

Experts have argued that Differentiated Integration (DI) may be a viable solution for accommodating diverse preferences in the European Union. On the one hand, DI allows those who want more to do more. On the other hand, DI allows those who are reluctant about European integration to obtain exemptions from common policies.

This view is supported by the observation that both citizens' awareness and their support for a 'Two-speed Europe' are increasing over time (Figure 1). However, pro-EU and Eurosceptic voters differ widely in the form of Differentiated Integration they want to see (Figure 2). There are also great differences in citizen preferences between the member states as well as between supporters of governing parties and opposition parties (Figure 3). Hence, while DI may be a way to bridge preference heterogeneity *between* member states, it does not address preference heterogeneity *within* member states, thus risking to further alienate domestic minorities. However, good institutional design and fair decision-making procedures should make DI more acceptable to such minorities.

**Figure 1. Growing awareness of and support for a 'Two-speed Europe' among citizens**

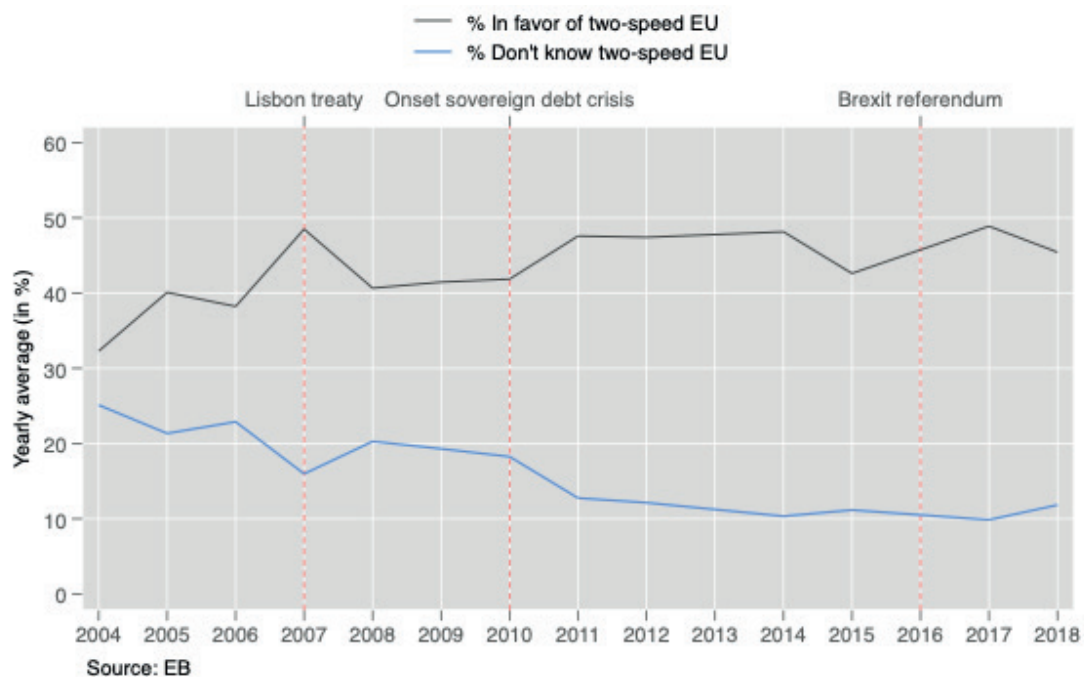
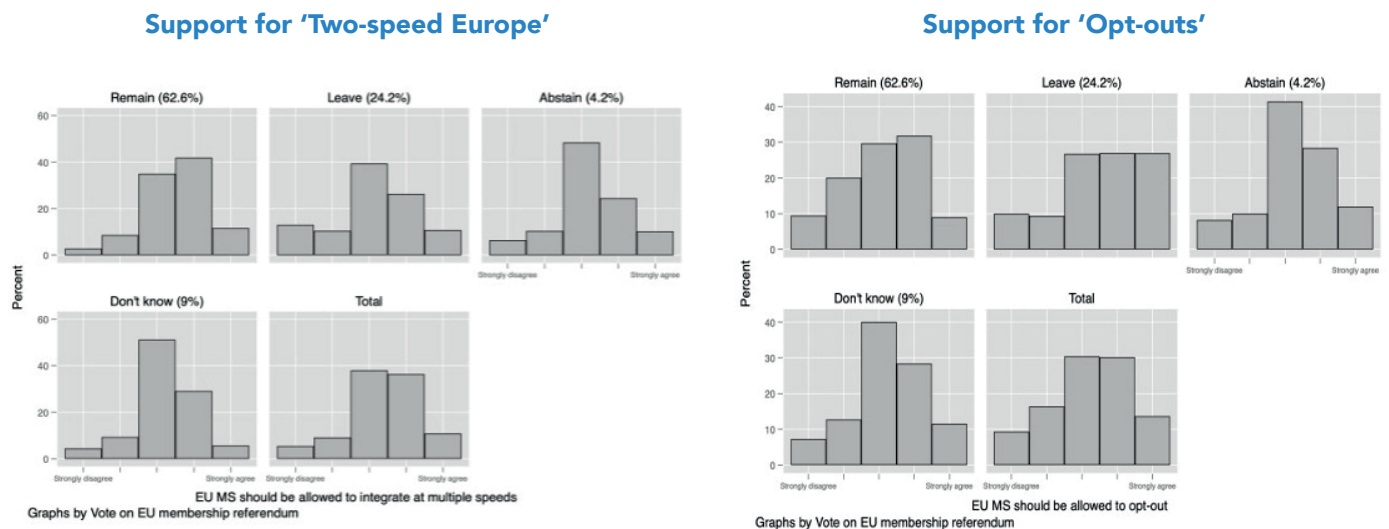


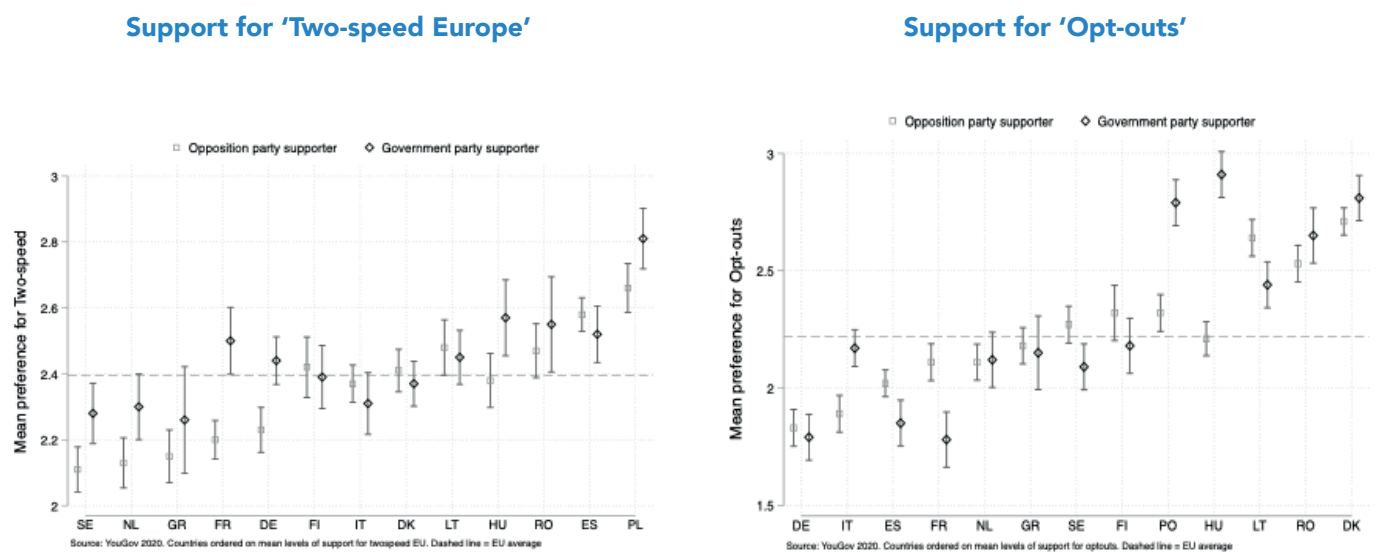
Figure 1 shows that citizens are increasingly aware and supportive of a 'Two-speed Europe'. However, this general trend hides the fact that the level of support for Differentiated Integration is not the same for all citizens. Figure 2 shows that pro-EU and Eurosceptic citizens prefer different forms of Differentiated Integration. Specifically, pro-EU citizens assess the idea of a 'Two-speed Europe' more positively than Eurosceptic citizens. By contrast, Eurosceptic citizens view 'Opt-outs' from the EU more positively than pro-EU citizens. In other words, pro-EU citizens tend to support forms of DI which suggest more integration, while Eurosceptic citizens tend to support forms of DI which suggest less integration.

**Figure 2. Pro-EU citizens support 'Two-speed Europe', Eurosceptic citizens support 'Opt-outs'**



Support for 'Two-speed Europe' and 'Opt-outs' also varies across countries and between supporters of government and opposition parties (Figure 3). On average, 'Two-speed Europe' is seen much more negatively by citizens in Sweden or the Netherlands than by citizens in Spain or Poland. Similarly, 'Opt-outs' are seen much more negatively by citizens in Germany or Italy than by citizens in Romania or Denmark. In addition, there are marked differences in the positions of government and opposition party supporters, especially in France, Poland, and Hungary.

**Figure 3. Differences across countries and supporters of government and opposition parties**



Finally, institutional design and decision-making procedures impact citizen support for Differentiated Integration. Citizens generally prefer temporal to permanent differentiation and larger to smaller DI subgroups. When it comes to the decision-making process, they prefer a majority vote among member states over unanimity. Citizens do not want (differentiated) integration to be held back by an individual member state and are more supportive of DI proposals put forward by the European Parliament or by their own home state (in comparison to more intergovernmental institutions). This suggests that member state governments act as an important source for citizens' preference formation and that the supranational EU institutions have an important part to play in the design of and bargaining for DI, not least to reassure citizens that no member state is discriminated against or taken advantage of. Finally, policy areas matter for citizen support of DI. While citizens view DI as a path forward for social policy initiatives, such as a common minimum wage, they do not think that DI in the relocation of refugees is fair - possibly because they worry about others free-riding on their efforts.