

Resistance against European Integration

*A qualitative study on the influence of social
and political actors on the opinion of students*

Master's Thesis European Union Studies



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May 2018



**Universiteit
Leiden**

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A qualitative study on the influence of social and political actors on the opinion of students

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Preface

You are reading the first sentence of the qualitative study on the relation between resistance and support of social and political actors and the opinion of students regarding European integration. The thesis was written to fulfil the graduation requirements of the Master's program International Relations at the Universiteit Leiden. Within the program I specialized in European Union Studies. The thesis was written between January and May 2018. Due to my interest in the 'crisis' of the European Union, the continuous decrease of support for further European integration, I did chose to write a thesis on this topic.

The thesis is written for a general audience but mainly persons with an interest in European Union Studies will be determined to go through my research. For academics interested in the relation between youth and Euroscepticism the project supplements the already existing body of literature consisting of mainly quantitative studies. For European policymakers the project is useful to find out if increased scepticism about European integration leads to more opposition among youngsters.

I would like to thank my supervisor Brian Shaev for his guidance during the project, his constructive feedback on both structure and language use was essential for handing in this final version. Of course I am grateful as well towards the fourteen respondents who participated in the interviews and the family members and friends who distributed the introductory note about the project. Lastly I would like to thank those closest to me, my parents, brother and girlfriend for their support and motivation.

I sincerely hope you enjoy reading.

Lars Ankum

Amsterdam, 18 May 2018

Abstract

The Treaty of Maastricht halted the relatively straightforward process towards an ever closer European Union. Opinions about integration became more dispersed and resistance to European integration can now be found in all layers of society. This increased resistance, or its opposite support, can influence the opinion of citizens about European integration. One group of citizens is especially vulnerable, youngsters between 18 and 25, who are still in a period of extraordinary psychological and social change. Goal of this research project is to analyse if resistance or support of these groups of actors influences the opinion of youngsters, in this regard students, about European integration.

To analyse the relation semi-structured interviews are employed with students from EU member states studying in the Netherlands. Along resistance and support of actors three additional factors were considered, political and economic considerations, identity and the role of the media. Of these factors a conceptualization of several elements of the identity of a respondent, their personal background, was found to be most important. Resistance and support and economic considerations were of secondary importance.

The results point to a smaller influence of external factors than expected. As long as students are satisfied with their socio-economic position they are not influenced heavily by external factors. Instead they formulate their opinion about European integration based on their personal background. Based on the results of my research project European policymakers should focus on economic and social benefits if they want to ensure the support of the young generation. Further research should explore this conclusion in more depth by conducting interviews with a more diverse, lower educated, group of students.

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Introduction

Euroscepticism is, as Usherwood & Startin (2013) note, currently a persistent phenomenon all over Europe as the European integration process finds itself on a bumpy road in the twenty-first century. Examples as the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, the difficulties around implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the backdrop of the Eurocrisis illustrate that deepening of European integration is not self-evident anymore. Most academics believe that it is the Treaty of Maastricht that triggered the end of a permissive consensus, the relatively straightforward integration process until the 90s. What followed is a period of constraining dissensus, negotiations about European issues became more contested in several ways (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). This thesis however argues, following Down & Wilson (2008), that a shift from consensus to dissensus is somewhat misleading. A more nuanced picture shows that it is not the level of support that is different now but rather the level of disagreement. Down & Wilson show that the distribution of opinions changed, with attitudes being more dispersed and the distribution flatter. Crespy & Verschuere (2009) summarize that the Treaty of Maastricht had a qualitative rather than a quantitative impact on support for Europe, it brought about a dispersion and differentiation of opinions over European integration rather than an increase in opposition.

In addition, Crespy & Verschuere (2009) assume that, although the visibility of contention over integration has unarguably increased since the early 1990s, European integration has always been intrinsically contentious. Understanding the debate over European integration on the longer term responds to the call of Vasilopoulou (2013) for a more holistic approach to Euroscepticism. Vasilopoulou argues that Euroscepticism should be treated as an independent as well as a dependent variable because of its persistence, embeddedness and changing nature over time. She points out that the concept has until now predominantly been treated as a dependent variable with authors trying to understand its nature or explain its drivers. Treating Euroscepticism as an independent variable however helps us understand how opposition to European integration has impacted the European integration process over time. When accepting this influence of Euroscepticism on the longer term, the concept can be used to analyse the influence of the dispersion in opinions after Maastricht.

The claim that European integration has always been intrinsically contentious presupposes an influence of this debate on European integration. A process such as European integration is however very broad and can be analysed from a variety of angles. In this report I join Crespy & Verschuere (2009) in arguing that general public opinions from sources such as the Eurobarometer are not the best empirics to study contention over integration and turn instead to the realm of qualitative research. I suggest that qualitative research aligns best with the conceptualization of Vasilopoulou (2013) and helps me understand how Euroscepticism changed over time. Several terms can be used to analyse the contentiousness of European integration. Actors can oppose, content or be sceptic and

support, applaud or encourage European integration. In this thesis I adopt the notion of *resistances*, and as opposite support, for EU integration. Resistances can be defined as “*manifestations of hostility towards one (or several) aspect(s) of European integration perceived as a threat to one's values (Crespy & Verschueren, 2009)*”. This conceptualization aligns with Vasilopoulou’s remark about the changing nature of the concept as it is a tool for studying long term processes (Crespy & Verschueren, 2009). The thesis adopts resistance and support of a variety of actors and considers the influence of these actors as an independent variable. Interviews with students will be used to analyse the influence in which the opinion of students about European integration serves as the dependent variable.

An analysis of the opinion of students is especially relevant in this period of constraining dissensus. The dispersion after Maastricht led to an even more contested debate about European integration but the consequences of the divergence in opinions for the general public have received little attention. The choice for the opinion of students evolves from recent contradictory findings regarding the opinion of youngsters. Kersan-Škabić & Tomić (2009) show that young people are even more sceptical than older people. While elsewhere, for example in the recent Brexit referendum, results point to a higher level of positivism among youngsters (BBC, 2016). According to the most recent Eurobarometer young people are still largely in favour of European integration (European Commission, 2018). According to the results half of the youngsters (15-24) have a positive image of the EU while only 36 percent of the oldest generation (55+) have a positive image. This generational divide features prominently in recent academic work on Euroscepticism. While other researchers, such as Guerra (2018) and Grimm, Pollock and Ellison (2018), explain the positive image of youngsters. What remains to be seen however is the influence of external factors on the opinion of youth. Fox & Pearce (2018) made a start on this topic utilizing quantitative analysis to identify generational differences in Euroscepticism. Goal of this research project is to add to the work of Fox & Pearce (2018) on the relation between external factors and the opinion of youth about European integration. Because of its qualitative approach the study allows for in-depth analysis and helps us understand both the nature of Euroscepticism over time and the influence of the divergence in opinions after Maastricht. The expectation is that especially students, which are still vulnerable to external influence when shaping their own opinion, are influenced by resistance and support of other actors.

The remaining sections of this thesis are structured as follows. In the first chapter the theoretical framework is explicated and in the second chapter the research design and research methods relevant for this study are discussed. The third chapter considers the influence of the independent variables on the opinion of students. The thesis ends with a concluding section which also has discussing and reflecting elements.

Chapter 1: Opposition to the EU and the integration process

The theoretical framework is shaped around the relation between resistance or support of actors regarding European integration and the process of European integration. Three additional factors are considered, political and economic considerations, identity and the role of the media. The first section of this chapter further explains the process of European integration. The second section examines resistance and support and highlights the difference between political and social actors. The third section looks at the political and economic considerations, the fourth at identity and the last at the role of the media.

1.1 The process of European integration

The process of European integration is a concept which is mentioned in the article of Vasilopoulou (2013). The concept basically entails two elements, the first being *European integration* the second *a process*. These elements are firstly examined separately after which the concept is explained in its entirety.

To start off it should be mentioned that the concept European integration itself is ambiguous: it has static and dynamic meanings (Rose & Borz, 2016). The static meaning refers to the European Union as it is today. The dynamic definition, which is mentioned in the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, relates to European integration as a process of movement towards an ever closer Union. In their paper Rose & Borz (2016) argue that there is a difference between these two meanings as they find that a majority of the participants in an Eurobarometer change their position when asked to evaluate further integration vis-à-vis a question about the current situation. Both the static and dynamic meanings of European integration will be analysed as respondents will be asked about the development of European integration and the current situation. The focus will however be on the dynamic understanding as I see integration especially as a process of movement.

The main characteristic of a *process* is that it is open-ended in contrast to results or outcomes which are already settled. An example is provided in the book of Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel (2006) who make a distinction between a 'backward-looking' and a 'forward-looking' perspective when analysing the process of international socialization after the Cold War. This example is relevant since these authors apply the concept 'process' in a similar fashion, describing how the constitutive rules of the international community led to societal changes in European states. To do so the authors adopted a forward-looking perspective which has the advantage that it allows analysing the processes *directed at* or *potentially leading to*, in their regard, rule adoption by the target states. Like Schimmelfennig *et al.* I analyse the processes directed at or potentially leading to, in my regard, European integration. A variety of angles exists to do so. In this thesis the notions resistance and support were adopted which are well-fitted to analyse long-term processes.

To firstly illustrate the processes of the past leading to the current situation I turn to the article of Vasilopoulou (2013) who identified three periods in which resistance and support had a particular influence on the process of European integration.

Elite-driven Euroscepticism

In her article Vasilopoulou (2013) describes that Euroscepticism was elite-driven and arguably somewhat nation-specific in the beginning. While the 'permissive consensus' thesis describes the popular opinion at the time the political drive towards European integration was not straightforward as different visions about integration competed. During the early years of European integration, which started with the Schuman Plan and culminated in the European Coal and Steel Treaty of 1952, two main schools of thought can be recognized. In a 2002-article Carls & Naughton define these groups as functionalists and federalists. The models of these groups are described by them: "*(1) building cooperation among countries through the integration of one or more highly important economic function shared by all of them (functionalism); (2) directly establishing a European political federation (federalism)*". Craig Parsons (2003) extends the categorization of Carls & Naughton as he introduces three key ideas about French interests in European institution building. The community model connected a wide range of national problems to solutions in supranational institutions. The traditional model stood for the status quo and opposed deeper forms of integration and the confederal model occupied the middle ground and favoured broad intergovernmentalist solutions. More so than Carls & Naughton, Parsons identified resistance to European integration, found with those who supported the traditional model. Nonetheless all authors argue that resistance in this period was limited to the fringes of elite groups as most were supportive of European integration.

Popular Euroscepticism

The first period lasted until the coming into force of the Treaty of Maastricht. Vasilopoulou (2013) argues that the 2000s witnessed an increasing influence of critical discourse in the European public sphere indicating that, far from being an ephemeral phenomenon, Euroscepticism has become integral to the process of European integration. During the early years scepticism was predominantly found at the fringes of elite-groups but after Maastricht, when ordinary citizens finally realized that the EU also was a political project, criticism became apparent in all layers of the society. In their article Hooghe & Marks (2008) explain the development from elite-driven to popular scepticism. The indifference of the general public was dismantled as decision-making on European integration entered the contentious world of party competition, elections and referendums. Public opinion on European integration became rather well structured and started affecting national voting. While I showed earlier that the shift from consensus to dissensus is somewhat misleading (Down & Wilson, 2008) the processes during this period were significantly different than

during the first decades of European integration. The divergence in opinions, both resisting and supporting integration, led to more salience of the European issue.

General Euroscepticism

The integral status of Euroscepticism has been further exemplified by the outbreak of the economic crisis. Simone Guerra (2018) described how the economic crisis impacted on the already contested debates, channelled by Eurosceptic parties across party systems. National elites and politicians, sparked by popular discontent, started turning their backs on the European project and also began arguing against further integration. More so than during the previous phases this period combines mass and elite Euroscepticism. Baimbridge (2018) analysed the relation between the economic crisis and Euroscepticism and concluded that the crisis can possibly amplify scepticism even more. In a statistical analysis he recorded a relation between macroeconomic indicators such as national growth and inflation and Euroscepticism. The full effect of the economic crisis will still have to be determined but Baimbridge hypothesizes that the crisis can have a direct and an indirect effect. The direct effect is increased popular and elite discontent and the indirect effect the consequences of the austerity-based policies that were adopted to resolve the crisis which put pressure upon the European Social Model. Resistance became more widespread during this period and can now be found both under elites and ordinary citizens. An opposite process of increased support under Euroenthusiasts can however also be noted. The trajectory of European integration was significantly different during the three periods. In the next section I consider which actors resist and support and how this relates with the opinion of students.

1.2 Resistance and support of political and social actors

The body of literature about Euroscepticism has, especially as a consequence of the differentiation in opinions after the Treaty of Maastricht, significantly expanded during recent years. Euroscepticism as a concept is made up of two words, Euro, which essentially refers to criticism against (parts of) the European project, and scepticism. Hooghe & Marks (2007) provided a definition for scepticism: *"the meaning of the word scepticism has diffused from its reference to the classical scepticism to mean 'an attitude of doubt or a disposition of disbelief' "*. In a first definition on Euroscepticism by Paul Taggart (1998) this attitude of doubt was essential as Taggart distinguished between contingent or qualified opposition and outright or unqualified opposition. Not all actors who are Eurosceptic do indeed reject the entire European project, some oppose only certain elements.

Later, Taggart refined his conceptualization, when he introduced, together with Aleks Szczerbiak (2002), the distinction between hard and soft Euroscepticism. 'Hard' Euroscepticism referred to principled opposition to the EU - being opposed to the whole European project and a wish for withdrawal. 'Soft' Euroscepticism rather refers to qualified opposition to the EU and includes opposition to specific policies or issues which intrude on

national interests. In the same year Kopecký & Mudde (2002) criticize the aforementioned authors and provide an alternative conceptualization. Here, the authors draw on an older piece on political regimes, and categorize Euroscepticism not in a dichotomy from hard to soft but rather distinguish between ‘diffuse’ and ‘specific’ support for European integration. The diffuse support category points to the general ideas of the EU or the principle that the EU exists and the specific support category refers to the development of the EU and its current situation (Kopecký & Mudde, 2002). In her PhD-thesis Catharina Sørensen (2007) however points to the similarities in the two explanations, both classifying party positions. The main difference between the two approaches lies in the manner of categorizing. Taggart & Szczerbiak (2002) use a binary construction of opposition / support while Kopecký & Mudde (2002) consider the element a party is opposing / supporting.

Most of the later pieces on Euroscepticism use categorizations which are based on the work of either Taggart & Szczerbiak or Kopecký & Mudde and it can be difficult to find a definition of Euroscepticism which combines both approaches. One of the few to do so is Sørensen (2007), who researched the concept Euroscepticism and came up with the following definition:

“Euroscepticism is a sentiment of disapproval—reaching a certain degree and durability—directed towards the EU in its entirety or towards particular policy areas or developments (Sørensen, 2007)”

Sørensen combines to the two perspectives and points to both the degree of disapproval and the policy area or development. Also she does not directly incorporate political parties but leaves room for interpretation who is having a sentiment of disapproval. Since I argued earlier that I would use the concept *resistances* I point to the similarities between the ‘sentiment of disapproval’ of Sørensen and the ‘manifestations of hostility’ of Crespy & Verschueren (2009). One of the advantages of using resistances actually lies in its link with the diversity of potentially involved actors. Other classifications, such as a those recently provided by Szczerbiak & Taggart (2018), still predominantly focus on political parties. In this research project I do move behind this one-sided focus on political parties and capture social actors along political actors. Social actors became more important within the paradigm of multi-level governance which came into being after the Treaty of Maastricht. Both types of actors can influence the opinion of a student on European integration which is still vulnerable during his ‘formative years’ (Fox & Pearce, 2018). The concept resistances allows doing so as the diversity of potentially involved actors is incorporated.

The concept ‘actor’ is a sociological concept and became widely used in academic work after World War II. Actors are not only individuals but refer to a wider range of entities having agency, including nation-states, non-governmental organizations and companies. Both

individuals and entities can shape the opinion of a respondent about European integration and they can do so both by opposing, which the definition of Sørensen (2007) captures, but also by supporting European integration. We should not forget that, even with the diversification of opinions after Maastricht, most citizens of the European Union, although often lukewarm, support European integration.

Out of the general definition of an actor two categories can be determined. Political actors are considered to be "*individuals who have obtained at least some measure of political power and/or authority in a particular society and engage in activities that can have a significant influence on decisions, policies, media coverage and outcomes associated with a given conflict (Wolfsfeld, 2015)*". This definition for example captures leaders of political parties, high-level government officials and ministers but also, following the broader agency interpretation, political parties. Social actors on the other hand are seen by Stockinger (2005) as agents who possess a common cognitive reference frame and have a specific competence for dealing with this frame. An example is a group of people engaged in the same social practice, such as producing motor vehicles, who have organized their competence in a labour union. Other examples are religious communities, elite groups and farmer organizations. An individual can also be a social actor if the person has competence and references to a particular practice (e.g. the pope). Most media organizations are however not seen as social actors since they are not organized around a particular frame.

Social and political actors can oppose or support European integration for multiple reasons about which a large body of literature exists. Problematic again is that most research still focuses on political parties rather than also considering social actors. Szczerbiak & Taggart (2018) for example examine that political parties oppose integration because of ideological-programmatic or strategic-tactical reasons. The first is linked to the cleavages between party families such as the liberal, social- and Christian-democratic schools. The second aligns with strategic positioning and issues related with the electoral system, types of legislature and the spatial distribution of power. Opposition of social actors is thought to be influenced predominantly by the same types of factors as FitzGibbon (2013) concludes. However some non-party-based factors should be taken into account from which he identifies interest representation and a lack of political opportunities as the most important elements.

1.3 Economic and political considerations

In the period of dissensus after Maastricht opinions are more dispersed than earlier. Hooghe & Marks (2008) identify several factors influencing the wide-range of opinions. The first factor are cues from intermediary institutions or political parties, which are introduced in the previous section and the second is identity, introduced in the following section. A last factor influencing opinions are the objective consequences of market integration for individual economic well-being. Anderson & Reichert (1996) draw two simple conclusion

about the relation between economic benefits and support for European integration based on Eurobarometer results. They conclude (1) individuals living in countries that benefit more from EU membership display higher levels of support for their country's participation in the EU and (2) those individuals who benefit personally are also more supportive of the integration project. While criticized on some aspects the economic performance-model, also called the utilitarian model, still partly explains the opinion of students on European integration according to for instance Grimm *et al.* (2018). In their chapter Grimm *et al.* cite an earlier article of Hooghe & Marks (2005) and argue that the utilitarian model implies a distinction between economic losers and winners of European integration and suggests that individuals benefiting from the EU's economic policies will be more likely to support European integration.

Especially during the early years of the European project public opinion was indeed seen as a cost/benefit analysis. Further political integration however changed this assumption. In her article McEvoy (2016) argues that citizen attitudes towards European integration are influenced by the output-oriented factors based on the EU's capacity to yield economic benefits but also by input-oriented factors related with feelings of political efficacy. Efficacy is defined as "*an individual's belief or expectation that their actions are meaningful (McEvoy, 2016)*" and can be divided in external and internal efficacy. External efficacy refers to a citizens perception that the political system responds to their needs while internal efficacy can be measured as political participation. To support European integration citizens do not only take economic benefits into account but also consider feelings of trust and perceptions of fairness of process that they afford to EU institutions (McEvoy, 2016). These perceptions, both economic and political, stand between influence on the opinion on the micro-level (identity) and the macro-level (resistance / support). While they can be shaped by others or by a changing identity the perceptions especially play a role on the longer term when an opinion regarding the European integration process is formulated.

1.4 Social identity theory

The concept identity is very broad and can be conceptualized in multiple ways. As most authors on the topic of Euroscepticism I turn to social identity theory to identify why identity is so crucial. Social identity theory was formulated by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and 1980s. Based on this perspective Nario-Redmond, Biernat, Eidelman & Palenske (2004) summarize that psychologists became increasingly aware that the 'self' represents more than just a collection of individualized attributes that remain constant over time and across contexts. Social identity theory was later expanded upon in self-categorization theory. According to the self-categorization theory the self is conceptualized "*as a hierarchical structure with levels of increasing abstraction that each contribute to an individual's sense of who he/she is (Nario-Redmond et al., 2004)*". Sociologists of the constructivist school such as Tajfel and Turner thus argue that the identity or self of an

individual is formed at several levels. They identify two levels: the interpersonal level and the intergroup level. In their study Nario-Redmond *et al.* introduce both levels. The authors argue that at the interpersonal level “*personal identity can be described in terms that differentiate the individual as distinct from other members of the in-group (e.g. I am a unique personality, creative, different)*”. Alongside, at the intergroup level “*social identities are emphasizing the stereotypical similarities shared among members of the group (e.g. I am a Latina, a psychologist)*”. These two categories, personal and social identity, will be used to consider the influence of identity formation at both the interpersonal and intergroup level on the opinion of students about European integration.

Regarding European integration it is especially social identity in the form of national identity which is thought to be influential. In earlier work Hooghe & Marks (2004) argue that humans have an emotional capacity for intense group loyalty which can be extremely powerful in shaping views toward political objects. National identity, rooted in strong linguistic and cultural ties, is the strongest of these group loyalties. Elsewhere Hooghe & Marks (2008) however argue that it is not this national identity by itself but how group identities relate to each other and whether and how they are mobilized in elite debate which is important for European integration. In an intense public debate after Maastricht it is group identities, national, but also at other geographical scale levels or at other community groups (religion, welfare state mode) which became more important. This conclusion does however not subvert the importance of the personal identity category as in the original study of Nario-Redmond *et al.* (2004) personal identity was more important for identity construction than social identity.

Alongside I need to reflect on the difference between self-identification and identity according to demographics. According to Starks (2013) self-identification is seen as a sociological process of locating oneself within a social context. Basically you provide an answer to the question ‘Who am I?’ but often do so with reference to others by answering the question ‘Who are they?’. These questions relate with the levels within the hierarchical structure mentioned above. This clearly differs from identity according to demographics, when policy makers ascribe a certain identity to an individual. This thesis follows the self-identification approach and asks respondents to locate oneself within a social context.

1.5 The role of the media

I argued earlier that media outlets are no social actors because they do in most instances not have a common reference frame. Nonetheless the influence of media organizations on the public opinion should not be underestimated. In her book chapter Michailidou (2018) discusses the role of the media in the Eurosceptic debate. She identifies three main empirical approaches about the relation between Euroscepticism and the media of which the approach that focuses on the effects of media frames on public opinion is the most

relevant for our purposes. In a study about the 2009-elections for the European Parliament van Spanje & de Vreese (2014) indeed concluded that media evaluations of the EU affect voting for Eurosceptic parties. The more a voter was exposed to framing of the EU in terms of benefits derived from membership in these countries, the less likely she or he was to cast a Eurosceptic vote. In one of the most influential studies on the topic de Vreese (2007) concludes that the influence of the media on Eurosceptic attitudes depends on two factors *“(a) the pervasiveness of the strategy news frame and (b) moderation by political sophistication”*. The first factor refers to the content of the news. If EU news is not covered in a suggestive frame it tends to lead to less cynicism about EU affairs. The second factor points to the level of knowledge about EU affairs. According to de Vreese (2007) persons who are less-sophisticated politically tend to be influenced more by critical news framing.

Political sophistication can be linked to the term ‘cognitive mobilization’ coined by Inglehart in 1970 which is a *“broader process of the increasingly wide distribution of the political skills necessary to cope with an extensive political community”*. This means that if a person has more political knowledge he or she is less sensitive to information broadcasted in the news. A person who is less informed will also often use domestic proxies rooted in domestic political considerations (government, party and system support), as explained by Anderson (1998), to formulate an opinion about the integration process. The factors of de Vreese (2007) political sophistication, conceptualized here as cognitive mobilization, sometimes in the form of domestic proxies, and the pervasiveness of the news frame are the two dimensions of the last independent variable, the role of the media

Chapter 2: Research design and methods

The second chapter considers the research design and methods employed in this thesis. The first section introduces the relevance of the research project and brings forward the research question and sub-questions. After that the hypotheses for the empirical work are presented and the conceptual framework is formulated. The fourth section constitutes of the operationalization of the main concepts and the fifth and sixth sections look at respectively the research strategy and methods.

2.1 Problem definition and research question

The Treaty on European Union was signed in 1992 and was greeted by the majority of the European population with indifference. The years after however did not pass quietly for the newly formed European Union. In 2000 10.000 people attended a demonstration of the union of European Federalists which campaigned for an European constitution. Contrary to that event the year before the United Kingdom Independence Party gained its first seats in the European Parliament. The two events can be seen as opposites, signalling the dispersion in opinions after Maastricht. Britain voting to leave the Union in 2016 with a margin of only 3.8 percent is another example. Opposition or support for European integration is however not new but maybe only better visible for the wider public. Well-known politicians as Charles de Gaulle and Margaret Thatcher are often characterized by their opposition to integration.

The dispersion of opinions is visible throughout the Union but one of the most interesting groups to analyse are young people, aged 18 to 25. In a 2016-survey of PewResearchCenter an age gap between young people (18 - 35) and older people (50+) was recorded in six of the ten EU member states participating in the survey. Young people were found to be significantly more positive about EU membership. Fox & Pearce (2018) also argue that young people are the most supportive generation of EU membership, caused by a combination of factors including their experience of the EU during their formative years, their relationships with domestic political institutions and their access to education. Their findings however contrast significantly with those of Kersan-Škabić & Tomić (2009) who concluded that the students' population in Croatia was Eurosceptical because of the economic cost they expect Croatia would have with its entrance in the EU. The general consensus in the literature is that youngsters from Eastern European states are more critical than citizens from the west of Europe anyway but the results from the Croatian study does not stand by itself. The findings are reflected in a report of the TUI Foundation (2017) in which it is mentioned that three out of four young Europeans think that the core of the European Union is not its shared values, but rather economic cooperation.¹ The opposite

¹ In the survey 6.000 young people aged between 16 and 26 in seven EU countries – France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK - were polled.

conclusions raise considerable doubt about the often thought belief that young people are more positive about European integration than older people.

The opinion of students on the process of European integration will be analysed in relation with the influence of political and social actors. The relation with young people, such as students, is relevant for two reasons for which the earlier argument about this age cohort being in its formative years is extended by pointing to the piece of Niemi & Hepburn (1995). They argue that youth is a time of extraordinary psychological and social change and that these are also the years that society traditionally attempts to educate persons for civil participation. More so than during adulthood late teenagers and early twenties are vulnerable to external factors. The following research question is posed to analyse the relation:

“How does resistance / support of political and social actors regarding European integration influence the opinion of students on the process of European integration?”

Students can take part in the research project if they comply with a few prerequisites. They need to be between 18 and 25 years old, live in the Netherlands, be enrolled in a Dutch education program and hold a nationality of one of the countries of the European Union. Alongside this relation three additional concepts are considered which are identity, political and economic considerations and the role of the media. This conceptualization leads to the following sub-questions:

- How is the opinion of students about the European integration process influenced by political and economic considerations?
- How is the opinion of students about the European integration process influenced by the identity of the respondent?
- How is the opinion of students about the European integration process influenced by the role of the media?

2.2 Conceptual framework and hypotheses

Following the research question and sub-questions the conceptual framework is shown on Figure 1.

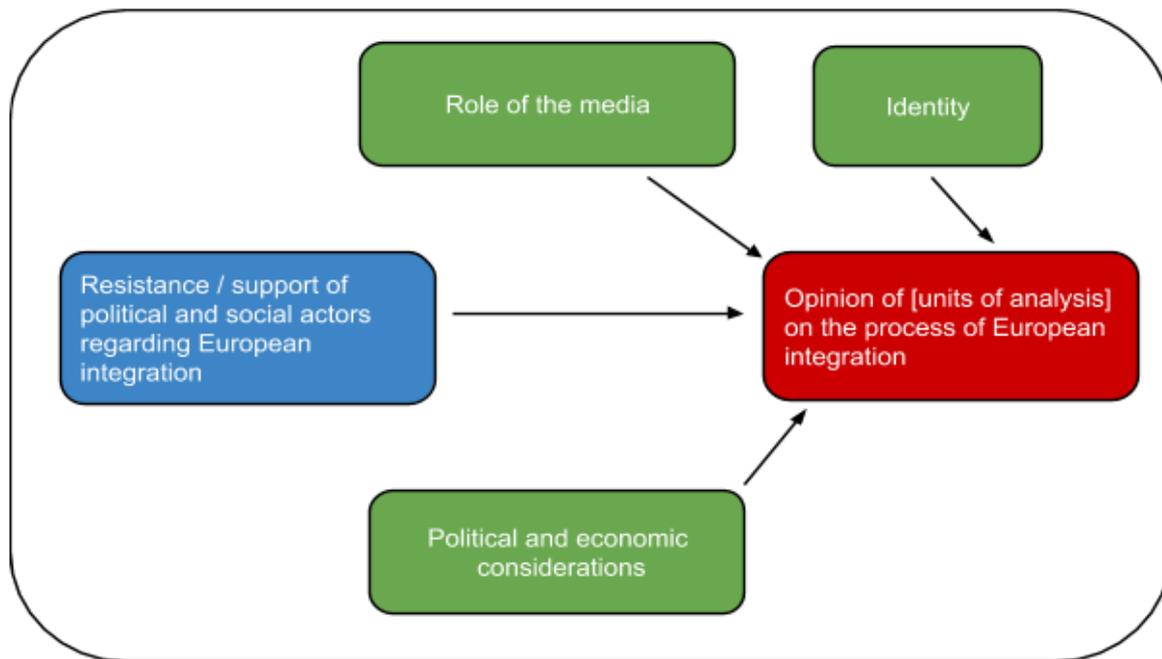


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

On the right side the dependent variable, the opinion of the units of analysis on the process of European integration, is displayed. On the left side the main independent variable is shown and on the top and bottom the contextual variables influencing the opinion of the units of analysis are depicted. The arrows depict the direction of the relation between the variables. The operationalization of these concepts will follow in the next section. Before doing so however it is possible to formulate some hypotheses.

Firstly considering economic and political considerations the two simple conclusions of Anderson & Reichert (1996) can be restated. I hypothesise that (1) individuals that think that their country benefits from EU membership are more positive about the European integration process and that (2) individuals who think that they personally benefit from EU membership are more positive about European integration. Regarding political efficacy I assume, following McEvoy (2016), that individuals who think that their actions are meaningful are more positive about European integration. Secondly, considering identity I believe that especially the age factor is influential for the personal identity. Despite earlier arguments providing a different point of view I do hypothesise here that the respondents think that their opinion about European integration is positively influenced by their young age. Because they are young they are expected to be more conscious about the benefits of integration. This hypothesis is based on the aforementioned Eurobarometer, which still

concludes that most young respondents are in favour of European integration. Following Hooghe & Marks (2008) most attention within the social identity category was directed towards national identity. In this regard I do hypothesise that those who have a stronger national identity will have a more negative opinion about European integration. The last factor is the role of the media. As cited in the chapter of Grimm *et al.* (2018) political scientist Ronald Inglehart (1970) argues that higher levels of cognitive mobilization are associated with support for European integration since increased access to information about the EU makes the organization appear less distant. Following this argumentation I suppose that the opinion of a respondent about European integration is positively influenced by a higher level of cognitive mobilization. I expect, in line with Hooghe & Marks (2008), that identity is the most important factor among the contextual variables.

Also for the main independent variable, which consists of two categorizations as a distinction can be made between social and political actors and between resistance and support, hypotheses can be formulated. Firstly I do hypothesize that political actors have more influence on the opinion than social actors. Political actors not only receive more media attention but are also the decision makers in nation-states. Alongside, the expectation is that resistance of political and social actors is more visible and thus influential than support of those actors. Resisting actors are better known than their supportive adversaries and extreme voices are more often broadcasted in the media. Following the argument about the vulnerability of youth (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995) I do indeed expect that the opinion of a student is at least partly shaped by external actors.

2.3 Operationalization

The operationalization of the concepts displayed in Table 1 should, as a consequence of the fluidity of the research method, merely be seen as a guideline and not as an research approach which is set in stone. The semi-structured interviews will touch upon the variables and indicators mentioned in the operationalization but often delve into detail on some of the personal details or experiences of the interviewee. As a consequence all interviews will differ slightly but the main theme will always be the same.

The concepts are operationalised as follows. The opinion concept is operationalised into the static and dynamic meanings of European integration derived from the article of Rose & Borz (2016). The resistance / support concept has the political and social actor dimensions following the conceptualization of Crespy & Verschueren (2009). For the economic and political considerations concept the economic dimension comes from Hooghe & Marks (2008) and the political efficacy from McEvoy (2016). The identity concept is divided into the two identity categories of Nario-Redmond *et al.* (2004) and the elements of the media concept come from the work of de Vreese (2007).

Table 1: Operationalization main concepts			
<u>Concept</u>	<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Variables</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
Opinion of [units of analysis] on the European integration process	Static meaning of European integration	EU as it is today	e.g. 'What is your opinion about the EU as it is today?'
	Dynamic meaning of European integration	EU as it was / EU as it will become	e.g. 'What is your opinion about the possible development of the EU?'
Resistance against / support for European integration	Political resistance / support	Resistance / support of national governments, politicians, pol. parties	e.g. 'Does this political party influence your opinion about European integration?'
	Social resistance / support	Resistance / support of individuals, unions, associations, companies, news media etc.	e.g. 'Does this labour union influence your opinion about European integration?'
Political and economic considerations	Economic considerations	Country's benefit / Personal benefit	e.g. 'Do you think your country / you benefit(s) from EU membership?'
	Political considerations	Political efficacy	e.g. 'Do you think the members of the EP/EC take your concerns into account?'

Identity	Social identity	Group memberships / social affiliations	e.g. 'Do you think your background as a Frenchman influences your opinion about European integration?'
	Personal identity	Age / personal traits	e.g. 'Do you think your age impacts your opinion about European integration?'
The role of the media	Political Sophistication	How EU / own country work (= dom proxy)	e.g. 'Do you think you know how the EU works?'
	Persaviness of news frame	Kind of television program / newspaper / internet website	'Do you think your opinion is influenced by the news media you follow?'

2.4 Research strategy and units of analysis

Within the social sciences inductive and deductive research are the most often used research strategies. Basically deductive reasoning works from the general to the more specific, using hypotheses to test theory and then collecting data to falsify or verify the hypotheses. Inductive reasoning works the other way around as it uses the empirical outcomes to formulate hypotheses and come up with some sort of conclusion or theory. While the two strategies should, according to the handbook of Bryman (2008), be better thought of as tendencies rather than as a hard-and-fast distinction this report follows the deductive line of reasoning in general lines.

Bryman (2008) also provides definitions for the different positions regarding epistemology and ontology. Following his work I argue that the study is grounded in an interpretive epistemological doctrine and occupies a constructionist ontological position. According to Bryman interpretivism respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore allows the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action. About the constructivist ontological position Bryman argues, that it allows analysing that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors.

The report adopts a deductive line of reasoning in which semi-structured interviews with students are used to test the hypotheses. Some elements about the choice for this group

should be explained more extensively. First of all the choice for only students will be illustrated. Secondly it will be considered why only citizens of EU member states can take part in the survey and lastly the sampling issue will be clarified.

In the Netherlands the statistical bureau CBS (2008) made a classification of education levels which divides the population on basis of their highest completed education level in low, middle and highly educated people. According to this classification low educated people only hold a degree at elementary school or at the lowest level of secondary education. It is often this group of people which, at the age of 18, already started working since education in the Netherlands is only mandatory until that age. By purposely considering students and not young people this group is excluded from the research project. Nonetheless, since the project employs a qualitative research method, the author is well-aware that the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of young people anyway. Practical reasons were decisive in this choice. In a similar research project (Ankum, 2016) of the author only nine percent of the participants in a questionnaire belonged to this low education group. Even while the results cannot be generalized to the entire population the opposite conclusions about the opinions of young people as found by research institutes as the PewResearchCenter (2016) and the TUI Foundation (2017) highlight the relevance of analysing this group. Indeed other researchers such as Kersan-Škabić & Tomić (2009) also conducted research under only students rather than the entire population of young people.

The second element which has to be further explicated is the nationality of the interviewees. Only EU nationals are eligible to take part in the research project since I assume that people from other countries might not know enough about European integration to be able to formulate a well-developed opinion and assess what influences their opinion. A 2004-poll under 1000 randomly selected Americans for example showed that 77 percent of the respondents knew very little or nothing at all about the European Union (Gallup & Saad, 2004). While this might not be true for all students from non-EU countries it is assumed that the level of knowledge is at least lower in general. This can be illustrated by pointing to the difference between EU-nationals and persons from outside the Union. In an Eurobarometer (2017) survey 'only' 28 percent answered most questions wrong in a knowledge test about Europe.

The last issue considered in this section is sampling, the selection of the respondents. The population of interest in this report are students which fulfil the prerequisites mentioned earlier. The size of the desired sample can depend on multiple factors such as the complexity of the interview, the heterogeneity of the population and practical reasons as time, money and accessibility (Box, 2014). The general rule however is that you continue interviewing until you have reached your saturation point, the moment at which you realize that no new answers are coming from your respondents anymore. Following the work of

Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006) who found that 92 percent of the total set of codes that they ultimately developed occurred in the first twelve interviews, a total of twelve interviews will be taken as the minimal guideline. This number can also be linked with some of the other factors mentioned by Box (2014). Like my own approach Guest *et al.* (2006) used semi-structured interviews when they came up with the number. They argued that more interviews would be necessary if the approach would be open-ended. Elsewhere, Kuzel (1991) tied the number of interviews to sample heterogeneity, recommending six to eight interviews for a homogeneous sample and twelve to twenty to achieve maximum variation. Since I aim for maximum variation a total of twelve interviews is suitable as a minimal guideline.

Alongside the size, the sampling technique is an important element. Sampling techniques are divided into two groups, probability and non-probability techniques. The main difference between the two groups is random selection. When using a probability technique units are randomly selected to help you select units that are similar to the population in your sample. Non-probability techniques rather rely on the subjective judgement of the researcher. Using the preferred option of a probability sampling technique for this research project proved to be not possible. Obtaining a random sample of the student population would not only be difficult for legal reasons but also because of practical concerns. Instead the study will apply a version of purposive sampling called heterogeneous sampling. Following Patton (2002) purposive sampling is defined as “*a method in which you decide the purpose you want informants to serve, and you go out and find some*”. Heterogeneous sampling is a sampling technique used to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to the thing that you are interested in studying (Patton, 2002). For the purpose of this project I do aim at finding students who differ as much as possible in their opinion on the process of European integration. To achieve this goal the personal characteristics of possible respondents (age, gender, nationality) will be determined beforehand while I will as well ask about their satisfaction with European integration. Nonetheless this section should be concluded with the remark that, even when trying to be as heterogeneous as possible, the sample will be quite biased compared to a probability sample.

2.5 Data collection and research method

The semi-structured interview occupies a middle position when looking at the structure of an interview. A topic list with general questions and themes will be brought to the interview but the interviewer can explore certain themes in more detail than others. The remainder of this section will consider two elements of the data set. Firstly I explain how possible interviewees were approached and introduce the eventual sample. After that the structure of the interviews is explained by looking at the topic list and the corresponding list of codes in the qualitative analysis program *Atlas.ti*.

2.5.1 Data collection

To reach out to possible respondents an introductory note about the research project was formulated which was distributed both online and offline. This note is added in Appendix 1 and was written in both Dutch and English. Possible respondents were approached between the 7th and 28th of February 2018 and interviews were conducted in Dutch or English according to the language of preference of the interviewee. It was ensured that the questions on the both topic lists were strictly similar. An overview of the distribution channel, way of distribution, language in which was distributed and the person(s) who distributed is provided in Table 2. If available a link of the distribution post is added in the table as well.² The table shows that predominantly social media channels were used to reach out the possible respondents. Alongside, messages were sent to friends and relatives, asking them if they knew any people who might want to participate. Offline, people were approached orally and by distributing the note as a flyer at university buildings.

Channel (+ language)	Way(s) of distribution	Link(s) if available	Distributed by?
Facebook (EN + NL)	Own Facebookpage Facebookgroups Facebook Messenger	https://www.facebook.com/lars.ankum https://www.facebook.com/groups/280883709042487/ https://www.facebook.com/groups/296739250466742/ https://www.facebook.com/groups/219095914886234	Author and people who shared links
Twitter (EN + NL)	Own tweets and retweets	https://twitter.com/LarsAnkum	Author and people who retweeted
Instagram (EN + NL)	Own messages and likes	https://www.instagram.com/llars1994/	Author and people who liked
Whatsapp (EN + NL)	Messages	Personal Messages	Author
Personal contact (EN + NL)	Oral contact	Not applicable	Author and relatives
Flyers (EN + NL)	Distribution at university	Not applicable	Author

The first interview took place at the 16th of February and the last one at the 7th of March. In total fourteen interviews were conducted which is slightly more than the original goal of twelve. After twelve interviews I did not think however that saturation was reached which made me decide to distribute the note one last time and interview two more people. None of the interviewees was a close friend or relative of the author. Although I did know five of them before I was not aware of their opinion or political standpoints. In Table 3 the

² When other users of social media shared the note I am not able to add a link since these are not available.

background of all fourteen respondents who participated in the interviews is described. The table shows the respondent numbers, the language in which the interview was done, their answer to the question about satisfaction mentioned in the introductory note and the gender, age and nationality of each of the interviewees. The respondents are referred to using their aliases, which do reflect their personal background but are not their real names, in order to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees.

<u>Respondent</u>	<u>Alias</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Interview in..</u>	<u>Satisfaction</u>
Respondent 1	Sander	Male	23	Dutch	Dutch	7
Respondent 2	Freek	Male	24	Dutch	Dutch	7
Respondent 3	Marloes	Female	22	Dutch	Dutch	7
Respondent 4	Elske	Female	22	Dutch	Dutch	7.5
Respondent 5	Joris	Male	21	Dutch	Dutch	7
Respondent 6	Pien	Female	18	Dutch	Dutch	6
Respondent 7	Sophie	Female	25	Dutch	Dutch	7
Respondent 8	Lea	Female	25	Estonian	English	7
Respondent 9	Teodor	Male	19	Bulgarian	English	X
Respondent 10	Nina	Female	20	German	English	5
Respondent 11	Sebastian	Male	23	German / Czech	English	7
Respondent 12	Eleni	Female	25	Greek	English	8
Respondent 13	Mathijs	Male	22	Dutch	Dutch	X
Respondent 14	Paula	Female	19	Finnish	English	8

During the selection process some of the flaws of qualitative research with a non-probable sample became apparent as I was only able to reach the desired heterogeneity on some aspects. I am for example satisfied with the gender divide as six of the respondents are male while at first it proved to be difficult to find male respondents. In the beginning it was also hard to find foreign respondents but after actively promoting my research by flyering in university buildings and through online messages I was able to find six foreign respondents. Of course I will not be able to generalize to the population of the respective EU member states

but at least some perspectives other than the Dutch will be mentioned. On the downside the sample includes only participants which are either in university or in higher professional education. This suggests that the sample group will probably be more positive about European integration than when I would have used a random sample. Also, following the question about satisfaction I asked beforehand, people seem to be disproportionately positive about European integration. On average the interviewees rewarded their satisfaction about the EU with a 7.³ This grade is quite high compared with for instance the representative sample of the Eurobarometer (2018). On this bias I will extend in more length in the last chapter of this thesis.

2.5.2 Data set description

The interviews took between 29 and 50 minutes and were guided by an item list, either in Dutch or English, which is added in Appendix 2. The item list consists of both general questions and quotes of actors to spark the discussion. Quotes were shown to an interviewee only if deemed necessary. The questions on the item list were structured according to the operationalization. Before starting with an interview the interviewees were asked if they agreed with recording the conversation. Interviews were recorded using the mobile phone of the author and transcribed using the transcription program *oTranscribe*. The analysis of the interviews took place with the help of the qualitative analysis program *Atlas.ti*. Both open and listed coding were used to translate the outcomes of the interviews to tangible results. Listed codes correspond with the variables of the operationalization while open codes are themes which came up frequently during the interviews. The list of codes is displayed on Figure 2 on the following page and is further explained in Appendix 3. An example of a transcribed interview is available in Appendix 4.

The codes relate closely to the empirical chapter, in Appendix 3 it is also mentioned which code groups are discussed in which section of the following chapter. When analysing one of the codes students were measured according to a short summary made by the interviewer. To provide an example for the code about age I wrote down that respondents 2, 5, 7, 8 and 12 thought that age had some influence on the opinion of students while respondents 4 and 11 thought it was not that important. Alongside, respondents 6, 10 and 11 made a statement about another frequent finding, the differences between generations. This approach was followed for all codes to ensure that the analysis would be an adequate reflection of the opinion of all respondents

³ Two interviewees did not respond to the question about satisfaction

●	◇	A Opinion European Integration
●	◇	A1_PositiveOpinion
●	◇	A2_NeutralOpinion
●	◇	A3_NegativeOpinion
●	◇	B Influence Political Actors
●	◇	B1_ResistancePolActors
●	◇	B2_NeutralPolActors
●	◇	B3_SupportPolActors
●	◇	C Influence Social Actors
●	◇	C1_ResistanceSocActors
●	◇	C2_NeutralSocActors
●	◇	C3_SupportSocActors
●	◇	D Economic Considerations
●	◇	D1_PositiveaboutEconomy
●	◇	D2_NeutralaboutEconomy
●	◇	D3_NegativeaboutEconomy
●	◇	E Political Legitimacy
●	◇	E1_PositiveaboutPolLeg
●	◇	E2_NeutralaboutPolLeg
●	◇	E3_NegativeaboutPolLeg
●	◇	F Individual Characteristics
●	◇	F1_IndChar_Age
●	◇	F2_IndChar_Education
●	◇	F3_IndChar_Family/Nurture
●	◇	F4_IndChar_OtherSocialContacts
●	◇	F5_IndChar_SocStatus
●	◇	G Media/Framing
●	◇	G1_LackofInformation
●	◇	H National Interest
●	◇	H1_SenseofSecurity

Figure 2: List of codes

Chapter 3: The opinion of students about the process of European integration

In this chapter the results of the interviews are analysed. In the first section the relation between the main independent variable and the opinion of students about European integration is looked at. The second, third and fourth sections consider the contextual variables in relation with the opinion of students.

3.1 Resistance and support and the opinion of students

In the first chapter definitions were provided for political and social actors. The work of Wolfsfeld (2015) was used to define the category of political actors who ‘hold some measure of political authority and engage in activities which can have a significant influence on decisions, policies and outcomes’. Alongside, Stockinger (2005) defined the social actors category as ‘having a common cognitive reference frame and a specific competence for dealing with this frame’. Before turning to resistance or support of these groups it is considered if the interviewees see these groups of actors in a similar fashion as the theory.

Defining social and political actors

The group of political actors consists of high-level government officials and ministers but also, following the agency interpretation, political parties. In one of the interviews Elske was asked about who she thought when thinking about politics in the EU:

“First of all I think of Dutch political parties because you know from some of the parties what opinion they have about for example broadening of the European Union. I do not know that much about certain figures at an European level. Maybe Frans Timmermans or Donald Tusk but not really historical figures (Quote 1, Elske, 22, translated).”⁴

National political parties appeared most frequently when talking about political actors within the context of European integration. Most interviewees believe that what is happening on the European level has to be translated to the domestic level so that domestic actors still exercise the most influence. This conclusion was summarized by Nina: *“who you listen to when it comes to European action would be Angela Merkel. You would not go to Jean-Claude Juncker and listen to his interviews because that is far less relevant to my personal understanding of what is happening. It is nice that there are EU laws but the way that they are enforced is a question of the local government (Quote 2, Nina, 20)”*. The conclusion of Nina is supported by other interviewees who made a clear statement about this subject. The definition of Wolfsfeld (2015) about actors with political authority is

⁴ Translations of Dutch interview quotes are added in Appendix 5.

predominantly applicable to domestic political parties and individuals. Additionally only the best-known European politicians, such as Timmermans and Tusk, feature in the interviews. In contrast the group of social actors mentioned by the interviewees is more diverse. During the interviews it was already evident that not all respondents were thinking about the influence of specific social actors regarding European integration. Some mentioned they knew the two examples (Pegida and AEGEE) provided by the interviewer but did not know other social organizations which influenced their opinion while others came up with only one additional organization. The general line was summarized by Sebastian who responded to the question about the role of civil society organizations *“almost any societal organization that can offer enough information to the Commission. Due to inadequacy of the staff of the EU it needs to rely on external sources of information in order for the policies to gain legitimacy. It depends very much on the policy field that is being discussed (Quote 3, Sebastian, 23)”*. Due to the diverse group of social actors and the lack of responses of some of the interviewees on this topic it is however difficult to relate the outcomes to the theory of Stockinger (2005).

Resisting or supporting actors?

The second step in this section should be to consider if resistance or support of the actors is more apparent and what the reason behind it is. Resistance of political actors can, according to Szczerbiak & Taggart (2018), develop for ideological-programmatic or strategic-tactical reasons while Fitzgibbon (2013) adds interest representation and a lack of political opportunities for resistance of social actors. For support Guerra (2018) notes that higher levels of cognitive mobilization, a positive cost-benefit analysis, satisfaction with national democracy and an inclusive identity are associated with a positive view about European integration.

Firstly considering support it seems that support of social actors predominantly comes from actors which gain in an economic sense of European integration. Elske for example mentioned that *“it is very attractive for companies, especially in an economic sense, it is easier to move from one country to another and you do not have to pay import duties (Quote 4, Elske, 22, translated)”*. While other interviewees made some prerequisites for a company to be positive about integration, for example that it has to be export-oriented, companies were noted as the most positive social actors. Other social actors that were sporadically mentioned were non-governmental organizations and universities. Support of companies can be associated with the positive cost-benefit analysis mentioned by Guerra (2018) while for the other actors the reasons vary from ideological determinants to cognitive mobilization.

Support of political actors can come from national and European actors as the interviewees thought that most actors want to show that the EU is a good thing. Support is however seen

to be more dominant in Brussels than in the member states. Freek described that *"I think that the European Commission and Parliament are in general more positive. The Council, national parliaments and the citizens have a diverse opinion but tend to be more negative (Quote 5, Freek, 24, translated)"*. Support in the nation-states is thought to be found with political parties which have a liberal ideology such as VVD and D'66 in the Netherlands. Some respondents see the EU as an economic project and argue that parties favouring free trade such as VVD and D'66 align most with it. Interesting is that for supportive actors it is especially actors at an agency scale level, rather than individuals, that are thought to be positive.

Turning to resistance the group of actors resisting European integration is more diverse than the supportive group. For social actors no specific category of actors can however be seen as exemplary. Most reactions of the respondents about social actors were again provoked by the interviewer by showing the two examples on the topic list. Opposing political actors seem to be more visible. On the national level it is especially the parties on the fringes which stand out. Nina mentions the right-wing parties *"I think that there are nationalistic parties, which are on the rise, like the AfD or the FN or Geert Wilders. They confront us with the benefits of the EU (Quote 6, Nina, 20)"* while Sebastian also mentions the role of left-wing parties as the Greek party Syriza in the austerity debates. According to Nina, Sebastian and other interviewees the political actors arguing against further integration made the benefits of the EU more visible. The 'anti-voice' as Freek conceptualizes it led to a more tense discussion about integration and made proponents of integration think about the advantages of integration. In this sense, for at least half of the interviewees, a relation between resistance of actors and a positive opinion about integration can be noted.

In contrast to supportive actors for the resisting category specific individuals such as Geert Wilders, Marine le Pen or Charles de Gaulle were frequently mentioned by the interviewees. Returning to the categories of Szczerbiak & Taggart (2018) & Fitzgibbon (2013) both ideological and strategic reasons can be recorded when the interviewees talked about resistance of political actors. Ideological reasons for example in the reasoning of Syriza in the austerity debates and strategic reasons when talking about voting for a party which seats in a specific political group in the EP. Both factors of Fitzgibbon (2013) also return in the reasoning of the interviewees, for example when talking about Pegida, which is seen as 'group of dissatisfied people with no political alternative' by Sander.

Resisting actors are thought to be more visible and influential than social actors. Paula summarizes the line of reasoning voiced by most respondents *"I think the anti-people are more successful because they are heard more, I have never heard of the two pro-integration examples which you mentioned (Quote 7, Paula, 19)"*. In a few interviews the role of the media, to which I will return later, is also noted in this regard. The media would broadcast

extreme voices more often than moderate parties because this attracts more attention. While resisting actors are found to be more influential this does however not directly say something about their influence on the opinion of students. This relation will be the next element that is considered.

Influence on the opinion of students

Before starting with the empirical work of this project I hypothesized that resistance would be more important than support. In the previous paragraphs this hypothesis was confirmed. Additionally I expected that political actors would be more important than social actors and that the opinion of students would at least be partly influenced by external forces. These last two assumptions will be tested in the last part of this section.

Regarding the first assumption, the balance between social and political actors, I can highlight different arguments after analysing the data. Turning to Paula first it can be argued that political actors are more important *"I feel like political parties are more effective because we have elections so we have to vote. Than we start to see which parties we align with more. I feel like for civil society, their main aim is to affect the government rather than change our mind (Quote 8, Paula, 19)."* On the other hand there were a few respondents who are not interested in politics and valued social actors as more important *"I am not politically oriented, I think politics is more like a game. Civil society organizations are more personal, people act out of their own interest. (Quote 9, Sophie, 25, translated)"*. The general consensus in the interviews however seems to be more aligned with the opinion of Paula than with the opinion of Sophie. A few respondents acknowledged the role that social actors can play in the multi-level governance system but most pointed to political actors when answering to the question about which actors shape the process of European integration. In the final question, when interviewees were asked about the influence of the several factors on their opinion, one third of the respondents mentioned political actors as influential while only Sophie argued that social actors were actually influential for her opinion. The hypothesis, more influence of political than of social actors, can be confirmed.

The last hypothesis was about the general influence of social and political actors on the opinion of students. The hypothesis can be confirmed partly but in a slightly different manner as expected. At first sight I assumed that students would become more negative when confronted with resistance and more positive when confronted with support. This first assumption can however be dismissed as multiple respondents mentioned that they instead became more positive about integration as a consequence of opposition. Nina summarizes the reasoning behind this relation: *"when Pegida started demonstrating I started to have stronger political opinions. Confronting me with Islamophobia made me research the good parts of it, of the Islam. I wanted to be more embracing to the people who experienced hate from this kind of groups. In that way it helped me develop my own opinion (Quote 10, Nina,*

20)”. Sophie validated her statement by pointing to Pegida demonstrations in Utrecht and mentioning that ‘it made her wondering what their motives were’. Sander talks about the influence of both social and political actors on the opinion about European integration: *“Pegida and political parties which hit on the EU, especially extreme-right and nationalistic parties show people that something might have to change in the EU but that it should not be as extreme as they articulate. In a certain way you thus get a more positive view of the EU. You become stronger as you think about ‘us against those weirdos’ (Quote 11, Sander, 23, translated)”*. The opposite influence on the opinion, resistance leading to positivism, features frequently in the interviews, and is half of the answer to the hypothesis.

While some respondents did point to this opposite influence others did clearly dismiss the influence of other actors on their own opinion. While actors often provide ‘food for thought’ they do not influence or change the opinion of most of the respondents. Sebastian and Mathijs both articulate this conclusion in a slightly different manner: *“I would not say that they have a direct impact. I observe how they relate to the EU, how they behave in the EU but I try to formulate my opinion based on observations, by myself and not based on any party's or a certain politicians view (Quote 12, Sebastian, 23)”* and *“I formulate my opinions from several sources and what you hear on a daily basis. I do not lean to a certain party or person (Quote 13, Mathijs, 22, translated)”*. For these two and most of the other respondents social and political actors play a role in the background. Respondents collect information that actors provide but it does not directly change their opinion about European integration which they base on other aspects. The relation between resistance and support of political and social actors and the opinion of students on European integration is thus twofold. On the one hand some respondents became more positive about integration because of resistance of actors. On the other hand some respondents see resistance or support as ‘food for thought’ and base their opinion on other aspects. Approximately one third of the interviewees aligns with the first conclusion while the rest leans to the second conclusion.

3.2 Considerations and the opinion of students

The political and economic considerations were identified following the work of Hooghe & Marks (2008) but were also mentioned by Guerra (2018). The conclusions of Anderson & Reichert (1996) led to the hypotheses about economic considerations that personal benefits or benefits for the country in which a person lives would lead to a more positive opinion about European integration. Looking at the benefits for the country first, Lea mentions that it has led to a more positive opinion for her: *“I do not know how it has been here but for Estonia it has been good because it brought in new businesses. And the money as well, we used to have our own money and now we have the Euro. This has made it easier as well, to make business and to be part of Europe (Quote 14, Lea, 25)”*. The same line of reasoning is voiced by other respondents. Marloes points to the fact that the Netherlands is not a large

country and that it benefits from the size of the EU. Mathijs extends on this argument and points out that for larger countries such as France and Germany the economic advantages might be less significant as the national economy is large enough. The hypothesis about a more positive attitude when you consider your country to benefit can however be confirmed. A positive image about the economic image leads to more positivism and a negative image to more negativism.

Personal benefits are more important than benefits for the country and are by most respondents even considered more meaningful than the opinion of other actors. Teodor from Bulgaria summed up the general argument in his answer to the final question of the interview: *"to answer this in a personal way, for me the greatest thing is that I have free travel and that the university fees for European students are five times smaller than for people from outside the EU. I know that we have been talking about the bigger picture but European integration is why I am here (Quote 15, Teodor, 19)"*. As the interviewees regularly pointed out that everybody has 'their own interest in mind' most of them mentioned that their socio-economic background is one of the main influences on their opinion. At least half of the interviewees indicated that economic reasons were (one of the) most important reasons influencing their opinion. The second conclusion of Anderson & Reichert (1996) can also be confirmed. Some interviewees noted that they are more positive because of their privileged socio-economic position and that they would be more negative if the EU would cost them more.

Turning to the political field I hypothesized that respondents who think that their actions are meaningful are more positive about European integration. The results on this subject show mixed results. A first reason for this however is that at least half of the respondents were not fully aware of the functioning of the EU and because of that they were not able to analyse if the efficacy influenced their opinion about it. Among the respondents that could answer the question about this topic some thought that the EU is democratic enough such as Teodor who compared the situation in the EU with the situation in his home country Bulgaria and Elske who indicated that democratic accountability is one of the core values of the EU. In contrast others mentioned that there indeed is a 'democratic deficit' in the EU. Freek for instance indicated that the dysfunctioning of the European Parliament leads to a lot of frustration about the EU, especially for people who are already negative about the Union. The judgement of the respondents does however not seem to have much influence on the opinion about European integration:

"I would not say I am more negative, I do not think this is a good development. But on the other hand this is not a reason to leave the EU. I think this is something which can be adjusted by some Treaty changes, it would be unwise to leave or dismantle the EU just because of some smaller flaws which can be fixed (Quote 16, Sebastian)."

"I can see the point but at the same time I understand that there has to be some rules, some regulations and order, that goes into the processes. Of course it is not perfect but I still think the benefits outweigh the negatives such as being bureaucratic (Quote 17, Eleni)."

Both Sebastian and Eleni articulate that, although they see some flaws in the design of the EU, their opinion about the EU did not become more negative because of that. The hypothesis about the meaningfulness of the actions can however not be confirmed based on results. Rather than respondents who thought that their actions were meaningful being more positive it can be concluded that other factors, such as the personal background and economic considerations, are more important and outweigh the influence of political considerations. These considerations were conceptualized here as political efficacy which is different as a political ideology. An interviewee can also identify as member of a certain political group which is part of the social identity category treated in the next section.

3.3 Identity and the opinion of students

The identity variable is a broad factor consisting of the personal and social identity categories. Regarding the personal identity category I assumed that age would be an important variable and that respondents are likely to be positive because they are young. Alongside, the social identity variable was thought to be predominantly related with national identity. Respondents with a stronger national identity were expected to be more negative about European integration. Along these two a lot of different factors, education level, family, social contacts and social status were indicated by the respondents. I will limit myself to the general conclusions and most significant exceptions per factor.

Age

The first factor under the personal identity category was age. Respondents were asked if their age had influence on their opinion about European integration and if so, why they thought it had an influence. The majority of the respondents indeed indicated that their young age made them positive about European integration. Positivism was especially related with personal benefits which was expressed by Lea: *"I think the main difference was, when we talk about the EU for example, that the older generation was more against it. Younger people have the opportunity and the chances to study and travel abroad (Quote 18, Lea)"*. Most respondents articulate that younger people are in general more positive than older people but the generational divide is not seen as the most important element. Several respondents express that there are also young people who are negative about European integration and point to their socio-economic position for their positivism. Three respondents also wondered if the habituation to the comforts of the EU make the younger generation more sceptical because they did not experience the horrors of the past.

The difference with other generations noted by some respondents. Nina for instance articulates that she experiences a difference between the opinion of her parents' generation and the generation of her grandparents *"I would rather talk to young people or really old people than my parents' generation. Because they do not really know what it was before (Quote 19, Nina)"*. The line of reasoning of Nina is voiced by other respondents. This finding is noteworthy since it extends on earlier quantitative work about the generational divide. An advantage of qualitative research such as this project is that it can apply nuances to 'hard' quantitative results. Reflecting on the hypothesis I can however partly confirm that younger people are more positive about European integration than older people. This confirmation however comes with some nuances as it also depends on the circles in which you spend time, in the more educated circles people are usually pro-European.

Education level

The second factor within the personal identity category is the education level. The main conclusion evolving from the empirical data is simple: if a person was higher educated he or she was more positive about European integration. A secondary conclusion is however more interesting to analyse. At least half of the respondents mentioned that because of the things they learned during their studies they are less receptive to influence of political and social actors. Pien expressed this attitude: *"I think that only more knowledge gathered during my studies would change my opinion. This is academic knowledge which I can use to formulate my opinion. This is not the case for information from television, when there are just people shouting things (Quote 20, Pien, translated)"*. This however also has to do with the type of study of the respondent as it were mostly the respondents studying something related with politics who expressed this opinion. For them education can be seen as a mediating factor between the attitude of other actors and their own opinion about European integration. Regarding education I do conclude that higher educated respondents are more positive about European integration and that well-informed students are less receptive to the influence of others. It should however be noted that, due to the lack of low educated students, this conclusion should be taken with a grain of salt.

Family and other social contacts

The third and fourth factors were family, also seen as nurture, the way a person grew up, and other social contacts. Between the factors major similarities exist. For both some respondents mentioned that these social ties are important. This was however more so for family ties than for other social ties as eight respondents talked about the family influence and four about other social ties. The difference was clearly expressed by Mathijs who mentioned: *"personally I think my parents had a huge influence. On a later age I also took the opinion of acquaintances and friends into account because you start formulating an own opinion later in your life (Quote 21, Mathijs, translated)"*. Some respondents expressed that they talked about the EU with their relatives and that it led to a 'pragmatic' or 'conservative'

view on European integration. The ties, both family and other ties, were however for only one respondent the most important factor influencing their opinion. Like education level and the next factor, social status, social ties, are however part of the personal background which multiple actors mentioned as the most important element influencing the opinion.

Social Status

The last factor under the personal identity category is social status, which is related with the socio-economic position mentioned in the previous section. Earlier I confirmed the assumptions of Anderson & Reichert (1996) about the economic benefits which associate with the economic part of the position. The social part is explained by Sander:

“After pre-university education you start studying on the university and in most instances you participate in the student life. You start living in Amsterdam, most of the students live there, and become part of a fraternity. You do not encounter any obstacles which leads to a positive image about the political situation, about the EU (Quote 22, Sander, 23, translated).”

Sander explains that a strong socio-economic position leads to a positive opinion about European integration as you are satisfied with the current situation. On the other hand persons with a weaker position would like to change the situation and are more negative about integration. The explanation of Sander aligns with the utilitarian model explained earlier based on the work of Grimm *et al.* (2018). Most of the interviewees indeed indicated that they have a positive opinion about European integration because they have a strong socio-economic position. They also reflected on those with a weaker socio-economic position which might be more negative about integration. Since there is however a strong difference between self-identification and identification of others no far-reaching statements can be made about the relation between a weak position and negativism about integration.

Some respondents conceptualize the social status and the previous elements in the personal identity category as their ‘personal background’. Conceptualizations vary but the personal background can be seen as a combination between the education level, the way a person grew up and their socio-economic status while some respondents also incorporate their age. Eleni expresses why she thinks her personal background is the most important element influencing her opinion: *“I think it makes it makes the situation very obvious to me, I can directly see the benefits or the disadvantages of being in the EU which directly affects my opinion (Quote 23, Eleni, 25)”*. At least three quarters of the interviewees considered a conceptualization of their personal background as the most important element influencing their opinion about European integration.

Social Identity

Group memberships were not often mentioned by the interviewees. Except from a national identity no other group memberships could be noted. None of the respondents identified as for example a member of a religious community which had an influence on their opinion.

Turning to national identity I assumed earlier that respondents with a strong national identity would be more negative about European integration. Based on the results from the interviews this hypothesis can however be rejected. The few respondents that articulated a strong national identity did not see their national identity as an alternative to an European identity. Sometimes this was because of security interests as Lea from Estonia for example mentioned that 'it is nice to have Europe behind our back when confronted with Russian aggression'. In other instances a respondent was supportive about European integration because of other elements and did not think that his or her national interests were hurt by European integration. It however seems that the bias in the sample plays a role as none of the respondents was opposing European integration per se.

3.4 The role of the media and the opinion of students

The last factor thought to influence the opinion of students is the role of the media. De Vreese (2007) was cited who introduced two elements, the pervasiveness of the strategic news frame and political sophistication. The second factor was linked to the term cognitive mobilization of Inglehart (1970). I assumed that the opinion of a respondent about European integration is positively influenced by a higher level of cognitive mobilization. The pervasiveness of the news frame relates to the difference between the influence of subjective and of objective news. First of all the relation between the codes associated with the role of the media and the education variable should however be noted. A correlation exists between a higher education level and a higher level of cognitive mobilization. The role of the media however goes behind only education. While information during your study can help you acquire more political skills this does not directly translate into a better understanding of the news frame. Turning to the pervasiveness of the news frame first Marloes argues that the type of news the media broadcasts is of influence: *"I think that the media have some influence, maybe not directly, but if when it shows positive or negative news it can have an indirect influence (Quote 24 Marloes, 22, translated)"*. Marloes did not mention objective news framing but rather talked about the type of subjectivism. This type of reasoning is resonated by several other respondents, an extraordinary amount of negative news items would lead to more negativism. The difference between objective and subjective news seems only visible for respondents who have some background in communication studies. Lea and Eleni, both communication studies students, were critically aware of the differences between factual truths and rhetoric or news items.

Your interpretation of the news however also hugely depends on your personal background which was introduced in the previous section. Freek illustrates this when I asked him about

the influence of social organizations as Pegida on his opinion: *"Pegida is an organization which I do not identify with. I rather distance myself from them, but I again do that from a certain personal frame. I identify myself as pro-European so if I see something from the PVV or Pegida I already have a certain interpretation of that (Quote 25, Freek, 23, translated)."*

Like Freek several respondents mentioned that they frame news according to their own background. Extending this argument I find some evidence for the cognitive mobilization factor. None of the respondents argued that they became more positive about European integration as a consequence of more cognitive mobilization but negativism about European integration is according to some respondents related with a lack of cognitive mobilization. This statement is however questionable as there is a clear difference between respondents reflecting on their own opinion and their perception of what affects other people's opinions. Since none of the respondents actually mentioned that they were more negative because of a lack of cognitive mobilization I do not unequivocally make this argument but rather bring it up and call for more research on this relation.

The hypothesis about this variable, a higher level of cognitive mobilization leading to more positivism about integration, should however be rejected, instead, lower levels of mobilization of others can lead to more negativism. Following the work of de Vreese (2007) the argument about the influence of the pervasiveness of the news frame can be extended by pointing to the framing of the individual as a consequence of their personal background. For the opinion about European integration the role of the media is however limited. As Freek already illustrated most respondents formulated their opinion based on other elements and frame news items accordingly. Also, because the respondents had sufficient political skills, cognitive mobilization was for themselves not found to be important.

Conclusion and discussion

In this research project an answer was formulated to the question: 'How does resistance and support of political and social actors regarding European integration influence the opinion of students on the process of European integration?' To do so fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with students from EU member states studying in the Netherlands. Next to resistance and support of both groups of actors three additional factors were examined, political and economic considerations, identity and the role of the media.

Following the results the personal background of a respondent is seen as the most important element influencing the opinion about European integration. Conceptualizations of the personal background vary but most consist of a combination between the education level, the way a person grew up, socio-economic status and sometimes age. Twelve of the fourteen respondents noted that their personal background is (one of) the most important elements while resistance and support of actors was noted by only four actors. The influence was interestingly enough found in resistance of actors leading to a more positive opinion of respondents. A third influential factor was economic considerations related with the utilitarian model which three respondents noted as (one of) the most important elements. The other factors, political considerations, social identity and the role of the media were of lesser importance and the associated hypotheses had to be rejected. A clear difference between respondents reflecting on their own opinion and their perception of what affects other people's opinions can however be recorded. Since respondents were more positive anyhow they ascribed to certain positions and were less sensitive to resistance leading to a more negative opinion. Instead they noted that these types of negative influences can be found among less educated 'other' students and young people.

The qualitative research project showed that resistance of actors is more important than support and that political actors outweigh social actors. Students were however less vulnerable to external influence than expected as for only one third of the respondents this was the most important element. Of the additional variables identity was indeed recorded as the most important factor while economic considerations were the second most influential. Notwithstanding the dispersion in opinions and the growth of resistance against European integration students in most instances still dismiss external factors as 'people shouting things at television' and formulate their opinion based on their own background.

The structure of this research project should however be reflected upon. In his book Bryman (2009) introduced three criteria, reliability, replication and validity, to evaluate research projects in the social sciences. The first two criteria were sufficiently addressed throughout the thesis but the design has flaws regarding validity and especially regarding external validity, whether study results can be generalised beyond the particular research context.

Due to the non-purposive sample method the eventual group of respondents is not representative of the entire population. The respondents were highly educated and more positive about European integration when compared with a representative sample. Further research on this topic should thus further explore the conclusions of this project by conducting interviews with lower educated students and comparing the results. Another interesting angle can be to compare member states which have strong anti-European voices and those where integration is still widely accepted.

The findings of this project can however still fulfil its role within the body of literature on youth and Euroscepticism. Recent projects such as the chapters of Grimm *et al.* (2018) and Guerra (2018) adopt a quantitative approach towards the subject which this qualitative project can supplement. The conclusion that, at least for highly educated students, the dispersion in opinion after Maastricht, does not play a significant role, indeed reinforces the argument of Guerra that the EU is still retaining support from young people as long as it fulfils its expectations regarding the (socio-)economic situation. Other elements mentioned in the quantitative chapters such as cognitive mobilization and satisfaction with democracy are however not found in this research project which allows room for further research to explore these contrasting findings. The contextualization of the project by firstly examining the processes leading to the current situation, the diversified opinions about integration after Maastricht, also contributes to a better understanding of the current situation.

Along further exploring quantitative results this study should be interpreted as a new step towards an in-depth understanding of the opinion of youth about European integration. In contrast to my expectations formulated after analysing Niemi & Hepburn (1995) external factors were for my group of respondents not that important as internal factors such as the personal background. This awareness can be a bright spot for European policymakers, who seem to retain support of highly educated students as long as the EU meets its socio-economic demands. Before we can however really determine whether actors resisting the ever closer union, such as Pegida or Front National, have a strong influence on students this research project should be extended to less highly educated students.

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Appendices

In Appendix 1 the introductory note which invited people to take part in the research project is displayed. Appendix 2 consists of the topic lists in both Dutch and English. In Appendix 3 an explanation of the codes used in *Atlas.ti* is provided, Appendix 4 holds a transcript of one of the interview and the last Appendix contains of the original Dutch interview quotes which were translated in the text.

Appendix 1: Introductory notes

These introductory notes were used to approach people, both online and offline, to participate in the research project. Depending on the situation the English, Dutch or both versions were used. The channels used to distribute the note were mentioned earlier.

Beste medestudent,

Ik ben Lars Ankum en volg op het moment de master Europese studies aan de Universiteit Leiden. Momenteel schrijf ik mijn scriptie over weerstand tegen Europese integratie. De laatste tijd is dit verzet duidelijk naar voren gekomen, onder andere in het referendum in Groot-Brittannië en in het Oekraïne-referendum in Nederland.

Voor mijn scriptie ben ik op zoek naar studenten (18-25) afkomstig uit de Europese Unie en momenteel studierend in Nederland voor een interview over Europese integratie. In het interview zal ik vragen naar de invloed van andere actoren (personen en organisaties) op jouw mening over Europese integratie. Daarnaast ben ik ook benieuwd of jouw eigen identiteit en overwegingen over zaken zoals de economische situatie in de EU van invloed zijn op jouw mening.

Het interview duurt ongeveer een half uur en kan plaatsvinden op een locatie en moment van uw keuze. Uiteraard wordt de deelname zeer gewaardeerd en zal die beloond worden met een versnapering op kosten van deze dankbare interviewer. De resultaten van het interview zullen worden geanonimiseerd en worden enkel gebruikt voor dit onderzoeksproject. Als je wilt deelnemen kan je reageren op dit bericht of een e-mail sturen naar l.a.ankum@umail.leidenuniv.nl. Ik vraag je ook om te vermelden hoe tevreden je momenteel bent over Europese integratie (op een schaal van 1 tot 10). Belangrijk om aan te geven is dat mocht jij mij toevallig goed kennen de kans dat je wordt uitgekozen voor het interview niet heel groot is. Toch staat het je uiteraard vrij om te reageren.

Ik wil je bij voorbaat danken voor jouw tijd en hoop je spoedig te mogen begroeten!

Dear fellow student,

My name is Lars Ankum and I am a student European Union studies at Leiden University. Currently I am writing my Master's thesis about resistance against European integration. During the last couple of years resistance has been quite apparent in the European Union, visible for example in the Brexit referendum and in the referendum about Ukraine in the Netherlands.

For the thesis I am looking for students (18-25) from countries of the European Union who are currently studying in the Netherlands to interview about European integration. In the interview you will be asked about the influence of other actors (people and organizations) on your opinion about European integration. Also I will question the influence of your identity and wider considerations such as the economic situation on your opinion about the integration process.

The interview will take approximately half a hour and can take place on a location and date of your preference. Of course you will be highly rewarded with coffee or thee at the expense of this grateful interviewer. The results of the interview will be made anonymous and are only used for this research project. Please respond to this message or send an e-mail to l.a.ankum@umail.leidenuniv.nl if you are willing to participate. I also ask you to mention how satisfied you currently are about European integration (on a scale from 1 to 10). Important to add is that if I am very familiar with you it is not very likely that you will be invited to take part in the research project. Nonetheless you are of course allowed to respond to this invitation.

I thank you in advance for your time and hope to see you soon!

Appendix 2: Topic lists

Like the introductory note two versions of the topic list were available, one in English and one in Dutch. Eventually six of the interviews were kept in English and eight in Dutch.

Dutch: Oppositie tegen Europese integratie - Itemlijst

Introductie (13 vragen in totaal)

- Welkom heten en danken voor deelname
- Regels en opname (anoniem, stoppen wanneer je wilt, geen foute antwoorden)
- Voorstellen respondent (leeftijd en nationaliteit, geen NAAM) en jezelf
- Introductie onderwerp: weerstand tegen Europese integratie en mening over EU integratie

"Hoe heeft de weerstand / support van politieke en sociale actoren aangaande Europese integratie invloed op de mening van studenten op het proces van Europese integratie?"

Historische vragen

- Wat weet je van het proces van Europese integratie?

- Denk je dat de Europese Unie nu anders is dan in het verleden?

- Wie (personen en organisaties) hadden invloed op Europese integratie en hoe deden zij dat?

- Wat voor actoren waren positief over het proces van Europese integratie / wat voor actoren waren hier negatief over?

What fragmenten die getoond kunnen worden

Marine le Pen - *Everyone understands the European Union is a failure. It has not kept any of its promises - in particular about prosperity, security - and, worst of all, has put us under a guardianship.*



Francois Mitterrand - *"Nationalism is War"*.





Pegida - *"Stop Islamisation of Europe"*



Student Organization AEGEE - *"Some call it Europe, we call it home"*

Invloed van actoren

- Hebben deze politieke actoren invloed op jouw mening over Europese integratie?

- Hebben deze sociale actoren invloed op jouw mening over Europese integratie?

Economische / politieke situatie

- Heb jij profijt van het EU-lidmaatschap van jouw land?

- Heeft de economische situatie invloed op jouw mening over Europese integratie?

- Stem jij in verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement?

- Heeft de politieke legitimiteit van de Europese Unie invloed op jouw mening over Europese integratie?

Identiteit

- Heeft jouw achtergrond als een invloed op jouw mening over Europese integratie?

- Heeft jouw leeftijd invloed op jouw mening over Europese integratie?

Conclusie

- Wordt jouw mening over Europese integratie beïnvloed door de mening van anderen, de economische en/of politieke situatie of jouw identiteit (of allen)?

- What kind of actors were positive about the process of European integration / and what kind of actors were negative about this process?

If necessary some fragments can be shown

Marine le Pen - *Everyone understands the European Union is a failure. It has not kept any of its promises - in particular about prosperity, security - and, worst of all, has put us under a guardianship.*



Francois Mitterrand - *"Nationalism is War"*.





Pegida - *"Stop Islamisation of Europe"*



Student Organization AEGEE - *"Some call it Europe, we call it home"*

- Does the political legitimacy of the European Union influence your opinion about European integration?

Identity

- Do you think your background as a influences your opinion about European integration?

- Do you think your age influences your opinion about European integration?

Conclusion

- Is your opinion about European integration influenced by the position of others, economic / political considerations, individual characteristics (or all)?

Appendix 3: Explanation codes Atlas.ti

The codification process was based on the conceptual framework presented earlier in this report. Some of the codes were however added later according to open coding.

The **A-codes** are derived from the dependent variable of the thesis. The categorization is ranging from positive to negative opinion. General statements about a respondent about European integration were given code A while subjective statements got one of the subcodes. The dependent variable was discussed in all sections of Chapter 3

The **B- and C-codes** are associated with the main independent variable. The categorization here varies from resistance to support of political and social actors according to the conceptual framework. General and subjective statements were divided in the same way as mentioned for A-codes. These code groups were discussed in section 3.1.

The **D- and E-codes** are related with the considerations contextual variable. The categorization again varies from positive to negative. Positive statements about for instance the economy received code D1 for instance. General statements received standard code D or E. These code groups were discussed in section 3.2.

The **F-codes** are related with the contextual identity variable but is the first group for which open coding was used. Since the identity variable can be interpreted broadly I used open coding to come up with the subcodes. Accordingly these five categories were mentioned frequently in the interviews and were added to the list. Code F3 consists of family relation and the influence of nurture on the opinion. This code group was discussed in section 3.3.

The **G- and H-codes** lastly were the result of both open and listed coding. The G- and H-general codes were already formulated before starting with the coding process but the G1- and H1-subcodes were added later because these subjects were frequently mentioned by the interviewees. The G-codes were discussed in section 3.4 and the H-codes in section 3.3.

●	◇	A Opinion European Integration
●	◇	A1_PositiveOpinion
●	◇	A2_NeutralOpinion
●	◇	A3_NegativeOpinion
●	◇	B Influence Political Actors
●	◇	B1_ResistancePolActors
●	◇	B2_NeutralPolActors
●	◇	B3_SupportPolActors
●	◇	C Influence Social Actors
●	◇	C1_ResistanceSocActors
●	◇	C2_NeutralSocActors
●	◇	C3_SupportSocActors
●	◇	D Economic Considerations
●	◇	D1_PositiveaboutEconomy
●	◇	D2_NeutralaboutEconomy
●	◇	D3_NegativeaboutEconomy
●	◇	E Political Legitimacy
●	◇	E1_PositiveaboutPolLeg
●	◇	E2_NeutralaboutPolLeg
●	◇	E3_NegativeaboutPolLeg
●	◇	F Individual Characteristics
●	◇	F1_IndChar_Age
●	◇	F2_IndChar_Education
●	◇	F3_IndChar_Family/Nurture
●	◇	F4_IndChar_OtherSocialContacts
●	◇	F5_IndChar_SocStatus
●	◇	G Media/Framing
●	◇	G1_LackofInformation
●	◇	H National Interest
●	◇	H1_SenseofSecurity

Appendix 4: Transcript one of the interviews

An transcript of one of the interviews is added as an example. The other transcripts can be requested by contacting the author via e-mail (l.a.ankum@umail.leidenuniv.nl).

Interview respondent 8: Woman, 25 years

00:00 I: Welcome, can you first mention your age and your nationality?

00:11 R8: I am 25, and I am from Estonia (Estland)

00:28 I: The first question is quite general, what do you know about the process of European integration, and then in general lines, what you know about when it started and how it developed?

00:35 R8: In general I do know what it is, but not the specific characteristics. I do know that the EU played a huge role in integration, especially within Europe. There are different aspects probably to it. Within Europe itself but also from outside to Europe because it has been a very popular destination now for people from different continents.

01:16 I: You mean to work in the EU (R8: Yes). Also you mentioned that it had a huge role, can you describe what you mean by that?

01:34 R8: It has made it so much easier, because the borders are open in the sense that European Union members have the same rights everyone. So it makes it easier to come to a different country and find a job. Because companies themselves don't have to worry about all the people, it provides people with much more options. And companies the possibility to hire people from outside their own nation state.

02:14 I: Okey, do you know when the EU started?

02:16 R8: Probably much earlier but I think the European Union started in the late 1990s, or in the beginning of 2000. At that moment was the biggest explosion of integration.

02:40 I: Because you mentioned that you are from Estonia. When did Estonia join the EU?

02:47 R8: In 2004 I think.

02:50 I: And would you say that you know more about it from the moment that Estonia joined. Or do you have some knowledge from before that as well?

03:01 R8: Definitely I have more knowledge afterwards, because than I was also of the age that I could comprehend what happened. Before that we were also occupied under Russia, than there was also integration but maybe in a different way. For example we had rubber boat travellers who run away from Estonia to Finland or Sweden. We had like war refugees, not exactly refugees but something like that.

03:38 I: So that was also a kind of cooperation with neighbours?

03:46 R8: The neighbour countries did not know about it, so Estonians just went, they did not have the approval of the countries to go there, but they escaped from the war conditions. I think that was also earlier in that sense.

04:10 I: For how long was Estonia under Russian occupation?

04:18 R8: In 1991 we became independent.

04:32 I: If you think about the EU, do you think it is different now than it was before?

04:39 R8: Yes, it is easier, definitely easier. They kind of promote it, now they see it as a negative thing as well. In the beginning it was a positive thing and people felt much more comfortable going. Before that people were looking beyond Europe, US for example. But now people consider the EU, because it is the easiest option.

05:08 I: And that is for Estonian people?

05:12 R8: I think it can be applied for Estonian people indeed.

05:23 I: A lot what you say is about migration, is that an important element for yourself?

05:29 R8: I see it as an opportunity!

05:48 I: Is it different now than like 20 years before?

05:54 R8: Yes, it is difficult for Estonia, because the re-independence is only there for 27, 28 years.

06:00 I: It is easier to live in the EU, because it has some advantages, do you have any other examples except from the open borders?

06:19 R8: I do not know how it has been here but for Estonia it has been good because it brought in new businesses. And the money as well, we used to have our own money and now we have the Euro. This has made it easier as well, to make business and to be part of Europe.

06:40 I: So the Euro mentally but also physically played a big role for more integration.

06:57 R8: Yes I think so. I think it was a difficult transition because Estonians were keen on their own money...

07:02 I: Because it was not too long ago right?

07:06 R8: No, it was 2011 actually. So it was very recent and there was a lot of discussion

about if it was a good thing or a bad thing. I think it was a good thing but it also sad because we are very proud on our nation, nationality and independence. I think because it is so recent and I have only grown up with it.

07:29 I: That seems clear. If you think about certain parties or organizations in European integration. Like organizations, people or parties would you then identify?

07:45 R8: That is more difficult because I am not that familiar with all the parties.... (I: explains question). But I think all the instances which are in Brussels, they are on different places but mainly Brussels of course. I am trying of the names in English but I only know them in Estonian.... I think the UN also, I think they also play a role but I do not know specifically how.

09:11 I: You mentioned the instances in Brussels, do you know any specific agencies?

09:21 R8: The EP is there right. I think it is a language barrier right now...I can remember them in Estonian but not in English..

09:42 I: Maybe you can describe what they do? Which kind of people go there?

09:49 R8: Yes, politicians mainly, also from Estonia (I: explains European Commission and European Council)

10:45 I: Okey, so we identified some organizations, so we talked earlier about the companies and we found the agencies in Brussels and the UN. If you think about these organizations, do you think they promote further integration or are they against it?

10:58 R8: I think they promote integration because they probably see it as a way, not directly, to connect countries and deal with globalization. On a smaller scale of course but I think they see it as a good way to have common agreements instead of a lot of separate systems.

12:05 I: So you think that especially global forces are influential in this? (R8: Yes). Is that also maybe because you lived in Estonia which is close to Russia?

12:22 R8: Yes, because I have seen from a close perspective that it is nice to have Europe behind our back. Because in recent years it has been a hot topic again and Russia has make some strong arguments about wanting to take back our country.

12:38 I: Can you maybe talk a bit more about that, the situation in Estonia with Russia and the EU?

12:47 R8: It is very difficult, first of all a lot of countries, they know Estonia, they recognize Estonia, but there is still a lot which they do not know about us. And what Europe covers about the relation between us and Russia it is very different than what we see. And for Estonians it is a scary moment as well because we are afraid of the fact that Putin or Russia in general can come and take over whenever they want. It has been very critical and of

course we have a border with Russia and that border has been changing a lot. It used to be much more easier but now it is harder to go to Russia and we need a Visa of course. Also we have a lot of Russians in Estonia, who have been there for so long but who still think of themselves as Russians. They want Estonia to belong to Russia. It is a very thin line where we are walking right now. There was this case, one Estonian, a political person, was walking on the border, but the border is not defined, it is not a clear border between the countries. He was captured by the Russians and kept in Russia for two years as a political prisoner. Only last year he was traded for another Russian who Estonia kept. It is still politically very critical and I think having the EU and NATO behind us is a little bit comforting.

14:58 I: Because you mentioned there is a difference between how the EU talks and how it acts?

15:01 R8: I think they cannot go in detail as well so I do not blame them. But Estonia goes much more in detail about how it actually is. But Estonia does also not talk so much about what is going on in here. About UK and the EU, Greece or Italy and the refugees they have. Because we do not actually take in so many refugees, we are very separate from that. We were agreeing on it but people do not really want to come to Estonia I think.

15:45 I: We talk about especially the relation with Russia, with the NATO and the EU. If we talk about your own opinion about the EU, we can identify, for which I make a difference between political and social organizations. I have two pictures here. The first one is of Marine le Pen, she is one of the most critical European politicians, she is France and complains a lot about the EU. She argues that all countries should be independent again, that is one side of the story. The other picture is one of briefly after WWII, when the EU started, with the French and German Prime Ministers in France, on a memorial for the fallen soldiers of WWII. Which is an example of European unification. If we talk about certain political parties, which can be from Estonia, but also European politicians or political organizations in general. Do they influence your own opinion about the EU?

17:10 R8: I think not so much, if we call media a instance than maybe. Politically no because I am politically very neutral. I like to read up and know what is going down. But I do not have that many opinions based on political party opinions. I create my own opinions based on the things I hear, but I do not change them because one political party for example changes.

17:49 I: Do you read about political news?

17:53 R8: A little bit yes, but not that much. Because I also get frustrated a bit about it. I think political news is not covered very neutral, there is always somebody's opinion behind it. Right now you always see something about Trump, which is very exhausting, sometimes I see something more interesting. With Brexit, I did follow the news, because I thought it was important. But it was not widely covered in Estonia.

18:45 I: Are there political parties in Estonia which are pro or against the EU?

18:51 R8: I think it is pro- or anti-Russia actually. There is one political party, which has been pro-Russia, they are now trying to change but they have been pro-Russia historically. When there are elections, people who vote for them are Russians, old people who are still from

Russian times. This political party has a very strong pro-Russia message and not so much than EU of course.

19:28 I: Of course you talked already about the media, if you talk about social organizations, they are more broader organizations, which you can mention. I again have an example of a very anti-EU organization, which is Pegida. Pegida was a protest organization, especially in 2015, 2016, against migrants. Especially in Germany but also in the Netherlands. (R8: The Turkish migrants?) I: No not the Turkish migrants, but more the refugees, during the migrant crisis in 2015 and 2016. There were a lot of people on the streets with the signs, especially in Germany after Merkel mentioned that they could welcome all the refugees. A grass-roots anti-EU organization. On the other side we have AEGEE, which is a student organization which have charities in a lot of European countries. They try to unify all the students by organizing exchanges etc. If you think about social organizations, you already mention the media, do they have an influence on your opinion about the EU?

20:54 R8: Yes, I think so, I think more than the political parties.

20:56 I: Especially news media than or more civil society organizations?

21:03 R8: News media is the one I have most access to of course. In a broader sense they are a lot of options, like television programs, but that is also a news media of course.

21:22 I: Which media channels do you use most often?

21:27 R8: Actually Estonian to be honest. Estonian national television website, I follow that one. And another organization, they have the watchdog reputation in Estonia, they cover it from all different aspects, they have television programs but also news sites, which cover things happening in the EU. They have a column focusing specifically on that, you can use which column you want but there is one specifically focusing on that.

22:19 I: If you read this kind of news. You already mentioned that you read the facts and you base your opinion partly on that?

22:29 R8: I have a background in media production so I kind of know how the news is generated. So I try to find the neutral media to bind my position on. If I read a one-sided article about the EU, I figure that I am sceptical because I do not see things black and white. I do not change my opinion every day. I use it more to understand and know what is going on but not too much to think too much about it.

23:17 I: So your own background in your studies is quite important?

23:25 R8: Yes, I think it helped me a lot how to critically review and examine news media.

23:35 I: And apart from the news media are there other civil society organizations which influence your opinion? Like the church or other organizations?

23:49 R8: I think that it very deeply rooted in Estonia, we are not a religious country, so we

do not have a huge influence from the church. It is mainly news.

24:09 I: That were the questions about other actors. If we think about for example the economic situation in the EU. There are a lot of opinions about that as well, people say that they pay a lot to the EU but they do not get much back from it. In the Netherlands they for example mention that they pay a lot but that the money goes to the South. Do you think you personally benefit from the fact that Estonia is now in the EU?

24:43 R8: Yes, I think so. The reason behind it is more difficult but Estonia does get a lot of money from the EU. We are one of those countries which gets a lot of money from the bigger countries and we have been able to develop as a country because of that. Improve our nation because.

25:19 I: The businesses were able to develop themselves as you mentioned before. Does that make you more positive?

25:38 R8: Yes, I think so.

25:39 I: Would your opinion have been more negative if Estonia would not have benefited..

25:42 R8: That is a hard question to answer because I do not know what the situation would be

25:57 I: Do you understand arguments about that the EU only benefits the rich and not the poor or that countries get divided into receiving and paying countries.

26:15 R8: But I think that it is always divided, there are always some who benefit more. But if you think about the EU, there is not a direct link to benefit, but actually all countries benefit. Because if the EU is doing good, in the long run all countries are doing good. And if one is doing bad this has to be solved because this can impact the whole EU as a union.

26:46 I: Some questions about the democratic situation in the European Union. Because you already mentioned briefly the European Parliament. Next year we are going to have elections for the EP, in 2019. Are you planning to vote?

27:04 R8: Yes, of course. I do take it very seriously, I do not yet know who I am voting for.

27:19 I: You take it seriously, why do you think it is important?

27:25 R8: Because it is my duty to be a citizen and as an Estonian. We all complain about it but if we do not vote we cannot change anything. I do not think that my vote can change a lot but at least I am doing something.

27:44 I: Do you think that everybody should vote?

27:48 R8: Yes, I think so. Well, everybody who is within the laws of course.

27:57 I: Because you think it is the duty as a citizen to be politically active. (R8: yes). You already mentioned that your own vote will not make much of a difference. If we think about the EU, do you think that it is a democratic organization?

28:17 R8: I think yes but I do not have argumentation for that. I do not know what goes on very deep inside. If you would want to you could always find counterarguments to that but not everything can happen at once. The EU is not so old or so long.

29:00 I: If for example the whole of Estonia would vote for a political party which takes education very high in its value. Do you think that the EU would think very strictly about the Estonian concerns? That your votes would be respected..

29:26 R8: Yes and no. Of course they will be respected but I do not think that it is very feasible to think that if only Estonia says that education is important that it should be a key issue. That is the democratic part about it, there are so many nations and countries in EU. So it has to be benefiting them all and it would be nice if the issues are addressed or at least mentioned. Of course an issue has different components and not everything can be done at once. But it would be nice if the issue would be taken into concern and they acknowledge that. But it would be foolish to think that now we can change everything after the elections.

30:15 I: That was just to give an example, sometimes I make some statements to understand what comes behind your opinion.... Now we are at the last few questions, we already talked about your background, about the country in which you grew up in. You mentioned, because of the situation in Estonia, you have a specific opinion about the EU, you talked about safety and guardianship of the EU against Russia. Do you think that your opinion would have been different if you had grown up in another country. Is your opinion specific for an Estonian?

31:12 R8: I think it is, I think it is strongly affected by the fact that I am Estonian and grew up in that culture. So it is hard to say that it would have been different if I had grown up in a Western European country.

31:34 I: And are there any other things, we already talked about the church, other characteristics of yourself which influence your opinion, like your education or the way you grew up?

31:59 R8: I think education would be one and also the opportunities I had during growing up. Because I spend a year in America during growing up, earlier. This actually sparked an interest in politics, because I was there during the first Obama election circle. It was very interesting to see how different things were there than they are here. I think the opportunities I had shaped by opinion. But also my family...

32:38 I: What role does your family play?

32:46 R8: They have raised me, in an Estonian culture, these things are intertwined. They

have thought me from the perspective they grew up with and they grew up in deep Russia, in Russian times and everything. They have given me the pride that I have for Estonia. That is also why I analyse from the perspective of Estonia and cannot put myself anywhere else.

33:27 I: One last thing we can talk about is our age. Especially for your generation in Estonia, there could be a difference between your generation and older generation, you already mentioned it briefly. Do you think the opinion would be different for other generations?

33:52 R8: Well I think the main difference was, when we talk about the EU for example, the older generation was against it more, more against Europe. Younger people have the opportunity and the chances we had and we have had the chance to study and travel abroad. I think that older people are more against the EU than younger people.

34:21 I: What is the reason that they are more against it?

34:26 R8: I think they see it as a way of giving up a little bit of their independence. Of course it is important for us as well to keep the independence and everything. But we see the EU as a possibility and not as a restriction of our independence. It is just the way that things change or sometimes have to change. I think that older people do not have a more difficult time but a different vision of it.

35:10 I: We are at the last question. We talk about political and social organizations, the economic situation and the democratic legitimacy of the EU and about your own background. If you take all these different elements into account. Which one or which ones do you think have the most influence?

35:37 R8: Can you specify what you mean?

35:59 I: Well if I would summarize your own opinion, it is influenced by your own background and alongside that you read a lot, you read the columns and you make sure that you read neutral media items, because you have the experience with your studies. And based on this neutral news, you sometimes differentiate your opinion....

36:25 R8: I think that is my background which is most important, like growing up in Estonia and being Estonian. I think that that really has influenced me the most.

36:45 I: The things you read are like sideline information?

36:51 R8: Yes, I am still an independent person, I am of course Estonian, I think what I read helps me understand things better. Shape my opinion.

37:07 I: So that's it for me at least, do you have any things to add or any questions?

37:19 R8: No, I think no, I think it is pretty clear.

37:24 I: Okey, than I will stop the recording.

Appendix 5: Dutch interview quotes

[Quote 1, Elske, 22] "R4: Ik denk dat ik wel eerst zou denken aan Nederlandse politieke partijen. Gewoon omdat je van een aantal partijen wel weet hoe zij daar tegenover staan, tegenover uitbreiding van de Europese Unie. Ik denk eigenlijk dat ik weinig weet van bepaalde figuren op Europees niveau. Dat je misschien een Frans Timmermans en die Donald Tusk, dat soort figuren zou ik dan als eerste aan denken en niet echt historische figuren ofzo."

[Quote 4, Elske, 22] "R4: Nouja voor bedrijven is dat natuurlijk enorm aantrekkelijk, vooral op economisch vlak, dat het makkelijker is om van het ene land naar het andere land te gaan en ook voor bijvoorbeeld importheffingen. Dat is ongetwijfeld voor bedrijven een stuk makkelijker."

[Quote 5, Freek, 24] "R2: Ik denk dat de commissie en het EP in meerdere mate positief hier tegenover staan. De media niet sowieso. En de raad, de nationale parlementen en de burgers zijn heel divers denk ik maar die neigen iets meer naar negatief."

[Quote 9, Sophie, 25] "R7: Ja, ik ben gewoon niet zo politiek gericht, ik vind politiek meer een spelletje en ik vind sociale organisaties, dat vind ik persoonlijker. Dat doen mensen echt voor zichzelf. Dan wil ik niet zeggen dat politieke personen daar niet voor zichzelf staan, en niet in hun recht staan. Maar het is gewoon een politiek spelletje, ik ben daar iets minder geïnteresseerd in."

[Quote 11, Sander, 23] "Pegida zit niet in heel Europa, vooral Duitsland en Nederland volgens mij. Ik denk ook die politieke partijen die tegen de EU aan schoppen, en dan helemaal de extreem-rechts, semi-nationalistische partijen dat die dusdanig extreem zijn dat mensen ook inzien van, misschien moet er iets verbeteren aan de EU, maar zo extreem wil je eigenlijk nooit meer want dan merk je waar toe dat zou kunnen laten. Dus ook in die mate krijg ik een meer positief idee van de Europese Unie. Van als wij samen zijn, kunnen wij ook tegen dat soort gekkies, kan je daar ook sterker in zijn."

[Quote 13, Mathijs, 22] "Ik haal mijn meningen uit verschillende bronnen en wat jij dagelijks hoort, in het nieuws, dan weer iets anders, daarop baseer ik mijn mening. Ik neig niet naar een partij of een persoon"

[Quote 20, Pien, 18] "Ik denk hoe meer kennis ik vergaar via mijn studie dat dat alleen mijn mening zou vervormen dan perse iets wat ik zie op televisie van bepaalde groepen. Aangezien dat academisch is en ik daar beter mijn mening op kan vormen voor mijzelf dan op wat andere mensen roepen."

[Quote 21, Mathijs, 22] "R13: Bij mij merk ik dat mijn ouders wel veel invloed hebben gehad. Op een latere leeftijd dat ik dan ook de mening van kennissen en vrienden mee neem. Dat je dan ook echt zelf een mening gaat vormen."

[Quote 22, Sander, 23] "In principe van VWO ga je door, nou dan ga je studeren, en in

principe ga je dan in grote mate met alleen maar studenten om. Dan ga je naar Amsterdam, de meesten wonen daar, ga je ook bij een studentenvereniging. En omdat dat dan allemaal kan, je wordt niet tegengewerkt, tegen hele zware drempels aanloopt, alles kan dat dat heel erg bijdraagt aan een positief beeld."

[Quote 24, Marloes, 22] "R3: Misschien niet direct, maar ik denk dat vooral media wel invloed kunnen hebben, als zij bijvoorbeeld positieve of negatieve dingen tonen. Maar ik denk wel misschien indirect."

[Quote 25, Freek, 23] "Nou, Pegida wel, dat is een organisatie waarmee ik mij niet identificeer, waar ik mij zelfs sterk van af zet maar ja dat wordt wederom vanuit een bepaald frame, dat zie ik ook weer vanuit een bepaald frame van mijzelf. Dus die acties analyseer ik ook vanuit dat idee. Dus ik ben al, ik voel mijzelf al op een bepaalde manier pro-Europees dus als ik dan zoiets als Pegida of de PVV ofzo zie, dan is dat al bij voorbaat dat ik daar al een bepaald beeld van heb."