



YOUNG  
EUROPEAN  
FEDERALISTS

## BEST PRACTICE GUIDE ON COUNTERING EUROSCEPTICS



“Fighting the rise  
of the Eurosceptics”

## A RISE OF EUROSCEPTICISM

In the run-up to the European elections, many European commentators expected that the next European Parliament will entail fundamentally more Eurosceptic members than the former European Parliament.

However, their impact should not be overstated. It is unlikely that the diverse group of eurosceptics on the radical left, the conservative centre, the extreme right and various non-attached individuals will manage to unite across their national interests. Furthermore, eurosceptics have been in the European Parliament since its very first election. Internal criticism and opposition are fundamental parts of democracy. That is why the supporters of European integration should not fear the rise of euroscepticism.



Whereas the projected rise of euroscepticism is unlikely to have a large influence on the positions of the European Parliament, those who support further European integration should not feel at ease. Rather, they should be reminded that their arguments must be clear and persuasive for European citizens.

## THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE COUNTER ARGUMENTS

Although eurosceptics will not win a majority in the European Parliament, the danger exists that their arguments will gradually win the minds of the European citizens. Leaders of the eurosceptic ‘movement’ such as Marine Le Pen (FN), Nigel Farage (UKIP), Geert Wilders (PVV) or Beppe Grillo (M5S) are highly effective speakers, whose arguments and speeches manage to attract a lot of (media) attention.

It is therefore important to understand how eurosceptic speakers seek this media attention. Often, their arguments consist of warnings about urgent social and economic ‘problems’, such as immigration, a rise in crime, or the collapse of the monetary system. In order to attract media attention for these (mostly unfounded) claims, they are sometimes “spiced up” with short, simple and often repeated key phrases, and exaggeration of specific numbers to give a factual impression to the claims being made

(for instance, Nigel Farage often mentioned “massive and uncontrolled immigration” or “26 million Bulgarians and Romanians wanting to come to the UK”), which are often combined with highly emotive language and use of strong imagery (for instance, Wilders’ claim that “slavish adherence to European rules will ‘bleed’ the people”). These “spiced-up” claims are used to suggest that the European Union has fundamental problems, after which the European Union is blamed and attacked for being unable to deal with these ‘problems’, or its political establishment is mocked in order to attract media attention to the eurosceptic message. (For instance, Nigel Farage’s gained significant media attention when he described European Council President Herman Van Rompoy as having the “charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk”). Having captured the media attention and having presented their exaggerated claims, overly simplistic ‘solutions’ are then presented to deal with these ‘problems’ (For instance, Le Pen, Farage, and Wilders often argue that their counties should leave the EU to stop immigration and to solve crime problems).

These arguments may appeal to the media but they are rarely constructive and often misleading. For these reasons, it is essential that those who believe in the future of the European Union focus on countering these eurosceptic arguments. In order to reach this goal, the counter-arguments must be clear and effective on the one hand, while on the other hand, the arguments must persuade the audience.

## EFFECTIVE COUNTER ARGUMENTS

Actors and organisations that support further European integration differ widely in their interests and areas of expertise. While the arguments they use to promote European integration in their policy fields can therefore be very different, a better understanding of the structure of an effective (counter-)argument is likely to be of benefit to all of them.

According to the Toulmin model of argumentation, an effective counter-argument consists of the six following elements:

<b>The policy:</b>	The issue about which someone wants to convince the audience.
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<b>The argument:</b>	Series of statements aimed at reaching a conclusion that supports the policy.
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<b>Claim:</b>	A short statement about what you want someone to believe
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<b>Evidence:</b>	Is a piece of information that the audience (already) believes to support the claim.
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**Reasoning:**

Links the evidence to the claim in short summary.

**Link:**

Links 'argument' to 'policy' in short summary, points out whether policy is 'good' or 'bad', and why audience should care.

These elements can be found in three different kinds of populist eurosceptic arguments: universal, right-wing and left-wing eurosceptic arguments.

Universal eurosceptic arguments relate to 'claims' that Europe threatens values of sovereignty and democracy at the cost of citizens. The 'policy' of universal eurosceptic arguments is therefore to withdraw to the nation state and the 'argument' is that only the nation state can protect its citizens, guarantee national sovereignty, and maintain the values of democracy.

Right-wing Eurosceptic arguments relate to 'claims' that Europe drives globalisation and threatens national/individual freedom. The 'policy' of right-wing euroscepticism is therefore to withdraw to the nation state on the basis of the 'argument' that only the nation state can protect citizens against pressures of globalisation and is the guardian of individual or national 'freedoms'.

Left-wing Eurosceptic arguments relate to claims of Europe as the driver of capitalism and competition and the destroyer of solidarity: Their 'policy' is therefore to withdraw to the nation state on the basis of the argument that the nation state protects against unbridled capitalism and individualism and that it is the largest possible arena of solidarity.





## MAKING APPEALING COUNTER ARGUMENTS

Regardless of the structure of the argument, it is the goal of any speaker to persuade their audience to ultimately support the policy they present. In order to do this the speaker can use different persuasive appeals to try to achieve this objective. Aristotle describes three persuasive appeals: the appeal to logos, ethos, and pathos.

Logos refers to an appeal to logic and reason. Here, “persuasion is effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question”. The speaker might use facts, data and logical conclusions to guide his audience from evidence to claim to argument to policy. Aristotle considers logos to be the most ethical appeal, and suggests using the other appeals only when logos does not suffice or is not available.

Ethos refers to an appeal to credibility: here, “persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible”. The speaker tries to establish their "moral legitimacy", for instance by showcasing their knowledge by using famous quotes, by mentioning that they are a professor at a renowned university, a democratically elected leader, or just a "normal citizen".

Pathos refers to an appeal to the audience's emotion. Here, “persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions” The speaker tries to evoke emotiveness and inspire hope, joy, fear and sadness, for instance by speaking about the unemployment of their friends, or about how their grandfather died in battle for the sovereignty of his nation.

These three strategies are used effectively by some eurosceptic speakers, but merit more attention from supporters of further European integration in order to significantly strengthen the democratic debate about the European Union.

## GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

More examples can be found on [www.towardsfederaleurope.eu](http://www.towardsfederaleurope.eu)

**Eurosceptic policy:** “We need to leave the euro because it is doomed to fail!”

**Counter-argument:** Eurosceptics only tell you half of the story: the euro is likely to fail, but only if we don't manage to build a political union (*claim 1*). They have predicted the downfall of the euro again and again and yet now we see that the euro still stands, that the eurozone has been reformed and is slowly climbing out of the recession. We are surviving this storm and becoming stronger (*claim 2*).

**Link:** The euro is not doomed to fail, but the crisis was a solid warning that we need to build a fiscal, economic and political federal union if we want to make sure that the euro is here to stay and to bring prosperity for European citizens ([link](#)).

**Claim 1:** Eurosceptics only tell you half of the story.

**Evidence:** The Eurosceptic argument states that a single currency can't work for the eurozone, because the eurozone is not an 'Optimal Currency Area'. The eurozone doesn't have high labour mobility, wage and price flexibility are too low, risk-sharing mechanisms such as fiscal transfer mechanisms do not really exist in Europe and economic fluctuations in the Member States are not occurring simultaneously. All these elements mean that the eurozone countries cannot have a single currency: the euro is therefore destined to fail. The fact of the matter is that such eurosceptic speakers conveniently forget to mention the other half of the story told by economic experts such as nobel prize winners Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz. The second half of the story is that an 'Optimum Currency Area' can be created if we move Europe forward into a fiscal and economic union, which are only possible within a political union. Such a Union could make policies to create an Optimum Currency Area in the eurozone by promoting labour mobility, alleviating macro-economic and social imbalances, integrating regulation for wage and price flexibility, setting up solidarity mechanisms to support structural reforms in countries and regions in difficulty, making European economic policy to integrate and stimulate the vital sectors of infrastructure, energy and the new digital world, etcetera... These instruments require a political union! In the long run we cannot manage the euro with 18 (and eventually more) uncoordinated national economic policies and politics. So what eurosceptics say is only partly true: the euro is only likely to fail, if they manage to block a political union ... and they won't!

**Reasoning:** The euro is only likely to fail as long as we are unable to build a political union in the eurozone. Saving the euro means building political union in Europe, building a true European political government.



**Claim 2:** The euro didn't fail and is actually getting stronger again.

**Evidence:** Since 2012, newspapers in several countries contain opinion pieces stating that the time is right for some countries to leave the eurozone, or disaster would strike. These commentators argued that Greece had to get out before things would spiral out of control. That Portugal, Italy and Cyprus were beyond saving. Or according to others they had to “exit the euro” as soon as possible to regain their economic flexibility and sovereignty. However, after reform in the crisis-ridden countries and solidarity of other countries in the past 2 years, we see that the skies are now clearing. The eurozone economy is slowly exiting the recession, the crisis countries are reforming and the pace of austerity is finally set to slow down. Things are still bad, unemployment is still a major plague in many countries and growth remains sluggish, but we are getting better. For any individual country and for the eurozone as a whole, leaving the eurozone now would be a terrible idea. In addition, leaving the eurozone would be an extremely complex exercise, for which there is no legal basis: Everything would have to be negotiated. The country that would exit would see its new national currency immediately devalue massively, its debt to foreign creditors skyrocket, its costs for energy and other imports increase, and the value of the savings and property of its citizens plummet versus the euro, in essence an expropriation! We are all in a boat together and we have survived the storm, regardless of what the eurosceptics told us. It might still be uncomfortable to be in the same boat with 18 countries and no single skipper, but leaving the eurozone now would be the same as sinking the boat in which we are all sitting together. Better believe in the future and sail stronger together.

**Reasoning:** If we would have listened to eurosceptics, there's no telling where we would have been now. Contrary to what they said, the euro survived, debt-ridden countries are reforming and the Eurozone is leaving the recession. Things are bad, but they are getting better.

## CLOSING WORDS

The supporters of European integration should not fear the rise of euroscepticism. Internal criticism and opposition are fundamental parts of democracy. However, they should be reminded that their arguments must be clear and persuasive for European citizens. Further European integration can only be achieved through democratic decisions, and democracy can not be left to populist eurosceptics who too often use misleading arguments. Only through clear and persuasive argumentation and counter argumentation can we ensure that the democratic debate about Europe is strengthened, and that democratic decisions will guide us to a better and ever closer European Union.



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