

# **Re-bordering Europe? Euroscepticism and Membership Discourse in European Parliaments**

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Membership is a fundamental constitutional issue in any political organization. This is especially true in a relatively new and dynamic polity such as the European Union, in which negotiations on the admission of new members have kept the organization constantly busy during the long decade of expansion from 12 to 27 member states between 1995 and 2007. In 2013, the EU not only added Croatia to its membership, but the Cameron government's decision to hold a referendum on 'Brexit' has put the issue of leaving and remaining on the agenda, too.

In this paper, we explore the development of membership discourses in the EU. In particular, we are interested in the determinants of positions and frames in this discourse and its development over time. In the early 2000s, many scholars described EU enlargement as a meritocratic process based on a pan-European identity and liberal democracy (Schimmelfennig 2003; Sedelmeier 2005; Vachudova 2005). The borders of the EU were constructed as open and inclusive – permeable concentric circles, across which countries move towards the center as they adopt the standards of liberal democracy. This post-Cold War consensus has come under increasing pressure since the mid-2000s. On the Eastern outskirts of the EU, it is challenged by the rise of Russian great-power nationalism and the Eurasian integration project of reconsolidation of the former Soviet area. Moreover, the wave of democratization in Eastern Europe, which has triggered the 'big bang' enlargement is stagnating and reverting. Inside the EU, the challenge has come from concerns about the EU's 'absorption capacity' and 'enlargement fatigue' and from domestic contestation of European integration: the rise of Eurosceptic sentiment and parties in the 'polycrisis' of the EU and

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unprecedented threats of disintegration from Grexit to Brexit and beyond. Both external and internal developments have led to increased contestation of the meaning and borders of ‘Europe’ and of EU membership – and apparently to a hardening of the EU’s external border discourse and policy. In this paper, we explore this development in an analysis of membership discourses in the European Parliament and national parliaments of selected EU member states (between 2004 and 2017).

Even though EU membership is primarily a matter of international negotiations and treaties, parliaments have a dual role of deliberation and ratification to play. First, parliaments deliberate on membership issues because they are of fundamental importance to the polity. Second, parliaments ratify – and may reject – accession or withdrawal treaties. Executive negotiators therefore need to pay attention to parliamentary deliberations and justify their membership decisions to win support.

In the EU in particular, there is ample room to deliberate because the membership of the EU and the borders of Europe are not legally specified in a precise and binding way. First, Art. 49 stipulates that ‘any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union.’ These values are ‘respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law’ as well as respect for human and minority rights. Yet these values and the meaning of ‘European’ are nowhere clearly defined. Second, there is no legal way to prevent a member state from vetoing an accession or association treaty for any other reason – such as a bilateral dispute (as in the case of Greek’s long-time veto of the start of accession negotiations with (North) Macedonia). At the end of the day, the borders of Europe and the criteria for membership are thus a matter of political construction and negotiation.

In this paper, we ask, first, whether there has been a shift in the positions and frames of members of parliament indicating a more exclusive membership discourse and a hardening of the EU’s borders across European parliaments and across time. Second, we seek to explain the distribution of positions and frames across parties and party families.

We find, indeed, that there has been a change towards more negative positions on membership, most clearly in the period 2013-2017. Yet, this change was not accompanied by a concomitant hardening of the framing of membership. At the same time, whereas the European Parliament (EP) represents the overall discourse well, national parliaments vary significantly regarding their positions on enlargement and the malleability of the membership criteria they apply.

In addition, we show that, after controlling for heterogeneity between parliaments, membership discourse is strongly partisan. We find that Euroscepticism is systematically associated with the hardening of the EU's borders. The less favorable the party position of speakers in parliaments is towards the EU, the more negative is their position on EU membership and its enlargement and the more rigid is the framing that they use. By contrast, more integrationist parties are also more favorable towards enlargement and use malleable criteria to justify their positions. Whereas positions for or against enlargement also depend on the merits of the candidates, the partisan logic persists if we take the governance performance of the candidates into account.

### **Bordering processes and membership discourse**

Membership discourses are an important source of information about the bordering processes of the EU: in a basic sense, the borders of the EU are defined by its membership. The most obvious and easily observable indication of bordering are EU enlargements and exits from the EU. In addition, however, the membership criteria matter, too. We speak of 'de-bordering' when EU borders increase in perimeter or become more malleable. Conversely, we speak of '(re-)bordering' when these borders stagnate or decrease in perimeter and become more rigidly defined. 'Bordering' policies have a discursive and a behavioral dimension. In this paper, we only examine membership discourses, not decisions or practices.

The border *perimeter* is the first dimension. In the EU, the perimeter typically increases when the EU admits a new member state. Alternatively, a member state could expand its territory, which has happened in the case of German unification in 1990. Correspondingly, the perimeter decreases when a state decides to leave the EU (as in the case of Brexit), a state loses territory (e.g. if Catalonia became independent), or a region of a state decides to leave the EU (as Greenland did in 1982).

Second, the *malleability* of borders depends on the criteria for membership in the EU. A malleable border is one that depends on state characteristics that are alterable in principle. In addition, it becomes the more malleable, the more easily these characteristics can be attained. Membership criteria that refer to the adoption of EU policies, the establishment of political institutions or the achievement of economic and social standards make the border malleable in principle. The more numerous and demanding these standards are, however, the less malleable the border becomes de facto. At the other extreme, criteria based on geographic

location or culture (religion and language) refer to state characteristics that are impossible or very difficult to change. They make the border rigid.<sup>2</sup>

We draw on both external and internal factors to explain de-bordering and re-bordering. Internally, we assume that the cultural or transnational political cleavage between proponents of openness, inclusion, integration or cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and proponents of closure, exclusion, demarcation and communitarianism, on the other, shapes membership discourses (Kriesi et al. 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2017; De Wilde et al. 2019). Because of our focus on European integration, in the remainder of the paper, we refer to the cleavage as one between pro-integration and anti-integration parties. Pro-integration political actors and parties support de-bordering: a progressive and open-ended enlargement process based on alterable and universal membership criteria. By contrast, more anti-integration (Eurosceptic) actors favor re-bordering: a restrictive enlargement process based on rigid, essentialist (cultural or geographic) criteria. Accordingly, we advance our main hypothesis:

*(H1) Eurosceptic members of parliament are more likely to make re-bordering claims.*

*(H1a) The more Eurosceptic a member of parliament is, the more likely this member will oppose membership.*

*(H1b) The more Eurosceptic a member of parliament is, the more likely this member will use rigid membership criteria.*

At an aggregated level, we thus expect that EU membership discourse shifts from de-bordering to re-bordering, as the presence of anti-integration parties in European parliaments increases.

We do not assume, however, that party ideology alone determines the bordering claims that members of parliament make. Rather, we hypothesize that these claims will be shaped additionally by properties of the country they refer to. It is plausible to assume that the availability of suitable candidates for membership drives the EU's membership discourse, too. Previous research has established that the EU has based its membership decisions in the process of Eastern enlargement primarily on merit in terms of the liberal-democratic or, more broadly, 'good governance' conditions enshrined in the Copenhagen Criteria of 1993 (Schimmelfennig 2003; Vachudova 2005). Correspondingly, the overall EU membership

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper, we use the terms 'malleable' and 'rigid' rather than the more common opposition of soft and hard. Note that we refer to membership *criteria*, while the typical soft/hard distinction refers to physical or territorial vs. symbolic or functional *borders*. Malleable or rigid criteria can be applied to both soft and hard borders.

discourse will move towards re-bordering as the democratic or good governance credentials of non-member states deteriorate. Moreover, the best-performing countries will attract the strongest support.

*(H2) The worse a country's governance performance, the more its membership will be opposed.*

Note that we do not assume that governance performance matters for the frames or membership criteria that parliamentarians use. In principle, their reference to malleable or rigid criteria should be independent of and prior to the actual performance of the country they debate. We may find, however, that countries with bad performance are also framed differently (with more rigid frames) than well-performing countries. Whereas support for H1 would indicate a partisan membership discourse, support for H2 would indicate a meritocratic process.

Note that we disregard several additional factors that could explain the positions and criteria of parliamentarians. Such factors could be individual characteristics of members of parliament beyond their party affiliation (some of which might account for both their party membership and their contributions to discourse), specific events (e.g., the crises of the EU), and country characteristics beyond governance performance as, for instance, economic and cultural factors. There is, however, a strong correlation between wealth and governance performance. In general, we seek to control these additional or alternative factors by clustering members of parliament in parties and party families and by country and time fixed effects.

## **Research design and data**

Our unit of analysis are individual statements on membership that speakers make in plenary debates of parliaments. The documents we work with are transcripts of parliamentary debates on topics of European integration. Transcripts contain speeches by members of parliament as well as other institutional actors invited as experts or guests. These transcripts are publicly available online in general and administered by the parliaments' secretariat. We are exclusively interested in those sessions of the parliament, where speakers explicitly address European integration.

To qualify for inclusion in the dataset, a statement needs to express a position about a European membership issue, i.e. they require a participant in the parliamentary debate to take

a (negative, positive or neutral/conditional) statement about the membership of a specific country or group of countries in an organization or policy regime of European integration. We discard all other statements expressing a position on the EU.

We manually code 11 elements for each statement (see Table 1)<sup>3</sup>: the date of the statement, the national parliament, in which the debate takes place, and the type of parliamentary session (usually plenary session), belong to the ‘setting’. Here, we restrict the analysis to the European Parliament and national parliaments of selected member states (for now France, Greece, Hungary and the UK) from the beginning of 2004 to the end of 2017.<sup>4</sup> Note that we are not interested in parliaments as such or variation in their institutional features but regard them as comparable loci for the relevant partisan discourse on EU membership.

The name of the speaker, the type of speaker (normally a Member of Parliament, but also guests or ministers not members of parliaments), the party of the speaker and the state the speaker represents belong to the ‘actor’ dimension of the statement.

Table 1 Coding scheme

STATEMENT											
CONTEXT						CLAIM					
SETTING			ACTOR				ISSUE		POSITION	KEYWORDS	
Date	Parliament	Type	Speaker	Type	Party	Origin	Organization	Country	0 ; 1 ; 2		

Each statement contains a claim, the position of the actor on the membership of a country (or group of countries such as the Western Balkans) in an organization, supported or justified by one or more keywords. Whereas the dataset also includes statements for or against membership in the Eurozone or Schengen, for instance, for the purpose of this analysis, we only examine claims regarding candidacy for or full membership in the EU. The position can take on three values: for or against the membership of a country in an organization – or a neutral, conditional position that makes a negative or positive position dependent on the fulfilment of conditions, with limitations or restrictions. Examples of conditional statements are: “Ukraine should be part of the EU **if** it develops further its market economy” or “Moldova has a vocation to join the EU **but** a lot of work has to be done in the justice sector.”

<sup>3</sup> We take inspiration from political claims analysis as conceptualized by Koopmans (2002), but leave out several elements from his coding scheme and add a more detailed analysis of the issues.  
<sup>4</sup> The selection of parliaments for this paper reflects the state of coding and does not follow any methodological case selection criteria.

We interpret such conditional statements as halfway between a positive and a negative position. Positive positions indicate a ‘de-bordering’ and negative statements a ‘re-bordering’ claim.

Finally, the keywords refer to concepts the speakers use to motivate or justify their positions on the issue. They answer the question: why is the speaker for or against membership or what are the conditions under which the speaker supports membership? Speakers often use several concepts, which we enter into the dataset as multiple keywords per statement. By contrast, it is rare that speakers do not give any justifications for their positions in parliamentary debates.

In our dataset, we use a dictionary of 69 frames, which we aggregated inductively from the keywords used in parliamentary debates. In order to measure the malleability of membership criteria, we classify these frames as malleable and rigid. Frames referring to alterable or universal criteria such as human rights, democracy, rule of law, or the economy are malleable. So are frames referring to enlargement or membership as an open-ended, gradual process. By contrast, frames referring to culture, identity, religion or geography are rigid. Table A1 in the Appendix shows how we allocate frames to the two categories we use in the analysis. In case speakers use both malleable and rigid frames to support their positions, we calculate the ratio of both types of frames.

Our current dataset contains 10’501 statements, of which 6’769 focus on the membership of a country in the EU (or its candidacy for EU membership). Some statements just express a position but do not use a frame or justification. A total of 6’355 statements have both a position and a framing. This is our relevant dataset for this analysis.

Our independent variables are the attitudes of members of parliament towards European integration and the governance performance of the countries to which the membership statements refer. To measure the anti- and pro-integration attitudes of the speakers, we use the position on European integration of the parties, to which they adhere. We assume that speakers typically represent the positions and frames of their party group in parliamentary debates, and that party groups select speakers that represent the attitude of the party well. We use the ‘EU position’ of parties from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015; Ray 1999) with linear interpolation for years without a survey. For the party groups of the European Parliament, we calculate the weighted means based on the scores for their constituent national parties. Smaller parties not represented in the CHES create around 200 missing values, however. In addition, we use a standard classification of party families (radical right, conservative, Christian democrat, liberal, regionalist, green, socialist and

radical left) that we also take from CHES and complement with our own classification of parties not represented in the CHES dataset.

For governance performance, we use the annual mean of the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), which provides an overall estimate of good governance combining democracy and governance quality.<sup>5</sup> The six indicators are ‘voice and accountability’, ‘rule of law’, ‘political stability’, ‘government effectiveness’, ‘regulatory quality’ and ‘control of corruption’. The WGI are aggregated from a variety of data sources including surveys, NGO reports, business information services, and public sector organizations. We use the WGI to measure the performance of individual non-member states. Often, however, speakers refer to enlargement in general or to entire groups of countries such as the “Balkans” or “Eastern Europe”. In these cases, we refrain from assigning a WGI score. As a result, the dataset shrinks to around 4’200 statements.<sup>6</sup> Alternatively, we use the dataset of non-member state compliance with EU conditions compiled from the European Commission’s (Progress) reports (Böhmelt and Freyburg 2013), resulting in a dataset of below 3500 statements. We lag both WGI and compliance scores by one year.

For the analysis, we pool all statements. Because positions vary between negative, conditional and positive, we use ordered logistic regression for our first dependent variable (*ologit* in STATA 14). Frames, our second dependent variable, varies between 0 and 1 and contain intermediate values representing proportions of malleable and rigid frames. We therefore apply fractional logistic regression (STATA 14’s *fracreg logit*). We also include year and parliament fixed effects to control for time-dependency and for the heterogeneity among parliaments and the countries (or the EU polity), in which they operate.

Before we come to the regression analysis, however, we present descriptive evidence on the characteristics and the development of membership discourse in the European and the national parliaments.

## **Membership discourse in the EU**

In general, the EU’s parliamentary membership discourse has been characterized by de-bordering in the period between 2004 and 2017. Statements on membership have been on the positive side on average and based on predominantly soft, malleable membership criteria and

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#home> (last accessed 17 April 2019).

<sup>6</sup> We plan to code average scores for these groups of countries for the next version of the paper.



frames. The mean position in 6355 statements has a value of .67 (where 0 is negative and 1 is positive), and the mean frame has a value of .31 (where 0 is soft and 1 is hard). Positions and frames are only weakly correlated (at -0.009 overall).<sup>7</sup> These figures mask variation across time and parliaments, however.

First, parliaments debate EU membership issues in varying frequency and intensity. Not surprisingly, the European Parliament (EP) is the most active, accounting for almost 60% of statements in our dataset. The British parliament accounts for another 20%, whereas the other three parliaments hold relatively infrequent and irregular debates.<sup>8</sup>

Second, the average positions and frames vary (see Table 2). The EP values are almost the same as the overall mean values, which is not only a result of its dominance in the discourse, but also appears to indicate that it represent national parliamentary discourses rather well. The Greek discourse is significantly more negative, and the Hungarian discourse significantly more positive, than that of the other parliaments. Moreover, Table 2 shows that the UK discourse is based more strongly on malleable frames than other parliamentary discourses, whereas the Hungarian discourse features a significantly higher share of rigid membership criteria.

*Table 2      Positions and frames in European parliaments*

	EP	France	Greece	Hungary	UK
Positions	.66	.67	.52	.77	.68
Frames	.31	.35	.32	.45	.22

Note: For simplification, we treat ‘positions’ as continuous variables in this table.

Finally, has the discourse changed over time? Figure 2 shows that, positions on membership have become more negative on average over time, in particular since 2013, whereas the use of frames has not changed considerably. If anything, the use of soft frames is slightly more pronounced in 2017 than it had been in 2004. Thus, the expectation of a trend towards ‘re-bordering’ is corroborated for the perimeter but not the malleability dimension of bordering. The EP is again broadly in line with the general development, but actually shows an initial de-bordering trend between 2004 and 2007. Re-bordering is most pronounced in the eighth EP

<sup>7</sup> See also Table A2 of pairwise correlations for all relevant variables in the Appendix.

<sup>8</sup> There are even two years without any relevant statements from the Assemblée Nationale in our dataset.

(since 2014). For both ‘all parliaments’ and the EP, we observe very similar trajectories independently of whether we take into account all 10’500 statements, the relevant sample focusing on EU membership and candidacy statements, or a more restricted sample excluding the discourse of parliaments on the EU membership of their own country (see Figure A1 in the Appendix). However, the decline of positive positions is less steep if we include all statements or exclude current member states.

The Hungarian and UK graphs show the development in two countries that have long had a more positive average position on EU membership and enlargement (and a more sustained discourse than France and Greece). Both have seen a negative trend in positions overall, which preceded the steep decline in the UK discourse when it started to become almost exclusively focused on Brexit from 2016 onwards. However, we do not observe a clear trend in framing.

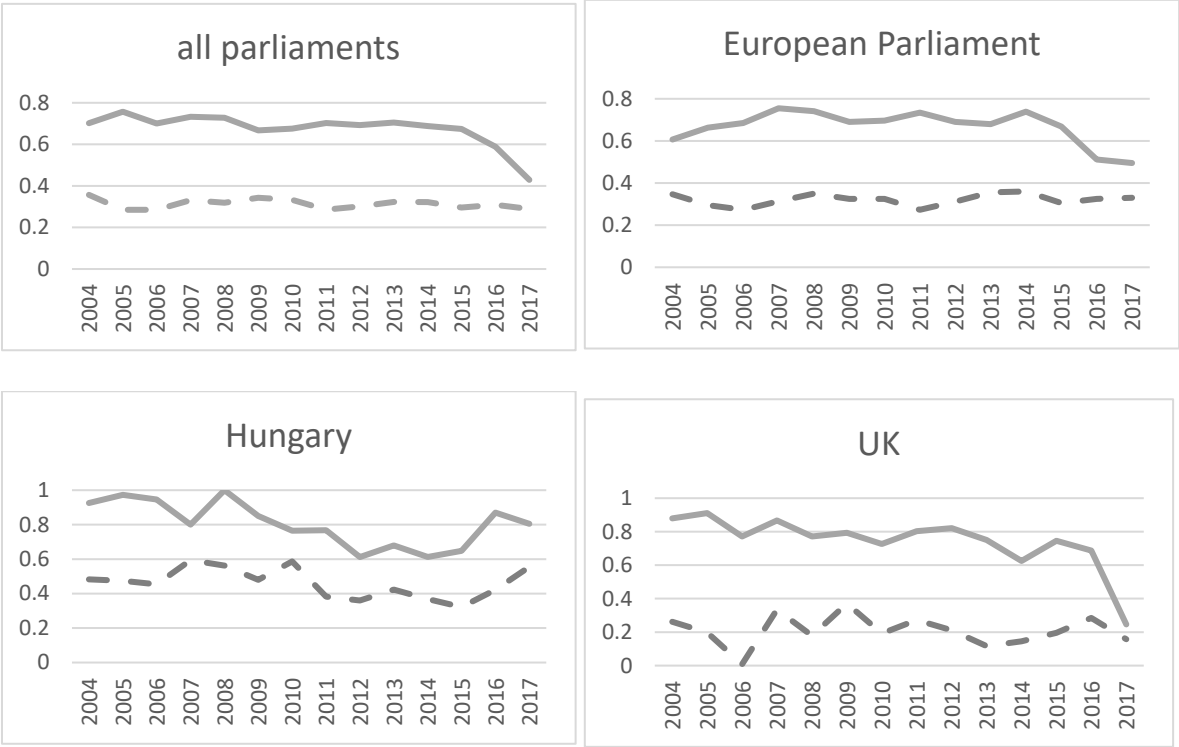


Figure 1 Membership discourses in selected European Parliaments

Note: Annual ratios of negative and positive positions (solid lines) and malleable and rigid frames (dashed lines).

With 20% of all statements, Turkey’s EU membership was the most debated issue in the period under investigation. Serbia, Croatia and Macedonia were distant runners-up with 5-7% of the relevant statements each. We therefore need to test whether our findings hold with or

without statements on Turkey. If we include statements on current member states, the UK accounts for 11.5% of the statements.

### Analysis of membership statements

The regression table (Table 3) reports our findings from the logistic regression analysis for both dependent variables (positions and frames). In line with our expectations (H1), the EU position of the speaker's party is systematically associated with the positions they hold and the frames they use. Members of more integration-friendly parties and party groups are consistently more positive about the (candidacy for) membership of the countries on the parliamentary agenda, and they are more likely to use malleable frames, than members of more Eurosceptic parties and party groups. Our measures of governance performance for the accession countries show that membership discourse is merit-based, too. Better-performing countries are more likely to find support. Yet partisan, ideological positions remain relevant after controlling for performance. Note that models 2 and 3 not only include measures of governance performance, but are de facto restricted to discourses on candidate countries for EU membership, whereas models 1 include discourses on the membership of current members. Because of the highly unequal sample sizes, we refrain from comparing the odds ratios.

*Table 3 Regression results (using EU position)*

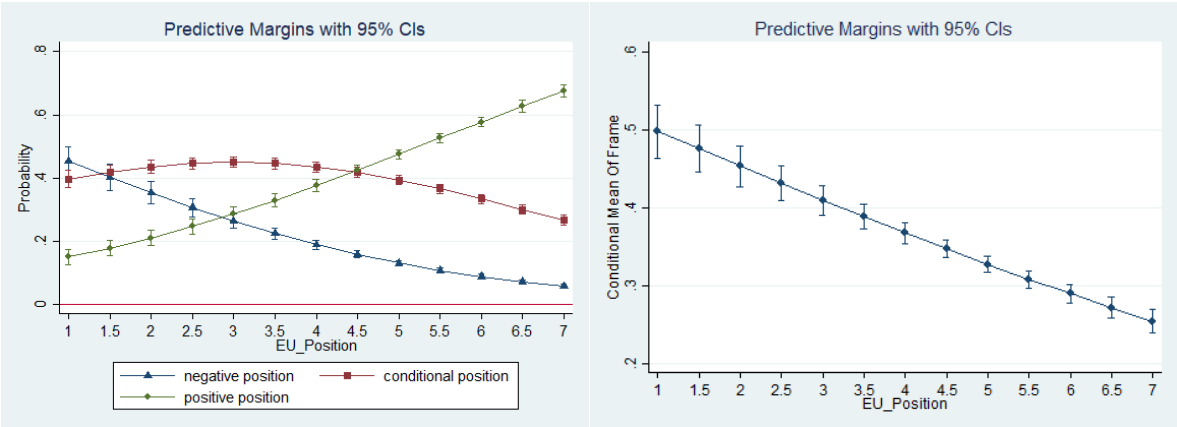
	Model 1a (positions)	Model 2a (positions)	Model 3a (positions)	Model 1b (frames)	Model 2b (frames)	Model 3b (frames)
EU position	1.68 (.03)***	1.58 (.04)***	1.64 (.05)***	.88 (.01)***	.83 (.01)***	.83 (.02)***
WGI score		1.37 (.14)**			.69 (.06)***	
Compliance			2.11 (.30)***			.91 (.11)
constant				1.14 (.13)	1.26 (.16)	1.51 (.33)
N	6529	4371	3556	6155	4159	3389
Prob>chi2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Pseudo R2	0.11	0.1001	0.1059	0.0214	0.0318	0.0255
Estimation	Ordered logit			Fractional logit		

Note: Odds ratios and robust standard errors. Parliament and Year fixed effects omitted from table. \*\*\*: significant at 0.1% level; \*\*: significant at 1% level; \*: significant at 5% level. Note that odds smaller than 1 indicate a negative relationship.

Interestingly, governance performance is associated with frame selection, too. Better-performing countries are discussed with more malleable frames than less well-governed countries. It may well be that parliamentarians use a different, more rigid set of frames when they talk about authoritarian or failing states. This association does not appear to be robust, however. If we use the compliance measure, it loses statistical significance.

For better interpretation of the association of partisan EU positions with enlargement positions and frames, we present the predictive margins plots in Figure 2. The left-hand graph illustrates the probabilities with which anti- und pro-integration stances produce negative, positive and conditional positions on membership. The lines for positive and negative position clearly run in opposition directions. The most Eurosceptic speakers express a negative position with more than 40% probability and a positive position with less than 20% probability. The differences are particularly large on the pro-integration side. The most integration-friendly speaker will have a positive position with a probability of almost 70% and a negative position with a probability of less than 10%. The probability of conditional statements does not vary strongly across the spectrum of EU positions (except for the most integration-friendly parties). Mildly Eurosceptic speakers are most likely to use them.

Figure 2 Predictive margins plots



Note: Based on Models 2a and 2b.

Likewise, as we move from radical Eurosceptics to radical integrationists, the use of malleable frames becomes more prevalent. But note that even highly Eurosceptic parties balance malleable and rigid frames on average.

The coefficients for the fixed effects are omitted from Table 3. The analysis of positions confirms, however, that the Greek parliament is significantly more negative, and the British and Hungarian parliaments are significantly more positive, than the EP (our base category). Most year effects are not statistically significant at conventional levels, but 2016 and 2017 show a clear negative deviation from 2004. In the analysis of frames, the French and Hungarian parliaments turn out to use more rigid frames than the EP, whereas the British parliament uses frames that are more malleable. Finally, the association of EU positions and membership positions and frames is robust if we remove the numerically influential case of Turkish accession from the analysis (not shown here).

In the next step, we would like to know how the partisan, ideological discourse on EU membership maps onto party families. Our question here is whether and how the EU positions of individual parties and party groups and their effect on membership positions and frames can be aggregated to the party family level. Table A3 in the Appendix shows that party families differ strongly in their average EU position, with liberals, regionalists and socialists being the most, and both radical right and left parties being least integration-friendly. However, some parties – in particular the conservatives and the radical left – are also strongly divided internally.

*Table 4 Regression results (using party families)*

	Model 4a (positions)	Model 5a (positions)	Model 4b (frames)	Model 5b (frames)
Party family (baseline: Christian democrat)				
- conservative	1.50 (.64)	2.12 (1.2)	.65 (.05)***	.58 (.05)***
- radical right	.17 (.07)***	.23 (.12)**	2.14 (.84)	1.28 (.55)
- liberal	1.98 (.86)	2.24 (1.2)	.42 (.04)***	.35 (.04)***
- regionalist	9.5 (5.5)***	1.99 (1.5)	.68 (.19)	.68 (.33)
- green	1.64 (.73)	1.92 (1.1)	.45 (.06)***	.40 (.06)***
- socialist	2.61 (1.1)*	2.64 (1.4)	.54 (.04)***	.45 (.04)***
- radical left	.45 (.21)	.77 (.44)	.66 (.09)***	.63 (.09)***
WGI score		1.4 (.14)***		.69 (.06)***
constant			.98 (.10)	.92 (.10)
N	6715	4439	6321	4220
Prob>chi2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Pseudo R2	0.1103	0.1108	0.0240	0.0330

Note: See Table 3.

In the analysis of party families, we exclude the models using the alternative measurement for performance (compliance). In each model shown in Table 4, the (supposedly centrist) Christian democratic party family serves as a baseline against which we compare the positions and frames of the other party families.

The analysis of positions is in line with the expectation that radical parties are the most anti-membership. Both radical right and radical left have more negative positions on membership than the Christian democrats (but only the difference to the radical right is statistically significant). By contrast, socialist and regionalists are more positive than the Christian democrats are. When we limit the analysis to enlargement and control for the merit of the candidate country in question, only the radical right differs significantly from the Christian democrats.

The analysis of framing shows, however, that the Christian democrats are similar to the radical right and the regionalist parties in using more rigid membership criteria than all other parties. Liberals, greens and socialists deviate furthest from the Christian democrats in using malleable frames (also if we control for candidate country performance). It appears as if their abundant use of cultural and religious frames sets the Christian democrats apart from other integration-friendly parties. By contrast, even though the radical left is highly sceptical of membership and enlargement, it does not frame its opposition with rigid criteria.

## **Conclusions**

Are Europe's borders hardening? Our study of the development of discourses on membership in the EP and several national parliaments offers a cautious confirmation. Parliamentarians have taken increasingly negative positions on EU enlargement over time, indeed, but they have not moved towards more rigid membership criteria and frames.

We also show that the negative membership discourse is not simply a reflection of the deteriorating merit of the EU's candidates for accession, but also follows a partisan logic. Based on our sample of parliaments, we find that both the positions that parliamentarians take on membership and enlargement – and the framing they use to motivate and justify their positions – are systematically associated with the general positions of their parties and party groups on European integration. Members of more Eurosceptic parties use more frames that are rigid and take positions that are more negative when they debate EU membership issues in the EP and national parliaments.

For the moment, we conclude that membership discourses are both party and merit-driven and that the rise of Eurosceptic parties and the stagnation or decline in ‘good governance’ among the EU’s candidates for membership have both contributed to hardening of Europe’s borders.

The partisan logic of positions and frames indicates that attitudes on enlargement are structurally similar to attitudes on European integration more general. We also observe the inverted U-shape of party positions on EU enlargement that we find in studies of partisan support of European integration more generally: radical parties on the left and right are both more opposed to enlargement than centrist parties. When it comes to the framing of enlargement, however, we see indications of a cultural left-right divide. Parties on the cultural right are more likely to use rigid, exclusive frames than are parties on the cultural left. In general, positions and frames appear to be independent from each other, which supports our approach to study both.

Moving forward, we plan to include further national parliaments in the analysis. In addition, our party-based explanation would benefit from including further factors – such as whether a party is in government or in the opposition, whether it is a mainstream or fringe party and what its positions are on the left-right and GAL-TAN dimensions. Moreover, we plan to look into specific issues such as enlargement (membership of other countries) vs. the membership of own country, the accession of specific (groups of) countries and the question of association. The marked differences we observe between national parliament offer another angle of further inquiry. Finally, we are interested in the link between discourse and behaviour. Does a more negative discourse produce re-bordering in enlargement decisions, too?

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*Appendix*

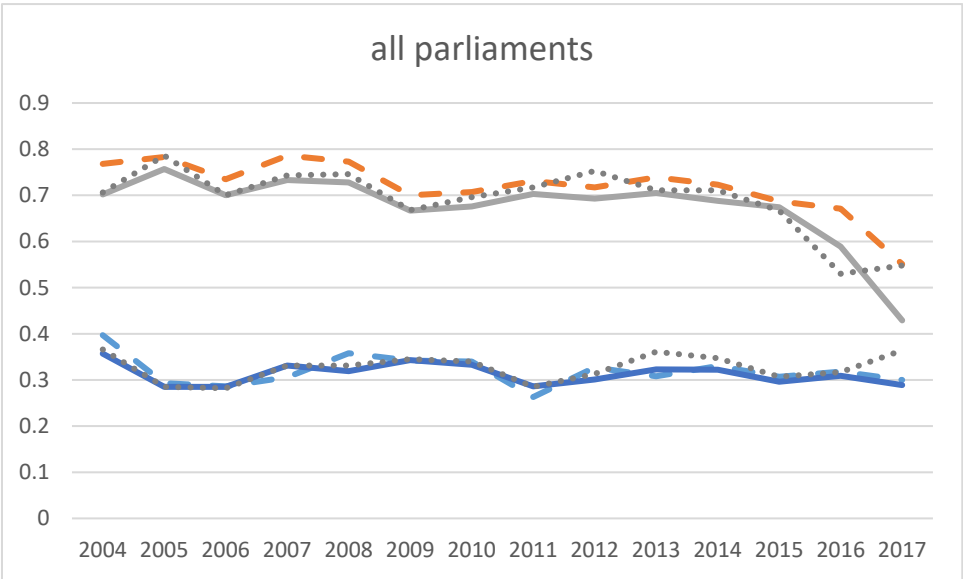
*Table A1 Frame classification*

Malleable	Rigid
Achievements	Belongs to Europe
Attraction	Bilateral Issues
Business	Borders
Capacity	Culture
Choice	Energy
Civil society	Ethnic minorities
Conditionality	Geography
Consistency	Geopolitics
Convergence	History
Cooperation	Identity
Costs/Benefits	Migration
Crime	Nationalism
Crisis/Problems	Peace/conflict
Deepening	Power/Strength
Democracy	Religion
Dialogue	Security
Domestic Politics	Sovereignty
Economic costs/benefits	Stability
Economy	Unity/Diversity
Education/Science	
Efficiency/Quality	
Employment/labour	
Environment	
Free movement	
Freedom	
Future	
Future in the EU/Aspiration	
Governance	
Human Rights	
Institutional ties	
Integration	
Interests	
Market/Trade	
Neighbourhood	
Obligations/Commitments	
Openness	
Partnership	
Process	
Reforms	
Rule of Law	
Society	
Solidarity	
Support/Assistance	
Time	
Values	
Wealth	
Welfare and living standards	
Will of people	

**Table A2** *Table of correlations*

	<i>EU position</i>	<i>WGI score</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Framing</i>
<i>EU position</i>	1				
<i>WGI score</i>	0.0162	1			
<i>Compliance</i>	-0.0165	0.5658	1		
<i>Position</i>	0.363	0.0254	0.0188	1	
<i>Framing</i>	-0.103	-0.0207	-0.0033	-0.0091	1

**Figure A1** *Alternative samples for positions and frames*



Note: Dashed lines: all statements in dataset; solid lines: membership (as in main text); dotted lines: membership excluding France, Greece, Hungary, UK. Lines at top: positions; lines at bottom: frames.

**Table A3** *Party families and EU positions*

Party	Number of statements	Mean EU position	Standard Deviation
Radical right	980	1.92	.57
Conservative	4378	4.75	1.25
Christian Democrat	53	4.80	.13
Liberal	1092	6.14	.24
Regionalist	75	6.10	.34
Green	362	5.50	.27
Socialist	2798	5.95	.48
Radical left	333	2.54	.89

Based on full dataset of 10'501 statements.