UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**
**CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES (CES)**

# STRONGER TOGETHER… IN AN EVER CLOSER UNION?

## EU citizens' attitudes towards EU enlargement and deepened defence integration

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|---|---|
| Master's thesis: | 30 credits |
| Programme: | Master's Programme in European Studies |
| Level: | Second Cycle |
| Semester year: | Spring 2025 |
| Supervisor: | Linda Berg |

# Abstract

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, the European Union (EU) is experiencing one of its most serious security and geopolitical challenges since the end of the Cold War. As the EU was founded with the ultimate purpose of keeping peace in Europe, European politicians claim the EU is now needed more than ever. Both vertical European integration – with deepened cooperation in defence policy on EU level – as well as horizontal integration – with enlargement of the EU with additional member states in Eastern Europe – has lately gained priority on the EU's agenda.[1] Simultaneously, right-wing Eurosceptical parties are on the rise in EU member states,[2] which could pose a potential threat to the European integration project. In this thesis, regression analysis is applied to Eurobarometer (EB) data from the autumn of 2023, to analyse the East-West dimension[3] in support among EU citizens, with regard the previous mentioned integration areas, through the lens of David Easton's Political system theory. The findings show that EU citizens are generally positive towards both further vertical integration, i.e. deepened security cooperation, as well as further horizontal integration, i.e. welcoming new member states. This is also aligned with Political system theory, as this theory assumes the citizens want the political system to deliver solutions to problems they experience.[4] The two regression analyses show that there is a limited effect of an East-West dimension in support of further enlargement, but not a significant effect from East-West dimension for an EU common defence and security policy.



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| Keywords: | European integration, attitudes, EU enlargement, EU Defence Policy, East-West dimension, Political system theory |
| Word count: | 11768 |


[1] European Commission. (2024). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews.* https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/926b3cb2-f027-40b6-ac7b-2c198a164c94_en?filename=COM_2024_146_1_EN.pdf. Retrieved 2025, 26 April.

[2] European Parliament. (2024). *European Elections 2024 | Election results | European Results*. https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/european-results/2024-2029/. Retrieved 2025, 16 August.

[3] Toshkov, D., Kortenska, E., Dimitrova, A., & Fagan, A. (2014). *The 'Old' and the 'New' Europeans: Analyses of Public Opinion on EU Enlargement in Review* (MAXCAP Working Paper Series No. 02). Freie Universität Berlin. https://userpage.fu-berlin.de/kfgeu/maxcap/system/files/maxcap_wp_02.pdf. Retrieved 2025, 16 August.

[4] Easton, D. (1957). *An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems*. World Politics, 9(3), pages 383-400.

# Contents

# List of abbreviations

CAP – The EU Common Agricultural Policy

EB – Eurobarometer

ECSC – European Coal and Steel Community

EP – European Parliament

ESS – European Social Survey

EU – European Union

EU13 – The 13 member states of the EU that has joined the EU since 2004

EU15 – The member states of the EU that joined the EU prior to 2004 (which are now 14, post Brexit)

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

IFN – Swedish Research Institute of Industrial Economics

ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization[5]

TEU – Treaty on the European Union

UI – The Swedish Institute of International Affairs

UK – United Kingdom

WWII – Second World War

[5] Even though this thesis is written in British English, in which the word "organisation" is generally spelled with an "s" rather than a "z", the official spelling of the "North Atlantic Treaty Organization" in its founding treaty of 1949, usually known as the "Washington Treaty", is with a "z".

Another remark on this topic, is that quotations in the thesis will be written in their original American spelling, such as the word "behavior" or "favorable" instead of "behaviour" and "favourable".

# List of tables and figures

# 1. Introduction

For the same reason as individual human beings once upon a time decided to create communities and societies, i.e. to protect one another from threats, the European Union (EU) and its original precursor (the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)), were founded in order to secure peace and prosperity in Europe[6] – a continent which in the early 1950s was still rising up from the ashes of the Second World War (WWII). Hence, peace and security have been cornerstones of European integration since the early beginning of the European integration project today known as the EU.

Following Brexit (finalized on February 1, 2020) and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (February 24, 2022), the EU has put increased focus on two areas of integration in particular, with regard to widened integration (i.e. enlargement of the EU with more member states,[7] also known as horizontal integration) and regarding deepened integration (i.e. expansion of the EU's competences, also known as vertical integration), specifically within the area of a common EU Defence and Security Policy.[8]

According to David Easton's *Political System theory*, which in previous research has proven to be suitable for theoretical analysis of attitudinal data, the citizens' support (or lack of support) constitutes the basis for the legitimacy of all political systems.[9] Hence, the EU as a political system cannot exist without support from its people.[10] Thus, it is vital for the legitimacy of the EU as a project, that its citizens generally have favourable attitudes towards the EU. Brexit showed very clearly what *could* happen if the system no longer has enough support. Thereby, it is important to study the attitudes among EU citizens towards the EU and relevant EU policies, such as European integration in key areas. In this thesis, I will look into Eurobarometer attitudinal data from the autumn of 2023, and analyse the results using the theoretical framework of David Easton's *Political System theory*.

Even though attitudes towards the EU, as well as attitudes towards its various policy areas and dimensions of European integration, is a research field which has been widely explored,[11] there are still

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[6] Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (1951, April 18). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:11951K/TXT. Retrieved 2025, 19 February.
[7] European Commission. (2022). *2022 Enlargement package: European Commission assesses reforms in the Western Balkans and Türkiye and recommends candidate status for Bosnia and Herzegovina*. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_6082. Retrieved 2025, 19 February.
[8] European Parliament. (2022). *European Parliament recommendation of 8 June 2022 to the Council and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the EU's Foreign, Security and Defence Policy after the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0235_EN.html. Retrieved 2025, 19 February.
[9] Karv, T. (2019). *Public Attitudes Towards the European Union*. Åbo Akademi University Press, page 51.
[10] Loveless, M., & Rohrschneider, R. (2011). *Public perceptions of the EU as a system of governance*. Living Reviews in European Governance, 6(1), pages 1-37.
[11] For instance by Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks, Catherine E. De Vries, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Marcel Lubbers, Soetkin Verhaegen, and more. Some of their important work among others, will be presented in the "Theory and previous research" chapter further below.

areas that need further exploration. Especially in light of the geopolitical challenges the EU has been facing since the early the 2020s, following the realisation of Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Thanks to the wealth of studies performed within this research field, we are aware of some factors and variables that generally tend to influence EU attitudes on an individual level, as well as between countries and within countries.[12] It is on this knowledge this thesis further aims to build upon and complement, both in chronology and in width, as most of the current publications were published before the important crisis in Europe that was caused by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and their focus primarily is on other explanatory factors than the East-West dimension. Considering that it is an Eastern European country, aspiring to become an EU member, that has been invaded by its neighbouring country Russia, it is particularly relevant to look at the effect of the East-West dimension, and how it affects EU citizens' attitudes towards further enlargement of the EU, as well as deepened cooperation within the area of a common EU Defence and Security Policy, which I expect will have increased due to the disruptive events previously mentioned.

The data, which the empirical analysis of this thesis is based on, is from the Eurobarometer (EB) 100.2 (2023). As the reader will notice, this data was collected in 2023, more specifically between October 23 and November 17, 2023, and is the most recent published EB data containing data for both attitudes to enlargement and a common EU Defence and Security Policy in the same survey and dataset.

## 1.1. Research aim

This thesis will present a case of the effect of external disruptive events, and their consequences on support for European integration in key areas. More specifically, it is to analyse the effect of an East-West dimension regarding EU citizens' attitudes from both an empirical and theoretical perspective, regarding horizontal integration (EU enlargement) and vertical integration (deepened integration).

The specific hypotheses that will be tested will be presented by the end of the next chapter, which presents theory and previous research.

## 1.2. Disposition

The thesis follows the following disposition. First of all, I will present theory and previous research within the field of political system theory and attitudes towards the EU. Then, I will present the hypotheses, before going into methods and material. The final two chapters of the thesis will explain the empirical analysis of the data and present the results of the regression analyses in light of the theoretical framework, as well as wrapping up with final thoughts, conclusions and input for further research within the research field.

[12] Karv, T. (2019). *Public Attitudes Towards the European Union*. Åbo Akademi University Press.

# 2. Theory and previous research

In this chapter, I will present the previous research which this thesis will further build upon and contribute to, as well as the theoretical framework used in the empirical analysis, which aims at answering the research aim and the upcoming hypotheses of this thesis.

As will be further explained in detail in the "Methods and Material" chapter, the empirical data analysis in this thesis is based on EB data for the dependent and independent variables. The data will be analysed by using a theoretical framework that is applicable to attitudinal research. For this purpose, aligned with the preferred choice of plenty of other scholars within this field of research,[13] [14] I have selected "Political system theory" (as presented by David Easton in his 1957 article in World Politics[15], and later, in 1965, further developed as "Political support theory").[16] [17]

As previously mentioned, the aim and research problem of this thesis, is investigated by the use of primary data from the EB survey conducted in the autumn of 2023, to do specific regression analyses, targeting specific variables in the EB survey. That is, underlying factors that according to theory and previous research *could explain differences in attitudes* (among the citizens of the EU) *towards further enlargement of the EU*, as well as *support for further European integration within the area of defence and security policy*.

## 2.1. Political system theory

"Political system theory" was first presented by David Easton in the early 1950s, and in 1957 he wrote a revised article about it that was published in the *World Politics* journal. He further developed his theory in additional publications throughout the years, e.g. in the 1960s and 1970s. In a nutshell, the principle of Political system theory states that a political system is surrounded by an *environment* that reacts to different *events* in the environment, which cause *stress* on the political system to *act* and deliver *outputs* in shape of *policies*. The environment consists of both *happenings* and *people* (whose attitudes or *support* are important to take into account for the political system, as the legitimacy of the political system relies on the *people* – who are also the *electorate*). Easton defines "support" as one of two things, i.e. *supportive behaviour* or *a supportive state of mind*. Supportive behaviour may consist of "actions promoting the goals, interests, and actions of another person"[18], i.e. an *open action*, whereas a supportive

[13] Verhaegen, S., Hooghe, M., & Quintelier, E. (2017). *The effect of political trust and trust in European citizens on European identity*. European Political Science Review, 9(2), pages 161-181.
[14] Karv, T. (2019). *Public Attitudes Towards the European Union*. Åbo Akademi University Press.
[15] Easton, D. (1957). *An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems*. World Politics, 9(3), pages 383-400.
[16] Easton, D. (1965). *A Systems Analysis of Political Life.* University of Chicago Press.
[17] Easton, D. (1975). *A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support*. British Journal of Political Science, 5(4), pages 435-457.
[18] Easton, D. (1957). *An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems*. World Politics, 9(3), page 390.

state of mind is not as visible, but still is manifested through for instance an individual's attitudes, which can affect the behaviour, such as *voting behaviour* or *attitudes and trust* towards institutions in society.

In an article published in 1975, Easton further distinguished between *specific* and *diffuse* support.[19] Specific support is exemplified as being a "response to authorities"[20], for which actions or lack of actions have consequences.[21] Diffuse support on the other hand, is an "evaluation of what an object is or represents – to the general meaning it has for a person – not what it does".[22] It consist of a "reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effects of which they see as damaging to their wants".[23] According to Easton, diffuse support "tends to be more durable than specific support".[24] As a concrete example, even though citizens of the EU are not fully content with EU decisions or policies, that doesn't necessarily mean that they want their country to leave the EU.

The actions taken by the political system cause *output* that affects the *environment*. The output's effect on the environment leads in turn to new *input* that again produces output, and as such, the political system is (or at least *should be*) moving forward.[25] This graphically explained in Figure 1 below, which is credited to Easton's 1957 article in World Politics:

[19] Easton, D. (1975). *A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support*. British Journal of Political Science, 5(4), pages 435-457.
[20] Ibid, page 437.
[21] Ibid, page 439.
[22] Ibid, page 444.
[23] Easton, D. (1965). *A Systems Analysis of Political Life.* University of Chicago Press, page 273.
[24] Easton, D. (1975). *A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support*. British Journal of Political Science, 5(4), page 444.
[25] Easton, D. (1957). *An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems*. World Politics, 9(3), pages 383-400.

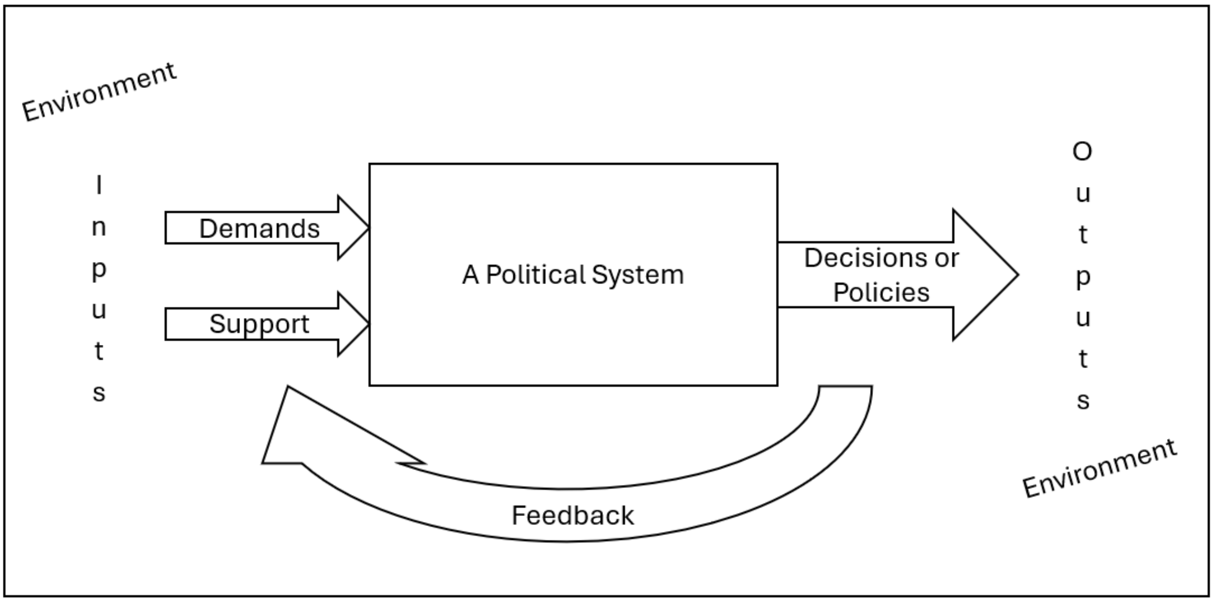


***Figure 1***. *Easton's basic model of for approaching the study of political life.*[26]

Another way of figuratively explaining the logic behind Easton's Political system theory, is through the so called "Bicycle theory", which has no clear original theorist within the academia, but is often credited to Jacques Delors, who was the President of the European Commission between 1985-1995. It has been used as a theory to explain the rationale behind further EU integration. The theory has common ground with Political system theory, in the sense that both theories claim that the political system (in this case *of the EU*) needs to deliver policies and solutions to the challenges that the citizens are experiencing. As a person who is riding a bicycle will fall off the bicycle if it is not moving forward, the same is claimed to be the risk for the EU, i.e. that the EU constantly needs to move forward, towards further integration (and "an ever closer union"), in order not to stagnate and fall apart.[27] This theory thus helps at explaining, in a very figurative way from a theoretical perspective, why the EU institutions are acting the way they are when pushing for further integration and enlargement of the EU.

One could argue that Easton's theoretical framework, as being more than half a century old at the time of writing, might be outdated, but I would argue that the logic and reasoning he is using still stands strong and is of scientific relevance for two reasons. The first reason, is that it has been widely used (and *still is being* widely used) within the research community for analysis of attitudinal data.[28] [29] The second reason, is that, apart from being widely used within the research field of attitudinal data, it also fits well

[26] Easton, D. (1957). *An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems*. World Politics, 9(3), page 384.
[27] Ross, G., & Jenson, J. (2017). *Reconsidering Jacques Delors' Leadership of the European Union*. Journal of European Integration, 39(2), page 9.
[28] Karv, T. (2019). *Public Attitudes Towards the European Union*. Åbo Akademi University Press, page 69.
[29] Verhaegen, S., Hooghe, M., & Quintelier, E. (2017). *The effect of political trust and trust in European citizens on European identity*. European Political Science Review, 9(2), pages 161-181.

into other theories that are often used to analyse European integration from a theoretical perspective, and the history has so far shown to fit well with the theory, as the precursor of the EU (i.e. the ECSC) fundamentally was founded as a response to the crisis of how to prevent another war in Europe. In the *Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community* it says: "*CONSIDERING that world peace cannot be safeguarded except by creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it;*" (translated to English by the author from the original wording in French)[30]. One could also easily argue, that recent crises have further strengthened the EU's power and competences vis-à-vis its member states. The Euro crisis (2009-2012) was partly managed e.g. by creating a banking union and stricter fiscal rules, the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021) resulted in further EU coordination on the competence area of health, and the economic recession following the COVID-19 pandemic was managed by the EU obtaining joint substantial loans in order to finance the economic recovery plan NextGenerationEU.[31] Both of these examples fit well into both Easton's Political system theory as well as one of the EU's founding fathers' Jean Monnet's prediction that "Europe will be forged in crises".[32]

There is a lot of previous research available, showing patterns on increased support for institutions during or following times of crises. This theory, which also aligns well with Easton's Political system theory, has also been proven empirically in several studies, and is known as "rallying around the flag".[33] The idea is, that especially during challenging times due to external pressure, for example during times of war or during the COVID-19 pandemic, the population gathers around a *common cause*. A very figurative example of this, was for instance when politicians in Sweden changed their party lapel pins to Swedish flag lapel pins during the COVID-19 pandemic, most likely to show unity in a challenging time of national and international crises.

## 2.2. EU attitudes

Within the field of attitudinal research relating to the EU and European integration, there is a wealth of research available. In this section, I will present an overview of some important contributions within this research area.

This thesis does not focus on Brexit per se, hence it will not go into deep empirical details behind it, but when researching *EU attitudes* nowadays, it is still relevant to mention Brexit. The reason for this is

[30] Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (1951, 18 April), page 11. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:11951K/TXT. Retrieved 2025, 19 February.
[31] European Commission. (2025). *NextGenerationEU*. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/eu-borrower-investor-relations/nextgenerationeu_en. Retrieved 2025, 15 March.
[32] Anghel, V., & Jones, E. (2023). *Is Europe really forged through crisis? Pandemic EU and the Russia – Ukraine war*. Journal of European Public Policy, 30(4), pages 766-786.
[33] Lee, J. (1977). *Rallying around the Flag: Foreign Policy Events and Presidential Popularity*. Presidential Studies Quarterly, 7(4), pages 252-256.

because Brexit showed us *firsthand*, what *can* actually happen if the attitudes towards EU and EU integration turns negative and the support for EU membership decreases and fall under a *critical* level, namely that an EU member state *can* take advantage of Article 50 in the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), and actually *leave* the EU, as was the case with the United Kingdom (UK).

According to research looking into the reasons for Brexit, we know that support for "leave" was stronger among voters with low education and income, older individuals, with higher attachment to their national (British) identity and lower satisfaction with national democracy. Stronger preference for "remain" was primarily found among those who have an educational degree and feel less attached to their British identity.[34]

Even though it is not from the academic research per se, Lord Ashcroft's exit poll "EU Referendum 'How Did You Vote' Poll", conducted between June 21-23, 2016, and published online on June 24, 2016 (i.e. the day following the referendum), reveals noteworthy insight into the minds of the British voters in the Brexit referendum. Lord Ashcroft's poll found that the second most mentioned reason to vote "leave" among the voters who voted "leave", was because they perceived it as "*offering the best chance for the UK to regain control over immigration and its own borders*", and the third most mentioned reason to vote "leave" among the "leavers", was that "*remaining meant little or no choice about how the EU expanded its membership or powers*".[35] Both of these reasons, i.e. immigration/border control and deepened EU integration, are highly relevant to the dependent variables of this thesis, as the immigration of EU citizens increased vastly from the time of the first Eastern enlargement in 2004, compared to before the enlargement. The immigration of EU citizens then continued to increase up until the Brexit referendum in 2016, with a majority of EU migrants coming from large Eastern European countries, such as Poland and Romania.[36]

A chapter in the recent publication *"Europaperspektiv 2024: The Depth and Size of the EU in a Time of War"* by Pehr-Johan Norbäck, a Senior Research Fellow at the Swedish Research Institute of Industrial Economics (IFN), also thoroughly lays out the reasons for Brexit, and what it has also meant for the EU to be "released" from the UK as well. As the UK has often been a rather *reluctant* EU member, who has opposed further integration in some areas, such as *defence policy*.[37] In another chapter in the same

[34] Pensiero, N. (2020). *To leave or not to leave? Understanding the support for the United Kingdom membership in the European Union: Identity, attitudes towards the political system and socio-economic status*. Rationality and Society, 32(3), pages 255–277.
[35] Lord Ashcroft. (2016, 24 June). *How the United Kingdom voted on Thursday… and why*. Lord Ashcroft Polls. https://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/. Retrieved 2025, 19 February.
[36] Cuibus, M. (2023). *BRIEFING: EU migration to and from the UK*. The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford. Available at: https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/eu-migration-to-and-from-the-uk/. Retrieved 2025, 24 February.
[37] Lundqvist, B., Michalski, A., Oxelheim, L. (Eds.). (2024). *Europaperspektiv 2024: Europeiska unionens djup och storlek i en tid av ofred*. Santérus förlag, page 101.

publication, Nicholas Aylott, the head of the Europe programme at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI), makes the argument that Brexit might actually have facilitated for the EU to move forward with deepened integration within the field of common defence policy, as the UK had always been very sceptical towards further EU integration within this area, as the British considered defence cooperation in Europe to be something that should be managed within NATO, and not the EU.[38]

There are also several papers available on the accession processes for specific candidate countries to join the EU (e.g. in the Western Balkans), such as John O'Brennan's *"EU Enlargement to the Western Balkans: Towards 2025 & Beyond"*.[39] However, this paper by O'Brennan is rather looking into the technicalities regarding the accession process of the Western Balkan countries, not the *attitudes* among *EU citizens* towards it. Another paper on the theme of EU enlargement policy in the Western Balkans (which does look into attitudes) is a paper published in 2022 by Tetiana Sydoruk et al., where the authors looked at EB data and the stances on the topic of further EU enlargement towards the Western Balkans, among political parties represented nationally in the parliaments of the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as parties from the current member states that are were represented in the European Parliament (EP) during the EU parliamentary term 2019-2024. Sydoruk et al. found in their paper that party-based Euroscepticism did not have a considerable effect on EU enlargement policy.[40]

There are also several papers published surrounding the topic of necessary institutional reform in order to make further enlargement of the EU possible. Among those, I would like to mention the Report of the Franco-German Working Group on EU Institutional Reform named "*Sailing on High Seas: Reforming and Enlarging the EU for the 21st Century*".[41] This paper, points out important institutional factors for the EU to consider, but it does not take into account the current *attitudes* among EU citizens towards *the enlargement* it is addressing.

One important concept within the research field of EU attitudes is "Permissive consensus and Constraining dissensus", which is used for explaining how public support for the EU and European integration has developed over the course of time. The argument is that a previously widespread, passive

[38] Lundqvist, B., Michalski, & A., Oxelheim, L. (Eds.). (2024). *Europaperspektiv 2024: Europeiska unionens djup och storlek i en tid av ofred*. Santérus förlag, page 120.
[39] O'Brennan, J. (2018). *EU enlargement to the Western Balkans: towards 2025 & beyond*. Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA), Dublin.
[40] Sydoruk, T., et al. (2022). *The impact of Euroscepticism on the EU enlargement policy in the Western Balkans*. Balkan Social Science Review, 19, pages 157-185.
[41] Costa, O., & Schwarzer, D. (2023). *Sailing on High Seas: Reforming and Enlarging the EU for the 21st Century*. Franco-German Working Group on EU Institutional Reform.

support in favour of European integration, has increasingly been substituted by generally more critic attitudes towards the European integration.[42]

Another significant premise, has shown how public attitudes towards European integration are connected to national conditions, which has contributed to better understanding of the underlying factors of Euroscepticism. The claim the author Catherine De Vries makes in her publication "*Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration*", is that Euroscepticism has multiple dimensions and that the EU is most likely doomed to accept an integration process which advances in different speeds for different member states,[43] an idea which has also been explored and academically supported by Alexander Stubb.[44] [45]

Previous research has also shown that media plays a significant role in in shaping public attitudes towards the EU and European integration. In an article from 2008, the authors show empirical evidence that positive reporting by media on EU matters tend to increase the support for the EU and European integration, while negative reporting by media on the contrary leads to decreased support for the EU and European integration, among the public.[46]

Another important contribution to the field of attitudinal research, are analyses that have helped us to understand on how social inequalities, socio-political attitudes and contextual factors affect Euroscepticism and support for right-wing parties. It is empirically shown that two of the most important factors when it comes down to being Eurosceptic and supporting right-wing parties, are education and income. Hence, people with low education and low income are more likely to support right-wing parties and have Eurosceptic attitudes, than people with relatively higher education and income.[47]

From previous research, we also know that identity correlates with attitudes, as such as the perception of a European identity correlates with increased support for the EU (and the opposite, i.e. that the absence of European identity makes a person more likely to be unsupportive of the EU). Also, members of more well-off societal classes are more likely to identify as European, and the causal effect is that they are more likely to profit from the economic benefits of integration and free movement within the

[42] Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2009). *A postfunctionalist theory of European integration: From permissive consensus to constraining dissensus.* British Journal of Political Science, 39(1), pages 1-23.
[43] De Vries, C. (2018). *Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration*. Oxford University Press.
[44] Stubb, A. C.-G. (1996). *A Categorization of Differentiated Integration*. JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies, 34, pages 283-295.
[45] Stubb, A. C.-G. (1997). *The 1996 Intergovernmental Conference and the management of flexible integration*. Journal of European Public Policy, 4(1), pages 37-55.
[46] Vliegenthart, R., Schuck, A., Boomgaarden, H., De Vreese, C. (2008). *News Coverage and Support for European Integration, 1990–2006*. International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 20(4), pages 415-439.
[47] Werts, H., Scheepers, P., Lubbers, M. (2013). *Euro-scepticism and radical right-wing voting in Europe, 2002–2008: Social cleavages, socio-political attitudes and contextual characteristics determining voting for the radical right.* European Union Politics, 14(2), pages 183-205.

EU.[48] The matter of identity is also aligned with research on Brexit, which showed that individuals with a higher degree of attachment to their national (British) identity, were more inclined to vote "Leave" in the 2016 Brexit referendum.[49] There is also a strong correlation between trust in political institutions and European identity.[50]

On the theme of political institutions, there is also research available that has looked into the correlation between trust in national institutions, and whether it boosts or reduces the level of trust in EU institutions. The research available presents both support and refutation of the hypothesis that trust in national institutions also have a positive effect on the level of trust in EU institutions. The authors argue and demonstrate, that even though trust in national and European parliaments is consistent and closely related at the individual level, country level of institutional trust averagely has a negative effect on citizens' trust in the European Parliament. I.e. trust in institutions seems to be an underlying attitude that functions no matter the specific level of government. It presents trusting citizens with confidence in doubtful institutions at various levels. Simultaneously, if a citizen lives in a country with institutions that possess a low level of general trust, it then tends to foster a higher level of trust in EU institutions. The authors (Muñoz et al.) conclude that: "The trustworthiness of national institutions sets a 'national standard' against which the EU institutions are compared. When the national reference point is highly trusted, the result is that confidence in European institutions is lower".[51] This is, the authors reason, because when citizens in a country with well-trusted and well-functioning institutions assess EU institutions, they have high standards as a reference point, which by comparison decreases their trust in EU institutions. Thus, support for EU institutions is not per se a result of attitudes either way towards national institutions.[52] Related to this topic, corruption in a member state has actually shown to have a positive effect on citizens' trust in EU institutions.[53]

Research has also shown that trust between citizens are higher in more economically developed member states, primarily found in EU15, rather than in some less economically developed member states, foremost belonging to the group of EU13.[54]

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[48] Fligstein, N. (2009). *Who are the Europeans and how does it matter for politics*. European identity, pages 132-166.
[49] Pensiero, N. (2020). *To leave or not to leave? Understanding the support for the United Kingdom membership in the European Union: Identity, attitudes towards the political system and socio-economic status*. Rationality and Society, 32(3), pages 255–277.
[50] Verhaegen, S., Hooghe, M., & Quintelier, E. (2017). *The effect of political trust and trust in European citizens on European identity*. European Political Science Review, 9(2), page 169.
[51] Muñoz, J., Torcal, M., & Bonet, E. (2011). *Institutional trust and multilevel government in the European Union: Congruence or compensation?* European Union Politics, 12(4), page 569.
[52] Ibid, page 570.
[53] Ibid, pages 566-567.
[54] Verhaegen, S., Hooghe, M., & Quintelier, E. (2017). *The effect of political trust and trust in European citizens on European identity*. European Political Science Review, 9(2), page 165.

Thomas Karv, presented in his 2019 PhD dissertation, statistical analyses based on Eurobarometer data, about attitudes that reflect support for the EU.[55] However, even though he did apply parts of his research to attitudes towards further enlargement of the EU, as well as a common defence policy within the EU, a lot has happened since 2019 (when his dissertation was published), with actual consequences of Brexit being visible (as Brexit was finalised early 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021), Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (2022-still ongoing) and the accelerated negotiations with EU candidate countries[56], just to mention a few examples. Donald Trump's re-election as US president is also posing challenges to the EU, both in relation to trade, security and geopolitical matters, such as his remarks about not protecting NATO allies[57] and imposing increased tariffs on the EU among others. However, these recent events caused by Donald Trump's re-election are not considered in this thesis, as these events happened after the empirical data was collected, and is as such for future research to consider.

To summarize, according to previous research, we know some factors that have shown to typically influence attitudes towards the EU and European integration. These aspects are usually such as level of education (high vs. low), geography (urban vs. rural) and age (young vs. elderly), where a younger, highly educated person in an urban area would be likely to be more positive towards the EU and European integration than an older, blue collar worker in a rural area.[58]

### 2.2.1. Attitudes towards EU enlargement

According to previous research, for instance in Thomas Karv's 2019 PhD dissertation, we can see that there is a correlation between attitudes towards the EU and attitudes towards EU enlargement. In general, citizens that have positive attitudes towards the EU also tend to have positive attitudes towards EU enlargement. Hence, factors that can explain positive attitudes towards the EU, can according to previous research also be used as explanatory factors to help us understand attitudes towards further enlargement of the EU.[59] The open question is, however, whether this is *still* the case, considering *events* that have taken place in the early years of the 2020s, most importantly Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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[55] Karv, T. (2019). *Public Attitudes Towards the European Union*. Åbo Akademi University Press.
[56] European Commission. (2024). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews*. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/926b3cb2-f027-40b6-ac7b-2c198a164c94_en?filename=COM_2024_146_1_EN.pdf. Retrieved 2025, 26 April.
[57] Gold, M. (2024, 11 February). *Trump Says He Gave NATO Allies Warning: Pay In or He'd Urge Russian Aggression*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/10/us/politics/trump-nato-russia.html. Retrieved 2025, 24 February.
[58] Karv, T. (2019). *Public Attitudes Towards the European Union*. Åbo Akademi University Press, page 179.
[59] Ibid.

### 2.2.2. Attitudes towards an EU common defence and security policy

A question about attitudes towards a common EU defence and security policy has been included in the EB survey since 1990.[60] As with the case of EU enlargement, the underlying factors explaining attitudes towards a common EU defence and security policy among citizens in previous research, goes hand in hand with the factors that explain positive attitudes towards the EU and European integration in general.[61] Negative attitudes towards a common defence and security policy, have previously been found primarily in Eastern European countries, such as Romania, Czech Republic and Hungary.[62] This makes it especially interesting to look into how this has developed, through an East-West dimension following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, considering the *geographical proximity* between these countries to both Ukraine (a country invaded by Russia) and Russia itself, as well as the *historic context*, with these countries having been forced to Russian/Soviet submission in the past.

Previous research has also looked into whether the gender gap is applicable for attitudes towards common foreign and security policy, and determined that when controlling for political ideology/economic values and feelings for Europe, there is no concrete difference in the attitudes between men and women.[63]

### 2.2.3. East-West dimension (effect of living in a newer vs. older member state)

Regarding the East-West dimension (EU13/EU15, i.e. newer vs. older member states), one could argue from a theoretical perspective that "Eastern Europeans" ought to be more positive towards further Eastern enlargement of the EU, compared to "Western Europeans", as the residents of many of these countries share a Slavic identity and hence are culturally attached to the peoples of e.g. Ukraine and the Western Balkans, as previous research has shown that identity is an important factor to explain attitudes. With the exception of the Republic of Cyprus as well as Malta, they also share a common experience of belonging to the previous socialist bloc in Eastern Europe, and many people still living there today ought to remember how it was to live under a totalitarian regime, without democracy or market economy. Further member states in the Eastern part of Europe would also move the "centre" of the EU further to the East. However, from an economic or "egoistic" point of view, it could be that the citizens of Eastern European countries (EU13), which generally have lower GDP per capita than Western European countries (EU15), and to a higher degree are net-receivers from the EU budget, might be afraid of losing a part of the economic contribution and support they currently receive from the EU budget, including agricultural support from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Hence, there is a theoretical incentive

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[60] Karv, T. (2019). *Public Attitudes Towards the European Union*. Åbo Akademi University Press, page 212.
[61] Ibid, page 139.
[62] Ibid, page 213.
[63] Kentmen, C. (2010). *Bases of Support for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy: Gender, Attitudes toward Economic Integration, and Attachment to Europe*. International Political Science Review 31(3), pages 285–299.

for them to not be as supportive of further Eastern enlargement of the EU as one could imagine from a cultural or historical perspective. As previous research has also shown to be not very clear about the "East-West" or "new versus old member states" dimension,[64] I find this particularly relevant to look into this factor in the empirical analysis.

## 2.3. Other factors and explanations

It is established in previous research that younger people tend to be more positive towards the EU, as they are the ones who can benefit from e.g. Erasmus exchange programmes for studying abroad in another European country, travel, or take a temporary low qualification job before they are established in the labour market or put down roots and form a family, which are two factors that tend to make someone less "mobile". Young people are also more likely to speak a second language which makes it easier for them to communicate with people of other nationalities.[65] In the polls related to the Brexit referendum, it was also shown that age had a significant effect on the attitudes towards the EU and whether the UK should remain in the EU or leave the EU.[66] In order to be able to draw any conclusions regarding the East-West/Newer-older member state dimension, it is thus crucial to control for age.

As mentioned earlier, when controlling for other factors, the gender gap does not seem to be among the most important explanatory factors regarding attitudes towards European integration or the EU or its policies. However, as one of the basic sociodemographic variables alongside age, education, financial situation and type of community, gender is included in the analysis in order to control for potential confounding effects, as well as allowing for the statistical model to more precisely estimating the core correlations.

Arnorsson and Zoega (2018) found in their research that GDP per capita in the area of residence had a significant effect on voting behaviour in the Brexit referendum, as well as a relatively higher level of net immigration.[67] This is also aligned with further research presented earlier, that supports the correlation between personal income and attitudes towards the EU and European integration, and as the empirical analysis of this thesis mainly concentrates on sociodemographic factors, I will thus include the "economic" factor on individual/personal level, rather than looking at the GDP of the residence area. Hence, as "income" per se is not included as a variable in the EB, the one closest to it, i.e. "Household

[64] Toshkov, D., Kortenska, E., Dimitrova, A., & Fagan, A. (2014). *The 'Old' and the 'New' Europeans: Analyses of Public Opinion on EU Enlargement in Review* (MAXCAP Working Paper Series No. 02). Freie Universität Berlin. https://userpage.fu-berlin.de/kfgeu/maxcap/system/files/maxcap_wp_02.pdf. Retrieved 2025, 16 August.
[65] Fligstein, N. (2009). *Who are the Europeans and how does it matter for politics*. European identity, pages 132-166.
[66] Lord Ashcroft. (2016, 24 June). *How the United Kingdom voted on Thursday… and why*. Lord Ashcroft Polls. https://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/. Retrieved 2025, 19 February.
[67] Arnorsson, A., & Zoega, G. (2018). *On the causes of Brexit*. European Journal of Political Economy, 55, pages 301-323.

financial situation" is included as one of the control variables. If the household financial situation is characterised as either "Very good" or "Rather good", then the economy around you should be less influential to your attitudes.

Trust in national political institutions, and whether it has an effect on support for EU institutions, has in previous research both been confirmed and refuted, and is, as previously mentioned, not per se a result of attitudes either way towards national institutions[68], but since this variable is highly relevant to the theoretical framework of this thesis, it will be included as a control variable in the empirical analysis.

## 2.4. Hypotheses

The EU, as well as its precursors, have always had its critics, and some referendums that were held in the member states prior to joining the EU were very narrow (e.g. in Sweden 1994 and Malta 2003). The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was voted down by the people in both France and the Netherlands, and furthermore, in both Sweden and Denmark the euro was not adopted after negative results in national referendums. However, based on previous research, the hypothesis is that recent disruptive geopolitical events, especially Brexit and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, have contributed to a "rally around the flag" effect (in this case the *EU flag*), meaning favourable attitudes among EU citizens towards both further enlargement of the EU as well as an EU common defence and security policy, in order to tackle an external threat.

The following hypotheses seek to test the causal effects between the independent and dependent variables, with regard to theory and previous research.

Hypothesis number 1 (**H1**) is:

- *People living in EU13 are more positive towards further EU enlargement than people living in EU15.*

Also based on cultural similarities and common history of living under authoritarian and/or under Soviet influence, citizens of Eastern European EU member states ought to be more positive towards a common security and defence policy on EU level.

Hypothesis number 2 (**H2**), is thereby formulated as follows:

- *People living in EU13 will be more positive towards an EU common security and defence policy than people living in EU15.*

[68] Arnorsson, A., & Zoega, G. (2018). *On the causes of Brexit*. European Journal of Political Economy, 55, page 570.

# 3. Method and Material

In this chapter, I present details from the dataset and descriptives of the specific variables that will be used in the empirical analysis, as well as the method that will be used for the empirical analysis of this thesis. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a wealth of research available looking at factors that are likely to influence people's attitudes towards the EU in general. Hence, the focus of this thesis is to look at how primary the East-West dimension of country of residence influence EU citizens' attitudes towards EU proposals such as future enlargement of the EU and further European integration within an EU common defence and security policy.

## 3.1. Material

The empirical analysis in this thesis is based on data from the Eurobarometer (EB). The EB was launched in 1974 and is performed on behalf of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Communication multiple times every year, as e.g. a Standard Eurobarometer (conducted twice a year), Flash Eurobarometer (which focuses on ad-hoc topics and are generally shorter surveys than the Standard Eurobarometer) and the Special Eurobarometer (which focuses on in-depth topics that are related to on-going work of the European institutions). The methodological approach and geographical coverage of the data collection varies between the different Eurobarometers. The Standard Eurobarometer and Special Eurobarometer are for instance conducted as a face-to-face interviews, while the Flash Eurobarometer is conducted either as a telephone interview or an online interview. The Standard Eurobarometer is conducted both in EU member states as well as in candidate states, while the Flash Eurobarometer and the Special Eurobarometer are conducted only in the EU member states.[69]

Apart from the EB, there is another cross-national survey widely used within social science research available, named the European Social Survey (ESS).[70]

Based on the research problem of this thesis, I have chosen the Eurobarometer as the empirical data source for the regression analysis of this thesis, as the variables that I analyse in this thesis are not available in the ESS.[71] At the time of writing of this thesis (during the spring of 2025), the most recent available EB data concerning attitudes towards enlargement is from the wave ZA8779 – Eurobarometer 100.2 (2023). Since the focus and contribution to the aggregated knowledge of attitudinal research of this thesis is on the geopolitical challenges of the EU in the early 2020s, the empirical analysis will only

[69] European Commission Directorate-General for Communication. (2025). *About Eurobarometer*. https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/about/eurobarometer. Retrieved 2025, 1 March.
[70] European Social Survey European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ESS ERIC). (2025). *About ESS*. https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/about-ess. Retrieved 2025, 1 March.
[71] ESS Data Portal. (2025). *The European Social Survey (ESS) – Politics*. https://ess.sikt.no/en/theme/321b06ad-1b98-4b7d-93ad-ca8a24e8788a/88eb08c8-371d-47d7-9fb7-351acd47eaaf. Retrieved 2025, 1 March.

be based on the data from the wave ZA8779 – Eurobarometer 100.2 (2023).[72] I am aware that it could be considered a weakness of my contribution to the aggregated research to only include a single point of time in the research. However, the objective of this thesis is not to investigate how the attitudes towards the dependent variables have developed over time, but rather to further build on existing research, by encompassing and take recent events up until the start of the second half of 2023 into consideration and account for this snapshot.

As previously mentioned, events taking place after the autumn of 2023, such as Donald Trump's re-election as President of the United States of America and his statements about not defending NATO allies who do not spend enough on their own defence, made repeatedly by Donald Trump since February 2024, have not been taken into consideration by the respondents. However, as it was collected well after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we have viable reasons to believe that the respondents will have taken this highly current geopolitical event into consideration when answering the survey. The survey also included some specific questions about the war in Ukraine, such as whether the war in Ukraine should be a priority for the EU, and the respondents' satisfaction regarding the EU's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.[73] The recency of the data does furthermore fall well within the limit of what could be considered acceptable with regard to the aim of the thesis, as well as according to academic standards.

The analysis is only based on respondents with value "1" for the variable *eu27b*: *NATION GROUP EU28 NO UK*. After excluding answers from respondents residing in the UK or candidate countries, the dataset contains a total of 26459 responses. In the frequency table 1 below the distribution per country included in the analysis is presented, including information whether the country is an EU13 or EU15 country.

[72] The dataset for ZA8779 – Eurobarometer 100.2 (2023), containing a total number of 35575 respondents, from all EU member states, as well as candidate countries, has been provided by GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in .sav format.
[73] Eurostat. (2023). ZA8779 Eurobarometer 100.2 (2023), Country Questionnaire Ireland (English).

***Table 1.*** *Descriptive statistics of number of respondents per country, specified on whether country of residence is an EU13 or EU15 country*

| **Country** | **EU13** | **EU15** |
|---|---|---|
| France | 0 | 1025 |
| Belgium | 0 | 1016 |
| Netherlands | 0 | 1011 |
| Germany[74] | 0 | 1527 |
| Italy | 0 | 1023 |
| Luxembourg | 0 | 503 |
| Denmark | 0 | 1011 |
| Ireland | 0 | 1016 |
| Greece | 0 | 1012 |
| Spain | 0 | 1006 |
| Portugal | 0 | 1031 |
| Finland | 0 | 1009 |
| Sweden | 0 | 1051 |
| Austria | 0 | 1005 |
| Republic of Cyprus | 505 | 0 |
| Czech Republic | 1011 | 0 |
| Estonia | 1003 | 0 |
| Hungary | 1022 | 0 |
| Latvia | 1007 | 0 |
| Lithuania | 1011 | 0 |
| Malta | 503 | 0 |
| Poland | 1024 | 0 |
| Slovakia | 1006 | 0 |
| Slovenia | 1017 | 0 |
| Bulgaria | 1010 | 0 |
| Romania | 1062 | 0 |
| Croatia | 1032 | 0 |
| **Total** | **12213** | **14246** |

In table 2 below, all the variables included in the analysis are presented. For all variables, as previously mentioned, all spontaneous answers such as e.g. “Don’t know” or “Refusal” have been excluded from the base (n) and hence the empirical analysis. The table shows the variable options after my recoding, such as grouping of certain categories, and changing dichotomous variables into 0-1 dummy variables, generally following the rule that “0” is a negative value (e.g. against/no/bad) while “1” is a positive

[74] In the data collection and original dataset, Germany was still divided between Germany – West and Germany – East, however, in this analysis they have been merged into *Germany*.

value (e.g. for/yes/good), the exception being the gender variable where 0=Man and 1=Woman is purely functional.

***Table 2.*** *Descriptive statistics of all the variables applicable to the empirical analysis after recoding*

| | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dependent variables** | | | | | |
| EU Common Defence Policy | 0.81 | 0.395 | 0=Against | 1=For | 24785 |
| EU Enlargement | 0.6 | 0.49 | 0=Against | 1=For | 23564 |
| | | | | | |
| **Independent variable** | | | | | |
| EU13 | 0.46 | 0.499 | 0=No | 1=Yes | 26459 |
| | | | | | |
| **Control variables** | | | | | |
| Age | 51.60 | 18.311 | 15=15 years old | 98=98 years old | 26457 |
| Gender | 0.529 | 0.499 | 0=Man | 1=Woman | 26404 |
| Education | 2.276 | 0.555 | 1=Low | 3=High | 26398 |
| Household economic situation | 0.724 | 0.447 | 0=Bad | 1=Good | 25890 |
| Type of community | 1.97 | 0.805 | 1=Rural area or village | 3=Large town | 26456 |
| Trust in national parliament | 0.41 | 0.492 | 0=No | 1=Yes | 25059 |

The country-based variable EU13 is based on country of residence, not nationality or citizenship. There are multiple reasons for this, as it is consistent with the other country-based variables in the EB, which are also based on country of residence, and not nationality or citizenship. The dichotomous nationality variables also allow for more than one answer, while the country of residence is always considered the country where the interview was conducted and is as such a single choice variable.

### 3.1.1. EU attitudes – the dependent variables

As previously mentioned and shown in table 2 above, there are two dependent variables in the empirical analysis of this thesis. Both of them are highly relevant to look into, as there is a gap of recent research based on underlying factors for attitudes towards these, and there have been recent events in the "environment" (as defined by Easton 1957),[75] that most likely have influenced the EU citizens' attitudes toward these variables. Since these are two topics of high relevance for peace and cohesion in Europe, and since most previous published research based on EB data regarding attitudes towards these "EU proposals" have been conducted before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, they are relevant to be looked into further.

[75] Easton, D. (1957). *An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems*. World Politics, 9(3), pages 383-400.

These variables, which the empirical analysis in this thesis will be based on as dependent variables, are:

- QB2_2: A common defence and security policy among EU Member States
- QB2_6: Further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years[76] [77]

The answer options for both of these variables in the original dataset are 1=For and 2=Against. Furthermore there are 3=Refusal [by the respondent to respond to the question] and 4=Don't know [spontaneous answer]. Only the first two answer options (1=For and 2=Against) have been included in the analysis, as the other two are not of interest, nor do they have relevance to the analysis. The included variables have been recoded prior to the analysis so that the positive value "For" is the highest value, keeping code "1", while "Against" have been recoded to "0".

### 3.1.2. Explanatory factor – the independent variable

The independent variable used in the empirical analysis of this thesis, is *Living in an EU13 country*. In the dataset, this variable can be found as *W94: Weight EU NMS 13*. As this is a weight variable, and I am only interested to take into account whether the respondents' country of residence is an EU13 country or not, but not the specific weight value, I have created a dummy variable named *EU13*, for which I have recoded the original variable into a dichotomous variable with value "1" for EU13 countries and value "0" for non-EU13 countries. The purpose of this variable is to test the *East-West dimension* mentioned earlier in the *Hypotheses* section, as it identifies which respondents that reside in EU13 (i.e. a "Eastern European country"/the "newer/more recent member states"), and hence also which respondents that reside in EU15 (i.e. primarily "Western European countries"/the "older member states"). Please note that EU15 is used as a group label for the member states joining the EU prior to 2004, even though the actual number of member states joining the EU prior to the Eastern enlargements starting 2004, only adds up to 14 after Brexit.

### 3.1.3. Control variables

*Age*. With respect to *Age*, it is established in previous research that younger people tend to be more positive towards the EU, as they are the ones who can benefit from e.g. Erasmus exchange programmes for studying abroad in another European country, or travel or take a temporary low qualification job before they are established in the labour market or put down roots and form a family, which are two

[76] Eurostat. (2023). ZA8779 Eurobarometer 100.2 (2023), Country Questionnaire Ireland (English).
[77] The most recent available data for these dependent variables in the same dataset are obtainable from the wave ZA8779 – Eurobarometer 100.2 (2023), although there is more recent data available collected between 2024, 10 October-5 November, for QB2_2 (a common defence and security policy among EU Member States), that was released early 2025.

factors that tend to make someone less "mobile". They are also more likely to speak a second language which makes it easier for them to communicate with people of other nationalities.[78]

*Age* included in the dataset as different variables, e.g. recoded age groups, but as it is usual to include age as actual age and not necessarily as age group in regression analyses, I have included age as a scale variable, *D11: Age exact*.

*Gender*. Is a standardized variable of interest within social scientific research to include as a control variable together with age, education and income/financial situation, and is thus also included in this analysis as a control variable. The variable used is *D10: How would you describe yourself?*. Originally this variable has four different answer options; 1="Man", 2="Woman", 3="None of the above/Non binary/Do not recognise yourself in above categories", and 4="Prefer not to say".[79] In the dataset only "Man" and "Woman" are considered valid answers, and "None of the above/Non binary/Do not recognise yourself in above categories", and "Prefer not to say" are consequently excluded from the analysis. In total only 55 respondents (i.e. 0.2%) answered the third answer option "None of the above/Non binary/Do not recognise yourself in above categories". In my analysis, based on D10, I have created a new "gender_dummy" variable, where "Man" has been recoded to "0" and "Woman" has been recoded to "1".

*Level of education*. As previous research has pointed out, blue collar workers tend to be more negative towards the EU, as they are the ones who have jobs that are most likely to move abroad in times of globalization.[80] Level of education is included in the original dataset as the dichotomous variables *D9a.1-9: Education level*, with 9 different levels among the answer options: "Pre-primary education (incl. no education)", "Primary education", "Lower secondary education", "Upper secondary education", "Post-secondary non tertiary (incl. pre-vocational/vocational)", "Short-cycle tertiary", "Bachelor or equivalent", "Master or equivalent" and "Doctoral or equivalent", with "Yes" and "No" answers for each of the levels. There are furthermore four spontaneous answer options, which have been excluded from the analysis. The question is asked in the survey as D8c with the wording "What is the highest level of education you completed?".[81]

[78] Fligstein, N. (2009). *Who are the Europeans and how does it matter for politics*. European identity, pages 132-166.
[79] Eurostat. (2023). ZA8779 Eurobarometer 100.2 (2023), Country Questionnaire Ireland (English).
[80] Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2004). *Does identity or economic rationality drive public opinion on European integration?* Political Science and Politics, 37(3), pages 415–420.
[81] Eurostat. (2023). ZA8779 Eurobarometer 100.2 (2023), Country Questionnaire Ireland (English).

I have used the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) framework[82] to merge the original 9 categories into 3 categories, i.e. Low = ISCED 0–2, Medium = ISCED 3–4, and High = ISCED 5–8, and created a new education variable with these three levels of education, named *educ_gr*, which will be used in the analysis.

*Rural vs. urban*. Scipioni and Tintori (2021) did find some, but strong support for a rural-urban effect. They rather claimed the differences to be credited to other socio-economic factors, such as age and education[83]. However, they did acknowledge that looking at recent electoral outcomes in EP elections, the rural-urban effect had some effect in regard to the electorate supporting right-wing Eurosceptic parties, and research has shown that there was a rural-urban dimension in people's voting behaviour in the Brexit referendum as well[84]. Based on this research, this variable is included in the empirical analysis as a control variable. This variable is included as *D25: Type of community*, with three different levels of urbanisation: "Rural area or village", "Small/middle town" and "Large town". There is also a spontaneous "Don't know" option, which has been excluded from the analysis.

*Trust in national institutions*. As highlighted in the Theory and previous research chapter, trust in national institutions have in previous research shown to have a correlational effect on attitudes towards EU institutions. It is also a highly relevant control variable to include with regard to the theoretical framework of Easton's Political systems theory, that the empirical analysis will build upon. In the EB, however, there is no single variable providing insights on the general level of trust in national institutions, but there are two variables included asking the respondent about his or her trust in two different national institutions. The question (QA6) is formulated as *How much trust do you have in certain institutions? For each of the following institutions, do you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?*, with the answer options "Tend to trust" and "Tend not to trust".[85] QA6_2 is asking about the respondent's trust in the national government, and QA6_3, is asking about the respondent's trust in the national parliament. The "national government" in QA6_2 clearly doesn't refer to the system of government and public authorities in more general terms, but specifically refers to the incumbent executive government in office around the time the survey was conducted. The level of trust in national government may thus run the risk of receiving a lower level of trust from the respondents who don't support the incumbent government, while the national parliaments naturally tend to have a wider representation over the political spectrum with more political parties represented, compared to the

[82] UNESCO Institute of Statistics – International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). (2025). *Data Mapping ISCED*. https://isced.uis.unesco.org/data-mapping/. Retrieved 2025, 15 May.
[83] Scipioni, M., & Tintori, G. (2021). *A rural-urban divide in Europe? An analysis of political attitudes and behaviour*, *EUR 30587 EN*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
[84] Egoshin, A. (2016, 18 June). *Mapping the Brexit Vote: A Geographic Perspective*. Vivid Maps. https://vividmaps.com/map-of-brexit-referendum/. Retrieved 2025, 29 March.
[85] Eurostat. (2023). ZA8779 Eurobarometer 100.2 (2023), Country Questionnaire Ireland (English).

incumbent government. Hence, if the intention is to control for general trust in national institutions, QA6_3, referring to trust in the national parliament, is the preferred choice. I have recoded the answer options and created a new dichotomous variable, named "TrustNatParl" where 0=Tend not to trust and 1=Tend to trust. The "Don't know" option is not included in the new variable, therefore these are missing values and not included in the analysis.

*Household financial situation*. As I, based on previous research, use *level of education* and *rural vs. urban* (type of community) as independent variables for the empirical analysis, I also want to check for the effect of personal finances. For this purpose, I have created a recoded dummy variable *HHFinSitGR*, based on the original variable *QA1_5: Household financial situation* as a control variable as well. The original variable had the following four answer options in the survey: "Very good", "Rather good", "Rather bad" and "Very bad". I have recoded the answer options for this variable in *HHFinSitGR* by merging the first two into a joint group category "Good" with value "1" and the last two into a joint category "Bad", with value "0". The spontaneous answer options from the original variable have been excluded in the recoded *HHFinSitGR* variable.

## 3.2. Method

To scientifically test causal and correlating relationships between a dependent and one or several independent variables, it is possible to conduct a regression analysis, which is a statistical method used for the purpose of looking into how changes in the independent variable(s) affect the dependent variable.[86] There are different kinds of regressions, whereof a couple of the most common ones are:

1. General linear model (GLM) or Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, also simply known as *linear regression*: This type of regression is applicable for cases where the relationship between the independent variable(s) and the dependent variable is linear, i.e. where the dependent variable is expected to change in proportion to the independent variable.[87]
2. Logistic regression: This kind of regression is appropriate for analyses where the dependent variable is binary (or dichotomous), i.e. "yes" or "no", "mentioned" or "not mentioned", "for" or "against", etc. It is used for modelling the probability of a specific result.[88]

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[86] Esaiasson, P. et al. (2007). *Metodpraktikan*. Norstedts Juridik, pages 429-431.
[87] Cleary, P. D., & Angel, R. (1984). *The analysis of relationships involving dichotomous dependent variables.* Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 25(3), pages 334-348.
[88] Peng, C., Lee, K., & Ingersoll, G. (2002). *An introduction to logistic regression analysis and reporting*. Journal of Educational Research, 96(1), pages 3-14.

3. Multilevel modelling or hierarchical linear modelling (HLM): This is a regression model which is typically applied in situations where you want to analyse clustered data on different hierarchical levels, for example individual factors together with country level factors.[89]

As my dependent variables are binary, i.e. are asked as whether a respondent is "For" or "Against" the specific EU proposal(s) asked in the survey, the method used in this thesis is a *binary logistic regression analysis*. As the regression analyses include the variable EU13, which in contrast to the control variables is not a variable on individual level, one could argue that a multilevel model regression analysis would have been the preferred choice. However, there are benefits of making a binary logistic regression, such as the model being simpler to conduct and understand. Besides, country dummies have been included in the analysis to allow for capturing of country specific variance.

Thus, there are several good reasons to conduct a logistic regression analysis, when analysing a number of binary variables in the same dataset. The first benefit is the obvious suitability, i.e. that it is perfect for classification of categorical outcomes. The second benefit, is that it usually produces an output which is fairly straightforward for interpret, when you know which coefficients to look at,[90] compared to a multilevel regression analysis which is more complex.

In the model an *intercept*, also called *constant* is included, which purpose is to take the baseline log-odds into account, i.e. when all predictors are zero, in order to ensure that there is an accurate estimation of probabilities and avoid bias.[91]

The hypothesis which will be tested in the empirical analysis is based on the East-West dimension of the dependent variables, but in order to control for in-between country variance, I have (as presented briefly earlier) added Country (of survey) as a dummy variable for all countries except one (Germany, which will be the reference category). This will allow for identification of variation between member states in order to control whether the effect on the dependent variable really correlates to a higher degree with my independent variables, rather than simply the respondent's country of residence.

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[89] Buxton, R. (2008). *Statistics: Multilevel modelling.* Mathematics Learning Support Centre, Loughborough University. https://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/media/schoolanddepartments/mlsc/downloads/Multilevel_modelling.pdf. Retrieved 2025, 1 March.

[90] Thanda, A. (2024, 19 December). *What is Logistic Regression?* CareerFoundry. https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/data-analytics/what-is-logistic-regression/. Retrieved 2025, 1 March.

[91] Bobbitt, Z., (2023, April 17). *How to Interpret Logistic Regression Intercept (With Example)*. Statology. https://www.statology.org/interpret-logistic-regression-intercept/. Retrieved 2025, 1 March.

In the empirical analysis, I will conduct ten separate binary logistic regression analyses, five for each of the two dependent variables. These regression analyses will be run step by step according to the following order for each dependent variable:

0. Null model. This model does only include the dependent variable, hence no independent variables – only the intercept/constant.
1. Model 1. This model includes the dependent variable and the country dummies as independent variables. The aim is to check how much of the effect that can be explained by the country variance, before adding the other control variables.
2. Model 2. Here the dependent variable is run only against the "usual suspects", i.e. the control variables age, gender, level of education, household financial situation, type of community, as well as trust in national parliament.
3. Model 3. In this model, I run the dependent variable only against the EU13 independent variable, in order to look into the sole effect of EU13, before adding further control variables.
4. Model 4. This model includes the dependent variable run against the independent variable EU13 as well as the control variables.
5. Model 5. Includes the dependent variable, control variables and country dummies. This model will allow us to see the cumulative effect of all the independent variables included in our models, with the exception of the independent variable of interest, i.e. EU13.

All models will be run by using SPSS syntaxes. These syntaxes are included in appendix C. The independent and control variables (with exception of age) which are not dichotomous, i.e. education and type of community will be marked as categorical, in order for the statistical programme to interpret the values as distinct separate values, rather than numeric continuous values. The reference categories will be the first category in each variable, which is the default approach by the statistical programme which is used, with the exception of the country dummy, where I have actively chosen Germany as the most suitable choice for reference category, as it is first of all the largest EU-member state and also has the largest base in the EB survey. Secondly, it is a country that used to be divided between Eastern and Western Europe, hence making it the most "neutral" choice available.

# 4. Results and empirical analysis

In this chapter, the hypotheses of the thesis will be tested and analysed one by one under separate sections. The results from the regression analyses will be presented in separate tables, displaying all applicable models and coefficients of interest for the analyses, in the respective section of the two dependent variables, i.e. attitudes towards further enlargement of the EU, and attitudes towards a common defence and security policy within the EU. I will start with some evaluation of the statistical models before looking closer at odds ratio, i.e. the coefficients followed by *Exp(B)* in tables, as well as the direction and significance of the B coefficients.

## 4.1. Hypothesis testing H1 (Enlargement as the dependent variable)

Models 1-5 below, constitute the binary logistic regression analyses that are testing the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable "Against" or "For" further EU enlargement, and the independent and control variables. To recap, the first hypothesis (H1) is that: *People living in EU13 are more positive towards further EU enlargement than people living in EU15.* Hence, the independent variable we are mostly interested in with regard to the hypothesis is the EU13 variable.

By looking at the odds ratios – i.e. the coefficients followed by *Exp(B)* in table 3 below, we can see how the odds change for that specific variable, if the independent variable increases with one unit, based on the premise that the other variables do not change. Apart from this, the B coefficients in the table can tell us something about the direction of the correlation, i.e. whether it has a positive or negative effect on the dependent variable, and whether it is significant or not, even though we cannot say anything about the strength of the correlation from the B coefficients in a logistic regression.

However, before diving deeper into the odds ratios, let us look at the numbers that the models give us, which all give indications of which model or models that is/are best at explaining the variation. The best model according to the Nagelkerke $R^2$, Omnibus Test (Model $Chi^2$) and -2 Log likelihood (-2LL) is model 5, which has the highest value for Nagelkerke $R^2$ and Model $Chi^2$ and the lowest value for -2LL. Looking at the predicted percentages furthest down below in the table, we can also see that it has the highest predicted percentage overall, being able to predict 66.4% overall, 43.7% of those against and 81.6% of those in favour of enlargement of the EU. Considering the model fit indicators, model 1 has better suitability than model 3. Country thereby seem to explain more of what drives a positive effect on attitudes towards further enlargement than EU13 as a group of countries.

***Table 3***. *Regression analysis of the dependent variable "What is your opinion on each of the following statements? – Further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years"*

| | Null model | Model 1 (incl. country dummies)[92] | Model 2 (incl. control variables only) | Model 3 (incl. EU13 only) | Model 4 (incl. EU13 and control variables) | Model 5 (incl. control variables and country dummies) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 0.406*** (0.013) 1.501 Exp(B) | -0.493*** (0.055) 0.611 Exp(B) | 0.442*** (0.086) 1.555 Exp(B) | 0.195*** (0.018) 1.215 Exp(B) | -0.218* (0.088) 1.244 Exp(B) | -0.772*** (0.115) 0.462 Exp(B) |
| EU13 | | | | 0.477*** (0.027) 1.612 Exp(B) | 0.656*** (0.030) 1.927 Exp(B) | |
| Age | | | -0.009*** (0.001) 0.991 Exp(B) | | -0.009*** (0.001) 0.991 Exp(B) | -0.009*** (0.001) 0.991 Exp(B) |
| Gender | | | -0.128*** (0.028) 1.137 Exp(B) | | 0.084** (0.028) 1.087 Exp(B) | 0.080** (0.029) 1.083 Exp(B) |
| Education Low | | | Ref. category | | Ref. category | Ref. category |
| Education Medium | | | -0.222*** (0.070) 0.801 Exp(B) | | -0.419*** (0.068) 0.657 Exp(B) | -0.171* (0.073) 0.843 Exp(B) |
| Education High | | | -0.164* (0.070) 0.848 Exp(B) | | -0.297*** (0.071) 0.743 Exp(B) | -0.074 (0.077) 0.929 Exp(B) |
| Household economic situation Bad or Good | | | 0.393*** (0.032) 1.481 Exp(B) | | 0.433*** (0.033) 1.542 Exp(B) | 0.453*** (0.035) 1.573 Exp(B) |
| Type of community Rural area or village | | | Ref. category | | Ref. category | Ref. category |
| Type of community Small/middle town | | | 0.003 (0.034) 1.003 Exp(B) | | 0.092** (0.034) 1.096 Exp(B) | 0.141*** (0.036) 1.151 Exp(B) |
| Type of community Large town | | | 0.122*** (0.035) 1.129 Exp(B) | | 0.156*** (0.036) 1.169 Exp(B) | 0.166*** (0.038) 1.181 Exp(B) |
| Trust in national parliament | | | 0.520*** (0.030) 1.682 Exp(B) | | 0.634*** (0.030) 1.884 Exp(B) | 0.756*** (0.032) 2.129 Exp(B) |
| N= | 23564 | 23564 | 22157 | 23564 | 22157 | 22157 |
| Nagelkerke R² | | 0.086 | 0.047 | 0.018 | 0.075 | 0.147 |
| Omnibus Test (M Chi²) | | 1547.806*** | 780.656*** | 315.310*** | 1273.353*** | 2551.371*** |
| -2LL | | 30166.154 | 29081.040 | 31398.650 | 28588.343 | 27310.326 |
| Predicted % Overall | | 64.0% | 60.9% | 60.0% | 63.0% | 66.4% |
| Predicted % Against | | 24.4% | 21.5% | 0.0% | 31.7% | 43.7% |
| Predicted % For | | 90.3% | 87.4% | 100% | 84.0% | 81.6% |

Source: EB 100.2 (2023). B coefficients. Standard errors in parenthesis. M Chi²=Model Chi-square.
* $p$ <0.05, ** $p$ <0.01, *** $p$ <0.001.

[92] Reference category for the country dummy is Germany, which is chosen on basis of being the largest member state in the EU. It has also the highest base of interview, and is a country which both used to belong to the previous Eastern bloc (East Germany) and West Europe (West Germany).

Looking at the independent variables in model 5, we can see that “Trust in national Parliament” is the single most important predictor of support for further enlargement of the EU. We can see that it has a positive correlation, that it is significant and that it has an odds ratio of 2.129, which is quite strong, considering that anything above “1” indicates a positive effect and thus better odds regarding the independent variable’s effect on the dependent variable.

Model 3, which includes only EU13 as an independent variable, is the poorest model of all the five, according to Nagelkerke $R^2$, Omnibus Test (Model $Chi^2$) and -2LL. However, the B coefficients is positive, the effect is significant and the odds ratio is 1.612, which is far above 1.0. However, of the five models, model 4 encompassing EU13 with control variables is the third strongest, and the effect of EU13 increases in this model, which means that the EU13 component does have a positive effect on the prediction of someone residing in an EU13 country being more positive towards enlargement of the EU than someone residing in an EU15 country. H1 is thereby confirmed.

## 4.2. Hypothesis testing H2 (Common EU Defence as the dependent variable)

We move now on to the models for the hypothesis testing of the second hypothesis (H2), which is: *People living in EU13 will be more positive towards an EU common security and defence policy than people living in EU15.* As with the hypothesis testing of H1, we will again start with some evaluation of the statistical models, before looking more at the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, and dig into the odds ratios and the significance and direction of the B coefficients.

Also for the dependent variable attitudes towards an EU common security and defence policy, the best model according to the Nagelkerke $R^2$, Omnibus Test (Model $Chi^2$) and -2LL is model 5. As the reader can see in table 4, it is in model 5 were we find the highest value for Nagelkerke $R^2$ and Model $Chi^2$ and the lowest value for -2LL. The predicted percentages furthest down below in the table, are not as interesting in these models as they were in the hypothesis testing H1, as all models except model 5 fails to predict any “against”. However, also model 5 has a very modest prediction of percentage of “against”. Observing the model fit indicators, model 1 has better suitability than model 3. Country thereby seem to explain more also in this case, of what drives a positive effect on attitudes towards further enlargement than EU13 as a group of countries. However, looking at table 4, we can see that there is no significant effect of the independent variable EU13 alone in model 3, against the dependent variable attitudes towards an EU common security and defence policy.

Model 4, which contains EU13 together the with control variables is the third strongest, and as in the hypothesis testing H1, the effect of EU13 increases in this model, which also in this case means that the EU13 component does have a positive effect on the prediction of someone residing in an EU13 country being more positive towards an EU common security and defence policy than someone living in EU15.

***Table 4***. *Regression analysis of the dependent variable "What is your opinion on each of the following statements? – A common defence and security policy among EU Member States"*

| | Null model | Model 1 (incl. country dummies)[93] | Model 2 (incl. control variables only) | Model 3 (incl. EU13 only) | Model 4 (incl. EU13 and control variables) | Model 5 (incl. control variables and country dummies) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 1.428*** (0.016) 4.170 Exp(B) | 1.327*** (0.064) 3.770 Exp(B) | 0.869*** (0.102) 2.384 Exp(B) | 1.421*** (0.022) 4.139 Exp(B) | 0,802*** (0.103) 2.231 Exp(B) | -0.459*** (0.133) 1.582 Exp(B) |
| EU13 | | | | 0.016 (0.032) 1.016 Exp(B) | 0.207*** (0.035) 1.230 Exp(B) | |
| Age | | | 0.001 (0.001) 1.001 Exp(B) | | -0.001 (0.001) 1.001 Exp(B) | -0.002 (0.001) 1.002 Exp(B) |
| Gender | | | 0.054 (0.034) 1.056 Exp(B) | | 0.041 (0.034) 1.042 Exp(B) | 0.034 (0.034) 1.035 Exp(B) |
| Education Low | | | Ref. category | | Ref. category | Ref. category |
| Education Medium | | | -0.179 (0.079) 0.836 Exp(B) | | -0.241** (0.080) 0.786 Exp(B) | -0.081 (0.086) 0.922 Exp(B) |
| Education High | | | 0.042 (0.084) 1.042 Exp(B) | | -0.001 (0.085) 0.999 Exp(B) | 0.103 (0.091) 1.109 Exp(B) |
| Household economic situation Bad or Good | | | 0.498*** (0.037) 1.646 Exp(B) | | 0.508*** (0.037) 1.663 Exp(B) | 0.535*** (0.039) 1.708 Exp(B) |
| Type of community Rural area or village | | | Ref. category | | Ref. category | Ref. category |
| Type of community Small/middle town | | | 0.043 (0.040) 1.139 Exp(B) | | 0.071 (0.041) 1.074 Exp(B) | 0.081 (0.043) 1.084 Exp(B) |
| Type of community Large town | | | 0.090 (0.042) 1.095 Exp(B) | | 0.100* (0.042) 1.105 Exp(B) | 0.132** (0.044) 1.142 Exp(B) |
| Trust in national parliament | | | 0.537*** (0.037) 1.712 Exp(B) | | 0.571*** (0.038) 1.770 Exp(B) | 0.725*** (0.039) 2.064 Exp(B) |
| N= | 24785 | 24785 | 23200 | 24785 | 23200 | 23200 |
| Nagelkerke $R^2$ | | 0.046 | 0.043 | 0.000 | 0.045 | 0.097 |
| Omnibus Test (M $Chi^2$) | | 716.248*** | 628.638*** | 0.248 | 663.485*** | 1458.041*** |
| -2LL | | 23630.012 | 22205.096 | 24346.013 | 22170.249 | 21375.692 |
| Predicted % Overall | | 80.7% | 80.6% | 80.7% | 80.6% | 80.6% |
| Predicted % Against | | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 1.3% |
| Predicted % For | | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 99.7% |

Source: EB 100.2 (2023). B coefficients. Standard errors in parenthesis. M $Chi^2$=Model Chi-square.
* $p$ <0.05, ** $p$ <0.01, *** $p$ <0.001.

[93] Reference category for the country dummy is Germany, which is chosen on basis of being the largest member state in the EU. It has also the highest base of interview, and is a country which both used to belong to the previous Eastern bloc (East Germany) and West Europe (West Germany).

The single most strong predictor for favourable attitudes towards a common security and defence policy within the EU, which has been included in these statistical models is “trust in national parliament”. The second strongest is “good” household economic situation. The effect of living in a large town becomes significant in models 4 and 5, which is aligned with previous research presented earlier in this thesis, which showed that people living in urban areas tend to be more positive towards the EU and European integration than people living in rural areas.

Since it was not significant in the regression analysis that people living in EU13 were more positive towards an EU common security and defence policy than citizens of EU15, H2 is hereby rejected.

# 5. Discussion and conclusions

In this final chapter of the thesis, I will recap the aim and discuss the results in general terms, with regard to Easton's theoretical framework, and from a methodological point of view, before wrapping up with some final conclusions.

This thesis was based on a quantitative approach and aimed at analysing specific factors among EU citizens, that in previous research have shown as crucial to explain underlying factors for differences in attitudes from both an empirical and theoretical perspective, regarding horizontal integration (EU enlargement) and vertical integration (deepened integration). With the current geopolitical challenges that the EU is facing, the vertical integration is in this thesis was represented by the policy area of a common EU Defence and Security Policy. Considering that Ukraine is an Eastern European country aspiring to become an EU member state, that has recently been invaded by Russia, I found it particularly relevant to look at the effect of the East-West dimension, and how it effects EU citizens' attitudes towards further enlargement of the EU, as well as deepened cooperation within the area of a common EU Defence and Security Policy.

The effect of the EU13 variable, which was the variable taking the East-West dimension into account, is stronger and more robust in the first regression analysis about enlargement of the EU, rather than in the second regression analysis connected to an EU common defence and security policy. For common defence and security policy, the effect of EU13 is not significant, unless analysed together with the control variables (age, gender, education, financial situation, type of community and trust in national parliament). The fact that the EU13 effect is not significant suggests a strong division regarding this EU proposal between the countries composing the group of EU13. This is aligned with media reports on countries like the Baltic states and Poland being strong supporters of providing military aid to Ukraine, while others, such as Hungary and Slovakia being more sceptic and showing less "fear" of Russia.[94]

The control variables have all had consistent effect in the models, which supports the fact that they were relevant to include as control variables.

Regarding differences in attitudes towards the two dependent variables, we could see that there was generally more support for horizontal integration (enlargement) than vertical integration within the field of defence and security policy.

[94] Gavin, G. (2025, 6 March). *Major division in EU as leaders get deal on arming Ukraine — without Hungary*. Politico. https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-leader-ukraine-viktor-orban-russia-hungary-26-countries/. Retrieved 2025, 12 August.

Trust in national parliament and good economic situation are two of the strongest predictors for support for both integration policies. A rather surprising conclusion, however, is that, higher level of education has a positive correlation with support for enlargement of the EU, but a negative correlation with an EU common defence and security policy.

## 5.1. Theoretical discussion

According to David Easton's Political system theory, a political system is surrounded by an *environment* that reacts to different *events* in the environment, which cause *stress* on the political system to *act* and deliver *outputs* in shape of *policies*. The environment consists of both *happenings* and *people* (whose attitudes or *support* are important to take into account for the political system, as the legitimacy of the political system relies on the *people* – who are also the *electorate*). Easton defines "support" as one of two things, i.e. *supportive behaviour* or *a supportive state of mind*, and differs between *specific* and *diffuse* support. The actions taken by the political system cause *output* that affects the *environment*. The output's effect on the environment leads in turn to new *input* that again produces output, and as such, the political system is (or at least *should be*) moving forward. In this case, residents of EU13 from a theoretical point of view, might be not that positive towards enlargement of the EU and deepened defence cooperation due to not being satisfied with the output that they perceive that the EU has delivered to them. The fact that "Trust in national parliament" is a strong predictor of both support for enlargement as well as an EU common defence and security policy, implies that specific support for national institutions can enhance the diffuse support towards the EU. This is consistent with Easton's theories about support for X can influence support for Y. The difference in attitudes between enlargement and EU common defence and security policy can also relate to Easton's concept of input and output. Enlargement can by citizens be perceived as input, i.e. who are allowed to join and participate in the political system, while common defence and security policy could be perceived as output, i.e. a policy that the EU delivers due to stress in the environment.

## 5.2. Methodological discussion

The results show that the EU13 variable has a limited but yet significant positive effect on attitudes towards further EU enlargement in all models where it was included. In model 3, where EU13 is the only predictor, the effect is positive and significant, suggesting that individuals in EU13 countries are generally more positive towards further enlargement than individuals in the older member states. However, it is important to mention that citizens in both EU13 and EU15 on the whole are generally more positive than negative towards both enlargement and deepened defence and security policy.

When control variables such as age, gender, education, economic situation, type of society and trust in national parliament are included in the statistical model, as in model 4, we can see the effect of the EU13 variable for both enlargement and common defence gets stronger, but it is still weaker than the effect of the country dummies. This indicates that a large part of the difference in attitudes between EU13 and other countries can be explained by sociodemographic factors rather than EU13 status per se.

This development between the models underlines the importance of including control variables in the model, for both individual and contextual factors when performing a regression analysis. It also shows that aggregate categories such as EU13 can hide complex underlying patterns, while at the same time capturing broader regional differences in attitudes.

## 5.3. Conclusions

Residing in an EU13 member state has a clear and significant positive effect on attitudes towards further enlargement of the EU, but not a positive effect on attitudes towards an EU common defence and security policy, which from a theoretical point of view can be interpreted as the citizens of EU13 countries have a lesser degree of diffuse support for the political system, compared to citizens of EU15 countries.

An EU common defence and security policy shows more variance in the attitudes, and the analysis showed that national context is more important to explain attitudes towards this policy area/EU proposal, than regional context like being neighbouring countries with similar cultural and historical experiences.

Sociodemographic factors and trust in national institutions (exemplified with national parliament in these regression analyses) are important explanatory factors in both analyses.

The results confirm Easton's theory that support for political systems is multidimensional and influenced by both individual experiences and institutional legitimacy.

We can thus conclude that the support among people residing in EU13 is strong for further enlargement, but interestingly enough not significant for an EU common defence and security policy. Future research within this field could be done by using a multilevel regression model, and specifically target a customized group of countries, rather than looking at an existent group of countries like EU13.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Variable values

| **Variable Values** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Variable | Value | Label |
| studyno1 | 8779 | GESIS STUDY ID ZA8779 |
| edition | 1 | Archive pre-release |
| survey | 1002 | Eurobarometer 100.2 (October-November 2023) |
| eu27b<br>NATION GROUP<br>EU28 NO UK | 0 | Not country group |
| | 1 | EU27b (No UK) |
| qb2_2<br>Common defence | 0 | AGAINST |
| | 1 | FOR |
| qb2_6<br>Enlargement | 0 | AGAINST |
| | 1 | FOR |
| EU13 | 0 | No |
| | 1 | Yes |
| d11<br>AGE EXACT | 15 | 15 years |
| | […] | […] |
| | 98 | 98 years |
| Gender_dummy,<br>based on d10 | 0 | Man |
| | 1 | Woman |
| Educ_gr3<br>Education | 1 | Low |
| | 2 | Medium |
| | 3 | High |
| HHFinSitGR | 0 | Bad |
| | 1 | Good |
| Type of community<br>d25 | 1 | Rural area or village |
| | 2 | Small/middle town |
| | 3 | Large town |
| TrustNatParl | 0 | No |
| | 1 | Yes |
| country_dummy_1 | 1 | France |
| country_dummy_2 | 1 | Belgium |
| country_dummy_3 | 1 | Netherlands |
| country_dummy_4 | 1 | Germany |
| country_dummy_5 | 1 | Italy |
| country_dummy_6 | 1 | Luxembourg |
| country_dummy_7 | 1 | Denmark |
| country_dummy_8 | 1 | Ireland |
| country_dummy_9 | 1 | Greece |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| country_dummy_10 | 1 | Spain |
| country_dummy_11 | 1 | Portugal |
| country_dummy_13 | 1 | Finland |
| country_dummy_14 | 1 | Sweden |
| country_dummy_15 | 1 | Austria |
| country_dummy_16 | 1 | Republic of Cyprus |
| country_dummy_17 | 1 | Czech Republic |
| country_dummy_18 | 1 | Estonia |
| country_dummy_19 | 1 | Hungary |
| country_dummy_20 | 1 | Latvia |
| country_dummy_21 | 1 | Lithuania |
| country_dummy_22 | 1 | Malta |
| country_dummy_23 | 1 | Poland |
| country_dummy_24 | 1 | Slovakia |
| country_dummy_25 | 1 | Slovenia |
| country_dummy_26 | 1 | Bulgaria |
| country_dummy_27 | 1 | Romania |
| country_dummy_28 | 1 | Croatia |

## Appendix B: Descriptive tables of the control variables

***Table 5.*** *Descriptive statistics of number of respondents per age group per participating country*

| **Country** | **Age 15-24** | **Age 25-34** | **Age 35-44** | **Age 45-54** | **Age 55-64** | **Age 65-98** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| France | 123 | 145 | 136 | 144 | 154 | 323 |
| Belgium | 259 | 152 | 127 | 130 | 147 | 201 |
| Netherlands | 58 | 170 | 131 | 173 | 208 | 271 |
| Germany | 160 | 198 | 224 | 176 | 316 | 453 |
| Italy | 128 | 99 | 142 | 184 | 204 | 266 |
| Luxembourg | 36 | 69 | 93 | 86 | 88 | 131 |
| Denmark | 37 | 96 | 104 | 134 | 161 | 479 |
| Ireland | 86 | 132 | 199 | 161 | 159 | 278 |
| Greece | 110 | 111 | 170 | 205 | 183 | 233 |
| Spain | 127 | 142 | 167 | 171 | 164 | 235 |
| Portugal | 97 | 96 | 143 | 173 | 193 | 329 |
| Finland | 34 | 101 | 126 | 129 | 183 | 436 |
| Sweden | 39 | 85 | 114 | 118 | 147 | 548 |
| Austria | 65 | 130 | 189 | 181 | 213 | 227 |
| Republic of Cyprus | 39 | 60 | 84 | 70 | 82 | 170 |
| Czech Republic | 70 | 126 | 181 | 192 | 201 | 241 |
| Estonia | 129 | 158 | 197 | 156 | 151 | 212 |
| Hungary | 54 | 127 | 192 | 228 | 196 | 225 |
| Latvia | 95 | 115 | 135 | 153 | 163 | 346 |
| Lithuania | 68 | 76 | 97 | 131 | 220 | 419 |
| Malta | 17 | 65 | 73 | 87 | 81 | 180 |
| Poland | 65 | 141 | 193 | 189 | 192 | 244 |
| Slovakia | 76 | 100 | 149 | 201 | 209 | 271 |
| Slovenia | 69 | 93 | 168 | 162 | 193 | 332 |
| Bulgaria | 66 | 124 | 144 | 193 | 204 | 279 |
| Romania | 149 | 160 | 181 | 221 | 175 | 176 |
| Croatia | 115 | 150 | 224 | 202 | 157 | 184 |
| **Total** | **2371** | **3221** | **4083** | **4350** | **4744** | **7689** |

***Table 6.*** *Descriptive statistics of number of men and women per participating country*

| Country | Man | Woman |
|---|---|---|
| France | 483 | 540 |
| Belgium | 498 | 513 |
| Netherlands | 617 | 389 |
| Germany | 738 | 782 |
| Italy | 510 | 513 |
| Luxembourg | 265 | 238 |
| Denmark | 523 | 488 |
| Ireland | 499 | 513 |
| Greece | 493 | 519 |
| Spain | 506 | 500 |
| Portugal | 461 | 570 |
| Finland | 525 | 480 |
| Sweden | 543 | 504 |
| Austria | 485 | 518 |
| Republic of Cyprus | 222 | 283 |
| Czech Republic | 483 | 526 |
| Estonia | 426 | 559 |
| Hungary | 426 | 596 |
| Latvia | 383 | 624 |
| Lithuania | 397 | 614 |
| Malta | 224 | 279 |
| Poland | 410 | 614 |
| Slovakia | 440 | 566 |
| Slovenia | 458 | 557 |
| Bulgaria | 475 | 535 |
| Romania | 506 | 556 |
| Croatia | 418 | 614 |
| **Total** | **12414** | **13990** |

***Table 7.*** *Descriptive statistics of number of respondents per level of completed education per participating country*

| Country | Low | Medium | High |
|---|---|---|---|
| France | 71 | 538 | 414 |
| Belgium | 50 | 562 | 387 |
| Netherlands | 17 | 325 | 669 |
| Germany | 13 | 1150 | 356 |
| Italy | 44 | 815 | 162 |
| Luxembourg | 19 | 216 | 263 |
| Denmark | 6 | 501 | 504 |
| Ireland | 81 | 540 | 392 |
| Greece | 141 | 589 | 280 |
| Spain | 133 | 595 | 277 |
| Portugal | 395 | 488 | 148 |
| Finland | 58 | 396 | 551 |
| Sweden | 17 | 397 | 636 |
| Austria | 1 | 662 | 335 |
| Republic of Cyprus | 80 | 217 | 208 |
| Czech Republic | 5 | 751 | 254 |
| Estonia | 12 | 640 | 350 |
| Hungary | 5 | 840 | 175 |
| Latvia | 10 | 666 | 331 |
| Lithuania | 28 | 554 | 428 |
| Malta | 88 | 227 | 188 |
| Poland | 8 | 807 | 209 |
| Slovakia | 75 | 708 | 223 |
| Slovenia | 8 | 682 | 326 |
| Bulgaria | 15 | 722 | 270 |
| Romania | 27 | 880 | 155 |
| Croatia | 12 | 796 | 224 |
| **Total** | **1419** | **16264** | **8715** |

***Table 8.*** *Descriptive statistics of number of respondents per type of community per participating country*

| **Country** | **Rural area or village** | **Small/middle town** | **Large town** |
|---|---|---|---|
| France | 215 | 575 | 235 |
| Belgium | 291 | 326 | 399 |
| Netherlands | 366 | 402 | 243 |
| Germany | 486 | 637 | 404 |
| Italy | 103 | 697 | 222 |
| Luxembourg | 150 | 243 | 110 |
| Denmark | 217 | 456 | 337 |
| Ireland | 356 | 242 | 418 |
| Greece | 299 | 181 | 531 |
| Spain | 429 | 294 | 283 |
| Portugal | 416 | 388 | 227 |
| Finland | 342 | 457 | 210 |
| Sweden | 132 | 605 | 314 |
| Austria | 443 | 187 | 375 |
| Republic of Cyprus | 176 | 153 | 176 |
| Czech Republic | 254 | 409 | 348 |
| Estonia | 282 | 294 | 427 |
| Hungary | 308 | 331 | 383 |
| Latvia | 374 | 262 | 371 |
| Lithuania | 380 | 297 | 334 |
| Malta | 367 | 83 | 53 |
| Poland | 400 | 325 | 299 |
| Slovakia | 448 | 352 | 206 |
| Slovenia | 613 | 222 | 182 |
| Bulgaria | 300 | 243 | 467 |
| Romania | 471 | 266 | 325 |
| Croatia | 356 | 364 | 312 |
| **Total** | **8974** | **9291** | **8191** |

***Table 9***. *Descriptive statistics of number of respondents that tend not to trust or tend to trust their national parliaments*

| **Country** | **Tend not to trust** | **Tend to trust** |
|---|---|---|
| France | 652 | 294 |
| Belgium | 527 | 465 |
| Netherlands | 421 | 557 |
| Germany | 732 | 716 |
| Italy | 611 | 379 |
| Luxembourg | 107 | 329 |
| Denmark | 346 | 643 |
| Ireland | 412 | 529 |
| Greece | 715 | 278 |
| Spain | 699 | 253 |
| Portugal | 642 | 343 |
| Finland | 270 | 677 |
| Sweden | 277 | 750 |
| Austria | 414 | 539 |
| Republic of Cyprus | 344 | 141 |
| Czech Republic | 691 | 278 |
| Estonia | 621 | 310 |
| Hungary | 551 | 445 |
| Latvia | 644 | 276 |
| Lithuania | 778 | 181 |
| Malta | 271 | 185 |
| Poland | 596 | 351 |
| Slovakia | 545 | 369 |
| Slovenia | 765 | 223 |
| Bulgaria | 716 | 204 |
| Romania | 681 | 317 |
| Croatia | 695 | 304 |
| **Total** | **14723** | **10336** |

***Table 10***. *Descriptive statistics of number of respondents per category of "bad" vs "good" household financial situation per participating country*

| **Country** | **Bad** | **Good** |
|---|---|---|
| France | 339 | 668 |
| Belgium | 260 | 744 |
| Netherlands | 74 | 933 |
| Germany | 346 | 1149 |
| Italy | 316 | 692 |
| Luxembourg | 47 | 453 |
| Denmark | 75 | 932 |
| Ireland | 185 | 803 |
| Greece | 496 | 502 |
| Spain | 255 | 727 |
| Portugal | 507 | 501 |
| Finland | 93 | 908 |
| Sweden | 67 | 981 |
| Austria | 240 | 716 |
| Republic of Cyprus | 177 | 325 |
| Czech Republic | 299 | 699 |
| Estonia | 259 | 688 |
| Hungary | 425 | 577 |
| Latvia | 284 | 701 |
| Lithuania | 302 | 675 |
| Malta | 108 | 388 |
| Poland | 182 | 803 |
| Slovakia | 382 | 596 |
| Slovenia | 236 | 778 |
| Bulgaria | 459 | 484 |
| Romania | 440 | 600 |
| Croatia | 293 | 721 |
| **Total** | **7146** | **18744** |

## Appendix C: SPSS Syntaxes

*****Model 1 to 5 with qb2_6 (enlargement) as dependent variable (DV)

*****Model 1: Only DV and country dummies

```
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_6
  /METHOD=ENTER country_dummy_1 country_dummy_2 country_dummy_3 country_dummy_5 country_dummy_6
    country_dummy_7 country_dummy_8 country_dummy_9 country_dummy_10 country_dummy_11 country_dummy_13
    country_dummy_14 country_dummy_15 country_dummy_16 country_dummy_17 country_dummy_18
    country_dummy_19 country_dummy_20 country_dummy_21 country_dummy_22 country_dummy_23
    country_dummy_24 country_dummy_25 country_dummy_26 country_dummy_27 country_dummy_28
  /SAVE=PRED
  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR
  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).
```

*****Model 2: Only DV and control variables

```
 LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_6
  /METHOD=ENTER d11 Gender_dummy educ_gr3 HHFinSitGR d25 TrustNatParl
  /CONTRAST (educ_gr3)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (d25)=Indicator(1)
  /SAVE=PRED
  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR
  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).
```

*****Model 3: Only DV and EU13

```
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_6
  /METHOD=ENTER EU13
  /SAVE=PRED
  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR
```

```
  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).


*****Model 4: DV, EU13 and control variables
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_6
  /METHOD=ENTER EU13
  /METHOD=ENTER d11 Gender_dummy educ_gr3 HHFinSitGR d25 TrustNatParl
  /CONTRAST (educ_gr3)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (d25)=Indicator(1)
  /SAVE=PRED
  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR
  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).


*****Model 5: DV, control variables and country dummies
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_6
  /METHOD=ENTER d11 Gender_dummy educ_gr3 HHFinSitGR d25 TrustNatParl
  /CONTRAST (educ_gr3)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (d25)=Indicator(1)
  /METHOD=ENTER country_dummy_1 country_dummy_2 country_dummy_3 country_dummy_5
country_dummy_6
    country_dummy_7 country_dummy_8 country_dummy_9 country_dummy_10 country_dummy_11
country_dummy_13
    country_dummy_14 country_dummy_15 country_dummy_16 country_dummy_17
country_dummy_18
    country_dummy_19 country_dummy_20 country_dummy_21 country_dummy_22
country_dummy_23
    country_dummy_24 country_dummy_25 country_dummy_26 country_dummy_27
country_dummy_28
  /SAVE=PRED
  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR
  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).


*****Model 1 to 5 with qb2_2 (common EU defence) as dependent variable (DV)
```

```
*****Model 1: Only DV and country dummies

LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_2

  /METHOD=ENTER country_dummy_1 country_dummy_2 country_dummy_3 country_dummy_5
country_dummy_6

    country_dummy_7 country_dummy_8 country_dummy_9 country_dummy_10 country_dummy_11
country_dummy_13

    country_dummy_14 country_dummy_15 country_dummy_16 country_dummy_17
country_dummy_18

    country_dummy_19 country_dummy_20 country_dummy_21 country_dummy_22
country_dummy_23

    country_dummy_24 country_dummy_25 country_dummy_26 country_dummy_27
country_dummy_28

  /SAVE=PRED

  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR

  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).


*****Model 2: Only DV and control variables

 LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_2

  /METHOD=ENTER d11 Gender_dummy educ_gr3 HHFinSitGR d25 TrustNatParl

  /CONTRAST (educ_gr3)=Indicator(1)

  /CONTRAST (d25)=Indicator(1)

  /SAVE=PRED

  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR

  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).


*****Model 3: Only DV and EU13

LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_2

  /METHOD=ENTER EU13

  /SAVE=PRED

  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR

  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).
```

*****Model 4: DV, EU13 and control variables

```
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_2
  /METHOD=ENTER EU13
  /METHOD=ENTER d11 Gender_dummy educ_gr3 HHFinSitGR d25 TrustNatParl
  /CONTRAST (educ_gr3)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (d25)=Indicator(1)
  /SAVE=PRED
  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR
  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).
```

*****Model 5: DV, control variables and country dummies

```
LOGISTIC REGRESSION VARIABLES qb2_2
  /METHOD=ENTER d11 Gender_dummy educ_gr3 HHFinSitGR d25 TrustNatParl
  /CONTRAST (educ_gr3)=Indicator(1)
  /CONTRAST (d25)=Indicator(1)
  /METHOD=ENTER country_dummy_1 country_dummy_2 country_dummy_3 country_dummy_5
country_dummy_6
    country_dummy_7 country_dummy_8 country_dummy_9 country_dummy_10 country_dummy_11
country_dummy_13
    country_dummy_14 country_dummy_15 country_dummy_16 country_dummy_17
country_dummy_18
    country_dummy_19 country_dummy_20 country_dummy_21 country_dummy_22
country_dummy_23
    country_dummy_24 country_dummy_25 country_dummy_26 country_dummy_27
country_dummy_28
  /SAVE=PRED
  /PRINT=GOODFIT CORR
  /CRITERIA=PIN(0.05) POUT(0.10) ITERATE(20) CUT(0.5).
```

*****Custom Tables

```
CTABLES
```

```
  /VLABELS VARIABLES=qb2_6 qb2_2 EU13 d11r2 Gender_dummy educ_gr3 HHFinSitGR d25
TrustNatParl
    DISPLAY=LABEL
  /TABLE qb2_6 + qb2_2 BY EU13 [COLPCT.COUNT PCT40.1] + d11r2 [COLPCT.COUNT
PCT40.1] + Gender_dummy
    [COLPCT.COUNT PCT40.1] + educ_gr3 [COLPCT.COUNT PCT40.1] + HHFinSitGR
[COLPCT.COUNT PCT40.1] + d25
    [COLPCT.COUNT PCT40.1] + TrustNatParl [COLPCT.COUNT PCT40.1]
  /CATEGORIES VARIABLES=qb2_6 qb2_2 EU13 d11r2 Gender_dummy educ_gr3 HHFinSitGR
d25 TrustNatParl
    ORDER=A KEY=VALUE EMPTY=INCLUDE MISSING=EXCLUDE
  /CRITERIA CILEVEL=95.
```