

Mind the Gap:

Southern Exit, Northern Voice, and Changing Loyalties since the Euro Crisis

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Abstract

In this article, we examine whether the EU's unequal encroachment on its Southern and Northern members' core state powers since the euro crisis – manifested in highly uneven burdens of economic adjustment and a reversal of intra-EU migration dynamics – had a knock-on effect on individual European identity. Though Euroscepticism has been rising everywhere, a steady majority of EU citizens continues to identify at least partially as “European.” While we see a widening educational gap across the Eurozone, we also observe a puzzling North-South divergence in identity among the young. Using individual-level data from Eurobarometer pooled over time, we investigate the micro-foundations of whether EU citizens continue to have a ‘shared’ (national/EU) or ‘exclusive’ (national) sense of belonging. We argue that the euro crisis triggered dynamics of Southern ‘exit’ (through surging South-North migration), Northern ‘voice’ (based on EU adoption of policies preferred in the North), and shifting national vs. European ‘loyalties.’

Key words: European Union, euro, exit, identity, loyalty, North-South gap, voice.

The Euro Crisis, Core State Powers, and Individual Identity Formation in North and South

After a decade rife with integration strife – over the euro, migration, security, and democracy – the issue of European collective identity is back on top of the EU agenda. In their response to various economic and political crises, EU leaders inadvertently empowered the supra-national institutions in Brussels and Frankfurt with a whole series of new economic policy tools and oversight, putting the EU directly in national political crosshairs (Bauer and Becker, 2014). Starting in 2011, both the European Commission and the European Central Bank began to interfere much more actively with what some scholars refer to as member countries’ “core state powers” (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2014, 2018). This has made the EU a much more salient and scrutinized actor in all member states, but not to the same degree in North and South. While the EU’s involvement in Southern ‘peripheral’ economies was much more palpable with direct consequences for national welfare and standards of living, its influence was less noticeable and hence less controversial in the Northern ‘core’ economies (Matthijs, 2017).

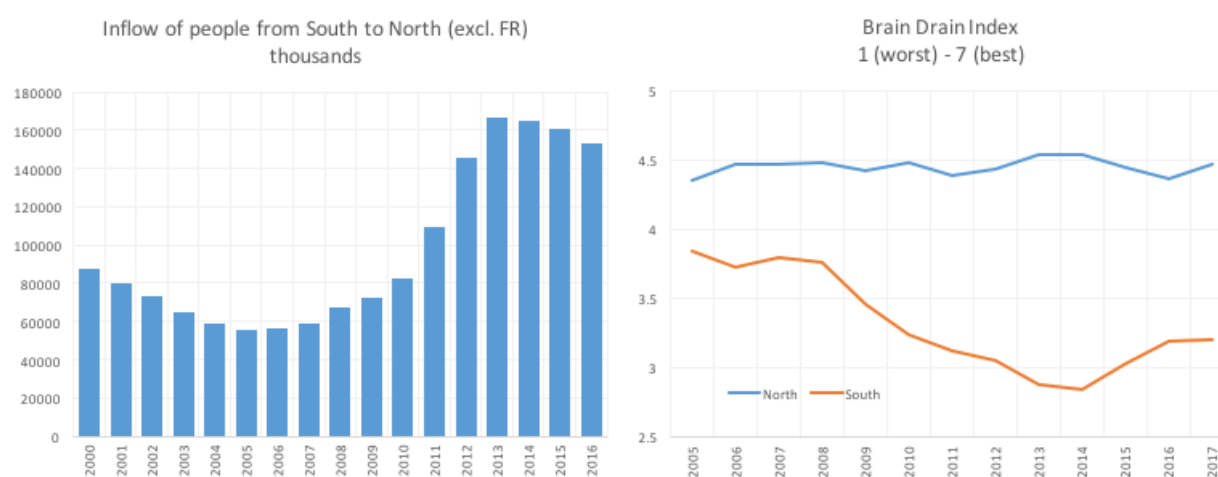
The euro crisis in particular had very uneven effects on EU member states. It is therefore hard to imagine that this gap in both input and output legitimacy (Schmidt, 2013) – little policy choice and rapidly worsening standards of living in the South vs. more discretion and better economic outcomes in the North – would not have had a qualitatively different impact on individuals’ sense of European identity in both parts of the Eurozone. Without a doubt, there exists considerable conceptual ambiguity around European identity – both individual and collective. Scholars continue to debate whether identity is mostly rational-primordial or constructed, and there are multiple problems of operationalization and measurement that have often led to a state of confusion in EU identity research (Kaina and Karolewski, 2013). We have good reasons to believe that the political salience of the euro crisis mattered a great deal for identity formation and will likely shape the debate on the EU’s future integration path. In a sense, the euro crisis provides us with the closest thing to a ‘natural experiment.’ Our basic aim is therefore to examine the impact of the European Union’s uneven encroachment on the core state powers of its Southern and Northern members since the euro crisis – given its disparate effects on domestic economic outcomes and intra-EU migration patterns – on the strength of individuals’ national and European identities.

The Eurozone’s crisis laid bare deep structural differences between a relatively more prosperous “Northern” core – Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, and the Netherlands – and a lagging “Southern” periphery – Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain.¹ The brunt of the burden of economic adjustment fell on the periphery countries, which adopted EU-sanctioned austerity measures and structural reforms in an attempt to stave off pressure from financial markets. These orthodox economic policies contributed to declining living standards, quickly rising levels of youth unemployment, falling wages, lower pensions, and cuts in public services in the euro periphery (Matthijs, 2016). In response, large numbers of young people emigrated from the Eurozone South to the Eurozone North (and to the UK), in search of better economic

¹ Note that we include France in the “North” even though it shares certain key characteristics with its Mediterranean neighbors, including high unemployment and low growth, but during the euro crisis was mostly treated by financial markets as a ‘creditor’ rather than a ‘debtor’ country. Note also that we include Ireland in the “South” even though it is obviously not in the Mediterranean, but was treated by financial markets as a ‘debtor’ country and often included in the ‘periphery’ (sometimes under the acronym ‘PIIGS’ or ‘GIIPS’).

opportunities. The crude net migration rate turned negative – signaling net *emigration* – in Ireland in 2009, in Greece in 2010, in Portugal in 2011, and in Spain in 2012.² This dynamic is visible in the substantial increase in inflows of people from the Eurozone South to the Eurozone North on the left panel of Figure 1. While the inflows had been steadily decreasing between 2000 and 2007, the euro crisis triggered an abrupt reversal of that trend. Immigration into the North from Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain almost tripled between 2007 and 2013. Only since 2014 have inflows started to slowly level off, though they continue at much higher levels than seen prior to the crisis. The counterpart of this massive Southern recourse to *exit* is a significant deterioration in the ability of especially Mediterranean European countries to attract new or retain existing talent, as measured by the World Economic Forum’s “brain drain index” illustrated on the right panel of Figure 1.³

Figure 1: Eurozone North vs. South: Emigration (left) and Brain Drain (right)



Source: Authors’ calculations based on OECD and WEF data (2018)

While the best and the brightest left, using the EU as an escape door, those who could not afford to leave – be it due to their older age, lack of foreign language abilities, or lower skills and human capital – remained stuck in crisis-torn countries. They resorted to using their *voice* by punishing their governments, which they held responsible for the economic pain inflicted, flocking to anti-establishment and Eurosceptic parties of both left and right. According to survey data from Eurobarometer, trust in both national governments and the EU in the South fell to all-time lows in 2013 (from a peak in 2007), and only partially recovered by 2017. In the North, on the other hand, trust in their national governments and the EU has been much more stable over time, but since 2010 trust in their national institutions has actually been higher than trust in the EU. This suggests that the citizens of the Northern countries feel that their economic and political models have been vindicated during the crisis, of which they did not suffer the fallout (Matthijs, 2017).⁴

² The crude rate of net migration plus adjustment is defined as the ratio of net migration (including statistical adjustment) during the year to the average population in that year. Data is from Eurostat, see: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/tps00019>.

³ This index is taken from the WEF’s annual global competitiveness report.

⁴ See Appendix, Figure A1.

While systematically falling levels of trust in national and EU institutions do not necessarily have consequences for political identity formation, these are worrying signs for EU officials keen on fostering a European *demos*. The core question we are asking in this article is whether the asymmetric nature of the Eurozone crisis has had different effects on individual European vs. national identity formation in North and South, given these conflicting economic and migration dynamics. We know from previous research (e.g. Fligstein, 2008; Fligstein et al., 2012; McNamara, 2015) that those who participate actively in “Europe” are more likely to develop and subsequently keep a “European” identity, while those whose perspectives are mostly local are likely to continue to hold a more “national” identity. But are these identities, once formed and established, relatively sticky over time? Or can they change, and if so, under what conditions?

In this article, we will assess how EU citizens’ self-identification has evolved over the past fifteen years, in light of the effects of the Eurozone debt crisis on European integration, especially given the accelerating encroachment of EU institutions onto ‘core state powers’ and the unequal knock-on effects on domestic economies that have set into motion new migration patterns (Kuhn and Nicoli, 2019). For the purposes of this article, we have in mind those core state powers that mainly deal with fiscal and financial affairs, i.e. taxation, banking supervision, and public administration. In the Southern periphery the erosion of national discretion over those domains has been more visible, contested, and hence politicized. While the euro crisis saw a tightening of the rules for all EU member states, including more oversight and regulatory powers for the European Commission and the European Central Bank in fiscal and financial matters (that used to be the exclusive domain of national governments), the Southern periphery experienced a more direct and heavy-handed interference of the EU institutions in domestic affairs compared to the Northern core.

We follow Martin Kohli (2002, p. 116) in that we see individuals as holding multiple identities rather than one single identity. They can relate to different group memberships and social positions, but our focus is mostly on individuals’ political identity with a territorial dimension. We are also fully cognizant of the fact that “collective” identities are context dependent, often highly disputed, situational, and not fixed over time (Cram, 2012). For us, identity is the product of both an individual’s material conditions as well as the social construction of collective identity by a country’s political elites over time. In order to better understand the relationship of collective identities and core state powers (Kuhn and Nicoli, 2019), we believe it however to be a useful exercise to drill down into the micro-foundations of people’s identity and disaggregate the survey data into questions of *individual* self-identification. This is especially important in finding out whether individual identity can change in response to an exogenous shock like the euro crisis. After all, we have strong reasons to believe that factors like geography, skill level, and relative youth all played a role in whether an individual’s identity evolved into being more European or more exclusively national as a result.

To that extent, we examine the North-South dynamics of four dimensions of individual EU/national identity formation over time: (1) how has young citizens’ identification with the European Union in North and South evolved since the mid-2000s; (2) what has happened to the existing educational gap in determining EU citizens’ identities since the crisis; (3) what has been the impact on citizens’ identity of perceived domestic economic conditions; and (4) how do individual preferences concerning economic priorities play into EU vs. national identity

formation? These questions will be explored using individual data from the European Commission's *Eurobarometer* survey.

Our central claim is that the euro crisis has set in motion different identity dynamics for different groups of people in North and South, with particularly strong effects on the young and the less skilled, who bore the brunt of the crisis. Accordingly, our theoretical framework proposes a substantial twist to Albert O. Hirschman's original insights in *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970), resulting in a few central hypotheses that we will test empirically. Our bottom line, somewhat counter-intuitively, is that we expect the young in the South to more strongly identify as "European" post-crisis, as they need the exit option the EU grants them through the single market and the free movement of people, while we expect the young in the North to identify less strongly as European post-crisis, as they credit their national governments' policies for growing economic opportunities and do not need to emigrate in search of better conditions. We also expect the more highly skilled, who have more voice in the EU, to identify as more European and less exclusively national since the crisis, while we expect the reverse for the less skilled. As a corollary, we will also examine other input factors, like individual economic policy preferences, and output factors, like macroeconomic performance.

But before we get to our theoretical model and proposed hypotheses, the next section will briefly review some key findings of the existing literature on the issue of European identity. That will allow us to situate a few gaps in that literature we are aiming to fill in this article.

Literature Review

The issue of whether and how a European identity could be constructed has been at the center of EU scholarship ever since the early days of European integration. The link between economic benefits, identities and political allegiance featured prominently in early works on supranational integration (Haas, 1958; 1964; Etzioni, 1969 [2000]) as well as in the European Commission's own research agenda (Commission 2012). Over the past few decades, European collective identity has been shaped by important EU symbols and practices in everyday life – including the use of a single currency, the euro, burgundy colored EU passports, cultural and economic exchanges, and common historical narratives – giving the EU an almost 'banal' authority (McNamara, 2015). But though the euro crisis was experienced all over the European Union, it had radically different macroeconomic effects on North and South and may therefore have influenced identity formation differently in core and periphery countries.

While some have argued that social identities are relatively sticky over long periods of time, heavily shaped by processes of early socialization, we wonder if a seminal event like the euro crisis could not affect those social identities (Mols and Weber, 2013). Such a negative shock could also be crucial in shaping individual identity especially for the young, who are in their formative years (Rekker, 2018). In general, we find that the existing EU literature on preferences does not interact as much with the EU literature on identity as we believe it should. More generally, our understanding of how identification with – and support for – Europe is shaped by national contexts is still partial, despite the relevance of these issues at a time when the euro crisis and the migration crisis have increased the salience of EU matters in national political discourses (Hobolt and de Vries, 2016, De Vries, 2018). While many EU scholars have used

identity as a key *independent* variable to explain various aspects of EU integration, our article aims to contribute to the literature that treats identity as a *dependent* variable, which is multi-dimensional and influenced by national socio-economic and political processes, individual characteristics, as well as collective European understandings (Boomgaarden et al., 2011).

Prescient of today's increased saliency of European issues in domestic political discourse, Risse (2006) pointed to evidence that socialization into European identity works not so much through transnational processes or through exposure to European institutions, but on the national level in a process whereby "European-ness" is gradually embedded in understandings of national identities. Focusing on the single currency, Risse (2011) further suggested that causality actually runs in both directions. On the one hand, the introduction of euro coins and notes affected euro area citizens' identification with the EU and Europe by providing a visible link from Brussels to the daily routines of its citizens (see also McNamara, 2015). On the other hand, existing collective identities pertaining to the nation-state explained how comfortable people felt using the euro. As mentioned earlier, Fligstein et al. (2012) showed that those who actively participate in 'Europe' were more likely to develop a European identity. But Fligstein and Polyakova (2015) pointed out that because of the global financial crisis, the EU had pushed citizens to value their national identities *more* and to look to their national governments for protection.

Petkanopoulou et al. (2018) looked at Spain and Greece to understand whether perceived inequality and disparities in wealth between EU countries predicted dis-identification with Europe. Their study suggested that this was indeed the case, and that the relationship between economic inequality in the EU and dis-identification with Europe was mediated by fear of losing national sovereignty and of Europe losing fundamental values. Galpin (2017) asked to what extent the euro crisis had affected the construction of European identity – through political and media discourse – in countries with different identities and national experiences of the crisis. Looking at Germany, Ireland and Poland, Galpin argued that the crisis had served to reinforce competing discourses on European and exclusive national identities and reinvigorated old national stereotypes of profligate 'sinners' and frugal 'saints' that in turn have reinforced divisions along North/South and Core/Periphery lines (see also Matthijs and McNamara, 2015).

An area in which more work could still be done is in studying the relationship between European identity formation and the domestic context in the form of macroeconomic policy preferences combined with differing personal opportunities for economic advancement. The main mechanism through which macroeconomic conditions have an impact on personal identity formation is that different situations create different winners and losers. In other words, national economies' varying rates of dynamism and their governments' economic priorities can lead to various cleavages among the population, for example of young vs. old, high vs. low skilled, or urban vs. rural. Furthermore, elite narratives about the benefits and costs of European integration can create different perceptions about the EU in different national contexts.

Recent research using micro and individual-level data has been able to cast a new light on the issue of preferences and on the link between the domestic context and preferences for supranational policymaking. Beaudonnet (2013) found that preferences for a European social policy are generated by limited social protection, a lack of allegiance, and a bad economic situation at the national level. This appeared to have been reinforced by the economic crisis.

Kleider and Stoeckel (2018) analyzed voters' preferences on international transfers, finding a strong association between voters' cultural orientations (i.e. their 'cosmopolitanism') and their position on transfers, as well as an important role of voters' economic left-right orientations. Franchino and Segatti (2017) analyzed experimental survey data from Italy to understand what drove individual attitudes towards a potential Eurozone fiscal union. Unsurprisingly, they found that high-income, right-leaning individuals with a weak European identity and a negative assessment of EU membership were more likely to oppose the measure. However, high-income respondents also displayed a greater willingness to pay to keep the euro, whereas lower-income participants were more willing to consider ditching the single currency if monetary union did not deliver the goods.

In the next section, we suggest our own theoretical framework as to why individuals with certain characteristics in both Northern core and Southern periphery of the Eurozone identify more or less with the EU or their national institutions. We will show differences stemming from the asymmetric adjustment they experienced since the euro crisis, and the perceived emigration opportunities or immigration threats the European Single Market brings to them, as well as skill level, input and output factors.

Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Changing Dynamics of European vs. National Identities in North and South

In order to better understand how individual characteristics and preferences have an impact on collective identity in the context of the Eurozone crisis, our model of identity formation builds on the work of David Laitin (1998: 21). His theory for how identities change over time tried "to account for both the impressive power of identity groups to give their adherents a sense of natural membership and the equally impressive power of individuals to reconstruct their social identities." For us, identity is first and foremost the product of a rational set of individual circumstances and personal material conditions. But we want to emphasize that we very much believe it also to be part of a package of socially constructed collective realities that are influencing and structuring the individual's identity at the same time. Seminal events – like the euro crisis – have the potential to drastically restructure both material conditions and how people experience their collective identity.

While we borrow the three key terms of Albert Hirschman's *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970), we propose a fundamentally different interaction between them. In his classic work, Hirschman argued that both 'exit' and 'voice' were two traditional ways in which consumers of a product could signal their relative satisfaction to the producers of the good. In effect, the two possible responses equally applied to members of any organization (e.g. a business, a political party, a nation, or any other human grouping) who perceived that the organization was demonstrating a decrease in quality or benefit to its members. 'Exit' implied a binary choice between withdrawing from the relationship or staying put. 'Voice' was a more active attempt to repair or improve the relationship through communication. In the case of citizens of a country, for example, they can respond to political repression or bad economic conditions by either emigrating to another country or by using various channels of protest. According to Hirschman, the way 'loyalty' mitigated the choice between exit and voice was to affect the cost-benefit

analysis of both options. Strong patriotism, for example, will work against emigration (or exit), and in favor of using voice, even in cases where the latter is deemed to be relatively ineffective.

In the context of identity formation within the European Union, we see the dynamics between exit, voice, and loyalty playing out rather differently than Hirschman did. Since the establishment of the Single Market, European citizens enjoy frictionless movement between member states and the right to study, work, and retire in any other member state. This fundamental freedom gives certain EU citizens – especially the ones who are relatively mobile, speak different languages, and face fewer cultural barriers – the relatively easy option to leave their national labor markets in the case of poor economic conditions. For the purposes of this article, ‘exit’ is therefore the choice to emigrate from one’s home member state (the individual’s national context) to another EU member state, usually one with much better economic and job prospects. ‘Voice’ comes into play in the Eurozone context when citizens feel that their national governments are actively considering their economic preferences or focus on their policy priorities (on the input legitimacy side) and are delivering the goods when it comes to a prosperous economy, dynamic labor markets, high quality public services, and generous pensions (on the output legitimacy side) (Schmidt, 2013).

The way ‘loyalty’ plays a central role in our framework is by measuring whether citizens identify as ‘more European’ (and are more likely to express a shared identity) or ‘less European’ (and are more likely to hold an exclusively national identity). We expect EU citizens who do not have enough ‘voice’ at the national level but can exercise the ‘exit’ option by emigrating to identify as ‘more European’ by switching their loyalties from the national context to the EU. We expect this to be the case for both people who leave and people who stay. At the same time, we would expect EU citizens who have neither much of a ‘voice’ nor any realistic ‘exit’ options to identify as ‘less European’ and show stronger (and more likely exclusively) national allegiances. On the other hand, we also expect EU citizens who have both ‘voice’ and ‘exit’ options to identify as relatively more European (but not as much as the ones who do not have voice), while the ones who have ‘voice’ but no realistic ‘exit’ options to identify as less European. There are two basic hypotheses we propose and test in this article, and two additional factors we would like to consider.

Table 1: Hypotheses I and II: Euro Crisis Effect on Age and Skills Cleavage in ECI Formation

Hypothesis	Rationale	Empirical Expectations
H1: Age Cleavage	<p><i>South:</i> Lack of voice + record high youth unemployment => ‘exit’ option highly valued; EU holds keys to the exit door.</p> <p><i>North:</i> More voice + record low youth unemployment => no need to exit. EU brings costs (bailouts) and potential competition from migrant workers.</p>	<p>Probability to express shared identity decreases with age generally, but more so in the South</p> <p><i>Probability to express shared identity among Southern youth higher and lower among Northern youth, post-euro crisis</i></p>
H2: Skills Cleavage	<p><i>Less Educated:</i> Feel more ‘dis-enfranchised’ in the EU (lack of voice) and do not have a realistic exit option given language and cultural barriers.</p> <p><i>Highly Educated:</i> Enjoy either exit options or voice (or both), and will continue to move further away from an exclusively national identity.</p>	<p>Probability to express a shared identity increases with level of educational attainment</p> <p><i>The gap between low and high skilled citizens, in terms of probability to express shared identity, deepens post-euro crisis</i></p>

Hypothesis 1 deals with the age cleavage. Given the different economic conditions between core and periphery brought about by the euro crisis, we expect Southern European youth (especially the highly educated) to be most likely to express a shared (national + European) identity, while Northern European youth (especially the lowly educated) to be the least likely to express such a shared identity. In the South, a lack of voice (given the negative economic effects of austerity and structural reform) and high youth unemployment imply that the ‘exit’ option is relevant and the EU holds the keys to the exit door. We therefore expect to see shifting loyalties from more ‘national’ to more ‘European’ among Southern Europe’s youth. In the North, with relatively more voice and record low youth unemployment, there is less need or desire to exit. On the other hand, the EU is perceived in the North as (a) more prone to crisis than the domestic economy, (b) a burden (as exemplified by the Southern periphery being the recipient of fiscal bailouts for which the North pays a relatively larger share), and (c) a potential threat for some (given immigration from the South). We therefore expect Northern youth’s loyalties to shift from more ‘European’ to more ‘national.’ For the older parts of the population, we expect their identities to become more uniformly national in both North and South, since the exit option has much less appeal, and either Northern bailout fatigue or Southern austerity resentments will have come into play (see Table 1).

Hypothesis 2 addresses the skills cleavage. Here we expect the existing gap in ‘shared’ identity to further grow uniformly after the euro crisis between the highly skilled (or highly educated) and the less skilled (or less educated) *across* both North and South. The less educated in general will feel that they have less voice in the EU and most of them do not have a realistic exit option given substantial language and cultural barriers. Furthermore, their preferences (voice) will differ substantially from their national and pro-EU elites, alienating them further from the European project. So, among the low skilled, we expect loyalties to become more strongly national, and shift towards national elites with a much more anti-EU agenda. The highly educated enjoy either exit options or voice, or both, and hence will continue to strongly identify with the European project, and move further away from an exclusively national identity (see Table 1)

Furthermore, we expect output and input legitimacy factors to play an additional role in individual identity formation. First, on the *output* legitimacy side, we want to look into the relationship between assessment of the state of the domestic economy and identity formation. In principle, we see two options: (1) ‘good weather’ Europeans who identify more as European in good times, but revert to nationalism in bad times, and (2) ‘bad weather’ Europeans whose common identification as Europeans increases when things are perceived to be bad. Second, on the *input* legitimacy side, *ceteris paribus*, we expect those who feel relatively more empowered vis-à-vis the European Union to be more likely to express a shared identity. In other words, all else constant, the probability to express a shared identity should be higher for those who think “their voice counts in the EU” than among those who do not. This effect should in theory be the same across North and South.

Preliminary and *prima facie* evidence for our framework can be found by looking at the data of Eurobarometer’s question on whether EU citizens trust EU or national institutions. While in the South, trust in the EU is universally higher than trust in national governments, the picture for the North varies for people of different age and education. The elderly (65 years and older) on average have been trusting their national government more than the EU ever since the beginning of the crisis in 2011. The youngest cohort (15-24 years old) is split. Those who are highly educated trust the EU more than their national government, in a similar vein as people in the South. But those who are at the bottom of the skills ladder – i.e. left full-time education at 15 – displayed a behavior similar to that of the elderly between 2011 and 2015.⁵ This fits with our framework. Uneducated young people in the North have no realistic *exit* option in a time of crisis, because they are unskilled and already live in countries that are relatively better off, leaving them exposed to the low wage competition of migrants from the less prosperous South. These factors combine into a shift of loyalty back towards their own national institutions, as the EU is increasingly seen as a threat.

In what follows, we show how EU citizens’ systematic identification as shared “European” and “national” (or exclusively “European”) has been remarkably stable over time across both North and South (between 60 and 70 percent of EU citizens had a ‘shared’ identity), despite the very different perceptions of input legitimacy (“does my voice count in the EU?”) between North and South, as well as individuals holding distinctive macroeconomic priorities. We maintain that certain peculiar dynamics of ‘exit’ and ‘voice’ in North and South among different parts of the population have developed since the euro crisis and can explain this identity (or ‘loyalty’) puzzle. We think that the only way to understand what is going on is to dig much deeper into the wealth of *Eurobarometer* data, and move our focus from the aggregate to the individual level. To that end, we first explain our methodology in greater detail.

Methodology

To get a better sense of which key factors are at work in defining ‘European-ness,’ we analyze demographic, socio-economic and other aspects of identity formation at the *individual* level. Who is most likely to feel at least *partially* European, i.e. to express a *shared* identification, as opposed to those with an exclusively national identity? And can we observe any systematic North-South differences when it comes to this self-identification process and its drivers? To

⁵ See Appendix, figure A2.

measure identification, we have pulled together 14 waves of Eurobarometer individual level data, covering annually the period from 2005 to 2017. We focus on 11 of the 12 early Eurozone members and use respondent-level data in a binary outcome logit model.⁶

Dependent Variable: Identity

Our dependent variable is a dummy that equals 1 for individuals expressing a ‘shared identity,’ and 0 otherwise. We include as shared identities respondents who do not see themselves as exclusively nationals of their own country – even when they still see their national identity as dominant. For most of the years included in our empirical analysis (2004-05; 2010; 2012-17), we are able to rely on the following question (Q1):

Q1: Do you see yourself as ...?

1. *[NATIONALITY] only*
2. *[NATIONALITY] and European*
3. *European and [NATIONALITY]*
4. *European only*

Q1 was not asked in 2006 – although a different question (Q2 below, see also Table A1 in the Appendix for more details on the coding) is available. The correlation between our measure of shared identity constructed out of Q1 with the equivalent constructed out of Q2 is 58% over the period 2004-06, so we believe that Q2 is therefore a good substitute for Q1 in 2006. However, since we also lack the questions we use to measure the effect of EU input legitimacy in 2006, we will only use Q2 in descriptive terms (Figure 3) but we will drop 2006 from the econometric analysis, and limit our pre-crisis period to 2004-05. While we would prefer to also include 2006, the 2004-05 still gives us 22,818 observations, which is more than enough to estimate the model safely.

Q2: Do you ever think of yourself as not only (NATIONALITY), but also European? Does this happen often, sometimes or never?
(ONE ANSWER ONLY)

1. *Often*
2. *Sometimes*
3. *Never*

Q1 was not asked in 2011 either, a key year to include in our analysis because it is when the Eurozone crisis enters its peak phase. After Greece and Ireland had asked for bailouts in 2010, Portugal also loses market access in 2011, and Italy and Spain come under very strong market pressure during the summer. In light of these facts, we think we cannot safely drop 2011 from the econometric analysis. We therefore resort to an alternative available question (Q3 below). The correlation between our measure of shared identity constructed out of Q1 with the equivalent constructed out of Q3 is 49% over the period 2010-13. Although we would prefer it to be higher, we think that using Q2 in place of the (missing) Q1 in 2011 is nonetheless justifiable and not problematic for the overall analysis, because it is only one of 4 years in our ‘crisis’ period.

⁶ The original EA12, excluding Luxembourg due to size. The “North” makes up Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, and the Netherlands; the “South” includes Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

Q3: For each of the following statements, please tell me to what extent it corresponds or not to your own opinion. You feel you are a citizen of the EU (%)

1. *Yes, definitely*
2. *Yes, to some extent*
3. *No, not really*
4. *No, definitely not*

Unfortunately, no directly comparable question was asked in 2007, 2008 and 2009 – so we exclude those years from our analysis. While Q1, Q2 and Q3 all deal with a similar concept of identification (based on nationality/citizenship), the only question available in 2007-09 is one asking respondent whether they feel any “attachment” to the EU – a very different concept. We therefore prefer to drop those three years, for the sake of keeping our dependent variable as consistent as possible over time.

Looking at the evolution of our dependent variable over time, one observes that identification as “European” (partly or exclusively) has remained remarkably constant – at around 60 percent of respondents – and that in aggregate terms the gap between North and South has been very narrow.⁷ The resilience of Europeans’ self-identification as “European” is striking, especially in light of the deterioration of perceived ‘input legitimacy’ of the EU in the South since the crisis. Aggregate figures of Eurobarometer also show that the share of respondents stating that ‘their voice counts in the EU’ was slightly lower in the South than in the North already before the crisis, but it subsequently dropped by a staggering 20 percentage points between 2010 and 2013. Despite a recent rebound, perceived input legitimacy in the South remains low with around 35 percent who believe ‘their voice counts in the EU’ against a much more robust corresponding figure for the North of close to 60 percent.⁸

Continued and stable identification with Europe is also surprising in light of the fact that citizens of Northern and Southern countries have differing views about the most important issues facing their countries. The Eurobarometer surveys include a set of questions asking respondents to identify the most important issues facing their country, including unemployment, inflation, government debt or immigration.⁹ While not being an exact measure of macroeconomic preferences, these questions give us some indication of what aspects of the overall policy mix Europeans in different countries would consider most important at a certain point in time.

Eurobarometer shows that before the crisis, inflation was more of a concern for people in the South than for people in the North – which corresponds with the direction of pre-crisis intra-Eurozone inflation differentials. After the crisis, North and South traded places, to then converge in 2014-15, coincidentally with the start of the ECB’s program of Quantitative Easing. In a similar vein, the North was much more concerned about unemployment than the South was, up until 2007. Again, North and South traded places after the crisis and the ensuing rapid increase of unemployment in the euro periphery. Concern with government debt has instead been stable in

⁷ See Appendix, Figure A3 (left panel).

⁸ See Appendix, Figure A3 (right panel).

⁹ Figure A4 in the Appendix shows the percentage of people mentioning specific terms.

the South since 2012 – the first year for which this data is available – and has been decreasing steadily in the North ever since.

Independent Variables

The apparent disconnect between stable aggregate identity expressions and changing input legitimacy perception on the one hand, and economic priorities on the other, constitutes – in our view – a very strong rationale for moving the focus of the analysis to the micro/individual level. Our independent variables can be divided in five groups:

- Demographics: age, gender, marital status, type of community where the respondent lives
- Socio-Economic Factors: education, employment status
- Input Legitimacy Factors: perception of whether own voice ‘counts’ in the EU
- Output Legitimacy Factors: assessment of domestic economic situation (not available for the pre-crisis period)
- Macroeconomic Priorities: three dummy variables identifying respondents who mention “inflation,” or “unemployment” as important issues for their own countries. The same question for “government debt” is only available from 2012 onwards, so we exclude it because we would not be able to compare it with the pre-crisis period.

We also include a “North-South” dummy. The North includes Austria, Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, and the Netherlands, while the South includes Spain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal. We also include interactions of this dummy with some of the independent variables, to understand whether specific factors have a different effect in the two geographical groups. All specifications also include year fixed effects. Not all these variables are available consistently for the whole time series – for example, the question about debt in the macroeconomic priorities section was only asked starting in 2012 and assessment of the economic situation is missing in 2008 (so 2008 will be dropped from the estimation). We start by running the following model:

$$y_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta * X + north_i + north_i * X_j + year_t + u_{i,t}$$

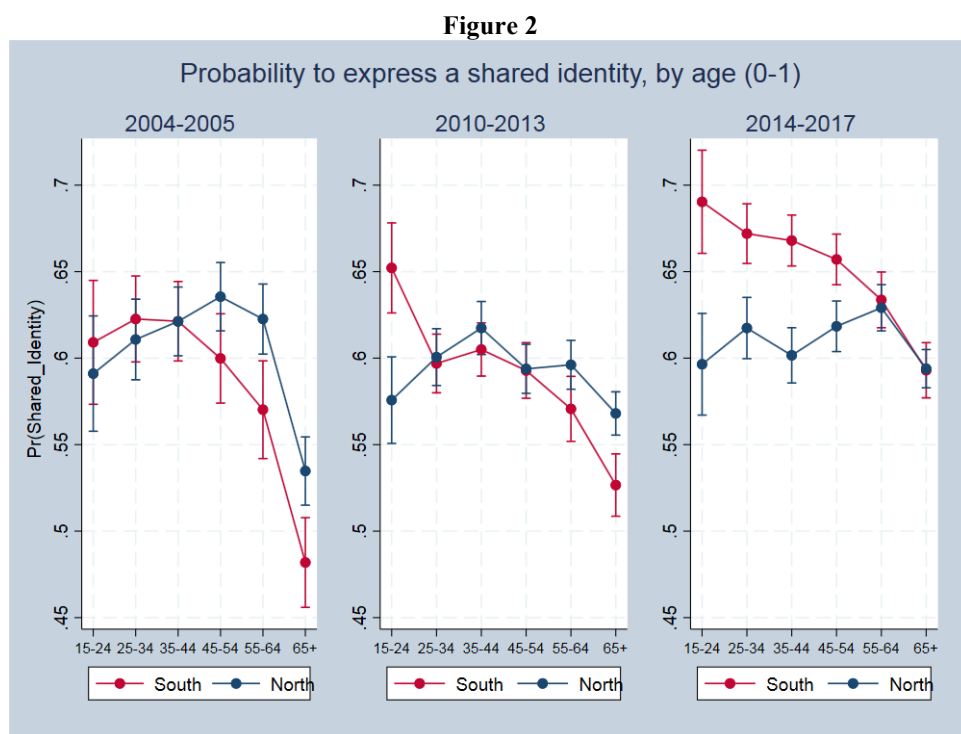
where y_i is our binary dependent variable (*shared identity*), X is a set of covariates (demographics, socio-economic factors, input and output factors etc.), $north_i$ is our geographical group variable, $north_i * X_j$ are interactions of a subset of variables in X with our geographic dummy, and $year_t$ is a year fixed effect. We estimate this model on three sub-periods: a pre-Euro-crisis period (2004-2005);¹⁰ a Euro-crisis period (2010-2013); and a post-crisis period (2014-2017). The estimated coefficients from the logit models are reported in the Appendix in Table A2. In the next section, we will discuss the marginal effects that we are most interested in, in light of our proposed hypotheses and additional factors of interest in the previous section.

Results

The most striking result from our analysis of individual-level attitudes concerns the **age** of the respondents. Figure 2 shows the predicted probability that respondents in North and South

¹⁰ As explained above, 2008 is dropped due to lack of data for one of the independent variables.

express a shared identity, depending on their age and holding constant all other factors – both before the crisis (left panel), during the crisis (center panel), and after the crisis (right panel).¹¹ Before the crisis, we observe that the probability to express a shared European identity was lower for the oldest cohorts than for the youngest ones, but for each cohort these probabilities were very similar across North and South. The young cohorts in North and South were virtually identical – from a statistical standpoint – in their likelihood to feel European. During the crisis, a gap started opening up between the youngest cohorts in North and South, but all other age groups appeared to be drawn even closer together, and the oldest cohorts became *more* likely to express a shared identity both in the North and in the South. This supports the view of the euro crisis as a ‘shared catastrophe’¹² – with the exception of the youngest generation.¹³



Things look very different for the 2014-2017 period. Controlling for all the other factors included in our model, respondents who are over 55 years old have the same predicted probability (between 60 and 65%) to express a shared identity in the post-crisis period, regardless of geography. But the gap is now increasing inversely to age. The probability to

¹¹ Since several of the variables included in our model are not available in 2008 and 2004, the pre-crisis period covers 2005, 2006 and 2007. The crisis and post-crisis period cover the years from 2010 until 2017.

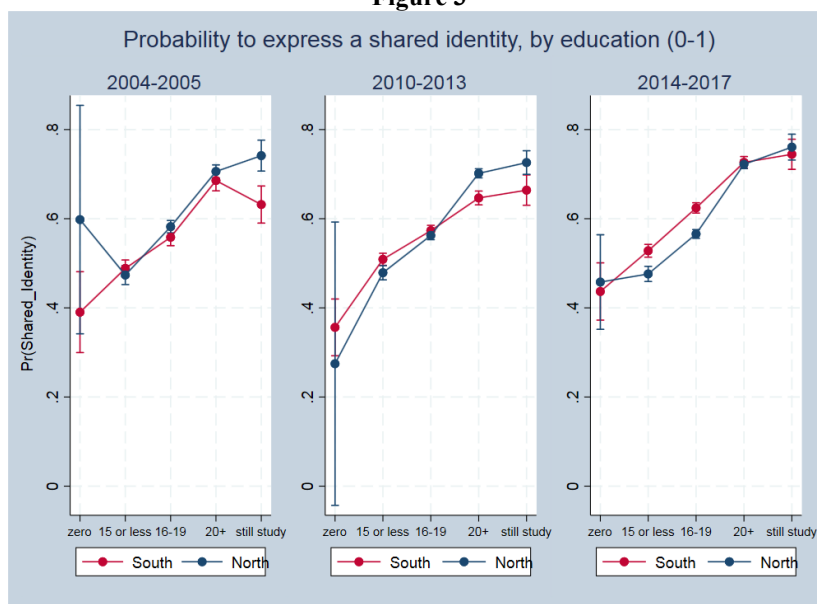
¹² See Merler and Nicoli 2018 for a discussion of the literature on this.

¹³ We also looked at whether any difference exists between “movers” (people who live in a country different than their country of citizenship) and “stayers” (people who live in their country of citizenship). Since only a very small percentage of respondents (1-2% per year) is constituted by movers, we were not able to estimate the full model. We did run a baseline model including basic demographic characteristics and our results revealed two things. First, movers are statistically identical across north and south as far as their likelihood to feel European is concerned. Second, the age profile of identification is markedly downward-sloping among stayers, while the relative position of cohorts has changed since the crisis. Before the crisis, when the need to emigrate was neither present nor pressing, young ‘stayers’ were statistically identical across north and south. After the crisis, we observe that young ‘stayers’ in the south are now markedly *more* likely to express a shared identity than their northern peers.

express a shared identity has not *decreased* among young respondents in the North, but young respondents in the South are now significantly more likely to express shared identities than their peers in the North. The difference in predicted probability reaches 10 percentage points between the youngest generation in the South – which is the *most* likely to express a shared identity across all people in our dataset – and the youngest generation in the North – which is the *least* likely to express a shared identity. These results strongly support our H1, as we indeed find Southern European youth to be most likely and Northern European youth the least likely to express a shared identity.

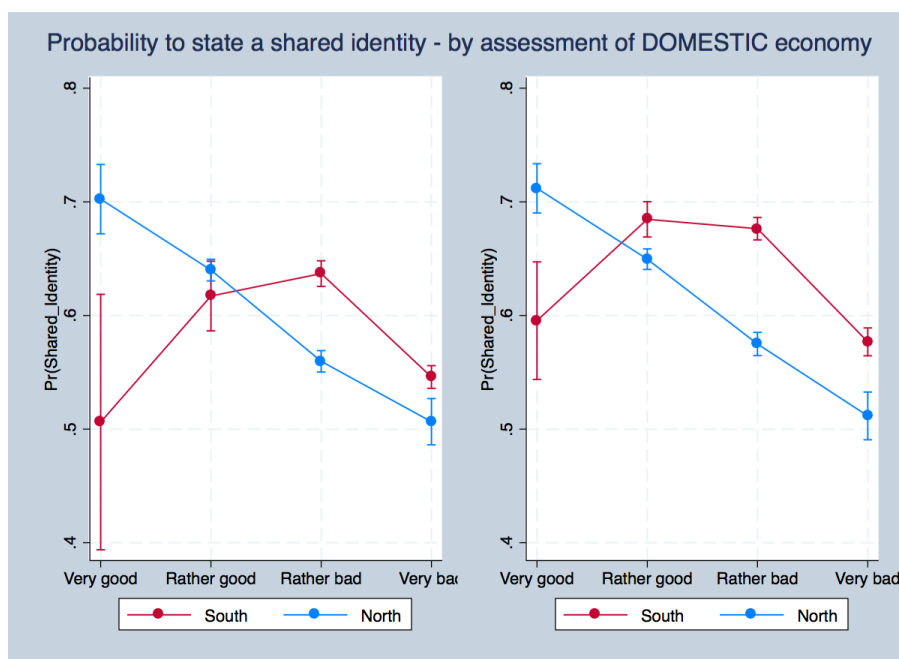
The effect of **education** (which we use as a proxy for skills) on the propensity to express a shared identity has also changed over time. Figure 3 shows the predicted probability that respondents express a shared identity, at different levels of education, before and during/after the crisis. The relationship is upward sloping. This means – as one would expect – that better educated people are less likely to express exclusively ‘national’ identities. Figure 3 (right) shows that people with tertiary education and people who are still studying have become even closer – in their European identification – across North and South, since the crisis. But the probability to express a shared identity across all lower educational levels is now slightly lower in the North compared to the South – consistent with the different trade-offs that we have identified in association with the skills distribution. These results generally confirm what we expected under our H2.

Figure 3



To establish the effect of **output factors**, we look at the predicted probability for respondents depending on their assessment of the state of the domestic economic situation – which unfortunately we are only able to do for the crisis and post-crisis period, due to data availability. Figure 4 (left) shows that the relationship between respondents’ assessment of the state of the domestic economy and their likelihood to feel European is different across North and South.

Figure 4



In the North, this relationship is clearly downward-sloping, suggesting that identification as Europeans is a decreasing function of the perceived state of the economy. Northerners, in other words, are “good weather” Europeans. They are significantly more likely to express a shared European identity in ‘good times’ than they would be in ‘bad times.’ For Southerners, the relationship is more complex and hump-shaped (Figure 4, right). People who see the economy as ‘rather good’ or ‘rather bad’ have a higher likelihood to feel European than people who see the economy as being in a ‘very good’ state. This appears to suggest that in the South, identification with Europe has become – at least for part of the distribution – an inverse function of the perceived state of the economy: Southerners feel significantly more European in (moderately) bad times than they do in very good times.

Coming to the **input factors** we included in our models – i.e. perceived input legitimacy and macroeconomic preferences – our results are more mixed. There is a clear and strong marginal effect of perceived input legitimacy on respondents’ likelihood to express a shared identity. Those who think their voice does not count in the EU have a markedly lower likelihood to feel European (even partially) and they are very similar across North and South. The difference between north and south has widened after the crisis (Figure A4 in the appendix) with Southern respondents today being more likely to feel European than Northern respondents, holding perceived legitimacy constant.

On our measures of macroeconomic preferences, the evidence is inconclusive. The marginal effects reported in figures A5 and A6 in the appendix suggest that those who are concerned with inflation at the country level are less likely to express a shared identity, whereas those who are concerned with unemployment are – at least after the crisis – more likely to. This latter result is clearly evident in appendix Figure A7, which shows how after the crisis those respondents who identify unemployment as one of the most important issues facing their country are *more* likely to feel European in the South but *less* likely to feel European in the North, compared to those respondents who do not express concern with unemployment. This evidence rhymes with our

framework, in that it suggests that particularly in the South, the EU seems to represent an implicit insurance against unemployment.

Conclusion

Despite the mixed effects of the euro crisis on the national economies of the Eurozone, aggregate shared identification as “European” has remained remarkably stable over time, while the gap between North and South has remained relatively small. This has been the case despite very different perceptions of input legitimacy and a gap in ranking of macroeconomic priorities. In order to make sense of this puzzle, we have transformed Hirschman’s ‘exit-voice-and-loyalty’ framework and applied it to the European Union context. We found that a key determinant in individual European identity formation – or the factor that could explain the shifting loyalties between national and EU level – to be the relative importance of exit (emigration) vs. voice (economic policy preferences) for different socio-demographic and socio-economic groups.

We proposed two hypotheses and two additional factors concerning the relationship between individual characteristics and shared vs. exclusive identity formation within our framework, and found the following. First, we identified a remarkable gap opening up between young people in Eurozone North and South during the crisis, which seemed to stick after the crisis. The youngest cohort in the South is now the most likely to express a shared European identity (even more so when highly educated), while the youngest cohort in the North is now the least likely of all to express a shared European identity (even more so when lowly educated).

Second, we found that the existing educational gap – in terms of individuals having a shared European identity – has widened even further since the euro crisis. Better educated and higher skilled people are more likely to feel European than the less educated and lower skilled across both Eurozone North and South. Third, personal assessment of the national economic situation has also had a differing impact in North and South. In the South, EU citizens identify more strongly as European in bad times, while in the North, EU citizens identify more strongly as European in good times. Finally, all citizens in the South who believe their governments should prioritize tackling unemployment are more likely to identify as European than those who do not, while this effect is much weaker in the North.

In sum, the euro crisis has been a mixed blessing for EU elites and EU scholars who were hoping that the process of European integration would gradually create ‘Europeans.’ While they may take to heart that the youngest cohort in the South now is much more likely to have a shared national and European identity, they should worry about the fact that the youngest cohort in the North is now the least likely to hold such a shared identity. They should also be concerned about the ongoing widening gap between the low and high skilled. Only if the economic situation of the low skilled improves significantly will the fertile soil for Eurosceptic movements start to wane. EU policymakers also have to ask themselves whether the patterns of South-North migration within the Eurozone – on top of the already established East-West migration flows – are desirable in the longer run, as it risks exacerbating the existing divisions within the Union. Making sure all EU member states can broadly share in the fruits of economic prosperity in the future should be their number one priority.

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APPENDIX

Table A1

<i>Question</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Coding</i>
<i>Q: Do you see yourself as ...?</i> 1. [NATIONALITY] only 2. [NATIONALITY] and European 3. European and [NATIONALITY] 4. European only	2004, 2005, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017	1 if $A = (1), (2)$ or (3) (shared identification) 0 if $A = (4)$ (exclusive identification)
<i>Q: For each of the following statements, please tell me to what extent it corresponds or not to your own opinion. You feel you are a citizen of the EU (%)</i> 1. Yes, definitely 2. Yes, to some extent 3. No, not really 4. No, definitely not	2011	1 if $A = (1)$ or (2) (shared identification) 0 if $A = (3)$ or (4) (exclusive identification)
<i>Q: Do you ever think of yourself as not only (NATIONALITY), but also European? Does this happen often, sometimes or never?</i> <i>(ONE ANSWER ONLY)</i> 1 Often 2 Sometimes 3 Never	2006	1 if $A = (1)$ or (2) (shared identification) 0 if $A = (3)$ (exclusive identification)

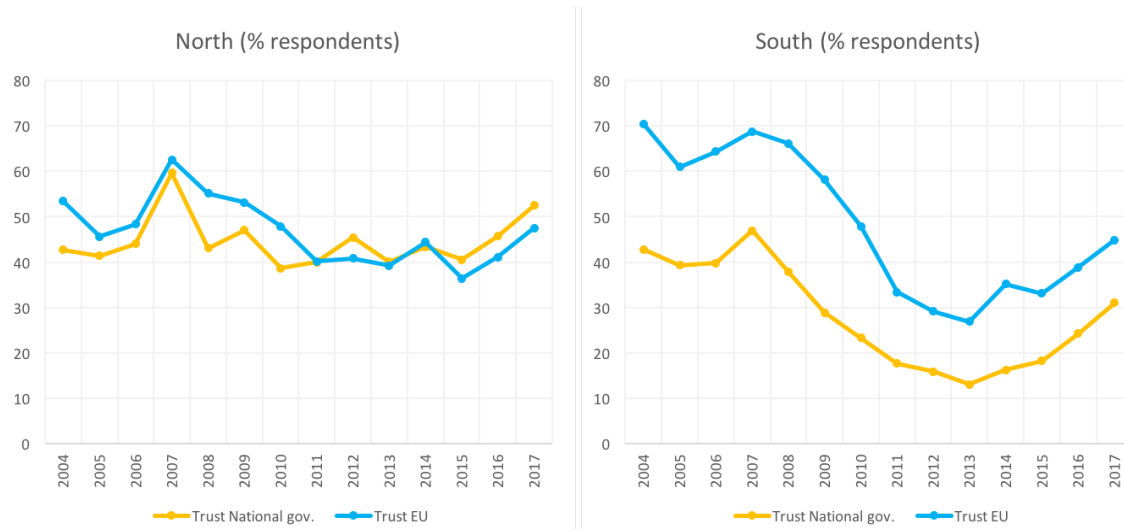
Table A2: Baseline Model

	pre-crisis (2004-05)			EZ crisis (2010-13)			post crisis (2010-13)		
	dy/dx	Std. E.	z	dy/dx	Std. E.	z	dy/dx	Std. E.	z
Age (15-24)									
25-34	0.017	0.015	1.1	-0.010	0.011	-0.9	0.003	0.013	0.3
35-44	0.023	0.015	1.5	0.004	0.011	0.3	-0.007	0.013	-0.6
45-54	0.022	0.016	1.4	-0.015	0.011	-1.3	-0.003	0.013	-0.26
55-64	0.002	0.016	0.1	-0.024	0.012	-2.0	-0.008	0.013	-0.6
65+	-0.086	0.016	-5.4	-0.059	0.012	-5.1	-0.045	0.013	-3.6
Male	0.061	0.007	9.3	0.041	0.005	9.0	0.037	0.004	8.4
Married	0.027	0.007	3.7	0.025	0.005	5.2	0.031	0.005	6.6
Community (rural)									
Small/middle sized town	0.046	0.008	6.0	0.017	0.005	3.2	0.013	0.005	2.6
Large town	0.068	0.008	8.0	0.046	0.006	7.8	0.025	0.006	4.3
Education (no full-time)									
15 or less	-0.033	0.079	-0.4	0.183	0.098	1.89	0.049	0.034	1.4
16-19	0.060	0.079	0.8	0.258	0.098	2.6	0.143	0.034	4.1
20+	0.185	0.079	2.3	0.371	0.098	3.8	0.276	0.034	8.0
still studying	0.183	0.080	2.3	0.391	0.098	4.0	0.305	0.036	8.4
unemployed	-0.040	0.014	-2.8	-0.038	0.008	-4.7	-0.037	0.008	-4.5
north	0.021	0.007	3.0	0.007	0.005	1.3	-0.032	0.005	-6.7
My voice doesn't count (EU)	-0.196	0.007	-29.6	-0.237	0.005	-50.1	-0.235	0.005	-51.6
Inflation imp. issue	-0.025	0.009	-2.9	-0.037	0.006	-6.3	-0.064	0.007	-9.5
Unemployment imp. issue	0.000	0.007	0.02	-0.006	0.005	-1.2	0.006	0.005	1.3
2005	0.018	0.007	2.8	..	..	..	..	..	..
2011	..	..	..	0.121	0.006	18.8	..	..	..
2012	..	..	..	0.078	0.007	11.9	..	..	..
2013	..	..	..	0.037	0.006	5.6	..	..	..
2015	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.005	0.006	0.7
2016	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.029	0.006	4.7
2017	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.029	0.006	4.6

Table A3: Full Model
(only available for crisis and post-crisis period)

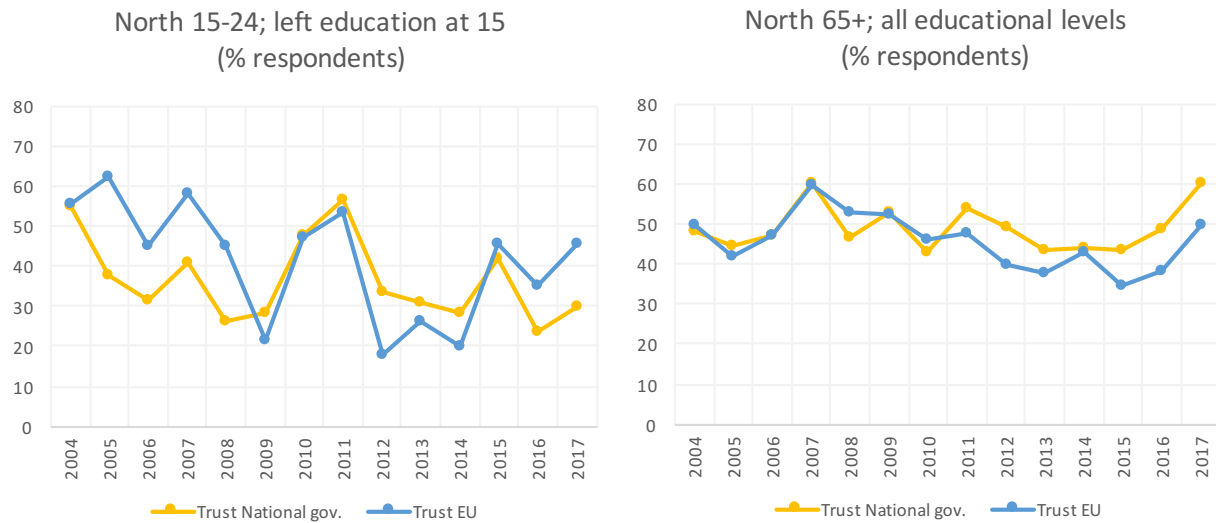
	EZ crisis (2010-13)			post crisis (2010-13)		
	dy/dx	Std. Err.	z	dy/dx	Std. Err.	z
Age (15-24)						
25-34	-0.009	0.011	-0.8	0.001	0.013	0.1
35-44	0.006	0.011	0.5	-0.007	0.013	-0.6
45-54	-0.011	0.011	-1.0	-0.001	0.013	-0.1
55-64	-0.017	0.012	-1.5	-0.005	0.013	-0.4
65+	-0.055	0.012	-4.7	-0.045	0.013	-3.5
male	0.035	0.005	7.8	0.033	0.004	7.4
married	0.021	0.005	4.4	0.027	0.005	5.6
Community (rural)						
Small/middle sized town	0.013	0.005	2.4	0.016	0.005	3.2
Large town	0.042	0.006	7.3	0.025	0.006	4.4
Education (no full-time)						
Up to 15 years	0.125	0.112	1.1	0.041	0.035	1.2
16-19 years	0.199	0.112	1.8	0.131	0.034	3.8
20 years +	0.310	0.113	2.8	0.263	0.035	7.6
still studying	0.325	0.113	2.9	0.286	0.036	7.9
unemployed	-0.026	0.008	-3.3	-0.027	0.008	-3.4
north	-0.033	0.007	-4.8	-0.060	0.005	-11.6
Situation national economy (v good)						
Rather good	0.017	0.027	0.6	0.008	0.014	0.6
Rather bad	-0.018	0.027	-0.7	-0.037	0.014	-2.7
Very bad	-0.086	0.027	-3.2	-0.118	0.015	-7.8
My voice doesn't count (EU)	-0.225	0.005	-46.6	-0.214	0.005	-45.3
Inflation imp. issue	-0.039	0.006	-6.9	-0.060	0.007	-8.9
Unemployment imp. issue	0.003	0.005	0.7	0.022	0.005	4.6
year						
2011	0.109	0.006	16.8	..	..	..
2012	0.073	0.007	11.2	..	..	..
2013	0.031	0.006	4.8	..	..	..
2015	..	..	..	-0.003	0.006	-0.4
2016	..	..	..	0.018	0.006	2.9
2017	..	..	..	0.007	0.006	1.1

Figure A1: Eurozone North vs. South: Trust in National Government (Yellow) and EU (Blue)



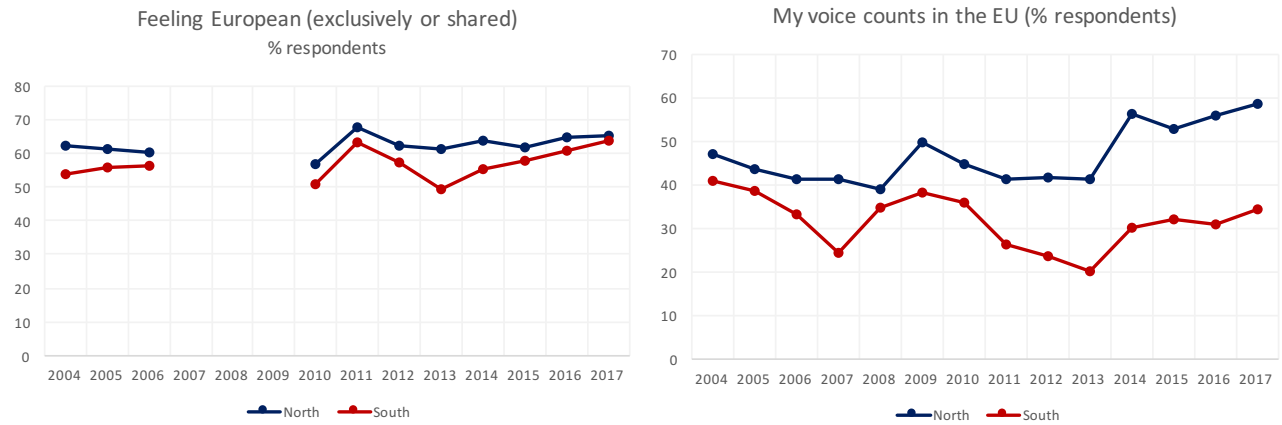
Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurobarometer data

Figure A2: Eurozone North: Trust in National Government (Yellow) and EU (Blue)



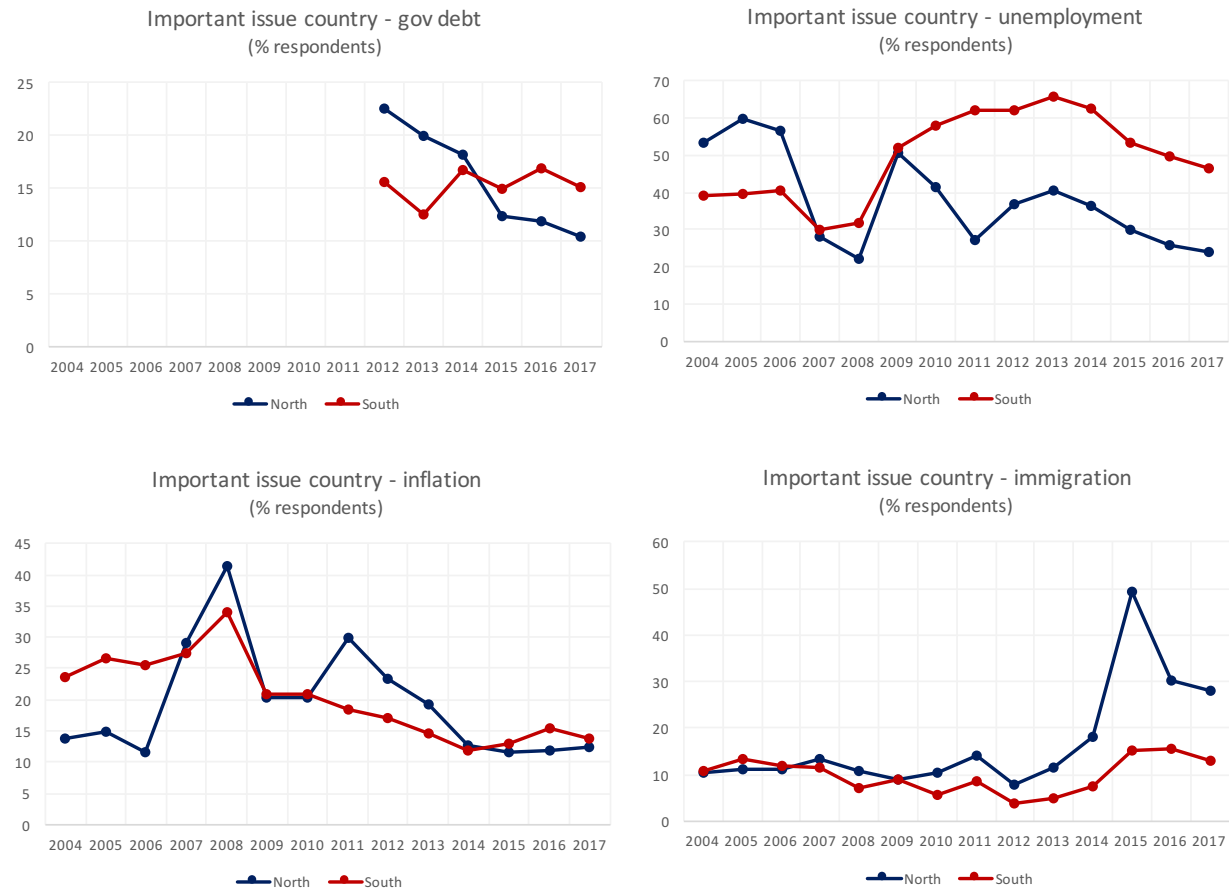
Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurobarometer data

Figure A3: European Identity (a) vs. EU Input Legitimacy (b)



Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurobarometer data

Figure A4: Important Issues (Debt, Unemployment, Inflation, Immigration)



Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurobarometer

Figure A5

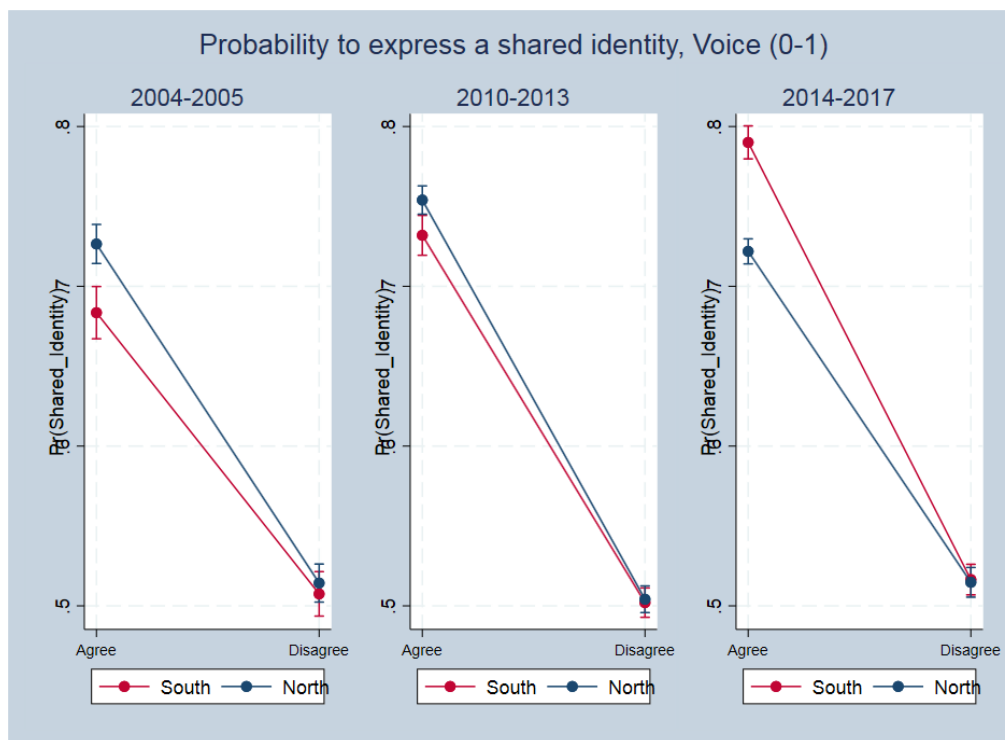


Figure A6



Figure A7

