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The Unlikely Eurosceptics: the Undercurrent Anti-European Attitudes among the Young Poles and the Role of the Domestic Context

Abstract: The first generation of Poles whose political horizons have been limited by their country's membership in the EU by a popular assumption should also be the most pro-European section of the society. However, empirical evidence demonstrates that despite the broad support for Poland's membership that we see on the surface, young people's perceptions of the EU are characterised by undercurrent euroscepticism. This undercurrent euroscepticism is less about a pragmatic assessment of benefits and losses, and more about concerns about emotive-symbolic issues, such as authority, self-determination, sovereignty, national identity and values. While the benefits of the EU membership are often taken for granted, the concerns about sovereignty understood in an old-fashioned way are brought to the fore in young people's perceptions of the EU. The article focuses on the role of the domestic political context and how the real and perceived generation gap plays into it. The paper calls for comprehensive education about European integration and critical thinking and media consumption literacy in order to diminish the susceptibility of young people to anti-European cues by political entrepreneurs.

Keywords: youth, euroscepticism, sovereignty, domestic context.

Euroscepticism, Youth, Poland, Domestic Context, Politicisation

The first generation of Poles whose political horizons have been limited by their country's membership in the EU by a popular assumption should also be the most pro-European section of the society (European Commission 2014). After all, this is the generation that has had a chance to fully enjoy the benefits of the EU integration and does not know any other political reality. However, this is also the age group that has disproportionately voted for Eurosceptic candidates not only in the European Parliament elections but also in the recent national parliamentary and presidential elections. This conundrum has prompted us to take a closer look at the young adult generation's attitudes towards the EU, with particular attention to motivations behind their Eurosceptic stance. The underlying assumption is that even if Euroscepticism was not the main driving force behind their voting patterns, voting for openly Eurosceptical parties implies a certain degree of acceptance of their anti-European stance. The article presents the empirical evidence that young people's perceptions of the EU are characterised by undercurrent euroscepticism, despite the broad support for Poland's membership that we see on the surface. This undercurrent Euroscepticism is less about a pragmatic assessment of benefits and losses, but more about concerns about emotive-symbolic issues, such as authority, self-determination, sovereignty, national identity and values. While the benefits of the EU membership are often taken for granted, the con-

cerns about sovereignty understood in an old-fashioned way are brought to the fore in young people's perceptions of the EU.

The article claims that the attitudes and perceptions of young people have been considerably shaped by the domestic political context: the politicisation of the EU integration resulting from the rift between the main pro-European party, incumbent during the coming of age period of this generation, and the anti-establishment parties supported by other political entrepreneurs, notably the Catholic Church, who have been propagating anti-European messages. This criticism of the EU, unleashed after the EU accession, has been falling on fertile ground due to the "shallow consensus" on European. Furthermore, the real and perceived generation gap is also believed to have contributed to the distancing of young people from the pro-European governing elites, translating into greater receptiveness towards Eurosceptic arguments. The paper calls for comprehensive education about European integration and critical thinking and media consumption literacy in order to diminish the susceptibility of young people to anti-European cues by political entrepreneurs.

The paper mainly relies on empirical qualitative research results, complemented by opinion polls data. It is organised in the following way: the brief presentation of the theoretical framework and the context of the research is followed by explication of methodology. Then I present empirical research results and discuss possible explanations for youth's Eurosceptic attitudes, notably the role of the domestic political context at the time of their coming of age and the role of knowledge and information. At the end the paper offers conclusions and some recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

Euroscepticism has been at the centre of scholarly attention ever since the end of "permissive consensus"—when general public paid little attention to the "deals cut by insulated elites" (Hooghe and Marks 2009: 5)—associated with the Maastricht Treaty. The initial take on Euroscepticism was limited to political parties' stances towards the EU integration. One of the most-quoted definitions of euroscepticism belongs to Taggart, who suggested that it is "the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration" (1998: 366). The fine-tuning of conceptual apparatus produced the differentiation into: (1) "hard" or "withdrawalist" euroscepticism, or a principled opposition to the membership in the EU, to its very existence or to the European policy initiatives without which the EU integration would be untenable; and (2) "soft" or "reformist" euroscepticism that is not a principled objection to the existence of the EU and membership to the Union, but qualified opposition towards integration in one or several policy areas, a sense that "national interest" is at odds with the EU's current trajectory as well as the opposition towards further integration or to the idea of a federal Europe. (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008: 7, 2001). Opposition towards further integration is also included in the scope of "soft" Europscepticism on the assumption that the presumed direction of EU integration is always forwards. There has been a number of more subtle typologies developed on the basis of this one (Flood and Usherwood 2005; Kopecky and Mudde 2002), yet I believe this distinction into hard and soft Europsceptics is sufficient for

the purposes of our discussion. Although this typology has been developed in reference to political parties, it can also come in handy in the discussion of public attitudes.

Several approaches to explaining public Euroscepticism can be differentiated. The utilitarian approach focused on the balance of costs and benefits, either on a macro level (Haas 1958) or micro level. The level of net benefits, the level of trade as well as inflation have been found to be correlated with the level of public support (Eichenberg and Dalton 1993). At the same time, perceived balance of costs and benefits may be shaped by own economic situation (Gabel 1998a; Garry, Tilley 2009; McLaren 2004), human capital (Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996; Gabel 1998a, 1998b) and the region of residence (Gabel 1998b). In post-communist countries, the "winners" of the transition—young, better educated and possessing transferable skills—are more likely to support the EU integration, than its "losers" (Cichowski 2003; McLaren 2006).

Recently scholarly attention diverted to the domestic political context and the salience of communal identities. National identity-related considerations can be at least equally important in shaping attitudes towards the EU integration (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Bruter 2008; Van Klingeren et al. 2013). Increased salience of group identities goes hand in hand with grater politicisation and contestation of the EU (Hooghe & Marks 2008; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Risse 2010; Hobolt, et al. 2011; De Vries and Edwards 2009) on the domestic level. Moreover, the inability to calculate the balance of benefits and losses may turn people more susceptible to political cueing by domestic political entrepreneurs. These cues can be ideological, value-based or related to the left/right distributional conflict and they may come from a variety of actors, not just political parties, but also the media, trade unions or churches. (Hooghe and Marks 2009) People may also use national proxies when evaluating the EU's performance (Anderson 1998).

The Maastricht Treaty as well as the "European Constitution" ratification debacles gave rise not only to explanations based on the salience of national identity and sovereignty, but also to the democratic deficit (Follesdal and Hix 2006) and crisis of legitimacy of the EU (Banchoff and Smith 1999; Bellamy and Castiglione 2001). Moreover, empirical evidence has indicated that perceptions of EU integration are related to disstatisfaction with democracy in the EU and feeling of under-representation (Rohrschneider 2002). McLaren demonstrated that lack of trust in EU institutions decreases support for EU membership (2007).

Finally, a number of explanations focus on knowledge, information and communication. According to Inglehart's cognitive mobilization theory the "cognitively mobilized"—or able to process more complex political developments and follow political events—are less likely to be threatened by EU integration, because they understand it better, whereas, those less likely to receive information about the EU are more fearful of the unknown (McLaren 2006). Empirical research has demonstrated that higher levels of education as well as higher interest in politics translate into more positive attitudes towards EU integration (McLaren 2006). Since lack of adequate information lies behind Eurosceptic attitudes, the obvious solution to this is better information strategy. (Anderson and Kaltenhaler 1998) Significant knowledge deficits among the general public regarding the EU integration condition the patterns of politicization in the European population (Hurrelman et. al. 2015). Media play an ambivalent role in shaping public attitudes towards the EU. The provide information,

but may also contribute to politicisation and polarisation of opinion and increase of anti-European and nationalist stances. (Leconte 2010; Wilde & Trenz 2012)

There have been some attempts to introduce typologies of motivations or arguments behind anti-European positions. Katarina Sørensen (2008) analysed public attitudes towards the EU and distinguished four ideal types of Euroscepticism. Cécile Leconte (2010) differentiated four main types of Eurosceptic arguments. These two typologies partly overlap. Sorensen differentiated between (1) economic (based on the assessment of benefits and losses), (2) sovereignty-based (stemming from the opposition to decisions being made on the supra-national level), (3) democratic (pertaining to democracy deficit in the EU) and (4) social (related to left-wing economic orientation) euroscepticisms. Leconte, in her turn, distinguished (1) utilitarian (based on the assessment of losses and benefits, akin to Sorensen's economic type), (2) political (encompassing Sorensen's sovereignty euroscepticism and democratic euroscepticism), (3) value-based (pertaining to cultural/moral dimension) types of Eurosceptic arguments as well as what she called (4) anti-Europeanism. Anti-Europeanism, in Leconte's understanding, pertains to the opposition to EU integration and, more generally, to globalisation and is rooted in the belief in cultural distinctiveness and incompatibility of nation-states.

Methodology

The objective of the empirical research was to analyse the nature of perceptions of the EU integration shared by the youngest generation of adult Poles. I deliberately focused on the group presumable most well-informed about the EU integration and least prone to manipulations among the young adults—Warsaw universities students. The research questions included: what is the content of the youth Eurosceptical perceptions? What types of arguments are used? Do critics of the EU also see positive sides? To what extent personal experiences of the EU have shaped their perception of the EU integration? Have the recent crises contributed to the negative attitudes towards the EU or rather made them realise the need for greater unity and cooperation?

The empirical research was conducted with the use of focus group technique.[1] Four focus groups (between 8 and 6 people each) were conducted among students (BA and MA) of social sciences and humanities of University of Warsaw, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski University in Warsaw, and Warsaw University of Technology during May 2015. The recruitment process was two-stage. Several course instructors at selected universities were approached with a request for sharing information about the research on "public perceptions of the EU" with their students. The participants were volunteers who agreed to take part in the study on the basis of the received information. Thus, if the assumption that people with more negative attitudes are more likely to be willing to talk is correct, the study group was biased towards people with more sceptical or negative position on the EU, yet did not automatically exclude EU supporters. The aim was to have a diversity of opinions and lively discussions, yet to be able to analyse the Eurosceptic positions in greater detail.

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There was roughly the same number of men and women in the whole sample. Participants of the research were heterogeneous in terms of place of origin: some were natives of Warsaw, while others originally came from smaller towns and villages, predominantly from north-east of Poland.

Setting the Context

Narratives about the EU integration are produced by political actors in the domestic context of already existing cleavages and debates (Franklin et al. 1994; Kritzinger 2003). Poland negotiated its membership and joined the EU during the period known as "constraining dissensus," that is the situation where decision-makers "must look over their shoulders" (Hooghe and Marks 2009: 5) when negotiating European issues. In the pre-accession period the EU membership in Poland enjoyed one of the highest levels of public support among the prospective member-states. The general consensus, however, was not the result of an informed debate about the EU membership and potential benefits and costs of it. Rather, it was constructed on shaky foundations of fairly abstract geo-political and historical terms: the end of the Cold-War East-West divide and the following "return to Europe" (Szczerbiak 2001; Kolarska 1999; Kucharczyk 1999).

To reflect the apparent but superficial consent for the EU membership not necessarily rooted in the fundamental values of the EU integration project, Skotnicka-Illasiewicz coined a term "shallow consensus" (1998; 2005). Out of the three spheres required for permanent consensus as defined by Sartori—the axiological sphere, consisting of the system of values and views, the procedural sphere, indicating the modality for reaching agreement and the agreement on the current government policy—only the third served as a basis for the consensus achieved around Poland's EU accession (2005). In other words, the Polish public supported the general course of the EU integration, as opposed to remaining in the Soviet bloc, yet did not fully comprehend the mechanisms or shared the values and principles behind the EU integration agenda.

The EU or more generally "Europe" from the start has evoked conflicting associations in Poland, being the epitome of human rights, the Enlightenment ideals, individualism and liberalism for some, while for others making sense only "when it is Catholic, or at least Christian" (Góra and Mach 2010: 240). The latter understanding of Europe goes hand in hand with the self-perception of Poland as an *ante-murale* of Christian Europe (Tazbir 2004 in Styczyńska 2014) and the messianic tradition presenting Poland as the ever suffering country for the good of Western European nations (Król 1998; Góra and Mach 2010). This historical legacy has shaped the Polish identity-based Euroscepticism (Styczyńska 2014). The EU integration was framed by Eurosceptics as Huntington's "clash of civilizations," where "traditional, healthy and based on morality" Poland was opposed to allegedly libertarian, morally relativistic "civilization of death" of the EU (Styczyńska 2014: 129). The Polish Church welcomed EU accession with much ambivalence, and officially supported the EU accession only after receiving assurance from the Polish government that integration would not affect the moral/cultural sphere, including

issues of gender equality, reproductive rights, etc. (Chełstowska, Druciarek, Kucharczyk, Niżyńska 2013).

The "complex of Poland"—the emphasis on the incomparable suffering of Poland vis-à-vis other countries in historical context and attributing responsibility for failures and misfortunes, purportedly inadequate position on the international stage or inadequate level of development to external factors, especially other countries—was discussed by Skotnicka-Illasiewicz in the study of young people conducted in 1990. France, Germany and the UK were mentioned by some participants as the countries that rule Europe and realise their own interests, exploiting the rest: "…France, Great Britain and Germany will exploit turmoil in many countries and will make [these countries] even more dependent on them and will unscrupulously decide about the shape of Europe" (Skotnicka-Illasiewicz 1991). Styczyńska noted that the Polish debate on EU integration could be summed up as the "Polish dilemma"—the simultaneous fears of "being absorbed" and "being excluded altogether" (2014: 135).

Immediately after the accession, both main political parties voiced concerns with regard to the establishment of a European "super state." Yet, after coming to power in 2007, the Civic Platform has moved to a more liberal orientation in the foreign policy and a more favourable attitude towards deeper integration, unlike the Law and Justice party that continued to raise concerns about the "super-state," "federalisation" and "German hegemony." Moreover, the euro crisis and the EU migration crisis have provided additional fuel for the anti-EU rhetoric. One of the central points of the political debate has become the concept of "differentiated integration," especially but not exclusively in reference to the adoption of the euro. While the Civic Platform government and the Left saw differentiation as detrimental to the Polish national interests and conductive to weakening of the Polish position in the EU, the then opposition (Law and Justice party) claim it to be an opportunity to "create an alternative centre of power to the imminent German hegemony in Europe" (Cianciara 2014: 189).

The party rhetoric was bound to radicalise also due to the several election campaigns: European Parliament in 2014, two-round presidential elections in May 2015, and parliamentary elections in October 2015. An analysis of right wing party programmes (Fuksiewicz 2014) demonstrates that all the parties on the right opposed any steps towards further integration and demanded limiting political integration and focusing on economic integration. The Eurosceptic rhetoric centred around sovereignty and national identity concerns, and upholding socially conservative values and norms referred to as "traditional" or "Christian."

We will effectively defend Polish national identity, tradition, culture, and the Polish model of life and customs against the emerging tendencies to introduce, in a supranational manner, some risky cultural experiments which are not accepted by the majority of society. Every nation and every state, within the European community, must preserve its sovereign right to shape its own model of social order and not to be subjected to some specific 'cultural re-education' from the outside (Law and Justice party materials, in Fuksiewicz 2014).

Congress of the New Right, and later KORWiN called for scrapping EU:

the EU "should be abolished as soon as possible. Poland should remain a member of the Schengen Agreement and the Economic Area—but these are institutions independent of the EU." (in Fuksiewicz 2014)

The following quotation could serve as a sample of the anti-German rhetoric by the leader of the Kukiz'15, Paweł Kukiz, who argued that Germany supported Poland's EU accession because they were counting on the cheap labour force, which will end in fifteen years:

In 15 years they [Germans] will sell us to the Russians, as they have sold Ukraine today. Some time ago Germans gassed people, now they allow to murder people for gas (in Fuksiewicz 2014).

Thus, this generation was coming of age during the time of the unprecedented politicisation of the EU integration, when the mainstream pro-European elites were constantly challenged by the anti-establishment Eurosceptic political actors.

Current Support for the EU Integration in Poland: What the Numbers Tell Us?

Although the Polish young people more often votes for Eurosceptic candidates, they are far from being "hard" Eurosceptics. The opinion polls results present an ambivalent picture. In terms of generalised support, 89% of Poles support Poland's membership in the EU, with the rate of support being slightly lower among the youngest respondents (18–24) (85%). The share of "hard" Eurosceptics is 10% among the young people (7%—on average).

However, while the generalised support is high, Poles are worried about the limited sovereignty and weak position of Poland in the EU. A considerable share of Poles believes that Poland does not have sufficient influence upon decisions taken at the EU level (67% in the youngest group and on average). At the same time, 36% believe that the EU membership limits Poland's sovereignty and independence too much (again both in the youngest cohort and on average). Finally, in terms of the shared European identity, the younger cohorts somewhat more often define themselves as Polish and European (46% to 41% on average) and slightly less often as exclusively Polish (49% to 55% on average). Self-identifications emphasising the European dimension (European and Polish or just European) are very rare, at the level of 1–3%. (Roguska 2014) Poles are not too enthusiastic about further integration. 33% of young Poles do not support further integration (compared to 29% on average). (Roguska 2014) The European Social Survey results show that the younger and more educated people are slightly less concerned about further integration. The mean score on the question whether EU unification has gone too far (0) or can still go further (10) is 5.59 for the youngest cohort (16–24), and is slightly higher than the average (5.52) (ESS, Round 7, 2014).

To recapitulate, despite high general support for EU membership, opinion polls demonstrate undercurrent Euroscepticism is also rather prominent in the Polish society, also among the age group that does not know any other reality than EU integration: two thirds believe that Poland does not have sufficient influence on the UE decisions, more than one third believe that Poland's sovereignty and independence is unduly limited as a result of the EU integration and activities and almost half do not identify as European. Now we will look in greater detail what arguments are employed to justify Eurosceptic stance.

Empirical Results

Hard Eurosceptic stance is not very widespread, according to opinion polls. Similarly among the study participants there were only four persons out of thirty who rejected the EU membership and declared they would support Poland's leaving the EU if there was a referendum on the issue. Three participants expressed unqualified Euroenthusiasm, calling for further integration, including the moral/cultural sphere (e.g. gender equality). Their criticism was limited to EU's lack of sufficient presence in given policy areas. The rest supported EU membership, but preferred a "differentiated integration" model, raising concerns over sovereignty and national identity and calling for excluding selected "sensitive" policy areas. It is worth reminding here that Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008) qualify as 'soft' euroscepticism not only challenging the status quo, but also the opposition towards further integration.

With regard to the motivations behind public attitudes towards EU integration, the two typologies of Euroscepticism offered by Sørensen (2008) and Leconte (2010) discussed above, are not exhaustive and thus, very helpful if any of them is applied exclusively, nor are mutually compatible. However, both contain some important insights that help understand the nature of these motivations. For this reason, where relevant, I will refer to the categories differentiated by both authors. In broad terms, all arguments, both critical and supportive of the EU integration could be divided into *pragmatic* (based on the assessment of costs and benefits) and *emotive-symbolic* (pertaining to collective identity, values , authority, autonomy, sovereignty, exercise of will).

As we will see, while in case of support for the EU integration pragmatic arguments prevail, whereas in case of criticism of the EU integration, both types of arguments are employed. The critical arguments have been divided into three groups: loss of sovereignty, threat to national interests, threat to national identity and values. Significantly, the arguments ostensibly referring to national interests, and thus presumably pragmatic or utilitarian in character, are strongly underpinned by considerations of a more emotive-symbolic nature. More often than not they are only framed as pragmatic, but in fact reflect study participants' pre-existing concerns about threats to national identity, preoccupation with national sovereignty and convictions about an unequal status of Poland vis-à-vis other member-states. In other words, while positive sides of EU integration are framed in instrumental and pragmatic way, the negative aspects predominantly of symbolic-emotive character.

The Qualified Benefits: the Pragmatic Outlook

The ambivalence about the EU project is rooted in its multifaceted nature. For many it was difficult to speak about the support for the EU in general, because very different dimensions are involved in this equation.

I would like to emphasise that I and other colleagues here mention benefits, but at the same time are aware of things that are not that good. I am not sure if one can actually give a general balance of benefits and losses, because very different spheres are involved here (male, Group IV).

Yet, ultimately the majority believed that there was no alternative to the EU membership, as the potential negative results of not joining are far more convincing that this was the right step to take.

Poland would be in a very different place now, if we had not joined the EU in 2004, it would look somewhat different. The results of jumping on this train we may see in many years to come, yet the effects of not joining it would have been visible already in 2015 (male, Group IV).

However, the support for EU membership was mainly expressed in qualified terms, coupled with concerns underpinned by nationalist thinking.

Even the hardest critics of EU integration were able to point to various pragmatic benefits flowing from the EU integration, yet reject EU membership due to considerations of a symbolic character. The positive aspects of EU integration were expressed almost exclusively in utilitarian terms and included the financial support, freedom of movement of people as well as the strengthening of the role of Poland on the international scene and increased security. EU was also mentioned as the source of good standards in selected policy areas.

The EU funding was mentioned by all participants as the most tangible and visible benefit following from Poland's membership in the EU. It has boosted Poland's development, helped to build road infrastructure, helped the establishment of small businesses, etc. One participant also mentioned the social dimension, such as activization of citizens, especially marginalised groups:

All the time there are some money from the Union flowing to Polish institutions. In my home place there are associations and they get some money to organise events for children or for women, and there are many people who want to do something, not just for money, but even for free—and this is positive (female, Group II).

However concerns were raised about the way the money is channelled and spent, as well as the relevance of some of the initiatives that got the EU funding, or the indolence of Polish bureaucrats, who failed to secure all the available funding and the uncertainty of the situation the EU funding ended in 2020. Those with a more critical stance also claimed that any benefit following from the EU also had its costs, as there is 'no such thing as a free lunch': the EU would demand something in return later. As one of the participants wondered:

it's interesting what the EU will want from us then in return (female, Group II).

In other words, the perception of benefits is also determined by the initial attitude towards the EU: those distancing themselves from the EU are also more cautious when assessing the benefits.

Freedom of movement, including the possibility to work and study in other EU states as well as travel without passports was the second most often mentioned positive aspect of the EU integration. Almost all participants mentioned the free movement of people as one of the main benefits of the EU:

you can see this everywhere, my friends, everybody flies here and there, one day they are in one country, and next—in another (male, Group I).

Yet others also drew attention to the negative sides of emigration, including broken families, children and they elderly left without proper care, as well as depopulation of Poland, brain drain and brain waste that also have negative consequences for the Polish economic development.

Another perceived benefit of the EU integration was the enhanced position of Poland's on the international scene and increased Poland's security. According to some, the only available alternative to the EU membership is being under strong influence of Russia, which is much more undesirable, even if one was critical of certain aspects of it:

It is enough to look at other countries in the East and South, all those countries that do not belong to the EU are in the sphere of influence of Russia, including Belarus, Moldova or Georgia—all these countries are under the influence of Russia. Some have already lost parts of its territory like Moldova has lost Transnistria and Georgia has lost Abkhazia. So when somebody is saying that membership is not important…. If a Baltic country, say Latvia, where there is really a huge Russian minority, if this country had not been in the NATO and the EU, it would also had been partitioned by now (male, Group I).

Especially the military engagement of Russia on the Ukrainian territory has contributed to the realisation by the younger generation of the geopolitical threats of which they—being a generation that did not personally remember the Cold War—had been previously less aware. The EU membership is seen as a security guarantee for Poland:

The EU creates such a military union that in case of threat can unite and defend itself against other countries, because we can see that these threats are real (male, Group I).

However, the general assessment of the EU's reaction towards Russia's aggression against Ukraine was rather negative. The EU has earned a lot of criticism for failing to react promptly, decidedly and in a concerted way. In the words of one participant:

In the context of the situation in Ukraine, for us, Poles, I believe our membership in the EU guarantees security. I do not believe that this (conflict) will reach us… But I am personally ashamed of the EU because of how it is treating what is happening in the East (female, Group III).

Critics of EU integration were not necessarily convinced by the argument about a stronger position on the international scene, guaranteed by the EU membership:

The EU is not seen as an equal partner of the States or Russia, we are a younger brother, because we do not have a single strong leader, delegated by all, and could be placed alongside Putin and Obama (male, Group I).

By implication, Poland has not gained that much from EU membership in terms of its position in international relations. The statement comes from a person critical of the EU integration on many accounts and is an interesting example of the skewed logic of the Eurosceptic argument: in a way, European integration is rejected because it is not deep enough.

The harmonisation of legislation in different policy areas in the context of EU integration is usually the main target of Eurosceptic criticism. Yet the EU is also seen as a source of good standards and quality legislation in selected policy areas. One of the participants pointed out that the EU is a source of policy inputs and contributes to the quality of decision-making process:

In Poland politicians and authorities often focus not on substantial policy issues, but on some internal debates and cannot reach decisions on legal regulations, because one politician is against another and the substantial issues are lost in this debate. So, if we cannot shape our own legal regulations and if these decision-making processes are overstretched, and politicians cannot unite, it is good that there are some external solutions. If we were not adopting some external regulations, politicians would just be shouting at one another, while people suffering from violence would not face any solutions (female, Group III).

The comment referred to gender equality legislation, while the majority of participants were not supportive of any harmonisation in the moral/cultural sphere. Yet even most unenthusiastic about the EU integration could notice positive aspects of some common standards in certain policy areas promoted by the EU. One of participants mentioned environmental protection policy:

Now the state of natural environment is worsening, and they [the EU] have more restrictive regulations (female, Group II),

and another referred to technology:

Probably it is good that the EU engages into the technological sphere. Even there was a directive that until 2020 the Internet speed should be 20–30 Mb. Thanks to this it can be introduced in some countries, where otherwise it would not have been possible. And thus we have the development of technology, and the development of society (male, Group II).

Both study participants expressed a lot of criticism of different aspects of the EU integration, including harmonisation in many other policy areas, demonstrating how complex attitudes towards the EU are.

Finally, several participants mentioned better understanding between people from different member-states:

I believe there is greater opening, despite everything, that we have opened ourselves towards other societies, nations and that cultural openness has really increased (female, Group III).

This perspective was, however, rather exceptional. Notably, the study participants did not explicitly mention peace in Europe as one of the benefits of the EU integration. The positive aspects were predominantly framed in utilitarian terms, as concrete tangible outcomes.

The Negative Aspects of EU Integration: the Realm of the Emotive-Symbolic Loss of Sovereignty

While the positive aspects of the EU integration were mainly voiced in pragmatic terms, the criticism stemmed mainly from concerns over national identity and sovereignty, the idea that "something is being imposed on us" was met with much resentment. Euroscepticism is by definition the opposition to limiting exclusive national sovereignty, be it in some or in all policy areas. Hooghe and Marks explain this "obsession" with sovereignty by showing that governance serves two different purposes: a means of collective benefits achievement and an expression of community. Since the necessary scope of cooperation

often overstretches the territorial scope of a community, problems are bound to arise: "the preference for self-rule is almost always inconsistent with the functional demand for regional authority" (2008: 2). However, while there may be different ways of arguing why "letting Brussels decide" is bad, for some national sovereignty poses a fundamental indisputable value in itself, which leads to indiscriminate "gut" opposition towards anything being "imposed" on Poland, irrespective of the policy outcomes.

Some of the study participants saw the transferring of the decision-making power to the supra-national level (at least in selected policy areas) as illegitimate and undue in itself, the policy outcomes were of no significance here. As one of the participants put it:

Membership in the EU means certain restrictions, Poland has lost its sovereignty, all those orders, bans, I don't think this is normal (male, Group III).

Migration policy was one of the areas that stirred emotional reactions:

Migrants that flow to Italy are also imposed on us. They can impose it on us that we need to accept some thousands of migrants. But it should be a decision for us to make and it should not be imposed on us. This is precisely the negative side of the loss of our sovereignty to the UE, limited sovereignty, they can impose something on us and we can get a fine or some sanctions (female, Group III).

The research was conducted still before the issue of migration crisis reached the epicentre of the political debate and electoral campaign. The opposition expressed here is not so much to receiving the refugees, but to the very idea that certain decisions are made beyond the domestic level. The very notion that decisions affecting the country should at a supra-national level raises considerable opposition. At the centre of the sovereignty-based motivations behind Euroscepticism is the emphasis on the indivisibility of nation-state.

Threat to National Interests

Many participants also made claims that are pragmatic at face value nature, but are underpinned by considerations of a more emotive-symbolic nature. Such claims against the EU integration rest on two assumptions: Polish national interests are fundamentally different from those of other member-states, especially the "old" member-states; and Poland's position in the EU is too weak to defend its own interests. Many participants suggested that Poland's voice is not heard in Brussels and Poland's interests and needs do not get sufficient attention, which was attributed to the multitude of interests represented by different nation states and relatively limited influence of Poland. The purportedly weak position of Poland was contrasted with the tandem of France and Germany (sometimes the UK was also mentioned) dominating the EU and focusing on ensuring their own national interests, at the costs of smaller member-states.

The worst in the EU is the uncertainty whether the EU is really aiming at the good for the whole EU or rather for several selected states. In practice we will see whether Poland belongs to this union creation or rather Poland is a separate member-state that is exploited, not treated as a partner... I believe we are an object rather than a subject in the EU policy, (female, Group III).

While some argued that Polish interests are disregarded due to the lack of understanding of the specificity of Poland's needs, others were certain of ill will guiding some of the old *member-states. Especially Germanophobic sentiments were very pronounced here:*

On the contrary, they know perfectly well how the situation looks like in our country and in other countries. Yet they consciously take steps that clash with our interests. By 'they' I mean Germany, and then France and Great Britain (male, Group I)

The "complex of Poland," discussed above, breeds resentment towards the EU "core" countries and informs Eurosceptic attitudes among the young generation who grew up as fully-fledged EU citizens. It is based on exaggerating Poland's suffering and equating it with moral superiority towards other member-states, especially towards Germany, and hence high aspirations regarding the role Poland should play in the EU and, at the same time, diminishing the real achievements, objective position and strength. It is noteworthy that none of the participants mentioned Poles Jerzy Buzek or Donald Tusk as holders of very high political offices in the EU.

The EU's response to the current security crisis in the east of Ukraine has reinforced this complex. Even though there was no consensus over what the EU reaction should have been—some criticised the lack of immediate introduction of sanctions, others voiced an opinion that Poland suffered from the sanctions disproportionally in comparison to other EU member states—a recurring claim was that Poland's position was somehow disadvantaged.

I believe the EU should react more, and it is hard for me to say in what exactly way this should be done. But it should be the reaction of the whole EU, and not just of Poland. Because Poland is a scapegoat of sorts, if something (is wrong), always Poland is to blame, (female, Group II).

Difficulty with which the EU managed to work out a common stance on Russia, many dissenting voices within different member-states, according to the research participants, illustrated the lack of solidarity between EU MSs and thus weakness of the EU:

This [lack of common front] demonstrates the internal weakness of the Union. Take for example the case of the conflict in the East, the Union condemns it, and then two days later the president of one of the founding EU member-states meets with Putin, and not necessarily to settle the conflict, but rather on business matters. This is a case of breaking this common front (male, Group IV).

Another participants supported this claim by saying that Germany is happy doing business with Russia, while Central Europe, "our region," and especially the Baltic states feel threatened by Russia (male, Group IV). Some of the participants criticised the fact that Poland was left out of negotiations with Russia. This fact was seen as proof that Poland, an "expert on Ukraine," is not treated with due respect by the 'core' member-states.

Predictably, the euro crisis contributed to unfavourable attitudes towards the common currency.

if we adopted the euro, we would not have any influence on the emission of the money, on what happens to it, so I believe it is a bad idea (male, Group IV).

The opposition between the "core" and "periphery" with Poland belonging to periphery but aspiring to the core is notable here. Many participants' emphasis on limiting integration in certain policy areas reinforced the idea of "differentiated integration" promulgated by Eurosceptical political entrepreneurs. Yet, they also complained that Poland does not enjoy

the position within the EU that it deserves—among the "big players," the "core" member-states. However, the majority appear to miss the fact that by trying to block integration in different policy areas, by insisting on Poland's exclusive interests and needs and by limiting its participation in the EU to e.g. economic integration, as some propose, Poland is certainly not moving closer to the "core." Only one participant made an observation that: 'We cannot be against everything that others consider to be good' (female, Group III).

However, concerns about the conflict between Poland's EU membership and the Polish national interests are rooted not only in the lack of trust towards other EU member-states. The conviction about misrepresentation of Poland's interests at the EU level goes hand in hand with lack of trust towards both national and pan-European institutions. Many participants claimed they did not trust much any of the institutions, either domestic or pan-European with just slight preferences of one level over another. According to one participant, even if he trusted the European Parliament the most among the EU institutions, his trust towards it was rather limited, because:

this is an assembly of representatives of certain countries, but why should the interest of Poland, its needs be of importance to them. Say Spain does not care about it, so how can you have trust? Poland has fewer representatives… they are not in majority, so if they want to push through a given project, they need to look for allies. So it's difficult to give a straightforward answer (male, Group I).

The lack of trust towards domestic institutions was justified by negative assessment of Polish political class and of the ruling elites in particular. In case of European institutions the participants rather emphasised their remoteness and limited knowledge about the institutions and their powers as well as current European affairs on the one hand, and too divergent national interests of EU MSs to have a common policies beneficial to all.

Threat to National Identity and Values

Concerns over sovereignty often coalesce with those on national identity: "while sovereignty concerns may exist independently of identity concerns, it is unlikely that identity concerns exist independently of sovereignty concerns." (Sørensen 2007: 102) The sense of threatened sovereignty translates into a sense of threatened national identity. It is closely associated with what Leconte defined as value-based Euroscepticism and stems from the assumption that Polish national identity is inseparable from Christian Catholic values understood as socially conservative norms. Any attempts to challenge these norms are seen as a violation of the value system fundamental to the Polish national identity.

According to a recurrent argument shifting decision-making to the supra-national level meant producing legislation that goes against the grain of nation traditions and norms, which is detrimental to national identity. In the words of one participant:

The legislation should preserve the national character of a given country, its traditions, and should not be imposed from outside (female, Group IV).

While in this context several policy areas were mentioned, the most prominent was the anti-discrimination legislation. EU's attempts to counter discrimination have often been

perceived as undue encroachment into the sphere of values system and morality, threatening the national identity. Many participants opposed what they called 'unification of values':

The majority of controversies concern the culture/moral sphere, for example single-sex marriage—here every country that does not have this legislation feels pressure from the EU and people coming from such countries and are in such relationships. (…) Whereas the legislation that reflects the country and its traditions should be preserved, such things should not be imposed (Group III, female).

The EU should give the basis for economic cooperation between these countries and produce benefits. And imposing…, telling other countries whether homosexual unions should be recognised or not is not a good idea. Moral issues should be left within [the discretion of] a cultural community (male, Group I).

This type of arguments fits Leconte's value-based Euroscepticism, or 'the perception that EU institutions unduly interfere in matters where not only strongly held collective and societal preferences, but, more fundamentally, value systems, are at stake" (2010: 57). It usually relies on the alleged incompatibility between the so-called "Christian values," as the defining values of the Polish national identity, and the norms promoted by EU regulations. Sometimes, the opposition is made between Europe as a civilisation built on Christian values, with socially conservative Poland firmly belonging to it, and the EU that goes against these values. Conservative social norms are understood here as the epitome of Christian values and thus the backbone of the European value system:

More and more we hear about the values system, that the Union clashes with this values system, clashes with Christianity, which is the pillar of Europe. This is especially visible when some controversial regulation needs to be adopted by the Polish legal system, and Poland does not have a chance to get out of it… this is a two-way street, we get much, but we also need to give much (female, Group IV).

Indirect reference to Poland as *anti-murale* of Christianity, discussed earlier, can be traced here. By inference, we might say even that in this understanding Poland is more European and the EU that has eschewed its Christian legacy. The EU seen as a threat to shared value system is simultaneously understood as a threat to national identity.

However, national identity is not just about values in this context. Other policy areas mentioned by study participants in the context of the EU encroachments into spheres affecting national identity included food industry and coal-mining. The harmonisation of the EU law on food safety affecting some food products, such as Polish cheese "oscypek," were seen as an attempt to undermine the Polish culture. Whereas the EU climate and energy policy aimed at liming the CO_2 emissions and thus downsizing the coal-mining industry was seen as a direct blow not only to Poland's independence but also to Polish traditions and Poland's identity as an inherently coal-mining country.

To sum up, the young educated adults' euroscepticism is not based on the pragmatic assessment of benefits and costs, rather it centres on claims around the loss of sovereignty and threats to national identity—symbolic issues of highly emotional character. These claims rest on several assumption including strong emphasis on the nation-state as naturally placed to respond to different challenges, values conflict between (Christian) Poland and (arelegious) Europe, civilizational differences between member-states resulting in conflicting interests and underpinned by a pronounced "complex of Poland" (Skotnicka-Illasiewicz

1991), a conviction that Poland is not given its due and a considerable lack of trust towards the elites, be it national or European ones. Even though some claims are framed in pragmatic terms—as "a threat to national interests"—they are not necessarily supported by factual evidence and thus can be seen as rationalisation of concerns and fears of symbolic nature. Predictably less educated young people, who possess even less knowledge about the EU and less trained in critical analysis of received information, form their opinions about EU integration on emotions pre-conceived ideas even to a larger degree. At the same time, the benefits of the EU integration are seen in almost exclusively instrumental way with a focus on the economic dimension.

Discussion

How can we explain Eurosceptic attitudes among the Polish youth? Kritzinger has demonstrated that national factors are more important than European ones in the evaluation of the EU. EU publics have insufficient knowledge about the EU, while nation-states have more direct influence on their citizens, hence EU's assessment is strongly related to the perceived performance of the nation-state (2013). The present research results also suggest that the negative opinions are formulated not on the basis of actual EU performance, but rather—different preconceived ideas and expectations grounded in the national context. In their "postfunctionalist theory of integration," Hooghe and Marks have argued that the key factor that changed the political climate in the EU from a "permissive consensus" to a "constraining dissensus" was politicisation of EU integration (2008). The young adult generation of Poles has missed the period of consensus over the EU integration preceding the EU accession, when the emphasis in the public and political sphere was put on the benefits of the EU integration, and instead were growing up during a period of increasing politicisation of the EU affairs, having been constantly exposed to various critical discourses on EU integration, unleashed after the EU accession had been achieved.

At the same time, the youngest adult Poles' political horizons are limited to EU membership, consequently, not only Poland's belonging to the EU, but also all the benefits coming from the European citizenship and the EU integration are taken for granted by them. Although even critics of EU integration mentioned some positive outcomes, such as mobility, they have no experience of any other situation, and thus are not that appreciative of such positive aspects of EU membership. Hooghe and Marks demonstrate that the inability to calculate the balance of benefits and losses due to limited knowledge turns people more susceptible to political cueing by domestic political entrepreneurs (2008). In the present case it is not just the inability to assess costs and benefits due to lack of knowledge that will be discussed below, but also a sort of "blindness" towards the positive, and underappreciation of the EU benefits due to lack of experience of any other context that renders them more receptive to the critical narratives promulgated by various political actors.

Popular support for the EU is strongly dependent on the political elites' ability to shape the political discourse on the EU integration in a way that reflects national interests and culture (Herrmann, Brewer, & Risse 2004: 3). However not only Eurosceptic, but also pro-European Polish elites all too often have shared a defensive stance vis-à-vis the EU, and fo-

cused on "protecting Polish interests" in an attempt to score political points. Niżnik rightly pointed out that even during the eight years of power in the pro-European Civic Platform the issue of European interests was completely absent from the political discourse (2015). It should not be thus surprising that the participants tended to focus on "what Europe can do for us," and never vice versa.

Moreover, voters, when formulating the opinions on the EU's performance, also rely on domestic proxies. According to Anderson's proxy model satisfaction with democracy in the domestic context is directly related to public support of the EU. His research demonstrated that support for the domestic political system, the establishment parties the incumbent government are most powerful predictors of support for the EU membership. (Anderson 1998) Kritzinger has also found that the citizens' attitudes towards the EU are formulated on the basis of their perception of the nation-state (2003). In other words, citizens project their opinions about something they know (national government) onto something they know far less (the EU). The pro-European Civic Platform government was in power for eight years, dominating the period of political awareness formation of the young adult generation. Thus the revolt against the Euro-enthusiastic Civic Platform, ruling for the past eight years translates into challenging different aspects of the EU integration and even the EU membership itself. So to some extent the anti-European sentiments are the effect of a collateral damage resulting from the fatigue with the government that happens to be pro-European.

The Polish context also serves as a good illustration of another claim by Hooghe and Marks, namely that "political parties are decisive in cueing the public, and the wider their disagreement, the more exclusive identity is mobilized against European integration" (Hooghe and Marks 2004: 417). Indeed, the political rift between the generally pro-European Civic Platform and its right-wing opposition has resulted in the summoning of an exclusive national identity, incompatible with a European identity, by the latter.

Almost half of the Polish society—including the youngest age groups—does not share European identity, as discussed above. Thus, Eurosceptic political claims fall on fertile ground, so to say. Indeed, the research by De Vries and Edwards demonstrated that individuals with exclusive national identities are susceptible to Eurosceptical political propaganda: they are more receptive to political framing and cueing and easier persuaded that European integration is in conflict with their patriotism. Notably, the role of populist right parties in whipping up Eurosceptic attitudes among individuals with inclusive national identities was minimal (De Vries and Edwards 2009). The radicalisation of Eurosceptic and nationalistic rhetoric, especially in the context of the three consecutive electoral campaigns, has undoubtedly had an impact on the perceptions of the EU integration of the youngest generation, arming EU-sceptics with plentiful arguments against the EU. The comparison between the selection of quotations from right-wing party campaign materials presented above and comments made by the study participants demonstrates striking similarities.

Furthermore, Hooghe and Marks rightly emphasise that political cues come from a variety of actors, not only political parties, as discussed above. The role of the Catholic Church in Poland with its very strong engagement in the political sphere (Janowski 2007; Chełstowska, Druciarek, Kucharczyk, Niżyńska 2013) including its recent 'war on gender' (Graff, Korolczuk 2017), its unequivocal support for selected political options, its strong presence in the education system cannot be overlooked here. One policy area met with emo-

tional responses by the study participants was the EU's (real, possible or alleged) role in promoting gender equality and LGBT rights. The reason for such a reaction has to do with a particular formulation of the Polish national identity as inherently Catholic, and of Polish Catholicism—as socially conservative and patriarchal. Gender equality, children rights, sexual minority rights have long been framed by right-wing parties, right-wing media and the Catholic Church not only as an unwelcome imposition, but also as a threat to national identity.

Moreover, the anti-establishment or anti-system tendencies derive their energy from perceived and real generation gap. On the one hand, the youngest generation of adult Poles never had a chance to either shape the debates on the prospective membership or give their opinion in the referendum. Thus, they may perceive EU membership as something imposed on them, something that happened without their choice. Eurosceptic stance may be an attempt to define oneself and the generation by challenging the political mainstream. Trenz and de Wilde rightly emphasise the discursive nature of Euroscepticism and see it as a reactive identity formation (2009). Criticising the EU is a reaction not only to the integration itself, but to the pro-European stance of the mainstream political elites, often resented (and envied?) by the younger generation. Yet, this generation gap also has deeper roots and consequences.

The political rift over EU integration is directly related to the cleavage over the attitudes towards transformation. The anti-establishment and anti-system rhetoric of the Polish right-wing and anti-system parties hinges on the criticism of the "round table" solutions. This narrative may be especially attractive to young people, who beside being generally prone to anti-system messages, may also feel as losers of the current system. (Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016) The young generation, including university students, may have a conviction that "round table generation" had the opportunity to undeservedly advance in politics, economy, media because of the quasi-revolutionary situation. Especially that this narrative is widely circulated in various right-wing media and book publications.[2] The youngest generation also appears not to see the irony of the then main anti-establishment party being simply former establishment, with some of their representatives being former members of the "round table." The real and perceived difficulties on the labour market faced by the youngest adult generation also may contribute to the self-perception of "losers" and the anti-establishment sentiments.

However, the alternative offered by the right-wing is based on an ahistorical understanding of independence and sovereignty and thus a gut opposition to the EU integration, which many young people have accepted in an act of phantom rebellion. The clear predominance of emotive-symbolic aspects in the negative evaluations of the EU integration and the normative value of national sovereignty which is entirely taken for granted illustrates this situation. The EU, often embodied by several bigger "old" EU member-states, is constructed as the enemy, against which this independence needs to be protected. While the majority of young people support Poland's EU membership, many they have also imbibed

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[2] See for example the book by Dorota Kania, Jerzy Targalski and Maciej Marosz, *Resortowe Dzieci*, purportedly shows the links between today's media, business, political and scientific elites with the Polish People's Republic structures.

the isolationist, xenophobic, distrustful of others narratives promoted by the right-wing political parties, media and other actors.

Significantly, during the pre-accession period Euroscepticism was mainly associated with the uneducated, unemployed, those living in the rural areas and the elderly. However, we are observing a process of "glamourisation" or "hipsterisation" of the conservative and nationalist circles, with young well-educated and well-dressed people successfully using modern technologies becoming an important link between the old-fashioned political parties and the young generation sharing with anti-establishment sentiments. The "patriotism fashion" includes clothes, gadget, tattoos, computer games, music, or historical reconstructions. (Chimiak 2016) This type of exclusive patriotism—promoted by varisou public institutions, including the Warsaw Uprising Museum or the Institute of National Memory—romanticises tragic events in Polish history, including the Warsaw uprising that bore a heavy toll of civic lives or the anti-Communist resistance—the so called "cursed soldiers" and contributes to an exclusive national identity. The online media play a very important role in promoting nationalistic outlook among the young people, including the multitude of patriotic and nationalistic web-sites and social media groups. One example here could be the Facebook community called "Hipster Prawica" (Hipster Right-wing) (more than 12 thousand followers), established by a group of right-wing journalists who also run the conservative *Fronda* magazine. This is a way of promoting political messages in a way attractive for young people. Thus, ironically, being "Eurosceptic" has become the expression of a critical outlook, independent thinking and high self-esteem, and thus more acceptable, attractive, or 'hip' in the eyes of many young people.

The role of the media in shaping the EU attitudes is ambivalent. On the one hand, they are the main source of information about the EU integration. Yet, the EU issues reported in the national media are heavily filtered through domestic lenses, while the interest in actors and institutions from other counties is rather limited, thus promoting a rather "parochial" view. Moreover, especially in times of crisis, the media—main source of information about the EU—may contribute to (re)nationalisation of public opinion, by "rallying-round-the-flag" reactions. (Leconte 2010: 212) The ongoing crises (the euro, the security and the migration crises have given perfect opportunity for coverages built around conflict and defence of national interests. Since media are the main channel of the public discourse on the EU, "media coverage is not so much a reflection or antecedent of Euroscepticism, it is its primary locus" (Wilde & Trenz 2012: 538). As higher news value is ascribed to negative news, journalists may selectively treat news stories regarding the EU, thus amplifying the discontent with the EU. The recent EU crises have provided ample opportunities for such coverage. As a result, the opinions on European integration are formed on the basis of not factual information, but half-truths, electoral mottos, misconceptions. It has been already mentioned that the study participants often declared lack of interest in the EU matters and lack of information about EU policies, decision-making process, even national representatives in the EU. Nevertheless, many voiced strongly-held opinions. It goes without saying that in absence of strong interest and sufficient knowledge, the public opinion is considerably more vulnerable to manipulations, as previous research has amply demonstrated.

Besides, fragmentation of sources of information and considerable distrust of mainstream media is also of importance. Young people often disregard or ignore the main-

stream mass media and rely on social media, where they belong to different subgroups that exchange articles and video clips, and subscribe to youtube channels. Some of the participants emphasised that they do not watch TV, because irrespective of the channel it is very one-sided, that journalists collaborate with politicians in creating the reality that suits them, while the truth is often hidden by them. It is worth emphasising that right-wing media often self-describe themselves as 'independent', 'anti-system', 'anti-elitists', 'free speech' 'politically incorrect', etc., catering to the anti-establishment sentiments of the young. Thus, instead of being a source of objective information internet-based media rather become an instrument of confirming already held views, after all in the internet all sources of information may be perceived as are equal. Moreover, since internet forums' users may also be more motivated to express their negative rather than affirmative opinions. As a result, as previous research demonstrated, online media may amplify euroscepticism and partially silence pro-European arguments. (De Wilde, Michailidou & Trenz 2014). The development of online media has undoubtedly contributed to the changing perception of the right-wing parties and conservative and nationalist ideologies and increased popularity of them among young people.

Last, but certainly not least, education contributes to the high receptiveness towards nationalistic messages among the young people. The quality of historical and civic education and education about the European Union in Polish schools appears an important factor shaping undercurrent euroscepticism among the young people. Civic education at schools is aimed at equipping students with necessary skills in order to be educated citizens able to make informed political choices and thus be less susceptible to populist claims. But it is also the main source of information about the EU. According to the report assessing the presence of the EU in school curricular in all EU member-states, although there is a special sub-chapter dedicated to the EU issues in the Polish civic education handbook, "the material was not considered appealing with the information presented in quite a 'dry' manner" (2013: 47), while Polish teachers admit they have difficulties in incorporating interactive methods into their regular teaching on EU issues. In other words, even if the data is available, it does not mean that students have a good chance of internalising it. The quality of education notwithstanding, the sheer number of lessons per week is very limited: in secondary schools (liceum) there are twice as many hours of religion as civic education. The results of the secondary school leaving exam in history and civic education are case in point. In 2015 half of the students scored only 20% and the average result was 26%. (Blumsztajn 2015) Thus civic education curriculum is not adequate to students' needs and capabilities, while the amount of time spent on this subject is far from sufficient.

The level of subjective knowledge of how the EU works is very high in Poland, relative to some other member-states. 71% of adult Poles claim to understand how the EU works, and this share is even higher among the youngest cohort (15–24)—82% and 88% among students. In France the average is 42% and 51% among students. Poles also perform relatively well regarding the questions meant to test the objective knowledge of "how the EU works" (Eurobarometer 81, 2014) The problem is that the knowledge of such facts as the current number of EU member states does not necessarily equal understanding of the processes and mechanisms of decision-making and power-sharing, as widely-shared concerns about the loss of sovereignty illustrate. As it has been discussed already, the lack of un-

derstanding of how the EU integration works, lack of knowledge as well as lack of shared European identity make people more susceptible to cues by political entrepreneurs with a Eurosceptic stance.

Conclusions

The support for the EU membership in Poland is high in all age groups, including the young people. Yet, research demonstrates, the undercurrent euroscepticism should not be ignored. Eurosceptic attitudes among the youngest generation of adult Poles are driven by concerns over threat to the national identity and sovereignty as well as national interests. The preferred model is some form of "differentiated integration." The main preoccupation of its proponents is "how to eat a cake and have it," in a manner of speaking, or how to stay in the EU and gain as many benefits as possible, yet not to give anything back and to avoid any "impositions" from Brussels or Berlin. The supporters of "differentiated integration" model, however, ignore the fact that constant emphasis on egoistic national interests and the drive to opt out from integration in different policy areas makes Poland weaker and distances it from the "core" of the EU. As one of the study participants quoted above noted the strategy of always opposing initiatives proposed by others is not a winning one.

The significance of the domestic political context for the increase in Euroscepticism should not be ignored. Radicalization of domestic political discourse, (instrumental) exploitation of Eurosceptic rhetoric by various political entrepreneurs shape people's perception of European integration and arm them with Eurosceptical arguments. Young people—relatively less politically savvy, and more prone to anti-establishment tendencies—have proved to be especially vulnerable to these messages.

Further research is needed to analyse the relationship between euroscepticism and xenophobia. Previous research demonstrated that anti-European sentiments have been shown to be strongly related to the fear of, or hostility towards other cultures. (McLaren 2002) We have already mentioned the uneasiness, to put it mildly, with which many of the study participants treated Germany, and its leadership in the EU, discussed above. This evidence can also be juxtaposed with much more widely-spread negative attitudes towards accepting refugees, especially from Muslim countries among the youngest adult Poles. 78% of people aged 18–24 against accepting some of the refugees from Africa and Middle East to aid other EU member-states, in comparison to 66% among 35–44 and similar share among the older cohorts (Kowalczuk 2016). Also young supporters of Polish right-wing parties have been shown to share authoritarian tendencies (strong leadership and socio-culturally homogenous society) as well as anti-immigrant prejudice (Jurczyszyn 2016). It is worth analysing in greater detail how euroscepticism and xenophobia interlay in the Polish context.

In order to divert these tendencies it is necessary to redefine the terms of the political debate on EU integration. It is vital that the pro-European elites do not compete with their political opponents on who better defends national interests vis-à-vis the EU, but take a pro-active European stance.

The information and knowledge thesis does play a role in the public's receptiveness to political Eurosceptic claims. It is strictly related to fragmentation of sources of information

resulting from greater reliance on social media as well as general distrust of mainstream media among the anti-system and protest-oriented youth as well as sensationalisation of news reporting on the EU (as well as other issues). However, knowledge about the process of EU integration or benefits of EU membership is not always sufficient for fostering more optimistic attitudes towards the EU. It is important to emphasise that the idea of "a community of 'sovereign' states is internally contradictory, and the only way to avoid this contradiction is deeper political integration" (Niżnik 2016: 247).

Without comprehensive attempts to challenge the state of shallow consensus over European integration among the Polish public and to educate younger generations in a more pro-European spirit, especially at a time of high politicisation of EU integration, the Polish society is likely to be further sinking into the state of constraining dissensus. Such education should focus on the development of social and civic competences of young Poles, so that they are prepared to criticise different aspects of EU integration in a constructive and well-informed way from a position of European citizens, and not disgruntled fellow-travellers. As early as in 2002 Mach formulated the barebones of European education. In his words it is "both education about Europe and for Europe, with the aim of educating future generations of Europeans" (2002: 7). Competences of a young European include: political, economic and social education that taken together help to shape an enlightened citizen of European society (Mach 2002). Importantly, this is not only about teaching the history of united Europe, but also about critical thinking about own history (Piejka 2013). Such a self-reflexive approach helps create an inclusive and not inclusive national identity, Polish and European at the same time. The recent European Parliament resolution on teaching EU at school also stresses the need for a European approach to the teaching of history and promoting EU dimension in education as well as teaching critical thinking. Learning about the EU at school should help "form well-informed and balanced opinions, exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities, including the right to vote, value diversity, encourage intercultural and interreligious dialogue and be active and responsible citizens." (European Parliament 2016: 6) The effects of this welcome initiative remains to be seen.

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