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**Public support for the European Union  
From theoretical concept to empirical measurement**

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This article elaborates a multi-dimensional conceptualization and a longitudinal measurement of public support for the EU. Operationalizations of public support for the EU either follow a utilitarian (specific) one-dimensional conceptualization or include an additional dimension of affective (diffuse) support measured with feelings of European identity. Yet, the latter dimension has been dismissed as irrelevant or has been found to have declined, along with specific support, after the Maastricht Treaty. Drawing on Easton's distinction between support for the political community and the sense of community, my analysis shows that affection is not the only indicator of diffuse support nor is a "thick collectivity" an essential condition to develop diffuse support. Using Eurobarometer data, I demonstrate that the variation of diffuse support for the EU over time is indeed relevant and has behavioral consequences (Muller et al., 1982) as the investigation in those member-states that held a referendum on EU issues shows.

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**Keywords:** European Union, public support, political system, diffuse support, political community.

## 1 Introduction

The surprising rejection of the European Union's (EU) Constitution by a majority of French and Dutch electors in recent referenda has both invigorated the idea that public opinion matters in the process of European integration, and that the erosion of public support after the Maastricht Treaty has not ended. In turn, this lack of support has prompted commentators to envisage a bleak future for Europe. Different interpretations of these last events have been offered by the literature on EU support which follows either of the two main lines of explanation developed in the last thirty years. The major explanations are the utilitarian perspective that has dominated the literature on public support especially after the work of Gabel (1998) or cultural accounts (Inglehart, 1971; Carey, 2002; McLaren, 2002; Diez Medrano, 2004).<sup>1</sup> Although a few scholars have shown that both kinds of explanations play a role (Hooghe and Marks, 2004), the causal mechanisms remain unclear. Overall, empirical results have offered limited vision on the development of public support for the EU.

The main problem within the debate of a lack of public support for the EU is that we do not know much about the kind of support that the EU is enjoying from its citizens. After thirty years of empirical research on public support for the EU, and a large array of explanations, we still have profound disagreement on the best indicators for measuring it. There has been much attention focused on explaining variation in support but little on how EU support is measured. Generally, the concept of public support for the EU is not well defined, the same concept is operationalized differently, and the same measurement is used as operationalization of different conceptualizations. The result is confusion, lack of comparability and little insights into the debate on the legitimacy of the EU, which is stirring both scientific and political debates. Therefore it is relevant to address the following question: *How is public support towards integration structured?*

Operationalizations of public support for the EU either follow a utilitarian (specific) one-dimensional conceptualization or include an additional dimension of affective (diffuse) support measured with feelings of European identity. The latter dimension has been dismissed as irrelevant (Gabel, 1998) or has been found to have declined, along with specific support, after the Maastricht Treaty (Niedermayer, 1995). These empirical results reinforce Scharpf's argument according to which diffuse support (input-oriented legitimacy) is precluded in the EU due to the lack of a 'thick collective identity'. In turn, this confirms the preoccupation of Newman (2001) who warns that this assumption of preclusion makes democratic legitimacy

impossible at the EU level, and may be used to justify the argument that the EU must confine itself to certain forms of regulation.

The distinction between affective versus utilitarian modes of EU support was introduced by Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) and has been quite influential in empirical analyses of support for the EU, as much as this distinction has been for analyses of public support at the national level (Dalton 1989, 2004; Norris, 1999). However in contrast with national investigations, when applied to the EU, there is greater attention paid to utilitarian support. So, despite its theoretical relevance for the stability of political systems (Easton, 1965, 1975; Muller, Jukam, Seligon, 1982), the diffuse mode of support has been neglected in studies of EU support. The goal of this paper is to address this deficit and better explore this important dimension of support.

The theoretical work of Easton (1965, 1975) on political support and his distinction between diffuse and specific modes of support, which seems to have inspired both works of Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) and Scharpf (1999), is used as a starting point. Drawing on Easton's distinction between support for the political community and the sense of community, my analysis shows that affection neither is the only indicator of diffuse support, nor is a "thick collectivity" an essential condition for developing diffuse support. A more appropriate conceptualization of EU support based on Easton's definition of political community is proposed and tested on a Eurobarometer longitudinal data set (1970-2004). The new measurement is examined over time and across countries, and compared with previous measurements of support. The implications of this measurement for further improvements of its explanations will be discussed.

## **2 Existing Operationalizations Of Diffuse And Specific Support For The EU**

In the extant literature, cross-national and longitudinal variations in the level of public support for the EU have been measured by four different survey questions (available mainly in Eurobarometer data sets): the 'Benefit', the 'Membership', the 'Dissolution', and the 'Unification'.<sup>2</sup> However, different scholars have interpreted these same questions in different ways.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the 'Benefit' question has been considered as an indicator of specific support and the 'Unification' question as an indicator of diffuse support by almost all authors, the 'Membership' and the 'Dissolution' questions have been approached differently. Because of these varying evaluations, accounts of support are also different.

The disagreements over the trends of affective or diffuse support illustrate these different interpretations. When describing the levels of public support for the EU from 1952 to 1986, Inglehart and Reif were pleased to note that diffuse support<sup>4</sup>, had developed among both founding members and newcomers. On the other hand they notice that "... a large gap still existed between the attitudes of the original six publics and those of the six newer member nations admitted in 1973, 1981, and 1986...in regard to utilitarian support"<sup>5</sup> (1991: 7), which in part they explained as due to the severe economic problems at the time of their accession. Contrary to these earlier findings, Niedermayer (1995) concludes that diffuse support,<sup>6</sup> not utilitarian support, features in the gap between the original six member states and those that joined from 1973 up to 1985. Then after the Maastricht Treaty, "... both diffuse and specific net support for the EC was in decline..." (1995: 67-69). However, Gabel claims that "...a public legitimacy for the European Union, grounded in widespread affective attachments, did not exist even long before the recent public opposition to the Maastricht Treaty' (1998: 32-33). Between 1985 and 1991 he noticed, "Only about one-fifth of the EU public expressed strong affective sentiments and this fraction seems to remain stable over time"<sup>7</sup> (1998, 35).

Disagreements on the use of different indicators for 'diffuse' and 'specific' support seem to be a leitmotiv in the literature. Many scholars bypass the problem by discarding

Easton's theoretical distinction, mainly on the basis of a lack of empirical tenability (Hewstone, 1986) or on the argument that although empirically tenable, the specific/utilitarian support is more relevant compared to the little developed diffuse/affective support (Gabel, 1998). Common in the literature is the choice to opt for uni-dimensional operationalizations at just one point in time. This, on the one hand, might increase the range of choice in selecting survey questions, but on the other hand, it restricts the analyses to static ones.

Common among scholars is to devise new indices of support for the EU composed of different questions. Yet, although the common goal is to improve measurement tools, the different items' compositions of different constructs tend to jeopardize comparability across studies. Overall, the 'Membership' indicator is always presented either alone (Gabel, 1998, Carey, 2000), or together with the 'Unification' question (Gabel and Palmer, 1995). In some research it is scaled together with the 'Unification' item, and the 'Dissolution' (Anderson and Kaltenhaler, 1996), in others jointly with the desired speed of integration and the desired direction of future integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2004); or it is considered together with the 'Benefit' question (McLauren, 2002). Additionally, the picture worsens when the same construct is used to measure different concepts. For example, in Norris (1999a) the 'Unification', 'Membership', and 'Dissolution' questions are the components of an index labeled 'support for EU principles'. Given the use of different operationalizations by scholars, it is necessary to re-examine the structure of EU support.

### **3 Dimensions of EU Support**

The conceptualization of political support developed by Easton (1965; 1975) for the analysis of national political systems has been very influential in subsequent investigations of support for political systems (Norris, 1999; Dalton, 2004). In Easton's words, "...support refers to the way in which a person evaluatively orients himself to some objects through either his attitudes or his behavior" (1975: 436). In his theoretical framework, support for a political system is a multidimensional concept that has two different modes: "specific" and "diffuse", which are directed to three objects of a political system: the political community, the regime, and the authorities. Building on that, Lindberg & Scheingold (1970), put forward a new conceptual framework for the analysis of the European Community political system. Their typology of support also considers three political objects and advances two new terms to describe the different modes of support, namely utilitarian and affective. They explain that: "...utilitarian and affective permit distinctions between support based on some perceived and relatively concrete interest (utilitarian) and support which seems to indicate a diffuse and perhaps emotional response to some of the vague ideals embodied in the notion of European unity (affective)" (1970: 40). Although the authors do not clearly establish any evident connection with the Eastonian modes of support, in the empirical literature the concepts of utilitarian and affective have come to be considered as synonymous with the Eastonian concepts of specific and diffuse and used in an interchangeable way (Shephard, 1975; Hewstone, 1986; Inglehart, Rabier & Reif, 1991; Niedermayer, 1995; Gabel, 1998).<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, in this section I contend that the similarities between utilitarian and specific on the one hand, and affective and diffuse on the other should be questioned as it seems to be at the base of the general disagreement on the interpretation of support as explained in previous section. First, the different nature of diffuse and specific (Easton, 1965; 1975) versus affective and utilitarian (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970) is explained followed by a discussion of the theoretical relevance of diffuse and specific. Then a re-examination of Easton's theoretical framework that focuses on the political community follows. Finally a new conceptualization is developed.

Lindberg and Scheingold distinguish between a rational, cognitive evaluation underlying utilitarian support, and a non-rational, emotional kind of support, the affective. Easton instead stresses the short-term variation of 'specific' support and the generalized connotation

of 'diffuse' support as underlying characteristics of the two evaluations. Writing about diffuse support, Easton argues that although such support represents some attachment to political objects, the attachment is not necessarily due to affection or long-term socialization but "...have their origins...in our own assessment of general political circumstances" (1975: 446). Additionally, 'specific' support is not necessarily instrumental as the concept of 'utilitarian support' implies. It is an expressive evaluation of a specific event, object, or performance of the system. Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) seem to apply a specific approach to the concept of attitude based on the theoretical idea that attitudes are made up of different components and that a clear empirical distinction between a cognitive and an affective dimension is possible (Hovland and Rosenberg, 1960).<sup>9</sup>

According to Easton diffuse support is more important than specific for the survival of the political system. It represents a reservoir of favorable attitudes that helps people to tolerate disappointments with the outputs. Also Scharpf (1999) who employs the concepts of "input-oriented" and "output-oriented"<sup>10</sup> suggests that the first is a more important kind of legitimacy. However, in contrast to Easton, Scharpf assumes that 'input legitimacy can exist only as a result of some thick collective identities. Input-oriented category is identity based and output-oriented is interest based. Therefore, his conceptualization reflects the theoretical distinctions between affective and utilitarian modes of support as assumed by Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) and adopted by all other scholars. Again, the argument that the EU must restrict activity because it does not enjoy diffuse support is an assumption that has received little scrutiny (Thomassen and Schmitt, 2004).

### **3.1 Re-examining Easton's typology of political support**

In Easton's framework the specific and diffuse modes of support are closely related to different political objects, which in turn represent different aspect of a political system. The political community, the regime and the authorities capture accordingly the polity, the politics and the policy aspects of a political system. 'Specific support' seems clear enough as it is a specific response to actions taken by authorities, support for the perceived outputs of the political system. The 'diffuse' dimension, due to its relevance for all three different objects of a political system, is more complex. In particular, a lack of clarity seems to occur when the political community is involved.

Generally in the literature, diffuse support tends to be reduced to the "we-feeling" towards the social community, though this is explained by Easton (1965) to represent an indication of the cohesiveness of society and not as having anything to do with the political aspect of society.<sup>11</sup> Opposite to Deutsch (1953), who first developed the idea of 'sense of community', as the mutual sympathy and loyalties, we-feeling, trust and mutual consideration among people, Easton is concerned with political community. He describes it as "...a group of persons that for one reason or another joined together in a common political enterprise..." (1965: 176) and cooperate towards some common goals, thus participating in a common division of political labor. Therefore, even if the EU lacks the grounding in a common history, culture, language, discourse and symbolism on which most individual polities can draw, and which might negatively affect their sense of community;<sup>12</sup> this does not prevent us from looking at the support for the EU political community.

Since a political community has been present since the ratification of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, we should be able to measure it. Thus, what we want to measure here is support for the political community as a political object in the Eastonian terms and not the 'sense of community'. Once this distinction has been made, it becomes clear how different kinds of indicators within the realm of the polity are mixed up in the literature. Citizen's trust for others living in different member states (Scheuer, 1999), citizen's solidarity with people living in different member states (Gabel, 1998), or the pride of being European (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995), all seem to be indicators of the 'sense of community' and not of support for the political community.

### 3.2 Building an appropriate theoretical framework

Past research has focused on specific support paying little attention to diffuse support. Furthermore, it has related on measurements of the sense of community when the work has examined diffuse support at the expense of Easton's political community. Here instead, a framework is developed which places political objects in the forefront along a continuum from diffuse to specific support (Norris, 1999b), or better a continuum from diffuse (input-oriented) to specific support (output-oriented). In Table1, a threefold conceptual framework is presented, which distinguishes between the main aspects of the EU political system and its related political objects. Yet, although the EU may be conceived as a political system because of its policy, politics and policy aspects, it is not a national political system. Thus its political objects might differ from those of national political systems. This seems to be the case for its political community.

Contrary to political communities of national political systems, the EU political community is still developing regarding both its common borders and common political goals. Due to the 'developing' feature of the EU political community, prior to any investigation of the sense of community, we need to understand to which kind of political community public support is addressed to. The EU is not a national political system whose political goals can be taken for granted.<sup>13</sup> In the course of its existence, the EU has been developing its goals as a political community depending on historical contingencies and national political elites. Over its 50-year existence, its aims have been written down in Treaties that have expanded over time. Economic cooperation has been the hallmark of the EU political community, but political and cultural policies have also followed. What sort of division of labor do people want? What sort of political responsibility do people wish the EU to take on?

Although analyses of public support for EU responsibility in terms of policies are growing (Thomassen and Schmitt, 2004; Gabel and Anderson, 2004 Sinnott, 1995; Dalton and Eichenberg 1998; De Winter and Swyngedouw, 1999; Kritzinger, 2005, Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005), few attempts have been done to incorporate this indicator into a conceptual framework of support. The main goal of these analyses mainly has been to provide some descriptions of the variations in support for an EU being responsible for a set of different policy areas. In this respect, some works conclude that people differentiate between the national or international<sup>14</sup> character of different policy areas (Sinnott, 1995) and prefer to assign responsibility to the EU for those policy areas that have an international nature (Sinnott, 1995; De Winter and Swyngedouw, 1999; Thomassen and Schmitt, 2004). Most stress the fact that people are "...unwilling to abdicate national sovereignty to the EU where it may threaten their national culture and identity" (Lahav, 2004:1175; Dalton and Eichenberg 1993), and "...endorse national policy-making the closer the issue is to home" (Kaltenthaler and Anderson, 2001:152). Others found that the distinction is "between policies 'better solved' and policies 'better not solved' at the national level" (Kritzinger, 2005:58). Further research has found instead that support for policy is cumulative one tending to support the others (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005), so that the EU political space is uni-dimensional (Gabel and Anderson, 2004). Few analyses try however to account for the variation of this aspect of support (De Winter and Swyngedouw, 1999; Kritzinger, 2005) and those few that encompass both diffuse and specific mode of support tend, contrary to my conceptualization, employ the question as indicators of utilitarian support (Kritzinger, 2005).

Fewer problems are involved in the measurement of the last two objects, at least in terms of their nature as being part of the EU political system. On one hand, *diffuse support for EU Institutions* is the support for all those mechanisms and institutions that the EU has developed in order to implement its goals while *specific support for EU Performance*, measures the support for those goals. No main distinctions from national political system seem to be needed. Diffuse support for the EU political community, diffuse support for EU Institutions, and specific support for EU Performance will guide the next empirical analysis.

Finally, two main expectations may at this point be spelled out. First, high variation on the support for the different objects of the EU political system is envisaged since they are

supposed to measure different aspects of the concept. Although the different dimensions may overlap, I expect the concept of support for the EU to have a multi-dimensional structure and thus capture different trends both over time and across member-states. Additionally, different explanatory models may account for the different aspects of the concept. Second, because of the developing character of the EU political community we might expect support for the EU political community to be more than one dimension.

## 4 Data and Methods

On the basis of the threefold conceptualization the appropriate valid indicators are selected from a longitudinal Eurobarometer (EBM) File 1970-2004. Following the arguments presented in the previous section, *diffuse support for the EU Political Community* should be measured with a set of questions that gauges people's ideas and beliefs with respect to the kind of division of labor. The following question available in EBM data set for a period of time from 1989 until 2004 are selected: 'For each of the following areas, do you think that decisions should be made by the (National) government, or made jointly within the EU?'<sup>15</sup> The *diffuse support for the EU institutions* is measured by asking people questions about their trust in a number of EU institutions.<sup>16</sup> Finally, two survey questions were used as indicators of *specific support for EU Performance*, namely the 'Benefit' and the 'Membership' questions. Both questions,<sup>17</sup> contrary to previous ones, were asked consistently over a longer period (1970-2004). The 'Benefit' question seems to be a valid indicator of specific support for EU performance, although by mentioning explicitly 'benefits' it seems to refer more strictly to utilitarian/economic performance. The membership question on the other hand, by asking if the membership is a good thing appears to allude to broader EU outputs thus represents a good match according to my conceptualization.

A factor analysis is then performed. The aim is test the structure of the concept of support for the EU political system as hypothesized in the conceptual framework above.<sup>18</sup> Factor analysis represents a valuable aid in the measurement of concepts (Marradi, 1981). Finally, the variations captured by each dimensions over time and across member states will be described.<sup>19</sup>

## 5 Results

The result of the Principal Axis Factoring Analysis, as displayed in Table 2, reveals that two factors nicely measure two theoretical dimensions of conceptual framework. The two variables that refer to the conceptual category of ***specific support for EU performance (PERF)*** score high on the same factor as well as all indicators of ***diffuse support for EU institutions (INST)*** register high factor loadings on a second factor.

The variables used to measure *diffuse support for the EU political community* are clustered into two different dimensions: the first factor contains high factor loadings for policy areas such as cultural policy, education, press standard, health and welfare, and unemployment. The second dimension includes high factor loadings on all the other policy questions such as currency, fight drugs, environment, foreign policy, scientific research, security and defense, as well as immigration and asylum rules. Although the social character of one dimension is evident, the second seems not to have a specific connotation as it includes not only economic and political policy areas, but also environment and scientific research. This distinction is difficult to match with previous findings which point to the national or international character of policy areas (Sinnott, 1995), or their cultural or non-cultural character (Dalton and Eichenberg 1993; Kaltenthaler and Anderson, 2001; Lahav, 2004). Both explanations fit but only in part. On one hand the national or international nature of policy areas appears to be a very good analytical tool when some policy domains such as

education and workers' co-determination as well as foreign policy and defense are considered. However, some other policy areas, such as welfare policy, are more difficult to locate. Is welfare policy a typical national issue, at the same extends of education? Or shouldn't it better be considered a European issue, due to the indirect pressures exerted by European economic policies on national welfare state. On the other hand, currency along with immigration policy (Ludetke, 2005) may also have a cultural connotation. Additionally, it is very difficult to state that the distinction is between policies better solved at different level of governance (Kritzinger, 2005). This implies an assumption on the knowledge of people in terms of policies, which is something that should first be tested. What appears rather to be the case is that the policy patterns that differentiate the two groups are related to the different targets toward which the policies are aimed, namely either the people or the member-state.

The first dimension includes policies that are addressed at the people, whereas the second dimension includes policy areas that are tailored for the general well-being of member-states, and only indirectly for their people. If this is the case, then the two dimensions would identify support for an EU political community, which at the same extent as member-states would deal with people's problems and an EU political community as a different level of governance, which supplement the member states in dealing with the complexity of globalization. The latent variable that underlies the measurements on the first factor has a clear social character, in the sense that it is directly addressed at people, i.e. people are the first to benefit. Accordingly, this dimension is named ***diffuse support for a Social EU Political Community (SOCPC)***. The second factor that underlies the other set of items includes those policies which guarantee some security, both in economic and political terms, to the member-states, in a globalize world. This has been termed ***diffuse support for a Secure EU Political Community (SECPC)***.

Although the two dimensions of diffuse support for the EU Political Community are somewhat highly correlated (0,54),<sup>20</sup> the factor analysis is quite clear about the structure of data both over time and across countries. Additionally when the two dimensions are regressed on the member-states' budgetary balances<sup>21</sup> different results are evident with a higher correlation for SOCPC (Rsq.0,14) compared to the inexistent one for SECPC (Rsq. 0,003). This confirms that two dimensions of the EU Political community are evident and that different structures of explanation may exist behind the two aspects, as expected. However, on the other hand because of the similar R squares of PERF (Rsq. 0.24) and INST (Rsq. 0.30), the latter two dimensions detected in the factor analysis appears to be somehow more similar.

Yet, since the correlation between these last two dimensions is lower (0,37) than the one of the two dimensions of the political community, and because of the theoretical relevance of them, all four dimensions' variations over time and across member-states have been measured.

### **5.1 The relevant variations over time and across member-states of diffuse support for the EU**

Three dimensions of diffuse support have been detected and, along with specific support for the EU performance, they have different means and different variations of the mean both over time and across member-states. This contradicts previous findings that the dimension of diffuse support for the EU is irrelevant (Gabel, 1998) and in turn confirms the expectation that these dimensions measure different aspects of the concept. Overall, when all 15 older member states are considered over time (Figure 1), diffuse support for a Social EU Political Community is below zero, which means that those people supporting an EU Political Community taking up social responsibilities are proportionally less numerous than those opposing it. The highest support is instead devoted to EU institutions while somewhere in the middle both trends of 'specific' support for EU performance and 'diffuse' support for a Secure EU Political Community are displayed.

[FIGURE 1 HERE]

Variations in the four trends over time are considerable. In the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty, the three trends available are quite different. While a sudden drop characterizes 'specific' support for EU performance in 1992-1993 followed by a further sharp fall in 1995, the 'diffuse' support for a SECPC instead gradually rises from 1989 to 1992 and remains stable until 1995. Conversely, support for SOCPD seems to match the decrease of specific support, at least until 1994. Thus, *contrary to previous measurements of support* (Niedermayer, 1995), *the breakdown of support in the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty is not evident on all dimensions of support*. Although people are not satisfied with the performance of the EU and they increasingly question a Social Political Community, they still wish the EU to exist as a Secure Political Community. However, the dramatic drop of support for EU performance may in part be explained by a tide of disillusionment, following the high expectations exerted since the early 1980s by the media and the political class, for the launch of the internal market on January 1992. From 1995 until 1998 specific and diffuse support for SECPC appear to follow broadly a similar trend, yet to split again in 1999, the year the Euro started to circulate. On that year, a sharp fall of support for SECPC has not been matched by similar drop in specific support, which instead is slightly increasing. And this is confirmed by research on support for the Euro (Banducci et al., 2003), which on a different indicator still find 1999 to mark a fall in support for the Euro compared to previous years. However, since 2001 support for SECPC increases (distinct analyses of support for the Euro are not available after 2000) to its normal trend and slightly improves through 2004, with specific support also growing though at a higher extent. On the other hand, since 2001 support for a Social EU political community steady decreases reaching its lowest point of lack of support in 2004.

For further comparison with previous investigations, variations across member-states are also necessary. The contention in the literature is on which mode of support older member-states differ from later member-states. According to the measurements developed in this analysis, *overall if there is a gap between founding members of the EU and the later group of member-states, it is on both diffuse and specific support, though over different time periods*.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, as the trends of diffuse support only start in 1989 (SOCPD and SECPC) and in 1999 (INST), a comparison with Inglehart and Reif's (1991) measurement of diffuse support is impossible. However, on specific support (Figure 2) as pointed out by Inglehart, in the 1970s and 1980s the gap between the two groups is evident with the original member-states higher in support. Yet, starting from the 1990s, Niedermayer (1995) is correct to claim that the two groups have reached similar levels of specific support, due to an increase in the new member-states. Then from 1996, the gap opens up again but this time with the later group leading. If the member-states that economically benefit more from being in the EU are distinguished from those that benefit less, within each group, the trends differ only within the later group. In Italy, except for 2000-2001, support is slightly higher than the rest of the original group. In contrast, Denmark does not increase as much as the later group in 1996 and runs close to the original member-states. Great Britain instead, never closes the gap with other countries, and represents an important outlier<sup>23</sup>.

[FIGURE 2 HERE]

On diffuse support, while one gap between the two groups of member-states seem to have been filled up on one dimension (SECPC), another one appears to open up on the other (SOCPD). When SOCPD is considered (Figure 3) in the founding member-states, a steady decline over time is evident, which from 2002 gets worse. In the second group, although support seems more stable, the pattern is similar to the first group, though from 2001 it suddenly increases. This creates a gap between the two groups with the later in a supremacy position. When the economic crosscutting feature is considered, on one hand Italy has a more stable and higher trend compared with the rest of the original member-states, and on the other Denmark and Great Britain, are also more stable but much lower than the later group. As for the SECPC dimension (Figure 4), again while the founding member-states show a slight but steady increase over time and take the lead over the later group for more than ten years, the latter group closes the gap by suddenly increasing since 2000. However, in 2004

the two groups differentiate again with the second group becoming negative while the original group continues to increase slightly. Again, Italy is higher on this dimension compared to the original member-states, though in the last two years its support has collapsed at the level of the rest of the group. Denmark and Great Britain, as the net contributors of the second group are lower than the second group although their trends in the last years considered are increasing.

[FIGURE 3 AND 4 HERE]

Yet, in order to be a better measure, the two modes of support proposed here should be of some help when trying to disentangle the different types of support. When trying to make sense of the negative result of the Danish referendum on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, Niedermayer (1995:69) noticed that all four indicators of EC support he used to measure the structure (diffuse and specific) of support, a few months before the referendum, were positive. Only on a question asking about support for Maastricht, the majority of Danish answered negatively after the referendum. Drawing on the different dimensions of support described in this analysis, in the Danish case it is evident, from Figure 5, that diffuse and specific in 1992 differentiate. While specific support for EU performance increases, both diffuse dimensions of the EU Political Community decreases. Other more recent examples may be added. While all four member-states that recently held a referendum on the ratification of the EU Constitution shared positive specific support for EU Performance in 2004, their level of diffuse support varied (Figure 5).

[FIGURE 5 HERE]

In Spain, all dimensions were positive. In Luxembourg, although both diffuse dimensions of the EU Political Community have been strongly decreasing from 2003, diffuse support for EU institutions seems to hold since 2001. In those countries where the 'no' option prevailed instead, 'diffuse' support for EU Institutions has been steadily decreasing and in the case of The Netherlands that is compounded by a dramatic decrease in the diffuse support for a Social EU Political Community. *These results do support previous findings in national contexts which contend a relationship between diffuse support and antisystem political behavior* (Muller and Jurkam, Seligon1982) *and thus reinforce the theoretical claim of diffuse support to be a stronger form of support for the stability of political system* (Easton, 1965, 1975; Scharpf, 1999).

## **6 New Measurements: Conclusions And Implications for the EU**

Over the last thirty years, the interest in describing diffuse and specific variations of support for the EU has been shared by many scholars, though with different conclusions (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970; Shephard, 1975; Hewstone, 1986; Inglehart and Reif, 1991; Niedermayer, 1995; Gabel, 1998). The present paper has addressed this inconsistency in the literature and has investigated how public support for the EU is structured. A new conceptualization of support for the EU has been elaborated, proposed, and tested. Contrary to the common practice in the literature to measure the concept of support for the EU as uni-dimensional, this empirical investigation clearly indicates that people structure their support for the EU according to the different dimensions of the EU developing political system of the EU. Support for EU Performance (PERF) is distinguished from support for EU institution (INST), while support for the EU Political community is a complex dimension reflecting two broad ideal-types of what the EU political community should be. Some people prefer an EU able to take up responsibilities for its citizens at the same extent as nation-states do, which has been called a 'Social EU political community' (SOCPC). Others prefer an EU political community able to supplement and sustain the nation-states, both on economic and political terms, in dealing with the complexity of a globalize world, thus a 'Secure EU political community' (SECPC). Thus, the consistent variation of the mean of these four dimensions as

described in this article confirms that the concept of support for the EU is a multidimensional concept.

Compared to previous descriptions of diffuse and specific support for the EU, the measurements developed in this work seem to be superior in two main respects. The first reason has to do with the explanatory implications underlying the different measurements. The dimensions advanced in this article do not prompt any particular kind of explanations of support, which seem instead to be implicit in all previous measurements that adopt the assumption of similarity between diffuse and affection, and specific and utilitarian. Inglehart and Reif (1991), who pointed out a gap on utilitarian support between original member-states and later comers, indicate the severe economic problems of the newcomers at the time of their accession as a main reason. Niedermayer (1995), who describes a decline in both diffuse and specific support after Maastricht suggests that the monetary implication of the Maastricht Treaty and its economic and symbolic aspects, may have played a role. Gabel who provide evidence of a lack of variation on diffuse support found it "plausible that citizens' utilitarian evaluations of the EU would reflect the EU's economic consequences" (1998:35). This analysis instead, has shown that affection is not the only indicator of diffuse support nor is a "thick community" an essential condition for developing diffuse support. What seem to mark the distinction between the two modes of support are ideas and beliefs about what is right in the political sphere and evaluations of the political performance. This is the distinction that Easton makes between legitimacy and trust for the political system and support for its performance, or the difference in Scharpf between the will of the people and the government of the people. What people think is right in the political sphere may be due to both utilitarian and cultural factors, as much as public support for political performance. The correlations of specific and diffuse support with the member-states budgetary balances, while confirms the multi-dimensionality of support, do not discriminate between the two modes of support on the basis of economic benefit. Member-states that economically benefit from the EU tend to support the EU on both specific and diffuse dimensions.

Second, these new measurements enable the data to show that diffuse support is a more important mode of support as theorized by Easton (1965, 1975) and Scharpf (1999), that has behavioral prominence as demonstrated by Muller and al.(1982) in national contexts. The empirical test in some of those member-states that hold an EU referendum has shown that negative diffuse support tends to better account for the opposition to the EU.

Although this work does not offer any test of explanations for the variation of support, these preliminary findings demonstrate that these measurements may contribute to solving the main problems in the field literature. Although public opinion analyses have produced robust empirical findings on both economic and non-economic factors correlating with pro-European attitudes, their causal mechanisms remain unclear. How different lines of explanations, both utilitarian and cultural interact and account for the high variation of support? The interesting variation across the four different aspects of support, as described in this article, seems to suggest that different dimensions of support may be explained by different models in which both utilitarian and cultural explanations are combined, possibly in different ways. Moreover, a research design that recognizes variation in dimensions of support may also contribute to refining country level explanations of support. Although overall the economic benefits from being in the EU seem to be a relevant factor on all dimensions, reinforcing the utilitarian accounts, member-states do not follow the same pattern of support on all aspects.<sup>24</sup> Additionally different structure of explanations may also vary over time, since variations of support on the different dimensions over time is also important.<sup>25</sup>

These measurements of support may also represent a good analytical tool to improve measurements of Euroscepticism, which in the literature tend to be confused with the concept of support (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005). The interaction between the different dimensions of support investigated in this article may capture different declinations of skepticism, in either its specific or diffuse features, and as such, they can provide us with some valid and reliable measurements of Euroscepticism.

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**Table 1. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT: "PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION"**

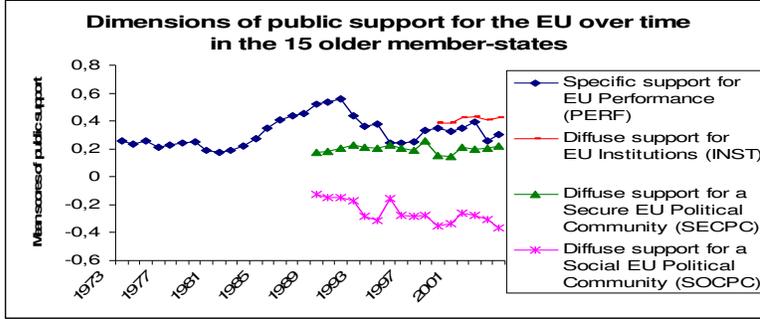
	←Input-oriented legitimacy ← Diffuse Support	Output-oriented legitimacy→ Specific Support →	
<b>EU Political System Dimensions</b>	<b>EU Polity</b>	<b>EU Politics</b>	<b>EU Policy Outcome</b>
<b>EU Political Objects</b>	<b>Support for EU Political Community</b>	<b>Support for EU Political Institutions</b>	<b>Support for EU Performance</b>

**Table 2. FACTOR PATTERNS**

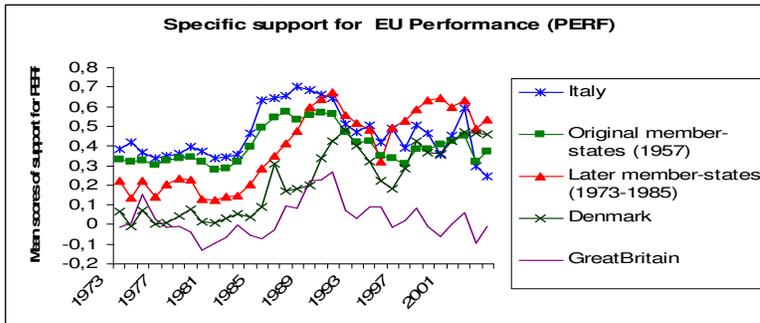
	<b>Social EU Political Community</b>	<b>Secure EU Political Community</b>	<b>EU Performance</b>	<b>EU Institutions</b>
Culture policy	,594			
Education	,827			
Press	,640			
Welfare	,785			
Unemployment	,411	,314		
Currency		,483		
Drugs		,586		
Environment		,490		
Foreign Policy		,694		
Science		,461		
Security		,572		
Immigration		,766		
Asylum		,768		
Membership Benefit			,848 ,902	
Trust EP				,821
Trust EC				,831
Trust Council				,842
TrustCourtJustice				,840
Trust Omdubus				,871
TrustCentral Bank				,833
TrustCourt Auditor				,876
TrustComm.Regio				,889
TrustSocialEconCo				,884

Principal Component Analysis, Oblique rotation, Pairwise deletion. Trend File EBM 1970-2002 plus EBM 59.1 (2003), EBM 60.1 (2003) and 62.0 (2004).

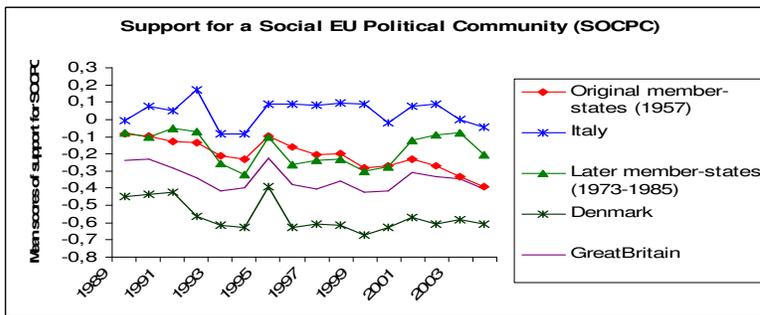
**Figure 1. Four dimensions of public support for the EU over time.**



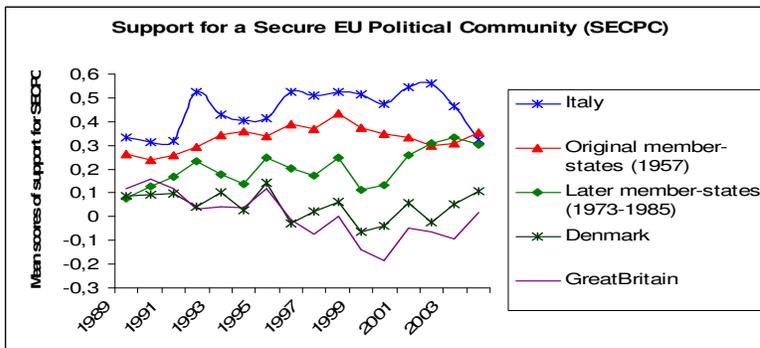
**Figure 2. Specific Support for the EU over time in original and later of member-states.**



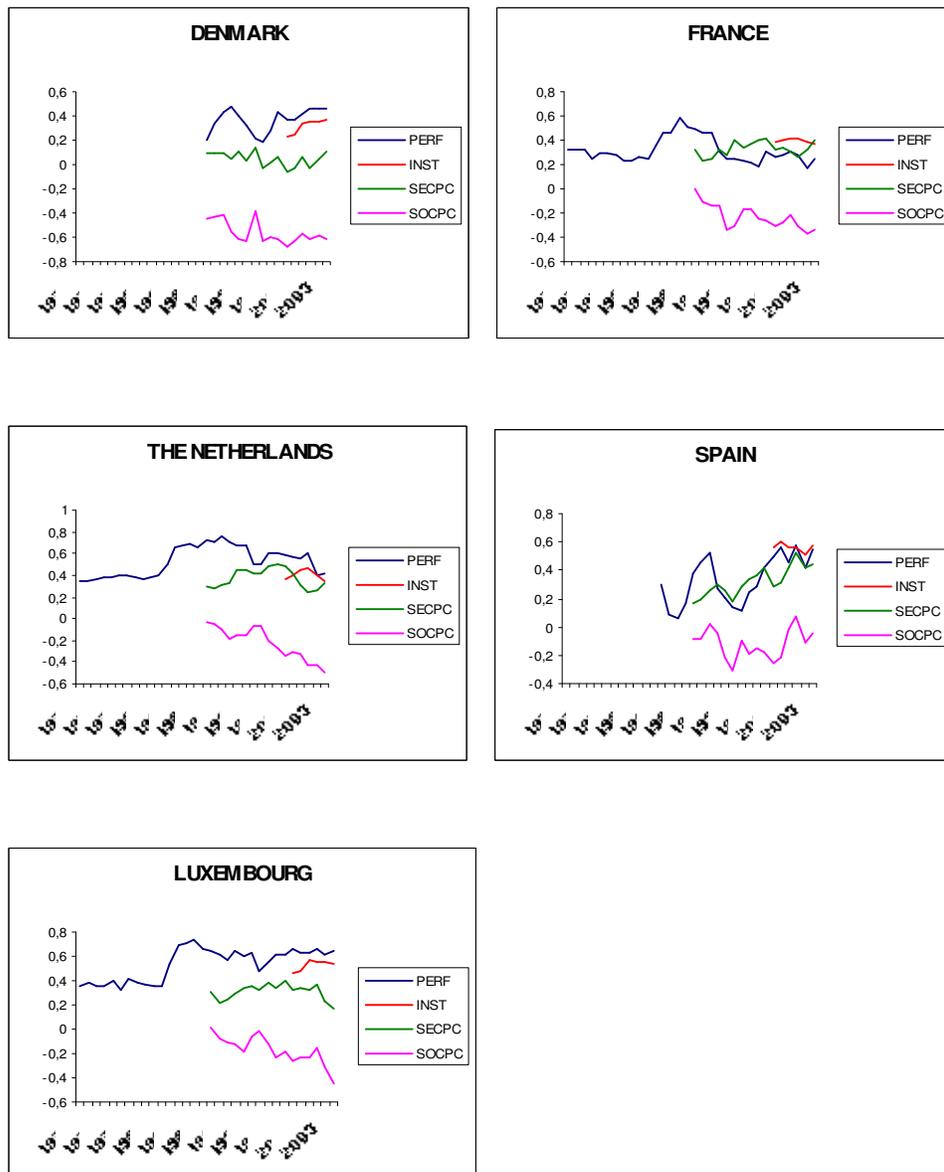
**Figure 3. Support for a Social EU Political Community over time in original and later member-states**



**Figure 4. Support for a Secure EU Political Community over time in original and later member-states**



**Figure 5. Dimensions of public support for the EU over time in five member-states where a referendum on EU issues has been held.**



<sup>1</sup> To respect the economy of this article, references have been reduced to the essential. See Hooghe and Marks (2004) for a description of the main economic and non-economic models in the literature.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Benefit' question asks, "Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Community?" The 'Membership': "Generally speaking do you think (your country's) membership in the Community is a good thing, a bad or neither good nor bad?" The 'Unification' demands: "In general, are you for or against efforts being made to unify Western Europe?" Finally, the 'Dissolution' indicator inquires, "If you were told tomorrow that the European Community had been scrapped, would you be very sorry about it, indifferent or relieved?"

<sup>3</sup> Lindberg and Scheingold found that "affective support for Europe, as such, while impressive, was not quite so high as the utilitarian support for economic integration" (1970:59). Instead, Shephard concluded that: "...it is not possible to affirm our second proposition, which stated that utilitarian support for supranational institutions is more marked than affective support" (1975:124). By contrast, Hewstone

pointed out that "... only for the British sample were correlations between overall attitude and utilitarian support items highly significant." (1986:206).

4 They measured it with the 'Unification' question.

5 Here they employed the 'Membership' question. The 'Benefit' question was first asked in Eurobarometer only since 1984.

6 In his analysis, which span from 1970 until 1997, diffuse support is measured with the 'Unification', the 'Membership', and the 'Dissolution' questions and specific with the 'Benefit' question only.

7 According to Gabel, 'Unification' tapping into both an affective and a utilitarian kind of support, would be a misleading indicator of affective support. The 'Identity' and the 'Solidarity' questions are the indicators he opted for instead. The 'Identity' indicator asks "Do you think of yourself not only as a (nationality) citizen but also as a citizen of Europe?" The 'Solidarity' "Are you personally, prepared to make some personal sacrifice, for example, paying a little more taxes, to help another country in the EC experiencing economic difficulties?" He observes that while positive answers to 'Solidarity' and 'Identity' questions never exceeded twenty percent from 1985 through 1991, the 'Unification' question also reached seventy-five percent.

8 Illustrative at this point is the statement by Inglehart and Reif according to which: "In order to grasp what has been happening, it is important to distinguish between diffuse or 'affective' support, and 'utilitarian' support - a calculated appraisal of the immediate costs and benefits of membership in the Community" (1991:7). Niedermayer and Westle also argue that diffuse/affective and utilitarian/specific are "nearly identical" (1995: 49).

9 Shepherd clearly sum up this idea when he writes that "The cognitive components match the utilitarian basis of support defined by Lindberg and Scheingold. Thus, support for integration which stems from perceived economic or political interests ... is termed cognitive or utilitarian support. Affective support, or the non-rational attitudes of loyalty, sympathy and shared values, may exist between peoples or may reflect attachment to an international community" (1975: 93).

10 "Input-oriented ...emphasizes 'government by the people'. Political choice are legitimate if and because they reflect 'will of the people'...By contrast, the output perspective emphasizes 'government for the people'...political choices are legitimate if and because they effectively promote the common welfare of the constituency" (Scharpf, 1999: 6).

11 At this regard, Easton argues that "...It does not matter whether the members form a community in the sociological sense of a group of members who have a sense of community or a set of common traditions. The members of a political system who are participating in a common political community may well have different cultures and traditions or they may be entirely separate nationalities..." (1965: 177).

12 The term sense of community has been used by different scholar differently referring both to social sense of community (Deutch) and political sense of community (Easton). This distinction is well established in Lindberg and Scheingold's (1970) framework when they distinguish between identitive and systemic support, whereby the first refers to "what might be termed 'horizontal' interaction among the broader public of the system, while systemic support probes 'vertical' relations between the system and these publics" (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970: 40).

13 An attempt to put under question the common operationalization of diffuse support at the national level and consider measures of support for the political community together with the sense of community is developed in my paper presented at the ECPR 2005, in Granada.

14 Sinnott uses three categories of internationalization of issues such as endogenous, exogenous and attributed. The first two are depending on the internal or external character of the issue itself on the international dimension. The latter refers not to a feature of the issue but to the will of people to attribute the issue to an international agency.

15 All policy areas included in the answer were first included such as: culture, currency, data protection, drugs, education, environment, foreign policy, immigration, industry, asylum, press, science, security, third world, unemployment, vatax, welfare, worker security and worker representation. However, because six policy areas' questions (data protection, industry, vatax, third world, worker security and worker representation) have not been asked after 1999, at the time when the 'Trust' trend questions started to be asked, they have been discarded from the analysis.

16 Again, all the lists of EU institutions were included, namely the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Ministers of the EU, the European Court of Justice, the European Ombudsman, the European Central Bank, the European Court of Auditors, the Committee of the Regions of the EU, and the Social and Economic Committee of the EU. Unfortunately, this set of questions was only posed from 1999 to 2004.

17 See note 2 for question wordings.

18 Principal Component Analysis based on pair-wise deletion of missing values and oblique rotation will be applied. Although varimax rotation is much more common in the literature, here I do not need to assume the independence of its dimensions. My interest is more on the general structure of the concept than on the independence of its components.

19 In order to do this, an index for each dimension found in the data is constructed and the different variables assigned to one of the indices according to the result of the factor analysis. So, first all variables will be recoded in order to bring them to the same scale. Dichotomous variables will be recoded -1 and +1 and the 'Membership' question, the only trichotomous, is recoded -1 0 +1. Finally,

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the mean of each index is calculated, first over time and then over time and across countries. The range of all dimensions will rank between -1 to +1. Positive values indicate a majority of people answering positively to the questions concerned; negative values register the opposite. Zero (0) means a neutral position.

20 SECPC 0,54  
 PERF 0,20 0,32  
 INST 0,16 0,21 0,37  
 SOCPC SECPC PERF

21 In order to validate the result of factor analyses, Carmine and Zeller (1974) suggest comparing the correlations of each dimension as the result of the factor analysis with important independent variables. Here the member-states' budgetary balances has been employed. This aggregate variable is a measure of the EU expenditure allocated by member-states and member-states' payment to the EU budget. Since economic considerations have dominated the accounts of support, and the member-states' budgetary balances has been found to be a relevant independent variable (Hooghe and Marks, 2004) this might not only discriminate between the dimensions but also provide some information on how specific and diffuse support differentiate on economic issues.

22 The third group of countries that joined the EU in 1995, considered in the general trends of Figure 1 is not included in the other pictures. This has been done in order to better compare my measurements with previous ones that did not included Finland, Sweden, and Austria. The later group of member-states that are here compared with the original member-states that signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957 are then those countries entered between 1973 and 1986. In order to control for the utilitarian reasons of their support the two groups are split according to their economic benefit in being in the EU. This is why Italy, although part of the original group is plotted as a unique country, as it economically benefits more than the rest of the group, and the same for Denmark and Great Britain in the other group as being those member-states that economically benefit less.

23 At the same level of Great Britain are all three member-states that entered in 1995.

24 Great Britain appears to be very skeptical on both PERF and SECPC, but its support for SOCPC is not the most negative. The original six member-states support SECPC stronger than the later group of member-states (Spain, Greece, and Portugal), although the latter is leading on support for PERF and SOCPC.

25 While in 2001 the latter group increased its support on both diffuse dimensions of the EU Political community, the original member states strongly decreased on SOCPC but not on SECPC.