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REVIEW

REVISED Populism, euroscepticism, and the populism-euroscepticism nexus: a conceptual framework for analysis

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Abstract

Populism and Euroscepticism have emerged as two of the most salient and contested phenomena in contemporary European politics. This review article develops a conceptual framework for analysing the populism–Euroscepticism nexus within CA23102 'Linking euroscepticism and populism: causes and consequences' (EUPopLink). The article reviews existing literature on populism and Euroscepticism, and discusses the link between the two concepts. It distinguishes three main forms of populism (right-ring populism, left-wing populism, and valence populism) and identifies variations in Euroscepticism based on the object of opposition, the intensity and consistency of opposition and the nature of opposition. It then theoretically explores the nexus between the two concepts. The article concludes by presenting the data collection strategy for the country reports produced by EUPopLink's Working Group 1. The link between populism and Euroscepticism requires further exploration. The article provides the solid theoretical foundation for such an analysis.

Keywords

Populism, euroscepticism, conceptual framework, left-wing populism, right-wing populism, opposition to European Union, European Union

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REVISED **Amendments from Version 1**

This revised version incorporates a number of changes aimed at strengthening the article's conceptual clarity, empirical scope, and engagement with recent scholarship. First, we have refined the discussion of the ideational and discursive approaches to populism, clarifying their points of convergence and divergence. We have also expanded the discussion of debates surrounding the measurement of populist attitudes and included recent critical perspectives on the concept.

Second, we further develop the analysis of the populism–Euroscepticism nexus by clarifying how different forms of populism, including valence populism, relate to critiques of the European Union. We also broaden the discussion of the relationship between Europe, the European Union, and populism, and expand our treatment of the contingent and evolving nature of Euroscepticism.

Third, in response to reviewer feedback, we have incorporated additional illustrative examples from Central and Eastern Europe, the Nordic region, and candidate countries, thereby better reflecting the geographical scope of the EUPopLink project. We also added references to relevant cases and recent literature throughout the manuscript.

Finally, we have revised several passages to improve conceptual precision, terminological consistency, and overall readability.

Any further responses from the reviewers can be found at the end of the article

I. Introduction: Linking populism and euroscepticism

Populism and Euroscepticism are among the salient political phenomena of our time. The COST Action project 'Linking euroscepticism and populism: causes and consequences' (EUPopLink) is designed to interrogate in detail the link between the two concepts. Its main objective is to 'analyse the interplay between Euroscepticism and populism, to identify its causes and consequences and how the negative consequences can be mitigated, using and combining existing datasets and exploring both the supply and the demand side of electoral competition' (for more information on the project, see Andreadis and Vasilopoulou, 2026).

Solid research requires the establishment of strong conceptual foundations, a task assigned to Working Group 1 (WG1): Conceptual Framework for Populism and Euroscepticism. As part of this Working Group, we developed a conceptual framework defining EUPopLink's key terms, which is presented in this article. Key definitions of populism and Euroscepticism can be applied to parties and politicians on the political 'supply side', as well as citizens and voters on the 'demand side'. Given that another key aim of WG1 was to map the 'populism-euroscepticism' nexus across European party systems, this article - that also serves as the foundation for the ORE EUPopLink collection of country reports - will mainly focus on the 'supply side'. To meet the goals of this working group we coordinated the collection of country reports on populism and Euroscepticism in 40 European countries. This document presents the project's key definitions, the theorised connections between populism and Euroscepticism, as well as WG1's data collection strategy and analytical guidelines for the empirical country reports.

II. EUPopLink's key concepts

EUPopLink explores the connection between two core concepts: the concept of populism, and that of Euroscepticism. Both are contested, requiring the adoption of transparent and shared definitions.

Populism

The use of the term populism remains haphazard in everyday language, but also in academic publications. One key problem remains the conflation of the term with adjacent concepts such as nativism (a xenophobic form of nationalism) or authoritarianism (De Cleen et al., 2018; Rooduijn, 2019). The academic debate on the concept is nevertheless well-developed and there appears to be a broad consensus that populism entails a normative distinction between the 'people' and the out-of-touch or corrupt 'elites' (Canovan, 1999; Taggart, 2000). According to the populist worldview, political elites are, at best, unresponsive to popular demands and, at worst, consciously scheming against ordinary citizens in an effort to further their own self-interest. Populism proposes that politicians should instead respect popular sovereignty, and that political decisions should be taken with the interest of 'the people' in mind.

There are still quite important distinctions between key approaches to populism (see Moffitt, 2020 for a systematic overview and comparison). The 'ideational' approach is currently dominant amongst political scientists, who note the usefulness of this approach for empirical application (see Hawkins et al. 2018). The guiding definition for this approach is Cas Mudde's (Mudde, 2004: 543), which sees populism as 'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people'. Mudde argues populism can be seen as a

'thin-centred' ideology that makes claims about the (real and desired) relationship between elites and the people, but lacks a concrete policy agenda (Freeden, 2017). Populism essentially needs 'host ideologies' to be added for it to mobilise in practice. For instance, nativism and authoritarianism combine with populism in the 'exclusionary' populist radical right (PRR) category (Mudde, 2007), while populism can merge with socialist values in more 'inclusionary' left-wing forms of populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

Many scholars focusing on this latter form of progressive and inclusionary populism – which lacks the nativist and xenophobic character of the PRR – subscribe to a different approach to populism inspired by the poststructuralist work of Ernesto Laclau (2005), that can be labelled as the 'discursive' approach (e.g., Mouffe, 2018; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014). For them, populism is essentially a logic of political mobilisation centred on a dichotomy between the people and (those in) power. Key to the populist form of mobilisation is the bringing together of a variety of societal demands and identities through the construction of a so-called 'chain of equivalence', which links together diverse constituencies that share a grievance with power holders. The idea of the chain of equivalence contrasts with the element of Mudde's (2004) definition that refers to the assumed homogeneity of both the 'elite' and 'people' categories. According to Mudde, populism is not only anti-elitist, but also anti-pluralistic: populists subscribe to the idea of a 'general will' and a 'homogeneous people', and thus deny or ignore the existence of inherent socio-economic and socio-cultural divisions within society. By contrast, the discursive approach conceives populism as a political logic through which demands are articulated within a 'heterogeneous and internally differentiated people'. From this perspective, populism does not construct 'the people' as homogeneous; rather, it temporarily unifies diverse groups and demands without erasing or undermining their particular identities (Stavrakakis, 2026: 2).

This key difference between the ideational and discursive approaches has important implications for more normative appraisals of the concept. If populism is inherently anti-pluralist, and denies societal heterogeneity, it is an illiberal force that many scholars therefore see as a threat to liberal democracy, or even democracy as such (Müller, 2016). Furthermore, if Mudde's definition is strictly followed, it is questionable whether parties with a culturally progressive profile that acknowledge cultural diversity – essentially many of the left-wing populists – can genuinely be populist in the first place. As a result, this perspective has tended to privilege the empirical analysis of the far right, where the assumption of a homogeneous and unified people appears more readily applicable, while overlooking significant examples of left-wing populism (Katsambekis, 2022; Dean and Maiguashca, 2020).[1] The idea of the 'chain of equivalence', conversely, allows for a more inclusive conception of 'the people', and scholars following the 'Laclauian' approach often consider populism to be a potential emancipatory force when it is employed by the 'left' (e.g., Mouffe, 2018; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014). In this perspective, populism functions as a means to unify and strengthen partial identities and demands that have previously been ignored by institutionalised politics. As such, it contributes to incorporating underrepresented or marginalised groups and identities into the political sphere.

Yet there are also important points of convergence between the ideational and the discursive approaches. They both start out from the idea that the two central categories to populism ('the people' and 'the elites') are, at least to some extent, undefined and open to different ideological and political articulations depending on the political context and the 'host ideology'. As far as 'the people' are concerned, the PRR refers to their ethno-cultural characteristics, while left-wing populists tend to define the category with reference to economic status (i.e. the 'people' become the underprivileged and economically marginalised, versus the privileged elite minority that holds power). The 'people' and 'elite' are thus given a meaning that is consistent with the broader political project of populist actors (De Cleen et al., 2018).

While the people vs elite dichotomy is a broadly accepted key aspect of populism, there are various other approaches that see populism as yet a different type of phenomenon, such as a 'discursive frame' (Aslanidis, 2024), a (communication) 'style' (de Vreese et al., 2018; Moffitt, 2017; Walgrave and Swert, 2004) or a 'strategy' (Weyland, 2001). Moffitt's stylistic approach and Weyland's strategic approaches focus, respectively, on the performative features of populist leadership (including 'bad manners') or the way in which a personalistic leader mobilises support. Such approaches to populism are therefore particularly (or even exclusively) suitable for analysing the political 'supply side' that covers the behavioural and organisational characteristics of politicians and political parties. Many scholars following the 'ideational approach', on the other hand, have argued that populism can also exist as an attitude held by citizens on the political 'demand side', and showed that these attitudes also matter in terms of explaining support for populist actors (Akkerman et al., 2014; Van Hauwaert and van Kessel, 2018).

[1]Notably, however, many scholars in the ideational tradition still consider socially liberal parties such as Podemos in Spain and SYRIZA in Greece as instances of 'left-wing' populism. Furthermore, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) claim it is possible to identify an 'inclusionary' form of populism based on Mudde's definition.

For EUPopLink, we need to outline the concept's key attributes in order to study it in a meaningful and systematic way. It is therefore necessary to take a position in key conceptual debates. For the purpose of this project, populism will be treated as a set of jointly necessary ideas or claims that revolve around the distinction between 'people' and 'elite'. Put simply, a phenomenon is only populist when it includes *both* elements of anti-elitism *and* an appeal to the ideal of popular sovereignty. From this it follows that not all 'anti-establishment' actors are also populist, given that not all of them present themselves as the 'voice of the people' – they may instead propose to replace the current elite with a new elite (e.g. a communist vanguard party that makes the people aware of their 'real interests').

This conceptualisation is essentially in line with the discursive and ideational approach, although it is still a matter of debate whether populism constitutes a genuine 'ideology' (thin-centred or not) or whether it is perhaps more useful to consider it as a 'discursive frame' that provides a certain interpretation of reality (Aslanidis, 2024). Given that certain political parties express populism frequently and more or less consistently (while others do not), it also makes sense to identify a group of 'populist parties' (see van Kessel, 2014). This does not preclude the possibility that populist claims can be made (whether for strategic reasons or not) by 'non-populists' as well. Populism can therefore both be used as a 'classifier' (to refer to a specific type of politicians and parties) as well as a type of discourse that can be used sporadically and temporarily. We also concur with the notion that populism can be measured at the political supply side (i.e. expressed by political actors) as well as the political demand side (i.e. as an attitude of citizens).[2]

It is also crucial to take a clear position on the question of whether populism is inherently anti-pluralistic, and therefore anti-liberal. While the easiest way to define 'the people' is arguably by pointing out who does not belong to this category, in our conception populism does not strictly need to treat 'the people' as a homogeneous entity, seeing the people's will as singular and indivisible. If this were the case, the concept becomes unsuitable for presumed (left-wing) populist actors (such as Podemos and Syriza) – and it would be questionable if populism can be 'left-wing' at all. Not all forms of populism are xenophobic, and the construction of 'the people' can, to a great extent, be inclusionary. In terms of more wide-ranging implications of populism, rather than seeing populism as a phenomenon that *either* threatens *or* revitalises democracy, we can subscribe to Margaret Canovan's (1999) analysis of populism as a phenomenon that is inherently linked to democracy, and that feeds on the tensions between the promises of democracy as an ideal and the realities of democratic government in practice (or: the 'redemptive' and 'pragmatic' faces of democracy).

More recent elaborations on populism, Europe, and the European Union (EU) have emphasised, in line with Canovan's initial proposal, that Europe possesses an inherent populist condition rooted in the predominance of a not-so-democratic liberalism (Eklundh, 2026: 2). Within much of the dominant literature, as well as in public discourse, European values are often portrayed as antithetical and external to populism. Yet what we observe instead is a constitutive relationship between an increasingly exclusionary liberalism at the EU level—for example, in the domain of migration policy—and the recurrent emergence of populism as its necessary counterpart and reverse side (Yates, 2026).

Based on the above considerations, our working definition of populism is as follows: **a political discourse or set of ideas centred on an antagonism between 'people' and 'elites' that expresses support for popular sovereignty versus unresponsive or corrupt elite rule**. In the European context, populism as expressed consistently by a certain set of political actors can furthermore be analysed using the following subcategories:

1) **The populist radical right (PRR):** Political actors that combine populism with a) nativism (the idea that members of the native group should be prioritised and that non-native elements are fundamentally threatening), and b) authoritarianism (adhering to the belief in a strictly ordered society with inherent natural inequalities) (see Mudde, 2007);

2) **Left-wing populists:** Political actors that express populism and 'reject the underlying socio-economic structure of contemporary capitalism' and 'advocate for alternative economic and power structures involving a major redistribution of resources from existing political elites' (March, 2011: 8).

3) **Valence populists:** Political actors that express populism and 'that predominantly, if not exclusively, compete by focusing on nonpositional issues such as the fight against corruption, increased transparency, democratic reform and moral integrity, while emphasizing anti-establishment motives' (Zulianello, 2020; Zulianello and Larsen, 2024).

[2]There is an ongoing debate in populism studies regarding the proper way to measure populist attitudes on the demand side, or even whether populism can be meaningfully captured at the attitudinal level at all. Critics have argued that such attempts risk reifying the phenomenon by constructing ad hoc attitudinal indicators that reflect academic assumptions rather than actually existing social processes or political dynamics (see Kim and Mondon, 2024).

In contemporary Europe, the PRR is electorally outflanking left-wing forms of populism, which previously experienced success mainly in Spain (Podemos) and Greece (SYRIZA) in the wake of the financial and economic crises of ca. 2008–2015. The PRR has witnessed a steady increase/consolidation of its support over the past decades, and a more recent expansion to countries (e.g. Germany, Sweden, Spain, Portugal) where it was previously unsuccessful. Some examples of the 'valence populism' category could be found in several Central and Eastern European countries where, around the turn of the 21st century, parties expressed dissatisfaction with the transition process from communism to liberal democracy and capitalism, and typically lamented the corruption of post-communist political elites. Early examples of 'valence populism' include Slovak party OL'aNO and Andrej Babis's ANO (at least in its early years). The Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy can also be seen as a more recent case of 'valence populism' given its key focus on the quality of government and original aim to revolutionise the political process. It is important to emphasise that valence populists obviously do adopt specific positions on concrete political issues related to the economy, migration, the environment etc.; 'however, their policy stances are primarily informed by an unadulterated conception of populism (with other ideological elements, if any, playing a marginal or secondary role), and are therefore flexible, free-floating and, often, inconsistent' (Zulianello, 2020: 332). It is possible, however, that actors transition from one to another type of populism across time; a case in point is the Hungarian Fidesz which moved to PRR territory in the past few decades.

Euroscepticism

The term Euroscepticism first came into use in the mid-1980s, when journalists and politicians started using it to refer to British Conservative MPs who were sceptical about the path of European integration (Leruth et al., 2018: 14; Spiering, 2004). Since then, the term has been appropriated by researchers in European politics, and developed into a distinct field of study analysing EU opposition to the amongst both elites and general publics.

In its first usages (and to some extent, to this day), the term Euroscepticism lacked precision, combining as it did two terms lacking specificity. The 'Euro' part, taken to refer to the EU, remained difficult to pin down because it was not clear what part of the European project one would have to object to be defined a Eurosceptic. This was compounded by the complexity of the EU itself, an unfinished organisation in constant development, with shifting geographical and political boundaries. The 'sceptic' part posed even more problems, to the extent that it seemed to potentially cover a variety of positions going from friendly constructive criticism to outright rejection of the European project as a whole. Ultimately, what made Euroscepticism difficult to pin down is the fact that it was (and still is), a negative construction. As Benjamin Leruth, Nicolas Startin and Simon Usherwood put it, Euroscepticism, 'refers to opposition to some aspect of European integration, the very vagueness of which merely makes the point that it risks being everything and nothing. The concept does not say anything about why that opposition exists, what form it should take, to what it should apply, nor to what end' (Leruth et al., 2018: 4).

To bring precision to the term, several definitions have emerged over the years. The first definition of party-based Euroscepticism was provided by Paul Taggart in 1998, when he defined it as 'the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European Integration' (Taggart, 1998: 366). In later work with Aleks Szczerbiak, they further distinguished between 'hard' and 'soft' Euroscepticism (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008a, 2008b; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002). In its final formulation, Szczerbiak and Taggart's definition considers 'hard' Euroscepticism to exist when 'there is a principled opposition to the EU and European integration and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived' (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008a: 7–8). 'Soft' Euroscepticism, instead, 'is where there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or where there is a sense that 'national interest' is currently at odds with the EU's trajectory' (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008a: 7–8).

Taggart and Szczerbiak's definition has been very influential and has the advantage of being both parsimonious and able to capture some of the variation that exists in Euroscepticism as a phenomenon. However, it remains limited concerning what is being criticized and how. This is particularly true for the category of 'soft' Euroscepticism which, while more specific than in the original formulation of 2002, remains somewhat broad (although 'hard' Euroscepticism has also come under scrutiny, e.g., Havlík and Hloušek, 2025).

With the shortcomings of the original definition in mind, others have sought to develop fine-grained categorisations of Euroscepticism that would be better able to capture the phenomenon's variation. Cas Mudde and Petr Kopecky were amongst the first to take this path and bring attention to what, exactly, it is that 'Eurosceptics' criticise. Drawing on David Easton's seminal distinction regarding the support for political regimes, their work focused on a two- dimensional conceptualization between diffuse and specific support for European integration. More specifically, they define diffuse

support as 'support for the general ideas of European integration', while specific EU support is defined as 'support for the general practice of European integration' (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002). Based on this framework of analysis, they offer a typology of party positions on Europe based on four subcategories. These are: (1) the 'Euroenthusiasts' who support the idea of European integration and are in favour of its institutionalisation; (2) the 'Eurosceptics' who combine pro-EU stances such as the support of European integration, but at the same time tend to adopt a more pessimistic view about its current form; (3) the 'Eurorejects' who are against both the idea of the EU and the process of European integration and finally, (4) the 'Europragmatists' who reject the principle of European integration, but support the EU in its current form on a more utilitarian basis (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002).

In a similar spirit, Peter Mair (2007) suggested that one should distinguish between 'policy' Euroscepticism and 'polity' Euroscepticism. 'Policy' Euroscepticism captures an expression of disagreement with particular EU policies such as the Single Market, or the Common Agricultural Policy. 'Polity' Euroscepticism refers to a more fundamental opposition to the EU as a political system and as a consequence, against EU membership as well (for an analysis see also De Vries, 2018; Verney, 2017). For her part, in work on far-right Euroscepticism, Sofia Vasilopoulou (2018) proposes to distinguish between party positions on the principle, practice and future of European integration, thus bringing a future-orientation to previous definitions. Her typology presents three main categories: rejectionist Eurosceptics, who oppose the principle of European cooperation, the practice of EU policy and any future integration project; conditional Eurosceptics, who are in favour of European cooperation, but oppose the EU's current form and are against more in-depth cooperation; and compromising Eurosceptics, who accept both the principle and current practice of the EU, but are averse to integrating further.

Other definitions focus more on how intensely the EU is being critiqued. This is the case of the definition advanced by Chris Flood and Simon Usherwood (2005), who seek to build a classification that will better capture degrees of support for, or opposition to EU integration. In their approach, they introduce six categories, with an optional seventh, to capture positions on both the EU project in general and specific aspects of it. The categories are, from least supportive to most supportive: rejectionist (outright refusal of integration and opposition to participation); revisionist (support for return to a previous phase of integration); minimalist (accepting of the status quo, but wanting to go no further in integration); neutral (no position); gradualist (accepting advances of integration, so long as they are slow and piecemeal); reformist (supporting advances in integration, subject to remedying existing shortcomings); and maximalist (pushing integration forwards towards the realization of one's preferred outcome). In a similar vein, Ray (1999) asked country experts about parties' positions on European integration as placed on a scale, how important these parties considered the issue, and the degree of internal disagreement over the issue. Later studies have built on this work—most notably the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Rooduijn and van Kessel, 2019), which provides up-to-date longitudinal data on party positions on a variety of issues, including positions on the EU.

The definitions of Euroscepticism discussed so far do not capture one last element of variation in Euroscepticism, that is, the variation in terms of the substantive content of Eurosceptic critiques. Actors belonging to different ideological traditions will be Eurosceptic for different reasons, something that is particularly noticeable amongst radical parties of the left and of the right. Scholars have noted that while parties at the ideological fringes tend to share Eurosceptic positions, the radical left and right express distinctive arguments against the EU (Conti and Memoli, 2011) and use different 'frames' in opposing European integration (Helbling et al., 2010; Pirro et al., 2018). The radical right typically portrays the EU as a project that threatens the sovereignty of the native people and, through the opening of borders, the cultural homogeneity of nations. Radical left parties typically describe European integration as a neoliberal project that encourages a 'race to the bottom' in terms of welfare entitlements and working conditions.

While the above definitions suggest that Euroscepticism is a somewhat static and clear-cut phenomenon, it is worth noting that it is in fact a more flexible and contingent construct than many of these typologies capture (Roch, 2025). Parties can modulate their positions based on evolving political contexts, switching from supporting EU integration to opposing it and vice versa. For example, some populist radical right parties such as the French National Rally, the Italian Lega and the Norwegian Progress Party moved from being relatively positive about the EU to being distinctly negative about European integration (Baro, 2026; Lorimer, 2021, 2024; Maccaferri and Newth, 2022; Mudde, 2007; Sitter 2001). Conversely, several social democratic parties across Europe switched from stark opposition to EU integration to support for it (Wolkenstein, 2020). Parties can also adopt deliberately 'equivocal' stances, alternating between soft and hard Euroscepticism, to achieve key strategic goals (Heinisch et al., 2021) or reduce the salience of Euroscepticism as they evolve. The latter has been the case for parties such as the Alternative for Germany and the United Kingdom Independence Party, which started as single-issue anti-EU parties, before developing more extensive policy programmes that led to a reduction in the centrality of Euroscepticism in their agenda (Roch, 2024).

Furthermore, even though the terms are used interchangeably in practice, 'Europe' and the EU are not the same, and political actors can discursively exploit that distinction. Parties of the populist radical right, for instance, may depict 'Europe' as the birthplace of Western civilisation, emphasising the common cultural heritage of the various European nations. Such a notion is helpful in constructing the 'other' as well as the identity of 'the people' these parties appeal to. A positive conception of a shared European identity can be accompanied by critical attitudes towards the actions of the EU as an organisation and towards the actions of member states' governments. Expressing 'Euro-ambivalence', far-right parties can claim allegiance to 'Europe', helping them to shed an image of narrow-mindedness and parochialism, while denouncing the EU, or at least its current direction, as a political project (Lorimer, 2021, 2024). The idea of Europe being a malleable concept helps us in understanding why populist (and other 'outsider') parties' ideas and positions on the issue of European integration are not that clear-cut.

Once the prerogative of marginal movements, Euroscepticism has increasingly moved in the political mainstream (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2013). The era of the polycrisis has facilitated this process, showing as it did that not all was well with EU integration. Euroscepticism has thus been adopted by mainstream actors, who have become increasingly critical of the process of EU integration themselves. Additionally, the progressive normalisation of radical movements has also led to Euroscepticism becoming a less marginal phenomenon. One should, however, also not over-state its importance, to the extent that political parties, for the most part, still give the EU issue less salience than to other issues (Braun and Schmitt, 2020; Hix and Cunningham, 2026; Marks and Steenbergen, 2004).

Based on the above considerations, we follow Paul Taggart in defining Euroscepticism as 'the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European Integration' (Taggart, 1998: 366) and specify three key aspects that help capture variation within this broad definition:

- **Object of opposition:** This element captures what aspect of EU integration is being critiqued and touches upon both the 'polity' and 'policy' distinction (is a party critiquing the institutional design of the EU or specific policy measures?), as well as the principle, practice and future of EU integration (is its opposition centred on the idea of European collaboration, the specific form it takes in the EU, or its future direction?)

- **Intensity and consistency of opposition:** This aspect captures the strength of the critique. It helps distinguish between 'hard' or 'soft' opposition (how intense is the party's opposition to EU integration?), as well as identify how consistently the EU is being critiqued (to what extent are positions consistently held?). As such, it can also help address elements of ambivalence in party position.

- **Nature of opposition:** This element captures the substantive content of opposition to the EU (for what reasons is the EU opposed?). Rather than focusing on what is being critiqued and how strongly, it considers why the EU is being criticised and the specific nature of the arguments that are brought against it. The nature of opposition will usually depend on a party's broader ideological positioning (e.g., left-wing or right-wing).

Although these categories are analytically separate, there may be overlaps between them. Taken together, they provide a comprehensive overview of party-based Euroscepticism.

III. The populism-Euroscepticism nexus

Acknowledging the heterogeneity of party positions and the evolving nature of EU critique, it remains possible to identify potential connections between populist discourse and Euroscepticism. EUPopLink develops theoretical expectations that are sensitive to the diversity, complexity, and fluidity of both populism and Euroscepticism, as previously defined. We map the fundamental linkages between populism and Euroscepticism. Subsequently, we explore how specific variants of populist discourse intertwine with opposition to the EU or critiques of its structure and policies. The discussion below offers a theoretical basis for analysing the populism and Eurosepticism nexus in practice, highlighting the ways in which the two concepts interact with reference to relevant literature and some illustrative empirical examples.

When we consider the essential characteristics of populism, it comes as no surprise that parties with a populist profile (be they left, right or valence) typically depict the EU as an elite-driven organisation that operates far removed from ordinary citizens and whose complex decision-making processes stand in the way of implementing the popular will (Canovan, 1999: 199; Rooduijn and van Kessel, 2019). Yet it has also become clear that most populists (on both the radical left and right) are by no means 'hard Eurosceptic'; that is, principally opposed to every form of European integration (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2024). The tumultuous Brexit process appears to have dampened the enthusiasm of vocal Eurosceptics for their country to leave the Union (Martini and Walter, 2024; van Kessel et al., 2020). More fundamentally, populist parties do not usually rule out all forms of European cooperation. PRR parties typically advocate collaboration in the form of a

'Europe of sovereign nations'. They may look positively upon the EU as an economic community as long as it benefits the prosperity of their nation, or see a role for the EU in dealing with 'outside threats' they identify, not least immigration from non-Western countries (Lorimer, 2021). Parties and social movements on the radical left – which in fact often desire *more* transnational cooperation – also call for 'another Europe' that prioritises economic and social justice, as well as democratisation (della Porta, 2020).

Previous studies have thus already pointed out that parties placing themselves outside of the so-called mainstream are not united in their opposition towards Europe – be it 'far-right' (Vasilopoulou, 2018), 'populist' (Pirro et al., 2018) or 'anti-establishment' (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2024) parties. Yet there is still a tendency to treat the connection between radical populist politics and Euroscepticism as a given. Gaining a more nuanced understanding of the (current) arguments and ideas of various types of (self-styled) 'political outsiders' is important to move beyond overly simplistic assumptions. This is even more pertinent in light of the electoral growth and consolidation of the PRR party family at the national and European levels, and these parties becoming part of governing coalitions in an increasing number of countries. The influence PRR parties can potentially exert on the process of European integration has never been larger – although this would presume a reasonably united stance and coherent perspective on European integration on the side of these parties, which are both essentially lacking.

To gain a precise understanding of the populism-Euroscepticism nexus it is important to consider 'Europe' as a 'malleable' concept – as we have discussed above - that does not necessarily refer to the EU and its institutions (Lorimer, 2024; Roch, 2025). In its broadest sense, the populist discourse—understood as a framework for constructing 'the people' and distinguishing them from 'the elites'—exhibits certain affinities with Euroscepticism. This connection becomes particularly evident if the EU is perceived as an elite-driven project (Beeson and Diez, 2018: 119; Bulmer and Joseph, 2016: 739; Hobolt, 2018: 243). In this context, the populist construction of 'the people', rooted in aggregating demands and recognizing popular identities, is often at odds with less directly accountable EU bodies such as the European Central Bank (ECB) or the European Commission. Consequently, populist discourse as such tends to align with a diffuse form of Euroscepticism, not necessarily focusing on the EU polity as a whole but rather on specific policies or institutions undermining the people's interest as well as perceived democratic deficits within EU institutions.

Anti-establishment rhetoric within populist discourse is often strongly associated with various expressions of Euroscepticism, spanning across the ideological spectrum (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2024). For instance, Italy's League and Five Star Movement used anti-establishment discourse to criticise the EU, particularly during the Eurozone and migration crises. Similarly, the National Rally and France Unbowed in France frame their Euroscepticism as opposition to EU elites, depicting them as part of a global establishment. The appeal to popular sovereignty is also shared by different types of populist actors voicing Euroscepticism, whereby the EU is portrayed as unresponsive to or insulated from popular demands. However, ideological leaning is crucial to determine the substantive content and arguments forming the EU critique of political actors. To illustrate this, it makes most sense to refer to the categories of the PRR and left-wing populism, given that 'valence populism' is not inherently ideologically oriented.

When populist discourse is employed by left-wing parties, the EU's social pillar—articulated through measures like the European Social Charter or redistribution initiatives—tends to be framed positively in contrast to the EU's more neoliberal components, such as the ECB's monetary policies or trade agreements like the TTIP (Oleart, 2021). In critiquing the EU from this perspective, left-wing populist parties often emphasize a vision of social justice, portraying European integration as a neoliberal project that fosters a 'race to the bottom' in welfare standards and labour conditions (see De Vries and Edwards, 2009). These left-wing populist movements are typically associated with 'soft' or qualified Euroscepticism (della Porta, 2020), although they may go through different stages in their EU opposition, changing the intensity or scope of their critique. For instance, Podemos in Spain evolved from an initial stage of critique of the EU as a polity to a qualified opposition to specific policies and institutional developments (Roch, 2021).

For its part, the PRR delineates 'the people' along nationalistic and identity-based lines (Lobera and Roch, 2022). PRR actors tend to be the fiercest critics of the EU: besides voicing populist critique, they lament the loss of national sovereignty, which they consider the result of deeper European integration, and they dislike the opening of borders which is associated with a rise in immigration. The populist-nativist discourse fundamentally opposes forms of European integration that are perceived as undermining national sovereignty. It advocates for a vision of a self-contained and self-sufficient nation, prioritizing national interests over transnational cooperation. Within this conception, the EU appears as a bureaucratic apparatus in opposition to national identity and sovereignty. For instance, in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats portray Islam as a threat to a prosperous and unified nation, while migrants are frequently associated with criminality and disorder (Janssen, 2023). While these critiques may also target specific policies, populism-nativism ultimately aspires to liberate the nation and its identity from the EU integration project entirely. However, pragmatic

political strategies have often tempered these impulses, leading PRR parties to advocate for a minimalistic EU framework or a loose alliance of sovereign states.

Besides the fact that populist parties are rarely fully opposed to the idea of European integration, we also see divisions inside Eurosceptic party families. Within the PRR, points of contention are, for example, the extent to which the EU should foster free trade, or positions towards Putin's Russia – the contrasting stances of Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland and Fidesz in Hungary offer a good example regarding the latter. The fact that no single radical right European Parliament group has been formed is partly grounded in diverging national interests and ideological viewpoints, but perhaps more important are strategic choices and presumed reputational consequences of allying with foreign partners (McDonnell and Werner, 2019). The Alternative for Germany is now shunned by fellow party family members given its extremist tendencies, whereas other PRR parties, such as Brothers of Italy, led by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, have been successful in softening their image. Meloni enjoys seemingly cozy and constructive relationships with various European leaders, illustrating the continuing legitimisation and normalisation of the far right (Mudde, 2019). Importantly, this relationship can be understood as reciprocal and two-sided. It involves not only a moderation of the positions traditionally associated with PRR parties, but also a process of strategic convergence on the part of the EU, which increasingly looks to some of these actors for policy responses, particularly in the field of migration. Meloni's approach to immigration provides a notable example in this regard.

When populist discourse portrays 'the people' as a transnational *demos* (Moffitt, 2017), the distinction between Europe and the EU—already present in the previously discussed modalities of critique—becomes more pronounced. In this perspective, efforts to construct a European identity for the transnational *demos* often lead to an evaluation of the EU as a flawed integration project. However, alternative visions of transnational identity and international solidarity, grounded in a proto-European identity, are regarded as desirable. The case of DIEM25 illustrates this dynamic particularly well. As a left-wing movement, it contests many core features of the EU while maintaining a broadly positive orientation towards Europe and pan-European political projects. At the same time, DIEM25's unsuccessful attempt to reshape EU politics from below highlights some of the limitations of conceptualising the relationship between populism and Euroscepticism in these terms (Oleart and Weisskircher, 2025). In this context, critiques of the EU are typically diffuse, focusing on bureaucratic inefficiencies or detrimental policies that are seen as further alienating EU institutions from the ideal of a bottom-up federation of European peoples.

Finally, given that the geographical scope of the EUPopLink COST Action spans beyond EU member states, we can briefly reflect on the interplay between populism and Euroscepticism in candidate countries. While Euroscepticism is studied primarily (albeit not exclusively) as a phenomenon touching on EU member states, it is not exclusive to them and is increasingly present in candidate countries as well – see for example the study on Serbia by Styczyńska and Dajč (2022). Prospective EU member states can exhibit high levels of Euroscepticism at the voter level, even though they are yet to join. As cases such as (pre-war) Ukraine and Georgia have demonstrated, the EU and EU membership can also be part of a cleavage that pits Western-oriented citizens and supporters of the pro-Russian authoritarian regime against one another. The country reports that are part if this collection will offer new perspectives and insights on the populism-Euroscepticism nexus beyond EU members states.

IV. Data collection

To map the linkages of populism and euroscepticism in Europe, Working Group 1 coordinated the submission of 40 country reports on populism and Euroscepticism in Europe. The countries cover EU member states, candidate countries, and European countries maintaining a close affiliation with the EU. To identify authors, we first invited members of the WG1 to indicate which country(-ies) they had relevant expertise on. Based on their responses, we assigned them the task of writing a country report on their selected country of expertise. As not all countries were covered, we sought additional country experts for missing countries. Authors were provided with a series of guidelines to follow when researching and writing their reports.[3] Our focus was on secondary research, rather than on original primary research. All authors submitted their reports in the summer of 2025. The reports were then reviewed by EUPopLink Core Group members, and authors invited to revise and resubmit their reports to their assigned reviewer. Once all corrections were approved, authors were invited to submit their case studies to the Open Research Europe (ORE) Platform. Completed reports are available to view, with remaining ones expected to become available on a rolling basis.[4]

[3]The complete guidelines are available at the following address: https://eupoplink.eu/node/17
[4]Access the full collection here: https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/collections/eupoplink/about

V. Conclusion

In this paper, we have summarised existing literature on populism, Euroscepticism and their linkage. We put forward three main definitions of populism: radical right-wing populism, left-wing populism and valence populism, and distinguished between opposition to the EU based on which aspect of the EU is being critiqued, how intensely and consistently this is done, and what perspective opposition is articulated from. We concluded by addressing the links between populism and Eurosceptcisism, and discussing how they were studied in the EUPopLink case study collection available on the Open Research Europe platform.

Ethics and consent

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

Data and software availability

No data are associated with this article.

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1. **Overall assessment**

I read the first version of this article as an interested reader rather than as a referee, and I am pleased to note that version 2 addresses a substantial number of the issues I had thought could be developed further. The revised text is analytically richer, engages with the principal debates in each of the two literatures, and provides a well-selected review of the core conceptual contributions.
In my view this is an important piece of work for scholars working on populism and on Euroscepticism (including those working on either phenomenon separately) and an excellent point of departure for reflecting on, conceptualising and theorising the mechanisms that connect the two phenomena on the supply side of political competition. The article is well suited to serve as the shared conceptual reference point that a large comparative data-collection effort of this kind requires.
The comments below are offered in a constructive spirit. None of them questions the soundness of the framework; they identify places where the argument could be extended, and questions that the article productively opens and that the authors may wish either to address or to signpost explicitly as an agenda for future work.

1. **Principal strengths**

In my view, the article's most valuable contribution lies in its handling of the conceptual and theoretical complexity of populism literature. Several features deserve particular mention:

- The article contrasts approaches to populism rather than merely juxtaposing definitions. This is a meaningful distinction and one that is too often collapsed in review pieces of this kind.
- It identifies the principal lines of disagreement in the field, including the long-standing debate over whether populism constitutes a threat to, or a corrective for, liberal democracy (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Urbinati, 2019), as well as the more recent and, to my mind, particularly interesting question of whether populism is by definition a phenomenon of the right. The latter debate is signaled but not fully developed, and I return to it below.

- It incorporates the body of work that defines populism negatively (that is, by opposition) and treats anti-pluralism as a constitutive attribute of populist actors (Müller, 2016; Galston, 2018; Urbinati, 2019; and, on the relational construction of populism and anti-populism, Stavrakakis, 2014; De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017). This is an important and welcome move. However, I would add one observation on this last point. If anti-pluralism is admitted as a definitional attribute, this places the conventional claim that populism is ideologically transversal, attachable in principle to host ideologies of any stripe, under considerable strain. The authors may wish to make this tension explicit rather than leave it implicit, since it bears directly on the question of the left–right asymmetry discussed below.

1. **Discussions that would benefit from further elaboration**

- **The tension between democratic promise and democratic practice.** The article raises the tension between the promises of democracy and the practice of democratic government but treats it largely in the abstract. This discussion would gain considerably from being connected to the empirical literature on populist actors in office, where precisely this tension is adjudicated: the choice between responsiveness and responsibility (Mair, 2009, 2013), the moderating or radicalising effects of incumbency, and the varying record of populists in government (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2015; Taggart & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016; Zulianello, 2019; Ruth-Lovell & Grahn, 2023). Linking the theoretical tension to this body of work would give the section a firmer empirical anchor and would also connect it to the article's own concluding concern with consequences.
- **Theories of European integration and types of Euroscepticism.** The article would be strengthened by acknowledging that several of its types of Euroscepticism correspond, at least loosely, to recognised theories of European integration. As the section currently stands, opposition to the EU is implicitly benchmarked against a neofunctionalist, supranational understanding of the integration process. Yet intergovernmentalist accounts (Hoffmann, 1966; Moravcsik, 1993; and, more recently, Bickerton, Hodson & Puetter, 2015) offer an alternative and entirely legitimate theorisation of integration that is considerably closer to the "Europe of nations" position the article discusses. The analytical consequence is not trivial: positions coded as Eurosceptic may in some cases be better understood as endorsing a different model of integration rather than opposing integration as such. This is precisely the distinction that Kopecký and Mudde (2002) sought to capture in separating diffuse from specific support, and that Vasilopoulou's (2011) tripartite scheme operationalises for the radical right. A paragraph making this correspondence explicit (even without developing it at length) would considerably sharpen the article's treatment of the "object of opposition" dimension.

1. **Questions the article opens**

- **Ideology: the elephant in the room.** Ideology is present throughout the article and is explicitly mentioned at several points, but it is not adopted as a central analytical concept. I would argue that doing so is now urgent, and that the article's own framework makes the case. The text opens a series of questions about the relationship between populism and ideology, between Euroscepticism and ideology, and consequently about the ideological structuring of the populism–Euroscepticism nexus itself. Two observations support this. First, the conceptualisation of *left-wing* populism is noticeably weaker than that of its right-

wing counterpart, though this is arguably as much an empirical as a conceptual matter, given that left populism has not achieved what right populism has achieved in electoral and governmental terms (March, 2011; Katsambekis & Kioupkiolis, 2019; Damiani, 2020). Second, the same asymmetry recurs in the treatment of left-wing Euroscepticism. It would be valuable for the authors to state explicitly whether they understand this asymmetry as analytical or as empirical, since the two readings have very different implications for the comparative data collection that follows. Second, I would encourage the authors to consider adopting a cleavage perspective in the third section, on the nexus. Framing the argument in terms of the integration–demarcation or transnational cleavage would allow the ideological contradictions identified above to be located within a structural account rather than resolved by definitional fiat (Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008; Hooghe & Marks, 2009, 2018; Bornschier, 2010; Häusermann & Kriesi, 2015; Kitschelt & Rehm, 2015; Hutter & Kriesi, 2019). This would also connect the supply-side framework to the demand-side realignment literature that the wider project will need to engage.

- **The negative consequences to be mitigated.** The introduction states that a central objective is to identify how the negative consequences of the populism–Euroscepticism nexus may be mitigated. This premise is largely taken for granted in the literature, and the article follows suit; yet remarkably few studies interrogate it directly. Several questions therefore remain open, and I would suggest the authors at least acknowledge them: Are the consequences at issue those of populist Euroscepticism in general, or specifically of its right-wing variant? Does a left-wing populist Euroscepticism exist as a comparable phenomenon at all? If so, in what respects is it comparable, in its discursive construction of the EU, its policy demands, its electoral base, or its behaviour in office? Does it in fact produce the same negative consequences that the introduction identifies as requiring mitigation? The existing evidence on the democratic effects of populism in power is more mixed and more conditional than the framing suggests (Huber & Schimpf, 2017; Ruth-Lovell & Grahn, 2023), and the inclusionary/exclusionary distinction (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013) offers one available route for differentiating consequences across variants. Making the normative premise explicit and conditional would strengthen, not weaken, the framework.

1. **Further avenues the authors may wish to consider**

The following are offered as optional suggestions rather than requirements.

- **Party-system position as an alternative explanation of the nexus.** A long-standing strand of the Euroscepticism literature treats opposition to integration as a function of a party's peripheral position in the party system rather than of its ideology (Taggart, 1998; Sitter, 2001). Because the article's third section theorises the nexus primarily in ideational and ideological terms, it would be useful to state explicitly how the framework relates to this strategic-positional account, and whether the two are understood as complementary or competing.
- **The shift from exit to sovereignist contestation.** Post-Brexit, the dominant supply-side strategy has shifted from withdrawal to reform-from-within and sovereignist reframing (Pirro & Taggart, 2018; Basile & Mazzoleni, 2020; Csehi & Zgut, 2021). This development interacts directly with the point raised in above, sovereignism is intelligible as an intergovernmentalist project rather than as rejection of integration, and it may strain typologies calibrated on the pre-2016 period.
- **Valence populism and the ideology question.** The article's inclusion of valence populism as a third form (Zulianello, 2020) is well justified, and it is worth noting that this category is

precisely where the ideological question posed before becomes most acute: valence populist actors typically exhibit the least stable and least predictable positions on European integration. This category may therefore constitute the most demanding test case for any ideological account of the nexus.

- **Portability across the supply and demand sides.** Given that the wider project explicitly links supply and demand, it would be helpful for the article to indicate briefly how far its supply-side conceptual choices are intended to travel to the individual level, where the ideological structure of EU opposition has been shown to follow a different and contested pattern (Van Elsas & van der Brug, 2015; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016).
- **Geographical portability of the typology.** Since the framework is intended to guide country reports across some forty European cases, it would be useful for the article to state whether its categories are expected to travel uniformly across regions. The left–right asymmetry discussed before intersects directly with geography: left-wing Euroscepticism in Southern Europe, articulated largely around austerity, economic governance and conditionality, is not the same phenomenon as left-wing EU opposition in Central and Eastern Europe, where the post-accession context, sovereignty concerns and party-system volatility structure contestation differently (Kriesi, 2016; Hutter & Kriesi, 2019). A brief statement on whether the typology is understood as universal, or as requiring regional calibration, would help the contributors to the country reports considerably.
- **Minimum coding criteria for borderline cases.** The article is explicitly conceptual, but its function within the project is ultimately classificatory. It would therefore be valuable (perhaps in the concluding section on the data collection strategy) to offer at least a minimal set of decision rules for the cases that the typology renders genuinely ambiguous. Three seem particularly consequential: (i) sovereignist but non-populist actors, whose opposition targets the model of integration rather than an elite–people antagonism; (ii) valence populists whose EU positions shift across electoral cycles, raising the question of whether Euroscepticism is coded at a point in time or across a period; and (iii) actors whose Euroscepticism is confined to specific policy domains while diffuse support remains intact. Without such guidance, cross-country comparability of the resulting reports may be difficult to secure.

I would be glad to see a revised version and thank the authors for a stimulating and carefully constructed piece of work.

Is the topic of the review discussed comprehensively in the context of the current literature?

Yes

Are all factual statements correct and adequately supported by citations?

Yes

Is the review written in accessible language?

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn appropriate in the context of the current research literature?

Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Comparative Politics, Euroscepticism, Populism, Southern Europe.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Reviewer Report 12 August 2026

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Kutsal Yesilkagit
Institute of Public Administration, Leiden University Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs, The Hague, South Holland, The Netherlands

Reviewer Report

This manuscript develops the conceptual framework for the EUPopLink project and discusses the relationship between populism and Euroscepticism in European party systems. I found the paper informative and useful in several respects. It provides a broad overview of the main literatures on both concepts, discusses different approaches to populism in some detail, and makes a serious attempt to formulate common definitions that can be used across a large number of country studies. I also appreciate that the authors do not simply assume that populism and Euroscepticism are the same phenomenon, and that they recognise considerable variation among populist parties in how they relate to European integration.

At the same time, I think that several conceptual issues need further clarification. My main concerns are about the derivation of the three types of populism, the distinction between populism and Euroscepticism, and the way in which the paper understands the political “supply side”.

1. The three categories of populism

It is not entirely clear to me how the authors arrive at the three categories of populism that they distinguish later in the paper: populist radical right, left-wing populism and valence populism.

The preceding discussion mainly deals with different approaches to defining populism: ideational, discursive, stylistic and strategic. The authors then settle on a definition of populism based on anti-elitism and popular sovereignty. That part is reasonably clear. What is less clear is how this discussion leads to the three categories that follow.

The populist radical right and left-wing populism are relatively easy to understand because populism is combined with a more recognisable ideological position. In the first case, this concerns nativism and authoritarianism; in the second case, a critique of capitalism and an

emphasis on redistribution and alternative economic arrangements.

The category of "valence populism", however, needs more explanation. It is described mainly in terms of issues such as corruption, transparency, democratic reform, moral integrity and anti-establishment politics. But these elements seem very close to the general people-versus-elites logic that the authors themselves see as central to populism. It is therefore not clear what exactly makes valence populism a distinct subtype.

The authors mention that this type became particularly important in Central and Eastern Europe and give examples such as ANO and the Five Star Movement. These examples are useful, but they do not in themselves solve the conceptual problem. I would encourage the authors to explain more clearly how "the people" and "the elite" are constructed in valence populism, how popular sovereignty is expressed, and in what respect this category differs systematically from the other two forms.

More generally, the paper would benefit from a clearer explanation of how the three categories are derived from the general definition of populism, rather than simply introduced after the conceptual discussion.

2. Populism and Euroscepticism as analytically distinct concepts

My second concern is more fundamental. The paper treats populism and Euroscepticism as two analytically distinct concepts and then investigates their relationship. This is certainly possible, but I do not think the paper yet explains sufficiently why the two should be treated as separate concepts in the European context.

Euroscepticism emerged as a political phenomenon from the 1980s onwards, while contemporary European populism developed during roughly the same period. More importantly, European populism developed in a context in which European integration became increasingly important for domestic politics. This raises the question of whether populism and Euroscepticism are not partly intertwined from the outset.

The manuscript itself points in this direction. The EU can easily be presented in populist discourse as an elite-driven organisation, far removed from ordinary citizens and limiting the expression of popular sovereignty. "Brussels elites", European bureaucrats or supranational institutions can therefore become part of the populist opposition between "the people" and "the elite".

This makes it important to explain more clearly how the two concepts can be distinguished analytically. If opposition to EU elites forms part of a populist construction of the political conflict, when is this an expression of populism and when is it an expression of Euroscepticism? And when is it both?

This is also a historical question. Populism does not develop outside its political context. Latin American populism, for example, has been shaped by the specific historical and political context of Latin America, including post-colonialism, anti-imperialism and particular state-society relations. In a similar way, European populism has developed in a context in which European integration has become an important political cleavage and institutional constraint.

I therefore think the paper should discuss more explicitly whether contemporary European populism and Euroscepticism are simply two separate phenomena that frequently occur together, or whether they are partly constitutive of one another.

This does not mean that they cannot be separated. Clearly, non-populist Euroscepticism exists, and not every populist party is necessarily strongly Eurosceptic. But if the paper wants to study the "nexus" between the two concepts, it should make the conceptual boundary more explicit.

One way to do this would be to provide concrete examples of four different situations: populist but not Eurosceptic, Eurosceptic but not populist, both populist and Eurosceptic, and neither. This would make much clearer what exactly is being compared.

3. What is meant by the political "supply side"?

A third issue concerns the use of the term "supply side". The paper states that it mainly focuses on the political supply side, but it could be clearer about what exactly is being supplied, and by whom.

In practice, political parties seem to be the main actors producing both populist discourse and Eurosceptic positions. If this is the case, then the same actors are being classified along two dimensions: first according to their degree or type of populism, and second according to their position towards European integration.
There is nothing wrong with this, but it would help if the analytical logic were stated more explicitly. What are the main sources of populist ideology on the one hand and Euroscepticism on the other? Are they generated by different ideological or political processes, or are they often produced by the same political parties and leaders?

This question becomes particularly relevant in cases where the two overlap. If a party claims that "Brussels elites" prevent "the people" from exercising their sovereignty, is this coded as populism, Euroscepticism, or both? The paper needs to explain more clearly how these dimensions are separated in empirical analysis.

I think it would help to distinguish between three things: the political actor supplying the message, the populist content of that message, and the position taken towards European integration. This would make the supply-side argument conceptually cleaner.

Overall assessment

I think this is a useful and potentially important conceptual paper, particularly because it provides the basis for a wider comparative research project. The literature review is broad, and the authors are clearly aware of the complexity of both concepts.

My main concern is that the paper currently moves somewhat too quickly from defining populism and Euroscepticism separately to analysing their relationship. Before doing so, the authors need to clarify more explicitly where the conceptual boundaries lie. In particular, I would encourage the authors to address the three points mentioned above.

Addressing these issues would considerably strengthen the conceptual foundations of the paper

and, by extension, the comparative country studies that build on it.

Is the topic of the review discussed comprehensively in the context of the current literature?
Yes

Are all factual statements correct and adequately supported by citations?
Yes

Is the review written in accessible language?
Yes

Are the conclusions drawn appropriate in the context of the current research literature?
Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Public administration; Democratic backsliding; political-administrative relationships; International governance

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Reviewer Report 08 August 2026

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Natasza Styczynska
Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

I appreciate the revisions that have been made and recommend the article for indexing.

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Euroscepticism, Populism, Central and Eastern Europe, Western Balkans, EU integration, Enlargement

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Reviewer Report 21 July 2026

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George Newth
University of Bath, Bath, England, UK

My sincere thanks to the authors for addressing each suggestion so meticulously and in such good faith. I think this is an excellent paper, and I have no further comments or suggestions.

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: My research focuses, principally, on how populist, far right and nationalist forms of politics are normalised via discourses of "common sense".

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Version 1

Reviewer Report 14 April 2026

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George Newth
University of Bath, Bath, England, UK

This is an incredibly useful, thorough, and well-written overview of the literature on populism, Euroscepticism and the various links between the two phenomena. The authors are amongst the leading experts in the field and this is reflected in the comprehensive nature of the report. In a very busy field, the authors succeed in teasing out revised and accessible definitions of both populism and Euroscepticism, which I believe will be useful to not only academics and policy makers, but also the general public.

I have listed below some minor suggestions which I hope might tighten up/clarify a few parts of the paper:

I appreciate the skilful navigation of the minefield of different definitions of populism, and I think a certain centre of gravity is successfully found in Margaret Canovan's approach. I do wonder, however, whether the difference between the ideational and discursive approach is somewhat downplayed in this process. For instance, the authors state

both start out from the idea that the two central categories to populism ('the people' and 'the elites') are empty vessels that need to be given a more concrete interpretation (depending on political context and 'host ideology').

I would argue that there should be a bit more nuance here, if possible and if space permits. Does the thin-ideology approach not already provide some ideological content to both the people and the elites vis-à-vis framings of homogeneity and moralism (pure v corrupt)? In that respect can the people and the elites ever really be empty vessels in the ideational approach? By arguing that populists view all elites as corrupt and all people as 'pure', there is a clear belief system at work here. There is also something to be said about the fact that the homogeneity thesis favours analysis of the far right (see, Katsambekis 2022). On this point, I believe Jonathan Dean's and Bice Maiguashca's work on populism could be useful. Furthermore, these authors make a compelling argument for considering the stylistic approach as an 'offshoot' of the ideational approach insofar as it involves viewing populism as a 'belief system'.

Refer to reference no. 1

A further issue, is raised in the statement below:

We also concur with the notion that populism can be measured at the political supply side (i.e. expressed by political actors) as well as the political demand side (i.e. as an attitude of citizens)

The idea of the 'political demand' is always a bit problematic and might need a footnote to indicate the nuance of 'public opinion' construction via top-down (and often skewed) surveys. Seongchul Kim's and Aurelien Mondon's work on 'populist attitudes' could be useful here insofar as they illustrate that the attitudes approach in its reliance on opinion polls risks treating public opinion as a fixed reality and assuming that "the people" have clear, objective qualities.

Refer to reference no. 2

More generally, there is emergent literature that populism is not something which is at all alien to Europe/European values, but which is at the heart of European politics. While I realise this is not the correct forum for lengthy debates around this, I wonder whether this could at least be acknowledged, not least because the authors draw the correct distinction between the EU and Europe. See, for instance, not only recent literature from Emmy Eklundh on Europe's populist condition/coloniality, but also from Alex Yates on European Values and anti-populism.

In terms of Euroscepticism, the contingent nature of this identity/discourse can also be measured by the fact that some parties change their position as they evolve. The Lega (Nord), for instance, was not Eurosceptic to begin with, but took a relatively Euro-pragmatist position in line with the idea of a 'Europe of the Regions'. It maintained this position between 1992 and 1998 (Maccaferri and Newth 2022). Conversely, some parties start with *just* Euroscepticism as their key raison d'être

e.g. AfD and UKIP (originally the anti-federalist league), and then shift to being part of the populist radical right by adopting increasingly reactionary positions. Is there a way of integrating this element of historical contingency into the report, albeit briefly?

Regarding the comment that:

Meloni enjoys seemingly cozy and constructive relationships with various European leaders, illustrating the continuing legitimisation and normalisation of the far right (Mudde, 2019).

I would ask the question of whether this is just a softening of Meloni's image or also a radicalization of the EU in terms of, for instance, their Asylum and Migration policy which makes it easier for far right figures to claim the EU is adopting its policies. (again this goes back to Eklundh's work on 'Europe's populist condition', and the fact that such anti-migrant/nativist/racist policies are not at all alien to Europe or European values).

The mention of transnationalism in the final paragraphs of the populism-Europscepticism nexus is welcome, but I wonder whether mentioning Diem25 would make sense here as a clearer and more explicit example. This is a potentially good example of a leftist movement which manages to straddle both opposition to certain aspects of the EU, while taking a 'pan-European' approach. The fact that the party also failed to elect any candidates, might also speak to the limitations in such an approach.

One further minor shortcoming in the third section is the lack of development of the issue of Valence Populism. This, I would argue is quite important, considering that one of the key 'Valence Populist' actors in the Five Star Movement, has had evolving views on Euroscepticism (and migration), see for instance:

Refer to reference no. 3

A further point is that there does appear to be a clear regional bias in the case studies presented. This is not necessarily a major issue, as the authors use the case studies very effectively. However, I would argue that the slightly western-centric nature of the examples/case studies should be acknowledged/justified from the outset.

A couple of more minor points relate to terminological consistency which I think could be confusing to some readers and risks undermining the careful definitional work previously established by the authors. For instance in the third section, the authors state

'A second variant of populism, the populism-nativist discourse, delineates 'the people' along nationalistic and identity-based lines (Lobera and Roch, 2022).'

In what ways is 'populism-nativism' different to the Populist Radical Right, which the authors have carefully outlined in the section on populism?

Similarly, the term 'radical populist parties' in this section is a bit unclear; this could mean either Populist Radical Right, or left wing populism, in theory.

Overall, I think this is a very good piece and I really appreciate the careful, meticulous research

involved in putting it together. I hope my comments are useful, relatively minor, and not too difficult to address

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Is the topic of the review discussed comprehensively in the context of the current literature?

Yes

Are all factual statements correct and adequately supported by citations?

Yes

Is the review written in accessible language?

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn appropriate in the context of the current research literature?

Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: My research focuses, principally, on how populist, far right and nationalist forms of politics are normalised via discourses of "common sense".

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Author Response 22 Jun 2026

Juan Roch

Dear **George Newth**, Many thanks for the tone of your review and for your very useful comments. We respond to each point below and explain the revisions we have made to the manuscript in light of your suggestions.

1.I would argue that there should be a bit more nuance here, if possible and if space permits. Does the thin-ideology approach not already provide some ideological content to both the people and the elites vis-à-vis framings of homogeneity and moralism (pure v corrupt)? In that respect can the people and the elites ever really be empty vessels in the ideational approach? By arguing that populists view all elites as corrupt and all people as 'pure', there is a clear belief system at

work here. There is also something to be said about the fact that the homogeneity thesis favours analysis of the far right (see, Katsambekis 2022). On this point, I believe Jonathan Dean's and Bice Maiguashca's work on populism could be useful. Furthermore, these authors make a compelling argument for considering the stylistic approach as an 'offshoot' of the ideational approach insofar as it involves viewing populism as a 'belief system'. Refer to reference no. 1

Thank you for this comment. We have clarified this point in the revised manuscript. We agree that the expression "empty vessels" is more appropriate for the discursive approach than for the ideational one, even though the latter conceptualizes populism as a thin-centred ideology in which 'the people' and 'the elites' remain relatively vague categories that allow for considerable ideological specification through different host ideologies. Accordingly, we have reformulated the relevant passage and narrowed the common ground between the ideational and discursive approaches to the idea that 'the people' and 'the elites' function as relatively flexible categories that are open to a variety of ideological and political articulations. Moreover, in the preceding paragraph, we now further develop the distinction between the two approaches and clarify the implications of defining 'the people' as a homogeneous entity, including its tendency to privilege research on far-right populism.

2. A further issue, is raised in the statement below: ***We also concur with the notion that populism can be measured at the political supply side (i.e. expressed by political actors) as well as the political demand side (i.e. as an attitude of citizens)*** *The idea of the 'political demand' is always a bit problematic and might need a footnote to indicate the nuance of 'public opinion' construction via top-down (and often skewed) surveys. Seongchul Kim's and Aurelien Mondon's work on 'populist attitudes' could be useful here insofar as they illustrate that the attitudes approach in its reliance on opinion polls risks treating public opinion as a fixed reality and assuming that "the people" have clear, objective qualities. Refer to reference no. 2*

Thank you for this comment. We have now addressed this issue in the manuscript by referring to the ongoing debate surrounding the measurement of populist attitudes. We also refer to the thought-provoking critique advanced by Kim and Mondon (2024).

3. More generally, there is emergent literature that populism is not something which is at all alien to Europe/European values, but which is at the heart of European politics. While I realise this is not the correct forum for lengthy debates around this, I wonder whether this could at least be acknowledged, not least because the authors draw the correct distinction between the EU and Europe. See, for instance, not only recent literature from Emmy Eklundh on Europe's populist condition/coloniality, but also from Alex Yates on European Values and anti-populism.

We consider these to be important contributions, and we have therefore included a short paragraph discussing the relationship between the construction of Europe, the European Union, and populism. We hope this addition broadens the scope of the article.

4.In terms of Euroscepticism, the contingent nature of this identity/discourse can also be measured by the fact that some parties change their position as they evolve. The Lega (Nord), for instance, was not Eurosceptic to begin with, but took a relatively Euro-pragmatist position in line with the idea of a 'Europe of the Regions'. It maintained this position between 1992 and 1998

(Maccaferri and Newth 2022). Conversely, some parties start with just Euroscepticism as their key raison d'être e.g. AfD and UKIP (originally the anti-federalist league), and then shift to being part of the populist radical right by adopting increasingly reactionary positions. Is there a way of integrating this element of historical contingency into the report, albeit briefly?

Thank you for your suggestion. In response to this comment, we expanded the section on the contingent nature of Euroscepticism. We have added a few examples of parties that switched positions from support to opposition and vice-versa. We have also included a point on formerly single-issue anti-EU parties giving the European issue less salience.

5. Regarding the comment that: Meloni enjoys seemingly cozy and constructive relationships with various European leaders, illustrating the continuing legitimisation and normalisation of the far right (Mudde, 2019). I would ask the question of whether this is just a softening of Meloni's image or also a radicalization of the EU in terms of, for instance, their Asylum and Migration policy which makes it easier for far right figures to claim the EU is adopting its policies. (again this goes back to Eklundh's work on 'Europe's populist condition', and the fact that such anti-migrant/nativist/racist policies are not at all alien to Europe or European values).

Thank you for this comment. We agree that this dynamic is more appropriately described as a reciprocal and two-sided relationship rather than simply as a process of moderation on the part of PRR parties. We have clarified this point in the revised manuscript (p. 12).

6. The mention of transnationalism in the final paragraphs of the populism-Europscepticism nexus is welcome, but I wonder whether mentioning Diem25 would make sense here as a clearer and more explicit example. This is a potentially good example of a leftist movement which manages to straddle both opposition to certain aspects of the EU, while taking a 'pan-European' approach. The fact that the party also failed to elect any candidates, might also speak to the limitations in such an approach.

Thank you for this suggestion. We agree that DIEM25 provides an illuminating example of (ultimately unsuccessful) transnational populism. We have therefore included a reference to the movement, as well as to recent research examining the factors that contributed to its failure (Oleart and Weisskircher, 2025).

7. One further minor shortcoming in the third section is the lack of development of the issue of Valence Populism. This, I would argue is quite important, considering that one of the key 'Valence Populist' actors in the Five Star Movement, has had evolving views on Euroscepticism (and migration), see for instance: Refer to reference no. 3 Thank you for this comment. We have clarified that certain critiques of the EU stem from populism itself and can therefore be found across different variants of populism. At the same time, we now make more explicit that ideological content becomes relevant when explaining the specific form these critiques take, a distinction that primarily concerns right-wing and left-wing populism rather than valence populism.

8. A further point is that there does appear to be a clear regional bias in the case studies presented. This is not necessarily a major issue, as the authors use the case studies very

effectively. However, I would argue that the slightly western-centric nature of the examples/case studies should be acknowledged/justified from the outset.

Thank you for this comment. We agree with this observation and have incorporated additional examples and reflections on Central and Eastern European countries throughout the manuscript.

9. A couple of more minor points relate to terminological consistency which I think could be confusing to some readers and risks undermining the careful definitional work previously established by the authors. For instance in the third section, the authors state ‘A second variant of populism, the populism-nativist discourse, delineates ‘the people’ along nationalistic and identity-based lines (Lobera and Roch, 2022).’ In what ways is 'populism-nativism' different to the Populist Radical Right, which the authors have carefully outlined in the section on populism? Similarly, the term ‘radical populist parties’ in this section is a bit unclear; this could mean either Populist Radical Right-, or left-wing populism, in theory.

We agree with this observation and have revised these formulations to improve their accuracy and clarity throughout the manuscript. Overall, I think this is a very good piece and I really appreciate the careful, meticulous research involved in putting it together. I hope my comments are useful, relatively minor, and not too difficult to address

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Report 08 April 2026

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Natasza Styczynska
Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

The article provides a conceptual framework for studying the populism–Euroscepticism nexus within COST action 'Linking euroscepticism and populism: causes and consequences' (EUPopLink). The article is well structured and easy to follow. It begins by exploring the concept of populism before moving on to examine Euroscepticism. It then goes on to analyse the links between the two. While the study is theoretically robust, its focus on Western European examples may give the impression that other regions are either unaffected by the phenomenon or have received less research attention. However, this is not the case.

The first part of the discussion focuses on the various definitions of populism. The authors have chosen to concentrate on the supply-side of populism and Euroscepticism. I am curious as to the

reasoning behind this. It would be beneficial to understand why authors only focus on the supply side, while the demand side also tells us about the nexus between these two phenomena.
The discussion presents an ideational and discursive approach. For the needs of the COST project, populism will be understood as a dichotomy between the people and the elite, and three types of populism: right-wing, left-wing and value populism will be studied.
The authors observe that valence populism 'has been particularly widespread in Central and Eastern Europe', a statement that is open to debate. While it is accurate for some of the first populist movements and parties, and can represent the evolution of particular cases, such as the Hungarian Fidesz party, it would not prove to be valid when analysing the value-driven populist arguments, especially of the actors characterised also by the Eurosceptic stance (and those are a primary focus of the COST network). The CEE is not a coherent region, which may make it challenging to generalise.
The following section, focused on Euroscepticism, is also firmly rooted in the academic discourse, underscoring the key concerns surrounding the term and highlighting the primary categorisations that have been established over time. The project builds on Paul Taggart's definition of Euroscepticism. It will analyse the object, nature and intensity of the opposition to European integration.

Following a thorough conceptualisation of both phenomena, the article goes on to explore the connection between populism and Euroscepticism.
While the section on conceptualisation of populism distinguishes 'valence populism', the section exploring the populism-Euroscepticism nexus does not engage with this category, focusing instead on left and right-wing populism only.
Except for a mention of the Hungarian Fidesz party, the provided examples cover populist and Eurosceptic actors in Western and Southern Europe. Surprisingly, the paper does not engage with cases from Nordic countries, Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Cases such as EKRE, Konferderacja, SNS, Sweden Democrats, Smer, Vazrazhdane and Romanian AUR, to name but a few, are of significance and could serve to demonstrate the phenomenon of populist Euroscepticism. There is a rich body of existing literature on these parties/countries and including it would enhance the paper and provide the reader with a more comprehensive understanding of the European populist-Euroscepticism.

In summary, this is a well-written and well-researched article that provides a solid foundation for further research. However, two issues have led to some reservations. Firstly, there is a lack of connection between valence populism and populist Euroscepticism in the section on the nexus between the two. Secondly, it should be noted that the geographical bias of the paper is notable, as it is based mostly on Western examples, while the COST network covers all of Europe, and the country reports cover 40 countries.

Is the topic of the review discussed comprehensively in the context of the current literature?

Yes

Are all factual statements correct and adequately supported by citations?

Yes

Is the review written in accessible language?

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn appropriate in the context of the current research literature?
Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Euroscepticism, Populism, Central and Eastern Europe, Western Balkans, EU integration, Enlargement

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Author Response 22 Jun 2026

Juan Roch

Dear Natasza Styczynska,
Thank you very much for your constructive and insightful comments. We respond to each point below and outline the revisions we have made in the revised version of the manuscript.

1. The article provides a conceptual framework for studying the populism–Euroscepticism nexus within COST action 'Linking euroscepticism and populism: causes and consequences' (EUPopLink). The article is well structured and easy to follow. It begins by exploring the concept of populism before moving on to examine Euroscepticism. It then goes on to analyse the links between the two. While the study is theoretically robust, its focus on Western European examples may give the impression that other regions are either unaffected by the phenomenon or have received less research attention. However, this is not the case.

Thanks for the positive comments, and also for pointing out that the use of examples can be drawn from a wider geographical area. We sought to address this by referring to more non-WE cases as illustrative examples. Note that this text primarily serves as a conceptual framework and basis for the country reports in this collection – so it does not aim to provide a systematic analysis of populist Euroscepticism, and empirical examples are mainly used to clarify concepts and theory.

2. The first part of the discussion focuses on the various definitions of populism. The authors have chosen to concentrate on the supply-side of populism and Euroscepticism. I am curious as to the reasoning behind this. It would be beneficial to understand why authors only focus on the supply side, while the demand side also tells us about the nexus between these two phenomena.

The reviewer is completely right to point this out, and the demand side will certainly also be covered by the broader EUPopLink project. But, beyond general conceptualization, our WG1 was primarily tasked with mapping populism and Euroscepticism on the supply side, and this article serves as a foundational article for the country reports that are also part of this ORE collection. We have clarified this in the introduction

3. The discussion presents an ideational and discursive approach. For the needs of the COST project, populism will be understood as a dichotomy between the people and the elite, and three types of populism: right-wing, left-wing and value populism will be studied. The authors observe that valence populism 'has been particularly widespread in Central and Eastern Europe', a statement that is open to debate. While it is accurate for some of the first populist movements and parties, and can represent the evolution of particular cases, such as the Hungarian Fidesz party, it would not prove to be valid when analysing the value-driven populist arguments, especially of the actors characterised also by the Eurosceptic stance (and those are a primary focus of the COST network). The CEE is not a coherent region, which may make it challenging to generalise.

The reviewer is right that this passage was too crude and lacked nuance. The revised text attempts to clarify the specific time span of these examples and to avoid generalization. Some more (recent) examples from CEE countries are integrated in the remainder of the text.

4. The following section, focused on Euroscepticism, is also firmly rooted in the academic discourse, underscoring the key concerns surrounding the term and highlighting the primary categorisations that have been established over time. The project builds on Paul Taggart's definition of Euroscepticism. It will analyse the object, nature and intensity of the opposition to European integration. Following a thorough conceptualisation of both phenomena, the article goes on to explore the connection between populism and Euroscepticism. While the section on conceptualisation of populism distinguishes 'valence populism', the section exploring the populism-Euroscepticism nexus does not engage with this category, focusing instead on left and right-wing populism only.

Two amendments in the section now clarify that all types of populism (left, right, valence) are likely to share certain critiques of the EU (those that are related to their populism per se). Where we discuss the additional role of ideological leaning for the substantive content and arguments forming the EU critique of political actors, we clarify that here only the PRR and left-wing populist variants are relevant, given that ‘valence populism’ is not inherently ideologically oriented.

5. Except for a mention of the Hungarian Fidesz party, the provided examples cover populist and Eurosceptic actors in Western and Southern Europe. Surprisingly, the paper does not engage with cases from Nordic countries, Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Cases such as EKRE, Konferderacja, SNS, Sweden Democrats, Smer, Vazrazhdane and Romanian AUR, to name but a few, are of significance and could serve to demonstrate the phenomenon of populist Euroscepticism. There is a rich body of existing literature on these parties/countries and including it would enhance the paper and provide the reader with a more comprehensive understanding of the European populist-Euroscepticism.

We agree with the reviewer that the use of examples can be drawn from a wider geographical area. We sought to address this by referring to several more non-WE cases as illustrative examples at various places in the article. We also added a paragraph that highlights the wide geographical scope of the project (that also covers candidate countries).

Note, however, that this text primarily serves as a conceptual framework and basis for the country reports in this collection – so it does not aim to provide a systematic analysis of populist Euroscepticism, and empirical examples are mainly used to clarify concepts and theory. This is also explained now at the start of the 'nexus' section. The rich country-specific empirical material can be found in the country reports that are part of this ORE collection.

In summary, this is a well-written and well-researched article that provides a solid foundation for further research. However, two issues have led to some reservations. Firstly, there is a lack of connection between valence populism and populist Euroscepticism in the section on the nexus between the two. Secondly, it should be noted that the geographical bias of the paper is notable, as it is based mostly on Western examples, while the COST network covers all of Europe, and the country reports cover 40 countries.

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