

A reply to Professors Breuss and Romagnoli

Francesco Farina, Roberto Tamborini

We wish to thank Professors Breuss and Romagnoli for their detailed and useful comments. Since some issues are common, we seek to provide an integrated reply.

In the first place, it is perhaps worth recalling that our aim is to bring some political science literature to the attention of economists, since the latter have the tendency to believe that enlightened ideas and policies will find their way if only politicians overcome their appetite for power. On the other hand, probing into the political science literature is beyond the limits of our paper.

In democracy, the last word comes from citizens. In this perspective, we think we have displayed some evidence and arguments leading to the conclusion that "the political stalemate facing the choice between 'more vs. less Europe' is now rooted in the citizens' will, so that it can hardly be resolved by pressure 'from below' in a predictable future" (p. 20). If politicians have their own share of fault, it is because they are unable to convince citizens, i.e. they are followers rather than leaders. However, convincing citizens is not just an exercise in rhetoric: problem-solving policies are urgently needed. But we agree with the strand of scholars who maintain that the present EU framework of policy-making is part of the problem, not of the solution.

"Evidence" in this field of studies dealing with opinions is a challenging goal. Both comments raise issues that are worth considering. We hasten to acknowledge that we do not presume we have produced the final word about the attitude of citizens towards "more vs. less Europe". The question itself is multifaceted and can elicit different answers from different angles. An obvious counter-question would be: which Europe, or which dimension of Europe? However, we think that the paper offers a collection of different clues regarding the economic dimension behind the citizens' attitude towards "more vs. less Europe".

Eventually, we seek to disentangle the ambiguities inherent in the available data, and we attempt an answer with political implications, which is partly similar to, partly different from, those suggested by Professors Breuss and Romagnoli, and can be summarised as follows (see pp. 18-19):

1) The EU-R/H-R countries (both the EU and the home country are on the right track) are more likely supportive of the *status quo*, granted by the CR/R aggregation balancing between traditional pro-Europe parties (such as the EPP) and the pressure on their constituency against 'more Europe' from the right-wing fringes.

2) People in the EU-W/H-W countries (both the EU and the home country are on the wrong track) may be ready to support major changes, but it is not clear *which* changes. Our conclusion is that this area can support further political

integration *as a means to obtain a change in European policy-making as well as of actual economic policies*. The majority of seats awarded to the CL/L parties may reflect the ambiguous positioning of this area, once considering that here the left-wing of Europe contestants is not openly against 'more Europe' but mostly for a radical 'change of Europe'.

3) A less controversial pro-integration interpretation seems more appropriate for the EU-R/H-W countries (the EU on the right, the home country on the wrong, track) where Europe 'as-it-is' may indeed be seen as a positive driver of the country's change.

We are aware that, as noted by Prof. Bruess, our data, and even our focus on the economic dimension, may now be obsolete owing to the dramatic insurgence in the last two years of other major social concerns like security and immigration. Indeed we have written that "Maybe that, as the crisis is perceived to subside, as our STI suggests, the citizens' attitude will change. However, enough evidence is not yet available, while the dramatic security immigration crisis may replace the economic crisis as the most salient issue in shaping the public opinion" (p. 20). On the other hand, the less remote steps towards "more Europe" envisaged by the Five Presidents Report are economic in nature, and the very fact that the more recent crises may have made the economic dimension of citizens' attitude less salient renders subsequent Eurobarometer surveys even less reliable for our purposes.

With regard to the informational value of the Eurobarometer surveys, we might just say that these are the main input of all empirical analyses in this field. However, an important part of our analysis, that Prof. Breuss does not consider, consists of cross checking the Eurobarometer data with the results of the 2014 EU elections. As written on p. 2, we are aware of the political literature questioning that the EU elections are clearly motivated by, or have any direct impact on, actual choices over European issues or on the policy-making process of European institutions. Nonetheless, the EU parliament remains the sole formal representative political arena in the EU, and according to some observers the 2014 elections have seen a surge in the "politicisation" of EU issues at the national level, including the issue of further integration (Hobolt 2015). Electoral votes present their own interpretative difficulties, but they may be regarded as more faithful indicators of attitudes than answers to questionnaire. Therefore, the extent of overlap that we find between electoral votes and our four quadrants of EU vs. Home attitudes is an important element in our assessment. This also explains why we have limited our Eurobarometer data to the waves around the electoral period.

We also provide some correlation analyses between country locations in the four quadrants, other Eurobarometer data and our index of economic pain. In response to Prof. Romagnoli, we can assure that the single components of the index are calculated as indexes so that they can be aggregated. Yet we assign

the same weight to each component since we do not wish to superimpose an arbitrary preference structure. Correlation analyses raise the issue of statistical significance. In this regard we wish to point out (see e.g. fn. 13) that our analyses concern the frequency of specified occurrences (or "sign correlation") in the data, rather than their quantitative relationship. To make an example, suppose you are interested to know the frequency of "*X and Y positive*". You may find 100% frequency though the quantitative correlation between *X* and *Y* is statistically poor or nil (imagine that all observations of *X* and *Y* lie in the positive Cartesian quadrant, though with a flat interpolation line). In some cases, the qualitative correlations are strong enough to allow for inferences (see e.g. Figure 2b which shows that in 75% of countries prevalent agreement with more integration is associated with prevalent negative judgement for the home country and vice versa).

Let us add one final consideration regarding the recent tensions emerged in the EU. With benefit of further investigation, we guess that our four quadrant cleavage would still retain some informational value, though with some reshuffling of countries. Brexit is consistent with the location of UK in the EU-W/H-R quadrant (with Austria on the brink of electing an anti-EU president). The bulk of reshuffling would probably concern the EU-R/H-W East European countries, which now seem strongly averse to "more Europe" on the grounds of security and immigration policies. However most of these countries do not belong to the Euro Zone, and the Euro Zone is the natural candidate to accelerate towards further integration, at least on the economic ground, especially after Brexit. Furthermore, the Euro Zone countries across the EU-R/H-R and EU-W/H-W quadrants seem less divergent towards "more Europe" for security and immigration policies, unless major political upheavals occur in France, Germany and Italy. Hence our conclusion may still hold that the ultimate key towards "more Europe" lies in these countries, and their (governments' and peoples') willingness and ability to find a progressive compromise between the preference for *status quo* and the request of major changes in the *economic governance* of the Euro Zone.