

EU-27 Public Opinion about Brexit

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Abstract

Although there has been much interest in what kind of Brexit the British people want, much less is known how EU-27 Europeans view the Brexit negotiations. This is surprising, because Brexit will have significant effects on the EU-27 as well and confronts the EU-27 public with a number of difficult choices. This is because a loss of the close cooperative relations between the UK and the EU will be costly not just for the UK, but also for the remaining member states. But, at the same time, making the UK better off outside the EU raises the risks that other countries leave the EU. This creates an *accommodation dilemma* for those EU-27 Europeans who are exposed to a fallout from a non-accommodative Brexit-arrangement, but who also care about the long-term stability of the EU. Using original survey data from 10432 respondents in all EU-27 countries collected in December 2018, this paper shows that the more exposed individuals are to the potential fallout from Brexit, the more willing to accommodate the UK in the negotiations. In contrast, the more they care about the viability of the EU, the less compromising they are. The evidence also shows that the accommodation dilemma moderates these preferences. Overall, the EU-27 public rather un sentimentally supports a Brexit negotiation line that safeguards their own interests best.

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With Brexit seen as “the will of the people,” research on Brexit-related public opinion is burgeoning. Lots of studies have examined voting behavior in the Brexit referendum (e.g., Alabrese et al. 2019; Clarke et al. 2017; Colantone and Stanig 2018; Goodwin and Hix 2017; Goodwin et al. 2018; Henderson et al. 2017; Hobolt 2016; Vasilopoulou 2016). Others have tried to identify, what kind of Brexit British voters actually want (Hobolt and Leeper 2017; Renwick et al. 2018; Richards et al. 2018; UK in a Changing Europe 2019), whether knowledge about and perceptions of the EU have changed since the 2016 vote (Grynberg et al. 2019), and how Brexit affects electoral behavior and public opinion in the UK more generally (e.g., Hobolt 2018; Hobolt et al. 2018). Beyond academic researchers, pollsters have tried to identify what British voters want or not want from the Brexit process and which types of Brexit arrangements might be acceptable to them.

This detailed attention to British public opinion on Brexit is mirrored by a dearth of research on Brexit-related public opinion in the remaining EU member states. Not even a handful of studies exist (Jurado et al. 2018; de Vries 2017) and only few questions on this issue have been asked in public opinion polls fielded in the EU27. This is surprising because any Brexit “deal” will have to be ratified by the EU Parliament and the remaining EU member states – all of whom have voters, too. Even if Brexit is a much less dominant issue in the EU27 public debate than in the UK, how the Brexit process plays out will matter for politicians and voters in the remaining member states as well.²

EU27 public opinion matters for two reasons: First, the EU and its remaining member states are the more powerful negotiating partner in the Brexit negotiations (Moravcsik 2018; Schimmelfennig 2018). As a result, the Brexit process has been shaped in important ways by the EU Commission, the EU Parliament, as well as the 27 governments of the remaining EU member states. British hopes that the remaining EU countries would be willing to offer the UK better withdrawal terms than the EU Commission have been repeatedly frustrated. Instead, the EU27 governments have been united in rejecting any British attempts at “cherry-picking”, even at the

² Evidence that national elections have a strong impact on international negotiations (Kleine and Minaudier 2019) suggests that governments feel constrained by voters’ preferences when negotiating international agreements.

risk that such an uncompromising stance might result in a “No-Deal”-Brexit. Because they influence the terms of withdrawal and the future relationship, however, national governments and MEPs are also likely to be blamed if the Brexit process goes awry. Given that some estimates see the costs of a negotiated, but “hard” Brexit at about 2.6% in the EU-27’s overall GDP (Chen et al. 2017) and even bigger exposure in some countries such as Ireland (10.1% of GDP at risk), Germany (5.5%), or the Netherlands (4.4%), and an even costlier fallout from a potential “no deal Brexit,” it is clear that Brexit can have significant negative consequences for the EU-27 as well. This raises the question of whether EU27 voters are aware of these risks, and to what extent they back their governments’ uncompromising negotiation stance.

Second, the voter-based nature of the Brexit decision has increased the risks of political contagion: the risk that Brexit might embolden Eurosceptics in the remaining member states and could lead to a proliferation of further exit referendums (Malet 2019; de Vries 2017; Walter 2018). Brexit may thus pose a serious threat for the EU as a whole (e.g., Hobolt 2016; Oliver 2016), especially as it comes at a time when European integration has become a heavily contested issue among European voters and elites (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hutter et al. 2016; Kriesi et al. 2008). This raises a second question: Are EU-27 voters concerned about these risks and how do they influence Europeans’ views about how the EU should conduct the Brexit negotiations?

To answer these questions and to address the lack of systematic survey research on EU-27 public opinion on Brexit, I have been running regular surveys of about 9000 EU27 working-age respondents each in 6-month intervals since the start of the negotiations in the summer of 2017. This article introduces this survey data and provides an overview about some of the key insights they yield. It begins with a brief discussion of the dilemmas and trade-offs that the EU-27 public confronts with regard to Brexit. After a brief overview of the survey design, the article then provides an overview about how the EU27 public views the Brexit negotiations. It then explores in more detail who supports a more accommodating or a less compromising negotiation stance. It shows that EU-27 Europeans understand that Brexit confronts them with an “accommodation

dilemma” (Jurado et al. 2018; Walter 2018) between maintaining the benefits from close cooperation with the UK and the risks of encouraging further disintegrative tendencies elsewhere. The conclusion discusses what these insights on EU-27 public opinion imply for the Brexit process.

1. Brexit, the accommodation dilemma, and negotiation preferences in the EU-27

The Brexit referendum marked a turning point in EU history. For the first time, voters in an EU member state had voted to leave the European Union. Of course, referendum-induced crises are not new to European politics (Hobolt 2009). The European integration process has been challenged and at times blocked by popular referendums in the past, for example when the Danes voted against the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, or when France and the Netherlands dealt the death blow to a European Constitution in 2005. But whereas earlier referendums aimed at slowing down or stopping efforts to integrate further, the Brexit referendum was about rolling back European integration. Depending on how the future relationship between the EU and the UK will be ultimately designed, this retrenchment of European integration is likely to have significant spillover effects in the other EU member states (Delis et al. 2018; Jurado et al. 2018; Walter 2018; Walter et al. 2018). Two types of spillover effects are particularly important: first, the loss of cooperation gains that disintegration entails, and second, the risk of political contagion.

Cooperation Gains at Risk. Many cooperation gains at risk from Brexit are economic in nature, such as the potential damage to firms engaged in trade with the UK, and the resulting economic downturn and job losses that are likely to occur if trade ties between the EU and the UK are cut or significantly reduced (Hix 2018). Other costs of Brexit include, among other things, the loss of London’s contributions to the EU budget, or the loss of free access to Europe’s financial center. However, many are also social or political in nature, such as when traveling between the UK and the EU-27 is made more cumbersome, the loss of free movement of people to the UK, uncertainty about the future of EU residents living in the UK, or the loss of UK-participation in EU-wide anti-crime or anti-terrorism schemes. If Brexit significantly severs the strong ties between

the EU and the UK, it would thus impose considerable costs on the EU-27 public as well. Nonetheless, the level of these costs is likely to vary significantly among individuals. They are highest for individuals who benefit from a close exchange with the UK, either directly in personal or business terms, or indirectly through their regional economy. For example, for individuals who live in member states that are closely integrated with the UK, the costs of Brexit are likely to be significantly larger than for individuals in countries whose ties with the UK are more limited. This exposure can vary considerably: a “hard Brexit,” for example, is estimated to put less than 0.5% of Slovakia’s and Bulgaria’s, but more than 10% of Irish and more than 5% of German GDP at risk (Chen et al. 2017).³

Political Contagion Risks. A second spillover effect is political in nature. A successful Brexit that makes the UK better off outside the EU demonstrates to the citizens of other member states that it is possible for countries to unilaterally improve their position, while still enjoying many of the benefits of membership (Hobolt 2016; de Vries 2017; De Vries 2018; Walter 2018). By providing a powerful counterfactual that allows voters to assess more accurately to what extent disintegration presents a viable and better alternative to membership in the EU, a successful Brexit is likely to encourage disintegrative tendencies in other member states. At the same time, however, observing that a country is worse-off post-disintegration (or aborts its disintegration bid for fear of negative consequences) is likely to deter voters from seeking an exit of their own country. By providing a “reality-check”, Brexit thus also has the potential to make an EU exit less attractive, especially for those voters who tend to expect that they will be able to enjoy both the benefits of international cooperation and regained national sovereignty at the same time (Emmenegger et al. 2018; this belief is relatively widespread, see for example Milic 2015; Owen and Walter 2017; Sciarini et al. 2015; Walter et al. 2018). In short, a “successful” Brexit that would improve the situation of the UK state is likely to encourage disintegrative tendencies in other member states. In

³ For other estimates of the Brexit-related fallout in the EU-27 see for example Lawless and Morgenroth (2019).

contrast, observing that the UK is worse-off post-Brexit (or aborts its Brexit-bid for fear of negative consequences) is likely to deter voters from seeking an exit of their own country.

The degree to which each of these spillover effects will manifest themselves depends on the contours of the future relationship between the EU and the UK. The cooperation losses will be smaller, the closer the relations between the two remains to the current level of integration are. This creates incentives for the EU-side to keep the ties with the UK as close as possible even after a formal exit of the referendum country in order to salvage as many of the cooperation gains from the existing arrangement as possible, even if this means that they need to allow the UK significant exceptions even from fundamental rules, such as the free movement of people. In contrast, the extent and direction of political contagion effects – encouragement or deterrence – will depend on how attractive the UK's new model will be for other member states. An outcome that accommodates many British requests is likely to encourage exit-tendencies in other member states, whereas a non-accommodative stance that is uncompromising and makes exit costly for the leaving country is likely to deter such tendencies elsewhere.

As a result, the EU institutions, EU-27 governments and large parts of the EU-27 public face an *accommodation dilemma* (Jurado et al. 2018; Walter 2018). On the one hand, a hard line – or even a no deal scenario – will be costly not just for the UK, but also for the remaining member states. But, at the same time, making the UK better off outside the EU by allowing it to enjoy the benefits of EU integration without sharing the costs threatens the long-term stability of the EU. I argue that how individuals decide in the face of the accommodation dilemma, how they view the Brexit negotiations, and whether they support a more accommodating or a more hard line negotiation approach by the EU, depends on how exposed they are to the consequences of each of the two types of spillover effects. Overall, individuals should be particularly hawkish when the net costs of non-accommodation are likely to be small for them, but more dovish when the costs of non-accommodation outweigh the benefits of taking a hard negotiating line.

This means that individuals who are more exposed to the losses of cooperation gains from a hard Brexit – be it because they have personal ties to the UK or because they live in an economy that is particularly vulnerable to such a Brexit – should be more supportive of a softer, more accommodating Brexit. In contrast, those with little exposure should take a tougher stance. At the same time, those who are most concerned about preserving the long-term stability of the EU should support a more hawkish negotiating stance. The more positively individuals view the EU, the less willing they should be to accommodate the UK. At the same time, creating an attractive EU-exit blueprint should appeal to Eurosceptics, especially if they aspire to an exit of their own country from the EU. I therefore expect more euroskeptic individuals to support a more accommodative stance towards the UK. At the same time, the accommodation dilemma should moderate these relationships: europhiles concerned about political contagion risks should be particularly uncompromising when their exposure to the fallout from a hard Brexit is low, but should exhibit a more moderate stance when it is high.

2. EU-27 public opinion about the Brexit negotiations: Descriptive Evidence

To address the lack of systematic survey evidence on EU-27 public opinion on Brexit, I have been running regular online public opinions surveys of respondents living in all EU-27 countries in 6-month intervals since the start of the negotiations in the summer of 2017. The data were collected by placing questions on an EU-wide online poll (the ‘EuroPulse’), regularly conducted by Dalia Research.⁴ In each wave (July 2017, December 2017, June 2018, and December 2018), the sample consists of a census representative sample of approximately 9000 working-age respondents (ages 18-65). Respondents are drawn across the remaining 27 EU Member States, with sample sizes roughly proportional to their population size. In order to obtain census representative

⁴ The EuroPulse omnibus survey collects data from all 28 EU Member States. I omit the data from respondents in the UK for the analysis.

results, the data are weighted based upon the most recent Eurostat statistics.⁵ For the more detailed analyses, I mostly rely on the most recent survey from December 2018.

2.1 What do EU-27 Europeans want to achieve? Goals for the Brexit negotiations

To get a first general idea of what the EU-27 public wants from the Brexit negotiations, I first examine their goals for the Brexit negotiations. In the most recent survey wave (December 2018), I asked respondents to rank five possible goals for the Brexit negotiations. Table 1 lists how often each of these goals was ranked as the most important goal. The first column shows the overall distribution of the answers, whereas the last two columns show how Europhiles and Euroskeptics, respectively, rank these goals.

Table 1: Percent ranking each goal as the most important Brexit negotiation goal

	<i>All</i>	<i>Europhiles</i>	<i>Euroskeptics</i>
<i>Maintain my country’s trade relations with the UK</i>	34.9%	26.6%	30.0%
<i>Avoid that other countries leave the EU in the future</i>	24.2%	39.3%	4.5%
<i>Establish a standard procedure that makes it easier for countries to leave the EU in the future</i>	19.1%	8.9%	50.9%
<i>Avoid a failure of the Brexit negotiations</i>	14.8%	14.2%	9.9%
<i>Punish the United Kingdom for leaving the EU</i>	7.0%	11.0%	4.7%
<i>N</i>	10432	1166	815

Notes: Europhiles (Euroskeptics) are operationalized as those who see the EU as very positive (negative). Data are from December 2018 survey.

Overall, the results suggest that the EU-27 public is indeed concerned about the economic and political spillover effects of Brexit on the EU and their own countries. The goal that respondents most frequently ranked as the most important goal was maintaining respondents’ countries’ trade relations with the UK. For one in three respondents, limiting the economic fallout from Brexit is thus the core objective for the Brexit negotiations. The runners-up focused on political spillovers: avoiding and encouraging political contagion were the second- and third-most frequently top-goals for the Brexit negotiations. Every fourth respondent felt that “avoiding

⁵ The target weighting variables are age, gender, level of education (as defined by ISCED (2011) levels 0-2, 3-4, and 5-8), and degree of urbanization (rural and urban).

encouraging other countries to follow the British example” was the most important objective, whereas one in five respondents felt that it was most important to “make it easier for countries to leave the EU in the future”. It is noteworthy that only 7% of respondents listed “punishing the UK for the decision to leave the UK” as the most important goal.

However, Table 1 also shows that there is considerable variation in what Europhiles and Euroskeptics want to achieve in the Brexit negotiations. Europhiles listed avoiding that other countries leave the EU most frequently as the most important goal. In contrast, for a majority of Euroskeptics, establishing a blueprint that would make leaving the EU easier in the future was the most important goal. This suggests that fears about the risk of political contagion are not unfounded: a Brexit with a favorable outcome for the UK might indeed encourage Euroskeptics in the remaining EU-27 member states to pursue EU-exit plans themselves.

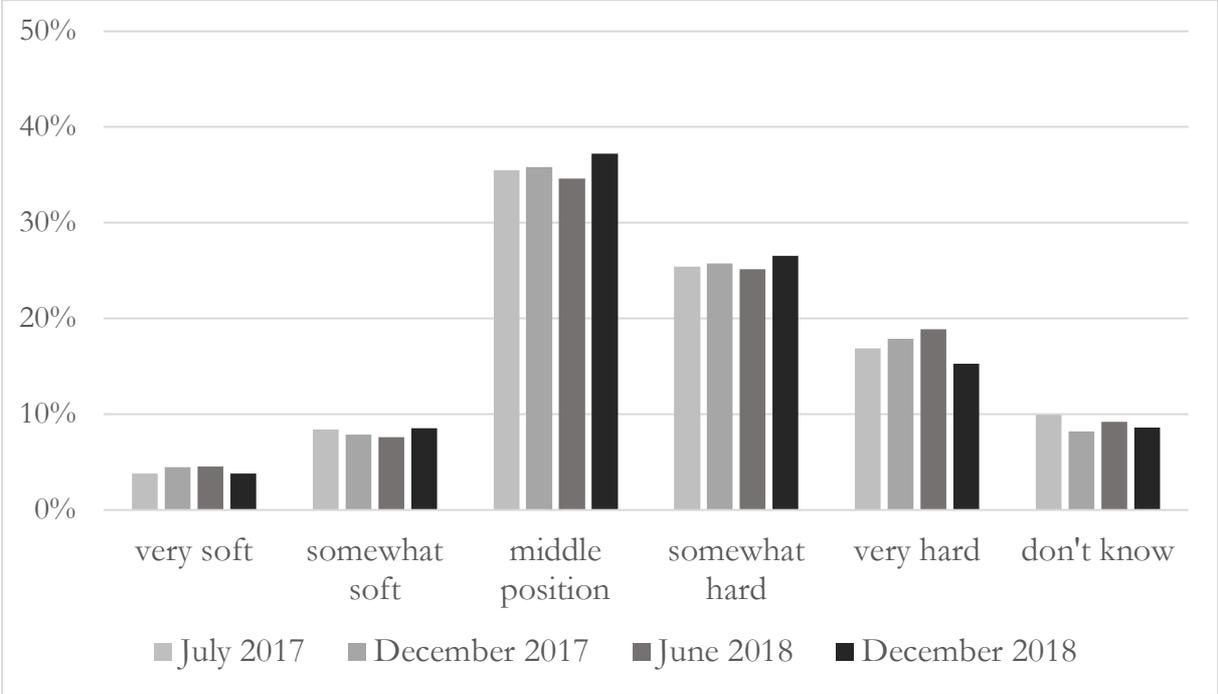
2.2 Negotiation Preferences

To gauge individuals’ negotiation preferences, I rely on two different approaches: the first asks respondents directly to state their preferred negotiation strategy, the second asks for respondents’ goals for the Brexit negotiations (for a similar strategy, see Jurado et al. 2018).

To measure whether respondents support an accommodating, softer EU-negotiation stance in the Brexit negotiations or a harder, non-accommodating approach, I directly asked how they thought that the EU should approach the exit negotiations with the UK. The question defined a hard (i.e. non-accommodating) line in the Brexit negotiations as one in which the EU insists that the UK pay a large “exit bill” to compensate the EU for the costs of Brexit, guarantee special rights for EU citizens living in the UK, and does not get privileged access to the European Single Market. In contrast, it defined a soft (i.e. accommodating) line as a negotiation position that accepts that the UK pays only a small “exit bill,” allows the UK to limit the rights of EU citizens currently living in the UK, and gives the UK privileged access to the European Single Market. Respondents were

asked to report their preferred negotiation line on a five-point scale ranging from. (1) “very soft line”, to (5) ”very hard line.”⁶

Figure 1: Preferred EU-Negotiation Stance, July 2017-December 2018



Notes: N=9371 (July 2017), 9468 (December 2017), 9423 (June 2018), 10434 (December 2018)

Figure 1 presents respondents’ Brexit-negotiation preferences from the start of the negotiations in July 2017 to December 2018. It shows that support for a (very) soft, accommodating EU negotiation strategy is low and has remained at around 12% throughout the first two years of Brexit negotiations. A good third of respondents would prefer the EU to take a middle position between a soft and a hard line, and this group has slightly grown over the course of the Brexit negotiations. Nonetheless, Europeans have on average preferred a rather hard Brexit-negotiation strategy from the start of the negotiations. Between 42% and 44% of respondents supported a hard or very hard negotiation stance in each of the survey waves during the withdrawal negotiations (2017-18). These opinions have been very stable and only as the difficulties of

⁶ There is a sixth category “Don’t know/don’t answer” which I recoded as missing for most analyses.

successfully concluding the Withdrawal Agreement increased in December 2018, did respondents slightly towards a more compromising stance.

Overall, this descriptive evidence suggests that – contrary to statements by some UK Brexiteers that “lots of Europeans are uneasy at the line the EU Commission is taking on Brexit”⁷ – the EU’s tough negotiation strategy is supported by many European citizens as well.

3. Correlates of preferring a hard negotiation line: Operationalization

The descriptive evidence shows that there is considerable variation in the willingness to accommodate the UK in the Brexit negotiations. My argument about the determinants of this willingness suggests that this variation should be related to how individual EU-27 Europeans are exposed to the economic and political spillover effects associated with different Brexit negotiation outcomes and how they evaluate these effects.. The next section therefore explores the correlates of individuals’ support for a hard, non-accommodating Brexit negotiation strategy on part of the EU. This support is operationalized with the question about the preferred soft or hard negotiation line presented above, with higher values indicating a preference for a harder, uncompromising negotiation strategy. The other variables in the analysis are operationalized as follows:

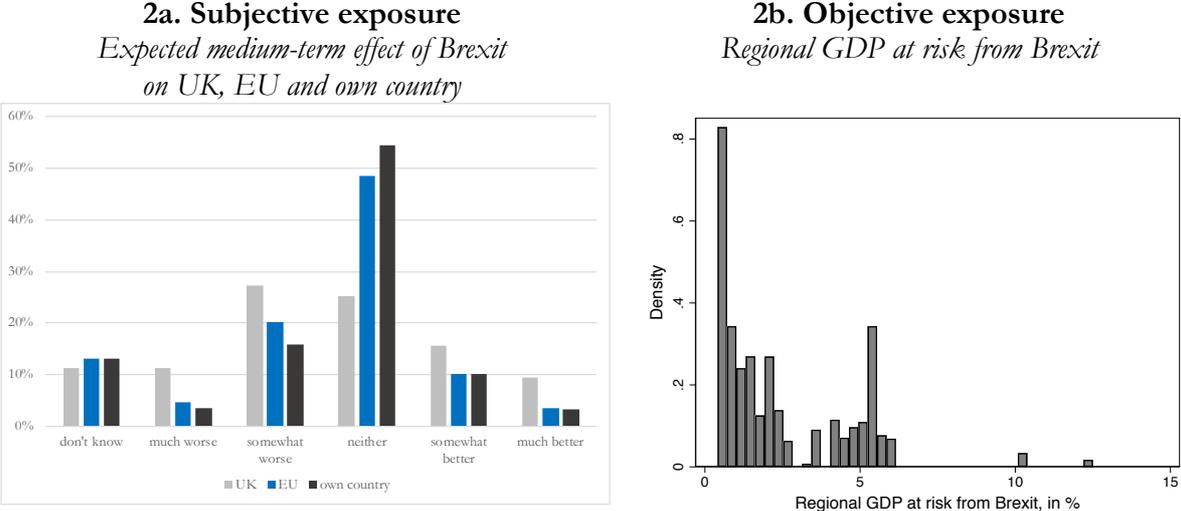
Exposure to loss of cooperation gains

To measure individuals’ exposure to the negative spillover effects of Brexit, I focus both on individuals’ direct and indirect exposure. Objective direct exposure is measured with a question that asks whether respondents had personal and/or business ties (including through their employer) with the UK. While four in five respondents report no ties, 11.5% report personal ties, 4.5% report business ties, and 4% report both personal and business ties.

⁷ See for example <https://twitter.com/DanielJHannan/status/1046677612939137024>

In addition to this direct exposure, Brexit is likely to affect respondents' context, such as the regional economy in which they are embedded or their country overall. This makes respondents' indirectly exposed to Brexit and I proxy this indirect exposure both with a subjective and an objective indicator. To gauge respondent's subjectively perceived indirect exposure to Brexit, I use their assessment about how Brexit will affect their own country within five years on a five-point scale, where higher values indicate more negative effects on respondents' own country.⁸

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents' exposure to the consequences of Brexit



Note: Data are from December 2018, N=10.432

Note: Data are based on Chen et al. (2017).

Figure 2a shows how this variable is distributed and compares respondents' assessment of the effects of Brexit on their own country to those on the UK and the EU. It demonstrates that as late as December 2018, the majority of respondents was rather unconcerned about the effects of Brexit on their own country.⁹ More than half (54.6%) do not think that Brexit will affect their own country at all, and 13.3% even think that Brexit will make their country (much) better off. Only 19.2% think that their own country will be worse off because of Brexit. In contrast, 48% expect that Brexit will affect the UK negatively. That said, a quarter of respondents also expects that the

⁸ The effect of Brexit will of course depend on the negotiated type of Brexit, so that answers to this question will vary depending on which outcome respondents envision for the Brexit process.
⁹ The earlier surveys show a similar picture, with very little movement over the two years of Brexit negotiations.

UK will be better off post-Brexit, and about a quarter doesn't expect any effect. Respondents are more optimistic about the effects of Brexit on the EU, although on average they believe that the EU faces slightly more risks than their own country.¹⁰

Given this rather optimistic assessment, I additionally use an objective indicator of the risks that Brexit poses to respondents' regional economy. Chen et al. (2017) have estimated the degree to which EU regions on the NUTS-2 level are exposed to the negative trade-related consequences of Brexit that arise from the geographically fragmented production processes within the UK, the EU and beyond. I use their estimates of the regional GDP at risk from (a hard) Brexit¹¹ and match it to the survey data using information about the respondent's location. Figure 2b shows the distribution of Brexit-exposure among the respondents in my sample. Regional exposure to Brexit-related trade losses varies from only .41% of regional GDP at risk in Liguria (Italy) to 10.13% in the Irish border region, midlands, and Western Ireland.¹² The median exposure of EU-27 respondents in my sample is 1.5% of regional GDP at risk. Figure 2b also shows that the data is highly skewed. For the analyses below, I therefore use the logarithm of this variable.

Concern about Contagion risks

A second type of spillover effects from Brexit consists in the possibility that Brexit may spark political contagion by providing an attractive and easy-to-follow roadmap for other countries to exit. This is a worrisome prospect for those who value the EU and want to safeguard the European integration project. I therefore expect these individuals to take a harder, uncompromising negotiation stance that does not accommodate the UK's request to continue to selectively benefit from the advantages of the European Union. For Euroskeptics, however, this is an attractive outcome, especially if they see an exit from the EU as a desirable outcome for their

¹⁰ Note that although those who are more interested in Brexit expect significantly worse consequences for the UK than those who do not follow the news on Brexit a lot, they share the low level of concern about the consequences of Brexit for the UK and the EU.

¹¹ Region-specific exposure estimates are listed in table A2 of their appendix (Chen et al. 2017).

¹² The results are robust to using regional labor income at risk instead.

own country. They should thus be more willing to accommodate the UK (see also Jurado et al. 2018).

I use two variables to capture these considerations. First, at the most basic level, I look at respondents' overall attitude towards the EU, using the question "What is your opinion of the EU?" Answers on the five-point scale ranged from "very negative" to "very positive".¹³ Second, I look at how respondents said they would vote if a referendum on leaving the EU were to be held in their own country. I create a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if respondents said that they would definitely (10.6%) or probably (13.9%) vote to leave the EU, and 0 otherwise.

Information, political participation, and sociodemographic controls

I additionally control for how much respondents are following the news with regard to Brexit. Only 17.7% are following Brexit a lot, but 49.9% are following it at least a little. About one quarter does not pay a lot of attention, and 8.2% say that they do not follow Brexit-related news at all. Given the multidimensional and complicated nature of Brexit, one would expect more informed respondents to better understand the many dilemmas and trade-offs it creates. It is not clear a priori whether this will result in a more or less accommodating stance towards the UK, however. On the one hand, more information about the difficulties to find a compromise and the risks of a negotiation failure to the EU-27 may increase respondents' willingness to accommodate the UK. On the other hand, more information about the political contagion risks of Brexit for the EU may also lead to a harder stance.

Politicians tend to pay more attention to potential voters, whereas the interests of non-voters are more readily dismissed (Walter 2016). For the Brexit negotiations, this means that the opinions of those EU-27 citizens who are likely to turn out and vote are likely to carry larger political weight than the preferences of the politically uninterested public. To gauge whether more

¹³ 24.6% of respondents had somewhat or very negative opinion, 27.2% neither a positive nor negative, and 48.2% had a somewhat or very positive opinion.

politically influential respondents differ systematically in their Brexit-negotiation preferences, I also control for whether an individual is planning to vote in the next national election.

Finally, I control for sociodemographic variables: age, gender, education, and whether the respondent lives in a rural or urban setting. I use weighted OLS regression that takes the different sample sizes among countries into account. Results are robust to using a random effects multilevel model.

4. Why EU-27 Europeans' willingness to accommodate the UK varies: Findings

Why are some EU-27 Europeans more willing to accommodate the UK than others? Models 1-3 in table 2 shows the results from a regression analysis of how respondents exposure to the spillover effects of Brexit are related to how they think that the EU should conduct the Brexit-negotiations. The key take-away from the analysis is that as expected, those who are more exposed to the negative economic consequences of a hard Brexit are significantly more accommodating towards the UK than those who are less exposed. This holds for both subjective and objective measures. At the same time, those who value the EU and want to safeguard its stability take a harder line, whereas Euroskeptics are more supportive of accommodating the UK, especially if they would like their own country also to leave the EU.

In terms of Brexit-exposure of EU-27 Europeans, I find that sociotropic exposure to and concern about possible Brexit-related disruptions in international trade is associated with support for a more accommodating negotiation line. More exposed respondents are thus more supportive of a negotiation position that increases the chances that the close existing trade relations between the EU-27 and the UK will be maintained. However, a closer look also reveals some interesting variation. Most notably, while individuals who with a high level of regional exposure or concern for the national economy are much more accommodating, egotropic motives matter much less: Those who have actual personal or business ties do *not* support a softer line. Mirroring research that individuals' trade policy preferences tend to be driven more by sociotropic than egotropic

Table 2: Correlates of Brexit-negotiation preferences

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Exposure to loss of cooperation gains					
Expected Brexit-effect on own country	-0.145*** (0.02)	-0.168*** (0.02)	-0.146*** (0.02)	-0.050 (0.06)	-0.152*** (0.02)
Regional GDP at risk from Brexit (log)	-0.061*** (0.02)	-0.054*** (0.02)	-0.058*** (0.02)	-0.060*** (0.02)	0.129*** (0.05)
Personal ties to UK	0.033 (0.04)	0.057 (0.04)	0.039 (0.04)	0.034 (0.04)	0.037 (0.04)
Business ties to UK	-0.005 (0.05)	0.046 (0.04)	0.017 (0.04)	0.010 (0.04)	0.025 (0.05)
Assessment of political contagion					
General opinion of EU	0.225*** (0.01)		0.157*** (0.02)	0.286*** (0.06)	0.192*** (0.02)
Potential Leave-voter		-0.516*** (0.04)	-0.275*** (0.04)	-0.278*** (0.04)	-0.279*** (0.04)
Interaction effects					
Exp. Brexit-effect * EU opinion				-0.041** (0.02)	
Regional exposure * EU opinion					-0.078*** (0.02)
Controls					
Attention to Brexit news	0.114*** (0.02)	0.139*** (0.02)	0.119*** (0.02)	0.117*** (0.02)	0.125*** (0.02)
Plans to vote in next election	0.066** (0.03)	0.082*** (0.03)	0.066** (0.03)	0.065** (0.03)	0.069** (0.03)
Age	-0.001 (0.00)	-0.001 (0.00)	-0.001 (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)	-0.001 (0.00)
Education	0.013 (0.02)	0.018 (0.02)	0.007 (0.02)	0.008 (0.02)	0.004 (0.02)
Female	-0.074*** (0.03)	-0.079*** (0.03)	-0.076*** (0.03)	-0.075*** (0.03)	-0.078*** (0.03)
Rural	-0.023 (0.03)	-0.022 (0.03)	-0.024 (0.03)	-0.021 (0.03)	-0.023 (0.03)
Constant	3.057*** (0.11)	3.705*** (0.10)	3.282*** (0.12)	2.982*** (0.20)	3.215*** (0.12)
R2	0.107	0.098	0.115	0.117	0.121
F	48.635	46.237	48.102	47.590	50.332
N	8386	8387	8386	8386	8386

Notes: Dependent variable is five-point measure of preferred EU Brexit-negotiation line, with higher values denoting a preference for a less accommodating stance. OLS regression using weighted data. Standard errors in parentheses. * < .1 ** < .05 *** .001

concerns (Mansfield and Mutz 2009) , neither having business nor personal ties is related to respondents' negotiation preferences.

While concern about the costs of a hard Brexit softens EU-27 Europeans' preferred negotiating stance, the possibility of political contagion effects also is on their mind. The more positive they view the EU, the harder and less accommodating their stance towards the UK becomes. At the same time, those who themselves favor an exit of their own country from the EU are much more accommodating towards the UK. This is not surprising, however, because Brexit allows them to establish a precedent favorable towards the leaving state. This is something this group of voters is acutely aware of: among those who say they would definitely vote to leave the EU in a potential EU-exit referendum in their own country, 50.1% list "establishing a standard procedure that makes it easier for countries to leave the EU in the future" as their most important goal for the Brexit negotiations.¹⁴

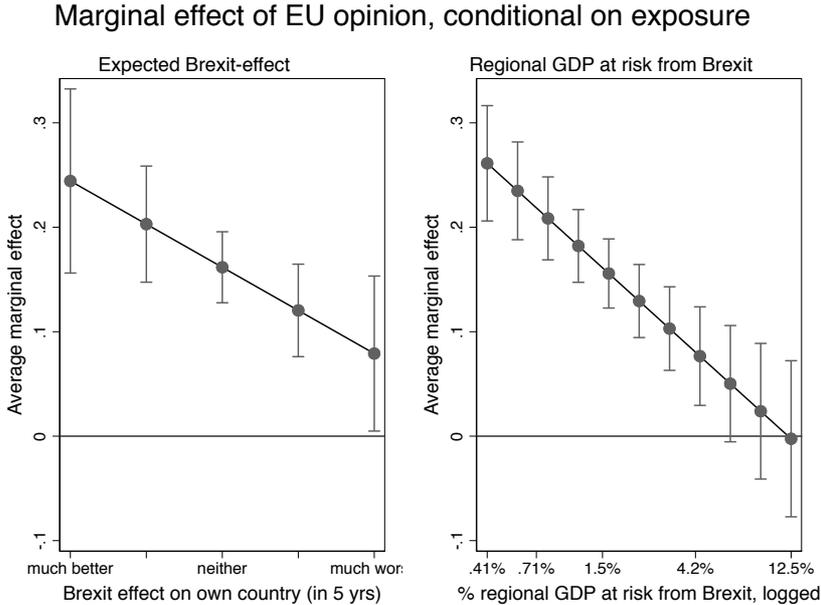
The analyses next examine to which extent the *accommodation dilemma* (Jurado et al. 2018; Walter 2018) shapes EU-27 Europeans' Brexit negotiation preferences. This dilemma confronts those Europeans who worry that accommodating the UK may encourage further exits from the EU, but who at the same time are vulnerable to the economic and/or social fallout from a hard Brexit. To test whether the effect of people's concern about political contagion is in fact conditional on a respondents' exposure, models 4 and 5 in table 2 include interaction terms between the sociotropic exposure variables and respondents' pro-EU opinion. These interaction terms allow me to explore to which extent a higher exposure to the economic and social fallout from Brexit moderates EU-27 Europeans' concern about political contagion effects, and vice versa.

The negative and statistically significant interaction terms suggest that EU-27 Europeans do indeed experience an accommodation dilemma. A more positive view of the EU makes respondents significantly willing to accommodate the UK; yet exposure to the risks of Brexit significantly moderates this effect. To facilitate the interpretation of the interaction term, Figure 3

¹⁴ Among those who say that they would probably vote to leave, this share is 34.4%.

illustrates the effects of holding a more positive opinion of the EU, conditional on exposure to the perceived (left-hand panel) and objective (right-hand panel) exposure of a respondents' economic environment. It shows that as expected, europhile respondents are particularly hawkish when their exposure to the costs of non-accommodating the UK is small. However, they become more dovish when their exposure to the costs of non-accommodation rises. This suggests that as expected, those who face less of an accommodation dilemma (because they are Europhile but not exposed) are freer to concentrate on the political spillover effects of Brexit. In contrast, respondents for whom Brexit has potentially significant consequences, need to confront the accommodation dilemma much more directly and therefore exhibit more moderate negotiation preferences.

Figure 3: The Accommodation Dilemma: marginal effect of EU opinion, conditional on exposure



Finally, the analyses presented in table 2 uncover another noteworthy finding: Politically more active respondents take a particularly hard stance towards the UK. Those who pay more attention to the Brexit process take a significantly more uncompromising stance towards the UK than those who are less informed. Likewise, those who are planning to turn out to vote in the next national election support a harder negotiation line than those who are not planning to vote in the

next election. This is bad news for the UK because it suggests that those EU-27 citizens who are more politically influential are even less willing to accommodate the UK's requests than the average EU-27 citizen.¹⁵

5. Conclusion

In the Brexit negotiations, the governments of the remaining member states (the EU-27) have shown an unusual degree of unity in the Brexit negotiations. This has engendered frustration and consternation on the British side – after all, there is a lot at stake for the member states as well. Nonetheless, the EU-27 have good reasons to maintain their tough negotiation stance. For one, the negotiation setting is highly asymmetric: Even though the EU-27 also have a lot to lose from Brexit, the fallout of such an outcome would be disproportionately higher for the UK with an estimated cost of a hard Brexit of around 12.2% of British GDP. This gives the EU-27 side more bargaining power, because the UK is more vulnerable to a failure to reach a deal. A second reason for the EU's tough line has been the fear that making it possible for the UK to enjoy the benefits of EU integration without sharing the costs, would encourage other member states to leave the EU as well. If the willingness to make the compromises that are necessary for international cooperation to work erodes among the EU member states, however, the long-term stability of the EU is put in question. Because accommodating the UK carries significant risks of political contagion, the EU is trying to make the exit of a member state as unattractive as possible. Against this background, the tough line taken by the EU side comes as less of a surprise.

This paper has shown that support for the EU's relatively uncompromising negotiation stance in the withdrawal negotiations is not limited to its political elites. Rather, it is supported by the wider EU-27 public. Using evidence from several EU-wide online surveys of EU-27 citizens, I have shown that EU-27 Europeans on average support a somewhat hard negotiation stance. Their

¹⁵ The sociodemographic control variables do not yield statistically significant results, with the exception that women take a significantly more compromising stance than men. Note, however, that the models are controlling for many attitudes that tend to be strongly correlated with some of these sociodemographic variables. In a model without any of the attitude questions, all sociodemographic controls with the exception of age reach statistical significance.

most important goal is to maintain their respective country's trade ties with the UK, but they also worry that allowing the UK to "cherry-pick" would threaten the long-term stability of the EU. At the same time, Euroskeptics are indeed eager to use Brexit to develop a blueprint that makes it easier for countries to leave the EU in the future.

The analyses in this paper showed that the EU-27 public recognize the trade-offs inherent in the Brexit negotiations and form their preferences about the negotiations accordingly. The more exposed individuals are to the potential fallout from Brexit, the more likely they are to compromise. The more they care about the viability of the EU, the less they are accommodating their stance. These goals often also conflict, and the evidence shows that the accommodation dilemma moderates Europeans' Brexit-related preferences. Overall, the evidence paints a picture of an EU-27 public that is well aware of the consequences of Brexit, and rather unsentimentally supports a negotiation line that safeguards their own interests best.

More generally, the evidence shows just how difficult "*mass-based disintegration*" (Walter 2018) is: Recent euroskeptic successes at the polls – such as the 2014 Swiss "Against mass immigration"-initiative, the 2015 Greek bailout referendum, or the 2016 Brexit vote - have often been based on a common narrative: that by being more assertive in international relations and putting the nation's interest first rather than accepting compromise, the country's prosperity, national sovereignty, and democratic quality could be improved. This narrative has not survived the test of reality, however, as successes at the domestic polls have been met with resistance abroad. Renegotiating international agreements has proven difficult, if not impossible, and has sometimes forced populist governments to concede that the status quo is better than what they could achieve if they left such an agreement. Voter-based attempts to unilaterally change or withdraw from the rules of international cooperation have not failed because of poor negotiation skills on part of the governments of the withdrawing states, but because voters in other countries have been unwilling to grant special privileges to one state at their own expense.

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