

SOCIAL TRUST, IMPARTIAL ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN EU CRISIS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONS

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In this article, we investigate whether differences in social trust and impartial public administration have an impact on public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. Our assessment is based on a cross-country comparison using aggregate country-level data of the member states in the European Union. Earlier studies on the EU as a crisis manager have not carefully studied to what extent differences in social trust and administrative culture may or may not matter. Our analysis shows that in countries where citizens are treated impartially by their own national public administration institutions, people are less likely to support EU-coordinated civil protection efforts. In contrast, in places where citizens perceive their government's treatment of them as partial and unfair, citizens will tend to support EU-coordinated civil protection.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary studies of crisis management have paid much attention to organizational structures and the strategic and operational capacities that countries have when coping with different types of crises. In the literature these are commonly labelled 'hardware' factors. Less attention has been devoted to analysing the so-called 'software' factors, that is, how norms, values, social trust, cultures and other informal structures impact human action and interaction in a crisis situation (Boin and 't Hart 2010). However, it is well known from previous research that software factors such as norms of fairness and impartiality are crucial for effective and legitimate public administration (Rothstein 2011). In a broader perspective, these are the structures that North (1990) has emphasized as fundamental for determining transaction costs in any society. Consequently, it is also important for crisis management studies to look beyond formal structures and examine the underlying determinants that are pivotal if crisis management and civil protection are to be coordinated more effectively and on a larger scale (Boin and Bynander 2015; Christensen *et al.* 2016).

This article aims to investigate whether differences in social trust and impartial public administration are related to public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. From a democratic point of view, it is essential for crisis management authorities that they enjoy the trust of citizens and are perceived as being legitimate and efficient. This issue is particularly interesting to consider in the context of the EU's political system, which has long been considered to be legitimized primarily by what it produces (output legitimacy) rather than the quality of its democratic processes (input legitimacy) (Scharpf 1999). We therefore ask: are citizens' beliefs in the effectiveness of EU-coordinated civil protection related to social trust and trust in domestic government institutions, and if so how?

Over time, the EU has become increasingly involved in crisis management and different capacities have been developed to assist in managing various types of crisis, both civilian and military. The solidarity clause in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (Article 222)

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introduces a legal obligation that the EU and its member states should assist each other when an EU country is the object of a terrorist attack or a natural or man-made disaster. To this end, the EU has created a civil protection mechanism and an accompanying operational hub in the form of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) which coordinates the response of the participating countries in the event of a crisis.

However, earlier studies on the EU as crisis manager have often overlooked differences in social trust and administrative cultures that may impact the effectiveness and legitimacy of such institutions (Olsson 2009). Hence, as a first step, the study presented here explores the relationship between social trust and public confidence in crisis management institutions in Europe by utilizing existing data on an aggregate country level. Measures of social trust and administrative culture – our main independent variables – are taken from the World Value Survey and the Quality of Government data sets, whereas our main indicators of public confidence in EU crisis management institutions are drawn from data contained in a special Eurobarometer survey. Our assessment is based on a cross-country comparison between 27 member states in the European Union.

The results of our multivariate analysis show that, on an aggregate country level, social trust measured as general trust in other people appears to be unrelated to public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. The way public administration institutions treat citizens, on the other hand, appears to be of importance for citizens' support for EU-coordinated civil protection. The data indicate that impartial treatment by national authorities, which is normally considered as central to the legitimacy of public administration institutions, has a negative correlation with public confidence in EU crisis management authorities. We suggest that this finding can be explained by the positive expectations citizens hold for EU crisis management authorities when national administrative authorities function poorly. Conversely, when people know they can trust national-level institutions, they seem content and see no reason to extend their trust beyond the borders of their own country. This finding increases our understanding of the limitations or prospects for more centralized crisis management functions at the EU level. It also provides a deeper understanding of how people make inferences from interpersonal trust and trust in national institutions to supranational institutions, and the kind of rationality that shapes their perceptions.

Although the causal relationships in this problematique should be explored further, the findings presented here appear to be robust. After controlling for different measures of state capacities, such as the public services provided by national institutions, the overall quality of a country's infrastructure and the general level of welfare in a given country, the way national administrations treat their citizens has a significant correlation with public confidence in EU-level coordination of civil protection. In addition, our results demonstrate a negative relationship between democratic political culture and public confidence in EU crisis management authorities. The more democratic political culture a country has, the less likely it is that its citizens will display high levels of confidence in EU-coordinated civil protection. This is consistent with previous research on European integration, which shows that national circumstances often affect citizens' attitudes towards the EU and its institutions (Sánchez-Cuenca 2000; Muñoz *et al.* 2011; Armingeon and Ceka 2014).

The article is structured as follows. First, we present the focal points of our study and our theoretical departure points. Following this, we provide a concise introduction to how the EU's role as a crisis manager has grown over time. We then present our data and measures, which outline our exploration into how differences in social trust and impartial public administration may have an impact on public confidence in EU crisis management

institutions. In the penultimate section, we provide the results of our endeavour. Finally, we end with some conclusions and suggestions for future research.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

A general or generic definition of crisis traditionally has three components: (1) it is a threat to core values; (2) it must be urgently addressed; and (3) it must be dealt with under conditions of uncertainty (Rosenthal *et al.* 1989; Boin *et al.* 2005). Effective crisis management depends on the capacity of managers, decision-makers, involved organizations, and stakeholders to contribute to the various specific phases and activities that make up crisis management. As crises increasingly transcend organizational and sector-specific boundaries, they increasingly involve an array of organizations that must coordinate and collaborate, sometimes intermittently and sometimes constantly, in multiple areas and often across different levels of government (Comfort and Kapucu 2006; Comfort *et al.* 2010; Boin *et al.* 2013).

Prior research studying crisis management performance and legitimacy has pointed to the importance of hardware factors (such as formal structures, technical equipment, and legal frameworks); less attention has been paid to software factors (such as leadership, training, network building, and organizational culture). Accordingly, we stress the importance of software factors in the same way as more recent crisis management studies have become interested in how social capital and its related components (trust, shared norms, networks, and administrative culture) matter as enabling or disabling factors for crisis management (Kapucu 2006; Boin and 't Hart 2010).

For example, Boin and 't Hart (2010) found that the importance of hardware 'is over-rated'. In their view: 'It distracts attention from the often more salient and cost-effective, yet less symbolically powerful "software" factors' (p. 367). These insights suggest that attempts to improve crisis management by going down the structural reform path and trying to build the perfect organization are not likely to work well if the people working in the various organizations do not trust each other, share key norms, or have a healthy administrative culture. Boin and 't Hart (2010) make the case that 'it is not formal structures but the quality of communication, coordination and collaboration within, across and beyond emergency services that matter most in shaping the quality of crisis responses' (p. 367). As has been shown in the warning response failures of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, coordination and cooperation problems were central to the suboptimal outcomes of these cases (Parker and Stern 2002; Parker *et al.* 2009).

As the EU has increasingly built up its crisis management capabilities, a number of important studies have attempted to map the organizational structures the EU has developed, provide an analysis of how and why the EU has done so, or attempted to assess how well the EU has prepared for or responded to particular crises (Missiroli 2006; Nowak 2006; Boin *et al.* 2013, 2014). In contrast to this work, the current study is interested in the often overlooked importance of social trust and administrative culture in various countries, and the impact it may have on public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. In particular, we are interested in citizens' beliefs in the effectiveness of EU-coordinated civil protection. Public confidence in civil protection authorities is particularly interesting to study in the EU where the ability to manage crises is now shared between the member states and the supranational level.

Political science has pointed to the central role social capital plays in creating effective governance structures (Putman 1993, 2000) and past research has also shown that

social trust and confidence in political institutions are associated with each other (Knack and Keefer 1997; Zmerli *et al.* 2007). Confidence in political institutions, or what has been termed public, institutional, or systemic trust, has been deemed by past research as essential for the legitimacy and effectiveness of institutional arrangements (Giddens 1990, p. 84; Kaltenthaler *et al.* 2010, p. 1262). It follows from these findings that if the EU is to secure the public support, resources and legitimacy needed to build well-functioning crisis management and disaster response institutions, it will require citizens to invest their trust in the EU as an actor in this realm. For this reason we are interested in investigating whether social trust and trust in domestic government institutions play a role in whether citizens express confidence and support in EU crisis management and civil protection arrangements and institutions.

While there has been growing interest in social capital among crisis management and disaster scholars, this has primarily been in relation to the subjects of mitigation, recovery and resilience (Adger 2003; Pelling and High 2005; Aldrich 2012) and interest in trust has largely centred on crisis communication (Fitzpatrick and Mileti 1994). There has been little research into the connection between trust and support for particular types of institutional arrangements for crisis management or at which level of government – EU or national – public support lies. In this article we examine whether there is a relationship between social trust and administrative culture, and confidence in EU crisis management institutions and EU action in dealing with disasters.

The main value of starting specifically in the social capital genre is that this field of research, even more clearly than in the case of the crisis management genre, emphasizes the importance of trust, social networks and common norms required for collaboration to work. Social capital has most often been studied at the citizen level where strong evidence has been claimed for the positive effect of social capital on democracy and economic growth. Social capital is a mechanism that can surmount even the most challenging obstacles to collective action.

In most of the literature on social capital and its relation to the state and its institutions, it is argued that a vibrant civil society will promote a state which is responsive to the needs and wishes of its citizens. Where the engagement and membership in choirs, football clubs, voluntary associations of various kinds, is high, there the state is usually less corrupt and quite efficient in serving its citizens (Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). The literature mainly points out two components in the activities of the civil society organization which creates this effect. On the one hand, in these organizations individuals internalize certain norms which are related to democracy in principle. On the other, individuals become acquainted with democratic practices. Being a member of civic groups, participating in meetings, learning to take turns in discussions, and arguing for ideas all provide citizens with a kind of school in democracy (Bell 2006; Weldon 2006; Marquart-Pyatt and Paxton 2007).

Hence, countries with more trusting people are likely to have more functional democratic institutions, better economies, and less crime and corruption (Uslaner 2008; Rothstein 2011). Accordingly, one can expect that the quality of democratic institutions in terms of efficiency and legitimacy appears connected to social trust and social capital. In *Quality of Government*, Rothstein (2011) provides an overview of this debate and argues that interpersonal relations are contingent on the character of the state – in particular its capacity for impartiality. Impartiality here means that in the exercise of public power ‘government officials shall not take into consideration anything about the citizen/case that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the law’ (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 170). Not only will

a state that executes its powers and responds to citizen demands impartially create trust and legitimacy for the state concerned, but it can also create interpersonal trust at the level of the citizens. If the state can be trusted, and if it is seen as dependable in providing protection for its citizens, then individuals also dare to trust each other more (Rothstein and Uslaner 2005), which can drastically reduce transaction costs (North 1990).

Moreover, by extending the logic of this argument, this relationship could be expected to apply also to EU crisis management institutions in the same way as to state institutions at the national level. The reason for this is that the mechanism which is suggested in the literature (Rothstein and Uslaner 2005; Rothstein 2011) means that people who constantly run into corrupt officials 'will make an inference that most other people cannot be trusted either' (Rothstein 2011, p. 173). Conversely, when state institutions act impartially, this can spread trust between individuals and to other public sector institutions. Consequently, if the inference mechanism suggested by Rothstein is very strong, then we could expect that such inferences will also affect perceptions about supranational entities such as the EU.

In addition, previous research has shown that the most significant determinants of trust and support for the EU are derived from evaluations of national politics and policy. Hence, 'citizens arrive at their evaluations of the EU mainly using heuristics based on the national level' (Armingeon and Ceka 2014, p. 103). One can therefore expect that citizens utilize a 'logic of extrapolation' where 'citizens' trust in the EU can be predicted by their trust in national institutions' (Harteveld *et al.* 2013, p. 561; see also Anderson 1998; Sánchez-Cuenca 2000). This transference logic – or what others have referred to as 'cue theory' (Armingeon and Ceka 2014) or the 'congruence model' (Muñoz *et al.* 2011, p. 553) – suggests that trust can travel beyond the national level to a supranational level. For example, past research has posited that transference logic may affect both general attitudes toward the EU (see, e.g. Harteveld *et al.* 2013; Armingeon and Ceka 2014) as well as more specific attitudes toward single institutions at the EU level such as the European Commission or the European Parliament (see, e.g. Sánchez-Cuenca 2000; Muñoz *et al.* 2011). Moreover, this transference logic may also hold for some kind of generalized social trust rather than being extrapolated from trust in national institutions. Or as put by Harteveld *et al.* (2013, p. 557): 'Rather, it implies that a common source exists for trust in institutions on both levels, possibly an aspect of personality, general outlook on life or social standing.' Hence, citizens who tend to trust each other should be more likely to have confidence in institutions at both the national and at the European level. Based on this research, we hypothesize:

H1: Citizens in countries with high levels of social trust are likely to have high levels of public confidence in EU crisis management institutions, while countries with low levels of social trust are likely to display low levels of public confidence in EU crisis management institutions.

However, there is another body of literature that suggests an alternative hypothesis to the one formulated above. If the public sector in a given country allocates services partially and corruptly, it is more likely to be considered to be less legitimate by its citizens. In such a case, its citizens could deviate from the kind of inferences suggested by Rothstein and Uslaner (2005), and instead draw the conclusion that it may be better to pool civil protection resources in the EU instead of letting their national institutions manage civil protection and crises. When national institutions are distrusted, the confidence in corresponding European institutions would then increase, sometimes referred to as the 'compensation' model (Muñoz *et al.* 2011, p. 554). Or put differently, 'living in a country with mistrusted institutions fosters trust in EU institutions' (Muñoz *et al.* 2011, p. 569). And

even if citizens had limited knowledge about how EU governing bodies actually work, they could be inclined to bet on the grass being greener on the other side.

Moreover, in cases where the bureaucracy does act impartially or in a non-corrupt way and already enjoys strong support and legitimacy, we can imagine that citizens could form the opinion that EU institutions are likely to perform below the national ones in comparison. When individuals are satisfied with the quality of their government and value the prevailing conditions, then risk-averse preferences and behaviour can be expected (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Simonsohn 2009). In this case it would imply a reluctance to fix something that works. This line of thinking also finds empirical support in previous research which has shown that the presence of high-quality national institutions tends to correlate to lower rates of satisfaction with EU institutions (Sánchez-Cuenca 2000; Kritzinger 2003; Desmet *et al.* 2012). Hence, institutional trust at the national level could negatively impact institutional trust at the EU level. We therefore hypothesize:

H2: Citizens in countries with more impartial public administration institutions will have lower levels of public confidence in EU crisis management institutions, while citizens in countries with more partial public administration institutions will display higher levels of public confidence in EU crisis management institutions.

THE EU AS A CRISIS MANAGER

Before operationalizing our variables and evaluating our evidence, it is useful to describe in more detail the EU's growing role as a crisis manager. Over time, the EU has become increasingly involved in crisis management and different capacities have been developed to assist in managing the various crises, both civilian and military (Boin *et al.* 2013, 2014; Kuipers *et al.* 2015). In a world characterized by complex interdependence, crises, such as the 2010 Icelandic volcanic ash cloud event, floods, earthquakes, disease outbreaks, industrial accidents, or mass migration flows, which form in one country have the possibility to swiftly cross borders and have major regional and even global impacts (Ansell *et al.* 2010; Galaz *et al.* 2011; Parker 2015). Transboundary events of this kind or national events that exceed the capabilities of a single country to handle alone are some of the principal reasons why the EU has assumed an increasingly central role in the management of crises. In recognition of this need, the Treaty of Lisbon includes a Solidarity Clause that expresses the EU's obligation to assist member states in the event of natural disasters, terrorist attacks or other major crises that have occurred as a result of human action.

Crisis management, and the closely related concept of emergency management, addresses the preparation, response, and recovery from extreme events. Crisis management can be further broken down into specific phases and activities, such as: threat assessment; prevention and mitigation activities; preparedness/early warning; response; and recovery. Broadly speaking, crisis management can be seen as risk management with the goals to reduce risks and increase societal resilience to resist and, when necessary, respond, cope, and then 'bounce back' from extreme events (Comfort *et al.* 2010).

Because the solidarity clause in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (Article 222) introduces a legal obligation that the EU and its member states should provide assistance when a fellow member is in need, various arrangements have been established among the EU member states in order to bring about effective coordination of crisis management and to enable the EU and its member states to respond to overwhelming natural and man-made disasters. One of the centrepieces of the effort to fulfil this obligation is the EU Civil

Protection Mechanism, which was established in 2001 with the aim of fostering cooperation among national civil protection authorities across Europe.

The EU's Civil Protection legislation was revised in December 2013 in order to bring together the various aspects needed for a comprehensive disaster management policy: disaster prevention, disaster preparedness and improved response arrangements (European Commission 2013). The operational hub of the mechanism is the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), which was set up in May 2013 and coordinates the response of the participating countries in case of a crisis. The ERCC, which replaced the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC), provides 24/7 real-time monitoring and can immediately respond to major disasters by matching offers of assistance with the needs of the impacted country. If the solidarity clause is invoked, the ERCC acts as the main 24/7 contact point to coordinate the EU's response.

In October 2014, a strengthened European Emergency Response Capacity or what is also known as the 'voluntary pool' was launched. This allows participating states to pre-commit response capacities, such as relief teams, experts and equipment, which are then subject to quality control criteria and a certification process. The voluntary pool assets are held on standby and are available for civil protection missions inside and outside the EU.

After the terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005) and disasters such as the 2004 tsunami, the European Council created the Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements (CCA) to provide a coordinated political response to major crises. After a major review, the CCA was replaced with the EU Integrated Political Crisis Response Arrangements (IPCR), which was approved in June 2013 by the Council. The IPCR is designed to provide the rotating Presidency and the Council with a flexible mechanism for political coordination in the event of a major crisis. The IPCR also provides a number of concrete tools such as an informal roundtable to bring key actors and experts together, a web platform to exchange information, an Integrated Situation Awareness and Analysis (ISAA) to give decision-makers a common picture of any crisis, and a central IPCR 24/7 contact point to provide monitoring, alerting, and liaison with key actors (Council of the European Union 2014).

DATA AND MEASURES

As previously indicated, our attempt to assess the effect of software factors on citizens' confidence in EU crisis management authorities is based on existing data on an aggregate country level (the countries included in this study are all current EU member states except for Croatia, since our data are from 2012). We acknowledge the limitations of these data. Whereas the classical ecological fallacy, in which conclusions are drawn from aggregate data about individual behaviour, must be avoided, ecological inferences are useful when exploring new questions and the availability of optimal survey data is limited (King *et al.* 2004; Rothstein 2011). The data used here allow for a cross-country comparison between member states in the EU, which can be used for 'extracting clues about individual behaviour from information reported at the group or aggregate level' (King *et al.* 2004, p. 1). In this section, we present how variables are operationalized and what data we use for the assessment prior to presenting the results of our statistical model in the next section.

Dependent variable

Our main indicators of public confidence in EU crisis management institutions are based on data from a special Eurobarometer survey on civil protection (European Commission

2012b). This survey deals with public opinions about disaster management in the 27 EU countries. Based on a random sample in each country, proportional to population size and population density, the survey is based on a total of 26,751 interviews. The data were collected between February and March 2012, and all measures reported here are based on the average of the results for 27 member states, weighted to reflect the actual population of each member state.

The survey looks, for instance, at the views of European citizens regarding which disasters they feel most at risk from, how informed they feel about measures taken in each country and at the EU level, and how prepared they are to deal with disasters. Our interest is directed at questions regarding public confidence in EU crisis management institutions.

Public confidence in EU crisis management institutions

Our dependent variable is an index created from three questions in the survey regarding coordinated EU action in civil protection. The *Index on EU-coordinated civil protection* is composed of three items: (i) Whether coordinated EU action in dealing with disasters is more effective than actions by individual countries; (ii) Whether the EU needs a civil protection policy because major disasters can have cross-border effects; and (iii) Whether pooling civil protection resources in the EU can be more cost-effective than each country managing their own resources (for exact phrasing of the question, see the appendix). Although they reflect people's opinions on slightly different issues, all questions revolve around confidence in EU-coordinated civil protection.

Respondents were asked in the Eurobarometer survey to answer according to four categories: Totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, and totally disagree. The index consists of the country average for all three items of all respondents who answered 'totally agree' and 'tend to agree'. Hence, the index ranges between 0 and 1 and is continuous (for descriptive statistics of all variables used in the analysis, see table A1 in the appendix). The reliability coefficient of the index (Cronbach's alpha) is 0.753, indicating that survey responses on the five items are highly correlated with one another.

Independent variables

Measures of levels of social trust and impartial administration are taken from the Quality of Government and World Value Survey data sets. Control variables are from the QoG standard data set, the OECD Social Expenditure Database, and from Eurostat.

Trust in other people

The trust variable is based on the standard question asked in the World Values Survey: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people in your area?' At the individual level, the response 'Most people can be trusted' is coded as 1 and 'Can't be too careful' is coded as 0. At the aggregate level, the variable measures the proportion of respondents who answered 'Most people can be trusted' over those who answered 'Can't be too careful'. The measure is continuous and is bound between 0 and 1.

With regard to the interpretation of what the question tells about social trust we side with Uslaner (2002), who argues that people's answers about whether they think that 'most other people can be trusted' indicates their evaluation of the moral standard of the society in which they live. This implies that trust can be seen as an informal institution, as argued by North (1990), which forms a binding element between people in a society.

Impartial public administration

Impartial public administration is an index that measures to what extent government institutions exercise their power impartially. The index is based on expert assessments (mean value of all experts per country) and is constructed by adding each measure weighted by the factor loading obtained from a principal components factor analysis. The index is continuous and has a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 (Rothstein and Teorell 2012).

Control variables***Democratic political culture***

The existence of a democratic political culture can be the underlying explanation for why people have confidence in societal institutions, including those at the EU level. We control for this by including the Economist Intelligence Unit's index of democracy, which is based on the ratings for 60 indicators grouped into five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. Each category has a rating on a 0 to 10 scale, and we use here the category on 'democratic political culture', which measures the extent to which there is a societal consensus supporting democratic principles.

Central government expenditure: public order and safety

This variable measures central government expenditures in the area of public order and safety. It is part of the OECD Social Expenditure Database which provides indicators of social policy and trends in aggregate social expenditure. Indicators include estimates of the net total social spending for 2007 for the 27 OECD countries. The government's spending on public order and safety can potentially explain why people want to rely on EU crisis management institutions rather than national institutions.

GDP per capita in PPS

Another much broader estimate of the economic activity in a given country is gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, which is a standard measure for the general welfare of a given country. It is defined as the value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a given year (here 2011), divided by the average population for the same year. The GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) is fictive 'currency' units that remove differences in purchasing power, that is, different price levels between countries, and hence is useful for comparing generalized differences in living standards between nations in a specific year.

Corruption perception: public officials/civil servants

This factor controls for people's perceptions of how widespread corruption is in a given country, and relies on citizens' perception of corruption among public officials and civil servants. Respondents have been asked the following question: 'To what extent do you perceive the following categories in this country to be affected by corruption: Public officials/Civil servants?' The scale runs from 1 (not at all corrupt) to 5 (extremely corrupt).

RESULTS

Figure 1 presents a scatter plot showing the relationship between general trust in other people and public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. The indeterminate

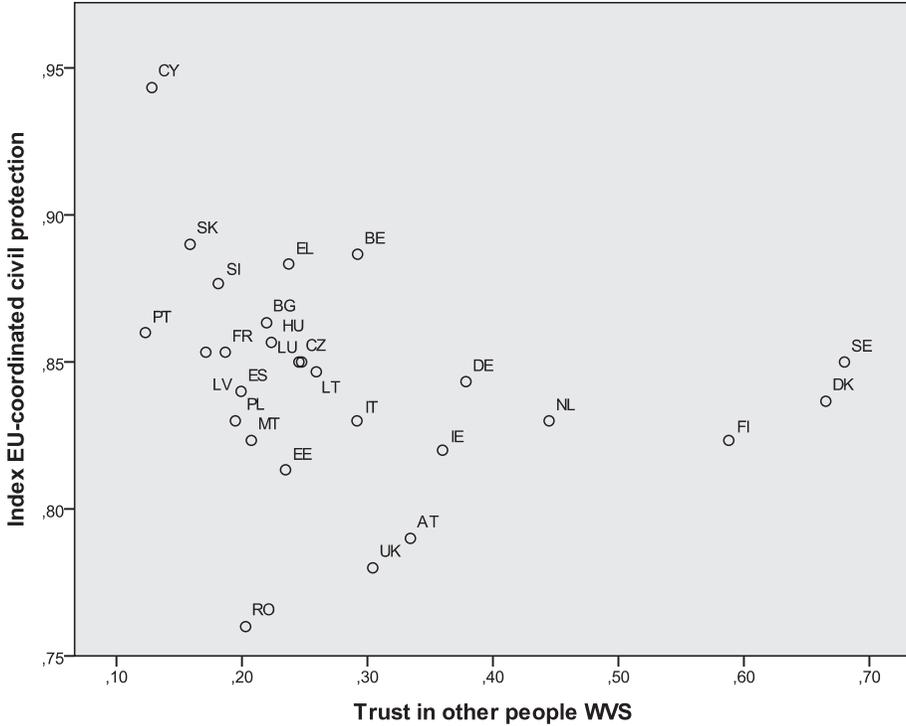


FIGURE 1 Scatter plot showing relationship between the index on EU-coordinated civil protection and general trust in other people

pattern from the figure means we are unable to find any clear support for our hypothesized positive relationship, that is, that the more people, on average, tend to trust other people, the more confidence they also have in EU crisis management institutions.

As illustrated in model 1 in table 1, there is in fact a negative relationship between general trust in other people and public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. The first model displays a simple bivariate regression with public confidence in EU crisis management institutions as the dependent variable and trust in other people as the independent variable. The results indicate that in countries where people, on average, tend to trust other people they display less confidence in EU-level civil protection. A 1-unit increase in trust in other people is estimated to decrease public confidence in EU crisis management institutions by 0.06 units on a scale running from 0 to 1. However, this effect is not statistically significant and substantively not very strong. Moreover, we see that trust in other people accounts for only 3 per cent of the overall variance in public confidence in EU crisis management institutions in the sample.

However, we need to consider this relationship in more detail before we dismiss it as non-existent. Importantly, since our dependent variable, public confidence in EU crisis management institutions, as well as our independent variable, trust in other people, are based on citizens' attitudes we need to control for broader measures of how democratic institutions function in a country. In model 2 we therefore include an index of democratic political culture as an additional explanatory variable and test the effect of social

TABLE 1 *Determinants of public confidence in coordinated EU crisis management*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Constant	0.86*** (0.02)	0.88*** (0.04)	0.85*** (0.01)	0.86*** (0.02)	0.93*** (0.06)	0.90** (0.11)
Trust in other people	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.06)			0.09 (0.06)	0.05 (0.07)
Democratic political culture		-0.00 (0.01)			-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)
Impartial public administration			-0.02* (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.01)	-0.05** (0.02)
Central government expenditure				-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
GDP per capita						0.00 (0.00)
Corruption perception						0.00 (0.02)
Observations	26	26	24	19	19	18
Adjusted-R ²	0.029	0.004	0.101	0.254	0.324	0.388

Note: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01. OLS refers to ordinary least squares regression.

trust on public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. As can be seen from model 2, the negative effect of general social trust on citizens’ beliefs in the effectiveness of EU-coordinated civil protection decreases somewhat once we control for the democratic political culture; however, neither the coefficient of social trust nor the index of democratic political culture is statistically significant. In addition, the introduction of the index of democratic political culture has decreased the explained variance. Hence, we find no support for a relationship between general social trust and public confidence in EU crisis management institutions.

However, we also need to consider our second independent variable, which is impartial public administration. Thus, in figure 2 we display in a scatter plot the relationship between impartial public administration and public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. As can be seen, there seems to be a negative relationship between our second independent variable and citizens’ support for EU-coordinated civil protection.

This finding is also corroborated by the results in model 3 in table 1 which displays a simple bivariate regression with public confidence in EU crisis management institutions as the dependent variable and impartial public administration as the independent variable. The results show clear evidence of our hypothesized negative relationship between public confidence in EU civil protection institutions and impartial public administration. In countries where people, on average, tend to consider their public administration institutions to be impartial, they are also less likely to have confidence in EU-coordinated civil protection. This effect is statistically significant although substantively not very strong. A 1-unit increase in impartial public administration is estimated to decrease public confidence in EU crisis management institutions by 0.02 units on a scale running from 0 to 1. Moreover, we see that impartial public administration accounts for about 10 per cent of the overall variance in the dependent variable in the sample.

Before jumping to conclusions, however, we need to consider this relationship in more detail. It could well be that the independent variable, impartial public administration,

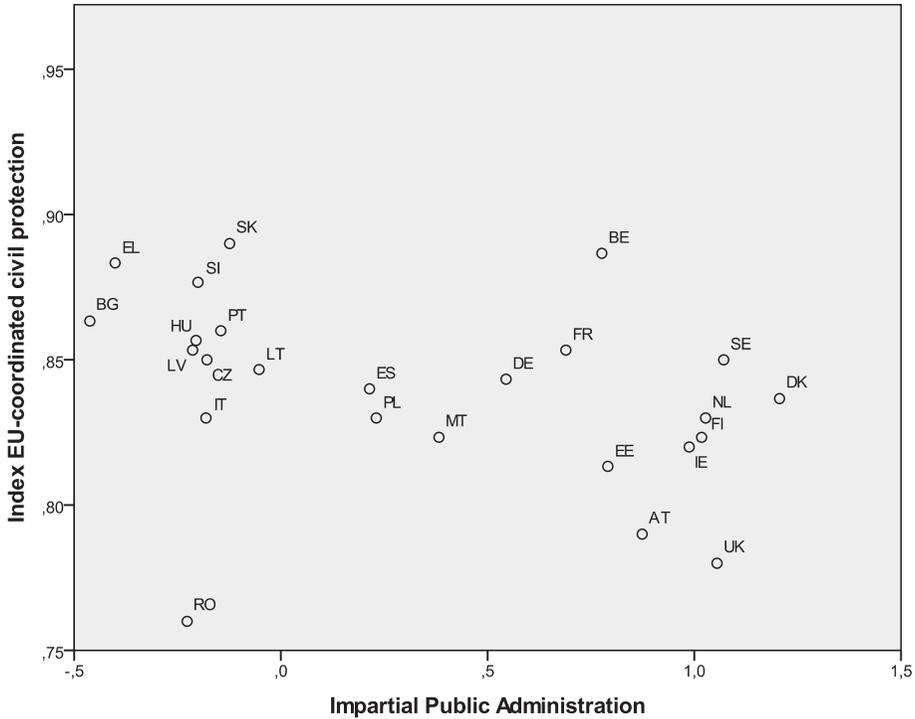


FIGURE 2 Scatter plot showing relationship between the index on EU-coordinated civil protection and impartial public administration

which is more of a procedural quality, is not as important as the more substantive output of public administration institutions, that is, *what* public services the state delivers rather than *how* they are delivered. If we do not control for this we run the risk of attributing an effect to the public confidence in EU crisis management institutions that really is due to the fact that it is the output of public administration that makes people trust their government institutions rather than how fairly citizens are treated.

In model 4 we therefore include a variable measuring central government expenditure in the area of public order and safety as an additional explanatory variable, and test the effect of impartial public administration on public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. As can be seen from model 4, the effect of impartial public administration on citizens' beliefs in the effectiveness of EU-coordinated civil protection is strengthened once we control for central government expenditure in the area of public order and safety; the coefficient of impartial administration is still negative and somewhat stronger, and statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level. In addition, the coefficient of central government expenditure in the area of public order and safety is entered with a negative sign; however, it is extremely small and not statistically significant. Moreover, this model explains about 25 per cent of the variation in the dependent variable.

Despite the fact that only one of our suggested independent variables is clearly correlated with the dependent variable when controlling for the functioning of democracy and

the public services provided by each state, we still need to assess the relative importance of our independent variables in a multivariate regression analysis. In model 5 in table 1, therefore, we display the effects of all four independent variables. As can be seen from model 5, the effect of impartial public administration on public confidence in EU crisis management institutions remains and is still significant. Moreover, we see that the overall explained variance in the sample increases from 23 per cent in model 4 to 32 per cent in model 5.

In order to further test the robustness of impartial public administration as being strongly related to citizens' beliefs in the effectiveness of EU-coordinated civil protection, we add two more important control variables. More specifically, we add one control variable to account for the general level of wealth in a society, measured as GDP per capita. In addition, we control for citizens' perceptions of corruption among civil servants and public officials, which is generally considered to be an important factor behind public confidence in public administration.

Interestingly enough we find in model 6, when controlling for the above-mentioned factors, that impartial public administration maintains its significance and the coefficient is further strengthened, although the effect is still not very strong. Hence, the negative relationship between impartial public administration and public confidence in EU-level civil protection appears to be fairly robust. Moreover, this extended model explains about 39 per cent of the variation in the dependent variable. We suggest that a plausible interpretation of this finding is that the way citizens are treated by their national public administration is more important for explaining public confidence in EU crisis management institutions than are more substantive measures of what the government provides in material terms.

Hence, the results of our multivariate analysis show that, on an aggregate country level, social trust measured as general trust in other people seems to be unrelated to public confidence in EU crisis management institutions, in contrast to the expectation of our first hypothesis. The way the state treats its citizens, on the other hand, appears to be of great importance for public confidence in EU crisis management authorities. Clearly, this relationship can be interpreted to support our second hypothesis, that is, that the more impartially citizens are treated by their national public administration institutions, the less likely they are to have confidence in EU-coordinated civil protection. Put differently, when citizens perceive their government's treatment of them as partial and unfair, citizens will tend to put their confidence instead in EU-level crisis management institutions.

Moreover, model 6 shows a significant negative relationship between democratic political culture and public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. Although the effect is not very strong, the relationship is significant. Our interpretation is that the less democratic the political culture is in a country, the more willing citizens will be to have civil protection resources pooled at the EU level. This finding is consistent with previous research on European integration more generally, which shows that national circumstances often affect public support for the EU and its institutions.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this article has been to investigate whether differences in social trust and impartial public administration are related to public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. From a democratic point of view, it is crucial for the legitimacy

and effectiveness of crisis management authorities that they enjoy the trust of citizens. This problem is particularly interesting to consider in the context of the EU's political system, since the Union has become increasingly involved in crisis management and different capacities have been developed to assist in managing various types of crisis.

A main finding of this study is that there is a negative relationship between impartial public administration and public confidence in EU crisis management institutions. If citizens perceive that national authorities treat them partially and unfairly, they will put more confidence in EU-level institutions. In contrast, states that execute their powers and respond to the demands of citizens impartially generate trust and legitimacy for the state concerned. If the state can be trusted, and if it is seen as dependable in providing protection for its citizens, then individuals are less willing to transfer powers to the EU level.

The mechanism behind this finding may be that citizens use the quality of national institutions as an ambitious yardstick for evaluating EU institutions which, in turn, will make them prone to regard any move to give EU-level institutions more power as a risk-taking enterprise that will be viewed sceptically. Nonetheless, the kind of inferences that Rothstein (2011), for example, points out may still hold true at the country level. Here, the relationships between individuals and the kind of trust they express are related to perceptions about government performance. However, our findings suggest that this will by no means 'rub-off' on EU crisis management institutions. Therefore it appears that this transference logic has its limits. Citizens who live in a context where the state is perceived to act impartially are likely to be risk-averse towards supranational solutions. It appears that it is primarily citizens in states suffering from partial public administration that will be inclined to support and trust EU institutions to take on more responsibilities for crisis management and civil protection. This may be caused by the fact that they feel they have little to lose in relation to their present circumstances. For this reason these citizens are more willing to place their faith in supranational solutions even if they know little about the actual performance of these alternatives.

The support we find for the second hypothesis corroborates previous research on popular support for European integration more generally, where support is seen as the consequence of the interplay between supranational and national politics: citizens with higher opinions of how well supranational institutions function have lower opinions on how well national institutions perform, and they also display higher levels of support for EU-level integration. In cases where the national political system is held in low esteem, there tends to be less opposition to pooling sovereignty at the EU level (Sánchez-Cuenca 2000; Kritzinger 2003; Muños *et al.* 2011; Desmet *et al.* 2012).

Furthermore, we hypothesized that citizens in countries with high levels of social trust are likely to put confidence not only in their national institutions, but would also be willing to extend more powers to the EU in matters relating to crisis management and civil protection. However, our study demonstrates that there is in fact no correlation between the general level of trust in other people and public confidence in EU crisis management authorities. Or put differently, we do not find support for a 'syndrome of trust' where trust in both levels originates in a common source (Harteveld *et al.* 2013, p. 561). On the other hand, our multivariate analysis indicates that, on an aggregate country level, a more democratic political culture seems to have a negative impact on public confidence in EU

crisis management institutions. This discovery mirrors our finding on the effect impartial public administration appears to have on whether or not citizens are willing to share civil protection powers with the EU.

The findings from this study are consistent with the view held by many scholars that impartiality is essential for the quality of government (Rothstein and Teorell 2008, p. 165). However, these authors claim to be primarily concerned with how governance affects people's lives, and they focus on aspects such as corruption, effectiveness, and output in more general terms. Crisis management has not been included in their studies as we have done here. Furthermore, their focus is primarily on the national level whereas we study the relationship between the national and the supranational levels. Hence, our findings on this issue contribute to expanding the knowledge in this field, while at the same time raising new and interesting questions. Why is it that some states known for impartiality still enjoy high levels of public confidence in EU crisis management institutions? Take, for instance, Sweden. Sweden is a country that scores high on the impartiality index. Nevertheless, Swedes, in general, still appear to support pooling crisis management resources at the EU level. By contrast, in a country such as Italy, which scores low on the impartiality index, citizens seem to be less supportive of transferring civil protection powers to the EU level.

These results, however, are preliminary. We need to be careful not to exaggerate the significance of the findings from a single study using only aggregate country-level data. More research is, therefore, needed to provide more detailed answers to the questions we have addressed in this article. Towards this end the current study has helped identify several important avenues for future research.

First, we think that it could be fruitful to establish the effect of software factors on the individual level and not only on an aggregate country level. Second, in order to rule out the risk of reverse causation, not only cross-section data but also time series data should be collected and analysed. Third, and finally, we need better measurements of factors that affect the relationship between country-level and EU-level civil protection mechanisms. Over time, the EU has become increasingly involved in crisis management, and different capacities have been developed to assist in managing various crises. It is essential, therefore, to better understand to what extent these new capacities at the EU level enjoy public confidence and how this relates to public trust and impartial public administration in national crisis management institutions.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article:

TABLE A1. Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the analysis

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APPENDIX

The phrasings of the relevant Eurobarometer questions for the index of public confidence in EU crisis management institutions:

i. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

A coordinated EU action in dealing with disasters is more effective than actions by individual countries

(Totally agree, Tend to agree, Tend to disagree, Totally disagree, no answer)

ii. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

The EU needs a civil protection policy because major disasters can have cross-border effects

(Totally agree, Tend to agree, Tend to disagree, Totally disagree, no answer)

iii. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Pooling civil protection resources in the EU can be more cost-effective than each country managing their own resource

(Totally agree, Tend to agree, Tend to disagree, Totally disagree, no answer)

The index adds the share of respondents who agree for all three questions.

All measures are from the Special Eurobarometer 383 on Civil Protection (European Commission 2012a).