



Is Right the New Left?

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Description

The Eurozone crisis has pushed reform of the European Union (EU) to the forefront of political debate. How can a Union of 28 states with a population of over half a billion be reformed to weather future economic crises and political challenges? Finding an answer to this question is extremely difficult not only because current reform proposals are so varied, but even more so because we lack insights into the preferences for reform amongst national elites and publics. Although EU support has interested scholars for over three decades now, we virtually know nothing about public support for EU reform. Current research focuses almost exclusively on the causes of support for the current project and fails to provide a sufficient basis for effective reform decisions. Surely, the feasibility and sustainability of EU reform crucially hinges on the support amongst national publics. eupinions examines public support for EU reform by developing a theoretical model and employing cutting-edge data collection techniques. Our findings will aid policy makers to craft EU reform proposals that can secure widespread public support.

Executive Summary

France is the homeland of the political labels left and right. Ever since the French revolution, it is the guiding principle through which political systems around the world are organised. However, with the mobilization of cross-cutting issues like immigration and European integration and the success of populist parties on the left and right of the political spectrum in recent elections across Europe, the utility of the labels themselves have come under attack. The evidence cited to suggest that the labels left or right might no longer be useful relate to the working class roots of supporters of populist right parties or the liberal free market ideals of supporters of the Centre left and Green parties.

This *eupinions* report takes a closer look at those who identify themselves as left or right. We examine how the attitudes towards national politics, european politics and international politics differ between those who see themselves as left or right wing. We do so for the European Union as a whole and for France in particular.

The main results can be summarized as follows:

French voters are more polarized than their fellow Europeans. Among French respondents we find that only 36 per cent classifies themselves as centrist (21 per cent self-identify as centre-left and 15 per cent as centre-right). What is more, the share of those who see themselves as extreme, either left or right, is with 20 per cent almost three times higher among French respondents compared to respondents in the EU as a whole. Interestingly, while we find twice the amount of respondents describing themselves as extreme left in France compared to the EU, we find almost four times as many respondents who view themselves as extreme right in France.

These left and right self identifications matter. If we were to summarize this report's findings in one sentence, it could read: Right wing voters are more negative and distrustful of politics compared to left wing voters, regardless of whether it relates to politics at the national, European or international level. This pattern holds true for the EU as a whole, but is particularly pronounced in France.

In France, respondents on the right are least positive about their personal economic situation, the direction of their country and their personal outlook on the future. Only 30 percent of them say that their personal economic situation has improved over the past two years (41 per cent in the EU). Only 4 per cent say that they approve of their country's direction (22 per cent in the EU). And only 33 per cent are positive about their personal future (42 per cent in the EU). Right wing voters also have less trust in what we could call classic representatives of the establishment, with an all time low level of trust when it comes to politicians and journalists.

A similar pattern emerges when we ask them about European politics. Only 37 per cent of respondents in France who identify as right wing wish to remain in the EU (47 per cent in the EU), versus 65 per cent or even 81 per cent of the left and centre-left and 70 per cent of the centre-right respondents do. When it comes to the Euro, only 42 per cent of those on the right in France (41 per cent in the Eurozone) would like to keep it (contrary to two-thirds of centre-right, centre-left and left respondents). Also, the majority of right wing respondents in France wish to see less integration (53 per cent), while the majority of left, centre-left and centre-right respondents wish to see more.

When asked about what they believe will be the biggest challenges for the EU in the near future, 90 per cent of people who self-identify as right wing in France (79 per cent in the EU) view the development of a common European defence policy as crucially important, followed by a common migration policy (83 per cent in France, 78 per cent in the EU). Interestingly, for left wing and centrist respondents defence and migration are also most important, but to a lesser extent than for right wing respondents.

When it comes to the international level, French respondents identify terrorism and climate change as the most important global challenges regardless of their ideological leanings. Right wing voters prioritise terrorism though (95 per cent), whereas left wing voters put climate change first (80 per cent). Overall, the climate change and terrorism percentages are higher in France compared to similar ideological groups in the EU as a whole. At the same time, the danger of a rising authoritarianism seems to be imminent only to a few Europeans, French or not, right wing or left wing.

When it comes to the EU's role in the world, a majority of respondents in France and the EU as a whole, no matter their personal ideological leanings, wish to see the EU play a more active role on the world stage. That said, respondents on the right, especially in France, are slightly torn here. While 54 per cent of right wing respondents in France would like to see a more active EU in global affairs, 46 per cent would oppose it.

Finally, when it comes to political leaders, French voters in general approve of Angela Merkel and disapprove of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin. When delving into the numbers, interesting differences emerge however. Right wing voters in France mostly approve of the German chancellor (52 per cent), but less than other French voters. Also, they disapprove of the American and Russian President much less strongly than their fellow French-men and -women of a different ideological leaning (37 per cent and 41 per cent approval rate). This is even more true in the EU as a whole. Amongst Europeans who identify themselves as right wing, Merkel, Trump and Putin enjoy the same approval rating (43 per cent, 44 per cent and 42 per cent).

Introduction

The two-round system used in the French presidential election often forces voters in the second round to vote with their ‘head’ instead of their ‘heart’. While in the first round voters can cast a ballot for the candidate they sincerely prefer (‘voting with their heart’), in the second round they need to take the strategic considerations of their choice into account (‘voting with their head’). We witnessed this type of trade-off in the 2002 presidential election for example, where left wing voters in France faced two right wing presidential candidates in the second round, the right wing candidate Jacques Chirac and the far right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen. Many left wing voters may not have wanted to vote at all, as they disagreed with the stances of both candidates, but for many the prospect of a far right president was so grim that they backed a right wing candidate that they did not like, Jacques Chirac. Fast-forward to the French election of 2017, and the eyes are again on far left and left voters. Who will they vote for, and will they turn up at the polls? The same might be asked for centre-right voters.

The origin of the labels ‘left’ and ‘right’ also lies in France. The terms referred to the seating arrangement in the French Assembly during the French Revolution. The supporters of the *Ancien Régime* were seated on the right and revolutionaries on the left. Ever since this time the terms left and right have signified distinct historical traditions and lifestyles, pitting a more progressive and redistributive view of the role of the state (left) against a more conservative and market oriented state outlook (right). Yet, with the mobilization of cross-cutting issues like immigration and European integration and the success of populist parties that span the left-right spectrum in recent elections across Europe, the utility of the labels left and right has come under attack (De Vries et al. 2013 for example).

Ever since the era of the so-called Third Way when politicians declared themselves to be ‘beyond left and right’ (Giddens 1994), experts have suggested that left and right might not be accurate descriptions of people’s world views. The evidence that is often cited to back up the claim that left and right matters less today than before relates to the working class roots of supporters of the populist right or the liberal market ideals of supporters of the Centre left or Green parties (Oesch 2008, Oesch and Rennwald 2010, Ford and Goodwin 2014). A recent study by Inglehart and Norris (2016: 30) indeed suggests that the rise in populist support in Europe and the US, exemplified by the Brexit vote and Trump victory, should be explained through the lens of cultural politics as ‘a reaction against a wide range of rapid cultural changes that seem to be eroding the basic values and customs of Western societies’. While it is clear that the cultural dimension of politics or liberal versus authoritarian worldviews are important, and might have gained in

importance recently, the question to what extent the terms left and right still provide lenses through which people view the world is a matter of debate.

The question we aim to explore here is if people who self-identify as left or right view politics differently. In this latest *eupinions* report, we present evidence based on a survey conducted in March 2017. 11,021 Europeans were interviewed in all member states of the European Union (EU). The sample we analyse is representative for the EU as a whole as well as for the six biggest member states. For clarity sake, we focus on EU data and French data.

In this survey we asked people about their views about politics at the national, EU and international level as well as asked to classify themselves as left, centre-left, centre-right or right. We do not intend and simply cannot answer the question if people's left-right views cause their national, European and international political evaluations, what we aim to do here is to examine if those who view themselves as left, centre-left, centre-right or right differ in their political views. We rely on two types of evidence based, on the one hand, on a sample capturing public opinion in the EU as a whole, and the other hand by focusing on public opinion in France. The report consists of four parts. First, we explore the share of respondents who view themselves as left and right in France and the EU as whole. Next, we examine how those who identify as left or right view national politics. Third, we examine how left and right respondents view politics in the EU, and finally how they view international political developments. This overview provides us with important insights about how voters in France might react to the policy platforms of the two presidential candidates who are still in the race, and how difficult it might be for the new French president to unite the country, while putting the French numbers in a comparative perspective.

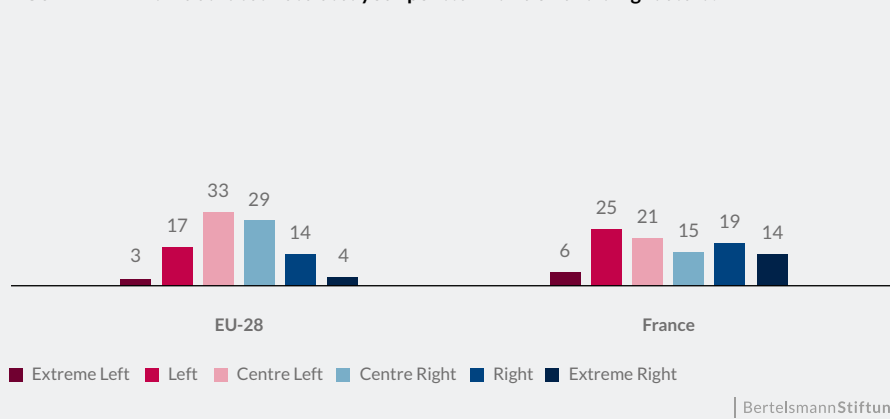
In Focus

Left-Right Views in France and the EU as a Whole

In our survey we asked people which label would best define their political views on a left-right scale: extreme left, left, centre-left, centre-right, right or extreme right. Figure 1 below shows the share of people who place themselves in one of these six categories in France and in the EU as a whole.

In the EU as a whole a majority of respondents, namely 62 per cent, describe themselves as centrist, either on the left or right, while only 7 per cent view themselves as extreme left or right. 17 and 14 per cent respectively view themselves as left or right. Interestingly, among French respondents we do not find that a majority classify themselves as centrist, only 36 per cent do (21 per cent self-identify as centre-left and 15 per cent as centre-right). What is more, the share of those classifying themselves as extreme, either left or right, is almost three times higher among French compared to EU respondents (20 per cent). Interestingly, while we find twice the amount of respondents describing themselves as extreme left (6 per cent in France versus 3 in the EU), we find almost four times as many respondents who view themselves as extreme right in France compared to the EU as a whole. This suggests that compared to patterns in the EU as a whole French respondents are more polarized in terms of their left-right positions.

FIGURE 1 Which label describes best your political views on a left-right scale?

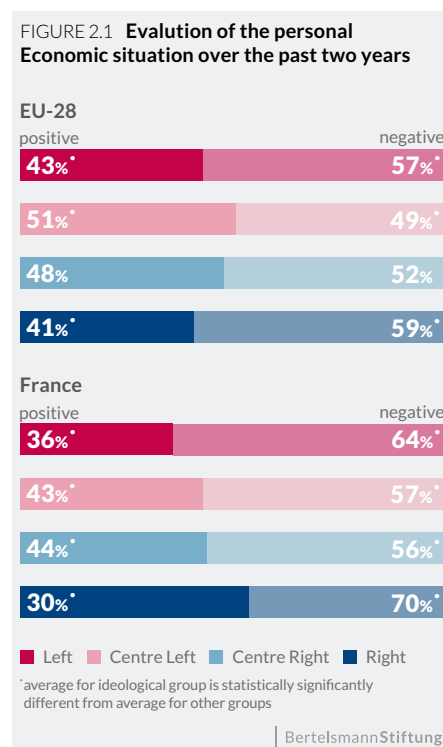


In the ensuing sections of the report, we question if these different groups of respondents also hold divergent political views. As has become clear from Figure 1, the share of respondents who view themselves as either extreme left or right is rather small, especially in the EU as a whole. In order to overcome problems associated with relying on a limited number of observations, we group respondents that view themselves as extreme left or left together as well as those that describe themselves as extreme right and right. Consequently, in the remaining analyses, we discuss four groups, those on the left, centre-left, centre-right and right. We now turn to differences in their view about national politics.

People's Views about National Politics

To what extent do people who view themselves as left, centre-left, centre-right or right hold different views about politics in their country? In order to explore this, we compare people's responses to two sets of questions, one relating to their evaluations of the national economic and political situation and another relating to trust in professional groups, such as policemen or politicians. We again present the responses of French respondents and average responses for those in the EU as a whole. Figure 2.1 presents information about people's evaluations of (1) the economic situation in their country over the past two years, (2) the current policy direction, and (3) their own personal outlook for the future. Specifically, the figure reports the share of respondents who hold positive evaluations. It also highlights if the average evaluations of each ideological group is different from all the others. If the percentage is accompanied by a * symbol this indicates that the average evaluation of the ideological group in question is statistically different from all other groups or merely based on chance

(this is based on a difference-in-means test and * indicates $p \leq 0.05$). The * symbol is used to indicate statistically significant groups throughout the remaining sections of this report.



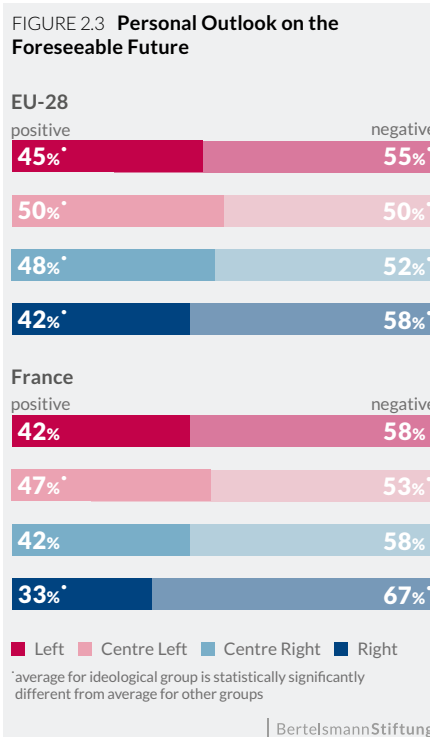
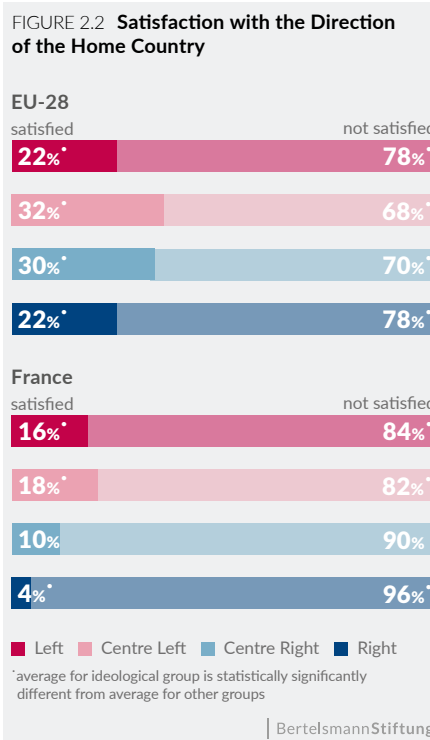
The percentages displayed in figure 2.1 suggest that ideological groups differ quite substantially when it comes to their views of the economic and political situation in their country. For example in France, we find that while respondents on the right are the least positive about the economic situation in their country over the past two years (only 30 per cent are), 43 and 44 per cent of centre-left and centre-right respondent hold positive retrospective economic evaluations. Interestingly, a comparison with patterns in the EU as a whole suggests that on average EU respondents are more positive about the economic situation over

the past years, and that right, left and centre-left respondents hold more similar evaluations about the economic situation over the past two years.

When it comes to satisfaction with the policy direction in the country, we also find that French respondents are much more negative about the policy direction compared to EU respondents (figure 2.2). Yet, dissatisfaction in France is much higher on the right compared to the left, centre-left and even the centre-right. In fact, only four per cent of those on the right are satisfied with the current policy direction in France. In the EU as a whole, we also find significant differences between the ideological groups, but dissatisfaction, although substantial, is overall slightly less pronounced and concentrated among both left and right respondents.

Finally, when it comes to people's personal outlooks about the future, the results in figure 2.3 suggest that those respondents on the right in France are much less positive about the future compared to the other groups. Only a third of right wing respondents, 33 per cent, in France is positive about their own personal outlook for the future, while almost half, 47 per cent, of centre-left respondents are positive. In the EU as a whole, right wing respondents are also least positive when it comes to their own personal future outlook whereas the centre-left is most positive. However, the difference between these two groups is only 8 per cent compared to 14 per cent in the case of French respondents.

We now turn to a set of questions about people's views about the trustworthiness of different professional groups, see figures 3.1 and 3.2. We pit people's views about the trustworthiness of politicians against those of policemen, teachers, journalists and doctors. This allows us to examine how much trust people place in their representatives vis-à-vis those who also perform important functions in public life.



We asked respondents to evaluate how trustworthy they thought each professional group is by placing them on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means least trustworthy and 10 most trustworthy. The results presented in figures 3.1 and 3.2 show that both in France and the EU and no matter the ideological leanings of respondents, politicians are perceived as the least trustworthy of all

FIGURE 3.1 How trustworthy do you think the following professional groups are in your country? EU-28

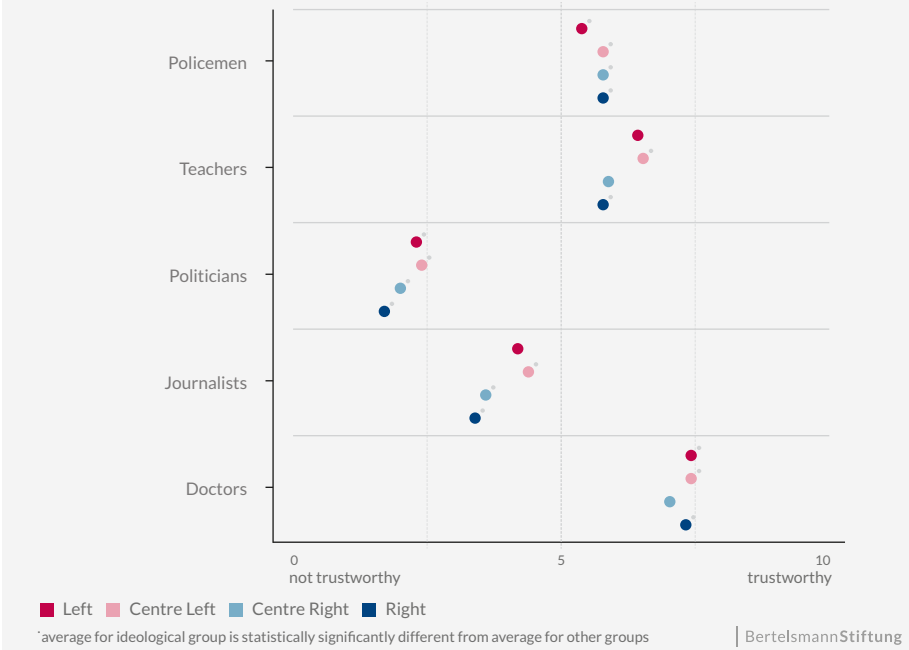
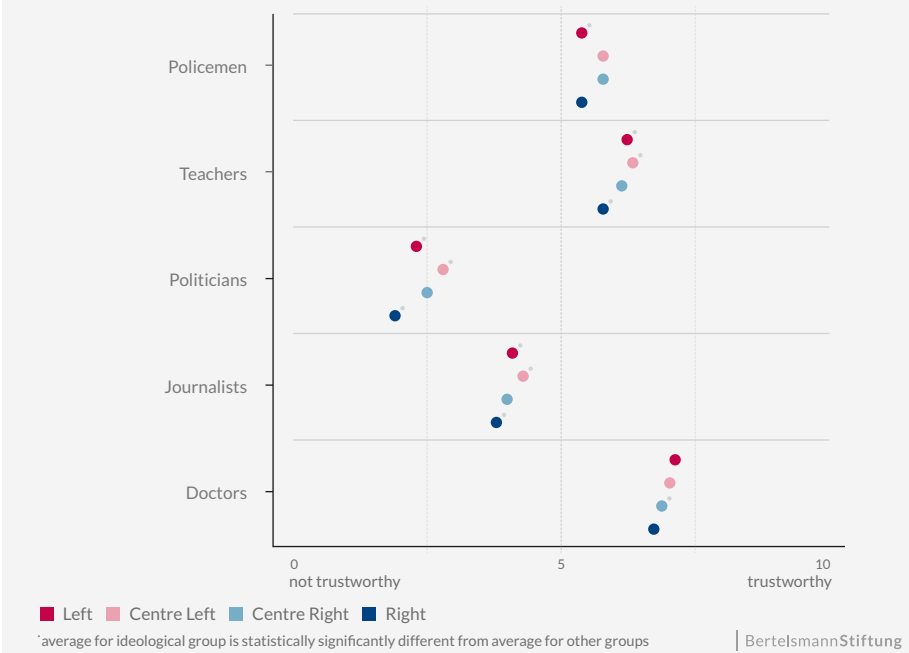


FIGURE 3.2 How trustworthy do you think the following professional groups are in your country? France

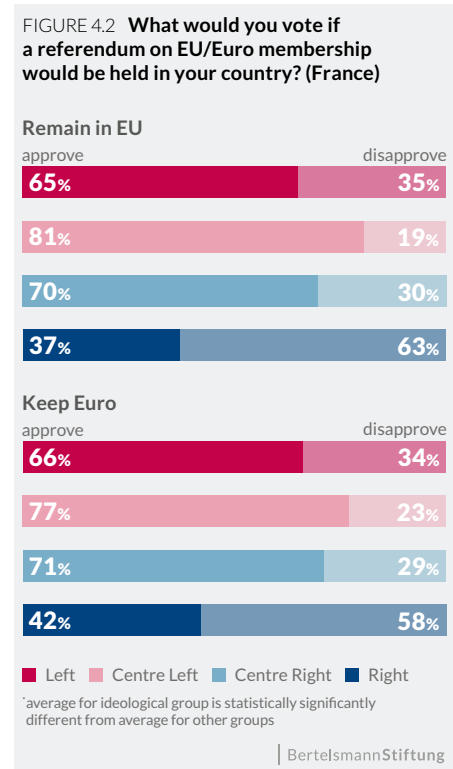
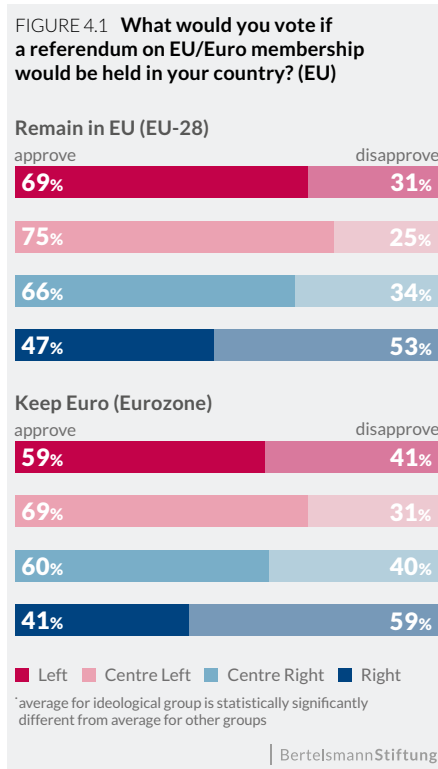


professional groups, followed by journalists. Doctors are perceived as most trustworthy. Trust in politicians and journalists is lowest among respondents who self-identify as right wing. Overall, both in France and the EU as a whole right wing respondents display lower levels of trust towards all five different professional groups. Moreover, with the exception of policemen and politicians, respondents on the left and centre-left display the highest levels of trust, both in France and the EU as a whole. In fact, trust in politicians is the highest among centre-left respondents in France. These findings suggest that politicians are not perceived as very trustworthy, although trust levels are slightly higher in France compared to the EU as a whole. What is more, both in France and in the EU as a whole, trust in all five professional groups is least pronounced among respondents who view themselves as right wing. When we view these findings together with national economic and political evaluations of people discussed earlier, we see that in France respondents on the right are also least positive about the future, past and present direction of their country. This seems to corroborate the view that Marine Le Pen is both able to gear up and use dissatisfaction with national politics in France. Interestingly, French respondents across ideological lines seem more dissatisfied with national politics than those from the EU as a whole. This dissatisfaction most likely contributed to the fact that politicians who portray themselves as somewhat of political outsiders, like Le Pen, Macron or Melenchon have been able to rally a considerable voter base.

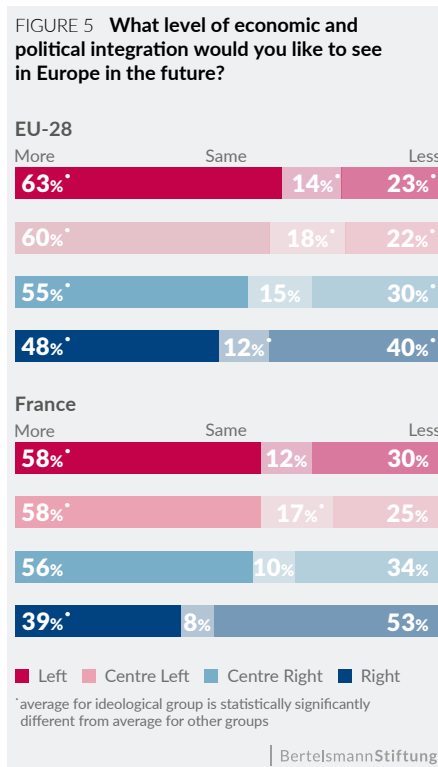
People's Views about EU Politics

How do left wing, centre-left, centre-right and right wing respondents differ in their views about the EU? As a first step in analyzing this question we explore people's vote intentions in a possible referendum about France's membership in the EU and the Eurozone. In our survey, we asked people how they would vote if a referendum on EU / Euro membership would be held in their country. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 present the share of respondents who stated that they would either vote to remain in the EU or to keep the Euro by different ideological groups. We present this information for respondents in France and in the Eurozone as a whole.

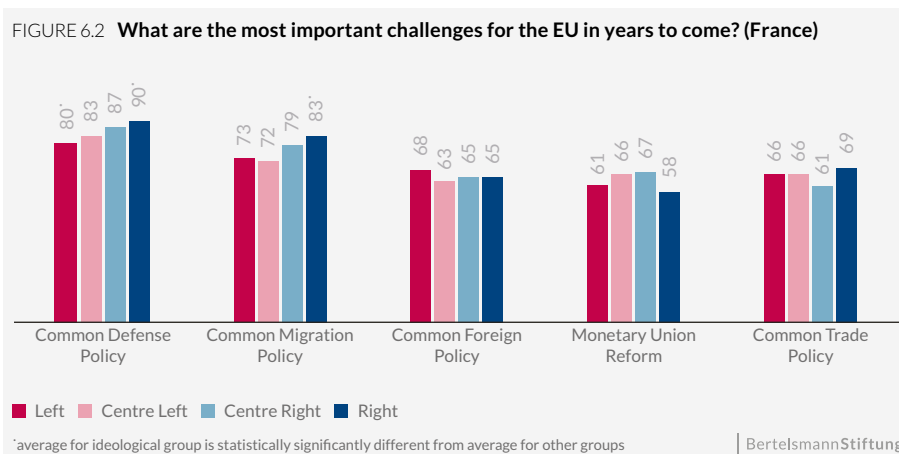
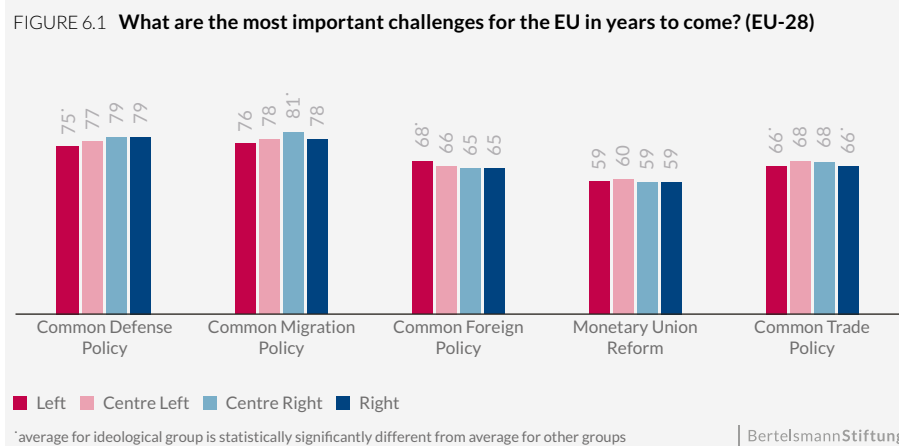
The results in figure 4.2 show that while only 37 per cent of respondents who identify as right wish to remain in the EU, 65 per cent or even 70 per cent of left versus centre-right respondents do. The support for EU membership is the highest among centre-left respondents. We see similar patterns of EU membership support in the Eurozone, where support is clearly lowest with 47 per cent among right wing respondents. While in the Eurozone support for the Euro is slightly lower among ideological groups compared to support for membership, this is not really the case in France. Except for right wing respondents of whom only 41 per cent would support remaining in the Euro, well over two-thirds centre-right, centre-left and left respondents wish to keep the Euro. These findings suggest that hard anti-EU line of the Front National and its enthusiasm for Brexit might not be shared by the majority of French voters. Euroscepticism seems most pronounced among the right.



This interpretation is supported when we inspect people’s views about future political and economic integration in Europe. Figure 5 shows the percentage of people who wish to see more, the same, or less integration in the future. While the majority of right wing respondents in France wish to see less integration, the majority of left, centre-left and centre-right respondents wish to see more. Interestingly, in the EU as a whole we see that 48 per cent of right wing respondents wish to see more integration, while 55, 60 and 63 per cent of centre-right, centre-left and left wing respondents do.



Finally, we explore what people think the most important challenges for the EU will be in years to come. Figures 6.1 and 6.2 below provide information about the percentage of people who think a common defence, migration, foreign, trade policy or the reform of the monetary Union will be the main challenges for the EU. All policy challenges are rated as important by both French and EU respondents, but defence policy seems especially



important for French respondents. We also find important differences based on people's ideological leanings. 90 per cent of people who self-identify as right wing in France view the development of a common European defence policy as a crucially important challenge for the EU followed by the formulation of a common migration policy. Interestingly, for left wing and centrist respondents defence and migration are also most important, but to a lesser extent than for right wing respondents. For centrist respondents, the reform of the European Monetary Union is rated as the third most important challenge for the EU, though it is the least important of all policy areas for the left and right in France. For French respondents on the right, the development of a common trade policy is seen as the third most important challenge for the EU. Yet, we only really find significant ideological differences in France when it comes to the priority of migration and defence policy for respondents who classify themselves as right wing.

Interestingly, for EU respondents we only find significant differences in people's views about the biggest policy challenges for the EU among the left when it comes to foreign and defence policy and for the left and right for trade policy. Within the EU as a whole the left views defence and trade as less important compared to the other groups and foreign policy more.

Overall, our inspection of people’s views about European politics underscores a pattern for France that we found for national evaluations as well, namely people on the right especially are dissatisfied and worried. This is also the case for EU evaluations of people on the right in the rest of Europe, but the differences are less pronounced compared to France. Interestingly, centre-right, centre-left and left respondents in France are quite positively predisposed towards the EU. This discrepancy between the right and the rest of French respondents perhaps suggests that the harsh anti-EU rhetoric employed by the Front National in the past might reap limited electoral gains. Rather Macron’s more positive EU message might more likely strike a cord with the majority of voters.

People’s Views about International Politics

In a final step, we examine people’s views about international politics and examine possible differences between those who view themselves as left wing, centre-left, centre-right and right wing. First, we explore what people think the biggest global challenges are today, see figures 7.1 and 7.2. Here we find considerable ideological differences in the EU as whole, while these are slightly less pronounced in France. Among French respondents terrorism and climate change are perceived as the most important challenges, almost by all respondents regardless of their ideological leanings. We do find differences between the left and right. While left wing respondents view climate change as the most important challenge (80 per cent do), right wing respondents think terrorism is (95 per cent). Yet, overall the climate change and terrorism percentages are higher in France compared to similar ideological groups in the EU as a whole. Two other differences between left wing and right wing respondents in France stand out, namely (1) while right wing respondents think authoritarianism is not at all an important challenge (16 per cent), many more left wing respondents do (38 per cent); (2) while mass migration is viewed as a big global challenge by 73 per cent of right wing respondents in France, only 42 per cent of left wing respondents think it is key.

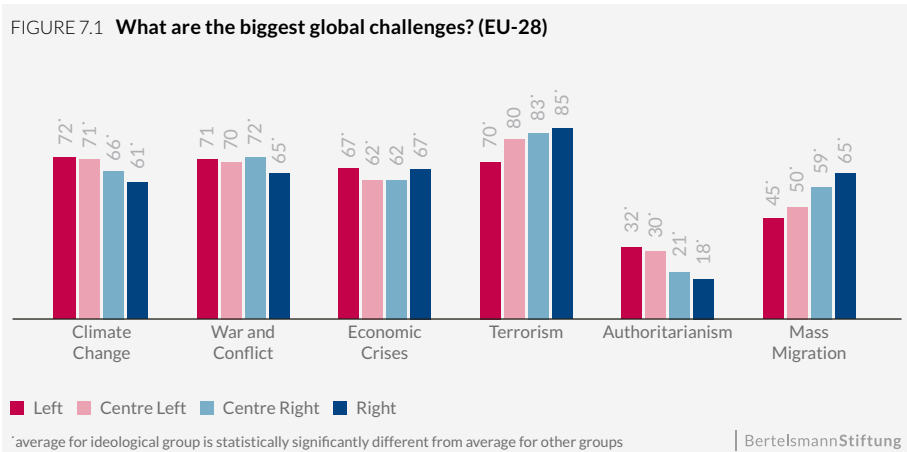
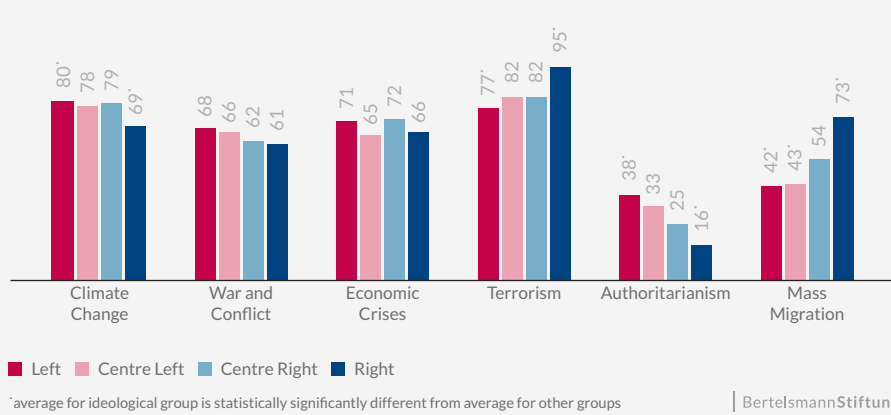


FIGURE 7.2 What are the biggest global challenges? (France)

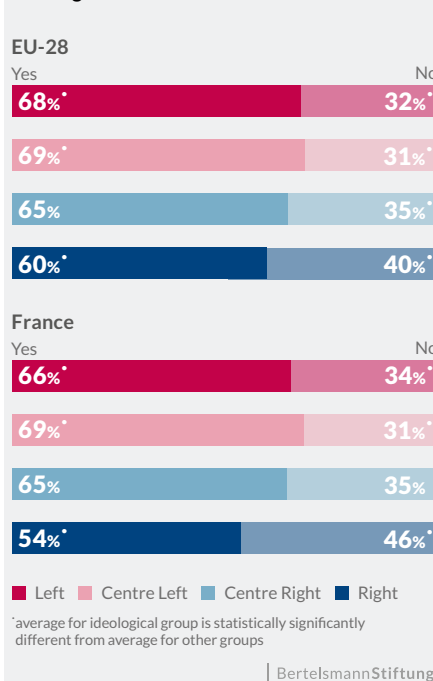


For respondents in the EU as a whole, terrorism and war and conflict are viewed as the major global challenges, followed by climate change for left or centre-left respondents and economic crises and mass migration for the right and centre-right.

In a next step, we explore how people think these challenges should be tackled. Figure 8 provides an overview of people's views about the role that the EU should play. It displays the shares of respondents who think the EU should play a more active role in global affairs compared to those who think that it should not by their self-identification from left to right. We again provide evidence from France and the EU as a whole.

The results presented in figure 8 suggest that a majority of respondents in France and the EU as a whole, no matter their personal ideological leanings, wish to see the EU play a more active role on the world stage. That said, respondents on the right, especially in France, are slightly torn. While 54 per cent of right wing respondents in France would like to see a more active EU in global affairs, 46 per cent would oppose it. In the EU as a whole we also see that support for the EU playing a more active role on the world stage is lowest among right wing respondents with 60 per cent supporting it, while over 65 per cent of centre-right, centre-left and left respondents do.

FIGURE 8 Should the EU play a more active role in global affairs?



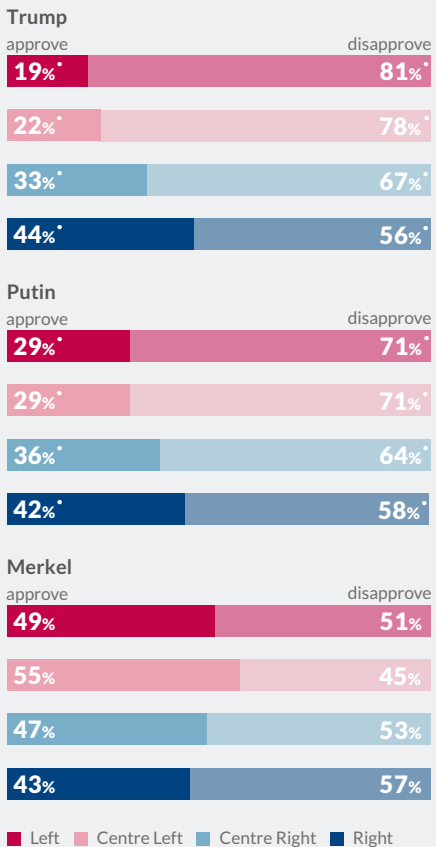
How do people view leaders on the world stage? Do they approve of the leadership of President Trump, President Putin and Chancellor Merkel? Figures 9.1 and 9.2 display the share of respondents who approve of President Trump and Putin as well as Chancellor Merkel split by ideological leanings. It presents this

information for French and EU respondents. Interestingly, while French respondents from different left-right ideological camps differ very little in their approval of German Chancellor Merkel, on average over 50 per cent approves of her, respondents on the left and right differ very much in terms of their views about Presidents Putin and Trump. While only 13 and 23 per cent of left wing respondents approve of Trump and Putin respectively, 37 versus 41 per cent of right wing respondents approve of Trump or Putin respectively. Overall, the right and centre-right approve of Trump and Putin more, although only the difference for the right are statistically significant from other groups.

When we compare the French results to those of the EU as whole, we see that while the approval of Chancellor Merkel is lower in the EU, the approval ratings of Trump and Putin are slightly higher. One of the most striking results is the fact that right wing respondents in the EU as a whole approve of Trump and Putin as much as they approve of Merkel, namely just over 40 per cent of them approve of their leadership. Overall, in the EU as a whole, like in France, approval ratings of Trump and Putin are higher among the right compared to the left.

Interestingly, these results suggest that while in France the right is least satisfied when it comes to the state of politics in the EU and at home, they are somewhat more positive about the leadership of Trump and Putin compared to the left, although they on average still disapprove of both leaders. The right seems most concerned about terrorism and mass migration in the future. Overall, French supporters are quite concerned about terrorism, more so than EU respondents. This surely can be seen as a reaction to the recent string of terrorist attacks in France. Finally, both in France and the EU, right wing respondents are more torn when it comes to questions of a more active role for the EU in global affairs, but more positive about the possible leadership of Trump and Putin although they on average still disapprove of both.

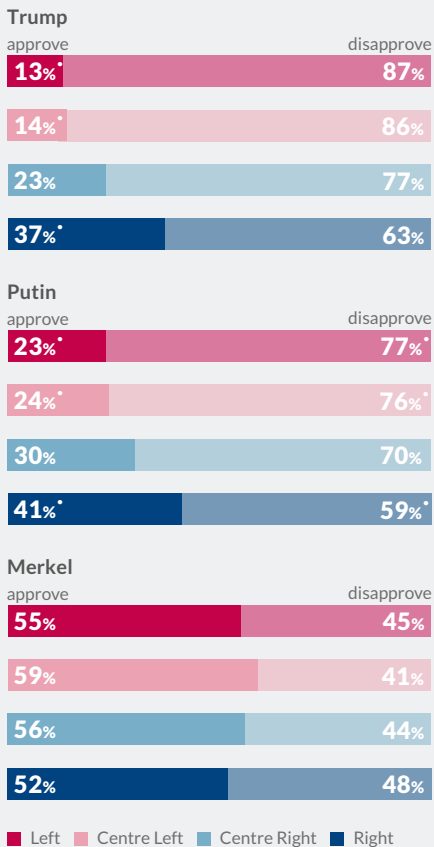
FIGURE 9.1 Do you approve of the following political leaders? (EU-28)



*average for ideological group is statistically significantly different from average for other groups

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FIGURE 9.2 Do you approve of the following political leaders? (France)



*average for ideological group is statistically significantly different from average for other groups

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Concluding Remarks

From the French Revolution on, we use the terms right and left to signify conservative and progressive forces in every political system. Proceeding from the industrial revolution, we have become to believe that conservative rhymes with free market policies and progressive rhymes with interventionist policies. Over centuries being right-wing meant to defend traditional values with a clear sense of hierarchies within society while believing in free market forces economically. Being left wing meant to fight for equal rights and to challenge a vision of society in which everybody is best served by remaining in the social niche provided for them by birth. Social protest and laws were to bring about that change, the state had to play a central role in granting social justice. Right wingers were seen as socially rigid and economically flexible, whereas left wingers were socially flexible and economically rigid. The former defended the status quo, the later challenged the status quo.

Do these models still hold? Ever since the era of Tony Blair and the so-called Third Way, politicians declared themselves to be 'beyond left and right'. Moreover, experts have suggested that left and right might not be accurate descriptions of people's world views any longer. This is reflected in the increasingly working class roots of supporters of the populist right or the liberal free market ideals of supporters of the Centre left or Green parties.

Nevertheless, left-right are still important categories, not only but also because people keep using the terms to situate themselves in the political sphere and thus create their political persona. Left-right categories are still alive, but it is less clear what they capture exactly.

Given our findings and in keeping with the idea that being right wing is associated with defending the status quo, there is a case to made that the right today is the new left. Supporters and politicians of the right today contest the status quo, while those who declare themselves left-wing or center-left defend it. Those who disagree with the status quo and want political change in their home countries and in the EU are those who label themselves as right wing. Those on the right are negative about the state of affairs especially in their home countries, they feel that the system is failing them and they distrust those who represent that system. When it comes to political leaders, they do not mind authoritarian ones. The approval ratings of Trump, Putin and Merkel are telling in this respect: those who call themselves right wing in the EU as a whole approve of Trump and Putin about as much as they approve of Merkel.

Does being right wing signify being more pessimistic about economy and more skeptical of politics? As well as being concerned about migration and security,

but not so much about authoritarianism? This seems to be true for the EU as a whole but even more so for France. It suggests that the labels left and right today pick up people's satisfaction with the status quo of a society open to the world versus not. This fits work by De Vries and colleagues (2013) on the Netherlands that suggests that as extreme right political entrepreneurs like Le Pen in France get a foothold, they redefine partly what it means to be right.

So where do we put a radical left wing candidate like Jean-Luc Mélenchon? In order to draw a clear line between him and the candidate of the radical right wing party Front National, it is not enough to point out his economic rhetoric about ending austerity and the problems of free trade. The only real change Marine Le Pen brought to the party when she took over from her father was to move it economically to the left. Nowadays she talks as much about austerity and free trade as Mélenchon does. Equally, Mélenchon like Le Pen is sceptical of the EU. Here Le Pen seems to be more closely aligned with her base.

When it comes to the EU and its politics, those who declare themselves right wing clearly display different views than the rest of the electorate. They dislike their country's membership in the EU, they would give up the Euro if they were asked about it and they do oppose more political and economic integration. Considering that the part of the French electorate that espouses these views is about 33 per cent of the general population, there seems to be a curious mismatch between the amount of candidates to the French presidency that chose to position themselves as Eurosceptic and the size of the pool of voters that is truly receptive to their messages. If the future of the EU were one of the campaign issues voters cared most about and that could ultimately win an election, it would be a strange strategic choice to take such a clear anti-EU stance knowing that two thirds of the electorate does not share this opposition.

Why would many French presidential candidates choose to put such an emphasis on the issue with which they differ from many voters? The only reason that comes to mind is that it is an easy way to create an anti-establishment image for the candidate. In this French election cycle, it has become an indispensable accessory to any serious candidate to build themselves an outsider reputation. It is the it-bag of the 2017 campaign so to speak. The elitist image of EU politics makes opposition to it, an anti-establishment tactic *par excellence*.

This French presidential campaign does follow a larger trend. Scoring quick points by being critical of the EU has been high on the agenda of many candidates in recent elections all over the Union. A strategic choice that turned out to be both easy as well as risky. In the presidential race in Austria for example, the

right wing candidate Norbert Hofer was leading the race until he announced to hold a referendum on Austria's membership in the EU. He ended up losing the election at least in part because he took his Euroscepticism too far. Being critical with the state of affairs of European politics resonates with many citizens, but leaving the EU like the British is taking things too far. People are wary of EU policy making, but to confuse this with a general rejection of the European project as a whole is foolishness. (eupinions 2017/01 Supportive but wary. How do Europeans feel about the EU 60 years after the treaty of Rome?) Even extreme candidates like Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Marine Le Pen seem to know this. Jean-Luc Mélenchon does not say "We're leaving." He says: "We're going out if we don't get what we want (from the Germans.)" Marine Le Pen perhaps has a harder time to camouflage her end-game, the Merkel bashing seems to serve a similar purpose. Our findings show that most French voter rather approve of the German chancellor. To attack her generates media attention and makes those who lead the attack look like a David going for Goliath.

What respondents in France from different ideological leanings have in common is deep dissatisfaction with the political and economic situation in the country. Dissatisfied with the past, they look to political outsiders who promise to do things differently. Yet, addressing this deep public discontent will be quite a tall order for the next French president, no matter who he or she will be.

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Method

— This report presents an overview of a study conducted by Dalia Research
T in March 2017 on public opinion across 28 EU Member States. The
— sample of n=11.021 was drawn across all 28 EU Member States, taking
into account current population distributions with regard to age (14-65 years), gender and region/country. In order to obtain census representative results, the data were weighted based upon the most recent Eurostat statistics. The target weighting variables were age, gender, level of education (as defined by ISCED (2011) levels 0-2, 3-4, and 5-8), and degree of urbanization (rural and urban). An iterative algorithm was used to identify the optimal combination of weighting variables based on sample composition within each country. An estimation of the overall design effect based on the distribution of weights was calculated at 1.46 at the global level. Calculated for a sample of this size and considering the design-effect, the margin of error would be +/-1.1 % at a confidence level of 95 %.

Data Appendix

How much do you think the people in your country trust the following professional groups? Rank from 0 (little trust) to 10 (a lot of trust).

France

	Policemen	Teachers	Politicians	Journalists	Doctors
Left	5.4*	6.2*	2.3*	4.1*	7.1
Centre-Left	5.8	6.3*	2.8*	4.3*	7.0
Centre-Right	5.8	6.1	2.5	4.0	6.9*
Right	5.4	5.8*	1.9*	3.8*	6.7

EU-28

	Policemen	Teachers	Politicians	Journalists	Doctors
Left	5.4*	6.4	2.3*	4.2	7.4*
Centre-Left	5.8*	6.5*	2.4*	4.4*	7.4*
Centre-Right	5.8*	5.9	2.0*	3.6*	7.0
Right	5.8*	5.8*	1.7*	3.4*	7.3*

If the percentage is accompanied by a * symbol this indicates that the average evaluation of the ideological group in question is statistically different from all other groups or merely based on chance (this is based on a difference-in-means test and * indicates $p \leq 0.05$). The * symbol is used to indicate statistically significant groups throughout the remaining sections of this report.

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