



**LIBERA UNIVERSITA' INTERNAZIONALE  
DEGLI STUDI SOCIALI**

*Ph.D. Programme in Political Theory, Political Science and Political  
History  
XXX cycle*

**Beyond the Left-Right Dimension?  
The Impact of European Integration on West European  
Party Politics.**

PhD Candidate: Luca Carrieri  
Supervisor: Leonardo Morlino  
Co-Supervisor: Lorenzo De Sio

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Party Systems and European Integration

Since the foundation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 and until the beginning of the 2000s, the academic literature substantially showed the weak impact of European integration on the national party systems and the patterns of party competition. According to Peter Mair (2000), who epitomized this view, European integration had little effect, both on the format and mechanics<sup>1</sup> of party systems. Europeanization did not affect the number of significant parties competing in the national elections and only a tiny group of parties were established to primarily mobilize the opposition or support towards the EU. Thus, the Anti-/Pro-Europe conflict did not constitute a new dimension of party competition, while the Left-Right divide dominated the partisan alignments in Europe, significantly predicting electoral behaviour.

The lack of influence of European integration on the dynamics of party competition had much to do with its peculiar development. Indeed, the process of European integration started in the 1950s, involving well-established nation states, being mainly driven by national governments under the pressure of transnational economic interests. The pivotal role of political and economic elites in shaping the European project was accompanied by a substantial popular disengagement. Even if some scholars underline the widespread citizens' approval of the EU project (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970), Hooghe and Marks (2009) referred to a phenomenon of people's *permissive consensus*, which characterized the public opinion trends

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<sup>1</sup> The format and mechanics are the two core features of national party systems identified by Giovanni Sartori (1976).

regarding European integration. Indeed, the vast majority of the European public did not fully perceive the political outcomes of the integration, leaving wide room for action for national governments to expand the EU project. Consequently, European integration did not assume the status of a political issue among the voters and its saliency remained substantially low for the whole period, the political parties not having any incentive to transform it into a dimension of political contestation.

The Maastricht Treaty (1992), which has been widely identified as one of the critical junctures in the European integration process (Fabbrini 2015), triggered a slow downturn trend in the popular approval of the European Union project (Eichenberg and Dalton 2007). This Treaty<sup>2</sup>, not only marked a sharp transfer of functions to supranational and inter-governmental institutions, once exclusively retained by the nation-states (defence, foreign, justice and home affairs policies), but it also lay the foundations for the European Monetary Union (EMU). However, the abrupt deepening of the European integration was not complemented by a widespread development of an inclusive European identity (Hooghe and Marks 2009), unleashing some forms of discontent towards the EU. In fact, for the first time, Eurosceptic sentiments developed across the continent, becoming visible even among the EEC founding members (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and Netherlands), which had previously embodied the European project. The sign of the Maastricht Treaty was a unprecedented watershed in the mobilization of the opposition towards the EU: *“hand in hand with an accelerated process of European integration in recent years has come a rise in outright opposition to the European Union (EU) in party systems*

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<sup>2</sup> The Treaty on European Union (TEU), later labelled the Maastricht Treaty, was signed on 7 February 1992 by 12 countries.

*across Western Europe. Increased Euro-scepticism has been the corollary of increased integration”* (Taggart 1998, 363). Thus, the popular support for European integration switched from a *permissive consensus to a constraining dissensus* (Hooghe and Marks 2009), opening up windows of opportunities for the entrepreneurship of Anti-European parties.

Many overviews (De Wilde and Zurn 2012; Grande and Hutter 2014; 2016a; 2016b) have recently refined these insights by providing the *Authority transfers hypothesis*: “*The politicisation of European integration is driven by transfers of authority from the national to the European level. Because the Maastricht Treaty represents a very critical event in this process, we expect a significant and lasting increase in politicisation in the period after the Maastricht Treaty*” (Grande and Hutter 2016b, 25). Anyway, some important qualifications have occurred in the cross-national analysis that they carried out and, consequently, the *Authority transfers hypothesis* has found only a mixed empirical backing (Grande Hutter 2014; Grande and Hutter 2016b). In fact, in spite of the documented changes in public opinion, the Pro-/Anti-European orientations had remained a *sleeping giant* (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004) in the immediate Post-Maastricht decade, without finding substantial party outlets to express this latent conflict. Political parties that made radical attempts to emphasize European integration issues failed in the objective of maximising votes. Especially the so-called “*Single Issue Eurosceptic Parties*” (Taggart 1998, 368), which exclusively aimed at strengthening their reputation on *Eurosceptic* stances (for the notion of Euro-scepticism see: Kopecky and Mudde 2002, Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002), turned out to be electorally marginal, rapidly vanishing. Even Stefano Bartolini (2005), who identified the potentiality of the European integration issues in structuring a new

political conflict, underestimated the effects of the EU unification on the morphology of Western European party systems. This potential dimension of political contestation, which had appeared to be ready to be mobilized, was strategically hampered by the mainstream governing parties to avoid electoral setbacks (Mair 2011).

## **1.2 Transformative Effects of the Euro Crisis**

Another contingent, but powerful, factor appears to have accelerated the establishment of a new political conflict related to the European integration and its subsequent translation into a set of party alternatives: The *Great Recession* or *Euro crisis* (2008-2014). In fact, the crisis has probably catalysed many electoral changes at the national level, reversing some of the pre-existing patterns of voting behaviour. Following the aftermath of this worldwide economic trend, the levels of electoral volatility have increased in Western Europe, mirroring a growing electoral instability (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2015). On the one hand, these switches in electoral choices certainly reflected an ordinary reward-punishment dynamic (Key 1966; Fiorina 1981), whereby the citizens sanctioned the poor economic performances of the incumbent governments (Bosco and Werney 2012; Kriesi 2014). On the other hand, the increasing shares of votes for Protest/Challenger parties (Hobolt and De Vries 2015; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2017; Morlino and Raniolo 2017), which have provided voters with a set of outright Anti-European positions, may signal a new dimensionality of political conflict related to the European integration.

Indeed, the European Union took centre stage in the management of the Euro Crisis, handling several economic and political challenges. The Great Recession, which can be dated back to September 2008

with the collapse of Lehman Brothers in the USA, rapidly translated into an international financial upheaval, spurring the sovereign debt crisis in Europe. Many countries (8 out of 28 EU members) resorted to a financial bailout from the EU and IMF and, consequently, they had to adopt many fiscal retrenchment measures coupled with structural reforms imposed by the joint actions of the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Moreover, most of the EU member states suffered a prolonged period of stagnation, undergoing an acute lowering of their GDP growth, and some countries saw the dramatic increase in unemployment levels (source: Eurostat), especially within the South of Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal). A process of bargaining among governments took place within the European Council, which determined many policy guidelines but also a new regulatory framework at the EU level. The efforts for reformist actions came from the creditor states under the aegis of the German government that was particularly committed to the pursuit of mechanisms for preventing new crises (Fabbrini 2013). This process entailed a complex package of reforms, developed by intergovernmental treaties (the six pack, European semester, two pack, Fiscal Compact, etc.) to reduce the lasting mismatch between centralized monetary policies and decentralized fiscal policies within the EMU. Hence, this new set of rules was established in order to consolidate the fiscal coordination among the EU countries by tightening the constraints of the budgetary policies and sharpening the monitoring power of the EC (Laffan 2014a Schimmelfennig 2014). One of the pillars of this system was based on the obligation of governments to cope with the fiscal consolidation by introducing an automatic mechanism of deficit reduction within the national legal system (if possible under the form of constitutional law). This

austerity measure was laid down by the so-called Fiscal Compact Treaty (the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union) that was signed by 25 member states of the European Union on 2 March 2012.

This whole pattern seemed to bring about deep repercussions at the national level, further undermining the state sovereignty and weakening the electoral accountability. In the first place, the prominent role fulfilled by the EU institutions in handling the crisis has exacerbated a growing tension between responsiveness and responsibility (Mair 2009; Mair 2011; Laffan 2014a; Kriesi 2014; Morlino and Raniolo 2017). Indeed, the governments' domestic responsiveness<sup>3</sup> towards the citizens has been strongly constrained by their external responsibility towards the EU, which has reduced the range of policy choices during the crisis. For instance, the demand-side and pro-growth policies were removed from the domestic agendas by the efforts of the European Council, which has favoured a general orientation towards austerity measures, made up of budgetary cutbacks, structural reforms and supply-side programs (Scharpf 2015). This non-majoritarian (Majone 1994) and poorly accountable decision-making has hindered national governments in dealing with the social consequences of the Great Recession, such as unemployment and stagnation, magnifying the growing gap between public demands and policy outputs (Cramme and Hobolt 2015). Furthermore, these *“austerity requirements are no longer defended as an immediately effective remedy for state-credit crises, but have become part of a new euro regime whose purpose is to ensure the long-run viability of EMU.”* (Scharpf, 2015, 26). Hence, the Euro

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<sup>3</sup> According to Morlino (2012), the responsiveness of government is: *“the capacity of government to satisfy the governed by executing its policies in a way that corresponds to their demands.”* (Ibidem 2011, 208)

crisis has probably ushered in a new era of economic governance in the Euro-zone countries, further boosting the role of EU institutions (mainly the intergovernmental ones) and increasingly reducing the room for manoeuvre of the national governments.

Once this set of policy constraints was reinforced, the clarity of partisan choices turned out to be reshaped at the domestic level. Indeed, the convergence on the austerity measures may have weakened the capacity of Pro-European parties to link voter preferences on the Left-Right conflict dimension. Indeed, the economic content ensuing the Left-Right dimension of political contestation has appeared to be dampened in political agendas by the European Union economic governance. The polarization between those supporting a more regulatory and interventionist role of the state and those advocating a market-oriented and deregulated wisdom of the state was already jeopardized by the collapse of the Bretton-Wood system and the crisis of the embedded capitalism (Mair 2008). Nevertheless, the EU management of the crisis may have exacerbated this trend by overshadowing the economic divisions among parties in designing policy-making. The Left-Right ideological dimension has seemed to be undercut by the effects of the Euro crisis, potentially depriving the voters from this political information device (Downs 1957) and, perhaps, restructuring the electoral preferences at the national level. Many of the Mainstream parties have tried to include cultural issues (immigration, environmentalism, etc.) in their platforms (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Dalton, Farrell and Macallister 2011; De Vries, Hackaverdian and Lancee 2013) in order to avoid electoral defeats and to bloc potential new sources of political conflict. However, the party repertoires of action have been lessened by the impetus of the Euro crisis, which has downplayed the economic conflict as an asset of electoral competition.

Meanwhile, despite the complexity of the EU building, which set up a multi-level polity, the citizens were able to assign responsibility to the European institutions (Hobolt and Tilley 2014). The propensity of citizens to blame the EU for the policy outcomes has substantially increased during the crisis, changing public opinion towards the overall European building (Schimmelfennig 2014). Sarah Hobolt (2015), by relying on the Euro-barometer data, showed a loss of public trust in the European institutions, occurring between 2007 and 2013, which is likely to be related to the EU management of the crisis. These trends in public opinion and the institutional developments have apparently rendered the public debate over the European integration more salient at the domestic level (Kriesi and Grande 2014; Kriesi and Grande 2016), potentially laying down the foundation for the emergence of the *EU issue voting* (De Vries 2010). Indeed, many parties may have met the conditions for emphasizing the EU's issues, drawing attention to the European integration conflict and providing voters with important cues in terms of Pro-/Anti-European stands at the general elections. These parties, especially those located at the extreme of the Left-Right continuum and outside of the *cartel* of governing parties (Katz and Mair 1995), could have perceived the competitive advantages in framing this set of issues by breaking a Pro-European consensus. Consequently, the Euro crisis may have led towards an alteration in the electoral supply, opening up strategic opportunities for the Anti-European entrepreneurs in manipulating the political agenda (Riker 1986).

Thus, the Euro crisis, and its above-mentioned political outcomes, could have sparked off the mobilization and the politicization of the conflict over the European integration. However, we do not identify the Great Recession as a proper critical juncture, but we rather consider it as a catalyst: *“That is, contrary to the classic*

*Schumpeterian hypothesis in economics that crises bring about innovative destruction, we hypothesize that in politics an economic crisis magnifies and accelerates latent or less latent trends and factors already present within the political system”* (Morlino and Raniolo 2017, 23). Indeed, many of the preconditions for the awakening of the *Sleeping Giant* (Franklin and Van der Eijk 2004), above enlisted, were already underway. Therefore, we argue that the economic downturn may have propelled a substantial electoral change<sup>4</sup> by intensifying the impact of EU issues over the party preferences. The transformative effect of EU issue voting may result in a freezing of new electoral alignments and a stabilizing in new patterns of party competition over time. Nevertheless, at this moment, we are likely to cope with a more contingent change, which could be determined by the mobilization of the European conflict that has still to prove its long-term viability.

Consequently, this work does not advance a Pro-/Anti-European *cleavage* hypothesis, but rather it aims at assessing the politicization of the conflict over EU issues. Moreover, this politicization may have strengthened another dimensionality of political contestation, based on the Pro-/Anti-European attitudes, which currently affect the voting choices.

### **1.3 The Politicization of European Integration Conflict**

In the last decade, many overviews have been dedicated to analyse the politicization of European integration (Marks and Steenburgen 2004; Bartolini 2005; Kriesi 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2009; De Wilde and

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<sup>4</sup> The electoral change is actually undisputed by current academic literature (Chiaromonte and Emanuele 2015; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2017; Morlino and Raniolo 2017).

Zurn 2012; Grande and Hutter 2014; Hurrelman, Gora and Wagner 2015; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016; De Wilde, Leopold and Schmitdke 2016; Hoeglinger 2016a; 2016b). A great deal of this academic debate has revolved around the EU's increasing authority and the formation of clear-cut public attitudes towards the deepening integration. In fact, the development of mass attitudes on EU issues and the transfer of powers at the supra-national level appear to be substantially conducive to activating a European integration conflict, setting up several incentives for the political actors. Nonetheless, we contend that the entrepreneurship role of parties is pivotal in triggering new conflicts by restructuring the electoral supply. According to Giovanni Sartori (1968, 209): "*conflicts and cleavages may be channelled, deflected and repressed or, vice versa, activated and reinforced, precisely by the operations and operators of the political system*". Thus, parties often choose to dismiss certain conflicts, which could potentially jeopardize their electoral stability or, vice versa, they assign saliency to conflicts that could constitute an electoral asset (Budge and Farlie 1983). For a long time, the conflict over European integration was substantially depoliticized by the Mainstream parties, which had strategically displaced the EU related issues from the political agenda, avoiding confrontations over these (Marks and Steenburgen 2004). The Euro crisis has seemed to reshape the party strategic incentives, opening up windows of opportunity for the Anti-European parties, which have sought to strengthen their electoral support. Both the sociological and institutional variables, which have largely been employed by the scholarly literature as the main determinants of politicization, do not appear to be sufficient conditions for the activation of a conflict (Meguid 2005; Meguid 2008).

The party strategic efforts in emphasizing and priming the EU issues are central in our analysis. We expect that the losing parties over the dominant dimension of conflict (Left-Right) are more likely to struggle for the establishment of a new issue dimension. Indeed, the multidimensionality in the political competition has often been considered as a resource for parties to reverse a negative electoral trend (Riker 1986). On the contrary, the party capacities for manoeuvring their position in the issue space appear to be more limited (Grofman 2004; De Sio and Weber 2014), especially concerning the Pro-/Anti-European dimension (Hooghe and Marks 2017). In fact, party positioning on the main conflict dimensions are likely to be resilient over time, while the parties' strategies on issue emphasis could be subjected to modifications and adjustments. Thus, we aim at detecting the EU issue entrepreneurship of the parties, drawing attention to its effects over the electoral preferences in Western Europe. We hypothesize that, in the aftermath of the Euro crisis, the electoral strategies of the Challenger/Protest parties on the European integration may have impacted the existing lines of political divisions, establishing a new dimension of political competition based on the Pro-/Anti-European orientations.

Consequently, our notion of politicization strongly hinges upon the party strategies in emphasizing or dampening certain conflict related issues within the political agendas. However, politicization also rests on the voters' electoral responses towards the resulting party supply. If the parties were able to link the voters' preferences on a structured and polarizing Pro-/Anti-European dimension of political contestation, we would encounter a fully politicized European integration conflict. In order to assess the linking mechanisms between the party stances and the electoral choices on the European integration conflict dimension, we employ the Downsian proximity model (Downs 1957).

Despite its limitations, this approach allows us to analyse the voter-party proximity on the Pro-Anti-European conflict dimension. Thus, we can test the congruence between parties and voters on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, shedding light on the extent of EU issue voting, which here is defined as “*the process whereby individual preferences over European integration directly influence the voting choices in national elections*” (De Vries 2010, 92).

#### **1.4 Research Question and Hypotheses**

The conflict over European integration, which potentially weakens the Left-Right dimension, appears to be becoming a strong predictor of electoral choices in Europe today. The impact of the European integration on voting choices has been analysed both at the national and European elections by a great deal of scholarly literature with a variety of results (De Vries 2007; De Vries 2010; Rovny 2012; Green-Pedersen 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2016; De Sio, Franklin and Weber 2016). We are attempting to disentangle the complex interplay between EU Issue Entrepreneurship and the fluctuations in the electoral preferences, following the Euro crisis.

We hypothesize that the *Protest* parties, which are outside the Mainstream and positioned towards the extreme Left-Right poles, have found new incentives for politicizing EU issues in the wake of the Euro crisis. These parties are expected to be the main political entrepreneurs of European integration issues, by emphasizing their Eurosceptic stances. Indeed, Protest parties are weak in vying along the Left-Right dimension and to maximise votes they could try to overturn the party competition patterns. On the contrary, the Mainstream parties, positioned closer to the centre of the Left-Right continuum and belonging to the established European party families,

are more likely to minimise the EU issue saliency to maintain the traditional partisan conflicts. In fact, this cluster of parties does not seem to have any incentives to introduce new conflict dimension as a source of electoral competition. Even if the Euro crisis may have catalysed some *blame shifting* towards the EU institutions on the part of the national government (Hobolt and Tilley 2014), Mainstream parties have probably pursued the de-politicization of European integration conflict in order to prevent some electoral losses. As a result, a research question emerges:

*Since the outbreak of the Euro crisis, how much has the European integration conflict reshaped the electoral supply and party preferences in the national party systems?*

This work aims at developing arguments about how European integration has affected the electoral supply of the Protest and Mainstream parties at the national level. On the one hand, this analysis focuses on the party supply in 12 European countries - Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Greece, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Austria – to formulate some generalizations. On the other hand, we seek to observe the trends in the four larger European democracies – France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom – to understand how much the national culture is a mediating factor in shaping the electoral supply.

In the first step of this work, the literature background is defined, dealing with definitions and concepts, such as politicization and EU Issue Entrepreneurship. In the second step, we seek to examine the party positions and emphasis on European integration by means of employing the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES), which has been proved to be reliable in previous studies (Steenburgen and Scott 2004). The CHES allows us to understand whether the Euro crisis has impacted on the trends in party positioning and their saliency

manipulation on the main issue dimensions. To summarize these, we have adopted the EU Issue Entrepreneurship's notion (Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2015) relying on three rounds of CHES surveys (2006, 2010, 2014). Hence, the core objective is to identify which parties have actually emphasized and, thus, have been more likely to own EU issues after the Euro crisis. Specifically, by means of these findings, the objective is to test if the Protest parties have increased their levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, the so-called *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis (H1)*. As well, this section of the work aims at ascertaining which parties have sought to dampen the European integration conflict, maintaining the Left-Right dimension as an asset in electoral competition. The expectation is that the Mainstream parties have substantially deflected their levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, trying to lock up their electoral fortunes. This alleged strategy of the well-established European parties is defined here as the *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis (H2)*. We test the two above hypotheses at the aggregate level, identifying the general trends of EU Issue Entrepreneurship in Western Europe. Moreover, we outline a disaggregate and comparative analysis on the four larger European democracies – France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom - to understand the effects of the national culture on new entrepreneurial strategies.

The third step involves providing explanations for the contemporary trends in European voter preferences. European Election Studies' (EES) data allows for creating linear regression models to identify the relations between the European integration conflict and the voting preferences for national parties between 2004 and until 2014. Our model adopts the Downsean "*smallest distance*" theory (Downs 1957), which is suitable to examine the voter-party proximity on the issue dimensions. While the Downsean approach has referred to a

one-dimensional political space, this work attempts to test the *smallest distance* theory on two different dimensions - The Left-Right dimension and Pro-/Anti-European one. The hypothesis is that the crisis has strengthened the establishment of the Anti-/Pro-European dimension of contestation and the *EU issue voting* has increasingly determined the electoral preferences at the domestic level. The notion of political entrepreneurship rests on the party abilities to draw attention to certain issues, also by means of polarizing their positions. Thus, we contend that the Protest parties have been more likely to maximize their electoral preferences on a scale ranging from Anti-European to Pro-European. The current hypothesis is outlined as the *Protest-voting Hypothesis* (H3), which holds that, since the outbreak of the Great Recession, the voter-party proximity to the European dimension of conflict has significantly increased its explanatory power in conditioning Protest party support.

Meanwhile, Mainstream parties have appeared to exploit the resiliency of the Left-Right division, which is still one of the most noteworthy electoral predictors in Europe. These parties have made many efforts to extinguish the fires of the European integration conflict for the prevention of its installation as a permanent source of electoral competition. Thus, we argue that these parties have deflected the saliency of EU related issues by maintaining more conformist positions on this dimension of contestation. In fact, Mainstream parties have aimed at securing their winning electoral positions by depoliticizing the EU issues. Furthermore, they have tried to escape from the threats of the potential intra-party conflict unleashed by the EU conflict. Thus, in the aftermath of the crisis, the Mainstream parties have probably reaped electoral gains by exploiting the Left-Right dimension of contestation, overlooking the Anti-/Pro-European dimension. This latter hypothesis is dubbed as the *Mainstream-voting*

*Hypothesis (H 4)* and it maintains that the voter-party proximity to the Mainstream parties on the Left-Right issue dimension has remained the chief determinant of their electoral preferences, which are more influenced by issues resulting from the traditional partisan alignments. The voter preference section exclusively involves the four larger European democracies – France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom – summing up the current impact of the EU Issue voting at the national level.

The four hypotheses are summarized below:

- *The Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis (H1):* Protest parties are expected to increase EU Issue Entrepreneurship, by emphasizing European integration and establishing their reputation on Euro-scepticism.
- *The Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis (H2):* Mainstream parties are expected to decrease EU Issue Entrepreneurship, enhancing the issues subsumed by the traditional Left-Right dimension.
- *The Protest-voting Hypothesis (H3):* the impact of party-voter proximity on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, as a determinant of electoral preferences, is expected to increase among the Protest parties.
- *The Mainstream-voting Hypothesis (H4):* the impact of party-voter proximity on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, as a predictor of voting choice, is expected to decrease among Mainstream parties

## 1.5 Selection of Cases, Units of Analysis and Span of Time

In this work we introduce a comparison, including four European countries – France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. We argue that these Western European democracies are *comparable* cases, *similar in a large number of characteristics (variables), which can be treated as constants* (Lijphart 1971). Indeed, in spite of the variance in their timing and patterns of integration, all these countries were EU Member States during the period we are covering<sup>5</sup>, being affected to some extent by the decision-making undertaken at the European level. Moreover, since the post-war period, these Western countries have shared many fundamental areas of conflict, which “*have been mostly responsible for the similarity of party landscapes*” (Bartolini 2000, 10). Indeed, a set of cross-cutting cleavages<sup>6</sup> established widespread dividing-lines within these polities, which rapidly developed into a set of stable party organizations endowed with cultural norms and entrenched in social structure (for an overview on the analytical connotation of the “cleavage” concept, see Bartolini and Mair 1990). The Left-Right dimension has steadily synthesized the content of these major conflicts (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990), even in spite of the deterioration of cleavage politics (Franklin 1992), binding voter preferences to party choices. Therefore, we hold that the deep-seated establishment of this dimension of contestation is a constant within these post-war Western European party systems. Moreover, another criterion takes on a fundamental importance - the country size. Indeed,

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<sup>5</sup> After the advisory referendum on the withdrawal from the EU, held in the June 2016, which saw a narrow victory (51.9) of “Leave the European Union”, the United Kingdom initiated a complex process to exit the EU. However, the UK remains in our analysis, which covers a span of time ranging from 2004 to 2014, during which this country had been a full member.

<sup>6</sup> Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identified four lines of cleavages, stemming from the state formation and industrial revolution: 1. *Centre versus Periphery*; 2. *State versus Church*; 3. *Land versus Industry*; 4. *Owners versus Workers*.

we have selected four countries quite homogenous in terms of population, allowing us to make a cross-cutting comparison. This selection also enables us to check the impact of the national culture, which may influence political and citizen attitudes on European integration. We shed light on the changing partisan supply within the four countries, summed up in the EU Issue Entrepreneurship notion. Moreover, we seek to ascertain whether the alleged changes on the party supply have been matched by fluctuations in the electoral preferences, testing our voting hypotheses (*H3 and H4*), which, however, exclude an aggregate analysis. This empirical choice has been grounded on the need to take into account the impact of national culture in the electoral domains.

However, our sample of cases also includes some notable differences. First and foremost, one of our cases- Italy - clearly belongs to the debtor group of European countries. This country has faced a more intense sovereign debt crisis, complemented by a huge increase in its unemployment rates, suffering more intensively from the EU led austerity policies. On the other hand, the other cases – France, Germany and the United Kingdom - have mainly fallen into the cluster of creditor countries, which have been more in favour of a strict budgetary control over the Member States and it has supported the implementation of austerity policies. Subsequently, it could be argued that the EU tackling of the crisis has had a different impact on the two clusters, undermining our ability to come up with any theoretical generalizations. Nevertheless, we posit that the Euro crisis has resulted in consequences for the basic structure of conflicts in all the countries under study. Indeed, the economic issues related to the EU have probably increased in terms of saliency, as an outcome of the EU management of the crisis. According to Kriesi and Grande (2016, 247): “*Within debtor countries, it has been resistance against*

*austerity measures imposed by the EU; while ‘creditor’ opposition to fiscal transfers in the course of various rescue measures has been the object of public controversy. Moreover, the euro crisis has given rise to calls for new supranational programmes and instruments for fiscal transfers, market regulations, the stimulation of economic growth and budgetary controls”*. Hence, the economic crisis may have widely catalysed the politicization of a European integration conflict, spurring public concerns over the economic issues related to the EU within both clusters. We assume that these national debates have strongly revolved around the issue of economic redistribution both at the domestic and at the EU levels (Statham and Trenz 2015). In outlining this comparison, we pursue cognitive goals, describing the political phenomena involved in European integration. Moreover, we seek to establish explanations, drawing robust findings, which result from the alleged similarities among these countries. This selection allows us to test the plausibility of our hypotheses, identifying their explanatory power and, eventually, coming up with original insights.

Our unit of analysis is the nation state. Indeed, the national contexts are still the main arenas for mobilizing political conflicts (Kriesi et al. 2012). Even, in spite of the alleged Europeanization of the conflicts, following the Euro crisis, the European Parliament (EP) being the elected body of the Union, has been marginalized from the decision-making process by the inter-governmental institutions. The EP’s weakness has probably reduced the incentives for developing a transnational party system, consequently, limiting the articulation of the European integration conflict at the supranational level. The Euro-parties have maintained a configuration of weak federations of national parties (Fabbrini 2015), which are mainly responsive to and accountable for their domestic electorates. According to Kriesi and Grande (2014), the peculiar characteristics of the debate on European

integration have determined a paradoxical effect: “*on the one hand, the debate has been exceptionally salient and has contributed to the increased visibility of Europe in the politics of the European nation-states. On the other hand, this debate has not accelerated the transfer of European politics into ‘mass politics’.* Rather, it has mainly taken place in the inter-governmental channel and has been dominated by *supranational executive agencies and national executives*” (Ibidem 2014, 84). Thus, we explore the potential mobilization of the European conflict at the domestic level, rather than search for the Arab Phoenix of European Union mass politics. Our investigation looks at the positions, the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, substantially neglecting the role of Euro-parties in the activation of this conflict. The European elections have probably increased in their importance and autonomy, perhaps channeling the Pro-/Anti-European attitudes and being an outlet for EU issue voting. However, this electoral arena has not led to a supranational party system, capable of articulating conflicts within a Europe-wide polity.

We also provide an aggregate overview - including 12 countries - Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Greece, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Austria. This level of analysis enables us to test the general validity of *H1* and *H2* in Western Europe. Three countries in our sample were latecomers to the democratization process – Greece, Spain and Portugal. Nonetheless, these younger democracies have revealed a dynamic of competition structured along the Left-Right dimension, akin to that of the other countries. On the contrary, the newer democracies of Eastern and Central Europe have been outside of these cleavage-based politics, without developing the same patterns of political contestation. By advancing this level of analysis, we aim to formulate more convincing generalizations on the trends in the party supply.

Our time span begins in 2004, several years before the beginning of the crisis, and it ends in 2014. This choice is based on the previous contributions of political science research, which have recurrently rejected the full politicization of the European integration conflict until the beginning of the 2000s (Mair 2000; Franklin and Van der Eijk 2004; Bartolini 2005). As we observed in the first paragraph of this chapter, the Maastricht Treaty has probably propelled a process of gradual reversal in the rate of public approval regarding European integration by accelerating the power transfer towards the European institutions. Nonetheless, the level of conflict politicization at the domestic level was scant and the EU issues found only a very moderate expression within national party platforms. We assume this is because of the low mobilization of this conflict in the immediate Post-Maastricht era (1992-2000). We do not re-propose any further empirical tests on the so-called *Authority transfers hypothesis* (De Wilde and Zurn 2012; Grande and Hutter 2016a; Grande and Hutter 2016b), which speaks of the strengths of the institutional incentives arising from the Maastricht Treaty. We would prefer to examine whether the Euro crisis has effectively catalyzed or not some changes in the mobilization of this conflict, substantially reshaping the electoral choices at the domestic level. The chosen span of time permits us to empirically capture these potential fluctuations, by carrying out an analysis on both the *pre-crisis (2004-2008)* and *onward-crisis (2009-2014)* political context.

## **1.6 Outline of the Study**

This study develops a step-by-step analysis divided into four parts:

- The first part of the work (Chapters 2 and 3) provides an array of concept definitions, which operate as essential theoretical devices for the subsequent empirical analysis. This section of the work deals with many notions, such as conflict politicization, political entrepreneurship, etc. This first part also outlines a typology of the different kinds of parties competing in Western Europe, based on the academic literature.
- The second part of the work (Chapters 4-5-6-7-8) has the goal to map out the party positions and strategies on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of political contestation, using the Chapel Hill Expert Survey. This step deals with the *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis (H1)* and the *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis (H2)* both at the aggregate and comparative levels.
- The third part of the work (Chapters 9-10-11-12) outlines multi-variate models of voting behaviour to assess the strength of EU issues on electoral choices. This model aims at developing arguments about how European integration has swayed electoral behaviour in general, taking into account all the main concurrent explanations. The hypothesis is that the European integration conflict currently represents a new dimension in party competition and is an increasing predictor in determining party electoral performance. The core step of this part is in observing the extent of the *EU issue voting*, before and during the Euro crisis, paving the way for testing *Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4*.
- The fourth part (Chapter 13) summarizes all the previous work, trying to advance some theoretical generalizations

regarding the effective politicization of the European integration conflict, its influence on the political space and electoral preferences.



## **2. Politicization through Manipulation: Party Strategic Efforts on EU issues**

### **2.1 The European Integration Conflict**

Nowadays, European integration appears to be more contentious, potentially capable of reshaping political space and, consequently, voting behaviour. Nonetheless, the effects of EU issues on voter preferences are not necessarily automatic consequences of institutional incentives set up by the ever-increasing Europeanization. Political science literature has broadly stressed the importance of party agency in articulating the political conflicts (Rokkan and Lipset 1967; Sartori 1969). Indeed, the politicization of a conflict and its transformation into an electoral choice results from the mobilization efforts of political parties. However, political entrepreneurs, themselves, do not create the socio-structural conditions to activate a conflict, but they exploit windows of opportunities opened up by external shocks. The European integration conflict had not been translated into electoral choices or programs for decades, given the lack of party agency, remaining outside the core of political contestation.

Despite such absence of a political outlet able to channel these divisions for a long time, changes in opinion gradually took place among the citizens, paving the way for the beginning of the European integration conflict. Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) remarked on the steady development of well-defined public attitudes on the European integration by examining the opinion polls. They found that European voters increasingly expressed non-random and clear-cut preferences regarding their own country's EU membership and the overall unification process. Moreover, these preferences were highly controversial and polarized among the population, revealing the latent

political divisions spurred by Europeanization. This changing set of values and beliefs constituted one of the empirical references for the potential mobilization of the European integration conflict, the so-called *Sleeping Giant* (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004).

However, this public response to Europeanization was not matched by a wide range of party supply regarding European integration. For a long time, the voters had faced a lack of party choices pertaining to European issues, remaining without any meaningful channels of expression in the political landscape. Indeed, the differences in mainstream party positions regarding the EU had been fairly narrow for decades, and the political elites had probably colluded on that area of policy to avoid the politicization of the European conflict (Marks and Steenburgen 2004; Mair 2011). The established parties had perceived the threats of a new dimension of the political space generated by the European integration, which could potentially weaken the traditional Left-Right dimension. Hence, the long-standing European party families (Social Democrats, Liberals, Conservatives, Christian Democrats, etc.) persistently structured political contestation along the Left-Right continuum. This dimension of competition created a lasting fount of ideological identification and reduced the information costs for the voters during the elections, simplifying the complexity of politics (Downs 1957). The European voters were able to recognize these ideologies and to place themselves on the Left-Right scale (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009; Dalton, Farrell and Macallister 2011), electorally rewarding the established party alternatives. Moreover, the Left-Right dimension proved its great flexibility by means of incorporating a wide array of new issues over the decades. Indeed, this conflict was initially rooted in a socio-economic base, which was the most widespread source of political disagreement within the European party

systems (Lipjhart 1984). Nevertheless, the Left-Right framework moved far beyond the socio-economic controversy and was able to absorb the emerging cultural issues (environmentalism, gender equality, immigration, etc.), also labelled as *post-materialistic* issues (Inglehart 1976).

On the contrary, many models and studies have substantially demonstrated the lack of relations (or the orthogonality) between the economic Left-Right dimension of political conflict and that of European integration (Hix and Lord 1997; Marks and Steenburgen 2004; Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009). The EU issues have appeared to be more disassociated from the well-established Left-Right dimension, potentially transforming the political space and destabilizing party competition patterns. Indeed, this latent conflict could effectively cut across the divisions, traditionally subsumed by the Left-Right issues, establishing new partisan alignments at the domestic level.

According to Kriesi *et al.* (2008), when parties create the grounds for a new political conflict, they restructure to a large extent the political space of contestation, strategically positioning themselves in the new dimensional configuration. In the case of the European integration conflict, some parties are likely to transform the political space by adopting Eurosceptic stances to match voter preferences. The Eurosceptic parties have probably sought to mobilize the new conflict, emphasizing EU issues so as to reverse the mass electoral alignments in their favour. These strategies may lead toward an increase in EU issue voting, which appears to be becoming a strong predictor of electoral choices in Europe today. Therefore, after forty years of irrelevance, the conflict over European integration could materialize, altering the political space configuration and increasingly conditioning the electoral preferences in the national elections. The next sections of

this chapter introduce a tool-kit for the main approaches and definitions pertaining to conflict politicization and party strategies. This theoretical overview allows us to analyse the emergence of a new dimension of political contestation and to understand the role of party strategic efforts in politicizing or de-politicizing the European integration conflict.

## **2.2 The Patterns of Conflict Politicization**

A broad amount of political science literature has been committed to forging a clear-cut notion of politicization. In his neo-functionalist work, Philippe Schmitter (1969, 166) dealt with the politicization of the European integration conflict, defining it “*as a process of rise in the controversiality of the regional decision-making process*”, whereas “*national actors find them gradually embroiled in a ever more salient or controversial area of policymaking*”, which is “*likely to lead to a widening of the audience or clientele interested and active in integration*”. In this notion, some of the compounding elements that still characterize many contemporary approaches on the politicization conception (such as broadening of the involved actors and the systemic saliency) were already present. Grande and Hutter (2016a) have recently refined a general definition of politicization “*as an expansion of the scope of conflict within the political system.*” (Ibidem, 7). This minimal definition hinges upon Schattschneider’s notion of conflict and it stands out for its flexibility. In fact, this notion does not exclude the involvement of different types of political actors (parties, governments, social movements, etc.), which may act in different ways to politicize a conflict. Moreover, Grande and Hutter (2014; 2016a; 2016b), have identified three main dimensions in the politicization of the European integration conflict:

1. *The issue saliency (or visibility)*: the saliency is one of the inescapable pre-conditions for politicizing the EU issues (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2009; De Vries 2007; 2010; Green-Pedersen 2012). As a matter of fact, if the political parties do not place a political issue in the public agenda, the chances of conflict politicization would certainly vanish. However, Hutter and Grande (2014; 2016a; 2016c) overruled an argument based on saliency as the only driving force behind politicization, underlining the effects of other determinants in affecting the rise of political conflicts.
2. *The expansion of the actors*: this dimension basically indicates the growing number of actors engaged in public debate. Grande and Hutter (2014; 2016a; 2016b) have avoided employing a too minimal approach for politicization, based on the exclusive role of party and government elites. Even if the electoral and governmental arenas remain key political grounds for the active mobilization of new conflicts, social or Protest movements have seemed to condition the public debates on the European integration (Della Porta and Caiani 2009; Della Porta 2015; Calossi 2016) by raising the visibility of the EU issues.
3. *The intensity of conflict*: the actors have to polarize their positions in order to politicize the European integration conflict, producing two opposing and stable camps. The polarization concept has been employed in party system literature, referring to the intense ideological distance between political parties (Sartori 1976). In the politicization framework, polarization is a key ingredient for catalysing the emergence of conflicts and it cannot be a question of a subtle opinion

contrast among parties. Indeed, it has to trigger broad and intense political disagreements, which result in two different constellations of actors, taking radically distinct stances (Kriesi et al 2008).

In spite of some theoretical variations, many other scholars have shared similar three-fold notions of politicization (Wilde and Zürn 2012; Statham and Trenz 2015; De Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke 2015; Hoeglinger 2016a; Hoeglinger 2016b).

This theoretical background provides us with notable insights pertaining to the current process of politicization, however it must be qualified. In fact, the political pressures from below on the part of social or protest movements may clearly be conducive to the translation of EU issues into publicly debated matters. This bottom-up social contestation has been considered one of the preconditions for the establishment of a real European public sphere (Risse 2003). However, in spite of their transformative potentials, the influence of the social movements has not been so evident in explaining the emergence of new controversies on the EU issues. As argued by Della Porta and Caiani (2009), the democratic deficit at the EU level has certainly limited the actions of the transnational social organizations, while national protest movements have fundamentally targeted their criticism towards the domestic governments. A new wave of social protests has emerged in the wake of the Euro crisis, which have largely sought to reverse the austerity policies led by the EU institutions, constituting a new reality in the European political landscape. Nonetheless, even if many societal actors have arguably contributed to increasing the visibility of the EU issues, they have not been a common denominator within the cases under study. In fact, political mobilization along a Pro-/Anti-European dimension of

contestation has not always been accompanied by the presence of social/protest movements. On the one hand, many protest movements have flourished among the debtor countries (Morlino and Raniolo 2017), assuming the status of Anti-Austerity movements (Della Porta 2015; Calossi 2016) and also paving the way for the politicization of this conflict. On the other hand, these societal phenomena have rarely taken place in the creditor countries, whereas many party actors have seemed to chiefly manoeuvring the politicization processes. Thus, the assumption that the involvement of movements is a necessary condition for politicization appears to be too restrictive, obscuring the impact of party strategic interaction at the mass level.

We contend the limitations of the above-mentioned politicization theory drawn by Hutter and Grande (2014; 2016a), which revolves around the participation of a broad range of actors that result in constituting a proper *constellation* (Kriesi et al. 2008; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016). The chances of observing and finding broad and durable constellations of actors, compounded by political parties, interest groups and movements, could be extremely rare, substantially limiting our capacity to make theoretical generalizations. Van der Ejjik and Franklin (2004), apart from pointing out the structured and polarized public opinions concerning the EU issues, have identified the lack of party agency as an obstacle preventing the *Sleeping Giant* of the European integration conflict from awakening. When a political party matches the voter preferences with a set of policy alternatives, conditioning the electoral choices at mass level, we may find a political conflict. Our notion of politicization is more embedded in the strategies of political parties, which may emphasize and polarize new issues, substantially leading towards new conflicts arising. This conception is consistent with the seminal post-functionalist approach outlined by Hooghe and Marks (2009), who have underscored the

pivotal role of parties. Consequently, we define politicization as a *process of transformation of a previous non-political and non-contentious issue into an object of public contestation, which is mainly mobilized by the political parties in the electoral arena, becoming a notable driving force for the voter preferences at the domestic level.* In order to assess the level of politicization, we employ saliency and polarization yardsticks, combining these dimensions into one single formula, the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, while we discard the expansion of the actors as an indicator of the new conflict emergence. In the following paragraphs, we deepen this concept of politicization by providing a nuanced overview on the party strategic activities on the EU issues.

### **2.3 Politicization: A Party-Based Model**

According to Hooghe and Marks (2009), the EU issues have entered the core of the political contestation by means of the efforts of the party actors. In their view, the Maastricht Treaty produced new incentives for the political parties, spurring unprecedented identitarian concerns at the mass level. Thus, institutional factors have certainly played a role in opening the windows of opportunities for triggering a new conflict, which has revolved around a dividing-line between Pro-Europeans and Anti-Europeans (Ray 1999; 2007). Consequently, the systemic saliency of the EU issues (Benoit and Laver 2006) has probably increased due to the institutional changes. However, Hooghe and Marks (2009) have showed that the political party took centre stage by injecting EU issues into the national political debate. The two scholars have assumed that parties aim at politicizing an issue when they perceive it as holding some electoral benefits, thus increasing its saliency. In doing so, political actors have to face many constraints in

achieving policy shifts within the main issue dimensions, bounded by their ideological reputation (Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Grofman 2004; Hinich and Munger 2008; De Sio and Weber 2014; Hooghe and Marks 2017). As a matter of fact, established party families (namely Christian-Democrats and Liberals) could not easily accommodate Euro-scepticism in their political platforms, since they have historically projected and sustained the overall integration project. On the contrary, this political source of contestation may be more easily owned and capitalized by the radical right and radical left parties, which have consistently rejected the integration. Moreover, leaders are likely to avoid raising an issue that may jeopardize the internal party unity, which entails electoral losses. In the case of Mainstream parties, the Anti-European attitudes have often taken the shape of party factionalism (Taggart 1998) Therefore, Hooghe and Marks (2009) in their post-functionalist approach have identified the following pattern: *“Most mainstream parties continued to resist politicizing the issue. But a number of populist, non-governing parties smelt blood. Their instinctive Euro-scepticism was closer to the pulse of public opinion. On the far left, opposition to European integration expressed antipathy to capitalism; on the populist right, it expressed defence of national community.”* (Hooghe and Marks 2009, 21).

This set of assumptions advanced by Hooghe and Marks (2009) has fundamentally laid down a model of politicization based on the strategic interactions among parties. Even if they have not disregarded the institutional environment and the public opinion trends, they have developed a more minimalist conception *“assuming that how an issue relates to major conflicts in a society, and whether it is politicized or not, are determined by political parties seeking votes and avoiding internal conflict, while constrained by their ideology”* (Hooghe and

Marks 2009, 21). This overview has appeared to be consistent with other findings, especially those provided by Hanspeter Kriesi and his colleagues (Kriesi et al. 2008), who have identified the efforts pursued by the extreme parties in mobilizing the so-called globalization losers<sup>7</sup>.

Christoffer Green-Pedersen (2012) has further narrowed the politicization concept. He contended that the party strategies have basically rested on the saliency ascribed by parties to the EU issues during the campaigns. As a matter of fact, political actors may have different incentives in tackling policy stances during campaigns, accentuating these issues on which they hold a greater credibility and competitive advantage (Budge and Fairlie 1983; Riker 1986; Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987; Petrocik 1996; Budge et al. 2001). In the framework of the European integration conflict, Protest parties may have a stronger reputation on the Anti-European stances and they are more likely to emphasize the EU related issues to gain electoral benefits. On the contrary, the Mainstream parties may tend to lean more towards the de-politicization strategy (Statham and Trezn 2015; Börzel and Risse 2018). In spite of their clear-cut ownership of Pro-European issues (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Marks and Steenburgen 2004), Mainstream parties are likely to maintain the Left-Right dimension of electoral competition that has brought them substantial electoral payoffs, extinguishing the Pro-Anti-European dimension of contestation. Other works have drawn attention to the importance of saliency in increasing the degree of EU issue voting (Scott and Steenburgen 2004; De Vries 2007; De Vries 2010; De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2015), which is

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<sup>7</sup> Kriesi et al. (2006; 2008; 2012) have broadly studied the effects of historical critical junctures, such as globalization, denationalization or Europeanization, which have increasingly weakened the nation-state boundaries, unleashing a growing polarization between winners and losers of these macro-processes.

conducive to the full politicization of the European integration conflict.

## **2.4 Politicization and De-Politicization Efforts**

Many works have heralded the politicization of the European integration conflict in the last decade (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Schmitter 2009; De Wilde and Zürn 2012; Statham and Trezn 2013). Nonetheless, other contributions have eschewed a clear trend in this direction. Grande and Kriesi (2016) have referred to a process of *punctuated politicization*, resulting from the contrasting strategies of different political actors. In fact, this non-linear path of politicization, which has substantially varied among different countries over time, has probably been swayed by the sharp conflict between politicization and de-politicization efforts of different party types. By downplaying the emphasis of the EU related issues, Mainstream parties may have successfully prevented the full politicization of this new conflict, maintaining the pre-existing political conflict lines (Börzel and Risse 2018). Similarly, Dominic Hoeglenger (2016b) has argued the *limited politicization* of this conflict, which has neither been fully awakened nor completely sedated by parties in the last decades. In his analysis, EU issue saliency has remained comparatively low, while the level of polarization spurred by the European integration has considerably waxed over time (analogous findings have been advanced by Kriesi and Grande, 2016). Hoeglenger (2016a) has also showed that the EU issues have been notably overshadowed by the conflict on immigration issues in domestic debates. This observation has clearly lent support to the globalization cleavage hypothesis (Kriesi et al. 2006; Kriesi et al. 2008; Kriesi et al. 2012), which has posited a conflict on Pro-\Anti-immigration policy dimension as one of its chief

manifestations. On the contrary, European integration has been one of the sub-processes in this new cleavage (Kriesi 2007), weakly reshaping the patterns of political contestation.

In spite of some important theoretical results achieved by these contributions, we hypothesize that the Euro crisis has instead led to some transformative effects, increasing the impact of the EU issues on national electoral preferences. In fact, many of these overviews have neglected to extensively address the extent of *EU issue voting* and their selection of cases has been biased towards the creditor country cluster (Green-Pedersen 2012; Grande and Hutter 2015; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016; Hoeglinger 2016b). This work analyses the effects of EU issues on voting preferences in order to provide a more comprehensive framework. Moreover, we are considerably lengthening the time span by covering the 2014 electoral round that may have shed light on the new electoral trends occurring since the onset of the *Great Recession*. We hypothesize that the Euro crisis could have brought about an unprecedented level of politicization of European integration, which is fundamentally mirrored by the increasing degree of EU issue voting. By advancing this hypothesis, we posit that the party strategies on Pro-\Anti-European dimension have spurred the voters in changing their electoral preferences, rendering the European integration conflict more politicized.

## **2.5 Transformative Effects of the Euro Crisis**

Even if we conceive the party strategic interactions as the cornerstone of our notion of politicization, these entrepreneurial activities have taken place in the context of several external events, which may have fostered some fluctuations in the electoral supply. One of our central

arguments is that the crisis has paved the way for the politicization of European integration conflict by providing new strategic incentives for parties on the EU issues. Consequently, before tackling the main approaches and definitions of party strategies, we have to analyse the catalysing effects inherent to the Euro Crisis.

Since the beginning of the Great Recession, public mistrust in EU building has reached its peak and citizens have increasingly blamed the EU institutions for policy-making activities (Hobolt and Tilley 2014; Schimmelfennig 2014; Hobolt 2015). These processes have been set in motion by the EU management of the crisis, minimising the national government responsiveness (Morlino and Raniolo 2017) and probably opening up new window of opportunities for the Anti-European political entrepreneurs. Indeed, in order to prevent the collapse of the Euro-zone, austerity measures have been imposed by the EU institutions on the member states, under the driving-force of the creditor countries. Moreover, the solvent states have provided for mechanisms to bail out the insolvent states under strict budgetary control conditions. This greatly enforced the intergovernmental body powers and it strengthened the Commission monitoring role (Laffan 2014a; 2014b; Schimmelfennig 2014; Scharpf 2015; Fabbrini 2015). These reforms have led towards a more EU technocratic (non-majoritarian, Majone 1994) policy-making, considerably impinging on the democratic quality within the national sphere. As a matter of fact, these institutional trends (increasing intergovernmentalism, see Fabbrini 2013) have deprived the national governments from the policy devices to cope with the outcomes of the Euro crisis, leaving limited leeway for manoeuvre. The weakness of the governments during the crisis has probably affected the electoral performance of Mainstream pro-European parties, which in many cases have suffered notable electoral setbacks (Bosco and Verney 2012; Kriesi 2014,

Hobolt and De Vries 2015; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2017; Morlino and Raniolo 2017). On the contrary, the Anti-European Protest parties have appeared to increase their electoral payoffs since the onset of the crisis.

Some scholars have argued that Mainstream attempts at downplaying the EU issues have been a hurdle for the politicization of European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Green-Pedersen 2012; Grande and Kriesi 2016). As a matter of fact, many Mainstream parties have probably tried to dismiss and blur the EU issues from the public agenda (Meguid 2008; Rovny 2015) by enhancing the powers of technocratic bodies (Schimmelfennig 2014; Börzel and Risse 2018). However, since the beginning of the crisis the visibility of EU issues has skyrocketed, consistently remaining under the spotlight of the mass media (Statham and Trenz 2015). The intensified media coverage of the EU management of the crisis has probably made the growing tensions between Pro-integrationists and Anti-integrationists more inevitable. For the first time, voters may have found party outlets expressing outright policy choices on a Pro-\-Anti-European political of contestation. As an outcome of the crisis, the strategies pursued by Protest parties in providing Anti-European cues to voters (De Vries 2007; Hooghe 2007; De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2015) have perhaps conditioned the systemic saliency of the EU issues. These may have affected the electoral (mis)fortunes of Mainstream parties.

Our remarks on the potential effects of the Euro crisis do not equate these transformative events to an actual critical juncture (see also: Morlino and Raniolo 2017). In our view, historical macro-processes had already been developing before the Euro crisis onset, such as globalization or denationalization (Kriesi et al. 2008; Kriesi et al 2012), which may lay down the foundations of new structural

cleavages. Europeanization has been considered as a sub-process of these emerging cleavages by many of the above-mentioned works (Kriesi 2007; Kriesi et al. 2008; Kriesi et al. 2012; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016; Hoeglinger 2016a; Hoeglinger 2016b). However, we posit that the systemic alterations brought about by the EU-building have the potential to deeply restructure the patterns of the electoral competition. In fact, under the catalysis effect of the crisis, the party actors may have translated the EU related issues into a new source of political conflict, polarizing the voters between Pro-integrationists and Anti-integrationists. Thus, we hypothesize that since the start of the crisis, EU issue voting has increasingly impacted electoral preferences. Even if this hypothesis does not constitute a new cleavage theory, we hope to foster further analyses regarding the effects of the Europeanization within the existing constellation of cleavages in Western Europe.

## **2.6 Party Strategic Interactions**

Many theories on party strategies have gradually been developed in academic literature, appearing to be well-suited to explain the establishment of the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of political conflict. One of the most notable approaches has been the Rikerian notion of *heresthetic*, which refers to the party activity of restructuring political competition (Riker 1986). In fact, a tactical device at the disposal of parties is the manipulation of the political contestation dimensionality. By introducing a new issue dimension, the losing parties may unsettle the previous electoral equilibrium, damaging their political opponents and obtaining electoral payoffs: *“If successful, this maneuver produces a new majority coalition composed of the old minority and the portion of the old majority that likes the alternative*

*better.*” (Riker 1986, 1). The political entrepreneurs often draw attention to the previously neglected issues (Meguid 2005; 2008; Rovny 2012; 2013) to produce intra-party divisions within their competitors. This pattern could actually describe the impact of the EU issues on the established parties. Indeed, according to Paul Taggart (1998), the European Union conflict might introduce some internal factionalism within Mainstream parties, under the form of Eurosceptic wings opposing the Europhile ones, undermining the homogeneity of the party programmes. In Riker’s view (Riker 1982; Riker 1986; Riker 1996), the party strategic efforts in establishing alternative dimensions have triggered major shifts in electoral alignments, reshaping the distribution of the median voter along policy dimensions<sup>8</sup>. Nowadays, the Protest parties have probably found a strong incentive in highlighting the EU issues to render the Pro-/Anti-European political dimension prominent, reducing the space of agency for the Mainstream parties. We actually contend that since the outburst of Euro crisis, several European parties, ranging from the Radical Right to the Radical Left, have attempted to mobilize a conflict revolving around the Pro-/Anti-European orientations to topple the Mainstream elites from their government positions.

Therefore, at the core of the competition between parties there is the control of political agenda and its underlying issue dimension (Schattschneider 1960). Nonetheless, a political issue does not come into being as a matter of course, but it is the outcome of the complex interplay between political strategies and ensuing popular responses,

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<sup>8</sup> According to Riker (1986), the American presidential elections of 1860 epitomized the notion of heresthetics, whereas Abraham Lincoln and the newly founded Republican Party emphasized the slavery abolishment issue to defeat and divide the hegemonic Democratic Party. This tactical strength proved to be successful, triggering new partisan alignments that lasted until the emergence of the New Deal coalition in the 1930s.

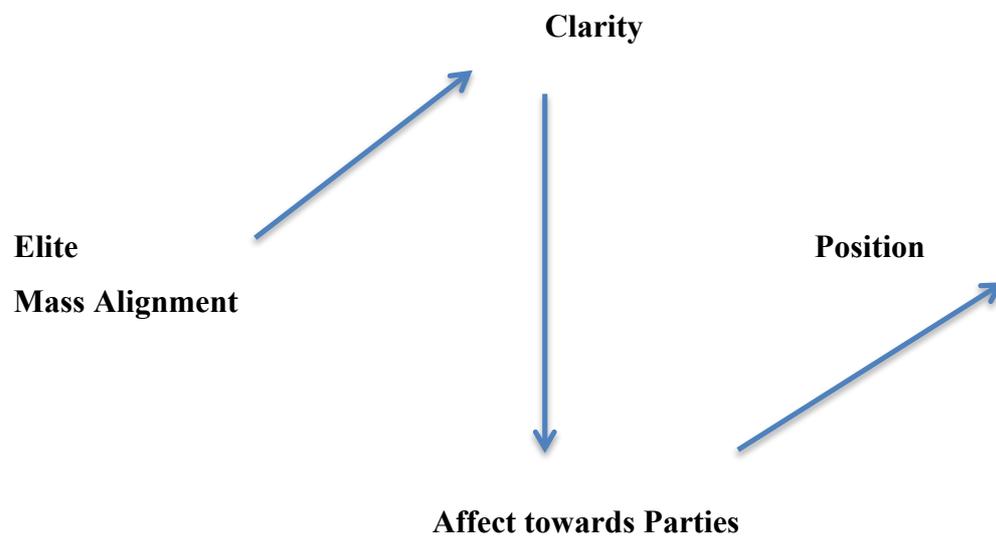
spurred by pre-existing incentives. Carmines and Stimson (1986; 1989) have tried to shed light on the multifaceted dynamics of issue evolution, providing us with a path-breaking analytical framework. “*We define issue evolutions as those issue capable of altering the political environment within which they originated and evolved. These issues have a long life cycle; they develop, evolve, and sometimes are resolved over a number of years. The crucial importance of this issue type stems from the fact that its members can lead to fundamental and permanent change in the party system.*” (Ibidem 1989, 11). They have described the cycle of issue evolution as a multiple stage process that involves well-defined interactions between elites and voters (see Figure 1).

The “*elite positions*” is the first step in this process, where the parties seek to structure a certain issue in the sphere of mass politics by polarizing their positions and providing cues for voters. However, the potential alterations in partisan alignments depend on a subset of mass reactions to these elite strategies. One of the preconditions for the politicization of conflicts is the so-called issue *clarity*, which entails public awareness of the party positioning pertaining to a new issue. In fact, voters should be able to identify the dividing-lines between parties in order to develop attitudes on the emerging issue alternatives. Nevertheless, the increasing mass perception of the new partisan cues does not constitute a sufficient condition to realign the electoral landscapes. A new issue has to raise polarized affections among voters to trigger shifts in voting choices, which is the third step in this causal chain of issue evolution, dubbed as *affect towards parties*.

In a nutshell, in order to produce an *electoral realignment*, polarization in elite behaviour should be accompanied by the mass public having clear cognitive images and well-defined emotional regards on the new issue. Hence, the realignment concept is qualified

here as the outcome of issue emergence, which is likely to transform rather than strengthen the established party conflicts, prompting electoral changes. The EU issues might actually lead towards reversals in electoral choices by cutting across the traditional partisan divisions. Our central argument is that the Euro crisis has paved the way for a new process of issue evolution in Western Europe, which has resulted in a new set of electoral preferences.

Figure 1. The Sequence of Issue Evolution.



Source: Carmines and Stimson (1986; 1989)

The above-mentioned overviews have basically drawn a top-down picture of politics, whereby the parties frame the dominant issues within the agenda, guiding electoral preferences. This top-down approach basically views the party as the chief information device that provides voters with cues (Downs 1957; Converse et al. 1960). Therefore, the role of party agents appears to be inevitable in politicizing the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of political

contestation. According to Hellström (2008), parties have demonstrated to be capable of strongly affecting public perceptions and attitudes regarding EU issues by efficaciously cueing the constituents. As a matter of fact, the complexity of the EU matters has made the voters more heavily reliant on party assessments and framing on this issue dimension. However, other works have not deflected the importance of public opinion fluctuations as fundamental incentives for the mobilization of EU conflict, sustaining two-directional approaches (Steenburgen, De Vries and Edwards 2007; Sanders and Toka 2013). Indeed, parties are likely to consider voter inputs before adopting a certain strategy and they have seemed to be aware of public shifts along the policy dimensions. By all means, the party strategies may end up in major failures, when these do not evoke emotional responses among voters (Carmines and Stimson 1986), remaining incongruous to people preferences. In fact, issue politicization is basically an activity of linking the elite policy positions with the broader mass orientations.

Nonetheless, many works have showed the consistent evidence of the strong effects of partisan cueing on voter preferences (Ray 2003; Brader and Tucker 2012; Adams, Greens and Milazzo 2012; De Sio, Paparo, Tucker and Brader 2013). We hypothesize that the information costs related to EU issues have arguably risen over time and, consequently, party cueing activities have increasingly impacted electoral preferences. Thus, we contend that voter choices on the EU issue have ultimately hinged on party strategic behaviour. Parties still provide voters with the main existing source of political information in the real political world, establishing the fundamental alternatives in terms of issues. Hence, we will examine the party top-down strategies on the EU issues in order to investigate the establishment of a new political dimension and its underlying outcomes on electoral choices.

## 2.7 EU Issue Entrepreneurship

One of the implicit cornerstones of the above-mentioned theoretical efforts has been the notion of saliency, which revolves around the parties' selective emphases on the issues. Parties choose to draw attention to certain issues during the electoral campaigns when they perceive to hold some competitive advantage. *“They seem to think that certain policy areas attract a net inflow of votes to the party when they become salient. Conversely, other areas favour rivals: mentioning them at all (even to refute mistaken policies) runs the risk of rendering an unfavourable issue salient and helping to push voters into another party”* (Budge and Farlie 1983, 24). This saliency theory largely hinges on the notion of issue ownership (Petrocik 1996), that is, the degree on which a party has developed a good image in handling a certain issue policy. This positive reputation may stem from the party's previous governmental performance or rather it could arise from its ideological proximity on that issue position. Thus, parties are not likely to reckon with the whole range of the issue alternatives during elections. On the contrary, the political actors tend to mobilize the voters by prioritizing the issue that they have substantially owned over time. In the meantime, parties usually override those issues that could bring some electoral profit to their adversaries.

Consequently, we purport that the degree of EU issue voting could be conditioned by the level of saliency attached to EU issues by political parties (De Vries 2007; De Vries 2010; Green-Pedersen 2012). In our case, in the aftermath of the Euro crisis, the Protest parties may have had strong incentives in emphasizing the EU issues by owning Euro-scepticism. In fact, restructuring the dimensionality of contestation is

a political endeavour to increase or decrease the perceived saliency of partisan conflicts at the mass level. Neither the manipulation of political dimensionality (Riker 1982; 1986) nor the patterns of issue evolution (Carmines and Stimson 1986; 1989) can ever take place without party strategic emphases on given issues.

Party strategic emphasis on new issues may result in establishing a new dimensionality of contestation. Thus, by emphasizing and polarizing their stances, the Protest parties may introduce a Pro-/Anti-European dimension of competition, potentially reshaping the patterns of voting. When the political contest engages a multiple dimensionality, some parties may employ counter-strategies to minimize the impact of the new issues. According to Jan Rovny (2012; 2013) one of these tactical devices is *position blurring*. Indeed, these political actors could undertake deliberate efforts to convey an ambiguous political message to the broader public to downplay a newly arising dimension. This tactic aims at affecting the issue clarity, preventing a fully-fledged issue evolution and maintaining the pre-existing set of conflicts. Jan Rovny (2012, 273) stresses the ambiguity inherent to the blurring strategy, which seek “*to misrepresent the distance between the party and its potential voters on the critical dimension*”. According to Börzel and Risse (2018), the Pro-European elites have predominantly responded through a de-politicization strategy towards the increasing challenges inherent to the European integration. These political actors have probably omitted the references to the Pro-European values from their political discourses or programme to hamper the emergence of a Pro-/Anti-European dimension. Bonnie Meguid (2005; 2008) has defined this saliency-reduction strategy as *dismissive*, whereas parties tactically deflect some issues, owned by their opponents, from the political agenda. We

posit that Pro-European parties actively de-emphasize or blur their positions on the EU related issues to minimise this conflict.

These abovementioned strategies have seemed to be effective analytical tools for describing the actions of parties pertaining the EU issues. Nevertheless, we utilize these theoretical findings to develop another set of strategies: *Entrepreneurship Decrease* and *Entrepreneurship Increase*. As a matter of fact, we contend that the concept of saliency requires some adjustments in order to capture the main strategic devices of contemporary parties. By manipulating the saliency and strengthening the ownership of a certain issue, parties may affect the voting choices and increase their electoral payoffs. “*It seems clear, however, that parties can compete by altering three factors: policy position, issue salience, and issue ownership.*” (Meguid 2008, 27). Thus, the party manoeuvring in the policy space remains a notable variable in the partisan strategic interactions. Indeed, the party stances on the policy dimension(s) still produce the electoral alignments, being an important determinant in issue voting. Moreover, party positions on the main political dimension(s) may actively interact with the issue saliency, which cannot be divested from a minimal reference with the structure of policy preferences. Indeed, by expressing an extreme position on a given policy dimension, a party may boost the saliency of that issue, strengthening its control over the political agenda. On the contrary, when a party adopts moderate stances on a policy, it often aims at deflecting the magnitude of the arising issue dimension, making partisan alternatives less clear (the so-called blurring strategy, see Rovny 2012; Rovny 2013). Consequently, one of our driving assumptions is that policy position and saliency manipulations are closely interwoven and so we will single out two fundamental definitions of party strategies on EU

issues by combining issue saliency with issue position. We identify two types of tactical alternatives on the EU issues:

1. *EU Issue Entrepreneurship Increase*: Hobolt and de Vries (2015) have recently refined many insights provided by the earlier academic literature. They have developed a clear-cut definition of an issue entrepreneur, which is a party that “actively promotes a previously ignored issue and adopts a position that is different from that of the mean position in the party system.” (Hobolt and de Vries 2015, 1168). This notion leads to a strategy of increasing the entrepreneurship of the EU related issues, which have been previously neglected or downplayed. This pattern appears to describe the strategies of Anti-European parties, which aim at politicizing a new dimension of political contestation, also through a position polarization.
2. *EU Issue Entrepreneurship Decrease*: by relying on the theoretical findings of Hobolt and de Vries (2015), we can identify another strategy, the Entrepreneurship Decrease: *A party set in motion an Entrepreneurship Decrease when it deliberately de-emphasizes a previously overlooked issue and adopts a position that is close to that of the mean position in the party system.* This concept describes a party activity of issue dismissal to prevent the establishment of a new dimension of political contestation. Many Mainstream parties have appeared to underemphasize the EU issues, also by adopting blurred stances, attempting to minimize a dimension based on Pro-/Anti-European orientations.

Hence, we maintain that the contestation between Pro-European and Anti-European parties has been especially rooted in the degree of issue saliency they have attached to EU issues, while checking for the party positioning within the party systems. In deviating from the average positioning, a party substantially seeks to politicize the European integration, distinguishing itself from the other parties. On the contrary, when a political actor assumes a more average position on EU issues, it tries to blur and overshadow a potential source of contestation. We posit an open polarization between Entrepreneurship Decrease and Entrepreneurship Increase, relying on both spatial and saliency approaches of voting behaviour to understand the party crosscutting strategic efforts<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> We also rely on the mathematical formula that measures the joint effects of party positions and issue saliency provided by Hobolt and De Vries (2015), which is thoroughly examined in Chapter 4.

### **3. How Parties Respond to European Integration? The Impact of the Party Family Location**

#### **3.1 Anti-European Protest Party**

Over the last two decades, the number of parties that sought to activate and mobilize the European integration conflict has flourished and many scholars have tried to identify the recurrent patterns of this strategic politicization. The first systematic attempt was provided by Paul Taggart (1998), who identified a variant of the Eurosceptic party in Western Europe -the *Protest based Party with Euro-scepticism*- which seemed to be electorally persistent and widespread across Europe. These parties were positioned at the extreme poles of the ideological spectrum and were predominantly excluded from holding governmental offices, only occupying peripheral positions within the party systems. They were intent on challenging the electoral dominion of the Mainstream or *cartel parties* (Katz and Mair 1995), which monopolized government offices and colluded on several issues, including support for European integration. This party type sought to overturn its losing position within the party systems even by means of establishing a new dimension of party competition, based on the *Pro-/Anti-European* attitudes. Indeed, the Eurosceptic identity was one of the bases for distinguishing themselves from the cartel parties. Therefore, their location within the party system was an important factor in determining the spread of Euro-scepticism at the domestic level: “*It seems therefore that parties that are peripheral are more predisposed to use Euro-scepticism as a mobilising issue than parties more central in their party systems*” (Taggart 1998, 372). Consequently, the mobilization of Euro-scepticism was understood as

one of the strategic responses to the growing phenomena of party cartelization. Even if this kind of party could not solely be defined by its critical stances over European integration, being more of an anti-establishment party with a Protest/Radical platform, it tried to emphasize and be the owner of the Eurosceptic issues. However, the *Protest based Party with Euro-scepticism* is not equated with an *anti-system party* (Sartori 1976) that challenges the fundamental principles of democratic regimes, but instead it advocates a radical opposition towards the EU external constraints (Morlino and Raniolo 2017).

In a similar vein, other studies have underlined the role of political extremism in the mobilization of Euro-scepticism (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; De Vries and Edwards 2009). In fact, extreme parties have probably channelled and swayed the opposition towards the EU: “*While Eurosceptic parties on the right rally opposition by stressing the defence of the national sovereignty and identity considerations, left-wing extremist parties resist further integration on the basis of the neoliberal character of the project and mobilize feeling of economy uncertainty*” (De Vries and Edwards 2009, 6). Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) defined this relationship between party positions within the Left-Right dimension and those on the Pro-/Anti-European as an “inverted U-curve”. As a matter of fact, the parties on the extremes have taken Euro-sceptic positions, while the established parties (Liberal, Christian-democrats, Social-democrats, etc.) located at the centre, which have substantially projected and implemented the European construction, have been more favourable towards a stronger integration. A party with a more extreme stance on the Left-Right scale would be more likely to mobilize Anti-European values as a source of political contestation. Therefore, Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) have shown a non-linear relation between parties location on these two fundamental axes of political conflict.

Hobolt and de Vries (2015) have recently confirmed many of these findings provided by the prior political science reviews. They have expected that those parties placed in peripheral or losing positions within the leading dimension of party contestation were likely to be drivers in the politicization of new issues. Their empirical results were consistent with the overall expectations on party strategies, showing how the parties with non-Mainstream positions on the Left-Right scale and without a strong governmental experience have been the EU issue entrepreneurs (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and de Vries 2015). These peripheral parties have probably made strategic efforts in manipulating the political agenda, by means of polarizing the EU issue. De Vries and Hobolt (2012) have created a definition of *challengers* “as the parties that have not previously held political office. Parties thus cease to be classified as challenger parties if they enter government” (Ibidem, 251). Nevertheless, this definition raises the dilemma of those radical parties, which had beforehand taken part in governing coalitions, but remaining distant from the Mainstream Pro-European positions. Notably, this is the case of the Italian party system, where the Northern League, despite its long-term abidance in the centre-right cabinet as a minority partner, has maintained a principled opposition towards the EU building. A more appropriate definition of the Anti-European party type could not be based only on its governmental status, but should include its location on the Left-Right continuum and its association with different kinds of European party families (Dolezal and Hellström 2016). Furthermore, the challenger label is somehow misleading, implicitly evoking the anti-systemic nature of these political formations in line with Sartori’s meaning (1976).

Consequently, we posit a revival of the *Protest based Party with Euro-scepticism* (Taggart 1998), which is here relabelled as Anti-

European Protest Party<sup>10</sup>. This party type has taken the form of *new radical protest parties* (Morlino and Raniolo 2017), which have risen in the aftermath of the Euro crisis, and of *revitalized radical Protest parties*, which had already been established. The Protest parties have certainly exacerbated the level of conflict by backing more anti-consensual and polarized policy alternatives, but without openly contesting the established democratic rules (Mair 2008). They have been mainly located at the peripheral poles of the Left-Right continuum, providing voters with meaningful cues concerning European integration, even if we define these parties as radical rather than extreme.

Many other programmatic facets have accompanied these political subjects, which cannot be seen only as a mere outgrowth of the Pro-/Anti-European political dimension. As a matter of fact, the Protest Parties have also stood out for their strong Anti-Establishment appeal, mobilizing voters on the overall rejection of the political/economic elites. Consequently, these parties have probably shared a *populist* ideology, which is here “*understood as a thin-centred ideology that considers society ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people*” (Mudde 2004, 543). Peter Mair (2002; 2008; 2011) interpreted the populist reaction as a consequence of the ever-increasing process of party cartelization (Katz and Mair 1995; Katz and Mair 2009), which produced a “partyless democracy”. This system has been characterized by a non-partisan and colluding politics, increasingly removed from civil society and substantially leaning towards the public institutions, appealing to an indistinct mass

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<sup>10</sup> We deal with the distinction between Euro-scepticism and Anti-Europeanism in the fourth chapter of this work, explaining this theoretical choice.

public. Therefore, the demise of the party representative functions has unleashed a strong wave of anti-party sentiments across Western Europe, which has been predominantly seized by the radical parties. The *EU management* of the Great Recession could have worsened these trends, prompting the surge of a new populism across the continent (Kriesi 2014). In spite of the above-mentioned “*thinness*” of populism, many parties have broadened this by including “*thicker*” political ideologies in their programmes. We hypothesize that the opposition towards European integration has been one of the ideological pillars of Protest parties, holding populism as a constant of their political discourse. Moreover, many parties may have combined the *populist* rhetoric with the Anti-European cues. Indeed, these could have defined the *people* as “*sovereign*” or “*nation*” (Meny and Surel 2002), placing them in opposition to the non-elected Euro-bureaucrats and Mainstream Pro-European elites, which threaten the state sovereignty and the integrity of the nation. Thus, *Anti-European Protest Parties* have probably aimed at establishing a new dimension of political contestation, based on the Pro-/Anti-European orientations, also by employing populist Euro-sceptic cues. Two subtypes are identified here among the Protest parties: the *radical left* parties and the *radical right* ones.

Both the Radical left and Radical right have seemed to reject the European integration, trying to mobilize voters along a Pro-/Anti-European axis of conflict. However, their hypothetical opposition towards the EU project has been rooted in different background ideologies. In fact, party reactions towards emerging issues have been historically influenced by the preceding system of cleavages (Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002), which have resulted in deep-seated ideological orientations. Thus, parties have faced

ideological constraints in responding to the emergence of EU related issues.

### **3.2 Radical Left Parties**

As we examined in the previous section, both the radical party families may have taken similar positions towards the European integration, being strongly affected by their ideological legacies. According to March and Mudde (2005, 25), radical left parties have basically rejected the “*underlying socio-economic structure of contemporary capitalism and its values and practices*”, advocating alternative economic systems and sustaining more redistributive policies. As a consequence, the radical left has appeared to link the European integration to an underlying neo-liberal bias, which jeopardize their economic collective goals and the achievements of welfare states (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2009). These parties have markedly distinguished themselves from the Social democrats, which have espoused many deregulation policies (Giddens 1998; Kriesi et al. 2006), by adhering to their principled opposition towards the economic globalization. Therefore, their anti-capitalistic views have probably determined this negative perception towards the overall EU building. According to De Vries and Edwards (2009), radical left parties have mobilized Euro-scepticism around the economic issues by cueing voters on economic anxiety subsumed by the European integration. Other findings have shown the economic-utilitarian approaches employed by the Radical left in framing the political discourse on the European integration (Grande, Hutter, Kerschler and Becker 2016). Radical Left parties are likely to be committed to rejecting the economic inequalities spurred by the European integration, rather than emphasizing the threats towards the nation state and sovereignty.

Nevertheless, some scholars have disputed this pattern of opposition towards the European integration, underlining the Radical Left positive orientations towards the exclusive prerogatives of the nation state. Indeed, in spite of their alleged cosmopolitan views (Bornschiefer 2010) or internationalist values (March and Mudde 2005), these parties have persistently identified the nation state as the natural vehicle for achieving their programmatic objectives (Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasiliopoulou 2012). Consequently, the radical left may have raised pragmatic support towards the protection of the nation state and its sovereignty, meantime opposing the European Union as a market-deepening project. Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasiliopoulou (2012) have defined this nationalism as civic, which is grounded in a more inclusive view of the state, which “*does not emphasize the homogeneity of the nation but rather seeks emancipation and independence from powers which are seen as exploitative of popular classes*” (Ibidem, 511-512). As a matter of fact, the radical left’s opposition to the European Union does not seem to involve rejecting EU enlargement and the entry of new members states (Dolezal and Hellström 2016).

After the Euro crisis, some windows of opportunity may have opened up for the radical left parties, potentially increasing their electoral preferences. Indeed, the EU management of the crisis has led towards the implementation of austerity measures at the domestic level. These policy packages, chiefly involving tax increases and spending cuts, were pursued by the European institutions (especially the European Council; Fabbrini 2013), which established a new set of economic rules at the EU level (Scharpf 2015; Laffan 2014a). According to Calossi (2016, 97), “*austerity may be a prominent and long-standing cleavage that would divide societies in its supporters and its discontents, today and in the days to come*”. By advancing a new

cleavage hypothesis, Calossi (2016) has outlined a new party type: the *Anti-Austerity Left Party*. These parties have probably emphasized the negative social consequences brought about by the austerity policies, establishing their ownership on the anti-austerity issues. They have developed a new political narrative by blaming the EU institutions and the Pro-European governments for the policy outcomes of the Euro crisis. In fact, at the core of their political discourse there is the outright identification of the EU with the international capitalist institutions and the political collusion of the Mainstream parties on these austerity issues. They have probably taken advantage of their opposition status during the Great Recession, which has strengthened their reputation as anti-austerity parties. Meanwhile, many of their governing opponents have been compelled to enact these retrenchment policies due to the impetus of the European institutions. For instance, the European Social democratic or progressive parties have largely lost their credibility concerning the reversal of the austerity measures, given their Pro-European attitudes and involvement in cabinet positions (Bailey, De Waele, Escalona and Viera 2014), leaving a larger leeway for manoeuvre of the Radical Left. This pattern has been notable in the Southern European countries, whereas the Greek PASOK, the Spanish PSOE, and to a lesser extent the Italian PD, have leaned towards the pro-austerity pole of this societal divide (Bosco and Verney 2012; Kennedy 2014; Sotiropoulos 2014; Calossi 2016; Morlino and Raniolo 2017), paving the way for the electoral success of radical Left parties, such as Podemos and SYRIZA. These parties have probably reaped substantial electoral payoffs by breaking the consensus over the fiscal policies led by the European Union (Hobolt and Tilley 2016).

We posit that the Euro crisis has increased the saliency of the Anti-European appeal among the radical left parties, which have sought to

consolidate their reputation on the Euro-sceptic stance, consequently becoming *EU issue entrepreneurs*. The radical left has probably exploited to a larger extent the economic aspect of the Anti-European opposition rather than the cultural one. The latter has concerned the ethnic homogeneity of the nation state threatened by the European integration. Nonetheless, we do not advance an autonomous hypothesis regarding this party family, but we consider it as a sub-type of the *Anti-European Protest Party*, which have aimed at mobilizing EU related issues in order to increase its electoral preferences. Even by acknowledging some remarkable insights provided by the Pro-/Anti-Austerity cleavage theory (Calossi 2016), its long-term explanatory capacity may still be questioned, requiring further investigation. Thus, we refer to the radical left parties rather than employ the Anti-Austerity left party type, which may prove to become a fundamental mean of expression of a new societal divide in next decades.

### **3.3 Radical Right Parties**

According to Cas Mudde (2007; 2010), the Radical Right ideology has involved a combination of authoritarianism, populism and nativism. Similarly, Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) have stressed their traditional, authoritarian and nationalistic (TAN)<sup>11</sup> broad ideological orientations, which have been strongly associated with

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<sup>11</sup> By relying on previous studies on the new politics (Müller-Rommel 1989; Kitschelt 1989; Inglehart 1990; Franklin et al 1992), Hooghe, Marks and Wilson have summarized a new political dimension of contestation based on the GAL-TAN orientations, which divides the supporters of green, alternative and libertarian (GAL) values from those advocating the traditional, authoritarian and nationalistic (TAN) stances.

negative European integration stances<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, these parties “*react against a series of perceived threats to the national community: the threats are many: immigrants, foreign cultural influences, cosmopolitan elites, and international agencies. European integration combines several of these threats and poses one more: It undermines national sovereignty. As scholars of European integration have long argued, one of the chief consequences of European integration is weakening the authority of national states*” (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002, 977). Therefore, radical right opposition towards the European integration has probably revolved around the defence of nation-state homogeneity and the protection of its sovereign prerogatives. These parties have appeared to constitute the main source of the Anti-European bloc, gradually becoming the chief partisan channels for the Anti-European voters.

One of the cornerstones of the challenger right ideology has been *nativism*, which here is defined “*as an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that non-native elements (person and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state*” (Mudde 2007, 19). This ideology has entailed exclusive and ethnocentric forms of nationalism, outright discordant with the EU project. Moreover, nativism has been strongly associated with anti-immigration stances, which have triggered a radical opposition towards European integration. Indeed, radical right parties have aimed at reversing the opening up of borders, inherent to the EU construction, and at blocking the entry of new members, especially from Eastern Europe. The free movement of people, established by the Schengen Treaty, potentially undermines the cultural, ethnic and

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<sup>12</sup> Domenic Hoeglinger (2016b) has also recently advanced a similar assessment over the parties closer to the TAN pole of political contestation.

religious homogeneity of the nation-state, which has been strongly advocated for by the radical right. These parties have apparently attempted to frame the conflict over Europe in nationalistic-identitarian terms (Grande, Hutter, Kersher and Becker 2016), which involve the rejection of the EU project and the reversal of the authority transfers.

One of the most recurrent explanations for the rise of Anti-European sentiments has resulted from the resiliency of nationalist identities in spite of the widening integration. Hooghe and Marks (2009) contended that the sudden acceleration in European integration since the 1990s has been accompanied by stable national identities. Indeed, the political integration among European nation-states has not always spurred a consistent development of more inclusive identities, such as the multicultural or universalistic ones. The latter would have the potential to foster and strengthen positive attitudes towards the EU. On the contrary, the denationalization of politics and the weakening of national borders, resulting from the EU unification and the entry of new member states, have increased cultural competition, strengthening the exclusiveness of national identity (Kriesi et al. 2008; Kriesi et al. 2012). Public concerns over the loss of national identity have probably catalysed the electoral consolidation of radical right parties, which have electorally mobilized and capitalized on this source of political contestation. Indeed, this party family has appeared to channel and sway the opposition towards the EU, especially by means of emphasizing the safeguarding of national identity (De Vries and Edwards 2009), incompatible with the European project.

In the above-mentioned works, the importance of the economic issues in driving the radical right opposition concerning the European Union has often been overlooked. Radical right cultural orientations have

been considered the chief ideological source in explaining their Eurosceptic attitudes. According to Kitschelt and McGann (1995), these parties have adopted market-oriented positions in the economic realm, combining these stances with a cultural protectionism. These mixed political platforms have constituted the “*winning formula*” of the radical right parties, which has allowed them to build cross-class electoral coalitions, including the lower skilled blue-collar workers and small self-employed entrepreneurs. Kriesi et al. (2006) have created a two-dimensional analysis in six European countries, exploring the party positioning on the economic and cultural dimensions, which has shown only a mixed empirical support for this alleged winning formula. The radical right seems to have developed a more social interventionist attitude to respond to the electoral preferences of the globalization losers (Kriesi et al. 2012), who have demanded more social protectionism. This policy shift has probably been achieved via the adoption of a welfare chauvinist platform, which includes only the members of the native community as service recipients, while excluding the immigrant population from receiving social benefits (Mudde 2007)<sup>13</sup>. As a matter of fact, according to Lefkofridi and Michel (2014), in the 2010s, the Western European radical right increased the saliency of the economic-redistributive issues by means of highlighting the exclusive solidarity model of welfare subsumed by their nativist-chauvinist ideology. These economic orientations have probably strengthened the radical right negative stance on European integration, which is perceived as a market-deepening project, thus approaching the radical left positions in this policy domain.

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<sup>13</sup> Even by stressing the economic facets of the radical right political platforms, Cas Mudde (2007) has considered these issues as secondary compared to cultural ones.

Even in the wake of the Euro crisis, these parties seem to have joined a protectionist bloc, instead of leaning towards economic liberalism. Many of these right-wing forces have probably advocated for social protectionism during the Great Recession, being identified as opponents of the Austerity measures. One of the most prominent cases has been the National Front (FN) in France, which has epitomized an abrupt reverse towards these economic policies (Betz 2015). Other radical right parties, such as the Italian Northern League (LN), the Greek ANEL, the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) and the Finns Party (PS) (Lefkofridi and Michel 2014; Ylä Anttila and Ylä Anttila 2015; Van Kessel 2015; Bobba and MacDonnell 2015; Pappas and Aslandis 2015; Kriesi and Pappas 2015; Calossi 2016; Morlino and Raniolo 2017), have followed the same path by rejecting many austerity packages and advocating for less market-oriented policies. Furthermore, redistributive issues at the EU level appear to have gained saliency in the national political debates as a consequence of the Euro Crisis (Statham and Trenz 2015). Grande and Hutter (2016a) have referred to *problem of solidarity* as one of the main conflict sources concerning the European integration, which results “*from the decisions on the distribution and redistribution of financial resources between member states*” (Grande and Hutter 2016a, 15). The solidarity/redistributive policies among EU members have probably taken centre stage during the crisis, polarizing between creditor and debtor countries. While the radical left has often been expected to have more windows of opportunity within the debtor countries, the radical right may have found a favourable environment in the creditor ones (Hooghe and Marks 2017). As a matter of fact, the rescue measures for bailing out the debtors could foster a rightward protest in the creditor countries. Radical right parties opposed the government willingness to rescue other member states. Therefore, these parties

have probably intensified the saliency ascribed to the Anti-European issues by rejecting the burden sharing of sovereign debt led by the EU institutions. The opposition towards these redistributive policies at the EU level has arisen from the nativist-nationalistic broad ideological orientations of the radical right parties, which has prevented them from supporting resource re-allocation among the member states. According to Kriesi and Grande (2016), some stages of the Euro crisis, such as the Greek second bailout in March 2012, have acquired a certain saliency in many creditor countries, probably increasing the politicization of the European integration conflict. Many governments have tried to de-politicize the management of the Euro crisis (Statham and Trenz 2015; Börzel and Risse 2019) by resorting to the executive bargaining within the smoke-filled rooms of the intergovernmental bodies. Nonetheless, one of the main efforts of the radical right has been to shed light on these processes, exploiting the media coverage on the Euro crisis (Hobolt and Tilley 2014; Statham and Trenz 2015; Hoeglinger 2016b). Even if this pattern of opposition towards European integration could only account for the surge in the radical right protest within the creditor countries<sup>14</sup>, many of these party actors, which have leaned towards an Anti-Austerity pole, have flourished or consolidated even in the debtor countries.

The radical right principled hostility towards the European project has historically involved cultural-identitarian frames, such as the defence of nation state's ethnic/cultural homogeneity and its sovereign prerogatives. Nevertheless, the redistribution of resources among the member states, catalysed by sovereign debt crisis, may have also

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<sup>14</sup> The German case has probably embodied this pattern, whereas the new radical protest party, the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AFD), may have mobilized this hostility towards the intra-state solidarity policies, maximising its electoral preferences.

played an important role in increasing radical right Anti-Europeanism. Consequently, we challenge the conventional wisdom that radical right opposition to the European integration has solely revolved around cultural issues. On the contrary, in the aftermath of the Euro crisis, the economic-utilitarian frames have probably explained the intensification of broad Anti-European appeals at the mass level undertaken by the radical right party family.

We propose that the radical right parties have not strategically mobilized voter preferences on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation simply by polarizing their stances. Actually, it is likely that their Anti-European positions have remained quite stable over time (Hooghe and Marks 2017), while they have appeared to increase the saliency attached to the EU issues as a consequence of the Euro crisis. The crisis has probably established many favourable electoral conditions for this party family, in the same way as it did for radical left. Thus, we expect a substantial rise in the degree of radical right EU issue entrepreneurship, which may explain the growth of its electoral preference at the expense of Mainstream parties.

### **3.4 Pro-European Mainstream Parties**

Bonnie Meguid (2005, 348) has defined Mainstream parties “*as the electorally dominant actors in the center-left, center, and center-right blocs on the Left-Right political spectrum. In this classification, the center-left parties explicitly exclude left-libertarian parties, whereas the center-right categorization excludes right-authoritarian, or right-wing, populist parties*”. Mainstream parties have generally been conceptualized by their location on the Left-Right political dimension, being placed closer to the centre, and by their governmental status,

holding the cabinet positions (Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002). The majority of Mainstream parties belong to the four deep-seated Western European party families (for the notion of party family see: Van Beyme 1985; Mair and Mudde 1998): 1) *Social-Democrats/Socialists*; 2) *Christian Democrats*, 3) *Conservatives*; 4) *Liberals*. These political families have stemmed from the four main dividing-lines that occurred in the European polities (*Centre versus Periphery*; 2. *State versus Church*; 3. *Land versus Industry*; 4. *Owners versus Worker*). These cleavages have structured and crystallized the political landscape for decades (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In spite of the *weakening of cleavage politics* (Inglehart 1976; Franklin 1985; Franklin et al. 1992; Knutsen and Scarborough 1995; Mair 1997; Kriesi 1997; Dalton, Farrell and Macallister 2011), these parties have managed to survive over time, keeping the ideological preferences of the electorates within the boundaries of the old conflict lines. These political actors have remained the fundamental electoral and governmental alternatives in the Western European party systems. As a matter of fact, in the 1990s, when Katz and Mair (1995) heralded their renowned cartelization theory of politics, these well-established political families chiefly compounded the so-called cartels of colluding and governing parties, which controlled the crucial cabinet positions and the policy-making processes. Consequently, their bonds with the voters have lasted for generations, exceeding many rosy expectations and drawing a picture of political stability. Nevertheless, since the post second world war, many systemic alterations have taken place, considerably reshaping the broad ideological commitments of these parties. For instance, the Social Democrat parties have clearly deflected the emphasis on the class conflict (Morlino 2012), while Christian Democrats have modernized their ideological platforms by blurring their confessional appeals. Many prominent party families,

such as the Communist, Fascist and Agrarian, have become clearly residual, vanishing from the current electoral choices. Furthermore, since the emergence of the so-called Post-materialist\Materialist cleavage (Kitschelt 1989; Müller-Rommel 1989; Inglehart 1990; Franklin et al 1992), new political formations have emerged, such as the Green-Ecologist parties, which electorally have succeeded in many European countries (Müller-Rommel 2002). Green parties have substantially entered the Mainstream of politics by moderating their policy stances and being co-opted as minor partners in many governments (Müller-Rommel and Poguntke 2013). Thus, including the green party family within the Mainstream cluster does not appear to be too problematic. On the contrary, classifying the regionalist party family may raise some uncertainties. In fact, these parties have challenged the Mainstream political formations mainly by emphasizing the issues related to the territorial dimension of contestation (Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber 2015; Alonso, Cabeza and Gomez 2015; Rovny 2015). However, these parties have not complied with the criteria for being considered as *Anti-European Protest party*, being likely to assume Pro-European positions (Jolly 2007). Therefore, we posit that regionalist parties have basically followed the strategic patterns of Mainstream parties by deflecting the EU issues rather than breaking the Pro-European consensus in the aftermath of the Euro crisis.

According to Marks and Wilson (2000), the pre-existing system of social cleavages has extensively determined the parties' ideological predispositions towards European integration: "*Political parties are not empty vessels into which issue positions are poured in response to electoral or constituency pressures; rather, they are organizations with historically rooted orientations that guide their response to new issues.*" (Ibidem 2000, 434). Consequently, Mainstream parties have

tried to accommodate all the emerging issues in their broad ideological platforms. Many works have not neglected to underline the strong impact of the national cultures in mediating the party attitudes towards European integration (Diez Medrano 2003; Kriesi 2007; Conti 2013), which have widely proved to be an explanatory factor in the fluctuations. Nonetheless, Marks, Wilson and Ray (2002) have provided evidence that although the impact of national cultures has remained prominent, party family location has chiefly determined European integration party positioning. The EU issues have apparently raised several ideological challenges for these party families, unleashing some internal factionalism (Taggart 1998) and triggering many strategic dilemmas (Hooghe and Marks 2009). However, each Mainstream party family has coped with its own distinctive problems in blending the EU issues with their deep-seated policy stances along the Left-Right dimension. Consequently, in our work we define this party cluster as *Pro-European Mainstream Parties*. The definition aims to include those parties endowed with a clear-cut Pro-European position, which is one of the facets of their wider ideological programmes. Therefore, examining the ideological inclinations of the party families is an essential step in our work to understand the historical foundations explaining their attitudes towards European integration.

We observe the historical legacies on the EU issues of the four established Mainstream party families (Socialists, Liberals, Christian democrats and Conservatives), also including in our analysis a younger party family, the Greens, and a non-Mainstream family, the Regionalists. Many works have referred to the Conservatives\Christian Democrat party family (Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest 2010; Hutter Grande and Kriesi 2016; Hoeglinger 2016b) to indicate the Mainstream centre-right bloc. Even if this

Conservatives\Christian Democrat cluster is heterogeneous, grouping parties with a different ideological tradition, it is well-suited to describe the contemporary dividing lines within Western European party systems. Consequently, we use this broader party family in our analysis.

### **3.4.1 Social Democrat\Socialist parties**

Social Democrat\Socialist parties have historically expressed the class cleavage, being chiefly responsible for the similarities across European party systems and polarizing the political contestation between workers and owners (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bartolini 2000). In the early stage of democratization, socialist parties enfranchised the working class, channelizing the participation of this social group and providing them with a cultural identity. In the subsequent phases, these parties became remarkable governmental actors, moderating many of their most radical economic stances and supporting work\capital agreements to prevent social conflicts and to appeal beyond the working classes (Kirchheimer 1966). Nevertheless, socialist parties had remained strong advocates for redistributive, state-intervention, welfare spending and Keynesian policies over the whole post-war period. The core of these issue platforms was strongly entrenched within the national economic sovereignty and in the Bretton-Woods system, which allowed the governments to hold the reins of macro-economic policies. Therefore, this party family did not strongly support many facets of the authority transfers laid down by the European integration. The Socialists perceived the European project as a neo-liberal and market-deepening project, under the aegis of Christian Democrat\Liberal parties, that

could jeopardize the redistributive and welfare achievements by downplaying the prerogatives of the nation-state (Marks and Wilson 2000; Kriesi 2007). Until the 1980s, the main political opposition to European integration had come from the Social Democrat/Socialist parties, which criticized the overall European building. Nonetheless, in the subsequent decades this ideological aversion has gradually reversed and the majority of the socialist parties have repositioned themselves on the pro-integrationist pole of this ideological divide (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Gabel and Hix 2004). This identity leap was arguably aimed at bringing some of the Social Democrat goals to a EU level. This change was prompted by the many failures in conducting the pro-demand Keynesian policies at the domestic level, epitomized by the monetarist U-Turn undertaken by the French President Francois Mitterrand. Hooghe and Marks (1999) drew up a model of two-dimensional policy space, where the European integration dimension ranged from supranationalism to nationalism, while the Left-Right dimension varied from social democracy to market liberalism. In their view, the European integration issue dimension may subsume some facets of the Left-Right economic divide, such as the sharp contrast concerning the market regulation, while other aspects were more likely to remain substantially orthogonal. Thus, they have posited the “*emergence of a cleavage ranging from left-leaning supranationalists who support regulated capitalism to rightist nationalists who support neoliberalism*” (Hooghe and Marks 1999, 76). Consequently, the socialist parties have leaned towards the deepening of the European integration in order to intensify positive market regulation and to match citizen demands for welfare provisions, opposing the European construct as a form of a neo-liberal project. Furthermore, European Social Democracy has sought to strengthen a supranational democratic

building in order to create an institutional channel for achieving the objectives of a regulated capitalism.

At the turn of the century, this potential pattern of party contestation appeared to be quite promising by integrating the two policy dimensions and aligning the European Social Democrats with Pro-integration supporters. Nevertheless, the so-called Hooghe-Marks model (1999) did not receive strong empirical support, being notably rejected by subsequent studies (Marks and Steenburgen 2004). Unquestionably, the socialist parties have shifted their stances on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension by adopting Europhile positions (Hooghe and Marks 2017). However, in doing so, this party family has not been clearly committed to emphasizing and framing the EU issues in terms of regulated capitalism, revealing a certain ideological ambiguity (Hoeglinger 2016b). These parties have extensively employed the economic prosperity and multiculturalist-libertarian arguments, while *“It appears that, in general, social-democrats focus on the economic aspects without being very afraid of jeopardising social achievements”* (Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest 2010, 511). Escalona and Viera (2014) have referred to the Social Democrat *Faustian Pact* on the grounds of European integration. Indeed, by moving towards the Pro-integrationist side of this political conflict, Social Democrats have substantially enhanced the neo-liberal bias underlying European integration rather than underpinning a Euro-Keynesian vision. They have consistently supported all the major treaty shifts, which have established the free flow of capitals, people and commodities coupled with the strict tightening and monitoring of budgetary policies. This market-led unification of Europe was pursued by the policy initiatives of the Socialist President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors (1985-1994), who played an active role in promoting a neo-liberal EU (Scharpf 1999; Escalona and Escalona

2014). Furthermore, European integration has considerably been inspired by the Ordoliberal principles (the German version of neo-liberalism). These principles established mechanisms for balancing the budget by removing the political discretionary powers from economic-policy making. Even in the domain of the budgetary policies, European Social Democracy has strongly upheld the Stability and Growth Pact (July 1997), which laid down strict convergence criteria aiming at budgetary stability. As a matter of fact, in the 1990s the Social Democrats widely adhered to the *third way* ideology (Giddens 1998), becoming strong supporters of the market-economy (Ryner 2014) and drawing up political programmes for the so-called globalization winners (Kriesi et al 2006; Kriesi et al. 2008; Kriesi et al. 2012). Hence, their endorsement for the European integration has appeared to be grounded in their appeals for economic prosperity, inherent to (Ordo)liberal economic system, rather than within a project of regulated capitalism. Since the onset of the crisis, in spite of some criticism, the majority of these parties has leaned towards the Pro-Austerity pole of contestation (Calossi 2016), aligning themselves with the Liberals and the Christian Democrats\Conservatives. Meanwhile, the Social Democrat party family has been oriented towards a cosmopolitan-multicultural framing of the European integration, revealing a shared commitment to cultural liberalism (Kriesi et al. 2006; Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest 2010; Grande, Hutter, Kersher and Becker 2016; Hoeglinger 2016b).

The ideological collusion on the economic austerity with the other Mainstream parties, which has been led by the EU institutions, has probably provided to Social Democrat\Socialist parties with new incentives to adopt a de-politicization strategy on the EU issues. Indeed, they may have played down the saliency of this potential conflict, being increasingly aware of the electoral threats inherent to

the EU issues. Therefore, these parties have been likely to the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, de-emphasizing their favourable arguments towards the European integration in the political debates. They may have pursued this dismissive strategy to avoid the establishment of Pro-\Anti-Integration dimension of competition.

### **3.4.2 Christian Democrat\Conservative Parties**

According to Marks and Wilson (2000), the Christian Democrats, representing the denominational side of the religious cleavage in Western Europe, have been traditionally supportive of European integration, being “*more closely associated with the founding of the European Union than any party family*” (Ibidem 2000, 451). These parties have rejected the nationalist ideology, gradually adopting more cosmopolitan and supra-national positions, paving the way for creating the European project. They have not faced the economic dilemmas of the European Social Democracy, considering market integration as a political instrument to achieve economic prosperity. However, since the Christian Democrat denominational appeals have deteriorated over time, this party family may have slightly shifted towards a more nationalist pole. Moreover, as was argued by Marks and Wilson (2000), the enlargement steps substantially affected the homogeneity of this party family within the European Parliament, transforming the European People’s Party (EPP) into a more ideologically diverse coalition of parties. Indeed, the Christian Democrat parties have become a minority over time<sup>15</sup>, while more right-oriented conservatives (such as the Italian FI, the Greek New Democracy ND, the Spanish PP, etc.) have replaced them, increasing

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<sup>15</sup> The collapse of the Italian Christian Democracy marked a sharp decline of this political tradition in Western Europe.

their cultural influence on the overall EPP (Emanuele 2014)<sup>16</sup>. In our work, we do not take into account the dynamics of the competition among the so-called *Euro-parties* in the European Parliament. Nonetheless, the EPP includes the majority of the centre-right Mainstream parties and the overall positioning of this party cluster may account for notable position swings regarding European integration (Gabel and Hix 2004). Moreover, we contend that the constant political bargaining within the EPP may have reshaped some broad ideological orientations on the European integration of national parties.

Conservative parties have aimed at mobilizing the interests of the middle and upper classes, combining neo-liberalism and a moderate nationalism (Marks and Wilson 2000). These two conservative ideological pillars have produced some dilemmas concerning European integration. On the one hand, this group of parties, led British conservatives, have identified the European project as a minimalist endeavour to establish a single European market. This diluted version of European integration should pursue market integration, lowering tariff barriers and allowing the free circulation of goods/workforce. Meanwhile, it should reduce state regulation powers over these policy areas. Many conservative parties have supported a limited authority transfers towards a supranational structure, endowed with the task of guaranteeing a negative regulation and a system based on free-exchange. These neo-liberal ideological orientations seem to have fostered a moderate conservative support for European integration, which has probably rested on utilitarian arguments. However, the long-standing commitment of these parties to a

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<sup>16</sup> The creation of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) in 2009, a Euro-Party endowed of Anti-European and Anti-Federalists attitudes, has drew from the EPP the support of the British Conservatives within the EP. However, we maintain this party actor within our bloc of mainstream centre-right parties.

moderate nationalism has posed some problems towards EU integration. Indeed, *“politically and culturally they are likely to be nationalists and opposed to the opening of the borders. Cultural and political integration threatens the national traditions and national sovereignty – values that conservatives traditionally defend.”* (Kriesi 2007, 87). According to Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002), many conservative parties have probably leaned towards the TAN (Traditional\Authoritarian\Nationalist values) pole of political contestation, which has predicted a stronger opposition to European integration. The French Gaullists (UMP\Republicans), the British Conservatives, the Portuguese People’s Party (CDS-PP) and the Italian Forward Italy (FI) have recurrently adopted moderate Eurosceptic stances, aiming at politically channelling some sovereignty and cultural homogeneity concerns of their national electorates. Moreover, many sovereignist factions have emerged within these parties, openly challenging the neo-liberals on the grounds of European integration (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002). This type of intra-party conflict dramatically took place among the British Conservatives during the so-called *Brexit* Referendum (June 2016), where two factions, a Europhile one (led by the PM, David Cameron) and a Eurosceptic one (led by the former Mayor of London, Boris Johnson), openly clashed on the issue of the British withdrawal from the EU.

Hoeglinger (2016b) has recently refined many insights on the overall Conservative\Christian Democrat party family, confirming the findings advanced by Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002). He has observed that some parties closer to the TAN pole (the German CSU, the British conservatives and the Austrian ÖVP) have been likely to take more Euro-sceptic positions by opposing the enlargement steps. Moreover, this party cluster has considerably attached saliency to the

EU issues, employing some identitarian-nationalist frames during the electoral campaigns (for the same argument see Dolezal and Hellström 2016). Grande, Hutter, Kersher and Becker (2016) have identified a similar pattern, although they have highlighted how much the national-identitarian arguments exploited by this party family have been conducive in justifying and supporting European integration rather than opposing it. Nonetheless, these studies have selected a limited set of creditor countries, excluding the debtors. By notably enlarging our sample of countries, we expect to observe the clear-cut Conservative\Christian Democrat efforts to demobilize the EU issues, extinguishing this potential source of conflict.

Moreover, we contend that the conservative internal factionalism on European integration has prevented this party family from playing the card of the EU issues to avoid electoral losses (on this subject see: Scott and Steenburgen 2004; De Vries 2010). In accounts of their positioning along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation, a recent extensive mapping on Mainstream parties (Hooghe and Marks 2017) has shown the consistent Pro-European values of Christian Democratic\Conservatives parties in Western Europe, which have never rallied their constituents on the issue of withdrawing (the only exception was the Anti-European conservative faction in UK during the *Brexit* referendum). Instead, the majority of the conservative parties has been more likely to fall into the group of Euro-pragmatists (Kopecky and Mudde 2002), underpinning and warranting EU integration in order to pursue their country's national interests. The Christian Democrats\Conservatives have certainly faced the radical right political challenges on European policies (Bale 2008; Rovny 2013). They have probably reacted by undertaking a minimal accommodative strategy on the cultural opposition towards European integration, (for the notion of accommodation see Meguid 2005;

Meguid 2008) to reduce the electoral success of the radical right. However, our hypothesis is that their main tactical device, for crowding out the radical right political viability, has been EU issue blurring.

### **3.4.3 Liberal, Green and Regionalist parties**

- *Liberal Parties* - The Liberal party family originated from a multiple set of conflicts, which since the 17<sup>th</sup> century had characterized European politics (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). These parties have mainly represented industrial as opposed to landed interests, while, on secularization grounds, they have been likely to clash with the clergy's control of state legislation and public education, channelling anti-church political sentiments. "*Across these diverse cleavages, liberal share some diffuse common values based on opposition to ascription, clericalism and aristocracy, and support for economic and political freedoms, though the substantive content varies considerably.*" (Marks and Wilson 2000, 448). Consequently, two main variants of the political liberalism have spread across Western European party systems: the liberal-radicals and the liberal-conservatives<sup>17</sup>. On the one hand, the liberal-radicals have traditionally advocated for more progressive policies on economic grounds, being supportive of moderate state intervention and social rights (e.g. the British Liberals, the Danish Social Liberal Party, etc.). Furthermore, these parties have also upheld the free circulation of people and the opening of borders underlying the European integration. On the other hand, the *liberal-conservatives* have fervently stood for market-oriented policies, conceiving the EU

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<sup>17</sup> This distinction has been further employed by Marks and Wilson (2000), Kriesi et al. (2006) and Kriesi (2007).

building as a means for rejecting state-centred stances. Meanwhile, their attitudes on cultural liberalism and the opening of the borders have been more moderated, revealing a mixed orientation towards nationalism. Although some differentiated ideological predispositions displayed by these two party sub-types, liberal parties have consistently stood in favour of European integration over time, being one of the main channels of the Pro-European electoral choices (Franklin and Van der Eijk 2004; Gabel and Hix 2004). Some overviews have explored the framing of this party family, assessing the large share of cultural arguments employed by the liberals, which rested on a multicultural-cosmopolitan ideological commitment (Kriesi et al. 2006; Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest 2010; Hoeglinger 2016b).

*-Green Parties* - Since the beginning of the 1980s, the Green parties have progressively established themselves, gaining considerable electoral payoffs and subsequently becoming stable alternatives within many European party systems (Müller-Rommel 1989; 2002). These parties have mobilized emerging values along a Post-materialist\Materialist axis of political contestation (Inglehart 1990), which has indicated the existence of a *value-based cleavage*. Public values have arguably shifted from the concerns of self-sustenance and material wellbeing towards sentiments of self-expression and lifestyle (Montero and Torcal 1997; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Although some scholars have disputed the notion of *value-based cleavage* (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Mair 1997), cultural changes have probably developed across Western European polities, paving the way for bolstering the electoral strength of the Greens. According to Dalton, Farrell and Macallister (2011), new cultural issues reflecting post-materialist values, such as pro-environmental, pro-immigration and

gender equality issues, have become steadily more prominent among voters, consequently reshaping the value content subsumed by the Left-Right scale. According to Kitschelt (1989), many parties have channelled a new libertarian wave by emphasizing values such as spontaneous solidarity, individual voluntarism and free-association. He has referred to these parties as the Left-Libertarians, which have underpinned wider political participation, more decentralized and less bureaucratized political organization, openly rejecting the corporate and hierarchical model of European Social Democracy. Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) have summarized these findings by providing the “New Politics” dimension of contestation, ranging from the GAL (Green\Alternative\Libertarian) values to the TAN (Traditional\Authoritarian\Nationalist) values. In the previous paragraphs, we have already noted how the closeness to the TAN pole has unequivocally determined the Euro-scepticism of the party actors. On the contrary, *“Green parties, located towards the GAL pole, have become more integrationist. This strengthens the association between the new politics dimension and the support of the European integration.”* (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002, 983)<sup>18</sup>. Even if these parties may not be included among the pool of Euro-Enthusiasts (for this notion see Kopecky and Mudde 2002), they have found pragmatic incentives for sustaining the integration deepening processes. In fact, the European project has also involved pro-environmental issues and free circulation policies, which have been strongly favoured by the Green parties. However, one of the core ideological mainstays has been cultural liberalism, entailing the opening of the borders and cosmopolitan views, which have probably increased the positive

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<sup>18</sup> In assessing the GAL party positive orientation towards the European integration, Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) have pointed out that it has been strongly related to the degree of environmentalism of parties.

inclinations of the Greens towards European integration. Indeed, these parties have consistently explained the EU issues in cultural terms by employing multicultural-cosmopolitan rather than economic-utilitarian frames (Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest 2010; Hoeglinger 2016b). Hence, since the turn of the century, green party family support towards the European integration has probably constituted a growing source for spreading the Pro-European values across the Western European party systems.

*-Regionalist Parties* -Regionalist parties have traditionally sought to represent the territorial and ethnic minorities that oppose authority centralization, advocating for more decentralized forms of political organization or even appealing for a withdrawal from the central state. This territorial cleavage, the centre vs. the periphery (Lipstet and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan and Urwin 1983), has been markedly pronounced within the multi-national, multi-ethnic and multi-languages states (i.e. Spain, Belgium and United Kingdom). Regionalists have stood out for electorally competing only in a given territory or region, rather than pursuing a *nation-based* strategy, distancing themselves from the *state-wide* parties (Brancati 2008). These parties have recurrently tried to unsettle the fundamental structure of political competition, based on the Left-Right divide, by introducing a *territorial* dimension of contestation. According Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber (2015, 843), “*The territorial dimension can therefore be understood as a conflict over the structuring of political authority within the state, where political actors in territorially distinct communities contest the state’s right to rule uniformly across its territory*”. Apparently, many regionalist parties have succeeded in their strategic efforts. Alonso, Cabeza and Gomez (2015) have showed the coexistence of a double dimensionality of political

contestation (economic and territorial) in many Spanish and British regions, established by the entrepreneurship of regionalist parties, which have mainly competed on the territorial policy dimension. Few works have attempted to provide a systematic overview on the regionalist party attitudes towards the European integration. Marks and Wilson (2000) have assessed how those parties representing territorial-ethnic minorities have been likely to support the European integration as a means to support multi-level governance and gain more autonomy from the central-state. Marks, Wilson and Ray (2002, 587) have subsequently observed that the regionalist party family position on European integration has ranged from moderately to strongly in favour. In their view, this party cluster has strongly advocated for economic integration, as the suitable grounds for their autonomist demands, while it has been more lukewarm on political integration. Seth Jolly (2007) has provided us with the most extensive mapping of regionalist positions on European integration currently at our disposal. He has found that these parties (with the notable exception of the Basque *Harri Batasuna*) have steadily supported the European integration, becoming one of the political channels of Pro-European values, approaching the Europhile orientations of the Mainstream parties. He has confirmed the previous findings (Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002), which contended the regionalist party family positive orientation towards the economic side of integration rather than to the political one (the SNP has embodied this dynamic). *“Unlike other fringe parties in Western Europe, regionalist parties are Europhile. They are pro-EU across time and issue area. The existence of this Europhile fringe contradicts the expectations of the mainstream versus the fringe party theories on support for European integration”* (Jolly 2007, 124). In many cases, these parties have been peripheral in their party systems by radically emphasizing autonomist

issues on the territorial dimension, being excluded from holding government positions. Nevertheless, the Regionalist party family has not consistently assumed polarized stances on the economic Left-Right dimension and consequently they cannot be equated to the left-right radical party family in Western Europe. Furthermore, they have substantially lacked the incentives and motivations to politicize the European integration conflict in domestic public debates, being more likely to fall within the cluster of the EU issue extinguishers.

We have already pointed out the hardships faced by the *Pro-European Mainstream Parties* in dealing with the European integration conflict. As a matter of fact, position shifting along the Pro-\Anti-European dimension has been ideologically prohibitive for them, given their well-rooted reputations (Hooghe and Marks 2009), and they have seemed to remain quite inflexible over time (Hooghe and Marks 2017). Moreover, these parties have been disinclined to play the card of EU issues to avoid intra-party conflicts (Taggart 1998; Scott and Steenburgen 2004; De Vries 2010).

We posit that the deepening of the economic crisis has posed further difficulties for the Mainstream political families in dealing with the EU issues. As governing parties they have dealt with the EU management of the economic crisis, being bound by their responsibility towards the European institutions. The EU, especially under the form of intergovernmental bodies (Fabbrini 2013; Fabbrini 2015), took centre stage during the crisis by establishing new rules and obligations for national budgetary policies. On the one hand, governing Mainstream parties have played an active role within the EU intergovernmental bodies, establishing new treaties, which have paradoxically shrunk their own manoeuvring room at the domestic level. On the other hand, Mainstream parties, acting as governments,

have enforced the austerity packages resulting from intergovernmental bargaining, made up of tax increases and spending cuts. These policies have probably magnified a responsiveness crisis (for the notion of responsiveness see Morlino 2012), mirroring the existing dilemma between responsibility towards the EU institutions and the responsiveness towards the domestic electorates (Mair 2009; Mair 2011; Laffan 2014a; Morlino and Raniolo 2017). The poor governmental performance in handling the crisis effects have probably prompted electoral sanctions for many incumbent\Mainstream parties (Bosco and Verney 2012; Kriesi 2014; Hobolt and De Vries 2015; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2017; Morlino and Raniolo 2017). However, many citizens have been able to link these policy outcomes to the European institutions, acknowledging the EU's share of responsibility, becoming increasingly critical towards the European building (Hobolt and Tilley 2014; Schimmelfennig 2014; Hobolt 2015; Hobolt and Cramme 2015).

These austerity policies have had different impacts across our selection of cases. Certainly, the debtor countries, such as Greece, Italy, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, have suffered these packages of economic policies or reforms more acutely, which culminated in the signing of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (TSCG), also referred to as the *Fiscal Compact*. Considering their economic weaknesses, these governments had little voice in influencing the major treaty changes or in spurring a different policy course. Nevertheless, even many creditor countries – such as Netherlands, Austria and France - have themselves been facing economic troubles, exacerbated by the reduction in welfare provisions that have been steered by EU decisions and treaties, probably catalysing some forms of discontent towards European governance. The creditor governments have also dealt with the burden

sharing problems related the rescue packages for the insolvent countries, potentially unleashing the Anti-European mobilization of the radical right.

We hypothesize that the Mainstream parties have aligned themselves towards the Pro-European pole of the political contestation, in spite of their location on the Left-Right dimension of political contestation or their governmental status<sup>19</sup>. They have established a sort of “Mainstream consensus” (Hobolt and Tilley 2016), mirroring their long-standing ideological commitment to the European project and largely supporting the Pro-Austerity policies. According to Calossi (2016), the main party families have mainly colluded on these policies driven by the EU. These parties have probably tried to prevent the whole EU building from falling apart and collapsing by imposing the above-mentioned set of measures (even if their effects may be considered disputable). In doing so, they have pursued a depoliticization strategy, actively reducing the saliency of the EU issues at the domestic level. We have already labelled this type of strategy as EU Issue Entrepreneurship Decrease, which is a deliberate attempt to de-emphasize a previously overlooked issue, adopting a blurred position closer to that of the average position in the party system. We posit that the Mainstream parties have sought to depoliticize the EU issues to avoid the risk of being electorally downsized. Indeed, a new dimension of political contestation based on the European integration may lessen their dominance over the party systems and decrease their electoral support. Where the Protest parties have smelt blood regarding the electoral potentials inherent to EU issues (Hooghe and Marks 2009), the Mainstream parties have smelt a rat, firmly resisting the European integration politicization. Therefore, a paradox may

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arise in the Western European party systems. On the one hand, the Anti-European voters were provided with clear-cut electoral channels by the strategic efforts of the Anti-European political entrepreneurs (the Protest parties). On the other hand, the Pro-European voters may have faced blurred partisan cues on the part of Mainstream Europhile actors, perhaps finding more hurdles in expressing their electoral preferences, given the high information costs associated with the EU issues (Hellström 2008). According Börzel and Risse (2018, 85), the Europhile electorate “*has remained silent and inactive in the absence of trans-nationalized, liberal\cosmopolitan elite discourses*”. Hence, one of our current expectations is that this cluster of parties has not maximised its electoral preferences on the Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension.

### **3.5 Party Type and Party Strategy Patterns**

In the second chapter of the work, we have provided a tool-kit for the main tactical devices at the party’s disposal relevant to the European integration conflict. By analysing the existing political science literature on this subject, we have identified a two-fold set of party strategic efforts on EU issues. On the one hand, the party may emphasize the EU issues and could deviate from the mean party position in a determined party system, thus increasing the EU Issue Entrepreneurship. On the other hand, a party may de-emphasize the EU issues and may adopt a blurred position, ideologically colluding with the other Mainstream parties, consequently decreasing the *EU Issue Entrepreneurship*.

In the third chapter, we have drawn another two-fold party typology, which revolves around the party family deep-seated ideological orientations on the European integration. On the one hand, we have

hypothesized the revitalization of the *Anti-European Protest Party*, which are more likely to accentuate the EU issues. These parties have chiefly been located at the extreme poles of the Left-Right continuum, belonging to the radical left or radical right party families and being substantially marginalized from governmental positions (though there are several exceptions). On the other hand, we also posited the widespread resiliency of the *Pro-Europeanism Mainstream Parties*, which have probably deflected the EU issues. These parties have been located closer to the centre of the Left-Right dimension, belonging to the established European party families (Social Democrats\Socialists; Christian Democrat\Conservatives; Liberals, etc.) and largely holding the governmental offices.

The core objective is to combine the two above-mentioned typologies in order understand which party type is more likely to be associated with a determined strategic frame on EU issues, testing our first subset of hypotheses:

- *H1: The Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis: as a consequence of the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, Protest parties have increased the level of the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, by strengthening the emphasis attached to their Anti-European stances to politicize the European integration conflict.*
- *H2: The Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis: as a consequence of the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, Mainstream parties have downplayed the level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, enhancing the issues subsumed by the traditional Left-Right dimension to extinguish the European integration conflict.*

Figure 3.1. Party Types and Party Strategies on the EU Issue  
Entrepreneurship

		Protest	Mainstream
		Party Types	
Party Strategies	Increase	Protest Entrepreneurship Increase	Mainstream Entrepreneurship Increase
	Decrease	Protest Entrepreneurship Decrease	Mainstream Entrepreneurship Decrease

Consequently, we expect to find a higher degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship among the Protest parties and, conversely, to observe an extinguishing strategic effort on the part of Mainstream parties regarding this source of conflict. Nonetheless, we cannot aprioristically exclude other patterns involving the politicization\de-politicization of the European integration conflict. In Figure 3.1., we provide all the existing pattern combinations of the party types and party strategies pertaining to EU issues and we identify four potential patterns:

1. **Protest Entrepreneurship Increase:** In the upper-left quadrant of the figure, we have located the Protest Entrepreneurship Increase. This box contains the variant that describes our expectation concerning the Protest parties: *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis (H1)*. The *H1* posits that the Protest parties, belonging to the Radical left and right, have increased their level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship in order to reap electoral payoffs. Since the onset of the economic crisis, these parties, endowed with Anti-European positions, were expected to emphasize and polarize the EU issues.
  
2. **Protest Entrepreneurship Decrease:** In the lower-left quadrant, we have located the Protest Decreasing Entrepreneurship. This counter-intuitive pattern of mobilization implies a Protest party effort in decreasing their level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, which represents the main alternative hypothesis to our above-mentioned *H1*. We may find that Protest parties have tried to deflect EU issues, rather than accentuating the issues related to the Left-Right dimension. Thus, the exact location of the Protest parties is considered to be important in lending empirical evidence to *H1*.
  
3. **Mainstream Entrepreneurship Decrease:** In the lower-right quadrant, we have located the Mainstream Decreasing Entrepreneurship. This quadrant includes the pattern that is well suited to understand our prediction on the Mainstream parties: *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis (H2)*. *H2* expects these parties to minimize the issues related to the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of political contestation, while

boosting the pre-established patterns of competition, based on the Left-Right conflict. Thus, since the beginning of the economic crisis in Europe, *Pro-European Mainstream Parties*, affiliated to the well-rooted Western European party families, have probably decreased their level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship.

- 4. Mainstream Entrepreneurship Increase:** In the upper-right quadrant, we have located the Mainstream parties increasing their EU Issue Entrepreneurship. According to this potential pattern, the Mainstream parties could boost their EU Issue Entrepreneurship, attaching saliency to these issues and seeking to compete on the Pro-\Anti-European dimension of political conflict to obtain electoral benefits. If this pattern is substantiated over time, then we will have a null hypothesis, empirically disclaiming *H2*. The unexpected spread of Mainstream Pro-European entrepreneurs may shed light on the new dynamics of electoral competition in Western Europe, where a new policy dimension may reshape the mass alignments.

In this work, these patterns exhaust the gamut of our expected combinations. Even if the degree of entrepreneurship on EU issues is a continuous variable expressed in mathematical terms (see De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2015), we draw from this a more dichotomous scenario. In the second chapter, we have identified two fundamental existing party strategies on EU issues, merging party positions and issue emphasis, the Entrepreneurship Increase and Entrepreneurship Decrease. However, we acknowledge the inherent complexity of Issue Entrepreneurship and we will employ its

numerical content in the subsequent chapters. On the contrary, the dichotomy used regarding party types, Mainstream vs. Protest, appears to be unproblematic.

In our comparison, the aim is to locate the parties within one of the above quadrants to test our hypotheses. If we find a high concentration of cases in the *Protest Entrepreneurship Increase* and *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Decrease* quadrants, then H1 and H2 will be empirically supported. Alternatively, if we note a much higher dispersion of cases in the four quadrants, then we will obtain incoherent findings and our hypotheses will be null.

## **4. General Results in the Degree of Entrepreneurship**

### **4.1 The Establishment of the Pro-/Anti-European Dimension of Competition**

According to Anthony Downs (1957), the Left-Right dimension of political competition synthesized the major conflicting issues within the party systems. In his view, the political space was basically one-dimensional, determining the partisan alignments and constituting one of the main sources of political information and communications. This work aims at developing a convincing scale of party positions concerning European integration, establishing a mathematical representation of this dimension in Downsean terms (thus, characterized by a certain range of party positions) by means of exploring the current literature background. In fact, ordering the party positions on an imaginary new dimension of party contestation is an empirically and theoretically challenging operation, which has been successfully achieved in several overviews.

For example, Taggart (1998) dealt with the concept of Euro-scepticism, defining it as a comprehensive term that “*expresses the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration*” (Ibidem 1998, 366). This rough outline clearly rejected a binary notion of EU party positioning and, subsequently, Taggart and Szezerbiak (2002) developed a more nuanced approach of Euro-scepticism, dividing this concept into two main ideal types:

1. *Hard Euro-scepticism, which encompasses a principled opposition to the EU building and entails the questioning of the country's membership or, alternatively, it raises strong*

*disagreements over those values underlying the European project;*

2. *Soft Euro-scepticism, which incorporates a non-principled opposition towards European integration, implying a qualified opposition to the policies retained to be incompatible with national interests* (Taggart and Szezerbiak 2002, 7).

As well, Kopecky and Mudde (2002) drew a four-fold typology of party positioning in Europe, primarily distinguishing between the Eurosceptic parties and the Euro-reject ones. In their view, the Eurosceptic parties were mainly in favour of European integration, trusting the underlying ideas of the overall EU project and the deepening of inter-state cooperation, however, they expressed disagreement over the ways the EU was being implemented. Thus, these parties were placed among the Anti-European ones. On the contrary, the Euro-reject parties clearly adopted Anti-European stances, turning away from the fundamental principles inspiring the European construction. They also created another two categories: *Euro-enthusiast parties, which hold firm positive ideas towards the EU and its current development, supporting the acceleration of the integration process; and Euro-pragmatist parties, which do not support many of the fundamental ideas underlying the EU, but are satisfied with the current embodiment of the EU that matches their country's national interests* (Taggart and Kopecky 2002, 299-304).

Other findings (Ray 1999; Ray 2007, De Vries and Edwards 2009) have referred to a single dimension ranging from strong opposition to strong support of European integration. Even if this kind of scale may overlook some complexities of the contemporary party ideologies, this range of positions over European integration is more in line with the goals of this work. Thus, the party and voter set of opinions on the EU

are ordered within one single dimension (mathematically represented), whereas “actors located at one of the dimensions desire relatively ‘less’ European integration, and actors at the other end desire more” (Ray 2007, 13). This work also refers to Euroscepticism as per Taggart and Szezerbiak’s meaning, in indicating the less supportive parties in the furthering of integration. Moreover, we recurrently employ the above-mentioned Kopecky and Mudde’s (2002) four-fold typology to describe the nuanced attitudes of the party actors.

Thus, as was stated in the previous section, this Pro-/Anti-European dimension appears to have come into being and the parties are likely to have increasing incentives in linking the voters along this new conflict dimension. Parties’ efforts at minimizing their distance from the mean voter position on the EU issue dimension may be electorally rewarding and the party systems could be deeply affected by these voting-seeker strategies. Even if the voters have showed their ability to express structured and polarized opinions on the Pro-integration/Anti-integration continuum (Franklin and Van der Eijk 2004), parties are always aiming at reducing their information costs, organizing the electoral competition. Moreover, the EU issues may have been gradually more debated at the electoral level, assuming the status of relatively salient issues (Kriesi 2007).

## **4.2 Testing the EU Issue Entrepreneurship**

In the first part of the empirical analysis, this work uses the data provided by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) from 2006 to 2014 to identify the degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship and, consequently, to test *the Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis* and the *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*. This dataset has allowed for measuring the party positioning on this dimension of political

contestation, using questionnaires of party experts. On the one hand, the respondents were asked to assess the party position on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly opposed) to 7 (strongly in favour), that synthesized the “*overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration in general*”. On the other hand, they were asked to place the parties on a general Left-Right scale, ranging from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right).

The CHES is based on the experts’ evaluations, which are not necessarily linked to a specific electoral campaign and exploit a wide array of communication sources, going well beyond simple party manifestos (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011). According to Marks, Hooghe, Steenburgen and Bakker (2007), the expert data stands out for its flexibility, encompassing “*topics that do not surface in electoral manifestos*” (Ibidem 2007, 26). As a matter of fact, the experts rely on television debates, newspapers, roll-call votes and politicians’ speeches in order to capture the actual party stances, increasing the reliability and validity of the CHES rounds (Bakker, De Vries et al. 2015). Some investigations show the strong congruence between the expert evaluations and other sources, such as surveys conducted amongst voters and MPs, which cross-validate the CHES data (Hooghe, Bakker et al. 2010; Bakker, De Vries et al. 2015), warranting its usage in the empirical research. Furthermore, this source takes into account the numerous intraparty divisions that may occur within a party on a given issue, usually overridden by the party manifestos that seek to display the party internal unity. However, the CHES is not lacking in some deficiencies, such as the personal bias and a certain information asymmetry of the single expert, who assesses the party positions retroactively and, then, could be conditioned in evaluating successive political developments

(Steenburgen and Marks 2007; Marks, Hooghe, Steenburgen and Bakker 2007).

Nonetheless, we contend that in contemporary politics the party positions on the main polarizing issues cannot be simply inferred by the use of the party manifestos, and therefore, the CHES is well suited to cope with this drawback. On the contrary, the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), which is the other important source for studying the positioning of political parties, has the limitation of gathering the same information exclusively from the party manifestos, ruling out other potential and crucial founts of political information. Moreover, some scholars have recurrently cast doubts on the CMP ability to capture party positions by mainly focusing on issue saliency during the campaigns (Dinas and Gemensis 2010; Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011). It is worth noting that the Euro Manifesto Project would have the advantage of being synchronized with our electoral rounds (EES 2004: EES 2009: ESS 2014, see the next chapter), however, it measures issue salience by analysing the manifesto written in the context of EP elections. Thus, this data will inevitably inflate the European dimensions - even for parties that do not normally emphasize this.

This work hinges upon the classification developed by Ray (1999) for defining the party position on European integration. Indeed, by employing the above-mentioned scale provided by the CHES round on general integration, Ray has refined a qualitative scale, where each score range corresponds to a determined definition of the party stance on the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension (see table 2.1). Thus, we classify a party on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation by looking at its position on this seven-point scale, allowing us to empirically understand the overall attitude towards general European integration. As already maintained, we mainly refer to a single

dimension ranging from a strong opposition to a strong support of European integration (Ray 1999; Ray 2007, De Vries and Edwards 2009).

Table 4.1. Party Position on the General European Integration

<i>Range</i>	<i>Ray's Definition</i>
<i>1 to 1.5</i>	<i>Strongly Opposed</i>
<i>1.5 to 2.5</i>	<i>Opposed</i>
<i>2.5 to 3.5</i>	<i>Somewhat Opposed</i>
<i>3.5 to 4.5</i>	<i>Neutrality</i>
<i>4.5 to 5.5</i>	<i>Somewhat in Favour</i>
<i>5.5 to 6.5</i>	<i>In Favor</i>
<i>6.5 to 7</i>	<i>Strongly in Favour</i>

Source: Ray 1999

The *Pro-European* parties are those that exceed 4.5 on the 7-point scale, revealing favourable attitudes towards Europe. On the contrary, those parties that are located above the critical threshold of 3.5, are hereby dubbed as *Anti-European*, showing negative views regarding the authority transfer processes. We have singled out another more residual party category on EU issues, labelled as *Neutral* and ranges from 3.5 to 4.5. Many overviews have maintained the strengths of the party family location for determining the overall party stances on the EU (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002 Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002). Nonetheless, other studies have shown the explanatory power of the national cultures in determining party leanings towards European integration, which have differed from one country to another (Diez Medrano 2003: Kriesi 2007: Conti 2013). It is worth noting, that this work focuses on three rounds of party positions on EU issues (Chapel Hill Expert Survey from 2006 until 2014), only revealing party medium-term strategies. Consequently,

the aim is to observe the partisan cueing on EU issues during this span of time, by providing a snapshot of the current party debate on European integration.

This work combines the issue position on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension and the corresponding issue saliency for capturing the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, following the definition and methodological orientation developed by Hobolt and de Vries (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and de Vries 2015). These two scholars provided a mathematical formula to calculate issue entrepreneurship:  $(P_{eu} - MP_{eu}) * SP_{eu}$ .  $MP_{eu}$  represents the average position of the parties in the system on the European dimension, while  $P_{eu}$  indicates the single party stance on the same issue space and, last but not least,  $SP_{eu}$  stands for the saliency that  $P$  ascribes to European integration. We obtain the EU issue salience through the CHES dataset from 2006 until 2014, which asked the experts to evaluate the “*relative salience of European integration in the party’s public stance in 2014*” (CHES 2015) on a scale ranging from 0 (European integration is of no importance) to 10 (European integration is of great importance)<sup>20</sup>. Positive scores on this EU entrepreneurship index reveals the party favourable dispositions towards integration, while, a negative one mirrors the party Anti-European stances<sup>21</sup>. Our core interest is not in establishing the direction of EU entrepreneurship, positive or negative, but in seeking to ascertain the entity of the indexes in order to shed light on the emergence of a new dimension of political competition within the

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<sup>20</sup> In the 2006 and 2010 CHES rounds the scale ranged from 1 (European integration is of no importance) to 4 (European integration is of great importance). In order to synchronize the different scales, we adopted a normalization technique (feature scaling) to bring the values in range [0-1], then, we multiplied by 10 to have the same scale as the 2014 round.

<sup>21</sup> This work slightly refines their formula, by switching the position of  $P_{eu}$  with that of  $MP_{eu}$ , in order to obtain a positive score for the Europhile parties and a negative score for the Eurosceptics.

European party systems. Those parties that aim at politicizing the European integration issue will have a high score, exceeding the average score of EU issue entrepreneurship within the national party system and, thus, assuming EU issues ownership at national level. In this work, this type of strategy is defined as *Entrepreneurship Increase*. On the other hand, the parties that seek to deflect the EU related issues would record a lower score, falling into the EU issue extinguisher cluster. This strategy is labelled here as *Entrepreneurship Decrease*. In order to assess the alleged *Decrease/Increase* strategy we establish as a threshold the index achieved by the party during the pre-crisis period (2006). If the final post-crisis (2014) score positively exceeds at least of one unit, the level obtained by party, prior the crisis outbreak, we may qualify a partisan strategy of Increasing Entrepreneurship. While, on the contrary, if a party score has diminished by one unit or remained stagnant, we will have a decreasing entrepreneurship. These mathematical results reflect the degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship of each party within the national system, establishing a solid ground to identify the strategies of the Mainstream and Protest parties and to test *Hypothesis 1* and *Hypothesis 2*.

## **4.2 Party Selection Criteria**

This chapter provides an extensive mapping of the EU Issue Entrepreneurship in Western Europe to test *H1 (the Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis)* and *H2 (the Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis)*. The analysis also entails an overview concerning the party positions on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of political contestation. In the first paragraph, we report the findings on the degree of EU issue entrepreneurship at the aggregate level.

These aggregate results gather the average levels of entrepreneurship for each of the two main party types under scrutiny - the *Mainstream Party* and the *Protest Party*. In fact, to verify the alleged effects of the Euro crisis on the party type strategies, we should identify contingent variations in their entrepreneurship indexes over a period of time. Many party positions or strategies could be transient, fluctuating over time and being affected by some non-permanent factors or strong catalysts, such as the Euro crisis. Consequently, an investigation pertaining to the entrepreneurship seems to be worthwhile, accounting for the hypothetical discrepancies within the two broader party types (Mainstream and Protest) and allowing for formulating new generalizations. Our selection of cases includes: Germany, France, Italy, United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Greece, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Austria

The second part of this chapter aims at outlining the different patterns of EU Issue Entrepreneurship at the national level. This empirical analysis is consistent with our set of assumptions established in Chapter 2 regarding the notion of politicization. We have defined politicization as a *process of transformation of a previous non-political and non-contentious issue into a matter of public contestation, which is mainly mobilized by the political parties in the electoral arena, becoming a notable driving force for voter preferences at the domestic level*. In this phase of the work, the analysis focuses on the subtleties of each party system under study, highlighting the dynamics of the party agency on EU issues. By individuating the levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship at the national level, we can reconstruct the processes of party elite positioning or repositioning (Carmines and Stimson 1986), which may have unleashed the European integration conflict.

Before tackling our hypotheses, we have defined the criteria to delimit the selection of parties in the current study. Indeed, this work deals with a large number of party systems, specifying information on the strategies of many individual parties. Each of these party systems has undergone its relative degree of instability and electoral volatility in the last decade (see Mair 2011; Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2015) and, therefore, it is necessary to be a little parsimonious in order to avoid becoming embroiled in a counter-productive intricacy. Whether to consider a party relevant is a vexing question in political science. The electoral strength is usually chosen to capture the number of relevant parties in a given party system. Nonetheless, as Giovanni Sartori (1976) rightly pointed out, establishing a cut-off threshold for enumerating the relevant parties “*is not a solution at all*” (Ibidem 1976, 121). Actually, the electoral size of a party does not necessarily explain its systemic role during a determined span of time. In spite of their electoral weakness, many party actors have recurrently performed a pivotal role in the cabinet formation, acquiring a considerable veto power. Sartori (1976) has referred to the *coalition potential* of parties as one of the operational requirements for counting the number of relevant parties. Many Western European political landscapes have been characterized by the stable presence of small parties with a strong coalition bargaining power, especially within multiparty systems with proportional rules and low electoral thresholds, exploiting their ideological consonance with the major parties in order to acquire governmental positions. Unquestionably, many minor parties, such as the German Free Democratic Party (FDP) or Greens (Grüne), the Danish Radical Liberals (RV), the Dutch Democrats 66 (D66) or Christian Union (CU), the Swedish Centre (C) or Christian Democrats (KD), have turned out to be coalition partners.

However, according to Sartori (1976), a second subsidiary criterion for assessing the party relevance may come into play - the *blackmail potential*. This condition essentially involves the veto power that occurs in the parliamentary arena on the part of the opposition-oriented parties, which affect the direction of the political competition by adopting polarized stances. The anti-system parties, unable to take a government office and located at the extreme poles of the Left\Right dimension, have certainly epitomized this pattern. Nowadays, after the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Communist party family, the notion of the anti-system party appears to be obsolete. In the previous chapter, we have already rejected the recourse to the concept of an anti-system party, which openly contested democratic principles. On the contrary, we have employed the *Protest party* type that is currently questioning the *Mainstream consensus* (i.e. regarding European integration or immigration) by trying to break the *cartel* of governing parties, but formally accepting the democratic rules. Many of these party actors have been persistently marginalized from holding government offices by their Mainstream rivals. Nevertheless, the Protest parties have conveyed a certain number of polarized issues within their respective party systems, potentially altering the direction of the political competition and, thus, conditioning the agenda formation.

While identifying the *coalition potential* is not at all problematic (exclusively revolving around the cabinet participation of a single party), operationalizing the second criterion represents a more complex task. According to Sartori himself (1976), the latter operational requirement was fundamentally associated with the status of the anti-system party. We should, therefore, adjust the conditions for capturing the blackmail potential of the ever-evolving realities of the Protest parties, completely different from the anti-system party

type. In the aftermath of the Euro crisis, many Protest parties were involved in cabinet support, such as the Danish People's Party (DF) or Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) and other parties have become minor coalition partners in some executives, such as the Finns Party (PS) or the Portuguese Left Bloc (BE). Moreover, the Greek Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) resulted in being the first electoral party in the Greek general elections of 2015, obtaining 36.3% of the valid votes and, consequently, forming and leading the new cabinet. Thus, after the outburst of the Euro crisis, many Protest parties have experienced major electoral breakthroughs, strongly increasing their blackmail potential in the contemporary Western European party systems. These electoral trends have certainly mirrored a remarkable realignment across the domestic electorates under study, resulting in scholars being able to determine the number of the effective Protest parties. On the contrary, the pre-crisis phase has raised more difficulties in individuating the relevant Protest parties. In fact, at that stage, these parties were already channelling some effective Anti-Cartel or Anti-Mainstream opposition, influencing the policy agenda. Although, their electoral share of votes remained substantially lower compared to their post-crisis electoral results.

Establishing an electoral threshold seems to be a must in singling out the exact number of relevant parties. In order to minimize the effects of the electoral systems, which substantially vary from one country to another, we will include all the Protest parties, despite their governmental status, which have polled more than 3% of the electoral votes. Unquestionably, *“there is the difficulty of establishing a threshold, since any cut-off point is inevitably arbitrary.”* (Bartolini and Mair 1990, 128). Indeed, the above-mentioned threshold does not necessarily identify the veto power of parties at the government\parliamentary level, but it can indicate an effective voice

of the Protest parties within society. In spite of its approximation, we retain that the chosen yardstick can be an indication of the societal presence of the Protest parties in the pre-crisis stage, revealing their systemic impact at the national level. Some cases will be excluded, considering that neither the CHES nor the EES rounds have covered the entirety of parties that meet the set-up criteria. Since we employ three rounds of the European Election Studies for testing the potential transformations of the party preferences in Western Europe (see chapter 10), the established electoral threshold is extrapolated from the European Elections (2004, 2009 and 2014). By doing so, the timing of the elections is made uniform, rendering our cases more comparable. However, this work is not investigating the formation of a transnational party system, revolving around the role of the EP as the natural outlet for the European integration conflict. For many decades, the European Elections have been regarded as “second order elections” (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Schmitt 2005), reflecting the prominence of domestic politics rather than expressing the saliency of EU issues. This work does not seek to refine this notion, as it considers the nation state as the cornerstone for analysing the rise of EU issue voting, which heavily depends on the mobilization efforts of the national political parties.

In the 2006 empirical round, the Mainstream parties individuated are the following: **Germany** - Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU), Alliance 90\Greens (the Greens), Free Democratic Party (FDP); **United Kingdom** - Conservative Party, Labour Party, Liberal-Democrats, Scottish National Party (SNP); **Italy** - Forward Italy (FI), Left Democrats (DS), National Alliance (AN), Democracy and Freedom – the Daisy (DL), Union of the Centre (UDC); **France** - Socialist Party (PS), Union for a Popular Movement

(UMP), Union for French Democracy (UDF), Greens; **Netherlands** - People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Labour Party (PvdA), Democrats 66 (D66), GreenLeft (GL), Christian Union (CU); **Austria** - Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), Greens –Green Alternative; **Denmark** - Social Democrats (A), Liberals (V), Conservative People's Party (C), Danish Social Liberal Party (B); **Finland** - Centre Party (Kesk), Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), National Coalition Party (Kok.), Green League (Vihr.), Swedish People's Party of Finland (RKP), Christian Democrats of Finland (KD); **Greece** - New Democracy (ND); Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK); **Spain** - Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), People's Party (PP), Convergence and Union (CiU), National Basque Party (PNV), Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG); **Sweden** - Swedish Social Democratic Party (S), Moderate Party (M), Centre Party (C), Green Party (MP), Christian Democrats (KD); **Portugal** - Socialist Party (PS), Social Democratic Party (PPD-PSD), People's Party (CDS-PP).

Whereas the Protest parties are: **Germany** - Left (LINKE); **United Kingdom** - United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP); **Italy** - Northern League (LN), the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC); **France** - National Front (FN), Movement for France (MPF), French Communist Party (PCF); **Netherlands** - Socialist Party (SP); **Austria** – Hans-Peter Martin's List (MARTIN), Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ); **Denmark** - June Movement (J), People's Movement against EU (N), Red-Green Alliance, Danish People's Party (DPP); **Finland** - Left Alliance (Vas.); **Greece** – Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), Communist Party of Greece (KKE), Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS); **Spain** - United Left (IU); **Sweden** - June List (June),

Left Party (V); **Portugal** - Left Bloc (BE), Democratic Unitarian Coalition (CDU).

On the other hand, in the 2010 empirical round, the Mainstream parties include: **Germany** - Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU), Alliance 90\Greens (Greens), Free Democratic Party (FDP); **United Kingdom** - Conservative Party, Labour Party; Liberal-Democrats, Scottish National Party (SNP); **Italy** - People of Freedom (PDL), Democratic Party (PD), Italy of Values (IDV), Union of the Centre (UDC); **France**- Socialist Party (PS), Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), Democratic Movement (MoDem), Europe Ecology- the Greens (EELV), New Centre (NC); **Netherlands**- People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Labour Party (PvdA), Democrats 66 (D66), GreenLeft (GL), Christian Union (CU), Reformed Political Party (SGP); **Austria**- Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), Greens –Green Alternative; **Denmark** - Social Democrats (A), Liberals (V), Conservative People's Party (C), Danish Social Liberal Party (B), Red-Green Alliance; **Finland** - Centre Party (Kesk), Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), National Coalition Party (Kok.), Green League (Vihr.), Swedish People's Party of Finland (RKP), Christian Democrats of Finland (KD); **Greece** - New Democracy (ND), Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), Ecologist Greens (OP); **Spain** - Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), People's Party (PP), Convergence and Union (CiU), National Basque Party (PNV), Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG); **Sweden** - Swedish Social Democratic Party (S), Moderate Party (M), Centre Party (C), Green Party (MP), Liberal People's (FP), Christian Democrats (KD), Pirate

(PP); **Portugal** - Socialist Party (PS), Social Democratic Party (PPD-PSD), People's Party (CDS-PP).

While the Protest parties encompass: **Germany** - Left (LINKE); **United Kingdom** - United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP); **Italy** - Northern League (LN), Communist Refoundation Party (PRC), Left Ecology and Freedom (SEL); **France** - National Front (FN); Movement for France (MPF); French Communist Party (PCF); **Netherlands** - Socialist Party (SP), Party for Freedom (PVV), Party for the Animals (PvdD); **Austria** – Hans-Peter Martin's List (MARTIN), Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ); **Denmark** - June Movement (J), People's Movement against EU (N), Red-Green Alliance, Danish People's Party (DPP); **Finland** - Left Alliance (Vas.); **Greece** – Coalition of the Radical Left – Unitary Social Front (SYRIZA); Communist Party of Greece (KKE), Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS); **Spain** - United Left (IU); **Sweden** - June List (June), Left Party (V); **Portugal** - Left Bloc (BE), Democratic Unitarian Coalition (CDU).

Finally, in the 2014 empirical step, the Mainstream parties are: **Germany** - Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU), Alliance 90\Greens (Greens), Free Democratic Party (FDP); **United Kingdom** - Conservative Party, Labour Party; Liberal-Democrats, Green Party (Greens); Scottish National Party (SNP); **Italy** – Forward Italy (FI), Democratic Party (PD), New Centre-Right (NCD) Union of the Centre (UDC); **France**- Socialist Party (PS), Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), Democratic Movement (MoDem), Europe Ecology- the Greens (EELV), New Centre (NC); Radical Party of the Left (PRG), Radical Party, Centrist Alliance (AC); **Netherlands**- People's Party for Freedom and Democracy

(VVD), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Labour Party (PvdA), Democrats 66 (D66), GreenLeft (GL), Christian Union (CU), Reformed Political Party (SGP); **Austria**- Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), Greens –Green Alternative; The New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS); **Denmark** - Social Democrats (A), Liberals (V), Conservative People's Party (C), Danish Social Liberal Party (B), Red-Green Alliance; **Finland** - Centre Party (Kesk), Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), National Coalition Party (Kok.), Green League (Vihr.), Swedish People's Party of Finland (RKP), Christian Democrats of Finland (KD); **Greece** - New Democracy (ND), Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), The River (Potami); **Spain** - Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), People's Party (PP), Convergence and Union (CiU), National Basque Party (PNV), Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG); Ciudadanos (CS), Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD); **Sweden** - Swedish Social Democratic Party (S), Moderate Party (M), Centre Party (C), Green Party (MP), Liberal People's (FP), Christian Democrats (KD), Feminist Initiative (FI); **Portugal** - Socialist Party (PS), Social Democratic Party (PPD-PSD), People's Party (CDS-PP).

On the contrary, the Protest parties selected are: **Germany** - Left (LINKE), Alternative for Germany (AFD); **United Kingdom** - United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP); **Italy** - Northern League (LN), Five Star Movement (M5S), Left Ecology and Freedom (SEL), Brothers of Italy (FDI); **France** - National Front (FN); Movement for France (MPF); Left Party (PG), French Communist Party (PCF); **Netherlands** - Socialist Party (SP), Party for Freedom (PVV), Party for the Animals (PvdD); **Austria** – Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ); **Denmark** - People's Movement against EU (N), Red-Green Alliance, Danish People's Party (DPP); **Finland** - Left Alliance (Vas.), Finns

Party (PS); **Greece** – Coalition of the Radical Left – Unitary Social Front (SYRIZA); Communist Party of Greece (KKE), Golden Dawn, The Independent Greeks (ANEL); **Spain** - United Left (IU), Podemos **Sweden** - Left Party (V), Swedish Democrats (SD); **Portugal** - Left Bloc (BE), Democratic Unitarian Coalition (CDU).

### 4.3 EU Issue Entrepreneurship: Aggregate Findings

This paragraph addresses the aggregate findings on the phenomenon under study - EU issue entrepreneurship. On the one hand, our first hypothesis expects that the Protest parties, after the beginning of the Great Recession, have strategically increased the emphasis on EU issues to reap electoral payoffs. On the other hand, the second hypothesis foresees that, in spite of the Recession, the Mainstream parties have tactically downplayed the impact of EU issues to dampen the electoral success of their opponents. The Great Recession and its management by the European institutions may have opened up a window of opportunity for parties' entrepreneurial activities. This first empirical step attempts to examine the strategic efforts of the two main party types pertaining to EU issues. This empirical test has been done by employing Hobolt and de Vries's; (2015) index of entrepreneurship:  $(P_{eu} - MP_{eu}) * SP_{eu}$ , which explain the evolving trends in the electoral supply on European integration related issues. This section of the work does not primarily seek to assess the direction of this entrepreneurship, whether a party locates itself on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, but aims at understanding the magnitude of the partisan strategic efforts on this alternative issue dimensionality. Indeed, our aggregate figures simply report the strength of the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, without specifying the

party positions, which are extensively analysed in the subsequent paragraphs on the national party systems. In these aggregate findings, we provide the average values of the EU Issue Entrepreneurship by calculating the simple arithmetic mean for each party type. Hence, the subsequent figures are not weighted on party electoral strength, which could negatively sway the meaning of the results, reflecting the electoral successes rather than partisan strategic commitments to the EU issues.

Figure 4.1 on party types indicates a sustained growth in the degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship among the Protest parties, lending a moderate empirical support to the *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis* (H1) at the aggregate level. Indeed, the level of the aggregate index for this party cluster has increased, rising from 13.8 to 16.3. However, this bloc of parties had already developed a high level of EU issue entrepreneurship during the pre-crisis period, revealing stronger indexes than Mainstream parties. It is worth noting that many of the strategic incentives involving the mobilization of EU issues were probably maturing before the economic upheavals that have shaken the continent. This is consistent with many theoretical overviews, which heralded the switch from the permissive consensus of public opinion to a constraining dissent on European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009), paving the way for the politicization of this new conflict.

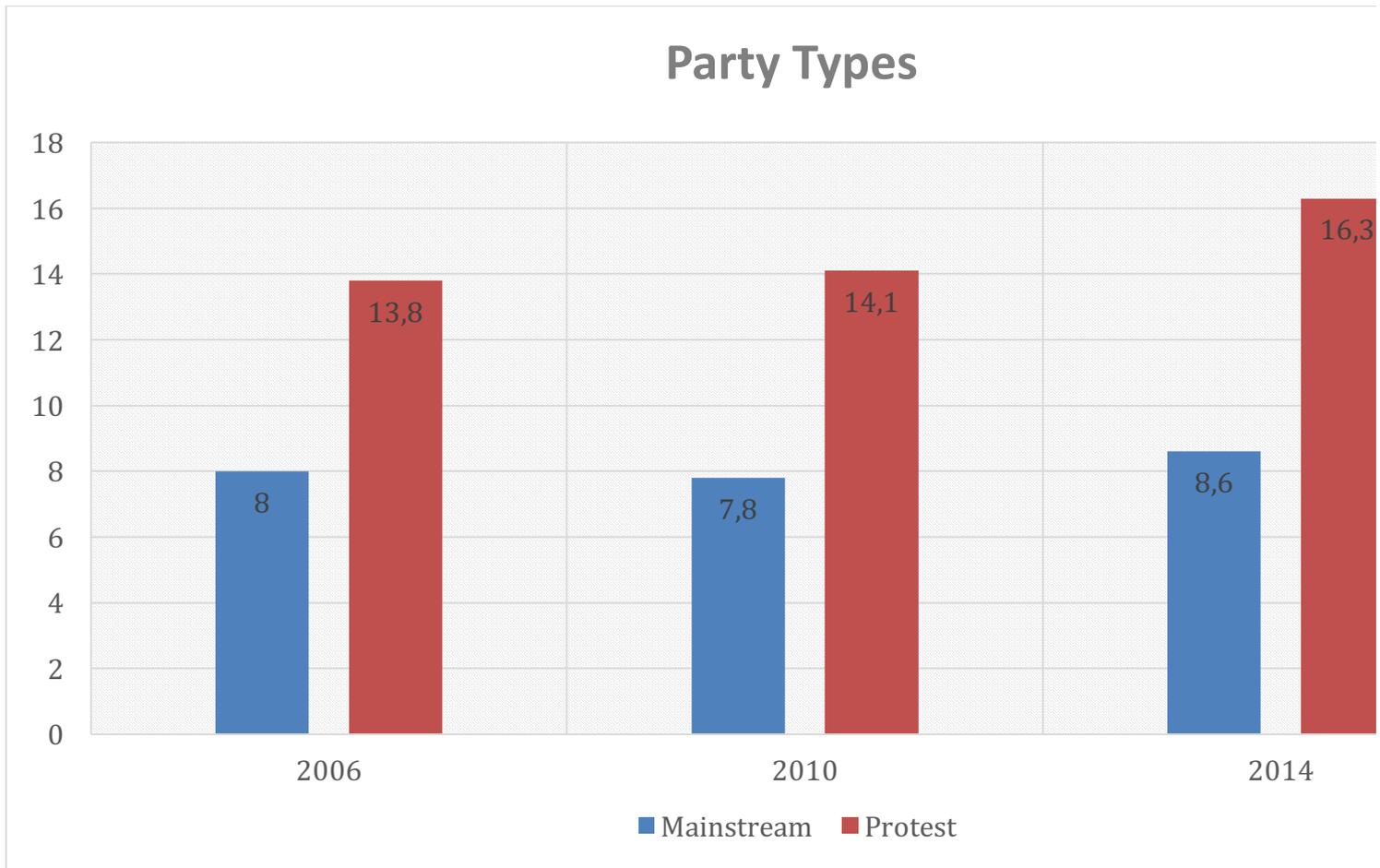
Hence, even before the beginning of the Great Recession, Protest parties had already identified the electoral potential inherent in EU issues. These political actors have seemed to be increasingly aware that the latter issues could produce an alternative dimensionality of political contestation in Rikerian terms (Riker 1982; 1986; 1996), thus, unsettling the Mainstream parties' electoral dominion. These

losing parties within the dominant issue dimension - the Left\Right - have attempted to electorally succeed by undermining the long-lasting patterns of political competition. By adopting clearer and more salient positions on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of political conflict, they have tried to weaken such alignments based on Left-Right divisions. The Euro Crisis has probably hastened this set of strategic incentives, leading the Protest parties to further modify their electoral supply by emphasizing and polarizing the EU issues. As a matter of fact, their degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship has heightened, perhaps matching the voter orientations on this latent issue dimension. The Anti-European parties have significantly flourished across Western Europe, becoming more credible electoral outlets for millions of European voters.

Conversely, the Mainstream indexes of EU Issue Entrepreneurship have remained quite stable, without undergoing any quantitative leap over time. In spite of the increasing media coverage on the EU management of the crisis (Hobolt and Tilley 2014), Mainstream parties have clearly resisted the politicization of the European integration issues, seeking to maintain the pre-existing system of conflicts. This aggregate data empirically corroborates the *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis* (H2). Since the Mainstream *parties* have persistently been committed to *dampening the saliency of the EU issues* in the national political debate, they have undertaken Entrepreneurship Decrease strategy. Indeed, at the aggregate level, these party actors have intentionally deflected the European integration conflict by decreasing the saliency of the EU issues. This strategy seems to imply an activity of issue blurring (Rovny 2012; 2013; 2015), which has conveyed to the electorate unclear electoral hints to hinder the emergence of the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation. The above-mentioned findings confirm the de-

politicization approach that this party type has overtly pursued (Börzel and Risse 2018), which may have jeopardized the impact of EU issue voting at the domestic level.

Figure 4.1. Average levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship obtained for Mainstream and Protest parties between 2006 and 2014.



Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Baker et al. 2015)

In short, these aggregate results do not contradict our first set of hypotheses (*H1* and *H2*), empirically sustaining a dichotomous world

pertaining to the party type entrepreneurial activities, polarized between Entrepreneurship Decrease and Entrepreneurship Increase. The Anti-European Protest parties have tactically set themselves apart from their mainstream competitors by adopting more extreme Eurosceptic stances and by boosting the emphasis on EU issues. One of their policy targets has certainly been the reshuffling of the political contestation direction by introducing the Pro-/Anti-European dimension. Therefore, these parties have unambiguously pursued the politicization of the European integration conflict by becoming EU issue entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, the figures have also showed that the rising importance of the EU issues within the Protest parties' platforms substantially pre-dated the outbreak of the Euro Crisis. Apparently, the Great Recession did not trigger this process of issue evolution but, instead, accelerated its political development increasing the incentives for the Anti-European entrepreneurs. On the contrary, the Mainstream parties have sought to deliberately downplay the European integration conflict by blurring the clarity of the inherent issues. Their levels of EU issue entrepreneurship have been fairly stable compared to the pre-crisis ones, which were already lower compared to their counterparts' indexes. This entrepreneurial resiliency indicates a certain degree of ideological collusion among these parties. Arguably, Mainstream parties have not lacked in a Pro-European consensus in the post-crisis era, without changing their stands on this ideological terrain. However, this should be the subject of further empirical enquiries. In fact, the level of ideological collusion among parties cannot be assessed at the aggregate level, but requires more comprehensive analyses of the national party systems. Meanwhile, the current findings demonstrate mainstream strategic attempts to maintain the preceding system of conflicts, which have been largely based on Left-Right divisions.

A thorough examination of the cumulative indexes allows us to formulate the following general statements on EU Issue Entrepreneurship:

- Proposition 1: *The euro crisis has not set in motion a deep-seated process of issue evolution on the European integration conflict but it has plausibly opened up more windows of opportunity for the Protest parties to increase their level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship and for Mainstream parties to decrease of EU Issue Entrepreneurship.*
- Proposition 2: *since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, if a party falls into the Anti-European Protest Party type, all things being equal, it is more likely to increase its level of EU issue entrepreneurship. In general, this kind of party adopt this strategy by strengthening its polarized stances on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, distancing itself from the mean position of the party system, and by attaching more saliency to EU issues.*
- Proposition 3: *If a party belongs to the Pro-European Mainstream Party type, all things being equal, it is more likely to extinguish the European integration conflict. Typically, this party type achieves this tactic by blurring its position on the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension, assuming a position fairly close to that of the average within the party system, and by deflecting the saliency of the EU issues.*

This aggregate analysis raises a few doubts on these general patterns regarding these party types and the strategic polarization between Entrepreneurship Increase and Entrepreneurship Decrease in Western Europe. Nonetheless, many questions still remain unanswered - Has

the degree of EU Entrepreneurship been homogenous in Western Europe or have some notable national-wide differences emerged within each of the national party systems? Has the national culture been a powerful driving force in determining the level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship? The next empirical round aims at clarifying these unresolved matters by looking at the variations in EU issue entrepreneurship occurring within the different Western European party systems.

#### **4.4 National Variations in EU Issue Entrepreneurship**

As has been clearly pointed out in the previous paragraphs, one of the chief goals of this work is to identify the general trends in Western European electoral supply, through examining the strategies undertaken by parties on EU issues. The first empirical stage of this work has provided a meaningful support to the *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis* and *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*, enabling us to formulate some theoretical generalizations. The premise is that the Euro Crisis may have prompted some fluctuations in the overall levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, transforming the partisan cues for voters and reshaping the electoral preferences. Thus, establishing theoretical generalizations were an inescapable empirical step of this overview. Nonetheless, it is impossible to ignore the potential consequences of the Great Recession occurring at the domestic level, which could result in national differentiated levels of European integration politicization. In fact, whether or not this politicization has actually taken place is also a matter regarding its configuration in the different party systems. In some countries, the party actors may have successfully resisted the

politicization of EU issues or they have not been able to find a big enough window of opportunity to set underway this new source of political contestation. On the other hand, in other countries, party attempts to reduce the magnitude of the EU issues may have proved to be worthless, while the EU Issue Entrepreneurs have plausibly succeeded in politicizing this conflict, exploiting the favourable conditions opened up by the crisis. Therefore, by looking at the eventual national-wide deviations from the outlined general patterns (see *H1* and *H2*), the accuracy of our findings may be increased, providing stronger insights into EU Issue Entrepreneurship evolution in Western Europe. Indeed, the country level cultures may have clearly influenced the reactions of the party actors to the Euro Crisis and its management on the part of the EU institutions, spurring the emergence of a new electoral supply.

According to the general expectations of this work, the different party types have adopted contrasting efforts in their politicization/de-politicization strategies on European integration related issues. Our hypotheses foresee the contrasting efforts of the different party types in the politicization/de-politicization strategies on EU issues. Switching this analysis from the aggregate level to the national level does not change the essential content of these general hypotheses. However, some theoretical adjustments are required to explain the outcomes of the Euro Crisis at the national level. Hence, the following patterns have been devised to empirically capture the dynamics of European integration politicization within the national party systems:

- 1. Protest-based Entrepreneurship:* according to this scenario, the Great Recession has resulted in the Protest Anti-European parties enhancing their entrepreneurial activities, attempting to alter the foundations of electoral contestation. Conversely,

Mainstream Pro-European parties have been committed to extinguishing this issue dimensionality, trying to stabilize the pre-existing configuration of political competition. This strategic polarization lends empirical support to our core expectations outlined in the *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis* and *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*. In fact, Protest parties, which are located at the extreme poles of the Left-Right continuum in the respective party systems, carry out the role of EU Issue Entrepreneurs. Instead, Mainstream parties, which are placed in the more centrist positions along the ideological divide, decreased the EU Issue Entrepreneurship. This scenario explains the political extremism factor in triggering the growth of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, while demonstrating the considerable impact of ideological centrism in lessening the overall politicization of this issue dimension. It is worth noting that this dynamic seems to unleash only a partial level of European integration politicization in the party system, whereas the partisan opposing strategies may have reduced the impact of EU issue voting.

2. ***Systemic Entrepreneurship***: in this scenario, the Euro Crisis has been a catalyst in boosting European Integration politicization, bringing about a notable shift in both party type strategies. In fact, the increasing Entrepreneurship appears to be more evenly distributed along the whole political spectrum, also revealing a sharp expansion at the ideological centre. Mainstream Pro-European parties tend to behave as authentic Entrepreneurs rather than seeking to overshadow the EU issue dimensionality. This pattern clearly contradicts the *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*, only supporting the

*Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis.* Nonetheless, this systemic entrepreneurship is likely to be more conducive for the establishment of the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of political contestation. As a matter of fact, whereas most parties have engaged in an activity of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, this source of political conflict should result in being more strongly politicized in the public debate. Therefore, this salient contrast between Pro-European and Anti-European party actors may favour the transformation of the EU issues into a matter of political contestation at the electoral level, conditioning voting preferences.

3. ***Limited Entrepreneurship:*** in some party systems, the crisis has not prompted any notable impact on the EU Issue Entrepreneurship magnitude, which has remained markedly weak. Protest parties have probably not encountered strong windows of opportunity to intensify their electoral cues on European integration, without being EU Issue Entrepreneurs. On the contrary, Mainstream parties may have effectively hampered the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, by deflecting the EU issues and blurring their stances on this potential conflict. This pattern evidently substantiates our assumptions on the Mainstream party strategies, while it rejects the predicted entrepreneurial activity undertaken by the Protest parties. Indeed, in this scenario, party actors have not acted as EU politicization agents, limiting their efforts in creating this dimension of political conflict. Thus, Mainstream parties, in spite of the transformative potential brought about by the economic downturn, have successfully achieved the depoliticization strategy of the European integration conflict, which has only slightly swayed the electoral alignments.

4. *Pre-existing Entrepreneurship*: this last scenario disputes the explanatory power of the Euro crisis in generating another dimension of electoral competition, without falsifying the overall politicization thesis of the European integration conflict. Indeed, in these party systems, many party actors had enhanced their Entrepreneurship on this issue dimension in the pre-crisis era. Even in the electoral arena, the party preferences were somehow steered by the voter orientations on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality. The windows of opportunity for politicizing this conflict have been opened up by other factors, probably entrenched within the national culture. The present dynamic does not necessarily question the general patterns on the entrepreneurship strategies adopted by the Mainstream and Protest parties, as seen in our hypotheses. However, this scenario disproves the catalyst effects displayed by the Euro Crisis, disclaiming the validity of our expectations.

These four scenarios draw attention to the existing differences in the levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship occurring at the national level, taking into account the diverse impact of the Euro Crisis. This enquiry represents one of the foundations for explaining the elite positioning/re-positioning (Carmines and Stimson 1986; 1989) on European integration related issues, which may have spurred substantial electoral re-alignments. The first scenario, the *Protest-based Entrepreneurship*, is more in line with our first set of hypotheses, but it does not necessarily produce a more intense degree of politicization. Actually, this kind of pattern resembles the punctuated politicization drawn up by Grande and Kriesi (2016) that may limit the degree of EU issue voting. The second scenario, the

*Systemic Entrepreneurship*, although contradicting the alleged entrepreneurial actions of mainstream parties, probably unleashes a more deep-seated politicization process. The third scenario, the *Limited Entrepreneurship*, fundamentally falsifies the politicization of the European integration conflict by identifying the lack of the Protest party strategic agency. The last scenario, the *Pre-existing Entrepreneurship*, contests the Euro crisis impact, without necessarily disqualifying the overall politicization hypothesis.

We maintain that this theoretical background may establish the basis for testing our hypotheses, shedding light on the national processes in the EU Issue Entrepreneurship sparked off by the Euro Crisis. In the following chapters, four different countries – France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom - will be investigated. In this selection, the creditor\debtor dichotomy simply vanishes and the most important criterion is the country size. As the size of these countries is relatively homogenous, we are able to compare this selection of cases, although there are profound discrepancies among these national contexts and cultures. Furthermore, this cluster represents a sample of 272 million inhabitants, accounting for a large percentage of the European population. In each of these cases, we are going to examine the relevant parties, providing its evolving trends in the EU Issue Entrepreneurship. In fact, we believe the national culture has also been a notable driving force in affecting party stances and tactics on European integration (Diez Medrano 2003; Kriesi 2007). In order to test the validity of our general propositions, we seek to assess if the different patterns in the national levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship have actually taken place by observing the variations in the partisan cues on this issue dimension.

We resort once again to the above-mentioned system, establishing as a threshold the score recorded by the party prior to the Euro Crisis

(2006). If the final post-crisis (2014) index positively outweighs, by at least one unit, the score realized by the party in 2006, we may identify a partisan strategy of Increasing Entrepreneurship. While, on the contrary, if a party index has reduced by one unit or remained stable, we will have a Decreasing Entrepreneurship

By introducing a comparative analysis, we limit the number of parties under study, excluding some political formations scrutinized in the aggregate part. In order to provide more nuanced observations, we rule out some parties that have played a minor and transitory role, although they held some blackmail potential in their respective party systems. This choice prevents us from dealing with too many party cases, allowing us to outline a more effective comparison. The parties selected are: **Germany** - Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU), Alliance 90\Greens (Greens), Free Democratic Party (FDP), Alternative For Germany (AFD); Left party (PDS/Linke); **United Kingdom** - Conservative Party, Labour Party; Liberal-Democrats, Scottish National Party (SNP), the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP); **Italy** – Northern League (LN), Five Star Movement (M5S); Communist Refoundation (RC), Left, Ecology and Freedom (SEL), National Alliance (AN), Brothers of Italy (FDI), Forward Italy (FI), People’s Freedom Party (PDL), Left Democrats (DS), Freedom and Democracy – the Daisy – (DL), Democratic Party (PD), New Centre-Right (NCD) Union of the Centre (UDC); **France**- Socialist Party (PS), Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), Democratic Movement (MoDem), Europe Ecology- the Greens (EELV), Left Party (PG), French Communist Party (PCF), National Front (FN).





## **5. Europe to the Centre Stage: Protest-Based Entrepreneurship in France**

The French party system has plainly embodied a pattern of *Protest-based Entrepreneurship*, whereas political extremism has explained the growth in EU Issue Entrepreneurship, confirming one of the predominant streams in political science literature (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson De Vries and Edwards 2009; De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2015, which has persistently assessed the strategic efforts of the Protest parties. Moreover, the current dynamic in the French electoral supply seems to be consistent with our set of outlined hypotheses pertaining to the two different party types, signalling the contrasting politicization strategies on the part of the Mainstream and Protest parties.

### **5.1 The National Front**

As might be expected, the FN has turned out to be the chief EU Issue Entrepreneur at the national level, gradually surpassing the other political actors. This party has often waged campaigns against the EU, perceived as an obstacle for the French national community. The FN has consistently prioritized the interests of the native French population, identified as its core electoral constituency, pitting it against the foreign population. As a result, the National Front's Anti-European stances have arisen from its nativist appeals, which have hinged on ethno-centric and nationalist views. In its party platform, the European Union has been mainly defined as a instrument jeopardizing state sovereignty, opening up the borders and reducing cultural homogeneity (Grunberg 2008; Reungoat 2010). Since the 1990s, some political events have led to the FN's instinctive Anti-

Europeanism, coming to the surface of public contention. In fact, two national referenda were held to ratify the ever-increasing integration – the 1992 Maastricht Treaty Referendum and 2005 European Constitution Referendum. Therefore, the party had several opportunities to express its ideological distance from the mainstream actors by cueing the voters on Anti-European issues.

In spite of its recurrent efforts to crusade against the EU institutions, the FN apparently did not gain any substantial electoral payoff from these negative campaigns. According to Gérard Gruber (2008), who referred to the 2002 Presidential elections, the “*National Front is primarily perceived by voters as a xenophobic party that holds values contrary to the value of the republic, not as an Anti-European party. In the second ballot of presidential elections, only those voters who are also xenophobic voted for Le Pen. The FN is too widely perceived as an extreme-right party to be in a position to represent the full spectrum of Eurosceptic sentiment in the second ballot*” (Ibidem 2008, 52). In fact, under the leadership of its founder, Jean Marie Le Pen (1979-2011), the FN had stood out as an Anti-Immigration single-issue party (Meguid 2008), predominantly drawing its electoral support from the popular scepticism on migration policies (Van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2000, Rydgren 2008; Goodliffe 2015). Therefore, though its Anti-European position remained steady (see table 4.1), the party did not effectively erode the primacy of the Left-Right dimension of competition, which remained the main source of political division in France.

We argue that the Euro crisis actually brought about a renewal in the FN’s attempts in priming EU issues in the political debate, seeking to produce sizeable electoral realignments along the Pro-\Anti-European dimension of contestation. The EU management of the economic recession has probably increased the opportunities for structuring the

national political discourse on EU issues. French voters have expressed misgivings and uncertainties towards the European institutions' capabilities of handling the crisis outcomes, which have prompted a rising rate of popular Euro-scepticism (Vassallo 2012; Goodliffe 2015). Moreover, the inter-governmental bodies have limited national government discretion in achieving economic policies, imposing austerity measures (Howarth and Schild 2017).

Tab. 5.1. National Front's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<i>National Front</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (2014-2006)</i>
<b><i>EU Position</i></b>	<i>1</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>0.2</i>
<b><i>Party Type</i></b>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<b><i>EU Saliency</i></b>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>8.5</i>	<i>1.2</i>
<b><i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i></b>	<i>19.8</i>	<i>26.2</i>	<i>32.3</i>	<i>12.5</i>
<b><i>Party Strategy</i></b>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

The FN was the most active actor in channelling and swaying these popular sentiments. The rising levels (see Figure 4.2) in the FN's EU Issue Entrepreneurship support the validity of this thesis. The party's index effectively increased from 2006 (19.8) to 2010 (26.2) and, finally, reached the quite impressive score of 32.3 in 2014. Though this political entrepreneurship did not suddenly come about, pre-dating the crisis, the party greatly boosted these kinds of issue frames. While the FN had consistently staked out its radical Anti-European

stances, which remained fairly stable over time, it intensified the saliency attached to the European integration issues. Furthermore, by becoming the most important Eurosceptic entrepreneur in France, this party strengthened its ownership of the Anti-European issues, which is currently contended only by the Radical Left (PCF and PG)<sup>22</sup>.

It is worth noticing that the party carried out one of the crucial steps in the multi-faceted process of issue evolution (Carmines and Stimson 1989), further clarifying its Anti-European positions at the popular level. Indeed, the National Front conveyed to the voters' clearer hints on EU issues, probably sensing the potential electoral gains stemming from this political conflict. However, we have not taken for granted the mass reactions towards these policy cues, which would imply an electoral realignment along the Pro-\Anti-European issue dimensionality. Even if the FN's entrepreneurial activities remain conditional in unleashing the EU issue voting at the domestic level, these are not a sufficient condition to alter the electoral preferences. Since the outset of the crisis, the voting choices may have been more noticeably influenced by other factors, entrenched in the well-established Left-Right dimension of competition, also conditioning the FN's electoral support. In fact, we should point out that this party undertook a more comprehensive strategic turnabout and that the focus on the economic anxieties, deriving from the Euro Crisis, has not always been bound to a political discourse over European integration.

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<sup>22</sup> The electoral demise of some single-issue Eurosceptic parties (Taggart 1998), such as the Movement for France (MPF), has further enhanced the FN's ownership on Euro-scepticism. We know from our theoretical background (Petrocik 1996; Bélanger 2003; Meguid 2008) that assuming a certain issue ownership may constitute an essential tactical device in political contestation, especially within an electoral environment dominated by issue voting.

Marine Le Pen, who assumed the FN's presidency in January 2011, has reinforced this strategic shift, refurbishing the political platform to leave behind the party's political isolation. Indeed, the National Front has always lacked a democratic legitimacy, being overwhelmingly identified as a peril for French Republican values. Consequently, under Marine Le Pen's leadership, the FN has begun a process of normalization, dubbed as party *dédiabolisation*, trying to break into the Mainstream of French politics (Betz 2015; Stockemer and Amengay 2015; Shields 2015; Stockemer 2017). First and foremost, the party has ceased to be a single issue Anti-Immigration party by broadening its ideological appeal and shifting away from its more radical xenophobic and Anti-Semitic stances. As far as immigration is concerned, the National Front has refined its position by embracing a more nuanced welfare chauvinism, which opposes the foreign population insofar as they jeopardize the providing of services for the national community. "*The FN does not see immigration as an end in itself. Rather, the economy, social protection and France's economic crises are at the center. Anti-immigration is a means to address these problems.*" (Stockemer and Amengay 2015, 375). Even if the immigration inflow reduction remained an enshrined principle in the party programme, it was closely intertwined with the FN's so-called "*economic patriotism*" (Betz 2015, 83). Indeed, the party came up with new economic messages, supporting a more interventionist state role (Ivaldi 2015) and thus abandoning its pro-market stance. This policy shift has been consistent with the findings outlined by Kriesi *et al.* (2012), who have identified the Radical Right's increasing efforts in developing state-centred economic plans to electorally mobilize the globalization losers.

Therefore, as can be seen, we are not hypothesizing that the EU issues overtook the entire party platform, absorbing all the other ideological

facets and becoming the only determinant of FN electoral support. This party recurrently displayed comprehensive programmed appeals, without assuming the distinctive features of a *Single Issue Eurosceptic Party* (Taggart 1998). However, we have showed that, since the beginning of the Great Recession, the National Front has effectively increased its overall degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, which has been one of the cornerstones in its tactical calculations. By cueing the voters on this issue dimensionality, the National Front has taken the centre stage in politicizing the European integration conflict, trying to curtail the electoral preferences of its Mainstream foes.

## **5.2 The French Communist Party (PCF) and the Left Party (PG)**

We have already pointed out that the National Front has not monopolized the ownership of the Anti-European policy stances, which have also been channelled by the Radical Left parties in the Euro Crisis aftermath. The PCF, the most longstanding political formation in the French context, “*was, since the 1950s, a historical opponent of the process, which was perceived as through the framework of the cold war and also for a sovereigntist stance, contrary to the Eurocommunist stream developed in Southern Europe*” (Reungoat 2017, 18). The PCF’s Anti-European standpoint can be seen in its strong attachment to national state prerogatives, conducive to its policy goals. In fact, this party has recurrently advocated for the defence of national interests, which has been considered as deeply antithetical to the authority transfer towards the EU. According to Haliakiopoulou *et al.* (2012), the PCF has embraced the civic nationalist ideology, which identifies the EU’s underlying neo-liberal character and its exploitative powers towards the national-popular classes. Their findings have empirically corroborated these

ideological predispositions, reflecting the close relations between the party nationalistic stances and its Anti-European positions.

However, other scholars have recognized another pattern pertaining to the PCF responses towards the integration processes (Grunberg 2008; Reungoat 2010), proving that this party has frequently softened its Anti-European positions. This adjustment in the policy platform has often been conditioned by the PCF cooperative orientation towards the chief centre-left party actor, the PS. For instance, between 1997 and 2002, the Communists had taken part in the so-called *Plural Left Cabinet*, led by Lionel Jospin. By fulfilling their governmental tasks, the French Communists found themselves in the cumbersome situation of supporting the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, which laid down the Stability and Growth Pact's strict convergence criteria within the EMU countries. The signing of this treaty was clearly discordant with the PCF's pre-established stances on European integration. The party had previously rallied the voters against the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. Consequently, the party elite shifted strategy by blurring the saliency ascribed to the EU issues (Grunberg 2008).

During the 2000s, the party had resumed its profile as an Anti-European actor by waging a campaign against the Treaty for the European Constitution. However, PCF's Anti-European reputation may have been affected by its past government status, rendering this party less likely to play up the European integration conflict. The Great Recession and the subsequent austerity measures, undertaken by the UMP\PS governments, have probably renewed the strategic incentives for the French Radical Left to behave as a EU Issue Entrepreneur.

Tab. 5.2. PCF's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<i>PCF</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index: 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>10.7</i>	<i>9.8</i>	<i>12.2</i>	<i>1.5</i>
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

The 2006 data reveals the significant level of the PCF's EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Before the crisis, the party had been relatively committed to Anti-European stands, accentuating the related issues. The French Communists were probably taking full advantage of the 2005 European Constitution referendum to gain electoral benefits (Evans and Ivaldi 2013). In fact, by providing voters with Anti-European electoral cues, they were establishing a source of ideological distinction from the Mainstream opponents, developing an Anti-Cartel strategy. In doing so, the PCF electorally maximized the French Anti-European attitudes during the 2007 presidential election (Lewis-Beck, Naudeau, Bélanger 2012). Nevertheless, these attitudes remained fairly weak among the French population and, therefore, the electoral rewards for the Communists were quite limited. In general, the European integration conflict had not been widely touted by the political forces in the French political debate, being markedly overshadowed by other political matters, such as the economic

problems and immigration. Even if the PCF partially mobilized the voters on an Anti-European political platform, this party actor not seem to exclusively conduct its electoral campaign on the ground of European integration. In the pre-crisis era, its degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship actually resulted in being lower than that of some of the Mainstream Pro-European actors, such as UMP and UDF.

After the evident electoral setbacks suffered in the 2007 presidential elections by its candidate, Marie-George Buffet, the PCF switched strategy by promoting a political cooperation with Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Left Party (PG). In March 2009, PCF, PG, the Gauche Unitaire and several minor left-oriented organizations united in the Left Front (FG), restructuring the electoral supply of the radical left camp. This FG is an electoral coalition that has not yet led to a true merger between the two parties (PCF and PG), which have maintained their organizational autonomy (Damiani and De Luca 2016). In spite of many internal disputes, Jean-Luc Mélenchon has taken upon himself the leadership of the French radical left, strongly harnessing the pre-established PCF organizational networks to challenge the Mainstream parties. He was a former member and minister of the French PS, mobilizing the voters on a clear-cut Anti-European platform, and left the party in the aftermath of the 2008 Reims Congress, founding the Left Party (PG).

Mélenchon had consistently stood out as one of the most active Eurosceptic leaders in the French context, characterizing his own party with a strong Anti-European profile. Since he has assumed the leadership of the French Radical Left, Mélenchon has renewed efforts in confronting EU issues, exploiting the critical conditions opened up by the Euro Crisis. In fact, the austerity policy packages, imposed by the EU institutions, may have increased the French's economic concerns regarding European integration, providing new opportunities

for the Radical Left. By stressing and owning an anti-austerity platform, the PCF and PG have clashed head-on with the EU’s management of the Recession. Consequently, these parties promised Treaty reforms to amend the EU neo-liberal foundation and to counterbalance its democratic deficit (Goodliffe 2015). The French Radical Left has basically employed economic-utilitarian arguments related to European integration, “*linking the recent economic crisis to a neo-liberal market Europe*” (Halikiopoulou *et al.* 2012, 524). Moreover, Mélenchon also upheld a system of interstate solidarity and economic cooperation at the EU level by endorsing the Greek cause and blaming the German government. Hence, the Left Front criticized the current embodiment of European integration as detrimental to safeguarding the French social model, advancing a qualified, although very strong, opposition to the EU.

Tab. 5.3. PG’s EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship in 2014

<i>PG</i>	<i>2014</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	<i>2.1</i>
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	<i>8.1</i>
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>23.5</i>
<i>Party Strategy</i>	

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015).

This Radical Left strategy towards European integration has been reflected in its levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. In 2010, the PCF was still characterized by a certain degree of tactical uncertainty, showing a decreasing entrepreneurship (9.8) compared to the pre-

crisis period. However, this party still remained one of most active in politicizing the EU issues in the political arena and its policy stances were markedly different to the Mainstream ones. In 2014, the PCF's Entrepreneurship grew compared to the pre-crisis era, mirroring a positive increment of 1.5. Although, this increase was not spectacular, we can define the PCF as a true political entrepreneur, which has emphasized and owned EU issues.

Nevertheless, we maintain that PCF strategies have been strongly swayed by its main political partner, Mélenchon's PG. Indeed, PG's efforts to prime the EU issues have been unquestionable, significantly cueing voters on this set of policies. Even if we have at our disposal only one round in the party EU Issue Entrepreneurship (2014), this figure reached the impressive score of 23.5, exceeding the indexes of all the other French political actors apart from the FN. Thus, Melenchon's party has sought to realign the voters along a Pro-\Anti-European dimension of conflict to increase its electoral preferences. Here, the PG has certainly perceived the latent electoral potential of EU issues, trying to politicize this source of political contention.

However, the Radical Left subjects have not become *Single Issue Eurosceptic* parties (Taggart 1998), maintaining a broader program appeal, encompassing many issues related to the Left\Right dimension of conflict. It is worth noting that the Left Party has probably fallen into the category of the *Anti-Austerity Left Party* (Calossi 2016), politically mobilizing the economic anxieties related to the austerity policies and advocating social and labour security measures. The EU institutions have been recurrently blamed by the PG, which has identified them as the source of the lasting and growing economic inequalities. Therefore, European integration has turned out to be a powerful tactical tool for the French Radical Left that did not abandon its core economic objectives, strongly entrenched in traditional

political conflicts. Therefore, in the Euro Crisis aftermath, we expect that the propensity to vote for the overall Left Front can be increasingly explained by the EU issue voting. However, it is likely that its electoral preferences have been determined by the Left-Right divisions.

### **5.3 The Socialist Party (PS)**

The French Socialists have performed a major role in engineering the fundamental steps in the integration process. In 1957, Guy Mollet, the General Secretary of SFIO (French Section of the Workers' International, the PS ancestor) and French Prime Minister, negotiated and signed the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community (EEC). In 1992, the Socialist Francois Mitterrand, President of the Republic (1981-1995), jointly with the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, embarked on negotiating and concluding the European Union Treaty (TEU). The so-called Maastricht Treaty ushered in a new era by creating the EU and laid down the foundations for the Single Currency, the *euro*. Mitterrand's leadership effectively established a Pro-European transformation in the Socialist identity by committing his presidency to broadening the supranational authority transfer. In fact, during the 1970s, the Socialists had remained predominantly silent on the issues of European Integration to prevent the emergence of internal divisions. When the party took over the Elysee Palace in 1981, it began to regard the European building as a favourable environment for achieving its policy objectives. According to many overviews (Escalona and Viera 2014; Bouillaud 2014; Hanley 2017), Mitterrand's fruitless attempt to carry out pro-demand measures unleashed a more positive orientation

towards the integration project, increasingly seen as a market regulation instrument by the Socialist party family (Hooghe and Marks 1999). The party notably increased its positive statements over the European building, strongly positioning itself towards the Pro-Integrationist pole of political contestation and attaching more saliency to the EU issues (Ray 1999).

Although the French PS has staked out an overall Pro-European orientation in the last quarter of the century, it had always hosted within its ranks some Anti-European factions (the so-called *courants*), which found several channels to express their opposition to the EU. These factions have conveyed moderately Eurosceptic stances, without openly demanding the French withdrawal from the European Union, but expressing concerns on neo-liberal bias related to integration (Crespy 2008; Wagner 2008). According to David Hanley (2017), a recurrent pattern has steered the party responses towards European integration. A large part of the PS's activists and officials, inspired by the Jacobin view of a sovereign and interventionist state, has persistently rejected the ever-increasing authority transfer. On the contrary, the majority of the party leaders have perceived European integration as an asset, upholding a multi-level governance.

These tensions were magnified by the two above-mentioned political referenda on the European Treaties, which provided important political outlets for the Anti-European Socialists. Indeed, some prominent PS leaders (such as Chevènement and Mélenchon), who had previously rallied the voters on outright Eurosceptic platforms, abandoned the party, founding their own political formation. These party splits caused the Socialists to suffer some significant electoral losses. In 1993, Jean-Pierre Chevènement created the Citizens' Movements (MDC), strongly cueing the voters on Anti-European stances and competing with the PS in the 2002 presidential elections,

electorally dooming Lionel Jospin's candidacy. In 2008, Jean Mélenchon's set up his Anti-European Left Party (PG), which subsequently formed a lasting and successful electoral alliance with the other radical left parties (the Left Front), which have probably drawn votes from the PS. Thus, as much as the European issues systemic saliency has grown over time, this potential conflict dimension has become a powerful drawback for the party unity and its electoral performance. Consequently, the French PS has had clear incentives to maintain unaltered the pre-existing system of political conflicts, largely deriving from the Left/Right dimension of contestation.

The Euro Crisis bolstered this set of incentives, spurring the party to strongly blur its stances on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. It is worth noting that in 2006, before the onset of the Euro Crisis, the degree of PS Entrepreneurship on EU issues was not that insignificant (9.1), without peaking its political agenda. Although the Socialists favourable orientation towards overall European integration had weakened since the 1990s (see: Ray 1999), they had remained somehow supportive of the whole process, leaning towards the Pro-Integrationist pole of contestation. This decreasing support was due to party factionalism, which had emerged during the controversial Constitutional Treaty referendum, leaving open several internal wounds regarding EU issues (Wagner 2008).

In 2010, during the initial stage of the Euro Crisis, the party did not take on any substantial strategic reversals. Indeed, its EU Issue Entrepreneurship was unaffected, while some of its Mainstream adversaries, namely the UMP and UDF, markedly diminished their strength in emphasizing this latent issue dimension. In the meantime, the party resumed profiling itself as a stronger Pro-European supporter, and its general stance on the general integration rose from 5

to 6.1. According to Hooghe and Marks (2017), a one-point shift along the CHES general European integration scale represents a notable ideological leap, given that political parties have traditionally showed an ideological inflexibility. Nonetheless, our data demonstrates that the Mainstream actors (PS, UMP, UDF, EELV) were increasingly in agreement on this policy area, whereas their ideological distance on general European integration was widening.

Tab. 5.3. PS's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and

<i>PS</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index: 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6.1</i>	<i>5.8</i>	<i>0.8</i>
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>5.1</i>	<i>-1.9</i>
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>9.1</i>	<i>8.9</i>	<i>4.1</i>	<i>-5</i>
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Decrease</i>

Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker et. Al. 2015).

In October 2011, in the PS primary elections, François Hollande was crowned as party nominee for the incoming 2012 presidential elections. According to Hanley (2017), the Socialist candidate stood out as a strong Euro-supporter in the French electoral landscape. Indeed, as PS General Secretary, Hollande had constantly expressed a strong political commitment to integration by sustaining the underlying ideas of the overall EU project. During the Congress of Dijon in 2003, he engineered a party motion “*clearly in favour of European integration on the current model. Its federalist,*

*integrationist vision of the future of the EU was coupled with a generally positive assessment of the current state of the Union”* (Wagner 2008, 6). However, in the wake of the 2012 Presidential elections, he did not entirely uphold the current embodiment of the Union, raising several questions on the way European integration was being implemented. In fact, Holland demanded the renegotiation for the establishment of a *Federal Budget*, the *Euro-Bonds*, *Project Bonds* and the *Fiscal Compact*, outlining a plan of broad social investment at the European level to cope with the consequences of the crisis (Vassallo 2012).

In doing so, he was heavily criticizing the so-called Merkozy directorate and its management of the crisis, which had mainly produced the austerity measures. This criticism directly involved the work of the incumbent president, Nicolas Sarkozy, who was basically blamed for his government performance both at the domestic and European levels. The French Socialists had probably sensed the political opportunities to frame the EU as pro-growth and a Keynesian-led project in outright opposition to Sarkozy’s austerity-driving Europe. Meanwhile, they displayed an unprecedented level of internal unity on the EU issues that has probably constituted a powerful electoral asset during their electioneering. Consequently, we argue that the European issues may have been policy tools during these Presidential elections, playing a not so secondary role during the campaign and, partially, affecting the voting choices. However, our dataset does not provide us with the necessary information for supporting this thesis, which basically remains a well-reasoned speculation.

On the contrary, our empirical data demonstrates the dwindling levels of the PS's EU Issue Entrepreneurship in 2014, which reached a score of 4.1. In fact, after the Élysée takeover in 2012, the French Socialists clearly carried out an issue dismissal activity decreasing the saliency ascribed to European matters. This de-politicization effort has deeply contrasted with the antithetic strategies undertaken by the French Protest parties, which have targeted the establishment of the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation. Namely, the PS appears to have blurred the clarity of this latent dimension by delivering ambiguous political messages to the French voters. It clearly emerged that President Hollande and most of the party elite identified the electoral perils related to the politicization of this conflict, which could have triggered unfavourable voting realignments.

This abrupt strategic shift has probably been catalyzed by the external budgetary constraints regarding EU, jointly with the adverse political conditions for pursuing efficacious reforms at the European level. In fact, the French President had faced a sub-optimal political context for achieving his pledged reforms, limited by an overwhelming pro-austerity majority of states within the inter-governmental bodies (Bouillaud 2014). Consequently, since the outset of his presidency, Hollande had supported ordo-liberal economic governance within the EU, propelled by the German government, proving his acquiescence towards the pre-established management of the crisis. This strategic reversal brought about a new wave of party internal factionalism on European integration, which had been hitherto dampened by Hollande's leadership.

Thus, the European integration conflict has not been perceived as an electoral asset by the French Socialists, who have not played up the EU issues in the electoral arena after winning the presidency. Indeed, they have not developed a good reputation in handling EU economic

governance, highlighting France's ancillary role to the German government. Consequently, the PS has decreased its EU Issue Entrepreneurship to overshadow the government failures in steering the European policy agenda and preventing the revival of intra-party divisions. The Socialists have taken on saliency-reduction actions, tactically extinguishing these issues and vying along the more deep-rooted Left-Right dimension of contestation. However, they have consistently remained attached to the general Pro-European stances, without softening their support towards the overall project.

#### **5.4. The Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) and the Republicans**

As well as the Socialists, the French Republican Right has always had to cope with many adversities in handling European integration issues. A great deal of internal controversies and ideological ambiguities have involved and affected all the parties that have embodied the Gaullist political tradition over time (RPF, UNR, UDR, RPR, UMP and the Republicans). Since the start of his Presidency in the 1950s, General Charles De Gaulle had interpreted the overall integration process as an inter-governmental project (Fabbrini 2015; Leruth and Startin 2017), where most of the political powers would remain with the national states rather than being transferred to the supranational bodies. This view had basically seen the building of Europe as an institutional tool to enforce French interests at the continental level. De Gaulle's legacy has deeply influenced the subsequent developments in the French Republican Right's responses to the ever-increasing European integration. Indeed, these parties have never completely abandoned their sovereignty and nationalistic values, advocating for a centralized and interventionist notion of state that is plainly mismatched with the European building project. It is worth pointing out that since the

beginning of 1980s the Gaullists, under the label of Rally for the Republic (RPR), have gradually changed their economic platform by adopting more market-oriented principles (Demker 1997). In doing so, RPR approached a Euro-Pragmatist stance (Taggart and Kopecky 2002), which entailed a qualified support for the European project insofar as it met French national interests. In spite of this, the Gaullists often encountered many internal challenges in framing this Pro-European political discourse, generating several party splits. Unlike their Left-oriented counterparts, the centre-right Anti-European splinters were never able to reap the electoral fortunes of RPR/UMP, which succeeded in securing the French presidency from 1995 until 2012. Although, during both the Chirac (1995-2007) and Sarkozy (2007-2012) presidencies, the UMP displayed consistent Pro-European stances, supporting all the further integration steps, latent internal divisions persisted within the party. According to Leruth and Startin (2017), many disgruntled party members and activists stubbornly expressed sovereignty concerns and, thus, Anti-European attitudes, arising from their entrenched Gaullist political traditions. As well, the RPR\UMP\Rep. had to face the political dilemma between nationalism and market liberalism, recurrent within the conservative party family (Marks and Wilson 2000). Consequently, although the UMP's majoritarian party elite conveyed to the voters' utilitarian Pro-European cues (falling into the Euro-pragmatist category), this party lacked the inducement to emphasize EU issues within the political debate. Therefore, the UMP/Rep. probably chose to de-politicize the European integration conflict to avoid electoral losses.

The Euro Crisis effectively exacerbated this set of UMP strategic counter-incentives, leading to a marked decrease in the party levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Indeed, in 2006, during the pre-crisis era, the UMP reached an overall level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship of

11.3 (see table 5.4). The UMP was approaching the levels of the main political EU Issue Entrepreneurs (namely the UDF and FN) within the French party system, also exceeding the PCF's overall entrepreneurship. Therefore, before the crisis, the Republican Right had not displayed any real uneasiness in mentioning Pro-European stands in its program and subsequent events demonstrated that the party leadership was not deliberately omitting to use EU issues. In 2004, Nicolas Sarkozy took over the UMP presidency, bringing to an end Jacques Chirac's forty-year leadership and advancing his own candidacy for the 2007 presidential elections. Under his leadership, the party declared a Pro-European position, mainly by remaining attached to inter-governmental Gaullist ideological commitments (Vassallo 2012; Fabbrini 2015). According to Lewis-Beck, Nadeau and Bélanger (2012), during the 2007 presidential elections, the UMP clearly established its ownership on the Pro-European stance, displaying a stronger party unity compared to the Socialists and, consequently, obtaining some electoral benefits by placing these issues in the political debate. Nonetheless, EU issues were still playing a minor role in party voting equations, being seen as secondary political issues by the majority of French electors.

After his election, Sarkozy took centre stage in negotiating the Lisbon Treaty in October 2007, fulfilling his electoral pledges on reforming the European Treaties. He often highlighted the need to establish common defence and foreign policies, also identifying the EU as a political body to counteract the negative economic impact resulting from globalization (Leruth and Startin 2017). Nonetheless, he firmly opposed the Turkish accession to the European Union, showing some cultural resistance towards further EU enlargement and, thus, strengthening the political partnership with the German CDU. By doing so, the UMP demonstrated its high level of cultural-nationalistic

frames regarding Europe (as was confirmed by Statham and Trenz's findings, 2013), to some extent using the justification of protecting the European Christian heritage. This pattern seems to be consistent with many overviews that have heralded the conservative parties' efforts in exploiting these cultural-nationalistic arguments (Grande, Hutter, Kerscher and Becker 2016 Hoelglinger 2016b), eradicating the Radical Right core framing on European integration. Therefore, before the crisis, even if the EU issues had lurked at the fringes of French political debate, the UMP did not escape from politicizing European integration. However, this latent conflict has not turned out to be a bone of internal contention and, then, the party prioritized other issues.

Tab. 5.4. UMP/Rep.'s EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<i>UMP/Rep.</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (2006-2014)</i>
<b><i>EU Position</i></b>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>5.4</i>	<i>-0,3</i>
<b><i>Party Type</i></b>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<b><i>EU Saliency</i></b>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>6.3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>-0.7</i>
<b><i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i></b>	<i>11.3</i>	<i>7.8</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>-9.3</i>
<b><i>Party Strategy</i></b>				<i>Entrepreneurship Decrease</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015).

The Recession ushered in a more critical period for the De Gaulle political heirs, reshaping their relations with European integration.

The French President took on a very active role in tackling the Euro Crisis at the European level, forging a political pact with the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel. As economic conditions worsened in Europe, Sarkozy became increasingly aware of the symbolic importance of this political alliance for French national interests. Thus, the Franco-German axis guided the Eurozone countries through the financial crisis, driving the major treaty reforms and establishing a strict set of rules for national budgetary policies (Vassallo 2013). However, this political partnership had political costs for Sarkozy, who was largely held by voters as responsible for the mismanagement of the recession. By endorsing the EU austerity-led policy packages, the French government was not able to effectively deal with the growing unemployment and economic stagnation. Between August 2011 and January 2012, the UMP government, led by the Prime Minister Francois Fillon, carried out two rounds of hard austerity measures, aiming at reducing the deficit by raising taxes and freezing government spending. Sarkozy's actions in the inter-governmental bodies led his own government towards this set of policies, clearly unveiling his orientation towards the Pro-Austerity measures. Therefore, the party actually tried to play down the EU issues to minimize its own responsibilities in prompting growing economic dissatisfaction.

In 2010, the level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship dropped to 7.8, mirroring the declining party efforts in politicizing European integration. This drop was mainly due to the systemic collusion among the Mainstream parties on this latent conflict. According to Evans and Ivaldi (2013), in the wake of the 2012 presidential elections, the Pro-European cartel of parties carried out a coordinated action to down play the EU issues at the domestic level. In 2014, these coordinated efforts in de-politicizing the European integration conflict

became increasingly evident in the French political landscape. In fact, the PS and UMP synchronized their attempts to extinguish this issue dimensionality to maintain their respective share of votes. By owning the Pro-European issues in an ever-increasing Eurosceptic environment (Vassallo 2012; Goodliffe 2015), they recognized the inherent risks related to this conflict. These two parties suffered from the electoral competition of their Protest Anti-European opponents, the Left Party and the National Front, which owned the Anti-European issues.

The UMP has stood out for decreasing its EU Issue Entrepreneurship, achieving a very insignificant score (2). This party has markedly de-emphasized the saliency ascribed to the EU issues, undertaking an issue dismissal activity (Meguid 2005; Meguid 2008) to counteract the strategies of their Protest Anti-European foes. By reducing the saliency of these political matters, the party has tried to lessen the clarity of the EU issue at the mass level to avoid the emergence of a popular response along this latent policy dimensionality. Even if Sarkozy tried to reposition the UMP by articulating a clear opposition towards the Schengen Treaty, this policy shift was not achieved, and the party reputation as a Pro-European actor remained unaltered. Consequently, the policy tool at disposal of the party was the dismissal or the blurring of the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation. In spite of the party's relabelling, from UMP to Republican, and the leadership turnover in 2016, when former Prime Minister, Francois Fillon, won the primary elections, the party does not appear to have undertaken any strategic renewals on European integration. Our core expectation is that this party has actually ceased to maximize its voting preferences along this potential issue dimensionality in the post-crisis era, electorally exploiting its position on the traditional Left-Right conflict axis.

### **5.5 The Union for French Democracy (UDF)\Democratic Movement (MoDem) and Europe Ecology – the Greens (EELV)**

The two remaining Mainstream Pro-European parties, the UDF\MoDem and Green\EELV, have pursued quite different strategies on the European integration conflict. On the one hand, since the outbreak of the Great Recession, the Union for French Democracy (UDF), later redubbed as Democratic Movement (MoDem), has notably decreased its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, downplaying the saliency of European issues. On the other hand, the French Ecologist party, as an outcome of the Euro Crisis, has increased its efforts in dealing with this issue dimensionality by shifting its position on general European integration.

The MoDem is a successor of the UDF, the party of the former French President Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, who basically devised the European Monetary System (EMS) and is unanimously considered as one of the founding fathers of the contemporary European Union. This party has always been one the most consistent Euro-supporter actors within the French political landscape (Halikiopoulou et al. 2012), never notably altering its stance on the Pro-\Anti-European political divide (Hubé 2014). As a matter of fact, before the Euro Crisis, this party behaved as an authentic entrepreneur of this issue dimension, obtaining the highest score (19.9) at the national level. In spite of the minor importance of the European integration conflict in France (Lewis-Beck, Bélanger and Naudeau 2012), the UDF was very prone to draw attention to the EU related issues, emphasizing this potential source of public contention. It is worth noting that, in spite of some splinter groups, the party suffered less from internal divisions

compared to the other Mainstream Pro-European parties. Consequently, during the period preceding the crisis, the UDF had politicized these EU issues, often overridden by the other political actors.

Tab. 5.6. UDF\MoDem's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue

<b>UDF\MoDem</b>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	6.3	6.7	6.6	0,3
<i>Party Type</i>	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Stable
<i>EU Saliency</i>	7.7	8	6.7	-1
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	19.9	15.5	10.7	-9.2
<i>Party Strategy</i>				Entrepreneurship Decrease

Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

Since the beginning of the economic and financial crisis, this party has substantially ceased to distinguish itself on the European integration terrain. In 2010, MoDem's EU Issue Entrepreneurship notably waned, scoring 15.5 (-4.4 compared to 2006), mirroring its decreasing efforts in tackling this latent policy dimensionality. This rapid drop has been mainly explained by the widespread level of ideological collusion pursued by the majority of Mainstream actors (PS, UMP and Greens), which have adopted similar stances on the Pro-\Anti-European political divide. Consequently, even by remaining an outstanding entrepreneur, MoDem's distinctive characteristics on European integration had gradually begun to vanish.

In fact, in 2014, MoDem's degree of entrepreneurship continued its downward spiral, falling to 10.7, revealing an absolute decline of -9.2. The party's decreasing entrepreneurship was spectacular and the MoDem clearly reduced its strength in politicizing this conflict. Unlike our precedent empirical round, this further decline cannot be explained by the rise of a systemic collusion on EU issues, but clearly stems from a deliberate strategy taken by this party actor. In spite of its outright ownership of a Pro-European stance, the party has devoted less attention to EU matters, sensing the general unpopularity of the European Union. Nevertheless, MoDem remains the most loyal supporter of European integration and, consequently, we predict that the EU issue voting may still significantly steer its electoral preferences.

On the contrary, the Europe Ecology – the Greens (EELV) is the only French Mainstream Pro-European party that has increased its attempts to prime EU issues in the public debate during the post-crisis era. In 2006, the French Greens clearly disregarded this potential conflict by assuming a moderate Pro-European position and poorly highlighting the EU issues. During that period, this party prioritized the ecologist pro-environmentalist issues, which had a substantial impact on the voters' political agenda between 2002 and 2007 (Lewis-Beck, Naudeau and Bélanger 2012), while their degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship was the lowest. The ecologists were fundamentally rallying the voters on a left-libertarian and post-materialistic political program (Kitschelt 1989; Dolezal 2010). Nonetheless, in doing so, they were leaning towards the so-called GAL (Green\Alternative\Libertarian) pole of political contestation strongly associated with an increasing support for European integration (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002). Consequently, as we can see in

the subsequent empirical rounds, this party rapidly shifted towards strong Pro-European stances in the post-crisis period.

In the 2009 European elections, the Green party promoted an electoral alliance with other small environmentalist subjects, adopting the label of Europe Ecology – the Greens (EELV). This electoral cartel obtained 16.3% of the valid votes, the, becoming an authentic political party, which changed its strategies on European integration. In 2010, this party augmented its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship by embarking on a profound adjustment in its policy platform. In fact, the EELV adopted a well-defined Pro-European stand, strongly changing its orientation towards the general integration process. Secondly, it boosted the saliency attached to the EU issues, which had previously been kept on the margins of its program. This tactical choice was also seen in the party label itself, which contains the word *Europe*. The EELV emerged with a deep-seated support for European integration, being one of the chief issues in the party manifesto. However, the French Environmentalists framed their Pro-European discourse within a Federalist and Multiculturalist backdrop, lacking in any expressed criticism of the EU's economic policies. This kind of discourse had probably been perceived as too Euro-Enthusiast (Kopecky and Mudde 2002) by the French voters, who probably electorally punished the EELV for this tactical choice (Beaudonnet and Vasilopoulos 2014). Therefore, in 2014, the EELV began to play down its focus on European integration and its entrepreneurial activities fell to a score of 7.8.

Although we cannot define the ELLV as a strong entrepreneur of this conflict dimension, it emerges as the only Pro-European party that has increased its attempts to politicize European integration. According to Reungoat (2017), this political formation has effectively sought to restructure the collective identities by owning and emphasizing the

Pro-European stances within the French context. Hence, we hypothesize that, after the beginning of the financial crisis, this political party may have increasingly maximized its electoral preferences on the Pro-\Anti-European policy divide.

Tab. 5.7. Greens\ELLV's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue

<b>Greens\ELLV</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</b>
<b>EU Position</b>	4.7	6.1	6.2	1.5
<b>Party Type</b>	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Stable
<b>EU Saliency</b>	4.7	7	6.5	1.8
<b>EU Issue</b>	4.7	9.3	7.8	3.1
<b>Entrepreneurship Party Strategy</b>				Entrepreneurship Increase

Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

## 5.6 Conclusion

The French parties have revealed an elevated degree of strategic polarization on EU issues, which has seemed to be accentuated by the transformative effects of the crisis. In fact, Mainstream Pro-European parties, namely the Socialist Party (PS), the Union for a Popular Movement/ the Republicans (UMP/Rep.) and the Union for French Democracy/Democratic Movement (UDF/MoDem), have clearly attempted to eliminate this source of conflict. Instead, the Protest Anti-European parties, such as the National Front (FN), the Left Party (PG) and, to a lesser extent, the French Communist Party (PCF), have enhanced their efforts in rallying voters around Anti-European values,

increasing their EU Issue Entrepreneurship to establish an alternative dimension of political competition. Our overview reveals this evolving trend in the French electoral supply, where political extremism has been an important factor in explaining the increasing EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Both the PCF and, especially, the FN had already been Anti-European entrepreneurs in the pre-crisis era, confirming one of the established findings on the European integration conflict, which revolved around the strategic efforts of the radical parties (De Vries and Edwards 2009; Hooghe and Marks 2009; De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2015). However, since the outbreak of the crisis, Protest parties have significantly strengthened their references to the European integration conflict, which may have hastened the emergence of a new issue dimensionality in France.

On the contrary, as a consequence of the Euro Crisis, French Mainstream parties have relinquished rallying the voters on the European integration policy dimension. The rising popular Euro-scepticism in France (Vassallo 2012; Goodliffe 2015), spurred by the economic slump, has probably led these parties to downplay the impact of EU issues on the political agenda, reducing the party agency room. As a matter of fact, French Mainstream parties have been prevented from electorally mobilizing the emerging Anti-European orientations by their Europhile long-standing reputation. Consequently, these political subjects have been plainly committed to hampering the foundation of the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension, rather than openly clashing with their Eurosceptic opponents on this issue dimensionality. The Mainstream parties' decreasing degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship has been quite unmistakable, revealing their straightforward de-politicization efforts. The Republicans and Socialists have been the leading actors in toning down the systemic

saliency of this policy debate, seeking to overshadow the European integration conflict. According to Hubé (2014), these parties viewed the European building as compatible with national identity and interests, advancing very nuanced positions on the overall integration project: “*They are in favour of a mixed supranational and intergovernmental decision-making, depending on the issue area, and support a greater subsidiarity in EU policy-making... They also make reference to the common European identity and consider France to have mainly benefitted from the EU. These parties create a Euro-supporter, but not necessarily a federalist pole.*” (Hubé 2014, 33). However, it is important to point out that the EU issue debate has recurrently generated intra-party factionalism within the two main French governing parties, PS and UMP\Rep., which have seemed to have strongly suffered from the external pressures of the ever-increasing integration. Mainstream internal divisions, which have been generally introduced by the literature (Taggart 1998; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2009), probably explain the shrinking levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship employed by the PS and UMP\Rep in the aftermath of the Euro Crisis.

Nonetheless, as we have already argued in the third chapter, the *Protest-based Entrepreneurship* may have brought about only a limited level of politicization of the European integration conflict, the so-called *punctuated politicization* (Grande and Kriesi 2016), which could limit the degree of EU issue voting in national elections. Indeed, the intense extinguisher activities undertaken by the chief Mainstream parties may result in a successful de-politicization of the EU issues within the French political landscape.

## **6. Colliding on a Pro-\Anti-European Issue Dimension: the German Case**

Since the onset of the Eurozone crisis, a new electoral supply has emerged in Germany, reflecting a marked increase in the degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, which has involved all the main party actors. Even though a deep-seated politicization is strictly conditioned by voters' responses along a Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension, the German parties have openly collided over the European integration conflict. The Euro crisis has clearly marked a watershed in spurring these unprecedented levels of partisan entrepreneurship, which may have propelled a new source of ideological contestation in Germany. Prior to the economic crisis, only the PDS\Linke had managed to employ Anti-European electoral actions, although to a limited extent, mainly owning the Euroscepticism at the domestic level. On the contrary, in the aftermath and, perhaps, as a consequence of the Great Recession, another Anti-European subject emerged, the Alternative for Germany (AFD), which has mobilized the growing Eurosceptic attitudes, probably affecting the partisan supply in Germany. Indeed, by broadening its EU Issue Entrepreneurship, the AFD may have prompted a strategic reaction on the part of the Mainstream parties, which have vied along the Pro-\Anti-European dimension of conflict. Thus, the German party system provides a clear deviation from our expected patterns, where many centrist actors have determined a systemic growth of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Even if this observation clearly contradicts our hypothesis on the Mainstream parties' strategies (which have increased rather than diminished their references on European issues), it lends major support to the overall politicization thesis. In fact, as much as the EU Issues

Entrepreneurship has become more uniformly spread across the entire ideological spectrum, a more politicized European integration conflict at the electoral level can be discerned.

### **6.1 The Alternative for Germany (AFD)**

While the vast majority of the European party systems had gradually experienced the emergence of quite important Radical Right parties, which have electorally succeeded and flourished in many Western countries (Ignazi 1995; Meguid 2008), the German political landscape constituted a notable outlier, where these party actors had remained substantially ephemeral until the 2000s<sup>23</sup>. In fact, German nationalist ideology found many constraints in its political mobilization, being constantly associated with the National-Socialist experience by the Mainstream party elites (Arzheimer 2015). Consequently, several attempts to restructure the electoral supply failed over time, evidence of lack of political space for xenophobic or nativist based parties.

According to Hooghe and Marks (2017), the rise of a Radical Right party in Germany has been a landmark, substantially epitomizing the establishment of a new transnational cleavage in Europe, which has been hastened by a system of multiple crises (the economic recession jointly with the refugee emergency). Even if we are not testing a new cleavage hypothesis, nor do we consider this set of crises as a proper critical juncture (Morlino and Raniolo 2017), the Euro Crisis appears to be the chief catalyst in explaining the AFD's emergence in Germany.

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<sup>23</sup> Namely, small Radical Right formations, such as the German Republicans or the National Democrats (NPD), occasionally achieved some significant electoral results, but then rapidly disappeared from the German electoral context.

While the German economy has suffered less acutely from the economic recession than other countries (Rohrschneider and Schmitt-Beck 2017), it has been fully involved in the economic risks related to the rescue packages for the debtor states (Schmitt-Beck 2017). The German government has performed a fundamental role in handling the crisis within the Eurozone by endorsing bailout measures in favour of the insolvent countries. Under the aegis of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who claimed a “*lack of political choice*” (Grimm 2015, 266), all the established Mainstream Pro-European parties - CDU\CSU, SPD, FDP, the Greens - supported these fiscal transfers to the debtor countries, which were forced to adopt stricter austerity measures. According to Kriesi and Grande (2016), between late 2009 and the beginning of 2012, the debate on the crisis management in Germany had reached its highest share of systemic saliency, probably topping the policy agenda in the wake of 2013 federal elections (Reher 2017). Moreover, these fiscal transfers to the debtor countries received a strong media coverage (Statham and Trenz 2015), probably unleashing a growing Euro-scepticism amongst the German public. Consequently, the Euro Crisis appears to have widened a window of opportunity for politicizing European integration, which has been mainly seized by the Alternative for Germany (Franzmann 2016).

According to Grimm (2015), the Euro crisis abruptly broke the widespread permissive consensus on the general integration, magnifying many pre-existing concerns, which were to be found in German society. These latent Anti-European attitudes amongst the German public have been clearly entrenched in the most radical interpretations of the ordo-liberal principles, questioning the foundation of the European Monetary Union as laid down by the Maastricht Treaty. In fact, during the 1990s, many ordo-liberal scholars underscored the lack of political and economic conditions for

founding a currency union. Furthermore, the German academic debate had already been revolving around the threats of abandoning the mark, which had symbolized the country's economic stability and power during the all post-war period.

In April 2013, the AFD was created by a group of intellectuals and journalists and rapidly gained a sizeable organizational strength by establishing regional branches in all the 16 German *landers* (Berbair, Lewandowsky and Siri 2015). Since its foundation, the AFD has proved itself capable of breaking the Mainstream consensus on European integration by strongly contesting the rescue packages for the insolvent countries. It has clearly revitalized a strong ordo-liberal criticism towards European integration (Grimm 2015; Franzmann 2016), rallying the voters around the eradication of the single currency in Germany (Reher 2017). Indeed, the latter issue overwhelmingly dominated the AFD's policy agenda, where Bernd Lucke's leadership chiefly highlighted the German withdrawal from the EMU, qualifying this party as a single-issue Eurosceptic party (Arzheimer 2015; Grimm 2015; Schmitt-Beck 2017).

Our 2014 empirical test (table 4.3.1) shows that the AFD has actually championed the European integration conflict in Germany, reaching one of the highest scores (31.4) of EU Issue Entrepreneurship among our sample of European parties. It has markedly outperformed all the other German parties, including the Left Party (LINKE), indisputably taking over the ownership of Anti-Europeanism. The saliency ascribed to the EU issues has been quite extreme (9.5 out of 10) and, consequently, the AFD met the criteria of a *Single-issue Eurosceptic party* in Taggart's meaning (1998), thus, supporting the above-mentioned theoretical background. It is quite unmistakable that during the early stages of its political life, the AFD strongly prioritized its negative stance on European integration, initiating a process of issue

evolution on the Pro-\Anti-European dimension of political contestation.

Tab. 6.1. AFD's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship in 2014

<b>AFD</b>	<b>2014</b>
<i>EU Position</i>	1.6
<i>Party Type</i>	Mainstream Pro-European
<i>EU Saliency</i>	9.5
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	31.4

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2014 (Bakker, Edwards et al. 2015a)

Although the party has opposed the current embodiment of European integration, it has never openly cued the voters regarding rejecting EU membership. On the contrary, the AFD core program objective has been the demand to withdraw from the common currency and restore the German mark, without any principled opposition towards the EU building. This party has supported the single-market and also the free circulation of people and goods across the member states, markedly distinguishing itself from most of the Radical Right parties in Europe. Indeed, the 2014 CHES round (Bakker, Edwards *et al.* 2015) assessed the AFD position on the general European integration issue (1.6) as slightly less negative compared to that of the French FN (1.2), the Italian LN (1.1) and the British UKIP (1.1). Many theoretical overviews (Arzheimer 2015; Grimm 2015; Reher 2017) have been prone to define the AFD as a Soft-Eurosceptic party (Taggart and Szezerbiak 2002), advancing a nuanced opposition on EU policies considered detrimental to German national interests. In a nutshell, we hypothesize that this party has probably channelled anti-currency concerns in Germany, which have pre-dated the Euro Crisis, and it has

also mobilized those voters who have dissented from a deepening European integration.

As we have already mentioned, the AFD has mainly conveyed Anti-European political hints to the voters, conducive to the politicization of the European integration conflict. However, the party has also stood out for some positions related to traditional Left-Right conflicts, such as an economic orthodoxy issue (Franzmann 2016) and, thus, characterizing itself as an economic conservative party. By extensively analyzing its policy positions, Kai Arzheimer (2015) has identified AFD as a far-right party in the German ideological space. Indeed, this party consistently advocated for economic liberalism, assuming conservative civil rights stances and opposing the Turkish accession to the European Union. It is worth noticing that this party may have also occupied the rightist policy space vacated by the CDU centrist shift under Merkel's leadership. Nevertheless, we argue that the AFD has been predominantly committed to engaging in EU issues, which have chiefly accounted for its electoral preferences, while the Left-Right related issues have played a secondary role in determining its electoral fortunes.

## **6.2 The Party of Democratic Socialism\Left Party (PDS\LINKE)**

During all the post-unification period, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the SED political successor, has repeatedly advanced criticisms of European integration, turning out to be a Soft Eurosceptic party (Lees 2008). In fact, even by raising a qualified Anti-European opposition, this party never articulated an outright Euro-reject position nor over-emphasized the EU issues in the political debate during the pre-crisis period. Nonetheless, this party opened a breach in the broad Mainstream Pro-European consensus

and injected some Eurosceptic political hints within the German party systems. According to Lees (2008), the PDS ideological predisposition was initially rooted in its *Pro-Eastern* attitudes, which associated the EU with the Western political establishment and the NATO military powers. Since the Left Party (LINKE) foundation, resulting from the political merger between the PDS and the WASG, the German Radical Left has transformed its policy framework on European integration. Nowadays, “*It underlines that the European policies are wrong in dismantling the social security systems and leading to mass unemployment; a broad policy change would be needed.*” (Wagemann 2014, 51). The PDS\LINKE has basically opposed general integration by highlighting its liberal bias and its democratic deficit, developing its reputation as an Anti-European actor for German voters (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2017).

Tab. 6.2. PDS\LINKE’s EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<b>PDS\LINKE</b>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	3.3	3.3	3.0	0.3
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	3.3	4.3	5.6	2.3
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	7.3	8.9	10.6	3.3
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015b)

Our data has mirrored the ideological distance between the PDS\LINKE party and the other political subjects on the Pro\Anti-European policy dimension during the whole period. In the pre-crisis

era, the party had achieved the highest rates of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, outperforming all the Mainstream European parties and being the sole Protest Anti-European party within this system. Therefore, the PDS\LINKE has been the original provider of the Anti-European identity in Germany, supplying the voters with plain Eurosceptic messages (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2017). However, we should point out that the party has obtained these higher entrepreneurship scores by deviating from the mean EU party system position rather than by strongly highlighting these issues. Before the financial crisis, the PDS\LINKE emphasis on EU related policies had been negligible, remaining on the fringes of its political programme. In fact, the party stances on the Left-Right issue dimension had been the major explanation for its electoral support (Doerschler and Banaszak 2007), mobilizing and channelling the growing concerns over the economic unfairness among the German population, (Bowyer and Vail 2011), especially in the Eastern regions of the country.

The Euro Crisis has paved the way for a different course of action in the Radical Left efforts to politicize the European integration conflict. The emphasis devoted to the EU issues has progressively grown, producing a remarkable shift in the party level of entrepreneurship that reached 10.6 in the last post-crisis round (2014). The German Radical Left has actually stood out for this entrepreneurship increase, although to a much more moderate extent compared to the other Anti-European actor, the AFD. Nonetheless, the Left party has found many arguments related to the European integration to distinguish itself from its Mainstream foes and to reap electoral benefits. First and foremost, the Left Party was the only political actor within the German Bundestag to oppose the bailout packages and the austerity policies at the domestic level. Furthermore, this party has mainly advocated a stronger version of inter-state economic cooperation

within the EU by backing a softening of the strict economic conditions imposed on the insolvent states.

We contend that the German Left party has epitomized the pattern of the Radical Left party family, which has historically cued the voters on the economic concerns subsumed by European integration (De Vries and Edwards 2009). The Great Recession has clearly opened up new political opportunities to break the Pro-Austerity consensus on the management of the Eurozone crisis (Hobolt and Tilley 2016), led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, and it has further bolstered the party ownership of the economic inequality issues in Germany. Bowyer and Vail (2011) had already predicted that economic austerity could bring about new electoral prospects for the Radical Left camp in Germany, widening its voting preferences. However, Germany appears to be the winner in the Euro Crisis (Grimm 2015) that has successfully extinguished any potential sources of economic dissatisfaction related to European integration. In fact, unemployment has noticeably shrunk, while the overall GDP growth has substantially recovered (Source: Eurostat). Consequently, this economic scenario may have reduced the space for a left-leaning protest towards European integration, narrowing the overall impact of EU issue voting on the Left party electoral preferences. While our expectation regarding the AFD propensity for voting remains very straightforward, envisaging the preponderant weight of the Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension, we maintain that the Left-Right ideological divide still exerts a noticeable effect on Radical Left electoral performances, decreasing the explanatory power of the EU issues.

### **6.3 Christian Democratic Union (CDU)**

Ever since the end of the Second World War, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has enthusiastically supported European integration. This so-called *Volkspartei* party has typified the Christian Democratic tradition, which has clearly laid the foundations of a integration project (Marks and Wilson 2000). In fact, this party has not dealt with the nationalist dilemmas of the European Conservatives nor has it contended with the economic inconsistencies of the Social-Democratic party family. Since its creation in 1945, the CDU has rejected a nationalistic ideology, embracing more cosmopolitan views, while it has recognized the market liberal economy as the fundamental channel for its economic development, especially under the form of the ordo-liberal ideology.

Together with their French counterparts, the Christian-Democratic chancellors were constantly the architects of the most important integration steps, which led to the establishment of the European Union. During the 1950s, the CDU's chancellorship of Konrad Adenauer, perceived the inherent potential of the authority transfer towards the European institutions, which could buttress the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) national interests. Indeed, this project was understood as the key political device to break the post-war FRG insulation and to stabilize the country's democratic institutions. There were extensive concerns over the lack of a liberal-democratic tradition (Diez Medrano 2003), but the European integration could spur a process of democratic consolidation. Furthermore, the country's economy was mostly based on exports, which were strictly limited by the external control of International Ruhr authority, holding back FRG industrial development. The CDU political elite was rightly expecting to take advantage of the establishment of the European free exchange area, which subsequently was dominated by German exports (Lees 2008; Bulmer and Paterson 2013). Thus, the FRG's economic

interests were assumed to be linked to the process of European integration that had to be achieved under the core aegis of the French-German political partnership (Paterson 2011).

The party had maintained its strong Pro-European stances during the Helmut Kohl Presidency and his following Chancellorship (1982-1998). Though the CDU Chancellor had been aware that the entire process of German unification would have been conditioned by further European integration, he was still able to steer the negotiations that led to the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. Ordo-liberal principles were basically integrated into the Maastricht Treaty and, subsequently, in the Amsterdam Treaty, by setting up strict SGP convergence criteria within the EMU countries (Bulmer 2014). Even the ECB was created in the image of the Bundesbank to calm domestic anxieties over potential inflation and to meet the set stability goals (Howarth and Rommerskirchen 2013). In a nutshell, the reunified Germany imposed its economic model and objectives on the European level and this political process was mainly achieved under the impetus of the Christian Democratic political elite. Therefore, the CDU's unalterable Pro-European reputation has appeared to be embedded in the preponderance of ordo-liberal principles and the deepening growth of economic integration, which have made Germany the most obvious beneficiary of European integration.

Before the outbreak of the economic crisis, under the leadership of Angela Merkel, the CDU clearly turned out to be the strongest Pro-European actor within the German party system. As a matter of fact, our first empirical round shows this dynamic, where this party adopted a very discernible Europhile position by markedly staking out positive references on the general integration issue (6.4). At this stage, Angela Merkel brought the CDU into line with its conventional Pro-European stance by blatantly endorsing the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty

during the Bundestag debate (Wimmel and Edwards 2011). In doing so, the party favoured the major institutional amendments at the EU level, which entailed an increasing supranational integration by establishing the Council's presidency and the High Representative (HR) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. However, the CDU's level of Entrepreneurship was quite modest, probably revealing the scant systemic saliency of the EU issues in Germany, successfully kept at the margins of the political debate by the ideological collusion of the Mainstream parties.

Tab. 6.3 CDU's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and

<b>CDU</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</b>
<b><i>EU Position</i></b>	6.4	6.0	6.4	0
<b><i>Party Type</i></b>	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Stable
<b><i>EU Saliency</i></b>	6.7	8	6.9	0.2
<b><i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i></b>	6	5.2	10.4	4.4
<b><i>Party Strategy</i></b>				Entrepreneurship Increase

Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

Our post-crisis empirical rounds have drawn a very interesting, and somewhat unexpected scenario, showing the CDU's resiliency in steadily supporting European integration. In spite of the rise of the Radical Right party in German, the AfD, the Christian Democratic party has not colluded on Euroscepticism, maintaining its Pro-European reputation (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2017). While

many centre-right political actors have tried to dampen the electoral consolidation of the Radical Right parties by embracing a qualified Euro-scepticism, the CDU has had a different policy strategy on EU issues. It is worth noting that altering its credibility as Euro-supportive would have been a challenging political operation for the CDU, given its old allegiance to the whole European project.

Hence, the party has not dealt with the Euro Crisis by changing its ideological stand or de-emphasizing the EU related issues. On the contrary, the CDU level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship has intensified over time, revealing a noteworthy increase (+4.4) compared to its pre-crisis score. Although this entrepreneurship growth has been largely due to the polarizing effect introduced by the emergence of the AFD, the CDU has not avoided tackling the EU issues dimension during the post-crisis period. This finding largely contradicts many previous works on the strategic efforts achieved by the established Pro-European parties (De Vries and Edwards 2009; Hobolt and De Vries 2012; Rovny 2012; Börzel and Risse 2018). In fact, we show that the Euro Crisis has spurred an increasing CDU entrepreneurship, which has overtly contrasted with the Anti-European parties on this policy ground.

We maintain that since the outset of the Eurozone crisis, the governing CDU has faced many political dilemmas and domestic constraints, especially those related to bailout packages for the debtor countries. At the beginning, Angela Merkel was apparently reluctant to aid the Greek government in solving its troublesome public finance crisis, asserting the need for compliance with the existing set of budgetary rules. Since the contagion effect became unavoidable, spreading towards Portugal, Ireland, and eventually Italy and Spain, she has been fully engaged in preventing the Eurozone from falling apart (Bulmer 2014). Consequently, Merkel and most CDU ministers

and officials have largely advocated for the need for these measures, held to be conducive for German interests. In fact, they have mostly framed their Pro-European political discourse in utilitarian terms by highlighting the inherent assets related to the single currency, which ensure economic stability and guarantee against the resurgence of new conflicts (Howarth and Rommerskirchen 2013; Grimm 2015). The CDU has been largely able to shape the Euro Crisis debate at the domestic level, conditioning, or even marginalizing, the other Mainstream party actors, which were basically compelled to vote in favour of the rescue packages.

Moreover, the German government has aimed at compensating for the lack of fiscal coordination within the Eurozone by undertaking extensive reformist actions at the EU level. Since 2010, the CDU Chancellor has manoeuvred broad negotiations within the intergovernmental channels to establish a new set of rules (Fabbrini 2013), which reached a climax with the approval of the Fiscal Compact Treaty. Angela Merkel has clearly led a coalition of creditor member states to set in motion a more fiscally coordinated Eurozone, which may be more equipped to cope with the emergence of new crises (Laffan 2014a). The Fiscal Compact Treaty has introduced automatic mechanisms to reduce budgetary deficit and public debt within the member state constitutions. *“This approach to resolving the crisis comes straight out of the ordo-liberal toolbox: stringent fiscal rules with little or no scope for discretionary intervention”* (Bulmer 2014, 1254). The CDU has been successfully committed to transferring its chief paradigms within the Eurozone countries, further bolstering its support for European integration. Indeed, the party has consistently staked out clear-cut Pro-European positions, which have always been constant in its political platform.

Paterson (2011) has rightly identified a rising political dynamic in Germany, where further integration steps have to be politically framed and rationally warranted by the party and governmental actors. We argue that Angela Merkel has gradually developed a deep-seated strategy on the EU issues, which has come to the public surface in the post-crisis era. The Chancellor has actually framed her Pro-European support by resorting to *ordo-liberal* principles and the *Stability Culture* (Howarth and Rommerskirchen 2013). Furthermore, Merkel has also acquired a strong reputation as an effective Euro Crisis manager (Schmidt 2014), who has ensured German economic recovery. Thus, the party has provided voters with considerable Euro-Pragmatic shortcuts, justifying further integration steps by claiming national interests. In doing so, the party has increased its degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, being likely to maximize its electoral preferences on the Pro-\Anti-European political dimension and not only by exploiting the traditional sources of political contestation.

### **6.5 Christian Social Union (CSU)**

Although the CDU has never hosted within its ranks notable Anti-European party wings, its sister party, the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), has more recurrently expressed some criticism towards the European building (Arzheimer 2015). According to Lees (2008), since the unification, the CSU has developed an anti-interventionist stand, contesting the excessive intrusion of the European institutions in domestic affairs. In doing so, the CSU has never radically changed its Pro-European identity, being in favour of general integration, but it has advocated for the principle of subsidiarity at the EU level (Wagemann 2014). In fact, this Regionalist party has opposed the

Federalist bias of the European project, to safeguard its room for manoeuvre in the pre-existing statehood organization of Germany (Wimmell and Edwards 2011).

In 2006, the CSU was displaying Pro-European attitudes, but without drawing any substantial attention to these matters. In fact, before the onset of the recession, this party had been more intent on reckoning with other political matters related to economic or territorial dimensions of contestation, rather than engaging in EU related issues. Therefore, the CSU level of entrepreneurship had been negligible, proving the scant party involvement in the European integration conflict.

Tab. 6.4. CSU's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<b>CSU</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</b>
<b><i>EU Position</i></b>	5.4	4.9	4.8	-0.6
<b><i>Party Type</i></b>	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Stable
<b><i>EU Saliency</i></b>	5.8	7.2	6.6	0.8
<b><i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i></b>	0.6	3	0.7	0.1
<b><i>Party Strategy</i></b>				Entrepreneurship Decrease

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

The Euro Crisis has not brought about sizeable changes in strategy for this party. Though the CSU has moderated its Pro-European position, perhaps aiming at colluding with the AFD Soft-Euroscepticism, and has enhanced the emphasis attached to EU issues, the party's degree of Entrepreneurship has never reached a high level. The CSU has

apparently reacted by undertaking a more accommodating strategy towards the Anti-European cues raised by the AFD (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2017). Nonetheless, the party has ended up by exhibiting a very opaque position on general integration in its programme, and probably will eliminate this source of political contestation. Thus, we predict that the EU Issues have not exerted a noticeable impact on the CSU voting preferences, which have probably been determined by other factors.

## **6.6 The Socialist Democratic Party of Germany (SPD)**

The Socialist Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) has historically had a more complex and troubled relation with the European integration project compared to its chief Centre-Right counterpart. Indeed, until the mid-fifties, this party had chiefly given priority to the German reunification, retaining that European integration was unable to coexist with this core political objective (Paterson 2011). Moreover, the acceptance of integration processes would have meant the relinquishing of the Social Market Economy, which was the cornerstone of the SPD economic programme. This party had actually been endorsing state interventionism, welfare policies and redistributive-oriented measures, which were substantially jeopardized by the neo-liberal bias of the European project. This early SPD Euro-scepticism was largely shared by the whole Social-Democratic party family in Europe (Marks and Wilson 2000; Kriesi 2007).

Nonetheless, the party positions on European integration underwent a substantial shift under the leadership of Willy Brandt. Willy Brandt had been committed to a whole party ideological renewal, which symbolically took place at the Bad Godesberg Convention in 1959, resulting in a refurbished SPD platform. This broad ideological

modification brought about a softening in the party's most radical stances against capitalism, which had mainly lead the SPD towards a more favourable position to European integration. In spite of claiming an increasing Pro-European stand, Willy Brandt's Chancellorship (1969-1974) developed the so-called *Ostpolitik* as its fundamental mainstay in foreign policies, mostly pursuing establishing new treaties with Eastern European countries rather than engaging in European project consolidation (Paterson 2011). On the contrary, under Helmut Schmidt's Chancellorship (1974-1982), the SPD Pro-European switch turned out to be more discernible at the public level. In fact, Schmidt achieved many important results on the ground of European integration, by engineering the European Monetary System (EMS) and strengthening German cooperation with the French presidency. During the Kohl era (1982-1998), while the SPD was suffering a long-term marginalization from government, the party preserved its positive orientations towards European integration, endorsing all the fundamental integration steps that occurred in that period. However, the SPD did not draw attention to European related issues, which were not recognized as an electoral asset by the party officials. After the leadership takeover of Gerard Schröder in 1998, the party strategy on EU issues went through another notable transformation. According to Lees (2008), the SPD increasingly criticized some facets of European integration, defined as incompatible with national interests, channelling some growing Eurosceptic sentiments in Germany. For instance, Schröder took a tough position against the EU common budget, where Germany was supposed to play the major role of paymaster, supplying 60% of the net contributions (Sloam 2003). The party developed a Euro-Pragmatist approach, where further integration steps were basically conditioned by compliance with German domestic interests. By adopting this ideological stance, the

SPD ushered in a new era in German policy debate on European integration, which was no longer taken for granted. In fact, the party introduced a more realistic view on EU issues (Sloam 2003; Paterson 2011; Bulmer 2014) in all the German political landscape, undermining the pre-established broad Euro-Enthusiastic consensus, which had probably saw its peak during the Kohl Chancellorship. We should point out that although advancing recurrent objections towards the EU building, the SPD maintained its Pro-European attitude, becoming a pragmatic supporter of the ever-increasing integration.

Furthermore, in spite of many principled commitments displayed by the SPD platform, Schröder had gradually rejected a Social Europe project (Wimmel and Edwards 2011). The party fully embraced the third way ideology and it did not carry out a consistent strategy for transposing a Keynesian model at the European level. On the contrary, during their time in office, the German Social Democrats had sustained the economic-deepening framework of the EU, also supporting the enlargement steps, which could boost German exports (Schmidt 2014). Thus, in the wake of the Euro Crisis, the SPD has been a strong Euro-Pragmatic actor, profiling itself as a more neo-liberal agent on the terrain of European integration.

In our first empirical round (2006), before the start of the economic crisis, the SPD was a junior partner within a Grand Coalition government, jointly with the CDU-CSU. Unsurprisingly, the degree of ideological collusion between the two chief governing parties was very strong on integration policies, as both political formations claimed firm Pro-European stances. Nonetheless, the SPD's attached saliency to EU issues remained lower compared to its main government partner and, consequently, its level of Entrepreneurship score turned out to be very modest (2.6). Hence, in 2006, the party was not engaged in distinguishing itself on the ground of European

integration maximize its share of votes and EU issues held a secondary role in the German political debate.

Tab. 6.6. SPD's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<b>SPD</b>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	6	5.9	6.4	0.4
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	5.2	6.8	6.8	1.6
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	2.6	3.6	10.2	7.6
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

According to Wimmel and Edwards (2011), during the Lisbon Treaty debate in the Bundestag, the SPD adopted an outright appeal for a Social Europe, which had been previously abandoned by the Schröder Chancellorship, demanding a tighter market regulation at the EU level. However, the German Social Democrats ended up by enthusiastically approving this Treaty, without marking any significant ideological difference compared to the CDU. Thus, we contend that the pre-crisis period had been characterized by a widespread Mainstream parties' cooperation on European issues, which had been uncontested by the SPD.

The outbreak of the Euro Crisis has further limited the room for manoeuvre of this party, which has suffered the clear-cut dominance of the Ordo-liberal principles inherent to the Stability Culture at the

domestic level (Howarth and Rommerskirchen 2013). Angela Merkel has been capable of steering the whole debate on the management of the Euro Crisis, while the SPD was kept at the margins of these discussions. Furthermore, in spite of some effective actions undertaken by the SPD Minister of Finance, Peer Steinbrück, the German Chancellor has been credited as the most successful manager of the crisis according to public perceptions, soundly defeating the Social-Democrats at the 2009 Federal elections (Schmidt 2014). Consequently, the 2010 empirical observation has still witnessed a pattern of SPD scant entrepreneurship on EU issues, which has been due to its substantial programmatic concurrence with the other parties. From 2010 until 2012, the debate on the Euro Crisis had reached a peak in Germany (Kriesi and Grande 2016) and it had basically revolved around the issue of the bailout packages for the debtor countries. The SPD approved these rescue measures, which had been subjected to strict austerity conditions for the insolvent states. However, the party has gradually outlined a distinctive stance on this set of issues. In fact, while Angela Merkel has successfully framed these rescue packages as beneficial for national interests, the SPD has advocated for the mitigation of the austerity conditions for the debtors, also supporting a more Pro-Growth European course (Schmidt 2014; Schmitt-Beck 2017). Moreover, “*SPD leader, Sigmar Gabriel, called for the introduction of Eurobonds and far-reaching European reforms to effectively tackle the instability of financial markets arising from the insolvency risk of individual states*” (Grimm 2015, 267). Thus, when the EU issues had probably peaked to a systemic saliency in Germany, the Social-Democrats strengthened their profile of as Pro-European actors by emphasizing a well-defined vision of a Social Europe (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2017).

Indeed, the 2014 empirical round reflected the SPD entrepreneurship increase, which markedly widened (+7.6 points) compared to the pre-crisis period. This growth has probably been spurred by Eurozone turbulence, which has brought about new strategic incentives for Social-Democrats. They have repositioned themselves on many European social issues by sustaining a stronger intra-state solidarity and, consequently, relinquishing the Euro-Pragmatist orientation assumed during the Schröder era. The SPD has taken on a more idealistic European frame, being likely to become one of the strongest Euro-Federalist supporters, jointly with the Greens, domestically. This tactical effort has been magnified by the rise of the Anti-European party, the AfD, which has introduced a polarization of the German parties' position along the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension. The SPD has adopted a conflicting strategy on EU issues, broadly confronting all the right-oriented parties (CDU-CSU, FDP and AfD) and, therefore, being likely to politicize the European integration conflict in Germany. In a nutshell, after the onset of this world-wide financial turmoil, the Social-Democrats have maintained their reputation as a Pro-European actor, slightly shifting their position along the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimensionality.

According to Schmidt (2014), this strategy has not brought the party any substantial electoral payoffs, estranging a large portion of their middle-class constituents. Indeed, the Stability Culture has almost turned out to be a valence issue during the Euro Crisis in Germany, being the most effective tactical device at the disposal of the Christian Democrats (Howarth and Rommerskirchen 2013). Indeed, the SPD has not developed a strong reputation concerning the stability related issues, broadly popular at the mass level, which have been unquestionably owned by the CDU. On the contrary, the SPD has deliberately avoided framing European policies in pragmatic or

utilitarian terms, advocating for a more idealistic approach for European economic solidarity. In doing so, the party has probably attracted the more Euro-Enthusiast German voters, which may have been an important driving factor in explaining the party electoral preferences in the post-crisis period. Thus, we hypothesize that behind the traditional determinants of the SPD voting propensity, related to the Left-Right dimension, the EU issues have probably increased the impact exerted on the party support compared to the pre-crisis era.

### **6.7 Alliance 90\the Greens and the Free Democratic Party (FDP)**

The two minor Mainstream Pro-European parties, the Alliance 90\the Greens and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), have dealt with the European integration conflict by coming up with different strategies. Since the 1980s, the German Greens have gradually adjusted their positions on Pro-\Anti-European issues by becoming one of most consistent Europhile actors in the German party system. According to Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002), the Green party family has developed Pro-European attitudes by conceiving this project as a political device for achieving their environmental goals. Thus, their GAL (Green\Alternative\Libertarian) broad ideological orientations have historically been the major determinant in fostering the Greens' pragmatic support for European integration. The German Greens ideological leap emerged while they were performing the role of junior partners within the Schröder cabinets (1998-2005). As a matter of fact, the Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer, clearly shifted the party towards well-defined Pro-European stances, redrawing the party profile. During that period, the party manifesto laid down many positive references to the general European

integration. “*In terms of the benefits the Greens saw the EU as the platform from which the party’s long-standing ideological objectives – international peace and cooperation, social justice, environmental protection and development, and the protection of the ‘European social model’ – could be achieved.*” (Lees 2008, 23-24).

Tab. 6.7. Greens’ EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<b>Alliance 90\the Greens</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</b>
<i>EU Position</i>	5.8	6.0	6.2	0.4
<i>Party Type</i>	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Stable
<i>EU Saliency</i>	5.7	6.5	6.1	0.4
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	1.7	4.2	7.9	6.2
<i>Party Strategy</i>				Entrepreneurship Increase

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015b)

In 2006, before the onset of the Euro Crisis, the Greens had rallied the voters around a Pro-European platform, but without noticeably highlighting the EU issues at the domestic level. Indeed, their EU Issue Entrepreneurship happened to be very weak (1.7), outperformed by most of the other Pro-European actors. Though the Green party has generally been a strong supporter of general European integration, it has recurrently advanced many criticisms regarding its embodiment, stressing its lack of democratic accountability and the deficiencies of its Social dimensions (Wimmel and Edwards 2011).

Their petition for a stronger Social Europe has been probably boosted by the outbreak of the Eurozone crisis, arguing against Angela

Merkel's policies on the ground of the bailout policies. In fact, the party, jointly with the SPD, has sponsored more redistributive policies at the EU level to soften the burden of the insolvent countries (Grimm 2015; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2017). As a consequence, the Greens have enhanced their programmatic emphasis on EU issues, strengthening their entrepreneurship on the European integration conflict. Though this entrepreneurship increase has not been comparable to that achieved by the CDU or SPD, it has heralded a notable switch in party strategy on European integration. Moreover, even if the SPD has followed a similar strategic pattern during the period, the Greens have appeared to be the authentic owners of European Social issues, given their long-term dedication to this policy sub-field. Therefore, they may have electorally exploited the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality by framing a favourable discourse on the general integration, which also takes into account the importance of the social issues on which they had gained a greater reputation than the Social-Democrats.

In spite of their early opposition towards the first integration steps, (Almeida 2008; Paterson 2011), the Free Democratic Party of Germany (FDP) has subsequently built up a substantial Pro-European position, standing for the market-deepening processes and the free circulation of people and goods. Indeed, the FDP has framed this support by predominantly employing pragmatist and utilitarian arguments (Lees 2008), marking a distance from many other European Liberal parties, which have resorted to a large share of cultural issues (multi-cultural\cosmopolitan ones) to endorse European integration (Kriesi et al. 2006; Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest 2010; Hoeglinger 2016b). We argue that the Euro Crisis has

undermined the efficacy of these arguments, raising several difficulties for this party at the domestic level.

In 2006, the party held Pro-European stances, as the other governmental actors (CDU-CSU, SPD and the Greens) and, thus, it fell into the Mainstream integrationist consensus, but without placing any significant emphasis on EU related issues. Consequently, the FDP level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship had remained unimportant in the pre-crisis period and the party had not attempted to electorally compete on an alternative policy dimension, based on the Pro-\-Anti-European stances.

During the discussions on the Lisbon Treaty, the FDP stressed the market-oriented benefits associated with this further step in European integration (Wimmel and Edwards 2011). The German liberals' chief goal on the European level had been to strengthen the common-market, which could have resulted in valuable assets for German exports. The party seemed to typify the dynamic of the liberal-conservative parties, which were likely to support general integration to achieve their core economic targets (Marks and Wilson 2000; Kriesi 2007). Nevertheless, the FDP had not rejected a strengthening of common defence and foreign policies that could have guaranteed a lasting peace and prosperity on the continent.

The Euro Crisis has apparently prompted internal divisions and ideological inconsistencies within the FDP, which has tried to dampen the European integration conflict within German policy debate. The Liberals have approved of the rescue packages for the insolvent states, warranting this support with the strict austerity conditions imposed on these countries (Grimm 2015). However, these bailout measures probably created a wedge in this party, spurring strong inner controversies, which led to the resignation of the party leader, Guido Westerwelle in 2011 (Huber 2017). By consistently leaning to the

right of the ideological continuum (Arzheimer 2015), this party was probably expected by the voters to assume more conservatives (or radical ordo-liberal) stances on this set of EU related policies. On the contrary, the party remained a Pro-European actor, without channelling the anxieties related to the bailout policies, which have been probably seized by the AFD. Furthermore, these intra-party divisions may have prevented the Liberals from gaining any public recognition for the management of the Euro Crisis, while Angela Merkel increased her reputation for the results achieved by the German government.

Tab. 6.9. FDP's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<b>FDP</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</b>
<b><i>EU Position</i></b>	6.3	6.0	5.7	-0.6
<b><i>Party Type</i></b>	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Stable
<b><i>EU Saliency</i></b>	4.8	6.3	5.5	0.7
<b><i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i></b>	3.9	4.1	4.4	0.5
<b><i>Party Strategy</i></b>				Entrepreneurship Decrease

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

In fact, in the aftermath of the Euro Crisis, we may observe that the FDP Issue Entrepreneurship has languished. The party has not attempted to alter its position on EU issues, without ideologically colluding with the AFD on this ground, nor has it attached any noteworthy emphasis on EU issues, aiming at escaping from the

perilous intra-party divisions. It is worth noting that the FDP has undertaken a blurred strategy on EU issues in a context of growing politicization of the European integration conflict, whereas most political parties have increased their entrepreneurship. Thus, we contend that EU issues have not been a prominent driving factor in swaying FDP electoral support after the eruption of the crisis and probably their explanatory power has progressively diminished over time. The Liberals have seemed to suffer more acutely from the emergence of the AFD, which has electorally mobilized the more radical interpretations of ordo-liberalism, crowding out some FDP strategic tools. In fact, the party has been one of the losers of the economic recession, without reaching the necessary 5% electoral threshold at the 2013 Federal Elections, it was not able to enter the Bundestag.

## **6.8 Conclusions**

The German party system has empirically confirmed our hypothesis on the Protest parties (*HI*), which have provided voters with stronger Anti-European cues by increasing their level of EU Issues Entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, the Euro Crisis has prompted a more systemic change in the German electoral supply, whereas even the Mainstream parties have enhanced their entrepreneurial efforts regarding the EU issues.

In the aftermath of Eurozone crisis, the Mainstream parties (namely, the CDU, SPD and the Greens) have sharply conflicted with the Protest actors along the Pro-\Anti-European issue dimension, probably fuelling the politicization of the European integration conflict. In fact, the Mainstream Pro-European political subjects have not carried out a dismissal activity on EU issues, but have publicly clarified their policy

position on general integration. Thus, these parties have been committed to endeavouring to achieve an elite position on the European policy dimension, which represents the first step in the sequence of issue evolution (Carmines and Stimson 1986). This dynamic has clearly invalidated our *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis (H2)* that has envisaged the shrinking levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship among the Mainstream parties in the post-crisis period. On the contrary, the CDU, SPD and the Greens have produced a more intense and homogenous level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship in the German political landscape, where the location on the Left-Right dimension has not resulted in any significant effect on party strategies. In the German scenario, the Euro Crisis was a catalyst in strengthening the European Integration politicization, changing the party strategies. This Entrepreneurship had been spread on the whole ideological divide, also involving Mainstream Pro-European parties. This systemic entrepreneurship probably hastened the establishment of the Pro-Anti-European dimension of political contestation. In fact, most of German parties were committed in colliding on the European integration, which resulted to be more politicized. The open confrontations between Pro-European and Anti-European party actors may unleash a more intense debate on the EU issues, turning out to matter of political contestation, conditioning voting preferences. Therefore, an electoral re-alignment on the Pro-Anti-European policy dimension appears to be more likely, given the widespread entrepreneurial efforts made by the major Protest and Mainstream parties in Germany. Since the start of the Euro Crisis, we expected an intensification of the EU Issue Voting, which has probably conditioned more intensively the electoral preferences within German politics.

## **7. Unstable EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Blurred Shortcuts: the Italian Case**

In the aftermath of the Euro Crisis, most Italian parties have primed the issues related to European integration, systemically increasing entrepreneurship. In spite of some similarities with the German case, where collision on EU issues has involved all the main parties, this country presents some outstanding peculiarities. First and foremost, the Italian situation has been characterized by the changing direction of political competition on this policy dimension, where it is not only the Protest parties that have broken the Pro-European consensus. Indeed, two Centre-Right Mainstream actors (PDL-FI and AN-FDI) have changed their stances on this policy ground, becoming authentic Anti-European advocates. Moreover, the joint strategic efforts of a new Protest Party, the M5S, along with a pre-established party, the LN, have markedly bolstered the Italian Anti-European electoral supply. Thus, the Italian case epitomizes the flourishing of the Eurosceptic outlet within the party system, marking a significant change from the pre-crisis era. Indeed, before the financial crisis, this political landscape was noted for its broad Pro-European support, shared by the majority of the party actors (Conti 2006; Quaglia 2008). Nonetheless, growing EU Issue Entrepreneurship has not been simply associated with the ideological extremism on the Left-Right ideological continuum nor with the Anti-European thinking. In fact, two Mainstream Pro-European parties (PD and NCD) have tried to activate this EU-related issue dimensionality, responding to the Protest parties' tactical activities. Furthermore, the M5S has maintained a centrist position on the traditional s left-right conflicts and its Anti-European entrepreneurship has probably been determined by its populist ideology. On the contrary, the Radical Left has not

exploited the opportunities provided by the Euro Crisis, not behaving as a political entrepreneur. Therefore, many have refuted the *Mainstream entrepreneurship* hypothesis, while the *Protest entrepreneurship* hypothesis, in spite of some outliers, has been substantially borne out by the Italian parties.

The 2013 general elections in Italy fell into the category of *critical elections* (Key 1955), reflecting an impressive level of Total Electoral Volatility (TEV) (Bartolini and Mair 1990), reaching a score of 39.1 (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2014). This trend has mirrored a significant electoral realignment at the mass level, coupled with emergence of new electoral parties. In fact, party competition patterns have radically changed, marking an unprecedented rate of a voting shift from the two pre-established electoral coalitions (Centre-Right and Centre-Left) towards new parties, namely the M5S and Civic Choice (SC). These electoral trends have revealed a genuine *tripolarization* of the Italian electoral supply, which has apparently brought to a close the bipolar era. Moreover, both the Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) and Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPP) have risen compared to previous elections (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2014), indicating a growing fragmentation. Many party actors have emerged during the post crisis-era, resulting from the internal splits of some pre-existing political subjects (FI, FDI, NCD), while new ones have been created *ex-novo* (M5S). Moreover, some interesting party mergers (PD and PDL) occurred in the pre-crisis period, revealing the ever-present national electoral fluidity. The changing electoral supply on the Pro-\Anti-European issue dimension has interacted with this electoral fragmentation, raising further difficulties in analysing the Italian case. In fact, a larger number of parties have been taken into account compared to other national cases, thus, extending the length of the

Italian contribution.

## 7.1 The Northern League (LN)

Many overviews have assessed the pronounced positional flexibility achieved by the Northern League (LN) along the Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension (Giordano 2004; Quaglia 2005; Conti 2006; Quaglia 2008; Diamanti 2009; Conti and Di Giorgi 2011), probably reflecting the party's strategic use of EU issues in domestic political contestation.

The party identity has gone through different phases (see: Diamanti 2009): “*it switched between federalist and secessionist positions in the 1990s, and back to a federalist one after 2000,*” (Bosco and McDonnell 2014, 164). In fact, the LN was the first political actor in Italy to rally the voters under a federalist or overtly secessionist political platform, turning out to be an ethno-regionalist party (Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001; McDonnell 2006). Consequently, since its foundation as a political party in 1991, the party programme has revolved around the political empowerment of the Northern regions or the construction of an alternative state entity (the so-called *Padania*), challenging the current embodiment of the Italian centralized state. In doing so, this party strongly criticized the state bureaucracy inefficiencies and the redistributive policies in favour of the Southern regions, which were detrimental to Northern interests. Nonetheless, during this stage, the Northern League identified the EU as a hospitable environment to achieve its main policy goals, including the foundation of the *Padania*. In fact, the party elite perceived European integration as a political device to reduce the prerogatives of the nation-state and to move towards the “Europe of Regions” (Morini 2017), which could foster a more European-wide decentralization

process. According to Huysseune (2010), the LN's state-building objective was strongly embedded in a Pro-European discourse and the party leaders were advocating the European-ness of the whole *Padania*. Consequently, from 1991 until 1998, the party had expressed a significant Pro-European political stance, approving the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and supporting accession to the EMU (Quaglia 2005; Quaglia 2008).

When the Centre-Left government, led by Romano Prodi, entered the single currency in 1998, the Northern League promptly reversed its thinking towards European integration. In fact, the party politically exploited the alleged Italian incapacity to meet the established convergence criteria for justifying the creation of Padania, which was more qualified to join the EMU (Quaglia 2008; Diamanti 2009). This integration step fundamentally brought about a political setback for the LN, which had expected the Government to fail. Furthermore, the integration process, as a whole, was increasingly seen as a hurdle for de-centralization that was targeted by the LN. "*The EU institutions were accused of being in a process of state-building that aimed at replacing nation-states with a new 'super-state' which would hinder the development of local identities*" (Conti 2006, 224). Thus, the party embarked on an Anti-European ideological path, which occurred along with its radical rightward shift along the traditional dimension of political conflict (Conti 2003; Caiani and Conti 2014). Indeed, although the LN had not emerged with a nationalist identity, it had increasingly outlined a radical anti-immigration and populist discourse (Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001; Bobba and McDonnell 2015), advocating for the economic interests of the globalization losers (for this notion see Kriesi et al. 2006), including the farmers and small entrepreneurs of the north. Therefore, we argue that since the end of the 1990s the party has shared many characteristics with the Radical

Right party family, including the principled opposition to European integration.

The LN course of EU Issue Entrepreneurship has followed a very distinctive pattern compared to the majority of the Protest Anti-European actors under analysis. In fact, before the beginning of the financial crisis (2006), the party had already displayed an exceptional level of Entrepreneurship (23.5), assuming a clear-cut Eurosceptic stance (1.5) and attaching a relatively important emphasis to EU issues (6.7). The LN clearly established its ownership on the Anti-European political cues, by breaking a Pro-European consensus that was characterizing the Italian context at the time (Roux and Verzichelli 2010). Consequently, at this stage, the party utilized the EU issues to develop an Anti-Cartel strategy, probably aiming at distinguishing itself from the other parties in the European domain to reinvigorate its electoral fortunes (Giordano 2004). Indeed, the LN was seeking to maximize its share of Protest voting by highlighting the Anti-European issues in Italy.

However, our second empirical round (2010) has witnessed a notable fluctuation in the LN attitudes to European integration. The party has actually moderated its stance along the Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension and reduced the focus on EU issues in its political platform. As a result, its degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship collapsed in the immediate post-crisis period, disconfirming our expectations on this Protest Anti-European party. We contend that the LN governmental status in 2010 could have largely explained this changing strategy on European integration, prompting a decreasing entrepreneurship on this alternative dimension of contestation. By examining the LN roll-call voting in the Italian Parliament, Conti and De Giorgi (2011) have found a scant congruence between the party's self-declared Anti-Europeanism and its legislative conduct, which has

been recurrently Euro-pragmatic. This acquiescence towards European integration has had different peaks over the years, especially when the party was in a governing role and it endorsed the Nice and Lisbon Treaties. Thus, the LN was often constrained in expressing its Eurosceptic stand by prominent institutional factors. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, although it had adopted some rather blurred tactics on European integration, this party had been the most likely to play up the EU issues in the Italian party system during our first post-crisis round.

Tab. 7.1 LN's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<b>LN</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</b>
<b><i>EU Position</i></b>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>-0.4</i>
<b><i>Party Type</i></b>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<b><i>EU Saliency</i></b>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8.5</i>	<i>1.8</i>
<b><i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i></b>	<i>23.7</i>	<i>13.2</i>	<i>25.5</i>	<i>1.8</i>
<b><i>Party Strategy</i></b>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

Our last empirical observation (2014) highlights a further strategic reverse concerning this political subject, which has increasingly conveyed Anti-European messages to its constituents. In November 2011, after the downfall of the Berlusconi government, the party was subjected to several judicial investigations pertaining to the misappropriation of public\party funding. This involved many important LN officials, including the founder, Umberto Bossi. These investigations, coupled with the post-crisis government incumbency,

weakened the reputation of the party, which suffered a heavy electoral setback in the general elections of 2013 (Bobba and McDonnell 2015). The above-mentioned events destabilized the party's dominant coalition (for this notion see: Panebianco 1988), paving the way for a landmark leadership turnover, when Matteo Salvini won the party primaries in December 2013, defeating Umberto Bossi.

Salvini seizing of power has ushered in a new era for the party, as he has embarked the LN on a thorough ideological and strategic renovation. In fact, under his leadership, this party has relinquished the politicization of the Centre-Periphery cleavage (Morlino and Raniolo 2017), ceasing to emphasize regional questions. On the contrary, Salvini has largely focused on and tackled the European integration conflict, exploiting the growing windows of opportunity opened up by the Euro Crisis, which has noticeably increased popular opposition towards Europe (Di Mauro 2014). Indeed, we can observe that the LN degree of entrepreneurship started to grow again in 2014, topping the indexes obtained in the preceding empirical observations. This increase was mainly due to a radical Anti-European shift achieved by the party, which has assumed a very extreme Anti-European position (1.1), coupled with a noteworthy intensification of the saliency attached to EU issues (8.5). The LN has crusaded for the austerity policies imposed by the Franco-German management of the Euro Crisis, blaming the European institutions for the worsening economic conditions in Italy and launching Anti-European political rallies in the wake of the 2014 Parliamentary elections (Morini 2017). Indeed, Salvini has been keen to promote a national referendum determine the Italian withdrawal from the single currency, without openly campaigning to leave the EU, but firmly denouncing its lack of democratic accountability (Castelli Gattinara and Froio 2014). According to Vercesi (2015), the LN has attempted to politicize the

European integration conflict to broaden its electoral support in the central-southern regions, largely exploiting the anti- single currency arguments. Thus, the activation of this new source of political contestation has probably been conducive to opening up an electoral breach in the southern regions, strengthening the party electoral base.

We contend that the Northern League has probably been capable of combining the protest for austerity policies with some nationalistic-identitarian arguments related to the deepening integration. As a matter of fact, since 2008, Italy has suffered a substantial GDP growth stagnation along with a high increase in the unemployment rate, which reached double figures for the first time in decades (source: Eurostat). Moreover, the Italy's public accounts were exposed to market speculative attacks, resulting from the spill over effects of the Greek sovereign debt crisis. As a consequence, the European Union increased the pressures on the Italian government to implement austerity policies, probably fuelling political protest during a critical economic juncture. In fact, Italy coped with the economic crisis by reducing public spending and undertaking many austerity measures, under the impetus of the European institutions (Morlino and Piana 2014). According to Morlino and Piana (2014), the formation of a technocratic government, led by the former European Commissioner, Mario Monti, epitomized this new policy path, where the Italian Prime Minister was chiefly committed to domestically approving a set of measures bargained for at the European level.

The LN, due to its opposition status, has taken advantage of this during this span of time, protesting against these policies and, thus, becoming an Anti-Austerity party. It has openly campaigned for an increasing inter-state solidarity within the European polity, endorsing the Euro-Bonds and Project-Bonds (Castelli Gattinara and Froio 2014; Morini 2017). We maintain that the party has seized on popular

concerns regarding the weakening of nation-state borders spurred by European integration that has jeopardized the homogeneity of national identities. Indeed, the LN has maintained its pre-established ownership of the anti-immigration issues (Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001; Conti and De Giorgi 2011), which are incompatible with support for European integration. Furthermore, under Salvini's leadership, the party has approached the chauvinistic identity of other Radical Right parties, taking the French FN as its role model (Morlino and Raniolo 2017), increasingly framing its Anti-European discourse in nationalistic-identitarian terms (Grande, Hutter, Kersher and Becker 2016). Therefore, we claim that, after the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, this party has found its winning formula, by blending the economic-utilitarian arguments related to the austerity measures with the more nationalistic ones inherent to the broader integration processes.

Summing up, our expectations are that there will be an increase in LN party preferences along the Pro-\Anti-European issue dimensionality probably enhancing its explanatory power in the post-crisis period. Nevertheless, some factors may have undermined the relation between the voters' positions on EU issues and their propensity to vote for the Northern League. In fact, the party's Anti-European reputation may have been reduced by its positional fluctuations on this policy dimension, perhaps eroding its capacity to gain electoral preferences by prioritizing the EU issues. Furthermore, this party does not fall into the cluster of the *Single Issue Eurosceptic party* (Taggart 1998), displaying broader programmatic facets, including many issues related to the Left-Right conflict. It is worth noting that the traditional conflicts have probably had an effect in determining party electoral support. Finally, it is also worth underling that Euro Crisis has not been the only driver for this Anti-European ideological shift, which has also been influenced by a leadership generational turnover

together with the party return to the opposition.

## 7.2 The Five Star Movement (M5S).

The Five Star Movement (M5S) was officially created in October 2009, setting up its organizational platform from a pre-existing network of *Meetup* groups, which revolved around the political *blog* ([www.beppegrillo.it](http://www.beppegrillo.it)) of the party founder, Beppe Grillo. Since the outset, the M5S has demonstrated its ability to activate on the ground political rallies, harnessing all the potential of its path-breaking *technological infrastructure* (Vignati 2013, 36). Although it has presented some pioneering organizational features, defining itself as a political movement and rejecting a party label, we maintain that the M5S has satisfied the minimum preconditions for a party organization, being a “*political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public offices*” (Sartori 1976, 63-64). Nonetheless, the M5S has remained somewhat elusive in the European political context, belonging neither to the Radical Right nor to the Radical Left party family types, being more embedded in the Italian political culture (Carrieri 2017), where there “*has been one of the strongest and most enduring markets for populist parties in Western Europe.*” (Bobba and McDonnell 2015, 163).

Many works have singled out the distinctive *Populist* character of this party, which has directly appealed to the real people (the civil society), rejecting the inward-oriented political class, derogatorily qualified as the *Caste* (Corbetta and Gualmini 2013; Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013; Bobba and McDonnell 2015; Franzosi, Marone and Salvati 2015). Indeed, under the charismatic leadership of the former comedian, Beppe Grillo, the M5S has lashed out at the professional

politicians, “*considered highly corrupt and aiming at protecting their privileges*”, (Morlino and Raniolo 2017), without advancing any distinction between the Centre-left and Centre-right parties. In doing so, this actor has progressively developed a pure populist political narrative, based on the antagonism between the *people-sovereign* and the democratic representative institutions, mainly embodied by the political parties (Mény and Surel 2002). The latter have been blamed for constraining the expression of the people’s sovereignty, consequently, becoming the chief target of contention. This Manichean outlook has been clearly employed as a tactical device by the party, which has increased its reputation as an Anti-Political and Anti-Establishment actor. Moreover, the M5S has also placed a heavy emphasis on anti-corruption and the reduction in costs of Italian politics, gaining the ownership of these alleged valence issues.

Morlino and Raniolo (2017) have defined the M5S as a *New Protest Party*, regarded as populist, arising from two overlapping processes. Firstly, this party has seemed to be the political outcome of a long-term electoral realignment that has occurred in the Southern European democracies, eroding the popular allegiance towards the representative institutions. Secondly, the M5S has been the offshoot of a more contingent political entrepreneurship, which has sought to channel a growing protest against the Mainstream party actors. In fact, this party has probably captured this widespread protest trend due to the lack of responsiveness of the political parties, which has been worsened by the Euro Crisis. Morlino and Raniolo (2017) have argued that the M5S has incorporated this voice in a democratic and representative channel, translating the protest into Anti-Political attitudes. The mounting incongruences between citizen economic demands and policy outcomes have been magnified by the EU

management of the Euro Crisis, opening up more windows of opportunity for this political actor.

Indeed, the party has been capable of challenging the traditional conflict based on the Left-Right ideological division, achieving an unprecedented electoral success. By rejecting this pre-established political conflict and by owning some important valence issues (Anti-Corruption; Anti-Establishment, etc.), the M5S has stood out as the authentic catch-all party in the Italian party system (Carrieri 2017), capturing a cross-cleavage and cross-partisan electoral support (De Sio and Paparo 2014; Maggini and De Lucia 2014). The party electoral triumph in the 2013 general elections profoundly reshaped the current format of the Italian party system, which has undergone a growing trend towards the tri-polarization of the electoral supply, largely grounded on the political competition of the three electoral coalitions (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2014).

The M5S rejection of the established Left-Right political conflict has been often considered as the main source of its electoral performance. Though, on the contrary, the role fulfilled by the EU issues has been substantially underestimated by the political science literature. Some studies have dealt with the strategies adopted by Grillo's party on European integration, but without evaluating the immediate impact of the EU issues on M5S electoral preferences. Prior to the 2013 general elections, the party programme had not officially expressed any direct reference to EU issues that were on the whole absent from the M5S political discourse (Corbetta and Vignati 2014; Franzosi, Marone and Salvati 2015). During this phase, the M5S apparently appeared to be mainly committed to criticizing the government economic measures, made-up of austerity policies. Nonetheless, Castelli, Gattinara and Froio (2014) underlined that Grillo himself often related these domestic criticisms to EU bureaucracy decision-making, which deeply

influenced the technocratic nature of Monti’s cabinet. Thus, the party was already displaying Anti-European political attitudes, but we argue that the emphasis placed on these issues has been gradually increased by the party elite. According to Franzosi, Marone and Salvati (2015), the M5S has tactically strengthened its critical stance towards European integration in order to gain the electoral advantages of the spreading popular dissent on European building.

Tab. 7.2. M5S’s EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship in 2014

<b>M5S</b>	<b>2014</b>
<i>EU Position</i>	1.4
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	8.5
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	23

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015a)

The 2014 CHES’s round empirically corroborates these theoretical assumptions on the party electoral supply, clearly mirroring the outstanding level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship of the M5S. Indeed, the party has notably primed the EU issues, probably pursuing the politicization of the European integration conflict to increase its electoral support. These strategic efforts have almost matched the attempts achieved by the LN on this dimension, qualifying the M5S as a strong Anti-European political entrepreneur. Indeed, Grillo’s party has significantly cued the voters with Eurosceptic political shortcuts by adopting a radical Anti-European stance (1.4) and over-emphasizing the EU issues (8.5). The M5S has seemed to tactically react to the strong Pro-European position assumed by the Italian

Democratic Party (PD), politically clashing over this new issue dimension. This direct confrontation may have consolidated the politicization of the European integration conflict in Italy, perhaps bringing about widespread popular responses that have produced an electoral realignment along the Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension. Though the M5S has probably seized on these emerging policy divisions on the EU issues in Italy, many questions have still remained open on the nature of its Anti-European opposition. The party has never staked out a principled rejection of European Integration, often referring to the positive legacy of the EC\EU founding fathers and, hence, turning out to be a Soft Eurosceptic political actor (Morlino and Raniolo 2017). In the wake of 2014 EP elections, the M5S outlined its clear opposition to these EU policies that resulted in being discordant with Italian interests. In fact, the party has campaigned on an Anti-European political platform, the *seven-point program for Europe*, by calling for the elimination of the fiscal compact and the creation of the Euro-Bonds. Furthermore, the M5S questioned the Italian membership to the Euro, proposing a national referendum to leave the Eurozone, assuming the status of an anti-currency party. We can observe that this party has noticeably radicalized its Anti-European stances, largely colluding with the LN concerning Anti-Austerity opposition to European integration. Therefore, the party criticism of the European building has seemed to be rooted in socio-economic and utilitarian arguments (Biorcio and Natale 2013), which have shifted the M5S towards the Radical Left parties. However, this party has never structured its critical position to European integration in nationalistic-identitarian terms, moving away from the identity of the Radical Right parties.

Even though Grillo's party joined the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group in the EP, its MEPs have subsequently

revealed their strong ideological proximity to the European United Left – Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL) and the Greens –European Free Alliance (Greens\EFA) (Franzosi, Marone and Salvati 2015). According to Castelli, Gattinara and Froio (2014), the M5S has mainly applied its systemic and populist criticism at the European level. In fact, this party has often denounced the lack of responsiveness and the democratic deficit within the EU, attacking the non-elected bureaucracy and the corrupted political elite, which have limited the expression of the pure people's sovereignty.

We foresee that the M5S has reaped a substantial electoral support by strongly providing its voters with Anti-European hints. In reality, the party elite has unquestionably tried to politicize the European integration conflict, clarifying the M5S positions on this issue dimensionality to spur widespread reaction among the voters. Since the M5S has primarily aimed at colliding with the Europhile PD, it has strategically resorted to the EU issues to create a source of policy distinction from its principal rival. Nonetheless, this party has not been the authentic owner of the Anti-European issues, whereas the LN has strongly advanced its primacy as the Eurosceptic political actor in the Italian party system. Thus, we cannot take as a foregone conclusion the impact of the EU issues on the M5S electoral preferences but instead we can test their explanatory power as one of the key independent variables within an empirical voting model.

### **7.3 Forward Italy\ People of Freedom Party (FI\PDL)**

Silvio Berlusconi's party, *Forward Italy* (FI), has recurrently advanced an opposing position to European integration. In doing so, this party has deviated from the other Centre-Right Mainstream parties in Western Europe, namely those belonging to the European People's Party (EPP), which have consistently been Pro-European. FI

has apparently linked its stand on the EU to Italian national interests, periodically swinging from a Euro-Pragmatic position to a Euro-Critic one. According to Conti (2003; 2006), the party commitment to market liberalism has fostered its favourable orientation towards the integration processes. In fact, FI prioritized the establishment of a free-exchange European area, which could incorporate new member states, including Russia, Israel and the Eastern European countries. Meanwhile, the party has never openly endorsed the construction of a federal EU (Conti 2006; Conti and Memoli 2013), aiming at minimizing the authority transfers to the supranational institutions. The FI has probably embodied the ideological pattern of the European Conservative parties, combining moderate nationalism with market liberalism (Marks and Wilson 2000). These mixed positions have often sparked some caution among the party officials, who have often understood the EU as a minimalist deepening-market project. According to Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002), the FI has belonged to the Right-Wing Mainstream parties with TAN (Traditional\Authoritarian\Nationalist) leanings, being likely to express moderate Anti-European positions or to host some Eurosceptic internal factions.

During his first and brief government experience (1994), Berlusconi took a middle-of-the-road policy stand on EU issues, mediating the existing conflicts between the National Alliance (AN) and Northern League (LN) on European integration (Quaglia 2005; Quaglia 2008). Furthermore, the FI senior member and Foreign Affairs Minister, Antonio Martino, opposed the convergence criteria laid down for the accession to the EMU and Berlusconi himself referred to the opportunity to re-examine the Maastricht Treaty clauses (Quaglia 2008). When the party returned to the opposition, it again proposed the amendment of the convergence criteria to allow Italy to join the

EMU, strongly criticizing the Centre-Left austerity policies. Nonetheless, during this whole period (1994-2001), the FI took on a very blurred position regarding European integration and devoted scant attention to EU issues (Castelli Gattinara and Froio 2014).

In the subsequent period (2001-2008), although the FI had initially showed an openness to a general integration, its relation with the European institutions gradually worsened. In the FI's electoral programme, the so-called "*Contract with the Italians*", Berlusconi pledged many broad reforms and policies, including a large-scale tax reduction, an increase in the minimum pension, a broad employment plan and an enormous infrastructural project. These policy goals collided with the SGP ceilings, which limited the domestic responsiveness of Berlusconi's cabinet (Quaglia and Radaelli 2007).

During the Italian presidency of the EU, the government attempted a reformation of these SGP binding constraints, but it was incapable of forging a successful alliance with other member states to achieve this. Moreover, the EU has intervened in many other policy areas, including media regulation, the conflict of interests' law and the new immigration rules (the Bossi-Fini Law) (Quaglia and Radaelli 2007).

The 2006 empirical round reflected a political tension between the FI and the European institutions. The party displayed a neutral stance on European integration (4.1), assigning a negligible emphasis to the EU issues (5) and, thus, resulting as a very weak political entrepreneur on the Pro-\Anti-European dimension of contestation. The original Pro-European position was unquestionably weakened by the external limitations put forward by the European institutions. Many FI senior ministers, including Giulio Tremonti and Antonio Martino, expressed clear opposition to some of the economic facets of European integration (Quaglia 2005; Quaglia 2008). In a nutshell, in the pre-crisis period, although Berlusconi declared his principled support to

the very foundation of European integration, he was mainly focused on domestic issues. However, many disagreements occurred between the Italian government and the EU actors, gradually generating some Anti-European sentiments within the FI's ranks.

Tab. 7.3. FI\PDL's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<b>FI\PDL</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</b>
<b>EU Position</b>	4.1	4.7	3.5	-0.6
<b>Party Type</b>	Mainstream Neutral	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Anti-European	Unstable
<b>EU Saliency</b>	5	3.7	5.8	0.8
<b>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</b>	4.8	0.7	4.1	-0.7
<b>Party Strategy</b>				Entrepreneurship Decrease

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker et al. 2015)

In 2008, the FI merged with the other Italian Centre-Right party (AN), founding the People of Freedom Party (PDL), which won the 2008 general elections. Conti and Memoli (2013) noted that the PDL had lacked strong references to European integration, noticeably neglecting EU related issues during this period. The 2010 empirical observation has substantially confirmed this finding on the PDL. This party placed minor emphasis on the European integration conflict (3.7), obtaining an insignificant level of EU Issues Entrepreneurship (0.7). By playing down EU issues in public debates, Berlusconi was probably trying to minimize the Euro Crisis impact in Italy. In fact, at the time the European Council was urging the Italian government to

adopt the necessary measures to cope with the increasing public debt. On the contrary, Berlusconi sought to maintain his electoral promises, without raising taxes, and he constantly denied the existence of any economic crisis in Italy. As a result, the Italian government was openly challenged by the European institutions on its economic performance, which triggered a major inter-institutional conflict (Castelli Gattinara and Froio 2014). Berlusconi strategically responded by dismissing the saliency of the EU issues, which were strongly intertwined with the management of the Euro Crisis. The European institutions were sources of political de-legitimation for the Centre-Right government, which also tended to stress the hardships of the financial crisis for the Italian people.

However, this denying strategy could not resist the mounting international pressures, which reached a peak in the autumn of 2011, when an extraordinary European Council summit was held to specifically tackle the Italian crisis. The financial markets had already lost confidence in the government's competence to handle the spill-over effects of the Greek debt crisis, downgrading the rating of the Italian public debt. Consequently, "*Berlusconi resigned on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and was replaced by President Giorgio Napolitano's nominee, Mario Monti, who led a technocratic executive (containing no MPs or party representatives) which swiftly set about introducing the austerity measures desired by Europe and the markets.*" (Bobbia and McDonnell 2015, 170). Nonetheless, Berlusconi largely held the European institutions as responsible for determining his government's downfall that ushered in a pronounced Anti-European turn on the part of the PDL/AFI. In fact, in spite of the party vote of confidence in favour of Monti and the legislative support for the austerity measures approved by the government, the PDL was openly establishing some Euro-sceptic stances, opposing the policy agenda imposed by the EU

(Castelli Gattinara and Froio 2014). During the electoral campaign for the 2013 general elections, Monti was recurrently blamed for his Pro-German leanings, which were placing the Italian economy under pressure. Thus, the PDL adopted outright Anti-European arguments, drawing attention to the negative consequences of the austerity policies that had slowed down economic recovery.

This shifting position is unmistakably clear in our last round (2014), where Berlusconi's party, which has been newly labelled as Forward Italy (FI), took on a negative stance on European integration (3.4), becoming an Anti-European Mainstream party. Indeed, this new-branded party has assumed a moderate Eurosceptic position, revealing a conflicting attitude towards some European actors, including the European People's Party (EPP), which endorsed Monti's party, Civic Choice (SC), in the previous general elections. Although, this party is a notable exception in the European party landscape, being the unique Anti-European political subject within the EPP, it has not notably aimed at politicizing this latent source of political contestation at the national level. The FI has not actually attached an important level of saliency to EU issues (5.8), which have been kept at the fringes of its political platform. Consequently, the party elite has not attempted to any great extent to vie along the Pro-\Anti-European axis of political completion, achieving a fairly stable degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship compared to the pre-crisis era.

In spite of some genuine Anti-European sentiment arising in party as a result of the European management of the crisis, Berlusconi has not strongly perceived the EU issues as an effective electoral asset to be used in the political conflict. His core objective has been the overshadowing of European integration, maintaining the pre-existing set of conflicts, retained to be more conducive to increase party electoral preferences. A window of opportunity has been opened up

by the Euro Crisis, concerning the austerity policies and the lack of domestic responsiveness propelled by the European institutions. Nevertheless, the FI could not entirely seize these political chances, restrained by its incumbency and previous reputation as a supporter of European integration. Thus, we argue that the Euro Crisis has apparently exacerbated some sovereigntist issues found in the background ideology of the party, previously channelled by some party internal wings. To sum up, the FI has expressed a moderate European opposition, which has been related to a determined economic and political conjuncture, but it does not appear committed to achieving a full politicization of this conflict. We predict that the FI has not notably improved its voting support by harnessing the EU issue voting in the post-crisis period.

#### **7.4 The Communist Refoundation Party (PRC) and Left Ecology and Freedom (SEL)**

The Communist Refoundation Party (PRC) stemmed from the PCI, bringing together those who were rejecting the party transformation into the PDS and who were pursuing the Marxist-Leninist ideological legacy. However, under the leadership of Fausto Bertinotti, the party also embraced some post-materialistic values, such as environmentalism and civil rights' issues (Conti and De Giorgi 2011). This political actor fell into the Radical Left party cluster, taking many critical stances against European integration (Conti 2006; Quaglia 2008; Conti 2009). Indeed, the PRC has substantially linked the European project to the deepening of the market economy, which potentially endangers the life quality of the working class. According to Conti (2006), the party assumed the same ideological profile adopted by the Communists during the 1960s, advocating for "*the role*

*and the sovereignty of the nation-state, defined the natural environment for the development of democracy and social rights”* (Ibidem 2006, 221). Thus, the PRC was committed to Anti-Capitalist and sovereignist values, which determined a negative attitude towards the European integration project. This party voted against the Maastricht Treaty, rejecting the single currency and cueing the voters on economic anxieties concerning European integration (De Vries and Edwards 2009). Though the PRC Anti-European opposition had seemed to revolve exclusively around utilitarian arguments (Benedetto and Quaglia 2007; Quaglia 2008), some works have assessed the party as a principled Euroscepticism (Conti 2006; Conti 2009).

Our first empirical round (2006) partially disclaimed the PRC alleged radicalness in criticizing European integration. Indeed, the PRC expressed a moderate and qualified Anti-European position (3), assigning a small saliency to EU issues (4.7) in its political platform. It is worth noting that its party government status has probably weakened its negative position on the broadening of integration. Conti and De Giorgi (2011) empirically demonstrated that, while it was holding ministerial positions in the second Prodi government (2006-2008), the PRC fully endorsed the Pro-European legislative measures. Consequently, party opposition to European integration completely disappeared at the institutional level, revealing a growing inconsistency between the party’s ideological background and its policy actions. This pre-crisis observation has not completely captured this party identity switch on a European level, where the PRC still notably deviated from the mean party system EU position (5.1), turning out to be a notable EU Issue Entrepreneur at the domestic level. In fact, at the beginning of its government experience, the Neo-Communist party was still one of the most active actors in campaigning on EU issues, politicizing this potential conflict.

Tab.7.4. PRC\SEL's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurs and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<i>PRC\SEL</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>0.1</i>
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Neutral</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	<i>4.7</i>	<i>4.3</i>	<i>5.6</i>	<i>0.9</i>
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>9.6</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>5.6</i>	<i>-4</i>
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Decrease</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015b)

However, the ongoing process of ideological moderation is evident in the first post-crisis empirical step (2010), where all the Radical Left electoral supply underwent a big change. The main party in this political camp became the Left Ecology and Freedom (SEL), led by the President of the Apulia Region, Nicky Vendola, gradually developing a significant *coalition potential* (Sartori 1976) within the Centre-Left coalition. Although the PRC did not organizationally vanish from the Italian political landscape, it did turn into an electorally unimportant party, losing its *blackmail potential* (Sartori 1976)<sup>24</sup>. In spite of some approximations inherent to this analytical choice, we take SEL as the epigone of the PRC, because it largely absorbed its political elite, assuming a similar ideological position on

<sup>24</sup> In the 2009 EP Elections, the PRC was still the most prominent electoral formation of the Radical Left, obtaining 3.4% of the valid votes and slightly surpassing SEL (3.1%). Nonetheless, since 2010, SEL has been the dominant electoral force in this area in all the subsequent electoral rounds, strengthening its presence locally and regionally.

the Left-Right divide. Initially, SEL represented an electoral alliance that contested the 2009 European elections, merging splinter members from the PRC and other small left-oriented political formations (such as the Green Federation). In December 2009, this cartel was transformed into a genuine political party, forming electoral coalitions with the PD and Italy of Values (IDV), rapidly increasing its bargaining power both regionally and locally. By adhering to these broad electoral alliances, this party further undertook a process of ideological moderation, which has clearly involved policy stances on EU issues.

In the first post-crisis empirical round (2010), the party had a blurred strategy on the Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension, displaying a neutral ideological stand (4.5) and deflecting the emphasis on European policies (4.3). SEL was faced with a trade-off between its government aspirations, given its allegiance to the Centre-Left coalition, and some Anti-European ideological background, entrenched within the Radical Left political tradition. Thus, the party adopted a dismissive strategy on EU issues to eliminate this latent source of political contestation. In fact, SEL displayed a very scant level of Entrepreneurship, probably fearing the spectre of the intra-party divisions brought about by general integration policies. Nevertheless, we argue that this actor maintained its status as a Protest party, taking more radical stances on some other policy facets, and preferring to compete along the established Left-Right issue dimension, highlighting labour and civil rights' issues (Bordandini 2013).

This line of party moderation on European integration probably continued until the 2013 general elections, where SEL ran as the PD's main coalition party. When this electoral alliance, *Italy. Common Good*, failed to obtain the absolute majority of seats in both the

Houses of Parliament, the PD chose to form a Grand Coalition with the Centre-Right, excluding SEL from holding any government positions. As a result, the party partially re-established its ideological profile as an Anti-European party (3.1), strengthening the saliency devoted to EU issues (5.6). On the wake of the European elections (2014), SEL joined a Radical Left electoral cartel, the Tsipras List (LT), jointly with other leftist formations. This electoral alliance was created to pursue some European policy objectives, raising opposition to the alleged neo-liberal European project. This Anti-European critique revolved around the Anti-Austerity political challenge expressed by the Greek leader, Alexis Tsipras, who advanced his own candidacy for the presidency of the EC (Morini 2016). In fact, the austerity policies implemented in many countries, under the impetus of the European institutions, had propelled a restructuring of the Eurosceptic electoral supply among the European Radical Left. According to Calossi (2016), the EU-led austerity course has established a dividing line between its supporters and its discontents, which has been seized on by the *Anti-Austerity Left Parties*. The austerity measures adopted by the Monti government, jointly with the alliance rupture of the PD and SEL, have revealed new strategic incentives for the Italian Radical Left. Indeed, the LT laid down an Anti-Austerity platform, involving criticisms of the Fiscal Compact and European neo-liberal policies (Morini 2016). Nonetheless, this electoral cartel fell into the Soft-Euroscepticism party cluster, neither opposing the single currency nor proposing a referendum to leave the Eurozone (Morini 2017).

It is worth noting that SEL, which we regard as the organizational backbone of this electoral coalition, has not reinforced its entrepreneurial strengths on this issue dimension (5.6), obtaining a lower score compared to the PRC during the pre-crisis era. Hence,

although a window of opportunity has been opened up by the Euro Crisis, the Italian Radical Left has not taken advantage of this strategic aspect. After adopting more moderate stances along the Pro-\\Anti-European issue dimension, SEL has lost its reputation as a Eurosceptic actor, not fully recognizing the electoral benefits of the politicization of the European integration conflict. Therefore, after the onset of the Euro Crisis, we claim that EU issue voting has gradually decreased in its explanatory power regarding the electoral preferences of the Radical Left, which has not focused on activating this latent dimensionality of political contestation.

### **7.5 National Alliance (AN) and Brothers of Italy (FDI)**

From its foundation in 1995 and up to when it was absorbed into the PDL, the Post-Fascist party, the National Alliance (AN), had maintained a central position in the Italian party system, being FI's main coalition partner. This party had been the political successor of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), a Neo-Fascist political group, which had electorally appealed to many who were still nostalgic for the Fascist era. At the beginning of the 1990s, the MSI party elite exploited the window of opportunity opened up by the corruption scandals that were involving the old parties (Ruzza and Schmidtke 1996), changing its party label and achieving an ideological centrist move to break into Mainstream Italian Politics.

According to Lucia Quaglia's manifesto analysis (2011, 37), the old Neo-Fascist party did not adopt Euroscepticism in its policy discourse, being somewhat favourable to the "*Europe nation*". However, the AN needed to bolster its Pro-European reputation in order to strengthen its democratic legitimacy both domestically and internationally (Quaglia 2008). Consequently, the party's leader, Gianfranco Fini, made a

Europeophile ideological leap, leaving behind some of the AN's background nationalistic positions (Conti 2003; Quaglia 2005; Conti 2006; Quaglia 2008). Our pre-crisis empirical round (2006) highlights the moderate Pro-European stand adopted by this party (4.8), which set itself apart from the Eurosceptic position. Nevertheless, our data also reveals another finding, which has been largely heralded by the pre-existing literature on this party (Conti 2006; Quaglia 2008), where the Post-Fascist party attached very scant emphasis (4.3) on the EU issues in its political discourse. In fact, this political formation did not engage in the politicization of the European integration conflict, choosing to adopt a weak profile on this policy ground. This blurred choice was probably due to an intentional strategy undertaken by Gianfranco Fini, who perceived the possibility of latent intra-party conflict regarding European integration policies. Consequently, the party had one of the lowest EU Issue Entrepreneurship scores in the Italian system (1.3) and, thus, was not likely to electorally compete on this policy dimension.

In 2009, the AN officially vanished from the political scene, merging with FI into the PDL. As we already noticed in the previous paragraph, the PDL took a moderate Pro-European stance, without strongly highlighting the EU issues in its political program and, consequently, assumed the same strategies adopted by FI-AN on European integration. In November 2011, the PDL parliamentary backing of the Monti government prompted many intra-party conflicts, which led to an internal split and to the foundation of the Brothers of Italy (FDI). This splinter party has been chiefly composed of the former AN elite, including Ignazio La Russa, Giorgia Meloni, Gianni Alemanno and Adolfo Urso. These party officials have subsequently taken up again the old National Alliance party label, incorporating it into the FDI's brand. Berlusconi himself fostered the

creation of this party to replicate the electoral dynamic of the old Centre-Right, based on the electoral complementarity of the AN-FI duo. Thus, although some shuffling has occurred among the old Post-Fascist party elite, we may consider the FDI as the political heir of the AN.

Tab. 7.5. AN/FDI's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship in 2006

<i>AN</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>FDI</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	4.8	<i>EU Position</i>	2.2	-2.6
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	4.3	<i>EU Saliency</i>	6.8	2.5
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	1.3	<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	12.9	11.6
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015b)

Nevertheless, the FDI has undertaken a substantial ideological transformation in many policy domains compared to the AN. One of the most notable identity modifications has regarded the party position on EU issues. Indeed, this political actor has vigorously reacted against the EU-driven austerity policy packages, adopting an outright Anti-European stand (2.2). The Euro Crisis has acted as a catalyst in the strategic efforts of this party, which have played up the EU issues in the political debate. It is worth noting that the FDI has tried to activate the European integration conflict, strongly enhancing the level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship compared to its political predecessor. On the one hand, the AN did not employ general

integration issues in policy debates in order to avoid potential intra-party conflicts, while, at the same time, adhering to the broader Pro-European consensus. On the other hand, the FDI has primed the EU issues by joining the Anti-Currency camp and opposing the major EU-led fiscal restraints (Conti, Cotta and Verzichelli 2016). In doing so, this party has left behind its status as a Mainstream party, embracing a broader Protest-oriented political platform. However, the FDI has tackled many other policy facets, such as social and immigration issues, which have involved a more traditional set of conflicts. Thus, although the FDI has probably increased its voting support along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality, its electoral fortune can in all likelihood be still explained by the Left-Right political divisions.

#### **7.6 The Italian Union of the Centre (UDC) and the New Centre-Right (NCD)**

The Italian Union of the Centre (UDC) was the result of the merger between two smaller parties, the Christian Democratic Centre (CCD) and the United Christian Democrats (CDU), providing voters with a more centrist and moderate electoral supply within the Centre-Right coalition. The party has always openly claimed a DC legacy, embodying a path of continuity with the political experience of the Italian *First Republic*. As a Christian Democratic party belonging to the EEP, the UDC has persistently maintained a Pro-European position and the Euro Crisis has not brought about any notable policy shift in the party platform. Some overviews have pointed out that this party has not been committed to stressing the EU issues during the pre-crisis period, generally setting aside this potential conflict in its manifestos (Conti 2009; Conti and Memoli 2013). On the contrary, though, our data has refuted these findings on the UDC strategies,

proving its significant party entrepreneurial strengths on this policy dimension in 2006.

Since the beginning of the Great Recession, the party has slightly increased its EU Issue Entrepreneurship and, thus, has not escaped from the politicization of the European related policies. The UDC also stood out as one the most enthusiastic supporters of the technocratic Monti cabinet, endorsing its major austerity reforms. In the 2013 general elections, this party joined the centrist coalition *With Monti for Italy*, which revolved around the former Italian Premier and his government experience, forming an electoral alliance with Civic Choice (SC) and Future and Liberty for Italy (FLI). In doing so, this party aligned itself with the Pro-Austerity political camp, upholding the policy path outlined by intergovernmental bodies at the European level and implemented by Monti at the domestic level. Although the UDC has never fully aspired to be a *catch-all* party (see Kirchheimer 1966), the party has further narrowed its political messages by electorally targeting the backers of the European-led austerity measures. After its huge defeat in the general elections, the UDC has lowered the saliency ascribed to EU issues (4.3), acknowledging the drawbacks subsuming the previous tactical option on general integration. Indeed, the UDC had probably been electorally punished by providing voters with these Pro-European cues, also suffering from the electoral competition of Monti's personal party, the SC. Even by diminishing attention on the EU policies, the party retained its Europhile profile, marginally increasing its degree of European entrepreneurship in 2014.

Tab. 7.6 UDC's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<i>UDC</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	6.3	6.3	6.1	-0.2
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	5.8	5.7	4.3	-1.5
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	7	7.9	8.6	1.6
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker et al. 2015)

The UDC ran in the 2014 EP elections forming an electoral cartel with the New Centre-Right (NCD), a splinter actor emerging from Berlusconi's party in November 2013, which attracted most of the Pro-European PDL's former MEPs. The party was created to support the Letta cabinet after the PDL's defection, being the major coalition partner of the PD, and it successively expressed a vote of confidence for the Renzi government. The NCD has staked out a notable Pro-European policy stance (5.8), emphasizing EU issues (7.7) in its political discourse. Thus, it is worth noticing that this party has clearly attempted to set in motion this policy dimension, obtaining a prominent level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship (12.2). Apart from the PD, the NCD has resulted in being the most active national Pro-European political entrepreneur and campaigned strongly supporting European integration in the 2014 EP elections. Hence, we can say that the NCD has electorally maximized its proximity to the voters on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. On the contrary, although the UDC has, to some extent, politicized the European integration conflict, the Euro Crisis does not appear to have marked any

significant transformation in its electoral trend, which has probably remained stable over time. Nevertheless, both parties have represented for voters a Pro-European electoral outlet, being the only alternative to the PD within the Europhile camp.

Tab. 7.7. NCD's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship in 2014

<i><b>NCD</b></i>	<i><b>2014</b></i>
<i><b>EU Position</b></i>	<i>5.7</i>
<i><b>Party Type</b></i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>
<i><b>EU Saliency</b></i>	<i>7.7</i>
<i><b>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</b></i>	<i>12.2</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2014 (Baker 2015)

### **7.7 The Left Democrats (DS), Freedom and Democracy - the Daisy (DL)- and the Democratic Party (PD)**

Since its creation, the Italian Democratic Party (PD) has steadily supported the deepening of European integration, which has constituted an important part of its political ideology. This party resulted from the merger of the Left Democrats (DS) and the Daisy – Liberty and Freedom Party (DL) in October 2007. Both these political formations had previously developed a principled Europeanism approach (Conti 2006), which entailed an increasing authority transfer towards the supranational institutions, the EP and the EC. Consequently, these parties were in favour of a Federal vision of Europe, marking a strong ideological distance from the Italian Centre-

Right parties, which endorsed a qualified inter-governmentalism (Quaglia and Radaelli 2007).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the most notable political heir to the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the PDS\DS, had adopted a Pro-European identity as a means to enhance its political legitimacy within the Italian system. Although this Pro-European ideological shift had preceded the political transformation of the Communists into the PDS, the latter party largely prioritized Pro-European issues in order to achieve its pre-defined vote-seeking and coalition-seeking political objectives (Benedetto and Quaglia 2007). Its enthusiastic support for the most important integration steps, including the Maastricht Treaty and the Italian accession to the EMU, had contributed to turn the PDS into a government actor, which subsequently became the major party supporting the Prodi cabinet (1996-1998). Furthermore, this systemic legitimization process was also fostered by the party's entrance as a full member to the Party of the European Socialists (PES), reflecting the ideological moderation undertaken by the Post-Communists (Giannetti and Mule' 2006; Benedetto and Quaglia 2007). Even the PPI-DL had not expressed any great criticism of the European project (Conti 2003; Conti 2006), following the ideological tradition of the Italian Christian Democracy (DC) and being substantially in line with its major coalition partner on this set of issues.

Consequently, before their political merger with the PD, the two parties had not displayed any sizeable ideological divergence in the realm of European integration. In Table 7.8, a comparison is drawn between the two parties, revealing their ideological homogeneity. Indeed, their Europhile stances were almost perfectly matched in 2006, revealing the absence of any negative references to European integration on the part of DS\DL. Furthermore, these actors have placed exactly same level of emphasis on EU issues, being both

entrepreneurs of the Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension during the pre-crisis era. Hence, the two parties have probably strategically politicized this latent conflict, aiming at reaping electoral payoffs.

Tab.7.8. DS and DL's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship in 2006

<i><b>DS</b></i>	<i><b>2006</b></i>	<i><b>DL</b></i>	<i><b>2006</b></i>
<i><b>EU Position</b></i>	6.9	<i><b>EU Position</b></i>	7
<i><b>Party Type</b></i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i><b>Party Type</b></i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>
<i><b>EU Saliency</b></i>	8.7	<i><b>EU Saliency</b></i>	8.7
<i><b>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</b></i>	16	<i><b>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</b></i>	16.8

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006

This ideological convergence remained within their shared government experiences (1996-2001; 2006-2008), where the Centre-Left cabinets endorsed and achieved important integration steps, embracing a Pro-European political discourse. The first Prodi government (1996-1998) ushered in a new era in Italian relations with the EU (Della Sala 1997), revealing an increasing commitment to the convergence criteria for joining the EMU (Quaglia and Radaelli 2007). Indeed, the government had targeted Italian admission in the first wave of Eurozone countries, in an attempt to restore international confidence in Italian public debt management. These efforts deeply affected domestic policies, involving fiscal adjustments and budget cutbacks to respond to European pressure. Thus, the executive combined Italian internal affairs with European issues, which topped its political agenda. In fact, Prodi had persistently presented entry to the EMU as the core political objective to be pursued by the government, setting its major policy initiatives around it. According to

Quaglia and Radaelli (2007, 929): the “*discourse of the ‘external constraint’ was deliberately and strategically deployed to justify a heavy fiscal retrenchment and other related reforms (such as welfare and incomes policy)*”.

By accomplishing the EMU accession, the two main Centre-Left parties, the DS and DL, certainly enhanced their reputation as Pro-European actors, injecting the EU issues into the policy debate. Meanwhile, the Centre-Right fluctuations on its European stand consolidated the Centre-Left ownership of Europhilia, which was also epitomized by Romano Prodi’s appointment as European Commission President (1999-2004). Though these two political formations maintained their ideological divergences regarding many domestic policies, they gradually developed much closer stances on European integration. According to Conti (2006), both parties perceived the inherent potential in the European policies to promote a regulated capitalism, which could lead to more redistributive social policies. Thus, even in the economic realm they merged domestic issues with European issues, sharing a commitment to the European social dimension.

The PD has not notably changed the Centre-Left strategies on EU issues, which had played an important role in the party platform. The Centre-Left unitary party has displayed very high levels of Pro-Europeanism, supporting the further delegation of powers to the supranational institutions (Conti and Memoli 2013). However, the 2010 empirical round marked a relative drop in the PD’s EU Issue Entrepreneurship compared to the levels achieved by its political predecessors in 2006. Indeed, this first post-crisis observation has mirrored a systematic shrinking in its entrepreneurship, which has involved all the main Italian political groups. Even in remaining the most important Pro-European entrepreneur, the PD has not reversed

the marginalization of EU issues in the policy debate, successfully overshadowed by the governing parties.

Tab.7.9. PD's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2010-2014

<b>PD</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Absolute Variations (Index 2010)</b>
<b>EU Position</b>	6.6	6.6	-0.4
<b>Party Type</b>	Mainstream Pro-European	Mainstream Pro-European	Stable
<b>EU Saliency</b>	7	7.6	0.6
<b>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</b>	11.9	19	7.1
<b>Party Strategy</b>			Entrepreneurship Increase

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

In the autumn of 2011, the continual worsening of the Italian economic situation probably increased the overall saliency of European matters at the domestic level. The EU inter-governmental bodies, dominated by the Sarkozy-Merkel couple, directly tackled the Italian crisis by holding an extraordinary meeting, which questioned the government's capability of handling the recession (Fabbrini 2013; Bobba and McDonnell 2015). Thereafter, EU issues gained a growing media coverage in public debate (Belluati and Serricchio 2013), affecting party strategies in the 2013 general elections. In spite of its deep-rooted Pro-European reputation, the PD, under Pier Luigi Bersani's leadership, faced some tactical dilemmas concerning the European integration policies. On the one hand, the party had been constrained by European and internal pressures to support Monti's cabinet and its austerity policies. On the other hand, Bersani tried to qualify the PD as an Anti-Austerity political formation distancing

itself from Monti on EU issues. In doing so, the party probably deflected the emphasis on this policy dimension, still preserving its Pro-European image where public perceptions were concerned (Belluati and Serricchio 2013).

In the 2013 general elections, the PD had a very disappointing electoral performance, paving the way for the emergence of a new intra-party dominant coalition. In fact, after the resignation of Pier Luigi Bersani, the 38-year old Mayor of Florence, Matteo Renzi, won the party leadership primaries in December 2013, marking a significant generational turnover within the PD. He subsequently replaced his party colleague, Enrico Letta, as the head of the Italian government. Matteo Renzi's party and government takeover was a turning point in Centre-Left strategies concerning European integration. Though the party support for European integration has remained stable (6.6), Renzi has clearly changed the PD story on EU issues in his discourse (Brunazzo and Della Sala 2016). Indeed, since his inaugural speech as the President of the Council of Ministers, he has devoted more and more attention to European questions, which have taken on a remarkable level of saliency (7.6) in the party program. Consequently, the party levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship have rapidly increased and the PD significantly played up the card of Pro-Europeanism in the 2014 EP elections. Furthermore, the increasing Euro-scepticism in Italian party supply strengthened the Europhile reputation of Renzi's party (Morini 2017), becoming the most important electoral channel for Pro-European voters. Even if domestic factors probably affected the results of the European elections, electorally rewarding Renzi's party, which probably benefitted from a *Honeymoon Effect*, EU Issues have probably determined the voting preference for the Democratic Party (Segatti, Poletti and Vezzoni 2015).

According to Brunazzo and Della Sala (2016), Renzi initially deployed the traditional Pro-European rhetoric of the Italian Centre-Left, resorting to the *external constraint* principle to warrant his policy-making. In fact, he presented a set of reforms (including institutional ones) as a necessity required at the European level, which bestowed his government action with a key political legitimacy. However, Renzi has subsequently changed this political story where Europe is concerned, underlining Italy's pivotal role in providing the EU with an essential degree of legitimacy. Furthermore, as the President of the Council of the European Union (July-December 2014), he presented further demands for Pro-Growth measures within the Eurozone to enable Member States to achieve economic recovery. According to Bordignon (2014), Renzi has recurrently resorted to a populist narrative in his political discourse, presenting himself as an 'outsider' leader opposed to the Centre-Left party establishment. Thus, he has drawn a dichotomous reality, where 'Us', the *local administrators* close to the people, have been in contrast with 'Them', the *party oligarchy* entrenched in the national institutions and detached from public interests (Bordignon 2014). After his seizing of power, Renzi applied this Manichean outlook towards the European institutions, which have displayed a technocratic power distant from the people's interests. Therefore, the Italian Prime Minister has openly emphasized the lack of democratic accountability of the European Commission, openly clashing with his President, Jean-Claude Juncker. In doing so, he has exercised a sort of blame shifting towards the European Union (Hobolt and Tilley 2014), unaccountable and responsible for the worsening of the Italian economic situations and for the fiscal retrenchment. He has also tried to publicly prove his ability to resist European directives and to obtain a margin of discretion in budgetary policies (Brunazzo and Della Sala 2016).

Nevertheless, in spite of these recurrent inter-institutional conflicts, the Italian PD has never abandoned its Pro-European tradition, playing on its Europhile position electorally. The party has not resisted the growing politicization of the European conflict in public debate, colliding with the other political formations on the Pro-\Anti-European issue dimension and, notably, contradicting the expected trends concerning the Mainstream parties. Indeed, the PD has maintained high levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, which had characterized its political predecessors, the DS and DL, that had previously politicized this source of conflict. Though the Euro crisis had initially created some impasses for this political formation, the PD has subsequently developed a new strategy to European integration. On the one hand, under Bersani's leadership, the PD reduced its focus on EU matters, probably being more rooted in the traditional axis of political contestation, epitomized in the Left-Right division. On the other hand, Renzi has placed more emphasis on the European integration conflict by inventing a new political story on EU issues, which has probably been an effective asset from an electoral point of view.

## **7.8 Conclusions**

Some concluding remarks can be drawn here on the ever-fluctuating Italian supply on the Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension. After the Euro Crisis, most of the parties have been engaged in deepening this conflict politicization by increasing their entrepreneurial efforts. In fact, EU Issue Entrepreneurship growth has basically involved the ideological spectrum, where the Mainstream Pro-European parties have clashed with the Protest Anti-European parties, leading to activating a new issue dimension.

The PD have noticeably stood out as an important Pro-European entrepreneur, disproving our *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis* at the national level. In fact, the main governing party has increasingly focused on EU issues, attempting to maximize its voting preferences by politicizing Europe. Moreover, the UDC has, to some extent, displayed a political consideration on this emerging conflict, while the NCD, the major PD cabinet partner, has acted as a political entrepreneur of EU issues. On the contrary, Berlusconi's party, PDL-FI, has carried out an Anti-European positional switch, but it has not been active in promoting this alternative conflict, fitting in with our general expectations on the Mainstream parties.

The Protest Anti-European political entrepreneurs have flourished, largely restructuring the national electoral supply. The LN has increased its strategic efforts to settle this conflict, while the M5S, a *new Protest party*, has rapidly developed a strong Anti-European program, sensing a political opportunity. Another party, the FDI, has exited from the Mainstream of Italian politics, changing its position along the Pro-\-Anti-European divide and enhancing its Eurosceptic entrepreneurship. This increasing entrepreneurial activity has not been associated with the Radical Left, which has displayed the only eccentric aspect in forecasts for the Protest parties. Nonetheless, the Italian political landscape has considerably corroborated our *Protest entrepreneurship hypothesis*, whereby these actors have sought to deepen the European integration conflict.

Most of the Mainstream Pro-European and Protest Anti-European parties have acted as genuine political entrepreneurs and, thus, it can be inferred that Italy has epitomized a *Systemic Entrepreneurship* pattern. We have already singled out the high potential for transforming EU issues into a source electoral contestation in a political environment characterized by many entrepreneurs.

Nevertheless, the major political formations analysed here (LN, PDL-FI, AN-FDI and PRC-SEL) have markedly repositioned themselves along the Pro-\-Anti-European ideological divide. These recurrent policy adjustments may have blurred the cues for voters, hampering the process of issue evolution (Carmine and Stimson 1986). In fact, the elite actions have displayed many inconsistencies on this policy ground, perhaps preventing the establishment of well-defined relations between the parties and electors. If the party elites are not capable of clarifying their issue positions, then the likelihood to observe mass electoral re-alignments will certainly diminish. From the political science literature, we know that *issue clarity* (Carmines and Stimson 1986), occurring at the public level, remains the fundamental precondition for conflict politicization. Furthermore, many overviews have ascertained the specific importance of the elite behaviour in framing information shortcuts regarding the European issue dimension, which has represented a very complex subject for voters (Steenburgen, De Vries and Edwards 2007; Hellström 2008). Indeed, Italian voters have been presented with a very unstable electoral supply, which may have inhibited them from developing clear-cut emotional responses to EU-inherent issues. Therefore, the Italian case requires a further empirical step in order to understand whether EU issues have impacted electoral preferences or not, consolidating a process of conflict politicization.

## **8. The Pre-Established Politicization of the European Integration Conflict: The British Case**

The British pattern somehow challenges the crisis explanatory power, which did not operate as a powerful catalyst to establish the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. Indeed, many pre-existing incentives, which were well-rooted in the national culture, paved the way for the emergence of a Eurosceptic partisan supply before the Euro Crisis. The UKIP took over the ownership of these issues, acting as a genuine EU Issue entrepreneur since the Maastricht Treaty ratification. In addition, the Conservatives had achieved a Eurosceptic shift during the Thatcher period, which preceded the onset of the crisis. Consequently, since the 1990s, the Anti-European parties have flourished in the United Kingdom, restructuring the political landscape. However, these developments did not probably lead to a fundamental transformation in the patterns of political competition. Indeed, the Liberal-Democrats were the only actors who openly clashed with these Eurosceptic subjects by conveying Europhile messages to the voters. Thus, the ideological dividing lines were not exacerbated by the parties, whereas the elites did not polarize their positions on the European integration. While Labour dismissed the EU issues within the political debate, the Conservatives had colluded with the UKIP by advancing Anti-European positions. However, the Tories probably lost the potential benefits arising from EU issues, being constantly divided and, therefore, delivering blurred electoral shortcuts.

### **8.1 United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)**

The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty had catalyzed a growing dissent on EU issues in the UK, increasing the popular concerns regarding the loss of state sovereignty and national identity (Baker et al. 2008; Vasilopoulou 2017). The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was established in 1993 by former members of the Anti-Federalist League, which was a political organization lobbying the parties and rallying the voters against the Maastricht Treaty. Many scholars have considered the UKIP as a *Single Issue Eurosceptic Party* (Taggart 1998), heralding its exclusive commitment to withdraw the country from the European Union (Usherwood 2008; Hayton 2010). In fact, the UKIP members have been strongly united in pursuing this shared goal, raising a principled opposition to the existence of the EU and setting themselves apart from the Eurosceptic factions established within the Mainstream parties (Ford and Goodwin 2014). Thus, the UKIP assumed the core characteristics of a *Euro-reject* party type (see: Kopecky and Mudde 2002), without subscribing to the fundamental principles inspiring the building of Europe nor endorsing its actual embodiment.

According to Tournier-Sol (2015), the party ideology has drawn on the British Eurosceptic tradition, which has represented a legitimate channel of protest in the British political landscape. In doing so, the UKIP articulated a firm opposition to the alleged Anti-Democratic bias inherent in the European institutions, allegedly lacking a popular legitimacy. Consequently, the party has often conveyed its petition for British Self-Government, which has purportedly sheltered the democratic and libertarian traditions entrenched in the national political culture. According to the UKIP, the approval of the Maastricht Treaty has undermined the nation-state sovereignty, transferring authority towards an unaccountable bureaucracy and depriving the citizens of their democratic rights (Tournier-Sol 2015).

Moreover, the party has linked this weakening sovereignty to the loss of control over national borders, which has eroded the cultural homogeneity of the country (Pareschi 2017).

By developing this distinctive political platform, the party occupied itself with a limited set of issues, facing some strategic dilemmas. Indeed, some contributions written on the single-issue parties have identified the existing tensions “*between those who feel that the objective is fundamental to the nature of the party and cannot be compromised at any point, and those who accept a need to be flexible in the short-run, in order to have a better chance of achieving the objective in the longer-term.*” (Usherwood 2008, 4). Therefore, the single-issue party may encounter some perilous intra-party divisions, when it moderates its stances on core issues (Ezrow 2008) to broaden its political appeal. On the contrary, this party type should actually highlight these issues on which it is more able to consolidate its electoral performance (Meguid 2008). The *Single Issue Eurosceptic Party* (Taggart 1998) constitutes a peculiar sub-type of niche party (Lynch et al. 2012), which predominantly set its sights on establishing an alternative political conflict based on Pro-\-Anti-European orientations. Consequently, the UKIP has appeared to make constant campaign efforts to set in motion a new source of electoral contestation.

Our pre-crisis data corroborates the party’s endeavours on this policy dimension as the UKIP achieved a remarkable score of EU Issue Entrepreneurship (32). This entrepreneurial activity resulted from a combination of two key factors. Firstly, the UKIP strongly deviated from the mean of the national party system EU position, adopting the most extremist Anti-European stands on this issue dimension (1). Secondly, the party placed a very selective emphasis on general integration policies, which clearly overshadowed most of its electoral

messages to the voters. Thus, this empirical round confirms the theoretical backdrop for this party actor, which has been primarily regarded as a *Single Issue Eurosceptic Party*. During the pre-crisis period, the UKIP unquestionably sought to transform European integration into a subject of political contestation, perceiving the electoral benefits inherent in EU-related issues. In fact, with a strong credibility on the most radical Eurosceptic policies, this party tactically manoeuvred an introduction of a Pro-\-Anti-European conflict dimensionality.

However, these strategic efforts were clearly downplayed by the scant coverage ascribed by the national media to EU issues, which were mainly kept on the fringes of political debate (Ford *et al.* 2012). This low systemic salience has affected the electoral performance of the UKIP, which has suffered from strong competitive disadvantages in achieving its vote-seeking strategies. Furthermore, the Mainstream actors have often tried to manipulate the ownership of Anti-European issues, subjected to the party's tactical calculations (Meguid 2008). In fact, the Conservative party has colluded on this set of issues, adopting Eurosceptic stances and thus minimizing the UKIP exclusive reputation on Anti-European leanings (Lynch *et al.* 2012). Last but not least, the party dealt with the institutional constraints posed by the majoritarian plurality system (Goodwin 2015), which have persistently prevented many voters from choosing this Anti-European electoral outlet in the general elections.

On the other hand, the UKIP gradually strengthened its electoral support in the European elections, where the strict majoritarian rules do not operate and EU issues are more likely to condition voting choices (Hobolt *et al.* 2009; Ford *et al.* 2012; Vasilopoulou 2017). According to Ford *et al.* (2012), the party electorally benefitted from the so-called *Strategic Eurosceptics*, defined as Tory constituents,

who voiced their discontent to the EU by voting for the UKIP in the EP elections, but who then returned to support the Conservative party in the Westminster elections. Nevertheless, this party also developed a core electoral constituency, made up of those voters sincerely endorsing the UKIP and wishing to express their hostility to the Mainstream elites (Ford *et al.* 2012). Though the strategic voters still outweighed the core voters, this electoral trend reflected the UKIP's shift from the *Single Issue Eurosceptic Party* type towards a broader platform. Indeed, this party has been capable of merging this ideological background with novel issues, which have emerged in the political debate (Lynch *et al.* 2012; Goodwin 2015; Tournier-Sol 2015; Goodwin and Milazzo 2015; Clarke *et al.* 2016). The UKIP has strategically responded to the changing political context, broadening its platform and seizing some opportunities arising from the Euro Crisis.

After the party's electoral failure in the 2010 general elections, Nigel Farage took over again the UKIP leadership, ending the endemic internal conflicts and renovating the party agenda. However, in doing so, he did not dilute the radicalism of the Anti-European electoral messages, which have remained at the core of the UKIP political manifesto. Nonetheless, this actor has found a new winning formula, securing an increasing voting support. First and foremost, Farage himself persistently identified the migration flows as the most critical problem facing the country (Tournier-Sol 2015). These immigration problems were successfully related to European integration, which enabled thousands of people from Eastern Europe to cross British borders. For the UKIP, these demographic trends worsened the economic conditions of the true British people, economically distressing the so-called "left behind", who were hit hard by the crisis (Ford and Goodwin 2014; Goodwin and Milazzo 2015). Leaving the

European Union became the key policy device to restore the control over the national borders (Goodwin 2015), bringing to an end this massive demographic phenomenon. However, the UKIP officials were able to distance themselves from the more xenophobic political tradition, previously embodied in the British National Party (BNP), becoming the “polite alternative” for expressing anti-immigration attitudes (Ford et al. 2012). It is worth noticing that in the UKIP platform, the Anti-Immigration issues appeared to be a subset of the Pro-/-Anti-European political conflict, reversing the pattern described by Kriesi *et al.* (2006; 2008; 2012), who defined the European integration conflict as a parcel of the globalization related conflicts. The UKIP clearly targeted the so-called globalization losers, by increasing its policy framing on Anti-Immigration issues. Nevertheless, the frame had been placed in the broader picture of Anti-European stances, which topped the party platform.

Moreover, according to Tournier-Sol (2015), Farage’s political messages had been strongly rooted in a Populist and Anti-Establishment narrative. In fact, under his leadership, the UKIP voiced its genuine commitment to political principles, rather than pursuing a sheer office-seeking strategy. The populist story-telling entailed a clear-cut formula, devising the term “LibLabCon”. In doing so, the UKIP referred to the alleged ideological similarity among the Mainstream parties, which basically colluded on the main policy areas. The Euro Crisis certainly undermined the elite responsiveness to the popular widespread demands, consolidating the efficacy of these populist appeals. Indeed, the governing parties handled the recession by implementing austerity policies, without effectively providing a different set of policy alternatives. The turnabout occurred in 2010, when the incumbent Labour party was replaced by the Conservative\ Liberal-Democrat governing coalition, without

producing a substantial reversal in policy-making, establishing a favourable environment for the populist partisan supply (Goodwin 2015). Consequently, the UKIP won electoral advantages from the increasing dissatisfaction towards the Mainstream elites (Ford *et al* 2012; Ford and Goodwin 2015)- by using the populist dualistic narrative, which separates the “pure people” from the “corrupted elites” (Mudde 2004). Nonetheless, the UKIP populist rhetoric had been adapted to its core policy aim, being moulded along the Pro-  
 \Anti-European ideological divide. Indeed, the party persistently emphasized the ceding of democracy to the European Union, minimizing people’s rights in favour of the ruling European bureaucracy. These rhetorical efforts were devised to create a further ideological distance from the Conservative party, outlining a more populist Anti-European vision compared to the elite-driven softer version of the same ideology advanced by David Cameron (Tournier-Sol 2015).

Tab. 8.1. UKIP’s EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2010-2014

<b>UKIP</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</b>
<b><i>EU Position</i></b>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>0.1</i>
<b><i>Party Type</i></b>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Protest Anti-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<b><i>EU Saliency</i></b>	<i>10</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>9.1</i>	<i>-0.9</i>
<b><i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i></b>	<i>32</i>	<i>31.3</i>	<i>34.6</i>	<i>2.6</i>
<b><i>Party Strategy</i></b>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

Our post-crisis data has depicted a picture of substantial increase in the UKIP 's EU Issue Entrepreneurship compared to the pre-crisis round. It notably differed from the mean party system position on European integration, by petitioning for the British withdrawal from the EU. In fact, the party persistently provided the voters with very extremist Anti-European cues, setting its main focus on politicizing the European integration conflict. Some literature has highlighted the broadening appeal of the party (Lynch et al. 2012), which has made this subject closer to a classical Radical Right party, embedded in nativism and populism (Goodwin 2015). We are not completely disclaiming these findings, noting its partial platform renovation in many issue domains. However, these new programmatic facets, namely Anti-Immigration and Populism, have always been connected to the party's Anti-European ideology, appearing to be parcels of this broader identity. The party reputation has probably been grounded in the ownership of Euroscepticism and the UKIP exploited other aspects compatible with its core policy objective. The UKIP increasing levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship have reflected this heretical attempt (Riker 1986), revealing the party's commitment to establishing a political conflict on which it holds greater electoral advantages. This actor tried to realign the voters along the Pro\Anti-European ideological divide, forming a new majority on its preferred political dimensionality to reverse the pre-existing electoral trend.

Since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, the number of people disgruntled with the Mainstream elites has increased and the party seized on populist arguments, merging these into its Anti-European political discourse. Moreover, the UKIP clearly sought out the *globalization loser* voting support, highlighting Anti-Immigrant stances and thus following the path of the Radical Right parties. The party persistently defined immigration policies as underlying

European integration, being the primary obstacle in regaining control over borders. In fact, the UKIP rallied the voters around a radical Anti-European political platform, campaigning for the “*Leave*” option during the so-called *Brexit*, held on the 23 June 2016.

It is worth noting that Conservatives had embarked on a centrist shift along the Left-Right ideological dimension before the 2010 general elections, when David Cameron adopted a more liberal program for modernizing the Tory appeal (Lynch 2015). The UKIP somehow tapped into this window of opportunity and “*it has targeted the political space vacated by the Conservatives’ move to the centre, purporting to be an authentic conservative voice on Europe and immigration, adopting policies shunned by the Tories (e.g. building grammar schools) and appealed to disaffected Conservatives to ‘lend us your vote’*” (Lynch *et al.* 2012, 744). Hence, we posit that the Left-Right dimension has boosted its explanatory power in swaying the UKIP electoral preferences during the post-crisis era. Nevertheless, the European issues have probably exceeded the other determinants, remaining the most powerful drivers in party support during the period under study.

## **8.2 The Conservative Party**

In spite of its current reputation as a Soft Eurosceptic, the Conservative party had once stood out as the strongest supporter of European integration within the British political landscape (Baker *et al.* 1993). During the 1960s, the so-called Strasbourg Tories, led by the Prime Minister, Harold MacMillan, promoted the British request to join the European Economic Community. Although the French President, Charles De Gaulle, had twice vetoed the British

membership, this attempt represented a significant shift in the party's ideological orientation towards European integration. MacMillan himself had previously been the creator of the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA), which resulted in being a major failure. Thereafter, many Conservative officials had gradually acknowledged the economic benefits related to the country's entry to the EEC, which was proving to be a rather successful instrument to achieve some market-oriented objectives. Consequently, the party elite mainly referred to economic-utilitarian arguments to warrant this integration step, framing the latter issue as a subset in a broader plan of ideological modernization (Bale 2012). Moreover, this request had also been driven by a Pro-Atlantic choice, where the Prime Minister interpreted British membership as the most effective ploy to bring the EEC closer to the USA (Sowemimo 1996). Nonetheless, regarding European issues, MacMillan did not encounter any strong internal opposition, the only incident being the resignation of a junior minister (Baker *et al.* 2008).

The Conservatives continued in their endeavours to join the EEC, especially under Edward Heath's leadership (1965-1975), who extensively addressed this issue in the party agenda. According to Bale (2012), after the Labour Pro-Entry conversion, the Tories paid considerable attention to the European question in order to respond to public concerns. In fact, the EEC matter could have become a potential source for Conservative electoral vulnerability, where voters preferred the Labour position. In order to prevent electoral losses, the party initiated an accommodative strategy by enhancing its Pro-Entry support, endangering the party unity. However, once again, the Conservative leadership was able to resist the liabilities posed by the Anti-European faction, finally ratifying British accession through a Parliamentary vote in October 1971 (Baker *et al.* 2008).

According to Baker *et al.* (1993), the Conservatives confronted the long-lasting tension between two contrasting tendencies pertaining to the British role in the world economy. On the one hand, the Tory ideology had been grounded in national sovereignty, the so-called “politics of nationhood” (Bale 2006, 385), involving the protection of a centralized nation-state’s prerogatives. On the other hand, many party members endorsed the growing international interdependence in the economic domain, which potentially could provide many advantages for British manufacturing (Sowemimo 1996). In the 1960s and 1970s, this greater interdependence had been supported by the party leadership, who had accepted the sovereignty pooling in the ECC to pursue the country’s economic goals. Nevertheless, the British Conservatives were mainly identifying the European project as a minimalist endeavour to establish a single market. This diluted version of European integration should have involved a market integration, lowering tariff barriers and allowing the free circulation of goods. Many Conservative leaders supported an authority transfer towards a supranational structure, endowed with the limited task of guaranteeing a negative regulation and a system based on free-exchange. This moderate Pro-European support exclusively rested on utilitarian claims, while the Federal Union objective had always been ruled out by the Tories.

During the 1980s, this sovereignty\interdependence intra-party conflict remerged as a direct response to further integration steps, which challenged the Conservative governments. Margaret Thatcher’s leadership had unquestionably ushered in a new era in the party management of European issues, reinvigorating the nationhood advocates in their Anti-Federalist political crusade. Although Thatcher signed the Single European Act (SEA) in 1985, she did not change her negative stance on a more integrated European Union (Gamble 1994;

Startin 2017). The European market integration remained an enshrined principle in the party platform, well-suited to bolster the government's economic goals based on supply-side deregulation policies. However, the most radical Thatcherites had steadily challenged the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), which was also strongly opposed by the Prime Minister herself. In fact, many Conservative members held the ERM as being conducive to bringing the UK into the single currency and thus threatening the country's national sovereignty (Sowemimo 1996). This nationalist party wing did not express any uncertainty towards the expansion of the single market, but it did contest the authority transfer towards a closer political union.

However, the European issues were resulting in an unprecedented level of intra-party conflict, cross-cutting the Conservative dominant coalition (Baker *et al.* 1993; Gamble 1994; Baker *et al.* 2008). In fact, many neo-liberal Tories had gradually adopted a more moderate position on European monetary policies, accepting to peg the British sterling to the German mark. Senior cabinet members, such as Geoffrey Howe and Nigel Lawson, upheld the British ratification of the ERM, which was seen as a means to financially stabilize the common market, without embracing the political union project. However, by sustaining the ERM, they had come into direct collision with the Prime Minister, weakening government cohesion. This internal cabinet dispute resulted in Lawson and Howe resigning, progressively undermining Thatcher's leadership and ultimately provoking her downfall (Gamble 1994). Therefore, European integration had demonstrated its disruptive effects within the Tories, eroding party unity, and thus enfeebling its electoral competitiveness (Baker *et al.* 1993; Sowemimo 1996). It is worth noting that the Anti-European faction had gained ground during the Thatcher period,

increasingly conditioning the Conservative ideology, which had subsequently been characterized by a Eurosceptic identity.

Even Thatcher's successor, John Major, had had to cope with the endemic internal disagreements over European integration (Startin 2017). Though Major had negotiated the opt-out clause from the single currency, rejecting the social dimension, the Maastricht Treaty ratification led to an enduring and acrimonious parliamentary rebellion in the Conservative ranks (Berrington and Hague 1998). The Prime Minister agreed to omit any *Federal* reference from the treaty, using an Anti-Federalist reasoning to quell this intra-party revolt. However, he was never fully able to escape from the assaults of the Anti-European MPs, having to recurrently adjust his position on European integration (Baker *et al.* 2008). Hence, Euroscepticism was clearly turning into one of the main reasons for determining internal factionalism (Bale 2012), which the Conservative party solved by profiling itself as a Soft Eurosceptic party (Lynch and Whitaker 2013b).

In 1997, the Conservatives were defeated, ousted out of power after 18 years of government by the Labour party. Since then, the party gradually took on a clear-cut Eurosceptic outlook, which became a distinctive feature of its ideology (Baker *et al.* 2008). However, even by distinguishing themselves regarding European integration, the Tories did not play up the EU issues in electoral campaigns to a great extent (Bale 2006; Lynch and Whitaker 2013a; Lynch 2015). Indeed, Europe was not a major issue in public concerns during that period, being mostly perceived as a valence issue, where most people desired “*a still sovereign country enjoying a mutually beneficial relationship with neighbouring democracies*”, (Bale 2006, 387). Furthermore, the Conservative leaders acknowledged the electoral liabilities resulting from the intra-party dissent over Europe, de-emphasizing their distinct

positions in this policy area (Lynch and Whitaker 2013b). According to Lynch (2015), the EU issues weakly impacted David Cameron's election to party leader in 2005, mainly committing himself to carrying out a modernization process concerning economic and civil rights domains (Lynch and Whitaker 2013b; Tournier-Sol 2015).

Our pre-crisis observation corroborates the above-mentioned insights pertaining to this party. The Conservative party had been a Mainstream political formation leaning towards an Anti-European position (2.6), thus diverging from the other British centrist parties, such as Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Nonetheless, the Tory elite downplayed this set of issues in the party platform, without finding any notable incentives to politicize the European integration conflict. The party leaders had been influenced by short-term strategic calculations, relinquishing their attempts to transform European matters into position issues (Bale 2006). The Conservatives did not actually perceive any substantial electoral benefits arising from the European integration conflict, which could have posed some further divisions within the party. Even if the Anti-European stances evidently took over the party identity, many ideological differences were entrenched in the Tory ranks. Consequently, the party did not try to set in motion the Pro-\Anti-European policy dimension, achieving a relatively moderate level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship (8.7), being strongly outdone by the UKIP.

As we have already pointed out, Euroscepticism was not regarded as one of the main drivers in David Cameron's climb to power. Nevertheless, this leader consistently advanced an outright Anti-European stand, proclaiming himself as a pragmatic Eurosceptic (Lynch 2015). He pledged the Conservative withdrawal from the European People's Party (EPP) and he actually kept faith to this promise by founding the European Conservatives and Reformists

(ECR) group within the European Parliament. Cameron needed to accommodate his personal leadership to the hard-Eurosceptic wing, preventing a damaging intra-party conflict on European integration (Bale *et al.* 2010). Moreover, he was motivated by the tactical choice to deprive the UKIP ownership of this set of issues, by adopting a stronger Anti-European ideological profile. Lynch and Whitaker (2013b) have suggested that the Conservatives, though developing their distinctive Eurosceptic stance, lessened their emphasis regarding EU issues during the 2010 electoral campaign. The party purportedly lowered the priority of this latent conflict to overshadow its internal disputes and defied the external challenge of the UKIP.

Tab. 8.2. Conservative's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2010-2014

<i>Conservative</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Mainstream Anti-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Anti-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Anti-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	<i>5.3</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>7.4</i>	<i>2.1</i>
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>8.7</i>	<i>10.4</i>	<i>13.3</i>	<i>4.6</i>
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

Our 2010 data has overruled this latter interpretation, showing the growing entrepreneurial activities of the Conservative party. One of our theoretical assumptions has drawn upon the ever-present interaction between the party position and the emphasis attached to a given issue (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2015),

which has created our entrepreneurship index. The Conservatives embarked on a narrow policy swing along the Pro-\-Anti-European divide (2.3), which was coupled with a slight saliency enhancement (5.8). This combined action brought about an increasing level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, reflecting some gradual adjustments in party strategy and ideology. Under Cameron's leadership, the Tories clearly drew a further dividing line from the other Mainstream formations, increasingly deviating from them on general integration policies. In doing so, the party partially tackled the European integration conflict, which was no longer seen as a liability in electoral competition. However, the EU issues remained a subset in a broader platform, while the party became involved in a cross-cutting electoral appeal campaign to topple Labour from power. Indeed, Cameron adopted a more centrist ideological position to maximize party votes, probably prioritizing the economic issues on which the incumbent Labour PM, Gordon Brown, had damaged his reputation (Goodwin 2015).

Although their electoral results lagged behind the forecasts for the 2010 general elections, the Conservatives however celebrated their government comeback, forming a coalition cabinet with the Liberal-Democrats. This return to power exacerbated, rather than dampened, the pre-existing internal discord, fuelling growing tension on European integration issues (Lynch and Whitaker 2013b). As the opposition leader, Cameron himself had previously succeeded in managing these latent divisions, probably benefitting from a greater authority among his party colleagues, who had predicted his electoral victory. Once he became Prime Minister, this personal credit rapidly vanished, with the party having to recurrently deal with backbencher rebellions over EU issues (Lynch and Whitaker 2013b; Lynch 2015). Nevertheless, the Conservative internal dynamics mirrored a different type of ideological division within the party ranks. "*The falter line in*

*the Conservative party is no longer between Europhiles and Eurosceptics, but between 'soft Eurosceptics' – who oppose further integration but support EU membership - and 'Hard Eurosceptics' - who are opposed in principle to European integration.”* (Lynch 2015).

Thus, the Conservatives notably departed from their background ideology, which had been previously grounded on the shared belief to shelter the common market achievements (Kriesi 2007).

The Euro Crisis indisputably fuelled this array of intra-party discord, spurring additional difficulties in handling the European integration conflict for the Tory leadership. Indeed, during this period, several reformist efforts were undertaken by a creditor state coalition to avoid the occurrence of new economic setbacks (Fabbrini 2013). Many intergovernmental treaties were established to bolster the monitoring powers of the EC and to increase fiscal coordination within the Eurozone (Laffan 2014a; 2014b; Schimmelfennig 2014). From the outset, Cameron had strongly feared the impact of this deepening integration, which could have precipitated into the creation of a multi-speed Europe, depriving the UK from a fundamental decision-making role at the European level (Lynch 2015). Moreover, this growing integration did not fit in with the Conservatives' growing Euroscepticism, which increasingly found many political outlets among important party members. Thus, Cameron adopted a more confrontational style on these policies, vetoing the Fiscal Compact Treaty and Jean-Claude Juncker's appointment as European Commission President. However, he weakly counteracted the reactions from those Conservatives who were increasingly rallying the voters around an outright withdrawal platform. These Tory representatives embraced the so-called *hyperglobalist* wisdom on political economy, sensing the obstacles posed by the interventionist EU and consequently seeking to build trade partnerships with the

emerging economies and restore Trans-Atlantic relations (Baker *et al.* 2002).

In January 2013, Cameron pledged to hold a popular Referendum on British membership in the EU, if he had won the 2015 Westminster elections. The Referendum was conditioned by a new settlement on the relationship between the UK and EU, based on obtaining new clauses to warrant the country's membership. In fact, the Prime Minister drew up a new framework, supporting the country's membership in a reformed European Union (Lynch 2015). This new settlement mainly sought to establish revised conditions regarding the freedom of movement and the welfare rights of EU citizens, establishing some limitations in these policy domains. In doing so, Cameron linked immigration issues to European integration, taking a short-term strategic move to bring peace to the party ranks and to collude with the UKIP platform. This tactical manoeuvre reflected the increasing systemic saliency of immigration issues, which were framed as a parcel of the European free movement, fuelling the utilitarian concerns over the cost/benefit ratio of EU membership (Vasilopoulou 2016). Moreover, this pattern reflected the UKIP's ability in dictating the political agenda content, forcing the Conservative party to tackle more right leaning issues (Tournier-Sol 2015).

Our last empirical scrutiny (2014) shows an important intensification of the Conservative's EU Issue Entrepreneurship (13.3), signalling a significant increase compared to the pre-crisis period. The party achieved this growth by attaching more saliency to general integration issues, which probably absorbed many other policy frames in the Tory platform. This party confirmed to be a notable outlier among the Mainstream actors in Western Europe, providing the voters with Anti-European information shortcuts. Meantime, the Conservatives have

disclaimed our expectations on Mainstream entrepreneurship, probably consolidating their efforts in politicizing the European integration conflict in the post-crisis era. Therefore, the party seized on transformative effects of the crisis by apparently setting in motion a further dimension of political competition to maximize its voting preferences.

Nonetheless, many additional factors have appeared to complicate the party efforts in clarifying its position on EU issues and, thus, in reaping electoral benefits. In fact, the internal disputes were aggravated by the EU management of the Euro Crisis, which basically hastened the integration processes. The Conservative ambiguities on European integration blurred the clarity of the party message to the electorate, perhaps diluting the effects of EU issue voting on Tory preferences. These divisions were subsequently manifested during the Brexit referendum, where a strong faction of the party campaigned for the 'Leave', led by Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, while David Cameron and George Osborne were conducting the 'Remain' campaign. Consequently, the voters received unclear cues from the Conservatives, especially concerning the clear-cut stands adopted by the UKIP on European integration.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that also the CHES 2014 round does not seem to perfectly capture the party position on general integration policies (3.1). Indeed, this observation could probably be related to Cameron's soft Euroscepticism, who moderated his Anti-European stances by supporting the new settlement between the UK and EU. On the contrary, the more aggressive Eurosceptic stances were overridden by this general score, revealing to some extent its lack in accuracy. Although the Conservatives had unquestionably drawn attention to these issues, promoting the referendum and addressing the European integration policies, their positions remained unclear for many voters.

Consequently, it is not a foregone conclusion that the Conservatives increased their voting support along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of competition in the post-crisis period. This party has probably relied on the traditional issues related to the Left-Right political conflict to maximize its voting preferences, in spite of the political transformations brought about by the Great Recession.

### **8.3 The Labour Party**

In the second post-war period, the Labour party has often been characterized by internal disputes concerning the pace and direction of European integration, having to cope with recurrent factionalism on these issues. According to Forster (2002), between 1945 and 1961, the Labourites shared an outright Anti-European stance with the Conservatives, although relying on different arguments to their political counterpart. In fact, during the overall period, this party sensed the actual perils posed by the deepening of integration, which could have undermined the Labour's welfare achievements. This economic-utilitarian explanation has habitually been regarded as the main driver in determining Labour's vocal opposition to building Europe (Baker *et al.* 2008). Nonetheless, other factors played a major role in shaping this negative attitude in the immediate post-war phase, establishing an important distinction compared to the other socialist parties across Western Europe. First and foremost, a clear-cut Pro-Atlantic majority dominated the party, and the Labour Secretary of State, Ernst Bevin, was more prone to enforce the Anglo-American alliance rather than establishing the Council of Europe (Forster 2002). Moreover, the first Labour Post-war Cabinet (1945-1951) had dismantled the British Empire, promoting the involvement of the former colonies in the Commonwealth. Thus, the party was committed

to fostering the Commonwealth rather than engaging in pooling sovereignty in a European building. In a nutshell, until the early 1960s, Labour had advocated for the nation-state prerogative, embracing the safeguarding of national institutions, which had warranted the huge sacrifices made by Britons during the war.

After Hugh Gaitskell's premature death in 1963, the Labour leadership was assumed by the more Euro-Pragmatist, Harold Wilson, who narrowly won the majority of seats in the 1964 Westminster elections. Following his election, Wilson applied for British entry to the EEC, encountering the French veto vote for the second time. However, by developing this pro-entry position, internal party disagreements notably emerged and the Labour MPs discipline rapidly collapsed in the House of Commons (Daniels 1998). During the 1971 party conference, Labour adopted a more Anti-European platform (Baker *et al.* 2008), subsequently rejecting the conditions agreed on by the Tory Prime Minister, Edward Heath, for the British accession to the EEC. Therefore, Wilson, as opposition leader (1970-1974), pledged to renegotiate the terms of British membership and to hold a popular referendum on EC entry. In doing so, the Labour leader was primarily seeking to maintain party unity rather than effectively pursuing accession (Wellings 2010). When the party retook the reins of power in 1974, the Wilson cabinet succeeded in establishing a new settlement for the British entry, and the referendum, held on June 1975, resulted in a major victory for the cross-party coalition of Pro-Europeans. Although the Labour government accomplished this difficult task, the party factionalism remained fairly stable during the period and Wilson's successor, James Callaghan, downplayed the saliency of European integration.

After the electoral defeat in the 1979 general elections, the left-wing Michael Foot seized power in the Labour Party, reinvigorating the

Eurosceptic crusade among the party ranks and making a commitment for British withdrawal from the EEC. Nonetheless, this return to Euroscepticism contributed to a party split with the more moderate Pro-European wing forming the Social Democratic Party (SDP) (Bulmer 2008; Hertner and Keith 2016). The 1983 electoral setback caused another change in the dominant coalition, where the Pro-European modernizers gained ground, gradually marginalizing their left-wing Eurosceptic opponents from power (Forster 2002). Indeed, between 1983 and 1997, Labour embarked on a path towards a more Europhile position, attempting to improve the party's reputation as a credible governing actor and also filling the space vacated by the Conservative Anti-European U-turn (Daniels 1998). Therefore, the party endorsed the British accession to the ERM and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, criticizing the Tory governments for their ambiguous orientation on general integration. Apart from the window of opportunities opened up by these domestic factors, Labour's reappraisal of European issues was also due to economic reasons. Mitterrand's failure in carrying out an expansionary Keynesian programme in France had magnified the limitations to employ this economic model in one single country. Consequently, the entire Socialist party family repositioned itself towards the more Europhile pole of political contestation (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Gabel and Hix 2004), aiming to bring some of its economic goals to a European level. The Labour party identified the growing international interdependence in the economic realm, acknowledging the EEC's key role for bolstering the British economy.

At the beginning of Tony Blair's political era (1994-2007), Labour reinforced its Pro-European position, ushering in a new course in the party management of EU issues (Smith 2005). The 1997 party manifesto urged for the completion of the Common Market and a

further integration step, such as union enlargement to Eastern European countries. Moreover, it pledged to ratify the Maastricht Treaty's social chapter and to increase the inter-institutional accountability at the European level (namely by envisaging a more accountable European Commission towards the European Parliament). Nonetheless, Labour had muddied the waters concerning accession to the Eurozone (Bulmer 2008; Opperman 2008). Although staking out a principled positive stance on the economic framework regarding the EMU, the party conditioned the British application depending on a popular referendum. In fact, Labour feared a lack of public support on this integration policy (Daniels 1998), which could have undermined its success in the 1997 general elections. We should point out that the programmatic renewal carried out by Tony Blair had certainly involved many European-related issues. Nevertheless, a *“positive European policy did not become an objective in its own right but was seen as an integral part to a wide range of other policy goals, such as economic competitiveness. Indeed, Blair's commitment to seizing the electoral centre-ground meant that there was considerable caution about fighting the election on the European issue”* (Bulmer 2008, 599).

When Labour regained government office in 1997, ending its opposition status after 18 years, it displayed a willingness to restore good relations with the EU. In fact, during its first term in office, the Blair cabinet engaged in a constructive approach towards its European partners by strengthening the British diplomatic efforts (Smith 2005; Bulmer 2008). The government took a central stage in negotiating the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties, bringing to a clear end British isolation at the European level. However, the party faced a certain public hostility towards the increasing European integration, which had been constantly interwoven with the Eurosceptic bias of the British press

(Daddow 2012). According to Opperman (2008), Labour did not try to reshape these public attitudes towards Europe, but it rather depoliticized the latent conflict on European integration. In doing so, the party framed the European related issues in a supranational utilitarianism (Bulmer 2008), seeking to blend British interests with European policies. This tactical device was aimed at consolidating the reputation of Labour as the more competent actor in handling European integration, outperforming the Conservatives. Thus, the party was transforming the EU related policies into valence issues (Bale 2006; Opperman 2008), downplaying the positional difference among the parties. This Euro-pragmatic approach represented a means to weaken European integration as a source of inter-party competition. Furthermore, the party had operated a saliency-reduction strategy by shifting the decision-making towards a more technocratic arena (Forster 2002) and by conditioning many integration steps to a popular referendum (Opperman 2008). Clarke *et al.* (2004) underlined the lowering level of EU issue voting in UK, which could have favoured the Conservative party electoral support.

Our pre-crisis round (2006) basically confirms the above-mentioned scenario, capturing the concluding stages of Tony Blair's political era. Although Blair's second and third terms in office had been characterized by many reversals in his earlier Europhile commitment (Smith 2005), the party had kept a substantial Pro-European position (5.2), increasingly shifting its ideological distance from the Eurosceptic Tories. Nonetheless, the Labourites had not tackled this latent conflict, sensing the electoral liabilities inherent in EU related matters. Indeed, by competing on a Pro-\Anti-European dimension of contestation, the party could have responded to the discontent of the British public, providing the Conservatives with a formidable electoral advantage. Consequently, Labour attached a low saliency (4.3) to EU

issues, developing a weak entrepreneurship index (4.3) and, consequently, attempting to extinguish any form of open dispute concerning European integration. In this case, a very clear-cut de-politicization strategy had been set out before the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, somehow revealing the pre-established difficulties to express the Pro-European position in the British context.

Tab. 8.3. Labour's EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<i>Labour</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	<i>5.2</i>	<i>4.8</i>	<i>5.6</i>	<i>0.4</i>
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	<i>4.3</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>-0.7</i>
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>4.3</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>-1.8</i>
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Decrease</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

The outbreak of the Euro Crisis coincided with a leadership turnover in the Labour Party, with Tony Blair being replaced by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown. Brown had focused on the party's potential to support multilateralism and economic interdependence, framing the European Union as a parcel in a broader system of international affairs (Schnapper 2015). He had recurrently stressed the benefits of the single market for the British economy, selling the country's European membership as a matter of national interest (Hertner and Keith 2016). In doing so, he never truly distanced himself from Tony Blair's Euro-pragmatic stand, remaining on the trail of the New Labour European policies. However, he had

not endorsed a Federal vision of Europe, repeatedly referring to the need for reforms at the European level. Economic concerns had probably been predominant during the Brown cabinet (2007-2010) (Carey and Geddes 2010), which faced the collapse of an important national bank, the Northern Rock, suffering greatly from worldwide economic interdependence. According to a valence interpretation of politics (Stokes 1963), Brown's reputation in handling the economy had probably been undermined by many different critical conditions, diminishing the partisanship effects as a determinant of the Labour electoral support (Palmer *et al.* 2013).

In the 2010 Westminster elections, the Labour campaign had revolved around domestic factors, while European issues barely surfaced in the party manifesto. Our 2010 data mirrors this trend, with the party lowering its degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship (2.5). Labour mainly achieved this strategy by toning down the emphasis ascribed to EU related matters, without notably re-positioning itself along the Pro-\Anti-European ideological divide. Moreover, though the British public opinion had often expressed Eurosceptic biases (Opperman 2008), the government did not markedly employ a blame shifting strategy towards the EU institutions for the financial crisis (Hobolt and Tilley 2014). In fact, the party had widened its tactic of saliency reduction, increasing its de-politicization efforts concerning the European integration conflict. Therefore, during the early stage of the Euro Crisis, Labour would have been consistent with our expectations pertaining to the Mainstream parties, minimizing the EU issues and electorally vying on questions inherent to the Left-Right dimension.

When the party returned to the opposition benches in 2010, its previous plans on European integration remained unaltered and it was quite single-minded in defusing this latent conflict. Brown's successor, Ed Miliband, primarily targeted domestic issues, such as

the National Health Service and economic crisis outcomes, largely overriding the EU matters in his policy commitments (Hertner and Keith 2016). Though he downplayed European integration as a source of political contestation, Miliband clarified his position on EU membership, constrained by David Cameron's resolution to hold a referendum on this constitutive question. The Labour leader advocated for the country remaining in the EU, highlighting the economic benefits of this membership. Nonetheless, he had to some extent distanced himself from the stands expressed by the Blair-Brown duo by drawing the attention to the shortcomings of the single currency (Schnapper 2015).

Our last empirical observation (2014) sketched a picture of a political party, avoiding EU policies in the national debate. British public opinion had not established favourable conditions for displaying a Pro-European attitude and, consequently, Labour had restrained itself from conveying outright Europhile messages to the voters. Moreover, by playing the EU issue cards, the party could have moved away from its working-class constituents, increasingly attracted by the UKIP Anti-European cues (Ford *et al.* 2012). Furthermore, the Euro Crisis probably hastened some pre-existing incentives to rally the voters on a Eurosceptic platform, without spurring a counter-offensive within the Pro-European camp. The flourishing of the Anti-European electoral supply was not matched by a parallel development in a Pro-European political entrepreneurship. Hence, the European integration politicization may have suffered from the lack in Labour entrepreneurship. Indeed, the party minimizing strategy cannot be underestimated in assessing the establishment of the Pro-\Anti-European dimension of contestation, representing a large hurdle for politicizing the European integration conflict. Our predictions regarding the Labour Party are inextricably linked to this current

overview, suggesting an overwhelming predominance of Left-Right related issues in explaining its electoral preferences, which could have probably outweighed the European integration impact.

#### **8.4 Liberals\ Liberal Democrats**

The Liberal-Democratic Party was established in 1988 as a result of the merger between the Liberal Party and Social Democratic Party. We have already examined to what extent the impact of European integration had had on the Labour party during the 1980s, ultimately prompting the split from the Pro-European right-wing faction. However, since the 1920s, the Liberals had become the third party in the British party system, being permanently located on the opposition benches. While many opposition parties usually shifted their stands on European integration, driven by short-term strategic calculations, the Liberals had consistently leaned towards the Pro-Integration pole of political contestation (Benedetto and Varela 2013). Pro-Europeanism had been a founding value of the Liberal party identity, which had shared this ideological orientation with the SDP, jointly laying the foundations for the Liberal-Democrats. Although the latter party could not have electorally benefitted from this Europhile position, it fully supported all the major integration steps, developing a distinct policy stand within the British party system (Butt Philip 1993). Nonetheless, the Liberal-Democrats were not completely immune to patterns of intra-party divisions on EU issues (Baker *et al.* 2008), where the older generation of MPs remained more distinctively Pro-European compared to the new generation (Smith 2012). Furthermore, this support for European integration had not always been unconditional (Benedetto and Varela 2013), neither can the party be qualified as a Euro-Enthusiast actor. According to Hertner and Keith (2016),

together with the Labour party, “*Liberal-Democrats can be best described as soft and, at times, half-hearted, lukewarm Europhiles.*” (Ibidem, 84). In fact, the party was influenced by the Euro Crisis outcomes in tempering its Pro-European stands, showing a more pragmatic approach.

Tab. 8.4. Liberal-Democrat’s EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<i>Liberal-Democrats</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	<i>6.2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>13.3</i>	<i>10.6</i>	<i>12.1</i>	<i>-1.2</i>
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Decrease</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

However, our empirical observations tell a different story, reverting some of the findings highlighted by the political science overviews. Indeed, after the outbreak of the economic crisis, the Liberal-Democrats did not soften their endorsement towards the European Project. On the contrary, the party increased its approval on general integration policies (+0.5), gradually becoming a fully-fledged supporter. This political actor did not change in its strategic endeavours, persistently emphasizing EU issues and achieving a high entrepreneurship level during the post-crisis period. Although its index EU Issue Entrepreneurship slightly dropped (-1.2), the party achieved substantial strategic efforts on European integration, which were marginally affected by the political situation. Consequently, the

Euro Crisis did not bring about major turnabouts in Liberal-Democrat strategies on EU issues, which constituted a central asset in their political discourse. Moreover, after the 2010 general election, when the party regained power, becoming a junior government partner in the coalition with the Conservatives, it continued supporting European integration. The party leader, Nick Clegg, had engaged in debates with Nigel Farage, publicly lauding the country's benefits ensuing from EU membership, which became a cornerstone in the Liberal-Democrat program. Jointly with the UKIP, the party continued to politicize the European integration conflict, aiming to set in motion this latent source of party contestation in the British context. In a nutshell, we expect that the Liberal-Democrats have been prone to compete on the Pro-\Anti-European latent dimension, greatly explaining its voting support during the overall period under scrutiny.

### **8.5 The Scottish National Party (SNP)**

Although the Scottish National Party (SNP) had historically achieved many positional swings along the Pro-\Anti-European ideological divide (Baker *et al.* 2008), it had gradually moved towards a more integrationist policy stance (Benedetto and Varela 2013). In multi-national countries, such as the United Kingdom, regionalist parties attempted to unsettle the current foundation of intra-party competition by injecting a territorial dimension of conflict, which revolved around the structure of political authority (Elias, Szöcsik and Zuber 2015). According to Mark and Wilson (2000), regionalist parties perceived European integration as a policy device to carry out a greater degree of multi-level governance. Thus, these political formations had been regarded as Pro-European parties by scholars (Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002), who took into consideration their principled endorsement of

the European project. During the 1980s, the SNP drew up its “Independence in Europe” strategy, conditioning the Scottish secession from Britain to its European membership. In doing so, the party launched a realistic platform, where the viability of Scottish independency emerged, allowing the free movement of people and goods between Scotland and England within Europe (Jolly 2007; Dardanelli and Mitchell 2014). Even if many criticisms remained regarding the party program, which triggered many disagreements on the current embodiment of the European Union, the SNP plainly fell within the Pro-European pole of political contestation (Benedetto and Varela 2013).

Tab. 8.5. SNP’s EU Position, EU Saliency, EU Issue Entrepreneurship and Absolute Variations between 2006-2014

<i>SNP</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Absolute Variations (Index 2006)</i>
<i>EU Position</i>	<i>5.2</i>	<i>5.1</i>	<i>6.3</i>	<i>1.1</i>
<i>Party Type</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Mainstream Pro-European</i>	<i>Stable</i>
<i>EU Saliency</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>5.6</i>	<i>-0.4</i>
<i>EU Issue Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4.4</i>	<i>7.8</i>	<i>1.8</i>
<i>Party Strategy</i>				<i>Entrepreneurship Increase</i>

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006-2014 (Baker *et al.* 2015)

Our empirical observations signal an interesting trajectory in the SNP entrepreneurship on EU related policies, which had set it apart from the other Mainstream parties. It is worth observing that the party had strengthened its overall support for general integration policies, accomplishing a positional transformation along the Pro-\Anti-European latent dimension. By shifting its European stand, the SNP

modified its tactical activities on this source of conflict, augmenting the political entrepreneurship on EU issues (1.8). Therefore, after the outbreak of the Great Recession, the SNP turned out to be more committed to mobilizing Europhile sentiments compared to the pre-crisis era, taking political action against the Anti-European crusade carried out by the Conservatives. However, this regionalist party cannot be considered as primarily competing on the Pro-\Anti-European ideological divide, still representing a minor parcel within a broader platform. This political actor had been keener in politicizing another kind of conflict, based on the Centre versus Periphery political division, which ultimately denoted the regionalist parties' political actions. Nevertheless, the SNP's case led to a peculiar situation, where Scotland's independence was connected to the European integration policies. By advocating this political discourse, the party had increasingly framed its core policy objectives within a Pro-European platform. During the campaign for the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, the SNP leadership emphasized the government's pledge to hold a referendum on the UK remaining in the EU as a compelling factor for justifying the secession. Though the majority of Scottish voters decided to remain part of the UK (55.3%), the party retained these Europhile arguments to promote a second referendum on the independence of Scotland. In fact, the result of the Brexit referendum set in motion a new political initiative, fostering another popular consultation to take place on Scottish secession. Consequently, the SNP boosted its EU issue entrepreneurship by associating Scottish independence with European integration, being apparently unaffected by the Euro Crisis. These economic factors probably did not influence the SNP strategies, which had been chiefly swayed by its secessionist target. This party has contradicted our prediction on the Mainstream parties, increasingly politicizing the conflict related to the Pro-\Anti-

European dimension during the aftermath of the Euro Crisis. However, as we have already mentioned, the party had been primarily engaged on other issues, which had been detached from the European integration conflict. Therefore, we expect that this party did not maximize its electoral preferences by vying on the EU issues, nor by competing on the policies related to the Left-Right dimension of contestation, but, instead, it sought to establish a further political division related to the Centre versus Periphery. Nonetheless, we exclude the SNP from our subsequent empirical test, given the small number of cases provided us by the EES rounds on the Scottish case.

## **8.6 Conclusions**

The United Kingdom context displays many distinctive features, suffering a weaker impact from the Euro Crisis. In fact, the party supply experienced small variations during the post-crisis period, which did not lead to a noticeable electoral instability. Nonetheless, many actors were already committed to politicizing the European integration conflict, striving for the establishment of the Pro-\Anti-European dimension of contestation. These subjects had been mainly the UKIP and the Liberal-Democrats, which were located at the party system fringes, electorally downsized by the majoritarian electoral rules. The UKIP has been a peculiar sub-type of Anti-European party, being a single issue Eurosceptic party and strongly cueing the voters on this subset of policies. The latter political formation assumed an extreme stand on the Left-Right ideological divide, emphasizing some inherent issues, such as the Anti-Immigration policies, while it had gradually developed a populist outlook as a result of the Euro Crisis. Thus, the crisis reshaped the whole party ideology, sparking some substantial changes, which did not involve its entrepreneurial undertakings on EU issues that had remained unwavering. On the

contrary, the Liberal-Democrats steadily positioned themselves on a more centrist stance. Nevertheless, this observation lend support to our *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*, where this party had slightly decreased its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship as a result of the economic crisis.

The Conservative party had been subjected to a major modification in its cueing activities, acting as a more genuine Anti-European entrepreneur. Although it certainly represented a further exception in assessing our first hypothesis, the financial crisis propelled many factional divisions within this Mainstream actor. Therefore, by being unable to amalgamate a coherent position, the Tories did not catalyse a deep-seated process of issue evolution. Indeed, their activities lacked a fundamental issue clarity, suited to prompt a massive electoral realignment along the Pro-\Anti-European axis of conflict (Carmines and Stimson 1989).

The Labour party had consistently downplayed the European integration conflict from its manifestos, assigning more emphasis on other policy matters related to the Left-Right issue dimension. By deflecting this channel of intra-party competition, this subject confirms our expectations pertaining to the Mainstream parties, which had generally shrunk its entrepreneurial pursuits after the Recession. This Labour pattern had been embedded with its Europhilia, which could not be manipulated as an electoral resource in the national political landscape. Some public opinion fluctuations prevented the Labourites from highlighting these issues, weakening the politicization of the European integration conflict. In fact, this party action impinged on the overall systemic saliency of the EU issues, which were substantially marginalized from the core of the political agenda by the Labour Party.

The British scenario disqualified the transformative effects of the crisis, proving that some actors were already transforming the electoral supply, taking advantage of some preceding window of opportunities. This party system has experienced a pattern of Pre-Existing Entrepreneurship on the EU issues and the conflict politicization has probably occurred prior the Crisis outbreak. As a matter of fact, the current analysis may uphold the politicization thesis, where the many British parties played up European integration cards in the public debate. Although some political subjects faced long-lasting dilemmas on the EU issues, we argue that voting preferences may have been driven by the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality. This case had also disputed the consistency of the Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis, which emerged as being null. In fact, the Conservatives and SNP have confirmed an alternative set-up, where these parties increased their levels of EU Issues Entrepreneurship, rather than downplaying it. Many paradoxical facets have characterized the British case, which has not lacked the political mobilization of Anti-European petitions, ultimately conducting towards the withdrawal from the EU. Nevertheless, the Pro-European actors have scanty carried out corresponding actions, concealing Europhile hints.

## **9. A Comparative Overview on the EU Issue Entrepreneurship**

The current chapter summarizes our findings on the entrepreneurship hypotheses (*H1 and H2*) concerning the four party systems under analysis – Germany, France, Italy and United Kingdom – drawing some remarks on the electoral supply (Sections: 9.1; 9.2). This step enables us to test the validity of our set of hypotheses at the disaggregate level, which may lead us towards different conclusions compared to the established results at the aggregate level. Moreover, this chapter identifies the test of the congruence between the party supply and electoral preferences as a necessary empirical stage for shedding light on overall politicization hypothesis (Section: 9.3).

### **9.1 Electoral Supply Fluctuations in Four European Democracies**

The EU issues have been regarded as *sleeping* (Ejik van der and Franklin 2004) for many decades, being uncontested and marginalized by parties in national debates. We have posited that the Euro Crisis has resulted in some transformations in the electoral supply; opening windows of opportunity to lay the foundations for a new conflict. Our analysis on the EU Issue Entrepreneurship has shed light on different national trajectories concerning this latent conflict dimensionality.

The French case has embodied a Protest-based entrepreneurship pattern, mirroring the Protest Anti-European parties attempts in politicizing an alternative dimension, while the Mainstream Pro-European parties have sought to maintain the pre-established conflicts. These radical political formations have gradually set an Anti-

European political discourse, providing the voters with outright Eurosceptic alternatives. The Mainstream parties have strategically responded by extinguishing this source of contestation, identifying the electoral liabilities stemming from the European integration conflict. The Euro Crisis has clearly magnified this two-fold set of strategies, hinging upon a tension between de-politicization and politicization efforts. Consequently, Mainstream party activities may have limited the rise of an alternative issue dimensionality, dampening the overall restructuring of the electoral supply. Furthermore, this case requires a further investigation on the voting alignments along a Pro-\-Anti-European dimension. Although the Mainstream parties have deployed a de-politicization strategy, Protest parties may have succeeded in injecting a substantial level of polarization pertaining to this policy dimension, reshaping voter preferences. The latter attempts may have resulted in the formation of a new majority of Anti-European voters, which, perhaps, have flourished across the country during the post crisis-period. However, this national case has showed a set of contrasting tactics, which may have prevented the issue evolution from taking place.

The German scenario has lent support to a more unquestionable systemic entrepreneurship, involving all the major parties, which have displayed very coherent tactical endeavours. Indeed, the German parties have not undertaken any major policy adjustment on this dimension, while they have enhanced their entrepreneurial efforts by attaching more saliency to EU issues. The emergence of the AFD has probably interacted with these political initiatives, injecting a genuine Eurosceptic supply into this party system and, thus, spurring a policy polarization on EU issues. Nonetheless, the rise of this party has been linked to the financial crisis, which has been a catalyst in placing a

systemic emphasis on the policies arising from the bailout of debtor countries. This debate revolved around the matter of inter-state solidarity, increasing some pre-existing dissatisfaction with the workings of the Eurozone. These debt-sharing policies have probably set in motion the emerging of an important political divide in Germany between those supporting and those rejecting the rescue packages for the insolvent countries. This debate may have been ephemeral, quickly vanishing in its impact as a source of inter-party competition. However, this subtle controversy may have paved the way for the rise of a more constitutive and deep-seated division between Pro-European and Anti-European parties in the German context. By responding on this issue dimensionality, the Mainstream parties have probably tried to electorally benefit from the established Pro-European alignments, which have remained majoritarian during the post-crisis period. Conversely, the AFD, an authentic post-crisis party, may have electorally seized on the growing Euro-scepticism by consistently making strategic efforts to politicize this issue dimensionality. It is worth noticing that the German parties have probably achieved a positioning clarity on EU issues, conveying clear-cut messages to the electors, a required step to unleash an issue evolution process (Carmines and Stimson 1989). Consequently, the voters may have reacted to these cues, perhaps realigning themselves on this issue dimensionality and producing some sizeable electoral transformations.

The Italian electoral supply has shared some core characteristics with the German case, where both Mainstream and Protest parties have behaved as authentic EU Issue Entrepreneurs by emphasizing these issues and adjusting their policy stances on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimensionality. However, the ever-changing Italian party system may

have hampered a politicization process, blurring these information shortcuts. The Euro Crisis has probably led towards a transformation in partisan strategies on the policy dimensionality, reflecting the increasing efforts to politicize the European integration conflict. Nevertheless, the parties may have found many difficulties in developing an outright policy reputation on EU issues. We have shed light on the rise of the Eurosceptic cues, adopted by the LN, FDI-AN and M5S, which have tried to take advantage of the incentives arising from the crisis. Although these parties have notably clarified their Eurosceptic messages during the post-crisis period, this issue ownership had diminished in the pre-crisis era, given their pre-established unclear strategies. Even the FI\PD\ has had many positional adjustments on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension over time, leaning towards a de-politicization. On the contrary, the Pro-European Mainstream parties have more consistently attempted to benefit from a voter majority on the Europhile pole of this policy divide, recurrently tackling these issues. Indeed, after the outbreak of the crisis, the PD and UDC have increased their tactical efforts, acting as policy entrepreneurs for the Pro-European sentiments. However, this Pro-European supply may not have restructured the foundations of the conflict, resulting in a simple *punctuated politicization* (Kriesi and Grande 2016). Thus, in spite of the increasing EU Issue Entrepreneurship widespread across this political divide, we are more inclined to propose that the Pro-European voters have been the only group who have found a party outlet. The hypothesis we have presented is contrary to the rise of an authentic ideological divide-line, against the Pro-European and Anti-European parties and, therefore, influencing the voting preferences in Italy. Although a systemic entrepreneurship has gradually taken place, a well-defined relation between the elites and voters may have not occurred concerning

European integration. In fact, this national case probably lacks in the clarity conducive to catalyse the issue evolution patterns, without realigning the voters along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension.

The British case has provided us with a scenario of Pre-Established Entrepreneurship, where many parties had already been committed to politicizing the EU issues in the electoral arena. This kind of strategy has not simply regarded a Single Issue Eurosceptic Party, such as the UKIP, but it has strongly involved a governing Mainstream actors, the Conservative Party, taking the EU issues to central stage. The British context revealed pre-established incentives setting in motion a new source of electoral contestation, basically denying the transformative effects brought about by the financial crisis. However, some minor outcomes have been triggered by the Recession, especially affecting the two major political parties, the Labour Party and the Conservatives. Labour adopted a dismissal activity on European integration, mainly seeking to re-profile itself on the Left-Right ideological divide. The Tories, instead, have carried out many entrepreneurial activities on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation, but the crisis has also exacerbated some intra-party conflicts, blurring the party messages. Thus, a process of issue evolution has probably been minimized by this set of unclear cues, hampering the reactions of emotion-based voters on this issue dimensionality. Although important levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship have been established, remaining stable for some parties, the rise of this European integration conflict may have been downplayed, rather than boosted, during the post-crisis period.

In spite of the many qualifications occurring in the electoral supply, this comparative overview appears to partially confirm some

transformative effects triggered by the crisis. Many parties, across different party systems and national contexts, have increased their EU Issue Entrepreneurship, which have become a tactical device in the political debate. Certain incentives have actually taken place to unleash a restructuring of the partisan cues on EU issues and many parties have increased their references to European integration. To draw some concluding remarks and complete our comparison, we should mix party strategies and party types to summarize our findings at the disaggregate level.

## **9.2. Party Strategies and Party Types: Disaggregate Findings on the Electoral Supply**

In Figure 9.1, we report the mix of party types and party strategies in order to confirm the validity of our first set of hypotheses at the disaggregate level. In Chapter 2, when we presented the table, we established the alleged location of Protest Anti-European parties (upper left quadrant) and Mainstream Pro-European parties (lower right quadrant) to uphold an empirical confirmation of the hypotheses. First and foremost, our empirical output provides clear evidence for the *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*, showing a very high concentration of cases in the upper left quadrant, being consistent with our expectations. We have posited the increasing entrepreneurial efforts achieved by this party cluster along the Pro-Anti-European issue dimensionality. One of the unambiguous results in our analysis has involved the Radical Right parties. These parties have stood out as the most significant EU issue entrepreneurs within their party system, staking out the ownership of Eurosceptic stances. This pattern of entrepreneurship may be identified in France (FN), Germany (AFD), Italy (LN and FDI) and the United Kingdom (UKIP), where the

strength of the parties in the entrepreneurship of European integration has appeared to be undisputable, probably aiming at reversing the patterns of political competition. In each party system under study, a Radical Right party has, to some extent, sought to create a new voter majority along the pro-/Anti-European dimension of conflict in order to gain electoral payoffs. Indeed, *“Besides their anti-immigration positions, which is their most prominent feature, and criticism of the political elite, Euro-scepticism is the most important common denominator of populist right parties in the early twenty-first century”* (Dolezal and Hellström 2016, 159). Even if the Radical Right parties have not monopolized the EU issues (Grande, Hutter, Kersher and Becker 2016), they have persistently campaigned against the authority transfer by providing Eurosceptic cues for voters.

While the Right Protest parties have been more plainly committed to accentuating and owning the issues related to European integration, the path of Radical Left parties has indicated some qualifications. There is a subset of Radical Left parties that have taken outright Eurosceptic positions, such as the PCF, PDS\Left and SEL, which had already been installed before the Euro crisis. Despite their long-standing disagreements on European integration, which has been rooted in the alleged neo-liberal bias of the integration project (Marks and Steenburgen 2004; Kriesi 2007), they have mainly aimed at rallying the voters against the austerity policies, set up by the EU to manage the crisis. Thus, they have tried to merge this left-oriented platform into a Eurosceptic policy stand. Although these parties have appeared to be embedded within the traditional mechanisms of partisan competition inherent to the Left-Right dimension, Radical Left parties have evaluated the Pro-/Anti-European dimension as being profitable electorally. The only case that has negated our

expectation has been the PRC\SEL, which has downplayed its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship in the post-crisis period.

Figure. 9.1 Party Strategies and Party Types

<p>Protest Entrepreneurship Increase: <i>FN; PCF (France); PDS\LINKE (Germany); LN; AN\FDI (Italy); UKIP (United Kingdom)</i></p>	<p>Mainstream Entrepreneurship Increase: <i>Greens\EELV (France); CDU; SPD; Alliance 90\the Greens (Germany); UDC; PD (Italy); Conservatives (United Kingdom)</i></p>
<p>Protest Entrepreneurship Decrease: <i>PRC\SEL (Italy).</i></p>	<p>Mainstream Entrepreneurship Decrease: <i>PS; UMP; UDF\MoDem (France); CSU; FDP (Germany); FI\PDL (Italy); Labour; Liberal Democrats (United Kingdom).</i></p>

On the other hand, the Protest Anti-European parties established in the aftermath of the economic downturn, such as the AFD, PG and M5S have clearly seized on the window of opportunity opened up by the increasing dissatisfaction with the working of the EU. These parties have pursued the mobilization of the European issues by leaning towards the Anti-European side of our scale and developing very high levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. The Euro crisis was probably a

strong driver in spreading Eurosceptic attitudes among the public, causing an unprecedented electoral instability. These Protest parties have partially been the political outcomes of the Euro crisis, which have magnified all the EU rules on budgetary policies and the lack of responsiveness of national governments (Hobolt and Tilley 2014). Consequently, their existence seems to remain, at least to a certain extent, within the EU Issue Entrepreneurship and in the attempts to struggle against the dimensionality of political contestation. These findings lend a significant empirical backing to the *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*, mirroring the politicization efforts of the Protest parties. Hence, we may assess that, at the disaggregate level, *the Protest parties have been more likely to increase their EU Issue Entrepreneurship by polarizing their Eurosceptic stance and, consequently, by attaching more emphasis to the EU issues.*

Our Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis foresees that these parties will weaken their levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, accentuating the traditional issues underlying the Left-Right dimension. Many of these parties have actually downplayed EU issues by blurring their traditional Pro-European positions. Many prominent Mainstream formations have adopted this strategy, reducing their references to European issues within their political platforms, such as the PS, UMP, UDFMoDem, CSU, FDP, FI\PD, Labour and Liberal Democrats. Moreover, some Mainstream parties had adjusted their position on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality by adopting more Neutral and Eurosceptic stands. This trajectory has especially involved three right-wing parties (UMP, CSU and FI), which have reshaped their framework over Europe as a response to the systemic competition of the Radical Right parties, being capable of establishing a new ground for the political vie. Moreover, these parties have often

internally struggled to harmonize their traditional commitment to national interests and the ever-increasing European integration, which they have historically supported. This pattern has often been somewhat dramatic in the case of the UMP that has faced several dilemmas regarding European integration during its history. Another set of Europhile mainstream parties (PS, UDF\MoDem, FDP, Liberal Democrats and Labour) have actually attempted to decrease the saliency of European integration, trying to avoid the potential electoral backlash related to EU issues. They have maintained positive attitudes to integration, without providing any meaningful cues to voters on this set of issues.

Nonetheless, a group of Mainstream parties have responded to the European integration dimension, by emphasizing Pro-European attitudes, rather than overlooking them. The Greens\EELV, CDU, SPD, Alliance 90\the Greens, UDC and PD have conveyed Europhile messages to voters, reacting to the spread of Euro-scepticism. This observation clearly does not fit in with our Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis, which has been weakened by the strategic efforts of these parties in boosting the Europhile propensity. This kind of counter-mobilization on the Pro-/-Anti European has been partially unforeseen by the scholars, but it may strengthen the establishment of a new dimension of party competition, mirroring the strategic success of the Protest parties. Indeed, these parties have perhaps won their battle over the political dimensionality (De Vries and Marks 2012), by imposing the issues they own into the public debate. Thus, this path may be a hint to the altering configuration of partisan competition in Europe. However, this hypothesis will be dealt with in the next section. Finally, the British case has a different configuration compared to the others. In fact, the United Kingdom has presented a notable case of a Mainstream Anti-European party - the

Conservatives. While the UKIP and the Conservative Party have been clear-cut Eurosceptic parties, the Labour Party has decreased its entrepreneurial strength on this issue dimension, being consistent with our prediction. On the contrary, the most outright British Pro-European actor, the LD, has slightly deflected its politicization achievements on the European policies, preferring to stress other issues.

Consequently, our results hold only a mixed empirical bearing to the *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*. On the one hand, a notable set of Mainstream parties has actually avoided stressing European integration, choosing to vie along the Left-Right dimension. On the other hand, another pool of Mainstream parties, very powerful in terms of government office and large in terms of electoral size, has counterattacked on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, mobilizing Europhile stances. Consequently, this work does not accept Hypothesis 2, not confirming the expectations on clear-cut patterns of Mainstream Entrepreneurship strategies at the disaggregate level.

### **9.3 Concluding Propositions on the Party Supply**

This overview allows us to formulate some propositions concerning our first set of hypotheses and, thus, evaluate the transformations set in motion by the Euro Crisis, which may have hastened the rise of the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimensionality.

*Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis:* The Recession has somehow strengthened some windows of opportunity for the Protest Parties, which have increased their level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship over time. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of Protest parties has fitted in with the above-mentioned scenario on the Protest Entrepreneurship

Hypothesis. Many of these parties had already tried to unsettle the preceding foundations of inter-party contestation, seeking to establish a new majority of Anti-European voters. The French, the German and the Italian contexts have clearly indicated a political transformation sparked off by the financial crisis, which has substantially changed the overall electoral supply on EU issues. Namely, the Protest Parties have undertaken this alteration at the systemic level, polarizing their positions on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, setting themselves apart from the Mainstream Europhile consensus and ascribing more emphasis to EU issues. The only notable outlier has been the British party system, where the incentives for politicizing the European integration conflict had already been underway during the pre-crisis period. Nonetheless, the British UKIP has been committed to increasing its EU Issue Entrepreneurship in the post-crisis period, standing out as a Single Issue Eurosceptic party. This analysis of the national cases has partially reverted the established findings on the cumulative results in Europe, mirroring deeper transformative consequences of the Euro Crisis. *Thus, since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, in Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, if a party falls into the Anti-European Protest Party type, all things being equal, it is more likely to increase its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship.*

Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis: On the contrary, the Great Recession has not ushered in a homogenous reaction within the Pro-European camp. We noticed that many French and British Mainstream parties have unquestionably decreased their EU Issue Entrepreneurship over time, while many Italian and the German parties have openly collided with their Anti-European counterparts. Our aggregate results have empirically corroborated the Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis, where this party type, all things being equal, has been more likely to extinguish the European integration

conflict. On the contrary, our disaggregate findings have produced more scant evidence for our hypothesis, where these parties have remained strategically divided on the politicization\de-politicization efforts on the European integration conflict. Indeed, two clusters of Mainstream parties have come into being, revealing a differentiated impact resulting from the economic crisis. Although we are not fully able to confirm the Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis, we may say that the entrepreneurial efforts achieved by Mainstream parties may have resulted in a major conflict politicization at the domestic level. The latter pattern has seemed to be epitomized by the German party system, where a more clear-cut issue evolution process has probably taken place. *In a nutshell, our disaggregated findings on the Mainstream parties do not allow us to confirm our Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis, which, conversely, has been supported by our aggregate results.*

#### **9.4 The Congruence between Electoral Supply and Voting Preferences**

The analysis outlined on our four party systems has somehow supported the transformation set underway by the financial crisis, which has partially reshaped the electoral supply. Our driving assumption is that political parties had historically carried out a fundamental role of agency in politicizing the latent conflicts. In fact, by seizing the opportunities opened up by external catalysts, parties may have activated new political divide lines, realigning and matching the voter preferences along a previously overridden issue dimensionality. Indeed, many Protest parties have actually sought to restructure the foundations of the electoral competition by politicizing the European integration conflict. These parties have been regarded as

losers in the traditional conflicts, maneuvering to produce a new voter majority along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality. These manipulative efforts have revolved around an increasing EU Issue Entrepreneurship, which has emerged as a fundamental tactical device. In doing so, Protest parties have unquestionably tried to unleash a deep-seated process of issue evolution, strongly clarifying their Eurosceptic stances in the public debate.

According to Kriesi and Grande (2016), different strategies may have interacted, mirroring the contrasting efforts developed by the different political parties. In fact, tension between the de-politicization and politicization strengths may have hampered a full polarization on the European integration conflict, blurring the divisions between Pro-European and Anti-European parties. Nonetheless, the analysis we have presented on the four party systems does not necessarily lend support to the above-mentioned scenario, where many Mainstream parties have actually been committed to entrepreneurial efforts on the European integration conflict. These actors have responded on this issue dimensionality by conveying to voters clear-cut Europhile cues and, consequently, spurring a growing politicization of EU issues. We have defined a conflict politicization as *a process of transformation of a previous non-political and non-contentious issue into a subject of public contestation, mainly mobilized by the political parties in the electoral arena, becoming a notable driving force for voter preferences at the domestic level.*

This definition underscores the importance of analysing the electoral preferences to assess the politicization of the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension. By employing the theoretical framework provided by Carmines and Stimson (1986; 1989), who have identified an issue evolution as a multi-faceted process, requiring an interaction between elite strategies and mass reactions. The previous chapters have shed

light on the entrepreneurial activities set in motion by the parties, which may have sparked off position clarity on EU issues. Indeed, the parties may have succeeded in structuring the EU issues as founts of electoral contestation by outlining more polarized positions and outright shortcuts for voters. This step certainly represents a precondition to initiate partisan realignments on a given issue dimensionality, catalyzing a process of electoral change. However, in order to realign the voter preferences, the electors have to recognize this new set of party positions, perceiving the alterations in partisan supply. This step does not simply consist of a cognitive process, whereby the voters become increasingly aware of new electoral outlets. In fact, an issue evolution requires widespread emotional responses to the new cues, producing affection or disaffection among the voters. This kind of mass reaction may bring about a renewal of the pre-established party identifications, paving the way for electoral transformation. Thus, we defined this so-called *Affect Toward Parties* (Carmines and Stimson 1986; Carmines and Stimson 1989) as a crucial stage to determine electoral realignments on a certain issue dimensionality. If this deep-seated process has ultimately taken place, we may find substantial electoral realignments occurring along the Pro-\-Anti-European ideological divide.

By qualifying an electoral realignment as an outcome of issue emergence, the final step of this work is to investigate the eventual fluctuations of EU issue voting. Our notion of politicization hinges upon the complex interplay between party agency and voter reaction, which may lead to the transformation of voter preferences. When previously overruled issues turn into important determinants of electoral behavior, we are able to demonstrate a certain success in the politicization activities undertaken by parties. The electoral supply analysis represents an essential but insufficient condition to

confirm\disconfirm a politicization hypothesis. In our previous chapters, we have noticed that many variations have come into being concerning the supply, reflecting entrepreneurial strengths achieved by parties. In fact, the EU Issue Entrepreneurship has found many party outlets, where these political actors have unprecedentedly primed clear-cut cues on EU issues. Nonetheless, these party strategies may not automatically lead to a politicization, which involves emotional responses from voters, ultimately, ushering in a change in electoral preferences. Thus, a thorough analysis of the party support is the necessary final step to understand whether or not politicization has occurred at the domestic level. If we notice a substantial emergence of EU issue voting in the electoral arena, we will be able to shed light on these alleged transformative phenomena, realigning the voters along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. Therefore, we plan to examine the eventual fluctuations in the electoral preferences by providing voting models for the parties in the four countries under scrutiny. This empirical step allows us to formulate some propositions on the congruence between party supply and party preference, which may have unleashed the conflict politicization.

## 10 Empirical Models of Voting Preferences

The current chapter outlines our second set of hypotheses (*H3 and H4*), providing combinations between Party Types and EU Issue Voting (10.1). It explores the theoretical background on the issue dimensions and electoral behaviour (10.2), relying on the Minimum Distance theory and identifying as a dependent variable the propensity to vote (10.3). Moreover, in this chapter, we explain our empirical choices regarding the independent and control variables, included in our models of party preferences (10.4- 10.5), while the next chapter directly tests these hypotheses by outlining the regression tables.

### 10.1 Party Types and EU Issue Voting

This work aims at developing arguments about how European integration has affected the strength of party support for the Protest and Mainstream parties at the national level in the four larger European countries - France, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom- from 2004 until the 2014 European elections. We employ the European Election Studies' (EES) rounds (2004, 2009, 2014)<sup>25</sup>,

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<sup>25</sup> We report the quotations for each round: Voter Study 2004: Schmitt, Bartolini, Van der Brug, Van der Eijk, Franklin, Fuchs, Toka, Marsh, Thomassen, (2009), *European Election Study 2004* (2nd edition). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA4566 Data file Version 2.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.10086.  
Voter Study 2009: *Van Egmond, Van der Brug, Hobolt, Franklin; Sapir (2013): European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA5055 Data file Version 1.1.0, doi:10.4232/1.11760.*  
Voter Study 2014: *Schmitt, Hobolt, Popa, Teperoglou; European Parliament, Directorate-General for Communication, Public Monitoring Unit (2016): European Parliament Election Study 2014, Voter Study, First Post-Election Survey. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA5160 Data file Version 4.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.12628*

outlining linear regression models to investigate the current relation between the EU issues and the voting propensity for the Mainstream and Protest parties. Our models hinge upon the Downsian “proximity” or “*smallest distance*” theory (Downs 1957), which is driven by one fundamental assumption - *the voters are likely to choose a party that is closest to their issue preferences on the policy space to maximize their electoral utility*. Although the Downsian approach has revolved around a one-dimensional policy space, we seek to shed light on the rise of a further dimension of contestation - the Pro-/Anti-European ideological divide. We hypothesize that the Euro Crisis has unleashed this political conflict, which has turned out to be a concurrent explanation in determining Protest party electoral support. Consequently, these parties have attempted to be increasingly responsive to voter preferences on a scale ranging from Anti-European to Pro-European, by adopting clear-cut Eurosceptic stances. The current hypothesis is outlined as the *Protest-voting Hypothesis (H3)*, which holds that, after the outset of the Euro Crisis, the Protest parties’ proximity to the voters on the European dimension of conflict has increased its explanatory power to determine their electoral preferences, substantially matching the strength of their proximity to the Left-Right scale. Meanwhile, during the post-crisis period, the Mainstream parties have probably seized the pre-established conflicts, grounded within Left-Right division. The Left-Right ideological divide has appeared to persistently influence the electoral preferences in Europe, its explanatory power remaining unaltered. Thus, the voters have predominantly aimed at reducing their distance from the Mainstream parties on this axis of political contestation, overlooking the Anti-/Pro-European dimension. This latter hypothesis is dubbed as

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the *Mainstream-voting Hypothesis (H4)* and it foresees decreasing effects of the European integration dimension on Mainstream party electoral support, which is more influenced by issues resulting from traditional party alignments.

Figure 10.1 Party Types and EU Issue Voting

		Party Types	
		Protest	Mainstream
EU Issue Voting	Increase	Protest Voting Increase	Mainstream Voting Increase
	Decrease	Protest Voting Decrease	Mainstream Voting Decrease

Thus, we foresee to observe a substantial growth in the levels of EU issue voting among the Protest Anti-European parties and, conversely, to find a decreasing pattern of EU issue voting among the Mainstream Pro-European parties. However, we should take into consideration all existing combinations between the party types and EU issue voting to have an empirical confirmation of *H3* and *H4*. In Figure 9.2, we

devise a four-fold set of combinations, singling out the following scenarios:

1. **Protest Voting Increase:** In the upper-left quadrant of the table, we have placed the Protest parties, which have increasingly reduced their ideological proximity from voters along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. This box substantially corroborates our expectations on *the Protest-Voting Hypothesis (H3)*, revealing the growing probability of these parties to electorally maximize from their Eurosceptic supply in the national elections. In order to confirm this hypothesis, we should observe substantial variations in the levels of EU issue voting after the onset of the financial crisis, which has acted as a catalyst to reverse the voting patterns of Protest parties.
2. **Protest Voting Decrease:** In the lower-left quadrant, we have located the Protest parties that, since the outbreak of the crisis, have reduced their capacity to draw electoral support along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. This scenario notably weakens *the Protest-voting Hypothesis (H3)*, which does not constitute a foregone conclusion. Though these parties have actually attempted to set in motion an alternative issue dimension, they may have been mainly responsive to voter preferences along the Left-Right ideological divide. Consequently, if the overwhelming majority of Protest parties are going to be located in this box, we may disprove our *H3* and the alleged transformations brought about by the Euro Crisis.

- 3. Mainstream Voting Increase:** In the upper-right quadrant, we locate the Mainstream parties, which have increasingly maximized their electoral preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality. This potential pattern contradicts the Mainstream-voting Hypothesis but it may strengthen the overall politicization thesis. In fact, if this electoral trajectory has materialized, we will have a more contentious and controversial contestation of the EU issues in the electoral arena. Thus, this unexpected scenario may reflect new forms of electoral competition in Western Europe, where Mainstream parties have realigned voters along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. Moreover, this electoral trend is apparently consistent with our above-drawn remarks on the Mainstream Entrepreneurship, showing us some strategic efforts of these actors on the European integration conflict.
  
- 4. Mainstream Voting Decrease:** In the lower-right quadrant, we locate Mainstream parties, which have decreased their electoral preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension during the post-crisis period. This quadrant captures our outlined prediction on the *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis, showing how these parties have been weaker in benefitting from the EU issues. Conversely, the Left-Right ideology has maintained its explanatory power, driving the preferences in favour of the Mainstream actors. Thus, if we notice a high cases concentration in this quadrant, we may infer a substantial confirmation of the transformative effects sparked off by the Great Recession.

Our core objective is to locate these parties within one of the above-mentioned quadrants to verify our hypotheses. If we establish a high concentration of cases in the *Protest Voting Increase* and *Mainstream Voting Decrease* boxes, then H3 and H4 will be empirically grounded. Alternatively, if we observe a much higher scattering of cases over the four quadrants, then we will have inconsistent results and the hypotheses will be null.

## **10.2 Issue Voting, Issue Saliency and Party Position**

As we already mentioned in the introductory chapter, the EU issue voting is defined as “*the process whereby individual preferences over European integration directly influence the voting choices in national elections*” (De Vries 2010, 92). By referring to EU issue voting, we assume that electoral preferences are mainly grounded on issue positions rather than on social identities. The decline in social structures as determinants of party support has mirrored the *weakening of cleavage politics* (Inglehart 1976; Franklin 1985; Franklin *et al.* 1992; Knutsen and Scarborough 1995; Mair 1997; Kriesi 1997; Van der Eijk and Franklin 2009, Dalton, Farrell and Macallister 2011). As a matter of fact, since the 1960s, “class volatility” has become an emerging reality in Europe with the established parties not exclusively relying on the support of the *class gardeè* (Duverger 1963). They have developed new tactics to maximize the votes, disregarding their earlier social ties to openly pursue “*catch-all*” strategies (Kirchheimer 1966) and to move beyond their traditional constituencies.

We argue that the emergence/consolidation of Anti-European parties is not solely based on sociologically driven explanations, but that

political strategies play a pivotal role in determining new partisan alignments. Many parties may electorally succeed across Europe by manoeuvring their positions on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension or by emphasizing the saliency of EU related issues. Of course, the sociological factors may not be secondary in swaying contemporary party reshuffling. In fact, many socio-demographic variables are included in our models, testing their impact on the alleged fluctuations in party support. However, long-lasting linkages between social structures and electoral preferences strongly depend on the party entrepreneurial activities, which may have activated the European integration conflict.

The spatial theories of voting behaviour have underlined how the policy shifts along the main dimensions of conflict have been the fundamental strategic devices for the parties (Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984; Adams, Merrill III and Grofman 2005). Indeed, party movements on policy dimensionality have certainly been a key aspect in their electoral strategies. Parties have sought to position themselves, within the spatial dimension of contestation, to minimize their distance from the median voters and, therefore, to maximize their share of votes. Nonetheless, the room for manoeuvre of parties in their policy stance swings has appeared to be limited by several constraints. Firstly, pursuing a policy change may reduce the party ideological consistency, blurring the public perception on its overall political platform (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu 2011). Secondly, the main party stances tend to be resilient over time and changes along the predominant dimensionality of contestation rarely occur (Grofman 2004). De Sio and Weber (2014; 872) have postulated that a “*change of ideological or policy position is difficult and costly for parties, much more so than a change in issue emphasis*”.

Therefore, we contend that issue-based electoral competition involves a much broader range of explanations, such as the issue selective emphasis, the ownership on policy stances and the manipulation of political dimensionality (Budge and Farlie 1983; Riker 1986; Petrocik 1996). In fact, parties may have different incentives in tackling policy stances during campaigns, accentuating the issues on which they hold a greater credibility and competitive advantage (Budge, Robertson and Hearl 1987). In the framework of the European integration conflict, Protest parties hold a stronger reputation on Anti-European stances and are more likely to emphasize the EU related issues to gain electoral benefits. On the contrary, the Mainstream parties tend to lean towards the de-politicization strategy of EU issues (Statham and Trenz 2015; Börzel and Risse 2018). In spite of their clear-cut ownership of Pro-European issues (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Marks and Steenburgen 2004), these parties are likely to maintain the Left-Right dimension of electoral competition that has brought them substantial electoral payoffs, extinguishing the Pro-Anti-European dimension of contestation. We have already introduced the concept of Entrepreneurship, which brings together the issue position with the issue saliency, analysing its trends in our sample of countries. Although we relied on EU Issue Entrepreneurship to assess the transformations in the electoral supply, we cannot directly test its impact on voting preferences. However, the framework advanced in the previous chapters allows us to investigate if the partisan strategies succeeded in realigning the voting preferences. In fact, the elite positioning or re-positioning do not automatically establish a new issue as a source of intra-party competition, which require the triggering of mass voter emotional reactions (Carmines and Stimson 1986). Therefore, the party preference analysis is a necessary

empirical step to shed light on the complex dynamics of issue evolution.

### **10.3 Electoral Preferences and Minimum Distance Theory**

In his path-breaking work, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Anthony Downs (1957) contended that the party choice was the result of a dynamic process, mainly involving two steps. In the first step, the voter formed his/her own structure of preferences over all the party alternatives within the system, even those that were not actually chosen by the elector. This set of party preferences was dubbed by Downs as “party utility”, which depended on the net benefits that voters expected to reap by choosing a given party. In the second step, the voter made his/her electoral choice for the party that best matched the rational expectations he/she had developed in the previous phase. This Downsean concept of “*party utility*” was successfully revisited by Van der Brug, Van der Eijk and Franklin (2007), who deprived that notion of its mere utilitarian connotation by means of identifying another analytical tool - the propensity to support a party (which has frequently been labelled, for the sake of simplicity, as the “propensity of voting”, “party support” and “party preference”). This concept mainly stems from the above-mentioned Downsean first step in which the voter develops his/her own set of party preferences and measures the strength of the single party support. Van der Brug, Van der Eijk and Franklin (2007) argued that voting choice, which has often been operationalized by scholars as a dichotomous variable between the governing and opposition parties, may overshadow the real driving forces behind voter preferences. Some phenomena, such as economic voting, were actually deflected by the mere party choice, while the propensity of voting could possibly reveal the pattern of political

competition underway. Indeed, a voter may not decide to switch voting option, but some events may change his/her propensity towards another party, initiating a process of preference reversal. Some works have already showed the increasing share of votes for the challenger parties in the aftermath of the Euro crisis (Hobolt and Tilley 2016), but these changing trends do not enlighten us regarding the real impact of European integration on overall electoral processes. On the contrary, the propensity of voting appears to be more thorough in accounting for the increasing electoral strengths of those parties that are challenging EU development, even in spite of their current votes. In fact, many strategic calculations may hinder the voters from choosing a Protest party, which are often not entitled to take office. Nevertheless, these voters may develop a favourable orientation towards these parties, because of their stances on the European dimension, being more likely to switch their vote over the longer term. Thus, the propensity of voting (or party preference) is used here to test the emergence of the Pro-/Anti-European dimension or the potential resiliency of the Left-Right one as the electoral predictor.

#### **10.4 The Independent Variables: Left-Right Proximity and Pro-/Anti-European Proximity**

This work uses a Linear Regression models to establish connections between the dimensions of the political competition and voter preferences for the Mainstream and Protest parties between 2004 and 2014 within the above-mentioned sample of countries.

- *Propensity of Voting* - The dependent variable is the propensity of voting for each of the parties included in the previous step of this empirical analysis, those that were available in the EES. To operationalize this variable, this article relies on the EES question (2004, 2009 and 2014): “*If you think of ..., what mark out of ten best*

*describes how probable it is that you will ever vote for this party?"*.

The voters were asked to describe their propensity of voting for each party on a ten-point scale, ranging from 0 (Not at all probable) to 10 (Very probable). In this work, the scores of the electoral preferences were re-coded in order to obtain another ten-point scale, ranging from 0.1 (Not at all probable) to 1 (Very probable), which better matches the aims of this empirical analysis.

- *Left-Right Proximity and Pro-/Anti-European Proximity* - This model aims at assessing whether the voters have higher electoral preferences for a party, which is closest to their policy positions on the two issue dimensions under study. By advancing this empirical test, we implicitly assume the rationality of voting behaviour, where voters increase their electoral preferences by ideologically approximating a given party (Downs 1957, Van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983). Thus, the two independent variables identified here are the Left-Right proximity and the Pro-/Anti-European proximity, which are the concurrent explanations under investigation. On the one hand, to capture the distance between voter positions on the Left-Right dimension and the party positions on the same scale, this analysis employs the following EES: *"In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". What is your position? Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where '0' means "left" and '10' means "right". Which number best describes your position?"*. The respondents were asked to place themselves on a ten-point scale, which was here re-coded in another ten-point scale, ranging from 0.1 (Extreme Left) to 1 (Extreme Right). For each party, its Left-Right position distance<sup>26</sup> from each voter was calculated, gauging the Left-Right proximity variable.

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The party positions on both dimensions have been already provided in a previous section of the work, relying on the CHES data.

On the other hand, to define the distance between voter positions on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension and the party stance on the same scale, this work uses the subsequent EES question: “*Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where '0' means unification "has already gone too far" and '10' means 'it should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position?*”. Thus, the respondents were asked to place themselves on a ten-point scale, which were here re-coded in another ten-point scale, ranging from 0.1 (*has already gone too far*) to 1 (*it should be pushed further*). For each party, its Pro-/Anti-European position distance from each voter was calculated, measuring the Pro-/Anti-European proximity variable. If a voter increases his electoral preference for a party by consistently reducing his/her ideological distance from it, we should find a negative  $\beta$  coefficient in our regression tables.

### **10.5 Control Variables**

Though our core objective is to investigate the impact of Left-Right proximity or Pro-/Anti-European proximity on the potential fluctuations of party preference, we should include several other variables to realize an empirical control. *Party Identification* - first and foremost, this model must also consider another traditional and powerful predictor - *party identification*. Campbell *et al.* (1960) in their path-breaking work the “*American Voter*” assessed the strength of the voters’ partisanship in affecting their electoral choices. The favourable ideological and affective dispositions towards a given party developed during the early socialization processes of an

individual are long-lasting. When voting, the voter was likely to express his/her long-term affiliation by remaining a loyal party voter, but this party identification could be reshaped over time (Fiorina 1981). Even if some scholars contended the decline of party identification (Franklin *et al* 1992, Van der Eijk and Franklin 2009), this work regards partisanship as a strong determinant in electoral preference, which should be incorporated in the empirical model as a control variable. Party identification is operationalized here by using this EES question (QPP21): “*Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular political party? If so, which party do you feel close to?*”. The respondents may declare their closeness for only one party. This work labelled this variable as “*party closeness*”, which is more consistent with the content of the survey, representing a good proxy for party identification.

*Gender* - In the post-war era, female conservatism was considered to be a persistent feature, producing sizeable electoral alignments in favour of centre-of-right parties. Inglehart (1976) showed a gender gap in the support for parties of the Left, where women were a minority source of voting. However, since the 1980s, a pattern of gender realignment gradually took place, reflecting the interaction between societal transformations and the changing system of political values (Inglehart and Norris 2003). By becoming increasingly more emancipated from religion and family, women changed the structure of party preferences in the post-industrial societies. Nowadays, political science literature has recently advanced a very interesting finding (Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Mudde 2007; Spiering and Zaslove 2015; Spiering and Zaslove 2017), showing that there is a lesser propensity for women to vote for the Radical\Populist parties. According to Mudde (2007), gender emerged as a very powerful

socio-demographic variable, with Radical Right parties gaining lesser support from females, being more likely to vote for Mainstream parties. This work investigates a new potential *gender divide* pertaining to electoral preferences, allegedly existing in contemporary societies and, consequently, turning out to be a driver in voting choices. Gender, here, is translated into a dichotomous variable by employing the EES questions on gender status, where 0 represents men and 1 indicates women.

*Age* – Although its impact has often resulted in being blurred, interacting with other variables, age has been regarded as an explanation for voting behaviour (Bellucci and Segatti 2010), determining electoral alignments. Van der Eijk and Franklin (2009) dismantled the conventional wisdom on the established relation between the older population and political conservatism, defining it as a myth. On the contrary, age strongly affects ideological orientation and party identification, where the timing of political socialization matters in conditioning these political values. Some works have displayed contradictory findings regarding age as a determinant of Euro-scepticism at the aggregate level (Lubber and Scheepers 2010; Kuhn 2011), while other overviews on single parties have underlined the older voter propensity to support the Protest Anti-European Parties (Ford *et al.* 2012). Hence, we lack a clear-cut expectation on age as a voting explanation, but we include it to provide a stronger empirical control. We operationalize age as a four-scale variable, dividing the generational groups as follows: 1 (16\18-24); 2 (25-39); 3 (40-54) and 4 (55 and plus).

*Education Years* – The lower educational level has mainly hindered voters from recognizing the information shortcuts presented by parties

(Downs 1957), diminishing their cognitive skills in understanding the content of the Left-Right ideological dimension (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990; De Sio 2011; Russell, Dalton and McAllister 2011). Furthermore, the more educated voters, belonging to the more affluent and bourgeois social classes, historically supported the centre-of-the-right parties. Instead, the left parties electorally mobilized those who had a lower level of education, enfranchising the working class constituents (Bartolini 2000). We maintain that these patterns have been reverted by deindustrialization and globalization, which has catalysed deep-seated electoral alterations. Firstly, a higher education level may determine some liberalizing effects, prompting a positive value orientation towards cultural liberalism and increasing tolerance and openness (Kriesi *et al.* 2008). Education also represents an indispensable asset for succeeding professionally, endowing the more educated with specialized skills, enabling them to be more flexible in the labour market. Conversely, poorly educated voters usually develop less tolerant attitudes towards foreigners and immigrants, deprived of the cognitive tools to understand other cultures (Bornschieer 2010). Moreover, by being unskilled, they are likely to suffer more acutely from nation-wide economic setbacks, becoming economically more insecure. Hence, the educational\cultural divide may restructure the conflict foundations (Kriesi *et al.* 2012), increasingly reshaping voting preferences. We raise the hypothesis that lower education levels may have been linked to the probability of voting for the Protest Anti-European parties, channelling both the economic and cultural insecurities inherent to European integration (De Vries and Edwards 2009), which were magnified by the outbreak of the crisis. On the other hand, Mainstream Pro-European parties may have been electorally benefitted from the higher education level groups, especially those political actors locating themselves on the GAL

(Greens\Alternatives\Libertarians) side of political contestation (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002). We operationalize the education variable by using the EES question (*How old were you when you stopped full-time education?*), translating into a 3-point scale, where 0 corresponds to less than 15 years, 1 to a range between 16 and 19 years old, 3 is equivalent to 20 years and plus.

- *Cleavage Variables* - We introduce two variables - *religiosity* and *trade union membership* - that have been traditionally related to cleavage-based voting. We have already stressed the decline of cleavage politics, which has been gradually reduced by social transformations and generational turnover, halting the spread of cleavage loyalties (Franklin *et al.* 1992; Van der Eijk *et al.* 1992, Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Van der Eijk and Franklin 2009). However, testing the impact of cleavage-related variables on voting preferences represents an essential step to establish an empirical control. The religiosity measures if the secular-religious ideological divide has maintained a meaningful explanatory power in determining electoral support. The religious cleavage has been historically considered a deep-seated political conflict by scholars (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rose and Urwin 1969; Lewis-Beck 1990), remaining a resilient source of intra-party contestation (Petrocik 1996, Raymond 2011). According to Dalton (2006), the secular-religious conflict is located at the beginning of a causal chain, affecting individual value orientations, which indirectly result into determinants of voting choice. Religious voters are supposed to electorally reward the right wing or conservative parties, channelling traditional values within societies. Conversely, secularized electors would increase their propensity to vote for a broader array of secularized party families (Liberals, Social Democrats, Greens and the Radical Left). Moreover,

we argue that religiosity is a parcel of the so-called TAN (Traditional\Authoritarian\Nationalistic) pole of political contestation (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002), which usually determines (negative) ideological attitudes towards European integration, fostering the voting probability for an Anti-European party. Thus, by influencing voters' self-location along both the ideological dimensions under examination, the religion cleavage may primarily produce indirect effects on electoral preferences. We operationalize religiosity by asking the respondents whether they attend religious services, drawing upon the EES surveys. This variable is re-coded as 5-point scale in 2004, varying from 1 (*several times a week*) to 5 (*Never*).

On the contrary, trade union membership density reflects the persistence of class cleavage (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bartolini 2000), which has aligned the national electorates along socio-economic divisions. Trade unions have been interest groups, enfranchising workers and traditionally nurturing direct or indirect linkages with Socialist\Social Democratic\Labour\Communist parties. In fact, many mass parties stem directly from trade union movements, exploiting societal connections rather than institutional ones (Duverger 1963). According to Allern *et al.* (2017), unions and left-of-centre parties preserved many aspects of their organizational ties, being consolidated partners in contemporary Europe. The above-mentioned hypotheses expect to find a significant relation between trade union members and electoral preferences for the left-of-centre parties. However, other findings have been outlined in many other overviews, assessing that union members may have emancipated themselves from the political hegemony of these political families, electorally supporting the Radical parties (Parsons 2017). In fact, many unskilled workers have been more likely to suffer from the pressures of globalization (Kriesi *et al.* 2006, Kriesi *et al.* 2008, Kriesi

*et al.* 2012), developing negative attitudes to the economic and cultural threats arising from these macro-processes and, perhaps, increasing their propensity to vote for the Protest Anti-European parties. We should take into account the potential political fluctuations among the trade union members, looking for their explanatory power at the electoral level. In fact, according to Kriesi *et al.* (2008), globalization has brought about deep-seated societal and political divisions, resulting into cross-cutting and cross-cleavage coalitions. We operationalize this variable as a dichotomous one, using the EES rounds (*Are you yourself a member of a trade union or is anyone else in your household a member of a trade union?*), where 0 indicates those who are not trade union members, while 1 indicates those who personally belong or have a household member belonging to a trade union organization.

*Unemployment Status* – Checking on the effects of the contingent economic conditions is a crucial test in our empirical model, which is related to Euro crisis repercussions. In order to estimate the level of economic voting, we identify the unemployment status as a control variable - *“If voters react differently depending on their personal circumstances, this will provide evidence of a form of pocketbook voting where voters bring concerns about their own situation to bear on their process of political preference formation.”* (Van der Brug, Van der Eijk and Franklin 2007, 125). Consequently, the unemployed, who have markedly suffered from the economic downturns, losing their jobs or being the victims of austerity policies, may have augmented their propensity to vote for Protest Anti-European parties. This electoral equation cannot be established as a foregone conclusion, being contested by several works (Golder 2003; Meguid 2008), which found controversial results in this alleged relationship.

However, the Euro crisis increased the level of unemployment, probably aggravating a reward-punishment dynamic (Key 1966; Lewis-Beck 1986) as an explanation for the electoral preferences. The Mainstream Pro-European parties, largely controlling the government offices, have probably been blamed by the unemployed voters, holding them as responsible for the EU's management of the crisis (Hobolt and Tilley 2014). On the contrary, these constituents have potentially been more attracted by the policy package outlined by the Protest Anti-European parties, which have consistently rejected the EU and its austerity directives. We utilize the EES questions on the work situation for operationalizing this variable, where 0 includes the employed, students, housewives and retired voters, while 1 corresponds to the unemployed electors.

## **10.6 Conclusions**

As we have now established all the fundamental variables of our voting preference models, in the next chapter, the variations of the EU Issue Voting will be estimated. Testing these potential fluctuations represents the last empirical step of this work, which aims at investigating the emergence of European integration as a source of intra-party conflict. We are not able to establish an arbitrary threshold, reflecting whether a Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation has come into being or not. However, we can observe if some notable electoral changes have occurred along this ideological divide, steering the party preferences and being linked to the Euro Crisis. Thus, we expect that Protest parties have steadily increased their electoral support by harnessing their Pro-\-Anti-European proximity from voters, seizing the windows of opportunity opened up by the crisis. This scenario necessarily involves the growing impact of the Pro-\-

Anti-European proximity as a *Protest-voting* explanation, mirrored by higher and more significant  $\beta$  coefficients during the post-crisis period. Conversely, the Left-Right proximity has been held to remain the major voting predictor for the Mainstream parties, where the Euro Crisis has not impacted the driving forces of their electoral preferences. This scenario assumes the stable or declining explanatory power of the Pro-/Anti-European proximity as a source of *Mainstream-voting*, revealed by stagnant coefficients in the post-crisis era.

Moreover, this further analysis allows us to shed light on the congruence between the electoral supply and voting preferences. We have already presented a thorough examination of the changing partisan supply, examining the variations in the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, which need to be theoretically linked with a voting behaviour overview. We referred many times to the Carmines and Stimson (1986; 1989) causal chain of issue evolution, which requires an elite positioning/repositioning, a public clarity and an emotional popular response to produce a sizeable electoral realignment on a certain issue. This work does not directly test electoral instability, but relies on the existing literature concerning this topic, assessing the growing volatility jointly with the electoral successes of the Protest Parties (Mair 2011; Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2015; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Hobolt and De Vries 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2017). Nonetheless, this analysis seeks to identify the major explanations behind these electoral alterations, observing the voting preferences. The next chapter tries to ascertain whether the voters have electorally responded to the changing partisan supply, creating clear-cut connections with the elite and, thus, unleashing the politicization of a new conflict. In a nutshell, we expect that parties, both Mainstream and Protest, have been capable of restructuring the foundations of

political competition by reshaping their electoral supply, ushering in a deep process of issue evolution.

## 11 Electoral Preference Models in Four European Countries

### 11.1.1 France

The French context has embodied a pattern of *Protest-based Entrepreneurship*, where the Radical parties (FN, PCF and PG) have increasingly sought to politicize the European integration conflict. These tactical efforts have been strongly opposed by the Mainstream Pro-European parties, such as PS, UMP\Rep. and MoDem, which have attempted to dampen this latent conflict. Indeed, these Europhile formations have considered the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation as being detrimental to their voting performance. Therefore, the French Mainstream parties have been prone to escape from the internal divisions on EU issues, which often undermined the integrity of their program commitments. As a result, we shall try to shed light on whether the Protest parties have been successful in triggering a new political conflict or, instead, the Mainstream parties have effectively eliminated these divisions. Consequently, we test the Euro Crisis impact on the voting preferences by observing the eventual variations in the degree of EU issue voting in France, assessing if a new conflict has come into being.

*FN* – The National Front’s instinctive Anti-Europeanism has traditionally been entrenched in its nativist appeals, placing the native French interests before the immigrant interests. Therefore, Euroscepticism has become one of the mainstays in the party platform, reflecting its nationalistic, identitarian and anti-immigration views. Prior to the Euro Crisis, this party had appeared to tap into the

traditional conflicts, grounded in the Left-Right ideological divide (Gruber 2008), with no realigning of voter preferences on the European integration conflict. Since the outbreak of the economic crisis, the FN has increasingly emphasized the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, clarifying its strong Anti-European stances and, probably, matching the growing Eurosceptic attitudes of the French voters. However, this program facet has remained a parcel in FN's strategic actions, which have entailed a broader re-positioning, chiefly involving economic policies. Although we have identified the wider tactical endeavours in the party manifesto, we argue that the EU issues have exerted notable causative effects in steering its voting preferences, competing with the Left-Right ideology as an electoral explanation. Furthermore, we hypothesize that the Euro Crisis has triggered this transformation, enhancing the impact of the Pro-/Anti-European proximity on party support.

Our pre-crisis round (2004) clearly negates the above-mentioned expectation, revealing the explanatory power of the European integration conflict in boosting the propensity to vote for the National Front. In fact, this independent variable displayed a very meaningful effect on FN preferences, exceeding the impact of the proximity of the voters along the Left-Right dimension. It is worth observing that this Protest party gained substantial electoral support on this issue dimensionality, moving away from the Pro-European consensus and, thus, adopting an adversarial strategy on European integration. These finding contrasts with some previous assessments made on the National Front, defining this party as an Anti-Immigration Single Issue party (Meguid 2008), being unable to politicize a new ideological division (Gruber 2008). Therefore, we maintain that the FN had already been embarked on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation prior to the Great Recession, even though it had been

lacking in any well-rooted structure regarding political opportunities, where most voters still expressed favourable opinions towards European integration.

Tab. 11.1.1. Multivariate Regression Models of the FN Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

FN	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	se	B	Se
Women	-0.0886	(0.144)	-0.0935	(0.135)	-0.155	(0.189)
Age	-0.231**	(0.0858)	-0.122	(0.085)	-0.428***	(0.113)
Education	-0.391***	(0.108)	-0.428***	(0.102)	-0.662***	(0.145)
Church Attendance	-0.147*	(0.0687)	0.0974	(0.065)	-0.0139	(0.0958)
Trade Union Membership	0.172	(0.218)	-0.208	(0.182)	0.352	(0.282)
Unemployment	-0.0562	(0.384)	0.176	(0.257)	0.633	(0.353)
Party Closeness	6.355***	(0.490)	8.649***	(0.721)	6.555***	(0.365)
Left-Right Distance	-1.309***	(0.271)	-1.691***	(0.275)	-3.420***	(0.401)
European Integration Distance	-1.317***	(0.269)	-0.573**	(0.216)	-0.801*	(0.343)
Constant	5.511***	(0.542)	3.043***	(0.553)	6.590***	(0.727)
N	888		793		758	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.242		0.235		0.474	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The first post-crisis observation (2009) indicates the diminishing explanatory power of the European integration proximity, relatively changing the electoral trajectory of the National Front. This coefficient actually decreased in its influence, exerting a less statistically significant effect on party preferences, which were more biased by the Left-Right conflict dimension. Surprisingly, the probability to vote for the FN increased along this established conflict line.

Our last election round (2014) has further undermined support for a Protest-voting hypothesis regarding the FN, mitigating the effects brought about by the Pro-\Anti-European dimension of contestation on party support. In the meantime, the enhancement of the Left-Right issues has been unquestionable, turning into a clear determinant in party preferences. Consequently, voters have been inclined to increase their FN voting propensity along the Left-Right ideology, while the preferences have been less significant regarding the European integration conflict. This result allows us to formulate an unforeseen consideration on the FN electoral performance - *the traditional source of conflicts, grounded within the Left-Right divisions, has been an essential factor in driving the voting preferences in favour of the FN, improving its explanatory power, while the EU issue voting has not strengthened its impact in the aftermath of the Great Recession.*

Since Marine Le Pen's leadership takeover, the FN has successfully carried out an effective party modernization (*dédiabolisation*), toning down the radical nature of many of its traditional issue stances. The party has outlined a policy package, based on economic patriotism (Betz 2015) and a more pragmatic anti-immigration position, offering the so-called Globalization voters a more suitable electoral supply. Indeed, the FN has probably exploited the feelings of insecurity arising from immigration and economic problems, maximizing its electoral preferences along the Left-Right dimension. This trend has been further epitomized by the education variable, which has resulted in substantial electoral outcomes - *those endowed with a lower level of education have been more likely to vote for the FN.* The party has drawn support from this cluster of voters, who have markedly suffered from the crisis, and have probably developed less tolerant attitudes towards immigrants, seeing them as a threat. Therefore, after the outbreak of the recession, the Left-Right conflict has probably

overridden the Pro-\-Anti-European ideological divisions, reducing the overall impact on FN preferences. Nonetheless, the effects of EU issue voting cannot be completely dismissed by our work, proving to some extent the significance of the European integration conflict as a voting determinant. In fact, the percentage of Anti-European voters may have increased, electorally rewarding the most authentic owner of Euroscepticism in the French party system. Although issue dimensionality emerges as an undisputable factor in the post-crisis period, it may have represented a substantial electoral asset for Marine Le Pen's party, who capitalized on the widespread dissatisfaction with the European Union. Thus, we present some concluding remarks on the National Front that, *in spite of its entrepreneurial efforts, the party has not fully reaped voting preferences on the Pro-\-Anti-European conflict, but, instead, has benefitted much more from some partisan re-alignments occurring along the Left-Right dimension of contestation*. By rejecting the Protest-voting Hypothesis on the FN, we partially contest the transformative effects of the Euro Crisis, which may have not been a catalyst in the emergence of a new conflict in France. In fact, the effects of the EU issue voting have predated the crisis and the FN had already introduced this conflict into the electoral arena, achieving a breakthrough in Europhile consensus.

- *PCF and Left Party* – Although the French Communist Party has traditionally opposed European integration, it has recurrently softened its Eurosceptic attitudes by de-emphasizing the EU issues. This tactical calculation was mainly due to its government cooperation, preventing this party from playing up the card of European integration. However, the referendum held on the approval of the European Constitution established new incentives to politicize this conflict for the Communists, who re-profiled themselves as Anti-European crusaders. Furthermore, the austerity measures laid down by

the UMP government probably led the PCF to reinvigorate its Anti-European discourse, increasing its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship during the post-crisis era. The foundation of the Left Front, an electoral cartel made up of the PCF, the Left Party and other minor actors, has ushered in a new era for the French Radical Left. Jean-Luc Mélançon's Left Party has restructured this electoral supply, increasingly priming Eurosceptic cues in the political debates. By assuming the leadership of this cartel, Mélançon has tried to establish ownership of the Anti-Austerity policies, intertwining these issues with the economic insecurity arising from European integration. Consequently, we posit that, since the onset of the Great Recession, the Left Front has sought to electorally benefit from its proximity to voter alignment along the Pro-\Anti-European conflict dimension, which may result in being a strong explanation for its voting preferences.

Our regression table has completely overturned this scenario, the Radical Left parties never having maximized on their preferences by minimizing their ideological distance from voters on the European integration conflict. The weak effects of the EU issues on PCF support had characterized the 2004 and 2009 electoral rounds, while the Party Closeness and Left-Right proximity predominantly steered these preferences. Instead, the education levels affected its electoral performance, where the lesser educated voters were more likely to support this party actor. By testing the electoral trends regarding the Left Front (2014), we have dealt with some operational problems. The Left Front is currently a cartel of parties, which have preserved their organizational autonomy, without achieving any authentic merger. Thus, in order to calculate the coalition stances on the Left-Right and Pro-\Anti-European dimensions of contestation, we determined the position average of the PCF and Left Party on both conflicts. While

Tab. 11.1.2. Multivariate Regression Models of the PCF\Left Front  
Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

PCF\Left Front	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	0.0800	(0.133)	0.0440	(0.163)	-0.206	(0.177)
Age	-0.320 <sup>***</sup>	(0.0795)	-0.136	(0.104)	-0.442 <sup>***</sup>	(0.105)
Education	-0.284 <sup>**</sup>	(0.100)	-0.358 <sup>**</sup>	(0.124)	-0.0227	(0.136)
Church Attendance	0.119	(0.0637)	0.128	(0.078)	0.0509	(0.0885)
Trade Union Membership	0.259	(0.203)	0.370	(0.220)	0.159	(0.263)
Unemployment	1.087 <sup>**</sup>	(0.356)	0.0190	(0.312)	0.390	(0.330)
Party Closeness	4.941 <sup>***</sup>	(0.511)	5.973 <sup>***</sup>	(0.586)	5.785 <sup>***</sup>	(0.406)
Left-Right Distance	-2.372 <sup>***</sup>	(0.250)	-4.623 <sup>***</sup>	(0.388)	-5.380 <sup>***</sup>	(0.396)
European Integration Distance	0.344	(0.280)	-0.266	(0.419)	1.000 <sup>*</sup>	(0.453)
Constant	4.289 <sup>***</sup>	(0.493)	4.393 <sup>***</sup>	(0.698)	5.106 <sup>***</sup>	(0.730)
N	887		786		736	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.242		0.321		0.436	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

the two parties have plainly converged on Left-Right ideology, they have slightly diverged on European integration, where Melanchon's party has adopted a more radical Eurosceptic position. The last observation confirms the outright inability of the French Radical Left to drive its voting preferences on the Pro-\Anti-European ideological divide. Indeed, our positive coefficient sheds light on a surprising finding, revealing that by ideologically approaching the Left Front Anti-European position, the voters tend to decrease in their probability to vote for this formation. On the contrary, its voter proximity on the Left-Right ideology greatly enhanced its explanatory power in the second post-crisis round, reflecting the partisan re-alignments on this established conflict. Although the Radical Left has made many efforts to clarify its Eurosceptic stance, its voters have mainly remained more Pro-European, without responding to these electoral shortcuts. It is

worth noting that these parties have not created a winning formula by combining an Anti-Austerity platform with the social insecurities exacerbated by the integration processes. This overview sharply contrasts with the hypothesis concerning the Protest-voting, showing the decreasing impact of EU characterized the 2004 and 2009 electoral rounds, while the Party Closeness and Left-Right proximity predominantly steered these preferences.

- *PS* – The EU issues have often undermined the unity of the French Socialists, inhibiting this party from priming the European integration conflict. Therefore, the PS has traditionally tried to extinguish this source of intra-party contestation, emphasizing the saliency of the Left-Right issues. In fact, this party hosted Eurosceptic factions, placing these issues at centre stage during the referenda held in France on the approval of European treaties. These divisions resulted in several party splits, strongly damaging the party's electoral performance. The Euro Crisis has apparently diminished the party room of agency and the PS has toned down its levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Although the former French President, Francois Hollande, expressed clear-cut Pro-European opinions, outlining a more Federalist and Pro-Growth program, he had to deal with several constraints in this policy domain, resulting from the member state Pro-Austerity coalition. Therefore, under Hollande's leadership, the PS gradually changed its strategy by adopting a saliency-reduction tactic to blur its failure on European integration policies. Our hypothesis is that, since the outbreak of the crisis, the PS has aimed at preventing the rise of this issue dimensionality by increasingly maximizing its voting preferences on the Left-Right ideological divisions.

Tab. 11.1.3. Multivariate Regression Models of the PS Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

PS	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	-0.0965	(0.162)	0.409*	(0.191)	0.460*	(0.189)
Age	-0.346***	(0.0969)	-0.230	(0.122)	-0.164	(0.112)
Education	-0.111	(0.122)	-0.0926	(0.146)	0.209	(0.146)
Church Attendance	0.159*	(0.0776)	-0.00394	(0.092)	0.183	(0.0944)
Trade Union Membership	0.115	(0.247)	0.326	(0.257)	0.0794	(0.281)
Unemployment	0.583	(0.435)	0.136	(0.366)	-0.277	(0.354)
Party Closeness	3.986***	(0.202)	3.861***	(0.279)	4.599***	(0.236)
Left-Right Distance	-5.269***	(0.441)	-6.520***	(0.574)	-5.391***	(0.574)
European Integration Distance	-0.942	(0.486)	0.0177	(0.344)	-1.874***	(0.379)
Constant	6.832***	(0.629)	6.476***	(0.807)	4.400***	(0.757)
N	887		794		752	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.499		0.364		0.499	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

This scenario has been empirically negated by our electoral observations, mirroring the growing propensity to vote for the PS along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension. The impact of the EU issue voting proved to have insignificant effects in 2004 and 2009, with no increase in the probability to support the PS. Our dependent variable was mainly conditioned by the Left-Right Proximity and Party Closeness, which emerged as the core driving forces for biasing these electoral preferences. The internal divisions sparked off by the 2005 referendum probably led to a weak public perception of the party position on European integration, which did not affect the propensity of voting for the Socialists. The following empirical step (2009) further corroborates this, where the impact of the above-mentioned variables has substantially remained unaltered.

The last election round (2014) abruptly changed this trend, increasing the explanatory power of the voters' ideological proximity to the party on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension. This finding openly contradicts our expectation regarding *Mainstream-voting*, demonstrating the increasing likelihood of the Socialists to electorally benefit from their Europhile stance. Though the party has barely attempted to politicize this latent conflict, many Pro-European voters may have reacted to the surge of the Eurosceptic political supply by endorsing the PS. Thus, by leaning towards the Pro-European side of political contestation, this party has probably reaped some electoral benefits, capitalizing on the emerging polarization on this issue dimension. This trend refutes our assumption about the essential role of party strategies in shaping issue evolution, and this electoral realignment has not occurred as a consequence of the clear positioning of the PS. Nonetheless, the voters' emotional responses on the Europhile stands may have occurred as a response to the efforts undertaken by the Protest Anti-European parties, which have somehow succeeded in politicizing this conflict. We know from our background that Holland had been forced to support the Ordo-Liberal policies at the European level, being more likely to cue the voters on the Pro-Austerity management of the Euro Crisis. Thus, the PS has basically drawn its voting support from along this issue dimension, adopting some Neo-Liberal frameworks rather than developing a different discourse on European integration. In short, *after the onset of the crisis, although the voters have predominantly minimized their ideological distance from the party on the Left-Right dimension, their proximity on the Pro-\-Anti-European conflict has gradually assumed a notable explanatory power, becoming a very significant determinant in party preferences.*

*-UMP\Republicans* – The French Republican Right promoted an intergovernmental approach in strengthening an authority transfer towards the European building. The French President, Charles de Gaulle, aimed at blending French interests into these ever-increasing processes of integration by preserving many nation-state prerogatives. This Euro-Pragmatist stance dominated the Gaullist platform, leading to some intra-party factionalism. Although the UMP had often dealt with the political dilemmas of the European Conservatives, being recurrently divided between moderate nationalism and market liberalism (Mark and Wilson 2000), this party had constantly conveyed clear-cut Pro-European messages. Before the Euro Crisis, the UMP had to some extent taken on this conflict as an electoral device by increasingly mentioning the EU issues in its program. Indeed, the Gaullists had been more likely to gain electoral advantages from the Pro\Anti-European conflict, while the Socialists remained strongly divided on these issues.

Conversely, the Euro Crisis brought about an issue dismissal reaction, promptly diminishing the EU Issue Entrepreneurship of the UMP. Under Sarkozy's Presidency, France assumed a leadership role, jointly with Germany, in setting up the major Treaty modifications to cope with the economic upheavals. These policy-making initiatives were translated into austerity measures, which the French public strongly associated with EU issues. Consequently, the UMP has mainly tried to extinguish the European integration conflict by deflecting its emphasis and ideologically colluding with the other parties. We hold that the voter proximity on the European integration conflict has decreased its explanatory power.

Tab. 11.1.4. Multivariate Regression Models of the UMP Electoral

UMP	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	-0.198	(0.160)	0.105	(0.180)	0.0573	(0.183)
Age	0.103	(0.0961)	0.0928	(0.114)	-0.212	(0.110)
Education	0.121	(0.121)	-0.00594	(0.136)	0.0145	(0.141)
Church Attendance	-0.233**	(0.0768)	-0.338***	(0.087)	-0.309***	(0.0927)
Trade Union Membership	-0.928***	(0.243)	-0.752**	(0.242)	-0.0141	(0.273)
Unemployment	-0.215	(0.427)	-0.601	(0.343)	-0.115	(0.343)
Party Closeness	3.521***	(0.234)	4.188***	(0.237)	4.055***	(0.293)
Left-Right Distance	-5.971***	(0.443)	-7.034***	(0.504)	-6.565***	(0.508)
European Integration Distance	-1.044**	(0.404)	0.394	(0.325)	-0.249	(0.395)
Constant	6.564***	(0.618)	6.407***	(0.742)	7.283***	(0.720)
N	884		794		747	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.454		0.577		0.497	

Preferences (2004-2014)

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Our electoral rounds clearly illustrate this expected electoral trajectory, where the impact of the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension vanished as a voting determinant for the UMP preferences. As a matter of fact, the European Integration proximity variable boosted the probability of support for this party, becoming a parcel, although a minor one, of its voting equation in 2004. We argue that, at this stage, the UMP attached more saliency to EU issues, delivering clearer cues to the voters on this voting dimension and, thus, being one of the Europhile owners in France. On the contrary, the post-crisis rounds have mirrored the notable shrinking of this coefficient, which has lost statistical significance and, consequently, its explanatory power. By decreasing its entrepreneurial efforts on European integration, the UMP ceased to maximize its preferences along this issue dimensionality. Conversely, the ideological proximity of voters to the

Left-Right policy divide increased its impact as a driving force behind UMP support. Hence, it is worth noticing that the Republican Right has mainly been grounded in the cultural and economic issues encompassed in the Left-Right conflict, which still appear to be predominant among French electorates. Furthermore, this party has steadily taken advantages from the dividing-lines established by the old cleavages, reaping many electoral payoffs from those voters regularly attending church. Therefore, the UMP has drawn a substantial voting support from the French Catholic electors, being electorally weaker among the secularized ones. In the meantime, the 2004 and 2009 electoral observations have demonstrated its major electoral feebleness among trade union members, who have showed their lesser propensity to vote for this party. Thus, the Republican Right electoral pattern has borne out our hypothesis on the *Mainstream-voting*, where, since the outbreak of the crisis, the voters have diminished their propensity to vote for the UMP by minimizing their ideological distance on the European integration dimension, being more likely to support this party on the basis of their conservative values.

- *UDF\MoDem* – The UDF\MoDem has always championed European integration, staking out strong Europhile positions and, thus, following the legacy of the former French President, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, who has been regarded as a founding father of the EU. Before the beginning of the financial crisis, the UDF was actively drawing attention to EU issues, which constituted a noteworthy part of its platform. In the aftermath of the crisis, although the MoDem has held Pro-European issue ownership, it has clearly moderated the emphasis attached to EU issues. Nonetheless, even if the party has downplayed its entrepreneurial efforts on the Pro-\-Anti-European

conflict, we hypothesize that the latter issue dimension has maintained its explanatory power as a determinant of MoDem electoral performance in the post-crisis period. In fact, the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation has explained the voting propensity for the MoDem, which has consistently preserved its Europhile reputation.

Tab. 11.1.5. Multivariate Regression Models of the UDF\MoDem Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

UDF\Modem	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	-0.169	(0.166)	-0.128	(0.189)	-0.230	(0.199)
Age	0.206*	(0.0983)	-0.436***	(0.119)	0.0557	(0.118)
Education	0.460***	(0.126)	0.0248	(0.144)	0.270	(0.153)
Church Attendance	-0.483***	(0.0788)	-0.167	(0.089)	-0.0895	(0.0986)
Trade Union Membership	-0.648**	(0.250)	0.326	(0.249)	-0.0944	(0.293)
Unemployment	-0.708	(0.442)	0.485	(0.360)	-0.640	(0.382)
Party Closeness	4.101***	(0.372)	4.537***	(0.593)	4.070***	(0.430)
Left-Right Distance	-1.076*	(0.502)	-2.939***	(0.554)	-4.464***	(0.625)
European Integration Distance	-1.229***	(0.367)	-0.410	(0.300)	-0.921**	(0.346)
Constant	5.063***	(0.644)	5.774***	(0.778)	4.621***	(0.790)
N	888		778		715	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.223		0.144		0.222	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Our pre-crisis observation (2004) demonstrates the importance of this source of voting, where the UDF stances on European integration influenced party preferences, exceeding the impact of the Left-Right dimension as an electoral driving force. Jointly with the UMP, this party stood out as the chief political formation in drawing electoral support from Pro-European voters during the pre-crisis period.

The second electoral round (2009) mirrors a notable reversal in the MoDem pattern of voting, probably reflecting the waning systemic saliency of EU issues. Indeed, the Pro-\-Anti-European axis of conflict resulted in being a statistically insignificant variable, while the Left-Right dimension chiefly determined the MoDem preferences. It is worth noting that none of the Mainstream Pro-European parties maximized its voting support by reducing the ideological distance from voters on this issue dimensionality, which disappeared as an electoral explanation in France in 2009.

The second post-crisis round (2014) epitomized a further evolution in the trends of EU issue voting, where many other Pro-European actors have gained electoral advantages from their Europhile positions. In fact, by approximating its stances on these issues, voters have notably increased their voting preferences for MoDem, perhaps indicating the rise of European integration as a subject of electoral contestation in 2014. Therefore, by being the most coherent Pro-European actor in the French political landscape, MoDem made use to its own advantage this kind of issue ownership, probably injecting a sharper politicization of this divide-line, opposing the Pro-European versus Anti-European parties. However, the Left-Right conflict has outweighed the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension, which has turned out to be a secondary determinant rather than the core driving force for the probability to vote for MoDem. Furthermore, the Recession has not increased the impact of the European integration proximity as a MoDem voting determinant, substantially diminishing its explanatory power compared to the pre-crisis era. We may argue that the electoral strength of the Left-Right issues has dominated the French scenario, involving the MoDem, which has typified the Mainstream-Voting hypothesis, where the effects of EU Issue voting have shrunk rather

than boosted the propensity to support this party-, as a consequence of the Euro Crisis.

- *Verts\EELV* – Although at the beginning they disregarded EU issues, the French ecologists have steadily developed a strong Pro-European discourse, probably becoming a Euro-Enthusiast party actor. On the wake of the 2012 Presidential elections, Europhile arguments have taken over its policy commitments, being framed within Federalist and Multi-Cultural stances and, also, revealing the party's leaning towards the GAL pole of contestation (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002). Since the Recession, by changing its policy stance and enhancing the saliency of the EU issues, the EELV has been the only Europhile subject bolstering its entrepreneurial efforts to politicize this conflict. Consequently, the voters may have been more likely to minimize their ideological distance from this party, increasing their probability of voting for the EELV along the Pro-\-Anti-European divide, which has strengthened its explanatory power during the post-crisis period.

In fact, the European integration ideological proximity of voters has turned into a notable voting explanation in affecting the EELV support during the post-crisis period, substantiating our background assessment. The 2004 and 2009 rounds did not indicate any significant effect exerted by the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension on the party preferences, mainly conditioned by Party Closeness and Left-Right proximity variables. Furthermore, socio-demographic factors, such as gender, age and church-going, have shown to be important in biasing the EELV support. The link between the younger bracket of the population and the higher likelihood to support the

EELV has constituted the long-standing demographic determinant, which has somehow survived the Euro Crisis.

The last empirical round (2014) has indicated the substantial impact of the voters' proximity to the EELV, along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality, in increasing its electoral preferences. The coefficient has taken on a highly statistical significance and a substantial entity (-2.121<sup>\*\*\*</sup>), capturing the emerging driving force behind the probability to vote for the EELV. In fact, the Pro-European voters have electorally approached the Europhile position conveyed by this party, thus, responding to its electoral messages. Therefore, by reshaping its electoral supply and clarifying its Pro-European stances, the EELV may have unleashed a major politicization of the European integration conflict. Nonetheless, we should point out that this party has not been the only political outlet for the Europhile voters, which have also increased their voting propensity for the other Pro-European actors, such as the PS and MoDem. Hence, their strong Federalist and Multi-Cultural cues have probably been sources of EU issue voting without overtaking the overall Europhile camp. However, the EELV has stood out to be one of the main parties that have tried to politicize this issue dimension, gaining some electoral payoffs as a consequence. The Euro Crisis may have played an essential role in steering this transformation, although the explanatory power of the Left-Right proximity has remained the key factor in swaying the EELV preferences, outweighing the effects exerted by European integration proximity. Therefore, after the onset of the crisis, even if the Left-Right conflict has constantly wielded a predominant impact on the party preferences, remaining the major alignment explanation, EU issue voting has increasingly influenced the EELV support, negating our *Mainstream-voting hypothesis*.

Tab. 11.1.6 Multivariate Regression Models of the Verts\EELV  
Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

Verts\EELV	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	0.183	(0.170)	0.446*	(0.196)	0.294	(0.203)
Age	-0.406***	(0.103)	0.0901	(0.125)	-0.371**	(0.119)
Education	0.123	(0.128)	0.138	(0.149)	-0.108	(0.156)
Church Attendance	0.0195	(0.0819)	0.201*	(0.094)	0.0856	(0.102)
Trade Union Membership	0.135	(0.260)	-0.00837	(0.263)	0.365	(0.300)
Unemployment	0.0351	(0.459)	0.625	(0.375)	0.304	(0.379)
Party Closeness	3.539***	(0.475)	2.655***	(0.344)	4.735***	(0.435)
Left-Right Distance	-4.466**	(0.424)	-4.769***	(0.574)	-4.391***	(0.543)
European Integration Distance	-0.923	(0.529)	-0.458	(0.351)	-2.121***	(0.384)
Constant	6.317***	(0.656)	5.090***	(0.823)	6.576***	(0.821)
N	887		792		755	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.224		0.214		0.287	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

### 11.1.2 Final Remarks on the French Case

We have outlined a scenario of *Protest-based Entrepreneurship* pertaining to the French case, hypothesizing a *punctuated politicization* pattern on the European integration conflict (Kriesi and Grande 2016). This configuration may have occurred as a result of the de-politicization strategies taken by the Pro-European parties, which have tried to halt and revert the establishment of a Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation.

However, the current analysis of EU issue voting has drawn an unexpected picture, reflecting a more marked politicization of EU issues, which have arisen as a source of electoral support for many Mainstream parties. Indeed, the PS and Greens have disproven our initial predictions on *Mainstream-voting*, increasingly maximizing

their preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European conflict dimension. Moreover, the European integration proximity of voters has preserved its meaningful explanatory power in influencing the MoDem support, even by showing a weaker impact compared to the pre-crisis era. On the contrary, the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension has reduced its impact in steering the probability to vote for the UMP, which has been more consistent with our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis.

The *Protest-voting* hypothesis has unveiled more contradictory findings, being substantially disconfirmed by the current overview. First and foremost, the FN has not enhanced its voting propensity by attracting voters on this issue dimensionality, thus, not substantiating our expectations on the electoral trajectory of this party. Indeed, since the beginning of the Recession, its proximity on the European integration conflict has lost its explanatory power. The FN has more intensively relied on traditional sources of conflicts, probably benefitting from electoral realignments occurring along the Left-Right ideological dimension. Nonetheless, this party has been more prone to adopt a long-term strategy on EU issue politicization, which predated the financial crisis, injecting a more polarized conflict. Therefore, its entrepreneurial activities may have unleashed a reaction from the Pro-European voters, which have rewarded the Mainstream parties, such as the PS, EELV and MoDem. Although some of the latter party formations have downplayed this conflict, the FN has perhaps succeeded in translating the EU issues into arguments for electoral contestation. On the other hand, the Radical Left has failed to reap any electoral payoffs by exploiting the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of conflict, while its voters have tended to lean towards a more Europhile side of this ideological divide. The findings magnify the Radical Left's incapacity to reshape the electoral alignments by conveying

Anti-European messages to the electors, disconfirming the *Protest-voting* hypothesis regarding the Left Front.

This set of observations lends some empirical support to the Euro Crisis transformative effects, paving the way for the development of a new conflict, pitching Pro-European parties against the Anti-European parties. The FN has been chiefly responsible for placing the EU issues in the public agenda, producing an increased polarization at the systemic level, while other parties have shifted away from this source of electoral contestation. Consequently, the EU issue voting increasingly impacted the party preferences in 2014, especially affecting the performance of the Mainstream Pro-European parties. These parties have not actively manipulated the EU issues to reshape the foundations of the electoral contestation and the European integration conflict has come into being as a consequence of voter realignments on this issue dimensionality. However, these parties gained an electoral advantage along the Pro-\-Anti-European ideological divide, reflecting the weaknesses in their partisan shortcuts in this issue evolution. Conversely, this pattern highlights the FN's political achievement, which has manipulated this policy dimension to win more votes in France. By taking advantage of the window of opportunity opened up by the Euro Crisis, the FN has resulted in gaining a more favourable majority on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension, harnessing the growing support from the Eurosceptic voters and sparking off intra-party divisions among its opponents. Moreover, the French case has basically weakened one of our background predictions regarding the Radical Left, which hinged upon the agency of this party family in hastening the rise of the European integration conflict.

Nonetheless, the Left-Right dimension has still stood out as the most relevant voting explanation in France, being the chief determinant of

the electoral transformations during the post-crisis era. The resiliency of this conflict has been unquestionable, with no challenges emerging from an alternative majority. Indeed, the FN, which has been held to be the driving force behind the spread of the EU issue voting, has primarily increased its voting preferences by reducing its ideological distance from the voters along the Left-Right issue dimension. Therefore, in spite of the strengthening of the EU issue voting, it has remained a secondary determinant in influencing the patterns of party support. Furthermore, the results outlined by our models are still displaying some scatter effects, without lending a full support to a deeper and long-lasting process of issue evolution where the European integration conflict is concerned. The politicization of these issues appears to reflect a simpler dynamic of issue voting, which has not yet taken on a role of center stage in the French intra-party contestation.

### **11.2.1 Germany**

In Chapter 6, we observed the transformations in the German parties' electoral supply, being characterized by the increasing levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. The Euro Crisis acted as a powerful catalyst in spurring further attempts to emphasize the EU issues, involving the major German parties, such as the CDU, SPD, AfD, the Greens and the Left Party. In fact, the Mainstream and Protest parties have been significantly prone to collide along the Pro-\Anti-European ideological divide, which has turned out to be increasingly politicized as a source of intra-party conflict. We advanced a clear-cut hypothesis on Germany, where the European integration conflict may have sparked off changing party preferences, prompting a notable electoral alignment. Consequently, since the Recession outbreak, the

expectation is that the degree of EU issue voting has risen, becoming a crucial in explaining electoral behaviour.

*AFD* – The AFD has certainly restructured the electoral supply by filling the Right Radical policy space, left vacated by German parties for decades, unleashing a political turning point in all of Europe (Hooghe and Marks 2017). This party had apparently stemmed from the latent Anti-European sentiments widespread at the popular level, exacerbated by the fiscal transfers towards the debtor countries. The Mainstream parties have shared their policy stand on the rescue measures, notably colluding on this issue. Therefore, the AFD had the political opportunity to set itself apart from the established parties, breaking this Mainstream consensus on EU issues. This party actually initiated a process politicization of the European integration conflict, cueing the voters on the most radical Eurosceptic shortcuts and especially utilizing anti-currency arguments. This pattern has been epitomized by its striking level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, reflecting the AFD's growing reputation as a strong Eurosceptic actor. According to some overviews (Arzheimer 2015; Grimm 2015; Schmitt-Beck 2017), the AFD has profiled itself as a Single-Issue Eurosceptic Party (Taggart 1998), which has devoted its chief program commitments to dealing with general integration and marginalizing other policy facets. On the contrary, other works (Franzmann 2016) have underscored that the AFD's identity has also remained within the Left-Right dimension of conflict, adopting rightist economic positions and occupying the right-leaning policy space left by the CDU. However, the voting hypothesis remains clear-cut for the AFD, which has been more likely to increase its electoral preferences on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of conflict rather than exploiting the Left-Right one.

Tab. 11.2.1 Multivariate Regression Model of AFD Electoral Preferences (2014)

AFD	2014	
	B	se
Women	-0.152	(0.145)
Age	-0.0871	(0.0848)
Education	0.214*	(0.100)
Church Attendance	-0.0321	(0.0741)
Trade Union Membership	0.0419	(0.195)
Unemployment	0.539	(0.317)
Party Closeness	7.077***	(0.505)
Left-Right Distance	-1.760***	(0.382)
European Integration Distance	-2.222***	(0.287)
Constant	3.274***	(0.528)
N	1141	
$R^2$	0.234	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The AFD can be defined as a Post-Crisis party, which has sprung from factors originating from the Great Recession, becoming the success political story in Germany. As we foresaw, this party has increased its voting preferences by capitalizing on the voters' proximity to its position on the European integration conflict. In fact, this factor outweighed the strength of the Left-Right ideology as the electoral driving force, drawing many electoral preferences towards the AFD. The other parties have been more prone to electorally benefit from the conflicts arising from the Left-Right dimension, which remained the most prominent source of their voting support in 2014. Hence, the AFD presents itself as a Single-Issue Eurosceptic party, provoking

further political divisions in Germany, opposing the Pro-European versus Anti-European and moving beyond the traditional conflicts. This actor has hastened the emergence of the European integration conflict by positioning itself on the very extreme pole of Anti-Europeanism and realigning the voters on this issue dimensionality. By electorally responding to the Eurosceptic hints outlined by the AFD, the electors have ushered in an issue evolution on European integration. However, other determinants have played an important role in affecting AFD electoral support, such as Party Closeness, which became a very substantial and statistically significant coefficient. The AFD has probably been able to shape a favourable set of ideological predispositions and affinity for its own direct benefit, perhaps establishing a new and long-lasting source of political affiliation in Germany. We may propose that the AFD has been well-suited to our *Protest-voting* Hypothesis, maintaining that this Post-Crisis party has maximized its preferences on the European dimension of conflict, outdoing the Left-Right ideologies.

*PDS/Linke* – The Radical Left party has developed a Soft Eurosceptic position in the German context, emphasizing the neo-liberal bias of the integration processes and advancing many petitions for broader reforms (Wagemann 2014; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2017). In doing so, the party has distanced itself from the Mainstream Pro-European actors, being the unique Eurosceptic subject prior to the outbreak of the Great Recession. The onset of the crisis provided the Left party with new incentives for increasing its EU Issue Entrepreneurship, raising several arguments related to the economic anxieties involving European integration (De Vries and Edwards 2009). Nevertheless, this policy framing may have been minimized by the effective economic recovery achieved by Germany, which has

probably extinguished the impact of European integration as a source of voting support for the Linke.

In fact, the proximity of the voters to the party position along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension has been insignificant in determining its preferences, without undergoing any explanatory shifts during the post-crisis period. The PDS\Linke has never maximized its voting support on this latent conflict, being rooted in the pre-established policy divisions. The Left-Right ideology has probably absorbed the other policy parcels related to the EU issues, primarily influencing the probability to vote for this party. Although the Linke rallied the voters on an outright Anti-Austerity platform, it was unable to bind the latter issue to the European integration conflict. Our post-crisis electoral round (2014) reflects the Linke capacity to break through to the unemployed voters, which became an electoral asset for the party. The German Radical Left succeeded in gaining ownership of inequality issues, seizing on the negative consequences sparked off by the austerity policies. Thus, we may infer that the Linke drew its support by cueing the voters on the economic insecurity, without realigning voters along the Pro-\-Anti-European axis of contestation. Unsurprisingly, this party has electorally benefitted from the secular\religious divide, obtaining greater preferences from among the secularized voters. The Linke has exploited this cleavage-based explanation, matching our expectations about the Radical Left party family. Nonetheless, the Protest-voting hypothesis has resulted to be a null hypothesis regarding the Linke, which has not gained any electoral advantages from this issue dimensionality, predominantly exploiting the Left-Right ideology.

Tab. 11.2.2 Multivariate Regression Models of PDS\Linke's Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

PDS\Linke	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	0.422*	(0.206)	0.0879	(0.154)	-0.00843	(0.139)
Age	-0.152	(0.108)	-0.178	(0.0920)	-0.0510	(0.0812)
Education	0.00635	(0.159)	0.184	(0.109)	0.211*	(0.0974)
Church Attendance	0.438***	(0.0946)	0.252***	(0.0736)	0.393***	(0.0712)
Trade Union Membership	0.479	(0.253)	0.580***	(0.174)	0.291	(0.188)
Unemployment	0.280	(0.524)	0.320	(0.444)	0.625*	(0.302)
Party Closeness	5.024***	(0.797)	6.373***	(0.423)	5.703***	(0.272)
Left-Right Distance	-1.129*	(0.542)	-3.797***	(0.399)	-5.402***	(0.398)
European Integration Distance	-0.913	(0.647)	0.260	(0.424)	-0.526	(0.380)
Constant	1.380	(0.721)	1.898**		2.409***	(0.542)
N	465		887		1240	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.171		0.370		0.463	

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

- *CDU* - The CDU has constantly maintained its Europhile stance, blending it within the ordo-liberal principles and the stability culture platform (Howarth and Rommerskirchen 2013; Bulmer 2014), thus, developing a Euro-Pragmatist approach. While in the pre-crisis period (2006) this party was reluctant to ascribe more saliency to the EU issues, since the beginning of the financial crisis Angela Merkel has strengthened its policy framing on Pro-European related matters. Indeed, in the post-crisis era, the German Chancellor promoted further integration steps to consolidate a stricter set of rules concerning the budgetary policies within the Eurozone. By doing so, Merkel laid the foundations for a growing fiscal coordination, tackling the crisis in order to achieve economic recovery. She also manoeuvred the

national political agenda, endorsing the bailout packages for the debtor countries and being capable of imposing these measures on the other Pro-European parties. Consequently, by combining national interests in European policy-making, the CDU increasingly sold its Pro-European arguments as a matter of German economic concern, sharpening its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship.

Tab. 11.2.3. Multivariate Regression Models of CDU Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

CDU	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	0.183	(0.308)	0.236	(0.218)	-0.106	(0.164)
Age	0.0597	(0.161)	-0.150	(0.130)	0.0335	(0.0976)
Education	0.282	(0.235)	-0.0161	(0.154)	0.134	(0.117)
Church Attendance	-0.475***	(0.140)	-0.410***	(0.105)	-0.242**	(0.0859)
Trade Union Membership	-0.746*	(0.365)	-0.831***	(0.250)	0.0339	(0.225)
Unemployment	-0.524	(0.745)	-0.726	(0.634)	-0.119	(0.355)
Party Closeness	3.329***	(0.380)	4.135***	(0.277)	5.436***	(0.198)
Left-Right Distance	-7.698***	(1.175)	-6.165***	(0.725)	-4.908***	(0.586)
European Integration Distance	0.695	(0.631)	-0.818	(0.425)	-0.860**	(0.321)
Constant	7.405***	(1.042)	8.327***	(0.757)	5.306***	(0.613)
N	391		762		1071	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.343		0.361		0.527	

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

In line with the above, the voters' proximity to the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation increasingly conditioned the CDU's electoral support in the second post-crisis round (2014). In fact, elections in prior periods (2004, 2009) had showed the negligent impact of this conflict on the party preferences, where the CDU was mainly receiving electoral benefits from its proximity to the Left-Right ideological divide and those who were close to this party.

However, between 2004 and 2009, this party also drew its support from voters who frequently attended church, reflecting a certain resiliency of the secular-religious cleavage as an explanation for voting behaviour. Moreover, trade union members had a lower propensity to voting for the CDU, which had probably been identified as the party of the employers by the unions. This pattern mirrored the notable effects of cleavage-based voting in aligning the electoral preferences in favour of or against this party. The 2014 electoral round ushered in a new era for the CDU, which electorally benefitted from Pro-European voters, showing a higher and more statistically significant coefficient on this issue dimension. This electoral trend was consistent with the strategy outlined by the party on the European integration conflict, gradually augmenting its EU Issue Entrepreneurship. In fact, during the initial stage of the Euro Crisis (2009-2010), the CDU did not perceive EU issues as effective electoral instruments likely to override this conflict. On the contrary, during the following stage (2014), the political context underwent some changes (bailout measures, new intergovernmental treaties, etc.), compelling the governing party to take central stage in the integration processes. By cueing the voters on Euro-Pragmatist information shortcuts, the Pro-\-Anti-European proximity became an important determinant of the CDU electoral support, increasing its explanatory power. It is worth noticing that the Left-Right proximity and the Party Closeness remained the most meaningful voting explanations, noticeably outweighing the proximity to the European integration dimension. Although the CDU has clearly negated our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis, where this party has partially escaped from the traditional source conflicts, the Left-Right ideological divide has maintained its predominant effect on aligning the voters in favour of or against this political actor.

- *CSU* – The Bavarian Christian Social Union has raised a lot of opposition to the current embodiment of European integration, challenging many of its interventionist aspects. Nonetheless, this party has never advanced a principled opposition towards general integration policies, developing nuanced and qualified critiques. Furthermore, the CSU has always downplayed the impact of this conflict in its political agenda by attaching insignificant saliency to EU issues. Though the Euro Crisis has not changed this scenario, the party has shifted its policy stands by undertaking a more moderate support towards European integration. In fact, we argue that the CDU has tried to prevent electoral losses by partially colluding with the AFD on Eurosceptic policies.

We have not used the pre-crisis round (2004), dealing with a lower number of cases regarding Bavaria. Since we define the CSU as a regionalist political actor, which competes exclusively in only one region, we have dropped the other German cases, using only the Bavarian ones. However, from 2009 to 2014, we may observe some variations in the CSU voting explanations, directly involving EU issue voting. Indeed, its proximity to voters along the Pro-\-Anti-European ideological divide took on a peculiar strength, increasingly swaying the CSU preferences. While this coefficient did not have any statistical significance in 2009, demonstrating its weakness as a voting determinant, it turned out to be a notable factor in bolstering the probability of voting for the CSU in 2014. Therefore, the positional adjustments adopted by the party elites were a successful strategic tool, manoeuvring its voting preferences on this issue dimension. The CSU has seemed to be the strongest austerity crusader, expressing its reservations on bailout packages, cueing the voters on a moderate support for the integration processes and, consequently, reaping some

electoral benefits. Moreover, after the onset of the crisis, employment became another factor in influencing party support - the employed have been more likely to vote for the CSU, which had probably enjoyed the electoral benefits of the economic recovery (jointly with the CDU). In the meantime, the cleavage-voting effects have had more impact in the post-crisis period (2014), where the church-goers have probably been more inclined to vote for the CSU.

Tab. 11.2.4. Multivariate Regression Models of CSU Electoral Preferences (2009-2014)

CSU	2009	se	2014	Se
	B		B	
Women	-0.0383	(0.573)	0.492	(0.392)
Age	-1.081**	(0.366)	-0.343	(0.220)
Education	-0.616	(0.422)	0.152	(0.255)
Church Attendance	-0.493	(0.275)	-0.431*	(0.210)
Trade Union Membership	-0.790	(0.671)	-0.625	(0.531)
Unemployment	-2.139	(1.596)	-2.059*	(0.863)
Party Closeness	3.794***	(0.651)	3.631***	(0.457)
Left-Right Distance	-6.566***	(1.872)	-7.774***	(1.379)
European Integration Distance	-1.881	(1.650)	-2.156*	(1.016)
Constant	13.92***	(2.022)	9.198***	(1.417)
N	124		162	
$R^2$	0.405		0.583	

Standard errors in parentheses  
 $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Another important explanation for the CSU voting has been the constant outweighing of its Left-Right proximity to voters over party closeness. While the latter predictor has been the major reason behind the preferences for the other parties, the CSU stood out by chiefly harnessing the Left-Right proximity variable rather than party

identification. Hence, we posit that the CSU has reversed our chief expectation on *Mainstream-voting* by progressively widening its electoral preferences on the Pro-Anti-European dimension of contestation, which have become a notable driving force behind the party's strength.

*SPD* – The Social Democratic Party of Germany undertook a pronounced and abrupt strategic shift on the European integration conflict, markedly expanding its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Before the financial crisis, we examined how the SPD had colluded with its centre-right counterpart on the Pro-Anti-European ideological divide, maintaining an outright Europhile stance. Therefore, this party was not committed to setting itself apart from its rivals, without significantly emphasizing EU issues. The Euro Crisis changed this set of tactical incentives, probably boosting the systemic saliency of the European integration conflict in Germany. As a consequence, the SPD, especially under Sigmar Gabriel's leadership, steadily developed more nuanced Pro-Growth and Federalist positions regarding Europe, seeking to soften the burden for the insolvent countries and, thus, partially contrasting with Merkel's policies. By doing so, the party strongly increased its EU Issue Entrepreneurship in the second post-crisis round (2014), but it suffered from Angela Merkel's positive reputation in dealing with EU related policies. Indeed, the CDU held the ownership of the ordo-liberal principles, inherent to the German Stability Culture, diminishing the Social Democrats room for agency on European integration.

Although our work has supported the SPD attempts to extinguish this conflict, the party noticeably maximized its proximity to voters on the Pro-Anti-European dimension of contestation in the period preceding the Euro Crisis (2004). The SPD coefficient on this conflict

almost matched the Left-Right proximity to voters, strongly influencing the party electoral preferences. This scenario has contradicted the low strategic emphasis on EU issues of the SPD, which did not significantly tackle the European integration conflict. However, many Pro-European voters reduced their ideological distance from the SPD on this ideological divide, appreciating its Europhile (Euro-Pragmatic) stand.

The 2009 elections upheld this trend, where the voters' attitude on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension outweighed the strength of the Left-Right dimension as a voting determinant. In both these electoral rounds, the gender variable influenced the party support and women tended to vote more for the Social Democrats. This observation lends support to the so-called gender-based electoral realignments (Inglehart and Norris 2003), reflecting the higher probability for women to support a progressive and centre-of-left party in Germany. Another factor affecting the propensity to support the SPD was age - the younger age bracket of the population was more likely to vote for this party, mirroring a generational divide in the German electorate. Conversely, the Social Democrats had proved to be less capable in exploiting the old-established cleavages to increase its electoral preferences. As a matter of fact, neither Trade Union Membership nor Church Attendance bore any important influence on its voting preferences, revealing an insignificant effect on SPD electoral performance. Consequently, the SPD voters were not aligning themselves on the dividing-lines of the old class cleavage, the workers versus the employers, the party apparently not gaining any benefit from this political conflict.

Tab. 11.2.5. Multivariate Regression Models of SPD Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

SPD	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	0.591*	(0.237)	0.474*	(0.190)	0.255	(0.148)
Age	-0.328**	(0.126)	-0.471***	(0.114)	-0.0285	(0.0866)
Education	0.0286	(0.184)	-0.109	(0.134)	0.254*	(0.103)
Church Attendance	0.172	(0.109)	0.127	(0.0893)	0.101	(0.0742)
Trade Union Membership	0.360	(0.297)	0.212	(0.216)	0.162	(0.201)
Unemployment	-0.876	(0.602)	0.608	(0.550)	-0.262	(0.321)
Party Closeness	3.422***	(0.363)	4.589***	(0.269)	4.759***	(0.185)
Left-Right Distance	-3.466***	(0.826)	-1.940**	(0.596)	-3.829***	(0.563)
Pro-\-Anti-European Distance	-2.932***	(0.540)	-2.230***	(0.380)	-1.174***	(0.284)
Constant	5.633***	(0.812)	6.612***	(0.667)	4.448***	(0.544)
N	467		886		1236	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.312		0.315		0.421	

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The 2014 elections took place during a period of renewed tactical effort on the European integration conflict. Indeed, the SPD was seeking to play up the EU issues more intensively in the public debate, reshaping the content of general integration policies. Nevertheless, our coefficient demonstrates the failure of the Social Democrats in steering the German agenda on Europe, showing the declining impact of its Pro-\-Anti-European proximity to voters as an explanatory factor. The latter variable has lost much of its power compared to previous electoral rounds and the SPD has succeeded less significantly in maximizing its Pro-European values at the electoral level. We argue

that the issue framing operated by the SPD, focusing more on social-oriented measures and market regulation (Wimmel and Edwards 2011), has been an electoral liability rather than an asset, narrowing its capability to gain from this conflict. On the contrary, Angela Merkel has used a different discourse, enabling more people to endorse its policies on Europe. As a consequence, the CDU managed to increase its voting preferences along this axis of contestation, depriving the SPD of its Pro-European constituents, being dissatisfied with the party's program commitments.

By heightening its degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, the SPD has provided voters with unsuccessful hints on this conflict, losing its attractiveness on the ground of the Pro-/-Anti-European dimension. Although the proximity to voters on this issue dimensionality has kept its explanatory power, it notably reduced its effects in determining party support during the post-crisis period, confirming our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis pertaining to the German Social Democrats.

- *Alliance 90/the Greens* – Since their emergence as an important political actor, endowed with a considerable coalition-potential, the Greens have taken on a very discernible Europhile stance, supporting all the major integration steps. In doing so, they have followed the classic trajectory of the GAL (Green/Alternative/Libertarian) parties, positioning themselves on the Pro-European side of this policy divide (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002). Nonetheless, before the beginning of the financial crisis, they had scarcely attempted to activate this latent conflict, devoting scant attention to EU issues. The Greens have gradually reverted their strategies during the post-crisis period, ascribing more emphasis to the European-related policies. It is worth observing that the Greens strongly clashed with the CDU management

of the Euro Crisis, demanding social measures and more redistributive policies at the European level.

Our electoral rounds have proved to be incoherent with the above-mentioned trends in the Green's Entrepreneurship on Europe and the party proximity to voters along this dimensionality has steadily declined in being able to influence the Greens' preferences. Before the crisis, the Greens had greatly taken advantage of the European integration conflict, outdoing the power of the Left-Right ideology as a voting determinant. Apparently, the Greens were addressing their stance along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension, meeting the voters' preferences by employing Europhile arguments. The following empirical round (2009) represented a relative setback in the strength of this variable, where the Pro-\-Anti-European coefficient lessened its impact on the overall electoral support for the Greens. Nevertheless, this ideological proximity explanation has remained as a notable source of party support, still capitalizing on its Pro-European values. On the contrary, the 2014 model underlines a further deterioration in EU issue voting as a chief driving force behind the propensity to vote for the Greens. In fact, the decline is more evident and spectacular in this case, contrasting with our background assessment on the party strategies. Indeed, the party has increased its efforts to politicize the European integration conflict, but without increasing its preferences by reducing its ideological distance from voters on this issue dimension. Conversely, the party support has gained a more pronounced socio-demographic profile, where the younger, the educated and women have been more likely to vote for the Greens. Although the latter observation matches with the pre-existing overviews regarding the Pro-Environmental parties, these variables lack in any meaningful explanatory power for the previous electoral rounds. Thus, the increasing petition for a social Europe has probably

resulted in being a weaker electoral tool, the voters seeing the CDU Europhile framing as more appealing. In a nutshell, the Greens have decreasingly maximized their electoral support on this Pro-\Anti-European dimension of contestation, empirically bearing out our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis.

Tab. 11.2.6 Multivariate Regression Models of Alliance 90\Greens Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

Alliance 90\Greens	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	0.464	(0.247)	0.608**	(0.194)	0.366*	(0.149)
Age	-0.169	(0.131)	-0.214	(0.116)	-0.293***	(0.0874)
Education	0.213	(0.192)	0.255	(0.138)	0.591***	(0.105)
Church Attendance	0.225*	(0.113)	0.101	(0.0193)	0.0429	(0.0748)
Trade Union Membership	0.461	(0.301)	0.0888	(0.220)	0.434*	(0.201)
Unemployment	-0.401	(0.626)	0.0125	(0.561)	0.151	(0.325)
Party Closeness	4.461***	(0.468)	4.299***	(0.401)	5.417***	(0.299)
Left-Right Distance	-2.570**	(0.865)	-3.961***	(0.661)	-3.741***	(0.550)
European Integration Distance	-3.165***	(0.747)	-2.846***	(0.384)	-1.478***	(0.298)
Constant	3.932***	(0.842)	5.222***	(0.681)	3.640***	(0.550)
N	469		887		1234	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.270		0.267		0.338	

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

- *The FDP* - The German Liberals have been in favour of the authority transfers towards the European Union, seen as suitable ground for achieving their market penetration goals. However, prior to the Great Recession, the FDP had not made any notable politicization efforts on EU issues, being marginalized from its core policy discourse. The

Euro Crisis management sparked many internal divisions among FDP officials, who dealt with the issue of the bailout for the insolvent countries. By approving this set of policies, the FDP probably lost its ownership of the most radical ordo-liberal positions, opening up some windows of opportunity for the AfD. In addition, this party was not capable of taking any political credit for the measures to combat the crisis, and on which Merkel gained an overwhelming support. As a consequence, the Liberals have been committed to delivering unclear messages on this policy dimension, retained to be dangerous for internal stability and perceived as an electoral obstacle.

Tab. 11.2.7 Multivariate Regression Models of FDP Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

FDP	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	se	B	Se
Women	0.184	(0.225)	-0.0995	(0.200)	0.0489	(0.125)
Age	-0.139	(0.116)	-0.233	(0.120)	0.0215	(0.0728)
Education	0.576***	(0.172)	0.143	(0.141)	0.259**	(0.0877)
Church Attendance	-0.123	(0.102)	-0.0724	(0.0953)	-0.204**	(0.0643)
Trade Union Membership	-1.093***	(0.271)	-0.619**	(0.230)	-0.0165	(0.168)
Unemployment	-0.766	(0.561)	-0.138	(0.581)	-0.152	(0.269)
Party Closeness	3.702***	(0.609)	4.663***	(0.414)	5.836***	(0.564)
Left-Right Distance	-3.200***	(0.831)	-5.627***	(0.649)	-2.677***	(0.411)
European Integration Distance	-0.0869	(0.473)	-0.174	(0.395)	-0.448	(0.271)
Constant	4.179***	(0.757)	6.003***	(0.684)	2.516***	(0.447)
N	465		883		1227	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.187		0.223		0.139	

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Our electoral observations have plainly consolidated this background analysis on the FDP, reflecting the insignificant impact of the Pro-\-Anti-European proximity to voters as a voting explanation, both prior and after the Euro Crisis. The FDP has emerged to be the outlier among our cluster of Pro-European Mainstream parties in Germany, which have all been able to electorally assume their Europhile positions. Indeed, this party has not emphasized the EU issues, moving away from this conflict rather than accentuating it. On the contrary, FDP electoral preferences primarily remained on the Left-Right proximity and Party Closeness, resulting in the most significant variables in predicting its support. Moreover, It is difficult to draw some general arguments from our set of control variables, which have had volatile effects over time. Though the FDP propensity of voting had been entrenched in the Left-Right conflict, the old cleavage division is not able to substantially shed light on the party preferences. Our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis has showed to be justified pertaining to the Liberals, revealing the stagnant strength of voter proximity along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension to account for the party support.

### **11.2.2 Concluding Remarks on the German Case**

The German case has not resulted in a clear-cut empirical confirmation of the *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis, reflecting the increasing effects of EU issue voting for some Pro-European actors (CDU and CSU). Although the SPD and Greens saw a weakening impact of the Pro-\-Anti-European conflict dimension, they maintained substantial and statically significant coefficients by minimizing their distance from voters on the EU issues during the post-crisis era. On the contrary, the FDP has fit in more

unambiguously with our set of predictions, revealing the ephemeral influence of the European integration conflict on its preferences. Conversely, the Protest Anti-European parties, which strongly reshaped the electoral supply on EU issues, revealed some contrasting trends regarding their voting patterns. On the one hand, the PSD/Linke has not managed to realign voters by strengthening its cues on this issue dimension, with no effect on its voting preferences. On the other hand, the AFD framed a Eurosceptic political discourse, prioritising the EU issues as its voting determinant. In doing so, this party has been able to politicize a new conflict, opposing the Pro-European versus Anti-European voters, by transforming a previous non-contested issue into a subject of political contestation.

Apart from the AFD's role, the German context emerges as a national case where the Mainstream parties have strategically responded to their Eurosceptic counterparts, increasing their levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. This dynamic has probably hastened the establishment of the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, bringing EU issues to the forefront of the electoral arena. The Euro Crisis has clearly prompted some transformational outcomes on European integration politicization, epitomized by the growing impact of EU issues on party preferences. Before the beginning of the financial crisis, a minority of German parties had been characterized by the significant effects of EU issues on their electoral support. Contrary to this, the post-crisis period has mirrored a different scenario, where electoral performances have been more strongly conditioned by this scale of values, ranging from Pro-European to Anti-European. In fact, the voters have reacted to party information shortcuts on EU issues, adjusting their party preferences as a consequence of the parties' tactical efforts. Consequently, a deep-seated issue evolution on European integration has seemed to have

taken place in the German landscape, coexisting with, but not overriding, the Left-Right ideological divide. We argue that the last step in this issue evolution, involving voter emotional reactions to the elite repositioning, has come into being, politicizing the European integration conflict.

Moreover, from the current analysis, we can argue for the emergence of two sets of conflicts regarding European integration. We have already maintained the rise of a political controversy opposing the Pro-European versus Anti-European parties. Nevertheless, another sub-conflict has apparently occurred, cutting across the Pro-European camp. In fact, the Europhile parties have been mainly divided between the supporters of the bailout packages, strongly conditioned by Pro-Austerity measures (the CDU, FDP and CSU), and those advocating for the debt-sharing policies at the European level, claiming the need for a Social Europe (the SPD and Greens). The last electoral round magnified this pattern, where the victory of the right-wing camp of Pro-European parties was unquestionable, gaining the largest consensus. Meanwhile, the other Europhile actors were not able to drive the preferences of the Pro-European voters, thus, resulting in being defeated on this issue dimension of contestation. Therefore, the German context has been increasingly marked by a further divide, which did not necessarily encompass the one opposing the Eurosceptics versus Europhiles parties, but involving a cross-cutting contestation among the Europhile actors. A multiple set of disputes pertaining to European integration has characterized the German landscape, being a key factor in reshaping the voting support.

### **11.3.1 Italy**

The Italian electoral supply has been characterized by the rise of many Anti-European outlets, which have primed Eurosceptic cues in the aftermath of the Euro Crisis. Indeed, many Protest Anti-European parties have tended to seize on this factor, aiming at reversing the older voter majority and shifting the pre-established electoral alignments to their favour. However, some Mainstream actors have responded along the Pro-/Anti-European conflict dimension, conveying Europhile messages to the voters. Therefore, by disconfirming our *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*, we are probably dealing with a pattern of systemic entrepreneurship, where the majority of Italian parties have increased their efforts on this latent conflict. As a result, the EU issues may have emerged as more contentious, becoming an important source of electoral alignment.

However, it is worth noting that the Italian parties have carried out many position adjustments on this issue dimensionality, perhaps blurring their electoral cues and, thus, resulting in being detrimental to the politicization processes. In fact, EU issues usually require crucial linkage activities between the elite and the voters, given the higher complexity of this policy domain. Consequently, by recurrently repositioning themselves along the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, the Italian parties may have hindered the rise of an alternative conflict, diminishing the impact of the EU issue voting.

- *LN* – The Italian Northern League has embodied the above-mentioned pattern of ideological flexibility regarding the European integration conflict. During the early stage of its political life, the LN adopted a Pro-European stance, seeing the EU as a hospitable environment to develop its primary goals based on secessionism. The Italian entry to the Single Currency (1998), achieved by the Centre-Left government, ushered in a new era for this party, which switched

to an outright Eurosceptic position. This policy shift was probably due to its growing Anti-Immigration appeal, where the LN was seeking to win over the electoral support of the working classes, entrepreneurs and farmers in the north of Italy. By trying to create this cross-cleavage coalition, the party gradually took on a principled opposition to European integration. In order to achieve these electoral goals, the LN mobilized voters around strong Eurosceptic messages, strengthening its EU Issue Entrepreneurship before the outbreak of the Great Recession. Instead, the first post-crisis round (2010) indicated a clear decline in these tactical efforts, where the party minimized the saliency ascribed to EU issues. This trajectory was probably affected by the party's government status, forcing the LN to soften its Anti-European position. Under Matteo Salvini's leadership, the LN has re-profiled itself as the Eurosceptic champion in the Italian party landscape, largely leaving behind its entrepreneurial activities in creating a new cleavage, in opposition to the Centre versus Periphery order. Therefore, the EU issues have become the mainstays of the LN platform, increasingly emphasizing and polarizing this potential source of inter-party contestation. In fact, its EU Issue Entrepreneurship has impressively increased and the party has strongly contested the austerity policies imposed by the Franco-German directorate, recurrently putting the blame on the European institutions. In doing so, the LN has heightened its efforts in rallying voters on the Anti-Immigration issues, which have remained an enshrined principle of its policy commitment. We posit that this party has presented a nativist and welfare chauvinist outlook, supplying voters with economic and identitarian concerns related to the immigration question. Although this broad parcel of its political discourse has been linked to the Left-Right issues, the LN has tended to blend the Anti-Immigration messages into the emerging Anti-

European protest movement spreading in the Italian population. Hence, our hypothesis revolves around the increasing level of EU issue voting in explaining the LN support. Nonetheless, this driving force may have suffered from the party position fluctuations and the resiliency of the Left-Right issue dimensionality.

Tab. 11.3.1 Multivariate Regression Models of LN Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

LN	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	-0.146	(0.146)	0.0161	(0.252)	-0.133	(0.202)
Age	-0.151	(0.0919)	0.118	(0.142)	0.360**	(0.132)
Education	-0.260**	(0.0940)	-0.0936	(0.159)	-0.301*	(0.135)
Church Attendance	0.224***	(0.0672)	0.0460	(0.104)	-0.0220	(0.107)
Trade Union Membership	-0.293	(0.154)	0.332	(0.287)	0.0297	(0.384)
Unemployment	-0.835	(0.615)	-0.311	(0.463)	0.174	(0.349)
Party Closeness	5.427***	(0.349)	5.012***	(0.408)	5.672***	(0.473)
Left-Right Distance	-4.218***	(0.344)	-5.923***	(0.497)	-3.798***	(0.434)
European Integration Distance	-0.838**	(0.271)	-0.258	(0.565)	-0.0671	(0.376)
Constant	5.182***	(0.486)	4.484***	(0.787)	2.965***	(0.713)
N	957		557		643	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.389		0.431		0.317	

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Our electoral tests have not substantiated the emergence of voter proximity to the LN along the Pro-\-Anti-European conflict as an electoral determinant, disproving our expectations. Moreover, the LN voting patterns have reversed the crisis transformative effects, where EU issues had been an electoral device only in the pre-crisis period (2004). We examined the focus of the LN during this span of time, when the party established its ownership of Anti-European issues,

which were exploited as an important electoral asset. In fact, the voters reduced their ideological distance from the LN Eurosceptic stand, increasing the probability to vote for this party on this issue dimensionality. Nevertheless, this coefficient has displayed a lower explanatory power compared to the Left-Right ideological proximity, which overshadowed this other concurrent causal factor. Thus, the Left-Right related issues, such as the immigration policies, was the main driver behind its electoral preferences. Furthermore, this analysis has not considered the Centre versus Periphery conflict as a voting explanation, which could have exerted some significant effects on the propensity to support the LN. Indeed, before the onset of the crisis, this party had strongly cued the voters on Autonomist\Secessionist\Federalist issues, favouring multi-level governance and regional-based autonomy.

The post-crisis rounds (2009 and 2014) have sketched out a different picture, where the impact of the European integration ideologies on the LN preferences has completely vanished as a voting determinant. The 2009 observation has been more consistent with our overview, revealing the decreasing entrepreneurial efforts adopted by the party, constrained by its status as a junior government partner. Consequently, the party did not maximize its electoral preferences by exploiting the European integration conflict. Conversely, the 2014 elections have shed light on an unforeseen finding, indicating the zero impact of the Pro-\-Anti-European proximity variable. Although the LN has multiplied its entrepreneurial activities on this issue dimensionality, aiming at clarifying its Eurosceptic stance, it has not led to any remarkable emotional response on a popular level, failing to reap any electoral benefits. It is worth observing that voters may have encountered several difficulties in understanding the LN position, which has been continuously modified by its party elite. Therefore,

the LN has developed opaque messages, showing its incapability in realigning the Italian electors on EU issues. At the same time, the Left-Right ideology has maintained its explanatory power and this party may have electorally succeeded in establishing its ownership of the Anti-Immigration position. This reputation has actually become more well-defined at the popular level, enabling voters to recognize the party cues on this subset of policies and steering support for the LN. We reject the *Protest-voting* hypothesis regarding the LN as, since the beginning of the crisis, it has mainly gained electoral advantages from the Left-Right issues, constantly exceeding the impact of Pro-\-Anti-European conflict as an electoral driver.

*-M5S* – The Five Star Movement has been the *new-comer* in the Italian party system, with electoral success in the 2013 general elections. Though this party has steadily prioritized populist-related issues, focusing on the high costs of Italian politics and on the Anti-Corruption positions, it has established an Anti-European program, advancing outright criticisms towards the Single Currency and the bureaucratic functioning of the Union. The emphasis on EU issues has gained substantial ground in its platform, achieving a high entrepreneurial strength on this conflict dimensionality. The M5S has probably exploited Anti-European arguments to distinguish itself from its Europhile counterpart, the Democratic Party, which has been held to be the main political foe by the M5S officials. According to Morlino and Raniolo (2017), the M5S has tended to fall more into the Soft Eurosceptic cluster, placing this protest in an Anti-Austerity platform, rather than channelling identity and nationalistic concerns related to European integration. By clarifying its Eurosceptic position, we hypothesize that the party may have initiated an issue evolution

linked to this latent conflict, which has resulted in a source of important electoral payoffs.

Tab. 11.3.2 Multivariate Regression Model of M5S Electoral Preferences (2014)

<b>M5S</b>	<b>2014</b>	
	B	Se
Women	-0.118	(0.193)
Age	-0.340**	(0.128)
Education	-0.301*	(0.130)
Church Attendance	-0.0156	(0.101)
Trade Union Membership	-0.349	(0.370)
Unemployment	-0.486	(0.335)
Party Closeness	5.392***	(0.282)
Left-Right Distance	-3.765***	(0.629)
European Integration Distance	-0.468	(0.385)
Constant	5.307***	(0.711)
N	647	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.451	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

However, the 2014 electoral round has lent support to an alternative scenario, where the probability for voters to support the M5S by approximating themselves on its Eurosceptic ideology did not significantly increase. On the contrary, this party has successfully realigned the Italian electors along the Left-Right conflict, challenging the pre-established ideological divisions. Indeed, the Left-Right proximity variable has proved to be a very substantial and statistically significant explanation in increasing the M5S voting preferences. By providing voters with populist cues and by adopting a centrist position on this dimension of contestation, the M5S has probably been able to

reshape collective identities on the Left-Right related issues. Its entrepreneurial efforts on some valence issues, revolving around an Anti-Political, Anti-Establishment and Anti-Corruption discourse, have played an essential role in addressing the public's broader orientations regarding politics. It is worth noticing that, in the aftermath of the Great Recession, a crisis in responsiveness has probably occurred in Italy, undermining the popular trust in the democratic institutions and, thus, setting up a favourable political environment for spreading the M5S messages. However, the M5S has manoeuvred its stances to gain these electoral benefits, developing path-breaking information shortcuts and also creating a popular sentiment of partisanship to its own advantage. As a matter of fact, Party Closeness has stood out as the most important determinant in boosting the probability of voting for the M5S, reflecting the sudden emergence of a positive psychological disposition towards this party. The party has also capitalized on some of our socio-demographic variables, where the less educated and those belonging to the younger bracket of the population have tended more to support the M5S. In short, by confuting the *Protest-voting* hypothesis, we contend that the M5S has realigned the voters along the Left-Right dimension, notably weakening pre-existing ideological or partisan loyalties, by seizing on some windows of opportunity opened up by the Euro Crisis. Thus, its electoral success has been driven by the traditional conflicts, taking on the ownership of some valence issues, while the impact of a dimension, ranging from Pro-European to Anti-European, has remained null.

- *FI\PD*L – In our overview on Berlusconi's party (FI\PD), we have identified several fluctuations in its position regarding European integration policies, which have been recurrently modified. Although

it has fostered the widening of the free-market, endorsing a Euro-Pragmatic support for the authority transfers to the European Union, it has often moved towards TAN (Traditional\Authoritarian\Nationalist) values, which have been translated into Eurosceptic orientations (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002). Furthermore, when the party took office in 2001, its relations with the European institutions had gradually deteriorated, dealing with a set of external constraints that reduced domestic responsiveness. As a consequence, before the onset of the crisis, the FI had not been prone to draw attention to EU issues, undertaking a saliency-reduction strategy and adopting a middle-of-the-road position. In the subsequent period, after the FI's temporary merger with the National Alliance (AN) forming the People of Freedom Party (PDL), its EU Issue Entrepreneurship dropped further by becoming a largely minor parcel of the party platform. After the Berlusconi's controversial resignation as Prime Minister at the peak of the Euro Crisis, the FI more intensively profiled itself as a Eurosceptic actor, blaming the European institutions for its loss of power. However, in spite of standing out as the only Mainstream Anti-European party in the Italian political landscape, the FI has made relatively poor efforts in politicizing the European integration conflict. The party has not recognized the electoral assets inherent to a Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of political contestation, tending more to electorally compete on the Left-Right ideological divide.

The current electoral analysis corroborates our expectations, mirroring the FI's incapacity to maximize its preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality, which has resulted in being detrimental to the party electoral performance. In fact, the FI proximity to voters on the Left-Right dimension has held its meaningful explanatory power, remaining one of chief determinants behind its electoral preferences. On the contrary, the European

integration proximity variable displayed null effects on the FI support (2004 and 2009), while the coefficient was statistically significant and a positive sign in 2014. The latter observation allows us to formulate the following remark - *in 2014, by reducing their ideological distance from the party Eurosceptic stances, the voter probability to vote for FI was minimized.*

Tab. 11.3.3 Multivariate Regression Models of the FI\|PDL Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

FI\ PDL	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	se
Women	-0.176	(0.153)	0.434*	(0.215)	-0.191	(0.182)
Age	-0.0272	(0.0973)	-0.0593	(0.121)	0.181	(0.118)
Education	-0.0376	(0.0989)	-0.143	(0.135)	-0.195	(0.121)
Church Attendance	0.00856	(0.0706)	-0.0712	(0.089)	-0.188	(0.0967)
Trade Union Membership	-0.631***	(0.162)	-0.0357	(0.246)	-0.775*	(0.350)
Unemployment	0.278	(0.649)	-0.00448	(0.394)	0.177	(0.313)
Party Closeness	4.838***	(0.229)	4.732***	(0.257)	5.895***	(0.280)
Left-Right Distance	-7.657***	(0.482)	-7.501***	(0.527)	-5.436***	(0.492)
European Integration Distance	0.413	(0.479)	0.775	(0.537)	1.650**	(0.570)
Constant	5.575***	(0.500)	5.670***	(0.679)	4.005***	(0.638)
N	967		557		654	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.556		0.667		0.530	

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Thus, this party has failed in steering the Italian electors on the Pro-\-Anti-European position and its constituents have probably leaned towards Europhile values. The FI has not developed a substantial credibility by outlining Anti-European cues, given its long-lasting reputation as a Europhile actor. Moreover, this ideological leap may have triggered many concerns among its voters, who have rejected a negative discourse pertaining to European integration. Its policy adjustments on this issue dimensionality may have resulted in the creation of unclear information shortcuts, which have not been conducive in affecting an issue evolution process. Thus, the FI preferences have been predominantly grounded in the Left-Right conflict - lending support to our *Mainstream-voting* -, being incapable of re-addressing its support along the Pro-\-Anti-European ideological divide.

- *PRC\SEL* – The Italian Radical Left has traditionally opposed the authority transfers towards the EU, identifying the neo-liberal aspects of the overall process. Nonetheless, the *PRC\SEL* underwent many ideological turnabouts on this issue dimensionality, perhaps diminishing its capacity to electorally profit from the EU issues. Under the *PRC* label, the Radical Left deviated from the mean position on the general integration policies by adopting a clear Anti-European stance. Indeed, before the outbreak of the crisis, this party was strongly playing up the EU issue cards to politicize this potential conflict. On the other hand, when the Italian Radical Left undertook a process of ideological moderation, under the leadership of Nicky Vendola, it toned down its Eurosceptic position, downplaying the EU issues. By minimizing its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, the *SEL* aimed at consolidating its alliance with the centre-of-left Democratic Party (PD). The last post crisis round (2014) marked a further shift

along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of conflict, where the SEL merged into the Tsipras List cartel, mostly cueing voters on the economic anxieties related to European integration. However, although the Tsipras List voiced a lot of criticism of the integration policies, revolving around the austerity measures and the Fiscal Compact, it has not achieved a notable level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Thus, in spite of the incentives arising from the Great Recession, we regard the EU issues as a secondary explanation in accounting for the Radical Left preferences, being predominantly driven by the left-Right ideology.

Tab. 11.3.4 Multivariate Regression Models of the PRC\SEL Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

PRC\SEL	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	se	B	se
Women	0.0819	(0.140)	0.434*	(0.216)	-0.306	(0.219)
Age	-0.328***	(0.0887)	-0.357**	(0.121)	-0.211	(0.141)
Education	-0.123	(0.0902)	-0.197	(0.137)	-0.0216	(0.147)
Church Attendance	0.119	(0.0639)	0.162	(0.087)	-0.0834	(0.116)
Trade Union Membership	0.637***	(0.147)	0.112	(0.250)	-0.132	(0.418)
Unemployment	0.206	(0.616)	0.408	(0.393)	-0.469	(0.402)
Party Closeness	5.023***	(0.318)	5.500***	(0.674)	3.577***	(0.800)
Left-Right Distance	-4.926***	(0.293)	-4.082***	(0.426)	-1.961***	(0.489)
European Integration Distance	-0.0431	(0.343)	-1.382*	(0.561)	-0.910	(0.689)
Constant	5.517***	(0.488)	4.758***	(0.706)	4.430***	(0.802)
N	967		544		527	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.497		0.323		0.086	

$p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Our empirical research discloses a surprising finding, where the Radical Left parties have maximized their voting preferences on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension only by softening their Eurosceptic stances. In fact, in 2009, the SEL gained benefits by conveying more

moderate messages on the European integration conflict, being rewarded by voters, who probably appreciated its neutral stand on these issues. Conversely, when the Radical Left embarked on a more Anti-European political discourse, it did not increase its voting preferences on this issue dimensionality. Instead, the electors preferred other kinds of program aspects, revolving around economic domestic policies. Therefore, the Tsipras List has presented an Anti-Austerity platform, but has apparently failed in linking these issues to an electorally appealing Eurosceptic program. It is worth noting that the voter probability to choose this cartel by mainly reducing their ideological distance on the Left-Right ideologies has increased. Consequently, the Anti-European issues have not played an essential role in swaying the Radical Left preferences, without spreading a major level of politicization in the Italian system. This scenario further magnifies the European Radical Left's weakness in reshaping voter identity along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension. These political formations have hardly reaped any electoral payoffs on the EU issues during the crisis aftermath. Therefore, we should dismiss our *Protest-voting* hypothesis for these parties, which have electorally been able to tap into other spheres of support found in the established conflicts.

- *AN\FDI* - Although the moderate Pro-European swing achieved by the National Alliance (AN) leadership, the political heir of the neo-Fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), it used a saliency reduction strategy on the EU issues to minimize the impact of this latent conflict in the political agenda. In fact, before the crisis, the National Alliance had dismissed conflict politicization in order to avoid the rise of intra-party conflicts, which could have jeopardized the party unity. Between 2009 and 2012, the AN electorally disappeared to merge with the FI into the PDL, thus, leaving this rightist policy space vacant in Italy.

The Brothers of Italy (FDI) party brought together many splinter members from the PDL, subsequently claiming the AN legacy by readopting its old label. The Euro Crisis probably acted as a catalyst in prompting this split, where many senior officials were disgruntled by the parliamentary backing of Mario Monti’s cabinet. The FDI has substantially distanced itself from the Mainstream Pro-European consensus by adopting a very adversarial strategy towards the current embodiment of the integration processes. In doing so, the FDI has probably left behind the Mainstream Pro-European cluster, breaking into the Protest Anti-European camp. Thus, we expect that EU issues should have increasingly played a role in driving its preferences. Nonetheless, the Anti-Immigration issues and Welfare Chauvinist policies have been enshrined principles in the FDI program, subsuming the traditional Left-Right conflict.

Tab. 10.3.5 Multivariate Regression Models of the AN\FDI Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

<b>AN\FDI</b>	<b>2004</b>		<b>2014</b>	
	B	Se	B	Se
Women	-0.120	(0.150)	-0.166	(0.194)
Age	-0.285 <sup>**</sup>	(0.0947)	0.0524	(0.126)
Education	-0.0196	(0.0961)	-0.143	(0.130)
Church Attendance	-0.00482	(0.0686)	-0.166	(0.102)
Trade Union Membership	-0.470 <sup>**</sup>	(0.159)	-0.508	(0.363)
Unemployment	-0.677	(0.633)	0.224	(0.337)
Party Closeness	3.793 <sup>***</sup>	(0.241)	5.621 <sup>***</sup>	(0.565)
Left-Right Distance	-8.276 <sup>***</sup>	(0.387)	-4.551 <sup>***</sup>	(0.451)
European Integration Distance	0.659	(0.491)	0.379	(0.464)
Constant	7.293 <sup>***</sup>	(0.492)	4.713 <sup>***</sup>	(0.675)
N	966		618	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.558		0.305	

$p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Our voting models do not lend empirical support to our background hypothesis, demonstrating the null impact of the EU issue on the AN\FDI electoral strength during the overall period. The voters were attracted by the rightist policy package presented by these parties, which have never maximized on their electoral preferences on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of conflict. While the 2004 electoral round has provided us with a consistent outcome of the AN strategy choices, where the party showed absolutely no signs of commitment to politicizing this conflict, the 2014 round has delivered a different scenario, proving the FDI's major failure in tactically priming the Anti-European messages. This party has tended to suffer from its incumbency status, when it leaned towards a more Europhile pole of political contestation by endorsing Monti's policies. Furthermore, by being a new-comer to the Italian landscape, although it gained from the political legacy of the AN, the voters have probably had a very blurred perception of its Anti-European shortcuts, not identifying the FDI's ideological switch. On the other hand, the Italian electorate has been more familiar with the political rightist values expressed by this party, tending to increase their voting probability for FDI along the Left-Right conflict dimension. Hence, the Euro Crisis has not ushered in a new era for the Italian Radical Right Parties, which have not steered their voting preferences on the European integration conflict, negating our Protest-voting hypothesis concerning the AN\FDI.

- *UDC\NCD* – The Union of the Centre (UDC) represented the more moderate and centrist parcel of the Berlusconi led Centre-Right coalition. By consistently claiming the political legacy of the Italian Christian Democracy (DC), the UDC has always fostered Pro-

European sentiments among its ranks, probably constituting an outlet for the Europhile voters. Nonetheless, the saliency ascribed to the EU issues has not stood out to be very noteworthy during the pre-crisis period, where the party focused more on the Left-Right related issues. The UDC enthusiastically supported the Monti government, aligning itself to the Pro-Austerity camp and, probably, as a consequence, being electorally punished by the voters in the 2013 general elections. Since the onset of the crisis, although this party has openly rejected a catch-all strategy on EU issues, its Pro-European identity has mainly remained unchanged, only slightly increasing its entrepreneurial activities on this issue dimension. Therefore, we contend that the UCD may have gained electoral advantages from the Pro-\-Anti-European conflict by coherently displaying its Europhile attitudes.

Tab 11.3.6 Multivariate Regression Models of the UDC Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

UDC	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	se	B	Se
Women	-0.528***	(0.154)	0.109	(0.226)	-0.0545	(0.175)
Age	0.0855	(0.0969)	0.0358	(0.127)	0.00741	(0.114)
Education	0.0550	(0.0988)	-0.144	(0.142)	-0.0987	(0.116)
Church Attendance	-0.336***	(0.0708)	-0.195*	(0.091)	-0.258**	(0.0917)
Trade Union Membership	-0.161	(0.158)	0.444	(0.253)	-0.586	(0.335)
Unemployment	0.262	(0.645)	0.469	(0.414)	0.0205	(0.305)
Party Closeness	3.231***	(0.350)	4.696***	(0.630)	4.120***	(0.766)
Left-Right Distance	-3.235***	(0.552)	-3.851***	(0.641)	-3.395***	(0.548)
European Integration Distance	-0.638	(0.333)	-0.403	(0.400)	-1.032**	(0.350)
Constant	4.603***	(0.511)	4.112***	(0.696)	4.518***	(0.628)
N	948		552		625	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.194		0.197		0.148	

$p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Indeed, our voting models lend support to the alleged UDC electoral trajectory, revealing the growing impact of EU issue voting on party support. While the 2004 and 2009 rounds have showed the null effect of the European integration proximity variable, which has remained statistically insignificant, the latter factor has emerged as a meaningful voting determinant in 2014. During this period, by devising its Europhile shortcuts, the UDC maximized its voting propensity along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension, which has boosted its explanatory power. It is worth noting that this Europhile supply probably targeted those who were more likely to sustain Austerity and Stability policies, bringing electoral payoffs to the UDC. Although the party has not tried to mobilize the Italian electors on a catch-all platform, it has tactically manoeuvred the EU issues in order to gain the support of those concerned with the Italian mismanagement of the budgetary policies and also the effects of the Greek situation, electorally succeeding in steering their preferences. Therefore, the UDC has become the party outlet for the Pro-Austerity voters, who have openly endorsed Monti's course of policy-making. Moreover, we have to stress that the UDC has been consistently held to be a Catholic party, attracting the electoral preferences of the regular church-goers. Consequently, it has been electorally entrenched within the established cleavage divide-line, of secularized versus Catholic voters. Thus, the UDC has been one of the most prominent political actors in Italy to inject some degree of EU issue politicization, tending to realign the voters towards a Pro-Austerity pole. Indeed, this party has clearly contradicted our expected pattern on *Mainstream-voting*, increasingly maximizing its electoral preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension. However, it should be taken into account that the party size has clearly diminished over time, weakening its contribution to the overall politicization hypothesis regarding Italy. Its

share of votes has shrunk and its blackmail-potential is currently vanishing, rendering the UDC less capable of affecting the coming into being of EU issues at an electoral level.

The New Centre-Right (NCD) came into being to support Enrico Letta's government and, then, Matteo Renzi's cabinet. This splinter party has made several politicization efforts by prioritizing the EU issues and adopting a Pro-European position. Jointly with the PD and UDC, the NCD has campaigned voters on an outright Europhile platform during the EP elections, tending to translate these issues into a subject of inter-party contestation. Consequently, the European integration proximity variable has probably been a key explanation in affecting NCD electoral support.

Tab. 11.3.7 Multivariate Regression Model of the NCD Electoral Preferences (2014)

NCD	2014	
	B	Se
Women	-0.212	(0.201)
Age	-0.0751	(0.131)
Education	-0.129	(0.134)
Church Attendance	-0.229*	(0.105)
Trade Union Membership	-0.495	(0.378)
Unemployment	0.210	(0.359)
Party Closeness	3.525***	(0.820)
Left-Right Distance	-3.811***	(0.575)
European Integration Distance	-0.555	(0.422)
Constant	4.853***	(0.715)
N	609	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.125	

$p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Our regression table has not sustained our hypothesis, where the NCD has not maximized its voting preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality. The chief driving forces have been the Party Closeness and Left-Right ideological proximity behind NCD support, notably rooted in the pre-established conflicts. This party has probably been unable to clarify its position in the political debate, being relatively a new-comer and also a splinter party. We may contend that the EU issue evolution has interacted with Italian electoral instability, persistently blurring these information shortcuts in this electoral arena. Thus, the electors have faced many difficulties in recognizing the partisan cues, which have hardly resulted in any widespread emotional responses on this issue dimensionality, not producing any electoral realignments.

*DS\DL\PD* – Before their merger into the Democratic Party, both the Left Democrats (DS) and the Daisy – Liberty and Freedom Party (DL), had shared a Pro-European identity, converging on this issue domain. On the one hand, the Europhile discourse set out by the Post-Communist party was a parcel of a broader strategy, enabling it to be profiled as a government actor. In fact, the DS championed the further steps in the integration process, strongly priming EU issues in its program. On the other hand, the DL remained faithful to the Christian Democratic Europhile tradition by making many entrepreneurial efforts on the Pro-\-Anti-European conflict dimension. These parties were senior members of the first Prodi cabinet (1996-1998), which recurrently moulded domestic issues with European objectives, focusing on accession to the Eurozone and which subsequently, it succeeded in doing.

Since the creation of the PD, this centre-of-left political formation has not deviated from the above-mentioned legacy on general integration policies. Although the PD had initially decreased its levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship compared to its epigones (2010), it maintained relatively high references to integration policies in the party platform, preserving its Europhile outlook. In December 2013, Matteo Renzi won the party primaries, becoming the PD General Secretary and, then, taking office as Prime Minister. After his leadership takeover, the PD highlighted EU issues more strongly, remaining a strong Pro-European actor. As a consequence, the PD Issue Entrepreneurship shows to be noticeably higher in 2014, openly colliding with the Anti-European actors in the 2014 EP elections. Nonetheless, this centre-of-left party has changed its narrative on the European integration policies, increasingly petitioning for Pro-Growth measures at the European level. Moreover, Renzi constantly deployed a blame-shifting strategy towards the European institutions, holding them to be responsible for the worsening of the Italian economic situation. In doing so, the PD tended to increase the politicization of the European integration conflict, increasingly maximizing its voting preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality in the post-crisis period.

Our pre-crisis round (2004) has empirically sustained the null effects exerted by the European integration proximity variable, involving both the PD's predecessors, the DS and the DL. On the contrary, the cleavage variables – *Trade Union Membership* and *Church Attendance* - clearly impacted their electoral preferences, representing a pattern of continuity from the past. It is worth noticing that the Left Democrats strongly aligned themselves along the old cleavage divide-lines, tending to be supported by the more secularized voters and those belonging to the trade union organizations. Therefore, though

the DS carried out many policy shifts to achieve a *catch-all* strategy, it has remained the outlet for those voters ingrained along the deep-seated societal divisions, being the political heir to the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Moreover, the DL also reaped electoral benefits from among trade union members, being embedded in the corporative tradition of the Christian Democracy (DC). The Left-Right proximity variable had a very meaningful explanatory power in influencing the probability of voting for these two party formations, reflecting their strong capacity to drive preferences on this traditional source of conflict.

Tab. 11.3.8 Multivariate Regression Models of the DS\DL Electoral Preferences (2004)

<b>2004</b>	<b>DS</b>		<b>DL</b>	
	B	Se	B	se
Women	0.0916	(0.137)	-0.0331	(0.159)
Age	0.00348	(0.0871)	-0.0778	(0.101)
Education	-0.0445	(0.0879)	0.0615	(0.102)
Church Attendance	0.168**	(0.0619)	-0.0918	(0.0727)
Trade Union Membership	0.503***	(0.144)	0.739***	(0.163)
Unemployment	0.132	(0.602)	0.330	(0.693)
Party Closeness	3.969***	(0.178)	3.832***	(0.278)
Left-Right Distance	-8.010***	(0.356)	-8.539***	(0.471)
European Integration Distance	-0.207	(0.262)	-0.511	(0.292)
Constant	5.608***	(0.471)	6.357***	(0.547)
N	973		959	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.691		0.451	

$p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The other empirical rounds have reverted this scenario, weakening many traditional voting explanations for the centre-of-left party. First

and foremost, some changes have been due to the DS and DL merger into the PD, which encountered many difficulties in combining the policy positions of its political predecessors. In fact, the explanatory power of the Left-Right proximity variable dropped in 2009, probably indicating some adjustment problems arising from the setting up of the PD. Nonetheless, trade union members tended to be more likely to support the PD, mirroring to some extent the endurance of the cleavage-based divide-lines. However, voters did not increase their voting propensity for the PD by minimizing their ideological distance from the party along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation

Tab. 11.3.8 Multivariate Regression Models of the PD Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

PD	2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se
Women	0.552*	(0.225)	-0.320	(0.197)
Age	-0.243	(0.127)	0.0794	(0.130)
Education	-0.226	(0.143)	-0.0329	(0.131)
Church Attendance	0.0768	(0.090)	0.0851	(0.103)
Trade Union Membership	0.850***	(0.257)	0.100	(0.375)
Unemployment	-0.300	(0.415)	-0.291	(0.343)
Party Closeness	4.857***	(0.289)	4.692***	(0.213)
Left-Right Distance	-5.379***	(0.612)	-3.550***	(0.635)
European Integration Distance	-0.399	(0.351)	-1.267***	(0.381)
Constant	5.390***	(0.726)	4.736***	(0.723)
N	555		644	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.554		0.540	

$p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The 2014 observation highlights a substantial switch in voter background motivations, where their alignments on the European integration conflict became important electoral determinants in affecting the PD preferences. Indeed, the electors increasingly downplayed their distance from the PD Europhile position, with their likelihood to vote for the party on this issue dimensionality increasing. On the one hand, the European integration proximity variable acquired a notable explanatory strength, revealing to be a considerable and a statistically significant coefficient. On the other hand, the Left-Right proximity variable has further diminished its impact in influencing party support. This finding has epitomized an electoral trajectory, which is not well-suited to shedding light on the expected patterns regarding the Mainstream parties, where the Euro Crisis probably resulted in creating different incentives for this governing party. Nevertheless, the current finding has further confirmed our background scenario, where this party made entrepreneurial endeavours on this latent conflict, also by presenting a package of reforms at the European level. In fact, the PD has developed Pro-European messages, strongly drawing attention to EU issues and, thus, reacting to the Eurosceptic cues presented by the Protest parties. Consequently, by colliding on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension, the PD has contributed to politicizing this conflict, representing the most notable Pro-European channel for voters in the Italian party system. The party has probably cued the voters on some economic concerns linked to European integration, which has been often defined as an obstacle to economic recovery. However, in doing so, the party has not embarked on a positional shift, becoming Eurosceptic, but, instead, it has embodied debtor-country policy objectives, aiming at promoting budgetary flexibility at the domestic level. On the contrary, cleavage-based voting has vanished as determinant of PD support and,

under Renzi's leadership, the party probably succeeded in achieving its catch-all strategies by leaving behind its pre-established societal ties.

Therefore, since the outbreak of the crisis, the Italian PD has increasingly maximized its electoral preferences on the Pro-\Anti-European ideological divide, contradicting our Mainstream-voting hypothesis, while the Left-Right proximity variable has shrunk in its explanatory effect. This observation has shown the party capability of manoeuvring its preferences by providing voters with Pro-European shortcuts, standing out for its politicization efforts in the Italian landscape.

### **11.3.2 Concluding Remarks on the Italian Case**

The Italian parties have outlined an ever-transforming electoral supply, which has not been conducive to catalysing politicization processes within this political landscape. As we posited in Chapter 7, this instability may have played a pivotal role in minimizing the emergence of EU issue voting, which has not resulted in being an important source of electoral alignments. It is worth noticing that the Protest Anti-European parties have failed to tap into this latent dimension of contestation, probably being incapable of clarifying their (re-)positioning in the electoral arena. The LN has been the most active actor in emphasizing Anti-European cues, but it has perhaps suffered from its positional fluctuations, which have been detrimental to injecting an issue polarization in opposing either a Pro-European or Anti-European camp. In fact, the LN has not epitomized the *Protest-Voting* hypothesis, steering its electoral preferences along the Left-Right ideological divide and, therefore, exploiting its clear-cut

reputation as an Anti-Immigration crusader during the post-crisis period. Even the other Radical Right subject, the FDI-AN, has not reshaped voter orientations on the Pro-\-Anti-European axis of conflict, electorally benefitting from Left-Right related issues. Furthermore, the M5S has surprisingly benefitted on the Left-Right issue dimensionality, reshaping people's pre-established loyalties and partisanship on the traditional conflicts. Thus, the M5S electoral success has been an outcome of realignments occurring along the Left-Right conflict dimension, probably triggered by the Euro Crisis, while the European integration proximity has exerted null effects on party preferences. Consequently, despite their entrepreneurial efforts in the realm of European integration, this cluster of parties has not restructured the foundation of inter-party contestation, producing a deep-seated coalition of Anti-European voters. Their manipulative strategies have been too inconsistent on EU issues and there has been no authentic change in the political environment over time. We contend that issue clarity has not developed, undermining any further steps in issue evolution, and preventing the Eurosceptic cues from becoming a matter of electoral contestation.

The electoral patterns involving the Mainstream parties have been more contradictory and ambiguous, disclosing some unexpected outcomes. In fact, the FI\PD L has provided voters with an ever-changing electoral supply, switching from a Europragmatic to a Eurosceptic position. Moreover, Berlusconi's party persistently tried to overshadow this fount of conflict, downplaying the emphasis ascribed to EU issues. However, this Anti-European policy shift has not turned out to be an electoral asset, establishing an ideological distance between the party and its voters. On the contrary, the PD and UDC, by consistently advancing a Pro-European platform, have been able to gain electoral advantages from the dimension ranging from

Anti-European to Pro-European. Although the two parties have presented diverse Europhile messages, championing different visions concerning European integration, these have tended to be party outlets for Pro-European voters. On the one hand, the PD has expressed some economic concerns related to the austerity policies and the crisis management, pledging reforms and pro-growth measures. On the other hand, the UDC has leaned towards the Pro-Austerity handling of the crisis, probably attracting the right-oriented supporters of European integration. We argue that these parties have been the more successful in politicizing this conflict, perhaps facing less internal constraints in playing up EU issue cards. The PD has been a very important actor in the Italian party system, increasingly maximizing its preferences along the Pro-\Anti-European dimension of conflict, while the UDC has been pushed to the fringes of the electoral landscape. However, their active efforts in tackling these policies have probably not sought to unsettle the existing majority of voters, exploiting the pre-established alignments in favour of European integration. Nonetheless, these Europhile orientations have become a determinant in their voting equations, demonstrating the emergence of Pro-European issue voting in Italy.

Summing up, we have already presented the problematic aspects related to the unstable entrepreneurship and the opaque information shortcuts devised by the Italian parties, which may have prevented the establishment of an alternative dimension of conflict, opposing the Pro-European versus Anti-European scale of values. In spite of some scatter confirmation on EU issue voting, we are able to reject the politicization of the European integration conflict in Italy. The last step in issue evolution has not yet taken place, given the lack of issue clarity at the public level, where the reshaping of the electoral supply has not driven the electoral preferences. This observation has

weakened a short-term hypothesis of issue evolution, which probably requires long-term interaction between elite cues and voter responses in order to lead to electoral realignments. The ever-fluctuating partisan supply, marked by a high level of Total Electoral Volatility, has prevented the emergence of alternative patterns of inter-party competition in Italy, where the Left-Right related issues have persistently dominated electoral trends. Although the Euro Crisis has spurred a systemic growth in EU Issue Entrepreneurship, this clear-cut increase has not resulted in a major level of politicization, not transforming EU issues into a matter of electoral contestation.

#### **11.4.1 United Kingdom**

In Chapter 7, we pointed out that the British partisan supply has not been subjected to the repercussions of the Euro Crisis, which has not led to any major variations in the party entrepreneurial efforts regarding the European integration conflict. In fact, many incentives had had an impact during the pre-crisis period, when the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty acted as a powerful catalyst in exacerbating pre-existing Anti-European attitudes, coming to the forefront of the political debate. This was interwoven with the aspect of British national culture, detrimental to the authority transfer towards a supranational entity. Consequently, the UKIP took over the ownership of Euroscepticism, recurrently priming Anti-European messages in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the Conservative party has taken on a positional shift along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality, becoming an authentic Mainstream Anti-European actor. However, the Pro-European Labour Party has not focused on this source intra-party contestation, avoiding the politicization of the European integration conflict. The Liberal Democrats have been less inclined to

draw attention to Europhile cues. Consequently, we hypothesize that the British landscape has been characterized by a notable politicization of this issue dimensionality, which has affected voting preferences during the period under study, without increasing its explanatory power in the post-crisis era.

- *UKIP* – The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) has always framed the core of its political discourse by rallying voters on Anti-European cues. This party has mainly sought to achieve the British withdrawal from the EU, an enshrined principle in its platform, turning it into a *Single Issue Eurosceptic Party*. Thus, the UKIP has constantly made many efforts in setting in motion this alternative dimension of conflict by assuming a clear-cut reputation on Euroscepticism. Indeed, by adopting a very radical Anti-European stance and placing a strong emphasis on EU issues, the UKIP has developed a notable entrepreneurial strategy on a dimension ranging from Anti-European to Pro-European. It is worth observing that the party had already been aiming at transforming the EU issues into electoral contested matters before the outbreak of the crisis. Although it remained a strong EU Issue Entrepreneur during the post-crisis period, the UKIP has gradually broadened its policy commitments by championing Anti-Immigration issues and outlining a populist narrative. In doing so, the party has leaned towards creating an electoral supply suited to attract the support of the so-called globalization losers, targeting their discontent and economic concerns. Furthermore, under the leadership of Nigel Farage, this Protest party has occupied the right space vacated by the moderate shift of the Conservatives. However, its program objectives have mainly revolved around Anti-European shortcuts, while the UKIP party officials have regarded other policy domains as secondary. In fact, the party has

been more prone to establishing a new voter majority along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension in order to gain electoral advantages, breaking into the Mainstream of British politics. Thus, we claim that the UKIP has persistently maximized its preferences on EU issues, which have probably been the key factors in influencing its electoral payoffs, outweighing the impact of the Left-Right issues.

Tab. 11.4.1 Multivariate Regression Models of the UKIP Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

UKIP	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	se	B	Se
Women	0.0429	(0.162)	0.229	(0.204)	-0.0604	(0.202)
Age	-0.279**	(0.102)	-0.210	(0.127)	-0.280*	(0.127)
Education	-0.500***	(0.119)	-0.407*	(0.162)	-0.451**	(0.154)
Church Attendance	0.0671	(0.0661)	0.0643	(0.087)	0.0780	(0.0838)
Trade Union Membership	-0.126	(0.194)	0.417	(0.242)	0.217	(0.248)
Unemployment	0.0722	(0.214)	0.898*	(0.405)	0.501	(0.433)
Party Closeness	0.125	(1.030)	5.202***	(0.782)	6.099***	(0.409)
Left-Right Distance	-2.073***	(0.458)	-2.350***	(0.503)	-2.721***	(0.482)
European Integration Distance	-2.969***	(0.294)	-2.512***	(0.366)	-3.208***	(0.415)
Constant	7.115***	(0.539)	5.441***	(0.784)	5.972***	(0.790)
N	1143		811		851	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.134		0.169		0.344	

$p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Our regression tables have confirmed our expectations concerning the UKIP, which constantly drew electoral support from the voter attitudes based on a scale of values, ranging from Pro-European to Anti-European. The European integration proximity has exerted very significant effects in swaying the voting probability in favour of the

UKIP during the period, peaking its impact as a consequence of the crisis. On the contrary, the Left-Right proximity variable has always been outweighed by our concurrent explanation, empirically bearing out our hypothesis on the UKIP. This party has permanently been committed to politicizing this issue dimensionality to establish an alternative voter majority, partially disproving the catalyst effects triggered by the crisis.

It is worth noting that both our main explanations have increased the effects on party support in the second post-crisis round (2014) and the UKIP has profiled its ideology more clearly in the political debate, emerging as an important actor in the aftermath of the recession. Although the crisis has not been a watershed in sparking off the European integration conflict, it has perhaps brought to the surface other critical factors, such as the worsening of economic conditions, which have fostered the increasing visibility of the UKIP in the electoral domain.

However, the UKIP has apparently taken all the necessary steps to prompt a process of issue evolution in the UK, clarifying its policy position, spurring widespread popular reactions and, finally, electorally benefitting from the electoral alignments on EU issues. In fact, by seizing on the negative attitudes of many British people regarding European integration, the UKIP has restructured conflict foundations, contributing to establishing a new source of inter-party contestation. Its electoral cues have been effective, providing voters with clear-cut information and, thus, influencing its electoral preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. Furthermore, the UKIP has been capable of shaping partisan loyalties in its own favour and the Party Closeness has gradually gained explanatory power in steering the voting propensity for this party. Nonetheless, we should observe that these voting preferences have not

necessarily translated into actual votes for the UKIP, suffering from the mechanic effects of the majoritarian electoral system. The education variable has also determined the party support and those belonging to the lower educational cluster of the population have increased their probability to vote for the UKIP. We have already stressed how lower educated people have felt threatened by globalization and European integration processes, which has given rise to many utilitarian and identitarian concerns amongst this social group. Therefore, this party has probably drawn support from the globalization losers, which have rewarded it for its populist and Anti-Immigration views.

We can argue that the UKIP has somehow fitted in with our *Protest-voting* hypothesis, where its voting preferences can be increasingly explained by the voter attitudes on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. However, this party has always exploited its negative stance on European integration, recurrently priming Eurosceptic cues in the political debate and, thus, weakening the explanatory power linked to the onset of the economic crisis.

- *Conservatives* – Although the Conservative Party had formally promoted the British accession to the EEC, it had always hosted strong Anti-European factions in its ranks. The party accepted the pooling sovereignty in the European institutions to reap the economic advantages from the market integration. However, its core ideology was based on the politics of nationhood, seeking to maintain key competences for the nation-state. Margaret Thatcher's leadership takeover triggered a major positional shift along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality, leading the party to oppose any further integration steps. Since 1997, when Labour electorally defeated the Conservatives, the party has expressed more outright Eurosceptic

attitudes, falling into the Anti-European political cluster. However, they have barely acknowledged EU issues as an electoral resource in the political arena, ascribing a low emphasis to these policies. Under the leadership of David Cameron, the Tories have progressively boosted their Eurosceptic cues, distancing themselves from the other Mainstream parties. In fact, its EU Issue Entrepreneurship has rapidly developed during the post-crisis period, reflecting its politicization effort on this conflict. However, this policy-adjustment strategy has not ended the Tories' endemic factionalism on the EU issues, spurring a conflict between the Soft Eurosceptic and Hard Eurosceptic wings. Cameron's attempts to halt and revert these internal struggles proved to be unsuccessful, while this controversial subject has inexorably gained ground among Tory members. In fact, the Euro Crisis has paved the way for the increasing authority transfer towards the European institutions, unleashing these intra-party conflicts. Thus, although this party further primed the European integration conflict, it presented blurred information shortcuts, being constrained by a long lasting internal disagreement over these issues. We posit that this entrepreneurial move set in motion by the Tories may have occurred in vain and the party has not been inclined to increase its voting preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of conflict.

This expectation has resulted in being empirically grounded, where the voters proximity on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension ceased to interact with Conservative preferences in 2014. In fact, this party maximized its voting preferences by capitalizing on the Anti-European alignments during 2004 and 2009. During this span of time, the party became an authentic outlet for Eurosceptic voters, who preferred the Conservatives to the more Europhile Labour Party. This result was probably related to the more clear-cut cues provided by the Tories, which was dealing with a minor level of intra-party tension on

Tab. 11.4.2 Multivariate Regression Models of the Conservatives  
Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

Conservative	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	se
Women	-0.179	(0.150)	0.604**	(0.202)	-0.234	(0.195)
Age	-0.00935	(0.0938)	-0.236	(0.127)	0.121	(0.122)
Education	0.0652	(0.109)	0.295	(0.159)	0.312*	(0.148)
Church Attendance	-0.146*	(0.0610)	-0.0538	(0.086)	-0.0751	(0.0813)
Trade Union Membership	-0.575**	(0.181)	-0.0312	(0.242)	-0.357	(0.243)
Unemployment	0.0334	(0.197)	-0.322	(0.405)	-1.061*	(0.414)
Party Closeness	4.753***	(0.221)	4.249***	(0.269)	4.877***	(0.287)
Left-Right Distance	-5.260***	(0.568)	-6.284***	(0.629)	-6.192***	(0.582)
European Integration Distance	-1.764***	(0.413)	-1.465*	(0.588)	-0.486	(0.703)
Constant	6.182***	(0.491)	6.397***	(0.779)	4.235***	(0.757)
N	1202		819		871	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.383		0.371		0.403	

$p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

the EU issues. Indeed, clarity of positioning is one of the preconditions for fostering issue evolution, which requires a well-defined conveying of electoral messages to bring about electoral changes. In lacking party unity on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension, the Conservatives were probably unable to set in motion a politicization process, presenting blurred cues to the voters. They have not succeeded in reshaping voter loyalties to this position, hampering the overall politicization process in the United Kingdom. As a consequence, the impact of the European integration voter proximity has vanished in the voting equation of this party, being mainly swayed by other variables, such as the Left-Right ideological divide and Party Closeness. Thus, since the beginning of the crisis, the Conservatives have decreasingly steered their electoral preferences on this issue

dimensionality, being incapable of changing people's attitudes to European integration. Although by fitting into our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis, the Conservatives to some extent have corroborated the pre-established politicization thesis, demonstrating that other internal catalysts had already been at work during the pre-crisis period.

- *Labour* - The Labour Party had initially identified the European institutions as liberal-biased bodies, opposing the major integration steps. However, they gradually undertook a policy shift, turning into a Europragmatic party and, subsequently, applying for British membership to the EEC. A positional switch had occurred during Labour's long-term opposition period (1979-1997), when the party had increasingly leaned towards the Pro-Integration pole of contestation. Once the party regained the reins of power, the Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, clarified the cabinet's commitment to stepping up the integration processes, standing out as a notable Europhile actor. Nonetheless, the party had also been committed to a broader process of ideological moderation, primarily involving the Left-Right related issues and, thus, partially overshadowing the general integration policies. In fact, Labour minimized this potential source of intra-party conflict, trying to transform the EU issues into valence issues, maintaining ownership. After the Euro Crisis, the party officials increased this dismissal strategy and Labour has chiefly primed domestic policies to gain some electoral advantages. In fact, the Labour level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship has diminished over time, presenting voters with unclear messages on this issue dimensionality. Consequently, in the aftermath of the crisis, we hypothesize that the party has predominantly maximized its preferences on the Left-Right conflict, while the European integration voter proximity has lost its capability to explain its electoral trends.

Tab. 11.4.3 Multivariate Regression Models of the Labour  
Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

Labour	2004		2009		2014	
	B	se	B	se	B	Se
Women	0.0771	(0.150)	-0.218	(0.195)	-0.0615	(0.193)
Age	-0.211*	(0.0940)	-0.574***	(0.121)	-0.150	(0.122)
Education	-0.0721	(0.109)	0.251	(0.152)	0.177	(0.148)
Church Attendance	-0.0337	(0.0607)	-0.164*	(0.082)	0.0662	(0.409)
Trade Union Membership	0.139	(0.182)	0.632**	(0.231)	0.441	(0.239)
Unemployment	-0.167	(0.197)	0.198	(0.386)	-0.518	(0.408)
Party Closeness	4.558***	(0.211)	4.660***	(0.277)	6.346***	(0.272)
Left-Right Distance	-1.279**	(0.479)	-2.580***	(0.569)	-4.384***	(0.634)
European Integration Distance	-3.896***	(0.374)	-3.482***	(0.470)	-1.598***	(0.421)
Constant	6.298***	(0.492)	6.876***	(0.746)	4.458***	(0.751)
N	1212		818		868	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.380		0.411		0.440	

-  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Our empirical analysis has shed light on an interesting scenario, where the Pro-\-Anti-European ideological dimension has emerged as a key driving force in Labour electoral support. Although the party has never truly emphasized this set of issues in its platform, the voters have persistently increased their propensity to vote for the Labour by reducing their ideological distance on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality. In fact, the European integration proximity outweighed the impact of the Left-Right proximity as a voting explanation in 2004 and 2009, being the most notable ideological explanation in influencing Labour preferences. This factor has turned out to be a very statistically significant variable, exerting remarkable effects on the probability to support this party. This pattern has lent

support to some overviews (Bale 2006; Opperman 2008), which have underlined the Labour capability in handling EU policies, turning these into valence issues under Tony Blair's leadership. Indeed, during the pre-crisis era, Labour reconciled general integration with national interests, attracting the electoral support of the Europragmatic voters. On the contrary, the ideological moderation undertaken by the Labour was not as effective, not producing any sizeable electoral realignment on the Left-Right ideological divide. The voters remained more distant ideologically from the party position on this traditional source of conflict, without necessarily adopting a more centrist outlook. However, Labour may have carried out an authentic catch-all strategy, attracting the median voter on the Left-Right issue dimensionality. It is worth observing that its stance on European integration turned into a powerful electoral device, strongly accounting for its voting performance.

The last empirical round (2014) shows the drop in the explanatory power of the European integration voter proximity, being notably downplayed in the Labour voting equation. Although it had significant effects and was also statistically important, the coefficient has substantially decreased, being exceeded by the Left-Right proximity variable. This pattern has probably reflected the saliency-reduction strategy set out by the Labour officials, who feared losing the support of their working class constituents, increasingly leaning towards the Eurosceptic pole. By achieving this rejection of EU issues, Labour has strongly re-profiled itself on a leftist platform, rallying the voters on domestic policies. In doing so, the party has established an ideological distance from the centrist turnabout undertaken by Tony Blair, shifting its positional stand along the Left-Right dimension of contestation. Consequently, voters have predominantly increased their preferences for Labour by reducing their ideological distance on the

Left-Right issues, while their proximity on the European integration conflict has diminished in its impact. Labour has been unwilling to attach emphasis to EU issues, chiefly attempting to depoliticize this conflict. While it has rendered the information shortcuts on European integration more unclear, it has notably clarified the Left-Right related cues to hamper the rise of an alternative dimension of contestation. Thus, we maintain that Labour has dropped out of the European integration conflict, not openly colliding with the Anti-European actors and, thus, fitting into our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis. The Euro Crisis has appeared to further reduce the room for political entrepreneurship of this party, which was not able to set underway a policy adjustment tactic on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension, constrained by the growing Euroscepticism.

- *Liberal-Democrats* – Since their foundation, the Liberal-Democrats have always championed European integration in United Kingdom, representing an important party outlet for the Pro-European voters. Consequently, this Mainstream actor has traditionally emphasized EU issues, aiming at electorally competing on this issue dimensionality. The Euro crisis has slightly affected the party's strategic endeavours on the European integration conflict, prompting a decreasing EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, Liberal-Democrats have openly faced the challenges posed by the Anti-European parties, somehow advocating European Union related benefits. Our expectation is that the European integration proximity has been a constant in determining the voting probability for this party during the period under study. Our models of voting support have notably sustained the insights outlined about the Liberal Democrats, which have gained electoral benefits by minimizing its distance from voters on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. Indeed, this variable has always been a

core driving force in swaying the party preferences. By consistently framing a Europhile reputation, this party has drawn its electoral preferences from those supporting European integration. Although the Liberal-Democrats have not necessarily adopted a catch-all strategy in behaving as a Europhile actor, given the increasing dissatisfaction towards the functioning of the EU, it has developed one of the most notable electoral supplies for Pro-European voters. Tab. 11.4.4

Multivariate Regression Models of the Liberal Democrats' Electoral Preferences (2004-2014)

Liberal Democrats	2004		2009		2014	
	B	Se	B	Se	B	Se
Women	0.514***	(0.145)	0.552**	(0.189)	0.0367	(0.166)
Age	0.0707	(0.0908)	0.0155	(0.119)	-0.140	(0.106)
Education	0.384***	(0.105)	0.808***	(0.149)	0.434***	(0.127)
Church Attendance	-0.00635	(0.0590)	-0.0181	(0.080)	-0.164*	(0.0686)
Trade Union Membership	-0.0597	(0.174)	0.274	(0.224)	0.114	(0.017)
Unemployment	-0.438*	(0.190)	-0.189	(0.379)	-0.0616	(0.353)
Party Closeness	3.497***	(0.287)	4.005***	(0.441)	6.245***	(0.570)
Left-Right Distance	-2.842***	(0.472)	-2.237***	(0.546)	-1.904***	(0.514)
European Integration Distance	-1.651***	(0.294)	-1.939***	(0.369)	-1.526***	(0.330)
Constant	4.834***	(0.485)	3.573***	(0.732)	3.292***	(0.645)
N	1200		820		859	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.210		0.211		0.216	

$p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

However, in spite of maximizing its party strength by priming EU issues, its Left-Right voter proximity has outweighed the impact of the other determinants, chiefly conditioning their voting preferences. Moreover, this party has capitalized on some socio-demographic variables, such as gender and education, as woman and those

belonging to more educated sectors of the population have been more prone to electorally support the Liberal Democrats. This finding unveils that those with higher education levels have probably leaned towards cultural and economic liberalism, perceiving immigration and globalization as minor threats. Thus, this party has attracted the globalization winners, who have benefitted from these macro-processes.

In a nutshell, by making some entrepreneurial efforts on this issue dimensionality, the Liberal Democrats may have injected a further politicization into the EU issues in the British context. Indeed, this party has tried to steer a process of issue evolution along the Pro-/-Anti-European dimension, seeking to create a new Pro-European voter majority to gain electoral payoffs. We should point out that Liberal Democrats' systemic relevance has declined over time, being electorally downgraded and, thus, weakening these strategic attempts to realign the British electors. However, the electoral trajectory of this Pro-European formation confirms our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis, where the financial crisis has not enhanced the impact of the EU issue voting in increasing the electoral preferences for the Liberal-Democrats.

#### **11.4.2 Concluding Remarks on the British Case**

The British scenario indicates an electoral landscape, where the European integration conflict has displayed a substantial impact on voting behaviour. We have already identified the British electoral supply as a concrete example of Pre-Existing Entrepreneurship on EU issues, where the party attempts to politicize this issue dimensionality actually preceded the crisis. The electoral trajectory of the parties has somehow confirmed this expectation and the European integration

voter proximity had determined the party preferences in the pre-crisis period. The United Kingdom had a different and more intense pattern of *constraining dissent* concerning European integration, based on the national culture and paving the way for the emergence of an alternative issue dimensionality. Indeed, some parties have been strongly committed to engaging EU issues, aiming to translate them into contested and salient matters in the electoral arena.

We may contend that the Anti-European UKIP has preserved their entrepreneurial efforts during the overall period, drawing substantial electoral benefits from EU issues. The UKIP represents an interesting case of *Single Issue Eurosceptic Party*, persistently trying to realign the British voters on the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. Its Eurosceptic cues have been truly radical, strengthening the party's reputation as an authentic crusader for the British withdrawal from the EU. Moreover, the UKIP may have hastened the establishment of a new foundation for intra-party competition by assuming a more substantial relevance in this party system. In fact, the party strategy has revolved around the manipulation of the policy agenda, drawing attention to EU issues, previously overridden by other parties, and thus confirming our *Protest-voting* hypothesis. This Eurosceptic supply has partially been matched by the Liberal Democrats, which have not avoided tackling the EU issues in their program. Thus, this party has perhaps contributed to politicizing this potential conflict at the domestic level by presenting clear-cut Europhile cues for voters and spurring inherent emotive and electoral reactions.

Conversely, the two major Mainstream formations, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, have seemed to be more profoundly influenced by the impact of the Euro crisis. On the one hand, although the Conservative Party had been outlet for the British Anti-European electors in 2004 and 2009, this voting pattern vanished during the

peak of the financial crisis. In fact, the Tory divisions have been exacerbated by the Recession, preventing the party from priming a clear position along the Pro-\-Anti-European ideological divide. Consequently, this party has been unable to unleash a process of issue evolution, losing the potential electoral benefits arising from the Anti-European attitudes in the UK. On the other hand, the Labour Party has not leaned towards dealing with EU related topics, playing down this source of inter-party competition. In spite of the weakening effects of the EU issue voting in shaping the Labour preferences, the European integration proximity has stood out as an important voting driver for this party in our second post-crisis round. This electoral trajectory has mirrored the embodiment of the Mainstream-voting hypothesis, where the Euro crisis has probably resulted in the decline in the explanatory power of EU issues in driving the electoral preferences for these parties.

Although the British parties have demonstrated a stable level of entrepreneurship during this period, being unaffected by the crisis outcomes, the patterns of EU issue voting have resulted in being diminished in 2014. We contend that Labour and the Conservatives are key actors in politicization, holding government positions and electorally mobilizing the majority of voters. These parties have been less capable of steering voting preferences along this issue dimension and, thus, issue evolution has been hampered by this declining electoral response. In fact, the blurring of the electoral cues has probably led the voters to predominantly support these parties on the basis of the traditional source of conflict, ranging from the Extreme Left to the Extreme Right. In short, the Great Recession has weakened the politicization of this conflict, which had been rapidly gaining ground, contradicting our expectations regarding the British scenario. Nonetheless, the voters' attitudes on the Pro-\-Anti-European scale of

values have remained an important source in explaining the party's electoral support. The EU issue voting had already established its roots, where the electoral alignments on this issue dimensionality exerted a strong explanatory power, revealing a deep-seated political controversy among the British public. This division has had very significant effects in the electoral domain, chiefly affecting the UKIP and Liberal Democrat voting preferences, but its impact decreased somewhat in 2014. Therefore, the British scenario has not lent support to an increasing politicization of the European integration conflict, *while, after the outbreak of the crisis, previously contested EU issues have been gradually downplayed as sources of inter-party conflict and, conversely, traditional issues have been re-profiled in the centre stage of electoral contestation.*

## 12 A Comparative Overview on EU Issue Voting

This chapter summarizes the results concerning our voting hypotheses:

- *The Protest-voting hypothesis (H3): the impact of party-voter proximity on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, as a determinant of electoral preferences, is expected to increase among the Protest parties.*
- *The Mainstream-voting hypothesis (H4): the impact of party-voter proximity on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, as a predictor of voting choice, is expected to decrease among Mainstream parties*

This step enables us to formulate some propositions on the party support changes in the four countries under analysis – Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom. This comparative part allows us to assess the different voting patterns at the disaggregate level, which may result in the confirmation of the overall trends regarding politicization of the European integration conflict. We will seek to observe the potential congruence between the party supply and electoral preferences, which may have resulted in a deep-seated EU issue evolution.

### 12.1 Electoral Changes in Four European Democracies

Although we have identified a pattern of increasing EU Issue Entrepreneurship in our four countries, a great deal of uncertainty remains regarding the effective politicization of the European integration conflict. Indeed, the financial crisis has actually affected the electoral supply, increasingly revolving around a divide line

between Pro-European and Anti-European actors. This outright division has been considered to be conducive to establishing the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation, which could have reshaped the electoral preferences, reshuffling the pre-existing voter majorities. The so-called Party *losers*, hereby dubbed as Protest Anti-European parties, have tried to manipulate patterns of voting contestation by injecting Euroscepticism into the public debate. Meanwhile, many Mainstream parties have not necessarily escaped from the politicization of this latent conflict, engaging in ideological confrontations with their Anti-European counterparts. In fact, many of these parties, made up of the governing political formations, have been committed to accentuating Europhile messages to strengthen the camp of Pro-European voters.

Our last empirical step entails the analysis of the electoral preferences – and their alleged fluctuations – to assess the rise of a Pro-\-Anti-European ideological divide as a source of inter-party conflict. Indeed, our politicization notion relies on the effective transformation of a previously overridden issue into an object of electoral contestation, activated by entrepreneurial activities of the political parties. Many parties, both Protest Anti-European and Mainstream Pro-European actors, have effectively clarified their positions along this issue dimension, conveying outright messages to the voters. Nevertheless, in order to shed light on the electoral realignments, analyzing the eventual changes in the voting preferences takes on a particular importance in verifying the politicization of the European integration conflict.

In the French context, EU issue voting has undergone substantial modifications, becoming a determinant of the voting support for many parties. Some Mainstream parties, such as the PS and Verts\EELV,

have increased their voting preferences along this issue dimensionality, disproving our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis. Conversely, since the onset of the Great Recession, the French Protest parties have not improved their electoral support by reducing their ideological distance from voters along the Pro-\-Anti-European conflict dimension. While the case of the PCF\Left Front has plainly rejected our background prediction, the FN's trajectory requires some further qualifications. In fact, although this Radical Right party has mainly relied on the Left-Right ideological dimension to widen its electoral support, the explanatory power of its European integration proximity has shown some marked effects. By polarizing and emphasizing its Eurosceptic cues, the FN has effectively benefitted from this source of voting, perhaps increasing its politicization of the European integration conflict. The strategy employed by the FN may have triggered a counter-mobilization among the Pro-European voters, who have increased their propensity to vote for the Europhile parties. However, the latter group of parties has not necessarily been committed to achieving tactical efforts on the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension. In spite of this lack in cueing, they have capitalized on their Pro-European values, being the natural outlet for those concerned with the spread of Euroscepticism in France. Nonetheless, the FN electoral story has been mainly driven by realignments occurring along the Left-Right conflict, which has probably explained its electoral success in the crisis aftermath, refuting our *Protest-voting* scenario. In a nutshell, though the Euro Crisis has appeared to change voting patterns by setting a more favorable environment for the European integration conflict, the Left-Right ideological divide still dominates the electoral contestation in France. Indeed, the reshuffling of the electoral preferences has been strongly swayed by the

traditional foundation of conflict, which perhaps has mirrored some alterations in the median voter location over time.

The German context outlines a more clear-cut emergence of an alternative source of issue voting, which has been more divided compared to our expectations. A Single Issue Eurosceptic party, the AFD, has come into being, exploiting the windows of opportunity opened up by the Euro Crisis. This party has developed a path-breaking narrative by framing Eurosceptic arguments, chiefly based on the most radical interpretations of the Ordo-liberal culture, which remained pervasive in Germany. Nonetheless, AFD political initiatives have been matched by the spread of the Pro-European party supply, involving many major Mainstream actors (CDU, SPD and Alliance 90\Greens). Consequently, EU issue voting has been an electoral explanation for the majority of the important parties in Germany, excluding the PDS\Linke and the FDP. The governing center-of-right parties, the CDU and CSU, have boosted their support along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension, disconfirming our *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis. On the contrary, the center-of-left parties, such as the SPD and Alliance 90\Greens, have fitted in with our *H4*, which foresees the decreasing explanatory power of the EU issues as a voting determinant. In spite of the weakening of the EU issue voting for the SPD and Alliance 90\Greens, their ideological distance from voters, along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension, has still exerted a notable effect in steering their electoral support during the post-crisis period. The Protest party trajectories have reflected two different voting patterns: the PDS\Linke has not reaped electoral benefits by providing voters with Eurosceptic messages, mirroring the its difficulties in setting into motion an alternative source of inter-party conflict; meanwhile, the AFD has resulted in being the success

story behind the European integration conflict, being the main agent and the core beneficiary of the politicization processes. We have not been able to observe its electoral fluctuations, given that this party has been a new-comer in the German party landscape. However, we may notice that the impact of European integration proximity on its support has clearly outweighed the effects of the Left-Right related issues. Thus, although we cannot observe the transformations produced by the Euro Crisis on the party electoral performances, we may consider this party as leaning towards our *Protest-voting* Hypothesis. Moreover, the German case has provided us with a system of overlapping divisions ensuing the European integration conflict. On the one hand, the rise of the AfD marked a discontinuity from past, supplying Euroscepticism to the German voters and ushering in a new era for the format of competition. On the other hand, another division has taken place, cross-cutting the Pro-European camp, pitching the supporters of bailout packages plus the austerity measures (CDU, CSU and FDP) against those sustaining a more intense inter-state solidarity (SPD and Alliance 90\Greens). This further split among the Pro-European actors has fundamentally rewarded the Pro-Austerity actors, which have more effectively increased their preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimensionality. Though the latter conflict may blur the divide-lines among parties on the general integration policies, we argue that this controversy has unleashed a major politicization of the European integration conflict. In fact, the German context has lent the most important level of support to our politicization Hypothesis, mirroring the congruence between party supply and voting preferences in Germany, where previous non-controversial issues have been successfully transformed by parties into a subject of electoral contestation. The party Eurosceptic\Europhile cues have gone through a well-defined learning

process from voters, who have emotionally responded to the reshaped information shortcuts. Thus, the German scenario currently represents the most promising landscape to further strengthen the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension and the incoming elections will be testing ground to assess the development of this conflict politicization.

The Italian case clearly contrasts with our set of hypotheses, mostly contradicting *H3* and *H4*, reverting many of our background observations. As a matter of fact, the electoral instability has probably interacted with a fully-fledged rise of an alternative dimension of conflict, ranging from Anti-European to Pro-European. The Italian party system has presented the voters with many difficulties to develop clear-cut images regarding the party position on general integration issues, being characterized by growing levels of total electoral volatility (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2013) and the fluctuations on electoral supply. Thus, the *Protest-voting* Hypothesis has been completely unfounded, mirroring the uncertainty of the Protest parties' cueing activities, which have resulted in opaque information shortcuts. This pattern is appropriate to describe the LN and FDI\AN Eurosceptic supply, which have undergone too many changes, being detrimental to triggering an issue evolution. Even the M5S, the successful new-comer in the Italian context, has not been capable of initiating any process of electoral realignments along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension, while, instead, it has probably steered the changing preferences on the traditional sources of conflict. Our remarks on the Italian Mainstream parties have been more surprising. On the one hand, while the political formation led by Silvio Berlusconi, FI\PDL, has persistently downplayed and recurrently adjusted its stances on the European integration conflict, on the other hand, other Mainstream outlets, such as the PD and UDC, have

consistently come up with a Pro-European discourse, emphasizing the related issues. The FI\PD\ has set itself apart from its Europhile voters, blundering in its strategic choices. The PD and UDC have increased their voting preferences along this issue dimensionality, denying our *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis. In spite of the spreading Eurosceptic supply, the Protest Anti-European parties have not changed the existing dimensionality of the electoral contestation in Italy. On the contrary, Pro-European voters have been prone to sustain the Europhile formations, which have been more coherent in outlining their platform. The Italian context has showed us a marked incongruence between party supply and voting preferences, where the changing and increasing levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship have not produced notable realignments along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. This pattern underlines the crucial importance of the position clarity achieved by parties to initiate politicization. In fact, the latter process has been hindered by the inconsistencies established by the political formations, which were unable to bring about emotive reactions among the voters. Indeed, the Italian electorate encountered too many obstacles in understanding the information shortcuts supplied by the parties, without electorally rewarding the group of Protest Anti-European actors. Thus, the Italian case notably rejects a politicization of the European conflict, maintaining the profile of a sleeping and confused giant, which has not yet been able to find its way out from its cave. Indeed, a conversion of the EU issues into a matter of political contestation has not taken place in the electoral arena, which has constantly remained under the essential sway of the Left-Right dimension.

The British case has negated our expectations on the alleged changes sparked off by the Euro Crisis. In fact, the effects of the EU issue

voting have lost the explanatory power regarding electoral preferences during the post-crisis period, while the Left-Right dimension has gained some ground in influencing voting behavior. This pattern has been epitomized by the electoral trajectory experienced by the two major party actors, the Conservatives and the Labour Party. These political formations have empirically borne out our scenario on Mainstream parties, where their ability to exploit the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension has diminished in the aftermath of the Great Recession. While the Labour case has reflected a deliberate strategy, aiming at depoliticizing an additional issue dimension, the Conservatives have been imprisoned by their internal conflict, providing the voters with opaque messages on European integration. As a result, the overall conflict politicization has been downplayed at the national level, being dampened rather than exacerbated by the Euro Crisis. Nonetheless, the Single Issue Eurosceptic UKIP has strengthened its grip over the British electorate in the post-crisis era, increasingly becoming an important political subject. This party has emerged to be the authentic outlet for the Anti-European voters, probably realigning them along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension by insistently clarifying its Euro-reject political stance. In fact, the UKIP has faced no major dilemmas on the European integration conflict, which has set in motion a destructive effect among the Conservatives officials, catalyzing an endemic factionalism. The Liberal-Democrats have followed an alternative pattern by benefiting from their Europhile cues, remaining one of the core electoral recipients of the Pro-European electors. However, even this party has slightly decreased its electoral preferences along this issue dimensionality after the crisis, corroborating our *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis, and it has lost much of its blackmail potential at the systemic level. Thus, though there had been many incentives to politicize this European

integration conflict and the EU issue voting had been more marked compared to other national cases, the Euro Crisis has not fostered the consolidation of another conflict dimensionality in the United Kingdom. On the contrary, the Left-Right dimension has been revived by the voter preferences, mirroring its remarkable endurance. On the one hand, these electoral outcomes have been synchronized with the party's dwindling levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, as for Labor and, partially, the Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, this result has been linked to the adverse consequences triggered by the Great Recession, initiating a critical trend in the public support for the authority transfer processes, which unleashed many tensions within the governing Conservative party. Therefore, the overall politicization of a latent conflict has appeared to deteriorated, bolstering the traditional issues as the chief source of inter-party competition.

It is worth noting that the fluctuations in EU issue voting have not always been consistent with party entrepreneurial attempts on this issue dimension in the four countries under study. Moreover, many findings have openly contradicted the predictions related to *H3* and *H4*, contesting our above-drawn voting patterns. This comparative analysis has demonstrated different trends in the politicization hypothesis, including two extreme cases - the German and Italian. Indeed, the German case has displayed a dynamic of rising EU Issue voting, probably brought about by the transformative effects of the Euro Crisis. On the contrary, the Italian case has only mirrored some scattered effects regarding EU issue voting, embodying the null impact of the Great Recession. The French context represents a middle-of-the-road scenario, where some Mainstream parties have increasingly maximised their Europhile positions at the electoral level. Meanwhile, the chief Anti-European actor in France, the FN, has

maintained its Anti-European cues as electoral assets, but without boosting its voting support along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension. In the United Kingdom, this conflict politicization has been undermined by the Euro Crisis, which has reduced the impact of EU issue voting in the electoral arena. Nonetheless, the latter case has reflected the higher polarization and contentiousness of the European integration conflict, maintaining an elevated explanatory power. In order to present some generalizations on *H3* and *H4*, we should combine the party types with their voting trajectories, drawing some remarks on our second set of hypotheses.

## **12.2 Party Types and EU Issue Voting: General Remarks on the Electoral Preferences at the National Level**

In order to present some generalizations on *H3* and *H4*, we should combine the party types with their voting trajectories, drawing some remarks on our second set of hypotheses. Figure 12.1 summarizes the voting patterns achieved by our cluster of parties during the period 2004-2014, providing us with output on the fluctuations regarding the impact exerted by EU issues on voting preferences. First and foremost, our regression models have clearly revealed the efficacy of party closeness as a predictor for electoral support. Indeed, this proxy of party identification has predominantly outweighed the other two determinants of electoral preferences, being statistically very significant. Furthermore, party closeness not only shows its effects on the established party alternatives, which are supposed to receive the highest shares of partisanship, but it also involves the new-comer parties, such as the M5S and AFD, which have often been expected to be without any strong identification features. Thus, this work accepts the validity of party closeness as one of the chief explanations for voting propensity in Western Europe.

Figure 12.1 Party Types and EU Issue Voting

<p>Protest Voting Increase: <i>AFD (Germany); UKIP (United Kingdom)</i></p>	<p>Mainstream Voting Increase: <i>PS; Verts\EELV (France); CDU; CSU (Germany); PD; UDC (Italy).</i></p>
<p>Protest Voting Decrease: <i>FN; PCF\Left Front (France); PDS\Linke (Germany); LN; M5S FDI-AN; PRC-SEL (Italy);</i></p>	<p>Mainstream Voting Decrease: <i>UMP\Rep.; UDF\MoDem (France); SPD; Alliance 90\the Greens; FDP (Germany); FI\PDL; NCD (Italy); Conservative; Labour; Liberal Democrats (United Kingdom)</i></p>

*-Protest parties* - It is worth noting that the *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis* has proved to be empirically grounded within the four party systems under investigation. Thus, the expectations on the effectiveness of the *Protest-voting Hypothesis* has seemed to be theoretically justified. The prediction is that, since the onset of the financial crisis, the Protest parties' proximity to voters on the European dimension has increased its explanatory power in accounting for their voting support, basically equating the driving force linked to the Left-Right ideological divide. By locating the Protest parties within one of our four boxes, we can assess whether or not this claim has been well-founded.

We may observe that the majority of the Protest Anti-European parties occupy the lower-left quadrant, reflecting a scenario of *Protest Voting Decrease*. Since the outbreak of the Great Recession, these parties have mainly reduced their ability to maximize their voting preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of contestation. This result notably disproves our *Protest-voting Hypothesis (H3)*, negating the expectations related to transformations triggered by the Euro Crisis. Although the Protest parties have effectively tried to overturn the existing dimensionality of electoral competition, they have mainly benefitted from realignments occurring along the Left-Right conflict. Some Anti-European actors have electorally increased their voting support *on the scale ranging from* Anti-European to Pro-European. The only two parties that completely match the expectations of the *Protest-voting Hypothesis* are the UKIP and AFD, which are located in the upper-left quadrant, epitomizing a scenario of Protest Voting Increase. Their proximity to voters on the European dimension has actually outweighed their voter proximity along the Left-Right scale and the Euro Crisis appears to have triggered these electoral trends (see sections: 11.2.1; 11.4.1). These two parties are quite exceptional because they fall into one particular party ideal-type, that is, the *Single Issue Eurosceptic Party* (Taggart 1998,). This kind of party mainly aims at strengthening its reputation on the *Eurosceptic* stance, but resulted in being electorally marginal in the previous generation. Nowadays, this variant of the Eurosceptic party, epitomized by the UKIP and AFD, may be best equipped to reverse the traditional patterns of partisan competition and, definitely, it has electorally exploited its ideological proximity to the voters on the new dimension. These parties have probably injected with a more intense level of conflict politicization, transforming the EU issues into a matter of electoral competition at the domestic level. In fact, the two countries,

Germany and the United Kingdom, have mirrored a higher impact of EU issue voting, which has involved the majority of the important parties. Similar patterns cannot be applied to the other Eurosceptic subjects. The National Front, which is currently waving the flag of Euro-scepticism in France, has electorally maximized its positioning on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, notably swaying its voting strength. Nonetheless, since the beginning of the crisis, its performance on the Left-Right dimension has been more important than that on the Pro-/Anti-European one, which has diminished its effects on party support (see section: 11.1.1). The outputs of the Italian party system have been even more detrimental to corroborating our *Protest-voting Hypothesis*. Indeed, Italy has had three strong Protest Anti-European subjects within its party system (M5S, LN and FDI) and not one of them has been able to maximize its electoral preferences by reducing its distance from voters along the European dimension in the post-crisis period (see section: 11.3.1). The pattern seems to magnify the resiliency of the Left-Right dimension in Italy, while emphasizing that Euroscepticism does not seem to be electorally profitable. This also involves the M5S that has attempted to openly challenge the Left-Right continuum, probably obtaining some payoffs from the partisan realignments towards the centre of the Left-Right scale in the country. Some further considerations have regarded the Radical Left parties, which have demonstrated a marked weakness in electorally capitalizing on their Eurosceptic cues. Indeed, this party cluster, made up of the PCF/Left Front, PDS/Linke and PRC/SEL (see sections: 11.1.1; 11.2.1; 11.3.1), has persistently failed in driving its voting preferences along a different issue dimensionality. These parties have not succeeded in moulding their Anti-Austerity arguments within an effective Eurosceptic narrative, not reaping any substantial electoral payoffs on EU issues.

Our findings do not allow for supporting the *Protest-voting Hypothesis*, and the Left-Right dimension has been persistent in shaping electoral preferences during the post-crisis period. A qualification has occurred for those *Single Issue Eurosceptic Parties*, which have increased their likelihood of gaining votes by strengthening their Eurosceptic shortcuts. On the contrary, the Protest Anti-European parties, including the FN, LN, M5S, FDI, PCF\Left Front, PDS\Linke and PRC\SEL, were found not to have widened their voting propensity along the Pro-\-Anti-European conflict dimension, without effectively changing the pre-established patterns of inter-party competition.

The Protest party type has electorally exploited many issues consistent with the Left-Right scale, which has been probably subjected to some transformations involving the distribution of voters on traditional issues. According to Hobolt and Tilley (2016), many voters have abandoned the governing parties in the aftermath of the Euro Crisis, rewarding the parties that have set themselves apart from the Mainstream consensus. These electoral trends, which saw an electoral decline in established party alternatives, are basically uncontested. We have advanced different hypotheses, revolving around the entrepreneurial efforts of the Protest parties in politicizing an alternative conflict, which may have produced the widespread emergence of EU issue voting. Though these parties have effectively clarified their stances on the European integration policies, the latter source of conflict has not represented a fundamental driver for electoral changes in our countries. An alternative majority of Anti-European voters has not been out-rightly created by the Protest parties, affecting electoral preferences. Nonetheless, these Anti-European actors have flourished and succeeded, jeopardizing the electoral dominance of the Mainstream parties, which had held the

reins of power for decades. However, in determining this electoral trajectory, the EU issues have only played a secondary role in reshaping the voting behaviour. We have already considered the breadth of these party program commitments, which have involved Anti-Immigration stances and more state interventionist positions in the economic domain. These reshaped stands have often been combined with a populist outlook, which has probably constituted an electoral resource. The Protest parties have mainly drawn electoral support from issues related to the Left-Right dimension, while their Eurosceptic messages to the voters have remained a parcel in a wider strategy. Most of our parties have never managed to gain electoral benefits along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. Only the AFD and UKIP have strongly relied on their Anti-European cues, probably setting in motion an issue evolution in their respective party systems and, thus, catalysing a more accentuated politicization of the European integration conflict. However, apart from these exceptions, our analysis corroborates a different explanation behind the electoral changes, where some realignments occurring along the Left-Right issue dimension have determined the success of the Protest parties. This observation is conducive to arguing for some potential voter redistribution on the established sources of inter-party contestation, reverting the explanatory effects from the Euro Crisis. In fact, this catalyst has not fostered the transformation of EU issues into new subjects of electoral competition, but it has, instead, consolidated the Left-Right dimension of conflict, which has probably absorbed new contents and issues. Although these parties have cued the voters on the insecurities related to European integration processes (De Vries and Edwards 2009), their winning formula has probably hinged upon a combination of Anti-Immigration and Anti-Austerity positions, exploiting the windows of opportunity opened up by the Great

Recession. The Radical Right parties have been entrenched in their nationalistic or nativistic identity, advocating for the control of national borders, the cultural-identitarian homogeneity of the nation and the reversal of the authority transfer processes. They have also developed a different line on economic policies, sustaining a more state-centred approach, seeking to socially protect the native population from the alleged costs of immigration. We argue that by profiling themselves as crusaders of the Nation-State, and its prerogatives and identity, the Radical Right may have been capable of building a cross-class coalition of voters, partially realigning them along the pre-existing dimension of conflict. This finding sustains the globalization cleavage hypothesis (Kriesi et al. 2006; Kriesi et al. 2008; Kriesi et al. 2012), which identifies the macro-processes related to globalization as the most conducive to determining new partisan alignments, considering the European integration as an ancillary parcel of new electoral trends (Kriesi 2007; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016). One of the main globalization phenomena has probably been related to a Pro-/Anti-immigration policy dimension, setting the ground for new forms of contestation. Furthermore, the Radical Right has developed an economic program suited to capturing the electoral support of the globalization losers, which has demonstrated a major compatibility with the Left-Right ideological divide. On the contrary, the EU issues, somehow more orthogonal and alternative compared to the established Left-Right issues (Hix and Gabel 1997), have been secondary engines in driving the electoral changes, hardly affecting the patterns of inter-party competition. Meanwhile, the Radical Left parties have been clearly entrenched within traditional sources of conflict, probably benefitting from their Anti-Austerity outlook. In fact, by rejecting the fiscal policies carried out during the Euro Crisis, basically made up of spending cuts, these parties have established an

ownership of the Anti-Austerity measures (Calossi 2016). Nonetheless, their information shortcuts on the economic insecurities related to European integration have proved to be ineffective, without realigning voters on this issue dimension. They have probably faced suboptimal conditions for outlining a Eurosceptic platform, where their constituents have probably remained Pro-European, being ideologically distant from the party stances.

*-Mainstream parties* - In the previous chapters of this work, the empirical findings have not allowed for making any generalizations on Mainstream party strategies. These results should partially redefine our expectations regarding the *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis. Nevertheless, we uphold our previous hypothesis, aiming to test if *the impact of party-voter proximity on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, as a predictor of voting preferences, has actually decreased its explanatory power for Mainstream parties*. Our outcomes lend a mixed empirical bearing to the *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis. All the national Mainstream parties have strongly maximized their positions on the Left-Right dimension, which has stood out as one of the core explanations in driving its voting support. The overwhelming majority of these coefficients have been very high and statistically significant. The consistency of these outputs should not overshadow another significant finding established by this empirical analysis: *after the Euro Crisis, many Mainstream parties have increased their electoral capacity to benefit from voter proximity along the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, reverting our expectations*. This path has not only affected these parties that have increased their strategic achievement to politicize the European integration conflict, but it has involved some weak Europhile entrepreneurs. In France, the financial crisis has resulted in the widening of the coefficients of

European integration proximity, which have been higher and more significant for the PS and EELV (see section: 11.1.1). Even in the German context, some Pro-European actors have gained more electoral profit from capitalizing on this latent dimension. In fact, since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, the CDU and CSU have significantly augmented their electoral support by supplying the voters with a Pro-European electoral discourse. This outcome has probably been due to the effectiveness of their cueing activities, revolving around the implementation of Ordo-Liberal policies at the European level. Meanwhile, their centre-of-left-counterparts, the SPD and the Greens, have failed in setting up a different narrative, based upon a Social Europe and inter-state solidarity. As we already mentioned, this cross-cutting division among German the Pro-European actors has probably led to an overlapping system of conflicts regarding general integration policies (see section: 11.1.1). Within the Italian party system, the PD stands out as the party that has best maximised this dimension of party competition, widely enhancing its explanatory power in swaying the party preferences in 2014. Even the UDC, a small Europhile centrist party, has electorally exploited the European dimension (see section: 11.3.1). These parties, which have been located in the upper-right quadrant (Mainstream Voting Increase), had held government positions at the time of our empirical test. We argue that by maintaining key roles in the inter-governmental bodies, these parties have been at the centre stage of EU policy making, allowing them to clarify their Europhile stand. This trend has been evident in marking the electoral trajectory of Merkel's party, the CDU, which has taken many policy initiatives to handle the Euro Crisis. Furthermore, the pattern of the Italian PD, summed up in a more conflictual approach of the former PM, Matteo Renzi, towards the European Commission, seemed to characterize, more plainly, the

party policies on this realm, providing the voters with outright shortcuts. By observing a notable trend of Mainstream Voting Increase, which disputed our *H4*, we may hypothesize some scattered signs of European integration conflict politicization. Indeed, a cluster of Pro-European voters has been partially mobilized by the governing Mainstream actors, reacting to the spread of Eurosceptic messages in the national party systems.

Nonetheless, more than 60% of the Mainstream parties under analysis have fitted in with our *H4*, falling in the lower-right quadrant (Mainstream Voting Decrease). By decreasing their electoral preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension, these parties have confirmed our expectations associated with the Euro Crisis. In fact, many relevant Mainstream actors have showed their weakness and incapacity to steer their preferences on the European integration policies. On the contrary, the Left-Right ideological divide has maintained its impact, being the chief explanation in accounting for their party support. However, many specifications come into play by mentioning these electoral trajectories, which have reflected a different impact of EU issues on Mainstream parties. In fact, the SPD, Alternative 90\Greens, Labour, Liberal Democrats and MoDem have reaped substantial electoral payoffs by minimizing their ideological distance from voters on this issue dimension (see sections: 11.1.1; 11.2.1; 11.3.1; 11.4.1). However, the latter determinant has reduced its impact on the party preferences during the post-crisis era, corroborating our *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis. Although some electoral changes have been sparked off by the Great Recession, the high and significant coefficients recorded by these parties demonstrated to us the resilient impact of European integration on their electoral preferences. On the contrary, the Conservative party epitomizes a more clear-cut case of a Mainstream party, which has not

been capable to profit from its Euroscepticism, deeply divided and unsettled by the EU issues. Meanwhile, the Mainstream Forward Italy (FI) is the only party in this sample that has received a positive sign, mirroring its mistaken party strategy in its positioning on the European dimension. Moreover, some centre-of-right parties, such as the UMP\Rep., FDP and NCD, have failed in gaining electoral issues from their Europhile stances, revealing their difficulties in handling this latent conflict.

A dividing line among the Mainstream parties has apparently emerged, magnifying the importance of government\opposition status as a determinant in EU issue voting. Indeed, the opposition Mainstream parties have predominantly relied on the Left-Right issues to maximize their voting preferences. These political subjects have probably encountered more problems in clarifying their strategies on the European integration conflict, being marginalized from the pivotal decisions involved in the related set of policies. The governmental status appears to be an asset for obtaining electoral benefits along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension of conflict. Conversely, the opposition parties have been more likely to convey to voters an image of being powerless in effectively influencing integration policies, without exploiting EU issues.

The empirical data that we have tested shows little evidence of new trends, but instead provides marked proof of a continuity. In fact, both our party types have clearly exploited the resilience of the traditional Left-Right dimension. We have observed how the Protest parties have been more likely to stress European integration, by consolidating their Eurosceptic reputation. Nevertheless, they have not reversed the patterns of partisan competition, continuing to vie within the issues subsumed by the Left-Right continuum. On the contrary, the

Mainstream parties have displayed a mixed strategy on European integration and, in fact, a large set of Mainstream parties has downplayed European integration, by blurring their position over Europe. Instead, another group has actively mobilized positive attitudes towards the EU, aiming at increasing their electoral payoffs. Even if the Left-Right dimension is a more important voting determinant, many Europhile parties have electorally capitalized on their positioning on the European dimension. This is a very unforeseen result that may reveal the increasing strength of Europhile attitudes in explaining Mainstream electoral preferences. On the contrary, the Protest parties, in spite of the Eurosceptic Entrepreneurship, have mainly benefitted from other issues, such as economic or immigration, inherent to the Left-Right continuum. Therefore, the predominant trend is one of continuity rather than one of change in political contestation. Indeed, a new dimension of partisan competition, based upon European integration, does not appear to have been fully established and it certainly does not outweigh the strength of the Left-Right dimension.

### **12.3. Concluding Propositions on the Party Preferences**

Some general propositions may be formulated on our second set of hypotheses, summarizing our findings, and assessing the impact of the Euro Crisis on voting preferences:

*Protest-voting* Hypothesis: The Great Recession has not improved the ability of the Protest Parties to increase their preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension. Although they have made more intense entrepreneurial attempts to politicize this potential conflict, the EU issue voting has displayed only some scant effects in realigning

the national electorates. This pattern sheds light on a marked incongruence between the party strategies and their electoral payoffs. Indeed, the Protest parties have not established an alternative voter majority on a new dimension, ranging from Pro-European to Anti-European, without catalysing a deep-seated process of issue evolution. The majority of Protest parties has negated the prediction arising from H3, sustaining the stable explanatory power of the Left-Right issues. It is worth noticing that the Euro Crisis has produced many electoral changes, which have probably involved the traditional conflict dimension, rather than hastening the creation of a Pro-/-Anti-European dimension. Their electoral success has probably been driven on major realignments on the Left-Right dimension, which has taken over new contents and new issues. Two outliers have departed from the current schema, the ADF and UKIP, which have adopted the outlook of Single Issue Eurosceptic parties. This party variant seems to have resulted in a more effective politicization, partially transforming the EU issues into an object of electoral contestation. As a matter of fact, the German and the British party systems have mirrored a deeper contentiousness and polarization regarding EU issues, which has not necessarily been linked to the Euro Crisis. However, the Protest parties, endowed with larger manifesto commitments, have mostly maximized their electoral support on the Left-Right issues. This overall scenario leads us to notably reject our Protest-voting hypothesis. *Thus, since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, in Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, if a party falls into the Anti-European Protest Party type, all things being equal, it is less likely to increase its voting preferences along the Pro-/-Anti-European issue dimension. The latter finding somehow contrasts with some observations outlined on the Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis, showing us the substantial complexity inherent to the issue evolution*

*process, which unquestionably requires a deeper interplay between elite action and public response.*

*Mainstream-voting Hypothesis:* The Great Recession has had a similar impact on the Mainstream Pro-European parties, but unveiled some unexpected findings. In fact, some important Mainstream parties have notably augmented their electoral support by reducing their ideological distance from the voters on EU issues. This group of parties has exclusively included governing actors, which, voluntarily or being constrained, have probably received a major media coverage on their European integration policies, electorally benefitting from this political exposure. We may infer that holding the reins of power is a factor in pursuing an effective Pro-European strategy, affecting party electoral performance. On the contrary, the opposition parties have met persistent hurdles in conveying outright messages on European integration, probably being marginalized from this debate. This interesting observation may magnify the inter-governmental bias currently embodied in the EU, where national governments play a fundamental role in swaying the integration processes, inevitably championing Pro-Europeanism. Thus, the government positions have become an electoral resource for maximizing voting preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European dimension, rewarding the Europhile formations. Although the majority of Mainstream parties has followed a pattern of decreasing EU issue voting over time, we are able to draw some clearer comments on the Mainstream-voting hypothesis: *since the onset of the Euro Recession, in Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, if a party falls into a governing Pro-European Mainstream Party type, all things being equal, it is more likely to increase its voting preferences along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. Conversely, if a Mainstream occupies the opposition benches, all things being equal, it is more likely to decrease its*

*electoral support on a dimension varying from Pro-European to Anti-European.* Those voters leaning towards a Pro-European side of ideological contestation have clearly set out some electoral advantages for governing parties. This European integration proximity variable has probably represented a proxy of the government approval variable, excluded from our regression models. This electoral dynamic has probably reflected the growing importance related to European integration policies in assessing the conduct of governments in Western Europe. However, we cannot deduce from these trends an altering type of inter-party contestation, which has reversed the existing conflict dimensionalities.

### **13 Conclusions**

Although the so-called pattern of public *permissive consensus* on the general integration policies has gradually turned into a *constraining dissent* (Hooghe and Marks 2009), a conflict dimension, ranging from Pro-European to Anti-European, has had insignificant effects on the format and mechanics of the party systems. The Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension has played a secondary role in determining the voting preferences in our group of countries, remaining a *sleeping giant* (Franklin and Van der Eijk 2004). Indeed, although it has perhaps contained a potential for transforming the voting preferences, it has not ushered in an era of path-breaking electoral realignments across different party systems. This electoral outcome has not been due to the lack in politicizing efforts undertaken by the party actors. On the contrary, many of these have been committed to prioritizing the EU related issues, but without raising widespread concerns and emotions among the national electorates.

We have already examined the explanatory weaknesses related to the authority transfers hypothesis, which posit the transformative effects resulting from the major European treaties, and many contributions have basically disqualified the influence of these institutional processes (De Wilde and Zurn 2012; Grande and Hutter 2014; 2016a; 2016b). Hence, we have shifted our central focus to the political renewals potentially established by Euro Crisis, foreseeing the hastening of a Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension. By doing so, our hypotheses have revolved around short-term electoral fluctuations initiated by the Euro Crisis, which could stabilize over time. As a matter of fact, we forecasted that the set of rules, established by the

inter-governmental bodies in the aftermath of the Great Recession, have magnified the role played by the European institutions, further reducing the room for manoeuvre of national governments. Consequently, the EU has been increasingly held responsible for the management of the economic crisis by the national electorates (Hobolt and Tilley 2014), exacerbating negative public attitudes towards the further authority transfers at the EU level. Another expectation related to transformations catalysed by the Euro Crisis has been the weakening of the Left-Right issue dimension as a source of inter-party contestation. Indeed, by depriving the national governments of many of their policy devices, the economic divisions inherent to the Left-Right issues may have vanished from the political agendas, producing a substantial shift towards another issue dimensionality. Furthermore, the European institutions have mainly tackled the crisis by implementing austerity policies, perhaps resulting in widespread Eurosceptic sentiments, which may have been channelled by Protest Anti-European parties. Thus, we have hypothesized a combination of inter-linked dynamics - the fading saliency of the Left-Right issue dimension and the rising saliency of the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension as a source of electoral contestation. The research question we outlined to synthesize our set of expectations has been the following: *Since the outbreak of the Euro crisis, how much has the European integration conflict reshaped the electoral supply and party preferences in the national party systems?*

By dividing our concluding chapter into three main parts, we will provide unified remarks on this general research question, proving or disproving our hypotheses.

### **13.1 Electoral Supply**

The electoral supply, made up of program and policy commitments adopted by our cluster of parties, has appeared to go through a process of renovation in the aftermath of the Euro Crisis. By individuating two core party types (Mainstream Pro-European and Protest Anti-European), which currently operate and compete in the electoral realm, we have tried to build two-fold generalizations. On the one hand, if a party belongs to the Protest party type, it is expected to increase its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, aiming at politicizing this latent conflict (*H1*). On the other hand, if a party falls into the Mainstream party type, it should decrease its EU Issue Entrepreneurship, downplaying this issue dimensionality (*H2*).

This work has used the notion of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, as developed by previous contributions (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and De Vries 2015), which has proved to be a valuable measuring tool. In fact, this index of Entrepreneurship -  $(P_{eu} - MP_{eu}) * SP_{eu}$  – combines the party issue position with the saliency attached to that given issue, including the average positioning recorded within a party system as an intervening factor. By relying on this yardstick, we have mapped the parties' strategies on the European integration conflict, observing the alleged transformations of the electoral supply triggered by the Euro Crisis.

We ascertained two sets of patterns concerning EU Issue Entrepreneurship by forming a cluster of 12 countries to shed light on the general trends in Western Europe. First and foremost, if a party belongs to the Protest party type, it has been more likely to increase its EU Issue Entrepreneurship by polarizing their Eurosceptic stances and by prioritizing the inherent set of issues. Secondly, if a party belongs to the Mainstream party type, it has been more probable to decrease its degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship by adopting a closer position to that of the mean party system and ascribing a lower emphasis to EU

issues. Although these strategic trajectories have corroborated our *Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis* and *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*, these observed transformations have not reflected an authentic reversal in electoral supply. Indeed, our aggregate findings have simply demonstrated a sustained growth in the systemic saliency of the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension, downplaying the explanatory effects of the Euro Crisis. *Nonetheless, this observation allows us to state that, since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, the electoral supply has somehow changed, spurring the contrasting efforts from our different party types. In fact, while the Protest parties have tried to politicize the EU issues, the Mainstream parties have actually attempted to dampen the establishment of another issue dimensionality in Western Europe.* It is worth noting that this tactical polarization has probably not unleashed a deep-seated politicization of the European integration conflict and the Mainstream dismissal activities may have resulted in limiting the politicization of EU issues.

While our aggregate findings have been more suitable in describing the expectations on electoral supply, the disaggregate ones have somehow deviated from these forecasted developments. In fact, we have disaggregated the results regarding the electoral supply in four larger European democracies – France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom - to test if the validity of H1 and H2 has been conditioned by variables related to national cultures. This different focus, achieved by restricting the number of countries under analysis, may undermine the general results obtained at the aggregate level. However, this empirical step laid the foundations for a more nuanced analysis, where many qualifications may emerge, providing us with insights regarding the electoral supply at the domestic level. By advancing this level of

analysis, we have outlined a four-fold set of patterns involving EU Issue Entrepreneurship at the domestic level: 1) *Protest-based Entrepreneurship*. 2) *Systemic Entrepreneurship*. 3) *Limited Entrepreneurship*. 4) *Pre-existing Entrepreneurship*. Three of these patterns have been substantiated in our group of countries, where different national contexts have epitomized some of our predictions.

The French party landscape has mirrored a *Protest-based Entrepreneurship* dynamic, where Protest parties (FN, PCF and the Left Party) have steadily increased their program commitments on this issue dimension, while the Mainstream parties (PS, UMP/Rep. and UDF/MoDem) have minimized their efforts to politicize the European integration conflict. Thus, political extremism has played a major role in determining the changes in the electoral supply in France. In fact, both the Radical Left and Radical Right parties have tried to transform the EU issues into a source of inter-party contestation, cueing the voters on anxieties and concerns related to the general integration processes. Conversely, Mainstream parties have not mobilized the electorate on the potential divisions subsumed by this issue dimensionality, sensing the electoral perils stemming from the European integration conflict. Therefore, the French national context has reflected polarizing tactical achievements on the Pro-/-Anti-European dimension of contestation, characterized by a tension between de-politicization and politicization strategies, perhaps preventing the deeper establishment of a further divide-line among voters.

The German case has plainly overturned some expectations on the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, especially regarding the Mainstream actors and, therefore, embodying a pattern of *Systemic Entrepreneurship*. In fact, the entrepreneurial activities on the Pro-/-Anti-European dimension have not been associated with the party positioning along

the Left-Right ideological divide. Both the radical parties (AFD and PDS/Linke) and the moderate ones (CDU, SPD and Alternative 90/Greens) have increased their EU Issue Entrepreneurship, openly colliding on a new source of conflict. The Euro Crisis apparently acted as a powerful catalyst for releasing these political processes. It is worth noting that the AFD, an authentic post-crisis party, has probably exacerbated a previously sedated divide-line in the German electorate by instilling a higher degree of policy polarization on EU issues. Thus, by confirming the Protest Entrepreneurship Hypothesis and disconfirming the Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis, we retain that the German party landscape has more intensively laid the foundations for the politicization of the European integration conflict. The Italian national variant has seemed to lend support to the *Systemic Entrepreneurship* trajectory. Indeed, the Protest parties (LN, M5S, FDI-AN) have been active in initiating the European integration conflict, attempting to set in motion a process of issue evolution at the national level. These endeavors have been matched by the Europhile counter-mobilization achieved by some Mainstream parties (PD, UDC and NCD), which ideologically responded to the Eurosceptic cues. The Italian PD, the major governing actor, has stood out as a genuine Pro-European champion, persistently holding the torch for the authority transfer to the EU. However, the Italian voters have had to face an enduring instability at the electoral level, jointly with the marked fluctuations of partisan cues along the Pro-/-Anti-European dimension. This may have diminished voter ability to identify clear-cut images of party positions on EU issues, which have been notably inconsistent over time. Hence, we have advanced many doubts on the potential rise of the European integration conflict as a fount of electoral contestation in Italy, lacking a clarity in elite actions.

The British context has already seen increasing levels of strategic activities on EU issues adopted by parties, epitomizing a *Pre-established Entrepreneurship* pattern prior to the Euro Crisis. In fact, the British national culture has probably been a strong mediating factor in swaying the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, providing incentives for parties to play up these electoral shortcuts in the political debate. The UKIP has strongly profiled itself on this policy ground, rallying voters on a Euro-reject platform, envisaging the British withdrawal from the EU. In doing so, though this party has substantially enhanced its EU Issue Entrepreneurship during the post-crisis period, it had always been devoted to crusading against European integration. The Conservative party has developed an Anti-European outlook over time and the financial crisis has perhaps spurred an increase in its EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, this catalyst has probably aggravated a pre-established intra-party factionalism among the Conservatives, with the Soft Eurosceptic wing versus the Hard Eurosceptic wing. While the Liberal Democrats have mainly remained unaltered in their strategic undertakings on this issue dimension, the Labor Party has notably deflected its degree of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Though the British scenario has somehow weakened the transformative effects sparked off by the Great Recession, it seems to have been a hospitable environment for fostering the establishment of a Pro-/-Anti-European issue dimension. In spite of some reservations, these trajectories regarding EU Issue Entrepreneurship have supported a growing change in the party supply, which have probably been linked to the Euro Crisis. Nonetheless, in order to draw some unified responses to our research question, we have summarized these observations, describing the overall trends involving the two outlined party types. Since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, all our Protest parties, excluding the PRC/SEL, have confirmed the Protest Entrepreneurship

Hypothesis, strengthening their levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship. Indeed, these parties have polarized their Eurosceptic cues and increasingly stressed the related issues. This evolution has mainly regarded the Radical Right parties (FN, AFD, LN, FDI-AN, UKIP), which were pivotal in their respective party systems to bring the European integration conflict to center stage. However, many other Protest subjects (PCF, Left Party, PDS/Linke; M5S) have primed the Anti-European issues, extensively tackling this issue dimension in the political debate. *Thus, we have been able to maintain that, in the aftermath of the Euro Crisis, if a party falls within the Protest party type, it has been more likely to increase its level of EU Issue Entrepreneurship in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.* On the contrary, we have found many deviations from our set of predictions related to Mainstream Entrepreneurship. Indeed, not all our Mainstream subjects have minimized their tactical undertakings on this issue dimensionality, reacting to the spread of Euroscepticism in their party systems. These strategic achievements have been carried out by many parties, such as the Verts/EELV, CDU, SPD, Alliance 90/Greens, PD and UDC. These parties have boosted, rather than downplayed, their levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship, supplying the electorates with an alternative set of Pro-European values. Thus, this issue entrepreneurship has not been monopolized by the Protest parties, which have been forced into an ideological collision with their Pro-European opponents. Although another substantial pool of Mainstream parties, such as the PS, UMP/Rep., UDF/MoDem, FDP, CSU, PDL/FI, Labor and Liberal Democrats, have corroborated our *H2*, we have mainly rejected the latter hypothesis, observing many inconsistencies. Consequently, we point out that, *since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, if a party falls into a Mainstream party type, it has not necessarily been more likely to decrease its degree of EU Issue*

*Entrepreneurship in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.*

While the Protest parties have reacted to the Euro Crisis by adopting very identical strategies concerning the European integration conflict, the Mainstream formations have not displayed a harmonized response, reversing our empirical discovery at the aggregate level.

Nevertheless, the incoherent findings established on the Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis have not undermined the changing configuration of the electoral supply on EU issues. On the other hand, this result has shown us how much the index of EU Issue Entrepreneurship has not always been related to political extremism along the Left-Right conflict dimension. Indeed, many moderate and centrist formations have widened their entrepreneurial efforts in order to reap electoral payoffs, further modifying the electoral supply. Therefore, in the aftermath of the Great Recession, the EU issues have apparently gained an unprecedented level of saliency, making available for voters an alternative set of arguments in determining their party preferences. The Euro Crisis seems to have had a major impact on these manipulative attempts taken on by parties. By bringing the integration processes under public scrutiny, the financial crisis has probably renewed the electoral supply revolving around the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension, opening new windows of opportunity for altering the electoral shortcuts.

In a nutshell, we are able to deal with our first part of the research question, dissolving doubts involving the electoral supply. By melding the party position with an emphasis ascribed to EU issues, controlling for the mean position in the party system, we have tried to account for the processes related to fluctuations in the electoral supply. In doing so, we have assumed the complex combination of factors interwoven in this notion, which cannot rely exclusively on the party position or issue saliency, but has implied the complementarity of these elements.

Hence, by discerning a notable growth in the EU Issue Entrepreneurship, we hypothesize that, *since the outbreak of the Euro crisis, the European integration conflict has reshaped the electoral supply in the national party systems under study*. In spite of some important exceptions, our party types have substantially carried out a shared strategic commitment i to politicizing the European integration conflict during the post-crisis era. They have unquestionably commenced a process of issue evolution along the Pro-/-Anti-European issue dimension, aiming to clarify their policy positions at the public level. In doing so, they have exploited the tactical devices at their disposal in a clear-cut attempt to restructure the electoral supply. It worth noticing that this evolution has not only involved the loser party within the Left-Right ideological divide, involving many Mainstream parties, which have not safeguarded their alleged benefits linked to the traditional foundation of conflicts. Thus, strategic maneuvering along the Pro-/-Anti-European issue dimension has regarded parties belonging to the overall ideological continuum, seeking to produce a new voter majority or to maintain the existing one. Voter responses to the altering electoral cues remain essential in order to evaluate the eventual electoral fluctuations on a new issue dimension. Nevertheless, the European integration conflict has appeared to gain ground within the political agenda, where parties have tried to transform the EU issues into a source of electoral contestation. Here, we can sustain that some pre-conditions of the politicization processes have been set in motion by parties after the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, making major efforts to mobilize previously overridden issues in the electoral arena. Though the electoral supply has undergone important shifts in the last decade, confirming some of our expectations, the analysis of voting

preferences remains essential to make some further generalizations on the politicization of the European integration conflict.

### 13.2 Party Preferences

Exploring the congruence between the electoral supply and party preferences on EU issues is the final and inescapable empirical step of this work, allowing us to formulate concluding remarks on the politicization process. By dissecting the voting preferences in our four democracies – France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom – we can discover if the last stage of politicization has come about or not. Two set of predictions have been raised by this work -on the one hand, since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, if a party belongs to the Protest party type *the impact of party-voter proximity on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, as a determinant of its electoral preferences, is expected to increase among the Protest parties; on the other hand, since the onset of the Great Recession, if a party belongs to the Mainstream party type, the impact of party-voter proximity on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, as a predictor of its voting choice, is expected to decrease.* By using the proximity or smallest distance theory (Downs 1957), we have been provided with many regression models on the party preferences to test the variations of EU issue voting from 2004 to 2014. Our models have contained numerous control variables, but these have mainly revolved around two independent variables, Left-Right ideological proximity and European integration proximity, to examine to resiliency of old conflicts or the rise of new ones.

The French context has revealed an unforeseen dynamic of party competition, where the EU issue voting took on a sustained growth. In spite of the relinquishing of entrepreneurial efforts taken by many

Mainstream parties on EU issues (PS, UMP/Rep. and UDF/MoDem), some of the more centrist actors (PS and Verts/EELV) have increasingly reaped electoral benefits along the Pro-/-Anti-European issue dimension. The lack of cueing activities has not prevented voters from recognizing the set of Pro-European outlets, which have been somewhat rewarded by the electorate, partially denying our *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis. On the contrary, this pattern of growth has not involved the Protest parties, which have been entrenched within the traditional foundation of conflicts. The most notable Anti-European crusader, the FN, has reduced its ability to harness this issue dimension, although it may have succeeded in its efforts to politicize the European integration conflict in the long-term. The Radical Left parties have completely failed in realigning voters on the Anti-European pole of contestation, plainly adopting a mistaken political strategy. Thus, the *Protest-voting* Hypothesis has not been empirically borne out in the French context, overturning our predictions. Nonetheless, the European integration has had some increasing effects in the electoral arena, without outweighing the Left-Right issue dimension. Indeed, our findings have demonstrated the stable explanatory power of the old ideological divide, which has probably been the source for determining the electoral success of the Protest parties.

The German case has turned out to be the most suitable to set in motion an alternative foundation of conflicts. In fact, the rise of the AFD, a Single Issue Eurosceptic Party, has paved the way for contesting the European integration conflict within the electoral arena. By notably rallying voters on a Eurosceptic platform, the AFD has probably introduced new partisan divisions into the German landscape, revolving around the Pro-European versus Anti-European. Though the electoral analysis of the AFD has regarded only one

empirical round (2014), we are prone to locate that party within the envisaged trajectory of the Protest party. The other Protest Anti-European party, PDS/Linke, has miscarried its tactical attempts to reshape its electoral supply, not driving its electoral preferences along the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension. Meantime, German Mainstream parties have not discarded some effective endeavours to electorally compete on this issue dimension. The CDU, SPD, Alliance 90/Greens have drawn significant attention to the Europhile cues, entering into a new kind of electoral contest. The CDU and CSU, the chief governing actors, have increased their electoral preference by reducing their ideological distance from voters on the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, reversing the *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis. Conversely, other Mainstream parties, such as the SPD, Greens and FDP, have epitomized our set of expectations. It is worth observing that apparently many policy divisions have been activated by parties on the European integration policies in Germany. These divide-lines have not simply concerned the Eurosceptic versus Europhile line, but also encompassed a lot of discord within the Pro-European camp. As matter of fact, another clear-cut disagreement has emerged with the supporters of Ordo-Liberal and Stability culture policies (CDU, CSU and FDP) versus the supporters of social measures combined with a transnational solidarity (SPD and Alliance 90/Greens). The latter group of parties have worsened their performance along the Pro-/Anti-European dimension, probably being punished for the stances they have adopted on European integration. Although the Left-Right dimension has continued to bias the electoral preferences, without being outweighed by other ideological explanations, the German electoral landscape has witnessed the rising importance of the European integration conflict during the post-crisis period.

The Italian party system has involved a problematic dynamic for assessing the emergence of the European integration conflict. We argue that its enduring electoral instability, where parties have adopted too many policy adjustments on the EU issue, has been detrimental to producing an increasing EU issue voting. Indeed, the Italian Protest parties have not successfully managed to electorally capitalize on their Eurosceptic shortcuts. On the contrary, they have markedly rendered null our *H3*, lessening their ability to reduce their ideological distance from voters along the Pro-/Anti-European dimension. Indeed, voters have not emotionally reacted to these cues, not being able to distinguish the renewed Eurosceptic identities of the Protest parties. Meanwhile, the findings arising from the Mainstream parties have been more controversial, reshaping our background considerations. On the one hand, the centre-of-right formations, such as the FI/PDL and NCD, have been more consistent with our *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis, where EU issues have not influenced their electoral preferences. On the other hand, the PD and UCD have increased their ability to draw voting support from this issue dimension, which has become an authentic electoral asset for them. We maintain that these parties have probably been the only consistent actors in conveying messages to the voters, achieving an issue clarity, which is an essential step to activate electoral re-alignments on a new issue dimension. The Italian context has lacked some fundamental pre-conditions for the politicization of the European integration conflict, being persistently hampered by the fluctuations of its electoral supply. Consequently, the Left-Right conflict has maintained its entire explanatory power, basically remaining the exclusive source of the inter-party contestation in Italy.

The British parties have not sedated the EU issues in the political debate, where the Giant of the European integration conflict has been

awakened, increasingly swaying voting preferences. In fact, we already pointed out that this politicization had been gaining ground before the onset of the Great Recession, showing its potential to catalyse some electoral changes. The UKIP, which epitomizes a Single Issue Eurosceptic Party type, has been firmly identified by voters as a bulwark against further authority transfers towards the EU, opposing the British membership. The party has widened its support along the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension, becoming an important party actor in this national party system and substantiating our *Protest-voting* Hypothesis. Conversely, the two major Mainstream parties have reduced their ability to gain electoral benefits along this issue dimensionality, corroborating our *Mainstream-voting* hypothesis. This outcome has been due to deliberate a depoliticization carried out by the Labour party officials, who have intentionally minimized this source of conflict in their discourse in the post-crisis period. The Conservatives have probably been divided by the critical factors, sparked by the Great Recession, without electorally maximizing the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation. The British scenario has more notably disqualified the transformations related to the Euro Crisis, which have not triggered a major politicization of the European integration conflict, but it has weakened the impact of EU issue voting.

Although the Euro Crisis has probably unleashed some different increases in EU issue voting, our analysis has, instead, delivered a picture of a limited politicization of the European integration conflict in Western Europe. The EU issues have apparently arisen as a determinant of voting preferences across our countries, substantially excluding the Italian case, but these have remained as a secondary explanation, being strongly outdone by the Left-Right dimension of contestation. The only two parties which have fitted in with our

*Protest-voting* Hypothesis have been the UKIP and AFD, showing us the increasing explanatory power of the European integration proximity. Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of the other Protest parties have minimized their electoral benefits along the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension, rejecting the latter hypothesis. The Protest parties have evidently relied on the traditional foundation of conflicts, hinging upon the Left-Right ideologies, to increase their voting preferences. These electoral trajectories have probably reflected substantial voting realignments on the Left-Right related issues over time, which may address further enquiries in this direction, investigating the potential changes of median voter distribution on this issue dimensionality. Neither the Radical Right parties nor the Radical Left ones have stood up to the deep changes in overturning the existing dimensionality of political contestation, confuting our background hypotheses. Moreover, their growing levels of EU Issue Entrepreneurship have had only minor effects in the electoral domain, without strongly altering the voting preferences in Western Europe. *Thus, we have argued that, since the onset of Great Recession, in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, if a party falls into the Protest party type, it has not been more likely to increase its voting preferences along the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation.*

The Mainstream parties have allowed us to formulate more surprising and nuanced hypotheses. Two clusters of Mainstream parties have gradually emerged during the post-crisis period. - On the one hand, many governing parties have increased their voting preferences on this issue dimension, probably exploiting the media coverage stemming from their cabinet positions. Indeed, by controlling the domestic institutions, these parties have more effectively conditioned the policy-making at the European level, seizing the electoral support of

Pro-European voters. On the other hand, the parties occupying the opposition benches have been perceived by voters as less effective and competent in these policies, diminishing their reputation as Europhile actors. As a consequence, most of the Mainstream opposition parties have seen the dwindling impact of the European integration proximity as a voting determinant. Government status has appeared to be a fundamental variable in predicting voting support along the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension, perhaps indicating to us a new and valuable prospective in terms of future study. Thus, in the aftermath of the Euro Crisis – in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom – *if a party falls into a government Mainstream party type, all things being equal, it is more likely to increase its electoral payoffs along the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension. Conversely, if a party has belonged to a Mainstream opposition party type, all things being equal, it is more likely to decrease its preferences along this issue dimensionality.*

This concluding overview leads us to reject the rise of an alternative source of inter-party contestation. Thus, we formulate the following proposition concerning party preferences: *Since the outbreak of the Euro crisis, the European integration conflict has not strongly reshaped the electoral preference supply in the national party systems under study, providing only some sustained and scattered effects.* In fact, our findings have ruled out the establishment of a Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, which has not been hastened by the Euro Crisis. By remaining a very minor voting explanation, the EU issues conflict has proved its ineffectiveness in raising new concerns and affections among the national electorates. We may contend that this latent conflict may ripen in the long-term, acquiring an increasing explanatory level in the electoral arena. Indeed, many parties may reap the electoral benefits related to their entrepreneurial

strengths in the future electoral rounds, when the voters will develop more clear-cut cognitive images of the renewed electoral cues. However, by rejecting the *Protest-voting* Hypothesis and, with some qualifications, the *Mainstream-voting* Hypothesis, we maintain the relative stability of the traditional foundation of conflict, while EU issues have been marginal in driving party preferences.

### **13.3 The Lacking Politicization in the European Integration Conflict**

Our comparative overview has revealed a profound incongruence between the transforming electoral supply and electoral preferences among the countries under analysis. In fact, we have observed the substantial impact of the Euro Crisis in swaying the party strategies on the European integration conflict. Although many supply alterations have appeared over time, these have mainly been detached from the electoral realignments along the Pro-\-Anti-European issue dimension. In this work, we have relied on a fundamental assumption of the manipulative capabilities of political parties concerning the politicization of new conflicts. In addition, the Great Recession has been regarded as the pivotal catalyst, creating the pre-conditions to set in motion a new voter majority and, therefore, allowing the parties to operate as politicization agents. Our empirical results somehow collide with these assumptions, raising other questions to be further considered.

In fact, partisan strategies have not had a clear-cut effect on the establishment of a new dimension of contestation, not ushering in a new era for the inter-party conflict. This observation minimizes the impact of the cueing activities achieved by Protest Parties on EU issues. This group of parties has unquestionably aimed at restructuring

the pattern of competition by consolidating their Eurosceptic reputation. Nonetheless, these political subjects have never given up rallying voters on the traditional source of conflict, advocating for path-breaking policies stemming from Left-Right dimension. Indeed, we argue that the haemorrhaging of votes from Mainstream parties towards Protest parties has been explained by the realignments occurring on the Left-Right dimension. By effectively harnessing a crisis in responsiveness occurring at the domestic level, the Protest parties have set themselves apart from a Mainstream consensus, outlining policy packages entrenched in the Left-Right issues. Indeed, the binding rules established by the European treaties have clearly reduced the set of policy options at the disposal of governments, catalysing a growing lack of responsiveness (Laffan 2014a; Kriesi 2014; Morlino and Raniolo 2017). Consequently, the Protest parties have perhaps modified the electoral supply to occupy some policy space left vacated by Mainstream parties along the Left-Right issue dimension. In spite of the increasing EU Issue Entrepreneurship achieved by these parties, the Left-Right issue domains have probably absorbed their strategic endeavours. Moreover, the Parties have also benefitted from a dynamic reward-punishment related to the crisis (Hobolt and Tilley 2016), where many voters blamed Mainstream actors for the worsening of their economic conditions. In a nutshell, national electorates have apparently rewarded the Radical Right and Radical Left parties on the basis of immigration, economic and redistributive issues, which are interwoven within the Left-Right issue dimension.

This pattern indicates the major failure of parties to initiate a new conflict revolving around European integration. We have relied on the importance of the elite level actions to set up a new issue dimension, where parties have established fundamental information devices to

realign voters. Nevertheless, we have also assumed the necessity of people's emotional reactions towards partisan cues, which is an imperative step in politicizing a conflict (Carmines and Stimson 1986; Carmines and Stimson 1989). This necessary nexus between the elite (re-)positioning and popular affections has not materialized, proving to be only scant empirical evidence. Indeed, voters may have faced many cognitive troubles related to these cues, without identifying a clear-cut policy division among parties. Alternatively, they may have not reacted towards these shortcuts, which has not necessarily raised affections or disaffections. This trajectory seems to reflect other kinds of concerns among Western European electorates, which have been based on the traditional foundation of conflicts. Furthermore, the Left-Right ideological divide may have broadened its contents and meanings, demonstrating new types of emotional (dis-)affections among voters and propelling widespread electoral changes. The Euro Crisis has probably acted as a powerful catalyst in transforming the electoral preferences, without operating in the direction we expected. Indeed, the Great Recession has brought about many changes in the electoral realm, spurring some notable realignments along the Left-Right issue dimension and determining the electoral growth of Protest parties. On the contrary, EU issue voting has not been widened by the financial turmoil, which has, instead, led towards other forms of electoral renewal. Thus, we may deduce from this analysis that the elite actions carried out by our set of Protest parties have proved to be ineffective in politicizing an alternative source of conflict. We cannot claim that this non-politicization outcome has been due to the extinguishing achievements set in motion by Mainstream parties, because we have rejected the validity of the *Mainstream Entrepreneurship Hypothesis*. Therefore, we feel entitled to revert some political science findings on the European integration conflict

(Kriesi and Grande 2016; Börzel and Risse 2018), which have assumed that Mainstream entrepreneurial feebleness is the major liability for hampering this politicization process. This observation clearly weakens a theoretical background, which hinges upon a top-down approach of politics, where parties have been held to be masters in unleashing new conflicts. Our parties have not succeeded in accomplishing a deep-rooted process of issue evolution, without realigning voters along the Pro-/Anti-European issue dimension. Consequently, we maintain the *limited politicization* of the European integration conflict, corroborating other kinds of patterns, where EU issues have probably been eclipsed by immigration issues (Hoeglinger 2016a). This scenario consolidates the image of the growing impact of globalization in the national electoral arenas, increasingly conditioned by the policy division subsumed by the Pro-/Anti-Immigration issue dimension (Kriesi et al. 2006; Kriesi et al. 2008; Kriesi et al. 2012). On the contrary, the process related to European integration seems to have been a secondary parcel in a broader set of political controversy, weakly influencing electoral preferences. In fact, the relative stability of EU issue voting has shed light on the weakness of people's reactions to the party shortcuts regarding European integration. Therefore, we can draw some conclusions on the politicization of this potential conflict: *since the outbreak of the Euro Crisis, in spite of the parties' entrepreneurial efforts to draw attention to the previously neglected EU issues, the latter have not turned into notable determinants of voting preferences, remaining basically at the fringes of the electoral contestation in our group of countries. Indeed, EU issues have not been successfully transformed by parties into a subject of public contestation, not becoming a notable driving force for voter preferences at the domestic level. Thus, we can claim that our politicization hypothesis has been null, without developing its*

*alleged potential to alter the traditional foundations of conflict in Western Europe.*

Although a broad number of parties have resorted to a tool-kit, made up of altering issue saliency and the swings in their policy positions, these have faltered in producing a deep process of issue evolution. Political parties have substantially placed EU issues within the policy agenda to obtain electoral benefits, but without broadening the number of actors involved in this contestation nor propelling widespread popular concerns. We have assumed the necessary link between the electoral supply and party preferences to spur an authentic process of politicization, which has not yet been substantiated. In fact, party manoeuvring along a Pro-/Anti-European issue dimensionality has not proved to be an electoral asset, while the parties have been more effective in restructuring their supply on the traditional issues. Furthermore, the inherent complexity related to EU issues seems to be incontestable, where voters have probably faced many problems of asymmetric information. Cueing the electorates on the European integration policies represents a very challenging task for contemporary parties, which have often been inconsistent in developing communication snapshots on this issue dimension. Thus, many a lot of evidence of continuity has emerged in the electoral domain, disqualifying the potential transformations brought about by the European integration conflict. From this backdrop, we may draw many alternative paths of analysis, perhaps linked to the changing meanings and contents of the Left-Right conflict dimension, which have played a prominent role in biasing the party preferences.

Nonetheless, we are not completely convinced about discarding a Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation and its future developments as a source of inter-party conflict. Indeed, the alteration of the electoral supply could transform the basis of electoral

contestation in the next decade, when the voters become more aware of the existing policy alternatives on this set of issues. Parties may have planted their cues for the next harvest, which may not have been in vain. There are two prospective events surfacing on the political horizon. On the one hand, parties may persist in emphasizing Eurosceptic/Europhiles cues, pursuing a long-term electoral strategy and we posit that some parties will maintain their entrepreneurial efforts on EU issues to gain electoral benefits over time. On the other hand, parties may relinquish their tactical strengths, adopting a saliency reduction strategy on the European integration conflict. In doing so, these political actors may be more prone to play up the cards of the Left-Right issues, which have been more profitable electorally. Thus, we contend that monitoring of EU issue voting could represent an essential empirical operation to assess the fluctuations of the party preferences in the medium and long term. However, the current results of this work do not allow us to establish any certain propositions on the establishment of the Pro-/Anti-European dimension of contestation, remaining as a well-reasoned conjecture, which has to demonstrate its effectiveness. Summing up, we argue for the stability of the Left-Right issue dimension, which may have been reshaped by the onset of the Euro Crisis, in affecting the party preferences in Western Europe. On the contrary, the European integration still constitutes a secondary explanatory parcel in the electoral domain, being unstructured and with scarce and scattered effects.

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