

eupinions Brief | January 2018

Cold Love

The 45th President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, has been highly controversial ever since he took office over a year ago. His isolationist message of 'America First', his decision to pull out of the Paris climate agreement and to move the US embassy to Jerusalem are just some of his actions that have created great controversy on the global stage. While his predecessor Barack Obama was hugely popular among the European public, how do Europeans view President Donald Trump and the future of the transatlantic partnership?

Catherine E. de Vries & Isabell Hoffmann

In our eupinions survey from March, July and December 2017, we have asked over 36,000 respondents in the European Union about their views about President Trump. We started by asking respondents if they approved of him or not.

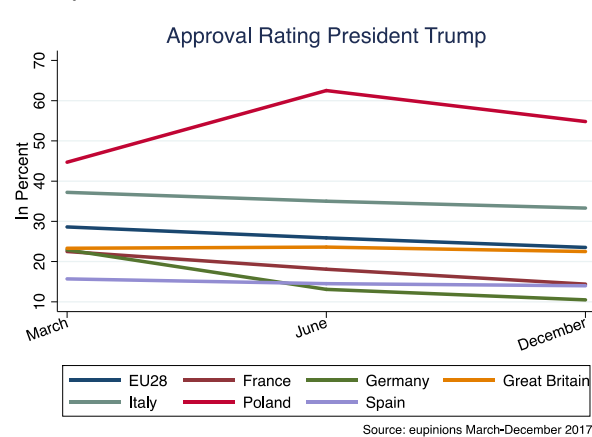
Summary #1: With the exception of Polish public opinion, European citizens strongly disapprove of President Donald J. Trump. *In March 2017 only 29 per cent of Europeans approve of President Trump, while in July and December 2017 his approval rating deteriorated further to 26 and 23 per cent respectively. The exception is Poland where he is in fact quite popular. In December 2017, a majority of Poles,*

55 per cent, approve of the President of the United States.

Graph 1 below shows the approval ratings of Trump in the 28 EU member states as well as the six largest member states, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Poland and Spain. President Trump is deeply unpopular within the EU28. His approval rating trailed well below thirty per cent over the course of 2017. Approval steadily declined over the course of 2017 from 29 per cent in March to 23 per cent in December. President Trump is least popular in Germany where only 10 per cent of the public approved of him in December 2017, down from 23 per cent in March. Trump is also deeply unpopular in Spain

and France. 14 per cent of Spaniards and 14 per cent Frenchmen approved of him in December 2017. A clear exception to this pattern is Poland. In March 2017, 45 per cent of the Polish public approved of the American president, and by December he scored a 55 per cent approval rating (slightly down from 62 per cent in July of 2017).

Graph 1: Approval Rating of President Donald J. Trump, March-December 2017

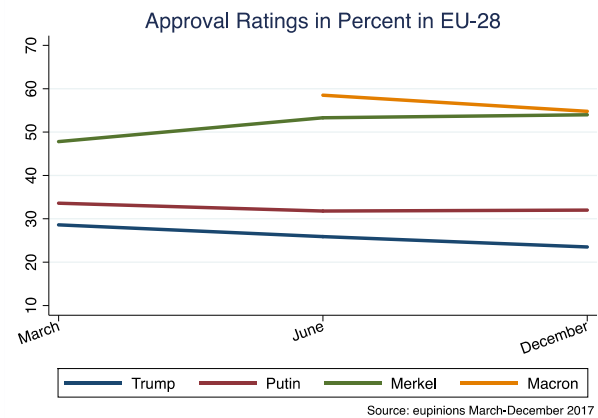


Summary #2: The approval ratings of President Trump are lower than those of President Putin, Chancellor Merkel and President Macron.

In December 2017, the approval rating of President Trump was 23 per cent compared to 32 per cent for President Putin, 54 per cent for Chancellor Merkel and 55 per cent for President Macron. Poland is again the exception. Among the Polish public Putin scored the lowest approval rating (17 per cent) and Trump the highest (55 per cent) in December 2017.

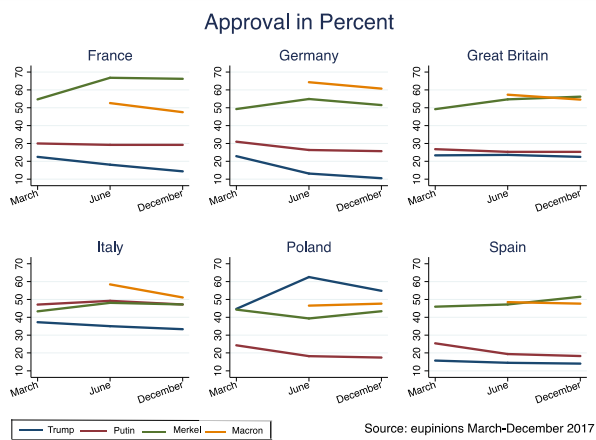
How do these approval ratings compare to those of other leaders? In Graph 2 we plot the approval ratings of President Trump within the EU28 over the course of 2017 against those of Putin, Merkel and Macron. The approval of Trump is lower compared to the other leaders. It is arguably no surprise that Europeans hold more favourable opinions about European leaders, such as Merkel and Macron, but interestingly they approve more of the Russian president than of the American president. While only about a third of Europeans hold positive views about President Putin, less than a quarter of Europeans approve of President Trump in December 2017.

Graph 2: Approval Rating of President Trump, President Putin, Chancellor Merkel and President Macron in the EU28, March-December 2017



Graph 3 shows the same type of information, but now split by the six largest member states. President Trump is least popular among the public in the six largest member states again with one exception, namely Poland. While in March 2017 the approval ratings of Trump among the Polish public matched those of Merkel, the approval ratings of Trump slightly picked up as the year went on while those of Merkel decreased somewhat. The approval ratings of the German chancellor are the highest in France where by December 2017 two thirds of the population approved of her. This share is larger even than in her own country. By December 2017, slightly over 50 per cent of British and Spanish respondents approved of Chancellor Merkel while less than 50 per cent of Poles and Italians did. President Putin is viewed most positively in Italy. By December 2017, the approval ratings of Putin among Italians are at the same level than those of Merkel, namely 47 per cent. President Putin is least popular in Poland. Finally, the approval ratings of President Macron are the highest in Germany with 61 per cent in December 2017. President Macron's approval ratings are the lowest in France with 47 per cent, followed by 48 per cent approval in Poland and Spain.

Graph 3: Approval Rating of President Trump, President Putin, Chancellor Merkel and President Macron in the Six Largest Member States, March-December 2017

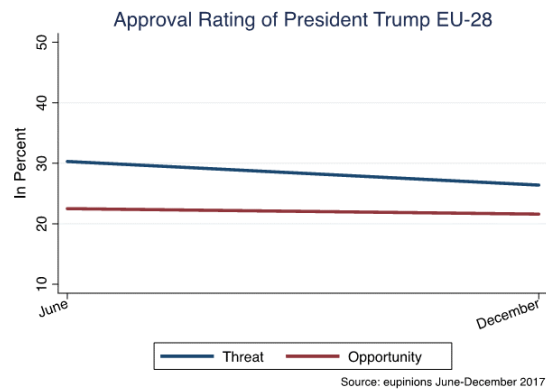


Summary #3: The approval ratings of President Trump are higher among those who view globalization as a threat.

In July 2017, 30 per cent of those who view globalization as a threat approved of President Trump while only 22 per cent of those who view globalization as an opportunity did. By the end of 2017, approval ratings for both groups were lower. In December 2017, 26 per cent of those who feel threatened by globalization approved of the American president versus 22 per cent of those who feel that globalization is an opportunity.

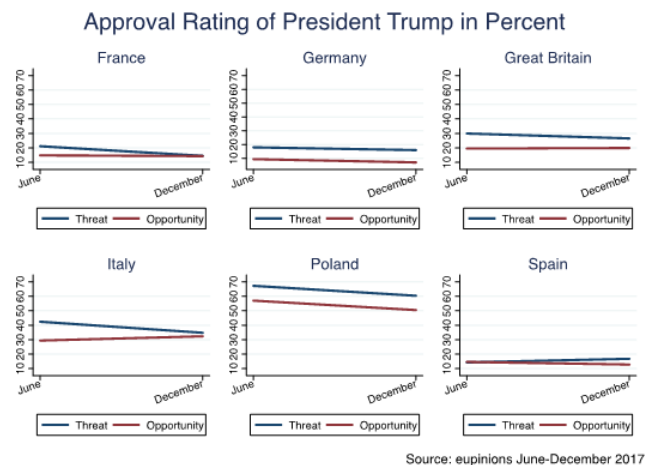
President Trump's nationalist agenda and scepticism towards international cooperation might make him a more popular figure among those who fear globalization. We will explore this in a next step. Graph 4 shows the approval rating of Trump among those respondents in the EU28 that view globalization as a threat and among those who view globalization as an opportunity. Although the President's approval ratings are well below the 50 per cent mark for both groups, respondents that fear globalization hold much more positive views about him. In July 2017, 30 per cent of those who view globalization as a threat approved of Trump while only 22 per cent of those who view globalization as an opportunity did. In December 2017, 26 per cent of those who feel threatened by globalization approved of the American president versus 22 per cent of those who feel that globalization is an opportunity.

Graph 4: Approval Rating of President Trump Among Those Who View Globalization as Threat versus Opportunity in the EU28, July-December 2017



Graph 5 displays the approval ratings of those who fear globalization versus those who do not within the six largest member states. In all six countries respondents that feel threatened by globalization approve more of President Trump than those who think that globalization is an opportunity. Interestingly, the gap in approval ratings between those who fear globalization versus those who do not is the largest among the German and Polish public and the smallest among the French and Spanish public. The gap in approval between the two groups narrowed somewhat over the course of 2017. In France, Great Britain and Italy those who view globalization as a threat have become more sceptical of the US president.

Graph 5: Approval Rating of President Trump Among Those Who View Globalization as Threat versus Opportunity in Six Largest Member States, July-December 2017

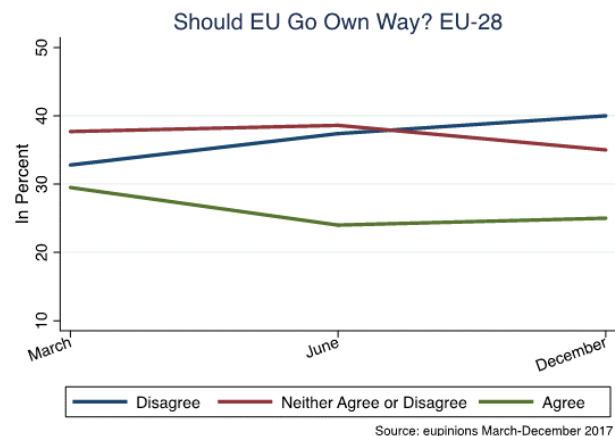


Summary #4: Even though a majority of Europeans disapproves of President Trump, only a quarter of Europeans wishes for the European Union and the United States to stop cooperating closely on the world stage.

In December 2017, only 25 per cent of Europeans agreed with the statement that the European Union after closely cooperating with the United States for a long time should now go its own way. 40 per cent disagreed with the statement and 35 per cent indicated that they neither agree nor disagree.

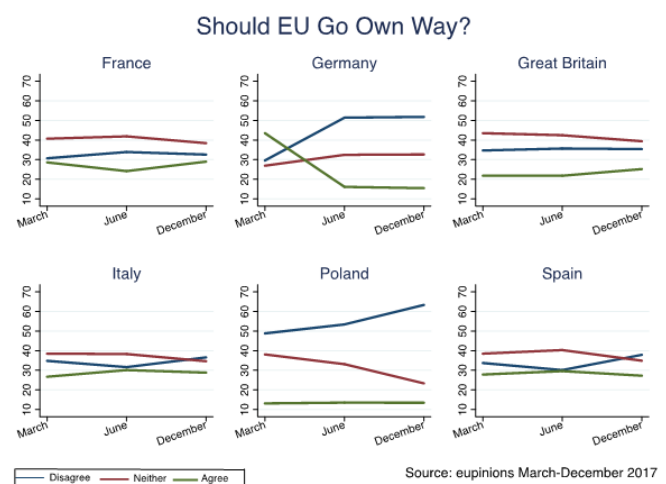
We now wish to inspect if the low approval of Trump among European citizens has also translated into more sceptical views about the relationship between the European Union and the United States. In order to explore this, we asked people if they agree with the following statement: "In the last half century, Europe and the United States have always cooperated closely. Do you think that it is time for Europe to go its own way?" People could choose to agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Graph 6 below shows people's agreement over the course of 2017. While the previous graphs showed that approval of President Trump slightly decreased over the course of 2017, Europeans do not wish the European Union and the United States to part ways. In December 2017, 40 per cent of Europeans disagreed with the statement that it is time for Europe to go its own way, while 25 per cent agreed and 35 per cent neither agreed or disagreed. In March 2017, 33 per cent disagreed with the statement that the EU should go its own way, 38 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed and 29 per cent agreed with the statement.

Graph 6: Views About Future Relationship between the European Union and the United States in EU28, March-December 2017



Graph 7 shows the same information for the six largest member states of the European Union. A clear majority of German and Polish respondents disagree with the view that the European Union should go its own way. The largest share of French and British respondents are not sure what to think about the notion that the European Union should stop cooperating closely with the United States. While the Italian and Spanish public initially was not sure what to think, by December 2017 they were more likely to disagree than agree with the statement that the European Union should go its own way.

Graph 7: Views About Future Relationship between the European Union and the United States in the Six Largest Member States, March-December 2017



Conclusion

To summarize, our eupinions surveys from March, July and December 2017 paint a picture of a European public that is increasingly sceptical of the current President of the United States, Donald J. Trump. Polish public opinion is the clear exception here. Over fifty per cent of Polish respondents approved of Trump in December 2017. Interestingly, people who share his sceptical outlook towards international cooperation and see globalization as a threat rather than an opportunity, are overall slightly more supportive of the American president. That said, again with the exception of Poland, the approval of Trump among Europeans is well below the 50 per cent mark and on average declined over the course of 2017. Finally, while the majority of Europeans is deeply sceptical of Trump, our data shows that they do not wish to see an end to the close cooperation between the European Union and the United States in global affairs.

.....

Interested in more data on European public opinion? Visit us at www.eupinions.eu

Authors:

Isabell Hoffmann

Senior Expert
Bertelsmann Stiftung
phone +49 5241 81 81313
isabell.hoffmann@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Catherine E. de Vries

Professor of Politics
University of Essex
Catherine.devries@essex.ac.uk

www.eupinions.eu
[@eupinions](https://twitter.com/eupinions)