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Various Faces of Populist Euroscepticism

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The crisis of the Eurozone put the critics of the European Union once again into the limelight. Some of these parties achieved a real electoral breakthrough in the 2014 European Parliamentary election. However, various parties have emerged with different criticism over the integration across the European Union. The paper aims to present the distinct faces of Populist Euroscepticism by examining the behaviour of four Eurosceptic parties. The cases were selected in two ways. First of all, relevant Populist Eurosceptic parties are chosen. Three of them won the 2014 European elections in its country, namely, the Greek Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA), the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the French National Front (FN). The fourth one, the Italian Five Star Movement (M5S) became runner-up. Secondly, parties with very different ideologies are sampled to distinguish the different types of the phenomenon. As far as the method is concerned, the paper focuses on the 2014 European election campaigns on the one hand because the campaigns of Eurosceptic parties can give a comprehensive picture about the nature of their Euroscepticism. On the other hand, the parties' voting behaviour in the European Parliament since 2014 is also compared to distinguish the separate kinds of the phenomenon. The paper concludes that these parties differ from each other not only in the European policies but also in other policy areas despite of some similarities among the nature of the examined parties' Euroscepticism.

Keywords: Euroscepticism, European Parliament, UKIP, National Front, Syriza, Five Star Movement

1. Introduction

Euroscepticism has become one of the most researched areas of European political science in recent years. Lots of studies and books have been written and they have covered almost all aspects of the phenomenon. Naturally, the most important works in this field (e.g. Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008a) were born before the economic and migration crises, the knowledge on Euroscepticism has been deepened since the outbreak of the debt crisis. Scholars have researched the types of Euroscepticism, compared the parties arguments against the European Union etc.

As far as the voting behaviour of the Eurosceptic MEPs is concerned, the literature is quite insufficient. Although there are studies concentrating on the roles of Eurosceptic MEPs (e.g. Brack, 2015) or articles analysing the radical right in the European Parliament (e.g., Conti, 2011 or Brack, 2013) but a comparative approach which includes leftist parties as well has been out of the focus of researches. Our aim is to contribute to the literature by analysing the voting behaviour of the most important anti-establishment Eurosceptic parties.

In this study we will follow the classification of Eurosceptic parties carried out by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008). According to them, there are two large types of Eurosceptic parties, soft ones and hard ones. Soft Eurosceptic parties do not reject the idea of European integration but they criticise some aspects of its embodiment. Hard Euroscepticism is the principled opposition to the EU, e.g. the rejection of the membership.

We compare the parties' MEPs voting behaviour between 16.07.2014 and 07.07.2016 and focus on the similar or different patterns in the behaviour of the various Eurosceptic EP-delegations. We analyse the four most important Eurosceptic parties, namely, the UKIP, the French National Front, the Greek Syriza and the Italian Five Star Movement. Three out of them won the last EP election in their countries, while the Five Star Movement became runners-up. Moreover, these parties represent different party families, so the various forms of populist Euroscepticism can be perfectly examined by analysing their behaviour.

We conclude that only UKIP is hard Eurosceptic party, while the two left-wing ones tends to be more pro-European than the National Front. In addition, a clear left-right division can be observed in some policy areas. Nonetheless, there are some area where all the parties reject further deepening of the integration (e.g. in monetary affairs).

2. Concept of Euroscepticism

The literature on Euroscepticism is very detailed and far-reaching. This paper does not pay attention to every definition of the phenomenon, it only focuses on the most important and relevant literature. The first real milestone of the research of Euroscepticism was the classification of Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart (2000). They differentiate two kinds of Euroscepticism. These definitions have been clarified during recent years, so the study concentrates on the very last designations.

Hard Euroscepticism is where there is a principled opposition to the EU or the European integration and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008a: 7).

Soft Euroscepticism is where there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or where there is a sense that 'national interest' is currently at odds with the EU's trajectory (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008a: 8).

Szczerbiak and Taggart emphasise that hard Eurosceptic parties oppose the intergovernmental form of the economic integration (i.e. the original form of the EEC) as well (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2000: 6). This is an important statement because most of the Eurosceptic parties prefer that kind of cooperation. However, parties being in favour of utopian conceptions such as proletarian union are included in the hard Eurosceptic category.

Kopecký and Mudde find some weaknesses of the concepts of Taggart and Szczerbiak. First of all, the authors criticise that the category of soft Euroscepticism is too inclusive because it includes every insignificant disagreement with any policy decision (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002: 300). Taggart and Szczerbiak allege that the subject of soft Euroscepticism is only the planned and further extension of EU competencies (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008b: 242). This amendment is a very important and relevant one in the terms of this study for the reason that it makes a clear distinction between a Eurosceptic attitude and a pro-European one with some criticism over the policies of the European Union.

Secondly, Kopecký and Mudde note that the difference between hard and soft Euroscepticism is blurred when the authors argue that 'hard Euroscepticism can be identified by the principled objections to the

current form of European integration in the EU'. Thirdly, Kopecký and Mudde argue that it is not clear that hard and soft Euroscepticism reflect on the relation to the idea of the European integration or on its embodiment, the European Union (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002: 300).

Finally, Taggart and Szczerbiak do not reflect enough on the changed situation after the EU accession, i.e. they handle the status before and after the enlargement equally. It is a mistake because parties that opposed joining the EU do not wish to withdraw their countries from the EU in every case (e.g. Austrian Greens opposed joining the EU and have promoted the maintaining of the country's EU membership). The lack of this distinction could cause the overestimation of the number of hard Eurosceptic parties and thereby it could lead to incorrect conclusions which do not help the understanding of the phenomenon.

As a reaction to the early concepts of Taggart and Szczerbiak, Kopecký and Mudde create an alternative classification based on Visegrád countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary). The authors conclude that there is a difference between the relation to the idea of the European integration and the European Union itself. They use Easton's (1965) model on the support for political regimes (diffuse and specific support). As the authors show, the diffuse support for Europe is the support of the idea of the European integration, while the specific support concerns the European Union (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002: 300).

Kopecký and Mudde point out that the supporters of the EU are EU-optimists, the rejecters are EU-pessimists, while the supporters of the European integration are Europhiles, and the rejectors are Europhobes. These categories create four groups. Parties which combine Europhile and EU-optimist positions are Euroenthusiasts. Eurosceptics support the idea of the European integration but they are pessimistic about the current form. Groups that oppose both the general idea and the current form of integration are Eurorejects, and finally, parties that do not support the idea, but they support the European Union are Europragmatists (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002: 302-303).

Taggart and Szczerbiak criticise this classification in some ways. Firstly, they say that the category of 'Eurosceptics' is too exclusive because it does not include the principled opposition. Secondly, the authors find the 'Europragmatists' category illogical. Kopecký and Mudde categorise as Europragmatist parties such as Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) or the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKgP) in Hungary (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002: 316). Finally, Taggart and Szczerbiak argue that the 'Euroenthusiasts' category is too inclusive because there are differences between parties supporting the current integration process (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008b: 243-244).

Agreeing with Taggart and Szczerbiak, we think there is another major problem with the classification of Kopecký and Mudde. It seems very clear that the category of 'Eurosceptics' is not a principled opposition of the EU, but only a criticism of the current European integration. From this point of view, it is more or less the same as Taggart and Szczerbiak's soft Euroscepticism. Along the same principle, Eurorejects can be categorised as hard Eurosceptics. Despite their problems, both classifications could be useful to analyse parties' relation to the European Union.

3. Selecting the cases: the four parties

In the last decade new parties arose and became successful across Europe. Many of these parties are labelled 'populist' and 'Eurosceptic' because of their criticism against the incumbent political establishment. Around a decade ago Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak said 'in some member states Euroscepticism has become a visible and stable, albeit minority, seam running through public opinion' (Taggart-Szczerbiak, 2008: 1). Nowadays, we can say that Euroscepticism is not only a stable standpoint of a minority but the core programmatic and rhetorical content of electorally successful parties. Such parties which questioned the meaning and the future of the European integration, reached outstanding results in many European countries.

The media called these parties together 'Eurosceptic', although the academic literature already defined that the Eurosceptic parties have very different origins and ideological standpoints (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008a; Brack, 2013). The attitudes towards the European integration became more complex in the last decades and the political positions have broadened. However, the field of research remains in the national political arena or neglect the behaviour of the Eurosceptic actors in the European institutions (Brack, 2013).

In our ongoing paper we will analyse the behaviour of Eurosceptic MEPs, and compare with their parties' programmes we will define the 'various faces' of Euroscepticism. Our research is based on the MEPs of four parties which were selected in the context of their electoral results and political influence. The selected parties are labelled in the academic literature as Eurosceptic, and they had already conflicts with Europhile political actors in the political scene. Another aspect was their influential position both in the level of the European Parliament and their national political arena. We choose parties which gained outstanding results in 2014 and won several seats, what makes them relevant in our research. Following these criteria, we selected for the field of our research the Greek Coalition of the Radical Left (*Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás*, Syriza), the Italian Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*, M5S), the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the French National Front (*Front National*, FN).

Table 1. Election results and seats of the selected parties in the last three EP-elections

	Syriza		M5S		UKIP		FN	
2009	4.7%	1/22	-	-	16.6%	13/72	6.3%	3/72
2014	26.6%	6/21	21.2%	17/73	26.6%	24/73	24.9%	24/74

Source: European Parliament, 2014

Coalition of the Radical Left. The Syriza was created as a coalition of a number of rather insignificant left-wing formations. The permanent economic crises, the austerity measures, the budget cuts, and high unemployment made a completely new situation in Greece and gave opportunity to those political actors which offered new visions and policies. Due to its anti-establishment discourse the Syriza became the main left-wing force in the parliamentary elections in 2012 May and June. After the fall of the coalitions of the old establishments' parties, the Syriza won at first the European parliamentary election in 2014 than the legislative elections in 2015 (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014; Nikolakakis, 2016).

The party's criticism of the neoliberal character of the European integration process is present but less underlined in the party's earlier documents. The Eurosceptic voices have become more dominant since 2010, when the party defined the Greek economic and fiscal crises as an impasse, which was dictated by the neoliberal European elite. The first Syriza-led government negotiated over months about the terms of the loans that the country received by the troika. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras called for a referendum about the European Commission's ultimatum which contained new austerity measures as a condition of the new loans for the Greek banking system. The party called for 'No' vote, which gained the majority with 61.31 per cent on 5 July 2015. After the Euro Summit on 11 July the Greek government accepted the agreement about under the terms of austerity measures (Nikolakakis, 2016).

Five Star Movement. The Italian party is one of the most spectacular and interesting political actor of the post-industrial European politics. It was established by Beppe Grillo, a popular comedian and Gianroberto Casaleggio, a web strategist. The party has a very eclectic programme and rejects the status quo both in Italy and at the European level. It criticises the rising levels of inequality inside the European Union and being held the Italian and European political establishment for this problem. The M5S became the main political challenger to the left-wing government, especially Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. The party reached the second place on the EP-election in 2014 and won key mayoral seats in 2016 June (for example in Rome and Turin, which were left-wing strongholds). In the European Parliament the party's MEPs formed a common group with the UKIP in 2014.

UK Independence Party. The party was established in the early 1990s by Eurosceptic groups which were dissatisfied with the European policies of the Conservative Party. The party's profile is based on its hard Euroscepticism (Lynch and Whitaker, 2013). The leaders of the party describe themselves as

libertarian because of their economic preferences. Some political scientists identify the UKIP as a radical right party because in the last years the anti-immigrant and anti-establishment views have become more emphatic in the party's programme (Usherwood, 2016). The party and its leader, Nigel Farage played a central role during the EU-referendum campaign in 2016 June. In the last decade the UKIP became one of the most important Eurosceptic actors in the European Parliament (Whitaker-Lynch, 2014). It had the most members in Eurosceptic Groups, such as the Independence/Democracy (2004-2009), the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (2009-2014) and the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (2014-), and it also held the Co-Chair position of these Groups by Farage.

National Front. Many scholars consider the FN as a prototype of the radical right parties (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Ignazi, 2003; Rydgren, 2005; Hainsworth, 2008)¹. The founder of the party, Jean-Marie Le Pen who had been leading his party for nearly 40 years, became one of the most generally known 'face' of the radical right as a political phenomenon during his leadership (Givens, 2005; Norris, 2005; Ellinas, 2010). The party's eclectic programme which contains nationalist, anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic, anti-establishment components, and the FN's electoral successes in the 1980s and 1990s guaranteed a stable position in the French politics and the party became a notorious political actor in the European politics too. In 2011 Jean-Marie Le Pen was replaced as party chairman by his youngest daughter, Marine Le Pen. The new era manifested in the party's image and communication this was legitimated by the electoral successes in 2012 and 2014.

The FN has representatives in the European Parliament since 1984, formed groups many times together with other radical right parties (1984-1994, 2007, 2015-). The party won first time an election at national level in 2014 May.

¹ See: Kitschelt and McGann, 1995: 91 – France: The National Front As Prototype of the New Radical Right; Ignazi, 2003: 83 – France: Prototype of the New Extreme Right; Rydgren, 2005; Hainsworth, 2008
In the early 1990s Ignazi (1992) considered the Italian Social Movement (MSI) as the prototype of those parties which were at the right edge of the party systems. However, he changed his opinion in his later works, and wrote about the National Front as the most important and the most influential political actor in the right edge (Ignazi, 1997; 2003). Though Cas Mudde disputes the necessity of the 'prototype-hypothesis', he amities that the FN's electoral results have serious impact on both Western and Eastern European parties (Mudde, 2007).

4. Data and method

To determine the differences among the selected parties, we analyse the voting decisions on the plenary sessions by their MEPs. These data are taken from the database of the VoteWatch Europe. We prefer this database because it contains the results of almost every vote which are well structured and make it easy to work with these data. Our paper focuses on the 8th European Parliament which means we analyse the votes in the European Parliament from the first plenary session, 16.07.2014 until 07.07.2016. During this period the total number of the votes was 804 on the plenary sessions, which were classified into 21 various policy area, followed the classification of the votewatch.eu.

Table 2. The total number of votes during 8th European Parliament, classified by policy areas

Policy area	Total number of votes
Agriculture	12
Budget	86
Budgetary control	116
Civil liberties, justice & home affairs	65
Constitutional & inter-institutional affairs	19
Culture & education	10
Development	13
Economic & monetary affairs	54
Employment & social affairs	27
Environment & public health	46
Fisheries	27
Foreign & security policy	137
Gender equality	13
Industry, research & energy	27
Internal market & consumer protection	17
Internal regulations of the EP	7
Internal trade	40
Legal affairs	59
Petitions	3
Regional development	14
Transport & tourism	12
Total	804

Source: Votewatch, 2016

We prefer the European Parliament as political scene for two reasons. Firstly, in this political arena all of the selected parties attend, their politicians behave in the same institutional context. Secondly, in the European Parliament the classical government-opposition dichotomy does not exist, which let the MEPs to express their real preferences.

To establish a coherent and well-arranged database we analyse the behaviour of the EP-delegations of the selected parties instead of their individual MEPs. This decision made possible to analyse the votes during the whole period independently of the personal changes in the parties' delegations, the changes of the number of the MEPs², and the formation of the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) Group in 2015 June³.

5. Results

Table 3 shows the number of supportive votes of the four EP delegations during the period under review. A bit surprisingly, the Five Star Movement has been the most pro-European and voted in favour of almost 60 per cent of the motions. Although Syriza became a governing party in January 2015, the party has not moderated its Eurosceptic stance and backed 55 per cent of the initiatives. The National Front is somewhere halfway between the Five Star Movement and UKIP.

² There were only minor personal changes in the selected parties since 2014 July, which do not change the internal political relations neither in the parties nor in their EP groups. In the Five Star Movement served the same 16 people as MEP than in the first plenary session in 2014.

The delegation of the Syriza reduced from 6 to 4 representatives during the research's period. Nikolaos Chountis joined to the new left-wing party, Popular Unity which was created as a reaction to PM Tsipras' policy switch of the Greek bailout agreement. He became Greek MP and minister in Tsipras' first cabinet in 2015 January. In 2015 July he resigned both as MP and as minister. After that he succeed the retired Emmanouil Glezos on 20 July 2015 in the EP and left the Syriza in August. In 2015 September another MEP left the Syriza. Sofia Sakorafa left the party over the disagreement with the bailout agreement, and remained the member of the GUE/NGL Group as independent. There was another personal change in the Syriza since 2014. Georgios Katrougalos became minister in Tsipras' first cabinet in 2015 January, therefore was replaced in the EP by Stelios Kouloglou.

The delegation of the UKIP reduced from 24 to 22 representatives during the research's period. In 2015 January Amjad Bashir left the UKIP and joined to the Conservatives and their group, the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). Janice Atkinson was expelled from the party and the group in 2015, later she joined to the ENF group.

The delegation of the FN reduced from 24 to 20 representatives during the research's period. On 18 June 2014 Joëlle Bergeron joined to the new group of the UKIP, the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy. When the ENF group was created in 2015, Jean-Marie Le Pen was suspended from the new group and the party. Bruno Gollnisch did not join to the group in solidarity with J-M Le Pen, although he remained the member of the FN. In 2015 November another MEP, Aymeric Chauprade left the FN and the ENF.

³ The ENF group was established on 15 June 2015 by radical right MEPs, include the politicians of the FN. Until the creation of the ENF the MEPs of the FN were Non-Inscrits (NI) members of the European Parliament.

Table 3. The number of supportive votes of the four EP delegations

Policy area	Total number of votes	Syriza	M5S	UKIP	FN
Agriculture	12	5	6	0	4
Budget	86	63	66	0	48
Budgetary control	116	107	63	1	13
Civil liberties, justice & home	65	38	51	5	13
Constitutional & inter-inst.	19	4	6	2	3
Culture & education	10	4	2	0	3
Development	13	8	11	0	2
Economic & monetary affairs	54	18	7	1	17
Employment & social affairs	27	15	21	0	5
Environment & public health	46	36	33	5	14
Fisheries	27	22	23	0	19
Foreign & security policy	137	35	68	7	14
Gender equality	13	12	11	0	0
Industry, research & energy	27	12	13	0	9
Internal market & consumer protection	17	7	11	1	3
Internal regulations of the EP	7	4	2	2	2
Internal trade	40	15	24	2	6
Legal affairs	59	45	47	0	14
Petitions	3	3	3	0	0
Regional development	14	9	6	0	1
Transport & tourism	12	7	10	0	4
Total	804	448	472	21	185

Source: Votewatch, 2016

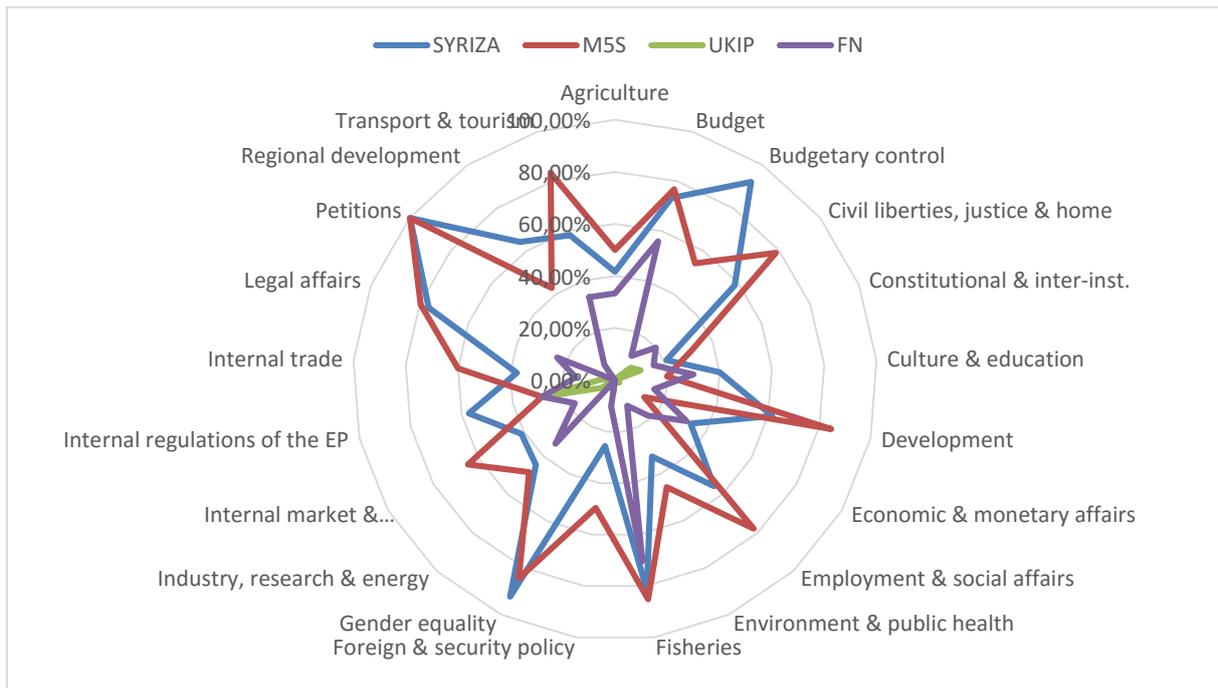
As the data shows, the clearest case out of the four parties is the UK Independence Party. The MEPs of the party supported only 21 motions out of the 804. In addition, some of the 21 cases were clearly Eurosceptic initiatives (e.g. the vote of no-confidence against the Juncker Commission in 2014). The voting behaviour of the MEPs of UKIP can be easily explained by the very nature of the party, i.e. by its hard Euroscepticism. The representatives of the party often abstained when the MEPs of the three other parties supported a motion (e.g. on the ‘Financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union’). This behaviour clearly demonstrates the party’s fundamentally rejectionist relation vis-à-vis the European Union.

The behaviour of the MEPs of the French National Front shows a more nuanced picture. Basically, the party was more supportive in the last 2 years than UKIP, especially in budgetary issue. It is also interesting to observe that one-third of agricultural and industrial measures were also backed by the party despite the fact that FN – in its programme – harshly criticises the EU's CAP and industry policy. The National Front is categorised as hard Eurosceptic (Grunberg, 2008: 45). Although the party rejects the federalist concept of the European Union, it is in favour of some common policies (Mudde, 2007: 159), so FN is rather a soft Eurosceptic party.

The Italian Five Star Movement supported the most motions during the examined period despite the fact that its MEPs sits in the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group – as well as the MEPs of UKIP. The party's Euroscepticism concentrates on the euro as a common currency: the representatives of the party voted in favour of only 12 per cent of economic and monetary affairs. It is not surprising if we take into account what the literature says about the Five Star Movement. The most important message of its European policy is the rejection of Italy's membership in the monetary union (Bartlett et al., 2013: 27). Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe that the party has been becoming more supportive in budgetary control and economic and monetary issues since the possibility of winning the next general election in Italy. The party does not have clear European policy, it often criticises the European bureaucracy and the Euro as a common currency (Dokos et al., 2013: 7). The party's Euroscepticism seems to be strategic in the sense that it is part of its opposition to the austerity measures, however, the party defined itself as the most pro-European party in Italy (Franzosi et al., 2015: 113-114). The MEPs of the party often voted with the major political groups and more importantly with the alternative leftist groups (Greens-EFA and EUL-NGL) (Franzosi et al., 2015: 120).

In opposite to the Five Star Movement, Syriza has not moderated its Euroscepticism over the past few years despite the fact that it is in governmental position since January 2015. It is surprising due to the fact that there was a major shift in the party's policy on summer 2015. However, it seems to be a change in its economic policy but not in the European one: the party voted along the group line (EUL-NGL) in almost every case. Syriza is the most supportive out of the four examined parties in economic and monetary issues which can be explained by the fact that the party is in favour of Greece's membership in the monetary union. Nonetheless, it has not supported much more motions than the National Front and the party's EP delegation voted with the French nationalists in half the cases in this policy area.

Figure 1. The proportion of supportive votes of the four EP delegations



Source: Votewatch, 2016, own calculations

Turning to the comparison of the delegations' votes (Figure 1), a left-right division could be easily observed in some policy areas, namely in civil liberties, development policy, employment and social affairs, gender equality, legal affairs and regional development. All of them originates in the very nature of these parties: left-wing parties (M5S, Syriza) are more equalitarian (legal affairs, civil liberties, gender equality) and socially more sensitive (employment, development).

Another important phenomenon is the relatively wide support of the fisheries policy. All parties but UKIP supported over 70 per cent of the motions in this field. Budget issues show a similar but weaker backing. The most rejected area is clearly the one containing the economic and monetary affairs which is not a surprise due to the permanent crisis of the monetary union.

Further analysis of the data reveals that the delegation of Syriza voted with the representatives of the Five Star Movement in 58 per cent of the cases. The most important common areas are the legal affairs, gender equality issues, environmental and public health policy and – somewhat surprisingly – the transport and tourism. The Greek party voted with the National Front in budgetary and fisheries issues, and in economic and monetary affairs. This fact clearly demonstrates the left-wing economic policy of the French nationalists.

The Five Star Movement has often had several very similar votes to Syriza but it shows similarities to the National Front in the fields of budget, agriculture and fisheries. The only common point with the right-libertarian UKIP is the Euroscepticism which is embodied in the rejection of the monetary union. Comparing the National Front to UKIP it is clear that the two parties have lots of common policies. On the other hand, the parties differ from each other in those areas where the French nationalists support some kind of integration or at least EU-wide cooperation (agriculture, fisheries, budget). The two most parties are Syriza and UKIP, their delegations voted with each other only in 17 per cent of the cases. It also demonstrates the very complex and nuanced nature of Euroscepticism.

Table 4. The number of cases when the examined parties voted in the same way

Policy area	Number of votes	Syriza +M5S	Syriza +UKIP	Syriza +FN	M5S +UKIP	M5S +FN	UKIP +FN
Agriculture	12	6	3	4	2	6	5
Budget	86	59	5	49	10	59	24
Budgetary control	116	63	8	20	45	51	92
Civil liberties, justice & home	65	39	9	10	7	15	35
Constitutional & inter-inst.	19	12	10	10	10	11	13
Culture & education	10	3	2	4	6	2	4
Development	13	8	2	4	0	2	8
Economic & monetary affairs	54	27	21	27	27	24	21
Employment & social affairs	27	16	6	11	2	7	16
Environment & public health	46	36	7	15	10	18	21
Fisheries	27	20	1	17	2	19	4
Foreign & security policy	137	62	32	39	20	29	66
Gender equality	13	11	0	0	0	0	11
Industry, research & energy	27	8	6	11	6	7	8
Internal market & consumer protection	17	8	3	5	4	6	11
Internal regulations of the EP	7	5	4	3	4	3	4
Internal trade	40	16	10	19	10	10	13
Legal affairs	59	45	5	16	3	16	33
Petitions	3	3	0	0	0	0	2
Regional development	14	10	1	1	1	1	9
Transport & tourism	12	9	2	4	2	6	8
Total	804	466	137	269	171	292	408

Source: *Votewatch, 2016*

6. Conclusion

Although the academic literature already defined that the attitudes towards the European integration became more complex in the last decades and Eurosceptic standpoints could have very different origins and contains, comparative approach which includes both right- and left-wing parties was sporadic. In this paper we have analysed the voting behaviour of the MEPs of four 'prominent' Eurosceptic parties.

Our research paper verified the literature's statement about the hard Euroscepticism of the UKIP. The MEPs of the party supported less than 3 percent of the motions which included clear Eurosceptic initiatives. In contrast to the behaviour of the UKIP, its group mate, the Five Star Movement was the most supportive party out of the four selected parties. In the cases of the voting in the European Parliament during the last two years, the rejection of the common monetary union proved to be the only common point of the two parties. The MEPs of the M5S supported only 12 percent of the motions in the economic and monetary area, while the MEPs of the party backed more than 55 percent of the motions in the plenary sessions of European Parliament. The MEPs of the two parties voted together only 171 times, which was less than the common votes of the M5S and the Syriza, or the FN. These phenomena made questionable the fundamental basis of the cooperation between the UKIP and the M5S. Maybe the two parties cooperate because of the institutional conditions of the European Parliament, or the good personal contact of Nigel Farage and Beppe Grillo. To answer this question could be the starting point of another research paper.

The differences between the UKIP and the M5S could be described as a left-right distinction. A left-right division could be easily observed in some policy areas (e.g. gender equality, environmental and public health policy issues), which was confirmed by the comparison of the M5S and the Syriza. The MEPs of the two left-wing parties voted together more than 58 percent of the cases. Comparing the National Front to UKIP it is clear that the two parties have lots of common policies. Though the FN is more supportive in some policy areas than the hard Eurosceptic UKIP. Despite the party's programme and its politicians criticised the common agricultural and industry policy, in the European Parliament the party supported more than the half of the motions of the fisheries and budgetary area.

Another important phenomenon is that the Syriza has not moderated its Euroscepticism since January 2015 when the party formed government for the first time. In contrast to Syriza, the M5S has been becoming more supportive during the last two years, which could be explained by the fact that probability of a governing position after the next Italian general election has increased. This process could be important for further researches and an additional possible conflict between the UKIP and the M5S.

The differences between the left- and the right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties could lead to the appearance of a clear division which separates left- and right-wing Euroscepticism in the future. The Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy is an interesting political experiment and its two most populous delegations have very different ideological standpoints. Although the majority of the members⁴ have clear right-wing ideology, the M5S remained in the EFDD Group. After the Brexit referendum the future of the British MEPs is questionable, which make uncertain also the future of the EFDD Group. If the UKIP disappears from the European Parliament the FN could become the main right-wing Eurosceptic political actor, which could enhance the ideological differences. This process could create the possible fundamental basis of a left- and a right-wing Euroscepticism of the future.

⁴ For example the Sweden Democrats (SD), the Lithuanian Order and Justice (TT) and the independent French MEP Joëlle Bergeron who was previously a member of the FN.

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