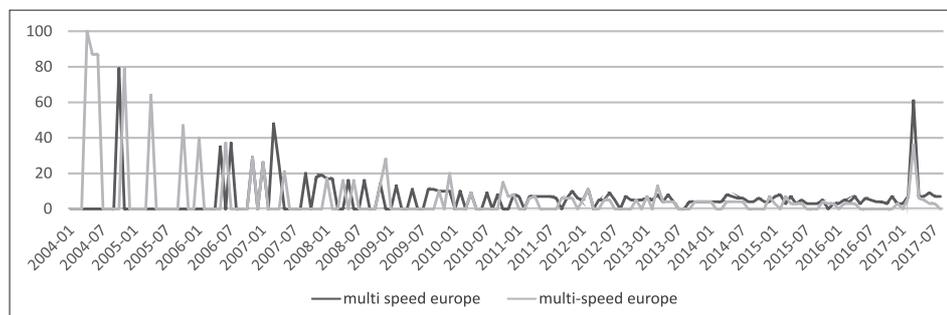


policymakers should bear in mind when using this concept to underpin their political strategies.

2. „Multi-speed“ Europe

In recent years, the European Union has faced the most severe crisis since its existence. The private debt crisis followed by a public debt crisis has created economic stagnation and high rates of unemployment in many parts of Europe. Serious doubts have been raised about the design and viability of the single currency, and simply keeping the European Union integrated and stable has been a challenge for politicians. In addition to an increasing sense of economic insecurity, recent developments in migration trends have led to a rise in popularity of far-right parties that promote nationalist and protectionist views and Euroscepticism, both in countries that have been part of the EU-project from the beginning and in new Member States. In Britain, this led to the decision to leave the EU.

Figure 1: Frequency of the search terms „multi-speed europe“ and „multi-speed europe“ on Google since 2004



Google Trends data, own representation.

This was the situation when Commission president Jean Claude Juncker put the idea of a Europe of different speeds back on the table in his „White Paper on the Future of Europe – Reflections and scenarios for the EU-27 by 2025“, published in March 2017. The resurgence in interest is reflected in the Google searches of the term (see figure 1). Juncker does not use the term directly but proposes a closer union of „those who want to do more“ as one of five possible scenarios for the future of the European Union (European Commission, 2017).

While such increased cooperation of a smaller number of countries could facilitate policy progress on issues that are blocked by a veto of one or a few countries, the general idea of multi-speed is not supported by all Mem-