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Euroscepticism – a today's issue with tomorrow consequences

Abstract

The European Union is dominated by permanent change and diversity so that public opinion regarding different EU-related issues follows a similar trend. Within this continually changing context, there are two important interconnected things to be considered: first, public opinion towards the EU represents the core of political and academic debates over the present and future of the European integration. Second, the favorable attitudes and opinions towards the EU have increasingly changed into disapproving or *sceptic* attitudes in the last years. Although there are studies on *Eurosceptic* attitudes and their causes in almost all EU member states, only a few of them offer a clear overview of this issue. The present paper addresses four questions: What is actually *Euroscepticism*?; What are the faces of *Euroscepticism* in the EU as a whole?; How prominent are *Eurosceptic* attitudes in Romania?; *Where* do we go from here? The aim of this paper is to examine the theoretical foundations of Euroscepticism and to provide insightful information to be used in future studies.

Keywords: public opinion; Euroscepticism; Eurosceptic attitudes; European integration.

1. Introduction

As Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas and de Vreese suggest (2011, p. 242), public opinion towards the European Union is at the heart of almost all the academic debates over the present and future of the EU integration. Moreover, the attitudes towards the EU are so intensely discussed in the literature, that they are an object of study in and by themselves. Thus, researchers from different fields of study related to media and political communication are interested in investigating public opinion towards the EU since it influences citizens' behavior both at a EU community (see, for example, de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006, 2008) and national levels (for example, de Vries, 2007).

Although there is a growing literature on the topic of public attitudes towards the EU and especially on Euroscepticism, many approaches seem to concentrate on very specific sides of Euroscepticism and, paradoxically, they seem to lose the idea that there is also the big picture that should be considered. Thus, this study aims at filling this gap, by providing some conceptual clarifications of what is, in fact, Euroscepticism, how it functions among the member states and in Romania, in particular, and what its future implications might be.

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The paper is divided in four major parts. In the first part, I analyze and discuss different visions and approaches on Euroscepticism, mainly referring to its multifaceted nature. In the second part, I critically review some of the most important research work on Euroscepticism in different EU countries. The third part focuses on a more specific context Euroscepticism in Romania, and, finally, the fourth part discusses some of the short and long term implications of Euroscepticism and some possible consequences of the growing negative attitudes towards the EU.

The value of the present study consists of bringing together new theoretical approaches and visions in the field of public opinion towards the EU. More specifically, the paper aims at creating a working overview regarding (negative) attitudes towards the EU that could be used in future empirical or theoretical studies of the complex concept of Euroscepticism. The paper will seek to provide answers to the following questions: What do we know about Euroscepticism when we study it?; How is Euroscepticism “working” in the entire European Union?; How is it “working” in Romania?; What should be done to overcome growing Euroscepticism? These questions will guide the following sections of the present article.

2. What is in fact Euroscepticism? – Different visions, different approaches

The literature on the topic of public opinion towards the EU has known a significant development in the last decade (de Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2008; Fossum & Schlesinger, 2007; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005, 2010; McLaren, 2007; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2008; Wessels, 2007). Furthermore, since the beginning of the financial and economic crisis, the questions and observations regarding this issue have been continually accompanying scholars’ work on EU-related topics (Serricchio, Tsakatika, & Quaglia, 2013).

In this context, early studies of public opinion regarding European integration have used the concept of EU support to characterize citizens’ attitudes towards the EU, but more recently the research literature uses the concept of Euroscepticism to refer to the same phenomenon (Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas, & de Vreese, 2011). The concept of Euroscepticism was originally used to characterize the way in which political parties faced the process of European integration (Taggart, 1998). Moreover, Boomgaarden et al. (2011) stress the idea that, since the process of European integration has a multifaceted nature, the same complex nature should be considered when addressing the attitudes towards the process. That is why the authors’ definition of Euroscepticism as “opposition towards a specific policy or integration effort” (2011, p. 242) sees Euroscepticism as one of many other engines which drive public opinion.

Considering the complexity of EU-related attitudes, more recent approaches to Euroscepticism have tried to offer a more organized picture of this concept. Some attempts (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Krouwel & Abts, 2007; Wessels, 2007) are valuable and need to be mentioned – they specify the importance of the object of mass attitudes, the type and origin/nature of the attitude involved. In this context, Eurosceptic attitudes differ according to the object to which they are addressed (Easton, 1975) – authorities, regime or community; they are dependent on the type of opposition (Gabel, 1998) – diffuse or specific and they are different due to the nature of public opinion (Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970) – utilitarian or affective.

The work of Boomgaarden et al. (2011) is essential since it clarifies the existent theoretical foundations and refines them. Taking into account different forms of public support, the authors suggest that specific support means support for the outcomes of a concrete policy, whereas diffuse support means an evaluation referring to what is an object, not to how it functions. Another vision which refers to almost the same types of support for the EU distinguishes between utilitarian and affective support. Thus, utilitarian support refers to ideas based on concern about the costs and benefits of being a member state, while affective support refers to emotional responses regarding some ideals rooted in the notion of European unity. The authors also put forward the idea of characterizing the EU attitudes by invoking two clusters of attitude orientation – specific, utilitarian and output-oriented attitudes, on the one hand and, diffuse, affective and input-oriented attitudes, on the other hand (2011, p. 244).

With reference to the objects of support, the above mentioned authors focus on the difference between attitudes towards the regime and towards the community. In this sense, the regime-specific attitudes are those related to regime principles, processes and institutions – which measure general membership support and the benefits supposed to come from a country's membership. Furthermore, the regime-support attitudes include approval for further enlargement, the transfer of policy-making competencies from the national to the EU level, trust in the EU institutions, evaluations of the functioning of the regime, as well as emotional responses towards the EU. On the other hand, EU attitudes to the community refer to the attitudes which have their roots in citizens' perceptions that EU functions as a community-driven force and it may be a threat to national interests. In this sense, attitudes to the community are measured in terms of identification with the EU and attachment given to the European community as a whole (2011, p. 245).

From the empirical point of view, Boomgaarden et al. distinguish five attitude dimensions which represent “unique components of the overall notion of EU attitudes” (2011, p. 258). The five dimensions include emotional responses – feelings that the EU represents a dangerous entity or a threat to the member states; a sense of European identity (for example, see Bruter, 2005) – this last dimension is gaining importance due to the discussion about the legitimacy of the EU (for an overview, see Thomassen, 2009); the performance and the democratic functioning of the EU and its institutions; utilitarian attitudes such as general support and benefit evaluations towards the EU and a strengthening of the EU in the future – which includes support to further European integration.

Given the work of Boomgaarden et al., we can conclude that negative attitudes towards the EU are inappropriately called Eurosceptic, since the EU attitudes have a multifaceted nature and Euroscepticism represents only “one facet of public opinion towards the EU” (2011, p. 242).

A similar line of research carried out by Boomgaarden et al. (2011) can also be found in Wessels' approach to the topic. He stresses the idea that public Euroscepticism runs as a cumulative force because the specific Eurosceptic attitudes towards the regime and the EU institutions change into diffuse Eurosceptic attitudes directed to the community as a whole; thus functioning as a cumulative factor. Moreover, the author suggests that Eurosceptic attitudes against the regime should be in the researchers' attention due to their possible effect in the long term (Wessels, 2007, p. 290).

Following the same direction, some approaches that frame Eurosceptic attitudes as negative attitudes towards the EU bring an added value to the investigation since they illuminate the diversity of attitudes that can be labeled as Euroscepticism. For example, Krowel and

Abts (2007, p. 263) classify attitudes regarding the EU as ones which include trust, scepticism, distrust, cynicism or alienation. Another important classification of the attitudes known as Euroscepticism is that of Wessels (2007, p. 300) – he suggests that there are different attitudes that hide behind the Eurosceptic cover. Among these, there are critical and sceptic attitudes which determine different possible effects – the critics may ask for a better Europe, while the sceptics may not want to see the EU functioning as a whole. The author argues that Euroscepticism as a form of expressing public opinion towards the EU should be sensitively analyzed as an entire set of attitudes which places opposition behind criticism.

Taggart (1998) advances the important view that Euroscepticism represents a complex attitude consisting of multiple other attitudes towards the EU integration and the EU as a project. In this context, the author defines Euroscepticism as “the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration” (1998, p. 366). Moreover, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001, 2008) attach two distinct dimensions to this concept – *hard* Euroscepticism and *soft* Euroscepticism.

As the two authors suggest, *hard* Euroscepticism is “where there is a principled opposition to the EU and European integration” (2008, p. 7), whereas *soft* Euroscepticism is “where there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership” (2008, p. 8). In other words, both forms of Euroscepticism refer to the positions that can be adopted by the political parties from member states, in the context of constructing ideology-based discourses.

Kopecký and Mudde (2002, pp. 300–301) criticize the approach proposed by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001). They suggest an alternative view that differentiates between diffuse and specific support for EU integration leading to four types of possible positions that structure attitudes towards the EU. These include: *Euroenthusiasts* – who support both the process of integration and its ideology; *Eurorejects* – who do not support anything related to EU integration; *Eurosceptics* – who support the idea of a united Europe, but reject the further practice of EU integration and *Europragmatics* – who are against the idea of a united Europe, but support the practice of further EU integration.

Going one step further, one can acknowledge that Euroscepticism roots in the events that happened in the 1990s, in the period immediately after the ratification of the “Maastricht Treaty” or the Treaty on the European Union. The Maastricht Treaty has changed the primarily economic role of the EU into a political one and has encouraged the widening of the EU through enlargement. Thus, the already established order of cost-benefit evaluations was seriously outbalanced by political and social variables, such as citizens’ identity and political institutions. This led to an important mutation of the factors behind public opinion support or lack of support towards the EU (Eichenberg & Dalton, 2007). This evolution of the public opinion towards the EU, from supporting views at the beginning and negative and questioning views remains a process which should be studied since it might reveal valuable considerations on the legitimacy of the EU as a whole.

Thus, there are different causes of Eurosceptic attitudes that have strong implications in determining the type of Euroscepticism. In what follows, four types of Euroscepticism will be reviewed – utilitarian-based Euroscepticism, identity-based Euroscepticism, politically-based Euroscepticism and culturally-based Euroscepticism.

The utilitarian-based Euroscepticism was coined in the literature in the field by Gabel and Palmer (1995). The authors show that the public support for the European integration is different according to “mercantilist or security benefits” (1995, p. 12) of each member state. They also show that income, occupation, political skills and the “proximity to foreign mar-

kets” (1995, p. 8) are positively associated with an attitude of support towards EU integration. Then, following the same line of thought, Gabel (1998) suggests that the utilitarian-based model offers clear clues about the variance of public support within member states – the citizens who discover real and immediate benefits of the European integration are more likely to develop a supporting attitude towards the EU integration.

The identity-based model of Euroscepticism posits that the source of Eurosceptic attitudes is represented by the citizens’ permanent need to find an identity. The literature suggests that even though the fear of losing national identity leads to lower levels of support towards the EU integration, this single feeling cannot exert such a strong influence on its own (McLaren, 2004). Moreover, McLaren reiterates the initial idea, using the following formula “less support generally means having ambiguous feelings about the EU and not feeling outright opposition to it” (2004, p. 909).

The politically-based model of Euroscepticism regards Eurosceptic attitudes as being caused by the citizens’ distrust in a supra-national political system which is directed from the center – from Brussels. But, as Leconte (2010) suggests these political-based attitudes are, in fact, conducted by a materialist power – both the elites and the political parties are driven by forces that use the cost-benefit perspective on the EU integration as a resource in national debates.

The fourth model of Euroscepticism – the culturally-based one – conveys the detachment from the whole EU project, since the EU integration plays a significant role in changing the national cultural values of the citizens from member states. Krouwel and Abts (2007) suggest that this variety of Euroscepticism contains the most negative attitudes towards the EU integration – varying from pessimistic positions to extreme feelings of total rejection of a supra-national community.

We can conclude that the study of Euroscepticism as one of the multiple facets of public opinion towards the EU has received increasing scholarly attention over the past decade. One of the reasons for this could be the assumption that, in general, the process of building public opinion is so complex and dynamic that it cannot be influenced by a single variable, but by a variety of factors – political, institutional or social. Thus, it is advisable to include in the study of Eurosceptic attitudes a strict and complex analysis of attitudinal components, causes, nature and varieties of what is known as Euroscepticism. By doing this, we would be able to see the big picture of a more and more Eurosceptic Union.

3. Euroscepticism in the EU

As discussed above, the concept of Euroscepticism in the European Union is intensely debated in the literature. However, we must note and comment upon some important contributions to the understanding of what hides beyond the umbrella term Euroscepticism and what this concept means.

In this context, Startin and Krouwel (2013, pp. 80–81) analyzed the results of the 2005 referenda in two of the Union’s founding members – France and the Netherlands. They concluded that the rejection of the proposed EU constitution in two separate referenda gives some important cues about the current state of Euroscepticism within both countries and across the EU as a whole. The “no” votes illustrate a continually growing and widening gap between party elites and mass public opinion regarding the issue of EU integration and prove that the elites are no longer able to persuade the public that the EU provides positive alternatives to

the negative consequences of globalization. Moreover, the authors noted that the similar trend was followed during the 1992 Maastricht referenda in Denmark and France. Therefore, the anti-EU agenda has become more and more popular, mainly among the voters with lower levels of education and income.

The 2005 referenda seem to have another significant consequence – they might have contributed to the widening of the socio-economic cleavage between citizens with respect to the attitudes towards the EU. In this context, one of the biggest challenges of the elites would be to persuade young voters (mainly those coming from modest socio-economic environments) that the EU can still be successful in counterbalancing the negative socio-economic consequences of globalization, rather than “merely acting as an agent which reinforces the process” (2013, p. 81). Thus, as the authors point out, failure to close the socio-economic gap and to persuade the EU citizens that the EU has a crucial role in an increasingly globalized world, might cause “irreparable damage” (2013, p. 82) to the entire European project and its future development.

Lubbers and Scheepers (2010) confirm the consequences of the 2005 referenda, but emphasize that there are different trends of Euroscepticism, depending on the country and the region. Moreover, they suggest that these trends are shaped by changes in social composition between countries and regions over time. So, they place their research theory in a more realistic context, dominated by change and strongly influenced by the passage of time.

Social composition seems to have a major impact on attitudes towards the EU. As Gabel and Palmer (1995) suggested that people experience different costs and benefits from their relationship with the EU; therefore, they are expected to show different reactions and attitudes. Lubbers and Scheepers (2010, p. 789) follow the theories suggesting that privileged categories of people have better opportunities to apply their talents in an international context and are expected to be in favor of EU integration and therefore not to develop Eurosceptic attitudes. However, the literature suggests that there are also other reasons that nurture strong Eurosceptic sentiments in lower social categories: national identification and the feeling that immigrants represent a threat.

One important thing to be mentioned here is Lubbers and Scheepers's idea (2010) that educational and social composition of a country may explain the differences in Eurosceptic attitudes between countries and regions. Thus, the decrease in Euroscepticism over time might be explained through the study of the educational and social class composition – an increasing number of highly educated people may be an important indicator of decreasing Eurosceptic opinions. Moreover, another factor that may explain the differences among countries and regions is the left-right placement of the political parties: right-wing people would be more likely to fear denationalization and would be rather sceptic of transferring decision making to the EU, whilst left-wing is less sceptic towards the EU (2010, p. 790).

In characterizing Euroscepticism all over the EU, Lubbers and Scheepers (2010, pp. 810–812) analyzed the EU attitudes towards the EU over a period of 10 years (between 1994 and 2004) and on a country-region level. They found insignificant relationships between the level of unemployment, inflation and economic growth and the development of a Eurosceptic attitude. However, the introduction of the euro correlates with higher levels of Euroscepticism in countries with higher GDP and the same trend is observed in countries showing lower levels of GDP. As a conclusion, the authors stressed the idea that divergent trends in Euroscepticism may “be found and explained at the individual level” (2010, p. 811). In other words, divergent trends in Euroscepticism across time and countries should become the fo-

cus of research in the years to come since non-economic and non-political factors seem to play a crucial role in explaining Eurosceptic opinions.

Following the same trend, that of non-economic and non-political factors of influencing the attitudes towards the EU, Eichenberg and Dalton (2007) analyzed the support for the EU during the period 1973-2004 in eight of the long-term member states. Their study is important because it stresses a paradoxical idea – as the authors named it – “the paradox, of course, is that the Union is protecting identities that are national rather than European” (p. 147). One of the most prominent findings of their study shows that, apparently, commitment to the national identity and culture remains a core commitment of European citizens, although they are in favor of market integration. Thus, divergent trends of Euroscepticism follow not only divergent, but also paradoxical factors – which make them even more complex and challenging.

Llamazares and Gramacho (2007, p. 211) describe another approach that continues the idea that Eurosceptic views are strongly conditioned by fears that the European Union threatens national cultures. In this sense, the above mentioned paradoxical idea is also addressed, but the authors suggest other general associations between the EU and positive objects such as prosperity, democracy and national influence, which may be responsible of affecting Eurosceptic orientations.

All in all, the Eurosceptic attitudes towards the EU seem to become more and more complex nature with the passage of time, a fact also revealed by their study within different cultural and socio-economic contexts. Moreover, as pointed out by Lubbers and Scheepers (2010), along with economic and political elements, non-economic and non-political influence factors – culture, identity, education, values – are relevant to the description of more realistic portrait of Eurosceptic attitudes across the Union and of their many facets.

4. Euroscepticism in Romania

As mentioned above, Eurosceptic attitudes can take different faces all around the EU, depending on socio-economic, cultural, political or contextual factors. But what happens in Romania? Research on Euroscepticism at the EU level comprises little if no data on Eurosceptic attitudes in Romania (see, for example, Serricchio et al., 2013; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002, 2008). Thus, aiming to develop a clear overview regarding Eurosceptic attitudes all around the EU, the study of Euroscepticism in Romania could add significant value to the research literature in the field. It could reveal the trend of attitudes in a country whose citizens seem to lack interest in EU-related issues; this lack of interest towards the EU problems can be seen as a sign of support.

In the following section of the paper, I will first try to offer an overview of attitudes towards the EU by comparing Euro barometers from 2007 and 2013. I will try to raise some questions that might be answered or at least taken into consideration by future research. Secondly, I will analyze and comment on the results of a relevant research on Romania's accession to the Schengen Area.

In 2007, Romania was among the five countries with the highest degree of optimism. According to the 2007 Euro barometer, the highest current optimism index was in Sweden (+38), followed by Denmark (+33). Spain, Ireland (both +29) and Romania (+28) all have optimism indexes over ten points higher than that for the EU as a whole (European Commission, 2007, p. 7). On the other hand, in 2013, due to the economic crisis, Romanian citizens seem to be

less optimistic and to list the country's economic situation as their most important concern, followed by concerns about inflation and unemployment (European Commission, 2013, p. 12). This trend is a general one at the EU level. But, the question is this: are Romanians worried about the economic situation at the EU level? Or is it just a national trend? In other words, is the degree of sceptic attitudes towards the EU fostered by internal factors or by community issues?

Another interesting thing to be mentioned is a 2007 Euro barometer result which shows that over 7 in 10 Romanian respondents (72%) have a trusting outlook regarding the EU institutions – European Parliament and the European Commission. On the other hand, the 2013 Euro barometer results show that the general trend of all the EU members is to develop an attitude of distrust both in the national and the EU institutions. This trend may offer a clue that an answer to the political issues must be looked up for in other segments – as Lubbers and Scheepers (2010) suggest – probably in non-political areas. Put it in other words, is trust in the EU institutions a sign of supporting attitudes towards the EU? Or is it just natural to place trust in supra-national/ European institutions?

One key factor in the contemporary reality which shapes the attitudes towards the EU is the economic and financial crisis. The 2007 Euro barometer suggests that “the possible rippling effects of the so called ‘sub-prime’ crisis in the US are as yet not fully played out, yet may well contribute to a feeling of uncertainty about the future” (European Commission, 2007, p. 3). In other words, the dangerous effects of the crisis are taken into consideration even in its early stages, but the type of attitudes and opinions is an issue that feeds a lot of uncertainties. On the other hand, the 2013 Euro barometer shows that Romania is among the three countries maintaining that the impact of the economic crisis has not reached its peak and that the worst is still to come (European Commission, 2013, p. 28). The questions here are: Is the economic crisis the only impediment in creating a supporting attitude towards the EU? Or are there other more important factors to be considered?

All these questions above are only a part of the multiple interrogations that accompany the issue of Euroscepticism. Consequently, we consider that not only answering a set of questions, but also raising them is an important step forward in understanding the process of building Eurosceptic attitudes at the EU level, which should not ignore the study of these attitudes in countries like Romania.

In the following section, I will discuss the findings related to Euroscepticism of a research on Romania's accession to Schengen. The research was carried out by the Center of Research in Communication¹, and it focused on the Schengen-related debates taking place from December 21, 2010 to January 21, 2011, in Romania. The study included three perspectives: the presence of the Schengen topic in the media, as well as the understanding and the interpretation of the topic; the mass and elites opinions about the postponement in Romania's adherence to the Schengen area and the impact of this decision on the country's position in the EU (Negrea, 2011, p. 179).

The main results of the research stressed the idea that the Schengen topic is able to offer valuable data on the intensity of public support towards the EU and the EU integration, in Romania. The interest in the Schengen case was mentioned as an important predictor in the discussion about the evolution of Eurosceptic attitudes towards the EU (see for example Bârgăoanu, 2011, p. 158). In this context, strictly referring to the Schengen topic and its impact on public opinion in Romania, the survey showed a decrease of Euro enthusiasm to-

wards the EU, but this trend is also revealed by the Euro barometers measuring public opinion at the EU level (Negrea, 2011, p. 179).

From a more general perspective, the results on Euroscepticism in Romania are consistent with both the results in other member states and the factors presented and analyzed above. In other words, Romanian public opinion follows the EU level trend regarding the factors that explain the intensity of supporting attitudes towards the EU. Moreover, the intensity of the Romanian supporting attitudes towards the EU varies according to the cognition of the benefits of being a member state and it is seriously influenced by the emergence of the “double-identity perception” (Negrea, 2011, p. 184). In this context, the Schengen topic does not seem to have a strong influence on the development of Eurosceptic attitudes, probably due to its low degree of visibility in the national media and because of the emotional point of view from which it was discussed in the public space.

5. Where do we go from here? – Some ideas about future implications of Euroscepticism

Following the discussion of the factors and causes that generate Euroscepticism at the EU or the Romanian level, this section focuses on future implications of Euroscepticism. Thus, I will analyze and critically review some recent approaches (Ray, 2004; Taggart & Szczepiński, 2013; Usherwood & Startin, 2013; Vasilopoulou, 2013) regarding the issue of Eurosceptic attitudes towards the EU and their impact on the future of EU integration.

Considering Euroscepticism as an issue which developed according to different time phases, Vasilopoulou (2013, pp. 163–164) shows that from the early 1990's onwards the nature and scope of Eurosceptic attitudes towards the EU has changed dramatically, rising new conceptions of integration which portrayed the EU as a “multispeed community”. Thus, the author suggests that the post-Maastricht period was one of long debates regarding the EU's legitimacy and it generated a fertile ground for the exhibition of the pervasive nature of Euroscepticism. More recently, the latest phase of Euroscepticism seems to be located in the outbreak of the financial crisis and it can be distinguished as a combination among mass Euroscepticism and protest, elite Euroscepticism and anti-referendum attitudes of EU leaders.

In this context, the author suggests that the latest Euroscepticism seems to have “far-reaching implications for the process and direction of European integration, domestic national politics and the development of EU studies” (2013, p. 164). Moreover, the author underlines that the current Euroscepticism is nurtured by the desire to consider supra-nationalism as a prevailing model – in this context, Eurosceptic voices tend to direct their strongest opposing views towards the “entire EU institutional framework rather than specific policies” (2013, p. 164). The author also suggests a possible solution to this problem, which is trying to avoid perceiving the EU as a supra-national political union. However, it is crucial that the EU is seen as a viable system through which its citizens can access political, economic and social resources more easily. By doing so, both the citizens and the EU as a whole would be in a win-win situation.

Usherwood and Startin go even further and suggest that Eurosceptic attitudes seem to threaten the “status quo that has protected the EU so far” (2013, p. 13). They base their assumption on the idea that it is possible to mobilize popular attitudes against the Union within a country in a relatively short period of time. Moreover, they advance a possible solution to the more and

more present issue of Euroscepticism, suggesting that it should be the EU itself that which deals with sceptics if it wants to ensure a secure legitimacy and success. The authors suggest that a failure to deal with Euroscepticism as Europe enters an uncertain economic period “could have serious consequences for the European project as a whole” (2013, p. 13).

Other contributions to the literature on Euroscepticism emphasize the same reality in different words, but with an almost identical warning connotation. For example, following a very similar line, Krowel and Startin claim that failure to “convince Europe’s citizens of the merits of the EU’s role in an increasingly globalized world, could cause irreparable damage to the future of the European project” (2013, p. 82).

In conclusion, Euroscepticism is an issue that needs the EU’s attention since it may have serious short term and long term implications on the future of the Union. Coping with Euroscepticism may assure citizens that the EU cares not only about things that they cannot have a direct access to, but also about issues that are more adjacent to their private interests, such as jobs or salaries. Thus, the today’s struggle to deal with Eurosceptic attitudes should be seen as a matter of tomorrow’s victory.

6. Concluding remarks

This article explored some of the most relevant theoretical and empirical work on Euroscepticism, in an attempt to offer some clarifications and interpretations of this concept with a multifaceted nature. Reviewing and critically analyzing the literature on Euroscepticism, the paper proposes an overview of attitudes and factors beyond Euroscepticism, types of Euroscepticism, Eurosceptic attitudes in the EU as a whole and in Romania, in particular, as well as some ideas about short and long term implications of Euroscepticism.

By advancing fresh theoretical considerations regarding Euroscepticism, this article sought to invite researchers to begin their work on measuring and assessing attitudes towards the EU with the aim of raising more questions while answering. Both the questions and answers should guide their attempt to reveal more and more unexplored sides of the topic, so as to be able to understand its profound and complex nature. In other words, it is essential to clearly understand an issue – Euroscepticism – from various perspectives – background, causes, factors, implications at the EU level and at the national level – since only by doing so, we could be able to see the big picture and to anticipate the future developments of Eurosceptic attitudes towards the EU.

Note

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