UNDERSTANDING THE EUROSCEPTICISM IN EU

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Since the European Union is a major supranational political and economic organization with a noticeable impact on regional and global affairs, Euroscepticism may have a significant impact on how the EU develops politically and administratively, which may alter the international relations landscape globally. The issue is worth studying because it explain the increased negative public opinion regarding the European Union activity and European integration process; analyze the impact of Eurosceptic parties of the European Parliament on EU legislation, EU enlargement and facilitates assessing the potential of further integration, the risk for withdrawals (like Brexit), and prospective changes to EU policy. The study shows a growing trend in the EU and is an attempt to offer a complete picture of the most important facets of euroskepticism among EU member states and the European Parliament. The research is based on the institutional-functional method and comparative study which contribute to the analysis of the implications of Euroscepticism in EU institutions, in decision-making process, the public opinion and support of citizens for EU integration.

The term „euroscepticism“ is a socio-political movement that is supported by people who are against the EU‘s institutionalized policies and the process of European Integration. An important contribution to the exploring of the concept have the authors Szczerbiak and Taggart [8, p.6], who made a comprehensive classification. According to them, political parties that hold the view that their countries should leave the EU and are vehemently opposed to the EU project and the European integration process are known as „hard“ eurosceptics. „Soft“ euroscepticism is defined as „where concerns about one (or several) policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, but where there is NOT a principled objection to European integration or EU membership.“

The causes of Eurosceptic attitudes of citizens can be explained throughout three main approaches: the utilitarian approach, which conceptualizes opinions about the EU and the European project as an evaluation of economic costs and rewards and links Euroscepticism to economic interests; according to the cultural identity theory, views on European integration are influenced by perceptions of external cultural challenges and sentiments of national identity; The political approach implies that attitudes of political discontent and institutional mistrust are linked to support for European integration.

The European Parliament, one of the most significant EU institutions, plays a vital role and is tasked with several key tasks to ensure the efficient functioning of the EU apparatus. The EU Commission President is chosen by the EP. The Parliament is also the body that passes laws. We can identify the political groups in European Parliament with a Eurosceptic orientation: European Conservatives and Reformists Group- ECR ;

Identity and Democracy Group- ID; The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL. After the 2019 European elections, EPP rest the largest political group within EP with 182 seats. The S&D kept its 2nd position with 154 seats. The next group is Renew Europe with 108 seats and Greens/EFA with 74 seats. The ID group has 73 seats and it is followed by the ECR group, which is placed on 6th position, comparing to the 3rd place in 20014 elections with 62 seats. The GUE/NGL has 41 seats and the rest 57 seats are occupied by Non-attached Members. According to the results of European Elections in 2009, 2014 and 2019, we can conclude that the soft and hard eurosceptic parties' performance in the European Parliament between 2009 and 2019 was one of gradual but steady growth. Since 2009, the negative attitudes towards the EU increased with almost 7% (See Table1).

Table1. The Eurosceptic seats in EP during 2009-2024

Legislative period of Constitutive session of EP	Number of Eurosceptic seats in EP	Percentage of MEP's
2009-2014	121	16,45%
2014-2019	170	22,63%
2019-2024	176	23,44%

[Elaborated by author based on European Parliament Constitutive session of 2009-2014, 2014-2019, 2019-2024 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en (visited 17.03.2024)]

By emphasizing the loss of national sovereignty in terms of law, budget, territory, and money, the eurosceptic parties argue against a European foreign policy. In terms of migration, they move together as a cohesive unit. MEPs on the far right claim that terrorists enter Europe pretending to be refugees. Brexit is the result of a position to leave the European Union due to euroskepticism.

In conclusion, the multiplicity of reasons for euroskepticism permits it to persist at various points in the European integration process. A growing trend of Euroscepticism can be seen throughout the continent as a result of widespread dissatisfaction with the political system. This study has demonstrated that shifting views of the EU and its function as a representative body for the European people were major drivers of euroskepticism during the 2009–2019 decade.

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Recomandat
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