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From Hard Consensus to Soft Euroscepticism: Attitudes of Croatian MPs on EU Integration

Bojana Kocijan & Marko Kukec*

Abstract: »Vom mühsam erreichten Konsens zur leichten Euroskepsis. Einstellungen der kroatischen Parlamentarier zur EU-Integration«. In this article, we offer the first systematic study of the attitudes of Croatian MPs about various aspects of Europeaness. Following the overwhelming elite consensus in 2012, when Croatia was about to join, MPs are still relatively satisfied with the EU in 2014. We argue beneficiary member mindset prevails among Croatian MPs suppressing any greater degree of Euroscepticism. However, 'soft Euroscepticism' is present, especially among right wing HDZ. Our analysis rests on 70 interviews with MPs and is a part of ENEC (2014) project. Croatian MPs take visible consideration of symbolic and strategic aspects when thinking about the EU. They have solid confidence in the EU institutions, report satisfaction with EU returns, favor further policy Europeanization and strongly identify as European elite. Negative feedback about the EU relates to poor representation of Croatia's interests. Our analysis reveals that by ceding some sovereignty MPs hope to compensate for redistribution of benefits by further policy Europeanization and better channels of interest representation. EU budget receivers seem to be better off in the EU rather than outside.

Keywords: Europeaness, national MPs, party dissent, beneficiary member, soft Euroscepticism.

1. Introduction¹

Scholars noted that party elites in the new Member States of European Union tend to follow a predictable pattern over time. In almost all cases, party elites

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adopt agendas that are consistent with the EU during the accession process (Vachudova 2008). After completing all pre-accession requirements, Croatia became EU's 28th member on July 01, 2013, after Croatian MPs in March 2012 unanimously voted in favor of Croatia's EU entry. Croatia's EU membership was rare political agenda that neutralized political differences between the left-oriented SDP and right-oriented HDZ (Maldini and Pauković 2016). The 'Gotovina case'² and Constitution amendments³ demonstrate the prospects of 'permissive consensus' (Hooghe and Marks 2009), as Croatian political elite, driven by the notion of 'return to Europe' (Lindstrom 2003), at least temporarily put aside differences and led the country towards the EU membership.

Although Croatian parliamentary parties were strongly in favor of EU accession, Eurosceptic voices in the campaign preceding the EU accession referendum were not absent. The public was less favorable of joining, especially before 2005 when Croatia had uneasy relationship with the Hague Tribunal and bilateral disputes with Slovenia and Italy. Public referendum, held in January 2013, shortly before the unanimous parliamentary vote revealed that a solid part of the public was Eurosceptic. The results of the referendum were 66% in favor and 33% against with a 44% turnout, which reveals a visible dose of Euroscepticism among citizens who turned out to vote. Reasons for Euroscepticism among Croatians were multifold, but among others included mistrust towards the elites, poor governments' performances, lack of information about the EU and national identity issues (Franc and Medjugorac 2013). Greek crisis that unfolded in 2013, just as Croatia was about to join has at least partially contributed to public Euroscepticism.

In this article, we study MPs attitudes in three dimensions of *Europeanness*; emotional attachment, rational calculation and EU's scope of competences (Best, Lengyel, and Verzichelli 2012, 8-9) and seek for evidence of 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks 2009) among Croatian party elites. Once accession-related constraints are lifted, party differences regarding many EU-related issues become apparent, especially among parties that adopt nationalist and culturally conservative positions (Vachudova 2008). Building on this argument, we suggest that the extent of 'constraining dissensus' among Croatian parliamentarians is conditioned upon the 'beneficiary member mindset'. MPs attitudes on *Europeanness* are generally positive, however, when inter-party differences exist, negative feedback about *Europeanness* is more voiced by right wing HDZ. Nevertheless, negative attitudes about the EU by right wing

² Despite previous claims in 2001 that the prosecution of Croatian war-time generals is out of question, in 2005, Ivo Sanader, then leader of HDZ and Prime minister extradited General Ante Gotovina, per request of the Hague Tribunal, in exchange for re-opening of the Croatian-EU talks, which created rage among is right-wing voter base.

³ The government amended the constitution for a referendum with less than 50% turnout to be valid, thus preventing Eurosceptics to use abstention as a potential tool to hijack the referendum.

MPs can be viewed only as ‘soft Euroscepticism’ (Taggart and Szczesniak 2004), because MPs’ rational calculations about EU benefits suppress any stronger anti-EU voices. Moreover, soft Eurosceptic attitudes are most likely along the cultural and value dimensions, rather than issues related to the economy (Vachudova 2008).

Our study is the first systematic attempt to examine attitudes of Croatian party elites on different aspects of EU integration. Our data are part of ENEC (2014) project that we complement with Chapel Hill Expert Survey data in the section on general EU integration attitudes. In 2014, we interviewed the same set of MPs who voted in favor of Croatia’s entry in 2012, which created a unique opportunity to study their attitudes only two years into Croatia’s membership and uncover patterns of inter-party differences. In our analysis, we predominantly focus on MPs from the three largest Croatian parties in 2011-2015 legislature; HDZ⁴, SDP⁵ and HNS⁶. HDZ was the main opposition party during this term positioned around the center regarding economic matters, but towards the right in cultural and value issues. SDP and HNS were members of the government positioned on the left in culture and value issues and similar to HDZ around the center regarding economic matters. We expect greater inter-party differences in cultural and value dimensions of Europeanness and almost no differences in economic matters. *Beneficiary member mindset* is likely to suppress Euroscepticism, especially along economic issues, while soft Euroscepticism is expected along cultural and value issues, especially among right wing MPs.

Our data reveal Croatian MPs are generally largely positive about various aspects of *Europeanness* after its short EU membership. They are satisfied with EU benefits and largely identify as European elite. They are somewhat content with EU’s performance during economic crisis and report solid trust in EU institutions. Inter-party differences however reveal that negative feedback about *Europeanness* is voiced by right wing HDZ, especially along national identity and sovereignty issues. In addition, soft Euroscepticism is voiced by both political camps in reference to representation of Croatian interests at the EU level, although it is not always clear if soft Euroscepticism reveals true negative attitudes, or at times also government-opposition dynamic. *Beneficiary member mindset* is clearly at work when it comes to the scope of governance and Europeanization of policy areas. Croatian MPs highly favor extension of the powers of the Parliament and the Commission and are fond of further policy Europeanization. MPs hope to compensate positive feedback for potential redistributive capacities and protection of Croatia’s interests that would

⁴ HDZ – Croatian Democratic Union.

⁵ SDP – Social Democratic Party.

⁶ HNS – Croatian People’s Party.

result from further Europeanization. This explains only soft Euroscepticism in only value dimension of Europeanness.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we address MPs rational calculation attitudes where we examine MPs' stands on EU benefits, efficacy of EU decision-making process, trust into and performance of the EU institutions. Next, we examine emotional attachment attitudes and those on threats to the EU. Finally, we address attitudes on the scope of governance and on further Europeanization of several policy areas. The conclusion summarizes our findings.

2. Rational calculation attitudes of Europeanness

2.1 Benefits of EU Membership

We begin our data analysis by examining the attitudes of Croatian MPs regarding benefits of Croatian first year of EU membership (Table 1). Overall, 69% of MPs believe that Croatia benefited from EU membership, but the attitudes also seem to be structured along the government-opposition line. Nearly 90% of MPs from government parties recognize benefits during the first year of EU membership, while only 45% of opposition MPs do so. However, the opposition is divided between mainstream HDZ, whose 63% of MPs recognize the benefits, and smaller parties at both right and left flanks of the party system, which are most disappointed with the Croatian track record in the EU⁷. Therefore, at the party level, government MPs almost uniformly applaud the EU membership benefits, while the opposition is divided between sceptics from mainstream HDZ and deniers of benefits from fringe opposition. These attitudes are not surprising, taking in the account the governing position of SDP, mainstream oppositional status of HDZ and fringe position of smaller opposition parties.

Table 1: Benefits of EU Membership, by Government Status (valid percentages)

Government status	Benefited ¹	Not benefited	N
Government ²	89.2	10.8	37
Opposition ³	45.2	54.8	31
Total	69.1	30.9	68

¹ Survey question: "Taking everything into consideration, would you say that Croatia has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union?"

² SDP, HNS, IDS and HSU.

³ HDZ, HSP AS, DC, OraH, HL, HDSSB, HSS, and Independents.

⁷ On the right of the political spectrum, MP of HSP AS and three out of four MPs from HDSSB deny benefits of EU membership, while on the left of political spectrum, all MPs from OraH and Labor Party also deny benefits.

As the government is responsible for day-to-day affairs with the EU, both success and failure in capitalizing on EU membership can be attributed to its work. Therefore, government parties defend the track record of their government, while the opposition, as a part of its competitive strategy has an incentive to expose the failure of the government to pick up benefits of EU membership. Within the opposition, mainstream opposition, however, usually abstains from completely denying any potential or real benefits of the EU membership, as they are aware that at any point in the foreseeable future, they might assume the governing position (de Vries and Hobolt 2012, 251). HDZ indeed frequently lamented the incapacity of the incumbent SDP-led government to properly manage EU funds, but still recognized some benefits of EU membership (Arnold, Sapir, and de Vries 2012, 1345). As noted by Raos (2016), HDZ and SDP actually compete over who is more capable of properly managing EU funds, turning EU benefits into a valence issue. As theorized in the introduction, the reliance of Croatia and its mainstream political elites on EU funding constrains the movement of mainstream parties towards hard Euroscepticism. Fringe opposition parties, on the other hand, are fairly free to express their traditionally strong reservations towards European integration (de Vries and Hobolt 2012, 251; Adam and Maier 2011, 435), as many of these parties are almost permanent opposition.

2.2 MPs Attitudes About the Efficacy of EU Decision Making Process

In this section, we analyze how satisfied MPs are with representation of Croatian interests at the European level, as well as how they feel about interest representation of other members. As demonstrated in the Table 2, MPs are generally disappointed with interest representation at the EU level. About 96% of MPs agree that interests of some members are overrepresented, while about 75% of MPs agree that Croatian interests are not taken in the account sufficiently at the EU level. This is in line with previous elite research, where scholars described the issue of interest representation as the ‘glass half empty’, because EU elites are generally dissatisfied with the unequal treatment of EU members (Cotta and Russo 2012, 31), where larger members have clear advantage over smaller ones to influence EU policy making (Panke 2010; Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006, 658).

Table 2: Interest Representation in the EU (valid percentages)

	Agree ²	Disagree ³	N
Croatian interests are underrepresented at the EU level ¹	75	20	67
Interests of some Member States are overrepresented at the EU level ¹	96	4	67

¹ Survey question: "How do you agree with the following statement: EU decision-makers do not sufficiently take in the account Croatian interests."

² 'Agree strongly' and 'agree somewhat' merged as one category.

³ 'Disagree somewhat' and 'disagree strongly' merged as one category.

When we analyze data at the party level (Table 3), we observe that MPs in both political camps think poorly about EU interest representation. However, MPs from HDZ are slightly more concerned about unequal representation of Croatian interests than MPs from SDP and HNS. Unequal interest representation is the dimension of *Europeanness* where Eurosceptic sentiments among all Croatian MPs are strongest, which is largely related to the small member status of Croatia that is at least in practice disadvantaged in influencing EU policymaking compared to big members. However, more Euroscepticism is voiced by MPs from right wing HDZ. It is unclear however, if their stronger negative sentiments about interest representation must be understood as a strategic tool of the opposition to criticize the capacity of SDP-led government to lobby for Croatian interests in the EU, or as concerns about national and sovereignty issues once accession-related constraints are lifted, which is natural to parties positioned on the right.

Table 3: Inter-party Differences: Under-representation of Croatian Interests and Overrepresentation of Interests of some Member States in the EU (valid percentages)

Underrepresentation of Croatia in the EU*	SDP	HDZ	HNS
Agree ¹	74	88	78
Disagree ²	26	12	22
N	23	16	9
Overrepresentation of some Member States at the EU level**	SDP	HDZ	HNS
Agree ¹	91	100	89
Disagree ²	9	0	11
N	23	17	9

Survey questions: **EU decision-makers do not take Croatian interests sufficiently in the account; **Interests of some Member States are overrepresented at the EU level."

¹ 'Strongly agree' and 'agree somewhat' merged as one category.

² 'Strongly disagree' and 'somewhat disagree' merged as one category.

2.3 Trust Into the EU Institutions

According to the data in Table 4, only 43% of Croatian MPs report high satisfaction with EU institutions, while only a small percentage of MPs (8%) reports low levels of trust in the EU institutions. Most MPs (48%) report some

trust in EU institutions. Although the difference in levels of trust between EU institutions is not dramatic, MPs have greater trust in EU Parliament (53% of MPs report high levels of trust in EP). Somewhat less trusted are European Commission (40% of MPs highly trust EC) and Council of Ministers (37% of MPs highly trust CoM). However, EC and CoM are not totally distrusted either, because slightly more than 50% of MPs report average levels of trust in both EC and CoM.

Table 4: Trust into EU Institutions (valid percentages)

	High (7-10)	Medium (4-6)	Low (0-3)	N
European Parliament	53	41	6	70
European Commission	40	51	9	70
Council of Ministers	37	53	10	70
Total average	43	48	8	70

Survey question: "Please tell me on a 0-10 scale how much you personally trust each of the following EU institutions to usually take the right decisions. 0 means that you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust."

It has been noted by previous elite research that the most trusted EU institution is EP, while EC and CoM were less trusted. This is primarily because EP is the product of national elections, which national elites still heavily control and the elites more likely trust institutions they have a direct control over. The Commission, on the other hand, is least directly connected to the process of national representation and is in charge of judging parliament's decisions, while Council of Ministers is least trusted, although it is an institution more closely connected to the system of national representation (Cotta and Russo 2012, 32).

In Croatia, average levels of trust in EU institutions could relate to relatively short experience with the EU, where the elite, only one year into Croatia's membership does not yet have proper experience and knowledge about the workings of the EU institutions and the impact of its decisions on Croatia. Croatian elite is in the learning process where full trust in the EU institutions might not be that easily granted. Trust in institutions is an indicator of institutional design expected to produce preferred outcomes, and the elites accept a degree of dependence from EU institutions, expecting that the EU institutions act in accordance with shared criteria (Jerez Mir, Real Dato, and Vazquez Garcia 2014; Heinrich 2016). Once Croatia spends more time in the EU and if EU benefits continue to be evaluated positively by the elite, trust in EU institutions is likely to increase in the future. It is also important to note that Croatia has only recently separated from one multi-national entity (Yugoslavia) where it registered negative experiences, so its elite might be careful in quickly expressing highly positive feelings about yet another entity of a similar format.

Table 5: Inter-party Differences: Trust into EU Institutions (average party positions)

Party	EP	EC	CoM	N
SDP	7.1	6.2	6.5	70
HDZ	6.4	5.9	5.6	70
HNS	7.1	6.4	6.7	70

Survey question: "Please tell me on a 0-10 scale how much you personally trust each of the following EU institutions to usually take the right decisions. 0 means that you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust."

Data in Table 5 demonstrate that inter-party differences, when it comes to trusting different EU institutions, are not dramatic. However, some soft Euro-scepticism is present among right-wing HDZ whose MPs report lower levels of trust in the EU institutions, which supports the argument about right-wing MPs being more concerned about identity and sovereignty issues. Still, because average party scores of all parties are above the middle of the scale, we also conclude that beneficiary status of Croatia suppresses MPs from all parties to expose any greater extent of mistrust towards EU institutions.

2.4 Attitudes on Performance of the EU Institutions During the Crisis

In this section, we examine attitudes of the Croatian elite about institutional management of the Eurozone crisis by three EU institutions, European Council, the Commission, and the Central Bank. As data in Table 6 demonstrate, only 23% of the elite reports high satisfaction with institutional performance during the Eurozone crisis and about 29% of the elite reports low satisfaction with its institutional management. Nevertheless, most MPs (45%) are somewhat content with how EU institutions functioned during the crisis.

Table 6: Performance of the EU Institutions during Crisis (valid percentages)

	High (7-10)	Medium (4-6)	Low (0-3)
European Commission	26	47	25
European Council	25	45	27
European Central Bank	19	44	36
Total average	23	45	29

Survey question: "On a 0-10 scale, where 0 is very negative and 10 very positive, how would you evaluate the role played so far by the following European institutions during the Eurozone crisis?"

According to the data in Table 6, the difference in levels of satisfaction with crisis management across the three EU institutions is not dramatic. MPs are lightly more positive when it comes to the performance of the Commission and somewhat more critical of the performance of the Central Bank. When we compare data in Tables 4 and 6, we see that Croatian elite is more trustful of, for example, EC and CoM, but is less pleased with how these two institutions

performed during the crisis. To this, we add that Croatia's position is rather unique when it comes to its experiences with the crisis, because it joined the EU when the crisis was well under way in 2013, so the effects of the EU crisis management might have not fully reached Croatia by the time we conducted our fieldwork in 2014. In addition, while Croatia was among the members badly hurt by the crisis, it did not reach Greek levels and consequently, the Croatian MPs are still rather confident in the EU institutions. Because Croatia is EU budget beneficiary, it is expected that MPs would not be overly critical of performance of the EU institutions during crisis or greatly mistrust EU institutions.

Table 7: Inter-party Differences: Performance of EU Institutions during Eurozone Crisis (average party positions)

Party	EC	Council	ECB
SDP	5.0	4.9	4.4
HDZ	5.2	5.4	5.3
HNS	5.5	6.2	5.5

Survey question: "On a 0-10 scale, where 0 is very negative and 10 very positive, how would you evaluate the role played so far by the following European institutions during the Eurozone crisis?"

As we can see in Table 7, inter-party differences regarding performance of EU institutions during Eurozone crisis do not tell us a new story. Right wing HDZ MPs are actually slightly more positive about institutional performance during Eurozone crisis than MPs from left wing SDP and HNS. We conclude that although Croatian MPs are not highly positive about performance of EU institutions during crisis, they are not very critical about institutional management either as average party scores are around the middle of the scale for all parties. This again supports our claims that soft Euroscepticism is countered by beneficiary member status.

3. Attitudes on Emotional Attachment and Threats to the European Union

3.1 Attitudes on National and European Identity

The idea of 'Europe' as the foundation of an identity is the key for the legitimization of the EU (Sassatelli 2002). If Europeans declare themselves as European citizens, and not only as nationals of one of the 28 Member States, they then understand European polity as a concept broader than mere system of rules and regulations (Cotta and Russo 2012). If national MPs feel 'European' more often than 'national', or at least 'as European' as they feel 'national', we can safely assume they will easily accept and respect EU norms and procedures. In

this section, we study attitudes about identity of Croatian elites. As data in Table 8 demonstrate, Croatian MPs feel European almost as much as they feel Croatian. About 77% of Croatian MPs feel either very or somewhat attached to Europe, which is only slightly lower level of attachment compared to the attachment to Croatia.

Table 8: Attachment to Country, Region and Europe (valid percentages)

	Attached ¹	Not very attached ²	N
Region	96	4	70
Country	100	0	70
Europe	77	23	70

Survey question: "People feel different degrees of attachment to their region, to their country and to Europe. What about you? Are you very attached, somewhat attached, not very attached or not at all attached?"

¹ 'Very attached' and 'somewhat attached' merged as one category.

² 'Not very attached' and 'not at all attached' merged as one category.

A slightly smaller attachment to Europe than to Croatia supports claims of previous research that European identity, as supranational identity is not antagonistic to national identity, but can be seen as its extension. Europe is not a challenge to national bonds, but an acceptable complement (Cotta and Russo 2012). To support this claim further, we find that only about 15% of MPs feel the EU endangers Croatia's culture. These results give us confidence that national attachment of Croatian elite extends to supranational level, and demonstrate that identifying with Croatia most often means identifying also with Europe.

Table 9: Inter-party Differences: Attachment to Europe (valid percentages)

	SDP	HDZ	HNS
Attached ¹	79	76	100
Not very attached ²	21	24	0
N	24	17	10

Survey question: "People feel different degrees of attachment to their region, to their country and to Europe. What about you? Are you very attached, somewhat attached, not very attached or not at all attached?"

¹ 'Very attached' and 'somewhat attached' merged as one category.

² 'Not very attached' and 'not at all attached' merged as one category.

According to the percentages in Table 9, we note there are no significant differences in the levels of attachment to Europe and to Croatia between right and left oriented MPs. However, HDZ MPs are slightly less attached to Europe than MPs from SDP and HNS, which supports the argument about potentially stronger Eurosceptic attitudes among right wing MPs once the accession-related constraints are lifted, especially when it comes to value and identity issues. However, attachment to Europe among Croatian MPs is generally strong and positive and reasons for this are both instrumental and symbolic. On

the one hand, the notion of ‘belonging to Europe’ and ‘to the West’ perpetuated positive feelings about Europe among Croatian elite and was perceived as a factor of distinction against other Yugoslav elites. Although strong attachment to Croatia is expected, positive feelings about Europe among Croatians most certainly also relate to these identity experiences prior to EU membership. Croatia’s road to the EU has been long and protracted process, but the elites from both political camps never wavered from Croatia’s EU path, especially in post-Tudjman era. Finally, because Croatia is the beneficiary of EU budget, strong attachments to Europe among Croatian MPs partially also relate to strategic calculations and its beneficiary status.

3.2 Threats to the EU

In the first comprehensive study of elite perceptions of threats to Europe, Matonyte and Morkevičius propose the notion of threats as ‘the other side of European identity’ (Matonyte and Morkevičius 2012). The strategy of ‘othering’ is particularly worthwhile when identities such as European are in flux and an anchor is needed to facilitate the acceptance of a new identity (Pinar Erkem 2009, 490). Diez (2004) distinguishes between ‘temporal others’ and ‘geographical others’ to group various threats that were instrumental in constructing the European identity since the end of the Second World War.

Starting with ‘temporal others’ (Table 10), which triggered the formation of the EU (Diez 2004, 325), we observe that 58% of MPs think that preference for national interests is a potential threat for the EU. However, economic differences among Member States are seen as the largest among enumerated threats. This finding corresponds to the ‘beneficiary member mindset’, as Croatian political elite portrays economic differences as the large threat in order to encourage the EU to increase its efforts in equalizing economic development of Member States, which would benefit Croatia.

Table 10: Threats to Cohesive Europe, by Party (valid percentages)

	Economic differences		Russia		Immigration	
	Threat	Not a threat	Threat	Not a threat	Threat	Not a threat
HDZ	94.1	5.9	100	0	94.1	5.9
SDP	91.7	8.3	62.5	37.5	36.4	63.6
HNS	100	0	80	20	66.7	33.3
Total ¹	94.3	5.7	76.8	23.1	67.2	32.8
	Emerging countries		National interests		Turkey	
	Threat	Not a threat	Threat	Not a threat	Threat	Not a threat
HDZ	70.6	29.4	62.5	37.5	70.6	29.4
SDP	58.3	41.7	80	20	17.4	82.6
HNS	80	20	39.1	60.9	22.2	77.8
Total ¹	61.8	38.2	58.2	41.8	37.3	62.7

Survey question: “Do you think that (ITEM) is a threat or not a threat for the EU?”

¹ Based on responses of all Croatian MPs.

From the early 1990s, Islam became the main geographical 'other' of Europe (Diez 2004, 328). 'Islam as a threat' discourse was revived with the prospect of Turkish EU membership, which is currently dim as reflected in the responses of MPs, where only 37% of MPs believes the enlargement to Turkey is a threat to the EU. However, increasing immigration to Europe carrying with it a fear of Islam came on top of the EU agenda after summer 2015 and serves as an ideal 'other' (Jones 2015). About 67% of Croatian MPs perceive immigration as a threat to Europe, which is not surprising given Croatia's homogenous and predominantly Catholic population. Alongside Turkey, Russia is another historical rival of Europe, and perceptions of it as a threat intensified after it annexed Crimea in 2014 and as Europe became more dependent on Russian gas (Weisser 2007, 2). About 77% of MPs regards Russia as a threat to Europe and it seems that 'othering' of Russia has taken roots among Croatian MPs. Other emerging economies could also assert themselves to the EU, through bilateral relationships with separate EU countries, from which Croatia does not profit (e.g., the import of goods (\$2 bln.) from BRICS to Croatia exceeds the export (\$500 mil.) by four times), which is why 62% of MPs consider competition from the emerging economies as a threat to the EU.

Up until this point, the analysis of threat perception was carried out at the aggregate level, which conceals possible inter-party differences. Table 10 reveals substantial differences between the two strongest parties (HDZ and SDP), with regard to immigration and Turkish EU membership, and less so for other threats. This finding is not surprising and fits our theoretical expectations regarding inter-party differences. The attitudes towards immigration and Turkish EU entry traditionally have sources in identity and values, rather than in attitudes on economic matters (for immigration, see Manevska and Achterberg 2011, 6-7; for Turkey, see de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko 2008, 520). As such, they map nicely to the cultural dimension of political conflict in Croatia, which is more divisive and dominates over the matters of the economy (Coman 2015, 9; Henjak 2007, 85; Henjak 2011, 35). As argued in the introduction, the issues, which fall outside of the cultural dimension produce less party disagreement.

4. Attitudes on European Integration and Allocation of Competences

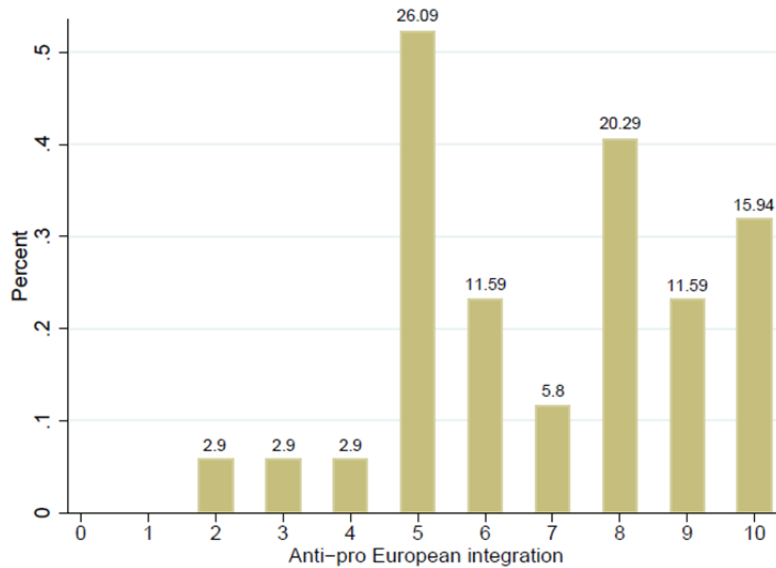
Having so far covered both cognitive and emotive dimensions of the concept of *Europeanness*, the final section examines attitudes of Croatian MPs towards further European integration. The prospects of further European integration (the conative dimension of *Europeanness*) can give us a better idea about skeptics and supporters of European integration, as further integration requires the transfer of an ever increasing number of competences to the EU level, many of

which have been the traditional functions of nation states. This section first inquires into general support for European integration and proceeds to deal specifically with MP's views on allocation of competences between the EU and nation states, and views on empowerment of EU institutions.

4.1 General Positions on European Integration

The standard 11-point scale included in ENEC questionnaire⁸ offers a general overview of individual attitudes on European integration without delving deeper into specific components of integration. As can be seen from Figure 1, majority of interviewed MPs score above the middle of the scale, with the entire mean sample of 6.9. Furthermore, the values from 8 to 10 account for almost half of the sample (47%), which points to the overall support for European integration among Croatian MPs.

Figure 1: Attitudes of Croatian MPs Towards European Integration



Seeking any signs of ‘politicization’ of European integration, we look at the mainstream party positioning and cohesiveness on the issue. Table 11 shows that among the three mainstream parties, SDP is the most favorable about

⁸ Survey question: “Some say European unification should be strengthened. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a 10-point-scale. On this scale, '0' means unification 'has already gone too far' and '10' means it 'should be strengthened'. What number on this scale best describes your position?”

strengthening the European integration (ENEC score, 7.71), and is closely followed by HNS (ENEC score, 7.6), its junior coalition partner, while HDZ lags behind the two forerunners (ENEC score, 6.94). To validate the party positions on European integration based on MPs responses, we supplement ENEC measure with the measure from the CHES dataset (Table 11, in brackets). Some authors would argue that opposition parties use the issue of European integration as yet another front on which to attack the government (Mair 2001). However, the reserved position of HDZ towards the EU (relative to SDP and HNS) has meaningful roots in its ideology. It ‘owns’ the issue of Croatian independence, which pushes HDZ towards soft Eurosceptic position, as European integration implies ceding some of country’s sovereignty to supranational level. On the other hand, SDP and HNS applaud the EU as a community of liberal values and anti-nationalism. With regard to the economic dimension, as both HDZ and SDP occupy central position on the scale, their attitudes on European integration are favorable.

Table 11: Party Position and Cohesiveness on European Integration¹ – ENEC and CHES Data Compared²

	Position on European integration	Cohesion	Min	Max	Number of MPs
DC	5 (-)	- (-)	5	5	1
HDSSB	5.75 (4.75)	2.87 (1.17)	4	10	4
HDZ	6.94 (6.22)	2.29 (1.56)	2	10	16
HL	5 (5.56)	1.41 (1.75)	3	6	4
HNS	7.6 (7)	2.37 (1.11)	3	10	10
HSP AS	7 (3.63)	- (4)	7	7	1
HSS	5 (5)	- (1.67)	5	5	1
HSU	4.5 (-)	3.54 (-)	2	7	2
IDS	6.5 (6.78)	2.12 (0.71)	5	8	2
NZ	6.33 (-)	2.31 (-)	5	9	3
ORaH	5 (6.11)	- (1)	5	5	1
SDP	7.71 (6.55)	1.71 (1.22)	5	10	24
Total	6.93	2.18	2	10	69

¹ Survey question: "Some say European unification should be strengthened. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a 10-point-scale. On this scale, '0' means unification 'has already gone too far' and '10' means it 'should be strengthened'. What number on this scale best describes your position?"; CHES uses the same 0-10 scale, on which parties are placed by country experts (in brackets).

² The measure of party cohesion in ENEC is the standard deviation of party MPs' responses on the general European integration scale, and is not directly comparable to the measure from CHES, where parties are placed by experts on the 0-10 scale, where 0 stands for maximum cohesion (in brackets).

Furthermore, as second column in Table 11 shows, SDP (1.78) appears to be more internally cohesive on the issue of European integration than HDZ (2.29) and HNS (2.36). Edwards (2009) argues convincingly that for a party to be internally cohesive on the issue of European integration positions on economic

and political integration have to overlap (either right-GAL or left-TAN). SDP's internal cohesiveness is of little surprise given its right-GAL position on economic and cultural dimensions of party competition. HDZ, on the other hand is split between pro-European faction (developed by former party president Ivo Sanader and adopted by current HDZ leader Andrej Plenkovic), which adopts center-right position on cultural dimension, and right wing faction (revived under the leadership of former party leader, Tomislav Karamarko) emphasizing national identity and sovereignty issues. This factionalization is reflected in higher levels of dissent among the party lines concerning the future of European integration.

Reflecting on our theoretical expectations, major Croatian parties are generally supportive of European integration. Nevertheless, the TAN position, which HDZ adopted under the presidency of Tomislav Karamarko, and many members still hold, pulls HDZ towards soft Euroscepticism, producing internal party dissent over the issue. As we expected, our evidence supports the argument that party disagreement over Europe is likely rooted in the differences of party positions on cultural, rather than on economic dimension (Vachudova 2008), and is facilitated by lifting of EU conditionality.

4.2 Attitudes on Europeanization of Specific Policy Areas

Taking the analysis one step further, we disaggregate the support for European integration into specific policy areas, which should give us a more nuanced perspective on MPs preferences for allocation of policy competences (Hooghe 2003, 282; Real-Dato, Göncz, and Lengyel 2012, 2012), as well as hint at the specific issues of disagreement between the mainstream parties. The results (Figure 2) are generally in line with the previous findings of elite studies, which apply the functionalist argument (Wessels and Kielhorn 1999). Simply put, the geographical scope of a problem-solving authority has to match the geographical scope of the problem. As can be seen in Figure 2, the highest preference for full Europeanization is in the fields of immigration, followed by financial regulation and environment policy. Fighting crime is the policy field with lowest preference for exclusive national competence, although full Europeanization is also not much favored.

Figure 2: Preferences on the Level of Policy Competence

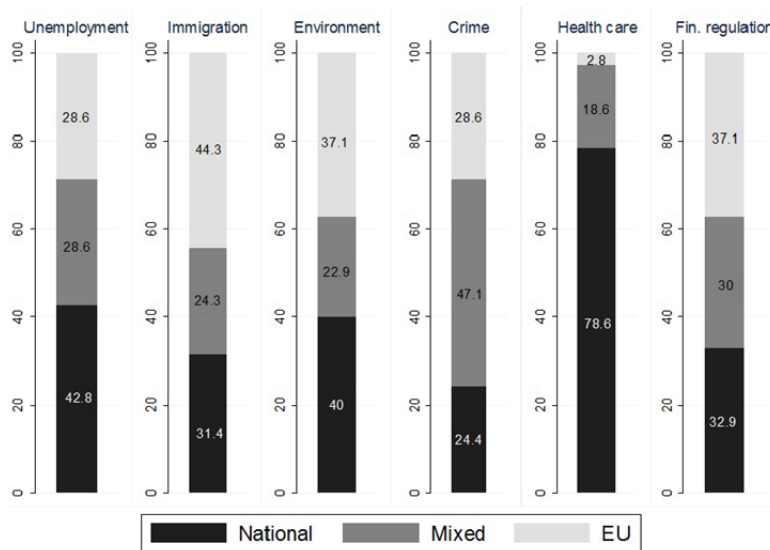


Table 12: Preferences on the Level of Policy Competence, by Party (valid percentages)

	Unemployment			Immigration		
	National	Mixed	European	National	Mixed	European
HDZ	58.8	11.8	29.4	52.9	11.8	35.3
SDP	37.5	37.5	25.9	29.2	29.2	41.6
HNS	10	40	50	0	30	70
	Environmental policy			Crime		
	National	Mixed	European	National	Mixed	European
HDZ	52.9	11.8	35.3	17.7	47	37.3
SDP	41.7	25	33.3	20.8	54.2	25
HNS	10	40	50	30	30	40
	Health care			Financial regulation		
	National	Mixed	European	National	Mixed	European
HDZ	70.6	23.5	5.9	41.2	23.5	35.3
SDP	75	25	0	29.2	37.5	33.3
HNS	90	10	0	10	20	70

Survey question: "How do you think it would be most appropriate to deal with each of the following policy areas? Do you think that [area] should be mainly dealt with at regional level, at national level, or at European Union level?"

Eyeballing the aggregate party preferences for national and European level (Table 12) reveals specific reasons why HDZ is more skeptical towards European integration than the other two parties (Table 11). Compared to SDP, HDZ prefers national competence in four out of six policy areas. Still, the largest

differences between HDZ and SDP can be observed in the field of immigration. This adds further support to the hypothesis predicting that if it at all occurs, politicization will be more related to the cultural, rather than to the economic dimension of party competition. The issue of immigration is strongly related to the cultural dimension of party competition, which structures the Croatian political space. Parties that culturally position themselves on the right have traditionally been skeptical over granting too much authority in the immigration policy to the European Commission, since the EC bureaucrats favor more liberal immigration policies compared to national governments (Luedtke 2011).

The breakdown of results regarding the preferred level of policy competence (Europeanization in 10 years) (Figure 3) reveals strong preference for Europeanization of these policy areas. Exactly 60% of Croatian MPs are strongly or somewhat in favor of a unified tax system in the next 10 years (column 1). Even stronger is the support for a common system of social security, as almost 80% of Croatian MPs favor such a solution (column 2), although it would be highly consequential for domestic budget. Both findings go against the functional argument of Wessels and Kielhorn (1999), distributional logic laid down by Hooghe (Hooghe 2003, 289-90), as well as the findings from IntUne project where MPs preferred tax policy in the national realm (Real-Dato, Göncz, and Lengyel 2012, 69). Moreover, there seems to be little disagreement on these preferences between the mainstream parties (Table 13). How can we account for this paradox?

Figure 3: Preferences for Europeanization in the Next 10 Years

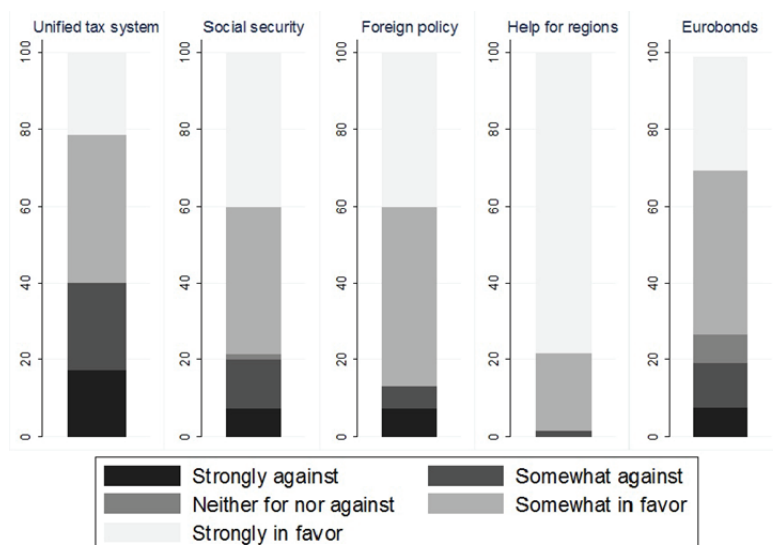


Table 13: Preferences for Europeanization in the Next 10 Years, by Party (valid percentages)

	Tax		Social security		Foreign policy	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
HDZ	70.6	29.4	82.4	17.6	82.3	17.7
SDP	62.5	37.5	83.3	16.7	100	0
HNS	70	30	70	30	100	0
	Help for regions		Eurobonds			
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree		
HDZ	93.8	6.2	91.7	8.3		
SDP	100	0	83.3	16.7		
HNS	100	0	88.9	11.1		

Survey question: "Thinking about the European Union over the next 10 years, can you tell me whether you are in favor or against the following (item)."

¹ 'Strongly agree' and 'agree somewhat' merged as one category.

² 'Strongly disagree' and 'somewhat disagree' merged as one category.

Although the crisis left Croatia grapple with high public debt, shrinkage of the economy, record-high unemployment and poverty, inter-party consensus on further Europeanization of social security is expected because of Croatia's EU beneficiary status where the country would profit more from further Europeanization. In addition, the redistribution to the less well-off citizens and regions to be successful, a common tax system has to be in place. Along our expectations, there is little inter-party division along these two economic aspects of European integration. Therefore, against the government spending logic of Hooghe (2003, 289-90), we suggest that for the EU budget beneficiaries such as Croatia, increasing the scope and depth of European redistributive system might actually be favorable and lead to inter-party consensus.

4.3 Attitudes on the Empowerment of EU Institutions

With MPs being ready to transfer some authority to the EU level, the question of capacity of these EU institutions naturally arises; are MPs ready to empower supranational institutions such as the European Commission and European Parliament? As data in Table 14 demonstrate, Croatian MPs are largely in favor of empowering European Parliament (82%) and European Commission (72%). Moreover, we find that 67% of MPs favor a state-like democracy, where European government would answer to the European Parliament, making support for supranational institutions quite considerable. However, these findings go against all odds, as in Croatia, the issue of sovereignty is still a touchy subject among both the public and the elites given Croatia's recent independence. Empirically, the analysis reveals that 94% of Croatian MPs' agree that Member States should remain the central actors of the EU.

A key to the puzzle lies in the perception of MPs that Croatia is on the losing side of EU intergovernmental decision-making process. First, the analysis

of perceptions of threats to the EU reveals that putting national interests ahead of European might endanger the EU (Table 10). Second, Croatian MPs are quite worried that Croatian interests reach EU institutions (76%), and third, they almost unanimously believe that some Member States have disproportionate power at the EU level (96%) (Table 3). We argue that by strengthening the EU level institutions Croatian MPs hope to curb the power of the most influential states, and expect the EU institutions to offer a better channel for representation of Croatian interests than in the current EU institutional setup. Similarly to the issues of tax policy and social security, empowerment of EU institutions does not produce inter-party disagreement (Table 14). Therefore, the obvious feeling of being underrepresented in the EU decision-making process did not lead to rejection of the European integration, but to the cross-party agreement about the need for its strengthening.

Table 14: Attitudes of MPs Towards Empowerment of European Institutions, by Party (valid percentages)

	National interests		European Commission		European Parliament	
	Agree ¹	Disagree ²	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
HDZ	100	0	87.5	12.5	82.4	17.6
SDP	87	13	78.3	21.7	82.6	17.4
HNS	100	0	72	28	82.6	17.4
Total	94.2	5.8	72	28	82.6	17.4

Survey question: "How much do you agree with the following statements? The Member States ought to remain the central actors of the European Union; The European Commission ought to become the true government of the European Union; The powers of the European parliament ought to be strengthened."

¹ 'Strongly agree' and 'agree somewhat' merged as one category.

² 'Strongly disagree' and 'somewhat disagree' merged as one category.

5. Conclusion

In this article, we offer the first systematic analysis of the attitudes of Croatian parliamentarians about the three dimensions of Europeaness. Moreover, we seek evidence of inter-party differences ('constraining dissensus') across the three largest parliamentary parties in 2011-2015 legislature; governing SDP, its junior coalition partner HNS and oppositional HDZ. After an overwhelming consensus among Croatian party elites prior to EU membership in 2013, we are interested in whether consensus persists once accession-related constraints are lifted.

Building on the studies that note party differences surface once EU membership is acquired, especially among conservative parties (Vachudova 2008), we suggest rational calculations and beneficiary member mindset among Croatian MPs suppress the divergence of attitudes on European integration among the main Croatian political parties. This is why only soft Euroscepticism in cultural

and value dimensions of Europeanness is expected among right oriented HDZ. Our data are part of ENEC (2014) project that we complement with CHES data while discussing general attitudes on European integration. Data analysis rest on 70 interviews with Croatian MPs in the second half of 2014, which created a unique opportunity for us to interview the same set of MPs who voted in favor of Croatia's entry in 2012.

We find that Croatian MPs are overall largely positive about various aspects of *Europeanness* one year into its short EU membership. They are satisfied with EU benefits, favor further European integration and policy Europeanization and largely identify as European elite. They also report solid degree of trust into EU institutions as well as praise their institutional management during Eurozone crisis. Soft Euroscepticism is voiced by both political camps only regarding poor representation of Croatian interests at the EU level. However, we did uncover some divergence in positions on European integration, and EU in particular, between the three Croatian political parties in our analysis. As expected, these inter-party differences are most visible in value and cultural issues, where MPs from HDZ are slightly more Eurosceptic than their counterparts from SDP and HNS. As our data demonstrate, MPs from HDZ are less attached to the EU, less satisfied with EU benefits, more mistrustful of EU institutions, more concerned with unequal interest representation, more concerned about 'others' as threats to the EU, and less in favor of further European integration compared to MPs from left wing SDP and HNS. With regards to further European integration HDZ is less internally cohesive than are the other two parties, which reveals some party factionalization within HDZ, one emphasizing pro-EU and the other emphasizing nationalist discourse.

Finally, we find evidence that beneficiary status of Croatia suppresses any stronger anti -EU sentiments. This is very clearly demonstrated by our data on further policy Europeanization; even in areas that are traditionally saved for national domain (e.g. tax and social security), and on extension of the powers of the Parliament and the Commission. As EU budget receiver, Croatian MPs hope for EU redistributive capacities and protection of Croatia's interests that would result from further Europeanization. Nevertheless, negative feedback about Europeanness by right wing MPs can be understood as only soft Euroscepticism, because MPs from all parties are still generally positive about almost all aspects of Europeanness. In addition, we also warn against over-interpretation of the results, because in many dimensions, we cannot fully establish whether inter-party differences are a result of some predictable pattern or are simple government-opposition dynamic. This is something we hope to determine by further research.

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