



LUISS GUIDO CARLI UNIVERSITY

From responsiveness to responsibility?

The government experience of three parties of left-wing Euroscepticism

Candidate: Akif Cem Ozkardes

Supervisors: Prof. Lorenzo De Sio

Assist. Prof. Vincenzo Emanuele

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Abstract

One of the significant impacts of the 2009 Eurozone crisis was party system change in the crisis-stricken countries, especially in Southern Europe. As a result, new parties emerged, some parties disappeared and demanding more responsive governments, relatively less stronger parties became contenders for offices; and in some cases, they became ruling parties for the first time. Throughout the economic crisis another phenomenon, the rise of party-based Euroscepticism has drawn considerable interest from both journalistic and academic accounts and it has been often associated with party system change. In this context, considering the 2009 Eurozone crisis as a turning point and focusing on political parties which have criticized the EU predominantly through economic lenses, this research concerns the question of how government participation and the constraints imposed by European integration affect the Euroscepticism of ruling parties which came to power for the first time. Theoretically grounded on Mair (2007) and (2009)'s distinctions between policy-scepticism and polity-scepticism; and responsible and responsive government, the investigated question is whether ruling parties with left-wing oriented Euroscepticism become more responsible and less Eurosceptic once they come into office. Moreover, drawing on Mair (2007), this research puts forward a new typology for the Euroscepticism of such parties. Using qualitative case study method and selecting the two South European cases (i.e., the Coalition of the Radical Left [SYRIZA] of Greece; and Five Star Movement [M5S] of Italy) and a non-EU Nordic control case (i.e., the Left-Green Movement [VG] of Iceland), this work investigates the impact of government participation and the constraints imposed by European integration on the Euroscepticism of Southern European ruling parties in Greece and Italy. The analysis is especially based on the collected data through semi-structured interviews with MPs and party cadres between June 2019 and November 2019. The findings reveal that the Euroscepticism and responsiveness of the cases under investigation have changed due to government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU. The difference is rather clear between the EU and non-EU cases. This difference is explained by the fact that whereas the SYRIZA and M5S cases faced both government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU, the VG case did not experience the latter as Iceland is not a part of the Eurozone and the EU, but the EEA and the Schengen Area.

Key words: Government-Opposition Dynamics, Euroscepticism, Interview Methodology

Sommario

Uno degli impatti maggiormente significativi della crisi dell'Eurozona del 2009 è stato il cambiamento del sistema dei partiti nei paesi colpiti dalla crisi, specialmente nell'Europa meridionale. Di conseguenza, sono emersi nuovi partiti, alcuni partiti sono scomparsi e, chiedendo governi più reattivi, altri partiti relativamente meno forti sono diventati contendenti per il governo, riuscendo in alcuni casi a diventare per la prima volta partiti al potere. Durante la crisi economica, un altro fenomeno, ossia l'ascesa dell'euroscepticismo su base partitica, ha suscitato un notevole interesse da parte dei resoconti giornalistici e accademici ed è stato spesso associato ai cambiamenti del sistema partitico. In questo contesto, considerando la crisi dell'Eurozona del 2009 come un punto di svolta e concentrandosi sui partiti politici che hanno criticato l'Unione Europea (UE) prevalentemente attraverso lenti economiche, questa ricerca si interroga sulla questione di come la partecipazione del governo e i limiti imposti dall'integrazione europea abbiano influenzato l'euroscepticismo di partiti saliti al potere per la prima volta. Teoricamente fondato sulle distinzioni di Mair (2007) e (2009) tra governo responsabile (*responsible*) e reattivo (*responsive*); e tra scetticismo delle policy (*policy-scepticism*) e scetticismo del politico (*polity-scepticism*), l'ipotesi testata è se i partiti al potere con un orientamento eurosceptico di sinistra diventino più responsabili e meno eurosceptici una volta saliti al potere. Inoltre, attingendo a Mair (2007), questa ricerca propone una nuova tipologia di euroscepticismo di tali partiti politici. Utilizzando un 'metodo di caso studio qualitativo' e selezionando i due casi del sud Europa (ossia, la Coalizione della Sinistra Radicale [SYRIZA] della Grecia; e il Movimento Cinque Stelle [M5S] dell'Italia) e un caso di controllo nordico extra-UE (ossia, la Sinistra - Movimento Verde [VG] dell'Islanda), questa tesi indaga l'impatto della partecipazione del governo e dei limiti imposti dall'integrazione europea all'euroscepticismo dei partiti al potere in Europa meridionale (Grecia e Italia). L'analisi si basa sui dati raccolti specialmente attraverso interviste semi-strutturate con parlamentari e quadri di partito tra giugno e novembre 2019. I risultati rivelano che l'euroscepticismo e la capacità di risposta dei casi in esame sono cambiati a causa della partecipazione del governo e dei limiti imposti dall'UE. La differenza è piuttosto netta tra i casi UE e non UE. Questa differenza è spiegata dal fatto che mentre i casi di SYRIZA e del M5S hanno dovuto affrontare sia la partecipazione del governo che i limiti imposti dall'UE, il caso VG non ha sperimentato quest'ultimo vincolo dal momento che l'Islanda non fa parte della zona euro e dell'UE, ma dello spazio economico europeo e dell'Area Schengen.

Parole chiave: dinamiche governo-opposizione, euroscepticismo, metodologia dell'intervista

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Abbreviation

- AKEL – The Progressive Party of Working People [Ανορθωτικό Κόμμα Εργαζόμενου Λαού]
- ANEL – Independent Greeks [Ανεξάρτητοι Έλληνες]
- DIMAR – Democratic Left [Δημοκρατική Αριστερά]
- EC – The European Commission
- ECB – The European Central Bank
- EEA – The European Economic Area
- EFFD – Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy
- EL – The Greek Solution [Ελληνική Λύση]
- EP – The European Parliament
- EU – The European Union
- FI – Let's Go Italy [Forza Italia]
- FSF – The Progressive Party [Framsóknarflokkurinn]
- GUE/NGL – The European United Left/Nordic Green Left
- IMF – The International Monetary Fund
- IV – Italy Alive [Italia Viva]
- KINAL – The Movement for Change [Κίνημα Αλλαγής]
- KKE – The Communist Party of Greece [Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας]
- LAE – Popular Unity [Λαϊκή Ενότητα]
- M5S – Five Star Movement [Movimento Cinque Stelle]
- MEP – Member of European Parliament
- MERA25 – The European Realistic Disobedience Front [Μέτωπο Ευρωπαϊκής Ρεαλιστικής Ανυπακοής]
- MP – Member of Parliament
- NATO – The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- ND – New Democracy [Νέα Δημοκρατία]
- PASOK – The Panhellenic Socialist Movement [Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα]
- PD – The Democratic Party [Partito Democratico]
- PDL – The People of Freedom [Il Popolo della Libertà]
- PE – Course of Freedom [Πλεύση Ελευθερίας]
- SAM – The Social Democratic Alliance [Samfylkingin jafnaðarmannaflokkur Íslands]
- SI – The Icelandic Socialist Party [Sósíalistaflokkur Íslands] (Iceland)
- SP – The Socialist Party [Socialistische Partij] (The Netherlands)

SYNASPISMOS – The Coalition of the Left, of Movements and Ecology [Συνασπισμός της Αριστεράς των Κινημάτων και της Οικολογίας]

SJ – The Independence Party [Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn]

SYRIZA – The Coalition of the Radical Left [Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς]

UK – The United Kingdom

UN – The United Nations

VG – Left-Green Movement [Vinstrihreyfingin – grænt framboð]

WTO – The World Trade Organization

XA – The Popular Association – Golden Dawn [Λαϊκός Σύνδεσμος – Χρυσή Αυγή]

From responsiveness to responsibility? The government experience of three parties of left-wing Euroscepticism

Introduction

At the dawn of the Eurozone crisis, political scientist Peter Mair expressed his concerns regarding an emerging problem of contemporary democracies. Accordingly, they were suffering from a gradually increasing phenomenon: “the growing and potentially unbridgeable gap between responsive government and responsible government” (Mair, 2009, p. 17). In this respect, he suggested “a situation in which the malaise is pathological rather than conditional” (Mair, 2009, p. 17). He argued that “parties have moved from representing interests of the citizens to the state to representing interests of the state to the citizens” (Mair, 2009, p. 6). Whereas the former is described as responsiveness, the latter is identified as responsibility (or acting responsible). In 2009, this pathological malaise of contemporary democracies (or the *problem of responsiveness*) has been started to be tested by the economic and societal crisis in Europe; particularly in the South of the continent. In this period, the economic disparities between Northern and Southern EU member states and the deficiencies of European integration have become more evident. Southern Europe faced the explicit impact of high unemployment and inflation rates; huge government debts; and consequently, the inability of states to provide basic welfare standards. Often depicted as a humanitarian crisis, such consequences have been observed particularly in Greece.

Economic difficulties quickly resulted with mass protests and social unrest coupled with the emergence of various movements and political parties along the left-right spectrum opposing the EU either in principle or as a specific response to the economic crisis. Meanwhile, the already identified “populist zeitgeist” (Mudde 2004) finally met the economic and societal crisis of the year 2009 and onwards. While right-wing populist parties continue to be strong contenders across the continent, it is debatable whether the wind of left-wing populism calmed down.

The impact of the economic crisis on the political life of these countries was inevitable. In a decade, institutional and structural changes took place within these states; the old political rules and methods were questioned; countries reconsidered their places within European integration; party systems changed; new parties were founded, some parties disappeared and some relatively new parties became ruling parties for the first time.

Already existing and newly established parties of the left-right spectrum raised their voices against the ways political actors managed to handle the crisis at both national and European level. Moreover, the economic crisis did not only feature new left-wing parties but also parties proposing left-wing prescriptions against the crisis. Demanding more responsive governance at these two levels above, some of these parties transformed themselves into contenders for offices. This research concerns this group of parties.

After the outbreak of the Eurozone crisis, the demand of these parties was also expressed through opposition to the EU (European Union) or European integration partially or as a whole. Since then, this opposition has been identified as *Euroscepticism* by both academic and journalistic accounts in the last three decades. The rise of these parties has gone hand in hand with their growing identification with populism or Euroscepticism or both; - sometimes with academic purposes, and sometimes with pragmatic motives. Given all above, this research links the problem of responsiveness to the Euroscepticism research by focusing on parties which have experienced the office for the first time after the outbreak of the crisis and maintained their left-wing criticism towards the economy policies of the EU. Southern Europe is considered as the best laboratory to do so.

Starting from the year 2009, the situation in the economic crisis-stricken European countries have posed concerns for the future of European integration. European integration has become “more contested than ever” due to the economic crisis and the different economic preferences of the electorate of Northern and Southern European countries pose more challenges to EU policy making (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 426). The economic and societal problems of the EU member Southern European countries forced both practitioners and intellectuals to revisit the economic asymmetries among EU member countries. Greece and Italy have been among those which extensively experienced the negative effects of these asymmetries. Especially the devastating developments in Greece often hit the headlines and the radical changes in Greek politics got the attention of international media outlets. Not an EU member country, Iceland; however, experienced the economic crisis before the aforementioned countries once the financial crisis of 2008 reached the European continent. Consequently, given their explicitly different national contexts, Greece, Italy and Iceland have shared a common historical experience in the 21st century: economic crisis. In such political contexts, having predominantly economic criticism towards the EU, three parties (i.e., The Coalition of the Radical Left [*Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς*; SYRIZA]; the Five Star Movement [*Movimento Cinque Stelle*; M5S]; and the Left-Green Movement [*Vinstrihreyfingin-grænt framboð*, *Vinstri*]

Græn - VG]) came into office for the first time in Greece, Italy and Iceland in 2015, 2018 and 2009 respectively.

While the M5S of Italy was founded at the beginning of the Eurozone crisis, both SYRIZA (or Synaspismos [the Coalition of the Left, of Movements and Ecology] as a component of SYRIZA alliance) of Greece and the VG of Iceland had been in the opposition until the economic crisis unfolded. The political and social impact of the economic crisis had not only changed the party systems of those countries, but also paved the way for these parties' electoral success. Despite its electoral success; however, SYRIZA spent time in office only for one term whereas by the day of writing the M5S has been in power almost for two years. On the other hand, the VG experienced the office twice between 2009 and 2013, and between 2017 to present. Not only the three parties but also their party systems experienced their firsts. While in Greece a radical left party came into office almost as a single party (i.e., it formed a coalition with the minor contribution of the Independent Greeks [ANEL]) for the first time, in Iceland a radical left party became a part of a ruling coalition for the first time in the 21st century. Italy, on the other hand, had been experiencing an unorthodox ruling party which formed a coalition first with the radical right Northern League (La Lega Nord) or shortly the League (March 2018 – August 2019) and then with the centre-left Democratic Party (PD).

Drawing on this context; taking a comparative approach and selecting the two EU member South European cases (i.e., SYRIZA and the M5S;), and a Nordic non-EU member control case (i.e., the VG) this thesis investigates the impact of government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU on the Euroscepticism (i.e., economic policy scepticism) of first-time ruling parties after the outbreak of the economic crisis. These three parties achieved good electoral results through several promises which were mostly framed by economic arguments as a reaction to the crisis and the way the EU (in the case of SYRIZA and the M5S) and other international institutions managed the crisis. This resulted with the fact that they have been often labelled as Eurosceptic, and even commonly compared with hard-Eurosceptic parties by academic and journalistic accounts. Yet, the questions of to what extent they kept their promises and implemented the promised policies in practice and to what extent they kept their Eurosceptic views after government participation have been a contested issue. In fact, as the following chapters will indicate, the literature suggests that they are no longer as 'sceptic' as they were after government participation, and they could not keep most of their promises. This will be tested throughout the thesis. In this respect, the following main question is asked while the four hypotheses below are proposed:

What is the impact of government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU on the economic policy positions of Southern European ruling parties after the outbreak of the economic crisis?

Hypothesis 1: Even though the investigated Southern European parties show polity Eurosceptic characteristics before government participation, their Euroscepticism is not against the EU polity but the EU policies.

Hypothesis 2: The regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of their domestic context and the constraints imposed by the EU make the investigated parties responsible once they become ruling parties.

Hypothesis 3: Being responsible, the investigated parties decrease their Euroscepticism and take a more moderate position towards the EU after government experience.

Hypothesis 4: Government participation and EU constraints affect these parties' Euroscepticism in accordance with the duration of their government participation and the degree of involvement (i.e., their coalition partners).

The comparative politics literature on party change, Euroscepticism and European integration with specific emphasises on southern European cases (particularly on Greece and Italy) is large. Yet, less academic works with small-N design comparing northern and southern EU member countries can be observed in the literature. Furthermore, the numbers are even more limited if one searches academic works comparing both EU and non-EU members in different regions. When it comes to the three cases under investigation, whereas SYRIZA could be considered as one of the most popular party cases in the last couple of years in the literature, considerable amount of works has been produced on the M5S. Not only geographically and through its non-EU context, the VG differs from the two southern cases to a large extent also with its under studied character. The Icelandic control case of this research is one of the least studied ruling party cases (especially with a specific reference to Euroscepticism), at least in the English-speaking academia.

As a result, this novel case selection and the main research question, coupled with a deep investigation of the three parties through predominantly qualitative means including semi-structured interviews with MPs and party cadres between June 2019 and November 2019 accompanied by basic quantitative indicators, aims to make an original contribution to both the comparative politics and European integration literatures.

The thesis is divided into six chapters: the first chapter presents both the literature review and the theoretical framework of the research which is based on the two different conceptualisations of Mair (2007) and (2009). The chapter starts with presenting the research puzzle (Chapter 1.1.) which links the theoretical framework of the research to the case selection and explains this relationship briefly. Then, Chapter 1.2. will discuss the concept of challenger party. The rest of the sections look into the theoretical assumptions of the research in detail. Presenting and challenging the existing literature on the phenomenon of Euroscepticism, first, this research suggests that Mair (2007)'s dual conceptualisation (i.e., *policy-polity* scepticism) grasps the Euroscepticism of the cases under investigation before and after their government participation. Second, it links this dualism with Mair (2009)'s another dualism: *Representative* versus *Responsible* government. Dividing a clear line between polity and policy scepticism, in this work Mair (2009) asserts that becoming more *responsible*, a government makes potential oppositions outside the governing circles more polity-sceptic. And he argues that there is a link between Euroscepticism and polity-scepticism. Chapter 1 will intensively discuss the causes and definition of polity-scepticism in both EU and non-EU contexts and subsequently will propose an alternative typology for Euroscepticism research. Drawing on Mair (2007)'s policy-polity dualism which was improved by Verney (2017) as *polity Euroscepticism* and *policy Euroscepticism*; and based on a newly created criteria on *pro-Europeanism*, the first chapter of this thesis will propose a new classification of Euroscepticism which will discussed in Chapter 1.7 in detail. Accordingly, while Euroscepticism can be divided either as polity Euroscepticism or policy Euroscepticism, pro-Europeanism can be separated either as policy Euroscepticism or *non-sceptic pro-Europeanism*. That is, policy Euroscepticism can be identified as a shared sub-category of Euroscepticism and/or pro-European (See Figure 1).

In the second chapter, both the theoretical and empirical evidence from the academic literature will be provided in parallel with the independent and dependent variables of the undertaken study which are *the regular dynamics of government participation* (i.e., the domestic constraints) and *the constraints imposed by the EU*, and *the economic policy positions* of the parties after the outbreak of the economic crisis respectively. Chapter 2.1. will give place the relatively limited literature written on the impact of government participation on Euroscepticism while Chapter 2.2. will concern the existing arguments for each party case which will be tested later in the remaining empirical chapters. Chapter 2.2. briefly concludes that the academic literature signals that SYRIZA and the M5S followed similar paths after their government participation whereas the control case VG's Euroscepticism after government participation differs from other two parties.

Chapter 3 will explain the methodological issues of the research. The chapter will start with shedding light in the research design and ontological and epistemological grounds of the undertaken study (Chapter 3.1.). Chapter 3.2 will focus on the rationale behind the selected cases and touch upon issues such as number of cases, method of analysis, comparison of national contexts and existing literature with a similar research (i.e., the small-N comparative analysis of political parties). Finally, Chapter 3.3. will focus on the data collection and data analysis and look into the interview method as well as the field research and its limitations.

Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 will focus on SYRIZA, the M5S and the VG cases respectively. Each chapter will test the four hypotheses of the research and attempt to answer the main research question through the qualitative analysis of 28 semi-structured and 3 written interviews which are conducted by the author between June 2019 and December 2019. In addition, academic sources, election manifestos, party programmes, party websites, elite speeches, and news media articles will accompany the interview data. The conclusion part of the thesis will discuss the main findings and reach a conclusion regarding the four hypotheses.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

1.1. Research puzzle

In parallel with changing political and economic conditions, each historical period brings about certain challenges for its own political units. This research investigates the challenges of one of the key political units of the 21st century European politics: political parties. Since the end of the Cold War, scholars and intellectuals all around the world attempt to understand the impact of the absence of bi-polar international system, cultural and economic globalisation and technological developments going hand in hand with globalisation on political parties. The recent accounts are not very optimistic. As Caramani (2017) puts,

(...) parties are blamed for having lost interest and capacity in representing the people and lost touch with their problems. On the other hand, parties are accused of having lost interest and capacity in governing responsibly focussing instead on short-term electoral gains. It is often claimed that parties' difficulty at representing and governing originates from the radical transformations of politics and economy, particularly economic globalization, the nonstate character of governance, and the mediatization of political communication. (p. 55)

The current academic and journalistic accounts often raise the difficulties that the so-called European project is facing today. From extreme right to extreme left, several parties and actors are associated with anti-European sentiments and practices which are often labelled as challenges for European integration. Nevertheless, the challenges that political parties facing are also highly relevant once they are considered within the context of the European integration process. Political scientist Peter Mair made an early warning in 2009 for European democracies (and for political parties) and pointed out their own *challenges* in his ground-breaking work “Representative versus Responsible Government”.

The processor works of Mair (2009) already handled the issue of party change as well as the challenges of contemporary political parties and democracies. Most notably, Katz and Mair (1995) coined the cartel party thesis in which they explained the evolution of *the party* from the stages of elite party, mass party, catch-all party to finally cartel party. These stages were explained through the party's relationship with the civil society and the state. In this

respect, Katz and Mair (1995) anticipate “the movement of parties from civil society towards the state” through which “parties become part of the state apparatus itself” (pp. 14–15). They define the last stage, the cartel party as a new model of party “in which colluding parties become agents of the state and employ the resources of the state (the party state) to ensure their own collective survival” (Katz & Mair, 1995, p. 5). They also argue that each party type led to the emergence of a successor party and they expected to see the cartel party’s “own opposition” even though they do not name it explicitly in their work but instead mention parties which are against “established politics” (p. 24). In their restatement in 2009, however, they call a new opposition type as “populist anti-party-system parties” (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 759). In other words, the expectations of Katz and Mair (1995) concerning the rise of an opposition against the cartel party proved to be correct in the form of populism in later years. In their re-visit, Katz and Mair (2009) also confirm this. The importance of Katz and Mair’s works in 1995 and 2009 is that both are suggesting political parties’ alienation from the citizens as a worrying development for modern democracies: “The parties do not act as agents of the voters. But then the voters appear to have little interest in acting as principals of the parties” (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 762).

At this point, this worrying development is linked to another one explained by Mair (2009) which contributes the theoretical framework of this thesis. Accordingly, he identifies ‘a’ European democratic landscape “in which the malaise is pathological rather than conditional” (Mair, 2009, p. 17). He summarizes this pathological malaise with the claim that “parties have moved from representing interests of the citizens to the state to representing interests of the state to the citizens” (Mair, 2009, p. 6). Whereas the former is described as responsiveness, the latter is identified as responsibility (or acting responsible). Accordingly, in addition to many other actors and factors, as a constraining actor, European integration has also a role in this malaise. At this juncture, Katz and Mair (2009) indeed presents an overview of a political and economic context in which political parties are constrained especially in the economic domain:

The liberal economic consensus is now well established, and on many of the issues that might offer the basis for polarization in left-right terms, the room for manoeuvre is either limited or the capacity to decide has been delegated elsewhere. Beyond the economy and welfare, and beyond the heavily constrained options available in fiscal and monetary policy, there lie other issue dimensions that might serve to organize opposition and that cut across the traditional class-based left-right

divide. The environment offers one set of issues, immigration offers another, the international order offers a third. (p. 760)

The depicted context above is well-suited to the context of European integration. Given this background, Mair (2009) makes five crucial conclusions concerning responsiveness-responsibility dilemma of ruling parties:

- 1) The task of governing is extremely difficult and this leaves no space for partisan mobilization
- 2) Much of what parties do is depoliticized (due to the above point 1) and it is more difficult for parties to justify their policy choices
- 3) Opposition outside the government takes Eurosceptic stance, mobilizes against the government, Europe and the polity
- 4) Growing gap between responsiveness and responsibility causes growing bifurcation in European party systems
- 5) “The growing gap between responsiveness and responsibility” causes “the disaffection and malaise of democracy”.

This thesis especially links the 3rd and 5th arguments of Mair (2009) whom work emphasises the constraints and challenges imposed by international institutions that political parties are facing. First, Mair (2009) gives a special emphasis on the challenges of European political parties derived from European integration and identifies Euroscepticism as a reaction to the excessive EU bureaucracy and national governments which are busy with this excessive bureaucracy. Second, Mair (2009) links the 3rd argument above to his work “Political Opposition and the European Union” (Mair, 2007). In this work he conceptualises the opposition towards European integration into two: polity oriented and policy-oriented, and associates only polity-scepticism with Euroscepticism. This thesis; however, warns that not only the polity oriented, but also policy-oriented opposition is often associated with the term Euroscepticism as this is evident in the academic literature (This will extensively be discussed in the next section on the review of Euroscepticism literature) and is also expressed by both practitioners and journalistic accounts. Referring Mair (2007), for example, Verney (2017) coins the terms polity Euroscepticism and policy Euroscepticism.

1.1.2. Political and economic context in Greece, Italy and Iceland

The crisis-stricken Southern Europe is a good laboratory to apply the theoretical frameworks of Peter Mair. The economic crisis has changed the political landscape of Southern Europe which was tested by deteriorating economic conditions including high unemployment and inflation rates; government debts; and decreasing GDP (See Graph 7, 8, 9, 10). Dictated austerity policies and budgetary cuts as a response to the crisis led to the economic and societal problems which triggered a political reaction in the form of the rise of formerly weaker political parties or the emergence of new parties and movements. This eventually led to party system change in the region.

After the outbreak of the economic crisis in Southern Europe, parties which have never experienced government participation, enjoyed successful electoral results and became major competitors in their party systems and finally participated in governments. The discourse of these parties was often labelled as Eurosceptic, populist, anti-establishment etc. by journalistic accounts.

Having a pre-dominantly economic criticism towards the EU, SYRIZA and the M5S also came into office for the first time in their countries following the economic crisis. They achieved electoral gains thanks to several promises which were mostly based on economic arguments (alongside anti-elitist/establishment arguments) as a response to the crisis and to the way the EU and other international institutions managed the crisis. The SYRIZA case, which experienced the government earlier than any other newly coming left-wing force, is often identified as a “Failure of the Populist Promise” (Mudde, 2017). Identified as a Eurosceptic actor, experienced the government, failed to achieve its promises in the summer of 2015, SYRIZA requires a deeper analysis and Mair (2007 and 2009) stand as the best explanatory theoretical frameworks in the literature. Following a similar but not the same path, the M5S is also the case under investigation with its *left-wing economic frames* when it criticizes the EU, and with its government participation experience in Southern Europe. Furthermore, this research selects the Icelandic VG as a non-EU member control case which shares a similar path with these parties after the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008.

While SYRIZA and the VG had already been in opposition before the economic crisis, the M5S was founded during the crisis. Once they all showed their best electoral performance, none of them were still able to form a single-party government and more importantly, they all formed controversial coalitions. As a radical left party, SYRIZA formed a coalition with right-wing nationalist ANEL sharing a single common position: anti-austerity. During the crisis,

austerity policies implemented by the Greek government resulted with anti-austerity movements including the so-called *aganaktismenoi*. According to Katsambekis (2015), the *aganaktismenoi* movement is considered to be a turning point for SYRIZA due to two reasons: first, the party adopted a discourse dividing political actors as pro-memorandum and anti-memorandum forces while associating the former with the elites and the latter with popular masses (and with itself); and second, it started to become “a viable challenger party, a true contender of power” (p. 156). SYRIZA’s rise in the party system challenged the already existing two-party system of the New Democracy (ND) and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). Once SYRIZA failed to gain the majority to form a single-party government after the January 2015 elections, it needed a minor support from other parties which eventually came from ANEL. Despite the obvious ideological differences, the two parties’ same anti-austerity positions as well as their support for the continuation of Greece’s Eurozone membership made this coalition possible (Mudde, 2017, p. 26) as even in 2012 other left-wing forces rejected SYRIZA’s “pre- or post-electoral cooperation” (Heilig, 2016, p. 11). SYRIZA’s ruling party years were especially marked by its signing to the third bailout-package, subsequent party split and party transformation which will be analysed in Chapter 4 in detail.

In the case of Italy, founded as an anti-establishment force in 2009, the M5S quickly rose in the Italian party system during the economic crisis. The M5S’s “environmental and anti-globalist appeal” as well as the party founder’s charismatic leadership attracted the voters from different ideologies, mainly the leftist electorate (Tronconi, 2018, p. 177). The party fiercely opposed the austerity policies and even made a call for an exit from the Eurozone at some point. It rose in the Italian party system in a context characterised by the economic crisis as well as a technocratic government. The M5S’s rise was confirmed by the 2013 elections even though its ruling years have begun after 2018 elections. It eventually formed a coalition with the radical right League after the 2018 elections and following a long government formation period, the two parties agreed on neutral prime minister Giuseppe Conte for the newly established cabinet. The M5S’s rather short coalition period with the League which will be analysed in Chapter 5 in detail, ended in August 2019.

As discussed in the case selection section of this thesis (Chapter 3.2.), the Icelandic VG as a non-EU control case went through a similar experience compared to SYRIZA and the M5S. Being permanently in opposition since its foundation, once the financial crisis of 2008 hit Iceland, which remains to be one of the most traumatic incidents in the history of modern Iceland, the VG formed the country’s first-ever left-wing coalition with the leading party of the 2009 elections, pro-European Social Democratic Alliance (SAM). Traditionally opposing

Iceland's EU membership, the VG became a part of this coalition which ironically applied for EU membership in the same year. The VG and SAM left office after the 2013 elections. Even though Iceland's economy experienced a fast recovery in the following years, Icelandic politics could not gain its pre-crisis stability again. Early elections took place both in 2016 and 2017 following several scandals. The VG became a ruling party in 2017 again even though it formed even a more controversial coalition with ideologically distant right-wing forces. Both government experience which will be examined in Chapter 6 in detail, led to disputes and internal turbulence within the party.

1.2. Challenger parties

Hobolt and Tilley (2016) assert that the most visible effect of the Eurozone crisis is the rise of challenger parties (p. 971). In this period, both SYRIZA and the M5S came into office by achieving significant electoral rise and often depicted as populist and challenger political parties by the academic literature. As the case selection section will also discuss, a very important criteria which led to these two parties meeting in this thesis, is the fact that both parties became contenders for office after the outbreak of the economic crisis. In other words, rather than their populist identities, both parties' rise in their party systems constitutes a more significant place for this research's case selection. This makes the two parties' challenger identity worth mentioning. Defining challenger parties as "those that have not (yet) had the opportunity to control policy or government" and considering most populist parties within a broader category of challenger parties to be classified (p. 1), De Vries and Hobolt (2020) assert that while the concept of challenger party refers to "the position of parties within the system, as either challenger or dominant parties", the definition of populist parties in the literature rather stresses the ideology of parties as a starting point (p. 2).

Facing sovereign debt crisis and receiving austerity requests from the EU and IMF in return for bail-outs, the traditional parties of debtor states faced a reaction from their voters which started to turn them to challenger parties (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016, pp. 971–972). Greece and Italy are among the most notable examples. While SYRIZA's coming into power as a challenger party took a form of "replacement" against PASOK (i.e., PASOK was replaced by SYRIZA) (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020, p. 7), the 2018 general elections in Italy are considered as an "unprecedented success" of the M5S as a challenger party (Paparo, 2018, p. 77). Also

referring to the M5S, Ignazi (2021) asserts that new challenger parties “have provided an alternative to the working and structuring of mainstream parties” (p. 112).

In their analysis, Hobolt and Tilley (2016) demonstrate that voters do not only punish traditional parties because of their failures during the crisis but also due to policy-based criticism and on the left, this takes a shape of criticism towards the consensus on fiscal policy (p. 985). Nevertheless, they also underline that even the challenger forces such as SYRIZA can be forced to move to the “mainstream consensus” due to government responsibility (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016, p. 985).¹ Moreover, emphasizing bad reputation of political parties across Europe, Ignazi (2021) puts forward an interesting argument suggesting that challenger parties and their “innovations” have not changed “discontent and distrust” of voters much, at least for the time being (p. 112). In this respect, it can be considered that by the year 2021, the problem of responsiveness is still persistent.

The next section will focus on the basic foundations of this research, the responsiveness/responsibility dichotomy. This conceptualisation is explanatory for both Euroscepticism and the context which causes Euroscepticism. Chapter 1.4. will give an overview of Euroscepticism literature and Chapter 1.5. explain why Mair (2007)’s dual conceptualisation (i.e., policy-polity scepticism) is considered as the best categorization for this research. These two theoretical frameworks (Mair 2007 and 2009) will ground the research in order to understand

- what conditions make opposition parties Eurosceptic,
- what conditions make them responsible and how once they become ruling parties,
- and to what extent their Eurosceptic stance change.

In this way, it is expected that the empirical cases will shed light on the impact of government participation on Euroscepticism.

1.3. Responsiveness vs. responsibility

What happens to political parties once they find themselves in office? What are the causes and consequences of the growing gap between responsiveness and responsibility? In the light of

¹ Chapter 2.2. and the entire Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 will give place to the debate and analysis of SYRIZA and the M5S’s transformations in detail.

Mair (2009), this section will divide the answer of the above questions into two categories: causes and consequences.

1.3.1. Causes

- 1) Inability to keep the balance: Mair (2009) notes that it has always been essential for democratic governments to keep the balance between demands for responsiveness and demands for responsibility and today this is a problem of party politics as not only the gap between responsiveness and responsibility is high, but the parties are also not sufficient to keep this balance (p. 10). Rather than representing the electorate, parties, especially the mainstream parties are more like governors whereas representation remains in the domain of the “challenger” parties which either “downplay governing ambition” or “lack governing capacity” (p. 6). Nevertheless, at this point, it is worth noting that the recent research suggests that despite being a significant “responsiveness function”, populist parties are “only slightly more responsive” than mainstream parties concerning the issues they embrace (Plescia et al., 2019, p. 513).
- 2) The hardship of reading the electorate: Since governments cannot read the preferences of their electorates, they face difficulties to respond them (Mair, 2009, p. 13). This problem occurs even when ruling parties are in a position to respond the demands of the electorate since they cannot know what the demands are (p. 13).
- 3) Constraints of the office: With the aim of meeting the “everyday responsibilities of office” of which Mair (2009) calls “seeking to act responsibly”, governments are constrained by other institutions in the context of globalisation and Europeanisation (p. 14). Under the circumstances in which governments are acting responsibly to the principals of these institutions, the electorate faces the difficulty to understand the decisions of governments (p. 14).
- 4) Constraints of the domestic context and previous commitments made by others: Mair (2009) asserts that not only governments’ domestic and international (e.g., the EU or the United Nations [UN] and the international law) constitutional constraints limit the governments, but also the policy commitments -which are increasingly heavier- made by previous governments

(e.g., the European treaties from Rome to Lisbon; the Kyoto protocols and the World Trade Organization [WTO] accords (pp. 14–15).

1.3.2. Consequences

Mair (2009) makes five propositions regarding the consequences of the growing gap between responsiveness and responsibility.

- 1) The absence of partisan mobilization and mobilisation capacity: According to Mair (2009), facing extremely difficult and time consuming task of governing, ruling parties suffer from the absence of partisan mobilization (p. 16). He depicts a context in which if a ruling party is busy with governing, then it is busy as a government rather than as a party; and if a party is busy as a party, then either another actor is in charge of governing or this party is governing badly (p. 16). Leaving aside the time limitations, Mair (2009) states that parties suffer from insufficient number of members to assist mobilisation of public opinion and do not have sufficient control over the means of political communication (p. 15).
- 2) De-politicisation of political parties: Busy with governing, the absence of partisan mobilization and mobilisation capacity make parties depoliticized and once they make their policy-making depoliticized, they are compelled to justify their choices as these choices are not anymore self-evident for their electorate (Mair, 2009, p. 16). In other words, more parties depoliticize, parties have more difficulties to justify their choices “as a party” (Mair, 2009, p. 16). Moreover, once a party becomes a ruling party, since it transfers its sources from “the party on the ground and in the central office” to “the party in public office”, the agenda of the party in public office becomes the agenda of the party as a whole (Mair, 2009, p. 16).
- 3) Euroscepticism: Mair (2009) states that once an opposition party opposes a ruling party which is “busy” mostly with the politics of “Europe” and its bureaucracy, that opposition party takes a Eurosceptic stance and mobilizing against government is associated with mobilizing against Europe (p. 16). Consequently, he concludes that Euroscepticism and polity-scepticism are linked (Mair, 2009, p. 16).
- 4) Growing bifurcation in European party systems: populists and others: Mair (2009) points out that the gap between responsiveness and responsibility causes “growing bifurcation in

European party systems between parties which claim to represent but don't govern and those which govern but no longer represent" (p. 17). Referring to the so-called mainstream parties, Mair (2009) states that "representation or expression, or the provision of voice to the people" becomes the property of a second of group of opposition parties which are characterized by "a strong populist rhetoric" (p. 17). Rarely governing and downplaying office-seeking goals, once they become ruling parties they face the challenges of representation as "a voice of the people" due to the constraints derives from "governing" and "compromising with coalition partners" (Mair, 2009, p. 17).

5) The disaffection and malaise of democracy: Mair (2009)'s final argument is that "the growing gap between responsiveness and responsibility" causes "disaffection and malaise that now suffuses democracy" (p. 17). In other words, governments and ruling parties solve problems from an increasing distance from public opinion (p. 17).

In the light of the research question and the applied methodology, the expectation is that before government participation, the cases under investigation show Eurosceptic characteristics (Consequence 3) and take populist stance (Consequence 4). Once they become ruling parties, they are constrained by the EU (Cause 3) and by the constraints of their domestic context as well as the previous commitments made by previous governments (Cause 4) and act responsible (Consequence 1 & Consequence 2).

In sum, with the claim of representation and having Eurosceptic and populist tendencies as opposition parties, once parties reach the office, they face internal and external constraints; and this makes them responsible. In this respect, this thesis hypothesises that being responsible in the course of the time, ruling parties decrease their scepticism towards the EU. Yet, the word 'scepticism' requires a further analysis.

1.4. Literature review on Euroscepticism

This PhD thesis attempts to enlighten various aspects of *the political opposition* to European integration. Regardless the quality and quantity of this political opposition, this work will hereby call this political opposition as Euroscepticism as if a political party is sceptical towards a continental-scale development (or a *project*), then opposition as a discourse and/or practice should naturally be expected from that party. In other words, for political parties,

scepticism should equally be understood as opposition. This decision will also be explained in this chapter.

This chapter undergounds the existing academic research as it concerns i) the debate on the relevance and importance Euroscepticism for party research; ii) Euroscepticism's various definitions; and iii) how this phenomenon is classified in the academic literature. Following a critique of the Euroscepticism literature, the preferred theoretical framework grounding this research will be discussed.

1.4.1. Importance

After the Maastricht Treaty, according to Usherwood and Startin (2013), Euroscepticism should be understood as “as an increasingly embedded and persistent phenomenon within the integration process” (p. 12). It is evident that the so-called phenomenon Euroscepticism (or the actors and developments which are associated with this term) has been shaping European political and social life for a long time. In the last two decades, Euroscepticism has never been exclusive to a single European country, and its definitions and causes vary across place, time, and international developments in the literature. Euroscepticism is a controversial phenomenon in the academic literature as, for example, Bertoncini and Koenig (2014) argue that the term Euroscepticism has been used wrongly by the media and even by some academic works as a catch-all term (p. 4). Moreover, the findings of this thesis will also prove that this diversity of interpretation (or confusion) can also be observed among political elite. Whereas the definition of Euroscepticism is highly contested and its classifications vary in the academic literature (as discussed in the next sections of this chapter), it is usually difficult to explain the causes of Euroscepticism through a single factor even in an individual country. Moreover, deeming who or what (e.g., political elite, public opinion, interest groups) can be called Eurosceptic is often highly challenging. Euroscepticism is a broad phenomenon as it can be found on both the right wing and the left-wing: “(...) like populism, it is compatible with any ideological position, from the extreme left to the extreme right” (Leconte, 2010, p. 4).

Since the 1950s, European integration has never been trouble-free. The nature of the integration was a disputed matter among European politicians and also academics. However, the recent developments (i.e., the Eurozone and migration crisis; Brexit; the rise of extremist of movements etc.) have inevitably increased concerns about the future of the EU. This research

suggests that it is a new era for Euroscepticism research since the current context is characterised by the rise of far-right parties and populist movements; the emergence of extremist political groups, the recent Brexit referendum, ongoing economic problems in the Eurozone, increasing migration, and terrorism all point to differences from earlier contexts. When it comes to public perception of the EU, the two referendums on the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands in 2005, the two referendums on the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon in Ireland in 2008 and 2009, and the so-called Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2016 are just a few examples of how public opinion could shape the future of the EU. One would even claim that the recent Brexit referendum is the most concrete manifestation of Euroscepticism in an EU member country.

Moreover, the rise of public Euroscepticism in formerly pro-European southern Europe can also be seen as another regional manifestation of it. Accordingly, the crisis led to a significant change of public opinion towards European integration as formerly “associated with prosperity and democracy”, the EU has started to be associated with “austerity and diminished sovereignty” (Verney, 2017, p. 183). For instance, in their work Freire et al. (2014) conclude that Greece and Portugal had experienced “a strong growth in Euroscepticism at the voter level” (p. 494) after the outbreak of the crisis. Despite the Greek public opinion did not support a withdrawal from the EU, as one of the most pro-European countries formerly, “sleeping giant of Euroscepticism” in Greece woke up during the turbulent times of the crisis and the salience of European integration as a political contestation issue considerably increased (Verney, 2015, p. 292). Yet, during the years of crisis, Clements et al. (2014) demonstrate a paradoxical phenomenon as despite the support of the Greek public opinion for the EU declined, its support for the Euro increased (p. 247).

The Euroscepticism of southern European countries; however, differ from each other after a decade: Teperoglou and Belchior (2020) assert that since the economic crisis “left a stronger mark on Greece and Italy”, a more structural attitudes of Euroscepticism are observed while the positive image of the EU before the crisis returned in Portugal and Spain (p. 21). They also underline an interesting finding that while leftist ideologies play a significant explanatory role in Southern European Euroscepticism in Greece, Portugal and Spain, this is not the case in Italy (Teperoglou & Belchior, 2020, p. 21). Furthermore, Verney (2017) demonstrates that “relatively untouched by the crisis” Malta is the only exception in Southern Europe as its public opinion has become more pro-European (p. 183).

Despite the growing relevance of Euroscepticism in the European landscape, the question of whether Euroscepticism is the key determinant of party’s electoral achievements in

every country remains to be uncertain. In this respect, for instance, Carrieri (2019) reaches a significant finding in the case of Italy. Accordingly, European integration is indeed politicized by the Italian parties with the aim of electoral gains even though these “strategic efforts” do not match with the electoral preferences as the Italian electorate continues to align itself with “the left-right dimension” rather than EU-related issues (Carrieri, 2019, p. 67).

Finally, when it comes to Iceland as the control case of this research, before the economic crisis, there was a gap between the political elite and electorate of Iceland regarding the EU membership question as the former was dominantly sceptical towards the European project while more than half of the latter wanted to begin discussing potential EU membership (Thorhallsson, 2002, p. 349). This situation has changed after the outbreak of the crisis, mainly after 2009, as opinion polls started to indicate a decline for the support for EU membership among Icelandic voters (Thorhallsson & Rebhan, 2011, p. 59; Bailes & Thorhallsson, 2013, p. 4). The low support for EU membership has been persistent in the recent years as well (Hilmarsson, 2018, p. 16).

1.4.2. What is Euroscepticism?

Scholars of European integration did not pay attention to “opposition or hostility to the European project” in the first decades of the integration (Leconte, 2015, p. 251). The phenomenon of Euroscepticism became popular in academia at the beginning of the 1990s and has since spawned a wide body of literature. Yet, it is worth noting that Euroscepticism originated in journalistic discourse instead of political science (Sczerbiak & Taggart, 2003, p. 6). The term Euroscepticism did not exist during the first years of European integration, and instead, actors who were opposing to integration used to be called as “nationalists”, “anti-marketeers”, “communists”, “Gaullists” and so on (Leconte, 2010, p. 3). The first usage of the term can be traced in the mid-1980s. Harmsen and Spiering (2004) note that although the Oxford English Dictionary refers to an article published by The Times in June 1986 as the earliest usage of the term, Spiering (2004) suggests another article published by the Times in November 1985 in which the word Euroscepticism was “interchangeably” used with “anti-marketeer” (p. 15-16). Thus, it is worth mentioning that the term Euroscepticism was born in Britain where it was used during the British public debate on the European Community (EC) in the mid-1980s and became popular especially after Margaret Thatcher’s “Bruges speech” in

1988 (Leconte, 2010, p. 3). Spiering (2004) even calls Britain as “the home of the term Euroscepticism” (p. 127).

The term Euroscepticism contains three different components: “Euro”, “Sceptic” and “Ism” (Sørensen, 2008). One would ask the following questions: First, what does Euro refer to? Europe or the EU? Or something else? For instance, Spiering (2004) suggests that “there is clear consensus that the ‘Euro’ in Euroscepticism refers to the EU and its precursors, while ‘sceptic means’ ‘doubtful’” (p. 128). Yet, the various typologies which will be introduced in the following sections of this chapter are explicitly challenging the view that Euro in Euroscepticism only refers to the EU. Second, what is sceptic in Euroscepticism? Leconte (2010) suggests that if one recognises the literal meaning of scepticism as a philosophical school or method which demands critical examination against any normative idea or belief, the term Euroscepticism does not necessarily refer to antagonism towards European integration (p. 5). Nevertheless, the current usage of the term differs from this assumption. Hooghe and Marks (2007) state that the meaning of the term scepticism has been diffused from its original root (p. 119). Third, can Euroscepticism be considered as an ideology because of the ism ending? (Sørensen, 2008, p. 5). The dominant view in the literature on populism is built on Mudde (2004)’s famous definition of populism as a “thin-centred ideology”. Even though sometimes populism and Euroscepticism go hand in hand in the works of academic and journalistic accounts, Leconte (2015) states that Euroscepticism is not an ideology as populism; however, “it can be reconceptualized as a discourse” (p. 257). Flood (2002) notes that the suffix “-ism” is often used as a component of ideology labels and it “lends itself to being incorporated into the domain of political belief systems.” (p. 3). Considering all above, even the separate components of the term make the meaning of the phenomenon more controversial.

Some scholars put forward brief definitions of Euroscepticism. For instance, according to Valleste (2013), the meaning of Euroscepticism in everyday language may seem evident: “Eurosceptics are those who criticize European Union (EU) integration” (p. 17). Archer (2000) also puts forward a basic definition: “... the term refers to those who have strong reservations about the process - and end point - of European integration as associated with the EC/EU” (p. 88). Hooghe and Marks (2007) offer a different definition: “Euroscepticism refers to scepticism about Europe or European integration (p. 120).” Yet, even these short statements require more sophisticated definitions. For example, Sørensen (2008) defines Euroscepticism in a broad manner: “a sentiment of disapproval-reaching a certain degree and durability-directed towards the EU in its entirety or towards particular policy areas or developments” (p. 6). Bertoncini and Koenig (2014) point out that “Euroscepticism represents an over-inclusive category and calls

for a more precise distinction between more moderate Euroscepticism and Europhobia” (p. 1). They claim that Europhobes which are mostly right-wing actors (Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014, p. 15) support withdrawal from the EU or the core policy areas of the EU whereas Eurosceptics are in favour of reforming the EU while expressing their discontent (Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014, p. 7).

1.4.3. Various typologies

Various typologies of Euroscepticism have been proposed by scholars in the last couple of years and the literature on Euroscepticism has been divided into several sub-branches dealing with party-based Euroscepticism or political elite; public Euroscepticism or electorate/public opinion; media, civil society and so on. Archer (2000) states that to answer the question of Euroscepticism in the Nordic countries, a proper definition of Euroscepticism is required (p. 88). Moreover, he asks which aspects of European integration process make people sceptical and offers a conceptualisation for Euroscepticism based on two main factors: “the area of attention” (process, policy, aim) and “the level of reaction” (popular, group, elite) (Archer, 2000, p. 88). In their work on the Euro Discourse Vaclav Klaus, Hloušek & Kaniok (2014) also emphasize the importance of studies dealing with individual politicians and they note that less attention has been given them in Euroscepticism research (pp. 35–36).

Ontological, epistemological and methodological concerns, research subjects, the selection of methods of data collection and analysis could be the reasons behind such divisions into sub-fields. Nevertheless, some scholars urge other scholars to avoid such separations. For instance, Skinner (2013) is not in favour of a separation between the study of party-based and mass Euroscepticism and so supports a research approach “on both levels” (p. 123). Vasilopoulou (2013) also calls researchers to take a holistic approach that would “examine the phenomenon beyond the study of party politics and public opinion” and “treat Euroscepticism as an ‘independent’ as well as a ‘dependent’ variable” (p. 153). Skinner (2013) calls this division in the literature as an “artificial separation between the study of party-based and mass Euroscepticism” (p. 123). Usherwood and Startin (2013) assert that since the Maastricht Treaty, Euroscepticism is not only embedded at political parties or public opinion but also “non-party groups, within government and within the media” (p. 4). This thesis supports the view that all political and social units in a single country or in group of countries should be investigated to capture the causes and impact of Euroscepticism. However, rather than calling the separation

between the study of party-based and mass Euroscepticism (or civil society or media) “artificial”, it argues that specific focus on different political and social units through specific and distinctive methodologies is also useful in the way that such special attention is also promising to reveal more insights about political and social units.

As stated, there is a large body of literature on the conceptualisation of Euroscepticism. For party-based Euroscepticism, Taggart and Szczerbiak’s (2001) famous differentiation between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ Euroscepticism is perhaps the most known and widely used conceptual framework. Soft Euroscepticism refers to “qualified opposition to European integration” and can also be sub-divided into two as sub “policy” or “national interest” Euroscepticism, whereas Hard Euroscepticism refers to “principled” rejection of European integration and “opposition to their country joining or remaining members of the EU” (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10).

Both “policy” or “national interest” Euroscepticism are “contingent” since they do not imply an opposition to European integration on principled basis like hard Euroscepticism, yet they also imply changes to a policy area or a shift in national interest (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10). Given this, first, policy Euroscepticism refers i) to opposition to instruments for the deepening of European political and economic integration significantly such as EMU; or ii) to opposition to an existing policy (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10). Nevertheless, policy Euroscepticism is compatible with showing broad support for the integration (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10). For instance, a policy Eurosceptic could be pro-EU, however, at the same time, be against the conditions of a treaty or the adaptation of the euro (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10). Policy Euroscepticism is a time and country-specific phenomenon since it could depend on the level of integration process that a country has already reached and the issues in question at any time; that is, the expression of Euroscepticism could differ in every single country (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10). Second, “national-interest” Euroscepticism refers to the rhetoric of protecting or standing up for a national interest during the debates on the EU (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10). As policy Euroscepticism, “national-interest” Euroscepticism is also compatible with showing broad support for European integration (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10). Last but not least, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) admit that Policy and National-interest Euroscepticism can frequently overlap as they are not mutually exclusive (p. 11). Taggart and Szczerbiak’s classification has received various reactions and alternative typologies have been put forward in the literature. Kopecky and Mudde (2002) is perhaps the most famous one which criticizes the soft/hard division by stating that the distinction is unclear and soft Euroscepticism is defined in a broad way (p. 300). Kopecky and

Mudde (2002)'s two-dimensional conceptualization of party positions distinguishes between specific support (i.e., support for the ideas grounding European integration) and diffuse support (i.e., support for the EU) for European integration (p. 297). Table 1 below shows the four-segment typology of Kopecky and Mudde (2002) on the basis of the two-dimensional conceptualisation:

Support for the EU	Support for European integration	
	Europhile	Europhobe
EU-optimist	Euroenthusiasts	Europragmatists
EU-pessimist	Eurosceptics	Eurorejects

Table 1: The four-segment typology Kopecky and Mudde (2002)

According to the first dimension of their conceptualisation, “the Europhiles” are separated from “the Europhobes” based on the “support for the ideas of European integration” which is referring to “institutionalized cooperation on the basis of pooled sovereignty (the political element) and an integrated liberal market economy (the economic element)” (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002, pp. 300–301). However, Kopecky and Mudde also claim that “the Europhiles” can be identified not only those who are advocating a supranational state but also those who see European integration only in economic terms (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002, p. 301). In this respect, they assert that for example, both one of the founding fathers, Jean Monnet and the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher can be considered as Europhiles even though whereas the former supported European integration for both political and economic motives, the latter “saw European integration primarily in economic terms” (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002, p. 301). Consisted of nationalists, socialists or isolationists, “the Europhobes”, on the other hand, are against the general ideas of the EU (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002, p. 301). The second dimension of this conceptualisation is based on the separation between “the EU-optimists” and “the EU-pessimists”. The former refers to those who are satisfied with the current shape or/and the future of the EU whereas the latter refers to those who do not approve the current form of the EU and pessimist about its future (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002, p. 302). Kopecky and Mudde note that

criticism of a certain EU policy does not necessarily qualify a party “EU-pessimist”, and moreover, not all “EU-pessimists” oppose to EU membership as some of them see the current form of the EU far from the founding ideals of European integration and hope to change it in the same direction of those ideals (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002, p. 302). These two dimensions result with the four categories of party positions which are “Euroenthusiasts”, “Europagmatists”, “Eurosceptics”, and “Eurorejects”: “Euroenthusiasts” refers to parties supporting the general ideas of European integration that include “Europhile” and “EU-optimist” positions. “Eurosceptics” refers to the parties supporting these ideas but are pessimistic about the EU’s current and/or future application to those ideas. This group includes “Europhile” and “EU-pessimist” positions. “Eurorejects” refers to parties supporting neither those ideas nor the process of integration. This group include “Europhobe” and “EU-pessimist” positions. Finally, “Europagmatists” refers to parties that include “Europhobe” and “EU-optimist” positions. “Europagmatists” do not support the ideas of European integration and they do not necessarily oppose them; but they support the EU (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002, pp. 302–303).

Vasilopoulou (2009) also offers a three-dimensional conceptualisation of European integration in her work on the European extreme right in which she classifies party positions as a three-fold dimension: “positions on first the principle, second the practice, and third the future of EU cooperation”. Consequently, she identifies three types of Euroscepticism: rejecting (refers to parties against all three dimensions); conditional (refers to parties against the practice of EU cooperation and its future, but not against the principle of EU cooperation); and compromising (refers to parties against further integration but supporting both the practice and principle of EU cooperation) Euroscepticism (p. 3). Typologies having more than four categories are also suggested in the literature. For example, Flood (2002) puts forward a more detailed and comprehensive typology dividing positions into six, namely rejectionist, revisionist, minimalist, gradualist, reformist and maximalist.

Even though this thesis recognises the usefulness of the typologies in the literature (i.e., Kopecky & Mudde [2002]; Vasilopoulou [2009] or Flood [2002]), it supports the two criticism of Szczerbiak and Taggart (2003). First, they argue that the term Euroscepticism involves both principled and contingent opposition to European integration whereas Kopecky and Mudde (2002) draw a line between Euroreject and Eurosceptic parties and use the former once principle opposition is observed (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2003, pp. 8–9). They rightly state that given Kopecky and Mudde (2002)’s typology, for example, one cannot categorise the UK Independence Party as a Eurosceptic party (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2003, p. 9). Second, referring

to both Kopecky and Mudde (2002) and Flood (2002), Szczerbiak and Taggart (2003) argue the following: “that the more complex and fine-grain the typology, the more difficult it is to operationalise and categorise the parties” (p. 9).

The present thesis is concerned with the impact of government participation on a small number of cases and gives a special attention to their economy policy positions. Consequently, rather than the aforementioned “complex and fine-grain typologies”, soft/hard distinction and especially the sub-category of policy Euroscepticism is considered useful for this research. Yet, the theoretical framework of this research deals with the shift of parties from being responsive to responsible, and Mair (2009)’s responsiveness - responsible dualism calls and requires another conceptualisation proposed by Mair (2007): policy-scepticism/polity-scepticism which will be applied to the research instead of Taggart and Szczerbiak’s (2001) soft/hard differentiation and this choice is justified in the next section.

1.5. Policy vs. polity Scepticism

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Euroscepticism is a phenomenon of political opposition. And indeed, the literature on *opposition* will also theoretically ground this doctoral research. Mair (2007) refers the three different modes of opposition proposed by Otto Kirchheimer (1957): “classical opposition” (actors outside the government oppose the policies of the government, but they also recognize the legitimacy of the government); “opposition of principle” (actors outside the government oppose not only the policies of the government, but also its legitimacy; that is, “the whole system of governance”); and finally “the elimination of opposition” (i.e., the absence of political actors sharing different views and competing in each other when the polity has a government by cartel) (p. 5). Moreover, Mair (2007) relates Kirchheimer (1957)’s typology to the categories of Dahl (1966) and suggests that classical opposition could be against to “the policies of the government”; opposition of principle could be against to the “polity”; and the elimination of opposition could take place when opposition is only against the “the personnel of government” (p. 5). What makes Mair (2007)’s work more significant for the current research is the following view: “(...) when classical opposition is limited or constrained, it then becomes more likely that critics will mobilize around an opposition of principle. In other words, if political actors lack the opportunity to develop classical opposition, then they either submit entirely, leading to the elimination of opposition, or they revolt” (p. 6). The current research also aims to understand, first, whether the opposition

of political parties under investigation is mobilised around an opposition of principle, and second, if it does, whether it arose from the absence of the classical opposition in the shape of revolt.

At this point, referring Dahl (1966), Mair (2007) argues that as a democratic institution, the EU suffers from the absence of one of the three milestones which marked the development of democratic institutions: despite citizens participate the decision-making by voting and they have the right to be represented in the EU institutions, “the right to organize opposition within the system” is deficient (pp. 6–7): “Once we cannot organize opposition *in* the EU, we are then almost forced to organize opposition *to* the EU (p. 7)”. Resting upon Dahl (1966), Kirchheimer (1957) and Schapiro (1965), Mair (2007) states that the absence of opposition in a polity can bring about either i) “the elimination of opposition, and to more or less total submission”; or ii) “to the mobilization of an opposition of principle against the polity – to anti-European opposition and to Euroscepticism” (p. 15). The following argument of Mair (2007) is one of the reasons why his conceptualisation matters for this Euroscepticism research. He claims that since separating “what is European” and “what is domestic” becomes difficult and these two becomes more inter-related, “dissatisfaction with Europe” eventually causes a more generalized “polity-scepticism” (p. 16). He explains this with the following words:

When we talk about Euroscepticism, and about opposition to Europe, we are also sometimes talking about scepticism and opposition towards our own national institutions and modes of governance. This is scepticism about how we are governed, and it is, in my view, a scepticism that is at least partially fostered by the increasingly limited scope for opposition *within* the system – whether that system be European or national, or both at the same time. (p. 16)

This actually forces the current research to consider also the perceptions of parties under investigation on their domestic contexts.

In his ground-breaking work, Mair (2007) does not use the term polity Euroscepticism (but “polity-scepticism”), and even use the terms “anti-European opposition” and “Euroscepticism” synonymously. However, Verney (2017) citing Mair (2007) uses the terms polity Euroscepticism and policy Euroscepticism. This research argues that Verney (2017)’s conceptualisation grasps the reality much better because given the existing literature, reducing Euroscepticism to anti-European opposition (and so polity-scepticism) could be misleading as

the term Euroscepticism can be used to address both policy-scepticism towards the EU (i.e., policy Euroscepticism) and anti-European opposition (i.e., polity Euroscepticism).

Consequently, this research prefers to use policy Euroscepticism and polity Euroscepticism typology. Verney (2017) in the same way with Mair (2007), defines polity Euroscepticism as “a loss of support for the EU as a system and by extension, for the continuation of membership” and considers policy Euroscepticism “as part of the process of normal democratic politics” in which disagreements with particular EU policies take place (p. 169).

Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001)’s policy Euroscepticism entirely overlaps with Verney (2017)’s policy Euroscepticism; however, a significant difference lies between hard Euroscepticism and polity Euroscepticism: whereas hard Euroscepticism refers principled rejection of European integration; involving this principled rejection, polity Euroscepticism also implies “scepticism and opposition towards the national institutions and modes of governance” (Mair, 2007, p. 16), alongside European-level scepticism.

Consequently, policy and polity Euroscepticism can be differentiated through the following criteria: on the one hand, if the Euroscepticism of a party arises from “disagreeing with particular EU policies”, but supporting the EU in general (Verney, 2017, p. 169), this can be defined as policy Euroscepticism. On the other hand, polity Euroscepticism can be identified when a party opposes to the EU project as a whole (Mair, 2007, p. 3); or wishes to return to the familiar confines of the nation-state (Mair, 2007, p. 3); or opposes the polity as a whole which “has failed to integrate opposition within government, and to provide it with an outlet” (Schapiro 1965 cited in Mair, 2007, p. 6). In other words, such an opposition can arise due to the absence/deficiency of a platform to oppose either at national or European level; or both. Therefore, it can take place at either or both national and European level and sometimes it may be vague in the sense of whether it is framed at European or domestic level. Then, it can be considered such an opposition is oriented to the polity (Also see Chapter 1.7. and Table 2).

Given the presence of an Icelandic political party in this research, the next section will discuss the debate on Euroscepticism in non-EU countries.

1.6. Euroscepticism in non-EU countries

A researcher conducting research on Euroscepticism should take the following distinction into account: i) Euroscepticism in EU member countries; ii) Euroscepticism in non-

EU countries which are already a part of the EEA (the European Economic Area) and Schengen areas; iii) Euroscepticism in candidate countries; iv) Euroscepticism in non-EU countries which do not have a membership prospect. Drawing a line between EU member and candidate countries, Gulmez (2014) introduces the concept of “EU-scepticism” which implies the opposition to EU membership conditionality, and not necessarily opposition to Europe (p. 167). He argues that “EU-scepticism” differs from Euroscepticism and Euroscepticism categories which were primarily created for examining EU member countries (Gulmez, 2014, p. 168). This research disagrees with this view especially in the case of EEA and Schengen member non-EU countries which are already engaged in European integration to some extent; in some policy areas even more than some EU member countries. Besides, there is already existing research on non-EU countries applying the typologies of Euroscepticism already used for EU member countries such as Skinner (2013).

Referring to their previous works, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2003) admit the weakness of utilising “attitudes towards EU membership” as the key definitional variable dividing different party positions towards Europe (p. 7). Instead, they admit the strength of the key variables used by Kopecky & Mudde (2002) which are first, “underlying support for or opposition to the European integration project as embodied in the EU (rather than a party’s support for or opposition to their country’s membership at any given time)” and, second, “attitudes towards further actual or planned extensions of EU competencies” (p. 7). On the other hand, Gulmez (2014) also criticizes Kopecky and Mudde’s typology. For instance, he finds the application of the Kopecky & Mudde’s typology to EU candidate countries impracticable, and refers Batory (2008), which criticizes Kopecky & Mudde (2002)’s Euroscepticism category combining EU-pessimist and Europhile positions and argues that this category “finds no obvious policy outlet in countries outside the EU” (p. 267). Gulmez (2014) asks: “If you are pessimistic about the EU’s current or future projection, why would you wish to join the EU in the first place?” (pp. 168–169). The question can be answered through different ways assuming different scenarios. Yet, at least, one hypothetical answer could be given to this question: That could be, for example, a context in which a Europhile political party would not see any other better alternatives or prescriptions to solve its own problems in short or/and long run but joining the EU despite all pessimistic projections. Similar hypothetical scenarios can be enhanced.

This research assumes that the polity/policy Euroscepticism conceptualisation already captures the significant traits of the party opposition against the EU in non-EU countries. For instance, a party supporting the country’s EU membership application but standing highly critical towards a policy area of the EU can be considered as a policy Eurosceptic party. In the

same vein, if a party is against European integration as a whole and/or wants to stay within the confines of the nation-state (due to ideological motivations or just to defend national interests), this party can be considered as a polity Eurosceptic party. It is true that as suggested by Mair (2009) in EU member countries opposition to European integration can be born as a reaction to responsible governments constrained by the EU's itself, and such a development would not be the case in a non-EU country. However, national interests and ideological motivation which could also include opposition to the EU's economy policies and democratic deficit question, can easily stimulate a polity Eurosceptic stance of a political party in a non-EU state. Moreover, once a country like Iceland, which is partially integrated to the European project, is at stake, all traits of polity Euroscepticism (including opposition to a responsible government) might even exist in theory. Moreover, the rise of responsible governments' numbers across the EU could also be instrumentalised by a non-EU political party as a justification to oppose European integration. In this respect, this research argues that the causes of a polity Eurosceptic opposition (which is linked by Mair [2009] to the opposition also to responsible governments) can be expanded to further motives in non-EU countries such as national interests and ideological motivation which could include criticism towards the EU's economy and/or democracy.

1.7. Beyond policy and polity scepticism

Can a political actor or party be identified as both pro-European and Eurosceptic at the same time as Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) suggest? Whereas Mair (2007)'s polity-scepticism specifically refers Euroscepticism, policy-scepticism does not necessarily refer Euroscepticism (unlike Verney [2017]) and therefore it is compatible with the term pro-European. This research agrees with Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) and suggests that a party can be both Eurosceptic and pro-European at the same time. However, how should a Eurosceptic-pro-European party and a non-sceptic pro-European party be differentiated then?

Non-sceptic pro-European actors or parties which are not sceptical towards the EU policies can be identified through the following criteria. Accordingly, parties or actors which

- prioritize the positive aspects of the EU in their election campaigns and party manifestos/programmes over the criticism towards European integration,

- utilise pro-European discourse, arguments and symbols as a fundamental competition tool by differentiating themselves from other Eurosceptic forces,

can be labelled as non-sceptic pro-European as long as they unconditionally support the current shape of European integration.

As noted in Chapter 1.5., if a party disagrees with an EU policy while supporting the continuation its own country's membership within the EU or supporting a potential EU membership, this party can be associated with policy Euroscepticism. This research suggests that policy Euroscepticism is a common category between Euroscepticism and pro-Europeanism regardless of a party's self-identification itself with pro-Europeanism. In other words, as long as a Eurosceptic party is not against the European integration, or the continuation of EU membership, or a potential membership, that party can be considered pro-European even if it criticizes the EU and even if it does not self-identify itself as pro-European. This is the minimal definition of pro-Europeanism.

To sum, Eurosceptic pro-European actors or parties (i.e., policy Euroscepticism) which are sceptical towards the EU policies can be identified through the following criteria. Accordingly, parties or actors which

- support the continuation of their countries' EU membership but criticize the EU's current traits (regardless the degree of their criticism)

can be labelled as policy Eurosceptic as long as they support their countries' EU membership.

Even though this approach partially confirms Kopecky and Mudde (2002)'s typology, this research does not apply their typology mostly due to the shared criticism with Szczerbiak and Taggart (2003). Instead, a new typology which is built upon Mair (2007) and Verney (2017), will be applied through the logic explained in Figure 1. Moreover, Table 2 indicates the traits of polity Euroscepticism, policy Euroscepticism and non-Sceptic Pro-Europeanism.

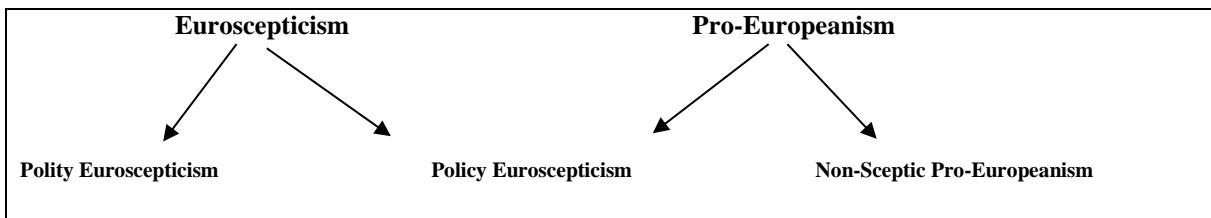


Figure 1: A new typology of Euroscepticism.

Source: Author's own elaboration

Polity Euroscepticism <i>Only Eurosceptic by definition</i>	Policy Euroscepticism <i>Both Eurosceptic and pro-European by definition</i>	Non-Sceptic Pro-Europeanism <i>Only pro-European by definition</i>
Opposition to European integration as a whole and support to return to the familiar confines of the nation-state (Mair, 2007, p. 3)	Disagreement with an EU policy while supporting the EU in general (Verney, 2017, p. 169). In other words, criticism towards the EU while supporting the continuation of a country's membership within the EU or supporting a potential EU membership	Unconditional support to the current shape of European integration
Opposition towards either or both national and European institutions (i.e., opposition towards the polity). This may also derive from the absence/deficiency of a platform to oppose either at national or European level	Either self-identification or non-self-identification with pro-Europeanism	Prioritization of the EU's positive aspects in the election campaigns and party manifestos/programmes over the criticism towards European integration Utilisation of pro-European discourse, arguments and symbols as a fundamental competition tool by differentiating itself from other Eurosceptic forces

Table 2: Polity Euroscepticism, Policy Euroscepticism and Non-Sceptic Pro-Europeanism

Sources: Author's own elaboration; Mair, 2007; Verney, 2017

Chapter 2: The argument

This chapter has been divided into two main sections. In the light of Mair (2007 and 2009), which have been discussed in detail in Chapter 1, the chapter will first briefly inform about the theoretical assumptions of the thesis (Chapter 2.1.). In this section, the main research question as well as four hypotheses and research variables will be discussed. Moreover, a few academic works written on the impact of government participation on Euroscepticism will be reviewed. Subsequently, Chapter 2.2. will provide empirical evidence for each party case from the existing literature in relation to the main research question.

2.1. Variables & research question

While the discussion on the Euroscepticism literature was presented by Chapter 1, this section will look into the relatively limited literature on the impact of government participation on Euroscepticism. This work is an opposition research which mainly concerns the Euroscepticism phenomenon as an *opposition* to European integration and investigates its existence within the transformation processes of opposition parties into ruling parties. Consequently, government-opposition dynamics and the phenomenon of Euroscepticism go hand in hand throughout the analysis process. Based on the assumption that the cases under investigation frame their criticism through economic lenses, taking a comparative approach and selecting the three ruling party cases which has come into office for the first time after the outbreak of the economic crisis, this research considers

- the regular dynamics of government participation (and the domestic constraints) and the constraints imposed by the EU as independent variables² and;
- the economic policy position of the parties after the outbreak of the economic crisis as dependent variable.

Taggart and Szczerbiak (2013) constitutes a special place for the undertaken research. First, by the year 2013, challenging the status of Euroscepticism as a phenomenon at the

² The duration of government participation and the degree of involvement into coalitions are also considered significant.

peripheries of party systems (Taggart 1998), their work is an empirical summary of the relationship between government participation and Euroscepticism phenomenon; the latter, as the authors admit, “has come in from the cold” (p. 34). Second, it points out a significant gap in the literature on Euroscepticism and government participation with an exception, namely Sitter (2001) which considers Euroscepticism as a government-opposition dynamic (p. 22); (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2013, p. 18). Sitter (2001), moreover, suggests that “efforts to gain participation in government encourages moderation of left-wing party-based Euroscepticism” (p. 35).

Furthermore, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2017) also underline the need for further research on the question of “what impact does government participation have on Eurosceptic parties themselves, particularly the positions that they take on European issues?” (p. 17). Taggart and Szczerbiak (2013)’s work reaches the conclusion that government participation has a “moderating effect” on parties’ Euroscepticism whereas “some discernible impact on policy” is observed as a result of Eurosceptic party participation in government (p. 33). Their work also urges caution about the differences between “minor” and “major” parties as well as “Eurosceptic rhetoric” and “the reality of European policy” (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2013, p. 33). Leconte (2010) also mentions a common assumption that “(...) government participation is barely compatible with anti-EU positions or even strong Euroscepticism” (pp. 106–107). Whereas the ruling parties are constrained by “the imperatives of Euro-compatibility”, this is not the case for opposition which can express their Eurosceptic views freely (Leconte, 2010, p. 107). And moreover, both participating in coalition governments with pro-European parties and/or participating EU decision-making process with EU and member state officials on daily base (of which Leconte calls “socialising effect”) could decrease the Euroscepticism of party members (Leconte, 2010, p. 107).

This work utilizes both academic literature and quantitative indicators provided by the Manifesto Project and Chapel Hill Survey in order to present the early expectations of the research in terms of the impact of government participation on Euroscepticism of the selected three cases. Subsequently, it tests these expectations through the collected interview data. In this respect, the main research question will be as the following:

What is the impact of government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU on the economic policy positions of Southern European ruling parties after the outbreak of the economic crisis?

The main research question particularly investigates post-2008 as the impact of the global financial crisis/Eurozone crisis in 2008/2009 is considered as a turning point. In relation to the main question, the investigation is based on four inquiries of which are transformed into four hypotheses. To start with, the first inquiry is about if Southern European ruling parties used to be against the EU polity prior to their coming into office as Mair (2007) suggests this may be the case among opposition parties. In the light of the literature, the initial expectation is that Southern European ruling parties were policy Eurosceptic rather than polity Eurosceptic even before their government participation.

Hypothesis 1: Even though the investigated Southern European parties show polity Eurosceptic characteristics before government participation, their Euroscepticism is not against the EU *polity* but the EU *policies*.

The second inquiry is about if these parties become more responsible (and as a result or indirectly ideologically moderated) once they come into office as Mair (2009) suggests. This transformation, according to Mair (2009) is caused by constraining factors which can be divided into two as domestic and external factors. Consequently, the following second hypothesis is made:

Hypothesis 2: The regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of their domestic context and the constraints imposed by the EU make the investigated parties responsible once they become ruling parties.

The third inquiry is the core component of the main research question as it questions whether investigated parties decrease their Euroscepticism once they come into office:

Hypothesis 3: Being responsible, the investigated parties decrease their Euroscepticism and take a more moderate position towards the EU after government experience.

Finally, the fourth inquiry focuses on the role of the investigated cases' formed coalitions and asks if having junior or major coalition partners, and the time factor played a role in changing Euroscepticism of the parties during their ruling years:

Hypothesis 4: Government participation and EU constraints affect these parties' Euroscepticism in accordance with the duration of their government participation and the degree of involvement (i.e., their coalition partners).

2.2. Empirical evidence for party cases

This section will provide empirical evidence from both the academic literature and quantitative indicators provided by the Chapel Hill Survey and the Manifesto Project concerning the three cases under investigation in relation to the main hypotheses of this research. Each section (i.e., Chapter 2.2.1., Chapter 2.2.2., Chapter 2.2.3.) is assigned to a party case and assesses the parties' opposition and ruling years in two separate sub-sections. To do so, each section will, first, give place to the arguments of the academic literature and then, the findings from the Chapel Hill Survey and the Manifesto Project will be accompanying these arguments. Using the expert survey method, the Chapel Hill Survey estimates "party positioning on European integration, ideology and policy issues for national parties" ("Ches Data-Mission", *the Chapel Hill Expert Survey Official Website*, n.d.). This research utilized Chapel Hill Survey data in order to gather numerical estimation of the overall orientation of each parties' leadership towards European integration (ranging from "0"- "7"). On the other hand, the Manifesto Project examines parties' election manifestos and provides a comparative content analysis of them with the help of coders from various countries ("The Manifesto Project-About", *the Manifesto Project Official Website*, n.d.) unlike the Chapel Hill Survey which depends on the expert's own party evaluations. Both sources are considerable useful for this stage of the research despite the existence of several limitations. That is, the investigated periods are not covered by all datasets consistently. For instance, the Chapel Hill included Iceland only in the year 2019 whereas the M5S as a relatively new party was covered by the Chapel Hill in 2014, 2017 and 2019 and by the Manifesto Project only in 2013 and 2018. Nevertheless, fruitful findings have been gathered for all parties studied.

2.2.1. The SYRIZA case

The radical left party family has caught the attention of both academic and journalistic domains after the outbreak of the Eurozone crisis in 2009. One would say that the rise of SYRIZA was the main driving force behind this increasing attention in Europe. SYRIZA

became the centre of interest not only through its electoral achievements, but also through its national context. SYRIZA has occupied a significant place in the political science literature in which various comparative or case study works have been conducted in the last couple of years.

It is evident that SYRIZA has showed the best election performance after the economic crisis compared to other European radical left parties including the relatively successful parties such as the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) in Cyprus, Podemos in Spain and the VG in Iceland. Despite this electoral success and also its crisis-stricken national context, various sources consider SYRIZA as a more pro-European (or less policy Eurosceptic in this research's terms, or not sceptic at all) actor (Hypothesis 3) and a more moderated (or not radical at all) party (Hypothesis 2). This section gives place to some of these sources of which the arguments will be tested in Chapter 4.

2.2.1.1. SYRIZA's stance towards the EU and the opposition years

Not only SYRIZA, but also the party family that it belongs to, namely the radical left party family is predominantly associated with Euroscepticism. This research also supports the argument that party-based Euroscepticism is still “a phenomenon largely relegated to the extremes of the political spectrum” (that is both the radical right and the radical left) (De Vries & Edwards, 2009, p. 22). Moreover, by the year 2019, some Eurosceptic radical left parties are no longer peripheral in their party systems unlike what Taggart (1998) suggested (p.384). SYRIZA is perhaps the most obvious example of this on the left. However, this work hypothesises that SYRIZA's Euroscepticism does not fit completely into the previously mentioned categories in the literature like hard Eurosceptic or Euroreject, or polity-sceptic even before its government participation. In this respect, it is considered that the most explanatory category suggested in the literature is Mair (2007)'s policy-scepticism (Hypothesis 1).

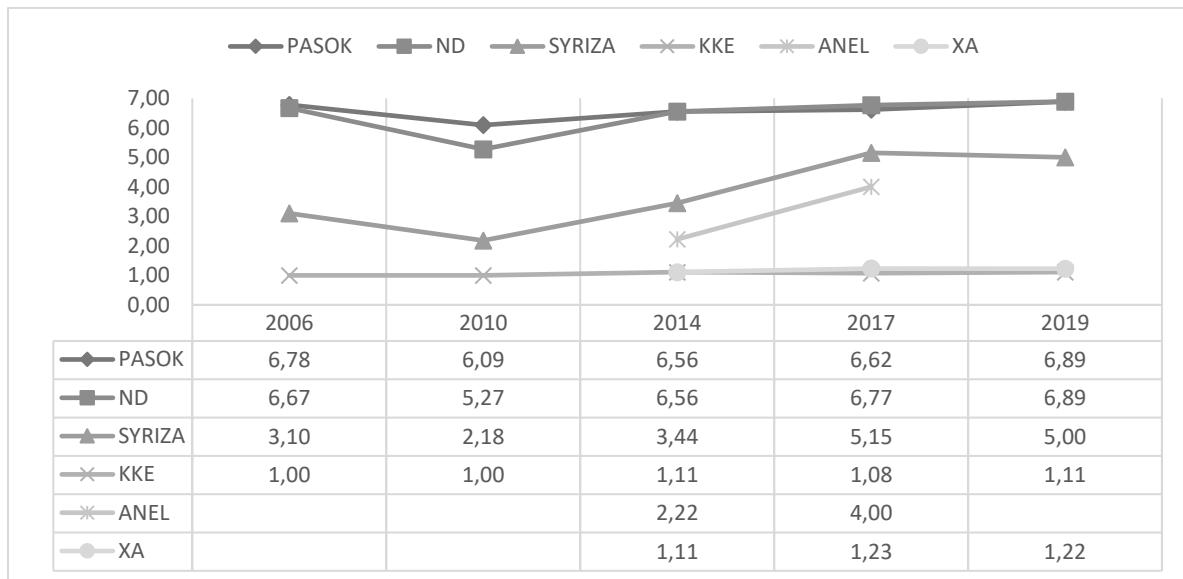
The literature suggests interesting insights on the radical left parties. Keith (2017) argues that most of the radical left parties tend to accept the European Project “as a reality” as they have been abandoning their hard Eurosceptic positions since the early 1990s (p. 90). After the economic crisis, Pirro et al. (2018) also state that showing their discontent with the EU's role during the crisis, several left-wing populist parties such as SYRIZA, Podemos, and the Socialist Party (SP) of the Netherlands took a soft position towards the EU as their prescriptions were excluding the option of their country's leaving from the EU (p. 381). Some scholars even suggest that following the Eurozone crisis, some radical left parties have taken less or more fragmented Eurosceptic stances. For instance, whereas Janssen (2013) states that radical left

parties diverge in terms of sovereigntist and federalist views rather than being united after the economic crisis (p. 45), Keith (2017) even argues that most radical left parties have not increased their Euroscepticism in this process (pp. 95–96).

What were the key clusters of the SYRIZA's view towards the EU before it became a ruling party? How can SYRIZA be described before government participation? SYRIZA have always been critical towards the EU's neoliberal traits. It considered the EU as a neo-liberal force implementing anti-democratic policies which are harming social cohesion, prosperity, and women and minority rights; opposed the European treaties signed since the Maastricht Treaty (Vasilopoulou, 2018, pp. 322–323). Nevertheless, despite SYRIZA's fierce opposition to the EU's dictated policies, and some party faction's radical projections, SYRIZA mostly seemed to be indented to stay in the EU, and even in the Eurozone (For example, unlike the Communist Party of Greece, KKE) whereas it continued to criticize the EU's unaccountable and undemocratic features (Vasilopoulou, 2018, pp. 322–323). Then, why did some journalistic accounts have the impression that SYRIZA was an anti-EU party threatening European integration? The different perceptions of some party factions are considered as an explanation to such inferences. Vasilopoulou (2018) identifies SYRIZA back in its opposition years as the “most divided party on the question of Europe” and claims that this divided nature of the party lies behind the public confusion on SYRIZA's preferences about leaving the Eurozone (p. 321). This divided nature of SYRIZA arose from the fact that while the parties' majority faction was against a Grexit (from the Eurozone), the minority faction supported a “Plan B” suggesting to overcome the crisis through a gradual adaptation of the drachma (Eleftheriou, 2016, p. 298). Yet, despite these different views within the party, the party moved on towards Tsipras' *Eurozone* direction. Disagreeing on the austerity though, both PASOK and SYRIZA had a common understanding: dealing with the crisis inside the EU (Vasilopoulou, 2018, pp. 323–324). Offering a socialist Europe as an alternative to the current one, SYRIZA considered the European Parliament (EP) as an institution that can increase accountability of the EU and balance the “unelected” and “neoliberal” policy making institutions like the EC and the ECB (Vasilopoulou, 2018, pp. 320–323).

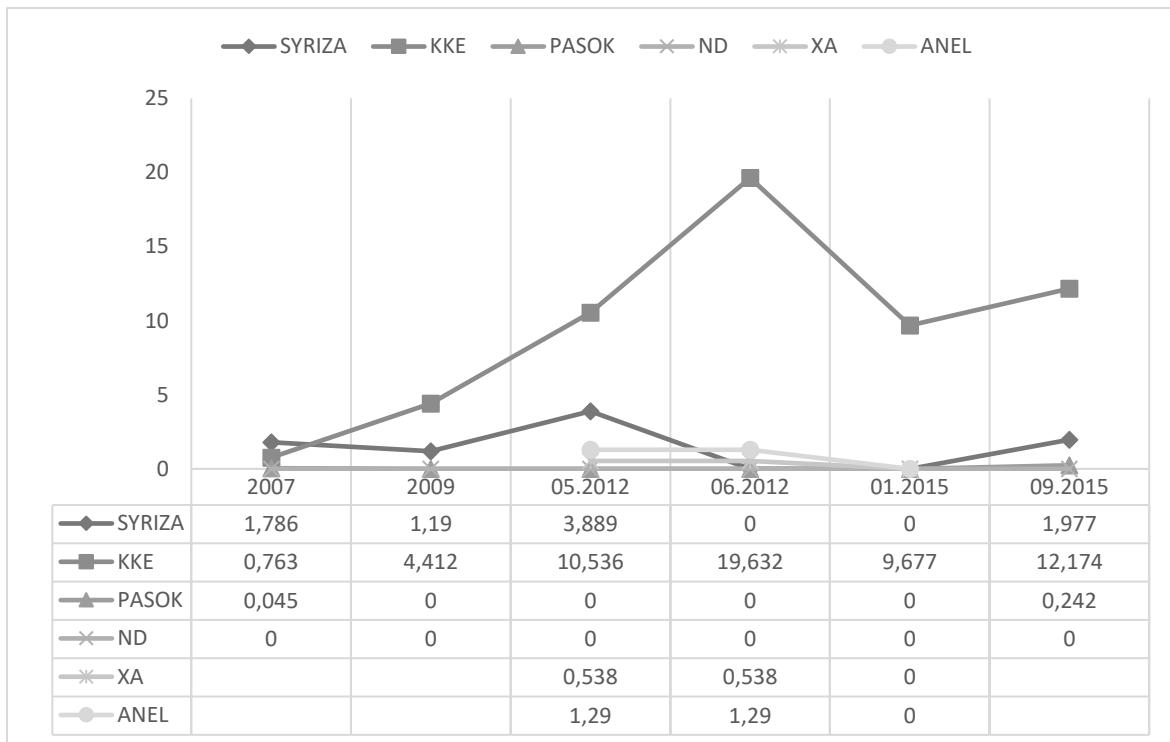
In addition to the literature provided so far, the quantitative data also confirm that prior to government participation, SYRIZA did not take an anti-position towards the EU. The Chapel Hill Expert Survey Data below includes the five different years of SYRIZA “EU position” (i.e., overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration in 2006, 2010, 2014, 2017 and 2019). The data indicate that the average position of SYRIZA before it has become a ruling party in 2015 was 2,90 (which corresponds to the dataset's “somewhat opposed”

category). Even when the pre-crisis period is excluded, the average position slightly decreases to 2,81. Compared to another left-wing actor, KKE, SYRIZA's overall orientation towards the EU seems to be much softer even before government participation. The same phenomenon can be observed through the Manifesto Project data below which also indicate that prior to the elections before it has become a ruling party (2007, 2009, May & June 2012, January 2015) SYRIZA seems to be taking a moderate position compared to KKE.



Y Axis 1 to 7 EU position Strongly Opposed to Strongly in favour (4=neutral)
X Axis Years from 2006 to 2019

Graph 1: The Chapel Hill Expert Survey Data (Greece) - Overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration (Hooghe et al. 2010); (Bakker et al. 2015); (Polk, 2017); (Bakker et al. 2020)



Y Axis 0 to ~ Party manifesto's negative references to the European Community/Union
X Axis Years from 2007 to 2015

Graph 2: The Manifesto Project Data (Greece) - Party manifesto's negative references to the European Community/Union (Volkens et al. 2020)

2.2.1.2. SYRIZA's stance towards the EU after 2015

Has SYRIZA's economic policy position towards the EU changed? Several scholars argue that SYRIZA's position towards the EU has started to be softened even once it got closer to become a ruling party (Hypothesis 3). For instance, Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou (2015) suggest that coming closer to power, SYRIZA moderated its position in order to obtain broader support from the electorate (p. 17). This view is supported by Eleftheriou (2016) stating that the elections of May 2012 (followed by the elections in June 2012) pushed SYRIZA's electoral agenda for domestic issues to attract the PASOK and ND electorate whereas the party's electoral programme merely emphasised to the EU's management of the crisis (p. 302). This sudden change can also be observed through the Manifesto Project Data in which the SYRIZA manifesto's negative statements show a sharp drop from 3,8 to 0 in a month between May and June 2012 (See Graph 2). According to Vasilopoulou (2018), SYRIZA's softened Euroscepticism proves the theoretical assumptions that not only the mainstream parties keep

their pro-European positions, but even challenger parties can soften their Euroscepticism once they get close to the power (p. 312). Not only its position moderated towards the EU, but a general moderation of the party is also suggested by several names. For example, Eleftheriou (2016) notes that SYRIZA became a more office-seeking party after May 2012 even though before the elections, having ties with the social movements opposing the Memorandum, the party had more policy-seeking characteristics (p. 296) (Hypothesis 2). Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis (2018) call the “change” of SYRIZA as a “moderation of left-wing populism in discourse and politics” when the party moves from the margins to the mainstream, that is the centre-left; (p. 202) and towards a more office-seeking strategy (p. 216) (Hypothesis 2). Despite these softening arguments, Kotroyannos et al. (2018) note that the first six months of SYRIZA as a ruling party also witnessed SYRIZA leadership’s harsh and continuous criticism towards the EU, ECB and IMF (the International Monetary Fund) (p. 8). However, in a strict sense, a line should be drawn between SYRIZA’s first six month in office (January-July 2015), and the rest of its participation to the government (from September 2015 to present) as the former constitutes a period of tough negotiations between the Greek government and the Troika in which, did not face the split ups yet, SYRIZA was a more heterogenous party. Consequently, despite the EU constraints, SYRIZA continued a fierce discourse against both the EU and other pro-austerity domestic actors until the second term in which, on the contrary, the party, according to Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis (2018), tried to justify the new austerity policies (p. 220).

In addition to the provided data so far, the quantitative data also confirm that SYRIZA has become a more moderate party towards the EU. The Chapel Hill Expert Survey data shed light to SYRIZA’s government experience for the first time in 2017 in which SYRIZA’s position moves to 5.15 which corresponds to above the Chapel Hill category of “somewhat in favor”. On the other hand, compared to this, the average of the pre-government participation years is considerably low with 2.86 (See Graph 1). Moreover, a relative increase can be observed even before SYRIZA’s coming to the office. Such a gradual increase is not reported in the case of other parties with the exception of ANEL.

Why has SYRIZA’s scepticism towards the EU changed (if it did)? (Hypothesis 3). This research hypothesises that the answer lies in both government participation and also the constraints imposed by the EU. The literature does not only report the change of SYRIZA’s scepticism towards the EU, but even a general ideological moderation (Hypothesis 2).

First, in the case of party moderation, Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis (2018) argue that experienced a more severe institutionalization than Podemos due to its rapid rise to power,

which also forced SYRIZA to deal with a four decade “crystallized state apparatus” existed under the rule of mainstream parties, and the constraints put by the EU (coupled with hostile and aggressive stance of some EU institutions), SYRIZA-ANEL government preferred to search strategic alliances with systemic and more moderate political forces (pp. 219–220). Eventually, it is considered that SYRIZA has become a more moderate party “accommodating conventional party mechanisms and power dynamics” (Kouki & González, 2018, pp. 138–139) (Hypothesis 2).³ SYRIZA’s expansion as the main opposition party and eventually as a ruling party can also be considered behind its ideological moderation. For instance, Spourdalakis (2014) lists a couple of warnings for a SYRIZA approaching to power and one of these warnings, “opportunism and careerism” can be associated with the risk of overall ideological moderation of the party membership: “As SYRIZA seems to provide an alternative to the government, thousands of newcomers have flooded the party’s local organizations. As the membership has tripled, it is not at all clear whether the party has the time and/or the means to unify the political culture and behaviour of all the new membership, whose intentions are not all that unselfish” (p. 363).

Second, when it comes to SYRIZA’s moderated position towards the EU, according to Vasilopoulou (2018), “the realities of governance” are behind SYRIZA’s softening Euroscepticism which is triggered when SYRIZA realised that Greece’s negotiating position was not strong enough to challenge the troika (p. 324). Calling this “the harsh truth of non-existent bargaining power at the supranational level”, Pirro et al. (2018) state that the Euroscepticism of SYRIZA-ANEL coalition decreased and took the shape of “a mere discursive affair” (p. 383) (Hypothesis 3). Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis (2018) assert that SYRIZA gave up the important features of the “parallel program” which was intended to reduce the pain of austerity after the September 2015 elections in spite of the new memorandum’s limitations, and in the end was not well received by the European actors (p. 221). This resulted with SYRIZA’s full-retreat from the applied economic and social policies and instead, the opening of a new front: fighting with corruption (Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis, 2018, p. 221). Moreover, Kotroyannos et al. (2018) even argue that SYRIZA has even utilized the memorandum as an excuse for the decisions it has made by blaming the previous ruling parties of the last three decades (pp. 7–8). According to Tsoukalis (2016), unpreparedness is a factor explaining SYRIZA’s troubles as the lack of experience in power and in knowledge of the EU’s dynamics led to SYRIZA’s misjudgement of its negotiating power (p. 133). Several scholars refer

³ The author also refers Podemos here alongside SYRIZA.

SYRIZA's encounter with "the realities" as a "defeat"; for example, accordingly, mixing two incompatible choices (i.e., embarrassing its original radical left identity, or being a responsible centre-left party) SYRIZA had been defeated at home and abroad (Mudde, 2017, p. 35).

This section has presented the three hypotheses on SYRIZA. In the light of the existing literature, the expectations of this chapter are first, even before 2015, SYRIZA has not been a polity Eurosceptic; but a policy Eurosceptic party; and second, after 2015, SYRIZA has become both a responsible party due to government participation dynamics and the constraints imposed by the EU constraint, and also a less policy Eurosceptic party. Chapter 4 of this thesis will provide more insights through the elite interviews conducted with the party members of SYRIZA as well as the primary and secondary sources, and will attempt to confirm these two expectations.

2.2.2. The Five Star Movement case

As the case selection section of this thesis will also discuss, the M5S is one of the most challenging parties in the EU to understand as both academic and journalistic accounts have had difficulties to locate the party ideologically on the political continuum and associate it with a party family. Similarly, the literature expresses concerns over the party's attitudes towards the EU. For instance, several scholars point out that the party's position on European integration is ambiguous and moreover understudied (Salvati, 2019, p. 297; Franzosi et al., 2015, p. 109) and "complex and difficult to define" (Corbetta & Vignati, 2014, p. 61). Nevertheless, the M5S has drawn attention thanks to both its unique characteristics and electoral achievements in the last decade and consequently a considerable amount of comparative or case study research have already been made on the party's evolution process.

Following the year 2009, the outbreak of the economic crisis marks the rise of the M5S. As in the SYRIZA case, the literature points out that despite the party's electoral rise and the effects of the economic crisis on Italy, the M5S has become a more pro-European (or less policy Eurosceptic in this research's terms, or not sceptic at all) actor (Hypothesis 3) and a more moderated party (Hypothesis 2) after government participation. This section gives place those arguments of which will be tested in Chapter 5.

2.2.2.1. The M5S's criticism towards the EU and the opposition years

Leaving aside the question of which party family the M5S belongs to, the literature suggests that the party shares similar criticism with the radical left parties towards the EU. Indeed, the M5S's critical discourse towards the EU plays a role in the popularity of the party inside and outside Italy.

As in the SYRIZA case, this research suggests that Mair (2007)'s policy-scepticism could capture the Euroscepticism of the M5S even before its government participation (Hypothesis 1) much better than the other typologies suggested in the literature (i.e., hard-Eurosceptic, or Euroreject, or polity-sceptic). In this respect, as the literature review below will also indicate, the expectation is that the M5S has never been a polity-sceptic party even though it shows some characteristics of polity-scepticism before its government participation (Hypothesis 1) and its policy-scepticism is mostly based on economic arguments.

Several scholars state that the Euroscepticism of the M5S started to appear especially during the 2014 EP elections (Franzosi et al., 2015, p. 109). In their work on the results of the EP elections in 2014, Emanuele et al. (2016) identify Italy among the countries which have the highest electoral results of Eurosceptic parties, and they also include the M5S among Eurosceptic parties (p. 710). As stated, the academic literature suggests that the Euroscepticism of the M5S concerns mostly economic issues. For instance, according to Caiani (2019) the main criticism of the M5S towards the EU is based on the economic problems (p. 241). Franzosi et al. (2015) suggest that mainly motivated by its opposition to austerity policies, the Euroscepticism of the M5S is linked to the country's economic performance and quality of democracy (p. 114). Written before the 2014 EP elections, Corbetta and Vignati (2014)'s work states that "indeed, Grillo's Euroscepticism is chiefly motivated by his opposition to austerity policies and to the dominance of economics and finance over politics" (p. 58). They even claim that the MPs of the party could adopt the Euroscepticism of the radical left parties (Corbetta & Vignati (2014, p. 58).

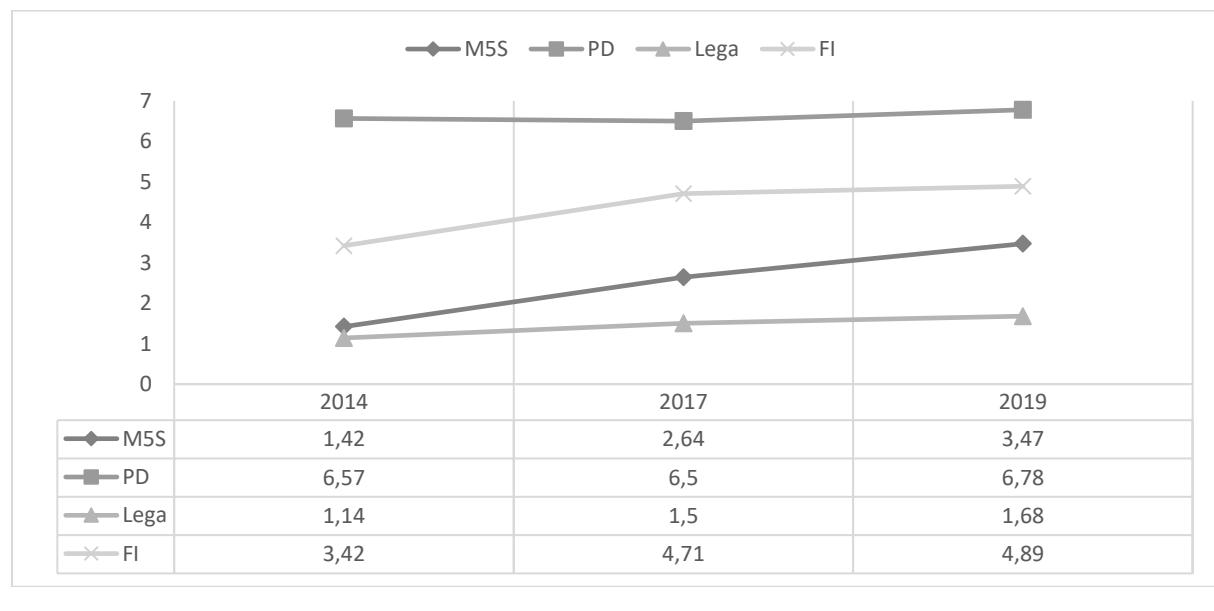
However, similar to the SYRIZA case, the management of immigration and the democratic deficit criticism are also present in the party's discourse. Nevertheless, Caiani (2019) states that "the M5S places more emphasis on socio-economic and political issues in its political discourse than on migration issues. There is little interest in the 'cultural crisis' seen as a clash of civilizations, which hardly gets mentioned" (p. 243). This conclusion is also supported by Franzosi et al. (2015) who claim that the M5S's Euroscepticism does not have "a deep ideological/cultural connotation" (p. 114). Corbetta & Vignati (2014) also state that "(...)

there is no cultural rejection of Europe in Grillo's declarations (on the contrary, he sometimes calls for more Europe and for a Europe that is more solidary)" (p. 61). Unlike the League which has exploited the "cultural framing of economic anxiety" through "nativist rhetoric", the M5S has exploited "economic anxiety" (Oner, 2020, p. 16). However, as an opposite view, Pirro and van Kessel (2018) state that even though socioeconomic issues constitute the main criticism of the party during the economic crisis, it also took "nativist cultural tones" in the middle of the migrant crisis (p. 339). Examining the voting behaviour of the M5S in the EP and finding it close to the leftist parties of the parliament, Salvati (2019) reaches the conclusion that the M5S "rarely voted together with Eurosceptic parties, especially on salient issues like immigration, while it often agrees with the leftist groups" (p. 298). As for demand side, in parallel with Salvati (2019), Basile and Borri (2018) demonstrate that the League and M5S electorate share a common anti-establishment view (especially in regard to the EU) whereas this is not the case on economic policies (especially in regard to the "basic income" [reddito di cittadinanza]) as well as migration and cultural issues (pp.13–14).

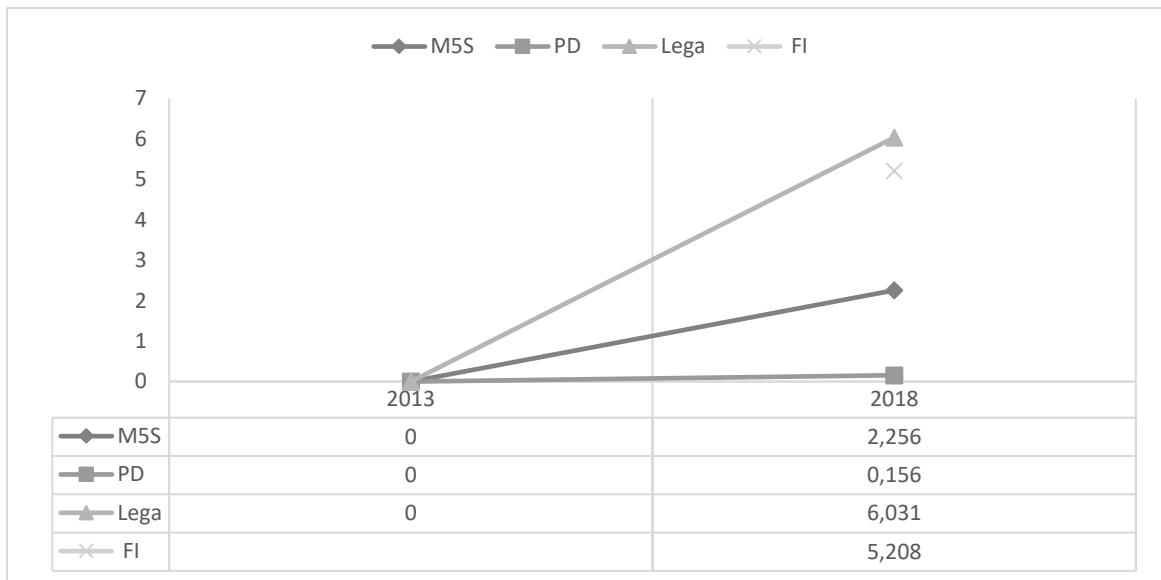
Prior to becoming a ruling party, the academic sources vary on the degree of M5S's Euroscepticism. For instance, Franzosi et al. (2015) claim that the M5S is a party between soft and hard Euroscepticism (p. 114) (Hypothesis 1). In their work on the populist Eurosceptic parties, Pirro and van Kessel (2018) identify the M5S as a soft-Eurosceptic party (p. 338). Tronconi (2018) states that following the 2013 Italian elections, the M5S "... has made the issue of limiting the power of European technocrats a crucial dimension of its anti-elitist approach, and has openly questioned Italy's participation in the Euro, promoting (but failing to achieve) a referendum on it" (p. 168). The party founder Grillo's call for a referendum to exit the Eurozone could be considered as the most explicit manifestation of the party's Euroscepticism. Discovering the key drivers of the M5S's behaviour in the EP after the 2014 EP elections, Bressanelli and De Candia (2019) conclude that the M5S has a critical but more moderate position on the EU than the EFDD group (p. 33) (Hypothesis 1). Kneuer (2019) argues that the M5S supports "a more democratic, more transparent and fairer EU", identifies the party as Eurocritical and links this category to the soft-Euroscepticism of Taggart and Szczerbiak (p. 39).

In addition to the literature provided so far, the quantitative data provide limited evidence concerning the M5S's opposition years as the party was assessed by the Chapel Hill Survey only in the year 2014 and 2017 and by the Manifesto Project data only in the year 2013. As for the Chapel Hill Survey data, the findings suggest the M5S's "EU position" (i.e., overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration) very similar to the League in

2014 (i.e., this corresponds somewhere between the dataset's categories “strongly opposed” and “opposed”) whereas a huge gap is visible between these two parties and the PD. These initial findings do not completely support this research's Hypothesis 1 which does not suggest such a higher degree of opposition to the EU. However, the findings of the year 2017 show a considerable moderation of the M5S towards European integration once the party comes closer to the office. In all years; however, the M5S's overall orientation to European integration exhibits softer values compared to the League. As for the Manifesto Project data, the findings for the party's opposition years are much more limited as for the year 2013, no negative references to the European Community/Union were reported. The findings from both datasets will also be used to assess the party's ruling years.



Graph 3: The Chapel Hill Expert Survey Data (Italy) - Overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration (Hooghe et al. 2010); (Bakker et al. 2015); (Polk, 2017); (Bakker et al. 2020)



Y Axis 0 to ~ Party manifesto's negative references to the European Community/Union
 X Axis Years from 2013 to 2018

Graph 4: The Manifesto Project Data (Italy) - Party manifesto's negative references to the European Community/Union (Volkens et al. 2020)

2.2.2.2. Towards being a ruling party

Achieving a big success in the 2018 elections, the M5S formed a coalition with another Eurosceptic radical right party, the League. As stated before, parties could moderate their Euroscepticism even before coming into office. In this respect, since the 2014 EP elections, the party's call for a referendum to exit the Eurozone has been abandoned "for tactical reasons" and was not repeated again during the 2018 general elections campaign (Mosca & Tronconi, 2019, p. 15). The party, according to Mosca and Tronconi (2019), has softened its "anti-EU" position through the reconsideration of conducting such a referendum (p. 15) (Hypothesis 3). From the demand side, Emanuele et al. (2020) also demonstrate an interesting finding that the majority of the M5S voters indeed stood against leaving the Eurozone and the EU during the 2018 general elections (p. 673) whereas the party did not emphasize the EU issues during its election campaign unlike, for example, the PD (p. 674). When it comes to the party's presence in the EP, Salvati (2019) states that unlike its hostile rhetoric, the behaviours of the M5S in the EP lead to the hypothesis that the party's protest behaviour transforms into "a more institutionalized approach to the single issues" (p. 311) (Hypothesis 2).

In addition to the provided data so far, the quantitative data partially confirm that the M5S has taken a more moderate position towards the EU in the course of its transformation into a ruling party. First, the Chapel Hill Expert Survey data shed light on the M5S's government experience only once in 2019 in which the party's position moves to 3,47 which corresponds to an average position between the Chapel Hill categories of "somewhat opposed" and "neutral". On the other hand, compared to this, the average of the pre-government participation years is considerably low with 2.03 (See Graph 3). Moreover, as mentioned, an explicit increase can be observed even before the M5S's government experience from 1,42 to 2,64 in 2014 and 2017 respectively. The Manifesto Project Data, on the other hand, presents opposite results as it reports much higher negative references to the European Community/Union (i.e., the negative references rise from 0 to 2,25 (See Graph 4). This trend; however, is visible in the case of other parties as well.

Being a coalition partner of the League around 1.5 year, the M5S's coalition collapsed once a motion of no confidence was proposed by the League leader Matteo Salvini in August 2019. What has changed in 1.5-year period concerning the Euroscepticism of the M5S? The Chapter 5 of this thesis will attempt to answer this question through the elite interviews conducted with the party members of the M5S.

As a party, the M5S has not experienced a crucial turning point as SYRIZA did in the summer of 2015 which could lead to Grexit and eventually a very different party evolution of SYRIZA. One could suggest that today's SYRIZA identity is also a consequence of the decisions taken in the summer 2015. The M5S, is on the other hand, has not been in power in a trouble-free national context. Moreover, unlike SYRIZA, the M5S has shared the governmental offices with a major coalition partner. And after all, both SYRIZA and the M5S have come into office in crisis-stricken Southern European national contexts and dealt with similar problems and constraints. The next section will give place another left-wing party which experienced the office for the first time after the outbreak of an economic crisis, yet in a different (i.e., non-EU) national context: the VG.

2.2.3. The Left-Green Movement case

The VG has similarities with SYRIZA and the M5S given its electoral performance during the economic crisis. Given its electoral performance, the VG is indeed one of the most

successful radical left parties in Europe after 2009. However, it also differs from the two parties with its criticism towards the EU which will be discussed in this section.

This research stresses that Icelandic party-based Euroscepticism is a non-peripheral phenomenon on both the right and left. Taggart (1998) argued that political parties which are peripheral to their party systems are taking Eurosceptic positions, and since they lack access to governmental offices, they cannot have influence in EU issues (p. 384). The Icelandic case continues to be an exception since the date in which Taggart's work was written. Euroscepticism is evident in Iceland as being in the first place, the Independence Party (SJ) and the VG have been the two political parties demonstrating the traits of party-based Euroscepticism for a long time. Skinner (2013) notes that although the dominant Euroscepticism is found on the right in Iceland especially led by the SJ, the VG is also an important political force on the left voicing opposition against EU membership in the Icelandic party system (p. 125). Consequently, it is one of the most significant characteristics of the Icelandic party system that a fierce party-based Euroscepticism can be observed both on the right and the left. However, at this point, one should admit that since this early analysis of Taggart (1998) on Eurosceptic political parties, Europe has changed to a large extent. Today, some Eurosceptic parties increasingly hold offices in government across Europe (Usherwood & Startin, 2013, p. 5) and even some parties which are not holding offices are quite influential in EU issues. Clearly the Icelandic case differs from Europe historically in the case of Euroscepticism.

2.2.3.1. The VG's stance towards the EU and the opposition years

As stated in the official party programme, the VG opposes Iceland's NATO membership ("Alþjóða-og friðarmál", 2016); and also further involvement to European integration (Bergmann, 2013, p. 138) as it believes that the cost of membership would be higher than the benefits ("Friðsöm alþjóðahyggja", n.d. as cited in Ómarsdóttir & Jónsson, 2016, p. 175). The SJ on the right and the VG on the left are the two political parties representing the two extremes in Icelandic politics (Bjarnason, 2010, p. 52) and taking Eurosceptic positions. Yet their official policies differ from each other. In regard to the motives, the VG rejects Iceland's EU membership on the basis of i) the risk of democratic deficit derives from the excessive transfer of legislative power from Reykjavik to Brussels (Ómarsdóttir & Jónsson, 2016, p. 175); ii) the belief that the EU is representing the interests of global capitalism (Ómarsdóttir & Jónsson,

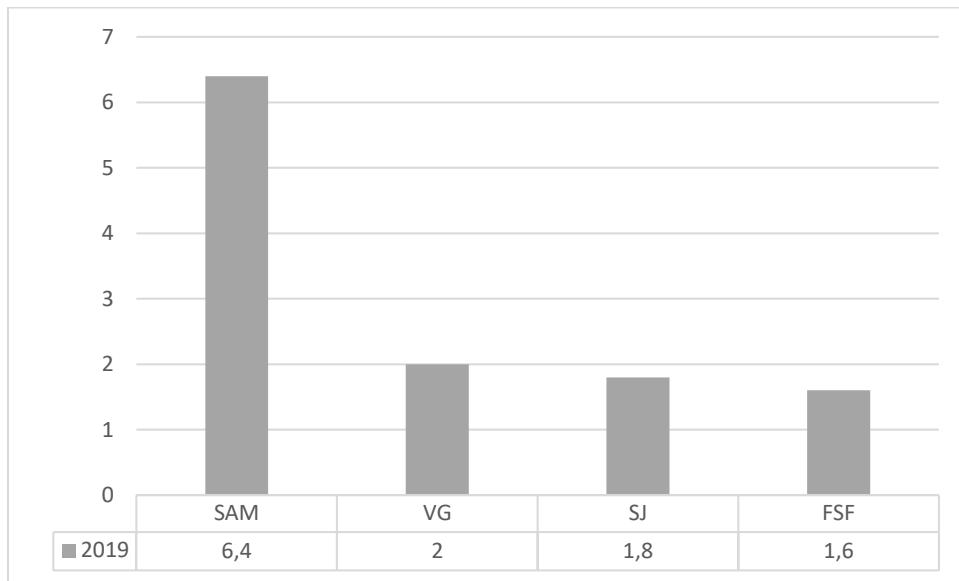
2016, p. 175); iii) concerns over environment, social equality, food policy, worker rights and controlling fisheries rights (The VG 2005 manifesto cited in Skinner, 2013, pp. 132–133).

Aftermath of the outbreak of the financial crisis, the VG had its first governmental experience in 2009. The literature suggests that before 2009, always having a sovereigntist/economic nationalism element concerning the membership question (Hallgrímsdóttir & Brunet-Jailly, 2015, p. 86), the VG was clearly opposing Iceland's EU membership (Thorhallsson & Vignisson, 2004, p. 93) and refusing to put an EU membership application on the agenda (Thorhallsson, 2002, p. 350). Not only EU membership, but also Iceland's EEA membership was criticized (Thorhallsson, 2004, p. 6) by the founding members of the VG (Thorhallsson, 2002, p. 352). Even Iceland's participation in the Schengen area was only opposed by the VG (alongside a small minority from the SJ) (Eiríksson, 2004, p. 55). In early years of the VG, Thorhallsson (2002) considers the party as “the most sceptical of the political parties favouring Icelandic involvement in any free-trade area or other economic or international federations” (pp. 352–353). Magnússon (2013) also identifies the VG as the “most vocally opposed” party to the integration with the EU (p. 17).

Skinner (2013) argues that “in non-EU Member States, the debate on European integration has a natural tendency to focus on the issue of membership” (p. 126). And therefore, whereas soft Euroscepticism can be found in EU member states, all Eurosceptic parties show the characteristics of hard Euroscepticism in Iceland (Skinner, 2013, p. 127). However, according to Skinner (2013), it is also possible to find “softer” versions of hard Euroscepticism in Iceland (p. 126) and the VG can be considered as a “harder version of rejecting Euroscepticism” (p. 136). At least for the early 2000s, Thorhallsson (2002) confirms Skinner (2013) by stating that “there are factions within all parties, except for the VG, which support EU membership or want to examine the possibility of membership” (Thorhallsson, 2002, p. 375). These arguments; however, will also be tested in the rest of the thesis.

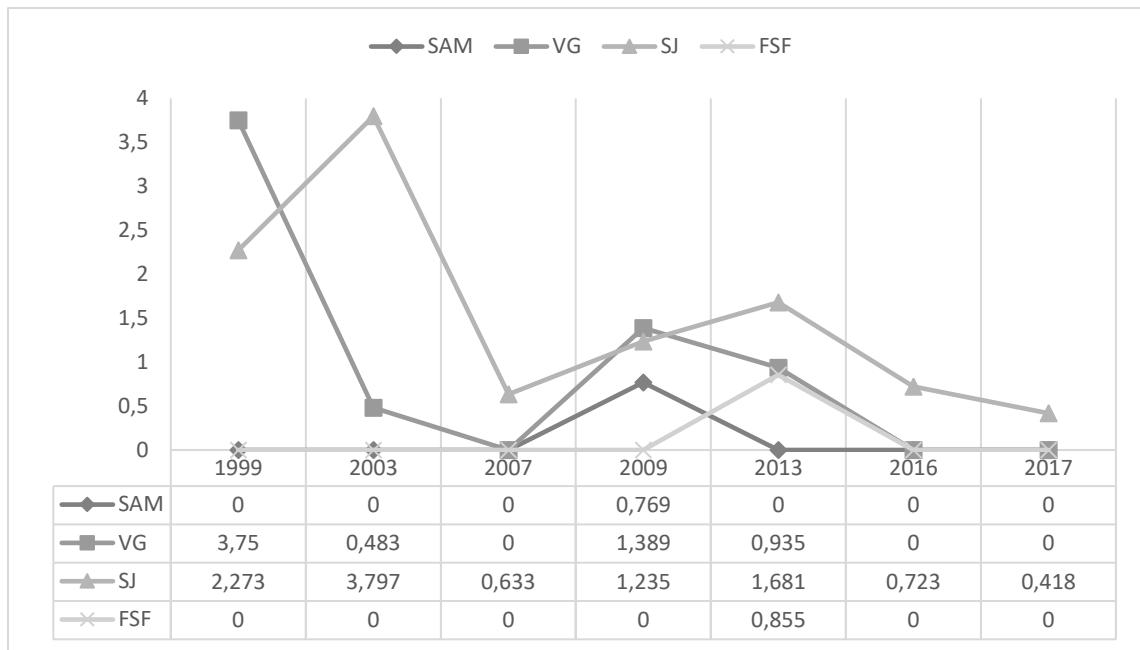
In addition to the literature provided so far, the quantitative data provide limited evidence concerning the VG's opposition years. First, the Chapel Hill Survey data do not provide any evidence to make a comparison within the investigated period as Iceland is covered only by the survey's 2019 edition (See Graph 5). An overview of the survey will be provided in the next section. Second, the Manifesto Project data cover the VG's all election manifestos published between 1999 and 2017. It reports the highest “negative references to the European Community/Union” in 1999. Such references do not exhibit a consistency in the subsequent years and they continue to be visible until the 2016 elections (See Graph 6). In the absence of a consistency, the data therefore do not suggest enough evidence to understand the VG's

Euroscepticism during its opposition years. However, the data clearly support the SJ's negative and the SAM's positive attitudes towards the EU in all reported years. Finally, as an interesting finding, no major negative reference is reported in the case of the Eurosceptic Progressive Party (FSF).



Y Axis 1 to 7 EU position Strongly Opposed to Strongly in favour (4=neutral)
X Axis Year Icelandic Parties

Graph 5: The Chapel Hill Expert Survey Data (Iceland) - Overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration (Bakker et al. 2020)



Y Axis 0 to ~ Party manifesto's negative references to the European Community/Union
X Axis Years from 1999 to 2017

Graph 6: The Manifesto Project Data (Iceland) - Party manifesto's negative references to the European Community/Union (Volkens et al. 2020)

2.2.3.2. The VG's stance towards the EU after 2009

After its first government participation, the VG's opposition to Iceland's EU membership remained steadfast (Avery et al., 2011, p. 96); (Thorhallsson, 2013, p. 13). The party continued to prefer bilateral cooperation rather than Iceland's accession into the EU (Erlingsdóttir, 2012, p. 45). Nevertheless, some scholars also state that the VG's position towards EU membership has been softened after the first government experience. Thorhallsson and Rebhan (2011) state that after 2009 even though the VG continued to oppose Iceland's EU membership, "the party line became somewhat blurred" as the party "approached the pro-European policy of the SAM" with its willingness to debate Iceland's EU membership and put the question on a referendum after the negotiations (p. 63). Decision to form a coalition with the SAM led to high tension within the party especially due to the EU membership application. The VG faced internal problems when the coalition government with the SAM applied for EU membership in 2009 as some of its members left the party by claiming that the application decision contradicted the VG's core principles (Ómarsdóttir & Jónsson, 2016, p. 182). Thorhallsson (2015) argues that changed its formal policy before 2015, the VG supports the

completion of the accession talks and a membership referendum today despite its fierce opposition to EU membership (p. 39). Ómarsdóttir and Jónsson (2016) claim that “entering government placed pressure on the radical and Eurosceptic Left-Greens to moderate their policy positions” (p. 183).

Why did the VG form a coalition with the pro-European SAM despite the fact that this coalition put the EU membership application on the table? Clark and Jones (2012) demonstrate that “opening accession negotiations with ‘Europe’ was the price that the Left-Greens had to pay to form a coalition with the SAM” (p. 68). Also due to the impact of the economic crisis, and with the aim of forming Iceland’s first left-wing government as “an historic opportunity” (Magnússon, 2013, p. 16), the VG made a pragmatic decision of being in a coalition with the SAM and applying for the EU membership (Thorhallsson & Rebhan 2011, p. 64). And actually, even during the negotiation process, some VG members attempted to withdraw the application (Thorhallsson & Rebhan 2011, pp. 62–64). Erlingsdóttir (2012) states that radical left parties can find it difficult to make compromises with their coalition partners and the VG was not an exception (p. 47). When it comes to the party’s view on Iceland’s EEA membership, no references has been given during the party’s national congress in November 2017 about whether the VG has changed its position on the EEA membership even though the party has been historically critical towards the EEA (“Wants to assess Iceland's EEA experience”, 2018).

As for the quantitative indicators concerning the ruling years of the VG, the Chapel Hill Survey data do not provide a comparative perspective as Icelandic parties are covered only in its 2019 edition. Nevertheless, an overview of the Icelandic parties in 2019 is considered as a valuable asset. According to this overview, the VG’s “EU position” (i.e., overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration) corresponds the dataset’s “opposed” category with the value of “2.0” (See Graph 5). Compared to this, the right-wing SJ and the FSF are positioned even at a lower degree (“1.8” and “1.6” respectively). The survey confirms the SAM’s pro-European position by suggesting its value “6.4” which corresponds somewhere between the dataset’s “in favour” and “strongly in favour” categories. Consequently, in the light of the Chapel Hill Survey data, it can easily be argued that the VG still keeps its opposition towards the EU while the rest of the main Icelandic parties also maintain their positions. As for the Manifesto Project data, the VG does not present a consistency regarding its negative references to the EU during its ruling years unlike the SJ which expresses negative views in its each party manifestos between 1999 and 2017 (See Graph 6). Nevertheless, the disappearance of the VG’s negative references by 2016 can be associated with the fact the EU related issues are no longer salient in recent years compared to the party’s permanent opposition years.

As a control case, the VG's Euroscepticism (which seems to be against the polity) clearly differs from SYRIZA and the M5S even though they shared a similar path towards the governmental office during the economic crisis. Although Iceland is a part of the EEA and Schengen Area, it can be considered that the country experiences the constraints of European integration much lesser than Greece and Italy. The assumption is that this difference plays a significant role in the parties' Euroscepticism once they are in office. Chapter 6 of this thesis will focus on the Icelandic VG case through the data collected from the party members.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will shed light on the methodological aspects of the undertaken research by focusing on ontological and epistemological grounds of the study; the rationale behind the selected cases; and data collection and analysis.

3.1. Research design

Pennings et al. (2006) point out that a researcher developing a research design should consider three issues: “the context of what is compared”; “the level of inquiry” (from micro to macro); and “the role of time and space” regarding the research problem under investigation and the number of included cases (p. 35). This section will address these issues and enlighten the preferred methods of the research in the light of Mudde (2012) and Vasilopoulou (2017).

The methodological choice of this research can be clarified through the distinction of Mudde (2012) who divides the literature of party-based Euroscepticism into two schools (i.e., Sussex and North Carolina schools) which differ from each other regarding the issues of definitions, data and method, scope, and explanations (p. 193). Mudde (2012) states that the definition (and categorisation) of Euroscepticism has always been a central concern for the Sussex School, unlike the North Carolina School in which this issue was wisely absent (p. 196). Instead, the North Carolina School assesses “the overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration” from the category of “strongly against” to “strongly in favour” (Ray, 1999 as cited in Mudde, 2012, p. 196), that is, they conceptualise it “as a continuum” (Vasilopoulou, 2017, p. 26). Concerning data collection and method, whereas the Sussex School relies on mostly election manifestos, party programmes, votes on treaties and media statements of politicians as well as manifesto projects measuring policy positions quantitatively, the North Carolina School uses the expert surveys (Mudde, 2012, p. 197). Concerning the issue of scope, the Sussex School mostly focuses on Euroscepticism solely at party level unlike the North Carolina School which predominantly does not study Euroscepticism purely at the party level, but at the public level as well (Mudde, 2012, p. 198). Concerning the issue of explanation, on the one hand, the fundamental question of the Sussex School’s party-based research is whether Euroscepticism is primarily explained by “ideological-programmatic or strategic-tactical party competition factors” (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2003, p. 17 as also cited in Mudde, 2012, p. 198). On the other hand, “ideology” is

mainly stressed by the North Carolina School “through the so-called ‘cleavage theory’ of party positions on European integration” (Mudde, 2012, p. 198).

According to Vasilopoulou (2017), the research design of the top-cited articles in the scholarly literature on Euroscepticism can be categorised through three indicators: rationale, methodological and design approach, and time (p. 29): The rationale of research design refers whether Euroscepticism is considered as a dependent variable (as a phenomenon to be explained) or as an independent variable (explaining other phenomena); the methodological and design approach refers whether an undertaken research is a qualitative comparative study, quantitative comparative study, quantitative case study or case study narrative; the time indicator refers whether an undertaken study is a cross-sectional (i.e., the analysis deals with a specific period) or a longitudinal research (i.e., the analysis focuses on the phenomenon extended over a period of time (Vasilopoulou, 2017, p. 29).

In line with the findings of Vasilopoulou (2017) above, since the main research question requires considering party-based Euroscepticism as a phenomenon to be understood and explained rather than as a cause of other phenomena, Euroscepticism is treated as a dependent variable. Concerning the methodological and design approach, this research is a qualitative comparative study also giving place the findings of quantitative content analysis and expert surveys. Given the main research question and number of cases under investigation, this research predominantly follows the four aforementioned issues applied by the Sussex School, whereas it also utilizes the two issues of the North Carolina School: The definition of Euroscepticism and data collection (i.e., the findings in the literature which were reached through quantitative content analysis and expert surveys will also be used to present basic quantitative indicators in Chapter 2). Such a combined approach is also taken by several researchers in the literature such as Vasilopoulou (2010); Gomez et al. (2016); Vasilopoulou (2018); Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro & Plaza-Colodro (2018). Nevertheless, the qualitative data collection and analysis methods will constitute the basis of the thesis (i.e., qualitative case study method; and semi-structured interview method). Finally, this is a cross-sectional research and as stated before, the time period of analysis will be post-2008 as this study recognizes the impact of the global financial crisis/Eurozone crisis in 2008/2009 as a turning point for the party-based Euroscepticism research.

In addition to the four general hypotheses of this thesis which were explained in the previous chapters, to facilitate the analysis for reader, a sub-hypothesis is assigned for each party case in relation to the four general hypotheses. For instance, Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, and Hypothesis 4 are converted into Hypothesis 1A, Hypothesis 2A, Hypothesis

3A, and Hypothesis 4A for the SYRIZA case and each of them are explained again at the beginning of Chapter 6, the SYRIZA chapter. The same assignment is also applied for the M5S case as Hypothesis 1B, Hypothesis 2B, Hypothesis 3B, and Hypothesis 4B; and for the VG case as Hypothesis 1C, Hypothesis 2C, Hypothesis 3C, and Hypothesis 4C. The Table 3 below summarizes each hypothesis:

Parties	Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3	Hypothesis 4
SYRIZA	Hypothesis 1A: SYRIZA showed polity Eurosceptic characteristics before government participation even though today SYRIZA's Euroscepticism is against the EU policies rather than the EU polity.	Hypothesis 2A: The regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of SYRIZA's domestic context, and the constraints imposed by European integration has made SYRIZA responsible once it had become a ruling party.	Hypothesis 3A: Being responsible, SYRIZA's Euroscepticism decreased and the party was forced to take a more moderate position towards the EU.	Hypothesis 4A: SYRIZA's government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU affected SYRIZA's Euroscepticism in accordance with the duration of its government participation and with the influence of its coalition partner.
M5S	Hypothesis 1B: The M5S showed polity Eurosceptic characteristics before government participation even though today the M5S's Euroscepticism is against the EU policies rather than the EU polity.	Hypothesis 2B: The regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of the M5S's domestic context, and the constraints imposed by European integration has made the M5S responsible once it has become a ruling party.	Hypothesis 3B: Being responsible, the M5S's Euroscepticism decreased and the party was forced to take a more moderate position towards the EU.	Hypothesis 4B: The M5S's government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU affected the M5S's Euroscepticism in accordance with the duration of its government participation and with the influence of its coalition partner.
VG	Hypothesis 1C: The VG showed polity Eurosceptic characteristics before government participation even though today the VG's Euroscepticism is against the EU policies rather than the EU polity.	Hypothesis 2C: The regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of the VG's domestic context has made the VG responsible once it has become a ruling party.	Hypothesis 3C: Being responsible, the VG's Euroscepticism decreased and the party was forced to take a more moderate position towards the EU.	Hypothesis 4C: The VG's government participation affected the VG's Euroscepticism in accordance with the duration of its government participation and with the influence of its coalition partners.

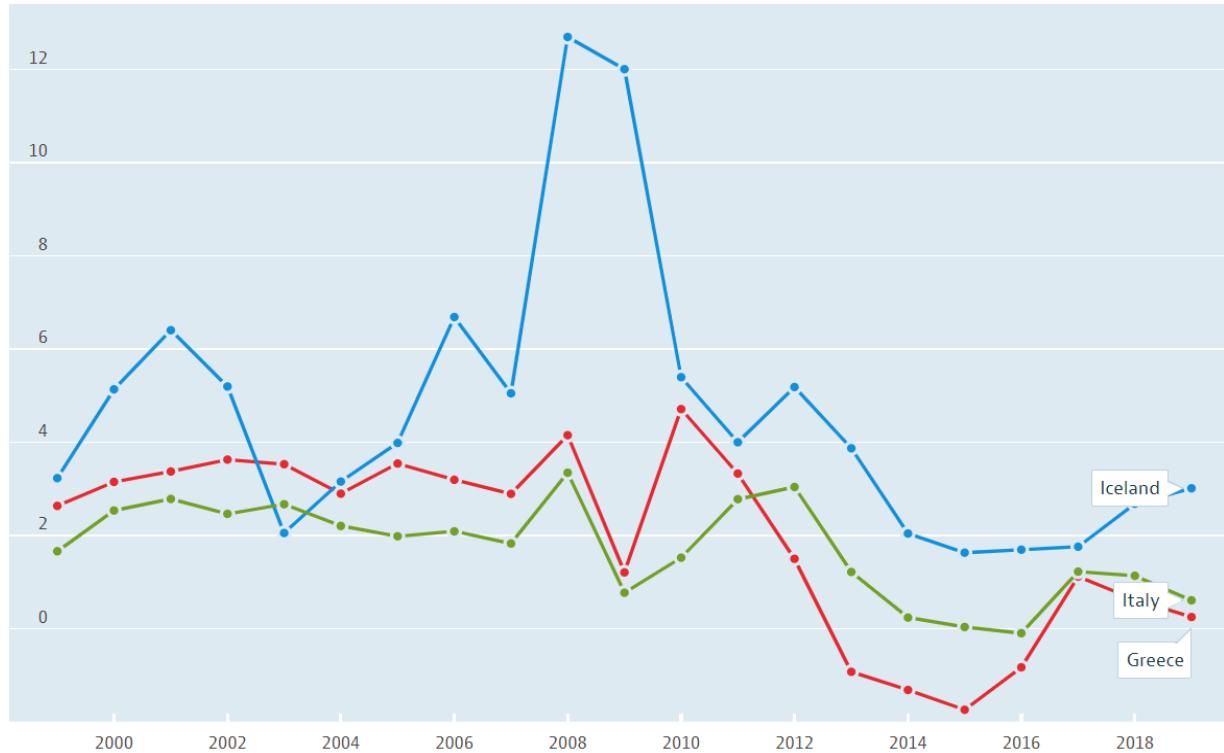
Table 3: Sub-hypotheses assigned for each party case in relation to the four general hypotheses of the thesis

3.2. Case selection

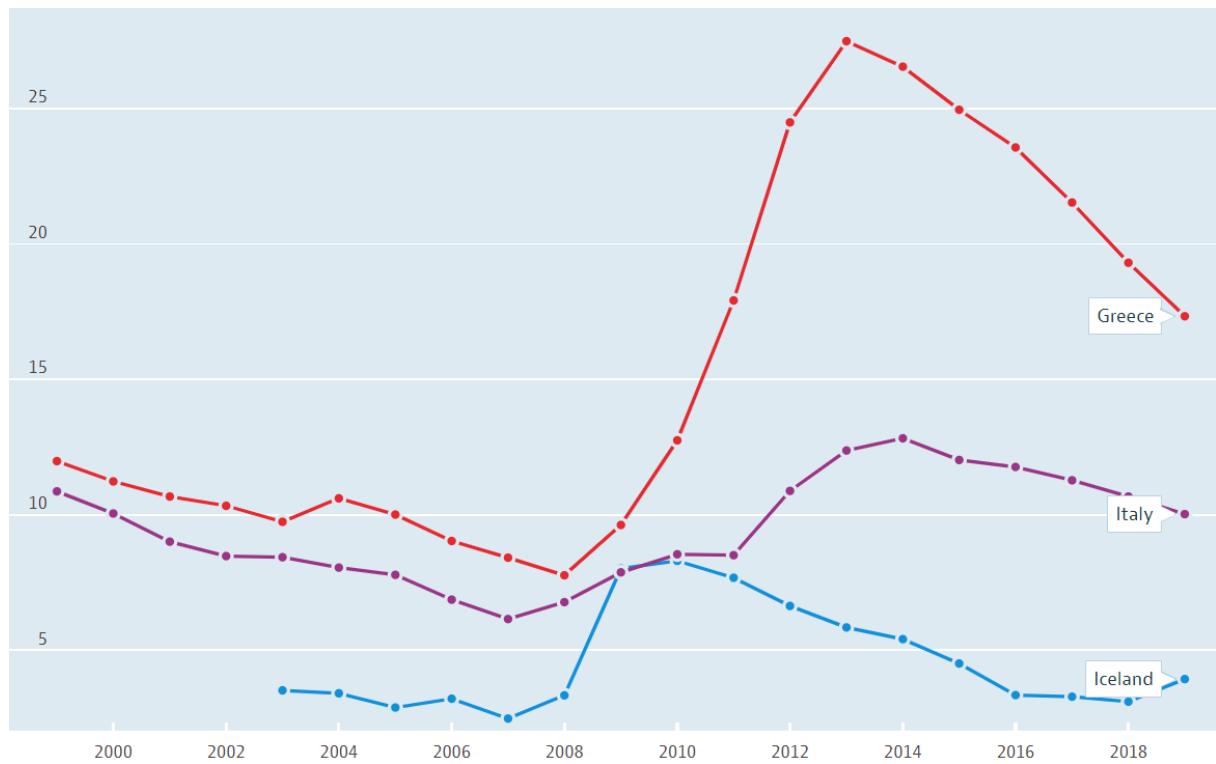
The three (i.e., the two main cases and one control case) cases of this research (i.e., SYRIZA, the M5S and the VG) have been determined through the four different criteria: the way they frame their criticism towards European integration (i.e., left-wing economic arguments); geographical location (i.e., Southern Europe and the Nordic region); government participation; and EU membership status (i.e., two EU member and one non-EU case). What brings these three cases together are their left-wing economic criticism towards the EU and their first-time government participation after the outbreak economic crisis in their own countries where the explicit effects of high unemployment and inflation rates; government debt; and decreasing GDP rates were observed (See Graph 7, 8, 9, 10). The party systems of Greece, Italy and Iceland experienced radical changes following the crisis, and SYRIZA, the M5S and the VG experienced the office for the first time in their history under such circumstances.⁴ Moreover, this was also a first for the radical left party family in Greece and Iceland. These three parties achieved good electoral results through several promises which were mostly framed by economic arguments as a reaction to the crisis and the way the EU and other international institutions managed the crisis. According to Pirro and van Kessel (2018), socioeconomic frames (i.e., economic and financial arguments, fiscal sovereignty, banks, bail-outs, national debt, Euro) link Euroscepticism to economic arguments associated with the Eurozone crisis whereas cultural frames (i.e., Immigration, multiculturalism, Christianity, Islam, security) link Euroscepticism to the immigration issue and, finally they consider sovereignty (i.e., Delocalisation, transfer of decision-making, centralisation) and legitimacy frames (i.e., Democratic deficit, effectiveness, competence, corruption) as typical frames used by populists as well (pp. 329–330). The literature on party-based Euroscepticism shows consistencies regarding the shared (and prioritized) critical arguments of radical left parties towards the EU. For example, in their recent work, Pirro et al. (2018) indicate that the dominant Eurosceptic framing of populist radical left Eurosceptic parties (i.e., SYRIZA, Podemos, the Left Bloc, and the Socialist party) is solely socioeconomic (p. 386). Vasilopoulou (2018) also

⁴ During the data collection process, other parties with left-wing economic criticism towards the EU in crisis-stricken Southern European countries such as Podemos in Spain, the Portuguese Communist Party and the Left Bloc in Portugal were providing confidence and supply support rather than gaining ministerial roles in government. Consequently, such parties are excluded from the case selection as they were beyond the timeframe of this thesis. AKEL in Cyprus is also excluded as it does not meet the criteria of ‘first-time government participation’ due to the fact that the party already experienced the office even before the outbreak of the economic crisis.

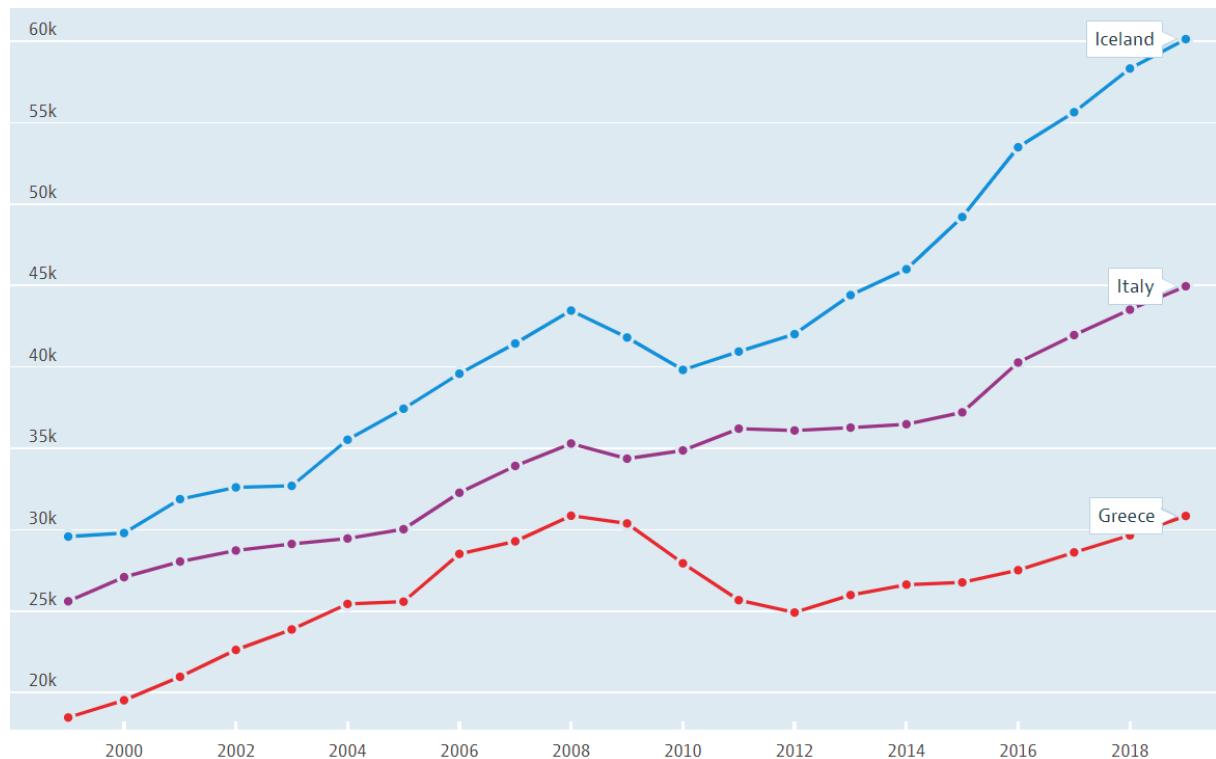
states that whereas radical right parties mainly use negative cultural frames, radical left parties mostly use negative socioeconomic frames (p. 317).



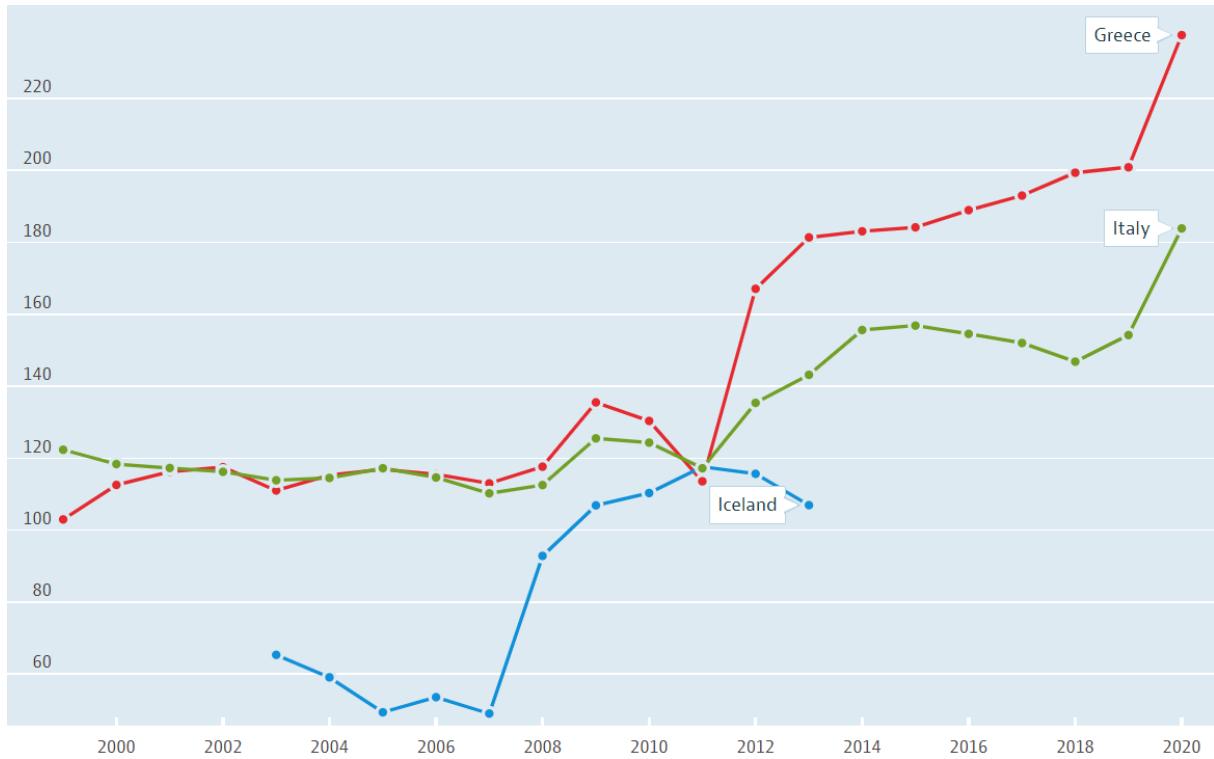
Graph 7: OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Data - Inflation (CPI)Total, Annual growth rate (%), 1999 – 2019 in Greece, Italy and Iceland



Graph 8: OECD Data - Unemployment rate Total, % of labour force, 1999 – 2019 in Greece, Italy and Iceland



Graph 9: OECD Data - Gross domestic product (GDP)Total, US dollars/capita, 1999 – 2019 in Greece, Italy and Iceland



Graph 10: OECD Data - General government debt Total, % of GDP, 1999 – 2020 in Greece, Italy and Iceland

By the time of data collection, SYRIZA and the M5S were the only Southern European cases which were in power after the crisis for the first time and had left-leaning criticism towards the EU which mostly explains the selection of the M5S case alongside the SYRIZA case. With these features, SYRIZA constitutes a significant example in both Southern European and among parties with left-wing criticism towards the EU. For a while SYRIZA had become the largest left-wing Eurosceptic party in Southern European in terms of electoral results and the party's rise generated excitement across the continent. In this short period of time, gaining more visibility, SYRIZA led to the questioning of whether the party's rise was just a beginning for the European radical left. The last six years proved it was not. Given both national election results in the recent years and the 2019 EP elections, the radical left party family is on the decline in terms of electoral results. SYRIZA, on the other hand, does not hit headlines neither as a potential vanguard party nor as a threat to the European project.

This thesis is not a party family research. Nevertheless, one of the two main cases and the control case share the same party family (i.e., SYRIZA and the VG) whereas the M5S's belonging is controversial in the literature. Being compared to a Southern European radical left party, SYRIZA, the selection of the M5S owes an explanation.

Why does the M5S find a place in this research even though there is no consensus over its (radical) left-wing status? On the right-left continuum, the status of the M5S is, unclear (Kotroyannos et al., 2018, p. 3). Referring the M5S's founder Beppe Grillo, Ceccarini and Bordignon (2016) (p. 142), and referring the M5S's party manifesto, Salvati (2019) state that the party self-identifies itself “neither a right-wing nor a left-wing party” (p. 299). In this respect, the party was depicted in various ways. For instance, Emanuele et al. (2020) argue that the M5S can be considered “as a genuine catch-all party” (p. 668). Pirro and van Kessel (2018) state that the M5S “started out as an anti-establishment party with left-libertarian concerns, but increasingly adopted nativist tones” (pp. 328–239). However, Mosca and Tronconi (2019) highlight that the M5S is not xenophobic despite its “mixed or contradictory policies on immigration” (p. 20). Furthermore, some scholars state that the M5S’s main arguments are based on socio-economic rather than cultural orientation (Caiani 2019, p. 243). As the interview data of Chapter 5 will also indicate, right-wing exclusionary xenophobic discourse and positions are absent in the M5S. Caiani (2019) states that the M5S is a “left-wing or inclusionary form of populism” (p. 238). This view was supported by different works in the literature such as Font et al. (2021) (p. 178). Nevertheless, Mosca and Tronconi (2019) assert that the M5S is “an anti-austerity but not an anti-capitalist party” (p. 20). They even state that the M5S has some traits of radical left parties in the case of economy policies (e.g., “welfare expansion”, “strong role of the state in the economy”, “anti-austerity position”, “universal basic income” etc.) despite some “anti-tax discourse” (Mosca & Tronconi, 2019, p. 19). Moreover, referring the Manifesto Project Database, Manucci and Amsler (2018) even state that the M5S’s party manifesto is “the most left-wing manifesto presented in Italy since 1945” despite the presence of former right-wing voters among its electorate (pp. 115–116). Yet, is this enough to denounce the M5S as a radical left party? At this point, one would also question whether the commonly accepted radical left parties including SYRIZA and the VG are also anti-capitalist parties. The current research has the tendency to avoid calling them anti-capitalist as well.

In addition to the M5S, the VG’s value as a control case is worth explaining. Iceland’s different geographical location and non-EU member status makes the VG’s presence in this research as a control case an asset. Compared to the two parties above, the VG is a special case as it

- is in the radical left party family;
- is also labelled as Eurosceptic by the academic and journalistic accounts;
- also experienced a major rise in its party system following the financial crisis;

- became ruling a party for the first time in 2009 after the outbreak of the economic crisis;
- faced internal problems caused by the challenges of government participation (e.g., splits)
- is forced to make compromises as a result of government participation in the time of crisis.

And despite these similarities, the hypothesis is that on the one hand, for example, whereas SYRIZA and the M5S

- faced the constraints imposed by the EU (including the Eurozone crisis' itself);
- acted responsible (to some extent);
- has changed (i.e., party moderation), and moderated their Euroscepticism due to government participation;

the VG

- did not face the constraints imposed by the EU in the way the Southern EU member countries did;
- acted relatively responsible (i.e., it became a part of the coalition which applied for EU membership even though it never changed party's opposing position towards EU membership officially);
- has experienced a minor change (e.g., party splits) due to government participation, but has not changed party's position towards EU membership officially (i.e., it did not soften its Euroscepticism despite the splits). The explanatory argument is that despite the impact of the government participation is present in all cases, due to the absence of the EU membership as a constraint, the Icelandic VG did not go through a moderating process as other parties did.

The Table 4 below presents a brief summary of the characteristics of the three cases.

Country Specific													Party Specific			
Parties	Region	EU member since	Integration	Economic Crisis	Parliament	Party Founded	Current Status (2020-2021)	Government Experience for the first time after the economic crisis	Seats (Last elections)	Votes % (Last elections)	Party Family	EU criticism Based on				
SYRIZA	Southern	1981	EEA/ Eurozone/ Schengen	Highly Affected	Unicameral	2004	Opposition	Coalition government between 2015 and 2019*	86/300 (2019)	31.53% (2019)	Radical Left	Mainly economic arguments				
M5S	Southern	Founder	EEA/ Eurozone/ Schengen	Highly Affected	Bicameral	2009	In office	Coalition Government since 2018 to present**	227/630 Chamber 112/315 Senate (2018)	32.68% Chamber 32.22% Senate (2018)	Contested	Mainly economic arguments				
VG	Nordic	Non-EU	EEA/ Schengen	Highly Affected	Unicameral	1999	In office	Coalition Government between 2009-2013, and from 2017 to present***	11/63 (2017)	16.9% (2017)	Radical Left	Mainly economic arguments				

Table 4: The Comparison of SYRIZA, the M5S and the VG in their national contexts

Sources: Author's Calculations; Italian Ministry of the Interior ("Archivio storico delle elezioni [Historical archive of elections]", *Governo italiano, Ministero dell'Interno [Italian government, Ministry of the Interior]*, [n.d.]); Chiaramonte et al., 2018, p. 488; The Hellenic Parliament ("Election Results", *The Hellenic Parliament*, [n.d.]); Greek Ministry of Interior ("National Elections", *Greek Ministry of Interior*, [2019]); the National Statistical Institute of Iceland ("General Elections", *Statistics Iceland [the National Statistical Institute of Iceland]*, [n.d.]).

*Coalition Partner with ANEL between 2015 and 2019.

**Coalition Partner with the League between 2018 and 2019; with the PD, Italy Alive (IV) and Free and Equal group from 2019 to 2021. Today within the national unity government.

***Coalition Partner with the SAM between 2009 and 2013; with the SJ and the Progressive Party (FSF) from 2017 to present.

To sum, rather than taking a comparative approach with the three equal cases to reach a generalisation, the research proposes to include a non-EU party as a control case. The Icelandic case also differs from other non-EU cases (e.g., Western Balkans or Turkey) as Iceland is a member of the EEA and Schengen area. The country is a part of European integration in economic sense even though it is outside the Eurozone.

3.2.1. Number of cases

The inclusion of Iceland as a control case has increased the strength and value of the research. However, this brings another matter urged upon by Lijphart (1971): “many variables, small number of cases” which are the two interrelated problems that the (qualitative) comparative method faces (p. 685). Subsequently, he puts forward a prescription that especially the two of his solutions in this prescription are highly relevant with the case selection of this research. He suggests, first, increasing the number of cases as much as possible (p. 686); and second, focusing the analysis on “comparable” cases (p. 687). In the same vein, Schmitter (2008) rightfully states that “for a unit of observation to be a valid case for analysis, it must possess identical or, at least, comparable degrees of freedom with regard to the topic under investigation” (p. 275). Although, the three countries and cases under investigation differ from each other, given the main research question, they share the same type of criticism towards European integration and Eurosceptic positions, as well as a similar government participation experience. Choosing a control case and increasing the number of cases in this way, are in line with Lijphart (1971)’s prescription.

3.2.2. Analysis

Applying the qualitative case study analysis, this research is going to use the so-called “comparative method”. According to Collier (1993), the comparative method concerns “the methodological issues that arise in the systematic analysis of a small number cases, or a small N” (p. 105). Lijphart (1971) points out that the comparative method is similar to the statistical at all points and the only difference lies in the number of cases undertaken (p. 684). That is to say that the statistical method deals with many cases whereas the comparative method handles

few cases (Lijphart, 1971, p. 691). The literature of Euroscepticism is also diverse in relation to the application of these two methods as explained in the research design section.

At this point, Mill's methods of agreement and difference are also worth mentioning. Della Porta (2008) states that “while statistical analyses are based on the search for concomitant variations (...), comparative analyses use the methods of similarities and differences” (p. 204). What the method of difference refers is that, for example, if the three cases have different values on the phenomenon of soft-Euroscepticism, the one condition on which they differ should be taken into account (Della Porta, 2008, p. 204). On the other hand, what the method of agreement refers is that, for example, if the phenomenon of soft-Euroscepticism (dependent variable) has only one of several causal conditions (independent variable) in common, the cause of the phenomenon is that one condition present in all cases (Della Porta, 2008, p. 204). The undertaken research clearly applies the method of difference.

3.2.3. Country comparison

This research has been built upon the comparison of the two Southern European crisis-stricken countries. However, Iceland, as the only European country outside the EU which participated in the EU accession negotiations between 2009 and 2013 and then put it on hold, makes a great contribution to the research as a control case. Being in the EEA and Schengen Area, Iceland is indeed partially integrated in the European project even though it differs from the two main cases with its absence in the decision-making of the EU as a non-EU and non-Eurozone country.

While having major differences, the three cases share some similarities which matter for this research. To start with, they differ from each other with various aspects: geographical proximity (i.e., one Northern case vs. two Southern cases); size (population, territorial size, and GDP); language; religion; and Iceland's non-EU status. Despite these differences, all three countries faced the economic crisis and experienced similar implications after the outbreak of the crisis: political crisis; de-stabilisation of daily political life for years; party system change; the search for new alternatives (i.e., EU membership application in the case of Iceland; calls for referendum to leave the Eurozone or the EU; and also, Grexit in the case of Greece). The party system change especially plays a significant role in the evolution of the investigated cases. Greece, Italy and Iceland had party systems in which several mainstream parties were dominant. Yet, after the outbreak of the crisis, some of those dominant forces and their place in the party

systems had considerably changed. Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 will give a special attention to these party system changes.

3.2.4. Literature with similar design

Leaving aside the Euroscepticism research conducted through the case study method (i.e., only one country under investigation) such as Skinner (2011) in the case of Norway or Büyükbay (2014) in the case of the Euroscepticism of Turkish civil society; the small-N comparative analysis of political parties/movements is a common practice in the scholarly literature of Euroscepticism: for example, FitzGibbon (2011) in the case of Eurosceptic protest movements in Ireland, the EU, Estonia and Denmark; Dandolov (2014) in the case of Bulgaria (Attack), Romania (The Greater Romania Party), the Netherlands (The Party for Freedom) and Germany (The Republicans); Vasilopoulou (2010) in the case of the French National Front, the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally and the Italian National Alliance. The selected cases of this thesis reflect a usual approach of the small-N comparative research focusing on the three-party cases and solely Euroscepticism of political elite. The originality of this study lies in both the case selection and the hypothesis: First, the main research question brings forward some key features of SYRIZA, the M5S, and the VG which are their left-wing and economy policy-oriented Euroscepticism towards European integration; their coming into power in the post-economic crisis periods as their first governmental experience; and geographical difference between the main cases and the control case. And second, the hypothesis suggests that despite the geographical difference between Northern and Southern Europe ruling party cases, the implications of being a ruling party are similar whereas the EU member status of a country affects the Euroscepticism of a ruling party more than those which are not in the EU. The combination of these party traits and the investigated hypothesis meets a demanding and revealing data collection method, namely semi-structured elite interviews and all those aim to make an original contribution to the political science discipline and inspire further research on party politics and Euroscepticism literatures.

3.3. Data collection

This research primarily relies on semi-structured elite interviews with members of the Greek, Italian and Icelandic parliaments (And MEPs in the case of SYRIZA and the M5S) as

well as party cadres (i.e., party member policy advisors, committee members, youth members, party administration etc). In addition, the research will also utilize expert surveys and quantitative content analysis of party manifestos as well as party programmes, election manifestos, news media articles and academic sources. This section will shed light on the interview method and field research.

3.3.1. Interview method

Even though the interview can be considered as “most widely used method employed in qualitative research” (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 1), the rationale behind it and the way it is employed in an academic work depend on ontological and epistemological choices of a researcher. Whereas the ethnographic approach is widely applied in interview research, an interview can also be conducted on the basis of positivist paradigm. The aim of interviews can differ from each other. For example, hypothesis testing can be used even though it is not a mandatory component of interview research (Kvale, 1994, p. 160).

Referring Kvale (1996), Edwards and Holland (2013) explain the metaphor of “*miner*” and “*traveller*” which is perhaps the most explanatory example for the chosen interview method in the undertaken research (p. 12). Accordingly, the miner (or modernist interviewer) and the traveller (or postmodern interviewer) differ from each other at both ontological and epistemological levels as the former aims to reach the truth which is already “out there” to be collected whereas the latter concerns about the interactive and reflective interpretation of how interviewers see and transform “sights” into knowledge (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 12).

Throughout the data collection of this research, the interview method posed both significant advantages and, several challenges and limitations. In the light of several conclusions reached by the academic literature both at theoretical and empirical levels, the interview method plays a key role in confirming these conclusions. Starting from a main research question and the four hypotheses, the interview method was used as data collection and hypothesis testing instrument. In order to do so, the following steps were taken:

- 1) The detailed research of the investigated parties’ official websites, official parliament websites, and media sources;

- 2) Contacting to the investigated parties' official communication channels through emails in order to request assistance for finding interviewees, or contacting to the potential interviewees by sending emails to their private email addresses;
- 3) Arranging the time and place of the interview;
- 4) The completion of the interview;
- 5) The application of the snowball sampling method after the interview. In this method, a few key interviewees were chosen and then, they were asked to name other key interviewees relevant to the scope of the research (Burnham et al., 2008, p. 233). Throughout the interview process, this method proved to be efficient in all party cases.

Before, during and after, the application of the interview method has been guided by positivist approach. That is, in connection to the miner metaphor, the gathered data are considered independent of the interviewee (or an independent reality) and the “knowledge” was regarded as deductive, objective and value free (Edwards & Holland, 2013, pp. 15–16). In this respect, standardization was sought and consequently,

- the same/similar questions were asked in the same way during the interviews;
- any influence from the researcher was avoided and, in this way, the objectivity and reliability of the collected data was aimed (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 15).

Although the interviews were conducted in the light of the presented academic literature and its advice above, it should be admitted that there is a limit of such standardization which can be considered as the limitation of the interview method as a mining practice once the positivist approach is taken. As Kvale (1994) puts it, “bias in research cannot be completely avoided, but counteracted by carefully checking for effects of bias in subjects and researchers” (p. 155). Having all these in my mind, this research recognizes the possible bias information provided by the interview participants and therefore, before reaching any strong conclusion on a particular issue during the analysis process, it cross-checked any potentially bias data through different sources including other respondent’s views, academic and media sources. A special

attention was also given whether a statement of a respondent was based on his/her own experience and/or observation; or his/her assumption and/or expectation (Kvale, 1994, p. 154).

3.3.2. Field research

The main data of this research are composed of semi-structured elite interviews which took place in three different forms: face to face interviews in a physical environment; Skype/Zoom interviews; and written/email interviews. The first interview was made with a SYRIZA respondent on the 4th of June 2019 in Athens, Greece and the last one was made with two M5S respondents on the 26th of November 2019 in Rome, Italy. SYRIZA interviews were made between June 2019 and August 2019 and the M5S interviews were made between September 2019 and November 2019. The VG interviews are expanded to a larger period as they were made between June and November 2019. The data were collected from 31 respondents (i.e., 11 SYRIZA respondents; 12 M5S respondents; and 8 VG respondents).⁵ 28 out of 31 were interactive interviews. 19 face to face interviews (i.e., with SYRIZA and M5S respondents); 8 online (Skype & Zoom) interviews (i.e., 7 interviews with VG respondents and 1 interview with a SYRIZA respondent) and 1 phone interview with a SYRIZA respondent were conducted. Apart from these, the 3 respondents provided written data (2 M5S and 1 VG respondents). Two face to face interviews were made through the assistance of a translator in Greek and Italian. One interview was made in Turkish. The rest of the interviews were conducted in the English language. The interviews were made with 21 MPs & MEPs & Senators (i.e., 5 former Ministers & Alternate Ministers; 1 party founder who is also a former minister and the current speaker of the Icelandic parliament; 2 MEPs; 2 Senators; 1 former undersecretary; 11 other MPs) and 10 party cadres (i.e., 1 Party vice-chairman; 1 former party general secretary; 1 policy advisor; 1 parliamentary group manager; 1 youth member; 1 head of youth section; 1 founding member & former MEP candidate; 1 member of secretariat; 1 anonymous party member at municipal level; 1 party newspaper editor). The first 9 interviews were made with SYRIZA members between the 2019 EP Elections and the June 2019 Greek Legislative Elections in Athens during my research visit period at the Institute of European Integration and Policy, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. During both elections period, I had the chance to visit party campaign kiosks to collect informal information from

⁵ In total, approximately 18-hour interview record was generated from 28 interactive interviews. From both interactive and written interviews, 231-page interview transcript (Times New Roman, 12-point, single space) was generated.

party members/activists and even candidates of various parties (i.e., mostly SYRIZA, the ND, the Movement for Change [KINAL; former PASOK]), and some other minor parties), collected election brochures & manifestos and took photos. The presence of such platforms was also an advantage for networking as a few of the respondents was found through this way.

3.4. Limitations

During the data collection and field research process, the two developments have partially interrupted the interview method. First, the early elections on the 7th of July 2019 in Greece slightly affected the field research process negatively. Yet, the target number of interviews were conducted successfully. Before and even after the early elections, both MPs and party cadres were busy, sometimes absent (i.e., they left Athens for the election campaigns in their own electoral districts) and in some cases they did not move to their new offices yet after the early elections. Under such circumstances, I attempted to reach both MPs and party cadres (and contact persons) and to create more networks. Nevertheless, this process was helpful in terms of exploring and learning more about how Greek politics and bureaucracy (and to some extent the EU in this context) work and how to reach respondents even in such complex times. Bias interview data is a potential limitation of the interview method despite all the standardization efforts made in this research as discussed in detail in the Interview Method section (Chapter 3.3.1). One might warn that this limitation may be more persistent during times of elections. In the case of the interview SYRIZA respondents; however, I consider this risk at its lowest point as five out of eleven interviews were conducted after the general elections in July 2019 while most of the pre-election respondents did not run in the elections and most of them were not MPs but party cadres. Second, following the field research in Greece, in the early August 2019, the so-called government crisis started in Italy. It was extremely difficult in that process to reach potential interviewees to arrange an interview in Rome. Following the end of the crisis, the interviews started to take place in the mid-September 2019 without any serious problem.

Since I am not a native speaker of the Greek, Italian and Icelandic languages, the majority of the interviews were made in English. Whereas 1 interview was made in Turkish with a SYRIZA respondent, 2 interviews with a SYRIZA and M5S respondents were made through the assistance of translators. In addition to the interview data, my intermediate level of Italian helped me to read the party documents and media sources in the case of the M5S. Even

though my beginner level of Greek and familiarity with the political terminology in the Icelandic language helped me to reach the key party and media sources, I collected the necessary data through translations.

Chapter 4: The SYRIZA case

Using the data obtained from 11 semi-structured elite interviews with SYRIZA members (i.e., MPs, MEP, and party cadres), the rest of this chapter will focus on SYRIZA as a case study. Moreover, other secondary sources will also accompany to the interview data as well. This chapter will test the hypotheses below:

Hypothesis 1A: SYRIZA showed polity Eurosceptic characteristics before government participation even though today SYRIZA's Euroscepticism is against the EU policies rather than the EU polity.

Hypothesis 2A: The regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of SYRIZA's domestic context, and the constraints imposed by European integration has made SYRIZA responsible once it had become a ruling party.

Hypothesis 3A: Being responsible, SYRIZA's Euroscepticism decreased and the party was forced to take a more moderate position towards the EU.

Hypothesis 4A: SYRIZA's government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU affected SYRIZA's Euroscepticism in accordance with the duration of its government participation and with the influence of its coalition partner.

4.1. Background

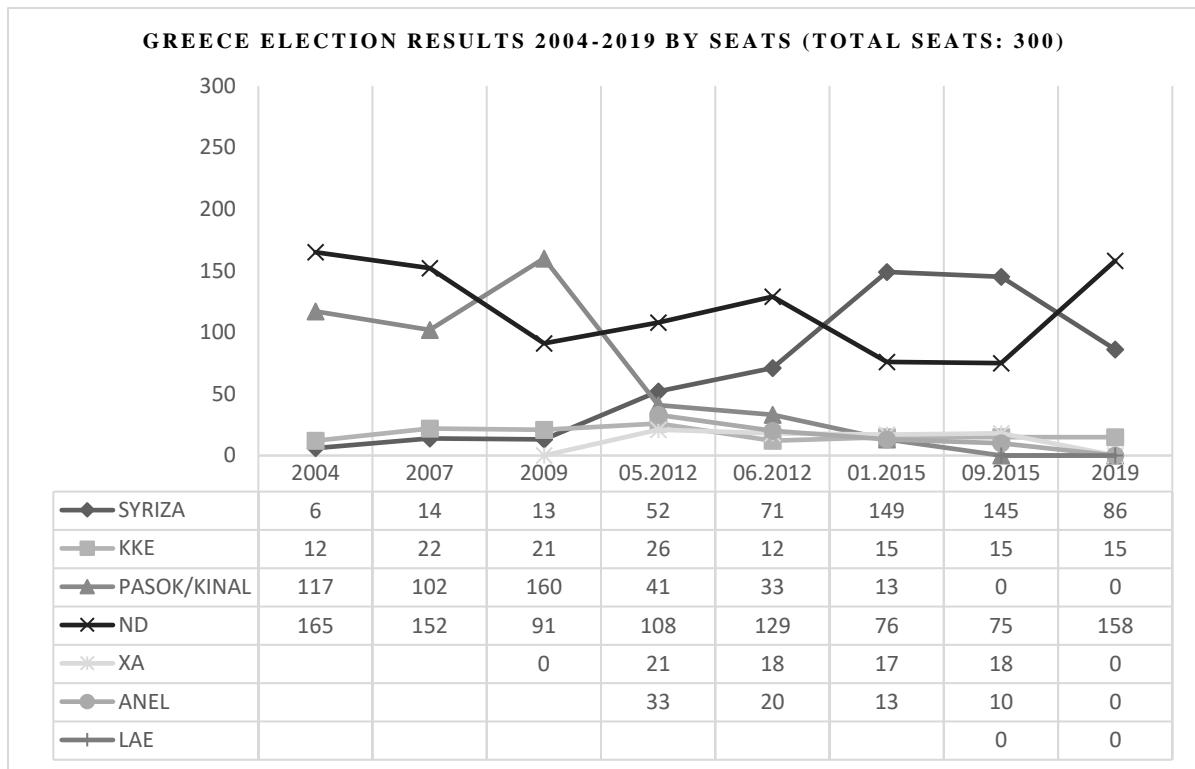
The rise of SYRIZA occupied an important place in European politics after the outbreak of the 2009 Eurozone crisis. As a rising force, SYRIZA was neither alone in Greece nor in Europe as the economic and social crisis led to significant changes in the party systems across the continent. That is, from the extreme right to the extreme left, different political parties and movements started to appear as major actors in Greece and Europe. Facing not only political and economic, but also humanitarian crisis due to severe impact of the economic conditions over Greek citizens, Greece, however, experienced a new political phenomenon: in addition to the usual centre right-left and radical right-left parties, the Greek Parliament even witnessed the presence of Neo-Nazi representatives, a first in post-war Europe. Moreover, once SYRIZA was

in power, the economic crisis in Europe was followed by the migration crisis of 2015 (of which Greece was perhaps the worst-hit EU member country) and the Brexit referendum of 2016. The rise of SYRIZA took place in such a context and it marked a controversial decade of European left politics.

The European left went through periods which were characterised by disagreements and split-ups within the communist parties of Europe in the mid-20th century; the collapse of the Soviet Union; and subsequently, the emergence of new radical left parties. Being one of these new radical left parties, the historical evolution of SYRIZA has similarities with several European radical left parties. Having its roots in the communist tradition and later in the radical left party, Synaspismos (which was also founded as a coalition initially in the late 1980s and then transformed into a party), SYRIZA has been established as an electoral alliance in 2004. Having Alexis Tsipras as its last leader, Synaspismos was the biggest member of the SYRIZA alliance alongside various radical left forces (i.e., “much smaller groups of the extra-parliamentary left of Maoist, Trotskyist, communist, ecologist, socialist and left social democratic origins”) until its own formal dissolution in 2013 (Font et al., 2021, p. 169). Synaspismos’ itself was historically linked to the tradition of Eurocommunism (Interview No. 3, 6, 7, 9) and the disagreements within the KKE. Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis (2018) suggest that by establishing the SYRIZA alliance, Synaspismos aimed to loosen its ties with the Eurocommunist tradition while broadening its influence among the youth and activists, to adopt a new “radical left” character based on social movements against neoliberalism (p.211-212). As an electoral alliance composed of various radical left parties under its roof, SYRIZA participated in four legislative elections (In 2004, 2007, 2009, May 2012) and achieved results above 3% (i.e., the electoral threshold in Greece) in every election (See Graph 11). SYRIZA came to power predominantly through following a broad anti-austerity agenda in the context of broader social transformations and conflicts derived from long term political and economic crisis (Kouki & González, 2018, p. 123). According to Keith and March (2016b), this anti-austerity agenda and political background coupled with “populist overtones” and both “pragmatic” (i.e., forming coalition with ANEL and “principled” (i.e., “clear anti-austerity principles”) approach to power mostly explain SYRIZA’s success (p. 371). SYRIZA’s anti-austerity agenda was a strong response to the pro-austerity front which was composed of the two mainstream rival parties: the ND and PASOK.

The two parties, according to a respondent, were largely responsible of Greek economy’s bankruptcy and country’s entering to the memorandum period (Interview No. 11). SYRIZA’s 2012 election manifesto was clearly associating these two parties with “business

interests” (“εκλογική διακήρυξη” (SYRIZA Electoral Declaration), *Synaspismos Official Website*, 2012, p. 2). Following the crisis, converged on a neoliberal center (Kouki & González, 2018, p. 127), the two parties formed a pro-austerity coalition in the 2012 elections. Eventually both parties lost against SYRIZA in the January 2015 elections whereas PASOK came up against the worst election results since its foundation (See Graph 11). This led to the so-called phenomenon pasokification; that is, the collapse of PASOK. The implementation of the first memorandum was “very destructive” for PASOK and it was the beginning of the end for the party (Interview No. 4). Went through a transformation process for a while, PASOK eventually merged into a new political alliance: KINAL. The story of PASOK between 2009 and 2015 had occupied a significant place throughout the interview process. A respondent depicted PASOK/KINAL as “neoliberal”, “neoconservative” and “pro-European” (Interview No. 10). He also maintained that even though PASOK/KINAL is pro-European, it defends status-quo unlike SYRIZA which is in favour of a radical change in Europe (Interview No. 10). The past of PASOK/KINAL, ideological differences, and different European visions also led to a problem of communication between the two parties. A SYRIZA member expressed this by saying that PASOK/KINAL “still remains closer to the neoliberal democracy than to their family” and it has been difficult for SYRIZA “to create some channel of communication” (Interview No. 6). Another respondent also confirmed the problem of communication and asserted that SYRIZA “cannot discuss efficiently with KINAL and PASOK in Greece” (Interview No. 9). Unlike PASOK/KINAL; however, the ND did not experience such a sharp fall and with the exception of the two elections in 2015, the ND generally showed a relatively consistent trend in terms of electoral results (See Graph 11). Between the years 2009 and 2019, the economic crisis brought about the emergence of new political parties (e.g., ANEL, Democratic Left [DIMAR], the River [To Potami], Popular Unity [LAE], the European Realistic Disobedience Front [MeRA25], Course of Freedom [PE], the Greek Solution [EL]) in the Greek party system while several extra-parliamentary parties (e.g., The Popular Association – Golden Dawn [XA], the Union of Centrists) started to be represented in the parliament for the first time. SYRIZA had been rising in such a party system and competing against permanent forces in the parliament: the ND, PASOK/KINAL and the KKE.



Y Axis 0 to 300 Total seats in the Greek Parliament
X Axis Dates of General elections

Graph 11: Greece Election Results from 2004 to 2019^{6 7}

Source: The Hellenic Parliament (“Election Results”, *The Hellenic Parliament*, [n.d.]); Greek Ministry of Interior (“National Elections”, *Greek Ministry of Interior*, [2019])

Having a stable two-party system more than three decades, a political earthquake accompanied by the economic crisis turned upside-down the Greek party system (Tsatsanis & Teperoglou, 2016, p. 428). The economic crisis “marked a rupture with the *metapolitefsi* era” which led to the formation of a two-party system by the ND and PASOK (Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis, 2018, pp. 204–205). From 1970s to 1980s, PASOK’s electoral achievement brought about “one of the most stable party systems in Europe, with very low electoral volatility” (Moschonas, 2013, p. 33). Nevertheless, as Kouki and González (2018) put it, “a seemingly unchangeable” bipartisan party system was changed by socioeconomic and political crisis in less than five years (p. 126). Mudde (2017) asserts that the party system change in Greece is not similar to the Italian one in the 1990s in which corruption scandals triggered the change of the old system called the First Republic and almost all parties were replaced by new parties with the exception of the League (p. 8). Greece first experienced a dealignment process

⁶ PASOK run in the September 2015 elections as a part of the Democratic Alignment.

⁷ PASOK run in the 2019 elections as a part of the KINAL.

characterised by “high levels of electoral volatility and fragmentation” until 2012 which was followed by a “gradual stabilisation and realignment” process (Tsatsanis & Teperoglou, 2016, p. 445). The period between the 2014 EP elections and September 2015 general elections signalled the formation of a new and rather weaker party system -compared to the previous ones- dominated by SYRIZA and ND (Tsatsanis & Teperoglou, 2016, p. 445). In this respect, Mudde (2017) predicts that providing a populist left-wing alternative to the ND, SYRIZA will play more or less the same role in the party system as PASOK did (p. 8). In the times of crisis, SYRIZA adopted a discourse dividing political actors as pro-memorandum and the anti-memorandum forces while associating the former with popular masses (and with itself) and the latter with the elites (Katsambekis, 2015, p. 156). Nevertheless, in her analysis, Vasilopoulou (2018) also demonstrates that the EU issue has been salient in the Greek party system even before and after the economic crisis (p. 320).

Until the elections in 2019, the left-wing universe in the Greek parliament was mainly composed of social democrats (i.e., KINAL), radical left SYRIZA and the KKE. Compared to SYRIZA, today’s KKE represents a different left-wing position in the parliament. Alongside ideological differences, Synaspismos and the KKE were representing the two different European approaches within the Greek radical left of the parliament as the KKE was in favour of Greece’s leaving from the EU whereas Synaspismos took a critical position towards the EU and its specific policies (Lefkofridi, 2010, p. 14). The KKE is known as a party which has always been against the EU (Interview No. 3, 4). A former KKE member (since 1974) and SYRIZA MP stated that after the collapse of the Greek Junta in Greece, the KKE was against Greece’s EU (European Economic Community) membership on the basis of the view that the partners who are not equals among themselves, cannot be serious partners (Interview No. 2). During the interview process, the KKE was depicted by the SYRIZA respondents as “dogmatic”; (Interview No. 1); “most orthodox, isolated communist party in Europe” (Interview No. 3); the strongest party in terms of union power among Greek leftist parties including SYRIZA (Interview No. 4); “very conservative” (Interview. 5); and “a relic” (Interview No. 7). Despite their shared radical left identity, denouncing SYRIZA’s leftist status, the KKE refused to join SYRIZA in the government (Interview No. 1) and a respondent also noted that there is not any “channel of communication or any prospect of cooperation in the near future” between SYRIZA and the KKE (Interview No. 6). Being constantly represented in the parliament since 1974, the KKE continues to be a strong actor of the Greek left and shows relatively consistent electoral results in the last fifteen years (See Graph 11).

From being a minor radical left platform, SYRIZA's story towards being a major leftist force has started in a very short time frame. Just in three years after the outbreak of the economic crisis, SYRIZA was not only representing a new hope for Greece but also for the European radical left and southern European anti-austerity parties and movements. The failure of the centre right and centre left Greek parties in tackling the economic crisis rapidly and effectively coupled with the chronological problems of Greece (e.g., nepotism and corruption) had become an opportunity for SYRIZA to change and rise in the Greek party system.

SYRIZA was transformed into a political party aftermath of the May 2012 elections to run in the next elections held in June 2012 as a political party⁸ and eventually became the largest opposition party in the parliament. Completed its organizational transformation in 2012/2013, after almost a 2.5-year experience in the parliament as the main opposition party, SYRIZA was the leading party in the elections of January 2015 and formed a coalition with the right-wing ANEL (See Graph 11).

SYRIZA became a ruling party in a hard-national context in which the negotiations were held with the so-called Troika for six months between January-June 2015. In this period, according to a SYRIZA official, the party realised that it was "the first only radical left government in the EU and had no alliances" and all political actors were against it (Interview No. 3). There was a period in which the KKE and PASOK (KINAL) had been rejecting to cooperate with SYRIZA (Interview No. 9). A respondent stated that SYRIZA had been isolated from other political parties (namely the ND, PASOK (KINAL), the KKE, other smaller parties) in the parliament throughout the 4-year government experience (at least until the signing of the Prespes Agreement) (Interview No. 1). The conservatives considered SYRIZA as "dangerous virus" while the social democrats and socialists saw it as "an agent of pasokification" (Interview No. 3). Once the negotiations came to an end, SYRIZA asked the bailout question to the public through a referendum and endorsed the *OXI* (No) answer in June 2015. Even though received the answer that it campaigned for, SYRIZA signed a new bailout deal with the Troika in the following days. Subsequently, the minority group within SYRIZA protested the new deal, some of its members left the party and established a new political party called Popular Unity (LAE). As a result, losing its majority in the parliament, SYRIZA faced snap elections in September 2015 resulted with another SYRIZA victory whereas the newly established LAE failed to exceed the threshold. It "proved remarkably resilient" despite its recent bitter experience with the Troika as well as the party's internal turmoil (Aslanidis & Kaltwasser, 2016, pp.1078–

⁸ Since the leading 'party' (but not the alliance) gets bonus seats in the Greek election system, SYRIZA was transformed into a political party.

1080). The summer of 2015 had marked the beginning of a considerable change for SYRIZA. In the next few years, other new parties were also established by former SYRIZA-led government politicians such as Yanis Varoufakis' MeRA25 and Zoe Konstantopoulou's PE. According to Vasilopoulou (2018), another SYRIZA victory in September 2015 signals the fact that despite its contribution to party's rise, SYRIZA's Euroscepticism was not necessarily behind its success in elections (p. 324). Instead, having a reputation not damaged by "corruption, nepotism, and rent-seeking behaviour", SYRIZA was considered as a new actor opening a new leaf in the Greek party system (Vasilopoulou, 2018, pp. 323–324). Some scholars claim that the new deal was even harsher and more demanding than the previous terms, which were rejected through the referendum (Tsatsanis & Teperoglou, 2016, p. 437; Keith & March, 2016a, p. 7), and was "implemented in its toughest form" (Kotroyannos et al., 2018, p. 11). Why did SYRIZA accept the 3rd memorandum? Whereas the official discourse was that the government accepted the new austerity measures to protect the national interests through staying in the Eurozone, it seems that the question will remain difficult to answer for a long time as Tsatsanis and Teperoglou, (2016) suggest (p. 437). SYRIZA had been in power until the June 2019 early election which was called by Tsipras's himself once SYRIZA could not get successful results in the EP elections of May 2019.

The leadership factor also played a key role in this rise. Proposing Tsipras as his successor, Alekos Alavanos stepped down from party leadership in 2008 even though in the subsequent years tension arose between the two leaders (Katsourides, 2016, pp. 54-55). The economic crisis and the subsequent rise of SYRIZA made Tsipras undoubtedly more popular even though he was mostly depicted negatively in European media (Heilig, 2016, p. 10).

Moschonas (2013) argues that SYRIZA's transformation into the main opposition party would not be possible without Tsipras' leadership and strategy (p. 36). Chaidas (2018) even goes further and asserts that prior to the September 2015 elections, "Syriza's discourse was predominantly emotional and oriented at the projection of Tsipras' moral superiority" (p. 137). Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis (2018) also state that whereas SYRIZA used to emphasize "collectivity, plurality, and horizontalism" and avoid giving a central role to its leader during its campaigns, it built the election campaign "almost solely around Tsipras himself" during the September 2015 elections (p. 221).

Once SYRIZA was advancing towards office, Tsipras has been becoming "all the more powerful" (Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis, 2018, p. 221). After the signing of the third memorandum, various fractions and dissidents in the party demanded Tsipras' resignation (e.g., the SYRIZA Youth) or quit the party which led to the foundation of the LAE by Lafazanis

(Katsourides, 2016, p. 125). In this regard, Mudde (2017) claims that Tsipras' call for the September 2015 elections aimed only to eliminate the radicals from the party who were opposing the third bailout and the moderation of Tsipras and as a consequence of the elections, Tsipras' power in the party significantly increased (p. 27–28). After this date, he had now a strong authority on the party and the government (Kioupkiolis 2016, pp. 112–113). Even before SYRIZA's government participation years, Moschonas (2013) notes that the radicalised left-wing faction of SYRIZA already favoured leaving the Eurozone and the party membership already questioned whether SYRIZA can remain united in the event of coming into power and reaching compromises with the EU (pp. 36–37). He argues that the disagreement within the party on such issues used to already undermine “the party’s cohesion and strategic manoeuvrability” (Moschonas, 2013, pp. 36–37). The dissidents failed to gain an electoral achievement in September 2015. In this regard, Mudde (2017) asserts that prior to the September 2015 elections, the internal opposition was not organized yet and more importantly, most of the Greek electorate were tired of fighting with the EU and not in favour of the idea of Grexit which was supported by the internal opposition (p. 26).

4.2. Analysis

4.2.1. SYRIZA’s Euroscepticism before, during and after government participation

4.2.1.1. Towards being a ruling party

By the summer of 2012, it became clear that SYRIZA was now a major rival for the mainstream political parties in the Greek party system. Unlike Vasilopoulou (2018), Pirro et al. (2018) suggest that as an outsider among major political parties in the Greek party system, SYRIZA benefited the most from its Eurosceptic platform on its way to the office (p. 383). As stated in Chapter 2, some scholars urge that being a contender for office also led to the change of SYRIZA’s Euroscepticism. For instance, Vasilopoulou (2018) puts forward a chronology of SYRIZA’s Euroscepticism in which the party has different degrees of criticism towards the EU in 2006 (low), 2010 (hard) and 2014 (moderate) (pp. 319–320). Run as a political party, the June 2012 elections was a turning point for SYRIZA and for its Euroscepticism as well as for its new role as the main opposition party in the parliament.

Back in SYRIZA's opposition years, the party expressed its Euroscepticism through mostly economic arguments accompanied by an anti-neoliberal and anti-austerity stance and the democratic deficit criticism. SYRIZA's anti-neo liberal stance before 2015 can easily be traced in party's official documents as well as official speeches. For example, in two different years, Tsipras labelled neoliberalism as a threat:

Because peoples of Europe are in danger, democracy itself is in danger.

Neoliberalism and -the barbarian austerity measures- is a threat to the peoples of Europe. ("Alexis Tsipras' speech at the 4th Congress of the European Left", *SYRIZA official website*, 2013);

Democracy is in retreat. And the reason is neoliberalism. ("Alexis Tsipras' speech at a debate organised by the Dutch Socialist Party in Amersfoort", *SYRIZA official website*, 2014)

Having this critical stance towards neoliberalism, SYRIZA explicitly associated it with the EU and ruling mainstream parties of Greece. In an official party statement, SYRIZA claimed that adopting neoliberal policies both the government and the troika want to "turn Greece into a labour-rights and social desert" ("Announcement of the Press Office of SYRIZA on the International Workers", *SYRIZA official website*, 2014). In this respect, Tsipras unsurprisingly viewed European integration as a "neoliberal" process ("The Europe We Want- article by Alexis Tsipras in the New Europe magazine", *SYRIZA official website*, 2014). Associated with an anti-neoliberal discourse, the austerity measures used to constitute SYRIZA's main criticism. The numbers of anti-austerity public statements and speeches made by Tsipras and SYRIZA members throughout the rise of SYRIZA are countless. SYRIZA did not only blame the EU and the memorandum for the social crisis, but also the mismanagement of the crisis by the Greek political parties (i.e., PASOK and ND), and this was interpreted by SYRIZA as a need for fighting against neoliberalism at both domestic and the European levels (Eleftheriou, 2016, p. 298). For SYRIZA, rather than the Greek people, "the pro-austerity establishment" which was composed of parties implementing neo-liberal policies forced by the "memoranda", and other business actors, were supposed to be blamed (Kouki and González 2018, p. 131). Instead of the new austerity policies of "the so-called saviours", SYRIZA offered a "new strategy based on the support of growth and the redistribution of wealth" ("SYRIZA press release on the new memorandum measures", *SYRIZA Official Website*, 2013). Moreover, rather

than isolating Greece from European integration, SYRIZA discourse was mostly about changing Greece in connection to changing Europe as well: “We are responsible towards the European tradition and the European vision” (“SYRIZA London: Public talk by Alexis Tsipras”, *SYRIZA Official Website*, 2013). The party was even labelled by SYRIZA MEP Papadimoulis in 2015 as a “pro-European force” which does not consider “Grexit” as an option (“GUE/NGL condemns scaremongering and gives its full backing to SYRIZA”, *SYRIZA Official Website*, January 2015). From time to time, SYRIZA gave the signals that it is not a polity Eurosceptic party even before government participation. The SYRIZA leadership’s discourse had been neither about collapsing the EU nor leaving the EU, but changing the EU:

We want the democratic and progressive reorientation of the European Union. Ending neoliberalism, austerity and the so-called European societies of two-thirds, where 1/3 of society behaves as if there were no economic crisis and 2/3 suffer every day, more and more. (“The Europe We want-article by Alexis Tsipras in the New Europe magazine”, *SYRIZA Official Website*, 2014) (Hypothesis 1A)

Nevertheless, the rise of SYRIZA was perceived as a threat by several actors back in these years. For example, Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2014) point out that especially left-wing political actors which are resisting the austerity policies, are “discredited and denounced as an irresponsible populist” (p. 133). SYRIZA was not an exception as the party was “portrayed dangerously populist, a defender of the ‘drachma lobby,’ anti-EU and anti-NATO” and so on (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 134). After all, the party challenged both the domestic system and the austerity in Europe (Tsoukalis, 2016, p. 133) and so it had promises not only for Greece but also for the polity: “The future of Greece, the future of Europe depends on our success” (“SYRIZA London: Public talk by Alexis Tsipras”, *SYRIZA Official Website*, 2013) (Hypothesis 1A). Eventually the rise of SYRIZA had become a new hope for the European radical left (at least for a while) and for the countries hit by the austerity measures. After long negotiations in the first six months of SYRIZA in office, the compromise between the Greek government and the so-called Troika took place in the summer of 2015 and the impact of this compromise on SYRIZA is sought in the rest of this chapter.

4.2.1.2. SYRIZA as a ruling party: a short outlook

A small coalition of radical left parties has become a major force in the Greek party system in less than 10 years and ruled Greece for more than 4 years. Took its critical stance towards the EU during its election campaigns as an opposition party, what has changed then in SYRIZA's conception over European issues once it became a ruling party? Concerning the party's general stance towards the EU, throughout the interview process, **none of the respondents** stated that SYRIZA is against European integration as a whole (Interview No. 1–11). On the contrary, as a part of their answer to various interview questions, several respondents labelled SYRIZA as a “pro-European” party (Interview No. 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11). Some stated that SYRIZA is in favour of the EU and/or Greece's EU membership (Interview No. 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11); some only mentioned the positive aspects of European integration (Interview No. 2). In general, **all** respondents expressed their personal opinions about at least one positive aspect of the EU (or they made at least one general positive remark about the EU) during the interviews (Interview No. 1–11). However, it is also crucial to note that **all** respondents pointed out that the party has had a certain criticism towards the EU (Interview No. 1–11). In this respect, **all** respondents mentioned the party's criticism concerning EU's economy policies (Interview No. 1–11) while several respondents expressed party's criticism (or their personal criticism) towards democratic issues in the EU (Interview No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11). A respondent also mentioned party's criticism towards the EU's management of the migration policies (Interview No. 1) while another one expressed his own criticism concerning the absence of a common defence policy in the EU (Interview No. 7). It should be noted that no party criticism towards the EU on the cultural basis (or through nativist arguments) had been reported by the respondents (Interview No. 1–11). Nevertheless, the question of to what extent SYRIZA is enthusiastically supporting the EU today is controversial. In this respect, a SYRIZA member made the following statement:

I don't think people have a positive view on the EU necessarily within the left or within SYRIZA or within Greece in general. But, the idea of that there is a political plan that we can leave the EU is I think mainly abandoned right now. (Interview No. 4)

This statement implies that SYRIZA is far from being a non-sceptic pro-European party today even though polity Eurosceptic proposals are no longer accepted in the party (Hypothesis 3A).

Supporting this hypothesis, two respondents identified the party through different categorizations which can also be found in the literature of Euroscepticism. While a respondent emphasized that rather than being a “pro-Europeanist” “in a non-sceptical way” SYRIZA has always been “internationalist” and “pro-Europeanist”, “a critical pro-Europeanist” (Interview No. 5), another respondent labelled SYRIZA as a “soft Eurosceptic party” criticizing the EU “as it is right now” but supporting the existence of the European project (Interview No. 3). The following sections will look into Hypothesis 3A and seek further answers.

4.2.1.3. Party split and remaining members

SYRIZA lost its majority in the parliament once several members of the party including prominent names and well-known public figures left the party by protesting the signing of the 3rd bailout programme by Tsipras leadership. Consequently, being in government for only eight months, SYRIZA experienced a concrete and drastic change. The party split led to the early elections in September 2015 which was criticized by Tsipras with the following words:

Finally, comrades, I cannot help but mention the wound that opened in SYRIZA when the government majority turned into a minority; when the government was practically overthrown from the inside; when the party was split and the proponents of the old political system rushed to take advantage of this ugliness. (“Alexis Tsipras speech at the nationwide SYRIZA conference”, *SYRIZA Official Website*, 2015)

The question of whether the departure of these members has changed the overall orientation of the party on the issue of exit from the Eurozone will be sought in this section.

As discussed before, it is well-known that SYRIZA had different factions during its opposition years of which Eleftheriou (2016) calls “majority” and “minority” factions (p. 298). The argument of the research is that it is difficult to consider SYRIZA as a party which was entirely composed of pro-European and policy Eurosceptic members until August 2015 (i.e., polity Euroscepticism was still visible inside the party). At this point, a clarification is needed on the question of what SYRIZA’s polity Euroscepticism was. The term Grexit was mostly used to refer Greece’s exit from the Eurozone rather than Greece’s total leaving from the EU (like Brexit). However, when put into words, the line between the two prospects was sometimes

vague. The options of exiting the Eurozone and leaving the EU were intensively discussed and sometimes used interchangeably by political and journalistic accounts in the investigated period and it can be considered that this is also an explanatory factor behind this vagueness. This conceptual difficulty was also observed during the interview process. The present research defines the term Grexit as a reference to exiting the Eurozone unless otherwise is mentioned, and associates it with policy Euroscepticism as long as an exit from the EU or an anti-EU attitude or stance are not implied by a source.

The interview data clearly confirm the argument that today's SYRIZA is not a polity Eurosceptic party at all and does not even consist of polity Eurosceptic members anymore. That is, SYRIZA has become a more homogenous party in terms of the approach of its members towards the Eurozone and EU. In order to understand this change, it is essential to look into the details of the interview data. Even though several respondents highlighted that SYRIZA has not changed its "pro-European" stance after government participation (Interview No. 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11), it can be considered that polity Eurosceptic views used to exist within the party until the summer 2015. For instance, a SYRIZA official confirmed this via the following statement:

During the split of 2015, the anti-EU part of the party and most of them are actually nationalist; kind of left-nationalist, kind of that mix, they left the party. The people that remained with the party, actually all of them are pro-EU. They recognize the importance of staying in the EU and having alliances. (Interview No. 3)

Similar to the Interview No. 3, another respondent labelled the party cadres of the splinter group within SYRIZA with the word "nationalistic":

To some extent, after... some cadre from more nationalist within SYRIZA left in 2015 after the adoption of the memorandum, after the election of 2015, after the memorandum. (Interview No. 5)

Other two respondents; however, claimed that the splinter group within the party decided to make the proposal "to be outside Europe" not before but after the negotiation process and the referendum in the summer 2015 (Interview No. 9) and those who left the party in the summer 2015 was not that much against European integration:

There was minority which were splits after September, under the signing of the agreement; which was not so much against Europe in general but they thought of Greece should withdraw the Euro; that made it clear how it could survive in that kind of state. There was a minority. It has been consistent to some sense, more critical, let's say, than the majority of SYRIZA from the very beginning. But now that minority has left party. (Interview No. 1)

To sum, two of the four respondents expressed opposite views when they identify the scepticism of the splinter group towards the EU. Whereas the first two respondents even used the word “nationalist” when they identify the splinter group, the last two respondents depicted a moderate Euroscepticism which can be translated as policy Euroscepticism if they were really against only the Eurozone but not European integration as a whole. In addition to the interview data above, several media sources support the different views above. In December 2014, SYRIZA MEP Papadimoulis said that “there is no SYRIZA party member who speaks in favour of returning to the drachma” (“SYRIZA reiterates its commitment to the eurozone”, *Euractiv*, 2014). In order to understand SYRIZA’s splinter group in these years, it is worth looking into a prominent figure of SYRIZA’s Left Platform and the Minister of Productive Reconstruction, Environment and Energy in the first SYRIZA cabinet: Panagiotis Lafazanis who later became the leader of the newly created LAE and run in the elections of September 2015 just after his departure from SYRIZA in August 2015. In international media sources, Lafazanis was depicted as a “Eurosceptic”, “radical voice”, and “hardliner” back in the opposition years and first term of SYRIZA while he was portrayed as an opponent of another deal with the troika (“SYRIZA: Everything you need to know about Greece’s new Marxist governing party”, *Independent*, 2015; “SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras prepares for power”, *Euractiv*, 2014; “What happens if Greece can’t pay its debts?”, *The Guardian*, 2015). In the same period in which Papadimoulis' statement was cited above, Lafazanis was also expressing the following: “We want to exit the euro and a complete break with the totalitarian EU” (“What Would SYRIZA’s Victory Mean for Europe?” *Der Spiegel International*, 2015). Finally, a statement of the Left Platform indicates that the minority section is explicitly demanding an exit from the Eurozone but also taking a very critical stance towards the EU (“Λαφαζάνης: Ρήξη και έξοδος από το ευρώ”, [Lafazanis: Rupture and exit from the euro] *The Toc*, 2014). Given these opposite views of the interview participants and different media sources, it can be considered that during the opposition years, the splinter group was not entirely homogeneous in terms of polity and

policy Euroscepticism. This confirms the arguments of Eleftheriou (2016) and Vasilopoulou (2018) discussed in Chapter 2 regarding SYRIZA's divided nature over the European question during the opposition years. Nevertheless, it is certain that the big majority of the respondents explicitly confirmed that today none of SYRIZA members is supporting Grexit or the idea of leaving the Eurozone or the EU (Interview No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11) whereas a respondent gave the answer of "very low levels" (Interview. No. 6) when the question about the popularity of a Grexit among SYRIZA members was asked. The complete abandonment of the idea of leaving the EU within SYRIZA is expressed by a respondent through the following words:

So, I think that one main aspect which is fairly obvious is that post-summer of 2015 what changed was SYRIZA's perception of how much can be done within the confines of the EU. And the choice was made that it is essentially impossible to do outside those confines. (Interview No. 4)

This can be translated as the new understanding of SYRIZA caused by the constraints of European integration (Hypothesis 2A). In this respect, even after an eight-month experience, it can be said that SYRIZA became a homogenous party of the policy Eurosceptic members in the absence of the splinter group having polity Eurosceptic members. Last but not least, there are indicators of a political context in which the notion of Grexit does not seem to be a hot topic anymore in Greece as even the most Eurosceptic left-wing party in the Greek parliament, the KKE does not "raise the issue as an immediate concern" (Interview No. 3).

4.2.1.4. Discourse and position of the remaining members

There is no doubt that September 2015 was marking the beginning of a new era for SYRIZA due to new party law-makers in the parliament, the absence of the splinter group, and a new SYRIZA administration under the new conditions of the austerity. In addition to the first term of SYRIZA with full of tough negotiations with the Troika, what has changed at the end of SYRIZA's ruling years concerning party's discourse and position towards the EU? The interview data strongly suggest the change of SYRIZA's discourse towards the EU. However, to argue a radical change of the party's position (or its scepticism once asked), the collected findings are complex unlike the certainty of the discursive change.

First, the interview data strongly confirm that SYRIZA has softened its discourse towards the EU. For example, a respondent specifically emphasised SYRIZA's less critical discourse towards the EU mainly regarding the economy policies:

Before 2015, SYRIZA had a harsher rhetoric about the EU related issues, but mainly on the two pillars: the first pillar was the economic policy. And the second was about the social policy and employment policy of the EU broadly. After coming in the power in 2015, this harsh rhetoric became more nuanced if you want to say like that. Which is that we were forced to you know... being at the opposition you can say whatever you want with no cost. But leading the country and being obliged to communicate, try to find consensus to collaborate with other leaders of the EU council for instance. The EP makes you, you know, try to find some balances, so bottom-line the criticism of SYRIZA vis a vis, the EU related issues those two issues, economy and social policy remained the same, but the way this criticism is expressed has been more delicate. (Interview No. 6)

The quote above indicates not only the moderation of SYRIZA's discourse concerning economy policies but also the cause of this moderation which is clearly SYRIZA's coming into power and its experience with the EU institutions (Hypothesis 2A & Hypothesis 3A). In the same vein, another respondent said that "the criticism remains. But not in the same strand, agility. It is much more civilised" (Interview No. 7). And when asked about SYRIZA's general criticism towards the EU, the same respondent also stated that SYRIZA's discourse is "softened" and it is "more pragmatistic" (Interview No. 7).

Second, concerning the change of the party's position, different views were observed. As discussed in Chapter 2, several scholars such as Pirro et al. (2018), Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou (2015) and Vasilopoulou (2018) suggest a softening change of SYRIZA's position towards the EU after its government participation. Moreover, Eleftheriou (2016) and Vasilopoulou (2018) also note that parties could start moderating their position even before their government participation. For example, a SYRIZA member asserted that SYRIZA had a more radical programme when it was an opposition party and meanwhile it started to be more realistic:

(...) even though we had sort of two years of very harsh memorandum, SYRIZA did not win the elections in 2012 even though and with... I would say much more radical programme at that time. So, that also I think show something both about SYRIZA and how things went between sort of 2012 and 2015 how there was a shift towards... I don't like the word realistic policies, but I think that there was other than having a shift towards realism and what would work with euro.

(Interview No. 4)

Another respondent mostly emphasised the closing gap between the EU and SYRIZA and claims that in the course of 2015, the EU and SYRIZA “(...) found the common road after the referendum (...)” (Interview No. 9). He also expressed this closing of the gap with the following words:

In the beginning there was also big distance because there was no trust between the government of Greece and the EU, and the EU and the government of Greece. There was a gap between. But I think after our first governmental steps in 2015 and 2016 mainly, and the first evaluation law that was voted in 2016 and the results of the economy; we proved that we are a democratic government that we are stable in our agreements and we can implement that we have agreed for the best of European citizens. (Interview No. 9)

Similar to Interview No. 9, another SYRIZA MP argued that “gradually SYRIZA has been most absolutely compliant. It agrees with the main lines of European policies” (Interview No. 7). No other respondents confirmed that SYRIZA’s position towards the EU’s economy polices have been dramatically changed or SYRIZA moderated its view towards the EU. On the contrary, even the two aforementioned respondents also stated that “the content of the economy policy” (Interview No. 4) and the value of SYRIZA’s policy (Interview No. 9) towards the EU has not changed. And also, when it was asked if SYRIZA’ criticism changed, two other respondents also claimed that the criticism of SYRIZA has not changed (Interview No. 1, 7, 6, 10, 11). However, in relation to the EU, some respondents commented that SYRIZA “became more realistic” (Interview No. 5); “moved from political adolescents to political adulthood” (Interview No. 6); and “became more pragmatistic” (Interview No. 7). SYRIZA faced and

understood the realities of international politics (Interview No. 2), of the EU (Interview No. 5), became more experienced (Interview No. 6, 11), increased its knowledge over the EU (Interview No. 1, 3, 9). The regrets of the party were also mentioned by some respondents. Accordingly, SYRIZA believed that it could negotiate and reach a deal with the lenders (Interview No. 7) and the party was idealistic and mistaken about the forces which were “vindictive vis a vis SYRIZA” more than the party was expecting in the first six months concerning the debt of Greece (Interview No. 5). SYRIZA realised that its strategy was “little bit naïve” (Interview No. 10). In this respect, a SYRIZA MP asserted that the party perhaps could not predict that the EU would have such a cruel, prescriptive and dictating attitude (Interview No. 2). Overall, despite the confirmation of a discursive change, a radical change of the party’s position towards the EU has not been strongly confirmed in this section. Instead, coupled with the party split, the signs of a minor moderation and decrease of policy Euroscepticism of the party can be proposed in the light of the interview data.

4.2.2. The constraints: towards a more responsible ruling party?

The analysis below will show if the regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of their domestic context and the constraints imposed by European integration have played a role in making SYRIZA a responsible party once it became a ruling party in 2015.

4.2.2.1. The constraints

There is no doubt that SYRIZA’s assertive promises had played a significant role in its electoral success. The feasibility of those promises was criticized by various actors including some left-wing actors such as the KKE which even refused to be in the same coalition with SYRIZA after the January 2015 elections. Given SYRIZA’s own promises and the external criticism towards the feasibility of those promises, what did the main opposition party SYRIZA think about handling the constraints of European integration? The 2012 election manifesto was claiming that Greece was being blackmailed and intimidated between the choices of the memorandum and an exit from the Eurozone which was a lie according to SYRIZA, as such a prospect would have been costly for the Eurozone’s itself (“εκλογική διακήρυξη” (SYRIZA Electoral Declaration), *Synaspismos Official Website*, 2012, p. 2). During the opposition years

of SYRIZA, the party leadership was confident about its bargaining power. A Guardian interview unfolds this clearly: Emphasising the fact that SYRIZA wants to stay in the Eurozone while renegotiating the terms of the austerity programme, Tsipras was asked what leverage the SYRIZA government will have and he answered by stating that Greece (as all other Eurozone countries) has “a strong bargaining chip” (i.e., exiting the Eurozone) which has not been used by other Greek government (“Alexis Tsipras: Greece could be the spark for defeating austerity across Europe”; *SYRIZA Official Website*, 2013).

In the end, the Tsipras leadership did not defend the option of exiting the Eurozone and was forced to accept the memorandum which was what it criticized the most during the rise of the party. During the interviews, concerning the constraints imposed by the EU; **all** respondents mentioned the limiting role of the memorandum on SYRIZA’s promised economy policies (Interview No. 1–11). A SYRIZA respondent summarized the process through the following words:

In the first six months, we tried to negotiate for a better agreement with European creditors. But we were more or less obliged to sign a compromise because we faced a very aggressive and negative reaction from the European creditors and from the European leadership and European elite. (Interview No. 11)

In the same vein, some respondents stated that SYRIZA was forced to implement the austerity agenda (Interview No. 1, 7, 8) even though the party did not like it (Interview No. 1); and the party was obliged to implement policies that it would never approve since it had to reach the target numbers such as 3.5% increase in the budget (Interview No. 2). The following words of a respondent also support the two arguments above:

There were two things that are important. Number 1: the party never accepted these policies as the rule. They were policies that were forced by the EU and they were not part of the ideological programme of SYRIZA. (Interview No. 4)

Moreover, according to a SYRIZA member, it is thought by everybody that Greece faced a harsher treatment from the EU (i.e., the European Commission [EC] and European Central Bank [ECB]) than the IMF as “Europeans were more hostile, more austere than IMF. Very very

vindictive” (Interview No. 5). As for the role of other international organizations, another respondent explained the constraints that they pose for a political party:

Imperialism, neoliberalism, the global institutions like IMF, the World Bank, the imperialist powers still have an influence. They create a frame inside you can move, you can do things but not much more. They limit the room of your liberty. It is like being in a cage. You try to expand the flow of your cage. (Interview No. 3)

Some respondents, moreover, also emphasized that despite the fact that they were forced for an austerity agenda that they do not approve, they tried to produce alternatives to the austerity. The practices of SYRIZA as a leftist party had often been emphasised by the respondents during the interviews.

The general view of the respondents is that forced to implement the austerity programme, SYRIZA “kept a space for pro social policies which is that at that time” the government was “implementing harsh austerity measures” (Interview No. 6). A SYRIZA official supports the view above by mentioning the efforts of SYRIZA under such circumstances:

For the first three years, it was not a concept of having our own policy. We adopted to the bailout. It was actually having time to do economic policy with your hands tight up, tight behind your back. But still we managed to find rooms for manoeuvre against structural forces against that. And what, the concert was actually to help most vulnerable and poorest. (Interview No. 3)

The protection of poor people and creating a safety net for the most vulnerable and poorest part of the Greek society was a commonly referred issue made by many respondents (Interview No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11). An example of this was given by another SYRIZA MP who noted that SYRIZA passed two laws during its first term in office, first, “to create a safety net for the lowest or nonexistent incomes” through “kind of giving a card to those who are below poverty level” whereby they can meet their basic needs and second, to provide a “relief” to those who “owe too much to the state or to the pension funds” by allowing “them to pay through small

instalments month by month” (Interview No. 1). The same respondent also stated that “even those small measures at first were considered by the Europeans as against the programme”, that is, the 3rd bailout programme that SYRIZA signed in 2015 (Interview No. 1). It was reported by several respondents that SYRIZA abolished the underage youth minimum wage (which was less than the minimum wage), and increased the minimum wage by 11% (Interview No. 5). Unlike the previous government which cut “pensions and income from low income-middle income groups”, a respondent claimed that SYRIZA “increased public spending for those two social groups” and “cut public spending for high incomes” (Interview No. 6). Furthermore, even though the SYRIZA-led government was forced to lower public spending in many sectors especially in education, it “invested more in public health” (Interview No. 6). A respondent also stated that whereas SYRIZA secured access to healthcare for entire population and put efforts for “basic minimum income”, “housing allowances”, and “family allowances” and yet, once it took austerity measures, it had to “to cut the pension supplement allowance that was very harmful to poor pensioners” (Interview No. 3). He underlines the presence of such constraints through following words: “And you have to do that. Because they blackmail you, because they threaten you with destruction. They are blowing up your economy you have to do that” (Interview No. 3).

The evidence above strongly confirms the presence of the constraints imposed by the EU concerning SYRIZA’s economy policy options. Yet, in addition to this burden, three respondents reported that SYRIZA faced domestic constraints when it came into power. Referring the difficulties faced due to the “deep state” in Greece, a SYRIZA MP said that being a ruling party is difficult (Interview No. 2). The same respondent also mentioned the coalition partner (i.e., ANEL) as an obstacle to the government’s performance (Interview No. 2) (Hypothesis 4A). Another SYRIZA member also referred “deep state” (by giving the examples of Judiciary the police, the big business, a part of civil servants etc.) and its hostility towards SYRIZA, and he made a significant argument for the main research question and said the following: “I think that it is not the compromise but mostly, it is the governmental experience that made us more moderate” (Interview No. 10). A respondent mentioned the difficulties caused by both the regular dynamics of being a ruling party and the domestic constraints. He reported that due to the hostile approach of the Greek bureaucracy which are “attached to the previous establishment parties”, a large part of SYRIZA, party cadres moved to the government to support it (Interview No. 3). The move of the party cadres is also discussed in the next section. Finally, another respondent stated that the media (including TV channels, the big newspapers) are all against SYRIZA and therefore SYRIZA has difficulties to reach the Greek public

(Interview No. 10). What is role of the aforementioned constraints in the party's transformation into a responsible party?

4.2.2.2. An ideologically moderated SYRIZA?

It is evident that SYRIZA leadership was aware of the realities (or one would call them the risks and challenges or constraints) and the possibility of party moderation. For example, during another interview in 2013, Tsipras replies the question of whether there might be a danger of alienation from its electorate for a prospective SYRIZA government in the event of a compromise:

This is a long discussion that is also taking place in Greece as to whether SYRIZA would be coming closer to what some refer to as realism. However, in light of the current brutal reality in Greece and Europe, there is nothing more realistic than to demand to change such reality. (...). SYRIZA - and European south following the electoral success of a government of the left in Greece- are capable of constructing an example for Europe. (...). If we gain power, and don't try to change everything, then we have no chance of remaining in power. ("Alexis Tsipras: Greece could be the spark for defeating austerity across Europe"; *SYRIZA Official Website*, 2013)

The compromise took place after a long negotiation process. Has the party come to close the "realism"? Concerning SYRIZA' transformation into a responsible party; several respondents admitted the existence of the moderation. Accordingly, SYRIZA "is becoming more and more party of state" (i.e., a "cartel party") (Interview No. 5). Even though SYRIZA "remains to a certain degree radical left party", after summer 2015, it "gradually was transformed to... not a centre-left party, but it was, it moved to in political space between radical left and centre left" (Interview No. 6). SYRIZA was transformed into a party practicing "old style social democratic policies" "due to the governmental experience" (Interview No. 5) (Hypothesis 2A). According to Eleftheriou (2016), PASOK's fall led to the emergence of two successors: SYRIZA and DIMAR which represented the two different periods of PASOK': (p. 298). Whereas the former adapts "the traditional Centre-Left of the 1980s headed by Andreas Papandreou", the latter

embraces the “third way style PASOK of the 1990s expressed by Costas Simitis” (Eleftheriou, 2016, p. 298). During an interview, following the respondent’s words on Andreas Papandreou, when the interviewer asked if SYRIZA became more similar to PASOK of Andreas Papandreou, the respondent somewhat confirmed Eleftheriou (2016) and said: “Yes, in some respects. Yes. And it is not unavoidable considering the vast majority of the voters, SYRIZA voters, about 80 almost 90 percent are voters, refugees from PASOK” (Interview No. 7). Indeed, SYRIZA’s coming into office has been facilitated by the centre-left PASOK’s sharp fall as this helped SYRIZA to obtain PASOK’s electorate, party activists and even organization (Keith & March, 2016b, p. 371). In this way, Tsatsanis and Teperoglou (2016) point out that the left-wing of the two-party system of PASOK and ND has been replaced by SYRIZA which has become the hegemonic left-wing force in the Greek party system (p. 431). Another respondent implied the moderation of the party by saying that among the three values, socialism is now less prioritised compared to the values of liberty and democracy and “(...) the real social democrats, but not only this, is the radical left in Greece. Because the former social democrats became neoliberal and neoconservatives” (Interview No. 10). On the other hand, a SYRIZA MP strictly expressed the view that SYRIZA is not coming from social democratic tradition and it is a radical left party (Interview No. 8).

4.2.2.3. Towards a responsible party?

This section confirms two of five propositions made by Mair (2009) regarding the consequences of the growing gap between responsiveness and responsibility. These are explained in Chapter 1 as “The absence of partisan mobilization and mobilisation capacity” (Consequence 1) and “De-politicisation of political parties” (especially concerning the gap between the party on the ground and in the central office) (Consequence 2). It should be noted again that these two consequences are supporting Hypothesis 2A.

As stated in Chapter 2, perhaps the best explanation for the relationship between SYRIZA’s ideological moderation and its being a responsible party is proposed by Mudde (2017) who argues that SYRIZA tried to combine being both a “radical left” and “responsible centre-left” party and eventually this led to the party’s so- called defeat against the Troika (p. 35). Throughout the interview process, several indicators which prove that the party showed some characteristics of being responsible in government, has been observed. For instance, even though the party mobilisation was not a central issue in the answers of the majority of the

respondents, some stressed the presence of a change of the party mobilisation. According to a party member, for instance, SYRIZA did not have enough mobilisation when it was in power and the party “lost some connection” with the society and movement (Interview No. 4) (Consequence 1). Even more clearly, another respondent highlighted the relationship between the issues of mobilisation and party organization and made the following statement:

Organizationally, since 2015, SYRIZA went backwards and now it is much more difficult to mobilize party’s supporters. Because the party emphasized more in governing the country than improving party politics in try to broaden the appeal of SYRIZA within the Greek society. (Interview No. 6) (Consequence 1 & Consequence 2)

The changes of the party mobilisation are related to the party organization of SYRIZA. Several respondents admitted the existence of the gap between party central office and public office after government participation. For instance, it was stated that a large part of SYRIZA moved to the public office once it became a ruling party (Interview No. 3). The party faced “a larger deficit in organization” once “most of the best” party cadres moved to the government (Interview No. 4). The party structure was weakened by the fact that many capable party cadres moved to the government (Interview No. 5). According a respondent, SYRIZA could not strengthen its party organization in the same vein with its electoral success and could not create necessary ties with the society (Interview No. 2) (Consequence 1). He continued that it was a necessity that the policies were formed by a core leadership rather than party’s other organs because the top-level negotiations were decisive due to the nature of European politics (Interview No. 2) (Consequence 2). The party lost the best party cadres which “started to work in the public offices like the parliament and ministries” and “it was very difficult for SYRIZA members to participate in protests, concentrations etc. in the same way that they did it previously” (Interview No. 10) (Consequence 1 & Consequence 2). This view is also supported by Kouki and González (2018) who suggest that SYRIZA has transformed into “a static top-down structure” from a coalition having ties “less hierarchical and more horizontal groups” which lasted until 2012 (p. 132). In the same vein, a respondent also confirmed that “a lot of power has been concentrated in the hands of the top leadership, prime minister’s office, and to the cabinet ministers” (Interview No. 5). These changes of the party mobilisation and party organization are the clear signals of the transformation of SYRIZA into a more responsible party (Hypothesis 2A).

4.3. Concluding remarks for Chapter 4

The interview data completely confirm Hypothesis 1A and Hypothesis 2A whereas it partially confirms Hypothesis 3A and the literature written on it. SYRIZA had polity Eurosceptic members before government participation and showed some polity Eurosceptics characteristics during its opposition years. Yet, the analysis in this chapter suggests that even in these years, the majority of the party could be labelled as policy Eurosceptic (Hypothesis 1A).

And in the course of time, there are evidence that SYRIZA has become a more responsible party due to both the regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of its domestic constraints and the constraints imposed by the EU (Hypothesis 2A). Whereas SYRIZA's critical discourse towards the EU has moderated, a radical change of the party's position towards the EU has not been observed (Hypothesis 3A). Nevertheless, it should be noted that there are signs of a minor moderation and decrease of party's Euroscepticism. However, by contrast with some observers and scholars suggest, SYRIZA has not transformed into a party totally defending status-quo (i.e., a non-sceptic pro-European party with this research's terms). In other words, SYRIZA can be labelled as a policy Eurosceptic party which still keeps its pro-European vision as well. Finally, no clear relationship has been observed between SYRIZA's coalition partner and duration of SYRIZA's government participation, and the moderated policy Euroscepticism of the party (Hypothesis 4A).

Chapter 5: The Five Star Movement case

Using the data obtained from 9 semi-structured elite interviews and 2 written interviews with the M5S members (i.e., MPs, Senators, an MEP, and a party cadre), this chapter will focus on the M5S as a case study. Moreover, other secondary sources will also accompany to the interview data as well. This chapter will test the hypotheses below:

Hypothesis 1B: The M5S showed polity Eurosceptic characteristics before government participation even though today the M5S's Euroscepticism is against the EU policies rather than the EU polity.

Hypothesis 2B: The regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of the M5S's domestic context, and the constraints imposed by European integration has made the M5S responsible once it has become a ruling party.

Hypothesis 3B: Being responsible, the M5S's Euroscepticism decreased and the party was forced to take a more moderate position towards the EU.

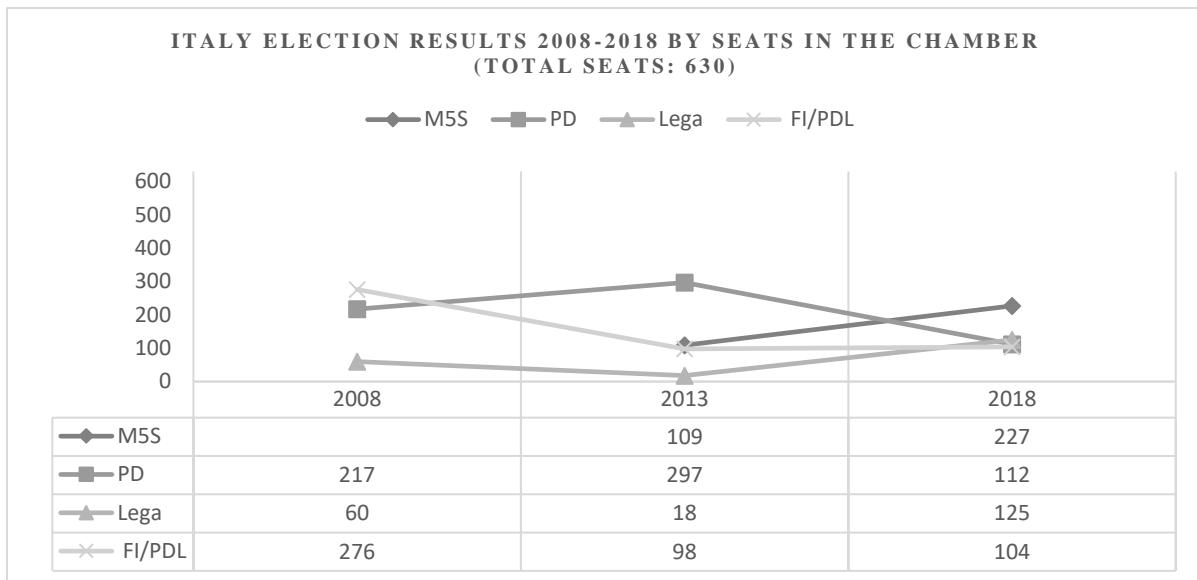
Hypothesis 4B: The M5S's government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU affected the M5S's Euroscepticism in accordance with the duration of its government participation and with the influence of its coalition partner.

5.1. Background

Negatively affected by the 2009 Eurozone crisis, Italy was no exception in Southern Europe in terms of the emergence of new political parties and shake of the party systems. Moreover, unlike the Iberian Peninsula, and alongside Greece, Italy was one of the two countries in Southern Europe badly affected by the migration crisis of 2015. Since then, the already increasing trend of the exploitation of the migration problem by the radical right parties in the party systems gained even a stronger place; Italy was no exception. By the mid-2010s, while Greece was the place where an already existing left-wing alliance was transforming itself into a political party and preparing for the government, Italy was witnessing the rise of a new and unorthodox political initiative: the M5S.

The M5S was founded in 2009 in such a context under the leadership of former comedian Beppe Grillo and entrepreneur Gianroberto Casaleggio. Manucci and Amsler (2018) depict Grillo as “the megaphone, founder, guarantor, and (charismatic) political leader” of the M5S and his blog as “the legal headquarters” of the party (p. 119). The party has its roots in Grillo’s blog which was created in 2005 and in his career as a comedian (Font et al., 2021, p. 172). The leadership factor played a key role in the evolution of the party. Biorcio (2014) emphasizes that thanks to the Web, Grillo could use “his extraordinary communication skills without fear of being censored by the large television networks or the major newspapers” (p. 39). Tronconi (2018) also points out that “an environmental and anti-globalist appeal” coupled with “Grillo’s communication skills” played a significant role in the electoral achievement of the M5S by attracting mainly leftist Italian electorate (p. 177) as Grillo criticized “the political, medial and economic system” and mobilized the discontent electorate (Kneuer, 2019, p. 38). When it comes to Grillo’s position towards the EU, Corbetta and Vignati (2014) argue that Grillo’s opposition to European integration is not based on a “cultural rejection of Europe but instead austerity policies (pp. 57–58).

Based on largely Grillo’s influence (Kotroyannos et al., 2018, p. 9), the M5S emerged with the aim of being “alternative to the ‘usual suspects’ of the Italian political panorama” (Interview No. 18). Therefore, it indeed emerged “as a movement of protest, as an anti-system movement” (Interview No. 19). Since its foundation the M5S participated in the two legislative elections in 2013 and 2018 and achieved results above 20% in both elections (See Graph 12 and 13). In a context characterised by the Eurozone crisis, and a technocratic government led by Mario Monti, the former marked the rise of the party at electoral arena. Similar to SYRIZA, the M5S’s first post-crisis electoral performance was quite successful. Just after one and half years, for the first time, the M5S run in the 2014 EP elections in which it gained 17 seats (i.e., 21% of the votes) and became a part of the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group (EFDD) led by the British Eurosceptic politician, Nigel Farage in the EP. This controversial choice was one of the contributing factors making the M5S’S approach to the EU contested.

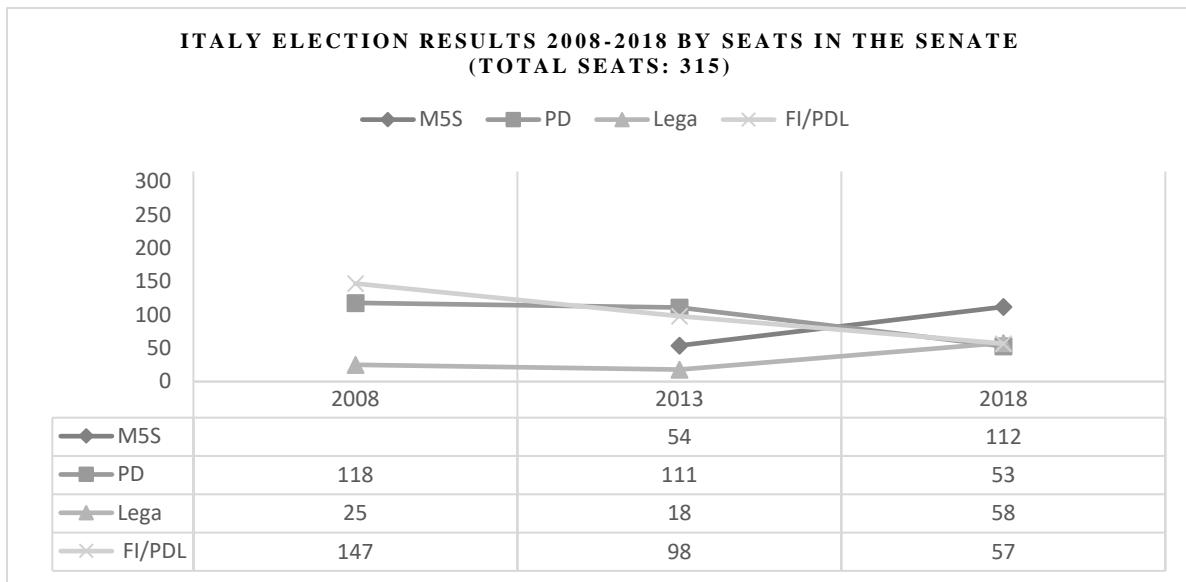


Y Axis 0 to 600 Total seats in the Italian Chamber of Deputies
X Axis Dates of Legislative Elections

Graph 12: Italy Election Results from 2008 to 2018 (Chamber)⁹

Source: Italian government, Ministry of the Interior (“Archivio storico delle elezioni [Historical archive of elections]”, *Governo italiano, Ministero dell’Interno [Italian government, Ministry of the Interior]*, [n.d.]); Chiaramonte et al., 2018, p. 488.

⁹ Run in the 2013 elections, the PDL was dissolved in the same year and merged into the newly established FI.



Y Axis 0 to 315 Total seats in the Italian Senate
X Axis Dates of Legislative Elections

Graph 13: Italy Election Results from 2008 to 2018 (Senate)¹⁰

Source: Italian government, Ministry of the Interior (“Archivio storico delle elezioni [Historical archive of elections]”, *Governo italiano, Ministero dell’Interno [Italian government, Ministry of the Interior]*, [n.d.]); Chiaramonte et al., 2018, p. 488.

The 2016 marked another success of the party at regional level as in both Rome and Turin the M5S had now the two elected mayors. In 2017 Luigi Di Maio was elected by the online voters as the party leader while Grillo stayed as the guarantor of the party. Eventually, in the 2018 legislative elections, the M5S was the leading party and became “the first successful new party in post- World War II Western Europe to increase its votes in the following general election” (Emanuele et al., 2020, p. 666) even though it could not get enough seats to form a government without a coalition partner. The League also achieved its highest results ever in the same elections which made it an available choice for the M5S as a coalition partner (See Graph 12 and Graph 13). Shared a similar choice with SYRIZA, the M5S also decided to be in the coalition with the radical right party, the League while a neutral prime minister for the new cabinet was chosen: Giuseppe Conte. Kotroyannos et al. (2018) claim that Di Maio’s election as the party’s leader was a turning point as the party was now available for future partnerships, and eventually similar to SYRIZA’s coalition with ANEL, the M5S also formed a coalition

¹⁰ Run in the 2013 elections, the PDL was dissolved in the same year and merged into the newly established FI.

with the League (p. 10). According to Emanuele et al. (2020), Di Maio leadership had been “more moderate and inclusive” (p. 668).

Even though scholars like Kotroyannos et al. (2018) stress the potential threats of this cooperation for the European project (p. 10), this relatively short coalition ended after 1.5 years once a motion of no confidence was proposed by the League leader Matteo Salvini in August 2019. The so-called government crisis took place after two months of the 2019 EP elections in which the League was the leading party whereas the M5S got only 17% of the votes; a sharp decline compared to the elections in 2018. A 1-month government crisis which arose the question of early elections, ended once the M5S and the PD formed a new coalition. The success of Salvini’s League in the EP elections led to the “unexpected” “reconciliation” between the two parties and forced the M5S “to make a 180-degree turn and seek refuge in the arms of the PD” (Chiaramonte et al., 2020, p. 151).

The Italian party system experienced a huge transformation in the 1990s following corruption scandals which ended the so-called First Republic (Mudde, 2017, p. 8). Nevertheless, once “the effects of the economic crisis on the lives of ordinary people became more and more evident”, the new party system also started to come apart in 2010s (Biorcio, 2014, p. 40). Indeed, as Chiaramonte et al. (2020) put it, in the recent years, instability is the best concept capturing the nature of the Italian party system change (p. 148). The increasing volatility and the emergence of new political parties rejecting the traditional left-right dimension such as the M5S and the Civic Choice marked the collapse of the party system stability in Italy since 2013 (Emanuele et al., 2020, p. 668). With the exception of the League which just appeared at the end of the First Republic, all other contemporary parties in the party system are either completely new such as FI and the M5S or having roots in the previous parties, significantly transformed such as the PD (Mudde, 2017, p. 8). Tronconi (2018) depicts the rise of the M5S as “the most significant occurrence in Italian party politics” during the economic crisis and states that the party had a “major impact on the Italian party system” after the 2013 general elections (p. 163).

One can easily consider the M5S as a *sui generis* phenomenon in the European context. To reach such an assertive conclusion, how can this argument be supported? This research suggests that the three different aspects of the M5S together make the party unique: its party organization and leadership; its non-party family self-identification; and its government experience. To start with, the M5S, for instance, differs from SYRIZA historically and ideologically (Kotroyannos et al., 2018, p. 9). Unlike SYRIZA, the M5S does not have roots in any political party or movement of the 20th century. The history of the M5S is behind its “non-

ideological perspective”, according to a respondent, as the party is not linked to the “old communist” or “old Christian Democrat” traditions (Interview No. 15). The party was not established as an alliance of various political parties. And unlike SYRIZA, the M5S neither has self-identified itself as a left-wing or right-wing party nor the party’s members have such a clear convergence. The M5S has rather a broad, hybrid and indeed complex political stance on political issues. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the party is attracting both the left-wing and right-wing voters through its left-wing (e.g., minimum income, environmentalism) and right-wing (e.g., antitaxation) policy promises (Mosca & Tronconi, 2019, p. 2). Determining the M5S ideological orientation or the party family that it belongs is a challenge in the academic literature as discussed in Chapter 3. The same challenge also applies to determining the party’s overall position over European issues as discussed in Chapter 2.

The M5S does not differ from SYRIZA only through its ideology or history. Both the party organization and the way the party introduces the 21st century technology into politics make the M5S an exceptional case not only in Italy, but also in Europe. As a respondent puts it, the M5S does not have any “structure”, “offices”, “hierarchy”, or “decision hierarchy” and instead the party has digital platform Rousseau whereby proposals and voting take place (Interview No. 19). The usage of internet which “directly benefited its political influence” according to Kotroyannos et al. (2018), plays a significant role once the party is being compared to other parties in Europe (p. 9). The idea of direct democracy constitutes the identity of the party while the party’s online platform became the place where this direct democracy experiment has been made through party member’s participation (Mosca, 2018, p. 3). As Biorcio (2014) puts it, “the Internet has facilitated the participation and recruitment of many people previously uninvolved in politics” (p. 50). Members of the party often refer the M5S as a movement rather than a party as the M5S, for example, does not have a substantial party headquarter unlike SYRIZA. Digital technologies indeed replace the concept of party headquarter. In this respect, Mosca (2018) argues that the M5S is being made “extremely dependent on leaders’ resources and decisions” due to “lack of formal organizational processes and bodies” (p. 2). A respondent highlights the unorthodox role that the M5S leaders play in the party through the following words:

And also, other big, big difference which is the party leader which is Beppe Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio were not candidates. They were not in office. So, this is a real and strong key to understand the M5S. (Interview No. 15)

Another respondent argues that the M5S differs from other parties such as the PD which has a "sort of oligarchic structure in the party" unlike the M5S (Interview No. 20). This view was also supported by Davide Casaleggio, son and successor of Gianroberto Casaleggio, in an interview through the following words: "Our parliamentarians who stood for election were chosen through online voting on the Rousseau platform — not inside a smoke-filled room like the established parties" ("A top leader of Italy's Five Star Movement: Why we won", *the Washington Post*, 2018; "Il successo del Movimento 5 Stelle raccontato al Washington Post", *the M5S official blog*, 2018).

Despite all these differences; however, the two parties meet at two common points: their government experience and their Euroscepticism based on mainly economic arguments. As a contribution to the previous chapters and to this introduction above, the interview data offer various insights concerning the questions of how and to what extent the M5S has changed once it has become a ruling party. The next sections of this chapter will be dealing with these questions.

5.2. Analysis

5.2.1. The M5S' Euroscepticism before and during government participation

5.2.1.1. Towards being a ruling party

As stated in Chapter 4, SYRIZA's Euroscepticism during its opposition years was mostly characterised by economic arguments accompanied by an anti-neoliberal and anti-austerity stance and the democratic deficit criticism. When it comes to the M5S's opposition years, the party's criticism towards the EU can be summarised based on the three pillars: the anti-austerity stance (accompanied by demands to increase budgetary spending limits); the democratic deficit criticism; and the criticism towards the management of the EU's immigration policy. None of these pillars were absent in the SYRIZA case even though it can be considered that the criticism towards the management of the EU's immigration policy played a more dominant role in the M5S's discourse compared to SYRIZA. As discussed in Chapter 2, the findings in the academic literature also suggest that the M5S's concerns are mostly based on economic arguments (Caiani, 2019) rather than cultural issues (Corbetta & Vignati, 2014;

Franzosi et al., 2015; Caiani 2019). The budgetary spending limits and the austerity conditions in the crisis-stricken countries constituted one of the most leading critical economic arguments of the M5S during its opposition years. For instance, it can easily be seen that the 2018 programme of the M5S addressed the budgetary and economic constraints (Hypothesis 2B) and highlighted the importance of a fair economic policy for social protection of citizens (“Il Programma Nazionale del Movimento 5 Stelle, Unione Europea”, *M5S Official Website*, 2018, p. 2). The words of the M5S’s founder Grillo explicitly put forward and summarise the criticism of the party in economic issues towards the EU in the EFDD Group meeting in 2014:

We would like a different Europe. A Europe of people. A Europe that it is not a thing of banks, a financial thing. (...) In 1999 we had 13 currencies, today we have 12 currencies. One of them is euro. What type of monetary union have we done? I do not know. What type of economic union is this? If the economic union is made of world-wide trade, if private multinationals control the trade of the world, what is this European Union? This economic union? Which economy? Well, the meaning of these words is ‘we need more Europe... more money to banks... more austerity’. This is a Europe that failed. (“EFDD Group Meeting - The Europe we want - Beppe Grillo's speech in Strasbourg”, *EFFD Group*, July 2014)

Grillos’ words manifest itself in the M5S as the party had been associated with Euroscepticism during its opposition years in which it also made a call for Italy to exit the Eurozone (Interview No. 12, 13, 19, 20, 21). Some respondents even claimed that it was not only the Eurozone but also the EU that the party was against at some point (Interview No. 19, 21) whereas another respondent specifically stated that it was not the EU but only the Eurozone that the party was against during the opposition years (Interview No. 13). Nevertheless, rather than taking such an anti-stance towards the European project as a whole, the support of the leadership can be traced within the statements of the party leadership similar to the SYRIZA leadership. For instance, supporting the initial ideas of the European project, Grillo expressed his harsh criticism against the common currency in an interview which indicates his position in 2012:

Europe was a marvellous dream invented by Jacques Delors and Willy Brandt. But it has failed by putting together economies which were very

different from each other. This and also the currency which should not have been the same for everyone. The two currencies would have been better. Otherwise, Angela Merkel and Germany could go back to the Deutsche mark and we will have a weaker Euro used in South European countries like Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal even Ireland. We could form a different Eurozone. Let's sit down and discuss this. We have nothing to lose. We already lost 30% of our economies since joining the euro. ("Euronews interview - Beppe Grillo explains", *Euronews*, May 2012)

As clarified in Chapter 4, the conceptual difficulty of the term Grexit was solved by defining the term as a reference to exiting the Eurozone unless otherwise is mentioned, and by associating it with policy Euroscepticism as long as an exit from the EU or an anti-EU attitude or stance are not implied by a source. In this respect, the present research considers the M5S's referendum call to exit the Eurozone as an indicator of policy Euroscepticism. This consideration was valid as long as an exit from the EU was not implied by a source while mentioning the referendum call. The two respondents provided an interesting finding regarding the currency issue during the interview process. Accordingly, even though the party made a call to exit the Eurozone, the idea was "not to go back but was to investigate" the option (Interview No. 13). That is, since the decision to join the monetary union was made only by the governments instead of making a referendum and asking people (Interview No. 13), the idea of the M5S before 2018 "was not to leave the Eurozone, but it "was to ask people" (Interview No. 14). The party was "not clearly against the EU" (Interview No. 14). Having a "more radical opinion"; for example, the League wanted to exit from the Eurozone (Interview No. 13). Despite these two insights, it can be understood from Grillo's quotes above that the proposed Eurozone referendum was not only a request to fulfil the will of the people in Italy, but also an instrument to fix the economic and monetary flaws of both Italy and the EU. What differentiates SYRIZA and the M5S during their opposition years is the absence of an explicit call by SYRIZA for a referendum to exit the Eurozone. Even though this option was intensively debated among SYRIZA members (and eventually defended by many of them in the summer 2015), the SYRIZA leadership did not make a call for a referendum. Moreover, as showed in Chapter 4, the party leadership even put efforts to emphasize that SYRIZA is not against the idea of European integration. Despite the Eurozone criticism; however, the M5S also shows similarities with SYRIZA as similar efforts can also be seen in the case of the M5S. That is,

both parties were trying to show their own criticism while denouncing the references (e.g., populist, Eurosceptic, anti-European etc.) of political and journalistic accounts. An example of such an effort can be seen via the words of Grillo: “The word populist has become an insult. You are a populist or a Eurosceptic. We are not anti-Europeans” (“Italian politician Beppe Grillo defends his views in Rome”, *AFP News Agency*, January 2014). It can be argued that the M5S’s EFD (Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy) Group membership in the EP after the EP elections in 2014 is one of the main leading forces behind the party’s association with Euroscepticism. Nevertheless, during the interview process, an MP claimed that the EFD “was not representing” the M5S “very much” (Interview No. 12). Another MP stated that the M5S was “with Farage” in the EP, but the party “never claimed to go out from the EU” “also because the history of European integration from the UK perspective is totally different from the Italian one” (Interview No. 15). In addition to these interview findings, the remarks of a M5S MP reported by a news media article in 2013 displays the efforts of the party to clarify its position (which, for instance, corresponds to policy Euroscepticism with this research’s terms) vis-à-vis the EU:

Insisting on the movement not being anti-European, he noted that the current EU structure should be regarded as "unsustainable" as a result of financial issues in Italy and abroad, including a growing and unjustifiable government bond 'spread'. ("Italian Five Star MP: EU is 'unsustainable' in its current form", *Euroactive*, 2013)

Being one of the most visible arguments of the M5S against the EU, the democratic deficit criticism was frequently being overlapped with the economy policy criticism of the party. The 2018 programme of the M5S addresses the role of the EP which is “overshadowed” by the economic crisis which, on the other hand, strengthened the Commission and the Council (“Il Programma Nazionale del Movimento 5 Stelle, Unione Europea”, *M5S Official Website*, 2018, p. 2). The programme therefore argues that as the only democratically elected EU institution, it is too marginal in the decision-making process (“Il Programma Nazionale del Movimento 5 Stelle, Unione Europea”, *M5S Official Website*, 2018, p. 5). Another speech of Grillo tries to clarify his position which is, according to him, not against Europe, but against the way it functions. Self-identifying himself as a “pro-European” person, he endorses the initial idea of the European project and signals the democratic deficit argument:

(...) also, here the same, the great strength was the complexity of laws. Nobody understands them. They vote because their boss says ‘vote yes or vote no’. If only you go to read the paragraph 7 that change the paragraph 5 of the article 7. Nobody is interested because it is unintelligible. It is their strength make us not understand. We are here to understand, to simplify, to bring out and to say gentlemen, this Europe is not the one we want, a Europe of citizens, sympathetic that cooperates in immigration, in religion. To cooperate means to face the problems together. These people are amateurish and then they have this attitude to favor crime because with their rules they have changed treaties, treaties signed by fine gentlemen. Because this was an idea... for who have invented Europe, was a marvellous thing. I am the most pro-European of all, I am not against Europe. I am against this type of mechanism of people without emotions. (“EFDD Group Meeting - The Europe we want - Beppe Grillo's speech in Strasbourg”, *EFFD Group*, July 2014)

The majority of the findings in this section so far confirm several academic arguments (i.e., some of the already cited scholars in Chapter 2 such as Franzosi et al. 2015; Pirro and van Kessel, 2018) stating that the M5S was not entirely against the European project (or the party was not anti-European, or hard-Eurosceptic; that is, it was showing soft-Eurosceptic characteristics), but on the contrary, it had a policy Eurosceptic stance towards the EU with this research’s terms (Hypothesis 1B). Nevertheless, given a few references to members/positions in the party during its opposition years, it can be argued that the presence of minor polity Eurosceptic traits used to exist within the party similar to the opposition years of the SYRIZA case (Hypothesis 1B).

5.2.1.2. The M5S as a ruling party: a short outlook

Following a three-month negotiation process, the unorthodox so-called Yellow-Green coalition of the M5S and the League was formed in the summer of 2018. The formation of this coalition by the two Eurosceptics was no good news for the Europhile circles in Europe. Nevertheless, once the government came to an end in August 2019, one could suggest that the

consequences of this coalition were not detrimental for Italy's place in Europe or for the European project, at least until the time of writing. The question of what the implications of this relatively short experience were for the conception of the M5S over European issues is the main concern of the rest of this chapter. To begin with, the words of a M5S respondent is a very good summary of the upcoming analysis:

(...) there is one thing that we normally say in the M5S we have been accused of being not very precise regarding the EU and to some extent this is true. But it is also true that we believe in the concept and organization of the EU. (Interview No. 12)

As for the party's general stance towards the EU, similar to the SYRIZA respondents, **none** of the M5S respondents made a statement affirming that the party is against European integration as a whole (Interview No. 12–23). The majority of the respondents also emphasized that the M5S does not want Italy leaving the EU (Interview No. 20); and it wants Italy to stay in the EU (Interview No. 23). Therefore, the party still "believes in the EU as a concept and as an entity" (Interview No. 12). It just wants to change it from inside (Interview No. 14, 15, 17, 19, 21). An MP, for example, admitted that the M5S is more Eurosceptic than some other parties in Italy but it also knows that it has to start "dialogue" to "change the European institutions" (Interview No. 21). The same view was also expressed by another MP who stated that the M5S is "just a bit less European than the left-wing party, the PD" and "just little bit more European than the Lega Premier Salvini" (Interview No. 20). According to a respondent, when the party's view towards the EU is compared to other parties, the M5S can be considered "little bit more on the left side" and in that sense "closer to the green parties in Europe" or the "GUE group" (i.e., the European United Left/Nordic Green Left group) in the EP (Interview No. 12). Another respondent also emphasized that even though the M5S was in the EFDD group in the EP, now "the space that" the party "has to position is the Greens" (Interview No. 15).

Throughout the interview process, only one respondent claimed that even though the party wants to change the EU inside, there are still some members who think that Italy should leave the EU (Interview No. 19). On the other hand, according to another respondent, the M5S does not have any anti-European members anymore (Interview No. 20).

The demand of the party for such a change only inside the EU was expressed through criticism towards the EU's economy policies by the most of the respondents (Interview No. 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 22). Several respondents also expressed their personal criticism towards the EU's

economy policies (Interview No. 15, 19, 20, 21, 23). While some respondents mentioned party's criticism and personal criticism towards democratic issues in the EU (Interview No. 1, 5), some mentioned criticism towards the EU's management of migration policies (Interview 15, 20). As discussed, the M5S member's discourse on immigration issues caused a controversy and confusion about the party's overall ideology. Observers who claim that the M5S is a right-wing leaning party, sometimes ground their arguments on the M5S discourse concerning immigration issues. Nevertheless, similar to the SYRIZA case, **no party or personal criticism** towards the EU on the cultural basis (or through nativist or xenophobic arguments) had been reported by the M5S respondents during the interview process (Interview No. 12–23).

The majority of the respondents expressed their personal opinions about at least one positive aspect of the EU (or they made at least one general positive remark about the EU) during the interviews (Interview No. 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23). However, unlike all these reported similarities above between the SYRIZA and M5S findings, a significant difference lies between the two parties: their self-identification in relation to Europe. That is, unlike the SYRIZA respondents, **none** of the M5S respondents labelled the party as pro-European. The words of a respondent are worth mentioning at this point:

(...) the other traditional parties they define themselves pro-Europe, European supporter but they say this through all these years, just how can I say? Accepting without any criticism, any proposal, anything coming from Brussels, from the EU. So, with the excuse to be pro-European, they accept everything coming from Brussels (...).

(Interview No. 19)

The criticism towards some pro-European parties is shared by both SYRIZA and the M5S. That is, with this research's terms, both parties are critical towards non-sceptic pro-European parties. Consequently, it can be considered that although both parties do not self-identify themselves as pro-European, they meet at another point: policy Euroscepticism (Hypothesis 1B).

Given all above, the overall views of both SYRIZA and the M5S concerning the EU show a lot of similarities in general. The rest of this chapter will look into the M5S's discourse and position after its government participation in detail.

5.2.1.3. Discourse and position in the ruling years

The tested argument in this section is whether the M5S has completely abandoned its polity Eurosceptic traits and moderated its policy Eurosceptic stance once the party has come into government in the presence of the constraining elements of European integration, and in the absence of a political incident like the acceptance of the 3rd memorandum and a major party split -as SYRIZA experienced both-. At least until August 2019 in which the M5S changed its ruling partner, the party did not experience a turning point in office in its first term similar to SYRIZA's in the summer 2015. Yet, the question of what has changed in the discourse and position of the M5S towards the EU once it started to approach the power and eventually came into office is still worth asking in comparison with SYRIZA.

In addition to the acceptance of the 3rd memorandum and the major party split, the government experience of the M5S differs from the SYRIZA experience with another feature: coalition partner the League and its much higher weight within the coalition compared to SYRIZA's minor coalition partner ANEL. This forces the undertaken research to assume that both the discourse and position of the M5S towards the EU did not have such a flexibility as SYRIZA had and the M5S could have a more limited manoeuvre capability over European issues due to its coalition partner compared to SYRIZA. A similar situation will be reported in the case of the VG.

First, starting with the discourse of the M5S towards the EU, the interview data confirm a discursive change similar to the SYRIZA case. A respondent, for example, reports that the party is more collaborative and less violent while communicating with the EU:

We still have the same position on the topics. But the way we want to achieve them is different. It is more about collaboration rather than demonstration, rather than clashes or whatever. It is not we were violent in anyway but some words were for sure violent. Some you know some behaviours were not friendly let's say. It was different. It was different.

(Interview No. 12)

Supporting the quote above, while a respondent also points out that the M5S has not changed its position even though it has "become more diplomatic" (Interview No. 14), another one states that the M5S's criticism is not less or more after the government participation but "the way it

asks probably is different” (Interview No. 23). The following sections will also touch upon the proofs of this discursive change.

Second, concerning the change of the party’s position, through the words of several respondents, it can be understood that the M5S’s approach towards the economy policies of the EU has changed to some extent. Some respondents confirm that the party is now less critical towards the economy policies of the EU (Interview No. 20). For instance, a M5S MP stated that despite it is still a “harsh” one, the communication between the EU and M5S is “more collaborative”; the party is less “stubborn” and keener on negotiating or mediating issues whereas in the past it even reached a point in which it was organizing a campaign to leave the Eurozone (Interview No. 12). As mentioned in Chapter 2, several scholars such as Mosca and Tronconi (2019) consider the abandonment of the referendum call as a moderation of the party’s position (p. 15). The interview data suggest that the M5S constantly emphasizes the role and importance of Italy in the EU. A senator from the party, for example, stated that the M5S has become more “optimist” concerning the role of Italy in the EU:

The 5SM attitude towards the European Union has indeed evolved, from the skeptical approach of the beginning, to the more sophisticated optimism of nowadays. We believe that Italy has a crucial role to play in this respect and that - therefore - the European Union would be a positive thing for the Italians as long as Italy plays a decisive role in the EU’s decisional process. (Interview No. 18)

Similar to the SYRIZA case, there are indicators that the Euroscepticism of the M5S has started to decrease not when it became a ruling party but even before once it became a potential ruling party. A M5S MP confirmed this with the following statement:

No. I think that the M5S has not changed opinion about EU after being ruling the government. I remember that I was a candidate at the European election in 2014. At that movement we changed vision about the EU. We did not say that we wanted to leave Europe or Euro. We just started in that moment our view because it could be a mess to leave Europe or Euro. We changed that view. And we want to change the EU inside making different things, different laws. But we just changed the view before 2018. (Interview No. 21)

Changing the EU inside or solving the problems of the nation-state through the EU are similar approaches which were also shared by many SYRIZA respondents. A M5S MEP noted that “there has been an evolution concerning the M5S’s approach to Europe which is not anymore the idea to go out” (Interview No. 19). Also giving the example of Greece, she maintained that the party realised how negative the economic consequences could be for Italy if the country leaves the EU and therefore, the party wants to change the EU inside, within the institutions despite the fact that the development of the M5S was “very much critical to Europe” (Interview No. 19). According to another respondent, even though there were anti-EU members during the opposition years, there are not anymore (Interview No. 20), and even though the M5S was “with Farage’s party”, and “it had sense”, “nowadays it is not” (Interview No. 20).

Despite the views above confirming the change of the party’s conception over European issues, several respondents reported opposite views as well which was also an issue in the SYRIZA case. Accordingly, the party has not changed its view concerning the EU’s economy policies (Interview No. 14, 15, 16, 22, 23). It just became more diplomatic (Interview No.14) and changed its strategy vis a vis the EU:

It is not that we have changed our minds about the EU. We have changed, let’s call, it as strategy. We are pushing, we are trying to push the EU to listen more to Italy. We are trying to change their views towards Italy. Especially concerning the immigration problem that is a huge problem for Italy. And we need the right help to deal with it. We need collaboration and this is the direction that the M5S has taken. And I think that in the next few months, and in the next few years, these results, positive results will come. Because there is the wish to work together. And maybe in the past governments, this has not really been, it was not seen. There was not this closeness and so, the M5S has decided to work differently. (Interview No. 16)

Referring the EU’s stability and growth pact, a respondent stated that even though the party has not changed its position, it is “still very critical because the rules are not changed” (Interview No. 15). Several respondents emphasized the necessity that Italy needs to be listened by the EU more (Interview No. 16, 22). Accordingly, the M5S tries to make sure that “its voice arrives in Europe” (Interview No. 23).

As an alternative approach to the two aforementioned group of views concerning the M5S's stance towards the EU, two respondents noted that the change of the EU's attitudes has also contributed to the change of M5S's view on the EU. For instance, a respondent stated that "the trust between European institution and Italian government" has changed and there is a "mature and adult way of behaving from the European side" (Interview No. 12). More interestingly, another respondent expresses the following:

Right now, I think that the M5S will not propose again a referendum. The reason is that not only the M5S changed, but the EU also changed. The EU of today is not the EU of the financial crisis of 2008-2009. It is another EU. And right now, we are talking about flexibility. We are looking for the errors that we made in the past years. We are putting on the table new solutions. So, maybe... Ok, the M5S is still so not happy with the European management. But we can talk as a government, we can discuss (for new rules again). And also, we can obtain results for the country. (Interview No. 13)

A striking similarity was expressed by also a SYRIZA MP who implied the change of EU's view vis a vis Greece:

(...) at the end of 2016, there was a more positive view from the EU. It was not so tight, so bureaucratical, so power their positioning. They understand that we make steps that we can finish the programme.
(Interview No. 9)

In this respect, it can be argued that the changing attitudes of the EU by the time could also partially be a contributing factor in the two parties' view over the EU once they became a ruling party. Finally, as an addition, a quick revisiting the priorities of the M5S in an official election manifesto after a 1.5-year government experience can be an alternative way to understand the parties' main goals during those days. The 2019 EP elections manifesto of the M5S lists six main points which are concerned with austerity, democracy, social issues and policies and a common migration policy ("Il programma del Movimento 5 Stelle per le elezioni europee", *the M5S Official Blog*, 2019). This proves the stability of the party's fundamental concerns from its opposition years to its ruling party years.

Overall, as in the SYRIZA case, despite the confirmation of a discursive change, a radical change of the party's position towards the EU has not been strongly confirmed in this section. Nevertheless, a partial moderation of the party's policy Euroscepticism can easily be suggested in the light of the presented data. It can be argued that this partial moderation is slightly higher than SYRIZA's minor moderation as SYRIZA has never made an official call for an exit from the Eurozone through a referendum and has never changed its official stance over the Eurozone. The next section of this chapter will look into the constraints that the M5S faced during its government experience.

5.2.2. The constraints: towards a more responsible ruling party?

The analysis below will show whether the regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of their domestic context, and the constraints imposed by European integration have played a role in making the M5S a responsible party once it has become a ruling party.

5.2.2.1. The constraints

The constraints of which the M5S has faced once it became a ruling party, are divided into two in this section: EU as an external constraint and domestic constraints. First, whereas the third bailout programme was mentioned by all SYRIZA respondents as a constraint imposed by the EU in Greece, several M5S respondents mentioned the budgetary spending limit as a constraining factor of the party's economy policies (Interview no. 13, 17, 21) once the party, for example, wanted to "bring forward the citizen's income to the Italian *redito cittadinanza*" (Interview No. 12). A respondent explains the impact of the EU on the government's economy policies with the following words:

EU affect a lot about our economic policies. We have limits of spending. EU just does not want we spend more than 2.5 % of GDP. And this is a big trouble. I know that other countries are more able to spend. But Italy is always under control. This is a big trouble for us. Because we need to spend to introduce money in a real economy to grow Italy. Yes, it affects a lot in our policy. (Interview No. 21)

As mentioned several times, the economic crisis raised the questions of leaving the Eurozone or even the EU in both Italy and Greece where pro-Europeanism was once the dominant view. In this respect, the experience of Greece in 2015 was a traumatic display for EU member countries including Italy. Referring to Greece's experience, a respondent states that "there has been an evolution concerning the M5S's approach to Europe which is not anymore the idea to go out" as the party realised that "going out means worse working conditions, worse economic problems" (Interview No. 19). The strictness of the EU rules and the example of Greece were referenced by another respondent who expressed her own opinion through the following words:

I think that the rules that EU -has- are too strict. Especially regarding the economic rules... Instead that they should take into account of different requirements for different states in order to adopt these rules to the situation in a country. For example, it was terrible what happened to Greece a few years ago. And still the situation is quite hard.
(Interview No. 23)

Another respondent confirmed the argument (which was also suggested by Interview No. 12) by stating that the party is more collaborative. Moreover, she also gave a reference to the EU's dictating rules and the difficulties of being a ruling party vis-a-vis being an opposition party:

If you are a ruling party, you cannot break or make a war against the EU because we are inside the EU. Because it is important to be inside the EU. And we have to trying to make dialogue with the European institution and try to obtain more exceptions, more results for us. But obviously if you are in opposition you can say everything. You can say what you wanted, you are opposition you are not ruling. If you are ruling, you have to stay to some rules also because the consequences are more effective, more... worse the consequences if you don't respect rules. So, we are trying to have a dialogue with a European institution. We are trying to obtain more exception, more flexibility but obviously we have to stay under some rules. (Interview No. 21)

Last but not least, the impact of Brexit was visible during the interview process. For example, a respondent explained this by saying that leaving the EU “could be really really a mess” and “it could be a trouble” also for the Italian economy “to get out from Europe”, which is “impossible for also Salvini” (Interview No. 21). A striking finding is that the interview process reveals how Greek and Italian politicians consider the Brexit and Greek experience in the last decade: an explicit manifestation of the EU’s constraining role for member states and their economies.

Second, similar to the SYRIZA case, a few respondents mentioned the domestic constraints that the M5S faced in power. While the SYRIZA respondents mentioned the domestic constraints such as the presence of deep state; bureaucracy; media; business; and SYRIZA’s coalition partner, the two M5S respondents emphasized the constraints as the already practiced policies and already given commitments by the previous governments and the impact of these commitments over today’s politics. This appears to be both a constraint of the EU and a domestic constraint caused by the binding practices of the previous governments. In this respect, the two quotes below are pointing out on the difficulties of the M5S as a ruling party:

So basically, we in Italy as the M5S we grew up just because as I said before, politics in past years did not listen too much to people. Instead, the M5S started from those kind of committees, local committees against imposed infrastructures for instance. We had many. When we came to the government for each case, we saw that maybe an infrastructure was designed 15 years ago and we could not do anything to stop. So, when you become a ruling party you see more more more than what you saw before. And you have to, you have to... to work so much on this because you have to talk to the people again and saying that you cannot do anything to stop an infrastructure, you cannot do anything to stop a project, a particular project. And this was the main issue of the M5S in this experience. And this translated in many aspects of politics. Consensus for instance. We took more than 33, around 33% in 2018 and in 2019 in the European elections we had less than 20%. So, we lost many consensus about that. Just because we made many promises but when you become a ruling government you cannot have

everything under your control. Because many decisions were taken before your government experience. (Interview No. 13)

Because we see that the EU want to have a say because the treaty enables them in the economic and budgetary affairs. So, if you ask us to be to obey to the rule that we signed it is true but... The question is how much these treaties that have been signed by the previous government can limit the action of actual political member of the parliament and government. (Interview No. 15)

When it comes to the issue of coalition partners, the sharp differences are visible between the M5S and SYRIZA cases. Having all ministerial positions with the exception of one, SYRIZA was able to control the entire government whereas its minor coalition partner ANEL was only in charge of one ministry and the leverage of being a coalition partner. On the other hand, the M5S had to share the power of the cabinet with the League. For instance, two respondents gave place the impact of the party's coalition partners over the M5S's relationship with its electorate and the obstacles that it faced respectively:

After becoming a ruling party, we changed mainly our relationship with other parties, because the numbers in parliament forced us to find a programmatic agreement with political parties very different from us to form a government. This required a modification in our communication strategy and was a problematic step for us in terms of consent of the electorate, because our willingness to govern first with the Lega and then with the Democratic Party, putting aside the old hostilities, has been interpreted as a loss, or as a neglect, of a clear political identity. Notwithstanding that, I think that nor Luigi Di Maio's leadership neither internal opposition has been affected. We are still the most compact party in Italy. (Interview No. 17)

So, in this sense for example now as we are in the government with the Democratic Party, we had the chance to negotiate and we have been collaborative. We have the chance to do this immigration policy like in one week we managed to achieve what it was impossible for years

especially with Lega. So, with the redistribution of migrants in Europe, it has been achieved in like a week. (Interview No. 12)

It is obvious that the role of the coalition partner was much influential in the case of the M5S than SYRIZA (Hypothesis 4B). Finally, similar to the SYRIZA respondents who were reporting the successful economy policies despite all the constraints that they faced, successful efforts of the party in terms of economy policies and initiatives were expressed by the majority of the respondents (Interview No. 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23) in the presence of all constraints, notably the austerity and the spending limit. For instance, among them, the most prominent mentionings were Redito Cittadinanza (basic income) (Interview No. 12, 13, 21) wage cut of MPs (Interview No. 15), the cut of number of parliamentarians (Interview No. 16), successful negotiations in the last budget law (Interview No. 20) for “more advantageous conditions for Italy (...)” (Interview No. 17).

To sum, considering four propositions of Mair (2009) regarding the *causes* (as explained in Chapter 1) of the growing gap between responsiveness and responsibility, two of four *causes* are clearly visible as a result of the analysis in this section: Constraints of the office (Cause 3), and constraints of the domestic context and previous commitments made by others (Cause 4). In this respect, the next section will be asking if the *consequences* of these two *causes* have been visible in the party after the government experience.

5.2.2.2. An ideologically moderated and more responsible M5S?

The M5S’s nature as a protest party had been started to be questioned by journalistic accounts during its ruling party years which, for example, can be understood through a news media article’s title: “How the rebel Five Star Movement joined Italy’s establishment” (“Analysis: How the rebel Five Star Movement joined Italy’s establishment”, *the Local*, 2019). As stated in Chapter 2, a more “institutionalised” stance of the party after the government experience was reported by the academic literature (e.g., Salvati, 2019). This section is concerned with the question of whether the M5S is ideologically moderated and more responsible after the government experience.

Unsurprisingly, the implications and views of the M5S respondents on the party’s ideology and ideological moderation differ from the SYRIZA members to a great extent. Once the M5S respondents were given the chance of differentiating their own party with others in

Italy and Europe, the dominant view was that the M5S is a post-ideological political phenomenon (Interview No. 12, 17). Another different expression of the same view was that the M5S is not based on ideologies (Interview No. 13, 15, 16, 21, 22).

This view was detailed through different ways. While the right-left distinction is considered as “outdated concepts” (Interview No. 17), “being post-ideological and refusing ideologies”, according to another respondent, allow the M5S “to talk about topics” (Interview No. 12). “It is an issue party; it is a topic party” (Interview No. 12). In this respect, rather than ideologies, the party “was born on topics” (Interview No. 13) and is “inspired” by “very real pragmatism” (Interview No. 19). Thus, compared to other parties, it is not an “ideologic party” but instead “more pragmatic” (Interview No. 21). Rather than being “moved by an ideology”, the M5S is “moved by the idea of solving problem through solution” (Interview No. 13). Therefore, it “tries to solve the problems in a very practical way”, “without ideologies” (Interview No. 22). Grillo’s words in 2014 also confirm the data above: “We don’t have a left-wing or right-wing ideology. We have ideas” (“Italian politician Beppe Grillo defends his views in Rome”, *AFP News Agency*, January 2014). Finally, an interesting insight was provided by an MP who underlined the fact that as a “post-ideological” party, none of the M5S’s stars are “related to the identity politics” (Interview No. 12). He maintained that the party “cares about them but not so much to put them as a star” and lists “labour”, “innovation”, “environment”, “economics”, “development” as “more important” issues (Interview No. 12).

As a matter of fact, given the M5S’s self-identified post-ideology stance expressed above, ideological moderation has not been a central issue during the interviews with the M5S respondents. That is, each respondent has been given the chance to make remarks concerning the change of the party organization, leadership, internal opposition and so on. The change of the party has never been directly reported or implied by the respondents with the exception of two respondents:

(...) in the EU the approach we are using it is precisely the same. It is more institutional; it is more responsible. And we understand we cannot win all. There cannot be... it is very harsh to have a win-win situation. Of course, if it is possible to create a win-win situation we will go for that. (Interview No. 12)

The same respondent also emphasised that the party has not changed “so much about Europe” but in general it has changed, and this change has consequences in every topic including Europe

(Interview No. 12). Moreover, he also asserted that even though the party started with a “narration of anti-establishment”, being a ruling party makes it difficult to keep this narrative (Interview No. 12). Finally, another respondent criticized the decision-making mechanism within the party via the following words:

In my opinion we have to be more inclusive in decision-making. No more one leader for every trouble, for every issues that decide everything. We started in 2007 as a group, as an assembly. Every decision was made by this assembly, by this group. So, we should start a party with a group that make decision. (Interview No. 21)

To sum, not only the issue of ideological moderation, but the discourse revolving around the ideology of the party was rather invisible throughout the interview process with the M5S respondents unlike the SYRIZA members. Apart from this, compared to SYRIZA, no references were made to the weakening of party mobilisation (Consequence 1); the backwarding of the party organization; the gap between central office and public office (Consequence 2); the movement of party cadres to the government; or the rise and concentration of power of the leadership (with the exception of one respondent) once the party became a ruling party. This notable difference between the two parties can be explained through the intensity of EU’s constraining role in Greece before and after the third memorandum, and perhaps more importantly, through already discussed *sui generis* party organization and structure of the M5S. Considering five propositions of Mair (2009) regarding the *consequences* (as explained in Chapter 1) of the growing gap between responsiveness and responsibility, the data collected via interviews for the M5S case show much lesser symptoms of a transformation into a responsible party. Nevertheless, the institutionalisation of the party in terms of its communication with domestic and external actors; and of its stance vis-à-vis European issues can be observed. Ironically, such an institutionalisation can also be considered as a development that the party has been avoiding as a result of its nature since its foundation.

5.3. Concluding remarks for Chapter 5

The interview data completely confirm Hypothesis 1B whereas it partially confirms Hypothesis 2B and Hypothesis 3B and the literature written about it. The M5S had minor polity

Eurosceptic characteristics before government participation similar to the SYRIZA case. However, unlike the M5S, SYRIZA has never made an official call for an exit from the Eurozone through a referendum in these years. Nevertheless, the analysis in this chapter suggests the same result as even in these opposition years the majority of the party can be labelled as policy Eurosceptic like SYRIZA (Hypothesis 1B).

Although Chapter 4 on SYRIZA suggested that SYRIZA has become a more responsible party due to both the regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of its domestic context and the constraints imposed by the EU, such a visible transformation of the M5S into a responsible party has not been confirmed through both the interview data and the analysis of this chapter with the exception of very minor proofs (Hypothesis 2B). The details of this finding were discussed at the end of the previous section.

Similar to SYRIZA, the M5S has also moderated its discourse (Hypothesis 3B). Moreover, a striking finding is that the way these two parties justify this discursive moderation show similarities. Although a radical change of the party's position towards the EU has not been observed, there are signs of a partial moderation and the decrease of party's policy Euroscepticism (Hypothesis 3B).

Finally, even though the M5S respondents refer their coalition partners as an obstacle to their policies much more frequently than the SYRIZA respondents, no clear link has been found between the moderated economic policy Euroscepticism of the party and its coalition partner as well as the duration of the party's government participation (Hypothesis 4B).

Chapter 6: The Left-Green Movement Case

Using the data obtained from 8 semi-structured elite interviews with the VG members (i.e., MPs, and party cadres), this chapter will focus on the VG as a case study. Moreover, other secondary sources will also accompany to the interview data as well. This chapter will test the hypotheses below:

Hypothesis 1C: The VG showed polity Eurosceptic characteristics before government participation even though today the VG's Euroscepticism is against the EU policies rather than the EU polity.

Hypothesis 2C: The regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of the VG's domestic context has made the VG responsible once it has become a ruling party.

Hypothesis 3C: Being responsible, the VG's Euroscepticism decreased and the party was forced to take a more moderate position towards the EU.

Hypothesis 4C: The VG's government participation affected the VG's Euroscepticism in accordance with the duration of its government participation and with the influence of its coalition partners.

6.1. Background

Unlike the M5S, and similar to SYRIZA, the VG has its roots in the 20th century left tradition. The party is representing Iceland's radical left (Ómarsdóttir & Jónsson, 2016, p. 174) in the parliament today. As a part of the radical left party family, it differs from the M5S even though the party's specific concerns and references to economic and environmental issues make the VG similar to the M5S. The VG and SYRIZA share the same party family and similar ideological concerns even though they also differ from each other especially regarding populism as the latter is commonly identified. The core principles of the VG are "socialism", "feminism", "pacifism" and "environmentalism" (Interview No. 24). Whereas the SAM has been occupying the centre left of Iceland, the VG's place has been considered as more on the left of the SAM. According to Ómarsdóttir & Jónsson (2016), what separates the SAM and VG

is their stance on the issues of Iceland's NATO membership and the EU membership question, and international trade whereas they share concerns on issues like the welfare system and gender equality (p. 175). As stated in the official party programme, the VG opposes Iceland's NATO membership or any other military alliance in each and every different period as an opposition and ruling party ("Stefna VG", *the VG official website*, 2007; "Alþjóða-og friðarmál", *The Left-Green Movement Official Website, Party Programme*, 2016; Stefnumál/Alþjóða- og friðarmál, *the VG official website, party programme*, 2021).

Under the leadership of the founding chairman, Steingrímur J. Sigfusson, the VG has constantly achieved to enter the parliament as an opposition party between 1999 and 2009. After the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008, the early elections took place in the spring 2009. Being in the same coalition with the leading party of the elections, the SAM, the VG became a ruling party for the first time¹¹ in 2009¹² which lasted until the elections in 2013.

The 2008 financial crisis can be considered as a major driving-force behind the Icelandic radical left's rise in the party system similar to the SYRIZA case. The difference between the rises of SYRIZA and the VG; however, is the absence of a pasokification in the Icelandic party system. That is, the SAM has not experienced a sharp fall and eventually a quasi-disappearance as PASOK of Greece did during the crisis. Nevertheless, starting from the 2013 general elections, the SAM has gradually lost a considerable amount of electoral support and could not recover in terms of gaining votes since then. (See Graph 14). Another striking similarity between the Greek and Iceland party systems is visible in the case of centre-right parties, namely, the ND and the SJ. First, both parties were blamed as a cause of the economic crisis. Second, both parties faced defeats against their left-wing opponents (i.e., the ND against SYRIZA in 2015; and the SJ against the SAM and VG in 2009) after the outbreak of the crisis. Third, both parties survived such turbulent times; never exhibited a sharp fall in terms of electoral support and eventually come into power again in the subsequent elections (See Graph 14). Indeed, Thorhallsson (2021) states that the traditional party system has always been dominated by the SJ (p. 66).

¹¹ When the SJ member Prime Minister Geir Haarde resigned in January 2009 after the outbreak of the crisis, the minority government was formed by the SAM and VG on the 1st of February 2009 which lasted until May 2009 as the elections took place in April 2009.

¹² This research considers the 2009 coming into power as the core turning point for the VG's Euroscepticism affecting the period between 2009 and 2019 (i.e., the year of the conducted interviews). It also sees the 2017 experience of the party as an additional asset for the understanding of this period.

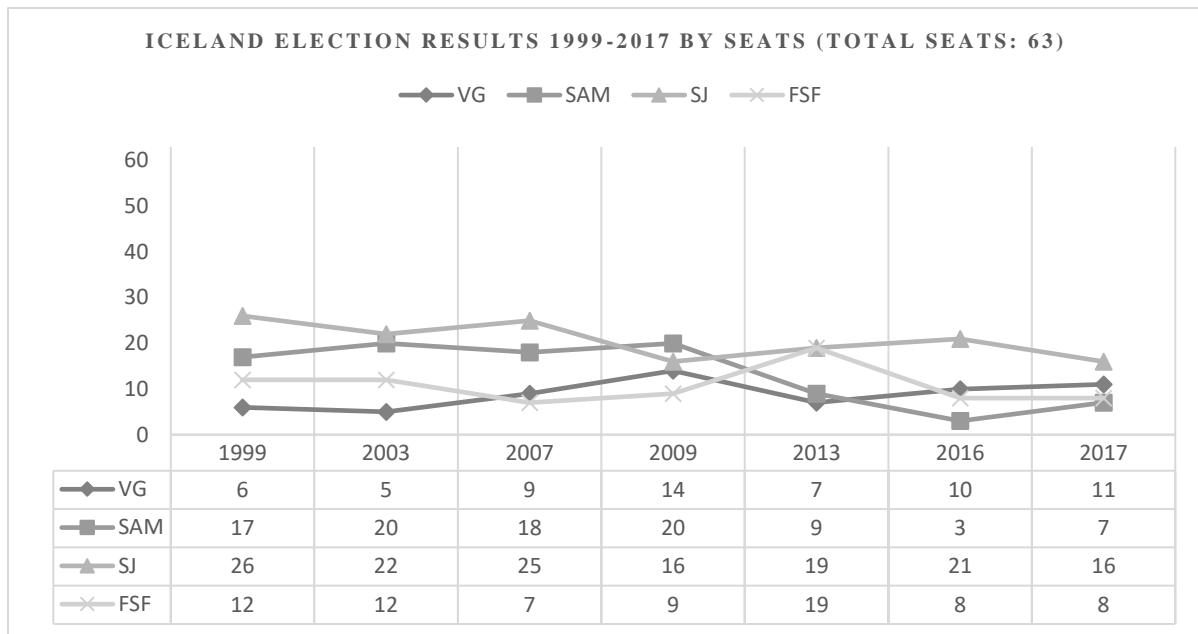
The 2008 financial crisis had similar consequences for the Icelandic party system as in the cases of Greece and Italy. According to Jonsson (2016), the four main Icelandic parties and the main political institutions experienced “a legitimization crisis” after the outbreak of the financial crisis (p. 149). Vilhelmsdóttir and Kristinsson (2018) state that following the economic crisis, Icelandic politics experienced lower levels of political trust, rising electoral volatility, fragmentation and weaker coalition governments (p. 212). They also note that despite the economic recovery, political instability is still persistent (Vilhelmsdóttir and Kristinsson, 2018, p. 213).

There have been only four political parties which are permanently represented in the Icelandic Parliament since 1999: the VG, the SAM, the SJ and the FSF. Before the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008, only the Liberal Party achieved to enter the parliament successively in the 2000s. The Icelandic party system was, therefore quite stable. Indeed, accordingly, Önnudóttir et al. (2022) for five decades, Icelandic party system was “extremely stable and strong” and dominated by four political parties which were also referred as the *fourparty or fjórflokkurinn* (p. 21). This situation has changed and the economic crisis “acted as a catalyst in that change” (Önnudóttir et al., 2022, p. 94). Jonsson (2016) argues that despite having a stable party system in the post-war era, Iceland’s party system started to be destabilized due to “the introduction of the neoliberalist regime” in the 1980s (p. 132). He further predicts that the recent economic and political crisis including the emergence of new political parties will not led to a “a real critical juncture “generating a “post-neoliberalist regime change” (Jonsson, 2016, p. 132).

After the crisis, the newly established parties started to be represented in the parliament: The Bright Future and the Pirate Party in 2013; the Reform Party in 2016; and the People’s Party and the Centre Party in 2017. More importantly, some of these parties overtook the permanent four parties in the elections: The Pirate Party, the Bright Future and the Reform Party received more votes than the SAM while the Pirate Party surpassed even the FSF in the 2016 elections. The Centre Party, as a split from the FSF, received more votes than the FSF in 2017. Consequently, while maximum five parties were represented between 1999 and 2009 in the parliament, by the time of writing, the parliament hosts eight parties. Önnudóttir, et al. (2022) identify pre-crisis new parties as “short-lived splinter parties from one of the established parties” while describe most of the new post-crisis parties as parties having roots outside the established parties (p. 113) (with the exceptions of especially the Centre Party and to some extent the Reform Party) (p. 130). According to Hardarson and Kristinsson (2018), such a fractionalization in the party system has posed difficulties for coalition governance and new

parties have contributed to the unpredictability of the political situation in Iceland (p. 135). Rising number of new parties in the post-crisis era proves that “the Great Recession has left a mark of a more fragmented party system in Iceland” (Önnudóttir et al., 2022, p. 130). Finally, as this research concerns, Thorhallsson (2021) argues that the Icelandic political party system has been increasingly polarised regarding European integration (p. 65).

The VG’s first governmental experience took place in a crisis-stricken national context which was characterised by social unrest, high inflation and unemployment rates, and the Icesave dispute which needs a further clarification. The Icesave dispute with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands occupied the era of crisis as a central matter (Loftsdóttir, 2014, p. 339). Icesave was an internet-based saving account and a branch of the private Icelandic bank Landsbankinn. Following the collapse of the three big banks of Iceland, namely, Landsbankinn, Glitnir and Kaupthing, Icesave also went bankrupt (Loftsdóttir, 2014, p. 339). The dispute between Iceland and the UK as well as the Netherlands was based on determining who would be responsible to compensate the losses (Loftsdóttir, 2014, p. 339) of the Icesave high-interest account holders of the two countries (Hallgrímsdóttir & Brunet-Jailly, 2015, p. 80). In this period, Britain even used the Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act to freeze UK-held assets (Hallgrímsdóttir & Brunet-Jailly, 2015, p. 80). The UK and the Netherlands compensated the losses of their citizens partially through funds supplied through the European Deposit Investors Guarantee Fund; however, they requested the repayment of those funds by Iceland (Hallgrímsdóttir & Brunet-Jailly, 2015, p. 80). The Icelandic government’s efforts to reach a compromise with the British and Dutch governments led to a highly tense domestic dispute and protests in Iceland which resulted in the two referendums in which the Icelandic electorate rejected the repayment plan (Hallgrímsdóttir & Brunet-Jailly, 2015, p. 80). Eventually, the issue was brought before the EFTA Court and in 2013 the Court did not hold Iceland responsible for repayment (Hallgrímsdóttir & Brunet-Jailly, 2015, p. 80). The Icesave dispute was eventually associated with the EU membership debate (Bergmann, 2013, p. 153) and it affected Icelandic public opinion in a negative way (Thorhallsson, 2015, p. 45). To conclude, throughout the year of crisis, Iceland was not only facing the economic problems by itself, but also dealing with international controversies. The crisis and Icesave dispute have dominated Icelandic political and societal life starting from mid-2009 and shaped the country’s choice towards Europe. In such a context, the SAM-VG coalition applied for the EU membership which was a precondition of the coalition for the VG’s “pro-European” coalition partner (Interview No. 26). The VG’s approval to the EU membership application will be intensively discussed in the next sections.



Y Axis 0 to 63 Total seats in the Icelandic Parliament
X Axis Dates of Parliamentary Elections

Graph 14: Iceland Election Results from 1999 to 2017 for the four main parties

Source: The National Statistical Institute of Iceland (“General Elections”, *Statistics Iceland [the National Statistical Institute of Iceland]*, [n.d.]).

The year 2013 was a turning point for the VG as in the same year the party chairman Sigfússon was replaced by “long-time vice-chair” Katrín Jakobsdóttir (Ómarsdóttir & Valgarðsson, 2020, p. 842) while both the VG and SAM were defeated in the general elections which subsequently led to the end of Iceland’s EU membership quest. Ómarsdóttir and Jónsson (2016) claim that in this period while leaving office, one of the challenges that the party faced was that the chairwoman Jakobsdóttir remained “overshadowed” by the former chairman, Sigfússon (p. 185).

The winning parties, the SJ and the FSF formed a Eurosceptic coalition which put a hold to the EU application immediately after the elections. Aftermath of the 2013 and 2016 general elections, the VG was still the biggest left-wing opposition party in the parliament. Finally, following the 2017 early general elections, the VG has formed a controversial coalition with the SJ and FSF under the prime ministry of Katrín Jakobsdóttir. As a result, not only the VG has had a prime minister for the first time, but a radical left party has had right-wing coalition

partners for the first time in Iceland as well. When the VG formed a coalition with the right-wing parties, many “felt like a betrayal” and several prominent members left the party including two former general managers (Ómarsdóttir & Valgarðsson, 2020, p.844).

As a control case, the VG has a similar economic understanding with the two main cases. As a Eurosceptic radical left party, it had the chance of being a ruling party only after the outbreak of the economic crisis. In other words, the party systems became more suitable for the rise of the three parties once the economic crisis took place in these countries. Being in office was a hard test for the VG as it also faced internal criticism, compromises with external actors and difficulties of being a ruling party. What makes the Icelandic case interesting and valuable is that whereas the Icelandic VG has gone through similar experience compared to SYRIZA and M5S, its national context differs from the other two with its EEA member non-EU status. The absence of the constraints imposed by the EU membership gives the present research the chance of observing the impact of such constraints on the investigated parties’ Euroscepticism.

6.2. Analysis

6.2.1. The VG’s Euroscepticism before, during and after government participation

6.2.1.1. From being a permanent opposition party to a ruling party

Prioritizing the conservation of environment, equality and social justice, fair and prosperous economy, independent foreign policy and feminism, the VG was established in 1999 by “the dissident minority” from the People’s Alliance and the Women’s Alliance with the aim of gathering socialists and environmentalists together as an alternative to the SAM (Erlingsdóttir, 2012, p. 43-45). The VG’s prioritized policy areas as “environment”, “social justice”, “woman rights”, and “peaceful/independent foreign policy” can easily be seen in its party programme in 2007 (“Stefna VG”, *the VG official website*, 2007). These features have been meeting with another issue during its opposition years: the VG’s opposition to Iceland’s EU membership.

Throughout the interview process, **all respondents** confirmed that the VG has **always** been against Iceland’s EU membership (Interview No. 24–31). As explained in Chapter 2, throughout the opposition years, the VG had been against Iceland’s EU membership due to predominantly economic motives as well as sovereignty concerns. Even though the party supports

cooperation between Iceland and the EU, it is also obvious that the party programme in the opposition years rejects the EU membership on the basis of economic and democratic deficit arguments (“Stefna VG”, *the VG official website*, 2007). According to Thorhallsson (2002); however, both the SJ and the VG leaders “most frequently refer to the independence of Iceland and the sovereignty of the nation” when they address the EU membership issue (p. 359). Furthermore, an early academic source reports that the VG was sceptical even towards Iceland’s EEA membership in the early opposition years (Thorhallsson, 2004, p. 6) and moreover, only the VG and a small minority of the SJ opposed Iceland’s participation in the Schengen area (Thorhallsson, 2004, pp. 55–56). The VG’s stance towards Iceland’s EEA membership will be discussed in the light of the interview findings in the next sections.

In addition to the VG’s views on the European project, the characteristics of the party are worth mentioning. The prominent names from the opposition years of the VG provided several insights concerning the traits of the party in these years. According to the VG’s former general-secretary during the opposition years, the party “had huge influence even in opposition” and the VG “managed very well” a practice of a “Nordic tradition”, which is “the party that is most to the left stands outside of government, pulling the government to the left” (Interview No. 31). The founder and the chairman of the VG for 14 years, Sigfússon stated that the VG was not founded with the idea of keeping the party permanently in opposition:

We were not established as a party to be in opposition forever. In that sense, we kept character. It has never been my idea to establish a party that will always be in opposition. (Interview No. 30)

The VG’s ongoing opposition status was about to change once the global financial crisis of the year 2008 arrived in Iceland, relatively earlier than Greece and Italy. Less than a year since the implications of the financial crisis were being felt in Iceland, the centre-right which had been the dominant force in Icelandic governments for decades, was about to be replaced by the country’s first left-wing government: a social democratic party and a radical left party which resembled each other in terms of several political and economic issues; and dramatically differed from each other regarding their answers to the Iceland’s EU membership question, and their conceptions on the European integration-related issues. Eventually, after another four-year period as an opposition party between 2013 and 2017, the party came into power again thanks to the 2017 elections. The change of the party is summarised by Sigfússon through the following words:

And it is rather interesting to look back over these 20 years and see us now. Having the prime minister leading the government... And myself, I am the speaker of the parliament. So, the VG now holds two key positions in Icelandic positions. That was not the estimation of many when we started the party in 1999. (Interview No. 30)

As an opposition party between 1999 and 2009, the VG had a clear position against Iceland's EU membership and therefore, despite the country's EEA membership, the VG's position can easily be explained through polity Euroscepticism in the opposition years. The crisis-stricken national contexts were influential in SYRIZA and the M5S's coming in power. And the relations of these two parties with the EU have more or less changed in the course of the time. As for the VG, Iceland applied for the EU membership thanks to the coalition in which the VG's itself was involved. Has the VG's government experience changed its polity Euroscepticism then? Attempting to answer this question, the next sections will be investigating the impact of being a ruling party on the Euroscepticism of the VG.

6.2.1.2. The VG as a ruling party: a short outlook

A four-year coalition of the VG and SAM was marked by an EU membership application followed by a chaotic process known as the Icesave dispute; a rapid recovery of the economy (at least compared to Greece for instance); and from positive to negative, a rapidly changing public opinion on the EU membership of Iceland. Eventually the 2013 general elections brought the Eurosceptic centre-right government back and ended Iceland's EU membership negotiation process. Subsequently, waiting another 4-year period in opposition, the VG formed a coalition government in 2017 with other two centre-right parties. This was yet another coalition composed of entirely Eurosceptic parties. The question to be briefly answered in this section is what has changed in the VG's conception on European issues, particularly on EU membership after these two separate government experience.

The current party programme of the VG on its official website states that the party is still against Iceland's EU membership (*Stefnumál/Alþjóða- og friðarmál, the VG official*

*website, party programme, 2021).*¹³ Standing against Iceland's EU membership, the VG, however, is also stating its desire to finalize it by asking it to the public as this was also expressed by two respondents (Interview No. 29, 30), and confirmed by the party's official programme (“Stefnumál/Efnahagsmál”, *the VG official website, party programme, 2021*). However, one of these respondents also argued that “no such referendum is on the cards” in the short-term (Interview No. 29). Concerning the party's general stance towards the EU, throughout the interview process, **none of the respondents** labelled the VG as a pro-European party (Interview No. 24–31) like the M5S case, and unlike the SYRIZA case. Nevertheless, **none of the respondents** stated that the VG (or personally themselves) is against European integration in principle (Interview No. 24–31). It is actually worth noting that **all** respondents expressed their personal opinions about at least one positive aspect of the EU (or they made at least one general positive remark about the EU) during the interviews (Interview No. 24–31). However, as noted in the previous section, **all respondents** confirmed the party position by stating that the VG has always been against Iceland's EU membership (Interview No. 24–31). These four generic findings require the following question: is the VG an entirely homogenous party concerning its stance towards European integration today?

The two respondents suggested that the VG electorate and party membership has different views on the question of EU membership. Referring to the opinion polls, a respondent reported that the party electorate (and he calls this “membership”) has always been divided into the three groups: “pro-EU”; “anti-EU” and “undecided” (Interview No. 24). Another respondent also stated that whereas some members want Iceland to be an EU member (even though this is not the case so much among the MPs according to the respondent) the EU membership question has not really been discussed during the party meetings (Interview No. 26). **None** of other respondents mentioned the presence of such a heterogeneity in the party (Interview No. 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31).

The Icelandic party-based Euroscepticism is not a homogenous phenomenon. That is, the critical arguments of the political parties towards the European project or the EU membership of Iceland differ from each other. For instance, the three biggest parties opposing Iceland's EU membership “do it on different premises” and in this respect, compared to the SJ and FSF, “the socialist/green profile of the VG explains the view” of the party on the EU

¹³ The VG official website provides the party's programme in both Icelandic and English. In the English version of the ‘International Affairs and Peace’ section and ‘Economics’ section which also have Icelandic equivalents, no information has been provided about the EU or Iceland's EU membership unlike the Icelandic versions. For the English version of the VG's party programme, see: <https://vg.is/vg-english/>

(Interview No. 25). According to a respondent, whereas the VG opposes the EU due to the fact that it doesn't "see it as a project for people", the SJ and other right-wing parties oppose it as they "will lose their power" (Interview No. 27) in the event of EU membership. Another respondent also underlined the differences between the criticism of the VG and other right-wing parties towards the EU membership. Accordingly, whereas the VG is critical towards the market-oriented traits of the EU, the right-wing parties see the EU as a "social phenomenon" and associate it with "commerce regulations" (Interview No. 30).

The party programme criticizes the EU in terms of its right-wing economic and monetary policies as well as undemocratic institutional structure ("Stefnumál/Efnahagsmál", *the VG official website, party programme*, 2021). In the same vein, throughout the interview process, the VG respondents predominantly gave place the criticism within the VG (or their personal criticism) towards the EU in terms of the EU's economy policies or its economic aspects (Interview No. 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31). Several respondents also emphasised VG's criticism (or their personal criticism) towards the EU in terms of Iceland's specific conditions, mostly the issue of fisheries (Interview No. 26); the democratic deficit problem in the EU (Interview No. 27); the management of the refugee problem by the EU (Interview No. 31); the management of the phenomenon of "the rise of populist, undemocratic and neo-nationalist political parties and movements" (Interview No. 25). Similar to the SYRIZA and M5S cases, **no party or personal criticism** towards the EU on the cultural basis (or through nativist or xenophobic arguments) had been reported by the VG respondents (Interview No. 24–31).

The *short outlook* sections of the previous two chapters clearly identified SYRIZA and the M5S as policy Eurosceptic parties unlike the present section which strongly associates the VG with polity Euroscepticism (Hypothesis 1C). Yet, these two sections also revealed that despite sharing similar concerns and having a similar position towards the EU, the two parties differ from each other regarding their self-identification in relation to Europe as no M5S respondents self-identified their party as pro-European unlike the SYRIZA respondents. It is the basic assumption of the theoretical understanding of this research that as a polity Eurosceptic party the VG cannot be associated with the term pro-European. The interview findings confirmed this as no respondents labelled neither the party nor themselves as pro-European. The rest of this chapter will be concerned with the discourse and position of the VG after its government experience.

6.2.1.3. Party split and remaining members

Unlike the SYRIZA and the M5S cases, the VG has become a ruling party twice and each time the party faced split-ups and abandoning members due to various motives. These split-ups; however, never brought about the loss of the VG's majority in a coalition to force the country for an early election. Even though the interview process covered both 2009 and 2017 government experience of the VG, the 2009 split-up constitutes the centre of this research because the main reason behind this split-up was directly related to the EU membership whereas the 2017 split-up was mostly based on ideological concerns of the abandoning members. Nevertheless, the data on the 2017 split-up are also considered as an asset as they also provide insights to understand the impact of being a ruling party on the VG, and the domestic constraints that it faced by 2017 and onwards.

As one of the most prominent opponents (and the only one among the left-wing parties represented in the parliament) of Iceland's EU membership in the parliament, the VG had made a controversial decision to form a coalition government with a party which prioritized the EU membership application as a pre-condition of being in this coalition (Interview No. 26). This controversial and unexpected decision was made during perhaps one of the most chaotic periods of Icelandic history characterised by public protests, an early election, discouraging economic indicators, and full of uncertainties. Even though some political actors were looking forward to the EU membership as a solution to overcome the crisis in Iceland, the VG was not one of them. However, a respondent reported an interesting insight concerning this period. Accordingly,

there was a significant amount of people who voted for the VG prior to 2009 elections that voted for the VG because it thought by doing so it would negate the chance of Iceland going to the talks with the EU to go into it. And as a turn out, that is not what happened. Iceland did apply for membership. (Interview No. 29)

It was not only the voters but also some party members who were disappointed with the EU membership application. "There were many many members of the VG that were not happy about it" (Interview No. 26). The application led to "internal power struggles within the party" and "this really was hurting the party at least 2.5 years" (Interview No. 27). The developments within the party in the period between 2009 and 2013 in which the application for Iceland's EU membership also took place, are explained by an MP of the party with the following words:

It became a very heated debate within the party in the 2009 and 2013 cycle. Because the strongest opponent of EU membership so they sensed betrayal to our basic principles so many of them left the party as a result. (Interview No. 24)

Depicting this period “internally very difficult for the party” as some members left the VG while some “MPs switched parties”, another respondent underlined that the EU application “was a big part of” these developments (Interview No. 29). In addition, it was not only the departing members but, according to a respondent, “a few leading members quit active membership after the disagreement in 2009-2012” (Interview No. 25).

Despite the EU application, several respondents have expressed that the VG kept its position against Iceland’s EU membership and labelled their coalition with the SAM as a “compromise” (Interview No. 24, 30) for greater good. Once the question of whether the party’s collective view towards the EU had changed after these departures, a respondent stated that since 2009 “it has been more or less the same” (Interview No. 24). Despite this, whereas many members “who were in great opposition to the EU has left” in 2009, the 2017 coalition decision led to the departure of many “radical feminists” and “socialists” from the party (Interview No. 31). In this process, even though a few MPs did not support the coalition, they chose to stay in the party (Interview No. 24). Voted against the coalition agreement in 2017 as an MP, a respondent justified his decision by stating that being in government between 2009 and 2013 was a “big challenge for the workers of the party” and his worry “was that the compromise would be too big” as the VG and “more conservative” SJ “don’t agree on economic matters” as well as matters like “immigration” and “human rights” (Interview No. 24).

The 2017 coalition brought the three Eurosceptic party together and one of them (i.e., the VG) was ideologically distinct from the rest (It is worth noting again that a similar unorthodox coalition was also formed by SYRIZA and ANEL). Such a hybrid coalition was a first in Iceland. Was Euroscepticism the main reason bringing them together? The answer No will be explained in the following sections. Despite having a common trait (i.e., opposition to Iceland’s EU membership) the rest of the differences led to a second wave of party turmoil within the VG. It has not been easy for the party leadership to convince its own members for such a coalition. When the VG became a ruling party for the second time by forming a coalition, “the betrayal talk” took place which also happened in 2009, as the coalition with the SJ was “considered by some an absolute betrayal” (Interview No. 27). As a result, “a lot of people from

the labour movement side left the party” as the VG was “in a coalition with the sort of party of industrialists” now; and “a lot of feminists left the party because what broke the government down in 2017 and caused an early election was a scandal involving a cover of sexual misconducts where the SJ was seen as part of the cover” (Interview No. 24).

To sum up, each decision of the VG in 2009 and 2017 led to the party facing serious internal opposition and the challenges of being a ruling party. Alongside the aforementioned party-splits, the next section will be focusing on the impact of being a ruling party over the discourse and position of the VG towards the EU.

6.2.1.4. Discourse and position of the party as a ruling party

What has changed at the end of the VG’s first (2009-2013) and during the second (2017 to today) ruling periods concerning the party’s discourse and position towards the EU? Once the question of whether the VG has changed its position towards the EU was asked, a respondent stated that he does not think that “the general standpoint of the VG towards the EU has changed” and gave place his assumption and the possibility that “there may have been opinion shifts; that is from a vast majority of “no-people” to the rather few “yes-people” (...)” (Interview No. 25). He also maintained that “quite many members are positive towards the EEA-agreement; some of those opposed its ratification 20 years ago” (Interview No. 25). The respondent’s words confirm the VG’s stance towards the EEA while it suggests the possibility of a very minor change within the party towards the EU. In the same vein with this conclusion, another respondent argued that the VG’s view on the EU has changed “from being more negative to being more neutral” since 2009 (Interview No. 29). Emphasizing that there is no debate nowadays on the EU membership, another respondent argued that “if the EU becomes an issue, it will be deliberated on much more grounded political terms” based on “realpolitik” rather than “principles” as “the most radical stance against the EU, the most non-compromising radical stance will not be heard” (Interview No. 27).

Despite these views; however, the majority of the respondents explicitly stated that the VG has not changed its position towards the EU (Interview No. 24, 25, 26, 28, 30). Accordingly, it still has the same “general standpoint” (Interview No. 25). The party “has been more or less the same” since 2009 in terms of the collective view on the EU, and “the party has this clear position of opposing EU membership despite the voters have been divided on the topic”

(Interview No. 24). It did not back from its “kind of principle of being sceptical towards the EU” (Interview No. 28).

If the position of the VG towards the EU has not changed as the majority of the respondents reported, then why did the party form a coalition which eventually led the country to apply for the EU membership? What did motivate the VG to form such a coalition despite the EU membership application? This crucial question received similar answers by some respondents. Accordingly, the coalition agreement in 2009 was aiming “to prevent the economic/political disaster” and “to bring the country on its feet again” (Interview No. 25). And “a lot of member of the VG” accepted to make the application and see “what comes out of it” but insisted to oppose the membership (Interview No. 26). The VG “never came close to even agreeing to apply or anything” but it was just “willing to listen” and “willing to read up and think about” it (Interview No. 28). Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, the founder and the chairman of the VG (and the minister of finance in the SAM-VG coalition) explained the decision of the party in 2009 through the following words:

(...) when we accepted in 2009 to put in the membership application, we made it very clear that we had as a party have not altered our position. We still have the party policy that membership was not the best way for Iceland. But we accepted to negotiate and see what kind of an agreement Iceland possibly could reach and (let it) actually Icelandic people to decide. (Interview No. 30)

Avery et al. (2011) confirm this explanation by stating that the VG leadership tolerated the coalition’s “pro-European policy” “in the firm belief that Iceland will not obtain a satisfactory accession treaty and that the terms it is offered will be rejected in a referendum” (p. 100).

In addition to this, several other motives were reported during the interviews. Accordingly, “the heads of the party had a clear record” which also increased the support for VG’s coming into power (Interview No. 27). The VG “had not been responsible for the policies before” and “there was a big demand that” the party “would step in and sort of take actions to take care of things” (Interview No. 30). In a country where “the right-wing parties had really crushed the economy”, the VG was now ready “to restore the country’s economy after the crisis” (Interview No. 26). “In the ruins of a twenty years of a neoliberal policy”, the VG had the chance now to create the first left-wing government in Iceland to “clean up the whole mess after the crush” (Interview No. 27). The motivation of the party was “to come in and shift the

course of the country away from the right-wing policy that had been ruling it for 18 years prior” and it “had to make this big compromise” (Interview No. 29). That is, the SAM “made this ultimatum” for Iceland’s EU membership application and the VG “made the sacrifice to make this compromise” (Interview No. 30). Nevertheless, the VG “had already as a party decided that this question would be left to the Icelandic people to answer” (Interview No. 30).

The 2009 coalition was justified through these arguments. When it comes to the second government experience of the party, the 2017 coalition requires an explanation as the VG formed the 2009 coalition with an ideologically similar party to itself in a context characterised by the economic crisis and early elections. The 2009 coalition was composed of solely left-wing parties unlike the 2017 coalition. What was the justification of this new coalition for a radical left party? Once the question of whether the common Eurosceptic stance can be considered as a reason or as an encouraging factor behind the coalition in 2017, an MP stated that he is “not sure it was big enough issue at that time” (Interview No. 24). Instead, “the main argument for this unorthodox coalition government” was “to bring stability into Icelandic politics again” as “there was a big demand for stability on the political scene” (Interview No. 30). In this respect, another respondent reminded that the country faced three different crises in 2008, 2016 and 2017 and stated that “the willingness to work with the largest right-wing party was a new feature but has to do with the economic/political crash in 2008 that required new thinking” (Interview No. 25). Despite these arguments, a respondent also stated that internal opposition also raised “due to the energy issues and the cooperation with the right-wing SJ” (Interview No. 25). At this point, it is worth noting that the energy issue is directly linked to Iceland’s EEA membership.

The interview findings show that even though the EU membership is not a salient issue in the case of the VG (as it is not “debated” (Interview No. 24, 27) and “discussed” (Interview No. 26) or talked as “a major issue” (Interview No. 28) and “is not high on the agenda” (Interview No. 30), the EEA related issues are more actual. In this respect, a respondent expressed the following words: “I think in the coming years, we are going to see more discussions not on EU membership, but on the membership of the EEA to be honest.” (Interview No. 29).

As discussed in Chapter 2 in detail, Iceland’s EEA membership had also not been a trouble-free process as several actors including the VG opposed it. And as showed in the same chapter, even today some parties question (and not necessarily oppose) Iceland’s EEA membership and the VG does not seem to be one of them. For instance, according to a media source, no references have been given during the party’s national congress in November 2017

about whether the VG has changed its position on the EEA membership even though the party has been historically critical towards the EEA (“Wants to assess Iceland's EEA experience”, *Iceland Monitor*, 2018). The next section will be concerned with the constraints that the VG faced during its government experience and will discuss Iceland's EEA membership in detail.

To sum up, this section confirmed that the VG as a polity Eurosceptic opposition party has not changed its position and its criticism towards the EU in a way to re-label it as a policy Eurosceptic party once it came into office whereas minor indicators of the moderation of the party's polity Euroscepticism can be found within the interview data (Hypothesis 3C).

6.2.2. The Constraints: towards a more responsible ruling party?

The analysis below will show if the regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of the domestic context and the constraints imposed by European integration have played a role in making the VG a responsible party once it became a ruling party.

6.2.2.1. The constraints

As emphasized before, European integration plays a special role in Iceland which is not a part of the Eurozone and EU, but the EEA. Compared to Eurozone member countries like Greece and Italy, Iceland is certainly less integrated to the European project. And therefore, the simple assumption is that the constraints imposed by European integration play a much lesser role in Iceland. Nevertheless, the interview data suggest that even though it is much limited compared to Greece and Italy, Iceland also faces several constraints through the EEA. As a respondent puts it, being in the EEA “is like being a part of the EU but not taking part in legislative process” (Interview No. 29).

To start with, “the EU does directly affect” Iceland as the country is in the EEA (Interview No. 28). A respondent pointed out that the EU affects Iceland “massively” as 75% of Iceland's legislation “comes from the EU through the EEA already” (Interview No. 27). Through the EEA, Iceland is “passing legislation after legislation adopting law and regulations they are not even being read” (Interview No. 27). Despite this; however, “way strong cases are not really decided with any consideration of the specifics of Iceland” (Interview No. 30). The

words of this respondent explain the problematic aspects of being an EEA member without EU membership:

(...) often this is called democratic deficit. In that sense sometimes decisions are taken by the EU and we are not at the table. We can try to influence but this is of course often a debate in Iceland, Norway and Lichtenstein. We have to take on many kinds of regulations and rules but we have not been actively involved in deciding. (Interview No. 30)

In addition to these problems, the association of the EEA with neo-liberalism was referred by two respondents. According to a respondent, “a lot of EEA legislation is highly influenced by the neo-liberal process” (Interview No. 24). Another respondent stated that “some say that membership of the EEA leads to more market-oriented legislation being adopted” (Interview No. 29). Despite these criticism; however, it was reported that the party considers Iceland’s EEA membership as positive in general (Interview No. 24) and some respondents mentioned positive aspects of the EEA membership throughout the interview process (Interview No. 25, 28, 30).

Being a “very contentious piece of legislation” that Iceland adopted (Interview No. 29), the third energy package talks as another EEA related issue took place in 2019 which “spurred” the EU debate again (Interview No. 25). According to a respondent, even though “these days the EU membership” is not spoken much and not it is not a “major issue at the moment”, the only “major issue is the kind of the possibility of the EU having the opportunity to dictate” Iceland’s energy (Interview No. 28). In fact, one of the “longest parliamentary debate” since the years of the economic crisis took place over the EU’s Third Energy Package in the parliament in May 2019 (“Longest parliamentary debate in years”, *RUV*, 2019).

When it comes to the domestic constraints, four respondents referred to the different and challenging aspects of being a ruling party, particularly to being in a coalition with another party and to the compromises that the party had to make. For instance, one respondent made a reference to the difficulty of being a ruling party once the party is facing the realities when it wants to achieve something (e.g., “to make a new constitution”) (Interview No. 27). Another respondent referred to the nature of being in a coalition. She stated that “everyone needs to give a little bit” as, for example, this applies to the VG’s opposition to Iceland’s NATO membership which is not raised as an issue in the current coalition (Interview No. 28). Giving the example of the VG, another respondent stated that it is “very simple” for a party in the opposition for ten

years which “can have a very clear framing of things” until it becomes a part of a coalition government as subsequently it needs “to make compromises with other parties” (Interview No. 29). In this respect, when the question of whether the party has changed, a respondent expressed the following words:

(...) when you are in government and you have to work with other parties to form a government, you have to make compromises. And when you are in opposition, it is much easier to just say that “well, this is our party policy, this is what we want”. Then when you are in government with other parties, you have to make all some kinds of compromises, and the thing that being a left-wing party, especially a lot of our members find it hard to make those compromises. (Interview No. 26)

In the presence of such internal and external constraints, similar to the SYRIA and M5S respondents, the majority of the VG respondents also reported the party’s successful economy policies (Interview No. 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31). For instance, as a left party, the respondents reported the following achievements of the VG concerning the economy policies: “incremental income tax”, “free admission for children at health care providers” (Interview No. 24); developments in “the health care”, “some social benefits”, “living conditions (general wages)” (Interview No. 25); “reform on the healthcare system” by strengthening “the public sector”, “the lower taxes for those with the lowest income”, “the taxes on those with the highest income” (Interview No. 26); a taxation policy in favour of the “ones with the lowest wages” (Interview No. 29); “economic restoration”, the rescue of a “damaged economy” in a “socially just and fair way”, preservation of “the situation of lower income groups” (Interview No. 30); the protection of “the welfare system”, “progressive taxing system”, and higher taxes for “big fishing companies” (Interview No. 31). Despite these reported -left-oriented- achievements of the VG, has the party become more responsible and ideologically moderated?

6.2.2.2. An ideologically moderated and more responsible VG?

Compared to the M5S, the VG’s overall ideological view is much less disputed. The VG does not have an anti-establishment nature or a claim to be having a post-ideological stance.

It is simply a radical left party in a changing world. During the interview, the founder of the party identified the VG as still a “radical left and environmentalistic, feminist and activist party” (Interview No. 30). And yet, three respondents made references implying that conditions moderated the VG’s radical leftist traits. According to a respondent, the VG “has become a more pragmatic” party after the government experience between 2009 and 2013 (Interview No. 31). A respondent stated that “the voices of the radical left that were often speaking out in central party meetings and national assemblies would keep up policy further to the left” were lost (Interview No. 27). Referring to the polls, another respondent stated that the VG “has shifted a bit from the left to the centre” and there is another party to the left of the VG which is the Socialist Party (SI) (Interview No. 29). Furthermore, **none** of the respondents made a reference to the weakening of the party mobilisation (Consequence 1). Only one respondent reported the weakening of the party central office as a result of its moving to the public office (Consequence 2):

I think that going into government always changes the party. Our experience from 2009 to 2013 was perhaps that it was a very challenging time to be in government. That was also a time where a lot of our grassroots had chosen to work for ministers. They had to actually do things. Maybe tempting to the grassroots became a secondary priority which was not good at a time when maybe we needed them most. And then we also have these people leaving the party because of number of issues including the EU in 2009 to 2013. And this is something that we again experienced in 2017. (Interview No. 24)

A very similar situation was reported by the SYRIZA respondents which was raised as an issue by Mair (2009) before both parties’ government experience. Compared to the SYRIZA case; however, the VG shows much lesser symptoms of a transformation into a responsible party (Hypothesis 2C). The absence of the EU as a constraining actor in the monetary and fiscal policies of Iceland especially in times of crisis can be considered as the most significant reason behind the difference between the VG and SYRIZA in the case of such a transformation.

6.3. Concluding remarks for Chapter 6

The first general hypothesis of this research for the two main Southern European cases is that even though before government participation, the parties show polity Eurosceptic characteristics, SYRIZA and the M5S's Euroscepticism is not against the EU polity but the EU policies. The analysis for the VG in this chapter shows that since its foundation, not even against a specific policy of the EU, but the VG has always been against the EU polity due to various motives. Unlike the SYRIZA and the M5S cases, during the opposition years, the VG can easily be considered as a polity Eurosceptic party (Hypothesis 1C).

The second general hypothesis of this research is that the regular dynamics of government participation (including the constraints of their domestic context) and the constraints imposed by European integration make parties responsible once they become ruling parties. Whereas there is evidence that SYRIZA has become a more responsible party, when it comes to the M5S, only minor proofs have been gathered through the interview data for such a change. As for the VG, similar to the M5S case, only minor proofs have been gathered through the interview data to confirm Hypothesis 2C.

The third general hypothesis of this research is suggesting that ruling parties eventually decrease their policy Euroscepticism and take a more moderate position towards the EU after government experience. The VG as a polity Eurosceptic opposition party; however, has not changed its position and its criticism towards the EU in a way to re-label it as a policy Eurosceptic party (Hypothesis 3C). The interview data suggest minor indicators of the moderation of the VG's polity Euroscepticism. The party kept its official anti position against the EU membership whereas several respondents reported that it also lost some of its members who are opposing EU membership radically. Furthermore, it is worth noting as the party is also no longer opposing the EEA membership of Iceland.

Finally, as a control case, given the EU membership application in July 2009, the VG can be considered as the most affected party by its coalition partner (i.e., the SAM in 2009) concerning an EU related issue compared to the SYRIZA and the M5S cases (Hypothesis 4C). The impact of this coalition and EU membership application has a strong impact especially over the party membership. This confirms the fourth general hypothesis of this research which suggests that government participation and EU constraints affect parties' Euroscepticism in accordance with the duration of their government participation and the degree of involvement (i.e., their coalition partners).

Conclusion

This thesis, first, provided the basic assumptions and theoretical framework of the undertaken research through Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. In these two chapters, the following empirical context was presented in a changing political landscape in Europe, especially in Southern Europe:

- party system changes, especially in the crisis-stricken countries;
- newly emerging or disappearing political parties;
- new parties represented in the parliaments for the first time after the outbreak of the economic crisis;
- new ruling parties or new contender parties which were not effective candidates for offices before;
- increasingly visible extremist right-wing movements and parties, most notably the presence of a neo-Nazi party in the Greek parliament;
- increasing debate on populism and Euroscepticism by academic and journalistic accounts.

Even before the emergence of these conditions, Mair (2009) argued that ruling parties struggle to be responsive (and becoming more responsible) due to the increasingly influential domestic and external constraints. This resulted with the rising scepticism of the opposition actors against the European *polity*; sometimes in the form of populism, sometimes not. From this point of view, proposing a new typology for the Euroscepticism literature (i.e., Polity Euroscepticism; Non-Sceptic Pro-Europeanism; and policy Euroscepticism; - the latter shows the characteristics of both Euroscepticism and Pro-Europeanism), this research focused on ruling parties - which came into office for the first time after the outbreak of the Eurozone economic crisis - taking critical positions against the EU predominantly through economic lenses. The main question was how government participation and the constraints imposed by European integration affect the Euroscepticism of Southern European ruling parties (i.e., SYRIZA and the M5S). The Icelandic VG, on the other hand, was utilized as a non-EU control case. For the data collection, 28 semi-structured and 3 written interviews were conducted while the qualitative case study method was applied for data analysis. The methodological issues including research design, case selection, data collection and data analysis were discussed in Chapter 3 which was followed by Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. Each of these chapters analysed a party case in detail and the collected data were analysed through qualitative case

study method. As a result of the analysis in these three chapters, the impact of government participation and the constraints imposed by the EU on the economic policy positions of Southern European ruling parties after the outbreak of the economic crisis were verified. The research findings partially confirmed the four hypotheses of the thesis.

First, the two main cases under investigation showed polity-sceptic characteristics before the government participation. These characteristics; however, disappeared once they became ruling parties. They even started to disappear once these parties became major contenders as potential ruling parties before their government participation. The research confirms that these parties cannot be labelled as polity Eurosceptics or non-sceptic pro-Europeans but clearly policy Eurosceptics in general.

Second, the research confirms that whereas the SYRIZA case largely shows the symptoms of a transformation into a responsible party, the M5S case shows it to a lesser extent. Both the regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of Greece and Italy's domestic contexts and the constraints imposed by European integration play a significant role in the change of the parties towards a more responsible stance during their ruling periods.

The third hypothesis revealed the most complex results compared to other hypotheses as the results have both common and differentiating traits. Starting from the common traits, the analysis explicitly shows that experiencing the difficulties of being a ruling party, the two parties have changed the way they are approaching European integration and the EU governance, and actors involved in the daily politics of Europe (i.e., both EU bureaucrats and other politicians of the EU member states). In other words, leaving aside the question whether they changed their views and principles in theory and their discourse and policies in practice the two parties have changed their tactics and strategies when they are dealing with European matters.

When it comes to the differentiating traits of the hypothesis, the two parties show similar but certainly different results regarding their policy Euroscepticism. Accordingly, whereas there is no doubt that after the government participation, SYRIZA's discourse towards the EU governance has considerably been moderated, the findings do not show a clear policy position shift towards the EU on a large scale. Nevertheless, as the Chapter 4 indicates, there are signs of a minor moderation and decrease of policy Euroscepticism. Moreover, the major party split in 2015 (i.e., the absence of hard liners after August 2015) and the party's ideological moderation towards centre-left support this view. The M5S, on the other hand, has moderated its discourse similar to SYRIZA. Moreover, a striking finding is that the ways these two parties justify this moderation show similarities. In the case of the M5S, the analysis shows a policy

position shift towards the EU more than SYRIZA. However, one should also note that the party did not face a party split caused by a disagreement on an EU issue. So, once one considers the departure of SYRIZA members with polity Eurosceptic views, SYRIZA's policy shift can also be considered similar to the M5S to some extent.

Fourth, even though the M5S respondents refer their coalition partners more frequently than the SYRIZA respondents, no clear link has been found between the moderated policy Euroscepticism of the two parties and their coalition partners as well as the duration of their government participation.

Finally, the Icelandic control case made a substantial contribution to the understanding of the main research question and to the elaboration of the research findings. Even though the VG experienced both government participation twice and party split due to a disagreement on an EU issue once, the party did not lose its main Eurosceptic character: polity Euroscepticism. However, in the absence of the constraints imposed by the EU, the analysis indicates that the regular dynamics of government participation including the constraints of Iceland's domestic contexts have made a minor contribution to party's transformation into a more responsible party. Moreover, even though the VG did not abandon its polity Eurosceptic stance, the findings suggest that party's overall scepticism towards the EU has been slightly moderated by the party split. Compared to the VG case, the relationship between SYRIZA and the M5S's government participation and their changing Euroscepticism can be explained especially through the constraints imposed by the EU and their integration into the European project. Finally, unlike SYRIZA and the M5S, the SAM as the pro-European coalition partner of the VG had a significant role in the VG's Euroscepticism; especially in relation to the party-split of the VG in 2009. The research findings can be summarized in relation to the main research question and hypotheses as below (Table 5):

Parties	Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3	Hypothesis 4
SYRIZA	confirmed	confirmed	partially confirmed	no strong evidence to confirm
M5S	confirmed	somewhat confirmed	partially confirmed	no strong evidence to confirm
VG	the opposite confirmed	somewhat confirmed	somewhat confirmed	confirmed

Table 5: Research Findings

This thesis reached the conclusions, which support the concerns of Mair (2009) to a large extent, through a small-N analysis. It has indicated that the two cases under investigation faced both domestic and external (European integration particularly) constraints during their ruling periods. Some of the interviewed respondents implied that their parties were ideologically moderated (sometimes as a result of hard-liner member's withdrawal due to various motives) or more responsible; or could not keep their promises and implement their pre-election prescriptions; - prescriptions involving especially the economic issues concerning European integration.

The results stand as a warning for future ruling parties (or parties intend to come into offices) orienting their criticism towards the EU (or any kind of external actor) mainly through economic lenses. The lessons of the two EU member examined cases in this thesis suggest that not only when they become ruling parties, once they transform themselves into contenders for office, parties tend to start moderating their ideological positions and their economic criticisms towards the EU. And they tend to be less responsive to the demands of their own electorate (or even their own party programmes and manifestos).

To what extent do radical left parties across Europe generate *radical* and *left* prescriptions? And perhaps more importantly, to what extent do they implement their prescriptions once they have the opportunity to govern? If the practices of those parties rather resemble the practices of traditional social democratic parties once the opportunity given by citizens, then, what is the meaning of radical left party programmes, pre-election statements and even the names containing the words *radical* or *left*? For instance, once a party does not implement an answer given by the citizens via a referendum for policy-making, isn't it an obvious proof of the absence of responsiveness?

Similar questions can also be addressed to anti-establishment parties: is it conventional or normatively acceptable that a party demanding more responsiveness with an anti-establishment rhetoric gains the most of the votes in the elections but approves a cabinet which is also composed of technocrats? Demanding a referendum to exit from the Eurozone and justifying this demand on the basis of the fact that the citizens were not asked once the country became a part of the Eurozone in the first place, how acceptable would it be for an anti-establishment party to abandon this aim once it got closer to power? Certainly, such questions require another research on the radical left party family or anti-establishment/populist parties through various approaches.

Mair (2009) identified “a democratic malaise” or “a crisis of legitimacy” (p. 9) in western democracies. In such a context, it is not surprising that centre-right or centre-left parties fail to be more responsive. What is surprising (if not inevitable) is that radical left or left-leaning populist parties which come into offices with the claim of being a cure of this malaise, also tend to fail to do so.

Appendix- List of interviews

List of SYRIZA interviewees

Interview No.	Name of the respondent	Interview Date	Interview Type	Interview Location
1	Aristides Baltas	4 June 2019	Face-to-face	Athens
2	Mustafa Mustafa	6 June 2019	Face-to-face	Athens
3	Christos Kanelopoulos	11 June 2019	Face-to-face	Athens
4	Aris Spourdalakis	13 June 2019	Face-to-face	Piraeus
5	Mihalis Spourdalakalis	19 June 2019	Face-to-face	Athens
6	Dimitris Rapidis	24 June 2019	Face-to-face	Athens
7	Nikolaos Ksidakis	13 July 2019	Face-to-face	Athens
8	*	15 July 2019	Face-to-face	Athens
9	Sokratis Fanellos	24 July 2019	Face-to-face	Athens
10	Dimitris Papanikolopoulos	28 August 2019	Skype Interview (Face-to-face)	Online
11	Dimitrios Papadimoulis	10 September 2019	Phone Interview	Online

* The permission allowing the mentioning of the respondent's name and affiliation was not granted

Affiliations of SYRIZA interviewees

Int. No.	Name of the respondent	General Affiliation on the day of the interview	Detailed Affiliation
1	Aristides Baltas	MP** from Attica	- Former Minister of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs; - Former Minister of Culture and Sports; - Member of the Political Secretariat of SYRIZA; - Founding member of SYRIZA - MP from 2015-2019
2	Mustafa Mustafa	MP from Rodopi	- Also former MP from Synaspismos - MP from 2015 to 2019
3	Christos Kanellopoulos	Party Cadre	- International affairs/EU policy advisor at the Foreign Policy and International Relations Department of SYRIZA since 2015
4	Aris Spourdalakis	Party Cadre	- Member of SYRIZA Youth since 2012
5	Mihalis Spourdalakalidis	Party Cadre	- MEP candidate for European Elections 2019; - Founding member of SYRIZA
6	Dimitris Rapidis	Party Cadre	- Member of the secretariat of European and Foreign Affairs of SYRIZA since 2015
7	Nikolaos Ksidakis	Former MP from Athens	- Former Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs; - Former Alternate Minister of Culture - MP between January 2015 and July 2019
8	*	MP*	*

9	Sokratis Famellos	MP from Thessanoliki	- Former Alternate Minister for Environment and Energy; - Founding member of SYRIZA - MP from 2015 to present
10	Dimitris Papanikolopoulos	Party Cadre	- Editor at pro-SYRIZA newspaper AVGI - Member of SYRIZA since 2007
11	Dimitrios Papadimoulis	MEP***	- MEP in the EP since 2014 (between 2014-2019 and 2019-present); - Founding member

* The permission allowing the mentioning of the respondent's name and affiliation was not granted

** MP = Member of Parliament

*** MEP = Member of European Parliament

List of M5S interviewees

Interview No.	Name of the respondent	Interview Date	Interview Type	Interview Location
12	Niccolo Invidia	17 September 2019	Face-to-face	Rome
13	Luca Carabetta	27 September 2019	Face-to-face	Rome
14	*	03 October 2019	Face-to-face	Rome
15	Francesco Berti	07 October 2019	Face-to-face	Rome
16	Emma Pavanelli	10 October 2019	Face-to-face	Rome
17	*	19 October 2019	Written	Online
18	*	29 October 2019	Written	Online
19	Daniela Rondinelli	04 November 2019	Face-to-face	Rome
20	Mattia Fantinati	11 November 2019	Face-to-face	Rome
21	Simona Suriano	18 November 2019	Face-to-face	Rome
22	Luciano Cadeddu	26 November 2019	Face-to-face	Rome
23	*	26 November 2019	Face-to-face	Rome

* The permission allowing the mentioning of the respondent's name and affiliation was not granted

Affiliations of M5S interviewees

Int. No.	Name of the respondent	General Affiliation on the day of the interview	Detailed Affiliation
12	Niccolo Invidia	MP** from Lombardia	- MP since 2018 - Member of the party since 2012
13	Luca Carabetta	MP from Piemonte	- MP since 2018 - Member of the party since its foundation
14	*	Party Cadre*	*
15	Francesco Berti	MP from Toscana	- MP since 2018 - Member of the party since 2012
16	Emma Pavanelli	Senator from Umbria	- Member of the party since 2009 - Senator since 2019
17	*	MP*	*
18	*	Senator*	*
19	Daniela Rondinelli	MEP***	- MEP since 2019 - Member of the party since February 2018
20	Mattia Fantinati	MP from Veneto	- MP since 2018 (also between 2013/18) - Former Undersecretary of the Council of Ministers of Italy (Public Administration) between 2018-2019
21	Simona Suriano	MP from Sicilia	- MP since 2018 - Member of the party since 2007
22	Luciano Cadeddu	MP Sardegna	- MP since 2018 - Member of the party since 2018
23	*	MP*	*

* The permission allowing the mentioning of the respondent's name and affiliation was not granted

** MP = Member of Parliament

*** MEP = Member of European Parliament

List of VG interviewees

Interview No.	Name of the respondent	Interview Date	Interview Type	Interview Location
24	Andrés Ingi Jónsson	14 June 2019	Skype Interview (Face-to-face)	Online
25	Ari Trausti Guðmundsson	30 July 2019	Written	Online
26	Steinunn Þóra Árnadóttir	19 August 2019	Skype Interview (Face-to-face)	Online
27	Edward Huijbens	19 August 2019	Skype Interview (Face-to-face)	Online
28	Hreindís Ylva Garðarsdóttir Holm	2 September 2019	Skype Interview (Face-to-face)	Online
29	Kari Gautason	8 September 2019	Skype Interview (Face-to-face)	Online
30	Steingrímur J. Sigfússon	18 September 2019	Skype Interview (Face-to-face)	Online
31	Drífa Snædal	19 November 2019	Zoom Interview (Face-to-face)	Online

Affiliations of VG interviewees

Int. No.	Name of the respondent	General Affiliation on the day of the interview	Detailed Affiliation
24	Andrés Ingi Jónsson	MP* Reykjavík Constituency North	- MP since 2016/2017 elections
25	Ari Trausti Guðmundsson	MP Southern Constituencies	- Member and MP since 2016/2017 elections
26	Steinunn Þóra Árnadóttir	MP Reykjavík Constituency North	- Member since 2002 - MP since 2016/2017 elections
27	Edward Huijbens	Vice-Chairman of the VG	- Founding member - Vice Chairman for 2 years
28	Hreindís Ylva Garðarsdóttir Holm	- Chairperson of the Young Left-Greens - Secretary of the Reykjavík Sector	- Active member of the party since 2016 (member of the party even before this year)
29	Kari Gautason	Manager of the Left-Green parliamentary group	- Member of the party since 2009 - Member of the central committee between 2009-2013
30	Steingrímur J. Sigfusson	- Speaker of the Althing (Icelandic Parliament) - MP Northeast - Founder of the VG	- Chairman of the VG between 1999 and 2013 - MP since 2016/2017 elections - Minister of Finance between 2009 and 2011
31	Drífa Snædal	-The President of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour - Former General Secretary of the VG - Former member of the party	- Former General Secretary of the VG between 2006-2010 - Founding member - No longer member of the VG since 2017

* MP = Member of Parliament

Lists of interview questions¹⁴

SYRIZA interview questions¹⁵

- 1) How do you view the European Union (EU) since its foundation? Is the EU a successful or unsuccessful political entity?**
- 2) What is your view on Greece's EU membership? Is it beneficial or not?**
- 3) In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that Greece is facing today? If any, positive or negative, what is the role of the EU in these challenges?**
- 4) Has SYRIZA changed its view towards the EU governance after it has become a ruling party in 2015? (until July 2019) If yes, in which direction has it changed? Towards a positive or negative direction?**
- 5) How have the government's economy policies been affected by the EU after it has become a ruling party in 2015 (until July 2019)?¹⁶**

Sub-question: Is SYRIZA less critical towards the economy policies of the EU or the economy policies demanded by the EU and implemented by SYRIZA after it has become a ruling party in 2015 (until July 2019)?

- 6) Do you think that SYRIZA's discourse towards the EU is still as relevant and topical as before SYRIZA has become a ruling party in 2015 (until July 2019) among SYRIZA members and leaders? ¹⁷**

¹⁴ In very rare cases, if the answer of a question is already gathered by previous questions, that question was not asked.

¹⁵ In the case of Interview No. 11, due to time limitation, no answers were gathered from Question 8 and Question 9 as these questions were not asked.

¹⁶ Accompanying this question, the additional sub-question below was asked once it is considered necessary.

¹⁷ Question 6 and Question 7 were asked to several SYRIZA respondents; however, the collected answers were either not considered useful for the research or they were already acquired through other questions. Eventually these two questions were cancelled for the rest of the interview process. These two questions were not asked to the M5S respondents at all.

7) If it still has any, do you think that SYRIZA's current criticism towards the EU still derives from the same or similar reasons of the period in which SYRIZA was an opposition party?

8) In general, has SYRIZA changed after it has become a ruling party in 2015 (until July 2019)? (e.g., organizationally; internal opposition; leadership; relationship with other parties; EU relationship etc.)

9) From your perspective, how does SYRIZA differ from other left-wing parties in Greece, and also other southern European left-wing parties in Italy and Spain
- ideologically;
- in the sense of SYRIZA's economy policies;
- and also, in the sense of its view towards the EU in general?

10) SYRIZA is a member of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left Group in the European Parliament and also a member of the European Left. What do you think about SYRIZA's membership to these transnational platforms in general?¹⁸

¹⁸ Question 10 was designed as an additional question for this research. Due to the same motives explained for Question 6 and Question 7, this question was not asked to all SYRIZA and the M5S respondents.

Five Star Movement interview questions¹⁹

- 1)** How do you view the European Union (EU) since its foundation? Is the EU a successful or unsuccessful political entity? And what is your view on Italy's EU membership? Is it beneficial or not?
- 2)** In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that Italy is facing today? If any, positive or negative, what is the role of the EU in these challenges?
- 3)** Has the Five Star Movement changed its view towards the EU governance after it has become a ruling party in 2018? If yes, in which direction has it changed? Towards a positive or negative direction?
- 4)** How have the government's economy policies been affected by the EU after the Five Star Movement has become a ruling party in 2018?²⁰

Sub-question: After more than a one-year experience, is the Five Star Movement less critical towards the economy policies of the EU or is the Five Star Movement more tolerant towards the economy policies of the EU?

- 5)** In general, has the Five Star Movement changed after it has become a ruling party in 2018? (e.g., organizationally; internal opposition; leadership; relationship with other parties; EU relationship etc.)
- 6)** From your perspective, how does the Five Star Movement differ from other parties (especially left-wing parties) in Italy, and also other southern European (especially left-wing) parties
 - ideologically;
 - in the sense of the Five Star Movement's economy policies;
 - and also, in the sense of its view towards the EU in general?

¹⁹ Once I communicated with Interview No. 18, he/she provided his/her answers to my email which was summarizing the general scope of the proposed interview through three different points. Consequently, Interview No. 18 provided a written answer for these three points rather than answering each interview question during an interview process.

²⁰ Accompanying this question, the additional sub-question below was asked once it is considered necessary.

7) The Five Star Movement has currently 14 MEPs in the European Parliament. What do you think about the role of the Five Star Movement in the European Parliament in general?

VG interview questions²¹

- 1)** How do you view the European Union (EU) since its foundation? Is the EU a successful or unsuccessful political entity? The EU membership issue has been a long debate in Iceland. In your opinion, would Iceland's EU membership be beneficial for the country or not?
- 2)** In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that Iceland is facing today? If any, positive or negative, does the EU play a role in these challenges?
- 3)** After both 2009 and 2017 parliamentary elections the Left-Green Movement has become a part of the government. And moreover, following 2017 parliamentary elections, for the first time, a leader of the party has become the prime minister of Iceland. Has the Left-Green Movement changed its view towards the European Union (not only concerning Iceland's membership, but also in general) after these two-government participation experience?
- 4)** Do you think that the Left-Green Movement's discourse towards the EU is still as relevant and topical as before the party has become a part of the government in 2009 and 2017 among party members and leaders?
- 5)** In general, has the Left-Green Movement changed after it has become a part of the government in 2009 and 2017? (e.g., organizationally; internal opposition; leadership; relationship with other parties; EU relationship etc.)
- 6)** From your perspective, how does the Left-Green Movement differ from other parties in Iceland in the sense of its view towards the EU in general?
- 7)** In your opinion, after it has become a part of the government, to what extent the Left-Green Movement has been able to implement the policies for which it has been motivated during its opposition years before 2009 and also before 2017?

²¹ Since the VG is a control case, several questions asked to the VG respondents slightly differ from the questions of the SYRIZA and the M5S cases.

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