

# Mapping EU attitudes: Conceptual and empirical dimensions of Euroscepticism and EU support

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## Abstract

Public attitudes towards the European Union (EU) are at the heart of a growing body of research. The nature, structure and antecedents of these attitudes, however, are in need of conceptual and empirical refinement. With growing diversification of the policies of the Union, a one-dimensional approach to attitudes towards the EU may be insufficient. This study reviews existing approaches towards theorizing EU public opinion. Based on this inventory, originally collected public opinion survey data ( $n = 1394$ ) indicate the presence of five dimensions of EU attitudes: performance, identity, affection, utilitarianism and strengthening. The study furthermore shows that different predictors of EU public opinion matter to differing extents when explaining these dimensions. In light of these findings, we suggest tightening the link, conceptually and empirically, between attitudinal dimensions and their antecedents.

## Keywords

Affection, Euroscepticism, EU attitudes, multidimensionality, public opinion

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## Introduction

Public opinion towards the European Union (EU) is at the heart of political, popular and academic debates regarding the present state and future of European integration. Unlike in the era of permissive consensus (see, for example, Hooghe and Marks, 2008; Inglehart, 1971; Moravcsik, 1991) it is now acknowledged that integration efforts hinge on support from EU citizens – who are increasingly sceptical about and disapproving of the EU (Hobolt, 2009). Characterizing this trend, *Euro scepticism* has become a buzzword both in policy circles in Brussels and in the academic literature, in the latter often placed to convey public aversion towards European integration (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005, 2010). Attitudes towards the EU are an object of study in and by themselves (for example, Gabel, 1998) and they are important to understand voting behaviour in relation to European politics (for example, De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Franklin, 2002; Hobolt, 2009; Schuck and de Vreese, 2008; Svensson, 2002), and increasingly so in national politics (for example, De Vries, 2007; Schoen, 2008; but see Evans, 2007; Hellström, 2008).

Early studies of public opinion about European integration used the concept of EU support (for example, Duch and Taylor, 1997). In recent years, the literature increasingly refers to Euro scepticism, however, often using the same items (in reversed coding) that were previously applied to assess EU support (for example, Evans, 2000; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010). Despite their importance for EU studies, both EU support and Euro scepticism are in need of conceptual and empirical clarification (Krouwel and Abts, 2007). Some have systematically engaged in this discussion by disentangling the underlying dimensions of Euro scepticism (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005; Weßels, 2007); however, these studies usually rely on Eurobarometer items.

Considering the multifaceted nature of the process of European integration, we claim that the enquiry needs to go beyond using unspecified umbrella terms such as Euro scepticism or EU support when addressing public attitudes towards the EU. This is also reflected at the country level, where some countries such as the UK, for instance, show very low support for the monetary union but at the same time strongly embrace further enlargement (see Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010). Political support can be directed towards *different objects of support* (Easton, 1975), can be *diffuse* or *specific* (Gabel, 1998; Hewstone, 1986) or can be of a *utilitarian* or *affective* nature (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970). We believe that studies of public opinion on the EU need to reflect on the different types of support or aversion, in order to fully capture the potential multidimensionality of EU attitudes (see also Hobolt and Brouard, 2010). Euro scepticism – narrowly defined as opposition towards a specific policy or integration effort – may be just one facet of public opinion towards the EU.

The multidimensionality of EU attitudes bears important implications for the legitimacy of European integration. Whereas, for instance, diffuse support has been rather stable and not subject to short-term influences (Niedermayer and Westle,

1995: 49–50), this has recently been shown to fluctuate (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010). Likewise, Gabel (1998) argued that utilitarian support is subject to short-term influences, but in the 1990s this instrumental evaluation was relatively stable, while feelings of attachment to the EU fluctuated (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010). This suggests that the legitimacy of European decisions, as expressed by citizens, is not static over time, nor does it apply across the board to different types of policy areas. This study asks what the different underlying dimensions of EU attitudes are.

We further pursue the differentiation between utilitarian and affective orientations of public attitudes, including the role of emotions. The latter have become increasingly important in research on political attitudes and behaviour (for example, Neuman et al., 2007). Whereas the utilitarian perspective has for long dominated the literature (Gabel, 1998), ‘emotional or “gut” commitments can be extremely powerful in shaping views towards political objects’ (Marks and Hooghe, 2003: 6). We empirically investigate the multidimensional nature of EU attitudes, but we also contribute to a more refined understanding of the extent to which different antecedents matter in explaining different dimensions of such attitudes. Most explanatory studies draw on very similar models in order to explain attitudes towards the EU, even though these are often conceptualized quite differently. A systematic engagement with potential differences in the explanatory power of different antecedents for different dimensions of EU attitudes is still lacking. We pursue this and suggest, for example, that economic factors should be more important to explain utilitarian support rather than emotional responses to the EU. If citizens’ attitudes towards the EU are indeed multidimensional, then we also need to pay more attention to the theoretical underpinnings and the composition of our explanatory models.

The present study has two explicit aims. In the first part we introduce and test a set of items potentially tapping into the different dimensions of EU attitudes. In the second part we specify the antecedents of these attitudes and we address potential differences in the explanatory value of these antecedents for different attitude dimensions. Drawing on original data, including a comprehensive battery of relevant measures, we show that EU attitudes are in fact a multidimensional concept. Moreover, we show that established explanations fare better in explaining some rather than other EU attitude dimensions and that the same antecedents play different roles in explaining different dimensions.

## **The multifaceted nature of EU attitudes**

Public opinion towards the EU has been conceptualized in very different ways, from instrumental to political Euroscepticism (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005, 2010), from national pragmatic attitudes (Semetko et al., 2003) to pro-European feelings (Evans, 2000), and from EU enlargement support (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006; Karp and Bowler, 2006; Schuck and de Vreese, 2006) or support for the euro

(Banducci et al., 2003) to general Euroscepticism (Elenbaas and de Vreese, 2008; Hooghe and Marks, 2007). What is lacking in these studies, however, is conceptual clarity regarding the dependent variable, the EU attitude measure. Are Euroscepticism and EU support just two sides of the same coin?

In this study we posit that – given the complex nature of the European integration project – it would be naive to speak about EU attitudes as a one-dimensional concept (see also Hobolt and Brouard, 2010). Drawing on the comprehensive work by Niedermayer and Westle (1995), we briefly turn to literature on political support that provides the theoretical basis to study the dimensionality of EU attitudes. Easton (1975) differentiates two *modes* of support (specific and diffuse) on one dimension and three different *objects* of political support (the community, the regime and the authorities) on the second dimension. Concerning the modes of support, *specific* support relates to concrete policy outcomes or the performance of a polity, whereas diffuse support represents a general evaluation of ‘what the object is or represents, not what it does’ (Easton, 1975: 444). Because specific support varies with the output that is concerned, *diffuse* support is related to the object’s propensities. Lindberg and Scheingold (1970), adapting Easton’s (1975) framework to discuss support for the EU, differentiate between *utilitarian* and *affective*, rather than specific and diffuse support. The former refers to support based on interest in the costs and benefits of membership in the EU (and thus is policy oriented) and the latter to a ‘diffuse and perhaps emotional response to some vague ideals embodied in the notion of European unity’ (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970: 40).

There is evident overlap between these two conceptualizations. Niedermayer and Westle (1995), noticing that the terms specific/utilitarian and diffuse/affective are used almost synonymously, combine these perspectives and speak about specific and diffuse evaluations (see also Inglehart and Reif, 1991: 7).<sup>1</sup> The two modes of political support (specific and diffuse) furthermore resemble Scharpf’s (1999) distinction between input- and output-oriented legitimization of the EU. *Output-oriented* legitimization can be seen as rather utilitarian and specific in that it is concerned with problem-solving and specific interests, whereas *input-oriented* legitimization relates to diffuse and affective political support. Our discussion of different measures of EU attitudes below refers to two clusters of attitude orientations: (1) specific, utilitarian and output-oriented attitudes and (2) diffuse, affective and input-oriented attitudes.

Turning to the *objects* of support, we focus on the distinction between attitudes towards the *regime* and towards the *community* (for example, Easton, 1975).<sup>2</sup> Some have refined these categories when applying them to EU governance (for example, Niedermayer and Westle, 1995; Norris, 1999). First, drawing on the notion of community, political collectivity is defined as consisting of the members of the EU and their people which ‘participate in a common political structure’ (Niedermayer and Westle, 1995: 41) and refers to ‘orientations to one’s own nation and its people, as well as towards the other member countries and their people’ (Niedermayer and Westle, 1995: 42). Political collectivity can be of a

territorial or a personal nature. Second, attitudes towards the regime (the political order) can relate to support for the political philosophy of the regime or for its institutional power structure (Niedermayer and Westle, 1995). Similarly, Norris (1999: 75) distinguishes support for regime principles and regime processes, and adds evaluations of regime institutions. To structure the discussion of the items and dimensions, we refer to the main distinctions set out above. On the one hand, we differentiate the modes of support: (1) utilitarian/specific/output-oriented support and (2) affective/diffuse/input-oriented support. On the other hand, we differentiate the objects of support: (A) the regime, including its principles, its processes and its institutions, and (B) the community, including territorial and personal aspects.

Classifying survey items, we look at *regime*-specific attitudes (A) relating to *regime principles*. These include the two standard Eurobarometer questions measuring general membership support and perceived benefits of a country's EU membership (for example, Anderson, 1998; Carey, 2002; Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; McLaren, 2002; Norris, 1999; see also Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005; Weßels, 2007). Furthermore, this type of regime support includes approval for further enlargement or, more generally, the favoured speed of further European integration (for example, Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000) and the transfer of policy-making competencies from the national to the EU level (for example, Dalton and Eichenberg, 1998; Gabel and Anderson, 2002). We consider questions about individuals' perception of the EU bringing about peace and prosperity, as well as environmental protection (Hobolt and Brouard, 2010). Trust in EU institutions also refers to the regime, specifically relating to the institutional aspect of regime support (for example, Lubbers, 2008). Evaluations of the functioning of the regime and its democratic nature are considered as relating to regime processes (for example, Decker, 2002; Rohrschneider, 2002). Finally, emotional responses are classified as regime-specific attitudes, but it remains unclear whether these relate to regime principles, processes or institutions.

Secondly, we look at EU attitudes to the *community* (B). Acknowledging the increasingly important identity approach to EU attitudes (for example, Hooghe and Marks, 2004; McLaren, 2007a), we understand items that measure citizens' perceptions of a threat to national interests allegedly brought about by the EU as a community-directed rather than a territorial attitude measure. In relation to the personal aspect of the community, identification with and attachment to the EU and Europe are considered (for example, Bruter, 2003).

Regarding modes of support, the perceived benefits of EU membership (including in terms of protecting the environment or securing peace), evaluations of the functioning of the Union and matters of strengthening European integration are considered as *utilitarian, specific* (1) modes of support. By contrast, *affective/diffuse* attitudes (2) include emotional responses, identity-related factors and perceived threats to the nation. Finally, there is disagreement as to whether general support for membership and trust in the EU should be considered as

affective or utilitarian, for they have been described as both in the literature (for example, Niedermayer and Westle, 1995; Gabel, 1998; Inglehart and Reif, 1991). Below, we consider whether our exploratory results can be interpreted in light of these conceptual frameworks.

## Data

To empirically address the question of the multidimensionality of EU attitudes we draw on survey data collected in the Netherlands in November 2008. A web-based survey was administered through TNS-NIPO. From an online panel of 143,809 citizens, representative of the Dutch adult population, 2400 individuals aged 20 years and older were randomly selected and invited to fill out an online questionnaire. Of these people, 1394 completed the questionnaire, which yields a response rate of 58 percent. Our sample is by and large representative of the Dutch population (see Table A1 in the webappendix).

We rely on a battery of 25 items that measure different facets of attitudes towards European integration and the EU. A number of noteworthy studies have looked at the multidimensionality of EU attitudes (for example, Hooghe and Marks, 2007; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005, 2010; Wessels, 2007). Although these studies have made valuable conceptual contributions, they were limited in relying on Eurobarometer data and therefore on a restricted number of survey questions. In our study we include traditional measures employed in previous EU-related public opinion research, but also introduce a number of new items.

First, we employ the widely used items from the Eurobarometer survey on country membership (for example, Anderson, 1998; Carey, 2002; Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993) and country benefit evaluation (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005; McLaren, 2002). We also include traditional Eurobarometer items tapping the desired speed of integration (for example, Hooghe and Marks, 2005; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000), support for policy transfer to the EU level (for example, Dalton and Eichenberg, 1998; Gabel and Anderson, 2002; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005),<sup>3</sup> and trust in key EU institutions (for example, Lubbers, 2008; Weßels, 2007). Furthermore, we include personal benefit perceptions of EU membership (for example, Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Schuck and de Vreese, 2006).

Second, we draw upon more recent EU public opinion studies that have explored the conceptual and empirical boundaries of EU attitudes by taking measures into consideration that potentially tap into a broader range of economic, political and identity-related attitudes. We include two simple and general items: 'The European Union should become one country' (Lubbers, 2008), and 'The decision-making power of the European Union should be extended' (Hobolt and Brouard, 2010). We also include two identity-focused measures: 'I am proud to be a European citizen' (Lubbers, 2008) and 'The European Union poses a threat to Dutch identity and culture' (Hobolt and Brouard, 2010; Lubbers, 2008). From the Lubbers (2008) study, we additionally select an item that measures the extent to which citizens perceive the EU to be 'wasting tax money'. We furthermore select

two items that relate to post-materialist utilitarianism: 'The European Union fosters peace and stability' and 'The European Union fosters the preservation of the environment' (Hobolt and Brouard, 2010).

Third, we consider an array of new items. We added items gauging general trust ('I trust the European Union') and general support for enlargement ('The EU should be enlarged with other countries'). We also measure evaluations pertaining to the functioning of the EU ('The decision-making process in the European Union is transparent', 'The European Union functions according to democratic principles' and 'The European Union functions well as it is'). Furthermore, several additional identity-related measures are included ('Being a citizen of the European Union means a lot to me', 'I feel close to fellow Europeans', 'The European flag means a lot to me' and 'Europeans share a common tradition, culture and history'), some of which we loosely derive from the work of Bruter (2003). Last but not least, we examine emotional responses to the EU, asking respondents to what extent they felt 'anger', 'fear' and/or 'disgust' towards the EU, reflecting a set of related but conceptually distinct negative discrete emotions (for example, Huddy et al., 2007; Lerner and Keltner, 2001). Anger is elicited in response to perceived obstacles or offences against oneself (for example, Izard, 1977). Fear is associated with a perceived loss of control when facing a threatening situation (for example, Lazarus, 1991) and, finally, disgust is associated with a feeling of repulsion in response to an object or idea one is strongly opposed to (for example, Nabi, 1999).<sup>4</sup>

In order to facilitate scale-building and comparisons among variables, all item responses were measured on scales ranging from 1 to 7 (except for policy transfer, see endnote 3). All items were put to respondents in a randomized order to avoid question order effects.

## Results

Table 1 shows the results of an exploratory rotated principal components factor analysis on the 25 EU attitude items. Five factors emerge from the solution, explaining 63 percent of the variance. Each factor consists of five items.<sup>5</sup>

First, items expressing negative affection towards the EU and a perceived threat of European unification form the strongest factor, which we here label 'negative affection' (towards the EU). We thus see that affective (2), emotional responses to the regime (A) cluster with a more community-oriented (B) threat to the national interest.

The second factor consists of items relating to identification with the EU, such as pride in being an EU citizen and feeling close to other Europeans and their culture and history, but also adherence to EU symbols such as the flag. This dimension of EU attitudes therefore is labelled (EU) 'identity', and it consists of items that all fall into the community-directed (B) affective (2) attitudes.

The third factor relates to items that deal with the democratic and financial functioning and the performance of European institutions, labelled 'performance' (of the EU) (see also Linde and Ekman, 2003: 397). Items loading on this factor

**Table 1.** Pattern matrix and component labels for the 25 EU attitude items

	Factors				
	Negative affection	Identity	Performance	Utilitarianism and idealism	Strengthening
I am afraid of the European Union	.960				
I feel threatened by the European Union	.906				
I am angry about the European Union	.862				
I am disgusted with the European Union	.824				
The European Union poses a threat to Dutch identity and culture	.577				
Being a citizen of the European Union means a lot to me		.866			
Europeans share a common tradition, culture and history		.844			
I feel close to fellow Europeans		.841			
The European flag means a lot to me		.824			
I am proud to be a European citizen		.768			
The decision-making process in the European Union is transparent			.901		
The European Union functions well as it is			.848		
The European Union is wasting a lot of tax money			-.601		
The European Union functions according to democratic principles			.593	.334	
I trust the European Parliament			.509		



The European Union fosters peace and stability					.964
The European Union fosters the preservation of the environment					.879
Dutch membership of the European Union is a good thing					.637
The Netherlands has benefited from being a member of the European Union					.555
I personally benefit from the Netherlands' EU membership					.404
The European Union should become one country					.851
I support more decision/policy-making at EU level					.748
The decision-making power of the European Union should be extended					.606
Desired speed of European integration					.478
The EU should be enlarged with other countries					.404
Initial eigenvalue			.353		
Percent explained variance	9.12	2.46	1.67	1.20	1.09
Rotation sums of square loadings	36.49	9.83	6.69	4.81	4.32
Scale reliability Cronbach's alpha	6.36	6.16	5.71	6.50	5.49
	.87	.87	.76	.85	.74

Note: Principal components analysis with promax rotation (Kaiser normalization). Rotation converged in six iterations. Factor loadings below .3 were omitted from the table. Loadings are sorted by size.

relate to the transparency of decision-making or the wasting of tax money. Trusting the European Parliament also loads on this factor.<sup>6</sup> This factor thereby encompasses concepts that were classified as relating to the power structure of the regime (A) and its functioning, including primarily utilitarian (1) aspects of support. We note that also the trust item, for which classification into utilitarian or affective support was unclear, loads on this dimension.

The fourth factor consists of traditional general support, the country's and personal benefit measures, and items that express a post-materialist utilitarian approach to European integration in terms of the EU helping to preserve peace, prosperity and the environment. To capture this factor we apply the label 'utilitarianism' (utilitarian EU support). We again see regime-directed (A) utilitarian (1) items loading on this factor. Also the ambiguous general support item falls into one dimension with utilitarian items, which suggests a utilitarian interpretation of general support.

Finally, a fifth factor called (EU) 'strengthening' is distinguished. This factor consists of items that relate to the future of European integration and to a process of further deepening and widening of the EU, and consists of items that tap support for policy transfer and extended decision-making competencies, the integration of more member states (widening) and integration into one country (deepening). This last factor consists of items that were classified as being directed towards the regime (A) and relating to utilitarian, output-oriented support (1).

Overall we see that the distinction between (1) specific, utilitarian support and (2) diffuse, affective measures – with very few exceptions – does fit with our classification. We also find that the differentiation between (A) regime- and (B) community-related support is reflected in our empirical results. However, within these objects of support, our findings indicate that some dimensions include items that relate to the political order *and* the philosophy of the regime ('utilitarianism') and to the personal *and* territorial aspects of the community ('identity'). The results also suggest that, *within* the regime and the utilitarian classifications, different types of attitude dimension can be found. This calls for a more fine-grained theoretical differentiation. We also find that a combination of utilitarian and community-related items does not occur in our classification. This may, however, reflect our selection of indicators rather than suggest a theoretical misfit between these two aspects of support.

Whereas the 'negative affection' and the 'identity' dimensions are clearly distinct from all other factors, we find a few item cross-loadings. First, agreement with the statement that the EU functions according to democratic principles, which belongs to the 'performance' factor, also loads rather strongly on the 'utilitarianism' factor. Further, specific support for EU enlargement – part of the 'strengthening' factor – is also related to the 'performance' dimension. It is noteworthy that these cross-loadings appear only on dimensions that are both regime specific and utilitarian in nature.

Next we created weighted scales of the five factors identified using the respective factor loadings. Correlations between the factors range from .36 to .64. We find the

strongest bivariate correlation between ‘negative affection’ and ‘utilitarianism’ ( $r = -.64$ ). The latter also correlates strongly with ‘identity’ ( $r = .49$ ) and ‘strengthening’ ( $r = .46$ ). ‘Performance’ and ‘identity’ correlate less strongly with ‘negative affection’ ( $r = -.45$  and  $r = -.36$  respectively). In a second step, the question is to what degree these different factors are explained similarly or differently by established explanatory factors of EU attitudes.

### **Antecedents of EU attitudes dimensions**

If attitudes towards the EU are multidimensional – as shown above – it becomes highly relevant to assess the extent to which generic models explaining variation in support or aversion apply to the different dimensions. In line with Hooghe and Marks (2004), we seek not to assess the general validity of one or another theory, but to assess their relative contribution. Explanatory models of EU attitudes have identified a number of important antecedents. The utilitarian perspective emphasizes the importance of cost–benefit concerns for explaining public support. Citizens who are well educated, are skilled or have a high income are more likely to benefit from further European unification (Anderson and Reichert, 1996; Gabel, 1998; Gabel and Palmer, 1995). In line with this, economic conditions and evaluations have evolved as an important and consistent predictor of EU attitudes (Anderson and Reichert, 1996).

A second strand of studies claims that cues from national politics are critical. Citizens lack the basic information to make up their minds about the EU and therefore resort to proxies from national politics. Government approval and support for incumbent parties (provided these are supportive of the EU) were shown to lead to more public support (Anderson, 1998; Franklin et al., 1994; Ray, 2003). Thirdly, national identity considerations (for example, Carey, 2002; Christin and Trechsel, 2002; Denver, 2002; Kritzinger, 2003) and immigration-related factors (for example, de Vreese et al., 2008) are an important area of research into EU attitudes. Citizens who are strongly attached to their nation and who dislike or feel threatened by immigrant groups are more likely also to despise European integration (Azrout et al., 2011; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; McLaren, 2002, 2007b). Although these factors represent a virtually standard set of indicators employed to explain public opinion towards the EU nowadays, no attention has been paid to potential *differences* in the impact of these factors, depending on the conceptualization of the dependent variable.

In setting out expectations concerning the differential impact of established antecedents of EU attitudes we focus on the four antecedents that feature most prominently in recent literature: economic evaluations, government approval, anti-immigration attitudes and national identity. Explanatory factors are expected to vary between affective versus utilitarian support, but also between notions of regime- and community-directed support.

We expect specific support, in particular the utilitarian and the performance dimensions, to show stronger relationships with factors that are likely to fluctuate

and that are policy-outcome related (Gabel, 1998). Specifically, economic interests are primary indicators of short-term outputs and benefits (Anderson, 1998). Utilitarian support hinges on benefits brought about by EU integration, and the quality of outputs depends on the performance of EU governance. Those who are economically well-off are more likely to benefit from a well-functioning EU. Therefore we expect (I) economic evaluations to be stronger predictors of the 'utilitarian' and the 'performance' dimensions than of the other three dimensions identified above.

Second, national governments are an integral part of the EU's governance structure (EU Council, Councils of Ministers). In fact, most important decisions in the EU are made via the intergovernmental route, with strong involvement of representatives from national governments (Hix, 2008). Seeing the national government in a positive light is expected to spill over to the EU level, and in particular to the dimension with the clearest relationship to the national government, that is evaluations of the democratic functioning and decision-making of the EU. Accordingly, (II) government approval is expected to show a stronger effect on the 'performance' dimension than on any of the other dimensions.

The two diffuse dimensions – negative affection and EU identity – are expected to be subject to the influence of rather stable factors, primarily national identity and also perceptions of immigrant out-groups. Strong attachment to the nation-state is an indicator of positive attachment to the national community, the in-group (Tajfel, 1978), whereas EU identity signifies positive attachment to the community of EU citizens. We expect a closer match between these community-directed measures, so that (III) national identity will have a stronger effect on the 'identity' dimension than on the other dimensions identified above.

Finally, anti-immigration attitudes as an indicator of fear and the perceived threat of immigrant out-groups accordingly have both a cognitive but importantly also, if not primarily, an affective component (Pettigrew, 1997). We should in the following find a stronger effect of such affections on the 'negative affection' dimension. This also includes a measure of the perceived threat by the EU to the nation-state, which is likely to be linked to the threat from immigration. Therefore we expect (IV) that anti-immigration attitudes have a stronger effect on 'negative affections' towards the EU. Finally, immigration is closely related to an ever-deepening and widening Union, in which the movement of people from different countries is increasingly made easy. This leads us to expect (V) a stronger relationship between anti-immigration attitudes and 'strengthening' vis-à-vis the remaining three dimensions.

## Methods

A range of *independent variables* was included in the survey described in the methods section for the first part of this study. Descriptive information regarding the variables and indices is given in Table A2 in the webappendix. Anti-immigration attitudes were measured by means of eight items. Answers were given on seven-point

agree–disagree scales and recoded if necessary to form a reliable index of anti-immigration attitudes (Eigenvalue 4.52; 57 percent explained variance;  $\alpha = .89$ ). Economic evaluations are sociotropic prospective assessments of the economy on a seven-point scale from ‘much worse’ to ‘much better’. Furthermore, respondents reported whether they overall were satisfied with the present government on a seven-point scale running from ‘not at all satisfied’ to ‘very much satisfied’. Finally, national identity is an index variable of five items that mirror the EU identity items (see above) and that were posed after EU identity had been gauged. Agreement with the statements was reported on a seven-point scale, and the items form a reliable index (Eigenvalue 3.58; 72 percent explained variance;  $\alpha = .90$ ). The question wordings for all independent variables are provided in the webappendix.

In addition to these four variables, the models *control* for political ideology (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005), measured by self-placement on an 11-point scale ranging from left to right. We recoded responses into two dummy variables that represent the left and right (that is, the four extreme points on both sides of the scale), with the middle values as the reference category. We also control for the influence of variables related to cognitive mobilization (for example, Dalton, 1984; Inglehart, 1970, 1990). Political interest was measured with one item on a seven-point scale ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’. Political knowledge is an index of eight factual multiple-choice knowledge questions relating to national and European politics. Incorrect and ‘don’t know’ answers were coded 0 and correct answers were coded 1; the individual scores per question were then added up to represent an index of general political knowledge (Eigenvalue 3.5; 44 percent explained variance; Kuder-Richardson 20 = .81). Finally, sociodemographic variables are included (for example, Nelsen and Guth, 2000). Gender is a dummy variable representing females. Age was measured in years, education reflects the highest level obtained on a six-point scale ranging from low to high, and income is measured as household income classified in 27 categories sorted from low to high.

## Results

We use this set of antecedents of EU support to explain the five different dimensions of EU attitudes that were distinguished by the data. Table 2 displays five OLS regression models. First, we note that the explained variance differs considerably for the different EU attitude dimensions. The set of antecedents works best for predicting the ‘negative affection’ and the ‘performance’ factors, with 25 percent and 21 percent explained variance respectively. The ‘strengthening’ dimension and, in particular, the ‘identity’ factor are less well explained by the independent variables, with 15 percent and 11 percent explained variance respectively. Furthermore, we note that only five antecedents significantly explain the ‘strengthening’ factor, whereas eight out of the ten independent variables are significantly related to the ‘negative affection’ and ‘utilitarianism’ factors. Interestingly, the latter factor

Table 2. Predicting five EU attitude dimensions

	Negative affection			Identity			Performance			Utilitarianism			Strengthening		
	B	SE		B	SE		B	SE		B	SE		B	SE	
Intercept	.000	.023		.000	.025		.000	.024		.000	.024		.000	.024	
Gender (female)	-.049*	.024		.049	.026		.028	.024		.056*	.025		.040	.025	
Age	-.083**	.027		.116***	.029		-.043	.027		.084**	.028		.087**	.028	
Education	-.154***	.027		.022	.030		-.033	.028		.154***	.028		.040	.029	
Income	.007	.023		-.023	.026		.026	.024		.017	.024		.019	.025	
Political interest	-.058*	.027		.088**	.030		-.132***	.028		.032	.028		-.001	.029	
Government approval	-.175***	.026		.138***	.028		.253***	.026		.205***	.027		.137***	.028	
Positive economic outlook	-.065**	.024		-.029	.027		.127***	.025		.065*	.025		.011	.026	
Left ideology	-.012	.026		-.032	.029		-.009	.027		-.007	.027		-.057*	.028	
Right ideology	.000	.026		-.043	.029		-.006	.027		.021	.028		-.060*	.028	
Anti-immigration attitudes	.297***	.027		-.159***	.030		-.264***	.028		-.179***	.028		-.302***	.029	
National identity	-.021	.026		.166***	.028		.065*	.026		.101***	.027		-.049	.028	
Political knowledge	-.086**	.028		-.124***	.031		-.094**	.029		.078**	.029		-.026	.030	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.25			.11			.21			.19			.15	
F		40.08			12.62			32.13			27.73			20.65	
N		1390			1390			1390			1390			1390	

Note: Cell entries are unstandardized b coefficients and standard errors.

\*\*\*p < .001, \*\*p < .01, \*p < .05

includes the items most commonly employed in EU opinion research to formulate different theoretical perspectives.

Negative affection is most strongly explained by anti-immigration attitudes and by government approval, with those disliking immigrants and disliking the government feeling more negative about the EU. A positive economic outlook is only a weak, negative predictor of disliking the EU. Holding a European identity is most strongly explained by national identity, but, contrary to what we expected, stronger attachment to the nation-state leads to stronger identification with Europe too. Anti-immigration attitudes and government approval are also strong significant predictors of identifying with the EU. So-called 'soft' factors – national identity and immigration attitudes (De Vreese et al., 2008) – are strongly related to EU identity considerations. The positive effect of national identity on EU identity is in line with Haesly (2001), who finds such an effect of non-exclusive national identity. Rather than representing opposite, exclusive choices of attachment to national vs. supranational entities, we need to distinguish between attachment vs. non-attachment to such entities in more general terms.

The 'performance' dimension is less strongly explained by soft factors, but also by government approval and economic considerations. Positive evaluations of the government and of the economy and national identity attachment lead to more positive evaluations of the EU's performance, and anti-immigration attitudes lead to more negative evaluations. The 'utilitarianism' dimension of EU attitudes is strongly explained by government approval and anti-immigration attitudes, with stronger anti-immigration attitudes leading to less positive attitudes and stronger government approval leading to more positive attitudes towards the EU on this dimension. Again, national identity is positively related to this factor, that is, the more strongly one is attached to the nation-state, the more positive one is about the EU on this attitude dimension (see also Haesly, 2001). Those with a more positive economic outlook show more utilitarian and idealist support, but the latter two relationships are weaker. Finally, the 'strengthening' dimension is primarily explained by anti-immigration attitudes, with those disliking immigrants being strongly against further efforts to deepen or widen the EU.

The control variables exhibit some interesting relationships. Whereas political knowledge, in line with our expectations, is positively related to the 'utilitarianism' dimension, it is a negative explanatory factor for 'identity' and 'performance'. Similarly, political interest is a negative predictor for 'performance' evaluations, but a positive one for 'identity'. These differences in observed effects appear reflective of a cognitive and affective component of political engagement (Zaller, 1992). Finally, the results show that older people in particular and females are more supportive of EU integration, and also higher education levels are a positive explanatory factor for some dimensions. Income and ideology are virtually unrelated to any EU attitude.

Next, we illustrate the differential impact of the four most important and consistent predictors of the different EU attitude dimensions and discuss the expectations set out above. The negative affection dimension was mirrored to allow for

a better comparison with the other dimensions. Specifically, we look at whether the strengths of the effects of the four variables discussed above significantly differ from each other. To do so, we ran a series of 40 regression models in which two different attitude dimensions were stacked to represent the dependent variable, and interaction terms between the independent variable of interest and a dummy representing one of the stacked dimensions were entered. By interpreting the interaction terms, it is possible to substantiate whether the effect of a specific independent variable is significantly stronger for one dependent variable than for the other dependent variable (for the results of this procedure and more information, see Table A3 in the webappendix).

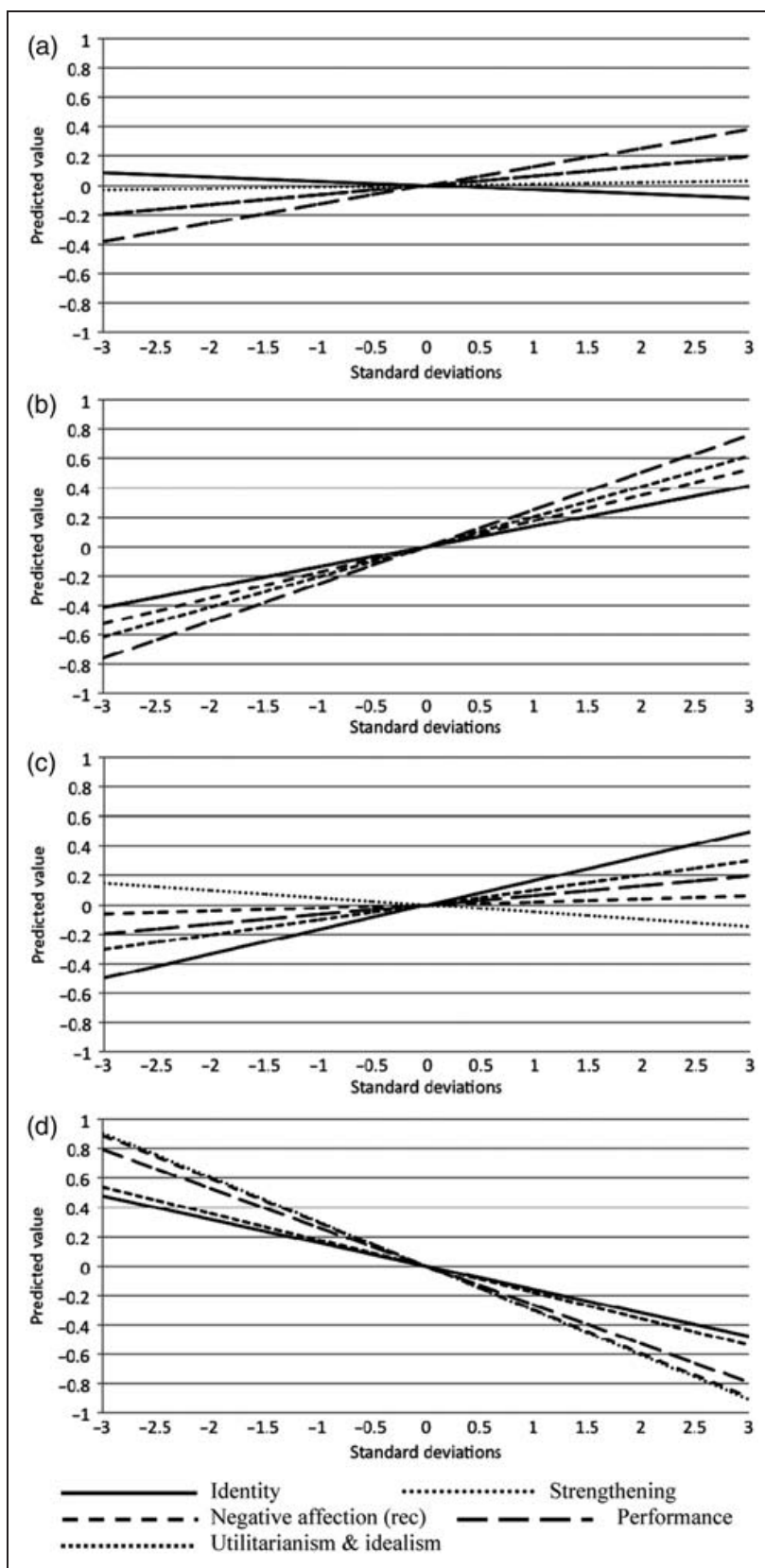
We start by discussing a very prominent variable in explanatory models of EU attitudes – economic evaluations. We found that their impact is overall rather limited. Economic evaluations, as expected, affect the ‘performance’ factor, but are virtually unrelated to the ‘strengthening’ and the ‘identity’ factors (Figure 1(a)). In line with our expectations (I), economic evaluations are significantly stronger predictors of ‘utilitarianism’ and ‘performance’ (see Table A3). Contrary to expectations, however, ‘negative affection’ was also more strongly affected by economic expectations than were ‘strengthening’ and ‘identity’.

Next we consider the seemingly most consistent predictor in our models – government approval. ‘Performance’ is most strongly affected by this political predictor variable, but ‘utilitarian’ attitudes too are explained substantially by government approval. ‘Identity’ considerations and the ‘strengthening’ dimension, by contrast, are least influenced by government evaluations (see Figure 1(b)). As expected (II), we find stronger effects of government evaluations on ‘performance’ than on ‘strengthening’, ‘identity’ or ‘negative affection’ (Table A3). Government evaluations, however, influence ‘utilitarian’ support equally strongly. This could mean that liking the government spills over to thinking that the government ensures the best outcomes for its own country and citizens in the EU.

The effects of national identity and of anti-immigration attitudes are the least consistent across the five different dimensions. National identity in particular shows a rather mixed picture. It is most strongly related to EU ‘identity’ and virtually unrelated to the ‘strengthening’ and ‘utilitarianism’ (Figure 1(c)) dimensions. Confirming our expectation (III), national identity is a significantly stronger explanatory factor for ‘identity’ than for all other factors (Table A3).

Finally, anti-immigration attitudes have strong effects on three out of the five factors, considerably decreasing support in terms of ‘strengthening’ and ‘utilitarianism’ and increasing ‘negative affection’ towards the EU. Anti-immigration attitudes also influence EU ‘identity’ concerns and ‘performance’ assessments (Figure 1(d)), although to a lesser degree. ‘Strengthening’ and ‘negative affection’, in line with our expectations (IV, V), are significantly more strongly explained by anti-immigration attitudes than are ‘performance’ and ‘identity’ (see Table A3). But, against expectations, anti-immigration attitudes also strongly influence utilitarian support. Apparently, people who dislike migrant out-groups do not believe in the potential benefits of international cooperation in more general terms.





**Figure 1.** (a) Regression lines of economic evaluations. (b) Regression lines of government approval. (c) Regression lines of national identity. (d) Regression lines of anti-immigration attitudes.

Overall we find that it is important to consider the nature of the dependent variable when formulating expectations about the effects of different, established explanatory variables. As shown here, this most evidently applies to economic evaluations and national identity, for which we find substantially different relationships with the different EU attitude dimensions.

## Discussion

The study of public attitudes vis-à-vis European integration has gained in prominence on the research agenda along with an increased awareness of the importance of public opinion for the legitimacy of the European Union and its further integration (Thomassen, 2009). In the literature, umbrella terms such as Euroscepticism or EU support have been used interchangeably. This can be conceptually and empirically misleading. In our study, we find clear differences in the ways that people think about the EU and European integration. Specifically we distinguish five attitude dimensions. These dimensions are unique components of the overall notion of EU attitudes.

Emotional responses represent the first of these dimensions, referring to feelings of fear of and threat by the EU. Generally we see emotions gaining increasing attention in political communication and public opinion research (see, for example, Brader, 2006; Gross, 2008; Huddy et al., 2007), and for the first time an emotional affective dimension of EU attitudes has been identified. The second dimension refers to a sense of European identity, which is a topic that has been addressed before (for example, Bruter, 2003) and is also gaining prominence in the discussion about the legitimacy of the EU (Thomassen, 2009). The third dimension relates to the performance and the democratic and financial functioning of the EU and its institutions. The fourth dimension relates to utilitarian attitudes such as general support and benefit evaluations as well as more post-materialist utilitarian considerations with regard to the EU. The fifth and final dimension refers to a strengthening of the EU in the future and reflects support based on agreement with extended decision-making competencies and policy transfer as well as with further integration. Extending prior work on the structure of EU attitudes (for example, Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005; Niedermayer and Westle, 1995; Weßels, 2007), our study is the first to address these different dimensions within a single study with such an inclusive battery of EU attitude items.

Referring back to the theoretical classifications, we note that distinction of the objects of EU attitudes (following Easton, 1975) directed at the regime and the community is largely in line with the empirical evidence. It is only the negative affection dimension that spans two different objects – the regime and the community. In addition, our data largely supported the differentiation between utilitarian and diffuse support. What is interesting, however, is that not all items that are, for example, regime specific *and* utilitarian automatically fall into one dimension. In fact, we establish three distinct dimensions that include, by and large, items

directed towards the regime *and* that are of a utilitarian nature (i.e. performance, utilitarian, strengthening). This suggests that there are more substantial considerations going into EU support than those presented by the classic distinctions. It appears that further specification into subcategories along the lines of, for example, Norris (1999) is important. Our 'performance' dimension largely relates to what Norris (1999) calls regime processes or what Niedermayer and Westle (1995) refer to as the regime's power structure, whereas the 'utilitarian' dimension includes regime principles (Norris, 1999) or more strongly to regime-specific values (Niedermayer and Westle, 1995). Similar subdivisions of the utilitarian classification may also be warranted to fully capture the range of different EU attitudes.

Relating our classification to prior empirical work, we see an overlap between our strengthening dimension and what has been termed instrumental Euroscepticism, and between the utilitarian dimension and political Euroscepticism (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005). Weßels (2007), in line with our findings, distinguishes a European identity dimension, a cluster indicating general support that is similar to our utilitarian dimension, and attitudes about the responsiveness and effectiveness of the EU, which bear some resemblance to our performance dimension.

Our analysis shows five dimensions that are, albeit related, genuinely distinct and independent dimensions of EU attitudes. We do not argue that this is an exhaustive list or that these dimensions are always equally important, but we stress that EU attitudes are not a one-dimensional concept and, to understand both variation in the degree of support and changes in future levels of support, it is important to be explicit about the nature, focus and composition of this concept. Some dimensions, such as identity, may be more stable over time than others and less influenced by new developments within the integration project and elite discussions. Others such as performance and strengthening, however, may well be subject to short-term changes (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010). Thus, understanding citizens' attitudes and the way they lend legitimacy or opposition to European integration calls for more precision.

The second part of the study was concerned with a specification of how antecedents differ in explaining the several dimensions of EU attitudes. Our results show noteworthy differences in the impact on the attitude dimensions we distinguished. Immigration attitudes and government approval were the only predictors influencing all five dimensions, but to varying degrees. We take the importance of government approval as an indicator of continued support for the fact that many citizens rely on elite opinions with regard to the EU (for example, Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004). However, government approval is far from being a dominant explanatory variable, so it does not seem that we are looking at 'second-order attitudes' driven solely by 'proxies'. Much of the variance is explained by factors pertaining to the perception of the EU, such as immigration attitudes, as the EU has developed to be seen as a vehicle for sparking immigration (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005).

A noteworthy difference from our expectations concerns the overall positive effect of national identity on EU attitude dimensions, in particular on European identity. Prior studies have argued for and demonstrated a negative impact of national attachment, pride or identity on public support for the EU (for example, Carey, 2002; Christin and Trechsel, 2002). Others, however, see a potential reinforcement of national and European identities (Citrin and Sides, 2004; Haesly, 2001). Again, part of the solution to this puzzle may lie in the conceptualization of national identity being exclusive vis-à-vis European identity (see also Hooghe and Marks, 2005). We claim that, in order to differentiate clearly between the dependent variable (European identity) and the independent variable (national identity), it is worthwhile not to relate these identities in terms of measuring their exclusiveness. Our results appear to demonstrate that national and European identity – at least in the Netherlands – are not mutually exclusive.

Our findings show that certain explanatory factors fare better than others in explaining certain dimensions of EU attitudes. We believe that the patterns ascertained here should apply more generally, also across the borders of the Netherlands, though obviously national contexts influence the impact of individual attitudes (for example, Burgoon, 2009; Garry and Tilley, 2009; Luedtke, 2005; McLaren, 2007b). This calls for an extension of this research agenda to a comparative setting.

Future studies of EU attitudes need to be conceptually more precise regarding their dependent variable. Our study shows that EU attitudes comprise several components, and future research will be well served by explicating which dimension of such attitudes it is concerned with. In terms of the independent variables, our study has shown that expectations with regard to the assumed effects of specific explanatory factors should be adjusted depending on which EU attitude dimensions are assessed. These assertions should be tested with models that are even better specified and operationalized than the ones presented here.

We believe our study has a significant bearing on future enquiries into the antecedents, structure and consequences of EU attitudes. As the EU continues its integration course, it increasingly seems appropriate to speak of EU attitudes as the collection of multiple dimensions of attitudes. We realize that our study is not without shortcomings and it should be seen as a first rather than as a final step. The list of items used is elaborate, but certainly not exhaustive. Although we have included units that are commonly employed in EU attitude research, it is worthwhile to consider items that speak to theoretical differentiations that were not included above, for instance measures that combine utilitarian support directed at the community. Furthermore, our items were tested in one country only (owing to practical constraints). It is likely that, if other dimensions exist, they will become important in light of future developments of the EU or that the relative strength of the dimensions differs according to the context. Future research

should not only look at other possible attitude dimensions and compare results cross-nationally but also work on expanding the set of possible predictors by introducing more targeted concepts in order to further the understanding of individual differences in each of the respective attitude dimensions. EU-wide surveys, ideally at different points in time, that incorporate the different dimensions of EU attitudes introduced here are needed, in order to test the cross-national validity of our findings and potentially to consider how contexts affect different attitude structures. The shortcomings of the present study notwithstanding, an important first step has been made in unravelling the notion of EU attitudes and specifying the antecedents of these attitudes. The EU is an evolving multidimensional polity and research should reflect this.

## Notes

1. Note that our discussion of the classification of Niedermayer and Westle (1995) does not include perspectives on cognitive or behavioural dimensions, since we are solely concerned with the dimensions of attitudes here.
2. We do not refer to authorities here, which are defined as the occupants of political roles, thus concrete political actors. We are interested in a more general dimensionality of EU attitudes that does not strongly depend on specific persons, and therefore we refrain from including evaluative items relating to specific EU-level political office holders or to very specific policy outcomes, i.e. we exclude support for authorities (including their actions) as described by Easton (1975).
3. The measurement of the variable differs from that in the Eurobarometer. The policy transfer variable was created from four items that for different policy fields had respondents assess whether these would be better dealt with by the national government or by the EU. The question was: 'Who do you think is best suited to taking decisions in the field of...?' and the four policy fields were (1) the economy, (2) the environment, (3) immigration and (4) globalization. Answers were recoded so that 0 would represent national government and 1 the EU. The four items were then summed, yielding a variable ranging from 0 to 5. To make this variable comparable to the seven-point scale items above, we recoded the values to range from 1 to 7.
4. We focus on negative emotions only since other studies have shown that dimensions of emotions other than valence may have as much (or more) impact as valence does (for example, DeSteno et al., 2000; Keltner et al., 1993; Lerner and Keltner, 2001) and certain negative emotions resemble certain positive emotions (for example, anger and happiness or threat and enthusiasm) with regard to their effects on subsequent action and cognition.
5. A Mokken scale analysis for polytomous items performed with MSP5 for Windows that is sensitive to item response distributions yields substantially very similar results compared with the PCA: five factors with the same substantial meaning and coefficients H ranging between .68 and .42. Two items that perform least well in the PCA model did not scale well in the Mokken scale analysis either.
6. We note that it essentially does not matter whether the trust item relates to trust in the EP, in the European Commission or in the EU itself. Replacing the EP trust item with any of the other two yields very comparable results. Because we have five-item indices per dimension, we opted to include only one trust item here.

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