Master's Thesis

Learning through hard times

The impact of Euroscepticism on the European Commission as a learning organization

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Abstract

Organizational learning is an increasingly important aspect for organizations working in a globalised and rapidly changing environment. Several shocks can originate from the outside and organizations should be ready to immediately adapt to the new conditions. Together with the financial crisis, Euroscepticism can be considered as one of the major shocks which has concerned the European Union in the last decades. The implications of the Eurosceptic phenomenon are several. Nevertheless, the external environment is not only a dangerous habitat. It is also a rich source of knowledge and information, hence a very precious contribution to the learning process. So, what happens in terms of learning when the external environment becomes hostile to the organization? This research assesses what influence Euroscepticism has in terms of organizational learning on the European Commission. The theoretical model applied was elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016) on schools as learning organizations and identifies 7 dimensions of the learning organization. An adaptation of the survey created by the OECD (2018) has been distributed and completed by 45 Directorates General's staff members with the aim to test the model employed and to assess staff's perception of the impact of Euroscepticism on their organization's learning process. Data originating from this source have been analysed through a mixed-method approach; in fact, both quantitative and qualitative data have been gathered and analysed. The purpose of the analysis is descriptive. The findings of the analysis show that, on the one hand, the model used, originally employed for schools as learning organizations, proves to be applicable to the case. On the other hand, Euroscepticism is not perceived to have a great impact on none of the 7 dimensions of the learning organization which constitute the model. However, with two of them, the relationship is "moderate", contrarily to the rest of the dimensions which are perceived to have a "limited" relationship with Euroscepticism. Consequently, the influence of Euroscepticism on the EC as a learning organization is verified only for two of the 7 dimensions. This research opens new avenues for both theory and research in the direction of a more in-depth study of the organizational learning dynamics of European institutions and for the elaboration of more precise theories and models that explain their interactions with the external environment.

Keywords: Learning organization, Euroscepticism, external environment, European Commission, Directorate General

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List of Acronyms

CSB – Common Source Bias

DG – Directorate General

- CONNECT – Communications Networks, Content and Technology
- COMM – Communication
- DEVCO - International Cooperation and Development
- DGT - Translation
- DIGIT - Informatics
- ENER - Energy
- EUROSTAT – Eurostat, European Statistics
- FISMA - Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union
- GROW - Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
- HR – Human Resources and Security
- INEA - Innovation and Networks Executive Agency
- JRC – Joint Research Centre
- MOVE – Mobility and Transport
- REGIO – Regional and Urban Policy
- RTD – Research and Innovation
- SCIC – Interpretation
- TAXUD – Taxation and Customs Union
- TRADE – Trade

DLOQ – Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire

OLM – Organizational Learning Mechanism

SLO – Schools as Learning Organizations

CHAPTER 1
Introduction

1.1 Motivation and topic

Learning is one of the abilities that has enabled human kind to survive and evolve. Just like individuals, organizations need to learn from stimuli coming from their external environment (Buelens, Broeck, Vanderheyden, Kreitner, & Kinicki, 2006). In the private sector, organizations need to undertake this process so to create competitive advantage (Senge, 1997). In this sense, learning is seen as a strong strategic asset (Buelens et al, 2006). However, learning is not important only within the private context, it is a pivotal feature of public organizations, as well. In fact, the consistent and continuous environmental changes that characterise the public context require governments, and public organizations more broadly, to adapt to those changes, elaborating an appropriate response to new inputs (Roberts, 2016; Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). Although public administrations have always learned, nowadays the process is even more critical and needs to be continuous, as the probability that unpredicted shocks and sudden changes happen has appreciably increased (Roberts, 2016). Organizations that present the above-mentioned features are known as “learning organizations”, an expression which has been firstly coined by Senge (1997) in his seminal work “The Fifth Discipline”. A wide literature has been produced concerning learning organizations and several definitions have been formulated. This theoretical production includes the work by Kools and Stoll (2016) that added two dimensions to the 5 initially defined by Senge (1997), listing 7 characteristics that a learning organization should have. As for now, there is no hard definition of what organizational learning is, but a blueprint can be identified (Treasury Board of Canada, 2007).Although no perfect learning organization exists, learning processes can be individuated in many public sector organizations. Within the European Union, for instance, there are many examples of how learning has played an important role in different situations, such as in the integration process or the reform of the pension system. However, no general agreement has been reached on what theory explains best the learning path of the EU (Zito & Schout, 2009). In addition to that, the link between crisis, learning and change has been analysed by Kamkhaji and Radaelli (2017) in the context of the economic crisis that affected the eurozone in 2009-2010. Here, learning processes have been studied as a way to provide a response to an external shock that challenged the entire Union. Nevertheless, in contrast with other policy learning theories, in that study learning represents a phase which follows temporally the decision-making process. In fact, according to the authors, during crises external contingencies push to rapidly take action, and sense-making and feedbacks concern the last step of the learning process.

In this historical moment, the EU has not completely recovered from the financial crisis

and it is experiencing other criticisms, such as the migration phenomenon or the legitimacy crisis. This last issue is not a novelty for the EU, nevertheless, it is gaining *momentum* on the European political scene like never before (Ultan & Ornek, 2015). In fact, as a result of the European Parliament elections in 2014, almost one third of the elected MPs belonged to Eurosceptic parties[1] and some of them entered the EP for the first time with a strong anti-establishment identity, like the Italian 5 Stars Movement or the German Alternative für Deutschland (BBC, 2014). Moreover, one of the original founders of the EU registered the victory of an extreme-right party: in France, Marine le Pen's Front National, obtained 24 seats in the EP (Spiegel & Carnegy, 2014). The strength of some Eurosceptic parties was confirmed in May 2019 EP elections that saw "right wing and nationalist parties" gain "a sizeable number of seats in the European Parliament. In Italy, France, Poland and Hungary they were even in the majority" (Schulz, 2019). Without any doubt, the rise of Euroscepticism can be considered as a consequence of the frustration of European citizens for the failure of some EU policies (Treib, 2014). However, its size and influence are so important in the political scenario that Euroscepticism can be seen as a crisis in itself (Rood J. , 2017). More precisely, it is a crisis of both input and output legitimacy, as it originates from the lack of ability of the EU to deliver, but also from the decrease of direct support of the EU citizens towards the European institutions (Genschel & Zangl, 2014). The legitimacy crisis as it has configurated since 2014 EP's elections, represents a shock in the external environment of the European Union. Such shock, based on the theory, is expected to have affected the way the EU, and more precisely the European Commission, develops its learning process. In fact, learning cannot be conceived without considering the external environment and the relationship between the context and the organization itself (Kools & Stoll, 2016). This research assesses if and in which way Euroscepticism has indeed influenced the EU as a learning organization. The analysis focuses on the organizational level of the learning process, hence leaving aside the individual and group level. In fact, what is revolutionary of the theories concerning the learning organization is that learning is considered as a feature of the organization itself, rather than the product of a process individually undertaken by its members or its components (Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). Considering the EC as a learning organization and assessing this through the application of Kools and Stoll's (2016) 7-dimension model, as well as focusing on Euroscepticism as an external factor that can influence learning represent the main innovations introduced by this research. Furthermore, the analysis is based on an original dataset, developed in the framework of this thesis.

[1] Political parties that are critical towards the European integration process or EU's actions and policies (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002).

1.2 Research objectives and research question

Through the analysis of the perception European Commission's staff members have of their organization's learning process, the impact of Euroscepticism on the EC as a learning organization is assessed. In testing this, the level to which the EC can be considered a learning organization is analysed, too. The overarching research question that underpins the study is:

What is the impact of Euroscepticism on the European Commission as a learning organization?

The dependent variable is the EC as a learning organization (that here is often employed as synonym of organizational learning within the EC, as explained in the following chapter), while the independent variable is Euroscepticism. The path towards the answer is supported by partial theoretical research questions:

1. What does the literature state about the learning organization?
2. What does the literature state about Euroscepticism?
3. What is the theoretical relationship between the learning organization and Euroscepticism?

The research focuses specifically on the European Commission. This choice is based on the idea that considering the whole EU would lead to inconsistent results, due to the extreme complexity of its organizational structure. In fact, the multi-level nature of the EU's decision-making process renders the outcomes of learning more uncertain and more dependent on the decisions or vetoes of the other levels of the hierarchy (Schout & Zito, 2009). Moreover, this choice is taken in the light of the role of the Commission as the executive body of the EU and of its task of representing the organization's interests. Differently, taking into consideration the European Parliament or the Council, would introduce party-based or state-based dynamics that would spoil the findings of the research. Another important aspect considered is the role the EC plays in the EU's strategy elaboration and implementation, as well as its pivotal nature of executive body of the EU. Most importantly, the EC has the task to evaluate EU's policies (European Commission, 2019c) and evaluation is the stage of strategic management where learning occurs (George & Desmidt, 2014). For those reasons, it is deemed particularly important to deepen the impact Euroscepticism has on EC's organizational learning. The theoretical premise to this study is that the EU can be considered a learning organization. As observed above, some literature has been produced on the topic (Kamkhaji & Radaelli, 2017; Schout & Zito, 2009). In addition to that, Malek and Hilkermeier (2001) highlight the non-monolithic nature of the European Commission as a learning organization, due to the paramount role played by its numerous subunits, notably the DGs. In this sense, the subunits'

way of thinking and acting influences organizational learning. However, Schout (2009) points out the increase in terms of horizontal co-ordination capacities which also indicates an increase in terms of organizational learning within the EC. Hence, under an empirical point of view, the EC is represented by its DGs in this research. Considering these premises, three empirical subquestions can be introduced:

4. To what extent is the European Commission a learning organization?
5. Has Euroscepticism impacted the EC's capacity to be or become a learning organization?
6. What is the impact of Euroscepticism on the dimensions of the learning organization within the European Commission's Directorates General?

The first set of subquestions focus on the theoretical nature of the two variables and their relationship within the literature. Differently, these last empirical subquestions have the aim to address more practical aspects of the general research question, helping elaborate an answer. The first empirical subquestion refers to the model of the learning organization designed by Kools and Stoll (2016). Hence, it aims at measuring the extent to which the EC is a learning organization based on the criteria established by the model itself (i.e. the 7 dimensions). In this sense, this subquestion aims at assessing the suitability of the model to the specific context. The second subquestion, on the other hand, tests the premise to the research question. In other words, before considering the magnitude of the impact of Euroscepticism on the organizational learning dynamics of the EC, it aims at assessing whether any type of influence of Euroscepticism on the EC exists. The third empirical question translates the general research question into more empirical terms, explicitly referring to the 7 dimensions of the learning organization and to the DGs.

It should be considered also that the objective of the research is not to test causal relationships between the variables, but rather to describe the organizational staff's perception of the link between the two. In other words, this thesis is a descriptive study. In order to fulfil this objective, the analysis builds on a newly-developed dataset.

1.3 Academic relevance

This study contributes to the literature about learning organizations. The majority of the studies that deepen the role of learning within the EU are carried out from a public policy perspective. For instance, Schout and Zito (2009) combine learning theories with European integration studies. As a result, there is a lack of researches that analyse the topic through the lenses of public management. In this sense, this thesis goes into the direction of expanding the existing approaches to the subject and providing a new perspective to it.

The need for the creation of more context-based models of the learning organization identified by Örtenblad (2015) is partly satisfied by this research. Although the focus of the study is not theoretical, and its aim is not to elaborate a new model that fits the context of the European Commission, it tests the applicability of an existing model, giving possible starting points for future elaborations. As a matter of fact, the model proposed by Örtenblad (2015) for bureaucracies as learning organizations can be redeveloped in the light of the findings of this study, considering also the peculiar aspects of a supranational international organization which have not been included in the model he elaborated.

Furthermore, in his research about the relationship between organizational learning and legitimacy Desai (2018) claims: 'this study also suggests the need for additional research regarding how communities or other third-party outsiders can influence the nature of organization-stakeholder collaboration, or even shape specific organizational processes such as exploration and learning' (Desai, 2018, p. 240). This research specifically considers the impact of a phenomenon originating from the 'outside' - Euroscepticism - on EC's learning and exploration capacities. Building on this aspect, Schechter and Mowafaq (2013) identify paths for future studies in the field of organizational learning. Despite being a research that belongs to the literature on schools as learning organizations, their study provides some interesting research questions which – to a certain extent – are answered by the present study. In fact, the two authors underline the importance of assessing the relationship between organizational learning mechanisms (OLMs) and administrative legitimacy. Although this thesis does not explicitly focus on OLMs, the general research question aims at finding the link between the legitimacy crisis of the EU, whose strongest expression is Euroscepticism, and the learning dynamics of the EC. Hence, in this sense, this research addresses the literature gaps highlighted by the two authors.

Moreover, the recent growth of the Eurosceptic phenomenon renders this research even more relevant. The novelty of the context implies that not much has been written on it, especially in terms of public management theories. Despite of the fact that the legitimacy crisis has interested a lot of researchers over the last decades, the most recent developments of the tendency have been less deepened. In past researches, the lack of legitimacy of the EU has often been associated with the democratic deficit of the Union and analysed as a dependent variable. Thus, the focus of those studies was rather on identifying what caused the legitimacy crisis, or more in general, to understand what influences legitimacy (e.g. Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014; Krouwel & Abst, 2007; Schmidt, 2015; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002; Usherwood & Startin, 2013; Weßels, 2007). The original contribution of this thesis is that Euroscepticism is here interpreted as a change in the environment, as a signal sent to the

institutions and most importantly, as the independent variable of the research that affects the dependent variable: the learning organization.

1.4 Practical relevance

The practical relevance of this thesis lays mainly in the applicability of the findings for decision-makers at the European level. In fact, reflecting on how Euroscepticism is impacting on the European Commission as a learning organization can help them to elaborate future actions. Furthermore, the notion of the learning organization is becoming more and more crucial for the public sector. Hence, deepening this subject would help the professionals working in this domain to enhance the understanding of the concept and its practical applicability. The quickly changing environment that surrounds public sector organizations force them to 'need to wholeheartedly embrace learning if they wish to be able to respond with novel, innovative solutions in a timely fashion' (Roberts, 2016, para. 17).

The analysis of learning processes within the European Commission will be particularly relevant at the practical level due to the link between learning and Euroscepticism that is at the core of this study. The historical *momentum* of Euroscepticism in Europe is clear, thus, understanding to which extent and how the legitimacy crisis is transforming the EC in terms of learning processes is in the interests of the whole Union. The urgent need to contain the consequences of Euroscepticism is demonstrated by the fact that 'democratic change' appears among the 10 priorities that the EC has set for the period 2015-2019. The subtitle of this strategic priority says: 'making the EU more transparent and democratically accountable'. Hence, the final aim of the strategy seems to be to strengthen the legitimacy of the Union (European Commission, 2019b). In fact, among the documents produced by the Commission in this respect, the report entitled "Reaching out the EU citizens: a new opportunity" highlights the importance of regaining the support of EU citizens by involving them within the decision-making process (Brande, 2017). In this regard, during a speech given in front of the European Parliament on 15 July 2014 less than a month after his election as the Commission's President, Jean-Claude Junker defined the 2014-2019 Commission as 'last-chance' (Brande, 2017, p. 6). Due to the outmost importance of the EU citizens' support to the Union, for both political and strategic reasons, this research will give a useful insight of the problem, suggesting future developments.

1.5 Reading guide

This introduction is followed by five chapters. First, a literature review is carried out. This section takes into consideration the general body of literature concerning each of the two variables. This overview of the knowledge produced about Euroscepticism and the learning organization lays the foundation for the following chapter. Second, the theoretical framework is designed and justified. In this chapter the hypotheses are defined based on some specific

theories that connect the two research variables. Third, the research design is explained and the employed data analysis and data gathering methods are illustrated. The fourth section consists in the presentation and discussion of the findings. Furthermore, the limitations to the study are described. In the conclusion, the general research question is answered and theoretical, research and practical implications of the study are discussed.

CHAPTER 2
Literature review

In Chapter 2 a review of the literature concerning the two variables, the learning organization and Euroscepticism, is carried out. The aim of this section is to respond to two of the partial research questions:

1. What does the literature state about the learning organization?
2. What does the literature state about Euroscepticism?

In order to do so, the definition, the characteristics, and the outcomes of each variable are analysed. With this respect, many studies and theories that concern the variables are considered. Definition and characteristics of the two variables are presented so to help the reader making sense of the concepts, whilst outcomes are introduced in order to highlight the results of the two variables and their relevance is thus explained. The objective of the literature review is to take stock of the body of knowledge built so far about the learning organization and Euroscepticism. A more specific focus on the theoretical relationships between the two is deepened in the theoretical framework, which focuses on specific elements of the theory that are also used to formulate the hypotheses. In this sense, the process followed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 can be compared to a funnel, that starting from the general literature on the variables leads to the selection of specific concepts that are useful in this research to identify the relationship between the variables and, in the end, to respond the question that underpins the study. The literature review is preceded by a search protocol, which presents the process followed to create it. The purpose of the protocol is to render the passages replicable.

2.1 Search protocol

The same research passages have been applied to both variables. Nevertheless, in the case of the learning organization, some preliminary documents have been considered as an important starting point for the research due to their pivotal role within public management literature. More specifically, it is the case of: Senge (1997), Buelens et al. (2006), the guide elaborated by the OECD (2018) about schools as learning organizations and the work by Kools and Stoll (2016). Starting from this ground knowledge, further research has been carried out following a series of steps:

Step 1: General literature about the ‘learning organization’ and ‘Euroscepticism’ has been gathered by typing these key words on Google Scholar. The category of documents which have been selected was “article” or “book chapter”. This first step was useful to form a general idea about the topic and begin to collect information about which specific themes needed to be deepened.

Step 2: A more in-depth research has been carried out. At this stage, the database Web of Science has been used. In this database combinations of key words have been entered in order to find more specific literature. For instance, the combination between 'learning organization' and 'external environment' has been applied so to find the interaction between the organization and its external environment, which has emerged to be one of the main characteristics of a learning organization. The same process has been done with other aspects that have demonstrated to be critical for the two variables. A summary of the key words selected is displayed in Table 1.

Step 3: Some filters have been selected to reduce the number of results. The filters applied concerned the type of document (article or book), the field of the study (Management, Public Administration, Political Science). The 'Highly Cited Paper' filter has been selected when required by the high number of results.

Step 4: An analysis of title, abstract and key words has been carried out to furtherly select the sources that were in line with the research scope. Besides the criteria already mentioned, other sources have been used:

- Sources often referenced within the articles considered;
- Articles mentioned in the 'Cited Reference' section, below the abstract page on Web of Science;
- Expert review;
- Peer-reviewed articles on the University Library portal.

Simultaneously, official websites have been consulted in order to provide a more complete context. For example, the OECD or EU websites have been useful to add context information to the research.

The final number of articles used in the literature review is 54, of which 13 have been gathered through Web of Science, following the process described in Table 1 (Step 2 and Step 3 of the overall process). The rest of the articles have been identified through Step 1 and Step 4.

Table 1: Step 1 and 2 of the documents gathering from Web of Science.

Key words	Filters	Results	Articles used
Euroscepticism	Article, political science, public administration	374	5
Euroscepticism + types	Political science	15	2
Organizational learning + performance	Article, management, public administration, highly cited in the field	17	2
Organizational learning + European Union	Article, public administration, management	30	3
Learning organization + external environment	Article, management, public administration	332	1

2.2 What does the literature state about the learning organization?

2.2.1 Definition

When the concept of 'learning organization' is introduced the name of Peter Senge must be mentioned. The author is one of the first researchers who highlighted the importance of learning within organizations. Focusing on the private sector, Senge (1997) defines the learning organization as the organization that not only applies adaptive learning, but, most importantly, that puts generative learning in place, which enables it to strengthen its own creativity. To do so, the learning organization has to present 5 characteristics, the 5 dimensions: personal mastery, team learning, mental models, shared vision and system thinking (Senge, 1990, 1997). Personal mastery combines self-awareness with the desire to clearly perceive and interpret reality; it's final aim is to pursue the truth. Team learning consists in the creation 'of group comprehension that goes beyond the understanding of any individual member' (Senge 1997, p.51). It builds on a shared vision, which should include and inspire all the organization's members, at any level, as it is based on values that are shared by the whole organization and pictures a common future. Mental models, which can have different levels of complexity, represent the way people, and consequently the organization, interpret the world

and thus act. The first step to take with this respect is being aware of their existence. The most important feature of a learning organization is the famous fifth discipline (system thinking) that gives the name to Senge's (1990) seminal work. This discipline is the most innovative one introduced by Senge, as it manages to condensate all the others. The importance of system thinking lays into its useful role to approach reality as an integrated *ensemble* of relationships and interconnections; 'it is a discipline for seeing wholes' (Senge, 1997, p. 48). And seeing wholes enables the organization to enact generative learning. Hence, the organization not only survives to the changing environment, but most importantly, it generates new actions. Therefore, the learning organization successfully employs the above-mentioned five disciplines - and most importantly system thinking - to survive and respond to the constant change that characterises the external context (Senge, 1997).

Buelens et al. (2006) try to come up with a general definition of the learning organization in their book and the elaboration they formulate is that a learning organization is 'one that proactively creates, acquires and transfers knowledge and that changes its behaviour on new knowledge and insights' (Buelens et al., 2006, p. 650). The author compares organizational learning to individual learning, as they both are processes entailed to respond to external stimuli. However, a difference distinguishes the two types of learning: organizational learning is a collective phenomenon that requires knowledge to be commonly accepted and spread, while individual learning only concerns the single person involved within the process (Buelens et al., 2006).

A couple of years after the publication of Peter Senge's book (1990), Mills and Friesen (1992) highlight the importance of being a learning organization in the business context. In fact, an organization should be fast enough to learn and adapt to the changing conditions. It needs to be responsive to changes and transform accordingly (Mills & Friesen, 1992; Roberts, 2016; Senge 1990, 1997; Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). The authors list three characteristics that a learning organization should have in order to fulfil this objective: (1) it should commit to knowledge, (2) it should design mechanisms that enable it to transform and renew and (3) it should be open to the external environment to gather knowledge and information and be able to use it in an advantageous way (Quinn Mills & Friesen, 1992).

Daniels (1994) starting from an analysis of existing organizations, tries to individuate features that are shared by those that can be defined as learning organizations. She concludes that those characteristics are: (1) considering learning as a means to achieve the organizational mission, (2) establishing a continuous learning process that involves all the organization's members and (3) organizing daily working activities in a way that gives them opportunities to create knowledge.

As for now, already four definitions of the learning organization have been provided and many more have been elaborated in the literature. Anders Örtenblad (2018) has tried to

organize the numerous definitions by categorizing them into three main groups. The first group is the 'organization as facilitator', where the organization is seen as an environment that encourages learning both through daily work and through a 'climate' that is favourable to experimentation and that offers a lot of opportunities to learn to its staff. The second category considers the organization as a 'learning unit' in itself that owns a memory which is separate and independent from the one of the individuals that compose the organization. Organizational memory is aimed at creating knowledge which is accessible to the internal environment. The third and last category consists in the organization 'as end process'. The focus of such definitions is that the learning organization should be made by members that are continuously learning and that are able to exchange their roles, ensuring a high organizational flexibility (Örtenblad, 2018). According to Örtenblad (2018), Senge's (1990) definition belongs to this last category. Applying this framework to the other definitions mentioned so far, it could be deducted that Quinn Mills and Friesen's (1992) definition are part of the category of the 'learning unit', while Daniels' (1994) definition is rather ascribable to the first one, with a stronger focus on the role of the organization's staff.

Schools as learning organizations. The definitions analysed so far are all mostly applicable in the case of organizations that operate in the private sector. However, the connection between the concept of the learning organization and the public context had already been anticipated by Senge at the beginning of his research, despite deciding to focus on private organizations later on (Senge, 1997). The empty place left on this respect was filled by other researches. The OECD adapted the concept to the governmental sector, elaborating the most known definition of a public learning organization. The importance of learning for the public sector derives from the rapidity of the changes that concern the external environment in which these organizations operate. In fact, public organizations need to become more flexible and adaptable to new challenges: to do so they need to gather new information and produce new knowledge (Roberts, 2016). Despite being, in a sense, opposed to the private sector, the public sector experiences exogenous pressures and a certain amount of competition. For this reason, it needs to gain competitive advantage to survive. In this respect, it is comparable to the private context, where learning is a mechanism that help organizations to beat their competitors (Buelens et al., 2006). The pushes coming from the external environment are called environmental enablers and are, for instance, the pressure deriving from the competition with other service-delivering private actors, regulatory boundaries, the pressure to constantly innovate and the fear of uncertainty (Greiling & Halachmi, 2013). However, within the public sector, the drivers of change are in part different since they emerge also from the political context and they are specifically linked to the services public organizations deliver, such as healthcare, education, administration etc. (OECD, 2010). Learning can be considered a means through which internal dynamics are put into question

and developed: it is a trigging factor that simulates the individual and organizational performance (Greiling & Halachmi, 2013). Nevertheless, consolidated internal structures and risk-aversion render learning and change harder in public sector organizations (Barrados & Mayne, 2003). Hence, there are no specific distinctions in terms of definitions between a public or a private learning organization. Yet, some differences can be drawn with respect to the context in which the two types of organization operate and the consequent kind of environmental enablers that play a role within the learning process. In 2016 Kools and Stoll tailored a description of a public learning organization by defining 7 fundamental dimensions. This definition was applied to the case of schools as learning organizations (SLO), nevertheless the features indicated are general enough to be referred to other types of public organizations, as well. The 7 dimensions are indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The seven dimensions of SLO. Adapted from What makes a school a learning organization? A guide for policy makers, school leaders and teachers by OECD. Copyright 2016 from OECD.

Five of them can be reconducted to the 5 disciplines elaborated by Senge (1997), namely: “Developing a shared vision centred on the learning of all students” (Kools & Stoll, 2016) to “Shared vision”. This dimension focuses on the importance for a learning organization to define a vision that inspires its action. Specifically, it has to define clear goals and aims at achieving what is good for the community; in this sense, it has to have a moral nature. In the case of SLO, the vison should be centred on equality and quality of education (Kools & Stoll, 2016). “Promoting and supporting continuous learning opportunities for all staff” to “Personal

mastery". This feature is based on the idea of a continuous process of learning that involves all staff. Feedback mechanisms play a fundamental part in this since they ensure the regular assessment of the work and offer the opportunity of improvement for staff and the whole organization (Kools & Stoll, 2016). "Promoting team learning and collaboration among all staff" to "Team working". As a matter of fact, like in the dimension elaborated by Senge (1990), Kools and Stoll (2016) stress the importance of peer networking in the learning process of both staff and the organization. Moreover, technology and trust among staff members play an important role in easing the process. "Establishing a culture of enquiry, innovation and exploration" to "Mental models". Kools and Stoll (2016) here highlight the centrality of openness to new perspectives. This is possible through risk-taking and exploration. This dimension is focused on the organizational culture which ideally should be committed to learning, which often can be achieved through failure. "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning" to "System thinking". In fact, this dimension in centred on knowledge exchange both within the internal environment and between the organization and the external environment. Evaluation processes are with this respect pivotal, as they enable to learn from the organization's action. Technology is very important in this dimension as it supports the knowledge exchange (Kools and Stoll, 2016). "Learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system" and "Modelling and growing learning leadership" are the two dimensions that are not explicitly addressed by Senge. The first one is more linked to characteristics individuated by other authors, such as the focus on the external environment and the importance of openness (Quinn Mill & Friesen, 1992). However, it can be associated with "System thinking" as well, since this last does not only focus on the internal organizational environment, but it considers the whole system in which the organization is involved. The last element, leadership, is defined in the framework of the SLO model as 'the essential ingredient that binds all of the separate parts of the learning organisation together' (Kools & Stoll, 2016, p. 10). In particular, leadership is the agentry of change and has the role to ensure that learning remains a priority of the organization. This great responsibility should be shared among several figures that cooperate with this objective (Kools & Stoll, 2016). The combination and integration of all the 7 dimensions renders organizations (in this specific case schools) learning organizations.

The definition of the learning organization that is here considered is the one elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016). This choice has been taken in the light of the marked practical applicability of the 7 dimensions to a concrete case. In addition to that, this definition is tailored on a public sector organization, which makes it more suitable to the subject of this research. Furthermore, the focus on the external environment ensures that the interdependence between the organization and the context is taken into consideration.

Knowledge management and organizational learning. Two other concepts are often mentioned when it comes to define what a learning organization is: 'knowledge management' and 'organizational learning'. Buelens et al. (2006) make a distinction between a learning organization and an organization that manages knowledge. The first uses knowledge to adapt and transform under the push of a changing environment, while the second builds and shares new knowledge within the organization, but without producing any type of organizational transformation (Buelens et al., 2006).

'Organizational learning' is often used a synonym of 'learning organization' (Örtenblad, 2018). This happens also in the framework of this research. However, this is not always the case. In fact, the learning organization sometimes has a normative value, as it indicates how an organization should be in order to carry out learning. Instead, organizational learning focuses more on describing the process of learning that takes place in the practice (Örtenblad, 2001). Furthermore, another and more significant aspect distinguishes the two concepts. Organizational learning refers to the cognitive process that allows the organization to learn, omitting the individual level, whilst the idea of the learning organization considers also the individual members of the organization that are involved in the learning process (Örtenblad, 2001). Nevertheless, since both expressions indicate processes aimed at generating learning (Örtenblad, 2001), they are considered here as interchangeable when they refer to the general process of creating knowledge and producing change. The fact that both concepts conceive learning as a process that takes place at a level that is above the individual one shows that they are close enough to be used as synonyms with this respect. However, when the dimensions of the learning organization designed by Kools and Stoll (2016) are specifically analysed and measured, the expression used is exclusively 'learning organization'. In this case it is indeed the normative model of the organization that is taken as reference and not the learning process.

In the literature on organizational learning, two main types of learning process are generally recognised: single-loop and double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The first learning process in based on a feedback mechanism that elaborates quick responses to stimuli coming from the external environment. This type of process does not entail deep changes within the organizational structure. On the other hand, double-loop learning represents the act of questioning the entire set of values and ground norms on which the organization is based. Therefore, the organization undertakes major transformations and developments during double-loop learning (Buelens et al., 2006). Single-loop learning is often termed corrective, as its function is to adjust the behaviour of the organization, whilst double-loop learning can also be referred to as transformational, due to the deeper organizational metamorphosis that such process entails (Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). What pools all

types of organizational learning is their dependence from experience. Experience is what the organization delivers, which interacts with the environment; from this interaction, knowledge is produced (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). As stated above, within this research the terms learning organization and organizational learning are used as synonyms. However, the type of learning considered is double-loop learning. In fact, single-loop learning only brings to knowledge creation and management and does not entail 'transformational learning' which is at the base of the learning organization (Buelens et al., 2006).

2.2.2 Characteristics

It is so far clear how the concept of the learning organization is a heterogeneous idea, characterised by many nuances and that can be interpreted differently. Nonetheless, within the literature certain common characteristics can be identified and intertwined to form the theoretical ground of the concept. This paragraph considers characteristics that are independent from the dimensions mentioned in the previous section. In fact, these features do not refer to any specific definition or model of the learning organization, but rather to more general elements that are shared by multiple studies on the topic.

The first element that could be individuated is the importance of the organizational dimension of the learning process, which involves three levels: the individual level, the group level, the organizational level. The most innovative element introduced by the concept of the learning organization is that the organization puts learning at the centre of its activities and adapts to new knowledge, not only as a set of individuals and groups, but as a composite *unicum* (Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). As anticipated in the previous paragraphs, some researchers do not stress the organizational dimension much and focus on the staff's role (e.g. Daniels, 1994). However, what distinguishes organizational learning from other types of learning processes is indeed its organizational dimension (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Senge, 1997; Treasury board of Canada, 2007). In fact, if on the one hand individuals play a role in the creation of learning within an organization, on the other hand wider variables intervene, such as societal, political or structural elements (Shrivasta, 1983). In this sense, the organization becomes a unit of learning that has its own memory, which is nourished by day-to-day work (Örtenblad, 2018).

The second characteristic that has been identified as a common feature of learning organizations is the pivotal influence of the external environment on the learning process. More specifically, the external context consists in all the elements that exist outside the organization, such as competitors, clients, institutions and regulators (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). The importance of openness to the external environment has been pointed out by the sixth dimension of SLO, as elaborated by the Kools and Stoll (2016): "Learning with and from the external environment and larger system". The link with the external environment for an organization has double nature. First, the external environment is the context where

exogenous changes occur and where the competitors act (Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). In this sense, the external environment represents a threat that organizations must face and to which they need to respond adapting to the new *stimuli.* Second, the interaction with the external environment can be interpreted as positive, as an occasion to build new knowledge and develop (Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). For instance, in 2015 the European Commission's Joint Research Centre has designed the Knowledge Management for Policy (KMP) Professionalization Programme with the aim to match the demand of researches that could be used for policy purposes with its offer in the external environment. Among the eight skills to support evidence-based policies 'managing expert communities' and 'engaging with citizens and stakeholders' are mentioned (Topp, Mair, Smillie, & Cairney, 2018). From this programme it is evident how engaging with other actors and, more broadly, with the external environment to produce knowledge is a priority nowadays. This holds true not only in the case of firms or private companies, but also for public sector organizations (Barrados & Mayne, 2003; Senge, 1990). Another aspect of the relationship between an organization and its environment should be considered here. Interconnections among organizations have become more and more important in order to survive in a rapidly changing environment (Roberts, 2016; Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). Interacting with other actors to exchange economic and informational resources has become a necessity for organizations. This interaction is based on the 'willingness' of those to establish this type of relationships. This 'willingness' is rooted in the concept of legitimacy: transactions between actors happen only if there is mutual recognition (Terreberry, 1968). According to this perspective, legitimacy is useful to enhance the chances of survival in an extremely dynamic environment, where interconnections among actors are increasing and can be useful to gather information and create new knowledge.

The third characteristic of the learning organization that emerged from this literature review is the connection between learning and change. As stated in the definition of the concept, a learning organization does not limit its action to string information, thus to knowledge management, but also and most importantly, it needs to adapt to changing conditions by modifying its internal structure and behaviour (Buelens et al., 2006). However, this change is not as smooth as it may appear (Montpetit, 2009). In fact, for organizations it is hard to find a balance between changing and maintaining its own identity (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). From the perspective of organizational learning theories, two different types of change can be entailed. March (1991) defines the difference between exploration and exploitation within organizations. The first process triggers a deeper change, characterised by innovation and risk-taking. On the contrary, exploitation concerns small adjustments to the way the organization works aimed at making it fit with new conditions (March, 1991). This distinction can be reconducted to the dualism between single and double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978) and between Senge's (1990) idea of adaptive and generative learning

(Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Another debate in the literature concerns the nature of the change, namely whether the change triggered by learning is cognitive or behavioural. With this respect, in the last decades the preferred approach consists in measuring the variations in terms of practices and process, which enable to capture both explicit and tacit changes (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Whatever the type of change entailed, the learning organization has to adapt. In other words, it has to transform the knowledge acquired into concrete actions. Furthermore, in the field of policy learning theory, change is deemed to be caused by learning. In their work about policy learning and change as a consequence of 2008 economic crisis in the EU, Kamkhaji and Radaelli (2017) theorize a causal link between crisis-learning and change. The authors underline the difference between the traditional theories of policy change that are constructed on hypothetical (and rarely realistic) contexts and the empirical mechanisms of learning. The first dynamic is more reasoned and driven by clearly-defined objectives: it is the case of inferential learning. The second dynamic, on the contrary, is triggered by the surprise provoked by an unexpected external *stimulus*, thus it is more rapid and less rational (Kamkhaji & Radaelli, 2017). In the empirical reality, change is often caused by a shock (crisis) rather than a reasoned learning process. The type of learning that takes place in these cases is more experimental.

To conclude, the three characteristics that are shared by all learning organizations are: the importance of the organizational level compared to individual and group level within learning dynamics, the interdependence between the organization and its environment and the casual relationship between learning and change. These features contribute to the understanding of the concept of learning organization and are useful to stress fundamental aspects that recurs in the framework of this research.

2.2.3 Outcomes

This section discusses the implications of organizational learning in both public and private organizations. An immediate way to assess the importance of the concept could be to analyse the link between learning and performance. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that the fundamental contribution led by the idea of the learning organization lays in the new way in which performance is conceived rather than in its measurement. In other words, the learning organization develops a way of evaluating its own performance which is different from the one applied by other types of organizations. In particular, the value of failure is radically reinterpreted as it is no longer seen as a harmful possibility, but rather as an occasion to grow and improve (Treasury Board of Canada, 2007).

Public sector. In the light of this clarification, it can be stated that a positive impact of organizational learning on performance is observed. In the case of SLO in Wales, the performance of both teachers and students increases. Furthermore, schools become more

reactive to the changing context that surrounds them and learn how to interact with it in the best way (OECD, 2018). According to Pokharel and Choi (2015) the organizational culture dimensions, as elaborated by Watkins and Marsick in their "Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire" (DLOQ) (1996,1999, 2003) have a positive impact on organizational performance. A similar result emerges from the study by Young (2003) on the same organizational dimensions (Watkins & Marsick, 1996,1999, 2003), that will be used as the starting point for the elaboration of the model by Kools and Stoll (2016). In particular, learning at the organizational level has a mediating relationship with the individual and group levels and improves organizational performance (Pokharel & Choi, 2015). Another aspect that seems to be positively impacted by organizational learning in the case of SLO is staff's job satisfaction (Kools, Goudard, George, & Steijn, 2018). This element also entails higher levels of motivation and commitment, that lead to enhanced performance (Kwong, Wang, H., & Clifton, 2010). Moreover, as already observed, adapting to the external environment is nowadays an urge for all public sector organizations in order to avoid extinction (Roberts, 2016). To be competitive in an extremely dynamic world, transforming stimuli into knowledge and knowledge into actions is necessary. 'The learning organization is thus key to the competitiveness of governments' (Treasury Board of Canada, 2007, p. 7).

***Private sector*.** The public sector is not the only context in which organizational learning's relationship with performance is assessed. Learning is deemed to produce competitive advantage, notably in the case of firms (Senge, 1997). In fact, in a globalised environment, learning represents a strategic asset that enables companies to invent and create new solutions that increase their ability to adapt to and prosper in the changing environment (Buelens et al., 2006; Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). Is that confirmed in practice? The positive link between learning and competitive advantage has been tested and confirmed by empirical studies (Goh & Ryan, 2008). On this line, some researchers have identified a positive correlation between organizational learning and financial performance of firms (Ellinger, Ellinger, Yang, & Howton, 2002). In fact, four aspects of firm's performance improve when organizational learning is applied: employee skills development, product/service innovation, cost-effectiveness and growth in revenues (Siddique, 2018). Furthermore, a learning organization is characterised by a more collaborative environment and a stronger ability of problem-solving. Both elements enhance the organizational performance and are encouraged in order to develop more collaboration within and outside the organizations (e.g. with clients) (Shieh, 2011).

To sum up, the main outcomes originating from organizational learning (Table 2), both within private and public sector, consist in the creation of competitive advantage and the improvement of organizational performance. In the public sector also staff's job satisfaction benefits from learning.

Table 2: Outcomes of the Learning Organization.

Outcomes of the Learning Organization	
Public sector	
Staff's and teachers' satisfaction	Kools et al
Competitive advantage	Treasury Board of Canada, 2007
Performance	OECD 2018;Pokharel &Choi, 2015; Young, 2003
Private sector	
Competitive advantage	Senge, 1997
Performance	Ellinger et al., 2002; Goh & Ryan, 2008; Siddique, 2018; Shieh, 2011

2.3 What does the literature state about Euroscepticism?

2.3.1 Definition

Euroscepticism is probably one of the most used terms to describe the political situation of the EU in the last decades, as well as the one of many of its member states (Rood J. , 2017). However, some confusion about the precise meaning of the term can arise. Euroscepticism is often defined as the scepticism about the EU, more precisely the scepticism concerning the European integration path. Originating from philosophy, the word 'scepticism' indicates a way of thinking characterised by the lack of certainties and an approach that tends to put every single notion into question. When applied to the specific case of the European integration, this scepticism brings to questioning every aspects of this process and doubting about the values and the narratives used to justify it (Ultan & Ornek, 2015). Originally, the academic analysis of the phenomenon has largely focused on the role of parties (e.g. Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002). This approach is in contrast with the idea according to which masses play a greater role then parties in determining the incidence of the phenomenon. However, the boundaries are not very clear, and the different levels of opposition are interconnected (Skinner, 2013). In fact, after the Maastricht Treaty, Euroscepticism has become more embedded at non-party level, involving more heterogeneous actors such as the media and even the governments (Usherwood & Startin, 2013). Consequently, the roots of the phenomenon are not strictly dualistic.

2.3.2 Characteristics

According to the party-based Euroscepticism perspective, the phenomenon can be defined as 'hard' or 'soft' depending on the outcomes proposed. If the desired solution is to withdraw from the Union the phenomenon is 'hard', if the ideal outcome envisaged is a reform of the competencies of the EU, the type of Euroscepticism is 'soft' (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002). More recent literature on this aspect distinguishes between the scepticism towards the integration design of the EU and the scepticism concerning the current role and working of the EU. Both these versions originate from the masses' attitude towards the European Union (Serricchio, Tsakatika, & Quaglia, 2012). Furthermore, in its most recent developments, the definition of the concept has become more nuanced, and attempts to define different degrees of Euroscepticism have arisen. For instance, Euroscepticism can be classified based on five levels of intensity: trust, scepticism, distrust, cynicism and alienation (Krouwel & Abst, 2007). These levels refer to the intensity of European citizens' discontent. Trust consists in a general - albeit conditional - confidence towards the political system. Scepticism is a very alert attitude that citizens have when they critically monitor the actions of the political system and its actors and are ready to transform this attitude either in confidence or distrust, based on the inputs received. Distrust is characterised by negative expectations towards the political system. It 'can develop when a sceptic is frequently disappointed or feels betrayed by political actors or malfunctioning institutions' (Krowel & Abst, 2007, p. 42). Cynicism consists in an attitude which lacks belief and reasoning. It is thus a prejudiced and acritical interpretation of the political reality, which leads to a perpetual negative attitude towards the political system. Lastly, alienation indicates a behaviour of isolation from the political sphere which questions the general functioning of democracy. In this case citizens desire to remain emarginated from the rest of the community, that they do not recognise as legitimate (Krouwel & Abst, 2007). The distinction by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002) can be linked to the one made by Weßels (2007) between "critical Europeans", who hope in the improvement of the work of the EU, and "adamant Europeans" who, on the contrary, aspire to an end of the EU. In addition to that Weßels elaborates a categorization of political scepticism within the EU. He starts from the assumption that Euroscepticism cannot be explained by the utilitarian framework which analyses micro and macro-economic performance of the EU. The phenomenon is triggered by a more emotional cause: identity, namely European identity. This last is opposed to national identity, which has been considered in the majority of the studies on European integration (Weßels, 2007). The author combines this assumption with Eatson's (1965) model of political objectives and, thus, distinguishes among Euroscepticism directed to authorities, regimes and communities (Weßels, 2007).

For the purpose of this study, the two levels of Euroscepticism identified by Serricchio, Tsakatika and Quaglia (2012) are taken into consideration. More specifically, the distinction

between scepticism towards European integration and the one concerning the working of the EU is acknowledged. However, unlike Serricchio, Tsakatika & Quaglia (2012) the first type of Euroscepticism is not considered here the most relevant. In fact, this research aims at understanding the relationship between a generalized sense of scepticism towards the EU on the learning process of the European Commission, in spite of the level of intensity of such feeling. As a consequence, both forms of scepticism should be taken into account.

In addition to the characteristics presented above, other features of Euroscepticism can be derived from its history and geographic diffusion. Euroscepticism has gained *momentum* in the last years, and particularly after the economic crisis (Rood, 2017). The relevance of this opposition has even increased after Brexit. However, the phenomenon is not novel. Euroscepticism has originally been considered a temporary condition, a physiologic circumstance. Nevertheless, its origin dates back in 1988, when the anti-EU mood begun to actualize, on the push of Margaret Thatcher, who openly questioned the tendency of increasing co-operation which characterised the EEC at that time (Usherwood & Startin, 2013). Nonetheless, the moment that is recognised as the beginning of Euroscepticism is Maastricht Treaty (1992). In fact, the Treaty touched fundamental topics strongly related to national sovereignty and competencies. The paramount role of the treaty is embodied in the emblematic terminological change from 'Community' to 'Union' (Usherwood & Startin, 2013). Despite the persistence of the phenomenon, it is undeniable that it has intensified in the last years. Pivotal events that have fostered this trend are the financial crisis, the EP elections of 2014 and 2019, Brexit. Since 2008, the EU is not only experiencing an economic crisis, but also a deep democratic legitimacy crisis. Among the causes individuated to this issue the remoteness of the Union from its citizens and the dissatisfaction of the services delivered are the most influential (Schmidt, 2015). It is hence clear how the phenomenon of Euroscepticism has a quite long history, but it is only in the last 20 years that stood out as one of the major political issues within the Union.

Another element that characterises Euroscepticism is its Pan-European nature. After Maastricht Treaty the transnational side of the phenomenon has intensified, creating relationships among diverse and heterogeneous groups (Usherwood & Startin, 2013). Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that Euroscepticism is a phenomenon that not only characterises the EU, but that also (and more strongly) concerns countries that have not joined the Union, such as Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. In fact, in those areas, Euroscepticism can be classified as 'hard' (Skinner, 2013). As a consequence, the dimension, thus the salience, of the phenomenon are even more relevant.

In conclusion, three are the main characteristics of Euroscepticism. Firstly, it is clear that different types of classifications of Euroscepticism can be formulated, based on several criteria. In this research the distinction which is taken as reference is the one by Serricchio et

al. (2012), which distinguishes between a form of scepticism directed towards the European integration process as a whole and a type of scepticism that concerns the actions of the EU. Secondly, an important characteristic is represented by the fact that Euroscepticism is a persistent phenomenon in the EU's history, although it has gained *momentum* in the last decades. Lastly, its Pan-European aspect represents an important feature of the concept.

2.3.3 Outcomes

In the last years, several episodes have shown the strong impact that Euroscepticism can have on the European political scene. The parliamentary elections of 2014 have confirmed this tendency with almost one third of MPs elected belonging to Eurosceptic parties, 212 MEPs out of 751. It was a record for the EU (Treib, 2014). This episode marked the end of the so-called 'permissive consensus' (Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014). In addition to that, the shock provoked by Brexit shook the entire EU building. Nevertheless, the impact of this event still needs to be assessed. In fact, Brexit can be interpreted not only as a failure of the integration process of the EU, but also as an opportunity to enhance EU's future cohesion (Cameron, 2019). Furthermore, the difficulties encountered by the UK in the last months might represent a warning for other member states.

Moreover, the impact of Euroscepticism can be noticed also in terms of national politics. A "contagion effect" can be observed from Eurosceptic parties that normally do not participate in the government to mainstream parties. In fact, traditionally, more centrist parties tended to hold pro-EU positions, while far-right or far-left parties presented a stronger Eurosceptic approach. However, mainstream parties need to shift more and more their ideas towards Eurosceptic positions, so to gain competitiveness against anti-EU parties and be re-elected (Meijers, 2017).

It is evident that Euroscepticism has an influence on both national and European political contexts. Brexit is the clearest example of the impact at the EU level. At national level, the anti-EU shift of mainstream parties represent the consequences of Euroscepticism. For these reasons, understanding the phenomenon and deepening its implications has a strong value for both European and national contexts. In order to assess the type of influence Euroscepticism has in terms of EC's organizational learning, several steps are made in the next chapters. The first one consists in the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3
Theoretical framework

After the analysis of the literature produced about the learning organization and Euroscepticism, a theoretical framework is elaborated in this chapter. While the literature review displayed a general overview of the theoretical elaboration of the two variables, in spite of the focus given in this research, the theoretical framework focuses on the specific relationship between the two. Hence, deepening the conceptual elements that link Euroscepticism and the learning organization, the hypotheses are formulated. In fact, this section aims at answering to the third theoretical subquestion:

3. How are Euroscepticism and the learning organization interrelated within the theory?

In other words, this question aims at assessing what could be the impact of Euroscepticism on organizational learning within the EC, based on the theory. In the light of the answer provided through the theoretical framework described in this chapter, 6 hypotheses are formulated. This is done considering two types of theories, process theory and variance theory. The first type is helpful to define the model of the learning organization that is applied to the specific case, while the second describes the theoretical relationship between the two variables and helps formulating expectations (hypotheses) based on this ground.

The difference between the two theoretical approaches lays in their purpose. In the organizational domain, this distinction has been explained by Van de Ven (2007). Firstly, he uses the term model instead of theories, since only certain elements of theories are used to analyse the relationship between variables. Furthermore, he explains that variance models focus on what is the consequence of X on Y, whilst process models describe in a narrative way how the two variables are connected (Van de Ven, 2007). Consequently, in this research the process model describes how Euroscepticism and the learning organization are linked, while variance model explains what the expected type of influence of Euroscepticism on the EC as a learning organization is. The two models are complementary in fact, ‘one way to significantly improve the robustness of answers to the first (variance model) question is to explicitly examine the process that is assumed to explain why an independent variable causes a dependent variable’ (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 160). However, it should be considered that since the study is purely descriptive, no causal relationship is between the variables is assumed and tested in this research.

3.1 Process Model

3.1.1 The 7 dimensions of a learning organization

As anticipated in the literature review, the model elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016) is the process model within this theoretical framework. It represents the theoretical ground of the

research, as its application to the case of the EC is fundamental in order to build the hypotheses and answer to the general research question. This model focuses on schools as learning organizations (SLO) and individuates 7 dimensions that characterise them: “Developing a shared vision centred on the learning of all students”; “Promoting and supporting continuous professional learning for all staff”; **“**Promoting team learning and collaboration among all staff”; **“**Establishing a culture of inquiry, exploration and innovation”; “Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning”; “Learning with and from the external environment and larger system”; “Modelling and growing learning leaders”. These elements are tailored on the field of education, but they can be generally extended to the public sector and, consequently, to the context of the EC. In fact, the model by Kools and Stoll (2016) was built on the 7 dimensions presented by Watkins and Marsick (1999) in their study entitled “Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire” (DLOQ). In this work, the authors elaborate a questionnaire based on 7 attributes of the learning organization which aim is to contribute to researches and strategic development of learning organizations (Watkins & O’Neil, 2013). The focus of such instrument were organizations in general and not specifically SLO. Consequently, the theoretical basis of the model by Kools and Stoll (2016) applies to all learning organizations. In the light of this element, it can be derived that the 7 dimensions of the learning organization can be adapted to another context.

Furthermore, there is a characteristic shared by both SLO and the EC: they are public organizations. Such feature is particularly important with respect to organizational change, as ‘the drivers for organisational change in the public sector are different from those in the private sector, emanating as they do in part from the political system’ (Kools & Stoll, 2013, p.15).

Based on the above-presented theoretical elements the first hypothesis that is formulated and is tested in the framework of this research is:

H1: The 7 dimensions of SLO individuated by Kools and Stoll (2016) apply to the European Commission.

Clearly, in the operationalization some elements of the model elaborated for SLO are modified to fit the EC context. This aspect is explained in the following chapter.

3.1.2 Contingency theory

Another element that is included in the process model, as it explains how the variables are connected, is contingency theory. As explained by George and Desmidt (2014), contingency theory identifies determinants that intervene on the strategic management process within the public sector. More specifically, it indicates the external environment and the organizational determinants as elements that influence strategic management (Poister, Pitts & Edwards,

2010). Bryson (2010) includes strategic implementation and evaluation within the concept of strategic management. Moreover, organizational learning is listed among the strategic actions that a public organization carries out, based on the original balanced scoreboard model elaborated by Kaplan and Norton (1996). As a consequence, according to contingency theory, the external environment can influence the strategic management process, including learning, within a public organization.

Going back to the definition of the learning organization elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016) and, notably to its 7 dimensions, a relationship can be found between the external environment and two of those dimensions: “Learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system”; “Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning”. In fact, they are directly related to the external environment. In other words, as pointed out in the literature review, they are a further development the most revolutionary discipline introduced by Senge (1990, 1997), “System thinking”. From this theoretical ground, a second hypothesis can be formulated:

H2: *The dimensions “Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning” and “Learning with and from the external environment and larger system” are the two features of the learning organization influenced the most by Euroscepticism.*

In the next paragraphs, more hypotheses are elaborated in the light of concepts such as trust or a hostile environment that constitute the variance model. These considerations will enable to specify the nature of the relationship that links the above-mentioned two dimensions and Euroscepticism.

3.2 Variance model

3.2.1 The role of trust

The first element of the variance model - thus, that explains what the expected impact of Euroscepticism on the learning organization is - is trust. According to the model elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016) trust is one of the four transversal themes that contribute to the development of the 7 dimensions of the learning organization, together with time, technology and thinking together. More specifically, ‘trust underpins the kinds of relationships needed internally and externally’ (Kools & Stoll, 2016, p. 32). It can be identified also in other dimensions, such as professional learning among staff members, which requires mutual trust among professionals in order to exchange experience and feedbacks (Kools & Stoll, 2016). However, for the purpose of this research, the influence of trust on the relationship with the external environment is the only element which is deepened. In fact, Euroscepticism is likely to have affected the perception of the EU form external actors due to the decrease in trust of public opinion towards the Union.

3.2.2 The role of information

Contingency theory has highlighted the impact of external environment on strategic management and learning. But, how is this possible? The evaluation stage of strategic management entails the creation of monitoring mechanisms that analyse data originating from both the internal and the external organizational environment. The purpose of the monitoring phase is to eventually adapt the strategy to environmental stimuli (George & Desmidt, 2014). Clearly, this dynamic consists in organizational learning: depending on the type of change entailed by the process it can be identified as either single-loop or double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The necessary condition for this process to happen is the availability of manageable information (Boyne, Gould-Williams, Law, & Walker, 2002). In line with this idea, Berry (1994) argues that collaboration with private actors enhances innovative good practices diffusion within public sector organizations, strengthening their flexibility. Therefore, having the opportunity to gather and elaborate information originating from the external environment increases the likelihood of learning. The importance of formal and informal networking in the case of the European Environmental Agency (EEA) is the focus of the study by Zito (2009), which demonstrates the centrality of information gathering processes aimed at enacting organizational learning in the case of the EU. However, Euroscepticism might negatively affect the availability of data and information provided by stakeholders, due to the general scepticism that affects the Union's surroundings. In fact, knowledge and information coming from the external environment of the EU is gathered through several thematic networks aimed at providing the necessary information to policy-makers (European Commission, 2019d). The lack of trust towards the EU can undermine this process, affecting organizational learning, too. In fact, both forms of Euroscepticism identified by Serricchio et al. (2012) derive form citizens' perception of the EU. As a result, a negative perception of the Union and a lack of trust towards this institution can discourage citizens and stakeholders in general to cooperate with the EU. In the light of these considerations H3a and H3b are formulated.

H3a: Euroscepticism has a negative impact on the learning organization's dimension "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning".

H3b: Euroscepticism has a negative impact on the learning organization's dimension "Learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system".

Each hypothesis refers to one of the two dimensions of the learning organization that rely on the interactions with the external environment and considers the potential negative influence that Euroscepticism might have.

3.2.3 A hostile environment as an incentive for learning

So far, the possible negative relationship between Euroscepticism and organizational learning has been explored. Nevertheless, a positive link between the two variables can be derived from the theory. In fact, external negative contingencies can boost the application of strategic planning (Poister, Pitts, & Edwards, 2010). This dynamic is illustrated by the case of the state of Oregon presented in a study by Kissler, Fore, Jacobson, Kittredge and Stewart (1998) where the strategic plan development realised by the state's government is analysed. In the context of this study, voters' cynicism is identified as a factor that has stimulated the development of strategic planning. As stated above, learning processes are part of the evaluation stage of strategic management; this last includes strategic planning (George & Desmidt, 2014). Despite of the fact that the study by Kissler et al. (1998) focuses specifically on strategic planning, its findings can be extended to strategic management and organizational learning, as well. In fact, between the end of the 1980s and mid-1990s Oregon elaborated two strategic plans for the state, Oregon Shines I and Oregon Shines II. They consisted in public policy plans, mainly focused on the economic development of the state. Thanks to the benchmarking system defined by the first plan, the fulfilment of the strategic objectives has been assessed and recommendations for the new strategic plan produced. As a result, the second strategic plan has been adjusted in the light of the monitoring and evaluation of Oregon Shines I outcomes. The result of this evaluation process was a new strategic plan more focused on a bottom-up approach and the involvement of citizens and stakeholders. The applied adjustments were aimed at tackling general voter scepticism through the involvement of the community (Kissler et al., 1998). What has emerged from the study is that a negative external condition can enhance strategic planning. Since strategic planning is part of strategic management, this research argues that the same conditions also entail an improvement of the overall strategic management process. This last idea implies that also learning (that results from the evaluation stage of strategic management) is strengthen by a hostile environment. This last logical step is underpinned by the fact that a stronger relationship with the external environment was at the core of the Oregon Shines II. Furthermore, the link between the external environment and strategic management is described by contingency theory. Oregon case study shows that a hostile political environment has stimulated a closer cooperation between the government and civil society as a consequence of an evaluation process. Since the cooperation with external actors has been identified as a core feature of organizational learning, other two hypotheses can be introduced:

H4a: Euroscepticism has a positive impact on the learning organization's dimension "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning".

H4b: Euroscepticism has a positive impact on the learning organization's dimension "Learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system".

In other words, a parallelism between Oregon case and the EC is at the base of H4a and H4b. It is possible that in both contexts a hostile political have stimulated learning. In the case of Oregon, this has been demonstrated by Kissler et al. (1998), while in the case of the EC this still needs to be tested.

In this chapter a theoretical framework has been designed deepening the theories that define a conceptual relationship between the variables and thus, the empirical partial question "how are Euroscepticism and the learning organization interrelated within the theory?" has been answered. In brief, the model used to analyse organizational learning within the EC is the one designed by Kools and Stoll (2016) for SLO. 2 of the 7 dimensions of the learning organization have a particularly significant link with the external environment and are expected to be influenced by Euroscepticism. The type of impact of the phenomenon can be either negative, as indicated by contingency theory and considering the importance of trust, or positive, as theorised by Kissler et al. (1989). Based on this conceptual ground 6 hypotheses have been formulated (H1; H2; H3a; H3b; H4a; H4b). To sum up the process followed to elaborate the theoretical framework, Figure 2 displays the main theories considered to shape the hypotheses. In the next chapter the methods applied to test the hypotheses are discussed.

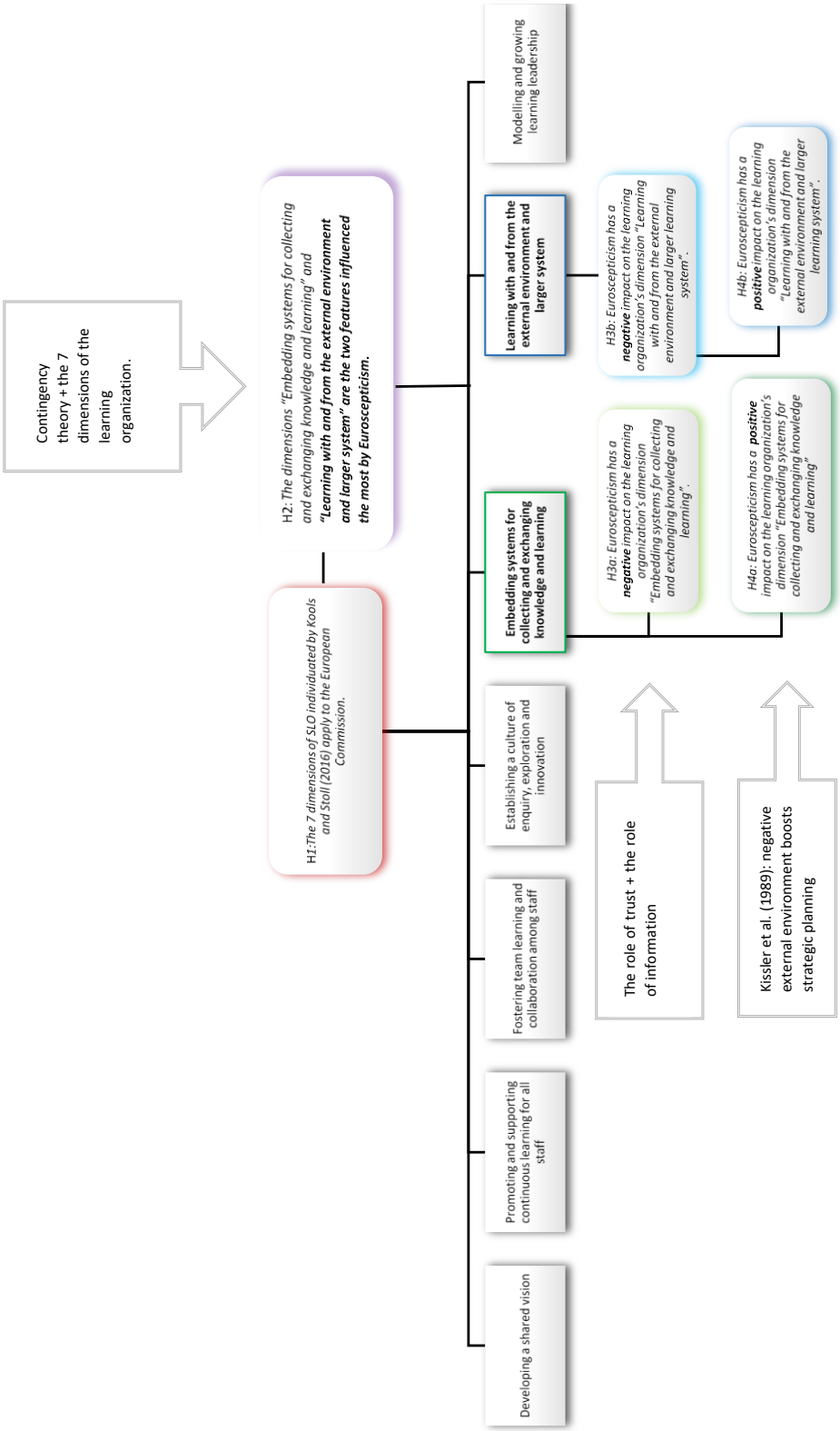

Figure 2: Theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 4
Methods

Chapter 4 develops the methodology and the research design employed in this study. Subsequently, the analytical approach and the validity and reliability of the study are discussed.

4.1 Empirical setting

The object of this research is the European Commission (EC) as a learning organization and the final aim of this study is to assess whether Euroscepticism had an impact in terms of organizational learning within the EC. Furthermore, through the first hypothesis this research tests if the model of SLO elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016) can be applied to the context of the EC. As a matter of fact, the premise to test the influence of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions of the EC is that the 7 dimensions can be applied to the case so that, in a second phase, the impact of the Eurosceptic phenomenon can be analysed. For this reason, the empirical setting considered here is the EC itself and, more precisely, its DGs.

The EC can be compared to a national government. It is composed by a core executive represented by the College of Commissioners, a bureaucracy embodied by the DGs and a network of agencies which have both monitoring and regulatory competencies (Hix & Høyland, 2011). The DGs can be compared to ministries as they are in charge for specific policy areas (European Commission, 2019a). In total, 53 Departments and executive agencies operate within the EC in different thematic fields. However, only Directorate-Generals have been considered in order to ensure a higher homogeneity of the sample population. In fact, the autonomy which characterises EC's executive agencies differentiates from the DGs in terms of organizational features and competencies (Koenig, 2017). This aspect could have threated the representativeness of the sample population and, consequently, these entities have been excluded. Furthermore, Commissioners have not been considered due to their political role, which could have spoilt their perception of the EC and the possible impact of Euroscepticism. In addition to that, DGs "have their own units not just for implementing policies but also for monitoring achievements" (Schout A. , 2009, p. 1130). Hence, their organizational capacities render them appropriate units to take into consideration in assessing the EC's organizational learning. Members of all DGs have been contacted, so to guarantee the representativeness of the population. For this reason, the selection of the sample population can be defined as 'horizontal' as it transversally involves all the DGs.

4.2 Data gathering

In order to answer to the research question 'what is the impact of Euroscepticism on the European Commission as a learning organization?', a descriptive cross-sectional research

design is selected and applied. In fact, 'cross-sectional studies are best used to describe a population of interest at a single point in time' (Cummings, 2018, p. 317). As said before, in this case the population of interest consists in the European Commission's DGs' staff. Their perception of the influence of Euroscepticism is particularly important as they have a privileged perspective on the dynamics of organizational learning. Data have been gathered through a survey, composed mainly by close-ended questions and by one open-ended question. The software used to create the survey is Qualtrics. The survey link has been distributed via e-mail to the observed sample. One reminder has been sent after one week. In total, 183 DGs' members have been reached via phone and/or e-mail. 98 responses have been collected of which 45 were complete. Consequently, the overall response rate was 53.5%, but less than half of the responses have been analysed.

Due to the scarce reachability of the target population, which is composed by representatives of the top *élite* of the European Union, the data gathering represented a challenging phase. The process can be divided into three main steps, which are summarised in Figure 3. Due to the difficulties to apply a randomized selection, the target population consists in a convenient sample. Consequently, the first step of the data gathering process is characterised by the collaboration with a single contact point within a specific Directorate-General, the DG GROW. Through this contact, the survey has been introduced into the DG and distributed among some of its members. However, the amount of gathered responses was limited and the sample was not representative of the whole Commission's DGs. Hence, the second step was aimed at increasing the number of respondents and expanding the set of DGs involved. This passage was carried out passing through the central HR office, which has a transversal role among all the DGs, and which enabled to expand the targeted population. Due to time limitations, Step 3 was carried out in parallel with step 2. Step 3 consisted in contacting directly (via phone or via e-mail) members of management teams of all DGs. The approach to this passage was very structured. The list of the DG was accessed via the European Commission's website. For each of the DGs included in the list, the organizational chart was analysed. This last was shown through the EU internet platform "Who is who", which displays the names and the contacts of the staff members of every EU institution. For all the DGs, the full names of the management staff members and phone numbers of the entire staff were shown. Managers' e-mail addresses, when they were not explicitly shown on the platform, were traced via a general Google search or by contacting them or their assistants via phone. The fact that only the names of management teams' members were shown, made it easier to contact staff belonging to this organizational layer. Yet, the population was varied in terms of hierarchical position. This was possible because the management teams' members distributed the survey among their team's members with

different positions. As anticipated, the last step of the data gathering process (Step 4) consisted in sending to all contacts a general reminder to complete the survey.

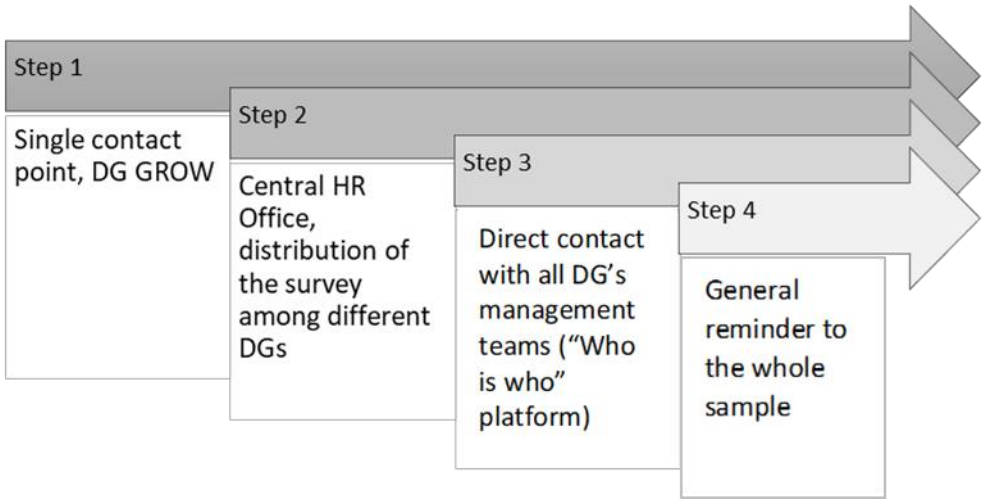

Figure 3: Data gathering process.

At the end of Step 1, the number of received responses was only 9 out of 98. 62 responses were gathered during Step 2 and Step 3, which have been carried out almost in parallel. After Step 4 the overall number of responses reached 98.

4.2.1 The survey structure

The first section of the survey (see Appendix A) has been developed starting from the study conducted by the OECD (2018) on schools as learning organizations (SLO). The objective of the research was to assess which dimensions of SLO applied to Welsh schools and to which extent. For this purpose, a questionnaire was distributed among Welsh schools' staff. For each of the 7 dimensions identified by Kools and Stoll (2016), several group items have been elaborated. As a result, the survey was divided into sections, each of which referred to one of the dimensions, containing the respective items. The survey answers to this first group of questions were presented under the form of a five-point Linkert scale, whose reliability is supported by the fact that it is largely used to measure governance or public management variables in public administration studies (OECD, 2018). The leverage of the scale to measure dimensions of the learning organization in this specific study have been tested through a Cronbach's alpha test; the results are presented later in the analysis. The 5 possible answers to the questions which compose the scale are: "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree", "Strongly agree" (OECD, 2018). The same questionnaire structure has been proposed for the first part of the survey used in the present study. Before evaluating the impact of Euroscepticism on the organizational learning processes of the EC, it was necessary to verify whether the model applied to the case of the EC. In fact, there is no similar study within the literature of the EC as a learning organization. To this end, the questionnaire elaborated

and used by the OECD with Welsh schools has been applied with some modifications. Consequently, the operationalization of the variable 'learning organization' follows the one carried out by the OECD (2018). More specifically, the 7 dimensions of SLO introduced by Kools and Stoll (2016) are operationalised through the questionnaire items presented in the framework of the study on Welsh schools by the OECD (2018).

Clearly, the fact the OECD's (2018) questionnaire targeted Welsh schools made it necessary to adjust some of the survey items which are presented in the Appendix. Table 3 shows the main changes produced.

Table 3: Modifications to OECD's (2018) questionnaire for SLO.

OECD's questionnaire	**This research questionnaire**
(Your) school	(Your) DG
Students	Citizens
Parents/other schools	Stakeholders or (external) partners
Development plan	Management plan
Developing a shared vision centred on the learning of all students	Developing a shared vision
"The school's vision is aimed at enhancing student's cognitive and social-emotional outcomes, including their well-being"	Item deleted
"The school's vision emphasises preparing students for their future in a changing world"	Item deleted

SLO were the focus of the OECD's research, while in this study the target population is DGs' staff. For this reason, the term 'school' has been substituted by 'DG' in the survey questions. Students are the beneficiaries of schools' work, as much as citizens are the beneficiaries of EU's work. As a consequence, the term 'citizens' has replaced the term 'students' within the survey. A similar ratio justifies the use of 'stakeholders' or '(external) partners' instead of 'parents' or 'other schools': partners and stakeholders of the EC can be compared to what parents and other schools are in the educational context. Moreover, the term 'management plan' has been employed instead of 'development plan' in the light of to the use of this expression done by the EC itself on its official website, where a management plan is defined as follows: 'It describes the actions for each department derived from the priorities and the strategic objectives of the Commission. It also enables the management of the department to

plan, follow up and report on all its activities, resources and staff needs' (European Commission, 2016). A similar role is played by development plans for schools. In fact, the Welsh government describes schools' development plans as a strategic document which aims at defining the way each school intend to improve its outcomes, as well as evaluating its performance and setting medium and long-term objectives (Welsh Government, 2014). The dimension "Developing a shared vision centred on the learning of all students" was transformed into "Develop a shared vision" in order to make it fit with the context of the EC and to render it more generic, so to include all the DGs. Furthermore, two items belonging to this dimension have been excluded from the adapted survey version. This choice is due to the fact that the two items were strongly linked to the educational context and were hardly adaptable to the case of the DGs. In fact, the aim of each DG changes based on the policy area it works in and so does its vision. Consequently, the items were hardly generalizable.

One criticism may emerge about the fact that the questionnaire created by the OECD was tailored to assess schools as learning organizations. However, as explained in the previous chapter, the 7 dimensions of SLO were elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016) based on a study by Watkins and Marsick (1996;1999) whose output is a questionnaire, the "Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire" (DLOQ), targeting public organizations in general. Since the study by the OECD (2018) on Welsh schools builds on Kools and Stoll's (2016) 7 dimensions, the survey which is used to gather data is that study can be easily adapted to another public sector organization as the EC. After assessing the presence of the 7 dimensions of the learning organization in the EC, the survey measures the perception of the relationship between Euroscepticism and organizational learning. Consequently, the second survey section consists in 7 items, each of which assesses the perceived influence of Euroscepticism on every single dimension of the learning organization using an answer scale that goes from "not at all" to "to a very great extent". In addition to that, an open question has been added at the end of this section in order to give the respondents the opportunity to explain how they think Euroscepticism has influenced one or more of the dimensions they considered the most affected by the phenomenon. Moreover, the survey asked the respondents to specify the DG they work in and their position within their DG. This last information is relevant as each level of a DG might have a different perception of their organization's learning dynamics. In fact, from a study by Payne and Mansfield (1973) it has emerged that people that occupy higher positions within the organizational hierarchy tend to have a more positive opinion of certain organizational elements. Specifically, high levels of the hierarchy perceive their organization as less authoritarian, characterised by greater work interest, friendlier, redier for innovation (Payne & Mansfield, 1973). For this reason, knowing the organizational role of every respondent helps to be aware of this kind of response bias, thus to be able to prevent its influence on the results. In addition to that, knowing the DG

respondents belong to might help to understand which DGs' staff have perceived the influence of Euroscepticism the most. The policy area the respondents work in can indeed impact on their opinion in this sense.

4.3 Data analysis

The final aim of the data analysis is to describe the perception different DGs' staff members have of their organization and its learning process, as well as of their opinion concerning the impact of Euroscepticism on their DG's daily work. Consequently, the type of analysis that is carried out is descriptive. In fact, as highlighted above, the objective of this study is not to assess a causal relationship between the variables, but rather to describe the perception of the link between the two that DGs' staff have. Doubtlessly, this research can be considered as a starting point for future more in-depth explanatory studies that aim at testing the causal link between the variables.

4.3.1 A two-step analysis

From a statistical point of view, the data analysis has been divided into two steps. The first concerns the analysis of the data originating from the first section of the questionnaire, which refers to the 7 dimensions of the learning organization. The second step focuses on the other half of the survey, which regards the impact of Euroscepticism on the organizational learning dynamics of the European Commission's DGs. In both cases data have been analysed via the software SPSS, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

First step. The initial step of the analysis focuses on the survey section which tests the applicability of the 7-dimension model to the DGs. The aim of this step is to build variables that correspond to the 7 dimensions and to assess the performance of the DGs in each of them. Normally, a factor analysis is also needed to verify that 'factored entities (e.g., variables) cluster in a theoretically expected way' (Thompson, 2007, p. 1). More specifically, in this case, it would have been used to verify the suitability of the model elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016) to the EC context. Nevertheless, due to the small N which characterises the sample, this step cannot be applied. Consequently, the variables considered are those suggested by the model itself, the 7 dimensions. Yet, a test to their reliability is necessary. To this end, a Cronbach's alpha test is carried out for each of the variables. The function of such test is to measure the internal consistency of scales. In other words, it tests 'the extent to which all the items in a test measure the same concept or construct and hence it is connected to the inter-relatedness of the items within the test' (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011, p. 53). After that, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum) are carried out for both the population as a whole and for the different DGs. Furthermore, the responses to the first questionnaire section are analysed in the light of the organizational position of the respondents. More precisely, any difference in organizational learning perception between the

sample of DGs' team management members and the rest of the organization is assessed.

Second step. The second type of analysis consists in two main tests. Since each of the 7 questions assessing the impact of Euroscepticism on the dimensions represents a variable in itself, the Cronbach's alpha test is not necessary. In fact, differently from the first stage of the analysis, the variables have not been created by an aggregation of survey items. As a result, there is no need to test the employed scale, as it only refers to one item. The first test of the second analysis stage consists in descriptive statistics. The description includes basic elements that are considered for each of the variables separately: mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum. The second and last test consists in the analysis of the responses to the open-ended question which ends the second section of the questionnaire. This analysis is carried out by clustering the responses into groups, based on their content. This procedure follows the one adopted by the OECD (2018) in the study about SLO. The findings originating from all the analysis stages will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.3.2 Mixed method design

The distributed questionnaire was mainly made by close-ended questions which can be analysed following a quantitative approach. However, the presence of an open-ended question challenges the purely quantitative nature of the data gathering method. In fact, the open-ended question leads to the conclusion that the employed data gathering method can be classified as a mixed method. With this respect, starting from data gathered through quantitative and qualitative methods, the analysis is carried out in a way that integrates the results, without simply juxtaposing the different sets of data. As a matter of fact, the mixed method should be chosen due to the added value that it gives in answering to the research question and this added value can be maximised only integrating datasets (Creswell, 2013). The open-ended question represents an added value in the research in the sense that it enables to investigate the way Euroscepticism has influenced EC's organizational learning, which would not be possible from the sole analysis on the close-ended question. Furthermore, it gives the respondents the possibility to better explain their responses to the survey, enhancing the internal validity of the analysis. Nevertheless, as highlighted in the limitations, more open-ended questions would have enhanced the explanatory power of the qualitative analysis. Generally, a mixed-method research design is characterised by the use of qualitative and quantitative data gathering techniques, the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods and the integration of the approaches (Creswell, 2016). All three elements can be identified in this research. Data can be integrated in different ways, based on different designs. The design selected for this research is an explanatory sequential mixed method design in which quantitative analysis represents the first phase and is followed by qualitative

analysis. This last is used to better explain the results emerged from the quantitative approach (Creswell, 2016). The design adopted for this research is shown in Figure 4.

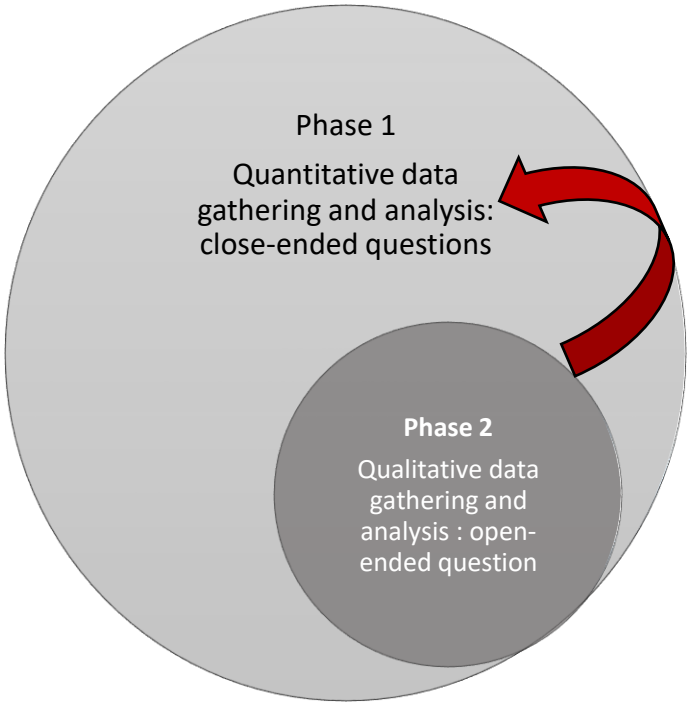

Figure 4: Explanatory sequential mixed method design.

Since the data gathering tool (the survey) is the same for both quantitative and qualitative data, the two design phases are included within the same circle. The circle containing Phase 2 is smaller just because of the more reduced amount of data produced, not due to its smaller relevance. Phase 2, which represents the qualitative approach used to gather qualitative data and analyse open-ended questions, is integrated within Phase 1 and helps explaining part of the findings originating form the first phase of data gathering, as underlined by the red arrow. In conclusion, the interrelation of the qualitative and qualitative approaches determines the use of the term mixed-method to define the design which has been employed. More specifically, the quantitative analysis is used to assess the perception of the EC as a learning organization and of the impact of Euroscepticism on each of the 7 dimensions. After that, qualitative research deepens the reason why respondents think that certain dimensions are more influenced by Euroscepticism. In this sense, the qualitative analysis expands the explanatory leverage of the research.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

4.4.1 Internal validity

Two main types of validity are considered when a research is designed and carried out: internal validity and external validity. Generally, internal validity is defined as ‘the accuracy of statements made about the causal relationship between two variables, namely, the

manipulated (treatment or independent) variable and the measured variable (dependent)' (Salkind, 2010, p. 619). However, the idea that internal validity depends on the causal relationship between the variables is strictly correlated with the type of research design employed. Specifically, this concept applies to experimental and quasi-experimental research designs. Concerning this topic, Campbell and Stanley (2015) have pointed out possible obstacles to both internal and external validity in experimental and quasi-experimental research design. Yet, as Onwuegbuzie (2000) has noticed, this definition is not suitable for other types of quantitative research, such as descriptive quantitative designs. In fact, for different types of researches, different criteria should be considered. Building on Huck and Sandler (1979) and McMillan (2000), the author lists several elements that are internal validity 'threats' (Onwuegbuzie, 2000). Among the others, instrumentation is considered a threat to internal validity. In the case of this research, using a questionnaire which has been elaborated and used by the OECD, is considered a sufficient guarantee of reliability. It is true that the 7-diemension model elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016) has never been tested on a public sector organisation, yet, the solidity of such model renders it reliable enough. The purpose of the second survey section is to assess the perception of the influence of Euroscepticism over each of the dimensions. For this purpose, a simple extent scale has been used to measure the answers. Despite not having been taken from the questionnaire by the OECD (2018) the second part of the questionnaire is still inspired to the 7 dimensions of SLO. Furthermore, an open question has been added to let the respondent explain better in which way they perceive Euroscepticism to have influenced any of the dimensions. This way the risk deriving from this last instrument is minimised.

4.4.2 External validity

External validity can be defined as 'the generalizability of research results and findings to the population that the sample has been taken from' (Kalaian & Kasim, 2008, p. 255). The population of interest for this study consists in the European Commission, hence the external validity would be at its highest if it could be said that the findings of the research can be generalised 'to similar populations in terms of contexts, individuals, times, and settings' (Kalaian & Kasim, 2008, p. 255). However, as the results of the survey rely on the individual perception of many DGs' staff members, would be hard to claim that. In fact, the answers of the respondents are determined by a certain organizational and political context that are hardly replicable in different periods of time. Furthermore, it would be hard to find similar populations in other contexts, due to the pretty unique nature of the EU. In addition to that, the use of a convenient sample, undermines the generalizability of findings also in terms of the EC itself. As a consequence, the external validity of this research is limited. However, the results of the first part of the questionnaire, aimed at testing the suitability of Kools and Stoll's (2016) model

for the EC, could be considered more generalizable. In fact, it refers more broadly to the learning dynamics of the DGs, without taking into consideration the political contingencies.

4.4.3 Reliability

The reliability of a quantitative study consists in 'the quality of consistency in a measure or procedure' (Dick, 2014, p. 684). Firstly, in this research, the consistency of the measure is ensured by the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey, which represent for the respondents the basic guarantee and which could encourage their honesty and objectivity.

It could be noticed that data have been gathered only through one single tool, the survey. Consequently, someone could think that the biggest threat to the reliability of this research is Common Source Bias (CSB). In fact, CSB is often considered the main issue when it comes to the use of surveys. This bias 'indicates potential issues when scholars use the same data source, typically a survey, to measure both independent and dependent variable' (George & Pandey, 2017, p. 246). Based on the definition, this research seems to belong to the case. However, in order to represent a reliability threat to the analysis, the research should be aimed at measuring the causal relation between the variables. In fact, CSB applies when Common Method Variance (another form of bias deriving from using the same data source) results into inflated correlations (Favero & Bullock, 2015). Yet, as stated above, this study has a descriptive focus and does not aim at assessing any causal link between the variables. Hence, the descriptive nature of the study itself prevents CBS to undermine the reliability of the research.

To conclude, this thesis presents a good level of both reliability and internal validity, on the one hand. On the other, the external validity of the study is limited, due to the link of the topic with a specific temporal and political context and to the employment of a convenient sample.

4.4.4 Limitations

One of the limitations this study presents has already been mentioned in the previous sections and consists in the lack of external validity. This aspect derives from multiple elements. Firstly, the sample considered is a convenient sample, as only the staff members which contacts were available on the internet has been considered. Moreover, the survey has been distributed within the different DGs by the staff members firstly contacted. For this reason, it has not been possible to create a representative sample. This choice has been done in the light of time and resources constraints. Yet, the number of responses received and the variety of the DGs and the roles included in the population helped enhancing the cross-sectional leverage of the sample. Nevertheless, with respect to the variety of DGs included, some of them count only 1 or 2 respondents. This prevent from carrying out a more vertical analysis which could give results that are representative of the single DGs. This is indeed possible, to a certain extent,

only in some cases that will be presented in the next chapter. Second, the choice of considering only members of the bureaucracy of the EC makes it hard to generalize the findings for the whole institution. In addition to that, the considerable autonomy DGs have one from another makes it hard to consider the sample as unitary. If it is true that, on the one hand, the variety of the DGs included enhances the representativeness of the bureaucracy of the EC, on the other hand, a more in-depth approach to each of the DGs would be required in order to consider the specificities of each Directorate General.

The second type of limitation which characterises the research is linked to the survey and, more precisely, to the open-ended question. This questionnaire item is particularly important to understand the ratio behind the responses of the population. However, due to the necessity to keep the survey as manageable as possible and to invite the respondents to complete it, it was not advisable to add more open questions. Most importantly, the fact that it was a written survey instead of a face-to-face interview did not give the opportunity to ask further questions to the respondents and to collect more data. In fact, often the responses to open-ended questions within surveys are not clear and contain ambiguous terms that render the interpretation of the message harder (Kammeyer & Roth, 1971). The choice of the data gathering method has been done in the light of the difficulty of reaching members of the EU *élite* for face-to-face interviews and the limited amount of available time. In the next chapters, the findings are presented and interpreted also in the light of the above-mentioned limitations.

In general, time and context-related constraints, as well as the above-mentioned limitations weakened the leverage of the hypotheses testing. In part, this is due to the fact that this study is a preliminary research on the topic of organizational learning within the EU and that it is the only one, based on what emerged from the literature review, to apply the model by Kools and Stoll (2016). The same conditions restrained the possibility to test the statistical relationship between the variables. However, the descriptive leverage of this research represents a starting point for future developments.

CHAPTER 5
Findings

This chapter provides a description of the findings resulted from the data analysis. They are presented following the chronological order of the analysis steps. The aim of this section is to respond to the empirical subquestions presented in Chapter 1:

4. To what extent is the European Commission a learning organization?
5. Has Euroscepticism impacted the EC's capacity to be or become a learning organization?
6. What is the impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions of the learning organization within the European Commission's Directorates General?

Furthermore, in parallel the findings are interpreted in order to verify the hypotheses.

5.1 The 7 dimensions of the learning organization

As described in the previous chapter, the analysis of the first part of the survey is aimed at testing the applicability of the model by Kools and Stoll (2016) to the specific context of the European Commission. The first test that has been carried out is the Cronbach's alpha test. All the values of the test are included in a range that goes from 0.70 to 0.95, which has been individuated as the range of acceptable alphas (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Table 4 shows the exact Cronbach's alpha value per each of the 7 dimensions.

Table 4: Cronbach's alpha of the 7 dimensions.

Dimension	Cronbach's alpha	N. of items
Developing a shared vision	0.79	9
Promoting and supporting continuous professional learning for all staff	0.88	11
Fostering team learning and collaboration among staff	0.88	11
Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation	0.90	9
Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning	0.85	8

Learning with and from the external environment and larger system	0.78	6
Modelling and growing learning leadership	0.92	12

Consequently, the 7 dimensions result to be reliable. After having tested the reliability of the dimensions, 7 corresponding variables have been computed through the statistical software. Specifically, the variables have been created calculating the means of the responses to the survey items that corresponded to each of the 7 dimensions. Hence, the score of each of the dimensions (which corresponds the 7 variables) is the means of the responses to the corresponding items. Descriptive statistics test has been applied to the variables. Thanks to this test, the performance of the DGs in each of the dimensions has been assessed. The mean is done among all the answers to the survey items belonging to each of the 7 variables. Since the answer scale goes from 1 to 5, the mean is a value included in this range. 1 corresponds to the scale option “Strongly disagree” and 5 to the option “Strongly agree”. As a consequence, the closer the value of the mean is to 5, the more a dimension applies to the DGs and vice versa. The standard deviation varies across dimensions (see Appendix B, Table B1). It is particularly low in the case of the dimension “Fostering team learning and collaboration among staff” (*SD*=0.46), due to the fact that the difference between the minimum (*minimum*=3.00) and the maximum (maximum=5.00) value is small. This indicates that the scores in this dimension are quite uniform thus a general agreement among the respondents has been observed. Contrarily, the difference between the maximum (*maximum*=5) and the minimum (*minimum*=1.56) values is at its highest in the case of “Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation” (*SD*=0.68). Hence, the variance of the responses differs significantly among the variables. Figure 5 helps visualize how the DGs are perceived to perform in all the 7 dimensions by their staff members.

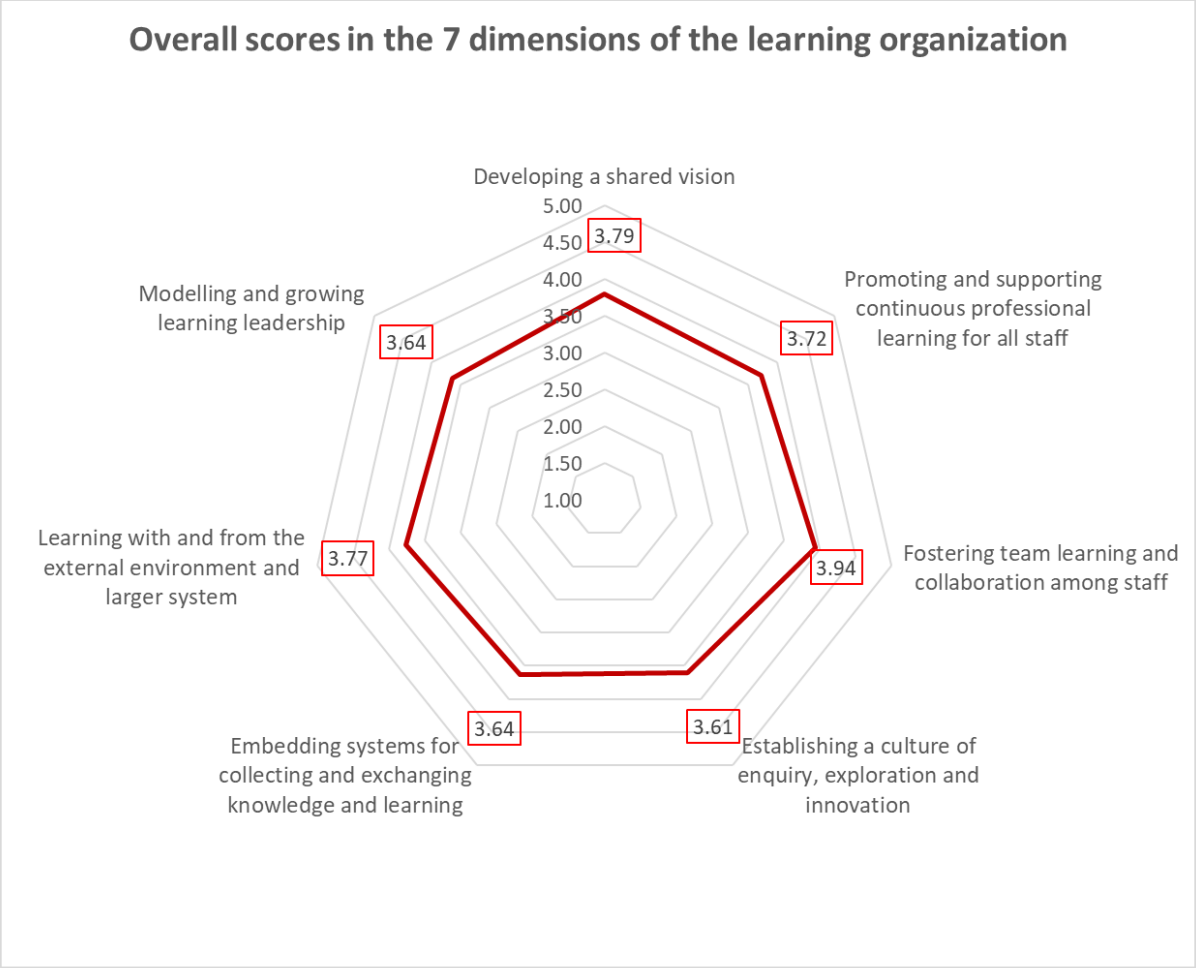

Figure 5: The 7 dimensions of the learning organization in the whole sample of DGs.

The dimension in which the DGs seem to perform best is "Fostering team learning and collaboration among staff" (*M*=3.94), followed respectively by "Developing a shared vision" (*M*=3.79) and "Promoting and supporting continuous professional learning for all staff" (*M*=3.72). On the contrary, the dimension in which the targeted group of DGs is perceived as most lacking is "Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation" (*M*=3.61). Overall, all the means are included into a range that goes from 3.5 to 4, which means that the average of the responses is ideally located in a space included between "neutral" (3) and "agree" (4). Yet, the values are all closer to 4, so respondents seem rather to agree to the fact that the 7 dimensions are relevant for their DGs. However, some distinctions among the 7 variables can be observed. The dimension which is the closest to 4 is "Fostering team learning and collaboration among staff" (*M* =3.94). In this case, it can be concluded that the dimension applies to the case of the DGs. Contrarily, the dimension which is the most distant from the value 4 is "Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation" (*M*=3.61). Although the value of the mean is still closer to 4 than to 3, the average is almost equally distant from the two values and the model seems to apply less strongly with respect to this dimension.

Figure 6 displays the distribution of the means of the 7 dimensions within the range between "neutral" and "agree".

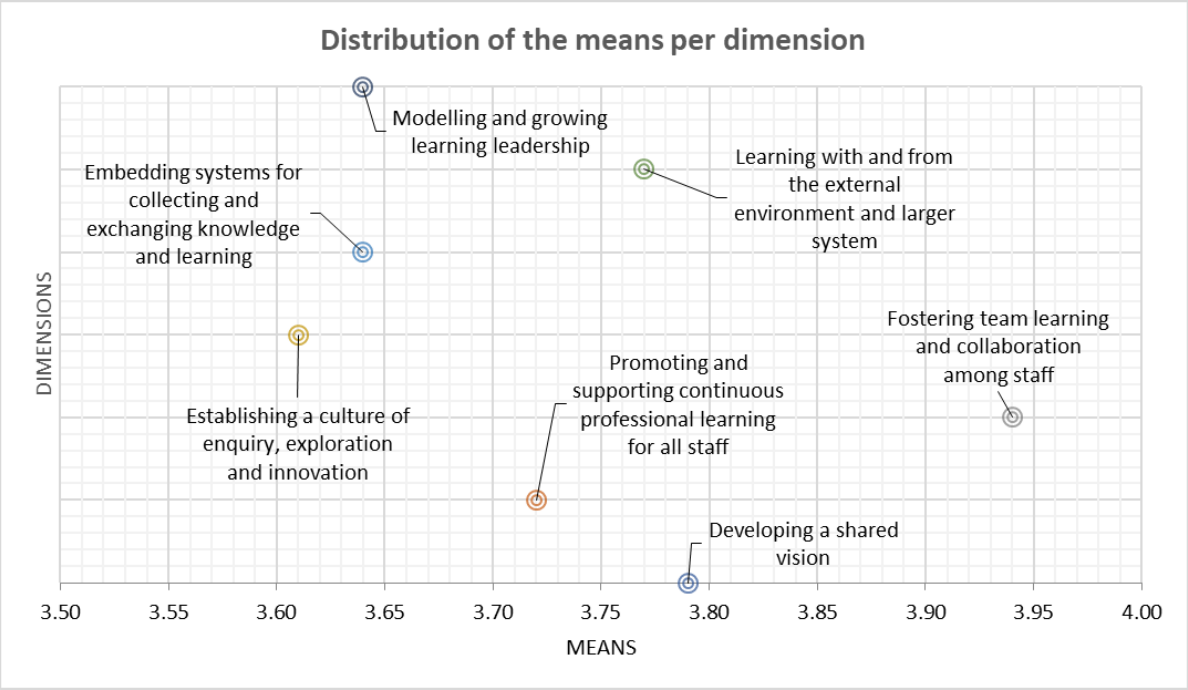

Figure 6: Means per each of the 7 dimensions.

In conclusion, the model applies to the case of the European Commission. Nevertheless, for the majority of the dimensions, this result is not convincing enough. In other words, except for the dimension "Fostering team learning and collaboration among staff", the results do not show a clear-cut agreement on the presence of the 7 dimensions in the *modus operandi* of the DGs. Consequently, H1, according to which the model by Kools and Stoll (2016) can be adopted to describe the learning dynamics of the EC, is only theoretically verified. Future studies in this direction are needed to obtain clearer results.

5.1.1 The 7 dimensions analysed per DG

So far, the sample population has been observed as a whole (*N*=45), nevertheless the respondents belong to different DGs. With this respect, the patterns of the responses can be analysed in the light of the DG the respondents work for. The composition of the analysed population is reported in Figure 7.

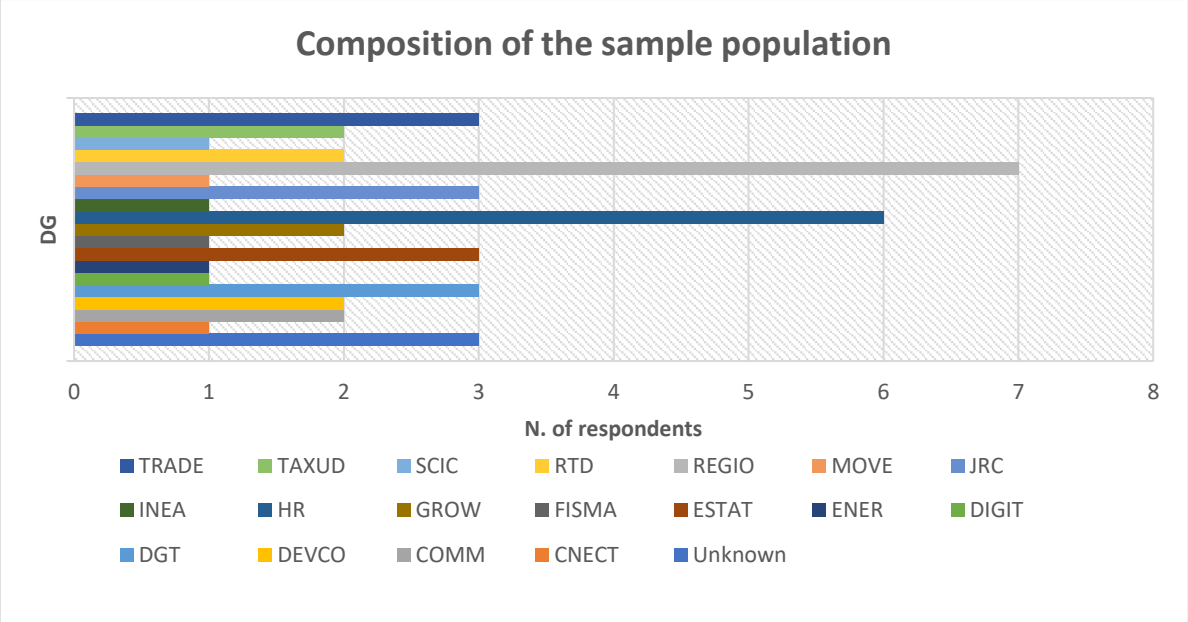

Figure 7: Composition of the sample population.

The total amount of DGs that are represented in the sample population is 18 out of 31 existing DGs. Consequently, 58% of the DGs are included in the analysed sample. The 3 responses in which the DG was not specified fall under the category of "unknown". The consistent variety of DGs included in the population increases the cross-sectional leverage of the research. Some DGs are represented by only 1 or 2 respondents. For representativeness reasons, only DGs which respondents were at least 3 have been included in the analysis of the 7 dimensions. This choice has been taken considering that 3 is the number of responses per DG that is exactly in between the lowest (n=1) and the highest (n=7). Consequently, generalizing the results of the survey to the DG when less than 3 responses have been recorded, would not lead to a particularly significant analysis of the DGs' perceptions with respect to the overall sample. Although 3 respondents cannot be considered representative of an entire DG, this reasoning has been done in the light of the size of the observed population (N=45) and the number of responses gathered per DG. However, the complete descriptive statistics are reported in the Appendix (Appendix B, Table B2). The scores of the DGs with a sample bigger than 2 respondents for each of the learning organization's dimensions are shown in Figure 8.

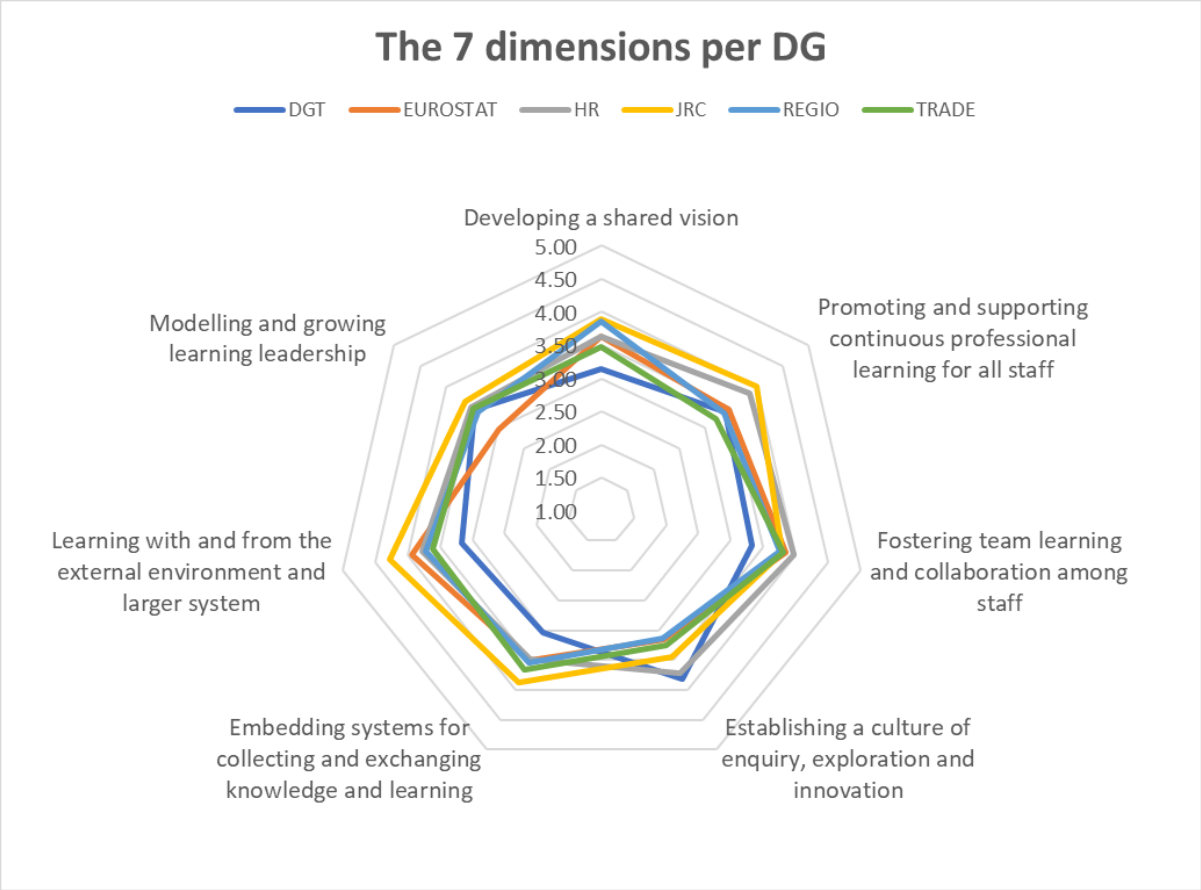

Figure 8: The scores of the 7 dimensions displayed per DG.

Overall, the DG which presents the highest scores in 4 out of 7 dimensions is DG JRC (*n*=3). Compared to the rest, some DGs show particularly low scores in certain dimensions. For instance, it is the case of DGT (*n*=3*)* in "Learning with and from the external environment and larger systems" (*M*=3.33) and "Fostering team learning and collaboration among all staff" (*M*=3.17). Nevertheless, the same DG obtains the highest score in the dimension "Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation" (*M*=3.81). DG EUROSTAT (*n*=3) is the weakest DG in terms of "Modelling and growing learning leadership" (*M*=2.97). DG HR (*n*=6) is characterised by quite high scores in all the dimensions and is the first in terms of the dimension "Fostering team learning and collaboration among all staff" (*M*=3.97). With respect to the applicability of the model, DG JRC shows results in line with and even higher than the general trend of the whole sample, except for one dimension: "Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation". For this reason, in the case of DG JRC, the model of the 7 dimensions of the learning organization applies with one modification: the observed dimensions are 6. The model fits also the DG HR, excluding for the dimension "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning". However, the values are included in the range between "neutral" and "agree", like in the overall population, hence the result is not fully convincing. The model does not fit the DGT in 6 out of 7 dimensions (*M*<3.5)

and the only dimension which could be considered applicable, “Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation” does not reach 4.0 (*M*=3.81). Concerning the other DGs, the model seems to apply only in the case of some of the dimensions (but still they do not exceed the threshold of 4). The minimum score in one single dimension has been obtained by DG EUROSTAT (*M*= 2.97), while the maximum by DG JRC (*M*=4.23). This means that the values of the responses of the DGs considered here (*n*=25) do no variate greatly among them and that in general, values are in line or slightly differ from the average trend.

Despite not being included in the considered sample of DGs, due to the small number of components (*n*<3), some DGs show interesting patterns. For instance, the model of the 7 dimensions applies perfectly to the DG DEVCO, according to the respondents (*n*=2). The average score in each of the 7 dimensions in higher than 4.0.

5.1.2 Social desirability bias

Another type of descriptive analysis is interesting for the purpose of this research. The last question of the survey asked participants to specify if they belonged to the management team of their DG. The answers to this question enable to divide the sample population into two groups based on their role within the organization and to observe whether the perception of the learning dimensions changes based on this distinction. In total, 26 respondents are part of the management team and 18 are not (*n*=44*)*; 1 respondent did not provide this information. The outcome of such observation is that respondents that are part of the management team of their DG, on average, gave higher scores to all the 7 dimensions (Figure 9). This result could be explained in the light of the so-called social desirability bias. As anticipated in the previous chapter, social desirability bias can be defined as the tendency of members of an organization who belong to the managerial layer of having a more positive vision of the organization in terms of openness, quality of their work and internal environment (Payne & Mansfield, 1973). In this case, the analysis confirms this tendency as the responses of staff members that belong to managerial layers portray the EC as performing better in all the 7 dimensions. In this sense, social-desirability bias can be measured observing the variance of the responses between the two groups (Payne & Mansfield, 1973). Yet, it should be specified that differences among the means are very small; in fact, they never exceed 0.3 (Appendix B, Table B3). Consequently, the impact that the social desirability bias has had on the general results is limited.

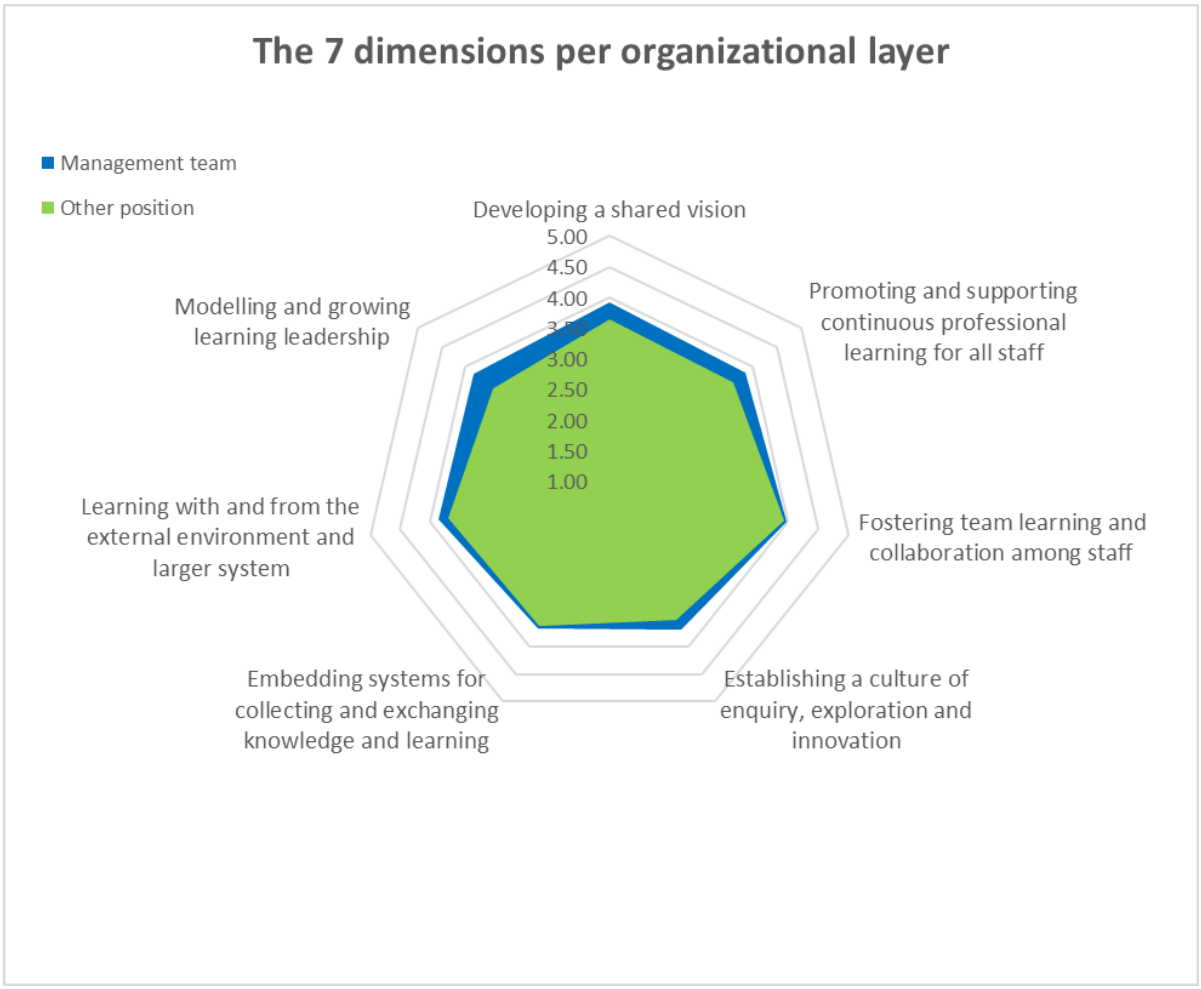

Figure 9: The overall scores in the 7 dimensions of the learning organization according the two organizational layers.

5.2 The impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions

The second part of the survey focuses on the influence Euroscepticism has in terms of each of the 7 dimensions. This questionnaire section is composed by 7 items, each of which measures the impact of Euroscepticism on one single dimension. As explained above, the descriptive statistics are done directly on the 7 items, which are also the 7 variables. The answer scale used for this section of the survey differs from the one used in the previous part. Although the number of items and consequently the values do not change (1 to 5), the label of each of them differs. The scale is indeed composed as follows: “Not at all” (1), “To a small extent” (2), “To a moderate extent” (3), “To a great extent” (4), “To a very great extent” (5). The dimensions which are perceived as the least impacted by Euroscepticism are “Promoting and supporting continuous learning for all staff” and “Fostering team learning and collaboration among all staff” (*M*=2.33). On the contrary, the dimension which is considered the most influenced by Euroscepticism is “Developing a shared vision” (*M*=2.84). Nevertheless, it can be noticed that there is scarce difference among the 7 values. As a matter of fact, the respondents think that their DGs have been impacted by Euroscepticism in terms of all the

dimensions and the intensity of this phenomenon varies slightly among the dimensions. In other words, the general perception of the surveyed population is that Euroscepticism has influenced the 7 dimensions of the learning organization to an extent which is included within "To a small extent" and "To a moderate extent" (Appendix C, Table C1). The means of respondents' perception concerning the impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions is shown in Figure 10.

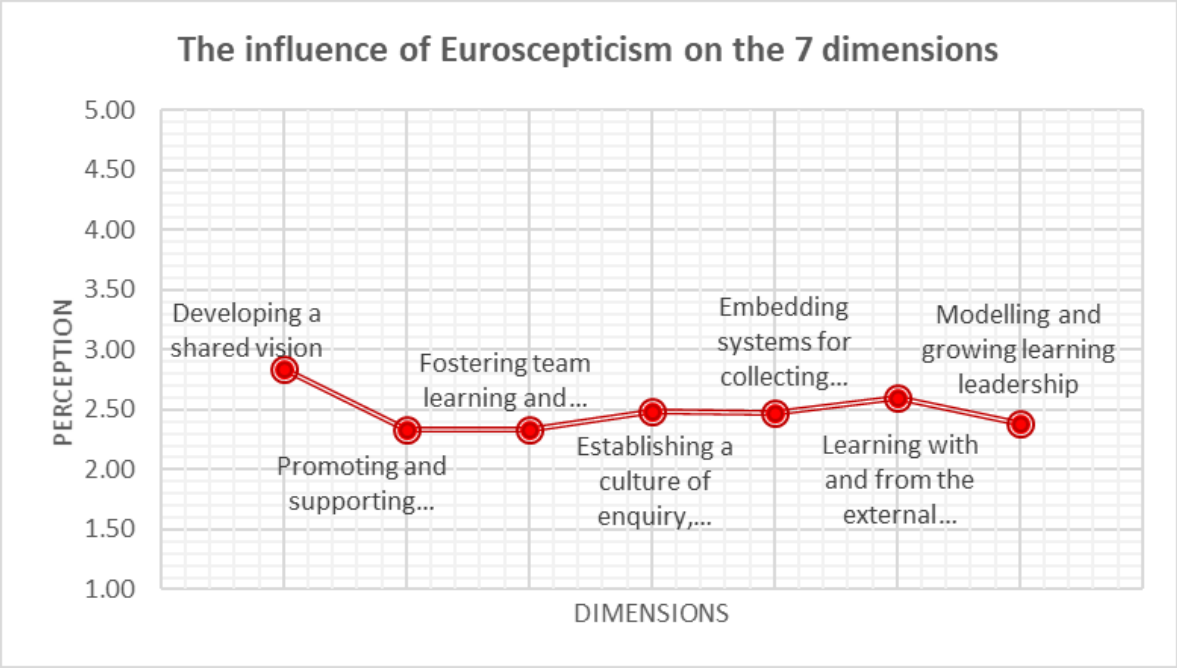

Figure 10: The perception of the influence of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions.

The two dimensions which, based on the theoretical framework, were expected to have the strongest relationship with Euroscepticism are "Learning with and from the external environment and larger system" and "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning". Their scores are respectively the 2nd (*M*=2.60) and the 4th (*M*=2.47) highest of the series. Consequently, "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning" is influenced "To a small extent" by Euroscepticism, while "Learning with and from the external environment and larger system" is impacted "To a moderate extent". This leads to the conclusion that concerning "Learning with and from the external environment and larger system", the second hypothesis is partially verified, as it demonstrates to be valid only for one of the two dimensions considered. In fact, the this last is formulated as follows:

H2: *The dimensions "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning" and "Learning with and from the external environment and larger system" are the two features of the learning organization influenced the most by Euroscepticism.*

The part of the hypothesis which envisages “Learning with and from the external environment and larger system” as a dimension with the strongest correlation with Euroscepticism is correct. In fact, as highlighted above, considering the research findings it is the second most influenced dimension. The same conclusion cannot be drawn regarding “Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning”. Instead, the other dimension which is perceived as the most impacted by Euroscepticism is “Developing a shared vision”. This last was not included in the initial hypothesis due to the fact that the survey items which correspond to this variable measure the effort or the attempt of the organization to include external stakeholders rather than the effective collaboration between those and the organization. Specifically, the items which refer to the involvement of external actors assess the extent to which DGs’ staff think they are “invited to contribute to the vision”, rather than the existing partnership with those actors. Furthermore, the connection with the external environment represents a minor aspect of the dimension. As a matter of fact, this dimension is more centred on improving the performance of students and the quality of the service and on boosting equality (Kools & Stoll, 2016). It should also be considered that the score of the dimension “Developing a shared vision” with respect to its applicability to the DGs’ context is the second highest overall (*M*=3.79). Consequently, the problem seems not to be in the effort done by the organization. However, the high value of the variable measuring the influence of Euroscepticism on this specific dimension can be due to the fact that European citizens are considered to cooperate less to inform the DGs’ strategy or that a bigger effort has been done by the organization to include external actors. The next stages of the analysis help shed light on this finding.

5.2.1 The impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions according to the DG

In the previous stage of the analysis, the perception of the single DGs has been discussed. The same approach is followed in this section in order to see whether the perception of the impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions varies across the DGs. The DGs taken into consideration here are the same included within the previous analysis, those which have more than 3 respondents (Figure 11). However, interesting cases of the other DGs are mentioned, as well (see Appendix C, Table C2 for complete statistics).

The DG which results to be the least influenced by Euroscepticism in terms of its organizational learning is DGT. In fact, the answers of the respondents (*n*=3) correspond to the option “not at all” (*M*=1.00) for 6 dimensions. The dimension with the highest score (*M*=1.67) is “Learning with and from the external environment”, but it is lower than “to a moderate extent” (2). Consequently, DGT reports the lowest scores in all the dimensions, except for “Learning with and from the external environment”, in which DG EUROSTAT reaches the lowest point (*M*=1.33). However, it should be kept in mind that from the first phase

of the analysis it resulted that the model does not apply to DGT in 6 out 7 dimensions. DG TRADE has the strongest perception of the influence of Euroscepticism on 3 dimensions: “Developing a shared vision” (*M*=3.67), “Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation” (*M*=3.00) and “Modelling and growing a learning leadership” (*M*=2.67). In this last dimension, it has the same score as DG JRC, which is the first DG in terms of perception of the influence of Euroscepticism on “Embedding systems for collecting knowledge and learning” (*M*=3.00) and “Learning with and from the external environment” (*M*=3.33). DG HR has the highest score in the dimension “Promoting and supporting continuous professional learning for all staff” (*M*=2.88), while in “Fostering team learning and collaboration among staff” it is DG REGIO which reports the highest score (*M*=2.71). In general, Euroscepticism seem to have a small impact on the learning dynamics of the DGs taken into consideration. The DGs which reckon Euroscepticism influences at least “to a moderate extent” the dimensions are those which have a score higher than 2.5. DG TRADE and DG REGIO exceed this threshold for 5 dimensions and are very close to it for the other 2, hence, they can be considered the DGs which overall perceive the impact of Euroscepticism the most in all the dimensions among the DGs considered in the specific sample.

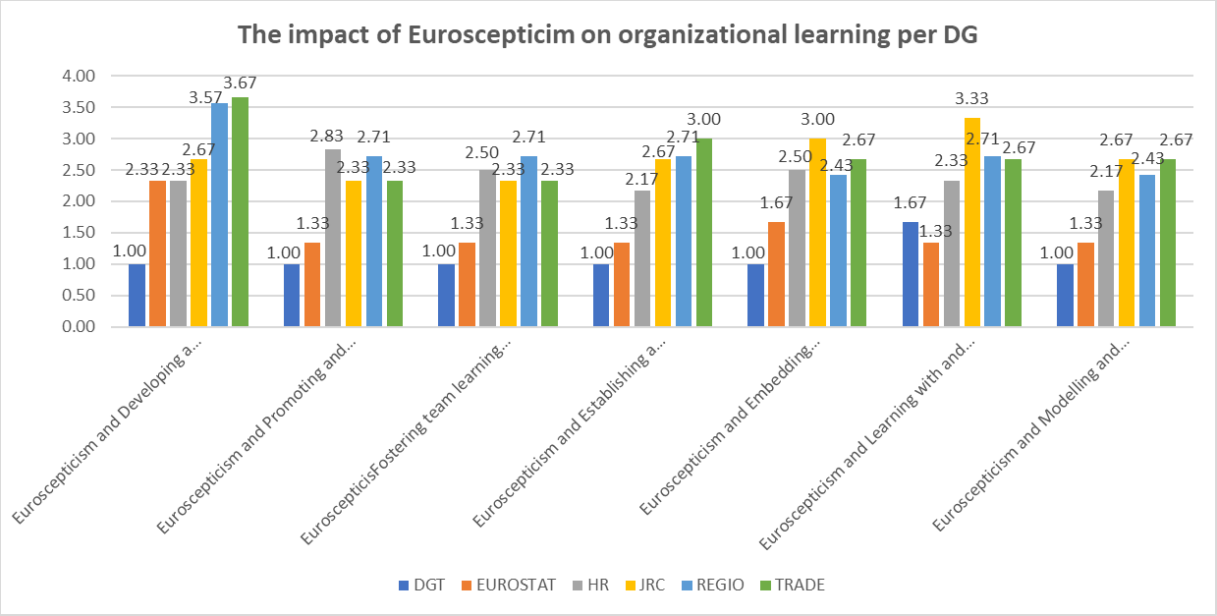

Figure 11: The impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions of the learning organization according to single DGs.

In the group of DGs with a small sample (*n*<3), DG GROW shows high means in all the dimensions. Yet, three of the dimensions are particularly interesting: “Developing a shared vision” (*M=4*.00), “Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation” (*M*=4.00) and “Modelling and growing a learning leadership” (*M*=4.00). Specifically, they have very high scores and no standard deviation (*SD*=0). This finding indicates great accordance among the respondents and could require further researches.

5.3 Analysis of the open-ended question

In total, 6 respondents answered to the open-ended question that concluded the questionnaire. Regarding the composition of the sample, 5 of them belong to different DGs and one respondent's DG is unknown; half of them belong to the management team of their DG, half do not. These conditions, despite not guaranteeing a vertical representativeness of the single DGs, ensure a good level of cross-sectional representativeness. The open-ended question consists in the quantitative approach of the mixed method design and its role is to assess the type of impact Euroscepticism has had on the dimensions of the learning organization. Consequently, the hypotheses H3a, H3b, H4a and H4b are tested through this survey item. These hypotheses refer to the dimensions which were expected to be the most influenced by Euroscepticism: "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning" and "Learning with and from the external environment and larger system". From the previous analysis steps, it is now clear that on average the influence of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions is not perceived as strong and that the two dimensions which are interested the most by the phenomenon ("to a moderate extent") are "Developing a shared vision" and "Learning with and from the external environment and larger system". However, the answers to the open questions can give information on how Euroscepticism influences the learning process of the DGs, revealing elements that can be useful to confirm or reject the hypotheses. Based on the 4 hypotheses, Euroscepticism is expected to have either a positive or a negative influence on two dimensions:

H3a: Euroscepticism has a negative impact on the learning organization's dimension "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning".

H3b: Euroscepticism has a negative impact on the learning organization's dimension "Learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system".

H4a: Euroscepticism has a positive impact on the learning organization's dimension "Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning".

H4b: Euroscepticism has a positive impact on the learning organization's dimension "Learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system".

The open question has been analysed clustering the responses in the light of their core message and interpreting them in order to verify or reject the above-mentioned hypotheses. Among the 6 responses, 3 focus specifically on the way Euroscepticism has influenced the DGs' work. They stress the fact that since the rise of Euroscepticism in the EU, a bigger effort has been done to communicate more effectively with European citizens and "to develop a much more open system". The other 3 responses can be divided as follows: one rejects the hypothesis that Euroscepticism influenced the learning (more specifically the "consultation")

dynamics of the EC, one refers to the possible negative impact of Brexit on internal funding and one defines Euroscepticism as an “existential threat” to the European Union. Table 5 presents the organization of the responses into clusters and shows some direct quotes.

Table 5: Summary of the open-ended question analysis.

Development of communication strategy (3 responses)	No relationship (1 response)	Existential threat (1 response)	Budgetary concerns (1 response)
• «Massive unprecedented communication effort» • « Euroscepticism has led many DGs (including mine) to become more careful in what it does, how it does it and how it communicates about its activities» • «We try to develop a much more open system so citizens can see and understand what we are doing»	• «Euroscepticism is not the reason why we consult widely»	• «In general, Euroscepticism is seen as an existential threat in the European Institutions»	• «Our budget could be reduced, e.g. from Brexit, and less budget means less resources to satisfy the requests of the EU Commission’s staff»

Based on these findings, H3a and H3b cannot be confirmed. Indeed, they assumed that Euroscepticism had a negative influence on the learning dimensions, while it seems to have boosted the effort of the organization to involve external stakeholders. The respondent who stressed the value of Euroscepticism as a threat can be interpreted as an element in favour of H3a and H3b, but due to the generic nature of this claim which cannot be linked to neither learning in general nor to any of the specific dimensions, it does not seem enough to confirm any of the two hypotheses.

Differently, the responses seem to support the idea of a positive impact of Euroscepticism on the endeavour of the organization to reach citizens and external partners. However, they focus more on the communication strategy of the DGs rather than on the mutual exchanging of knowledge and learning between the internal and the external environment, which is at the base of the learning process. The core of the effort of the DGs seem to be more aimed at explaining their work instead of at involving external partners in it. However, this effort can be interpreted as an attempt to create the roots for further collaborations. In this sense, H4a and H4b can be confirmed. Yet, the respondents who have explained the influence of Euroscepticism with the increase in terms of communication effort, have given different scores to the 7 dimensions in this respect. Due to the lack of homogeneity in their answers it cannot be established which type of dimension is related to the boost of communicative effort. More in depth face-to-face interviews could have helped to shed light on this aspect. The consequences of Brexit in terms of internal resources mentioned by one respondent could, indeed, undermine organizational learning. Nevertheless, the whole performance of the EC would be affected. Consequently, this aspect seems not to be directly related to the learning dynamics of the EC’s DGs.

To conclude, Table 6 summarises the outcome of the test on the hypotheses. It should be considered that this test, and the consequent rejection or confirmation of each of the hypotheses, is subjected to the limitations that concern the entire analysis. Hence, H3a, H3b, H4a and H4b are tested in the light of the data gathered through the open-ended question included in the survey. However, it has been highlighted that more open-ended questions or an interview would have increased the amount of qualitative data and enabled the test on the hypotheses to be more robust. Similarly, a wider N would have strengthened the leverage of the quantitative analysis, increasing the representativeness of the observed population. Consequently, the hypotheses are confirmed or rejected only contingently to this research, which represents an initial test on a hard to investigate topic.

Table 6: Summary of the outcomes of the hypotheses.

Hypothesis	Outcome
H1	Confirmed (room for improvement)
H2	Partly confirmed
H3a; H3b	Rejected
H4a; H4b	Confirmed, but not exclusively in the case of two dimensions

In the light of findings discussed above, the answers to the empirical subquestions can be derived. Firstly, the findings originating from the first step of the analysis respond to the following empirical subquestion:

4. To which extent is the European Commission a learning organization?

As a result of the scores of the 7 dimensions, it can be concluded that the EC can be considered a learning organization, as defined by the model by Kools and Stoll (2016). Nevertheless, the fact that these scores are not particularly high could either mean that there is need for improvement in the sense of a stronger organizational learning, or that the model needs to be adjusted in order to better suit the context of the EC. A combination of both factors can be the reason of these results, too. The second empirical subquestion is:

5. Has Euroscepticism impacted the EC's capacity to be or become a learning organization?

From the data analysis, the impact of Euroscepticism results to be limited in the case of 5 dimensions and moderate with respect to 2 dimensions. The two dimensions which are

impacted the most by the phenomenon of Euroscepticism are “Developing a shared vision” and “Learning with and from the external environment and larger system”. Concerning the way this influence affects the work of the DGs, the answers to the open-ended question have helped to clarify. The qualitative step of the analysis has answered to the last empirical question, too.

6. What is the impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions of the learning organization within the European Commission’s Directorates General?

What has emerged from quantitative data is that the hostility of the external environment has pushed the Commission to develop its communication strategy. In this sense, the impact of Euroscepticism can be considered as constructive. However, differently from what stated by H4a and H4b, this type of influence does not concern only 2 dimensions but seems to have a more general impact on all the dimensions. Furthermore, this impact refers mainly to the outreach effort of the EC, rather than to an effective inclusion of citizens in its work. In the next chapter the final research question is answered, and both theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.

CHAPTER 6
Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter elaborates the answer to the overall research question and presents the implications of the findings for theory, research and practice.

The overall question which guided the research is:

What is the impact of Euroscepticism on the European Commission as a learning organization?

Firstly, although there is still room for improvement, the theoretical model applied to the case (Kools and Stoll, 2016) has proved to be valid in the specific context. For its part, Euroscepticism seem to have influenced the process of elaborating a shared vision and the process of gathering data and information originating from the external environment. In terms of the dimensions of the learning organization, these two processes correspond to "Developing a shared vision" and "Learning with and from the external environment and larger system". Based on the qualitative analysis step, the influence of the phenomenon on the way DGs operate is positive in the sense that it boosts the outreach effort of the Commission, instead of undermining its action. However, this information is not specifically linked to any of the 7 dimensions of the learning organization. Based on what emerged from the survey, it can be assumed that this holds true for the two dimensions of organizational learning which are perceived as the most influenced by Euroscepticism, but more research in this direction is necessary. Moreover, the need to follow up the communication endeavour with a more concrete involvement of external actors within the decision-making process is identified.

6.1 Implications for theory

The answer to the research question has been reached through the application of the model of the learning organization elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016). In fact, the 7 dimensions that have been identified for schools as learning organizations (SLO) have been adapted to the specific context of the EC. Consequently, the first step of the analysis, which was preparatory to the following, consisted in an assessment of the applicability of the model to the case of the DGs and of the EC more broadly. Since the existing studies concerning the EC as a learning organization belong to the field of public policy (Kamkhaji & Radaelli, 2017; Malek & Hilkermeier, 2001; Schout, 20009; Schout & Zito, 2009), this specific model has never been adopted before. Thus, the main contribution to the general theory represents its innovative approach. The model resulted to be applicable to the case of the EC, but with some room for improvement. In fact, the scores of the majority of the variables were slightly below 4.0, which is the value that corresponds to the answer "Agree". Hence, on average,

respondents agree, albeit not to a full extent, that the 7 dimensions can be observed within their DGs. In terms of theoretical implications, this means that the model by Kools and Stoll (2016) can be adapted to the case of bureaucracies, but it would need adjustments concerning the definition of the dimensions, which should be more in line with the specific context. These adjustments would imply certain concrete modifications to the questionnaire built by the OECD (2018). Besides that, the general applicability of the model shows how the concept of the learning organization is relevant nowadays. In fact, the importance of learning in a rapidly changing context, for both private and public organizations, has been extensively highlighted by the literature (Buelens et al., 2006; Roberts,2016; Senge, 1990; Senge, 1997; Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). The findings of the present study confirm this idea and expand its scope to supranational organizations. Clearly, the embryonic status of this approach does not justify alone the creation of a specific model or theory for supranational organizations, but it could represent a first step in this direction. In fact, a stronger theoretical focus on this topic is advisable, as it could lead to relevant findings that can help understand and explain the learning dynamics of the EU.

The findings also showed that the hypotheses concerning the impact of Euroscepticism were confirmed only for one of the two dimensions ("Learning with and from the external environment"). The dimension which is perceived as the most concerned by the Eurosceptic phenomenon, "Developing a shared vision", was not included in the hypotheses. This choice was made considering the small role played by the involvement of external actors within its definition. In fact, as explained in the previous chapter, the dimension was more linked to the aim of ensuring equality among students and to strengthen the quality of their education (Kools & Stoll, 2016). However, the fact that two of the items have been cut in the adapted version of the survey designed by the OECD (2018) might have caused an increase in the weight of the items related to the involvement of external actors. For this reason, the relationship of this dimension with the external environment could have been emphasised, leading to an increased perception of the impact of Euroscepticism on that dimension. Another reason for such finding may lay in the fact that the concerned dimension could result into two distinct dimensions, as in the case of Welsh schools. In the framework of the study conducted by the OECD (2018) on SLO, an 8-dimension model emerged. The eighth dimension originated from "Developing a shared vision centred on the learning for all students" which was divided into two dimensions labelled "Shared vision centred on the learning of all students" and "Partners invited to contribute to the school's vision" (OECD, 2018). The same case might have verified for the EC. Nevertheless, this element could not be assessed via the data analysis due to the inapplicability of the factor analysis to the specific sample of this study. Consequently, in a study characterised by a wider N, this possibility could be tested via a factor analysis. Furthermore, a more specific adaptation of the survey to the EC's organizational nature could

lead to more precise findings in this sense.

Overall, the fact that the 7 dimensions of the learning organization have been impacted by Euroscepticism confirms the relationship between organizational learning and the external environment. More precisely, this result underpins the link between the legitimacy of the organization and its external context (Terreberry, 1968). This is particularly true in the case of the two dimensions that are moderately impacted by Euroscepticism. However, despite the weak link between the rest of the dimensions and the Eurosceptic phenomenon, the relationship is perceived as existing and is, thus, confirmed to a certain extent. Regarding the nature of this relationship, the answers to the open-ended question point in the direction of a stimulating impact of Euroscepticism on organizational learning, as emerged in the study by Kissler et al. (1989). In fact, a hostile external context seems to have encouraged the Commission to boost its communication activity, which can be interpreted here as the premise for a more effective involvement of external stakeholders within its organizational learning dynamics. In fact, the communication endeavour can be considered as a way to reach out the external actors, hence the necessary condition to gathering knowledge form the surrounding context. With this respect, this study provides a starting point for research. In fact, the role of communication in the learning process of (international) public organizations should be deepened in future researches. Moreover, future studies should explore whether the communication endeavour of the EC will lead to an improved learning process in the coming years or if this strategy will not be followed by the active involvement of external stakeholders. More generally, these findings also confirm the role of the contingency theory in explaining the relationship between the external environment and organizational strategic management (George & Desmidt, 2014; Poister, Pitts & Edwards, 2010). In fact, as highlighted in the theoretical framework, organizational learning is a part of the whole strategic management process (Bryson, 2010; Kaplan & Norton, 1996) and, thus, it is influenced by external contingencies, like all the other phases.

6.2 Implications for research

The elements underlined concerning the theoretical implications of this study can be translated into new research avenues. As a matter of fact, the limitations of the applicability of the model by Kools and Stoll (2016) can result in the elaboration of a new model which adapts the first to the context of bureaucracy in a more structured way. This, for instance, can be done by expanding the sample population. This would enable researchers to identify possible different factors and to adjust the original model accordingly. Moreover, considering a bigger population could lead to an even more representative sample of the EC whose responses could be generalized to the whole institution, as well as to the level of the single DGs. Overall, due to the lack of studies in the public management field concerning European institutions as learning

organization, a more intense coverage of the theme would enable to improve the quantity and accuracy of the knowledge on the topic. In fact, the existing body of literature regarding the EU as a learning organization belongs mainly to the domain of public policy (Kamkhaji & Radaelli, 2017; Schout & Zito, 2009).

Another possible path for future studies is the assessment of the causal relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. The present research focuses on the perception of DGs' staff members of the link between the two variables and its aim is purely descriptive. An explanatory study could complete the initial steps taken by this study by testing the causality link between Euroscepticism and the European Commission as a learning organization. Furthermore, the observation of a correlation between Euroscepticism and organizational learning may push researches to deepen the theoretical and empirical link between the two variables.

One of the limitations listed in Chapter 4 referred to the incompleteness of the information received through the open-ended question. This tool provided quantitative data, which helped to make sense of some of the aspects of the questionnaire. However, face-to-face interviews would have enabled to deepen the gathered information leading to clearer findings. Specifically, more questions would have given the possibility to understand which dimension of the learning organization is concerned the most by the enhanced outreach effort of the EC according to the respondents. This could represent a new path for future research aimed at finding the implications of the communication action of the Commission in terms of organizational learning. Such study should also take into consideration the fact that presumably a certain period of time is needed in order to assess if there have been any consequences in terms of knowledge creation for the organization. Hence, an alternative research design that could be employed with this purpose is a longitudinal panel-data design, that would enable to measure the two variables over time, observing any changes in terms of one or the other variable. Otherwise, a cross-sectional explanatory study with a stronger quantitative focus could help test the model on a wider population and to establish causality between the variables.

6.3 Implications for practice

Some practical recommendations as well can be drawn from this study. The dimension which obtained the lowest score concerning their applicability to the DGs' organizational context is "Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation". This dimension refers to organizational culture, which interprets failure as an opportunity to learn and which creates a stimulating internal environment where people are willing to experiment and innovate (Kools & Stoll, 2016). Consequently, the EC results to be lacking with this respect and would need to strengthen this aspect. This is confirmed by one of the responses to the open-ended question,

in which the “expertocartic” approach of the EC is criticised in opposition with a more innovative management which encourages a “thinking beyond the box” attitude. According to this respondent an effort in terms of organizational culture should be done to improve the EC’s way of working. As a matter of fact, Yang (2003) has pointed out how the 7 dimensions of the organizational culture elaborated by Watkins and Marsick (1996) and embodied into the DLOQ, have a clear causal relationship with organizational performance. Overall, the scores obtained by the EC in all the 7 dimensions are not particularly high. It should be in the interest of the Commission to improve each of them, in order to enhance its learning capacity and performance.

From the data analysis a link between the dimensions “Developing a shared vision” and “Learning with and from the external environment and larger system” and Euroscepticism emerged. This fact renders it necessary for the EC to focus on those dimensions, in order to make sure that organizational learning is not undermined by the external conditions and to be able to prevent this outcome in case similar conditions persist or recreate in the future. Although the qualitative analysis has shown that the impact of Euroscepticism was perceived as constructive, the number of open answers was limited and did not specifically referred to the two dimensions. Hence the risk of a negative influence of Euroscepticism should be prevented. As a matter of fact, the learning organization is the one which can adapt to a fast-paced changing environment and to accept the *stimuli* coming from it as a positive occasion for further development (Roberts, 2016; Treasury Board of Canada, 2007). For this reason, the challenging conditions originating from the outside should entail an improvement in terms of flexibility. The intensified communication effort goes in this direction. However, more should be done to follow up this preliminary phase, ensuring that a more effective communication strategy also leads to an increase of the participation of external stakeholders to the learning process of the organization. This effort would also enable the Commission to meet one of its most ambitious objectives, increasing the legitimacy of the Union and creating a “citizen-owned” and “citizen-focused” Europe (Brande, 2017).

Based on what has been highlighted in this section, some key recommendations can be formulated:

The EC should:

1) Develop an organizational culture that stimulates *innovation, exploration and enquiry*.
2) *Improve all the dimensions*, so to enhance learning and performance.
3) *Focus on «Developing a shared vision» and «Learning with and from the external environment and larger system»* and prevent these dimensions to be negatively impacted by Euroscepticism in the future.
4) Follow up the communication endeavor *actively involving European citizens* in the EC's work.

6.4 Conclusions

This research concludes that the 7-dimension model of the learning organization elaborated by Kools and Stoll (2016) applies to the specific context of the European Commission's DGs. In fact, the first stage of the analysis consisted in testing whether this model suits the EC's context. However, more studies in this direction are encouraged, so to elaborate a model which could perfectly fit the case. The impact of Euroscepticism on these dimensions is classified as small, overall. Nevertheless, two of the 7 dimensions are affected by the Eurosceptic phenomenon to a moderate extent: "Developing a shared vision" and "Learning with and from the external environment and lager system". From the qualitative analysis of the open-ended question it has resulted that the impact of Euroscepticism can be interpreted as mainly positive for organizational learning, as it has stimulated a more intense effort to effectively communicate with the external environment. However, to have a real influence on the organizational dynamics of the organization, this effort should not only be focused on rendering the message more understandable by citizens and external actors but, most importantly, it should be directed to actively include those actors in the work of the EC. A more representative sample and a stronger explanatory approach are identified as main ways to expand the knowledge on the topic. The public management perspective chosen to analyse it could stimulate an intensification of the research with this respect and widen the spectrum of existing studies on organizational learning of European institutions and the possible influence that political external events can have on it.

This research points out that Euroscepticism can have implications in terms of organizational dynamics for EU institutions. Consequently, besides political consequences of Euroscepticism, which have been widely considered by experts, the influence on the management aspects of the work of such organizations can reveal interesting paths, too. Developing research in this direction could be fundamental to contain the implications of Euroscepticism on the work of the EU. The survival of the European Union depends also from

its response to the legitimacy crisis it is experiencing. Considering different perspectives on the problem could be of vital importance.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Survey

EUROSCEPTICISM AND THE EC AS A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Welcome to my thesis survey!

Thank you for dedicating **8-9 minutes** of your time to my project.

Please click on the arrow--> below to proceed to the survey.

In which Directorate General of the European Commission are you currently working?

_____

THE 7 DIMENSIONS OF THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Developing a shared vision

In my DG...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Our vision embraces all European citizens	○	○	○	○	○
Every activity is designed with our vision in mind	○	○	○	○	○
Our vision is understood and shared by all staff working in the DG	○	○	○	○	○
Staff are inspired and motivated to bring our vision to life	○	○	○	○	○
All staff are involved in developing our vision	○	○	○	○	○
Other DG's directors are involved in developing our vision	○	○	○	○	○
European citizens are invited to contribute to our vision	○	○	○	○	○
Other external stakeholders are invited to contribute to our vision	○	○	○	○	○
Other external partners are invited to help shape our vision	○	○	○	○	○

Promoting and supporting continuous professional learning for all staff

In my DG...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Professional learning of staff is considered a high priority	○	○	○	○	○
Staff engage in professional learning to ensure their practice is critically informed and up to date	○	○	○	○	○
Staff are involved in identifying the objectives for their professional learning	○	○	○	○	○
Professional learning is focused on European citizens' needs	○	○	○	○	○
Professional learning is aligned to the DG's vision	○	○	○	○	○
Mentors/coaches are available to help staff develop their practice	○	○	○	○	○
All new staff receive sufficient support to help them in their new role	○	○	○	○	○
Staff receive regular feedback to support reflection and improvement	○	○	○	○	○
European citizens are encouraged to give feedback to the DG and support staff	○	○	○	○	○
Staff have opportunities to experiment with and practise new skills	○	○	○	○	○
Beliefs, mindsets and practices are challenged by professional learning	○	○	○	○	○

Fostering team learning and collaboration among staff

In my DG...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Staff collaborate to improve their practice	○	○	○	○	○
Staff learn how to work together as a team	○	○	○	○	○
Staff help each other to improve their practice	○	○	○	○	○
Staff observe each other's practice and collaborate in developing it	○	○	○	○	○
Staff give honest feedback to each other	○	○	○	○	○
Staff listen to each other's ideas and opinions	○	○	○	○	○
Staff feel comfortable turning to others for advice	○	○	○	○	○
Staff treat each other with respect	○	○	○	○	○
Staff spend time building trust with each other	○	○	○	○	○
Staff think through and tackle problems together	○	○	○	○	○
Staff reflect together on how to learn and improve their practice	○	○	○	○	○

Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation

In my DG...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Staff are encouraged to experiment and innovate their practice	○	○	○	○	○
Staff are encouraged to take initiative	○	○	○	○	○
Staff are supported when taking calculated risks	○	○	○	○	○
Staff spend time exploring a problem before taking action	○	○	○	○	○
Staff engage in enquiry (i.e. pose questions, gather and use evidence to decide how to change their practice, and evaluate its impact)	○	○	○	○	○
Staff are open to thinking and doing things differently	○	○	○	○	○
Staff are open to others questioning their beliefs, opinions and ideas	○	○	○	○	○
Staff openly discuss failures in order to learn from them	○	○	○	○	○
Problems are seen as opportunities for learning	○	○	○	○	○

Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning

In my DG...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The DG's overall management plan is based on learning from continuous self-assessment and updated at least once every year	○	○	○	○	○
Structures are in place for regular dialogue and knowledge sharing among staff	○	○	○	○	○
Evidence is collected to measure progress and identify gaps in the DG's performance	○	○	○	○	○
Staff analyse and use data to improve their practice	○	○	○	○	○
Staff use research evidence to improve their practice	○	○	○	○	○
Staff analyse examples of good/great practices and failed practices to learn from them	○	○	○	○	○
Staff learn how to analyse and use data to inform their practice	○	○	○	○	○
Staff regularly discuss and evaluate whether actions had the desired impact and change course if necessary	○	○	○	○	○

Learning with and from the external environment and larger system

In my DG...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Opportunities and threats are monitored continuously to improve our practice	○	○	○	○	○
Stakeholders are partners in our organizational processes	○	○	○	○	○
Staff actively collaborate with external partners to better respond to European citizens' needs	○	○	○	○	○
Staff actively collaborate with other external partners to deepen staff learning	○	○	○	○	○
Staff collaborate, learn and share knowledge with peers in other DGs	○	○	○	○	○
Our DG as a whole is involved in networks or collaborations with external partners	○	○	○	○	○

Modelling and growing learning leadership

In my DG...

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Leaders participate in professional learning to develop their practice	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders facilitate individual and group learning	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders coach those they lead	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders develop the potential of others to become future leaders	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders provide opportunities for staff to participate in decision making	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders provide opportunities for European citizens to participate in decision making	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders give staff responsibility to lead activities and projects	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders spend time building trust with staff	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders put a strong focus on improving learning	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders ensure that all actions are consistent with the DG's vision, goals and values	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders anticipate opportunities and threats	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders model effective collaborations with external partners	○	○	○	○	○	○

THE INFLUENCE OF EUROSCEPTICISM ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

In the light of the previous questions, in your opinion, to which extent does Euroscepticism influence your DG's organizational learning in terms of each of the following dimensions:

	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
Developing a shared vision	○	○	○	○	○
Promoting and supporting continuous professional learning for all staff	○	○	○	○	○
Fostering team learning and collaboration among staff	○	○	○	○	○
Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation	○	○	○	○	○
Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning	○	○	○	○	○
Learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system	○	○	○	○	○
Modelling and growing learning leadership	○	○	○	○	○

If you think that Euroscepticism has had a great impact in terms of one or more of the above-mentioned dimensions, please explain how.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are you part of the management team of your DG?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you wish to receive updates concerning this research, please insert your e-mail address below. Please note that this information will only be used to send a report on our findings and will not be linked to survey answers to guarantee anonymity.

_____

Please click on the arrow -> below to finalize the survey and register your answers.

Thank you for the precious contribution to this survey!

Your response has been recorded.

APPENDIX B

Descriptive statistics of the 7 dimensions

Table B1
Descriptive statistics of the 7 dimensions of the learning organization based on the responses of the whole sample.

Descriptive Statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Developing a shared vision (D1)	45	2.89	5.00	3.79	.55
Promoting and supporting continuous professional learning for all staff (D2)	45	2.00	5.00	3.72	.59
Fostering team learning and collaboration among staff (D3)	45	3.00	5.00	3.94	.46
Establishing a culture of enquiry, exploration and innovation (D4)	45	1.56	5.00	3.61	.68
Embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning (D5)	45	2.75	5.00	3.64	.60
Learning with and from the external environment and larger system (D6)	45	2.33	5.00	3.77	.56
Modelling and growing learning leadership (D7)	45	2.17	5.00	3.64	.66

Note: The 7 dimensions will be indicated with the abbreviations into brackets hereafter.

Table B2
Descriptive statistics of the 7 dimensions of the learning organization based on the responses of each DG.

Report

DG		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7
	N	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Mean	3.93	3.88	3.91	3.63	3.54	3.61	3.56
	Std. Deviation	0.61	0.53	0.33	0.55	0.63	0.42	0.51
CONNECT	N	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Mean	4.11	3.36	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.67	4.00

	Std. Deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
COMM	N	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Mean	4.11	3.91	4.00	3.89	3.81	3.83	3.67
	Std. Deviation	0.79	0.13	0.13	0.00	0.27	0.24	0.00
DEVCO	N	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Mean	4.11	4.23	4.32	4.00	4.19	4.50	4.50
	Std. Deviation	1.26	1.09	0.96	1.41	1.15	0.71	0.71
DGT	N	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Mean	3.15	3.39	3.33	3.81	3.04	3.17	3.44
	Std. Deviation	0.36	0.47	0.29	0.74	0.07	0.17	0.38
DIGIT	N	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Mean	3.33	3.36	3.45	3.33	3.13	3.50	3.50
	Std. Deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
ENER	N	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Mean	4.00	4.27	4.27	3.67	3.13	3.33	3.92
	Std. Deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
ERCEA	N	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Mean	4.44	4.09	4.09	3.56	4.00	4.50	4.25
	Std. Deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
EUROSTAT	N	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Mean	3.63	3.45	38485.00	3.15	3.50	3.94	2.97
	Std. Deviation	0.13	0.09	0.67	0.68	0.70	0.67	0.55
FISMA	N	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Mean	4.78	4.64	4.91	4.22	5.00	4.17	4.58

	Std. Deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
GROW	N	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Mean	3.72	3.86	3.91	3.72	4.00	3.67	3.96
	Std. Deviation	0.86	0.71	0.51	0.55	0.53	0.71	0.65
HR	N	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
	Mean	3.63	3.85	3.97	3.72	3.48	3.78	3.51
	Std. Deviation	0.13	0.41	0.34	0.65	0.58	0.47	0.88
INEA	N	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Mean	3.22	3.45	4.27	3.78	3.38	2.33	3.50
	Std. Deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
JRC	N	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Mean	3.89	4.00	3.79	3.44	3.88	4.28	3.64
	Std. Deviation	0.56	0.64	0.19	0.48	0.57	0.10	0.32
MOVE	N	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Mean	4.44	3.91	4.45	4.67	4.38	4.17	4.33
	Std. Deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
REGIO	N	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
	Mean	3.86	3.36	3.77	3.13	3.54	3.71	3.39
	Std. Deviation	0.72	0.87	0.41	0.94	0.77	0.61	0.86
RTD	N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Mean	4.00	3.77	3.77	3.61	3.69	3,75	3.71
	Std. Deviation	0.63	0.45	0.45	0.08	0.44	1.06	0.77
SCIC	N	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

	Mean	4.00	4.73	4.45	3.56	3.25	4.50	3.42
	Std. Deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
TAXUD	N	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Mean	3.89	3.77	4.55	4.33	3.88	4.00	4.46
	Std. Deviation	0.47	0.32	0.51	0.79	0.71	0.47	0.41
TRADE	N	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Mean	3.48	3.21	3.82	3.26	3.67	3.61	3.47
	Std. Deviation	0.36	0.43	0.18	0.46	0.26	0.10	0.59
Total	N	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00
	Mean	3.79	3.72	3.94	3.61	3.64	3.77	3.64
	Std. Deviation	0.55	0.59	0.46	0.68	0.60	0.56	0.66

Table B3
Descriptive statistics of the 7 dimensions of the learning organization based on the responses of two organizational layers.

Report

Management Team		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7
Yes	N	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	26.00
	Mean	3.93	3.84	3.98	3.70	3.67	3.85	3.82
	Std. Deviation	0.59	0.55	0.49	0.62	0.67	0.61	0.54
No	N	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00
	Mean	3.64	3.59	3.93	3.52	3.64	3.69	3.42
	Std. Deviation	0.42	0.63	0.36	0.75	0.51	0.46	0.75
Total	N	44.00	44.00	44.00	44.00	44.00	44.00	44.00
	Mean	3.81	3.73	3.96	3.62	3.66	3.79	3.66
	Std. Deviation	0.54	0.59	0.44	0.68	0.60	0.55	0.66

APPENDIX C

Descriptive statistics of the impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions

Table C1: Descriptive statistics of the impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions of the learning organization based on the responses of the whole sample.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Euroscepticism on D1	45	1	5	2,84	1,242
Euroscepticism on D2	45	1	5	2,33	1,261
Euroscepticism on D3	45	1	5	2,33	1,331
Euroscepticism on D4	45	1	5	2,49	1,272
Euroscepticism on D5	45	1	5	2,47	1,290
Euroscepticism on D6	45	1	5	2,60	1,250
Euroscepticism on D7	45	1	5	2,38	1,336
Valid N (listwise)	45				

Table C2: Descriptive statistics of the impact of Euroscepticism on the 7 dimensions of the learning organization based on the responses of each DG.

Report

DG		Euroscepticism on D1	Euroscepticism on D2	Euroscepticism on D3	Euroscepticism on D4	Euroscepticism on D5	Euroscepticism on D6	Euroscepticism on D7
	N	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Unknown	Mean	3.00	1.67	2.00	2.33	2.67	2.33	2.00
	Std. Deviation	0.000	1.15	1.00	0.58	0.58	0.58	1.00
CONNECT	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Mean	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
	Std. Deviation							
COMM	N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Mean	4.00	3.50	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00

	Std. Deviation	0.00	0.71	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00
DEVCO	N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Mean	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.50	4.50
	Std. Deviation	0.71	0.71	0.71	1.41	1.41	0.71	0.71
DGT	N	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Mean	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.67	1.00
	Std. Deviation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.15	0.00
DIGIT	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Mean	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Std. Deviation							
ENER	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Mean	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
	Std. Deviation							
EUROSTAT	N	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Mean	2.33	1.33	1.33	1.33	1.67	1.33	1.33
	Std. Deviation	1.15	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58
FISMA	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Mean	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Std. Deviation							
GROW	N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Mean	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.50	4.50	4.00
	Std. Deviation	0.00	1.41	1.41	0.00	0.71	0.71	0.00
HR	N	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

	Mean	2.33	2.83	2.50	2.17	2.50	2.33	2.17
	Std. Deviation	1.03	1.17	1.76	1.33	1.38	1.51	1.60
INEA	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Mean	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Std. Deviation							
JRC	N	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Mean	2.67	2.33	2.33	2.67	3.00	3.33	2.67
	Std. Deviation	1.15	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.73	1.15	1.53
MOVE	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Mean	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Std. Deviation							
REGIO	N	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
	Mean	3.57	2.71	2.71	2.71	2.43	2.71	2.43
	Std. Deviation	1.13	1.11	1.11	1.38	1.51	1.11	1.27
RTD	N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Mean	2.50	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.50	2.50	2.50
	Std. Deviation	0.71	1.41	1.41	0.00	0.71	0.71	0.71
SCIC	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Mean	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
	Std. Deviation							
TAXUD	N	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Mean	3.50	2.50	2.50	3.00	2.50	3.00	2.50
	Std. Deviation	0.71	2.12	2.12	1.41	2.12	1.41	2.12
TRADE	N	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Mean	3.67	2.33	2.33	3.00	2.67	2.67	2.67

	Std. Deviation	1.53	1.53	1.53	1.00	1.15	1.15	1.15
Total	N	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
	Mean	2.84	2.33	2.33	2.49	2.47	2.60	2.38
	Std. Deviation	1.24	1.26	1.33	1.27	1.29	1.25	1.34