

Mentality International Flash Report

Different Worlds Series 2: European Parliamentary Elections

The staying power of the Eurosceptic voter rebellion

About Mentality International

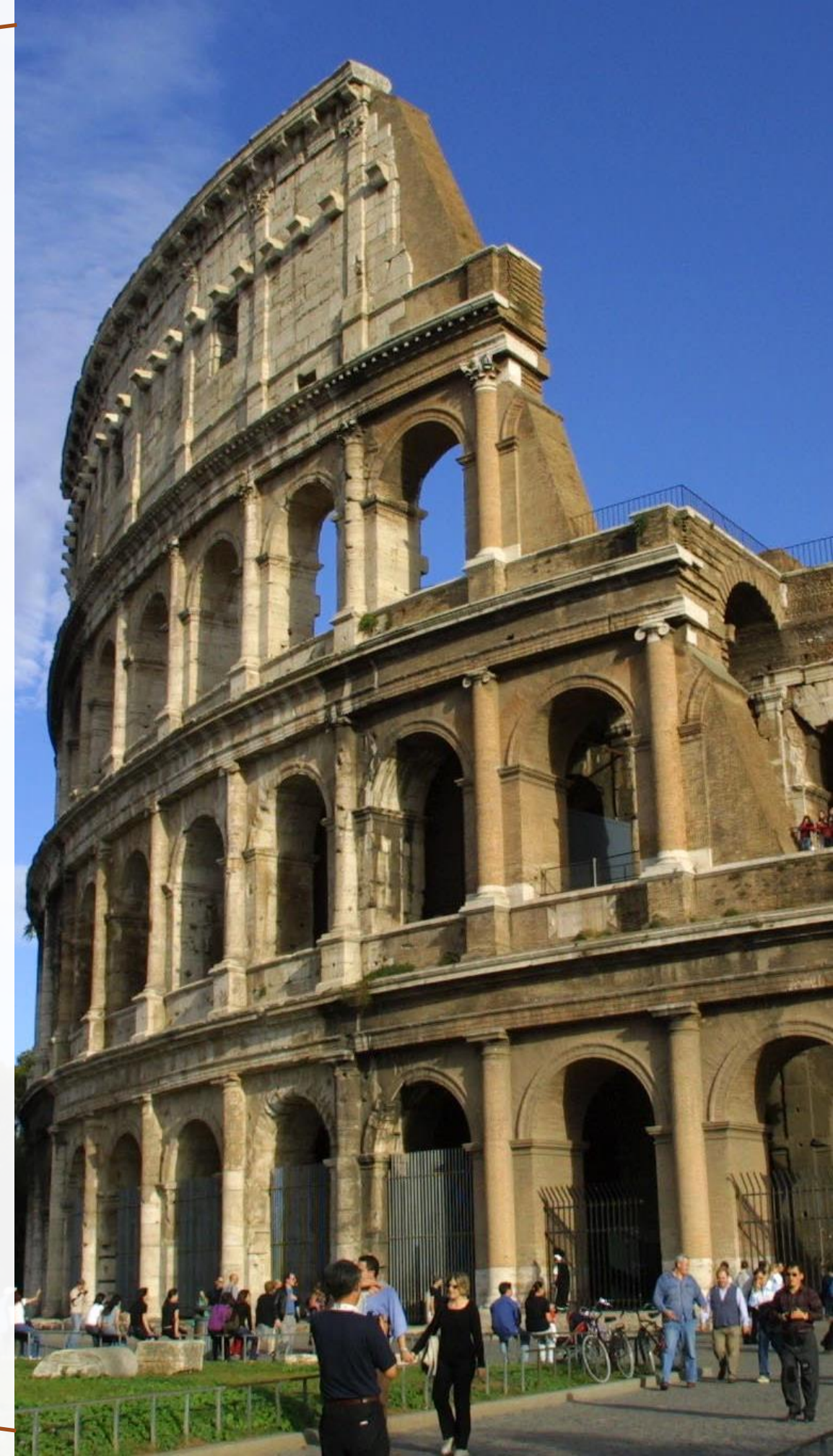
The world is constantly changing. Exponential growth of technologies and new media mean a continuously faster distribution of knowledge and products. The younger generations are taking over the mantle from older generations. The challenges for companies and governments are greater than ever in the year 2014. It is crucial for organisations to have the best understanding possible of future developments. A necessary condition for success is knowledge of fundamental trends, what motivates people and how these can differ from each other locally and relate to each other worldwide.

In the context of the Mentality International Project, Motivaction surveyed more than 46,000 respondents in 20 countries and 12 languages in December 2013 and January 2014. The study was conducted in the US, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, Japan, China, South Korea, India, Russia, Turkey, South Africa, Italy, Poland, Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. This selection of countries contains 58% of the world population and represents 75% of the world economy.

Executive summary:

Far-right Eurosceptic political parties throughout Europe have a very distinctive and similar voting base, in terms of demography, cultural values, normative behavior, political views and general perspective on life. The depth and strength of these similarities suggest that there is far more to the Eurosceptic vote than one-issue concerns in a one-off protest vote against the EU. Moreover the expected Eurosceptic voter insurgency for the European Parliamentary elections in May 2014 may be just the beginning of an ongoing rebellion in the heart of EU decision making.

This is the main conclusion of a unique in-depth survey into the voting base of Eurosceptic political parties in Great Britain, France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands which was conducted in December 2013 and January 2014. The results of this survey show that voters of Eurosceptic parties feel fundamentally abandoned and betrayed by their own society and institutions. They feel victims of both the economic crisis and the broader process of globalization. Disengaged from society at large they are seeking structure and security in their personal lives. In a separate analysis of the voter base of the Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy the survey finds that Eurosceptic parties can also tap into other voting bases. M5S are distinctively more moderate and modern, but share the institutional mistrust and general disillusion of right wing Eurosceptic voters. If more Eurosceptic parties manage to mobilize voters such as M5S, that might pose an even greater challenge to the European Union.





Insurgency of Eurosceptic parties

Throughout Europe opinion polls predict a big win for Eurosceptic political parties at the European Parliamentary elections in May 2014¹. In many countries Eurosceptic parties are polling well over 20% of the vote, in some countries they are expected to come in as first. These parties challenge the basic principles of the European Union: the free movement of people, the monetary union and membership of the EU itself. Hard Euroscepticism, defined as the opposition to membership of, or the existence of, the European Union as a matter of principle is mostly found among right wing populist parties². Throughout Europe it is expected that these right wing Eurosceptic parties will be the big winners of the European Parliamentary elections. This survey zooms in on the voter base of five of these parties:

1. *UK Independence Party (UKIP)* – The UK is historically one of the most Eurosceptic countries, in part due to its geographical separation from continental Europe. Support for UKIP is surging, the party gained one in four votes during Municipal elections in 2013³. Under electoral pressure from UKIP, UK Prime Minister Cameron promised the British electorate an EU ‘in-or-out’ Referendum in 2017⁴.

2. *Flemish Interest (VB)* – VB has a long history as a far right anti-EU party with strong support. However it is one of the few right-wing parties that is expected to lose in the European elections⁵. The party faces fierce competition from a rival party that like VB promotes Flemish secessionism, but unlike VB has a pro-European agenda.
3. *Freedom Party (PVV)* – This outspoken anti-EU party is making high waves in opinion polls in the Netherlands as the largest political party⁶. Together with FN PVV leader Geert Wilders is trying to establish a new Eurosceptic Group in the European Parliament⁷.
4. *National Front (FN)* – Also Front National is currently leading opinion polls in France as the strongest political party and was the big winner of the municipal elections in March 2014. With a projected 23% of the European Parliamentary vote, FN could more than triple her previous election results⁸.
5. *Northern League (LN)* – The party leader once stated that the Euro is a ‘crime against mankind’⁹. Although this separatist party stands only at 6% in current opinion polls¹⁰ that is mostly because of competition from Eurosceptic rival Five Star Movement.

1. www.economist.com/news/briefing/21592666-parties-nationalist-right-are-changing-terms-european-political-debate-does?zid=309&ah=80dcf288b8561b012f603b9fd9577f0e

2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euroscepticism>

3. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/ukip/10036463/Local-elections-2013-Nigel-Farages-Ukip-surges-to-best-ever-showing-winning-150-seats.html

4. www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jan/23/david-cameron-eu-speech-referendum

5. www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/17103/Verkiezingen/article/detail/1792558/2014/02/13/Vlaams-Belang-krijgt-kiesdrempel-in-zicht.dhtml

6. <https://www.noties.nl/peil.nl/>

7. www.euractiv.com/eu-elections-2014/eurosceptics-compete-efd-groups-news-532158

8. www.thejc.com/news/world-news/115261/european-parliament-vote-a-step-too-far

9. www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/politica/2013/12/15/Lega-Salvini-contro-euro-Crimine-contro-umanita__9781968.html

10. <http://scenaripolitici.com/2014/03/sondaggio-scenaripolitici-3-marzo-2014-per-elezioni-europee-pd-275-m5s-254-fi-200-lega-63-tsipras-54-ncd-42-altri-partiti-sotto-il-4.html>

There are a number of other Eurosceptic political parties that are expected to win in the European Parliamentary elections that cannot be classified as right-wing. These are mostly new parties that have been established in opposition to EU (and Member States) policy responses to the economic crisis. These parties include: Alternative for Germany, SYRIZA in Greece and the Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy. In this report an analysis is included on the voter base of M5S, who put themselves centre stage in Italian politics with 26% of the vote in the Italian national elections in 2013 (with comparable high polling numbers for the European Parliamentary elections)¹¹.

Table 1: Right-wing and new Eurosceptic political parties analysed in the survey¹²

Political Party	Latest national elections			European Parliamentary Elections 2009	
	Country	Year	Results	Results	Seats
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	United Kingdom	2010	3%	17%	13
Flemish Interest (VB)	Belgium	2010	18% ¹³	10%	2
Freedom Party (PVV)	Netherlands	2012	10%	17%	4
National Front (FN)	France	2012	14%	6%	3
Northern League (LN)	Italy	2013	4%	10%	9
Five Stars Movement (M5S)	Italy	2013	26%	-	0



11. <http://scenariopolitici.com/2014/03/sondaggio-scenariopolitici-3-marzo-2014-per-elezioni-europee-pd-275-m5s-254-fi-200-lega-63-tsipras-54-ncd-42-altri-partiti-sotto-il-4.html>

12. Data from www.wikipedia.com

13. Percentage taken from the Dutch language group vote





Methodology

In December 2013 and January 2014 Motivaction conducted a world-wide online survey among respondents between age 18 and 65 in over 20 countries. For the purpose of this current report analysis have been made of the survey results in five European countries: the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Italy. The total sample in these 5 countries contains 10,755 respondents. Voting behaviour in this survey is based upon people's recollection of their vote during the last national elections. This definition has the advantage over intended voting behavior (as in opinion polls) because it gives a better reflection of the people that actually voted for certain political parties. This survey therefore has no predictor value about the results of the European Parliamentary elections, but instead tries to give insights in the values that underlie the profile of the typical Eurosceptic voter. Only for UKIP voters an exception is made in the voter definition. Because the gap between voting behavior in the latest national elections in 2010 and voting intention now is so large, the voting intention for UKIP has been taken as the defining measure. Each country in the survey has a subsample differing between 2624 (Italy) and 1913 (Belgium) respondents. The data were weighed so every country was equally represented in the sample. All further profiling analysis are based on a comparison

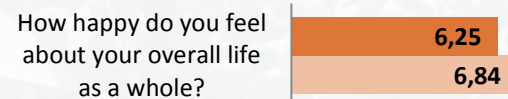
between right-wing Eurosceptic voters (excluding M5S voters) and the average outcome in the general population (not the average voter). The analysis is made on 554 rightwing Eurosceptic voters taken together, based on 117 National Front voters in the last elections for the national parliament, 61 Northern League voters, 128 PVV voters, 104 Flemish Interest voters and 144 respondents who intend to vote UKIP if elections for the national parliament were held the day they completed the survey. In a last paragraph a comparison is made between the right-wing Eurosceptic voters and voters for the M5S (388 voters from the Italian sample).



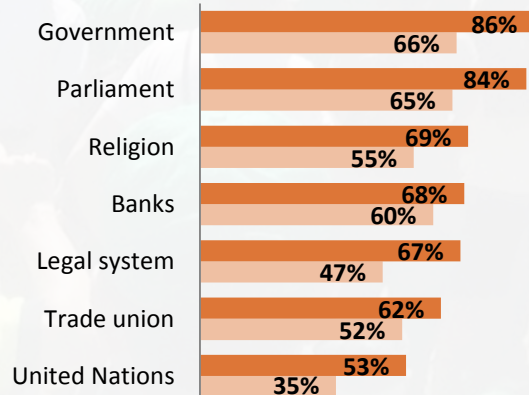
Struggling working class

The socio-demographic profile of Eurosceptic voters in some ways resembles the stereotype of the 'angry white man'. Eurosceptic voters tend to be older (45+) and more often male and married. In other characteristics the Eurosceptic voter is more similar to the average voter. Eurosceptic voters can be found in all income groups and employment situations (both employed and unemployed). There are slightly more Eurosceptic voters with lower education, but also those with higher education are well represented. The Eurosceptic voters do however associate themselves more with the working class, a group that according to many analysts are experiencing stagnant wages and have not profited even from the economic boom in the nineties¹⁴. Eurosceptic voters also report significantly more problems to 'make ends meet', which makes clear that this group is more than average struggling with the economic crisis. More than other voter segments they are facing difficulties in coping with the pressures of the ever increasing forces of globalisation.

Happiness



No trust in institutions

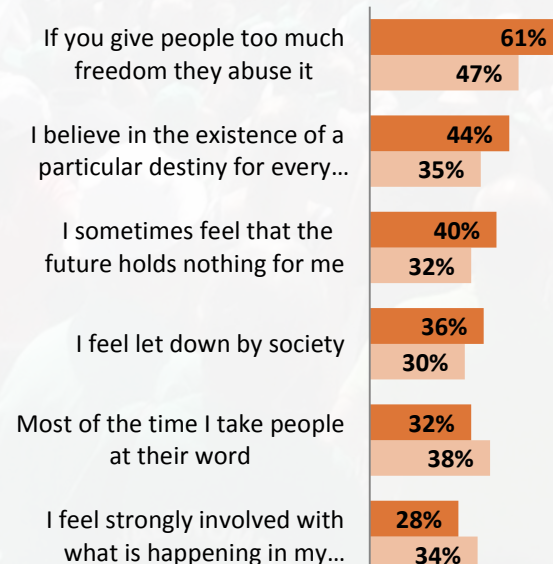


■ Eurosceptic
■ Non-eurosceptic

Let down by society

The feeling of abandonment and mistrust is key to understanding the state of mind of the Eurosceptic voter. They feel 'let down by society' more often. And they also have less trust in other people. They find that 'if you give people too much freedom they will abuse it' and are less trustful that you can 'take people on their word'. They are more pessimistic about their own future and have the fatalistic belief that every individual has a particular destiny. In general they are less happy in life than others. Apart from that they are less willing to get involved in their own community. The most pronounced distrust is the low trust in their institutions. Eurosceptic voters mistrust their government and parliament especially, but also a range of other institutions such as banks, religious institutions, trade unions and the United Nations. Moreover this institutional distrust includes the judiciary, the one power that is supposed to hold a check on the other two more political institutions in the legislative and executive branch.

Basic Values

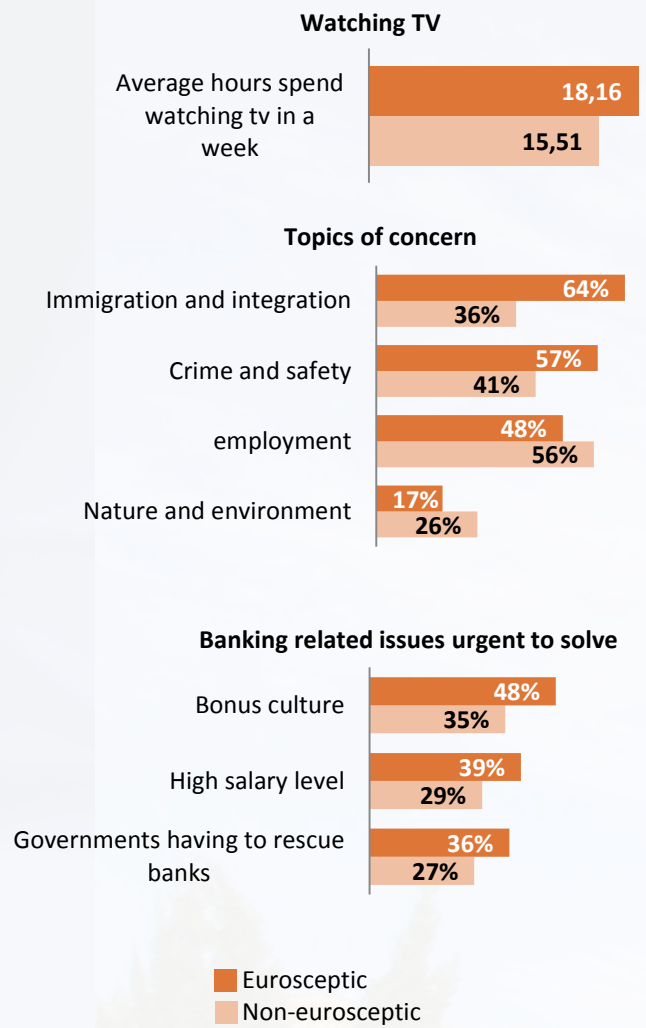


14. www.economist.com/news/briefing/21594264-previous-technological-innovation-has-always-delivered-more-long-run-employment-not-less



Seeking security and structure

Maybe as a way to repair their crumbling view on society, Eurosceptic voters are longing for structure and security in their own life. They like their life to be organised and predictable. They more frequently agree that ‘children should always obey their parents’ and that nowadays there is ‘too little emphasis on traditional values’. In general they are having more difficulties to strategically navigate through modern life. They find more often that ‘everything is changing too fast’. This is also reflected in their outlook on modern technology. Naturally they make use of the internet, but they are less frequent users of social media. Instead TV remains their main media of choice. They have a more utilitarian view on life. Asked about the meaning of life they more often answer: ‘having fun’.



Tough on immigration, crime and 'corrupted elite'

It is sometimes suggested that there is more political apathy among Eurosceptic voters, but this is not reflected in this survey. Eurosceptic voters do not differentiate from the average in their interest for politics. They do have an outspoken opinion about the political issues that they care about. 'Crime and safety' and 'immigration and integration' are the most distinctive issues that they find important. On the other hand environmental policies and concerns about employment score fairly low. Eurosceptic voters are more than average worried about governments having to rescue banks. On social issues it is interesting that while there is no large support for 'more equal distribution of wealth', they are outspokenly negative about the 'bonus culture' and the generally 'high salary levels' in the banking

sector. This reflects a deep suspicion of elites, which manifests itself also in their support for companies to fight corruption (instead of other Social Corporate Responsibility goals). This suspicion of elites also has a policy component in the sense that Eurosceptic voters have a clear aversion of all those policy issues that elites, especially EU elites, tend to care very much about: human rights, environmental policies, cultural exchange and multiculturalism. The one altruistic issue that they do feel passionately about are animal rights. Although this probably does not point at fierce opposition against the bio-industry, but relates more to their affection for pets.

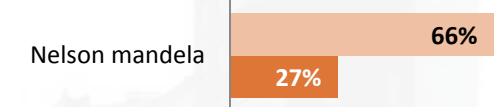




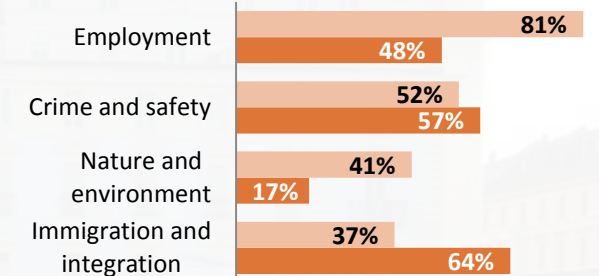
M5S voters: moderate and modern, but similarly disillusioned

The voting base that Beppe Grillo of the Five Star Movement (M5S) has been able to mobilize against Italy's (and EU imposed) economic policies is in many ways more threatening for mainstream political parties than the support for Eurosceptic parties from the right. The reason is the far larger potential voter base that parties such as M5S can tap into. While right-wing voters are older and generally more cynical, M5S voters tend to be young and idealistic. On a series of statements related to dreaming about the future M5S voters score significantly higher than average. Where right-wing voters have difficulties with new technology, M5S voters are frequent users of it, especially in regards to social media. In other words, M5S is tapping into the voting base of the future. In political positioning right-wing voters and M5S voters also differentiate. The former are preoccupied with immigration and crime, while the latter care more about the environment and employment. Nelson Mandela is often mentioned as an icon by M5S voters, a name much less mentioned by right-wing voters. While having a modern and moderate lifestyle, the similarity with right wing voters is their general disillusion with the current powers that be. Like right wing voters they feel fundamentally let down by society and the (political) leadership.

Appealing person



Topics of concern



■ Eurosceptic
■ M5S voters

Conclusion

The large number of value and normative variables that set Eurosceptic voters apart from the average indicate that right wing parties might be able to build a lasting relation with their voters. These are not one-off protest votes, but votes of a group of people who feel fundamentally disconnected from mainstream politics and who recognize themselves in the anti-establishment, anti-migration and anti-EU rhetoric of right wing Eurosceptic parties. Although this group is aging and generally less engaged in societal debate and decision making, this is an influential group during elections. A political answer from mainstream parties to this electoral group could be in offering credible answers to their wish for more structure and security in their personal lives. For example by offering more protection (welfare state, fighting crime) and predictability (pensions, mortgages) on issues where this group feels under pressure by the economic crisis and other forces of globalisation (migration, technology).

While the large group of right-wing Eurosceptic voters should seriously worry mainstream political parties, they should be alarmed by the voter insurgency of more mainstream oriented Eurosceptic parties such as M5S. It is a sign on the wall when moderate and modern voters turn their back towards the European Union. Re-engaging this group of voters in a positive way with the European Union requires either a fundamental change of course in the current way the EU (and Member States) handle the economic crisis or the firm believe that the current course will produce economic results pretty soon.

Interested in the full Electoral package?

This flash report only gives a glimpse of the data and knowledge that is available about voting behaviour, political issues and communications. The full data-set consists of hundreds of variables, throughout 8 EU countries and 12 countries outside the European Union. In a tailor made presentation or report it is possible to zoom in on the voter base and potential of relevant political parties in specific countries and to build a comprehensive voter and communications profile for campaigning. Hereby you could think about socio-demographic background, attitudes towards political and social issues, media use, activities, cultural values, competitive analysis, etc.

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