between the attitudes of people towards the EU in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania

Latvia	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Latvia's membership in the EU should be supported	1									
2. Latvia's membership in the EU can be evaluated in different ways, but in general the EU is a good thing	0.81*	1								
3. Latvia's membership in the EU encourages social cohesion and integration of national minorities in Latvia	0.48*	0.49*	1							
4. Joining the EU was the only possibility for Latvia to resist the impact of Russia	0.46*	0.42*	0.39*	1						
5. Latvia as an independent national country cannot exist	-0.07	-0.10*	0.07	0.07	1					
6. Latvia as a country would do better at the moment if it belonged to CIS, not the EU	-0.51*	-0.49*	-0.22*	-0.41*	0.23*	1				
7. From Latvia's participation in the EU benefits only a small group of people	-0.46*	-0.41*	-0.32*	-0.31*	0.23*	0.40*	1			
8. Management of the EU does not care how Latvia people feel	-0.35*	-0.29*	-0.37*	-0.26*	0.16*	0.31*	0.60*	1		
9. The EU will soon collapse	-0.52*	-0.50*	-0.39*	-0.34*	0.17*	0.48*	0.48*	0.50*	1	
10. Joining the EU contributed to the economic downturn in Latvia	-0.55*	-0.51*	-0.31*	-0.37*	0.18*	0.49*	0.55*	0.49*	0.59*	1
Estonia	**1.**	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**	**6.**	**7.**	**8.**	**9.**	**10.**
1. Estonia's membership in the EU should be supported	1									
2. Estonia's membership in the EU can be evaluated in different ways, but in general the EU is a good thing	0.84*	1								
3. Estonia's membership in the EU encourages social cohesion and integration of national minorities in Estonia	0.58*	0.62*	1							
4. Joining the EU was the only possibility for Estonia to resist the impact of Russia	0.51*	0.47*	0.48*	1						
5. Estonia as an independent national country cannot exist	0.15*	0.12*	0.15*	0.28*	1					

6. Estonia as a country would do better at the moment if it belonged to CIS, not the EU	-0.32*	-0.32*	-0.17*	-0.28*	0.08*	1				
7. From Estonia's participation in the EU benefits only a small group of people	-0.49*	-0.51*	-0.41*	-0.36*	-0.06	0.43*	1			
8. Management of the EU does not care how Estonia people feel	-0.44*	-0.46*	-0.44*	-0.33*	-0.07	0.33*	0.69*	1		
9. The EU will soon collapse	-0.49*	-0.51*	-0.44*	-0.37*	-0.08*	0.35*	0.57*	0.59*	1	
10. Joining the EU contributed to the economic downturn in Estonia	-0.47*	-0.47*	-0.36*	-0.39*	-0.12*	0.44*	0.59*	0.52*	0.52*	1
Lithuania	**1.**	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**	**6.**	**7.**	**8.**	**9.**	**10.**
1. Lithuania's membership in the EU should be supported	1									
2. Lithuania's membership in the EU can be evaluated in different ways, but in general the EU is a good thing	0.64*	1								
3. Lithuania's membership in the EU encourages social cohesion and integration of national minorities in Lithuania	0.58*	0.66*	1							
4. Joining the EU was the only possibility for Lithuania to resist the impact of Russia	0.33*	0.40*	0.35*	1						
5. Lithuania as an independent national country cannot exist	0.05	0.06	0.10*	0.33*	1					
6. Lithuania as a country would do better at the moment if it belonged to CIS, not the EU	-0.13*	-0.32*	-0.18*	-0.16*	0.21*	1				
7. From Lithuania's participation in the EU benefits only a small group of people	-0.17*	-0.34*	-0.32*	-0.22*	0.06	0.37*	1			
8. Management of the EU does not care how Lithuania people feel	-0.17*	-0.36*	-0.31*	-0.21*	0.04	0.38*	0.66*	1		
9. The EU will soon collapse	-0.32*	-0.41*	-0.34*	-0.23*	0.09*	0.45*	0.53*	0.55*	1	
10. Joining the EU contributed to the economic downturn in Lithuania	-0.31*	-0.50*	-0.38*	-0.21*	0.15*	0.48*	0.52*	0.51*	0.54*	1

Note: (*) indicates the statistical significance at $p < 0.05$. On how the correlation coefficients summarizes the associations between two variables (in this case – attitudes), see an interactive visualization at http://rpsychologist.com/d3/correlation/; $r < 0.4$ – weak correlation; 0.4 – 0.6 – moderate correlation; > 0.6 – strong correlation.

Source: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017, authors' own calculations

Table 3. Correlations between S5 and S4 and S6

		S4 - Joining the EU was the only possibility to resist the impact of Russia			S6 – My country would do better at the moment if it belonged to CIS, not the EU		
		Correlation coefficient	Statistical significance at p = 0.05	Number of respondents	Correlation coefficient	Statistical significance at p = 0.05	Number of respondents
S5 - Lithuania as an independent national country cannot exist	Altogether	0.33	Yes	841	0.21	Yes	795
S5 - Estonia as an independent national country cannot exist	Altogether	0.28	Yes	827	0.08	Yes	808
	Estonian speakers	0.37	Yes	632	-0.03	No	594
	Russian speakers	0.12	No	192	0.32	Yes	175
S5 - Latvia as an independent national country cannot exist	Altogether	0.07	No	762	0.23	Yes	720
	Latvian speakers	0.17	Yes	477	0.09	No	462
	Russian speakers	0.01	No	284	0.42	Yes	257

Note: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017, authors' own calculations

ENDNOTES

[1] The correlations come only from the respondents who provided meaningful answers (that is, other than "hard to say").

[2] These values of percentages are calcuated using the Interpreting Correlations tool from http://rpsychologist.com/d3/correlation/.

UNCOVERING THE DIVERSE EXPRESSIONS OF EUROSCEPTICISM

Euroscepticism is a popular but vague concept used to describe diverse expressions of opposition towards the EU, and, from the perspective of post-Soviet countries, to the whole Europeanisation (Westernisation) project. An essential observation from public opinion polls is that support for or opposition to EU membership may not mean liking or disliking the EU by default. A Eurooptimist, on one side, would agree to both statements, while a radical Eurosceptic, on the other side, would certainly oppose the two. But what about the middle? It is sensible to believe that the middle is filled with the opinions of a mixed nature. A person may dislike the EU; however, if her or his country is fraught with geopolitical tensions or runs a risk of economic underdevelopment, he or she may still prefer that the country is a member of the EU. At the same time, one can also imagine that a person may have warm feelings about the EU generally, but be opposed to membership in the EU, because, for example, he or she feels that the EU would inflict harm on the country, or that the EU represents a too distant culture, or that EU membership might ignite a regional geopolitical rivalry. In this part of the study, a theoretical framework encompassing four types of attitudes is built and tested through an opinion poll with the purpose (1) to determine the popularity (relative weight) of each type of attitude in population and (2) to determine the sociodemographic features of people adhering to a particular opinion. Additionally, using the cross-tabulation method, (3) associations between specific opinion groups and various popular stereotypes linked to the EU are tested.

DIVISION OF RESPONDENTS IN FOUR OPINION GROUPS AND THE RESULTS OF TESTING

By crossing the positive and negative responses to the questions on EU membership and the EU as such, a matrix of four possible attitudes can be constructed (see Table 1). The categories of Eurooptimists and Radical Eurosceptics speak for themselves. The assumption is that people with Radical Eurosceptical views would respond negatively to both statements, while Eurooptimists, on the contrary, would reply positively to both. The group of people who support EU membership but are opposed to the EU as such can be named moderate Eurosceptics or Europragmatists. The specific feature of this type of opinion is a deliberate calculation of benefits and costs from EU membership. In the perception of these people, the EU may be either a "necessary evil" (or the "least evil") or, alternatively, a project requiring serious improvements. Lastly, those who like the EU but are opposed to EU membership can be categorised as Alienated people, whose specific feature is the feeling of a need to distance their country from the EU for whatever reasons.

Table 1. Matrix for clustering of the respondents in four dominant opinion groups on the EU

	AGREE that EU membership is good	**DISAGREE that EU membership is good**
AGREE that the EU is a good thing	Eurooptimists	Alienated
DISAGREE that the EU is a good thing	Moderate Eurosceptics or Europragmatists	Radical Eurosceptics

The theoretical assumptions of clustering peoples' attitudes into four opinion groups were tested through the SKDS opinion poll from May 2017. The results are shown in Table 2. The poll was carried out simultaneously in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania and consisted of ten statements with five response options given to respondents. The options were: "completely agree," "tend to agree," "tend to disagree," "completely disagree," and "hard to say/no answer." In computation,

the positive replies were combined in one set and the negative – another set. The "hard to say/no answer" replies were not taken into account.

In Table 2 one can see that in all three countries the dominant group is Eurooptimists, although in relative terms this group is the smallest in Latvia (71 percent), while in Lithuania it is of moderate size (77 percent) and in Estonia the greatest (83 percent). The second largest opinion group, although of considerably smaller size, are the Radical Eurosceptics, with Latvia leading (22 percent), and Lithuania and Estonia at a comparable level in this respect (+/- 11 percent). The other two groups of more moderate and nuanced opinions – Europragmatist and Alienated – are in minority in all three countries, although, in Lithuania, the weight of Europragmatists is rather close to that of Radical Eurosceptics (8 and 11 percent).

Table 2. Actual weight of each dominant opinion groups on the EU in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, cross-tabulated data, percents*

Latvia (n=922)		Estonia (n=893)		Lithuania (n=911)	
Euro-optimists 71.48	Alienated 3.25	Euro-optimists 83.43	Alienated 1.57	Euro-optimists 76.73	Alienated 4.5
Euro-pragmatists 3.69	Radical Eurosceptics 21.58	Euro-pragmatists 3.47	Radical Eurosceptics 11.53	Euro-pragmatists 7.90	Radical Eurosceptics 10.87

Note: (*) Only the meaningful responses (i.e. excluding "hard to say/no answer" option) were included in the processed data

Source: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017, authors' own calculations

The general conclusion is that people in the Baltic countries hold rather polar views about the EU and EU membership – they either support or oppose both. The case of Latvia stands out for conspicuously high share of Radical Eurosceptics which is twice as big as in the other two countries. In Lithuania, on its part, the share of Europragmatists is double of that in the Latvia and Estonia. Such a distribution, however, brings some difficulty to this particular study. Namely, taking into account the overall sample size (n ~ 1000 in each country), and the small size of the Europragmatist and Alienated

peoples' group (in Estonia's case, it is limited to only several dozens of respondents), the cross-tabulation results of sociodemographic and stereotypical profiling of these two latter groups need to be treated with great caution.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF EACH DOMINANT OPINION GROUP

Table 3 shows the results of sociodemographic parameters for each opinion group achieved through the application of the cross-tabulation method.

The results show that gender in all Baltic countries does not influence what people think of the EU: the distribution is equal among the four opinion groups making differences statistically insignificant. In the meantime, education level and the location of residence is a determining factor in all three countries. As for the other parameters, the results are rather mixed across the three countries. Age and marital status matter in Latvia and Lithuania but not in Estonia. In Latvia and Estonia, there are considerable opinion differences among people speaking Russian in their family and native language speakers. At the same time, income level and employment status are relevant factors in Lithuania, but not in Estonia. In Latvia, income level matters, but the employment status not.

At the level of specific opinion groups, people over the age of 55 in Latvia and over 65 in Lithuania dominate among Radical Eurosceptics. In Lithuania, one can observe a very clear association between the increase in age and more support for Radical Euroscepticism. A majority of Radical Eurosceptics are married people, while divorced people also have a rather high presence among Radical Eurosceptics in all three countries but in particular in Latvia (23 percent), while the highest presence of single persons is observed in Estonia (21 percent). As for education, people with vocational or secondary education dominate among Radical Eurosceptics in all three countries (67 percent in Latvia,

69 percent in Estonia and 65 percent in Lithuania). In addition, Radical Eurosceptics in Lithuania tend to have a low or medium-low level of income and are unemployed. In Latvian and Estonia the association between employment status and Radical Eurosceptical attitude cannot be established with a statistical certitude. In Latvia, radicalism is more pronounced among Russian speakers (64 percent). In Estonia, Russian speakers also have high exposure to Radical Eurosceptical ideas, however, the concentration of Estonian speakers among Radical Eurosceptics is even higher (41 and 59 percent respectively). Region-wise, the Radical Eurosceptics tend to concentrate in the capitals in all three countries, and in eastern parts of Latvia and Estonia. At the same time, in Lithuania, Radical Euroscepticism is more popular in regions with large cities like Kaunas and Šiauliai.

As with Radical Eurosceptics, people who are categorised as belonging to the Europragmatist group are mostly aged people – this type of linkage can most clearly be observed in Lithuania. Married people dominate among the Europragmatists (59 in Latvia, 65 in Lithuania and 62 percent in Estonia). As for education, like Radical Eurosceptics, Europragmatists also have among their ranks mostly people with vocational or secondary education (62, 74 and 53 percent). Europragmatism is comparatively widespread among people with medium-low and medium-high incomes in all three countries – thus, in comparison with Radical Euroscepticism, Europragmatism is more popular among people with higher living standard (however, in the case of Estonia, this conclusion cannot be ascertained with statistical significance). Among Europragmatists in Latvia and Estonia, native language speakers dominate (56 and 68 percent respectively). As for regional parameters, Europragmatists mostly live in Vidzeme and Latgale in Latvia (32 and 29 percent), in Tallinn and in Western- and Southern-Estonia (35, 23 and 19 percent) and in Klaipėda and Kaunas regions in Lithuania (26 and 19 percent) – in regions with supposedly more pronounced conservative – national and/or religious – cultural traditions.

Among Alienated people – those who believe in the EU but do not support the EU membership of their country – dominate middle aged people (between 25 and 64 years) and again those with vocational and secondary education in all three countries, also employed people with medium-high or high income (the results for Estonia are not statistically significant). In Latvia and Estonia, Russian speakers dominate among Alienated people (50 and 57 percent). At a regional level, Alienated people mostly live in Vidzeme and Latgale in Latvia (40 and 17 percent), in Tallinn and Northern-Estonia (29 percent in both), and in Kaunas and Vilnius area in Lithuania (39 and 27 percent).

Table 3. Division of respondents in groups according to their attitude towards the EU and sociodemographic profile of each group, cross-tabulated data, percents*

			Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
GENDER	Latvia	Male	49.75	50.53	50.00	40.00
		Female	50.25	49.47	50.00	60.00
		Pearson chi2(3)=1.2794 P=0.734 (differences are not statistically significant)				
	Estonia	Male	48.54	50.07	51.61	21.43
		Female	51.46	49.93	48.39	78.57
		Pearson chi2(3)=4.6022 P=0.203 (differences are not statistically significant)				
	Lithuania	Male	48.48	46.49	50.00	48.78
		Female	51.52	53.51	50.00	51.22
		Pearson chi2(3)=0.4684 P=0.926 (differences are not statistically significant)				
AGE	Latvia	15–24 years	8.04	15.78	8.82	13.33
		25–34 years	12.56	22.15	14.71	10.00
		35–44 years	20.10	15.78	14.71	13.33
		45–54 years	20.60	18.21	29.41	33.33
		55–64 years	23.12	14.57	14.71	6.67
		65–74 years	15.58	13.51	17.65	23.33
		Pearson chi2(15)=34.8818 P=0.003 (differences are statistically significant)				

			Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
AGE	Estonia	15–24 years	5.05	11.44	13.79	7.69
		25–34 years	23.23	18.04	10.34	23.08
		35–44 years	22.22	20.09	17.24	23.08
		45–54 years	22.22	20.09	10.34	7.69
		55–64 years	17.17	20.38	24.14	23.08
		65–74 years	10.1	9.97	24.14	15.38
		Pearson chi2(15)=15.4387 P=0.420 (differences are not statistically significant)				
	Lithuania	15–24 years	8.08	16.88	6.94	9.76
		25–34 years	6.06	14.88	4.17	17.07
		35–44 years	4.04	18.17	5.56	9.76
		45–54 years	16.16	17.74	18.06	26.83
		55–64 years	30.30	16.02	23.61	24.39
		65–74 years	35.35	16.31	41.67	12.20
		Pearson chi2(15)=84.0524 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
MARITAL STATUS	Latvia	Married/ cohabiting	51.26	58.42	58.82	53.33
		Divorced/ separated	22.61	10.77	8.82	16.67
		Widowed	8.04	8.19	2.94	13.33
		Single	18.09	22.61	29.41	16.67
		Pearson chi2(9)=23.0340 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
	Estonia	Married/ cohabiting	49.51	60	64.52	28.57
		Divorced/ separated	16.5	11.54	12.9	14.29
		Widowed	12.62	11.01	9.68	21.43
		Single	21.36	17.45	12.9	35.71
		Pearson chi2(9)=11.1458 P=0.266 (differences are not statistically significant)				
	Lithuania	Married/ cohabiting	50.53	59.85	61.76	67.50
		Divorced/ separated	13.68	9.23	8.82	10.00
		Widowed	16.84	7.08	17.65	5.00
		Single	18.95	23.85	11.76	17.50
		Pearson chi2(9)=24.2203 P=0.004 (differences are statistically significant)				

			Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
EDUCATION	Latvia	Basic or primary	12.06	14.87	14.71	10.00
		Vocational or secondary	66.83	51.59	61.76	70.00
		University degree	21.11	33.54	23.53	20.00
		Pearson chi2(6)=18.4100 P=0.005 (differences are statistically significant)				
	Estonia	Basic or primary	12.62	11.01	12.9	7.14
		Vocational or secondary	68.93	58.79	74.19	85.71
		University degree	18.45	30.2	12.9	7.14
		Pearson chi2(6)=13.8252 P=0.032 (differences are statistically significant)				
	Lithuania	Basic or primary	21.21	13.88	26.39	9.76
		Vocational or secondary	64.65	53.65	52.78	60.98
		University degree	14.14	32.47	20.83	29.27
		Pearson chi2(6)=23.7762 P=0.001 (differences are statistically significant)				
MONTHLY HOUSE-HOLD INCOME	Latvia	Low	32.10	23.70	15.38	25.93
		Medium low	19.14	19.65	30.77	22.22
		Medium high	31.48	29.29	11.54	40.74
		High	17.28	27.36	42.31	11.11
		Pearson chi2(9)=20.5531 P=0.015 (differences are statistically significant)				
	Estonia	Low	21.62	13.4	11.54	11.11
		Medium low	18.92	21.44	26.92	44.44
		Medium high	28.38	33.33	34.62	44.44
		High	31.08	31.83	26.92	0
		Pearson chi2(9)=10.0111 P=0.350 (differences are not statistically significant)				

			Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
MONTHLY HOUSE-HOLD INCOME	Lithuania	Low	24.14	27.23	16.92	16.67
		Medium low	39.08	18.85	38.46	22.22
		Medium high	16.09	24.96	21.54	19.44
		High	20.69	28.97	23.08	41.67
		Pearson chi2(9)=32.2639 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
EMPLOY-MENT STATUS	Latvia	Employed	53.27	62.67	64.71	56.67
		Unem-ployed	46.73	37.33	35.29	43.33
		Pearson chi2(3)=6.0938 P=0.107 (differences are not statistically significant)				
	Estonia	Employed	65.05	62.68	51.61	50
		Unem-ployed	34.95	37.32	48.39	50
		Pearson chi2(3)=2.7876 P=0.426 (differences are not statistically significant)				
	Lithuania	Employed	40.40	60.94	40.28	68.29
		Unem-ployed	59.60	39.06	59.72	31.71
		Pearson chi2(3)=25.9092 Pr=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE FAMILY*	Latvia	Latvian	35.86	68.65	55.88	50.00
		Russian	64.14	31.35	44.12	50.00
		Pearson chi2(3)=70.2369 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
	Estonia	Estonian	59.22	77.73	67.74	42.86
		Russian	40.78	22.27	32.26	57.14
		Pearson chi2(3)=24.9598 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
REGION	Latvia	Rīga	39.70	32.63	14.71	23.33
		Vidzeme	19.10	26.86	32.35	40.00
		Kurzeme	11.56	11.08	5.88	13.33
		Zemgale	15.58	15.17	17.65	6.67
		Latgale	14.07	14.26	29.41	16.67
		Pearson chi2(12)=21.3969 P=0.045 (differences are statistically significant)				

			Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
REGION	Estonia	Tallinn	29.13	33.42	35.48	28.57
		Northern – Estonia	17.48	15.17	9.68	28.57
		East-Viru-maa	23.3	8.86	6.45	21.43
		Western – Estonia	11.65	11.81	22.58	7.14
		Middle – Estonia	3.88	6.85	6.45	0
		Southern – Estonia	14.56	23.89	19.35	14.29
		Pearson chi2(15)=32.3748 P=0.006 (differences are statistically significant)				
	Lithuania	Alytus	2.02	5.15	5.56	9.76
		Kaunas	28.28	18.03	19.44	39.02
		Klaipėda	3.03	12.02	26.39	7.32
		Marijam-polė	5.05	4.58	5.56	0.00
		Panevėžys	3.03	8.01	15.28	0.00
		Šiauliai	12.12	9.01	15.28	4.88
		Tauragė	1.01	4.86	0.00	2.44
		Telšiai	1.01	4.86	0.00	2.44
		Utena	5.05	3.00	4.17	2.44
		Vilnius	36.36	29.47	5.56	26.83
		Pearson chi2(27)=79.0670 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				

Note: (*) Only the meaningful responses (i.e. excluding "hard to say/no answer" option) were included in the processed data

Source: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017, authors' own calculations

ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN THE DOMINANT OPINION GROUPS AND POPULAR STEREOTYPES

The cross-tabulation method also allows uncovering associations between the four opinion groups and specific popular stereotypes included in the May 2017 opinion poll (see Table 4). Thus, the people with a Radical Eurosceptical inclination tend to believe that EU membership discourages social cohesion (93 in Latvia, 94 in Estonia

and 90 in Lithuania), although they see membership also as the only chance to resist the impact of Russia (88, 86 and 81 percent). On the issue of the sustainability of national statehood, the Radical Eurosceptics in Estonia and Lithuania are convincingly optimistic about their countries' prospects (73 and 79 percent), while in Latvia the opinion among Radical Eurosceptics is almost split on this issue (56 against 44 percent). Radical Eurosceptics in Latvia also tend to agree with the opinion that their country would do better in the CIS than in the EU (59 percent). The same tendency is also observed in Lithuania (53 percent). At the same time, one can notice a very high accord among the all three countries' Radical Eurosceptics on the issue of the uneven distribution of membership benefits – they strongly believe that only a small group of people benefits from participation in the EU (88, 93 and 78 percent). On the issue of the EU management's indifference about how the local people feel, the agreement among Radical Eurosceptics is even more pronounced (92, 93 and 77 percent). Radical Eurosceptics also believe that the EU will soon collapse (82, 85 and 73 percent) and that the EU contributed to the economic downturn (84, 81 and 74 percent) in all three countries. It is interesting to note though that in the case of Lithuania the degree of associations with negative stereotypes about the EU is slightly weaker than in the other two Baltic countries among the Radical Eurosceptics.

As for the people with a preference for Europragmatism, one can observe a high concordance between the three Baltic countries. Europragmatists disagree with the idea that the EU promoted social cohesion (81 in Latvia, 77 in Estonia and 67 percent in Lithuania) and they also at large oppose the claim of the strategic importance of the EU (59, 47 and 69 percent). At the same time, they share the perception of the EU's elitism (71, 74 and 90 percent), the persistence of disregard for the local people (79, 79 and 92 percent) and the EU's role in the economic downturn (69, 54 and 76 percent). Europragmatists are also strongly inclined to think that concerns over the sustainability of national statehood are overblown (66, 66 and 75 percent); however, these results, except for Lithuania, are not statistically significant.

Despite high general opinion concordance among the three countries' Europragmatists, some differences are to be noted too.

First, in Lithuania, Europragmatists hold slightly more radical views compared to their peers in the other two countries. This is well illustrated by the Lithuanian Europragmatists' tendency to be less optimistic about the future of the EU (76 percent) than in the other two Baltic countries (52 and 59 percent). Second, and most importantly, among Latvia's and Estonia's Europragmatists, one can notice higher support for the claim that the EU represents the only viable alternative for keeping Russia's influence out of the region (41 and 53 percent against 31 percent in Lithuania). The only viable explanation for this phenomenon is the high presence of radical national ideology among the Europragmatists in Latvia and Estonia. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that, in Lithuania, 77 percent of Europragmatists agree that their country would do better in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), while in Latvia only 37 percent and in Estonia mere 18 percent agree. The rest disagree.

Among Alienated people, there exists a much higher diversity of opinions. In Latvia, Alienated people disagree with the claim that the EU's has a positive impact on social cohesion (71 percent), while in Estonia and Lithuania the opinion is opposite (31 and 44 percent disagree). Likewise, on the EU's strategic importance in resisting Russia's impact, Alienated people in Latvia and Estonia strongly disagree with this suggestion (71 and 83 percent), while in Lithuania – again – only a minority opposes it (45 percent). Likewise, a discordance of opinions among Lithuanian Alienated people can also be detected on the issue of unequal distribution of benefits from EU membership and the EU's contribution to the economic downfall. These differences point to the presence of some structural difference between Lithuania's Alienated people and Latvia's and Estonia's Alienated people. This difference seems to be linked with a high incidence of sceptical Russian speakers among the Alienated people in these countries. On the issue of economic downfall, 62 percent of the Alienated people in Lithuania disagree to the claim that the EU had a role in this, while in Latvia only 26 percent and in Estonia 10 percent

discharge the EU of responsibility. The effect from the Russian-speakers presence among the Alienated people in Latvia and Estonia cannot be excluded also in this situation; however, this can also be explained the fact that Lithuania was less severely affected by the crisis and did not need to rely on external financing or counsel.

Last but not least, somewhat strikingly, one can observe that even among Eurooptimists there exists elevated dose of scepticism towards the EU. In Latvia, this is more pronounced than in the other two Baltic countries: Eurooptimists there are less optimistic about the good things from the EU (e.g. the social cohesion and the geopolitical importance of EU membership) and more pessimistic about the bad things (e.g. the unequal benefits and disinterest in local opinion). On some issues, Lithuania's Eurooptimists share the concerns of Latvia's Eurooptimists. Thus, around half of Eurooptimists in both countries believe that the EU encourages unequal distribution of membership benefits (51 in Latvia and 49 percent in Lithuania). The majority of Eurooptimists also shares the concern over the EU's disinterest in local people (70 and 53 percent) in the two countries. This signals a worrisome tendency.

Table 4. Associations between main opinion groups and popular stereotypes, cross-tabulated data, percents*

		Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
[The respective country] membership in the European Union encourages social cohesion and integration of national minorities in [the respective country]					
Latvia	Disagree	92.78	40.93	81.25	70.83
	Agree	7.22	59.07	18.75	29.17
	Pearson chi2(3)=158.6247 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia	Disagree	93.62	29.01	76.92	30.77
	Agree	6.38	70.99	23.08	69.23
	Pearson chi2(3)=162.3382 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Lithuania	Disagree	89.58	13.00	67.16	43.59
	Agree	10.42	87.00	32.84	56.41
	Pearson chi2(3)=314.4864 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				

		Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
Joining the European Union was the only possibility for [The respective country] to resist the impact of Russia					
Latvia	Disagree	88.24	44.18	59.38	71.40
	Agree	11.76	55.82	40.63	28.57
	Pearson chi2(3)=105.3020 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia	Disagree	85.86	27.04	46.67	83.33
	Agree	14.14	72.96	53.33	16.67
	Pearson chi2(3)=143.2653 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Lithuania	Disagree	81.32	27.22	69.23	44.74
	Agree	18.68	72.78	30.77	55.26
	Pearson chi2(3)=132.1309 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
[The respective country] as an independent national country cannot exist					
Latvia	Disagree	55.81	57.34	65.52	59.26
	Agree	44.19	42.66	34.48	40.74
	Pearson chi2(3)= 4.4851 Pr=0.214 (differences are not statistically significant)				
Estonia	Disagree	73.47	62.57	65.52	61.54
	Agree	26.53	37.43	34.48	38.46
	Pearson chi2(3)= 4.4851 P=0.214 (differences are not statistically significant)				
Lithuania	Disagree	79.17	60.06	75.00	57.50
	Agree	20.83	39.94	25.00	42.50
	Pearson chi2(3)=17.9232 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
[The respective country] as a country would do better at the moment if it belonged to CIS, not the European Union					
Latvia	Disagree	40.94	89.26	62.96	52.17
	Agree	59.06	10.74	37.04	47.83
	Pearson chi2(3)=168.2460 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia	Disagree	60.27	92.21	81.82	58.33
	Agree	39.73	7.79	18.18	41.67
	Pearson chi2(3)=76.0576 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Lithuania	Disagree	47.31	73.59	22.95	62.16
	Agree	52.69	26.41	77.05	37.84
	Pearson chi2(3)=80.1104 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
From [The respective country] participation in the European Union benefits only a small group of people					
Latvia	Disagree	11.54	48.84	29.03	3.45
	Agree	88.46	51.16	70.97	96.55
	Pearson chi2(3)=99.3433 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				

		Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
Estonia	Disagree	7.45	69.69	25.93	27.27
	Agree	92.55	30.31	74.07	72.73
	Pearson chi2(3)=151.7117 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Lithuania	Disagree	22.45	51.30	10.29	51.28
	Agree	77.55	48.70	89.71	48.72
	Pearson chi2(3)=64.3909 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Management of the European Union does not care how [The respective country] people feel					
Latvia	Disagree	7.94	30.09	21.21	10.71
	Agree	92.06	69.91	78.79	89.29
	Pearson chi2(3) = 41.3778 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia	Disagree	7.37	57.08	21.43	7.69
	Agree	92.63	42.92	78.57	92.31
	Pearson chi2(3)=100.0691 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Lithuania	Disagree	22.68	46.30	8.45	47.50
	Agree	77.32	53.70	91.55	52.50
	Pearson chi2(3)=52.6001 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
The European Union will soon collapse					
Latvia	Disagree	17.90	69.65	48.00	18.18
	Agree	82.10	30.35	52.00	81.82
	Pearson chi2(3)=147.5155 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia	Disagree	15.12	78.9	40.91	16.67
	Agree	84.88	21.1	59.09	83.33
	Pearson chi2(3) =169.2793 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Lithuania	Disagree	27.27	75.13	24.14	52.78
	Agree	72.73	24.87	75.86	47.22
	Pearson chi2(3)=126.3083 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Joining the European Union contributed to the economic downturn in [The respective country]					
Latvia	Disagree	16.48	68.37	31.03	26.09
	Agree	83.52	31.63	68.97	73.91
	Pearson chi2(3)=158.5873 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia	Disagree	18.52	77.36	45.83	10.00
	Agree	81.48	22.64	54.17	90.00
	Pearson chi2(3)=139.8360 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Lithuania	Disagree	26.32	74.53	23.53	62.50
	Agree	73.68	25.47	76.47	37.50
	Pearson chi2(3)=138.6647 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				

Note: (*) Only the meaningful responses (i.e. excluding "hard to say/no answer" option) were included in the processed data

Source: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017, authors' own calculations

CONCLUSIONS

The combination of responses to the question of the perception of EU membership and the image of the EU in an opinion poll allows clustering the respondents into four groups: Eurooptimists, Radical Eurosceptics, Europragmatists and Alienated people. The cross-tabulated results from the opinion poll from May 2017 in the Baltic countries reveal that people in the Baltic countries hold rather polar views about the EU and EU membership – they either support or oppose both. The Eurooptimists is the dominant opinion group in the Baltic countries. The second largest group, Radical Eurosceptics, is considerably smaller in all three countries. In terms of mutual proportions, in Estonia, the difference between the proportion of Eurooptimists and Radical Eurosceptics is the largest, while in Latvia – the smallest, thus confirming again the more pronounced Eurosceptical inclination of the Latvian people. The third group, Europragmatists, is rather small in all three countries, although, its size in Lithuania is twice as big as in Latvia and Estonia. The last group, Alienated people, are almost absent in Estonia, while in the other two countries their amount is minuscule.

Sociodemographic profiling reveals that the ranks of Radical Eurosceptics are mostly filled by middle aged or aged people, living alone, with vocational or secondary education, with moderate or low incomes, belonging to Russian-speaking community (in Latvia and Estonia) or living in the capital or eastern regions of the country. Among Europragmatists, aged people and those with vocational education also dominate. However, contrary to Euroradicals, Europragmatists have higher income level and, in Latvia and Estonia, a majority of them are natives. Europragmatism is more prevalent in regions with conservative cultural traditions in all three countries. At the same time, Alienated people are mostly past middle age, with vocational education, with medium or high income level, employed or living in the capital or eastern parts of the country. In Latvia and in particular in Estonia, the incidence of Russian speakers among the Alienated people is very high.

The results show that Radical Eurosceptics are indeed the most radical in their negativity towards the EU among the other opinion groups in all aspects. Eurooptimists delivered a surprise, however – the results indicate a high level of scepticism about the specific aspects of the EU among them, in particular in Latvia, and also in Lithuania. There, the Eurooptimists are less consistent in their positivity about the EU, and an overwhelming majority of them believe that only a small group of people benefits from EU membership and that the EU's management has little regard for local people. Unfortunately, the small relative size of Europragmatists and Alienated people in poll's sample and the general limits on the opinion poll's sample size do not allow drawing meaningful conclusions on the features of these two groups in this study. However, some tendencies can be detected. First, among the Europragmatists in Latvia and Estonia, people with radical national ideological inclination prevail. Second, the stark opinion differences between Lithuania's, on the one hand, and Latvia's and Estonia's Alienated people, on the other hand, point to a high occurrence of sceptical Russian speakers among Latvia's and Estonia's Alienated people.

EUROSCEPTICISM AND THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING POPULATION OF LATVIA AND ESTONIA

It is a known fact that Russians and the other ethnicities that use Russian as their family language living in Latvia and Estonia tend to exhibit heightened antagonism towards the EU and, for that reason, are more critical of EU membership than natives. There are many reasons for this, such as the failure to integrate; prejudices against the public authorities, which are allegedly dominated by the natives; allegiance to Russia and approval of Putin's regime; frustration and lack of trust in European institutions; anti-European propaganda from Russia etc. Solvita Denisa and Gints Apals address the situation with Russian speakers in greater detail in this volume. In this article, the scale and content of local Russian speakers' attitudes are revealed based on conclusions from the data from the May 2017 SKDS opinion poll. In addition, a test of the longitudinal consistency of the opinion differences between natives and Russian-speaking communities in Latvia is carried out by comparing the data between the polls from May 2017 and November 2011 (both from the SKDS).

The communities of Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia are sizeable and rather diverse (see Table 1). Ethnic Russians are a majority; however, these communities include also many other ethnicities like Belarusians, Ukrainians, Moldovans, Armenians, and Jews. The Russian language is their *lingua franca* as it was in the Soviet period when Russian was widely used in Latvia for official and inter-personal communication. The largest concentration of Russian speakers is in the capitals (Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius), in other large cities and in the eastern regions of the countries – in Latgale (Latvia), Ida-Viru (Estonia) and in Utena and Vilnius regions (Lithuania). In

Lithuania, the Russian language affiliated community is much smaller and, as such, has almost no impact on the general public stance on the issues like membership in the EU; therefore, no further attention will be devoted to the Russian speakers living in Lithuania in this article.

Table 1. The proportional size of Russian-speakers' communities in Latvia and Estonia, percent of total population

	Latvia	Estonia	Lithuania
Census 2000	37.5	30.9	8.3
Census 2011	37.2	30.3	7.5

Source: National statistical offices of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania

THE GENERAL PICTURE

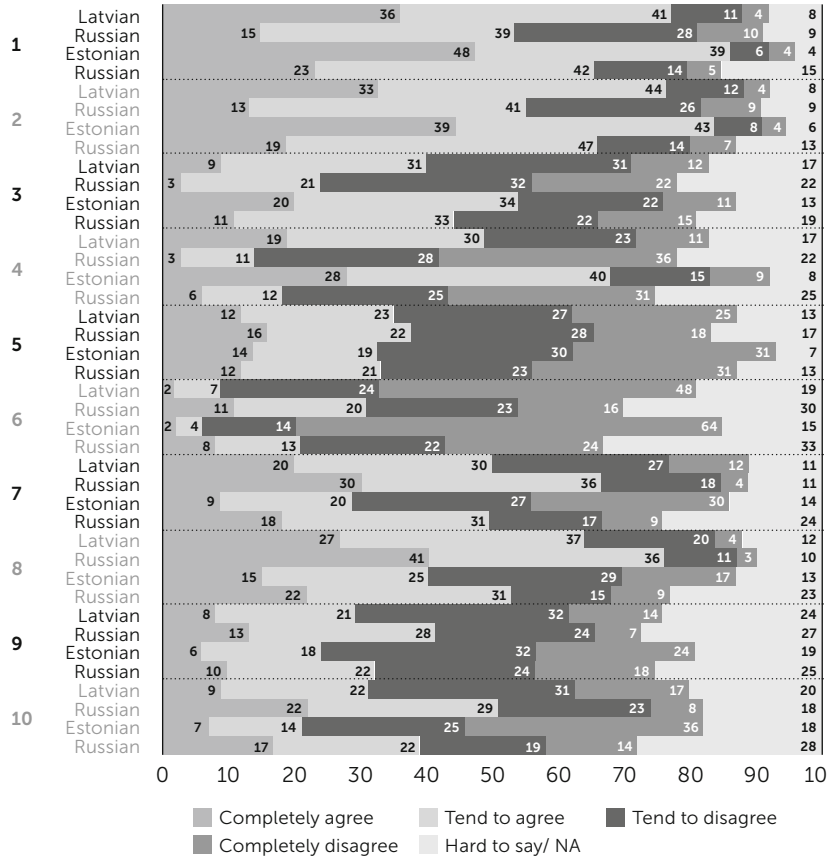
The SKDS opinion poll from May 2017 shows that, in Latvia, 38 percent of Russian speakers are not supportive of Latvia's membership in the EU (10 percent completely disagree and 28 percent tend to disagree; see Table 2). This confirms that, on the one hand, the level of Euroscepticism is much higher among the Russian speakers compared to the 15 percent of the native speakers who resent EU membership; on the other hand, a majority of Russian speakers (54 percent) is still supportive of EU membership, which is good news. As to the image of the EU among Russian speakers, while 37 percent see it negatively, which again surpasses the level of antipathy among Latvian speakers (16 percent), still, it represents a minority of Russian speakers.

In Estonia, the Russian-speaking population is noticeably less negative towards the EU than in Latvia. Only 19 percent of respondents who indicated Russian as their family language thought negatively about EU membership and 21 percent thought negatively of the EU in general. The other notable difference is that, in Estonia, the number of those who don't have an opinion on the EU and EU membership is considerably higher (13 and 15 percent respectively). The same tendency can be observed with respect to other issues – in

all cases, a milder antagonism towards the EU and a higher level of indecision is observed in Estonia's Russians speakers compared to Latvia's.

On some issues, the differences in opinion between Russian speakers and natives are huge in Latvia and Estonia. For example, on the claim that EU membership was the only possibility to resist the impact of Russia, only a very small fraction of Russians speakers

Table 2. Russian speakers' attitude towards the EU in Latvia and Estonia, general results, percents



Source: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017

agrees (14 percent in Latvia and 18 percent in Estonia), while native language speakers are much more affirmative of it (49 percent in Latvia and 68 percent in Estonia). At the same time, a congruence of opinions on some issues between the Russian speakers and the natives can be noticed too. Thus, somewhat strikingly, albeit for different reasons, the level of disbelief in the future chances of the national independence is very similar in both communities in both countries (33 to 38 percent in Latvia and 33 to 33 percent in Estonia).

At last, it has to be added that in Latvia, despite moderate support for the EU among Russian speakers on the whole, in some aspects their negativity is very extreme. For example, in the perception of 64 percent of Russians, the EU is not contributing to minority integration in Latvia. Additionally, 66 percent believe that only a small group of people benefits from EU membership and 77 percent agree that EU management does not care how local people feel.

IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE ATTITUDES OF THE RUSSIANS SPEAKERS

The configuration of the May 2017 SKDS opinion poll permits splitting the Russian-speaking respondents into four main opinion groups: Radical Eurosceptics, Eurooptimists, Europragmatists and Alienated people. The results of the division of Russian-speaking respondents are shown in Table 3. From there one can see that Eurooptimists among Russian speakers are by far the largest group in both countries, but especially in Estonia (57 percent in Latvia and 73 percent in Estonia). Radical Eurosceptics constitute the second largest group, whose weight in Latvia is almost double of that in Estonia (35 percent and 19 percent). The combined weight of Europragmatists and Alienated people among Russian speakers in both countries is small – around 8 percent. Compared to the same results from the whole sample of the opinion poll,[1] one can notice that Eurooptimism among Russian speakers is less manifested (57 to 71 percent in Latvia and 73 to 83 percent in Estonia), while Radical Euroscepticism is

elevated (35 to 22 percent and 19 to 12 percent). At the same time, Europragmatism seems to be slightly more eminent among Latvian and Estonian Russian speakers (4.1 and 4.4 percent) when compared to natives (3.7 and 3.5 percent). The level of alienation is also more pronounced among Estonian Russian speakers, while Latvian Russian speakers' alienation matches the level of the natives (3.2 to 4.1 percent).[2]

Table 3. Size of the main opinion groups on EU issues among Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia, percents*

Latvia (n = 363)		Estonia (n = 225)	
Eurooptimists 56.75	Alienated 4.13	Eurooptimists 73.33	Alienated 3.56
Europragmatists 4.13	Radical Eurosceptics 34.99	Europragmatists 4.44	Radical Eurosceptics 18.67

Note: (*) Only the meaningful responses (i.e. excluding "hard to say/no answer" option) were included in the processed data

Source: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017, authors' own calculations

In terms of prevailing attitudes in each of the four opinion groups, one can detect the following associations (see Table 4). The Russian-speaking Radical Eurosceptics, as expected, in Latvia and Estonia show a great unity in their denial of the positive aspects of EU membership and in underscoring the negative aspects of the EU. Additionally, Russian-speaking Radical Eurosceptics also show a high inclination to see Russia and the CIS as valid alternatives to the EU. Interestingly, in Estonia Russian-speaking Radical Eurosceptics tend to be more radical than in Latvia.

In both countries, Russian-speaking Eurooptimists hold more moderate views (that is, a gap between the shares of positive and negative reactions is smaller) than natives with respect to claims such as the positive impact of the EU on social cohesion and minority integration, and that the countries would do better in the CIS than in the EU. At the same time, in both countries, Russian Eurooptimists have more polarised views (in the sceptical direction) on issues such as juxtaposing the EU's membership to Russia's impact, the fair

distribution of the benefits of EU membership, the EU management's regard for the local people, the future of the EU, and, ultimately, on the EU's impact on the national economies.

Although the Russian-speaking Europragmatists – people who support EU membership despite their distaste for the EU – and Alienated people – people who oppose EU membership although they like the EU as such – are too small as groups to allow drawing statistically valid inferences, still, some observations deserve attention. To a very high degree, people from the both groups share concerns over the fair distribution of benefits and negligence of EU management over what the local people think. They also tend to think that the EU will soon collapse and that the EU should be blamed for economic hardship. The Alienated Russian-speaking people more than Europragmatists tend to show hostility towards the EU, particularly in Latvia; however, their hostility is somewhat more restrained than of the Russian-speaking Radical Eurosceptics. For their part, the Russian-speaking Europragmatists are more conciliatory towards the EU, with the exception of the issue of the CIS as a viable alternative to EU membership – between 58 and 80 percent are inclined to think that membership in the CIS would have brought more benefits. Somewhat strangely, on the same issue, Russian speakers from Alienated group show the opposite attitude – they tend to doubt to a great extent (at 43 percent) the ability of the CIS to deliver more than the EU.

Finally, the responses to the claim that Latvia and Estonia cannot exist as independent nation states among the Russian-speaking respondents did not yield statistically significant differences among the four major opinion groups. This serves as an indicator that the scepticism about the viability of these small nation states is high among the Russian-speaking people irrespective of their attitude towards the EU.

Table 4. Associations between the main opinion groups and stereotypes among Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia, cross-tabulated data, percents*

		Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
[The respective country] membership in the European Union encourages social cohesion and integration of national minorities in [the respective country]					
Latvia (n = 299)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	96.49	45.91	66.67	63.64
	Completely or tend to AGREE	3.51	54.09	33.33	36.36
	Pearson chi2(3)=76.7495 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia (n = 194)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	92.31	32.61	55.56	12.5
	Completely or tend to AGREE	7.69	67.39	44.44	87.5
	Pearson chi2(3)=47.6747 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Joining the European Union was the only possibility for [The respective country] to resist the impact of Russia					
Latvia (n = 296)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	92.79	75.32	61.54	64.29
	Completely or tend to AGREE	7.21	24.68	38.46	35.71
	Pearson chi2(3)=18.8802 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia (n = 173)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	92.5	66.67	88.89	85.71
	Completely or tend to AGREE	7.5	33.33	11.11	14.29
	Pearson chi2(3)=12.0655 P=0.007 (differences are statistically significant)				
[The respective country] as an independent national country cannot exist					
Latvia (n = 312)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	50.45	57.71	76.92	46.15
	Completely or tend to AGREE	49.55	42.29	23.08	53.85
	Pearson chi2(3)=4.3676 P=0.224 (differences are not statistically significant)				
Estonia (n = 202)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	58.97	66.67	55.56	42.86
	Completely or tend to AGREE	41.03	33.33	44.44	57.14
	Pearson chi2(3)=2.5120 P=0.473 (differences are not statistically significant)				

		Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
[The respective country] as a country would do better at the moment if it belonged to CIS, not the European Union					
Latvia (n = 268)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	32.65	75.51	41.67	57.09
	Completely or tend to AGREE	67.35	24.49	58.33	42.91
	Pearson chi2(3)=46.0227 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia (n = 159)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	45.83	83.74	20	57.14
	Completely or tend to AGREE	54.17	16.26	80	42.86
	Pearson chi2(3)=25.0501 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
From [The respective country] participation in the European Union benefits only a small group of people					
Latvia (n = 331)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	11.30	36.70	35.71	7.14
	Completely or tend to AGREE	88.70	63.30	64.29	92.86
	Pearson chi2(3)=26.9261 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia (n = 185)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	5.26	53.08	11.11	25
	Completely or tend to AGREE	94.74	46.92	88.89	75
	Pearson chi2(3)=32.2477 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Management of the European Union does not care how [The respective country] people feel					
Latvia (n = 335)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	9.09	20.00	26.67	16.12
	Completely or tend to AGREE	90.91	80.00	73.33	83.88
	Pearson chi2(3)= 7.7502 P=0.051 (differences are not statistically significant)				
Estonia (n = 185)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	10.81	42.42	11.11	0
	Completely or tend to AGREE	89.19	57.58	88.89	100
	Pearson chi2(3)=18.9478 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
The European Union will soon collapse					
Latvia (n = 278)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	22.12	60.78	66.67	16.67
	Completely or tend to AGREE	77.88	39.22	33.33	83.33
	Pearson chi2(3)=43.0612 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				

		Radical Eurosceptics	Euro-optimists	Euro-pragmatists	Alien-ated
Estonia (n = 177)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	12.5	77.44	20	0
	Completely or tend to AGREE	87.5	22.56	80	100
	Pearson chi2(3)=43.0612 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Joining the European Union contributed to the economic downturn in [The respective country]					
Latvia (n = 316)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	18.10	54.60	28.57	25.00
	Completely or tend to AGREE	81.90	45.40	71.43	75.00
	Pearson chi2(3)=40.7425 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				
Estonia (n = 177)	Completely or tend to DISAGREE	14.71	57.94	30	0
	Completely or tend to AGREE	85.29	42.06	70	100
	Pearson chi2(3)=27.6431 P=0.000 (differences are statistically significant)				

Note: (*) Only the meaningful responses (i.e. excluding "hard to say/no answer" option) were included in the processed data

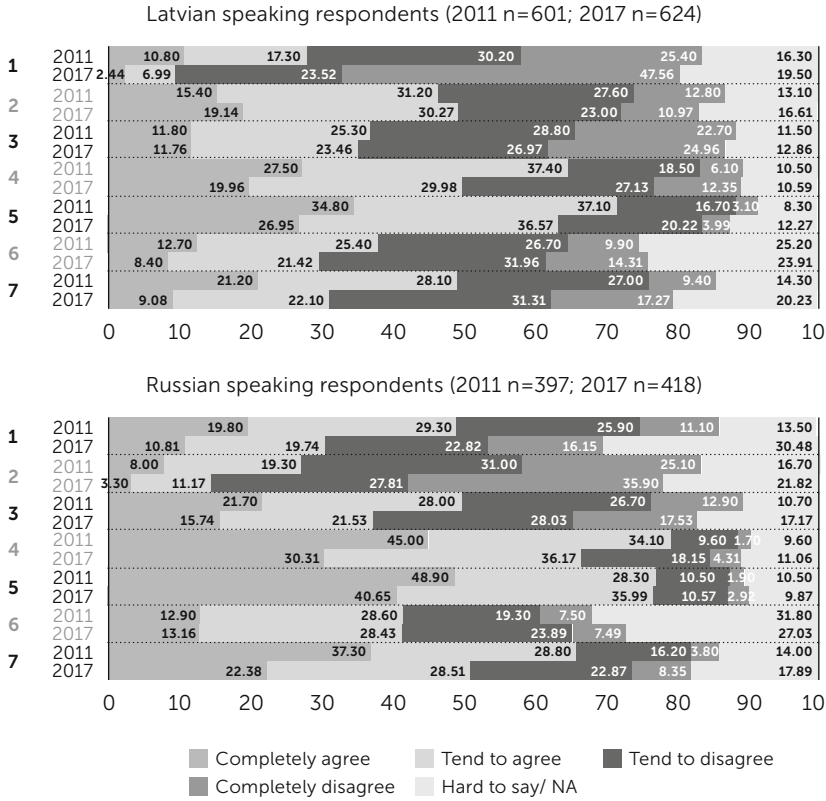
Source: SKDS opinion poll from May 2017, authors' own calculations

THE LONGITUDINAL TENDENCIES OF PUBLIC OPINION ON THE EU IN LATVIA

The SKDS opinion poll from May 2017 was designed to also measure the longitudinal tendencies in the perception of different popular EU-linked stereotypes in Latvia since November 2011. The longitudinal measurement is permitted by the similarity of questions included in the May 2017 SKDS opinion poll and the November 2011 SKDS opinion poll.[3] In both polls, the respondents were divided between Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking groups.

The general results show (see Table 5) that the level of EU pessimism has substantially decreased in the Latvian-speaking segment of population. Membership in the CIS was seen as less attractive in 2017 (9 percent) than back in 2011 (28 percent). Support has also increased for the claim that the EU acts as a protector against the impact of Russia. At the same time, somewhat fewer number of Latvians has doubts about

Table 5. Longitudinal tendencies in the perception of the EU related stereotypes among the Latvian and Russian-speaking parts of population in Latvia, percents. (See the questions in Table 6.)



Source: SKDS opinion polls from November 2011 and May 2017

the viability of national statehood (from 37 percent in 2011 to 35 percent in 2017) and about the negative effects of EU membership, such as the EU benefiting only a small group of people (from 65 to 50 percent), being ignorant about the needs of local people (from 72 to 63 percent), and causing economic hardship (from 49 percent to 31 percent). The number of pessimists among Latvian speakers with respect to the fate of the EU has also dropped (from 38 to 30 percent).

Among the Russian-speaking population of Latvia, one can observe a similar general tendency: although Russian speakers are still more sceptical about the EU, their level of scepticism has also tended to decrease. In 2011, 49 percent of Russian speakers thought that the CIS would be more beneficial than the EU to Latvia, while in 2017 only 30 percent shared this vision. Likewise, Russian speakers have become less inclined to doubt Latvia's nationhood (from 50 to 37 percent) and to insist on the elitist nature of the EU (from 79 to 66 percent). Although in the 2017 poll, fewer Russian speakers expressed support for the statement that the EU contributed to the economic slump (from 66 to 51 percent), Russian speakers stayed as sceptical in 2017 about the future of the EU as in 2011, at 41 percent. Finally, one important reverse tendency can be detected among Russian speakers, namely, between 2011 and 2017, the level of support for the claim that the EU represented the only possibility to resist the impact of Russia has almost halved (from 27 to 14 percent).

The cross-tabulated data (see Table 6) show that all differences between Latvian speakers and Russian speakers are statistically significant, allowing to conclude with a high degree of confidence that the differences observed in opinion poll samples exist among Latvia's population in general.

Table 6. Longitudinal tendencies in the perception of EU-related stereotypes among Latvian and Russian-speaking parts of population in Latvia, cross-tabulated data, percents*

	Latvian speakers		Russian speakers	
	2011	**2017**	**2011**	**2017**
1. Latvia as a country would do better at the moment if it belonged to CIS, not the European Union				
Completely or tend to DISAGREE	66.53	88.29	42.98	56.06
Completely or tend to AGREE	33.47	11.71	57.02	43.94
	Pearson chi2(1)=46.1546 Pr=0.000**		Pearson chi2(1)=106.3271 Pr=0.000	
2. Joining the European Union was the only possibility for Latvia to resist the impact of Russia				
Completely or tend to DISAGREE	46.29	40.58	67.07	81.04
Completely or tend to AGREE	53.71	59.42	32.93	18.96
	Pearson chi2(1)=35.5299 Pr=0.000		Pearson chi2(1)=133.5261 Pr=0.000	

	Latvian speakers		Russian speakers	
	2011	2017	2011	2017
3. Latvia as an independent national country cannot exist				
Completely or tend to DISAGREE	58.32	59.19	44.51	54.91
Completely or tend to AGREE	41.68	40.81	55.49	45.09
	Pearson chi2(1)=16.3327 Pr = 0.000		Pearson chi2(1)=1.5840 Pr=0.208	
4. From Latvia's participation in the European Union benefits only a small group of people				
Completely or tend to DISAGREE	26.95	44.09	11.67	25.00
Completely or tend to AGREE	73.05	55.91	88.33	75.00
	Pearson chi2(1)=30.5620 Pr=0.000		Pearson chi2(1)=35.0997 Pr=0.000	
5. Management of the European Union does not care how Latvian people feel				
Completely or tend to DISAGREE	21.23	27.74	13.52	14.85
Completely or tend to AGREE	78.77	72.26	86.48	85.15
	Pearson chi2(1)=8.6229 Pr=0.003		Pearson chi2(1)=21.2678 Pr=0.000	
6. The European Union will soon collapse				
Completely or tend to DISAGREE	48.78	60.89	40.07	43.28
Completely or tend to AGREE	51.22	39.11	59.93	56.72
	Pearson chi2(1)=5.1871 Pr=0.023		Pearson chi2(1)=23.1468 Pr=0.000	
7. Joining the European Union contributed to the economic downturn in Latvia				
Completely or tend to DISAGREE	41.94	60.76	22.29	38.08
Completely or tend to AGREE	58.06	39.24	77.71	61.92
	Pearson chi2(1)=35.2607 Pr=0.000		Pearson chi2(1)=41.8766 Pr=0.000	

Notes: (*) Only the meaningful responses (i.e. excluding "hard to say/no answer" option) were included in the processed data; (**) In all cases differences are statistically significant

Source: SKDS opinion polls from November 2011 and May 2017, authors' own calculations

CONCLUSIONS

Latvia and Estonia, for historical reasons, are home to a sizeable Russian minority, which combined with other Russian-speaking ethnic minorities (Belarusians, Ukrainians, Moldovans, Armenians, and Jews), form Russian-speaking communities in both countries. The results from the opinion poll confirm that, although a majority is

supportive of the EU, a noticeable level of antagonism against the EU is observed in these communities too, particularly in Latvia.

Compared to natives, the Russian-speaking Radical Eurosceptics show great unity in their denial of the positive aspects of EU membership and in underscoring the negative aspects of the EU. At the same time, the Russian-speaking Eurooptimists hold more moderate views on the positive aspects of the EU than natives do. The responses from the Russian-speaking Europragmatists and Alienated people are more varied, although not statistically significant. Scepticism about the viability of Latvia and Estonia as nation states is prevalent among Russian-speaking people irrespective of their attitude towards the EU.

A comparison between opinion polls in 2011 and 2017 reveal the longitudinal tendencies or consistency of opinions among Latvian and Russian speakers in Latvia. The general conclusion is that among Latvians, the level of EU pessimism has substantially decreased. Russian speakers still have a strong tendency to be more critical of the EU, although as far as separate statements are concerned, the attitude has considerably improved between 2011 and 2017. Latvians also have a rather critical attitude towards the EU, although this criticism is less pronounced than among the Russian speakers. The only issue for which Latvians show a high degree of unity is in favour of the EU in the hypothetical choice between the EU and the CIS. Interestingly, the perception of salience of the geopolitical importance of EU membership among Russian speakers in Latvia has halved since 2011.

ENDNOTES

[1] For the results on the whole sample, see section „Uncovering the Diverse Expressions of Euroscepticism" in the 2nd part of this volume.

[2] However, due to their small sample sizes, the associations drawn in connection of Europragmatist and Alienated peoples' groups are statistically not significant and the results have to be treated with caution.

[3] Data of November 2011 opinion poll are drawn from Māris Cepurītis and Rinalds Gulbis, "Ārpolitikas mīti Latvijā: Eiropas Savienība un Krievija" [Foreign policy myths in Latvia: the European Union and Russia] (Latvijas Vēstures mazās bibliotēkas atbalsta fonds, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS ON EUROSCEPTICISM IN THE BALTIC STATES: NO REASON TO PANIC – YET

Aldis Austers

The aim of this volume was to investigate the content, breadth and depth of Eurosceptic views in the Baltic countries and to provide an explanation of observable trends. More particularly, the volume examines the roots of the apparent paradox that the Baltic countries, which stand to gain the most from European Union (EU) membership of all member states from Central Eastern Europe (CEE) and, for this reason, should be the most enthusiastic about European integration, continuously exhibit disproportionally low levels of popular support for EU membership, in particular Latvia and Estonia. Moreover, another paradox was researched, linked to the conspicuous absence of popular Eurosceptic or anti-European movements in these countries despite the relatively low societal appetite for European integration.

As studies from other CEE member states reveal, the Eurosceptic sentiment of people may not automatically translate into a policy action, and popular levels of Euroscepticism may coexist with low support for parties expressing Euroscepticism. As asserted by Taggart and Szczerbiak,[1] "only when there are citizens, parties and policies that are Eurosceptical will Euroscepticism become a realised force in European politics." For Euroscepticism to become a political force, accordingly, it would have to work in four dimensions. It would require: (1) significant levels of public support; (2) parties expressing Euroscepticism; (3) a salience of Eurosceptical issues for voters meaning that they would be prepared to vote for Eurosceptic

parties and (4) a salience of Eurosceptical issues as a dimension of competition for the parties.

It makes sense to structure the conclusions along these four dimensions, as discussing the assertions from authors of this volume from such a single methodological framework would allow drawing meaningful inferences on the status and future of Euroscepticism in the Baltic countries. However, before turning to Taggart's and Szczerbiak's outline, concluding observations regarding the terminology and definitions used in this volume merit attention first. In the end, before drawing the final conclusions, the economic aspects of Euroscepticism are discussed too.

SUMMING UP CONSIDERATIONS OF TERMINOLOGICAL NATURE

Euroscepticism is widely understood to imply a negative attitude held towards European integration, in general, and the European Union (EU), in particular. According to Bukovskis, Euroscepticism is "a term used to describe the strongly critical or even nihilistic attitude towards the European project."[2] Yet, as noted by Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė,[3] there is no single, universally accepted usage of the term Euroscepticism, as it has been formed "from the different visions of EU integration and differing evaluation of EU development," and may entail "not only opposition to the EU as a supranational organisation but also a critique of some developments, integration processes, policies etc."

Taggart and Szczerbiak propose, as they call it themselves, an actor-oriented concept of Euroscepticism. According to this approach, actors can be divided into *hard Eurosceptics* and *soft Eurosceptics*. Hard Eurosceptics "de facto reject their country being a member of the EU." Soft Eurosceptics, however, "encompass those who are supportive of EU membership in principle but contest the trajectory of the European project." Alternatively, Kopecky and Mudde, adopt a party-based approach in which Euroscepticism is treated as a "relative

point on a continuum" of positions along two axes – EU pessimist/optimist and Europhobe/Europhile. More specifically, they suggest a four-fold typology by distinguishing between *Euroenthusiasts* – those who are both supportive of the broad project of European integration and optimistic with regards to the actual trajectory of EU development; *Europragmatists* – actors supportive of the broad project of European integration, but are nevertheless positive about the current EU insofar as it is serves particular national interests; *Eurosceptics* – those who hold a positive view of the broad project of European integration, but are critical of the actual development of the EU; and, finally, *Eurorejects* – people rejecting both the general idea of European integration and the specific form which it has taken in the EU.[4]

Occasionally, another term – *Eurorealism* – is used instead of Euroscepticism. However, this term has a dual meaning, and is of little help. On the one hand, these are radical Eurosceptics who prefer to be referred to as Eurorealists because of their ostensible ability to behold the "true" – be it futile, hostile or doomed – nature of the EU which is hidden from lay people. On the other hand, as indicated by Bukovskis,[5] for small peripheral EU countries, Eurorealism carries another connotation and, from their perspective, has a close association with the expression of "the least evil". According to Bukovskis, in small EU countries, "the economic and security gains prevail in political calculations and positioning on the EU's membership." That is, in these countries, people's attitude towards the EU is determined by a cold-headed weighing of benefits and costs of EU membership, and this stance may be referred to as Europragmatism.

In fact, as noted in this volume by Apals, the public perception of Europe is a much broader topic than attitudes regarding European integration or the EU, namely, that "the notion of Europe is generally understood as a synonym of the West or, more concretely, a web of international structures that includes the EU and many other governmental or non-governmental organisations." For this reason, Euroscepticism should not be confused with *anti-Europeanism*. From

the perspective of peripheral Eastern European countries, inter alia the Baltic states, anti-Europeanism denotes opposition not only to the EU, but to the whole Western orientation of these states, including NATO membership.[6]

Austers and Ņikišins in this volume develop an alternative approach in relation to people's attitudes towards the EU along two dimensions – support or opposition to EU membership and good/bad image of the EU. The resulting categories entail Eurooptimists, Europragmatists, Radical Eurosceptics, and Alienated people. Austers and Ņikišins test this four-fold typology by analysing responses to the question of the perception of EU membership and the image of the EU in an opinion poll. The cross-tabulated data show that such categorisation earns statistically significant results in the case of the three Baltic countries. These results reveal that people in the Baltic countries hold rather polar views about the EU and EU membership – they either support or oppose both. The Eurooptimist group is the dominant opinion group in the Baltic countries. The second largest group, Radical Eurosceptics, is considerably smaller in all three countries. In terms of mutual proportions, in Estonia, the difference between the proportion of Eurooptimists and Radical Eurosceptics is the largest, while in Latvia – the smallest, thus confirming the more pronounced Eurosceptical inclination of the Latvian people. The third group, Europragmatists, is rather small in all three countries, although, it is twice as big in Lithuania as in Latvia and Estonia. The last group, Alienated people, is almost absent in Estonia, and in the other two countries it is minuscule.

Grostiņš, as Eurosceptic himself, underscores in this volume that the Eurocritical movement in Latvia has always developed in the broader context of European political processes, and points to confusion in Latvia about what terminology to use for people who are sceptical or critical of the development of the EU. According to Grostiņš, people who are critical of how the EU functions often prefer to use the term *EU-critic* or *EU-sceptic* to highlight that the EU is not representative of Europe. Meļķis also comes to the conclusion that Euroscepticism is not the appropriate term to use in

connection to existing complaints about the EU. Business people in Latvia, according to Meļķis, "while repeatedly using words like 'realism' and 'criticism,' still stress fundamental support for EU membership, participation in the Economic and Monetary Union and the commitment to promote functional and effective business and social policies in a united Europe in the future." Instead, Meļķis suggests shifting the emphasis from Euroscepticism as a lack of faith in effective common policies and practices, to *Eurocriticism* as a means to correct inefficiencies, and *Eurorealism* as a way to interpret common but still nationally centred economic relations between the member states. Veebel, analysing Eurosceptical manifestations among Estonia's economic actors in this volume, concludes that the prevailing mode of Euroscepticism is particular issues based and centred on specific personalities.

THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF EUROSCEPTICISM

Public Opinion

Latvia seems to be the most sceptical in terms of EU membership – the distance is considerable with the other Baltic peer countries: Estonia comes second and Lithuania third. The level of antipathy towards EU membership has been declining recently in Latvia though, under influence of a combination of factors (e.g. the economic recovery, the euro introduction, the EU presidency and growing geopolitical tensions with Russia). These factors have a positive effect also on the attitudes in the other Baltic countries; however, this positive effect is dispersed over time. Interestingly, while only a few people in the Baltic States object to the EU's internal free movement of people, there exists a considerable opposition to the euro, particularly in Lithuania.

Despite general observation that in the Baltic countries people with positive disposition towards the EU tend to rebuff the claims of negative consequences from membership, and vice versa, those

who think negatively about the EU tend to call attention to the negative aspects of membership, Austers and Ņikišins observe that the correlations between specific issues show that Latvians and Lithuanians hold more diverse views on the EU and its specific aspects than do Estonians. That is, among those Latvians and Lithuanians who are supportive of EU membership, a higher percentage is also critical of the consequences of EU membership, such as the uneven distribution of rewards from EU membership and the arrogance of the EU management.

Awareness of the geopolitical significance of EU membership vis-a-vis Russia is the most elevated in Lithuania. However, the correlations suggest that the strongest association between support for EU membership and the geopolitical indispensability of EU membership exists in Estonia, followed by Latvia. In Lithuania, despite the perceived geopolitical salience of EU membership, the population holds a variety of views regarding the purported benefits of their current EU membership and a hypothetical Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) membership, and many supporters of membership in the EU tend also to think that Lithuania would do better in the CIS.

The observed differences between Latvia and Estonia, on the one hand, and Lithuania, on the other hand, as observed by Austers and Ņikišins, resonate with the conclusion of Apals in this volume, who, in relation to Latvia, underlines that the prevailing positive attitude towards Europe has been shaped by a wish to "escape history and geography." In Latvia, public opinion seems to be more sensitive to geopolitical strains between the West and Russia than in the other Baltic countries. In Lithuania, at the same time, public opinion on the EU seems less shaped by historical memories and geopolitical considerations, but more by people's interaction with national institutions. The gap between trust in the EU and national government is the widest in Lithuania among the three Baltic countries. In this volume Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė notes that, in Lithuania, the negative view towards the euro "is not associated with the general view of the EU but it has more to do with the performance

of national government, economic situation and general expectations before the introduction of the euro."

In Latvia, the situation is somewhat different. Those Latvians who support EU membership tend also to support the view that the benefits that accrue from this membership are superior to those from a hypothetical participation in the CIS. The level of conviction in Latvia regarding the right choice in favour of the EU is the highest in the Baltic countries, followed by Estonia. Latvia's situation stands out also from the perspective of the linkages (more precisely – the conspicuous lack of linkages) between the perception of the viability of national statehood and people's stance on EU membership, on the one hand, and the geopolitical salience of the EU vis-a-vis Russia, on the other hand. That is, EU membership is not seen in Latvia as a solution to the concerns either about the sustainability of national independence or Russia's impact. Instead, many of those people with doubts about national independence – both Latvians and Russians – think that Latvia would do better today in the CIS. This worrying tendency signals that, in the mind of many people of Latvia, the EU is failing to deliver on security that many people in Latvia long for, a notion which is also confirmed by Apals in this volume.

In Estonia, on the contrary, people with a positive stance towards the EU show little doubt about the geopolitical significance of the EU and the benefits it delivers compared to the CIS. Notwithstanding Estonian Russian speakers' negativity towards the EU, the high degree of conviction of native Estonians balances out this negative effect and, therefore, in sum, Estonia stands out as the most consistent pro-European country in the Baltic region.

The analysis of respondents' sociodemographic parameters reveals that a person's age, educational attainment, level of income, status of employment, language spoken in the family and place of domicile are all factors which have the strongest association with people's positive or negative perception of the EU and its membership. Thus, a typical Eurosceptical person, according to Austers and Ņikišins, is middle aged or retired, has Russian as his/her family language, with basic education, unemployed, with a low level of income and is living either

in the capital or in remote regions. Except for the high concentration of sceptics in capitals, the sociodemographic profile of Eurosceptical people in the three Baltic states is very similar to that of other EU member states, conclude Austers and Ņikišins. Interesting revelation is that, in Latvia, large families with more children tend to be less sceptical about EU membership than families composed of single person. Unfortunately, due to shortage of data, this relevant inference could not be checked against the other Baltic countries.

After clustering the respondents into four opinion groups – Radical Eurosceptics, Eurooptimists, Europragmatists and Alienated people – and developing a profile of each group, Austers and Ņikišins reveal that Eurooptimists is the dominant opinion group in the Baltic countries. The second largest group, Radical Eurosceptics, is considerably smaller in all three countries, although in Latvia its relative size is much bigger than in Estonia and Lithuania. The third group, Europragmatists, is rather small in all three countries, although, its size in Lithuania is twice as big as in Latvia and Estonia. The last group, Alienated people, are almost absent in Estonia, while in the other two countries their amount is minuscule.

The cross-tabulated results from a public opinion poll show that Radical Eurosceptics are indeed the most radical in their negativity towards the EU among the other opinion groups in all aspects. Eurooptimists delivered a surprise, however – the results indicate a high level of scepticism about specific aspects of the EU among them, in particular in Latvia. There, Eurooptimists are less consistent in their positivity about the EU, and an overwhelming majority of them believe that, for example, only a small group of people benefits from EU membership and that the EU's management has little regard for local people. Unfortunately, the small relative size of Europragmatists and Alienated people in the poll's sample and the general limits on the opinion poll's sample size do not allow drawing statistically significant conclusions on the features of these two groups in this study. However, some tendencies can be detected. First, among Europragmatists in Latvia and Estonia, people with a radical national ideological inclination prevail. Second, the stark differences in opinion between

the Alienated people in Lithuania, on the one hand, and in Latvia and Estonia, on the other hand, point to a high occurrence of sceptical Russian speakers among Latvia and Estonia's populations of Alienated people.

The main language of Euroscepticism in Latvia and Estonia is indeed Russian. Latvia and Estonia, for historical reasons, are home to a sizeable Russian minority, which combined with other Russian-speaking ethnic minorities, form Russian-speaking communities in both countries. Although a majority is supportive of the EU, a noticeable level of antagonism against the EU is still observed in these communities, particularly in Latvia, conclude Austers and Ņikišins, and Russian speakers are able to infuence the general stance on the EU of people in these countries to a considerable extent.

By studying the popularity of prevailing stereotypes among Russian speakers with Radical Eurosceptical, Eurooptimist, Europragmatist and Alienated outlooks towards the EU, Austers and Ņikišins notice that, compared to natives, the Russian-speaking Radical Eurosceptics show greater unity in their denial of the positive aspects of EU membership and in underscoring the negative aspects of the EU. At the same time, Russian-speaking Eurooptimists hold more moderate views on the positive aspects of the EU than natives do. The responses from the Russian-speaking Europragmatists and Alienated people are more varied, although not statistically significant. Scepticism about the viability of Latvia and Estonia as nation states is prevalent among Russian-speaking people irrespective of their attitude towards the EU.

Lastly, the results from a longitudinal test of consistency of people's opinions on different popular stereotypes linked to the EU among Latvian and Russian speakers in Latvia reveals – with statistical certitude – that in 2017, compared to 2011, Russian speakers still have a strong tendency to be more critical of the EU, although as far as separate popular stereotypes are concerned, the attitude has considerably improved. Among Latvians, the level of EU pessimism has substantially decreased in the same time span: Latvians also have a rather critical attitude towards the EU, but this criticism is less pronounced than among the Russian speakers, and, as noted, has notably diminished since 2011.

Parties Expressing Euroscepticism

In a study on party-based Euroscepticism in the CEE, Estonia and Latvia were classified as countries with high public Euroscepticism combined with a high party-based Euroscepticism, putting the two countries in the same group with the UK, Denmark and Austria, for example. Only Lithuania according to this classification stood out as a country with a high level of public Euroscepticism but with a low party-based Euroscepticism.[7] Has the situation changed since 2002?

In fact, it is quite difficult to map the parties according to their European positions. First, as European integration has been a multi-dimensional and nonlinear process, "it is possible to be in favour of the euro but against developing common security and defence policy and vice versa." Second, many parties are often reluctant to be explicit about their "precise approach to European integration or to the current and future direction of the EU." The authors of this volume were advised to differentiate between parties with radial Eurosceptical stance – rejecting outright their country's membership in the EU – and moderate Eurosceptical position – supportive of EU membership in principle but contesting the current trajectory of the European project or further extensions of EU competencies.[8]

Apals, by analysing party-based Euroscepticism in Latvia, concludes that institutional Euroscepticism exists only on the fringes of Latvia's political left-right spectrum and that the popular appeal for and the number of Eurosceptic organisations has substantially declined, as revealed by a comparison of results from parliamentary elections in 2002 and 2014. After a failure in the 2014 elections, Eurosceptic organisations tried to use the municipal elections of 2017 to reposition themselves but to little avail. In Apals mind, the decline of party Euroscepticism in Latvia is linked to the absence of a viable alternative to membership in the EU, the reliance on EU funding and "even the fact that all the major parties have become integrated with European political groups." However, Apals makes an important methodological observation, namely, that the views and promises of Eurosceptic groups during the recent local elections once again

underscored the fact that the public debate about Latvia's relationship with Europe could not be focused on the EU alone, as during the municipal elections of 2017, "Eurosceptic groups tried to capitalise on anti-Western sentiment, indiscriminately denouncing the EU, NATO and Western structures in general."

In Estonia the situation is somewhat different. Illimar Ploom and Viljar Veebel, by analysing the political aspects of Euroscepticism in Estonia, point to a personality-based Euroscepticism in Estonia. Several mainstream political forces of pro-European orientation, be it Estonian Reform Party or Estonian Centre Party, have tolerated the expressions of relatively radical Eurosceptical views by some individual members of these parties. What is more, in contrast to Latvia, a radical Eurosceptic party has made to the national parliament in the recent elections in Estonia. The Estonian Conservative People's Party got seven seats in 2015 elections and its leadership, while insisting on close economic, cultural and security ties with Europe, has been calling for a new referendum on the Estonia's EU membership.

Vitkus, in his survey of the party Euroscepticism in Lithuania, concludes that, like in Latvia, it remains marginalised in Lithuania, as support for Eurosceptical ideas is in decline and only small populist nationalist parties at the extreme right dear to take an openly Eurosceptical stance. In 2016 national elections none of traditionally Eurosceptical parties passed the threshold. However, in 2014 European Parliament elections a number of openly Eurosceptical parties participated and the leader of the Bloc of Valdemar Tomaševski – Tomaševski himself – made it into the European Parliament. Vitkus also notes, however, that established political parties in Lithuania are not populated by European federalists neither and they have opted at times for inclusion of solid Eurosceptical proposals into their electoral programs. In addition, as in Estonia's case, scepticism on the part of individual party members has been tolerated too. For instance, the former leader of the governing Order and Justice party Rolandas Paksas has been more Eurosceptical than his party – along Tomaševski, Paksas is also a Member of the European Parliament today.

Today, in western EU member states, radical left and radical right oppose European integration, while centre left in general is supportive of European integration, and centre right is populated by a variety of opinions, including scepticism of varied dosage. What is more, opposition to the EU is often linked to disillusionment with the current establishment, because, from the voters' perspective, the choice of either left or right parties has had no meaningful impact of their concerns about the European agenda because of the EU's *de facto* apolitical nature, caused by asynchronous between leftist and rightist governments in member states.[9] Hence, in many old EU member states one can observe a collapse of the traditional left-right political cleavage. At the same time, a new cleavage is opening, between liberals and conservatives. What about the Baltic states?

As noted by Ploom and Veebel, while in general the Western world is only recently witnessing a contraction of traditional left-right politics and the rise of the cleavage between liberals and conservatives, Estonia with its right-wing political paradigm has been there already since long. In a curious way, Estonia is experiencing a slight countermove, underline Ploom and Veebel – "If nearly throughout the post-Soviet era right-wing parties and politics have prevailed, the end of 2016 saw a change when more left-leaning parties and policies have taken the lead." In the case of Latvia, in Apals estimate, a change in political paradigm from the traditional left-right cleavage to a new liberal-conservative dichotomy may happen at the moment when "the Brussels-based debate about the future of Europe spills over to become a major media topic locally" and the parties will be forced to express themselves more clearly on their preferences in respect of the EU. As to Lithuania, Vitkus underlines that Euroscepticism in Lithuania is not a separate political trend or ideology, but a constituent part of a broader political outlook/positions, and is more detectable in the "world" of social movements than of political parties in Lithuania.

The Salience of Eurosceptical Issues for Voters

The third perspective is connected to the dominating public narratives with respect to the EU. The intellectual debates in the old member states show the long-standing division "between those who call for continent-wide unity and those who defend European nations as the only legitimate political units." The former, called cosmopolitans or supranationalists, "equate more Europe with ... the promise of economic, social, moral, and eventually political progress," destined to avert another bloody conflict between the European nations and, more lately, to serve in defence against the wild processes of globalisation. Eurosceptics, for their part, claim that EU integration has resulted in too much transfer of national competences to the EU, leading to a "loss of control" and the weakening of nation states. In their perception, the federalisation of the EU would ultimately destroy the national democratic institutions, hence, "European integration is not considered as progressive but rather as a threat to both collective self-determination and/or social justice – the two major achievements of the contemporary nation-state."[10]

At the same time, in some countries, like Portugal, membership in the EU is equated with general patriotism.[11] In the UK, on the contrary, the support for participation in the EU is seen as antipatriotic. During the Brexit referendum campaign, people's opinion was framed in a way that they were forced to choose between national independence or membership in the EU, that is, the country's independence was juxtaposed to EU membership. Also, the EU members from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe have shown a rather lukewarm attitude towards deeper European integration. Their preferred form of Europe is based on an intergovernmental mode of cooperation. Religious sentiments, pan-nationalism, the sense of "long deserved" self-determination, the "siege mentality" complex, "messianism" and "self-victimisation" are driving anti-European sentiments in these regions.

As noted by Apals, in Latvia, "for the ordinary citizen, Europe is an external force that helps Latvia develop, provides security and

some prosperity, simultaneously imposing change and suppressing traditional values and prejudices, occasionally doing so against the will of the majority of the population." During the second half of the 1990s, scepticism about European intervention in domestic affairs was associated mostly with mainstream nationalist parties and organisations, while the Russian-speaking population had a more positive perception of Europe's role at that time due to the attention paid by the OSCE and the Council of Europe to the human rights situation. The EU accession changed the order of things. From the point of view of moderate nationalist circles, "accession to the EU promised Latvia an equal status among other European nations and autonomy in domestic affairs." At the same time, from the perspective of Russian-speaking Eurosceptics, "the EU was nothing but an entity competing against Russia and seeking to ruin their usual way of life."

Despite people's general commitment to the EU, in Latvia, intellectual Euroscepticism has been on the rise since the beginning of the financial and economic crisis. Besides, the concerns over national security have never receded in Latvia; in fact, the security concerns among Latvia's population have been on the rise since the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the crisis in Eastern Ukraine. Although it resulted in a more positive perception of the EU as a major source of stability, the fact that in the coming decade the EU would not be in a position to provide security either against a conventional military attack or against hybrid warfare, would not suffice to reassure Latvia's population, concludes Apals. Indeed, the combination of security concerns related to the continuous influx of migrants and reduced European financial input may diminish the centrality of Europe and undermine the pro-European consensus in Latvia.

In Estonia, as reported by Ploom and Veebel, recent developments in the EU have already seriously challenged the reputation of the Union. In particular, during both the Greek debt crisis in 2012 and the recent European refugee crisis from 2015, public support for EU membership in Estonia declined. Nevertheless, according to Ploom and Veebel, it is unreasonable to expect that a massive wave of Euroscepticism might sweep through Estonia in the coming years. If

there exists visible active criticism, then it is connected with certain specific EU related projects or the ability of the Estonian government to represent societal interests at the EU level, note Ploom and Veebel, thus underlining the prevalence of issues-based Euroscepticism in Estonia, in addition to manifestations of personality-centred Euroscepticism.

The bulk of Estonian Euroscepticism has strong right-wing connotations which can be summed up in a relatively simple basic attitude – Estonia needs to keep the prerogatives of nation state while taking advantage of EU support schemes as much as possible. According to this viewpoint, the EU retains its value as long as it is kept to the very minimal role of safeguarding free trade and does not restrict the sovereignty of the member states. Underlying the pragmatic cold-headed weighing of benefits and costs of EU membership is a deeply and widely felt need to remain a member of the EU for the sake of security; at the same time, identity politics has made its way to the mainstream political arena of Estonia and – especially in the context of the refugee crisis – at a certain point the relatively immature characteristic of nationalism in CEE may nevertheless arise, as attested by a recent attempt to side with populist and anti-democratic leadership of Hungary and Poland from the side of Estonia's Eurosceptical parties.

According to Vitkus, the weakness of Euroscepticism in Lithuania can be explained by a number of factors – history, economics and geopolitics. However, a connection with the size of the state seems most persuasive, argues Vitkus. That is, the typical challenges of small states, inter alia, more acutely include feeling territorial and political threats, a greater dependence on foreign resources, and perceived dangers to the cohesion and identity of society, and the EU represents an "almost ideal security organisation for the region's small states after the Cold War."

Nevertheless, Lithuania's commitments to the EU were challenged twice in recent years. One of the most striking events was the referendum on the prohibition of selling land to foreigners and juridical persons on 29 June 2014. This referendum was an unexpected

success for all Eurosceptical forces – the referendum was initiated by Eurosceptics but attracted support from a big economic actor and interest group in Lithuania – the Farmers Union. As explained by Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, the Farmers Union was supporting the referendum on the pretext of perceived unequal opportunities in the EU among farmers from different member states, namely, as farmers receive unequal subsidies in various countries, they have unequal conditions for competition in the market and to buy land. The referendum ultimately failed due to low voters' activity, however, it was indicative of the true social base for Euroscepticism in Lithuania, as those, who voted in favour, in fact, were genuine Eurosceptics, as they knew that their vote jeopardised Lithuania's participation in the EU.

The second attempt to jeopardise Lithuania's integration in the EU happened in 2013 and involved an initiative for another referendum, that time on the euro introduction. In fact, the introduction of the euro, according to Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, was another salient issue for Euroscepticism in Lithuania. The common currency was not positively evaluated in Lithuania before its introduction in 2015. The high level of support for EU membership, in combination with the low esteem for the euro are to be perceived as an indication of satisfaction with the status quo and a rejection of deeper integration in Lithuania, argues Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė. The referendum initiative was declared illegal; however, there is a worthy lesson in it. Apparently, in Lithuania, the sympathies towards the EU were associated with a vision of the EU as an opportunity, and the euro – as a symbol of diminished independence and national sovereignty, bringing worse living conditions. As put by Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, Lithuanians had many expectations from the EU, and when the expectations were not fulfilled, they began to show some signs of general dissatisfaction with deeper integration, particularly regarding the euro.

The Salience of Eurosceptical Issues for Political Parties

This perspective is linked to the prevailing mode of interaction between the public and domestic political establishment on the one hand, and between public and European institutions on the other hand. It has been noted in many studies that the mode of working of the EU has resulted in a shift of power from the national legislators to executives, opening the gates to the accusations of "democratic deficit." Although "insulating" decision-making from democratic procedures has resulted in improved efficiency in many CEE states after accession to the EU, today, however, the governing political structures in a number of CEE countries have become very reluctant to cede command to grass-roots democratic political groups, as has been observed in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Bulgaria. How the existing political structures in the Baltic states interact with European institutions and policies? Has a top-down Europeanisation resulted in significant adjustments in the three countries, as observed in Hungary and Poland?[12] How big is the risk of a surge of Visegrád type anti-democratic and populist sentiments in the Baltic states?

At the present juncture, observes Apals, the combination of weak institutional Euroscepticism and rising intellectual criticism of Europe cannot substantially change the overall consensus in Latvia that membership in the EU is indispensable for Latvia's independence and development. Nevertheless, the prevailing attitudes may evolve should the paradigm shift from current pro-European consensus, based on an understanding that Latvia should be able to maintain its autonomy, sovereignty and identity even within the ever-closer Union, in favour of deeper integration and a marginalisation of those member states not willing or able to join the advanced core group of nations. The problem is that, in the view of Apals, the domestic political priorities and public discourse do not necessarily reflect the agenda of EU institutions, and, consequently, the gap between the expectations of the electorate and actual priorities of the European policy-making process remains open.

In Apals' assessment, outmatching public trust in EU institutions does not necessarily indicate the marginalisation of domestic decision-makers. On the contrary, this may suggest that from the perspective of ordinary citizens, the EU and its institutions remain an abstraction that embodies the popular desire for better governance: although the average citizen may harbour grievances against local elites, "elected parliamentarians and members of the government are the only politicians who keep in touch with the electorate on regular basis and therefore can by no means be marginalised by televised images of the European leadership."

Also in the view of Ploom and Veebel, it is short-sighted to conclude that the apparent lack of trust in domestic institutions would immediately cause the marginalisation of the domestic political system. This means that national institutions cannot easily be replaced in their basic function of being national institutions. If domestic political institutions deserve heavy criticism, beyond the relatively low level of trust in specific actions and the particular office holders, it presumably also signifies the high expectations towards national institutions. Ploom and Veebel denounce the authorities' arrogance. According to their observation, those who hold Eurosceptical views are often described as "confused, narrow-minded or angry people" opposing noble European values, and are therefore automatically deemed to represent Russia's interests. This conclusion resonates with Grostiņš' remark that critics of the EU are often treated in a derogatory manner earning such labels as "anti-European," "Europhobes" or even "pro-Russian." Moreover, Ploom and Veebel also observe that the refusal of pro-EU forces to engage in public debate with their opponents leaves the public mindset vulnerable and easy prey to anti-EU sentiments, as the rebuff to recognise the role of Eurosceptics on European integration increases the gap between the national/European elite and the hopes and opinions of ordinary people.

Grostiņš agrees with Apals that in Latvia's media there is a lack of qualified debate about how EU institutions work and how the EU should be shaped in the future, and is upset about the discrimination

against Eurosceptical parties from the point of view of access to public funding, which prevents these parties from competing on par with pro-European parties. It follows from Grostiņš, that if there had been a more fair distribution of funds, the Eurosceptical flank in Latvia would have made more impact on the public. Yet, undemocratic and, in particular, often arrogant policy-making has resulted in pro-European parties and their policies losing ground. Since 2014 elections to the European Parliament, which led to many Eurosceptics entering the great European legislative body, European funding is available to alleviate the problems of funding Eurosceptical activities at national level.

In estimation of Grostiņš, under the influence of the immigration crisis, problems in the euro zone, and the challenges currently facing the EU in different policy areas, Latvia's political landscape is very likely to include a growing Eurocritical element in the future. However, there is a problem to it, which can be described as "hijacking of the Eurosceptical agenda" by mainstream parties. As noted by all authors on political aspects of Euroscepticism in this volume, there has always been a considerable public scepticism towards integration at the background in all three Baltic countries. The mainstream parties – with varying degree of success – have not hesitated to endeavour to capitalise from this public sentiment, thus forcing genuine Eurosceptical parties to the fringes of national politics. As reported in this volume, for example, in Latvia, this tactic was applied by the Union of the Greens and Farmers and the National Alliance, in Estonia – by Estonian Centre Party, in Lithuania – by the Order and Justice party and Labour Party. As a result, the key Eurosceptical politicians have begun to migrate to more moderate political parties. Grostiņš, as a Eurosceptical personality himself, is an example. Another tactic entails adopting conservative populist ideas from Visegrád-model.

A good account of Euroscepticism in the Baltic states will not do without analysis of the Russian-speaking population's attitude. Denisa-Liepniece addresses the relevant issue of the role of media in forging (or undermining) European loyalty among Russians living

in Latvia and Estonia. The ample anti-EU attitude among Russian non-citizens is not so much linked with the unfulfilled expectations from the EU as with dissatisfaction with their status in the country, a lack of knowledge of vernacular, and strong ideological, cultural and linguistic links with Russia. This dissatisfaction, however, makes local Russians vulnerable to populist style rhetoric appealing to desirable solutions without focusing on the practical side of implementation. Kremlin related media depict the Baltic countries with narratives of a "failed state" and "rotten Europe." These narratives are transmitted via both hard and soft media content, and Latvia and Estonia, according to these narratives, are losing from cooperation with the West. Denisa-Liepniece notes a tendency of diminishing opposition to the EU though; however, this has not translated into a substantial increase in support for the EU, leading to a conclusion that those who have given up their opposition prefer to move to the grey zone of the undetermined "hard-to-say" category.

Denisa-Liepniece notes that despite recent efforts by European institutions to counter Russia's propaganda, people still have a lack of information about the processes taking place in the EU: only a small number of people from EU institutions are prepared to provide their views to the local media in Russian. While European institutions are supporting delivering hard (i.e. news) content to Russian speakers, they do not have access to the targeted audience, as the latter prefers entertainment over news. What is more, the accounts of EU related organisations seem not very appealing to Russian social media users, as witnessed by the absence of their content from social media users' timelines. As a result, the Russian-speaking audience is confused and finds it difficult to provide direct answers to questions of a geopolitical inclination.

Finally – on a philosophical note – from a "strict theoretical and historical" point of view, Radžvilas dismisses the ongoing public and academic debate between "Euroenthusiasts," "Eurorealists" and "Eurosceptics" as a purely ideological and non-substantive dispute. Instead, according to Radžvilas, "a volitional attempt to contemplate the crisis faced by the EU from a strictly theoretical and historical

point of view" is warranted. By drawing from the experience of the collapse of the USSR, Radžvilas indicates that the main cause of the recurrent crises and at the simultaneous fundamental challenge faced by the EU is its "spiritual death," in other words, a loss of a governing idea – the spiritual, moral and political purpose that binds the populace and provides the desperately needed common feeling that the Union has a *raison d'etre*.

In Radžvilas view, the current process of European integration as "a type of ordo-liberal high (post)modern governance project" was built on shaky conceptual foundations from the very beginning and now the decades-old neo-functionalist integration approach has become completely exhausted conceptually. Monnet's neo-functionalist integration plan was allegedly inspired by a curious amalgamation of the two great revolutionary traditions of the West, embodied by the political ideologies of liberalism and Marxism. Essentially, in this vision, a "new" European had to be constructed to serve the same factual purpose as the proletariat in the revolution theory of Marx – a class embodying universal humanity.

The EU's helplessness in face of the Russian-Georgian War of 2008 was the first most apparent manifestation of trembling conceptual grounds of the existing liberal-Marxian integration project. A spontaneous response to this crisis has been the resurgence of the idea of national self-preservation, currently noticeable in practically every country of the EU, but in particular in the Visegrád countries. Such opposition, in the opinion of Radžvilas, may create the preconditions for the revival of the idea of a unified Europe based on an alternative to the current integration model – a democratic union of free nations and sovereign states, as it has been envisaged by the Christian Democrats, not the purely "functional" federation that is currently in the process of formation.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF EUROSCEPTICISM

For the member states from CEE, EU membership in general represents a comprehensive modernisation opportunity with sizable financial injections to assist reform efforts. However, a popular perception is that within these countries, not everyone has access to the benefits of the EU. Besides, certain traditional industries are losing, and for that reason, may favour less integration and more protectionism. What is more, the EU's stringent oversight procedures and strict enforcement of competition rules are at times perceived as a threat to survival of local industries, forcing them to transform into Eurosceptical lobbyists out of self-defence. There have been strong voices in the new EU member states claiming that the membership has led to the "emptying" national economies. Such concerns are linked, first, to massive emigration of economically active people to more affluent member states; second, to pushing local businesses out of certain sectors by foreign businesses from other member states; and, third, to the rigidity and excessive intrusiveness of the EU's policies limiting the ability of national economies to adjust to economic shocks.

According to Meļķis, in Latvia, one can hardly speak of economic Euroscepticism. Business and trade union representatives speak favourably of the EU and the benefits accruing from EU membership. The existing criticism is targeted at some EU policies, notes Meļķis, and at certain EU ideals that are not functioning in reality. More precisely, economic Eurocriticism in Latvia has two main points of focus. The first is linked to the presumed inefficient use of EU structural funds. In many businesses' view, the distribution of money involves too much bureaucracy and the result is too "just," ignoring economic logic which requires not horizontal dispersion of funds but vertical concentration of payouts to benefit, first and foremost, the business champions, which, if successful, would drag all other local businesses.

The predefined nature of policy objectives attached to EU funding ignores local specificities and impedes local policymakers from developing genuine national economic interests. Despite

well-intended objectives such as environmental protection, a lack of sufficient internalisation of those objectives causes unbalanced local implementation and market distortions. Consequently, local businesses are pushed out of the market. Municipalities also suffer because they are stripped of public money diverted for appropriations of EU funds earmarked for the construction of arterial roads. Combined with growing welfare inequality, the general effectiveness of EU structural assistance policy is in significant doubt, despite the aim of cohesion policy.

The second focus of criticisms, according to Meļķis, concerns the allegations that EU regulations have been used for protectionist purposes at the cost of businesses from the CEE member states. The specific examples refer to the construction business and road haulage services. In fact, the tendencies towards protectionism are viewed as the biggest actual threat to Latvian businesses in Europe, as in several real-life situations the principles of the single European market are only paid lip-service. At the same time, complaints from traditional industries with markets in the East are muted, as gains from the single European market are considerable too. Meļķis affirms that "On the one hand, there is a constant necessity for a member state to reassess its economic interests and lobby them through suitable EU legislation and policies. On the other hand, a small country and its industries have to be realistic about the power games played in the EU in the environment lacking a genuinely 'single' market or altruistic financial assistance."

The concerns raised by Meļķis are to some extent also shared by Veebel discussing the business attitude in Estonia in this volume. Thus, according to Veebel, Eurosceptic views and arguments are based on pure economic logic and, therefore, can in principle refer to a sort of "Europragmatism" in Estonia. Euroscepticism in Estonia is mostly associated with certain specific EU-related projects and the government's ability to implement the projects or safeguard national interests at the EU level. The fair and equal treatment of all member states has also been questioned in Estonia. First, it concerned contributions to the bail-out of Greece in the face of Estonia's own

experience of the drastic austerity measures implemented during the years of the financial crisis. Second, the European Commission's refusal to allow granting public assistance to the Estonian national flag carrier "Estonian Air," which ultimately went bankrupt, initiated a discussion in Estonia about whether strict EU state aid regulations are simultaneously rational and flexible enough for the specific needs of small peripheral EU member states.

Veebel notes that recent debates in Estonia have mostly concentrated on the role of EU funding in supporting or harming the country's development, and the implementation of the infrastructure projects of the Trans-European Transport Network, including the EU North Sea-Baltic corridor and the "Rail Baltic" – a trans-Baltic railway project. Although EU funds represent significant financial resources from Estonia's perspective, the question has been raised whether the funds have been allocated to projects that adequately facilitate the country's economic development, exhibiting high socio-economic returns, and whether the risk of aid dependence exists in Estonia. The need to remove EU member state obstacles in the application of the EU-directive that regulates the movement of workers across the EU has also been stressed by Estonians in the framework of the "Fair Transport Europe" initiative. Farmers in Estonia are also restless and have staged two massive public demonstrations in 2015 and 2016 to draw attention to the overproduction of agricultural products in the EU, and to the lack of local supportive measures for Estonian farmers to overcome the unfavourable market situation.

Ploom and Veebel make a strong point by underlining the EU-wide topics that face strong criticism at the national level often reflect country-specific vulnerabilities and challenges, inter alia, country's own limited ability to promote its interests at the EU level. Thus, in Estonia, the farmers' criticism is foremost targeted towards the government of Estonia, arguing that they are not sufficiently representing the interests of Estonian farmers at the EU level. Another relevant point – the "neo-mercantilist trade policy" implemented by some member states leading to excessively expanded exports within the EU and the euro zone is a concern too, as it challenges

the competitiveness of their partners, creating asymmetric economic interdependence, according to Veebel.

Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė in this volume reports on the attitude towards the EU among economic agents in Lithuania. Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė is in agreement with other authors on the conclusion that Euroscepticism represents a critique of some developments, integration processes and policies, and also of the "home grown" character of Euroscepticism. In general though, according to Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, in Lithuania, the economic groups with a high level of internationalisation (industrial sector, transport sector and others), transnational corporations and big companies are more supportive of the national market's integration into a single market and, for this reason, have less sceptical views. The companies and economic sectors (e.g. farmers) that are oriented towards the national market and use local raw materials, as well as small businesses, would like to have more protection and are against integration. For instance, the small business companies selling vegetables and fruits are not likely to support integration and the opening of markets.

One of the most powerful lobbyists with an ambivalent position on the EU is Lithuanian farmers. Farmers as a group receive more benefits from the EU than other groups, but they also are the most visible critics of EU policies. The second business group which is highly integrated into the EU market but criticises some EU policies are transport companies, notes Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė. The Lithuanian transport companies performing their activities in EU markets have a generally positive evaluation of the EU but have some complaints about national protectionism in some older EU member states, especially after the closure of the Russian market.

Representatives of other sectors of the Lithuanian economy have no clearly expressed complaints about the EU. Trade unions, although not very popular among workers, treat the EU as an opportunity to solve various problems and in setting higher labour standards, reports Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė. They are sceptical of the possibility of implementing the European social model due to the existing inequalities in various member states; however, the EU funding

provided to them as social partners and the prospects of the improved social standards implemented through EU regulations ensure the support of trade unions for the EU.

CONCLUSIONS OF CONCLUSIONS

None of the three Baltic countries represents a case unbridled Euroscepticism. The observed manifestations of Euroscepticism have been of a sporadic nature, based on specific issues and personalities, and have not yet developed into a systemic institutional phenomenon.

A cross-country comparison reveals that Latvia tends to be most sceptical of all three Baltic states, while even there, as shown by longitudinal examination, the level of opposition towards the EU has considerably diminished since 2011 as a consequence of a series of events of geopolitical nature. Estonia turns out to be the most consistently pro-European country, while in Lithuania, largely because of higher national self-esteem, a greater variety of opinions is observed, including on benefits from hypothetical membership in the CIS. The scepticism about the EU in the Baltic states is not so much driven by radical opposition to the EU but by a critical appraisal of its negative side-effects. As attested by authors with a Eurosceptical mindset in this volume, even the harshest Eurosceptics in the Baltic countries admit that, if properly organised, the EU would bring a lot of benefits. At the same time, there is a noticeable agreement among the authors of this volume that much of the ado about Euroscepticism in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania has roots in the frustration with national political institutions, and has less to do with EU institutions in Brussels, although greater respect to locally specific circumstances is warranted from these institutions too. Likewise, the occasional unfair treatment of businesses from the Baltic region in the European single market is also a major concern.

One cannot make everyone happy to the same extent, even in a friendly family. At the same time, as shown by this study, the "traffic" lights have turned from green to yellow in some aspects, signalling

approaching danger. The first disquiet is caused by the high share of Eurooptimists in the three Baltic states who believe that EU membership is mostly benefiting a small group of people, and that EU management does not show enough regard for local people. The second disquiet is linked to the unwillingness of political elites in the Baltic countries to engage Eurosceptical opinion leaders in a frank discussion about the future of the EU, and to reduce the gap between the mundane concerns of local people and Brussels' agenda. It may indeed be that, at some point in the future, the chances of the local politicians would depend on their capacity to convince the electorate that the EU policies on such sensitive issues as migration or structural funds are compatible with the vision of Europe as a union of equal nation-states. At any case, the scepticism will deepen provided that the integration processes advance without consent from people. The prediction of a spiritual death of a current "liberal-Marxian neo-functional model of European integration" though may be premature, however, until the hesitation to deliver meaningful solutions to concerns over security and development is overcome, a great number of the people in the Baltic countries will remain in a state of confusion about what to expect from the EU and, ultimately, about the direction of their loyalty. This particularly concerns the Russian-speaking segment of local populations, whose "minds and hearts" the Kremlin is so keen winning.

ENDNOTES

[1] Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, "The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States," *SEI Working Paper* No. 51 and *Opposing Europe Research Network Working Paper* No. 6 (2002), 33.

[2] Kārlis Bukovskis, "Introduction: Entering the Age of Euroscepticism," in *Euroscepticism in Small EU Member States*, ed. Kārlis Bukovskis (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2016), 9.

[3] Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, "Eurosceptics in Lithuania: On the Margins of Politics?" *European Quarterly of Political Attitudes and Mentalities – EQPAM* 3:4 (2014), 1–21.

[4] Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde, "The Two Sides of Euroscepticism: Party Positions on European Integration in East Central Europe," *European Union Politics* No. 3 (2002),

297-326, quoted in Ingrida Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, "Eurosceptics in Lithuania: On the Margins of Politics?", 5.

[5] Bukovskis, 9.

[6] Although these issues are not addressed in this volume, for the sake of a general insight, the anti-Europeans, inter alia, may find the "egoistic individualism" and "consumerism" of the West to be degrading the authenticity of personality and destructing warm local intra-communal ties. Sometimes it may also involve a "siege mentality": a mind-set, according to which the EU and NATO represent instances of subjugation to the Western prevalence. See, E.g. Xenophon A. Yataganas and George Pagoulatos, "Europe Othered, Europe Enlisted, Europe Possessed: Greek Public Intellectuals and the European Union," 183–202, or Magdalena Gora and Zdzislaw Mach, "Between Old Fears and New Challenges: The Polish Debate on Europe," 221–240, in *European Stories: Intellectual Debates on Europe in National Contexts*, ed. Justine Lacrois and Kalypso Nicolaïdis (Oxford University Press, 2010).

[7] Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, "The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States".

[8] Ibid., 34-37.

[9] Some EU scholars have pointed to the slightly right inclination of the EU policies. However, this is more to do with the "negative" nature of the EU competences (e.g. focus on dismantling of national barriers) rather than ideological considerations. The EU is less potent in construction of "positive" integration, whose testimony is slow pace of development of solidarity type policies in the EU.

[10] Justine Lacroix and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, „European Stories: An Introduction," in *European Stories: Intellectual Debates on Europe in National Contexts*, 12–18.

[11] Sandra Fernandes and Isabel Estrada Carvalhais, „Portugal: A Weak Case for Euroscepticism," in Bukovskis, *Euroscepticism in Small EU Member States*, 47.

[12] Aldis Austers, "From the EU's Economic Presence to Successful Europeanisation: Theoretical Insights," in *Dilemmas of Europeanisation: Political Choices and Economic Transformations in the Eastern Partnership Countries*, ed. Aldis Austers et al. (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2016), 25.

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