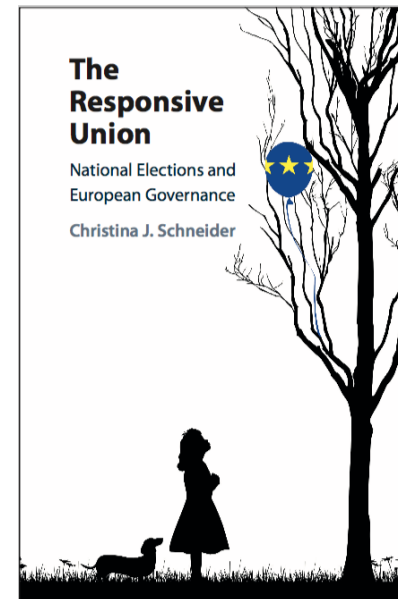# Legitimacy Crisis, Government Responsiveness, and the Future of European Integration

Christina J. Schneider

University of California, San Diego

A Crisis of Democratic Representation?

- Declining democratic legitimacy of European integration:
  - Unaccountable & nonresponsive elites
- Negative politicization of EU affairs
- Further reinforced by various crises
  - European debt crisis, terrorism, Ukraine crisis, refugee crisis, Brexit crisis, Covid-19 crisis, U.S. withdrawal and changing world order
- Disintegration pressures

Trust in the European Union
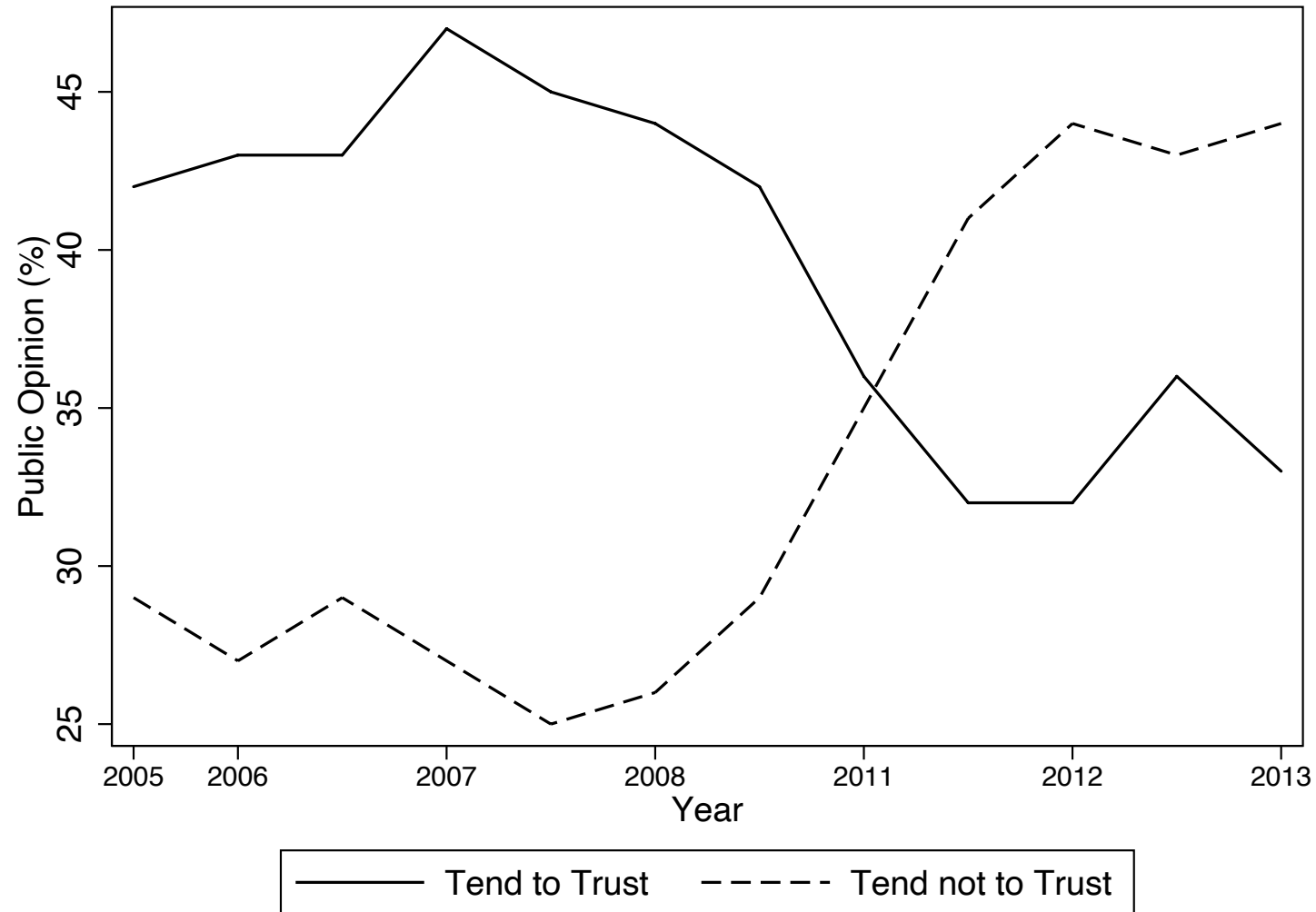
Double Dilemma

- Declining opportunities for democratic representation at the national level

- Few incentives for democratic representation at the EU level (weak accountability)

(at least according to the common wisdom)

Politicization & Democratic Representation

Historical politicization has increased accountability and pressures for democratic representation:

- Across the EU (Toshkov 2011; Bølstad 2015)

- Council of the European Union (Schneider 2013, 2019, 2020; Hageman et al. 2016, Wratwil 2017; Schneider & Slantchev 2018; Rauh et al 2019)

- European Commission (Rauh 2016; De Bruycker 2017)

- European Parliament (Schmitt and Thomassen 2000; Costello et al 2012)

- National Parties (Williams &Spoon 2015; Huetter et al 2016; Meijers and Rauh 2016, Rauh and De Wilde 2018)

The Responsive Union

- Governments want to stay in power

- Politicization of European affairs

The Responsive Union

National Elections and European Governance

Christina J. Schneider
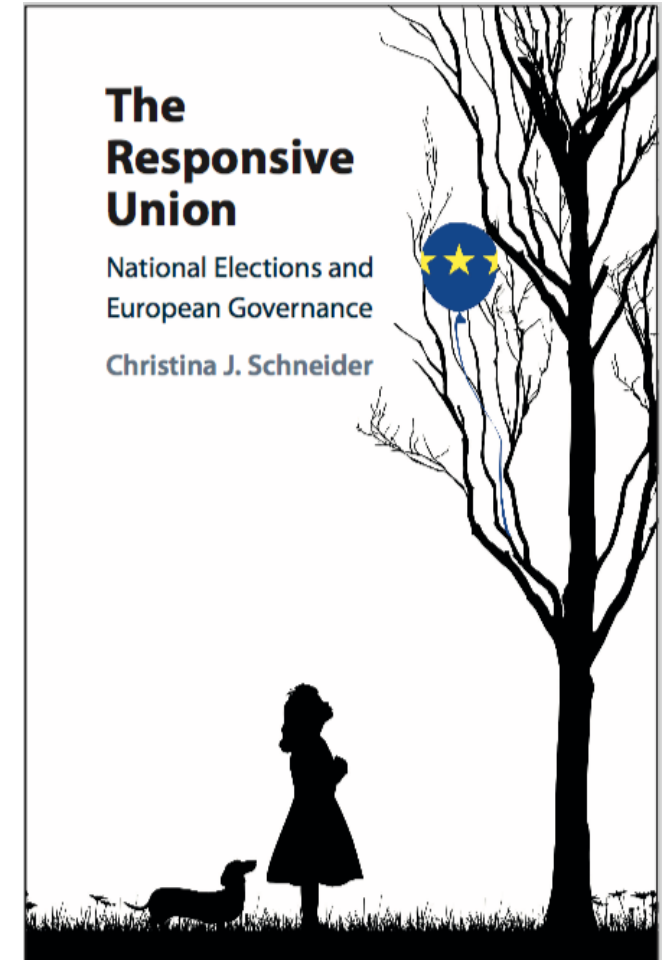
The Responsive Union

- Uncertainty about politicization increases incentives to act responsive (especially before elections)

- Responsiveness: Willingness and ability to represent the interests of politically relevant national electorates in the EU

The
Responsive
Union

National Elections and
European Governance

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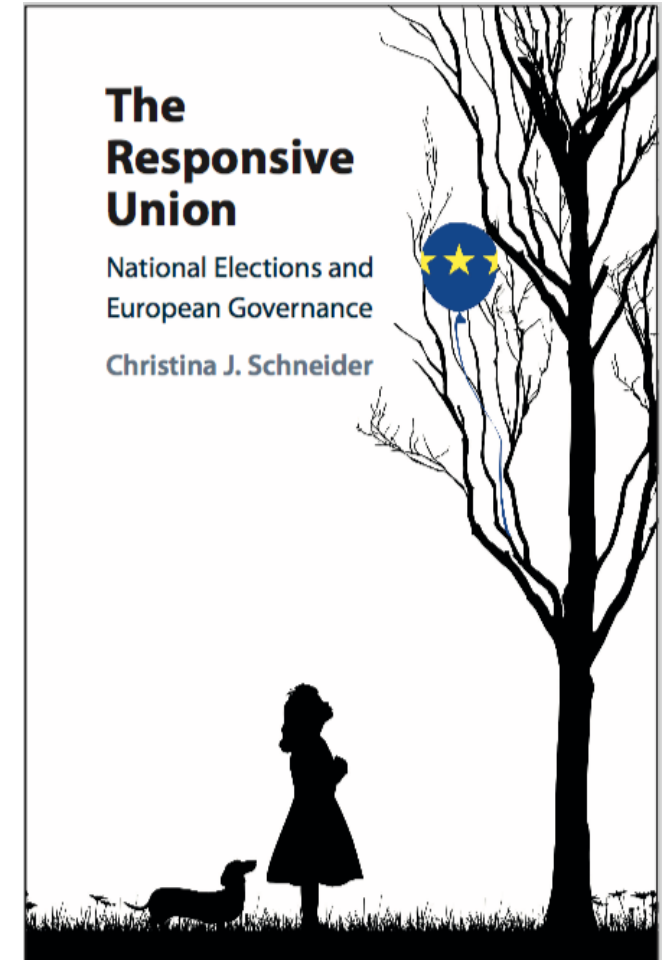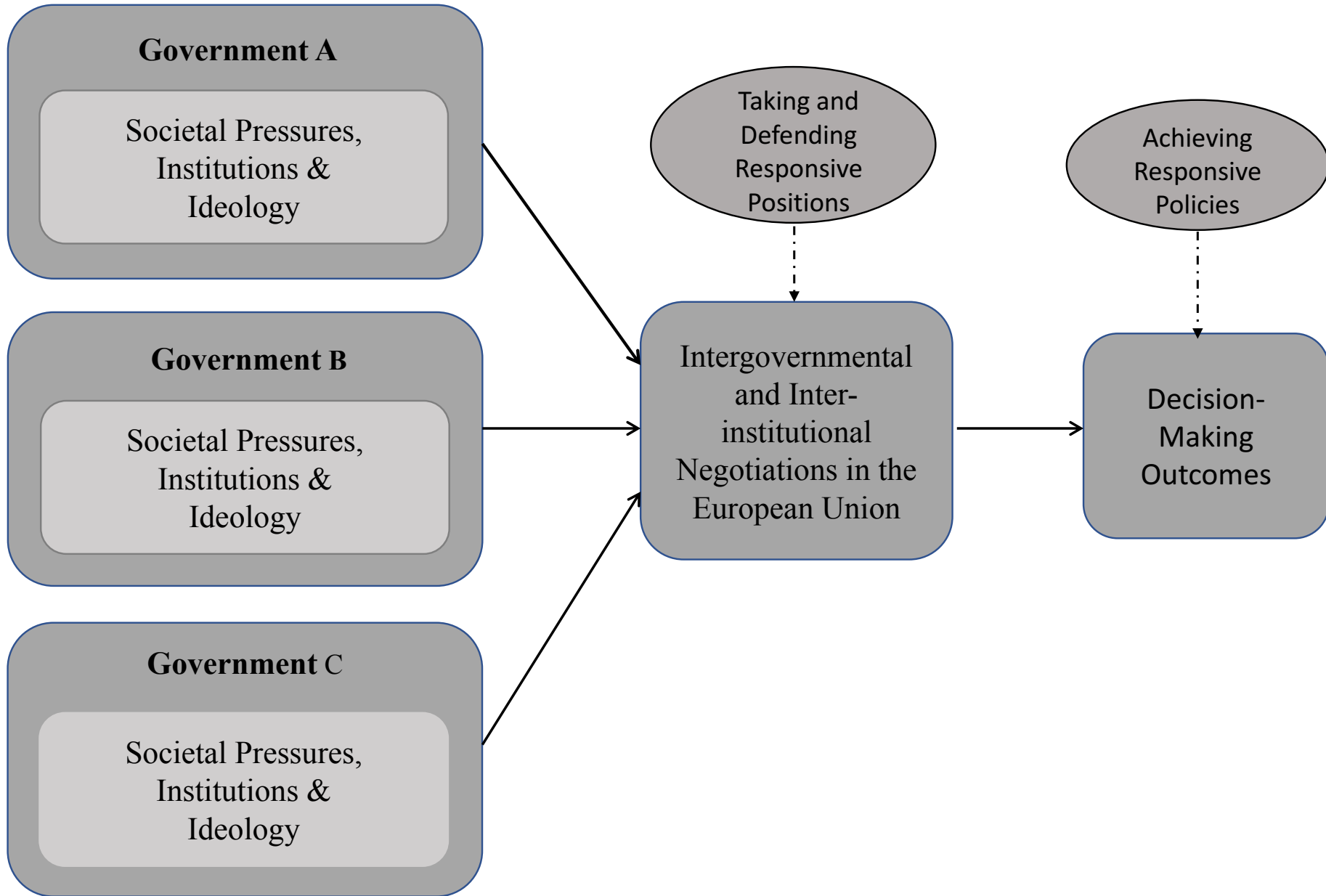
Empirical Implications

EU governments that face elections at the national level are more likely to use Council negotiations to signal responsiveness to their voters, in the hope of garnering additional public support:

- Public commitments to responsive positions (Position Defense)

- Responsive policy outcomes (Bargaining Success)

The Book

- Historical Politicization of the EU

- Theoretical Argument

- Testing the Accountability Assumptions (Experimental, Observational)

- Testing Signals of Responsiveness
  - EU budget negotiations (quantitative)
  - Multiannual Framework, 2007-13 (qualitative, archival)
  - EU legislative negotiations (quantitative)

- Blame Avoidance
  - EU legislative negotiations (quantitative)
  - German politics of the Greek bailout (qualitative, archival, elite interviews)

Research Design

- Legislative negotiations and outcomes in the Council, 1998-2012 (DEU II data set)

- Data on over 125 legislative proposals (1-5 issues)
  - Initial policy positions
  - Final policy positions
  - Policy outcomes
  - [Example]

- Level of analysis (country-issue)

- Initial policy positions largely responsive (Wratil 2017, Schneider 2019)

Position Defense	Bargaining Success

Election (Negotiations)

Election (Post Agreement)

Coefficient
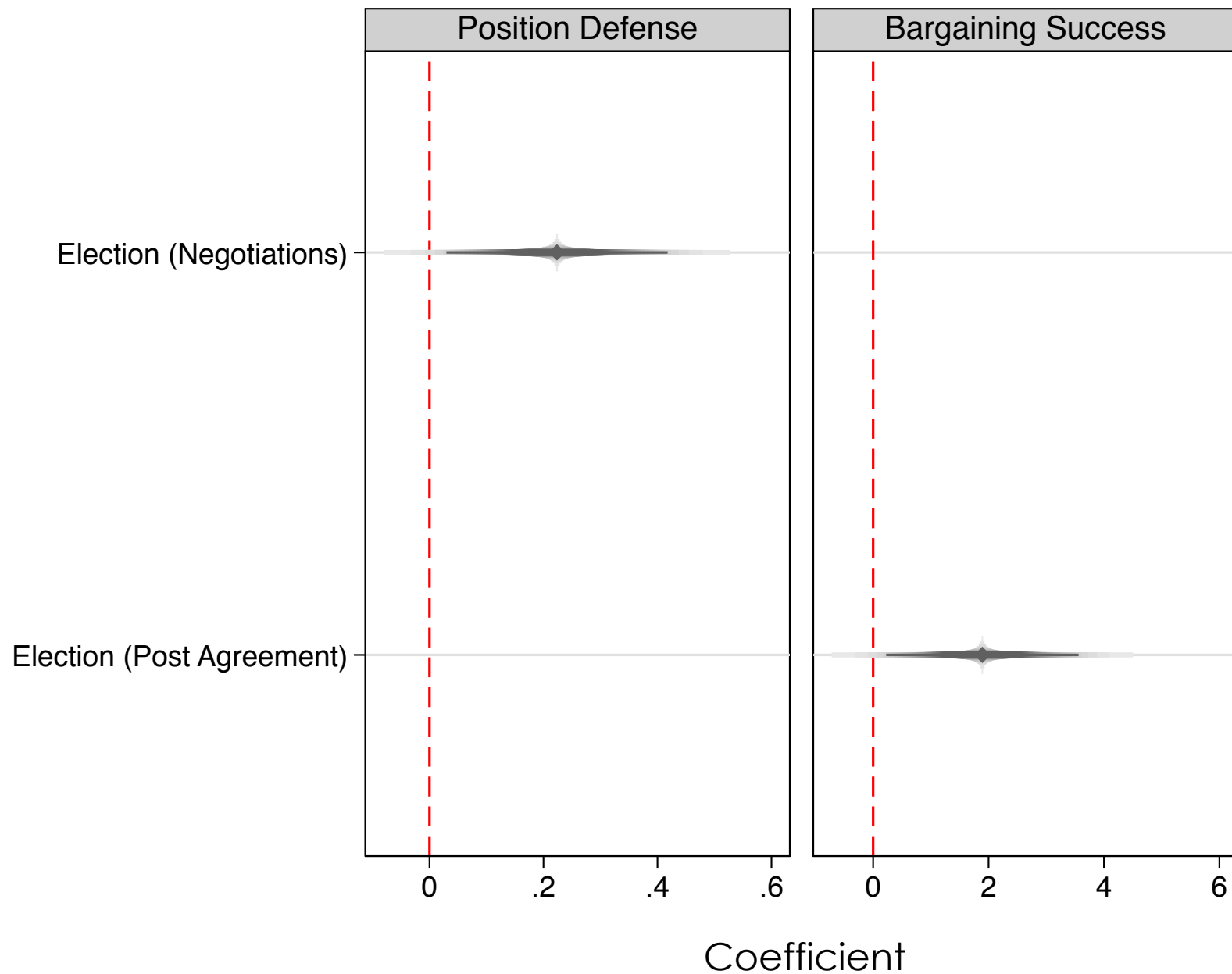
- Multi-level mixed effects: Probit/OLS

- N=2073/1506

- Wald χ^2: 65.2*/138.4*

- Control variables omitted

Incentives to Signal Responsiveness?

- Conjoint Survey Experiment in Germany

- Responsiveness signals of politicians on two policy issues

- Three steps:

    1. Respondents indicate their opinions

    2. Politicians who randomly vary on a number of dimensions

    3. Respondents are asked who they would vote for

Position Defense

Immigration | **Bailout**

Defense

No Defense

Defense

Partisanship

Different Ideology

Similar Ideology

Change in PR(Support for Politician)

● Responsive Behavior   ◆ Nonresponsive Behavior
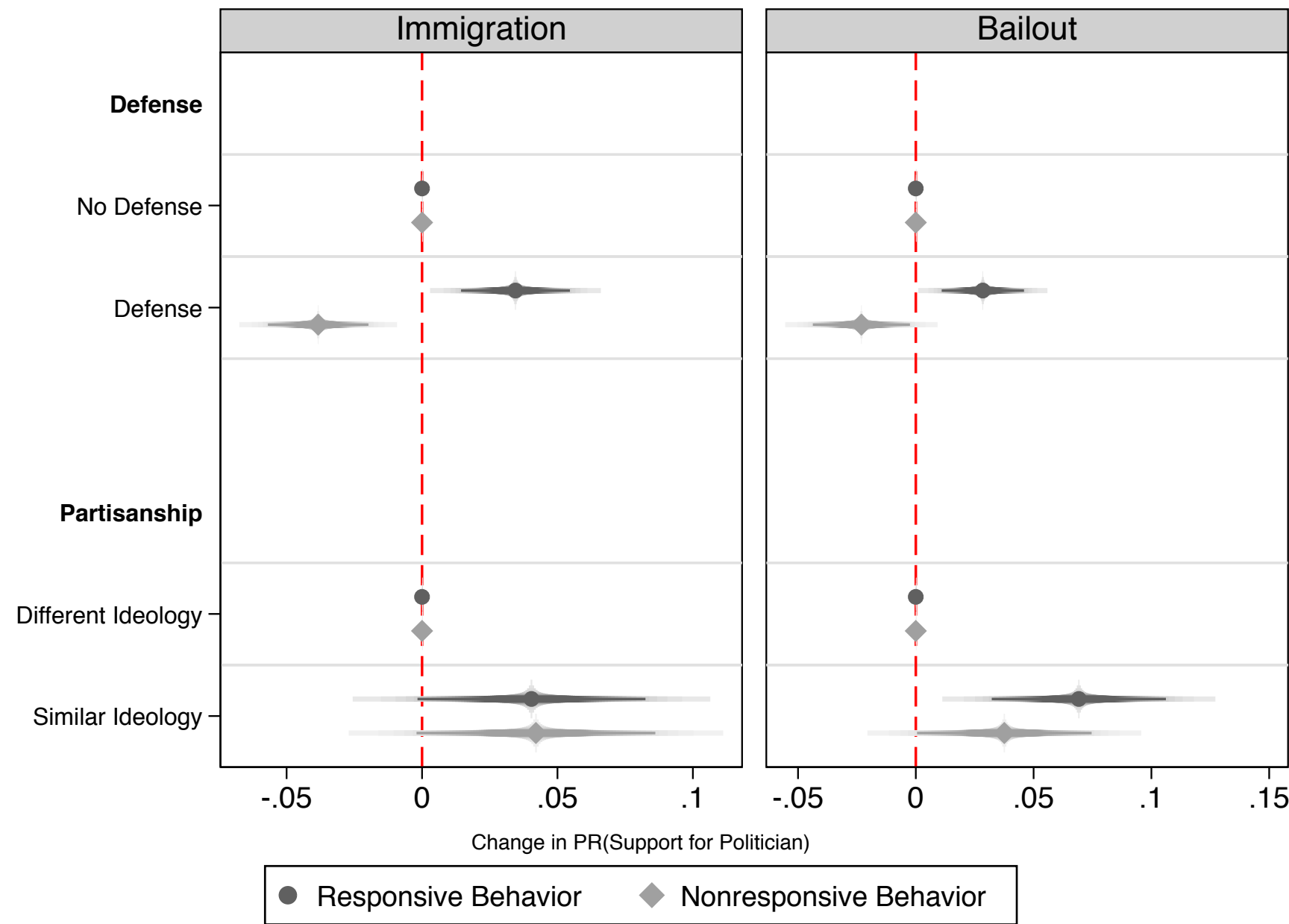
[Control Variables Omitted]

The COVID Pandemic 2020
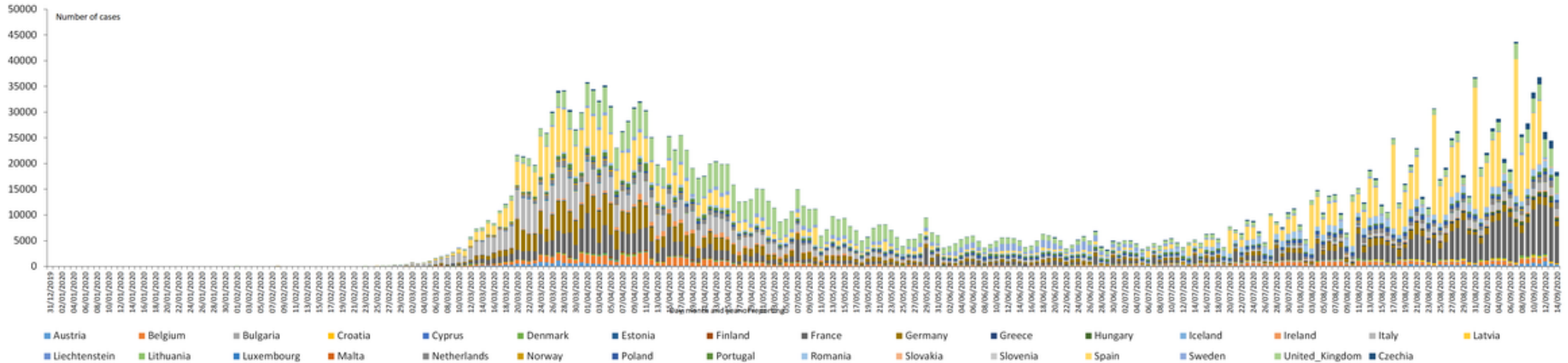
What Europeans expect from the European Union:

- Coordinate national responses and policies to stop the spread of the virus.
- Take steps to minimize the economic fallout and help countries in economic crisis.

Why We Might be Concerned

- Public expectations vs EU competencies

The European Union lived up to its responsibilities during the pandemic

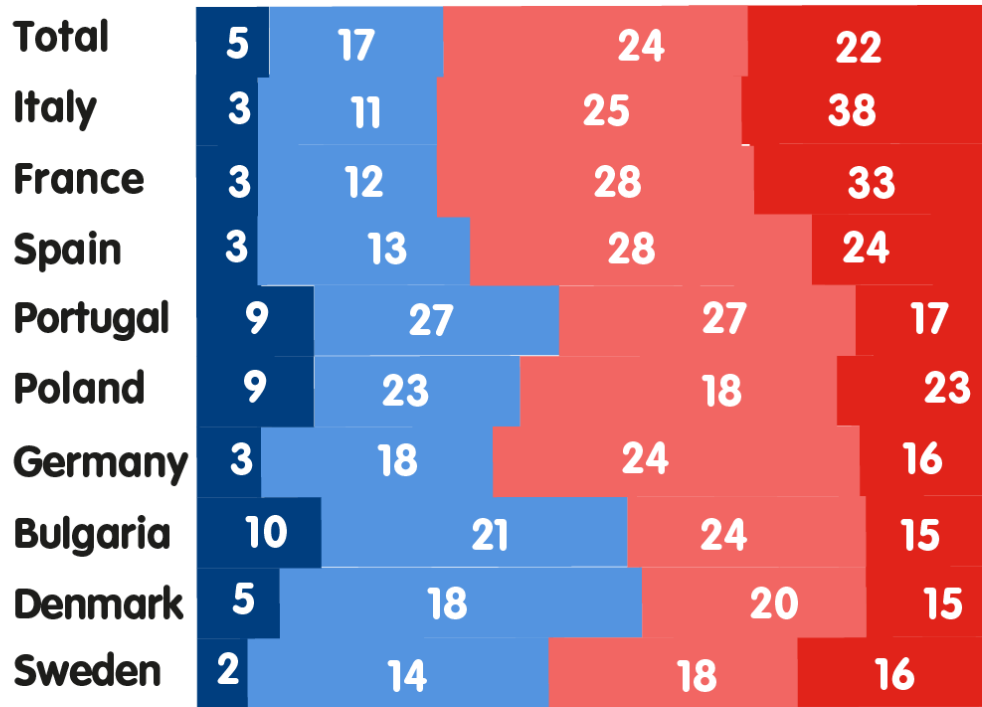|	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
Total	5	17	24	22
Italy	3	11	25	38
France	3	12	28	33
Spain	3	13	28	24
Portugal	9	27	27	17
Poland	9	23	18	23
Germany	3	18	24	16
Bulgaria	10	21	24	15
Denmark	5	18	20	15
Sweden	2	14	18	16

Legend: Strongly agree · Agree · Strongly disagree · Disagree

EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
ecfr.eu

Source: ECFR

Excludes Neither Agree nor Disagree and Don't Know

The European Union has been irrelevant during the pandemic
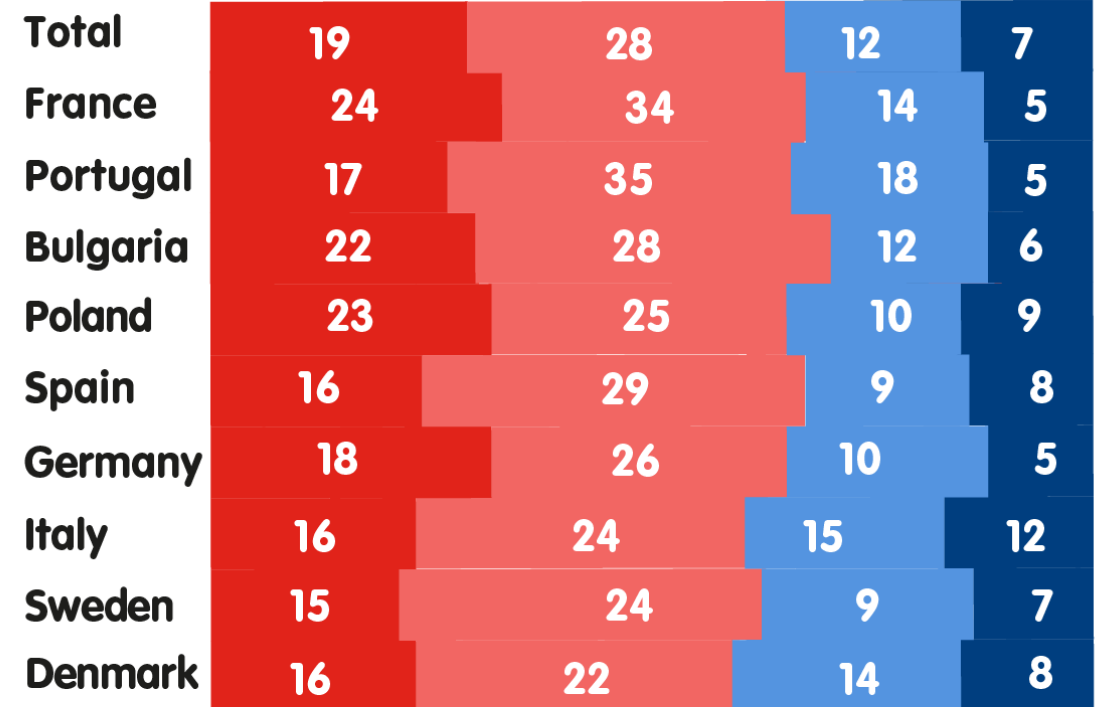
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Total	19	28	12	7
France	24	34	14	5
Portugal	17	35	18	5
Bulgaria	22	28	12	6
Poland	23	25	10	9
Spain	16	29	9	8
Germany	18	26	10	5
Italy	16	24	15	12
Sweden	15	24	9	7
Denmark	16	22	14	8

Legend: Strongly agree · Agree · Strongly disagree · Disagree

EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
ecfr.eu

Source: ECFR

Excludes Neither Agree nor Disagree and Don't Know

Why We Might be Concerned

- Public expectations vs EU competencies

- Eurosceptic parties & scape-goating

- Conflict in intergovernmental negotiations
  - North-South rift
  - Domestic politicization and need for responsiveness

How bleak is the future for European integration?

A Different Perspective

- Effect of pandemic on public Euroscepticism minimal.

How has the coronavirus changed your attitudes towards the EU? (%)
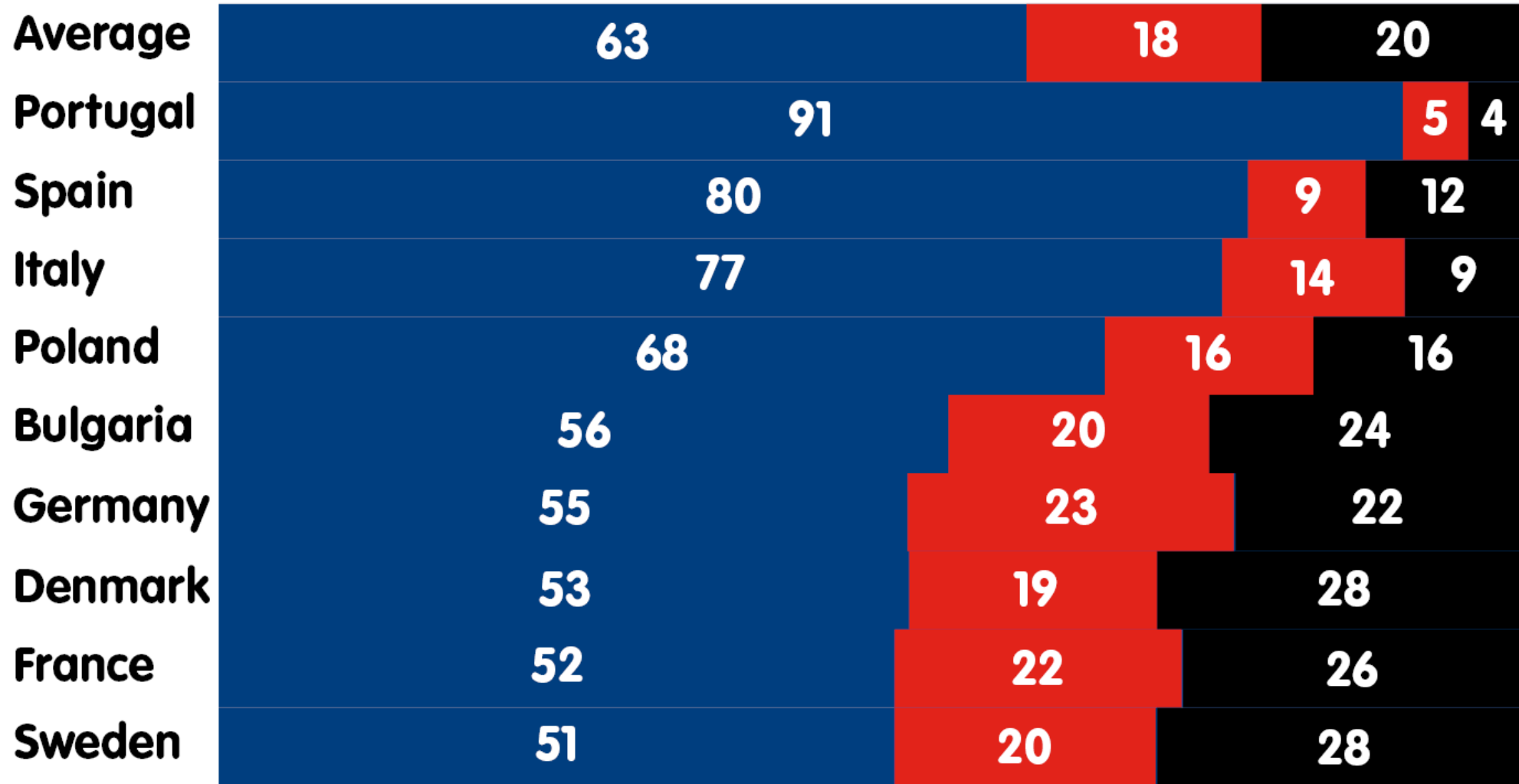
	Shown the need for greater European cooperation	Shown that EU integration has gone too far	Don't know
Average	63	18	20
Portugal	91	5	4
Spain	80	9	12
Italy	77	14	9
Poland	68	16	16
Bulgaria	56	20	24
Germany	55	23	22
Denmark	53	19	28
France	52	22	26
Sweden	51	20	28

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Shown the need for greater European cooperation

Shown that EU integration has gone too far

Don't know

Source: ECFR

If you had to choose, which of the following statements best describes your overall attitude towards European integration?

We need less political and economic integration across Europe

EU27 + 5MS

Select:
- **EU 27**
- **France**
- **Germany**
- **Italy**
- **Poland**
- **Spain**
- **The Netherlands**

eupinions
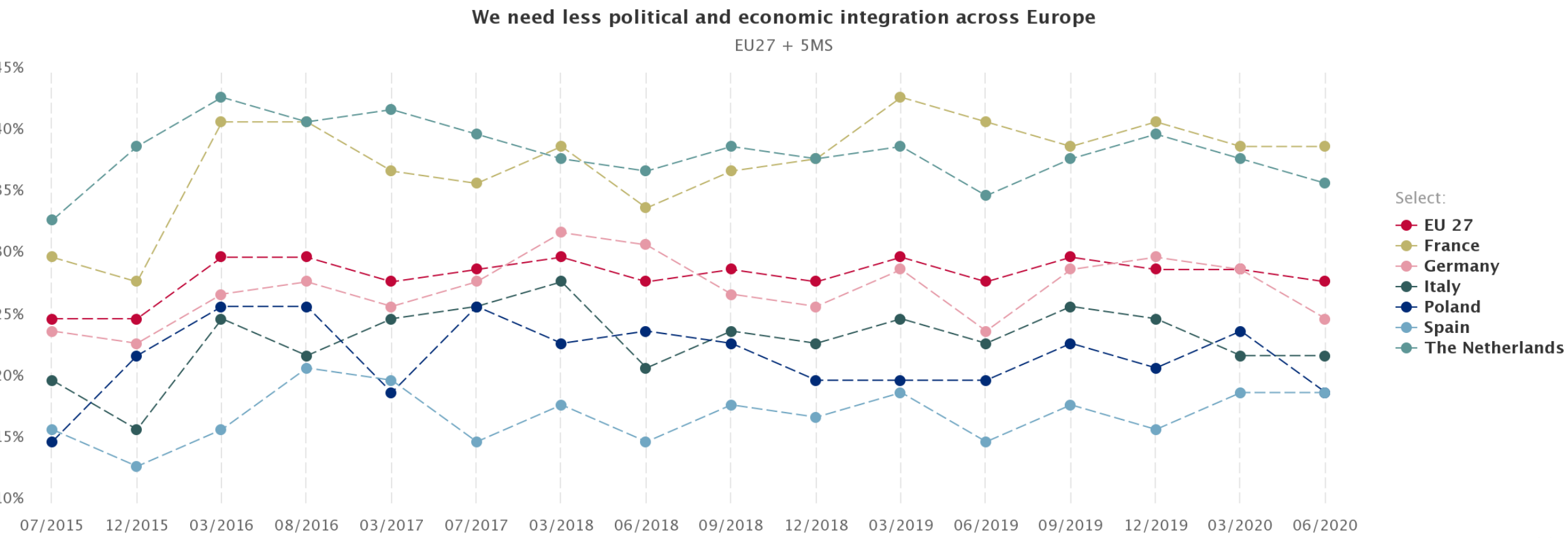
Once the coronavirus crisis is over, how should things change in Europe?

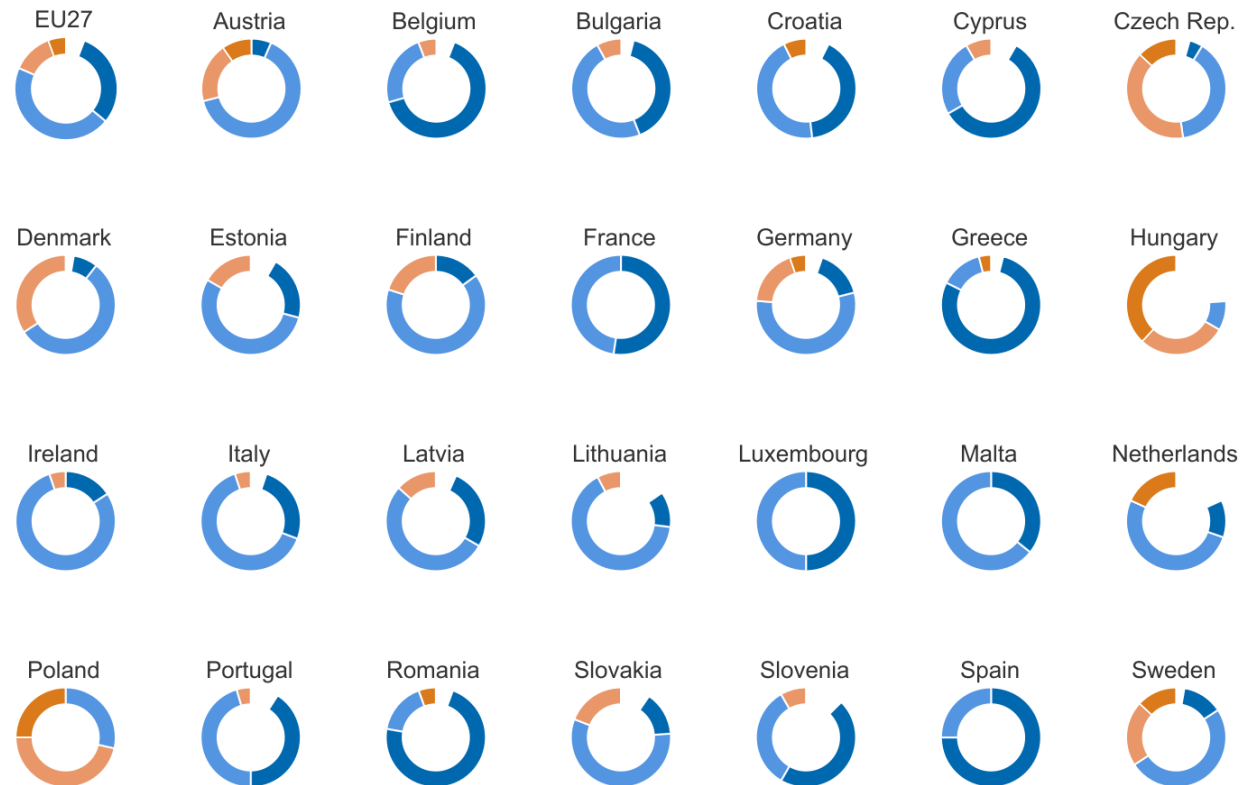|	
The EU should develop a more common response to global threats and challenges	52
EU countries should be more willing to share the financial burden of a crisis like the pandemic	48
There should be more control over the EU's external borders	46
Companies should be encouraged to produce more medical supplies within the EU, even if it means higher prices	41
There should be more control over borders between EU countries	34
Companies should be encouraged to produce more non-pharmaceutical products internally in the EU, even if it means higher prices	28
Power should be brought back from the EU to individual countries	27
Citizens should reconsider their need to work, live, and travel abroad	26

EUROPEAN
COUNCIL
ON FOREIGN
RELATIONS
ecfr.eu

Source: ECFR

Support for common European public health policy

Considering the future, do you think that your country's government would support a stronger mandate for the European Union on public health policy?

- ● Strongly support
- ● Somewhat support
- ● Somewhat oppose
- ● Strongly oppose
- ○ Don't know

EU27	Austria	Belgium	Bulgaria	Croatia	Cyprus	Czech Rep.

Denmark	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary

Ireland	Italy	Latvia	Lithuania	Luxembourg	Malta	Netherlands

Poland	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	Spain	Sweden

Source: ECFR

ecfr.eu/**coalitionexplorer**

A Different Perspective

- Effect of pandemic on public Euroscepticism minimal.

- Increased coordination on health
  - Coordinated travel restrictions
  - Coordination on provision of medical equipment
  - EU4Health

- Economic solidarity
  - Repurposing of structural funds
  - Loosening of state-aid rules
  - New funding for medical research
  - Monetary policy measures through ECB
  - EU Recovery fund, Next Generation EU

Main Concerns

- Threats from outside
  - Withdrawal of the US from global liberal order
  - Geopolitics, Europe between Russia and China
  - Climate Change
  - Brexit?
- Threats from within
  - Euroscepticism/backlash to globalization
  - Democratic Backsliding

Thank you!