

DOES HOST IDEOLOGY SHAPE POPULIST PARTIES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EU? The links of populism and Euroscepticism in Southern Europe

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¿CONDICIONA LA IDEOLOGÍA DE ACOGIDA LAS ACTITUDES DE LOS PARTIDOS POPULISTAS HACIA LA UE? Los vínculos entre populismo y euroscepticismo en el sur de Europa

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ABSTRACT

Can a study of populist parties in Southern Europe shed light on the relation between populism and Euroscepticism? The proposed comparative framework examines the different degrees and types of Euroscepticism of populist parties in the Southern region. We expect that the variety of populist parties in this region, more oriented to the left, will help to expand our knowledge of the links between populism and Euroscepticism. Overall, our article shows that left and right-wing populist parties share what may initially look as a homogeneous Eurosceptic profile. However, further examination supports that left-wing populist parties hold more positive views of the EU in indicators related to the political side of the EU (powers of the European Parliament and enlargement).

RESUMEN

¿Puede un estudio de partidos populistas en el sur de Europa arrojar luz sobre la relación entre el populismo y el euroscepticismo? Este trabajo comparativo examina los diferentes grados y tipos de euroscepticismo de los partidos populistas en la región sur, ya que esperamos que la naturaleza más variada de los partidos populistas en esta región amplíe el conocimiento sobre las relaciones entre el populismo y el euroscepticismo. En general, nuestro artículo muestra que los partidos populistas de izquierda y derecha comparten lo que inicialmente puede parecer un perfil euroescéptico homogéneo. Sin embargo, un examen más exhaustivo confirma que los partidos populistas de izquierda tienen opiniones más positivas sobre el proceso de integración en los indicadores relacionados con el lado político de la UE (poderes del Parlamento Europeo y proceso de ampliación).

KEYWORDS

Euroscepticism; political ideology; populism; Southern Europe.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Euroscepticismo; ideología; populismo; Sur de Europa.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary research suggests that populism is one of the driving forces behind a profound process of realignment taking place in European party systems since the 2008 Great Recession (Kriesi 2014; Pirro, Taggart and Van Kessel 2018). At the national level, populist forces have been able to capitalize on the crisis of representation triggered by governments' loss of legitimacy, and this environment of "disconformity" has paved the way to campaign against the political establishment who assured that "Europe is good" (Duff 2013: 141). Although contestation directed towards the European Union (EU) existed before (see Hooghe and Marks 2007), the electoral and political relevance of populist forces sets a new scenario, in which Eurosceptic positions are no longer the patrimony of small and marginal political parties.

Hence, a central piece of the post-2008 political scenario relates to the (re)politicization of European integration as a source of political contestation in many member states (Kriesi and Grande 2015 and 2016). On the demand side, the Eurozone crisis provoked a new wave of Euroscepticism (Usherwood and Startin 2013; Armingeon and Ceka 2014; Braun and Tausenpfund 2014), and a decrease in support for further integration (Hobolt 2014). In spite of the intents of depoliticization to inhibit political reactions against the EU, discussions over Europe and the European integration are not only increasingly expressed in national public debates (De Wilde and Zürn 2012: 138; Hooghe and Marks 2018: 123; Börzel and Risse 2018: 20); also, the salience of European issues is out of the control of mainstream parties (Grande and Hutter 2016: 40; Treib 2014). Moreover, political controversies regarding Europe in the last decade have generated debates on topics like "the question of bailing out of member States in need" (De Wilde and Zürn 2012: 138) or "the numbers of refugees that should be received" (Harteveld et al. 2018: 1), permitting parties to mobilize European issues using different framings.

Euroscepticism literature largely considers that political parties' attitudes towards the EU, besides strategic considerations, are fundamentally shaped by their political ideology (c.f. Szczerbiak and Taggart 2003 or Benedetto and Quaglia 2007). Although this relation is dynamic, there is a general agreement that radical parties, both on the right and left-side of the ideological spectrum, are more likely to be Eurosceptic (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; De Vries and Edwards 2009; Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopoulou 2012). From a different stream of literature, Rooduijn and Akkerman (2017) also underlined that a relation exists between political ideological radicalism and populist discourses. Triangulating these elements, we should reasonably expect that populist parties tend to be Eurosceptic. However, as Harmsen (2010) suggests, populism

and Euroscepticism should be considered in relational terms, that is, "in relation to the particular positions occupied by particular parties at particular times within their national party systems" (Harmsen 2010: 338). Can a study of populist parties in Southern Europe shed light on the connection between populism and Euroscepticism?

We argue in this paper that, despite recent efforts (Rooduijn 2018; Della Porta, Kouki and Fernandez 2017; Carlotti 2017; Harmsen 2010), the relationship between populism and Euroscepticism has been largely considered from a "northern-European" perspective. Far from claiming that current research findings are inaccurate, we aim to complement them by focusing on a geographical area that has been less explored, and whose populist ideological profile is more dominated by left-wing forces. In doing so, we delve into different subtypes of negative attitudes towards the EU, investigating to what extent political ideology shapes populist parties' discourses towards the EU.

A comparative framework is proposed to answer whether the relationship between populism and Euroscepticism is mediated by host ideologies in a distinctive manner. We investigate the relationship between populism and positions towards the EU through a comparison of Southern European populist parties in Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.¹ Overall, our article shows that left and right-wing populist parties share what may initially look like a homogeneous Eurosceptic profile. However, further examination supports that left-wing populist parties hold more positive views of the EU in indicators related to EU performance and EU strengthening (powers of the European Parliament and EU enlargement).

This article is organized as follows: the first section discusses the literature on the relation between populism and Euroscepticism, focusing on two main elements: radicalism and anti-elitism. The second section delves into the expected differences caused by host ideologies and presents the main hypothesis. The third section presents the data utilized, justifies the selection of cases and refers to the methodological approach. The fourth section discusses the results, and ending with conclusions.

THE NEXUS OF POPULISM AND EUROSCEPTICISM

Nowadays, it seems uncontroversial to define populism as a thin ideology (Mudde 2004) which considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which emphasises that politics should be an expression of the general will (Stanley 2008; Van Kessel 2014). Populism can be reduced in its minimal definition to two core features: anti-elitism, which is a central piece of populist and

challenger parties (Mudde 2004; Hobolt and Tilley 2016), and people-centrism. Populism, although far from being a new phenomenon (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017), has proved adept in shaping contemporary European politics, particularly in the post-crisis period, when issues related to European integration became more relevant than ever (Kriesi 2014; Kriesi and Grande 2015, 2016). Poor economic performance and particularly high levels of unemployment are considered a (mildly) favourable opportunity for populist parties in Europe (Kriesi and Pappas 2015), and can also explain the rise of hard Eurosceptic parties (Nicoli 2017; Schraff 2017). Building upon the fundamental work by Szczerbiak and Taggart (2000 and 2008), the term 'Euroscepticism' is used in this article as an encompassing one. Therefore, Euroscepticism expresses the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, but also incorporates outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration. Both populism and Euroscepticism have increased their importance after the Great Recession (Pirro, Taggart and van Kessel 2018), but their coincidence does not seem to be purely temporal.

Research on party-based Euroscepticism suggests that parties on the extremes of the ideological spectrum, on both the left and the right, share (hard) Eurosceptic orientations (Hooghe and Marks 2005, De Vries and Edwards 2009), which can occur for both ideological and strategic reasons (Taggart 1998, Ray 2007). Since Rooduijn and Akkerman (2017) demonstrated that populist parties are largely located at the extremes of the political ideological axis, it seems reasonable to assume that they are Eurosceptic. From this perspective, it is not left or right ideology that influences the Euroscepticism of populist parties, but its radical ideological stance. By adopting radical positions, populist parties look to differentiate themselves from mainstream ones, appealing to voters dissatisfied with the status quo (Taggart 1998: 382). However, beyond strategic reasons, populism has its own ideological connections with Euroscepticism. First, populist parties display a strong anti-elite component in their discourses, and may find that politicians in Brussels are equally part of an elite separated from the people and 'evil' in their actions. Second, Euroscepticism might be a reaction against national-level elites, accused of transferring too much power to the EU (Rooduijn 2018).

Whereas the general connection between populism and Euroscepticism seems well defined, the relational nature of the puzzle (Harmsen 2010) strongly advises for a more fine-grained consideration of these links, testing the stability of these theories across different contexts. In particular, we aim to study the relationship between populism and Euroscepticism in southern Europe as we expect that the more varied nature of populist parties in this region will shed light on the theoretical relations between populism and

Euroscepticism. Here, we fundamentally refer to the different types of populist parties as a function of their ideological preferences. Above all, we are interested in how left and right-wing populist parties express their preferences towards the EU.

THICK IDEOLOGIES AND EUROSCEPTICISM. WHY IS SOUTHERN EUROPE DIFFERENT?

Only a decade ago, Southern Europe was a fertile terrain for pro-European orientations in party systems (Llamazares and Gramacho 2007, Verney 2011, Conti 2003). However, this scenario of Euro-enthusiast leanings was increasingly undermined over this past decade (Sericchio, Tsakatika and Quaglia, 2013; Usherwood and Startin 2013; Ehrmann, Soudan and Stracca 2013; Roth, Gros and Nowak-Lehmann 2014; Braun and Tausendpfund, 2014; Dotti Sani and Magistro, 2016). South European governments have been experiencing a series of critical elections since the beginning of the Great Recession, which sometimes even lead to a party system collapse (Bosco and Verney 2012, Morlino and Raniolo 2017). The attribution of responsibility for the crisis and the implementation of adjustment policies, for which the EU is a principal actor, were influencing factors in the transformation of party systems (Magalhães 2013). Crucially, the framing of the Euro-crisis in the South permitted radical left parties (populist or not), to gain the major share of the discontent vote, even in countries where populist right parties existed prior to the crisis, as in Italy and Greece (Hooghe and Marks 2018: 125).

The rise of Euroscepticism in the region's party systems is driven by parties that changed the pattern of consensus towards the EU from the left. This is illustrated by the emergence of parties such as Podemos in Spain, Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal and specially SYRIZA in Greece, where a renewed debate on the importance of the EU in the domestic public policies contributed to the emergence of a new division around the issue of the EU/IMF bailouts (Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014; Verney 2015). Nevertheless, the Italian supply-side differs from the general South European pattern: it is more Eurosceptic because of the Lega Nord's (LN) transit towards hard Euroscepticism (Gómez-Reino 2017), and also due to the discourse of the new Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) - the only party that has used both economic and cultural framings against the European Union (Pirro, Taggart and van Kessel 2018: 10).

Political science scholars are aware that populism, as a thin ideology, only refers to a limited number of aspects in the political realm. Hence, populism is normally attached to other thick ideologies, to get a complete discourse that speaks to a broad audience in the electoral competition (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser

2013b; Aslanidis 2016; Rensmann, De Lange and Couperus 2017; Huber and Schimpf 2017). A fundamental thick ideological dimension is the political ideological one, which means that populist parties can be found at the right (Mudde 2007), left (March 2011) or even centre (Havlik and Stanley 2015) of the ideological spectrum. This has important consequences in terms of policy proposals, as the sub-types of populism provided by Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013a) identify inclusive and exclusive forms of populism that would correspond, respectively, to the left (including the poor) and the right (excluding foreigners).² Mény and Surel's (2000) three-fold conception of the people: the political (people as sovereign), the cultural (people as nation) and the economic (people as a class), is of great help to further explore these left/right-wing differences.

In Europe, references to the nation are often characteristic of the populist right, while the notion of people as a class is stressed by left-wing populism. Thus, left and right populist parties differ at least in their discursive emphasis. While left-wing populism tends to focus on economic issues (March 2011), the right-wing populist parties emphasize cultural issues as authoritarianism and nationalism (Mudde 2007). Populist right-wing parties stress their anti-establishment rhetoric, blaming established parties for not solving the problems derived from immigration. Left-wing populist parties connect their political anti-establishment stance to economic issues, arguing that "hardworking, ordinary citizens are betrayed by the political-economic power elite" (Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017: 200).

Among the authors that highlight that Eurosceptic positions are expected both from left and right populist parties (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Rooduijn 2018), Rensmann's (2017) position should be highlighted. Rensmann argues that distinctions between left and right populism based on nativism versus cosmopolitanism are difficult to empirically substantiate in the European context. Accordingly, he considers that opposition to non-native groups representing globalization is not limited to right-wing populist parties (Rensmann 2017: 125). Following his argument, European populist parties, despite being left or right, share not only the discontent claims against established politics, but also a homogeneous notion of cultural identity – anti-pluralistic and anti-universalistic – illustrated by their opposition to the "globalized immigration society and their elites" (Rensmann 2017: 124-125).

Against this, we join De Vries and Edwards (2009), Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopolou (2012), Van Elsas et al. (2016) and Lisi and Tatsanis (2017), in pointing out that ideology matters for the concrete expression of critical attitudes towards the EU also in populist parties. This is so, we argue, because the different roots of distrust towards the EU ultimately condition the intensity and type of anti-European discourses. Whereas right-

wing populist parties' discourses are directed against the foundational pillars of the organization (integration and borders, see Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2018 or Börzel and Risse, 2018), left-wing populist parties concentrate their criticisms on the current economic structure of the organization (austerity and liberalism, see Gómez-Reino and Plaza-Colodro 2018). Even if Kopecky and Mudde state that radical left-wing parties can share a wish for international cooperation with a Europhobe vision of the EU (Kopecký and Mudde 2002: 301), we suggest that economic and social criticism towards the EU, as profound as they can be, is essentially reconcilable with an intensely reformed EU (see Scharpf 2002). On the contrary, we join Zaslove (2004 and 2008) in proposing that a fundamental contradiction is likely to occur between right-wing populist parties and the EU.

Research on party-based Euroscepticism involves two different perspectives - what Mudde calls Sussex and North Carolina schools (Mudde 2012). These schools differ in definition, scope and findings on the parties' position on European integration. North Carolina's definition considers party-positioning towards the European Integration process as a continuum that ranges from 'very positive to very negative dispositions towards European integration, its policies, its institutions or its principles' (Hooghe and Marks 2007:120). On the other hand, the Sussex school's interpretation of Euroscepticism set the main difference between hard and soft Euroscepticism by attending to the feasible incorporation of the parties' criticism to the organic and legislative structure of the EU (Mudde 2012). Delving into this second approach is of particular interest for our relational thesis.

Building upon the hard and soft notions of Euroscepticism (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2000), differences have been found between attitudes of opposition towards integration as a principle (general practice of European integration), and opposition towards the specific ideas of integration underlying the EU, to produce a typology that distinguishes between Euro-enthusiasm, Euro-rejection, Euroscepticism and Euro-pragmatism (Kopecky and Mudde 2002). Euro-enthusiasts hold a positive view of the principles of integration, and also positively assess current policies at the EU level. Euro-rejects occupy the opposite pole, being both Europhobe (regarding EU main ideas) and Euro-pessimist (dissatisfied with where the EU is going). Eurosceptics agree with the general principles of the EU, while at the same time disapprove of the current state of things and direction of the EU. Lastly, Euro-pragmatists do not have a strong opinion about the EU principles, but still positively consider its results (ibid 2002: 302-4). Together with other efforts such as those by Flood (2002), Wessels (2007), Vasilopolou (2009) or Serricchio, Tsakatika and Quaglia (2013), these classifications share an important implication: relevant information is missing if we refer to Euroscepticism as a phenomenon structured along a single dimension.

Therefore, and even if both left and right populist parties may initially display general Eurosceptic positions, we expect that their thick ideological profiles determine different attitudinal approaches to the EU. Therefore, we should see that:

H1a. *Left-wing populist parties, although at first sight Eurosceptic, do not question all the arrangements and the very structure of the EU as a whole.*

H1b. *Right-wing populist parties hold radical positions against the EU, questioning the principles of the organization.*

DATA: POPULIST PARTIES AND THEIR ELECTORAL PLATFORMS

Crucial for our study is the selection of parties considered as populist in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Whereas it is true that no single dataset is available to measure populist discourses across Europe, we can rely on previous works for the operationalization of this selection criterion. Here, we have selected those parties that are considered populist by at least one author, and for which we have found no major dispute regarding their populist nature. Departing from this, and although not all the parties are equally consistent in their utilization of populist statements, we have identified the following forces that will be labelled as populist for this research: Anexartitoi Ellines (ANEL) and Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás

(SYRIZA) in Greece; Forza Italia (FI), Lega Nord (LN) and Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) in Italy; Bloco de Esquerda (BE) and Partido Comunista Português (PCP) in Portugal; Izquierda Unida (IU) and Podemos (Ps) in Spain. Table 1 contains the list of references used to justify the inclusion of each party in our selection. With this, we do not intend to provide an exhaustive and final list of populist parties, but a transparent justification of the selected forces.

Party-level data for positions towards the EU and ideological profiles were extracted from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES). Due to reasons linked to the availability of the questions of interest, we selected the 2014 CHES dataset (Polk et al. 2017).³ Descriptive statistics for each populist party can be found in table 2. The first group of variables identifies political parties' ideology, and contains data on their general left-right profile (Irgen), as well as their economic (Irecon) and socio-cultural (galtan)⁴ positioning. The former two variables reflect the multidimensional nature of ideology, separating economic from socio-cultural aspects. The second group of variables refers to parties' position towards the EU and contains five questions: parties' general position towards the EU (position); parties' positive or negative assessment of country membership in the EU (benefit); parties' position towards the rights of the European Parliament (ep); parties' willingness to accept EU intervention in national budget matters (budgets); parties' position towards a EU enlargement to Turkey (Turkey).

Table 1.
Identification of populist parties based on literature review

Country	Party	References
Greece	ANEL	Stavrakakis and Katsambekis forthcoming; Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2017; Stavrakakis, Andreadis and Katsambekis 2017; Aslanidis and Rovira Kaltwasser 2016; Rori 2016; Van Kessel 2015.
Greece	SYRIZA	Santana and Rama forthcoming; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2018; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018; Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2017; Spierings and Zaslove 2017; Stavrakakis, Andreadis and Katsambekis 2017; Aslanidis and Rovira Kaltwasser 2016; Katsambekis 2016; Rori 2016; Van Kessel 2015; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014.
Italy	FI	Rooduijn 2018; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018; Bobba and McDonnell 2016; Verbeek and Zaslove 2016; Tarchi 2015; Rooduijn, de Lange and van der Brug 2014; Fabbrini and Lazar 2013; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011; Fella and Ruzza 2009; Tarchi 2008; Zaslove 2008.
Italy	LN	Rooduijn 2018; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018; Ivaldi, Lanzzone and Woods 2017; Akkerman, de Lange and Rooduijn 2016; Bobba and McDonnell 2016; Verbeek and Zaslove 2016; Passarelli 2015; Tarchi 2015; Rooduijn, de Lange and van der Brug 2014; Fabbrini and Lazar 2013; De Lange 2012; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011.
Italy	M5S	Rooduijn 2018; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018; Santana and Rama 2018; Ivaldi, Lanzzone and Woods 2017; Spierings and Zaslove 2017; Vittori 2017; Bobba and McDonnell 2016; Verbeek and Zaslove 2016; Lanzzone and Woods 2015; Tarchi 2015; Fabbrini and Lazar 2013.
Portugal	BE	Gomez-Reino and Plaza-Colodro 2018
Portugal	PCP	Gomez-Reino and Plaza-Colodro 2018; Hawkins and Castanho Silva 2016.
Spain	IU	Hawkins and Castanho Silva 2016; Marcos-Marne et al. 2017.
Spain	Ps	Rooduijn 2018; Santana and Rama 2018; Sola and Rendueles 2018; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018; Marcos-Marne et al. 2017; Ramiro and Gomez 2017; Spierings and Zaslove 2017; Stavrakakis, Andreadis and Katsambekis 2017; Vittori 2017; Kioupiolis 2016.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In terms of operationalization, we consider that position towards the EU, and assessment of the benefits of belonging to the EU, are a good reflection of the general perception of the organization. The specific capacities of the EP, the (un)constrained power of the EU to influence national budgets, and the EU enlargement to Turkey reflect assessments of particular policies, and are expected to give us a more fine-grained distinction of Eurosceptic positions. Whereas the first indicator measures to what extent populist parties are willing to favour the powers of the European Parliament, the only majoritarian EU institution directly elected by citizen vote (system-related), the second assess the extent to which parties support the intervention of the EU on national arenas (economic sovereignty-related). As for the last question, we understand that it indicates that the party perceives the basis of the EU project as valid, as it seems largely incompatible that parties negating the validity of the supranational project are willing to expand the political community to new members. In that sense, positive attitudes towards the enlargement could be read as supporting the organization. However, positions about the enlargement towards Turkey also reflect Taggart's (1998) different sources of criticism in terms of the EU being too exclusive or too inclusive, and also of "who belongs to us" (identity politics-related). Thus, this question could also be interpreted in terms of support towards EU policies, as the negotiations with Turkey were active until 2016.

As we propose a study characterized by a small number of cases, we will prioritize the presentation of data in easily interpretable two-dimension scatter plots, recurring to theoretical arguments that build upon our theoretical expectations. In doing so, we fol-

low a comparative approach in the terms defined by Collier (1993), and we are aware of the limitations this method implies regarding generalization (ibid 1993: 106-107). Nevertheless, it seems of particular interest in view of our aims of complementing existing theories, and pointing out how general approaches might be enriched from considering an additional angle of the relation between populism and Euroscepticism.

DOES HOST IDEOLOGY MATTER? LEFT-RIGHT POSITIONING ON POPULIST PARTIES' EUROSCEPTICISM

Left-Right-wing Populism and Euroscepticism in Southern Europe

Beyond exploring mere inter-group differences between left-wing and right-wing forces (and considering the heterogeneity of positions and the number of cases included), it seems appropriate to recur to an individual analysis of the parties on each of the selected dimensions. For that, two different scatter-plots will be presented in each dimension, containing populist parties' position towards the EU dimensions (vertical axis) and position on the left-right scale (horizontal axis).⁵ In each figure the left field contains the distribution of parties classified according to their economic ideology, whereas the right one classifies them as a function of GAL-TAN ideology. The order of the figures follows the data and methods section: position towards the EU (Figure 1); benefits of the EU for the country (Figure 2); position towards the powers of the EP (Figure 3); position towards budget intervention (Figure 4); position towards EU enlargement to Turkey (Figure 5).⁶

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics

		Ideology			EU Position				
		lrgen	lrecon	galtan	position	benefit	ep	budgets	Turkey
GR	ANEL	8,78	5,11	8,56	2,22	2,38	3,40	1,22	1,14
GR	SYRIZA	2,00	1,44	2,11	3,44	2,22	5,25	1,63	4,17
IT	FI	6,71	7,00	7,29	3,43	2,29	4,00	2,14	4
IT	LN	8,86	7,29	9,14	1,14	3,00	2,80	1,14	1,14
IT	M5S	4,67	3,43	2,57	1,43	3,00	3,25	1,29	1
PT	CDU	0,50	0,33	4,17	1,88	2,88	4,80	1,00	5
PT	BE	1,33	0,67	0,67	3,13	2,38	5,67	1,33	5,33
SP	IU	2,00	1,78	1,40	4,60	2,00	6,13	2,63	5
SP	Ps	1,67	1,25	1,75	4,44	2,33	6,00	1,50	4,67

Source: Polk et al. (2017)

Figure 1.
Populist parties' General Position towards the EU

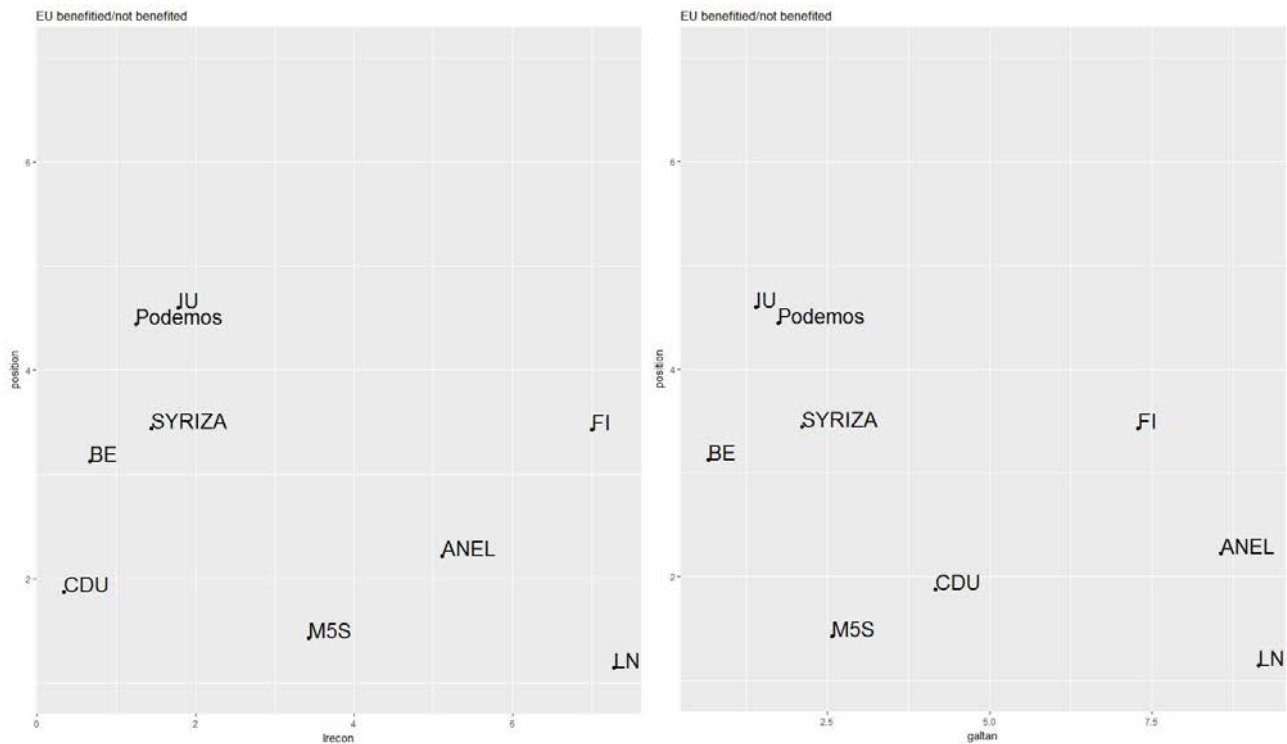
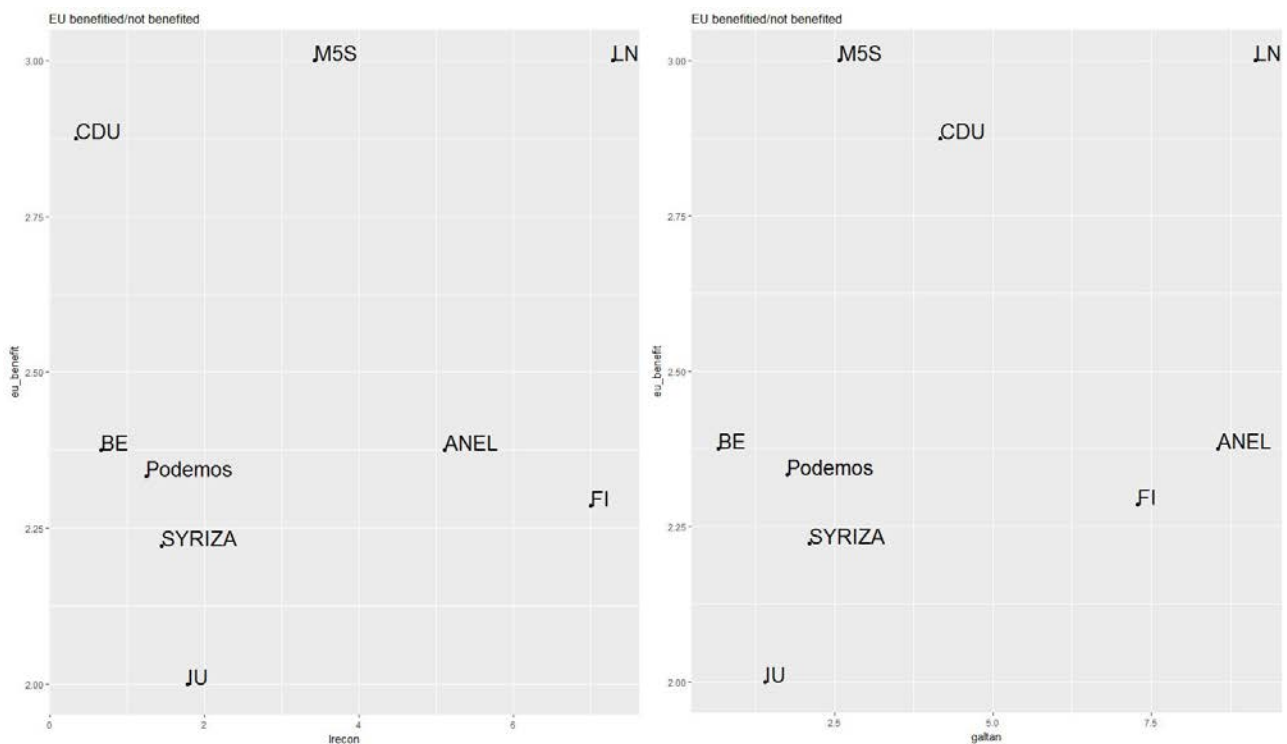


Figure 2.
Populist parties' assessment of the benefits of the EU



According to our theoretical framework, populist parties are expected to share a general Eurosceptic position towards the EU. Surprisingly, we can see in Figure 1 that two populist parties do not hold

a negative general position towards the EU (the Spanish IU and Podemos). As for the rest of populist parties, it is true that they all share rather negative visions of the EU, with no obvious clustering

between left and right-wing forces taking place. The Italian FI shows similar values to SYRIZA and BE, whereas the most Eurosceptic parties are ideologically very heterogeneous (even more if we focus on the economic dimension). The second question that allows for a general assessment of the EU is that which reflects political parties' perception of the EU: being beneficial for the country (1); neither beneficial nor harmful (2); or not beneficial for the country (3) (Figure 2). It is not surprising to see that none of the populist parties considered EU membership in purely positive terms. Again, right and left-wing populist parties cluster together with no clear distinction between them. Overall, and despite slight differences between forces, it seems that populist parties indeed tend to be critical of the EU, and that no straight line can be drawn from one party's ideological stance to its general position towards the EU (left-wing populist parties can be mildly or radically against the EU, and the same goes for the right-wing populist ones). This situation reflects reasonably well the first part of our H1a and H1b statements, from where we aim to consider more fine-grained differences. To do that, we recur to populist parties' positioning on three key aspects of the EU: the powers of the EP, the EU intervention in budget matters and the enlargement to Turkey (Figure 3 to 5).

The question about the powers of the EP can be read as the willingness of a certain party to ex-

pand the democratic nature of the EU system and its institutions. Here, a left-right descending diagonal line becomes more apparent, in particular when the GAL-TAN dimension is considered. This is in accordance with our theoretical expectations, as left-wing populist forces, even if they are critical of the EU, seem willing to strength transnational institutions in democratic terms, even if that means giving up some (political) sovereignty. However, this should not be read as left-wing populist parties willing to transfer all kind of powers to the EU. Figure 4 clearly shows that neither right nor left populist parties in Southern Europe are willing to allow the intervention of the EU in budget matters. Hence, left-wing populist parties seem to agree with statements that support the idea of a more powerful EU in political terms (in opposition to right-wing populist parties), whereas both left and right-wing populist parties strongly oppose giving up economic sovereignty.

Our last indicator refers to the enlargement of the EU towards Turkey. A descending diagonal line can be observed in Figure 5, which should be interpreted as left-wing populist forces being more in favour of Turkey joining the EU. We understand this as an indicator of left populist parties supporting enlargement in general, and a multicultural one in particular (that is, in inclusive terms). As we have already seen in Figure 3, thick ideologies seem to make a difference in the fine-grained perception of the EU.

Figure 3.
Populist parties' positions towards the powers of the European Parliament

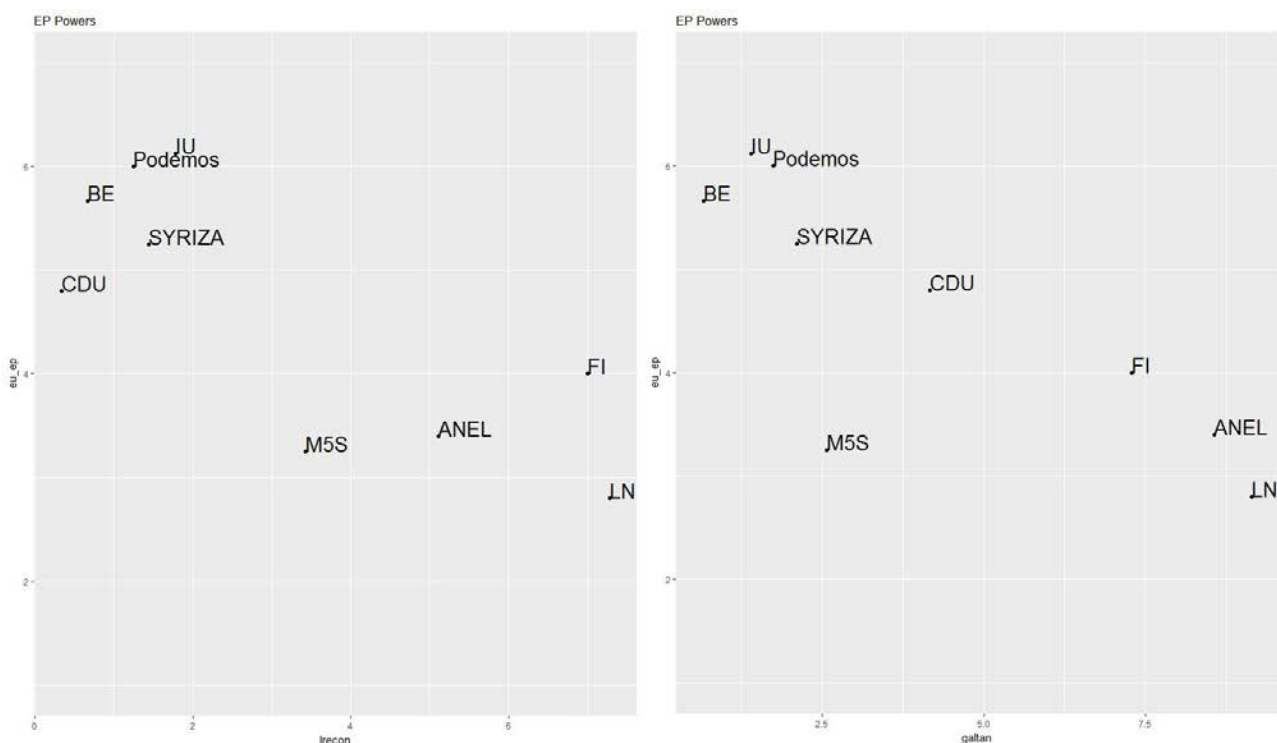


Figure 4.
Populist parties' positions on Budget intervention

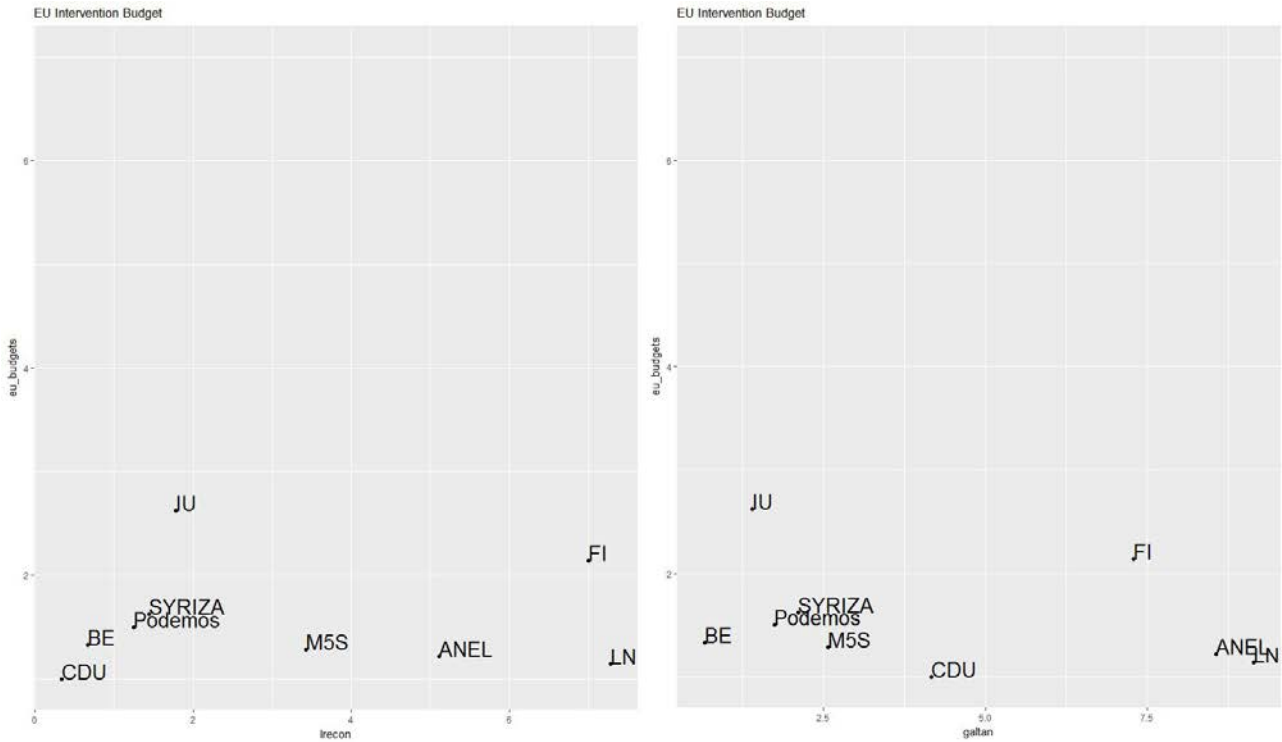
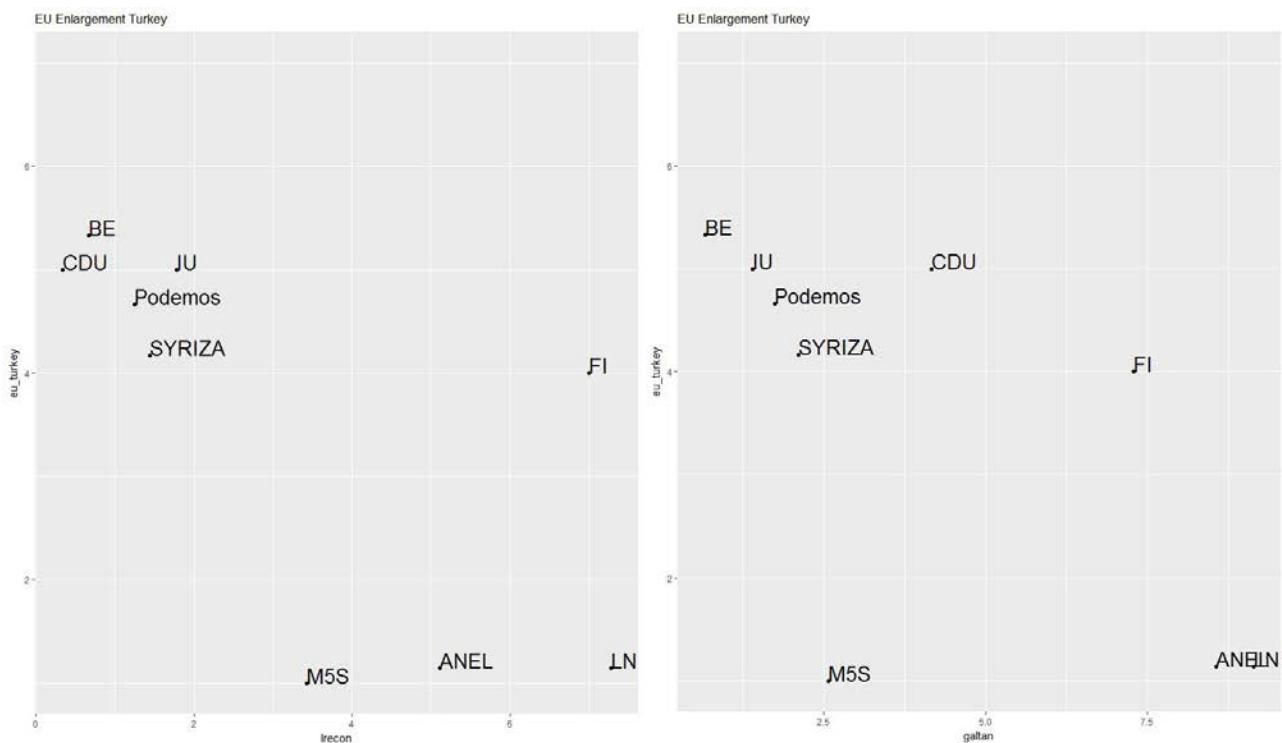


Figure 5.
Populist parties' position on EU enlargement towards Turkey



Populism and Euroscepticism. Relational beyond thick ideologies?

We so far proposed that populist parties' thick ideological profile is essential to unravel different attitudes towards the EU that may be hidden behind a general Eurosceptic posture. Although radicalism

plays a role in separating populist from mainstream parties in their attitudes towards the EU, the specific ideological pole occupied by populist forces is also important to distinguish how (and how much) they dislike the EU. However, to what extent is our argument fully independent from the regional particularities of Southern Europe? Besides being traditional

allies of the European Union, Southern European countries have their own group-dynamics in economic and political terms, and a textbook example of North-South differences is the distinct impact of the recent European crisis, arguably a major determinant of political attitudes towards Europe in recent times. If the relationship suggested in H1a and H1b is truly dependent on the populist parties' ideological positioning, and assuming that the content of the left-right axis is comparable across countries, we should see that left and right-wing populist parties outside Southern Europe also behave as expected in H1a and H1b. Looking to test the external validity of our argument, we incorporated in the analysis two more countries in which left and right-wing populist discourses are present: France (Front National, FN and France Insoumise, LFI) and The Netherlands (Party for Freedom, PVV and Dutch Socialist Party, SP).⁷

Regarding general positions, the main observation remains that populist parties normally share critical views of the EU, and that no major differences can be extracted from their ideological positioning (figures included in the online appendix). Furthermore, left and right-wing populist parties in France and The Netherlands also share a very critical view of the EU intervention in national budgets. This position is not common to all political parties in the countries analysed, and refers to a fundamental consideration of economic sovereignty for populist parties that is not necessarily determined by the intervention of the Troika in Southern Europe (figures in the online appendix). The most interesting indicators for our comparison are those referring to powers of the European Parliament and enlargement towards Turkey (figure 6 and 7).

What we first observe in these figures is that French and Dutch populist right-wing parties cluster together with the other right-wing populist forces from Southern Europe, holding strong positions against the EU. However, the most important part for the generalizability of our argument is extracted from the location of left-wing populist forces, PG and SP, in figures 6 and 7. Whereas these two parties are located closer to other left-wing forces in relation to an EU enlargement to Turkey (and are as inclusive in identity terms as their South European counterparts), they also come closer to populist right-wing forces when assessing the powers of the EP. Although this has implications for our research, in the sense that the relational nature of the puzzle mentioned in the theoretical section is even more complex than we expected, it does not imply that thick ideologies have nothing to say about the relation between populism and Euroscepticism once regional dynamics are considered. For example, if we look at CHES data for the years 2010 and 2006 (with a more reduced sample of populist parties), we see that left and right-wing populist parties also had an indistinguishable general position towards the EU (mostly negative). However, if more detailed indicators are considered, left-wing populist parties differ from populist right-wing ones. In 2006 and 2010, the former were also more in favour of the EP powers and of the EU enlargement towards Turkey, which refers to a long-standing link between left-wing populist forces and a nuanced Eurosceptic position (figures to be found in the online appendix). Although strategic considerations may help to explain differences in the assessment of EP powers, the thick ideological positioning matters when observing populist parties' attitudes towards the EU even outside Southern Europe.

Figure 6.
EP powers. South European populist parties plus FN, LFI, PVV and SP

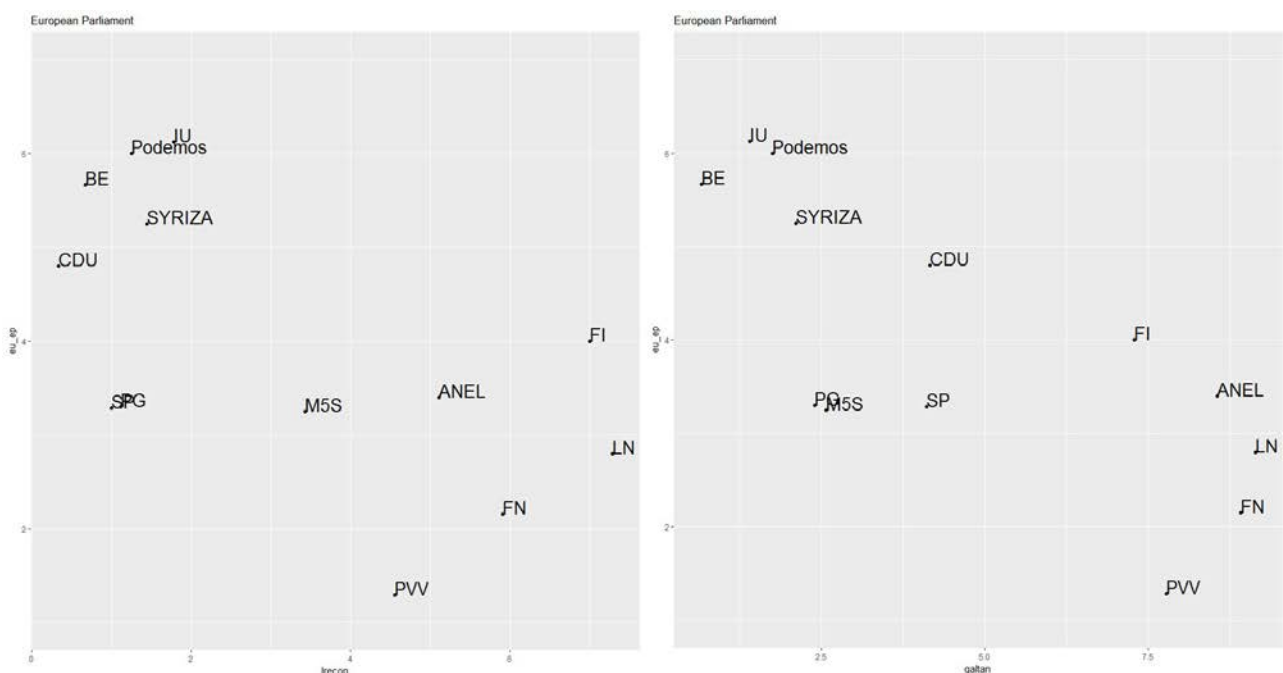
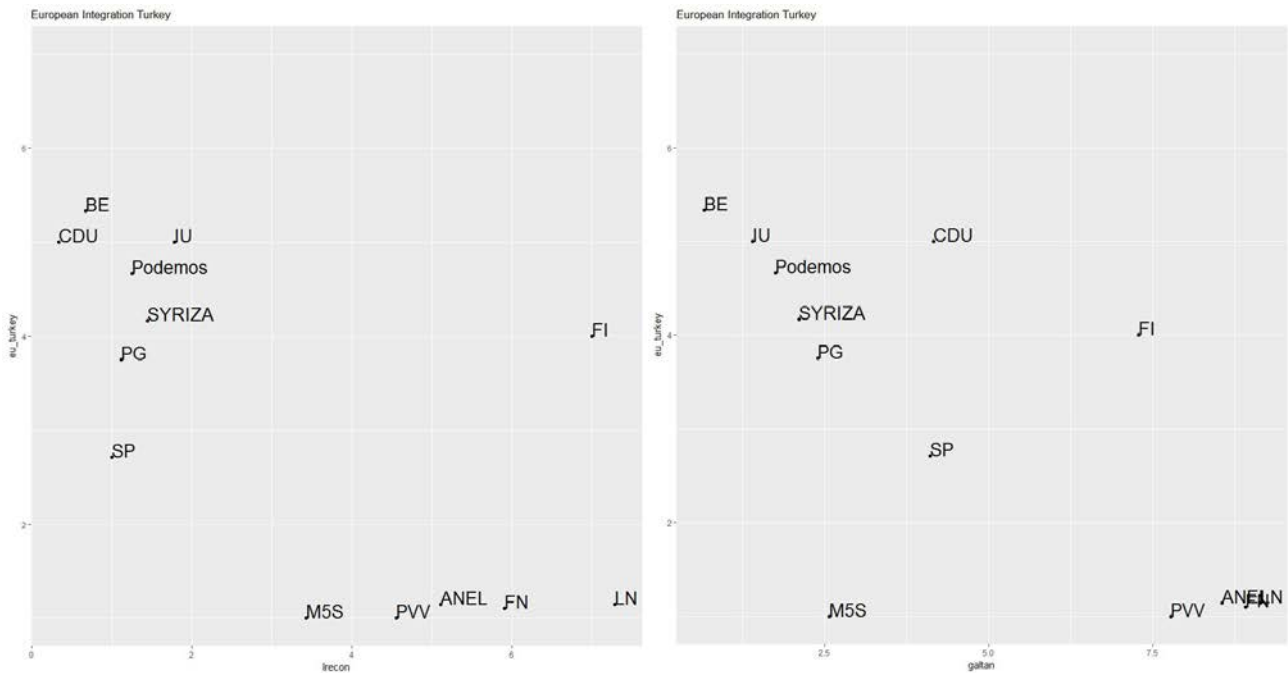


Figure 7.
Enlargement towards Turkey. South European populist parties plus FN, LFI, PVV and SP



A different profile? Recapitulation

The previous results are largely in accordance with our theoretical expectations, as left-wing populist forces (also critical of the EU) seem willing to strengthen transnational institutions in democratic terms (EP), even if that means giving up some (political) sovereignty. Additionally, they also seem supportive of an inclusive (multicultural) European enlargement. The question remains however, if these differences are enough to speak of a different type of Euroscepticism. That is, does this different perception of the EP powers and the EU enlargement justify that we call left-wing populist parties less Eurosceptic or distinctly Eurosceptic?

In the same way as “[soft] and ‘hard’ Euroscepticism do not do enough justice to the subtle, yet important, distinction between the ideas of European integration, on the one hand, and the European Union as the current embodiment of these ideas” (Kopecky and Mudde 2002: 300), it is our understanding that the differences proposed in our article reflect subtle differences that are in line with the ideas of specific and diffuse support towards the EU (ibid 2002). Given that these differences seem significantly affected by thick ideologies, we argue that referring to left and right-wing populist parties as ‘Eurosceptic’ is not totally accurate, when the general level of Euroscepticism is left out.

Departing from the individual level, Boomgarden et al. (2011) already stressed the importance of clarifying the distinct dimensions comprised within the Eurosceptic category, ultimately referring to EU at-

titudes as a collection of multiple dimensions of attitudes (ibid 2011: 260). Therefore, and as useful as a broad understanding of Euroscepticism can be to foster dialogue and comparative efforts in the discipline, its relationship with populism seems well complemented by findings from studies allowing a more fine-grained approach to the key concepts: populism and Euroscepticism. It is in this regard that we believe our research to be more relevant, highlighting that right and left-wing populist parties actually differ when assessing EU performance (EP) and strengthening (enlargement). Ultimately, this distinction is pertinent to understanding the complexity of positions towards the EU, a multidimensional polity on its own (Boomgarden et al. 2011).

CONCLUSIONS

Our research shows that the study of populist parties in Southern Europe sheds light on the relation between populism and Euroscepticism, complementing recent efforts to disentangle this nexus by focusing on a geographical area that has been less explored, and whose populist ideological profile is more dominated by left-wing forces. In doing so, we delve into different subtypes of negative attitudes towards the EU, investigating to what extent political ideology shapes populist parties’ discourses towards the EU.

Overall, our article shows that left and right-wing populist parties share what may initially look to be a homogeneous Eurosceptic profile. However, further examination holds that left-wing populist par-

ties hold more positive views of the EU in indicators related to the “political side” of the EU (powers of the European Parliament and enlargement). This is so, we argue, because the different roots of distrust towards the EU ultimately condition the intensity and type of anti-European discourses also in populist parties. Whereas right-wing populist parties’ discourses are directed against the foundational pillars of the organization (integration and borders), left-wing populist parties concentrate their criticisms on the current economic structure of the organization (economic intervention). Consequently, the demands of the latter are susceptible to be integrated within the frame of the EU, whereas the former’s question the EU itself.

Returning to the goals of the article, it is not our intention to question the general relationship observed between Euroscepticism and populism, which has been constructed after thorough analyses and with broad empirical support. However, even if populist parties indeed tend to be more Eurosceptic than mainstream political parties, populist parties’ assessment of the EU seems mediated by thick ideology. This has theoretical implications,

but it is also relevant for understanding the practical consequences that the success of different populist parties may have in terms of EU legitimacy and support. Although some authors consider thick (host) ideologies when studying populist parties, further empirical works may benefit from taking into account the host ideology together with a broader understanding of what being Eurosceptic means. At the individual level, this distinction may shed light on why Euroscepticism is not one of the features uniting voters of populist parties.

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NOTES

1. The other country typically considered in studies of Southern Europe, Cyprus, has been left aside due the lack of relevant populist discourses.
2. For Huber and Schimpf (2017) left-wing populist parties are more inclusive even considering two subdimensions of liberal democracy: political inclusion (minority rights) and mutual constraints.
3. The wording of the original questions, as well as the corresponding scales, can be found in the online appendix.
4. GAL-TAN stands for Green, Alternative, Libertarian (GAL) – Traditional, Authoritarian, Nationalist (TAN). For more information see Hooghe et al. (2002) or Polk et al. (2017).
5. CDU is the name of the electoral coalition including PCP, together with the Green party, since 1987.
6. Original scales have been respected in the figures to improve readability and comparability. Excepting Figure 3 (ranging from 1 to 3) all the scales range from 1 to 7 (strongly opposed to strongly in favor, with 4 as neutral point).
7. For the definition of Front National as populist see Rooduijn (2018); Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel (2018); Ivaldi (2018); Spierings and Zaslove (2017); Akkerman, de Lange and Rooduijn (2016); Rooduijn, de Lange and van der Brug (2014); Mudde (2013); Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013a); Bornschieer (2012); Oesch 2008 and Rydgren 2008. For LFI see Hanley (2018); Ivaldi (2018); Mény (2017); Rensmann (2017) and Damiani (2016). For the Dutch SP see Pirro and Van Kessel (2018); Rooduijn (2018); Otjes and Louwerse (2015); Rooduijn, de Lange and van der Brug (2014) and March (2007). For the PVV see Pirro and Van Kessel (2018); Rooduijn (2018); Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2015); Rooduijn, de Lange and van der Brug (2014); Akkerman (2011) and Vossen (2011).

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