# A Comparative Case Study on Variations in Citizens' Relationship to the European Union.

*To what extent are there variations in the citizens' relationship to the European Union between federations and unitary Member States?*

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# Abstract

This thesis explores and assesses whether there are variations in the European citizens' relationship to the European Union (EU) in federations and unitary states. The underlying hypothesis stems from argumentation that exposure to, or rather socialization in a multi-level governance system, supposedly makes citizens socialized in federations more apt to engage in the politics surrounding the EU, given that this is conceptualized as another layer of governance. The problem formulation which guides this thesis is: *To what extent are there variations in the citizens' relationship to the EU between federations and unitary Member States?*

The thesis takes the form of a mixed-methods longitudinal comparative case study. The chosen Member States are all three federations in the EU, Austria, Belgium, Germany, and three unitary states. Each federation was partnered with a unitary member state based on requirements pertaining to the age of EU membership and population. The three unitary states being France, the Netherlands and Sweden, meaning that Austria and Sweden were matched, Belgium and the Netherlands were matched, and Germany and France were matched together.

The thesis's literature review introduces and discusses a selection of the plethora of academic literature on the topic of legitimacy, regional integration, identity and identity creation, as well as state structure. But the literature review importantly also doubles as the theoretical point of entrance for the analysis. It is from the literature review and the conceptual framework that the three essential elements of analysis of citizen's relationship to the EU are uncovered, introduced and operationalized. Those three elements are voter turnout, attachment and identification, and support towards the EU.

A mixed methodology and mixed-methods approach is applied in order to answer the stipulated research question adequately. The data subjected to analysis stems from three main sources. Voter turnouts were retrieved from IDEA and data on public opinion from Eurobarometer. These two secondary data sources are, additionally, complimented by an expert interview.

Throughout the analysis, it is uncovered that there to a great but not exclusive extent tend to be a higher turnout for the EP elections in the analysed federations than their partnered unitary states, the discrepancy between voter turnout at the EP election and the national parliament election are also often, but not consistently smaller in the federations, France, for instance, is undoubtedly the analysed Member State with the smallest discrepancy between EP and national elections. However, the federations do not top overall voter turnout statistics. Finally, the results are discussed, and reasoning as to why we see some of the given results are offered. For the second and third element of the analysis, pertaining to attachment and identification as well as support for the EU, it is concluded that in the questions which were touching upon a civic form of identification there was, at least for the founding MS, a higher level in the federations than the unitary states.

But for most analysed elements, there are no tangible variations between the federations and the unitary states. Alternative explanations are accordingly taken into consideration throughout the thesis. In the thesis conclusion, it is suggested that more research needs to be conducted on the nature of decentralization in the EU's Member States, what additional cases might tell us, but also that additional aspects such as trust in the EU's institutions, can be of interest in the analysis of citizens' relationship to the EU.

**Keywords:** Longitudinal Comparative Case Study, European Union, Federations, Unitary States, European Citizens, Voter Turnout, Public Opinion.

# Contents

# Abbreviations

Appendix – Appex.

Austria – AT

Belgium – BE

Commission of the European Communities - CEC

European Commission - EC

European Parliament - EP

European Union - EU

France - FR

Germany – DE

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance - IDEA

Member States - MS

The Netherlands - NL

Sweden - SE

# 1. Introduction

"[T]he process of integration will yield a new national consciousness of the new political community uniting the erstwhile nations which had joined." (Haas, 1958/2004, p.14). Such were the words of one of the first scholars attempting to theorise political and regional integration, materializing in Western Europe after WWII (Jensen, 2016, pp. 56-57). Deutsch et al., a year prior to Haas, also state that political integration requires a community, a "we-feeling" (Nelsen & Stubb, 2014, pp. 125-144; Dosenrode, 2009).

This notion of a new national consciousness or we-feeling feeds into a grander debate, where solidarity, identity, and attachment play a significant part. Solidarity was also a pivotal point in the Schuman Declaration, stating that "Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity." (Schuman, 1950).[1] In the last 70 years, we have seen evermore political integration in depth and width.[2] Since Schuman's declaration and the subsequent establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, the community, now the European Union (EU), has grown from six Member States (MS) to 28 (Nugent, 2010, p. 20). After Brexit, the number of MS went down to 27.

Many questions arise when researching the EU: What makes states engage in integration projects like the EU? What drives half of the eligible EU citizen to vote in the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections (EP, 2019)? In essence, what is it that makes the EU legitimate? The EU's motto – "United in Diversity" seems to be rather fitting for the 27, in various ways, heterogeneous states (EU, 2020). From Finland in the north to Cypress in the

[1] **The Schuman Declaration** is a speech given by the French Foreign Minister Schuman on May 9th, 1950, proposing to take action to create a united Europe, particularly establishing friendly relations between FR and (West)Germany (Schuman, 1950).

[2] There has been one significant setback regarding the MS with Brexit.

south, with more than 80 million Germans to just about half a million Maltese, European citizens are indeed from diverse backgrounds (Eurostat, 2021).[3] We can draw on Benedict Anderson's (1983/2016) ideas, suggesting that our political communities exist as a social construct that is imagined (p. 6).

Regarding the European citizens' relationship to the EU, Clark (2015) writes in the article "The Federalist Perspective in Elections to the European Parliament" that a European citizen's experience "with decentralized governance may also motivate greater interest in EP elections and prompt EU-conscious voting." (2015, p. 538). He states that these individuals "are more likely to participate in EP elections." (2015, p. 538).[4] His argumentation stems from theorizing "that individuals from decentralized political systems are more keenly aware of the distribution of functional responsibilities within multilevel systems such as the EU, more likely to understand that such a system requires citizens to monitor and respond to decisions at multiple levels of governance, and are thus more likely to vote on EU-relevant concerns in EP elections." (Clark, 2015, p. 524). The argumentation stems from a belief that political socialization,[5] i.e. whether or not the one has received schooling in or come into contact with a multilevel political system, affects the citizens voting behaviour in EP

[3] Despite the diversity amongst the EU MS, the states all belong to what Huntington (1993) describes as the western civilization and the European sub civilization. I.e. "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have" (p. 24). Although the EU's motto is "United in Diversity", there is arguably more that unite than divide us. This is the case for the vast majority of the EU MS, but a handful of the MS, for instance, Greece, can be argued as part of Huntington's (1993) Slavic-Orthodox civilisation. This is an important notion to keep in mind when applying Huntington's (1993) ideas of civilisations and the clash thereof because he theorises that the conflicts that we will encounter in the future will be at the fault lines of these civilizations (pp. 25-31). This thesis will speak of the MS of the EU as belonging to the Western civilization since this is the case of most MS.

[4] Clark is aware that there are states with decentralized systems, which are not federations, given that the decentralized system is not protected by the given states constitution (Clark, 2015, p.525). One can say that all federations are decentralized states, but not all state with a degree of decentralization are federations. The focus is in this thesis is, however, on the federations.

[5] In this thesis, socialization will be defined following Checkel (2005), who describes it as "a process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community" in the manner that these rules and norms will come to be seen as natural or appropriate to the socialized individual (p. 804). Socialization is, therefore, a broad concept, and there can be many socialization processes going on at the same time.

elections. Clark (2015) even suggests that the mentality or the civic duty of people living in decentralized systems "may contribute to more active participation at the European level." (p. 529). It should furthermore be added that federations are perceived as entailing a "higher possibility of participation for the population" (Dosenrode, 2018, p. 6). It is noticeable, and a point of critique, that Clark (2015), in his paper, only draws upon empirical material from the 2009 EP election. He thereby misses any longitudinal observations and conclusions.

Bergbauer (2018) suggests that individuals' socialization process does involve the political institutions of their state (p. 34). However, she makes no arguments related to how this affects the interaction with a supranational layer of government. But the fundamental idea that exposure to multiple levels of government provides for a greater familiarity with a multi-level governance structure is logical.

That citizens socialised in decentralized systems are more likely to vote in the EP election is ever more relevant to the academic debates revolving around integration, identification and democratic deficits. If we follow Clark's (2015) arguments, we must consider if the high interest in the EP election from decentralized states perhaps comes with greater implications. For as Deligiaouri (2019) states then EP elections constitute "the highest democratic process of European demos" as such "Elections speak to the heart of democracy and European Parliament elections are the most important moment in pan-European representative democracy allowing citizens to have a direct say for European issues.".

One can then wonder if Clark's observation offers implications regarding the European demos or European identity. In the most simple form, demos refers to a people, understood in a political manner, as in the more tangible character of 'the public' or 'citizens' (Jolly, 2005, p. 12). The demos should be understood as the subject of a given democracy. Wiesner (2019) argues that one can interpret demos as meaning the democratic identity (pp.

222-224). In this thesis, European demos will be used somewhat interchangeably with the word European identity. This choice is made based on Weiler et al.'s (1995) description of the demos as "the people of the polity, the Volk" the demos, furthermore, relies on self-identity (pp. 10-11). The emphasis on self-identification is mirrored in Wiesner's (2019) writings (pp. 222-224). As well as on Anderson's (1983/2016) notion of imagined communities.[6] An important question is then if citizens of federations, given that federations embody a decentralized system, although there are decentralized unitary states, feel more European than other EU citizens? If the socialization process deriving from the state structure has a tangible effect on the perception of and relationship to the EU.

It is with an outset in this puzzle that this thesis takes its departure. The problem formulation is: *To what extent are there variations in the citizens' relationship to the European Union between federations and unitary Member States?* This thesis will undertake this task by focusing on a total of six EU MS, three that are federations and three that are not federations. The thesis thereby takes the format of a comparative case study. These six states being Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Germany (DE), all federations as stipulated by Clark (2015) and France (FR), the Netherlands (NL) and Sweden (SE) (p. 531).[7]

The thesis will be structured in the following manner. First, the literature review of the thesis offers a theoretical introduction to the many areas that the problem formulation touches on. Hereafter follows the methodology section, which also introduces more thoroughly the chosen cases. Section 4 offers the targeted and operationalized conceptual framework applied in the following analysis that also discusses the results. Finally, the

[6] For more elaboration, see section 2.3.

[7] For more on the case selection, see the methodology section.

conclusion provides a to the point answer to the aforementioned research question, as well as implications thereof.

Lastly, a few words ought to be mentioned regarding what this thesis will not explicitly touch upon. Despite having a key focus on federations in the EU, it is not a point of this thesis to contribute to the discussion of whether the EU itself constitutes a federation. Or whether it is on its way to becoming one, see, for instance, the arguments of Keil & Bransden (2016, pp. 228-230) or Burgess (2000, p. 280);[8] Whether the EU is *sui generis,* an "unidentified political object" as feared by Jacques Delors (1985) or yet another possibility. What is inherently imperative for this research project is that the thesis ascribes to the conceptualisation that the EU is *state-like.* As such, it has several of the characteristics which we associate with statehood (Dosenrode, 2012).

# 2. Literature Review

There are several areas and aspects of the academic literature one must explore to address the relevant matters adequately. This literature review will look upon elements such as political legitimacy, European integration, European identity and identity-creation.

The purpose of these pages is multiple. Any good research project would be incomplete without a thorough search and presentation of what is known, debated and contested. It seeks to highlight any knowledge gaps uncovered in the academic literature as well as provide clear definitions of some of the key concepts that will be used throughout the document. The problem formulation has guided this literature review. In this manner, the literature review also functions as a theory section, given that it introduces, contextualises

[8] Notably, the Schuman Declaration also speaks of the "foundation of a European federation" (Schuman, 1950).

and offers definitions of various matters related to the thesis. The texts and notions presented here have guided the direction and laid the foundation for the conceptual framework.

## 2.1 Communities and Legitimacy

The first topic explored is legitimacy, specifically, political legitimacy in relation to communities. According to Abromeit (2007), "The notion of legitimacy is a diffuse and complex one, usually combining the aspects of (formal) legality, (normative) acceptability and (empirical) acceptance of a system of government." (p.39). The diffuse nature makes the concept of legitimacy tricky. Because as Greene (2017) writes, "All states seek to be legitimate." (p. 295). However, the term legitimacy is imperative for researchers in social science. Therefore, it has also been discussed for more than two thousand years (Cerovac, 2020, p. 4). Schmitter (2010) also writes that:

> "'Legitimacy' is one of the most frequently used and misused concepts in political science. It ranks up there with 'power' in terms of how much it is needed, how difficult it is to define and how impossible it is to measure. Cynically, one is tempted to observe that it is precisely this ambiguity that makes it so useful to political scientists. Virtually any outcome can be "explained" (*ex post)* by invoking it – especially its absence – since no one can be sure that this might not have been the case." (p. 1).

Schmitter (2010) continues by stating that it is primarily the lack of legitimacy that researchers are interested in (p.1). One can argue that it is difficult to perceive the presence of legitimacy in a given policy as an object of study unless it is in connection with the lack of legitimacy in another polity. As Schmitter (2010) states, "I may not be able to define (or measure) it, but I know it when it is not there" (p. 1).

We know from Aristotle's writings that the state is built upon a society, or a community, and that this community has its roots in a need “for some good purpose; for an apparent good is the spring of all human actions” (Aristotle, 4th century b.c/2009, p. 21; Dosenrode, 2012, p.23).

Centuries later, Locke and Rousseau enlighten us on the relations between citizen and state. Locke (1689/1982) speaks of the consent of the governed in order to achieve the comforts or safety that community may bring about (p.58). And in Rousseau’s (1762/2002), work we find that the political community resembles the structures of the family, “the leader is the analogue of the father, while the people are like the children; and all, being born free and equal, give up their freedom only for their own advantage.” (p. 156).

Once the social contract is implemented or established, this contract linking citizens and state does, according to Bruter (2005), ensure that the state “is maintained implicitly legitimate because citizens choose to *identify* themselves to their community.” (pp-1-2). More than a hundred years after Rousseau, Lincoln (1863) famously affirms that government is “of the people, by the people, for the people”. We, here again, see the importance of the community.[9]

On the topic of the legitimacy of a given community Bauer (2020) argues that there is a connection between the citizens’ diffuse support of a given polity and the perceived legitimacy and trust in the given policy. This can take shape in various forms of actions, e.g., by abiding to the rules of the polity or showing respect to the authorities. The diffuse support can also be expressed through a we-feeling or self-identification (pp.16-17; See also section

[9] Risse (2014) puts the legitimacy and community debate into a European context by arguing that a European demos, the community/we-felling, provides the EU with legitimacy.

4.3). We hereby see a clear connection between legitimacy, support for and identification with the community.

One can hardly mention legitimacy without mentioning Weber, whose typology of legitimacy states three sources of legitimacy "charisma, tradition and legal rules" (Greene, 2017, p. 297). In defending Weber's standard of political legitimacy, Greene (2017) argues that Weber defines a legitimate rule based on the citizens' "belief about the rightfulness of the authority." (p. 298; Cerovac, 2020, p. 4). That people consent or accept the authority to use Locke's terminology. Thus, the actions of the rulers, for instance, the government, have to be interpreted as valid by the citizens in order for the polity to be legitimate (Greene, 2017, p. 299).

Weber's conceptualization of a community also varies significantly from the conceptualizations of Locke (1689/1982) and Rousseau (1762/2002). According to Greene (2017), he emphasizes that a political community is being upheld by using both threats and physical force (p. 300).

A contemporary definition is found in the writings of Cerovac (2020), legitimacy "is the *moral permissibility* of one agent's (e.g. the state's) issuing and enforcing its commands owning to the *process by which they were produced.*" (p. 3). Thus, we see a relation between the given communities' decision-making processes and the polity's actions related to these. One can link this to Weber's idea of legitimacy as originating from legal rules. From a Rousseauian perspective, one could argue that the rules of the community and the actors acting upon them are perceived as legitimate because citizens chose to identify with the given system.

To sum up, states are based on a community, and communities are based on people who consent/show acceptance/support towards being governed.[10] Again, we return to Anderson's (1983/2016) notions referring to the communities as imagined (p.6). In imagining oneself as part of a community, one arguably not only consents to being a member of a given state or whichever shape a political community may take, but one also chooses, implicitly or explicitly, to identify with a certain community.

In relation to this thesis, it is of great interest that polities' legitimacy depends upon the communities and the members of the community's acceptance/consent. A manner in which this community can be expressed is through participation, for instance, by voting in elections. With Clark's (2015) article, we saw that for the 2009 EP election, citizens in federations and decentralized systems were more likely to vote in the EP election than their fellow EU citizens. The puzzle setting in motion this thesis was therefore rooted in a wonder related to whether the higher voter turnout could have more implicit implications. For instance, in regard to identification with being European.

## 2.2 Regional Integration

The coming pages will introduce and discuss the literature on European integration. The thesis, as a result of this, moves closer to the essence of the puzzle.

Having mentioned both the Neofunctionalists work of Haas (1958/2004) and the work of Deutsch et al. (Nelsen & Stubb, 2014, pp. 125-144; Dosenrode, 2009) in the introduction of this thesis, it ought to be highlighted that although both authors touch upon the community feeling as being a part of integration processes, they notably disagree on the question of what

[10] One can use Brexit as an example where the consent of the governed was withdrawn.

came first. In a contemporary work, Bauer (2020) argues that the we-feeling seen in political communities "cannot be taken for granted for all European citizens." p. 29.

To Haas (1958/2004), "integration will yield a new national consciousness", i.e. it will be brought about as a result of the integration process (p.14).[11] However, to Karl W. Deutsch et al., it is rather a prerequisite (Nelsen & Stubb, 2014, pp. 125-144; Dosenrode, 2009; Saurugger, 2014, pp. 20-22). In the following paragraphs, these two integration theories will be introduced.

Before elaborating further, one ought to offer a definition of regional integration. We are dealing with regional integration in Europe, and integration is to be understood as the process or processes that have brought about increasing levels of intensity and geographical spread of the EU and its organisational predecessors (Nugent, 2010, p. 27). There are several scholars who offer theoretical insight into how these processes have been brought about, of which two have already been mentioned. However, confusion about the concept of regional integration can occur, given that it is used interchangeably to describe both process and product (Dosenrode, 2010, p. 3).

With Deutsch et al.'s Transaction Analysis or Transactionalism, the focus was not on what transpired in Europe in the 1950s. Instead, their focus was on what historical examples could tell researchers (Nelsen & Stubb, 2014, p. 125). The key element of Transactionalism is the creation of security communities. A community is derived from "the network of transactions between" the states in question. The level of integration is dependent upon the communication, but also the previously mentioned we-feeling, which is also referred to as

[11] Through the idea of spill-over mechanisms and the transfer of importance to the EU, actors would start to orient their work towards this polity. Consequently, "firms, governments political parties and citizens would start to orient their expectations and political behaviour towards the EU." (Fligstein et al., 2012, p. 106).

cognitive adaptation (Saurugger, 2014, pp. 20-22). Therefore, one can say without communication (transactions), there is no community.

On the other hand, we have Neofunctionalism, theorized initially by Haas (1958/2004). While Deutsch et al. focused on historical examples, Haas was interested in the development in Europe in the early 1950s. Saurugger (2014) also refers to it as "The founding theory of European integration" (p. 35). The essential processes of Neofunctionalism are spill-over and the transfer of loyalty. Spill-over, the most 'famous' aspect of Neofunctionalism, theorizes how one measure of integration creates the pressure or the necessity for integration in another field; integration as a result of this spills over into another policy area. De Gaulle's actions leading to the Empty Chair Crisis in the 1960s proved a challenge for the Neofunctionalist school of thought. Another critical element of Neofunctionalism is the transfer of loyalty. Also referred to as elite socialization, one expects that societal elites, who are believed to be the engine of integration, in their actions are guiding not only their attention but also their loyalty to the EU. Concerning the elite socialization, Neofunctionalists also assume that the new centre of power will bring about the creation of supranational interest groups because these will also have an interest in targeting the EU's institutions (Saurugger, 2014, pp. 39-45; Jensen, 2019, pp. 58- 63).

It is argued that some community feeling, implicit or explicit, ought to be seen as a prerequisite. After all, Huntington's (1993) argues that civilizations do rely on groupings and identification (p. 24). In that manner, one would adhere to the we-feeling as something that was already existing, something that could easily be uncovered. Whether or not integration requires identity as a prerequisite is a significant point of discussion. As outlined, Haas (1958/2004) and Deutsch et al. (Nelsen & Stubb, 2014, pp. 125-144; Dosenrode, 2009) present polar opposite views on, if not causality, then essentially elements of processes relating to regional integration. We here clearly have a very contested stance on regional integration.

Another theory is Intergovernmentalism. It gained ground after the Empty Chair Crisis. The focus is on cooperation or pooled sovereignty. This is why Intergovernmentalists do not talk of integration as a process with a given direction. The key actor for scholars of Intergovernmentalism is the state (Saurugger, 2014, pp. 54-56; Cini, 2019, pp. 71-72). Another notably different aspect is the matter of identity; in both Nefunctionalism and Transactionalism, citizens or identity creation play a part, the same cannot be said of Intergovernmentalism (Kuhn, 2019, p. 1214).

From Intergovernmentalism came Liberal Intergovernmentalism, and as Saurugger (2014) quotes Schimmelfenning, "liberal intergovernmentalism (LI) is a theoretical "school" with no "disciples" and a single "teacher": Andrew Moravcsik." (p. 67). The key thought of Liberal Intergovernmentalism is simple, in that it considers "European integration first and foremost as a collective action seeking to optimize gains for each state." (Saurugger, 2014, p. 67). Integration is a result of calculated economic desires by the MS; it also stems from the actors, the states, and the national elites' rational choice. But importantly, states are not ascribed an essential role in Liberal Intergovernmentalism as in Intergovernmentalism, but when states engage in international affairs, it is always with the national preferences in mind (Saurugger, 2014, pp. 67-72).

Another integration theory that naturally ought to be included is Federalism. It was highlighted that the Schuman declaration speaks of the "foundation of a European federation" (Schuman, 1950). Not only will the insight into federalism as a process provide us with insight into an integration process that can help explain European integration. But it importantly provides us with insight into the construction of three of our analysed states.

There are two schools of federalist thought, a liberal and a realist. Key to the liberal school is a desire to be governed in the prescribed way, i.e. the decision is voluntary, implying a belief in multiple levels of governance. Actors engage in integration because of security or prosperity concerns or because there is a familiarity/or a geographical closeness amongst the integrating partners; the process is lastly triggered by an elite (Dosenrode, 2010, pp. 12- 15; Dosenrode, 2018, pp. 9-11). This thesis is, as mentioned, not an analysis of whether the regional integration process in Europe can be characterised as being federalist, but even with little insight into modern European history, one can 'tick-off' several of the presented boxes. The realist school of Federalism, on the other hand, emphasises security, military power and strength (Dosenrode, 2010, pp. 15-19; Dosenrode, 2018, pp. 11-14). Sabine Saurugger (2014) argues that federalism gains attention during treaty debates (p. 9). One can circle back to the Schuman declaration of 1950, referencing the possible creation of a European federation.

One can conclude that there is a debate about what comes first regarding identity and integration, whether identity is the product of the integration procedure or the other way around. Although this is an apparent disagreement between scholars working on regional integration, it has been established that community-feeling, familiarity, prosperity, and proximity are of great importance. This is one of the reasons why research related to attachment and identification is of great interest to scholars interested in the EU.

It should be noted that the European integration process has been a relatively long process, with ups and downs, but regardless of setbacks, the EU of today is vastly different from the Europe of our parents and grandparents. Although attention has been paid to the role of identity and we-feelings in this introduction of regional integration, Kuhn (2019) argues that (mass) identity played an insignificant role in the early days. Here, the focus was instead especially on the societal elites (p. 1213). However, the EU of today is very much a European

Union of European citizens, and more importantly, "citizens' collective identities have become increasingly relevant for European integration" given that the two concepts are related. In this manner, having a European identity implies that one supports European integration (Kuhn, 2019, pp. 1214-1215).

Lastly, a few words ought to be mentioned about how the author positions herself in relation to the mentioned integration theories. All of the theories have their value when approaching regional integration, and all have their points of critique, which one ought to be mindful of. The theories offer ideal explanations/approaches to regional integration. In reality, the answer might be a hybrid of the ideal types. In this thesis, there is a belief or interest in those theories that have the citizens or identity in mind, for example, Transactionalism, Neofunctionalism and Liberal Federalism.

## 2.3 European Identity and Identity Creation

Despite the importance that has already been expressed towards the community feeling, for several scholars, the European we, the European identity or the European demos is not something that existed in the beginning of the regional integration process in Europe or even now.[12] The following pages will therefore go into detail with the academic literature and debate surrounding the European demos and European identity, as well as the importance ascribed to these terms.[13]

[12] It is imperative to keep in mind that the European integration project started to take shape after WWII, meaning that the horrors of WWII and WWI were still, if not 'fresh' in peoples' memory, practically unavoidable.

[13] Bauer (2020) neatly sums up why social science scholars have an interest in the European identity,

> "If considering the EU a political regime that has to be evaluated by democratic standards, scholars have to include the concept of European identity and the perception of democratic quality on the European level when studying political attitudes towards Europe." (p. 28).

This means that the importance ascribed to European identity stems from an approach to the study of political entities.

In their famous article "European Democracy and Its Critique", Weiler et al. (1995) state that one cannot presuppose a European demos. They find a demos to be a prerequisite in order to have democratic rule. They base this argument partly on the grounds that European integration has been guided towards a "union among the *peoples* of Europe. Demoi, then rather than demos." (p.5). They conclude that, firstly, there is no European people, an argument which is later mirrored by Jolly (2007). Secondly, that integration does not create a European people. Third and lastly, they cement their view that without a demos, there is no democracy; in addition, they argue that:

> "If the European Parliament is not the representative of *a* people, if the territorial boundaries of the EU do not correspond to its political boundaries, than the writ of such a parliament has only slightly more legitimacy than the writ of an emperor." (Weiler et al., 1995, p. 15).[14]

With the debate of a European identity or a European demos, we are touching upon the EU's democratic nature. Whether we can even claim that this polity is democratically governed, whether the EU suffers from a democratic deficit.

Risse (2005) also claims that identification with the EU is a good hint about support for European integration (p. 295). Meaning that people that identify with the EU are more supportive of integration. We also see this connection between identification and support in the writings of Bauer (2020), who states that "The existence of a European identity is a prerequisite for complying with and consenting to majority decisions made on the EU level." (p. 41).[15] Therefore, it is interesting from an integration stand-point to uncover whether there

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[14] Here there is a strong association to the notions presented on the aspects relating to democracy, in particular to the importance of the 'people' which we see in Abraham Lincoln's (1863) speech.

[15] Bauer (2020) argues that there is empirical evidence to back the claim that "respondents that declare some form of European attachment are much more likely to support the EU in general." (p.42).

are variations between federations and unitary states. If, as Clark (2015) suggest that the experiences gained from being exposed to a system of multiple levels of government can affect one's relationship to the EU, then the European institution, as well as pro-European movements and organizations, ought to be interested in tapping into these notions, and exploring relevant opportunities for communications and dissemination.

Fligstein et al. (2012) adhere to the notions derived from Weiler et al. (1995) relating to European identity. They concretely state that "In the past ten years, and particular since 2007 with a worldwide financial crisis, the sense of 'Europeanness' (never strong to begin with) has seemed to lessen." (p.107). But Fligstein et al. (2012) are not without optimism regarding European identity building. In the light of how many hundreds of years it has taken to construct the nationalities within Europe, then the interaction of Europeans only really became tangible with the creation of the single market, meaning that concerning formative years one ought to talk of merely a few decades (p. 119).[16] This notion that European identity might be brought about over time is extremely interesting to consider; it presupposes an almost neo-functionalistic perception that an identity will be 'yielded' due to the process.

The presented notions have thus far been pessimistic. But Risse (2005) would argue strongly against the perception of seeing identity as a zero-sum game; based on Anderson's (1983/2016) Imagined Communities, one should approach the national identity and the European identity as two separated imagined communities that are interrelated (p. 295). One can therefore feel both Austrian/Belgian/Dutch/French/German/Swedish and so on while still feeling European. This is, for instance, materialised in the Eurobarometer surveys where the

[16] Time as a factor in identity creation is an interesting notion. We see it in the works of Fligstein et al. (2012) and Haas (1958/2004). This feeds into a conceptualization of identity creation as being a (socialization) process. To Bruter (2005) the time is of the essence. The longer a country has been a MS of the EU, the greater exposure to the effect of European integration (pp. 31-32). Shorrocks & de Gues (2019) also find in their study that the longer one has lived in an EU MS, the more positive one is of the given MS's EU membership.

country first, Europe/European second, is an answer that is often picked concerning identification (Risse, 2005, p. 295).

More recently, we see Wiesner (2019) arguing that the EU is in possession of a "limited *demos*" (p. 285). However, she argues that there are possibilities for making a stronger European demos. One possibility is to be achieved through EU decision-making, a topic that citizens are familiar with, which would break with the conceptualisation of the EU as an elite project (Wiesner, 2019, pp. 293-294).

In another overlap of demos and identity, Wiesner (2019) argues that a politicisation of the EU will lead to more identification from the citizens' side and increasing support for integration (p.295).

In relation to identification, one should think of multiple identities or loyalties; the notion of nested identities is an example of a contextualization. One should visualize identity as the Russian dolls, making the author of this thesis a Zealander, a Dane and a European. (Risse, 2005, pp. 295-296).[17] Returning to Huntington's (1993) notions about civilization, he argues that a civilization is our highest level of cultural identity. In his argumentation, he offers the example of "a Roman, an Italian, a Catholic, a Christian, a European, a Westerner" (p. 24). We here have another exemplification of how a nested identity can be visualized.

In the famous federalist work "The Federalist Papers", we can also interpret the following words of Hamilton (1788/2007) as adhering to the idea of nested identities:

> "It is a known fact in human nature, that its affections are commonly weak in proportion to the distance or diffusiveness of the object. Upon the same principle that

[17] **Nested identities** presuppose that one identity is nested in another, in the manner that Danish-ness is nested in being European. The identity provides the individual with the control, and therefore the more explicit identification is often with the smallest group. However, some exceptions exist, for instance, if symbols or rituals of a larger group becomes a focal point (Díez Medrano & Gutiérrez, 2001, pp. 757-758).

> a man is more attracted to his family than to his neighbourhood, to his neighbourhood than to the community at large, the people of each State would be apt to feel stronger bias towards their local government than towards the government of the Union; unless the force of that principle should be destroyed by a much better administration of the latter." (p. 131).

Although Hamilton's remarks here would give us reason to believe that in the European context, we would see support mainly for citizens nationality or region/federal state, there are hints that this might be subject to change. If the EU is functioning better than the MS do on their own.

Hamilton's writing partner Madison (1788/2007) also argues, in one of the Federalist Papers, that "the people should in future become more partial to the federal than to the State governments, the change can only result from such manifest and irresistible proofs of a better administration, as will overcome all their antecedent propensities." (p. 363). Going back to Clark's (2015) article about the socialization inherent in the exposure to a particular state system. One can play with the thought of whether citizens in federations are potentially predisposed to better assess the administrative layers and their functioning. This is another clear knowledge gap.

Another interpretation of multiple identities is the marble cake identities, i.e. there is a belief that various identities are mixed as different doughs are mixed to make a marble cake. Although Risse (2005) mentions that little research is conducted with an outset in this conceptualization, he argues that describing oneself as both a member of one's nation and European can be interpreted as a materialization of a marble cake identity (p. 296). One could argue that in the case of the Roman person presented above, it might be difficult, if not impossible, to separate the Italian identity from the Catholic identity and separate that from the Christian identity.

When addressing European identity, this thesis does not distinguish between the nested identities and the marble cake identities; they are both ideal types. Though this functions well as a way of theorising, it is perhaps not something that explicitly manifests itself in citizens. It is, however, a good visualization of how multiple identities can be interpreted.

The following paragraphs go into greater detail with what the academic debate tells us about the components of identity, i.e., what should researchers look for when analysing European identities.

A key aspect is self-identification, understood in the manner that a citizen actually identifies as belonging to a certain group, state etc. This is often referred to as a subjective manifestation of identity or, in Weiler et al.'s (1995) case, peoplehood (pp. 10-11; Huntington, 1993, p. 24). We also see it more implicitly stated in Fligstein et al.'s (2012) article when they address identity as partly arising from "the idea that a group of people accept a fundamental and consequential similarity that causes them to feel solidarity amongst themselves" (p. 108). The importance of self-identification is reiterated in Bauer's (2020) work when he states that in the simplest form, support for the EU can be seen in identification. Furthermore, he adds that "The existence of a collective European identity promotes the willingness to support the division of political labour within the perceived political community." (pp. 29-30). In line with Bauer (2020), one can in Bergbauer's (2018) work also read that: "*Individual identification with Europe refers to citizens' self-categorisation as European together with their evaluations of their membership in the*

*European collective and their affective attachment to Europe and other Europeans*." (p. 18). This means that self-identification feeds into a bigger picture related to the EU.

The importance of self-identification can also be found in Wiesner's (2019) work. She clarifies that identities are static and therefore subject to change, perhaps obvious but nonetheless essential notion to keep in mind (p. 226). For instance, in the case that European integration was not founded on a shared identity, it is still possible that this identity might develop in time, which is a reason as to why this thesis engages in a longitudinal comparative case study.

Similarly, Bruter (2005) tells us that our attention should be guided towards whether people *feel* European (pp. 4-21). It is believed that self-identification depends on or stems from several more tangible elements, such as language, habits/customs, history, religion, and values (Weiler et al., 1995, p. 11; Huntington, 1993, p. 24).

One can view identity from both an ethnic and a civic standpoint; the civic conception can be seen as taking a legal approach to identity; it concerns itself with citizenship, as well as, acceptance of a "legal, political and social system" (Fligstein et al., 2012, p. 112). The ethnic conception, on the other hand, stems from the aspects mentioned in the paragraph above, but it can also include "ancestry and membership in a dominant ethnic or racial group" (Fligtstein et al., 2012, p. 112).

To sum up, identity is a contested academic field. The text above has highlighted some key aspects and notions. The sharp divide between no belief in multiple identities and a belief in multiple identities with potential for shifting centres of identification is the cornerstone of the debate.

## 2.4 State Structure

If we circle back to the core reasoning behind undertaking this literature review and this thesis, the core puzzle was whether the state's organisation that people have been socialized under could be seen through variations in the citizens' relationship with the EU. It is hypothesized that citizens of federations, the embodiment of a decentralized system with multiple layers or levels of government, would show higher levels of attachment and identification because the citizens of these countries are predisposed via their political socialization processes to understand the EU as an extra layer. Therefore, this last element of the literature review will touch upon relevant matters related to federations and state structure.

What distinguishes federations from unitary states, or as states with some degree of decentralization, are multiple levels of government (at least two). One level must account for the whole of the state and the other for a regional level. There is furthermore "a formal constitutional distribution of legislative and executive authority and allocation of revenue sources between the two (or more) orders of government ensuring some areas of genuine autonomy for each government;" (Watts, 2016, p. 12). In addition to these, the political system must be designed to create provision for regional representation in the federations' decision-making processes. Here Watts (2016) mentions that this often takes the shape of a second chamber. The federations' constitutions can, furthermore, not be changed without significant backing from "the legislatures, governments or voters of the constituent units" (p. 12). Lastly, processes must have been put in place to foster intergovernmental cooperation in the areas where responsibilities overlap. Likewise, a judicial system must be put in place to handle any intergovernmental conflicts (Watts, 2016, pp. 12-13).

On the other hand, unitary states can be defined rather briefly as a state

> "in which local governments exercise only those powers granted to them by the central government. Under a unitary system, local governments are more accurately thought of as administrative units of the central government. Such states differ from federal states, in which sovereignty is divided between the national government and the regional governments." (Calhoun, 2002).

To put it differently, while the local governments can hold some power, this is an expression of what is bestowed upon them from the central government and not constitutionally protected, as is the case with federations. Because of this, we might also see states, which we would describe as unitary, having decentralized features.[18]

Having now defined federations and unitary states, one element ought to be clarified. When this project refers to state structures as being made up of multiple levels, then it is to be understood as one would see it in a federation. It is not to be confused with the concept of multi-level governance, a term that has been coined to explain matters pertaining to decision-making in the EU (Bache & Flinders, 2004, p. 3).

It is the interplay of all the notions, debates, knowledge gaps, and definitions presented in the previous sections of this literature review that are of the greatest interest. The purpose of this literature review was to set the scene and contextualize the thesis within the myriads of literature written on topics of legitimacy, community, integration, identity, and so on.

To sum up, we know that a community feeling, an identity, a demos, is an essential aspect of creating legitimacy for any polity structure; the polity depends upon the citizens'

[18] The forthcoming methodology section will highlight whether the unitary systems contain decentralized elements. Notably, Marks & Hooghe (2004) argue that evidence would suggest a rising decentralization. They argue that no European country has become more centralized since 1950 (p. 23).

consent. Whether identity can be created as a result of regional integration or if it is a prerequisite is of great debate. European identity and identity creation are the most debated topics brought up in this literature review. But we additionally know from Hamilton's and Madison's (1788/2007) writings that attachment to the various level of government can be subject to change, so if attachment to the EU is low, this is not necessarily definite.

# 3. Methodology

The object of the study is the citizens' relationship to the EU; interest has been taken to uncover whether we as researchers can pinpoint any variations between unitary states and federations. Furthermore, it has been argued that socialization experiences, i.e., being socialized in a multi-level government structure, should make the individual more susceptible to the multi-level government system. Therefore, this thesis has an underlying hypothesis that if this research uncovers differences between unitary and federal states, then there is an expectation that the citizens' relationship to the EU is 'better' in the federations.

The following section seeks to elaborate on the driving forces behind undertaking this research and introduce the epistemological and ontological philosophical choices. The section after that addresses the choice of doing a longitudinal comparative case study. As mentioned previously, this thesis undertakes a comparative case study of all the federations in the EU, AT, BE and DE, and three unitary states, namely FR, NL and SE (Library of Congrees, 2020; Groenleer & Hendriks, 2020, p. 195; Lidström, 2020, pp. 138-140). The methodology provides a section on the chosen methods, statistical analysis and thematic analysis, and a section on the data and data collection. Lastly, this methodology section concludes with a section on reliability, replicability, validity, and critique.

## 3.1 Research Approach

This thesis takes its outset in a question-driven approach, as described by O'Leary (2014). In social science research, researchers often deal with the quantitative-qualitative divide — each with assumptions regarding paradigms and methods. Quantitative research is associated with a positivist epistemology, while qualitative research is associated with an interpretivist epistemology. However, O'Leary argues that these traditional assumptions can be limiting for researchers, "After all, isn't quantitative data simply a coding system for qualitative concepts? And to think that you need to avoid counting or tallying in a 'qualitative' study is ludicrous" (pp. 120-121).

This methodology section is not a battle cry for abolishing decades worth of research traditions. Rather an encouragement to close the gap on the divide between the two traditions. To make sure that "methodological choice should always be based on what is useful in answering your questions, regardless of any philosophical or paradigmatic assumption" (O'Leary, 2014, p. 147). When stating that this thesis takes its outset in a question-driven approach, what is meant is that the problem formulation *To what extent are there variations in the citizens' relationship to the European Union between federations and unitary Member States?* dictates the research strategy (O'Leary, 2014, p. 149).

This is the reasoning behind why this project employs a mixed methodology that bridges the qualitative-quantitative divide. It is believed that this will help to construct the most thorough research design. In addition, using a mixed methodology will allow one to gain better insight into, for instance, voter turnout by including qualitative elements (O'Leary, 2014, pp. 146-148).[19]

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[19] A brief definition of **qualitative and quantitative methods** and data should be offered. Lamont (2015) defines qualitative methods as "data collection and analysis techniques or strategies that rely upon the collection of, and analysis of, non-numeric data." this data can text-based or more abstract 'text' such as art (pp. 78-79).

The epistemological choice is the matter of how the social world should be studied, and the ontological assumption addresses the nature of the entities investigated. These two lays the foundation for this project (Lamont, 2015, pp. 24-27; Bryman, 2016, pp. 24-31). It is also here that the mixed methodology becomes tangible. Even though most of this thesis will consist of analysing data in the form of statistics, which one would typically associate with quantitative methods and, therefore, also a positivist epistemology, this thesis does ascribe to an interpretivist epistemology (Bryman, 2016, pp. 24-31).

An interpretivist epistemology implies that people, institutions etc., are inherently different from elements studied in the natural sciences, and therefore researchers must also approach them differently. Interpretivism emphasises interpreting and understanding the actions of the social actors; an interpretivist epistemology is also in stark opposition to a positivist epistemology (Lamont, 2015, p.19). There is a double interpretation in social research as "the researcher provides an interpretation of others' interpretations". Here one can even add a third layer of interpretation when a researcher also applies the given theory and concepts to social entities (Bryman, 2016, pp. 24-31). The choice for adhering to an interpretivist epistemology comes from the wish of "understanding social meaning embedded within international politics" (Lamont, 2015, p. 19).

This thesis ascribes to a constructivist/ constructionist ontology; the ontological divide here is "whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors." (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). The belief is that social actors construct the social world. Therefore, the social world is also continuously

Quantitative methods are defined as referring to "data collection and analysis strategies where numeric data is collected in order to determine whether or not a relationship exists between two or more variables." (Lamont, 2015, p. 97).

subject to reconstruction. The social world is, therefore, also not separate from the social actors (Bryman, 2016, pp. 28-31). There is an adherence to this because even though a substantial part of the material is numerical, the data reflect citizens' political beliefs and feelings. These, like the rest of the social world, are the results of ever ongoing construction.

According to Bryman (2016), there is a perceived clear relationship between the interpretivist epistemology and the constructivist ontology. But they are also perceived as entailing an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research. i.e., that there is a belief that research helps generating theories rather than testing them (pp. 31-34). An inductive approach generates theory by generalizing from empirical observations (Elliot et al., 2016). But one might, as a researcher, find that there lacks guidance in finding and handling one's data. In this thesis, the relationship to theory will be a deductive approach rather than an inductive approach.

This thesis uses the notion of conceptual framework instead of theoretical framework. The reasoning behind choosing this is to avoid misunderstandings, given that theory has at least two interpretations. One, referring to the application of the more abstract, grand theories or the less abstract middle-range theories. This is not the case in this project, although it relies on aspects from middle-range theories. The second meaning is that theory is to be understood as referring to the academic literature that forms the background or underpinnings related to a specific area of enquiry (Bryman, 2016, pp. 18-21).

When stating that there is a deductive relationship between this research and the conceptual framework, this thesis ascribes to what Bryman (2016) refers to as the most common view of the relationship between theory and research (p.21). One also ascribes to the idea that theory guides the data collection and the analysis. The process can be described as a puzzle leading to the literature search, uncovering a conceptual framework that dictates data collection and handling. Bryman (2016) writes that in the purest sense, the deductive approach also entails a revision of the theory, but it is not an imperative element of the process (p.21). While this thesis will engage in a discussion of the implications of the results, it will per se not engage in an explicit revision of the conceptual framework.

In the literature search, three elements were uncovered as essential to answering the research question. Those being voter turnout, attachment & identification, and support for the EU. In section 4, each will have its own designated subsection, which elaborates upon the element and offers an operationalisation of how each of the given elements will be applied in the analysis.

The nature of this research is a longitudinal comparative case study amongst the six chosen MS. The coming section will discuss what a case study is and how one can use it. Thereafter follows a subsection introducing each of the MS.

## 3.2 The Case Study

A case study can simply be described as a thorough or intense study of a case. The use of case studies in this thesis draws on both elements from a longitudinal and a comparative case study. Both aspects will therefore be elaborated upon and discussed before the subsections on the chosen cases.

The choice of doing a case study stems from the problem formulation. One can here again see an adherence to the question-driven approach. To assess the variation in the citizens' relationship to the EU in federations and unitary states, one would naturally have to look at precisely that. And one would need to compare the two state structures to uncover variations (Bryman, 2016, pp. 60-64; Yin, 2018, p. 16).

The choice of the cases to be subjected to analysis was therefore easy. All of the federations in the EU were chosen, AT, BE and DE. The selected cases hereby fulfil Yin's (2018) requirement of being clearly defined (pp. 26-31). Each was matched with a unitary state. There were two requirements for the match: age of membership to the EU or its organisational predecessor and population size.

DE was paired with FR, both being founding members. They are furthermore the two highest populated MS in the EU.[20] BE and NL, also both founding members, were paired with each other. Even though BE's number of inhabitants is closer to that of, for instance, Greece, NL has been chosen for the comparative case study because they have been members for the same length of time. AT and SE were paired with each other. Both MS entered the EU in 1995 (EU, 2021b; Nugent, 2010, p. 35). It should be made clear that when using the words matched or paired, it is not to be interpreted that this thesis is solely going to analyse a federation and compare it to the opposing unitary state. The analysis will also look at the federations and compare them to each other.

The thesis is a comparative case study. In essence, a comparative case study can be described as consisting of at least two cases analyzed with the same methods. The comparison is believed to contribute with valuable insight into the studied cases (Bryman, 2016, pp. 64-66).

The thesis is inspired by the notions presented in Lijphart's article "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method". Because when having ascribed to the EU as state-like, one also ascribes to the perception that the EU can be approached with an outset in the myriad of academic literature that exists within the fields of political science.

[20] One must not forget that the German participation in the European regional integration was only undertaken by West Germany for a long period.

Lijphart (1971) argues that although the comparative method is not always the ideal choice, he is a strong supporter of both the statistical and experimental approaches. The comparative approach can be promising when dealing with a few cases since it allows for greater intensity in the given study (p. 685).[21] He furthermore argues that it is advisable for the chosen cases to be comparable. Simply speaking, one should not compare bananas and apples solely because one wishes to do so (Lijphart, 1971, p. 687; Mair, 2008, p. 177). This is why the two requirements were set up.

From Mair (2008), we can derive that much social science research is comparative in nature. "That is, most research is concerned with findings which are directly compared across countries or cases, or which can be tested against theories and inferences derived from such a comparison of countries and cases." (p. 177). He argues that this takes place either implicitly or explicitly (Mair, 2008, p. 177). I.e., little information is of use if it cannot be contextualised in relation to something.

Yin (2018) finds that multiple cases, case studies are advisable (p. 61). For the reason that they "have distinct advantages and disadvantages in comparison with single-case study designs. The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and overall multiple-case study is therefore regarded as being more robust." (Yin, 2018, p. 54).

In doing a comparative case study, researchers also counter some of the critiques that case studies are met with (Yin, 2018, p. 62). The main point of critique for a single case, case study is that it is not possible to generalize anything from just one case, that the single case, for instance, a country, cannot tell us anything about the matter at hand (Bryman, 2016, p. 62; Yin, 2018, pp. 20-21).

[21] Lijphart (1971) argues that comparative methods are great for initial studies, from which grander research designs can be derived, for instance, a study containing all MS of the EU (p. 685).

Flyvbjerg (2011) would very much disagree with the statement that case studies cannot bring about generalizations. It all depends on what you are studying. In fact, he would also argue that formal generalizations are occasionally overrated. They are undoubtedly good, but there are other ways through which knowledge and scientific progress can be obtained. He furthermore states that "Knowledge may be transferable even where it is not formally generalizable." (pp. 304-305).

There are instances, especially regarding falsification, where the case study plays an important role in offering or debunking generalizations. For example, Flyvbjerg (2011) offers the idea that a single case of a black swan will 'destroy' the idea that all swans are white. Deviation can, following this logic, have significant consequences for generalizations (p. 305).

To summarise on what one can and cannot conclude from a case study, one might say that the case study approach has its points of critique. In the research process, these limitations are kept in mind, but it is also believed that some generalising conclusions can be drawn, as suggested by Flyvbjerg (2011). After all, the comparative study at hand does include every single case of federations within the EU.

A longitudinal approach implies that one includes the aspect of time. The thesis, therefore, analyses the same variables, in the same cases, in the same manner, at several points in time. In this thesis, the longitudinal approach has been chosen because it was argued that identity and, arguably, also support might be subject to change over time.

Concerning voter turnout, the EP elections very much set out a timeframe. They are held every fifth year, which has been the case since 1979. Regarding the other two elements of our analysis, a less stringent approach will be applied. From Yin's (2018) writings, one can derive that it is not necessary to work with predefined time intervals but instead "cover trends over an elongated period of time, following a developmental course of interest." (p. 51). The aim has been every fifth year to match the interval frequency set by the EP elections. Unfortunately, not all of the analysed questions have been asked with this frequency, so there are a few instances of longer intervals.

The following subsections will introduce the chosen cases. First, the three federations will be presented in the order of population size after that follows the unitary states. The purpose of these subsections is to provide us with bigger insight into the chosen cases before we commence the analysis. The subsections on the unitary states will also touch upon the degree of decentralization within the given country since this might have implications for the subsequent analysis.

### 3.2.1 Germany

(West)Germany was one of the founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community. DE has often been the driving engine for further integration together with FR (Nugent, 2010, pp. 256-258).

The Federal Republic of Germany was founded in 1949. It was formed by the western zones of occupation, whereas the eastern zone became known as the German Democratic Republic; unification took place in 1990 (Kaiser & Vogel, 2019, p. 88; Conradt, 1998, p. 215). "The federation was considerably more centralized at its foundation than other federations at the time of their birth. If compared to other federal states in 1950," but Kaiser & Vogel (2019) argue that it was, in fact, only moderately more centralized than other federations at the time (p. 89). In the past 70 years, the federation has undergone further centralization. Yet this centralization is described as small and mainly concerning administrative affairs (Kaiser & Vogel, 2019, p. 94).

German history suggests that we should actually look back a hundred years to see the first signs of a federation in DE. "The foundation of the Federal Republic revitalized a federal tradition that originated in the revolutionary constitution of 1849 but was only put into practice with the creation of Bismarck's federal national state in 1871." (Kaiser & Vogel, 2019, p. 88; see also Conradt, 1998, pp. 217-218).

The German system fulfils the previously stated definition of a federation. A parliament acts alongside the second chamber, representing the Länder (Kaiser & Vogel, 2019, p. 88; Conradt, 1998, pp. 228-230). This second chamber has, according to Kaiser & Vogel (2019), played a significant role in political decision making, however, this was halted in recent time with a reform in 2006 that affected the number of laws that needed approval by the second chamber. In regards to federalist characteristics, it merits being mentioned that "the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) act as a federal umpire and review the constitutionality" of both the federal laws and the laws of the member states (Kaiser & Vogel, 2019, p. 88).[22] Additionally, it should be mentioned that each Länder has its own parliament (Conradt, 1998, p. 228).

### 3.2.2 Belgium

BE is also one of the founding states of the European Coal and Steel Community and has, according to Nugent (2010), been a consistent supporter of European integration (p. 256).

BE became a state in 1830 (Farhat et al., 2020, p. 600). Initially, a unitary state, the socio-political cleavages between the French- and Dutch-speaking parts of the country constituted an ever-greater challenge to the unitary state throughout the 20th century. Demands for federalist reforms started to gain force in the 1960s (Farhat et al., 2020, pp. 608-609).

[22] The legislative powers of the German Länder lie mainly within the fields of "culture, education and law enforcement as well as media and natural resources." (Kaiser & Vogel, 2019, p. 89).

> "Federalism in Belgium took shape, from 1970 onward, with a systematic increase in the autonomy of the various subunits. In less than a decade between 1972 and 1978, the party system (based, until then, on nationwide coverage) split into two along linguistic lines" (Farhat et al., 2020, p. 610).

Therefore, the Belgian federal state is quite young. Currently, BE is made up of three regions Wallonia, Flanders and the Brussels region. In addition to these were established three cultural communities, a Flemish, a French and a German (Farhat et al., 2020, p. 610).

By the late 1980s, power was divided such that the regions had gained powers in areas such as "economy, energy, public works, transport, employment, scientific research, the environment and environmental planning". In contrast, the communities have powers on "cultural and personal welfare issues, education and language." (Witte, 2009a, p. 382). Both the regions and the communities have their parliaments and governments (Witte, 2009b, p. 451).

In all, there have been six rounds of constitutional reform. Farhat et al. (2020) write that these reforms have caused ever more competencies to be ascribed to the regions (p. 610). One here sees the multiple layers of government needed for a federation. In 1984, a court was also established specifically to handle matters pertaining to the relationship between the regions and the state. Around the same point in time, we also see the establishment of a two-chamber structure, thereby having the two chambers of representation (Witte, 2009a, pp.379-382).

Something uniquely interesting about BE is that it is the only chosen MS that practises mandatory voting. This will undoubtedly affect the analysis because it limits how much insight we can derive from the BE voter turnout numbers. Therefore, the main focus in the first section of the analysis will be on the other five chosen states (IDEA, 2021a; EU, 2021a). This has been chosen because it is limited how much one can derive from the turnout numbers in a country where one faces disenfranchisement and fines if one does not vote (IDEA, 2021a).

### 3.2.3 Austria

AT joined the EU in 1995, together with Finland and SE. Nugent (2010) writes that AT, together with Finland and SE, has never "created any major problems for the EU" (p. 259). However, this we should take with a grain of salt, for while this may be the case for parts of Austro-EU relations, one ought not to forget the Haider affair of 2000 or the 'membership' of the Frugal Four.[23]

AT was constituted as a federation in 1920, her parliament consisting of both a National Assembly and a Federal Council (Erk, 2004, pp. 5-6). Erk (2004) describes how the Austrian federation has experienced several centralizing processes in the last hundred years, to such an extent that some scholars speak of a "centralistic federation" (p. 1).

The 1920 constitution did give a lot of powers to the nine Länder. However, Erk (2004) argues that there has been a tendency towards centralizing measures, which have not been met with strong political opposition. He ascribes this to the lack of diversity between the citizens of AT. There is no "territorially based distinctiveness" which would demand a federal state structure (p.2). Additionally, Erk (2004) argues that politicians, interest groups and other political actors also guide their attention towards the national level rather than to the Länder (p. 2).

[23] The **Haider affair** arose from the 1999 Austrian parliament elections, where the right-wing Freedom Party, led by Haider, became the second-biggest party. The other EU MS promised and enacted sanctions towards AT if a government coalition including the Freedom Party was sworn in, which it was on the 4th of February 2000. All of the sanctions were lifted by the 12th of September the same year. The Haider affair was very much a matter of what is acceptable politically within the union. It was believed that the participation of a right-wing party in government was unacceptable (Leconte, 2005, pp. 620-622).

The Austrian Länder have "specific executive powers and maintain provincial parliaments with select legislative powers. They have their own provincial electoral authorities and electoral legislation." (Bundesministerium Inneres, 2021). These legislative powers relate to "spatial planning, environmental protection, planning law, transport" (European Committee of the Regions, 2021).

Given the centralist nature of the Austrian system, the assumption that the citizens are more apt to understand and participate in the politics of the EU is perhaps here challenged. For if AT is a federation on paper but not in action, the socialization experiences of the Austrian citizens can arguably be seen as resembling that of the citizens in a unitary state.

### 3.2.4 France

FR is another of the European Coal and Steel Community' founding members. The Empty Chair Crisis has already been mentioned as being a serious threat to the European integration project. However, Nugent (2010) writes that despite this incident, along with the no to the Constitutional Treaty, FR's relationship has predominantly been a positive one and does, as mentioned, make up half of the Franco-German driving engine for integration (pp. 256-258).

From the Library of Congress (2020), we know that "France is a unitary republic with a bicameral legislature composed of the National Assembly and the Senate." The members of the National Assembly are elected via direct elections, while the members of the Senate are elected from indirect elections. Indirect elections here entail that a group of municipal actors elects the senators. The bicameral system that exists in FR today dates back to the constitution of the Third Republic of 1875. The current constitution is from 1958.

The French system has a long history as a centralized system; the levels below the national governmental structures are, according to Safran (1998), administrative and do not play a decision-making role, except in very few matters on "housing, roads, welfare services, cultural programs, and educational services" which are dealt with by départments, each département is under the charge of a government official (pp. 147-152).

### 3.2.5 The Netherlands

NL is another of the founding members of the Coal and Steel Community. NL also rejected the Constitutional Treaty along with the French in 2005, but Nugent (2010) claims that despite this, NL is also a supporter of European Integration (p. 256).

> "The Netherlands is traditionally considered a decentralized unitary state: the central government provides uniformity through legislation and supervision, but provinces and municipalities, because of their proximity to citizens and their knowledge of local circumstances, possess a degree of autonomy to make and implement policy." (Groenleer & Hendriks, 2020, p. 195).

So briefly can NL's system be described. However, Groenleer & Hendriks (2020) argue that, in recent years, there has been a wave of decentralizing measures, such as matters pertaining to welfare and spatial planning (p. 196).

NL, as we know it today, came into existence in 1815 and was established as a monarchy. The French system inspired the then-new state structure. Despite NL having functioned as a confederacy consisting of seven provinces for years, it is perhaps from this 'mixed' background that the decentralized but unitary system takes its form (Groenleer & Hendriks, 2020, pp. 198-199).

### 3.2.6 Sweden

SE joined the EU together with AT and Finland in 1995. Nugent (2010) writes that despite the Swedish no to the Euro in 2003, the country has a positive relationship to the EU (p. 259).

SE is a decentralized unitary state. Lidström (2020) writes that there are strong forces at the local level that help to create a balance between the national and local levels. The local level has played a significant role, especially with creating the welfare state, where the local level functions as the implementing force. The local level's primary responsibilities in SE are health, social affairs, and education (pp. 138-140).

The present-day Swedish constitution originated in 1971 and came into force in 1974. This establishes a one-chamber system with a parliament whose members are directly elected (Scobbie, 2010, pp. 180-181).

## 3.3 Methods

Two methods of data analysis have been chosen; analysis using secondary statistical data and thematical analysis of expert interviews.

It is, therefore, also evident that this thesis uses a mixed-method approach. Mixed-methods refers to the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. As implied above, one of the chosen methods is quantitative, i.e. the statistical analysis, while the other is qualitative, i.e. the thematic analysis of expert interviews (Lamont, 2015, p. 115). The mixed-method approach has been chosen based on the belief that the chosen methods together offer us, as researchers, greater complementary insight into the matter at hand, namely variations in the relationship to the EU. Below each of the methods will be briefly introduced.

### 3.3.1 Statistic Analysis

The larger part of our analysis will rely upon the analysis of secondary statistics. The sources and reliability of the data will be discussed in greater detail in section 3.4. As will become apparent in the conceptual framework, all aspects of the outlined conceptual framework will entail handling quantitative data. The main points of interest are uncovering and tracking increases, decreases, patterns and discrepancies in voter turnout, attachment and identification, and support for the EU.

### 3.3.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis seeks to uncover themes related to the research question and the established conceptual framework in the conducted expert interview.

There are various interpretations of how to conduct a thematic analysis, but in this thesis, the guidelines are derived from Nowell et al.'s (2017) work. They argue that thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set". In this thesis, the thematic analysis will be used to analyse the expert interviews (p.2).

The process of doing a thematic analysis here adapted to this thesis is, familiarization of the data is the first step. Step two entails coding/uncovering themes, i.e. assigning themes to relevant sections of the data. In this research project, the codes derive from the conceptual framework. In analysing the interviews, attention is given to uncovering information on voter turnout, attachment & identification, and support, meaning that these act as overarching themes in the analytical approach (Nowell et al., 2017, pp. 4-11).

In the forthcoming analysis, this method will be visible in the manner in which aspects of the interviews will be brought in as supplementary data, shedding light on the analysed elements. This is why thematic analysis has been chosen, instead of, for instance, content analysis, which has a quantitative element or discourse, narrative or conversation analysis, because the focus is on what is said, rather than how or why it is said (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2019, ch. 9).

According to Nowell et al. (2017), the advantages of doing a thematic analysis are that it is accessible or easy to employ, as well as being an excellent method through which one can highlight the key findings in one's data (p. 2).

## 3.4 Data & Data Collection

There are three main sources of data for forthcoming analysis: voter turnouts originating from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), data on public opinion from Eurobarometer, and data in the form of expert interviews.

### 3.4.1 IDEA

"The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide." It aims to contribute with knowledge building regarding "electoral processes, constitution-building, democracy assessment, and political participation and representation." Part of this is a database on voter turnout (IDEA, 2021b).

One should always be critical of one's sources and always ask if the organisation behind any information would have any reasons to portray something in a given light. But the data we are gathering from IDEA are public, and IDEA mainly offers a straightforward way to collect the data. Moreover, the elections of interest here are all taking place in western Europe and are believed to be held in a free and fair manner. Additionally, no reason for fiddling with the numbers comes to mind. Vowles (2018), in fact, refers to IDEA's database as "valuable" when studying voter turnout (p. 58). Additionally, no critique of the IDEA has been uncovered.

### 3.4.2 Eurobarometer

The Eurobarometer was founded by the European Commission (EC) in 1973 and has conducted biannual surveys on public opinion ever since. A key element of the Eurobarometer surveys is that the survey questions are the same across the union allowing researchers to make comparisons union-wide (CVCE, 2021). In addition, several survey questions are also reoccurring, allowing researchers to trace developments over time (Höpner & Jurczyk, 2015, p. 1).

It is amazing that the EC provides us with such an extensive amount of material of the public's opinion on the EU. But, again, we should be critical of our sources of data. It would be tragic if researchers and politicians alike vested a degree of reliability in data that have no grounds in the real world.

Höpner & Jurczyk (2015), in their article tellingly titled "How the Eurobarometer blurs the Line between research and propaganda", argue that they have uncovered that the Eurobarometer surveys "*systemically steer responses in a pro-European, integration-friendly direction"* (p. 18). Höpner & Jurczyk (2015) are not alone in criticizing Eurobarometer. In December 2019, Bennike wrote that the number of invited participants who chose to participate in the survey is so low that it should make us question the validity of data presented in Eurobarometer.[24] The article gives an example from DE where only 15% of invited citizens decide to participate, while some social science scholars advocate for a participation rate around the 50% mark. Of the five surveys, Bennike (2019) looks at all have issues with their participation rates. This is a severe critique of the representativity of the data.

[24] Bennike (2019), is a journalist who focuses on EU related matters. He backs his critique with quotes from researchers at Copenhagen University, the University of Milan, and the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research.

The severity of the critique is possibly what prompted the EC to answer swiftly. Only two days after Bennike's (2019) article did EUobserver report that the EC had defended its research method. Notably, it was made clear that the participants, approximately 1000 per MS, are not actively informed, before agreeing to participate, that the survey is about the EU. A preconceived view of the EU from the participants should, hereby, be avoided (Zalan, 2019).

Clearly, Eurobarometer has its issues, but where else or how else would one come to be in possession of such a vast amount of data? One should not blindly forget the issues presented here, but the critique also does not merit a complete disregard of the Eurobarometer material. In this thesis, the specific questions drawn on will therefore also be approached critically when used in the analysis. This is done in order to reflect on and be critical of the material used.

### 3.4.3 Expert Interviews

The type of interview chosen in this thesis is the semi-structured interview because it allows for much greater room for the interviewees' perspectives to be elaborated upon than a quantitative interview. In other words, as an interviewer, one seeks to create a space where it is okay for the interviewee to get a bit off the track initially envisioned by the interviewer (Bryman, 2016, pp. 466-467; Lamont, 2015, p. 84).

Conducting a semi-structured interview implies that the interviewer has prepared a number of questions for the interview, i.e. an interview guide (see Appex. A). But in the semi-structured interview, there is room to be flexible (Bryman, 2016, p. 468). Of importance is the opportunity for the interviewees to be able to express how they "understand issues and events – that is, what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understating events, patterns, and forms of behaviour." (Bryman, 2016, p. 468). Thus, the interviews are conducted to supplement the quantitative data in the analysis. This is the reason why it has been decided to interview experts.

The expert interview entails interviewing a form of expert. Here the experts have been chosen because of

> "their specific contextual knowledge of a given research field or their internal knowledge of the structures, procedures and events in a given organization. In other words, experts serve as informants and possess knowledge otherwise not accessible to researchers." (Littig, 2009, p. 100).

In this case, the focus has been on researchers who work on areas related to the thesis's topic. Yet Littig (2009) writes that the term expert can be interpreted broadly to refer to anyone with access to specific knowledge of interest in the given research situation (p. 100). An additional requirement for finding the experts which was applied, in all but one case, was that the interviewee should either work in or originate from one of the analysed MS; the exception was a researcher working at Aalborg University, here proximity played a part.

Five researchers were invited for an interview. Five were invited due to time limitations. Three responded in the affirmative. Those three being Jørgen Goul Andersen, Peter Bursens and Theresa Kuhn, all professors of political science. Goul Andersen, from Aalborg University, was chosen based on his work on democracy and political participation (Goul Andersen, 2021). The conversation mainly offered background information, with an outset in the Danish context. The interview will therefore not be included. Bursens, from the University of Antwerp, was chosen based on his description of his research focus, "My research agenda focuses on European decision-making, Europeanization, federalism and democratic legitimacy of multi-level political systems." (Bursens, 2021). Finally, Kuhn, an Austrian citizen working at the University of Amsterdam, whose work has also been included in this project, was chosen based on her work with "cross-national survey analysis and experiments to study how citizens react to European integration and globalization in their attitudes and collective identities." (Kuhn, 2021). Kuhn, unfortunately, cancelled due to illness. The interviews were held throughout May via Microsoft Teams (see Appex. B for transcription of the Bursens interview).

## 3.5 Reliability, Replication, Validity and Critique

Reliability, replication and (internal and external) validity are key concepts within social science (Bryman, 2016, pp. 41-42; de Vaus, 2001, pp. 27-31). In this section, it will be discussed how this study fares in regards to the specific measurements. As a conclusion of this subsection and of the methodology section as a whole, a few alternative research designs will be briefly introduced and discussed.

Reliability is concerned with consistency, "whether the results of a study are repeatable" (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). Here we are faced with a peculiar situation because we would anticipate some fluctuations in all of the variables of the analysis, which goes against Bryman's (2016) idea that "if we administer a measure to a group and then readminister it, there will be little variation over time in the results obtained." (p. 157), (See also Ruane, 2005, pp. 67-69). But it has been argued throughout the literature review that there is a strong relationship between the variables chosen for the analysis.

The second concept is replication; a good research design must be replicable for other researchers (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). This quality criterium has been mitigated by having a sound methodology section and a clear conceptual framework that explicitly operationalises the given variables. The vast majority of data is also publicly available data. The only aspect of the study in which replication is out of the hands of the researchers is the expert interview. Firstly, it might not be possible to have the same experts participate in another round of interviews. Secondly, we cannot ignore the possibility that the expert might change their mind as the passing of time, new information, or events could change their perceptions. But aspects such as these would undoubtedly also be part of why one would want to replicate a study such as this. For example, the differences in voter turnout between a given election and the next election will be unchanged, but our interpretation of what has brought about this change will, possibly, be subject to developments throughout time. But this does not mean that the study is not replicable. It is not a laboratory experiment, and, as has been mentioned previously, the variables are subject to change in time.

The last concept, which is divided into two, is the concept of validity, which "is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research" (Bryman, 2016, p. 41).

Internal validity is concerned with whether the given research design can sustain the conclusions we draw from the analysis. A manner in which this has been mitigated is by including all of the federations in the EU. Unfortunately, limitations in time and length of this thesis prescribe that not all unitary states in the EU can be analysed, which would otherwise be ideal. Therefore, the thesis will avoid generalizations such as X because DE is a federation or Y because FR is a unitary state (de Vaus, 2001, pp. 27-28; Raune, 2005, pp. 63-67).

On the other hand, external validity is concerned with whether "results from a study can be generalized beyond the particular study" (de Vaus, 2001, p. 28). The generalizability of case studies was discussed in section 3.2, where it was concluded that one could draw conclusions from a case study. Yin (2018) also tells us that one should consider a case study as an "opportunity to shed empirical light on some theoretical concepts or principles." (p. 38).

In making this research design, several other approaches were also considered. Thus, a few words ought to be mentioned about these. It is no secret that feasibility has played a role in the choice of data and methods, as well as the limitations of time and resources. As was mentioned, Eurobarometer has been faced with its share of critique. Still, it was deemed better than endeavouring to survey upwards to a 1000 citizen pr case, as well as handling this data. This approach would also have left us without the longitudinal aspect. Still, one would have been in complete control of the questions asked. Another alternative would have been to conduct focus group interviews with citizens from the chosen MS. The question would again be how one would find participants for that. Interviewing and transcribing is also a time-consuming task which should also be kept in mind.

# 4. Conceptual Framework

The following pages elaborate on the conceptual framework which will be applied in the analysis. Three main elements have been uncovered as key from the literature review: voter turnout, attachment & identification, and lastly, support for the EU. Each of these variables has been chosen due to the insight into the citizens' relationship to the EU that it is believed to uncover. The three elements of the conceptual framework will be introduced one by one. Each subsection offers an introduction of why said variable has been chosen, a description of the variable, and an operationalization.

## 4.1 Voter Turnout

The first element of this conceptual framework is derived from Clark (2015), and it is inherently simple. This aspect of the conceptual framework concerns voter turnout in EP elections. In praxis, this means that the first part of our analysis will explore and assess the turnout for the EP and national parliament elections in the six chosen MS.

The voter turnout is chosen as a variable for several reasons, the first being that if we want to extend or support or challenge the research of Clark (2015), we have to address the same elements. In the introduction, it was criticised that Clark (2015) only looked at one EP election. Given that EP elections have been held every five years since 1979, there is plenty of data to assess, which will be the case in the forthcoming analysis (Burns, 2019).

A second reason for focusing on voter turnout is based on Fligstein et al.´s (2012) argumentation that "'ethno-European identity' is based on culture, which includes 'any form of common history; moral, religious, or ethnic traditions; philosophical, political, and moral norms and values'" (p. 113). Such a norm is voting. It is one, if not the key, political activity. We even have a tendency to associate citizenship with voting rights. If one is a citizen of a given country, one can, and should, vote. This opinion is mirrored in Vowles's (2018) writings, asserting, based on Dahl's writings, that not only is voting "a key conceptual element of democracy", a high voter turnout should also be perceived as being good (p. 59). One can argue that it is a stamp of approval from the citizens of the polity. On the other hand, Bauer (2020) argues that a low voter turnout, i.e. citizens absenting from voting, should be interpreted as a lack of support for the EU as a whole (p. 72). We here see a clear link to one of the other variables explored in this thesis.

The third reason for choosing voter turnout as a variable in our analysis is derived from Wiesner 's(2019) writings on demos, identity and political activity, for as she writes:

> "every political activity directed to the EU will actively contribute not only to the development of an active *demos,* but also a European identity and stronger democratisation. As Ankersmit has emphasised, the political act of representation creates the represented (Ankersmit 2002)." (p. 297).

We here see a clear coming together of some of the essential focal points of the thesis, in the manner that Wiesner (2019) presents voter turnout as feeding into both the demos and identity debate.

The difference between a national election to an EP election is essential to keep in mind. Every EU citizen is allowed to vote in the EP election in the country that they are residing in. This concretely means that a Dane living in BE would show up on the Belgian turnout numbers (Burns, 2019, pp. 185-186).[25]

Adding to this, we also include the notions of Rolfe (20129. In her book "Voter Turnout: A Social Theory of Political Participation", she argues that we should see voting as a response to the decisions that are made by our social surroundings. This means that if a citizen finds him/herself in a societal situation where people are engaging in political debates and talking about the upcoming election, and so forth, then the individual citizens are more likely to vote (p. 4).

The EP elections are perceived as second-order elections. The term refers to the idea that a given election is perceived to be of lesser importance to societal actors. The national parliament election or presidential election would often be perceived as the first-order election (Vowles, 2018, p. 61).

A notion from Vowles's (2018) writing pertains to federal and regional elections. Vowles writes that member state levels in federations, regional, and local elections are all also perceived as second-order elections compared to the national election (p. 61). This is why the EP elections' voter turnout are compared to the national turnout. It would have been of great interest to compare data on all the elections in the member states in a lengthier project, be it presidential, regional even municipal.

[25] This will have implications for our research. Every EU citizen can take residence in another MS. However, Eurostat tells us that in 2019 only 3.3% of 20-65-year-old Europeans reside in another country than their MS. It is believed that the analysis is still feasible and reliable. It is, after all, a small percentage (Eurostat, 2020). We ought to reflect on why it is then only 3.3%, given that it is one of the pivotal elements of European integration. One can argue that taking up residence in another country is a permanent choice. The EU offers an easier way for its citizens to travel internally, especially within the Schengen Area, for business, studying and leisure (EU, 2021c).

On the topic of second-order elections, Bauer (2020) writes that one of the reasons that the EP election is perceived as a second-order election pertains to the fact that EP elections do not result in the formation of a government (p. 75). But with the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in December 2009, the results of the EP election have to be taken into considerations when nominating the new commissioners (Burns, 2019, p. 179; Pavy**,** 2020). The EP elections should, therefore, theoretically speaking, be progressively evading the second-order election shadow that has followed it for many years. Thus, in the upcoming analysis, it would be expected that the voter turnout increased after the Lisbon Treaty came into force in 2014 and 2019.

With the enactment of the Lisbon Treaty, the EP was given an even more significant role in the EU's decision-making processes. The power of the EP has steadily increased since its direct elections were introduced in 1979. To Bauer (2020), the EP with its current powers is equal to the Council of the European Union (p.70).

The analysis will, whilst analysing the voter turnouts, investigate several aspects. How high or low are the chosen MS turnout compared to its 'partnered' MS, how the six chosen MS fair in relation to the EU average, as well as the discrepancy between the EP and national parliament elections. It will assess whether any conclusions can be drawn regarding particularities related to the federations. To provide as deep and thorough insight as possible, all EP elections will be subjected to analysis.[26]

To sum up, voter turnout is chosen as part of this theoretical framework because it is the prime empirical manifestation of political attachment to the analysed polity. This

[26] Belgium is the only one of our cases where voting is compulsory also in the EP elections, i.e., one would expect a high turnout from Belgians in elections, and it would be very telling if there was a low turnout. In AT, voting was mandatory in some of the Länder until 1992. This was the case for Tyrol, Voralberg and Styria. Voting has been compulsory in NL from 1917-1967, which is good to keep in mind since it may have had a socializing influence (IDEA, 2021a; EU, 2021a; Bundesministerium Inneres, 2021).

theoretical notion will be operationalized by assessing voter turnouts from the past EP elections.

## 4.2 Attachment and Identification

The following paragraphs will elaborate on why attachment and identification have been chosen. It shall touch upon how this contributes to answering this thesis research question, and lastly, this section of the conceptual framework will also offer an operationalization of the stipulated theoretical notions.

In the literature review, it was argued that a community feeling is essential for any community, also the EU. It was also argued that for a democracy to be viable, a demos or a volk needs to exist, and this demos needs to match the individual polity. In Wiesner's (2019) writing which was quoted above, we saw that political activity contributes to creating a European demos and a European identity (p. 297). She additionally argues that:

> "democratic institutions and procedures must be carried out and should also be actively filled by a democratic subject, a *demos*, that defines itself as such, at least to a minimum extent. This self-definition and self-identification of a democratic subject, then, can be termed democratic identity (see in detail Wiesner 2014), and it is necessary in a democratic polity for several reasons: it is a condition for political activity that the *demos* be at least conscious of the fact that it is linked to a respective polity - that is, people should consider themselves as members of that polity." (Wiesner, 2019, p. 223).

Wiesner (2019) argues that if the citizens do not identify or consider themselves as members of a polity, this will be tangibly evident in their lack of political activity. This means that we would expect that the citizens that define or consider themselves as European would also identify themselves as European when asked, and they would be in support of the EU. It is not necessary to exclusively feel European; as was mentioned in the literature review, some express identification with both their nationality and being European. We would, of course, also expect the opposite, anti-EU citizens living in the EU would be less likely to self-identify as European and less likely to be in support of the EU (pp. 223-224).

From Bauer (2020), we know that there is a connection between identifying with the EU or being European and showing support towards the EU (p.42). We thereby also have a link to the next part of the conceptual framework.

It is not only in the recent literature that we see that attachment and identification are of interest. Attachment is also a topic for two of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America, namely Hamilton (1788/2007) and Madison (1788/2007). We also derive it from later works such as that of Anderson (1983/2016) that individuals imagine themselves as belonging to a community despite the fact that they "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (p.6). Self-identification is also found very explicitly in Weiler et al.'s (1995) and Huntington (1993) writings. It is with an outset in all of these presented scholars' conviction that self-identification is imperative that this element has been chosen to form part of the conceptual framework in this thesis.

The following paragraph will touch upon how this concretely will come into play in our analysis. The Eurobarometer questions on which data will be drawn on are the reoccurring question of whether citizens feel like they are citizens of the EU. This specific question was chosen based on Wiesner's (2019) use of data as a way of assessing whether a European demos is in the making (p. 229). The analysis will also use data derived from the questions of how attached people are to the EU. As well as the questions concerning whether people would describe themselves via their nationality, their Europeanness or a mixture of both.

To sum up, it has been argued that attachment and identifications are key traits shown by the citizens towards their given polity. Furthermore, an operationalization of this element of the conceptual framework has been offered.

## 4.3 Support for the European Union

As has been the case in the two previous subsections of this conceptual framework, this subsection will also offer an explanation as to why support has been chosen, and it will cover what it entails to address and assess support for the EU. Additionally, this section will offer an operationalization detailing how this measure will be applied in the analysis.

As was elaborated upon in detail in section 2.1, the consent of the governed is essential for the community, which was seen in the writings of Locke (1689/1982). This consent can easily be translated into support or acceptance of the community. But as was highlighted in the section on regional integration, the term regional integration can be used to refer to both process and product. Therefore, it should be clarified that when speaking of integration in this context, we use the first conceptualization, i.e. what exists at the given point in time. An analysis of the second element risks becoming too vague, given that there is no universally acknowledged integration plan for the EU. Hence, interviewees rely on associations on which researchers have little information.

Having already argued that support or consent is essential for a community, one should take Wiesner's (2019) words into consideration. She argues that "politicization of integration ultimately leads to a redefinition of integration objectives and more identification of the citizens, hence an increase in support." (p. 295).

Bauer (2020) argues that there is a strong connection between the persistence of any given political system, in this case, the EU, and the support it receives from its citizens (p.2). Bauer (2020) outlines two types of support; one that is short-term titled specific support, and one that is long-term titled diffuse support. When analyzing the EU, it is the diffuse support, i.e. the more long-term support that is of interest. This is because it is perceived as being especially important for the persistence of the EU (p. 2). Diffuse support can draw upon latent, and of the polity favourable, associations within the citizens which can be used to accept policy outputs that are not having a negative impact on the specific support (Bauer, 2020, p. 16). One can argue that the average European citizen is not always on top of what is taking place in 'Brussels' and what this might have of effect on their lives. Therefore the long-term support offers a more holistic image; we can here make an association back to the idea of first- and second-order elections highlighted in section 4.1.

According to Bauer (2020), diffuse support is

> "only subject to attitude change as a result of generalized long-term experiences or extreme sudden events. Compared to specific support, diffuse support is more stable regardless of its positivity or negativity. It is built during socialization and form continuing generalized direct experiences distinct from any specific action, output or performance (Easton 1975, 444 f.; 453)." (p. 16).

The idea of socialization processes as having a part in the construction of support for the EU is particularly interesting considering the topic of this thesis. Furthermore, Bauer (2020) argues, based on Easton's writings, that diffuse support consists of both trusts in the polity and the perception of the polity being legitimate (p.16).

The issue of support will, in the upcoming analysis, concretely be approached in the following manner; It will be relying on Eurobarometer data to compare the support for the

EU between the analyzed cases. The question that has been chosen is pertaining to whether the EU is seen as a good or bad thing. Furthermore, attention will be paid to whether there is any notable variation between our federations and our centralized states.

To sum up, the upcoming analysis will address the support for the EU. This element has been chosen because it is perceived as offering insight into the legitimacy and the union's ability to persist.

# 5. Analysis

All of the three variables will be addressed in each their subsection. Each subsection will briefly reiterate the central aspect of the given element and its operationalization. It should furthermore be mentioned that this thesis does not include a separate discussion of the results. The results will be discussed throughout the analysis.

## 5.1 Voter turnout

The first element to be investigated is voter turnout. The focus is on the differences in voter turnout at the EP elections compared to the national elections. In the conceptual framework, it was argued that voter turnout is a political activity, a political norm and an inherent part of a given demos.[27] It is therefore of interest to uncover if there are notable increases, decreases, or patterns that can be discovered.

As argued, a high voter turnout is perceived as good, whilst a lower turnout should be perceived as a lack of support towards the EU. Firstly, one ought to ponder about what a

[27] At least a modern demos, it would be difficult to conceptualise a political people in the 21st century without the people engaging in some form of elections concerning the polity's government.

good or bad voter turnout is. One can argue that the higher, the better. But, what a high turnout entails, for instance, in percentages, is subject to national variations. Most Danes would presumably find the turnout at the last U.S presidential election to be low compared to a Danish parliament election. IDEA (2016), for instance, does not offer a number or interval for what a good turnout should be. They also remark that voter turnout has declined globally since the 1990s. In this thesis, there is a belief that a bad voter turnout is lower than 50% because it is tricky to argue for the representativity of a government if a majority of the population did not engage in voting, but again the higher, the better, and increase and decrease merits investigation.

The analysis will be structured so that each EP election will be investigated separately. After the presentation of the results from the given EP election follows a table presenting the voter turnouts from the national parliament election, which took place prior to and subsequently after the relevant EP election. The prior and subsequent elections are chosen to provide a more thorough snapshot of voting behaviour in a given country. The section will be rounded off with a discussion of the results.

The first election to the EP took place in 1979.

| **Voter Turnout 1979 EP Election (EP, 2019).** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BE | FR | WEST GERMANY | NL | EP[28] |
| 91.36% | 60.71% | 65.73% | 58.12% | 61.99% |

It is clear that the voter turnouts in both federations are higher than in the two unitary MS. It is here imperative to keep in mind that BE has mandatory voting. It should be mentioned that even though BE is the MS with the highest voter turnout, our other federation West Germany is not the country with the second nor the third-highest turnout. Both Italy and

[28] EP here refers to the EP voter turnout average across the community or union.

Luxembourg had higher turnouts than West Germany, but both federations rank above the average of 61.99% (EP, 2019). It is, of course, imperative to keep in mind that Luxembourg and Italy have mandatory voting, though in Italy only until 1993 (IDEA, 2021a).[29]

We can see that the federations have higher voter turnouts than the unitary states that have been chosen for comparison. The federations are both above the EU average. And the state with the highest turnout that does not have mandatory voting is a federation.

When comparing the turnouts for the EP elections to the national parliamentary elections held before and subsequently after the EP election, one can see that the notion of the EP election being a second-order election is very apparent in all but the Belgian case.

| **Voter Turnout National Parliament Elections (IDEA, 2021c).** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BE | FR | WEST-GERMANY | NL |
| **Prior Election** | 1978: 94.87% | 1978: 71.63% | 1976: 90.75% | 1977: 88.00% |
| **Subsequent Election** | 1981: 94.56% | 1981: 70.87% | 1980: 88.57% | 1981: 87.03% |

In the German case, almost a quarter of the citizens who voted in 1976 and 1980 abstained in the EP election. It is a few percentage points higher in the NL, while the discrepancy in FR is only around ten percentage points. One could argue that the French citizens in this instance are more able to or interested in participating in the EP elections because the gap is smallest in FR.

| **Voter Turnout EP Election 1984 (EP, 2019).** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BE | FR | WEST GERMANY | NL | EP |
| 92.09% | 56.72% | 56.76% | 50.88% | 58.98% |

BE is again the country with the highest turnout, but West Germany only has a 0.04% 'lead' over FR. Also, Italy and Luxembourg have higher turnouts than West Germany, as

[29] Five EU MS have mandatory voting, those being Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, and Luxembourg (EU, 2021a).

does the new member Greece, which also has mandatory voting. Of our analysed cases, all but BE scores below the average (EP, 2019). It is of great interest that the country with the highest 'voluntary' voter turnout is a federation. It is also notable that in all but BE, we see an increase in voter turnout. A reason for this decrease can perhaps be ascribed to the financial crisis and so-called period of Eurosclerosis. Phinnemore (2019) writes that there in the MS was a focus on national rather than international solutions, which can have taken away attention from the EP elections or perhaps even painted them in a bad light (pp. 18-19).

| **Voter Turnout National Parliament Elections (IDEA, 2021c).** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BE | FR | WEST-GERMANY | NL |
| **Prior Election** | 1981: 94.56 % | 1981: 70.87 % | 1983: 89.09 % | 1982: 80.98 % |
| **Subsequent Election** | 1985: 93.59 % | 1986: 78.48 % | 1987: 84.33 % | 1986: 85.76 % |

There is still a big gap in the voter turnout for the two kinds of elections in all MS, but BE. There is a turnout discrepancy of almost 30 percentage points between the EP and national election, 32.33 and 27.57, to be exact, in the German case. For the NL, that number is slightly lower and slightly higher, with 30.1 and 34.88 percentage points, while the French gap is significant but less than the Dutch. Again, FR is the country with the lowest discrepancy between turnout at national and EP elections.

| **Voter Turnout EP Election 1989 (EP, 2019).** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BE | FR | WEST-GERMANY | NL | EP |
| 90.73% | 48.80% | 62.28% | 47.48% | 58.41% |

In the EP election of 1989, one can detect a further decline in the voter turnout in all of the analysed MS except for West Germany. The German federation is also the MS with the second-highest voter turnout of the MS that do not employ mandatory participation, behind Ireland with six percentage points. The EU average for the election was 58.41%, of which the only MS of interest here, which ranks above average, is West Germany (EP, 2019).

| Voter Turnout National Parliament Election (IDEA, 2021c). | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BE | FR | (WEST)-GERMANY | NL |
| **Prior Election** | 1987: 93.38 % | 1988: 66.18 % | 1987:84.33 % | 1986: 85.76 % |
| **Subsequent Election** | 1991: 92.71 % | 1993: 68.93 % | 1990: 77.76% *The election was held after reunification. | 1989: 80.27 % |

Looking at the discrepancies between the voter turnouts at the surrounding national elections, we can see that the gap has been lessened in the German case and was here 22.05 and 15.48 percentage points. It remains roughly the same in the French case, while it has grown in the Dutch case.

The fourth EP election is the last EP elections held before AT and SE joined the EU.

| Voter Turnout EP Election 1994 (EP, 2019). | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BE | FR | DE | NL | EP |
| 90.66% | 52.71% | 60.02% | 35.69% | 56.67% |

Once again, we see that DE has a higher turnout than FR, and BE has a larger turnout than the NL; the dutch turnout is, in fact, very low. And DE also has the second-highest voter turnout of all the MS that have voluntary voting. Italy is the only MS with a higher turnout, with a turnout at 73.60%. The EU average was 56.67%, of which the only MS of interest in this thesis to obtain a higher turnout was once again DE (EP, 2019).

| Voter Turnout for National Parliament Elections (IDEA, 2021c). | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BE | FR | DE | NL |
| **Prior election** | 1991: 92.71 % | 1993: 68.93 % | 1990: 77.76 % | 1994: 78.75 % |
| **Subsequent election** | 1995: 91.15 % | 1997: 67.96 % | 1994: 78.97 % | 1998: 73.23 % |

It is evident that voter turnout in DE has fallen both at the national and European level. The discrepancy is 17.74 and 18.95 percentage points. Also, one can see the notion of the EP election being second-order very clearly in the Dutch case. At the two elections held in 1994, there is a difference in voter turnout of 43.06 percentage points. An extremely high number, perhaps some of the gap can be derived by a mixture of 'voter fatigue', maybe EU disinterest plays a role. In the French case, the discrepancy between the national and EP elections is a bit lower than the German case, with 16.22 and 15.25 percentage points.

Before addressing the numbers at the fifth EP election, one needs to look at the two new MS, AT and SE. When entering the EU, each had EP elections. A Swedish election was held in 1995, with a turnout of 41.63%, while an election was held in AT in 1996, where there was a significantly higher turnout of 67.73% (EP, 2019). The Austrian national parliament election of 1992 had a turnout of 80.91%, while the 1998 election had a turnout of 74.40%, which gives a discrepancy of 13.18 and 6.67 percentage points, which is arguably not that high. It is the lowest seen so far, meaning that one could argue that the Austrians, qua their experience in a multi-level system, were better suited for the election. On the other hand, the voter turnouts for the Swedish national parliamentary elections in 1994 and 1998 was at 86.39% and 81.39%, respectively, meaning that there is a difference of 40+ percentage points, roughly correlating to half of the Swedes that voted in the national election deciding to abstain in the EP election (IDEA, 2021c).

| **Voter Turnout EP Election 1999 (EP, 2019).** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE | EP |
| 49.40% | 91.05% | 46.76% | 45.19% | 30.02% | 38.84% | 49.51% |

FR's voter turnout is higher than DE's, with one percentage point for the first and only time. Voter turnout has decreased in all analysed states, most apparent in the Austrian case. Here there is almost an 18 percentage points difference. Neither of our studied cases with voluntary voter turnout is at the top of the scoreboard; all also fall under the EU average for the election, which was 49.51% (EP, 2019).

| **Voter Turnout for National Parliament Elections (IDEA, 2021c).** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE |
| **Prior election** | 1999: 80.42 % | 1999: 90.57 % | 1997: 67.96 % | 1998: 82.20 % | 1998: 73.23 % | 1998: 81.39 % |
| **Subsequent Election** | 2002: 84.27 % | 2003: 91.63 % | 2002: 60.32 % | 2002: 79.08 % | 2002: 79.06 % | 2002: 80.11 % |

We have significant discrepancies between voter turnout at the EP and the national elections in all MS. If we look at the federations first, we very interestingly see that for the 1999 national election and the 1999 EP election in BE, there is a tiny turnout difference favouring the EP election. In the Austrian case, the discrepancy is between 31.02 and 34.87 percentage points compared to the surrounding elections, which is a few percentage points lower than the German case, where the difference is 37.01 and 33.89 percentage points.

For the unitary states, we see the following. The discrepancy is significantly lower in the French case than for the other MS, with approximately 21.2 and 13.56 percentage points. In both of our two other unitary states, NL and SE, the discrepancy is very high. In the Dutch case, there is a 43.21 and 49 percentage point difference in the voter turnout, while in the Swedish case, those numbers are 42.55 and 41.27 percentage points. No clear-cut conclusions can be derived from these numbers. Still, it ought to be remarked that FR is once again the state with the lowest discrepancy between turnout at EP and national elections, which would go against the hypothesis that citizens of federations are more easily familiarised with a multilevel system.

| **Voter Turnout EP Election 2004 (EP, 2019).** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE | EP |
| 42.43% | 90.81 | 42.76% | 43.00 | 39.26% | 37.85% | 45.47% |

The German turnout is a tiny bit higher than the French, the Austrian turnout is almost five percentage points higher than the Swedish, and the BE turnout is more than double as high as the turnout in NL. The EU average was 45.47%, and neither of our chosen states, excluding BE, was amongst the states with the highest turnout. So even thorough the federations score higher than their partnered unitary state, the picture becomes muddled when we take the rest of the EU into consideration (EP, 2019).

| Voter Turnour National Elections (IDEA, 2021c). | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE |
| **Prior Election** | 2002: 84.27 % | 2003: 91.63 % | 2002: 60.32 % | 2002: 79.08 % | 2003: 80.04 % | 2002: 80.11 % |
| **Subsequent Election** | 2006: 78.49 % | 2007: 91.08 % | 2007: 59.98 % | 2005: 77.65 % | 2006: 80.35 % | 2006: 81.99 % |

We once again still very much see the implications of the EP elections being second-order elections. There is a discrepancy of 41.84 and 36.06 percentage points in the Austrian case when looking at the national elections. In the German case, the numbers are 36.08 and 34.65 percentage points. In NL, the discrepancy roughly translates into having only half of the voters who voted in the national election turnout for the EP election. However, the highest discrepancy is in SE, where less than half of the number of people who voted in the surrounding national elections voted in the EP election. FR is once again the country with the lowest discrepancy between EP and national elections, 17.56 and 17.22 percentage points.

| Voter Turnout EP Election 2009 (EP, 2019). | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE | EP |
| 45.97 | 90.39 | 40.63 | 43.27 | 36.75 | 45.53 | 42.97% |

The EU average for the election was 42.97%, and all of the federations and SE score above average. The voter turnout in the federations is also again higher than in their matched unitary states. The turnout in AT is only 0.44 percentage point bigger than the turnout in SE. But besides BE, none of our analysed MS are high up on the list regarding voter turnout. Malta, Italy, Ireland and Denmark are amongst the MS without mandatory voting that score high (EP, 2019).

| Voter Turnout National Elections (IDEA, 2021c). | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE |
| **Prior Election** | 2008: 78.81 % | 2007: 91.08 % | 2007: 59.98 % | 2005: 77.65 % | 2006: 80.35 % | 2006: 81.99 % |
| **Subsequent Election** | 2013: 74.91 % | 2010: 89.22 % | 2012: 57.22 % | 2009: 70.78 % | 2010: 75.40 % | 2010: 84.63 % |

If we look at the variations in turnouts around the 2009 EP election, we can see that there are still significant discrepancies between the national turnouts and the turnouts for the EP elections. The country with the lowest discrepancy is still FR, with 19.35 and 16.59

percentage points, respectively. In the Austrian case, the numbers have fallen, but they are still high, with a discrepancy of 32.84 and 28.94 percentage points. In the German case, the numbers are also lower but not significantly lower. There is a discrepancy of 34.38 and 27.51 percentage points. The turnout discrepancy is still highest in the two unitary states: NL, 43.6 and 38.65 percentage points, 36.46 and 39.1 percentage points in SE. In both MS, the turnout for the 2009 EP election is close to half of the turnout for the national elections.

Notably, the eighth EP election is the first EP election where the election results had to be considered when constructing a new commission. Therefore, it is interesting to see if the second-order election shadow has been lessened, i.e. whether the discrepancies have been narrowed.

| **Voter Turnout EP Election 2014 (EP, 2019).** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE | EP |
| 45.39% | 89.64% | 42.43% | 48.10% | 37.32% | 51.07% | 42.61% |

Notably, AT has a lower turnout than SE, with a difference of 5.68 percentage points. Almost, as usual, DE has a higher turnout than FR, with a voter turnout that is 5.67 percentage points higher than the French. The EU average for the election was 42.61%, which means that all our federations plus SE score higher than the average. But once again, it must be mentioned that besides BE, several other MS rank at the top concerning voter turnout across the EU. Now, for all of the analysed MS except AT and BE, the voter turnout has, in fact, risen from the 2009 EP election to the 2014 EP election (EP, 2019).

| **Voter Turnout National Elections (IDEA, 2021c).** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE |
| **Prior Election** | 2013: 74.91 % | 2010: 89.22 % | 2012: 57.22 % | 2013: 71.53 % | 2012: 74.56 % | 2010: 84.63 % |
| **Subsequent Election** | 2017: 80.00 % | 2014: 89.37 %* | 2017: 48.70 % | 2017: 76.15 % | 2017: 81.93 % | 2014: 85.81 % |

* The national election and the EP election are held on the same day (Election Guide, 2021).

A few things can be highlighted when looking at the differences between the turnout at the national elections and the EP elections. Once again, FR has the smallest variations in turnout, with 14.79 and 6.27 percentage point difference. The AT turnout discrepancy is once again around 30 percentage points, 29.52 and 34.61, to be exact. The German gap in voter turnout has lowered once again, and for these two elections, the difference is 23.43 and 28.05 percentage points. The Dutch case is by far the case with the highest difference, with 37.24 and 44.61 percentage points, closely followed by SE, where the numbers are 33.56 and 34.74. Lastly, it should be mentioned that there is very small Belgian turnout difference for the national and EP elections held on the same day; more, albeit it few voters, voted in the EP election than in the national election.

For the most recent EP election, held in 2019, the voter turnout numbers are as follows:

| **Voter Turnout EP Election 2019 (EP, 2019).** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE | EP |
| 59.80% | 88.47% | 50.12% | 61.38% | 41.93% | 55.27% | 50.66% |

It was the first-ever EP election which had an overall turnout higher than the previous one (EP, 2019). We can see that the AT turnout is higher than the Swedish turnout. We see the same in the German-French comparison. And of course, also in the Belgian-Dutch comparison. And once again, all of our federations and SE have a higher turnout than the EU average.

| **Voter Turnout National Elections (IDEA, 2021c).** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AT | BE | FR | DE | NL | SE |
| **Prior Election** | 2017: 80.00 % | 2014: 89.37 % | 2017: 48.70 % | 2017: 76.15 % | 2017: 81.93 % | 2018: 87.18 % |
| **Subsequent Election** | 2019: 75.59 % | 2019: 88.38 %* | | | 2021: 78.71 % | |

* The national election and the EP election are held on the same day (Election Guide, 2021).

For the latest few national elections, we can observe the following: The AT discrepancy has fallen compared to the previous election and was at 20.2 and 15.79 percentage points. The same goes for DE, where the number is 14.77 percentage points. For the first and only time, in the French case, we see that a turnout for the EP election was higher than the turnout for the previous national election. The difference is only 1.42 percentage points but noticeable, nonetheless. The numbers remain high in both the Dutch and the Swedish cases, with 40 and 36.78 percentage points and 31.91 percentage points.

Having now looked at the numbers from each of the EP elections and compared them to the national elections, the following paragraphs will discuss the presented results. Firstly, follows Figure 1-6, which visualise the voter turnout in the six MS.

Figure 1 Voter Turnout Austria (IDEA, 2021c).

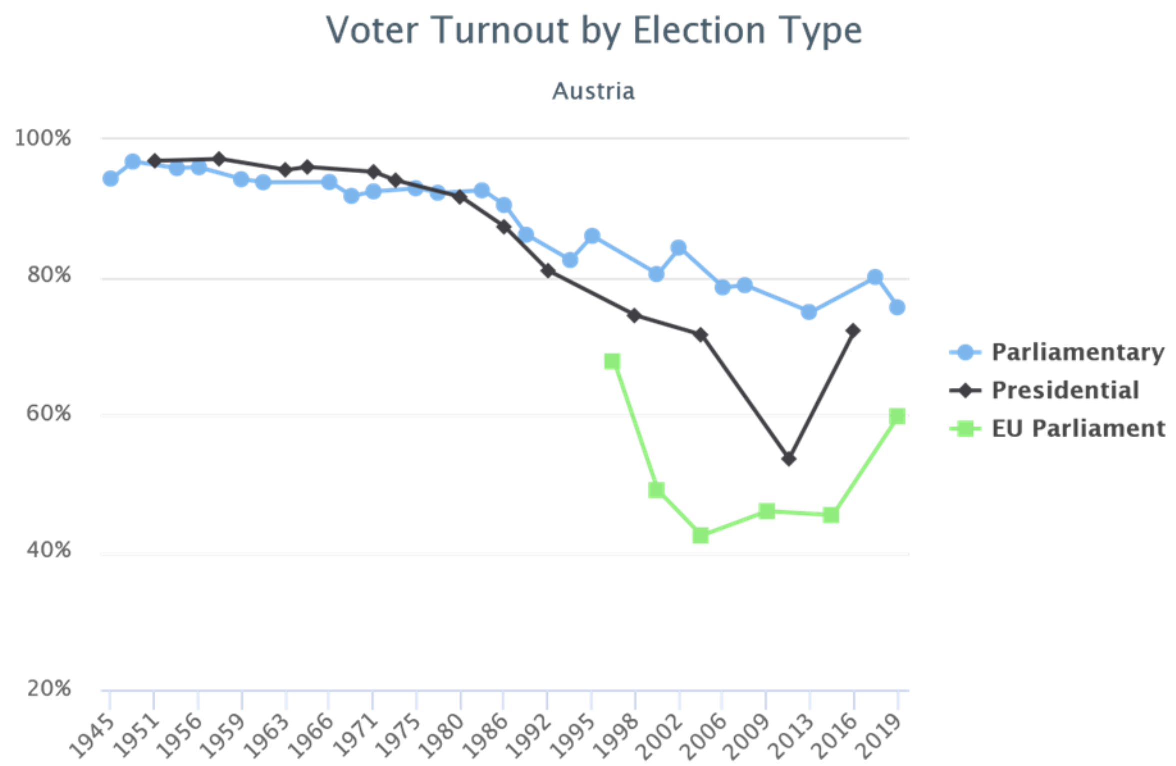


Figure 2 Voter Turnout Belgium (IDEA, 2021c).

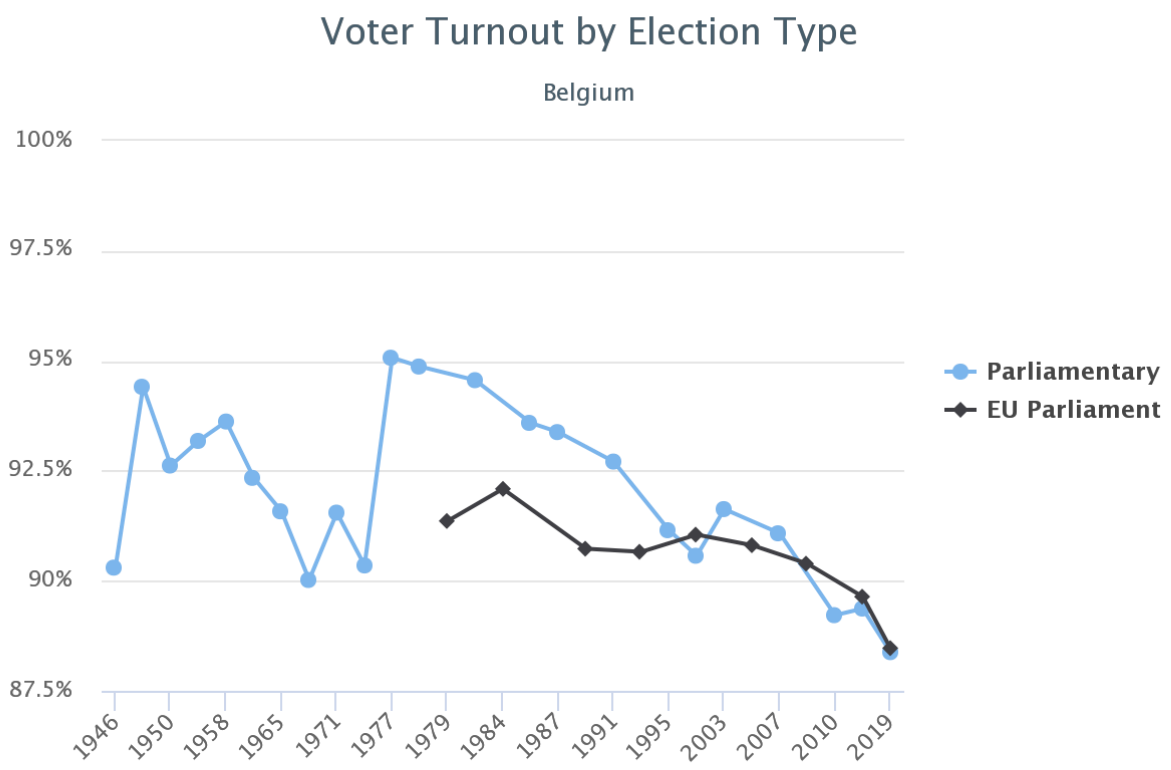



Figure 3 Voter Turnout France (IDEA, 2021c).

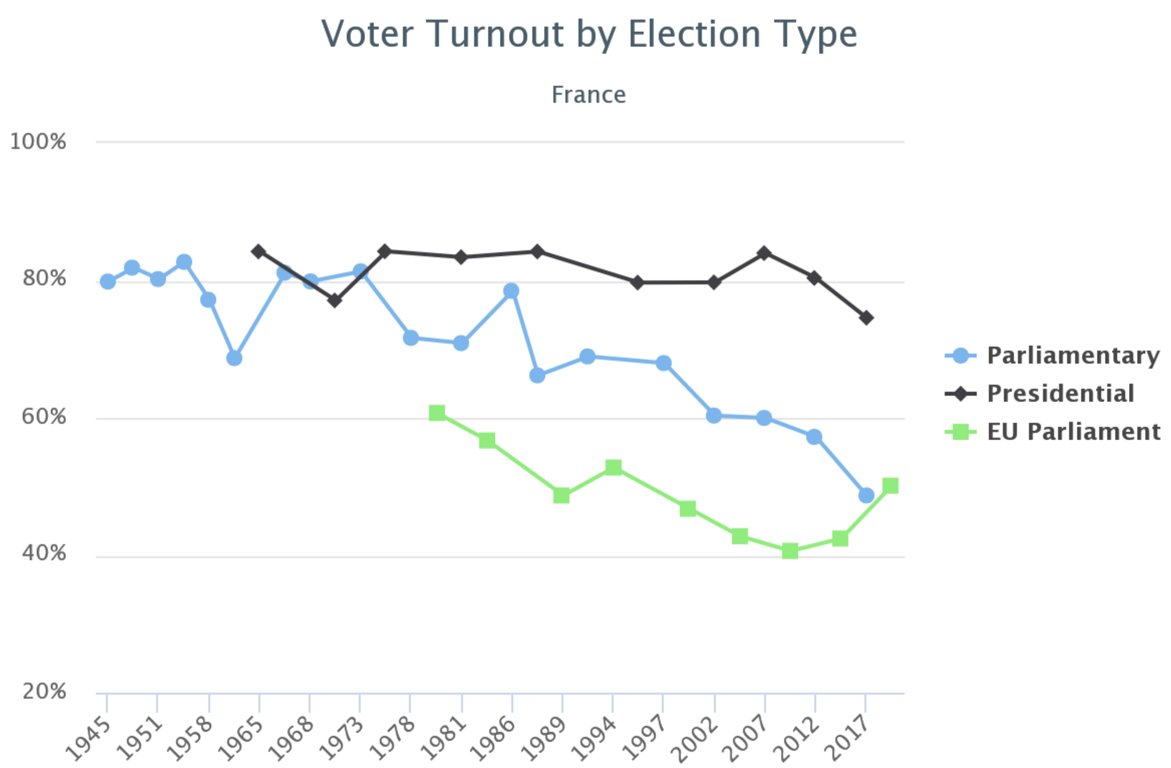


Figure 4 Voter Turnout Germany (IDEA, 2021c).

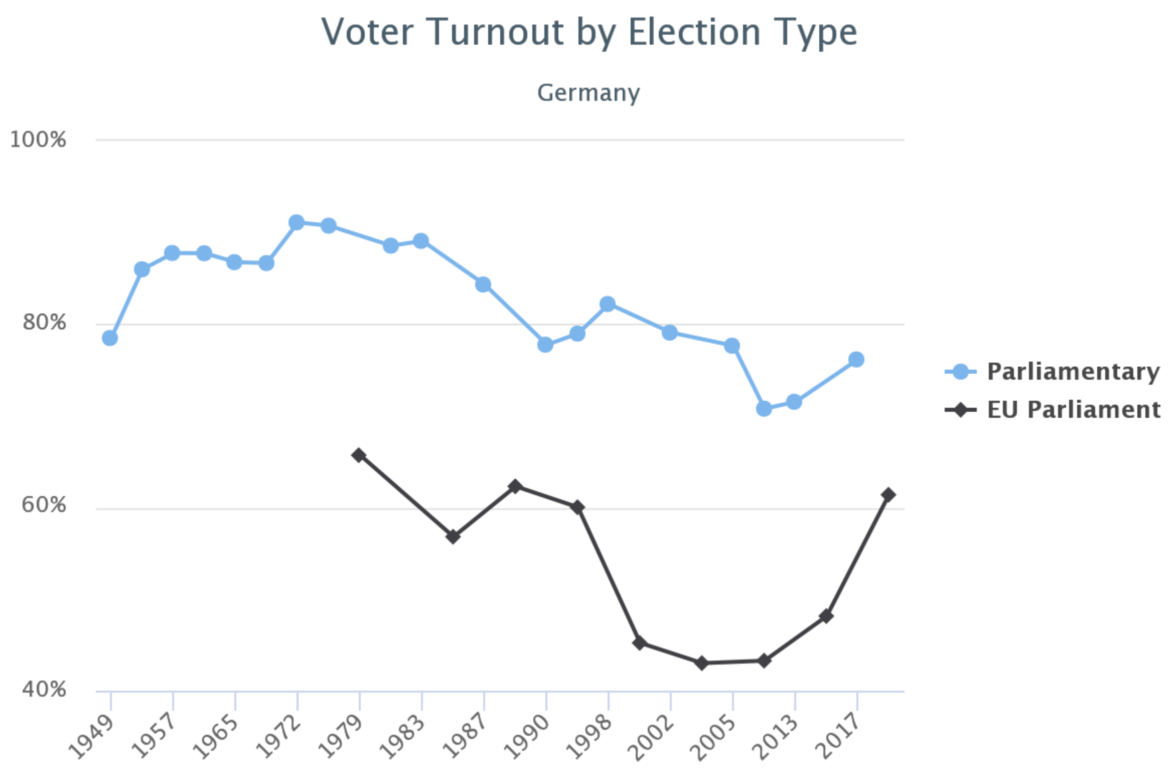



Figure 5 Voter Turnout The Netherlands (IDEA, 2021c).

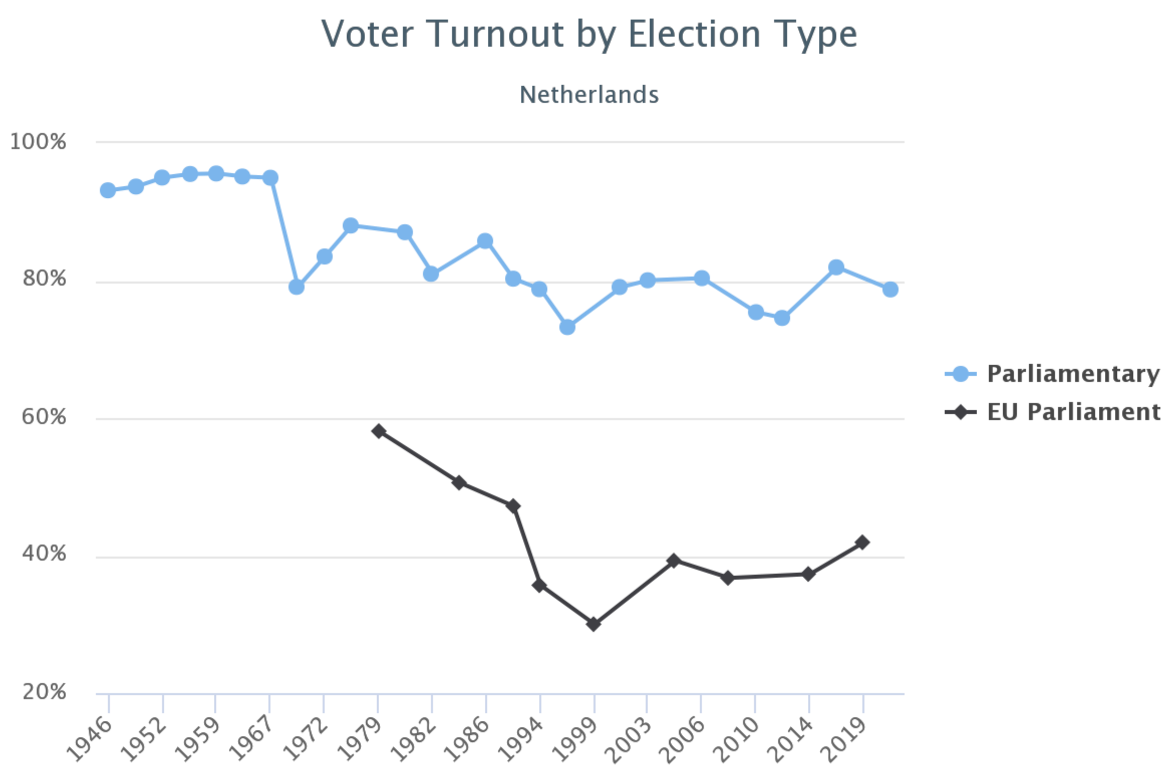
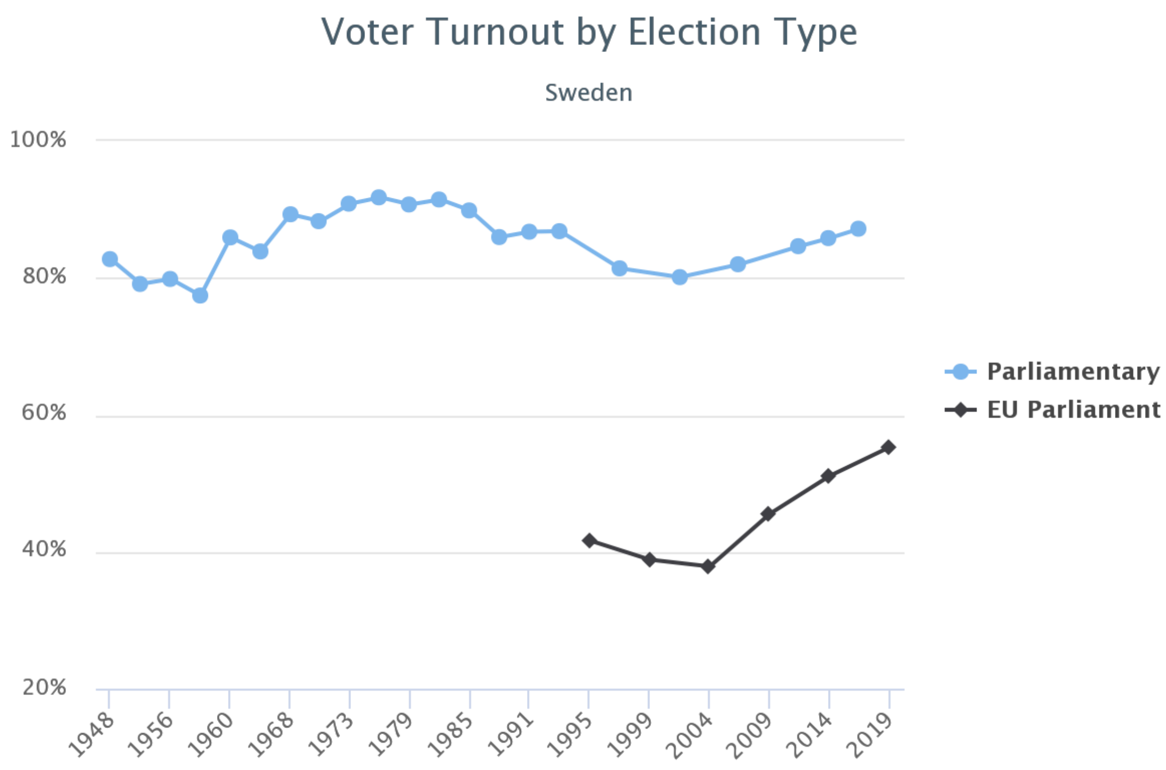


Figure 6 Voter Turnout Sweden (IDEA, 2021c).




Few clear-cut conclusions can be drawn. However, some observations should be highlighted and discussed. The Austrian voter turnout is higher than the Swedish turnout all but once, the exception being the 2014 EP election. In the Franco-German comparison, voter turnout is also higher in the federation in all but one case, the 1999 EP election. The Belgian numbers are, unsurprisingly, also higher than the Dutch. Still, one should not ascribe too much importance to these numbers; given the mandatory voting, it would be close to comparing bananas and apples. This seems to be speaking in favour of the underlying hypothesis that citizens of federations having been socialised in a federation are better equipped to navigate this layer of governance, given that we, time after time, although with one exception, see that federations have higher turnouts than the partnered unitary state.

It is debatable how much importance we can, or for that matter, should ascribe to this one deviation in the Austrian and German turnout pattern being higher than their partnered country. In the Franco-German case, it is a deviation of one out of nine, while in the Austro-Sweden case is a deviation of one out of six. Of course, the deviations are small in the bigger picture. Still, it was argued in the methodology section, based on Flyvbjerg's (2011) writing, that falsifications are of great importance when working with generalizations. Therefore, one cannot conclude that federations always have higher turnouts than unitary states of the same size and age of EU membership. But we can, without a doubt, claim and conclude that this is the case in the vast majority of the EP elections, which would imply that the federations' citizens are more apt to engage in the EU system. It is also worth noting that DE was the MS with the highest turnout in the first two EP elections and the MS with the second-highest turnout in the next two EP elections if one solely looks at MS where voting is voluntary.

It was argued in the conceptual framework that a high voter turnout is perceived as good and can be seen as a stamp of approval from the citizens of the polity. This is interesting when reflecting upon the fact that DE ranked high on the scoreboard for the first 4 EP elections. Furthermore, all of our federations and SE have ranked above the EU average regarding voter turnout for the past three EP elections. But it was also shown that several of the federations and unitary MS had voter turnouts beneath 50%, which is part of the reason why some consider the EU as lacking input legitimacy.

Having discussed the observations derived solely from the EP turnout numbers, one ought to discuss the differences in the turnout numbers between the EP and the national elections. The discrepancy between the EP elections and the national parliament elections is the lowest in FR, as seen repeatedly. The discrepancy is uncovered to range between -1.42 to 21.76 percentage points. For the two other unitary states, SE and the NL, the discrepancies were high. For the Dutch case, it ranged between 28.91 to 49 percentage points, but more often closest to the 40 percentage points difference. In the Swedish case, the discrepancy ranges between 31.91 and 44.76 percentage points. For both MS, there have been uncovered instances where the turnout differences correlate to EP elections turnout of half of the turnout to the surrounding national elections.

For the two federations, the difference between the turnouts for the EP election and the national parliament election is also high but lower than for NL and SE. The German discrepancy varies from 14.77 to 37.01 percentage points, as is visualised in Figure 4. Then, the turnout for the EP election took a fall in 1999 and started to rise again in 2014. For the Austrian case, 6.67 to 41.84 percentage points, as seen in Figure 1, the turnout dropped drastically after the first EP election, and a significant increase was not seen until 2019. Arguably the underlying hypothesis implies that the experiences with a multi-level system suggest that there would not be any significant variations in the turnout. But this is not what we are seeing with the fluctuating numbers from DE and AT. In the Austrian case, we draw one, Karner's (2017) description of AT as being one of the most EU sceptical MS, as well as having its most-read newspaper being an EU sceptical one (pp. 38-42). Perhaps this scepticism and the enactment of sanctions in 2000 are part of the reason why we see this fluctuation in voter turnout. A lack of engagement in a polity that has actively sanctioned some citizens would be somewhat plausible, at least not inconceivable. The German voter turnout decline in the 1990s and 2000s can perhaps be related to the notions that the 1990s, especially reunification, brought about a new German national identity, distinct from the country's dark past, which can have disengaged the German citizens from the EU (Galpin, 2015, pp. 28-29).

The French numbers are perhaps to do with the fact that the French first order election is not the parliamentary election, but rather the presidential election, i.e. the chosen data is arguably not an adequate reflection of the highest level of political/voter activity in FR. It is perhaps the case that the comparison has been made between two second-order elections. From IDEA (2021c), see also Figure 3, one can see that the turnout for the French presidential election ranges from 74.56% to 83.97% in the years that were of relevance to this thesis. This would make the discrepancy for several of the EP elections bigger, given that the turnout for the presidential election is 10-20 percentage points higher than that of the national parliamentary election.

One should not forget about BE. The state has received little attention in this section of the analysis because it has mandatory voting, which muddles the data. But a few points ought to be mentioned. From the interview with Bursens, one can see that he argues that the underlying hypothesis that citizens from federations or multi-level systems are more apt to understand the EU system is "true to a certain extent, and this especially has an effect on the quality and also the effectiveness of Belgian civil servants and Belgian diplomats and maybe even Belgian political elites." (Appex. B, p.2). So, while adhering to the logic of the underlying argument, Bursens does argue that the results of using one's background from a multi-level system and applying it to one's approach to another multi-level system are "certainly true for the elites to a certain extent and maybe even much more so for the, let's say, the administrative elites and the diplomatic level and a bit less for the political level." (Appex. B, p. 2). It is less so in the case of the political elites because the internal multi-level systems demand a lot of attention from the national politicians (Appex. B, p. 3). He furthermore argues that although the Belgians are pro-EU, they also very much "don't really care" (Appex. B, pp. 3-4). This is because the EU has not become politicised in BE. Bursens argues that much greater attention and debate are ascribed to the EU in DK, for comparison, especially in regards to EP elections (Appex. B, p. 4).

And this is not helped by the fact that since 2011 the Belgian elections have all been held on the same day (Election Guide, 2021). Bursens argues that this pushes "Europe out of the picture. An effect of this is also that politicians don't make the difference between the levels themselves during campaigns, right." This is because the system is too complex for the average citizens, and matters are only complicated further by politicians not distinguishing between the levels. This also means that there is a tendency to vote for the same party as one would vote for at both the regional and national levels (Appex. B, pp. 8-10).

To sum up, in this first part of the analysis, a few things can be stated, but this thesis remains wary of drawing any ironclad conclusions. Yet, the observations and offered calculations suggest that our federations tend to have a higher turnout and less discrepancy between the first and second-order elections. However, the discrepancy is still significant, compared to our unitary states, except in the case of FR.

## 5.2 Attachment & Identification

It was described in the conceptual framework that voter turnout adds to the creation of, as well as being a sign of, a European demos and European identity. Therefore, it is natural that we now go in-depth with the attachment & identification of European citizens. Self-identification, it was argued, is a vital aspect of a demos or European identity, and there is a conceptual interplay between identification and support, which will be addressed in section 5.3.

Attention is devoted to whether there have been any increases or decrease in the levels of identification or attachment to the EU and its predecessors throughout time. It is anticipated that levels of identification and attachment will increase in all MS because of the socialization experience. But we also remember the words of Hamilton (1788/2007) and Madison (1788/2007), who argued that it is the level closest to the citizen that the citizen is attached to, with the mitigating circumstance that if the citizens perceive the other layers of government as more effective. The analysis will be structured so that each element uncovered from Eurobarometer will be addressed separately and chronologically, with a discussion and sub-conclusion in the end.

## Citizens of Europe

The first question we see in the Eurobarometer survey, which is of interest in this analysis, is thinking of oneself as a citizen of Europe, which was asked for the first time in 1982. Notably, the EC used the word citizen; union citizenship was not created until ten years later with the Maastrict Treaty (Nugent, 2010, p. 56). The whole question was: “Do you ever think of yourself as a citizen of Europe? Often, sometimes or never?” An element to be pondered about is what connotations the interviewees have towards the word – citizen and how the three categories are interpreted because, as mentioned, actual European citizenship had yet to come into existence. So the question is what the use of the word citizen entailed to the interviewees. It has clear undisputable civic notions, but whether these associations are triggered within the interviewees would have merited explanations from them.

On the other hand, we can also ponder on what the alternative to using the word citizen would have been. Another peculiarity is the use of the word Europe. Lengthy debates can be had about the boundaries of Europe. It is far from a tangible entity. It is mindboggling that a more tangible delimitation, either geographical or political source of boundaries, have not been chosen. The options often and sometimes are here both interpreted as positive. The EC average was 16% “Often”, 37% “Sometimes”, and 43% “Never”. In the Belgian case, the numbers were 11%/30%/53%, in the West German case, the numbers were 25%/50%%18%, in the French case 19%/42%/37%, and in the Dutch case 5%/35%/57% (Commission of the European Communities (CEC), 1982, pp. 41-42). The number of people that think of themselves as citizens of Europe in BE and NL is roughly at the same level, the sum of the “Often” and “Sometimes” being 41 and 40 %. The German numbers are, however, 14 percentage points higher than the French. Therefore, the outset is not a clear pattern in regards to the state structure at this point.

Five years later, in 1987, the numbers were: BE 10%/36%/50%, DE 11%/41%/42%, FR 17%/36/47% and NL 8%/25%/63%, the EC average was 14%/34%/49% (CEC, 1987a, p. A88). In all but BE, there is a decline in the number of people that either often or sometimes think of themselves as a European citizen. The biggest decline is in West Germany, where self-identification has fallen by almost a third. At the same time, in the Dutch and French cases, the fall is less than ten percentage points.

In 1992 the results were for BE 12%/39%/45%, for DE 8%/29%/59% for FR 14%/40%/46% for NL 9%/35%/55% the EC average 14%/33%/51% (CEC, 1992, p. A53). The number of interviewees that think of themselves as a European citizen "Often" remains low across the board. In all MS except DE, the numbers have gone up. In BE, FR, and NL, close to half of the interviewees either sometimes or often consider themselves citizens of Europe, while it was only a third in DE.

In 1992 we, for the first time, see the following question being asked "Do you ever think of yourself as not only (NATIONALITY), but also European? Does this happen often, sometimes or never?" arguably this question is close in nature to self-identification, given that it is broader, and does not entail the civic notions which are implied when using the word citizen. The question was asked together with the question above. Initially, the interviewers divided these two questions among the interviewees. Perhaps the question was asked because union citizenship was part of the Maastricht treaty, which would imply that asking someone if they felt European would entail asking someone if they felt that they were something which they were soon to become. In BE the numbers are 17%/41%/40%, in DE 8%/29%/59%, in FR 16%/36%/47% and in NL 11%/28%/59%, the EC average being, 14%/32%/51% (EC, 1992, p. A53). The answers do not vary much from the answers to the other question. However, it should be mentioned that the numbers are higher in BE but lower in FR and NL while being the same in DE.

Throughout the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the questions are not reoccurring in the surveys. The next time we see the question was in 2005. Many institutional changes have transpired in the meantime, as well as the Eastern enlargement of the EU, and unfortunately, a lot of time has passed, which made it impossible to adhere to the idea of investigating the data with five-year intervals. The numbers from the federations are as follows AT 18%/39%/40/%, BE 19%/38%/42%, DE 16%/42%/40%, it is clear that the amount which often think of themselves as European is basically the same across the three federations, the sum of "often" and "sometimes" is also at the same level, 57% in AT and BE while 58% in Germany. For the three unitary states, the numbers are as follows: FR 22%/36%/42%, NL 18%/40%/41%, SE 15%/38%/46%, few percentage points separate NL from FR and SE, but FR does have seven percentage points more interviewees that "Often" consider themselves European. In comparison, FR has more people who "Often" think of themselves as European than DE, but the overall number of people who consider themselves European is precisely the same. NL and BE differ overall with one percentage point in NL's favour, while AT has a four percentage point lead ahead of SE. The EU average is 55% either often or sometimes thinking of themselves as European, meaning that all but Sweden scored above average (EC, 2005, p. 43). I.e. there are not uncovered any variations in regards to state structure, and all the analysed MS score above 50%.

By 2010, we again see a variation in the question asked, this time the Eurobarometer once again uses the word – citizen, the question being "You feel you are a citizen of the EU – Yes, definitely; Yes, to some extent; No, not really; No definitely not; Don't know". The sum of the yes was on the EU average 62%, of which all but FR (56%) scored higher, BE, 75%, notably scored higher than NL, 63%, while DE, 72%, scored higher than FR, SE, 66%, scored higher than AT but only with three percentages points. FR was the only country to achieve below the EU average (62%) (EC, 2010, p. 118). When taking into account the data from the 83rd Eurobarometer, some patterns emerge, the feeling of citizenship is higher in DE, 81%, than FR, 61%, SE, 78%, scores higher than AT, 72%, BE and NL, however, have precisely the same amount of interviewees feeling that they are citizens of the EU (70%). FR is again the only country to score below the EU average of 67%. (EC, 2015a, p. 17). The outmost recent numbers we have on the feeling of being a citizen of the EU are from 2020. Once again, DE, 82%, scores higher than FR, 59%, SE, 75%, also scored slightly higher than AT, 72%, BE, 76%, scores a bit higher than NL with 73%. Once again, the only country under the EU average of 70% is FR (EC, 2020a, p. 25).

The feeling of being a citizen of the EU is above the EU average for all our federations and two of our unitary states. DE consequently scores higher than FR, BE two out of three times scores higher than NL. But SE, on the other hand, repeatedly score higher than AT. We can perhaps here circle back to the initial points made about using the word citizen. We see that the two federations BE and DE, score higher than their partnered MS, while AT scored lower. One can consider whether the older MS, BE and DE citizen's, have higher levels of identification because they have been members longer, but this does not explain why SE scores high and FR scores low. Perhaps part of the explanation can be derived from the multi-level systems of the federations, where one is not necessarily a 'citizen' of the region or Länder, but there is definitely an experience with political identification on more levels. The lower Austrian numbers can then, partly, be seen as an expression that AT is a very centralized federation, described in the methodology section as a federation mainly on paper, combined, of course, with the EU scepticism described above. SE was notably also described as a decentral state.

**Nationality or European**

How Europeans perceived themselves in relation to their nationality was also raised as a question for the first time in 1992. The interviewees were asked the following question: "In the near future do you see yourself as (NATIONALITY) only, (NATIONALITY) and European, European and (NATIONALITY), or European only?", here one really sees the level of self-identification across the union, as was mentioned in the literature review, country first, Europe second, is an often-chosen way of approaching multiple identities in the EU context. In this part of the analysis, a focus will therefore be on both how many see themselves as "European only", but also how many see themselves as European in any extent, also combined with nationality, because we know from the literature on both nested and marble cake identities, that it is perfectly possible to have two or more loyalties or identifications. This means that there is not in this thesis seen a difference between being (nationality) and European, on the one hand, and European and (nationality), on the other. Of course, one could engage in lengthy debates about whether the first is more focused on the nation while the second might be more focused on the EU, but it is also unclear how much importance this difference, if any, takes up within the interviewees. For instance, going from the lowest common denominator regarding identity would mean mentioning nationality before being European, while going from the broadest level of comparison would entail precisely the opposite. One should also remain critical and keep in mind that there is no clear middle ground for the interviewees to choose from (CEC, 1992, p. A54).

In 1992 the numbers were, (the order being "(NATIONALITY) only, (NATIONALITY) and European, European and (NATIONALITY), or European only"): BE 37%/46%/9%/3%, in DE 41%/43%/9%/3%, in FR 31%/55%/6%/6%, in NL 42%/45%/7%/3%, the EC average being 38%/48%/7%/4% (CEC, 1992, p. A54). Meaning that for BE, DE NL, just 3% would see themselves as solely European in the near future, while the number was twice as high in FR. FR, 67%, is also the only country above the EC average, 59%, regarding people that, overall, except to see themselves as European. BE, 58%, is only one percentage point lower than the EC average, while both DE and NL only have 55%. This means that for all our MS, more than half of the interviewees, which in some way, shape or form, expect to identify as European in the near future. For FR, it is two-thirds.

When the question was asked in 1997, the numbers looked as follows: BE 50%/34%/8%/5%, DE 47%/33%/9%/6%, AT 51%/38%/6%/3%, FR 32%/50%/8%/5%, NL 42%/48%/5%/4%, SE 57%/35%/4%/2%, the EU average being 45%/40%/6%/5% (EC, 1997, pp. 55-56). This means that the number of citizens that expect to perceive themselves as solely European in the near future had gone up in all MS except for FR, where it has gone down by one percentages point. But the overall perception of being European in the four MS mentioned in the previous paragraph has fallen in all but NL. We furthermore see both NL and FR having higher levels of identification than BE and DE. The level of identification is, however, higher in AT than SE.

In 2002 the numbers were for AT 45%/39%/11%/2%, for BE 34%/55%/5%/2% for DE 39%/43%/10%/6%, for FR 33%/52%/8%/4%, for NL 41%/48%/7%/2% for SE 54%/38%/5%/1%. There is an overall increase in all of the MS except NL, where the level remains the same as in 1997, meaning that in all but SE, half or more of the interviewees feel that they are European to some extent, in FR and BE, both 64%, the number is closer to two-thirds. The number of interviewees who perceive themselves solely as Europeans is still rather low, but low should be understood broadly because the numbers are close to the EU average. DE and BE have the highest numbers with 6% and 5% respectively feeling solely European. They are only surpassed by Luxembourg with 14 % (EC, 2002, p.60).

By 2010, little change can be detected, solely feeling European remains low in all of the cases. SE, 50%, and AT, 49%, are the MS with the lowest number of interviewees feeling European. They also score below the EU average, 51%. DE's numbers are only three percentage points higher than FR's with 59%, and NL and BE both score 62% (EC, 2010, pp. 113-115).

In 2015 we saw that the numbers have gone up for all of the MS, but solely thinking of oneself as European is low for SE it is 1% of interviewees, while of the other MS, it is 2%. However, 2% is also the EU average. AT, 57%, and FR, 63%, are the ones of the analysed MS with the lowest overall perception of being European, the EU average being 60%, the remaining of the MS all have more than two-thirds of the interviewees perceiving themselves as European, with NL and DE scoring highest of the six with 73% and 72% respectively (EC, 2015a, p. 22).

The most recent numbers that can be found in regards to Europeans perception of themselves are from 2019. There is one percentage point more Germans that perceive themselves as solely European. Otherwise, the numbers remain the same as the ones from the survey held four years prior. The overall perception of seeing yourself as European has gone up to 76% in DE, 71% in BE, 70% in SE, 62% in AT, 74% in NL, while in FR, the overall perception has gone down by one percentage points to 62% (EC, 2019, p. 47).

There are no conclusions that can be drawn concerning state structure here. We also see fluctuations throughout time, which would give reason to believe that many other explanations add to the citizens' conceptualisation of seeing themselves as European and/or nationality.

**Attachment**

The last element that will be discussed in this part of the analysis is attachment, i.e. how many of our interviewees from the chosen MS are attached to the EU. The interviewees are asked how attached they are to, in the first two mentioned Eurobarometers, Europe, and the EU in the later Eurobarometers. The interviewees can then choose between very attached, fairly attached, not very attached, not at all attached; again, one can criticise the lack of an option in the middle of the scale. The focus will be on the sum of very and fairly attached in the upcoming paragraphs, those being the two EU positive options. It will just be referred to as attached since this is also how Eurobarometer occasionally presents the data, i.e. without distinguishing between whether people are very or fairly attached. The sums of the interviewees feeling attached to Europe, in 1999, in the chosen MS were: AT 62%, BE 62%, DE 58%, FR 53%, NL 49%, SE 71%, the EU average is 56% (EC, 1999 p. B12). The country where the most citizens feel attached to the EU in the studied cases is SE, a unitary state. After her, the three federations follow. Although the variation between DE and FR is only small, it is to be noted BE has a more sizeable lead ahead of NL, while the variation between SE and AT is nine percentage points in SE's favours. The three federations and SE all also score higher than average.

Five years later, SE, with 76%, is still the case with the highest number of interviewees feeling attached to the EU after that followed BE, 74%, and DE, 69%, the EU average is 67%, FR 66%, AT 63% and NL 60%. Meaning that attachment has gone up in AT with one percentage point, in BE with 12 percentage points, in DE with 11 percentage points, FR with 13 percentage points, NL with 11 percentage points and in SE with five percentage points. While attachment has gone up across the analysed cases, the newest MS are those with the lowest increases (EC, 2004, p. 103).

By 2012 the wording of the question which the interviewees were faced with had changed. It was no longer the attachment to Europe that was of interest but rather the attachment to the EU. So, one should not consider these numbers as a direct continuation of the numbers addressed above. But it is noticeable that the numbers are significantly lower, in, for instance, the Swedish case, 37%, only half of the number from 2004. BE 58% is the MS with the third-highest number of interviewees being attached to the EU, following Luxembourg and Poland. BE is closely followed by FR with 55%, which scores higher than DE's 52%. The EU average of 46% is higher than AT, 41%, SE, 37% and NL, 35% (EC, 2012, p. 9).To sum up on this new question, then there emerges no apparent pattern, other than one can say that across the board, fewer people are attached to the EU than to Europe. One can perhaps connect this with the overall disinterest in the EU. It is inconsequential to be attached to Europe because this is an abstract entity, but the EU is much more tangible, and people would perhaps assume that you would be at least to some degree be knowledgeable about the EU.

In 2017, the only pattern uncovered was that DE, 68%, BE 57%, FR 56%, are above the EU average, 55%. While the Belgian and French levels have remained the same, the number of German interviewees feeling attached to the EU has risen by 16 percentage points. AT has also seen an increase of 14 percentage points. There is an increase in SE of 10 percentage points while the rise in NL is only 7% point (EC, 2017, p. 11). The most recent data on the attachment to the EU were from 2020. This time DE, 65%, is the only one of our MS that has more people feeling attached to the EU than the EU average, 55%, the Belgian, French, and Swedish levels remain the same, while there is an increase in NL of 7 percentage points, while there is a decrease in AT, from 55% to 48%. (EC, 2020a, p. 11).

After having presented the data on the self-identification and attachment in the EU throughout time, a few things should be highlighted and reflected upon. It can quite briefly be said that no definite pattern emerges concerning our six chosen states. From the question of whether one feels like one is a citizen of the EU, it was argued that DE scored higher than FR. At the same time, BE often achieves higher than NL, which arguably speaks in favour of the idea that identification or the presence of a European identity would be higher in federations than in unitary states, but with the two new MS, SE and AT, SE takes the lead. Here aspects such, as the length of membership, as well as the fact that AT was described as a centralistic federation, while SE was described as a decentral unitary state, should be taken into consideration. One ought to consider whether the decentralization of the unitary state can be seen as providing the same socialization experience as that of a centralized federation.

When it comes to seeing oneself as one's nationality, European or a mix thereof, one can not derive anything definite. We saw that feeling European overall was most of the time reaching the 50% mark and often higher. But there is no sign that the federations fared better or worse than the unitary states.

When looking at people's attachment to Europe and the European Union, one cannot conclude anything on the state structures. SE is the top-scorer when speaking of attachment to Europe, while DE and BE also score high, but it is, for instance, only a few percentage points that separate DE from FR in this matter. But when speaking of the EU, we see that, first of all, the number of people feeling attached dropped across all the analysed cases. The only pattern that one can see is that DE consistently has scored high on this element.

All in all, what can this tell us? Essentially, whether a state is a federation or a unitary state does not appear to be a determining factor as to the extent one feels attached or self-identifies with being European. i.e. state structure does not appear to be a determinating factor in this aspect of citizens' relationship to the EU. The only element where two federations score higher than the partnered unitary states is considering oneself an EU citizen.

One can ponder on whether the experience from a multi-level system makes the citizens of BE and DE more apt to approach the notion of EU citizenship. But otherwise, it is clear that this part of the analysis concludes that there must be other elements that determine identification and attachment to the EU, age of membership was suggested as one such element.

## 5.3 Support for the European Union

Support, the last aspect of the analysis, is argued to be understood as support for what the EU is at the given point in time. In the conceptual framework, it was argued that the persistence of a polity depends upon its citizens' support, which is one of the key reasons behind looking into support, so is the relationship between support and perceived legitimacy. As mentioned, it is the diffuse or long-term support that is of prime interest and not support for policy-specific issue(s).

In 1974, in the first-ever Eurobarometer, interviewees were asked whether the Common Market was "Good", "Bad", "Neither good or bad" or "No reply". Of our four MS, all had majorities finding that the Common Market was "Good", while the number of interviewees thinking it was bad was single digited. The divide was as follows: BE with 68% vs 3%, West Germany 59% vs 8%, FR 68% vs 5%, NL 66% vs 4%, while "Neither good or bad" gained the following percentages BE 15%, West Germany 26%, FR 20% and 14% (CEC, 1974, p. 34). Thus there is an overwhelming majority praising the Common Market. The most notable aspect is that West Germany is the MS with the least interviewees perceiving the Common Market as something good.

In 1979, we saw the following results: there was still overwhelming support for membership, the percentages of interviewees that answered "Good" vs "Bad" were as follows BE 66% vs 3%, West Germany 66% vs 4% and FR 59% vs 7%. "Neither good nor bad" was chosen by the following amount BE 17%, West Germany 21% and in FR 26% (CEC, 1979, pp. A20-A21). Unfortunately, the digitalization process has rendered it impossible to uncover the data from the NL, so one cannot conduct a comparison here between NL and BE. However, we can say that West Germany and FR have 'switched places', with West Germany being ahead.

When asked in 1984, the public was divided 59% vs 7% in BE; in West Germany, the numbers were 53% vs 5%, in FR 62% vs 4% and in NL 80% vs 3%. The numbers for how many answered "Neither good nor bad" were in BE 25%, in West Germany 31%, in FR 37% and in NL 13% (CEC, 1984, pp. 40-41). West Germany and FR have switched position again. This time FR has more interviewees considering the Common Market a good thing. Notably, there are 21 percentage points more Dutch interviewees who consider the Common market a good thing than Belgians.

When interviewees, in 1989, were asked, "Generally speaking, do you think that (your country's) membership of the European Community (Common Market) is:" "a good thing", "neither good nor bad" or "bad", i.e. there is a slight language change in the asked question. The results were as follows regarding the gap between whether it was perceived as a good or bad thing: in BE 73% vs 3%, in West Germany 55% vs 9%, in FR 68% vs 6%, in NL 84% vs 3%. The number of interviewees that perceived it as "neither good nor bad" was 18% in BE, 30% in West Germany, 23% in FR and 11% in NL (CEC, 1989, p. A8). Once again, there is higher support in FR than in West Germany and more in NL than BE.

By 1994 the question had been rephrased because of the creation of the EU. Therefore, the question was, "Generally speaking do you think that (Your Country's) membership of the European Community/European Union is … A good thing/A bad thing/Neither good nor bad/Don't know". The good vs bad percentages were: BE 56% vs

10%, DE 50% vs 12%, FR 50% vs 13% NL 77% vs 5%. The percentages of interviewees choosing the middle ground were: BE 30%, in DE 33%, in FR 33% and in NL 16% (EC, 1994, p. A26). In BE, DE, NL, there have been decreases in perception that the EU is a good thing. Furthermore, it is very visible that the perception that the EU is a good thing is significantly higher in the two unitary states than in the federations.

In 1999, the numbers were as follows on the divide between the perception of the EU being a good vs a bad thing: AT 36% vs 23%, BE 47% vs 8%, DE 44% vs 11%, FR, 47% vs 14%, NL 73% vs 5%, SE 34% vs 33%, the percentages that answer in the middle ground are AT 31%, BE 35%, De 31%, FR 31%, NL 18% and SE 28% (EC, 1999, B.26). FR and NL score higher than DE and BE, while AT scores higher than SE.

The 2004 numbers were: AT 46% vs 18%, BE 73% vs 6%, DE 60% vs 12%, FR, 56% vs 14%, NL, 75% vs 9%, SE 48% vs 24%. The numbers for the "Neither good nor bad" option were: AT 32%, BE 20%, DE 26%, FR 28%, NL 15%, SE 27% (EC, 2004, p. 68). NL's scores were higher than BE's but only by two percentage points. DE has a higher number of interviewees perceiving the EU as a good thing than FR, while the SE has two percentage points more than AT. The most recent numbers uncovered using this question are from 2009. In the later Eurobarometer surveys, the question has been more policy specific, but this question has also been asked repeatedly in potential new MS. The divide between perceiving the EU as a good vs a bad thing was AT 41% vs 19%, BE 66% vs 11%, DE 61% vs 11%, FR 50% vs 17%, NL 72% vs 7%, SE 54% vs 19%. The numbers for "Neither good nor bad" were AT 38%, BE 22%, DE 25%, FR 30%, NL 19%, and SE 25% (EC, 2009, p. 91). DE again has a higher number of interviewees perceiving the EU as a good thing than FR, NL scores higher than BE again, the same goes for SE, which scores higher than AT.

In the more recent Eurobarometer, support, in the manner of deeming something as good or bad, has mainly been asked on policy-specific elements. However, to provide as long a longitudinal perspective as possible, a few words are offered on the trust in the EU. After all, it can be argued that trust is an extension or expression of support and legitimacy; they are all interrelated notions (see section 4.3). When asked in 2015: "For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it, The European Union", the numbers that tended to trust for our MS were: AT 32%, BE 48%, DE 39%, FR 32%, NL 47%, SE 48%, although BE, NL and SE score above the EU average of 40%, none of the MS are even in the top 10 (EC, 2015b, pp. 106-108). In 2020, in the aftermath of the first Covid-19 wave, the numbers for tending to trust the EU were: AT 44%, BE 43%, DE 48%, FR 30%, NL 49%, SE 50%, the EU average was 43%. I.e. there is an increase in AT, DE, NL and SE, while BE and FR see a slight decrease. This time around, one of our MS is in the top 10, namely SE on a 10$^{th}$ place (EC, 2020b, p. 115).

To sum up, on the support for the EU and its organisational predecessors, we can conclude that NL often has more people perceiving the EU as a good thing than BE. In the Franco-German comparison, it is uneven, as, in some years, one has higher support than the other and reversed the following time. SE has more people perceiving the EU as a good thing than AT two out of three times. But these numbers are hardly anything from which one can make any clear-cut conclusions. The main thing that can be said is that support tends to be higher in the older than in, the younger MS. Perhaps this is the results of a longer socialization process, or maybe it stems from the fact that the older MS touched upon here are also all founding members of the EU. Although the same cannot be said in regards to trust in the EU. An aspect for future research could be to look into the middle ground here, neither the good nor the bad option. It was chosen to a great extent in some cases by more than 35%

of the interviewees. This middle option can be interpreted as reflecting the critical and reflective, but not good nor bad relationship to the EU or the Common Market.

# 6. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, essential elements of the citizens' relationship to the EU have been investigated to explore and assess *to what extent there are variations in the citizens' relationship to the European Union between federations and unitary Member States?* The problem formulation was derived from a puzzle regarding whether state structure, here the focus is on federations versus unitary states, act as an independent variable in the citizens' relationship to the EU, whether the socialization process makes citizens of federations more apt to approach the EU than citizens from a unitary state.

In brief, one can conclude that the underlying hypothesis that citizens of federations would have a better relationship, i.e. scoring higher on the analysed parameters, to the EU than citizens' from unitary states is debunked. There does not, overall, appear to be any variations in the relationship to the EU that derives or can be ascribed to the state structure, at least not in the elements analysed here. Had there been a distinctive socialization process, then we should not have seen the fluctuations within the MS, which was, for instance, the case with both the AT's and DE's voter turnouts. One would arguably have expected it to have remained relatively stable over time.

If we look at the individual elements of analysis, namely voter turnout, attachment & identification, and support, we can conclude the following. First, in regards to voter turnout, an aspect which provides us with insight into political legitimacy and political participation in the EU, as well as offering implications of a European demos, it is here that we see the most substantial connection between state structure and the citizens' relationship. The federations tend to have voter turnouts above the EU average in the most recent elections, so does SE. For the majority of elections, the federations also achieve a higher turnout than the partnered unitary states and lower discrepancies between EP and national parliament elections, except for in the French case. But the federations are notably not the top scores throughout the EU, which would refute the statements we saw in Clark's (2015) article regarding decentralization when applying a federalist interpretation.

When it comes to attachment and identification, essential elements of a European demos, and support for the EU, one can see that for feeling like a citizen of the EU, both BE and DE scores higher than their partnered unitary state, while AT does not, it evidently still scores above the EU average. It is discussed whether the centralistic nature of the Austrian federation and the decentral nature of the Swedish state might play a part here. We also across the board see fluctuations in the self-identification, implying that there must be other factors but time, and state structure at play, for instance, crises. The lack of variations is especially visible regarding the support for and trust in the EU. In all, one can not argue that integration has yielded a new national consciousness, more latently being expressed in federations rather than unitary states.

The following implications can be drawn from these conclusions. To a great extent, we can rule out state structure as an independent variable in the citizens' relationship to the EU; attention can and ought to be devoted to alternative ways of analysing the EU and citizens' relationship to it.

Perhaps one should not wholly disengage from studies of states' decentralization and its possible importance regarding the relationship to the EU. We did, for instance, see that decentral unitary SE scored higher than centralist AT in some areas. So perhaps one ought to, in future research, measure decentralization based on several indicators, such as fiscal, judicial, decision-making, public services etc. As well as exploring attachment to city, regions, country and the EU, i.e. the Eurobarometer does not measure attachment as a zero-sum game, it should therefore be possible to get an impression of which MS's citizens have the most decentral and multitude levels of attachment. It was, after all, discussed in this thesis whether AT was a federation mainly on paper, limiting our analytical insight.

On the other hand, NL, also a decentralized unitary state, did not overall fare better than BE. However, NL did mainly fare better regarding support, which is another reason why this merits further research because the picture is all but clear. A MS which could be interesting to investigate in future research is Spain, which according to Erk (2004), has federalist characteristics, but not the imperative federalist constitution (p.3).

Another implication or puzzle for continuous research stems partially from the Bursens interview (Appex. B). Is to what extent the EU continues to be an elite project, for as Bursens argues, the Belgian public is to a great extent not interested or adequately informed about EU matters, while the administrative elites are.

A conclusion would be incomplete without a few self-critical reflections. This thesis set out on a complex task about the public opinion in six diverse MS, which in and of itself proved challenging given the time and space limitations. But it was deemed essential to include all the federations. It would have been ludicrous to exclude one or two, given that there are three in total. Speaking of the cases, it shall once again be highlighted that AT is a centralistic federation and that BE is a very young federation. This, alongside the decentralised nature of NL and SE, could have been explored further. Which goes back to a previous point, that federations do not have a monopoly on decentralization. One should also have devoted more attention to discussing the awareness of the analysed citizens. It was assumed that familiarity with their state structure existed, which might not be the case for the entity of the population. Future research should also strive to include all 27 MS in any analyses.

The time and space limitations also greatly diminished the possibilities to more exhaustedly explore alternative explanations for the fluctuations and deviations seen—ideally, each merited attention and discussion. An error was, unfortunately, made when choosing the French parliament elections as the first-order election. Instead, the focus should have been on the presidential elections.

For future research, one ought to explore if the exact opposite of the underlying hypothesis is true, namely whether there is a saturation point for citizen's political relationships. Citizens' of federations already have, at least, two clear political loyalties. Perhaps, there is a maximum. As suggested, a thorough assessment of various elements of decentralization across the EU should be made. An alternative way of measuring citizens' relationship to the EU in federations and unitary states could also be explored through assessing the trust in the various EU institutions, engagement in debates about the EU, interactions with other European citizens and perhaps travels within the EU.

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# 8. Appendices

## 8.1 Appendix A

Interview guide for the interview with Peter Bursens – See attachment in digital exam.

## 8.2 Appendix B

Interview transcript from the interview with Peter Bursens – See attachment in digital exam.