



# **Mild Euroenthusiasm or Euroapathy? The Case of Romania**

**“10 years in the EU - Taking stock and Assessing  
Prospects” conference  
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## STARTING POINTS

- “Europe – United by Hostility” (Financial Times, October 2013)
- What unites European citizens today is the Eurosceptic mindset that has become more pronounced in all of the member countries during the crisis, albeit in each country **for different and rather polarizing reasons**. (Habermas, 2013)



# “DIVORCES” INSIDE THE EU

- Elites and citizens
- North – South
- East - West



# OVERVIEW

- **The Crisis of the European Union**
- More Europe means many things to many people
- United by Euroscepticism
- The case of Romania
- Paneuropean euroscepticism?



# WHAT CRISIS?

- Global crisis
- Euro crisis
- Eurozone crisis
- Sovereign debt crisis
- Financial crisis
- Banking crisis
- Fiscal crisis
- Trade imbalance crisis
- Competitiveness crisis
- Periphery debt crisis
- Europe debt crisis
- Solvency crisis
- Greek crisis/ Cypriot crisis/ German crisis ...



# IS EUROPE SOLVING THE WRONG CRISIS?

- All of the previous ones +  
**the crisis of the European Union** (Jurgen Habermas)
- The crisis in Europe is existential. It is a question of whether the EU survives as a recognizable entity (Giddens, 2012)
- Political crisis – with economical, financial, fiscal, symbolic etc. consequences
- What is at stake: **the future model of the EU, its vision for the future**



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# MORE EUROPE, BETTER EUROPE, STRONGER EUROPE

- Federation - supranational democracy
- Europeanized European Union – a Europe of nation states
- Federal Europe - 2- or 3- or x-speed Europe (intergovernmental)
- The United States of Europe (a European superstate) - a federation of nation states
- Federation of nation-states - post-national Europe
- A citizens' Europe – a banks' Europe
- An alliance of sovereign states
- An informal UN
- A loose confederation
- A “market-conforming democracy”
- An “accidental empire” with capital Berlin
- EU28, or the eurozone with ins (Poland) and outs (Greece, the whole South)





## MORE EUROPE VS. MORE EUROPES

The vision of Europe that will succeed will be that which  
“*inspires the commitment of [EU] citizens whose faith in  
a European future is shaken*”



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# WHAT TYPE OF EUROSCEPTICISM?

- Everyday language - Euroscepticism = opposition to the European Union and its policies
- But, a fundamental differentiation:
  - *EU-scepticism* (opposition to the EU *per se*) – **hard euroscepticism**
  - *current-EU-scepticism* (scepticism to its current political direction, actual policies, decisions) – **soft euroscepticism**
  - **Party-based euroscepticism** vs. popular euroscepticism



# MIXING ONE FOR THE OTHER

- Crossed pressure:
  - Euro-optimism regarding the need for “Europe”
  - Euroscepticism regarding the actual form of the current EU
- Outcomes of the crisis:
  - soft euroscepticism feeds hard euroscepticism
  - hard euroscepticism disguised as soft euroscepticism (EU as an idea/1 – collateral damage)
  - Euroscepticism of any kind – labelled as “anti-europeanism”



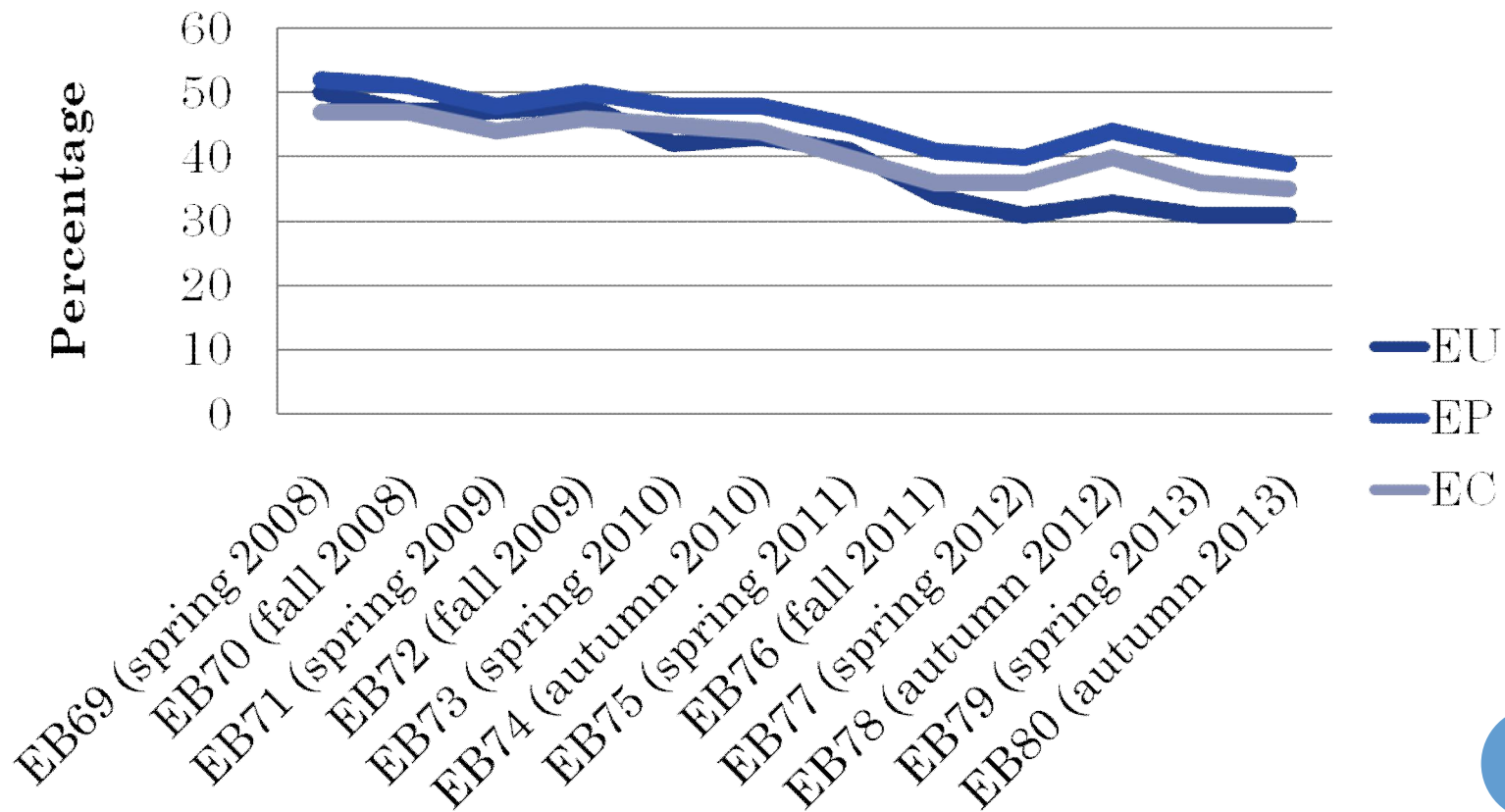
## (NOT SO) EXTREME FIGURES

- 56% of the British people would probably or definitely vote for the UK to leave the EU if they were offered the choice in a referendum
- Cyprus- 67% of respondents would prefer an exit from the eurozone and stronger ties to Russia
- Spain: 72% of respondents tend not to trust the EU



# TRUST IN THE EU AND THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS: 2008-2013

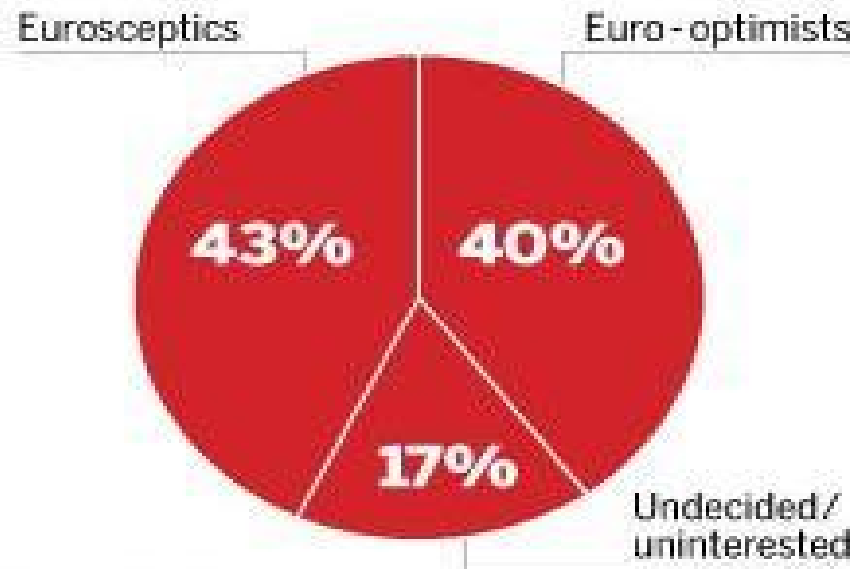
## Trust in the EU, EC, EP - EU average



# 17% - NEGATIVELY UNINTERESTED

## Eurosceptics and optimists in the European Union electorate

Classification based on answers to multiple questions, Sep 13-23, 2013



Sources: Eurobarometer; Gallup



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# NEW COMERS VS. OLD MEMBER STATES

- 2008: NMS largely more optimistic ( +10-20%) than EU average and than other older MS
- Trend in time (2008-2013): - **declining levels of trust in the EU and its institutions; the decline is sharper in new member states with serious debt problems (eg.: Cyprus)**
- The difference in levels of trust between old and new member states - reduced in the last 5 years of economic crisis;
- Although the new comers still exceed average results at the European level, the Eurobarometer results in NMS are fairly similar to those in older member states



# Euroscepticism in Romania

- Elite
- Party-based (no eurosceptic/ europopulist party)
- Popular
- Media (exclusive local focus, EU topics – only background information)



# EUROSCEPTICISM AMONG THE ROMANIAN ELITES

- 10 in-depth interviews
- March-April 2014
- Experts, (former) members of the EP, journalists specialised in EU affairs



## Elite consensus around the EU

- EU is the right/ only way for Romania
- Agree that the EU lacks leadership and long-term vision
- The gap between the EU and the Member-States
- Germany – has the power to unite or break the EU
- The center /periphery dichotomy feeds euroscepticism among the European public
- Europeanness – ideology (“you must be lunatic not to trust the EU”, “now it’s fashionable to be eurosceptical”)



## POPULAR EUROSCEPTICISM (I)

- Eurobarometers during 2007- 2013 (fall)
- Constant decrease of trust in the European Union
- 2007: 68% of Romanians stated that they trust the EU, meaning 20% above the European average
- 2013: 45% tend to trust, 43% tend not to trust



# INTERPRETATION (I)

- Constant decrease of public euro-optimism – more sober public; “Great expectations” (post - EU accession syndrome)
- EU the savior (saves us) – EU the headmaster (penalizes us); ‘EU as Messiah’ frame – less dominant
- Lack of trust in national institutions and political life
- Feel inferior (big league vs. the periphery)
- Feel left alone in Europe



## INTERPRETATION (II)

- EU – still seen as “corrector of external corrective for dysfunctional politics at home, but although popular anger is directed at [...] elites who are blamed for poverty and rampant corruption, the EU was no longer invoked as the cure. Private investors from other MS also came under fire, suggesting a shift to economic nationalism that might also provide fertile ground for Euroscepticism in the future” (Torreblanca & Leonard, 2013)



## INTERPRETATION (III)

- Trigger of downward trend - the (national) financial crisis and the ensuing austerity measures (2009)
- Austerity measures – although implemented at the request of the IMF and the European Commission, were largely perceived as being imposed only by:
  - IMF (face – Jeffrey Franks)
  - Romanian government (face – President Basescu)
  - Faceless Europe – not so bad after all?
- EU – not necessarily collateral victim of the euro crisis, but subject to indiscriminate dissatisfaction





# EUROENTHUSIASM OR EUROAPATHY?

- “*EU is like a religion - nothing bad can come out of it*”
- Mild, uncritical euro-optimism (ultrasoft euroscepticism)



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- **Pan-European euroscepticism?**



# UNITY IN DIVERSITY

- North *vs.* South
- West *vs.* East
- Euro *vs.* non-Euro
- Schengen *vs.* non-Schengen
- 2-speed Europe – 2-periphery Europe
  - Eurozone periphery (the South)
  - EU periphery (the East)
- Creditor *vs.* debtor
- Virtuous *vs.* vicious
- Belt-tightening *vs.* profligate



# EUROPEANIZED EUROSCEPTICISM?

- NO
- The type of eurosceptic that you are depends on your location in Europe
  - Unclear goals
  - Great expectations
  - No geopolitical alternative
  - I want my money back
  - Where is my money?
  - Where is my job?
  - The German grasshoppers paying for the lazy Greeks
  - Etc.





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**THANK YOU!**