

IMAGINE EUROPE

Analysis of the online survey results

Introduction:

As one of the key objectives of the Imagine Europe project is to gather data on the importance and spread of possible reasons for Euroscepticism and on ways to counter Euroscepticism, as envisioned in the project design all partners conducted an online survey with representatives of the five target sectors - business, education, migration, social sector and youth.

Drawing on data from previous research (eg: Hartleb 2015; Van Elsas et al 2016; Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008; Boomgaarden et al 2011; Nicolò, Memoli 2012) we structured the questionnaire around key topics that are known to be or are perceived as focal points of dissatisfaction with the EU – bureaucracy, financial burden, identity issues, migration and refugees, democratic representation. To avoid distortion of results and to have the opportunity to see the actual attitude of the respondents towards the EU we build the questionnaire in a very non-suggestive fashion, included options that presented pro-EU statements and reasoning.

The analysis is based on data from all partner countries participating in the project: Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and Sweden as the chapters on each country are written by the respective partners.

Methodology and design:

The survey in all countries was conducted as Computer-Assisted Self Interviewing (CASI) and results were gathered via internet, using Google forms. The target sample was 500 respondents per country as in the ideal case those would include 100 of each of the target sectors – business, education, migration, social sector and youth. However, since respondents were gathered via volunteer sample and because of certain objective obstacles, differing for each country, almost everywhere the initial quota of 100 respondents per target sector migration was not reached. The different problems we faced in different countries, discussed in detail in the corresponding sections, presented us with the choice of either striving for the initial ratio or losing information due to the need for

amputation of cases (as in Germany) or never completing the study due to the lack of such respondents (as in Croatia) or having to compute the actual representatives of this sector by using data from other questions (as in Bulgaria).

Since the selected method of gathering data is via volunteering, as respondents were more or less free to decide to participate or not, i.e. the sample is not representative, we decided it would be most appropriate and beneficial if we keep all the cases and include in the analysis all the available data.

Overall 3756 respondents were CASI interviewed in the 7 participating countries. Responses were gathered from 18.08.2017 until 30.04.2018.

It is important to stress that the type of sample used - volunteer sample – means that results of the survey are not to be extrapolated to the general population of the participating countries. It would be incorrect to presume that the percentages and numbers here represent the opinion of people living in the respective country and the analysis does not have such pretense. However, we do not consider this a disadvantage of the study as the main goal is to gather data on pro- and anti-EU opinions and possible explanations from the perspective of different target sectors. Furthermore, the fact that the sample is not representative does not diminish the importance of the relations we have found between different variables.

As already mentioned, we structured the questionnaire around the following key topics: bureaucracy, financial burden, identity issues, migration and refugees, democratic representation. The questionnaire included three types of questions: socio-demographic questions, main questions about opinions on key topics and explanatory questions with possible arguments and factors. Since our preliminary research showed that in reality very few people have an already structured opinion with clear argumentation on the matter we build the questionnaire with only close-format questions. At the same time, to avoid distortion, in almost all explanatory questions we included an option for adding a free answer.

To be able to make a comparative analysis on the data from different countries all partners used the exact same questionnaire, translated in their own language. Logical checks and pilot interviews were made so as to ensure there were no differences or vagueness due to language. After gathering the results data was translated back to English

and aggregated so to be compared and analyzed. In parallel with the overall comparative analysis, all partners made separate analyzes on the data from their own country.

CHAPTER 1: OVERAL RESULTS

This chapter presents overall results of the survey, based on data from all participating partners. It consists of four sub-chapters depicting: 1) characteristics of the sample and respondents; 2) shared opinions on the main topics; 3) most important differences in the opinions by country, sector, age and educational level; 4) profile of EU-sceptic and EU-optimist.

Characteristics of respondents and sample

As mentioned, all gathered cases and data are used in the analysis, meaning there are differences in the number of respondents that participated from different countries and from different groups according to target sector, gender, age and education. Another thing we must say is those differences are not weighted to match the general population ratio, as it would have only meant undue loss of information.

Regarding country the respondents come from, the biggest difference is in the case of Germany where in order to secure enough migrant and migration sector representatives more than 700 questionnaires had to be filled. The precise number of respondents by country are: Bulgaria – 503, Croatia – 503, Germany – 704, Greece – 504, Italy – 536, Poland – 503, Sweden – 503. Figure 1 below shows the ratio in percentages.

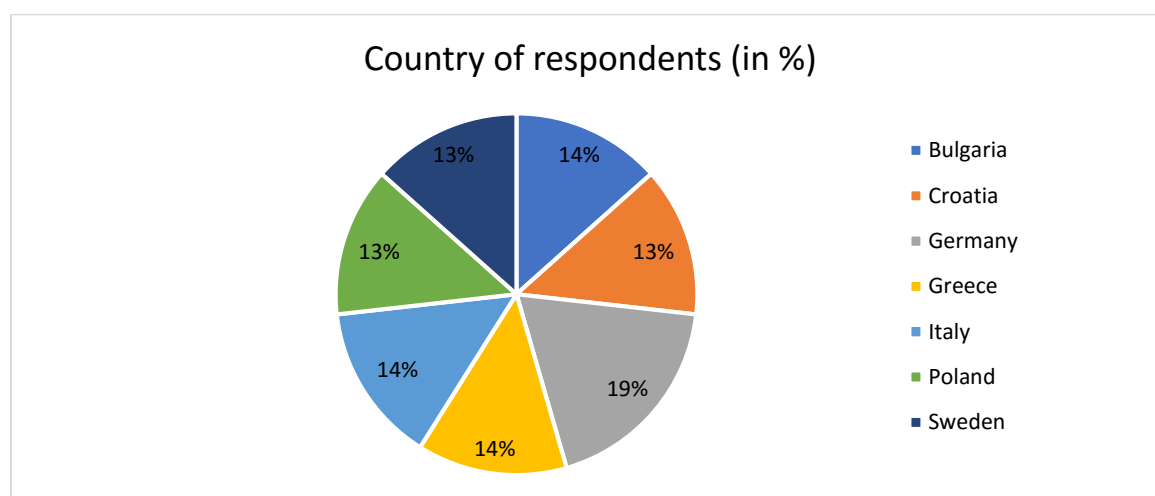


Figure 1

In terms of target sector, the smallest percentage of respondents belong to the migrant and migration sector – 9% and most belong to the social sector – 26% (Figure 2). This difference between the two sectors and gap between them and the rest is due mostly to the fact that (as noticed unambiguously in Germany) respondents who work with migrants would actually identify themselves not as migration but as social sector. Further, in the Bulgarian sample it was possible to objectively identify migrants and migration sector as there were two identical questionnaires in English and Bulgarian and by using data from other questions. Unfortunately, this was not possible for other countries, still we suspect in them as well respondents belonging to migration sector were reluctant to identify as such. It should be noticed here that, as data from Italy and Greece regarding the sector of the respondents is not available they are not included in the figure below.

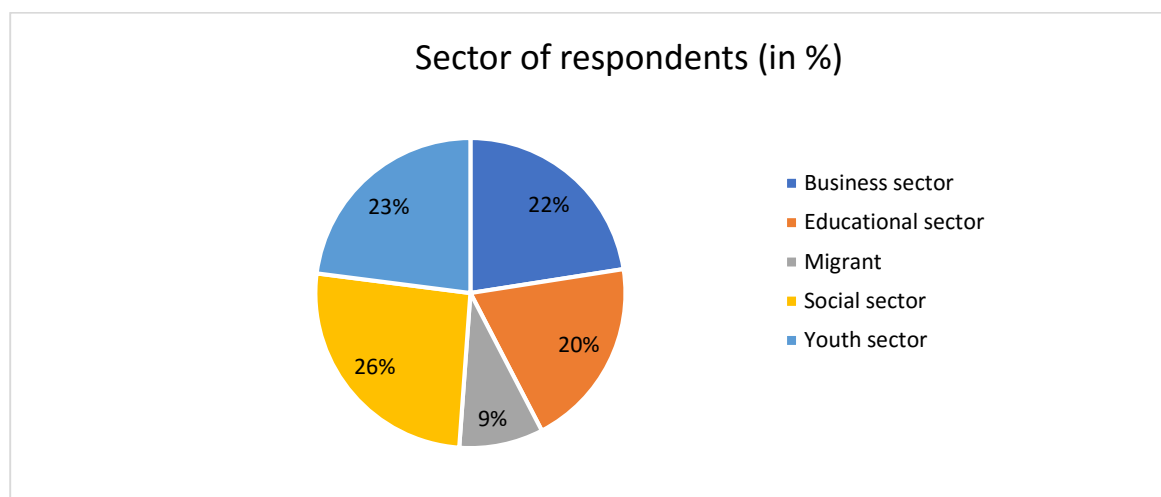


Figure 2

Regarding gender most of the respondents are female – 57% and 42% are male. There is one percent that identified as non-binary. Regarding age most respondents belong to the age group of 18-29, followed by the group of 30-45 (Figure 3).

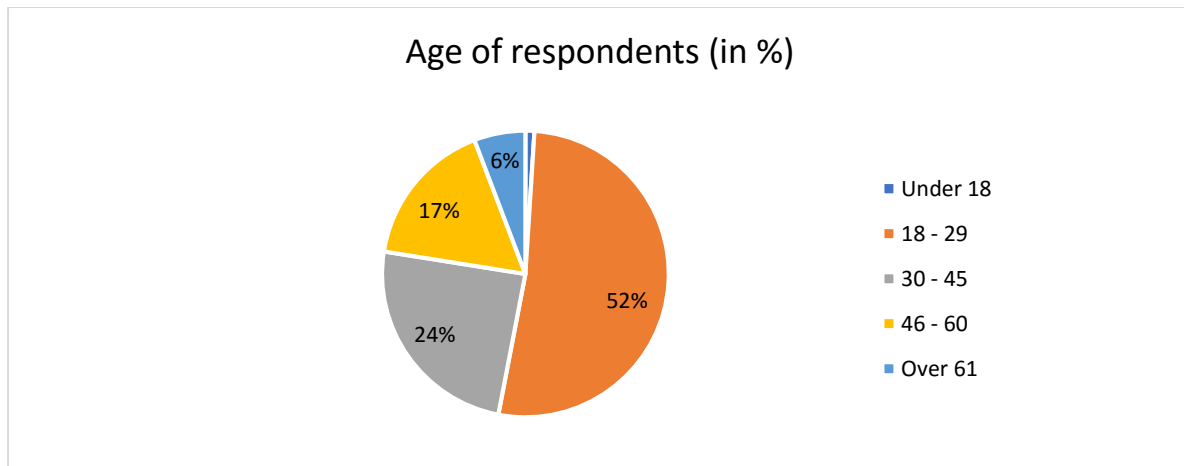


Figure 3

Regarding the level of education most respondents – almost half - hold a bachelor's or master's university degree (Figure 4). There is as well a high percentage of respondents who are high school graduates or hold an equivalent diploma – 31% and some that have passed a trade/technical/vocational exam. It must be noted that some of the respondents in those two groups are still continuing their educational path and are in the moment students in university. There are as well 5% of the respondents who are secondary school graduates, 4% - primary school graduates and 2% that hold a PhD degree.

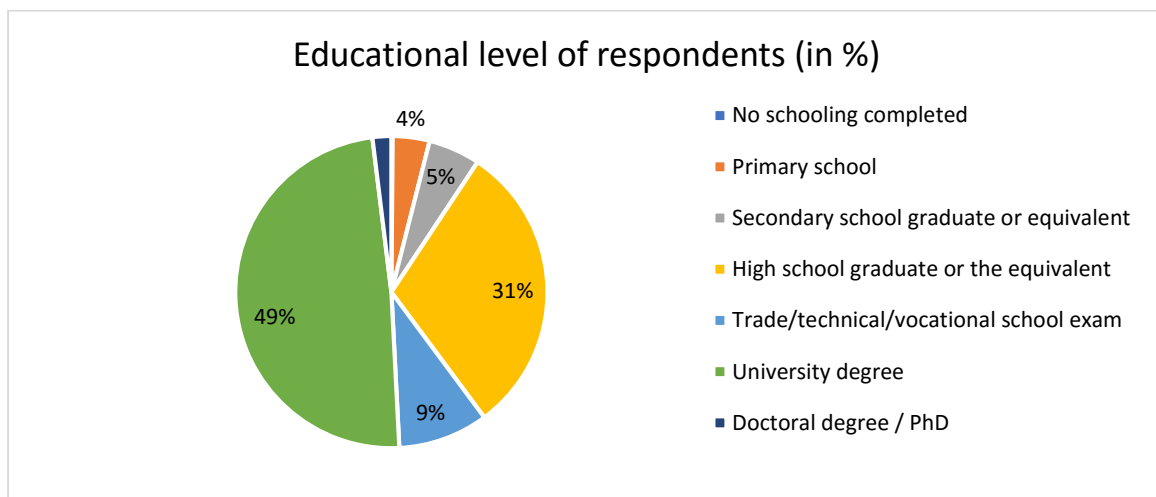


Figure 4

Overall attitude and opinions on main topics about the EU

Generally, results show that our respondents are closer to Euro-optimism than to Euro-skepticism. However, we must yet here say, there is small, but still relevant part of the respondents who openly and uniformly express their generally negative attitude towards EU

and an even bigger part of the respondents who, although generally pro-EU share concerns and dissatisfaction connected to the issues problematic.

On the topic of identity and belonging more than half of the respondents agree in one

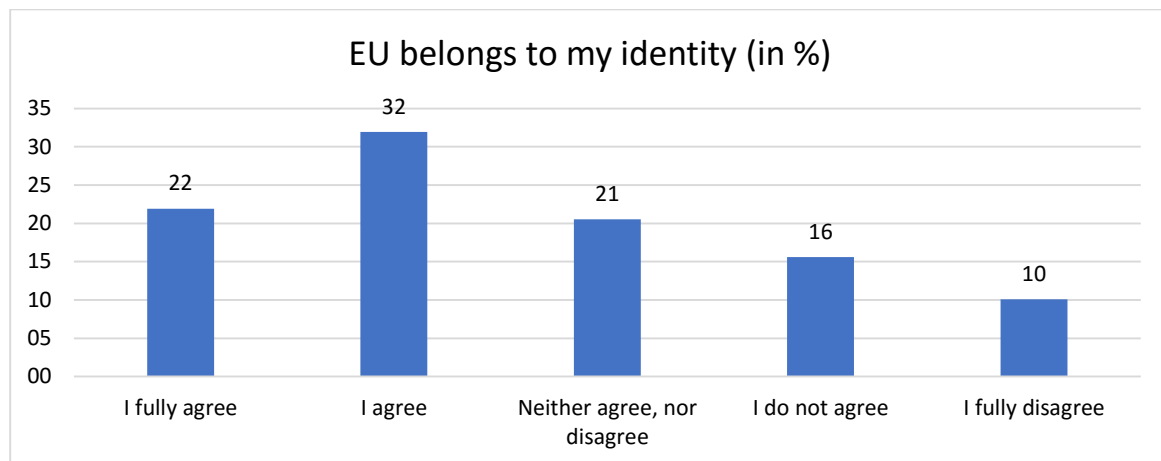


Figure 5

degree or another - 22% - "fully agree" and 32% - "agree" - that EU belongs to their identity (Figure 5). A quarter disagree in one degree or another - 10% - "fully disagree" and 16% - "disagree" that EU belongs to their identity.

Similarly, almost half of the respondents (47%) declare they "believe in Europe", but there are 10% that consider EU takes their identity or reduces it (Figure 6).

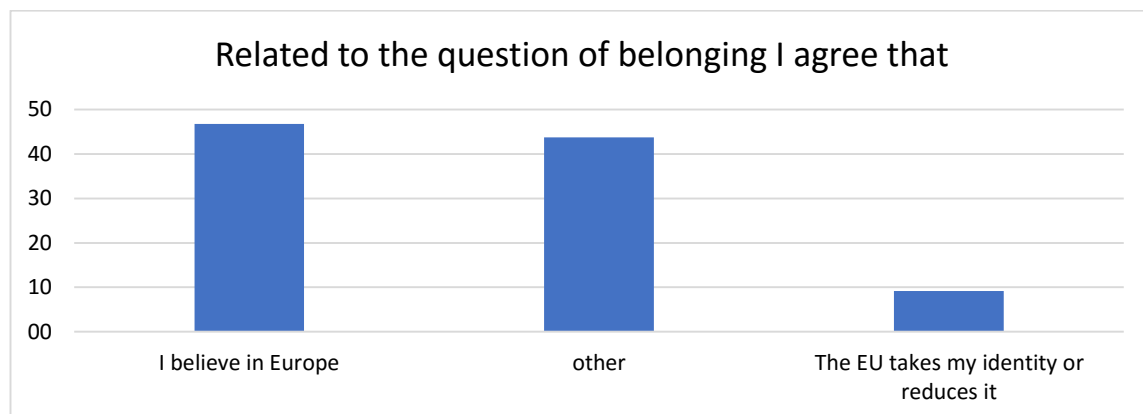


Figure 6

The topic of EU values is the one that gathers most positive opinions. 76% of the respondents agree that European values are important for them. Even more so, as shown in Figure 7 below the distribution of the opinions on this topic is exponential with the most frequent answer being "I fully agree" - 46% and the least frequent - "I fully disagree" - 03%.

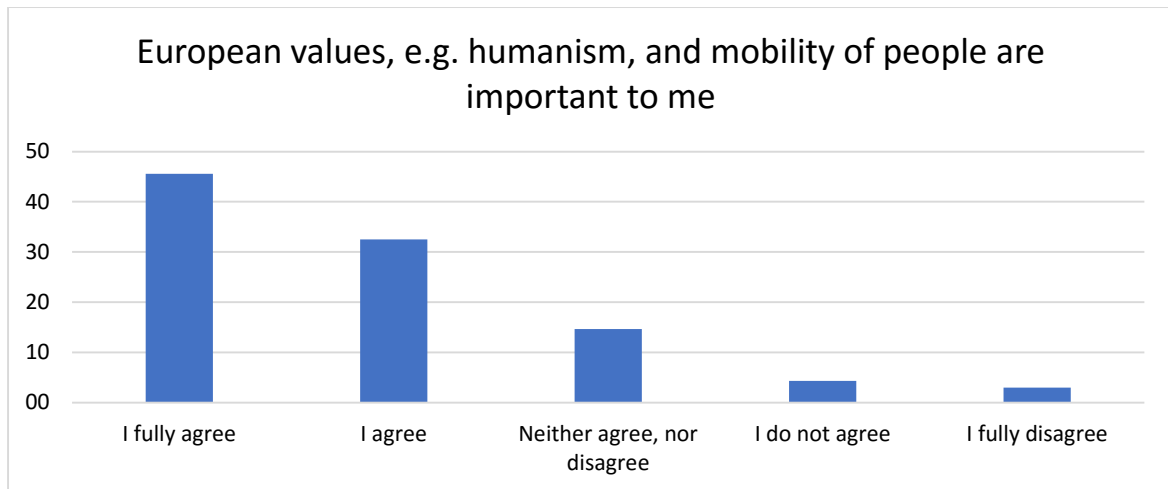


Figure 7

The topic of bureaucracy turns out to be the issue with most negative assessment from the respondents. Although the neutral option is most frequently chosen by the respondents, if we combine the positive and negative answers disregarding their degree, we see that more than half of the respondents consider that EU is indeed too bureaucratic. We have to also note there is only 1% of respondents who fully disagree EU is too bureaucratic, at the same time as 21% fully agree with the statement (Figure 8).

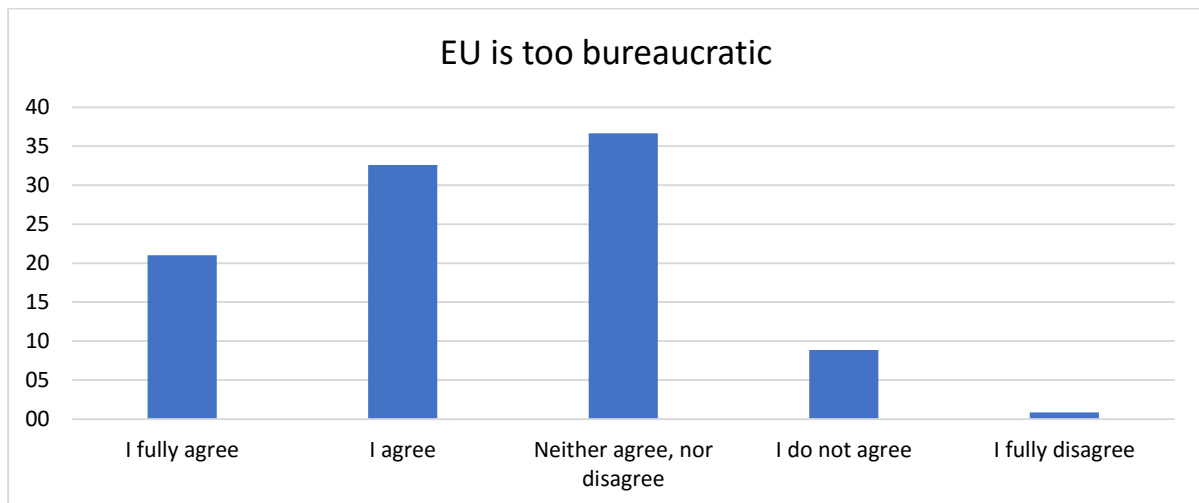


Figure 8

On the topic of cost of EU opinions are more evenly dispersed though, again, respondents who agree in one degree or another that EU costs too much money are significantly more than the respondents who disagree in one degree or another with such a statement (Figure 9). Again the extreme option "fully agree" is several times higher than the extreme option "fully disagree".

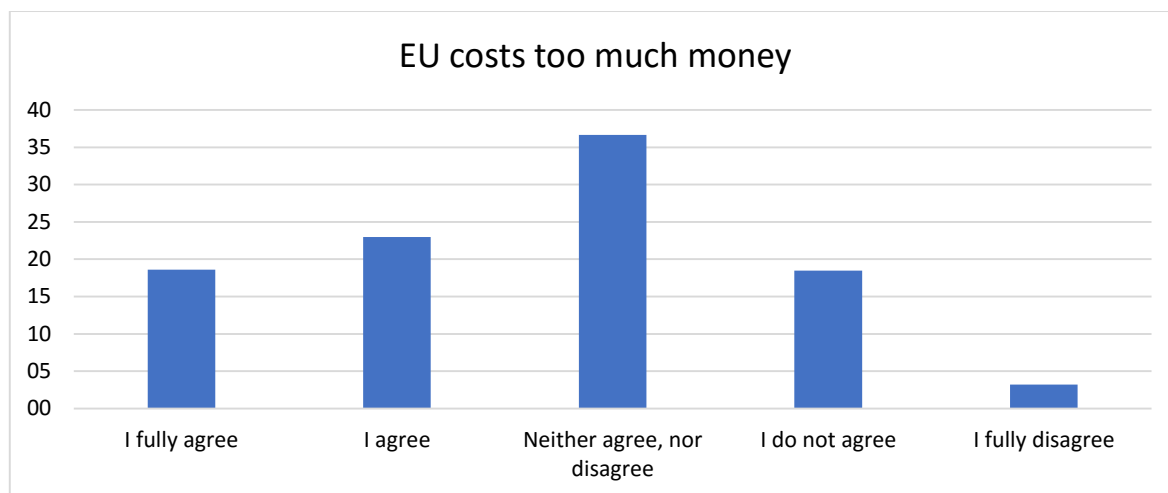


Figure 9

Most respondents would like to have more opportunities for their democratic participation in the EU as 32% of the respondents fully agree and 33% agree with this statement (Figure 10). 6% of all respondents do not agree in one degree or another with wanting more such opportunities.

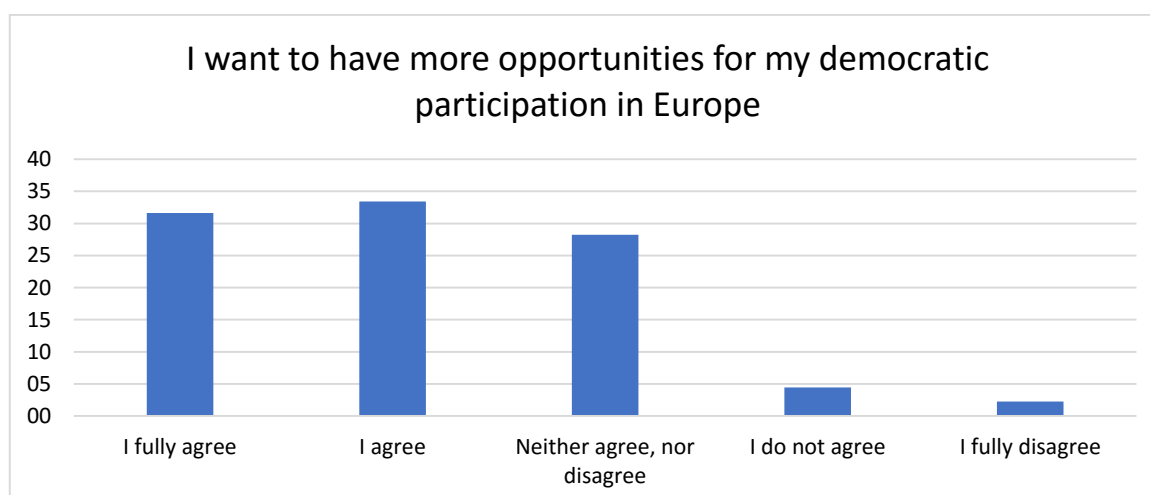


Figure 10

Regarding the topic of EU size, most frequent opinion is the neutral one – 37% neither agree nor disagree with the statement that EU has grown too big (Figure 11). It is interesting that, if we compare the positive and negative answers, without taking into consideration the strength, opinions of respondents who are not congruent predominate, however there are twice as more “fully agree” than “fully disagree answers”. In other words, respondents who consider EU is too big already, tend to be more extreme in their opinion than those who consider it is not.

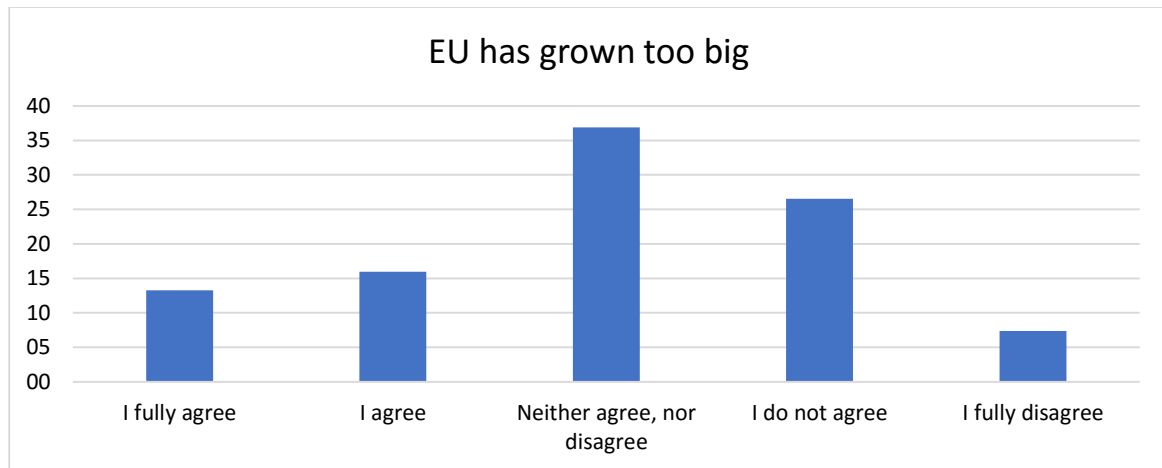


Figure 11

Regarding size and future of the EU the most frequent opinion is that EU shall include some new countries, followed by the opinion that EU should be as it is at the moment (Figure 12). There are however a lot of opinions that it would be better if the respondent's country would leave the EU (14%) and that other countries should leave the EU, making the Union smaller again – 13%. We have to mention as well the opinions that EU must focus on consolidation or should be reformed prior to everything else, as well as the opinion that other countries should be included only if they meet strict criteria. Despite being shared only by few, those are in fact free given answers that were later summarized and coded, meaning that the respondents that share them, already have them as a solid opinion.

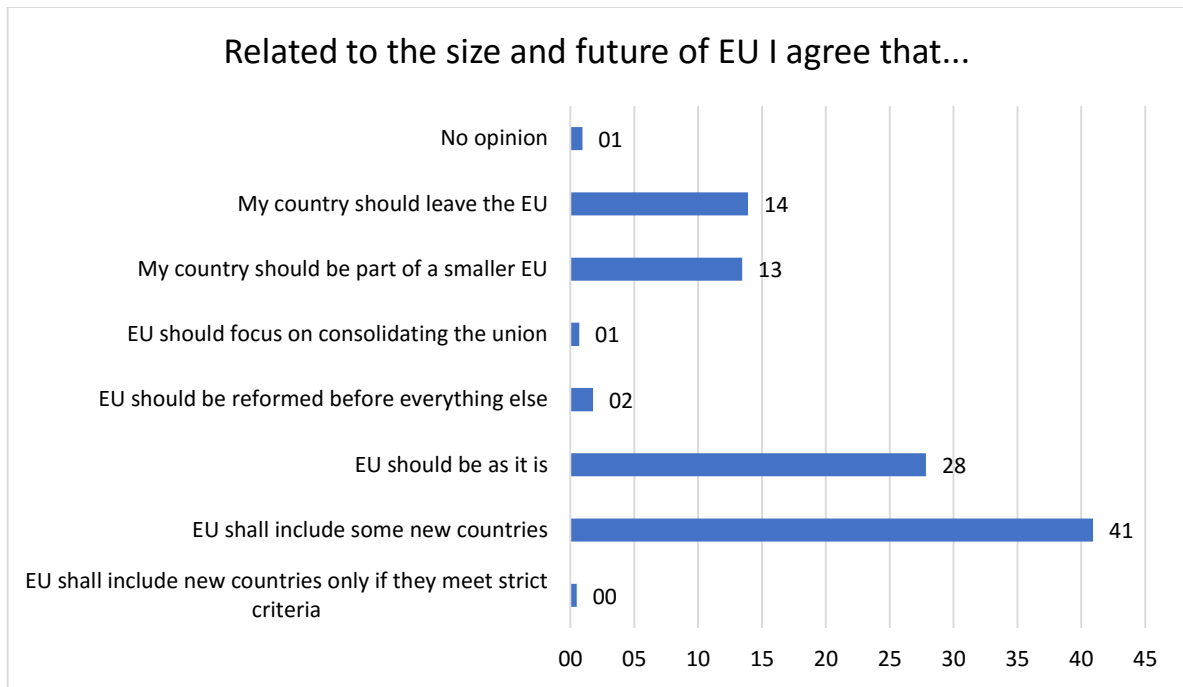


Figure 12

Detailed analysis

The cross-tabulation analysis of the data shows little or no difference in the distribution by gender and by type of occupation. There is significant correlation between main variables and country, sector, age and educational level, which we will analyze in detail below.

Differences by country

Statistical analysis with estimation of Phi and Cramer's V (nominal by ordinal variable) between the country of the respondents and the main variables shows there is significance in the interrelation in all cases (Table 1).

Table 1: Cramer's V values where there is significant relation.

	<i>Bureaucracy</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Identity</i>
Country	0,276	0,310	0,263	0,250	0,243	0,268

The correlation between most is small to medium since values of Cramer's V are between 0,1 and 0,3 or very small as it is under 0,1 (Cohen, 1988, p. 25 and 79). However, we see a medium to strong correlation between the country and the opinion on the cost of EU.

The distribution of variables depicting the main topics by county, shows some interesting differences that tend to be more or less consistent.

Respondents from Germany are most critical overall towards EU and among them the number of those who consider Germany should leave the EU is bigger than the number of those who believe in EU and this is unique among participating countries (Figure 13). German respondents are more likely to agree in one degree or another the EU is too

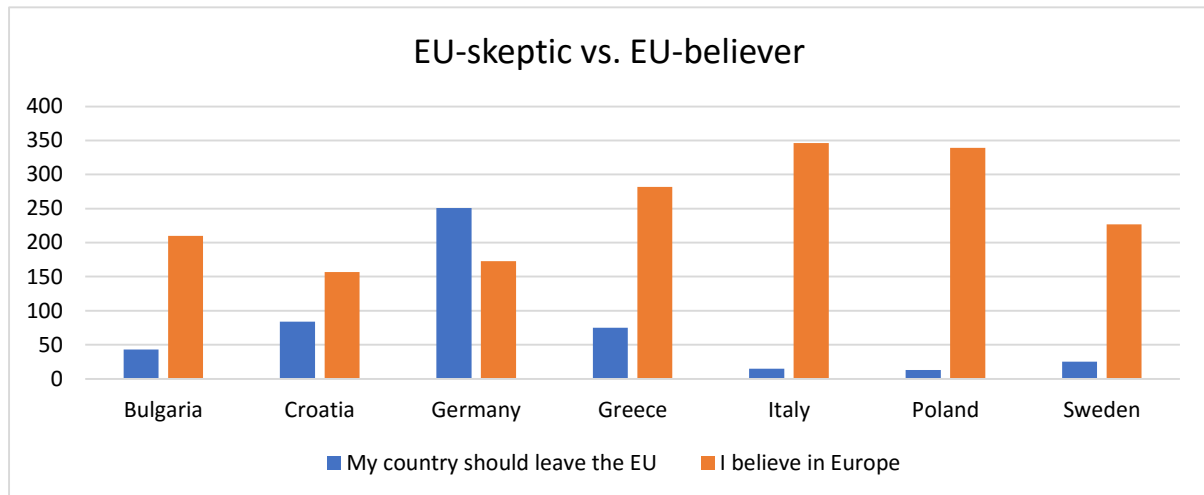


Figure 13

bureaucratic, costs too much or is overgrown. On the topic of bureaucracy and size of EU respondents from Germany are most critical of all. What is more, they tend to be more extreme in their negative assessments in all three topics and tend to fully agree in bigger proportion. More than half of respondents in Germany agree fully that EU is too bureaucratic (Figure 14) and too costly (Figure 15) and more than 40% fully agree EU has grown too big (Figure 16).

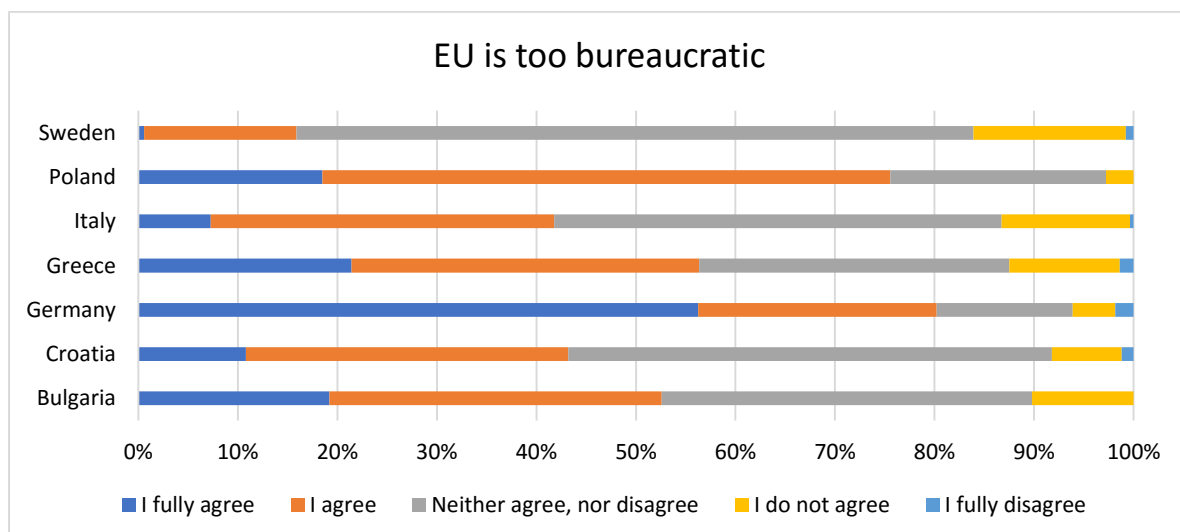


Figure 14

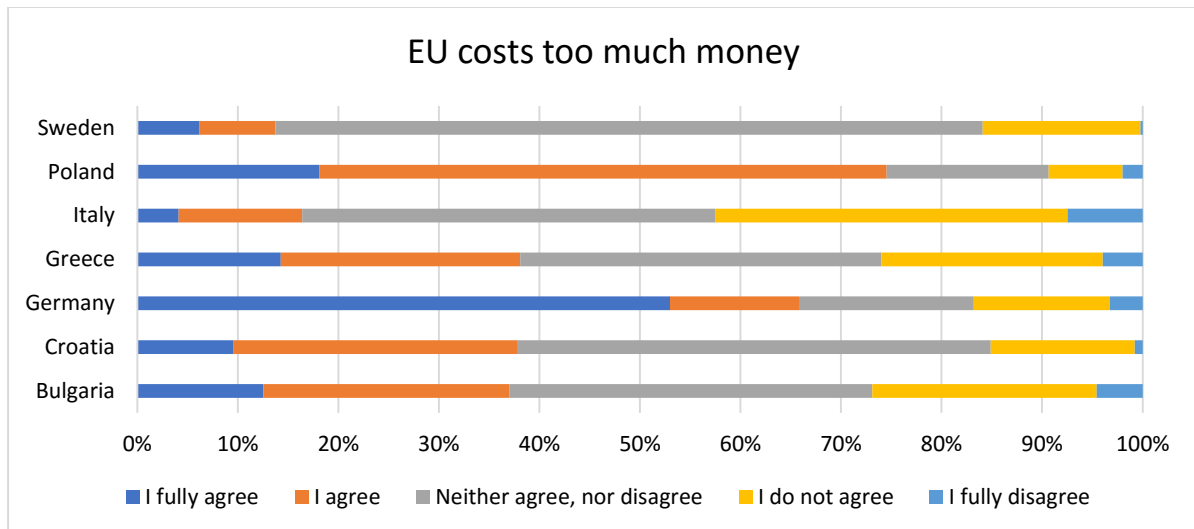


Figure 15

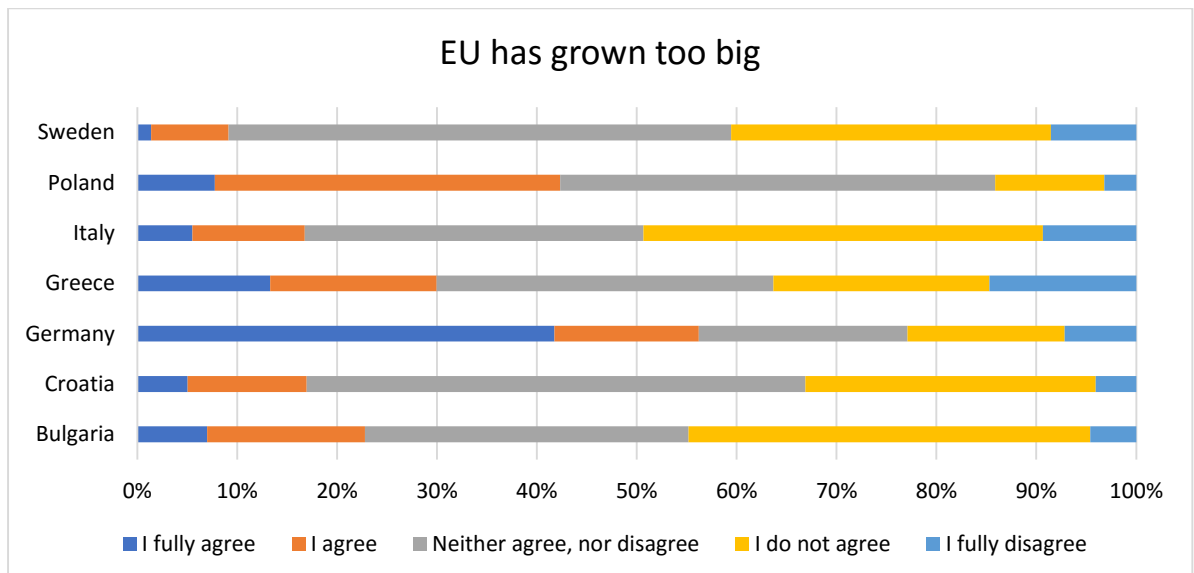


Figure 16

Similarly, respondents from Poland are more critical than others on the three topics of bureaucracy, cost and size of EU and even disagree in differing degrees less than all other countries on the three topics. On the topic of cost of EU Poland is most critical of all. At the same time however, they are among the ones that most strongly identify with EU (Figure 17), believe in EU (Figure 13) and cherish EU values (Figure 18).

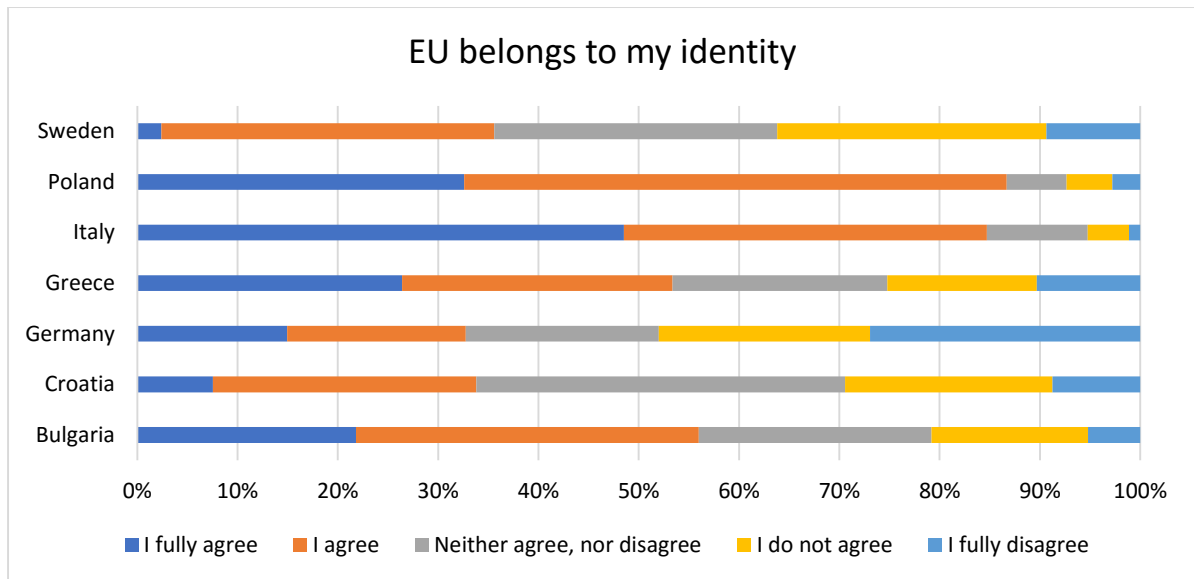


Figure 17

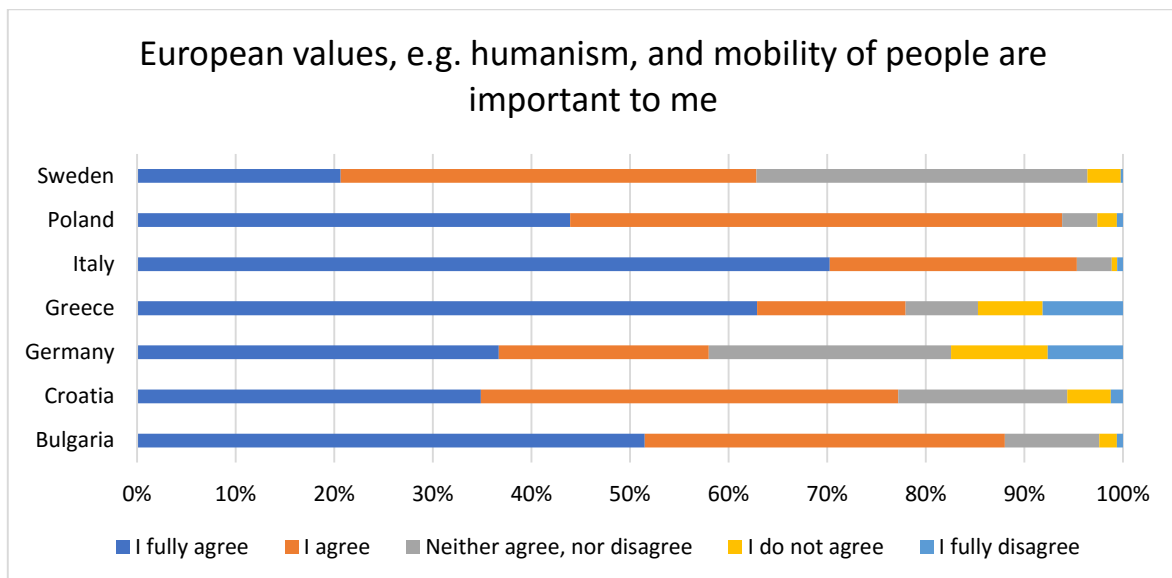


Figure 18

Respondents from Italy seem to be most pro- EU as they share in biggest proportions the values of the EU and tend to identify with EU (alongside Poles) much more than respondents from other countries. Italians are as well most likely to agree in one degree or another they want more opportunities for democratic participation in EU, i.e. they want to actively contribute to EU future.

Respondents from Sweden seem to be the utmost distanced from EU. They are least critical on the negative topics, as at the same time we have to note that this is not because they tend to mostly consider EU is not bureaucratic, costly or too big, but because biggest part tend to give neutral answer. What is more, almost 70% express neutral opinion as well on the topic of more opportunities for democratic participation (Figure 19).

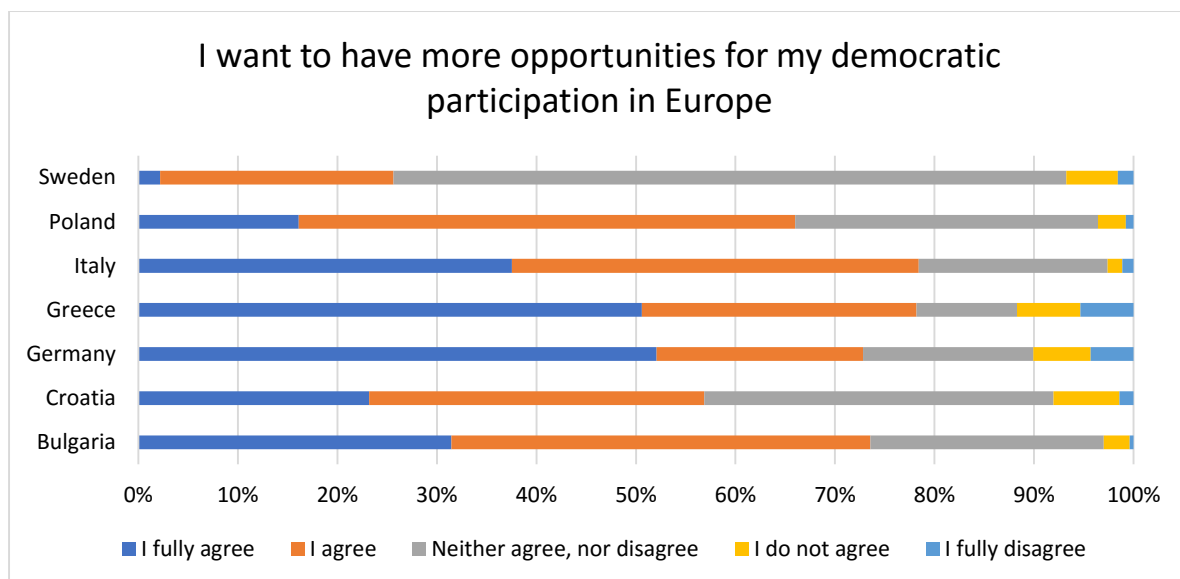


Figure 19

Respondents from Bulgaria, Croatia and Greece seem to be more moderate in all topics.

Difference by sector

Statistical analysis with estimation of Phi and Cramer's V (nominal by ordinal variable) between the sector of the respondents and the main variables shows there is significance in the interrelation in all cases (Table 2), though smaller than in the case of the country.

Table 2: Cramer's V values where there is significant relation.

	<i>Bureaucracy</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Identity</i>
Sector	0,134	0,119	0,105	0,088	0,081	0,088

The correlation between sector and the topic of bureaucracy, cost and size is small to medium as the values of Cramer's V are between 0,1 and 0,3 and the correlation between the sector and topics of participation, values and identity is very small as it is under 0,1 (Cohen, 1988, p. 25 and 79). Yet, there are some differences that are noteworthy as they are more or less consistent between different groups by target sector.

On the problematic topics of bureaucracy (Figure 20), cost (Figure 21) and size of EU (Figure 22) representatives of the business sector and the social sector seem to be most critical and likely to agree in one degree or another that indeed EU is too bureaucratic, costly or overgrown.

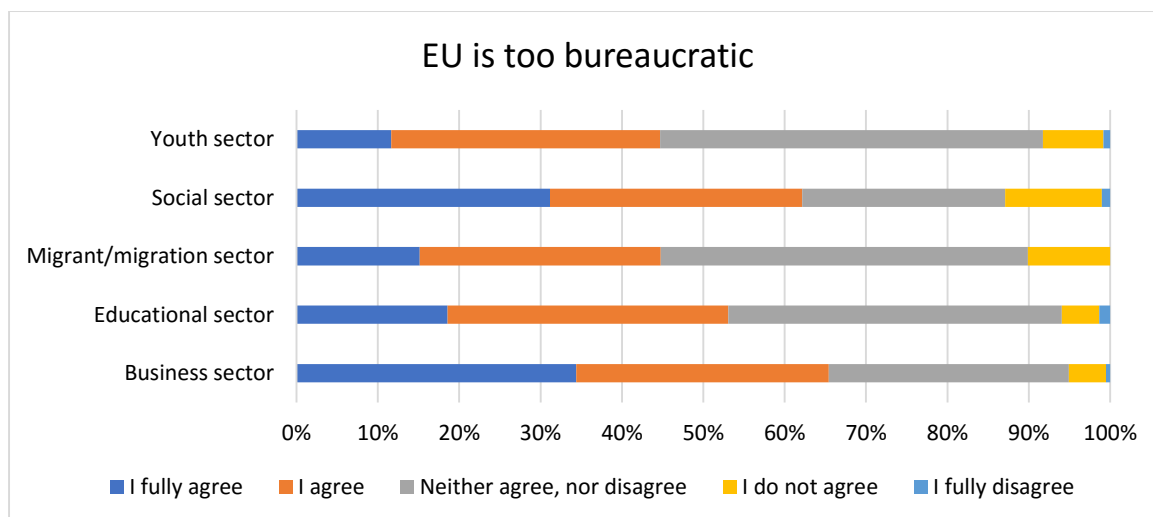


Figure 20

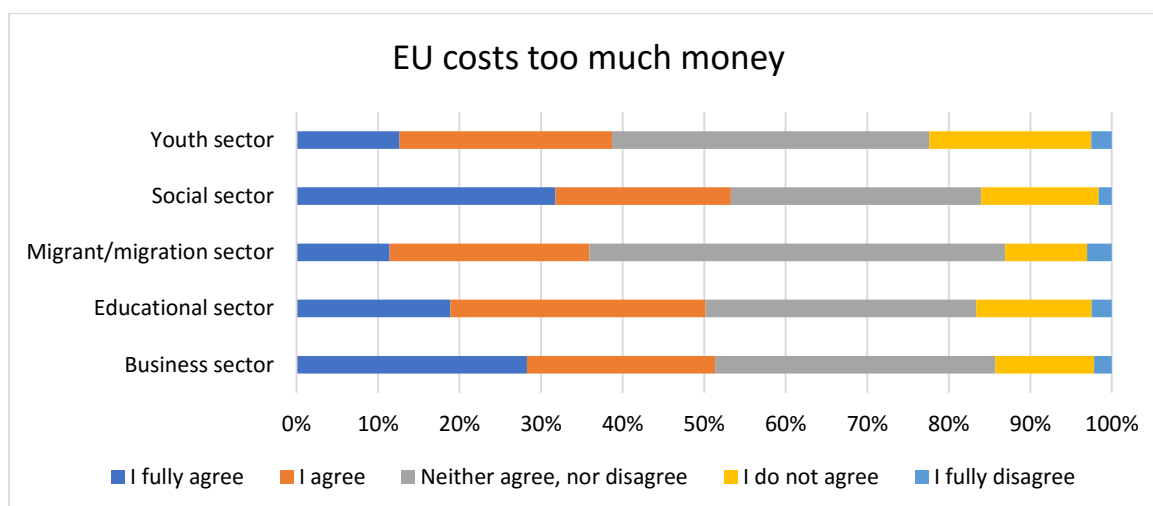


Figure 21

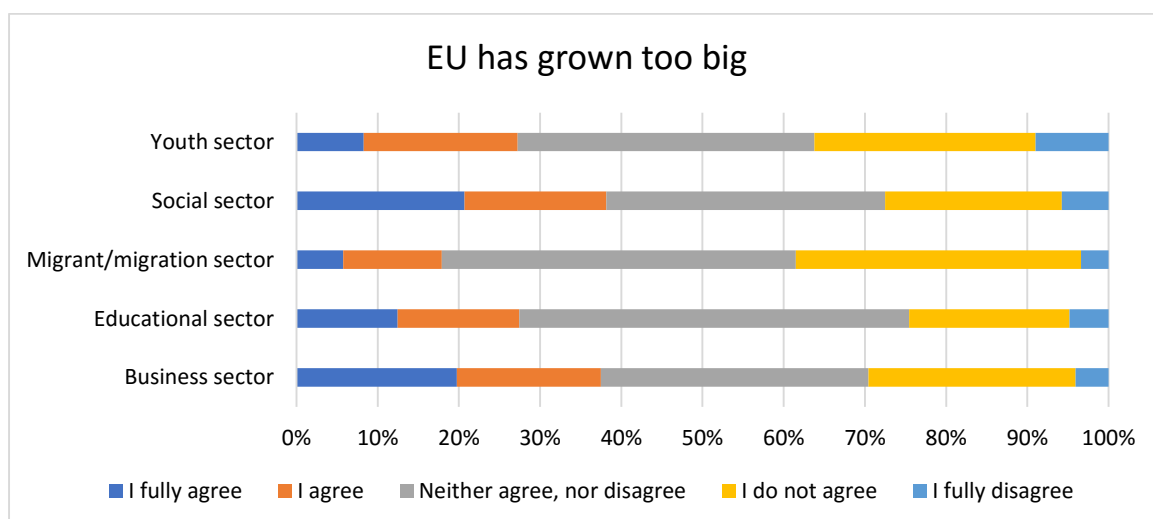


Figure 22

At the same time representatives of social sector are less likely to agree in one degree or another that EU belongs to their identity (Figure 23) or that EU values are important for them (Figure 24).

Representatives of youth and migrant sector are most likely to agree in one degree or another that EU belongs to their identity (Figure 23) or that EU values are important for them (Figure 24).

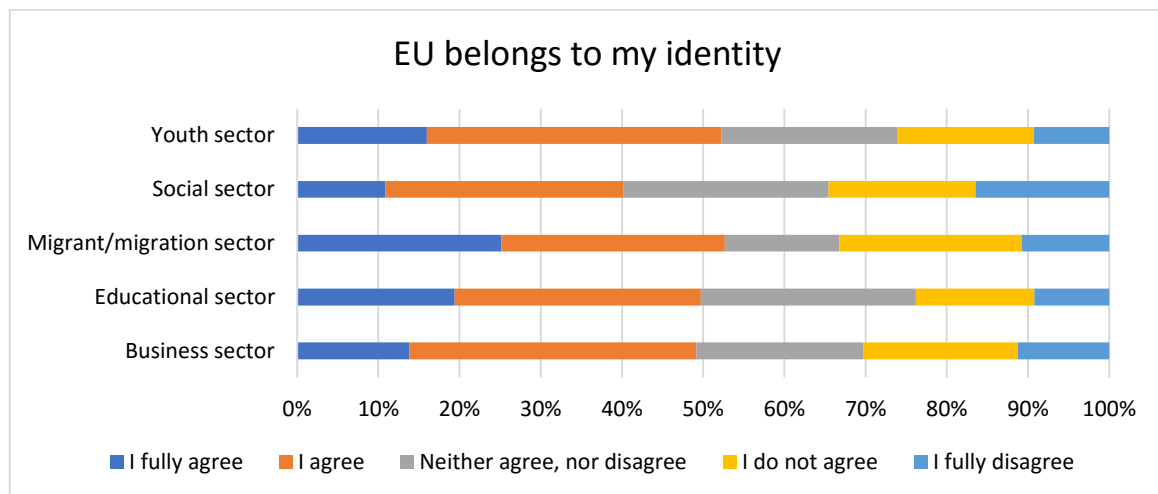


Figure 23

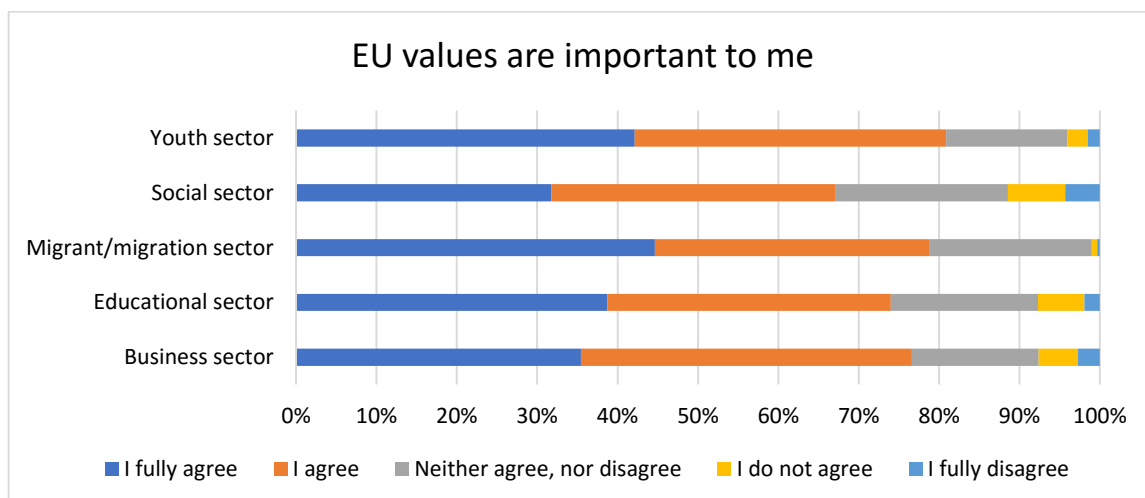


Figure 24

Representatives of the migrant sector are less likely to agree in one degree or another they would like to have more opportunities for democratic representation, wears business and social sector, most likely connected to their critical attitude are most likely to agree in one degree or another with this statement (Figure 25).

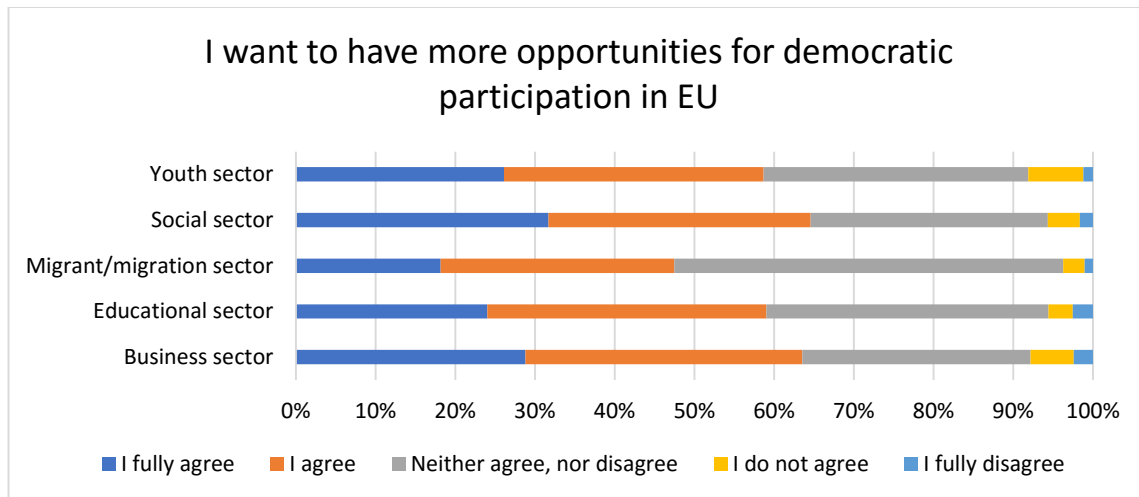


Figure 25

Differences by educational level

The statistical analysis of the correlation between the main topics and the educational level of respondents (ordinal by ordinal variable) using Gamma show small to medium significance of the correlation between educational level and the topics of values and identity and very small correlation between the educational level and the topics of bureaucracy, cost and size of EU (Table 2). There is no significant correlation between the educational level and the topic of participation.

Table 2: Gamma values where there is significant relation.

	<i>Bureaucracy</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Identity</i>
Education	0,099	0,152	0,146	*	-0,219	-0,282

Apart from strength, Gamma shows as well the direction of the relation. The small straight relation between the educational level of the respondents and their opinions on the topics of cost, size, bureaucracy means that although not very accurately (as the relation is significant yet small), we can predict that with the higher level of education respondents are more likely to disagree EU is too bureaucratic, costs too much or is overgrown. Indeed, there is such a pattern as visible for example in the case of cost (Figure 26), however we must say secondary school graduates are in fact most likely to agree and trade/technical/vocational school graduates are most likely to disagree with the statement that EU costs too much.

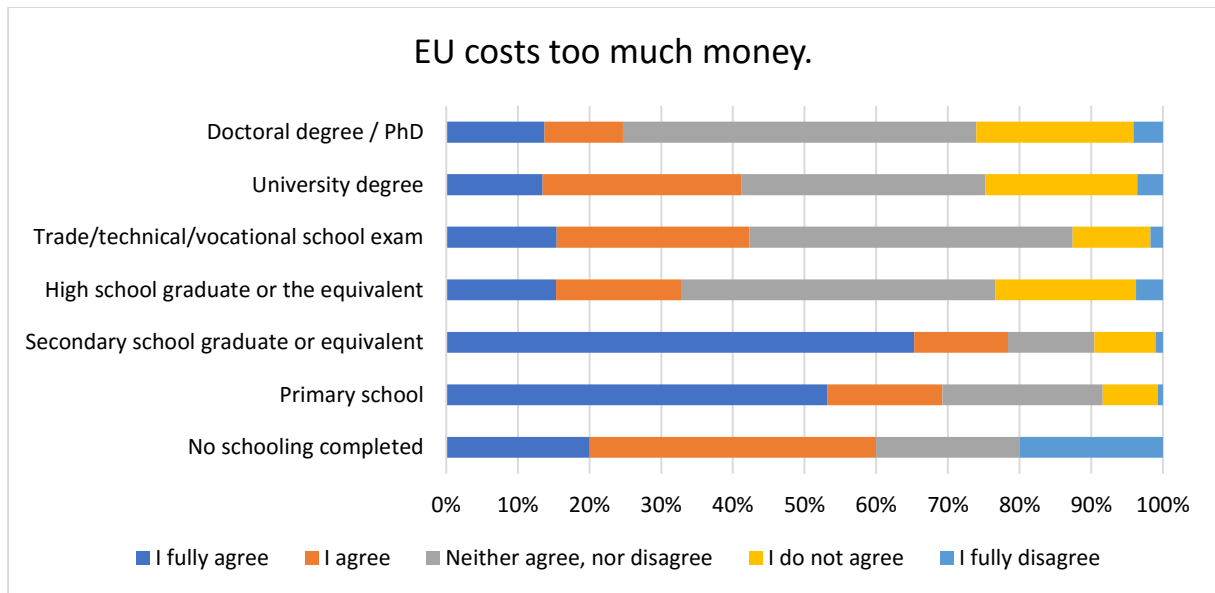


Figure 26

The pattern is much clearer in the cases of EU identity and importance of EU values. Here the connection is reverse meaning with the higher degree of education respondents are more likely to agree that EU belongs to their identity (Figure 27) and that EU values are important for them (Figure 28). Again however, there is small disruption in the pattern caused by the cases of the secondary school graduates and the trade/technical/vocational school graduates.

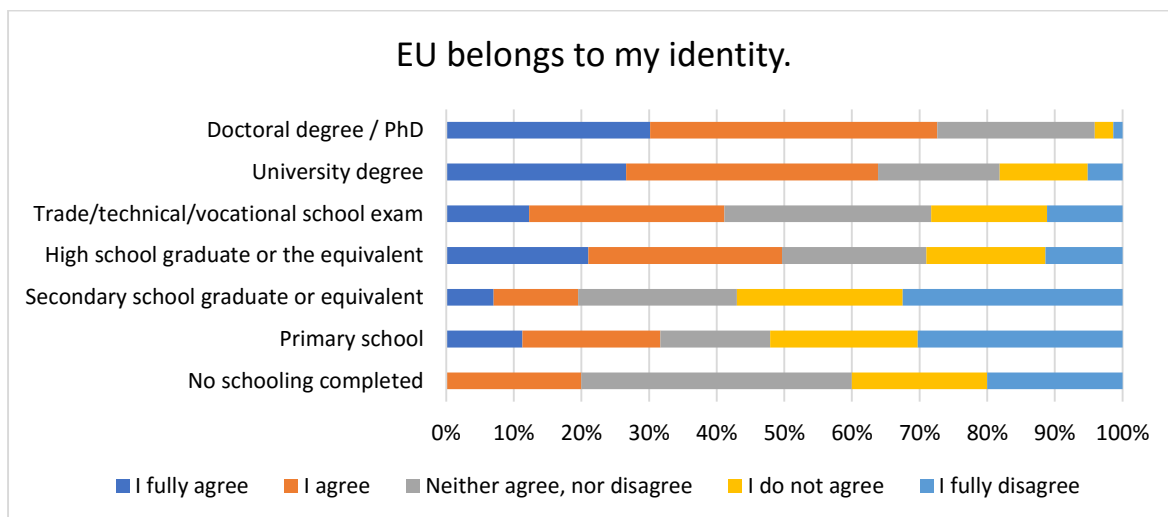


Figure 27

It is noteworthy that more than 70% of respondents with doctoral degree agree in one degree or another that EU belongs to their identity and more than 90% of the same educational group agree in one degree or another that European values are important for them.

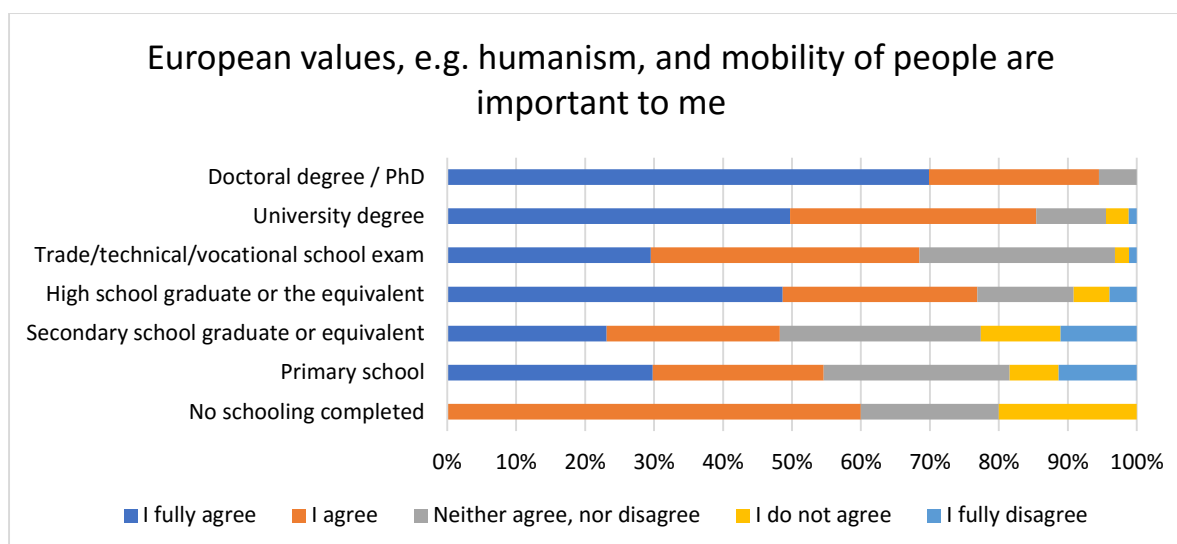


Figure 28

Differences by age

The statistical analysis of the correlation between the main topics and the age of respondents (ordinal by ordinal variable) using Gamma shows small to medium strength of the correlation between age and the topics of bureaucracy, cost, size and identity and medium to strong correlation between the age and the topic of importance of EU values (Table 4). In comparison with the correlations of the main topics and the educational level, in the case of age the correlations are stronger. Unfortunately, we cannot estimate whether correlations of the main topics with age are as well stronger in comparison with country and sector as it is incorrect to compare different statistical coefficients.

Table 4: Gamma values where there is significant relation.

	<i>Bureaucracy</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Identity</i>
Age	-0,218	-0,277	-0,232	*	0,304	0,271

Correlations between age and bureaucracy, cost and size are negative - reverse, meaning that with the age rising respondents are more prone to agreeing that EU is too bureaucratic, costs too much or has grown too big. On the contrary, the younger the respondents the more likely they are to disagree that EU is too bureaucratic (Figure 29), costs too much (Figure 30) or has grown too big (Figure 31).

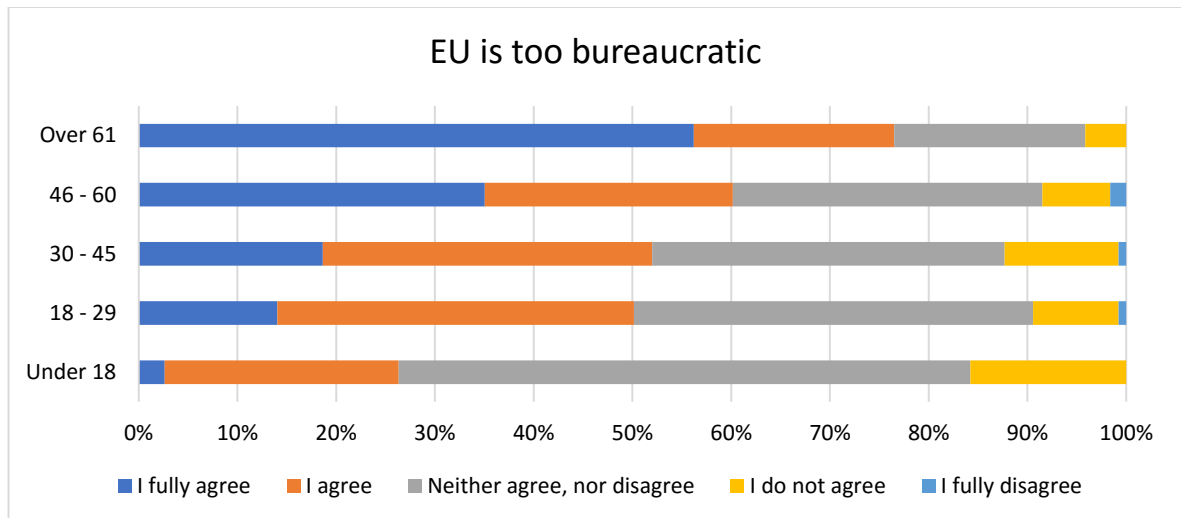


Figure 29

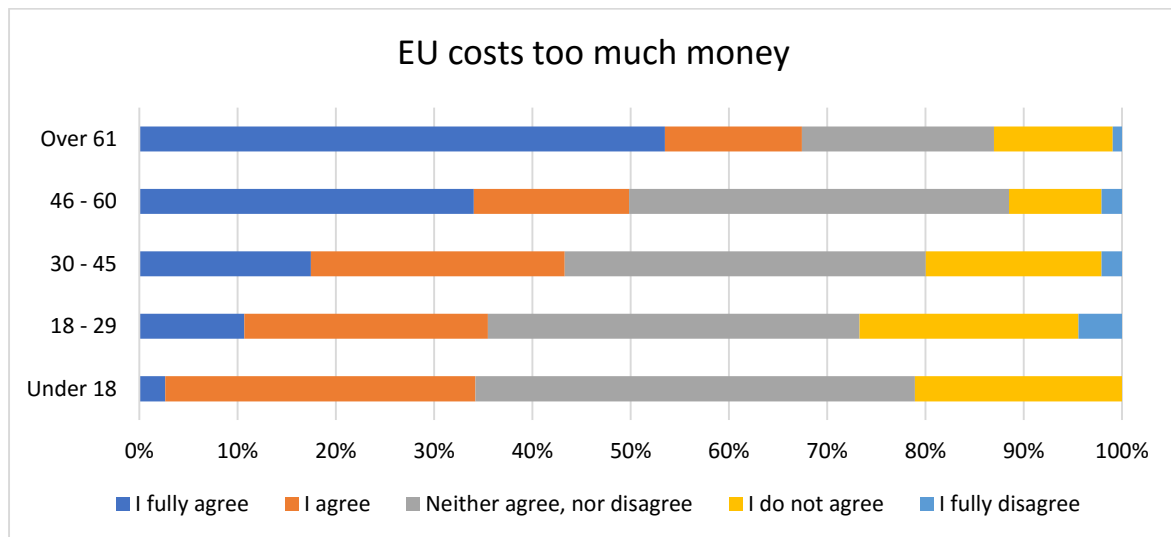


Figure 30

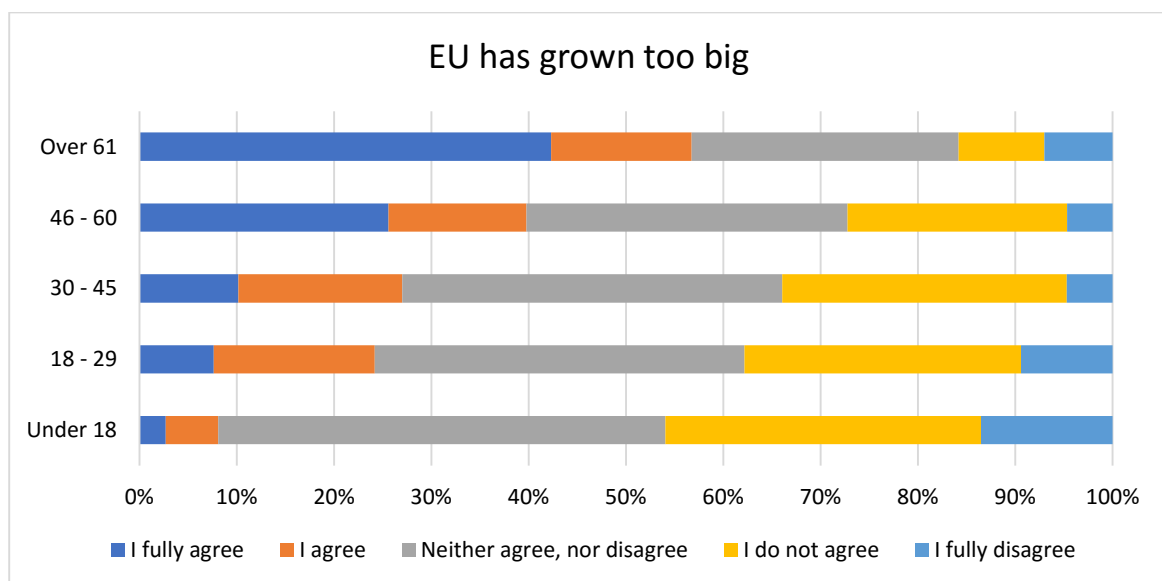


Figure 31

On the contrary, the correlation between age and importance of EU values is positive – straight, meaning that with age rising respondents are more prone to disagreeing EU values are important for them and the younger the respondents, the more likely they are to agreeing more EU values are important to them (Figure 32).

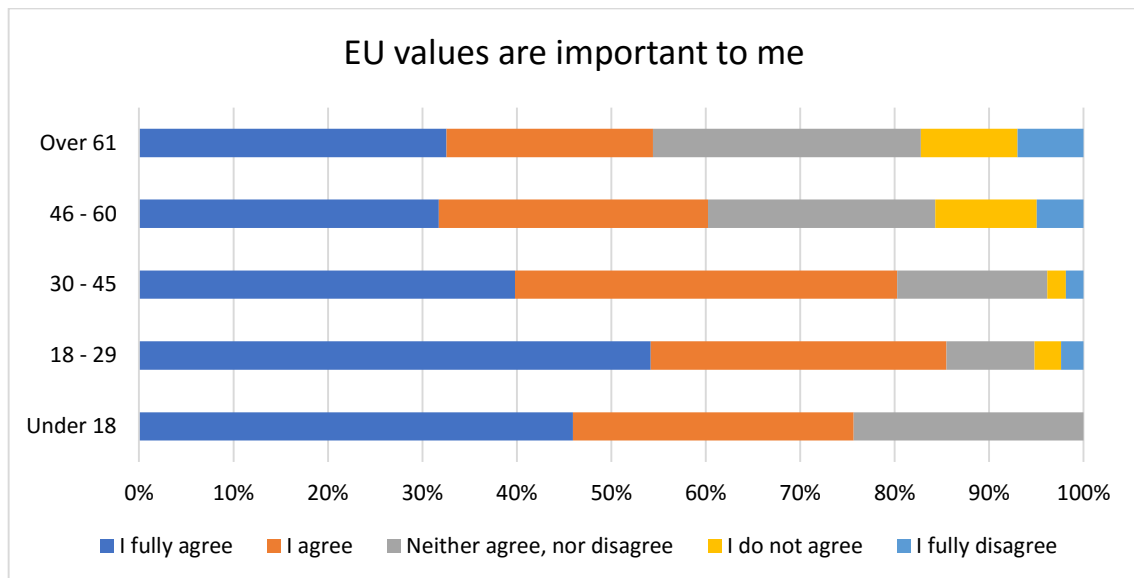


Figure 32

The correlation between age and belonging of EU to respondents' identity is as well straight. As we see clearly in the pattern displayed (Figure 33), with age rising respondents are more prone to disagreeing EU belongs to their identity and the younger the respondents, the more likely they are to agree more EU is part of their identity (Figure 32).

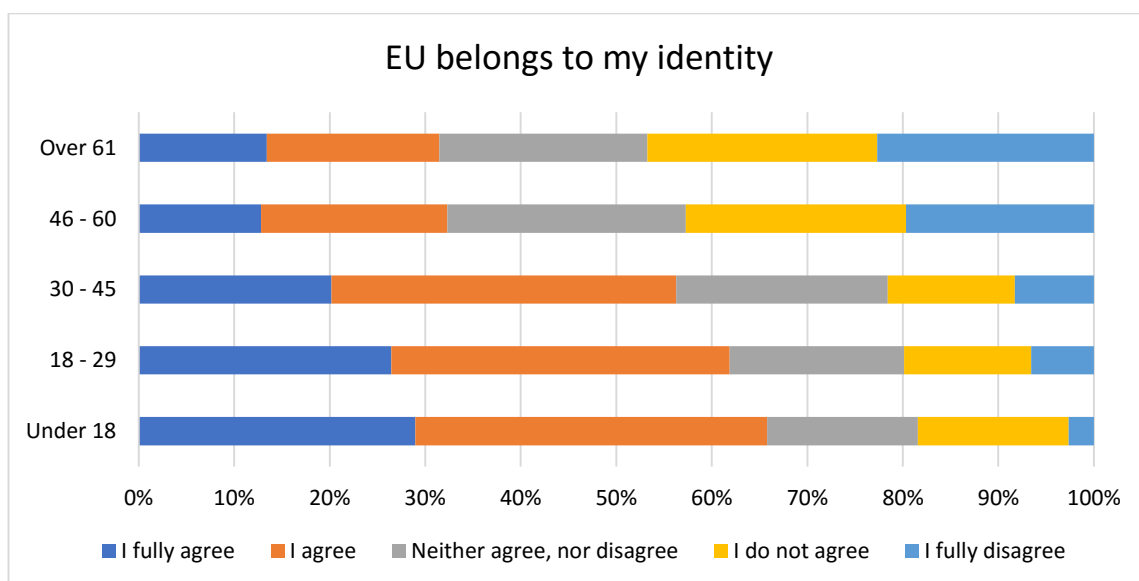


Figure 33

Interrelations between the main topics

As became visible in the graphics and analysis so far, there is clear interrelation between some of the main topics. This observation is also confirmed by the statistical analysis using Gamma coefficient (ordinal by ordinal).

It shows that there is significant correlation between most variables depicting the main topics in the research as most correlations are of small to medium strength (0,1 to 0,3), but there are as well medium to strong correlations (0,3 to 0,6) and also one that is

Table 5: Gamma values where there is significant relation between main topics

	<i>Bureaucracy</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Identity</i>
<i>Bureaucracy</i>	*	+0,588	+0,408	+0,184	-0,136	-0,203
<i>Cost</i>	+0,588	*	+0,538	-0,080	-0,392	-0,412
<i>Size</i>	+0,408	+0,538	*	-0,018	-0,364	-0,296
<i>Participation</i>	+0,184	-0,080	-0,018	*	+0,437	+0,318
<i>Values</i>	-0,136	-0,392	-0,364	+0,437	*	+0,609
<i>Identity</i>	-0,203	-0,412	-0,296	+0,318	+0,609	*

strong (>0,6).

The correlation between the importance of EU values and the disposition of the respondents to admit EU belongs to their identify is strong and straight, meaning that the more important EU values are for the respondent, the more likely he/she is to identify as EU citizen. What is more in 61% of the cases, we can determine the opinion on identity if we know the opinion on the importance of EU values or vice versa. We have to say here however that it is not a causal explanation, i.e. we cannot determine whether one of the opinions on those topics serves is determining the opinion on the other.

Medium to strong are the straight correlations between bureaucracy, cost and size, meaning respondents who consider EU is too bureaucratic will most likely think as well it costs too much and has overgrown. Again, we cannot determine which is the dependable variable, but in the case of bureaucracy and cost, for example, if we know one of the opinions we can predict the other one with 59% certainty.

EU sceptic vs EU believer

Finally, we did a comparison between the profiles of two groups of respondents that we called “EU believer” – respondents who said they believe in EU, and “EU sceptic” – respondents who said their country should leave the EU. To make the profiles we used the mode (most frequent answer) for each topic for those two groups. As the table (Table 1) below shows EU sceptics and EU believers differ in all main topics as well as some demographic characteristics.

Table 2: Profile (modes in topics) of EU sceptic and EU believer

EU believer		EU sceptic
Neutral on EU being too bureaucratic	Bureaucracy	Fully agrees EU is too bureaucratic
Neutral on EU costing too much	Cost of EU	Fully agrees EU costs too much
Neutral on EU having grown too big	Size of EU	Fully agrees EU has grown too big
Agrees on wanting more opportunities for democratic participation	Participation	Fully agrees on wanting more opportunities for democr. participation
Fully agrees EU values are important to him/her	EU values	Neutral on EU values being important to him/her
Agrees on EU being part of her/his identity	EU Identity	Fully disagrees on EU being part of her/his identity
Youth	Sector	Social sector
University degree	Education	High school or equivalent
Italy	Country	Germany

Conclusions and recommendations

Results of the research show the respondents are closer to Euro-optimism than to Euro-skepticism. There is a large number of respondents who express positive attitude towards the EU and the EU membership of their country. More than three quarters of the respondents agree European values are important for them and there is a large number of respondents who say they believe in EU.

However, there is small, but still relevant part of the respondents who openly and uniformly express their generally negative attitude towards EU and an even bigger part of

the respondents who, although generally pro-EU share concerns and dissatisfaction connected to the issues viewed as problematic such as bureaucracy, size and cost of EU. There is a noteworthy number of respondents who think that their country should leave the EU.

The analysis showed there is significant correlation between the opinions in almost all of the main topics as we must mention here the correlation between EU identity and EU values as it is with the highest strength. The country of the respondents is a significant factor for determining their opinion, as generally respondents from Germany are most prone to EU-skepticism and critical opinion, while Italians are most EU-optimistic. Age and educational level are as well important factors for the distribution of opinions on most topics. We noticed as well differences according to the sector and in almost all topics representatives of the social sector are more negative and critical.

As the sample is not representative we cannot extrapolate results. However, there are several valuable findings that rise questions and draw attention for future research on some of the connections we were able to spot, for example the connection between EU identity and EU values, the connection between political nihilism (participation is useless) and negative attitude towards EU (visible in Bulgarian sample), the influence of age, the reluctance to self-identify as migrant of some respondents.

Literature:

Hartleb, F. (2015). *A thorn in the side of European elites: The new Euroscepticism*. Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.

Van Elsas, E. J., Hakhverdian, A., & Van der Brug, W. (2016). United against a common foe? The nature and origins of Euroscepticism among left-wing and right-wing citizens. *West European Politics*, 39(6), 1181-1204.

Szczerbiak, A., & Taggart, P. (Eds.). (2008). *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism. Volume 2: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives* (Vol. 2). Oxford University Press.

Boomgaarden, Hajo, Andreas R.T. Schuck, Matthijs Elenbaas, and Claes H. de Vreese (2011). 'Mapping EU Attitudes: Conceptual and Empirical Dimensions of Euroscepticism and EU Support', *European Union Politics*, 12:2, 241–66.

Conti, Nicolò, and Vincenzo Memoli (2012). 'The Multi-faceted Nature of Party-Based Euroscepticism', *Acta Politica*, 47:2, 91–112

Cohen, J. (1988) *Statistical power and analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.), Hillsdale, N.J., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.