

Dissatisfaction, Welfare and Democracy:

Explaining the link between welfare state service satisfaction and the voting behaviour of dissatisfied voters in the European Union Maximilian Zoll (s1236636) Date of last revision: June, 11th 2014 Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in European Public Administration School of Management and Governance | Faculteit Management en Bestuur **Examination** Committee 1. Supervisior: Dr. Ringo Ossewaarde Associate Professor of Sociology 2. Supervisor: Dr. Martin Rosema Assistant Professor of Political Science 3. Supervisor: Dr. Minna van Gerven-Haanpää Assistant Professor of Sociology of Governance As part of the Bachelor thesis circle 2013-2014: The future of Social Europe?

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<u>Abstract</u>

Every modern-day nation state conducts nowadays social policy. However, it is on the basis of the "principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth, and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life" (Britannica Online Encyclopaedia, 2014) that make him a welfare state. In this vein British sociologist Thomas Humphrey Marshall (1950) identified the welfare state as a special and distinctive combination of democracy, welfare and capitalism. Building on this, welfare states and their services all across the European Union have been facing several challenges and pressures since the 1975s. Theoretical questions centre if voters are therefore satisfied with what the welfare state services (still) achieves and if not if they hold politicians for their respective actions account. Conducting multiple regression analysis showed that there is link between welfare state service satisfaction and support for the governmental parties during elections through EU15 countries. However, analysis also implies that there is significant country variation in their actual magnitude. In addition to that the increasing embedded nature of the welfare state in the multi-level governance system of the European Union has hardly any influence on the relationship but instead other variables like the educational level of the voter and the trust in the countries parliament has a significant influence on the relationship.

<u>Keywords</u>

Welfare State Service Satisfaction, Electoral Accountability, EU15, Representative Democracy

Samenvatting

Elke moderne natiestaat voert tegenwoordig sociaal beleid. Kenmerkend voor deze moderne verzorgingsstaat is sociaal beleid wat zijn basis vind in de "principes van gelijke kansen, rechtvaardige verdeling van rijkdom en publieke verantwoordelijkheid voor die mensen die niet in staat om in hun eigen onderhoud te voorzien zonder ondersteuning" (Britannica Online Encyclopaedia, 2014). Op deze manier heeft de Britse socioloog Thomas Humphrey Marshall (1950) de verzorgingsstaat geïdentificeerd als een bijzondere en karakteristieke combinatie van democratie, welzijn en het kapitalisme. Deze zelfde verzorgingsstaten en hun diensten zijn overal in de Europese Unie geconfronteerd met een aantal van uitdagingen en staan sinds 1975s onder druk. De centrale vragen of de kiezers nog tevreden zijn met de diensten die de verzorgingsstaat (nog) realiseert en als dat niet zo is, of ze politici verantwoordelijk houden voor deze acties. Meervoudige regressie-analyse in EU-15 landen toont aan dat er een connectie bestaat tussen de tevredenheid over de diensten van de verzorgingsstaat en steun voor regeringspartijen tijdens de verkiezingen. Deze analyse impliceert ook dat er een tussen de verschillende landen een significante variatie is in de orde van grootte van deze relatie. Omdat Europese verzorgingsstaten tevens ingekapseld zitten in de Europese Unie is deze invloed op de relatie ook getest. De verhouding van de lidstaten tot de EU, geconpceptualiseerd in multi-level governance, liet geen significantie invloed zien op de relatie, andere variabelen zoals het opleidingsniveau van de kiezer of het vertrouwen in de nationale parlement spelen wel een significante rol.

Sleutelwoorden

Verzorgingsstaat diensten Tevredenheid verzorgingsstaat, Electorale verantwoordelijkheid, EU15, Representatieve democratie

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1. Introduction

The time period from 1945 till 1975 is often labelled as the "Golden Age of the welfare state" (Ferrera et. al., 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2002) as these years where characterised by nation states, who were "able to control their own economic boundaries and the conditions under which transnational economic transactions would take place" (Scharpf, 2000, p. 191). This included also their "capacity for market-correction action" like "social insurance against the risks of sickness, invalidity, unemployment, and old age" (2000, p. 192). Most certainly it was in this time period and the combination of an activist state and social policies that shaped the attitudes and opinion of today's living people in relation to welfare provisions and social protection. However, with the 1975s changes in the international environment brought the "virtuous dialectic between economic growth and social policy development [...] to an end" (Ferrera et. al, 2001, p. 166). In responses to the earlier "Golden Age" the erosion led to a "Silver Age" (Ferrera et. al, 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2002), which resulted the circumstances favouring the expansion of welfare services to be reversed. Thus, the neo-liberal social movement started to reform EU Member States¹ and its welfare states institutes by reorganising them into global capitalist units. Resulting, the welfare states institutions to be increasingly pressured by internal and external factors. Whereas external challenges are related to globalisation and European integration; the internal problems relate to issues like an ageing populations, waning fertility rates, different employment levels, or even cost containment reforms and policies, rationalisation efforts and sometimes even outright retrenchment (Pierson, 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2002). This led to welfare state institutions to be reorganised, primarily via retrenchment measures, austerity measures, welfare cuts, and withdrawal of social rights and thus, replacing self-responsibilities of the citizens in exchange for welfare services (Taylor-Gooby, 2002; Ossewaarde, 2013). This new created environment is often coined by "permanent austerity" (Pierson, 2001). Most certainly, the since 2008 ongoing EU crises has radicalised and highlighted these neo-liberal pressures and transformations. Yet still, welfare states institutions have proven resilient to change (Kumlin, 2004).

Against this background Pierson (2001, p. 417) hypothesised that these pressures will result that political actors will try "to generate significant cost reductions while moderni[s]ing particular aspects of social provision will generally hold the balance of political power." But is that true? Research has shown that even small and seemingly insignificant changes in policies and institutions can instigate public dissatisfaction (Johansson, Nilsson and Strömberg, 2001, as cited im Kumlin, 2004) and hence, challenge the very core idea of representative democracy. Now, after nearly more than forty years of policy characterised by austerity the question arises whatever the European citizens are actually satisfied with what the welfare state services (still) achieves and if not, are those dissatisfied people holding the responsible political actors in elections account? On this academic research niche builds this bachelor thesis by investigating the relationship between welfare service (dis)satisfaction and electoral accountability. It aims to get new insights in this respective field by posing the main explanatory research question: **To what extent European voters, who are dissatisfied with the welfare state service last national elections accountable?**

¹ Scholars like Scharpf (1999) also argue that the EU has a "neo-liberal bias" in its institutional set-up since its establishment. He notes that the EU has achieved a lot in terms of economic integration and removal of obstacles for free trade (negative integration), but policies related to public spending, taxation and social policy (positive integration) reside more at the national level.

To that end, this thesis tries will also try to detect and understand if there is a pattern in relation to electoral accountability and welfare service satisfaction throughout the EU or not by analysing elections that took place before the year 2008. This bachelor thesis follows the line of reasoning of representative democracy, which is nowadays present in all modern Western-style democracies (Rosema, Denters and Aarts, 2011), which in its very core notion of representative democracy scholars is that type of democracy that is characterised by the struggle for the vote of the electorate. Hence, voters should be given a fair chance of holding responsible political actors to account (Hague and Harrop, 2011; Schedler, 1999; Rosema, Denters and Aarts, 2011). At a minimum, for those scholars, this entails being exposed to a fair and open debate on government performance, as potential voters should be given the possibility to evaluate different arguments concerning policy outcomes. Consequently, electorates need to think about the extent to which various political actors have affected - or in other words, are responsible for - the outcomes.² Thus, people who are dissatisfied should regularly be given a chance to express their dissatisfaction through voting in elections and vice-versa those satisfied should have an opportunity to express their support as in representative democracies. Therefore dissatisfaction with the government performance can express itself in voting for a different other than the governmental party.

This bachelor thesis therefore tries to contribute to the existing scientific knowledge of voting behaviour and welfare satisfaction and develop two testable hypotheses that will be analysed during the process of this thesis. It will aim to show that governmental parties do not need to be afraid of electoral loses when enacting in the voters view - unpopular policy in relation to welfare state service but instead they (maybe) can already calculate with potentially losses. Instead the contestation of voters with government satisfaction would encourage governmental parties to find new, better alternatives to possible problems relating to welfare state services. Making, the anticipation from this even clearer, is by illustrating the issue of (potential) electoral sanctions would force representatives to "act in the interests of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209). Important to note is that this decline of support with the incumbent government, as (it will be) measured through voting in favour of other than the governmental parties, does not imply that citizens do not aim their discontent at the political system as a whole, but instead they narrow down their dissatisfaction at particular actors inside the democratic system. Therefore, political accountability is, for representative democracy scholars, arguably one of the keys to make representative democracy work. This research project therefore does not only have a scientific relevance by trying to contribute and understand of how welfare state service satisfaction can influence the voting behaviour, especially in the time of austerity dissatisfaction but also a social one. Since in representative democracies there is that a possible dissatisfaction can lead to a decline of trust in political parties, the parliament or other political actors; this study is of high relevance as voting and trust are often seen as the fundamental parts of representative democracy (Cunningham, 2002; Held, 2006). In relation to support of governmental parties, active voting citizens are seen in representative democracies are seen as a supporter of the government's policies and thus, legitimating its course of action. Non-supportive voters in contrast are seen as weakening the party actions and declining the legitimacy of party actions. To that end, the thesis will asks how welfare service dissatisfaction affects various confounding variables as well as the dependent variable that is namely, being in support for the incumbent government as expressed

 $^{^{2}}$ Powell (2000) defines elections precisely on this, thus that elections serve as 'instruments of democracy.' They therefore should full fill two key functions; (1) holding past governments accountable and (2) providing future governments with a mandate.

through voting in favour of the current government parties in the last parliamentary elections. In this regard, the preamble of the Treaty of the European Union therefore reads that the EU should aim "to promote economic and social progress for their people" (Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union [2010] OJ C83/13 [hereinafter: TEU post-Lisbon, 2010]). Hence, the EU is not only for its Member States but also, if not more importantly, a Union for its citizens. Especially, since Social Europe was designed as a unique model of the European society that, in the context of global capitalism, strived for increasing social cohesion among Member States as well as promoting fundamental social rights and more equal wealth redistribution within the EU (ETUC, 2014).

Summing up, this chapter was meant to clarify the research project. It was shown that European welfare states have undergone a process of austerity transformation for more than forty years. This time period was mainly characterised by the reorganisation the welfare state institutions (and citizens) into global capitalist units, primarily via the withdrawal of social rights of its citizens and replace them with self-responsibilities for welfare. During the forgone "Golden Age of the welfare state" (Ferrera et. al, 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2002) people in Western Europe became attached to the welfare state, which even went to become an integral part of their national as well as European identity. Thus, austerity mechanisms have become to be seen as not only attack on the national identity of European citizen but instead against the notion of the EU itself. As Social Europe builds on the protective functions of the functioning national state, the welfare state is crucial to Europe's self-image and the process of European integration is regularly presented as a mechanism to strengthen and protect the welfare state against the excesses of the neo-liberal market (Grahl and Teague, 2013). People in Europe call for more solidarity among and inside European States in various fields and in this vein a EU social policy can play in making the Eurozone more stable as Grahl and Teague (2013) stress.

In that regard the question if voters are (still) satisfied what the welfare state institutions achieve and conversely those dissatisfied if the hold the responsible to account is of a high societal and academic relevance and therefore aimed to be answered in this bachelor thesis. In order to answer the research problem, this thesis will builds on five chapters to answer the research question. The upcoming, first, section of this thesis is therefore about the theoretical framework, where the outline of the theoretical expectations with regard to the research problem will be addressed and narrowed down to specific testable hypotheses about the research problem. The main concepts involved in the theory and how they are related to each other will be explained. The second chapter deals with the research methodology of thesis. It will explain how the empirically test for the hypotheses presented in the theoretical chapter will be designed. It will deal with the question of case selection, research approach, and the overall measurement of the variables. The third chapter will be about the analysis. It will take the given data and analyse it under the scrutiny of the hypothesised relationship. Thereby other (possibly intervening) variables will be taken into account. The fourth section will aim put the findings together and attempt to arrive at conclusions in regard to the hypotheses and research question. In this context it will be important not only to present the results themselves but also their interpretation. At the end of this section a statement needs to be made about how the findings corroborate or falsify the hypotheses. In the final chapter, the conclusion, an answer to the research question will be provided. Further the implications deriving from this will be discussed. Important in this respect is also the need to discuss the limits of the study in terms validity and reliability.

2. Austerity dissatisfaction and voting behaviour

The first chapter aimed to introduce the underling notion of this thesis to the reader. In that respect, the second part of the thesis will construct the fundamental theoretical framework for answering the research question. Starting of the first main segment, the idea will follow the notion of the undermined-welfare-state perspective, which builds on the assumption that reduced capacities and increasingly poor policy outcomes will decrease public support for the welfare state. Then, the concept of electoral accountability and two driving theories of voting, economic and prospect theory, will be explained. In the second major segment of the chapter, the gained insights from the relevant literature of part one will be used to develop statistical testable hypotheses in relation to the research question, which in chapter four will allow for statistical hypothesis testing. Finally, a summary will round up the chapter by showing which insight the chapter has given and setting the stage for the research methodology.

2.1 Welfare state reform and the dissatisfied voter

One of the major shortcomings in existing academic literature of welfare state research is that scholars cannot explain when social policy designs follow public preferences and when public opinion follows existing policy designs (and why) (Ravem et. al, 2011). Empirically analysis of both relationships - that is the influence of public opinion on welfare policies, as well as the influences of welfare policies on the public opinion - indict that both sides have empirical evidence to strengthen their respective relationships (Raven et .al., 2011). In that respect it therefore seems important to understand the question of *when* the public tends to decrease its support in relation to the welfare state and its policies?

With the year 2008 the EU has been aggravated to face a crises, which since its 'start' resulted a government debt crisis, a banking crisis and a growth and competitiveness crisis (CIA World Factbook, n.d.). This crises has certainly highlighted the neo-liberal attacks and transformation process on EU welfare states, which have been under the way since the end of the "Golden Age of the welfare state" (Ferrera et. al., 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2002). One of the most prominent features of this crises is that the EU and its Member States have been increasingly more pressured by cost containment reforms and policies, rationalisation efforts and even outright retrenchment. The environment became to labelled as "permanent austerity" (Pierson, 2001), where the circumstances favouring the expansion of welfare in the "Golden Age" were reversed (Taylor-Gooby, 2002) and the pursuit of the welfare goals, made it "increasingly difficult for advanced welfare states to deliver on their core commitments of full employment, social protection, and reduced inequality" (Ferrera et al., 2001, p. 166). As an answer to it people all across Europe started to protest against any welfare and social cuts, as Social Europe was always designed in the context of global capitalism, striving for increasing social cohesion among Member States as well as promoting fundamental social rights, more equal wealth redistribution and respecting the idea of democracy within the European Union (ETUC, 2014). These goals were even codified article three of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU post-Lisbon, 2010). On the peak even the President of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi, declared the European Social Model as dead and stated that in the midst of the extended economic and fiscal crisis also economic imperatives are now playing the first violin (Mabule, 2012).

Yet as social provisions vary across the EU in relation to the welfare state model, Member States were hit unequal by the crises and their necessity to push for cost containment reforms and policies as well as rationalisation efforts. Kumlin (2007) therefore argues that a common postulation developed from these is that

reduced capacities and increasingly poor policy outcomes have lead to a decrease public support for the welfare state. The assumption is that the widespread dissatisfaction may helped to "undermine" welfare states (Kumlin, 2007). He bases his argumentation on the fact that the reduced capacities and increasingly poor policy outcomes will be very likely the reason why people decrease their public support for the welfare state. As citizens discover that social security systems and public services do not deliver what they once did, they gradually abandon the idea of public solutions to social and economic problems, turning instead to for the benefit of the private market, the family or even the civil society (Kumlin, 2007). The pressured welfare states therefore "undermine" themselves in a vicious circle where unsatisfactory performance results reduced support (Kumlin, 2007), which even can result in less public spending but people enforcing more demands for non-public insurances and services; especially the elderly people, who still remise the "Golden Age" from their time when they paid in the welfare state systems (Ferrera et. al, 2001; Taylor-Gooby, 2002). Finally, this situation may constrain further already fiscally pressured public sectors, and in turn produce even more dissatisfaction. Notably, this also implies possible negative effects on support for political actors and political institutions. Voters "punish" parties and politicians for having taken too much public action (Kumlin, 2007), for having let government become too big for its own good. But how can express itself this possible dissatisfaction in a representative democracy, where governments are chosen on the basis of the voted received by electoral community

2.2 The concept of Electoral Accountability

The general idea of democracy and representation is that in democracy, governments are representative because they are elected, hence if elections are freely contested and participation is widespread, then governments will act in the best interest of the people it governs (Powell, 2000; Rosema, Denters and Aarts, 2011).

In this "mandate" view, elections serve to select good policies and/or good politicians. Parties and their candidates 'make' policy during their campaigns and explain how these policies would possibly affect citizens' welfare. Then citizens decide which of these proposals they want to be implemented and which politicians to charge with the implementation. When in office, the politicians do implement these policies. Thus, elections aim to follow a direct assembly and the winning platform becomes the "mandate" that the government pursues (Rosema, Denters and Aarts, 2011). However, in a second, "accountable" view, elections serve the purpose of holding governments responsible for their actions in the past (Powell, 2000). Because they anticipate the judgment of voters, governments are usually aimed to choose policies that - in their respective judgment - will be positively evaluated by citizens at the time of the next election (Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes, 1999), thus be rewarded and to be re-elected. Thus accountably can be seen as a synonym for responsibility (Schedler, 1999; Persson, Roland, and Tabellini, 1997). So, governmental parties that enter a vicious circle like the underminedwelfare-state perspective, voter could start, in representative democracies, to face a decline of electoral support for their actions in political office, as they are the actors current in charge with policy and government. This idea is seen as central in representative democracy theory and has nothing do with the classical idea of democracy as developed in Ancient Greece (Rosema, Denters and Aarts, 2011) as the concept of democracy has undergone tremendous changes since then, which usually went hand in hand with the changes in society (Rosema, Denters and Aarts, 2011). Thus, electoral accountability refers to the idea that in representative democracy dissatisfied citizens should be given a fair chance of holding responsible political actors to account - that is responsible - for their political actions. To be held responsible for one's actions, is often associated to be before another (political)

body, which can express judgments about, and may be able to impose sanctions on, the responsible actor (Hague and Harrop, 2011; Schedler, 1999), which in representative democracy is seen as the sum of voting citizens (Rosema, Denters and Aarts, 2011; Kumlin, 2004).³ It is important to not here that elections, which are often linked to political parties, are even seen by some scholars as an undemocratic element and criticises democracy. Robert Michels (1962) for example observed that all organisations, even those in theory most egalitarian and most committed to democracy - like political parties - are in fact oligarchical, and dominated by a small group of leadership. This bachelor thesis therefore takes the limited view by illustrating the research problem from a epresentative democracy perspective. Where where it is desirably that the citizen can hold representatives account via voting in elections (Cunningham, 2002; Held, 2006).

2.3 Austerity influences on the voter's choice

Changes in the welfare system affect voting behaviour of voter in a country. Change is associated with satisfaction, thus negative changes in the welfare system create a dissatisfied voter. This dissatisfied voter is angry with the reformer, who enforced the change. Therefore, at the next opportunity, the voter holds the reformer accountable. In electoral democracy this next opportunity and moment when he holds accountable is seen as the moment of elections. The simple causal model is the guiding idea of this chapter and precepts the main pattern that this thesis aims to investigate.

The act of voting, however, which can be best described as act of political behaviour, is in practise not that simple to capture but instead a highly complex issue (Evans, 2003; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009). The question on how and why people vote as they vote has puzzled certain political scientists for a long time. As reasons and motivations of people voting are specific and pluralistic, also the theory of voting in explanations itself is pluralistic. The two theories suggest and argued for in this bachelor thesis are not meant be the solely possible theoretical paradigms for the problem at hand but instead they can be rather seen as the two most distinct theories, when it comes to individuals and voting in relation to the topics sounding this, thus individuals, possible (dis)satisfaction, accountability, voting behaviour and economic influences.⁴ The theory of voting is divided into three main theoretical paradigms (Harrop and Miller, 1987). First, there is the "sociological" tradition represented by the Columbia school, which is focusing in its work on group socialisation and communication. Second, there is the Michigan school and its "psychological" tradition, which is looking more to the individual values and identifications of the voters. Third and lastly there is the Downsian school and its "economic" tradition, which is concentrating itself on self-interest, striving for utility and rationality of the voter.

2.3.1 Economic voting theory

The first notion on economic influences on people choices and decisions was elaborated Anthony Downs (1957), who discussed the idea of how voters would behave if one would apply the principles of rationality and utility, which he derived from the traditional used economic theory, to voting. This brainchild of Downs was

³ However, free and fair elections are not the only thing that matter for a representative democracy. Universal suffrage, the right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information and associational autonomy etc. are also important aspects that need to kept in mind (Dahl, 1989).

⁴ Although welfare services are *per se* not economic activities, they are seen in scope of the thesis as such. The reason for this is attribute to the fact that welfare services are usually empowered through a transfer of (usually economic) funds from the state, to the services provided (i.e. healthcare, education) or directly to the individual (i.e. as benefits).

later labelled as economic voting theory from which nearly everything comes that is related in its results on the relation between citizens and accountability (Lewis-Beck 1988; Norpoth 1996). Economic voting theory, in its most basic findings, states that voters in Western democracies tend to 'punish' their governments in times of unemployment, inflation or low GDP growth - so economic downturn, only to reward them when things get better and improve (Lewis-Beck, 1988; Norpoth, 1996). The theory argues that the "homo economicus" reaches his utility decision on the basis of information, while keeping the costs for actions minimised and their benefits maximised (Vis, 2010; Mankiw and Taylor, 2006). This means that rational voters' utility is averaged over all possible outcomes of a decision. This is an important aspect in the so-called decision theory (Lewis-Beck and Paldam, 2000) to which economic voting theory belongs. In order to compare the different decision outcomes, the voter acting rational would commonly assigns a relative utility to each of them. If there is uncertainty in what the outcome will be, the optimal decision maximises the expected optimal decision (utility). As welfare services are seen in the scope of this thesis as economic activities, this would mean that voters are acting rational and only blaming governments on the basis of their satisfaction with the welfare states services. Hence, potential voters - as rational actors - are inclined to withdraw their support with the incumbent government solely on the basis if their dissatisfied with the state of the welfare state services and vice-versa.

2.3.2 Prospect theory

But are voters are always acting rational and striving for utility in their decisions? Do they really vote solely on the basis of their welfare service satisfaction? Unlike economic voting theory, prospect theory argues that people tend make decision by choosing between probabilistic alternatives that involve risk and where the probabilities of outcomes are known (Vis, 2010). With other words, individuals - in this research voters - are "cautious in their decision-making (risk averse) when facing favourable prospects (gains), but tend towards bold decision-making (risk acceptance) when confronting threats to their well-being (losses)" (Vis, 2010, p. 109).

Kahneman and Tversky (1979, as cited in Vis, 2010) developed this psychological theory of choice under risk as a behavioural alternative to the expected utility theory as represented by the economic voting theory. Today it is seen as "the most influential behavioural theory of choice in the social sciences" (Mercer 2005a as cited Vis, 2010, p. 109), yet despite the fact that prospect theory had hardly any influence in political science (Levy, 2003).





It is still a better choice then economic voting theory as it implies that people make decisions based on the potential value of losses and gains rather than the final outcome and therefore comes the closest to reality (Levy, 2003). Voters evaluate their losses and gains using certain heuristics, which are simply seen as efficient rules, which they often use to form judgments and make decisions (Vis, 2010). The theory main features are perhaps best illustrated by a (hypothetical) value function (see Figure 1: A possible value function of prospect theory), which illustrates the decision processes of people in two stages; namely editing (curve "A" in Figure 1) and evaluation (curve "B" in Figure 1). The major obstacle with theory, however, lies within its units of analysis and observation - individuals. Since "individuals have a strong tendency to remain at the status quo, because the disadvantages of leaving it loom larger than advantages" (Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler, 2000 as cited in Vis, 2010, p. 114). This results the "status quo bias" to become a "reference point bias." As people are often unaware of the status quo/"reference point bias", this point is often linked with a certain legitimacy Vis (2010) and Levy (2003) argue.⁵ This is causing even more problems as people start to defend it against severe threats of losses than they seek for improvements. The premises that derive from this for the research is that voters "are more sensitive to what has been done *to* them than what has been done *for* them" (Weaver, 1988 as cited Vis, 2010, p. 114). Hence at the end, voters' support for governmental parties declines in times of downturn, only to rise them when things get better and improve (as in economic voting theory). They do so, however, now being aware of the supposed ideas and actions by the governmental actors and keep other potential factors into account and thus, giving a more accurate picture of the reality.

Recapitulating and accepting the fact that both theories are fundamentally different in their perception of how people derive at their voting decisions, notwithstanding they also share a number of commonalities. Most strikingly, both theories postulate the idea that in democracies voters tend to 'punish' governments in times of precept weak economic performance, while versa they 'reward' them when the situation gets better. In addition to that both theories share the idea "that individuals are independent agents making deliberate choices that will lead to a desired outcome" (Masters, 2004 as cited in Vis, 2010, p. 116). Therefore, when the two voting theories are so similar on certain points, why then use prospect theory and not economic voting theory in as an explanation in this research project? The notion of prospect theory is that what economic voting theory fails in its descriptive accuracy, prospect theory can be descriptively correct and holds explanatory force too (Vis, 2010, Levy, 2003). That is to say that prospect theory can "explain anomalies [like the status quo bias] and can *also* explain the most basic phenomena expected utility is used to explain" (Cameron, 2000 as cited in Vis, 2010, p. 117) why people as they vote, using the economic school of thought. Thus, prospect theory comes closer to the real-life picture till the voters makes their cross in the polling booth.

2.4 Developing hypotheses in terms of austerity, dissatisfied voters and voting theory

The underling premise of the first segment of this section was to give the necessary theoretical insights that are needed in relation to derive and develop statistical testable hypotheses for the research question.

On the basis of the concepts of electoral accountability as well as austerity measures, voting theory and dissatisfied voters that have been presented in first big part of this chapter, there are two different hypothesises respectively, which explain the relationship between the variables. Whereas in H₀ it is suspected that there is no relationship between the independent variable (X), which in this bachelor thesis is welfare state service satisfaction and its dichotomous values satisfied and dissatisfied and the dependent variables (Y), which is namely, being in support for the incumbent government as expressed through voting in favour of the current government parties in the last parliamentary elections. Differently, H_A suspects that possible dissatisfaction among citizens may help to "undermine" welfare states, hence that is that people are assumed to weigh the

⁵ It "subsumes the status quo bias whenever the reference point is defined as the status quo, and under those conditions it will be stabilising and reinforce the status quo. If the reference point is preferred to the status quo, however, the reference point bias is destabilising because it induces risky behaviour to avoid the losses inherent in the status quo." (Levy, 2003, p. 223).

benefits and costs related to welfare states services, and support becomes more likely the more positive net benefits are perceived. This means that at a high level of costs i.e. in terms of tax payments and other personal contributions, the dissatisfaction with benefit levels and public service quality produces less support for the idea of the welfare state. As in that respect political actors are seen as responsible for the welfare service satisfaction of their potential voters. Jørgen Goul Andersen (2001, as cited in Kumlin, 2007) therefore already argued that "the immediate reaction to such problems may be willingness to spend more but in the long run it may result in a decline of confidence and perhaps in a search for private alternatives. Even the most solidaristic person cannot in the long run be assumed to be willing to contribute to a system that is considered inefficient."

This bachelor thesis will therefore in its analysis section therefore investigate if there is a positive linear relationship between welfare service satisfaction and support for the government. To that end, the thesis therefore aims to investigate if there is an observable pattern that strengthens the relationship welfare service satisfaction and its support for the incumbent government throughout the EU Member States, which are the subject of the analysis. Similar H_A will test also the relationship but under the scrutiny on the basis of potentially influential third variables as the bivariate relationship maybe otherwise spurious (Babbie, 2009). Theoretically, one would suspect that the relationship is influenced on two different layers with potential confounders. The first level would be the micro level that is variables that influence the voter on his personal level. Contrasting to this, macro-variables are suspected to influences the big picture, thus the overall relationship between the variables. Figure 2 graphically illustrates these possible extraneous micro and macro confounders and how they might influence the relationship between independent variable of welfare state service satisfaction and the dependent variable, measuring the support for the incumbent government. The measures are included in the European Social Survey (ESS) data file as questions measured on a scale and some will be needed to recoded accordingly in order to be tested for the analysis section of this bachelor thesis. What the question entails and what will be measured through it will be elaborated at a latter stage of this bachelor thesis.

Recapitulating, the previous chapter introduced the main concepts of this research project and developed on the basis of these two testable hypotheses in relation to the research questions that can be controlled for in the upcoming analysis section.

Taken the underling notions from the "undermined-welfare-state perspective" and prospect theory this thesis is suspecting that changes in the welfare system ultimately affect the voting behaviour of the potential voters. Thus, negative changes in the welfare system are seen to be associated with dissatisfaction and accordingly, create a dissatisfied voter. This voter, being aware of the reformers actions, holds the reformer for the outcome accountable. Being unsatisfied with the reform, the voter holds accountable by declining his support for the incumbent (governmental) reformer.

So how does one can test empirically for these theoretical expectations? The upcoming of this thesis is precisely aiming at the answer to this question. Ergo, the third chapter will clarify the research methodology and objectives will be addressed. It will therefore centre on the question of case selection, the general research approach by describing how the empirically test for the theoretical expectations will be designed. Finally, the operationalisation of the most prominent concepts, units as well as variables (independent, dependent and cofounders) and their measurement for the (later conducted) statistical analysis will be elaborated pun. In this vein, this section will also explain how the chosen research strategy of this project will result in valid and reliable results.



Figure 2: The expected relationship between the variables Source: Self-created by the author

3. <u>Research Methodology</u>

The upcoming third chapter of this thesis will focus on the research methodology of the research project. As such it aims to present the empirical test that will be needed to investigate the rightness of the two, in the last chapter constructed, hypotheses (H_0 and H_A) will be explained. This involves the question of case selection, the general research approach that is the way of analysing the data as well as finally, the actual measurement and operatilaisation of the variables. For this, at first the underling research design for analysis will be explained. Here, also the European Social Survey as the chosen dataset of analysis will be introduced. Following, the second segment of this chapter justifies the case selection and sampling procedure that has been taken. In the third part, contrary, the earlier theorised variables will be elaborated upon in respect to their measuring. Finally, the fourth part will explain those variables, as empirical indicators, as well as why a statistical correlation analysis, specifically regression analysis, will be conducted (Pollack, 2009; De Vaux, Velleman, and Bock, 2012) to provide valid and reliable results in the research project of this bachelor thesis.

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

Aiming to understand patterns that derive in the whole European Union, this research project will conduct a quantitative analysis to investigate the research problem. Being interest in the opinions, perceptions and attitudes of the voters in all of the 28 Member States, the units of analysis in this research project are EU citizens, with the units of observation being individuals. Thus, working with a big sample size, where there is no randomised assignment and the data is coming from one specific time point (2008), the analysis will make use of a crosssectional design (Gering, 2012; Babbie, 2009). The use of this research design offers, in line with this research project, the opportunity to provide a snapshot of the outcome and the characteristics associated with one specific time point (Gering, 2012), which in this study is the year 2008. Further, this thesis aims to understand a (possible) correlation between Europe's Members State's institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of the population, which in this bachelor thesis is based on the relation between welfare state service satisfaction and support for the incumbent voting. Since Kumlin (2007) already pointed out there are almost no previous comparative studies of the effects of dissatisfaction with welfare state-related policy outputs, there is actually little knowledge about how welfare state dissatisfaction should be measured in a cross-country setting, how multi-dimensional it is or even how it affects, and is affected by, political orientations. Therefore the data of analysis should contain simultaneous measures of all the dependent attitude variables and evaluations of welfare state-related outcomes (Kumlin, 2009), including the confounders.

The dataset fulfilling helping to check for these requirements and that helps to determine if there is indeed a link between welfare state service satisfaction and electoral accountably in the EU Member States, is the European Social Survey (ESS). This bachelor thesis makes use of the ESS since it is a survey of social attitudes and behaviour, which has been carried out in up to 34 European countries since 2002 (About ESS, n.d.). The dataset provides information on the attitudes and beliefs of the citizens of the EU Member States (About ESS, n.d.) but the upcoming analysis in this thesis comes from the fourth round (2008), which focused in its this round specifically on welfare attitudes in European States. As the ESS describes the EU population within a single time frame by means of a cross-sectional survey (About ESS, n.d). The population under study for each country consists of persons that are 15 years and older and that are resident within private households. They are selected by means of stratified probability sampling. This dataset fits the purposes better than other comparative

surveys, especially due to the fact that it enables the research to test propositions in comparative analyses that combine micro-level survey data with macro-level data on institutional and political contexts. Especially the factor that it simultaneously contains all measures of the dependent attitude variables and evaluations of welfare state-related outcomes (Kumlin, 2009), including the confounder variables is on of the key arguments for choosing the ESS for the analysis in this thesis.

3.2 Case Selection and Sampling

The overall aim of this thesis is to gain new insights that apply to the overall EU and its Member States, an obvious choice for case selection would a sample size that consist of all the 28 Member States of which the EU consists at the moment of writing of this thesis. As the ESS describes the EU population within a single time frame by means of a cross-sectional survey (About ESS, n.d) it is possible to get a snapshot of reality with the help of the dataset. By the means of stratified probability sampling (About ESS, n.d), the survey collects its data from the population under study for each European country and consists of persons that are 15 years and older and that are resident within private households. Beyond this, however, case selection is not so much a matter of selection as it is of data availability. Since the dataset for analysis is from the year 2008, not all (currently present) 28 Member States are included in the dataset, which results our units of analysis to be diminished to the EU15 countries. Further, from those EU15 countries, Luxembourg and Italy were excluded from ESS Round 4, which means that the remaining EU15 countries are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (divided in West and East in ESS), Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Hence, the cross-sectional analysis in this study gives only a cross section through the Western European welfare regimes but no Eastern European ones and is therefore already limited in its own right. To that end, the research problem will be consisting only of an analysis of national voters satisfaction with their national welfare state services by their voting behaviour in favour off or against the governmental parties in their respective EU Member State. Therefore, the analysis will be not limited to the different welfare regime types classification made by the sociologist Esping-Andersen (1990), which was shortly elucidated in the theoretical framework. He introduced the idea that welfare states can be dividend into different types, dependent on the relation between the market and the state in terms of the provision of social benefits.

3.3 Operationalisation and measurement of the variables

A crucial aspect of this bachelor thesis is the analysis of the relationship between the independent (X) and dependent variable (Y) in respect to the proposed hypotheses. In that respect the key variables of relevance in this research project need to be operationalised and their measurement explained. This short section is therefore meant to elaborate how the dependent, independent and cofounders variables are obtained by means of (re)coding and/or directly from the ESS dataset used in this analysis.

3.3.1 The independent variable (X): Welfare state service satisfaction

Welfare state support has two core dimensions: attitudes one about what the welfare state should do and the other one about beliefs about its actual performance (Roosma, van Oorschot, Gelissen, 2014). Building on this school of thought of performance, Lodge and Stroh (1993, as cited in Kumlin, 2009) have observed that in general people tend to evaluate the public sector and the welfare state service performance as an overarching

phenomenon and therefore resulting that people do not generally keep meticulous track of specific areas of the state. This results that the different information about the public sector tend to be incorporated into an overall 'running tally' (Lodge and Stroh, 1993 as cited in Kumlin, 2009) of how these public schemes and programmes generally tend to work and perform. An empirical implication from this is that output evaluations of different policies tend to correlate. Consequently on this, the research conducted by Kumlin (2007; 2009) will created an index that captured voters dissatisfaction with welfare state services. It was made up from a combination of the two questions in the ESS survey, which asked how the respondent evaluated "the state of health services in [COUNTRY]" and the "state of education in [COUNTRY]" respectively, along scales ranging from an 11-point Likert-scale with values ranging from 0 (extremely bad) to 10 (extremely good). These two variables are significantly correlated (Pearson's r = 0.533) and will be in this analysis recoded into a dichotomous welfare state service satisfaction variable. This new variable will use binary logistic regression, meaning the variable will take the value of 0 indicating dissatisfaction and 1 showing satisfaction with the welfare state services. Methodological, the collapse of these two Likert scales and recoding them into a dichotomous one is feasible. Since the reduction of values in a Likert scale does not influence the variable as such. Likert-type scales traditionally measure primarily direction and only marginally intensity. Thus, there one is no 'losing in information', when creating a dichotomous scaling (Matell and Jacoby, 1971). Also the earlier use of this (dis)satisfaction indicator by Kumlin (2007; 2009) results some criterion validity for the indicator in the cross-European analysis of this research project of the bachelor thesis.

3.3.2 The dependent variable (Y): Support for the incumbent government

As the thesis aims to investigate the (hypothesised) relationship between welfare state service satisfaction and its effect on the support for the incumbent government, this bachelor thesis is analysing the research problem from the perspective of a representative democracy scholar. That is to say, a perspective where it is desirable that voters are present to exercise their opinion on governments via voting. The dependent variable, support for the incumbent government, will be precisely measured in this line of reasoning. More specifically, the dependent variable, which is support for the incumbent government will be measured through voters actions having voted for a governmental party in the last national elections. Therefore the analysis is only conducted among respondents, who have stated that they voted for a specific party in the last national election that took place before the year 2008. The statistical method used to measure the variable is also the binary logistic regression; with the dependent variable coded 1 if the respondent voted for a government party/parties, and 0 if another then the governmental party/parties was chosen. This has to be done for each EU15 Member State separately investigates and aims to conduct a crosscutting analysis across the European Union. Refusals, no answer or no applicable answer to the questions will not be (statically) dealt with and instead treated as missing values since they do not contain relevant information in the scope of this research project.

3.3.3 The confounder variables (T): Micro and macro-level of explanations

As outlined earlier, one can be never certain of counterfactual variables and therefore in this thesis will also control statistically for some potential confounders. The indicators are all measured through question included in the ESS dataset, which is used for the analysis in this paper. It is thereby hypothesised that that there are two levels of possible influence - the micro-level, which influences the potential voter on his/her personal level and

the macro-level, which influences voters decision on the broader scale. As possible omitted variables problem can never be fully kept in check, this section only aimed to inform about the most crucial variables influencing the relationship and how their measurement is conducted. Also, if needed, a short explanation on what the measurement of the variable entails will be given.

Micro-confounder variables

The first variable on this level is the educational background of the voter (Evans, 2003), which be measured via a recoded variable that will take the value of 0 if the voter has completed the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 1-3 that is to say till "upper secondary education (ISCED 3)" and 1 if the respondent has "finished post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) [and/or] completed tertiary education (ISCED 5-6)." The reasoning for this is that in general, people who are satisfied with the present-state of the welfare state services are (usually) inclined to not to change the system. Conversely, those that are dissatisfied are with it would aim to change it by voting for a different then current incumbent government party/parties. As in Western European democracies, parties endorsing New Left policies, which are usually (also) related to the promoting welfare services draw disproportionate high support from highly-educated voters as earlier research has shown (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009; Evans, 2003).⁶ Since the analysis that will be conducted in this bachelor thesis focuses mainly on western Member States of the EU, it is hypothesised that people with a higher educated background (ISCED 4-6) are able to detect and understand more about the (complex) interplay between welfare state services, support for the government and other influential factors. Thus, that welfare state services are not the only thing that matters in this relation. The coefficient is therefore hypothesised to be a negative value, whereas when the education level would not matter it would take a positive value.

The second, possible intervening variable is the respondents general interest in politics. Measured by a Likertscale this variable will be first recoded, with higher values, denoting higher interest in politics and then using it for multiple regression analysis. It thereby assumed that people that have in general more interest in politics, are also willing to support the government besides all the facts.

The third micro-level confounder related to the voters placement on the ideological (political) left-right scale, which will measured through the question if the respondent (voter's) willingness to allow the government to increase taxes to promote social spending (value 10) or not (value 0). In this thesis this indicator provides a more accurate proxy instead of the usual voters' self-placement on a scale between 0 (far to the left) and 10 (far to the right) because the respondents tend to use the left–right self-placement⁷ as a illustration of their party preferences. This effect is typically referred to as the "partisan component" (see Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976 as cited in Kumlin, 2007), resulting people that that support a leftist party also to place themselves left. However, this does not necessarily reveal all that much about state-intervention related attitudes (as done by welfare state services for instance). Instead it could result that dissatisfied voters are punishing an incumbent right-leaning

⁶ As across advanced industrial democracies, the left is more liberal: on the right in both economic and social issues. This is in contrast to the situation often found in post-communist countries where moderate right-wing parties tend to be more liberal on social issue than left-wing parties. Consequently, the moderate right receives a much higher level of support form educated voters compared with the left.

⁷ This is a widely used measure of ideological positions and has been, however, proven valid and useful for analysing political behaviour in Western Europe (Kumlin, 2007). But also in relation to the question whether the respondent can be located in the same political camp as the governing parties since belonging to a similar political camp as governing parties most crucially can influence individuals voting choices (Rosema, Denters and Aarts, 2011).

government (or vice versa) without changing their ideological orientations (Kumlin, 2007). So this question is highly relevant for the purposes of the analysis conducted in this thesis, and thus the question being the best proxy for it.

The fourth measure relates to the voters satisfaction with present performance of the national government. Measured like the second confounder, with an index ranging from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied), it is imaged to have a positive impact on the relationship. In ESS a question was asked in this regard with with higher values denoting higher satisfaction.

The fifth and last micro-variable relates to the statement whether social benefits lead to a more equal society or not. As very modern-day nation-state conducts nowadays social policy, it is on the basis of the "principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth, and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life" (Britannica Online Encyclopaedia, 2014) that make him a welfare state. Thus, it hypothesised that as more as people agree, it also will have a more positive impact on relationship. Similar to the second cofounder (general interest in politics) this question is measured by a six-point Likert-scale taking ranging forms of "Agree strongly, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree" Thus, before using the variable for the further analysis, however, it needs to be recorded in the opposite direction with higher values denoting more agreement.

Macro-confounder variables

European welfare states are increasingly embedded in the multi-level governance system of the European Union, resulting the common market and the stability and growth pact to influence welfare states (Scharpf, 1999). This resulted various levels of policymaking to influence the welfare sate and its services. In that respect Kumlin (2009, p. 408f.) examined already the extent to which "actual dissatisfaction with the present performance of national public services and welfare state arrangements hampers not only national allegiances but also trust in EU institutions." Building on this, the European integration is hypothesised to have a negative impact on the relationship of the variables since further integration is associated to hamper national welfare state provisions (Kumlin, 2009). It will be asset by the ESS question if "European unification go further or [has] gone too far" with higher values suggesting that the EU integration process should go further.

The second potential, influencing macro-cofounder is the issue of safety. Research has shown those people that experienced, or afraid to experience a safety threat, such as an terrorist attack, are more likely to vote in favour of the incumbent government as they expect it to response to those (possible) threats (Montalvo, 2011) better then a possible new government. In this regard ESS asked about voters perception of "a terrorist attack would occur during next twelve months" in Europe or in their Member State respectively with higher values denoting on a Likert-scale that the respondent thinks that there is no likelihood to occur. As the support for the government is measured through a retrospective action (voting in favour of the governmental party/parties in the last election) and the perception is about a possible future action (terrorist attack) it is assumed that the confounder coefficient is to have negative influence on the relationship. However, to use the responses they first have to be recoded in the opposite direction.

Finally, this thesis aims to understand not only if welfare service satisfaction cannot only result in a support dimension of the incumbent government but also if it relates to the voters perception of trust, especially towards the political parties as well the trust in the countries parliament. The third and fourth confounders are two trust items were measured via Liker-scales with higher values denoting more trust. It thereby hypothesised that a positive attitude towards the government will also lead to a higher trust towards parties and the countries parliament.

3.4 Data Analysis

The second chapter of this bachelor thesis ended with development of two distinct hypotheses (H_0 and H_A) in relation to the posed research question and overall research problem. As such, the fourth chapter of this thesis, Data and Analysis, will aim to test those hypotheses in order to provide a valid and reliable answer to the research question. For all three type of variables, there will be the usage of secondary quantitative data for analysis. The data collected from the ESS will be reanalysed for the purpose of this study. The computer program IBM SPSS Statistics is used to actual analyse the data. This programme allows the to make directed use of fourth round of the ESS dataset, which contains all measurement of the chosen indicators and their variables for the further analysis of this research project. To that end, the overall aim of the thesis is to investigate relationship between dependent and independent variables, so a bivariate relationship. Therefore a statistical correlation analysis, (Pollack, 2009; De Vaux, Velleman, and Bock, 2012) specifically multiple regression analysis, will be conducted as "[r]egression is the commonplace of statistical analysis in the social sciences" (Stolzenberg, 2004, p. 165). Multiple regression analysis is thereby a special form of statistical analysis as this technique is used, when one is focusing in ones analysis in a relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables (De Vaux, Velleman, and Bock, 2012). The analysis will test therefore if the newly collapsed dichotomous variable that will measure welfare state service satisfaction as the independent variable is correlated to the earlier defined indicator for the measurement of the support for the incumbent government (which is voting in favour of the governmental party/parties) as the dependent variable (Model 1 of the analysis). Hereby, also other potential explantations that could influence the relationship, so possible cofounders, will included in a second run (Model 2) of the analysis presented.

Kumlin (2007; 2009) implies in his research that a multi-level analysis technique would be better suited than the (multiple) traditional regression model as conducted in this paper for the type of problems at hand but also bears a higher risk that it inquires in the relationships between the set of variables a sort of number of different levels, which can lead to a hierarchy between the variables (De Vaux, Velleman, and Bock, 2012). Instead, the (multiple) regression model would allow the analysis to be conducted among all variables and to be treated to be equal important since no evidence in the academic literature suggest that some variables would be more important then others. Further, De Vaux, Velleman, and Bock (2012) mention that regression analysis offer a good basis if - as it is the case in the upcoming analysis - the sample is representative for the population of the inferred prediction. Yet, still the main problem with regression models lies in causation; most importantly, regression does not prove causation, nor is the theory clear on the direction of causation

Consequently, there will be the search for a potential association between the various explanatory variables and the response variable. A (perfect) positive association between the dependent variable and the independent variables would be indicated by value that takes the number of +1. If there would a negative association between the variables it would take number of -1. Whereas a value of zero indicates that there is no tendency for either direction and thus, there is a weak linear association (De Vaux, Velleman, and Bock, 2012). Hereby always the level of significance and its interpretation is of vital importance. It shows the extent to which the result deviates

from that expected to arise simply from random variation or errors in sampling. At the end, the results will (hopefully) allow to make a clear statement about the hypothesised relationships of the variables in a cross-European (EU15) setting.

3.5 Concluding remarks

To sum up, this chapter gave insights on the set up of research methodology and thereby has delivered of how the empirical test for the earlier outlined theoretical expectations - that is to say the hypotheses - will be conducted. In order to test these, the key influential variables (dependent, independent, and confounders) have been identified and operationalised in respect to the research project. With the help of the ESS dataset, which contains several key indicators of the variables, the most crucial ones have been selected and their use and measurement in this thesis explained. Conducting a cross-sectional design with multiple regression analysis this thesis will aim to gain more insights about the expected relationship between welfare state service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government.

However, before actually doing so two main steps must be taken care of before the actual analysis of the data can been conducted. At first, the data for analysis needs to be prepared. That is to say the (re)coding of the variables has to be exercised. Most prominently, the dependent variable that is support of the incumbent government, which is measured through the voting in favour of the government parties in the last parliamentary election. But also other (confounding) variables have to be coded. During this coding process, missing values will have to be omitted, as they do not provide any relevant data information in the line of this research project. After this has been done, in a second step then the actual multiple regression analysis needs be conducted. The first Model of analysis will thereby investigate the general relationship between the independent and dependent variable. Then, in a second round (the second Model), will test the relationship again but this time taking the hypothesised micro and macro-confounder variables into consideration. At the end, it will be (hopefully) possible to get a more clear and precise picture of the overall relationship between the different types of data.

4. Data and Analysis

After having prepared the ESS dataset for analysis, the fourth chapter will proceed with the actual analysis of relationship between the variables using the multiple regression analysis. Thereby in a first Model, the general relationship between welfare service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government will be analysed. Then, in a second round of analysis the relationship will be analysed in relation to the earlier hypothesised cofounders. In scope of this thesis there are two hypotheses that will be controlled for during the analysis.

Whereas H_0 follows the general default position - that is also to say that there is no relationship between two measured phenomena, H_A suspects a positive relationship between the two variables. In that respect, H_0 will be generally assumed true in this research project until evidence indicates otherwise (De Vaux, Velleman, and Bock, 2012). The cofounders are thereby supposed to strengthen or weaken the relationship, based on earlier hypothesised influence underlined in the earlier chapter. To that end not only will the results themselves will be presented but also the interpretation of them. At the end of the chapter, there will be a discussion of how the findings corroborate or falsify the hypotheses.

4.1 Model 1 - Investigating the null hypothesis (H₀)

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to understand whatever after nearly more than forty years of policy characterised by austerity, European citizens are actually (still) satisfied with what welfare state services achieves. And if not, are those dissatisfied people holding the responsible political actors in elections account? To answer this question, the first step included the construction of two hypotheses (H_0 and H_A), which then has been controlled for via multiple regression analysis across EU15 Member States. has been run via SPSS. In this regard, the upcoming section aims to answer the question if there is a relationship between variables welfare service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government and if so, if there is a variation across the EU15 countries or if there is pattern that can be deducted across the whole (Western) European Union. The results of the first round of multiple regression analysis are presented for each of the EU15 country alone and can be found as Model 1 in the tables **1** through **13**⁸ in the Annex.

During the analysis of the relationship, it became evident that people, who are dissatisfied with welfare state services, were also inclined to hold those responsible political actors account in national elections. Most prominently there was positive (as underlined in the H_A) and high statistical significance (p < 0.01 and 0.01 < p < 0.05) on the relationship between the variables. To name the EU15 countries by name, these were Denmark (0.140), Finland (0.137), France (0.110) Germany, West (0.098), Germany, East (0.074), Greece (0.146), Ireland (0.156), Netherlands (0.124), Portugal (0.118), Spain (0.130) and the United Kingdom (0.113). These findings are supported by the findings of Kumlin (2007), who besides using in his analysis data from 2002 wave of ESS⁹, found similar strong evidence for the relationship. This relationship, however, is only strengthened by the following three countries featured in both analysis; Ireland, Greece and United Kingdom. United Kingdom was hover not significant in this round of analysis as is Austria, which besides its result of a positive relationship

⁸ The interpretation of the significance was at a p < 0.01 (very strong presumption against null hypothesis); 0.01 (strong presumption against null hypothesis); <math>0.05 (low presumption against null hypothesis) and <math>p > 0.01 (no presumption against the null hypothesis)

⁹ With the year 2002 the ESS was launched. Unlike the 2008 round, which asked specifically questions in relation to welfare attitudes and opinions, this round focussed on the issue of citizenship, involvement and democracy as well as immigration.

between variables has not resulted no significant result. It seems that - at least for the analysis of Ireland and Greece - there seems to be strong evidence over a time span of 2002 to 2008. This could mean that that in those countries the voters are more inclined to support the government during elections, when they are also satisfied with the welfare state services. However, to truly confirm these findings further and extended research has to be conducted to investigate this assumption further. In that respect, it should noted that the coefficient level during the entire analysis of level 1 is rather lower and varies throughout all the EU15 countries. Still, there still is a (very) strong presumption against H_0 during the analysis. Next to this, however, the results of the regression analysis of welfare service satisfaction on support for the incumbent government (Model 1) only accounts for a total model fit - at a highest point in Ireland - for 2.5% of the cases. The model fit of the other EU15 countries revolves about 1%(!) and in the case of Sweden even just 0.01%(!), hence the large majority of variation in the data can thus not be attributed solely to the independent variable of welfare service satisfaction but instead to possible other confounders of the relationship. For the conducted research project this means that there is not enough evidence to suppose that the found relation between welfare service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government is not due to mere chance. Unlike previous research of Kumlin (2007; 2009), who did no investigated the exclusive relationship but directly the influence of the cofounders this means that the further the second regression analysis that has been run to determine the influential factors (Model 2) is more likely to give an overall and accurate picture of the relationship of the variables.

Yet, the results of Model 1 seem have to prove exactly the relationship as hypothesised far the vast majority of case. It seems like even the direction of the expected relationship, as suggested in the theoretical framework of this bachelor proposal, is true. There seems to be somewhat a relationship between welfare state service satisfaction and electoral accountability, yet the majority of explanations can be attributed to other factors. In relation to voting theory this supports the statements made in relation to prospect theory, which argued that voters tend make decisions on based of "what has been done *to* them than what has been done *for* them" (Weaver, 1988 as cited Vis, 2010, p. 114). This is, however, besides the fact the voters are - as also hypothesised by prospect theory - in support for governmental parties not solely on the basis of their welfare service satisfaction as they are aware of the supposed ideas and actions by the governmental actors behind it and with it other possible confounding factors of the relationship. For the further analysis that will be conducted in this bachelor thesis this means that if there is weak positive relationship between the variables and welfare service satisfaction and it can be only explain partially the vast majority of differences in support for the incumbent government?

4.2 Model 2 - Investigating the alternative hypothesis (H_A)

The second Model of this analysis aimed to investigate the relationship between welfare service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government under the scrutiny of earlier hypothesised confounder variables in this thesis throughout the EU15 countries. Including, the earlier hypothesised potential confounders produced nearly the same results (see Model 2 in the tables **1** through **13**); as the coefficient for welfare service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government drastically decreases, becoming even in some cases even negative, and nearly always losing its high significance level in comparison to the earlier found value of Model 1.

Instead it becomes during the expanded analysis evident that other cases of valuable issues play a more crucial role in relation to support for the incumbent government and which influence the voter in his/her

decision in the polling both. The addition of the hypothesised confounders results the new model (Model 2), which gives compared to the first model, an overall better model fit: It (now) accounts for up to a maximum of 82.0% in Ireland, which stood at 0.25% in Model 1 as well as 37.3% in Sweden (compared to 0.01%(!) in the analysis of Model 1). This is a drastic increase and exceeds with a great number the theoretical expectations (Kumlin 2007; Kumlin 2009; Vis, 2010). Other countries with noteworthy increase of their model fit are Denmark with increase in Model 1 from 0.13% to 30.2% in Model 2, Finland from 0.07% to 18.6% as well as France with 0.14% to 29.1% in relation to the respective models of analysis. Conversely, however, also the are countries with an overall low model fit with the most prominent one being at a minimum standing in Spain at 2.3%, which in comparison to Model 1, had a total variance level of 1.6%. So, the overall pattern is that in general throughout EU15 countries the overall model fit increased. So, there is besides the (still) low values a general trend towards a better fit from Model 1 to Model 2 of this multiple regression analysis, which implies that there is seems to be a relationship between welfare service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government as expressed through voting. The relationship, however, remains to be largely affected by other factors and not the solely by the welfare state service satisfaction of the voter. Yet, still there is not enough evidence to suppose that the found relation between welfare service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government is not due to mere chance of the analysis.

Despite this general low model fit, one can still, however, draw some conclusions from the multiple regression model as to what extend the hypothesised confounding factors are influential in this overall relationship of dependent and independent variables and play a role in the analysis.

First of all, the micro-level of influence, where the educational level of the potential voter yielded some interesting results. As suggested in the theoretical framework it resulted in most cases a (statistical) significant negative coefficient. The results suggests that voters that finished post-secondary but not territory (ISCED 4) as well as those voters that completed tertiary education (ISCED 5-6) would be more inclined to understand more about the variables, thus resulting a negative coefficient. In Sweden and Finland, however, a statistical significant positive coefficient has been found (Sweden: 0.097, Finland: 0.197 respectively). It seems that in those European countries the educational level in relation to welfare service satisfaction does not matter as strong as in the other European countries. These findings can be most likely explained by the fact that both countries can be considered - according to the classification of Esping-Andersen (1990) as part of the Social Democratic welfare state regime, which is characterised by high standard and strong protective feature of welfare state services (Mau and Verwiebe, 2010) and therefore people are confident enough to keep the high standard of the welfare state services - no matter, which political party is in the political office. Contrary, voters in other European countries are instead more concerned about this issue since diffrent political parties have diffrent standings on the welfare issue. It seems that like high provisons charaterise in a welfare state regimes seem to be not influential in the mideset of the variables as they are guarnteed no matter, which party is in office. This is contrary to the reuslts made by Kumlin in 2007 and 2009.

Next in line as a micro-level confounder variable is the political self-interest of the potential voter. Although, the analysis indicated both - negative and positive - results there has been no statistical significance of these results in relation to the hypothesised relationship. It seems like it turns out that political interest has no influence whatsoever on the relationship. This is not the way the relationship was expected as the academic literature of voting behaviour as suggested that those people, who are interred in political process are also inclined to vote (Hague and Harrop, 2011; Evans, 2003) and thus, resulting a higher voter turnout. It seems like this is not the case in this analyis. Instead the satisfaction with the present performance of the national government as well as ideological left-right placement plays a (more) significant role. The analysis suggests that whereas the satisfaction with the present performance of the national government has a positive impact on the relationship; resulting voters who are satisfied with the present performance are also more included to support the government during elections. Contrary, the ideological support has instead a more negative influence, which suggests that voters, who are apparently satisfied with the status quo of the welfare state services are not willing to let the government increase taxes to further promote social as they see the current status quo as enough and therefore they do not see the necessity of the government to change the current system. These findings can be confirmed by similar made findings by Kumlin (2007), who made the observation that higher levels of dissatisfaction tend to be associated with higher levels of state intervention support and therefore more satisfied are less willing to support state intervention. The results are to large extent statically significant with a $0.01 \le p \le$ 0.05 and p <0.01. Thus, strong presumptions against the null hypothesis. These findings, however, are only concerned with the individuals voters perception, thus the micro-level of analysis.m Also in relation to the macro-level - that is to say the overall, big relationship of the variables - interesting observations could be made during the conducted analysis.

Rather surprisingly, the results to the question relating to European integration, which asked if the "European unification of [Country] should go further or has gone too far" to that point, should be highlighted here. One should be remembered that these survey questions had been asked in 2008, the peak of the European crises. However, the results of the multiple regression analysis suggest that besides the fact that welfare states in the European Union are increasingly embedded in its multilevel governance structure, voters still attribute service satisfaction of national welfare state arrangements to the national level. European integration has hardly any influence on the relationship. This seems to back up findings made earlier since it seems like hat voters do not attribute their welfare service satisfaction with the integration of the European Union. Instead Kumlin (2009, p. 411) reminds the scientific audience that there is actually "little systematic knowledge [...] on how welfare-EU links are politicised in different contexts." Therefore there is a lack of census in the academic community in relation to the effects of European integration and the role the EU and welfare state issues play in different countries. Further analysis and research most therefore be conducted in that respect. Another striking observation is that has been made was in in relation to the hypothesised confounder of perception of safety in the European Union as well as in the Member State itself. The analysis showed that the safety perception in the Member States itself resulted both - negative and positive - coefficients, which had hardly any significant influence. This is in the opposite of the expected direction but instead it seems that voters see welfare state services as something unrelated to safety threats and consistent throughout time, also in case of a (possible) terrorist attack. Therefore it seems welfare state services are - as it seems - something that it consistent throughout time and not bound to the safety of a country.

Finally, for most voters in the EU15 countries the trust in the countries parliament plays, also in statistical terms, a significant role. It seems that voter that attribute more trust (positive relation) to the countries parliament are also generally inclined to be in support of the incumbent government. This seems logical as the parliament usually consists of those parties that stood in the last election and is dominated its policy-making agenda often by the party/parties that won the last election. Thus, the decision makers in the row of the government usually

also come from those parties that are also the strongest in parliament (Hague and Harrop, 2011). This observation can be, however, not be hold as true in relation to trust in political parties themselves. Here, instead a negative coefficient was found. It seems like voters do not link stratification with welfare state services and support for the incumbent government to trust in political parties.

The results of the analysis among the EU15 countries can, however, be grouped among their different welfare regime types and classification as made by the sociologist Esping-Andersen (1990). His classification of Western European welfare states knows in general three archetypes; namely the liberal, the conservative and the social-democratic one (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Each type differs on the relation between the market and the state in terms of the provision of social benefits. According to the grouping of the (Western) European countries in the book of Mau and Verwiebe (2010), which entails that the Northern countries (Sweden, Denmark, Finland), which are classified as under the term of the Social Democratic regime; next in line would be conservative welfare state regime, which sometimes is also referred to as the European Continental (Mau and Verwiebe, 2010) or the Christian Democratic one (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Examples of this welfare state regime are Austria, Belgium, France and Germany (Mau and Verwiebe, 2010; Esping-Andersen, 1990). Also a rather distinctive form of this form type of welfare state regime is the Mediterranean one (some even argue that it is a complete one type of welfare state regime, see again Mau and Verwiebe, 2010) to which pain and Italy Spain, Portugal and Greece belong. The last type refers to the so-called Liberal, Anglo-Saxon one. It entails the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as well as the Republic of Ireland.

It can can be observed the especially in countries that belong to the Social Democratic regime as classified by Esping-Andersen (1990), thus the Northern countries Sweden, Denmark and Finland, there seems to be weak relationship between welfare state service satisfaction and electoral accountability. It seems like that in those countries, which are characterised by high standard and strong protective feature of the welfare state services (Mau and Verwiebe, 2010) people do not seem to link to the political party in office since it based on the principals of the equal common good and solidarity of the people. Conclusively, social policy is seen as an economic and social investment. This can be supported by previous research of Kumlin (2007), who remarks in his work that the possibility that dissatisfied citizens draw different conclusions in relation to responsibility in the different welfare state regimes. Especially, in Social Democratic welfare state regimes are expected to be the ones, where one sees most clearly can conform the predictions of the earlier hypothesised and presented undermined- welfare-state perspective (Kumlin, 2007). Since is in such welfare states that most obviously build on (political) leftist and egalitarian principles, and because it is such welfare states that have been most consistently shaped by leftist political forces. It should be clear that the conclusion that can be made from this observation is that those voters that are dissatisfied in with welfare state services seek other alternatives then election to hold politicians account for their respective actions. In contrast, voters in liberal and conservative welfare states regimes and here especially in the countries labelled under the category of the Mediterranean welfare state regimes, thus Spain, Portugal and Greece; countries that also have been featured in this analysis. This respective regime is not characterised by the high-standard of the Social Democratic one but instead the service provided by the state "is often inadequate, making it necessary for those affected to access supplementary familial support networks" (Mau and Verwiebe, 2010, p. 55). In those countries the issue of ideology still plays as Kumlin (2007) suggests. This would mean that in theses countries leftist parties still promote more leftist strategies such as state intervention and expansion of the welfare state, whereas political right parties promote a

more rightist postion by trying to diminish the role of state. Therefore, it (still) may be that in those countries voters are more inclined to hold governments direct responsible for their (personal) satisfaction with the welfare state services. Two similar key observation can be made here in relation to trust, which have been measured in this thesis through the assessment of trust in the countries parliament and political parties, respectively. The first observation is that welfare state dissatisfaction tends to correlate with general political distrust in all the 13 investigated countries. Second, there is quite some considerable country variation around this effect in the EU. Yet still one should be reminded that in real-life political elections and its discourse are often focused on concrete policies and institutions in their in their electoral programme (Kumlin, 2007; Evans, 2003; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009) due to the current political-electoral environment of the country. This can led to the action to an atmosphere, where political parties have to respond to these demands in a salient area of the welfare state and that have a potential to dominate the agendas of election campaigns, or where even single issue voting may matter, like health care and pensions (Evans, 2003; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009). More frequently, however, voting behaviour and party competition in Western Europe are guided by more general concerns (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009). For the conducted research project this would mean that it can be only expected to find a strong relationship between welfare service satisfaction and electoral accountability if the issue is prominent on the voters' personal voting agenda or in combination with other equal important topics. This is, however, rather seldom the case as Kumlin (2007) states but instead welfare is a more an underlining issue during elections (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009).

4.3 Discussion of the key findings of Model 1 and Model 2

Summarising, the findings showed that it seems that there is weak positive relationship between welfare service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government. This relationship is mainly characterised by other potential variables that seem to play a more important role for the overall relationship between the variables. The relatively low values - in both model fit and significance of the values - can be probably most explain due to the various causes implied by the cofounders. Here, it should be noted that many more variables can be assumed to influence the relationship between welfare service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government. These include for instance topics like campaign events and candidate appeals and especially the perceived governing competence of potential candidates and political parties, which often weighs heavily on voters' choice (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009; Evans, 2003). In addition to that the social world is increasingly complex and therefore one cannot expect to find a perfect relationships between the (theoretical-linked) variables. Also a relationship between the analysed variables might exist, but not be sufficiently linear to be adequately modelled by a linear regression (Babbie, 2010 but instead another statistical analysis technique could be used. Also the operationalisation of some variables might be shorthanded and not fully adequate. An example would be the support for the incumbent government, which is only measured through the voting in favour of the government-parties in the last elections but support for governmental parties can express itself also in other forms and variables and not voting only in favour of the governmental-parties. Thus, only operationalising the variable only on this single dimension gives a rather distorted picture of the overall variable. In terms of theory, these findings, however, back up with prospect theory as presented by Vis (2010) as voters are expected to understand the complex interplay between political decision makers and not just make decision on the basis on sole satisfaction with welfare state services as the economic voting theory would hypothesised it. Instead other

factors tend to influence the relationship to larger or lower extent whereas other influencing factors could not adequately attributed in the analysis.

Overall on can summarise the new key insights that one has developed from this research project as well as point the odd, remarkable things. The new insights gathered from this research project as presented in this thesis are that the undermined-welfare-state perspective predicted that welfare service dissatisfaction can damage support for the incumbent government. Empirically, one can se (strong) evidence that this is indeed case for most of the EU15 countries. Moreover, while there is country variation in the strength of this impact, it seems also by other factors, , at least in the sense that it cannot be explained by the welfare dissatisfaction but also by trust like political parties, right-left scale or others. Also the role of the EU seems rather marginalised in this project and therefore role played by knowledge and information on the EU's impact need to be reevaluated. As pointed out earlier conducted research by others (Kumlin, 2007), voters often display a poor level of interest on the EU and its issues. Thus, all in all the the findings made in this research project led to a rejection of H₀, which suspected no relationship between the independent variable and dependent variables. Instead the HA is - even if weak - confirmed that there is a linear positive relationship between the independent variable and dependent variables. So voters that tend to satisfied with welfare state service, also tend to support the incumbent government as measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last elections. The initial premised included a number of factors that were (theoretically) linked to the relationship and supposedly positively (that is strengthen) the relationship. Whereas some confounders only partially contributed to the strengthening of the relationship, some having no significant influence on relationship, finally other confounders have been found to influence the relationship in the opposite of the expected direction. This included primarily the educational level of the voters, which showed in analysis that higher-educated voters are more likely to support the incumbent government, when they are satisfied with welfare state service instead of the lower educated ones. This supports earlier made findings that showed that in Western European democracies, parties endorsing New Left policies - including those relating to more welfare state services - draw disproportionate high support from highly-educated voters (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009; Evans, 2003). However, in countries where the welfare state regime is strong - like Sweden and Finland - education does not play any role. Also the voters willingness to support the government to increase taxes and thus promote social spending let to negative statistical significant coefficient meaning that those, who are already satisfied with the status quo of the welfare state services are not willing to pay more taxes as they thee social welfare provisions as enough. It seems, however, that other factors affect the likelihood of support for the government more stronger then welfare service satisfaction of the voters. Most crucially these would be topics like campaign events and candidate appeals as the perceived governing competence of potential candidates and political parties often weigh heavily on voters' choice (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009; Evans, 2003). The process of European integration was found to have no impact on the relationship and instead other factors - most prominently trust in the countries parliament - have been found to confound the relationship between the variables and the conducted multiple regression analysis.

Rather odd and unexpected is the fact that some hypothesised variables do not seemed to influence the relationship of the variables at all besides the fact that the earlier consulted academic literature did so. Most streakily, the political self-interest of the voter did not yield any (statical) significant results and instead has been found to hardy influence the relationship. Also the issue of safety (in the European Member State and the

European Union as a whole) did not seem to influence the voters actions in relation to voting. Also more straightforward questions like the statement whether social benefits lead to a more equal society or not did not yield a clear answer. It seems that besides the fact that nation-states conduct nowadays social policy, which aim on the basis of the "principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth, and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life" (Britannica Online Encyclopaedia, 2014). Voters still did not acknowledge this as the analysis did not show if any clear statement if it influences the relationship between welfare service satisfaction and electoral accountability.

Summarising, this section of the chapter showed that various variables seem to influence the overall relationship. Therefore it can be assumed, based on these findings, that the null hypothesis of this study is falsified; but instead of spurious relationship between welfare state service satisfaction and support for the incumbent government has been identified. Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, the following interpretation is suggested: Welfare state service satisfaction is linked to support for the governmental parties during elections, whereby this seems to be the case especially the case for European countries that do not have a high standard in their welfare state regime as the Nordic countries seem to be affected by the relationship. Especially the educational level of the voter plays a significant role since less-educated people are more inclined to be influenced by their social standing instead of their political self-interest, which contrary to other made findings in academic literature. There it was suggested that hight political self-interest will also result a higher turnout during elections. Yet, also the satisfaction with the actual government performance plays an important role in the relationship. It seems that voters attribute their perceptions of welfare state service satisfaction to what extend the national governmental actually performances. Interestingly, the increasing embedded nature of the welfare state in the multi-level governance system of the European Union has hardly any influence on the relationship as voters still the responsibility of the welfare state as a national competence (Mau and Verwiebe, 2010; Kumlin, 2009). A possible shift of competences or creation of European welfare state would yield some interesting results in the future. Finally, the voters trust in the countries parliament has a significant influence. It seems like that besides the fact of the multi-level governance nature of the issue, voters are still inclined to attribute in a realm, which is formally a national competence. They are not (yet) willing to attribute more to Europe. Most likely due to the fact that they are afraid that the social standard provisions in their country would be lowered and decline to the worse. Especially in relation to the different welfare state regimes that would mean different spendings (Mau and Verwiebe, 2010).

5. <u>Conclusions</u>

The presented research project was designed to investigate the relationship between welfare service satisfaction and electoral accountability across EU15 countries. This final part of the thesis is aimed to drawing a conclusion to this investigation. In the first part, the answer to the main research question in relation to the theoretical assumptions and hypotheses will be provided. Here, not only answer should be provided but also its implications will be discussed. Afterwards, in the second part, the limitations of the research project in terms of reliability and validity. will be discussed as well as where to find and position this bachelor thesis in the wider academic debate. Finally, the practical implications from the research project for the European Union will be presented. This implications are mainly concerned about possible policy actions that can be taken by European legislativemaking institutions.

5.1 Main findings and answer to the research question

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to understand whatever after nearly more than forty years of policy characterised by austerity, European citizens are actually (still) satisfied with what welfare state services achieves. And if not, are those dissatisfied people holding the responsible political actors in elections account? In order to investigate the answer to this question, first two hypotheses (H_0 and H_A) have been constructed, which then has been controlled for via multiple regression analysis across EU15 Member States. During the analysis of the relationship, it became evident that people, who are dissatisfied with welfare state services, were also inclined to hold those responsible political actors account in national elections. Most prominently there was positive (as underlined in the H_A) statistical significant relationship between the variables in ten of the thirteen EU15 countries of analysis. This backs up with findings of Kumlin (2007), who in his analysis used data from 2002 wave of ESS found similar strong evidence for in also in three countries featured in both analyses (with one however not being significant). Thus, it seems that - at least for two EU15 countries - there seems to be strong evidence over time. However, the actual model fit varies significantly across most EU15 countries as well as their receptive accuracy of the model. Most prominently Ireland showed the highest model fit at only 2.5%(!) and other countries being below 1%. Therefore, the actual fit of the analysis only accounts for a small percentage of cases. This implies that also other potential variables could explain the variation of countries. After analysing the (weak) bivariate relationship between the two variables across countries even further the general positive relationship seemed to diminish (and even becoming negative instead) but with the help of potential confounders the overall model fit increased with percentages that have up to two digits. Especially the case of Sweden is a worth mentioning example as its model fit increased from 0.01%(!) to 37.3%(!). Thus, the other, overall low model fit can be explained due to the fact these other factors tend to influence the support for the government more stronger then welfare service satisfaction of the voters. Most significantly, the voters level of education, his satisfaction with the present government performance and trust towards the national parliament have been found to influence the relationship between the two variables. In addition to that other factors like campaign events and candidate appeals as the perceived governing competence of potential candidates and political parties often weigh heavily on voters choice (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009; Evans, 2003). The ESS, however, lacked however a clear question in this regard and therefore no actual confounder analysis could be conducted in the multiple research analysis. In addition to he found evidence from the multiple regression analysis also resulted in an increase of the overall model fit.

Summarising, it can be only clearly stated that people, who are dissatisfied with the welfare state services are also inclined to withdraw their support for the incumbent government, also when other factors weigh more heavily on the voters mind when reaching their decision for the pooling booth. Hence H_0 can be rejected and H_A confirmed. These findings mirror similar results found by Jan W. van Deth, who also used survey data from the 2008 round of the ESS (Rosema, Denters and Aarts, 2011). He, however, studied the development of citizens' political orientations across 21 European countries in relation to citizens attitude towards system of representative democracy of which the welfare state as whole was regarded a part of. Van Deth found that by the end of 2008, when the economic recession had strongly influenced the opinion climate, citizens' life satisfaction and political confidence had not really suffered from it.

5.2 Academic debate and practical shortages of this research

Two of the major features in social sciences is on the one hand the posting of oneself in the academic debate, whereas on the other hand it on the issue of how to ensure that one on the one hand one measures in a valid and reliable way.

In relation to the academic debate one can state that that this bachelor project is somewhere in between the two extremes of this academic discourse. Neither has it proven the first extreme that is the fact that there is no relationship between welfare state service satisfaction and electoral accountability, nor has it proven the second extreme that is that there is a perfect and linear relationship between the variables (Kumlin 2007; Kumlin 2009). Instead, this bachelor thesis tried to prove that support for the welfare basis throughout Europe is still present besides the growing economic pressures and rising budgetary deficits governments, which forced to transform the welfare state according to the neo-liberal set and values. During the conducted analysis, results of multiple regression analysis showed that there is link between welfare state service satisfaction and support for the governmental parties during elections through EU15 countries. However, the analysis implied that there is significant country variation in the actual magnitude of this results. Also, more importantly, that there other factors that are more influential in this relationship, which are most prominently the satisfaction with the present performance of the government, trust in the countries parliament as well as educational level of the voters. This thesis has therefore contributed to the academic debate of comparative political behaviour, welfare state research, and representative democratic theory. To that end it has build on earlier research that has investigated that even small and seemingly insignificant changes in policies and institutions can instigate public dissatisfaction (Kumlin, 2004). However, this thesis has contributed in the understanding that disaffection with welfare states does affect voting behaviour of people. This analysis shows that active voting citizens are in representative democracies needed for its stability (Cunningham, 2002). Further, voters can express their disagreement with shortages made in relation to welfare. This causes political parties and actors to rethink their actions (Kumlin, 2007). Additionally, political parties need to evaluate their actions, which increases struggle democratic debate and promotes the contestation and confrontation of different opines and standpoints and vitalises democracy (Michels. 1962). The results of the analysis, however, should be not overrated as it should be noted that the conducted analysis in this project by itself is somewhat of a major shortcoming in this analysis. This can be most likely explained by the rather simplistic approach to a complicated problem. It should note and suggested at the same time that also other macro-level variables possibly even regime types, might play a crucial role of the analysis. It is likely that other variables, such as the current structure and generosity of benefits, political

alignment of current governments, and also further other minor-level variable like the degree of ageing of the population, also could play a role in this relationship. Next to this is the main problem that lies within in regression analysis. The problem lies within the issue of causation; most importantly, regression does not prove any causation, nor is the theory of regression analysis clear on the direction of causation. Thus, the thesis findings operate always under the assumption that welfare service satisfaction causes support for the incumbent, but the results cannot actually prove this.

Thus, to that end there are several limitations to this research project also - or better because of - that welfare state attitudes and government satisfaction have usually been so far conducted separately from each other. Perhaps exactly for this reason, there is not yet an optimal dataset for testing the hypotheses outlined here. Thus, this study has been forced to use survey measures that are mainly proxies (i.e. the dependent variable) for the measures of interest and therefore in this research project main critique would centre to be shorthanded on content-validity. Especially, the operationalisation of some variables might be shorthanded and not fully adequate. An example would be the support for the incumbent government, which is only measured through the voting in favour of the government-parties in the last elections but support for governmental party/ parties. The main problem occurs, when countries experienced a government shift after the last election. Where this is the case, it is difficult to construct a meaningful dependent variable, as there is more than one appropriate electoral target for dissatisfied citizens. On the one hand, some may punish the current government as implied by the coding of the dependent variable (especially where much time has passed). Whereas on the other hand, some may in fact have voted for a party currently in government exactly because they wanted to punish the old government for previous welfare state service failures. A second problem that dependent variable brings with in is the fact that countries differ in how long much time has passed since the last election. Respondents, who voted recently, should therefore have a more accurate recollection on their voting than those were several years have passed. Thus, only operationalising the variable only on this single dimension gives a rather distorted picture of the overall variable. However, the usage of similar (not dichotomous) index to capture welfare service satisfaction has some criterion validity since it was used in earlier research (Kumlin, 2007; Kumlin, 2009). This therefore reflects a valid measure in the scope of this thesis.

Based on these research limitations, therefore future research within this field should focus on a more recent year if they also want to do research on EU Member States as the data in this analysis came from the year 2008 since the ESS only provided data in this year round on the of topic welfare state and citizens attitudes towards it. However, this year does not include the data for all of the current 28 EU Member States. Further, it might of insert to check for interesting items for dependent variable by the means of confiding ones. The dependent variable of the research project in the core modules of ESS (which repeated every two years) might also allow to do a longitudinal analysis and observe a possible pattern throughout time and across EU Member States. Also a possible increase of the validity of the study, future research should try to include multiple indicators increases the certainty that the measurements actually measure they are supposed to measure. Finally, the research used a cross-sectional design, which allowed for the work with a big sample, which provides a snapshot of the entire population. Therefore the external validity, which reflects the correctness of inferences about the generalizability of the results across populations, can be seen as high in this study (Babbie, 2009). Yet, only in relation to the Western European welfare states since the analysis focused itself only on EU15

(of which two had been exclude), thus resulting the sample to include only all Western European countries. Therefore newer, mainly Eastern European Member States are not included in the analysis and therefore the results of this study are not easily generalisable to Eastern Europe. Further research therefore should aim to include for an overall analysis of the EU by using a a more recent year since the usage of all current 28 European Member States. Finally, to limit the size of the standard error of the estimate, further research should therefore try to draw its findings from as many samples from the population of interests as possible. In this way, the reliability of the measures of the variables can be increased. This, however, requires a lot of time and money, which is not always possible for every researcher to do (McHugh, 2008).

5.3 Implications from the research project for the European Union

The welfare states of the European Member States are increasingly embedded in the so-called multi level political system of the European Union. Yet, still the direct policymaking power remains mainly located at the national level, where research has shown that especially "negative EU-welfare state cues are more likely to be spread by parties which are simultaneously pro-welfare state *and* [emphasis also in original work, MZ] Eurosceptic" (Kumlin, 2009, p. 417). Thus, the alleged effects of European integration on national welfare states are destructive, with some signs that dissatisfied European voters develop negative attitudes, not only toward national governments, but also greater Euroscepticism like Kumlin (2009) also points out.

As much as the European Union is pluralistic in its set-up, so are its explanations in relation to its political, sociological, economical and legal dimension - not only by itself but also in relation to the research project investigated in this bachelor project. The dissatisfaction therefore can have serious implications for the idea of European Union and possible further integration processes. As the analysis section of this bachelor thesis has shown, there is still support for welfare provisions throughout Europe besides the growing economic pressures and rising budgetary deficits governments, and which has lead to a forced d to transformation of the welfare state according to the neo-liberal set and values. It is therefore important that when EU legislation is created in the field of social policy (by i.e. the European Commission, the European Parliament or the Council of the European Union) that it should always aim at the positive role that it can play. Specifically, the "Open Method of coordination" (OMC) has been created specifically for this type of action. The OMC offers the Member States to act together by aiming to establish a common set of policy goals or benchmarks with which they aim to improve policies and policy outcomes by learning from each others 'best practices' (Heidenreich and Bischoff, 2008). This has practical implications as they have been not only gathered new theoretical insights, but also socially relevant ones. The conducted analysis via multiple regression analysis has yet showed that there is a certain link between welfare state service satisfaction and support for the governmental parties during elections through EU15 countries.

For policy making in the European Union this means that the European Union does not ignore the dissatisfaction with the welfare state but takes a closer what exactly bothers European citizens and take then proactive measures to diminish the dissatisfaction and instead promote satisfaction. Politicians need to pay attention if they decide to further cut down the spendings for welfare state services as it otherwise would backlash in a withdraw of electoral support. Here, also especially important is the aspect that when the EU would aim for to create a European wide welfare state or just shift more compactness to the respective EU bodies that a high standard of the welfare state provisions has to be maintained. Since the analysis conducted has

shown that especially in those countries where the social provisions are the highest, also the actual satisfaction with welfare state services had hardly any influence on the overall relationship and hardly reflect in electoral accountability. This is important as one can observe that nowadays European citizens start to protest against any welfare cuts in the European Member States as they see the attack on welfare state not only as an attack of the system of the welfare state itself but also against their European identity of which the welfare state has been seen an integral part of. One clear see that Social Europe is an integral part of the European identity. Here, especially the transparency and openness towards the citizen has to be guaranteed. Especially, in relation to accountability if people are dissatisfied they should be govern certain measures and actions to hold the responsible to account. Also social policy conducted in general via welfare state services can help the EU to solve the current crises (Grahl and Teague, 2013). Since EU social policy can play a vital role in making the eurozone more stable and sustainable. Grahl and Teague (2013) for example argue that that some form of EU 'social union' is important, for without it the immediate financial problems facing the Member States cannot be resolved. This step cannot, however, be made from today to tomorrow but instead requires a process during which the EU social policy will need to be strengthened considerably, with interventions focusing on the creation of employment and on the capacity of national governments to perform a high standard of welfare state services across all EU citizens.

6. Appendix

Table 1: Austria - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.076** [0.031]	0.034* [0.039]
Level of education of respondent		-0.008* [0.032]
Political self-interest of respondent		-0.003* [0.018]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		0.019*** <i>[0.008]</i>
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.001* [0.009]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		0.026* [0.016]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		-0.008* [0.006]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.044** <i>[0.026]</i>
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		-0.029* [0.025]
Trust in countries parliament		0.013* [0.010]
Trust in political parties		-0.007* [0.010]
Constant	0.586 [0.026]	0.403 [0.101]
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1199 /0.0057	1049 /0.019]

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	-0.068** [0.039]	-0.091*** [0.041]
Level of education of respondent		-0.041* <i>[0.029]</i>
Political self-interest of respondent		-0.011* [0.017]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.021**** [0.008]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.035**** [0.008]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		-0.027* [0.016]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		0.000* [0.006]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		-0.001* [0.024]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		-0.014* [0.023]
Trust in countries parliament		0.009* [0.009]
Trust in political parties		-0.013* <i>[0.009]</i>
Constant	0.740 [0.036]	0.920 [0.097]
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1245 <i>[0.002]</i>	1201 [0.035]

Table 2: Belgium - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** p < 0.01Notes: Std. error is given in brackets. Data from the 2008 European Social Survey.

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.140**** <i>[0.033]</i>	-0.022* [0.032]
Level of education of respondent		0.035* [0.024]
Political self-interest of respondent		0.010* [0.017]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.038**** [0.006]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.099**** [0.006]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		-0.016* [0.013]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		0.011*** [0.005]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.035** [0.021]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		-0.029* [0.019]
Trust in countries parliament		-0.001* [0.008]
Trust in political parties		-0.022**** [0.008]
Constant	0.260 [0.030]	
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1316 /0.0137	1234 /0.3027

Table **3**: Denmark - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.137**** <i>[0.043]</i>	-0.054* <i>[0.042]</i>
Level of education of respondent		0.197**** <i>[0.026]</i>
Political self-interest of respondent		0.016* [0.018]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.032**** [0.007]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.087**** [0.008]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		-0.014* [0.014]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		0.00 2 * [0.006]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.014* [0.019]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		-0.026* [0.020]
Trust in countries parliament		-0.005* [0.009]
Trust in political parties		0.001* [0.009]
Constant	0.496 [0.041]	0.278 [0.105]

Table 4: Finland - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 < p < 0.1 *** 0.01 < p < 0.05 **** p < 0.01

Observations (N)

Model fit (R²)

Notes: Std. error is given in brackets. Data from the 2008 European Social Survey.

1380

[0.007]

1332

[0.186]

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.110**** <i>[0.027]</i>	-0.030* [0.025]
Level of education of respondent		-0.009* [0.026]
Political self-interest of respondent		0.023* [0.014]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.017**** [0.006]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.104**** <i>[0.006]</i>
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		0.011* [0.012]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		-0.013*** [0.005]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.029* [0.024]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		-0.011* [0.023]
Trust in countries parliament		0.016*** [0.018]
Trust in political parties		-0.021**** [0.007]
Constant	0.263 [0.020]	0.067 <i>[0.079]</i>
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1242 <i>[0.014]</i>	1165 <i>[0.291]</i>

Table 5: France - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.098**** [0.022]	0.047** <i>[</i> 0.024]
Level of education of respondent		-0.081**** [0.023]
Political self-interest of respondent		0.010* [0.015]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.023**** [0.006]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.032**** [0.006]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		0.038**** [0.012]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		-0.012**** [0.004]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.006* [0.019]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		0.024* [0.019]
Trust in countries parliament		0.019*** <i>[0.007]</i>
Trust in political parties		-0.011* [0.007]
Constant	0.710 [0.013]	0.518 [0.083]
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1733 /0.011/	1570 /0.0707

Table **6a**: Germany, West - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.074*** <i>[0.025]</i>	0.007* [0.027]
Level of education of respondent		-0.117**** [0.025]
Political self-interest of respondent		-0.014* [0.016]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.020**** [0.006]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.050**** [0.007]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		0.015* [0.013]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		-0.010** [0.005]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.021* [0.022]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		0.025* [0.021]
Trust in countries parliament		0.006* [0.007]
Trust in political parties		-0.011* <i>[0.008]</i>
Constant	0.617 <i>[0.014]</i>	0.495 <i>[0.092]</i>
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1713 [0.005]	1556 <i>[0.069]</i>

Table **6b**: Germany, East - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.146**** <i>[0.042]</i>	0.007* [0.042]
Level of education of respondent		-0.167**** [0.031]
Political self-interest of respondent		-0.016* [0.016]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.011* [0.007]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.032**** [0.007]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		0.003* [0.013]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		0.024**** [0.005]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.057**** [0.022]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		-0.013* [0.020]
Trust in countries parliament		0.031**** [0.007]
Trust in political parties		0.002* [0.009]
Constant	0.704 [0.014]	0.382 [0.082]
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1272 /0.0167	921 [0.153]

Table 7: Greece - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.156*** <i>[0.028]</i>	0.063** <i>[</i> 0.028]
Level of education of respondent		0.013* [0.030]
Political self-interest of respondent		-0.012* [0.017]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.013** [0.007]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.053**** [0.008]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		-0.019**** [0.016]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		0.001* [0.007]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.004* [0.019]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		0.004* [0.020]
Trust in countries parliament		0.009* [0.008]
Trust in political parties		-0.003* [0.009]
Constant	0.384 <i>[0.020]</i>	0.391 [0.096]
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1224 <i>[0.025]</i>	1144 <i>[0.820]</i>

Table 8: Ireland - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.124**** [0.030]	0.053* [0.033]
Level of education of respondent		-0.128**** [0.029]
Political self-interest of respondent		-0.047*** [0.020]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.001* [0.009]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.052**** [0.011]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		0.023* [0.018]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		-0.005* [0.007]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		-0.044** <i>[0.025]</i>
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		0.057*** <i>[0.026]</i>
Trust in countries parliament		-0.012* <i>[0.012]</i>
Trust in political parties		-0.003* [0.012]
Constant	0.454 <i>[0.025]</i>	0.281 [0.117]
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1323 <i>[0.013]</i>	1239 /0.0757

Table 9: The Netherlands - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.118**** <i>[0.035]</i>	0.002* [0.046]
Level of education of respondent		-0.095** <i>[0.051]</i>
Political self-interest of respondent		-0.035* <i>[0.023]</i>
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.001* [0.010]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.065**** [0.010]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		0.037** [0.021]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		0.000* [0.008]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.057*** <i>[0.029]</i>
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		-0.044* <i>[0.029]</i>
Trust in countries parliament		0.016* [0.011]
Trust in political parties		-0.016* [0.012]
Constant	0.491 [0.018]	0.188 <i>[0.134]</i>
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1035 <i>[0.011]</i>	606 /0.1097

Table **10**: Portugal - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	-0.040* <i>[0.029]</i>	-0.065*** [0.026]
Level of education of respondent		0.097**** <i>[0.026]</i>
Political self-interest of respondent		0.008* [0.016]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.050**** [0.006]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		-0.117**** [0.006]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		-0.014* [0.015]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		0.004* [0.006]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.023* [0.018]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		-0.013* <i>[0.020]</i>
Trust in countries parliament		-0.017*** <i>[0.008]</i>
Trust in political parties		-0.021*** [0.009]
Constant	0.540 [0.024]	0.361 <i>[0.094]</i>
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1288 [0.001]	1169 <i>[0.373]</i>

Table 11: Sweden - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.130**** <i>[0.028]</i>	-0.004* <i>[0.030]</i>
Level of education of respondent		-0.079**** [0.030]
Political self-interest of respondent		-0.019* [0.017]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		-0.004* [0.008]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		-0.111**** [0.007]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		-0.027*** [0.013]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		0.004* [0.006]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.027* [0.024]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		0.011* [0.025]
Trust in countries parliament		0.003* [0.008]
Trust in political parties		-0.140** <i>[0.008]</i>
Constant	0.450 [0.021]	0.143 <i>[0.098]</i>
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1347 <i>[0.016]</i>	1061 <i>[</i> 0.023]

Table 12: Spain - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Micro-level variables:		
Welfare state service satisfaction	0.113**** [0.027]	-0.007* <i>[0.029]</i>
Level of education of respondent		-0.080**** [0.027]
Political self-interest of respondent		-0.033*** [0.016]
Government decrease/increase taxes and social spending (Right-left scale)		0.003* [0.006]
Satisfaction with present performance of the national government		0.068**** [0.007]
Social benefits lead to a more equal society		0.027** [0.014]
Macro-level variables:		
European Union: European unification go further or gone too far		0.009* [0.006]
How likely terrorist attack in Europe during next twelve months		0.009* [0.026]
How likely terrorist attack in country during next twelve months		0.006* [0.025]
Trust in countries parliament		-0.002* [0.008]
Trust in political parties		-0.014** <i>[0.008]</i>
Constant	0.346 <i>[0.022]</i>	0.182 <i>[0.099]</i>
Observations (N) Model fit (R ²)	1423 <i>[0.012]</i>	1303 <i>[0.106]</i>

Table **13**: United Kingdom - Multilevel regression model estimates for support of the incumbent government (measured through voting in favour of the government-parties in the last election) (Source: own elaboration)

* p > .1 ** 0.05 *** <math>0.01 **** <math>p < 0.01

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