

# Russia's invasion of Ukraine: a tone setter for Euroscepticism at the EU's external border regions?

A quantitative study on the changes in Euroscepticism at the EU's external borders after times of border insecurity, crisis and refugee influxes



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# Abstract

This thesis aimed to determine *if* Euroscepticism is demonstrated to shift in the EU's external border regions after sudden border insecurities, compared to other types of regions. This field was explored due to previous researchers claiming that the EU's border regions are particularly susceptible to changes in Euroscepticism due to sudden border insecurity. The case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine was chosen to test this claim. Cross-sectional data from just before the start of the war and a few months after it was selected to be compared, with samples being selected from Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, the four EU countries with borders on Ukraine. OLS-regressions and t-test analyses were run to determine if Euroscepticism *had* been shown to change significantly after the start of the war in the external border regions whilst controlling for other covariates. The results indicated that Euroscepticism levels had not significantly changed in the external border regions after the start of the war. The results *did*, however, indicate that Euroscepticism levels decreased marginally in the entire sample used overall. Some significant independent covariates were additionally shown to correlate with Euroscepticism differentially after the start of the war, as opposed to before.

*Key words:* Euroscepticism, The EU's external borders, The war in Ukraine, Public opinion, The European Union

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Aim and study field of the thesis

There has been notably little previous research that delves into how individuals living in regions at the European Union's (EU) external borders react to sudden border destabilisation, insecurity and influxes of immigration at a rapid rate in the context of Euroscepticism. Despite this, the author of this thesis argues that there is substantial evidence indicating that this study field of Euroscepticism deserves more attention than it has been given so far. The most substantial section of the vein of literature that exists on Euroscepticism has, as Schoene (2019, p. 361) phrases it, treated geography as a "control variable", with little or no time being devoted to researching the regional aspects of the phenomena, despite merit existing to it being treated as more than that.

This thesis aims to expand upon border-based Euroscepticism by exploring what can perhaps be described as the most notable example of "insecurity" at the EU's external borders to date: Russia's war in Ukraine. This thesis's main aim is thus to find out if the levels of Euroscepticism have notably changed in the EU's external border regions next to Ukraine just before the war began as compared to a few months after, and if these changes in Euroscepticism are notable compared to those in regions not at the EU's external border regions in the same country. By performing this research, this thesis aims to expand upon the understanding of what role the geographical proximity to crisis and insecurity, in which the EU is a major player, has on Euroscepticism.

Scholars have made claims, when researching Euroscepticism at the EU's border regions, that individuals' proximities to them, and the contextualities of these borders, do, in fact, matter when Eurosceptic or anti-Eurosceptic opinions are formed (Kuhn, 2011; De Voogd, 2014; Scott, 2015; Bürkner, 2020; Durand et al., 2020; Klatt, 2020). Furthermore, crisis, insecurity and influxes of refugees at the border regions have been claimed to be

synonymous with increased xenophobia, scepticism towards the European project and an overall increased rejection of European integration for the individuals first-hand experiencing this perceived insecurity living at the borders, as crisis and insecurity puts the perceived “security” of the EU as a whole into question (Bürkner, 2020; Klatt, 2020). Some scholars have additionally made opposite claims, meaning that those at the border regions inherently tend to be less Eurosceptic than others (Gabel, 1998a; Kohli, 2000; McLaren, 2002; Díez Medrano, 2003; Dürrschmidt, 2006; Mau et al., 2008; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010). There is seemingly no universally agreed answer to how the factors that are attributed to living at the border regions of the EU affect EU perceptions, be that positively or negatively. If these findings hold true at the external borders of the EU, the same way they do at the internal, especially during times of crisis at the borders, additionally remains uncertain. This thesis, therefore, aims to fill that gap of uncertainty whilst adding to the somewhat limited field of border region Euroscepticism.

The field of research on causes of Euroscepticism in general, a term that can broadly be defined as “*the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration*” (Taggart, 1998, p. 366), has been studied and expanded upon for decades. In the field of Euroscepticism, several different areas of research have been explored, aiming to explain who tends to be Eurosceptic and what causes Euroscepticism in the first place.

There exists *some* research on Euroscepticism that has focused on times of crisis and how the perception of the EU and European integration has changed and been affected by the crisis in question. Two notable crisis’s that have been studied in the context of Euroscepticism are the Eurozone crisis of 2009 and the 2015 European refugee crisis (for further reading, see: Polyakova & Fligstein, 2016; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2018; Stockemer et al., 2020; Klatt, 2020; Csehi & Zgut, 2021). Most of these studies have focused on how the “perceived” threat of immigration and financial austerity impacts Euroscepticism, whilst Yeung (2021) added an extra dimension by studying how actual levels of immigration affects Euroscepticism in the EU’s member states.

However, a majority of the previous research that exists with a focus on Euroscepticism has instead concentrated on *soft* identity-based factors (McLaren, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2005; McLaren, 2007; Van Klingeren et al., 2013), *hard*

economic utilitarian factors (Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Hooghe & Marks, 2004; Garry & Tilley, 2009), *political* factors (Taggart, 1998; Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Hobolt & De Vries, 2011; Ejnaes & Jensen, 2019) and a mixture of all the above (Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Ejnaes & Jensen, 2019). These three factors have often been attributed to being the *main* factors explaining Euroscepticism.

## 1.2 Argumentation and structure of the thesis

This thesis will quantitatively analyse *if* levels of Euroscepticism at the external border regions in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania changed after Russia invaded Ukraine, as opposed to the regions not bordering the external borders of the EU in the same countries. The reason for using Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania as the countries to draw samples from is that they are the only four states in the EU with direct external borders next to Ukraine. Russia's invasion of Ukraine created substantial insecurity and massive influxes of refugees at these external borders, with all countries in question being within the top four of the biggest receivers of Ukrainian refugees per capita in the EU during the period studied in this thesis (European Parliament, 2022e; International SOS, 2022; Balicki, 2022; Brücker, 2022; Kopeć, 2022; Morariu, 2022).

Furthermore, the crisis has brought economic insecurity, causing severe implications within the EU. Energy prices, food prices, and inflation has shot up, in part due to previous dependencies on Russian gas and oil within several EU member states and the uncertainties the war, in turn, created (Gheorghe, 2022; Orhan, 2022; Arce et al., 2023).

The war has thus led to a combination of both economic, security and immigration-based hardships hitting the EU, three factors that have previously been suggested to be linked with a rise in Eurosceptic tendencies amongst individuals within the EU (Polyakova & Fligstein, 2016; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2018; Stockemer et al., 2020). The EU are, in turn, an indirect part of the war in Ukraine and has been ushered to act accordingly by its citizens. Therefore, public opinion of the war and how the EU is perceived to act in it, be it negatively or positively, is argued to influence how the public views the functioning of the EU overall.



The question that can be asked is, therefore, if the blame for the negative consequences of the war can be perceived as at least being partly put on the EU, given how active the EU has been through its so far ten sanction packages against Russia, its active and vocal role in the conflict and the aid that has been given to Ukraine from EU funds, alongside the promises of future EU accession for Ukraine after being granted candidate status on the 23rd of July 2022 (European Commission, 2023a; European Commission, 2023b; Parizek, 2023, p. 15-19, 31). Alternatively, individuals might instead experience an influx of “EU-phoria” and rising fondness for the EU as the “war against Putin” rages on, as was often portrayed to be the case in media during the Crimea and Donetsk conflicts of 2014 (Barthel & Bürkner, 2019; Bürkner, 2020, p. 557-558). The EU’s external border regions and their inhabitants are perceived as being at the forefront of all this chaos and insecurity compared to those not at the external borders in the same countries (Szicherle & Karaz, 2022).

This thesis then argues that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and its consequences *could* have altered the levels of Euroscepticism in the EU, especially in the *external border regions* of these most “exposed” countries bordering Ukraine. This is assumed, given that previous research on border region Euroscepticism has alluded that inhabitants at the border regions might experience European integration (and, in turn, Euroscepticism) differently than those living in “*core*” regions of a member state (Kuhn, 2011; De Voogd, 2014; Schoene, 2019; Bürkner, 2020; Durand et al., 2020; Klatt, 2020).

This thesis, in short, thus aims to explore if the levels of Euroscepticism amongst individuals in the most exposed external border regions are perceived to change during periods of high insecurity and refugee influxes, as compared to those not living in the external border regions in the same country, using the war in Ukraine as its study subject.

The Research Question is formulated as follows:

***Does living in the regions next to the EUs external borders indicate a significant change in individuals’ levels of Euroscepticism after periods of heavy border destabilisation, insecurity and immigration influxes, compared to the change in Euroscepticism experienced by individuals living in regions further away from the EUs external borders?***

Building upon previous theories on regional and border-based Euroscepticism, other proven and believed causes of Euroscepticism, various identity-based theories connected to how groups of people view contact with immigrants, alongside research on the relationships between Ukraine and the EU's external border regions and its contextualities, this thesis aims to answer the research question of the thesis through a hypotheses-based approach.

In addition to analysing if those living in external border regions experienced any changes in Eurosceptic tendencies after the start of the war, in comparison to those not living in the external border regions, other factors that previous research had indicated to correlate with Euroscepticism are controlled for, alongside factors controlling for public perception of more EU-based security at the external borders. This was done to give more nuanced and fair results on *how* and *if* living in an external border region affects Euroscepticism levels, as ignoring these factors would lead to incomplete and less nuanced conclusions.

Data from two rounds of the Eurobarometer dataset consisting of cross-sectional data and identically framed variables collected over two different timespans are used and compared to each other. The first dataset used is the Standard Eurobarometer 96.3 (data collected between the 18th of January 2022 – the 14th of February 2022, just before Russia invades Ukraine), and the second survey dataset used is the Standard Eurobarometer 97.5 (data collected between the 17th of June 2022 – the 24th of July 2022, a few months after Russia invades Ukraine).

This thesis follows the subsequential layout: Firstly, previous research on border-based Euroscepticism, identity-based theories and the contextualities of Russia's war in Ukraine in relation to the external border regions are discussed, with hypotheses being presented concerning the believed effects of the believed effects the war *might* have had on the external border regions and Euroscepticism. Secondly, previous research on the commonly shown causes of Euroscepticism within the EU is discussed to demonstrate what additional variables should be included in the statistical analysis of the thesis, with a "null-hypothesis" being presented in relation to the research question and the previous research presented. Thirdly, the method, the statistical models and the material are presented and analysed critically. Fourthly, the results of the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions of the two selected datasets, alongside complimentary t-test analyses of the mean value of *Euroscepticism* across the different datasets, in relation to the hypotheses testing the independent variable of the type of region, are presented. Lastly, conclusions are drawn from the results concerning the tested

hypotheses and the research question, with suggestions for future research being presented alongside these conclusions.

The results of this thesis indicated that whilst living at an external border region did not significantly correlate with a change in Euroscepticism after the start of the war in Ukraine, as opposed to living in any other type of region, so were other exciting findings present from the statistical analysis. Euroscepticism levels *did* indicate to decrease to a lesser, but significant amount, across the entire sample used after the war and in the regions not at the external border. The findings additionally suggest that some important factors, such as *soft* identity-based factors, *hard* economy-based factors and *political* factors, might have altered how and to what degree they correlate with Euroscepticism after the start of the war, meaning that Russia's invasion of Ukraine *might* have altered how Euroscepticism is shaped in individuals in the border-region countries.

## 2 Regional, border-based and identity-theories: hypothesis formulation concerning the contextual factors connecting the war in Ukraine to Euroscepticism

### 2.1 Borders: *why* they matter when Euroscepticism is shaped

Bürkner (2020, p. 545), when researching the frequent and historical shifts of the EU's external and internal borders and the effects these shifts have had on the public opinion of Europeanisation, states that “...border regions serve as culturally and politically seismographic zones. They visualise the various antagonisms related to Europeanisation, and they assemble several negative consequences that crises and shifting borders have on social communities, economic stability and political reorientation.”. Bürkner (2020, p. 561) additionally states that the effects of crises in border regions in comparison to *core* regions, particularly regarding sudden influxes of refugee migration, have the power to *destroy* notions of safe and peaceful borders within the EU for the populations at the borders and substantially shapes the border residents' opinions on the *ostensibly immature* governance of the EU. The border region residents are, thus, argued to be inherently more sensitive to change at their country's borders than those not living in close proximity to the borders.

The EU's border regions, both internal and external, not only serve as symbols for “state sovereignty”, “cultural differences”, and “socio-economic differences” between the bordering countries but now, in a time of increasing border destabilisation, the older roles of borders are returning in different forms. This includes factors such as their representation of state power and as platforms for adverse political attitudes towards the openness of the EU's borders (Bürkner, 2020, p. 546). This sentiment is backed by Kuhn (2011, p. 95), stating that the EU's borders are where the consequences of further European integration are felt the most, as its

citizens are in closer direct contact with the effects of the EU's cosmopolitan border policies. The citizens of the EU's border regions experience the consequences of European integration on a "daily basis" through closer interactions with the neighbouring country across the border, with the border regions being described as the laboratories of "social integration" in Europe, with both the "negative" and "positive" effects of a Europe growing being experienced more vividly (Dürschmidt, 2006, p.259). Lubbers & Scheepers (2005, p. 238-239) furthermore emphasise the importance of regional contexts behind Euroscepticism, suggesting that they should command more consideration than they previously had been in the field of Euroscepticism research.

Scott (2015, p. 29) poses that the EU's external borders "*lie at the intersection between the EU's ambitions for influence, acceptance and stability on the one hand, and its territorial anxieties on the other*", signalling the stark contrasts that exist of the meaning of the EU's external borders. The external borders might thus be beacons for "acceptance" and "stability" for those living in them or signal "territorial anxieties" and hostilities between the inhabitants of the EU's external border regions and those living across from them. Given the extreme degrees of destabilisation, change and refugee immigration the EU external border regions in Ukraine have seen after the start of the war, one could logically assume that this, in turn, has influenced how the individuals in these regions view the EU and European integration.

These findings carry forward the main sentiments of this thesis, which are that borders, and the regions in proximity to them, *matter* concerning shaping Euroscepticism. Border regions are demonstrated to being extra sensitive to any sudden change of security and stability that take place near them, leading to more pronounced shifts in the levels of Euroscepticism in the individuals living closer to these suddenly "unstable" borders. Given that these external border regions, and the individuals living in them, can be argued to be perceived as being the most severely impacted by a sudden and large influx of refugees and border instability, seemingly little research covering Euroscepticism in them exists. Some ambiguity still remains if these uncertainties bring the border-regions residents closer to the EU, or pushes them further away from the European project, leading to rejection of further European integration (Bürkner, 2020; Durand et al., 2020).

## 2.2 Border regions: *how* might they shape Euroscepticism during crisis?

What the consequences of living at a border region entail in relation to how an individual views European integration and what the actual purpose of a border should be garners varying explanations from scholars' research on Euroscepticism. Furthermore, different types of borders, such as internal and external borders, might be seen to serve different purposes (Durand et al., 2020, p. 588).

Some research suggests that individuals at the border regions of the EU will tend to be less Eurosceptic than those living in the central, or the "core", regions of the EU member states, as they, to a more considerable degree, can benefit from the positive aspects of open border travel and free market system, that EU membership brings with it (Gabel, 1998a; Kohli, 2000; McLaren, 2002; Díez Medrano, 2003; Dürrschmidt, 2006; Kuhn, 2011).

A "transnational" identity, as Kuhn (2011, p. 106-108) describes it, has often been shown to play a deciding role in how an individual perceives the EU. These "transnational" identities have furthermore been suggested to be more prevalent in some of the EU's borders, which suggests that these border regions are less Eurosceptic than their corresponding *core* region counterparts within a country (Gabel, 1998a; McLaren, 2002; Díez Medrano, 2003; Kuhn, 2011; Durand et al., 2020). It is furthermore suggested that a greater level of communication and interaction between two border regions enhances the bonds between two communities and increases the support for supranational governance and institutions, which in this instance, would be support for the supranational EU institutions of the EU (Kuhn, 2011, p.111-112).

It is additionally argued that the daily connections fostered by the proximity of two border populations from two different member states decrease the prejudices that might emerge between them. If close daily connections exist between them, it might, in turn, increase support for the European project and enhances the possibility of shared identities between different border regions, leading to inherently less Eurosceptic individuals in the external border regions as compared to those not living at the external border regions, as greater cultural understating and acceptance exists, even during border insecurity and crisis (De Voogd, 2014; Durand et al., 2020, p. 591).

Klatt (2020, p. 582), in their research that focuses on the internal borders between Germany and Denmark during the 2015 refugee crisis adds that a stronger fear of cross-border threats is “sensed” within the border regions. This is explained by border region citizens being perceived as more exposed to them because of their “periphery” to these threats. Klatt (2020, p.582) furthermore emphasises that this could lead to a fear of the “other”, a rejection of the cosmopolitan ideals of diversity synonymous with the EU, whilst blaming the EU for the perceived adverse effects of open borders, whilst demanding a re-bordering between border regions. Klatt (2020, p.576-578, 582) additionally suggests that a lot of the Euroscepticism and fear of the de-bordering of the EU’s internal borders are connected to the fear of cross-border crime, and Eastern and competition from cheaper Central and Eastern European labour, which immigration from Ukraine *could* be synonymous with for the EU external border region residents (Jóźwiak & Piechowska, 2017; Jaroszewicz, 2018; Gruszczak, 2022).

Durand et al. (2020, p.603–604) additionally adds that “mistrust” of the neighbouring regions, or xenophobia, is more frequently found in some of the bordering regions, as the cross-border co-operations are by some viewed as “destabilising” the economy, due to the perceived scarcity of employment. Often, the experienced perception of spikes of immigration and foreigners in individuals’ proximity leads to perceived spikes in crime, despite these spikes not always being “real” (Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2007; Schoene, 2019).

De Vogd (2014, p.27–28) additionally suggests that the fears described by Klatt (2020) are differently felt by the more cosmopolitan and highly educated elites living at the border regions, who can benefit more quickly from open borders and the opportunities they bring. The poorer and often less educated individuals, who are more nationalist and community-oriented, often reject the values that the EU tends to uphold and often reject the consequences that the EU’s de-bordering brings with it. The fear of immigration being prevalent and the perceived adverse effects of increased immigration (such as fewer jobs available to the locals) are projected to blame the EU (Durand et al., 2020).

The EU, primarily through the assigned tasks of its border management agency, Frontex, an EU agency that set out to protect the external borders of the EU and is the EU’s tool for “integrated border management”, closely co-operates with member state border control (Kalkman, 2020, p. 168-169). Furthermore, Frontex states its mission is to “*ensure safe and*

*well-functioning external borders providing security*” (Kalkman, 2020, p. 165). It is therefore argued that the EU is heavily tasked with protecting the EU’s external and, in turn, nation states external borders (Scott et al., 2018). How well the protection of the EU’s external borders is perceived during a refugee crisis, for example, can, in turn thus, be expected to have a direct effect on how individuals shape their opinions of the EU, especially if they live closer to and are more directly affected by how well the EU (through Frontex) is perceived to protect them (Bürkner, 2020; Klatt, 2020).

The EU’s heavy involvement in conflict, such as the 2014 Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, has additionally been argued to put the belief in solid and safe European borders into question. Due to the massive scale of Russia’s war in Ukraine and its consequences to EU-wide security, it might furthermore be expected that this argument holds more accurate than ever at the EU’s external border regions, with individuals there might perceiving themselves as being extra vulnerable, with the EU not doing quite enough to protect its borders (Klatt, 2020; Szicherle & Karaz, 2022).

The findings from scholars on Euroscepticism at the border regions demonstrate the disagreements and uncertainties that remain on how border-region residents *may* or *may not* react to sudden border instability and refugee influxes. However, on thing that these findings have in common is that borders and the contextualities behind them are argued to *matter* when it comes to shaping Eurosceptic opinions. There is, however, no widely agreed opinion as to what direction these Eurosceptic tendencies are shaped towards, that being towards an *increase* or *decrease* in Euroscepticism. In the next sub-chapters, arguments are presented on *how* Euroscepticism might be shaped in the EU’s external border regions in relation to the war in Ukraine, given the contextualities of the war, identity-based bonds between Ukraine and the external-border regions, alongside the previous research presented on border-based Euroscepticism, with the *two* main *hypotheses* being proposed.



## 2.3 Group and identity-theories: one of the pathways to explaining Euroscepticism at the external border regions?

The behaviour of rejecting and showing “hate” towards an “out-group” that is perceived to threaten your own “in-group” and the values, norms and culture of this that exist within this “in-group” has been extensively studied within what is called “social identity theory” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory has subsequently been interlinked with theories on the causes of Euroscepticism and a vast array of studies of Europe and the EU (see, for example, Scheepers et al., 2002; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2007; Van Klingeren et al., 2013). It is proposed that individuals within an “in-group” fundamentally need to perceive themselves as superior to any “out-group” that is ethnically different from themselves. In this context, individuals tend to apply positive characteristics to their own “in-group” members whilst negatively valuing and perceiving the “out-groups”, as individuals often show a strong desire to “belong” to a social group or institution, which for example, could be a local homogenous community. Immigrants, are thus, in some instances, perceived as being a threat to the “in-group” as they bring uncertainty to their communities (Van Klingeren et al., 2013, p. 693-994).

Gruszczak (2022), when researching Polish attitudes towards immigration and its immigration policy after the 2015 refugee crisis, argues that Polish society has been marked with an attitude of “parochialism” concerning immigrants arriving in the EU from the Middle East and Africa. In this instance, the immigrants were viewed as the “others”, with the parochial behaviours of Polish society, promoting a rejection of them. *Parochialism* in this context can be defined as attitudes, be that individual or collective, towards a social reality “*which structures collective behaviour around local, indigenous, and inner-circle affairs*” (Gruszczak, 2022, p.110). Parochial cooperation is further characterised by “in-group love”, the willingness to act in a sometimes-self-sacrificing manner and offer extended trust to those who are in your social group or are similar to it (De Dreu et al., 2014, p.32). Choi & Bowles (2007, p. 636) define *parochialism* as “*hostility toward individuals not of one’s own ethnic, racial, or other group*”. This combination of parochialism and altruistic behaviours existing in homogenous local societies, or “parochial altruism”, creates a reluctance towards accepting the threatening “other” immigrants that might take job opportunities or welfare away from your “in-group” members (Choi & Bowles, 2007; Gruszczak, 2022).

However, Gruszczak (2022) points out that most immigrants arriving in Poland are from neighbouring countries, predominantly Ukraine, even long before the widespread conflicts between Russia and Ukraine took a more violent turn in 2014. These immigrants from Ukraine come to Poland to work and study, often quickly adapting to Polish society (Morariu, 2022; Gruszczak, 2022). Furthermore, a relatively strong bond seems to exist between Poland and Ukraine, with “pro-Ukraine” sentiments being very prominently pushed from the start of the 2014 Crimean crisis due to this close contact between the citizens of the two countries and their historical ties (Józwiak & Piechowska, 2017; Gruszczak, 2022; Kopec, 2022). Furthermore, the high levels of Ukrainian immigrants arriving in Poland have been demonstrated to lead to visibly positive effects on the Polish economy and labour market, which furthermore cements the positive ties between Poland and Ukraine beyond that of purely cultural ties (Strzelecki et al., 2021).

Hungary, additionally, began to attract Ukrainian labour migrants through methods of granting Hungarian citizenship to those who felt “ethnically bound” to Hungary. As of 2018, roughly 100 000 Ukrainians, mostly hailing from the Transcarpathia region, a region with a large demographic of Ukrainians of Hungarian descent hail from, had migrated to Hungary, partly because of this strategy (Makoukh, 2017; Jaroszewicz, 2018, p-15-16). Hungary has furthermore pushed for the protection of its minorities in Ukraine after criticisms being raised against Ukraine because of it “limiting” the teaching of minority languages within schools back in 2017, with a “*special bond*” being argued to exist between Hungary and its ethnic minorities living across the borders (Embassy of Hungary in Washington, 2021).

Furthermore, immigrants from neighbouring countries, such as Ukraine, face a relatively mild and quick rite of passage to be accepted in society. This is due to them belonging to the same ethnolinguistic groups, sharing a common religion in Christianity, and having similar customs and habits as those at the border regions countries, such as Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia (Gruszczak, 2022, p. 113-114; Kopec, 2022). Gruszczak (2022, p. 113) additionally adds that when immigrants adjust to local conditions “*through the cultural and ethnolinguistic “goodness to fit”*”, or framed differently, through “*parochial adjustment*”, it seemingly depoliticises the issue of migration almost completely. Mau et al. (2008, p.7) additionally refer to the EU model as similar to the cosmopolitan models. However, the difference is that the cosmopolitan models expand their scope across European borders. Europeans are often shown

to draw a line between fellow Europeans and the “others” who are deemed untrustworthy and too different from themselves.

Ukrainians, however, are “European”, meaning that they may be considered as being within the European “in-group”, meaning that standing with Ukraine (and the EU) against Russia would be perceived as the “right thing” to do, especially if you are within closer proximity of the war and have more direct contact with the Ukrainian refugees. This, in turn, might mean that a sudden increase in refugee immigration at the external borders, such as with Ukraine, is not linked to the “negative” aspects of the EU. The line separating the “in-groups” from the “out-groups” in the case of the Ukrainian refugees and the external border-region populations might thus be muddled or almost non-existent to an even greater extent than for those living further away from regions bordering Ukraine.

## 2.4 The media and cross-border co-operations: the extra push towards “EU-phoric” support for the EU and Ukraine within the external border regions?

Support remains high for Ukraine, and so do the negative sentiments towards Russia’s and Putin’s involvement in the war in the border region countries of Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Additionally, Poland stands out as the border-region country where the citizens reportedly show the highest support for Ukraine, with Poland being the country out of the four that has accepted the highest number of Ukrainian refugees by some margin. This furthermore interlinks with the bond Poland has been demonstrated to have with Ukraine (Józwiak & Piechowska, 2017; Gruszczak, 2022; Kopec, 2022). Hungary, Romania and Slovakia are subsequently within the top five countries that have accepted the most refugees per capita in the EU (European Parliament, 2022a; European Parliament, 2022b; European Parliament, 2022c; European Parliament, 2022d; European Parliament, 2022e).

The sentiments of “EU-phoria”, “pro-west” and “anti-Russia” portrayed in the media during the Donetsk and Crimea conflicts of 2014 (Barthel & Bürkner, 2019; Bürkner, 2020, p. 557-558) have additionally been maintained since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February of

2022. The high visibility and positive light being shined on the EU's somewhat unexpected "*cohesiveness*" in its sanctions against Russia, amongst other things, has seemingly rallied Western media and, in turn, many of the EU's citizens, furthermore behind the EU's cause in the conflict (Parizek, 2023, p. 18, 30-33, 38).

This "EU-phoria" at the EU's borders has furthermore been promoted by the cross-border cooperation programmes initiated by the Commission (Scott, 2015; Bürkner, 2020). These EU-based promotions of cross-border cooperation are primarily operationalised through the "European Cross-Border cooperation" (also known as "Interreg A"), which in turn is composed of a total of 73 cross-border programs. The programs aim, amongst other things, to boost economic development, retain "*the brains*" of the border regions and improve employment and education capabilities across borders often "*scarred*" by the European wars and previous hostility (European Commission, 2022d).

Of these 73 cross-border programs, 24 focus on external border cooperation, with initiatives within the Interreg VI-A programmes existing for the regions in Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Poland that border with Ukraine, respectively (European Commission, 2022d). These programmes set out to encourage EU integration, cohesion and EU enlargement policy between the EU's external border regions and the border regions of Ukraine, to stimulate economic growth and cohesion and support the growth and acceptance of multiculturalism and culture between the regions, amongst other things (European Commission, 2022d; Interreg, 2022a; Interreg, 2022b). This, in turn, means that Romania and Slovakia, who may not have as close economic and cultural ties as Poland and Hungary have with Ukraine, still participated in close cross-border cooperation with Ukraine even before the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, which may have improved the relations between the external border residents of the EU member states in question and Ukraine

These border cooperation programmes add to the argument made by De Voogd (2014) and Durand et al. (2020). That is, that close cooperation between two border populations decreases the prejudices that exist between the people in both of them, fostering a closer understanding and increasing the bonds that exist. This intimate understanding, fostered by the proximity between those living in the external border regions and Ukraine, could, in turn, mean that the individuals in the EU's external border regions will feel more connected to the Ukrainian cause due to the war. The "*good European*" morality of supporting "*the West*", the EU and the

neighbouring European Ukraine in its quest to defend Europe against the immoral and aggressive Russia of Putin might push for more support towards the EU, especially for those living by the EU's external borders on Ukraine, with their closer proximity to the conflict and more prominent contact with the Ukrainian refugees.

Kuhn (2011, p.113) furthermore suggests that cross-border interaction between people from different countries often develops support for supranational institutions, such as the EU, and alongside that, “*a sense of community*” between the two border regions. This possible existing “*sense of community*” between the people of Ukraine and the people living in the EU's external border regions next to Ukraine could add the argument to the statement that those living in the EU's external borders regions became less Eurosceptic than those who do not after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Given the positive light that the EU has been put in as a result of their cohesive and generally agreeable actions, the greater sensitivity to crisis and immigration influxes argued to be experienced by those living at external border regions, as compared to those who do not (Kuhn, 2011; Schoene, 2019; Bürkner, 2020), the cross-border cooperation programmes between Ukraine and the external border regions of the EU, the existing previous research suggesting that those living in border regions are inherently less Eurosceptic, as they tend to sympathise with their cross-border neighbours (Gabel, 1998a; McLaren, 2002; Díez Medrano, 2003; Kuhn, 2011) and the theories proposed by the theories of parochial and social group theories (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Scheepers et al., 2002; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2007; De Dreu et al., 2014; Gruszczak, 2022), the first following hypotheses of the thesis is proposed:

***H1:** Living in the external EU border regions of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania will be shown to increasingly correlate with lower levels of Euroscepticism in an individual after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in comparison to living in a region not at the EU's external borders.*

## 2.5 The external border regions: a breeding ground for suspicions against refugees and Euroscepticism, intensified after Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

Szicherle & Karaz (2022), when researching public opinion on the refugees from Ukraine in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, found that those living in external border regions next to Ukraine were shown to be less positive towards Ukrainian refugees than those who did not. Szicherle & Karaz (2022, p. 17-19) furthermore concluded that those who saw more refugees passing through, being those living in border regions next to Ukraine, experienced a “*false sense of insecurity*” and more often claimed to have witnessed an increase in criminal activity relating to the influx Ukrainian refugees arriving at the external borders. It could be argued that the blame for this feeling of insecurity might be shifted towards the EU, given the EU's heavy involvement in the and its perceived role as a co-actor in it, and the negative consequences the war has brought with it on the EU, partly due to the EU's actions (Kopec, 2022; Parizek, 2023).

Much support linking negative attitudes towards immigrants and refugees to increasing levels of Euroscepticism exists in research performed on Euroscepticism (see, for example, Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Stockemer, 2017; Schoene, 2019; Stockemer et al., 2020; Downes et al., 2021). The acceptance of refugees, multiculturalism and open borders are synonymous with the core values of the EU, meaning that increased perceived negative experiences with refugees might, in turn, increase negative perceptions of the EU for those these negative experiences are felt by the most (Stockemer et al., 2020, p. 888).

Often, individuals blame the EU when things are perceived as going in the wrong direction in their own countries, meaning they subsequently “*proxy-shift*” the blame from the national government to the EU instead (McLaren, 2007; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). It can thus be asked if the citizens of the EU's “*vulnerable*” external border regions by Ukraine feel that the national governments have held their end of the bargain by delivering security in times of insecurity. If not, the blame might be shifted towards the EU. This need for security might be extra prominent for individuals living in the vulnerable external border regions next to Ukraine, as opposed to those who do not, given their proximity to the unsafe border zones (Szicherle & Karaz, 2022).

Durand et al. (2020) and Klatt (2020) point to individuals in border regions being more susceptible to the fears of cross-border crime and developing xenophobic dispositions during times of border crisis and high immigration than those not at the border regions. Additionally, an argument can be made that the cross-border programmes discussed in the previous sub-chapter might instead *harm* the relations between two border regions. This is argued to be due to the citizens in the border regions might instead become more aware of the cultural differences that exist between two border regions and the cross-regional competition that is perceived to exist for employment between the two border-regional residents, especially in the regions where jobs are being “stolen”, such as the EU border regions (Kuhn, 2011; Bürkner, 2020; Gruszczak, 2022; Klatt, 2020).

Additional immigration from Ukraine *could* therefore lead to a perceived fear of cheap labour coming to “*steal*” jobs from the citizens of the most exposed external border regions, alongside an increase in the perceived levels of crime (Józwiak & Piechowska, 2017; Jaroszewicz, 2018; Klatt, 2020; Gruszczak, 2022; Szicherle & Karaz, 2022).

Given the suggested susceptibility to adopt “*anti-EU*” values amongst border regions residents during times of insecurity and immigration influxes, alongside the research conducted by Szicherle & Karaz (2022) indicating that the inhabitants of the external border regions exhibit more negative perceptions towards the Ukrainian refugees and experience more “insecurity” compared to those not living at the external borders, a counter-hypotheses to “*H1*” is formalised as follows:

*H2: Living in the external EU border regions of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania will be shown to increasingly correlate with higher levels of Euroscepticism in an individual after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, in comparison to living in a region not at the EU’s external borders.*



### 3 The *soft*, *hard* and *political* explanatory factors: the backbones of Euroscepticism

The third chapter of this thesis outlines what has previously been proven to be the most consistent factors contributing to Euroscepticism and dispositions towards European integration within the EU member states. The previous research on the most agreed-upon factors of Euroscepticism helps determine what types of independent control variables should be included and considered in the regressions performed in this thesis. The previous research furthermore offers greater insight into what is previously known about Euroscepticism, what its causes are and how these commonly agreed upon factors might relate to the hypothesised changes in Euroscepticism that are proposed to occur after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In the last part of this third chapter, a "*null-hypothesis*" is demonstrated, where the arguments as to why Euroscepticism levels might *not* have been significantly affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine are presented.

Most, if not all, authors admit that Euroscepticism is a multifaceted subject that is difficult to generalize (Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005; Schoene, 2019; Stockemer et al., 2020). Furthermore, political scientists have heavily categorised and made distinctions between the different "types" of Euroscepticism that are said to be present in individuals. Ejrnaes & Jensen (2019) explored the most notable models used when identifying Euroscepticism, utilising a multilevel model with biennial data from the European Social Survey spanning from 2004-2014. These models included the utilitarian (economic factors), identity-based (norm and value-based factors), reference (performance of political establishments), cue-taking (heuristic cue-taking from party politics) and signalling factors (judging the performance of the EU based on the national governments' perceived performance). The final three factors (reference, cue-taking and signalling) are somewhat similar and can all be considered "political" factors.



Taggart & Szczerbiak (2002, p. 3-4) furthermore distinguishes between “*hard*” Euroscepticism, which is classified as an “outright rejection” of the entire European project, and “*soft*” Euroscepticism, which distinguishes itself as “*a contingent or qualified opposition to European integration*”, and not an outright rejection of the entire European project. The latter of the two is, however, the more common of the two classifications. Van Klingeren et al. (2013, p. 689–690), when comparing the effect of identity-based factors contra utilitarian factors to Euroscepticism through the 90s and early 00s, additionally distinguishes between “*soft*” factors of Euroscepticism, which are cultural and identity-driven factors, and “*hard*” factors, which are purely economic and utilitarian. Additionally, “political” factors, such as an individual’s “*left/right*” political placement, trust in the national government and political institutions and the overall feeling of political apathy, have been shown to play an essential role in shaping an individual’s levels of Euroscepticism (Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Magni, 2017; Schoene, 2019; Bürkner, 2020).

To keep it simple, the method of dividing factors linked with Euroscepticism into “*soft*”, “*hard*”, and “*political*” factors is used when demonstrating what the most prominent research on Euroscepticism has shown.

### 3.1 Soft Factors

The so-called “soft” factors, such as national identity, cultural identity and “European” identity, have gained significant traction in the research on Euroscepticism. Previous research finds that an individual’s own perceived “identity”, be that its national identity, identity within a cultural grouping or “European” identity, are amongst the, if not the most, significant predictors for Euroscepticism amongst individuals (McLaren, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Van Klingeren et al., 2013; Schoene, 2019). Much of the research focused on regional and internal-border-based Euroscepticism reach the same conclusions as well, with the inherently identity-based dispositions and cultural factors seemingly correlating the most with an individual’s levels of Euroscepticism (Kuhn, 2011; Schoene, 2019; Durand et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Bürkner (2020, p. 559-560) links Euroscepticism, particularly in the border regions, to the feelings of collective negligence of cultural identities, which may arise through

open borders and an available mixture of cultures. Schoene (2019, p. 360-362), when researching the urban/rural divide of opinions towards European integration, additionally finds that urbanisation plays a role in shaping individuals' opinions towards European integration, but that fundamental and identity-based values play the most prominent role in shaping the opinions of the EU amongst individuals.

Additionally, the fear, or rejection, of the “out-groups”, those who are different from your own “in-group” societies, in this context immigrants, is argued to be a driving force for an increase in Eurosceptic tendencies amongst individuals (Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). This additionally relates to theories of identity and parochialistic behaviours presented in *sub-chapter 2.3* of this thesis, and the identity-based “connection” external border regions residents in the EU *might* feel towards the “in-group” Ukrainians (Gruszczak, 2022). Hooghe & Marks (2009, p.13-14) finds that exclusively national identity plays a significant role in increasing negative dispositions against the EU, as it is often perceived that one's national identities are incompatible with that of a common European identity, which thus leads to the rejection further European integration. A strong national identity, or “pride” in your own country, does, in turn, not necessarily indicate that an individual is perceived to be more Eurosceptic if that national identity is not exclusively non-European (Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Hooghe & Marks, 2009).

Given the critical importance that “*soft*” identity-based factors play in how an individual perceives the EU, several types of identity connections within an individual are controlled for and analysed in the regression models presented.

## 3.2 Hard factors

Much of the earlier research on Euroscepticism was heavily focused on economic interests, or in other words, “*hard*” factors, given that the EU, in its essence, was, and still is, an economic cooperation with market integration at its core (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Individuals, in line with this utilitarian theoretical thinking, “*assess the gains of the Europeanisation process through a cost-benefit analysis*” (Durand et al., 2020, p. 591). The “winners” and “losers” of further European integration are often pointed out as essential determinants of an increase in Euroscepticism. The “winners” are presented as the wealthier and more educated individuals,

being able to capitalise on the liberalisation of the market, whilst the “losers” are the poorer and lesser educated manual labourers who struggled to adapt to the furthering integration of the European market (Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Gabel, 1998b; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000; Tucker et al., 2002; Kriesi et al., 2006).

Furthermore, a distinction is often made between “egotropic” and “sociotropic” utilitarian factors. The “egotropic” factors are an individual’s economic situation and interests, whilst “sociotropic” factors are the individual’s perception of their countries or communities’ economic interests (Anderson, 2000; Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Boomgaarden et al., 2011).

Both egotropic and sociotropic factors have been shown to matter when studying Euroscepticism. However, sociotropic factors have often been shown to outperform their egotropic counterparts, meaning that the country’s national economy is often put at the forefront when an individual in an EU member state judges the performance of the EU (Anderson, 2000; Garry & Tilley, 2009; Van Klingeren et al., 2013). Individuals often tend to vote with what they believe to be their own countries’ economies in mind and not necessarily their own (Anderson, 2000; Tucker, 2006; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2007). However, Lewis-Beck & Paldam (2000) propose that it is often seemingly dependent on the country in question if individuals tend to vote more utilitarian sociotropic or egotropic, meaning that the same might also hold concerning Euroscepticism.

Furthermore, previous research on utilitarian factors in connection to Euroscepticism indicates that the more poorly an individual deems their country’s economic prospects to be, the more Eurosceptic they, in turn, are, as the blame for the country’s perceived poor economic performance is shifted towards the EU (Hooghe & Marks, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2005).

Sánchez-Cuenca’s (2000) research on popular support for European integration amongst the current member states argues that a perceived lower economic performance in a member state leads to a lower believed transaction cost to transfer more power from the national government to the supranational EU. Furthermore, Christin (2005 p.39-40), when researching attitudes towards the EU in the Central and Eastern European EU member states throughout the 90’s accession process, echoes the sentiment of Sánchez-Cuenca (2000). Despite the different findings between Sánchez-Cuenca’s (2000) and Christin (2005), contra by Hooghe & Marks

(2004) and Hooghe & Marks (2005), so is the common denominator that the perception that individuals have of their national economy *matter* when Eurosceptic opinions are shaped.

Given the importance that both sociotropic and egotropic factors are shown to play in shaping Eurosceptic tendencies, both “*hard*” factors are controlled for in the regressions. The “*hard*” factors could additionally be argued to be extra important to control for in the context of the war in Ukraine due to the adverse economic effects the war has had on the EU and its citizens (Gheorghe, 2022; Orhan, 2022; Arce et al., 2023).

### 3.3 Political factors

Often, individuals’ radical political dispositions have been shown to negatively affect their opinions of the EU. The far left has historically been critical towards the EU’s seemingly inherently capitalistic interests and its “neoliberal” tendencies and tends to lean on mobilising economic anxieties about the functioning of the European project. The far right, on the other hand, shines the spotlight on the cultural threat that the EU brings with it through increased immigration and the perceived forced European integration through new legislation that is deemed to neglect national and local interests, which member states are forced to comply with (Taggart, 1998; De Vries & Edwards, 2009; Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Werts et al., 2012; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Ramiro, 2016; Stockemer, 2017; Bürkner, 2020).

Additionally, researchers have indicated that a feeling of powerlessness, political indifference, or, differently put differently, political “*apathy*” can play an essential role in shaping Eurosceptic tendencies. The feeling that your voice does not matter in national politics or within the EU or that you *do not care* may, in turn, may lead to more negative opinions of the European project (Magni, 2017; Bürkner, 2020). These feelings of neglect from the EU, which often coincide with similar feelings towards the national governments, lead to anger, uncertainty and negative dispositions towards the EU and European integration (Fanoulis & Guerra, 2017; Guerra, 2020).

Previous research has additionally indicated that individuals often judge the EU directly on how well they perceive the national government is performing. This is due to individuals often tending to blame the perceived wrongdoings of the government on the EU, given the common

lack of knowledge of what the EU does (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). Hooghe & Marks (2007, p. 122-124) state that citizens tend to extend their allegiances from their national governments to the EU when the national governments *can* deliver what is expected of them. However, this extended allegiance, or “*double allegiance*” to the national government and the EU, runs dry when the national governments no longer deliver “*security*” to their citizens. Hooghe & Marks (2007, p. 124) accordingly states that Euroscepticism is “*the price the EU pays when governments fail to fulfil their side of the bargain*”.

McLaren (2007, p. 249) finds that individual attitudes towards national institutions and government serve as a “*proxy*” for attitudes towards the EU and its institutions, which coincides with Hooghe & Marks (2007) demonstrating that the EU is just simply not most individual’s forefront minds. Schoene (2019) additionally found that satisfaction with national institutions directly translates into higher support for the EU when researching the causes of Euroscepticism.

The perceived important political factors are controlled for and kept “constant” in relation to an individual’s levels of Euroscepticism in the regressions being presented in this thesis to present more robust results on *if* and *how* border proximity correlates with individual Euroscepticism levels after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

### 3.4 Euroscepticism: a static phenomenon, even in crisis?

As Hobolt & De Vries (2016, p. 426) put it, we already know *who* tends to be more positive towards further European integration. Although there is no universally accepted agreement amongst all scholars as to how all factors researched affect an individual’s support for the EU, so has research often shown to indicate that it is those who are educated, well-off financially, have a European, or multiple intertwining identities and support the non-extreme political mainstream that tends to stand in support of the EU. These factors have seemingly remained relatively constant over the years, with “soft” identity-based factors that are difficult to alter, often being the strongest explanatory to how one views the EU (Carey, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Hobolt & De Vries, 2011; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Ejnaes & Jensen, 2019; Schoene, 2019).

Stockemer et al. (2020), when researching the long-term changes in the levels of Euroscepticism in connection to the 2015 refugee crisis, by looking at the period before (2012), during (2015) and after the peak of the crisis (2016), noted that the *soft*, *hard* and *political* factors remained relatively constant, even during times of crisis, and so did the actual levels of Euroscepticism in the EU across the entire period studied. This was *despite* the high influxes of refugees and perceived border insecurities experienced during the 2015 refugee crisis. The findings by Stockemer et al. (2020) *could* mean that individuals seem to become neither less nor more Eurosceptic after a border-related crisis, meaning that Euroscepticism levels and how various factors play a role in shaping Euroscepticism are rather constant.

It could perhaps then be hypothesised that the same will be the case even as a result of Russia's war in Ukraine, as it would seem unlikely that most individuals would fundamentally change their identities and beliefs during such a short time span as the one being studied in this thesis, *even* if they live in the more exposed external border regions. Therefore a "*null-hypotheses*" which contradicts the assumptions made in this thesis can be formalised. This "*null-hypotheses*", therefore, predicts *no* visible changes in the Euroscepticism levels, nor any changes in how important independent *factors* correlate with Euroscepticism after the start of the war in Ukraine as opposed to before the war had started. It, therefore, predicts that the Euroscepticism levels and the factors correlating Euroscepticism are held *constant* across both time frames. The "*null-hypotheses*" reads as follows:

***H0:*** *Perceived levels of Euroscepticism and the direction in which notable factors are shown to correlate with Euroscepticism will remain unchanged across both timeframes and in all of the region-types studied.*

## 4 Method

This thesis employs a quantitative method intending to distinguish inference on how the war in Ukraine might have influenced the levels of Euroscepticism in an individual who lives in an external border region, as opposed to one living in any other type of region. The choice to utilise a quantitative method, as opposed qualitative one, is that using more cases often leads to more concrete and generalisable answers (John, 2018, p. 267-270).

It is worth noting, however, that by utilising a quantitative approach and focusing on pure numerical values and survey questions with generalised descriptions of what each value entails, the nuances behind the subject, in this case, *perceived Euroscepticism in individuals*, are somewhat lost. The different *individual* perspectives of what causes them to be *Eurosceptic* in a thesis designed to capture *individual* causes are not entirely captured, as generalisations are drawn from survey data collected by an interviewer asking standardised questions on behalf of the European Commission (Ragin, 2000; John, 2018, p. 268; Gatto & Panarello, 2022). A qualitative approach *could* have led to a more “holistic” and in-depth understanding of what might lay behind Euroscepticism at an individual level, by the external border regions, and how these causes might relate to the war in Ukraine. In this scenario, this “in-depth” understanding could be achieved by focusing on a smaller group of cases more intimately by conducting primary research on the subjects (Vromen, 2018, p. 251-261).

However, despite gaining an added depth and nuance to what might (or might not have) caused a rise in Euroscepticism amongst individuals living at border regions after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine began, if primary research had been conducted, so would these results have been difficult to generalise. Additionally, collecting data of this kind would most likely be gruelling and time-consuming work, which perhaps would require knowledge of the local languages, to gain better quality data from the subjects being interviewed (Vromen, 2018, p. 251-261). A quantitative approach instead offers more generalisable and “concrete” results upon which further research can more easily build, which is one of the main goals of this thesis.

## 4.1 Choice of statistical models and their limitations

This thesis uses a linear multivariate OLS regression as its primary statistical model of choice. Additionally, independent samples t-tests are used to demonstrate if Euroscepticism levels appear to have *significantly* changed before the start of the war and after in the external border regions, the regions not at the external borders and across the entire sample used. IBM SPSS Statistics (version 29.0.0.0) was used to perform the OLS regressions, whilst Microsoft Excel for Mac (version 16.69) was used to perform the t-tests, with the data used in Excel being extracted from the IBM SPSS “*sav.*” data files.

These t-tests cannot control for other variables and keep them constant as the OLS regressions can. However, they will help add extra nuances and determine if a significant difference in the mean of the dependent variable measuring Euroscepticism is visible across the two datasets used (Field, 2009, p. 316-317, 334-341). Equal variance is assumed across both sample sets, as they are collected from the same populations using the same sampling methods. Additionally, slight positive skewness is visible in the dependent variable measuring Euroscepticism across both datasets. However, these values are below, or just slightly below or around the cut-off point for what would be considered “skewed data” (Hair Jr et al., 1998)<sup>1</sup>. The relatively large sample sizes used from the datasets, and the seemingly similar distributions of the Euroscepticism variable across both datasets, could also help mitigate the issues of slight non-normality in the data distribution, due to assumptions of the *Central Limit Theorem* possibly being applicable (Frost, 2022). The data, despite not being *perfectly* normally distributed, is assumed to be normally distributed enough, given the factors mentioned above.

Other types of statistical models were also considered, like ordinal logistic regression. However, comparing logistic model coefficients over periods of time or between different groups is a contested and complicated subject matter. This is, amongst other things, due to how

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<sup>1</sup> See *table 1* for statistics on index distributions.



logistic estimates are affected by omitted variables, even when they are not related to the independent variables included in the model and with there being no clear way to compare the unobserved variation that may exist between two time periods (Mood, 2009; Holm et al., 2014). Furthermore, Euroscepticism is a multifaceted concept, difficult to define by only one single factor, as pointed out by many scholars (see, for example, Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005; Schoene, 2019; Stockemer et al., 2020). Using an index that measures Euroscepticism in a “continuous” manner to account for the multidimensionality of the concept would not have been feasible nor reasonable in logistic regression.

There is, furthermore, some debate on whether to distinguish ordinal independent variables as continuous or not in OLS regressions. Often, when the variable is a Likert-type item (i.e., the values for the variable are, for example, “*Very good*” to “*Very bad*”), it may be considered reasonable to treat them as continuous when used as an independent variable (Williams, 2021). However, it is essential to point out that when doing this, the assumption is made that the categories are equally spaced between each other, which may be difficult to claim due to it being hard to know *exactly* how much an individual differentiates between “*very good*” and “*very bad*”.

In this thesis, the independent ordinal variables are treated the same as nominal variables, with each value in the ordinal Likert items being recoded into dummies. The reason behind this is that the ordinal values in the variables used are difficult to fully view as being equally spaced between each other by themselves, with four different languages being used to describe them by interviewers (Polish, Hungarian, Slovakian and Romanian) during the data collection and different subjective opinions being shaped for each value in the ordinal variables by each individual. A greater understanding will additionally be gained of how each different value correlates with Euroscepticism by dummy-coding them. Dummy coding the independent ordinal variables will also offer a more nuanced and precise comparison of the Standardised Beta Coefficients ( $\beta^*$ ) between the results of the two datasets. Coding the independent ordinal variables into dummies further created a better model fit than when they were treated as continuous when the two approaches were compared.

It is essential to point out that the data used is cross-sectional from two different periods. Despite including identically framed variables and the same sampling methods, so are different individuals studied across the two samples. Because of this, it is simply not possible to draw

any conclusions about causal relationships (Field, 2009; John, 2018). Additionally, reverse causality cannot be completely ruled out with the statistical models used in this thesis, that is that the dependent variable (Euro-scepticism) is what causes an increase in any of the independent covariates, and not the other way around (Gelman & Imbens, 2013; Leszczensky & Wolbring, 2022).

It might be unreasonable to assume that reverse causality is present in the case of the hypotheses testing independent variables controlling for the type of region an individual lives in. However, it could hold more sway in some of the control variables included to increase the robustness of the study, meaning that it is vital to consider the possibility of reverse causality being present when discussing the results of the regression models.

Suppose panel data was available to use for the research question of this thesis that is. In that case, data that covered the same individuals over time, quantitative methods to determine causality linking an individual living at an external border region before and after the war in Ukraine began, and a change in their Euro-scepticism levels might have been possible (John, 2018, p. 280-281; Leszczensky & Wolbring, 2022). However, such data is not available.

A multilevel model approach was additionally considered and arguably would have been a valid approach, given that the two data sets used contain the same *variables* and *groups whilst* using the same sampling methods, despite not being longitudinal. However, the option to use OLS regression models and t-tests was instead chosen, due to its more straightforward interpretation and more presentable nature, whilst in most likelihood reaching very similar, if not the same, conclusions as that of a multilevel approach. A multilevel model additionally would not have solved the problem of being unable to determine causality due to the cross-sectional nature of the data (Field, 2009, p. 209-212, 729-742; John, 2018).

Important variables might have inadvertently been omitted from the analysis, leading to what is commonly known as “omitted variable bias”. In this scenario, the OLS models being run could, in theory, attribute the effects of essential and omitted variables to the variable measuring if an individual is living in an external border region or not, meaning that it is not living in an external border region that correlates with a change in the levels of Euro-scepticism, but something else not included (Hanck et al., 2023). Covariates, such as variables covering “soft”, “hard”, and “political” factors that have previously been proven to correlate with an

individual's levels of Euroscepticism, are included to, as best as possible, avoid omitted variable bias being an issue.

## 5 The material used and its limitations

This thesis utilises cross-sectional data from two waves of the Standard Eurobarometer. The first dataset was collected just before the war in Ukraine broke out in February of 2022, whilst the second was collected a few months after the start of the war. The two datasets contain several identically framed variables that are used in answering the research question and hypotheses posed.

The European Commission collects the Eurobarometer public opinion surveys. The surveys explore public opinion in the EU, and its candidate states within various subject matters (GESIS, 2022a). Each Standard Eurobarometer survey uses the same sampling method, which is a multi-stage and random probability design. The Standard Eurobarometer data survey furthermore sets out to be as representative as possible regarding the proportions of each country's population size and the regional and urban/rural distributions of the real-life populations of the EU member states (GESIS, 2022b). The datasets are extensively used within quantitative research, with many of the papers being cited in this thesis has used data from the Eurobarometer surveys in their Euroscepticism research (see, for example, Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010; Kuhn, 2011; Stockemer et al., 2020; Yeung, 2021)

The first dataset used is the Standard Eurobarometer 96.3, collected between the 18th of January 2022 and the 14th of February 2022. This dataset is thus collected just before Russia invades Ukraine.

The second dataset used is the Standard Eurobarometer 97.5, where the data used was collected between the 17th of June 2022 and the 24th of July 2022. This is thus data from a few months after Russia invaded Ukraine on the 24th of February (Brücker, 2022; Kopec, 2022).

Values denoted “don't know” or “refused to answer” are kept in the variables “*Left-Right placement – recoded 5 cat*”, “*trust in institutions: national government*”, and “*trust in institutions: European Union*”. The “don't know” values not dropped in these three variables are used to indicate political apathy. The rest of the “don't know” or “refuse to answer” values

are dropped, due to them not being perceived as adding any additional context to the results of the regression. This is similarly in line with the logic posed by Kuhn (2011) and Yeung (2021) when opting to drop “don’t know” values from their regressions measuring levels of Euroscepticism.

It is essential to consider *who* collects the data and for what purpose. Eurobarometer data collection has, for example, often been performed to inform in line with upcoming policy decisions. This might slightly skew the results, as there might be a *desirability* to what the requester for the data collection might *want* the results to show to better argue for any policy changes (Gatto & Panarello, 2022). Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous chapter, so are the survey questions translated across several different languages (in this case, four languages: Polish, Slovakian, Hungarian and Romanian), with an interviewer conveying the meaning of each question to the subject. This, in turn, can lead to differences in interpretation in how everyone perceives the question being posed, somewhat putting into question the reliability of the results (John, 2018, p. 267-268; Gatto & Panarello, 2022). However, given the frequency and availability of the Standard Eurobarometer, the vast array of relevant survey questions that can be used to answer the research question and the real-life representativeness that the Standard Eurobarometer samples set out to meet, it is in this scenario deemed the most suitable dataset for the research question posed.

It is additionally important to note that some cases have been lost due to “don’t know” or “refusal” answers, which could influence the results. Due to this, some minor differences in the demographics across the two samples chosen is visible. This loss of cases needs to be considered when assessing the results of the two regressions. The datasets have, however been kept as representative and similar as possible while omitting values in variables that do not bring any additional information to the results.

## 5.1 Variables

### 5.1.1 The dependent variable: the measurement of “Euroscepticism”

The dependent variable of this thesis is set out to measure the concept of “*Euroscepticism*”. As demonstrated in previous literature, Euroscepticism is a multifaceted phenomenon (Taggart, 1998; Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005; Schoene, 2019; Stockemer et al., 2020). However, measuring “Euroscepticism” can be an arbitrary concept, given that individuals will form their own impressions and conclusions on what each value on the survey means to them.

An index is used to measure the concept to capture the multifaceted phenomenon of Euroscepticism more concretely. The index consists of a 0-100 scale that includes five ordinal variables that can be argued to measure the different nuances of Euroscepticism. Individually, the ordinal variables used would be more difficult to classify as “continuous”. However, together in an index, a more nuanced and perhaps “exact” measurement of Euroscepticism is argued to be created that measures the concept in a continuous fashion.

Greenstein (2006, p. 116) argues that one of the main reasons for using an index is when the construct in question being measured is “multidimensional”, which Euroscepticism is widely argued to be. In addition, an index can assist in reducing or cancelling out the measurement errors in the items used, which makes for better measurements of the concept in question (Blampied, 2022).

Using a *not-so-clear-cut* continuous variable as the dependent variable in an OLS regression could be considered within the grey zone of statistics. This is partly because the intervals between the scale values being measured cannot be considered inherently “equal.” (Jamieson, 2004; Carifio & Perla, 2007, Grace-Martin, 2022). Others, however, maintain that an ordinal scale is technically ordered and may be argued to be used as continuous data (Lubkhe & Muthén, 2004). A test consisting of manageable and “real” numeric data is more straightforward to communicate to the reader than the other options when dealing with dependent variables that are not considered inherently continuous. However, drawing

conclusions from the correlations shown in the OLS regressions should be made with caution, especially if the significance levels are shown to be low, as more stringent use of the alpha-levels in the case of using non-obvious continuous variables as the dependant variable in an OLS-regression is recommended when not using inherently continuous variables as the dependant variable (Grace-Martin, 2022).

### 5.1.2 Items used in the index measuring Euroscepticism

The first of the five variables included in the index is the variable “*EU image – positive/negative*”, which is a Likert-type item variable with the value “1” being “very positive” and the value 5 being “very negative”. It can logically be assumed that those whose EU image is “very negative” will, in turn, be more sceptical towards the EU.

The second variable included is the variable “*Attachment to: European Union*” and is a 4-point-Likert-type item, where the value “1” is “very attached” and the value “4” is “not at all attached”. Someone who feels “very attached” to Europe Union would assume to be less Eurosceptic than those who perceive themselves as being less attached.

The third variable in the index is variable “*Trust in institutions: European Union*” and has three values, where the value “1” is “*tend to trust*”, the value “2” is “*tend not to trust*”, and the value “3” is “*don’t know*”. The “*don’t know*” response are kept in the index and used as a value conveying political indifference towards the EU and are placed as a “middle” value when coding the variable into the index used to measure Euroscepticism. Often, the EU institutions have been thought of as lacking accountability among some citizens, leading to more Eurosceptic attitudes towards the EU in those who think that is the case (Carrey, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2007; McLaren, 2007). Therefore, one could assume that those who “*tend not to trust*” the EU institutions will be more Eurosceptic than those who do.

The fourth variable is “*Democracy satisfaction – European Union*”, which is a 4-point-Likert-type item, where the value “1” is “very satisfied” and the value “4” is “not at all satisfied”. The EU has often been quoted as suffering from a perceived “democratic deficit” by some (Hooghe

& Marks, 2005; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Stockemar et al., 2020), with these individuals who perceive the EU as being undemocratic in turn being more Eurosceptic.

The final and fifth variable included in the index measuring Euroscepticism is the variable “My voice counts – in the EU”, which is a 4-point-Likert-type item, where the value “1” is equal to “totally agree” and the value “4” is “totally disagree”. Given that someone who feels that their voice does not matter in the EU would be expected to be more Eurosceptic than someone who feels like their voice is being heard, this variable is included in the index.

The values of the variables used in the index are recoded to fit into a “0-100” scale, with the “least” Eurosceptic values being assigned the value “0” and the most Eurosceptic the value “100”. After the recoding, the variables are computed together, creating an “index” that continuously measures the concept of “Euroscepticism”. This approach, in turn, takes some inspiration from Gijssberts & Dagevos (2007, p. 811-813), who deployed several 0-100 scales consisting of ordinal variables in their regression to gain a better grasp of the concepts measured when researching the multifaceted implications of socio-cultural integration within Dutch neighbourhoods.

The Cronbach’s alpha value is calculated and analysed to account for the internal consistency of the index used in both datasets. The Cronbach’s alpha value for the index in the Standard Eurobarometer 96.3 dataset is = 0.746, whilst the Cronbach’s alpha value for the index in the Standard Eurobarometer dataset 97.5 is = 0.740. Removing any of the five items used in the index would lower the value of Cronbach’s alpha for both datasets, suggesting that it would be best to keep them all in. A Cronbach’s alpha value above 0.8 (but below 0.9) would have been ideal since it would have indicated more robust internal consistency within the variables used. However, a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.7 – 0.8 is generally considered acceptable (Field, 2009, p. 675-680). A factor analysis was furthermore performed on the index items in both datasets to refine the better index<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The Cronbach’s alpha and factor analysis tests may be found in the appendices for both Eurobarometer datasets.



### 5.1.3 Hypotheses testing independent variable

Each Standard Eurobarometer survey data set contains variables that determine the region each respondent is from in their home country. Through these variables, it is possible to determine the approximate proximity that each respondent lives from one of the external borders by Ukraine. External border regions located next to Ukraine in a country-region variable are coded “1”, whilst any other type of region in a country are coded “0”, creating a border-region dummy variable. The dependent variable is, in short, measures if an individual lives in a region in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Romania that borders Ukraine or not.

In the case of Poland, the Eurobarometer survey dataset distinguishes between 16 different regions. Two of the regions are located at the EUs external borders. Those two regions are “*Podkarpackie*” and “*Lubelskie*” and are therefore coded as “1”, whilst the remaining regions are coded as “0”. Poland furthermore borders the Russian territory of Kaliningrad Oblast, which is situated between Poland and Lithuania. However, in the context of this thesis, the regions bordering Kaliningrad Oblast will not be considered regions at the EUs external borders.

The region-determining variable for Hungary contains seven different regions, with the region “*Northern Great Plains (Eszak-Alfold)*” being located at the external borders of Ukraine.

The smaller country of Slovakia is divided into four regions in the Eurobarometer datasets, with the region “*Vychodne Slovensko*” located at the external border.

Romania is, divided into eight separate regions, with regions “*Nord-Vest*” and “*Nord-Est*” located at the external borders<sup>3</sup>.

The datasets used in this thesis contain distinctions between *NUTS 2* region sizes, the second most “specific” region classification made by the EU (GESIS, 2013). This, in turn, makes it slightly more challenging to make *precise* specifications on if a region is at the external border regions or not, as opposed to if the smaller *NUTS 3* regions were specified in the dataset. It is still possible to determine regional proximity to the external border through the regional data

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<sup>3</sup> Descriptive statistics of the original regional variable codings are available in the appendices.

available. However, *NUTS 3* specific data would have offered a dimension of more precise external border proximity in the individuals' studies across the samples.

#### 5.1.4 Control variables

Including control variables makes it possible to draw fairer conclusions on how living at an external border region correlates with Euroscepticism, as well as making it possible to observe how these covariates change after the war, as opposed to before. Including them additionally drastically improves the model fit and helps protect the statistical models from omitted variable bias (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016; Voxco, 2023).

#### 5.1.5 Control variables expected to correlate with Euroscepticism strongly

The first control variables, previously shown to correlate with Euroscepticism, set out to measure the "hard factors". To control for sociotropic factors in the analysis, the variable "*Situation: National economy*" is used. This variable asks respondents to describe how they feel about the current economy in their country. The variable uses a 4-point-Likert-type scale ranging from the value "1", which is "*very good*", to the value "4", denoted "*very bad*".

An individual's perception of their egotropic economic situation is measured through the variable "*Social class – Self assessment (5 CAT)*", which uses five categories where the individuals, on their own accord, decide which economic social class they belong to. This ranges from the value "1", which is described as "*the working class of society*", up to the value "5", which in turn is "*the higher class of society*". It is assumed that an individual who perceives themselves as part of the "working class" would view their economy as worse off than someone who perceives themselves as a part of the "the higher class".

To control for an individual's ties to their own country, the variable "*Attachment to: Country*" is used. The variable is a 4-point Likert item, where the value "1" indicates that an individual is "*very attached*" to their country, whilst the value "4" indicates that they are "*not at all attached*". Additionally, controls are included for an individual's attachment to Europe, which has previously been strongly indicated to affect levels of Euroscepticism (Hooghe &

Marks, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2009), and attachment to city/town/village, which may indicate to affect Euroscepticism in the often parochial societies of the external border region countries and their communities (De Dreu et al., 2014; Gruszczak, 2022). Previous researchers have shown that having multiple types of identities tends to reduce an individual's levels of Euroscepticism, as opposed to just having one single national identity (see, for example, Hooghe & Marks, 2005; Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Kuhn, 2011; Durand et al., 2020). Therefore, controlling for multiple identities in the regressions is reasonable.

The “political” factors are controlled through three variables. As more extreme political dispositions in an individual, be those far-left or far-right, have been indicated to correlate with an increase in Eurosceptic tendencies, an individual's own perceived “left/right” placement is controlled for. The variable controlling for an individual's political placement on the “left/right scale is variable *“Left-Right placement – recoded 5 cat”*, which is a nominal variable recoded to 5 categories from a ten-category variable, where the individual indicates how left or right wing they perceive themselves to be on a 1 (most left-wing value) to 10 (most right-wing value). Furthermore, the value for *“don't know/refuse to answer”* is kept as a value indicating and measuring what could be considered political disinterest or apathy.

The second political factor this thesis will add another dimension in controlling political apathy, or the feeling of political “powerlessness” in your own country. Individuals in the external border regions might additionally feel powerless to the changes happening because of the war in Ukraine in comparison to those not living directly at borders, with the high levels of refugees crossing, with a “false sense of insecurity”, as Szicherle & Karaz (2022), puts it, creeping in. Furthermore, individuals often tend to “blame” the EU for disapproval or feelings of neglect in national politics as national politics and EU politics are often evaluated together (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016, p. 422-423; Guerra, 2020). This is tested through the variable *“My voice counts – in (our country)”*, which is a 4-point Likert-type item, with the value “1” being *“totally agree”* and the value “4” in turn equalling *“totally disagree”*.

The “trust” in, or support, of the national government, is additionally controlled for, as it often, in turn, correlates with the support of the EU (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016). This is controlled for through the variable *“trust in institutions: national government”*, where the value “1” is *“tend to trust”*, value 2 is *“tend not to trust”*, and the value 3 is *“don't*

*know*". The value denoting "*don't know*" in this instance is argued to signal political apathy within the national political scene, so it is kept in the analysis.

Due to the sense of "insecurity" felt at the borders because of the war in Ukraine, alongside the importance the EU plays in border control (Barthel & Bürkner, 2019; Schoene, 2019; Kalkman, 2020; Szicherle & Karaz, 2022), how the idea of additional EU-reinforcements at the external borders is controlled for the regression. This is done through the binary variable "*EU proposals: Reinforce external borders with more guards,*". The value "1" indicates that the individual is "*against*" the proposal, and the value "0" indicates that the individual is "*for*" the proposal.

#### 5.1.6 Other control variables included

Additional controls are done for age, gender, type of community, employment status and the extensiveness of an individual's education.

Age has previously been indicated to play a role in how Eurosceptic an individual may be, with those who are older often being indicated to be more Eurosceptic than those who are younger (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010, p. 800; Stockemer et al., 2020, p. 904).

Gender has shown mixed results on Euroscepticism in previous research, with some studies suggesting that women have shown to be more Eurosceptic than men (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010, p. 800; Stockemer et al., 2020, p. 903), some indicating that gender may play a role in some instances where men tend to be more Eurosceptic (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Stokes, 2016, p. 7) or that it simply does not significantly correlate with Euroscepticism whatsoever (Nielsen, 2016, p. 1185).

The type of community an individual lives in, did not correlate strongly with Euroscepticism compared to other factors tested by Schoene (2019) when researching rural and urban regional Euroscepticism. Mishi (2012), however, argues that the more rural and less cosmopolitan populations tend to be more Eurosceptic than the urban populations, with Klatt (2020) and

Kuhn (2011) indicating similar findings. Including the variable is therefore argued to improve the model and lead to more valid results.

Those unemployed are often shown to show slight tendencies towards being more Eurosceptic and employment status is often controlled for in research on Euroscepticism (Schoene, 2019). Employment status is therefore controlled for in this thesis.

Previous research indicates that lower levels of formal education correlate with higher levels of Euroscepticism. A divide has often been demonstrated to exist between the highly educated “*elite*” and the lower-educated working-class individuals on the perceptions of European integration (De Vogd, 2014; Durand et al., 2020; Klatt, 2020). To account for this divide, a variable that accounts for an individual’s education level is included.

To account for and control for the cross-country variance in Euroscepticism that might exist, dummy variables controlling for the country that the individual is from are also included. Through this, the countries are held “constant”, leading to more accurate results of how the hypotheses-testing independent variable of proximity to the external border at Ukraine relates to Eurosceptic attitudes. (Polyakova & Fligstein, 2016, p. 71; Stockemer et al., 2020, p. 899). The reference category used is “Slovakia”, to which the other three countries are “tested”. Some individuals were additionally coded as having two nationalities. Due to the nature of this research question, these individuals were re-coded only to be related to the countries that they reside in, as not to have individuals being coded as having two nationalities.

# 6 Results

## 6.1 Statistical procedure and interpretation of results

The statistical procedure is performed through three steps.

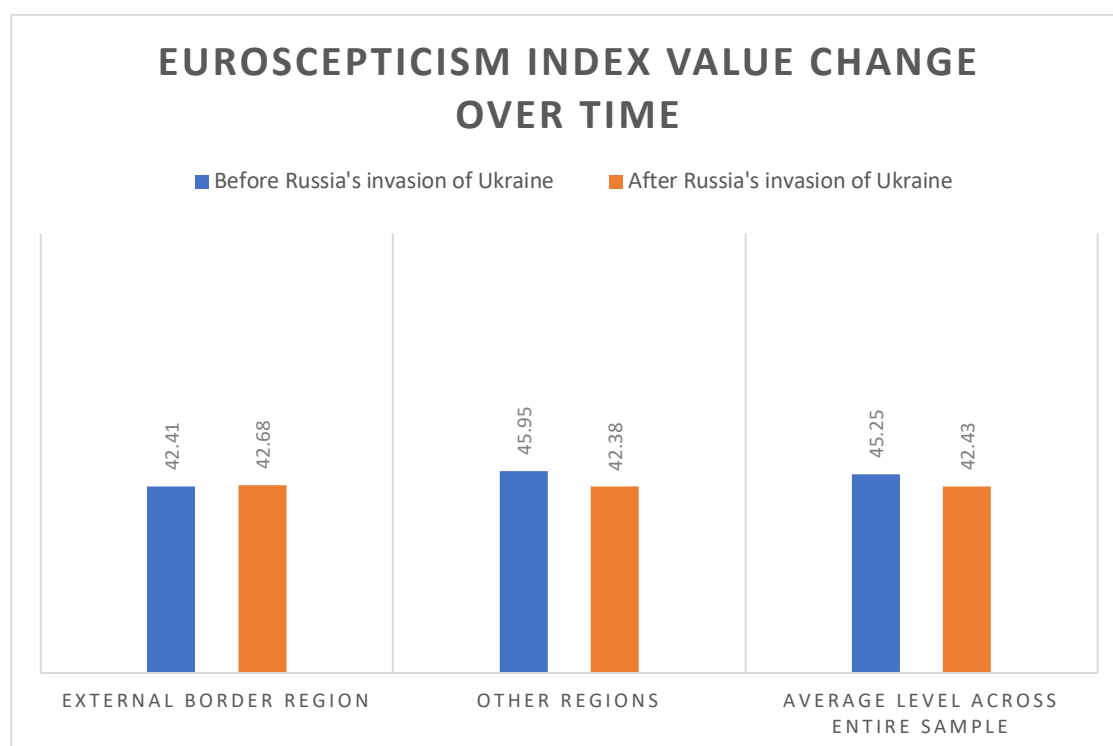
First, a visual analysis of the dependent variable and the hypotheses testing the independent variable is demonstrated (see *figure 1*). This is to visually demonstrate *how* levels of Euroscepticism have changed across the samples and over the two time periods. Additionally, t-tests are performed between the means of the *pre* and *post start of war* Euroscepticism levels to determine if the means across the two time periods are shown to be significantly different from each other. The t-tests are performed on individuals living in an external border region, individuals living in a “other” type of region than an external border region and on the entire samples, respectively (see *table 1*).

Secondly, OLS regressions for the pre-war and post-war datasets are run, consisting of three models with different sets of covariates being run stepwise. The first model includes the “base” control variables, containing common demographical values, to set a base value for the regression’s explanation of the variance in Euroscepticism. The second model contains the “base” control variables alongside the hypotheses testing independent variable of region-type. The third model includes all the variables previously included and the types of attitudinal and identity-based covariates that have been strongly indicated to correlate with Euroscepticism in earlier research, alongside a control for public perception of more EU-based security at the external borders.

Lastly, the results of the OLS-regression models and the statistical analysis for both data sets (before the war started and after) are discussed and presented in relation to each other.

Standardised Beta Coefficients ( $\beta^*$ ) are presented from the performed regression models to make comparisons of the variables and their directional change in correlation and effect sizes more feasible across the two datasets. A positive and significant  $\beta^*$  value indicates an increase in Euroscepticism, whilst a negative one indicates a decrease in Euroscepticism. It is also important to note that the value “*tend to trust*” for the variable “*trust in national government*” was removed due to issues with multicollinearity with other values. Additionally, the value “*up to 15*” is used as the references category alongside the variable “*no full-time education*” for the variable “*age education*” due to multicollinearity issues between the two values and a very low case count for those with no full-time education. However, removing these values from the regression does not affect the amount of variance that the models explain.

## 6.2 Visual presentation of change in Euroscepticism levels across both time periods



*Figure 1: Change in Euroscepticism across time.*

### 6.3 Results of the t-tests performed on the means of Euroscepticism for both time periods

	<u>External border regions</u>		<u>Other types of regions</u>		<u>Entire sample</u>	
	Before war	After the start of the war	Before war	After the start of the war	Before war	After the start of the war
<i>Mean</i>	42.41	42.68	45.95	42.38	45.25	42.43
<i>Standard deviation</i>	20.04	20.53	23.60	22.59	22.98	22.22
<i>Variance</i>	401.64	421.51	557.03	510.25	528.09	493.61
<i>Sample size</i>	697	667	2818	2912	3515	3579
<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	1362		5728		7092	
<i>t-value</i>	-0.25		5.86		5.25	
<i>p-value (two-tailed)</i>	0.40		< 0.001		< 0.001	
<i>Effect size (Cohen's d)</i>	-0.013		0.155		0.125	
<i>Skewness of data</i>	0.57	0.41	0.36	0.56	0.42	0.54
<i>Kurtosis of data</i>	-0.07	-0.54	-0.86	-0.54	-0.73	-0.53

*Table 1: Independent samples t-tests (assuming equal variance) of means measuring Euroscepticism.*



## 6.4 Results of the Ordinary Least Squares regressions from the pre-war and post-war data

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Pre-War data</b>			
N = 3515			
<b><u>Country variables (Slovakia ref.)</u></b>			
<i>Romania</i>	-0.074***	-0.067**	-0.147***
<i>Hungary</i>	-0.119***	-0.124***	-0.057***
<i>Poland</i>	-0.178***	-0.190***	-0.176***
<b><u>Control variables</u></b>			
<b><u>Type of Community (rural area or village ref.)</u></b>			
<i>Small/middle town</i>	-0.059**	-0.060***	-0.051***
<i>Large town</i>	-0.015	-0.017	-0.031*
<b><u>Employment status (self-employed ref.)</u></b>			
<i>Employed</i>	-0.044	-0.046	-0.037
<i>Not working</i>	-0.035	-0.030	-0.024
<i>Age exact</i>	0.135***	0.129***	0.089***
<b><u>Age education (recoded to 5 categories) (no full-time education and “up to 15” are both ref)</u></b>			
<i>16-19</i>	-0.053	-0.052	-0.014
<i>20+</i>	-0.149***	-0.146***	-0.035
<i>Still studying</i>	-0.059*	-0.059*	-0.029
<i>Gender (woman = 1)</i>	-0.039*	-0.041*	-0.049***
<b><u>Hypotheses testing variable</u></b>			
<i>External border region (region at external border = 1)</i>		-0.078***	-0.056***
<b><u>Covariates shown to be important from previous research</u></b>			
<b><u>Situation: National economy (rather good ref.)</u></b>			
<i>Very good</i>			0.002
<i>Rather bad</i>			-0.013
<i>Very bad</i>			0.089***
<b><u>Self-perceived social class (the middle class of society ref.)</u></b>			

<i>The working class</i>			0.034*
<i>The lower middle class</i>			0.015
<i>The upper middle</i>			-0.005
<i>The higher class</i>			-0.008
<b>Attachment to city/town/village (fairly attached ref.)</b>			
<i>Very attached</i>			-0.015
<i>Not very attached</i>			0.028*
<i>Not at all attached</i>			-0.021
<b>Attachment to country (fairly attached ref.)</b>			
<i>Very attached</i>			0.065***
<i>Not very attached</i>			0.024
<i>Not at all attached</i>			0.017
<b>Attachment to Europe (fairly attached ref.)</b>			
<i>Very attached</i>			-0.196***
<i>Not very attached</i>			0.213***
<i>Not at all attached</i>			0.199***
<b>Left-Right placement on political scale (don't know/refuse ref.)</b>			
<i>1 – 2 (left)</i>			-0.078***
<i>3 - 4</i>			-0.093***
<i>5 - 6 (centre)</i>			-0.074**
<i>7 – 8</i>			-0.067**
<i>9 – 10 (right)</i>			-0.010
<b>Trust in national government (“don't know” used as reference, “tend to trust” removed due to multicollinearity issues)</b>			
<i>Tend not to trust</i>			0.078***
<b>My voice counts in our country (tend to agree used as ref.)</b>			
<i>Totally agree</i>			-0.136***
<i>Tend to disagree</i>			0.063***
<i>Totally disagree</i>			0.237***
<b>EU proposals: Reinforce external borders with more guards (1 = against proposal)</b>			0.159***
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.065</b>	<b>0.070</b>	<b>0.442</b>

Table 2.

Significance levels: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed). Source: Standard Eurobarometer 96.3, European Commission (2022).

<b>Post start of war data</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>
<b>N = 3579</b>			
<b><u>Country variables(Slovakia ref.)</u></b>			
<i>Romania</i>	-0.136***	-0.134***	-0.161***
<i>Hungary</i>	-0.123***	-0.123***	-0.046**
<i>Poland</i>	-0.306***	-0.307***	-0.205***
<b><u>Control variables</u></b>			
<b><u>Type of Community (rural area or village ref.)</u></b>			
<i>Small/middle town</i>	-0.013	-0.013	-0.002
<i>Large town</i>	-0.062***	-0.063***	-0.030*
<b><u>Employment status (self-employed ref.)</u></b>			
<i>Employed</i>	0.005	0.005	-0.012
<i>Not working</i>	0.020	0.021	0.001
<b><u>Age exact</u></b>	0.062**	0.061**	0.067***
<b><u>Age education (recoded to 5 categories) (no full-time education and “up to 15” are both ref)</u></b>			
<i>16-19</i>	-0.067*	-0.067	-0.027
<i>20+</i>	-0.128***	-0.128***	-0.043
<i>Still studying</i>	-0.069**	-0.069**	-0.034
<b><u>Gender (woman = 1)</u></b>	-0.018	-0.019	-0.020
<b><u>Hypotheses testing variable</u></b>			
<b><u>External border region (region at external border = 1)</u></b>		-0.013	-0.018
<b><u>Covariates shown to be important from previous research</u></b>			
<b><u>Situation: National economy (rather good ref.)</u></b>			
<i>Very good</i>			-0.014
<i>Rather bad</i>			0.015
<i>Very bad</i>			0.062***
<b><u>Self-perceived social class (the middle class of society ref.)</u></b>			
<i>The working class</i>			0.052***
<i>The lower middle class</i>			-0.017
<i>The upper middle</i>			-0.035*
<i>The higher class</i>			-0.021
<b><u>Attachment to city/town/village (fairly attached ref.)</u></b>			

<i>Very attached</i>			-0.014
<i>Not very attached</i>			-0.003
<i>Not at all attached</i>			-0.046***
<b>Attachment to country (fairly attached ref.)</b>			
<i>Very attached</i>			0.061***
<i>Not very attached</i>			0.000
<i>Not at all attached</i>			0.021
<b>Attachment to Europe (fairly attached ref.)</b>			
<i>Very attached</i>			-0.161***
<i>Not very attached</i>			0.221***
<i>Not at all attached</i>			0.154***
<b>Left-Right placement on political scale (don't know/refuse ref.)</b>			
<i>1 – 2 (left)</i>			-0.075***
<i>3 - 4</i>			-0.069**
<i>5 - 6 (centre)</i>			-0.084**
<i>7 – 8</i>			-0.124**
<i>9 – 10 (right)</i>			-0.031
<b>Trust in national government (“don't know” used as reference, “tend to trust” removed due to multicollinearity)</b>			
<i>Tend not to trust</i>			0.018
<b>My voice counts in our country (tend to agree used as ref.)</b>			
<i>Totally agree</i>			-0.069***
<i>Tend to disagree</i>			0.100***
<i>Totally disagree</i>			0.269***
EU proposals: Reinforce external borders with more guards ( <i>1 = against proposal</i> )			0.171***
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.077</b>	<b>0.077</b>	<b>0.389</b>

Table 3.

Significance levels: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed). Source: Standard Eurobarometer 97.5. European Commission (2023).

## 6.5 Models 1 and 4: the base models

The “base models”, which lay the foundations of the other two models, *model 1* for the *pre-war* dataset and *model 4* for the *post-start of war* dataset, show some distinct similarities but also a few differences. When assessing the country-dummy variables, Slovakia is indicated to be the “most” Eurosceptic country both in pre-war and post-start of war datasets. Poland is additionally indicated to become quite notably less Eurosceptic after the war started, in comparison to the other three countries, with  $\beta^* = -0.178$  ( $p < 0,001$ ) for Poland in *model 1* and  $\beta^* = -0.306$  ( $p < 0,001$ ) in *model 4*. This could relate to the close connection often described as existing between Poland and Ukraine (Józwiak & Piechowska, 2017; Gruszczak, 2022; Kopec, 2022).

The type of community an individual lives in, has slightly different implications. *Model 1* suggests that those living in *small/middle-sized* towns might be slightly less Eurosceptic than those living in other types of settlements ( $\beta^* = -0.059$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ) and *model 4* suggests that those living in *large* towns are the least Eurosceptic ( $\beta^* = -0.062$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ). The type of employment is shown to be negatable and non-significant across both datasets. Age is furthermore indicated to positively correlate with an increase in Euroscepticism across both datasets (*model 1*,  $\beta^* = 0.135$ ,  $p < 0,001$  and *model 4*,  $\beta^* = 0.062$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ), indicating that older individuals are the most Eurosceptic.

Those who stopped their full-time education at a later stage are shown to be significantly less Eurosceptic than the rest, with the value 20+ for the variable *age education* having a  $\beta^* = 0.149$  ( $p < 0,001$ ) for *model 1* and a  $\beta^* = 0.128$  ( $p < 0,001$ ) for *model 4*. It is difficult to make the argument that gender shows play any significant role in shaping Euroscepticism in *model 1* and *model 4*, respectively, with women only indicated to be marginally less Eurosceptic than men in *model 1* with the  $\beta^* = -0.039$ ,  $p < 0,05$  and being insignificant in *model 4*.

*Adjusted R2* = 0.065 for *model 1* and = 0.077 for *model 4*, meaning that the “base” control variables account for 6.5% of the variance in the index used to measure Euroscepticism for the pre-war dataset and 7.7% in the post-start of war dataset.

## 6.6 Models 2 and 5: the hypotheses testing independent variable of region type added

For the second round of models, the hypotheses-testing variable, which indicates whether an individual lives at an external border region next to Ukraine, is included.

The baseline control variables remain practically unchanged in their significance levels, and  $\beta^*$  values compared to the previous models demonstrated.

Although the variable indicating region location is highly significant ( $p < 0,001$ ) in *model 2*, the  $\beta^*$  value is relatively low = -0.078. The  $\beta^*$  value in *model 5* for the variable indicating regional proximity to the external borders is insignificant. This indicates that living at an external border region correlates with lower levels of Euroscepticism in individuals before the war began and no longer does so after it started.

However, even if the regional variable *is* significant in *model 2*, so is the increase in the explained variance of the dependent variable minuscule from that of *model 1*, with *adjusted R2* = 0.070 in *model 2*, meaning that only an additional 0.5% points of the variance are explained by adding the variable measuring region type. The *adjusted R2* remains unchanged from *model 4* to *model 5* at 0.077.

## 6.7 Models 3 and 6: all of the variables controlled for included

The final two models included for both datasets adds variables measuring theoretical concepts previously shown to correlate and influence Euroscepticism. These are the variables accounting for the “soft”, “hard”, and “political” factors. Additionally, a variable controlling for public perception of more EU-based security at the external borders in relation to Euroscepticism has

been added through the variable “*EU proposals: Reinforce external borders with more guards*”. The results of the independent samples t-tests from **table 1** are also discussed.

### 6.7.1 Base control variables

Overall, so are the country-based dummy variables very similar in both **model 3** and **model 6**.

The type of community *might* be indicated to matter in **model 3**, with those living in small/middle towns being shown to be significantly less Eurosceptic than those who live in other types of settlements ( $\beta^* = -0.051$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ). Living in a *large town* is shown to lead to slightly less Eurosceptic tendencies, as opposed to living in another type of settlement ( $\beta^* = -0.032$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ), which was not the case in **model 2**. In **model 6**, living in a large town correlate significantly less with lower levels of Euroscepticism than in **model 5**, with significance levels dropping from  $p < 0,01$  to  $p < 0,05$  and the  $\beta^*$  value dropping notably. Overall, it would be difficult to argue that type of community has a notable effect on Euroscepticism.

Neither employment status nor education level are shown to be significant factors in explaining Euroscepticism when controlling for all variables in **model 3** and **model 6**. Age remains highly significant in both models, indicating that being older correlates with higher levels of Euroscepticism. Gender is a significant factor in **model 3** and increased in significance from **model 2** to  $p < 0,001$  with  $\beta^* = -0.049$ , indicating that women in the dataset collected before the war are marginally less Eurosceptic than men. Gender remains an insignificant factor in the dataset collected after the war in **model 6**.

### 6.7.2 Hypotheses testing variable of region type

In **model 3**, one can still see that individuals who live at the external border regions next to Ukraine are less Eurosceptic than those who did not before the war began ( $\beta^* = -0.056$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ), even with the added controls. However, only *marginally* so, with the  $\beta^*$  value being relatively small and the  $\beta^*$  decreasing in value from that of **model 2**. When looking at the model using the data collected after the war started, that being **model 6**, so is it again clear that there seems to be no significant correlation between living at an external border region next to Ukraine and a change in the levels of Euroscepticism. It, therefore, cannot be said that there is any visible difference between the Euroscepticism levels at the external border regions as

opposed to the regions not at the external border regions after the start of the war, as was hypothesised to be the case in this thesis.

When assessing these results in the context of *figure 1*, one can draw more apparent conclusions on *if* living at the external border regions next to Ukraine appears to have affected levels of Euroscepticism before and after the start of the war. Given that the Euroscepticism index value at the external border regions before the start of the war = 42.71 and = 42.86 after the start of it, it is possible to, without further statistical analysis, conclude that there is no meaningful difference between the two means. The t-test analysis in *table 1* confirms this.

The t-tests in *table 1* demonstrate that individuals living in an “*other*” type of region before the start of the war were more Eurosceptic on average ( $M = 45.95$ ,  $SD = 23.6$ ) than those living in an “*other*” type of region after the start of the war ( $M = 42.38$ ,  $SD = 22.59$ ), with this difference being significant  $t(5728)$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Additionally, on average, individuals from one of the EU’s external border countries were more Eurosceptic before the start of the war ( $M = 45.25$ ,  $SD = 22.98$ ) than after the war started ( $M = 42.43$ ,  $SD = 22.22$ ), with this difference also being shown to be significant  $t(7092)$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

What can be noted is that the effect size calculated is relatively small for both the significant t-tests, with *Cohen’s d* = 0.155 for the t-test performed on the “*other*” regions’ Euroscepticism levels and = 0.125 for that of the *entire sample*. Traditionally, a value of 0.2 is the “cut-off” point for when a “small” effect can be noted, meaning that despite the differences in the means being significantly different, so *may* the actual difference in levels of Euroscepticism between the pre and post start of war samples be limited. The cut-off for a “medium” sized effect is traditionally at 0.5, whilst it is at 0.8 for a “large” effect, for reference. These cut-off points are, however, not set in stone, with some scholars even suggesting lower cut-off points than 0.2 being reasonable in some instances (Panjeh et al., 2023). These results *could* suggest that Euroscepticism levels have lowered in the regions not at the external borders but in the external border region countries.

It is worth pointing out that Poland and Romania are the two external border countries where a *significant* decrease in the levels of Euroscepticism is visible, with the same not being the



case for Hungary and Slovakia. Poland is additionally an outlier, as Euroscepticism there is indicated to have decreased quite a bit more there than in the other countries sampled<sup>4</sup>.

Ultimately, however, so does neither the results of the OLS regression nor the t-tests indicate that Euroscepticism levels in the external border regions have changed significantly after the start of the war, as was hypothesised to be the case in this thesis.

### 6.7.3 The important control variables that are shown to strongly correlate with Euroscepticism

Both in *model 3* and *model 6*, one can note that sociotropic factors seemingly have a similarly significant but somewhat small correlation with Euroscepticism. If an individual perceives its national economy to be *very bad*, they are indicated to be more Eurosceptic than those who look at the national economy in a more positive light. In *model 3*  $\beta^*=0.089$  ( $p<0,001$ ) and *model 6*  $\beta^*=0.062$  ( $p<0,001$ ) for the value *very bad*.

The egotropic factors follow a slightly different pattern, with the *working class* ( $\beta^*=0.034$ ,  $p<0,05$ ) being indicated to be the most Eurosceptic in *model 3*. *Model 6* indicates that the *working class* ( $\beta^*=0.052$ ,  $p<0,001$ ) becomes slightly more Eurosceptic than the rest after the start of the war, in addition to the *higher class* ( $\beta^*=-0.035^*$ ,  $p<0,05$ ) being indicated to be slightly less Eurosceptic than the rest. This *could* indicate that sociotropic factors became more important after the start of the war, with the poorest being indicated to be the most Eurosceptic, whilst the richest, perhaps not as hard hit by the economic consequences of the war, being the least.

*Model 3* shows a *small* significant correlation being found between an individual's attachment to their city/town/village and Euroscepticism, as those who do not feel very attached indicated to be more Eurosceptic than the rest ( $\beta^*=0.028$ ,  $p<0,05$ ). Additionally, in *model 6*, those not feeling attached at all to their city/town/village are shown to be the least Eurosceptic ( $\beta^*=-0.046$ ,  $p<0,001$ ). However, these results are somewhat minuscule, putting into question the importance of attachment to one's city on Euroscepticism. It is, however, worth noting that the

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<sup>4</sup> Please see *appendices 1* and *2* for statistical presentations of how Euroscepticism has changed in each separate country-sample.

significance levels and the  $\beta^*$  value increase after the start of the war, as shown in *model 6*, as compared to the pre-war data of *model 3*.

An individual's attachment to their country shows to have similar effects on Euroscepticism in both models, with only those who feel very attached to their country being indicated to be slightly more Eurosceptic than the rest ( $\beta^*=0.065$ ,  $p < 0,001$  in *model 3* and  $\beta^*=0.061$ ,  $p < 0,001$  in *model 6*). This could most likely be indicated to be caused by the individuals who feel that the EU's values are incompatible with their own country's values.

Those who feel very attached to Europe are, by some margin, indicated to be the least Eurosceptic ( $\beta^*=-0.196$ ,  $p < 0,001$  for *model 3* and  $\beta^*=-0.161$ ,  $p < 0,001$  for *model 6*). Additionally, feeling unattached to Europe is a strong indicator of increased Euroscepticism (*not very attached*  $\beta^*=0.213$ ,  $p < 0,001$  and *not at all attached*  $\beta^*=0.199$ ,  $p < 0,001$  for *model 3* and *not very attached*  $\beta^*=0.221$ ,  $p < 0,001$  and *not at all attached*  $\beta^*=0.154$ ,  $p < 0,001$  for *model 6*). It is important to note that *very few* individuals in both datasets would describe themselves as *not at all attached* to Europe, hence the slightly weaker  $\beta^*$  for the value, in comparison to the  $\beta^*$  of those who feel *not very attached*.

A notable difference between the two models for the variable measuring left-right political placement is that those identifying themselves as the centre and centre-left are indicated to be the least Eurosceptic in the dataset collected before the start of the war (*model 3*), whilst the centre-right is indicated to be the least Eurosceptic in the dataset collected after the war (*model 6*). Those at the far right, alongside those predicted to feel political *apathy*, are predicted to be the most Eurosceptic across both models. This could indicate that those on the far right, who have often been shown to tend to support anti-EU political parties and those who do not care about politics or feel left behind in the political arena (Fanoulis & Guerra, 2017; Guerra, 2020), constantly remain more Eurosceptic than the rest.

There is a significant difference between how trust in the national government correlates with Euroscepticism between the pre- and post-start of war models. In *model 3*, those who *tend not to* trust their national governments are indicated to be more Eurosceptic than those who do tend to trust the government or do not know ( $\beta^*=0.078$ ,  $p < 0,001$ ). In contrast, *model 6* shows no correlation between Euroscepticism and trust in the government.

Just like in the variable measuring left-right placement, political *apathy* shown to significantly correlate with Euroscepticism when an individual's perception of how well their voice is heard in their countries is controlled for. However, when comparing the two models, some notable differences in the results are seen. The values indicating political apathy, that being if an individual *tends* to or disagrees with that their voice matters in their country, are slightly weaker in **model 3** (tend to disagree  $\beta^*=0.063$ ,  $p<0,001$  and totally disagree  $\beta^*=0.237$ ,  $p<0,001$ ) in comparison to **model 6** (tend to disagree  $\beta^*=0.100$ ,  $p<0,001$  and totally disagree  $\beta^*=0.269$ ,  $p<0,001$ ). The opposite is indicated to be for individuals who feel that they *totally* agree that their voice counts when comparing the two models (totally agree  $\beta^*=-0.136$ ,  $p<0,001$  in **model 3** and totally agree  $\beta^*=-0.069$ ,  $p<0,001$  in **model 6**). However, no real change in *how* political apathy affects Euroscepticism is visible when comparing both models.

The final factor controlled for is the public perception of more EU-based security at the external borders in relation to Euroscepticism. Both models show similar results, which are that those in favour of the proposal of more *EU-based* reinforcement at the external borders are less Eurosceptic than those who are against the proposal (**model 3**  $\beta^*=0.159$ ,  $p<0,001$  and **model 6**  $\beta^*=0.171$ ,  $p<0,001$ ). A reason for this *could*, amongst other things, be that individuals who trust the EU to protect its external borders might tend to be less Eurosceptic than those who do not, who in turn would rather see the borders being controlled solely by national authorities (Barthel & Bürkner, 2019; Bürkner, 2020; Klatt, 2020). This sentiment seems to stay constant, even after the war began and increased border insecurities arose.

Lastly, the **adjusted R2** increases by quite some margin for both **model 3** and **model 6**. This is, expected, as these models include variables measuring factors that have previously been proven to correlate with Euroscepticism in previous research. The **adjusted R2** = 0.442 for **model 3**, which in turn means that the model accounts for 37.2% points more of the variance in Euroscepticism than that of **model 2**. The **adjusted R2** = 0.389 for **model 6** means that the model accounts for 31.2% points more of the variance than **model 5**. However, one thing stands out when comparing the two **adjusted R2** values. That is that **model 3** seemingly accounts for 5.3% points more of the dependent variable's variance than that of **model 6**, despite both models including identically formalised variables.

This *may* indicate that something else that correlates with Euroscepticism is not accounted for in the dataset from after the war began. It could also indicate that the variables accounting

for *hard*, *soft* and *political* factors have lost some of their explanatory power since after the start of the war. However, any assumptions made about the reason behind this should be taken with caution, given the cross-sectional nature of the data and the slight differences in sample sizes for each variable between the two datasets. Despite this, a 5.3% points difference in the explained variance of the dependent variable between the two models is noteworthy<sup>5</sup>.

## 6.8 Discussion of the hypotheses concerning the results

Both *H1* and *H2* may be rejected. It *cannot* be stated that living in an external border region correlates with a change in the levels of Euroscepticism when comparing the levels of Euroscepticism before and after the start of the war in Ukraine. These results additionally put to question the importance living at the external border regions may have on how Eurosceptic tendencies are shaped, given that previous scholars have indicated that border-region residents might be extra sensitive to changes in opinion towards the EU during times of uncertainty in the EU and at its borders (Kuhn, 2011; Schoene, 2019; Bürkner, 2020; Klatt, 2020).

The conclusions that can be made of the rejection or the acceptance of the “*null-hypothesis*” of *H0* are less straightforward. Euroscepticism levels *did* indicate to decrease slightly across the entire sample used and in the regions not at the external borders. However, the effect sizes were very small, indicating only a minuscule, although significant, decrease in Euroscepticism levels after the start of the war. This perceived change in Euroscepticism levels additionally varies across the different sample countries (see *appendices 1* and *2*). Euroscepticism levels *might* therefore have decreased, although not at the external borders, as this thesis hypothesised could be the case. The *hard*, *soft*, and *political* factors remain the largest explanatories to the variance in Euroscepticism, both before the start of the war and after, as scholars have previously indicated to be the case across the entire EU over extended periods and even during times of crisis (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Stockemer et al., 2020).

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<sup>5</sup> Please see appendices 8 and 9 for subgroup analysis and comparison through OLS regressions of *how* the covariates correlate with Euroscepticism in the external border regions and the other types of regions before and after the start of the war. The results are similar to those of *table 2* and *table 3*, however, they indicate some minor differences.

However, some differences between the pre-war and post-start of war models in *how* these factors correlate with Euroscepticism are visible. This could signal that the war in Ukraine might have affected how Eurosceptic tendencies are shaped, despite these changes not being due to external border proximity.

Firstly, egotropic *hard* factors became *more* important after the start of the war, with the *working class* indicated to have become the most Eurosceptic class, whilst the *higher class* indicated to become the least. This *might* be related to how poorer individuals more often take the biggest hit in instances of economic uncertainties. These results could be argued to be related to the adverse economic effects the war in Ukraine has had on the individuals considered the “losers” of economic integration, who are often indicated to be the most Eurosceptic (Gabel, 1998b; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000; Tucker et al., 2002; Kriesi et al., 2006; Durand et al., 2020; Morariu, 2022; Orhan, 2022).

The *soft* factors slightly alter after the start of the war. Those feeling no attachment to their city/town/village are indicated to be *slightly* less Eurosceptic after the start of the war, as opposed to before. This *could* demonstrate that a lack of parochial, or “in-group” attachments to local communities after the war started in Ukraine led to an increase in support for the multicultural EU and its causes and, in turn, a rejection of the closed parochial and purely nationalistic communities of the sample country populations (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2007; Van Klingeren et al., 2013; De Dreu et al., 2014; Gruszczak, 2022). However, the  $\beta^*$  value signalling these changes is relatively weak, putting into questioning that the *soft* factors altered significantly after the start of the war, meaning that they might have remained static and unchangeable, as Stockemer et al. (2020) suggest they often do.

Slight differences are visible in the *political* factors across the two dataset models, with the centre and centre-left wing individuals being indicated to be the least Eurosceptic before the start of the war and the centre-right wing indicated to be the least after it had started. This *could* be an indication that those on the right of the political scale, who often value nationalistic values higher than those on the left (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Ramiro, 2016; Stockemer, 2017; Bürkner, 2020), are more inclined to support the EU’s fight against Russia, who pose a threat to both national security and identity. This is, however, a rather bold assumption to make, given the small differences in  $\beta^*$  values across the two datasets.

Less trust in the national government correlated with an increase in Euroscepticism before the start of the war but not after it had started. One of the explanations for this *could* potentially be that individuals *proxy-shift* blame from the national government to the EU to a lesser degree after the start of the war, as the EU has become a significantly more public actor in the media after the start of the war as a co-actor in it, through its widely reported sanctions on Russia and vocal support for Ukraine (McLaren, 2007; Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Kopec, 2022; Parížek, 2023).

Lastly, there is a difference in variance explained in the dependent variable of Euroscepticism, with the “*same*” independent variables seemingly explaining less of the variance in the index measuring Euroscepticism in the dataset collected after the war than in that collected before the start of it. This *could* indicate that there are other factors unaccounted for that could improve the model and explain Euroscepticism better after the start of the war; however, these factors may remain somewhat unclear without a deeper dive into the research field.

It could therefore be argued that the “null-hypotheses” of *H0* cannot be accepted either after considering all these differences. Some of the independent factors *may* correlate with Euroscepticism differently after the start of the war than how they correlated with Euroscepticism before the start of it. Additionally, so *might* Euroscepticism levels have decreased slightly after the war began, although not at the external border regions, meaning that Euroscepticism overall *might* be lower in the EU member states with borders on Ukraine as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

## 7 Concluding remarks and suggestions for future research

The primary purpose of this thesis was to expand upon the limited literature on border-region-based Euroscepticism. More specifically, the research question of this thesis set out to discover if individuals living in external border regions experienced significant changes in their levels of Euroscepticism after periods of extreme border destabilisation, insecurity and high immigration influxes, as opposed to individuals' not living in external border regions. This was accomplished by comparing cross-sectional data from just before Russia's invasion of Ukraine and data from a few months after the start of the war, which both use the same standardised sampling methods and variables.

The key findings of this thesis demonstrate that there seemingly were *no* changes in the levels of Euroscepticism at the external border regions after the start of the war. This is despite previous research indicating that external border regions are extra susceptible to border instability and refugee influxes and how these factors affect levels of Euroscepticism in individuals in comparison to those living in other regions (Kuhn, 2011; De Voogd, 2014; Scott, 2015; Bürkner, 2020; Durand et al., 2020; Klatt, 2020). However, the findings did demonstrate that there *might* have been a decrease in Euroscepticism in the regions not situated at the external borders and in the countries situated at the external borders, on average.

Despite the findings indicating that living at an external border region did not matter in relation to Euroscepticism levels, the results indicate that there *may* have been changes in how notable variables correlate with Euroscepticism. The results indicated that future research might, in more detail, include a look into how *egotropic* economic factors, soft parochial factors through community attachment and if the theory of *proxy-shifting* of blame from national governments to the EU is becoming less prominent after the start of the war due to the EU's increased "public persona". Furthermore, the results indicated that other factors might have become more apt at explaining Euroscepticism after the start of the war, which could prompt researchers to explore *what* these factors could be argued to be.



In relation to the *decrease* in Euroscepticism indicated after the start of the war, future research could expand on these findings and look at the long-term effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Euroscepticism, the same way Stockemer et al. (2020) did with the 2015 refugee crisis. Researchers could additionally attempt to find data covering the smaller and more precise NUTS 3 regions to understand better how external border proximity correlates to Euroscepticism, as opposed to the somewhat more limiting NUTS 2 data being available in the datasets this thesis utilised. Additionally, future research could explore *if* the Euroscepticism levels in the external EU-border *countries* are affected differentially by border insecurity and heavy refugee influxes, as opposed to member states geographically in the *core* of the EU. Lastly, future research could perform a more qualitative case study on *Poland* by more closely looking into its ties with Ukraine and how it may intertwine with Euroscepticism in relation to the war, given that Poland was indicated to becoming the least Eurosceptic after the start of the war, perhaps due to its close cultural and economic ties to Ukraine (Józwiak & Piechowska, 2017; Gruszczak, 2022; Kopec, 2022).

It is additionally important to point out some of the limitations this thesis experienced. Firstly, this thesis compared two cross-sectional datasets, meaning that different individuals were present between the two datasets. This issue was mitigated as best as possible by using identically framed variables across both datasets and using two datasets sampled the same way. However, panel data would have been the preferred choice. Panel-data could have been used to attempt to find relationships that could have been argued to be *causal* between Euroscepticism and external border region inhabitancy, which cross-sectional data cannot. Additionally, only a limited amount of relevant raw survey data sets covers the time *after* Russia's invasion of Ukraine, meaning that this thesis explored a somewhat limited period of time.

Despite not being able to prove that living at an external border region after times of heavy border destabilisation and insecurity significantly affected an individual's levels of Euroscepticism, so have the results opened for future research on the changes that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had on Euroscepticism in the countries at the EU's external borders, and on border-region Euroscepticism in general. This thesis has added to the limited literature existing that explores border-based Euroscepticism at the EU's external border regions. Future research can expand upon the findings of this thesis whilst employing different approaches



from what this thesis has employed to gain a better understanding of *how* border proximity may affect Euroscepticism.

# Literature review

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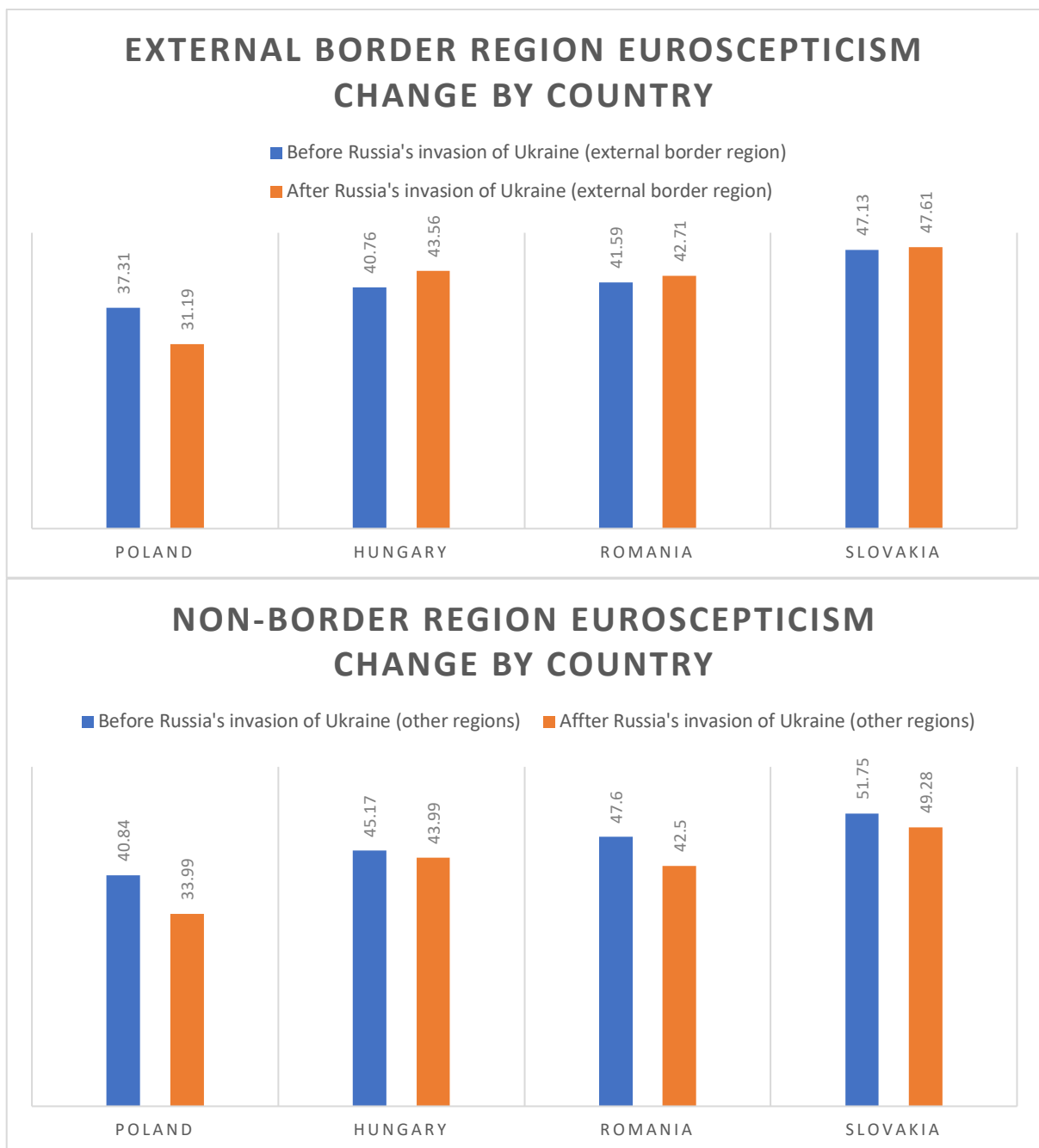
## Dataset sources

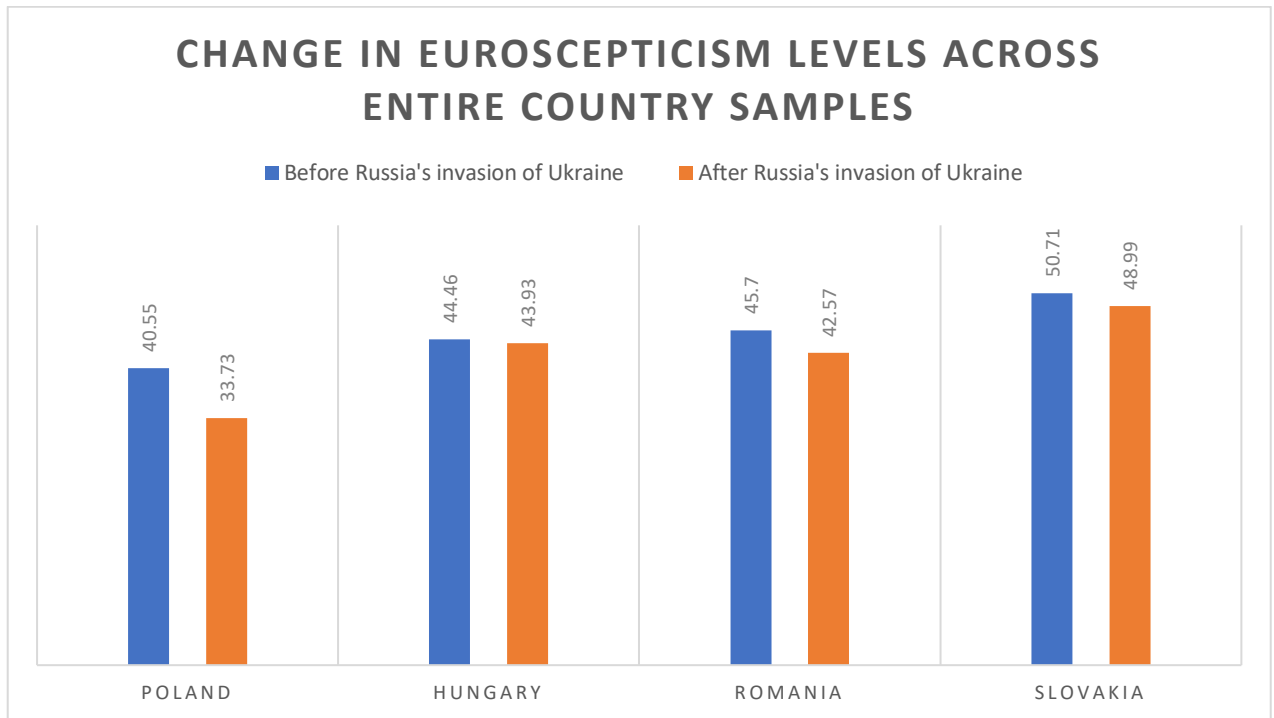
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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Visual representation of Euroscepticism changes across individual country-samples





## Appendix 2: Independent samples t-tests on the means of entire country samples

	<u>Poland</u>		<u>Hungary</u>		<u>Romania</u>		<u>Slovakia</u>	
	Before war	After the start of the war	Before war	After the start of the war	Before war	After the start of the war	Before war	After the start of the war
<i>Mean</i>	40.55	33.73	44.46	43.93	45.70	42.57	50.71	48.99
<i>Standard deviation</i>	21.80	18.72	21.91	22.59	21.46	19.10	25.80	25.03
<i>Variance</i>	475.28	350.62	480.26	510.46	460.41	364.70	665.46	626.31
<i>Sample size</i>	862	851	931	920	920	908	802	900
<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	1711		1849		1826		1700	
<i>t-value</i>	6.94		0.51		3.29		1.39	

<i>p-value (two-tailed)</i>	< 0.001		0.61		< 0.01		0.16	
<i>Effect size (Cohen's d)</i>	0.335		0.024		0.154		0.0676	
<i>Skewness of data</i>	0.65	0.89	0.56	0.45	0.26	0.48	0.12	0.23
<i>Kurtosis of data</i>	-0.24	0.28	-0.57	-0.71	-0.75	-0.28	-1.14	-1.01

### Appendix 3: Basic demographics for Eurobarometer 96.3

	<u>PL</u>	<u>HU</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>RO</u>	<u>Ext. reg</u>	<u>Other region</u>	<u>Entire Sample</u>
<i><u>n (sums in parentheses)</u></i>	<b>862</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>2818</b>	<b>3515</b>
<i><u>Age</u></i>							
<i><u>Mean</u></i>	49.71	49.97	51.13	43.71	46.24	49.1	48.53
<i><u>Median</u></i>	50	49	52.50	43	46	49	48
<i><u>SD</u></i>	16.41	16.37	16.81	15.24	17.13	16.28	16.49
<i><u>Gender</u></i>							
<i><u>Man</u></i>	43% (371)	45.5% (424)	42.1% (338)	48% (442)	47.3% (330)	44.2% (1245)	44.8% (1575)
<i><u>Woman</u></i>	57% (491)	54.5% (507)	57.9% (464)	52% (478)	52.7% (367)	55.8% (1573)	55.2% (1940)
<i><u>Age Educational</u></i>							
<i><u>15+</u></i>	7.3% (63)	11.3% (105)	2.6% (21)	6.1% (56)	6% (42)	7.2% (203)	7% (245)
<i><u>16-19</u></i>	54.9% (473)	65% (605)	68.8% (552)	67.1% (617)	62.3% (434)	64.3% (1813)	63.9% (2247)
<i><u>20+</u></i>	34.2% (295)	21.6% (201)	22.7% (182)	19.2% (177)	24.4% (170)	24.3% (685)	24.3% (855)

**Still studying**

3.6% (31)	2.1% (20)	5.9% (47)	7.5% (69)	7.3% (51)	4.1% (116)	4.8% (167)
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**No full-time education**

0%	0%	0%	0.1% (1)	0%	0.0004% (1)	0.00028% (1)
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**Type of community**

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**Rural area or village**

43.5% (375)	27.8% (259)	42.4% (340)	41.4% (381)	40.6% (283)	38% (1072)	38.5% (1355)
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**Small/middle town**

30.3% (261)	39.6% (369)	31.4% (252)	28.8% (265)	31.3% (218)	33% (929)	32.6% (1147)
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**Large town**

26.2% (226)	32.5% (303)	26.2% (210)	29.8% (274)	28.1% (196)	29% (817)	28.8% (1013)
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**Social class****The working class**

37.6% (324)	20.6% (192)	30.5% (245)	19.1% (176)	23.5% (164)	27.4% (773)	26.7% (937)
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**The lower middle class**

13.7% (118)	28.7% (267)	19.5% (156)	7.3% (67)	14.8% (103)	17.9% (505)	17.3% (608)
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**The middle class**

41% (353)	49.3% (459)	45.9% (368)	58% (534)	50.9% (355)	48.2% (1359)	48.8% (1714)
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**The upper middle class**

5% (43)	1.4% (13)	3.9% (31)	13.7% (126)	9% (63)	5.3% (150)	6.1% (213)
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**The higher class**

2.8% (24)	0%	0.2% (2)	1.8% (17)	1.7% (12)	1.1% (31)	1.2% (43)
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**Employment status****Self-employed**

6.5% (56)	6.3% (59)	6.5% (52)	3.6% (33)	5.6% (39)	5.7% (161)	5.7% (200)
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**Employed**

56.8% (490)	59.5% (554)	52.1% (418)	63.6% (585)	53.5% (373)	59.4% (1674)	58.2% (2047)
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**Not working**

36.7% (316)	34.2% (318)	41.4% (332)	32.8% (302)	40.9% (285)	34.9% (983)	36.1% (1268)
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Appendix 4: Cronbach's alpha and descriptive statistics of Euroscepticism index items (Eurobarometer 96.3)

	<i>Full index</i>	<i>Trust in institutions: EU</i>	<i>Attachment to: EU</i>	<i>My voice counts – in the EU</i>	<i>EU Image – Positive/Negative</i>	<i>Democracy satisfaction – EU</i>
<b><u>Cronbach's alpha</u></b>	0.746					
<b><u>Cronbach's alpha if item deleted</u></b>		0.731	0.720	0.719	0.674	0.670
<b><u>Corrected item-total correlation</u></b>		0.541	0.458	0.459	0.648	0.632
<b><u>Mean</u></b>	45.25	44.76	37.92	52.7	42.38	48.48
<b><u>Standard deviation</u></b>	22.98	48.33	27.7	31.4	23.54	26.07
<b><u>Skewness</u></b>	0.42	0.21	0.39	0.07	0.54	0.52
<b><u>Kurtosis</u></b>	-0,73	-1.90	-0.37	-0.94	0.069	-0.30

Appendix 5: Factor analysis of Euroscepticism index-items (Eurobarometer 96.3)

<b><u>Component</u></b>	<b><i>Eigenvalue</i></b>	<b><i>Total variance explained</i></b>
<b>1</b>	2.684	53.672%
<b>2</b>	0.73	14.6%
<b>3</b>	0.671	13.416%
<b>4</b>	0.524	10.478%
<b>5</b>	0.392	7.834%

*Determinant=0.270. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure = 0.813*

## Appendix 6: Basic demographics for Eurobarometer 97.5

	<u>PL</u>	<u>HU</u>	<u>SK</u>	<u>RO</u>	<u>Ext. reg</u>	<u>Other region</u>	<u>Entire Sample</u>
<i><u>n (sums in parentheses)</u></i>	851	920	900	908	667	2912	3579
<i><u>Age</u></i>							
<i><u>Mean</u></i>	49.07	50.64	47.83	42.51	44.41	48.21	47.5
<i><u>Median</u></i>	49	50	47	43	45	47	47
<i><u>SD</u></i>	15.66	16.23	16.16	16.03	18.18	15.77	16.31
<i><u>Gender</u></i>							
<i><u>Man</u></i>	39.1 % (333)	41% (377)	44.4% (400)	49.7%	49.2 % (328)	42.3% (1233)	43.6% (1561)
<i><u>Woman</u></i>	60.9 % (518)	59% (543)	55.6% (500)	50.3%	50.8 % (339)	57.7% (1679)	56.4% (2018)
<i><u>Age Educational</u></i>							
<i><u>15+</u></i>	4% (34)	12.5 % (115)	1.8% (16)	7.2% (65)	6.1% (41)	6.5% (189)	6.4% (230)
<i><u>16-19</u></i>	58.9 % (501)	62.6 % (576)	48.2% (434)	65.6% (596)	57.6 % (384)	59.2% (1723)	58.9% (2107)
<i><u>20+</u></i>	33.6 % (286)	21.4 % (197)	42.9% (386)	17.7% (161)	24.7 % (165)	29.7% (865)	28.8% (1030)
<i><u>Still studying</u></i>	3.5% (30)	3.5% (32)	7.1% (64)	9.3% (84)	11.5 % (77)	4.6% (133)	5.9% (210)
<i><u>No full-time education</u></i>	0%	0%	0%	0.2% (2)	0%	0.1% (2)	0.1% (2)
<i><u>Type of community</u></i>							
<i><u>Rural area or village</u></i>	41.5 % (353)	30.5 % (281)	34.6% (311)	43.8% (398)	41.1 % (274)	36.7% (1069)	37.5% (1343)
<i><u>Small/middle town</u></i>	34.7 % (295)	34.8 % (320)	35.2% (317)	26% (236)	33.3 % (222)	32.5% (946)	32.6% (1168)

<u>Large town</u>	23.9 % (203)	34.7 % (319)	30.2% (272)	30.2% (274)	25.6 % (171)	30.8% (897)	29.8% (1068)
<b><u>Social class</u></b>							
<u>The working class</u>	33.4 % (284)	18.8 % (173)	15.9% (143)	16.3% (148)	15.9 % (106)	22% (642)	20.9% (748)
<u>The lower middle class</u>	15% (128)	25% (230)	21.7% (195)	14.9% (135)	21.4 % (143)	18.7% (545)	19.2% (688)
<u>The middle class</u>	44.7 % (380)	54.3 % (500)	49.7% (447)	56.3% (511)	50.7 % (338)	51.5% (1500)	51.4% (1838)
<u>The upper middle class</u>	4% (34)	1.7% (16)	11.3% (102)	11.6% (105)	10% (67)	6.5% (190)	7.2% (257)
<u>The higher class</u>	2.9% (25)	0.1% (1)	1.4% (13)	1% (9)	1.9% (13)	1.2% (35)	1.3% (48)
<b><u>Employment status</u></b>							
<u>Self-employed</u>	5.9% (50)	5.9% (54)	10% (90)	2.3% (21)	4.9% (33)	6.3% (182)	6% (215)
<u>Employed</u>	61.1 % (520)	61.6 % (567)	52.6 (473)	64% (581)	52.2 % (348)	61.6% (1793)	59.8% (2141)
<u>Not working</u>	33% (281)	32.5 % (299)	37.4% (337)	33.7% (306)	42.9 % (286)	32.2% (937)	34.2% (1223)

## Appendix 7: Cronbach's alpha and descriptive statistics of Euroscepticism index items (Eurobarometer 97.5)

	<i>Full index</i>	<i>Trust in institution s: EU</i>	<i>Attachment to: EU</i>	<i>My voice counts – in the EU</i>	<i>EU Image – Positive/Negative</i>	<i>Democracy satisfaction – EU</i>
<b><u>Cronbach's alpha</u></b>	0.740					
<b><u>Cronbach's alpha if item deleted</u></b>		0.728	0.704	0.710	0.668	0.675

Corrected item-total correlation

Mean

Standard deviation

Skewness

	0.543	0.485	0.458	0.634	0.602
42.43	40.83	36.84	51.41	39.39	43.68
22.22	48.2	26.21	30.42	23.21	23.69
0.54	0.37	0.37	0.16	0.59	0.57
-0.53	-1.82	-0.24	-0.83	0.21	0.27

## Appendix 8: Factor analysis of Euroscepticism index-items (Eurobarometer 97.5)

Component

*Eigenvalue*

*Total variance explained*

1	2.668	53.354%
2	0.713	14.250%
3	0.654	13.088%
4	0.551	11.023%
5	0.414	8.285%

*Determinant=0.284. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure = 0.813*

## Appendix 9: OLS regressions on individuals living in external border regions (Standard Eurobarometer 96.3 and 97.5)

<b>n = 697 for 96.3 and n = 667 for 97.5</b>	<b>Standard Eurobarometer 96.3 (before the start of the war)</b>	<b>Standard Eurobarometer 97.5 (after the start of the war)</b>
<b><u>Country variables (Slovakia ref.)</u></b>		
<i>Romania</i>	-0.188***	-0.190***
<i>Hungary</i>	-0.094*	0.023
<i>Poland</i>	-0.068+	-0.125**
<b><u>Control variables</u></b>		
<b><i>Type of Community (rural area or village ref.)</i></b>		
<i>Small/middle town</i>	0.041	0.110**
<i>Large town</i>	0.114**	0.016

<b>Employment status (self-employed ref.)</b>		
<i>Employed</i>	-0.073	-0.059
<i>Not working</i>	-0.004	-0.020
<b>Age exact</b>	0.038	0.075+
<b>Age education (recoded to 5 categories) (no full-time education and “up to 15” are both ref)</b>		
<i>16-19</i>	0.001	-0.056
<i>20+</i>	-0.127+	-0.073
<i>Still studying</i>	-0.077	-0.097
<b>Gender (woman = 1)</b>	-0.054+	-0.010
<b><u>Covariates shown to be important from previous research</u></b>		
<b>Situation: National economy (rather good ref.)</b>		
<i>Very good</i>	-0.012	-0.089*
<i>Rather bad</i>	-0.054	0.032
<i>Very bad</i>	0.067+	0.095*
<b>Self-perceived social class (the middle class of society ref.)</b>		
<i>The working class</i>	0.018	0.047
<i>The lower middle class</i>	0.088*	0.013
<i>The upper middle</i>	0.015	-0.051
<i>The higher class</i>	-0.012	-0.013
<b>Attachment to city/town/village (fairly attached ref.)</b>		
<i>Very attached</i>	0.006	0.038
<i>Not very attached</i>	0.068+	0.038
<i>Not at all attached</i>	-0.076	-0.081*
<b>Attachment to country (fairly attached ref.)</b>		
<i>Very attached</i>	0.083+	0.015
<i>Not very attached</i>	0.049	-0.004
<i>Not at all attached</i>	0.086	0.033
<b>Attachment to Europe (fairly attached ref.)</b>		
<i>Very attached</i>	-0.173***	-0.222***
<i>Not very attached</i>	0.216***	0.239***
<i>Not at all attached</i>	0.166**	0.158***
<b>Left-Right placement on political scale (do not know/refuse ref.)</b>		
<i>1 – 2 (left)</i>	-0.038	0.015
<i>3 - 4</i>	-0.046	0.059
<i>5 - 6 (centre)</i>	-0.127*	-0.026
<i>7 – 8</i>	-0.138*	-0.138*
<i>9 – 10 (right)</i>	-0.004	-0.047

<b>Trust in national government</b> (“do not know” used as reference, “tend to trust” removed due to multicollinearity issues)		
<i>Tend not to trust</i>	0.044	0.108**
<b>My voice counts in our country</b> (tend to agree used as ref.)		
<i>Totally agree</i>	-0.107**	-0.017
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	0.000	0.082**
<i>Totally disagree</i>	0.178***	0.144***
<b>EU proposals: Reinforce external borders with more guards</b> (1 = against proposal)	0.178***	0.130***
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.338</b>	<b>0.354</b>

*Significance levels: +  $p < 0.1$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed). Please not the smaller sample size than those of the other regressions, meaning it may be harder to find statistical significance. Interpret  $p < 0.1$  significance with caution. Cronbach’s alpha = 0.644 for Eurobarometer 96.3 and = 0.690 for Eurobarometer 97.5. Sources: Standard Eurobarometer 96.3 and 97.5. European Commission (2022) and (2023).*

## Appendix 10: OLS regressions for individuals living in other types of regions (Standard Eurobarometer 96.3 and 97.5)

<b>n = 2818 for 96.3 and n = 2912 for 97.5</b>	<b>Standard Eurobarometer 96.3 (before the start of the war)</b>	<b>Standard Eurobarometer 97.5 (after the start of the war)</b>
<b><u>Country variables (Slovakia ref.)</u></b>		
<i>Romania</i>	-0.125***	-0.147***
<i>Hungary</i>	-0.053**	-0.049**
<i>Poland</i>	-0.187***	-0.209***
<b><u>Control variables</u></b>		
<b><u>Type of Community (rural area or village ref.)</u></b>		
<i>Small/middle town</i>	-0.072***	-0.028+
<i>Large town</i>	-0.062***	-0.039**
<b><u>Employment status (self-employed ref.)</u></b>		
<i>Employed</i>	-0.035	-0.003
<i>Not working</i>	-0.042	0.009
<b><u>Age exact</u></b>	0.103***	0.028**
<b><u>Age education (recoded to 5 categories)</u></b>		

<b>(no full-time education and “up to 15” are both ref)</b>		
<i>16-19</i>	-0.020	-0.016
<i>20+</i>	-0.018	-0.036
<i>Still studying</i>	-0.015	-0.021
<b>Gender (woman = 1)</b>	-0.046**	-0.025
<b><u>Covariates shown to be important from previous research</u></b>		
<b><i>Situation: National economy (rather good ref.)</i></b>		
<i>Very good</i>	0.013	-0.005
<i>Rather bad</i>	-0.010	0.012
<i>Very bad</i>	0.084***	0.058**
<b><i>Self-perceived social class (the middle class of society ref.)</i></b>		
<i>The working class</i>	0.038*	0.047**
<i>The lower middle class</i>	0.008	-0.020
<i>The upper middle</i>	-0.016	-0.036*
<i>The higher class</i>	0.001	-0.020
<b><i>Attachment to city/town/village (fairly attached ref.)</i></b>		
<i>Very attached</i>	-0.018	-0.024
<i>Not very attached</i>	0.014	-0.009
<i>Not at all attached</i>	-0.022	-0.036*
<b><i>Attachment to country (fairly attached ref.)</i></b>		
<i>Very attached</i>	0.065**	0.066***
<i>Not very attached</i>	0.010	-0.002
<i>Not at all attached</i>	0.014	0.020
<b><i>Attachment to Europe (fairly attached ref.)</i></b>		
<i>Very attached</i>	-0.199***	-0.154***
<i>Not very attached</i>	0.217***	0.208***
<i>Not at all attached</i>	0.205***	0.146***
<b><i>Left-Right placement on political scale (do not know/refuse ref.)</i></b>		
<i>1 – 2 (left)</i>	-0.078***	-0.089***
<i>3 - 4</i>	-0.097***	-0.087**
<i>5 - 6 (centre)</i>	-0.061*	-0.095**
<i>7 – 8</i>	-0.045	-0.119***
<i>9 – 10 (right)</i>	-0.008	-0.020
<b><i>Trust in national government (“do not know” used as reference, “tend to trust” removed due to multicollinearity issues)</i></b>		
<i>Tend not to trust</i>	0.088***	0.008
<b><i>My voice counts in our country (tend to agree used as ref.)</i></b>		
<i>Totally agree</i>	-0.144***	-0.081***
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	0.079***	0.103***

<i>Totally disagree</i>	0.249***	0.284***
<i>EU proposals: Reinforce external borders with more guards (1 = against proposal)</i>	0.167***	0.176***
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>0.468</b>	<b>0.403</b>

*Significance levels: +p < 0.1 \*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001 (two-tailed). Interpret p < 0.1 significance with caution. Cronbach's alpha = 0.763 for Eurobarometer 96.3 and = 0.750 for Eurobarometer 97.5. Sources: Standard Eurobarometer 96.3 and 97.5. European Commission (2022) and (2023).*

## Appendix 11: Variables used from the Standard Eurobarometer 96.3 and 97.5 datasets with their original value coding

<i><b>Variables used in the</b></i>	<i><b>Variable value and label</b></i>	<i><b>Variable designation in raw data</b></i>
<u><i>Eurocepticism index</i></u>		
<u><i>Trust in institutions: European Union</i></u>	1= Tend to trust 2= Tend not to trust 3= Don't know (SPONTANEOUS)	qa6b_10 (in 96.3 dataset) and qa6a_10 (in 97.5 dataset)
<u><i>Attachment to: European Union</i></u>	1= Very attached 2= Fairly attached 3= Not very attached 4= Not at all attached 5 = Don't know (SPONTANEOUS)	qc1a_3 (in 96.3 dataset) and qd1a_3 (in 97.5 dataset)
<u><i>My voice counts – In the EU</i></u>	1 = Totally agree 2 = Tend to agree 3 = Tend to disagree 4 = Totally disagree 5 = Don't know	d72_1
<u><i>EU image – Positive/Negative</i></u>	1 = Very positive 2 = Fairly positive 3 = Neutral 4 = Fairly negative 5 = Very negative 6 = DK (SPONT.)	d78
<u><i>Democracy satisfaction – European Union</i></u>	1 = Very satisfied 2= Fairly satisfied 3 = Not very satisfied	sd18b



4 = Not at all satisfied 5 = Don't know (SPONT.)	
<b><u>Country and regional variables</u></b>	
<b><u>Nationality: Hungary</u></b>	
0 = Not mentioned 1 = Mentioned	q1.19
1 = HU10 - Kozep-Magyarország (Central Hungary) 2 = HU31 - Eszak-Magyarország (Northern Hungary) 3 = HU32 - Eszak-Alfold (Northern Great Plains) 4 = HU33 - Del-Alfold (Southern Great Plains) 5 = HU23 - Del-Dunantul (Southern Transdanubia) 6 = HU21 - Kozep-Dunantul (Central Transdanubia) 7 = HU22 - Nyugat-Dunantul (Western Transdanubia)	region_hungary
<b><u>Nationality: Poland</u></b>	
<b><u>Region Poland</u></b>	
0 = Not mentioned 1 = Mentioned	q1.23
1 = PL11 - Lodzkie 2 = PL12 - Mazowieckie 3 = PL21 - Malopolskie 4 = PL22 - Slaskie 5 = PL31 - Lubelskie 6 = PL32 - Podkarpackie 7 = PL33 - Swietokrzyskie 8 = PL34 - Podlaskie 9 = PL41 - Wielkopolskie 10 = PL42 - Zachodniopomorskie 11 = PL43 - Lubuskie	region_poland

12 = PL51 - Dolnoslaskie	
13 = PL52 - Opolskie	
14 = PL61 - Kujawsko-Pomorskie	
15 = PL62 - Warminsko-Mazurskie	
16 = PL63 - Pomorskie	
0 = Not mentioned 1 = Mentioned	q1.24
1 = SK01 - Bratislavsky kraj 2 = SK02 - Zapadne Slovensko 3 = SK03 - Stredne Slovensko 4 = SK04 - Vychodne Slovensko	region_slovakia
0 = Not mentioned 1 = Mentioned	q1.27
1 = RO11 - Nord-Vest 2 = RO12 - Centru 3 = RO21 - Nord-Est 4 = RO22 - Sud-Est 5 = RO31 - Sud - Muntenia 6 = RO32 - Bucuresti - Ilfov 7 = RO41 - Sud-Vest Oltenia 8 = RO42 - Vest	region_romania
1 = Rural area or village 2 = Small/middle town 3 = Large town	d25
1 = Self-employed 2 = Employed 3 = Not working	d15a_r1
The exact age of the individual (15 – 97 years)	d11
1 = Man 2 = Woman 3 = None of the above/ Non binary / do not	d10

Nationality: Slovakia

Region Slovakia

Nationality Romania

Region Romania

**“Base” control variables**

Type of community

Occupation of respondent (recoded)

Age exact

Gender

	recognize yourself in above categories ( <i>no such cases were visible in either of the datasets</i> )	
<b><u>“Important” control variables</u></b>		
<u>Situation: National Economy</u>	1 = Very good 2 = Rather good 3 = Rather bad 4 = Very bad 5 = Don't know (SPONTANEOUS)	qa1_2
<u>Social class – Self-assessment (5 CAT)</u>	1 = The working class of society 2 = The lower middle class of society 3 = The middle class of society 4 = The upper middle class of society 5 = The higher class of society 6 = Other (SPONT.) 7 = None (SPONT.) 8 = Refusal (SPONT.) 9 = DK (SPONT.)	d63
<u>Attachment to: city/town/village</u>	1 = Very attached 2 = Fairly attached 3 = Not very attached 4 = Not at all attached 5 = Don't know (SPONTANEOUS)	qcl1a_1 ( <i>in 96.3 dataset</i> ) and qd1a_1 ( <i>in 97.5 dataset</i> )
<u>Attachment to: country</u>	1 = Very attached 2 = Fairly attached 3 = Not very attached 4 = Not at all attached 5 = Don't know (SPONTANEOUS)	qcl1a_2 ( <i>in 96.3 dataset</i> ) and qd1a_2 ( <i>in 97.5 dataset</i> )
<u>Attachment to: Europe</u>	1 = Very attached 2 = Fairly attached 3 = Not very attached 4 = Not at all attached 5 = Don't know (SPONTANEOUS)	qcl1a_4 ( <i>in 96.3 dataset</i> ) and qd1a_4 ( <i>in 97.5 dataset</i> )
<u>Left-Right placement – Recoded 5 CAT</u>	1 = (1-2) Left 2 = (3-4)	d1r2

3 = (5-6) Centre 4 = (7-8) 5 = (9-10) Right 6 = DK/Refusal	
<u><i>Trust in institutions: National government</i></u>  1 = Tend to trust 2 = Tend not to trust 3 = Don't know (SPONTANEUS)	qa6b_8 (in 96.3 dataset) and qa6a_8 (in 97.5 dataset)
<u><i>EU Proposals: Reinforce external borders with more guards</i></u>  1 = For 2 = Against 3 = Refusal (SPONTANEOUS) 4 = Don't know (SPONTANEOUS)	qb7_2 (in 96.3 dataset) and qb4_2 (in 97.5 dataset)