

How Deep Should the European Union Be? A Multilevel Test of the Impact of Personal Utility, Perceived National Opportunity and Political Attitudes on the Support for EU Integration

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Abstract

This article considers the public attitudes towards the further integration of European Union following the two large waves of expansion of 2004 and 2007 and before the deep economic crisis that began at the end of 2008. Testing individual and contextual effects by applying hierarchical linear regression to the set of data of the 2008 European Social Survey, I concluded that a simple instrumental model of euroscepticism is supported while a model of opportunity costs of sovereignty does not hold. In addition to these a model of institutional trust is supported by the data.²

Keywords: Euroscepticism; Support for European Integration; Instrumental Models of Attitudes; Institutional Trust; European Social Survey.

Introduction: the research questions

A large part of the scholarly literature on European integration focuses upon elites and institutions therefore giving a minimized importance to the mass public in determining the international relation configurations (Maier & Rittberger, 2008). The contested nature of topics like integration made the popular attitude towards the issue of depth of integration a critical one regarding the policy makers in the EU countries. This has become clear right before the 2004 and 2007 enlargement waves (when 12 countries joined the EU) and the debates around the newly proposed EU Treaty, when driven by anxious citizens and politicians, researchers of European public opinion have produced a respectable amount of empirical literature on the causes of the opposition or of the support regarding the deepening and broadening of the EU.

In the present study I will approach a theme that is important for the understanding of the dynamics of the EU support: the public attitude towards the further unification of the European Union; I will use it as an operational dimension of euroscepticism or EU support, which has become extremely relevant in the national and international debates during the past years, especially due to the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, but especially due to the EU constitutional debates of the later years and to the recession in the EU. The assessment of the sources of variation in support of the EU unification, during the failed constitutional

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referendums and after two main waves of expansion, is important for two reasons: policy relevance and methodology.

In the discussions regarding the policy relevance, those with respect to the unification support form a topic that deserves further research because: 1) The 'permissive consensus' previously recorded (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Hooghe & Marks, 2005) has waned as the issues and consequences of the integration became evident and contested as subject to internal political competition, i.e. on the occasion of constitutional referendums in countries like Netherlands, France or Ireland. Measurements done previously suggested that the EU citizens had been evaluating the broadening and the deepening of EU based on their anticipated gains and losses (Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Ehin, 2001; Gabel, 1998; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Lyons, 2007; McLaren, 2007; Tanasoiu & Colonescu, 2008; Christin, 2005; Cichowski, 2000; Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000) in the older member states as in the candidate countries). In 2008, as the EU constitutional debates got high on the public agenda, the citizens were more able to evaluate the integration, without being based on their more or less informed predictions. 2) The Integration of the EU is not a finished agenda as contemporary debates let us understand. Further unification has been proposed in the recently failed EU treaty, as well as following the economic crisis which demands, according some sides, increased political integration in order to deal with the fiscal issues and competitiveness problems in the UE. Nevertheless, the capacity of the political elite to cue the public opinion has been radically diminished as euroscepticism has become a major trend in the European public opinion.

Methodologically, there are still a number of insufficiently tackled questions in the research domain of EU-support which I will try to approach.

First, the issue of the nested data in international comparative research in EU has not been dealt with completely. The motivation for taking into account the nation-level variables within the model is that some variables, which are effective in respect to the attitude towards the European integration, are rather homogeneously influenced at national-level by factors, such as the access to European funds, political mobilization against/for the EU, national identity – the latter is the most significant component of the multiple identities of the European citizens and an important ingredient explaining the EU attitudes (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Hooghe & Marks, 2004; McLaren, 2007). By 2005, according to Hooghe and Marks (2005), only 3 out of 11 studies using international surveys to discuss EU-support employed multilevel regression. During the past years, empirical research have more and more frequently applied the method of multilevel analysis (Snijders & Bosker, 1999), including researches on the topic of individual support for European integration (starting with Brinegar & Jolly, 2005; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005; Hooghe & Marks, 2005; and continuing more recently with Garry & Tilley, 2009; Stockemer, 2012). These kinds of analyses have become more accessible not only due to the development of the multilevel modeling techniques, but also due to the proliferation of international surveys, such as the ESS (European Social Survey) –data that are used in the current study. Decomposition of variation and causes of support for EU integration among individuals and countries is still an open research project.

Summing up, this research paper continues approaching a number of puzzling questions about public opinion about the Union's unification within EU: 1) how do the instrumental and the political value models perform vis-à-vis the issue *after* the topic received a high public relevance? 2) what is the weight of the individual and national(-level) contextual factors in the determination of the variation of the EU-unification support?

In order to find answers to these issues, the present paper consists of two parts: 1) a brief theoretical and methodological overview of recent approaches describing the public attitudes towards the European integration and which highlights the importance of the proper assessment of context(ual) effects, in order to produce valid results regarding the international comparative research on the attitude shaping; 2) the application of the hierarchical linear regression tests on several hypotheses derived from theories concerned with the characteristics that impact on individual attitudes towards the European integration.

Attitude towards EU integration

The European integration is often pictured as a process ‘cued’ by political elites, which is consistent with the general skepticism regarding the linkages between EU policies and public opinion (Carrubba, 2001; Ray, 2003; Steenbergen, Edwards & De Vries, 2007). In fact, national policy representatives must take into account the public opinion on issues high on the public agenda. EU expansion and other correlative topics such as immigration, have emerged as important issues due to national political competitions, especially in the older member states of the European Union (Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Luedtke, 2005; Marks et al., 2006; Marks & Steenbergen, 2004).

Empirically, the euroscepticism (or EU support) was measured in international comparative surveys in more ways: through general attitude questions about the EU and its institutions, including satisfaction items or institutional trust items, as well as items concerning the competence and the authority assessment of the EU institutions, including the positions toward the enlargement of the European Union (Boomgaarden et al., 2011). The positive position regarding the attitudes towards the European integration is conceptualized as the agreement with the extension of the EU borders, the openness to receive new member states and the attribution of high competences to the European institutions. The opposing euro-skeptical attitudes object to the ideological and instrumental necessity of the territorial and institutional expansion of the EU. In all conceptual analyses, the opinion on the further unification and/or integration of the Union is a dimension of EU support although not entirely overlapping with it, being more on the ‘deepening’ than on the ‘broadening’ side of the integration (see for example (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Karp & Bowler, 2006). I hereby propose the assessment of the attitudes towards the EU integration through the analysis of the responses to the item from the 2008 European Social Survey (ESS) which refers to the evaluation of the opportunity of furthering the unification of the European Union.

Theory and method in the process of explaining the EU support

In this paper, a series of hypotheses will be tested, which refer to the way individual and contextual factors that are specific to a country influence individual evaluations of the pace at which the EU is integrating, as the 2008 ESS shows. Most approaches regarding the EU-attitudes are based on several theoretical models, out of which the utilitarian and the political values models are dominant, as suggested by Cichowski, (2000), Boomgaarden et al. (2011), Hooghe & Marks (2004) and McLaren (2007) or by Maier & Rittberger (2008) or in the distinction between instrumental and political Euroscepticism by Lubbers & Scheepers (2005). In fact, theoretical models are sometimes included in the paradigmatic oppositions between rational motivations (rational calculations) and emotional motivations (based on norms and values), through meta-discourses (Lyons, 2007). The two perspectives are not mutually exclusive though, as general attitudes can mediate the relationship between the structural positions in the world which are correlative to interests and which are reflected in the utilitarian calculations, on one hand, and attitude towards the European Union, on the other hand.

Individualistic approaches and related criticism

At the individual level, the proposed models will be compared with a base model of the attitude towards the deepened integration of the European Union, which calculates the correlation of the dependent variable with age, education level and gender; these are extremely important variables in determining the socio-economic position of a person, and implicitly, their attitude, through the cohort effects, which reflect histories and various socializing experiences and influences, and through the different situations brought about by specific moments within the life cycle; thus, interests and positions depending on age and associate characteristics will arise. The education level has the most important impact on the social status, whereas gender differences influence social integration as well as social and political attitudes. Among the most important theses explaining the support for European integration within the utilitarian model is that of a negative impact of education on evaluations of EU: lower skilled workers may expect to lose from European integration as their industries can move easily within the member states, especially to the newer

ones, on the one hand, and they could lose redistributive benefits due to the decline of the tax base in their home country because of the international competition (Brinegar & Jolly, 2005). These 3 variables will constitute the reference model of structural characteristics. The model is necessary either for assessing the extent to which the structural position of a person directly shapes attitudes towards the EU integration or for identifying other potential class effects (various attitudes, membership in a minority group etc.) that mediate this influence.

The first set of hypotheses are consistent with the utilitarian model; the model generally sustains that having a favorable attitude towards the EU is justified in the case of people who consider the European institutions responsible for solving important issues, which the national authorities seem to be incapable of tackling (the model of the anticipated opportunity costs of transferring the national sovereignty). Therefore, it is expected that the acceptance of the expansion of the European Union is negatively correlated with the evaluations of national governmental institutions. This widespread theory maintains that the ceding sovereignty in favor of European institutions becomes even more unbearable as the national authorities are believed to be more effective (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000). This sort of individualist-utilitarian model have an augmented empirical support for demonstrating the correlation between the attitude towards the European integration and expected post-integration costs and benefits (Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Ehin, 2001; Gabel, 1998; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Lyons, 2007; McLaren, 2007; Tanasoiu & Colonescu, 2008). It seems that for many Europeans sustaining the EU expresses merely the hope that national problems are solved by supranational institutions (Kritzinger, 2003).

In line with this utilitarian type of reasoning is the one specific to those persons who are part of a minority group of any kind, and who consider the EU as the most suitable institution to protect their interests against more or less discriminative national restrictions. Thus, I hypothesize that persons who belong to minority groups are significantly in favor of the integration of the EU, compared to those belonging to majority categories.

From the utilitarian point of view a causal alternative mechanism can be proposed though: members of minorities, likewise those with lower skills and education, can fear the loss of social advantages if the European Union is more deeply integrated and larger shares of the public become beneficiaries of redistribution. According to this, the mechanism belonging to a disadvantaged group should generate opposition to further integration of the Union.

Attitudes or values are an indispensable predictor in the models of subjective positioning towards the EU. The value model states that the opposition or the positive attitude towards the EU generally depends on certain ideological or axiological structures. As early as 1978, Inglehart & Rabier suggested that the support for EU, in the member states, depended on the post-materialist values and individual cognitive mobilization. According to Cichowski (2000), the attitudes towards democracy and capitalism influence the perception about the European Union; the statement is contradicted by Ehin (2001) in the case of the Baltic States or it is significantly reduced by Gabel's studies (1998), which underline the fact that political values explain the (dis)agreement with the European integration only at a small extent. McLaren (2007) argues that it is the attitudes towards the European institutions that are actually relevant; he also found that compact national identities are in dispute with the European integration (McLaren, 2002). Other important individual predictors of the attitude towards the European integration refer to: political participation - the political partisanship (Cichowski, 2000) or cognitive mobilization; the existence or perception of ethnical tensions (Ehin, 2001). Such theories suggest the introduction of two additional classes of individual level predictors from the same class, to perform as independent variables: the attitude towards European institutions expressed through the amount of trust in the European Parliament, which I expect to have a positive impact on the EU-support and the interest in politics, a measure of political partisanship and mobilization. In the latter case, predicting a direction of a relationship with the dependent variable is difficult, given the possible impact of the constitutional debates: while previous literature suggests a positive link, until 2008 the evolutions could lay the foundations of a negative assessment of those politically mobilized.

On the other hand, one of the consequences of the European integration was the rise in number of the non-indigenous populations who migrated from less developed countries to some of the most developed and thriving countries; this situation was indirectly generated by the increased mobility within the EU and the difficulties regarding migration control within the Union borders. Even if it is

only partly true, the increase of the cultural diversity through migration within the EU is perceived as a consequence of the European integration. A less approached hypothesis within the scholarly literature is that conservative perspectives, which are hostile to cultural diversity resulting from migration, are negatively correlated with the attitudes towards the EU enlargement if not tempered by direct intercultural transactions (Kuhn, 2012).

Modeling the impact of contextual variables

I assume that individual assessments of the government and of the economy do not explain alone the calculations of the efficiency of interventions performed by the European institutions. The above observations highlight the dependence of the individual attitudes concerning European Union, including one's position towards the Union's integration, upon supranational factors, mostly national. There have been past attempts to correlate individual attitudes with national evolution(s). As early as 1987, Inglehart & Rabier were already testing (rather based on intuition) the hypothesis that the support for the European Union became conditioned, to a certain point, by the size of the industrial production, the inflation rate at the time, as well as by the length of the EU membership (Inglehart & Rabier, 1978).

All studies using multilevel modeling emphasize the interaction between individual actions and attitudes and national conditions (Christin, 2005): sustaining the EU depends on the quality of national institutions (which/this interacts with the effect of the perception of the representativeness of EU institutions). A recent study demonstrates the influence of the economic background of the studied country on the two fundamental individual dimensions (economic calculations and attitudes) (Garry & Tilley, 2009). Rohrschneider (2002) states that the quality of the national institutions undermine the appreciation of the European Union, especially in the case of the individuals who consider themselves as being politically under-represented by the Union. Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) formulated the hypothesis that high levels of national corruption determine the increase of the EU sustaining. The majority of these studies have come up with a more or less explicit thesis about a competition between the national and European institutions, by studying the European citizens' opinions.

Thus, I consider that the context in which the EU expansion is perceived is constituted by two country-level classes of predictors: the economic development of the country and the governmental efficiency. Generally, countries with less developed economies (as expressed by the GDP/capita and unemployment rate) are expected to gain from a more integrated Union, as sustainers of the European integration vividly popularized. Conversely, the resource transfer mechanism towards less economically developed countries triggers a net deficit in the developed countries, when EU transfers occur, a fact that can produce negative attitudes in these countries. Another specific benefit of the EU membership results from the fact that weak and inefficient governments can be partially replaced by European institutions, if part of the national sovereignty is ceded to European organizations. On the other hand, citizens from efficiently governed countries perceive this as a mere disadvantage, as they lose sovereignty to some institutions which are often too bureaucratic or even corrupt.

The deepened unification of the European Union can also be instrumentally perceived from the perspective of the effects it exerts on the quality of life, as it may encourage the migration from newly acceded countries, which have usually less developed economies, to older members of the Union. A large part of the political analyses have focused mainly on the economic and social effects of a potential emigration wave from Central and Eastern Europe to Western European countries (Luedtke, 2005; Zielonka, 2004), which is expected, due to the recent massive EU enlargement waves. Therefore, the citizens from older member states are concerned and even hostile regarding the integration of the Union (via eliminating barriers against the free flow of persons and labor in the Union), as the process is associated with immigration and increased competition for jobs, and thus, with an increase of the crime and unemployment rate (Moravcsik & Vachudova, 2003). On the other hand, some citizens from newer member states aim at the opportunity to improve their living conditions by benefitting from the facilitated mobility of workforce within the Union. Correspondingly, I expect that the more developed a country, the stronger the opposition to EU integration. My last hypothesis including contextual variables states that it is very likely that a negative relation appears

between the share of immigrants in each country and individuals' appraisal of the EU integration, since the increase of the percentage of the non-indigenous populations is attributed to the participation in the EU, by conservatory and nationalist people.

Data, measurements, method

The next pages are based on the European Social Survey's data from 2008. The database is accessible on the website of the ESS and it comprises 35609 weighted cases from 22 countries members of the European Union. The data were weighted for correcting sampling errors in respect to the country's population size and representativeness in respect to the population structure (design error).

The survey item on which the present article focuses has the following wording: *Now thinking about the European Union, some say European unification should go further. Others say it has already gone too far. Using this card, what number on the scale best describes your position?*

The item has 10 answer levels, the maximum value (10) meaning 'Unification (should) go further'. It is, thus, an ordinal variable which will be used as an interval variable, in order to simplify the analysis. There are 2 types of independent variables in the analysis: variables measured at individual level and variables measured at country level. These are described in the tables below:

Table 1: Variables measured at individual level

Name of the variable	Description	Measurement	Univariate statistics
Political interest	Item: How interested are you in politics?	Ordinal (4 levels: 1-very interested, 4 not at all interested)	Avg.: 2,6,SD: 0,9
Trust in the European Parliament	Item: How much do you trust the European Parliament – indicator of trust in European Union	Ordinal (11 levels: 0 – no trust at all, 10 – complete trust)	Avg.: 4,5, SD: 2,4
Satisfaction with national government	Item: How much do you trust the government of your country? – indicator of trust in national institutions This variable centered on the national mean.	Ordinal (11 levels: 0 – extremely dissatisfied, 10- completely satisfied)	Avg.: 3,9, SD: 2,4
Attitude towards immigrants	Three item summated scale: Immigration is good or bad for the country? The country's cultural life is subverted or enriched by immigrants?	Ordinal: the larger the value the more favorable the opinion towards immigrants (alpha=0,83)	Avg.: 15,6, SD: 6,3
Higher education	The subject holds a higher education certificate. This variable centered on the national mean.	Dichotomy (1=yes)	26% with tertiary education diploma
Minority	The subject belongs to a minority status group.	Dichotomy (1=yes)	5.4% declare belonging to a minority
Age		Numeric, discrete	Avg.: 51,0, SD:67,05
Gender		Dichotomy (1=male)	48.1% male

Country level variables:

Table 2: *Variables measured at country level*

Name of the variable	Description	Measurement	Source
GDP_cap	GDP/capita in 2007	Numeric (US dollars)	International Monetary Fund (2007)
Unempl2007	Unemployment rate in 2007	Numeric (%)	International Monetary Fund (2007)
Immigrants	Percent immigrants in the country	Dichotomy (1=>0.5%)	United Nations (2006)
Governmental effectiveness	Indicator of government quality computed by the World Bank. It is a composite index of quality of public services, of public service capacity and of their independence from political pressures and of the quality of formulating survey data. The measurement is a synthesis of (the) survey and expert evaluation data.	Numeric	World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators
Corruption control	Indicator of government quality computed by the World Bank. It is a composite index which reflects the measure in which public power is used for private gains, including here small and large corruption as well as state capture by the elite or/and by private interests. The measurement is a synthesis of survey and expert evaluation data.	Numeric	World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators

Some of the variables that are usually introduced in such analyses have been eliminated as they create multicollinearity problems. The length of the EU membership is, for example, strongly correlated with GDP and was, thus, excluded from the regression models.

Results

Testing the necessity of multilevel modeling

One of the assumptions about multiple regression is the independence of observations. But the grouped character of the data contests it, as observations of the same group usually tend to be similar, at a higher extent than any of the two randomly chosen observations. The intensity of the similarity and the necessity to use hierarchical linear regression can be valued by calculating the unconditional inter-correlation coefficient. The outcome is that 9.6% out of the whole variance of the studied variable can be attributed to inter-country differences (which also signifies a degree of 9.6% internal homogeneity) and the remaining 90.4% is attributed to the differences among individuals. Statistical theories (e.g. Snijders & Bosker, 1999), assume that crossing the 5% limit implies that a multilevel modeling is needed. I conclude that the variation of attitudes towards the depth of the European integration depends significantly on national contexts that had been strongly shaping them and therefore, these attitudes can only be correctly shaped through multilevel regression (hierarchical linear regression).

Hierarchical linear regression modeling

The following hierarchical linear regression models have built the goodness of adequate measures being published in the last column of the table below:

Table 3: *Hierarchical linear regression models*

	Model	Chi-square (-2LL change), p (Chi-square) compared to the empty model
1.	Individual level structural predictors	359.12, p<0.001
2.	Individual level predictors (structural + attitudinal)	6742.04, p<0.001
3	Individual level predictors (structural + attitudinal) + General country-level factors (percent immigrants)	6753.70, p<0.001
4.	Individual level predictors (structural + attitudinal) + Country-level predictors (general + economic)	6774.63, p<0.001
5.	Individual level predictors (structural + attitudinal) + Country-level predictors (general + economic + quality of government)	6782.01, p<0.001

The effects of level interactions have not been tested and the significance of the random effects regarding the first level regression parameters has not been discussed, due mainly to the small number of level 2 cases and because of the relatively reduced value of the intergroup variation and in order to offer a simpler presentation.

The table above clearly presents the fact that the best improvements concerning the capacity of regression models of covering the variance of the dependent variable, compared to the baseline (empty) model are obtained when the fixed effects of individual attitudes are introduced in the equation. On the other hand, the introduction of country level predictors produces only slight improvements, even if it has a significant statistical effect on fitting the model with the data; another reason for this is that only a small part of the total variance of the dependent variable is explained by the internal similarity among countries. Significantly, each country-level predictor introduced improves the fit of the model.

The first two models, which include only individual predictors and which allow the variation of the regression intercept among countries (the country mean), prove that the attitude towards the integration of EU is strongly correlated with a series of other attitudes. As well, they prove that much of the effect of structural variables is indirect, as it is probably mediated by specific values and attitudes. However, as the consecutive models consistently show, strong support is found in the models for the hypotheses of instrumental evaluation of European Union through the hypothesized mechanism of anxiety over losing redistributive advantages because of deepened European interdependencies: less educated Europeans and members of minority groups are less in favor of the European integration.

The first second model and the next ones – which do not interact with the parameters of the individual structural and attitudinal model – deliver the important result of rejecting the hypotheses based on the model of anticipated opportunity costs of transferring sovereignty (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000). Members of minority groups, as already highlighted, do not feel better in a more integrated union, nor do those who keep their national governments in low esteem.

Concerning the impact of political attitudes, some findings from the second model are in accordance with our expectations while others are contrary to our hypotheses. The fact that the trust in the European Parliament, which is an indicator of the attitudes towards the EU institutions, positively correlates with the attitude towards the further unification of EU was expected. In addition, the second model demonstrates that the attitude towards immigration positively correlates with the dependent variable, as previously assumed, and it underlines the fact that the tolerance of diversity stimulates favorable opinions about the EU, given the fact that tolerance is determined by a certain cognitive openness (which is suggested by the positive relation of the dependent variable with the level of education). However, the models show that neither political interest nor satisfaction with one's own national government influence the EU-support in the predicted way. The significantly positive satisfaction parameter with respect to the government rejects the model of the expected opportunity costs and benefits of ceding national sovereignty while supporting the simple utilitarian model according to which the worse off in the EU countries expect their situation to worsen as an effect of the further integration. The lack of predictive power of political interest is difficult to interpret: it suggests that political mobilization does not play a role in generating EU-support and, consequently, cueing from the elite could be no longer effective.

The introduction of contextual variables provides only limited reductions in the variance of the dependent variable due to the relatively small proportion of the inter-class correlation coefficient ($ICC=0.09$); however, some important observations can be drawn upon it.

The dynamics of the parameters of the *share of immigrants* variable in models 3 and 4 indicate that it is confounded with the general economic indicators of the country. It also suggests that the effect of the share of immigrants on the attitude towards the unification of the EU from model 3 may be false. The fact that the negative effect of the share of immigrants is no longer significant once the GDP per capita is introduced in the model, which also relates negatively to the attitude towards the unification of the EU, suggests that a new confusion has arisen: the most thriving countries are the ones that host most immigrants, and in both cases, there is a positive relation with the euro-skeptical attitude. According to the analyses, one cannot state that the source of euro-skepticism is the intense immigration following the EU expansion or any other characteristic that is correlated with economic thriving. What is certain is that the poorer a country is the more favorable are its citizens' opinions regarding the EU enlargement.

Government effectiveness and GDP/capita are also confounded as shown by the evolutions of the parameters from model 4 to model 5: introduction of the index of the government effectiveness makes the parameter of GDP/capita in 2007 non-significant. All these confounding interactions support the utilitarian model: the national governments (that are) perceived as inefficient, which are more likely to happen/exist in less prosperous countries where the share of immigrants is also low, increase the optimism towards the unification of EU. On the contrary, euroscepticism is stimulated by the level of the economic development, the quality of the government and by a large proportion of immigrants in an EU country. If these confounding effects reflect causal mediation or a simple covariation, at this point, this is a matter of simple guessing.

Finally, the lack of effect of the unemployment rate requires some explanations. It raises doubts either regarding the validity of the win-lose calculations of those coming from the underprivileged social strata or regarding the reliability of the unemployment estimates and the accuracy of this indicator as proxy for subject's evaluations of perils against well-being.

Discussion

Broadly speaking, the hierarchical linear models presented in this article provide support both for the instrumental and for the political values based explanations of variations in support or opposition to European integration.

Testing the main operational hypotheses of the variants of the utilitarian model regarding the attitude towards the European integration produces interesting results. The individual satisfaction with the national government does not have the impact on the dependent variable that could be derived from the model of the opportunity benefits of transferring sovereignty to European Union. On the contrary, the satisfaction with the activity of the national government has a positive effect on the attitude towards the deepening of the unification of the EU. Conversely, the simple utilitarian model (gains vs. losses via market and administrative mechanisms) receives stronger confirmation by our models, i.e. as members in minority groups, those less educated and citizens from the more developed countries oppose more strongly further integration of EU. These results can be interpreted as proofs of the simple utilitarian model based on gains vs. losses calculations, as opposed to the more sophisticated predictions of the theory of opportunity costs of sovereignty transfer. Within this utility based causal mechanisms I detect two fundamental processes which both rely on the anticipation of redistributive gains and losses entailing deepened integration.

First, we have the general mechanism that opposes citizens from the more developed and better governed European countries to those from the poorer countries which expect greater net benefits following from/the EU-based transfers from the developed nations to the less developed ones. Added to it there is the anxiety of the individuals coming from marginal categories (low skilled workforce, minorities) to the anticipation of an increased competition for redistributive advantages following the increased European integration.

A second general reasoning underlines the impact of political attitudes, where institutional trust plays an important role apparently. Accordingly, the attitude towards the Union is built within the perspective regarding the malign/benign role of the institutions in general, explaining the unexpected results that have come up, i.e. the satisfaction impact the national government and the governmental efficiency. From this point of view, one can draw the conclusion that the EU is not perceived as an alternative or competing government in respect to the national one, but rather as a complementary state institution.

Conclusions

Our study presents the tests undertaken upon several hypotheses about the effects of the individual and national attitude characteristics manifested by citizens from 22 EU countries with respect to the deepening integration within the European Union. The expected waning of the permissive consensus on the role and function of the European Union, compared to the national or regional governments, following the spectacular enlargements of 2004 and 2008 and the difficult constitutional debates at the end of the previous decade, on the one hand, and the necessity to improve the knowledge about the impact of the country-level factors on the European public opinion provide the rationale for this investigation. Three theory driven hypotheses were proposed as explanations for the variation of support for deepened EU-integration: 1) the model of the costs of opportunity of sovereignty transfer to supranational bodies like the EU; 2) the model of anticipated gains and losses; and 3) the model of political values.

The results of the multi-level regression modeling of over 35000 answers from subjects included in the 2008 wave of the European Social Survey have sometimes been unexpected, enabling the reinterpretation of data and theories referring to the covariates of the pro-European and euro-skeptical attitudes. It is important though, to highlight that compared to previous assessments that occurred before some dramatic and traumatic events in the life of the EU – enlargement with 12 new members, many of them economically lagging well beyond their counterparts, and the failed constitutional debates – the European Union is no longer perceived by its citizens as an institution capable of solving issues left unresolved or made worse by the national government. EU-support has become more selfishly instrumental, on the one hand, while still relying on a general attitude towards institutions.

One important result is that the share of contextual factors in explaining the position towards how far the European integration should go is rather low yet significant (around 9.6%). This variance of attitudes among countries with respect to the EU shows that the country-level variables, including national policies, have only a statistically significant effect upon personal attitudes towards the EU requiring the use of multilevel approach in similar studies.

My findings highlight the two alternative mechanisms explaining the support of the European integration in the public opinion of the member countries. Thus, judging the desirability of the EU expansion is possible, on one hand, through the individual economic utility perspective, which is consistent with the utilitarian model. The economic utility model shows that the redistributive function of the EU is quite clear in what concerns the European citizens, while its evaluation is linked to the individual effects of the redistribution: the citizens from the more developed countries do not see the increase of the transfers towards the poorer members as being positive, while the citizens living in vulnerable groups (minority, low education) expect worse returns, for them, caused by further integration. It is very important to notice that even before the recession that began in 2008, the European Union was no longer seen as a panacea to problems left unresolved by the national governments.

On the other hand, the evaluation of the EU reflects the general attitude towards institutions – of course, when losses caused by further integration are not expected or have not been experienced yet. The second perspective provides the image of a positive correlation between the perception of national institutions and the perception of the European institutions. This interpretation can be extended to a perceptive model regarding relationships among national states and the EU institutions. On the other hand, the correlation of the dependent variable with the attitudes towards national and European institutions indicates that the EU is perceived as a

complementary entity to national states, and not as a governmental alternative for national institutions. More precisely, the common perception is not that the EU issues regulations against national states (although this idea may be spread among minority members), but that the EU governs along with the national states.

The present study obviously has certain methodological limitations which impede on the robustness and the general character of the results. The number of cases at level 2 is under the 30-unit threshold that is recommended in the methodology publications, which raises the problem of estimating the standard errors of the parameters specific to the hierarchical regression (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). On the other hand, the reconstruction of the theory regarding the attitude towards the European integration has to face several challenges: 1) the necessity to test interactions among variables at both levels, considering that the hereby described models only deal with the impact of contextual variables on the intercept of the regression equation, and not on the regression parameters of the individual-level factors; 2) the identification of the sources of variation country-level regression slopes of individual-level predictors – which was not dealt with in this paper. Further studies must be undertaken in order to investigate the relevance of the model concerning the two logics of the individual positioning towards the European integration. Such studies must take into consideration the dramatic economic crisis which engulfed the majority of European countries after the data collection for the used survey, whose effect upon pro-European or euro-sceptical positions is a very interesting matter to be examined.

Table 4: Hierarchical linear regression models of the attitude towards the continuation of unification within the EU

	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Male	0.043	0.078	0.055	0.056	0.055	0.564	0.055	0.056	0.055	0.056
Age	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Higher education	0.572**	0.078	0.116**	0.034	0.116**	0.034	0.116**	0.034	0.116**	0.034
Minority	0.126	0.080	-0.274**	0.123	-0.274*	0.123	-0.274*	0.123	-0.275*	0.123
Political interest			-0.013	0.046	-0.014	0.046	-0.015	0.046	-0.015	0.046
Trust in European Parliament			0.238**	0.030	0.237**	0.030	0.237**	0.030	0.237**	0.030
Satisfaction with government			0.081**	0.015	0.810**	0.015	0.081**	0.015	0.082**	0.015
Attitude towards immigration			0.116**	0.015	0.116**	0.015	0.116**	0.015	0.116**	0.015
Percent of immigrants					-0.918**	0.402	0.009	0.227	-0.182	0.206
GDP_capita 2007							0.000*	0.000	0.000	0.000
Unemployment in 2007							-0.043	0.045	0.008	0.043
Government effectiveness									-0.037*	0.010

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01

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