“THERE ARE NO EUROPEANS!”

Right wing anti-EU parties and their concepts of national identity since 1992

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"There are no Europeans!"
Abstract

In this thesis Welling studies the party positions of right wing anti-EU parties in Western Europe since 1992. He observes that several right wing parties have used their respective national identities as an important argument against the EU. Welling wonders what these parties have considered as their national identity and why they feel that their national identity has been threatened by the EU.

The title of this thesis is: ‘There are no Europeans’. This refers to claims that are often made in anti-EU party positions. These claims are based on the idea that there is a strong national identity and that Dutchmen, Danes or Belgians do exist in Europe, but that a single European identity or a ‘European’ does not exist. Welling starts his research by unravelling the complicated discussion on what a national identity is considered to be. In this he argues that political claims on national identity are always hard to make, since there is friction between a personal choice in national identity and a top-down formed concept of national identity that prevails in politics.

In the following, Welling claims that especially since the Maastricht treaty of 1992, several national identities have been claimed to be threatened by the increasingly powerful political structure of the EU. Several right wing parties have depicted the EU as an external power and as ‘the intruder’. Welling argues that these anti-EU sentiments can be placed in a larger tradition of right wing parties constructing hypothetical imaginary heartlands that consist of a homogeneous group of people with strict values. These heartlands, with a strong national identity, are claimed to be threatened by the EU.

In the last chapter Welling explores the development of three anti-EU parties in three Western European states more profoundly. He researches the Belgian ‘Vlaams Belang’, the Danish ‘Dansk Folkeparti’ and the Dutch ‘Partij Voor de Vrijheid’. By using a framework of thirteen elements, he examines which elements of national identity these parties have used in their anti-EU positions. The parties all refer to elements such as shared history, culture, language, religion, nativity, sovereignty, democracy, freedom of speech, civilization and the homogeneity of the people, to be threatened by the EU. It becomes clear that the elements that these parties have attached to their national identities are not that different and are always strongly linked to the party ideologies of nationalism and anti-immigration. Welling forms a better understanding of the basic ideas of anti-EU parties and thereby contributes to the understanding of anti-EU parties in Western Europe.
Preface

I would like to thank everyone who helped me to produce this extensive research paper. Thinking, writing and researching would not have been possible completely on my own.

I need to thank the European Parliament information office in The Hague. They offered me the opportunity to do a traineeship there and during these five months I worked with anti-EU reasoning every day. This inspired me to do a thesis on anti-EU party positions.

Most specially, I have to thank my thesis supervisor Ine Megens. For the second time she advised me, structured my often messy thoughts and took the time to assist a student who, after initially leaving the field of political history, still wanted to graduate with a subject related to his newer academic experiences.

As a last person, I want to thank Maartje, for being who she is.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DF</td>
<td>Dansk Folkeparti (Denmark)</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EP</td>
<td>European Parliament</td>
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<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
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<td>EFD</td>
<td>European party for Freedom and Democracy</td>
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<td>FN</td>
<td>Front National (France)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPÖ</td>
<td>Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Austria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN</td>
<td>Lega Nord (Italy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEP</td>
<td>Member of the European Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVV</td>
<td>Party Voor de Vrijheid (Netherlands)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VB</td>
<td>Vlaams Blok (1978-2004) / Vlaams Belang (Since 2004) (Belgium)</td>
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Introduction

“We are incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture. Not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it.”

(Clifford Geertz, cultural anthropologist)\(^1\)

In the last twenty years the EU has become a strong force in the political landscape of Europe. In several years of studying European history I have always wondered about the relation between political structures and institutions and the personal lives of ordinary citizens. There is undeniably an influence that political structures have had on the sense of identity of ordinary citizens. Which influence the EU, as a rather young political structure, has on the identities of the European citizens is hard to define. Nevertheless, an element of these identities, the so called national identity, is often used in arguments against European integration or the EU in general. The use of the term ‘national identity’ within anti-EU parties has fascinated me, because I could never clearly form an idea about what this national identity was perceived to be. This fascination has stimulated me to write this thesis. It is the outcome of my quest to find out what right wing parties have considered national identity to be.

Throughout my study I learned that academic research should be about challenging old assumptions and providing new perspectives.\(^2\) A political scientist or historian is supposed to be concerned with what is and was, not with what ought to be.\(^3\) This study will analyse the historical process that has come to a certain situation without demonstrating any intentions towards the spread of political ideals. In other words, I will study the way party positions actually were without trying to form an idea about how they should be. In doing so, I will challenge older perspectives on how anti-EU parties have formulated their anti-EU party positions and particularly their concept of national identity.

The title of this thesis is: ‘There are no Europeans’. This refers to claims that are often made in anti-EU party positions. These claims are based on the idea that there is a strong national identity and that for example Dutchmen, Danes or Germans do exist in Europe, but that a single European identity or a ‘European’ does not exist. This proclaimed non-existence of ‘Europeans’, whatever that may exactly be, and the assumed existence of nationals has

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become one of the strongest arguments against European integration and the EU in general.⁴

Next to becoming one of the most important anti-EU arguments, it was also one of the arguments that seemed the hardest to unravel. What constructed the idea of ‘the national’, who does exist and what was ‘the European’ who was claimed not to exist? Which forces gave a sense of belonging to a national and hereby created political arguments based on their strong ‘identity’?

This last question forms the basis for this quest within the concept of national identity. With a strong focus on three case studies, this thesis studies what has constructed the concept of national identity in the party positions of right wing Western-European anti-EU parties since the Maastricht treaty of 1992? This larger question is specified into a comparison between several concepts of national identity as used by three examples of anti-EU political parties. Within this comparison, the aim is to form a better understanding of what the concept national identity has meant when used in anti-EU party positions. A better understanding of this concept forms a better understanding of the basic ideas of Eurosceptic parties and their growth since 1992. The understanding of the formation of one of the main arguments against EU integration creates a better understanding of the political ideas within right wing anti-EU parties and their supporters.

**Structure**

The quest into the concept of ‘national identity’ within anti-EU party positions will start in the first chapter with an in depth analysis of what national identity means. It is a well-known and widely used term, but it seems to be hard to define this concept as used in political arguments. One of the most important aspects of the concept is that it is in academic literature accepted to be based on a personal choice. Everyone is considered to be able to define one’s own identity. In politics however, the concept is always used to describe groups in a passive way. This is one of the difficulties surrounding national identity. Several theoretical problems concerning this concept will be discussed. In the last part of this chapter the concept of national identity is explained as an argument against European integration. Is a strong national identity really endangered by the EU?

In the second chapter the rise of anti-EU parties will be analysed. The chapter will work in a step by step manner from the wide topic of anti-EU positions towards the arguments that right wing Western European anti-EU parties have used since the Maastricht treaty of

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1992 that relate to the concept of national identity. In this chapter, several methodological, temporal and semantic choices will be explained. Why, for example, do I choose the term ‘anti-EU’ and not ‘euro-rejectionist’ or ‘Eurosceptic’? Why has the term ‘national identity’ become more important in anti-EU positions since 1992? Or why do I use the term right wing and not ‘populist right’, ‘far right’ or ‘radical right’? By explaining these choices the focus of these parties and their positions becomes clearer.

The third chapter is a case study into the use of the concept of national identity within right wing anti-EU party positions since 1992. Three important Western European anti-EU parties are extensively discussed. The oldest, the Belgian Vlaams Blok (VB), is discussed first, followed by the Danish Dansk Folkeparti (DF) and finally the youngest, the Dutch Partij Voor de Vrijheid (PVV). To understand the settings of these parties, I will explain the choices for these parties and the important differences in the settings these parties have operated in. Within the case studies (chapter 3), the party history is discussed to form a general historical context around the parties’ conceptualization. Following the history, the general ideology of the party is discussed, with a focus on matters related to national identity. In the last paragraph the parties’ concepts of national identity are discussed.

*The three case studies*

In the third chapter of this thesis the subjects will be the VB, the DF and the PVV. Why a case study of three parties in three different states? Studies about right wing parties are numerous, but they are mostly constructed in a national context. There is often only a national explanation given for the reasons for the parties’ success and there is only little for other European parties with similar positions and ideologies. When it concerns anti-EU party positions, the ideologies should never be researched in a completely national context, since international and European conditions have major effects on these ideologies. When trying to contribute to the understanding of the similarities and differences between right wing anti-EU parties, one needs to perform comparative analyses between different countries. The greater aim of studying right wing anti-EU parties was made more effective by a case study of three parties. The comparative approach can give useful insights into the ideological and political ways of right wing anti-EU parties, that have often been considered to stand outside the main

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political spectrum. By performing an empirical and non-biased study on these parties our understanding of the successes of these parties throughout the last thirty years can grow.\(^6\)

The differences between the situations of the selected parties must be well understood. The VB has, for example, always been treated as a pariah party, while the DF and PVV have given non-participatory support to a national government. The differences will be explained to create a solid ground for comparison. The three parties have, nevertheless, operated in relatively (in a European context) comparable settings and held comparable party positions. This will be extensively explained (paragraph 3.1). Important arguments are that these parties are considered to be part of a ‘new-right’ movement in Western Europe, that each of them has had a strong nativist connotation and a strong influence in their small western European states. The most important argument is, however, that these parties all consider themselves to be right wing anti-EU parties that have been defending their national identities.\(^7\)

**Method**

This research will consist of a primary sources and a secondary sources analysis. The primary sources analysis consists mostly of the party programmes and other materials directly produced by the three anti-EU parties under investigation. These parties do not have all their materials accessible for research so therefore some of the materials have been taken from other scholars performing similar research. The intention is to look at the official ideological position of the parties. This is done by taking several publications of (party literature) and about the party into consideration. In this way the position that the party has and the ideas that the party wants to present to its national electorate can be studied, while keeping in mind that there are differences between these positions.\(^8\)

Within this context I choose the method of studying parties and party literature and speeches rather than the electorate. The prominent political scientist Santori calls this studying the ‘producer’, the party, and not the ‘consumer’, the voter. In his opinion the façade of being objective surrounds historians and political scientists who only look at political trends in terms of societal processes and electoral outcomes. One has to look at the political parties themselves as historical actors defining the political history and not only consider political

\(^6\) A danger when studying (right wing) parties is that one starts researching with a biased scope. Disregarding discussions on the possibility to ever step aside from one’s own bias, the intention must be there to not have any. See for a good explanation: Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 2-3.

\(^7\) The most prominent works on these party positions in a European context, all supporting this observation are: Szczerbiak and Taggart, Rovný and Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde.

\(^8\) Meret, *The Danish People’s Party*, 50-51.
parties as passive electoral machines reacting on socioeconomic trends. The success of parties can not only be explained on the basis of societal processes that have occurred in history. One must first of all look at the organizations, outings and ideologies of these parties and not beforehand consider them to be passive reactors in a changing society.

In this research several choices have been made on which literature to select to rely on for a strong academic basis. On the topics of national identity and anti-EU party positions, it is impossible to read all the academic sources. In this respect, several subjective choices have been made by choosing the most cited, well read and prominent works. Any critique on being subjective in these choices, will be immediately accepted. All discussions on which works were chosen on the before mentioned grounds, are welcome.

The method of studying only the parties’ outings and not their electorate and societal influence is stimulated by the observation that most research is focussed on the electoral successes of right wing parties. The content of their ideology and use of concepts is much less studied. I support the stance that right wing ideologies should not be considered as outside of the political spectrum and studied only as strange, radical exceptions. These ideologies should be studied just as well as mainstream centre-party ideologies.

Most research on right wing parties is centred around a quantitative analysis of election data. By combining this (see appendix) with primary source qualitative data from party programmes and party leader public statements, a comprehensive analysis can be created. With regard to the primary source material, the original language of the material can form a small methodological weakness. Since I am fluent in Dutch and not in Danish, the party programmes of the PVV and VB are all used in their original form. The Party programme of the DF was used, when possible, in the form of their own translations into English (contrary to PVV and VB, they have several), but also in the form of translations by Danish scholars. This might affect the strive for objectivity because these sources are no longer primary sources in the strictest sense. Nevertheless, I think the practical objection of this language factor is minor and acceptable.

Another methodological constraint lies in the controversy surrounding these parties. The parties’ ideologies are considered to be hard to define, because of the parties’ relative

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10 This idea is explained and supported by: David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: the Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). And: Szczerbiak and Taggart eds., *Opposing Europe*.

11 This argument is well explained in the introduction of: Art, *Inside the Radical Right*. 
novelty and controversy. There’s often a thin line in academic studies between who defines a right wing parties’ ideology, the researcher or the party itself. Ideally, these two would agree with each other, but since this seems to be almost impossible, there must be a thorough understanding of how the party has defined its own ideology and what researchers have defined as a party’s ideology. Several scholars have concluded that among the non-traditional parties (not Liberal, Christian Democratic, Social-Democratic or Green) it is hard to classify them as part of an ideological group. For example, populist radical right parties do not define themselves as such. In the case of most newer political parties, the ideological self-classification must be combined with observations about their party positions by the researcher.

One of the most important methodological choices in this thesis was the way to form a comparable model around the concept of national identity. This model was not found in works on national identity. The model is I use is based on studies on cultural identities and the communication between them. In general the model tries to define the variables of a concept, the elements filling in these variables, and the way the concept is used. In the paragraphs on the concept of national identity of the three parties, there will first be a formulation of the variables that a party accepts as constructing a (not yet defined) national identity. These variables will be the same for all three parties and are composed by all the elements that the parties have attached to their respective national identity. This creates a list of thirteen elements and thereby a good source for comparison. A variable would for example be a ‘shared religion’. In the second part this variable is filled in with the element that the party attaches to it (or not filled in if the party does not use this element). So, the variable would for example be filled in with ‘the Danish Lutheran Church’, in the case of the DF. In the third and last part this way of attaching an element to a variable within the larger concept, is attached to the parties’ anti-EU position. In this way the concepts of national identity can be compared on relatively equal grounds. The final conclusions can thereby be related to the shared and the different elements that these parties attach to their concepts of national identity.

12 Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 33-35.
1. National Identity

“Identity politics is always based upon an “us-them” distinction.”

(Cas Mudde, Political Scientist)\(^\text{13}\)

National identity is a familiar term. Almost anyone can form an idea about what his or her national identity consists of. A more difficult question than defining the contents of your own national identity, is the question of what constructs the concept of national identity in general. There seem to be a lot of general ideas about the concept of national identity and what it can consist of, but not many lead to a clear idea about what the complete concept means.

This thesis is a comparative historical study researching the concept of national identity. Before turning to the elements that several actors have ascribed to this concept it is essential to define what I will consider a useful definition of ‘national identity’ in general. Definitions declare the intended meaning of words and by formulating the definition of the central concept of this research in the first chapter, I will try to avoid misunderstandings.\(^\text{14}\) In the first part I will very briefly summarize the academic discussion on national identity. Since it is impossible to review all works on what defines national identity, I have taken a few of the most cited works. I will indicate where it originates from and what kind of different views there have been on national identity. In the second part of this chapter I will turn to the way the concept of national identity is related to the European Union and why this a peculiar topic.

\(^{13}\) Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 63.

\(^{14}\) Why one should always start with a definition: Sartori, “Where is Political Science Going?”.
1.1 National identity: the concept

A clear definition of the concept ‘national identity’, which most academic scholars agree upon, is hard to find. Still, when doing a comparative historical study like this, the terminology has to be clear in order to reach new insights. Without first defining how the concept that is being studied is ‘normally’ used, a comparison of political parties using this concept makes no sense. Besides this, a logical conclusion about the usages of the concept is worthless without first defining how the concept has been used by other actors than the parties under investigation.

The most simple notion about the concept of national identity is that it consists of two parts, national and identity. ‘National’ seems to be added to the more general idea of an identity. To come to a comprehensive concept of ‘national identity’ I will first explain identity in general before discussing what the word national can add to this. Following this, the idea of national identity will be deconstructed into an active versus a passive form.

(collective) identity

The term identity originates from Latin and stems from the word idem, which means ‘the same’. The term identity originally describes what is ‘the same’ in an interpersonal sphere. Identity hereby requires a significant other because the term is inherently comparative in nature. There is no ‘the same’, without something that is not the same. What a person considers to be the same is what constructs one’s own identity. In other words, one recognises the other as being not within his or her group of ‘the same’ and by this process of ‘othering’, an identity is formed. In psychology, sociology and political science this process is mostly referred to as identity negotiation. This is the process in which a person or a group of persons negotiate with different accessible identity roles and decide which factors will form their identity. Important to note is that the idea of identity is considered to always relate to one’s self image and that it is an internal process with a personal choice defining the outcome. The outcomes of these identities are most often formulated in terms of group similarities, but the process of identity negotiation is considered to be personal.

Since most persons relate their identity negotiation to the identity negotiations of others, it is an internal process that is strongly affected by group decisions and group roles. In

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this way, when we speak about identities, we generally speak about collective identities. Besides this, in political history an identity has never been influential when it was formed by a single actor. It only mattered in the shape of a collective identity. The most common definition for identity in political history has become the definition formulated by Benedict Anderson. He defined collective identity as being the common factors, mostly imagined, that make a group of people identify with an entity and feel solidarity amongst themselves. In this definition identity is accepted as being a personal choice, but only influential and significant in a collective form. The definition accepts the factors forming an identity as being the identity. A new insight that is ascribed to Anderson is that identity is inherently imagined and never fixed or biologically predetermined. Groups of persons are never born with a fixed identity. An individual always has the choice to deny a factor as being a part of his or her identity or a person can even be denied to a factor by the in-group claiming that factor. This means that the identity negotiation is strongly and most often decisively affected by the surroundings of the person or the group.

The definition of Anderson is the opposite from a so called essentialist view of identity and collective identity. Essentialists believe that for each group of people there is a fixed set of characteristics that are linked to their identity. This set is unchangeable. Each collective of people is said to have its ‘essence’. An essentialist would believe that within each form of identity a person has some unchangeable factors that make him or her belong to that identity, no matter what the personal identity negotiation would turn out to be. These essentialist ideas about identity are not supported much in academics, but are important to understand as contrary from Andersons’ idea of personal imagined identity.

National
The word ‘national’ originates from the word nation. The term ‘nation’ is generally accepted to be hard to define. In the concept of national identity, the addition national is made to the common factors that form an identity. One could state that Anderson’s common factors are in this way decreased by adding a condition. The word ‘nation’ is in popular use most often

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17 For this reason I do not use the general Oxford dictionary definition of identity that is often used in psychology, but the idea of an identity that relates to groups. The Oxford English Dictionary definition of identity is: “the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties or in particular qualities under consideration”. Criticism by political scientists in: Roger Smith, “Identities, Interests and the Future of Political Science”, Perspectives on Politics. Vol. 4, 2 (2006) 343-351.


19 Ibidem, 6.
considered to be a cultural and ethnic entity. This entity is formed by a creation of people that is rooted in common culture, language and customs that evolved over time in a certain domain of land. It is strongly related to the nation state, in which these creations are also vested in a political state system.\textsuperscript{20}

This general conception is only partly true, because in reality the nation is, just like identity, accepted to be an imaginary community, not a creation that is fixed in nature. It is not fixed in the ‘essence’ of people, as essentialists would argue. As one of the most prominent scholars on this subject, Eric Hobsbawm noted, the nation state is an artificial construct largely created by political and economic elites in a certain region. One could say that, like identities, nations and nation states are not growing from the soil or simply originating biologically. The nation is never a completely organic creation that can simply be found in different cultures. It is always constructed by a group of people and in recent history this creation has always functioned in a top-down manner. Elements of building a nation that is attached to a nation state are for example the creation of a national myth, forcing one language upon a group of persons or implementing a selective reading of history in an educational system.\textsuperscript{21}

In the past centuries the nation has become an addition to one’s identity that has often been considered to be fixed. From the French revolution until the end of the Second World War, the nation was the most important source for political legitimacy.\textsuperscript{22} The notion that it is a constructed group was less important. It has become hard to imagine a person without a nation. A nation and thereby a national identity seems as logical as having two feet and a mouth. This seems to be an acceptable truth, but it is not that obvious. Having a nation and thereby a nationality and a national identity is not considered to be an inherent attribute of humanity by most scholars.\textsuperscript{23} This core observation about the addition ‘nation’ to the word identity is important to make. The factor of one’s nation within the identity negotiation is often not considered to be a personal choice, but a fixed element.

\textit{National identity}

\textsuperscript{21} A good example of this top down creation of nations is the creation of the modern day Italy. At the first meeting of the national parliament of the republic of Italy in 1861 one of the founders declared: “We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians.” In: Eric Hobsbawm, \textit{Nations and Nationalism since}, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{22} McCormick, \textit{Europeanism}, 31.
For the understanding of the concept of national identity it is important to note that the personal choice and the imagination concerning both identity in general and national identity in particular is and has been contested in politics, but not in academics. In politics, national identity has often been considered to be something static, homogeneous, not changing over time and definable in a single moment in history. Following this logic, we can differentiate between the national identity that is described in political debates on the one hand and the personal identity on the other. We can on the one hand speak of a passive national identity that forms this static, top-down created and homogeneous national identity that is not subject to personal choice or imagination, and on the other hand speak of an active national identity that is mostly imagined, mostly created bottom-up and subject to personal choice.

The passive form of national identity is linked to the idea that national identity is a feature that is always externally exclusive. This means that the outsider or the person that is not within the nation or sphere of the national identity, can never become a full part of this identity. This passive conception of national identity conflicts with the idea that national identity is purely a matter of choice and imagination. The passive conception of national identity compromises with the idea that identity is only possible in a singular affiliation. The singular affiliation holds that a person belongs to one group and one group only. It is based upon the idea that a person belongs to a certain identity factor like gender, class, profession, race or nationality and cannot choose not to belong to this. This is linked to the essentialist view that some identity characteristics are unchangeable. In this sense nationality is passive and defined, without being subject to personal or group choice and imagination. These forms of exclusive, singular and passive national identity concepts are often criticized and mostly rejected by academic scholars.

By forming the distinction between an active and a passive national identity the distinction is made between a concept of national identity that is subject to an active personal choice or imagination and a concept that has a national identity passively placed upon someone. Even though academic scholars have denounced this passive concept of national identity, this form cannot be completely disregarded, since in history the term has often been used in this form. In political discourses, national identity has most often been subject to top-down formulations of what it could consist of instead of the recognition of an element of imagination or personal choice.

24 Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 16.
Within the definition of the word identity the process of ‘othering’ has been mentioned. In the formulation of national identity, the process of ‘othering’ has been central in the political discourses on the term national identity. A national identity was often defined by defining what it was explicitly not. By defining what constructs the ‘other’, one hereby creates the notion of what is ‘the same’. The definition of the concrete national identity often remains vague, but the definition of what is not part of the national identity is often extensive and explicit. Therefore one could say that in politics the national identity has often been defined by the mirror image of what it is explicitly not.\textsuperscript{26} In this line of thinking, a good understanding of what does explicitly not construct a national identity, is important when researching the concept of ‘national identity’.

In this paragraph, the central concept of this thesis, national identity was discussed. A clear idea of what academic literature has produced on this concept and how it was used in political discourses is essential for this thesis. The most important distinction made was between what academics have discussed as being national identity and how it was used in historical political discourses. Moreover, the important distinction has been made between a passive and an active form of conceptualizing national identity.

\textsuperscript{26} Mudde, \textit{Populist Radical Right Parties}, 18-20.
1.2 National identity in relation to the supranational EU

The EU has often been portrayed as a political entity that downgraded the influence of the nation states in politics. It has also been portrayed as being a danger for national identities, because it is a political entity that reduces the influences of national states. The danger the EU is said to form is not observed because it can directly replace the national identity. The European identity is much more disputed and often denied, compared to the generally accepted existence of national identities within Europe. As it has often been the case with national identities, the European identity or the identity related to the European Union has yet to be created and will not simply grow from the soil. As one of the originators of the first steps of European integration, Jean Monnet, said: “Europe has never existed: one has genuinely to create Europe”

The realization that the European Union as a political entity might require a stronger active and passive European identity creates the opportunity for friction with the more traditional national identities. After defining the concept of national identity and showing the different interpretations, it is relevant to discuss how national identity stands in relation to the European Union. Within this relation there are on the one hand the observations on what national identity means within the EU and on the other hand there is the friction that the EU appears to have created with the existing national identities. Without suggesting any form of causality, the assumed decline of the importance of national identity must be noted, when discussing the relation with the EU. Not because causality is impossible, but because the relation is suggested by many. In this regard it has to be stipulated that this causality is not the point of study in this research, but the observation of the relation between national identity and the EU must contain an element of the alleged decline of national identities.

Before the peace of Westphalia in 1648, Europe was governed by more than five hundred different political entities. The idea of national identity was not important yet, primarily because the stability of a political system was not yet reliant on its social coherence. Around 1900, Europe was governed by some twenty-five nation states, that placed a strong emphasis on the importance of the national identity of its citizens. The prominent German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, stated on the formation of these nation states in Europe that

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27 Szczerbiak and Taggart eds., Opposing Europe, Intro.
29 Rifkin, The European Dream 176.
the history of Europe has been a ‘sequence of painful processes of abstraction of solidarity among strangers.’ He claims that for example, the identity a Frenchman held in 1990, would not be the identity of all French, but they had been pushed into a group that feels in a sense solidarity among each other because of this Frenchness. This being put together under a political system for many years is what, according to Habermas, constructed national identities in Europe. In each community, he argues, the social alliances and their political expressions have been specific and corresponding to the power relationships existing in the territory.

Since the first step of European integration with the treaty of Rome in 1957 the national identities have still been strong and widely accepted in the EU and its predecessor, the EEC. Still, according to many scholars, the dominant political elites that have once been the creators of these national identities, have not been very reluctant to uphold them since 1957. Many scholars stated that the national identities were empowered by the strong nation states that existed until the two world wars. If one accepts these nation states as strong factors within the national identities of the European citizens, the relative decline of the political importance of these nation states can be considered as a possible reason for a decline in the importance of the national factor within the identity of the citizens.

The causality described above does not have to be a just observation, since some more essentialist views do not accept the idea that a national identity can become less important when the nation state loses part of its political importance. The former French prime minister Lionel Jospin stated on this: “I want Europe, but I remain attached to my nation. Making Europe without unmaking France, or any other European Nation, that is my political choice.” Even though Jospin does not accept a decline of his attachment to his nation, his notion in general reflects the tension between the EU and the national identity. He would not have stated this if no one had suggested that his French identity could be less evident since the start of European integration.

In general the above describes the tension between the EU and the national identities. There is an alleged decline of the importance of national identity since the start of the

European integration project. This alleged decline will become even more apparent in the next paragraphs, especially in the case studies of chapter 3. In the rest of this thesis the opposition against this European integration project will be studied. The focus will be pointed at the use of the concept of national identity within the formulations of anti-EU positions. Since these positions rely on the idea that national identity is important and is permanently in friction with the EU, the descriptions of the decline of these national identities must be considered.

The Decline of national identity within the EU?
The decline of national identity within the EU is explained in many different ways. In paragraph 2.3 I will discuss the arguments that right wing parties have used to support their idea that national identities were threatened by the EU. In this paragraph the general reasoning behind a possible decline in the importance of national identity will be discussed.

One of the dominant factors in all of these explanations is the process of ‘othering’ that was mentioned in the previous paragraph. Within the formation of one’s national identity the identity is often defined by factors that do not belong to it. By formulating what is ‘the other’, one automatically produces an idea of what is considered to be ‘the same’. This process of ‘othering’ in the internal European Union context is becoming more difficult when one forms a national identity, since a diminishing number of common factors exist within a strictly national context. There seems to be, compared to earlier years, relatively more of ‘the same’ within a non-national context and relatively more that can be considered to be ‘the other’ in a national context. One could also state that the factors that form an identity have become less restricted by national borders. Examples of these non-national potential identity forming factors are the European common market, the common currency, the free travelling opportunities, the common foreign policy, the European elections, the educational exchanges and many regional transnational cooperation programmes. In this respect the link with the creation of the EU as the first fully supranational political body is often made, because the EU

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34 This relation seems to be shown in the above. It is supported by several scholars. Among others Neil Fligstein supports this with is influential work Euroclash, in which he claims that the national identity matters less compared to the personal preferences of identity. See: Neil Fligstein, Euroclash: The EU, European Identity and the Future of Europe (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2008).

35 In this thesis the arguments that support the idea the national identity is in decline will be discussed. There are of course also arguments against this idea, but these will not be analyzed, since they do not support the understanding of the concept of national identity used by radical right wing parties.

36 Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 18-20.
is a visible factor that created a platform for the identity negotiation to become less bound by national borders. For some, the EU became a visible competitor to national identities.

Other explanations of the decline of national identity within the EU can be divided into cultural, and economic explanations. Within the cultural explanations the older national identities that were formed on a strong political and geographical basis, are replaced with a form of new personalized cultural national identity.\(^{37}\) This form of national identity is less politically relevant and limited to personally accepted cultural factors, like the recognition of a shared history. In this cultural explanation, national identity does still exist, but it is in no form attached to authority and the state. Another cultural explanation for the decline of national identity within the EU that is often mentioned is that in the last fifty years one’s identity has, compared to earlier times, had more competition from local, regional, continental and even global identities.\(^{38}\) Especially in the EU there was a strong upheaval of all of these four forms of identity, that can be in competition with one’s acceptance of a strong national identity.

The economic explanations of the decline of national identity within the EU are linked to the national economic market that has been challenged increasingly, by a strong global network economy. The global network economy, to which Europe is strongly linked, is often considered to be too flexible and too dense to be constrained in any form by national borders.\(^{39}\) This phenomenon is not entirely specific to the EU, because it is a worldwide implication of globalization, but it is nevertheless very much present in Europe. Perhaps even the most present in Europe.

The geographic limitations on global commerce are becoming smaller and smaller. Since the creation of the EEC, time and space have slowly been annihilated as important economic restrictions. Also, the problems and complications of global commerce, like environmental risks and worldwide network infrastructures, are problems that are often not considered to be manageable on a national level.\(^{40}\) These factors have been said to add to the

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\(^{38}\) Ibidem.

\(^{39}\) Rifkin, *The European Dream*, 182.

\(^{40}\) An interesting side note to make here is that these economic factors for a diminishing national identity within the EU are considered to be mostly top-down and arising first and foremost among the social elite in Europe. The declining national identity is economically mostly stimulated in a top-down manner, just like the construction and stimulation of national identities within the formation of nation states. This was also a predominantly top-down movement. A strong and coherent work on this is top-down decline in national identities is *Euroclash* by Neil Fligstein. In *Euroclash* he explains that European integration and the larger economic scales and markets this creates are mostly to the benefit of the educated, higher class Europeans. He distinguishes in this respect between euro-winners and euro-losers. See: Fligstein, *Euroclash*.  

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creation of more multi-layered identities that can, but do not have to be, global in scale. These economic and cultural factors are all considered to contribute to a generally diminishing attachment to the national identity of citizens within the EU.

1.3 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the question of what constructs the concept of national identity and especially what constructs the concept of national identity in relation to the EU. Most scholars consider national identity to be an artificial construct forming the common factors that make a group of people identify with a state and feel solidarity amongst themselves. Identity is, in its core, the factors that are considered to be the same (idem). These factors are never fixed, but always subject to subjective views. In this chapter two important distinctions were made within the concept of national identity. First, between the personal and political definitions of national identity and, second, between an active and a passive national identity. The active national identity is subject to the personal choice of a citizen. The passive national identity is subject to a top-down construction of group-identity, which is not subjected to individual choice. Politicians only form a top-down, never completely accurate concept of national identity. The relation and difficulties between this national identity and the EU are well described by the quote of Jospin: “I want Europe, but I remain attached to my nation. Making Europe without unmaking France, or any other European Nation, that is my political choice.”

The last part of this chapter has focussed on possible political, geographic and economic reasons for the decline of the importance of national identity caused by the EU.

41 Rifkin, The European Dream, 358.
2. The rise of anti-EU parties

"For generations, politics in Europe has been defined in terms of class...It is still the prevailing divide, but recent election results and the resurgence of far-right groups suggest the issue of identity is beginning to intrude." 43

In this second chapter the rise and characteristics of anti-EU parties will be visited. The greater subject of national identity within right wing anti-EU party positions will be approached from a broad scope of anti-EU positions in general and will step by step be narrowed down towards the concept of national identity. This will create a general basis of anti-EU positions and a more specific analysis of right wing anti-EU positions in western Europe since 1992. In the final paragraph the specific argument of national identity within these positions will be discussed. Since the study of anti-EU party positions is a field subject to many discussions on terminology, the terms used must sometimes be specified. However, one has to keep in mind that in the general scope of this historical analysis the semantics will always be a smaller concern.

The concept of national identity has been discussed widely in the last chapter. In this chapter there will be some references to academic and popular conceptions of national identity, but the focus will be on how national identity is conceptualized by right wing anti-EU parties. The quality of the arguments used in these party positions will not be subject of discussion, because the goal is to analyse what has exactly been stated and meant by these parties and not what this should have been or if the statements are just.

2.1 Anti-EU positions in a wider context

The term anti-EU

As stated in the last chapter, defining the terms of a research is essential when trying to formulate a clear analysis and avoid misunderstandings. The term anti-EU does seem quite straightforward, but it has been subject to changes in methodological and semantic approaches. When writing a thesis in the fields of history and European studies, the term anti-EU has to be explained to avoid semantic criticism.

The most common term for the opposition of European integration has become Euroscepticism. Differentiations within Euroscepticism have been made on several fields. A prominent study by Szczerbiak and Taggart made the distinction between soft-Eurosceptics, who oppose the way the EU is performing at the moment, and hard-Eurosceptics, who oppose the EU and European integration entirely.44 Another distinction within the forms of Euroscepticism is made by Rovny, who claimed that besides hard and soft Euroscepticism, there is strategic and ideological Euroscepticism.45 A prominent critique on both of the previous formulations is formulated by Kopecký and Mudde, who considered the distinction between hard and soft Euroscepticism as too simple. They made a new distinction between Euro-enthusiasts, Euro-skeptics, Euro-rejects and Euro-pragmatists.46

This complete discussion has been taken into consideration. The aim of this research is not to pin it down on a choice for one of these methodological paths. Therefore I chose the more simple term ‘anti-EU’, since this covers the complete party positions of the three parties I will study. It also covers the strongest anti-EU positions, which Taggart and Szczerbiak would name hard Euroscepticism, Rovny would name ideological Euroscepticism and Kopecký and Mudde would call Eurorejects. These distinctions will all be accepted but not used, because for the study of the use of the concept of national identity within anti-EU party positions, it does not matter precisely why (ideologically or strategically, trajectory or fundamentally) a party opposes the EU, but how it opposes the EU. The three case studies and most of the parties that can ideologically be related to the group of right wing anti-EU parties are well depicted as being anti-EU or opposing the European Union.

44 Szczerbiak and Taggart eds., Opposing Europe vol. 1, 4-9.
Opposing Europe

The opposition against the EU, or as it is often formulated by political parties, the opposition against Europe, is a very complex phenomenon. It cannot be pinned down on the classic linear scale of left and right wing political party positions. Anti-EU positions can be found both on the right and the left of the political spectrum. These positions have risen among liberal, conservative and social democratic parties across Europe. In this respect, the phenomenon is a new political dimension that has given the national party relations in many countries a new point of discussion.

In most studies, the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and the Maastricht treaty (founding treaty of the EU) in 1992 are considered to have been great stimulators and turning points for anti-European integration positions in political parties. Before these moments there was some resistance on a national scale against European integration, but in general the EU and its predecessor, the EEC, have never been crucial issues for political parties in the separate member states. This changed with the start of significant political integration and the trajectory choice towards deeper integration that was made with the Maastricht treaty. Alongside this, the fall of the Iron Curtain and thereby consequently the possibility of enlargement towards eastern Europe created stronger grounds for anti-EU sentiments. In most EU member states political party positions were formulated against the EU in general and against further integration in particular.

Since the European Union enlargement towards eastern Europe in 2004 the fear of labour market competition with cheaper workers from eastern Europe has grown significantly. This factor is widely considered to have made the 2004 enlargement another moment in the European integration history that has stimulated the anti-EU positions in several countries. This fear grew because the EU was considered to be not only a positive factor on a macroeconomic scale, but also a factor in social policies and labour market competition. The fear for labour market competition with cheaper workers can be placed in the tradition of anti-EU positions related to economic protectionism and social policy chauvinism. The EU has not only regulated purely macro-economic and monetary matters, but also had an effect on social policies and labour markets. These effects created a fear among several groups that they might

47 Meret, The Danish People’s Party, 77.
be negative for certain groups. The EU was considered to stimulate threats to stable social policies and good labour market chances.

The anti-EU party positions have not only grown in importance since the end of the Cold War and the Maastricht treaty, but also in numbers of parties involved. Anti-EU party positions have, among others, merged with agendas of anti-immigration, environmental protection, socialism, welfare chauvinism, xenophobia and liberal conservatism. In general it has become a new dimension in every European political party system. In the period following the 2004 eastern enlargement, the referenda on the constitutional treaty in 2005 have been considered another important outing of anti-EU party positions. In France and in the Netherlands the European Constitution was rejected and in Ireland it was accepted only after a second round of voting. These referenda were widely interpreted as a sign of popular dissatisfaction with the EU. In general there seems to be a sense of decline of the general consensus on European integration. The integration project has gradually lost the permissive consensus of popular support since difficulties following the Maastricht treaty.

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50 Szczerbiak and Taggart eds., *Opposing Europe*, intro.
51 Ibidem, 3.
2.2 Right wing anti-EU Parties in Western Europe since 1992

After discussing the choice for a clear terminology and the general context of anti-EU positions, this paragraph will limit the scope of research. As discussed in the last paragraph, anti-EU party positions can be found at several points in the political spectrum. In this paragraph the anti-EU positions will be limited to right wing parties. The geographical scope will be limited to western Europe, since in eastern Europe the anti-EU party positions are generally accepted to have mostly different backgrounds. The temporal starting point will be 1992, as a consequence of our finding in the last paragraph that significant and spectrum-wide party positions opposing European integration only grew significantly since the end of the cold war and the signing of the Maastricht treaty in 1992.

The right wing parties

As with anti-EU parties, when writing about right wing parties, the terminology has to be clarified first. Several distinctions can be formulated on right wing parties concerning the question of what kind of right wing parties are under investigation. The most far reaching anti-EU positions are often found not among the more common central right wing parties like conservative, neo-liberal or Christian democrats. The strongest anti-EU formulations that include a reference to the concept of national identity is to be found among right wing parties that are considered to be on the far end of the right wing spectrum. Nevertheless, in this study the word ‘right wing’ was chosen and not a word like far right or radical right.

There have been long discussions since the rise of the so called ‘new-right’ in the 1980s among scholars on how to appropriately label these parties. The terms extreme right wing, radical right wing, far right, anti-immigration right, ethno-nationalistic right and nativist right have all been used. Even though some of these classifications may apply to several of the parties under research and to the parties that came up as Anti-EU parties in Western Europe since 1992, none of the terms (far right or radical right) will be used consequently. The aim of this study is not to decide which of the classifications is more suited. The general question of this thesis is about the concept of national identity as used by these parties. For

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52 Szczerbiak and Taggart eds., Opposing Europe.
that question it should not matter too much which specific approach towards these parties is chosen. The classification of right wing Anti-EU party is sufficient.

**The Right wing turn following Maastricht**

For most right wing European parties the Maastricht treaty in 1992 has formed a starting point or an enforcement of their anti-EU positions. Some right wing parties had already held anti-EU ideas before, but several right wing parties have started to change their minds on the EU and shifted towards party positions opposing the EU. Many right wing parties had even been supportive towards the European integration process until the end of the 1980s and made a turn after the Maastricht treaty.

Examples of right wing parties shifting their positions are the French Front National, the Italian Lega Nord, The German Republikaner and one of the case studies later under discussion, the Belgian Vlaams Blok. The French Front National stated for example in its 1985 party programme that it would support a ‘European defence and nuclear system, a common foreign policy, common immigration controls and a common currency’. The European integration was supported by right wing parties that saw the EU as a strong supporter of their regional aspirations. These regional aspirations were a ground for support for both the Vlaams Blok, that had Flemish separatist ideals, and Lega Nord, that held Northern Italian separatist ideals. Another reason for initial support for EU integration of these right wing parties was that they saw the EU as a strong force against immigration from non-western European countries. Since Maastricht many of these right wing parties have moved toward anti-EU positions.

The European Union has, following the Maastricht treaty, been criticized by right wing parties for being ‘socialist’ and ‘neoliberal’ and above all for being an intrusive supranational body. Political scientist and one of the most important scholars on right wing parties, Cas Mudde states that until 1992 the main argument for most right wing parties to not be too fundamentally anti-EU in their party ideologies, was that the majority of the population

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was believed to have held pro-EU ideas. Following 1992 the popular consent with EU integration diminished according to these parties and the EU was consequently considered to be an intrusive supranational body, that did not comply with the sentiments living among the electorate.

**Why the EU is opposed by right wing parties**

After discussing the start of strong anti-EU positions and the choice for the term right wing, the content of the anti-EU party positions will be discussed. The right wing parties under investigation can be described as structural and complete anti-EU parties, because there is a complete opposition towards the EU with no form of support. It is accepted in academic literature on political parties that far right or extreme right wing and their anti-EU positions have become more mainstream in Western European politics. An interesting aspect to stipulate is that many right wing parties have been claiming to support the importance of ‘Europe’, but to oppose the EU. The objections were mostly against the procedures and institutions of the EU, but the importance of the European history and civilization was never downplayed. Many of these parties have claimed to be pro-Europe but anti-EU. The parties support a Europe with close cooperation between nation-states, but without a strong European Union. Or, as the French Front National formulated it in 1998: “A Europe of the Fatherlands”.

The Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde has concluded that right wing parties relate their anti-EU positions to several points of what he describes as the populist radical right trinity. This trinity focusses on battling corruption, fighting immigration and creating security. Within this research the focus will not be on the question if these parties are populist parties or not, but the matter of the fact is that the three factors forming Mudde’s trinity can all be found within their anti-EU positioning. What is considered to be shared by these parties is that for most of the right wing anti-EU parties there is a general distrust towards the ‘external’ or the outsider. In order to secure the factors of this trinity, this outsider has to be prevented from entering the ‘internal’ (national) sphere, according to these parties. According to Mudde, the extremes of right wing anti-EU parties consider the world to be a

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60 Art “The Organizational Origins of the Contemporary Radical Right: The Case of Belgium”.
63 Ibidem. 6-32.
hostile place in which everyone is believed to conspire against their nation and state. The external or outsider also includes the EU and the national citizens working for the EU.  

This last argument is the core of right wing party opposition against the EU. It is related to the process of ‘othering’, that was mentioned in chapter one. Until the treaty of Maastricht the European integration project was by many parties considered to be a process not completely external or not completely belonging to ‘the other’. Since the Maastricht treaty several right wing politicians started to describe the European Commission and the European parliament as ‘the other’ in opposition to the national interests of national citizens.

The Danish political scientist Susi Meret does not support Mudde’s idea of combining the populist radical right trinity and anti-EU party positions. Her ideas on anti-EU party positions in right wing parties are not strictly related to their overall political positioning. She states that the radical right turned against the EU predominantly because the EU is was considered to undermine the sovereignty and autonomy of the member states. Within this opposition against the EU, strong and hard rhetoric plays a crucial role. The rhetoric against the European Union is often formulated in the same way as the older rhetoric against the national elite. The outsider has transformed from being the opposite of the casual citizen, the national elite, into becoming the European elite, often depicted as the ‘bureaucrats in Brussels’. In other words the dominant ‘other’ is no longer a national elite, but an external force that threatens the national interests. The national politicians in power are now no longer portrayed as being ‘the other’, but as conveyors of European anti-national dictates.

Another common characteristic of the right wing parties that formulate strong anti-EU party positions is that they have all fiercely opposed the Turkish accession to the European Union. In general the enlargement of the EU was opposed, but when it came to the matter of the possible EU enlargement with the accession of Turkey, most of the right wing parties formulated an even harsher opposition. This position is comprehensible following the previously mentioned party line of respecting the common culture and heritage of Europe, but opposing the EU. The cultural heritage of Europe is in these party positions ending geographically at the Bosporus and is, according to these parties, culturally not including the heritage of the Islam.

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64 Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 74.
65 Meret, The Danish People’s Party.
66 Ibidem, 77.
67 See page 27. “…pro-Europe but anti-EU”.
68 Cas Mudde mentions this as a consistent point in parties in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Italy and Austria: Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties.
A difference in why the EU is opposed by right wing parties can be found in the role the party wants its national state to play. Some right wing parties are considered to be state-nationalists and some are considered ethnic-nationalists. The first prefer a Europe of states and the second prefer a Europe of ethnic communities. The difference between these two is ideological, but being toned down in their fierce anti-EU stances. Nevertheless, this division is one of the main reasons why pan-European political cooperation between right wing parties has not functioned very well so far. For example, the Front National and Vlaams Blok have never been able to come to a constructive cooperation even though Vlaams Blok has admittedly copied many strategies of the Front National. There is simply no agreement as to which form of nationalism the EU is in conflict with, the nationalism of the state (France) or that of the ethnic community (the Flemish).

Among right wing anti-EU parties that share important ideals on the issue of national identities, there have been several attempts to form European wide associations. The last and most important association was the European Association of nationalist parties, which in 2005 has constructed the “Vienna Declaration of Patriotic and National Movements and Parties in Europe.” Among these parties were the Austrian FPÖ, the Belgian VB, the Bulgarian Ataka, the French FN, the Italian Azione Sociale and Social Movement – Tricolore Flame, the Romanian Greater Romania Party and the Spanish Alternativa Española. The later investigated DF did not sign it, but did express its support for the declaration.

Right wing anti-EU electoral success

There are several theories about the reasons for the relatively larger electoral successes of right wing anti-EU parties since 1992. In most Western European countries the right in general and the right wing anti-EU parties in particular have had several large electoral successes in the 1990s, but even larger successes in the years since 2001. There are three prominent theories on the successes of these parties that cover Western Europe. The first important thesis is the Euroclash thesis, that focusses on the rising struggle between citizens profiting from EU integration and therefore supporting it and citizens not profiting and

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69 The United Kingdom Independence Party in the United Kingdom, Front National in France and Republikaner in Germany are considered to be state-nationalist parties. Vlaams Blok in Belgium and Lega Nord in Italy are considered to be ethno-nationalist parties.

70 Lieven De Winter, “The Vlaams Blok and the heritage of extreme-right flemish-nationalism.” Paper presented at the the seminar: “The extreme right in Europe, a many faceted reality”, co-ordinated by Dr. Xavier Casals, Barcelona, July 5-6, 2004.


72 See for a good outline of these successes: Harmsen and Spiering, *Euroscepticism*. 
There are scholars who have argued that the rise of right wing parties since the 1990s was not a process running parallel to the European integration process, but a by-product of European Integration itself. Berezin and Fligstein argue that without European integration the electoral niche for both nationalist anti-immigration parties and pro nation state parties would be much weaker. This idea is disputed, but must be noted when considering the right wing anti-EU parties in Western Europe and the explanations of their electoral success.

Finally, the greatest impact of most of these radical, extreme or far right parties in contemporary Europe is probably through their influence on other parties. Except for the FPÖ (Austria), the DF (Denmark) and the PVV (Netherlands) none of these parties has had the chance to take part or even officially support a national government. In the European Parliament these parties have also not played a significant role, when it comes to electoral force. Their impact is considered to lie more in the strong rhetoric that has an impact on the complete party culture and the positions of other parties. Moreover, these parties’ anti-EU rhetoric is well present in different forms of media and often attracts more attention than the electoral successes of the party would suggest. This is more important than their direct policy making impact. The influence of the ideas of these parties can clearly be observed in a more EU critical position of many other parties along the complete political spectrum.

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73 The most important formulation of the Euroclash thesis can be found in: Fligstein, *Euroclash*.
74 Populism explained as a reason: Paul Taggart, “Populism has the potential to damage European democracy, but demonising populist parties is self-defeating.” Article presented at Wiardi Beckman Stichting Workshop 2012. <URL> http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europppblog/2012/12/13/populism-has-the-potential-to-damage-european-democracy-paul-taggart/ (Visited 02-01-2013).
75 The new interest thesis well explained: Meret, *The Danish People’s Party*, 34.
77 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 283.
2.3 Fear for the loss of the national identity in anti-EU reasoning

In the last paragraph of this chapter the focus will lie on the specific argument of national identity in the right wing anti-EU parties’ reasoning. In the title the phrase ‘fear for the loss of’ is used because the argument of national identity in anti-EU party positions is predominantly used in formulations in which the national identity is under threat or in decline. It is however also used in formulations where it is presented as not being under threat, but simply as being an important force in a country.

The debate on national identity is said to have grown in general in Western European political systems since the treaty of Maastricht. The debate is in most countries not on the importance or the existence of a national identity, but predominantly on which factors construct a certain national identity or what these factors are definitely not. These factors were, before the process of European integration started, often considered evident and were not point of discussion. The Frenchness of the French, as Habermas mentioned (see 1.2), was still undisputed and a passive national identity which politicians described was strong and in many countries generally accepted. Since the treaty of Maastricht the argument of national identity, or the Frenchness of the French, has become a more important political argument against EU integration. First, this paragraph will unravel this argument. Next, it will turn to the question why this argument has been used and what kind of electorate it generally seems to have attracted.

The EU as a ‘competing’ political body

The argument of national identity in the party positions of right wing anti-EU parties first deserves some general observations on the transformations the EU has experienced in the last twenty years. These observations will further the understanding of the reasoning of these parties, since there are many references to these transformations of the EU.

An important observation about the changes of the EU in the years since the Maastricht treaty is that with every important change of this treaty, every new wave of accessing countries and every major integration step, there have been several major outings of resistance. These were mostly attempts to maintain the balance between the sovereignty of

78 See among others the in 2.2 mentioned ‘New Interest’ thesis that focusses on the shift in political issues away from the traditional right-left division.

79 There were of course also outings of resistance against the general direction of EU integration before 1992. A good example of this is the empty chair crisis of the 1960s. The difference in the whole integration process is that since 1992 almost every step of integration has been heavily criticized.
the countries and the empowerment of the European Union. In the words of political scientist Jeremy Rifkin: “each step forward to a closer union of the peoples of Europe has been met with a half step backwards to preserve the nation state powers.”

This tendency supports the claims of right wing parties that there are national sentiments that want to maintain a balance between empowering the EU and upholding nation state powers. A good example of this are the public resentments against the constitutional treaty that was formulated in 2005. These resentments were against installing a more state like constitution ruling over ‘the citizens of the EU’. There have been fierce political disagreements on this constitutional treaty and the faith in Europe as a unity that has shared features has dropped tremendously after the rejecting referenda in France and the Netherlands. Many right wing parties have claimed that since this moment the EU has started to legally resemble a state, despite the fact that the EU had no claims on territory. These claims made the right wing parties oppose the EU even stronger. Public support for these party claims seems to have grown since 2005 (see for example Appendix 1).

**Anti-EU and pro national identity**

The main argument of the parties rejecting the EU as a whole is that the EU is seen as an infringement and a threat to the national independence and the national identity. According to several scholars this argument is combined with so called ‘nativist’ positions on defining the in-group of a state, by defining the out-group. This is the before mentioned process of ‘othering’. Mudde considers, among other parties, the VB, DF and PVV to be right wing parties that have adopted ‘nativist’ party positions. Disregarding the truth of this classification, his idea about their concept of national identity is relevant, since this national identity is claimed to be in friction with the EU. For these parties the definition of the national identity of the in-group remains vague or even unspecified. The descriptions of what is not the national identity are, according to Mudde, very clear and explicit. In this sense the national identity is, for these parties, mostly defined as the mirror image of what it is explicitly not. A good understanding of what constructs the concept of national identity therefore relies partly

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83 The term nativist was until 2005 mostly used when referring to non-western civilizations, but has since been used more to also define western claims of cultural homogeneity.
84 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 63-64.
on a good understanding of what constructs the aspects of what is definitely not the national identity.

The friction between national identity and the EU is also said to be an argument used by many so called ‘populist’ parties. Populism is described in political science as an ideology that is based on the separation of two homogeneous groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite. Populist parties have also built their ideas about democracy, upon this idea. The common sense of the people or ‘the general will’ should always take precedence and should not be curtailed by undemocratic constraints like protection of minorities or even human rights or constitutional guarantees.\(^{85}\)

According to the political scientist Paul Taggart, the populist ideology and anti-EU positions have often been combined in the last twenty years. He states that right wing populist parties have often constructed hypothetical imaginary heartlands that consist of a homogeneous group of people with strict values. This homogeneous group of people were claimed to be the holders of the identity of the heartland.\(^{86}\) The heartland is claimed to be under threat by any form of outside influence, which also includes any form of supranational organizations like the EU. In this line of reasoning the EU is a major threat to the wellbeing of the pure and homogeneous group of citizens living in a country.

Within this group of parties referring to the heartland or posing ‘nativist’ ideas there is a strong difference between parties referring to this heartland as being present within an existing nation state (for example DF) and parties that make regionalist calls for autonomy of a group that shares a cultural identity (for example VB).\(^{87}\) The last group is in academic literature most often referred to as regionalists, but in political rhetoric they have most often called themselves nationalist.\(^{88}\)

The argument of national identity is in many studies considered to be a right wing reaction to globalization. The focus on a national identity by these parties was putting community, local and domestic interests versus multicultural, global and international interests. As regard to these multicultural, global and international interests the parties have

\(^{86}\) Taggart, “Populism has the potential to damage European democracy, but demonising populist parties is self-defeating.” And: Szczepański and Taggart eds., *Opposing Europe*.
\(^{88}\) The Italian Lega Nord has called itself a nationalist party. The VB has always referred to itself as being a nationalist party. For example in its founding principles of 1978 it states in its still pro-European integration phrases: “Vlaams Blok als nationalistische partij mag de eenwording van Europa alleen geschieden op basis van een samenwerking der volksgemeenschappen.” (Dutch: “Voor het Vlaams Blok als nationalistische partij mag de eenwording van Europa alleen geschieden op basis van een samenwerking der volksgemeenschappen.) From: Vlaams Blok: The five main articles that Vlaams Belang still recognizes as its founding principles: “Grundbeginselen” [http://www.blokwatch.be/content/category/4/77/50/lang.nl/](http://www.blokwatch.be/content/category/4/77/50/lang.nl/) (Visited: 05-01-2013).
claimed that there was no more interest for shared history and common culture. The public feeling of possibly not profiting from the growing economic scales was in this argument combined with a party position against the EU. These anti-globalization arguments are not always traditional right wing positions, but these were in anti-EU positions often combined with welfare chauvinism, economic protectionism and an emphasis on risks and insecurity that comes with EU integration.

**The electorate**

Several scholars have wondered which voter groups have been most attracted to the arguments of national identity to form an anti-EU party position. General observations have suggested that the electorate is in general relatively less present among voters with a foreign background and among higher educated voters. The claims on a society that consists of an ethnic and culturally homogeneous population seem to distract voters with recent non in-state backgrounds. Even though the national identity claims do not have to be exclusive in nature, immigrant voters seem not to support these in general.

Some scholars focus on the marginalisation of so called ‘losers’ or non-profiteers of globalization that are attracted to anti-EU party positions. Susi Meret makes a strong argument based on an older theory of Martin Lipset that it were most often not the voters who did not profit from globalization, but mostly the voters that shared a fear for the loss of social status and economic power. This fear is, according to Lipset’s theory, most often found among those who have risen fast in financial terms and might be frustrated in the desire to be socially accepted by groups that have a longer history of a higher social economic status. This situation is considered to give rise to projected fears that can be formed into political positions against the possibly threatening ‘other’ like ethnic minorities, foreign country interests or

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89 Rifkin, *The European Dream*, 248.
90 Meret, *The Danish People’s Party*, 35.
93 Ibidem.
94 Fligstein, *Euroclash*.
supranational organizations like the EU. Without claiming that this theory on the electorate is completely right, it must be kept in mind as an interesting explanation for the attracted electorate.

2.4 Conclusion

The second chapter has focused on the rise of anti-EU parties in Western Europe since 1992. Firstly, it was discussed why I chose the term anti-EU and not Eurosceptic or Euro-rejectionist. This was followed by a historical analysis of the rise of anti-EU party positions since 1992. The anti-EU party positions have not only grown in importance since the end of the Cold War and the Maastricht treaty, but also in numbers of parties involved and the political ideologies of these parties have become more scattered around the political spectrum. There were even several parties that have been supporting European integration before 1992 and have turned against it since Maastricht (Vlaams Blok for example).

In discussing why right wing parties have opposed the EU, I have discussed the relation between anti-EU positions and the right wing trinity formulated by Cas Mudde. Besides this, the ideas of sovereignty formulated by Susi Meret were discussed. An important conclusion is that the rise of anti-EU sentiments have not been running parallel to the EU integration, but is mostly considered to be a by-product of European integration. The more influential the EU became, the more the resistance against it grew and also the more it was considered to be interfering with national matters and threatening the national identity. The anti-EU sentiments can be placed in a larger tradition of right wing parties constructing hypothetical imaginary heartlands that consist of a homogeneous group of people with strict values. These heartlands, with a strong national identity, are claimed to be threatened by the EU.
3. Three case studies

After formulating the different conceptualizations of national identity in the first chapter and studying the rise of right wing anti-EU parties in the second chapter, three case studies will be discussed to form a stronger empirical basis. These three case studies will be the Belgian Vlaams Blok, since 2004 renamed Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest), the Dansk Folkeparti (Danish Peoples Party) and the Dutch Partij Voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom). The oldest party, the VB, will be dealt with first and the youngest, the PVV, last. Before dealing with the case studies, the next paragraph will attempt to clarify the choices for these parties and the most important differences in the settings in which these parties were operating.

The paragraphs on the parties will be split into three parts to make the cases easier to compare. The split is into the general facts and history of the party, the ideology of the party and a last part on the concept of national identity that can be extracted from party productions. Since the parties’ use of the concept of national identity is inherently concerned with the parties’ conception of ‘the nation’, ‘the national culture’ and ‘the national population’, the focus will lie on matters surrounding the nation and the parties’ stances towards ideological issues concerning ‘the nation’.

The last part of each case on the concept of national identity will again be split into three parts. The first considers what variables have, according to these parties, been aspects of their respective national identity (the framework). This framework of variable factors is value neutral and creates characteristics that can be compared. The variables are numbered and are used in all three cases. The second considers how this party has filled these characteristics with specific elements that create a specific national identity (the elements). In the third part the way these elements are related to their anti-EU party positions will be discussed.

The primary sources that will be used are party programmes and public statements by the respective party leaders. In the introduction I already mentioned the methodological ‘weakness’ that exists since I am fluent in Dutch and English and not in Danish. The translations of Dutch and Danish into English are therefore always accompanied by the original text.

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96 In the construction of this framework of characteristics or variables forming the concept of national identity, several possible factors constructing a cultural identity were taken from works on intercultural communication and identity formation. The used framework is not used before for this specific purpose, but the basis comes from works on cultural identity. See: Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, 12th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth 2009).
3.1 Three different, but comparable settings

Before discussing the differences in settings, the choice for the three cases has to be explained. There are several reasons why these three parties form a good case for a better understanding about the concept of national identity within right wing anti-EU party positions. I will first discuss the thoughts behind this selection.

First of all, the three parties are all considered by themselves and by many scholars as being Eurosceptic or Euro-rejectionist parties.\(^97\) The parties have since 1992 all formulated strong anti-EU party positions and linked these to their core ideology. Second, these parties are by several scholars considered to be the most influential populist radical right parties of their respective countries.\(^98\) Disregarding the truth of the label ‘populist’ and ‘radical’, the fact matters that they have been grouped together as sharing several characteristics in party positions. Third, these three parties are considered to be, together with the French FN, the best organized right wing parties in Western Europe.\(^99\) Fourth, these three parties are all part of the rise of the so called ‘new-right’ that has been observed in Western Europe since the 1980s. This concerns the right wing movement that is not directly related to older right wing party families like neo-liberalists, Christian Democrats and Conservatives.\(^100\) Fifth, these parties are all considered to share nativist ideals. The term nativism refers to a party that wants to return the power of an entity to the natives of a political area and return to its native culture.\(^101\) Sixth, these parties have all had large electoral successes. (See Appendix 1 and 2) and as a seventh and last point these parties have all been formed in small Northwest European countries that have been EU members for a long time.

Different settings

To create a better understanding of the observations on the party concepts of national identity, it is important to explain the different societal settings and conditions these parties have been operating under. This can clarify several interpretations of the concept of national identity and questions why these views could arise in these specific historical contexts. Moreover, when doing a comparative study it is important to first clarify the differences in the settings of the

\(^97\) Szczerbiak and Taggart eds., *Opposing Europe*, Rovný and Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde.
\(^98\) Mudde and Art.
\(^100\) Meret, *The Danish People’s Party*, 26.
\(^101\) The term nativism was eventually only used in non-western and non-industrial cases, but it is being used more to discuss historical and political situations worldwide. In: Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 18.
case studies. In this way these differences are understood not only as being fully subject to the actions of the party, but also subject to the different surroundings. It must be well clarified that, although it might be desirable, there is no option for a ceteris paribus situation in political history. In ceteris paribus examples, only parties would be studied in a comparative way and the outside world would be assumed to be unchanging. This is impossible.

One of the most important differences in the settings of Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands is that the last two have a fully national voting system and Belgium has a confederal party model with two separate elections in Flanders and Walloon. National parties have not existed at all in Belgium since the founding of the VB.\textsuperscript{102} Because the VB only takes part in the Belgian elections among half of the population, the voting results (see appendix 1 & 2) may be misleading and suggesting the idea that the DF and PVV had a larger electoral successes. The matter of the fact is that the best result in an election has been reached by the VB in the European Parliament elections of 2004. In this election the VB gained alsmot 24\% of the Flemish vote (see appendix 2), which is considerably higher than the lifetime peaks of 15,3\% for the DF (EP 2009) and 17,0\% for the PVV (EP 2009).

The VB was originally founded as a Flemish independence movement and has only participated in the Flemish elections, so it was only eligible for half of the complete Belgian electorate. This strive for Flemish independence forms a difference in the party goals. The DF and the PVV can be considered as nationalist or nativist parties, while VB is a regional separatist party.

Another difference in the settings lies in the acceptance of the party by the respective political system. The VB has since its founding been treated like as a political pariah party. The DF and PVV have both given official support to a government and been involved in cabinet negotiations. In Belgium there has been a publicly accepted rejection of the VB. This was made official in 1989 when all the other major Belgian parties signed a so called ‘cordon sanitaire’. In this, all parties agree to never make any political agreements and deals with the VB.\textsuperscript{103} In contrast, the DF was, after becoming the third largest party in the 2001 elections, accepted as a partner in the conservative-liberal coalition negotiations. Before this moment there had been a non-official form of a cordon sanitaire around the DF, but this was disposed after these elections. It resulted in a minority cabined in which the DF did not bring in any ministers, but did officially support the government and was involved in policy negotiations. The PVV has followed the same path as the DF and stepped out of its initial un-outspoken

\textsuperscript{102} Art, “The Organizational Origins of the Contemporary Radical Right: The Case of Belgium.”.
\textsuperscript{103} De Winter, “The Vlaams Blok and the heritage of extreme-right flemish-nationalism.”.
cordon sanitaire. It became a supporting, non-participating part of a Dutch Liberal-Christian Democratic minority government in 2010. This clearly signifies the difference of the VB having a cordon sanitaire around it and the DF and the PVV being accepted in the political party system.

A similarity between these parties that is interesting to note is that these parties all share a tendency to have strong and relatively long lasting leaders. The VB was led for around twenty years by Filip Dewinter since 1989, the DF has since its founding in 1995 had Pia Kjærsgaard as the party leader and the PVV has been led since 2005 by its founder Geert Wilders. On the matter of leadership there is a difference, because within the VB and DF there have been elections on the position of party leader, whereas the PVV is officially based on a foundation with one member, only Geert Wilders. Nevertheless, the other two parties seem to have rather exclusive structures too. The VB, for example, has a Party Council with decision power on every matter. This council was formed by fourteen members upon the party’s founding and remained unchanged for almost twenty years. The party is even said to denounce ‘democracy’ in its internal documents by claiming it is a way to organize a political system, not a political party.104

On the matter of exclusivity, the PVV is considered to be the most closed party of all radical right political parties in Western Europe. In an extensive study led by the Cambridge political scientist David Art, in which almost forty scholars have participated, around 140 interviews were carried out with radical right wing politicians throughout Western Europe. The PVV turned out to be the only party in all of the countries that was approached, but allowed no member politician to participate in any form of interview. The VB and DF did participate.105

The relations between the three parties are interesting to elaborate on. There has been a good relation between the PVV and the DF since the founding of the PVV in 2005. Especially the relation between the two party leaders, Geert Wilders and Pia Kjærsgaard has been considered to be good.106 The PVV is even considered to have resembled many strategies and formulations that the DF had used.107 Geert Wilders commented on the resignation of Pia Kjærsgaard as DF party leader in the summer of 2012 with the following statement:

104 De Winter, “The Vlaams Blok and the heritage of extreme-right flemish-nationalism.”, 16.
105 Art, Inside the Radical Right, 186.
“Through Pia’s leadership and influence on Danish politics, Denmark has become a proud and self-assured country that has fought for the ideals of freedom against Islamisation and decrees from Brussels...Pia has been an inspiration for many of her political friends in other countries.”

The relationship between the VB and the other two has never been strong. Despite several attempts towards cooperation from the VB, the PVV and DF have never shown any interest in open cooperation with the VB.
3.2 Vlaams Belang (Belgium)

“Our own people first! (Eigen volk eerst!)”

3.2.1 Party history

The Belgian Vlaams Blok has been one of the strongest right-wing parties in Europe over the last three decades. It was founded in a long Belgian history of Flemish separatist parties. In 1977 the Flemish separatist party, the People’s Union, participated in the negotiation of the so called Egmont Pact on possible governmental participation with five other parties. Several more radical right wing members within the People’s Union did not agree with the possible agreement that would shift towards a stronger federal Belgian state. In a few groups they separated themselves from the People’s Union and later joined forces to form a new party for the 1978 Flemish elections. They named it the Vlaams Blok (Flemish Block).

In the first decade of the VB it held different positions from what it became later known for. The VB was, for example, not yet labelled as an extreme right wing party, but rather as a conservative separatist party. The party was supporting European integration in the beginning years, which it fiercely opposed in its later years. In the first decade the electoral successes of the VB were still minor. In the Flemish elections it never topped 2% (See appendix).

Around 1987 the party made several important choices. The VB youth organization was founded in that year by, amongst others, later to be party leader Filip Dewinter. Partly by pressure from the rapidly growing youth party the party’s focus shifted from Flemish nationalism (separatism) towards resisting immigration.

The party formulated a new party slogan for the 1987 elections: “Own people first!” (Eigen volk eerst). It was derived from the French Front National Slogan “The French First.”

The party’s move to a more anti-immigration course had two major results. The party got more attention from the media and gained a larger electoral support since the elections of 1992. The party, however, also became a political pariah in the Belgian political party system. In 1989 all of the other political parties even signed a ‘cordon sanitaire’, in which they agreed not to cooperate in any form with the VB. This cordon sanitaire has kept the VB from

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111 De Winter, “The Vlaams Blok and the heritage of extreme-right Flemish-nationalism.”, 6.
112 Ibidem, 6-13.
governmental participation until this day, but according to many scholars it did bring them strong positions in election campaigns since they could always pursue vote-maximising campaigns of ‘overpromising’, uninhibited by concerns of how everything could be implemented.113 By always performing from the opposition the VB could also claim to be the only party fighting for 'ordinary people'.114

Until the 1990s the VB has actively propagated the idea of a Greater Netherlands.115 This point was downplayed after 1990. As reason for this move the important role of social democratic policies in the Dutch political climate is usually mentioned.116 The VB even expanded to the Netherlands propagating the idea of a Greater Netherlands. In 1992 the Dutch Block, or ‘Nederlands Blok’ was established. This party never played any significant political role. It only gained 2 municipal seats in Utrecht and was officially dissolved in 2000.117

A move towards a stronger anti-immigration party line was made when in 1992 the party leaders Filip Dewinter and chairman Karel Dillen introduced the party plan to reduce immigration and solve the Belgian ‘immigrant problem’. They presented a 70-point plan which was in full named: "Immigration: The solutions. 70 proposals for the solution of the problem of aliens."118 This plan was considered more radical than the VB had ever presented itself. It contained, besides anti-immigrant positions, the parties’ first positioning against the EU. It marks the move from considering European integration as an opportunity for Flemish regionalism, towards considering European integration as a threat. The party now condemned the Schengen treaty and stated that European governments were through this cooperation ‘in no way stopping non-western immigrants from entering the EU.’119

The party did, despite of its anti EU positioning, take seat in the European Parliament. After the 1989 EP elections it had sided with the French nationalist FN and the German nationalist Republikaner. The group was named the technical Group of the European Right. In the 1994 EP elections the party made it to two MEPs and in 1999 the party even became the

113 Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 289.
115 Greater Netherlands refers to the idea that all Dutch speaking persons should be united in one country. This includes Flanders, the Netherlands, a small part of Germany and several non-European territories where Dutch speaking persons live, like the white farmer population in South Africa. The PVV has also had the idea of the Greater Netherlands in its 2009 election programme.
116 De Winter, “The Vlaams Blok and the heritage of extreme-right flemish-nationalism.”, 11.
118 Dutch: “‘70 voorstellen ter oplossing van het vreemdelingenprobleem”.
119 70-point plan article 32.
third largest Flemish party (fifth in all of Belgium). These good results in the EP elections are often ascribed to the successful combination of anti-immigrant positions and anti-EU positions.\textsuperscript{120}

In 2000 the 70-point plan was officially discarded. VB was said to soften its tone to be able to create more room for cooperation with other parties.\textsuperscript{121} The other parties still held the cordon sanitaire, but ignoring and avoiding the VB became harder and harder since they seemed to gain ground in every election. In the 2004 regional Flemish election the party became the single largest Flemish party. Only by upholding the cordon sanitaire, three other parties could form a regional government without including the VB.\textsuperscript{122} Interesting to note is that until 2004 VB had never lost in an election compared to the previous election. This makes the VB the electorally best performing right wing party in Western-Europe.\textsuperscript{123}

The election successes of the VB were not always resulting in successes on other fronts. In 2004 the high court in Ghent banned the parties’ existence for “Repeated incitement for discrimination.” This shut the party down, because it was no longer able to get governmental funding and no longer allowed access to Belgian television.\textsuperscript{124} Directly following the ban, the members of the party recreated the party with a new name. The Vlaams Belang party was founded in November 2004 and the party claimed to be just the same as the former Vlaams Blok.\textsuperscript{125} Under the new name the VB seemed not to have suffered from the loss of a large public trial and conviction for open discrimination. In the 2006 municipal elections it gained several seats compared to the last election.\textsuperscript{126}

In the preparation for the 2009 EP elections the VB joined the newly formed EP group ‘Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty’. With among other parties the French FN, the Austrian FPÖ and the Bulgarian Ataka Party.\textsuperscript{127} In 2009, before the European elections, the twenty year leader, Filip Dewinter stepped down and under the new party leader Bruno Valkeniers Party, the party made its first loss in both the regional and EP elections that year. This was the first downfall in electoral success for the VB.

\textsuperscript{120} Mudde, \textit{The Ideology of the Extreme Right}, 32-33.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{123} De Winter, “The Vlaams Blok and the heritage of extreme-right flemish-nationalism.” 11.
\textsuperscript{124} Coffé, “The adaptation of the extreme right’s discourse: the case of the Vlaams Blok”
\textsuperscript{125} See ‘Ground ideas declaration of the Vlaams Belang’, http://www.blokwatch.be/content/view/64/50/lang.nl/
\textsuperscript{126} “Poll gain for Belgium’s far right”, \textit{BBC News}. 09-10-2006. <URL> http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6032331.stm (Visited: 02-01-2012).
In the 2010 general Belgian elections the VB lost again and was reduced from 17 to 12 seats in the Belgian chamber of representatives. The main reason for this loss was the emergence of a new party fighting for Flemish independence, New Flemish Alliance. This new Flemish nationalist party had a less radical right wing positioning and profited from several scandals within the VB. In 2011 the former party chairman MEP Frank Vanhecke left Vlaams Belang and later joined the Eurosceptic faction of the EFD party, of which also the DF is a member. The remaining member of the VB in the EP, Phillip Claeys, is not attached to any faction.

3.2.2 Party ideology

In this part the ideology and positions of the VB will be discussed, while trying not to form any normative ideas about this ideology. When positions are discussed as radical or controversial there will be references to generally accepted and well-read sources that have stated the same. The points constructing the larger VB ideology will be supported by several quotes from party programmes and public statements by the party leader.

The ideology of the VB has been split into four parts that can all contribute to the understanding of what the VB considers national identity to be. In general, the VB has focussed on a number of issues in Belgian politics. The most important one is Flemish nationalism, next to immigration, security and corruption. This last point will not be discussed since it is not related to national identity. Two other points are the strive for a Greater Netherlands and their positions towards European integration.

Flemish nationalism

The VB has foremost and continuously presented itself as a Flemish nationalistic party. In paragraph 2.3 the issue of the difference between nationalism and regional separatism was discussed. According to several scholars the party would be better labelled as regionally separatist, but the party describes itself as being Flemish Nationalistic.

131 I will not discuss the validity of radical stances of the VB of for example Belgian WWII collaborators that should be excused and the support for white movements in South Africa. For a good assessment of the complete VB ideology see: De Winter: “The Vlaams Blok and the heritage of extreme-right flemish-nationalism.”
132 Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 308.
In the founding documents the party stated that it exists: “To form a strong Flemish nationalist party.” In a 2007 questionnaire the party defined itself as a right-wing nationalist party. In the founding document of the newly formed Vlaams Belang in 2004 it stated:

“The party is a Flemish-nationalistic party, an instrument for politics of national and cultural identity within Flanders. This means that the party and its political actions want to make the cultural identity and people’s community decisive for the formation and governing of the state.”

A radical point within the Flemish nationalism is that the VB has often called for complete amnesty for all Flemish persons convicted of collaborating with the German occupiers in the second world war. The party has claimed that these were soldiers fighting for the national interests of Flanders within the Nazi forces. In its founding document it states that:

“We demand a complete and unconditional amnesty for all victims of repression of the Second World War.”

In another pamphlet:

“More than half a century since the end of the Second World War, the Flemish-nationalist collaboration leaders are still receiving praises in the VB journal. Their irrefutable Nazi ideology is not an obstruction to these praises. These Flemish leaders should, without exception, be depicted as great idealists for their people.”

Anti-Immigration

Upon its founding and even more since the beginning of the 1990s, the VB has taken hard anti-immigration positions. The positions were specifically against non-western immigrants and immigrants from Muslim countries. In its 70 point plan it states:

“The mass immigration from third world countries to Western-Europe in general and Flanders specifically presents a true danger to the identity and pureness of our

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133 From Grundbeginselen. (Dutch): Het Vlaams Blok vormt een sterke Vlaams Nationalistische partij.”
134 Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 309.
137 “Vlaams Blok demands complete and irrefutable amnesty for all collaborators”. See: http://www.blokwatch.be/content/view/388/50/lang.nl/

From this pamphlet: “Meer dan een halve eeuw na het einde van de tweede wereldoorlog ontvangen de Vlaams-nationale collaboratievoorman nog steeds de nodige huldeblijken in het VB-maandblad. Hun niet te ontkennen naziistische Nieuwe Orde-ideologie vormt daarvoor geen beletsel. De Vlaamse voormannen worden daarbij zonder uitzondering voorgesteld als grote idealisten in dienst van hun volk.”
people. The streets are changing, the quality of education is dropping, crime rates are rising and unemployment rises. Several foreign organizations are mistreating our tolerance and the pluralism of our society... VB wants a to reinstall a Ius Sanguinis principle. This means ‘blood line descendants’. This means that the nationality must be only for those who is born from Flemish or Walloon parents only, no matter where the birth occurred.”

The anti-immigration points are often linked to Flemish Nationalism. “Immigration is a threat to the ethnic Flemish community”. As long as the VB existed it has opposed immigration and the effects of immigration. The party has called for the repatriation of all immigrants that reject or combat the Flemish identity and European values, such as gender equality and freedom of expression.

In the anti-immigration positions of the party the focus was in several occasions put strongly on anti-Muslim arguments. The focus here lies on mentioning traditional Belgium and Catholic values, like ‘the family’. The VB has since the 1990s stressed the incompatibility of the Islamic traditions and faith with the core of Flemish culture and identity. Before this moment, the issue of religion in its anti-immigration position was mostly left out. Party leader Filip Dewinter stated in 2008:

“We already have more than 6,000 mosques in Europe, which are not only a place to worship but also a symbol of radicalisation, some financed by extreme groups in Saudi Arabia or Iran.”

Greater Netherlands

Until 1990 the party supported the idea of federal Greater Netherlands.

“In a uniting Europe the only acceptable federal form is a federalism within the lines of the low lands at the sea. Twenty million Northern Dutchmen and Flemish must, in

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138 From 70-point plan. Article II: (Dutch)

“De massale immigratie vanuit de derde-wereldlanden naar West-Europa in het algemeen en naar Vlaanderen in het bijzonder houdt een reëel gevaar in voor de identiteit en de eigenheid van ons volk.”… “Het straatbeeld verandert, de kwaliteit van het onderwijs vermindert, de criminaliteit stijgt, de werkloosheid neemt toe...”…” Heel wat vreemdelingenorganisaties maken misbruik van de tolerantie en het pluralisme eigen aan onze maatschappij.”… 22. HET IUS SANGUINIS TERUG INVOEREN. Het Vlaams Blok pleit voor het terug invoeren van ‘bloedafstamming’. Dit betekent dat de nationaliteit voorbehouden wordt voor diegene die geboren wordt uit een Vlaamse of Waalse ouder en dit onafgezien van de plaats waar de geboorte zich voordeed.”

139 70 point plan.

140 De Winter, “The Vlaams Blok and the heritage of extreme-right flemish-nationalism.” 13.

141 Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 85.

“There are no Europeans!”

The party has on several occasions claimed a strong relation of the Flemish identity to the white population of South Africa. This relation is incorporated into the idea of a Greater Netherlands. In its founding principles it reads:

“South Africa takes a special place for the VB. Firstly, because the African people (Afrikaners) are in a strong racial way related to our Dutch people, in second because the whites in South Africa have the right to life and therefore are sovereign and last because South Africa is of crucial importance for the defence of Europe...We demand a stop on the rage against the whites in South Africa and a upheaval of the cultural relations with the Republic of South Africa.”

Anti-EU

Until the formation of the EU in 1992 the party has supported European integration to some extent:

“For the VB as a nationalist party the unification of Europe can only proceed on the basis of cooperation between peoples communities. The current states cannot serve as stepping stones for the building of Europe, because even larger Belgian situations would arise.”

Since 1992 the party has opposed the EU and further European integration. This was done one the basis of a fear for more immigrants, a rejection of the current EU, a fear for the loss of national identity and an opposition to Europe having competences on social matters.

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143 From the Vlaams Blok Grondbeginselen. 1978: http://www.blokwatch.be/content/view/63/50/lang,nl/
“In een eenwordend Europa is de enig mogelijke aanvaardbare federalistische vorm een federalisme binnen het kader van de Lage Landen bij de zee. Twintig miljoen Noordnederlanders en Vlamingen moeten in het komende Europa hun eenheid als taal, cultuur, volk opnieuw beleven om hun eigen zelfstandige plaats in Europa in te nemen en zo hun eigenheid te handhaven.”


145 “Voor het VLAAMS BLOK als nationalistische partij mag de eenwording van Europa alleen geschieden op basis van een samenwerking der volksgemeenschappen. De huidige staten kunnen niet dienen als bouwstenen voor Europa, zoniet zouden op schaalvergroting nog veel ergere Belgische toestanden ontstaan.” From Grondbeginselen.”
“Our country must reject the treaties of Schengen and Dublin as soon as possible. Their phrases are lacking power and therefore the (state) government has no way to stop immigration from non-European aliens coming from countries not belonging to the European Community (EEC).”

Until the 2005 referendum, the party has never actually exploited its EU positions during elections as a major issue. Since that moment it claimed to be the strongest anti-EU party in Belgium. In 2012 the party organized a colloquium called: ‘Pro Europe, so against this EU’. Mentioned at this colloquium as being the essential elements of national identity that cannot be forgotten and will be forgotten with further EU integration are: languages, cultures, vision on what a good life is, labour relations, political culture and financial budget culture. “Therefore the EU is cultural genocide.”

3.2.3 National identity
As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the part on the concept of national identity that the party uses will be divided into three parts. First the variables that the party attaches to the concept of national identity will be discussed. These variables will be non-specific and will form a framework of possible characteristics that one can consider to be elements of the concept of national identity. This is the framework of variables that, according to this party, can form national identity. As a second part the specific elements this party fills this framework with, will be discussed. In a last part these elements will be linked to the parties anti-EU position.

Framework
The characteristics that can be extracted from the VB vision on what could hypothetically construct a national identity are very diverse. The possible characteristics or variables are, without giving the value that the VB attaches to these characteristics:
(1) A shared history, (2) a strive for an independent state, (3) religion, (4) relation between religion and state, (5) political structure, (6) language, (7) nativity, (8) gender equality, (9)

146 (Ideology) Vlaams Blok already Eurosceptic since early 1992. From 70-point plan article 32: “Ons land moet zo vlug mogelijk afstand nemen van de akkoorden van Schengen en Dublin. De bepalingen vervat in het akkoord van Schengen en Dublin in verband met immigratie en clandestiene immigratie zijn zo laks dat de overheid op geen enkele manier nog de immigratie van niet-Europese vreemdelingen afkomen uit andere landen behorende tot de Europese Gemeenschap zal kunnen tegenhouden of afremmen.”

147 At 24-11-2012 The Vlaams Blok organized a ‘colloquium’ with the name: ‘Pro Europe, so against this EU’. See the summary video for the quotes. http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/nieuws/9799
level of acceptance of others, (10) philosophical approaches to life, (11) structure of society, (12) level of love for the identity and (13) level of civilization.

**Elements**

The way the DF has filled these variables is how they have attached elements to their concept of national identity by attaching a value to the above formulated variables.

1. The first element the VB mentioned continuously throughout their party literature and public statements by the party leaders is the importance of a shared history in the Flemish national identity. 148

2. A second element the VB has mentioned several times is a strive for national independence. This is essential, according to the VB, to a national identity. It claimed that this is the most important element of the Flemish national identity. The strive for independence of the people of Flanders. 149

3. As a third element the VB has attached to the Flemish identity is religion. Catholicism is what the party considered to be a part of the Flemish identity and along with this come several values that the party has linked to its catholic national identity like opposition to abortion, rejection of homosexuality and anti-Euthanasia. The party also related its longings for more authoritarian schools and a zero tolerance policy on drugs to its respect for the catholic national identity. 150

4. The relation between religion and state is a factor that the VB mentions as important for the identity of Flanders. The Flemish national identity has an element of a strong separation between church and state, according to the VB. 151

5. The political structure was mentioned as a factor that distinguishes the ‘Flemish’ from the non-Flemish. As the political structure the VB mentioned democracy as belonging

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148 *The National identity is constructed by...* the community of citizens, that show enough connection to each other on the basis of cultural identity or on the grounds of a shared history and civilization.” (Dutch: “De waarden liggen in de volksgemeenschap van burgers, die voldoende verbondenheid hebben met elkaar, op grond van culturele identiteit of op grond van een gemeenschappelijke geschiedenis” 2004 constitution of Vlaams Belang. [http://www.blokwatch.be/content/view/64/50/lang,nl/](http://www.blokwatch.be/content/view/64/50/lang,nl/)


151 “The party protects…our culture, our values, our habits, our traditional principles of civilization, like for example the separation between church and state, democracy, freedom of speech and the equality between man and woman.” (Dutch) “De partij komt op voor onze cultuur, onze normen en waarden, onze leefgewoonten en aan belangrijke traditionele principes van de beschaving, die zich op het Europees grondgebied heeft ontwikkeld, zoals ondermeer de scheiding van kerk en staat, de democratie, de vrije meningsuiting en de gelijkwaardigheid van man en vrouw.” 2004 constitution of Vlaams Belang. [http://www.blokwatch.be/content/view/64/50/lang,nl/](http://www.blokwatch.be/content/view/64/50/lang,nl/)
to the Flemish national identity. (See footnote on point 4) On the political structure, also rule of law was mentioned as part of the national identity.152 As part of this political structure the VB has also mentioned the good labour relations and the financial budget culture that is vested in Belgian law and in Flemish history.153

6. Language is often mentioned as an important element of national identity. The Flemish national identity has Dutch as its only language, according to VB.154

7. On the matter of nativity, the VB states that immigrants must come from the Western World when coming as an immigrant to Flanders. No non-western immigrants can be elements of the Flemish national identity. These persons were described as a danger to the purity of the national identity.155 Nativity was also important for the identity since the party presented in its 70-point plan the before mentioned ‘ius sanguinis’ principle of blood line descendants. In this element national identity was not linked to the location of a person’s birth, but to his or her bloodline. This is what constructs the ethnic community linked to the national identity on a basis of nativity.

8. Gender equality was presented as an element of the Flemish national identity and characterized by the equal position of men and women in Flanders. (See footnote on element 4)

9. The characteristic of the level of acceptance of others is a factor within the VB national identity concept, because the VB has regularly described the Flemish national identity to be defined by pluralism and tolerance.156

10. The VB presented several elements of something that can be described a philosophical approach to life. The VB considered the Flemish national identity to be formed by ‘fundamental humanism’.157 Within the variable of a philosophical approach in life,


153 At 24-11-2012 The Vlaams Blok organized a ‘colloquium’ with the name: ‘Pro Europe, so against this EU’. See the summary video for the quotes. http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/nieuws/9799


155 “The mass immigration from third world countries to Western-Europe in general and Flanders specifically presents a true danger to the identity and pureness of our people.” (Dutch) “De massale immigratie vanuit de derde-wereldlanden naar West-Europa in het algemeen en naar Vlaanderen in het bijzonder houdt een reëel gevaar in voor de identiteit en de eigendom van ons volk.” 70-point plan, article 2.

156 From 70-point plan. Article II: (Dutch) “Several foreign organizations are mistreating our tolerance and the pluralism of our society” (Dutch) “Heel wat vreemdelingenorganisaties maken misbruik van de tolerantie en het pluralisme eigen aan onze maatschappij.”

157 From 70-point plan. Article II: (Dutch) Fundamental Humanism is explained by VB: “When a man is born, he is not a factory product. Recognizing tradition and accepting this, does not mean that the living are living in the
the VB mentions solidarity among the Flemish as another element defining their identity.\textsuperscript{158}

11. The characteristic of the structure of society might sound slightly odd, since it is very widely interpretable. The VB mentioned in several occasions ‘the family’ as the core element of society and its structure and thereby a core element of the Flemish national identity.\textsuperscript{159} Another structural element in society that is part of the Flemish national identity, according to the VB, is freedom. (See footnote in element 4)

12. The level of love for the identity was mentioned as a characteristic in the larger framework of what constructs a national identity, since the VB mentioned that no interests in the Belgian society should be placed above the love for the own community.\textsuperscript{160} The level of love for the identity was mentioned as a strong reason to oppose multiculturalism. This love is for the Flemish identity was said to be present in Flanders and therefore multiculturalism should be rejected since it reduces this love.\textsuperscript{161} The level of love for the identity has been very strong for the VB. Even that strong that any collaborators with the Nazi regime during World War II should be granted amnesty because of their efforts for the Flemish national cause. (See paragraph 3.2.2).

13. The last characteristic is the level of civilization. The VB party leader Filip Dewinter has expressed nativity in the form of cultural supremacy in several statements. Dewinter has declared that cultures are simply not equal and that Flemish culture is superior to Muslim culture. This culture is according to him non compatible to the Belgian identity. (See footnote 156 in element 12). The VB on several occasions

\textsuperscript{158} From this so called: “Constitution of Vlaams Belang” “Solidarity, a worthy human community is not constructed from isolated individuals. The freedom of man is essential to its people and its culture. Solidarity is the interchanging relation between man and the smaller and larger communities he belongs to.” (Dutch) “Solidariteit, Een menswaardige gemeenschap bestaat niet uit geïsoleerde individuen. De vrije mens is immers verankerd in de wezenskenmerken van zijn volk en van zijn cultuur. Solidariteit is de wisselwerking tussen de mens en die kleinere en grotere gemeenschappen waartoe hij behoort.”

\textsuperscript{159} Coffé, “The adaptation of the extreme right’s discourse: the case of the Vlaams Blok”

\textsuperscript{160} From this so called: “Constitution of Vlaams Belang” “Other interests can never let the strive for harmony and true civil unity be forgotten.”(Dutch)…”Andere belangen, mogen nooit het streven naar harmonie, naar echte volkse eenheid doen vergeten.”

\textsuperscript{161} Filip Dewinter reacting on accusations of racism and xenophobia: “Not at all. I think we should recognise that cultures are different and not all cultures are equal. When I see Muslim culture I think that our culture is superior. Our values, our way of life are superior and we have to say so. I don’t think the way of life of Muslims is compatible with our way of life. The multicultural mistake must be undone.” Agnus Roxburgh, “Blow to Belgium’s far right” BBC News. 09-11-2004. <URL> http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3995341.stm (Visited: 02-01-2012).
mentioned the level of civilization as special to the Flemish national identity. This complies with the before mentioned cultural supremacy the party expressed.

### 3.2.4 Conclusion: the VB’s anti-EU position

In the case of the VB it is interesting to note that the VB has made a strong move towards anti-immigration, Flemish nationalism and anti-EU party positions in the times of the Maastricht Treaty. This move has provided the party with several election wins. The anti-EU arguments of the party are often based on the parties claims that a multi-national state, like Belgium, cannot function well. This forms the parties believe that a European political structure cannot be successful. Besides this the party links its anti-immigration and nativity ideas to its anti-EU positions, claiming that the “EU is cultural genocide.”

Within the national identity conceptualization of the VB the anti-EU positioning is not always enforced by exact explanations of why or which element of the national identity is in friction with EU integration and the EU in general. The most outings of anti-EU positioning are stating that the EU “can only function as a cooperation of national communities of people” or that the EU is impossible to combine with the Flemish national identity. The VB has more specifically opposed the bureaucracy and the “will of the EU to infringe on national sovereignty”. The elements of national identity that are claimed to be endangered by the EU are:

1. The importance of a shared Flemish history, which is threatened by the EU
2. The Flemish sovereignty or national independence, that is being threatened by the EU.
3. The political structure and its history in Flanders are vested in the VB concept of national identity. The EU is claimed to threaten the labour relations and fiscal budget culture that are part of the national identity.
4. The Flemish national identity is endangered because the EU threatens its element of language.
5. The Flemish national identity is in danger because the EU cannot and effectively prevent more non-western immigrants from entering Flanders. More non-western

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162 At 24-11-2012 The Vlaams Blok organized a ‘colloquium’ with the name: ‘Pro Europe, so against this EU’. See the summary video for the quotes. [http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/nieuws/9799](http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/nieuws/9799)

163 At 24-11-2012 The Vlaams Blok organized a ‘colloquium’ with the name: ‘Pro Europe, so against this EU’. See the summary video for the quotes. [http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/nieuws/9799](http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/nieuws/9799)

164 Ibidem.
immigrants are a threat to the Flemish national identity, since they cannot be a part of this. They do not comply with the mentioned ‘ius sangiunis’ principle.

(10) The VB opposes the EU, because it claims that within its philosophical approach to life, the solidarity among Flemish is an important aspect of the Flemish national identity. This solidarity is threatened by the EU.

(12) The level of love for the Flemish identity was mentioned as being an important aspect within the national identity. This loyalty and love is claimed to be threatened by EU integration.
3.3 Dansk Folkeparti (Denmark)

“I am Denmark... I am a country that has the courage to say: stop. I am a country that will stand guard to protect my own country, because I am Denmark.”\textsuperscript{165}

3.3.1 Party history

The Danish People’s Party, or in Danish, Dansk Folkeparti (DF) was founded on October 6, 1995 by four former members of the existing right wing Danish Progress Party. Several members of the Progress Party left the party because they felt a strong dissatisfaction about the ‘anarchistic conditions’ within the Progress Party. Together, they formed the DF. The four politicians founding the new party were Pia Kjærsgaard, Kristian Thulesen Dahl, Poul Nødgaard and Ole Donner.\textsuperscript{166}

At the first convention of the DF, Pia Kjærsgaard was unanimously chosen as party leader and chairman of its faction in the national parliament. The fact that Kjærsgaard was a woman was noted to be very rare among European parties that were considered to be newly formed right wing parties. These parties have almost always had relatively fewer woman than traditional parties among their leadership, membership and electorate.\textsuperscript{167} Nevertheless, the leadership of Kjærsgaard lasted for fourteen years and was considered to be strong and undisputed.

In terms of ideology and political connotation the DF was considered to be a continuation of the Progress Party in a new form. On the point of anti-EU positions the DF resembled the Progress Party standpoints. The Progress party already had a strong anti-EU line and had for example unsuccessfully supported a no vote in the Danish 1992 referendum on the Maastricht treaty. Especially on the point of anti-immigration positions the DF was considered to be more radical than its predecessor.\textsuperscript{168}

With a strong anti-immigrant, anti-EU and pro Danish nationalism campaign in 1997 the DF had a promising result in the first national elections it participated in. The party won 7.4% of the popular vote and became the fifth largest party of Denmark (see appendix 1). During the cabinet formations following the elections the DF was kept completely out of the

\textsuperscript{165} Promotional Film on DF website: “I Am Denmark”: http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/Principprogram_andre_sprog.asp (visited: 03-01-2013).
\textsuperscript{166} Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 117.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{168} Meret, The Danish People’s Party, 139.
cabinet negotiations by the other parties. The party was still considered to be unacceptable to govern with, mostly due to its anti-immigration and anti-Islam positions.\textsuperscript{169}

In 2000 there was a referendum in Denmark on the possible implementation of the euro. It was rejected by 53.2\% of the Danish electorate and therefore Denmark still doesn’t have the euro as its currency. In the months before the referendum, the DF campaigned very actively against the implementation of the euro and was considered to be one of the parties accountable for a successful “no” to the euro in Denmark.\textsuperscript{170}

The success of the referendum was continued the next year in the Danish national elections when the party almost doubled from 13 to 22 seats in the Folketinget (Danish Chamber of parliament). It became the third largest party and the other parties in Denmark could impossibly ignore the DF any longer in the cabinet negotiations. The cordon sanitaire around the DF was broken. During the campaign of the 2001 elections, the DF had actively supported the candidacy of Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the Liberal Venstre Party, as Prime Minister. Together with the Conservative party, Venstre formed a minority cabinet with official support from the DF. The DF would not get any ministerial positions, but would support the cabinet in exchange for policies on several fields it considered to be crucial. The DF itself considered its influence on immigration policies the most important aspects of its government support without participation.

In 2002, the DF support for the liberal-conservative cabinet and the DF demands on several policy fields resulted in a new Danish immigration law. The DF claimed that the new law was “Europe’s strictest immigration law.”\textsuperscript{171} Part of this immigration law were new conditions imposed on bringing foreign spouses to Denmark, in order to prevent pre-arranged marriages. Besides this, unemployment benefits were made inaccessible for immigrants in their first seven years of their Danish citizenship. They were replaced by significantly lower start-up funds. According to the DF this new immigration law has decreased the number of immigrants tremendously:

“...the right to asylum on humanitarian grounds, which had previously seen up to 60\% of applications approved, was scrapped, the acceptable grounds for being granted asylum were cut to the bare minimum required under the Geneva Convention

\textsuperscript{169} Meret, \textit{The Danish People’s Party}.
\textsuperscript{171} Meret, \textit{The Danish People’s Party}, 27.
for Refugees, and social benefits for refugees were cut by 30%-40% for their first seven years in the country.”

The new Danish immigration laws resulted in a lot of criticism from outside of Denmark. Among others, the European Council of Human Rights and the neighbouring Swedish government had strong critique on the humanity of the new laws. Party leader Kjærsgaard replied on the Swedish criticism stating:

“If they want to turn Stockholm, Gothenburg or Malmö into a Scandinavian Beirut, with clan wars, honour killings and gang rapes, let them do it. We can always put a barrier on the Øresund Bridge.”

In the 2005 Danish parliamentary elections the DF grew again and got 13.2% of the vote. It kept supporting the Danish Conservative-Liberal government. In policy terms the party demanded more reforms of the welfare structures from the sitting government and focused relatively less on the immigration subject. The party was said to turn towards a position focussed on Danish nationalism combined with welfare chauvinism.

In the 2005 negotiations on the European Constitutional treaty, party leader Kjærsgaard positioned the party in a position fiercely opposing the constitution. Kjærsgaard claimed that the DF was pleased with the French and Dutch rejection in their referenda on the treaty. In the party magazine Dansk Folkeblad she wrote:

“The CEE-EU worked fine when it was a common market between sovereign and proud nations. But keep your hands off ideas and utopias. A community is doing best when there is respect for difference. The State of Europe is a sinking ship.”

In 2006 Denmark became the centre of world media reporting when there was a large scandal about a Danish cartoonist that had depicted the Islamic prophet in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten. Following this scandal, the DF rose tremendously in Danish opinion polls. The party reacted on the controversy about the cartoon by making posters for the 2007 parliamentary elections saying: “Freedom of speech is Danish, censorship is not”.

In the following election programme it focussed on what it called “working against Denmark becoming a multi ethnic society”. This could be done by limiting immigration and promoting

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173 Ibidem.

174 Meret, The Danish People's Party, 34.

175 (Dansk Folkeblad 2005/3:3). In: Meret, The Danish People’s Party, 140.


177 Meret, The Danish People's Party, 141.
cultural assimilation. In the elections of 2007 the party reached its all-time national electoral peak with 25 seats in parliament and 13.9% of the popular vote. Until the 2007 elections, the DF had won in every election compared to the previous election. Political scientist Susi Meret ascribed the parties’ 2007 success to its successful attempts to combine xenophobic social policies, anti-Muslim rhetoric and promises of generous public spending.178

In the 2009 EP elections the party won a second MEP seat. It retrieved 15.3% of the popular vote (see appendix 2) with a harsh anti-EU campaign. The party became a part of the EFD faction in the EP, of which in 2011 also former VB leader Frank Vanhecke became a member. After these successes, the 2011 national Danish elections showed the first decline for the DF. The party was down to 12.3% of the vote, but remained the third largest party of the country. In the summer of 2012 Pia Kjærsgaard stepped down as the party leader of the DF. Kristian Thulesen Dahl was appointed as successor. Pia Kjærsgaard was later considered to be one of the greatest inspirations for Europe-wide anti-immigration, anti-Islamic and anti-EU parties.179 She had made the 1995 formed DF into a strong and important factor in Danish politics.

3.3.2 Party ideology
In this paragraph the ideology and positions of the DF will be discussed, while trying not to form any normative ideas about this ideology. When positions are discussed as radical or controversial there will be references to generally accepted and well-read sources that have stated the same.180 The elements constructing the larger DF ideology will be supported by several quotes from party programmes and public statements by the party leader. The ideology of the DF has been split into three parts that can all contribute to the understanding of what the DF considers national identity to be. The DF has not been a one issue party, but focussed on several policy areas. The main subjects were anti-immigration and specifically anti-Islam positions, Danish nationalism and opposing the EU.

Anti-Immigration / Anti-Islam

180 I will not discuss the truth in radical stances of the DF. For a good study on this see: Meret, The Danish People’s Party.
The DF has most prominently presented itself as a party opposing immigration to Denmark and especially opposing non-western immigration to Denmark. Within the anti-immigration position of the DF, the party has centred on the opposition against immigrants from Islamic states and focussed on the differences between Muslim culture and the Danish national culture and identity.

In general, the DF fight against immigration was to focussed on the parties’ claim that Denmark has never been a ‘country of immigration’. The party claims that it wants to prevent Denmark from becoming a multi-ethnic society. According to party leader Kjærsgaard, a multicultural Denmark would be a ‘national disaster’. The party programme of the 2007 elections stated on immigration:

“Denmark belongs to the Danes. [...] A multiethnic Denmark would mean the breaking down of our stable homogeneous society by anti-development and reactionary cultures.”

The party especially opposed immigration from Muslim countries and confronted the idea that Islam was compatible with Danish national identity. The party mentioned freedom of speech, open-mindedness, tolerance, solidarity and work ethic as fundamental Danish values and expected immigrants to respect these values. This led, according to Kjærsgaard to the idea that a complete stop for immigrants from Muslim countries should be installed in Denmark. She claimed that the “islamization of Denmark” had to be stopped. A promotional video on the website of the DF, that uses the state of Denmark as a conscious actor, contains the text:

“But, I am a country that will challenge cultures that want to change what I've been fighting for. I will not back down and face the violence. I will not be forced to accept medieval traditions. I am a country that has the courage to say: stop. I am a country that will stand guard to protect my own country.”

Upon the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, party leader Kjærsgaards’ reaction was widely considered to be controversial. Since the DF only supported the cabinet at that

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181 Meret, The Danish People’s Party, 128.
183 (Danish People’s Party Work Programme 2007)
184 Meret, The Danish People’s Party, 24-25.
moment, but not participated in it, her remarks had no direct political consequences. Her statements reflect the parties’ cultural supremacy ideas:

“It has been said that September 11 was the beginning of a struggle between civilizations. I disagree, because a struggle between civilizations would imply that there are two civilizations, and this is not the case. There is only one civilization, and it’s ours.”

In 2010 the Dansk Folkeparti posted posters with the image of a young blue-eyed blond girl saying: “By the time you retire, Denmark will be a majority Muslim nation.”

**Danish nationalism**

In the party programmes of the DF Denmark is often described as a proud nation. The ideology of the party is culturally exclusive since it considers Denmark to be special and exemplary. The party is widely considered to be national conservative and nativist in its party positioning. Nationalism is combined with a great deal of welfare-chauvinism, which does not place the party on the traditional right end of the political spectrum. The party itself describes its ideology on the Danish nation in its 2002 election programme as:

“As has been the case until now, the essence of the party program is a warm and strong love of our country. In the Danish People's Party we are proud of Denmark; we love our country and we feel a historic obligation to protect our country, its people and the Danish cultural heritage, including the family, the monarchy and the church of Denmark.”

The parties’ nationalism is combined with strict respect for the rule of law, which the country considers to be an important aspect of the Danish cultural heritage. This includes in the 2002 and 2008 election programmes a call for stricter punishments for crimes related to violence, sexual abuse, and reckless driving. Within the national Danish constitution it does want to abolish the articles banning blasphemy and prohibiting hate speeches.

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189 Meret, The Danish People’s Party, 140.
190 Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties, 171.
191 From Party Programme 2002.
192 2008 party programme.
The party’s nationalism is partly based on a great respect for the Danish evangelical Lutheran church, which the party claims to have been an essential part of Danish life. An important aspect of this Lutheran tradition is the family:

“The Danish People's Party wants the Government to support the National Church...The family is the heart of Danish society...This does not prejudice ordinary religious freedom, of which we are supporters – and protectors.”

In the party’s explanations on what the Danish national identity consist of it formed a clear image of what the Danish culture is considered to be:

“The country is founded on the Danish cultural heritage and therefore, Danish culture must be preserved and strengthened. This culture consists of the sum of the Danish people's history, experience, beliefs, language and customs. Preservation and further development of this culture is crucial to the country's survival as a free and enlightened society...Outside Denmark's borders we would like to give financial, political and moral support to Danish minorities.”

**Anti-EU**

The DF has since its founding continued and even hardened its anti-EU line. The party claims to oppose any cession of Danish sovereignty to the EU. The party has always wanted to maintain the Danish Krone as the currency in Denmark and has specifically opposed the accession of Turkey to the European Union. Party leader Kjærsgaard has described the EU as being an interventionist utopia and a sinking ship. By not taking seat in the national cabinet, but only officially supporting it, the party could still criticize the Danish EU policy set out by the cabinet. On the ideology behind the anti-EU position the DF website states:

“Civil participation is only possible in nation-states in which there is a natural affinity of the people with the state...The Danish Peoples Party is against any development in the direction of a United States of Europe.”

The EU has also been described as an outside force trying to impose its will on Danish society. In 2000 there were EU sanctions against the Austrian government upon the instalment of the right wing anti-EU FPÖ party in the Austrian government. The DF magazine reacted with an article the title:

194 Ibidem.
195 Website Dansk Folkeparti, in Danish: [http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/M%C3%A6rkesag-EU.asp](http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/M%C3%A6rkesag-EU.asp)
197 Website Dansk Folkeparti, in Danish: [http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/M%C3%A6rkesag-EU.asp](http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/M%C3%A6rkesag-EU.asp)
“Big Brother Is Watching us…: EU’s opinion police is brought into action against the Danish People’s Party.”

Besides principal objections against the EU the party has also made several trajectory objections against the EU. The party for example wants to eliminate the European Parliament because it is an institutional instrument that is politically too far away from the Danish people.

### 3.3.3 National identity

In the last section on the case study of the DF, the study of national identity as represented in the party positions will be discussed in the same manner as it was presented within the case of the VB. First the variables will be extracted from the programme. To form a comparable section the framework has been constructed by the same elements as the other two cases. Second, these variables will be filled in with the specific meaning that the DF has attached to them. In the last part these elements will be linked to the party’s anti-EU positions.

#### Framework

The characteristics that can be extracted from the DF vision on what could hypothetically construct a national identity are again very diverse. The possible characteristics or variables are, without giving the value that the DF attaches to these characteristics:

1. A shared history, 
2. A strive for an independent state, 
3. Religion, 
4. Relation between religion and state, 
5. Political structure, 
6. Language, 
7. Nativity, 
8. Gender equality, 
9. Level of acceptance of others, 
10. Philosophical approaches to life, 
11. Structure of society, 
12. Level of love for the identity and 
13. Level of civilization. These twelve characteristics or variables are all recognized by the DF as being variables defining a national identity.

#### Elements

The way the DF has filled these variables is how they have attached elements to their concept of national identity by attaching a value to the above formulated variables.

1. The Danish peoples’ shared history and the customs they have had in this history are mentioned as an element of the national identity.

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198 (Dansk Folkeblad 2000/2: 8-9). In: Meret, The Danish People’s Party, 141.
200 This culture consists of the sum of the Danish people's history, experience, beliefs, language and customs. Preservation and further development of this culture is crucial to the country's survival as a free and enlightened
2. The strive for an independent state is not mentioned specifically as a variable. The danger of not being an independent state is nevertheless mentioned on several occasions as being an important reason to fight for the Danish national identity. The country’s ‘survival’ as an independent state is a strong element in the party’s rhetoric. (See note on element 1).

3. Religion is an important variable in the DF construction of national identity. It is filled in with a strong respect for the Danish national Lutheran church.  

4. The relation between church and state is mentioned as being defined by ordinary religious freedom. (see note on element 3).

5. As an important part of the political structure, the rule of law is mentioned several times in DF productions. Likewise, democracy and the nation state are mentioned as elements of the Danish national identity.  

6. The Danish language is mentioned as an element of the Danish national identity. (See note on element 1).

7. On the matter of nativity, the DF has often declared that it considers immigrants from Islamic countries and their identity incompatible with the Danish national identity. That is why it wants to end immigration from what it considers to be Islamic countries. Denmark is considered to be a stable homogeneous society that is in danger of losing its single ethnicity. On the matter of nativity a geographical link is often made. The territory of the state of Denmark is said to belong to the Danes, and the Danes only. 

8. The element of gender equality was not mentioned by the DF as being part of its concept of national identity.

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201 “The Danish People's Party wants the Government to support the National (Lutheran) Church…The family is the heart of Danish society…This does not prejudice ordinary religious freedom, of which we are supporters – and protectors.” From Party Programme 2002  


204 “We are working against Denmark becoming a multi ethnic society”…”Protecting our stable homogeneous society!” 2002 election programme.  

205 (Danish People’s Party Work Programme 2007)
9. The characteristic of the level of acceptance of others is a factor within the DF national identity concept, because the DF has regularly described the Danish national identity to be defined by tolerance. Linked to this tolerance could be the open-mindedness that the party mentions as being typically Danish.\textsuperscript{206}

10. As a possible philosophical approach to life, the DF has on several occasions mentioned freedom of speech as one of the highest valued things in Danish society. This is clearly considered to be an important aspect of the Danish national identity.\textsuperscript{207} Within the variable of a philosophical approach to life, the DF mentions solidarity and open-mindedness among the Danish as another element defining their identity.\textsuperscript{208}

11. Freedom of speech is also related to the DF’s ideas about the structure of society. The party wants to abolish the laws against blasphemy and hate speech. Both of these laws would obstruct the fundamental structure of society in which freedom of speech is valued as one of the most important goods.\textsuperscript{209} Another mentioned aspect of the Danish identity in the variable of the structure of society is the family. The ‘family’ has on several occasions been mentioned as being important to the Danish society.

12. The high level of love for society is often mentioned by the DF as being an important part of the national identity. It can be considered one of the most important elements of national identity for the DF, since it is so often mentioned. The essence of the party programmes comes down to a strong love for Denmark and the need to protect this love for Denmark.\textsuperscript{210}

13. A high level of civilization is, according to Kjaersgaard an important element constructing the Danish national identity. It is proclaimed to be supreme and ‘the only form of civilization’.\textsuperscript{211}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{206} Meret, The Danish People’s Party, 22.
\textsuperscript{207} “Freedom of speech is Danish, censorship is not”. 2007 election poster.
\textsuperscript{208} Meret, The Danish People’s Party, 24-25.
\textsuperscript{209} “Freedom of speech is Danish, censorship is not”. 2007 election poster.
\textsuperscript{210} “As has been the case until now, the essence of the party program is a warm and strong love of our country. In the Danish People’s Party we are proud of Denmark; we love our country and we feel a historic obligation to protect our country, its people and the Danish cultural heritage.”… “We love our country and we feel a historic obligation to protect our country, its people and the Danish cultural heritage, including the family, the monarchy and the church of Denmark.”…”natural affinity of the people with the state is essential.” 2002 election programme:
\textsuperscript{211} “It was been said that September 11 was the beginning of a struggle between civilizations. I disagree, because a struggle between civilizations would imply that there are two civilizations, and this is not the case. There is only one civilization, and it’s ours.” From: Peter Stanners,“How Pia’s influence spread across Europe.” The Copenhagen Post. 16-08-2012. <URL> http://cphpost.dk/news/international/how-pia%20%E2%80%99s-influence-spread-across-europe (visited: 03-01-2013).
\end{footnotesize}
3.3.4 Conclusion: the DF’s anti-EU position

The DF has been opposing the EU since its foundation in 1995. Their anti-EU positions have been one of the most important elements of their election campaigns ever since. The party has had several successes in their anti-EU positions like the Danish rejection of the Euro and the strict Danish immigration laws, that have been criticized by other EU members. The party’s success has been ascribed to its successful attempts to link xenophobic social policies, anti-Muslim rhetoric, promises of generous public spending to an anti-EU position.

In the DF’s party positioning against the EU the party has focussed on the intervention that the EU creates in the Danish sovereignty. The EU is claimed to lack the natural affinity that the people of a nation state have with their state. This affinity is related to the nation state’s national identity, which the EU is apparently lacking.\textsuperscript{212} The other above mentioned elements of national identity that are claimed to be endangered by the EU are:

(1) The importance of a shared Danish history, which is threatened by the EU.
(2) The Danish sovereignty and national independence, that is said to be threatened by the ‘interventionist’ EU.
(3) The EU does not share the historical link to the Danish national church, which is an important element of the Danish national identity.
(5) The political structure that is said to be under threat from the EU is the nation state democracy. The EU is said be an interventionist power intending to install a United States of Europe. This is conceived as a threat for the political structure that is linked to the Danish national identity.
(6) The EU is mentioned as a threat to the Danish cultural heritage, including its language.
(7) The EU is claimed to be a threat to the Danish national identity, because it cannot protect Denmark from an influx of more non-western immigrants. Especially immigrants from Muslim countries do worry the DF. These immigrants do not possess the natural affinity to the nation state and are therefore a threat to the Danish national identity. It is claimed that these cultures are reactionary and willing to change the Danish identity.
(10) The solidarity and open-mindedness of the Danish national identity is said to be under threat from the EU. The EU threatens the freedom of speech that is said to

\textsuperscript{212}“Civil participation is only possible in nation-states in which there is a natural affinity of the people with the state...The Danish Peoples Party is against any development in the direction of a United States of Europe.” DF website EU position.
be an element of the Danish national identity. Since the EU has commented on the Austrian government participation of the right wing FPÖ party, the DF has depicted the EU as having an EU opinion police, which is threatening the Danish freedom of speech.

(12) The high level of love for the Danish society is said to be threatened by the EU. The EU is linked to an impossibility to stop immigration and cultural mixture. This is considered to be incompatible with the important love for the Danish national culture and identity.

(13) The last threat that the EU forms for the Danish national identity is the threat to the high level of civilization. Party leader Kjærgaard has often exposed a strong sense of cultural supremacy and emphasised the high level civilization in Denmark. This has come under threat by the EU, that would create no more stop on the watering down of the highest form of civilization.
3.4 Partij Voor de Vrijheid (the Netherlands)

“…The EU, the multicultural super state with Brussels as its capital. The empire that wants to impose more Islam on us to take every memory of an independent and recognizable Netherlands away from us.”

3.4.1 Party history

In the fall of 2004, one member of the Dutch liberal VVD party left its parliamentary faction. This member was Geert Wilders. He left the VVD, because he did not agree with the party’s support for the accession of Turkey into the European Union. This issue was fundamental for Wilders. Therefore, he left the faction of the VVD. Wilders retained his seat in the Dutch parliament and named himself ‘group Wilders’.

In 2005 ‘Group Wilders’ and its only member Geert Wilders renamed themselves into the ‘Partij voor de Vrijheid’ (Party for Freedom) or abbreviated, PVV. This was the creation of the new party that was described by Wilders as ‘a new movement’. The party was not actually a political party with a party structure and an internal hierarchy. It was formed as a foundation with one member, which was Geert Wilders. Today, it is still a foundation with one member. In March 2005 Wilders has published his so called ‘declaration of independence’, in which he explained what the party’s stances would be for the next elections.

The national Dutch elections of 2006 were the first elections in which the new PVV participated. The party won 5.9% (see appendix 1) of the vote and became the fifth largest party of the Netherlands. The party was not included in the negotiations on the cabinet that had to be formed. There was still a strong resentment among the other parties towards Wilders and his PVV. The party became known in the Dutch parliament for Wilders’ strong rhetoric against the Islam, which he considered to be an ideology incompatible with western

214 Art, Inside the Radical Right: the Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe, 185.
Following these statements he has endured many death threats and lived under permanent protection. 

Several actions of Wilders were widely reported on in the Dutch national and international media. One of the first of these well reported actions was the PVV attempt to block the appointment of two state secretaries of the PvdA, the Dutch Labour party. The two MP’s held a dual citizenships with, next to the Dutch nationality, also the Turkish and Moroccan nationality. The PVV claimed that therefore there was doubt about their ‘loyalty to the Dutch state’. 

An action that got Wilders and his PVV even more international attention was the production of his 2008 movie called ‘Fitna’, which means ‘evil’ in Arabic. The film was about Wilders’ resentment towards the Islam and the ‘totalitarian ideology’, which he called the Islam. The main point of the movie was that Islam was a threat to Western society. In 2009, Wilders wanted to broadcast the movie in the English House of Lords. The British homeland secretary, Jacqui Smith, however declined Wilders entry into the UK. Wilders was arrested and deported back to the Netherlands.

In the European Parliament elections of 2009 the PVV got its best electoral result so far. It gained 17.0% of the popular vote (see appendix 2) with a very hard anti EU message. It became the second largest Dutch party in these elections. The five MEP’s of the PVV were installed in the EP as non-attached to any faction. A year later, the PVV had another great electoral success. After a Labour-Liberal cabinet fell in 2010 there were new parliamentary elections. The PVV rose from 9 seats in 2006 to 24 seats in 2010 and became an influence in the Dutch parliament that could no longer be ignored by the other parties. The Netherlands followed the ‘Danish Model’ and formed a government in which the former ‘pariah’ party gave official support to the government, but did not get control over any of the ministerial posts. The government was formed by the liberal VVD and the Christian Democratic CDA.

220 “Muslims condemn Dutch lawmaker's film.”
exchange for its support, several elements on which the PVV had focussed would be included in the coalition agreement between the VVD and the CDA.222

In 2010 a unique situation arose in Dutch politics since a person that was a supporting part of the sitting coalition, was faced with a criminal trial. The PVV leader Wilders was sued for “incitement to hatred and discrimination against Muslims and their religion.” The trial dominated the Dutch news for several weeks. After a long and turbulent public trial the verdict was, in June 2011, that Wilders was acquitted for all accusations.223 Following the trial there were international speculations about the funding of Wilders’ party when a Philadelphia based right wing think tank admitted to have paid for Wilders’ defence during the trial.224

In early 2012 the PVV became the centre of European wide mockery when it launched a website called: “Reporting point Central and Eastern Europeans”. At this PVV website, Dutch citizens could post complaints about immigrants from central and eastern Europe. The website was considered to be a complaint against the free travelling of labour throughout the EU. The official catchphrase of the website was:

“Do you have problems with people from central and eastern Europe? Have you lost your job to a Pole, Bulgarian, Romanian or other eastern European? We want to know.”225

In March 2012 prominent PVV parliamentarian Hero Brinkman left the PVV. Brinkman complained that he could no longer accept the lack of democracy within the PVV. The party was built around one man, who refused to consider the future, according to Brinkman. The party was, according to him, constantly singling out groups in society for criticism.226 After Brinkman, two other PVV parliamentarians followed and quit the PVV faction in the Dutch parliament as well.

Shortly after these parliamentarians had left the PVV, the PVV supported Dutch cabinet fell. The PVV withdrew its support for the Liberal-Christian Democratic coalition after five weeks of negotiating. The PVV could not agree with new austerity measures with the coalition partners it had supported for two years. The government of prime minister Mark

Rutte had depended on the support of the PVV to get a majority in the Dutch Parliament. In the 2012 national elections, the PVV fell from 24 to 15 seats with 10.1% of the vote. (See appendix 1)

3.4.2 Party ideology
In this paragraph the ideology and positions of the PVV will be discussed, while trying not to form any normative ideas about this ideology. When positions are discussed as radical or controversial there will be references to generally accepted and well-read sources that have stated the same. The elements constructing the larger PVV ideology will be supported by several quotes from party programmes and public statements by the party leader. The ideology of the PVV has been split into three parts that contribute to a better understanding of what the PVV considers national identity to be. The three most important issues of the PVV throughout its existence have been opposing the Islam, promoting Dutch nationalism and opposing the EU.

Anti-Islam
The PVV ideology is most widely known for its fierce anti-Islam positions. In this part I will try to focus on what these anti-Islam positions are forming as an ideology. In this I will try not to focus on the harsh rhetoric against the Islam, but more on the meaning of the words.

The anti-Islam positions are combined by the PVV with an idea of cultural supremacy of the Dutch or Western culture towards Islamic culture. The party wants to permanently stop immigration from non-western states to the Netherlands and wants to protect the Netherlands from an alleged ‘Islamization’.

Party leader Wilders has on numerous occasions made statements that are considered to be islamophobic. A random selection can include statements like: “Islam is a fascist ideology”…”Mohammed was a paedophile”…”Islam and freedom, Islam and democracy are

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228 I will not discuss the truth in radical positions of the PVV. For an interesting study on this see (in Dutch): Hans Moors et. al, “Polarisatie en radicaliseren in Nederland. Een verkenning van de stand van zaken in 2009,” University of Tilburg research paper presented to Dutch Parliament (2009).
incompatible.” Besides these phrases, Wilders warned for a “tsunami” of Muslim immigrants and compared the holy Muslim book Qur’an to Adolf Hitler’s Mein Kampf. 230

In the 2010 election programme of the PVV, the Dutch welfare state is presented as a “magnet for joy-seekers from Islamic countries”. The Islam is said “not to bring any cultural enrichment, but sharia fatalism, jihad-terrorism and hatred towards homosexuals and Jews”. Wilders states that according to him the Islam is above all a political ideology: 231

“The Islam is mostly a political ideology and it can therefore in no respect claim to have a right to the privileges of a religion…Ban the Burka and the Qur’an, tax headscarves and above all: a complete immigration stop for persons from Islamic countries. The battle against Islam should be the focus of our foreign policy.” 232

The PVV has always made a clear distinction between Muslim people on the one hand and Islamic tradition, culture and ideology on the other hand. Wilders claims to have a problem with Islamic tradition, culture and ideology, not with Muslim people in general. 233

The opposition to the Islam is driven by the PVV position that Europe, and the Netherlands in particular, has changed ‘beyond recognition’ as a result of immigration from Islamic countries. 234 There must, according to Wilders, be a solidarity in the Dutch society towards Christians, Jews and other people, who have been the victims of Islam. 235 He formulates his fear of Islam as:

“We are not going to allow Islam to steal our country from us. It was the land of our fathers, it is our land now, our values are based on Christianity, Judaism and Humanism and we will pass this on to our children with all the freedoms that the previous generations have fought for.” 236

Dutch nationalism


231 (Partij voor de Vrijheid, Election Programme 2010 ‘Agenda van hoop en optimisme’)

232 Own translation: “De islam is vooral een politieke ideologie en kan dus op geen enkele manier aanspraak maken op de voorrechten van een godsdienst…Verbied de boerka en de koran, belast hoofddoekjes…En vooral: volledige immigratiestop voor mensen uit islamitische landen…Strijd tegen islam moet het kernpunt van ons buitenlands beleid worden.” (Partij voor de Vrijheid, Election Programme 2010 ‘Agenda van hoop en optimisme’)


235 Ibidem.

236 Ibidem.
In the PVV party programmes the term Dutch nationalism was never mentioned. It is mostly referred to as Dutch patriotism. In this section it will be referred to as nationalism, since its contents are resembling what scholars consider nationalism to be.\(^\text{237}\)

The PVV claims that the Dutch society should take more pride in its own ‘nation’:

“...We must take pride in our nations again. We must cherish and preserve the culture and identity of our country. Preserving our own culture and identity is the best antidote against Islamization.”\(^\text{238}\)

Since its creation the PVV has upheld the wish to install a new article as the first article of the Dutch constitution. This article would state that in the Netherlands the Christian, Jewish, Humanistic culture should remain dominant.\(^\text{239}\) The party also states that it wants to record the ethnicity of all citizens in the Netherlands and that it want the Dutch government to communicate exclusively in Dutch and the minority language Frisian.\(^\text{240}\)

“Cultural relativism advocates that all cultures are equal. However, cultures wither away and die if people no longer believe that its values are better than those of another culture.” “Our Judeo-Christian Western culture is far better and far superior to the islamic culture. We must be proud to say so!”\(^\text{241}\)

Within the Dutch nationalism the PVV has repeatedly supported the unification of the Netherlands and Flanders.\(^\text{242}\) Wilders has stated that the Dutch and the Flemish have more in common than the Flemish and the Walloons.\(^\text{243}\) The ideas of the PVV about what belongs to the ‘Dutch’ or its idea of ‘the Netherlands’ does include Flanders, but does not include the Dutch overseas islands of the Antilles. According to the PVV, ethnicity is more important than state boundaries for the limits of a nation.\(^\text{244}\)


\(^{238}\) Geert Wilder Speech at Cornerstone Church, Nashville, 12 May 2011.

\(^{239}\) “Nieuw artikel 1 van de Grondwet: christelijk/joods/humanistische cultuur moet in Nederland dominant blijven” (PVV Verkiezingspamflet 2006).

\(^{240}\) Ibidem. P. 11 and p. 35.

\(^{241}\) Geert Wilder Speech at Cornerstone Church, Nashville, 12 May 2011.

\(^{242}\) “The PVV asks prime-minister Balkenende to actively support the abolishment of Belgium, to make sure that the Netherlands and Flanders can be reunited... The PVV is delighted with several investigations that indicate that Belgium is a fake state, where nobody cares about. (Own translation). http://www.pvv.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1975&Itemid=1 (PVV programme piece on a united Flanders and Netherlands, 2009).


\(^{244}\) Hans Moors et. al, “Polarisatie en radicalisering in Nederland. Een verkenning van de stand van zaken in 2009.” University of Tilburg research paper presented to Dutch Parliament (2009).
A last issue on the matter of Dutch nationalism for the PVV is the issue of dual nationality. The PVV has opposed the dual nationality of two proposed statesman. The party has questioned if a political representative is loyal enough to a state when he or she also holds the nationality of another state. In general the PVV has focused a lot on the importance of loyalty to the Dutch nationality.  

**Anti-EU**

The PVV has opposed the accession of Turkey into the EU since its founding. The support for Turkey’s EU candidacy was one of the main reasons that Wilders left the liberal VVD in 2004 and later founded the PVV. The anti-EU position has become harder since the 2009 European Parliament election campaign and even become the main election focus in the 2012 national Dutch elections.

The PVV claims that the Dutch are people with a long history of resistance against foreign rule. The EU should, according to the PVV, be opposed because it wants to impose a “multicultural super state on the Netherlands with Brussels as its capital.” The EU is considered to be a political entity that wants to wipe out every memory of an independent Netherlands. “Thanks to that club in Brussels, Europe turns into Eurabia.” Altogether, the PVV calls for a complete Dutch withdrawal from the EU.

**3.4.3 National identity**

In this last section on the case study of the PVV, the study of the PVV’s representation of national identity within the party documents will be presented in the same manner as it has been presented in the cases of the VB and the DF. The variables will be filled in with the specific meaning that the PVV has attached to them and in the last part of the paragraph these elements will be linked to the parties’ anti-EU positions.

**Framework**


247 Ibidem.

The characteristics that can be extracted from the VB vision on what could hypothetically construct a national identity are very diverse. The possible characteristics or variables are, without giving the value that the VB attaches to these characteristics:

1. A shared history,
2. A strive for an independent state,
3. Religion,
4. Relation between religion and state,
5. Political structure,
6. Language,
7. Nativity,
8. Gender equality,
9. Level of acceptance of others,
10. Philosophical approaches to life,
11. Structure of society,
12. Level of love for the identity,
13. Level of civilization.

**Elements**

The way the PVV has filled these variables is the manner how they have filled their concept of national identity by attaching a value to the above formulated variables.

1. The heroic Dutch history is often mentioned by the PVV as one of the most important elements constructing the Dutch national identity.  
249

2. In the PVV rhetoric there is a strong focus on the importance of the Dutch people’s strive for independence. The founding document of the PVV was called “the declaration for independence.” In the calls for importance of the Dutch national identity there are several references to the Dutch history and the 80-year war between 1568 and 1648 against the Spanish.  
250

3. In the anti-Islam positions Wilders has also used references to the Dutch strive for independence in claiming that the Dutch should ‘Reclaim the Netherlands’.  
251

4. The PVV never made direct references to religion, but has often mentioned the Christian, Judeo, Humanistic tradition as defining for the Dutch national identity. Religion is not mentioned specifically as an element of national identity (as with the VB and DF), but several religious traditions are considered to be defining for the Dutch national identity. The PVV wants to install this tradition in a new first article of the Dutch constitution.  
252

5. The element of the relation between religion and state was not mentioned by the DF as being part of its concept of national identity.

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249 “Our heroic patriotic history should be highlighted more” in Dutch: “Onze heroïsche vaderlandse geschiedenis mag meer in het zonnetje worden geplaatst.” (Partij voor de Vrijheid, Election Programme 2010 ’Agenda van hoop en optimisme’)

250 “We were born from a rebellion, a fight for freedom. Our ancestors have formed this swamp into a place the whole world is jealous about.” In Dutch: “We zijn geboren uit een Opstand, een vrijheidsstrijd. Onze voorouders hebben een zompige moerasdelta omgevormd tot iets waar de hele wereld jaloers op is…”

251 Geert Wilder Speech at Cornerstone Church, Nashville, 12 May 2011.

252 (PVV Verkiezingspamflet 2006).
5. The political structure within the Dutch national identity is, according to the PVV, based upon democracy and the rule of law.  

6. The element of language in the concept of national identity of the Dutch PVV is formulated in their wish to install rules about governmental communication. They stated that this communication could only be in Dutch or in the minority language of Frisian.

7. On the matter of nativity, the PVV has stated that immigrants must come from the Western World when they want to become Dutch citizens. No non-western and specifically no Islamic-immigrants can be elements of the Dutch national identity. To secure this the PVV wants to record the ethnicity of all Dutch citizens.

8. As part of the conceived Dutch national identity the PVV especially wants to protect the equality between men and woman. The PVV claims that this equality is vested in the Dutch national identity.

9. The element of the level of acceptance of others was not mentioned by the DF as being part of its concept of national identity.

10. The philosophical approaches to life that the PVV considers to be elements of the Dutch national identity are above all the right to freedom of speech as the highest human right. Open mindedness and freedom of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community are also mentioned as important aspects of the larger culture of the Netherlands.

11. Within the element of the structure of society the PVV claims that there should be a strong protection of the Judeo-Christian and humanistic structures that are vested in Dutch society.

12. One of the most important elements within the PVV concept of national identity is that the Dutch national identity contains a strong element of love for the own national identity. The Dutch history is presented as something of which the Dutch should be proud of, according to the PVV. The Dutch national culture is said to be far superior to other cultures.

253 (Partij voor de Vrijheid, Election Programme 2010 ´Agenda van hoop en optimisme´) 35.
254 Ibidem, 35.
255 Ibidem, 11.
256 Ibidem, 33.
257 Geert Wilder Speech at Cornerstone Church, Nashville, 12 May 2011.
258 Ibidem.
13. The last point of the supposed Dutch superiority can also be mentioned when discussing the variable of the level of civilization. Wilders has denounced cultural relativism on several occasions and proclaimed the superiority of Western Civilization in general and Dutch civilization in particular.259

3.4.4 Conclusion: the PVV’s anti-EU position

The Dutch PVV was founded when Geert Wilders left the liberal party in 2004 because he could not agree with the party’s support for the accession of Turkey to the EU. In this way the parties founding was built upon a combination of its rejection of Islamic influences in European and a strong anti-EU positioning. The EU has ever since been depicted as a foreign power that wants to destroy everything that the PVV considers to be Dutch. The party has since its founding wanted to withdraw the Netherlands from the EU.

In the PVV’s anti-EU position, the party has focussed on how the EU forms a threat to the Dutch sovereignty. The other above mentioned elements of national identity that are claimed to be endangered by the EU are:

(1) The importance of a shared Dutch history, which is threatened by the EU
(2) The Dutch national sovereignty and national independence, which are threatened by the ‘interventionist’ and ‘imperialist super state’ of the EU.
(5) The political structure that is said to be under threat from the EU is the national democracy. The EU is said be an interventionist power intending to install a United States of Europe. This is a threat for the political structure that is linked to the Dutch national identity. The PVV wants to abolish the European parliament, because it is a non-democratic institution.260
(7) The PVV claims that the EU wants to support the Islamization of the Netherlands. Therefore the EU should be opposed. The EU is said to be intending to ‘impose a multicultural super state on the Netherlands’. This multiculturalism or Islamization is linked to the EU and considered to be a threat to the Dutch national identity.
(12) One of the elements of the Dutch national identity that is, according to the PVV, most particularly under threat is the love for the Dutch national identity. The Dutch national heritage and culture are claimed to be under threat and therefore the great Dutch love for the own identity is obstructed by the EU.

259 (PVV Verkiezingspamflet 2006).
260 Partij voor de Vrijheid, 2010 Election Programme: “Agenda van hoop en optimisme”
http://www.pvv.nl/images/stories/Webversie_VerkiesingsProgrammaPVV.pdf
(13) The last threat that the EU forms for the Dutch national identity is the threat to the level of civilization. Party leader Wilders has often shown a strong sense of cultural supremacy and a sense of a high valuation of the level of civilization in the Netherlands. This is under threat by the EU, that would create no more stop on the watering down of the highest form of civilization with elements from inferior civilizations.
Conclusion

In the introduction I stated that academic writing should be about challenging old assumptions and providing new perspectives. This thesis has been researching the concept of national identity in right wing anti-EU party positions since 1992. The Belgian VB, the Danish DF and the Dutch PVV have served as case studies. Several assumptions on right wing anti-EU parties and on the concept of national identity have been challenged by the outcomes of this research.

The largest outcome is that it is definitely not easy to define what these parties have considered the concept of national identity to be. The parties under investigation never formulated a definition on what they considered national identity to be. The concept was predominantly defined by defining what is was explicitly not. Following this line it can be concluded that, as chapter 1 concluded, national identity is indeed an artificial construct of which each person and also each party forms its own idea.

Identity is, in its core, the factors that are considered to be the same (idem). These factors are, unlike what essentialist views and most right wing parties state, not fixed in time. What a national identity consists of is therefore hard to define since national identity is not a one dimensional construction of definable factors. In this thesis two important distinctions were made as to the concept of national identity. First, between the personal and political definitions of national identity and, second, between an active and a passive national identity. The active national identity is subject to the personal choice of a citizen. The passive national identity is subject to a top-down construction of group-identity, which is not subjected to individual choice.

A politician can only define the passive national identity. The important process of ‘othering’, in which a person defines what is not part of his or her identity, cannot be defined completely in a top down manner. So, politicians only form a top-down, never completely accurate concept of national identity. Important to mention is that while the distinction between active and passive is made, it is not stated that the two could hypothetically not be equal or similar. A politician can formulate a very solid and accurate interpretation of a state’s national identity. The point is that there is a difference in the way it is formed.

In the second chapter the rise of anti-EU parties in Western Europe has been discussed. According to several right wing anti-EU parties, their national identity has been under threat from the EU. Especially since the Maastricht treaty of 1992, the national identity...
was claimed to be threatened by the increasingly powerful structure of the EU. In the process of ‘othering’ or defining what is not the same, the EU became more and more positioned as being ‘the other’ and thereby explicitly not part of the national identity.

For several right wing European parties the Maastricht treaty has formed a starting point or an enforcement of their anti-EU positions. Some right wing parties have, before Maastricht, even been supportive towards European integration. The Belgian Vlaams Blok is a good example of a party that strongly turned against the EU following Maastricht. The EU has, since Maastricht, been linked to traditional right wing topics of immigration, security and fighting corruption. The Union has been portrayed as ‘the external’ party that took power and sovereignty from national governments. As Habermas has stated, since the treaty of Maastricht the argument of national identity, or ‘the Frenchness of the French’, has become much more focussed upon as a political argument against EU integration. The EU was increasingly considered to be an outside and intrusive competing political body, willing to harm the national identity. This element of anti-EU party positions has not gotten a lot of attention in the studies on the origins of anti-EU parties. This thesis has shown that national identity was an important element in the anti-EU positions and was also understood in different ways by several scholars.

The three parties studied in this thesis, have since the Maastricht treaty related their opposition towards the EU to their nativist ideals. The national identity was considered to be under threat since it was related to a form of nativism and purity of the native national people. This nativity and purity was considered to be threatened by the EU, because the EU was claimed to be unable and unwilling to stop immigration. In this way, the threat national identity was said to be facing because of immigration was linked to the EU and the European integration process.

One of the most important observations about the constructions of the concept of national identity by the three studied parties, is that it was never precisely defined. The concept of national identity was mostly described by what it was said not to consist of. These variables like nativity, religion and shared history, were defined by stating that they were explicitly not non-Western, not Islamic and not part of another history than the proclaimed history of their own state.

All three parties focus on the important link between government and the national identity of the people it governs. The parties’ claim that the national identity must be decisive

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in the formation of a government or political structure. All parties have specifically mentioned the incompatibility of Islamic culture with the respective national identity. Since the EU is proclaimed to be non-restricting or even promoting non-western immigration, the anti-EU positions are often linked to the anti-Islam positions.

There are several variables that can be defined as accepted by these parties to be part of the concept of national identity. They all fill these variables with similar elements. Each of the three parties mentions as variables constructing their national identity: a shared history, a strive for national independence or an awareness of the danger of not being independent, the rule of law, democracy, language, a strong geographical link to the identity (in the form of nativity), freedom of speech, a high level of love for the own identity, a high valuation of the own level of civilization. These aspects are all linked to their anti-EU positioning and proclaimed to be under threat by European integration and the EU.

An important difference within the concepts of national identity lies in the focusses these three parties choose. Several differences in focus can be noted. On the variable of religion within the concept of national identity the parties show important differences. The VB mentions Catholicism specifically as defining the Belgian national identity. The DF claims to protect an important element of the national church, the Danish Lutheran Church. The PVV, however, does not attach a specific form of religion to the Dutch national identity. It does claim, as the other two, that the Islam is specifically not a part of the Dutch national identity, but it only refers to the Christian, Judeo, Humanistic traditions, not to the religions in particular. The VB and the PVV both mention gender equality as being elements of their national identity, the DF does not. This can perhaps be linked to their strong attachment to the traditional Lutheran Danish Church. The VB and the DF have both mentioned tolerance as an element of their national identity. The PVV has not focussed on this. This is, according to some scholars, related to the accusations that have often been made in Dutch politics about the ‘intolerant’ character of the PVV.262 VB and the PVV put a focus on the ethnic community within the national identity. This reference is not made by the DF. DF does make references to the importance of love for the Danish national culture, but is not focussing much on ethnicity.

In general it can be stated that there are several similarities in the formations of the concepts of national identities in the positions of these three anti-EU parties. These similarities provide a better understanding in why these parties oppose the EU. In the national

262 See among others: Moors et. al, “Polarisatie en radicalisering in Nederland. Een verkenning van de stand van zaken in 2009.”
identity conceptualization, the anti-EU positioning is not always enforced by exact explanations of why the national identity is in friction with EU integration or which element of the identity is in friction with the EU. The EU is claimed to be a threat and it is claimed to be based on a malignant process of integration. The EU is claimed to be a threat to the importance of the national history, a threat to the national sovereignty, the existing political structure and democracy in general. The EU, moreover, threatens the homogeneity and nativity of the people because it does not stop immigration (enough). The EU threatens Western society since it does not protect it from the threat the Islam forms. The EU threatens the level of love for and the feeling of supremacy of the national identity. And finally, the EU threatens solidarity which is important within the national identity shared by the people. It seems to be an understatement that the EU is proclaimed to be quite threatening.

The VB, the DF and the PVV defined the concept of national identity through a process of othering and defining what it does not consist of. This thesis shows ones more that essentialist views on a static and unchangeable identity are unrealistic. The thesis claims that the concept of national identity is defined in similar, but still slightly different ways by right wing anti EU parties. It becomes clear that the elements that parties have attached to their national identities are not very different and are always strongly linked to the party ideologies of nationalism, nativism and anti-immigration. Unlike several political scientists (see chapter 2), I still believe these anti-EU parties and their conceptualizations of national identity should be taken seriously. When taking these parties seriously, this thesis can provide a solid ground for the understanding of anti-EU sentiments among right wing parties.

In the second chapter the starting quote stated that Western European politics has become more and more focussed around the concept of identity. I think I can partly support this observation for the period since 1992. Many people in Western Europe gain a sense of positive self-esteem from their identity groups now that economic and political borders have become less important. Within these identity groups the national identity has been more and more politicized since 1992, since it is not undisputed any more. Much more than before 1992, the EU has been seen as a political body challenging older fixed boundaries. This challenge has been widely criticized by right wing anti-EU parties claiming to defend the national identity.
Appendix 1:
Electoral success of three right wing Anti-EU Parties:
National elections

National Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Vlaams Blok / Vlaams Belang</th>
<th>Dansk Folkeparti</th>
<th>Partij voor de Vrijheid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>2.3% (1.4%) 1 / 212 # 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1.8% (1.1%) 1 / 212 # 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2.3% (1.4%) 1 / 212 # 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>3.1% (1.9%) 2 / 212 # 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>10.4% (6.6%) 12 / 212 # 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>13.1% (7.8%) 11 / 150 # 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.4% - 13 / 179 # 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>15.9% (9.9%) 15 / 150 # 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.0% - 22 / 179 # 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>18.8% (11.6%) 18 / 150 # 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.2% - 24 / 179 # 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.9% - 9 / 150 # 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>18.9% (12.0%) 17 / 150 # 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.8% - 25 / 179 # 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>13.2% (7.8%) 12 / 150 # 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.5% - 24 / 150 # 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.3% - 22 / 179 # 3</td>
<td>10.1% - 15 / 150 # 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Important to mention is that some election results can give a wrong image of the parties support, since some parties only ran in a limited number of districts in national or regional elections. Vlaams Blok/Vlaams Belang only ran in Flanders and never in Wallon.

All Belgian results from the website of the free University of Brussels:
http://www.ibzgip.fgov.be/result/hl/search.php

Belgium officially has two votes in a year of a national election. The vote of the lower house, the Chamber of Representatives and the vote of the higher house, the Senate. The voting results are in general never differing much. The Chamber of Representatives is considered to be much more important due to its legislative and controlling powers. For this reason the Senate voting outcome is omitted.

All Danish results from the website of the Denmerk Statistical Bureau:
http://www.dst.dk/valg/Valg1204271/valgopg/valgopgHL.htm

% Flemish votes
% of Belgian votes in total.
Number of seats in the House of Representatives
Compared to all Belgian parties, the party is the number # party.
Appendix 2: Electoral success of three right wing Anti-EU Parties: European parliament elections

European Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Vlaams Blok / Vlaams Belang</th>
<th>Dansk Folkeparti</th>
<th>Partij voor de Vrijheid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1.3% (2.1% in Flanders / 6th)</td>
<td>Non Existent</td>
<td>Non Existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 / 24 Belgian (13 Flemish seats)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4.1% (6.6% / 6th)</td>
<td>Non Existent</td>
<td>Non Existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 / 24 (13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>7.8% (12.6% / 4th)</td>
<td>Non Existent</td>
<td>Non Existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 / 25 (14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>9.4% (15.1% / 3rd)</td>
<td>5.8% / 8th</td>
<td>Non Existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 seats / 25 (14)</td>
<td>1 / 16 Danish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>14.3% (23.2% / 2nd)</td>
<td>6.8% / 6th</td>
<td>Non Existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 seats / 24 (14)</td>
<td>1 / 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>9.9% (15.9% / 3rd)</td>
<td>15.3% / 4th</td>
<td>17.0% / 2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 seats / 22 (13)</td>
<td>2 / 13</td>
<td>4 / 25 Dutch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


272 As the VB does not present lists in the unilingual French-speaking constituencies, its share of the Flemish target electorate represents a more exact image of its electoral performance within its target electorate. (De Winter, 2004, 7).

273 In the European parliament elections. The Belgian electoral college is divided into two parts. A Flemish part and a Walloon part.
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