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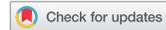
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Differently Eurosceptic: radical right populist parties and their supporters

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ABSTRACT

Since the 2008 crisis, radical right populist (RRP) party positions on European integration have hardened and/or increased in salience. But do their supporters align with them on this? And what role does Euroscepticism play in driving support for these parties? Using data from the 'euandi' voting advice application, we examine how close over 8000 RRP supporters in the UK, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden and Belgium were in 2014 to their parties on European integration and, for comparison, immigration. We find that, while they closely aligned on immigration, which remains a stronger predictor of support, they did not on European integration. We conclude, firstly, that increased salience of this issue does not necessarily lead to stronger linkages between parties and voters and that the consequences of positional congruence depend on salience congruence. Secondly, our findings suggest that RRP parties enjoy flexibility on European integration and can shift positions if necessary.

KEYWORDS Euroscepticism; European Union; immigration; radical right; populism

Introduction

In the post-2008 crisis years in Europe, Western European radical right populist (RRP) parties have been key proponents of hard-line Eurosceptic positions (Vasilopoulou 2018). As seen most prominently in the calls during this period from the French Front National (FN) and the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) for exit from the Euro and even the European Union (EU) itself, radical right populists have sought to take advantage of the difficulties encountered by the EU by hardening their positions on European integration and/or making these more salient.¹ This raises the following questions: *How important is Euroscepticism for radical right populist supporters in the wake of the crisis and their parties' shifts? Do they align with the parties on this issue? And what role does it play in their support?* From surveys conducted in the last decade, we know that Euroscepticism was well behind anti-immigration

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attitudes as a driver of support (Lubbers and Scheepers 2007; Werts *et al.* 2013). However, this may have changed given the long post-2008 economic and political crisis, the shift of RRP positions on European integration and/or the greater emphasis they place on the issue. In this article, we therefore seek to answer the above questions by examining the relationship between the positions of radical right populist parties and their supporters towards the European Union, using data gathered in the run-up to the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections.

Specifically, we use data from the 'euandi' (reads: EU and I) project, the cornerstone of which is a transnational online Voting Advice Application (VAA) that ran across the EU in the first half of 2014 (Garzia *et al.* 2015).² In addition, euandi researchers established party positions by coding relevant party documents and by consulting the parties themselves. The final dataset thus enables us to place RRP parties and their supporters in relation to one another (and to supporters of other parties), regarding a series of issues. The survey contains 8598 respondents who indicated support for the six Western European radical right populist (RRP) parties that we focus on in this study: the FN, PPV, the UK Independence Party (UKIP), the Sweden Democrats (SD), the Flemish Vlaams Belang (VB) and the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ).³

In the sections that follow, we first discuss the positions of radical right populists on European integration and the theoretical background to our study, in particular regarding when supporters take their cues from parties on issues. We then explain the data used to analyse party and supporter positions, before outlining the categories we have devised to tap into views on European integration and immigration. In the analysis section, we present the results of our study of the proximity between RRP parties and their supporters as well as the average non-RRP respondent. We find that RRP parties and their supporters were much closer on anti-immigration positions than on European integration and that, while proximity regarding European integration influenced their likelihood to support a RRP party, the salience did not. European integration positions thus played a much smaller role for RRP support than immigration and, contrary to our expectations, RRP supporters and parties were not particularly closely aligned on it. This gap, we conclude, firstly tells us that increased party salience on this issue does not necessarily lead to supporters aligning. Secondly, it suggests that RRP parties retain a considerable degree of flexibility on European integration and can therefore shift between positions – as several major RRP parties have already done since 2017 – without alienating their supporters.

Radical right populists and Euroscepticism

While Western European radical right populists have consistently espoused Eurosceptic positions since the turn of the twenty-first century, their

opposition to the EU and integration has come in varying degrees and saliences of opposition at different moments (Taggart and Szczesbiak 2008; Vasilopoulou 2018).⁴ As Mudde (2007) noted in the middle of the last decade, only a few Western European RRP parties such as UKIP advocated that their countries should leave the EU. Instead, as he put it, 'the majority of populist radical right parties believe in the basic tenets of European integration, but are sceptical about the current direction of the EU' (Mudde 2007: 164). This distinction between scepticism among parties towards the more abstract process of European integration and scepticism towards concrete policies like the common currency has also been reflected in the discussion about the dimensionality of public Euroscepticism. Some authors contend that there are distinct Eurosceptic economic and cultural dimensions (e.g., Boomgaarden *et al.* 2011; Van Klingeren *et al.* 2013). Economic Euroscepticism can be further divided into a left- and right-wing argumentation (e.g., van Elsas *et al.* 2016), while the cultural dimension can be either focused on nativist/anti-immigration or sovereignty issues (Kriesi 2007; Leconte 2010). Others, like McLaren (2006: 21), acknowledge these conceptual distinctions but argue that they are empirically closely connected.

As has generally been the case for their parties, Euroscepticism has not been the key issue for RRP voters. Various studies have shown that, while Eurosceptic attitudes were indeed linked to RRP voting in the decade before the post-2008 crisis, these were less important than nativist/anti-immigrant attitudes (Lubbers and Scheepers 2007; Van der Brug *et al.* 2005). Werts *et al.* (2013) used European Social Survey data to examine the role played by Euroscepticism in radical right voting at general elections in 18 countries between 2002 and 2008. They found that, although 'Euroscepticism affects radical right-wing voting, over and beyond other socio-political attitudes', it remained much less significant a driver of radical-right voting than 'perceived ethnic threat' (Werts *et al.* 2013: 196). Interestingly, despite the early years of the twenty-first century in Western Europe having been characterized by a series of referendum defeats on EU-related topics, along with controversy about the Euro and the accession of new member states from Central and Eastern Europe, Werts *et al.* (2013: 199) also found that 'the effect of Euroscepticism on radical right-wing voting has not increased between 2002 and 2008'. Nonetheless, they concluded that the crisis made it likely that 'Euroscepticism will turn out to be an even stronger determinant of radical right-wing voting in the near future' (Werts *et al.* 2013: 201).

There is good reason to believe they might have been right. The external shock of the financial crisis, whose economic and political effects were particularly severe and long lasting for the EU, provided opportunities for parties in the ensuing years to extend the depth and/or prominence of their Euroscepticism. As Pirro *et al.* (2018) argue, what distinguishes right-wing populists from left-wing ones during the post-crisis period is that RRP

have put both socio-economic and socio-cultural critiques of the EU at the centre of their framing of the issue, while left-wing populists focus predominantly on socio-economic ones. RRPs not only lament the alleged detrimental effects of the Euro for example, but also as Bornschier (2011: 176) argues, make a strong sovereignty argument 'for the primacy of autonomous national politics vis-à-vis obligations arising from European integration' in addition to lamenting the culturally homogenizing efforts of supranational elites (see also Vasilopoulou 2018).

The empirical evidence on the positions of Western European RRP parties towards European integration broadly points towards greater opposition and/or salience during the post-crisis years. According to the 2014 wave of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) on party positions (Bakker *et al.* 2015), Western European RRP parties had either become more negative towards European integration since 2009, or else had remained around the same negative level. None had become more positive. The Chapel Hill data also shows that the salience of opposition to European integration rose sharply for all the RRP parties covered in our study between 2009 and 2014. Based on their own expert surveys, Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2016) found that Western European parties furthest to the right (and left) were those whose Euroscepticism had hardened most between 2008 and 2013, while mainstream parties moved little over the same period. They conclude that this 'has left a clear representational opening' for radical parties to take advantage of (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2016: 158). As Wagner (2012: 82) argues, parties are more likely to adopt extreme positions in order to secure issue ownership when they are 'relatively small, when issue positions are ideologically distinctive and when other parties neglect the topic'.

What we do not know, however, is if RRP supporters in the post-crisis period aligned with their parties on European integration. Focusing on EU attitudes in 2007 (i.e., before the crisis), Sanders and Toka (2013: 23) find that the 'strongest cueing influences on mass opinion derive from the summary views expressed by members of the national political party that the individual citizen supports' (although they also find an effect of party supporters' positions – along with those of economic elites – on the EU attitudes of party elites). Looking at the same issue between 1984 and 1996, Ray (2003: 990) found that party positions on European integration served as cues for supporters particularly when the issue was more salient to the party. Given that the parties we focus on did not simply shift positions (or their salience) in their 2014 EP manifestos, but had signaled these repeatedly in the post-2008 crisis period, we therefore would expect to find alignment in the months leading up to that election between RRP supporters and the parties on European integration.

The euandi dataset and party/supporter positions

Our aim in this study is to investigate whether RRP supporters align with their parties on European integration in 2014 and how important this is in driving support. To do so, we used data from the 'euandi' project. The main component of euandi was a Voting Advice Application (VAA) devised by a team at the European University Institute (EUI) and run in the months leading up to the 2014 EP elections (Trechsel *et al.* 2015). The VAA was available in 24 languages and presented 30 policy positions with which respondents were asked to agree or disagree on a 5-point Likert scale. At the end, they were requested to indicate which policies were most and least important for them (they could choose as many policies as they liked for each). They were also asked how likely they were to vote for specific parties in their country (this required providing a score on a scale from 0 'not at all probable' to 10 'very probable').

The policy profiles of the parties were measured along the same policy questions and using 'an iterative method, consisting of a combination of experts' judgements and party self-placement' (Garzia *et al.* 2015). Researchers from the euandi team coded the same 30 policy positions of parties as were asked of the respondents. This was based, firstly, on the 2014 European election manifestos and, secondly, on 'other relevant party documentation' (*ibid.*). At the same time, parties were offered the opportunity to self-place themselves on the 30 policy positions. Later, parties were also invited to comment on how the researchers had coded their positions. As the party and respondents' policy positions were measured using the same formulations of questions and answer options, and party positions were determined by national party experts on the basis of party documents, the positions are directly comparable under the assumption that the public and the parties within one country, at a particular point in time, share the same understanding of the policy questions.

We focus on the positions of six RRP parties and their supporters in 2014: the French Front National (FN), the UK Independence Party (UKIP), the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), the Sweden Democrats (SD), the Flemish Vlaams Belang (VB) and the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ).⁵ Furthermore, we benchmark the RRP supporters against the non-RRP supporters in the country to investigate whether the proximity to the RRP parties is simply country-driven or whether RRP supporters stand out. In total, the survey contains 116,286 people in the six countries covered in our study, including 8598 respondents who indicated support for one of our six RRP parties.⁶ We identified 'supporters' as those who gave the RRP party in their country a score of 8 or higher in the survey question about the likelihood of voting for particular parties.⁷ About half the respondents identified as RRP supporters also expressed support for at least one other party in their country. For the

purpose of our analysis, this is not problematic since we do not make claims about (more or less) confirmed party voters but instead identify individuals that actively state a strong level of support for one of the RRP parties. Furthermore, whether or not a respondent supports a RRP party is a clear-cut decision for most. On average, 76 per cent of all respondents in the six countries deny any vote propensity for our RRP parties (i.e., choosing values from 0 to 2 on a 0–10 scale) and only 13 per cent are undecided, choosing values between 3 and 7. All of the RRP parties we investigate have a minimum of 330 supporters in the dataset (the average per party is 1433).

As the euandi data is based on a VAA, respondents are necessarily self-selected. Although this reduces the representativeness of the sample, the euandi dataset also offers a number of advantages. First and foremost, it allows us to analyse the attitudes of almost 8600 RRP supporters. While standard surveys would ensure a higher level of representativeness of the data regarding the countries' general voting populations, using them decreases the number of RRP supporters among the respondents to an insufficient level. For example, in the 2014 wave of the European Election Study (EES 2014), only 411 respondents indicated that they had voted for the six parties we investigate (ranging from 125 for UKIP to 26 for the VB). We find a similar picture if look at the 2012, 2014 and 2016 waves of the European Social Survey (ESS 2014): of the combined 30,000 respondents from the six countries only 1634 voted for our six RRP parties. As we are not interested in predictions at the population level, but in supporters of specific parties, euandi offers considerably better variation than the standard surveys. Furthermore, Table D in the appendix shows that the RRP supporters in the euandi data share the basic demographic characteristics of those in the 2014 waves of ESS and EES. Table J in the appendix also shows that a replication of the analysis with the pooled data from three post-2008 crisis ESS waves (2012–2016) produces the same results as ours but is less refined because ESS does not include core variables that euandi provides.

In order to investigate how the positions of RRP supporters in 2014 compared to RRP parties and non-RRP supporters, we combined different euandi survey questions to create general positions on European integration, our main positional dimension of interest, and immigration as a benchmark (see Table 1). The reasons for choosing European integration and immigration are straightforward given the relative importance of these in driving support for RRP parties. We tested the relationship between the survey questions for the dimensions in 2014 through correlation and a principal factor analysis (see Appendix). While it could be assumed that the attitudes regarding European integration and immigration are connected, Table B in the Appendix shows that they only correlate 0.3 (Pearson's R) and, thus, should be considered independently.

Table 1. Euandi survey statements, grouped into two dimensions.

European integration	Immigration
European integration is a good thing	Immigration [into your country] should be made more restrictive*
The single European currency (Euro) is a bad thing*	Immigrants from outside Europe should be required to accept our culture and values*
On foreign policy issues the EU should speak with one voice	It should be harder for EU immigrants working or staying in [your country] to get access to social assistance benefits than it is for [your country's] citizens*

*Answer categories reversed from original data.

Both dimensions are comprised of answers to three survey questions. The three questions on European integration cover the respondent's general attitude towards the EU, along with the economic and sovereignty dimensions of Euroscepticism (i.e., both the socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects of opposition to European integration). As [Table 1](#) shows, in some cases we reversed the answering categories in order to aggregate questions and let them run from negative to positive about the policy dimension. The possible answers for each individual policy ranges from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The answers for each of the three questions within the dimensions are first added up. The possible scale then runs from 3 (all three items 'totally disagree') to 15 (all three items 'totally agree'). After subtracting a value of 3, in order to make the scale start at a more intuitive value of 0, the final coding runs on a scale from 0 (totally disagree with integration or immigration) to 12 (totally agree with integration or immigration). [Table C](#) in the Appendix shows the results of the factor analysis for these two dimensions. The Cronbach's Alpha measures for internal consistency are at acceptable levels with 0.71 for the EU and 0.80 for the immigration dimension.⁸

We measured these positions for: (a) RRP parties; (b) RRP supporters; (c) all other respondents. Respondents were able to indicate which of the thirty policies featured in the survey were least (coded as -1) or most important (coded as 1). Alternatively, they could leave policies at the default level of importance (coded as 0). We added these saliences for each set of three policy questions within the same dimensions as the positions, thus creating a dimensional saliency scale running from -3 (all three policies were rated as least important) to 3 (all three policies were rated as most important). The data does not provide saliency scores for parties. The resulting positions for the six parties in this study regarding EU integration and immigration are summarized in [Table 2](#), confirming that these six radical right parties are Eurosceptic and anti-immigration. The slightly more positive positions of the FPÖ and VB are caused by their positions (positive and neutral, respectively) regarding the common EU foreign policy. The following analysis is robust against replacing the EU foreign policy item with the next-best loading question for the

Table 2. Party positions on EU integration and immigration, euandi 2014.

Party	EU integration	Immigration
SD	1	1
VB	4	0
PVV	0	0
FN	0	0
FPÖ	5	1
UKIP	0	0

Note: Each scale runs from 0 to 12, lower values denote more negative positions.

EU dimension, the position regarding an EU tax (which both FPÖ and VB reject).⁹

Radical right populist party and supporter proximity

In order to assess the proximity of radical right populist parties and voters on EU integration and immigration policies, along with the importance of these for RRP support, we conducted our analysis in two stages. First, we map the proximity between RRP parties and their supporters and between the RRP parties and all other (non-RRP) respondents from the particular country, as well as the salience of the issue for each respondent group. The proximity is calculated by subtracting the RRP party position from the position of every respondent in that country, thus creating the individual-level proximity. These distances are then averaged in two groups: for the RRP supporters and for all non-RRP supporters. Resulting negative values indicate that the party has a more positive position than the respondent while positive values indicate that the respondent has a more positive position than the party.

Mapping proximities and saliences allows us to assess whether RRP supporters (a) align with RRP parties on specific dimensions; (b) attribute different levels of importance to issues compared to the average respondent. We report the average proximity between all RRP parties and all RRP respondents to also have a numerical comparison between the EU integration and immigration dimensions. Tables E.a-d in the Appendix show that RRP respondents and non-RRP respondents have significantly different positions towards EU integration and immigration. In the second stage, we analyse the impact of a respondent's proximity to the RRP party and saliences on their likelihood to support one of the six RRP parties by running a logistic regression model with country-clustered standard errors. We include country dummy variables in order to control for country-dependencies like the level of general support for RRP parties. Apart from the individual respondents' proximity and ascribed saliences, we also include the most common demographic variables that have been shown to influence radical right support: gender, age, and educational level (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Lubbers *et al.* 2002) as well as general socio-economic and social left-right positions to account for the effect of other policy preferences.¹⁰

Proximity of positions and saliences

The first policy dimension we investigate is the positions of parties and respondents on European integration. As the six radical right populist parties all had clear Eurosceptic profiles, which had risen in salience by 2014, we expect to find that their supporters aligned with the parties (Ray 2003) and were more Eurosceptic than other respondents. The proximities between RRP parties and RRP supporters as well as between RRP parties and non-RRP respondents are shown in the left-hand panel of Figure 1, where the solid line represents the average proximity of RRP supporters to RRP parties (4.1).

Figure 1 shows that in all six countries RRP party supporters in 2014 held positions towards European integration that were much closer to the RRP party than other respondents. With regards to the proximity between RRP parties and supporters, only the standard deviations of FPÖ and SD supporters reach into the negative area where they have more Eurosceptic positions than their RRP parties. The average proximity, however, is well above the line, indicating that most RRP supporters are less Eurosceptic than their national RRP party.

We can also see in Figure 1 that not only were RRP supporters less Eurosceptic than their parties, but they attached less importance to this issue. As discussed earlier, we know that opposition to European integration had become very salient for the six RRP parties by 2014. However, the euandi data suggests that this was not the same for their supporters. The right-

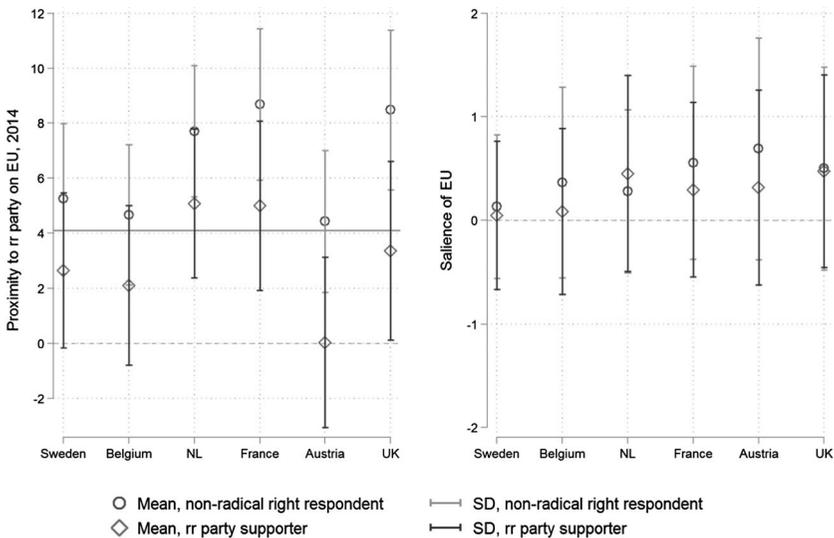


Figure 1. Proximity to RRP party position and salience of EU integration.

hand panel of [Figure 1](#) shows that European integration was only of medium salience both for RRP supporters and non-RRP respondents.

A different picture emerges with regards to immigration. The left-hand panel in [Figure 2](#) shows the proximity – calculated as above – between the RRP parties and their supporters or the non-RRP respondents in the six countries. Positive values denote respondent positions more favorable to immigration policies than the position of the RRP parties while negative values mean that the respondents are more anti-immigration than the parties. The right-hand panel in [Figure 2](#) shows the salience of immigration for the two respondent groups.

The results in [Figure 2](#) indicate a much higher proximity between radical right parties and their supporters on immigration than was the case for European integration in [Figure 1](#). The solid line, denoting the average distance, is far closer (0.9). Tables E.e and E.f in the Appendix reveal that both RRP supporters and non-RRP supporters are closer to RRP parties on the immigration than on EU integration dimension. At the same time, the gap in incongruences on the immigration and the EU dimension is larger between RRP parties and RRP respondents than between RRP parties and non-RRP respondents. [Figure 2](#) shows that their supporters strongly agree with these positions while non-RRP respondents are much further away from these parties. Additionally, RRP supporters attached higher importance to immigration policy than the non-RRP respondents. In comparison to the salience of EU integration (see [Figure 1](#)), RRP supporters assigned immigration 0.5–1.5 scale points higher importance than EU integration.

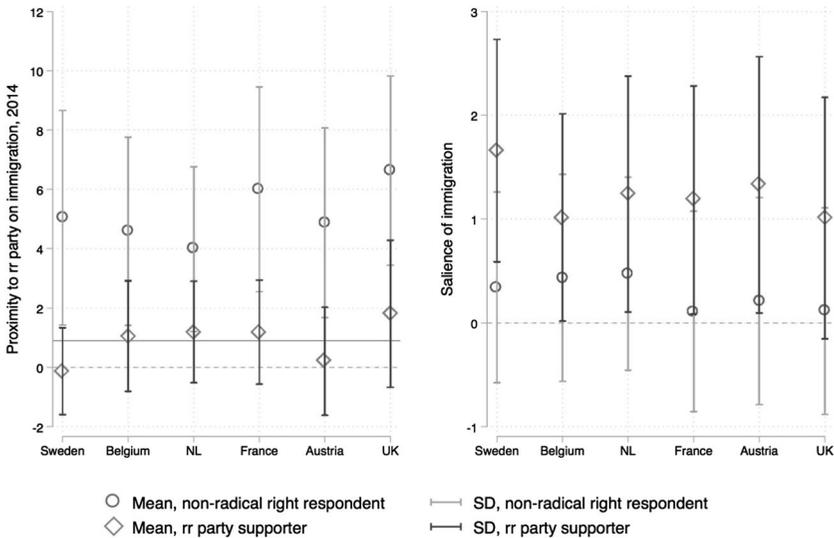


Figure 2. Proximity to radical right party position and salience of immigration.

Euroscepticism and support for radical right populist parties

The descriptive analyses of our two dimensions show how RRP supporters in 2014 were closer to the Eurosceptic positions of the RRP parties than non-RRP respondents but they did not attribute more importance to issues related to European integration. Thus, we would expect that Eurosceptic proximity to the RRP party, but not saliences, influenced RRP support. In addition, RRP supporters are even closer to the RRP parties in their restrictive positions on immigration policies but also attached a lot more importance to these positions than the non-RRP population. In order to test these patterns, we introduce interaction terms between proximity – measured as the distance between the individual respondent to the RRP party position – and salience for EU integration and immigration into the model below.

Table 3 presents the results of the logistic model explaining support for RRP parties in Austria, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.¹¹ Model 1 includes all independent variables except the two interaction terms and thus allows for an easy inspection of effect sizes. Model 2 also includes the interactions and, as the theoretically preferred model, is central to the analysis below. The results are the odds ratios for respondents supporting the radical right populist party.¹² An odds ratio of ‘1’ signifies that

Table 3. Logistic model explaining support for radical right populist parties in 2014.

DV: support for radical right populist party	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Conf. Interval		Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Conf. Interval	
	Model 1				Model 2			
<i>EU integration</i>								
Proximity	0.81***	0.01	0.79	0.84	0.84***	0.03	0.79	0.90
Salience	0.89**	0.04	0.82	0.96	1.00	0.11	0.71	1.24
Proximity*Salience					0.99	0.01	0.97	1.01
<i>Immigration</i>								
Proximity	0.65***	0.03	0.60	0.70	0.55***	0.05	0.47	0.66
Salience	1.40***	0.07	1.26	1.54	1.30***	0.06	1.20	1.42
Proximity*Salience					1.04**	0.02	1.01	1.07
<i>Controls</i>								
Social left-right	1.13***	0.03	1.08	1.19	1.13***	0.03	1.08	1.18
Socio-economic l-r	1.11***	0.01	1.09	1.14	1.11***	0.01	1.09	1.13
Gender (male = 1)	1.63***	0.06	1.52	1.75	1.63***	0.06	1.52	1.75
Age	0.95	0.03	0.89	1.02	0.95	0.03	0.89	1.02
Education	0.88***	0.01	0.86	0.91	0.89***	0.01	0.86	0.91
<i>Country (reference: UK)</i>								
Sweden	1.78***	0.16	1.49	2.12	1.77***	0.14	1.51	2.07
Belgium	0.11***	0.01	0.10	0.12	0.11***	0.00	0.11	0.12
NL	0.74***	0.02	0.71	0.77	0.73***	0.02	0.70	0.77
France	2.27***	0.10	2.08	2.48	2.27***	0.10	2.08	2.48
Austria	0.83	0.08	0.68	1.01	0.82*	0.07	0.69	0.98
Constant	0.20***	0.07	0.10	0.40	0.17*	0.14	0.04	0.82
N		90,433				90,433		
Pseudo R ²		0.42				0.42		
AIC		29,488				29,454		

Note: Standard errors adjusted for 6 country clusters.
 * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

the explanatory factor in question does not impact on the likelihood of supporting a RRP party. If the odds ratio is smaller than '1', an increase of the explanatory variable decreases the odds of supporting a RRP party. If the odds ratio is larger than '1', this indicates an increase in the odds of support for a RRP party. Furthermore, [Figure 3](#) allows us to make a more nuanced analysis of the effects as it shows the average marginal effect (AME) of the respondent's distance depending on salience, both for the EU integration dimension (left-hand panel) and the immigration dimension (right-hand panel), which serves as our benchmark.

The focus here concerns the effect of Euroscepticism and immigration attitudes on support for RRP parties. [Table 3](#) shows that immigration has a significant and substantive effect, both regarding distance and salience. Euroscepticism also has an effect, but only in terms of the proximity to the RRP party. In both cases, larger distances to the RRP party position decrease the odds of supporting the RRP party. The interaction terms in model 2 both seem not significant but we will investigate them in more detail below.

Turning to the specific effect of the European integration dimension, [Table 3](#) shows that the proximity to the RRP party affected RRP support in 2014 while its salience did not have a significant effect. From model 1 we can discern that, keeping all other factors constant at their mean, each scale unit a respondent is further away from the RRP parties' EU position leads to a decrease of the relative odds to support the RRP party in their country by 19 per cent. [Figure 3](#) confirms that the EU integration proximity has a clear significant and negative effect. However, this effect is not very

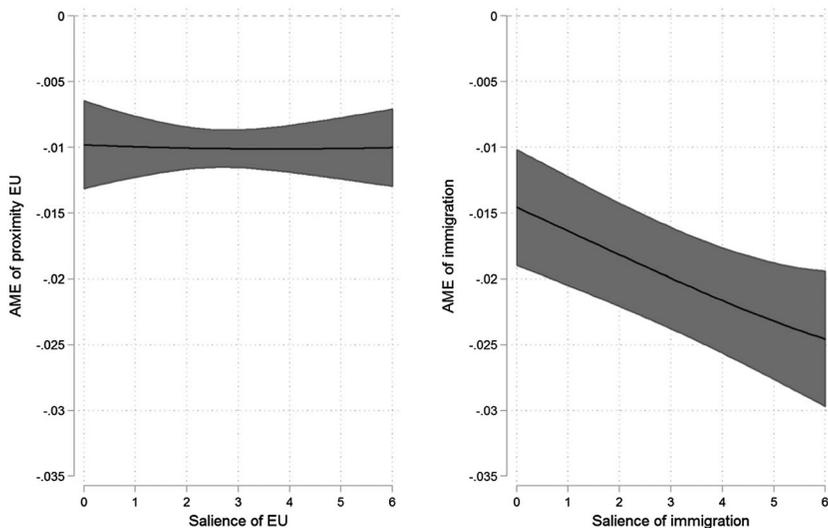


Figure 3. Average marginal effects of proximity dependent on salience, with 95% confidence interval.

large and does not depend on the level of salience as shown by the flat line of the effect along the x-axis.

To investigate the validity of the EU integration dimension (given the issues raised by Boomgaarden *et al.* 2011), we also ran a series of robustness checks, including separate models for the EU and immigration dimensions (Table G.a-c, Appendix) and models including, first, only the proximity and saliences of the three EU positions individually and, second, all items on the two dimensions individually. Taken individually, the first two items on this dimension – whether respondents agree that EU integration is good and their position towards the common currency – have the same effect (significant odds ratios of 0.74 and 0.73, respectively). The position regarding the EU foreign policy individually has no influence on RRP voting but its salience has an effect. These results indicate that, at least for RRP party supporters, the more abstract position for or against EU integration and the more concrete one for or against the Euro are closely related. This supports McLaren's argument (2006: 21) that the different dimensions of Eurosceptic attitudes may be conceptually distinct, but are empirically closely related.

Table 3 confirms that immigration is a stronger predictor of RRP support. Model 1 shows that with every point increase in distance between the respondent's and the (very anti-immigrant) RRP party position, the relative odds of supporting a RRP party falls by 35 per cent. At the same time, the more important immigration was to a respondent, the higher the likelihood of them supporting a RRP party (40 per cent per scale point). The right-hand panel in Figure 3 confirms that immigration has a larger effect size than EU integration and that it increases with salience. Overall, our analysis shows that while Eurosceptic positions among citizens did increase the likelihood of them supporting RRP parties, the interaction of favoring more restrictive immigration policies and evaluating immigration as a highly salient policy issue increased the likelihood most.

Conclusion

Given that the post-2008 EU crisis provided an external shock that incentivised RRP parties to harden their positions on European integration and/or increase the salience of them, we have investigated whether their supporters aligned with them on this and how the proximity of respondents to the positions of these parties influenced support. Using 2014 'euandi' data, we examined the positions of supporters of six radical right populist parties on European integration and, for comparison, immigration. Our findings showed that RRP supporters were substantially and significantly closer to their parties on immigration than on European integration. RRP supporters were more negative towards European integration than the non-RRP respondents, but they were not as Eurosceptic as their parties (and, in some cases, they were considerably less so). We also found that they attached less

importance to European integration as an issue than their parties, with the medium salience levels of RRP supporters being similar to those of non-RRP respondents. Our logistic regression model confirmed that anti-immigration attitudes were a far stronger predictor of RRP support. While the position of respondents on European integration did affect RRP support, the salience of it did not. By contrast, those who attribute high salience to immigration are much more likely to support radical right populists.

Despite the expectations of some scholars that attitudes to the European Union would become a stronger determinant of RRP support during Europe's long-running post-2008 crisis (Werts *et al.* 2013), we find that not only does it remain very much a secondary driver, but – more surprisingly – that RRP supporters do not align especially closely with their parties on the issue. This finding speaks to a long debate on parties' prioritizing of issues and whether the mechanism at play is one of policy congruence between parties and voters, of parties' issue ownership, or parties 'riding the wave' of high salience issues among voters. In the case of immigration, the story seems clear (e.g., Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016). Immigration is a high salience issue for RRP voters and parties and their positions on this tend to align.

With regards to Euroscepticism, the picture is much more mixed. First, the issue is far less salient among RRP supporters than their parties and, second, there is a sizable incongruence between the positions of RRP parties and those supporters. As RRP parties are generally the most Eurosceptic forces in their countries, proximity thus gives way to a more directional understanding of party support (Iversen 1994). In this regard, it seems to matter more – especially at a time when other parties neglect the issue – that the RRP parties take the most distinctive and extreme Eurosceptic position possible than that they are close to their supporters (Wagner 2012). In this way, they can continue to claim issue ownership on it, just as they do with immigration.

Our findings also show that positional congruence without taking salience congruence into account is limited in its meaning. Given the difference in salience RRP parties and supporters attach to EU immigration, their lack in positional congruence does not have much of an impact. The opposite is indicated by our findings on immigration, where the effect of positional proximity is strongly affected by salience. While positional congruence is in and of itself an important indicator for the responsiveness of parties to their voters (Arnold and Franklin 2012), our findings indicate that salience is not just a predictor for congruence but also a possible moderator for the consequences of congruence.

Finally, our study indicates that linkages may indeed 'run in both directions' between parties and supporters on European integration (see also Steenbergen *et al.* 2007: 29). The former can influence the latter, but the opposite is also true. One consequence of this is that, despite the increased salience of European integration for the parties, RRP parties retain room for manoeuvre as regards their Euroscepticism. In 2014, the EU was an issue on which they

either adopted more oppositional positions or at least increased the salience of existing Eurosceptic ones (Vasilopoulou 2018). But radical right populist parties have oscillated on this issue in the past and our findings suggest they could afford to do so again if it were to be electorally and politically expedient. In short, unlike immigration, European integration remains an issue on which RRP's remain flexible to perform significant shifts. Indeed, we have already seen this type of RRP softening on European integration in the case of the Front National since the 2017 Presidential election and of the Italian League since the 2018 Italian general election. Having first played down the salience of its Eurosceptic positions in the weeks between the first and second rounds, the FN retreated after the election from its opposition both to French EU membership and participation in the Euro. Similarly, Matteo Salvini (leader of the League) has made it clear that his party wishes to reform the EU from within and no longer prioritizes a 'Euro exit' policy. Having the flexibility, particularly when entering government, to move on European integration may prove advantageous for RRP's. At the same time, there may also be advantages for RRP's that have taken extreme positions on European integration – even if parties have to row back from them in the current phase. For example, if – against most expectations – Brexit proves to be a success and European integration increases in salience for the continental public, RRP parties could enjoy the benefits of having signaled stronger Eurosceptic stances earlier, especially given the lack of movement in this direction during the crisis by most mainstream parties (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2016). In short, radical right populists may have moved towards the edge on European integration, but they have not necessarily boxed themselves into a corner.

Notes

1. Front National changed its name in 2018 to Rassemblement National. We continue to use the former name in this article given the period covered.
2. See also: <http://euandi.eu/showHome.html> (accessed 24/5/17).
3. Other parties that fit our research focus on radical right populist parties (e.g. Danish People's Party) are excluded due to low respondent numbers. We do not look at extreme right parties such as the Greek Golden Dawn and the Hungarian Jobbik in addition to parties that were not widely recognized by scholars as populist radical right at the time of the 2014 EP election, like the Alternative for Germany (AfD).
4. Conceptually, we follow Mudde (2007) who sets out how radical right populist parties share key positions on nativism and authoritarianism. As radical right *populist* parties, they present a Manichean view of society in which a virtuous and homogeneous 'people' is under siege from above by corrupt and distant national/supranational elites (political, financial, media etc.) and, from below, by a series of 'others' whose identities, beliefs or behaviors place them outside 'the people' (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015: 5-6).
5. The FN, FPÖ, VB, PVV and SD have consistently been recognised as radical right parties. While UKIP was not for the initial decade of its existence, its emphasis on

anti-immigrant positions in recent years has led scholars to classify it too as radical right (e.g. Webb and Bale 2014).

6. Number of respondents: FN 5098; FPÖ 333; PVV 566; VB 460; SD 1747; UKIP 394.
7. We checked the effect of this slightly conservative threshold by changing the operationalization of support to '7 and over', re-analysing the demographic characteristic and rerunning the main model. Tables H.a-c (Appendix) show the results and their robustness.
8. While we might expect that the question regarding social benefits for (EU) immigrants is also an EU item, Table C in the Appendix shows that it does not load on the EU factor.
9. See Appendix, Table K.
10. Table A in the Appendix shows the questions that were combined to form the two left-right dimensions. They are also included in the correlation matrix between the positional dimensions (Table B).
11. Table E in the Appendix shows the results of the same analysis for each individual country and confirms the result of the pooled analysis.
12. We report odds ratio instead of coefficients for ease of interpretation because coefficients show the effect of the variable *on the conditional logit* of being a RRP supporter.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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