

# **The rise of nationalism in Europe and its relation to Euroscepticism in Germany and Austria**

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## Summary

This research is about the relation between nationalism and Euroscepticism. Within this relation, the case study focuses on identity and the feelings citizens have for one specific European institution: the European Parliament. The research question is: *What is the influence of identity feelings on the image European citizens have of the European Parliament?* Identity feelings are explained by having an exclusive national identity and voting for right-wing parties. The cases of this study are Germany and Austria, from 2013 onwards. Respectively the AfD in Germany and the FPÖ in Austria are the prominent right-wing extremist parties in these countries. In the research, there is a trend visible between having an exclusive national identity and having negative feelings to the European Parliament. However, there is no correlation with the strength of right-wing extremist parties. In general, when these two cases are juxtaposed, the conclusion can be made that an exclusive national identity correlates with a negative image of the European Parliament. However, it is not clear where these feelings come from and why they relate to this negative image.

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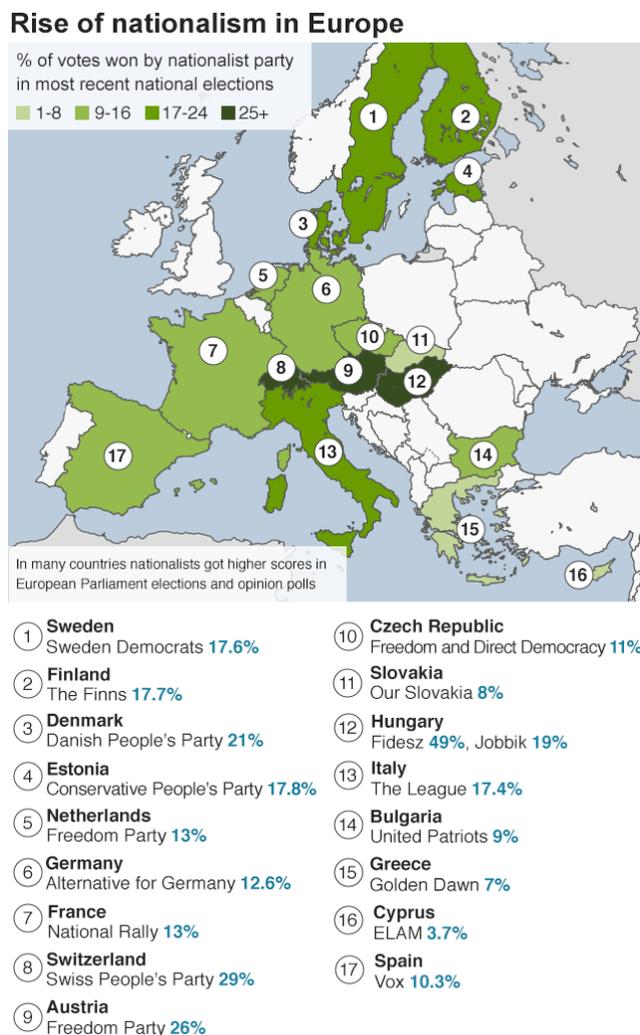
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# 1. Introduction

Nationalism has always been a feature across Europe’s political spectrum. However, in recent years and especially around the 2019 European elections, the voter support for right-wing and populist parties has been rising enormously (BBC, 2019). In recent national elections, nationalist parties got high scores in a lot of European countries. The most eye-catching example of this process might be Hungary, where more than half the votes goes to nationalist parties (BBC, 2019). Though, in many more European countries nationalism has risen. This is not only region-specific. The rise of nationalism has taken place in all regions of Europe, stretched out from Scandinavia to the Balkans (BBC, 2019). Below, the rise of nationalism is presented visually. The figure presents the percentage of votes won by nationalist parties in the most recent national elections, before May 2019 (BBC, 2019).



**Figure 1.** The rise of nationalism in Europe (Source: BBC, 2019)

Where did this rise of nationalism come from? And what does it mean for Europe? For Europe as a continent, but more specific for the European Union and its institutions? These questions are central to this research. An important part of nationalism is formed by identity. Therefore, this study focuses on the feelings of identity among European citizens.

### 1.1 Research question

The introduction of this topic leads to a research to the relation between identity on the one hand, and support for the European Union on the other hand. This relation is tested with the following research question:

*What is the influence of identity feelings on the image European citizens have of the European Parliament?*

In this thesis, the cultural view on this phenomenon will be researched. This will be done using two different hypotheses. The first hypothesis tests a correlation between having an exclusive national identity and having a negative image of the European Parliament. The second hypothesis tests a correlation between cue-taking by right-wing parties and having a negative image of the European Parliament. After analyzing the results of these hypotheses, an answer to the research question will be provided.

This study will conduct a comparative case study. The research will focus on two cases, thus two European member states. These member states are Germany and Austria. Germany is the first country to be researched, considered as one of the most pro-European member states (Rettman, 2019). As a second country to research, this study aimed for a country in which anti-European sentiments are more prominent. This country is Austria, a member state known for its history of Euroscepticism (Auel, 2018).

### 1.2 Scientific relevance

Besides focusing on two member states, also the part of the EU that is researched is specified. This research focuses on the European Parliament, being the body for representation of European citizens. Former studies mainly focus on the European Union in general. Therefore it is interesting to dive deeper into the European Parliament as an institution in this research.

Support for the European project is a phenomenon that has been researched before. This study aims to add new insights to this bulk of information. Many of the studies conducted before, have been approached quantitatively. This study aims to get deeper into the notions of identity feelings, conducting a qualitative research design. The goal of the research is to

contribute to the knowledge about support for the European Union, based on feelings of identity. Through a case study in two European member states, in-depth knowledge from practical circumstances can be added to the existing literature on this topic.

Most empirical studies of support for the European Union rely on Eurobarometer survey data (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Though, the difficulty using comparisons based on this data, is that some of the measures used by scholars to measure national and European attachment and attitudes toward minorities could be endogenous to EU support. Based on this data, it is difficult to establish whether it is feeling European causes support for the European Union (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Therefore, this study aims to provide more knowledge on this relation. Conducting a more in-depth analysis to the origin of these feelings, and how they relate to support for the EU.

### 1.3 Practical relevance

This study aims to deliver data on the ideas among citizens about identity and European institutions. As a result, the study provides insights for all sorts of parties active in the political spectrum. These parties gain more insight in the reasoning behind ideas of citizens on the notions of identity. Furthermore it provides parties information on why citizens are captured by certain topics. European policy makers get more insight on the relation between nationalism and Euroscepticism.

### 1.4 Thesis structure

After this introduction, the study will start with a review of the present literature on the topic. Next, a theoretical framework is pointed out. Then the research design is described. Hereafter, the results for both Germany and Austria and described, analyzed and compared. Finally, a discussion and conclusion is presented.

## 2. Literature review

This chapter discusses former research related to the subject of this thesis. To assess the factors that shape the image of the European Parliament, it is important to understand what this image entails. First, the European Parliament in general is described. After that, the literature on concepts is reviewed. Firstly, a part about representation is written. Next, the existing literature on factors that drive support for European integration is analyzed. This will lead to a description of four approaches that try to explain this concept. In the final part, existing literature on the image of the European Parliament is reviewed.

### 2.1 The European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) is a unique multinational parliament assembly. It is the directly elected body of the European Union. The EP consists of 705 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), which represent the European citizens. People can take part in the political process in a number of ways, namely by voting in elections, contacting MEPs, petitioning the Parliament or launching a citizen's initiative. The EP shares power over the EU budget and legislation with the Council of the European Union. The MEPs engage in public debates and play a crucial role in the policy-making of the EU. They have three principal areas of work. First, the EP decides on laws jointly with the Council of the EU. Secondly, the EP has budgetary power. Finally, the EP has a monitoring function. The EP controls the correct use of EU funds (European Union, 2016).

The legislative assembly of the EU was inaugurated in 1958. At that time, the Common Assembly consisted of representatives that were chosen by the national parliaments of member states (Britannica, 2020). In 1962, the name changed to the European Parliament. The Summer Conference in 1974 changed the way representatives were selected. It determined that direct elections should take place. In 1975, the Parliament adopted a new draft convention, which was agreed on by the Heads of State in 1976 (European Parliament, 2020a). Since 1979, members of the European Parliament are elected directly by the European citizens. The MEPs hold office in terms of five years (Britannica, 2020).

The empowerment of the EP is described as *“one of the most remarkable democratic developments in Europe”* (Hix & Høyland, 2013, pp. 171). Through the years, the EP has become an equal partner to the European Council in almost all policy areas. After the Lisbon Treaty, the ‘ordinary legislative procedure’ is used for all EU legislation, except some exceptions. Furthermore the EU has a voice in EU expenditure (Hix & Høyland, 2013). So, the European Parliament has become a very important player in the decision-making process. The

Parliament has a say in regulations that influence the lives of all European citizens. Therefore, we could argue that the European Parliament is a very important institution in Europe.

### 2.1.1 European Parliament elections

Every five years, European elections take place. These are the largest transnational elections worldwide. At these elections, citizens select who they want to defend their interests in the EU (European Parliament, 2020b). The number of members elected differs for every country. It depends on the size of the population. The elections are contested by political parties on a national level. However, when the MEPs are elected, most of the national parties become part of transnational political groups. Because of this, most national parties are connected to a European-wide political party (European Parliament, 2020c).

European elections are often said to be second-order in character. Citizens consider the European political arena as less important than their national politics. Following that reasoning, electors use their votes for the European Parliament to express how they feel about the domestic parties. They show their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the political circumstances in their own countries (Hix & Lord, 1997). This phenomenon has some implications.

First, the European elections are not primarily about the elected institution, namely the EP. Furthermore, participation will be lower than in national elections (Hix & Lord, 1997). Besides that, the campaigns are also dominated by issues that play a role on the national level. The results of the European elections will be governed by the domestic political cycle. They are not determined by what is happening in European politics. This has some effects. If the European elections are held close to the general national elections, the government parties will have a significant chance to get good results. The supporters of these parties will be reluctant to hurt them towards a national election (Hix & Lord, 1997). If the European elections fall in the middle of a national parliamentary term, the results for government parties will probably be opposite. These parties usually suffer from protest votes against their national policies (Hix & Lord, 1997). Because of this, parties of opposition in national parliaments, and small parties regularly do well in European elections (Hix & Lord, 1997).

## 2.2 Representation

Across Europe, representation is most widely understood via the 'responsible party government' model. Parties set up policy promised and performance. Based on this information, the electorate selects their candidates from these parties (Marsh & Norris, 1997). The model has three minimum conditions. First, different parties need to provide an alternative

set of policy programs on the issues facing the country. This way they compete with each other. Second, the electorate should evaluate these parties' record in government or policy platforms, and base their party choice on this information. Third, at a regular interval free and fair elections should be held in the country. The votes are translated into parliamentary and government seats at these elections (Marsh & Norris, 1997). This can be described as 'representation from above'. The parties that are elected come in power, and remain accountable on a daily basis to the parliaments. When voters are dissatisfied with the promised or performance of parties, they can remove them from office (Marsh & Norris, 1997).

There is a difference between representation on the national and European level. Domestically, parties enjoy a double function, namely representation and government. On the European level, these parties only have the single function of representation (Mair & Thomassen, 2010). The 'responsible party government' model is hard to apply to the context of the European Union. In the EU, there are two ways the electorate can influence the policy-making. Citizens can influence the policy-making both directly and indirectly. First, indirectly through their choice of governments in national elections. The governments of all EU member states together form the co-legislator in the Council of the European Union. Second, voters can influence the EU directly through the elections to the European Parliament (Marsh & Norris, 1997). Three minimal conditions have to be met. First, *"cohesive and unified parties within the European Parliament need to offer alternative policy programs on the major issues facing Europe"* (Marsh & Norris, 1997, pp. 154). Second, *"the electorate needs to choose parties based on retrospective evaluations of their performance and prospective evaluations of their programs"* (Marsh & Norris, 1997, pp. 154). Third, *"the outcome of parliamentary elections should thereby link voters' preferences with the policy making process within the European Parliament"* (Marsh & Norris, 1997, pp. 154). Parties and MEPs seem to represent their voters effectively, as the congruence between the European electorate and European Parliament is quite strong (Mair & Thomassen, 2010).

### 2.3 Support for European integration

Dalton and Eichenberg (1991) developed an economic voting model of European Community support. Their research suggests that citizen support for European integration is formed by both domestic and international elements. They argue that EU citizens evaluate the European Community generally on three aspects. First of all, its economic performance. Citizens blame politicians in their home countries when economic times are bad. However, the research shows that the economically based evaluations of citizens go beyond the nation-state level. People blame the politicians and bureaucrats in Brussels for bad economic circumstances (Dalton &

Eichenberg, 1991). Second, political salience is discussed. Political campaigns and elite action can change the public opinion (Dalton & Eichenberg, 1991). Finally, the role of the European Community on the international stage plays a big role in the variation on support (Dalton & Eichenberg, 1991).

Gabel and Palmer (1995) tried to offer a fuller understanding of European attitudes. Their research casts doubt on the appropriateness of the economic voting model of Dalton and Eichenberg (1991). The research of Gabel and Palmer (1995) shows that a greater level of support for European integration mainly comes from individual advantages derived from human capital, income, and proximity. Furthermore, 'mercantilist' and 'security' benefits tend to increase the support for European integration. Citizens' support for European integration is positively related to the security and the trade benefits of the nation (Gabel & Palmer, 1995).

Gabel (1998) empirically tested five theories on support for European integration. At the time of the study, fourteen countries were member of the EU. Firstly, the six founders, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and Netherlands. In 1973, Denmark and Ireland joined the community, whereas in 1981 Greece entered. Next, in the 1986 enlargement, Spain and Portugal joined the EU. At the fourth enlargement in 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden gained their membership. Gabel (1998) researched the theories of Cognitive Mobilization, Political Values, Utilitarian Appraisals of Integrative Policy, Class Partisanship, and Support for Government. The results show that two of these theories explain support for European integration best in all member states. First, the utilitarian theory provides a robust explanation for variation in support for integration. Following this theory, differences in economic welfare shape the attitudes of citizens towards European integration (Gabel, 1998). Secondly, the class partisanship theory also offers a robust explanation for support. Following this theory, class partisanship independently has an influence on support. This means that the position of the political party citizens support, shapes their attitude towards European integration (Gabel, 1998). The support for government theory explains support for integration, but not in the original member states. In the new member states, voters tie their support for integration to their support for the domestic government (Gabel, 1998). However, for the remaining two theories it is the other way around. The political values and cognitive mobilization theories only provide an explanation for citizens in the original EU member states. The first argues that support for European integration is associated with value orientations on economic and political aspects. The second states that citizens' cognitive skills enable them to identify with a supranational political community (Gabel, 1998).

Hooghe (2007) argues that support for and opposition to European integration are both interest-driven. This research is based on the rational choice institutionalist perspective, applied by Hix (2007). From this perspective, *“Euroscepticism is little more than a set of preferences by citizens, parties and interest groups about institutional design in Europe”* (Hix, 2007, pp. 131). If citizens expect the EU policy outcomes to move closer to their preferences, they tend to turn from Eurosceptic to Euro-enthusiastic. But if the situation occurs the other way around, Euro-supportive citizens are likely to become Eurosceptic (Hix, 2007). From this view, we could argue that the image of the European Parliament could be influenced by whether its position is close to the preferences of the citizens or not.

McLaren and Guerra (2013) describe the trends in public opinion towards the EU. In the period leading up to the Maastricht Treaty ratification, there was a marked increase in levels of Euro-enthusiasm. An impressive majority of Europeans across the whole Community considered membership as a good thing. Only Germany and France were a bit holding back about the single market. However, after the early 1990s, there has been a decrease in Euro-enthusiasm. The Eurozone crisis led to some serious fluctuations in attitude towards the European Union. People in Greece, Cyprus, France, Italy, Portugal and the UK felt very pessimistic about the EU. Also in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia there is Euroscepticism. Most surprisingly, in the newest member states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 public opinion is also not very positive (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). Theories have been developed to try explaining the public attitude towards European integration. McLaren and Guerra (2013) divide these theories into the following groups: political economy and rationality, attitudes to the national government, the influence of political elites, political psychology, and media effects. The political economy and rationality perspective explains public opinion by calculations of costs and benefits of the EU (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). The attitudes to the national government perspective tries to explain public opinion by the perception citizens have of the national government. They use domestic proxies to form their opinion (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). As another factor, the influence of political elites is executed via cues (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). The political psychology theory explains public opinion by factors like cognitive mobilization and the loss of national identity (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). Finally, the mass media have a role in driving opinions regarding the EU (McLaren & Guerra, 2013).

Hobolt and De Vries (2016) also researched the factors that influence public support for European integration. They argue that the public opinion is increasingly at the heart of both political and scholarly debates on European integration. This research uses three explanatory approaches to explaining variation in support for European integration: Utilitarian Approach, Identity Approach, and Cue-Taking and Benchmarking Approaches.

### 2.3.1 Utilitarian approach

In the 1980s, political science was becoming heavily influenced by rational, utilitarian approaches. Models of political behaviour were being developed around the assumption that people rationally pursue their self-interests. This approach impacted the study of attitudes of European integration substantially. These theories have been egocentric or sociotropic in nature.

The egocentric theory states that individuals support or oppose European integration because they personally benefit or get harmed by it (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). The utilitarian explanations of support are based on an individual cost-benefit analysis. This theory states that citizens get higher levels of income and human capital through European trade liberalization. As a consequence, these people will support European integration more. The removal of trade barriers allows companies to shift their production across European borders. This increases job insecurity for low-skilled workers, but high-skilled workers can take advantage of the liberalized market. Research shows that socioeconomic factors influence public support (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Recent studies even suggest that education has become an important determinant of the public opinion about the EU. Less educated people are becoming less supportive of European integration (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016).

The sociotropic theory states that citizens of EU member states are more supportive of European countries when their country benefits from the European project (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). If countries profit directly from transfers from net fiscal the European Union, or indirectly from improved trade and favourable economic condition, it is more likely that there is public support for membership (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). This argument has found mixed empirical support. Recent studies show that people on the left are more opposed to integration than people on the right in countries with extensive welfare states. They argue that integration could lead to the dilution of their welfare system. The opposite is true in countries with high income inequality and limited public ownership. In these countries, further integration might increase redistribution (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016).

### 2.3.2 Identity Approach

The identity approach suggests that European integration may be perceived by Europeans as a potential threat to their national identity. However, the exclusiveness of national identity may be important. There is an important distinction between those who hold multiple territorial identities and those who feel themselves to identify only with their nationality (McLaren &

Guerra, 2013). People who feel that their national identity is exclusive of other territorial identities are likely to be more Eurosceptic (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). The identity approach focuses on notions of identity, group conflict, and symbolic politics. European integration is *“also about a pooling of sovereignty that potentially erodes national self-determination and blurs boundaries between distinct national communities”* (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016, pp. 420). People’s attachment to their nation and their perceptions towards other cultures influences their attitudes concerning European integration (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Several studies have shown evidence for this theory. Carey (2002) substantiates the argument that people with a strong national identity and pride are less supportive of European integration. In other studies there is evidence that Euroscepticism is related to a general hostility towards other cultures. Examples of this are negative sentiments toward minorities and immigrants (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Hooghe and Marks (2004, 2005) show that Euroscepticism is mostly influenced by whether individuals conceive their national identity as exclusive of other territorial identities. People that feel this way, are likely to be Eurosceptic.

### 2.3.3 Cue-taking and benchmarking approach

These theories state that support for European integration has very little to do with perceived economic gains and losses. This is because many Europeans are not likely to be able to calculate whether they benefit or get harmed by the European project (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). The cue-taking approach states that European integration is too complex and remote from the daily lives of most citizens. This results in them having insufficient interest, awareness, or emotional attachment to the European integration process. They base their evaluation mainly on national proxies (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Many researchers argue that the EU is often perceived in terms of national issues. This is mostly visible in referenda on European issues, which turn into a vote on the national government’s popularity. Moreover, European elections are generally fought on national issues rather than European issues. But also people’s projection of feelings about the national government translates into feelings about the EU (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). However, other research argues opposite statements. When the national political system is functioning well, individuals are less positive about the EU than when they live in countries where there is a high level of corruption, weak enforcement of the rule of law, and a weak welfare state. This can be explained by the idea that some individuals may see little need for a European government, when their national government is functioning well, while in the case of the latter, individuals may want the EU to counterbalance their weak national political institutions (McLaren & Guerra, 2013).

This approach to studying EU attitudes examines mass-elite linkages. These linkages are structured in two forms. First, *“political elites can be instrumental in helping determine citizens’*

*attitudes in a top-down approach, which views the cueing process as a form of information flowing from elites to citizens” (McLaren & Guerra, 2013, pp. 357). Second, “mass opinion can also cue elites, in that elites can assume a position on European integration that reflects citizens’ views in a bottom-up manner” (McLaren & Guerra, 2013, pp. 357). This approach also analyses the effects of the media. Citizens can fill their gaps in information first through education, cognitive skills and the socialization process, and second from lifetime learning through the media (McLaren & Guerra, 2013).*

Citizens also use this national context as a starting point for their EU evaluation in other ways. The domestic political institutions form a so-called benchmark for citizens’ views on the European integration process (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). This benchmarking does not only apply to the national economic performance, but also to the functioning of national democracy. Citizens who consider their national democratic institutions to be working well, tend to support the European integration less. They perceive politics at the European level as being less democratic (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Furthermore, citizens use benchmarks to evaluate the European integration on the level of national prosperity. Citizens in less affluent member states tend to evaluate the European Union mainly on economic grounds, while citizens in more affluent member states people base their evaluation mostly on political criteria (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016).

## 2.4 Image of the European Parliament

The EP has power over policy outcomes that influence all EU citizens. These European citizens have a certain image of the institution. However, the ‘electoral connection’ between citizens and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) is extremely weak. More dramatically, one could argue that this connection almost does not exist (Hix & Høyland, 2013). Marsh and Norris (1997) argue that political representation is insufficiently strongly developed in the EP. Therefore, the linkage between European citizens and MEPs remains limited. The elections for the EP are more than often second-order elections to judge the domestic government, rather than that they have to do with the candidate MEPs themselves (Hix & Høyland, 2013). Despite successive reforms that made the European Parliament more powerful in legislation, the European elections are still not genuinely European contests (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). There are certain reasons why EP elections are not seen as equally important as national elections. First of all, EP elections do not lead to the formation of a government (Hix & Marsh, 2011). This leads to different behavior among EU citizens, compared to a national election. The national parties are also to blame in this case, as they tend to treat the EP elections as midterm polls on the incumbent government. They rather

campaign on their domestic issues than on their positions in the EP policy areas (Hix & Høyland, 2013). However, this has a very significant impact on the democracy level of the European Union, as “*absence of a truly European element in European Parliament elections means that they fail to translate public preferences on EU policy issues into policy outcomes*” (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016, pp. 424).

The study of public opinion on the EU almost exclusively focuses on the EU in general (Scully, 2001). However, Gabel (2003) zoomed in to the European Parliament specifically. The research investigates the public support for the European Parliament. It states that public support for the EP is important to the legitimacy of the European Union, as the EP has a central democratic role. Gabel (2003) tests five potential sources of support for the EP: information and political knowledge, citizens’ values regarding the proper scope of EU policy authority, fundamental values related to the role of the institutions, democratic values of a more general nature, and education. For the first factor, citizens indeed vary in support based on their information level about the EU. The second factor is also supported by the research. Citizens’ beliefs regarding the proper scope of EU policy authority influence their support for the European Parliament. Next, democracy is positively related to support for the European Parliament. Furthermore, ideological extremism is partially related to support for the European Parliament. Finally, education is, surprisingly, negatively related to support for the EP. The results of Gabel (2003) show that more years of education are associated with a lower support for the EP.

### 3. Theoretical framework

In this section, theories and definitions used in this research will be identified and specified. First, the dependent variable image of the European Parliament is described. Next, politicization of the European integration process is described in paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4. This framework aims to provide more insight on the origins of the current situation, and acts as a theoretical substantiation for the independent variables in this research. In the literature review, four different approaches were described. As discussed in the literature review, there are several approaches that try to explain the factors that influence the image Europeans have of this democratic institution. In this research, the relationship between one of these possible factors, and the image of the European Parliament will be assessed. As several scholars argue, the cultural dimension has become more important in recent years, as it is an important factor that influences people's feelings' towards Europe (Kriesi, 2016; Hooghe & Marks, 2005). Also with recent developments going on in Europe, like the upcoming populist movement in different member states, this is an interesting dimension to research. Therefore, this theoretical framework elaborates on possible cultural explanations of support for European integration, explicating the identity-based explanation. Finally, hypotheses are derived from these possible explanations.

#### 3.1 Image of the European Parliament

The image of the European Parliament is the dependent variable in this research. The European Parliament (2018) describes this 'image' as the perception citizens have of the institution, and the trust people have in the European Parliament. These concepts of perception and trust are used in this thesis.

The European Parliament is the only supranational European institution citizens can vote for. The MEPs are directly elected by citizens from their home country. The European elections of 2014 became the most "European" elections ever, because voters were more concerned about European issues (Kriesi, 2016). The rising popularity of political parties that propose radical reform of, or even exit from, the EU indicated clearly that voters were more concerned about European issues. Ideological factors, i.e. factors linked to Euroscepticism dominated the vote (Kriesi, 2016).

#### 3.2 The European integration process

Kriesi (2016) argues that the European Union faces an exceptional accumulation of tension. He describes the state of politicization of European integration. Grande and Hutter (2016) define politicization as an expansion of the scope of conflict within the political system. Hutter

et al. (2016) argue that the politicization of European integration is a patchwork of politicizing moments, rather than a uniform trend towards ever more politicization. At important events at both the European as the national level, the public debate on European integration intensifies (Höglinger, 2016). There is no uniform politicization process in the electoral arena. Increases in the politicization of the integration process have mainly been caused by membership conflicts (Kriesi, 2016).

Hooghe and Marks (2009) argue that political parties determine whether an issue is politicized or not. The most mainstream parties tried to shy away from the European issue, as they are generally more Euro-supportive. European integration has always been the project of mainstream parties in the middle of the political spectrum, from center right to center left. However, they failed to depoliticize the issue. Oppositional parties have raised the heat, particularly the populist right and radical left. They found out that their instinctive Euroscepticism was closer to the pulse of the public opinion. Therefore the debate on Europe has been framed by opponents of European integration (Hooghe & Marks, 2009).

### 3.3 Inverted U-hypothesis

The European integration issues are increasingly linked to the left-right dimension. De Vries and Edwards (2009) describe the relationship between left-right placement and support for European integration as an 'inverted U-curve'. As Hooghe and Marks (2009) also argued, the mainstream parties are generally supportive of the European integration process. These are for example the conservatives, social democrats and Christian democrats. These parties have frequently been part of governing coalitions in Western Europe. In this period, the integration process was executed. This European integration process is strongly opposed by left-wing and right-wing extremist parties. As a result, Euroscepticism is mostly found outside the political mainstream (De Vries & Edwards, 2009). However, the parties on the left-wing and right-wing oppose the European integration for different reasons.

The Euroscepticism of these political parties evolves around two dimensions. First, economic opposition to integration. Parties may argue that the European project undermines the national welfare state, because of the neoliberal character. Second, cultural opposition to integration. Parties may argue that the national sovereignty and national community is offended by the European project (De Vries & Edwards, 2009). The reason why parties rally opposition to the European integration process varies between left-wing and right-wing parties. According to De Vries and Edwards (2009), left-wing parties argue that the integration process has a negative influence on the national welfare state. Extremist left-wing parties cue voters against the

European project, arguing on the basis of economic insecurity arguments. The neoliberal character of the EU would threaten the national welfare provisions. The extremist right-wing parties mobilize opposition against the EU arguing that it undermines the national sovereignty. Further integration under control from Brussels would lead to cultural insecurity. Citizens are mobilized against the EU on national identity considerations (De Vries & Edwards, 2009).

### 3.4 Politicization in different parts of Europe

To further understand this politicization of European integration, the different social foundations that have been giving rise to national conflict structures in different parts of Europe have to be kept in mind. Kriesi (2016) divides Europe in three large regions: the Northwestern Europe, Southern Europe and Eastern Europe. In these different parts of Europe, different types of Eurosceptic parties have been successful. In Northwestern Europe, Eurosceptic parties from the right dominated, while the Eurosceptic parties from the left dominated in the South. In CEE, Eurosceptic parties hardly played any role, with the exception of Hungary and Poland (Kriesi, 2016).

In Northwestern Europe, two social transformations have been highly consequential for political conflict. First, new social movements which stood at the origin of the rise of the New Left (Kriesi, 2016). Second, structural transformations of globalization, denationalization, and of opening up national borders in economic, political and cultural terms. These transformations have led to an increasing awareness of the fragility of the sovereignty of the nation-state and the national cultures. These transformations led to the rise of radical populist right parties (Kriesi, 2016).

In the other two European regions, these social transformations have been much weaker. In SE, the New Left remained weak and Green parties have been equally weak. Radical populist right parties also remained weak or non-existent, while where it did develop, it was linked to the regionalist cause. Euroscepticism was mainly located in the old Communist circles (Kriesi, 2016). In CEE, the party systems still appear to be poorly institutionalized. Powell and Tucker (2014) describe that the party systems have not developed stable roots in society. Furthermore, they are hardly considered legitimate by citizens. The main dimension of conflict in CEE countries is strongly connected to cultural issues. However, these are not the same cultural issues that structured the party systems in NWE. It is more a defensive nationalism asserting itself against internal and external enemies (Kriesi, 2016).

In NWE, the cultural dimension definitely has become more important. As the cultural dimension is the main angle of this theoretical framework, this research will focus on NEW. As the European Parliament is the only supranational European body citizens can vote for, these are the elections people can express this cultural identity.

According to Hooghe and Marks (2009) the cultural dimension is the most important factor to support or opposition to European integration. They argue that identity is more influential than individuals and interest groups.

### 3.5 Nationalism

Hooghe and Marks (2004) distinguish national identity in exclusive and inclusive terms. Citizens can perceive their national identity as exclusive or inclusive. Exclusive national identity means that citizens identify themselves exclusively as a citizen of their nations. Others conceive their national identity in inclusive terms. This means that these citizens could identify themselves both a national citizen as well as a European (Hooghe & Marks, 2004). Citizens of member states in which there is a strong exclusive national identity, are likely to be more considerably more Eurosceptical than citizens of member states who conceive their national identity in inclusive terms (Hooghe & Marks, 2004).

As described before, De Vries and Edwards (2009) distinguish the reasoning of left-wing and right-wing extremist parties against the EU. This research aims to analyze the relation between identity and support for European integration. Therefore the focus is on the arguments coming mainly from the right-wing parties. In recent years, the literature also shifted its attention to explanations for support that build on notions of identity. Through European integration, sovereignty is pooled towards the European level. This might erode national self-determination and blur boundaries between distinct domestic communities. The attitudes of citizens towards European integration is influenced by their attachment to their nation and the perceptions of people from other cultures (Hooghe & Marks, 2005). People who conceive their national identity as exclusive of other territorial identities, might be more Eurosceptic than people who have multiple nested identities (Hooghe & Marks, 2004). Furthermore, people with a negative attitude towards minority groups and migration are likely to be more Eurosceptic (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005).

### 3.6 Cue-taking

Following the cue-taking approach, European integration is too complex and remote from the daily lives of most citizens to have sufficient interest, awareness and emotional attachment.

Therefore they cannot base their attitudes on Europe based on the implications of the process. Instead, they rely on cues that overcome their information shortfalls. Citizens rely on national proxies. They mainly find these proxies through national news media. The media form a critical source of political information to citizens (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Therefore you could expect that in a country with positive media towards the European project, its citizens should also be supportive. Whereas in the opposite situation, citizens should have a negative attitude towards the European institutions. The European Parliament as being one of the European institutions, is one of the organizations that this theory should be applicable to.

Another proxy is formed by national political parties. Political elites shape public support for the European Union (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Hooghe and Marks (2005) argue that citizens who support pro-European parties are more likely to be supportive of European integration. However, it is hard to determine who is cueing who. Parties could cue their voters, but it is also very possible that parties are cued by their voters.

### 3.7 Hypotheses

The paragraphs before set out a theoretical framework for this research. From this framework, different hypotheses can be derived. First, Hooghe and Marks (2005) explained that the attachment citizens have to their nation influences their attitude towards European integration. Kriesi (2016) described that this is a consequence of the process of the globalization and denationalization of NWE. This leads to the feeling that the national sovereignty and national culture is in danger. Therefore, you would expect that people with a strong national identity, would be against the process of European integration. When we translate this into the European Parliament, these people are expected to be against this pan-European democratic body, as decisions are taken at the European level. As Hooghe and Marks (2004) argue, we should distinguish national identity in exclusive and inclusive terms. People with an inclusive national identity could identify themselves also as Europeans. While people with an exclusive national identity see themselves as a national citizen only. These citizens are expected to be very opposing to the European Parliament. This leads to the following hypothesis:

*H1. An exclusive national identity leads to a negative image of the European Parliament.*

As De Vries and Edwards (2009) explained, Euroscepticism can be plotted as an inverted U-curve. Left-wing extremist parties focus on the notions of the welfare state. However, this research focuses on the notions of identity. Right-wing extremist parties cue voters their way with the argument that the EU attacks the national sovereignty. Following this argument, this research focuses on the right-wing extremist parties. If people have an exclusive national

identity, they are likely to be supportive of the right-wing extremist parties. The strong national identity citizens have, could be explained by voting for these parties. This leads to the following hypothesis:

*H2. Cue-taking by right-wing parties increases a negative image of the European Parliament.*

## 4. Research design and methods

In this section, the research design of this thesis is discussed. First, the research methods are described. The case selection and time frame are discussed. Furthermore control variables are presented.

### 4.1 Research methods

Several research methods can be used to conduct a thesis. Yin (1989) describes a research design as an action plan from getting from the research question to a research answer. First of all, quantitative and qualitative methods should be distinguished. Quantitative researches aim for generalization of effects. The objective is to research effects of causes across a population of cases (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006). The main pro for quantitative methods is that it allows researchers to test specific hypotheses, and the statistical nature allows for generalization. The main con is that you do not get specific details about the explanation for main events (Research Optimus, 2013). Qualitative research aims for an explanation of substantively important events. The objective is to develop an explanation of outcomes in individual cases (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006). The main pro for qualitative research is that it is great for exploratory purposes, obtaining a depth and richness of information. The downside of this type of research is the lack of generalization and the possibility of bias (Research Optimus, 2013).

#### 4.1.1 Quantitative designs

As quantitative research methods, experimental and observational designs can be distinguished. In experimental research designs, the researcher is in control. Experiments are executed for establishing causal links between an independent and a dependent variable (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013). However, there are several disadvantages for experiments. First, the world is not a controlled experiment, and experiments are costly. Furthermore, generalization is difficult, because of the small N. Also randomization may be difficult, which means that there is self-selection into groups. This is undesirable for the internal validity (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013).

Then there are observational design. Here, the researches cannot manipulate the independent variable. The measurement and statistical control are crucial. A random sample should be taken from the population. We can distinguish three observational designs. First, the cross-sectional design, where measures of units are taken at a given time. Next, the time-series design, where measures of one unit are taken over time. And finally, the panel-data design, where measures of multiple units are taken over time (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013). With

observational designs, there are certain threats to internal validity. First, the measurement of the variables. Control variables should be included in the analysis. Furthermore, the independent and dependent variables should vary. Finally, the dependent variable should precede the independent variable, which is not always clear in cross-sectional research design (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013). There is also a threat to external validity. There should be randomization, which means that a random sample should be taken which is representative of the population (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2013).

#### 4.1.2 Qualitative designs

As qualitative research methods, co-variational and congruence analyses can be distinguished. The co-variational analysis can be used for small-N research. It tests empirical evidence whether an independent variable makes a difference on a dependent variable. This research design looks for the causal effect of an independent variable. Theories entail the concepts that allow to specify the dependent and independent variable, and help to specify and justify the causal direction. The causal explanation has three elements. First, the cause and effect must co-vary. Second, the cause precedes the effect. Finally, the effect should not be caused by another factor. Therefore, the chosen cases should vary as much as possible on the independent variable, and be as similar as possible on the other relevant explanatory variables (Blatter & Haverland, 2012).

The congruence analysis can also be used for small-N research. It tests whether a theory could explain a phenomenon better than another theory. Where the co-variational is mostly focused on variables, the congruence analysis is more influenced by theories (Blatter & Haverland, 2014).

#### 4.2 Research design of this thesis

This research aims for an in-depth analysis of the relation between identity and the image of the European Parliament. The goal is to specify for individual cases. This means that both the congruence analysis and co-variational analysis could be applied. Quantitative designs are not applicable, as the research tries to explain individual cases. The theoretical framework zoomed in on one specific approach, namely the identity approach. The research tries to explain if the independent variable identity makes a difference on the dependent variable image of the European Parliament. It focuses more on a feature of the social reality, namely identity, than applying different theories. Therefore a co-variational analysis is most suitable.

### 4.3 Time frame

As Euroscepticism on notions of identity is more and more in the media in recent years, it is most interesting to look at these most recent years in this research. To exclude factors following the big economic and financial crisis, the beginning of the research time should be after this crisis. As this research aims to explain the most recent developments, the thesis will focus on the period in the run-up to the European elections of 2014, until now.

### 4.4 Case selection

In this research, individual cases are analyzed. Ideally the research would aim for as much cases as possible. However, because of feasibility reasons, two countries are selected. As stated in that section, the research zooms in on the region Northwestern Europe (NWE), as Kriesi (2016) argues that identity has recently been the most effective factor in this region, compared to SE and CEE. Following the most likely case scenario (Blatter & Haverland, 2012), if we do not see the cultural dimension matter in NWE, we do not see it to be applicable anywhere else.

In a co-variational analysis, the cases should vary as much as possible on the independent variable, while they should be as similar as possible on other possible variables. Therefore we aim for countries that are as different as possible on identity, while being as similar as possible on the other possible explanations. These other explanations are described before in the theoretical framework.

Two countries that are quite different on identity, are Germany and Austria. In 2018, 42% of the Austrian people stated that they feel Austrian only. Only 23% of the German people stated the same (European Commission, 2018). This means that a lot more Austrians feel like they have an exclusive national identity compared to the Germans. Now it is important to investigate whether these two countries are similar on other possible explanations.

First, the utilitarian approach. An important factor in the utilitarian approach is GDP per capita, as this approach argues that in wealthier countries, the general feeling about the European project tends to be more positive. In 2019, the GDP per capita of Austria was \$ 59,110, while that of Germany was \$ 56,052 (World Bank, 2020). These are very much comparable. When we look into all the 28 EU member states, there is no country between Austria and Germany on this variable (World Bank, 2020).

**European Union**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Most Recent Year</b>	<b>Most Recent Value</b>
<i>Luxembourg</i>	2019	121,292.7
<i>Ireland</i>	2019	88,240.9
<i>Denmark</i>	2019	59,830.2
<i>Netherlands</i>	2019	59,686.8
<i>Austria</i>	2019	59,110.6
<i>Germany</i>	2019	56,052.4
<i>Sweden</i>	2019	55,814.5
<i>Belgium</i>	2019	54,545.2
<i>Finland</i>	2019	51,323.8
<i>France</i>	2019	49,435.2

**Table 1.** GDP per capita in the European Union (Source: World Bank, 2020)

To seek for similarity on the benchmarking approach, the voter turnout is taken as framework. Following this approach, citizens use the national context as a starting point for their EU evaluation. This could result in more or less citizens going to the election. To avoid this factor to influence the research, similarity is aimed for. The elections that are most meaningful for this research, are the EP elections of 2014. Here, the voter turnout of Austria was 45%, while in Germany it was 48% (European Parliament, 2019a). So, for this factor both countries also very much comparable.

Taking into account region as an important factor, these two countries are very suitable for conducting this research. It is debatable whether these countries belong to the region NWE. However, we follow Kriesi (2016) on his argument that identity plays the most important role in NWE, and he considers both Germany and Austria to be a part of this region. Not only are both of these member states located in this area, they are even neighboring countries. Furthermore, both countries have the similar language family.

The countries do vary in size. Germany is in terms of population the biggest country of the EU, having more than 83 million inhabitants (Worldometer, 2020). Austria, with about 9 million inhabitants, finds itself in the middle of that list (Worldometer, 2020). As this research will mainly focus on percentages for deriving conclusions, this difference probably does not implicate the result very much. However, this difference also means a difference in power in the EU. This could lead to a different view of the European Union in these member states.

The countries also vary in membership development. Germany was one of the six founding members back in 1958. Austria joined the EU in the fourth enlargement in 1995. This means that the history of Germany with the EU goes far more back than the history of Austria with the EU. Implications for the research could be that Germans have built a better relationship with the European project over time. However, one could also argue the other way around. As Germany has a longer relationship with the EU, they could also feel tired of it. Anderson and Kaltenthaler (1996) argue that length of membership in the EP has an impact on support for a united Europe. Though, given that the other possible explanations show similarity and the difficulty to research complete equality on two member states, the dissimilarity of this factor is accepted for this research.

## 4.5 Control variables

As discussed in the literature review, there are four approaches that try to explain support for European integration. The utilitarian, identity, cue-taking, and benchmarking approach. This research aims to explain the image of the European Parliament from a cultural point of view. However, the possible other theoretical explanations should be controlled for. Therefore, this research tests the utilitarian approach and benchmarking approach as control variables.

### 4.5.1 Utilitarian approach

The basic idea of the utilitarian approach is that citizens base their opinion on a cost-benefit analysis of their economic gains and losses. The utilitarian approach is two-fold. On the one hand, there is the utilitarian approach on the individual level. This states that citizens base their opinion on whether they profit of the European project themselves (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). We could expect that citizens from member states that profit from European policies, would be more positive about the EU. On an individual level, the European project generally profits high-skilled workers and those with capital (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). On the country level, this would mean high economic development and a low level of unemployment (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). With the EP being the co-legislator that creates such a profitable economic climate, we could expect that citizens living in a country with a positive socioeconomic situation are generally positive about the EP.

On the other hand, there is the utilitarian approach on the national level. This states that citizens base their opinion on whether the country profits of the European Union (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). If countries profit directly from net fiscal transfers from the EU, public support for the EU institutions is more likely. If countries profit indirectly, through improved trade or

favorable economic conditions, we also often see a positive view on the European project (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016).

#### 4.5.2 Benchmarking approach

Citizens could also use the national context as a benchmark. If they perceive their domestic government as performing negatively, they would also evaluate the European Union negatively. However, most research shows a slightly different view. Citizens who feel bad about their domestic government, would be happy to see sovereignty transferred to European institutions. Vice versa, when citizens are happy with the performance of its government, would be dissatisfied when sovereignty is transferred to the European level (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016).

Benchmarking can also be applied to the functioning of democracy. If citizens are happy with the working of its national democracy, they will not be supportive of a European Parliament. They see politics at the European level as democratically deficient. Citizens who consider their national democratic institutions not working so well, would be more positive on a European democratic level to replace certain responsibilities of the national democratic bodies (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016).

#### 4.6 Variables and operationalization

In this section the different variables are operationalized. First, the measurement of the dependent variable is described. After that, the different independent variables are discussed.

##### 4.6.1 Image of the European Parliament

Since the early 1970s, the European Commission monitors the public opinion in the member states regularly. To do this, the Eurobarometer polls are used. The reports are published by the Commission and freely available online (McLaren & Guerra, 2013). There is criticism on the Eurobarometer. Höpner and Jurczyk (2015) show that Eurobarometer surveys select and frame questions in ways that systematically produces outcome that a more favorable of integration. They argue that there are incomprehensible, hypothetical, and knowledge-inadequate questions, unbalanced response options, insinuation and leading questions, context effects, and strategic removal of questions. This leads to violations of the rules of good public opinion research, and therefore Eurobarometer blurs the line between research and propaganda (Höpner & Jurczyk, 2015). However, despite these critiques, the Eurobarometer data is still the best option. It offers an insight in the public opinion of citizens towards the European Parliament in all EU member states, which is exactly what is needed for this

research. On this specific topic, there are no other sufficient available sources. This justifies the use of the Eurobarometer.

The data on image of the European Parliament can be derived from the yearly Parlemeter. In this Parlemeter, the following question is surveyed on the general opinion on the EP: *“in general, do you have a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image of the European Parliament?”* (European Parliament, 2018). So, this question is measured on a Likert scale. This is an ordinal psychometric measurement of opinions. The advantages of a Likert scale are that the results can be easily understood. The responses are easily quantifiable. The Likert scale also allows respondents to respond in a degree of agreement, instead of taking a stand. Furthermore, it presents a neutral option. However, there are also disadvantages to the Likert scale. It fails to measure the true attitudes of respondents, as it is uni-dimensional and the space between the five choices cannot be equidistant. People could avoid the extreme options on the scale (LaMarca, 2011). This question is measured among citizens from all EU member states. However, as stated before, this research will focus on Germany and Austria.

#### 4.6.2 Voting for Eurosceptic parties

Following hypothesis 2, national identity could be expressed by voting for right-wing extremist parties. To analyze this variable, the results of elections in Austria and Germany will be taken into account. First, the main right-wing extremist parties have to be detected in both countries. After that, the election results of these parties can be described and analyzed. Results of both domestic and European election are included in this research.

#### 4.6.3 Identity

You can feel attached to a nation state, or Europe. This feeling is part of your identity. There is a difference between inclusive and exclusive identity. Inclusive identity is about being something, without precluding being something else. Exclusive identity is about being something, and therefore not being something else. In European terms, we can see inclusive identity as feeling German or Austrian, not precluding feeling European. Exclusive identity can be seen as feeling only German or Austrian, and therefore not European.

From the Standard Eurobarometer, the first descriptive statistics can be derived. In the Standard Eurobarometer on European citizenship, questions are asked regarding European identity and citizenship. It focuses on areas like attachment to the European Union, perceptions of the European Union's achievements, and the concept of European citizenship (European

Commission, 2018). The following question is taken as measurement to determine how national, or European citizens feel: “*Do you see yourself as...?*”. The answers range from (NATIONALITY) only, (NATIONALITY) and European, European and (NATIONALITY), European only, and none (European Commission, 2018).

However, the research aims to dive deeper into the reasoning behind this inclusive and exclusive feeling of national identity. Therefore media outlets, news archives, secondary data and social media will be analyzed.

#### 4.7 Data sources and collection

This research tries to implement several important data sources. First of all, the descriptive statistics are derived from the Parlemeter and the Standard Eurobarometer. Furthermore, the most important media outlets and news archives from Austria and Germany will be looked into. Also secondary data on Euroscepticism in Austria and Germany will be used, as well as data sets on voting for Eurosceptic parties.

## 5. Analysis

To analyze the two hypotheses, an analysis and results section are written. In this chapter, the situation in the two cases, Germany and Austria, will be described. First, a historical background is sketched for both countries. After that, the data on both the dependent and independent variables are provided and analyzed. Finally, the two hypotheses are answered in the next chapter, the results section.

### 5.1 Germany

#### 5.1.1 Historical background

Obviously, Germany has had a big influence on the modern European history, being a major player in both World Wars. Since the 1950s, it is widely shared by public opinion that European integration is in Germany's vital interest. This was called the 'Europeanization' of German politics, based on the dictum of Thomas Mann: "*we do not want a German Europe, but a European Germany*" (Marcussen et al., 1999, p. 622). Chancellor Konrad Adenauer started the multilateralization of German foreign policy, as he thought this was the best means of overcoming the country's past. After World War II, the newly founded Christian Democratic Party (CDU) embraced European unification. This was regarded as the alternative to the nationalism of the past (Marcussen et al., 1999). The redemption for German sins would be "*the triptych of self-conscious anti-Nazism, Christian values, and dedication to European unity*" (Marcussen et al., 1999). They supported the creation of a European confederation, a supranational community among the family of nations. This new Europe should preserve and continue a Christian culture (Marcussen et al., 1999). A collective European identity was shaped in Germany. This was based on Christianity, democracy and social market economy (Marcussen et al., 1999). The identity was sharply distinguished from nationalism, following the catastrophe of World War II. This was done by distancing from the German nationalist and militarist part. This way, Germany's own past constituted the new "others" in their identity construction. They wanted to overcome their past by amalgamating the Christian vision of Europe with a modern Western concept (Marcussen et al., 1999).

In the early 2000s, a discussion came up in the country. This debate is known as the *Leitkulturdebatte* (Pautz, 2005). The debate was based on several aspects. It was a debate about Germany's predominant culture, characterized by a so-called 'clash' between civilizations and the incompatibility of 'different' cultures in Germany (Pautz, 2005). After the German government aimed to draw up for 'modern' laws for immigration and integration, this debate was initiated. The government stated that immigrants were no longer simply guest

workers, but had become an integral part of German society. Therefore, they should be allowed to participate in it, both socially and politically (Pautz, 2005). In reaction to these ideas, conservatives tried to gain the upper hand in defining German identity, playing the nationalist card. The *Leitkulturdebatte* followed (Pautz, 2005).

The concept of *Leitkultur* was based on the belief that different cultures should remain separate. This way, their identities could retain and cultural conflicts could be avoided (Pautz, 2005). The liberal German leading culture, consisting the German constitutions, the German language and key values as equality should be conformed to (Scholz, 2017). This debate was part of an international phenomenon. Since the end of the Cold War, cultural identity have become the key explanation for national and international conflicts. This international phenomenon can be described as the 'culturalization of politics' (Pautz, 2005). One of the goals of the debate was to re-establish a 'normal' German national consciousness. The Holocaust was beginning to be treated as a closed chapter. "*The debate on German Leitkultur sought to re-establish national identity and consciousness within a European context*" (Pautz, 2005, p. 41). So, together with a 'European identity' formed by enlightenment and modernity. The German *Leitkultur* was transformed into a German culture within a European one (Pautz, 2005). To conclude, in these years ideas focusing on a national, German identity became more accepted again in the German society. However, pure rightwing parties were still taboo in mainstream society because of the country's Nazi history (Wagstyl, 2014).

### 5.1.2 Exclusive national identity

In this section, the independent variable 'exclusive national identity' is analyzed. We research whether or not there is an exclusive national identity present in Germany. Furthermore, the development over time of this variable is described. In the next chapter, the results section of the thesis, the relation with the dependent variable is analyzed.

To analyze the exclusive national identity in Germany, the Standard Eurobarometer results of the past years are checked. These results provide us with the descriptive statistics of identity in Germany. We need to understand how many Germans have an exclusive German identity. They do not feel European, or both German and European. These citizens feel only German, and exclude the European identity. The following question is taken as measurement to determine how national, or European citizens feel: "*Do you see yourself as...?*". The answers range from (NATIONALITY) only, (NATIONALITY) and European, European and (NATIONALITY), European only, and none (European Commission, 2018). Below, the percentage of German respondents taking the option 'German only' is presented.

<b>Standard Eurobarometer</b>	<b>% Exclusive German identity</b>
Spring 2014 (EB 81)	27
Autumn 2014 (EB 82)	30
Spring 2015 (EB 83)	25
Autumn 2015 (EB 84)	30
Spring 2016 (EB 85)	29
Autumn 2016 (EB 86)	28
Spring 2017 (EB 87)	26
Autumn 2017 (EB 88)	27
Spring 2018 (EB 89)	26
Autumn 2018 (EB 90)	23
Spring 2019 (EB 91)	22

**Table 2.** Exclusive national identity in Germany (Source: Standard Eurobarometer 2014-18)

So, in the past years, between 23 and 30% of the Germans have felt exclusively German. This percentage is fairly stable. On average, about 27% of the Germans have been feeling Germany only in these years. Based on the Eurobarometer results, one could argue that in these years, approximately a quarter of the Germans feel German only. They do not feel European.

### 5.1.3 Strength of right-wing political parties

In this section, the strength of the right-wing party AfD in Germany is analyzed.

In recent years, nationalist and Eurosceptic feelings started rising in Germany. In 2013, the political party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) was founded. This was during the economic crisis. The party found it unfair that, from their point of view, German citizens had to pay for debts made by South European countries (Van 't Hof, 2017). The AfD was originally founded as a Eurosceptic party. However, the strength and representation rose after rightwingers took over and switched its focus to anti-immigration and Islam skepticism (The Guardian, 2019).

The party was founded by economist Bernd Lucke, together with Alexander Gauland and Konrad Adam (BBC, 2016). Lucke first belonged to Merkel's conservative CDU. However, the Greek bailouts forced him to reconsider, as he saw this as a breach of democratic, legal and economic principles (Kulish & Eddy, 2013). Lucke had the support of a group of fellow academics, among which former members of the CDU, who had previously challenged the German government's eurozone policies (Czuczka, 2013). The reason of the founding was the

dissatisfaction with the German European policy. They disagreed with the governmental ideas about Europe in the financial crisis (Duitsland Instituut, 2019). The consensus was that Merkel had protected German national interest by foisting austerity on the European south, in return for monetary support. However, the AfD wanted to stop the “madness of rescue packages” (Le Blond, 2013). Lucke wanted to address conservatives and economic liberals with his alternative to the CDU policy (Duitsland Instituut, 2019). One of the new members argued to be attracted to the AfD because of the prominence of its founders. Another reason was that the current Merkel government had put the country on “a *dangerous financial course*”, by giving out more and more money to Europe, while having so many problems in Germany (Kulish & Eddy, 2013). In the run up to the parliamentary elections of 2013, the AfD gained strength. The party was calling for an end to the European currency union (Kulish & Eddy, 2013). In April 2013, the party held its first formal party congress. Here, Lucke elaborated on the party’s plans, mainly focused on being an alternative for Chancellor Merkel’s government: the *Alternative für Deutschland*. The party wanted to end the so-called breach of democratic, legal and economic principles by the German government (Kulish & Eddy, 2013). The goal of the euro was to unite Europe. However, according to Lucke, the euro was dividing Europe rather than uniting it. The party is not necessarily against the European Union, stating that Europe will not fail if the euro fails (Kulish & Eddy, 2013). However, there was also criticism. The party was accused of deluding voters by drawing a possibility to renationalize the currency without drawbacks, which is considered impossible by critics (Kulish & Eddy, 2013).

Before the 2013 German federal elections, AfD party officials gave voice to their supporters’ fears, like energy becoming too expensive, saving accounts seeing their value eroded, and Germans working until the age of 67 (Der Spiegel, 2013). At the 2013 German federal elections, the AfD came tantalizingly close to the 5 percent threshold needed for representation in the Bundestag. Despite failing to reach this threshold, the election result could be seen as an astonishing success. A party only seven months old gained 4.7 percent of the votes (Der Spiegel, 2013). Research group Forschungsgruppe Wahlen concluded the AfD won proportionately more support from educated youngers votes with jobs (Wagstyl, 2014). Gauland stated that the party should turn its attention to the EU elections (Der Spiegel, 2013). Besides that, the party wanted to run for state parliament elections in several states. However, the party has not reached consensus on regional level policies. These disagreements were mainly about family, energy, foreign, education and tax policies. This led to difficulties in the run up to regional elections, dividing the party (Der Spiegel, 2013).

In 2014, the party was elected in the European Parliament for the first time. The party won seven seats, with Bernd Lucke as lead candidate. After the elections, the party joined the

European Conservative and Reformists. The AfD was not opposed to the EU, though it has suggested that weaker members should leave the single currency. The admission to the ECR led to international respectability on the AfD, because of the extra funds, staff and speaking time in the European Parliament (Nicolaou & Baker, 2014).

The party also attracted extremely right politicians. They found themes like immigration and Islam more important than the euro (Duitsland Instituut, 2019). From 2014 onwards the party shifted its focus to a cultural approach. The party lines became based more on the German cultural identity. One of the right-wing politicians, Petry flirted with the anti-Islam movement Pegida (Duitsland Instituut, 2019). Petry stated that Pegida protests against inadequate legislation on asylum rights and religious extremism. Next to that, she praised Pegida for demanding German law to be applied against law-breakers (BBC, 2014). Besides that, in her campaign she proclaimed that a German family should have three children, in order to save the surviving of the German people (Duitsland Instituut, 2019). Lucke and Petry have been arguing about the AfD's political position. The party became deeply divided between two opposing wings. On the one hand, Lucke's free-market liberals united in their opposition to Brussels' economic policies. On the other hand, Petry's national conservatives trying to move the party's focus to issues like immigration, cross-border crime and national identity (DW, 2015a). This led to a contentious power struggle. Lucke wanted to adopt a more liberal and pro-business stance. He was worried about the far-right part of the party, of which his supporters were not being able to distance themselves. However, Petry sought to steer the party further to the right. She supported talks with Pegida and stated that the vision of the state of a religion like Islam links to massive integration problems (DW, 2015b).

Five of the MEPs left the fraction after a year. One of them was founder Lucke (Duitsland Instituut, 2019). He became in open conflict with the east German wing of the AfD, led by Frauke Petry. Petry led the party to strong showings in eastern state votes, which boosted her influence in the party. This led to a leadership vote in 2015, won by Petry (Barkin, 2015). As a consequence, the party's focus shifted from the euro to immigration issues. Petry and other eastern AfD members flirted with Pegida, after the movement drew up to 25,000 people to rallies in Dresden (Barkin, 2015). This resulted in Lucke being concerned about the party becoming Islamophobic and xenophobic. He stated that the party had become a populist protest party (Barkin, 2015).

The change in leadership shifted the policies of the party. The resistance to the euro became less, while the emphasis on immigration and the perceived cultural intrusion of Islam grew (Sputnik International, 2015). In the following years the focus of the party shifted towards

asylum seekers. The party thinks that Islam doesn't belong to Germany. They want an immigration stop (Van 't Hof, 2017). So, in recent years the focus of the party has shifted more towards issues regarding the German identity, as the party thinks Islam is not a part of this identity. In 2016, the party announced a cooperation pact with the FPÖ in Austria. This was the paragon of the shift to a far-right party. Due to its links with this far-right Austrian party, the AfD was excluded from the ECR (Crisp, 2016).

Goerres et al. (2017) researched the supporter base of the AfD. They argue that the electoral success can be derived from socio-economic, attitudinal and contextual factors. The most explanatory variables are immigration, political distrust and economic decline. The party has a supporter base motivated by cultural and economically right-wing policy preferences (Goerres et al., 2017).

#### *5.1.3.1 Perceptions to the EU*

In this section, the perceptions of the AfD to the European Parliament and the EU in general are described.

In 2014, the AfD aimed for a Europe of nation states and not a federal Europe. The party promised to take an axe to the Brussels bureaucracy. The AfD was surprisingly moderate on immigration, as they support EU freedom of movement. Though, the AfD held a respectable anti-euro campaign (Wagstyl, 2014).

In 2019, the AfD announced their aim to abolish the European Parliament (Eijsvoogel, 2019). This was their spearhead of the campaign for the European elections of May 2019. The AfD calls the European Parliament undemocratically, and the MEPs privileged (Eijsvoogel, 2019). The party sees nation states as having the exclusive competence to make laws (The Guardian, 2019).

The AfD also sees a 'Dexit', the retirement of Germany from the EU, as an option if the Union isn't reformed within a reasonable period of time (Eijsvoogel, 2019). The party wants the EU to be reshaped in line with the party's ideas. According to the leaders, too much power has been transferred to Brussels. The EU has far outgrown its origins in economic cooperation. The party does not necessarily want to abolish the EU, but wants to bring it back to its sensible core (The Guardian, 2019), being a platform for economic cooperation. Die-hard AfD supporters view the EU as a superstate, robbing Germany of its national sovereignty (Karnitschnig, 2019). They want to re-introduce the D-Mark (Bagus, 2018). The EU should return most powers to member countries to restore a 'Europe of Fatherlands', being little more

than a trading bloc (Karnitschnig, 2019). If the party's demand for reforms within the European bloc are not met, the AfD will strive for the country's exit. This decision marked the first time a German party called for a 'Dexit' (The Guardian, 2019).

In conclusion, the AfD was founded in 2013 as a party against the Euro, and not against the EU as an institution. In 2014, the party was still very moderate on topics like immigration. However, with Petry taking over in 2015, the party shifted towards an anti-immigration and anti-Islam oriented party. They shifted their most important points to notions of national identity.

#### *5.1.3.2 Election results*

Next, we take a look at the election results in Germany. Several elections are taken into account in this research. We analyze the 2013 and 2017 German federal election results. Furthermore, the 2014 and 2019 European elections are being looked into.

Members of the Bundestag are elected in general, direct, free, equal and secret, meaning anonymous, elections. Every German over the age of eighteen is entitled to vote (Bundesregierung, 2020). From 2013 onwards, the anti-European Alternative für Deutschland participated in elections. The 2013 Bundestag elections was their first general German election to participate in. In the run up to these elections, the party had an openly anti-euro message. They made a case against Germany staying in the euro. If the party would make the Bundestag, they promised to use this platform to articulate these ideas. They considered the old parties to be silent about the problems of Europe (Evans, 2013).

In the 2013 German federal elections, only five parties, all pro-European, reached the threshold of 5 percent. The FDP lost their seats in the German parliament. CDU-CSU won 41.5 percent of the popular vote, with the SPD at an appropriate distance with 25.7 percent of the electorate won. Die Linke and Grüne battled for the third place, respectively winning 8.6 and 8.5 percent of the votes. The FDP and AfD both came close to representation in the Bundestag, winning 4.8 and 4.7 percent of the votes (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2013). So, they came just short for reaching the threshold. Translated into seats, CDU-CSU again became by far the largest party. The party got represented by 311 seats. SPD came in second with 193 of the seats. Die Linke and Grüne got 64 and 63 seats (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2013).

<b>Party</b>	<b>% Popular vote</b>	<b>Seats</b>
<i>CDU-CSU</i>	41.5	311
<i>SPD</i>	25.7	193
<i>Die Linke</i>	8.6	64
<i>Grüne</i>	8.4	63

**Table 3.** Results of the German Bundestag elections of 2013 (Source: Der Bundewahlleiter, 2013)

So, the Eurosceptic AfD did not win any seats in this election. Though, winning 4.7 percent of the popular vote, the party clearly appeared on the horizon.

The AfD participated in European elections for the first time in 2014. The party was surprisingly moderate on immigration, however the party held a respectable anti-euro campaign. With this program, the AfD gained 7.1% of the popular vote, resulting in 7 seats in the EP.

<b>Party</b>	<b>% Popular vote</b>	<b>Seats</b>
<i>CDU-CSU</i>	35.3	34
<i>SPD</i>	27.3	27
<i>Grüne</i>	10.7	11
<i>Die Linke</i>	7.4	7
<i>AfD</i>	7.1	7
<i>FDP</i>	3.4	3
<i>Other parties</i>	8.8	7

**Table 4.** Results of the European elections of 2014 in Germany (Source: European Parliament, 2014)

In the 2014 European election, the AfD gained a higher percentage of the popular vote. The party's popularity increased in the year after their first Bundestag election participation. This increasing popularity was mainly reached through standpoints on a utilitarian basis, as the party was not focusing on cultural ideas that much yet.

As discussed in previous sections, for the 2017 German federal elections, the Alternative für Deutschland came up with a firmly right program (Verburg, 2017). The AfD came in the Bundestag for the first time. This meant that seven parties, including CSU, won Bundestag seats. CDU-CSU again became the largest party of Germany, winning 32.9 percent of the popular vote. They were again followed by the SPD, winning 20.5 percent of the votes. The

AfD made a giant step towards the third place with 12.6 percent of the electorate. Finally, the FDP, Die Linke and Grüne won 10.8, 9.2 and 8.9 percent of the votes (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2017). CDU-CSU came in the Bundestag with 246 seats, SPD 153 seats, AfD 94 seats, FDP 80 seats, Die Linke 69 seats, and Grüne 67 seats (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2017).

<b>Party</b>	<b>% Popular vote</b>	<b>Seats</b>
<i>CDU-CSU</i>	32.9	246
<i>SPD</i>	20.5	153
<i>AfD</i>	12.6	94
<i>FDP</i>	10.8	80
<i>Die Linke</i>	9.2	69
<i>Grüne</i>	8.9	67

**Table 5.** Results of the German Bundestag elections of 2017 (Source: Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2017)

So, after the 2013 elections the Alternative für Deutschland made an enormous jump upwards in the 2017 elections. This implies an increase of popularity of the party. It seems that the ideas of the AfD were catching on in Germany. An interesting finding is, that in the years the shift towards right-wing extremist ideas took place, the popularity of the party increased.

In 2019, the AfD again participated in the European elections. This time with a far more extremely right program, focusing on immigration and the cultural intrusion of Islam. They turned themselves against the European Parliament, stating that nations states have the exclusive competence to make laws (The Guardian, 2019). The party made a call to abolish the Parliament, attacking the “751 privileged members” (The Guardian, 2019). The party gained 11.0% of the popular vote, resulting in 11 seats in the EP.

<b>Party</b>	<b>% Popular vote</b>	<b>Seats</b>
<i>CDU-CSU</i>	28.9	29
<i>Grüne</i>	20.5	21
<i>SPD</i>	15.8	16
<i>AfD</i>	11.0	11
<i>Die Linke</i>	5.5	5
<i>FDP</i>	5.4	5
<i>Other parties</i>	12.9	9

**Table 6.** Results of the European elections of 2019 in Germany (Source: European Parliament, 2019b)

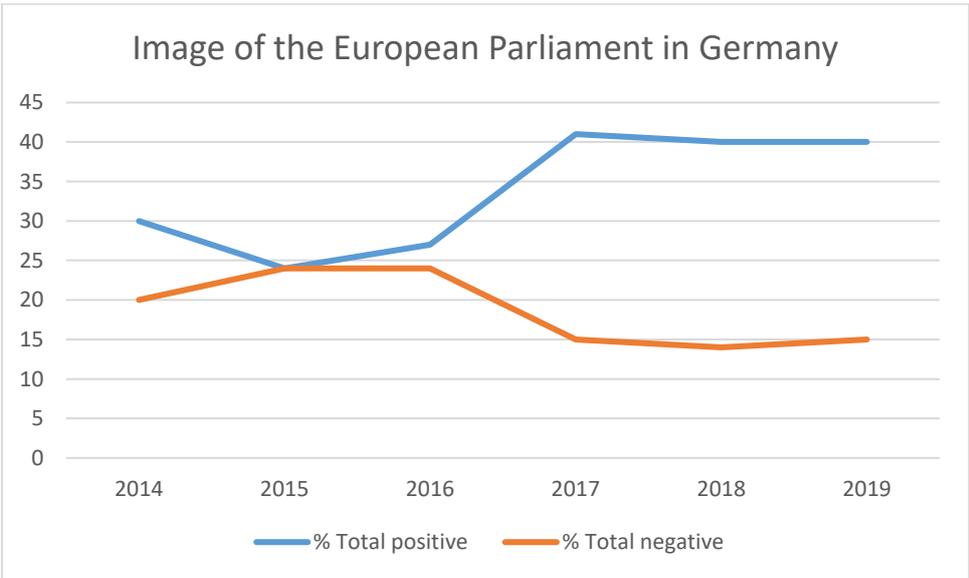
Comparing this result to the European election of 2014, the AfD again made a big step forward in popular vote. This result is an indication that the party’s popularity increased in the past five years. If we compare the results to 2017 Bundestag election though, a small decrease in popularity can be observed.

5.1.4 Image of the European Parliament

Next, we analyze the development of the dependent variable, the image of the European Parliament by German citizens. The image of the European Parliament is measured yearly in the Parlemeter. The results of 2014 till 2019 are analyzed for this research.

In 2014, almost half of the Germans felt neutral about the European Parliament. Furthermore, more Germans were positive about the EP than there were negative. In 2015, we see a decline of Germans that have a positive image of the EP, which shift towards the neutral and fairly negative part of the table. In 2016, we see a slightly more positive attitude. In 2017 and 2018, the Germans with positive feelings towards the European Parliament outbalance the negative part.

To be able to analyze these results more in-depth, we distinguish a positive (very and fairly) part and a negative (fairly and very) part. This delivers the following results:



**Figure 2.** Image of the European Parliament in Germany (Source: Parlemeter, 2014-2019)

In 2014, 30% percent of the German respondents had positive feelings of the European Parliament. In contrast, 20% of the German respondents felt negatively towards the EP. More Germans felt positively about the institution, however this group represents not even one third of the German population. In 2015, the percentage of positive Germans decreased even more. In this year, the results were more in balance. In 2016, a comparable result can be observed. In these years, the positive respondents and negative respondents were almost evenly balanced. We could argue that the image of the EP was quite neutral in these two years.

After 2016, the image of the EP saw a positive uprise in the German state. In 2017, the percentage of German respondents with positive feelings about the institution almost doubled. While in the same year, there were way less negative respondents. So, the change in image is twofold, with an increase on the positive side and a decrease on the negative side. It is therefore quite safe to say that the general feeling about the European Parliament has become more positive in Germany after 2016. From 2017 onwards, we see that this situation remains stable.

## 5.2 Austria

### 5.2.1 Historical background

The denazification of Austria after World War II was problematic. In this war, many Austrians were responsible for the Holocaust. However, in the country the myth existed that Austria was the first victim of Nazi Germany (Broeshart, 2005). At the end of World War II, Austria was occupied by the four Allies. They left in 1955, when Austria declared permanent neutrality (Luif, 2016). In these years, relations with the European Coal and Steel Community were being discussed in the country. West Germany and Italy were the most important trading partners of the country, and they were part of that organization. However, the country stressed their neutrality, what excluded membership of the European Economic Community (Luif, 2016). Their independence did not allow the country to look beyond a Western economic orientation (CVCE, 2020).

In the 1980s, debate about membership of the European Community started again in the country (Luif, 2016). After the advent of the Grand Coalition between the socialist-democrats and the conservatives, integration policies were accelerated. This was influenced by external developments such as the Single European Act, the European internal market and the demise of the Cold War. Also internal events had caused this swing, like the escalating crisis in nationalized industries and the need for reforms on institutional and social fronts (CVCE, 2020).

Because of economic problems and a narrower interpretation of neutrality, Austria applied for membership in 1989 (Luif, 2016). In 1994, 66.6 percent of the Austrian electorate voted in favor of joining the European Union (Schmidt, 2017). In 1995, the country finally joined the European Union. Because of joining the EU, the country had to adjust its political system and economy. This went quite smoothly (Luif, 2016). In the government’s campaign to enter expectations were risen. These expectations could not be easily met, and continued publicity and official support for the EU were absent. This led to disillusionment and indifference (Schmidt, 2017). Perceived price increases after the introduction of the euro also left a lasting impact (Schmidt, 2017).

5.2.2 Exclusive national identity

In this section, the independent variable ‘exclusive national identity’ is analyzed in Austria. It is researched if there is a strong national identity in the country, using data from Eurobarometer. In the results section, this data is contrasted to the dependent variable.

We need to understand how many Austrians have an exclusive Austrian identity. These citizens exclude the European identity. The Standard Eurobarometer results are used for this. The following question is taken as measurement to determine how national, or European citizens feel: “Do you see yourself as...?”. The answers range from (NATIONALITY) only, (NATIONALITY) and European, European and (NATIONALITY), European only, and none (European Commission, 2018). Below, the percentage of Austrian respondents taking the option ‘Austria only’ is presented.

<b>Standard Eurobarometer</b>	<b>% Exclusive Austrian identity</b>
<i>Spring 2014 (EB 81)</i>	33
<i>Autumn 2014 (EB 82)</i>	40
<i>Spring 2015 (EB 83)</i>	43
<i>Autumn 2015 (EB 84)</i>	49
<i>Spring 2016 (EB 85)</i>	40
<i>Autumn 2016 (EB 86)</i>	46
<i>Spring 2017 (EB 87)</i>	42
<i>Autumn 2017 (EB 88)</i>	39
<i>Spring 2018 (EB 89)</i>	41
<i>Autumn 2018 (EB 90)</i>	42
<i>Spring 2019 (EB 91)</i>	36

**Table 7.** Exclusive national identity in Austria (Source: Standard Eurobarometer 2014-2019)

In the past years, between 33 and 49% of the Austrians have felt exclusively Austrian. This percentage has been shifting quite a lot in these years. In general, this feeling has been above 40%. These Austrians don't feel European. This is almost half of the Austrian people, based on Eurobarometer research.

### 5.2.3 Strength of right-wing political parties

In this section, the origins, development and positions of right-wing party FPÖ are described. Next, their strength over the recent years is analyzed.

The *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) was founded in 1956. The party originated from movements that were in favor of a unified German nation, of which Austria should be part of (Mölzer et al., 2014). In 1986, Jörg Haider became the party chairman. He transformed the FPÖ into a radical right-wing protest party, known for its anti-establishment, anti-immigration and anti-Islam views. The party positioned itself against the mainstream (Mölzer et al., 2014). Under Haider's leadership, the party grew to a big party in Austria. In 2000, the FPÖ joined the government together with the ÖVP. The European Union reacted with sanctions (Elshout, 2017). The fourteen EU member states imposed bilateral measures (Schmidt, 2017). After joining the government, the FPÖ was plagued with internal disagreement and falling popular support. This eventually led to the departure of Haider from the party in 2005 (Mölzer et al., 2014). Heinz-Christian Strache's leadership regained the electoral support for the FPÖ. However, the ideology of the party remained similar. The party wants to protect the homeland of Austria and its national identity and autonomy. Furthermore, the party wants to protect the national livelihood. To achieve these goals, the party advocates restrictive policies on immigration and Islam (Mölzer et al., 2014). The FPÖ sees the family, nation and welfare state as extremely valuable. For each of these systems, people feel comfortable with its hierarchies and traditions. However, according to FPÖ others try to undermine these systems. The FPÖ defends these systems in order to be maintained (Mölzer et al., 2014).

One of the debates FPÖ is concerned with, is EU citizenship. The FPÖ states that the boundaries should be respected. They consider these boundaries both literal and metaphorical. The party sees the physical borders of Austria as a boundary. According to the FPÖ, international institutions have no right to intrude in Austrian affairs. One of these institutions is the European Union (Mölzer et al., 2014). The FPÖ finds that only they can restore common sense to Austria's immigration policy. They state that the professional elite and their immigration policies are far removed from the immediate concerns of ordinary people

(Mölzer et al., 2014). European freedom of movement degenerates into a questionable business model, because immigration into the European welfare systems is possible (Mölzer et al., 2014). The FPÖ states that only people with a real connection to a country should receive a passport of that country. They find that this principle should also apply to asylum seekers, to avoid having parallel societies in which new citizens perceive learning a new language as an imposition (Mölzer et al., 2014). The systems of immigration of member states are at risk of falling apart, when the countries become overrun with illegal migrants (Mölzer et al., 2014).

In 2015, Austria turned into a transit country for asylum seekers that traveled to Germany. Though, Austria itself received relatively more asylum requests than Germany (Van der Ziel, 2017). The migration crisis led to Austrians feeling as their country was flooded by asylum seekers. They were worried about the immigration. FPÖ responded to this feelings. The party took hard positions on immigration and promised to limit the benefits of asylum seekers (Van der Ziel, 2017).

Towards the 2017 national elections in Austria, the FPÖ had a good chance of joining the government (Isenson, 2017). The party tried to drive Austria to the right, making their position on migration very clear, calling for an 'Islamization ban'. The party wants no migration at all (Janjevic, 2017). They voiced a strong anti-Muslim message and a call for a ban on face veils. Besides, the party demanded an end to immigration to the country and aligned themselves with Eurosceptic parties in other countries, like Germany's AfD (Isenson, 2017).

In 2017, the FPÖ came into the government in Austria. The FPÖ was the only right-populist party in western Europe to join the government. The party was very critical towards immigration and Islam (Elshout, 2017). The ÖVP and FPÖ made coalition agreements. Though being Eurosceptic, the FPÖ agreed to not leave the European Union during the government period. There would be no referendum about the EU membership. However, the FPÖ wanted to block further unification and power to be given back to the national governments. Though, FPÖ committed to Austria being an active and reliable partner in the European Union (Elshout, 2017). However, after two years, top members of the party committed misdeeds, which led to the collapse of the government (Wolf, 2019). Two leading FPÖ politicians were filmed while plotting to take over Austria's biggest newspaper with the help of a Russian oligarch. In return, they would reward him with major infrastructure projects. This is known as the Ibiza scandal (De Monte, 2019). Austrians took to the street to call for snap elections, and the government collapsed. After this scandal, the party emphasized its renewal (De Monte, 2019). The party remained anti-EU (Prager, 2019).

In 2019, the party presented a manifesto, promising to go further, mainly in their anti-migration standpoints (Wolf, 2019). The core messages were law and order, security and immigration: *“Safety for Austria. Let’s continue the coalition for our home country.”* (Wolf, 2019). The manifesto praises measures that have been taken by the government the FPÖ was part of. For example benefit cuts for asylum seekers and migrants, and social measures. For the next period, the FPÖ promises fighting against Islam, demanding German skills before starting school and prohibiting the headscarf in schools (Wolf, 2019).

#### *5.2.3.1 Perceptions to the EU*

In 2014, the party argued that the EU had no right to intrude in Austrian affairs, stating that the boundaries should be respected. According to the FPÖ, the European institutions have no right to intrude in Austrian affairs. This standpoint was mainly based on cultural notions, as the party mostly acted against migration policies of the EU. The party always kept building on Eurosceptic ideas, conducting the debate on a cultural basis. In 2019, the party presented their manifesto, in which they again voiced their ideas on Europe. Again, this Eurosceptic agenda was based on cultural ideas, mainly migration.

Another ever-recurring element in Austria debates about the European Union, is the question of more direct democracy. The Austrian government is worried peril can arise from direct democracy, following examples like the Brexit referendum. They argue that referendums on complex issues quickly transform into generalized protest rather than a rational evaluation of the issues (Schmidt, 2016). In response, the FPÖ is very eager to promote national referenda. They use Switzerland as a best-practice example and express lots of critique of representative democracy. This way, the FPÖ wants to obtain a stronger agenda setting role, and benefit from the mass mobilization that would accompany referendums. By doing so, they hope to halt or reverse European integration (Schmidt, 2016).

When the party joined the Austrian government in 2017, the party accepted the coalition’s position of being a reliable partner for the EU. This was an interesting turning point of the party, However, when the government agreement collapsed, the party returned to spreading their anti-European ideas. This way, they remained a strong anti-EU party in Austria.

#### *5.2.3.2 Election results*

Next, we look at the election results of the FPÖ. Hereby, national and European elections are analyzed in the period of this research.

At the 2013 Austrian election for the National Council, six parties reached the threshold for representation. Hereby, the FPÖ was the anti-European party that joined the National Council. The other five parties all had different standpoint, but are in general positive about European cooperation. The social-democratic party SPÖ became the biggest party with 26.8% of the votes. The conservative ÖVP came in second, winning 24% of the electorate. The Eurosceptic party FPÖ won 20.5 percent of the votes, resulting in 40 votes and being the third party in the Austrian Parliament. The parties Grüne, Stronach and NEOS completed the Austrian representation.

<b>Party</b>	<b>% Popular vote</b>	<b>Seats</b>
<i>SPÖ</i>	26.8	52
<i>ÖVP</i>	24.0	47
<i>FPÖ</i>	20.5	40
<i>Grüne</i>	12.4	24
<i>Stronach</i>	5.7	11
<i>NEOS</i>	5.0	9

**Table 8.** Results of the Austrian National Council elections of 2013 (Source: Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2013)

The next big election the FPÖ participated in, was the 2014 European Parliament election. Here, the party gained a result comparable to that of the national election in 2013. The party won 19.7% of the votes, ending up as third biggest party. This meant a small decrease in popular vote, compared to a year before, but not very spectacular. Above the FPÖ, the ÖVP and SPÖ won respectively 27% and 24.1% of the electorate. The Grüne and NEOS also gained seats in the European Parliament.

<b>Party</b>	<b>% Popular vote</b>	<b>Seats</b>
<i>ÖVP</i>	27.0	5
<i>SPÖ</i>	24.1	5
<i>FPÖ</i>	19.7	4
<i>Grüne</i>	14.5	3
<i>NEOS</i>	8.1	1

**Table 9.** Results of the European elections of 2014 in Austria (Source: European Parliament, 2014)

At the 2017 Austrian election for the National Council, only five parties reached the threshold for representation. The ÖVP beat the SPÖ again and became the largest party. After a hard campaign, the FPÖ gained a lot of votes compared to earlier elections. Winning 26% of the popular vote, they found themselves in a position to join the government.

<b>Party</b>	<b>% Popular vote</b>	<b>Seats</b>
ÖVP	31.4	62
SPÖ	26.9	52
FPÖ	26.0	51
NEOS	5.3	10
PILZ	4.4	8

**Table 10.** Results of the Austrian National Council elections of 2017 (Source: Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2017)

In 2019, the most recent European elections were held. In this election, the FPÖ lost a lot of votes, compared to the 2017 national election. Though, their result is comparable with the votes won in the 2014 European election.

<b>Party</b>	<b>% Popular vote</b>	<b>Seats</b>
ÖVP	34.6	7
SPÖ	23.9	5
FPÖ	17.2	3
Grüne	14.1	2
NEOS	8.4	1

**Table 11.** Results of the European elections of 2019 in Germany (Source: European Parliament, 2019b)

After the collapse of the coalition in 2019, the most recent 2019 Austrian elections were held in that year. Five parties reached the threshold for representation. ÖVP again became the biggest party, winning a lot of votes. The FPÖ lost more than a third of their electorate, compared to the last national election. They ended up with 16.2% of the popular vote, being very much comparable with the result of the European election earlier in the year.

<b>Party</b>	<b>% Popular vote</b>	<b>Seats</b>
ÖVP	37.5	71
SPÖ	21.2	40
FPÖ	16.2	31
Grüne	13.9	26
NEOS	8.1	15

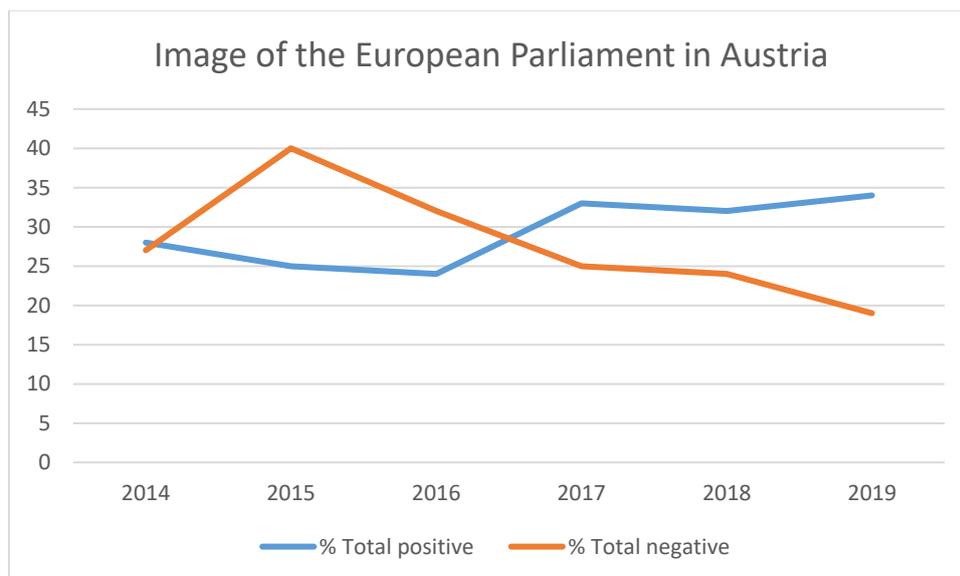
**Table 12.** Results of the Austrian National Council elections of 2019 (Source: Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2019)

#### 5.2.4 Image of the European Parliament

In this section, the dependent variable is analyzed. The image of the European Parliament is measured yearly in the Parlemeter. The results of 2014 till 2019 are used.

In 2014, we see a quite balanced image of the EP in Austria. While almost half of the respondents has a neutral image, the rest is balanced over the positive and negative side. In 2015 we see a shift towards more negative feelings. A lot more people feel fairly negative than in 2014. In 2016, some of these people make a shift back to a neutral opinion. From 2017 onwards, the positive side gets a boost.

To be able to analyze these results more in-depth, we distinguish a positive (very and fairly) part and a negative (fairly and very) part. This delivers the following results:



**Figure 3.** Image of the European Parliament in Austria (Source: Parlemeter, 2014-2019)

In 2014, the division between positive and negative feelings is quite evenly balanced. About a quarter of the Austrian respondents felt either positively, or negatively about the EP. The other respondents felt neutral. In general, we could argue that in 2014 there was a quite neutral feeling towards the European Parliament in Austria. Though, in 2015 this drastically changed to a negative feeling. As much as 40 per cent responded that they felt negative about the EP in that year, while the percentage of respondent with positive feeling about the institution decreased to 25 per cent. In 2016 less people felt negatively, however they neither led to more respondents feeling positively about the EP. In 2017, we see a big shift towards a positive image, which continues in 2018 and 2019. In these years, we could argue that the image of the European Parliament become more and more positive in Austria.

# 6. Results

In this section, the results are described. An answer is provided for the two hypotheses of the thesis.

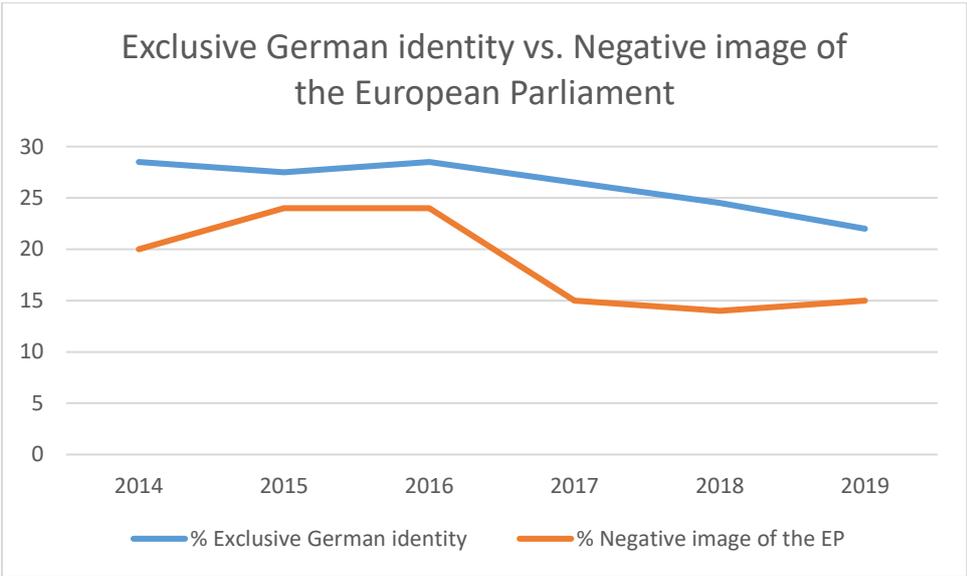
## 6.1 Germany

### 6.1.1 Hypothesis 1

In this part, the first hypothesis is answered for Germany:

*H1. An exclusive national identity leads to a negative image of the European Parliament.*

To test this hypothesis, the independent and dependent variable are compared. To make this data more insightful, a graph is shown below. For the independent variable, averages are taken of the two Eurobarometers each year.



**Figure 4.** Exclusive German identity vs. Negative image of the European Parliament in Germany

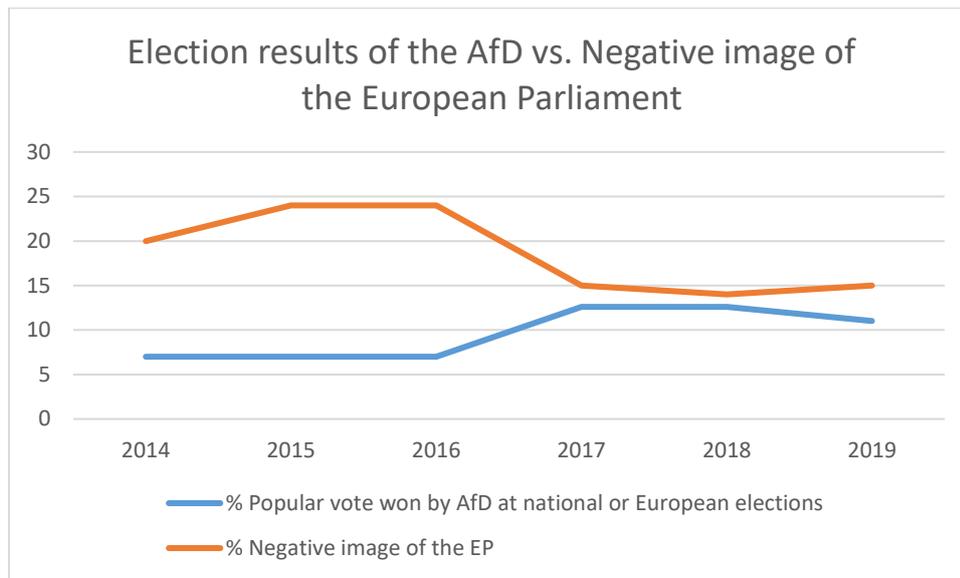
Following this graph, it seems there is a certain trend visible. In the period from 2014 till 2016, there is a slight increasing trend in both variables. After 2016, the percentage of Germans having a negative image of the EP, decreases. In this period, also the percentage of Germans having an exclusive German identity decreased. There seems to be a cohesion between the two variables. Therefore the first hypothesis can be supported in Germany.

### 6.1.2 Hypothesis 2

In this part, the second hypothesis is answered for Germany:

*H2. Cue-taking by right-wing parties increases a negative image of the European Parliament.*

First we compare the development of the main right-wing party AfD with the development of the dependent variable.



**Figure 5.** Election results of the AfD vs. Negative image of the European Parliament in Germany

In 2014, 20% of the German respondents of the Parliament had a negative image of the European Parliament. Towards 2016, we see an increase of this number to 24%. This means, the image of the EP has developed negatively. However, towards 2017 we see a decrease to 15%, remaining stable until 2019. This means that the image of the EP has become less negative in this period of time. In the meantime, the AfD gained a lot of votes, from 7.1% in 2014, to 12.6% in 2017 and 11.0% in 2019. The hypothesis would suggest otherwise, as it was expected that when the AfD gained popularity, the image of the EP should have developed negatively. Therefore we do not see this correlation.

Next, we point out the cues the AfD took in order to frame the European Parliament. In the run up to the European elections in 2014, the party was quite moderate about the EU, supporting freedom of movement for example. However, as the years passed, the party took a harder standpoint on the European Union and the Parliament. From 2017 onwards, the party implemented more far-right ideas in their programs. In 2019, the party aimed for abolishment of the EP and a German exit out of the European Union. This data is contrasted with the image

of the EP in these years. Here we see that after 2016, the negative image of the EP decreases. This while you would expect the opposite, as the AfD took cues with more negative ideas about the EP. Therefore this hypothesis is rejected in Germany.

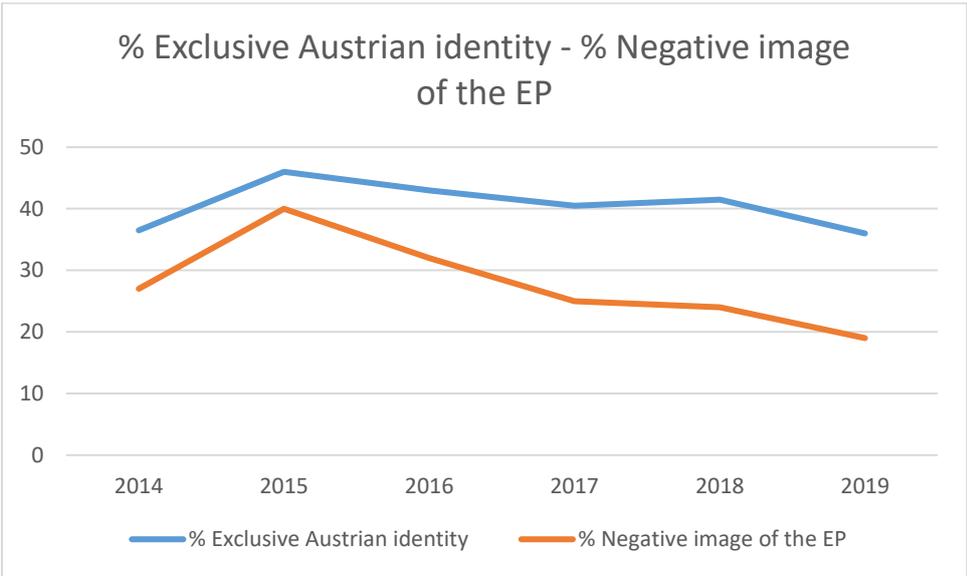
## 6.2 Austria

### 6.2.1 Hypothesis 1

In this part, the first hypothesis is answered for Austria:

*H1. An exclusive national identity leads to a negative image of the European Parliament.*

To test this hypothesis, the independent and dependent variable are compared. To make this data more insightful, a graph is shown below. For the independent variable, averages are taken of the two Eurobarometers each year.



**Figure 6.** Exclusive Austrian identity vs. Negative image of the European Parliament in Austria

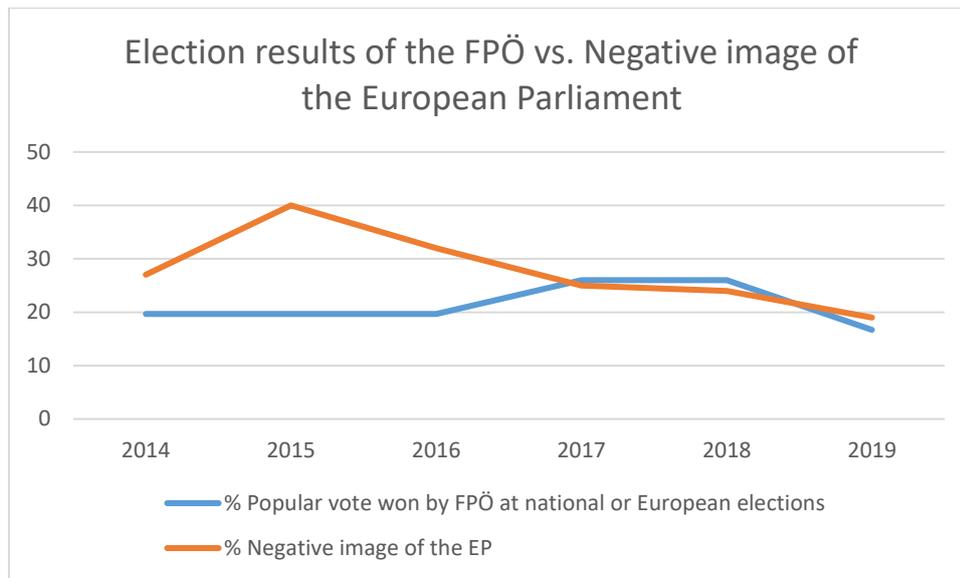
Following this graph, it seems there is a clear trend visible. From 2014 to 2015, the percentage of respondents having an exclusive Austrian identity increases. In this period, an evenly high increase of people having a negative image of the EP is visible. In the years that follow, there is a slight decrease in the numbers of Austrian having an exclusive national identity. In this time period, the percentage of Austrians having a negative image of the EP decreases comparably. Therefore this hypothesis can be supported in Austria.

## 6.2.2 Hypothesis 2

In this part, the second hypothesis is answered for Austria:

*H2. Cue-taking by right-wing parties increases a negative image of the European Parliament.*

First we compare the development of the main right-wing party FPÖ with the development of the dependent variable. As starting point of the election data, 2013 was taken.



**Figure 7.** Election results of the FPÖ vs. Negative image of the European Parliament in Austria

The negative image of the EP in Austria was 27% in 2014. In 2015, a big increase is visible. After that, the negative decreases again towards 25% in 2017. In this year, the FPÖ wins a lot more votes than in 2014 and before. This does not add up, when we follow the hypothesis. Towards 2019, the negative image of the EP decreases even more, while the electorate voting for the FPÖ also decreases.

Next, we point out the cues the FPÖ took towards the European institutions. In 2014 and the following years, the party took a very negative standpoint on the EU. However, after joining the government in 2017, the party became more moderate on European issues. In this time, we also see a decrease in negative image of the European Parliament. There might be a correlation here.

The second hypothesis cannot be fully supported. Cue-taking of the FPÖ may have had an influence on the image Austrians have of the EP, however we do not see this back when we compare the data to the election results of the FPÖ.

## 6.3 Comparing Germany and Austria

In this section, the results in the two countries in this research are compared. First, the two hypotheses will be analyzed. After that, a general overview of the results following the research question will be given.

### 6.3.1 Hypothesis 1

First, the results for hypothesis 1 are compared in both countries:

*H1. An exclusive national identity leads to a negative image of the European Parliament.*

First of all, the numbers in general are compared. Here we see that less Germans have a feeling of exclusive national identity than Austrians have. In the researched years, Germans have been feeling between 20 and 30% exclusively German. While in Austria, this number has been shifting between 33 and 49%, mainly being above 40%. Feelings of exclusive national identity are more present in Austria than in Germany. On the other hand, the negative image of the European Parliament is analyzed in both countries. This image has been negative among Germans between 14 and 24%. In Austria, these numbers shifted between 19 and 40%. Again here, this data has been quite higher for Austria than for Germany. We can conclude that both the feelings of exclusive national identity, and the negative image of the EP, have been more present in Austria than in Germany.

Next, the trends are analyzed. In Germany, a trend is visible. In recent years, feelings of German national identity have been going down. In this period, also the amount of people having a negative image of the EP, decreased. This trend is simultaneously visible in Austria. We can therefore state that a correlation is existing in both countries, and support the first hypothesis.

### 6.3.2 Hypothesis 2

Second, the results for hypothesis 2 are compared in both countries:

*H2. Cue-taking by right-wing parties increases a negative image of the European Parliament.*

First, the numbers in both countries are compared. In Germany, the AfD has a small supporter base in 2013, winning 4.7% of the electorate. In comparison, the FPÖ in Austria already wins 20.5% of the popular vote in that year. In the following years, the AfD in Germany grows towards 12.6% of the votes in 2017, and falls back to 11% in 2019. These numbers are not matching with the data on image of the European Parliament. The negative image of the EP in Germany increases towards 2015 and 2016, but falls back in 2017. This happens while the

AfD is still growing. In Austria, the same pattern is notable. First, an increase of negative image is visible, but after 2015 this number only goes down. In the meantime, the FPÖ gains a lot more votes in 2017, while falling back in the 2019 elections.

There are more differences visible between the role of the AfD in Germany and the FPÖ in Austria. First of all, the FPÖ has already been present on the political stage in Austria for a long time before the time period of this research. In contrast, the AfD was just established at the beginning of the time period of this thesis. At the first years of the research, the FPÖ already has a very strong position in Austria, being the third biggest party of the country. In contrast, the AfD just appeared on the horizon, missing seats in the Bundestag in 2013. At the same time, the negative image of the European Parliament was already more present in Austria than in Germany. The FPÖ remains comparably strong in the following years, however the percentage of Austrians having a negative image of the EP decreases. In Germany, the AfD becomes stronger. At the same time though, the percentage of Germans having a negative image of the EP decreases. Although the AfD became stronger and more present in the German political arena, this did not lead to a more negative image of the EP.

Next, the cues these parties took in the both countries are compared. In Germany, in the first years of this research the AfD was very moderate on the EU. In the years that followed, the party's ideas about the EU and the European Parliament became harder and harder. However, in these years the negative image of the EP in Germany decreases. This does not add up, when we follow the hypothesis. In Austria, the FPÖ had a very negative standpoint about the European institutions in the first years. After joining the government in 2017, the party became a little more moderate on EU topics. In these years, the negative image of the EP also decreases. There might be a correlation there. However, in general there is not enough evidence to support hypothesis 2.

### 6.3.3 Overview of the results

In this section, the research question is analyzed for both countries and compared:

*What is the influence of identity feelings on the image European citizens have of the European Parliament?*

In Germany, we see that identity feelings correlate with the image citizens have of the Parliament. Where these feelings come from, cannot be concluded from this research. There is no clear correlation between the cues of the AfD, the votes for this party and the image of

the EP. However, the identity feelings do seem to have a cohesion with the image of the EP in Germany.

In Austria, a similar trend is observed, and therefore comparable conclusions can be derived. Identity feelings do correlate with the image citizens have of the EP. Also here, we do not see this back in the election results of the FPÖ. However, what we do see is that cues the party took, correlate with results on image of the EP. Though, these results are not strong enough to draw a strong conclusion.

In general, when these two cases are juxtaposed, the conclusion can be made that an exclusive national identity correlates with a negative image of the European Parliament. However, it is not clear where these feelings come from and why they relate to this negative image. The party cues and election results are not a clear.

#### 6.3.4 Reflection of the findings

This research focused on the influence of identity feelings on the image of the European Parliament in Germany and Austria. As discussed before, a correlation is observed between having an exclusive national identity and negative feelings towards the European Parliament. This trend is discovered in both countries. What is not observed in the research, is a correlation between the strength of right-wing extremist parties and negative feelings towards the European Parliament. This trend is not visible in both Germany as Austria. This raises questions. On the one hand, it is interesting to analyze why this trend is not there. One could argue that these parties do not succeed in their Eurosceptic cues, as they do not lead to simultaneously negative feelings to the EP. Furthermore interesting is to analyzed what other possible explanations of negative feelings to the European institutions are. These explanations could be searched for in other theoretical approaches. This research focused on notions of identity. However, there are more approaches that try to explain support for European integration. As described in the literature review, we could distinguish also the utilitarian and benchmarking approach. Possible explanations could be searched for in these approaches.

## 7. Discussion and conclusion

### 7.1 Summary of the study

#### 7.1.1 Research question and hypotheses

The research question of the study was:

*What is the influence of identity feelings on the image European citizens have of the European Parliament?*

First, theoretical ideas were pointed out. In the literature review, four approaches that try to explain support for European integration were described. The utilitarian, cultural, cue-taking, and benchmarking approach could be distinguished. The next section set out a theoretical framework for the research. From there, hypotheses were derived. Hooghe and Marks (2005) explained that the attachment citizens have to their nations, influences their attitude towards the process of European integration. Kriesi (2016) mentioned feelings of national sovereignty and national culture. Hooghe and Marks (2004) stated that people with an exclusive national identity see themselves as a national citizen only. Therefore these citizens could be expected to be opposing to the European Union and its institutions. These theoretical ideas led to the first hypothesis:

*H1. An exclusive national identity leads to a negative image of the European Parliament.*

The second hypothesis followed the ideas of De Vries and Edwards (2009) and their inverted U-hypothesis. They argued that right-wing extremist parties cue votes their way with the argument that the EU attacks national sovereignty. This led to the following hypothesis:

*H2. Cue-taking by right-wing parties increases a negative image of the European Parliament.*

This research question and hypotheses were researched through conducting a co-variational analysis with two cases. These two cases were Germany and Austria, because of their variation on the independent variable, and their similarities on other possible variables.

#### 7.1.2 Main findings

In this section, the main findings of the research are displayed. For the analysis, data from Eurobarometer and Parlemeter surveys were used. Furthermore, media outlets and party programs were analyzed for the cue-taking part.

When we analyze the dependent variable image of the European Parliament, this is more negative in Austria than in Germany. This is comparable with the independent variable exclusive national identity. In Austria, feelings of exclusive national identity are more present than in Germany. When we analyze the data over the years, there seems to be a correlation. When the amount of people feeling national only decreases, also the amount of people having a negative image of the EP decreases. This applies to both countries. Therefore the first hypothesis can be accepted, in terms of correlation. In the cases of Germany and Austria, exclusive national identity correlates with a negative image of the European Parliament.

Next, the second hypothesis was analyzed. In Germany and Austria, no correlation was found between voting for right-wing parties and the image of the European Parliament. However, cues that were taken by these parties, could have an influence on this image. However, the cues that were taken, are not analyzed in-depth enough to tell what their influence is on the image citizens have of the European Parliament. Unfortunately, the results of this study are therefore too brief to draw a conclusion on the relation between the strength of right-wing extremist parties and the image of the European Parliament. Therefore the second hypothesis cannot be accepted nor rejected.

Coming back to the research question, some statements can be made. Following the results of this study, it seems that in Germany and Austria, the identity feelings do indeed have an influence on the image citizens have of the European Parliament. Though, the reason why and how these feelings have an influence, cannot be fully explained by this study.

## 7.2 Limitations of the study

### 7.2.1 Relevance

As described in the introduction, we could distinguish a scientific and practical relevance.

First, the scientific relevance that this research aimed for, is pointed out. Research to support for the European project has been conducted before. This study aimed to add new insights to this bulk of information. As many studies have been conducted quantitatively, this study adds insight from a qualitative research point of view. Furthermore, this study adds insight in the feelings about one certain institution, instead of the European Union in general. This research provides in-depth information on two European Union member states, namely Germany and Austria. This basis could for example be used in studies on different member states.

Second, the research tried to add relevant practical insights. The study delivered data on ideas among citizens about identity and European institutions. Furthermore, the party provided insight about parties that are in the right-wing of the political spectrum. Citizens can learn from these insights, and add it to their knowledge about the choices available in the political arena. In contrast, political parties can learn about the reasoning of citizens on the notions of identity. Finally, policy makers got more insight on the relation between identity and Euroscepticism.

### 7.2.2 Limitations

In this study, a co-variational analysis was conducted in two countries. However, there are some issues concerning the case selection. First of all, Germany and Austria are not completely comparable, mainly on their history to the European integration process and international cooperation in general. This could have influenced the research, as both countries did not have the same starting points for the variables. Therefore the results could be affected by path-dependency of events that happened in the past. Next, the research has a small N, taking into account two countries that were investigated. This was done because of the scope and feasibility of the thesis. To be able to generalize more, this study should be conducted in more countries.

Furthermore, there are some issues with the data. Eurobarometer and Parlemeter data were used as the source for the descriptive statistics. There is criticism on these data sources, as the data would systematically produce outcomes in favor of European integration. However, in the absence of other sufficient available sources, the use of this data was justified. Ideally, more data would have been used.

### 7.2.3 Recommendations for future research

Some recommendations for future research can be made. First, this study could be extended. On the one hand the study could be conducted in more countries, to achieve a more generalizable overview. On the other hand, more data resources could be added. For example, more questions from the Eurobarometer and Parlemeter could be used, to provide context on the variables. This would strengthen the results.

Furthermore, one could partly conduct the research using a quantitative research design. The existing Eurobarometer and Parlemeter data could be used for conducting a statistical test for all EU member states. This way, more generalized data can be produced about the relation and possible causality between identity feelings and identity of the European Parliament.

Finally, a study like this could be applied on different European institutions. This study has been conducted on the European Parliament. It is very interesting to investigate whether the same conclusions can be drawn for institutions like the European Commission, or the European Union in general.

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