UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

MASTER THESIS IN EUROPEAN STUDIES

Does time make more converts than reason?

An analysis of what drives public opinion towards the European Union in Sweden

Klara Bové

19th of May 2015

Supervisor: Maria Solevid

Words: 16 647

Abstract

Since Sweden joined the European Union in 1995, the Swedish opinion towards EU membership has gone from barely positive enough to win the advisory election, to a stable majority in favour of the membership. Founded on previous literature, this thesis argues that support for EU membership is deserved, as the perceived influence by the EU on national policy is positive. A causal mechanism is specified in which time and policy evaluation is expected to co-vary and strengthen the effect through a continuous socialisation process as time passes. Data from the European Parliament election studies 1999 – 2014 is used in logistic regression analysis, calculating predicted probabilities to support EU membership. Five policy areas divided into three groups in which the EU has a varying degree of mandate are investigated, uncovering significant differences. The results indicate that continuous socialisation is taking place on an aggregated level. When taking a closer look at the variations within the explanatory variables, a polarising effect between those evaluating EU impacts on policy performances most positively and most negatively is found. Further research would benefit from looking into what causes the polarisation effect and compare data with developments in other European countries.

Keywords: European Union; public opinion; policy evaluation; continuous socialisation process; logistic regression

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Introduction

"…the citizens are at the core of the European construction: the Union has the imperative duty to respond concretely to their needs and concerns"

(European Parliament, 1996)

The Swedish membership to the European Union (EU) turned 20 years on January 1st 2015. During the last twenty years the Union has evolved and expanded its competences and impact on its citizens. The interplay between public opinion and the development of the EU has historically been presented to be rather weak and serves as part of the foundation for the discussion about a democratic deficit in the Union (Toshkov, 2011). However, the negative vote on the Maastricht referenda in Denmark 1992, the rejection of the constitutional treaty in France and the Netherlands in 2005 and the influential organization of French farmers are examples of that the opinion of the public matters and holds at least part of the reins and whip on European integration (Gabel, 1998).

Sweden entered the Union after following the outcome of an advisory referendum on Swedish membership to the EU in 1994. The vote resulted in a modest majority of 52.3 per cent for and 46.8 per cent against the accession. During the period preceding and shortly after the day of the vote, the public opinion in Sweden towards EU membership was predominantly negative. Proponents successfully located the necessary support just around the Election Day. In the wake of the vote, the official stands of the parties represented in the Swedish parliament showed a clear positive overweight to join the EU while the voters of the same were split in their opinion towards EU membership (Fitzmaurice, 1995). Since then, the general opinion towards the EU in Sweden has struggled to reach Voting Day levels. In 2009, for the first time since EU entrance, a majority of the Swedish population favoured the EU membership (Holmberg, 2010). The fluctuating support towards the EU generates an inevitable question that will guide this thesis: what is influencing the change in attitude towards the EU?

In previous research we find analyses confirming that there exists a correlation between the general public opinion towards the EU and the view on introducing the EURO and the formation of a common foreign policy.[1] Still, most recent research has been limited to cross-sectional approach at single points in time, which limits the scope of analysis and possibilities to make causal inferences.

The signing of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) in 1992, also known as the Maastricht treaty changed the course of the Union. From being primarily an economically driven constellation, the formal objectives changed. The mandate of the EU now included areas intruding on member states specific economic policies through the introduction of EU driven national budgetary changes and an

[1] See for instance Holmberg, 2013, Gabel, 1998, Risse, 2004, Banducci et al., 2003

introduction of goals concerning social policy (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). The rejection of the Maastricht treaty by the Danes and 'petit oui' from the French opened up for a debate about the development of the EU and shed public light on the changes that the treaty would connote for member states and their citizens. As a consequence, the political elites were forced to rethink the degree of responsiveness to the public opinion (Down and Wilson, 2008).

In this thesis I look at five areas of politics where the EU has different degrees of mandate and I investigate its influence on general EU opinion with the focus on to what extent the EU is perceived to preform in a national context. Based on previous research, I develop a framework that seeks to investigate how the perceived performance in different areas of politics influences the general EU opinion. As noted, previous research is marked by cross-sectional analysis. Therefore, I also contribute by introducing repeated time series analysis, which widens the scope. The result of this study will contribute to the existing research concerning attitudes towards the EU as it explores what drives the attitude towards the European Union in a way not previously done. The time period covered allows us to look at the development of these attitudes over 20 years and will explore the perceived impact the EU has had on Sweden during the last two decades.

This thesis assumes a causal relationship where the attitude towards EU membership is deserved through policy performance and based on an evaluation by support either characterized by diffuse or specific aspects. The direction of the causality will be discussed and justified later in this thesis. The respondents' ratings of EU impact on the five chosen policy areas will be assessed in terms of how they have changed over time and which one is most influential on the general opinion on Swedish membership to the EU. Indications of differences between age groups, political affiliation and education level has surfaced in previous research, implying systematic differences related to skills and political values (Gabel, 1998). The ability to identify as a European, economic rationality and national attachment has also shown to influence the opinion towards EU membership on an individual level (Hooghe and Marks, 2004).

In summary, by performing empirical analysis of the swedes' opinions towards the EU membership, this thesis aims to explore the causal mechanism between the perceived performance in selected policy areas and attitude towards EU membership. Further, this thesis aims to investigate if the selected policy areas shed light on an underlying dimension of attitudes towards the EU. This thesis contributes to the research field on three main areas. First, the opinion towards EU membership has previously not been investigated in terms of comparing the influence of perceived performance in policy areas where the EU has varying degrees of mandate. Second, this thesis analyses how the proposed key relationships hold over time and thirdly, to what extent does an underlying interaction effect exist, where policy evaluation and time vary together? This will be carried out on data collected after the 'post-Maastricht blues' and will contribute to an update of previous research.

Outline

First I put forward a theoretical framework of support consisting of two main components of support namely diffuse and specific. In the subsequent section an overview of how the theoretical framework has been applied when analysing support for membership for the European Union is presented. In the following section the aim and the proposed mechanisms are presented and turned into clearly stated hypotheses and research questions. The sequent section motivates the case selection with focus on both Sweden as a country and on the policy areas that will be further analysed. The next section after that presents the data used to perform the analysis, how the variables are operationalized followed by a segment where the statistical method used is explained. The next section first presents, and then the results of the statistical regressions are analysed. Finally the implications of the results are discussed in a concluding discussion followed by recommendations for further research.

Theory and previous research

In this section I will present theory and previous research that will lie as the foundation for this thesis. First, existing theories explaining supports are presented. Second, I will look at how the presented theory previously has been applied specifically on support for the EU.

Support

The lion's share of research about public opinion related to support for political systems has built on the findings of David Easton and it is on this road I continue. David Easton defines support as "*an attitude by which a person orients himself to an object either favourably or unfavourably*" (Easton, 1975 p.436). In his works, Easton differentiates between different kinds of support by pointing at the disparity between **specific** support based on how political authorities *perform* and what they *produce* and **diffuse** support based on a *general sentiment* towards the authorities and *the system of such* (emphasis added, Easton, 1967). Diffuse support represents the long-term support important for the upholding of a political system while the specific support is based on short-time evaluations of the systems output. According to Easton these two kinds of support interacts and together they form our general basis of support towards a political system.

Lindberg and Sheingold (1970) presented a similar conception of support but instead differentiate between *rational* and *cognitive* based support and *non-rational* and *emotional* support. One of the most distinct differences between Easton's and, Lindberg and Sheingold's conceptions of support presented is how the interaction between the two types of support is theorized. While Easton (1967) presents the different kinds of support as extremes on a continuous scale with overlapping sections, Lindberg and Sheingold (1970) claims two clearly distinguishable categories with no interactions between them. Contemporary research has to a great

extent adapted the continuous scale approach rather than the nominal scale. Hooghe and Marks (2004) revisit the ideas that proclaim *utilitarianism* and *identity* as the defining attributes to describe the two types of support. Table 1 intends to helps clarify demarcations between different kinds of support that lays the ground for forthcoming research.

Norris (2011) concretises the hierarchy and interaction of the two types of support presented by Easton placing identity and national pride as the strongest indication of system support on the diffuse side and approval of office holders as the most specific indication of system support. Between the two extremes Norris places evaluations of regime performance. An evaluation of regime performance taps both the specific and diffuse aspects of support as is responds to both the performance of a regime and the overall workings of the democratic aspects and the general sentiments towards a system (Norris, 2011).

To understand and explain what drives changes in support for the European Union I will pay attention to the influence of both types of support. In the following sections I will elaborate on the interpretations and uses of the demarcation of support as has been done in theory and previous research.

Table 1 Different kind of demarcations of support.

Author	Support type 1	Support type 2
Easton; 1967, 1970 and 1975	Specific	Diffuse
Lindberg and Sheingold, 1970	Rational, cognitive	Non-rational, emotional
Inglehart 1970 and Hooghe and Marks, 2004	Utilitarian/economic	Affective /Identity

Specific support

The general notion of specific support is presented as a utilitarian perspective where an individual is evaluating the *performance* of an institution and bases its support and approval for the same on the *outcome* of an action or a policy. The definition and use of specific support has subsequently been developed since Easton introduced the concepts around the 1970's.

Easton denotes specific support as 'object specific' as it assumes a clear connection between decision makers and the outcome of an action (Easton, 1975). This type of support is the expressed response to the authorities and relates almost solely to the *perceived* result and performance of, in this case, a regime. The key question when evaluating specific support is: what is the outcome of an authority's actions?

The individual perception and knowledge about the connection between demand and supply in policy formation is influential for how to interpret the expressed opinion

about authority performance. Even though specific support is traditionally evaluated by 'object specific' performance, a lack of knowledge about the chain of command or who to hold accountable for perceived performance outcome can generate support for a general performance rather than object specific. However, Easton (1975) argues that the support is still specific as it is "*contingent on the authorities' presumed behaviour*" (Easton, 1975, p. 439).

In a national context, specific support has been exemplified by economic voting, where support is given to the incumbent in good economic times and punished in bad.[2] The proposed economic rationality emerges from both individual and aggregated cost-benefit analyses.

Perceptions of performance can fall under the definition of specific support even if the evaluation is not direct but based on opinion of aggregated performance over time, where the expectation of performance somewhat shadows the immediate evaluation (Easton, 1975). This view is supported by Muller, (1970 cited in Chierici, 2005) who points out the importance for a citizen to feel represented by the authorities and that the output produced by the authorities serves as a response to the citizens' demand. Easton approaches this inconsistency by presenting the characteristics of support on a scale where specific and, the below presented diffuse support interacts when measures of support are made over time (Easton, 1967). The essence of specific support is however still presented as a dynamic and short-term based response to output related performance of an authority.

As shown above, it becomes difficult to separate specific support from diffuse support with a cutthroat precision, as longitudinal aspects are included. This validates the continuous scale approach of measuring support, favoured by Easton.

Diffuse support

The concept of diffuse support is, in contrast to specific support most commonly associated with arguments discussing what the authority in question represents and the intentions of a policy rather than the outcome of the same (Easton, 1967). Thus, emotional apprehension of the ideals of an institution exemplifies diffuse support. There is an additional personal bias in levels of diffuse support as it is based on a perception of what the regime 'is'. When measuring diffuse support the key question is: what does the regime stand for, and when that aspect is cleared: what is intended with its existence? These are more philosophical questions compared to the rational nature of specific support and have shown relatively harder to operationalize.

Diffuse support is argued to be inertial, rather than swift as both negative and positive diffuse aspects of support are more stable over time and does not shift on short term, as policies are evaluated (Easton, 1975). However, misrepresentation and dissatisfaction over longer periods of time can cause a substantial decrease in diffuse support and start a downward spiral hard to halt. The same applies for a possible

[2] See for instance Hooghe and Marks 2004; Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000, and Andersson 2000.

positive spiral. Time is also expected to have an impact on the formation of support when looking at forming a general view of a political system and its principles. The time aspect of diffuse support has been presented as a continuing childhood to adult socialisation when one gets used to and acclimatised to a system and experiences its benefits (Easton, 1975).

Nuances of diffuse support are exemplified by negative affection and sense of ability to identify with the authority and what it represents. Perceptions of a subject can be traced back to a level of identification, meaning that if one can identify oneself with the idea of the regime one is also more prone to support it. The objective of diffuse support is connected to territorial and personal aspects directed at the community (Boomgaarden et al., 2011). Based on this understanding, contextual factors such as ideological conviction and who is governing rather than how the governing is carried out are important factors for diffuse support (Harteveld, Meer and Vries, 2013).

To summarise, diffuse support in contrast to specific support does not have the equivalent of aggregated explanatory variables to test for as it to a greater extent has been measured by the people's personal appraisal and attachment to a political authority. Aggregated measures such as unemployment, GDP and economic development statistics has shown to have substantial influence on specific support for political authorities. The impact of time itself and the expected socialisation aspect is the only variable accounted for in theory that is free from personal perceptions *and* falls under the definition of diffuse support. Without doubt, this explains some of the challenges found in previous research. A number of scholars have continued to analyse support in a multidimensional manner, where Easton's theories continues to serve as a stepping-stone for further development of the research field.[3]

Previous research on specific and diffuse support for the EU

Extensive research has continued on Easton's line of thought, where theories on political support have been applied on the case of the European Union. Both specific and diffuse foundations of support have shown to play a role when looking at support for EU integration in general and over time. Generally, 'support for EU membership' alone or as part of a number of variables in an index serves as the dependent variable but the operationalization of what is included in the explanatory variables varies considerably.[4] Up until the beginning of the 1990's the focus was mainly on specific support much due to its perceived higher relevance and the difficulty to operationalize diffuse support (Gabel, 1998 and Chierici, 2005).

On an individual level, higher education and occupational skills are expected to lead to stronger support due to a greater appreciation of the benefits of a free market and the economic regime the EU to a large extent still is (Gabel, 1998). On a country level, explanatory variables such as GDP are expected to address those evaluating the

[3] See for instance Shephard 1975 and Hewstone 1986 as quoted in Anderson and Kaltenhaler 1996.
[4] See for instance Gabel 1998; Chierici 2005; Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Harteveld, Meer and Vries, 2013

EU membership in a utilitarian manner. Diffuse support for the EU on the other hand is more complex than specific support, as both the borders and the explicit goals of the Union are modified along the way, causing the basis of diffuse support to change over time (Chierici, 2005). The long-term perspective of diffuse support can therefore be based on different foundations depending on at what time affection and identity are measured. Nonetheless, the Union's self-filling projection of itself and general views on why not to support the EU can to some extent be generalised over time.

The complexity of diffuse support is reflected in research, manifested in the variety of operationalisatons used. Andersson and Kaltenhaler (1996) use the domestic socialisation process introduced by Easton (1975) and developed by Inglehart (1970) as an explanatory variable, where higher levels of support is expected as time passes due to rising attachment and awareness of EU membership stands for. Contributions to research such as those presented by Andersson and Kaltenhaler (1996) further motivates the interest and relevance of opinion research over time. Hooghe and Marks (2004) on the other hand operationalizes diffuse support by focusing on identity as a generic term for national attachment, exclusive national identity and the respondents view on multiculturalism.

To a large extent researchers agree that different factors explain the support for the EU pre and post the Maastricht treaty. An end to the permissive consensus and historically low public support for the EU in the beginning of the 1990's, called for a reinvestigation of diffuse support as to the least be complementary to the indicators of specific support (Chierici, 2005). By the large, research made on pre-Maastricht data has been repeated cross sectional and reportedly identified variables measuring specific support as the main drivers of support for the EU. These studies have used mostly Eurobarometer data on an aggregated country level; enabling variables such as country level economic growth, unemployment and trade balance to explain changes in support.[5]

At the same time as the EU shifted some of its policy focus in the beginning of the 1990's research explaining public support towards the EU shifted focus as well. The great majority of scholars concluded that the shift in the direction of the development of the EU required a reconsideration of previous research at least to complement previous studies. [6] However, the 'new wave' of research has seemingly not focused on opinion research over periods of time. Instead, either partly renewed approach to old data or cross sectional analyses at one point in time has marked the research.

It is the development over time of support for EU membership post Maastricht, the perceived impact of the EU on the national arena, and the possible correlation between them that is blank spot to fill regarding opinion research on opinion towards

[5] See for instance Gabel 1998; Chierici 2005; Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007.
[6] See for instance Toshkov 2011; Boomgaarden et al, 2011; Harteveld, Meer and Vries, 2013.

the EU. Chierici (2005) presented one of the most recent repeated cross sectional studies on opinion towards the EU in 2005 in a comprehensive study using Eurobarometer data covering the years 1970 to 2004. The study concludes that both diffuse and specific aspects of support as presented by Easton (1967) holds, even though both diffuse and specific support each have new dimensions within worth exploring. The different dimensions of support towards the EU are by Chierici approached with a new conceptualisations aiming at revisiting the relevance of diffuse support for public support. According to Chierici (2005), diffuse support is important when explaining the structure of support for the EU membership. Chierici (2005) does not, however, evaluate the validity of the results over time, nor does she preform regression analysing contrasting the results against public support towards EU membership.

Boomgarden et al. (2011) sets another good example on exploring the post-Maastricht scenario by conducting a study on individual level data from one year (2008) on citizens from the Netherlands. By dividing the aspects of diffuse and specific support into two clusters with overlapping features, Boomgarden et al. (2011) uses the definitions of both Easton and Lindberg & Sheingold to predict the drivers of opinion towards the EU (see table 1). Within the clusters they identify five dimensions; three of specific support and two of diffuse support and attempt to detect their relative contribution (Boomgarden et al., 2011). The three nuances of specific support found were; performance, utilitarianism and strengthening of the EU mandate and the two nuances of diffuse support found were; identity and negative affection.

To summarise, previous research is marked by two waves. From the 1970's and up until the period before the signing of the Maastricht treaty several longitudinal studies were carried out on what influenced public opinion towards the EU. Strong influences of specific aspects of support were found as correlations between national economic performances, utilitarian evaluations of aggregated and individual benefits were significant. The diffuse aspects of support were shown to have relatively less impact on support for EU membership. These results coincide with a period of time when the EU was mainly an economically driven cooperation. After the Maastricht treaty, the EU expanded its competence areas and the economic crisis of the early 90's concurred with a historically low support for EU membership. Since then, research has departed from the previous longitudinal trends and has with few exceptions focused more on individual level datasets at one point in time. In this second wave of research, diffuse aspects of support have also re-emerged as important influences of support. Using the foundations of the theoretical framework as presented by Easton and applied by many after, the next section will present aim and course of action that will be used to investigate the drivers of opinion towards EU membership in Sweden.

Aim, proposed mechanism and hypotheses

The following section aims to clarify the relevance of the presented theories. First and perhaps foremost the aim of the thesis is explicitly stated. From this, a proposed model, which includes the causal mechanism, is presented as well as hypotheses and research questions.

Aim

In light of existing theories and empirical research the concept of support has presented as complex and multifaceted. Here, I will keep in line with previous research by adopting a multidimensional approach to public support defined as diffuse and specific. This thesis approaches public support towards the EU by investigating the connection between support of EU membership and perceived influence of the EU on selected policy areas.

The aim of this thesis is to *test to what extent the opinion towards EU membership can be predicted by an evaluative measure of the EU's influence on national policy on selected policy areas and how this relationship has changed over time*. With a diverse choice of policy areas, the aim is to test the degree of predictability of perceived performance on areas where the EU has varying degrees of mandate.

Proposed mechanism and hypotheses

As a continuation of the previously presented theory, and part of my contribution to the field of research, I will now present the building of a model. The model will serve as the foundation for subsequent operationalisations and statistical analysis.

The use of perceived performance of a political power to predict support for the same has been done by *inter alia* Pippa Norris in her work on democratic deficit (Norris, 2011). By categorising support based on Eastons seminal insight, Norris identifies evaluations of performance as one out of five aspects of political support. Here I will apply the operationalization of Norris work in a EU context; instead of system support, I use support for EU membership, and evaluation of democratic performance is exchanged for policy evaluation (Norris, 2011).

The causal mechanism that is expected to drive the change in support is presented in figure 1 where perceptions and evaluations of EU influence on national policy are expected to predict the opinion towards EU membership. This expectation is formulated in hypothesis 1.

> $H1_0$: policy evaluation does not influence opinion towards EU membership.
>
> $H1_1$: the more positively policy impact is evaluated; the more probable it is to be positive to EU membership.

The presumed direction of causality is not unproblematic. However, it has been argued and applied in research by prominent social scientists since the start of public

opinion research (Easton, 1967, 1975; Inglehart, 1970, Norris, 2011). Both Easton and Inglehart discusses the ambiguity of the direction of causality in a national respective regional context (Easton, 1967 and Inglehart, 1970). The proposed direction of causality emerges from the idea that appreciation needs to be deserved. This assumption does not exclude the possibility that the causality can be traced in the opposite direction, or more realistically that the relationship is reciprocal. The performance/ policy evaluative approach has been used in a large number of studies and in more recent research it is in cases where the opposite is done that the justification is discussed and problematized (Toshkov, 2011 and Shoen, 2008). However, the possibility to make inferences of the causal direction increases by relying on time series data.

Figure 1 Illustration of proposed causal mechanism

Even though the direction of causality possibly can be observed in both directions and reciprocally, this study as many before will accept and analyse the data based on the assumptions that the influence of policy evaluation on attitude towards the EU is of interest to investigate. As a result of this argued direction of causality the results of this study will not be discussed in terms of correlations but rather about influential factors affecting support for the EU.

Hypothesis 1 is followed up by an explorative research question (RQ_1) asking whether *the varying degree of EU mandate on the different policy areas impact the size of the effect on opinion towards EU membership.* This thesis will compare the effect of policy performance on EU membership opinion of five different policy areas. The varying degrees of mandate of the EU on each of the policy areas are expected to influence the size of the effect.

The impact of the evaluation of EU influence on national policy on opinion towards EU membership is expected to have different strengths depending on the mandate EU has on the area. The more influence the EU has on the policy area, the better of a predictor towards EU membership is should be. However, there is another dimension of impact of the policy areas, namely that of how they affect the daily life of citizens. As a rule of thumb the EU has less direct influence on 'bread and butter politics' affecting citizens daily life and more mandates on policy areas further away from areas directly affecting its citizens (see appendix B). Therefore, how the strengths of influence of policy evaluation on opinion towards EU membership differ between policy areas is not entirely clear and the RQ_1 is therefore explorative in nature. A stronger effect on areas where the EU has actual mandate is expected, with the acknowledgement that the general impact of the policy area on the everyday life of the citizens possibly moderates that effect. Possible spill over effects as a result of a more integrated internal market and a closer cooperation between members of the

European Union are difficult to control for and complicates the expectations about how policy evaluation differs in impact on opinion towards EU membership between policies. Nevertheless, exploring possible differences will give us as insight to the strength of the respective policy area as a predictor of EU opinion.

Taking into account the previously presented operationalisations of support as defined by Easton, and inspired by Norris conceptual framework, the evaluations of the performance of an institution or regime is categorised as 'middle level' of support influenced by both diffuse and specific drivers (Norris, 2011). The influence of output oriented specific support and input oriented diffuse support at a point where policy performance is evaluated is expected alter as time is added to the equation. As time passes the influence of diffuse, affective and identity driven support is expected to increase due to a continuous socialisation process. Support is not treated as a zero-sum game. Instead, diffuse support driven by time is expected to add to an overall increase in support for the EU membership. As a result, the relative importance of the kinds of drivers of support changes as times passes.

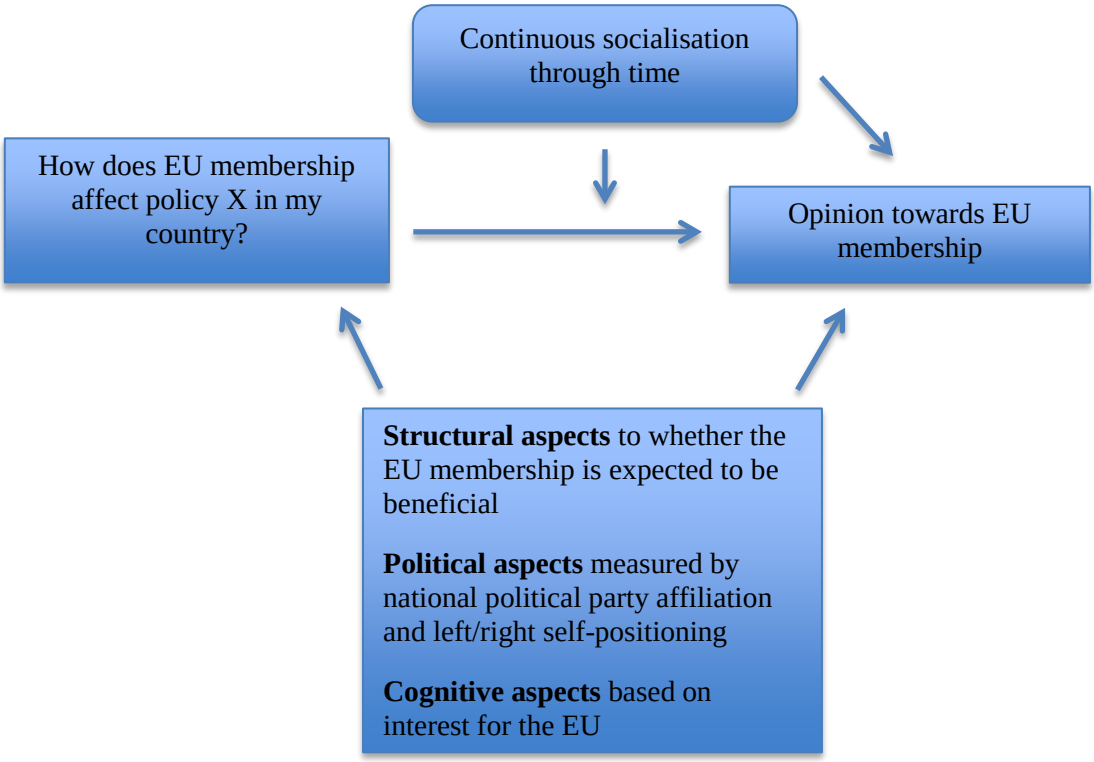
> $H2_0$: there is no significant interaction between policy evaluation and time that influence opinion towards EU membership.
>
> $H2_1$: policy evaluation and time will interact significantly to influence opinion towards EU membership.

The interaction effect presented in $H2_1$ is expected to show a stronger positive influence over time due to the continuous socialisation process.

A final dimension of H2 is formulated into a second research question (RQ_2) and looks at the variation between the values within the five explorative variables. *Does the influence of policy evaluation and time follow the same trend independent of if policy performance is evaluated positively or negatively or does hypothesis 2 hide an intrinsic dimension not visible in the general trends?*

The first step in the analysis is to explore the key relationships between the policy evaluation and opinion towards the EU. This will be done parallel in all five selected policy areas. As previously presented such influence is expected to exist on a general basis. The first step provides answers the expectations expressed in H1 and RQ_1. In the second step of the analysis the key relationships are explored, as the interaction term is included in the model. The results of step two in the analysis gives answers and basis for reflection to H2 and finally RQ_2. Figure 2 illustrates the full model. First, it shows the focal relationship between policy evaluations and support for the EU. This evaluation is under control for socialisation over time. When the two steps of analysis are ran in regressions, the focal relationships will be controlled for by factors divided into three categories: cognitive, political and structural. The operationalization of the segments of the model will be problematized and discussed upon in later sections.

Figure 2 Illustration of expanded model



Case selection

This section motivates the selection of cases and the limitations of this thesis. First the case of Sweden is presented where the Swedish context is described, as well as its relevance and contribution to this thesis. Second, the developments of EU mandate within the five policy areas analysed in this thesis, are described.

The case of Sweden

Out of the three countries that entered the EU in 1995, Sweden was the country with the lowest support for EU membership at the time of the accession. The EU positive stand of both the Social Democrats, who had had just recently won the general elections with a cogent 45 % support and the conservative party coalition enabled general consensus among the political elite. Only the Left party and the Green party had official standpoints opposing EU membership (Fitzmaurice, 1995).

Over time, the Swedish support for EU membership has increased. Data from the Eurobarometer tells us that in May 1995 37 % of the Swedes considered the EU membership to be a good thing while among the other two new members, 39 % of the Austrians and 51 % of the Finns said the same. In the latest available data from the same source, Sweden has surpassed the other two and was by 2010 the country of the three with the most positive inhabitants with a reported 56 % of the population considering the EU membership to be a good thing (European Commission, 2010).

Evidently, the development of support for the EU membership by Swedes' has increased to a much larger extent than the two countries that entered the Union at the same time as Sweden. The documented increase in approval of membership to the EU is supported by *inter alia* surveys conducted by the SOM institute.[7]

I argue for Sweden as a good case for testing the previously specified model. First, Swedes opinion towards EU membership has developed during the last 20 years. Also Sweden provides a good case, as it has been members of the EU during the last 20 years when the Union has both deepened its competences and widened its borders. The specific mandates and their development over time, together with a continuously developing acceptance of the new reality of membership are expected to be predictors of the general attitude towards the membership.

EU mandate and its development over time

When measuring opinion on individual level it is hard to know what the respondent refers to when voicing opinion on subjects such as the ones in this paper. However, the EU has varying and not to forget, limited mandate to act on different areas. Below I present a glimpse of the development in the five policy areas, the same areas that will later be used to assess the relationship between policy evaluation and support for the EU.

When the citizens of Sweden voted on entering the EU or not, the EU had just undergone a major period of development. The Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty established a number of foundational aspects of the EU that Sweden entered a few years later. New legislative procedures were introduced and the European Parliament was given a more significant role than before increasing the democratic aspects of decision-making. The plan for realising the Economic and Monetary Union had been presented and the question of the environment, as well as economic- and social- cohesion were developed as policy areas recognised in the treaties (Nugent, 2010).

Support for EU membership had until the developments in the beginning of the 1990's been strongly influenced by macroeconomic evaluations (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). This view was now challenged as the overall support in for the EU reached historically low levels. The permissive consensus that previously characterised the expansions and development of the EU and its competences was suddenly transcended into what has been called a 'constraining dissensus' (Lindberg and Sheingold, 1970, Down and Wilson, 2008).

Even though the formal mandate of the EU in all possible areas are stated in treaties, it is important to acknowledge the vast range of spill-over effects the membership itself has even in areas where the EU has limited or no legislative power. Increased cooperation between the member states, non-binding guidelines and goals of streamlined policies is an effect of EU membership. In the light of this, this thesis

[7] See for instance the report 'Swedish trends 1986–2013" (Oscarsson and Bergström, 2014)

looks at how the differences in *actual* mandate affect the general opinion towards EU membership.

Treaties after Sweden's accession

In 1999, The Treaty of Amsterdam established a common external border, fortifying the rules of free movement within the Union. Employment and a social chapter were fully incorporated to the Treaty of the European Community (TEC). The Nice treaty identified new ways of cooperating regarding the fight against organised crime and officially gave treaty recognition to such cooperation. Social Policy objectives were widened but coordination of social protection systems was specially mentioned *not* to be included in the extended harmonization process (Nugent, 2010).

The Lisbon treaty signed in December 2007 is the latest, and now current binding agreement between the members of the European Union. It did not present any great extensions in terms of policy competences but did strengthen the ability to cooperate on energy and internal security issues. The Lisbon treaty also clearly states what powers the EU hold exclusively, share with the member states and what powers the member states utterly possesses (Nugent, 2010).

The policy areas

The Treaty on the functioning of the EU (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, hereinafter TFEU) divides the competences of the EU in three main categories: exclusive, shared and supporting. This thesis focuses on policy evaluation of five areas; economy, employment, environment, agriculture and law enforcement. The policy areas are selected motivated by theory and relevance but due to practical constrains further limitations applies. Appendix B accounts for the practical limitations decisive in the selection process, mapping the EU's different competences and the areas that had been attended in the data available. When only the policy areas that were present in all four datasets remained, they were matched with the EU's mandate and the five policies were selected. Table 2 presents the selection of policy areas.

Table 2 Overview of policy areas

Policy area	Economy	Employment	Environment	Agriculture	Law enforcement
EU competence	Coordinating	Coordinating	Shared	Shared	Umbrella co-operation

Note: The categorisation of EU competences are retrieved from The European citizen's initiative (European Commission, 2015)

Firstly, representing the group of policy areas where the EU has shared competence, *agriculture* and *the environment* will be presented. Secondly, representing a group of policy areas where the EU has no direct competence but serves as a coordinating actor, *employment* and *the economy*. Finally, *law enforcement* will be presented in the capacity of an overreaching umbrella of cooperation between EU member states.

Shared competence

The areas where the EU has shared competence are since 2010 regulated by Article 4 of the TFEU. The EU defines shared competence as:

"The EU and Member States are authorised to adopt binding acts in these fields. However, Member States may exercise their competence only in so far as the EU has not exercised, or has decided not to exercise, its own competence."

(European Union, 2010 and further specified in article 4 of the TFEU)

Both the agriculture and environmental policy falls under this category. The agriculture policy of Sweden had been deregulated before the accession to the European Union, explaining the Swedish farmers' positive view on EU membership in contrast to the agricultural sector in many other countries (Fitzmaurice, 1995). A common agriculture policy has existed since the 1960's and has throughout time been the single biggest post in the EU budget. Around 40 % of the total budget of the EU goes to developing and investing in rural areas and supporting farmers (EU-upplysningen, 2015). In the 1990's the agriculture policy changed from focusing on the EU manipulating demand to control price levels, to a more supporting function where farmers gets support to develop and adjust to the market conditions of today. In 2015 Sweden will receive 8.45 billion SEK in agricultural support from the EU (EU- upplysningen, 2015).

The environmental policy has developed since its introduction to the EU competences in the 1970's. Climate change and scientific development has among other things influenced the topicality of environmental policy and the concerns in other policies. Sweden has been and still is considered a leader in promoting higher environmental standards. At the time of the accession in the middle of the 1990's Sweden, Austria and Finland were considered to be a 'green troika' that would push environmental policy up on the agenda (Liefferink and Andersen, 2010). An environmental guarantee assuring that countries are allowed to have more stringent environmental laws on well-motivated areas has been of political importance in Sweden. Both the Swedish government and the environmental interest groups voiced concern that the harmonised environmental laws of the EU would be a backlash for a forerunner like Sweden who intended to 'lead by example' with more strict policies than what the EU required (Liefferink and Andersen, 2010).

Areas where the EU has competence to provide coordination between EU member states

Employment and the economy are areas on which the EU cooperates with the member states. In areas that falls under cooperative mandate

"..the EU is responsible for ensuring the coordination of these policies. It is required to define the broad direction and guidelines to be followed by Member States."

(European Union, 2010 and further specified in article 5 of the TFEU)

Free movement of people, one of the four freedoms that the EU is founded on is among other things intended to enable response to a temporary unbalanced labour market by enlarging the size of the market and enable unemployed people in one region to move to regions with a higher demand for labour. Many were worried that the Swedish 'work line' with strong social partners, no legislated minimum wage but with far reaching collective agreements would crackle when exposed to competition from foreign actors. The fear of a 'race to the bottom' of wages and working conditions has however not been met (Ruist, 2015).

During the enlargement rounds of 2004 and 2007 the debate was vivid in the EU regarding what it would mean for the labour markets of the older member states when countries with labour intense markets would be free to move to, and compete with domestic workforce in the old member states. As a result a large number of old member state proposed a transition period where citizens of the new member states still had limited access to labour markets and welfare and thereby conditioning the free movement. All EU15 countries except Sweden utilised the right to limit the presumed working migration (Ruist, 2015).

The primary goal of EU's economic cooperation is set to achieve sustainability of public finances and to boost EU's competitiveness on the global market (EU-upplysningen, 2014a). When Sweden entered the EU it was just about to recover from an extensive economic crisis and many looked to the EU for rescue, and as a safety against standing outside the economic cooperation of the Union. Even though the EU does not have a formal mandate over the economies of its member states, one of the most recurrent arguments to ratify the Union's existence, further expansion and increased intensity of the cooperation are the economic benefits of its existence, both within the EU and as an actor in a global world (Gabel, 1998). Sweden has stayed outside the monetary union and by that kept control over interest and exchange rates resulting in a greater autonomy over the economy during the most recent economic crisis.

Umbrella cooperation

Cooperation on security issues and between national police in Europe has a history long before the birth of the EU. The formalisation and development of the cooperation have developed since Sweden entered the Union in 1995, as the digitalisation of means of sharing information it has become more effective (EU upplysningen, 2014b). The harmonisations of judicial systems and laws have implications on all citizens of the EU, on an individual level, for enterprises and for governments (Benyon, 1994).

On a macro level the EU primarily deals with harmonisation of national laws and international agreements. The miso level cooperation focuses on procedures, structures and practices of national police agencies while the micro level cooperation takes place on specific breaches of the law and around international meetings and events (Benyon, 1994). In some areas the EU may decide on minimum rules on the

conditions under which a law is to be used and punishment of the crime, for example trafficking, terrorism and IT- crime (EU-upplysningen, 2014b).

The idea behind identifying policy areas with different characteristics is to shed light on a possible difference in policy performance influence on EU membership. Will the strength of influence of policy evaluation on support for EU membership be affected by the particular characteristic of the policy area dependent on the EU's varying mandate? When discussing the results the trickle down effects of policies are to be carefully considered. Due to reasons previously presented, it would be naïve to look only at the formal and institutionalised impacts of the EU on the citizens of the Union. Nevertheless, the formal distinction of EU mandate will be an interesting feature when analysing the results as it enters previously unchartered research territory.

Data preparation and operationalization

The key relationships in this thesis are evaluative in nature; it is easy to directly place the implications of perceived performance in the specific, rational and utilitarian category of support. However, revisiting the conceptual framework of Norris (2011) the evaluation of a political systems performance is placed in the middle on the overlapping specific/diffuse support scale. The evaluation of performance taps both the satisfaction with perceived output as well as the workings of the practices of the Union (Norris, 2011)

If the strength of the influence of policy evaluation on attitude towards membership to the EU does not show a strong divide between policy where the EU has shared mandate compared to areas where the EU has cooperative mandate, this might unveil an underlying dimension of diffuse support embedded in the preciously output oriented specific support. The research question developed earlier, regarding how varying degrees of EU mandate influences the strength of the relationships between policy evaluation and EU opinion are not obvious due to the lack of clarity in the theoretical base for such expectations.

One distinction between the policy areas that can be made is the direct versus indirect impact they have on the public. The areas where shared competences are applied, here exemplified by environment and agriculture are areas where the impact on citizens can be argued to be indirect. With the exception of the 2 % of the Swedish workforce employed in the agriculture sector, implications of environmental and agricultural policies are not something that citizens of Sweden are directly exposed to on a daily basis (The World Bank, 2015). The economy and employment however can be considered to be much closer to the daily life of citizens. The economy and employment, connected to the EU or not, individual or aggregated, are important factors in every person's life.

Operationalization based on data from answers from a randomised sample of respondents encounters a series of challenges. As is characteristic for opinion

research, it is the *perception* of the respondents that results in the data used for analysis. A number of assumptions need to be done to justify the use of the expressed individual perception of a system or functioning of a system. The respondents must feel that they are free to express their views unhindered by possible repercussions by authorities and not the least that the respondents assume the same causality that this thesis does, namely that the support for a regime is based on its performance and therefore the support is something one earn. Easton (1975) expresses it: "w*ithout this causality being made, the performance of the authorities would have little probability of influencing the level of support directed towards them"* (Easton, 1975, p. 438).

The presumed knowledge and political awareness of respondents represents one of the criticisms against giving opinion research a place in policy evaluating opinion research (Norris, 2011). However, support serves as the base for electing representatives in general elections and informed electorates or not, the perceived knowledge and evaluations of authority or party performance by the electorate are substantially decisive in election outcomes.

Data

The data used in the analysis is collected using simple random net sampling of Swedish citizens, living in Sweden between the age of 18 and 80. Data collection and evaluation is done in collaboration between Statistics Sweden (SCB) and The Swedish National Election Studies Program (SNES). The data is cross sectional, repeated in co-occurrence with the elections to the European Parliament. Datasets used in this thesis are collected in concurrence with elections to the European Parliament at four times, namely 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014. The key independent variable asks the respondents to evaluate EU influence on policy performance. Therefore, data collected in connection with the first European parliament election in 1995 is not relevant in this analysis for obvious reasons.[8]

The chosen data are collected corresponding to the Elections to the European parliament. However, the survey provides generally worded questions, which are very suitable for measuring aspects of support. The combination of surveying and election year to the European Parliament might bump the interest for the EU and put the questions asked in respective surveys on the agenda.

The surveys used in this study are designed to give representative estimates of the Swedish population. The repetition also enables analyses of attitudinal changes since previous surveys. Another advantage with the use of repeated cross sectional data is that it minimises respondent fatigue, as an overlap of respondents is essentially non-existent between time periods (Steel, 2008). Also, it reduces conditioning effects

[8] In 2014 the survey mode changed from face to face interview/telephone to mail-back questionnaire /web/ telephone. The mode effect of changed method is expected to be minimal due to the types of questions used in this analysis. The variables used do not concern moral or ethical issues and the social desirability bias that is expected in face to face interviews should therefore not affect the results.

where the respondents are affected by participation in data collection at previous occasions.

Hitherto voiced critique of using cross sectional data in previous research is still relevant even though the repetition of surveys with the same design approaches some of the criticism. Data used in the 'first wave' of research on public opinion towards the EU most commonly originated from the Eurobarometer, conducting similar design over time. The European Election Survey (EES) uses the same design over time but similarities aside, a study comparing the SNES dataset from 2009 with data from EES the same year showed that, compared to census data, the representativity of SNES data outrivalled that of the EES (Dahlberg and Persson, 2013). The response rate of the Swedish section of EES reached a modest 11.2 per cent compared to 67 per cent in the SNES study. The composition of respondents was shown to better reflect the population as for education level, political interest, both general interest and EU specific, and place of residence (Dahlberg and Persson, 2013).

Panel data can be argued to be the optimal material to measure changes in opinion and longitudinal panel data is considered to be the best when measuring changes at individual level. However, sample sizes used in panel data are generally lower due to higher costs resulting in reduced precision of estimates (Martin, 2013). In the case of this study suitable panel data is not available. In SNES data, strong emphasis has been put on upholding high quality sample representation and by that unbiased estimates are maintained (Steel, 2008 and Oleskog & Hedberg, forthcoming 2015). Even though the data is collected in *connection* to the national elections to the European Parliament; this thesis does not aim to focus on the role of the European Parliament but on the opinion towards- and perceived performance of the EU- in general. More detailed information about the datasets from each year can be found in appendix C.

Operationalization

In order to use all of the four datasets covering 20 years of membership, datasets were merged using year of origin as identifier. Some recoding and data processing was needed in order to make the datasets match. This process will be approached in the following sections.

Support for the Swedish membership to the EU

In order to capture the relationship between perceived EU performance and the general view on EU membership, the dependent variable indicates if the respondent supports or opposes Sweden's membership to the European Union. The dependent variable is based on the following question *"Are you principally for or against Swedish membership to the EU or do you have no definite opinion on the matter?"* The response alternatives are; '*principally for'*, '*principally against'* and '*no definite opinion on the matter'*.

Previous research has used variables with the same phrasing to represent general support for the EU.[9] In this thesis I am interested in what explains *support* for the EU and consequently I have turned this originally three scaled variable into a dichotomous variable where the results corresponds to those in favour of Sweden's membership to the EU in relation to those opposing it. Only respondents with a voiced opinion are included in the sample. This is justified due to the stable development of the respondents that answers that they neither support nor reject the Swedish membership to the EU.

Generally it can be said that all information contributes and that omitting information should be avoided. However, considering the results of methodological studies of dichotomising variables measuring support for EU membership, it can be concluded that in the end it comes down to an evaluation of if the supposed loss of information is relative to the gain in simplicity and reliability (Marks et al., 2012). For the purpose of this study I made the decision that the gains outrivalled the losses. For detailed information on question wordings and coding procedure, see appendix A.

Explanatory variables

The main independent variables ask the respondent how they evaluate the impact the Swedish membership to the EU has had on a selection of policy areas. The questions are all part of the same battery of questions and have five response options, namely: *'great improvement', 'some improvement', 'neither', 'some deterioration'* and '*great deterioration'*. However, the response options differ in the data from 2014 where the response scale were phrased in terms of if the EU membership has had 'very positive' to 'very negative' impact on Sweden within the chosen policy areas. The scale was in all cases coded one to five with a 'neither' as a midpoint. In the merged dataset I replaced the coding of 2014 data with the coding applied on data from previous years. The frequency distribution between the response alternatives each year point in a direction where less and less people respond that they perceive neither an improvement nor deterioration. As a result of this, together with the similar construction of the question and the same number of steps on the scale, the recoding of 2014 data is accepted not to determine the results. The scales were reversed in order to reflect a more commonsensical direction of the expected influence. For detailed information on question wordings and coding procedure, see appendix A.

To summarise, five separate regression models will be analysed. In each of them, the support for the EU serves as dependent variable whereas five policy areas are used as main independent variables: economy, employment, environment, agriculture, and law enforcement.

Control variables

In order to estimate the impact of the explanatory variable on the independent variable, controlling variables are included in the model. Controlling variables are included in the model to estimate the impact of the explanatory variable on the

[9] See for instance Gabel, 1998

dependent variable when considering the effects of the controlling variables (Aneshensel, 2002).

The controlling variables are divided into three groups: structural, political and cognitive. The structural aspect of support is measured by level of education, age and sex of the respondent. The political aspects are measured by the respondents' self-placement on a political left-right scale and if the respondent was a supporter of the incumbent party at the time of the survey. Lastly the cognitive aspects will be measured by the stated interest in EU politics and to what extent the respondent reads news about the EU. Previous research identifies variables measuring cognitive ability as relevant to include in the equation as they are expected to have an impact on both the opinion towards EU membership and the ability to evaluate the impact the EU has on national policy. Interest in EU politics and consumption of EU related news are expected to influence opinion positively towards EU membership as the more information one have about the complex system of the EU and the existence of the EU, the less threatening the EU is perceived (Inglehart et al., 1991 in Gabel 1998). The structural and political variables are however equally relevant to include in the model, controlling for spurious correlations due to its expected influence on both the EU membership and policy evaluation. Support for the incumbent party and self-positioning on the left to right political spectra are expected to influence both opinion towards EU membership and policy evaluation as citizens tend to adopt the same attitude towards the EU as the party they support (Gabel, 1998).

Empirically all control variables are treated the same way but the demarcation between the three groups serves to distinguish between what is noise in the regression and what is other theoretical processes (Aneshensel, 2002). For detailed information on question wordings and coding procedure, see appendix A.

Time and the interaction variable

The dataset used in the analysis contains data collected at four moments in time covering a time period of 20 years. One of the main measures used to identify the development of diffuse support is the continuing socialisation process and the points in time when the data is collected will be used first as dummy variables and later as an interaction term in the analysis. Since this thesis suggests that the number of years of membership to the EU has an impact on the structure of support, the different years of collected data will be introduced as dummy variables in table 4 and as part of an interaction term in table 5. The effect of the dummy variables informs us if there are any significant differences over time. The variable 'year' has been coded 1-4, where each value represents the data collected one year.

Based on the theory of continuous socialisation there is reason to believe that there is an interaction effect suggesting that the longer time passes the more positively policy will be evaluated and therefore the more positive people will be to the EU membership. The interaction term is created by multiplying *policy evaluation* with *year*. The interaction term represents the change in opinion towards EU membership

when policy evaluation and time (year) vary together. The interaction term is the estimated effect of opinion towards EU membership that cannot be explained by policy evaluation and time passing respectively. Policy evaluation multiplied by time stands for the extra-predicted effect on EU opinion to as a result of being evaluating policy more positively the more time passes (Dahlberg and Solevid, 2005).

Table 3 accounts for a variable overview where the scale, mean and standard error for each variable are presented. The mean value of the dummy variables represents the percentage of the variable scoring one (1) on the scale, which can be translated as the distribution within the variable. Reference categories for the dummy variables are presented with (ref) in parenthesis.

Table 3 Variable overview

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	
Opinion about Sweden's membership to the EU	.673	0.469	0	1	1= Positive to EU membership
Policy evaluation: the environment	3.021	0.965	1	5	5= Great improvement
Policy evaluation: the economy	3.138	0.804	1	5	5= Great improvement
Policy evaluation: employment	3.002	0.863	1	5	5= Great improvement
Policy evaluation: agriculture	2.864	1.102	1	5	5= Great improvement
Policy evaluation: law enforcement	3.027	0.970	1	5	5= Great improvement
Interest in EU politics	2.573	0.735	1	4	4= Very interested
Consumption of EU news	2.336	0.749	1	4	4= Read almost everything
Political affiliation	5.215	2.227	0	10	0= Far to the left, 10=far to the right
Supporter of the Social democratic party	.201	0.401	0	1	1= Supporter of the Social Democratic party
Supporter of conservative party	.168	0.374	0	1	1= Supporter of the Conservative party
Countryside (ref)	.166	0.372	0	1	Countryside
Small town	.219	0.413	0	1	1= Small town
Town/small city	.362	0.481	0	1	1= Town/small city
Big city	.253	0.435	0	1	1= Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö
Low education (ref)	.170	0.376	0	1	Low education
Medium education	.413	0.492	0	1	1 =Medium education
High education	.417	0.493	0	1	1= High education
Female	.425	0.494	0	1	1= Female
Age	49.309	15.796	18	80	Age in years
1999 (ref)	.266	0.442	0	1	Responses collected in 1999 (n=918)
2004	.222	0.416	0	1	Responses collected in 2004 (n=765)
2009	.203	0.402	0	1	Responses collected in 2009 (n=700)
2014	.308	0.462	0	1	Responses collected in 2014 (n=1063)

Note: Total number of observations is 3 446. The source of all data material used in this study is distributed by Swedish National Data Service (SND). Principal investigators are Sören Holmberg and Statistics Sweden (SCB) for the 1999 study, Sören Holmberg, Henrik Oscarsson and SCB for the studies 2004, 2009 and Linda Berg, Henrik Oscarsson and SCB for the study 2014.

Statistical method

The study of support over time that has been absent in this area of research the last two decades will be approached in this thesis by looking at the case of Sweden and the country's 20 years of membership to the European Union. The importance of tracing the structure of public opinion over time is relevant as a response to the introductory citation stating the *imperative duty of the EU to be attentive to the needs and concerns of the citizens of the union* (European Parliament, 1996*).* Moreover, it is of interest to conduct this study to unveil the influence of time passing itself on the general opinion towards membership to the EU.

A bivariate logistic analysis will be carried out to establish to what extent policy evaluation is a good predictor to opinion towards EU membership. As a second step, controlling variables to avoid spuriosity and redundancy in the analysis are added to the primary model. The control variables are divided into three groups each representing structural, political and cognitive aspects expected to influence the key model. As the final step in the analysis, 'policy evaluation' will be multiplied by 'time', and through adding this interaction term a possible extra-predicted effect on EU opinion will be explored.

To perform this analysis the statistical software package STATA SE/13.0 is used. Because of the dichotomous characteristics of my dependent variable the use of logistic analysis is the preferred method of regression. The possible outcomes of the dependent variable (0/1) do not meet the requirements of linear regression and in order to predict the probability of being positive (1) towards Sweden's membership to the EU, logistic regression analysis will be conducted. The *logit* function used in STATA produces a coefficient that is the log of the odds, and odds are a function of probability of a one i.e. supportive of EU membership. The coefficient that is reported in table 4 and 5 shows the logged odds of being positive to EU membership for a one-unit change in the evaluation of policy performance (Pampel, 2000).[10]

Each key relationship with corresponding policy-evaluating explanatory variable is analysed in three logistic regressions. First, all five policy areas are run in a bivariate logistic analysis testing the focal relationship. Secondly, the controlling variables are added to each policy area and lastly an interaction term is created and the fully expanded model is analysed. The results of the bivariate regression can be found in appendix E. The second logistic regression is presented in table 4 and presents the results of all five regressions with the evaluation of the different policy areas as exploratory variables. Finally, in table 5 the logged odds of the fully expanded model, with focal relationships, control variables and the created interaction term is presented.

[10] Another way of presenting results of a logistic analysis is calculation the odds ratio. The ratio of the odds is calculated by dividing the odds of an event happening with the odds of an event not happening. By using logged odds the direction of influences are correspondent to the sign in front of the coefficient, in contrast to the odds ratio where values below 1 indicates a negative relationship and values over 1 are positive.

Figure 3 to 7 presents the results of table 5 that is the interaction effect of policy evaluation and time on support in terms of predicted probabilities computed at mean values. The probability is the ratio between the number of events favourable to an outcome and the total number of events, and odds are the ration between probabilities. The odds are the probability of the dependent variable being one(1) and the dependent variable being zero (0) (Sperandei, 2014). The confidence intervals reported in figure 3 to 7 shows the interval between which there is a 95% chance that the interval contains the population mean.

Assessment of the model

The independent variables are checked for normality and multicolliniarity and the result of those tests together with a correlation matrix and descriptive statistics are presented and reflected upon in appendix D. The results all fall within respective acceptable range and will not weaken the models in the following analyses.

In table 4 and 5 the -2 log likelihood (-2LL) and Cragg & Uhler's R^2 are declared for. The -2LL explains the deviance and is used to assess the model. The value of -2LL does not have a 'true' meaning but can be used as a tool to compare nested models and the ambition is for the value to decrease as the model is expended. Cragg & Uhler's R^2 is used to demonstrate the improvement the expanded models are compared to a null model. The value can take values between zero and one and a higher value indicates a better-fitted model.

Results

Below I present the results of the logistic regression used to test the influence of policy evaluation on opinion towards the EU. First, the multiple regression models will be discussed for all five policy-evaluating models. Second, the ultimate model with the added segment of the interaction effect will be commented upon and finally the logged odds of table 5 will be visualised and discussed in terms of predicted probabilities in figures 3 to 7 and summarised in table 6.

Regression results

The main analysis of the empirical findings contains five logistic regressions all representing each one of the five policy areas; the economy, employment, the environment, agriculture and law enforcement. First to be noted is that all variables in table 4 are significant in all five models, with the only exception age of the respondents and the time variable 2004 compared to the 1999 reference year for environment, agriculture and law enforcement. Among the significant results, all coefficients except for the gender of the respondents display positive effects.

All models in table 4 are controlled for the effect of time passing and the influence of policy evaluation on support for EU membership represent the average effect during the whole time period measured. Controlling for the exact same variables, the effect of

policy evaluation on the opinion towards EU membership is strongest in the economic policy model and weakest in the agriculture policy model.

When looking at the variation for each key independent variable the difference between those evaluating policy influence most negatively compared to those evaluating policy evaluation most positively are large and significant. The predicted probability to support EU membership depends largely on how the policy area is evaluated. If economic policy is evaluated most negatively (1) the predicted probability to support EU membership is 23.4 % and if economic policy is evaluated as a great improvement (5) the predicted probability to support EU membership is 96.8 %. Evaluating employment policy the same dispersion ranges between 28.8% and 95.4%. Within environmental policy evaluation the predicted probability to support EU membership ranges between 35 % and 92 %, within agricultural policy between 51 % and 89.3 % and finally, within law enforcement the dispersion lies between 43.1 % and 90.7 %. The magnitude of the dispersion reflects the size of the coefficient in table 4 and the larger the coefficient, the better of a predictor is the policy area in question. Appendix F presents the predicted probability of being positive to support EU membership at the extreme values of the key independent variable.

The effect of the cognitive variables on opinion towards membership has roughly the same influence on all key dependent variables. Interest for politics about the EU has a stronger positive influence on the opinion towards EU membership than the consumption of news about the EU. There seem to be little difference between supporters of the Conservative party and supporters of the Social Democrats. Being a supporter of the Social Democrats has larger effects when employment and agriculture are evaluators of support for EU membership, while the effect is stronger among conservative supporters when the three remaining policy areas are used as evaluators of membership support The structural variables indicate that highly educated males *not* living on the countryside are influencing EU opinion in a positive direction. The variable denominating place of residence is indicating a centre periphery divide, particularly in the environment, agriculture and law enforcements models where the effect of living in a big city compared to a conurbation is around double the effect compared to the reference category.

Table 4

Effects of policy evaluation on opinion towards EU membership

(Logged odds, std. err in parenthesis)

	Economy	Employment	Environment	Agriculture	Law enforcement
Policy evaluation	1.145(0.056)***	0.985(0.058)***	0.766(0.057)***	0.520(0.041)***	0.640(0.047)***
Interest in EU politics	0.450(0.081)***	0.533(0.079)***	0.507(0.077)***	0.547(0.077)***	0.486(0.077)***
Consumption of EU news	0.172(0.079)**	0.183(0.076)***	0.198(0.075)**	0.194(0.074)**	0.182(0.074)**
Political left/right affiliation	0.245(0.025)***	0.256(0.024)**	0.264(0.023)***	0.283(0.023)***	0.281(0.023)***
Social democratic supporter	0.755(0.123)***	0.816(0.119)***	0.735(0.116)***	0.812(0.116)***	0.820(0.116)***
Conservative supporter	0.769(0 .174)***	0.776(0.169)***	0.797(0.165)***	0.761(0.165)***	0.874(0.166)***
Country side (ref)					
Small town	0.415(0.140)**	0.403(0.135)**	0.289(0.131)**	0.243(0.132)*	0.325(0.132)**
Town/small city	0.711(0.131)***	0.659(0.127)***	0.638(0.123)***	0.626(0.124)***	0.617(0.124)***
Big city	0.696(0.143)***	0.675(0.138)***	0.639(0.134)***	0.656(0.134)***	0.637(0.136)***
Low education (ref)					
Medium Education	0.535(0.132)***	0.525(0.128)***	0.586(0.124)***	0.552(0.124)***	0.590(0.125)***
High education	0.936(0.141)***	0.915(0.137)***	1.142(0.133)***	1.114(0.133)***	1.012(0.133)***
Gender (male)	-0.191(0.092)**	-0.402(0.089)***	-0.368(0.087)***	-0.351(0.086)***	-0.376(0.087)***
Age	0.004(0.003)	0.003(0.003)	0.001(0.003)	.002(0.003)	0.003(0.003)
1999 (ref)					
2004	0.448(0 .127)***	0.406(0.123)**	0.148(0.120)	0.142(0.120)	0.073(0.121)
2009	1.150(0.142)***	1.155(0.139)***	0.864(0.134)***	0.893(0.135)***	0.844(0.135)***
2014	0.657(0.125)***	0.698(0.120)***	0.396(0.116)**	0.403(0.115)***	0.370(0.115)**
Constant	-7.24 (0.366)***	-6.95(0.361)***	-6.21(0.346)***	-5.56(0.324)***	-5.77(0.329)***
Cragg & Uhler's R^2	.444	.392	.351	.344	.352
-2 LL	3034.85	3216.83	3355.2	3376.68	3350.8
N	3 446	3 446	3 446	3 446	3 446

Note: Standard errors are presented within parentheses

*** , ** and * denote statistical significance at 1, 5 and 10 per cent, respectively.

The time variable measure the effect of time passed since Sweden entered the EU on opinion towards EU membership. By looking at the coefficients for each year we can see that the relationship is not linear as the strongest influence of time passing on the opinion towards EU membership is found the year of 2009. The coefficient 2014 is however significant and even if not as large as 2009 it indicates that time passed since accession is indeed influencing support for EU membership. I discuss precisely how time and policy evaluation varies together in relation to table 5.

In table 4 the Cragg & Uhler's R^2 has increased and the -2LL value decreased compared to the bivariate logistic regression models (appendix E). The change in values of both indicators show signs of an improved model compared to the bivariate and demonstrate the expected improvement of the model as a result of including the expanded model.

Introducing the interaction term

In table 5 the same models as in table 4 are tested with the addition of an interaction term. Here, context is introduced in the model by multiplying 'policy evaluation' by 'year'. The added interaction term changes the way we interpret the policy evaluation coefficient; the change in opinion towards the EU membership is a function of time passing, although it is policy evaluation that changes the value. Part of the effect of the key relationships found in table 4 disappears as the interaction term is introduced. The effect of policy evaluation is different depending on at what value the time variable is held constant at (Dahlberg and Solevid, 2005).

The results in table 5 are graphically demonstrated in figure 3 to 7. The effects are presented in terms of the predicted probabilities of being positive to EU membership depending on how the impact of the EU on respective policy area is perceived over time. The graphs include the effect of the interaction terms. The complete scale of the explanatory variable are demonstrated in the figures to show the variances in predictability of opinion towards membership to the EU when the explanatory variable is fixed at different values. The size of the coefficient of the interaction term corresponds to the change in dispersion between the values of the independent variable as times passes. Table 6 presents the differences in predicted probabilities between the extreme values and the change in polarisation over time in percent.

Table 5

Effects of policy evaluation on opinion towards EU membership with interaction term

(Logged odds, std. err in parenthesis)

	Economy	Employment	Environment	Agriculture	Law enforcement
Policy evaluation	0.782(0.126)***	0.385(0.134)**	0.495(0.142)**	0.354(0.094)***	0.376(0.117)**
Year	0.130(0.130)	-0.380(0.139)**	-0.136(0.145)	-0.005(0.096)	-0.117(0.118)
Policy evaluation x year	0.144(0.046)**	0.232(0.048)***	0.106(0.048)**	0.070(0.034)**	0.104(0.040)**
Interest in EU politics	0.426(0.080)***	0.503(0.078)***	0.481(0.077)***	0.521(0.076)***	0.464(0.076)***
Consumption of EU news	0.169(0.078)**	0.189(0.075)**	0.201(0.075)**	0.200(0.073)**	0.183(0.074)**
Political left/right affiliation	0.251(0.025)***	0.261(0.024)***	0.268(0.023)***	0.287(0.023)***	0.286(0 .023)***
Social democratic supporter	0.841(0.121)***	0.902(0.119)***	0.807(0.115)***	0.886(0.115)***	0.898(0.115)***
Conservative supporter	0.836(0.173)***	0.840(0.168)***	0.870(0.164)***	0.838(0.163)***	0.967(0.165)***
Countryside (ref)					
Small town	0.411(0.139)**	0.403(0.134)**	0.287(0.131)**	0.240(0.130)*	0.332(0.131)**
Town/small city	0.709(0.129)***	0.681(0.125)***	0.656(0.121)***	0.639(0.122)***	0.651(0.122)***
Big city	0.660(0.141)***	0.640(0.137)***	0.588(0.133)***	0.609(0.133)***	0.578(0 .134)***
Low education (ref)					
Medium Education	0.523(0.130)***	0.548(0.126)***	0.560(0.122)***	0.530(0.123)***	0.567(0 .123)***
High education	0.935(0.140)***	0.930(0.135)***	1.125(0.132)***	1.105(.132)***	1.002(0.132)***
Gender (male)	-0.194(0.091)**	-0.401(0.089)***	-0.371(0.086)***	-0.344(0.086)***	-0.368(0 .086)***
Age	0.004(0.003)	0.003(0.003)	0.001(0.003)	0.002(0.002)	0.002(0.003)
Constant	-6.31(0.472)***	-5.38(0.489)***	-5.49(0.511)***	-5.19(0.388)***	-5.14(0.441)***
Cragg & Uhler's R^2	.438	.390	.345	.337	.346
-2 LL	3056.74	3224.0	3375.28	3399.9	3370.31
N	3 446	3 446	3 446	3 446	3 446

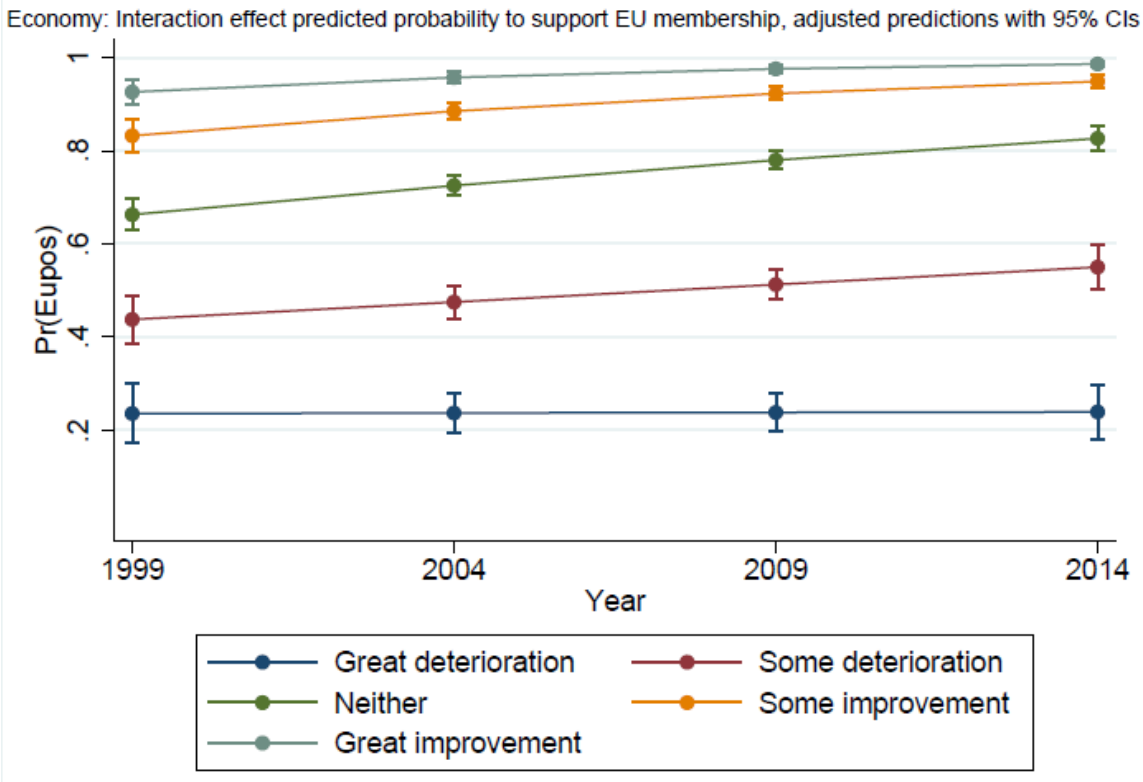
Note: Standard errors are presented within parentheses

*** , ** and * denote statistical significance at 1, 5 and 10 per cent, respectively.

In figure 3 we note that the initial dispersion between those being positive to EU membership influence on the economy and those being of opposite opinion is rather large and increases as time passes. The steepest development is found among those who think that EU influence on economy neither has improved nor worsened national policy on the area and those who perceived some deterioration.

However, economy policy evaluation is a relatively stable predictor to opinion towards EU membership. All values measuring opinion towards the EU's impact on national economic policy has increased to some extent. The aggregated change consists mainly of those positive to membership to the Union being slightly better predictors in 2014 than they were in 1999 while those perceiving EU influences on national economic policy to be of great deterioration are as little probable to be positive to EU membership in 2014 as they were in 1999. The increase in disparity between the extreme values of the economic policy evaluator is 5.6 percentage points. The increased predicted probability of those positively evaluating EU's influence on economic policy stands for a 6 percentage points increase while those most negative moderate the effect as those most negative has gotten 0.4 percentage points more positive towards EU membership over the years. In 2014, the predicted probability of being positive to EU membership if also being positive to EU's influence on economic policy was 98.6 %.

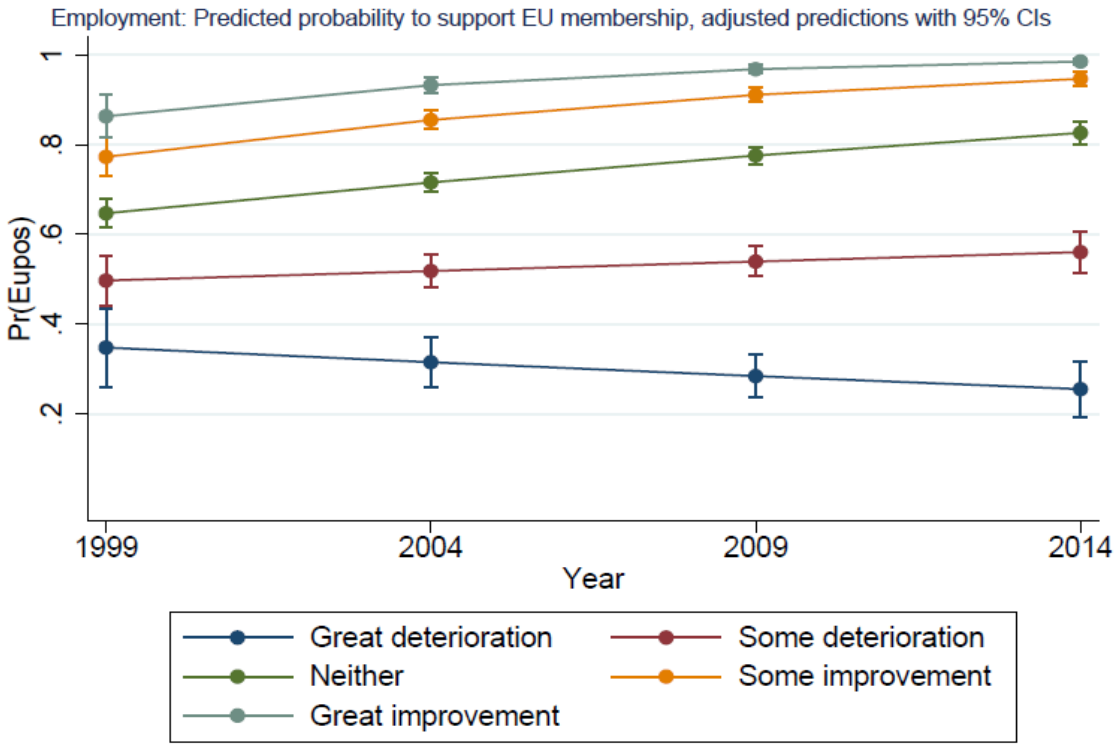
Figure 3 *Policy area 1: Economy*



Looking at the coefficient in table 5 and the demonstration of predicted probabilities in figure 4, we observe the impact of the EU on employment has the strongest change in influence when looking at the co-variation between policy evaluation and time. This is clearly visualised in figure 4 where we spot a clearly distinguishable polarisation over time between those being positive to EU influence on employment policy and those being negative. The increase in disparity between the extreme values of employment policy evaluation is 21.5 percentage points. The increased predicted probability of being positive to EU membership among those positively evaluating performance in employment policy is 12.2 percentage points. Those most negative ads 9.3 percentage points to the change from 1999 to 2014 as they become less probable to support EU membership over time. In 2014, the predicted probability of being positive to EU membership if also being positive to EU's influence on employment policy was 98.5 %. In other words, while support for EU membership increases among those who give positive or neither/nor evaluations of employment policy, support decreases among those who perceive most negative consequence of the EU membership on employment.

The polarisation between those experiencing EU influence on employment policy to be an improvement compared to those voicing the opposite improves the overall predictability of employment as an indicator of opinion towards EU membership over time.

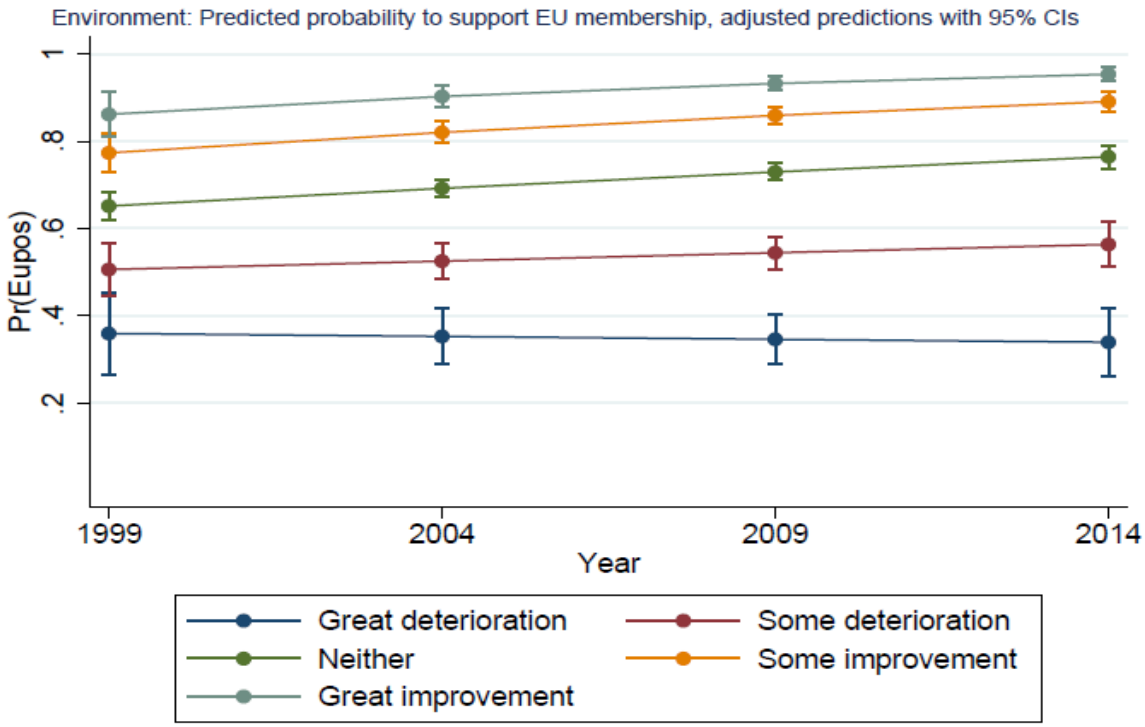
Figure 4 *Policy area 2: Employment 1999–2014*



Continuing to the analysis of environmental policy as a predictor of opinion towards EU membership, we observe comparable tendencies as noted in regards to employment. Figure 5 demonstrates the direction of the development over time of the different values of the policy evaluations. The initial spread is very similar to that of employment but the development is not as steep. Particularly the development of those perceiving EU influence on environmental policy as a great deterioration differs when comparing the two.

The increase in disparity between the extreme values of the environmental policy evaluator is 11.2 percentage points. The increased predicted probability of being positive to EU membership among those positively evaluating performance in environmental policy stands for a 9.2 percentage point increase while those most negative ads 2.0 percentage points to the change from 1999 to 2014, as they become less probable to support EU membership. In 2014, the predicted probability of being positive to EU membership if also being positive to EU's influence on environmental policy was 95.3 %. The same conclusion can be drawn regarding environmental policy as employment policy; while support for EU membership increases among those who give positive or neither/nor evaluations of environmental policy, support decreases among those who perceive most negative consequence of the EU membership on environment policy.

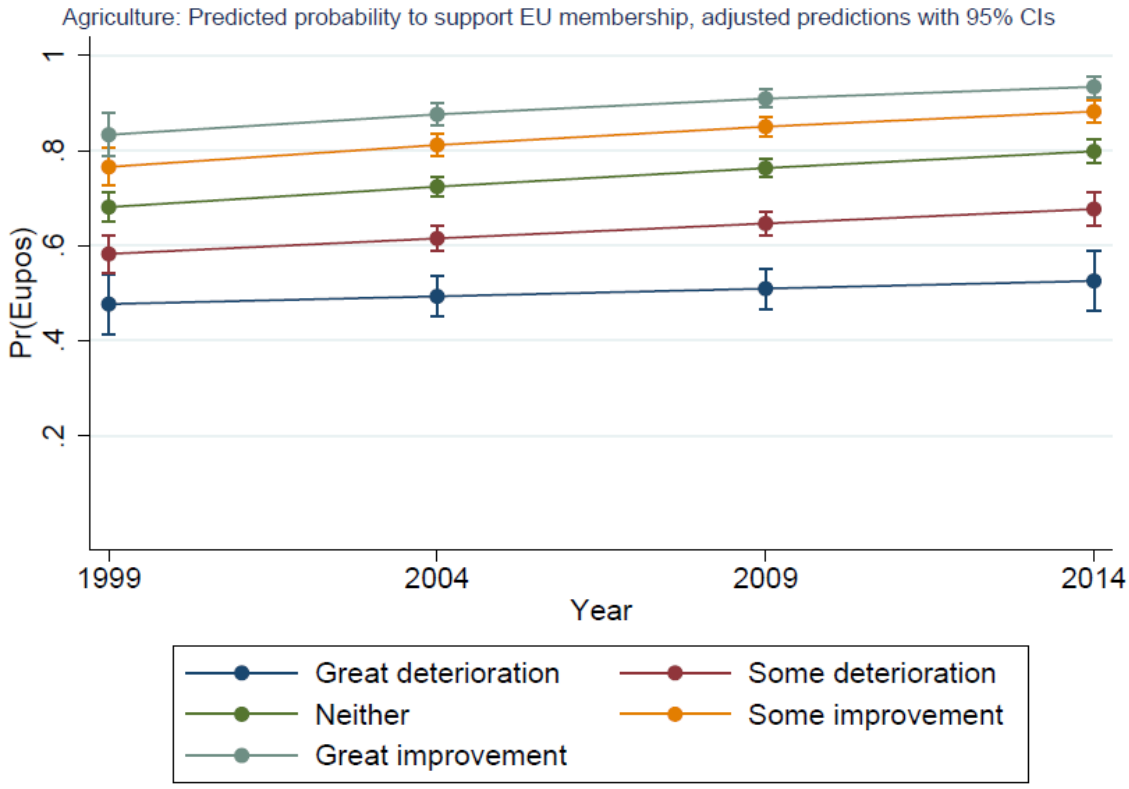
Figure 5 Policy area 3: Environment 1999–2014



The evaluation of the influence of EU membership on agriculture policy has throughout the analyses shown the weakest effects. In figure 6 we observe how the spread of predictability between those positive and negative to EU's influence on agriculture policy is the narrowest of the five models. The development over time of the different values of policy evaluation is close to parallel and only a small detectable polarisation is visible.

The increase in disparity between the extreme values of the agriculture policy evaluator is 5.2 percentage points, the smallest compared to the other policy areas. The increased predicted probability of being positive to EU membership among those positively evaluating performance in agriculture policy stands for a 10.1 percentage point increase while those most negative moderate the effect as those most negative has similarly gotten 4.9 percentage points more positive towards EU membership over the years. In 2014, the predicted probability of being positive to EU membership if also being positive to EU's influence on agriculture policy was 93.4 %. On the subject of agriculture policy we observe the largest increase in predicted probability of being positive to EU membership among those evaluating the influence of EU on agriculture policy most *negatively* over the years.

Figure 6 Policy area 4: Agriculture 1999–2014



Law enforcement represents the umbrella co-operation. The results point towards an initial dispersion similar to that of agricultural policy. As time passes the spread increases, where all except those perceiving EU influence to be a great deterioration are more likely to be positive to EU membership while those most negative becomes more negative over time. Figure 7 visualises the development of the results.

The increase in disparity between the extreme values of law enforcement policy evaluator is 14.6 percentage points, the second largest change over time after employment. The increased predicted probability of being positive to EU membership among those positively evaluating performance in law enforcement stands for a 10.7 percentage point increase while those most negative ads 3.9 percentage points to the change from 1999 to 2014 as they become less probable to support EU membership. In 2014, the predicted probability of being positive to EU membership if also being positive to EU's influence on law enforcement was 94.6 %. The same conclusion can be drawn regarding law enforcement as environmental policy, and employment policy; while support for EU membership increases among those who give positive or neither/nor evaluations of law enforcement, support decreases among those who perceive most negative consequence of the EU membership on law enforcement.

Figure 7 Policy area 5: Law enforcement 1999–2014

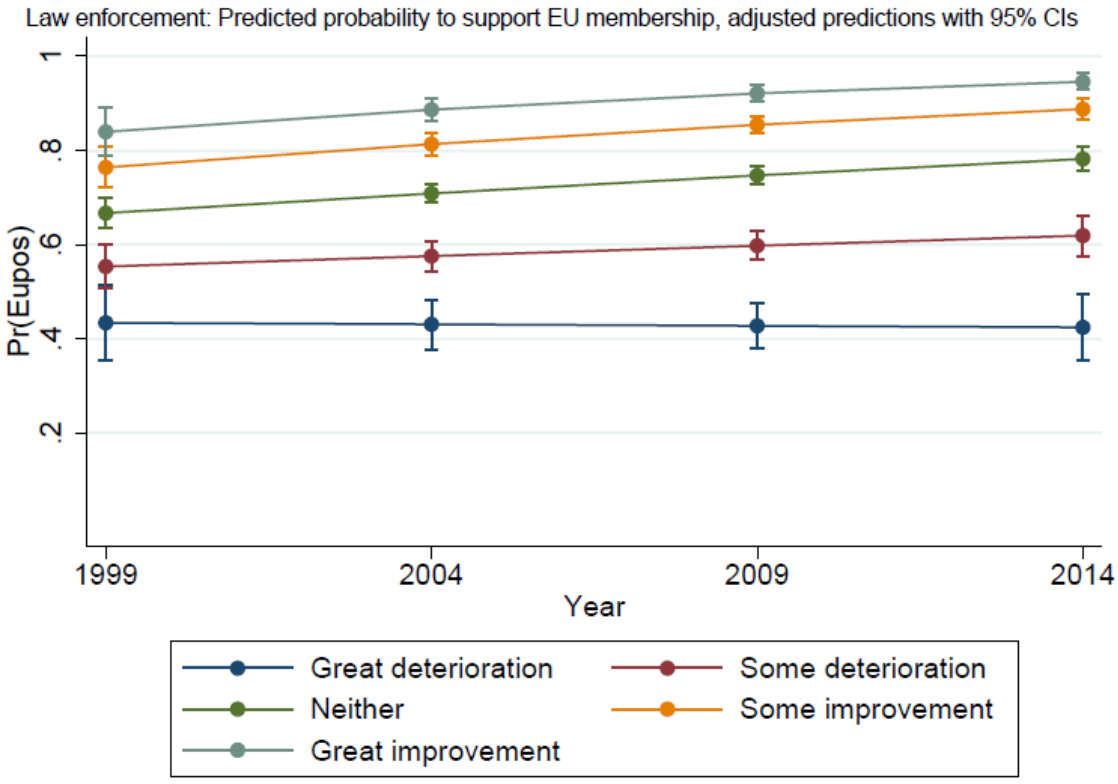


Table 6 summarises the changes in predicted probabilities to be positive to EU membership of the groups perceiving EU influence on respective policy areas to be a great deterioration (1) and great improvement (5).

Table 6 ***Adjusted predicted probabilities of policy evaluation on opinion towards EU membership with interaction term, at extreme values (1 and 5) presented in percent, 1999–2014***

	Economy		Employment		Environment		Agriculture		Law enforcement	
	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5
1999	23.5	92.6	34.8	86.3	35.9	86.1	47.7	83.3	46.4	83.9
2004	23.7	95.7	31.5	93.2	35.3	90.2	49.3	87.6	43.1	88.6
2009	23.8	97.6	28.4	96.8	34.6	93.2	50.9	90.9	42.8	92.1
2014	23.9	98.6	25.5	98.5	33.9	95.3	52.6	93.4	42.5	94.6
Change over time	0.4	6.0	-9.3	12.2	-2.0	9.2	4.9	10.1	-3.9	10.7
Change in polarisation	**+5.6 %**		**+21.5 %**		**+11.2 %**		**+5.2 %**		**+14.6 %**	

Note: The predicted probabilities are recalculations of the logged odds of the focal relationships partly presented in table 5 and the numbers behind demonstrated in figures 3–7. Control values are held constant at mean values.

As presented in table 3, the number of observations collected in the 2014 survey accounts for a larger share of the total number of respondents compared to the other years, which explain some of the differences in the spread of confidence intervals. With that noted the confidence intervals are generally largest among those most negative towards the EU's influence on respective policy area and in the early days of Sweden's membership.

Analysis of results

In the previous section I have presented the results of the statistical analysis preformed in this thesis. Having approached all aspects of the stated aim, hypotheses and research questions I found statistically significant results in all models. $H1_1$ is confirmed and the null-hypothesis rejected in line with previous research as a positive and significant influence of policy evaluation on opinion towards EU membership is found on all policy areas.

Approaching RQ_1 differences are detected between the different policy areas. The initial division of the different policy areas into three groups did however not show clear differences between the groups. Agriculture and environmental policy represent areas where the EU has shared mandate. Economy and employment represent the areas where the EU has much limited mandate and only competence to provide coordination between EU member states and law enforcement represents overreaching umbrella cooperation. The evaluation of economic policy was shown to be the best predictor of opinion towards EU membership followed by employment, environment, law enforcement and agriculture in that order. Besides the ranking of the policy areas no clusters were detected indicating a division between the different groups of policy areas.

These results indicates that 'bread and butter' politics rather than EU mandate on the policy area determines how good of a predictor policy evaluation is on opinion towards EU membership.

When looking at data from the whole time period controlling for all control variables and time, the polarisation between those most negative to how the EU has influenced national policy was greatest when it came to the ultimate utilitarian evaluator, namely the economy. The difference in predicted probability to support EU membership between those perceiving EU influence on economic policy most negatively and most positively was found to be 73.4 percentage point, for employment policy 66.6 percentage points, environment 57.0 percentage points, agriculture 38.3 percentage points and law enforcement 47.6 percentage points. As previously pointed out, a high spread between the extremes on the policy evaluation variable corresponds to a higher degree of predicted probability of opinion towards membership to the EU. Time was shown to have an impact on the focal relationships as time passed, operationalized as a dummy variable of years passed since accession to the EU.

The last step in the analysis investigated the possible interaction of policy evaluation and time passing through adding an interaction term introduced in table 5. $H2_1$ suggested that an extra effect on opinion towards the EU membership was to be found in all models. The results confirmed $H2_1$ and rejected $H2_0$ as the co-variation of policy evaluation and time added an extra effect on the focal relationship in all five models. The strongest influence of the contextual variable was found when employment was the explorative variable followed by economy, environment, law enforcement and agriculture policy. As time has passed employment has become a better and better predictor of opinion towards EU opinion and falls shy behind economy as the better predictor with only 1.2 percentage points in 2014 compared to a 17.6 percentage point difference in 1999.

I approached the final dimension, RQ_2 as I took a closer look at the variations within the independent variables. I found results with interesting implications for the future interpretation of the development of opinion towards EU membership. In the analysis of three of the five policy areas as predictors of opinion towards membership to the EU I found results showing that those evaluating the influence of the EU to have the most deteriorating influence on the policy area actually became *less* likely to be supportive of EU membership as time passed. The negative trend is strongest when the EU's impact on employment is used as a predictor of support for EU membership, followed by law enforcement and environmental policy. In the case of economy and agriculture, even those who evaluated EU influence most negatively became more had a higher predicted probability to be positive towards EU membership as time passed.

To summarise the final step of the analysis, the use of EU influence on employment policy as a predictor of opinion towards the EU improved the most over time. However, both environmental policy and law enforcement show likewise polarisation in both directions. The evaluation of economic policy and agriculture policy also showed to

become better and better predictors of opinion towards EU membership over time but in more modest effects. The effect of the increase in predicted probability among those evaluating the impact of the EU as a great improvement was moderated by those evaluation the impact of the EU as a great deterioration as they also show higher values of predicted probability to support the EU membership. Due to the fact that the predicted probability to support the EU if one evaluates the EU impact on policy positively is above 93 percent in all five policy areas, and above 98 percent in the case of economy and employment, there is little room for improving the predictability in that direction. If the trend continues there is however room for those evaluating EU influence as deteriorating to become even less likely to support the Swedish membership to the EU as an increasing spread of the extreme values on the policy evaluation results in a higher degree of predicted probability of opinion towards membership to the EU.

Concluding discussion

This thesis started off by asking what influences the change in attitude towards the EU. To investigate this I developed a model approaching the question by looking into the possibility that the perceived influence of how the EU affects national policy could be a predictor of opinion towards EU membership. The aim of this thesis was to investigate the use of policy evaluation as a predictor of opinion towards EU membership in Sweden and how that changes over time. This was carried out in four steps. First, the opinion towards EU membership was investigated in terms of if perceived performance in selected policy areas. Second, this thesis has analysed how the proposed key relations differ between different policy areas. Thirdly, to what extent does policy evaluation and time vary together in an underlying interaction and finally what tendencies can be found within the aggregated results.

By looking at a variety of policy areas this thesis has shown that policy evaluation, as a predictor of opinion towards membership to the EU is influential. An ongoing socialisation process, operationalized by measuring the policy evaluation and opinion towards the EU at four points in time, indicates that the value of using policy evaluation as a predictor of EU membership increases as the perception of the EU changes from being something new and foreign into something familiar and natural. At first glance, a continuous socialisation process is consistently shown to be valid when evaluating EU influence on all policy areas. When looking at the variation within the aggregated results exciting patterns emerged. The continuing socialisation process is not present among those evaluating EU influence on employment policy, the environment and law enforcement most negatively as they are shown less and less likely to support EU membership as time passes. When evaluating the impact of the EU on economic policy, those most negative did not change their opinion towards the EU over time while those evaluating EU influences on agriculture most *negatively* became *more probable* to support EU membership over time.

This thesis has found that diffuse support, through socialisation over time is a significant driver of opinion towards membership to the European Union on an aggregated level. Even though the effect is strongest on policy areas where the EU has limited direct influence on national policy such as the economy and employment policy, the effect is found in all five policy areas. Under control for previously known determinants of opinion towards the EU and policy evaluation I could reject all stipulated null-hypotheses. When looking at the variation within the results however, a significant polarisation trend within three of the five policy areas was found.

It is the development of the trends within predictors of support that contribute the most to the research field of support towards EU membership. The results show a continuous socialisation process among everyone except those most negative towards EU influence on national policy. Time itself is not a wonderworker even though it is shown to do a great deal of work. Time, alongside rational reasoning of utilitarian evaluations of policy performance seems to convert those people who are somewhat hesitant and already supportive into more probable of supporting EU membership, while neither time nor reason seems to convince those negative towards the Swedish membership to the EU.

Future research

Research on what drives fluctuations in support for political authorities is a well-researched subject with roots in the early works of David Easton. The approach has been applied on investigating support for the EU. This thesis shows that those evaluating EU influence on national policy are getting less and less probable to support EU membership. The polarisation effect found within the general socialisation effect would be of interest to elaborate and add to the scope of analysis of support for the EU. To better understand the working mechanisms among those evaluating EU performance most negatively it would be of value to investigate what drives the other side of the coin off support, those disapproving of the EU membership.

Another venue for future research is to carry out a comparative study where the results of this study are compared to those of Finland and Austria which entered the Union at the same time as Sweden. Because of the different developments of opinion towards EU membership within the three countries it would be of interest to analyse what might have caused these differences. However, comparable datasets are absent at the time being, but similar research could be carried out on for example Eurobarometer data. Research comparing the results of the case of Sweden with countries that accessed the union at other points in time would also be of interest. Similar tests could be run on other datasets to increase robustness of the results.

The theoretical differences between the policy areas, regarding not only EU mandate, but also domestic policies could be elaborated resulting in stronger conclusions regarding the results could be drawn. Finally, as much of the actual connection between public opinion and the European Union is filtered through national politics, further research would gain from including more levels of analysis.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Coding of variables

Phrased as presented below or equivalent.

Dependent variable

Opinion towards EU membership: *"Are you principally for or against Swedish membership in the EU or do you have no definite opinion on the matter?"* The response alternatives are; 'principally for', 'principally against' and 'no definite opinion on the matter'. Recoded into a dichotomous variable where (1) = principally for the Swedish EU membership and (0) = principally against the Swedish membership to the EU. Those who answered '*no* definite opinion on the matter' were excluded from the sample.

Exploratory variables

Policy evaluation: '*What do you think EU membership so far has meant for Sweden in the following areas: economy; employment; the environment; agriculture; law enforcement'*. All policy areas form part of a battery of questions where between 10–15 policy areas are listed. The response options are: (5) = great improvement; (4) = some improvement; (3) = neither; (2) = some deterioration and (1) = great deterioration. In 2014 the question was phrased: '*How do you think EU membership affect Sweden in the following areas: economy; employment; the environment; agriculture; law enforcement'* with the response options (5) = very positively; (4) = somewhat positively; (3) = neither; (2) = somewhat negatively and (1) = very negatively.

Control variables

Cognitive variables:

Interest in EU politics: '*How interested are you in political matters related to the EU?*' With the response options: (4) = Very interested; (3) = quite interested; (2) = not that interested and (1) = not at all interested.

Consumption of EU news: '*When you take part of the news media, how much do you usually read news about politics concerning the European Union?'*. With the response options: (4) = read practically everything; (3) = read quite a lot; (2) = does not read that much and (1) = read nothing or almost nothing.

Political control variables

Political affiliation: '*It is sometimes said that political opinions can be placed on a left-right scale. Where on the scale would you place yourself?'* with the following options: (0) = far to the left; (1); (2); (3); (4); (5) = neither left nor right; (6); (7); (8); (9); and (10) = far to the right.

Supporter of the Social Democratic party/the Conservative party: 'Which party do you like best?' with all parties represented in parliament read out loud/ listed as tickable options with the alternative to mark/ state 'other party' and specify the name of a party not given as an option. The answers where recoded into two variables with two response options each. Supporter of the Social Democratic party: (1) = Supporter of the social democratic party if respondent reported to be a supporter of the social democratic party and (0) = not a supporter of the social democratic party if that was the case and Supporter of the conservative party: (1) supporter of the Conservative party if the respondent of the Conservative party and (0) = if that was not the case.

Structural control variables

Place of residence: '*Where do you live?'* With the response options: (1) = countryside; (2) = small town; (3) = town/small city and (4) = big city.

Level of education: '*What is your highest level of education?'* with the response options: elementary school, or vocational school coded into (1) = low education; 2- year secondary school, 3-year secondary school, or 4-year secondary school coded into (2)= medium education; and studies at university or degree from university coded into (3)= high education.

Gender: register data informing about the respondents gender (1) = female and (0) = male.

Age: register data informing about the age of the respondent at the time of the survey.

Appendix B Selection of policy areas

EU competences	Areas evaluated in dataset	Evaluated policy areas and EU competences
Exclusive	Ability to effect the development of the EU	Agriculture
Customs union	Agriculture	Economy
Common commercial policy	Companies' competitive opportunities	Employment
Establishing of competition rules	Economy	Environment
Conservation of biological resources	Employment	Law enforcement[1]
Monetary policy	Environment	
Concluding international agreements	Higher education and research	
Shared competence	Immigrants and refugees	
Area of freedom security and justice	Law enforcement	
Agriculture and fisheries	Equality men/women	
Trans-European networks	Military security	
Transport	National independence	
Internal markets	National security	
Common safety concerns in public health matters	Personal integrity	
Social policy (with exemptions)	Price level on perishables	
Consumer protection	Quality of public sector	
Research , technological development and space	Refugees	
Development cooperation and humanitarian aid	Social security	
Economic, social and territorial cohesion	Social welfare	
Energy	Work force immigration	
Environment		
Competence to support coordinate or supplement		
Industry		
Protection and improvement of human health		
Civil protection		
Tourism		
Administrative cooperation		
Culture		
Education, vocational training, youth and sport		
Competence to provide arrangements within which EU member states must coordinate policy		
Economic policy		
Employment		
Social policies		

Note: The four datasets that was combined into one dataset to enable regression analysis consisted of different combinations of evaluated policy areas and therefor limited the selection of policy areas. [1]Even though Law enforcement is not a separate EU competence but an umbrella-like cooperation that integrates many policy areas and through that influences national law enforcement through European Union cooperation. The categorisations of EU competences are retrieved from The European citizen's initiative (European Commission, 2015). Principal investigators are Sören Holmberg and Statistics Sweden (SCB) for the 1999 study, Sören Holmberg, Henrik Oscarsson and SCB for the studies 2004, 2009 and Linda Berg, Henrik Oscarsson and SCB for the study 2014.

Appendix C European parliamentary election study 1999–2014 mode, sample size and response rate.

Year	Mode	Sample size	Field period	Net response rate	Number or respondents per year in merged file
1999	Face to face interview/ telephone	2 676	June/July	76%	918
2004	Face to face interview/ telephone	2 692	14/6-30/9 2004	78%	765
2009	Face to face interview/ telephone	2 682	N/A	67%	700
2014	Mail-back questionnaire/ web /telephone	5 400	26/5–17/8 2014	51.4 %	1 063

Note: selective presentation of original table from Oleskog and Hedberg (forthcoming 2015).

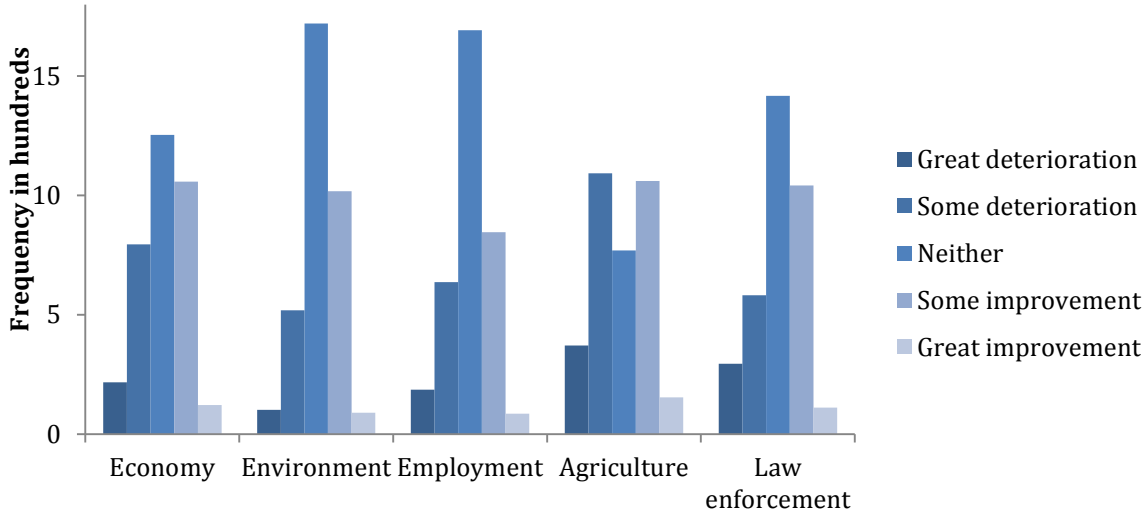
Appendix D Model assessment: correlation matrix, normality distribution and collinearity diagnostics

Correlation matrix of independent variables

	EUecon	EUenv	EUempl	EUagri	EUlaw	EUintr	EUnews	leftright	SocDem supporter	Conservative supporter	resid4	edu	female	age	year
EUecon	1.000														
EUenv	0.396	1.000													
EUempl	0.536	0.328	1.000												
EUagri	0.284	0.271	0.285	1.000											
EUlaw	0.312	0.292	0.348	0.217	1.000										
EUintr	0.217	0.142	0.143	0.069	0.192	1.000									
EUnews	0.180	0.089	0.120	0.056	0.130	0.641	1.000								
leftright	0.236	0.157	0.222	0.096	0.107	0.020	0.050	1.000							
SocDem supporter	-0.085	0.010	-0.106	-0.010	-0.041	-0.064	-0.052	-0.501	1.000						
Cons supporter	0.220	0.133	0.190	0.139	0.093	0.010	0.046	0.593	-0.447	1.000					
resid4	0.095	0.064	0.100	0.011	0.093	0.109	0.108	0.059	-0.057	0.083	1.000				
edu	0.159	0.057	0.186	0.048	0.173	0.201	0.139	0.105	-0.240	0.106	0.202	1.000			
female	-0.144	-0.046	-0.011	-0.045	-0.038	-0.043	-0.024	-0.093	-0.007	-0.096	0.003	0.084	1.000		
age	-0.063	0.038	-0.075	-0.036	-0.018	0.048	0.090	0.014	0.104	0.003	-0.087	-0.250	-0.008	1.000	
year	0.033	0.069	-0.001	0.045	0.079	0.052	0.057	0.024	-0.136	0.006	0.070	0.191	-0.008	0.053	1.000

Note: None of the explanatory or controlling variables correlates with each other on an unacceptable level.

Normality distribution of independent variables



Note: All explanatory variables but agriculture are slightly negatively skewed and somewhat leptokurtic while agriculture has a bimodal distribution. However, all variables are judged to be within acceptable range of normal distribution.

Colliniarity diagnostics

Variable	VIF	SQRT VIF	Tolerance	R- Squared
EUecon	1.61	1.27	.6220	.3780
EUenv	1.29	1.13	.7772	.2228
EUempl	1.51	1.23	.6644	.3356
EUagri	1.17	1.08	.8544	.1456
EUlaw	1.22	1.11	.8169	.1831
EUintr	1.76	1.33	.5686	.4314
EUnews	1.71	1.31	.5852	.4148
leftright	1.52	1.23	.6593	.3407
SocDem party supporter	1.26	1.12	.7913	.2087
Conservative party supporter	1.33	1.15	.7542	.2458
resid4	1.06	1.03	.9454	.0546
edu	1.25	1.12	.8002	.1998
female	1.05	1.02	.9528	.0472
age	1.14	1.07	.8762	.1238
year	1.09	1.04	.9178	.0822

Note: No problematic multicolliniarity is detected as all VIF values <5 and correspondently acceptable tolerance values>0.2 (Field, 2013, pp. 794-795).

Appendix E Bivariate logistic regression of key correlations

Policy evaluation	***Effects of policy evaluation on opinion towards EU membership*** **(Logged odds, std. err in parenthesis)**				
Economy	1. 24(0.050)***	–	–	–	–
Employment	–	1. 06(0.051) ***	–	–	–
Environment	–	–	0. 899(0.052) ***	–	–
Agriculture	–	–	–	0.559(0.036) ***	–
Law enforcement	–	–	–	–	0.740(0.041) ***
Constant	-2. 83(0.144)***	-2. 33(0.151)***	-2. 02(0.159)***	-0. 815(0.102)***	-1. 44(0.124)***
Cragg & Uhler's R^2	.294	.195	.134	.103	.137
-2 LL	3537.32	3835.83	4005.35	4090.75	3997.4
N	3 446	3 446	3 446	3 446	3 446

Note: Standard errors are presented within parentheses
*** and ** denote statistical significance at 1 and 5 per cent, respectively.

Appendix F Adjusted predicted probabilities of policy evaluation on opinion towards EU membership, held constant at extreme values (1 and 5) presented in percent

	Economy	**Employment**	**Environment**	**Agriculture**	**Law enforcement**
Great deterioration (1)	23.4	28.8	35.0	51.0	43.1
Great improvement (5)	96.8	95.4	92.0	89.3	90.7
Dispersion	73.4	66.6	57.0	38.3	47.6

Note: The predicted probabilities are a recalculation of the logged odds of the focal relationships presented in table 4.

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG