

# Economic determinants of public support for European integration, 1995–2018

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## Abstract

European support for integration is shaped by a range of economic, cultural, and political factors. However, in recent decades, scholars have argued that utilitarian calculations have become less important as European integration has advanced, and political entrepreneurs have mobilized nationalist identities. We analyze 24 years of responses to the Eurobarometer (1995–2018) to assess the influence of economic factors on public attitudes toward European integration. We find strong evidence that utilitarian factors are important across the entire panel. The performance of the macro-economy, as measured by unemployment, and an individual's position in the labor market, are consistent predictors of public support for and satisfaction with the European Union. Collective identity is also associated with attitudes toward the European Union. However, an individual's identity is also shaped by economic circumstances.

## Keywords

European integration, nationalism, political economy, public opinion

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Public opinion affects European integration. Early in the integration process, elites largely led the way, but in recent decades popular attitudes have come to the fore (Börzel and Risse, 2020; Hobolt and De Vries, 2016). Mass movements have arisen that are skeptical about aspects of European integration (Usherwood and Startin, 2013). Political parties that promote Eurosceptical views have gained increasing support (Heinö et al., 2017). European publics have expressed ambivalence about widening and deepening the European Union (EU) (De Vries, 2018; Hobolt, 2009, 2014).

The growing politicization of European integration has challenged theories that view integration as depending on economic interests. Scholarship has increasingly turned to understanding how national identities *constrain* public support for the European project. Hooghe and Marks' (2009) postfunctionalist theory, which holds that "identity politics" will rise in importance as political entrepreneurs exploit the gap between community identity on the national level and governance on the EU level, has proven to be particularly influential, fostering a rich literature about the formation of collective identity and its mobilization by political entrepreneurs. Many of the most influential recent studies on European public opinion and the success of Eurosceptical political parties emphasize identity politics, cultural cleavages, and/or opposition to immigration (Bechtel et al., 2014; De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Fligstein et al., 2012; Halikiopoulou et al., 2012; Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Hutter and Grande, 2014; Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012; Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Risse, 2015; Werts et al., 2013). Utilitarian considerations are sometimes acknowledged, but they are often theorized as coming to bear only when economic costs are high (De Vries, 2018) or the salience of economic factors is particularly palpable (Hobolt and Wrátil, 2015). Future progress in European integration is seen as revolving around cultural cleavages (Hooghe and Marks, 2018) and hinging on collective identity formation at the European level (Börzel and Risse, 2020; Kuhn and Nicoli, 2020; McNamara and Musgrave, 2020).

Against this backdrop, we assess the relevance of utilitarian theory for explaining public attitudes toward the EU over the last quarter century. We use 24 years of public opinion data to assess the extent to which economic interests shape support for European integration. We evaluate both absolute and relative measures, building on previous scholars' work on benchmarking (De Vries, 2018). In light of common arguments that utilitarian factors may have grown less important as the integration process has advanced, we investigate whether these patterns have changed since the 1990s and, if so, along which dimensions. Finally, we assess the robustness of economic factors in the face of alternative, identity-based explanations.

We find that utilitarian factors are strong predictors of public support for European integration, and that their impact has not declined over time. Favorable macro-economic conditions are consistently associated with public support for integration, with no noticeable decrease in their importance following the adoption of the euro in 2001, the eastward expansion of the EU's external borders beginning in 2005, or the global financial crisis that commenced in 2008.

When national unemployment rates are lower, compared to past performance or the EU average, Europeans are more likely to support integration, whether measured in terms of support for membership or satisfaction with EU democracy. Conversely, when macro-economic conditions worsen, support for integration goes down. Additionally, support for the EU is also now associated with the economic performance of the EU as a whole.

The relationship between individual endowments with human capital and support for European integration also does not appear to have diminished. As in the past, individuals at the top of the education and skills hierarchies consistently express greater support for European integration. Professionals, managers, and students, groups that have generally benefited economically from European integration and globalization, remain the most supportive, while blue collar skilled and routine workers are among the least supportive. Similarly, more highly educated individuals, who in many countries have seen a growing payoff to their education, are also generally more supportive. The impact of these socio-economic factors on attitudes does not appear to have changed much over time: occupational and educational divisions explain just as much about attitudes toward European integration as they did in the 1990s. Moreover, their significance does not diminish when we examine only individuals with strong national identities or those with ideologies on the far right, suggesting that rising nationalism has not reduced the importance of socio-economic divisions on key questions of European integration.

In line with previous findings (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2019; Polyakova and Fligstein, 2016), we do find that having an exclusive national identity is a strong predictor of Eurosceptical views. Voters who place their ideology on the far right, and who see their identity primarily in terms of the nation-state, are consistently more likely to see EU membership as a bad thing or to express dissatisfaction with EU democracy. However, we do not interpret these relationships as evidence that identity has replaced economic interests as the main factor shaping public support for the EU. When economic variables are regressed on national identity, many of the labor market factors that are highly correlated with public support for integration are also predictive of political and ideological identities. Professionals and managers, students and the highly educated are less likely to identify exclusively with their nation state, while the unemployed and less educated are more likely. When the EU's overall economy is stronger, as measured by EU-wide unemployment, individuals are less likely to identify exclusively with their nations.

We make two main contributions to the literatures on nationalism and European public opinion. First, our analysis of public opinion over more than two decades, from the mid-1990s through 2018, covers a longer period of time and a larger number of countries than most other studies (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016: 421). This makes it possible to assess the economic factors systematically associated with support for the EU, and to analyze whether the relationship between utilitarian factors and support for the EU has changed over time. In showing that relative macro-economic performance has been a consistent predictor of support for the EU since at least the mid-1990s, we provide additional empirical support

for benchmarking theory (De Vries, 2018). More broadly, by demonstrating that economic factors remain robust across a range of specifications and controls, that they remain relevant on both the individual and country levels, and that their importance has not significantly diminished over time, we provide reason to challenge the presumption, implicit in postfunctionalist theory, that cultural cleavages have gradually supplanted utilitarian considerations.

The second contribution is to analyze the complex relationship between economic interests, collective identities, and support for the EU. Our finding that economic factors help explain national identity corroborates the work of previous scholars who have noted how economic circumstances shape collective identities (Verhaegen et al., 2014). However, unlike previous work in this area, which has tended to focus only on the individual level, using single surveys or surveys covering short periods of time, our analysis examines both individual and macro-level factors over a quarter century. Our finding that macro-economic conditions are strongly linked to both an individual's collective identity and views about the EU suggests that the EU's declining economic performance since the Eurocrisis may have fueled the growth of nationalism and Euroskepticism across the continent.

### **Theory: What affects public opinion toward the EU?**

Early studies of European integration implicitly or explicitly assumed that socio-economic success would increase public support for the Union. This view reflected both the EU's focus on economic integration and the single market at the time, as well as the influence of neofunctionalist and inter-governmental theories of European integration that each, in their own way, emphasized economic considerations (Hooghe and Marks, 2009: 4–5). The focus on economic factors was natural given that, until the early 1990s, the overriding concern of European integration was the liberalization of trade and investment. These developments had substantial welfare and distributional effects. European integration benefited all member states economically; however, less developed states tended to see more substantial benefits, both because they received more substantial budgetary transfers and because integration spurred higher rates of economic growth.

The benefits of economic integration were also unequally distributed within societies. Integration put pressure on traditional manufacturing industries, generally hurting less skilled and educated workers. At the same time, investors and many white-collar workers benefited, as the creation of a single market expanded opportunities for those with financial and human capital. Early studies found that public support for European integration largely broke down along occupational and educational divisions, reflecting a utilitarian calculation (Anderson and Reichert, 1995; Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Gabel, 1998).

During the 2000s, utilitarian theory was increasingly contested, as new research revealed that support for the EU was conditioned by a range of other factors. Scholars pointed to how the political context and quality of institutions at the national level affected how voters perceived and responded to the EU

(Rohrschneider, 2002; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000). Another body of research recognized that most Europeans had limited personal experience with or information about the EU, and explored how voters relied on “proxies” based on their experience with national governments (Anderson, 1998) or “cues” from politicians and political parties (Hobolt, 2007; Hooghe and Marks, 2005). Drawing on attitudinal questions about identity and ideology, many researchers also found that identity was a much stronger predictor of support for integration than economic calculations (Carey, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; McLaren, 2002). Utilitarian calculations may well have been the most important determinants of support for the EU when it was mostly a market-building project perceived as making everyone better off. However, as political entrepreneurs mobilized populist opposition to the EU by appealing to national identity and fears of cultural threat (De Vries and Edwards, 2009; Hartevelde and van der Brug, 2021; Rooduijn et al., 2021), and as integration moved from “negative” to “positive” forms that increasingly involved core state powers and entailed more zero sum conflicts, collective identity became a more important determinant of public views about the EU (Kuhn and Nicoli, 2020: 9).

Hooghe and Marks’ (2009) postfunctionalist theory of integration has proven particularly influential in the literature, shaping the research agenda and terms of the debate. Challenging the rationalist underpinnings of both neofunctionalist and intergovernmental theories, Hooghe and Marks argue that “identity politics” has become the decisive factor shaping public support for and opposition to integration. In their view, the ongoing process of European integration has gradually resulted in a mismatch between governance on the European level and community on the national level. As political entrepreneurs made identity-based populist appeals that exploited the “tension between rapid jurisdictional change and relatively stable identities” (Hooghe and Marks, 2009: 13), those with strong national identities have become increasingly opposed to integration. The increasing politicization of Europe in domestic arenas has, in turn, gradually led identity to eclipse economic interests as the primary factor shaping the views of the public about the EU.

The Eurozone crisis, and the tremendous economic suffering and dislocation it generated, has revived interest in utilitarian theories to explain public opinion about the EU. Scholars in recent years have found that the negative economic effects of the crisis undermined citizens’ positive perceptions of the EU (Braun and Tausendpfund, 2014), particularly in debtor countries most affected by the crisis (Foster and Frieden, 2017) and among young people facing persistently high unemployment (Lauterbach and De Vries, 2020). Consequently, support for further integration in general (Hobolt, 2014) and in specific areas such as monetary union (Hobolt and Wratil, 2015), freedom of movement (Vasilopoulou and Talving, 2019) and economic governance (Nicoli, 2019) remains strongly influenced by cost–benefit calculations. De Vries’ recent book (2018) has made a particularly important contribution in this debate, showing that *both* economic evaluations and cultural views are important factors.

However, postfunctionalist theory remains extremely influential. Countless studies on European public opinion and the rise of populist and Euroskeptic

parties downplay the role of economic factors (Fligstein et al., 2012; Hutter and Grande, 2014; Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012; Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Polyakova and Fligstein, 2016; Werts et al., 2013). Others have found that globalization and the Eurocrisis, by raising concerns about redistribution and refugees, have reinforced the importance of national attachments over utilitarian calculations (Bechtel et al., 2014; Clark and Rohrschneider, 2019; Hartevelde and van der Brug, 2021; Kuhn, 2019; Kuhn and Stoeckel, 2014), and the centrality of cultural cleavages in European party systems (Downes and Loveless, 2018; Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Jackson and Jolly, 2021). Even those scholars highlighting the significance of economic factors often limit their claims to the context of the crisis (Braun and Tausendpfund, 2014; Nicoli, 2019; Talving, 2017), or the particularity of the policy area they are examining (Hobolt and Wratil, 2015). Indeed, the view that nationalism and collective identities are now the most important factors shaping public support for the EU has become so prominent that several journals (including this one) have published special issues dedicated to the question (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2021; Kuhn and Nicoli, 2020).

In this article, we contribute to this debate in two main ways. First, we examine whether the explanatory power of utilitarian factors really has decreased since the 1990s when they were the predominant explanation in the literature. Postfunctionalist theory provides a sophisticated theoretical framework for the expectation that economic factors might diminish in the future, which has been supported by some empirical studies (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2019). However, most existing studies do not consider views over long periods of time (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016: 421). Few scholars have queried the hypothesis with longitudinal data that cover public opinion over decades. Fewer still have looked at long-term trends using multi-level models that analyze co-variables on both the individual and country levels.

Second, we evaluate the insight, suggested in multiple studies, that national identities are endogenous to support for European integration (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016: 421; Nicoli, 2019: 400; Verhaegen et al., 2014). Specifically, we test whether economic factors at the individual and national levels are correlated with exclusive national identities. If people's occupational and educational positions are strongly associated with their collective identities, then it may make little sense to view national attachments and the growing success of Eurosceptical parties as separable from utilitarian considerations. Indeed, if the rise of nationalism is correlated with worsening overall economic conditions, then the economic shock of the Eurozone crisis may help account for why those with an exclusive national identity have become more likely to express Eurosceptic views (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2019).

### *Economic factors and support for European integration*

The impact of economic trends on public opinion is not straightforward. Many economic trends could be relevant to conditions faced by Europeans. Individuals

in Europe, as elsewhere, face economic outcomes in a variety of ways: through their own experiences, through the experiences of their families and friends, through what they see and hear in their communities, and through the media. Like experts, they have little way of knowing precisely who is responsible for economic outcomes – especially in distinguishing between results that could plausibly be attributed either to trends at the European or at the national level. However, individuals can assess their own economic situation and that of the community around them. Fair or not, both egocentric and socio-tropic economic assessments consistently predict the behavior of voters and the views of the public in a variety of political and institutional contexts, including the EU (Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000). Especially in light of the ebb and flow of economic growth in Europe over the past 30 years, it would seem important to explore systematically the effects of economic trends on mass attitudes in the EU.

We start with the *direct economic effects* of European integration on households. Scholars have long observed that human capital factors, such as occupation or educational background, condition the effects of European integration on individuals and households (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993). Given that integration has advantaged individuals with higher levels of human capital, we expect managers to be more supportive of integration than workers, those in white collar professions more than blue collar ones, and those with more years of education than those with fewer years. Since students and young people more generally are more likely to live, work and study in other EU member countries, they should register greater support for integration than non-students and older voters.

At the same time, broader conditions within the economy as a whole should also be impactful. Most simply, we expect individuals to respond positively to positive economic trends: the faster is economic growth, the lower are inflation and unemployment, the more people are expected to have favorable attitudes toward their national government and European institutions. Somewhat more complex are broader economic trends, such as a reduced availability of well-paying unskilled jobs or an increase in inequality.

Voters typically use some *reference point* by which to evaluate national economic conditions. Studies of economic voting have found that voters' assessment of government performance is often benchmarked against international or other trends and that any reward or blame depends on a government's relative performance (Kayser and Peress, 2012). In studies of the EU, national benchmarks are often seen as the most important given strong identities with the nation state and the degree to which information about the economy is funneled through national media (De Vries, 2018). Citizens often compare national conditions to those of near neighbors, on the principle that the government should be able to keep up with or exceed the performance of other similar countries (Anderson, 1998; Kritzinger, 2003). In the European case, prior research suggests this should take the form of comparing the EU status quo with an imagined national alternative state of non-membership (De Vries, 2018: 36–37), or the perceived functioning of

government on the European level compared to the national one (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000).

In the case of macro-economic performance, such benchmarks would take the form of comparing national trends to those of the EU as a whole. If voters know that the economy is doing poorly due to exogenous shocks – a global financial crisis, for example – they may be less likely to hold national or EU-level politicians responsible. On a different dimension, the relevant comparison for some might be the recent past: how national conditions compare to those of previous years. Citizens in a country where unemployment rates are usually above 10% are going to be more satisfied with an 8% unemployment rate than citizens in a country where the baseline is closer to 5%. Based on these theoretical premises, we therefore expect citizens to be influenced by their national economy's performance relative to *both* the performance of the EU as a whole and the performance of their own country in the recent past (Rohrschneider and Loveless, 2010).

The role of macroeconomic and distributional factors in public opinion is complicated and has given rise to an enormous literature and major controversies.<sup>1</sup> Our point here is two-fold: economic factors affect attitudes toward European integration, and they may also affect how individuals form political identities. Economic difficulties have long been associated with a resurgence of nationalism, and with a “populist” hostility to elites and to perceived foreign domination. The interplay of economic and socio-ideological considerations is complex, and we do not deny the importance of the latter; but we do argue for the independent and inter-connected relevance of the former as well.

## Empirical strategy

We evaluate the economic determinants of public support for integration by analyzing Eurobarometer surveys taken between 1995 and 2018. The Eurobarometer surveys are extensive face-to-face interviews with EU citizens, which ask hundreds of questions in a respondent's native language. Since it was established, the Eurobarometer has consistently asked a number of questions about various dimensions of integration, which can be used to evaluate public support for the EU. The surveys are conducted in all EU member states, and span a long period of time, allowing us to evaluate both aggregate trends across countries as well as change over time.

To conduct the analysis, we use the Eurobarometer Representation Dataset (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2020), which aggregates Eurobarometer survey data over the period of interest. In order to assess support for different dimensions of integration, we examine responses to two different questions that have been consistently asked by the Eurobarometer since the 1990s. The first question asks respondents to indicate whether they view EU membership as a “good thing” a “bad thing” or “neither good nor bad”. The second question asks respondents to indicate whether they are “satisfied” with the way democracy works in the EU. Together, these two indicators provide a sense both of strong support for the EU



regime as well as a softer measure of the EU's performance. Since the EU's legitimacy rests much more on output, or solving common problems, than input, or the quality of democracy (Scharpf, 2009), and regime support is more politically contested and conceptually ambiguous (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016: 416), assessing the effects of economic factors on support for the EU is particularly important. We compile one survey wave per year from 1995–2018. However, since in some years or survey waves either the membership or democracy question was not asked, there is still some variability in longitudinal coverage.<sup>2</sup> We transform answers to both questions into binary indicators. Those expressing affirmative support for integration (whether membership or satisfaction with democracy) are coded as a “1” while those not expressing support are coded a “0”.

The dataset we analyze pools Eurobarometer results from all EU countries across more than two decades of survey waves (17 years for EU membership and 21 for EU democracy). With multi-level survey data where individual responses are nested within both countries and survey waves, three standard regression models are available. The first is to simply pool the data and calculate population-averaged effects adjusted for clustering by country. However, this approach does not adequately account for the hierarchical and longitudinal nature of the data (Gelman, 2006). A second, “fixed effects” approach adds country and year dummy variables to the model, which absorb all time-invariant unobserved factors at these levels of the analysis (Allison, 2009). However, fixed effects approaches are not generally seen as appropriate for pooled data where individuals are nested within countries and years (Clark and Linzer, 2015; Plümper and Troeger, 2019) and where the explanatory variables of interest include *both* individual and country-level effects (Bryan and Jenkins, 2013; Giesselmann and Schmidt-Catran, 2019). The third option, which we employ, is a multi-level “random effects” model with random intercepts for country and country-year (Gelman, 2006). A multi-level model makes possible an analysis of *both* between and within unit variation while still taking into account the nested structure of the data (Bell and Jones, 2015). This approach is increasingly used in pooled cross-sectional studies such as this one that explore survey data that are nested within both countries and years (Abou-Chadi and Wagner, 2019; Schmidt-Catran and Fairbrother, 2016). It is also seen as ideal for analyzing slow changing unit effects as well as dynamic causal relationships that involve co-variates on the individual and country-levels (Bryan and Jenkins, 2013; Imai and Kim, 2019). However, since Hausman test results suggest that the panel-specific error terms are correlated with the regressors, we also run all of the models with country fixed effects, reporting results in the Online Appendix. For the most part, this alternative model specification produces the same or similar results.

Although the dependent variable has a binary structure, we opt to run multi-level ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions. This choice is motivated by two factors. First, linear probability models are easier to interpret than nonlinear models, especially when dealing with hierarchically structured data (Angrist, 2001).<sup>3</sup> Second, the small number of countries analyzed in most of the

models ( $n = 15$ ) makes the calculation of three-level multi-level models computationally difficult using logistic regression. But recognizing that other modeling choices could be justified, in the fixed effects specification, we use a two-level logit model with individuals nested within country-years and fixed effects for country and year. In order to assess the pattern over a longer time period, we limit the analysis to EU-15 countries. However, as a robustness check, we also run one of the models with the EU-25 during the period 2005–2018. To address differences in country populations and response rates, we include country weights that are calculated by the Eurobarometer. Additional information about the empirical strategy is available in the Online Appendix.

### *Empirical analysis*

Models 1–8 probe the relationship between economic factors and support for the EU, analyzing EU-15 countries from 1995–2018. In Model 1, we evaluate the effects of an individual's occupation, education, gender, and age on support for the EU. To establish an indicator of employment status, we use a Eurobarometer question asking about current employment to create a dummy variable of whether a respondent is unemployed. We also construct dummies for 12 different occupational categories: professional, owner, manager, skilled blue collar, routine blue collar, farmer or fisher, service sector job, white collar sales or desk job, student, retired, homemaker and unemployed. Service sector worker is excluded in the regression analysis, since respondents in this category indicate support for the EU at levels close to the overall average. For education, we use a question asking respondents how old they were when they stopped formal schooling. We code people into four categories: those with low education who stopped school before age 18; those with medium education (stopped school at age 18); those with high education (stopped school between 19 and 23); and those with advanced education (stopped school after 24). In the regression analysis, those with medium levels of education are used as the reference category. We include year dummies to account for unobserved change over time.

The results are reported in Table 1 (Models 1a and 1b). A strong link exists between individuals' positions in the labor market and their support for the EU regime. Professionals, managers, and owners are more likely to express support, while those in blue collar jobs are less likely. Moreover, being unemployed is associated with less support for EU membership and satisfaction with EU democracy. A similar pattern exists when we examine educational factors. On average, individuals with fewer years of schooling are less likely to express support for EU membership than those who stayed in school longer. Those with low levels of education are also more likely to express dissatisfaction with EU democracy. Finally, women are less likely to indicate support for EU membership and older people less likely to indicate support or satisfaction across both measures.

Model 2 adds a number of country-level variables to the analysis. To evaluate macro-economic performance, we include a country's annual unemployment rate,

**Table 1.** Determinants of support for the EU, Models 1–4 (multi-level OLS).

	“EU Membership is a good thing”				“Satisfied with EU Democracy”			
	(1a)	(2a)	(3a)	(4a)	(1b)	(2b)	(3b)	(4b)
Professional	0.0871*** (0.000)	0.0871*** (0.000)	0.0868*** (0.000)	0.0867*** (0.000)	0.0449*** (0.000)	0.0450*** (0.000)	0.0451*** (0.000)	0.0450*** (0.000)
Manager	0.0811*** (0.000)	0.0811*** (0.000)	0.0810*** (0.000)	0.0809*** (0.000)	0.0395*** (0.000)	0.0395*** (0.000)	0.0396*** (0.000)	0.0395*** (0.000)
Business owner	0.0241 (0.062)	0.0241 (0.062)	0.0240 (0.062)	0.0240 (0.063)	0.0127 (0.103)	0.0127 (0.104)	0.0126 (0.107)	0.0126 (0.107)
Farmer or fisherperson	-0.00948 (0.556)	-0.00970 (0.546)	-0.0101 (0.528)	-0.0102 (0.527)	-0.00515 (0.762)	-0.00536 (0.752)	-0.00528 (0.753)	-0.00543 (0.748)
Skilled blue collar	-0.0251* (0.036)	-0.0250* (0.037)	-0.0250* (0.037)	-0.0250* (0.037)	-0.0169*** (0.004)	-0.0168*** (0.004)	-0.0169*** (0.004)	-0.0169*** (0.004)
Routine blue collar	-0.0339* (0.028)	-0.0338* (0.029)	-0.0338* (0.029)	-0.0339* (0.029)	-0.0135 (0.594)	-0.0134 (0.597)	-0.0135 (0.595)	-0.0135 (0.594)
Routine white collar	0.0444*** (0.000)	0.0444*** (0.000)	0.0444*** (0.000)	0.0444*** (0.000)	0.0376*** (0.000)	0.0377*** (0.000)	0.0376*** (0.000)	0.0376*** (0.000)
Student	0.138*** (0.000)	0.138*** (0.000)	0.138*** (0.000)	0.138*** (0.000)	0.104*** (0.000)	0.104*** (0.000)	0.104*** (0.000)	0.104*** (0.000)
Retired	0.0263 (0.114)	0.0263 (0.114)	0.0264 (0.112)	0.0264 (0.113)	0.0130 (0.379)	0.0130 (0.379)	0.0130 (0.382)	0.0130 (0.382)
Homemaker	0.0268* (0.020)	0.0268* (0.020)	0.0268* (0.019)	0.0268* (0.020)	0.0258 (0.114)	0.0258 (0.114)	0.0258 (0.115)	0.0257 (0.115)
Unemployed	-0.0336 (0.109)	-0.0335 (0.111)	-0.0336 (0.109)	-0.0336 (0.109)	-0.0557*** (0.005)	-0.0552*** (0.005)	-0.0552*** (0.005)	-0.0552*** (0.005)
Low education	-0.0655*** (0.000)	-0.0655*** (0.000)	-0.0655*** (0.000)	-0.0655*** (0.000)	-0.0368*** (0.000)	-0.0368*** (0.000)	-0.0368*** (0.000)	-0.0369*** (0.000)
High education	0.0702*** (0.000)	0.0702*** (0.000)	0.0702*** (0.000)	0.0702*** (0.000)	0.0110 (0.268)	0.0109 (0.272)	0.0109 (0.275)	0.0109 (0.274)

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

	"EU Membership is a good thing"			"Satisfied with EU Democracy"				
	(1a)	(2a)	(3a)	(4a)	(1b)	(2b)	(3b)	(4b)
Advanced education	0.130*** (0.000)	0.130*** (0.000)	0.130*** (0.000)	0.130*** (0.000)	0.00689 (0.684)	0.00685 (0.686)	0.00663 (0.696)	0.00675 (0.691)
Gender	-0.0534*** (0.000)	-0.0534*** (0.000)	-0.0534*** (0.000)	-0.0534*** (0.000)	0.000986 (0.899)	0.000992 (0.898)	0.000998 (0.898)	0.000997 (0.898)
Age	-0.000801*** (0.000)	-0.000800*** (0.000)	-0.000803*** (0.000)	-0.000803*** (0.000)	-0.00113* (0.043)	-0.00113* (0.043)	-0.00113* (0.043)	-0.00113* (0.043)
Median income (€'000s)	0.000848 (0.732)	0.000848 (0.732)	-0.000976 (0.628)	-0.00208 (0.274)	0.00187 (0.327)	0.00187 (0.327)	0.00301* (0.049)	0.00247 (0.141)
Population	-0.000677 (0.619)	-0.000677 (0.619)	-0.00135 (0.320)	-0.00132 (0.369)	-0.000770 (0.206)	-0.000770 (0.206)	-0.000639 (0.178)	-0.000598 (0.246)
EU budget % GDP	0.0202 (0.096)	0.0202 (0.096)	0.0150 (0.192)	0.0169 (0.145)	0.0215 (0.057)	0.0215 (0.057)	0.00957 (0.373)	0.0150 (0.145)
National institutional quality	0.0185 (0.184)	0.0185 (0.184)	0.0189 (0.127)	0.0148 (0.220)	-0.00767 (0.638)	-0.00767 (0.638)	0.00248 (0.864)	-0.0110 (0.504)
National unemployment	-0.00464 (0.133)	-0.00464 (0.133)			-0.0174*** (0.000)	-0.0174*** (0.000)		
Average national unemployment			0.00733 (0.483)				0.00669 (0.298)	
National differential			-0.00864*** (0.001)				-0.0205*** (0.000)	
EU unemployment				-0.0173*** (0.001)				-0.0329*** (0.000)
EU differential				-0.00615* (0.031)				-0.0171*** (0.000)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Observations	254,259	254,259	254,259	254,259	285,064	285,064	285,064	285,064

Note: p-values in parentheses: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

as reported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Several additional EU-linked variables are also examined. These include a country's net receipts from the EU budget, as some countries benefit more than others from EU spending (Anderson and Reichert, 1995). We add an indicator for population because small countries are overrepresented in the Council of Ministers and European Parliament (Rodden, 2002) and since the comparative benefit of creating EU-level public goods decreases with population size. We also include several controls. Since economic development may diminish the salience of utilitarian calculations as citizens become more concerned with "post-materialist" issues such as the quality of representation (Inglehart, 1977), we include a measure for per capita income, also provided by the IMF. To examine the effects of institutional quality, which has been seen as conditioning citizens' perceptions of the EU (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000), we use Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

Columns 2 and 6 of Table 1 report the results (Models 2a and 2b). Although lower levels of unemployment are not statistically associated with support for membership, individuals living in countries with lower unemployment rates do, on average, express more satisfaction with EU democracy. Most of the other country-level variables, however, are not statistically significant.

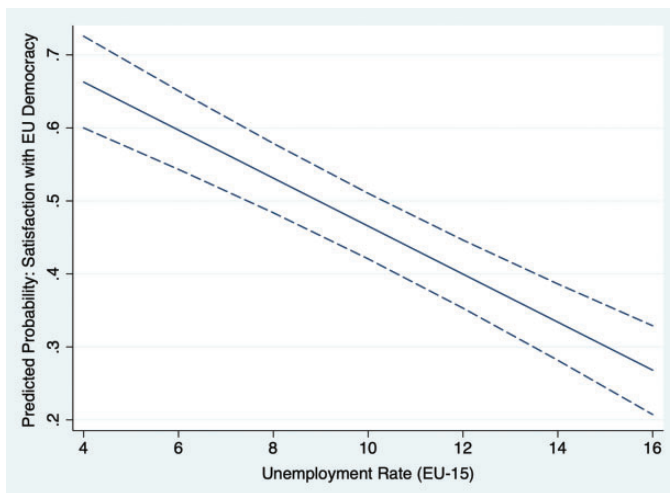
One might wonder if the effect of national economic performance on public support for the EU depends on benchmarking – that is, the relative performance of the economy compared to a country's historical economic performance or other countries in the EU (De Vries, 2018; Kayser and Peress, 2012). Model 3 examines the extent to which public support is conditioned by a country's relative economic performance compared to earlier trends. To provide a proxy for historical performance, we add a variable, labeled "average national unemployment" which indicates a country's average unemployment rate during the period examined (1995–2018). We create a measure called "national differential", which is the difference between a country's average national unemployment rate and its unemployment rate in a particular year. Model 4 assesses whether the EU's economic performance and a country's performance compared to it matters. To make this assessment, we examine two different measures of unemployment: the first is the weighted annual unemployment rate in the EU as a whole ("EU unemployment"); the second is the "EU differential" – that is, the difference between a country's national unemployment rate and the EU average (De Vries, 2018: 36). In order to assess the effect of the EU's overall economic performance, we do not include year dummies in Model 4.

As can be seen in Table 1 (Models 3a and 3b), for both dependent variables, support for the EU was lower when a country's unemployment rate was higher than its historical average. Although a country's average economic performance over the length of the panel does not appear to systematically affect public views, when a country's annual unemployment rate rises above the panel average, the public views the EU in a more negative light. Support for the EU was also lower where national unemployment was higher than the EU average (Models 4a and 4b). In addition to this relative effect, the unemployment rate in the EU as a whole

is negatively associated with public views about the EU for both dependent variables.

Figure 1 plots an individual's probability of expressing satisfaction with the EU at different levels of EU-15 unemployment. A one percentage point increase in the EU unemployment rate, from its average of 9 to 10, predicts a 3.5 percentage point lower probability that a respondent will express satisfaction with EU democracy, controlling for other factors. The effect is less substantial, but still significant for EU membership, with a one-percentage point increase in unemployment associated with a two-percentage point lower probability of supporting EU membership. When we examine unemployment on its own, removing all other variables, the relationship also remains, suggesting that these results are not an artifact of multicollinearity. These results build on earlier findings that macro-economic factors shape citizen support for the EU through benchmarking (De Vries, 2018: 33–55; Hobolt and De Vries, 2016: 421–423).

Has the importance of economic factors declined over time? As discussed in the previous section, some scholars contend that utilitarian considerations matter less now that citizens have received many of the economic gains from European cooperation and the focus of European integration has turned increasingly to political questions that impinge more directly on national identity. Models 5–6 examine whether the influence of economic factors has significantly changed since the 1990s. We split the time series in two and run separate analyses for responses from 1995–2004 and 2005–2018. We include all of the individual and country-level variables from Model 4. Since we are interested in assessing the EU-wide economic performance across the two time periods, we again include the EU unemployment indicator and a country's unemployment differential while



**Figure 1.** The relationship between EU-wide unemployment and satisfaction with EU democracy.

excluding year fixed effects. If the importance of utilitarian considerations is, in fact declining, then we would expect education and occupation to be less substantively significant in the second period compared to the first. We would also expect to see the importance of overall macro-economic conditions, such as unemployment, decline between the two periods.

Table 2 reports the results. On the individual level, most of the occupational and educational variables predict public support as expected across both periods. The association between white collar and higher skilled occupations and more support for EU membership is stronger during the first period compared to the second. However, these occupations are a more consistent predictor of satisfaction with EU democracy during the second period. Overall, economic conditions also seem to matter. The EU unemployment rate is negatively associated with both dependent variables across both periods. However, the EU differential (the difference between unemployment at the national and EU levels) is only significant during the second period. This suggests that the relationship between macro-economic conditions and support for the EU may have strengthened since the early 2000s. More broadly, there appears to be little indication that utilitarian considerations have become less important over time. If anything, their relevance may have increased over the last decade as the EU has undergone a period of sustained crisis and uncertainty.

In Model 7, we assess the extent to which the predictive power of economic factors declines when we add individuals' political ideologies and identities to our models. To measure ideology, we use a question about political ideology which asks respondents to place themselves on a 10-point scale from left to right. We recode this question to indicate responses on the far left of the scale (a 1 or 2), and those on the far right of the scale (a 9 or 10). We then include both indicators as dummies for whether individuals place themselves on the far right or far left. To measure collective identity, we use a Eurobarometer question asking respondents how they identify politically: exclusively with their country of citizenship, jointly with their country and the EU, or exclusively as European. We create a dummy variable indicating whether a respondent identifies exclusively with their country of citizenship. Since ideology and identity are not included in every survey, and not all respondents indicate their ideology or identity, we analyze a smaller number of responses for these models with some gaps in time. To account for longitudinal trends, we add year fixed effects back into the model.

Table 3 reports the results for Model 7. Right-wing ideology is associated with less support for the EU regime across both dependent variables, while left-wing ideology predicts less satisfaction with EU democracy. The relationship between political identity and public support for the EU is stronger. Having an exclusive national identity strongly predicts both less support for membership and satisfaction with EU democracy. This association is statistically and substantively significant, helping account for the identitarian focus in much of the contemporary literature examining public opinion about the EU. But notably, most of the economic variables retain their significance when we control for identity and ideology.

**Table 2.** Support for the EU across two time periods (multi-level OLS).

	"EU membership is a good thing"		"Satisfied with EU Democracy"	
	(5a)	(6a)	(5b)	(6b)
Professional	0.111*** (0.000)	0.0749*** (0.001)	0.0423** (0.001)	0.0496*** (0.000)
Manager	0.0747*** (0.000)	0.0922*** (0.001)	0.0145 (0.396)	0.0531*** (0.000)
Business owner	0.0175 (0.201)	0.0346 (0.084)	-0.00293 (0.833)	0.0227* (0.017)
Farmer or fisherperson	-0.0625* (0.013)	0.0371 (0.187)	-0.0287 (0.400)	0.00851 (0.487)
Skilled blue collar	-0.0262* (0.010)	-0.0268 (0.148)	-0.0232 (0.123)	-0.0156 (0.107)
Routine blue collar	-0.0543*** (0.000)	-0.00125 (0.958)	-0.0181 (0.413)	-0.0134 (0.686)
Routine white collar	0.0400*** (0.000)	0.0505*** (0.000)	0.0217 (0.204)	0.0469*** (0.000)
Student	0.129*** (0.000)	0.148*** (0.000)	0.0798*** (0.000)	0.113*** (0.000)
Retired	0.0119 (0.312)	0.0472 (0.069)	0.00677 (0.661)	0.0170 (0.332)
Homemaker	0.0230* (0.050)	0.0263 (0.080)	0.0283*** (0.001)	0.0180 (0.400)
Unemployed	-0.0469* (0.030)	-0.0149 (0.538)	-0.0674* (0.048)	-0.0476* (0.013)
Low education	-0.0550*** (0.000)	-0.0813*** (0.000)	-0.0148** (0.007)	-0.0517*** (0.000)
High education	0.0655*** (0.000)	0.0749*** (0.000)	0.00287 (0.771)	0.0139 (0.213)
Advanced education	0.115*** (0.000)	0.144*** (0.000)	0.00213 (0.834)	0.00687 (0.763)
Gender	-0.0508*** (0.000)	-0.0573*** (0.000)	0.00376 (0.662)	-0.000943 (0.915)
Age	-0.000931*** (0.000)	-0.000639 (0.117)	-0.00158** (0.003)	-0.000878 (0.133)
EU unemployment	-0.0253*** (0.001)	-0.0255*** (0.000)	-0.0382*** (0.000)	-0.0302*** (0.000)
EU differential	-0.00328 (0.370)	-0.00726** (0.002)	0.00239 (0.608)	-0.0190*** (0.000)
Median income (€'000s)	-0.00517* (0.037)	0.00277 (0.112)	0.00298 (0.193)	-0.000999 (0.315)
Population	-0.000970 (0.460)	-0.000768 (0.538)	-0.000340 (0.642)	-0.00115 (0.106)

(continued)



**Table 2.** Continued.

	"EU membership is a good thing"		"Satisfied with EU Democracy"	
	(5a)	(6a)	(5b)	(6b)
EU budget % GDP	0.00449 (0.476)	-0.0362 (0.183)	0.0156 (0.264)	0.00832 (0.422)
National institutional quality	0.0101 (0.512)	-0.0130 (0.313)	-0.00307 (0.890)	-0.00745 (0.469)
Year fixed effects	No	No	No	No
Observations	150,486	103,773	105,985	179,079

Note:  $p$ -values in parentheses: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Model 5 includes years 1995–2004; Model 6 covers 2005–2011 for EU membership and 2005–2018 for EU Democracy.

As before, an individual's position in the labor market predicts support for membership and satisfaction with democracy. While the relationship between unemployment and support for membership is now weaker, the national unemployment rate relative to the EU average remains inversely correlated with satisfaction with democracy. As a robustness check, we run the regressions only with respondents who have exclusive national identities or rightwing ideologies. Across both dependent variables, most of the economic variables remain highly significant. However important national identity may be in shaping support for the EU, its importance does not preclude a significant role for economic determinants.

Model 8 queries the extent to which national identity itself is a function of economic factors. As discussed above, there are long-standing historical and theoretical precedents for the association of economic difficulties with resurgent nationalism and hostility to foreigners. There is reason to believe that this may be operative with respect to attitudes toward the EU, in the context of more than a decade of very serious economic problems. To make this assessment, we move our dummy variable for exclusive national identity to the left side of the regression equation and assess whether individual-level occupational and education characteristics and macro-economic conditions are associated with national identity. In addition to examining the relationship for EU-15 countries from 1995–2018, we also assess EU-25 countries from 2004–2018. We run models with and without year fixed effects.

The regression results are reported in Table 4. The individual-level economic indicators are consistent predictors of national identity, reflecting the endogenous relationship between economic interests and collective identities. Professionals, students and those with college or post-graduate education are significantly less likely to identify exclusively with their nation. By contrast, those with fewer years of education, the unemployed, and workers in blue collar professions are all much more likely to express a strong form of national identity. Put differently, those individuals who have economically benefited most from the process of European

**Table 3.** Support for the EU: Economic and identitarian factors (multi-level OLS).

	EU membership (7a)	Democracy EU (7b)
Professional	0.0886*** (0.000)	0.0183* (0.028)
Manager	0.0655*** (0.000)	0.0278* (0.015)
Business owner	0.0249* (0.023)	0.0128 (0.261)
Farmer or fisherperson	-0.0634 (0.054)	-0.0183 (0.592)
Skilled blue collar	-0.0229* (0.014)	-0.00926 (0.185)
Routine blue collar	-0.0323** (0.007)	0.00593 (0.793)
Routine white collar	0.0374*** (0.001)	0.0316*** (0.001)
Student	0.115*** (0.000)	0.0759*** (0.000)
Retired	0.0356* (0.014)	0.0168 (0.244)
Homemaker	0.0458*** (0.000)	0.0310* (0.033)
Unemployed	-0.0228 (0.241)	-0.0494* (0.022)
Low education	-0.0343*** (0.000)	-0.0170*** (0.000)
High education	0.0503*** (0.000)	0.00125 (0.884)
Advanced education	0.0850*** (0.000)	-0.0130 (0.409)
Gender	-0.0436*** (0.000)	0.0138 (0.061)
Age	-0.000471* (0.026)	-0.00107 (0.117)
EU unemployment	-0.00737 (0.809)	-0.0366 (0.069)
EU differential	-0.00480 (0.115)	-0.0163*** (0.000)
Median income (€'000s)	-0.00241 (0.283)	0.00166 (0.288)
Population	-0.000842 (0.442)	-0.000648 (0.240)
EU budget % GDP	0.00888 (0.196)	0.0215 (0.055)

(continued)

**Table 3.** Continued.

	EU membership (7a)	Democracy EU (7b)
National institutional quality	0.0103 (0.424)	-0.0195 (0.227)
Exclusive national identity	-0.293*** (0.000)	-0.194*** (0.000)
Right-wing ideology	-0.0419** (0.003)	-0.0545*** (0.000)
Left-wing ideology	-0.0230 (0.195)	-0.0650*** (0.000)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Observations	128,990	142,385

Note:  $p$ -values in parentheses: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

integration, and suffered least from the region's economic difficulties, are among the least likely to identify in exclusively national terms. Additionally, in three of the four model specifications, a higher unemployment rate is positively associated with having an exclusive national identity. In the EU-25, unemployment predicts higher nationalism in models with and without year fixed effects. In the EU-15, unemployment is significant in the model without year fixed effects. In two of the four models, being in a country with higher per capita income also predicts a lower probability of indicating an exclusive national identity.

The unemployment relationship is illustrated in Figure 2, which reports the predicted probabilities for holding an exclusive national identity at different rates of unemployment in the EU-25. On average, a one-percentage point increase in the overall EU unemployment rate is associated with a two-point increase in the likelihood that an individual will have an exclusive national identity. As the EU as a whole has struggled with unemployment during the course of the Eurocrisis, these adverse economic circumstances have likely led to strengthened national identities.

## Discussion

We are hardly the first to argue that public opinion about the EU is shaped by economic factors. Indeed, during the first decade of scholarship on European public opinion, utilitarian theories were the predominant theoretical view. In recent years, a number of studies have come to similar conclusions, sometimes based on similar measures (Hobolt, 2014; Hobolt and Wrátil, 2015; Kuhn and Stoeckel, 2014; Nicoli, 2019). However, since many of these studies were focused on the global financial crisis and its aftermath, and since a range of other studies have concluded that cultural cleavages are more important determinants, it is still helpful to take stock and evaluate the long-term relationship between economic

**Table 4.** Odds of having an exclusive national identity in select country groups (multi-level OLS).

	EU-15 (8a)	EU-15 (8b)	EU-25 (8a)	EU-25 (8b)
Professional	-0.102*** (0.000)	-0.102*** (0.000)	-0.0964*** (0.000)	-0.0964*** (0.000)
Manager	-0.0814*** (0.000)	-0.0814*** (0.000)	-0.0873*** (0.000)	-0.0873*** (0.000)
Business owner	-0.0249* (0.010)	-0.0250* (0.010)	-0.0433*** (0.000)	-0.0433*** (0.000)
Farmer or fisherperson	0.0138 (0.386)	0.0137 (0.389)	0.0224 (0.195)	0.0222 (0.200)
Skilled blue collar	0.0227 (0.098)	0.0226 (0.098)	0.0125 (0.226)	0.0125 (0.227)
Routine blue collar	0.0393* (0.023)	0.0392* (0.023)	0.0387* (0.011)	0.0387* (0.011)
Routine white collar	-0.0410*** (0.000)	-0.0411*** (0.000)	-0.0451*** (0.000)	-0.0450*** (0.000)
Student	-0.0841*** (0.000)	-0.0840*** (0.000)	-0.0786*** (0.001)	-0.0785*** (0.001)
Retired	0.0290 (0.061)	0.0290 (0.061)	0.0255 (0.087)	0.0254 (0.087)
Homemaker	0.0379** (0.005)	0.0379** (0.005)	0.0426** (0.008)	0.0424** (0.008)
Unemployed	0.0551*** (0.000)	0.0551*** (0.000)	0.0607*** (0.000)	0.0608*** (0.000)
Low education	0.0940*** (0.000)	0.0940*** (0.000)	0.0990*** (0.000)	0.0989*** (0.000)
High education	-0.0665*** (0.000)	-0.0665*** (0.000)	-0.0771*** (0.000)	-0.0770*** (0.000)
Advanced education	-0.135*** (0.000)	-0.135*** (0.000)	-0.151*** (0.000)	-0.150*** (0.000)
Gender	0.0469*** (0.000)	0.0469*** (0.000)	0.0526*** (0.000)	0.0526*** (0.000)
Age	0.00120** (0.007)	0.00121** (0.007)	0.000820 (0.083)	0.000826 (0.083)
EU unemployment	0.0134*** (0.000)	0.0208 (0.242)	0.0181*** (0.000)	0.0350** (0.008)
EU differential	-0.000388 (0.822)	0.00156 (0.394)	0.00202 (0.380)	0.00230 (0.178)
Median income (€'000s)	-0.00351** (0.001)	-0.00125 (0.501)	-0.00304*** (0.000)	-0.00149 (0.126)
Population	-0.000607 (0.543)	0.000509 (0.611)	-0.000428 (0.588)	-0.000234 (0.778)
EU budget % GDP	-0.00668 (0.480)	-0.00129 (0.878)	0.00226 (0.707)	0.00324 (0.548)

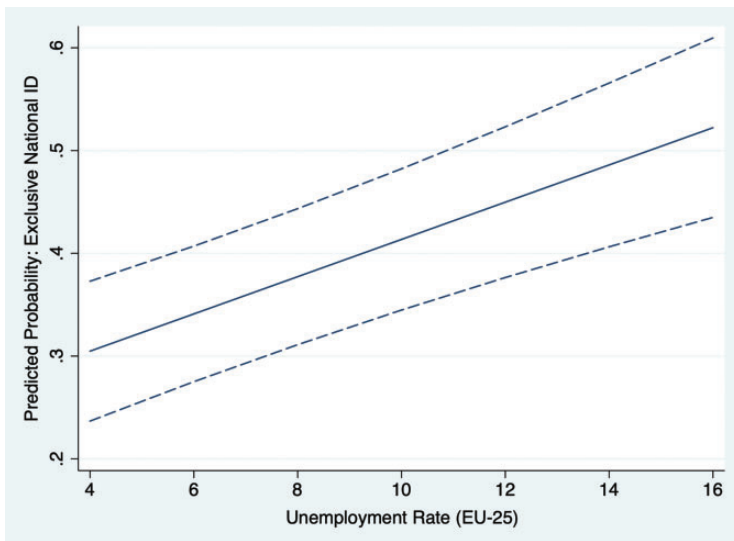
(continued)

**Table 4.** Continued.

	EU-15 (8a)	EU-15 (8b)	EU-25 (8a)	EU-25 (8b)
National institutional quality	0.0102 (0.319)	0.00646 (0.470)	0.0124 (0.188)	0.0130 (0.064)
Year fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Total observations	253,265	253,265	199,038	199,038

Note: *p*-values in parentheses: \**p* < 0.05, \*\**p* < 0.01, \*\*\**p* < 0.001.

EU Unemployment rate adjusted for country group examined; EU-15 covers 1995–2018; EU-25 covers 2004–2018.



**Figure 2.** National Identity at different levels of EU-wide unemployment.

factors and public support for integration, and economic factors and national identity.

The contribution here has been two-fold. First, we explore the question using data that cover a longer period of time than most recent studies. This, in turn, has made it possible to assess whether there has been a shift in the substantive significance of utilitarian factors over time. This includes testing economic factors on the individual and country levels, assessing the relevance of benchmarking theory, and examining the relationship between economic factors and national identity. We find a consistent pattern across the entire time series examined. Whether examining the 1990s or the more recent period, the occupational and educational groups that have been relatively advantaged by European integration remain the most supportive of the EU while those that have been relative economic losers indicate

lower levels of support. Those who are employed indicate much higher support for the EU regime than those who are unemployed. The performance of the macro-economy is also a consistent predictor of public support for the EU regime and does not appear to have declined with time. In fact, the unemployment rate, whether measured on the national or European level, or with relative or absolute measures, remains a powerful predictor of support for the EU. Such findings offer support for benchmarking theory. They also provide reason to question the prediction, found in postfunctionalist theory, that the deepening of integration and the politicization of the EU, have led public views about the EU to depend less on economic interests.

The second main contribution is to provide additional insight into the relationship between economic interests and collective identities. While many other scholars have noted the endogenous nature of national identity (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016: 421; Nicoli, 2019: 400), most previous studies have not empirically examined whether economic factors on both the individual and country level consistently predict collective political identities over extended periods of time. Other scholars have demonstrated that while the percentage of Europeans holding exclusive national identities has not significantly increased, the link between national identity and Euroskepticism has become much stronger (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2019). However, they do not examine *why* this relationship has changed, and whether economic factors at the individual or national levels may be playing a role. By showing that economic concerns themselves have a powerful impact on the collective identities that others see as determinants of European public opinion, and that this relationship is consistent over a long period of time, we provide some reason to suggest that economic factors—particularly declining macro-economic conditions in many parts of Europe, and widening gaps in economic inequality between the winners and losers of globalization—can help explain the growing strength of nationalism and the increasing success of nationalist and Eurosceptical political parties.

Finally, our article provides additional insight into the interconnected nature of economics and identity. For too long, these two sets of explanations have been treated as rival explanations, a position that is neither ontologically nor empirically justified. In this study, we have highlighted their powerful link, showing that exclusive national identities are more prevalent among the occupational and educational groups who have benefited least from European integration and within countries that have experienced comparatively worse economic performance. In calling attention to these relationships, we do not argue that economic factors are more important than identity. The fact that a person's employment status, labor market position and educational level are strongly associated with national identity does not, of course, mean that political identity is simply a function of economic circumstances. However, it does suggest that identity is shaped in part by economic factors and cannot be viewed as an alternative to a utilitarian calculus, just as utilitarian calculations cannot be fully separated from a person's ideology or collective identity.

This article represents one piece of evidence for the sources of European attitudes, using one dataset. The measures we have examined are, by their nature, limited. The attitudes we explore focus on current features of the EU rather than on more forward-looking views about the desired direction of European politics. And it should be clear that the nature of the data renders it impossible to make clearly identified causal claims, which would require, among many other things, tracing the same respondents over time. Nonetheless, we believe that we have provided evidence that strongly suggests the continued importance of macroeconomic and individual economic factors in shaping both Europeans' attitudes toward European integration as well as their propensity to form identities rooted primarily in the nation.

The future of European integration depends importantly on European public opinion. Public opinion in turn depends on the macroeconomic performance of Europe's economies, and on how the fruits of economic growth are distributed in the population. The bad news is that if Europe continues to stagnate economically, and if the fortunes of routine and semi-skilled workers continue to decline, the European project will become ever less popular as political entrepreneurs mobilize around this discontent. The good news is that government, and European policies to stimulate growth and to make its effects more widely felt throughout the population, can in fact restore the mass public's faith in European integration and European democracy.

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### Notes

1. For two important bookends to the analysis see Powell and Whitten (1993) and Ansolabehere et al. (2014).
2. For instance, the membership question spans 1995–2011, while the question on satisfaction with European Democracy is asked between 1997–2018 but excluding 2008. All told, we examine 17 waves for EU membership and 21 waves for EU democracy.
3. Using OLS models with limited binary dependent variables is now common practice in political science, especially where the primary concern is assessing causal effects. See, for instance, Hainmueller and Hangartner (2013) and Besley and Reynal-Querol (2011).

### Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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