

Is there a European Public Opinion?
Public support for the European Union, theoretical concepts
and empirical measurements

Catia Chierici
Department of Political Science
University of Twente
P.O. Box 217
7500 AE Enschede
The Netherlands
tel. +31 53 489 3238
fax +31 53 489 2159
email: C.Chierici@utwente.nl

Work in progress
Do not cite or quote without permission from the authors

Paper presented at POLIS **2005 Paris**

Introduction.

All main accounts of public opinion on the EU point to a general erosion of public support and recognize the Maastricht Treaty as a turning point, with support decreasing in all member states. Yet, no scholarly consensus on the accounts of support or lack of support exists and in the last thirty years different lines of explanation have been developed, which apply to rational (Dalton & Eichenberg 1991; Anderson and Reichert, 1996; Gabel, 1998; Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Anderson and Kaltenthaler, 1996; Gabel and Whitten, 1997; Eichenberg and Dalton, 1998; Marsh, 1999) as well as cultural perspectives (Inglehart, 1970; Duchesne and Frogner, 1995; Scheuer, 1999; Carey, 2002; Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000; McLaren, 2002; De Master and Le Roy, 2000; Nelsen and Guth, 2003; Hooghe and Marks, 2004). However, scholar's disagreements exist not only on which theoretical approach better accounts for support but also within each theoretical approach, which variables are the most prominent. To some extent, a wide range of variables, from national GDP (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993) to individual religious creed (Nelsen, Guth, & Fraser, 2001) have all been found to have some power in explaining support for the EU, at least in some time periods and in some countries. The result of this is little generalization and a series of intriguing conundrums still unsolved on the role of both identity and economy as determinants of support¹.

¹ Just to give a flavour of it, on the one hand the idea that "...stronger feelings of national identity lead to lower levels of support for the EU" (Carey, 2002), and on the other hand national loyalty and meaningful support for the EU are not expected to be mutually exclusive but can coexist and even increase at the same time (Weissberg, 1969; Lindberg & Scheingold, 1972; Martinotti, & Stefanizzi, 1995; Marks, & Hooghe, 2003; Hooghe & Mark 2004). Likewise, whereas some scholars found that individuals become more supportive of the integration project when their country's economy is performing well and critical when the economy turns sour (Inglehart and Rabier, 1978, Anderson, 1995, Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993), Gabel (1998) contends that improving economic conditions are related to declining support.

Yet, the main problem within the debate of a lack of public support for the EU is that we do not know much about the kind of support that the EU is enjoying from its citizens. The concept of support when applied to the European context has been generally operationalised as uni-dimensional, and measured by means of a general survey question. After long empirical research we have developed different explanations, but we do not know much about our dependent variable. We have been concerned with explaining the determinants of support for the EU, and we have forgotten to question what we are measuring and explaining. We use the fashionable word 'Euroscepticism' but we do not share any common empirical referents of the word. Generally concepts are not well defined, the same concepts are operationalized differently and the same measurements are used as operationalizations of different concepts. The result is confusion, lack of comparability and little insights into the theoretical debate on the legitimacy of the EU that is going on both at the scientific and political level. We thus come to the main questions addressed in this paper:

What does it mean to support the EU? How do people's support towards integration is structured?

This lack of empirical accuracy might not only be due to lack of data but to difficulties in the conceptualisation and measurement of theoretical concepts. To put it differently, old concepts such as political legitimacy and political support, within new contexts such the EU political system, deserve further conceptualisation. However, so far it seems that the most conceptualisations have just followed a nation-state centric perspective. Yet, as Newman (2001) warns, this might lead to negative conclusions about the possibility of democratic legitimacy at the EU level and may also be used to justify the argument that the EU itself must be confined to certain forms of regulation. This is indeed clearly evident in the normative argument of Scharpf (1999)

who, in his ‘Governing in Europe: effective and Democratic?’, posits a kind of inverse relationship between his two categories of legitimacy, ‘input-oriented’ and ‘output-oriented’ also defined as identity versus interest, and level of governance. Provided that both kinds of legitimacy are needed for a political system to be stable, Scharpf argues that the European polity, because of its lack of a ‘thick’ collective identity compared to national democracies can only aspire to “output-oriented legitimacy”. The same nation-state centric perspective has been applied to conceptualizations of political support for the EU. The distinction between affective versus utilitarian mode of support theorized by Lindberg and Scheingold (1970), has been quite influential in empirical analysis of support for the EU as much as it has been for investigations of public support at the national level (Dalton 1989, 2004). However because of the little development of the affective dimension at the EU level, as pointed out by the same authors of the framework, their conceptualisation has prompted a great deal of interest for the utilitarian support (Gabel, 1998), which until very recently has dominated the field literature. However, the theoretical work of Easton (1965, 1975) on political support and its distinction between diffuse and specific mode of support, which seems to have inspired both works of Scharpf (1999) and Lindberg and Scheingold (1970), does not provide any evidences that a ‘thick’ collective identity is an essential condition for developing diffuse support (input-oriented legitimacy) and that affection is the only indicator of diffuse support. This is the argument advanced in this paper whose purpose is to develop an appropriate conceptual framework as well as a measurement of political support for the EU. The goal is to contribute to the debate on the legitimacy of the EU, while setting the analytical tools to improve both the description and the explanation of the determinants of support.

The next two sections will deal with the concept of political support as first conceptualised by Easton, and present some of the most common operationalisations in the literature, as evidence of the general lack of agreement on the measurement of support for the EU. Then, on the base of some theoretical considerations a new multidimensional conceptualisation of support for the EU will be developed. The third section proceeds with the details of the data and the operationalization. The different dimensions of the concept of support for the EU will then be described in their variations over time and presented in a illustrative figure.

The concept of support for a political system.

The conceptualisation of political support developed by Easton for the analysis of national political systems, has been widely employed in the empirical analysis of public support for the EU (Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970; Shephard, 1975; Hewstone, 1986; Inglehart, Rabier & Reif, 1991; Niedermayer, 1995; Gabel, 1998). In Easton's words "support refers to the way in which a person evaluatively orients himself to some objects through either his attitudes or his behaviour"(1975,436). He describes support for a political system as a multidimensional concept that has two different modes: "specific" and "diffuse", which are directed to three objects of a political system: the community, the regime and the authorities. On this point he writes:

"... support is not all of a piece...some types of evaluations are closely related to what the political authorities do and how they do it. Others are more fundamental in character because they are directed to basic aspects of a system...the distinction of roughly this sort I have called 'specific' as against 'diffuse' support..." (1975, 447).

The importance of Easton conceptualisation lies mainly in the distinction he

posits between the two modes of support.

“...specific support lies in its relationship to the satisfactions that members of a system feel they obtain from the perceived outputs and performance of the political authorities... we use it to identify evaluations of outputs and general performance on the part of the political authorities...diffuse support ...refers to evaluations of what an object is or represents...not of what it does...vary with the object towards which the support is directed... To some extent, the political object will govern the mode of expression of diffuse support...diffuse support for the political authorities or regime will...express itself in the form of trust or confidence in them ,... for the political community the same kind of diffuse attitudes *may* appear as a sense of we-feeling, common consciousness or group identification” (1975, 437-447).

And the kind of relationship between the two modes inform us of possible future development of support for the political system. Diffuse support consists of:

“a reservoir of favourable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effects of which they see as damaging to their wants... Outputs and beneficial performance may rise and fall while this support...continues...” however “if discontent with the performance continues over a long enough time, it may gradually erode even the strongest underlying bond of attachment... Where diffuse support is low if not virtually non-existent, beneficial outputs may be able to provide a sufficiently favourable base until a reserve of goodwill accumulates” (1975, 444-445).

Following Easton conceptualisation, a new typology of public support designed for the specific European political system has been put forward by Lindberg and Scheingold (1970). They adopted two new concepts to describe the different modes of support, such as utilitarian and affective. As they inform :

“...utilitarian and affective, permits distinctions between support based on some perceived and relatively concrete interest (utilitarian) and support which

seems to indicate a diffuse and perhaps emotional response to some of the vague ideals embodied in the notion of European unity (affective)” (1970, 40).

Lindberg and Scheingold conceptual framework following Easton is a combination of two classifications: modes of support, or as they name it, the utilitarian and affective basis of response, and the levels of interaction: such as identitive and systemic., Systemic support is then further split, again similar to Easton’s objects of support, into community and regime. Although the authors do not clearly establish any evident connection with the Eastonian modes of support, in the empirical literature of political support the concepts of utilitarian and affective have become to be considered as synonymous of the Eastonian concepts of diffuse and specific and used in an interchangeable way or as Niedermayer and Westle argue “nearly identical” (1995, 49). Illustrative at this regard is the explanation given by Inglehart and Reif when they state that: “In order to grasp what has been happening, it is important to distinguish between diffuse or ‘affective’ support, and ‘utilitarian’ support - a calculated appraisal of the immediate costs and benefits of membership in the Community” (1991, 7).

Last but not least, the tension between Scharpf’s categories of legitimacy, “input-oriented” and “output-oriented” resemble Easton’s distinction between diffuse and specific. Both frameworks are very similar when they maintain that diffuse and input-oriented legitimacy are stronger forms of support respect to the specific or output-oriented legitimacy... However, as with Lindberg and Scheingold typology, Scharpf categories of “input-orientated” and “output-orientated” legitimacy are explained by the author as identity versus interests. According to Scharpf, “input-oriented” legitimacy relies on the preferences of the people understood as a

community while “outputs oriented” legitimacy implies the capacity to solve problems.

“Input-oriented democratic thought emphasizes ‘government by the people’. Political choices are legitimate if and because they reflect the ‘will of the people’- that is, if they can be derived from the authentic preferences of the member of a community. By contrast, the output perspective emphasizes ‘government for the people’. Here, political choices are legitimate if and because they effectively promote the common welfare of the constituency in question” (Scharpf, 1999, 6).

Scharpf goes further and warns that the EU can only aspire to output-oriented legitimacy because of its lack of a ‘thick’ collective identity. So far this argument has been widely taken for granted and little criticized (Thomassen and Schmitt, 2004). In the next sections, on the basis of Easton’s work, some evidences will be provided that affection is not the only indicator of diffuse support and that a ‘thick’ collective identity is not an essential condition for developing diffuse support (input-oriented legitimacy).

Different operationalizations of diffuse and specific support for the EU.

In the literature so far, cross-national and longitudinal variations in level of public support for the EU have been measured by different survey questions (available mainly in Eurobarometer data sets), which have become to be known as the ‘Benefit’, the ‘Membership’, the ‘Dissolution’, and the ‘Unification’ indicators of support for integration (Table1). Yet, different scholars have interpreted them in different ways².

² *Lindberg and Scheingold* (1970) found that “affective support for Europe, as such, while impressive, was not quite so high as the utilitarian support for economic integration” (59). Instead, *Shephard* (1975) concluded that: “...it is not possible to affirm our second proposition, which stated that utilitarian support for supranational institutions is more marked than affective support” (124). By contrast, *Hewstone* (1986) pointed out that ‘only for the British sample were correlations between overall attitude and utilitarian support items highly significant. In all other countries these predictors

While the 'Benefit' question has been considered as an indicator of specific support by almost all authors, different scholars have treated the 'Membership' and the 'Dissolution' questions differently. As a consequence of these different evaluations, accounts of support are also different. Inglehart and Reif when describing the levels of public support for the EU in the early 80s (1982-1985) explain that: "The question concerning support for *efforts to unify Western Europe seems to tap a general affective orientation*, rather than a cost-benefit analysis; and it indicates that some rather impressive gains were made in the development of a pro-European consensus during the decade following 1973, despite the severe economic problems that were experienced...Nevertheless, a large gap still exist between the attitudes of the original six publics and those of the six newer member nations...*in regard to utilitarian support*...In all six of the original member countries, those *who view membership in the Communities as 'a good thing'* outnumber those who view it as *'a bad thing'*...Among the publics of the six newer member nations, however, the picture was rather different..."(1991, 7-8).

More recently, Gabel, who measured diffuse support with the 'Unification', the 'Identity' and the 'Solidarity' questions (Table1), provided us with a different conclusion. According to his empirical analysis, 'Solidarity' and 'Identity' questions never exceeded twenty percent from 1985 through 1991 while the 'Unification' question also reached seventy-five percent. "Only about one-fifth of the EU public expressed strong affective sentiments and this fraction seems to remain stable over time" (1998, 35). So, while some scholars have argued that the Maastricht Treaty represented the end of an affect-based permissive consensus in support for integration, according to Gabel, a public legitimacy for the EU grounded in widespread affective

were considerably less powerful than three measures of affective support-solidarity, trust and confidence" (206).

attachments did not exist even long before the recent public opposition to the Maastricht Treaty.

The scenario is even less promising according to the operationalization adopted by Niedermayer (1995). He considers the ‘Benefit’ question as the only indicator of specific support, and the remaining three as indicators of diffuse support. According to his analysis “Since late 1991, ... both diffuse and specific net support for the EC was in decline” (1995, 67-69).

TABLE 1 HERE

Disagreements on the use of different indicators for ‘diffuse’ and ‘specific’ support seem to be a leitmotiv in the literature. Apparently, many conceptualisations of support bypass the problem by discarding Easton’s theoretical distinction, mainly on the basis of a lack of empirical tenability (Hewstone, 1986, add) or on the argument that although empirically tenable, the specific-utilitarian support is more relevant compared to the little developed diffuse/affective support (Gabel, 1998). Common in the literature is the choice to opt for operationalization at just one point in time. This might increase, on one side, the range of choice in selecting survey questions but on the other hand, it restricts the analyses to static ones. Common among scholars is the operationalization of new indexes of support for the EU made up of different questions, which are usually tested by factor analysis. Yet, although the common goal is to improve measurement tools, in fact by operationalizing the same concept differently it just jeopardizes comparability across studies, due to the different items’ compositions of different indexes.

Overall, the ‘Membership’ indicator is always present either alone (Anderson and Reichert, 1996, Anderson, 1998, Gabel, 1998, Carey, 2000), or together with the ‘Unification’ question (Janssen, 1991; Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Gabel and Whitten,

1997; Gabel 1998, Norris, 1999, Nelsen, Guth, Fraser, 2001; Ray, 2003;). In some other research it is included together with the 'Unification' item and the 'Dissolution' (Anderson, 1995; Anderson and Kaltenhaler, 1996; De Master and Roy, 2000; Delfem and Pampel, 1998) in some other works together with the 'Desired speed of integration' indicator (Steenbergen, 2002, Hooghe and Marks, 2003, 2004) and again in other investigations it is considered together with the 'Benefit' question (Eichenberg, 1999; McLauren, 2002). Additionally, the picture even worsens when the same construct is used to measure different concepts (see the concept of support for the regime principle by Norris 1999a).

The conceptualisation of support for the EU: building up a theoretical framework.

In order to develop a more appropriate conceptual framework for the study of political support for the EU political system, this work starts from an analysis of Easton's theoretical work on the conviction that, although widely mentioned and adopted, it might not have been exploited in the direction of its theoretical premises. Easton's conceptualisation of political support does not provide any evidences that a 'thick' collective identity is an essential condition for developing diffuse support (input-oriented legitimacy) and that affection is the only indicator of diffuse support. Although these are generally held to be true, it might be due to the assumption that Linberg and Scheingold (1970) typology of political support is similar to Easton, when here the contention is that it is not. Next goal is to restore the differences between the two, in order to proceed into the attempt of a new conceptualisation and operationalization of public support for the EU political system.

Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) distinguish between a rational, cognitive evaluation such as the utilitarian support; and a non-rational, emotional kind of support, the affective. In a similar way Scharpf (1999) distinguishes between ‘identity’ and ‘interest’. However, these distinctions are not evident in Easton’s classification of modes of support. On the contrary, Easton stresses the short-term variation of ‘specific’ support and the generalized connotation of ‘diffuse’ support as underlying characteristics of the two evaluations, which in turn and very importantly, are related to different objects. Both kinds of support imply different kinds of evaluation, specific is evaluation of a specific object and diffuse is an evaluation of what an object is or represents. Writing about diffuse support, Easton argues that although such support represents some attachment to political objects, the attachment not necessarily is due to affection or long term socialization:

“Diffuse support may also...derive from experience...beliefs about what is fundamentally right and proper in politics need not have their origins in what we have inherited from others early in the life but in our own assessment of general political circumstances” (1975, 446).

Niedermayer and Westle (1995) however, argue that ‘specific’ support as well as ‘utilitarian’ support involves a more rational than affective judgement. Yet, ‘specific’ support is not necessarily only instrumental as the concept of ‘utilitarian support’ implies, it is an expressive evaluation of a specific event, object, or performance of the system.

Lindberg and Scheingold’s (1970) modes of response seem to apply to what has been termed a multi-component view of attitude (Niedermayer and Westle, 1995, 199), based on the theoretical idea that attitudes are made up of different components and a clear empirical distinction between a cognitive and an affective dimension would be possible. However recent development in political psychology has proven that this

might not always be the case because cognition and affection interact in complex ways (Kuklinski, 2002).

The nation-state centric perspective applied to in conceptualisation of support for the EU plays also an important role. The most common indicators of ‘diffuse’ support for the political community in the case of national political systems are in fact “affective feelings of community attachments” measured by questions on national pride and the willingness to fight for one’s nation (Dalton, 2004). If in the case of national political systems these indicators may be considered consistent with the national political objects³, when the EU political system is under analysis it turns out to be a major shortcoming.

Now, the possible way to disentangle the different concepts might be to recast the due attention to the objects of support, which Easton suggests to consider in combination with the modes of support.

“Specific support is a response to the authorities...it is directed to the perceived decisions, policies, actions, utterances or the general style of these authoritiesdiffuse support is support that underlies the regime as a whole and the political community” (Easton, 1974, 437-445).

Accordingly, next step will try to better explore those objects and their relationship with the two modes.

The more controversial point when measuring support according to Easton’s definition is the operationalization of the ‘diffuse’ dimension. While ‘specific support’ seems clear enough, the ‘diffuse’ dimension, due to its different sub-dimensions related to the three different objects, is more confusing or as Fuchs put it “the exact meaning of diffuse support remains an open one” (?, 236). However, the

³ An attempt to put under question this common operationalization of diffuse support at the national level is developed in my paper presented at the ECPR in Granada 2005.

main problem seems to stem from a lack of clearness on one political object, namely the political community. Generally, in the literature diffuse support tends to be reduced to the “we-feeling” towards the political community, though this is explained by Easton to represent just one dimension of diffuse support. In Easton’s original work, the concept of “political community” refers to a group of persons who share a division of labour for the settlement of political problems (1965, 325).

“...it does not matter whether the members form a community in the sociological sense of a group of members who have a sense of community or a set of common traditions. The members of a political system who are participating in a common political community may well have different cultures and traditions or they may be entirely separate nationalities...participation in a common division of political labour need not under all circumstances conduce to strengthening of sentiments of mutual identification...a political community is phenomenally independent, at least in its initiation, from the feeling of solidarity that are usually considered to be a major precondition...the sense of community is a dimension of the political community, the affective aspect. It may or may not be present: and when present it may appear in different degrees...the group that shares a political division of labour may or may not have developed a sense of community”(1965, 177-188).

The feeling of sharing a sense of community is something else than the support for a political community. The idea of ‘sense of community’ was first developed by Deutsch (1957) meaning some mutual sympathy and loyalties, we-feeling, trust and mutual consideration among people. This distinction is stressed by Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) in their conceptualization of political support, when they distinguish between identitive and systemic support, in which the first refers to “what might be termed ‘horizontal’ interaction among the broader public of the system, while systemic support probes ‘vertical’ relations between the system and these

publics” (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970, 40). Yet, even if one agrees with Moravcsik (2002) and Scharpf (1999) who argue that the EU lacks the grounding in a common history, culture, discourse and symbolism on which most individual polities can draw, this does not prevent us to look at the development and support of its political community, as distinct from a sense of community. Although we might expect a sense of to be less developed, due to the fact that people living in different EU member-states speak different languages and rely on different sources of information and different structures of political and interest representations, a political community has always existed, since the ratification of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

What we want to measure here is support for the political community in the Eastonian terms and not the Deutsch (1957) ‘sense of community’ or the ‘identitive support’ (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970). Once established this distinction, then it is easy to detect how different kinds of indicators are employed and mixed up in the literature. Citizen’s trust for other people living in different member-states (Scheuer, 1999), citizen’s solidarity with people living in different member-states (Gabel, 1999), or people proud of being European (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995), all seem to be indicators of the sense of community, the we-feeling, though they are often used as indicators of support for the political community.

On the basis of the distinction between sense of community and support for the political community I propose a conceptual framework as presented in Table 2. It is a threefold conceptual framework which distinguishes between different objects of political support ranging across a continuum from diffuse (input-oriented) to specific support (output-oriented). “Diffuse support is support that underlies the regime and the political community” (Easton, 1975, 445), specific support “lies in its relationship to the satisfactions that members of a system feel they obtain from the perceived

outputs and performance” (Easton, 1975, 437). Like previous conceptual frameworks of public support developed for national analysis (Norris, 199b), the objects of political support are at the forefront and have been selected among other potential political objects⁴, within each of the three main dimension of the EU political system such as a *Polity, a Politics and a Policy outcome dimensions*. The idea behind this conceptual framework is to structure the analysis of political support in a way as to benefit from the theoretical insights of the ‘diffuse’ and ‘specific’ modes of political support as well as providing some empirical evidence to contest the normative argument of Scharpf (1999). This conceptual framework will guide the next empirical analysis.

TABLE 2 HERE

Operationalisation and Data.

On the base of the threefold conceptualisation outlined above, the appropriate indicators and variables are now selected, which tap each dimension, in order to determine whether the conceptual dimensions are empirically observable in the data. Table 3 provides an overview of the operationalization with the concepts’ dimensions, its relative indicators and the survey questions selected to measure each indicator.

All survey data in this paper are from the Eurobarometer cumulative File 1970-2002 and indicators have been selected on base of face validity concerning ‘diffuse’ mode of support for the political community and institutions and ‘specific’ support for EU performance. The EU political system is not a nation-state political system. It is an agreed project instead, which aim at some goals. ‘Diffuse’ support is not measured here as affective support but as support for ideas and beliefs on the EU and its institutions, ‘specific’ support is support for EU performance. The *diffuse*

⁴ As in the case of analysis of support at the national level other object might be selected like political elites or political principles.

support for the EU Political Community is measured with a set of questions that ask about the support for those goals. *Specific support for EU Performance* measure the support for the outcomes on those goals. In between there is a *diffuse support for EU Institutions* namely the support for all the mechanisms and institutions that the EU has developed in order to implement those goals.

The first dimension is measured with a set of questions as follows: For each of the following areas, do you think that decisions should be made by the (Nationality) government, or made jointly within the EU? The policy areas included are all those asked in the interviews such as: culture, currency, data protection, drugs, education, environment, foreign policy, immigration, industry, asylum, press, science, security, third world, unemployment, vatax, welfare, worker security and worker representation.

The diffuse support for the EU institutions has been here measured by questions asking people about their trust for a set of EU institutions. These are: the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Minister of the EU, the European Court of justice, the European Ombudsman, the European Central Bank, the European Court of Auditors, the Committee of the Regions of the EU, the Social and Economic Committee of the EU. Unfortunately, this set of questions have been asked only from 1999 to 2000. Additionally, because five policy area's questions (data protection, industry, vatax, worker security and worker representation) have not been asked after 1999, they have been discarded from the analysis because of lack of correlation with the trust questions.

Finally two survey questions measure specific support for EU Performance, namely the Benefit and the Membership questions (see also Table3). "Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance

benefited or not from being a member of the European Community?” and “Generally speaking do you think (your country’s) membership in the Community is a good thing, a bad thing or neither good nor bad?” which has been asked consistently over a long period of time. The benefit question seems to be a valid indicator of specific support for EU performance and the membership question a good match of it. Asking generally what people think of their country membership seems to refer to broader EU outputs. As already stressed at the outset, in Easton’s conceptualisation specific support is not necessarily only instrumental support, it is an expressive evaluation of the outputs.

TABLE 3 HERE

The following section will be devoted to the empirical testing of the theoretical work so far presented. Are these set of survey questions, here selected as measurements of the theoretical concept of support for the EU structured along the three dimensions of the conceptual framework so far developed? Next section will deal with this and will apply to factor analysis technique. Due to the fact that different dimensions are supposed to measure different things, the expectation is to find different trends both over time and across countries.

Results

Following the conceptualisation outlined in Table 2 we would expect people to structure their support for the EU along three different dimensions: EU political community, EU institutions and EU Performance. In order to determine whether citizens distinguish between these different objects of support we have factor-

analysed the various political support questions so far presented and as listed in Table 5. Although most of the factor analysis in the literature use Principal Component, since we expect more than one dimension Principal Axis Factoring seems to be more appropriate. Moreover, results will presented based on pair wise deletion of missing values and results rotated with varimax.

The result is a four factor solution as displayed in Table 6. A close look to the factor patterns reveals that the indicators used to measure *diffuse support for the EU political community* are split into two different dimensions: the first factor contains high factor loadings for *cultural and social* policy areas such as cultural policy, education, press standard, fight unemployment and health and welfare. The second dimension includes high factor loadings on all the other policy questions which are mainly on *security and economic* topics such as currency, fight drugs, environment, foreign policy, scientific research policy, security and defence, immigration rules,⁵ A third factor includes high factor loadings on the two indicators of the conceptual category of *specific support for EU performance*. Finally the fourth factor includes high factor scores for all indicators of *diffuse support for EU institutions*. The latent variable that underlies the measurements on the first factor have a clearly social content and will be called *diffuse support for a Social Europe*, while the factor that underlie the other set of items included in the second dimension have been called *diffuse support for a Powerful Europe*. Powerful here is meant to stress the power of an economic and political union.

⁵ During the analysis other two policy areas indicators have been discarded, such as the data protection and asylum rules. Although 'data protection' turned out to be part of the latent dimension of 'Social Europe' it was an irrelevant part of it. The second decision was taken because of the conceptual overlap of asylum with the immigration's policy area, as confirmed by the factors loadings.

5. Different dimensions, different variation and a general negative support.

So far the empirical tests on the cross-national and cross-sectional (1970-2002) EBM data set have confirmed that people structure their support for the EU across different dimensions. Specific support for EU performance can be distinguished from diffuse support for the EU Political Community and for EU institutions. The next step is to describe the variation captured by each dimension over time and eventually disentangle and grasp the kind of relationship between the different dimensions of support. In order to do this, four indexes have been constructed, one for each of the four dimensions. First of all, all variables have been recoded in order to bring them to the same scale. Dichotomous variables have been recoded -1 and $+1$ and only the trichotomous variable, the ‘membership’ question, has been recoded -1 , 0 , $+1$. Then the different variables have been assigned to one of the four indexes according to the result of the factor analysis. Finally, the mean of each indices has been calculated first over time and then over time and across countries. The four dimensions so far obtained are presented in Figure 1. For all of them, the range is from -1 to $+1$. Positive values indicates a majority of people answering positively to the ‘benefit’, the ‘membership’, the ‘trust’ questions and willing to have different policy areas decided at the European level. Negative values register the opposite trends.

The main striking feature in the figure is the different levels of support captured by the different dimensions. When all countries over time are considered, support for the Social Europe’s dimension of the Political Community is below zero, which means almost no support among European citizens. Higher support is instead devoted to EU performance and the Powerful Europe’s dimension of the Political

Community. Somewhere in the middle the trend of diffuse support for EU institutions is displayed.

In the second place, variations in the four trends over the same period of time is also considerable. Considering the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty, the three trends available are quite different. While 'specific' support for EU performance is characterized by a sudden drop in 1992-1993 followed by small improvements in the next two years, the 'diffuse' support for a Powerful Europe although decreasing, it is much less dramatic. Conversely, support for a Social Europe records a small increase in 1992 followed by a marked decrease.

Although 'specific' support and support for a Powerful Europe run very close to each other, the two trends are interestingly different. In 1995 both dimensions of the political community are strongly increasing which is not the case for the specific support. When country trends are under observation this inverse relationship is even stronger, with support for the powerful Europe overtaking specific support in all six original member states with the exception of the Netherlands and Luxembourg (See Figures 2-18). That is to say, although people are not satisfy with the performance of the EU they still wish the EU to exist and be powerful. However, an inverse relationship has been developing since 1999 when a sharp fall of support for a Powerful Europe has not been matched by support for the performance, which instead is slightly increasing.

Because of the short trends available for both dimensions of the political community, it is very difficult to predict any future development on the relationship between 'specific' and 'diffuse' support. Some of the policy areas included in the measurement of diffuse support have just started to be implemented. The sharp fall in support for a Powerful Europe in 1999, the year the Euro started to circulate, might be

the cause of that. Moreover, immigration and unemployment which are becoming salient issues might also be the reasons for the bifurcation of the trends between a positive 'specific' support and a negative 'diffuse' support.

Conclusions

After thirty years of empirical research on the concept of support for the EU, and a large array of explanations, we still have disagreements on the indicators of integrations. Generally concepts are not well defined, the same concepts are operationalized differently and the same measurements are used as operationalizations of different concepts. Most conceptualisations have just followed a nation-state centric perspective, which might have biased our knowledge of legitimacy and public support for the EU. This present paper has addressed this problem and has developed a threefold conceptualisation of the concept of support for the EU as well as a measurement by mean of data from the EBM Trend File 1970-2002.

How do people's support towards integration is structured? People structure their support for the EU according to the different dimensions of the developing political system of the EU. The result of the factor analyses support the conceptualisation developed in this paper, which on the basis of Easton's theoretical work, distinguishes between 'diffuse' support for the EU Political Community, 'diffuse' support for EU Institutions and 'specific' support for EU Performance. However due to the nature of the EU political system, which do not share the features of any national political systems, support for the Political Community is more complex and splits into two sub-dimensions: a Social Europe and a Powerful Europe. This makes sense if we think that the EU polity is the result of the development of different ideas of integration. The theoretical work of Easton (1965, 1975) does not

provide any evidence that affection is the only indicator of diffuse support. Opposite to the most conceptualisations in the literature, this empirical analysis indicates that diffuse support for EU political community exists and its relationship over time with ‘specific’ support can be compared. Additionally, the theoretical work of Easton (1965, 1975) does not provide any evidences that a common identity or a ‘thick’ collective identity as Scharpf (1999) termed it, is an essential condition for developing diffuse support for the Political Community (input-oriented legitimacy). In order to develop ” ... a group of persons who share a division of labour for the settlement of political problems (Easton, 1965, 325), “civic community” seem to be needed, which share ideas and goals, not necessarily a ‘thick’ collective identity.

The variations captured by each dimension over time have then been analysed. When all old fifteen member-states from 1973 to 2002 are considered, support for a Social Europe is below zero, which means almost no support among the majority of European citizens. Higher support is instead devoted to EU performance and the Powerful Europe’s dimension of the Political Community. Somewhere in the middle the trend of diffuse support for EU institutions is displayed.

Variations in the four trends over the same periods of time are quite considerable. Considering the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty, the three trends available are quite different. While ‘specific’ support for EU performance is characterized by a sudden drop in 1992-1993 followed by small improvements in the next two years, the ‘diffuse’ support for a Powerful Europe although decreasing, it is much less dramatic. Conversely, support for a Social Europe records a small increase in 1992 followed by a marked decrease. Interesting is also the relationship between ‘specific’ support and support for a Powerful Europe. In 1995 both dimensions of the political community are strongly increasing which is not the case for the specific

support. When country trends (see figures 2-17) are under observation this inverse relationship is even stronger, with support for the powerful Europe overtaking specific support in all original member-states with the exception of the Netherlands and Luxembourg. However, an inverse relationship has been developing since 1999 when a sharp fall of support for a Powerful Europe has not been matched by the support for the performance of the EU, which instead is slightly increasing.

Are these empirical evidences consistent with Easton theoretical insights? Because of the short trends available for both dimensions of the political community, it is very difficult to predict any future development on the relationship between 'specific' and 'diffuse' support. Some of the policy areas included in the measurement of diffuse support have just started to be implemented. The sharp fall in support for a Powerful Europe in 1999, the year the Euro started to circulate, might be the cause of that. Moreover, immigration and unemployment which are becoming salient issues might also be the reasons for the bifurcation of the trends between a positive 'specific' support and a negative 'diffuse' support. The conceptualization developed in this paper seem to be superior compared the previous ones because of its ability to capture different trends, and all important dimensions of support in a longitudinal way.

References

- Anderson, C. & Kaltenthaler, K. (1996). "The dynamics of Public Opinion toward European Integration, 1973-1993." *European Journal of International Relations* 2(2): 175-199.
- Anderson, C. J. (1998). "When in doubt, use proxies. Attitudes toward domestic politics and support for European integration." *Comparative Political Studies* 31: 569-601.
- Beetham, D., & Lord, (1998), *Legitimacy and the European Union*, in Weale, *Political theory and the European Union: legitimacy, constitutional choice and citizenship*, Routledge.
- Beetham, D., and Lord, (2001), Legitimizing the EU: is here a 'Post-Parliamentary Basis' for its Legitimation? in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 39, 3, pp.443-62.
- Blondel, J., Sinnott, R. and Svensson, P. (1998), *People and Parliament in the*

- European Union, Participation, Democracy, and Legitimacy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Bosch, A. a. N., K. (1995). Economic calculus or familiarity breeds content? in *Public Opinion and Internationalized Governance*. O. a. S. Niedermayer, R., Oxford University Press.
- Carey, S. (2002). "Undivided loyalties. Is national identity an obstacle to European integration?" *European Union Politics*.
- Dalton, R.J., (2004), *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices. The erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Oxford University Press.
- De Master, S. a. L. R., M. (2000). "Xenophobia and the EU." *Comparative Politics*.
- Deutsch, K.W. et. al (1957). *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Easton, D. (1965), *A System Analysis of Political Life*,
- Easton, D. (1975), A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support, in *British Journal of Political Science*, 5, 435-457.
- Duchesne, S. & Frogner, A.P. (1995). Is there a European Identity? In *Public Opinion and Internationalized Governance*. O. & S. Niedermayer, R., Oxford University Press.
- Eichenberg, R. C. and Dalton, R. (1993), "Europeans and the European Community: the dynamics of public support for European integration."
- Eichenberg, R. C. and Dalton, R. (1998), Post-Maastricht Blues: The political economy and citizens support for European integration. Paper presented to a Seminar of the Center for West European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, March.
- Gabel, M. a. P., H.D. (1995). "Understanding variation in public support for European integration." *European Journal of Political Research*.
- Gabel, M. a. W., D. (1997). "Economic conditions, economic perceptions, and public support for European integration." *Political Behaviour* 19(1): 81-.
- Gabel, M. (1998). "Public support for European Integration: an empirical test of five theories."
- Gabel, (1998). *Interests and Integration*,
- Hewstone, M. (1986), *Understanding attitudes to the European Community. A socio-psychological study in four member states*,
- Hooghe, L., and Marks, G (2004). "Does Identity or Economic Rationality drive Public Opinion on European Integration?" *PS Online*.
- Inglehart, R. (1970). "Cognitive Mobilization and European Identity." *Comparative Politics* 3: 45-71.
- Inglehart, R. (1971). "Changing value priorities and European integration." *Journal of common market studies* 10: 1-36.
- Inglehart & Reif, (1991), Analyzing Trends in West European Opinion: the Role of the Eurobarometer Surveys, in Inglehart and Reif, *Eurobarometer: the dynamics of European public opinion. Essays in honour of Jacques-Rene' Rabier*, MacMillian.
- Muller, E.N. and Jukam, T.O., (1977), On the Meaning of Political Support, in *The American Political Science Review*.
- Kuklinski, (2002). *Thinking about Political Pshychology*,
- Linberg, L. a. S., S. (1969). *Europe's Would-be polity*.
- Marks, G. and Hooghe, L. (2003). National identity and support for European integration, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin fur Sozialforschung (WZB).

- Marsh, M. (1999). Policy performance, in Schmitt, H. and Thomassen, J., *Political representation and legitimacy in the EU*, Oxford University Press.
- Martinotti, G. & Stefanizzi, S. (1995). Europeans and the nation state. In Niedermayer, O. & Sinnott, R., *Public opinion and Internationalized governance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McLaren, L. (2002). "Public support for the EU: cost/benefit analysis or perceived cultural threat?" *The journal of politics* 64(2): 551-566.
- Nelsen, B.F., and Guth, J. L. (2003). "Religion and Youth Support for the European Union." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 41(1): 89-112.
- Nelsen, B.F., Guth, J. L., & Fraser, C.R. (2001). Does Religion Matter? Christianity and Public Support for the European Union, *European Union Politics*, Vol.2, No.2, pp.267-91.
- Newman, M. (2001). Democracy and Accountability in the EU. In Richardson, J., *European Union. Power and policy-making*, 2nd edition, Routledge, London.
- Niedermayer, O. (1995). Trends and Contrasts. In Niedermayer, O. and Sinnott, R., *Public Opinion and Internationalised governance*, Oxford University Press.
- Niedermayer, O. & Westle, B. (1995), A typology of Orientations. in Niedermayer, O and Sinnott, R., *Public Opinion and Internationalized governance*, Oxford University Press.
- Niedermayer, O. and Sinnott, R. (1995). *Public opinion and Internationalized governance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Norris, P. (1999a). The political Regime. In H. Schmitt, & J. Thomassen, (eds), *Political representation and legitimacy in the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Norris, P. (1999b). *Critical Citizens*,
- Scharpf, (1999), *'Governing in Europe: effective and Democratic?'*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Sanchez-Cuenca, I. (2000). The Political Basis of Support for European integration, *European Union Politics* 1(2): 147-171.
- Scheuer, A. (1999). A Political Community? In H. Schmitt, & J. Thomassen, (eds), *Political representation and legitimacy in the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schmitt, H. & Thomassen, J. (1999). *Political representation and legitimacy in the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thomassen, J. and Schmitt, H., (2004), Democracy and legitimacy in the European Union, contribution to Festschrift for Henry Valen.

Table 1. DIFFERENT OPERATIONALIZATIONS OF DIFFUSE AND SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOR THE EU.

Concept dimensions	Indicators	Variables
<p>Specific support (Easton, 1965,1975)</p> <p>Utilitarian support (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970)</p>	<p>Benefit</p> <p><i>Membership</i></p> <p><i>Dissolution</i></p>	<p>“Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Community?”</p> <p>“Generally speaking do you think (your country’s) membership in the Community is a good thing, a bad thing or neither good nor bad?” which has been asked consistently over a long period of time</p> <p>If you were told tomorrow that the European Community had been scrapped, would you be very sorry about it, indifferent or relieved?”</p>
<p>Diffuse support (Easton 1965,1975)</p> <p>Affective Support (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970)</p>	<p>Unification</p> <p>Identity (Gabel, 1998)</p> <p>Solidarity (Gabel, 1998)</p>	<p>-In general, are you for or against efforts being made to unify Western Europe?” indicator</p> <p>-Do you ever think of yourself not only as a (nationality) citizen but also as a citizen of Europe?”</p> <p>-Are you, personally, prepared to make some personal sacrifice, for example, paying a little more taxes, to help another country in the Ec experiencing economic difficulties</p>

Table 2. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF: “PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION”

←Input-oriented legitimacy Output-oriented legitimacy→
 ← Diffuse Support Specific Support →

EU Political System Dimensions	EU Polity	EU Politics	EU Policy Outcome
EU Political Objects	Support for EU Political Community	Support for EU Political Institutions	Support for EU Performance

Table 5. OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT: “PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE EU”.

Concept dimensions	Indicators	Variables
Diffuse Support for EU Political Community <i>Polity</i>	1) Participation in a common division of political labor	1) <i>For each of the following areas, do you think that decisions should be made by the (Nationality) government, or made jointly within the EU?</i> <i>Culture, currency, data protection, drugs, education, environment, foreign policy, immigration, industry, asylum, press, science, security, third world, unemployment, vatax, welfare, worker security and worker representation.</i>
Diffuse Support for EU Institutions <i>Politics</i>	1) Evaluation of European Parliament and European Commission.	1) <i>Have you heard of(...)? And for each of them, please tell me if you tend to trust it or not to trust it?</i> <i>The European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Minister of the EU, the European Court of justice, the European Ombudsman, the European Central Bank, the European Court of Auditors, the Committee of the Regions of the EU, the Social and Economic Committee of the EU.</i>
Specific Support for EU Performance <i>Policy Outcome</i>	1) Evaluation of EC/EU performance from a socio-tropic point of view. 2) General evaluation of the EC/EU.	1) <i>“Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Community?”</i> 2) <i>“Generally speaking do you think (your country’s) membership in the Community is a good thing, a bad thing or neither good nor bad?”</i>

Table 6. Factor Patterns I

	Social Europe	Powerful Europe	EU Performance	EU Institutions
Culture policy	,450			
Education	,678			
Press	,477			
Unemployment	,441	,386		
Welfare	,645			
Currency		,412		
Drugs	301	,443		
Environment	333	,398		
Foreign Policy		,483		
Science	332	,395		
Security		,437		
Immigration		,687		
Asylum		,690		
Membership			,690	
Benefit			,635	
Trust EP				,784
Trust EC				,796
Trust Council				,814
Trust Court Justice				,782
Trust Omdubus				,831
Trust Central Bank				,782
Trust Court Auditor				,841
Trust Comm. Region				,872
TrustSocialEconCom				,871

Principal Axis Factoring
EBM Trend File 1970-2002.

Figure 1. Four dimensions of public support for the EU over time

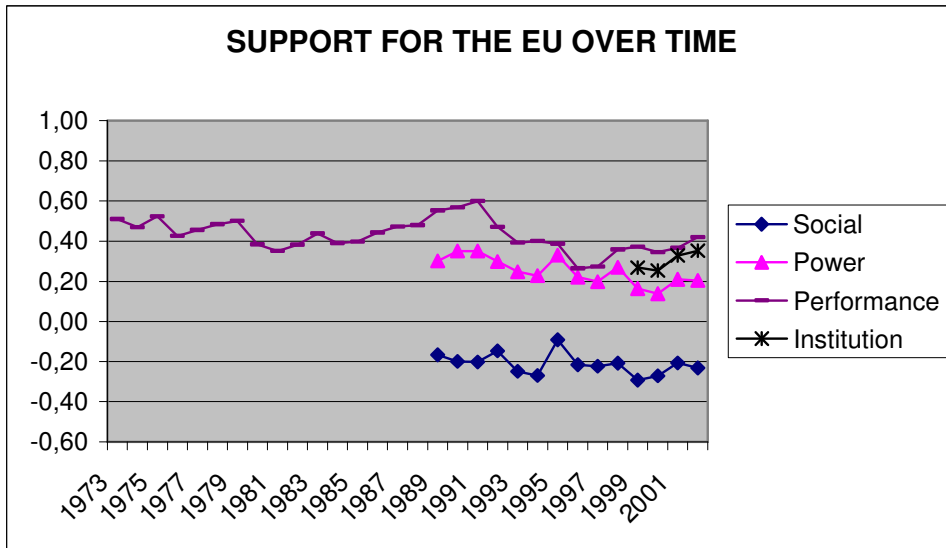


Figure 2

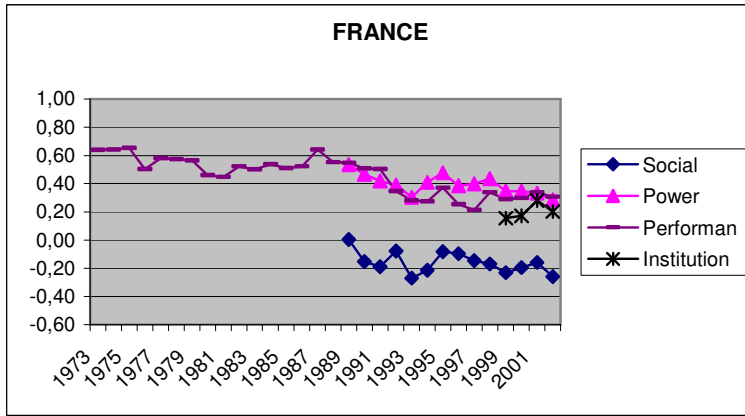


Figure 3

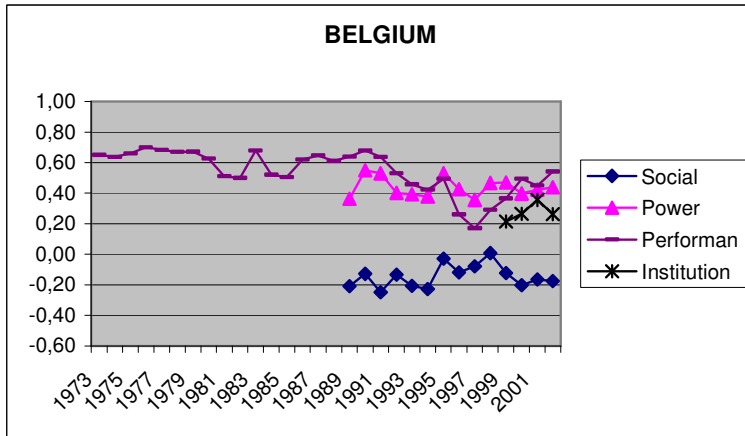


Figure 4

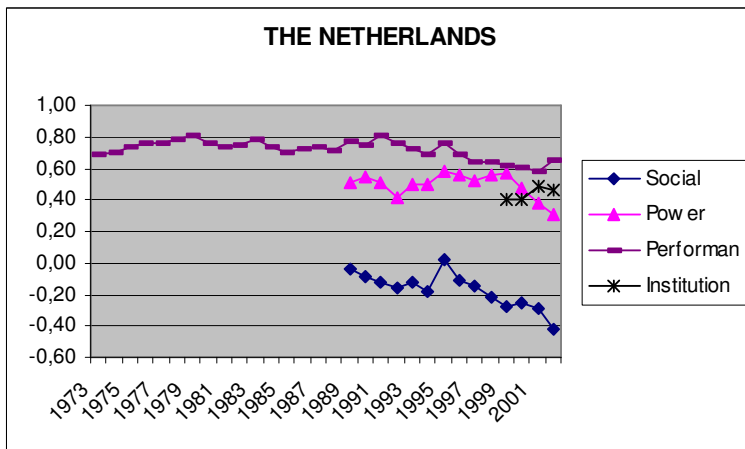


Figure 5

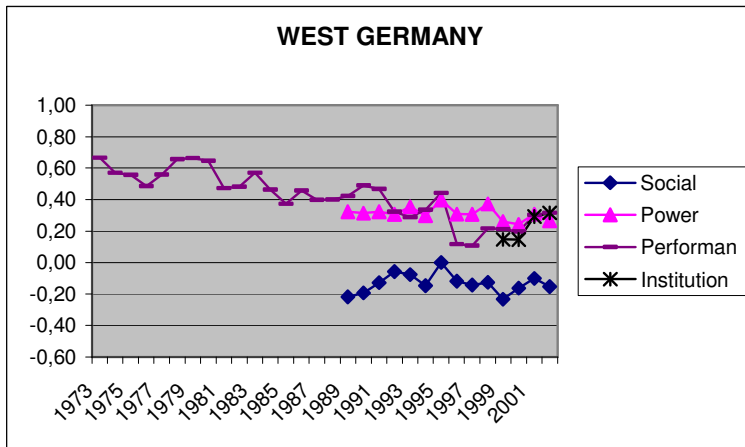


Figure 6

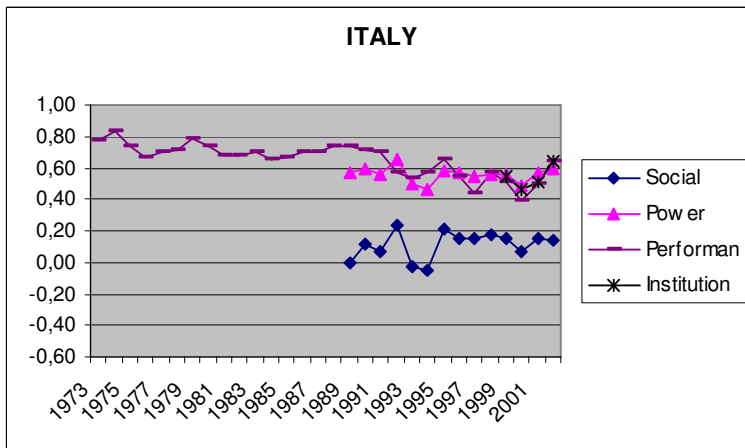


Figure 7

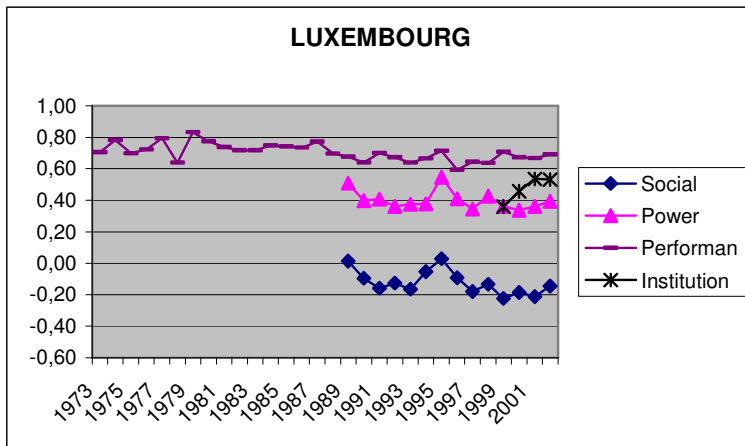


Figure 8

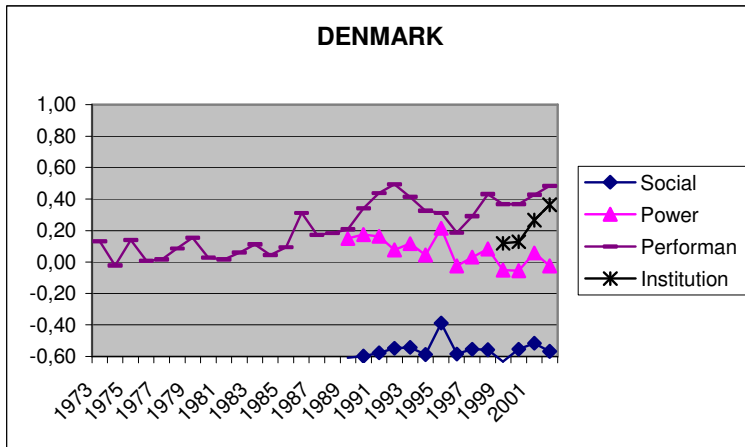


Figure 9

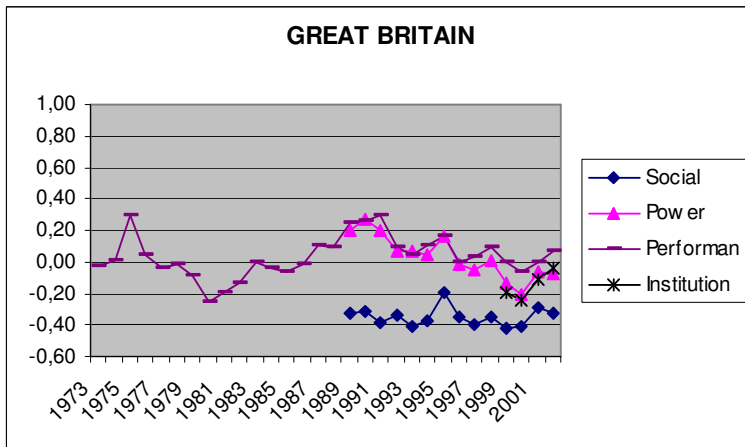


Figure 10

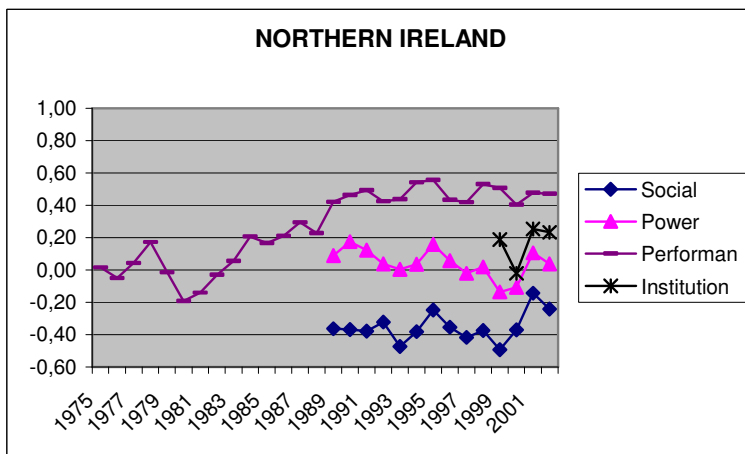


Figure 11

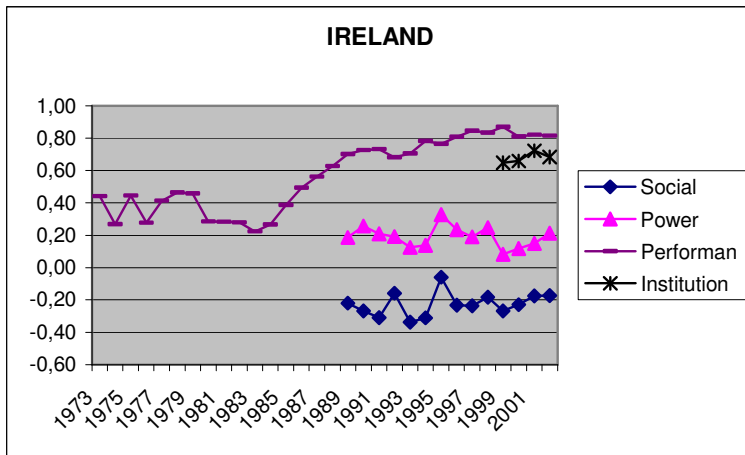


Figure 12

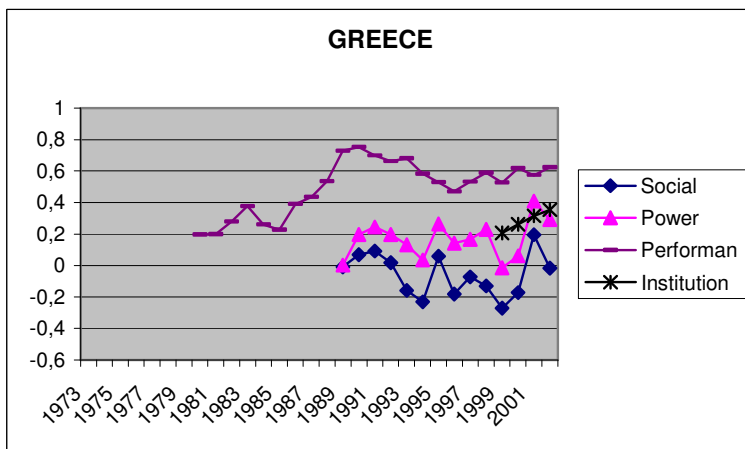


Figure 13

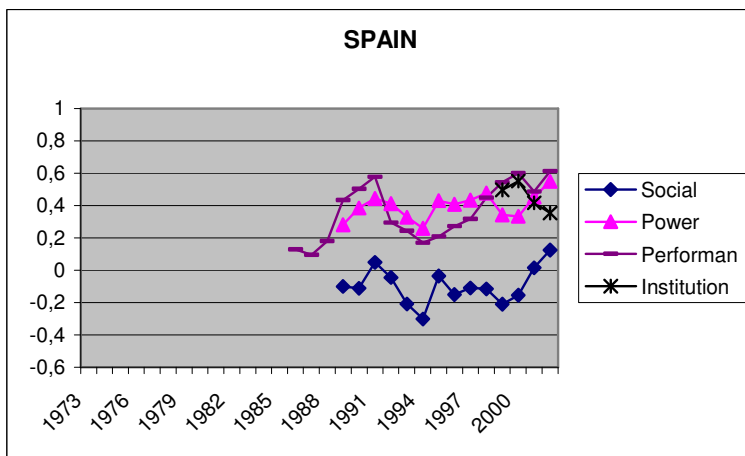


Figure 14

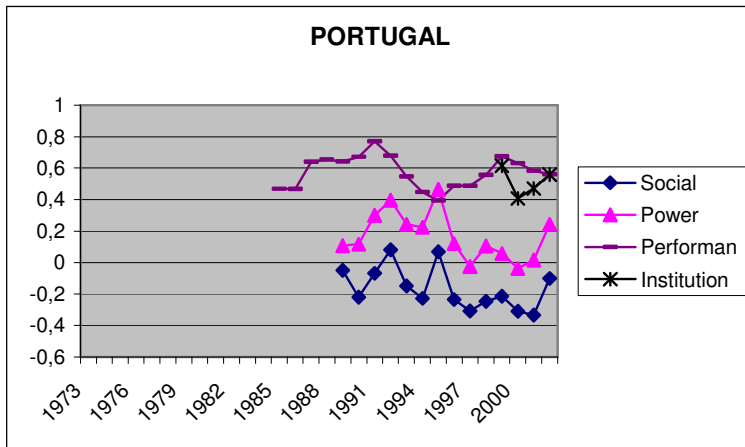


Figure 15

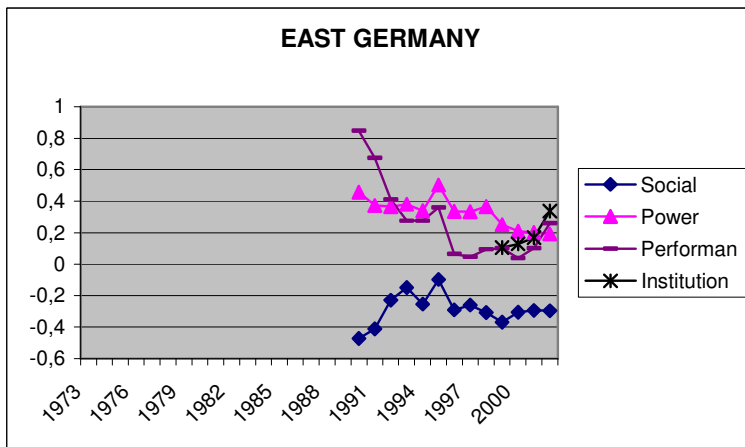


Figure 16

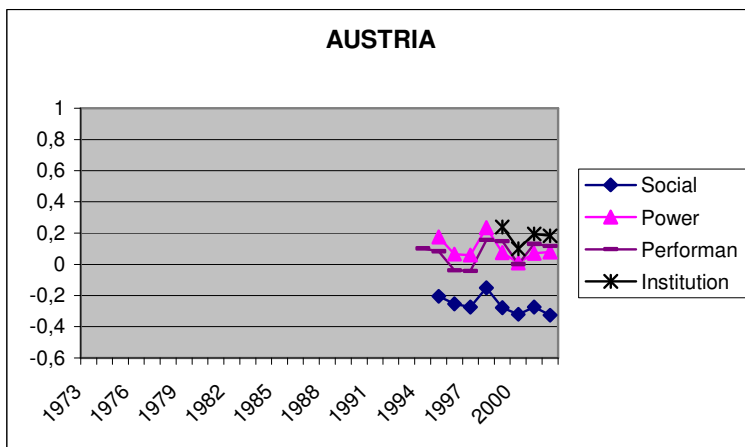


Figure 17

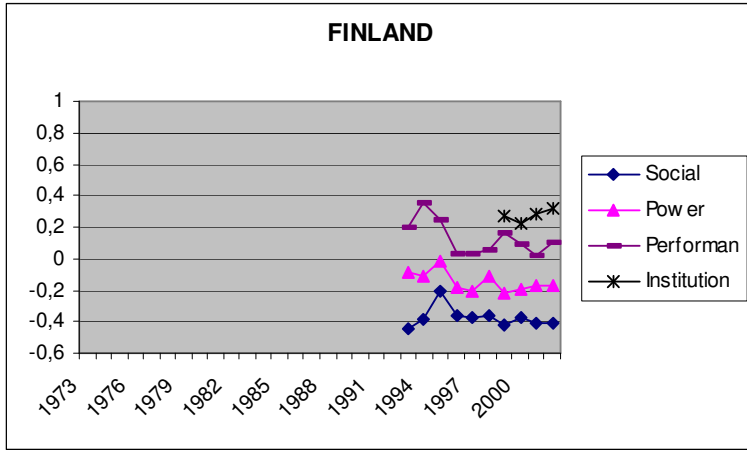


Figure 18

