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Democracy, European Identity, and Trust in European Institutions: Toward Macro-Micro Explanations

Introduction

For political elites and the general public, the issues of European identity and trust in European institutions are recurrent research themes (see chapters by Shabad and Słomczyński; Haman; and Marquart-Pyatt; and the works cited therein). Usually researchers look at correlates and determinants of identity and trust, focusing on various characteristics of individuals.¹ The political climate within which these relations occur has not been directly analyzed, although past research provides theoretical discussions of the relevance of national contexts.² In this chapter we make explicit the links with the political system and examine the possible relations between democracy as a country-level characteristic and individuals' opinions on European identity and on trust in European institutions.

Generally, countries differ substantially with respect to the development of democratic values, norms, and institutions. Well-documented research indicates that “prevailing circumstances for democratization vary significantly from era to era and from region to region as functions of previous histories, international environments, available models of political organization, and predominant patterns of social relations” (Tilly 2004: 9). To introduce the background for further analyses, the first part of our chapter describes differences among all IntUne countries according to three indexes of democracy: Demos Everyday Democracy Index (Skidmore and Bound 2008), EIU Democracy Index (Economist Intelligence Unit, see Kekic 2007), and Democracy, Markets, and Transparency Index (Salvia and Alberro 2007).

In the second part of the chapter we focus on the relationship between democracy and European identity. We pose the following question: Do political elites and the general public exhibit stronger European identity in countries with well-grounded democracies than their counterparts in newly established, mainly post-communist, democracies? It has been argued on theoretical grounds that a quasi-national conception of European identity is conducive to the rise of a democratic political union of Europe (De Beus 2001, Schmidt 2006). The “old” countries of Europe—especially France, Germany, and Great Britain—defined by a long democratic tradition, are seen at the forefront of this movement. Hence one would expect elites and the general public in the established democracies to exhibit particularly strong European identity.

However, there is also good reason to believe that people in countries that recently acceded to the European Union may identify with Europe more strongly than people in the core countries of the European integration project. The main argument involves the relationship between the time since ascension, on the one hand, and opportunities—actual and perceived—in the context of ascension itself, on the other. For newly admitted countries, EU membership is largely synonymous with having been admitted to a selective club, that of Europe, and is expected to bring great opportunities. Accordingly, nationals of recent member states display strong European identity as a sign of their new status. Moreover, they emphasize European identity as they start partaking of EU resources, for example, the more rewarding labor markets of West European countries.

There is a further important consideration that applies especially to post-communist Europe. For many in the former socialist bloc, “returning to Europe” means breaking down the economic, political, and cultural barriers between East and West. “Belonging to Europe” was a major drive behind the post-communist transformations while for Westerners it was and has been a normal state of affairs.

The third part of the chapter deals with the impact of democracy on people’s trust in European institutions in the context of the effects of both macro and micro variables. In addition to democracy as a country-level variable, we consider the social climate in which people form their opinions. As proxies for the social climate—also defined at the country level—we use the averages of trust in European institutions for political elites and for the general public, as expressed in the past. We assume that the effects of democracy and social climate can operate independently of micro variables such as gender, age, and education. In explaining individuals’ trust in European institutions, we also use their own European identity.

Since our explanatory strategy involves both macro and micro variables, we use hierarchical linear modeling in which individuals—members of political

elites or respondents from the general public—are considered to be “nested” in their respective countries. The application of the mixed effects models in STATA provides correct estimates of the regression coefficients and their standard errors. We conclude this chapter with the theoretical implications of our findings.

Indexes of Democracy for the IntUne countries

The basic features of democratic regimes—such as free and fair elections, competing political parties, civil and political liberties, majority rule, and minority rights to compete for power—are well-defined, and scholars acknowledge that these features vary across Europe (Dahl 1989; Held 1987; Prothro and Grigg 1960; Przeworski 1996; Sorensen 1993; Tilly 2004). We are aware that any assessment of this objective state of how democracy functions carries some error or bias resulting from how the “components” of democracy are analyzed. To minimize possible inaccuracies, we refer to the assessments of three independent organizations: Demos, the Economist Intelligence Unit, and CADAL. They have all measured democracy levels in many countries using their own criteria and large data sets usually collected just before 2006. Below we present a short description of the three scales that provide synthetic measures of a country’s democracy.

1. The authors associated with Demos (Skidmore and Bound 2008) created the Everyday Democracy Index (EDI) based on information pertaining to (a) elections and protocols of establishing political authorities, (b) citizens’ activities and participation in public life, (c) people’s attitudes toward democratic methods of problem solving, (d) freedom in taking on social roles and treating them in an egalitarian way, including in the family, and (e) the existing channels of controlling authorities, and citizens’ engagement in these control processes. The EDI scale was created for twenty-five European countries. Its values range from 10.3 to 51.7.

2. The Democracy Index, commonly known as the EIU Index (Economist Intelligence Unit, see Kekic 2007), is based on a meticulous analysis of sixty variables grouped into five categories: (a) election protocols and political pluralism, (b) citizens’ rights, (c) functioning of governmental institutions, (d) participation in political life, and (e) elements of political culture. Each of these categories is represented on a ten-point scale and the resulting general index is an arithmetic mean of the country scores on the subscales. From the set of EIU values we have chosen those that correspond to the EU countries that are part of the IntUne project.

3. We also consider the Democracy, Markets, and Transparency scale, known as DMT (Salvia and Alberro 2007). DMT is a compilation of indexes published in the *Freedom of the World* (Freedom House), *Index of Economic Freedom* (Heritage Foundation and *Wall Street Journal*), and *Corruption Perception Index*

(Transparency International). While *Freedom of the World* takes into account political legislation and citizen's rights, the *Index of Economic Freedom* focuses on the legal limitations of a market system as well as regulations concerning property possession. The *Corruption Perception Index*, in turn, reflects the spread of corruption in governmental institutions—corruption being understood as an abuse of public office for personal gain. Generally, the average DMT is 0.523; sixty seven of the countries analyzed are above this value and the remaining eighty-five are below. As in the case with EIU, we have chosen eighteen European countries.

Table 1. Indexes of Democracy According to Demos (EDI), Economist (EIU) and CADAL (DMT) for All IntUne Countries That Belong to the European Union

Countries	EDI ^a		EIU ^b		DMT ^c	
	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank
<i>Countries of the European Union</i>						
Austria	31.6	3	8.69	3	0.844	3
Belgium	33.3	2	8.15	7	0.808	5
Bulgaria	10.3	18	7.10	18	0.628	18
Czech Republic	20.5	12	8.17	5	0.721	11
Denmark	50.7	1	9.52	1	0.903	1
Estonia	22.3	11	7.74	12	0.797	6
France	29.9	5	8.07	10	0.787	7
Germany	29.2	6	8.82	2	0.830	4
Great Britain	31.4	4	8.08	9	0.879	2
Greece	25.3	7	8.13	8	0.631	17
Hungary	19.9	13	7.53	14	0.713	13
Italy	22.9	10	7.73	13	0.700	15
Lithuania	16.0	16	7.43	15	0.714	12
Poland	13.5	17	7.30	17	0.648	16
Portugal	16.9	15	8.16	6	0.759	9
Slovakia	18.0	14	7.40	16	0.706	14
Slovenia	23.7	9	7.96	11	0.753	10
Spain	24.4	8	8.34	4	0.781	8

^aSkidmore and Bound (2008).

^bKekic (2007).

^cSalvia and Alberro (2007).

The values of these democracy measures for the IntUne countries are presented in Table 1. Results reflect an unambiguous pattern. Denmark holds the top position on each scale. Countries such as Belgium, Austria, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Spain occupy the middle positions. Located slightly lower are Italy, Estonia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia. Focusing on Poland, we see that it occupies bottom positions on the democracy hierarchy, no matter which aspects of democracy are being measured. In the case of EDI and EIU, Poland is in seventeenth position, preceding Bulgaria, and in the case of DMT, in sixteenth position, preceding Greece and Bulgaria. Such consistency of positions on different scales is not an artifact.

Overall, the three scales are highly correlated, $0.762 \leq r \leq 0.870$. In further analyses we rely mainly on EIU Democracy Index because it is the most comprehensive and has performed well in prior empirical research (Słomczyński and Janicka 2009). We provide more information about the other two measures as well.

How Are Democracy and European Identity Linked?

Measuring European Identity

We emphasize that in this chapter the conceptualization of European identity differs from that in other chapters of this volume, although we rely on the same basic questionnaire items. The range of items pertaining to European identity is contained in the following set of questions:

...for being European, how important is each of the following ...?

- To be Christian*
- To share European cultural traditions*
- To be born in Europe*
- To have European parents*
- To respect the European Union's laws and institutions*
- To feel European*
- To master any European language*
- To exercise citizens' rights, such as being active in the politics of the European Union*

In the chapter by Shabad and Słomczyński, the authors presented their conceptualization of the cognitive aspect of European identity in terms of three constitutive dimensions: ascriptive (e.g., *to be born in Europe* and *to have European parents*), cultural (e.g., *to share European cultural traditions* and *to master any*

European language), and civic (e.g., *to respect the European Union's laws and institutions and to exercise citizens' rights, such as being active in the politics of the European Union*). In her chapter, Marquart-Pyatt introduced a division between cultural and civic European identity, classifying indicators differently from Shabad and Słomczyński. In particular, in Słomczyński and Shabad's measurement model the item *to feel European* belongs to the cultural factor whereas in Marquart-Pyatt's model it is part of the civic factor. Our approach disregards the factorial structure of European identity and concentrates on the items that have the most explanatory power for attachment to Europe. To account for this attachment to Europe, correlational and regression analyses were performed to select indicators that have the most discriminatory power in explaining attachment to Europe—a criterion variable. These analyses suggest three indicators of European Identity: *to share European cultural traditions*, *to respect the European Union's laws and institutions*, and *to feel European*.

Table 2. Distributional Characteristics of Items Indicating European Identity and Their Factor Loadings for Political Elite and the General Public, All IntUne Countries, 2007

Items ^a	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor loading
A. Political elite ^b			
Sharing European cultural traditions	3.981	1.146	0.726
Respecting the European Union's laws and institutions	4.364	1.042	0.761
Feeling European	4.409	0.979	0.824
B. General public ^c			
Sharing European cultural traditions	3.773	1.212	0.754
Respecting the European Union's laws and institutions	4.284	0.988	0.762
Feeling European	3.920	1.201	0.803

^aItems are drawn from the general question: *... for being European, how important are each of the following...? to share European cultural traditions... to respect the European Union's laws and institutions ... to feel European*. Each item was evaluated by respondents on a four-point scale from (1) very important to (4) not at all important, with spontaneous ambivalent answers coded as (5). We recoded this scale to five points: from (1) not at all important, (2) not important, (3) ambivalent answers, (4) important, (5) very important.

^bFor the measurement model, eigenvalue = 1.785, percent of explained variance = 59.5.

^cFor the measurement model, eigenvalue = 1.794, percent of explained variance = 59.8.

Table 2 presents the distributional characteristics of the selected items indicating European identity and the measurement models of European identity for political elites and the general public in 2007. In the case of both samples, the mean values of all three items are above the midpoint of the scale (3) by 0.773 to 1.409 points. The largest difference between samples deals with feeling European: political elites score higher in this respect than the general public. Otherwise, the means and standard deviations are similar for both samples.

The internal consistency of the measurement models—expressed in terms of eigenvalues and percentages of explained variance—is very similar for political elites and the general public. In addition, the factor loadings suggest essentially the same structure of items, with *feeling European* as the most important, *sharing European cultural traditions* the least important, and *respecting the European Union's laws and institutions* in-between. Generally, the differences between factor loadings for particular items and particular samples are relatively small, suggesting that all items contribute almost equally to the latent constructs for political elites and the general public.

Those people who score high on the introduced construct called European identity define “European” by evaluating *feeling European*, *sharing European cultural traditions*, and *respecting the European Union's laws and institutions* as very important. In contrast, those people who score low on this construct define “European” by evaluating *feeling European*, *sharing European cultural traditions*, and *respecting European Union's laws and institutions* as not at all important. Thus, we consider here a specific meaning of European identity that focuses on nonascriptive properties. It must be emphasized that these items have been selected because of their positive relation to attachment to Europe.

To test the intercountry measurement equivalency we applied factor analysis to all countries together as well as to each one separately. For each individual (respondent) we saved the values of the construct for a universal measure and for a country-specific measure. Next, we computed the correlation coefficient between the universal measure and the country measure. In no country was the value of this coefficient lower than 0.9. This proves that country idiosyncratic tendencies in European identity are negligible. It is justifiable to use the common construct, measuring it in the same metric for all countries.

Linkages of European Identity with Democracy

To get a sense of how respondents—the political elites as well as the general public—score on European identity, Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for the scale of European identity (expressed in standardized units) for countries in the IntUne data set. We find that political elites in most of post-

communist Europe exhibit, on average, higher European identity than the elites in the pooled data. Notable exceptions are the Czech Republic and Lithuania, two countries for which, unfortunately, there is no corresponding information for the general public. Political elites in some of the main established democracies of Europe, on the other hand, display a lower average score for European identity, and greater variation in responses, compared to the general mean and standard deviation. Germany, Denmark, and the UK are illustrative in this regard.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of the Scale of European Identity for Political Elite and the General Public, by Country, 2007

Countries	Political elite		General public	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Austria	-0.176	0.785	0.119	1.038
Belgium	-0.104	0.786	-0.117	0.991
Bulgaria	0.441	0.697	0.309	0.893
Czech Republic	-0.152	0.928	—	—
Denmark	-0.274	0.969	-0.055	0.917
Estonia	0.235	0.677	0.071	0.995
France	0.195	0.846	-0.156	0.988
Germany	-0.600	1.207	-0.163	0.984
Great Britain	-0.214	1.092	-0.532	1.175
Greece	0.222	0.837	-0.321	1.103
Hungary	0.249	0.560	0.342	0.880
Italy	0.259	0.714	0.276	0.773
Lithuania	-0.053	0.640	—	—
Poland	0.246	0.606	0.035	0.856
Portugal	0.209	0.756	0.225	0.904
Slovakia	0.283	0.683	-0.096	0.959
Slovenia	—	—	0.110	1.032
Spain	0.134	0.695	-0.124	1.018

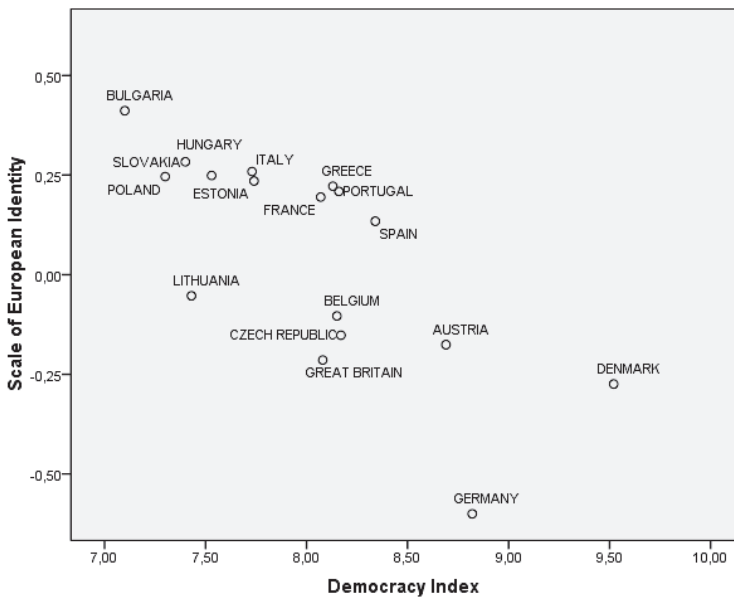
Results for the general public largely mirror these findings, although some discrepancies emerge. In Austria, for example, the mean value for the scale of European identity for the general public is higher than for the pooled data, while for the

political elite, the mean is lower. Greece, Slovakia, and Spain, on the other hand, have political elites whose average European identity score is above the pooled data mean, while the countries' general public falls below the common mean.

This information suggests that in the established democracies of Western Europe, European identity is weaker than in the less democratic, post-communist countries. To visualize how different democracies fare with regard to European identity, Figures 1 and 2 plot member states on the following characteristics: on the X-axis, the EIU democracy index; and on the Y-axis, the mean value of the scale of European identity for the political elites and for the general public, respectively.

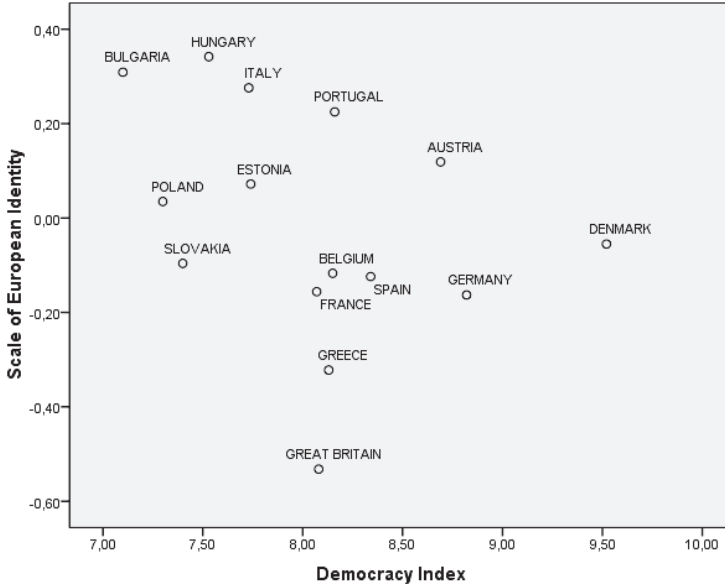
Both figures indicate a negative relation, but the pattern is clearer for political elites. Generally, the countries that score lower on democracy have higher mean values for the scale of European identity than the Western democracies. Indeed, at the aggregate level, we find negative coefficients of the correlation between the EIU democracy index and the scale of European identity for the political elites ($r = -0.729$) as well as for the general public ($r = -0.343$). However, in the second case, the coefficient is not statistically significant. The results for two other

Figure 1. Average Value of the Scale of European Identity for Political Elites in the IntUne Countries Ordered on the EIU Democracy Index



Note: IntUne data for 2007, the EIU Democracy Index for 2006

Figure 2. Average Value of the Scale of European Identity for the General Public in the IntUne Countries Ordered on the EIU Democracy Index



Note: IntUne data for 2007, the EIU Democracy Index for 2006

indexes of democracy, the EDI and the DMT scale are similar for political elites, but not for the general public. In the former case the correlation is close, about -0.7 but in the latter the variation is greater, -0.2 to -0.4 .

These results lend themselves to our argument that in the case of the general public it is length of EU membership rather than a country's level of democracy that, next to traditional individual-level determinants such as gender, age, and education, impacts the strength of people's European identity. Table 4 presents two regression models of the scale of European identity in the general public, for the 2007 pooled data. In the first model, we include number of years in the European Union as the variable of interest at the country level. The second model adds the average for political elites' European identity, since we can envision that the views political elites hold may shape the public's outlooks. In both instances, we find empirical support for the hypothesis that shorter membership in the EU has a positive effect on people's level of European identity, probably as an expression of hopes and aspirations. Adding the country-level measure for political elites' identity changes the standard error of the coefficient for years in the EU, but not the basic relationship between the independent variable and the criterion variable.

Table 4. Mixed Effects Models of Macro and Micro Variables Explaining European Identity in the General Public, 2007

	Coefficient	Standard error	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
A. Model I ^a				
Fixed effects				
Macro-level variable				
Years in EU	-0.008	0.003	-2.31	0.021
Micro-level variables				
Gender (male = 1, female = 0)	-0.041	0.016	-2.56	0.010
Age	0.004	0.001	8.58	0.000
Education	0.057	0.006	9.91	0.000
Constant	-0.280	0.101	-2.78	0.005
Random effects				
SD (constant)	0.218	0.044	—	—
SD (residual)	0.966	0.005	—	—
B. Model II ^b				
Fix effects				
Macro-level variables				
Years in EU	-0.008	0.005	-1.72	0.085
Average elite European identity	-0.024	0.154	-0.16	0.874
Micro-level variables				
Gender (male = 1, female = 0)	-0.041	0.016	-2.56	0.010
Age	0.004	0.001	8.58	0.000
Education	0.057	0.006	9.91	0.000
Constant	-0.269	0.126	-2.14	0.032
Random effects				
SD (constant)	0.227	0.047	—	—
SD (residual)	0.966	0.006	—	—

For the coefficient and standard errors, the values are rounded to the third decimal. Z-test computed on the basis of unrounded numbers.

^aNumber of observations = 15,103, number of groups = 15; Wald $\chi^2 = 143.35$, $p = 0.000$; LR test vs. linear regression $\chi^2 = 598.85$, $p = 0.000$.

^bNumber of observations = 15,103, number of groups = 15; Wald $\chi^2 = 143.06$, $p = 0.000$; LR test vs. linear regression $\chi^2 = 601.59$, $p = 0.000$.

The effects of individuals' characteristics are substantial and statistically significant in both models. Other things equal, males display lower European identity than females; the impact of age and education, on the other hand, is positive. Thus, other things being equal, older rather than younger people, and higher rather than lower educated exhibit relatively strong European identity.

Explaining Trust in European Institutions by Macro and Micro Variables

Measuring Trust in European Institutions

In his chapter in this volume, Haman shows various problems that researchers face when measuring trust in national and European institutions with the IntUne data. Relying on his analyses, we develop a concise synthetic measure of trust in European institutions, for which the core—common to the elite and the general public—pertains to the trust in the European Parliament and in the European Commission. For both institutions, individuals—members of the political elites and respondents from the general public—assessed their personal trust using ten-point scale. In the case of the political elite, an additional indicator is a declaration of trust in the European Council of Ministers. However, in the questionnaire for the general public this item was omitted because ordinary people usually do not know this institution or they have very limited knowledge about it.

In this situation, besides an assessment of trust in the European Parliament and the European Council, for the general public we use additional indicator based on assessment of the caring and competence of European policymakers. Respondents were presented with two items: (a) *Those who make decisions in the European Union do not care much what people like me think*, and (b) *Those who make decisions in the European Union are competent people who know what they are doing*. We assumed that people answering negatively to the first item and positively to the second item express trust in European policymakers.

To provide an accurate balance of trust in European policymakers with trust in the European Parliament and the European Council, the two items on personnel should be treated together. For both items we added the values on the five-point scales and obtained a single indicator for trust in European policymakers. The lowest value of this indicator means that respondents chose (1) Strongly agree, for *Those who make decisions in the European Union do not care much what people like me think* and (1) Strongly disagree, for *Those who make decisions in the European Union are competent people who know what they are doing*. The highest value of this indicator means that respondents chose (5) Strongly

disagree, for *Those who make decisions in the European Union do not care much what people like me think* and (5) Strongly agree, for *Those who make decisions in the European Union are competent people who know what they are doing*.

Table 5. Distributional Characteristics of Items Indicating Trust in European Institutions and Their Factor Loadings for Political Elite and the General Public, All IntUne Countries, 2007 and 2009

Items ^a	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor loading
A. Political elite, 2007 ^b			
Trust in European Parliament	5.836	2.149	0.845
Trust in European Commission	5.550	2.095	0.913
Trust in European Council of Ministers	5.704	2.024	0.885
B. General public, 2007 ^c			
Trust in European Parliament	5.732	2.412	0.904
Trust in European Commission	5.691	2.375	0.904
Trust in European policymakers	5.688	1.906	0.640
C. General public, 2009 ^d			
Trust in European Parliament	5.569	2.456	0.915
Trust in European Commission	5.583	2.421	0.920
Trust in European policymakers	5.711	1.947	0.631

^aTrust in European Parliament: *On a scale of 0–10, how much do you personally trust the European Parliament?* Trust in European Commission: *On a scale of 0–10, how much do you personally trust the European Commission?* Trust in European Council of Ministers: *On a scale of 0–10, how much do you personally trust the European Council of Ministers?* Trust in European policymakers: A combination of *Those who make decisions in the European Union do not care much what people like me think* and *Those who make decisions in the European Union are competent people who know what they are doing*—see text for explanation.

^bFor the measurement model, eigenvalue = 2.331, percent of explained variance = 77.7.

^cFor the measurement model, eigenvalue = 2.044, percent of explained variance = 68.1.

^dFor the measurement model, eigenvalue = 2.067, percent of explained variance = 68.9.

Table 5 provides distributional characteristics of items pertaining to trust in European institutions. Generally, on average respondents—members of political elites and individuals from the general public—were close to the midpoints of the scales on all three indicators that we use in the trust measurement models. Coef-

ficients of variation, expressed as the ratio of standard deviations to the means, range from 0.341 to 0.441, indicating moderate variation of responses. There is no major difference between political elites and the general public in assessments of trust in the European Parliament or the European Commission. In the case of the general public we observe very similar mean values and standard deviations for two time points, 2007 and 2009.

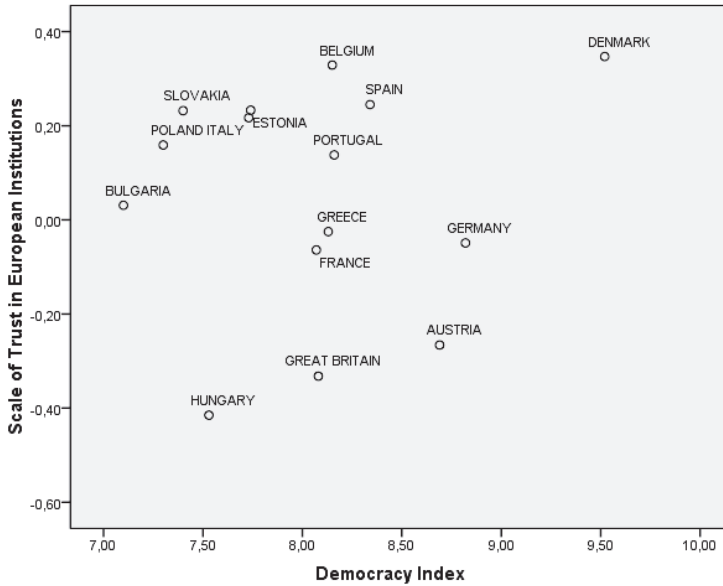
For political elites the correlations between three items measuring trust in European institutions ($0.590 < r < 0.743$), result in relatively high and uniform factor loadings (0.845 to 0.913). For the general public, correlations of trust in the European Parliament and European Commission are even higher ($r = 0.782$ for 2007 and $r = 0.813$ for 2009), giving higher factor loadings (0.920 to 0.904). However, for the general public, correlations for trust in European policymakers are much lower ($0.365 < 0.373$) and for 2007 and 2009, the respective factor loadings are 0.640 and 0.631. In all cases, the measurement models fit data very well (in terms of both eigenvalues and percents of explained variance) and reflect the notion of trust in European institutions.³

Linkages of Trust in Political Institutions with Democracy

Figure 3 shows the relationship between country-level average values of trust in European institutions and the democracy index. The highest values of trust are represented by Denmark (0.347) and Belgium (0.330). At the other pole, at the bottom of the scale of trust, are Hungary (−0.415), Great Britain (−0.332), and Austria (−0.226). Among all post-communist countries included in our analysis—Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Estonia—there is considerable variation in trust in European institutions, with some countries relatively low on the scale (Hungary and Poland) and some relatively high (Estonia and Slovakia). The distance on this scale among some traditionally democratic countries (Great Britain and Denmark) is large. Under this pattern of the relationship, the overall correlation between democracy and trust in European institutions is relatively weak ($r = 0.140$) and statistically insignificant (at $p < 0.05$).⁴ For other indexes of democracy, the EDI and the DMT scale, the results are similar, signifying that the results presented in Figure 3 are robust.

Does this lack of a relationship between democracy and country-level average trust in European Institutions mean that democracy is irrelevant for the analogous relationship on the individual level? A negative answer to this question stems from the possibility of aggregation fallacy, which extends the relationships from a higher level of analysis (countries) to a lower level of analysis (individuals). Thus, in the following section, we examine the relationship between democracy and trust in European institutions taking into account both macro and micro variables.

Figure 3. Average Value of the Scale of Trust in European Institutions for the General Public in the IntUne Countries Ordered on the EIU Democracy Index



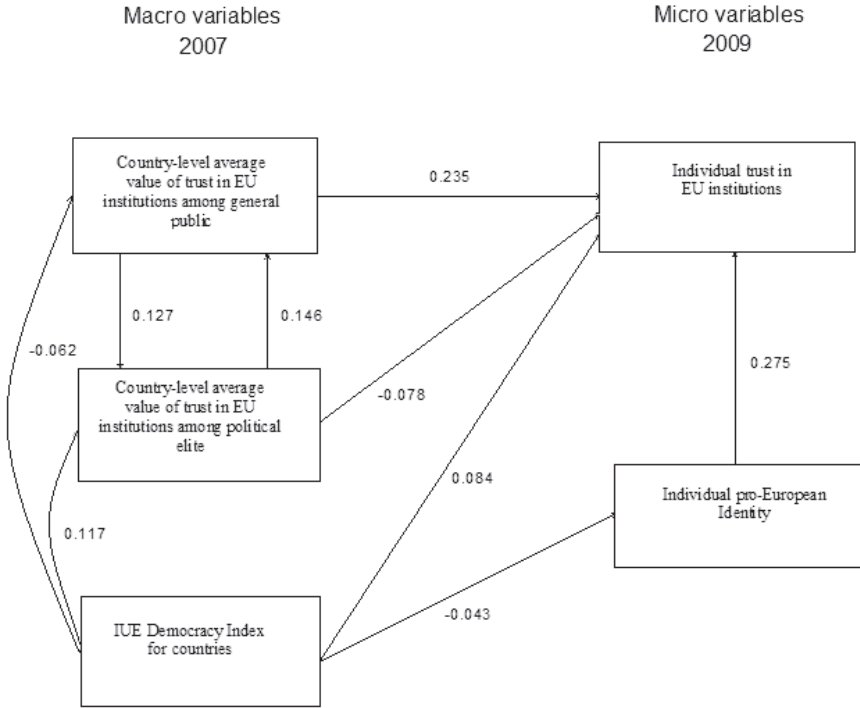
Note: IntUne data for 2009, the EIU Democracy Index for 2006

A Simple Model Explaining Trust in European Institutions: The Role of Democracy, Assessment of Trust in the Past, and European Identity

Our basic model, presented in simplified form in Figure 3, is meant as a heuristic device and shows the relative impact of democracy on trust in European institutions for the general public in 2009 in the context of the social climate created by the opinions of the political elites and the general public in 2007. In addition, the European identity of the general public in 2009 is included. All coefficients are computed on the individual level, without controlling for the effects of aggregation of data to the level of countries. Thus, we treat the coefficients as suggestive of some basic relationships rather than providing firm tests for our hypotheses.

A test is provided in Table 6. It confirms the impact of macro variables on trust in European institutions: average general public trust in the past, average elite trust in the past, and the democracy index have the same positive signs as in Figure 3. However, the coefficients differ with respect to their values since the variables in the model presented in Table 6 are centered around the mean but with varying variances. Standard errors are corrected and are the basis for establishing

Figure 4. Exploratory Model Explaining Individual Trust in European Institutions by Macro and Micro Variables



Note: Standardized coefficients estimated on the individual level, with macro variables considered as contextual variables assigned to respondents

the significance of the impact of particular variables. While the net effects of the average of general public trust in the past and democracy index are significant, the net effect of the average elite trust in the past is not (even with relaxed $p < 0.10$). We should remember, nevertheless, that the impact of the average elite trust in the past on the trust among the general public in time t can be exercised through the average general public trust in the past ($t - 1$), as Figure 4 suggests.

In Table 6, among the micro level variables, European identity shows a strong positive impact on trust in European institutions. The stronger European identity is, the more trustful people are of European institutions. Men and older people are less trustful than women and younger people. Those who are more educated are more trustful than those with less education. All effects of individual variables are statistically significant for $p < 0.01$.

Table 6. Mixed-Effects Model of Macro and Micro Variables Explaining Trust in European Institutions in the General Public, 2009

	Coefficient	Standard error	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Fixed effects				
Macro-level variables				
Average general public trust, 2007	0.103	0.017	5.95	0.000
Average elite trust, 2007	-0.243	0.166	-1.47	0.143
EIU Democracy Index	0.056	0.027	2.06	0.040
Micro-level variables				
European identity	0.274	0.008	34.66	0.000
Gender (male = 1, female = 0)	-0.039	0.015	-2.59	0.010
Age	-0.024	0.005	-4.93	0.000
Education	0.068	0.006	11.88	0.000
Constant	-0.605	0.219	-2.77	0.006
Random effects				
SD (constant)	0.124	0.028	—	—
SD (residual)	0.904	0.005	—	—

For the coefficient and standard errors, the values are rounded to the third decimal. Z-test computed on the basis of unrounded numbers.

Number of observations = 14,565, number of groups = 15; Wald $\chi^2 = 1,548, p = 0.000$.

LR test vs. linear regression $\chi^2 = 171.56, p = 0.000$.

Democracy as a Factor Conditioning the Impact of European Identity on Trust in European Institutions

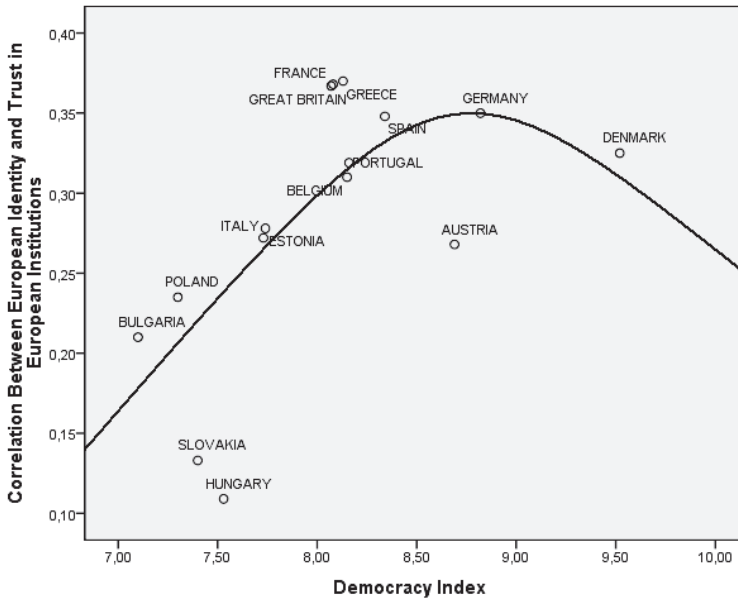
Correlations between European identity and trust in European institutions vary greatly between countries. In the majority of post-communist IntUne countries—Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Poland—this correlation ranges from 0.109 to 0.235. In contrast, in the case of the core countries of Western Europe—Great Britain, France, and Germany—the analogous figures are much higher, from 0.350 to 0.368. The countries of Southern Europe are particularly diversified: the correlation between European identity and trust in European institutions in Italy is 0.272, while in Greece it is 0.370.

Figure 5 shows how the correlation between European identity and trust in European institutions is related to the measure of democracy, the EIU index. The pattern is well described by the following quadratic equation:

$$Y = -4.936 + 1.199 * X_1 - 0.068X_2$$

where Y = correlation between European identity and trust in European institutions, X_1 = EIU Democracy Index and X_2 = squared value of the EIU Democracy Index. The F -statistic for this equation is 6,962, with a significance level of $p < 0.01$. The standard errors for B-coefficients for X_1 and X_2 are 0.523 and 0.032, respectively, indicating a significance level of $p < 0.05$. This equation explains almost 50 percent of the variance of dependent variables (adjusted $R^2 = 0.460$).

Figure 5. Correlation Between European Identity and Trust in European Institutions for the General Public in the IntUne Countries Ordered on the EIU Democracy Index



Note: IntUne data for 2009, the EIU Democracy Index for 2006

Figure 5 shows that the impact of European identity on trust in European institutions is greatest in countries that score close to the mean value of the EIU Democracy Index. However, at the same time, we observe that this impact is

the lowest in the post-communist countries but also relatively low in Denmark, the country at the top of the EIU Index. The figure essentially shows a reverse U-shaped relationship.

Discussion and Conclusion

For a national democracy to last, a certain level of social consensus regarding “the rules of the democratic game” is necessary. These rules are set largely by basic political institutions. A social system’s ability to sustain the belief that these political institutions are adequate and trustworthy is a necessary condition for the proper functioning of democracy (Dahl 1989; Held 1987; Przeworski 1996; Sorensen 1993). Trust in institutions of public life is relevant not only at the national level but also at the international level, including the European Union. Social scientists assume that trust in political institutions is a basis for legitimization of the political system. The European Union as a political system also needs legitimization through trust in its institutions.

On the individual level, for pooled data from the IntUne countries, democracy—as a country-level variable—has a positive and significant effect on trust, even if two other macro variables are controlled: average trust of political elites and of the general public in the past. The impact of individuals’ characteristics—gender, age, and education—on their trust in European institutions is not very strong but statistically significant. The weak and significant effects reported in this chapter reflect the nature of the majority of sociological regularities involving demographic/structural characteristics, on the one hand, and people’s attitudes, on the other. The relatively strong impact on people’s trust in European institutions is exercised by the psychological variable, individual European identity. We assume that identity is more deeply rooted in people’s minds than trust, and that identity affects trust. However, in the longer run we cannot exclude the possibility of a reciprocal relationship.

In this chapter we focused on the impact of democracy on European identity and trust in European institutions. It is important to note that in Central and East European countries, the correlation between European identity and trust in European institutions is much lower than in Western and Southern Europe.

Of course, all three variables—democracy, European identity, and trust in European institutions—are related to each other in a dynamic fashion. Democracy as a macro variable not only affects identity and trust but also depends on people’s attitudes. As is pointed out in the literature, democracy in the European Union could not develop without people’s identifying with this supranational entity and without trust in its basic institutions (see Westle 2007, and the works cited

therein). Past research shows that national identities, together with political trust, are related to prodemocracy attitudes and European integration (Gaber 2006). The argument that identity forms the “glue” holding together a political community and legitimizing democratic decisions, and thus “fosters the functioning and persistence of democracy” (Gaber 2006: 35) may apply not only to nations but also to the entire European Union. In this context, it is important to recognize that identities and trust are also determined by macro factors, including the level of democracy in the European Union’s member countries.

We conclude this chapter with a comment on the role of European identity and trust in European institutions for the future process of European integration. As is stressed in the literature, both identity and trust are fundamental for legitimizing a political system (for an extensive argument on this issue, see Kaina’s chapter in Karolewski and Kaina 2007). In a sense, this legitimacy of the European Union as a political entity is greater not only in countries where each of these attitudinal orientations is well developed but also in those countries in which they go together. However, legitimacy can be easily withdrawn if certain conditions of the performance of the European Union are not met. Intercountry conflicts within the European Union, dealing with the markets of capital, labor, and goods, may negatively affect feelings of being European and enhance nationalistic identifications. In addition, European institutions may not act according to people’s expectations or be unable to solve problems that Europeans consider crucial for their lives.

Democratization processes on both the national and European levels represent a mechanism through which legitimacy can be enhanced. Democratic values form the common ground for Europeans beyond their historical, cultural, economic, or linguistic diversities. Thus, the further institutionalization of democracy seems to be an important strategy for gaining legitimacy. In particular, the European integration project may be promising in strengthening a common European identity and trust in European institutions if governance on the European level is based on strengthened principles of democracy.

Notes

1. Some research focusing on determinants of identities and trust may be found in Vlachova (2001); Arts and Halman (2006); Bonet, Muñoz and Torcal (2007); Segatti (2007); Westle (2007) and the works cited therein. See also Herrmann, Risse, and Brewer (2004); Karolewski and Kaina (2007).
2. In research practice, identities and trust are explained solely through micro variables. Among the exceptions is a work by Garry and Tilley (2009), who use economic macro-level variables to explain national identities.

3. As in the case of measuring European identity, in constructing the index of trust in European institutions we checked for intercountry comparability of data. Again we correlated the universal measure with the country-specific measure. These correlations (about $r > 0.9$) warrant using the universal measure for cross-country comparisons.
4. Among social scientists there is no consensus on the extent to which success in building democracy depends on the values and attitudes of the majority of the society or depends on the attitudes and values of narrow political elites. We note here that for political elites the correlation between the index of democracy and average trust in European institutions is, as in the case of the general public, relatively weak ($r = 0.137$).

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