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Eurosceptics in Lithuania: On the Margins of Politics?

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Abstract

The first eurosceptic ideas were articulated in Lithuania during the European Union accession referendum campaign in 2003, but they were almost inaudible through the chorus of pro-European voices. Different kinds of eurosceptic arguments were expressed, such as a fear of identity loss or critics of the government “buying votes”. However, there were just a few political actors expressing these views, and the relevant political parties were absent among this group. This situation was in contrast to the neighboring countries with more serious eurosceptics. Ten years have passed and situation is changing. Eurosceptic ideas still lack popularity in Lithuanian political parties and among non-partisan actors, but some initiatives of eurosceptic movements receive popular support. Who represents the eurosceptics in Lithuania? Which of their arguments are increasingly cogent, if any? Why are these ideas popular or unpopular in Lithuania? To answer these questions, deeper analysis of the situation and reasons for euroscepticism in Lithuania is needed. With the above-mentioned questions in mind, the article concentrates on the euroscepticism debates in Lithuania among different groups and actors of society—e.g. political actors, and public and social movements – by discussing the main ideas of Lithuanian eurosceptics, and the reasons for their (un-)popularity. The article classifies Lithuanian euroscepticism both in terms of ideas and actors. Media monitoring, interviews with particular actors, public opinion and electoral data are the main research sources used for analysis. The article reveals that throughout the entire decade of Lithuania’s membership in EU the Lithuanian eurosceptics remained on the margins of politics; but, nevertheless, they have the potential to grow in number of supporters.

Keywords: Euroscepticism, Lithuanian political parties, political actors, social movements

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1. Introduction

Already ten years have passed since the European Union (EU) accession referendum in Lithuania. During the referendum campaign in 2003 organizers had doubts about whether Lithuanians would come and vote.

"Lithuanian political elites awaited the referendum results with great anxiety"

(Mažylis and Unikaitė, 2004: 48-49).

However, Lithuania held a successful referendum and became the most euro-enthusiastic country among the nine candidate countries, with a turnout of 63.37%; 91% of those who cast their votes voted "yes"; this was 57% of the entire electorate (Republic of Lithuania Central Electoral Committee, 2003). The first eurosceptic ideas and arguments (e.g. "the decline of the nation state", "less independence" or "selling the country to the Brussels")¹ were not attractive to the general society or were not visible in the media due to a weak eurosceptic campaign and poor coverage of eurosceptic ideas in media.

There were expectations that over time European integration would foster greater discussion of EU matters and that skepticism would increase in Lithuanian society. However, the opposite situation arose. Contrary to expectations, Euro-optimism dominated the entire decade since the referendum. The parliamentary mainstream Lithuanian political parties (whether on the left or the right of the ideological spectrum) actively promoted EU integration and support for the EU project. The political parties openly declaring their eurosceptic positions remained on the margins of politics, finding little support among Lithuanian voters. This situation is not an exception, because, as Ralph Negrine, Vaclav Stetka and Marta Fialová note,

"in Western Europe, strong opposition towards the integration process is largely confined to the fringe parties on both sides of the political spectrum, while the mainstream parties – with the exception of the British Conservative Party – are generally characterized by a pro-European orientation"

(2011: 75)

Consequently there were no major discussions on euroscepticism, or they were rare and went unnoticed in Lithuanian media due to the weak organization of eurosceptics and low media interest in these issues.

Notwithstanding all the problems incurred by Lithuania (e.g. unemployment, energy issues such as high prices, distrust in the state institutions and legal system, etc.), Lithuanian public opinion polls indicate that the population's attitude towards the European Union throughout the past decade remained favorable. A majority of Lithuanian residents are convinced that EU membership is beneficial for their country, and perspectives for the EU's future are optimistic (Eurobarometer 72, 2009: 3). The pro-European attitudes of the Lithuanian citizens and mainstream political parties encouraged the Lithuanian academic community to believe that euroscepticism is disappearing from the main political discourses and does not have the potential to be as popular as it is in some Western European countries. However, the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council in 2013 (from the 1st of July to the end of December) brought with it some

¹ The arguments are presented from the TV media monitoring data on EU accession referendum campaign collected by Vytautas Magnus University researchers (L. Mažylis, I. Unikaitė and political science students) in 2003 (unpublished data).

changes: EU matters in the Lithuanian media became more visible; and, the activity of eurosceptics increased as well (Peteris, 2013). The eurosceptic movements and politicians started actively participating in public discussions and promoting some of their initiatives.

The first important initiative of various nationalist movements expressing eurosceptic ideas, together with the Farmers Union, was presented in early autumn of 2013 when the process of the collection of signatures supporting the Referendum on the sale of land to foreigners started. The initiative was strongly supported by Lithuanians and more than 300,000 signatures for the implementation of the referendum were collected for the first time in Lithuania. This success boosted confidence, and group initiating the referendum against the sale of land to foreigners also planned to ask the nation whether it supports the introduction of the euro is planned for 2015. The aforementioned events show that marginalized eurosceptics are trying to start active public discussions on the EU integration process.

Who represents the eurosceptics in Lithuania? What are the main ideas supported by eurosceptics? Why are these ideas popular/unpopular in Lithuania? This article discusses these questions by concentrating on the euroscepticism debates in Lithuania among various groups and actors of society—e.g. political actors, social movements, and the general public. The article seeks to categorize these actors and their ideas according to the euroscepticism typologies proposed by many well-known researchers (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2001, 2002; Kopecky and Mudde; 2002; Spiering 2004), and provides an answer to whether eurosceptic ideas have the potential to gain greater popularity in Lithuania.

Media monitoring, interviews with particular actors, public opinion polls and electoral data are the main research sources used for the analysis and conceptualization of euroscepticism in Lithuania. First, the definition and typologies of euroscepticism are discussed by presenting a framework for analysis of euroscepticism in Lithuania. Second, the research methods are presented. Third, data on Lithuanian public opinion is analyzed. Fourth, the main eurosceptic political and non-political actors, their ideas and modes of activity are analyzed. Finally, the possible reasons for the popularity or unpopularity of eurosceptic ideas are discussed.

2. Euroscepticism Definition and Typologies: An Overview

As Robert Harmsen and Menno Spiering write,

“though initially cultivated in English soil, the term Euroscepticism has progressively taken root elsewhere” (2004: 15)

All euroscepticisms which are formed in various countries

“are marked by a doubt or an opposition as regards the particular political forms which have been assumed by European integration”

(Harmsen Spiering, 2004:18)

Euroscepticism is formed from the different visions of EU integration and differing evaluation of EU development. Euroscepticism might be not only opposition to the EU as a supranational organization but also a critique of some developments, integration processes, policies etc. In fact, there is no single, universally accepted usage of the term ‘Euroscepticism’. As Sofia Vasilopoulou notes,

"its connotations change depending on the political climate, the person that uses the term as well as the country that it is used in"

(2008: 3)

For instance, in some countries all nationalist parties and movements are assumed to be eurosceptic, but in other countries nationalist views are not associated with euroscepticism. Secondary literature and various attempts to provide typologies of euroscepticism also reflect that the term Euroscepticism is rather vague.

The most researched version is party-based euroscepticism. Paul Taggart provided the first definition of euroscepticism by discussing euroscepticism in Western European party systems. He described euroscepticism as "the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration" (Taggart, 1998: 366).

Later this definition was detailed by Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak when they introduced one of the typologies of euroscepticism. They distinguish between 'hard' and 'soft' forms of euroscepticism. According to them, hard Euroscepticism is a situation "where there is a principled opposition to the EU and European integration" (Taggart and Scerbiak, 2002: 7). The political actors representing this type of euroscepticism may directly express opposition to membership or even call for withdrawal from the EU. Later the researchers modified the definition by making it more concrete and argued that hard eurosceptics express "principled opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU, in other words, based on the ceding or transfer of powers to supranational institution such as the EU" (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2003: 12). Hard euroscepticism is typically associated with movements that are on the margins of national party systems. The harder forms of euroscepticism may be understood in terms of strategic or ideological reactions to the 'pro-European' orientation of the governing 'cartel' and hard liners usually like to express opposition to the mainstream parties through the manifestation of euroscepticism.

Accordingly, soft Euroscepticism is a situation "where there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but there is opposition to the EU's current or future planned trajectory based on the further extension of competencies that the EU is planning to make" (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2003: 6, Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008).

This distinction between the two types of euroscepticism is valuable because it is easier to operationalize these types in individual case studies. However, there may also be difficulties in operationalization due to the breadth of the definition, especially when analyzing soft euroscepticism. For example, at points it appears that every critique of EU policy might be considered soft euroscepticism. Additionally, there is difficulty in differentiating 'hard' from 'soft' euroscepticism when referring to the part of the definition related to the sharing of powers between national institutions and the EU. Both definitions address this, but one stresses the extension of competencies (soft) and the other emphasizes the ceding of rights (hard). It is occasionally very difficult to capture this difference in eurosceptic argumentation.

The aforementioned authors also note that:

"any account of the levels of Euroscepticism must take account of three components: (1) levels of public Euroscepticism; (2) party-based Euroscepticism; and (3) Eurosceptical policy outcomes. Only when there are citizens, parties and policies that are Eurosceptical will Euroscepticism become a realized force in European politics."

(Taggart and Scerbiak, 2002: 9).

Thus, they argue that analysis of euroscepticism in various societies shall pay attention not only to the parties' positions, but also to public opinion as well as to the policies of national governments. This is important for analyzing separate cases because it helps to capture the general eurosceptic views of a society.

Kopecký and Mudde present a different typology of euroscepticism by arguing that the first typology is not concrete enough. They distinguish between *specific* supports for the European Union on the one hand and *diffuse* support for European integration in general on the other (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002). The authors try to analyze euroscepticism along an EU pessimist/optimist axis and a Europhobe/Europhile axis. As Harmsen and Spiering state:

"Euroenthusiasts are those who are both supportive of the broad project of European integration and optimistic as regards the actual trajectory of the European Union's development. Europragmatists are not supportive of the broad project of European integration, but nevertheless are positive about the current EU insofar as it serves particular national interests. Eurosceptics, conversely, hold a positive view of the broad project of European integration, but are critical of the actual development of the EU. Finally, Eurorejects reject both the general idea of European integration and the specific form which it has taken in the European Union"

(2004:19)

In this explanation of euroscepticism the term eurosceptic itself has a more restricted scope than in most other common usage, referring only to a specific category of critics of the European Union. The general model of the four ideal types of euroscepticism is more detailed than the first one and is supposed to be applicable to qualitative analyses of parties' views.

Sofia Vasilopoulou proposes a third classification of euroscepticism. She talks about three categories of euroscepticism: rejecting euroscepticism (according to the position that *"all policies must be managed solely at the national level and member states must withdraw from the EU at any cost"* (Vasilopoulou, 2008: 6)), conditional euroscepticism (*"the party is not against the principle of cooperation but against its practice and its future"* (Vasilopoulou, 2008: 6)), and compromising euroscepticism (*"a party accepts both the principle and the practice of integration but rejects future cooperation"* (Vasilopoulou, 2008: 6)). According to Vasilopoulou:

"The demarcation line between 'rejecting' and 'conditional' Eurosceptics lies in the issue of EU withdrawal. <<...>> The parties that choose to adopt the 'rejecting' type of Euroscepticism "are fervent opponents of supranationalism and ceding one's national sovereignty to the benefit of European institutions" <<...>> "The 'conditional' Eurosceptics significantly differ from the 'compromising' Eurosceptics because they do not accept that the EU is the desirable framework for European integration. The 'compromising' Eurosceptics differ from the other two types in that they accept to work within the existing EU structures. All three types of Euroscepticism reject transferring further decision-making power to Europe and they are fervent opponents of a federal Europe."

(2008: 7)

This third classification is based on the three facets of European integration (principle, practice and future) and the issue of sovereignty. This typology of euroscepticism has the potential to be useful for analysis because it allows an analysis of euroscepticism with more analytical precision and clarity when assessing a party's position on Europe. Two variables used in the classification are described in detail and the three facets of EU integration have the potential to reveal significant qualitative differences between eurosceptic political actors.

In this paper, the term eurosceptic is used in its broader understanding and analyzes the Lithuanian case of euroscepticism generally according to the typology presented by Taggart and Szcerbiak. Their theoretical definitions and types of euroscepticism will be used as the basis for case analysis. However, the second typology as well as the third one will be applied in the analysis of social movements and parties' euroscepticism arguments and views.

3. Research Framework and Methods

The following Lithuanian case analysis is based on a discussion of three euroscepticism components: public euroscepticism, party-based euroscepticism and social movement-based euroscepticism. In order to be able to explain which type of euroscepticism is prevailing in Lithuania and whether that euroscepticism will have a tendency to increase in the future, all the actors will be analyzed according to their support or opposition to the EU project and policies by paying attention to how they express their ideas and activities, and what changes in their expression of euroscepticism. The policies of the Lithuanian government will not be analyzed, as this fall outside the limited scope of this article.

The empirical analysis is not aimed at a new conceptualization or the proposal of a new typology; instead it aims to understand the situation of euroscepticism in Lithuanian society and why and in which circumstances Lithuanians tend to be euro-optimists or in which circumstances eurosceptics.

The article uses the results of research based on qualitative methodologies. Qualitative research was conducted that sought to identify the trend and the dominant types of euroscepticism among the parties and social movements. The basic methods are qualitative interviews and analysis of the documents, concentrating on the programs and other information provided at the websites of social movements.

The qualitative semi-structured interviews were performed with representatives of social movements, according to a prepared questionnaire, during the period of 2012-2013. The representatives were chosen according to the eurosceptic positions they expressed in the media. Some of the interviews were conducted by the author of the article (1), others by a student (3), and one interview was found on an internet website. In total, the data from five interviews is used for the analysis here. The duration of the interviews varies from 32 minutes to 50 minutes. The informants were asked about their views towards the EU and its future, whether they call themselves eurosceptics, what methods and measures they use for the expression and propagation of their ideas, and why they have skeptical positions and what ideas about the future of EU integration they have.

Document analysis was performed before the interviews, with the aim of identifying eurosceptic movements and being able to identify the official position of the movements and parties. A number of documents were analyzed, including programs, articles, and opinion expressions posted on the websites of movements.

Quantitative data is used for public opinion analysis of euroscepticism and for the analysis of the results of elections. Data from Eurobarometer surveys and from the Election results data base is used. Seeking to ascertain the changes in public opinion towards the EU and its policies, descriptive statistical analysis of frequencies is used.

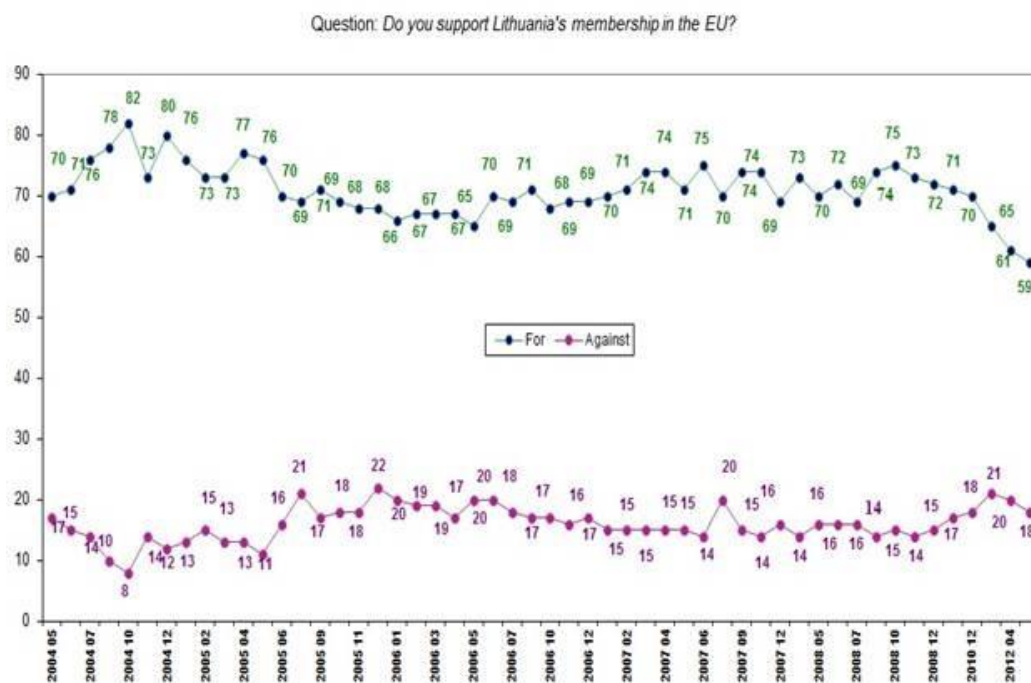
4. Lithuanian Public Euroscepticism

As previously noted, Lithuanian citizens were very active in supporting Lithuania's membership in the EU during the accession referendum. How has the situation changed during the ten year periods since membership?

As opinion polls conducted by the Lithuanian public opinion research center Vimorus indicate, the positive view of Lithuanian membership in the EU is stable and has only three insignificant peaks with 5-6 percentages of growth from average: the first in October, 2004 (82%), the second in July, 2007 (75%) and the third in November, 2008 (75%). From the last peak in 2008, support for EU membership among the residents of Lithuania has had the tendency towards slight decrease. (See **Diagram1**, which presents the opinion trends in detail.)

Diagram1. Opinion on the Lithuanian Membership in the European Union, 2004-2012.

Opinion on the Lithuanian membership in the European Union, 2004-2013, %



Opinion polls conducted by Market and opinion research center VILMORUS, 2004-2013

Source: Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs²

The group of Lithuanian residents opposing Lithuanian membership in the EU tends to be stable, with an average of about 16-17%. The smallest group against membership was in October 2004 – 8% (it overlapped with the biggest group of optimists—82%). The respondents from the last two years who were opposing the membership vary from 18% to 20% (see **Diagram1**).

The other indicators for the evaluation of Lithuanian public euro-optimism and euroscepticism come from the data provided by the Standart Eurobarometer surveys. Seeking to assess the changes in the views of society about the EU, two closely related questions are used from the Eurobarometer poll. The

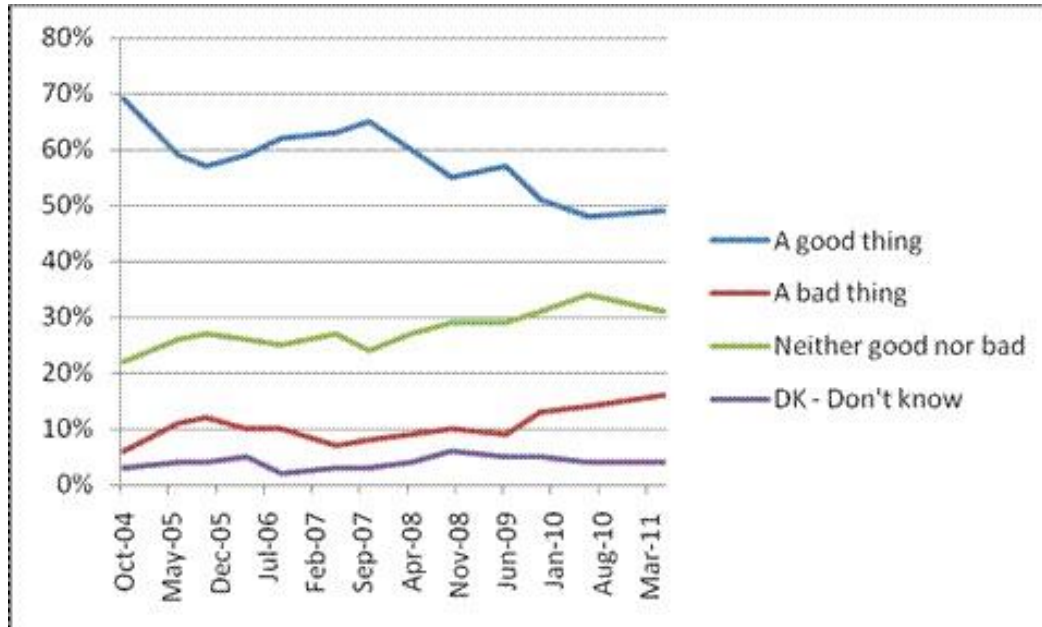
² Information provided by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the website: <http://www.euro.lt/en/lithuanias-membership-in-the-eu/lithuanian-public-opinion/>

first question asks whether the respondent thinks that their country's membership in the EU is 'a good thing' or 'a bad thing'. The analysis uses the figures for 'a bad thing' as indicating euroscepticism, and figures for 'a good thing' as indicating euro-optimism. However, in the reports of the poll the data for this question is provided only until 2011. For this reason calculating an average for the whole period is impossible. For the period from 2004-2013, as an indicator of the Lithuanian people's view towards the EU, the analysis applies the second question, which asks how much a person trusts in certain institutions (i.e. the European Union as a group of institutions). The answers are from "tend to trust" to "don't know".

Based on the findings of the Eurobarometer survey 2005, most residents of Lithuania were satisfied with the first year of EU membership; attitudes towards the EU have become slightly more rational during the year, as the enthusiasm has started to subside. If the first half of the year of membership was marked by optimism, the second showed a more rational outlook. That is understandable. Information provided by the mass media has become more diverse compared with that which was available prior to EU accession. Lithuania's EU membership did not result in a miracle, and the euphoria should subside. The degree of conviction that EU membership is useful remained high in Lithuania: from 69% (2004) to 57% (2005). In the period from 2004 to 2011 the answer "good thing" was changing from 69% to 49%, with some fluctuations (see **Diagram2**). The optimism started to drop with the beginning of economic crisis in 2008 in Lithuania and some other EU countries.

Diagram2. Lithuanian Opinion on the Benefit of EU Membership

Q: "Do you think that your country's membership in the EU is 'a good thing' or 'a bad thing'?"



Source: prepared by the author³

³ According to the Standart Eurobarometer data (2004-2011) // http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/cf/index_en.cfm

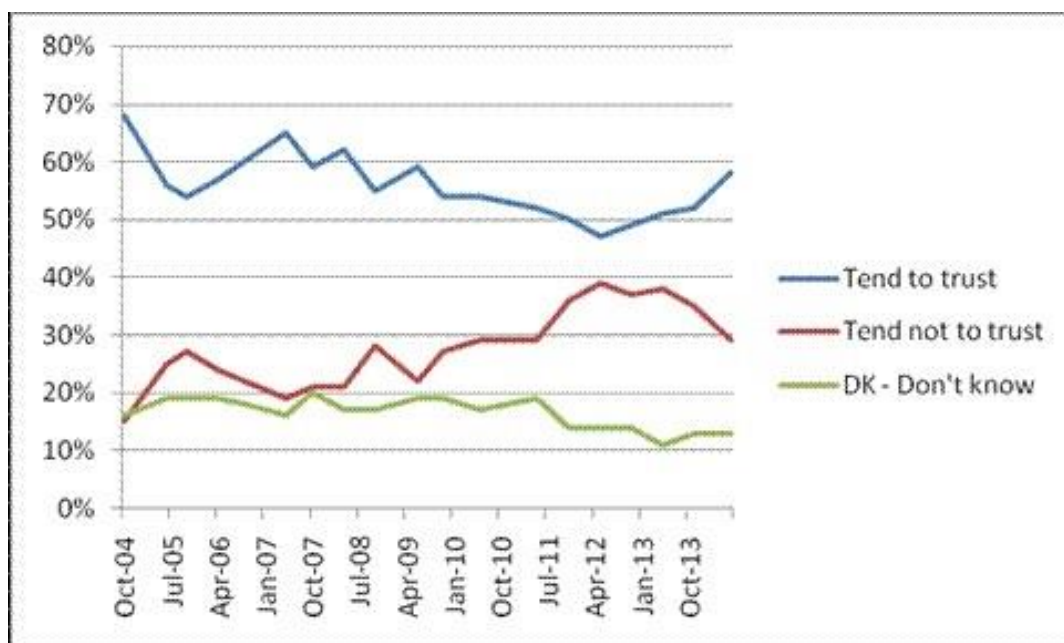
During the period of 2004-2011 Lithuania remained among the most optimistic countries. The number of pessimists was rather stable, changing from 6% to 16% (Eurobarometer, 2004-2011). This indicates that Lithuania had a small group of people who were skeptical about EU membership and its benefits for society. However, this group was not active in the public space and was not well organized in expressing their opinions. It tended to be passive according to participation in political activities.

Diagram 2 shows that the group of respondents who indicated that Lithuania's EU membership is neither good nor bad tended to grow, from 22 to 31%. The optimism is likely to change to a lack of judgment or uncertainty about the EU membership benefits. The undecided people may be potential supporters of both the eurosceptic and euro-optimist groups.

According to **Diagram 3**, in the period from 2004 to 2014 more than half of Lithuanian residents (from 47% to 69%) answered that they tend to trust EU institutions (Eurobarometer 2004-2014). The number of those who do not trust EU institutions ranged from 15% to 39%. These results do not show a great deal of skepticism. Trust in EU institutions is even stronger in Lithuania than the average among all EU countries (it varied from 42% in 2010 to 33% in 2013). Moreover, the numbers from the last two years indicate that Lithuanians' trust in the European Union is growing while distrust is decreasing. This might be associated with the increase of information about the activities of EU institutions.

Diagram3. Trust in EU institutions in Lithuania.

Q: "I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions (The European Union)"



Source: prepared by the author⁴

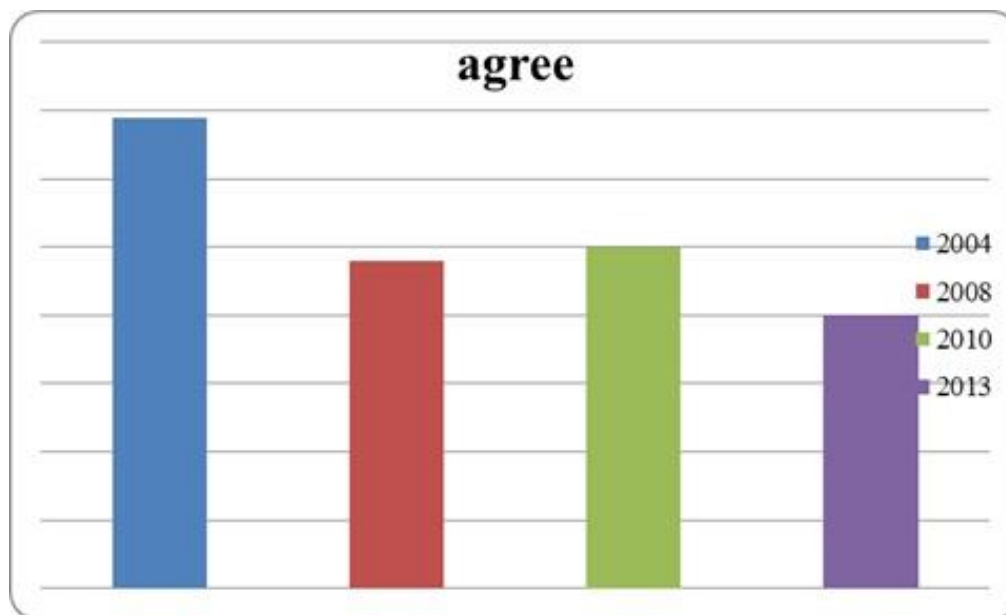
⁴ According to the Standart Eurobarometer data (2004-2014) //

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/cf/showchart_line.cfm?keyID=2193&nationID=21,&startdate=2004.10&enddate=2014.06

An additional indicator of public attitude towards the EU and integration processes is the question about support for EURO. Membership in the eurozone is not merely an economic decision. Lithuanians associate this membership with deeper integration and loss of sovereignty. That is why this question might be used as an indirect measure of euroscepticism reflecting the type of euroscepticism associated with a view on future EU integration processes. At the beginning of Lithuania's membership in the EU the common currency Euro was very positively evaluated by Lithuanians (69% of respondents agreed that the Euro is a good thing, see **Diagram4**). The last 2013 Eurobarometer results show that only 40% of Lithuanians positively evaluate the Euro (by comparison, 51% of all citizens of the EU member states have a positive opinion of the Euro, and 62% of eurozone residents also have a positive opinion of the Euro (Standart Eurobarometer 80, 2013)). This indicator shows an increase in euroscepticism related to deeper integration among the Lithuanian respondents. The majority of Lithuanians is satisfied with the current *status quo* of the EU, but is likely to reject deeper future integration.

Diagram4. Attitude toward the European Economic and Monetary Union with one single currency, the Euro.

Q: "Please, tell me whether you agree or not with one of these statements: the European Economic and Monetary Union with one single currency, the euro" (The percentages of respondents agreeing with the statement).



Source: Prepared by the author⁵

In measuring Lithuanian public levels of euroscepticism we note that Lithuanians do not look at the EU as a bad thing. Instead they agree that membership in the EU brings many benefits for the country (especially for those who receive subsidies (e.g. farmers), for people getting support for the activities from EU funds, etc.). Nevertheless, this optimistic view disappears when we evaluate different spheres and issues separately. The EU institutions are trusted more than national institutions, but people tend not to trust the Euro as a symbol of deeper integration. National currency is treated as a symbol of sovereignty.

⁵ According to the Standart Eurobarometer 80 data: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_lt_lt_nat.pdf

Taking into account the euroscepticism types described by Taggart and Szczerbiak, we can observe that Lithuanian public euroscepticism is not strong but it exists, and might be called soft euroscepticism. Lithuanians are likely to oppose the EU's extension of competencies that the EU is planning to make (e.g. the case of the introduction of Euro in Lithuania in 2015), but they have a generally positive view of the EU. If we evaluate Lithuanian citizens' views according to the second typology proposed by Kopecký and C. Mudde, we identify that Lithuanians tend to be europragmatists, generally accepting the policies of the EU but having reservations and suspicion towards future integration. According to the third classification, Lithuanian citizens might be called compromising eurosceptics, who think that "*European integration is not necessarily a good thing but some aspects of it are beneficial to the nation state. Transferring national decision-making power to European institutions is particularly unattractive*" (Vasilopolou, 2008: 6).

How does this soft euroscepticism and pragmatism of population coincide with the support for the parties that declare some eurosceptic ideas? The next part of the article provides an answer to this question.

5. Eurosceptic Political Parties in Lithuania

There were no hard eurosceptic parties in Lithuania from the beginning of the discussions about the possible membership of Lithuania in the EU. No one from the political parties was against EU membership. However, party-based euroscepticism was slowly becoming established as part of the Lithuanian party system. In the elections to the Lithuanian parliament (Seimas), two soft eurosceptic parties were identified: *The Centre Union of Lithuania* (which received 2.86% of the vote in 2000) and *The Lithuanian Peasants Party* (which received 4.08% of the vote in 2000). Both parties were small (in terms of electoral support and membership). Having no strong popular support these parties were not very active and visible during the campaign for the EU Accession referendum, which was dominated by positive and optimistic views and opinions. The aforementioned parties and their leaders were critical of the EU, which they argued takes power away from national governments and poses a threat to national sovereignty (Ozolas, 2010). However, Lithuanian citizens' optimism and economic hopes were stronger than the perceived threat of losing sovereignty.

During the elections to the parliament in 2004 the parties expressing some soft euroscepticism were again not supported by the voters. In fact, the support decreased. The parties which could have been considered soft eurosceptics had small membership, and their ideological orientation and rhetoric was essentially nationalistic. Thus, these parties received a small percentage of the votes: *National Centre Party* received 0,5% of the votes (they had no statements against the EU; they merely expressed indirect skepticism regarding the requirement that the EU constitution should be approved by a referendum of the people⁶); *the Republican party* received 0,36% of the votes (they had very nationalistic rhetoric with statements against the land sale for foreigners, against the industrial objects sale for foreigners and a statement that the party is against the Lithuanian membership in the EU—in other words, rhetoric of hard euroscepticism); *the Lithuanian nationalists union* received 0,21% of the votes (the party supports EU membership, but declares that it is against federation creation in the EU and thus losing Lithuania's status as a state). Altogether, eurosceptic parties expressing conditional euroscepticism received approximately 1% of the vote. One of the major reasons for this decrease of eurosceptic parties' support is Lithuania's

⁶ The Eurosceptic arguments of the parties were found in their election manifestos which were presented in the website of Republic of Lithuania Central Electoral Committee.

membership in the EU and the optimistic referendum campaign which was filled with positive arguments with hopes and promises. After the enthusiastic referendum campaign and active positive voting people were still full of hope during the Parliamentary elections. Thus, again, the Lithuanian political party system was dominated by strong euro-optimistic parties.

The 2008 Lithuanian Parliamentary elections were also not very different from the previous parliamentary elections. The campaign was dominated by national issues but with the positive influence of EU membership on these issues and benefits of membership. However, eurosceptic parties had a little bit higher support than in previous elections: *The Center Party* received 0.7% of the votes (in discourse they expressed soft euroscepticism by talking about the need to protect the country from EU influence and providing critique of some EU policies)⁷; *The Party "Young Lithuania"* received 1.75% of the votes (they declared the need to protect the nation from foreign influence and conniving strategies from the west). The two parties received about 2% of the votes. No one from the dominant and most relevant parties changed their positions, and their discourses were dominated by euro-optimistic ideas.

The 2012 parliamentary elections had a greater number of small parties participating in the elections. These elections were the first parliamentary elections when some eurosceptic ideas appeared in the discussions. Again some of the small parties expressed soft Euroscepticism. *The Republican Party* made no statement directly against membership in EU, but it stated that it is necessary to fight against wrong and discriminatory policies of the EU, such as unequal subsidies for the farmers, etc. The leader of the party repeated these ideas in his statements expressing concern on the plans of deeper EU integration⁸. Using euroreject rhetoric, the party changed its rhetoric to eurosceptic and conditional euroscepticism. This party received 0.27% of the votes. The coalition "*For Lithuania in Lithuania*", which united some nationalistic parties such as *the Lithuanian Center party*, *Lithuanian nationalists union* and *the Lithuanian social democratic union*, received 0,94% of the votes. This coalition expressed indirect euroscepticism by saying that it is going to fight against the propaganda of depravity (e.g. the issues of LGBT rights and parades associated with EU policies) and against the land sale for foreigners, etc. This rhetoric was similar to the *Republican Party* rhetoric and might be identified as eurosceptic according to the second classification and conditional euroscepticism, according to the third classification of euroscepticism. *Lithuanian peasants and Green Union* was also skeptical about some EU policies – e.g. it was against the land sale for foreigners. They received 3,88% of the votes. Altogether soft eurosceptic parties received around 5% of the votes. This shows some increase in support of euroscepticism, but mainly due to some ideas of the peasants' party, which is supported in some regions in Lithuania mainly by the farmers who started worrying about the land sale to the foreigners and felt a threat of losing the possibility to buy land at cheaper prices. Thus this euroscepticism is linked not to nationalist concerns about sovereignty but mainly to economic interests.

It is important to note that among the bigger parties which receive significant support from voters was one party, "Order and Justice" (7.31% of the votes and 11 seats in 2012), which expressed some euroscepticism related to national sovereignty in the campaigning period. The leaders of the party supported the idea of referendum on the introduction of Euro in Lithuania, argued that the party stands against the discriminatory policies of the EU towards the farmers subsidies.⁹ Their ideas about the

⁷ For the analysis of Parties Euroscepticism the election programs were analyzed. All the programs in Lithuanian are available at the website of Electoral Commission: www.vrk.lt

⁸ The statements of Valdemaras Valkiūnas are available at the website of The Republican Party: <http://www.respublikonupartija.lt/naujienos?start=15>

⁹ The texts of the speeches of party „Order and Justice“ leaders are available at the party's website: <http://www.tvarka.lt/index.php?id=6980>

necessity of reform in the EU (the necessity to strengthen the model of EU confederation instead of centralization and federalization of EU) might be called compromising euroscepticism. We may note that some parliamentary parties are ready to change their stances and use eurosceptic ideas in order to secure greater numbers of supporters. The rational voters are likely to vote for the more relevant parties presenting some euroscepticism instead of voting for the small parties that openly declare themselves eurosceptics.

If we compare the public opinion results presented in the previous section with the election results presented in this section it is clear that the level of public euroscepticism does not coincide with the support for the parties expressing euroscepticism. In the case of Lithuania we see that the public level of euroscepticism is not minimal, but the level of support for the parties expressing some soft euroscepticism is rather minimal. The first reason for this situation might be the *low level of salience* of the European issues in the national campaigning, as well in the media and political discourses. Even European Parliament elections are dominated usually by national issues in Lithuania. Political parties and politicians prefer to discuss the same issues of domestic policy as they discuss in national parliamentary or municipal elections (e.g. they promise to make salaries the same as the EU average for the people working in the sectors of education and culture; reduce taxes, attract investments, etc.)¹⁰. Therefore, there is no need for parties to harden their eurosceptic stance in order to be more visible. Only small Lithuanian nationalist and populist parties which are at the extreme political right have an ideological stance that makes it easier for them to use eurosceptic discourse than other mainstream parliamentary parties. These parties have no opportunity to enter the parliament in the multi-district. By using some eurosceptic and populist rhetoric they try to differentiate themselves from the political mainstream. In this way they try to unite those voters who are unsatisfied by mainstream politics. From this we may conclude that party euroscepticism tends to be marginalized in the Lithuanian political party system. Major parties are not likely to use eurosceptic rhetoric. Accordingly, small parties are not popular and have no chance to be represented in major national institutions (e.g. parliament, municipal councils).

Although we can note the marginalization of euroscepticism among Lithuanian parties, we cannot say the same about Lithuanian social movements, which will be discussed in the next section.

6. The Eurosceptic Groups and Social Movements in Lithuania

Taking into consideration political actors other than political parties who express some euroscepticism, we may distinguish a number of Lithuanian groups critical of the EU in the last years. All these actors became more visible in 2013 when Lithuania started the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. During the last year many newspaper and new media portals' articles were published discussing the issue of the EU as well as warnings about the dangers of the EU to Lithuanians. A part of the articles were a reaction to some events (e.g. the anniversary of the Lithuanian Independence movement "Lietuvos Sąjūdis) or speeches of politicians. For instance, one of the leading Lithuanian newspapers was discussing the words of Lithuanian minister of Foreign Affairs L. Linkevičius in September 2013 when he said that:

"it is necessary to suppress the nationalist parties by calling them radical, nationalistic combinations"

(*Respublika*, 2013)

¹⁰ The national issues dominated in the 2004, 2008 European Parliament elections.

Journalists criticized the attempts to link nationalist and eurosceptic ideas with radicals ones.

7. Euroseptic Groups on the Internet

In Lithuania we can note an increase of internet sites agitating against the EU (e.g. "We against (something related to EU)"/ "MES PRIEŠ") or "No!"/NE! (as an answer to something related to the EU). Who are these groups which are present in the media and internet?

Among the internet eurosceptic groups we find the following types:

Various nationalist and youth organizations which value nationalism, Lithuanian language and patriotism. They participate in protests and parades.

People who think that the EU is a new Soviet Union.

People who are against the euro and are for the national currency – Litas.

Patriotic participants to forums who think that participation in the EU Parliament elections is not important because it is impossible to elect nationalistic powerful Lithuanians.

Groups whose chief aim is to stop the "Baltic Pride" parade and forbid all LGBT persons and activities. They relate this issue to European values and the EU (Peteris U., 2013).

All these groups communicate via Facebook and usually the members of the groups have more or less the same marginal status. They often share links to Russian internet sites and articles which are full of anti-western and homophobic attitudes. The content of these group sites is hostile to the EU as an organization and discusses the theories of conspiracy about "imperialistic Brussels". They might be called as *Eurorejects*. The aforementioned groups on the internet are not influential but communication in social networks may attract the attention of some people and their ideas can be spread in wider society.

As we look at Western European euroscepticism, we can see that euroscepticism has no direct relationship with homophobia. Nevertheless, in Lithuania as well as in Central and Eastern European countries this link is visible. During the Baltic Pride parade in Vilnius in 2013 in July, among the observers of the parade standing along the street it was possible to see posters such as "the EU is a union of perverts" ("ES "iškrypėlių"), "Euro-Sodoma", etc.

This intensification of Euroscepticism related to the European values in Lithuania, just as in other countries of the region, might exist for simple reasons: such as EU requirements and pressure on human rights, particularly the rights of the LGBT community (Puleikytė, 2013). Homophobia has become a tool of euroscepticism in countries such as Lithuania. On the one hand, during the integration process of these countries into the EU in 2004, LGBT rights had not yet been touched and discussed separately. On the other hand, in the communist regime homosexuality was a strictly forbidden topic in public discourse. Such people "did not exist." Accordingly, LGBT rights issues escalated when EU institutions began to raise the requirements for Member-States on LGBT rights. The other reason that euroscepticism and homophobia are related is the traditional conception of the family. EU requirements for LGBT rights are automatically perceived as a threat to traditional family values in Lithuania. Marriage becomes an important symbol because the partnership links between LGBT people are often not treated as a traditional family links.

The other reason for the intensification of euroscepticism in Lithuania is the European economic crisis. Its consequences were important for a large number of people. Their socioeconomic position worsened, and many family members had to emigrate for economic reasons. That is one reason why skeptical views on EU policies are not a coincidence.

Nevertheless, the eurosceptics are active not only on the Internet websites; the Eurosceptic ideas are popular among the nationalistic social movements. The type of Euroscepticism which all these movements express is discussed in the next section.

8. Eurosceptic Social Movements

There are many formal and informal Eurosceptic movements and groups in Lithuania. They might all be grouped into three categories. One of the soft eurosceptic groups is an intellectual elite group of former participants in the Lithuanian independence movement *Sajūdis*. At the time of the reestablishment of Lithuania these people were rather influential, but due to different circumstances now they have no work, no important positions, and maybe even barely enough income to live with dignity. In their personal state of anger they expressed some disappointment with the decision of Lithuania to become a member of the EU and their discourse stressed the national sovereignty issue. They tend to fall between *Europragmatism* and *Euroscepticism*. This group last year was presented in the media due the 25th anniversary of the *Sajūdis* movement. In addition, part of this group participates in formal social movements which will be presented later.

The second group consists of people who are against Europe in principal and who believe that the values coming from Europe are bad. For example, we may mention the statement of catholic Archbishop G. Grušas from the tribune of Lithuanian parliament when he said that the EU legislation is trying to infiltrate our laws and undermine the institution of the family (Šindeikis, 2013). Therefore, this group is concerned about the potential damage of European values to Lithuanian society and tends to be called *Eurosceptics*.

The third Eurosceptic group consists of people attempting to find a rational intellectual discourse on what Europe should be; what are the challenges for the EU to find a common denominator and go ahead. This group is smallest and has no formal movement.

The main formal social and political movements who tend to express euroscepticism in Lithuania are as follows: *Lithuanian National Centre (LTC)*, *Lithuanian National Youth Union (LTJS)*, *The citizens union For Honesty and the Nation (PSDT)*, *Grunewald National Resistance Movement (ŽNPJ)*, and the *right-wing Thought Center - Intellectual Movement (DMC)*. Their names already show that they all have nationalistic ideology and are propagating national sovereignty and values. No special eurosceptic movement has been created in Lithuania up to this point.

Analysis of the information provided in the movements' websites as well as interviews with the representatives of the movements was performed in order to assess whether the aforementioned movements might be attached to Lithuanian euroscepticism.

The results of interviews¹¹ with the leaders of these movements as well as information provided on their internet sites¹² show that all the above-mentioned movements tend to express some eurosceptic ideas. These movements comprised a minority of Lithuanians against Lithuania's membership in the EU in 2004. Today they question the legitimacy of this referendum due to the changes in referendum law, as well

¹¹ Interview with representatives of *Grunewald National Resistance Movement R. Paulauskas and G. Jakavonis* // http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ER0Xdaiq0z4&list=UUbc7IBE5_st-tCscu3iYo8A&index=4&feature=plcp; Interview with Ričardas Čekutis. The head of Lithuanian National Centre. Vilnius, 2012 03 28. Interview prepared by Tautvydas Grinius, VMU student.; „Interview with representative of *PSDT R. Repšys*”. Kaunas, 2012 04 05. Interview prepared by Tautvydas Grinius, VMU student.; „Interview with representative of *DMC Linas Kojala*”, Vilnius. Interview prepared by Tautvydas Grinius, VMU student.; „Interview with head of *LTJS J. Panka*”, Vilnius, 2013 03 28. Interview prepared by the author.

¹² Lithuanian National Centre : <http://www.tautiniscentras.lt/apie-ltc>; Lithuanian National Youth Union : <http://tautosjaunimas.lt/lietuviu-tautinio-jaunimo-sajungos-strategija>; The citizens union For Honesty and the Nation : [http://www.doratauta.lt/index.php?id=2,0,0,1,0,0](http://www.doratauta.lt/index.php?id=2,0,0,1,0,0;); Grunewald National Resistance Movement: <http://www.zalgiris.org/kategorija/video/>. Accessed: 2013 09 25-30.

as due to the lack of discussion and the positive campaigning which hindered eurosceptics from presenting their opposing arguments (Mažylis and Unikaitė, 2004, Paulauskas, 2013).

After ten years of Lithuania's membership in the EU, these movements are still against membership in the EU as it is and talk about the need for reform. A majority of these movements in their arguments of skepticism stress that they are against the federalization process of the EU and the attempts to form the identity of European citizens by eliminating national identity. They tend to be conditional eurosceptics (see Table 1). For instance, the right-wing *Thought Center-Intellectual Movement* (DMC) calls itself a soft eurosceptic movement. They say "we are eurocritics, eurorealists" (Kojala, 2012). *The Citizens Union For Honesty and the Nation* representative says that the EU is the reality and therefore they criticize EU politics but are not against the EU as such (Repšys, 2012). The respondents highlight the decline in moral values in the EU. As a means of fighting against this decline the movement propagates catholic values. Some movements (*Lithuanian National Youth Union*) also express opposition to federalization. They even present their alternative models of the EU, such as "the community of European nations", where there is minimal to no bureaucracy and more power is given to national parliaments. This model argues that "the integration of the EU is possible only in certain areas like education, culture, and economics" (Panka, 2012).

The model confirms the conditional eurosceptic position of the movement, which recognizes the significance of European cooperation for Lithuania, but is skeptical of closer European unification.

Lithuania has examples of both soft and hard euroscepticism. The majority of the movements are quite moderate towards the EU, i.e. they are aware of the EU as an inevitable reality from which Lithuania cannot escape. These movements are likely to stress that Lithuanians should be more active in promoting their interests and are against losing sovereignty. The major reason why these movements are considered soft eurosceptics according to P. Taggart and A. Szczerbiak's model is their aim of seeing the EU different from how it is now—not driven from the top, but closer to the European citizenry. Thus these groups, in the last instance, do not wish for Lithuania to withdraw from the EU.

Only one movement takes a truly tough position on the EU: the *Grunewald National Resistance Movement* (ŽNPJ). The leaders of this movement argue that they would not like to see Lithuania in the EU; instead they wish Lithuania to be a national state with sovereignty on all issues. They think that Lithuania "delivered all the functions of economics, security, and finance to the hands of Brussels" (Jakavonis, 2013). They even think that "Lithuania would live better without the EU. Now EU membership is a reality though" (Paulauskas, 2013). The leaders of this movement, R. Paulauskas and G. Jakavonis, started to write their articles in leading news media portals and among other issues the various aspects of euroscepticism are very often a topic in their writings.

Table 1. *The Types of Euroscepticism of Lithuanian Social Movements*

Name of the movement	Soft/hard	Europragmatists/ Euroenthusiasts/ Eurosceptics/ Eurorejects	Rejecting/ Conditional/ Compromising
<i>Lithuanian National Centre (LTC),</i>	soft	<i>Eurosceptics</i>	Conditional
<i>Lithuanian National Youth Union (LTJS),</i>	soft	<i>Eurosceptics</i>	Conditional
<i>The citizens union For Honesty and the Nation (PSDT)</i>	soft	<i>Eurosceptics</i>	Conditional
<i>Grunewald National Resistance Movement (ŽNPJ),</i>	Hard/soft	<i>Eurorejects/ Eurosceptics</i>	Conditional
<i>Right -wing Thought Center - Intellectual Movement (DMC).</i>	soft	<i>Eurosceptics</i>	Conditional

Source: prepared by author

Lithuanian movements use mostly informative educational means in euroscepticism propagation: e.g. cyber strategy (e.g. information presentation in websites), educative publications, conferences, youth camps (local, international), and meetings with different people and politicians¹³. These means of communication are not particularly successful in attracting public attention. That is why these Eurosceptic movements do not have much influence on the masses.

Analysis of the information on euroscepticism provided by various Lithuanian movements reveals that different movements communicate their ideas differently. For instance, the members of the *Grunewald National Resistance Movement* are very active in organizing various discussions with certain experts on EU policies and integration aspects, and they present videos of these discussions on *youtube.com* and their website. On their web page there are 20 videos and more than half of them are related to EU issues. The discussions critique many mainstream political positions and express eurosceptic arguments. For instance, they posted a discussion on the introduction of the euro in Lithuania (Why does Lithuania need the euro when the euro is irrelevant for Europe?, 2014)¹⁴. This discussion reveals the movement's clear resistance to deeper EU integration. They argue that the government should present not only positive but also negative arguments regarding the euro introduction.

The Lithuanian National Centre does not aim to discuss various EU policies, but their documents (The program of *Lithuanian National Centre*, 2010) stress several issues which reveal eurosceptic views. First, they are against the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and any supranational variants of constitution; second, they are for an unlimited moratorium on the introduction of the euro; third, they are against propagation of sexual perversions (such as the perceive LGBT to promote); finally, they are against any imperialism, including EU imperialism. All of these aims of the movement show a resistance to deeper EU integration and dissatisfaction with present EU policies.

On its website the movement *The citizens Union For Honesty and the Nation* does not discuss anything in particular related to the EU except one issue – they declare that they are against homosexual ideology propagation which the EU initiates (About us, 2014). Thus the movement expresses its dissatisfaction of EU membership in terms of value orientation and is agitating to fight this EU initiative.

The Lithuanian National Youth Union has its own website and presents various information portals with writing about national, patriotic topics. Direct information on euroscepticism is absent but indirect their information shows support for some eurosceptic ideas. Most often the articles discuss the issue of homosexuality and its propagation. The documents express the view that Lithuania is for Lithuanians. This is a discriminatory and nationalistic position. They post a lot of information about various marches, demonstrations and various activities indirectly associated with euroscepticism.

All of these movements spread their ideas not only through their websites but also in printed media. Some of the movements have their own newspapers: for example, *Tribūna*, and *Žalgiris*. In the newspapers and portals the movements express their opinions on EU integration and other EU policy matters. One movement leader, Ričardas Čekutis, works as an editor at the newspaper *Respublika*. That is how he secures some space for eurosceptical articles in one of Lithuania's major newspapers.

The activity of eurosceptics is visible not only in the quantity of information provided but also in their involvement in various actions. The major change in euroscepticism visibility, popularity and activity is

¹³ This we may see in their websites. The information was confirmed by the data from interviews.

¹⁴ Kam Lietuvai reikalingas Europai nebereikalingas euras? (in Lithuanian)/ Why does Lithuania need the euro when the euro is irrelevant for Europe?

represented by the latest events in 2013-2014. The leaders of nationalistic movements such as *Lithuanian National Youth Union* and *Grunewald National Resistance Movement* were among the leading organizers of the Referendum on the sale of land to foreigners. The initiators of this referendum were Lithuanian farmers but nationalist movements were very active supporters and agitators. The issue of land selling was related to a very good opportunity to express and propagate euroscepticism among the Lithuanian citizens. It is important that the initiative was strongly supported by Lithuanians and more than 300,000 signatures supporting the referendum were collected for the first time in Lithuania. At the end of June Lithuania held a referendum. All of the major parties were worried about the results of the referendum because positive results would be in disagreement with the EU Treaty. However, only around 10% of voters came to express their opinion and the referendum failed. Hence, though eurosceptic ideas at points may be attractive, when emotional evaluations are faced with rational arguments, Lithuanians tend to be pragmatists.

What do these trends in eurosceptic movements in Lithuania demonstrate? Though no eurosceptic party receives especially significant support from the Lithuanian citizens, the movements that discuss certain relevant problems and associate those with the EU requirements can gain support under certain circumstances. Lithuanian society is not against the EU; but a significant and growing part of the population of Lithuania is inclined to support certain initiatives and contradictions associated with important questions. When these questions are associated with EU requirements, there is now the serious possibility that negative evaluations of the EU itself will be the result of addressing these questions.

9. Reasons for the Presence of Euro-Optimism and the Potential of Euroscepticism in Lithuania

Lithuania tends to be a euro-optimistic country, with no strong eurosceptic parties, social movements and public attitudes. We may list a number of reasons for support of EU membership among Lithuanians. First, Lithuanians tend to be pragmatists. A whole decade of membership convinced the people about membership benefits: e.g. financial support and funding from various European funds, and free movement in and among the EU countries with various possibilities for work, studies and travel. Second, among the reasons to support EU membership we may list Lithuanians' memories of their historical past: e.g. the occupation of Lithuania, Lithuania's membership in the Soviet Union, the threat of Russia, the geopolitical situation in general, etc. Lithuanians still feel threatened by Russia, and in this respect they think that it is better to lose some sovereignty by integrating with EU institutions while still maintaining a free and independent state. Third, Lithuanians experience many economic benefits offered by the EU common market. While euro-optimism prevails in Lithuania, we cannot avoid eurosceptic attitudes.

As previously noted, the people do not tend to vote for eurosceptics, but the "political and psychological climate and the way of people's thinking is affected not only by the election results but by the public speeches of intellectuals as well. It may take a long time but the so called marginal groups may convince the people that everything is bad in Lithuania" (Šindeikis, 2013) This is why we cannot say that we need not pay attention to their thoughts and discussions and treat the movements and various eurosceptic politicians as marginal figures without a future.

There are several possible reasons why euroscepticism still finds expression in a very euro-optimistic Lithuania. Historian A. Kasparavičius gives three basic explanations. Firstly, Lithuanian history influences some eurosceptics who remember that Lithuanians were among the last Christianized in Europe, having shown strong resistance to belonging to any union, fighting with crusaders, etc. Secondly, populism is supported in Lithuanian politics and populists use various strategies, among them euroscepticism; in Lithuania eurosceptic ideas are associated with populism. Thirdly, there is a difference in

the people's behavior—i.e. Lithuanians differ from Western Europeans. Lithuanians still seem to harbor some fears of something like Europe, which looks unknown and alien (Šindeikis, 2013). Thus, motivated by such fears, Lithuanians are more likely to support nationalistic and eurosceptic ideas.

Euroscepticism and populism is popular among those states which do not understand what role their country may play in the EU. Lithuania is no exception to this. Some groups of society really do not have a clear vision. They might be a potential source for euroscepticism. The analysis of eurosceptic ideas shows that euroscepticism in Lithuania appears in the form of questioning future EU projects that are not (apparently) based on values, but which, from the eurosceptic perspective, should be.

Despite the manifestation of euroscepticism in Lithuania during the last years, genuinely strong support of eurosceptic parties and movements is not likely to appear in the near future. There has always been and likely always will be a group of Lithuanians critical towards the EU; but it is unlikely that eurosceptics will become a numerous and significant political force in Lithuania.

10. Conclusion

This article provides empirical analysis of euroscepticism in the case of Lithuania, by applying the dominant theoretical division of euroscepticism into its soft and hard variants, and interpreting the four-type euroscepticism model presented by Kopecky and Mudde together with the third classification presented by Sophia Vasilopoulou. The analysis of public euroscepticism, party-based euroscepticism and social movement-based euroscepticism has revealed that there is no hard line euroscepticism in Lithuania among all of the three actors analyzed. They may all be classified as soft eurosceptics. The public, parties and movements already acknowledge that Lithuania's membership in the EU is a reality and no one questions it. Even the *Grunewald National Resistance Movement* acknowledges this, and it is one of the hardest of the soft eurosceptic movements. All of the efforts of Lithuanian eurosceptics are focused on criticizing the policies and future deepening of integration \ in the EU. The eurosceptic parties and movements tend to oppose the EU's current and planned projects based on the further extension of the competencies of EU institutions.

The paper reveals that Lithuania tends to be a euro-optimistic country where soft euroscepticism has the potential to grow. Although eurosceptic parties are not supported in the elections, public opinion polls and public support for some initiatives presented by eurosceptic groups and movements (last referendum initiative) indicate that euroscepticism is not absent in society and under certain conditions may even move off the margins of Lithuanian politics slightly more towards the center.

There are several possible reasons why euroscepticism was not supported in the elections for a long time, and remains unpopular among the public. First, though we may notice intensification of euroscepticism in the EU countries, it is still not highly supported in Western European countries and Lithuania is not an exception. Second, there is no eurosceptic party in the (Lithuanian) parliament. The nationalist parties expressing euroscepticism are incapable ideologically of competing with the major parties that also pretend to get votes from eurosceptics by talking about EU membership and aims to change the EU by being a part of the union (e.g. anti-elite parties like *Order and Justice* use this strategy). Third, weak institutionalization of social movements and lack of coordination of their activities, together with ignorance of eurosceptics in the mainstream media (except for the newspaper *Respublika*), do not allow the people to get more information and get involved in the expression and spread of euroscepticism. Fourth, open hostility to the EU is not compatible with the majority of Lithuanian voters' interests – Lithuanians already know the advantages of the common EU market, free labor force movement,

Schengen agreement, and EU structural funds. Accordingly, people may express criticisms among themselves and in the polls, but they will not vote for the parties arguing against the EU. Finally, euroscepticism in Lithuania very often is associated with the influence of the East (i.e. Russia). With memories of Soviet times still fresh, people are afraid of again coming under the direct influence of Russia.

In sum, one can state that eurosceptics are marginalized in Lithuanian politics for the reasons listed above. However, certain important and widely relevant issues, coupled with the mainstream political parties' inability to communicate with the public in a clear way about their decisions related to EU membership requirements, could potentially unite these otherwise marginalized eurosceptics voices. If this happens, eurosceptics in Lithuania may in fact have the chance to participate in mainstream politics.

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