



Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself? German Case Study

- New research from German think tank d|part, as part of a Demos (UK) cross-European project, reveals a gap between German politicians and citizens in the understanding of concerns about the European Union (EU).
- The study reveals that a majority of Germans now holds fears about the EU's impact on their national prosperity and quality of life, including on social security (53%) and the cost of increasing payments to the EU (52%). Significant minorities are also worried about the EU's role in eroding German national identity (45%), and the threat it poses to jobs (42%).
- Despite these concrete concerns, interviews conducted with political elites showed that politicians believe public fears to be a generalised response to global crises and insecurity. They are believed to be projected on rather than directly related to the EU.
- Less than 15% of citizens show a pattern of generalised fear with regard to the EU. Most citizens are concerned about distinct policy areas. Supporters of the CDU/CSU are more concerned about EU budgetary payments and a loss of national identity than those who identify with the Social Democrats, SPD.

New research conducted by German think tank d|part for a cross-European project on fear and populism in Europe led by Demos (UK) shows there is a major gap between public opinion and the political elite's understanding of fears about the EU in Germany.

A representative survey undertaken for the project shows that a majority of Germans holds concrete fears about the EU, which are generally grounded in one or two policy areas. A majority are strongly concerned about the EU's impact on social security (53%) and the cost of increasing payments to the EU (52%), and significant minorities are worried about the erosion of national identity (45%) or a loss of jobs (42%) as a result of Germany's EU membership.

Research interviews with political elites conducted by d|part reveal that German political leaders believe citizens' fears about the EU to be a generalised response to global crises and insecurity. Rather than being based on considered evaluations of specific policy areas, political leaders believe the EU is used as a scapegoat for other problems.

If this were true, however, it could be expected that citizens' concerns would spread across policy issues and that they would be independent of evaluations of the EU. But this is only the case amongst fewer than 15% of citizens, who are more likely to be older Germans and identify with the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) or no political party at all.

The research also reveals that supporters of different political parties have different concerns about the EU. Those who identified with Angela Merkel's CDU/CSU worried about increasing EU payments and a loss of national identity. Supporters of the Social Democrats are less concerned about EU budgetary payments and a loss of national identity, but are equally concerned about a loss of jobs and social security. Germans with the lowest level of fears overall about the EU were more likely to identify with the Green Party.

While the political leaders interviewed for the research believed that citizens project their generalised feeling of insecurity onto the EU, the study shows that concerns about the EU are directly related to evaluations of Germany's future strategy in the EU. Those who say that Germany should leave the EU are substantially more likely to express fears than those who prefer more powers to be devolved to the EU. Those who favour the EU's status quo are the least concerned across areas.

The research identified assessments of the economic situation and national identity as the drivers of concerns about the European Union. Those with a negative outlook on their own economic position are more worried about the EU than those more optimistic about their personal fortunes. In the interviews, political leaders tended to underestimate in particular the importance of national identity in Germany. Yet, the research reveals that Germans who identify as more 'German' than 'European' are more concerned about the EU, not only about losing their national identity, but also across other dimensions.

Commenting on the results, Christine Hübner, partner at d|part and lead researcher for this study, said:

"The research shows that citizens in Germany have concrete concerns about the EU that we cannot attribute to general insecurity only. What we observe are different types of fears. We need to support politicians in particular in understanding and addressing these different fears."

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Notes to Editors

Demos is Britain's leading cross-party think tank: an independent, educational charity, which produces original and innovative research. Visit: demos.co.uk

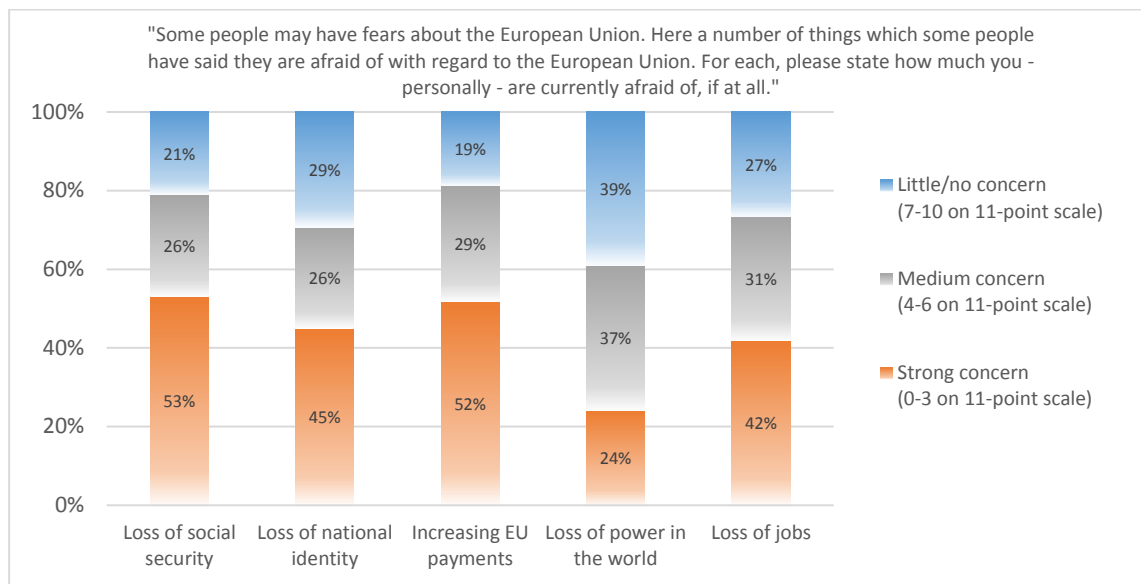
d|part is an independent, non-profit and non-partisan think tank based in Berlin. d|part's projects have built the foundation for discussions about the state of public opinion and political participation in Germany and Europe. Visit: dpert.org

This project was supported by the Open Societies Foundation.

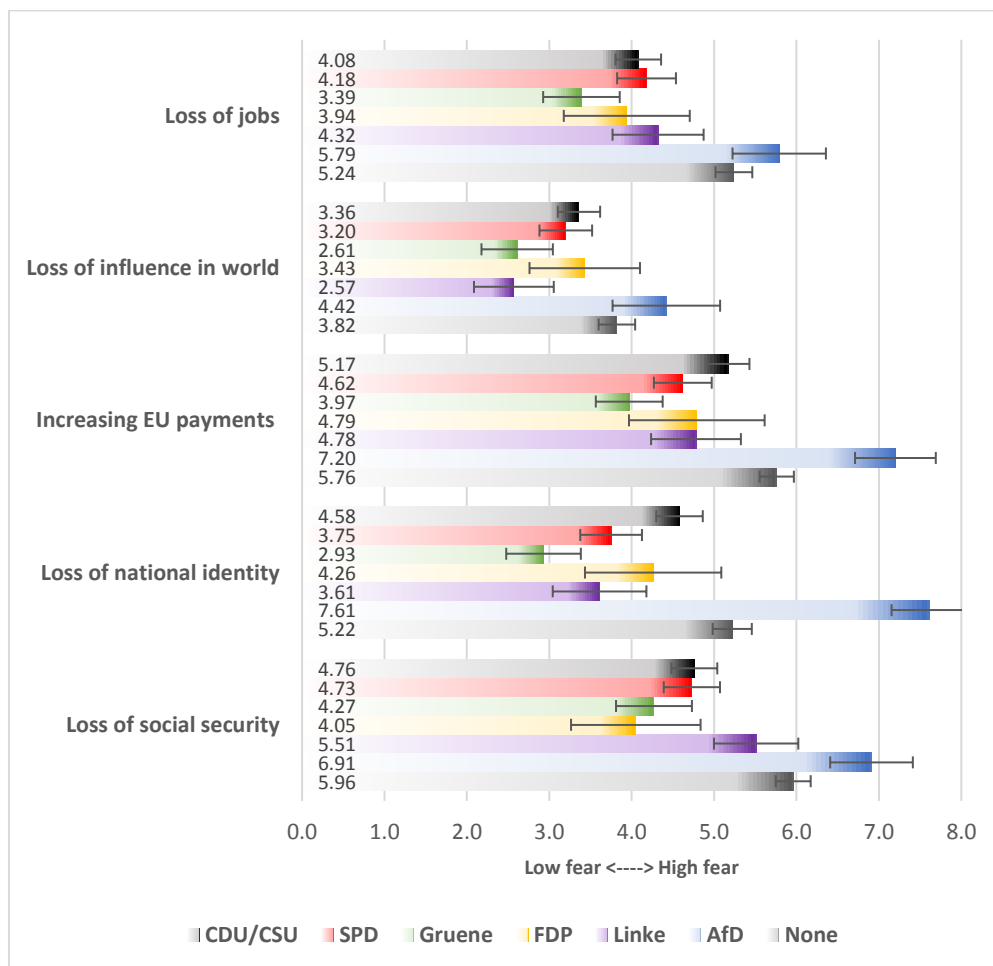
The full research, methodology and an executive summary are available to download [here](#).

This study was part of a major pan-European research project from the UK-based think tank, Demos, which sought to capture how an emerging culture and politics of fear is gripping the European Union as a whole, and its unique manifestations within member states. The project addressed five levels of impacts: party politics, public policy, social cohesion and integration, media rhetoric, citizens and identity.

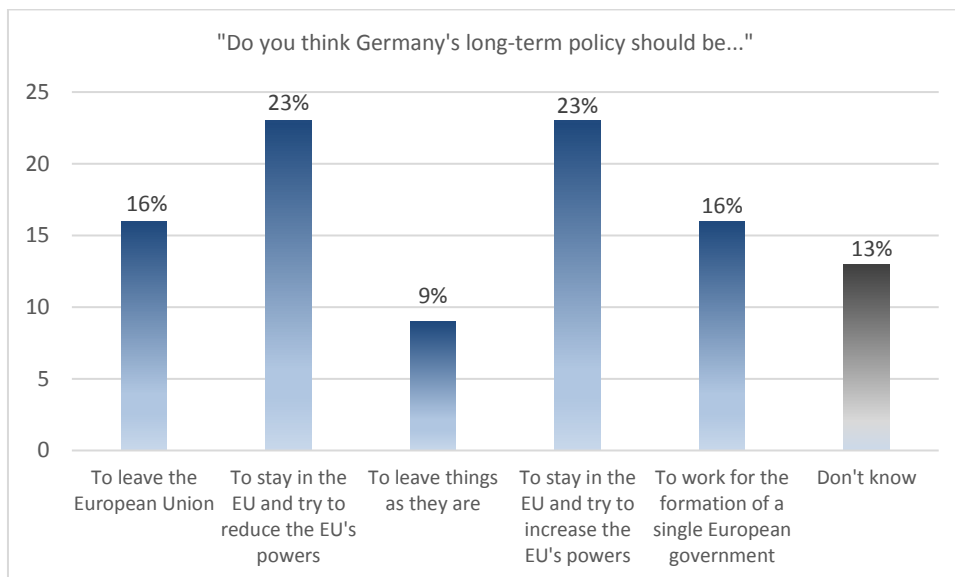
Demos undertook extensive pan-European research, as well as conducting specific analysis on the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union, and commissioned exclusive new academic research within five other member states to provide a snapshot of the 'flash-points of fear' on the ground in Germany, France, Spain, Poland and Sweden. The project was supported by two high-level workshops in Brussels, bringing together thought leaders from across the European Union, to map local level impacts and devise solutions at EU, national and grassroots levels.



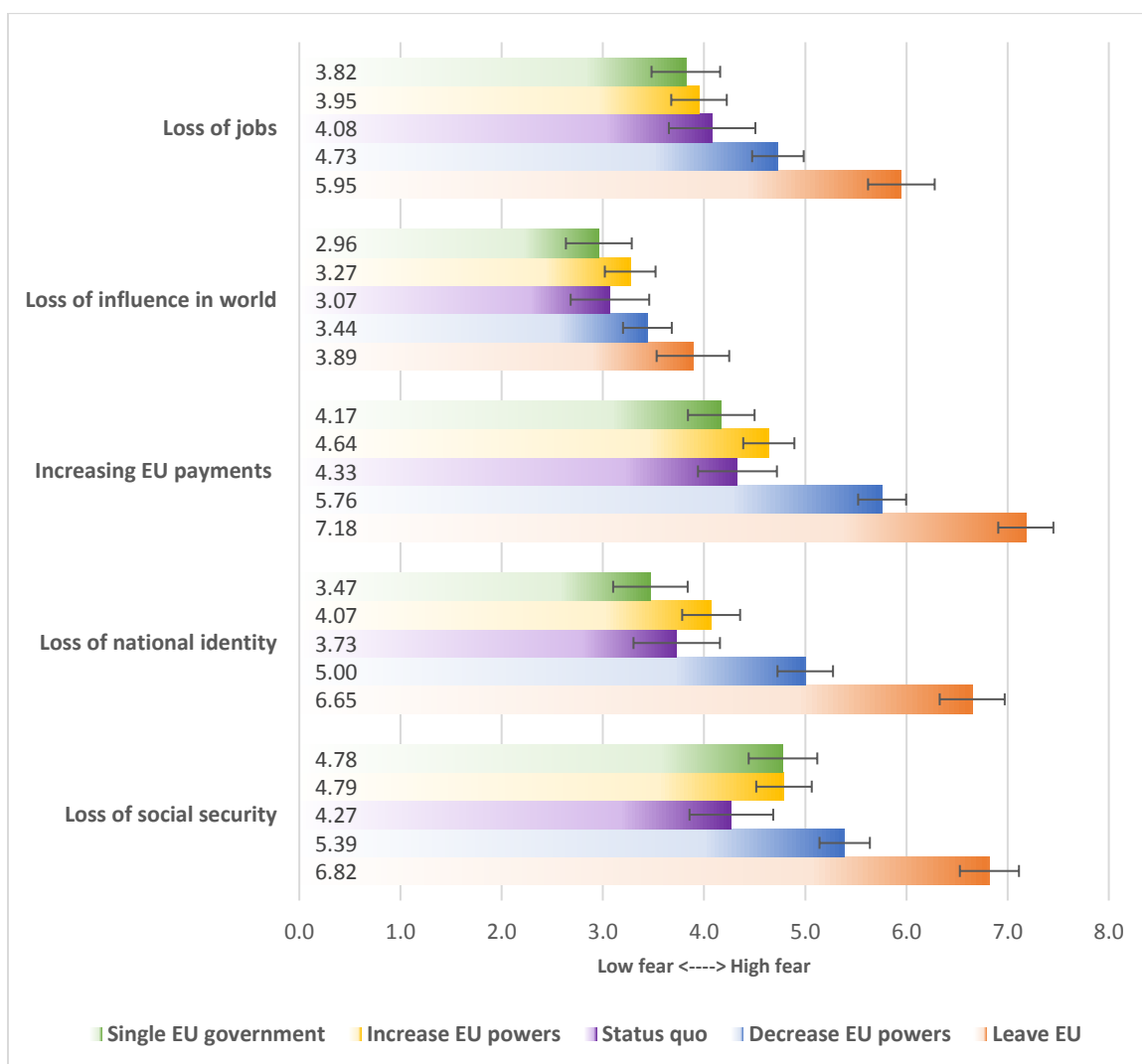
% of respondents expressing concern with regard to the European Union



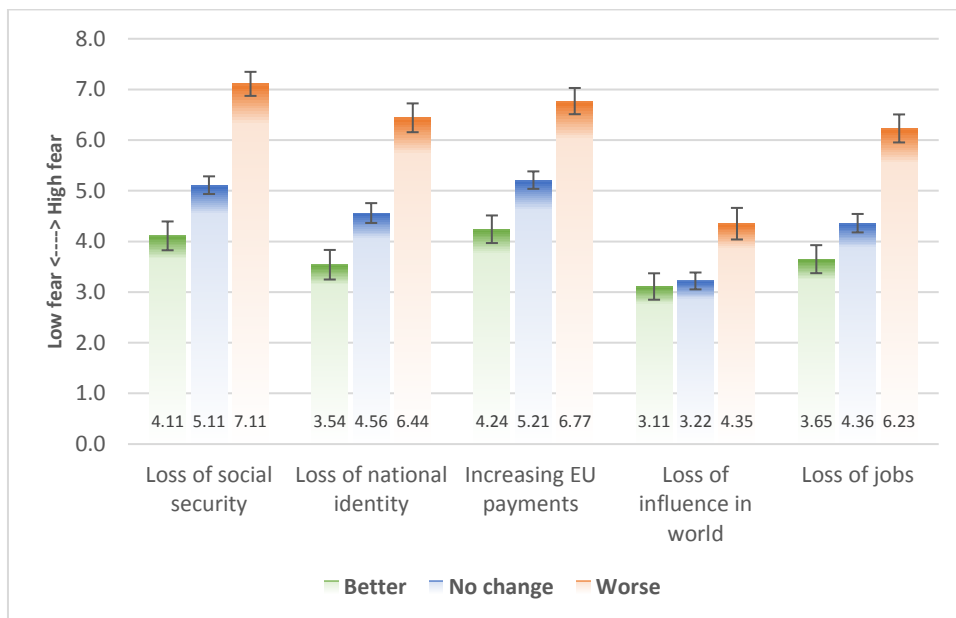
Fears by political party respondent feels an affinity for (excluding other parties with small sample sizes)



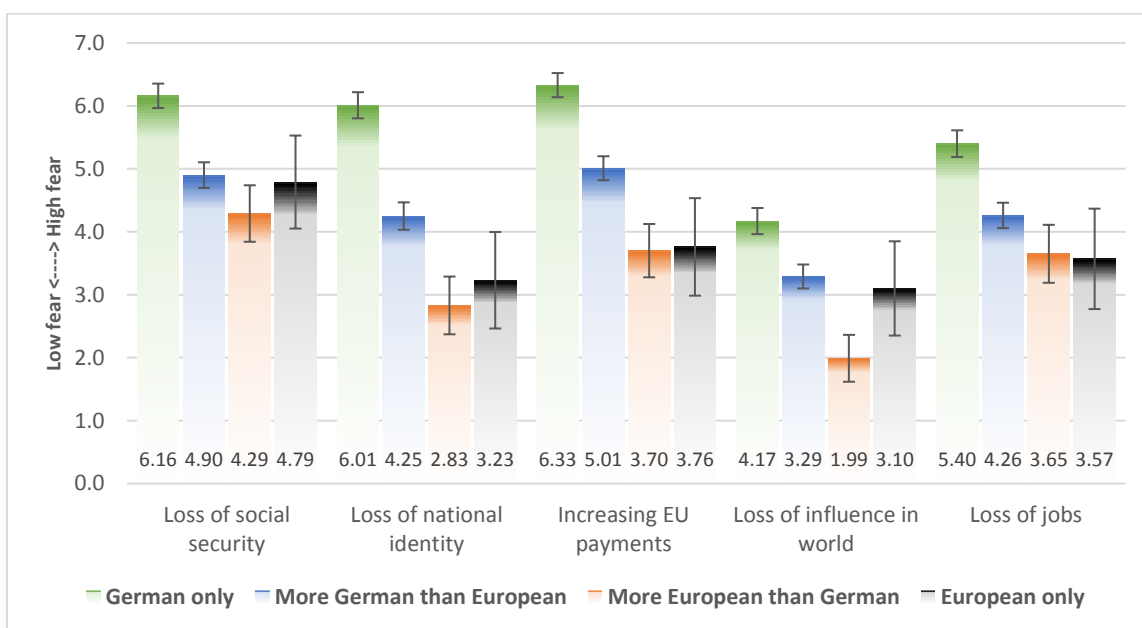
% of respondents expressing attitudes for Germany's long-term policy in the EU



Fears by view of what Germany's long-term strategy towards the European Union should be



Fears by expectations about how one's own personal situation will develop over the next 12 months



Fears by identity