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The young French and the EU

A case study on attitudes toward the European Union in light of a potential Frexit



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Abstract

In the wake of Brexit in 2016, the conception of Frexit was born and received an impetus in the French presidential election campaigns in 2017. The scepticism toward the European Union once again found expression as Eurosceptic political parties gained ground and supporters amongst French citizens. With attitudes toward the EU in France seemingly variable and impressionable of political currents, it is important to understand from where these originate as well as what a positive or negative attitude imply in practice. Therefore, this study aims to map out attitudes among young French citizens: A group with an overall positive attitude toward the EU as well as the generation in charge of the future European Union. The study is conducted in the form of a case study, with the framework of Functional Attitude Theory guiding the analysis. The main findings include an obvious lack of knowledge on the union among the interviewees, connected to a feeling of exclusion from the same. However, benefits and rights provided by the EU are considered grounds to stay within the union. Finally, the findings are discussed and ideas for further research are suggested.

Keywords

European Union, France, Frexit, attitudes, functional attitude theory, utilitarian attitudes.



Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	<i>Purpose and research questions</i>	3
2	Theoretical perspective	4
2.1	<i>Functional Attitude Theory</i>	4
2.2	<i>Utilitarian attitudes</i>	5
2.3	<i>Scientific relevance in the field of Political Science</i>	5
3	Previous research	6
3.1	<i>France and the EU after the Euro crisis</i>	6
3.2	<i>France and Brexit</i>	7
3.3	<i>The young French and the EU</i>	7
4	Methodology	9
4.1	<i>Type of study</i>	9
4.2	<i>Data collection</i>	10
4.3	<i>Selection of interviewees</i>	10
4.4	<i>Operationalisation</i>	12
4.5	<i>Data processing and analysis</i>	13
5	Findings and analysis	15
5.1	<i>Attitudes toward the EU</i>	15
5.1.1	What the EU does well	15
5.1.2	What the EU can do better	17
5.2	<i>Attitudes toward Frexit</i>	21
5.2.1	Expectations and fears	21
5.2.2	Possible benefits	23
5.2.3	The on-going Brexit	24
5.3	<i>Analysis through Functional attitude theory</i>	24
5.3.1	Interviewee A	25
5.3.2	Interviewees B and C	26



5.3.3	Interviewees D and G	27
5.3.4	Interviewees E and F	29
6	Discussion	30
6.1	<i>To be a product of one's age</i>	30
6.2	<i>The dimensions of involvement and trust</i>	31
6.3	<i>The effect of experience and desire on attitudes</i>	32
7	Concluding remarks	35
7.1	<i>Observed attitudes toward the EU</i>	35
7.2	<i>Frexit</i>	35
7.3	<i>Functional attitude theory</i>	36
8	Limitations and suggestions for further research	37
	References	1
8.1	<i>Oral references</i>	2
	Appendices	4



1 Introduction

On 23 June 2016, the British people entered the polling stations to vote in the *United Kingdom European Union membership referendum*, a referendum on Britain's continuous membership in the EU. The unexpected result of a support for "Brexit" took both government and population alike by surprise, and had the rest of the world perplexed: What would the EU actually be without the powerful member state and contribution of Great Britain? The remaining European member states suddenly faced a potential disintegration of an international cooperation that had characterized and developed Europe for decades, and the outcome of the referendum on the British withdrawal from the EU was an unpleasant surprise that from one day to another came to disarrange the prevailing scheme of things and re-arrange the future of Europe. Brexit made the favourable light on the EU dramatically fade and with the process in its cradle, still far from facing the far-reaching consequences, the story of Brexit possibly serves as a nationalistic trigger, rather making the risky withdrawal from the union seem like liberation in the eyes of sympathizers across the world.

In the French presidential election campaigns 2017, the increasing scepticism toward the EU once again found expression. Marine Le Pen, the presidential candidate for the often right-wing populist and nationalistic classified political party *Front National* (now called *Rassemblement National*), promised a referendum on the French membership if she were to win the presidential election. In addition, radical voices descending from the political left-wing in the shape of presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon expressed a desire of a new and reformed EU, as well as a potential Frexit if this would not be met with sympathy in the European Parliament (Henley, 2017). Though the French presidential election campaigns in 2017 were not the first forums in which the EU-scepticism and the idea of a Frexit were



manifested in the country: Only days before the British referendum, a public opinion poll was published by the Pew Research Centre where 61 % of the French people expressed a negative view on the EU, with only Greece voicing a stronger scepticism toward the union (BBC, 2016). With the discussion on a French withdrawal from the EU gaining ground through the presidential election campaigns in 2017, "Frexit" slowly transformed from a diffuse expression into a fully imaginable scenario.

With the main opponent Emmanuel Macron and his *La République En Marche!* as definite winners of the French presidential election 2017, the dream of a Frexit remained the nationalistic expression it had been thus far. The new president of France expressed no desire to realise a referendum on the French membership in the EU, similar to the one Le Pen had promised in her political campaign. Still, Macron gave to understand a presumption of an evident French support for a Frexit in case of a referendum similar to the one in Great Britain (Walker, 2018). But to what extent does Macron's theory about the public opinion in France correspond with reality, slightly over a year after the presidential election in 2017? How does the, from a general point of view, social group with the most positive attitudes toward the EU – the young citizens of the union – perceive the current Brexit, a potential Frexit and the European Union, and how are they affected by a France that is believed to possibly choose a path similar to the one chosen by Great Britain?

In a world where various nations raise critical voices against intergovernmental organisations and international cooperation, it is not unreasonable to assume that these factors affect and influence the group of people with the far most positive view of the European Union. As the topic is of great immediate interest, the opinions may be variable, presumably influenced by the reporting on the on-going process of Brexit. Thus, continuous and frequent studies on French attitudes and opinions toward the



EU and Frexit are of great interest and necessity, and particularly studies on the young French generation, which would be the one to face the far-reaching consequences of such a political procedure, though also the one to form and build the future EU, as citizens of one of the most important member states in the union.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate and map out attitudes among young French citizens toward the EU and France's membership in the union. The attitudes will then be analysed through the lens of functional attitude theory, with the specific focus on attitudes that serve a utilitarian function. In that way, the study will shed light on the different opinions on and perceptions toward the union, as well as examine them in order to understand how they form and why they are expressed in a certain way.

The following research questions have been formulated:

- What attitudes toward the EU and the French membership can be found among young French citizens?
- What possibilities and dangers respectively do they imagine concerning a potential Frexit?
- How are attitudes toward the EU related to actual experiences connected to the union?



2 Theoretical perspective

2.1 Functional Attitude Theory

Understanding public opinion is of high importance when investigating the relation between for example elites and masses, or between political institutions and people. The collective product of public opinion consists of systems of attitudes toward various objects and in the 1950's, Daniel Katz (1960) developed a new school of theory, arguing that people develop attitudes to serve their own goals. These insights contributed to the knowledge about attitude functions and enabled an in-depth understanding of how agents can influence and tailor messages to a specific audience or the masses, as well as understanding the reasons why people hold the views they do toward different objects (Andrews, Boster & Carpenter, 2013).

Based upon these theories, Katz (1960:170) developed a set of four different functional attitudes: (1) the instrumental, adjustive or utilitarian function (henceforth called the utilitarian function or attitude), (2) the ego-defensive function, (3) the value-expressive function and (4) the knowledge function. Utilitarian attitudes serve to maximise one's utility, meaning that one develops positive attitudes toward rewarding objects, and vice versa. The ego-defensive function means that one systematically avoids inconvenient realities in one's surrounding world or basic truths about oneself. The value-expressive function or attitude does not result in direct reward or punishment, but depicts the satisfaction of a person who expresses meaningful attitudes in line with his personal values. The knowledge function describes one's search for meaning and gaining knowledge about the structure of the surrounding world (Katz, 1960:170–171). For this thesis, the first function of utilitarian attitudes was specifically chosen for the analysis, and is therefore defined more closely in the following section.



2.2 Utilitarian attitudes

Utilitarian attitudes specifically suggest that people strive to maximise the rewards in their external environment. Katz (1960:170) argues with this theory that one develops favourable attitudes toward objects that maximise one's utility and quality of life. The same applies to unfavourable attitudes: These develop when objects are associated with punishment or any kind of undesirable consequences. These attitudes can in themselves be split into two different definitions: They either represent the *means for reaching a desired goal*, or *emotive associations based upon previous experiences in acquiring pleasure or satisfaction*. Katz (1960:170–171) also argues for the importance of understanding functional attitude theory in connection to politics, as he uses political party attitudes to exemplify how utilitarian attitudes can be applied – as an example, in research regarding public opinion – in which Katz claims that a worker will favour the one political party which he believes will advance and improve his economical situation.

2.3 Scientific relevance in the field of Political Science

The school of Functional Attitude Theory may be a system of theories first developed within the psychological field, and therefore not an absolute political theoretical perspective. However, even Katz (1960) argued at the time of publication of the study and presentation of the developed school of theories for its political relevance. Studies on public opinion and other controversial political phenomena may derive advantage from employing the Functional Attitude Theory, facilitating the mapping of the relation between different currents of attitudes and experiences or desires. This may be of use not only to political parties and studies on political elections, but to political organisations and institutions alike. Thus, the theory enables the author to shed light on a political phenomenon of particularly immediate interest, explaining and expounding standpoints where other studies have only scratched the surface.



3 Previous research

3.1 France and the EU after the Euro crisis

Being an official European Union member state since 1958, France's bond to the EU has been both natural as well as fragile. One of the more dramatic recent reverses in the country's relationship to the union appeared as a consequence of the economic crisis reaching Europe and the EU in 2009, often referred to as the "euro crisis", splintering the European unity. In a study published by the Pew Research Centre in 2013, findings indicate rapidly declining confidence in the European Union, with France as an especially palpable example with only 41 % of the citizens holding a favourable view of the EU. Drifting their way from Germany, a traditionally strong supporter of the European project with 60 % of the citizens holding a favourable view of the union, France's faith in the EU was at the time at a level comparable with the low ones found in Italy or Spain at the time of the study. The author of the study from the Pew Research Centre in 2013 specifically highlighted the declining confidence in the economy, in the leadership of President François Hollande as well as in the country's commitment to the European Union in general as reasons as to the country's decreasing faith in the union. (Baker, 2013)

Two years later, in 2015, another study on the topic "Faith in European Project Reviving" by the Pew Research Centre was published, examining the public opinion in six EU member states, including France. With the favourable view of the EU in France remaining relatively unchanged, increasing only from 41 % to 55 %, the younger generation in France is still far more supportive of the union than the older citizens. In 2015, a total of 70 % of the French 18- to 29-year-olds held a favourable view of the EU compared to only 43 % in 2013, where the country was still in the middle of the after-effects of the euro crisis. However, the belief in the efficacy of



economic integration among the younger generation was with 48 % still lower compared to 2009, where the number was 50 %. Among the older generations, only 31 % shared this opinion, though the number still increased from 22 % in 2013. (Stokes, 2015)

3.2 France and Brexit

In 2017, only a year after the British referendum on the country's EU membership, overall attitudes toward the union seemed to have recovered and even strengthened in most member states participating in the study by Manevich, Stokes & Wike (2017). In France, 22 % of the population supported a Frexit, then meaning only little support for a French withdrawal from the union – although 61 % still supported holding a national referendum on France's membership in the EU. Around 56 % of the French population held a favourable view of the union and 76 % wanted the country to remain a member state (ibid).

As to Brexit, opinions formed a pattern in most member states: Great Britain withdrawing from the union was considered harmful to the European project. However, France and Italy evinced a tendency to different views: over a third of the French believed that the EU would benefit from Brexit, whereas in Italy, just over a fourth of the population agreed with the French. With a median including all participating countries of only 14 % expressing a favourable view of Brexit, 70 % of the participating member states still believed the EU to be stronger with the powerful member state of Great Britain. Yet 62 % of the French believed Great Britain to not benefit from Brexit, with roughly a third of the French being of the opinion that Britain would be stronger on its own. (Manevich, Stokes & Wike, 2017)

3.3 The young French and the EU

The younger French generation held a particularly favourable view of the European Union, with 73 % of the 18- to 29-year-olds expressing a



favourable attitude in the study from 2017 (Manevich, Stokes & Wike). The following year, the “Young Europe 2018” study was published, conducted by the TUI Foundation. The study was likewise characterised by an overall positive view on the EU throughout the participating member states. The young French were no exception: 53 % – compared to 35 % in 2017 – no longer solely identify themselves as citizens of their country, but also as European. Only a fourth of the younger generation in France identified as solely a citizen of the country, a figure that had fallen sharply from 47 % in 2017. Furthermore, the study stated that fewer and fewer of the young French supported a Frexit, with 69 % believing that France belongs in the union and only a tenth supporting a withdrawal (TUI Foundation, 2018).

However, even amongst the supportive young people in France, populist attitudes were perceived. A fifth of the French participants expressed populist tendencies, assessed in the study through questions on “anti-elitism”, “belief in unrestricted popular sovereignty” and the “notion of a homogenous will of the people”. 22 % of the young French believed the political system in France to be in such poor condition that radical change was needed, and 45 % held that the political system worked poorly, but could be restored if certain measures would be taken. Remarkable is also the fact that a majority of the young French voters supported Marine Le Pen or Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the last presidential election in 2017, two populist candidates with favourable views of a Frexit. (TUI Foundation, 2018)



4 Methodology

4.1 Type of study

The study of attitudes toward intergovernmental organisations and international cooperation is a complex matter, involving many various aspects. Thus, a qualitative research method was considered appropriate, allowing the author to investigate and capture the nuances within the field of study. Moreover, the research method is an efficient tool when investigating how groups of people frame phenomena, courses of events and processes, shedding light on what kinds of meaning they give to different occurrences as well as the various attitudes toward them. The purpose of the study is not a generalizable result, but a mapping of various perceptions and ideas and the capture of unexpected elements, which requires a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns & Wängnerud, 2017:260–262). Further, a case study design was chosen in order to examine the field of study in detail, with the method offering deep insights into the phenomenon, as well as the possibility to observe unexpected aspects and expound theories (Bennet & George, 2005:19–25).

The study aims to serve as a "building block" study of a particular type or subtype of a general phenomenon, with a heuristic purpose. The study should be considered a component part of a specific field, in this case, EU citizens' attitudes toward the European Union. Thus, the specific attitudes toward the EU among young French citizens serve as a specified subtype of the general phenomenon of the attitudes towards the EU. This allows each "block" – the study of a specific subtype – to fill a space in the general theory and contribute to the overall understanding of the phenomenon. Yet, the "block" does not depend upon further studies, but can be seen as a sufficient study on its own (Bennet & George, 2005:76–78). Thus, the purpose of this study is to



broaden the existing knowledge about the general phenomenon of attitudes towards the EU, but can also be considered an independent study in itself.

4.2 Data collection

The data was gathered through conducting interviews with young French citizens. Three interviews were obtained via Skype, whereas the remaining ones were obtained through personal meetings. The decision to employ interviews as research method was based on its suitability for mapping out different opinions and viewpoints on the phenomena (Esaiasson et al., 2017:261), i.e. in this case, the opinions on and relation to the European Union among the young French. Interviews as a method offer the opportunity to shed light on everyday experiences in order to understand the interviewees' view of the society in which they live. (Esaiasson et al., 2017:263).

The interviews were semi-structured and based on three different key themes, each one including several pre-defined principal questions, although still allowing the interviewees to speak freely on the different themes and elaborate their answers. This suited the objective to obtain broader understanding of the interviewees' different perspectives on the topic, as the conversation was partly guided by the interviewees' own thoughts, still ensuring the author sufficient basic data through the guiding structure of the pre-defined principal questions asked to all interviewees.

4.3 Selection of interviewees

A total of seven interviews were conducted for the study, which were all anonymous by agreement. As the focus of the study was not the interviewees themselves, but the various opinions of the interviewees, variations and differences among the interviewees were preferred. Therefore, there was an intentional focus on selecting interviewees with a difference in characteristics, such as occupation and descent (with the requirement of a



valid French citizenship). Thus, the different opinions and perspectives of the interviewees would contribute to gaining various aspects on, as well as broaden the knowledge about, the phenomenon as a whole. However, to fulfil the purpose of studying the attitudes towards the European Union among young French people, the interviewees were all French citizens in the age of 20 to 30. The rather low number of interviewees is a product of the guide lines for qualitative interview studies by Esaiasson et al. (2017:268–269), where saturation is pointed out as the primary object rather than a large number of interviewees. A larger number of interviewees could indeed have affected the results as to the possibility of generalisation, as well as to scientifically verify the functional attitude theory used in the study. A larger total of interviewees may also have added additional perspectives. However, the verification of the theory was not the principal purpose; Neither was the quantitative aim of generalisation. Finally, the time frame of the study limited the possibilities regarding the search and selection of interviewees.

The selection of interviewees was mainly a result of further recommendations of acquaintances of the interviewees themselves, both upon request from the author as well as on the interviewees' own initiative. The fact that the interviewees had the opportunity to apply to participate in the study, could be considered to endanger the random selection; However, to avoid a one-sided selection of interviewees with similar characteristics such as international experience or a strong political interest, the participation of the proposed interviewees was finally determined by the author in order to ensure the presence of a variation in characteristics amongst the interviewees. Moreover, the interviewees were offered the help of an interpreter during the interview. Offering the interviewee the possibility to communicate in his or her native language made it possible to include



interviewees with little or no international experience, or interviewees lacking knowledge of the English language.

Respondent	Occupation	Date	Interview length
Interviewee A	Permanent employment at a real estate company	2018-11-27	55 minutes
Interviewee B	Student	2018-11-29	38 minutes
Interviewee C	Unemployed	2018-12-04	57 minutes
Interviewee D	Unemployed	2018-12-06	30 minutes
Interviewee E	Student in other EU country	2018-12-07	55 minutes
Interviewee F	Temporary employment as stockroom worker in other EU country	2018-12-07	61 minutes
Interviewee G	Permanent employment at a finance company	2018-12-09	46 minutes

Table 1: Table of interviewees

4.4 Operationalisation

The interviews were structured around the three key themes of the European Union, Brexit and Frexit. As the interviews were semi-structured, all interviewees were asked roughly the same questions, but were allowed free scope to elaborate their answers. Due to this, the interviewee itself partly shaped the interview. Each key theme was introduced with questions of a more general kind, in order to encourage reflection and careful consideration. In this way, the author was able to detect certain patterns in the interviewees' process of thought and reasoning, as well as notice if the interviewees steered their answers in a specific direction.



The first key theme, the European Union, constituted the first part of the interview. The questions were formulated to comprise a wide range of aspects related to the attitudes of the European Union, and were worded in a way that required no previous or specific knowledge on the EU from the interviewees. Additionally, questions on international cooperation were asked, in order to investigate attitudes toward global cooperation in general. The second key theme, Brexit, provided useful information as to the general perception of member states withdrawing from the EU, as this is a previously untried procedure still in realisation. Since the process of Brexit yet still is not fully in effect, the interviewees were encouraged to speculation, with their train of thought possibly revealing opinions and views of value to the comprehensive picture of attitudes toward the European Union. The third and last key theme, Brexit, served as an opportunity of taking all previous gained perspectives into account, bringing the purpose of the study to a head.

4.5 Data processing and analysis

All interviews were transcribed either on the same day of conduct, or the day after, to ensure good recalling and understanding of the registered answers. The coding process was mainly guided by the tool of *categorising*, meaning that the author takes notes on the occurrence or non-occurrence of certain aspects in the interview, as well as categorise the interviewees' statements as positive or negative (Esaiasson et al., 2017:280). In this study, the interviewees' experiences of the EU were subjects to analysis, being classified either positive or negative, or possibly as a belief that the EU contributed to an improved quality of life. These factors were then categorised as a favourable or an unfavourable attitude toward the union, to fit the theoretical theme of functional attitude theory. In this way, the material was connected to the study's theoretical perspective as shown in the table below, which illustrates the proceeding with actual quotes from the interviews.



Quote	Interpretation	Category
“The EU gave me Erasmus, and Erasmus gave me diversity, which is what I seek in life”	An actual encounter with the union resulted in a feeling of satisfaction	Positive experience
“I don’t feel included. No one knows what’s going on in Brussels.”	Lack of transparency and distance affect perception of ability to influence the system	Negative experience
“If Frexit happens, our [the French people’s] life quality will become so low, both economically and socially”	An EU membership is vital for a high quality of life for the French people	Belief that EU improves quality of life
“The quality of my future depends only on the country I live in. Not the [European] union.”	Only the country of residence has a (positive) influence on life	Belief that EU has negative impact or none at all on quality of life
“Any country can benefit from becoming a member of the EU”	The EU has something for all	Favourable attitude
“The EU has failed to implement the European project”	The EU does not fulfil its purpose	Unfavourable attitude

Table 2. Table of coding



5 Findings and analysis

In the following chapter, the collected data is combined with the analysis in order to conduct a clearer line of reasoning. This mode of procedure facilitates the exposition of the research questions, with the findings related to the two first questions presented separately, and the findings related to the third question presented in connection with the theoretical perspective. The tools presented in the section of theoretical perspective appear as guidelines throughout the analysis, with a particularly distinct theoretical focus in the finishing section of the analysis.

5.1 Attitudes toward the EU

The mapped out attitudes state various perspectives of the union, which however in most cases can be categorised as positive or negative. Yet, no interviewee was understood as entirely positive or negative, as each interview showed to some extent a nuanced view of the European Union.

5.1.1 What the EU does well

5.1.1.1 *International exchange*

The EU is considered to provide access to international and even global exchange. The union has ample means at its disposal in terms of knowledge, science, resources, sustainable development and cultural exchange. Interviewee A says: *“Through the EU, all member states have access to every countries’ resources. Through the EU, we can achieve a balance between the European countries”*. Thus, the exchange within the union does not only exist for national self-interest, but also holds a mission of solidarity in achieving a socioeconomic balance and an equal quality of life between the EU member states. In order to do so, the trade within the EU is regarded as necessary, and as one of the most fundamental parts of the union as well as a practical way of achieving and accomplishing international exchange.



The free movement within the EU is another way of accomplishing exchange and as well as developing tourism, and is a EU right that has been used at some point by all interviewees.

5.1.1.2 The Erasmus program

Several of the interviewees have participated in the Erasmus program, but all interviewees consider the programme a valuable benefit in the European Union. In relation to the Erasmus program, the interviewees mention attributes such as cultural exchange, enrichment and diversity. Interviewee B says: *“The EU gave me Erasmus, and Erasmus gave me diversity, which is what I seek in life”*. The Erasmus programme is connected to aspects such as cultural enrichment and forming valuable relationships with people from other countries. Interviewee G describes it as *“eye-opening when encountering other cultures”*, and believes the programme to have a considerable impact on the future of international cooperation. Moreover, the programme is described as an opportunity to free education.

5.1.1.3 The economical aspect

As France entered the Eurozone and accepted the Euro as currency, the country was officially integrated into the common sphere of economic cooperation in the EU. Being part of the Eurozone is considered essential for the French economy, and is believed to contribute to more stable economic development. Further, the Eurozone is considered to be a positive influence on national price-fixing, maintaining prices at a reasonable and fair level. Interviewee B believes that being a EU citizen and a part of the Eurozone can help stabilising one's socioeconomic status, and the interviewee adds: *“I feel economically safe in the [European] union”*. Consequently, the Eurozone is by five of the interviewees considered to have a great impact on the quality of life in France.



5.1.1.4 *Peacekeeping and defence policy*

Peacekeeping is considered one of the most fundamental missions of the EU: It is a frequently addressed aspect of the work of the EU, and is often linked to attributes such as “important” and “fundamental”. The European project is in general seen as an efficient tool for peacekeeping, together with promoting solidarity when assisting EU countries in crisis. The European union is also considered to increase the significance of the voice of European countries in global contexts. Interviewee D says: *“The European countries are mutually depending on each other. Alone, they will be eaten by the United States and China”*.

A topic addressed by two of the interviewees as a suggestion for further development of the European Union is increasing the union’s responsibilities with a common defence policy for all member states. With the European Union considered to include a large amount of common responsibilities and commitments already, some interviewees regard this as a natural and essential step in the development of the European project. Interviewee A says:

“I want more of a unity. I feel more French than European. The union should works as a union in everything. If there are all these European laws, the union should move forward and form a common defence, an alliance. The member states should all think as one.”

A common defence policy could deepen the cooperation within the EU and possibly strengthen the European identity, by making it more than merely an economic sector (Interviewee G).

5.1.2 What the EU can do better

5.1.2.1 *Trust and transparency*

A position characterising several of the interviews is the uncertainty whether the European Union can actually be trusted or not. This is a standpoint also



occurring in interviews distinguished by an overall positive attitude to the EU. Interviewee A, who is particularly positive toward the union recommending a deepened cooperation, hesitates when confronted with the subject of trust regarding the EU:

“Well, I think that I can trust it [the European Union]. I don’t know why, but I have never been disappointed. I have never followed their work excessively closely, but I think they are doing okay.”

Whereas interviewee A utters only obscure concerns, other interviewees express more prevalent fears. Interviewee B expresses fear concerning the considerable power of the EU, meaning that certain measures might interfere with his private sphere, leading to restricted personal freedom. Interviewee F expresses a non-existent trust toward the EU, motivated with the union’s lack of progressivity. The interviewee demands an increased activity of the union, to show that it *“actually cares and wants to do better, not only benefitting one group of people”*.

In connection to the topic of trust, five interviewees address the related problem of transparency. Exclusion, as well as a lack of information concerning the visions and objectives of the European Union, are factors that frequently recur in several interviews. The EU is accused of not succeeding in maintaining a bond with its people, avoiding communication with its citizens. It is described as a union created solely for the purpose of accessibility to specialists and experts, and for not being citizen-orientated; an international organisation without any goals or objectives; a union ruled by the political elite with little or no interest for the common man. The non-existing presence of the EU in the daily life is considered problematic: A belief that the EU operates outside of the sphere of the citizens, together with the experienced physical and as well as psychological distance to Brussels and Strasbourg conduce to the perception of the EU as an elitist political organisation (Interviewee C).



Furthermore, the democratic aspect of the European Union is criticised: The elections to the European Parliament are considered the only existing way to exercise one's democratic right of influence. Yet, the candidates standing for Parliament are described as technocrats, with political objectives distant from the voters' reality (Interviewee G). Additionally, voters' lack of information on political candidates as well as the political processes, organisation and systems within the EU make them unable to truly take advantage of the democratic system and elect the right candidates. Moreover, voters are deficient in knowledge as how to follow the political work of the elected candidates during their term of office (Interviewee F).

5.1.2.2 Lack of information

What has characterized a majority of the interviews is a stated lack of knowledge and information about the European Union. Irrespective of the overall attitude, none of the interviewees claim to have access to the information about the union they wish to possess. The ignorance is a fundamental problem, according to interviewee F: *"The fact that no one actually understands what is going on in Brussels says it all, I think"*, meaning that citizens are not included or even desired in the decision-making of the EU. The ignorance is a factor also considered to affect the possibility to contribute and participate: Without the cognizance of the mission or objective of the European Union, the elections are described as useless, as the candidates cannot be placed within a context with their working environment as well as conditions remain unknown (Interviewee F).

5.1.2.3 The unsuccessful implementation of the European project

Due to the above-mentioned lack of trust, transparency and information on the European Union, interviewee G considers the European project a failure. Meaning that the European Union has not fulfil its main purpose of bringing countries together, it has become an economic organisation with trading as its principal objective. Although integrated to a certain extent in every



member state, interviewee G still considers the European Union unsuccessful in establishing itself among the citizens. With a legislative body addressing political fields and topics distant from the broad mass of the people, it creates an image of the EU as less citizen-orientated and more elitist, according to the interviewee, claiming the European Union to have developed differently than initially planned with a change in focus concerning policies.

5.1.2.4 Dangers of the free movement

The by the interviewees most frequently used EU right is clearly the freedom of movement, which is also the one right that most of the interviewees say they could not live without. Still, the free movement is associated with fears and worries: The right is for one thing believed to obstruct the combat against terrorism and criminality internationally, making perpetrators more difficult to trace. Further, the freedom of movement is believed to have a negative impact on the high level of unemployment in France by foreign workers descending from other EU member states entering the French labour market. EU citizens settling in France due to socioeconomic reasons are also considered problematic. Interviewee G says:

“We don’t have enough jobs for our own people. The immigrants also use grants from the state. And when the French citizens see this, they don’t understand how these people have access to the welfare system when they don’t pay taxes. Eventually, they realise it’s because of the EU, so they protest against it. The EU becomes the scapegoat.”

In addition to this, interviewee G fears that the dissatisfaction with society will lead to desperation among the French people, resulting in desperate votes in political elections with this in turn meaning an increased political support for extremist parties.



5.2 Attitudes toward Frexit

5.2.1 Expectations and fears

None of the interviewees expresses a solely favourable view of a potential Frexit, even though criticism against the European Union is uttered in most interviews. It is an incontrovertible fact: Not even the most positive interviewee considers the EU to be a throughout flawless construction. However, all interviewees belong to the generation that considers the French membership in the EU to be a natural and well-integrated part of the political system and society in general, and only few are able to imagine an independent France outside of the EU borders.

5.2.1.1 *Financial complications*

The fear of an economic crisis as a consequence of Frexit is a aspect that six interviewees mention as possibly one of the most devastating and harmful to the country. Withdrawing from the Eurozone and exchanging the current Euro to the previous currency Franc is according to many interviewees a process that would be damaging to French economy. It is believed to cause inflation, an increased level of unemployment nationwide, the rise of extremist political parties and possibly even to a national collapse. Interviewee B believes a Frexit would exert a considerable impact on the quality of life of the French citizens, as well as their socioeconomic status. As a consequence of Frexit, interviewee B expects his socioeconomic status to change – yet, it would remain on a continuously unstable level, strongly affected by an altering post-Frexit society.

5.2.1.2 *Closed borders*

The lost access to the freedom of movement is the one change that the majority of the interviewees believe would affect them to the greatest extent – a natural perception, as the freedom of movement is also the most frequently used EU right among the interviewees. Interviewees descending



from the east of France frequently turns the right into account in order to cross the borders to Germany and Switzerland, and many mention family members or relatives employed in Luxembourg, who cross the borders daily when commuting. Interviewee F states:

“Just knowing that you’re not stuck in one country, that is amazing. You know that you are free, that you can move.”

Interviewee A, also descending from the east of France, frequently crossing the French border, says:

“It would be hard to put the borders back. Everyone is used to it now. A lot of people don’t even think about the old borders anymore. The free movement is so simple.”

5.2.1.3 Decreasing international influence

The interviewees residing in Paris consider the international influence in France a natural element of the daily life. Frexit is believed to close the doors to the surrounding world and exert a considerable impact on the country’s international relations. Interviewee D, who recently completed an internship in Paris at a multinational company, fears for the international cooperation. The interviewee assumes the departure of several international companies in case of a Frexit, as well as a decreasing international investment in the French market. Referring to her previous experience from the multinational company, interviewee D claims the French market to be considered *“sluggish, bureaucratic and therefore definitely not priority in Europe”*.

Additionally, Frexit is believed to affect the educational system in general, and the French universities in particular: A decreasing amount of international students in combination with a low number of professors with international experience would result in a less multicultural academic environment in France (Interviewee C). Maintaining international relationships is also assumed to be more difficult. Interviewee B supposes the



impaired image of France in international contexts caused by Frexit might affect his ability to establish future international relations.

5.2.2 Possible benefits

5.2.2.1 *Reclaiming the French identity*

Only two interviewees are able to name a possible benefit of a French withdrawal from the European Union. Interviewee B believes the French identity to grow stronger in case of a Frexit. Claiming France to have lost part of its national identity when founding and constructing the EU, interviewee B means that a Frexit would make France more free and independent. According to interviewee B, a negative aspect of international cooperation is the need of adapting and adjusting in order to compromise with other countries when building international relations, and says:

“We wouldn’t have to deal with other countries. Frexit might make us more isolated, but maybe more free and independent. And in the end, maybe I’d be proud that we took a decision on our own.”

Yet, interviewee B fears Frexit to be only a short-term solution, and that withdrawing from the European Union might frustrate opportunities to further development of international cooperation and maintaining international relations – all essential in a global world, according to the interviewee.

5.2.2.2 *Preventing a potential “brain-drain”*

Another possible benefit of Frexit is, according to interviewee E, the prevention of a so-called “brain-drain”: the departure of educated or professional people. The interviewee fears the freedom of movement and work to attract French citizens to other EU member states with better pay or living conditions, causing serious effect on the development of French society. In this case, France is believed fall behind internationally on



important fields, crucial for the stability and continuous competitiveness of the country.

5.2.3 The on-going Brexit

Most interviewees express an unfavourable view of the on-going Brexit, and it is referred to as a “mistake”. Other attributes mentioned are “selfish” and “sad”, and few interviewees believe Great Britain to grow stronger alone, outside of the European Union. However, also positive opinions on the Brexit process are observed: The British withdrawal is assumed to benefit France, in that way that international businesses and companies might leave the British market for the French one (interviewee D). According to interviewee D, this might benefit the French economy and create work on the French labour market. Interviewee G hopes that the Brexit will increase the importance of the voice of France in international contexts in general and in the European Union in particular. Moreover, interviewee G, who has a particularly critical view of the union, hopes that Brexit will force the EU to self-reflection, leading to a fundamental and profound remodelling as well as reorganization of the union.

5.3 Analysis through Functional attitude theory

Despite the wide range of attitudes toward the European Union occurring, each interviewee believes to be able to benefit from the EU in some way. The European Union is considered to have something valuable to offer, as France is principally considered to remain more stable within the union. However, there are significant differences in the interviewees’ reasoning and each interviewee conducts a different line of arguments, which in the following section will be analysed by means of the functional attitude theory’s perspective of utilitarian attitudes: The European Union could be considered offering (1) the *means for reaching a desired goal*, or be related to (2) *emotive associations based upon previous experiences in acquiring pleasure or satisfaction*. Consequently, the interviews will be presented



separately as an independent section, for a clearly inclined analysis. For a simplified outline, interviewees with common or similar experiences of the European Union are presented together in the same section.

5.3.1 Interviewee A

Having experienced the EU through both the Erasmus programme and the freedom of movement – the latter mainly as a resident in the east of France, crossing the French borders frequently – interviewee A has a positive experience with the European Union. Having found his current partner during the Erasmus exchange – and by doing so also forming a distance relationship between two EU member states – the interviewee clearly benefits from France remaining in the EU to be able to take advantage of the freedom of movement as well as the right to work in another EU country, to mention a few. Interviewee A expressly states a belief that the European Union has a positive influence on the overall quality of life, and feels included in the union as a EU citizen by having the ability to influence it by voting and participating in the elections to the European Parliament. The interviewee also believes that France derives advantage from the influence of the European Union, as the country is presumed to have the equal ability on its part to affect the union.

Interviewee A evinces a tendency to a typical utilitarian attitude: Having experienced the union in positive ways through different kinds of participation, as well as trusting that the European Union can improve his quality of life through offering to him various valuable benefits, interviewee A is convinced that the cooperation between the member states should be strengthened and developed further. The interviewee's experiences with the union manifest signs of both kinds of utilitarian attitudes: The first kind, which equals the *means for reaching a desired goal or avoiding an undesired one*, as well as the second, which equals *affective associations based upon experiences*.



5.3.2 Interviewees B and C

Interviewees B and C both consider the EU to be absent in their daily lives, despite actual previous international experiences with the union, such as the Erasmus programme. None of the two interviewees claim to be well informed about the actual benefits and work of the European Union, yet still wishes France to remain a member of the EU. However, both interviewees express fear of a Frexit, referring to the latest French presidential election in 2017, as the EU-sceptical party *Front National* became second largest party, promising a referendum on France's membership in the European Union in case of victory. By receiving significant support from French voters, the interviewees conceive the outcome in the election as a confirmation of an existing scepticism toward the EU among the people.

Interviewees B and C both believe the EU to have significant power over France's politics and development. Yet, neither considers France to be inferior to the union, but both interviewees are of the opinion that the country as well as its citizens possesses the power to influence the work of the European Union, by actions, changing habits and voting in the elections to the European Parliament. However, the actual power of the EU is believed to be of unknown extent and therefore considered to possibly interfere with privacy and personal freedom (Interviewee B). Furthermore, the European Union is considered distant and even elitist, not serving its citizens but rather the political interests of national leaders (Interviewee C).

Despite the negative aspects, the interviewees both believe the EU to provide them with benefits, such as international contacts, financial security and mobility within Europe. The on-going process of Brexit is by both interviewees considered damaging as to the image of the European Union, placing it in an unfavourable light. These attitudes show proof of protective tendencies toward the union as a whole from the interviewees. This is expressed further as neither of the interviewees B and C wishes France to



withdraw from the EU. All aspects considered, interviewees B and C express an overall favourable view of the EU, although uttering criticism on specific matters connected to the union. Consequently, their experiences with the EU are of both positive and negative nature, leaving only their belief of benefitting from the union as the probable explanation as to why they wish France to remain a member state. Thus, interviewees B and C show signs of viewing the EU as a *means for reaching a desired goal*, as in using benefits for increasing their quality of life. A possible explanation to the favourable view through attitudes connected to *affective associations based upon experiences* is less likely, as their experiences include negative aspects.

5.3.3 Interviewees D and G

Interviewee D has been residing in France since approximately ten years, and only recently became a French citizen. Originally descending from an African country, the interviewee has spent most of her life outside of the European Union. Having only little experience with the EU – the interviewee has taken advantage of the freedom of movement within the union only a few times, this being the interviewee's only actual interaction with it – interviewee D manifests tendency to *affective associations based upon experiences* only of limited extent. This is expressed as the interviewee considers the freedom of movement to be the only valuable benefit provided by the European Union. Consequently, interviewee D believes the EU to have no further impact on her life, saying: “*The quality of my future depends only on the country I live in. Not the [European] union.*” This belief expresses a lack of the other type of utilitarian attitudes, the view of the EU as *means for reaching a desired goal*, where the EU is favoured for being considered to provide useful means for a better quality of life.

Interviewee G is a French citizen by birth, has however like interviewee D taken advantage of the EU rights primarily through the freedom of movement when travelling to other member states. The interviewee



expresses a palpably critical view of the European Union and addresses the implementation of the European project as the union's most fundamental problem: The failure of establishing a bond between the formal institution of the EU and its citizens. Interviewee G says: "*When we think about the EU, we think of people in offices, and not of countries openly communicating with each other.*" Yet, provided that the matter will be taken care of and measures will be taken, interviewee G is convinced that the cooperation of the EU can perform the functions necessary for an international union. According to interviewee G, international cooperation in some shape would continue existing within Europe, even without the European Union. These attitudes mainly prove that interviewee G's few favourable views of the union are not owing to his *experiences* of the union – which are of rather negative character – but rather a belief that France would benefit of being a part of any international organisation or cooperation in the long term. The interviewee does enjoy the benefits provided by the EU and wishes to have continuous access to them: However, he believes these can be provided by international cooperation in any form, and not necessarily in the shape of the EU. This manifests a view of international cooperation – and possibly the EU after reforming and improving – as a *means for reaching a desired goal*.

Finally, both interviewees' experiences with the European Union results in a rather unfavourable view: On one hand, neither interviewee D nor G wish France to withdraw from the union, with the objective of ensuring access to possible benefits. On the other hand, interviewee D regards the European Union as weak and powerless, and a national perspective characterizes interviewee D's view of Europe: France is believed to benefit from a Brexit, as the process could result in an international preference for France concerning trading and business. The affect and impact of Brexit on Great Britain is predicted to be of limited extent, and the British economy to remain stable. Thus, the national perspective is clearly prioritized over the



international one. However, both of the interviewees express favourable views of international cooperation in general and believe this to be of great importance in a global world.

5.3.4 Interviewees E and F

Interviewees E and F are both currently residing in other EU countries – interviewee E as a free-mover attending university, and interviewee F for work – with plans to stay long-term. Having similar experiences with the union in the shape of the Erasmus program and using the free movement, they have as well come to the same decision as to future plans. Both interviewees therefore express positive attitudes toward the union, as of wishing France to remain a member state in order to be able to use the freedom of movement as well as the right to work in another EU member state. Aware of their rights and the European Union enabling them to carry their plans into effect, both interviewees express clear signs of viewing the EU as a *means for reaching a desired goal*. For this particular reason, none of the interviewees favour a Frexit, fearing that a French withdrawal from the European Union would prevent them from self-fulfilment. Also giving utterance to positive experiences from the Erasmus programme and the freedom of movement, both interviewees manifest attitudes connected to *affective associations based upon experiences*.

However, interviewee F is in many ways critical toward the European Union, meaning that EU citizens only have limited possibility to affect the work of the union. Claiming the elections to the European Parliament to be insufficient and inadequate, interviewee F also addresses the problem with the distance between voters and the elected representatives in the European Parliament, as the interviewee is of the opinion that EU citizens are not involved in the work of the EU. Yet, this fact does not affect the overall positive attitude toward the union to any appreciable extent, and it can be presumed that the interviewee conceives the benefits of the EU as being of



larger importance than any existing negative aspect, meaning that the union is favoured due to the view of it as *means for reaching a desired goal*, as experiences are of both positive and negative kind and therefore cannot fully explain the observed attitude.

6 Discussion

With quantitative studies repeatedly stating the positive attitudes toward the EU among young European citizens, the numbers and percentages alone fail to tell the stories that contribute to the comprehensive picture. In times where political movements spread like wildfire across international platforms such as the Internet, and where unfounded opinions gain ground together with sympathisers on social media at a speed where facts and knowledge fail to follow, it has become a matter of great importance to understand how and why certain attitudes and opinions form. It is a matter of understanding public opinion, and in that way, defending the system of democracy. This study confirms the complexity of public opinion and attitudes, proving the versatility of one single object of study. In that way, it also stresses the importance of in-depth studies in the field of public opinion.

6.1 To be a product of one's age

Growing up within and as a part of the European Union, few of the interviewees have experienced a time without the EU as a natural element of French society. When the interviewees are asked about a potential Frexit, it seems an undesired case, even difficult to imagine. Consequently, only one interviewee believes a Frexit to be at all possible, with reference to the dissatisfaction and nationwide protests in France during late autumn and winter 2018, initiated by the movement of the *Gilets Jaunes*: A rebellion sparked by a budget detail of the routine rise in taxes on fuel, later coming to address the entire economic model of French financial policy (Williamson,



2018). Five interviewees consider the positive attitudes in France toward the EU too prevalent to constitute a threat to the country's membership, whereas another interviewee states a presumption that the current president Macron would not venture a withdrawal from the EU by letting the matter be decided by vote. In brief, France's bond to the EU is considered natural, and the interviewees show accustomedness to several rights and benefits provided by the union.

Consequently, these results also confirm what quantitative studies have earlier stated: The young French recognise the benefits of France's membership in the union. The study from 2018 conducted by the TUI foundation implies that more than half of the young French consider themselves citizens of the EU or citizens of both France and of the EU, rather than French citizens alone. Accordingly, this corresponds with the interviewees' perception of Brexit as bad for the country, breaking an important international bond as well as leaving France with only poor chances to remain the same country without the EU in the global world of today. Furthermore, the membership in the European Union is considered to provide the citizens with a range of different factors, benefits and rights, of which many are perceived as natural elements of daily life: the freedom of movement, the right to work in another EU country, the Erasmus programme and the membership in the Eurozone are some aspects of the French membership in the European Union that interviewees use frequently and take for granted.

6.2 The dimensions of involvement and trust

A frequent view of the matter as well as a key finding in the collected data is the perception of the European Union as elitist and distant. Feelings of exclusion, the lack of possibilities to influence the EU policies, the inconspicuous and almost unnoticed elections to the European Parliament as well as the view of the EU as an unsuccessful international project, unable to



fulfil its purpose due to an erroneous focus in the pursuit of policies, are observed factors proving that the EU fails to be present in the daily lives of its citizens and therefore risking its legitimacy, highlighting a problematic lack of communication. Out of seven interviewees, six stated that they do not have sufficient information about the union, its work and its objectives – or even why the union actually exists. The existing trust toward the European Union seems to rest upon an empty basis, as the interviewees claiming to trust the EU cannot motivate as to why they feel comfortable in doing so. The trust could therefore be considered frail. This possibly poses a threat to the continuous existence of the European Union, as the lack of information and understanding of the EU create a lack of appreciation as to the actual purpose of the European Union's existence. Consequently, the lack of knowledge amongst the next generations of EU citizens could result in an unstable support for the union as an organisation.

This pattern of negative perspectives on the European Union constitutes a main finding in the study. Previous research – often with a quantitative approach – usually depict the young citizens of the EU as particularly positive toward the union. This very fact is not in any way challenged by the findings in this study, but they reveal a more nuanced picture: The young French recognise several aspects of the European Union in need of improvement and development. Further, it confirms that Brexit is not an isolated case: Scepticism can be found in several EU member states and even in the most positive social groups. This fact should be considered an important indication crucial to the future of the EU and the French membership in the union.

6.3 The effect of experience and desire on attitudes

Despite of various experiences with the EU with several containing negative aspects, five out of seven interviewees do not believe the country or themselves would in any way benefit from a Frexit. The two interviewees



claiming Frexit to offer positive outcomes – a stronger national identity and the prevention of a so-called “brain drain”, as the freedom of movement and work might result in the departure of educated or professional people – still believe that these outcomes only could be considered positive short-term, as the negative aspects of a withdrawal would affect France were far more considered harmful for the country, as well as long-lasting in comparison to the possible positive aspects.

The two types of utilitarian attitudes developed by Katz (1960), are both occurring in the interviews. The first type, the *means for reaching a desired goal* is observed in the shape of believing that the EU can for instance improve one’s future, offer possibilities for travel and work life, or facilitate in maintaining international contacts. The other type developed by Katz (1960), described as *emotive associations based upon previous experiences in acquiring pleasure or satisfaction*, is observed in the shape of making use of different rights offered by the EU, as for instance the freedom of movement and work in another EU member state, or having taken the Erasmus programme into account for purposes of study. However, some interviewees have likewise mentioned negative aspects concerning their experiences with the European Union. These experiences come in the shape of feelings of exclusion from the union; not feeling able to truly influence the EU, despite the European Union’s widespread power; and the perception of the EU policies as negligible or even valueless. Notwithstanding that these negative experiences are observed in some interviews, the interviewees expressing these interviews still believe that a Frexit would be harmful for France. Further, they wish to have continuous access to the different rights and benefits offered by the EU, and therefore disapprove of a French withdrawal from the union.

Given this, it is safe to conclude that the type of utilitarian attitudes described as *emotive associations based upon previous experiences* only has an



marginal influence on the attitude toward the EU as a whole, since the interviewees' experiences are not exclusively positive – yet still result in the perception that a Frexit would be harmful on a personal as well as on a national and international level. Consequently, the other type of utilitarian attitudes, *means for reaching a desired goal*, ought to exert an influence on the overall attitude toward the EU to a greater extent, as the rights and benefits offered by the EU are believed to improve certain aspects of life, like the ones mentioned above. Interviewees with more real-life experience with the EU do not necessarily hold a more favourable view of the union – on the other hand, the belief that EU can improve one's quality of life seems to have a conclusive effect on the overall attitude. The main profit of France remaining a EU member state is simply the valuable access to rights and benefits provided within the European Union.

There is, however, an aspect to this assumption that is important to point out. Interviewee D, originating from an African country and a relatively new French citizen, does not believe that the European Union neither particularly powerful nor able to influence her future in a considerable way. Nevertheless, she stresses the importance of international and global cooperation and does not wish France to withdraw from the EU, in order to have access to specific benefits provided by the union. Also interviewee G, with a distinguishingly critical view of the EU, agrees that a Frexit could possibly harm the country, yet still believes the international cooperation in Europe to live on in another form, if it would come to an actual withdrawal. In these cases, and possibly even others, the international cooperation as a phenomenon is considered more important than the actual organisation of the European Union *per se*.



7 Concluding remarks

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate and map out attitudes among young French citizens toward the EU and France's membership in the union, as well as to analyse the observed attitudes through the lens of functional attitude theory, with the specific focus on attitudes that serve a utilitarian function. The research questions together with the theoretical perspective of Functional Attitude Theory serve to guide and support the conclusion.

7.1 Observed attitudes toward the EU

Despite previous quantitative research stating an overall positive attitude toward the European Union among young French citizens, this qualitative study demonstrates a somewhat more nuanced comprehensive picture. Practical experiences with the union, such as using benefits and participating in EU-founded programmes, are connected to positive factors related to an increased quality of life. However, even interviewees with positive practical experiences with the EU express perceptions of negative experiences of the union related to feelings of powerlessness and disappointment in EU policies. Trust toward the union is observed in several interviews, yet still fails to be justified by relevant reasons or arguments and could therefore be considered frail.

7.2 Frexit

Frexit is in general considered harmful to France. Only one interviewee believes a Frexit to possibly happen, whereas others believe that the current process of Brexit will set a warning example. A financial crisis or even depression are expected consequences of a Frexit, as well as international companies withdrawing from the national market, complications when travelling abroad, a weakened reputation of France internationally and a deteriorating or altered socioeconomic status in French society. However, imaginable possibilities of a Frexit are diametrically opposed to the



previously mentioned dangers: Frexit is believed possibly able to prevent a so called “brain drain”, as the freedom of movement and work provided to EU member states might result in the departure of educated or professional people, as well as possibly strengthen the national identity.

7.3 Functional attitude theory

Interviewees with more real-life experience from the EU do not necessarily hold a more favourable view of the union, whereas the belief that EU can improve one’s quality of life seems to have a conclusive effect on the overall attitude. The main profit of France remaining a EU member state is above all the valuable access to rights and benefits provided within the European Union. Thus, the utilitarian attitude type of *means for reaching a desired goal* explains why attitudes are expressed and formed in a certain way to a greater extent than *emotive associations based upon previous experiences in acquiring pleasure or satisfaction*, since some interviewees with experiences resulting in both pleasure and discontent still wish France to remain a EU member state.



8 Limitations and suggestions for further research

The study of attitudes toward the European Union among young French citizens was conducted in the form of a qualitative case study. Due to the limited number of interviewees, the results and conclusions are not generalizable. As the study serves as a building block study, it is complementary to existing research as well as an independent study. Further studies can therefore be conducted with a more quantitative approach – with or without applying the theoretical perspective of Functional Attitude Theory – in order to reach a generalizable result. Another possibility is to develop a more comprehensive theoretical framework specific for measuring public opinion. An additional suggestion for further research is the deepened investigation of trust toward and involvement in the European Union, as these topics are frequently addressed in the study, as well as crucial for the survival of the EU.



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8.1 Oral references

Interviewee A, 2018: oral interview in Paris, 2018-11-27

Interviewee B, 2018: oral interview in Paris, 2018-11-29

Interviewee C, 2018: oral interview in Paris 2018-12-04

Interviewee D, 2018: oral interview in Paris, 2018-12-06

Interviewee E, 2018: oral interview via Skype, 2018-12-07

Interviewee F, 2018: oral interview via Skype, 2018-12-07



Interviewee G, 2018: oral interview via Skype, 2018-12-09



Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview guide

- *Presentation of the authors and the purpose of the thesis*
- *Presentation of the interview structure*
- *Ask for permission to record the interview*
- *Inform the interviewee about his/her right to be anonymous, to decline answering a question, discontinue the interview and withdraw from participation in the study*

1st Topic: The European Union

Tell me about your view of the EU.

- What political tasks and fields of politics are the most important in the EU?
- What should they EU do more of?
- What should the EU do less of?
- How well does the EU fulfil the purpose for which it was designed?
- Do you trust the EU?

Political influence

- In what ways does the EU exert power or influence on French politics and the general development in France?
- Is this influence good or bad?
- In what ways do you think that France exert power or influence on the politics and development of the EU?
- As a EU citizen, in what ways are you able to influence the EU?

Benefits and rights

According to you as a young EU citizen, what can the EU give you?

- What rights or benefits have you taken advantage of?
- Are there any ones that you could not live without?
- How can the EU affect your quality of life today? In the future?



International cooperation

- Is international cooperation of importance to you?
- Is international cooperation of importance to France?
- Do you think there will still be forms of international cooperation in the future?

2nd Topic: Brexit

Tell me about your opinion on Brexit.

- Do you think that Brexit will affect the EU? How?
- Has Brexit affected your view of the EU? If yes, how?
- What led to Brexit, do you think?
- How will Brexit affect the British people, do you think?

3rd Topic: Frexit

Tell me about your opinion on Frexit.

- Why do you think that the younger generation in France hold a more favourable view of the EU?
- Do you think that France would vote to leave the EU in a referendum? Why / why not?
- How would France be affected by a Frexit?
- Could France in any way benefit from leaving the EU?
- Do you think that a Frexit would affect you personally? How?
- Do you think that a Frexit could offer you any benefits?
- What changes would be the hardest to accept?