

# **Democracy and International Trust Before and After the Start of the Great Recession: The European Union and the United Nations**

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## **Abstract**

The paper investigates the change in the impact of democracy on political trust in national and international institutions, including the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN), after the start of the Great Recession 2008. Based on empirical evidence, the paper argues that the impact of the level of democracy on national trust is different from its impact on international trust *post-crisis* 2008, despite having been similar before the crisis. Previous studies reported that the crisis has led to decreased trust in political institutions overall. Our findings highlight that the way the level of democracy relates to political trust in national and international institutions has changed after the start of the Great Recession. These findings are important for studies on political trust, the literature on the impact of the Great Recession on public opinion, and for research on regional versus global institutions.

## **Keywords**

Democracy; International Institutions; Political Trust; Great Recession; National Parliament; European Union; United Nations

## Introduction

Studies on institutional trust have mushroomed over the last decade. Scholars addressed social and cultural factors influencing the formation of trust (such as, national identity, belonging to minority groups, immigrants, the impact of elections on trust), the role of corruption, welfare state and economic performance in shaping institutional trust, of ideological congruence on political judgment; while other studies addressed the consequences of trust for cooperation in international systems and even in membership in regional international organizations (Uslaner ed. 2018; Marien 2011; Hartevelt et. al. 2013; Muñoz, et. al. 2011; Van der Meer 2018; Hakhverdian and Mayne, 2012; Obydenkova and Libman 2019; Mayne and Hakhverdian, 2017, Vieira 2018, to name a few).<sup>1</sup>

The attention to institutional trust is not surprising given the growing European sovereignty and changes in attitude of the European citizens to the EU in the aftermath of the Great Recession 2008. Public trust into political institutions is the foundation of the *legitimacy* of these institutions. Some studies demonstrated the importance of institutional trust for the stability of democratic political systems, for elimination of corruption, and for the respect for law (Marien and Hooghe 2011). In words of Van Der Meer, "...political trust is considered a necessary precondition for democratic rule, a decline in trust is thought to fundamentally challenge the quality of representative democracy" (2017, p. 1).

On the other hand, a different set of emerging studies addressed the impact of the Great Recession, i.e. the financial crisis started in 2008, on the European society and politics: challenges of inequality and attitude to immigration (Dancygier and Donnelly 2014; Libman and Obydenkova 2019a), and also *new* trends in trust in political institutions (Armingeon and Guthman 2013; Bermeo and Bartels 2014; Chanley, Rudolph and Rahn 2000; Van Erkel and Van Der Meer 2016; Ervasti et al. 2019). In particular, research shows that the majority of European countries experienced a significant decline in trust in both national and international institutions, following the crisis. These new trends bear further investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to this rich literature, only in the last two years, two books on trust have been published: Sonja Zmerli and Tom WG Van der Meer (eds.) (2017) *Handbook on Political Trust*, Edward Elgar Publishing: Cheltenham; and by Eric M Uslaner (ed.) (2018) *The Oxford handbook of social and political trust*. Oxford University Press.

This paper builds on previous studies on trust and contributes to this literature by analysing the change in the impact of democracy on political trust in national versus international institutions, particularly the EU and the United Nations (UN), comparing two periods before and after the start of the Great Recession of 2008.<sup>2</sup> Our results show that before the start of the economic crisis the relationship between democracy and trust in the three types of institutions considered was non-linear. Especially, for trust in national parliament we find evidence for an inverted U-shape relationship between democracy and trust. After the start of the economic crisis levels of trust in the three institutions changes very little (and they are not statistically significant) with the level of democracy. This is mainly due to a substantial decrease in trust in the national parliament in “hybrid regimes”, i.e. countries with intermediate levels of democracy, and to a slight increase in trust in international institutions in the least democratic countries. As a consequence, the pattern of trust levels across democracy levels became much more similar.

## **Background**

### *Institutional Trust and Democracy*

The new stage of globalisation in world politics led to increased importance of so-called “distant” political institutions, such as the EU and the UN. While trust in national institutions has been studied from different perspectives, the question of how trust in national political institutions is different from trust in international institutions – if they differ at all – remains (Harteveld et al. 2013). In the words of Brewer, Gross, Aday, and Willnat (2004), “scholars should cast their attention not just on the familiar forms of trust, political and social trust, but on other forms of trust as well” (p. 94). Studies on the United Nations, in general, and on the trust in the UN, in particular, are few (exceptions are, for example, Torgler 2008; Diven and Constantelos 2011; Obydenkova and Vieira 2019). This paper contributes to this literature by analysing the differences and similarities of in the relationship between democracy and political trust and its

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<sup>2</sup> Following the studies on comparative regionalism and regional international organizations (IO) (e.g., Börzel and Risse eds. 2016; Libman and Obydenkova 2013; 2018a; 2018b), we refer to the EU as *regional* IO and use it interchangeably with “regional institutions”. In contrast, the UN is an IO *without* a regional dimension. This is in line with the definition of Börzel and Risse of “regions” as “located between the “national” and the “global” (eds. 2016, p. 6). From this perspective, the UN is referred to as global and the EU as regional organization.

changes over the Great Recession regarding national, regional (EU), and international (UN) institutions.<sup>3</sup> These differences and/or similarities remain highly important for understanding the nature of political trust *per se*. They might contribute to capturing the complexity of political trust in European nations towards non-national institutions.

A *non-democratic* state controls the mass media and imposes a certain image of outside world, combining it with a positive and trustworthy image of national government, this is likely to be reflected in the shaping of the public trust of a given society towards national and international institutions (on mass media, see Obydenkova 2008). It might increase trust in national institutions, while reducing trust in international institutions. However, it is only through addressing forms of trust comparatively, that we may unpack the dynamic of institutional trust and the role of the level of democracy.

Trust in political institutions and social trust have been discussed from various perspectives in many studies (e.g., Mishler and Rose 2001). The interplay between political elite and people, power, public behaviour and protest has attracted attention, especially after the beginning of the financial crisis in 2007 (e.g., Della Porta 2014). Studies have focused not only on various preconditions for developing trust and political legitimacy, but also on the obstacles to it, such as corruption; as well as discussed the nexus between membership in international organizations and corruption (Hafner-Burton and Schneider 2019, Morris and Klesner 2010; Obydenkova and Arpino 2018; Van Erkel and Van Der Meer 2016).

The studies of public support for the EU and trust towards European institutions have been growing in number over the last decade. In the words of Karp et al. (2003), “the weakness of the European Parliament (EP) allows for only limited accountability and responsiveness producing democratic deficit” (p. 272). Further on, Delhey (2007) demonstrates that both southern and eastern waves EU enlargement have caused a decrease in social trust *across* the EU’s member states towards each other.

The legitimacy of the EU and its impact on neighbour-states and even on sub-national regions have been studied from both an institutional and a social perspective

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<sup>3</sup> Technically, “regional” institutions such as the EU are actually international institutions based in a specific region (in this case, in Europe). Therefore, “regional” and “international” are terms used interchangeably in the paper. When the paper refers only to “international” institutions, it implies both the EU and the UN. When the paper refers to only “regional” institutions, it means only the EU.

(e.g., Hudson 2006; Lankina et. al. 2016a; McLaren 2007; Delhey 2007; Rohrschneider 2002; Obydenkova 2012). Various studies have focused on the origins of trust in the EU, testing theories on the role of national identities, individual utilitarianism, economic performance, and national cultures, combining individual-level and state-level variables (e.g., Hooghe and Marks 2005; Gabel 1998; McLaren 2007; Hooghe 2007; Boomgaarden, et. al. 2011). Others have suggested that public trust to the EU is endogenous to the performance of institutions, and that the sheer existence of trust (or mistrust) in “distant” institutions implies that people are not indifferent to what happens beyond the borders of their own states (Hudson 2006, p. 58).

Before the financial crisis started in 2007, some studies discovered the importance of well-functioning national institutions towards trust for the EU. Rohrschneider (2002) arrived at the important conclusion that the EU’s representation deficit “undermines mass support for Europe’s political integration *especially* when *national* institutions work *well*” (2002, p. 463; the emphasis is ours). Rohrschneider (2002) suggests that the support for the EU decreases *independently* of economic perceptions and that this finding is “especially strong in nations with well-functioning institutions” (p. 463). Our study develops this insight further, and argues that it holds true, as long as support for the EU is analysed out of the period of Great Recession.

### *Democracy and Great Recession 2008*

We focus on European states to evaluate the effects of differences in the level of democracy on political trust in national institutions, and on two types of international ones: a regional international institution (the EU) and the most “distant” one (the UN).

Prior to the Great Recession of 2008, abundant studies argued that support for the EU derived from the ability of the EU institutions to deliver the economic goods, either to individual households, or to the nation as a whole (Carrubba 1997; Christin 2005; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel 1998; Mau 2005). While research has found mixed results with respect to the impact of economic indicators on attitudes towards the EU *before the crisis*, Gomez (2015) shows that the EU’s support is indeed correlated with macroeconomic conditions *post-crisis*, which is unsurprising given the unpopularity of EU-backed austerity measures in some crisis countries.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Arrmingeon and Ceka (2013), for example, state that opinions about the EU depend on public attitude to domestic policy. Somewhat similar, another studies focusing on exclusively democratic context (where

*In democratic states*, the population relies on cues from national politics and politicians in forming opinions of international level institutions (for the EU institutions, see Adam and Maier 2011; Gabel 1998; Hobolt 2012; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Rohrschneider 2002). However, public opinion is also affected by the freedom of the mass media, which is directly related to the political regime. Free mass media is critical of national institutions and demanding for the quality of governance. Hence, free mass media in a democratic state might have negative impact on public opinion about political institutions. For example, the mass media of democratic Spain is highly critical of politicians and often reveals different corruption scandal involving political institutions.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, democracy may lead to critical popular attitude towards national institutions. On the other hand, the population exposed to higher level of quality of governance and transparency that can hinder trust towards national institutions.<sup>6</sup> Hence, there are two possible direction of the impact of democracy to trust in national institutions.

*In an autocracy*, somewhat similar to the above logic, two different directions of the relationship between political regime and trust might be expected: it can both hinder or damage institutional trust. Nondemocratic states have strong control over mass media, public opinion can be manipulated, and can be radically different from that of a democratic state. As a consequence, in a democracy, individuals who are critical of *national*-level politics may demonstrate more or less trust in *supranational* institutions, in the EU as well in the UN. In contrast, in an autocracy, one may expect higher levels of trust for national institutions and a more critical attitude of liberal international institutions, such as the EU and the UN. This trend was also discussed by Van der Meer (2017) who insightfully stated that political trust can be highest in non-democratic states as well as states with highest level of democracy (Nordic states), This is one of the reasons to expect a non-linear relation between democracy and trust. As a counter-argument, population of nondemocratic states are exposed to some experience with

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democracy as a variable hold constant) examined variation in the opinion of US citizens (Brewer et. al. 2004). In contrast to these studies, this project looks into variation in political regimes. Thus, some consideration of non-democracies is very important to the discussion.

<sup>5</sup> This can also explain why high level of democracy may be associated with higher level of *perceived* corruption. In contrast, in a non-democracy where mass media is controlled by the government, the *perception* of corruption can be lower than in democracy and trust to national institutions can be higher.

<sup>6</sup> On the role of mass media in perception of corruption, and in trust, also see Obydenkova and Arpino (2018).

democracies. As a growing literature on value diffusion demonstrates, this may take place through travelling, migration, exposure to Western cinematography, and relatively uncontrolled internet.<sup>7</sup> So, population of nondemocratic state may perceive high levels of quality of life in democracies as beneficial and compare them with low level of governance and high local corruption existing in their countries. That would lead to higher trust to international institutions as compared to national institutions. Like in democracies, the autocracy can actually have this ambiguous two-directional impact on public opinion about institutions.

Thus, the opinion is formed not necessarily in unidirectional way: interconnection between political regimes and public trust into national versus international institutions is more complicated and cannot be subsumed in a unidirectional hypothesis. Moreover, most previous studies were focused primarily on sample of democracies. How the national and international trust vary across different political regimes and how the level of democracy may impact it remain so far unclear and requires agnostic hypotheses – a recognition that existing empirical evidence may provide unexpected results.

Our study aims to contribute to the literature on how the level of democracy influence the formation of trust by considering two types of international trust as compared to trust in the national parliament. To distinguish the two types of international trust, we focus on explicitly European states. The first reason behind this choice is that this region has been through the regime transition of the 1990s, which resulted in the emergence of new democracies in Central and Eastern post-Communist Europe and newly emerged autocracies. This heterogeneity in political regimes allows for important observations regarding the impact of the level of democracy across this geographic sample. The second reason for this choice is that it allows distinguishing the “closest” international institutions (the European parliament as a regional international institution) from the “distant” international institutions (the UN).

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<sup>7</sup> That would be true for all modern nondemocratic states world-wide, probably with the exception of extreme cases, like North Korea or Turkmenistan. Yet, even China these days tries to shield its population against the influence of Hollywood movies. While there is a strong cooperation between the US and Chinese movie-makers, the movies released are censored by the Communist Party. However, in most other modern non-democratic states, the Hollywood movies are the prime source of public opinion about Western democratic high-level standard life and well-being. This can be source of creation of image of “good” international institutions versus malicious national ones (also see Obydenkova and Libman 2019).

### *Hypotheses*

In continuation of the studies discussed above, we argue that the impact of the level of democracy will be different for trust in national as compared to trust in international institutions. While the higher level of national democracy should be correlated with higher levels of trust in national institutions, the association of democracy with international trust might be less straightforward, even for consolidated democratic states (e.g., Brewer et. al. 2004). For example, for democracies, conclusions on political trust in national and international institutions differ. Some studies point out that the fact that national democracy is associated with higher trust in national institutions does not necessarily lead to more trust in international ones. Thus, Brewer et al. (2004) demonstrate that citizens of the USA lack international trust, despite enjoying a high level of democracy. Therefore, national democracy does not necessarily automatically lead to the development of international trust.

Previous studies on trust to the EU focused mainly on the EU member-states with similar levels of democracy. Specifically, they tested different logic explaining trust to the EU among member-states: evaluation of actual and perceived performance, identity, and extrapolation of trust to national institutions to international ones (Harteveld et. al. 2013; Muñoz et. al 2011). While the logic of extrapolation works for democracies, the question still remain how different political regime may matter for development of national and international trust.

Moreover, international trust *per se* might also take different forms. For example, the EU may be associated as the geographically closest institution for European states (the so-called “EU’s neighbour-states”). In contrast, the UN is a more “distant” institution, without any particular regional attachment. The level of democracy might have a different impact on trust in geographically closest international institutions as compared to its impact on trust in “distant” international institutions: that is, the impact of the level of democracy on popular trust in European institutions might be different from trust in the UN. Based on this logic, we expect that the *level of democracy has a different impact on trust in national, regional, and international political institutions.*

From this general premise, more specific questions arise: what kind of difference between the impact of the level of democracy on different forms of trust may



we expect and why? While there are numerous studies on the impact of national democracy on political trust, less has been written about the impact of non-democratic political regimes on both national and international trust. This leads to a number of options. *Non-democracies* might have control over the mass media and may use it to shape trust in national institutions and diminish the reputation of international institutions (the latter might even feature as “enemies of the state”). Thus, we conjecture that *a non-democracy may demonstrate a high level of trust in national institutions, and a low level of trust in international ones.*

On the other hand, in *democracies* with well-functioning political institutions accountable to the electorate, transparent politics and low corruption, the population is expected to have high level of trust in national institutions, but may be more sceptical about international ones (Brewer et. al. 2004; Torgler 2008). Following this logic, one may conjecture that *states with the lowest and highest levels of democracy demonstrate high levels of trust in national institutions and low levels of trust in international ones,* although for completely different reasons (that would imply the first possibility for the nonlinear relation between democracy and trust).

However, a different scenario can also be derived from these studies. People may evaluate the performance of international institutions by extrapolating their own experience with national institutions. Therefore, in a democracy, where the population observes *high levels of performance of national institutions, it might extrapolate this trust to international institutions.*

Applying this logic to non-democracies leads to two possible scenarios. First, the population may observe all the pitfalls of a national non-democratic government (corruption, poor medical services, unofficial bureaucrats and officials, etc.), and extrapolate this experience in shaping their opinion about international institutions. Thus, low levels of democracy might be matched with low levels of national and international trust. However, the second scenario for a non-democracy can be exactly the opposite. The population “may hope for alternative channels to resolve problems in dysfunctional states and regions” and perceive democratic Western states as an attractive alternative to their own national non-democratic political system (Torgler, 2008, p. 68). Some studies also suggest that “many non-democratic countries have partially free or almost free media” (Egorov et. al. 2009). Even a partially free mass media might lead to criticism of national inefficient political institutions and a more

objective account of Western democratic states. This might lead to the formation of a better opinion about Western international institutions (such as the EU) and a more critical attitude towards national ones.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, we may observe an alternative type of *nonlinear relation: the states with the highest and lowest levels of democracy may both demonstrate a high level of international trust*. In other words, consolidated democracy may create extrapolation of trust to national institutions into trust to international institutions. Population of non-democracies may perceive the contrast between well-being outside of their own state and the malfunctioning their national institutions. Based on the previous arguments and evidence, we formulate two alternative hypotheses about the (nonlinear) relationship between democracy and trust in institutions in the pre-crisis period:

*H1.1: States with the lowest and highest levels of democracy demonstrate high levels of trust in national institutions and low levels of trust in regional and international ones.*

*H1.2: States with the lowest and highest levels of democracy demonstrate a high level of trust in national, regional and international institutions.*

The financial crisis started in 2008 may have affected national and international trust. However, little research has investigated the link between national levels of democracy and attitudes towards international institutions, in particular the UN, over the Great Recession 2008. If a population is more aware about the missteps of national institutions, which became more obvious during the financial crisis and period of economic hardship, it might mistrust them (Harteveld et. al. 2017 and Muñoz et. al 2011). The Financial Crisis of 2008 might have made citizens search for someone to blame and use the malfeasance of national institutions as heuristics in shaping their opinion about all international institutions. Low level of trust in states with poor functioning institutions may result in better opinion about international institutions and their *perceived* performance. This is in line with the argument of Harteveld et. al (2013) where the authors distinguished between “actual” and “perceived” performances. The distinction is even more useful when one considers the nature of the trust to the United

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<sup>8</sup> The focus on one geographic region (European states) also implies high levels of internal immigration and cross-border travel in the region, allowing citizens of non-democracies observe all the benefits of neighbouring European democracies (such as infrastructure, quality of services, etc.).

Nations – the organization that seems to be the most distant one with little public experience of its “actual” functioning.<sup>9</sup> Trust to the UN would be related mainly to the public perception of the UN, without much of personal experience of its strong and weak issues of functioning. We will consider the differences of non-EU states as compared to member-states in the next section more closely.

Summarizing, two forms of logic may be applied: (a) extrapolation of mistrust in national institutions to the international ones (extrapolation logic); or (b) perception of international institutions as an attractive alternative to the problems caused by national institutions (contrasting logic). That leads us to development of another set of two alternative hypotheses about whether the relationship between democracy and trust changed or not after the start of the crisis:

*H2.1. Extrapolation logic dictates that after the economic crisis trust to both national and international institutions decreased regardless of the level of democracy. Therefore, the relationship between democracy and trust remained stable.*

*H2.2. The contrasting logic suggest that international institutions may be perceived as an attractive alternative to the problems caused by national institutions. Therefore, in non-democracies decreasing trust into national institutions may have caused higher appreciation for the international institutions, such as the EU and the UN. As a consequence, the relationship between trust and democracy is changed after the economic crisis and the levels of trust became more similar across the different countries.*

### **Data, variables and descriptive statistics**

We employ data from the European Social Survey (ESS),<sup>10</sup> a unique repeated cross-sectional survey representative of the population aged 15 and older that collects data on values, attitudes and opinions in almost all European countries and some non-European

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<sup>9</sup> On the importance of the UN and voting alignment at the United Nations General Assembly, also see Obydenkova and Vieira (2019).

<sup>10</sup> Data and documentation are available for free at the website [www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org)

countries, located in European neighbourhood, such as for example, Israel and Turkey on the south-east and Iceland and Norway to the north. Including non-member EU states also requires some consideration on differences in the public trust to the EU across members and non-members. The public of the EU member-states may be considered to be better informed of the EU performance and experience the EU's decisions and policies in every-day life. Yet, even across the EU states, scholars distinguish between "actual" and "perceived" performance of the EU. When it comes to non-EU member-states, the component of "perceived" performance naturally dominates in public opinion about the EU and its' evaluation. The image of the EU as a desirable destination is prevalent in such candidate states as Albania and Kosovo, for example. Similar attraction existed among the Turkish population, though prospects for membership disappeared. On the other hand, there is a group of democratic states with high level of quality of national governance that intentionally stays out of the EU membership. The classic example would be Switzerland. Other non-member states with high level of national governance opted to become part of the European Economic Area, yet, they are not member-states of the EU (e.g., Norway and Iceland). Last but not least, another group can be distinguished among the non-member states, encompassing the states that were candidates to accession and their prospects of becoming EU-members in the foreseen future are negligible, if any at all (such as Israel, Russia, Ukraine, and now Turkey). Naturally, the population of the states not-members view the EU as a distant institution and evaluate it based on its perceived performance (not an actual one). For some of these states, the EU is a shining light and desirable target (this mainly encompasses states with low-level functioning national institutions); while for advanced and consolidated democracies non-members, the EU might be perceived to have lower quality of government as compared to their national institutions. Including the non-member states into the analysis, thus, amplified our analysis of international trust, or trust into "distant" institutions.

The first round of the ESS started in 2002, and since then it has been implemented every two years. Not all countries participated in each round. In total, we have data on 36 countries and a total sample of 237,780 respondents. The ESS allows implementing comparative analyses using good quality data that respects high quality standards and guarantees a high degree of comparability across the different countries. Moreover, because the main part of the questionnaire (the core questionnaire) does not

change over time, it allows for the collection of data on the same country at different time points. All variables we used in this paper are part of the core questionnaire, so they are available in all rounds of the ESS.

In our analyses, we employ the first six rounds of ESS covering the period 2002 to 2013. This allows to have a sufficient number of observations both before (2002–2007) and after the start of the economic crisis (2008–2013), allowing us to examine the two periods separately and from a comparative perspective. In particular, we study how the relationship between trust and democracy changed after the start of the economic crisis as compared to before 2008.

#### *Dependent and Explanatory variables*

We aim at analysing how democracy influences trust in institutions operating at different levels: national, regional, international. To this end, we use data on trust collected in the core ESS questionnaire for the country's parliament (national level; abbreviated as NP), the European parliament (regional level; EU) and the UN (international level). Data is collected using a scale ranging from 0 (meaning that the respondent does not trust an institution at all) to 10 (the respondent has complete trust in that institution).

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics (country mean and within-country standard deviation) on the outcome variables and the level of democracy. Countries are listed in ascending order by the level of trust in the national parliament. Interestingly, from Table 1 we can notice that levels of trust in different institutions do not necessarily follow the same ranking: that is, there are several countries that score relatively low on trust in the national parliament but not on the trust in other institutions and *vice versa*. This is the case, for example, of Albania where trust in the national parliament is very low on average (2.95), but trust in the international institutions is much higher on average (6.91 and 7.30 for EU and UN, respectively) as compared to other states. On the contrary, Turkey has a higher trust in national parliament than the overall average (5.95), but it has a lower trust than the average level for the EU parliament (3.56) and the UN (3.48).

The relationship between trust in the different institutions is far from being a one-to-one relationship as shown by the Spearman correlation coefficients reported in Table 2. In particular, the correlation at the country-level between the average trust in

the NP and in the EU parliament is rather low (0.33). Correlations between trust in the NP or EU parliament and trust in the UN are medium (0.55 and 0.66, respectively), which indicate that people do differentiate between the three institutions when they have to express how much they trust them. This is in line with studies that demonstrated that for example consolidated democracy may experience high level of trust in national institutions, but low trust in European institutions (Muñoz et. al 2011).

The main independent variable of interest is the level of democracy in each country. We obtained this data from Freedom House,<sup>11</sup> which provides a rating for almost all countries in the world every year since 1972. Ratings are provided for two different dimensions: civic liberties and political rights. Both are measured on a 1–7 scale, with 1 representing the highest degree of freedom and 7 the lowest. None of the countries in our dataset obtained a score higher than 5 for civic liberties or 6 for political rights. Given that the two indicators are very highly correlated for the countries and years in our sample, we obtained a synthetic indicator by taking the simple average of the two after having recoded the two scales so that lower values indicate lower levels of democracy. The resulting democracy indicator ranges from 1 (the lowest level of democracy) to 5.5 (corresponding to the highest level of democracy observed in our data). Given that the fieldwork of the ESS usually lasts over different years, for each individual in the sample we considered the value of the indicator in the year the individual was interviewed as a country-level measure of democracy.

Freedom House's measures of democracy have been widely used in the literature. Other measures of democracy have been used in the literature and there is no consensus on which is the best measure to be used (see e.g. Skaaning 2018). However, in practice, the inverse combined ratings for political rights and civil liberties scale of Freedom House is strongly correlated with other common measures of democracy. For example, the correlation with another commonly used measure, the polity2 index from the Polity IV project (Marshall and Jaggers, 2014), has been found to be around 0.9 (Vanhanen, 2000). We have calculated the country-level correlation between our measure of democracy and the *v2x\_polyarchy* index from the V-DEM project (Coppedge et al. 2017).

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<sup>11</sup> The data can be downloaded for free from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>.

We do not observe changes in our democracy indicator for the majority of countries in our dataset and for the period covered by the ESS. We observe some changes for other countries (for example, Israel moves from 4.5 to 5 and Ukraine from 4 to 3). This is also shown in Table 1 where we can notice the small or null within-country variability in our measure of democracy. The ratio of the country-level variance out of the total variance of the democracy measure was about 97%.

From Table 1 an interesting picture emerges. There is no obvious pattern of association between levels of trust and levels of democracy. For example, low levels of democracy for Turkey and Kosovo are associated with high average levels of trust for the NP and international institutions, respectively. Moreover, the Spearman correlation coefficients at the country-level between democracy and trust in the three considered institutions are rather low (between 0.22 and 0.32; Table 2). This is consistent with our expectations for a nonlinear association between trust and democracy.

### *Control Variables*

In line with the literature on democracy and trust, we control for a number of important independent variables at both the individual- and country-level. Political ideology and a number of sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, education, individual income and employment-activity status, are all widely acknowledged as standard controls in the research on trust (see, for example, Brewer et al. 2004 and Fazio et al. 2018; on the role of ideology, see, for example, Bartels 2014). Following these studies, we include individual-level control variables of age (divided by 10 to help reading its effect in the regression table), gender (female = 1, male = 0), education (categorical variable: low, medium — reference —, high), partnership status (in a partnership = 1, otherwise = 0), area of living (rural = 1, otherwise = 0), political orientation (categorical variable: left, centre — reference —, right).<sup>12</sup> To address the activity status, we create three categories (categorical variable): unemployed, retired, other — reference.

Yet another set of literature identified a number of crucial macro-level variables in the development of trust and democracy, in attitude towards institutions and people,

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<sup>12</sup> Political orientation was the only variable with a high percentage of missing values (around 15%). To avoid losing a large part of the sample, we have flagged missing values adding an additional category to the political orientation variable for missing observations (coefficients not shown in the regressions but available from the authors), i.e. the variable used in the model had four categories: left, centre — reference —, right and missing).

as well as the role of historical institutional and social legacies in these phenomenon (e.g., Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Bowler and Karp 2004; Mishler and Rose 2001; Soroka and Wlezien 2014; Lankina et. al. 2019b; Libman and Obydenkova 2019b; Van Erkel and Van Der Meer 2016; Uslaner 2017). Thus, we include the following country-level control variables: the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), the GDP per capita, the percentage of respondents living in rural areas and the percentage of respondents with a high level of education.

The CPI is an index calculated by Transparency International<sup>13</sup> to rank countries based on how corrupt a country's public sector is perceived to be. It is a composite index, drawing on corruption-related data from expert and business surveys carried out by a variety of independent and reputable institutions. The CPI ranges between 0 (highly corrupt) and 10 (very clean) for the years 1995–2011; the range is between 0–100 from 2012 on. We rescaled the data on CPI so that it consistently ranges from 0 to 10 for all considered years. The index has been found to have acceptable validity and has been used in a number of studies (see, for example, Anderson and Tverdova, 2003).

Data on GDP per capita was obtained from the World Bank (<http://data.worldbank.org>). The other two macro-level indicators were calculated from the ESS data, aggregating individual responses. All macro-level indicators were measured for each respondent in the year of interview. Finally, we also controlled for round fixed effects to control for period effects.

## Methods

Our data show a three-level structure with individual nested within country-rounds nested within countries. We therefore used multilevel linear regression models to take into account the fact that observations within higher level units are not independent, as it is more likely, for example, that two individuals randomly drawn from the same country have more similar outcomes than individuals randomly drawn from two different countries (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). Multilevel models, also known as random-effect models, are able to adjust standard errors for the within-cluster correlation (Snijders and Bosker, 2012). Multilevel models are adequate to model the

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<sup>13</sup> For more details on the methodology followed in the construction of the CPI and for downloading the data, see <http://www.transparency.org/>.



influence of independent variables measured at different levels simultaneously, as in our case, where we account for individual, country-round and the country level independent variables that influence trust in institutions.

To test the hypothesis that the relationship between trust and democracy is nonlinear, we estimate three-level regression models that include the squared value of the democracy indicator as an additional independent variable ( $Democracy^2$ ). More specifically, for each of the trust outcome variables we estimate the following model:

$$Trust_{ijk} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Democracy + \beta_2 Democracy^2 + \gamma X_{ijk} + \alpha Z_{jk} + a_j + u_{jk} + e_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

where the subscript  $ijk$  indicates a person  $i$  belonging to country-round  $j$  and country  $k$ ,  $Trust_{ijk}$  denotes the outcome (trust in the NP, the EU or the UN),  $X$  and  $Z$  represent the vectors of individual and country-round level control variables respectively (there are no purely country-level variables in our analyses),  $a_j$ ,  $u_{jk}$  and  $e_{ij}$  represent the error terms at the country, country-round and individual level respectively. The error terms are assumed to be uncorrelated and to be normally distributed, with zero mean and variance to be estimated.

Including a variable  $X$  and its square as independent variables is not problematic in principle. However, when  $X$  has a limited range  $X$  and  $X^2$  may show some degree of collinearity. To reduce collinearity and improve interpretation of results, in Model 1 the democracy indicator is centred on the value 3, representing approximately the central value of the democracy scale. In this way, the coefficient of democracy can be interpreted as its marginal effect when democracy is equal to the intermediate level of democracy. This linear transformation does not affect the coefficient (and standard error) of the squared term, nor the overall model fit.

A quadratic specification is not the only way to allow for a nonlinear effect of an independent variable. We have also considered adding cubic values of Democracy but there were never statistically significant, nor the model fit was improved. We also considered categorizing Democracy in three levels obtaining substantively similar findings.

We estimated the models separately for the period before the start of the crisis (the first three rounds), and following the start of the crisis (the last three rounds). To improve interpretation of results, we complement the estimation tables with graphical

representations of the predicted values of each of the outcome measure. These predictions were obtained with the command *margins* in Stata 13. Predictions were obtained by varying the democracy index over its range while for control variables we did not fix a specific value. In other words, the observed individuals' values of each control variable are used to calculate individuals' predicted outcome that are then averaged to obtain a mean predicted value. Predictions refer to the fixed portion of the model, i.e., the random effects are set at the mean values (0).

### **Multivariate Results**

Table 3 presents results from multilevel models allowing for the quadratic effect of democracy, estimated separately using the three rounds before the start of the economic crisis (2002–2007) and after (2008–2013).

The first and most important results we can find in Table 3 concerns the comparison between the effects of democracy in the two periods. Table 3 shows a significant effect of the quadratic value of democracy for all the three outcomes but only in the period before the start of the crisis. This means that before the start of the economic crisis we found a parabolic relationship between democracy and trust in national and international institutions.

However, it appears evident that the relationship between trust in institutions and democracy is rather different in the two periods. In fact, none of the coefficients of Democracy and of the quadratic term “Democracy<sup>2</sup>” are statistically significant in the period after the start of the economic crisis (models without the quadratic term also showed a non-significant effect of Democracy). This suggests that after the start of the economic crisis we do not find evidence of a statistically significant relationship between Democracy and trust in institutions.

To better understand the implications of the estimated models we plot the predicted values of trust in the NP, the EU parliament and the UN in Figure 1 by the level of democracy in the country separately for the periods before and after the start of the economic crisis.

Graphs at the top of Figure 1 refer to trust in the national parliament. The right-hand side graph at the top of Figure 1 shows that the relationship between trust in NP and democracy before the start of the crisis follows a concave parabola. If we consider the lowest level of democracy, as the level of democracy increases, trust also tends to

increase, but only up to the point (intermediate levels of democracy: 3–4) where it starts to decrease as the level of democracy approaches that of the most democratic countries. In other words, individuals living in countries with intermediate levels of Democracy tend to report the highest levels of trust in their national parliament. The effect of Democracy seems quite substantially important. In fact, the predicted trust in NP changes from about 6 in country scoring 3 in the Democracy indicator to about 4.5 in the most democratic countries. In the period following the start of the crisis, predicted trust in the national parliament barely changes with the level of Democracy. Comparing the graphs for NP before and after the start of the crisis, it can be noticed that overall the level of trust in the national parliament decreased and especially so in countries with intermediate levels of democracy. This shift made all countries much more similar in terms of trust in the national parliament and the relationship between democracy and trust in NP practically disappeared.

Graphs on the middle of Figure 1 refer to trust in the European Parliament before (right) and after (left) the start of the economic crisis. As for trust in national parliament, and as we already noticed from Table 3, also for trust in EU before the start of the crisis shows a parabolic relationship with the level of democracy. However, from a substantive point of view the patterns are different because in the case of trust in the EU we can see that levels of trust tend to increase with the level of democracy, although at a decreasing rate (as shown by the convex parabola). In other words, individuals in most democratic countries (5-5.5 points) do not significantly differ in terms of their levels of trust in the EU as compared to individuals living in countries with intermediate levels of democracy (3-4). However, similarly to what we found for trust in the NP, also for trust in the EU we found a completely different pattern after the start of the economic crisis: in the second period analysed, again, the relationship between democracy and trust in the EU became not statistically significant (see Table 3) and average levels of trust in the EU appear to change very little with the level of democracy (Figure 1). In this case, the shift seems to be driven by the least democratic countries, which are the only ones where trust in the EU increased, while trust in NP substantially decreased.

Trust in the UN (bottom part of Figure 1) follows a similar pattern to that of trust in the EU. Again, the least democratic countries showed the lowest levels of trust in this “distal” institution before the start of the economic crisis, but in the second period this

was not anymore true and, if anything, the autocracies actually show slightly higher levels of trust in the UN than other countries. The relationship between democracy and trust in the UN was, however, not statistically significant (Table 3).

Results for individual-level control variables are very stable in all the considered models. For example, in Table 3 we observe a positive association between the level of education and trust in each of the three institutions. We also find that the unemployed report lower levels of trust on average than the employed, and that left-wing people report lower levels of trust on average than people ideologically oriented towards the centre. Age is negatively associated with all measures of trust. For gender, we do not find a consistent result for the three institutions: women tend to trust less than men in the NP but more in the European parliament, while we find opposite associations in the two considered periods for the effect of gender on trust in the UN.

With respect to the country-level independent variables, we find that a lower level of corruption perception (higher CPI) is positively and significantly associated with higher trust in NP and UN both before and after the start of the crisis, and in the EU but only after the start of the crisis.

## **Conclusion**

Our results points to the consideration that a comparative approach to trust in national and international institutions sheds light on the nature of political trust and the role of democracy. Most importantly, we found that the impact of democracy on all forms of institutional trust was not linear before the start of the economic crisis. We nevertheless demonstrated evidence of a nonlinear relationship between democracy and all three forms of institutional trust in different ways.

We found that the impact of the level of democracy plays a crucial role in the dynamics of trust in different institutions. More specifically, the impact of democracy on trust in national institutions followed an inverted U-shape relationship before the start of the economic crisis, with individuals in hybrid regimes holding higher trust levels. We do, however, observe an importance change after the start of the economic crisis. In the second period we analysed (2008-2013) the relationship between levels of democracy and trust in the national parliament disappeared, i.e. individuals tended to be similar in their average trust in NP across the different types of democracy or

autocracies. Our findings suggest that this is due to a reduction in trust in the NP that was particularly severe in hybrid regimes.

Countries with the lowest level of democracy (a score of 1-1.5) exhibited a level of trust in NP of about 5.3 points on average before the crisis, which reduced to about 4.8 on average afterwards. The states with the highest level of democracy (a score of 5–6) exhibited an average level of national trust of about 4.7 points before the crisis, reducing by more than half point. Finally, countries with intermediate levels of democracy (a score of 3–4) exhibited the most radical change in national trust, which reduced from 6 to 4 points on average.

As for trust in international institutions, we found that the impact of democracy on the dynamic of trust in both the EU and the UN exhibited strong similarities. Similar to national trust, the relationship between democracy and both types of trust in international institutions (the EU and the UN) was found to change over the course of the financial crisis from a nonlinear relationship to a practically and statistically insignificant relationship. Differently to what was found for trust in national parliament, trust in the most “distal” institutions appeared to have changed especially for the least democratic countries that were those with the lowest levels of trust in the EU and UN before the start of the economic crisis. Their levels of trust after the start of the crisis were very similar to those of hybrid regimes and democracies.

All in all, these findings show that changes in institutional trust took place mainly in the “hybrid” regimes (grey zone regimes that are neither democracies nor autocracies), for what trust in national institutions is concerned, and autocracies, for what concerns trust in international institutions. These are the societies that are “stacked in transition”: they are still experiencing regime fluctuation and therefore are more important in terms of the chances for possible future democratisation.

One limitation of our study was that our indicator of democracy showed relatively little variability over time as compared to its variability between countries. The variability of the democracy indicator between countries, instead, was not negligible and we were able to examine a range of countries that scored quite differently on the democracy indicator. Given the relatively smaller variability over time of the democracy indicator, we have not distinguished its longitudinal and cross-country components in our models and focussed on the *levels* of democracy. Future studies may

use longer time series of data and assess the differential effect of changes and levels of democracy.

Previous studies have stressed the important influence of democracy and corruption on political trust (e.g. Newton 2001; Van Erkel and Van Der Meer 2016; Uslaner 2017, 2018; Van der Meer 2017; Obydenkova and Arpino 2018). Although it was not the focus of our paper, in line with these studies we also found that higher corruption is associated with lower trust. Instead, our focus was on democracy level that was found to have differential effects before and after the start of the crisis. Thus, our findings also contribute to the emerging studies on the consequences of the Great Recession (e.g., Kumlin 2009; Armingeon and Ceka 2013, Van Erkel and Van Der Meer 2016, Van der Meer 2017; Uslaner 2018). For example, Van Erkel and Van Der Meer (2016) showed that the negative economic consequences of the economic recession largely contribute explaining the drop in trust in institutions observed during the same period. Our study suggests that not only trust was affected by the Great Recession but that the effect of democracy on trust changed after the start of the crisis, thus suggesting a different explanation for the decline of trust in national and international institutions. Previous studies have found that “the most significant determinant of trust and support for the EU is derived from evaluations of national politics and policy, which Europeans know far better than the remote political system of the EU” (Armingeon and Ceka 2013, 1). Our findings contribute to the previous findings through amplifying the notion of international trust beyond the exclusive focus on the EU and add important comparative findings with regard to trust in more distant international institutions such as the UN. More importantly, the paper discovers that the great recession impacted in a similar manner on the relationship between democracy and trust in both the EU and the UN. This has implications for a general concept of international trust as a critically different phenomenon from trust in national institutions.

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**Tables and graphs**

Table 1 – Country-level means and within-country standard deviations of trust in different institutions and level of democracy (ascending order of trust in national parliament)

Country	Trust in institutions						Democracy	
	National parliament		European parliament		United Nations		mean	sd
	mean	sd	mean	sd	mean	sd		
Bulgaria	2.2	2.4	4.5	3.0	4.7	3.1	4.6	0.2
Ukraine	2.4	2.5	3.8	3.0	3.8	3.1	3.7	0.5
Latvia	2.6	2.4	4.1	2.7	4.5	2.8	5.3	0.4
Kosovo	2.6	2.8	4.3	3.4	5.0	3.6	2.0	0.0
Croatia	2.6	2.3	3.5	2.5	3.9	2.7	4.7	0.3
Albania	3.0	3.2	6.9	3.2	7.3	3.1	3.5	0.0
Poland	3.1	2.2	4.6	2.4	5.3	2.5	5.5	0.2
Lithuania	3.2	2.3	4.8	2.6	5.0	2.7	5.5	0.0
Czech Republic	3.3	2.3	4.1	2.5	4.8	2.6	5.3	0.3
Russia	3.5	2.6	3.9	2.8	4.0	3.0	1.0	0.0
Portugal	3.5	2.4	4.1	2.4	4.7	2.5	5.5	0.0
Slovakia	3.6	2.3	4.6	2.4	4.9	2.5	5.5	0.0
Romania	3.6	2.6	5.7	2.9	5.8	2.9	4.5	0.0
Greece	3.7	2.7	4.4	2.8	3.7	2.8	4.9	0.3
Slovenia	3.8	2.4	4.5	2.5	4.7	2.6	5.5	0.0
Hungary	3.9	2.6	4.8	2.5	5.2	2.6	5.3	0.3
Israel	4.1	2.7	3.9	2.7	3.7	2.9	4.9	0.2
Ireland	4.2	2.4	4.8	2.4	5.6	2.4	5.5	0.0
Estonia	4.3	2.4	5.0	2.4	5.4	2.5	5.5	0.0
France	4.3	2.3	4.3	2.3	5.1	2.3	5.5	0.0
United Kingdom	4.3	2.4	3.5	2.3	5.0	2.4	5.5	0.0
Iceland	4.3	2.3	4.3	2.7	6.3	2.2	5.5	0.0
Italy	4.4	2.4	5.0	2.4	5.4	2.4	5.3	0.3
Germany	4.4	2.3	4.2	2.3	4.9	2.3	5.5	0.0
Spain	4.6	2.4	4.7	2.3	4.9	2.4	5.5	0.0
Cyprus	4.8	2.6	5.3	2.6	4.3	2.7	5.5	0.0
Belgium	4.8	2.2	5.1	2.2	5.3	2.3	5.5	0.0
Austria	4.9	2.4	4.1	2.5	4.6	2.6	5.5	0.0
Netherlands	5.2	2.0	4.8	2.0	5.5	1.9	5.5	0.0
Luxembourg	5.8	2.2	5.1	2.3	5.3	2.4	5.5	0.0
Switzerland	5.8	2.0	4.7	2.2	5.4	2.3	5.5	0.0
Sweden	5.9	2.2	4.5	2.2	6.4	2.1	5.5	0.0
Norway	5.9	2.2	4.8	2.0	6.8	1.9	5.5	0.0
Turkey	6.0	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.5	0.0
Finland	6.0	2.1	5.0	2.2	6.6	2.0	5.5	0.0
Denmark	6.3	2.1	5.0	2.2	6.5	2.1	5.5	0.0

Table 2 – Country-level Spearman rank correlation coefficients between trust in different institutions and democracy

Trust in:	National parliament	European parliament	United Nations
European Parliament	0.34		
United Nations	0.55	0.66	
Democracy	0.32	0.22	0.28

Note: all coefficients are significant at the 1% level.

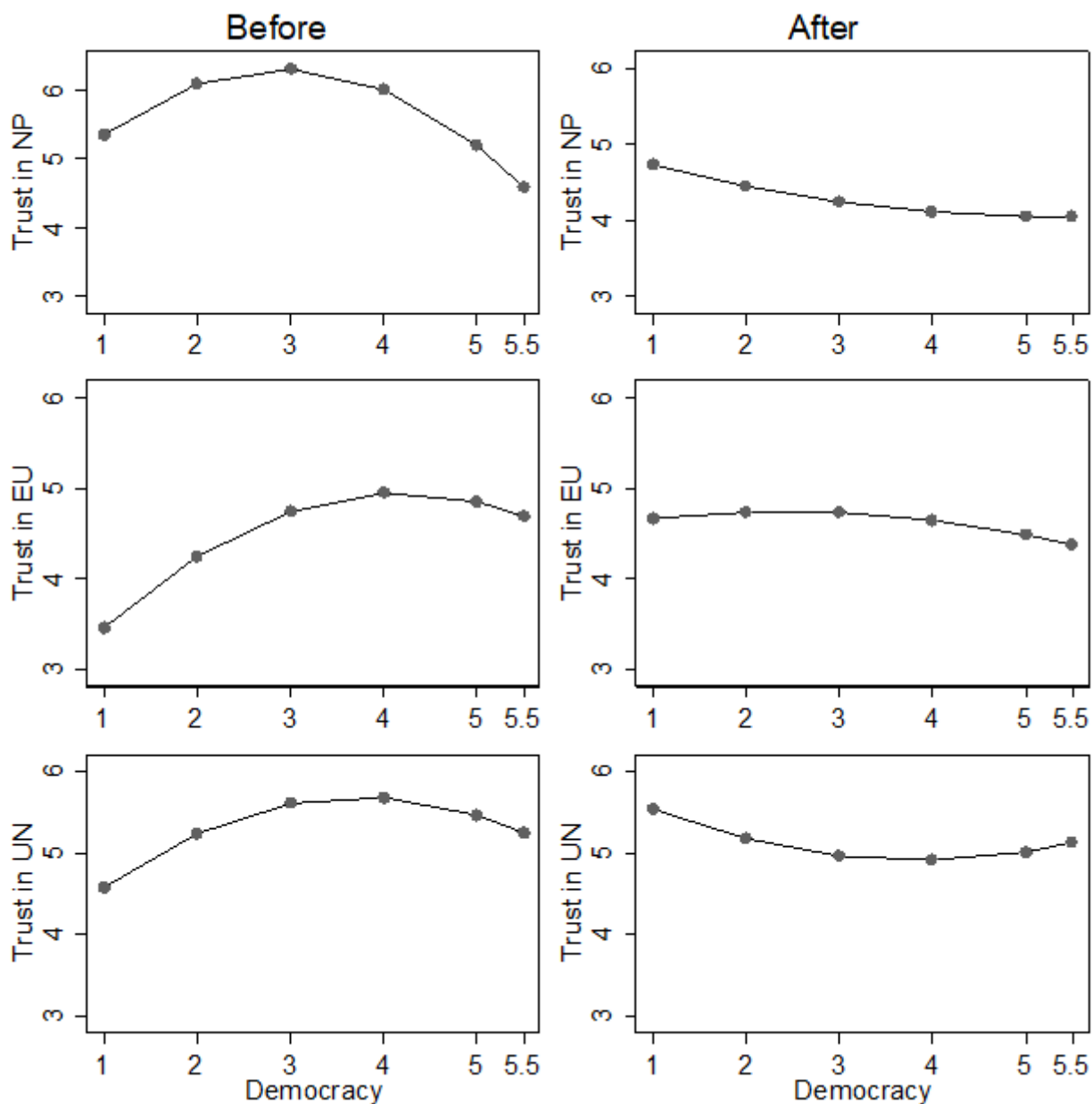
Table 3 – Regression estimates of multilevel models predicting trust in different institutions, before and after the start of the economic crisis

Independent variables	National Parliament		European Parliament		United Nations	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Democracy	-0.04 (0.19)	-0.17 (0.16)	0.35** (0.16)	-0.05 (0.16)	0.22 (0.19)	-0.13 (0.18)
Democracy <sup>2</sup>	-0.26*** (0.08)	0.04 (0.09)	-0.15* (0.08)	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.15** (0.07)	0.08 (0.09)
Age	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.14*** (0.01)	-0.15*** (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.01)
Female	-0.14*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
Low level of education	-0.05** (0.02)	-0.06** (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.06** (0.02)	-0.15*** (0.03)	-0.16*** (0.03)
High level of education	0.52*** (0.02)	0.47*** (0.02)	0.34*** (0.02)	0.36*** (0.02)	0.33*** (0.02)	0.35*** (0.02)
Unemployed	-0.38*** (0.03)	-0.37*** (0.03)	-0.33*** (0.03)	-0.28*** (0.03)	-0.36*** (0.04)	-0.32*** (0.03)
Retired	0.11*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.21*** (0.02)	0.15*** (0.03)	0.16*** (0.02)
In a partnership	0.02 (0.02)	0.04*** (0.01)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.01)
Living in a rural area	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)
Left	-0.32*** (0.02)	-0.40*** (0.02)	-0.23*** (0.02)	-0.30*** (0.02)	-0.22*** (0.03)	-0.24*** (0.02)
Right	0.20*** (0.02)	0.31*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.16*** (0.02)	0.22*** (0.02)
Corruption perception index	0.40*** (0.06)	0.34*** (0.07)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.12* (0.07)	0.20*** (0.06)	0.17** (0.07)
GDP per capita	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
% highly educated	-0.19 (0.57)	1.05** (0.50)	0.54 (0.53)	-0.04 (0.50)	0.64 (0.53)	-0.50 (0.45)
% living in rural areas	-0.05 (0.30)	0.14 (0.30)	-0.01 (0.29)	-0.11 (0.31)	0.26 (0.30)	-0.33 (0.30)
Member of the EU			0.02 (0.19)	0.23 (0.31)		
Constant	3.50*** (0.45)	1.80*** (0.40)	5.33*** (0.40)	4.55*** (0.39)	4.62*** (0.43)	4.60*** (0.42)
Variance components						
Country	0.32	0.34	0.28	0.30	0.42	0.60
	0.12	0.14	0.10	0.11	0.12	0.17
Country-wave	0.13	0.20	0.05	0.16	0.03	0.08
	0.03	0.05	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.02
Individual	5.27	5.34	5.54	5.86	5.90	6.05
	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02

N	107,894	129,886	107,894	129,886	107,894	129,886
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Note: \*  $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Figure 1 – Predicted trust in the National Parliament (NP), the EU parliament (EU) and the United Nations (UN) before and after the start of the economic crisis, by the level of democracy in the country.



Note: the graphs show predicted values of the outcomes using estimates from multilevel regression models presented in Table 3.



**Supplementary Material**

Table S.1 – Sample sizes by country and ESS round

Country	ESS rounds					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Albania						1,068
Austria	1,933	2,019	2,080			
Belgium	1,475	1,628	1,693	1,659	1,635	1,795
Bulgaria			849	1,619	1,825	1,627
Croatia				1,255	1,321	
Cyprus			784	1,013	856	938
Czech Republic	851	2,290		1,824	2,126	1,616
Denmark	1,241	1,268	1,295	1,393	1,392	1,217
Estonia		1,192	1,081		1,441	1,961
Finland	1,859	1,891	1,816	2,072		2,089
France			1,858	1,942	1,640	1,871
Germany	2,573	2,449	2,491	2,414	2,645	2,627
Greece	2,144	2,027		1,947	2,505	
Hungary	1,121	1,170	1,154	1,250	1,307	1,669
Iceland						533
Ireland	1,612	1,907	1,354	1,604	2,005	2,141
Israel	1,605			1,452	1,407	1,435
Italy	1,076	1,390				774
Kosovo						1,158
Latvia			1,512	1,667		
Lithuania						1,678
Luxembourg	964	1,243				
Netherlands	2,064	1,620	1,712	1,614	1,673	1,690
Norway	1,701	1,506	1,470	1,327	1,304	1,386
Poland	1,485	1,285	1,417	1,337	1,428	1,510
Portugal	1,135	1,733	1,725	1,834	1,710	1,862
Romania			1,644	1,731		
Russia			1,420	1,585	1,730	1,734
Slovakia		1,043	1,477	1,504	1,581	1,622
Slovenia	1,127	1,155	1,238	1,100	1,129	1,010
Spain	1,378	1,292	1,564	1,980	1,659	1,614
Sweden	1,656	1,664	1,553	1,565	1,228	1,653
Switzerland	1,659	1,713	1,487	1,451	1,265	1,278
Turkey		1,406		2,067		
Ukraine		1,176	1,257	1,202	1,205	1,286
United Kingdom	1,793	1,490	1,954	2,039	1,845	1,735

Note: an empty cell indicates that the country did not participate in that specific round.

Table S.2 – Country-level means of control variables

Country	Corruption perception index	GDP per capita	% highly educated	% living in rural areas
Albania	3.2	3.8	11.9	41.7
Austria	8.4	37.8	9.7	40.1
Belgium	7.3	39.1	28.9	49.9
Bulgaria	3.8	6.3	20.4	35.7
Croatia	4.2	14.7	19.8	43.3
Cyprus	6.2	27.5	28.2	39.9
Czech Republic	4.3	14.3	12.0	27.8
Denmark	9.4	51.2	37.7	26.0
Estonia	6.5	14.1	28.9	26.3
Finland	9.3	41.3	27.1	39.7
France	7.1	40.2	27.9	34.5
Germany	7.9	36.9	25.0	29.0
Greece	3.9	23.5	19.5	27.2
Hungary	5.1	11.6	17.2	33.0
Iceland	8.0	41.7	27.0	21.7
Ireland	7.4	47.3	32.0	46.5
Israel	6.3	26.8	35.0	13.5
Italy	4.8	30.3	13.3	35.9
Kosovo	3.3	2.8	9.2	58.4
Latvia	4.7	12.0	22.1	30.3
Lithuania	5.7	14.0	24.8	29.6
Luxembourg	8.5	74.4	17.9	65.4
Netherlands	8.8	43.0	25.6	42.4
Norway	8.6	76.9	35.9	37.7
Poland	4.8	10.8	16.6	29.9
Portugal	6.3	19.6	10.9	30.2
Romania	3.7	7.7	12.7	45.6
Russia	2.4	10.6	50.8	18.3
Slovakia	4.5	14.8	14.3	45.8
Slovenia	6.3	21.0	16.1	58.4
Spain	6.6	27.5	20.1	39.9
Sweden	9.2	46.9	24.8	29.8
Switzerland	8.9	62.3	26.2	57.2
Turkey	4.1	8.4	9.6	19.9
Ukraine	2.5	2.9	49.6	34.1
United Kingdom	8.1	38.1	32.5	20.6