

European Union Democratic and Institutional Deficits

by

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**Abstract:** Electoral campaigns in Europe exist on two distinct levels, the traditional national level and the newer supranational European level. Do voters view these two distinct levels as independent actors or do their opinions of one level influence their views of the other? The pre-existing “democracy deficit” in the European Union seems to have been exacerbated by the fallout of the financial crisis and subsequent sovereign debt crises and endless rounds of austerity. The unpopularity of these savage austerity measures seemingly imposed by distant, faceless and unaccountable institutions, it is said, is leading to extreme fringe parties gaining mainstream acceptance in European political systems, endangering the European democracy and the world economy. This paper uses Eurobarometer public opinion surveys in member countries to measure citizens’ levels of trust in their national government, as well as trust in European Union institutions. Data before and after the financial crisis is available, providing an opportunity to study public reactions over an extended period of time. The descriptive analysis suggests that in addition to a very real democracy deficit in “old” Europe (the West and South) an institutional deficit exists in the former Communist bloc nations; wherein their citizens’ trust level in Europe is unrelated to trust levels in their national government. They trust the supranational EU more than their own governments, giving a new wrinkle to research of European public opinion.

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## Introduction

It is estimated that between 75 and 100 million people died in both World War I and World War II. Reeling from these catastrophic wars, and with the daunting task of rebuilding a devastated Europe now under a perceived Communist threat, post-war French Prime Minister Robert Schuman proposed a radical plan to end the historic animosity between France and Germany that had led to so much destruction. Schuman's 1950 proposal, strongly supported by West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, was for the merger of coal and steel production into a single unified management structure. Schuman's vision was for this joint venture to launch an historic process leading to a peaceful and prosperous United States of Europe. Schuman believed having collective control of these resources of war (steel and coal) would be the initial building block in making the historic warring states of Europe economically dependent on each other. This would, he hoped, greatly reduce the chance of yet another devastating war. The Schuman Declaration started Europe on the path toward what would become the European Union. By 1951, France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg joined their coal and steel industries into one, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). By 1957 the ECSC had evolved into the European Community (EC), encompassing such areas as agriculture, free flow of labor across borders and a common open market among its members. By the early 1990s, the EC became the European Union (EU), which as of 2015 encompasses 28 countries<sup>1</sup> (see Image 1 below), including several former Communist bloc nations. In addition, the EU houses the Eurozone, 19 states that share a common currency (the euro, see Image 2 below)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom

<sup>2</sup> Austria, Belgium, Rep. of Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Rep. of Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain are the EU member-states who use the euro. In addition Kosovo and Montenegro have unilaterally adopted the euro

The EU consists of several transnational institutions, most notably the European Commission (the bureaucracy), the European Council (the heads of government of each member state) and the European Parliament, the only body directly elected. Finally, 26 nations (including some who are not members of the EU or the Eurozone) are members of the Schengen zone, wherein a citizen of one nation may move freely between all members of the Schengen area, allowing for the free flow of people, labor and capital (see Image 3 below)<sup>3</sup>.

Following the Cold War the European Community began a project of greater integration between its member states as well as plans to expand into Central and Eastern Europe. The new European Union was born and a great experiment of integration amongst sovereign nation-states that blurred traditional notions of sovereignty began. This European attempt at “an ever closer union” (Treaty of Rome) involved economic, political and cultural integration eroding borders and reducing traditional notions of sovereignty (Dinan, 2005). For the purpose of this study, integration will be defined as “a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities” (Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006). To put it more simply integration is “the borderless world” (Ohmae, 1992); or in this case a borderless Europe.

Frequently the stages of European integration were pushed forward via treaties between the representatives of member states with little input or accountability to the wishes of the citizens of these member states. As the writ of European institutions widened from esoteric concerns to affecting the lives of the average citizen, Europeans became aware of a growing “democracy deficit” in their European experiment. The term democracy deficit is credited to

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<sup>3</sup> Austria, Belgium, Czech, Rep., Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden are members of Schengen area. In addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland are members

David Marquand (1979) to mean the lack of accountability of European institutions toward the European public and the subsequent promulgation of sometimes unpopular policies against the wishes of the electorate and/or national governments legally bound to implement these decisions (Marquand, 1979). This disconnect between European institutions and the national electorate may lead to strong and growing dissatisfaction with the European institutions. Many see a powerful, transnational bureaucracy with little accountability encroaching on their nation's independence and sovereignty.

A great deal of academic and non-academic writing has been done examining the causes and effects of the democratic deficit, especially as the financial and sovereign debt crises have ripped through the continent, challenging government and non-government elites (Hartleb, 2012). Much less examined is the state of deficits in the former Communist bloc nations of Central and Eastern Europe. Common wisdom in contemporary European political discourse focuses on the democratic deficit as it is in Western Europe, with little thought seemingly given to whether the same conventions hold in the newer EU nations in the East. In fact, as this study will show, a deficit does exist, but of a different variety. In much of Central and Eastern Europe the European Union has historically been, and remains, more popular than their national governments. Even through austerity and the lean times of the last few years, trust in the EU remains relatively consistent and stronger than trust in their local, democratically elected, governments. This *institutional deficit* shows the differences in “new” Europe and “old” Europe, a distinction has not drawn as much attention as debt relief and integration policies.

**Image 1: European Union as of 2015**



The financial troubles of the last few years show vividly the strengths and weaknesses of European Union institutions and their new linkages within traditional domestic politics. In 2007-08 the great recession began in the United States with the collapse of the housing market and brokerage firms like Lehman Brothers and quickly spread throughout the complex, interconnected globalized economy. In Europe the recession hit hard, especially in the Eurozone. In many countries unemployment hit double figures, with youth unemployment extremely high (over 50 percent in Spain, according to the European Union's statistics). Governments, European Union institutions, the World Bank, the IMF and the stronger European economies (like Germany) reacted by following current conventional economic theory and imposing harsh austerity measures that raised taxes and cut government spending, causing



further harm in growth and employment numbers (Lane, 2012). A number of these policies seemingly hurt average citizens and were appeared to some imposed by foreign entities like the European Central Bank or Germany. Mainstream political parties of both left and right largely supported these measures, leaving opposition to these deeply unpopular policies to political parties traditionally outside the mainstream. The democratic deficit coupled with highly unpopular economic policies and the recession led to a perceived sharp rise in Euro-skepticism that opposed further integration, and sometimes advocated dismemberment of the EU itself (Hartleb, 2012). In addition, extreme anti-immigrant parties like Jobbik in Hungary have seen their electoral prospects improve as Europe struggles to come to grips with its various economic crises. European integration has connected Europe in deep and important ways, making backtracking on integration a potentially massively destabilizing phenomenon, potentially paving the way for political leaders with radically different ideologies and goals. This study will examine the effects of the globalized EU's policies on today's 28 member European Union. It will view public perceptions of national and pan-European governments as signs of acceptance and legitimacy for these same institutions.

**Image 2: The Eurozone**



Previous scholarly work in this realm has examined the perceptions of the European citizenry toward their individual national governments and toward European Union institutions, especially in the realm of European and national elections. For instance, Adam’s examination of political party campaigns and their use (or non-use) of European issues in national elections. Reif and Schmitt, Mair, Clark and Rohrschneider, Hix and others spend time examining first and second order elections. Reif and Schmitt presented the concept of first and second order elections in 1980. A first order election is an important national election, such as a parliamentary or presidential election. A second order election would be a smaller, less important election, such as to the European Parliament and would have less salience with the public and thus less participation (Reif & Schmitt, 1980).

Particularly germane to this study is the question of whether or not perceptions of one's national government are influenced by perceptions of the European Union, or vice versa. Two dominant theories are debated within the literature on European elections: transfer theory and *sui generis* theory. Transfer theory states that citizens' views are shaped by their perception of their own national government. Since European matters are second order, first order concerns influence perceptions. Transfer theorists note European issues have rarely been reflected in national political campaigns and elections for the European Parliament traditionally have much lower voter turnout, showing a lack of salience for European issues in national politics. Mainstream parties rarely discuss European issues with their electorates (Mair, 2000). To put it another way, there is less public engagement in a second order election (such as for the European Parliament), therefore public perception and voting habits may be influenced by domestic, national factors. Europe remains a secondary to more local affairs and is a second order election (Reif & Schmitt, 1980).

Contrasting this is *sui generis* theory, which simply means voters look at both national and European institutions separately and judge them separately. Europe is then a first order concern. This theory has been gaining in popularity as European Union institutions and the financial crisis have increased the power and presence of European-level structures to the average citizen (Clark, 2009). This study expands on this research by examining actual public perceptions of national governments and European institutions to try and identify whether Europeans just view EU structures through a national lens (transfer theory) or separately (*sui generis*). There is a growing awareness of European governmental power amongst citizens, even if the picture is still muddled. This awareness allows Europe to be judged separately (de Vries, 2013). These theories have in the past only been applied to European parliamentary and national

elections. This study will test theories on a broader scale in an attempt to identify how Europeans view their various national and transnational governments in relation to each other to try and ascertain any possible correlations. It is hoped this will enlighten as to where and how.

**Image 3: Schengen Area**



The general puzzle is how Europeans view their national and European institutions in light of the democratic deficit and in the wake of the financial crisis. It is possible to measure public perceptions going back decades due to the availability of Eurobarometer data. The European Commission (the administrative body of the EU) makes available survey data of all citizens from polls conducted biannually. Surveys date back to the 1970s, making it possible to measure a country's responses over time. This study will begin in 2004 which coincides with the accession to the EU of several former communist bloc states; members with decidedly different recent histories than the founding members of North and Western Europe. Using this data, this

study looks at two salient questions in member states: 1) do citizens tend to trust their national government; and 2) do citizens tend to trust the EU as a whole. The descriptive data may shed some extra light on to how Europeans view their institutions, what may be influencing these views and possible nuances overlooked elsewhere.

This paper will examine the considerable literature on the European Union, integration and theories proposed and debated. The results from these surveys are compared with previous theories and hypotheses. Then the analysis adopts a mix of comparative case study and descriptive statistics to test a hypothesis relating to public trust in national governments and EU institutions. The paper concludes with the implication of the results and possible generalizations. Using these methods we will see the answer is highly complex and not prone to simple, bilateral narratives. Some member nations will show a large gap between their levels of trust in their individual national government and the EU, suggesting the public views them separately.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In European scholarship, the democratic deficit has long-been studied and was first identified in 1979, when the EU was still a loose collection in Western Europe still known as the European Community. In 2011, Azman discussed the deficit as having two distinct interpretations: too little democracy and over-shadowed democracy (Azman, 2011). Thus, “democratic deficit in the EU means the lack or discrepancy between ‘what is’ and ‘what ought to be’ in terms of democracy in the EU” (Azman, 2011). This deficit has led to various interpretations in European politics of exactly how European citizens react and perceive various governmental institutions. Some argue that since Europe is removed from daily life, citizens’ perceptions are viewed through the lens of their own government. Others say the EU is viewed as its own identity. Below follows a review of literature on democracy deficit and perceptions of institutions in the European Union.

## DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

While European leaders initiated policies that led to ever closer integration, “large parts of their publics remained stuck in the ‘old’ ways of thinking about the importance of old-fashioned nation states” (Wilson, 2014). In other words, traditional notions of sovereignty and nationalism remained stubbornly fixed among large swaths of the public. The difference between public desires and government action is the democratic deficit. This deficit is shown in elections to the European Parliament (EP), the only directly elected institution within the greater European Union. Since 1979 the EP has been directly elected every five years by voters in member states, but even this modicum of electoral legitimacy may not have endowed the EU or the EP with sufficient democratic legitimacy. The European Parliament “is central to a model of political

representation that has failed to build effective links between the people and the Union” (Scully, Hix, & Farrell, 2012). In an enlightening study, Ezrow and Hellwig examine democratic responsiveness of national governments and the pressure applied on them from “outside” forces (like the International Monetary Fund) in decision-making processes by examining decision-makers choices between their constituents and international market forces. They find “market dependence” does in fact negatively affect democracy and a party’s incentive to respond to public desires breaks down when that economy is not sufficiently sheltered from world markets. Importantly, they find that as “countries become more deeply integrated into world markets, party representatives appear less and less responsive to citizen preferences. Specifically ... parties with governing experience in countries characterized by high levels of economic globalization do not respond in kind to *inter-election shifts* in the *mean voter’s position* in terms of *left and right*” (Ezrow & Hellwig, 2014). This fraying of traditional liberal democracy in globalized economies illustrates the democratic deficit and its effects on political legitimacy and stability.

Within the EU lies the Eurozone, the collection of states who share the euro as common currency (see above). The Eurozone has no centralized political authority as other currency zones do (such as the United States). Therefore the value of the euro cannot be changed by any one member state. This structural quirk erupted into prominence beginning in 2008 with the financial crisis and subsequent recession. While not all EU members use the euro, a significant number do (19 in fact), including the large economies of Germany, France, Italy and Spain. The structural restrictions of the Eurozone (namely the inability for an individual state to devalue the currency, the standard operating procedure when faced with recession and unemployment) meant several states had to run very large budget deficits in the immediate aftermath of the financial crash.

Poor states like Greece suffered and quickly found difficulty financing their sovereign debt, putting the entire Eurozone at risk, including EU bulwark Germany. As the magnitude of the problem grew and became clear, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and European Central Bank (an EU institution) negotiated bailout assistance to several countries, but with important caveats. The indebted countries were required to implement deep austerity measures which included hiring freezes, tax increases and massive spending cuts (Lane, 2012). To some, these measures made the recession worse and were undemocratically implemented by foreign powers onto separate sovereign nations. These austere measures have also been severe and highly unpopular. In June Greeks voted strongly against these measures in a referendum, only to have their creditors successfully impose them anyway, with government acquiescence. This has resulted in political instability and unrest, as anti-austerity political parties have gained in popularity, many of whom are outside the mainstream of traditional politics. In Greece, a left wing government was elected with the promise of ending austerity measures perceived to have been imposed upon Greece by the EU. Blaming the European Union and traditional pro-European parties is becoming common.

These strains can be seen in a 2013 study conducted in Spain, another country hit hard by austerity. This study was found political parties used the crisis to shift blame from themselves and onto the ethereal notion of “globalization,” in attempts to absolve themselves of blame for both the initial recession and the subsequent unpopular austerity measures (Fernandez-Albertos, Kuo, & Balcells, 2013). In addition, these authors found partisan bias to be a strong factor in policy preferences with regards to Europe and the economic crisis, especially if “...globalization-related explanations of the crisis are made salient” (Fernandez-Albertos, Kuo, & Balcells, 2013). This partisan attachment greatly affects Spanish citizens’ views of the crisis,



integration and the European Union. They find the “incumbent party endorsement of globalization as a cause of the crisis affects the party’s supporters’ views of the crisis: They help exonerate the government, and blame other European governments more. This suggests that it is not difficult ... to induce a specific subset of citizens to ‘scapegoat’ globalization in difficult economic times” (Fernandez-Albertos, Kuo, & Balcells, 2013). Thus, in an effort to survive, a domestic government (or traditional opposition) may overtly blame the integration and “outsiders” (i.e. the European Union) for their troubles and not the traditional political elites of the nation.

Additionally European policies during the euro crisis may have fed into the perception of a democracy deficit. Because the European Union is 28 nations and involves complex institutions and interconnections, collective decisions are often the result of several convoluted and messy compromises amongst a myriad of competing and at times diametrically opposed interests. Finding common ground in the name of European unity is increasingly difficult and at times runs counter to a nation’s sovereignty and policy preference. In fact “the EU was the one institution most likely to carry on as if nothing had happened” during the financial crisis (Wilson, 2014). As protests and disillusionment spread and new parties arose to take advantage, European politics has become more nationalistic and populist, two things the European Union is not and actively discourages (Wilson, 2014).

The European Union’s experiments with political integration was “...the result of a process of *voluntary* integration between the nation-states of Europe” (Hix & Hoyland, 2011) (emphasis added). It has evolved from six members to 28 and from coal and steel to a near total economic, social and political union (Hix & Hoyland, 2011). In the post-Cold War era, the EU has expanded beyond its Western and Southern European core to include the states of the former communist bloc, states with vastly different histories and cultures. It is now a giant single

market and the largest economy in the world. Since 1992, the European Union has exemplified the notions behind integration. It involves:

...the removal of internal barriers to the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour, a single European competition policy, and a single European currency (the euro). As a consequence of the single market, in 1990s the [EU] adopted common social and environmental policies, common policies on the movement of persons between the member states and across the EU's external borders, and began to coordinate macroeconomic, justice and policing, and foreign and security policies. (Hix & Hoyland, 2011)

This rapid expansion and integration led to an economic boom after to adoption of the euro (and easy credit). But then followed by the financial crash of 2007-08 and the subsequent recession and crises in the Eurozone, creating two enormous shocks to the EU system (Scully, Hix, & Farrell, 2012). This strained the EU's balance between democratic national governments and largely unelected European Union leaders. The EU political system is both decentralized and based on voluntary compliance from both member nation-states and their citizens. The administration of EU policies is left largely to the governments of the member states, even if those states disagree with the policy decided (Hix & Hoyland, 2011). This is resulting in yet another layer of the democracy deficit that threatens the unity and legitimacy of the entire European Union. This deficit "...results from the fact that as the governments have delegated powers to the European level, policy-making in Brussels (the headquarters of the European Union administrative body) has become isolated from domestic public opinion and national parliaments, which has led to a degree of 'policy drift' away from the preferences of some notional European wide average citizen" (Hix & Hoyland, 2011)

In short, the expansion of the EU and the economic crises of recent years have resulted in a high degree Euro-skepticism. The differences in perspectives toward Europe are seen in a

recent study of the political attitudes of MEP members from both old and new member states that showed “... MEP’s personal ideological preferences (left/right and pro-/anti-Europe) and which Member State they come from are more powerful predictors of their attitudes toward EU policies than their EP political group affiliation” (Scully, Hix, & Farrell, 2012). This study suggests that Members of the European Parliament view European issues via domestic concerns, and not necessarily in pan-European terms. Decisions are not made in the name of European unity but rather through a national lens. This has led to a situation where EU member states are both sovereign nations and deeply integrated members of a transnational government, creating a sense of confusion and ambivalence. The EU is “in reality, a mixture of post-modern factors and old nation-state traditions, reflected in the most complex constitutional and decision-making arrangements imaginable” (Wilson, 2014).

## INTEGRATION

European Union integration shares some pillars in common with the concept of globalization. Defining what exactly is globalization is a question that has produced much debate. The Geneva Centre for Security Policy defines globalization as “... a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities” (Al-Rodham & Stoudmann, 2006). Others see integration in ideological terms and use integration and globalization as a stand in for imperialism and define the phenomenon as “...the domination of developing countries by the overdeveloped ones, or of national and local economies by transnational corporations” (Axtmann, 1998). Some indeed see integration as a threat to democracy. This anti-globalization philosophy can then be divided into three categories: 1) globalization as Americanization, 2) globalization as a capitalist strategy and 3) globalization as a weakening of state institutions (Von Bogdandy, 2004). In the first criticism,

globalization as Americanization, integration is seen as nothing more than an expansion of American economic and cultural hegemony at the expense of all else. In the second criticism, globalization is seen as capitalism run amok and threatening to de-rail important social progress made, especially in Western Europe. Finally, the third criticism argues more that the power and influence of national institutions are being weakened, giving greater power to international actors (such as multinational corporations), whether legal or criminal, that often lack democratic legitimacy (Von Bogdandy, 2004). In short, integration/globalization leads to a loss of national sovereignty, especially if there is a lack of accountability in government.

In contrast the view that increased integration aids prosperity, democracy and, of interest for Europe, democratization can be seen. Free trade is linked to prosperity which is linked to consolidated democracies. Any restrictions on freedom of action for a state are seen as positives, of limiting the scope for unreasonable decisions. Furthermore, being tied to a global economy can codify international laws designed to protect free trade and democracy. (Von Bogdandy, 2004) A global market stretching beyond borders, it is argued, widens and deepens prosperity beyond levels of the nation-state. States within the European Union lack the freedom of movement of the traditional nation-state, by design as previously this freedom led to war and destruction. Where traditionally the “European understanding of the nation-state is based on the assumption of a fundamental congruence between a people integrated by strong economic, cultural and historic bonds and its state whose main task is to organize and develop this nation” (Von Bogdandy, 2004), now “most European countries have long ago ceased to be modern states provided with the complete toolkit of classical statecraft and the will for using it” (Wilson, 2014). With integrated economies and multinational actors proliferating, this old standard of nationhood is changing and may be a reason why public attitudes seem skeptical of further

integration. Old bonds are fraying and democratic legitimacy is being affected. A process of “de-nationalization” is occurring which manifests itself in various ways: an increase in migration outside one’s cultural sphere, national economies are more bound to the global economy than ever before, national cultures are part of a global entertainment system and an increase in non-state actors like terrorist groups and criminal gangs (Von Bogdandy, 2004).

## THEORIES OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Two theories on Europeans’ perceptions of their national and super national institutions in the literature are of importance for this study: *sui generis* and transfer. *Sui generis* posits that European institutions are viewed as their own entity and judged as such, while transfer theory believes that citizens’ perception of European institutions is influenced by their perceptions of their national government. One study finds that while there is evidence suggesting the transfer theory, increasingly the EU is judged *sui generis*, making European elections more impactful than previously (Clark, 2009). Clark and Rohrschneider (2009) write that as the EU becomes bigger and more powerful it is only natural that it begins impacting voter behavior since EU policies play an increasing and visible role in everyday life. More and more laws come from the European Union (Clark, 2009). Since the end of the Cold War, Clark and Rohrschneider point out, the European Community evolved from a small, western European institution standing in contrast to a communist Eastern Europe into a European wide single market with a shared currency, labor force and even the beginning of an independent government in an elected European Parliament, which theoretically holds the European Commission accountable. No longer is the “permissive consensus”<sup>4</sup> of earlier days possible. Therefore, “...citizens may

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald Inglehart defines permissive consensus as a situation where “there is a favourably prevailing attitude towards the subject, but it was of low salience as a policy issue, leaving national decisionmakers to take steps

increasingly rely on their preferences about European integration *per se*, as well as their perceptions of the EU's performance or that of national parties at the EU level, when they cast a ballot in EU elections or more generally judge the representation process at the EU level" (Clark, 2009). In essence, what were once second order elections, European Parliamentary elections, are in fact rapidly becoming first order elections. *Sui generis* theory says domestic politics has little to no effect then on European elections.

One reason for the growing gap between the public and European institutions is Europe's lack of salience as a domestic political issue. Mainstream parties in European member nations rarely have made European wide issues a part of their national campaigns, despite the growing reach and power of the European government. Green-Pedersen (2012) list two main reasons mainstream parties have preferred not to discuss European issues at home. "First, party positions on the issue deviate from the left-right dimension, which is the basic structure of party competition in Europe. ... Second, voting behaviour with regard to European integration depends crucially on how the issue is framed and this makes the electoral impact of politicisation more unpredictable for mainstream parties ..." and opening up political space for parties and actors previously outside the mainstream (Green-Pedersen, 2012). While European issues have been discussed in elections for the European Parliament, turnout is historically lower suggesting a low level of salience for the electorate. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) may also have different linkages to their constituents than traditional MPs. A 2012 study of MEPs found that while new member nations (in Central and Eastern Europe) were ideologically more right wing than their older nation counterparts, there is now no significant divergence on general attitude toward the EU. They were surprised to find that "...MEPs' personal ideological preferences

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favourable to integration if they wished but also leaving them a wide liberty of choice" (quoted in Hodges 1972: 334).

(left-right and pro-/anti-Europe) and which Member State they come from are more powerful predictors of their attitudes towards EU policies than their EP political group affiliation.”

(Scully, Hix, & Farrell, 2012) This result is not consistent with previous studies, which showed membership in a political group (or party) more important.

This lack of European issue salience in national level politics is seen by some as transfer theory at work as citizens’ frustration or praise of their own governments and transfer them to European institutions. National governments after all, rarely brought European issues into their domestic political discourse. In 2000, Mair said “Europe becomes a matter for the governing politicians and their bureaucracies; it is not something that requires the active engagement of, or consultation with, the electorate at large” (Mair, 2000). National parties failed to discuss Europe domestically due to internal divisions its lack of salience with a large number of national voters and the fact that European policies often and increasingly constrain a government’s policy options. For instance, the EU often has the power to dictate policy to its member states, legally requiring national governments to implement them. Mair (2000) does note the potential for Europe to enter national politics, such as via direct democracy (referenda) or through non-mainstream parties, but as of his writing it was limited. Furthermore, Mair notes the problems with the de-politicization of Europe.

In the first place, European integration increasingly operates to constrain the freedom of movement of national governments, and hence encourages a hollowing out of competition among those parties with a governing aspiration. As such, it promotes a degree of consensus across the mainstream and an inevitable reduction in the range of policy alternatives available to voters. Second, by taking Europe itself out of national competition, and by working within a supranational structure that clearly lacks democratic accountability, party and political leaderships do little to counteract the notion of the irrelevance of conventional politics ... In the end, therefore, it seems hardly coincidental that it is precisely during this period of deepening European integration that we begin to see the most obvious signs of electoral dealignment and disengagement.

Party leaderships – and the party systems of which they are part – may well have proved capable of protecting themselves from the direct impact of Europeanisation. Nevertheless, by so doing, they may have risked undermining the legitimacy of their calling (Mair, 2000, pp. 48-49).

Adam and Maier find a similar disconnect. They studied the campaigns of European parties in the 2009 European Parliament elections in six selected countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom) to see if European or national issues were highlighted. Their main hypothesis was if national issues were the focus, then the transfer theory applies. “We show that the majority of national parties in six European countries feature EU actors (and not national ones) as their main campaign message transmitter” (Adam, 2011). In low turnout elections to an unpopular institution, domestic political leaders were hesitant to enter the campaign, leaving it to “second order” European politicians. Maier, Adam and transfer theorists argue that election campaigns to the European Parliament are secondary to domestic campaigns and are highly subject to being influenced by domestic political conditions.

The EU did not fail to notice its democratic deficit. In the 2014 European Parliamentary elections, a new system was instituted with the *Spitzenkandidaten*. Before 2014 the EP had only the power to approve the appointment of the European Commission (the administrative body), including its president. The Commission had been nominated by the Council of Europe, the assemblage of member-states’ heads of government, since its founding. In 2014 though each of the EP’s political groups, or parties, competing for seats in the European Parliament would nominate a single individual, a *Spitzenkandidaten*, to serve as that party’s nominee for European Commission president. The idea for a single face of the party to campaign for the party was intended to make the EP election more familiar, more first order. The winner of a majority (or more realistically a plurality) was then assumed to be the next European Commission president.



This effort to democratize and empower the EU's sole directly elected body ran into some problems. Democracy meant different things to different people. The UK and Hungary felt the European Union was growing too powerful and invasive and was harming internal domestic democracy and their sovereignty. The rest of the EU felt voters' choice of the center-right European People's Party as the largest party entitled their candidate to the presidency. In the end, the UK and Hungary were outvoted. If elites fail to agree on the definition of democracy it's much more difficult for them to be responsive to the electorate (Hobolt, 2014). Hobolt's study (as well as the broad general election results from the entire Europe) suggests the breakdown of legitimacy is far from universal throughout Europe. Not only does the region matter, but country and region of the country matter as well.

Whether or not Europeans view the European Union through the lens of their own government or as an entity onto its own is still a hotly debated and contested throughout Europe. Mair's conclusions were published in 2000, in the very early days of the Eurozone. Adam and Maier's findings may well have been different if they had expanded their study beyond the six nations selected. Hobolt is writing of very recent events which may not have fully played out. Furthermore, the Euro crisis and the sovereign debt crises (as seen in the various Greek negotiations) have shaken Europe to its core. While there was agreement that national political elites are very hesitant to discuss European integration with an increasingly skeptical and even hostile public, studies tracking the public's views of both their national government and the European Union has been few and far between. This study seeks to fill that gap using publically available Eurobarometer data to examine how each member nation's views of their national government, their membership in the EU and their economy have changed over the years.

Euro-scepticism, often coupled with anti-integration and anti-immigrant rhetoric, is seemingly rising in Europe and much of the literature focuses on its origins in the EU's democracy deficit as well as the recession and subsequent Eurozone and sovereign debt crises. But as EU member nations move toward more integration, in some cases without consulting the electorate, there is little study on the impact of this growing divide and the possibility this potential illegitimacy could derail more than just integration. The literature agrees that the elites of the EU and its member nations and their electorate are not on the same page: political elites knew their positions are unpopular and therefore decline to make campaign issues out of these policies and therefore leave the positive aspects undefended. This can open up space for parties that use these issues as a wedge to gain votes and are anti-establishment, potentially radically so. The results have been a rise in strongly Euro-sceptic parties, such as the aforementioned Jobbik in Hungary. Using a comparative case study and some descriptive statistics this study will attempt to examine the extent, if it exists, of the erosion of tradition political legitimacy of the EU's national governments.

## METHODS

For this examination I tested how European citizens' perceptions of their government institutions are formed. For instance, does a citizen feel negatively toward pan-European institutions if he or she is opposed to their national government? Or does their perception of EU institutions affect their view of their government? This section will describe how I attempted to answer this question. Furthermore, I took two prominent theories on European citizens' relationship with their various governments (transfer and *sui generis*) and tested their validity, using methods listed below.

## SELECTION

I used available Eurobarometer data to test the hypothesis. Eurobarometer data is usually a biannual survey of European Union citizens conducted on behalf of the European Commission, the EU institution that serves as the bureaucracy. It has been conducted since 1973 and has consistently asked a number of relevant questions to European citizens over a long period of time. I selected two survey questions and measured them over a ten year period, starting in October 2004 and ending in May 2014. This time frame is useful as it covers a time of prosperity and rapid EU expansion in 2004 and through recession and the Eurozone crisis of the last few years. The survey questions I used measure the level of trust in the national government and in the European Union itself. They are:

- 1) Do you tend to trust or not to trust your national government,
- 2) Do you tend to trust the European Union.

Each survey consists of about 1,000 face-to-face interviews (with some exceptions for smaller states like Luxembourg. In addition England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are

proportionally sampled and listed as the UK so as not to skew results toward any one region). The surveys are conducted between 2 and 5 times yearly, with the reports being made available twice a year, usually in the spring and winter. The data will was evaluated primarily as a comparative case study and examined all 28 member nations as well as the EU as a whole. By presenting the data in charts, we can see the gaps in trust between the national government and the EU. The larger the gap between the two, the stronger the case for *sui generis* will be. The results will show that not all member states have equivalent levels of trust, suggesting other factors at play, at least in some countries. Each of the selected survey questions for each nation was put into a bar graph. I chose not to include all 28 bar graphs in the bulk of the paper however.

## RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

### Theory

There exists in the European Union a growing distance between policy elites and the general populace. As austerity and unemployment lead to an upending of politics as usual, seemingly aloof and far away people and institutions provide solutions that seem counterproductive at best. What explains this growing divide and its potential for nearly unprecedented political instability in the 28 nations of the EU? While a democratic deficit is present in Europe it is not the only factor. By examining the levels in trust citizens have in their national government and in the European Union itself, a gap between these levels of trust will be seen. Some countries, naturally, have larger gaps in trust than others. The larger the gap, the larger *sui generis* theory is applicable. Likewise, the smaller the gap the more transfer theory can be inferred.

In the wake of the economic crisis, Euro-skepticism has seemingly risen. However this appears to not be the case in Central and Eastern Europe, member-nations that share a recent history of authoritarian Communist governments. These countries seem to turn to the EU rather than their own governments, seemingly more comfortable with the older EU institutions rather than their own newer and unconsolidated democracies. As time passes, these countries may match their older EU brethren in Euro-skepticism, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

This rest of this paper examines the following hypothesis:

H1: There exists a gap between member-states' citizens professed trust in their national government and in the European Union as a whole over the time of this study. The greater this gap is the more it reflects *sui generis* theory, and vice versa. So-called "old" Europe, meaning

earlier members concentrated primarily in the West and North, will show less of a gap and a decrease in trust after the financial crisis began in 2008, while “new” Europe in the Center and Eastern part of the continent will show a wider gap, with trust in the EU being higher than trust in their own national governments.

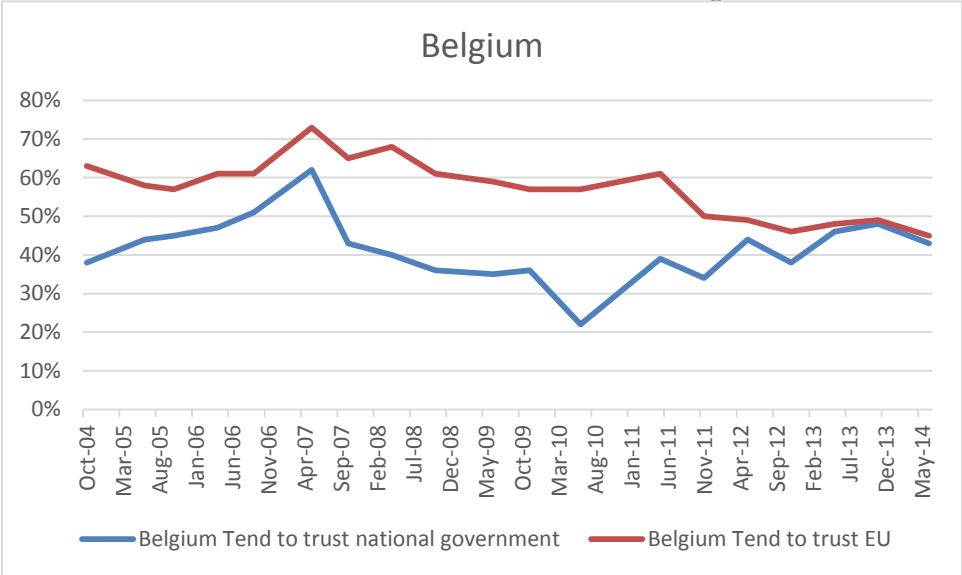
By studying the gap over a ten year time period covering the excitement of mass expansion through the great financial crises of the last half decade allows examination of public opinion independently. Where transfer theory applies the gap will be small; *sui generis* in contrast will have a higher gap. This timeframe also allows for the study of the financial crisis (amongst other controversial items, such as immigration) and their effect on public opinion and political legitimacy.

RESULTS

The following charts show the measured levels of trust of selected nations to the Eurobarometer polls. Again, the two questions being measured are 1) do you tend to trust or not to trust your national government, and 2) do you tend to trust the European Union? The questions are chosen as a good indication of faith, and therefore the legitimacy, of both national governments and European institutions. The time frame is from October 2004 until May 2014. The countries displayed are chosen to test both hypotheses. Charts were created for all 28 member states but only a few are listed.

Chart 1 begins with government trust levels in Belgium, a founder state of what would become the European Union in the aftermath of World War II. Belgium is a longstanding democracy and open market, but suffers from intense language-based political fractionalization. Its position in the center of the old European Community also allows it to be the host to a number of EU institutions. In addition, Belgium is a member of the Eurozone.

Chart 1: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Belgium

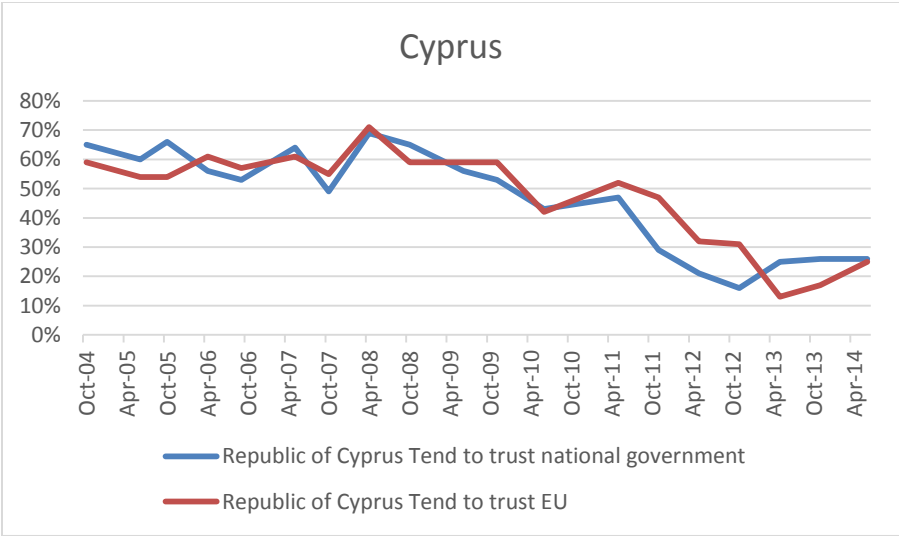


Source: Eurobarometer

The Belgian example shows a rich, Western European, founding member of the EU’s levels of trust in both their government and the EU. At the beginning of this timeframe Belgian citizens in fact trusted the EU more than their own, fractious national government, even in the early days of the financial crash 2009 and 2010. Beginning in 2011 however we see a convergence of the gap between levels of trust. H1 states that older states in Europe are more transfer theory. The data suggests that this is true after the debt crisis began in earnest.

Chart 2 offers additional evidence for the hypothesis. In it we see the trust levels for the island nation of Cyprus, which ascended to EU membership in the 2004 mass enlargement. While not a former Communist state, it has suffered from political instability due to the presence of a breakaway Turkish-backed separatist republic in the north of the country and the long-stalled peace talks between the sides. This did not halt Cypriot accession into both the EU and the Eurozone. In addition, Cyprus has been badly harmed by the debt crises and economic recession and was the recipient of a large bailout package from international creditors in 2013.

**Chart 2: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Cyprus**

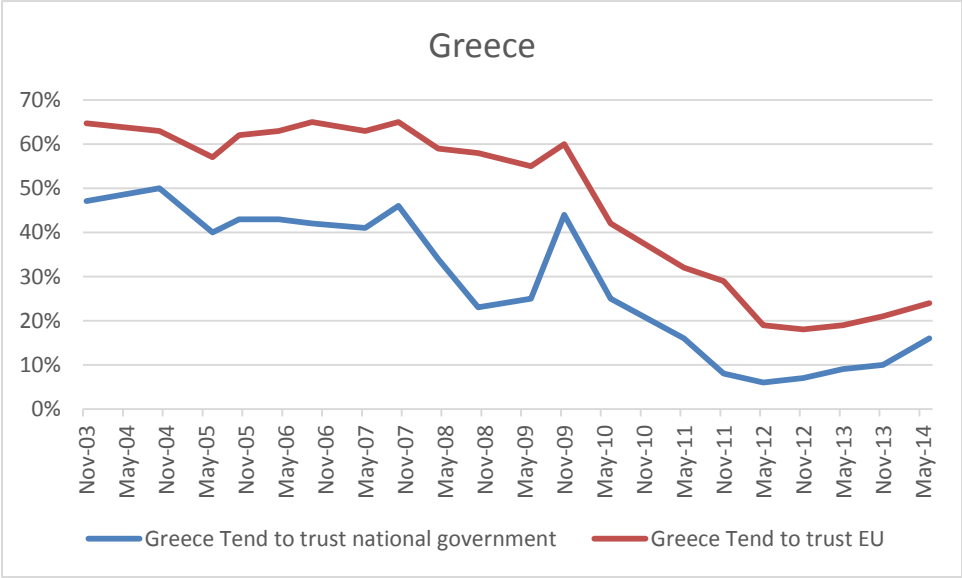


Source: Eurobarometer



The gap in Cypriot levels of trust in both levels of government is small and both levels plunge starting in 2008, right as the financial crisis struck. H1 applies here. Chart 3 shows Greece, which ascended into the EU in the early 1980s following the return of democracy after a short, but brutal, military dictatorship. While never subject to Communist rule, Greece did suffer through a brutal and divisive civil war between communists and non-communists following World War II. Greece is also a member of the Eurozone. Greece, of course, has been newsworthy of late for the controversy over negotiations for its third bailout package from international creditors and the European Central Bank, dominated by Germany. In this case we see stronger trust in the EU over the national government with a fairly consistent gap between the levels of trust. In addition Greece has been badly hurt by the economic crisis and this plays out in the sharp fall in trust levels once the crisis began in 2009 and 2010. This relatively consistent gap indicates Greece to be more *sui generis* than its older EU counterparts, but still suggests the recession has hurt trust levels. The gap however exists.

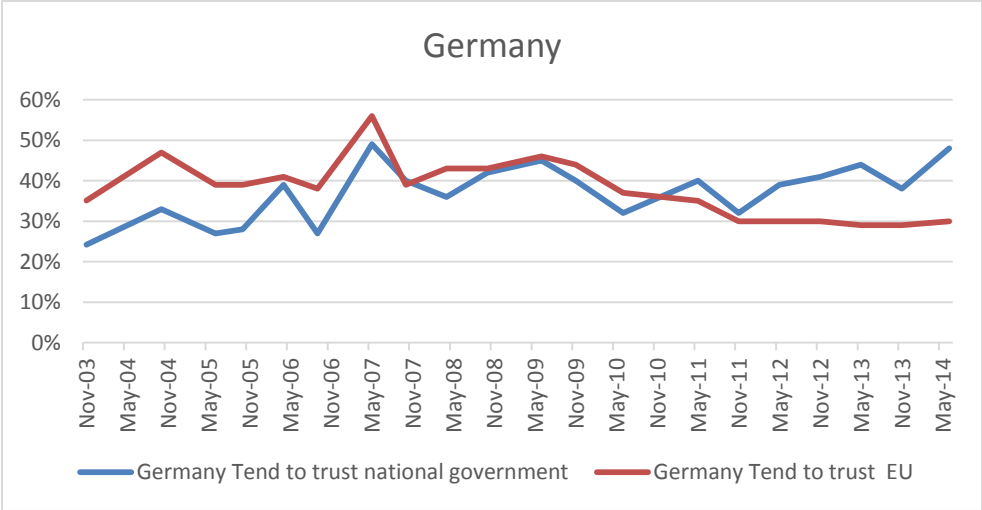
**Chart 3: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Greece**



Source: Eurobarometer

Now the attention is focused on Germany, the economic heart of the EU. Germany is the largest economy in the EU, a member of the Eurozone and politically the most powerful state. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has, for better or worse, become the face and driving force of Europe and EU policies. Since reunification in 1990, democracy and capitalism have been well established.

**Chart 4: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Germany**



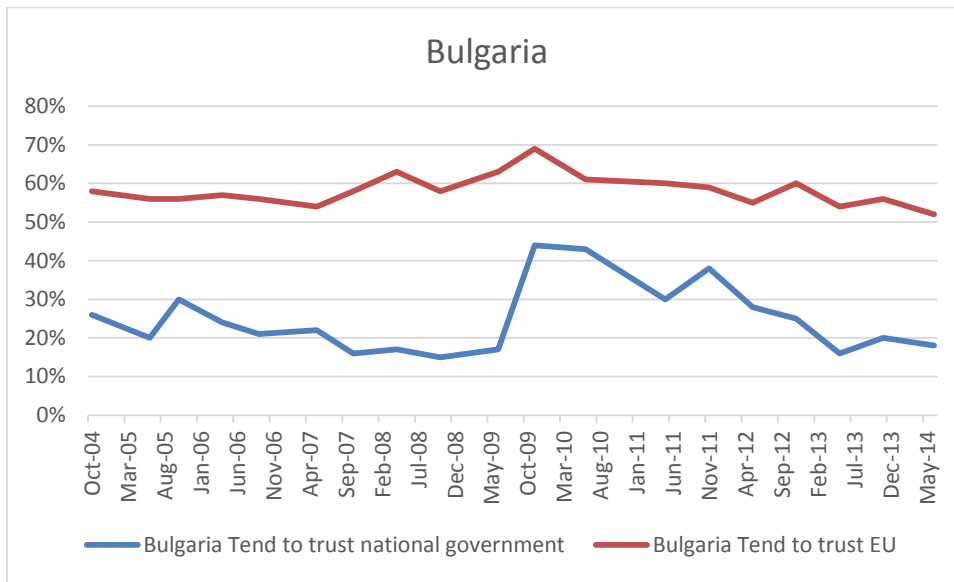
Source: Eurobarometer

Here we see an expected pattern, at least at first. The gap in German trust levels at the beginning of this study’s timeframe show a mild gap that closed in the year before the economic crisis erupted and prosperity seemed to abound in Europe. During the beginning of the crisis the gap basically closed and recently has seen trust in national government overtake trust in the EU, creating the reverse of the gap seen at the beginning of the study (though importantly both levels of trust rarely top 50 percent). The crisis seems to have had an effect on whether *sui generis* or transfer theory apply to Germany. Pre-crisis a small gap existed in favor of the EU, implying some *sui generis*. As the crisis hit, the gap vanished, then reversed in the last few years.

In the previous examples we see the effect of the economic crisis on trust levels. In the case of Belgium, wherein a gap existed before the crisis, afterwards trust levels converged. In Cyprus virtually no gap is present even as trust levels fall in the wake of the crisis. Greece sees a gap that stays consistent through the crisis as trust levels again fall. Finally in Germany, a small gap exists in favor of the EU before the crisis, evaporates during the early days of the crisis and has reversed itself in a small gap favoring the national government in the most recent surveys. To review, this paper's hypothesis states that a gap exists between levels of trust and was exacerbated by the economic crisis. The bigger the gap, the more evidence of *sui generis* theory is seen. Some EU countries show larger gaps than others; for instance, in the former Communist bloc. In 2004 the European Union had its greatest expansion, bringing in several nations of the former Communist bloc (including actual former Soviet republics Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and nearly doubling in size. Ten nations in all joined the EU, largely former Communist bloc nations transitioning to democratic capitalism. Part of the logic behind this expansion was the stabilization of democracy and capitalism, as both were new to many of these nations. Therefore it is hypothesized in these nations *support* for the stabilizing forces of the EU will outpace that of their new, unstable and often corrupt governments. This study's hypothesis believes they will possess a wider *sui generis* gap than their older counterparts.

Starting in Chart 5, selected former Communist nations are shown with their trust in national governments and trust in the EU, starting with Bulgaria, which ascended to the European Union in 2007 after at times acrimonious negotiations.

**Chart 5: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Bulgaria**

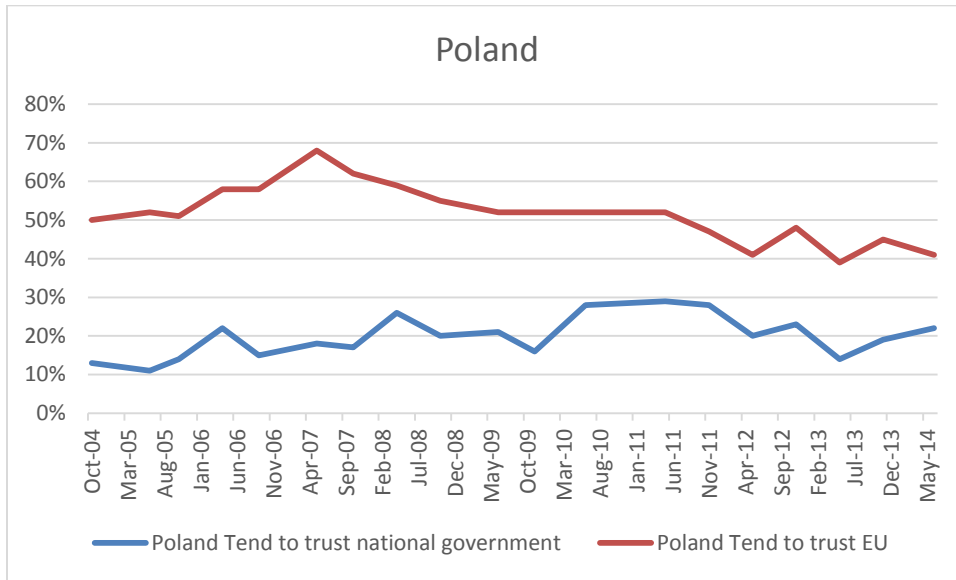


*Source: Eurobarometer*

Bulgaria, like its neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe, had a Communist government after World War II, only coming to democracy and capitalism in the early 1990s. Both before and after ascension Bulgarians had a higher level of trust in the EU than in their own national government. A wide gap exists between the levels of trust Bulgarians have for the EU and their national government, with the EU being consistently more trusted. In addition the economic crisis seems to have little effect on these levels.

Among the biggest and most enthusiastic EU proponents in the former Communist bloc was Poland, shown in Chart 6. Poland was among the leaders in overthrowing Communist rule and sought EU membership enthusiastically, though it has since cooled on joining the Eurozone. Chart 6 shows Polish levels of trust.

**Chart 6: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Poland**

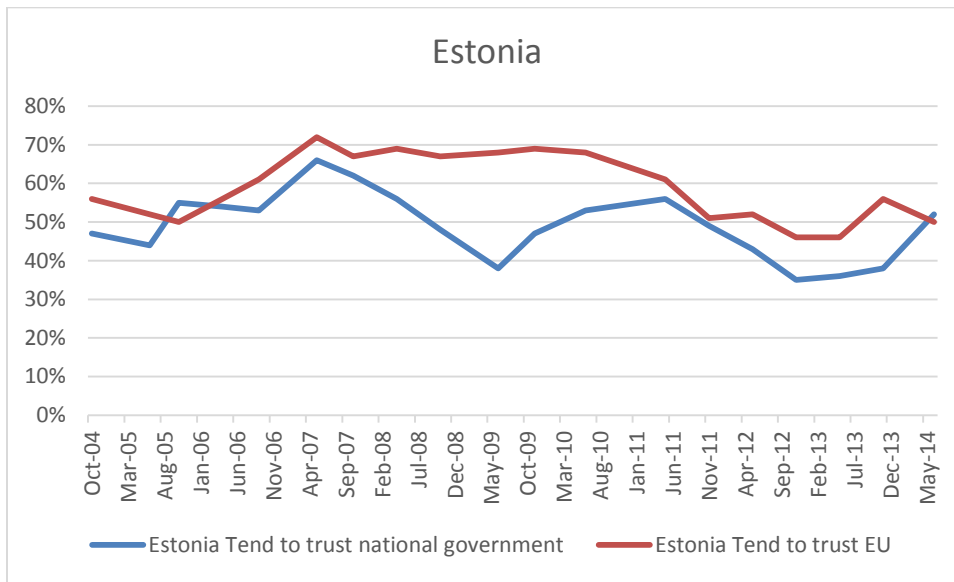


Source: Eurobarometer

A large gap between levels of trust exists early in the timeframe and closes somewhat as the economic crisis unfolded. This fits the hypothesis.

Another state that ascended in the mass expansion of 2004-5 was Estonia. Not only was Estonia a former Communist state, Estonia is a former constituent part of the USSR until independence in 1991. Unlike Bulgaria and Poland, Estonia is a member of the Eurozone. In Estonia there is a small and minimal gap between levels of trust, with the exception a sharp dip in trust in May 2009 for the national government, which was at the beginnings of the financial crisis. Nevertheless, Estonia does not fit neatly into the hypothesis that a *sui generis*-based gap exists and is more prevalent in the newer, formerly Communist member-states. Chart 7 below illustrates Estonia's case.

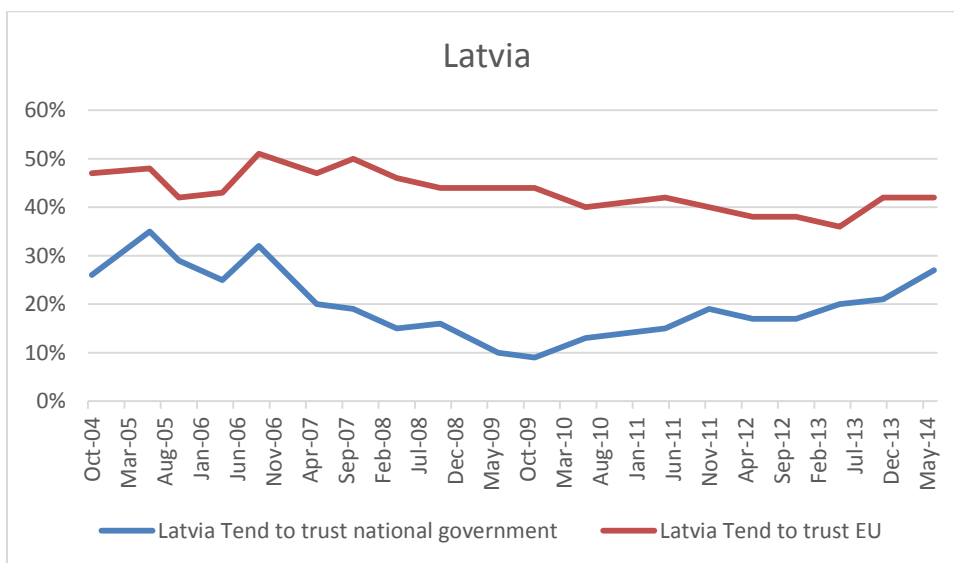
**Chart 7: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Estonia**



Source: Eurobarometer

An entirely different case is seen in Latvia, Estonia’s fellow former Soviet republic. Here a large gap exists that narrows somewhat in recent years of the crisis (once again note the lack of trust passing the 50 percent mark). In addition Latvia implemented European-initiated austerity measures similar to Greece in 2010-11, with much less political drama.

**Chart 8: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Latvia**



Source: Eurobarometer

Only Estonia, Germany and Cyprus see little to no gap in levels of trust. Belgium began the timeframe of the study with a small gap, but once the crisis unfolded that gap disappeared. Meanwhile, Greece, Bulgaria, Poland and Latvia show consistent and large gaps. H1 anticipated *sui generis* to be more prevalent in “newer” Europe, meaning a large gap in trust levels, with smaller gaps in “old” Europe. The following sections attempt to briefly account for these unexpected challenges to the hypothesis. However, due to time and the limited scope of this paper, deeper analysis will need to be done.

## INSTITUTIONAL DEFICIT

The new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe challenge the stereotype of growing Euro-skepticism in EU member nations, as their levels of trust in the EU exceed those of their national government, at least for now. In addition, these nations have larger gaps in their trust levels between national and transnational governments, even in light of the financial crisis. This suggests strong *sui generis* theory. An explanation for the discrepancy between the regions of the European Union might be explained by a sub hypothesis: nations with a recent history of authoritarian political control and a state centered economy (i.e. the former Communist nations of Central and Eastern Europe) lack fully consolidated and transparent democracies that have not yet fully earned democratic legitimacy from their populace, while the older and more established European Union is viewed as more stable, less corrupt and possessing more opportunity than the new national regimes. This *institutional* deficit then may explain why the hypothesis does not appear to apply as expected.

To test this sub hypothesis, corruption scores from Transparency International (a global anti-corruption NGO) are measured from the EU members listed above. Transparency International defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” (International). Yearly Transparency International releases a corruption perception index, which allows the comparison over time of the public’s perceptions of corruption in that country. A score of 0 is highly corrupt, while a score of 100 is a highly clean system. Table 1 below lists the EU countries listed above.

**Table 1: EU corruption perception index by 2014 score**

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>2014 Score</b>	<b>Rank out of all nations</b>
Germany	79	12/174
Belgium	76	15/174
Estonia	69	26/174
Cyprus	63	31/174
Poland	61	35/174
Latvia	55	43-174
Bulgaria	43	69/174
Greece	43	69/174

Source: <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results>

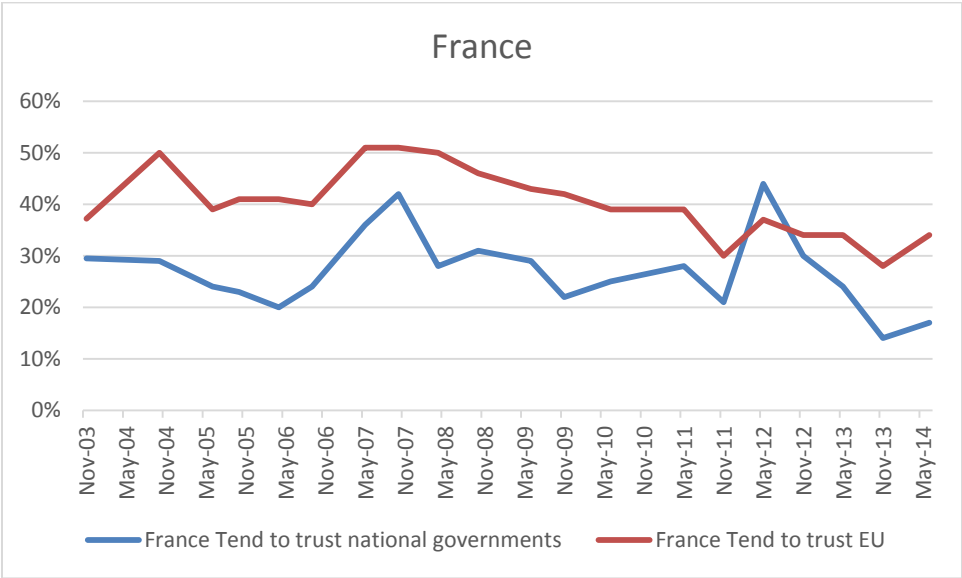
This list is topped by Germany, Belgium, Estonia and Cyprus with Poland just behind the Cypriots. Founding members Germany and Belgium possess high levels of belief in their cleanliness of their governments and see little gap in their levels of trust (though Belgium’s gap was virtually eliminated and Germany’s grew in favor of the national government during the economic crisis), as the hypothesis expects. Estonia, Cyprus, Poland and Latvia (three of whom are former Communist nations with a predicted institutional deficit) sit fairly close to each other in the middle of the pack with Bulgaria and Greece relatively far behind their brethren. The hypothesis predicts that newer member-nations with a recent history of Communist domination will have a higher level of trust in the EU and large gaps. While Latvia, Poland and Bulgaria bear



this out, Estonia’s relatively small gap coupled with Greece’s gap complicate matters. Table 1 attempts to explain via corruption perception indices possibly why Greece and Estonia differ from the hypothetical expectations. Greece’s high level of perceived corruption puts it closer in line with other Balkan members, while Estonia’s is more moderate. Corruption seems to play at least some factor trusting the EU over a new, unstable national government (such as in Bulgaria).

Another factor is the economic crisis. Briefly follows trust levels in bigger countries hit hard by the economic crisis, many of which have been forced to implement austerity programs by the member-states less affected. Charts 9 through 12 depict France, Rep. of Ireland, Italy and Spain (nations hit by austerity or the threat of austerity). Charts 13-16 show economically stronger countries such as Finland, Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. All but the UK are members of the Eurozone. In addition the UK’s Conservative-led government implemented some austerity measures on its own. Here are the results:

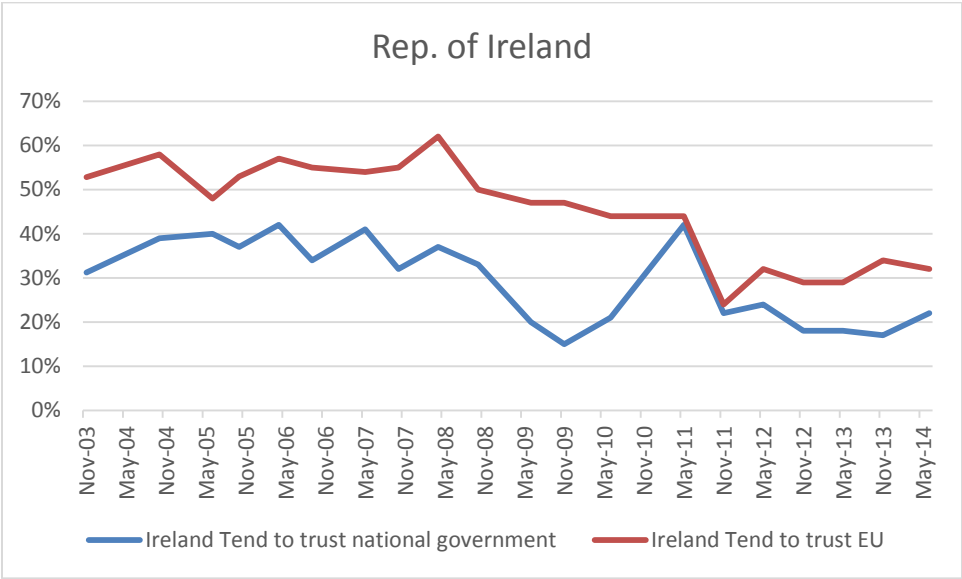
**Chart 9: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in France**



Source: Eurobarometer

France’s trust levels fluctuate and usually have a gap, indicating *sui generis*, despite France’s position as the second biggest economy in the Eurozone and historically the principal proponents of a united Europe. Chart 10 shows the Republic of Ireland, very badly hit in 2010’s crisis.

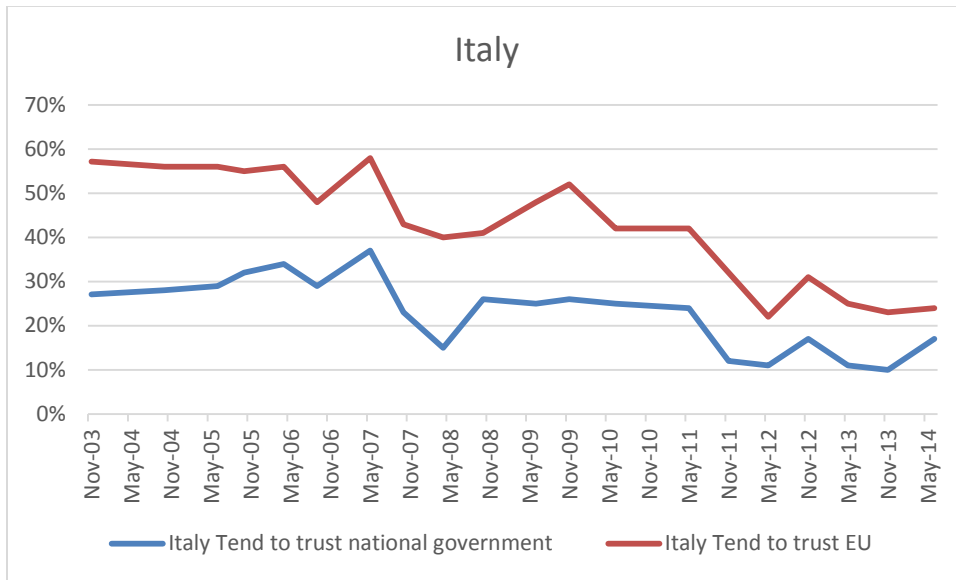
**Chart 10: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Rep. of Ireland**



Source: Eurobarometer

Again, we see a continuous gap, with the exception if May 2011. As the crisis abated by 2012 Irish levels of trust seemed to return to close to their pre-crisis levels. Ireland ascended to the EU in the 1970s and has an established democracy. Seeing *sui generis* this much is contrary to the hypothesis’ expectations, if the financial crisis is not taken into account. Next is Italy, shown below in Chart 11.

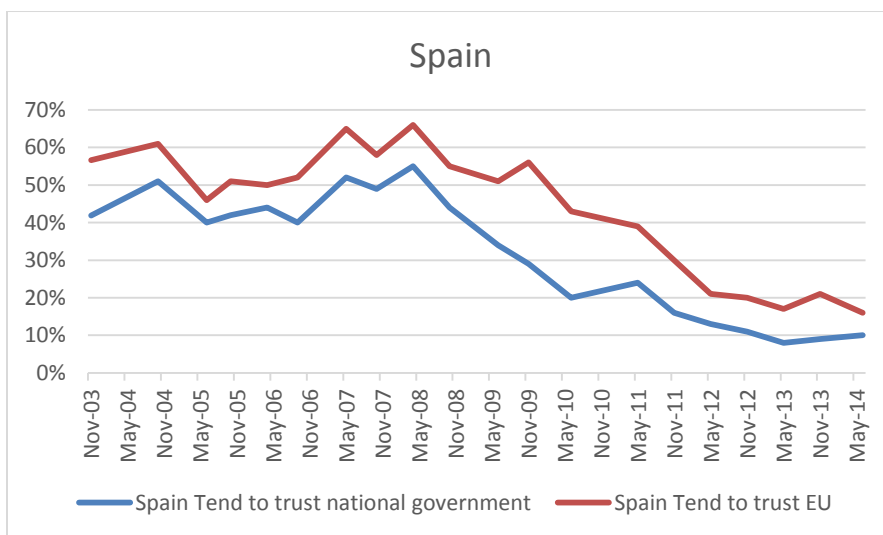
**Chart 11: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Italy**



Source: Eurobarometer

Italy also has seen economic difficulties during the last few years of the financial crisis, but still possesses a consistent gap in levels of trust, even as faith in the EU has fallen. Italy is a founding member of the EU and the Eurozone, therefore expected to show small gaps, if at all, according to the hypothesis. Chart 12 shows another austerity nation; Spain.

**Chart 12: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Spain**

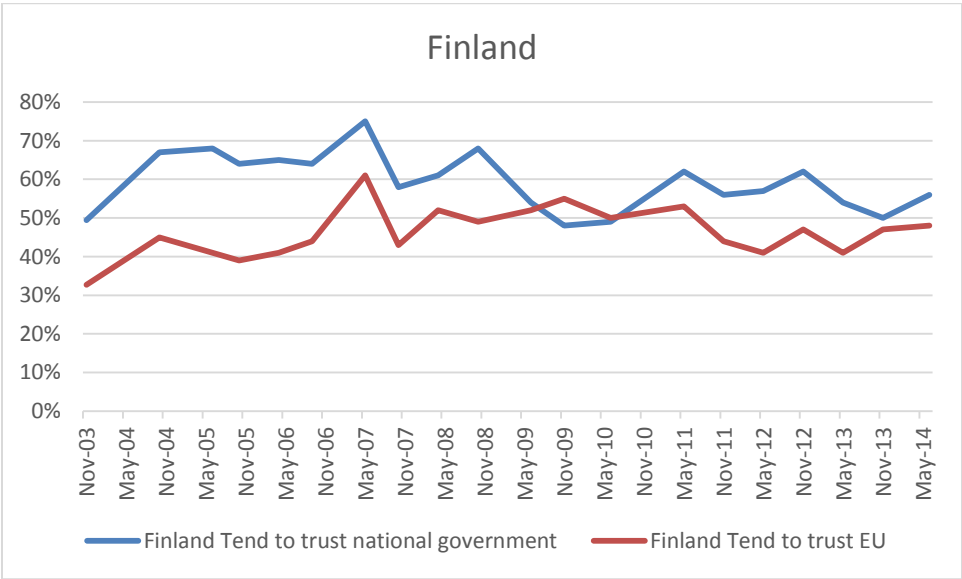


Source: Eurobarometer

Spain joined the EU in the early 1980s after completing the transition to democracy from the Franco years and is a member of the Eurozone. A relatively small but consistent gap exists. The crisis in Spain has seen an erosion of trust in both the national government and the EU.

Finally, next this study briefly looks at the stronger, creditor nations of the EU (having already examined Germany). First is Chart 13 and Finland.

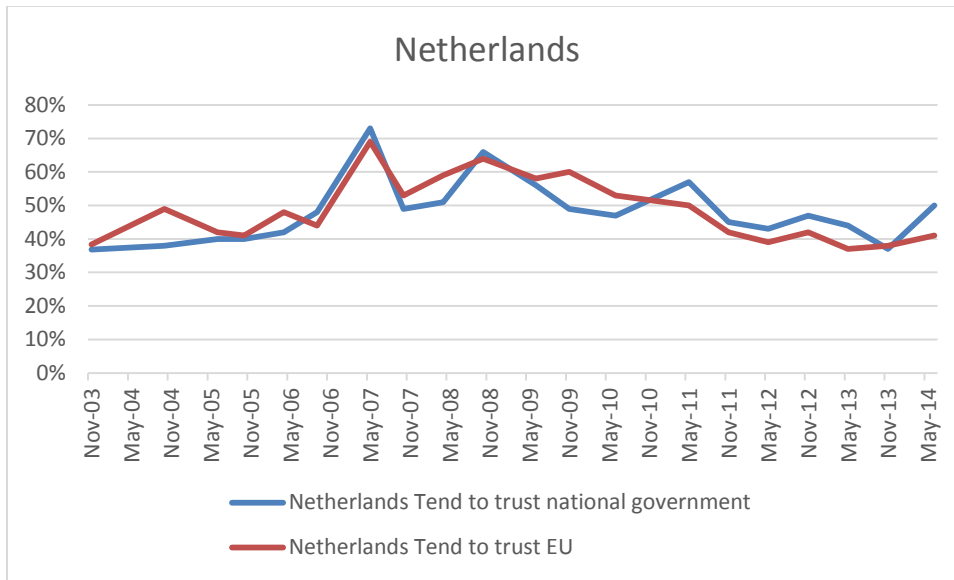
**Chart 13: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Finland**



Source: Eurobarometer

Finland is a newer member of the EU, but has a small gap that has closed somewhat during the crisis. Furthermore, trust in the Finnish government is slightly higher than the EU. In recent negotiations with Greece for a third bailout, Finland has been a supporter of Germany’s hardline tactics. Next is Chart 14 and the Netherlands. The Dutch nation is small, but possesses a strong economy and is among the founding members of the European Union.

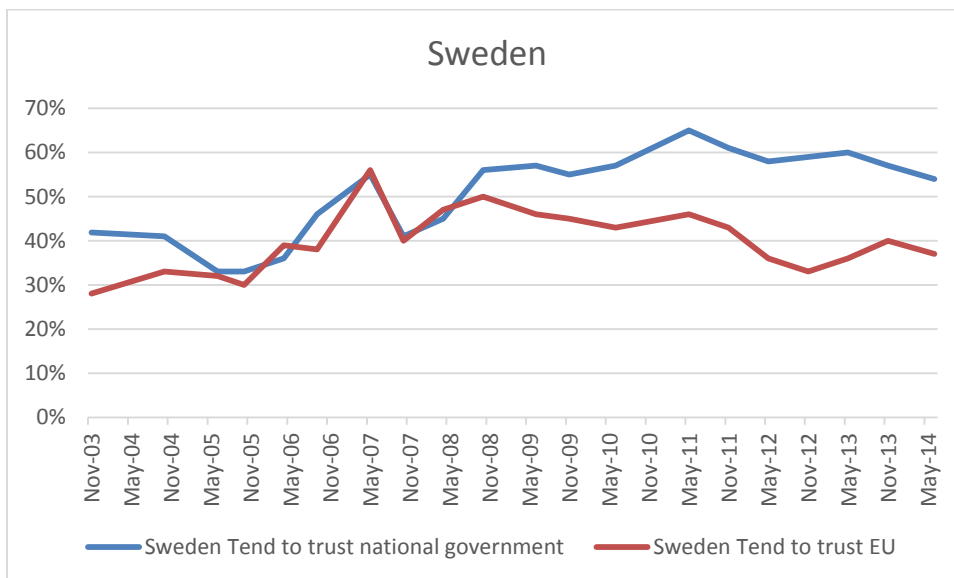
**Chart 14: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Netherlands**



Source: Eurobarometer

The Netherlands follows what the hypothesis expects: virtually no gap exists between trust in the national government and the EU. Next is Sweden, which joined in 1995 (alongside Finland) and is not in the Eurozone.

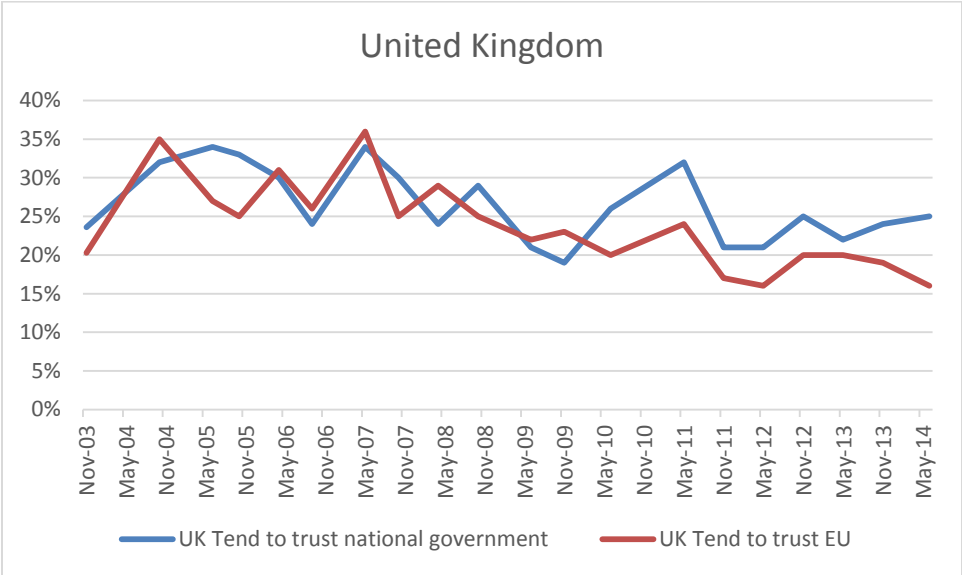
**Chart 15: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Sweden**



Source: Eurobarometer

Sweden shows little gap until the economic crisis hits, at which point faith in their own government begins to exceed that in the EU. Finally, the United Kingdom is examined. The UK has a consistent Euro-skeptic streak. The third largest vote getter in this year’s general election with the strongly Euro-skeptic United Kingdom Independence Party. The UK joined in the 1970s (after French opposition was dropped) and is not a member of the Eurozone.

**Chart 16: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in United Kingdom**



Source: Eurobarometer

The UK shows a low level of trust in BOTH governments but the gap is consistently small.

In conclusion, the hypothesis states there will be a gap between levels of trust in the national government of a member-state and the larger EU (indicating *sui generis*. The larger the gap, the more *sui generis* that country is). This will be especially true for the newer states with a recent history Communist authoritarianism, largely due to perceptions of corruption in their new regimes. Older European members will possess smaller gaps. The initial data did not fully back up the hypothesis. A further test was done on levels of perceived corruption. Well partially explanatory it was not fully so. Finally, when taking the financial crisis into account, the

incompleteness of the hypothesis is seen. Countries examined with small gaps (hypothesized to be older EU members) were:

- A) Belgium after the crisis,
- B) Cyprus,
- C) Estonia,
- D) Finland,
- E) Germany before the crisis,
- F) Netherlands,
- G) Sweden before the crisis and
- H) United Kingdom.

Countries with relatively large gaps included:

- A) Bulgaria,
- B) France,
- C) Greece,
- D) Rep. of Ireland,
- E) Italy,
- F) Latvia,
- G) Poland and
- H) Spain.

In the first group, only Estonia and Cyprus don't fit the hypothesis. Both countries though enjoy high levels of perceived cleanliness in their government. The second group, which contains the *sui generis* gap, is more diverse. France, Greece, Rep. of Ireland, Italy and Spain are all

hypothesized to be more in line with their older European counterparts. Corruption is one factor, especially in Greece, that may be contributing to this gap. Another could be the economic crisis. All of these countries have been hit hard by the crisis, while those in the first group have fared relatively well, are creditor nations in the Eurozone or are outside the Eurozone entirely and thus aren't faced with the same contagion effect should the Eurozone collapse. In short corruption, Eurozone membership and austerity in the economic crisis appear to play important factors in how *sui generis* a countries outlook has become in the financial crisis.

Further study is needed, especially to investigate the newer members of the Union. If these newer members possess more faith in the EU than their own national governments due to corruption and implications from the financial crisis, it is possible their trust levels will change as they further integrate with Europe. Meaning it is possible their trust gaps will reverse and resemble their older counterparts in northwestern Europe as they further integrate and stabilize; or they will stay similar to their current levels. In addition further study is needed on the causes of the gaps, where they exist. This study is limited in scope. Other variables likely need taken into account.



## DISCUSSION

This study tests the hypothesis to answer the research question as to how European Union citizens perceive their governments and institutions; specifically whether Europeans judge the European Union on its own merits (*sui generis* theory) or through the lens of their national government (transfer theory). Mair identified the differences between first and second order elections as evidence of transfer theory at work. *Sui generis* theorists believe citizens judge each by its own merits, as Clark and Rohrschneider (2009) show. Utilizing two simple Eurobarometer questions regarding faith and trust in national and EU governments in each member nation, I was able to test to determine if a gap existed in levels of trust. The larger the gap, the more *sui generis* theory was applicable in that country. By entering the survey questions into graphs, it was possible to observe public support for both national and European governments' side-by-side and over time.

The evidence presented a mix. Some states showed little to no gap, such as Germany, the Netherlands and Cyprus. Belgium's gap disappeared as the financial crisis unfolded. Some other states showed small gaps, primarily in the north and west of Europe. Larger gaps were seen in Greece, Bulgaria, Poland, France, Italy and Spain (among others). An institutional gap was tested. Using the Transparency International corruption perception index, several former Communist nations were seen to have higher levels of perceived corruption, possibly resulting in these nations' higher levels of *sui generis* gaps than their older counterparts. Approximately 100 million people, a third of the EU's population, are estimated to reside in these former Communist countries that favor the EU. This explanation, though, was not completely satisfactory as some non-Communist states also possessed high levels of *sui generis*. More explanatory was the effects of the financial crisis. States that suffered high levels of corruption IN ADDITION to

suffering via the financial crisis and subsequent unpopular austerity measures seemed to have higher levels of *sui generis*. This suggests a connection. The notable exception to this rule is Cyprus, which features a nearly negligible gap in trust levels. More research is needed.

This study suggests that Europe the European Union is far more complex than the simple paradigm of unelected elites imposing unpopular policies on a pliant and helpless public. The EU is a diverse and rich mosaic of political, cultural and economic cultures and nations. While undoubtedly the EU and policies seen as emanating from unelected bureaucrats from within the EU are unpopular in large segments of the public, the demonstrated trust deficit does not necessarily extend throughout the entirety of the continent. Mair and others note that European issues have largely been absent in domestic political elections, but there is evidence this is changing, possibly forcing the EU into a more democratic, accountable direction. The addition of *Spitzenkandidaten* is an indicator the European issues are gaining more salience, which may improve the chances of democratizing the EU. Euro-skeptic parties are entering the mainstream in places like the UK, where UKIP, while performing poorly in terms of seats, was the third largest vote getter in the UK general election. The reelected British government has promised an in or out referendum for the UK soon. All of these show European issues are entering the domestic mainstream, albeit in potentially unforeseen ways with unforeseen consequences on Europe. However it also presents the opportunity for policy-makers to incorporate Euro-skeptic parties in a peaceful, democratic way as well as reform the EU for the better, with increased accountability.

Rising Euro-skepticism and anti-EU fringe parties entering the mainstream is not the complete story. Findings indicate Central and East Europe value the EU more than the rest of the union, possibly making them more reluctant to enact reforms other nations are demanding

(though as these nations are integrated into Western Europe the possibility exists for the trust deficit to reverse and imitate the old European members). For instance the Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) have supported the sometimes unpopular German hardline on Greek debt relief negotiations. Hungary is building a border fence to keep out migrant workers. Numerous other cases of difficulty to reach a consensus agreement on policy include aggressive Russian expansion, migrants and refugees fleeing from the Middle East and future institutional reforms being pushed by the UK and others. It is possible the size and scope of the EU, in addition to the rapid and sizable accession of the Central and Eastern European countries with different political, social and economic histories, has made reaching a viable consensus more difficult. This in turn may result in policies too diluted to be of use in such a large, complex union. The result could then be profound frustration at the lack of efficiency and efficacy of European institutions, leading to more skepticism and a loss of trust. In addition, the growing public ennui in democratic and pluralistic societies in the West can further drive negative perceptions of Europe and institutions (but not necessarily of the policy-makers or the institutions themselves). Of interest for the future of the EU will be a possible United Kingdom referendum on leaving the EU, new elections in Greece and a possible bid for independence from Catalonia. Successful resolutions of these issues could greatly enhance the stability and legitimacy of the Shuman's European project. Furthermore, increased tension with Russia in the Ukraine crisis may inspire the EU to reduce dependence on Russian oil and recommit to NATO and a more united foreign and security policy. In short, this study suggests that the European Union and its politics are far more complex than the simple narratives seemingly emerging from European coverage and study: specifically in the difference perceptions between "old" Europe and "new" Europe.

The problems of the Eurozone are now exposed to the world and the rise of outside-the-mainstream parties to challenge (and possibly reinvigorate) mainstream politics may shake the EU out of its austerity-obsessed myopia and make the proper reforms that grow economies and provide a growth in wages and jobs, allowing for stability. In addition, anti-immigration anti-European parties rise in domestic elections may force mainstream parties to deal with these unpleasant and controversial issues and come to a more moderate resolution, in order to survive their challenge from more extremist parties. By forcing mainstream parties to deal with European issues, despite the risks, they may finally manage them and the extreme anti-EU parties would be weakened. The proper reforms may be enacted, and not knee-jerk, nationalistic and xenophobic policies advocated by some. The EU can survive and thrive and better promote its post-modern mission to provide security through internationalism and integration. It can prove democracy and capitalism can handle the rigors of an increasingly stateless world without sacrificing stability, prosperity, security, liberalism and respect for civil rights. The alternative is to fall into nationalistic and xenophobic discourse and atrophy, risking the entire European experiment for the political expediencies of the now.

It should be noted that this paper is suggestive and limited. Some correlation is seen between levels of trust in national government and levels of trust in the EU in several cases, but *correlation is not causation*. Further study is needed in this area, as well as in the emerging differences between “old” North and West Europe and “new” Central and East Europe. Additional study relevant to this paper would be in the nature of democracies in the West; meaning older, more established member-states seem to have a greater ennui towards Europe, democracy and pluralism. It is possible that it is the nature of a democratic society to grow

frustrated with the compromises inherent in a pluralistic system, causing some of the trust and legitimacy issues this paper discusses.

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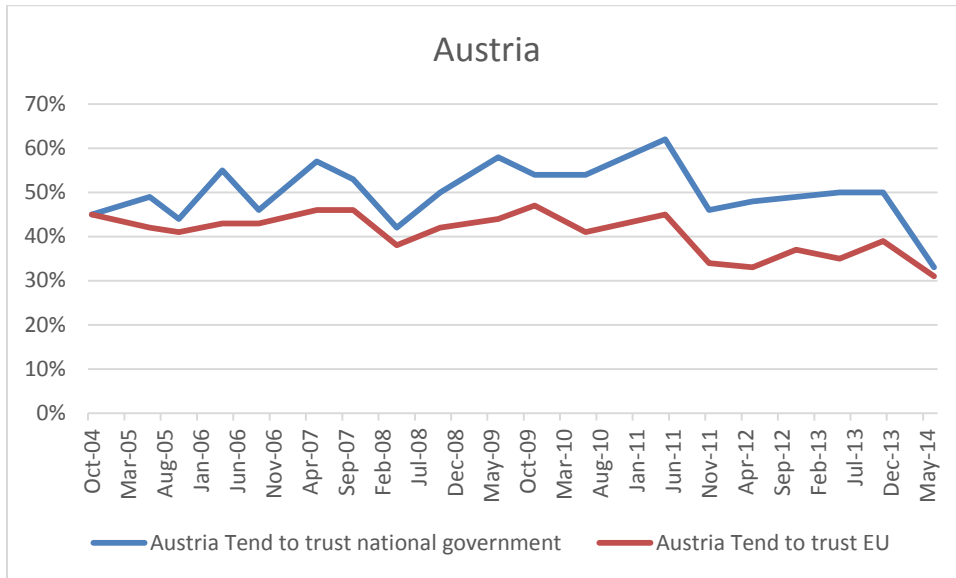
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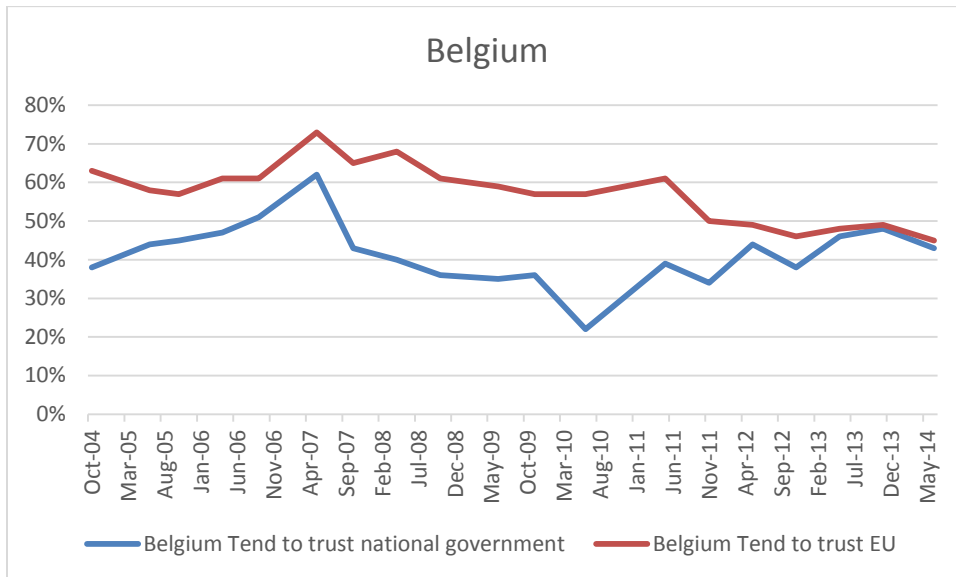
## Appendix A: Charts for all 28 European Union Member-States

Appendix Chart A: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Austria



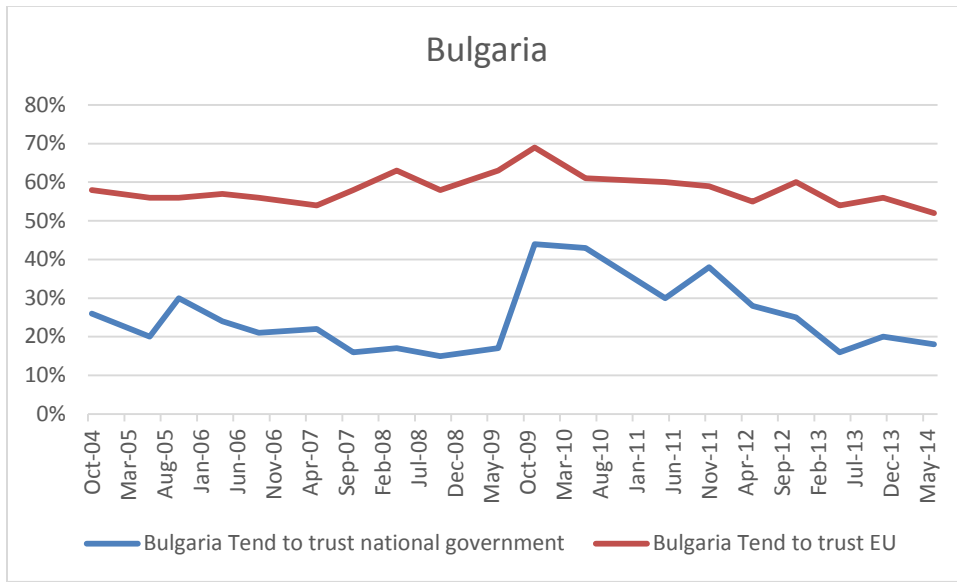
Source: Eurobarometer

Appendix Chart B: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Belgium



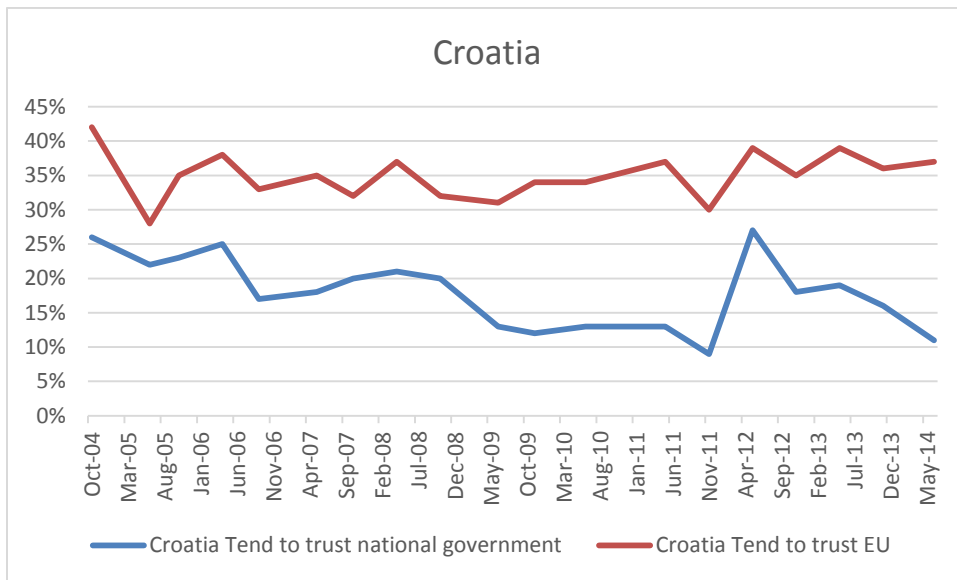
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart C: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Bulgaria**



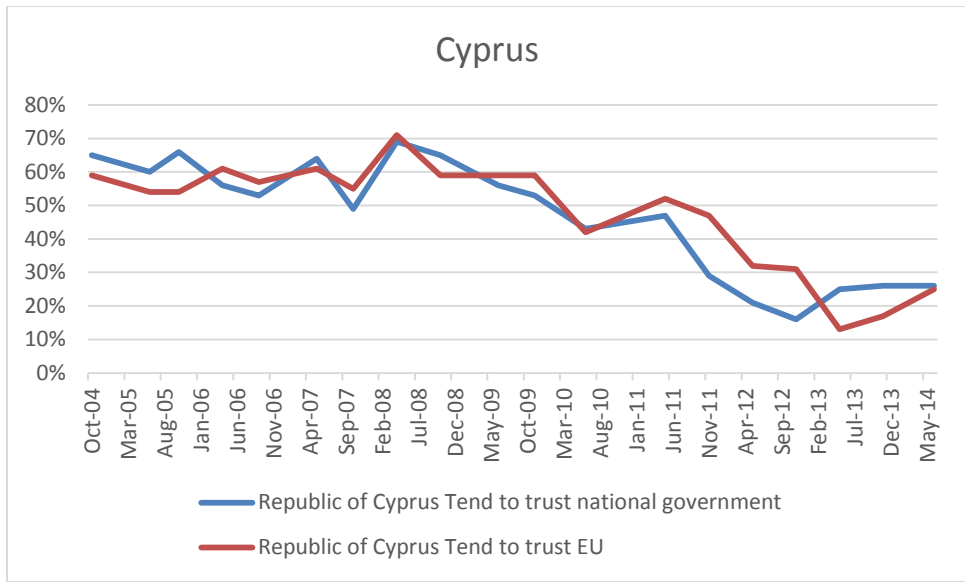
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart D: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Croatia**



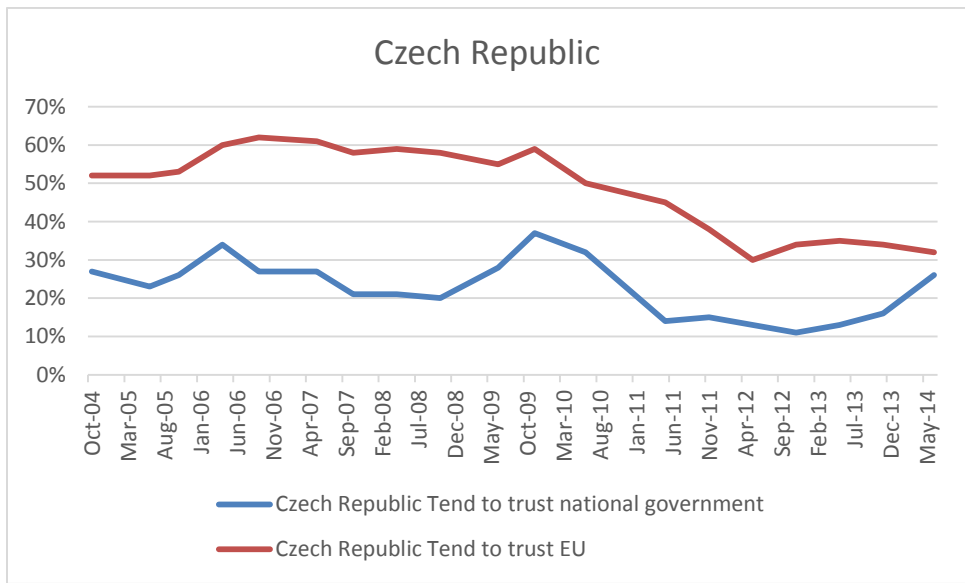
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart E: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Cyprus**



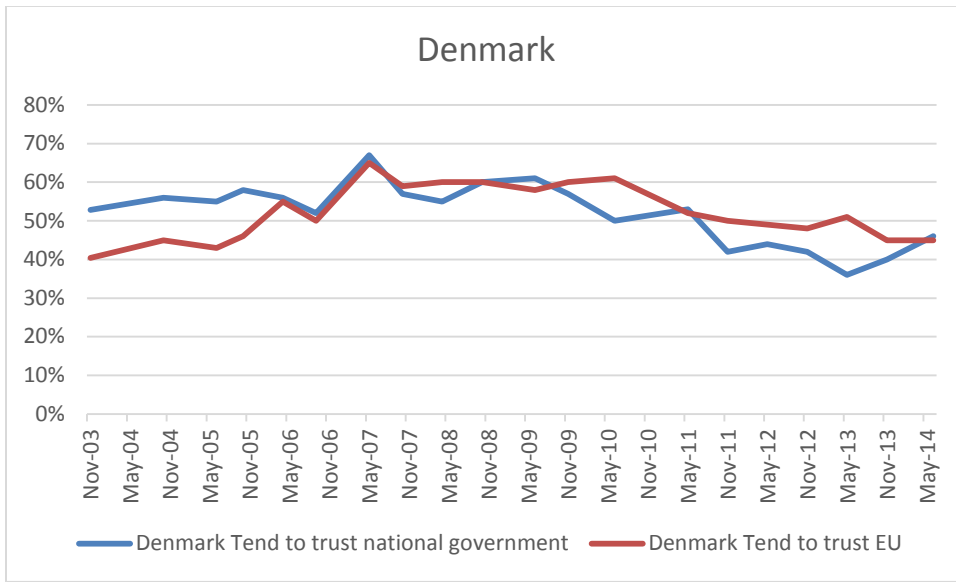
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart F: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Czech Republic**



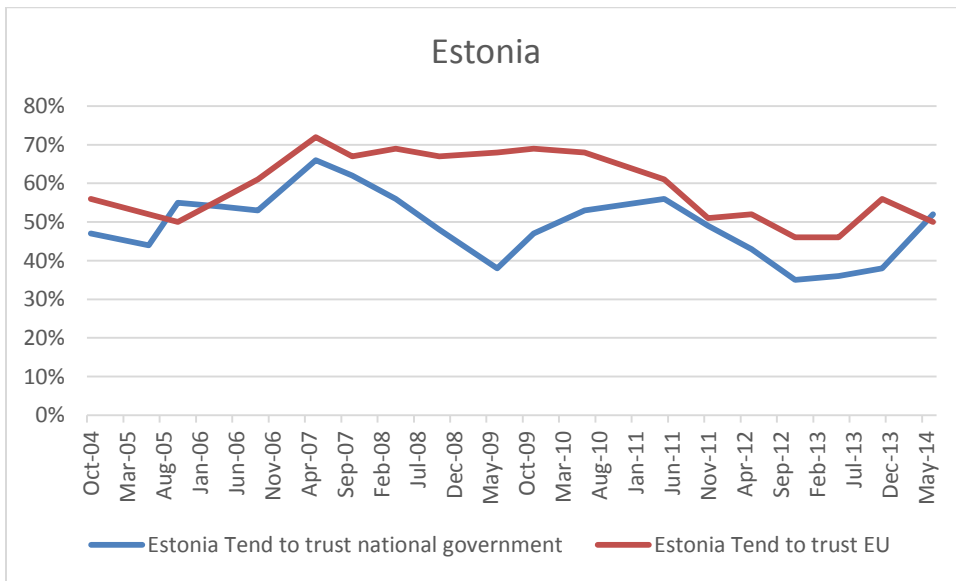
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart G: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Denmark**



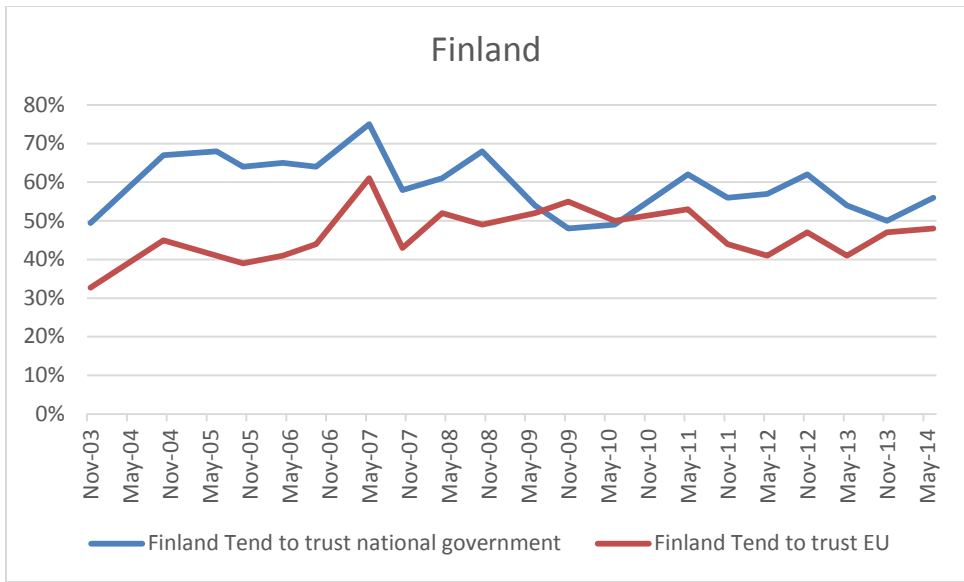
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart H: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Estonia**



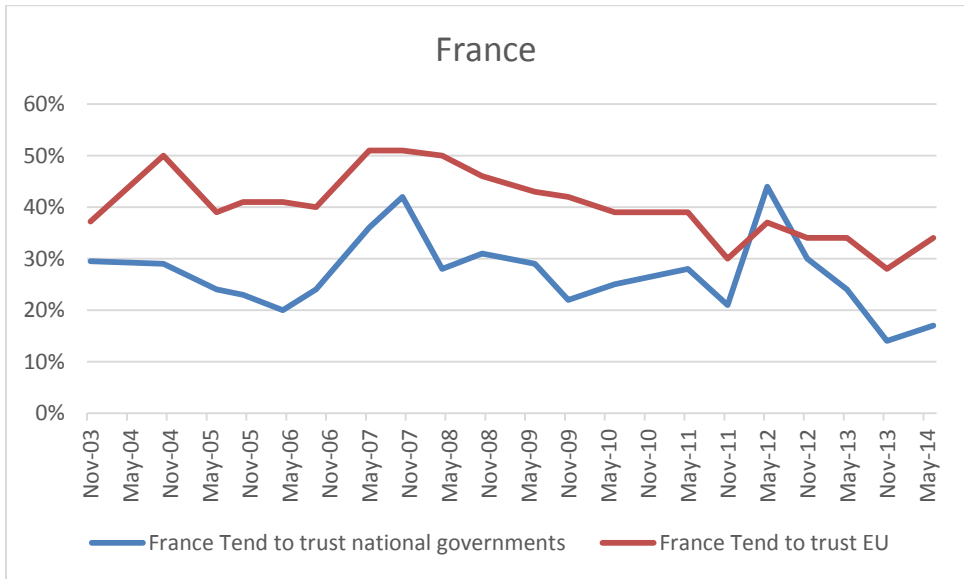
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart I: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Finland**



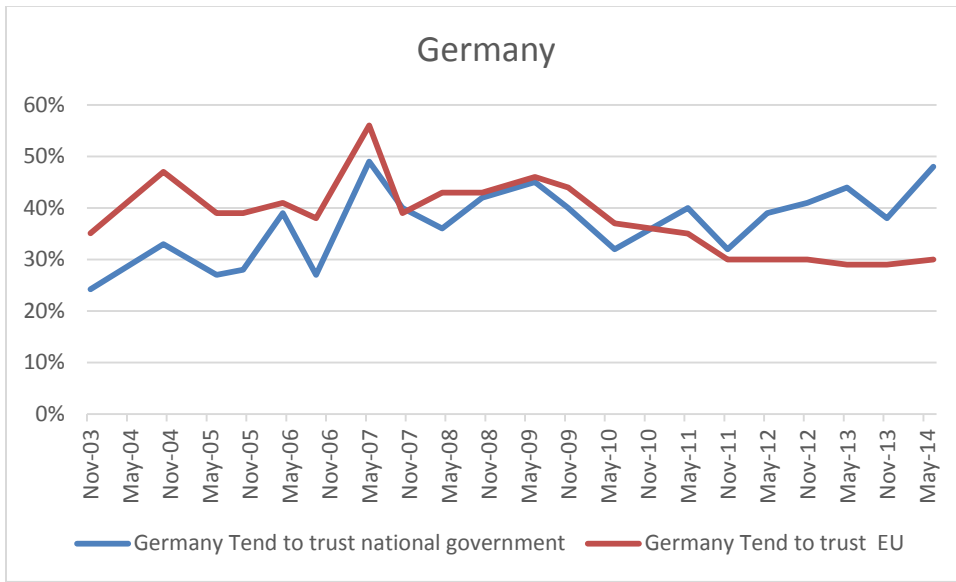
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart J: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in France**



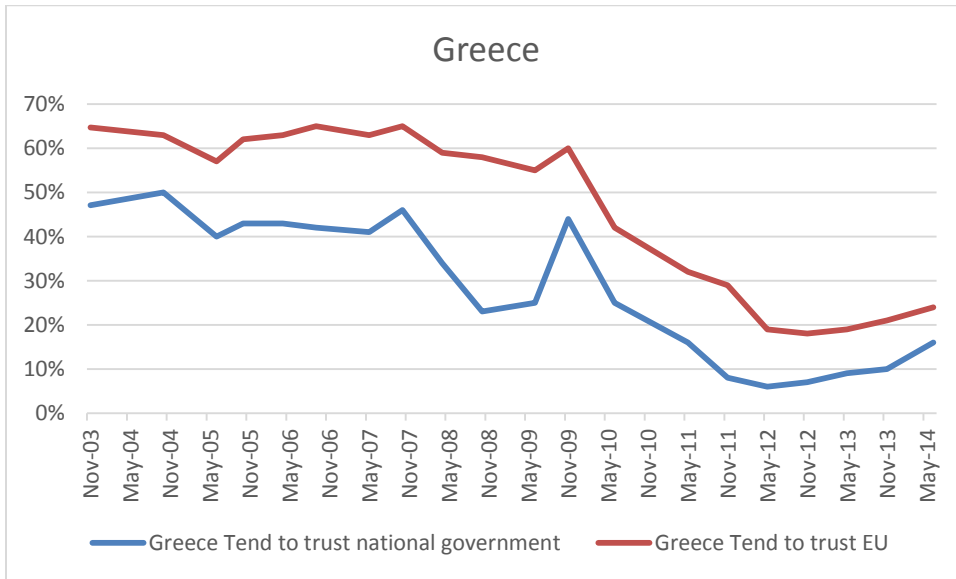
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart K: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Germany**



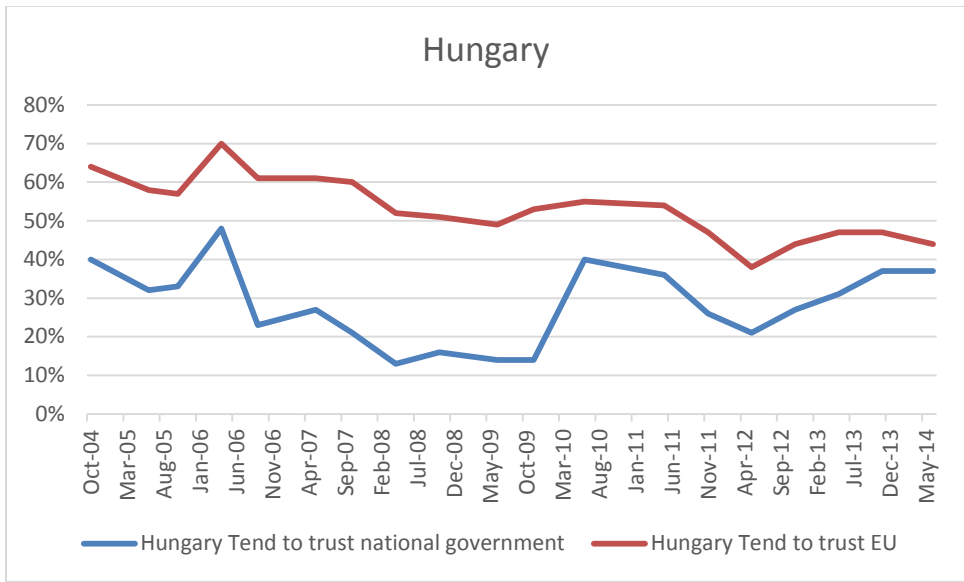
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart L: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Greece**



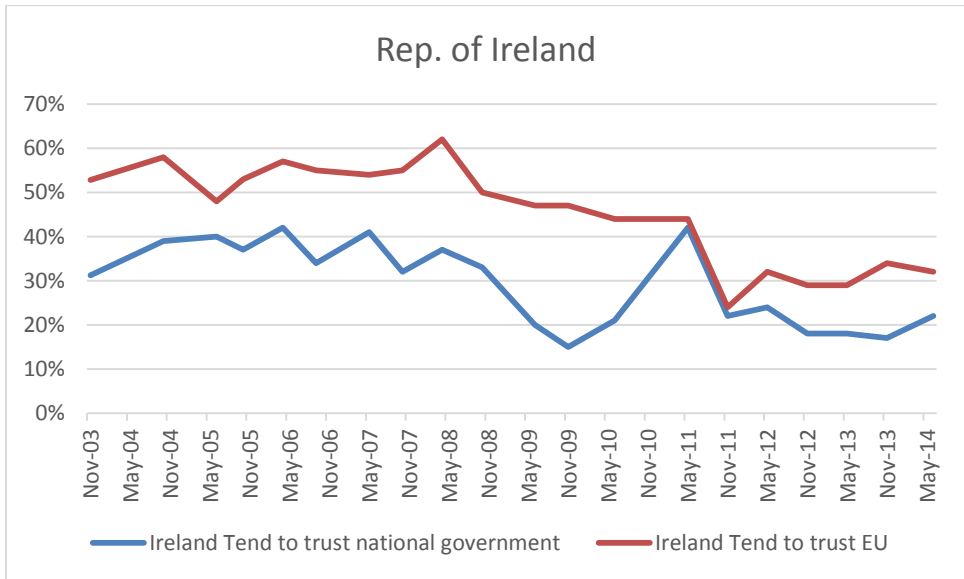
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart M: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Hungary**



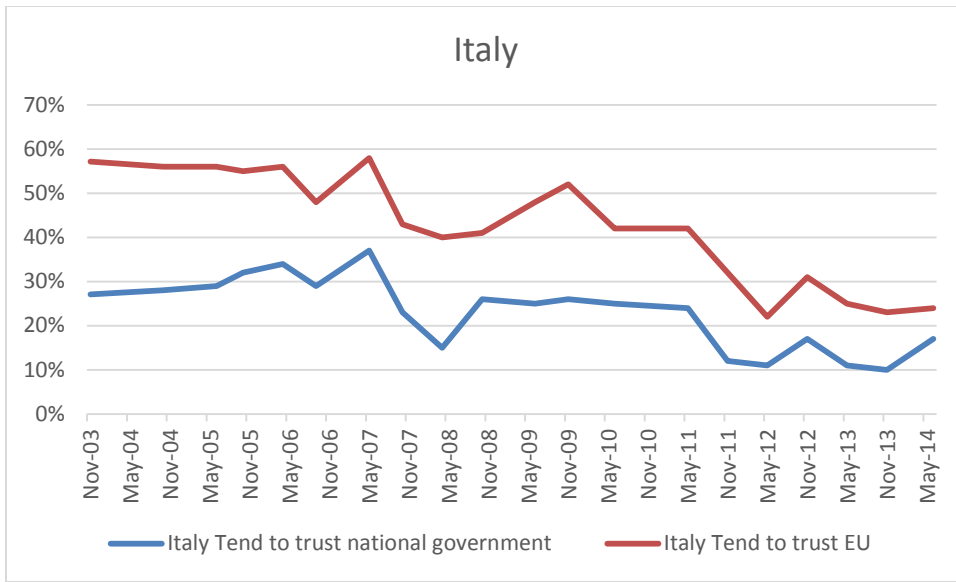
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart N: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Republic of Ireland**



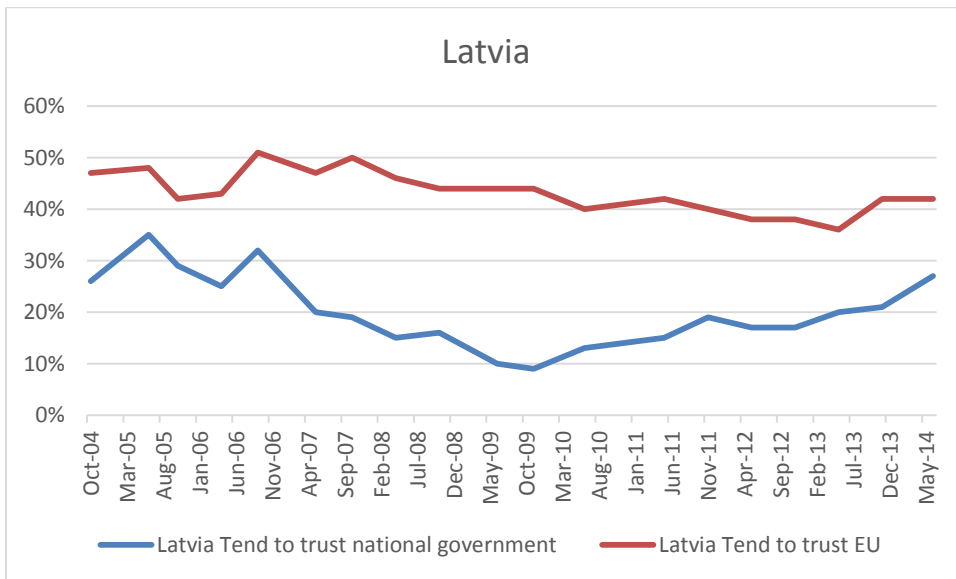
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart O: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Italy**



Source: Eurobarometer

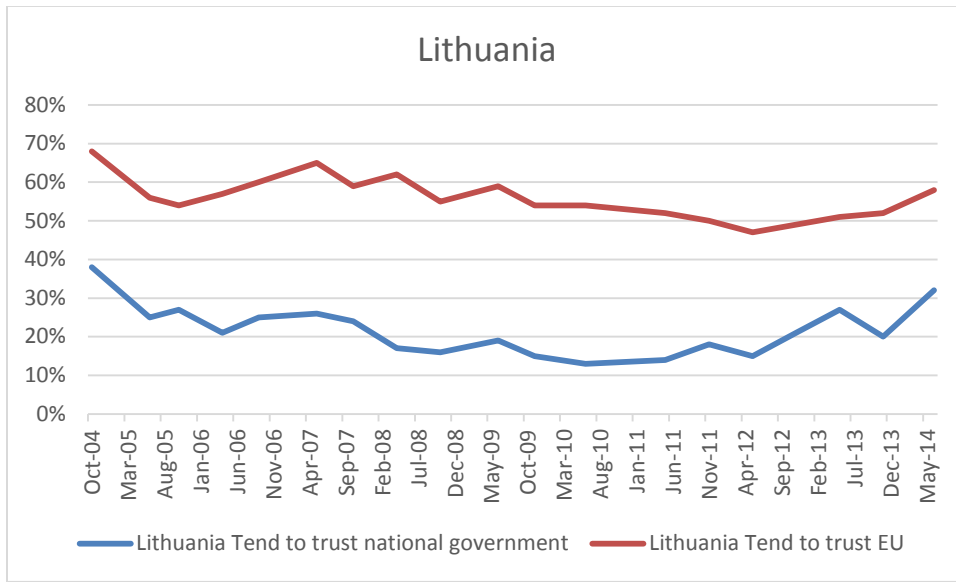
**Appendix Chart P: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Latvia**



Source: Eurobarometer

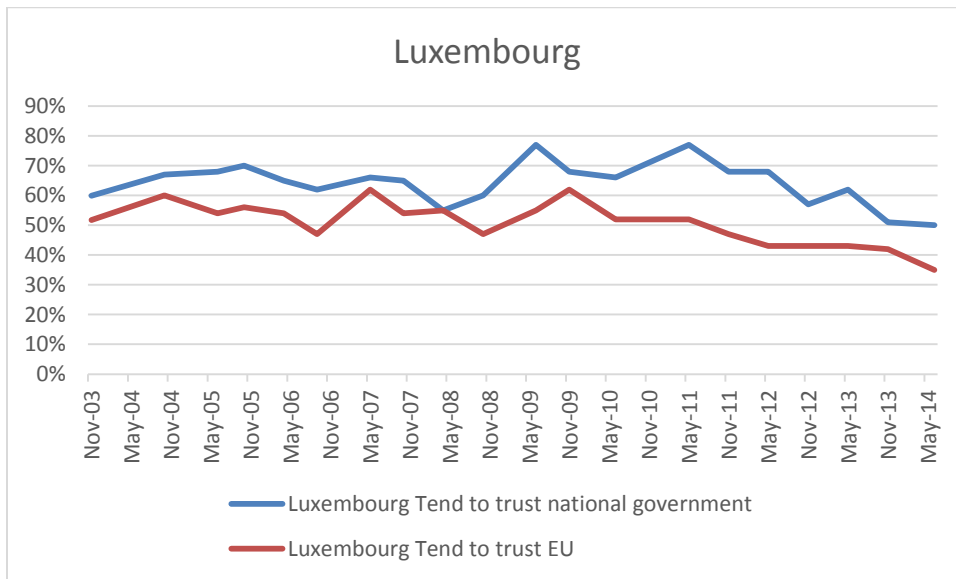


**Appendix Chart Q: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Lithuania**



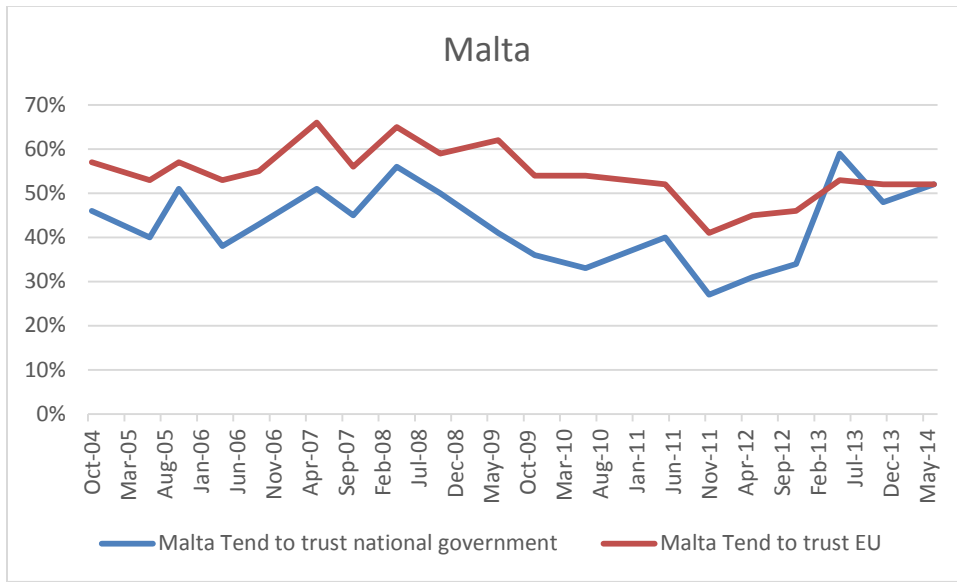
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart R: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Luxembourg**



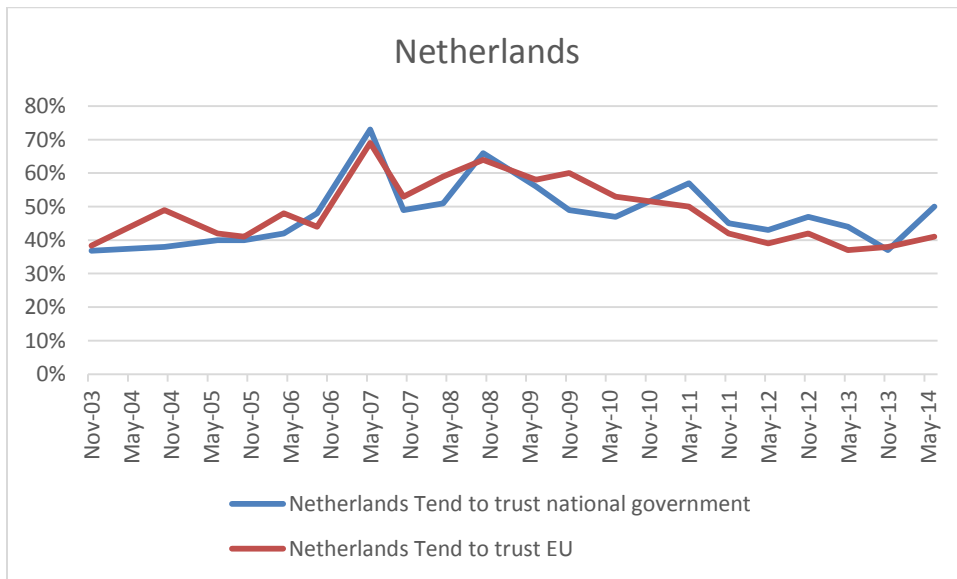
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart S: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Malta**



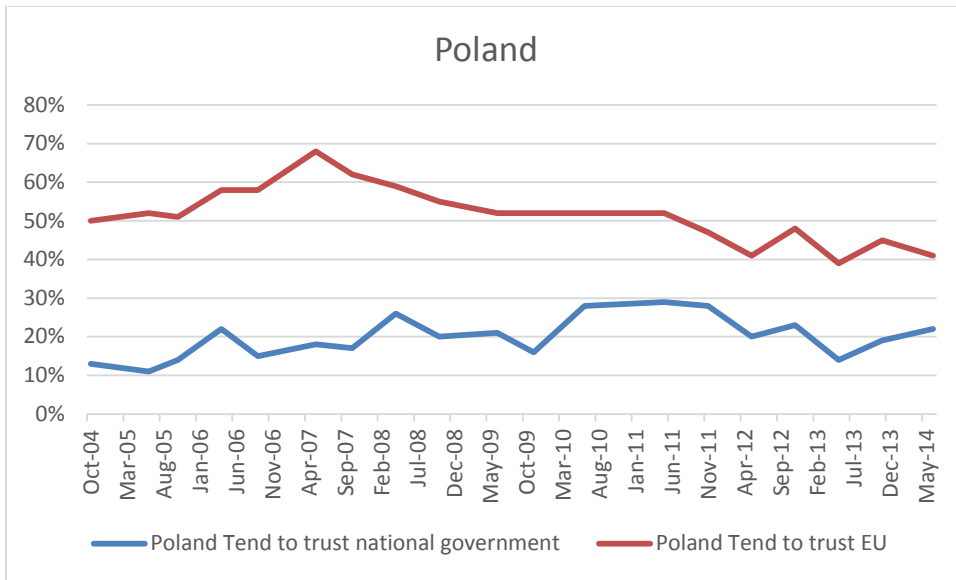
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart T: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Netherlands**



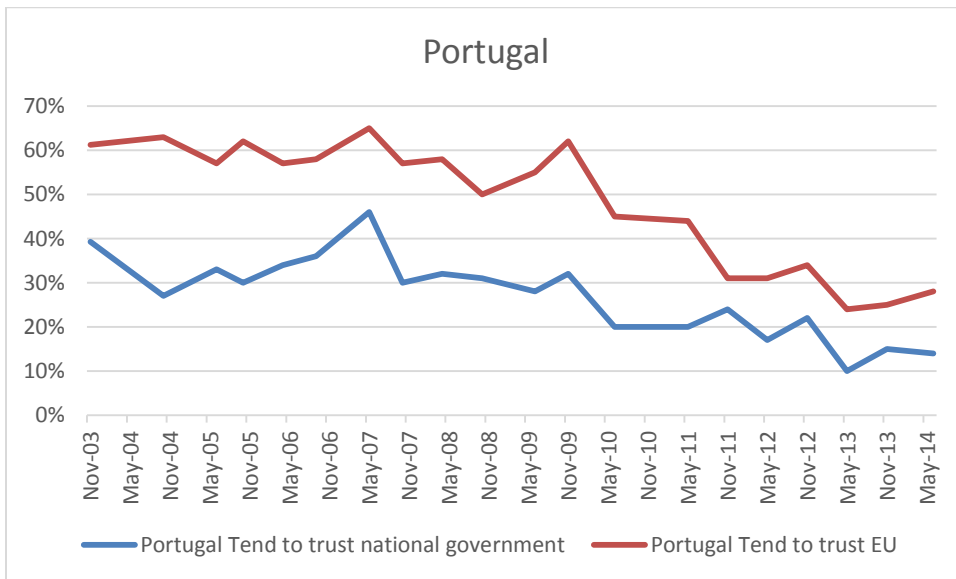
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart U: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Poland**



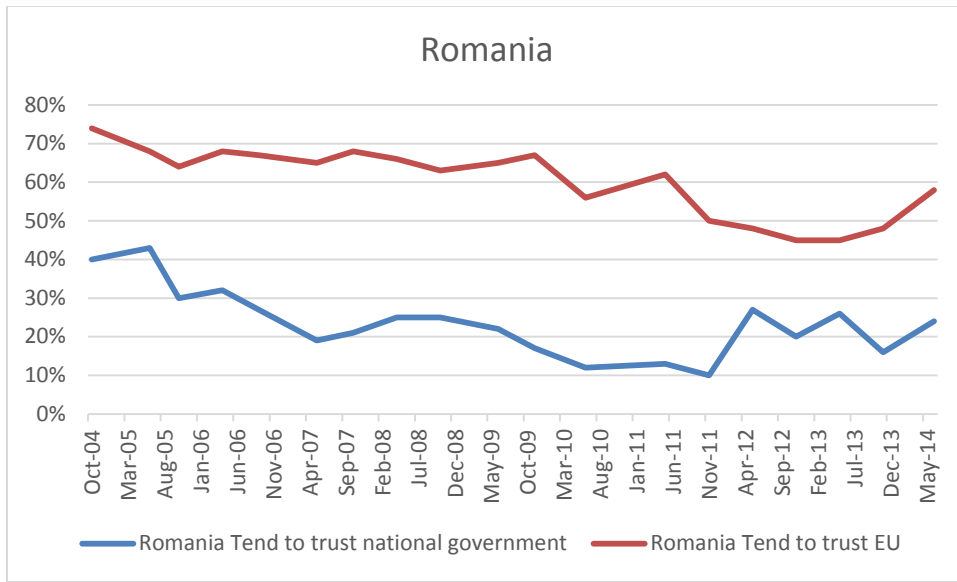
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart V: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Portugal**



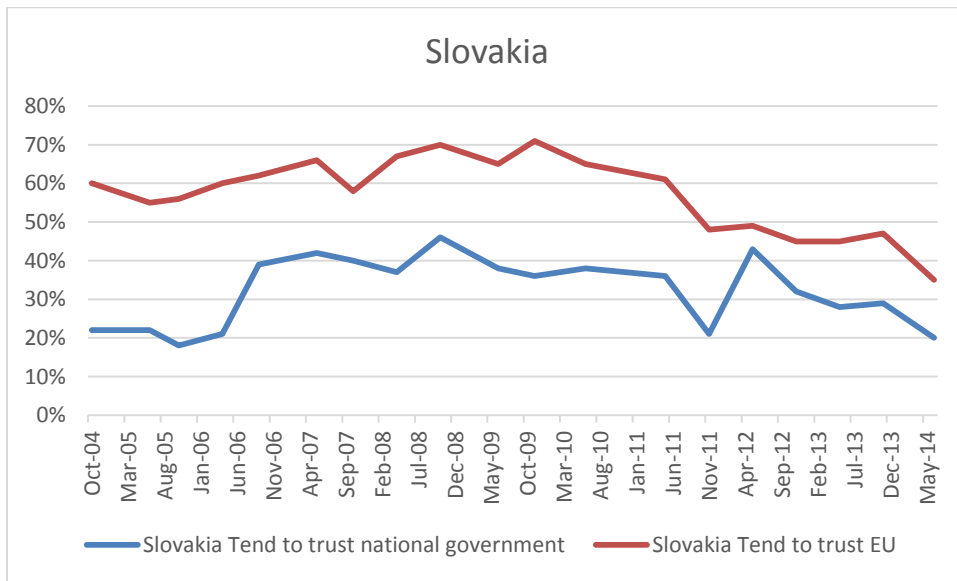
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart W: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Romania**



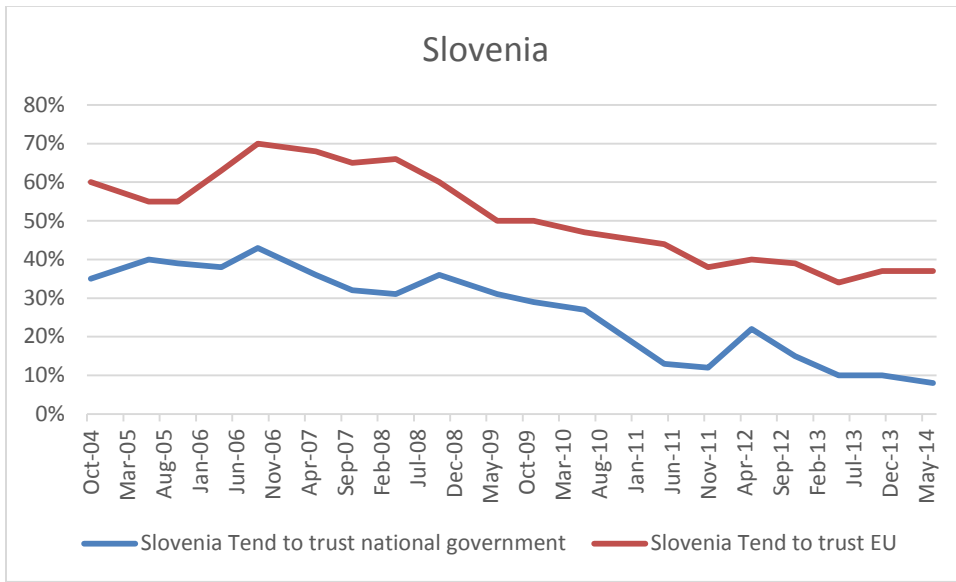
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart X: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Slovakia**



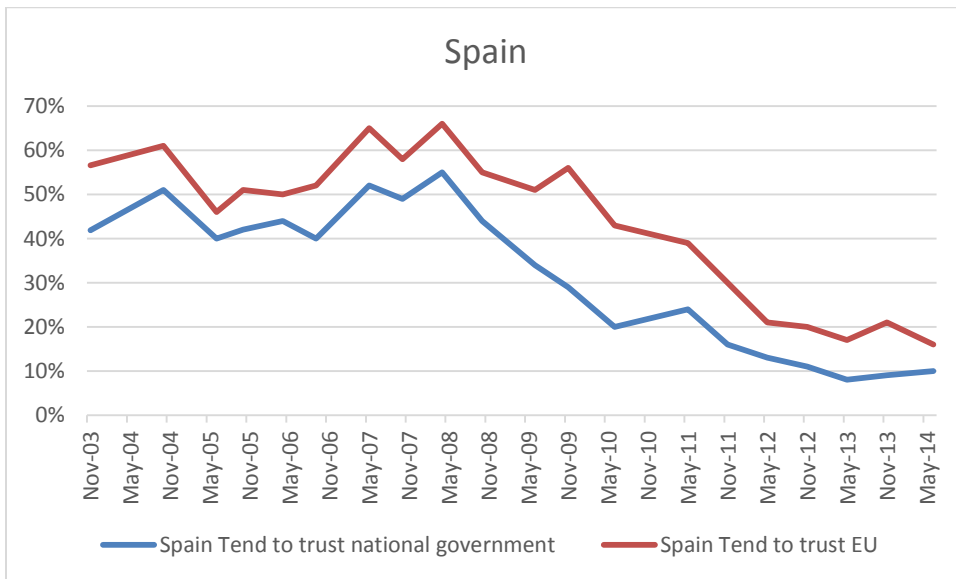
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart Y: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Slovenia**



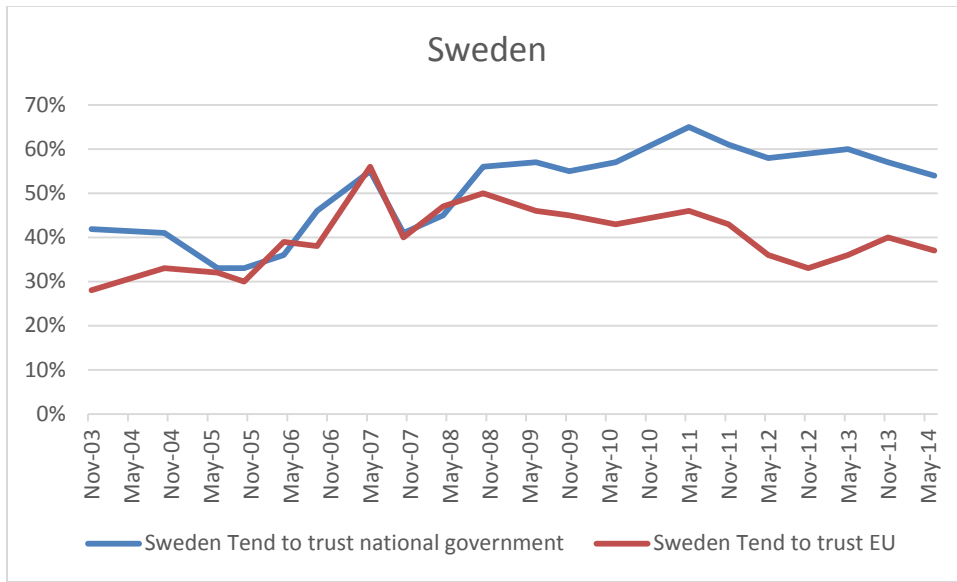
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart Z: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Spain**



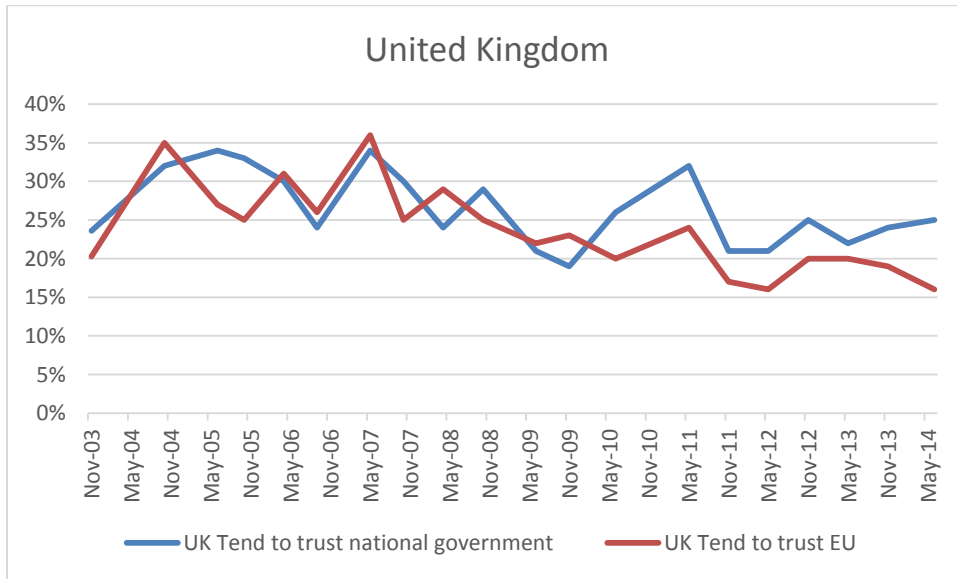
Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart AA: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in Sweden**



Source: Eurobarometer

**Appendix Chart BB: Levels of trust for national and EU institutions in United Kingdom**



Source: Eurobarometer