

# **Cuadernos Manuel Giménez Abad**

**EU Regional Policy  
and the identification  
with Europe**

## Sumario

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**INTRODUCTION**

by **Mario Kölling**

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The European project has been an ongoing process since the beginning of the fifties in the past century. Only recently a debate has started on how to increase the democratic legitimacy and how to guarantee more efficient decision-making at the Union level or on how to improve and promote a popular sense of European identity among the EU population. On the one side, the decision-making procedures at EU level have been traditionally criticized with the argument that the governance of the European Union in some way lacks democratic legitimacy. Over time, a number of reforms have been undertaken to increase democratic legitimacy, e.g. the Lisbon Treaty enhanced the role of national parliaments in EU legislation and introduced the European Citizens' Initiative. On the other side the European Union has been mainly characterised as having strong output legitimacy. The subject of our publication, the EU cohesion policy<sup>1</sup> has the objectives of reducing economic, social and territorial disparities, have had a significant impact with regard to this output legitimacy. Nevertheless the economic and financial crisis has put the output legitimacy under pressure, making it more difficult to explain the benefits of the EU. Since 2008, the income has declined for many people across the EU, at the same time employment rates have fallen in most EU countries and unemployment has grown, while poverty and social exclusion have tended to become more widespread. While in 2007 only 14% of EU citizens considered their country's membership to be a 'bad thing', this percentage had more than doubled in 2008 to 30% and remained almost constant in 2009. Nevertheless after this downwards trend and parallel to first signs of economic recovery, the image of the EU continues to improve. At the end of 2014 a majority of Europeans have a positive image of the EU (39%, +4 percentage points since spring 2014), while 37% have a neutral image (37%, -1), and fewer have a negative image (22%, -3). Furthermore the trust in the European Union has increased significantly (37%, +6 percentage points since spring 2014).

According to the classical distinction between political inputs and outputs; the current legitimacy debate of the EU focuses on the conflicts between a democratic (input) vs. a performance (output) emphasis. The input-output debate can also be linked to the identification with the political community. It has been held that when citizens feel the benefits of Europe they are more interested in and supportive of the EU. Especially in Western Europe, attitudes regarding EU membership have been explained by personal economic situations and individuals' perceptions of their own economic well-being and national economic performance. The identification with Europe has been understood as a positive attachment to the EU and is interpreted as being an effect of three causes: positive personal experiences (e.g. facilitated by ERASMUS), active identity formation through narratives and symbols (e.g. European anthem, flag and motto) and benefits from the EU and its policies (e.g. regional policies). With regard to the latter, there is empirical evidence that voters in the countries benefiting most from the EU subsidies turn out in the polls more actively than voters in the countries that pay these subsidies. In this context there also seemed to be evidence of a positive relationship between net financial transfers from the EU towards member states and identification with the EU integration process. These explanations rest on the notion that support for EU membership comes from the implicit cost/benefit analysis of individuals' likely economic benefit to be gained from integration.

1. The EU Cohesion policy is a broad term, it is often used synonymously with regional policy. For the purposes of this publication, the focus will be on the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU, what this means and the measures taken to promote this.

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There is significant research showing variations of public opinion and of concepts of the EU (variety of perception within the EU Member states, but also within societies, in addition to a variation over time). Moreover, there is no consensus on what constitutes European identity, and the question is left open whether such identity can be promoted. In our publication we would like to analyse if and how European regional policies impact the perception of Europe by its citizens.

Regional policies are the second largest part of the EU budget in the period of 2014-2020. EU regional policy has been considered as an investment policy, which should support job creation, competitiveness, economic growth, improved quality of life and sustainable development. Nevertheless during the past few years the crisis has had a major impact on regions and cities of the EU. Regional economic disparities which were growing caused national governments to reduce public investments in recent years to balance their budgets (public investment declined by 20% in real terms between 2008 and 2013), although cohesion policy funding continued to flow to Member States and regions.

There is a variety of European regions with regard on the level of implication concerning EU cohesion policy. EU regional policies have been affecting EU citizens in different ways, both related to their economic development, but also related to their thematic focus. Some regions have been receiving structural aid for decades, although in other regions these resources have been reduced progressively in addition to regions which have never received structural aid.

In concrete we will analyse the interrelation of the EU regional policy with the identification for the EU integration in five EU Member States (United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Poland and the Czech Republic) with different territorial organisation, civil participation and civic identification with EU membership. Spain and Italy are two countries which benefited for a long time from EU cohesion policy with a population characterised by a very positive attitude towards the integration project and where only recently the positive identification declined. Poland and the Czech Republic only recently started to benefit from the EU re-distributive policies and those citizens consider EU membership increasingly as a positive and beneficial phenomenon. Finally the financial resources received by the UK represented only a small proportion of GDP. Moreover the public opinion in this country is less in favour of the integration process.

Our approach is not simply based on the argument that citizens who gain from the EU tend to identify with Europe, nevertheless we will analyse under which conditions the EU cohesion policy can contribute or not to a stronger identification with the EU.

Mario Kölling ■

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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF EU REGIONAL POLICY IN POLAND AND ITS IMPACT ON EUROPEAN IDENTIFICATION OF POLISH CITIZENS**by **Elżbieta Opiłowska**

Willy Brandt Center for German and European Studies, University of Wrocław

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The perspective of the accession to the European Union, mainly the need for candidate countries to adopt *acquis communautaire*, has influenced the reform processes in East Central Europe. In order to manage the structural funds, the accession countries were forced to reorganise their administrative structures at the regional level. Moreover, the emphasis on multi-level governance has grown within the European Union, increasing the importance of sub-national units of authority (Bachtler 1992).

Following decades of ideological and institutional uniformity, Poland at the beginning of the 1990s was free to start the important processes of regionalisation. At that time state structures in Poland were highly centralised and over-bureaucratised. Decisions in the communist system were taken at the party-state level, while the lower levels of the party-state apparatus carried out decisions. Sub-national institutions were mere appendages of the central government (Yoder 2003).

Moreover, the economic development in Poland after the World War II was based on central planning and therefore provided little incentive for lower-level managers and workers to take responsibility in their work. The service sector and light industry, especially in the high-technology field, were neglected in favour of heavy industry. The spatial distribution of industry under communism focused on industrial-urban agglomerations, industrial 'zones' or 'axes'. These "very large, vertically-organised agricultural and industrial enterprises and infrastructure required organisation at the national level rather than regionally or locally" (Bachtler 1992). The administrative reform conducted between 1973 and 1975 even increased the centralisation of the state. Within 49 smaller, weaker voivodeships it was easier for the central government to control them. The territorial changes created several small, economically nonviable regions, whose boundaries ignored traditional ties and spatial economic, social and cultural relations. At each level of administration 'national councils' directly supervised the authorities and acted as instruments of the central party. However, despite the communist regimes' endeavours to impose uniformity, regional disparities remained. The three different development paths from the partition's period shaped Poland's economic and political development until present time.

Therefore, in the 1990s, the OECD noted several obstacles when implementing administrative reform in Poland, including a history of underdeveloped local and regional government structures. There was a concern that regional economic disparities would grow, tendencies for regionalism would become ethnically-based and the fact that, with vertical economic and administrative sectorial organization, regional thinking and decentralising efforts would be stifled (OECD 1996: 102). However, undoubtedly the EU accession process was an important catalyst for the development of the Polish regional policy system.

This contribution is aimed at presenting an overview of the development of regional policy in Poland and at analysing the correlation between EU cohesion policy and citizen identification with the EU. It is based on an evaluation of secondary sources and exploitation of European and national surveys on Polish attitudes, identities and appraisals of

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EU policies. Poland belongs to the major beneficiaries of the European cohesion policy and can, therefore, provide indicators of effectiveness of EU instruments in this area.

**II. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU COHESION POLICY IN POLAND**

The political and economic transformation in the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) and the enlargement process of the EU have led to a reform of cohesion policy and structural funds. The decentralisation and the strengthening of sub-national authorities were preconditions for candidate countries in the accession process. The EU regional policy promotes greater involvement of regional-level institutions in economic development, with potential for wider changes in regional governance structures (Hooghe 1996). In the case of Poland, the decentralisation reforms have also had a significant bearing on regional development policy.

In March 1990 the Polish Lower Chamber, the Sejm passed the Law on Local Self-Government, which granted new powers of self-government to the parishes. This reform introduced democratic elections at local level, transferred the ownership of communal property from central to local governments, and introduced local administration and local budgets separate from the central government. Additionally, it opened up new areas for political activism, gave more administrative and executive responsibility to local governments, and put the collection and disbursement of revenues in the hands of local authorities (Yoder 2003). Further, on 1 January 1999 the administrative reform became more effective. It reduced the number of 49 voivodeships to 16.

In Poland there is a dual administrative structure at regional level. The voivodeships councils (sejmiki) are responsible for the development and implementation of regional economic policies; their task is to stimulate business activities and improve competitiveness and innovation in the region. These bodies are independent legal identities with independent budgets (such as the districts and villages). The sejmiki are elected in general elections and are headed by elected marshals. On the other hand, the voivodes, are state appointed officials who represent the central government at a regional level. Furthermore, they are responsible for all services related to public security. The voivodeships can enter into bilateral and multilateral cooperation with foreign partners.

The EU launched different programmes in order to help the CEECs implement cohesion policy. In 1991 the European Commission established the ECOS-Ouverture programme for inter-regional cooperation between local authorities in the EU and CEECs. The PHARE Programme, as an EU pre-accession instrument, supported candidate countries in stabilising the external border of the EU and developing cross-border relations between old EU members and potential candidate countries.<sup>1</sup>

The implementation of the cohesion policy is the largest structured public intervention in Poland (Bienias; Gabski 2014). For this purpose, national strategies and programmes (National Development Plan 2004–2006 and National Strategic Reference Framework 2007–2013) have been developed. The distribution of EU structural and cohesion funds is still mostly coordinated on a national level by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, which also evaluates the effectiveness of implementing the cohesion policy. However, since Poland entered the European Union, the regional governments have also managed EU Structural Funds. Bachtler and Gorzelak (2007) emphasise some added values of EU Structural Funds:

1. [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/archive/innovation/innovating/ecos.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/innovation/innovating/ecos.htm) (last accessed 15.7.2014)

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- Leveraging additional resources for economic development;
- The multi-annual planning process, which encourages participants to adopt a ‘strategic’ approach to regional development, leading to the introduction of new ideas and approaches, better project selection and greater coherence of co-financed projects;
- Partnership. The principle of Structural Funds programming has brought enhanced transparency, cooperation and coordination to the design and delivery of regional development policy, and better quality regional development interventions as a result.

In the period 2004-2015 almost EUR 104 billion (from the EU budget and domestic public co-financing) will be allocated to the implementation of cohesion policy in Poland (Bienias/Gabski 2014). The funds are spread between regions, not equally but according to their GDP level. The largest beneficiaries are the eastern and southern voivodeships as follows: Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Podkarpackie and Świętokrzyskie (Zaleski 2013: 24). Most of the funds are allocated to development and modernisation of physical infrastructure, production sectors and human resources (ibid: 1). The evaluation of effectiveness of cohesion policy in Poland proved that it is an efficient instrument for the socio-economic development of regions. However, as Bianias and Gabski argue, success depends on good coordination and precise targeting of public interventions in order to identify market failures (Bienias/Gabski 2014: 42). According to the evaluation, the lowest level of effects could be observed in the case of highly innovative and R&D projects (Ambroziak 2014: 134).

Within the regional policy Poland has taken significant steps toward decentralisation and regionalisation. However, there are still regional disparities in the development process. The western part of Poland has shown positive signs of regional development, while eastern Poland struggles to keep up. The problem with Polish decentralisation is that the regions do not possess enough resources to solve their problems (Yoder 2003). The following map illustrates the GDP per capita in Polish regions in 2008 and its increase between 2004 and 2008. As we can see, the Mazowieckie voivodeship, with Warsaw as the capital, is the richest one and here the GDP per capita has also risen significantly. The eastern voivodeships (Podkarpackie, Lubelskie, Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie) have the lowest GDP per capita in Poland.

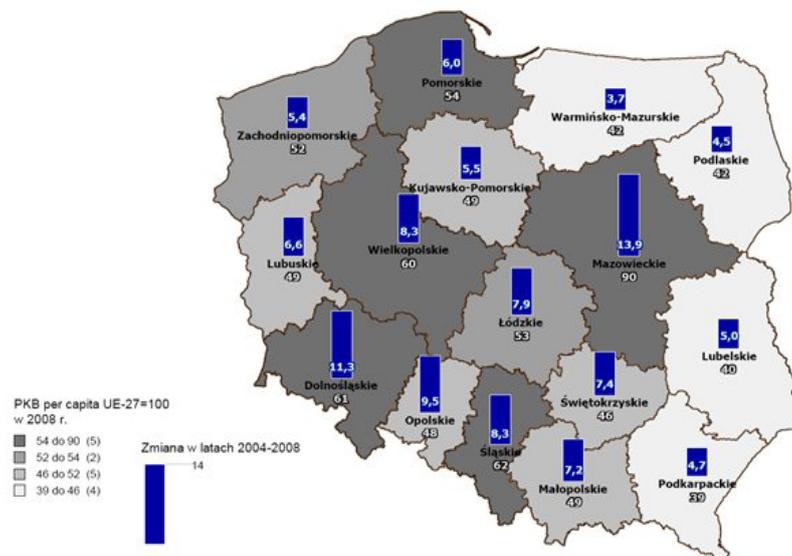


Fig. 1. The GDP per capita, UE=100. Source: Wpływ funduszy europejskich na gospodarkę polskich regionów i konwergencję z krajami UE [The impact of EU funds on economy of Polish regions and on convergence with EU states], Raport 2010, Warszawa 2010.

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The Polish Ministry for Infrastructure and Development regularly monitors the impact of the cohesion policy on the socio-economic development of Poland. According to the latest report<sup>2</sup> from June 2014, the impact was expressly positive. In the period 2004-2013, the GDP in Poland grew by 48.7%. The Ministry estimates that about 20% of mid-year growth resulted from enterprises that were realised with the support of EU funds.

Apart from positive impacts of the EU cohesion policy on Poland, there are still some faults and challenges to be addressed in the current financing framework (2014-2020). According to the evaluation reports, the projects realised with EU funds are not strategic but rather local-scale and do not have enough synergy effects. The system for managing regional policy has proved to be centralised and complicated. Its main characteristics include: inflexibility of procedures, lack of transparency in decision-making with all the negative consequences of this; undue efforts wasted on direct implementation instead of work on policy and strategy, and poor staff selection mechanisms (Kozak 2007).

Therefore the aims and procedures of the cohesion policy for the period of 2014-2020 have been redefined:

- a) linking allocation of the Cohesion Policy funds with the Europe 2020 objectives;
- b) reinforcing the territorial dimension of the cohesion policy;
- c) the imposition of conditionalities;
- d) stronger monitoring and evaluation;
- e) the increased role of repayable instruments (re-use of the initial funds) as opposed to non-repayable grants;
- f) change of the paradigm underlying the Cohesion Policy of the European Union.

In line with the Strategy Europe 2020 the Cohesion Policy will become a standard bearer for the objectives of smart, inclusive, and sustainable growth in the Europe 2020 strategy in all EU regions and will not only exclusively cover the least developed parts of the EU (Ambroziak 2014: 134).

In addition, the voivodeship governments in Poland administer in the period 2014-2020 more resources than in the years 2007-2013 when they had close to 25% of all funds for Poland at their disposal. In the new financial perspective they will have nearly 40% of the entire pool and 60 % of ERDF and ESF (37 % in 2007-2013).<sup>3</sup>

### III. THE EU COHESION POLICY AND IDENTIFICATION OF POLISH CITIZENS

From the beginning of Poland's accession to the European Community, the aim of national, and also regional, policy was a "return to Europe". In this regard, local politicians promoted identifying with Europe. However, there was a danger that the heavy-handed

2. Ministerstwo Infrastruktury i Rozwoju, Departament Koordynacji Strategii i Polityk Rozwoju (Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, Department for Coordination of Development's Strategy and Policy) (2014), Wpływ polityki spójności na rozwój społeczno-gospodarczy Polski i regionów w latach 2004-2013 (The impact of cohesion policy on socio-economic development of Poland and regions in the period 2004-2013), Warszawa.

3. <https://www.mir.gov.pl/Strony/glowna.aspx> (last accessed 10.5.2014).

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promotion of the European identity may have turned it into an empty catchphrase and a “festivalisation of politics” (Häußermann; Siebel 1993). In practical terms, this ‘return’ signalled a drive to join European institutions, especially the European Union. Following the acknowledgement of this aspiration by the EU in the mid-1990s, as Kataryna Wolczuk argues, the ‘return to Europe’ has taken on the technocratic form of implementing the ‘acquis communautaire’, comprising more or less specified prescriptions. So the accession process opened the applicant countries up to influences from external actors in areas which traditionally belonged to the realm of national sovereignty for EU member-states (Wolczuk 2002: 203-4).

Moreover, in the 1990s the struggle to de-communise and Europeanise Poland was connected with a revival of minority and regional identities, which inspired calls for greater regional autonomy (especially in the Upper Silesia). “The removal of the communist political straitjacket dispelled the myth of national and territorial homogeneity propagated by many communist regimes” (Ibid.). Therefore the regionalisation process in Poland was intrinsically connected with creating Europeanness that helped to escape from the national typecasting. For example in the Northern and Western territories of Poland, that used to belong to Germany before 1945, the regional cultural heritage (German, Polish, Czech, Jewish) has been redefined after 1989 in the framework of common European legacy.

So far there has been a little reflection on the issue, how the citizen’s identity has been shaped by redefinition of regional, national and European territory. Do Polish citizens discern the regional legacy? Do they recognise the EU funds? What is the point of reference for their identification – city/region, state or Europe? The following section aims at presenting the survey results regarding the aforementioned questions.

According to the Eurobarometer 384 “Citizens’ awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy”<sup>4</sup>, conducted in 2013, Polish citizens with 80% are placed at the top of the range regarding awareness of EU co-financed project. As the map below demonstrates, there is a strong link between a country’s eligibility for EU regional funds and the level of awareness of EU co-financed projects. Moreover, in comparison to 2010 the awareness has recorded a growth of 12%. 93% of Polish respondents also think that the EU funds have had a positive impact on the development of their city or region.

Concerning the question on personal benefits from projects funded by the ERDF Polish respondents are placed in the first position, with 59% having heard about the funds.

On the question “At which level should decisions about EU regional policy projects be taken?” 35% of Polish respondents mention local, 30% – regional, 18% – national and 11% EU level.

In summary, according to the survey, there is a very high awareness of the EU co-financed regional projects and a relatively positive evaluation of their results. Further polls confirm the positive attitude of Poles toward European integration. The Polish Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) conducted a survey “10 years of Poland’s membership in the European Union” in February and March 2014, according to which the acceptance of Poland’s membership in the EU is very high.

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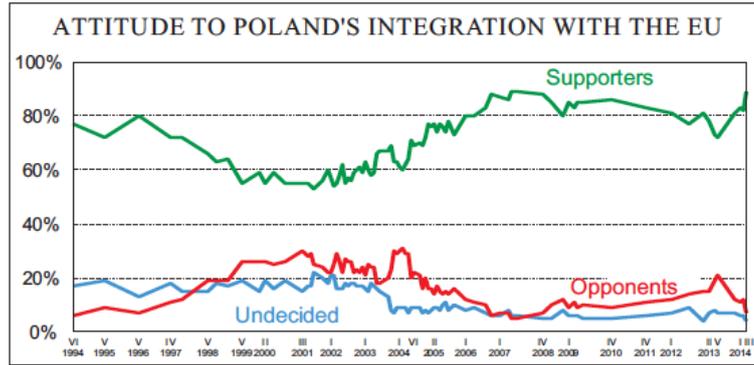


Fig. 2: Attitude to Poland's Integration with the EU, in: CBOS: 10 years of Poland membership in the European Union, source: Polish Public Opinion: April 2014.

In the opinion of respondents, the Polish membership in the EU brings more benefits for Poland than for them personally. However, since 2004 the number of people evaluating Polish membership as positive for Poland, and from an individual perspective, has increased gradually.

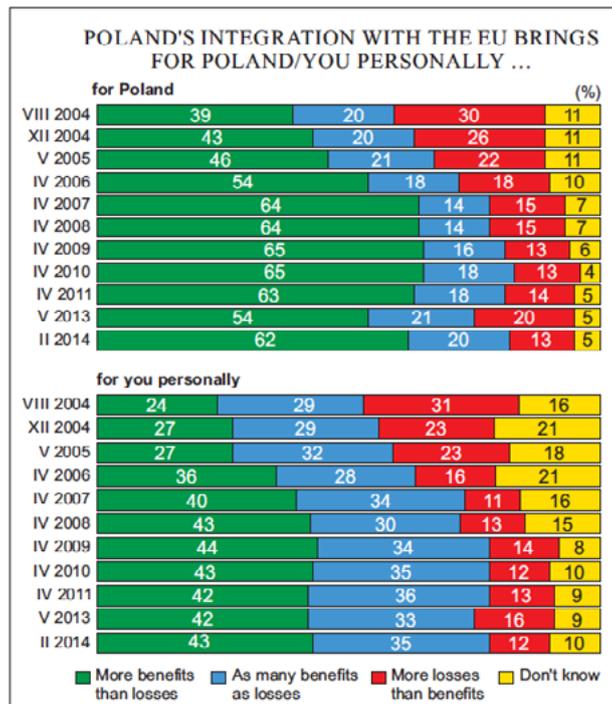


Fig. 3: Evaluation of Poland's Integration with the EU, in: CBOS: 10 years of Poland membership in the European Union, Polish Public Opinion: April 2014.

Poles perceive the positive consequences of EU membership above inter alia for agriculture (73%), improvement of material standard of living (53%) and improvements in roads and infrastructure (in the last 10 years the number of people noting progress in this area increased from 56% in 2004 to 83% in 2014).<sup>5</sup> In public opinion, EU membership has had a positive influence on international security of Poland (51 % in 2005 and 72% in 2014). However, 67% of respondents think Poland does not have sufficient influence on EU actions and decisions, although 74% see that EU membership increased the importance Poland within the international arena.

5. CBOS: 10 years of Poland membership in the European Union, Polish Public Opinion: April 2014, p. 2.

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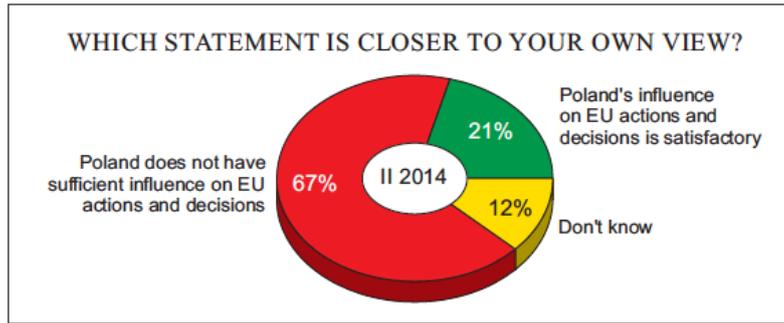


Fig. 4: Poland's influence on EU actions and decisions, in: CBOS: 10 years of Poland membership in the European Union, Polish Public Opinion: April 2014.

As demonstrated in the previous section, in the opinion of the majority of Polish citizens, EU membership has had a positive impact on the economic development of Poland. However, there arises a question on Europe as a point of reference for personal identification of Poles. The CBOS survey shows that 55% of respondents see themselves only in national categories – as Poles. 41% feel Polish as well as European. Only 2% prefer the European identity to the national, however this seems to be falling.

Do you see yourself as...?

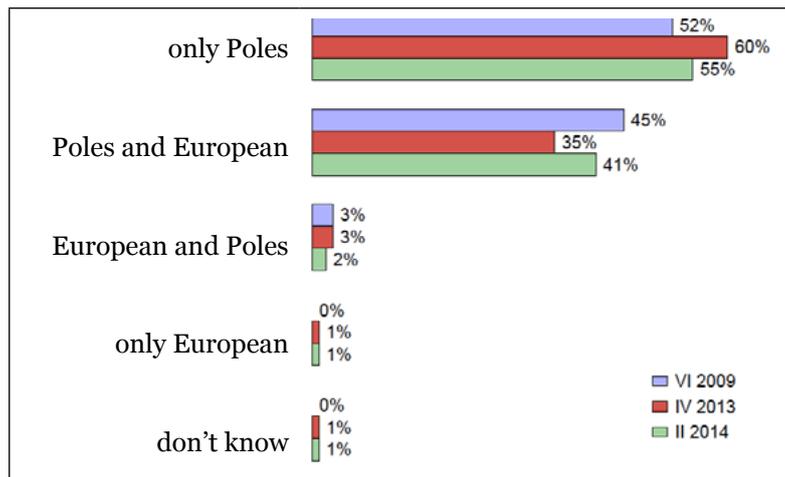


Fig. 5: National and European identification of Poles, source: Roguska, Beata (2014), 10 lat członkostwa Polski w UE, Komunikat z badań CBOS, Nr 52, Warszawa.

The survey of Eurobarometer 81 (Spring 2014) indicates slightly different results in favour of European identification. According to the poll rating, 36% of Polish respondents see themselves as nationality only and 55% as nationality and European.

Regardless of discrepancy between the Eurobarometer and CBOS assessments of self-identification of Polish citizens, it can be claimed that the EU membership of Poland has not impaired the Polish national identification.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

Poland is the major beneficiary of the EU cohesion policy and the evaluations of the effectiveness of its implementation demonstrate that EU programmes have had an explicitly positive impact on Poland. The EU funds contributed to economic and investment growth, internal and external economic stability and improved the labour market

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situation. According to the above cited reports, the EU funds accelerated the GDP growth in Poland and, therefore, alleviated the effects of the global economic crisis. Thanks to cohesion policy, the divergence between the economy of Poland, in comparison to EU member states, has been reduced, even though there is still a substantial difference overall. The pressure from the EU to adopt the ‘*acquis communautaire*’ in the pre-accession phase induced the decentralisation and regionalisation process of Polish governmental systems. Moreover, since 2004 regional governments have been systematically gaining more competence in management of regional policy and funds.

Taking into consideration the impact of membership on attitudes and identifications of Poles with the EU, it proved to be positive, too. According to surveys, Poles see numerous benefits from EU membership regarding economic growth, regional and local investments, labour market and national security. However, in their opinion, Poland profits more as a state than they do as individuals. Despite their acknowledgment of positive effects of EU membership, Polish citizens define themselves above all through nationality. The majority of respondents indicated only Polish nationality as a point of reference and the comparison to previous polls veers towards an opinion that the national identity will play a major role in the future. So far there are no dates on regional differences in identifications process of Poles and it is impossible to answer the question in correlation between EU support and European identification.

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## THE EU REGIONAL POLICY IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND ITS IMPACT ON EUROPEAN IDENTIFICATION OF CZECH CITIZENS

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### I. THE EU REGIONAL POLICY IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC 2004-2014 – THE SETTING AND THE MAIN ACTORS<sup>1</sup>

The EU Regional Policy has brought a notable degree of Europeanization of territorial arrangement. Czech regions (*kraje*) founded in 2000, did not correspond to the desired size of NUTS II-level regions, which were traditionally understood in the EU as the appropriate level for the implementation of regional policy. Some regions were therefore sometimes merged together, with two or even three regions “glued” together in the artificial form of a NUTS II region; however, these areas had no historical relationship, connectedness, or territorial integrity, as well as having absolutely no common identity. Regions with higher populations were more fortunate, and could choose to create their own NUTS II region congruent to their existing borders; this occurred in the cases of the Moravian-Silesian Region, the Central Bohemian Region, and the Capital City of Prague. In general, the size and shape of NUTS II regions in the Czech Republic led to a wide discussion, and the formation of these administrative territories (often grafting together historically disparate areas) was itself a largely disappointing situation for the *kraje* (Dočkal-Kozlová 2006: 20).

The Czech Republic received funding from EU Cohesion Policy organs even before the country’s accession in 2004. This including funding from the pre-accession PHARE, SAPARD, and ISPA programs, which, among other, had the goal of reducing the gap between the EU and the Czech economy. After 1 May 2004, these instruments “ran out,” and the Czech Republic, as a full member of the EU became a “full” recipient of the EU’s Structural Funds. The first round the Czech Republic was involved in was a relatively short time, from 2004 to the end of 2006, in which the country received 2.8 billion euros, which were allocated across a total of 16 programs. A considerable amount of the financial resources which the Czech Republic has been eligible to receive for each individual programming round is related to the fact that the majority of the country is poorer than 75% of the EU average, and is thus included in what was previously known as Objective 1, known as “Convergence” in the 2007-2013 programming round. Only the Capital City of Prague region fell under Objective 2, due to its higher than average economic development vis-à-vis the rest of the Czech Republic.

The government as well as the general public looked to the period of 2007-2013 with a great deal of hope, and the fact that the Czech Republic received 26 billion euros, of which the vast majority (25.89 billion) was directed toward the objective of “Convergence” was generally accepted as a boon to the country. The government of the Czech Republic and the administration of the NUTS II regions prepared 26 Operational Programs to obtain the money from the Structural Funds, which were considerably more programs than in the periods before as well as after this round. The creation of Operational Programs was characterized by a relatively high level of decentralization, in which the individual NUTS II regions had a large amount of autonomy. Some critics

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later saw this fact as one of the main problems of the system fostering an environment of corruption (see below). The bulk of the overall financial package was allocated to eight republic-wide Operational Programs, with an additional nine Operational Programs created in the area of European Territorial Cooperation. In the context of the aforementioned “regionalization” of regional policy, seven Regional Operational Programs (ROP) were created, and finally two were formed for Prague, even though it was prevented from applying under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective due to its above-average development, in contrast to the rest of the country.

One crucial body of regional policy at the central level in the Czech Republic in the years 2007-2013 was the Management and Coordination Committee. The main activity of this body was to coordinate the preparation and implementation of EU programs. Its goal was to involve as many actors as possible in policy building helping actors at the regional and local level to work with those at the national level, as well as facilitating contact on the level of the civil society. The composition of the committee, which has acted as the main “partnering” arena in the Czech Republic is extremely diverse – according to the body’s bylaws, voting rights are afforded to a maximum of 40 members, representing ministries, NUTS II regions, the Capital City of Prague (in its capacity as a NUTS II region), the Office of the Government, employee unions, chambers of commerce and industry representatives, universities, and other representatives of civic society. One interesting aspect of this is that representatives of cities, however, do not have a single member with voting rights, even though these decisions impact them. This is indicative of a phenomenon that often is seen in other areas of regional policy, where cities are somewhat underrepresented in spite of their efforts (see Havlík 2014). Additionally, the Management and Coordinating Committee obviously is not the only arena on the central level which implements the partnership principle. Coordination committees also exist at individual ministries; furthermore, there are working groups for individual topics, the majority of which include representatives not only of the *kraje*, but also of cities. Similarly to what occurs at the highest level, the partnership principle also has been implemented at the level of regions. Alongside the Management and Coordinating Committee of the Operational Programs, “Monitoring Committees” were also established during the 2007-2013 Programming Period to oversee the phases of implementation and evaluation of regional policy in accordance with the partnership principle.

The participation of individual actors in the formation of regional policy varies widely. While it is clear that ministries and *kraje* are well represented in the aforementioned monitoring committees of individual Operational Programs, the same cannot be said for cities, whose representation (generally only one or two members of the committee) is on par with that of unions, business groups, and universities. At a minimal level, cities take part in all phases of the political cycle, starting with the publication of an initial public consultation by the European Commission (initiation phase), to participation in the consultation and associated hearings, and the implementation of the general strategic principles of the Union in Member States, right up to involvement in the evaluation phase, by taking part in monitoring committees for Operational Programs. In all these phases, however, the member base of the associations representing cities and municipalities is usually very heterogeneous (ranging from small municipalities to large cities). This state of affairs, however, must be further interpreted. Czech cities communicate with the associations of cities in varying degrees of willingness and preparedness. The opinion presented by an association of cities may thus be rather intuitive and, in spite of the assurances given by some (rather passive) cities that they trust the associations entirely, this attitude is open to doubt. (see Havlík 2014 or Havlík 2013: 158-166) It may thus be stated that Czech cities are MLG actors, but unfortunately, they are atypical actors to a pronounced extent. They are invited to regional policymaking sessions as representatives of the local sphere, but their position in the process is strongly determined by the relatively low number of representatives in key governance platforms (monitoring

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committees, ministry working groups, etc.). The activities they undertake are on an *ad hoc* basis and are difficult to generalize. The classic behavior of cities usually entails passivity in the Czech context. However, proactive cities do exist that strike out on their own and try to negotiate support for beneficial projects or to address specific difficulties in the implementation process (Havlík 2013: 158-166).<sup>2</sup>

The current Programming Period of regional policy, 2014-2020, in which the Czech Republic will receive up to 20.5 billion euros, saw a return to a centralized distribution of subsidies, following the 2007-2013 phase of decentralization. The original Regional Operational Programs administered by individual NUTS II regions were ended, and replaced by a single Joint Regional Operational Program in reaction to corruption scandals as well as other things (see below). This trend can obviously lead to a more restricted space for the regional and local partnerships that were formed on the basis of regional Monitoring Committees (see above).

## II. MAIN PROBLEMS: CORRUPTION AND INEFFECTIVE EXPENDITURE OF EUROPEAN FUNDING

The dominant problem with respect to the implementation of European regional policy in the Czech Republic is the high level of corruption and fraud. This is not to say that the implementation structure as such should be impugned; instead, it suggests a negative image in the media that the European Structural funds have received in the Czech Republic in recent years. Several scandals have been publicized in the media which have led to convictions (or at least indictments) of various figures; these cases have been widespread, rather than merely in one region. In a case involving the NUTS II Northwest Region, corruption surrounding the distribution of ESF led to an indictment of one top regional policy staffer. Petr Kušnierz, who was sentenced to five years in prison, was found guilty of asking for a 10% cut from applicants of European subsidies (Idnes.cz, 2013). The case as a whole continued up to the EU level, in which Ústecký and Karlovarský kraj were ordered by the European Commission to pay back in to the Regional Operational Program a fine of more than 90 million euros (Angermannová 2013). The case was further complicated by the fact that in addition to the high position of staffers, regional politicians were also implicated; the most high-level of these was the Regional Lieutenant Governor, Pavel Kouda. Undoubtedly, the most famous scandal concerning the abuse of European subsidies was the case of the top politician in the Central Bohemian Region and a leading figure in the Czech Social Democratic Party, Regional Governor David Rath. The case was notable for its audacity, in that Rath was arrested on the street with 7 million Czech crowns in a bag, but it was also controversial for being in a different region. This seemed to indicate that corruption was endemic and that it was a “dyed in the wool” phenomenon. The resulting reaction by the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic demonstrated that the suspicion of corruption regarding European funding was seen as severe, and the Ministry suspended the allocation of funds from the Regional Operational Program (ROP) of Central Bohemia. In addition to these two *kraje*, speculation about illegal distribution of European subsidies also occurred in the South Bohemian and the Pilsen *kraje*. As mentioned previously, in addition to objective findings of fact (in which various regions were areas of corruption regarding European funds), the media image of the EU regional policy also has remained

2. It is thus understandable that many scholars leave cities out of the MLG concept and do not include them as an independent (local) governance level (Jeffery 2000 or Knodt; Hüttmann 2006: 229).

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a problem. In the past year alone, headlines such as “Police in Liberec go on the offensive due to EU subsidies, ex-politician of ODS also arrested” (Idnes.cz, 2014) or “Wild (North)west: *Kraje* to pay 2.5 billion for Subsidy Corruption.” (Lidovky.cz 2013).

Corruption has thus increasingly become a component of the discourse of European regional policy in the Czech Republic. The severity of the problem of corruption regarding the distribution of Structural Funds has also been observed by the Ministry of Regional Development, which is responsible for their allocation, developing the “Strategy to Combat Fraud and Corruption in Regards to the Allocation of Funds” in March of 2013. In this document, the Ministry specifically states that: “In the period of 2007-2013, there were a number of cases of the abuse of resources provided by the funds of the EU. In the case of several Operational Programs, this had a significant negative effect on the national budget, and in several cases, payments from the European Commission were temporarily suspended” (see Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj 2013). Corruption thus has not only been a simple matter of media speculation and the subject of ongoing court cases, but the government has also acknowledged the problem.

In addition to the issue of corruption, media attention has often pointed out the inability of the Czech Republic to collect the funding from the ESF that it has been allocated by the EU. In their 2012 analysis *Problematika čerpání prostředků ze strukturálních fondů v České republice: překážky limitující plynulé čerpání z fondů* (“The Problem of Drawing Funding from the Structural Funds in the EU: Obstacles Limiting the Smooth Flow of Funds”), Lucie Zimmermannová and Lenka Brown (2012: 15-16) identified other problems in addition to corruption and fraud, which have prevented efficient withdrawal of the EU Structural Funds. The most persistent problems include the following:

A. The issue of administrative capacity – the central state often fails to retain trained professionals in the relevant positions; hiring and retaining professionals who have the required qualifications and at the same time EU-related expertise is very difficult.

B. Bureaucratic inertia – in particular, the slow pace of administration and frequent changes in conditions; according to the analysis, simplification of the system by legislation has not taken place sufficiently quickly.

C. Promotion and communication – this is primarily related to the low quality of translated materials and publications. If the responsible body of the Operational Program was faced with a more complicated request or from individuals, the answer only came after several months and multiple reminders.

D. The monitoring system of the Structural Funds – the information system designed to ensure effective monitoring of projects co-financed by the structural funds is inadequate. The system lacks the control mechanisms that are usually implemented in such projects, and permits the recording of incorrect and even irrational data. The European Commission has criticized not only the functionality of the system, but also the bidding process for a service provider.

The problems listed above had been a long-term phenomenon concerning the ability of the Czech Republic to obtain the funding that the EU had allocated to it in the period between 2007 and 2013. This was particularly problematic regarding the oversight of funding withdrawals, which is supposed to be conducted by the Ministry of Finance. According to the annual report of the European Commission for 2012, the Czech Republic had the worst-performing oversight in the entire Union, which led the Commission to point out an almost non-functional process of obtaining funding (European

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Commission 2012). The Commission explicitly noted that “For one audit authority (Czech Republic), it was concluded that it essentially does not function and an action plan, linked to payment interruptions, was carried out in 2011-2012 leading to two flat rate financial corrections accepted in 2012.” Interrupting the allocation of subsidies to the Czech Republic is a step that the Commission has implemented in the past several times, which only confirms the seriousness of the problems listed above (corruption, bureaucracy, etc.).

In addition to other problems of European regional policy in the Czech Republic, the instability of implementation structures is also noteworthy. Even in 2006, during the planning period for the 2007-2013 round, Vít Dočkal, in his work on the implementation of EU regional policy in the Czech Republic, noted that “the arrangement of various Operational Programs became an issue of conflict as well, particularly the shift from the Common Regional Operational Program (SROP) to the seven Regional Operational Programs (ROP)... At the current time, the *kraje* loudly called for this program to be delegated each *kraj* separately, so that each one could arrange their program documents with an eye to the actual needs of their own region, and mainly, so that they could use financial resources as they saw fit” (Dočkal 2006: 57). Seven years later, the situation was completely different and in contrast they called for the centralization of Regional Operational Programs, which points toward the total unpredictability of implementation of European regional policy in the Czech Republic.

### III. DOES EU COHESION POLICY LEAD TO CZECHS HAVING A STRONGER IDENTIFICATION WITH THE EU?

In the 2003 referendum on joining the European Union, supporters cast a convincing 77.3% of the votes. While this figure was to a certain extent influenced by the low voter participation rate (55.2%), it nevertheless reflected the highest identification with the EU over the past decade. In later polls, we have generally only seen declines from this level. The Czech Republic is seen in the context of other nations as a somewhat euroskeptic Member State, in part due to the problematic ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. The position of the Czech Republic toward European integration, however, depends on whether we take the opinions of average citizens or of the political elite. Elites generally support Czech membership in the EU, and with exceptions (characterized best by those such as former President Václav Klaus), the political elite takes a more or less pro-integration stance. The stance taken by the general public is rather fluid, and is undoubtedly the result of a variety of factors. On the basis of results from Eurobarometer, in the period shortly after accession, slightly less than half to half of those polled supported Czech membership in the Union, while only about 10% regarded membership as a “bad thing.” The number of EU opponents began to (only slightly) increase after 2008; more interestingly, however, is steep decline in the number of respondents who indicated that membership was a “good thing,” from 45% in 2004 to only 31% in 2011. A corresponding increasing trend was seen among those who saw the EU as “neither good nor bad,” which represented half of respondents in 2011.<sup>3</sup>

3. This type of statistic was used by Eurobarometer until 2011; from that time on there is no available data from Eurobarometer on this question.

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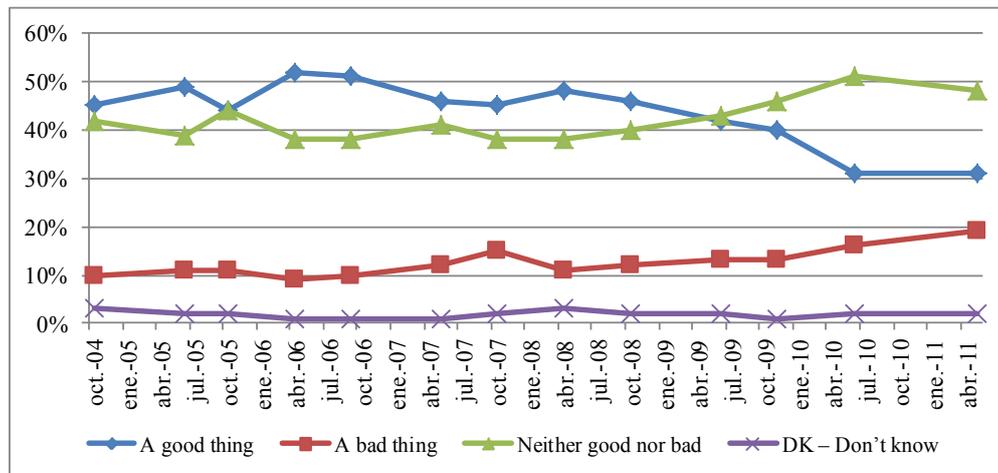
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**Figure I: Generally speaking, do you think that (your country's) membership of the European Community (Common Market) is...?**



Source: Eurobarometer Surveys

Similar statistics from Eurobarometer indicate the attitudes of Czechs from 2004 to 2014 showing their feelings about the EU. The tendency in this case is similar to the other statistics mentioned above. After 2009, the relatively constant positive image of the EU began to decline and in contrast to the enthusiasm shown in 2004, over one-third of Czechs had an overall negative impression of the EU. What is probably most interesting, particularly in the context of regional policy, is to compare the trend of trust in the European Commission among citizens of the Czech Republic. We see a gradual fall in this statistic as well, but this nevertheless begins considerably later than in the case of the polls dealing with EU membership generally. Czech distrust of the European Commission began to sharply increase at the end of 2011, and eventually rose to 53% by 2014 – almost twice as high as it was in 2004. As such, while support for Czech membership in the EU and the overall image of the EU began to worsen at about the same time as the economic crisis, distrust of the European Commission among the majority of the population rose considerably later. We can only speculate about the reasons for this anomaly. It could reflect a correlation with the long-running decline of trust in institutions in general among Czechs, as well as possibly taking into consideration the aforementioned cases of corruption regarding the distribution of the Structural Funds, which were widely discussed in the media during this time.

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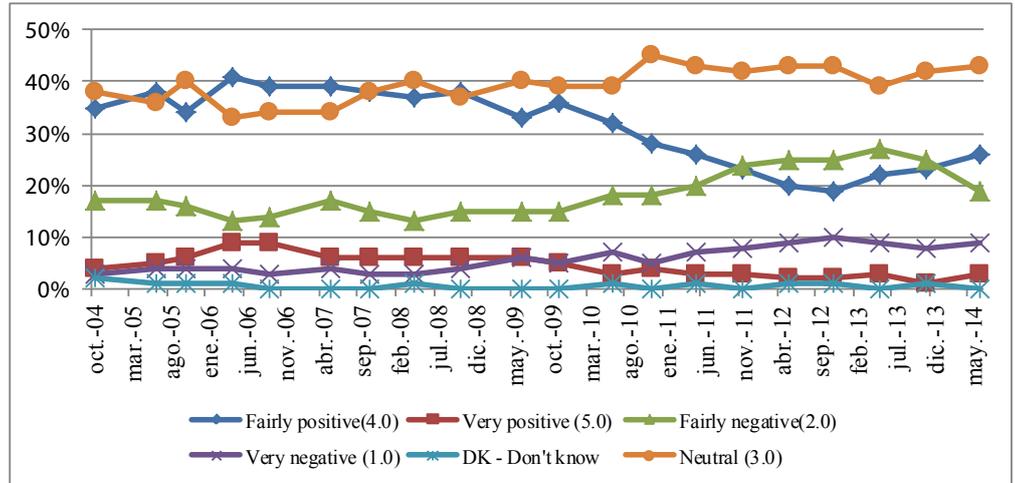
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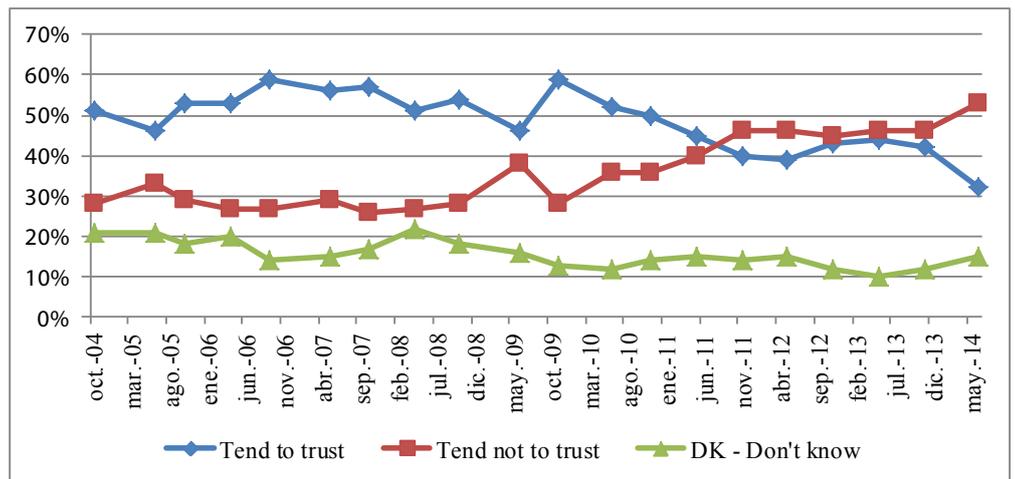
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**Figure II: In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative, or very negative image?**



Source: Eurobarometer Surveys

**Figure III: Trust in the European Commission**



Source: Eurobarometer Surveys

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

In the period of 2007-2013 as well as in the current funding round of 2014-2020, the Czech Republic was able to negotiate a substantial supply of funding from the EU in the form of the Structural Funds. In the first round, it became clear that the two main problems of receiving this funding centered on corruption during the distribution of subsidies as well as a long-term problem with respect to absorptive capacity and burdensome administration, insofar as the Czech Republic did not possess the capabilities to receive all the money allocated to it during the previous Programming Period.

During the 2007-2013 period, the range of actors involved in the implementation of regional policy significantly widened. This trend coincided with the decentralization of the securing of Structural Funds, in which the chief phenomenon was the founding

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of the “Regional Operational Programs.” However, it was precisely this move toward decentralization that critics argued led to such corruption on the regional level, which in turn led the government to return to centralize the allocation of European funding and create a single Joint Regional Operational Program. This step illustrates just how complicated the situation regarding EU regional policy in the Czech Republic is.

Only with many caveats can we interpret the aforementioned trend concerning Czechs’ faith in Union membership, as well as their trust in the European Commission. At first glance, while the fall in support among Czechs regarding the country’s membership in the EU correlates with the onset of the economic crisis, the decline in trust toward the Commission only occurred in 2011. This means that it would be highly speculative to search for reasons, and the problems with the implementation of EU regional policy thus may only be one of many reasons: general corruption in regional policy may – but does not necessarily – play a role in the question of the identification of Czechs with the EU. On the other hand, we can say with relative certainty that the significant amount of the funding allocated to in the Czech Republic under EU regional policy fails to correspond to a rising or at least steady amount of trust in the EU. Instead, the trend is opposite, and the ardent media attention given to corruption scandals cast a long shadow on the otherwise positive impacts of projects of EU Regional Policy.

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## **THE MANAGEMENT AND IMPACT OF EU COHESION POLICY – LESSONS FROM MEMBER STATES – THE CASE OF SPAIN**

by **Mario Kölling**

Fundación Manuel Giménez Abad

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Despite the deep crisis that has hit Spain during the past five years; the 1986-2014 period of Spain's membership in the EU has undoubtedly been the most politically stable, socially dynamic and economically successful in Spain's contemporary history. The EU Cohesion Policy played in this successful story an important role. Spain can be regarded as an outstanding case study for an analysis of the impact of cohesion policy on economic growth and administrative reforms. The Kingdom not only determined the introduction of this policy and further contributed to its successive reforms, but it is also the country that most benefited from it since accession in 1986. As one of the so-called 'Cohesion countries' characterized by most NUTS2 regions with a GDP per capita below 75% of the EU average, Spain has enjoyed substantial net inflows of resources from this policy over several financial perspectives.

The receipt of abundant EU funds has helped to modernize Spain's productive structure and to reduce the development gap between the country and other member states, as well as, between its territories. The financial resources coming from Brussels also represented for the Autonomous Communities (ACs) over past years a secure income for their budgets. Nevertheless not all ACs received the same amount of EU resources nor performed in the same way. During the economic crisis, when major fiscal consolidation is taking place through cutting public expenditure, the EU cohesion policy has prevented sharp reductions in investment in various policy areas (Lopez-Rodriguez; Faiña, 2010). Moreover Cohesion Policy has determined the mobilization of the ACs and how they developed mechanisms of participating at the European level. In this sense besides the activities related to promote cultural or political objectives based on specific regional identities or autonomy demands, the mobilisation of sub-national governments at the EU level has been primarily motivated by the interest to influence EU policy with the prospect of accessing or defending funding opportunities.

The Spanish public opinion has been traditionally very positive towards the European integration. Although indicators for public confidence in the EU are currently at their lowest point since accession, there has been no party with a Eurosceptic position established and after thirty years of membership the pro-European consensus among the main political parties can still be confirmed.

### **II. SPAIN AND THE EU COHESION POLICY**

#### *II.1. Financial relations*

Spain did not only determine the introduction of the cohesion policy and further contributed to its successive reforms, but it is also the state that most benefited from it throughout the years. (Morata 2008) Spain was the single largest beneficiary of the structural actions budget between 1989 and 2006. In the 2000-2006 period the allocation was around €60 billion (in 2004 prices), accounting for almost 27% of total commitment appropriations of this budget heading across the EU15. Spain was also in the financial period 2007-2013, after Poland, the second largest beneficiary of the

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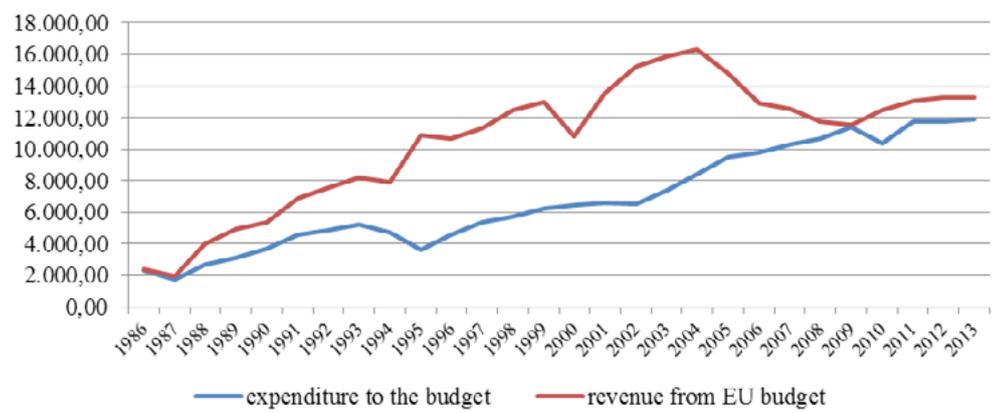
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cohesion policy. Over this period, Spain has received more than €35 billion in total; €26.2 billion under the Convergence objective (€3.5 billion from the Cohesion Fund), €8.5 billion under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective and €559 million under the European Territorial Cooperation objective.

Nevertheless Spain's role in the EU cohesion policy has changed significantly in recent years. Of the eleven ACs that in the period 2000-2006 were Objective 1 regions, only four<sup>1</sup> had an equivalent treatment as convergence regions in the period 2007-2013. This positive trend is on the one hand related to Spanish economic development between 1998 and 2007, but on the other hand it is also conditioned by the “statistical effect” of EU enlargement in 2004 when the average EU GDP decreased due to the accession of the new member states.

**Figure I: Net balance of Spain with the EU Budget (billions of Euro)**



Source: own elaboration

The impact of cohesion policy in a range of thematic areas has been substantial. Although interpretations of the scope and characteristics of this impact vary, there is no debate on the fact that the structural funds received by Spain had an important macroeconomic effect on the country since 1989. According to different studies,<sup>2</sup> the Fund for Regional Development and the Cohesion Fund contributed to the economy the equivalent of 0,65 % gross domestic product (GDP) annual growth for each year during 1989-1993, 1.17 % per year for the period 1994-1999 and 1.05% during 2000-2006. The resources coming from the cohesion policy were not only important to modernise the infrastructure but an additional 7,500 jobs were created or safeguarded as a result of the Structural Funds (Sosvilla-Rivero, et al. 2011). As a result, since 1995 Spain has narrowed the gap with the rest of the EU in terms of GDP, moving from 92% to reach 106.8% of the Union average GDP per head in 2007. Moreover cohesion policy has had a dual impact on the themes of environmental protection and sustainable development.

The national ‘catching up’ process continued until 2007. The situation changed with the onset of the global financial crisis and since then disparities between regions are growing reversing the convergence trends seen in the early/mid-2000s. The unemployment rate in Spain averaged 16% from 1976 until 2014, reaching an all time high of 27% in the first quarter of 2013 and a record low of 4.5% in the third quarter of 1976.

1. Andalucía, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura y Galicia

2. See: (Sosvilla-Rivero, et al 2010) (Sosvilla-Rivero, Herce 2004) (Villaverde, Maza 2009)

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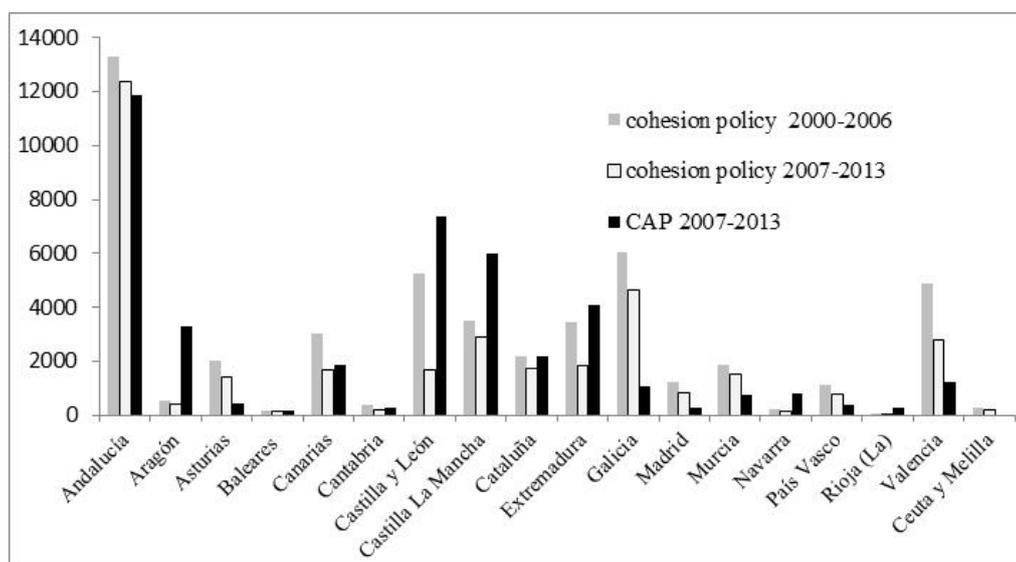
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Although there is traditionally a north-south divide in Spain's regional development, disparities are more important between metropolitan and urban areas compared to rural, sparsely populated areas. The most dynamic areas are metropolitan areas, e.g. Madrid and Barcelona, whereas several ACs face particular challenges. Such ACs include mountainous and sparsely populated areas, industrial structural adjustment areas, island and outermost regions. In addition, the ACs in the south and on the Mediterranean coast have been most affected by the 2008-2012 crisis and particularly by the fallout from the bursting of the housing bubble.

**Figure II: Financial Resources of the Cohesion Policy (2000-2006 and 2007-2013) and CAP (2007-2013) received by the ACs in millions of EUR.**



Source: own elaboration

Before the start of the MFF 2014-2020 negotiations it seemed very likely that Spain would become a net contributor to the EU budget, though it was one of the countries most affected by the economic and financial crisis. During the final negotiation of the MFF 2014-2020 the outcome improved the expectations of negotiators and analysts. According to estimations by the European Commission, Spain will receive the equivalent of 0.20% of GDP from the community budget until 2020, taking into account the growth forecasts for Spain, that figure could be around € 15.0 billion. In the MFF 2014-2020 only one region is considered as a less developed region, Extremadura, which will receive approximately € 2 billion of funding from structural funds. The Spanish “transition regions”<sup>3</sup> will receive approximately € 13.5 billion of funding from structural funds, while the more-developed regions<sup>4</sup> will receive approximately € 11 billion of funding. Moreover within the total envelop of € 28.6 billion of cohesion policy funding there is:

- € 643 million for European Territorial Cooperation
- € 484.1 million special allocation for the outermost regions
- € 943.5 million for the Youth Employment Initiative.

3. Andalucía, Canarias, Castilla-La Mancha, Melilla and Murcia

4. Aragón, Asturias, Baleares, Cantabria, Castilla y León, Cataluña, Ceuta, Comunidad Valenciana, Galicia, La Rioja, Madrid, Navarra, País Vasco

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The Spanish regions particularly affected by the economic crisis are receiving additional funding – €500 million for Extremadura, €624 million for the Spanish transition regions and €700 million for the remaining regions. Furthermore there is a specific treatment within the cohesion policy for the Canary Islands as an ultra-peripheral region and for Ceuta and Melilla as remote border towns. Regions exceeding the average unemployment rate of all the EU less developed/transition regions will receive an additional €1,300 (less developed regions) and €1,100 (transition regions) per unemployed person (above the average) per year.

## *II.2. Autonomous Communities*

The financial resources coming from Brussels represented especially for the Autonomous Communities (ACs) an important income which gave them some independence from central government allocations. Moreover during the nineties cohesion policy determined the mobilization of the ACs and how they developed mechanisms of participating at the European level. The “window of opportunity offered by the cohesion policy” was utilised by all the ACs and not only by those with a strong regional (national) identity (Morata, Popartan 2008). The Spanish government traditionally favoured programmes with a national focus, like the Cohesion Fund and the new initiative against youth unemployment.

During the first programming periods (1989-93) the process of programming of the Structural Funds was considered to be rather technocratic and centralizing. (Morata, Popartan 2008) In this period about 77% of Spanish territory was classified as eligible for Objective 1 status. The rest of ACs concentrated in the centre (Madrid) and in the north east of the country (Basque Country, Navarra, La Rioja, Aragon, Catalonia, and the Balearic Islands), were eligible for Objectives 2. The regional governments participated in the formulation of the regional programmes, but not in the final decision which was taken by the central administration. Although the regional authorities took an active role in the implementation phase; the central administration retained a broad margin of manoeuvre in distributing and managing the funds. (Morata, Popartan 2008) From 1993 onwards the input of ACs slightly improved and the national government and the regional governments jointly elaborated the Regional Development Plan (RDP). The ACs participated in setting the priorities and more meetings between the central and regional authorities took place. At the same time, the direct contacts and exchange of information between the autonomic authorities and the Commission multiplied. (Morata, Popartan 2008; Carmona, Kölling 2013)

Nevertheless, until today most ACs demand more participation in the development of the operational plans and more autonomy in the management and implementation of the funds. (Colino et.al. 2014)

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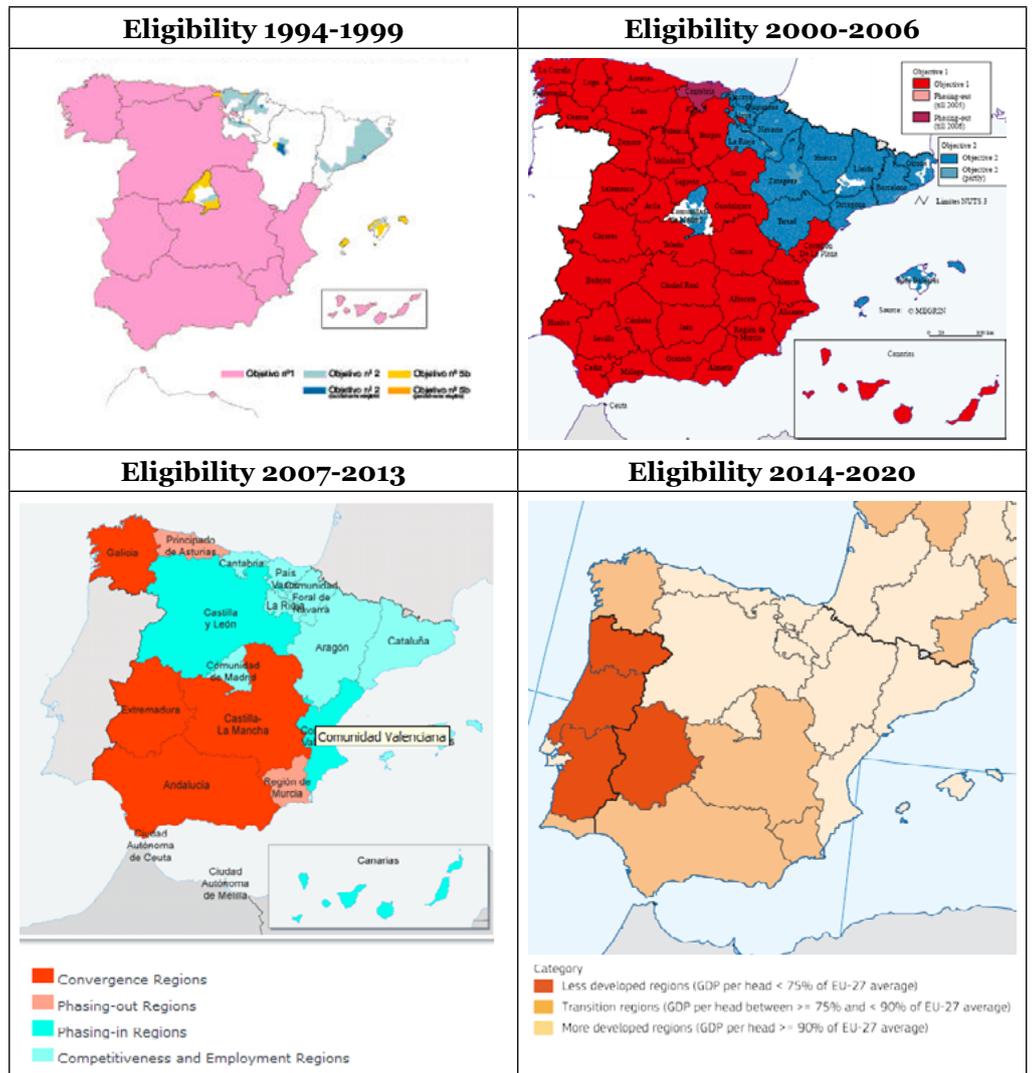
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**Figure III: Eligibility of ACs for EU structural policy since 1994**



Source: European Commission

In general terms, there have been similar preferences among the national and sub-national levels of government regarding the different spending headings of the EU budget. During the negotiations of the MFF 2007-2013 a high homogeneity of preferences between the central government and the ACs (with respect to the reorientation of cohesion policy from large infrastructure projects to investments in R&D and towards measures which support SMEs) could be seen. Because of the dramatic effects of the economic and financial crisis, we can verify a change in the bargaining position of the government of Spain during the negotiations of the MFP 2014-2020, and preferences have been oriented more towards measures which could address issues related to unemployment (e.g. the concentration of the European Social Fund towards the fight against youth unemployment). Although there was no common position signed, most ACs supported this focus. In addition, the government of Spain and most of the ACs demanded a gradual exit from the cohesion policy and the creation of “transitional regions”. Furthermore, both the central government and the ACs rejected the relationship between macroeconomic conditions and the performance of the cohesion policy.

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### III. COHESION POLICY AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF SPANIARDS WITH EUROPE

As a large net beneficiary Spain was always in favour of an increasing EU budget, which has been seen in line with the Spanish demands for “more Europe” and a symbol of the solidarity among member states. In this line, the percentage of Spaniards indicating that Spain benefits from EU membership, increased during the past decade in the same way in which the net balance of Spain increased. However it is important to underline that the Europeanism of the Spanish public opinion is not necessarily based solely on the structural funds and the economic benefits of membership. Since adhesion to the European Community, the Spanish public opinion supported the integration well above the European average, however, until the first half of 1989, most Spaniards believed that the country would be prejudiced by membership. In 1989, there is finally a reversal of this trend, called “Spanish paradox” occurs. (Barreiro; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2001: 34) Like in other member states, Spanish citizens believe that the main achievement of the EU is the “free movement of people, goods and services within the EU” (62% response). The second most valued accomplishment is “peace among member states of the EU” (44% of responses). Only 6% of Spanish citizens consider the CAP as an important achievement of the EU. If asked directly on the redistributive policies, Spanish people value them in a positive way but have little knowledge about their costs. A November 2009 poll by CIS (Centre for Social Investigation) found that only 26% knew that Spain was a net receiver. A higher percentage mistakenly believed that Spain was a net contributor to the EU budget. According to Eurobarometer 80, autumn 2013: 81% of Spanish claims to be little or nothing informed about European affairs (EU average 69%). Only 18% of Spanish considers being well informed. This has important consequences on the way Spaniards evaluate the EU spending. In 2011 33% of respondents considered that administrative costs accounted for the largest heading in the budget, only 8% knew that the CAP and (6%) regional policy were the most relevant policies financed by the EU budget.

After a troubled past, accession signified that Spaniards were finally able to achieve the longed-for link with the heart of the old continent as a means of achieving political and economic modernity. This longing for Europe was vividly summarized by the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who argued in 1910 that ‘Spain is the problem and Europe is the solution’ to the extent that ‘regeneration is inseparable from Europeanization’. (Kölling, Molina 2015) In this context from the transition to democracy, the connection between Europe and political or economic improvement was evident. (Molina, Toygür 2012)

Spanish people and politicians alike have been remarkably pro-European, and do not tend to see much conflict between their national and European identities; indeed the national identity is seen as part of the European identity, ‘nested’ within it. (Molina, Toygür 2012). However, like in other EU countries, the European project has been more supported by the economic and political elites. In fact, also recent studies confirm the important gap between public opinion and elites in terms of how well identification with Europe is rooted in political identities in Spain. (Sojka, Vázquez 2014) The pro-European consensus is also based on the absence of a profound debate on integration and a political discourse based on references to the benefits of structural and cohesion funds. The main political parties, which remain divided on most public policy issues, agree on the benefits of European integration and supported the European policy of the different governments.

The Spanish public opinion was crucial since the early nineties in the negotiating strategy of the government. Both the Gonzalez and Aznar governments, and finally also the governments of Zapatero and Rajoy, argued in budget negotiations that the Spanish public opinion would not understand the benefits of the EU and accept the structural

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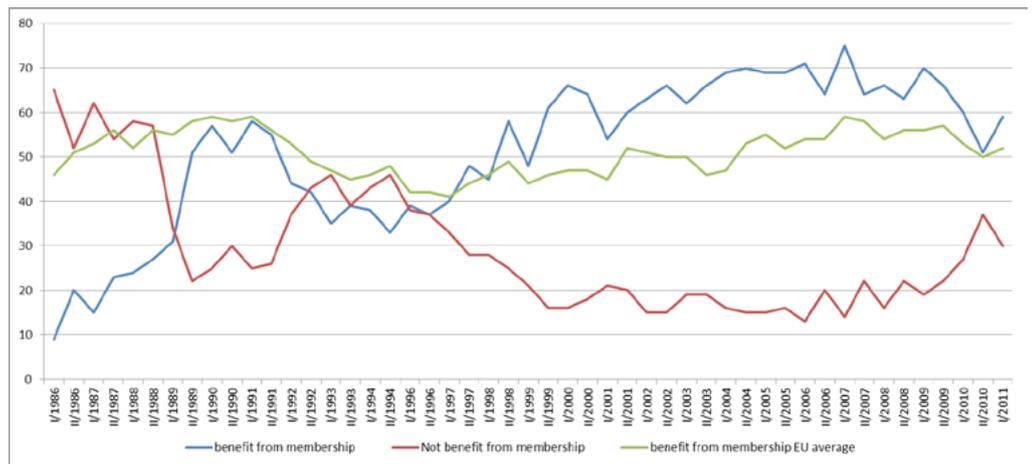
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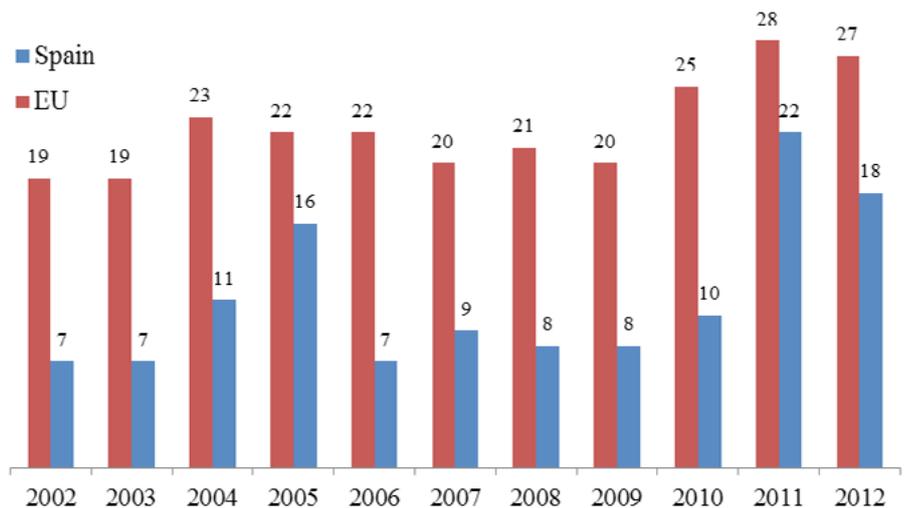
reforms if Spain had to pay more than it receives. The governments of Spain used the domestic “pressure” at the European level to improve their negotiating position. The argument of the public opinion assumed particular importance in the negotiations of the MFF 2014-2020, when the government stated that the public opinion, which had suffered a significant decline in its positive identification with the EU, would not understand how a country which had been hit by the crisis could become a net contributor. (Kölling 2014)

**Figure IV: In your opinion, do you think that Spain benefited or not from EU membership?**



Source: own elaboration, data: standard Eurobarometer

**Figure V: Percentage of Spaniards who associate the EU with “waste of money”**



Source: own elaboration, data: standard Eurobarometer

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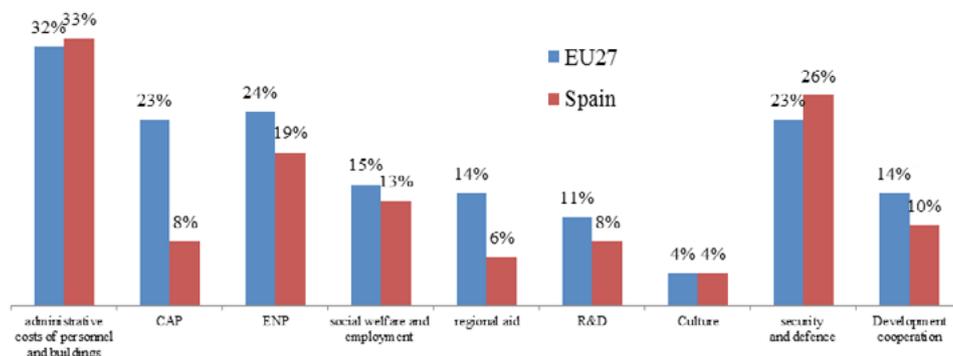
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**Figure VI: In which of the following do you think that most of the European Union budget is spent?**



Source: own elaboration, data: standard Eurobarometer

Like in other countries, the pro European sentiment is sensitive to national circumstances, in this sense higher unemployment also provoked traditionally less pro-European feelings and a decline of the number of those who consider that the country gets less profit from EU membership. Furthermore the fewer citizens feel satisfied with democracy, less enthusiasm is shown towards integration and Spain's membership of the EU, this is also a fact which is important for the current decline in the positive consensus towards EU membership.

Despite a significant decline since 2008 surveys on the role of Spain in the EU show a positive consensus above the EU average. However the Spanish public is rather pessimistic about the future of Europe, when compared to other Europeans. Until 2008, Spain felt it had largely benefited from the EU and Europe used to stand for quality of life and modernisation. The deep economic pessimism has worn down Spain's pro-European spirit. Citizens feel that the country had to make too many reforms and began to view the EU with a certain degree of distrust and the EU integration project is now being questioned. The Eurobarometer 80 poll shows 62% of Spaniards "tend to distrust" the EU, against 30% who "tend to trust" it. Support for economic integration dropped from 59 % in 2009 to 34 % in 2013.

While faith in both the EU and the national government has waned in Spain, there is still ultimately a pro-European attitude. When there is debate on Europe, it concerns more how the EU can help the cause of a given party, as opposed to membership of the EU itself.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

As one of the so-called 'Cohesion countries', Spain has enjoyed substantial net inflows of financial resources from the European Union. These funds have contributed to a strong growth performance, a largely successful economic transition, and economic convergence. The impact of cohesion policy has also been substantial in other areas. During the past decades there has been a relationship between the impact of EU regional policies and the positive identification with the European integration process. However public opinion did not only value the type of activities the Structural Funds support, moreover, they are not always aware of the impact of these mechanisms. In general terms, the knowledge about EU redistributive policies has been quite low. The positive identification with the EU within the Spanish public opinion has been used

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by the elites and political elites to justify at the domestic level necessary reforms, as well as, at the EU level in order to increase the bargaining power.

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The crisis has severely damaged Spain's view of the EU. However despite the severe disillusionment with the EU, most Spanish citizens still feel that being part of the EU is better than being outside of it.

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## THE EU REGIONAL POLICY AND THE IDENTIFICATION WITH EUROPE THE CASE OF ITALY

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Given the large socio-economic disparities between Italy's North and South it would appear plausible to assume that the country has always been particularly interested in EU regional policies and thus more proactive in this area than member states with less domestic imbalances. In reality, however, Italy was well-known from the outset of these policies until the 1990s for contributing little to the formulation of these policies and for lagging behind considerably regarding the utilization of funds. In those days the country was characterized as a "policy-taker" rather than a "policy-shaper" (Brunazzo 2010:2). This pattern has clearly changed over the last two decades as Italy has opened up to EU regional policies and has, as a consequence, increasingly felt their impact. However, there remains the question of whether and to what extent closer involvement in this policy field has also given rise in Italian regions to a positive perception of EU regional policies and stronger identification with Europe.

### II. THE TRADITIONAL NEGLECT OF EU REGIONAL POLICIES

The aforementioned failure for many years to take effective advantage of the structural funds was clearly related to the widespread perception that regional policy in Italy is a strictly domestic affair to be handled exclusively with the traditional domestic instruments. Therefore, regional policy was in fact regarded as synonymous with the *intervento straordinario nel Mezzogiorno* (Special Programme for the *Mezzogiorno*, hereinafter SPM). Although the SPM, established in 1950, ran for a long time parallel to EU regional policies, the latter were largely neglected until the 1990s.

Moreover, during this period there was a quite considerable gap between the SPA and EU regional policies with regard to both objectives and principles (Graziano 2003). Whereas at European level the reform of 1988 substantially clarified the objectives, the SPM aimed in very broad and general terms at "the economic and social advancement of Southern Italy."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it did not leave any room for the four principles,<sup>2</sup> which formed after the 1988 reform the cornerstones of EU regional policies. This gap between Italian and EU policies was only closed as Italy started in the 1990s to take towards the latter a more proactive approach. Until then the structural funds had been seen as relatively cumbersome because the SPM offered not only more financial resources but did so also with less stringent management requirements (Spina 2003:266). But during the last two decades European funding has taken center stage in fostering regional development in Italy. In return, this move forced the country to open up to the impact of EU regional policies.

1. Art. 1 of Law 10/1950.

2. Programming, concentration, additionality and partnership.

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## III. ITALY'S TURNAROUND

The abolition of the SPM in 1992,<sup>3</sup> closely related to the modest results achieved and rising anti-Southern movements such as the *Lega Nord*, created a need to reformulate Italy's policy towards the *Mezzogiorno*. Yet this was only one among several internal and external factors that made Italy embrace EU regional policies (Brunazzo; Piattoni 2008). Another significant domestic factor were institutional reforms, above all the so-called *Bassanini* laws,<sup>4</sup> which strengthened the regional and local levels of government. Accordingly, actors from these levels, especially those prepared and eager to act more autonomously from the national government, became more and more assertive and claimed a substantial role in managing regional policies. With its emphasis on the partnership principle EU regional policies provided an obvious opportunity for the involvement of these actors. The arguably most relevant external factors for Italy's turn towards a more proactive approach to the structural funds were the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the anticipated effects of Eastern Enlargement. The Maastricht convergence criteria restricted Italy's spending capacities, albeit not always successfully, and thereby prompted a search for alternative funds. These were found within the framework of EU regional policies. As the EU set out to expand towards Central and Eastern Europe, increasing awareness took hold in Italy that competition for these funds would be ever more intense and require stronger efforts.

The process, which fundamentally reformed Italy's regional policies after the SPM and adapted it to EU requirements, can be divided into two stages (Baudner; Bull 2005). From 1992 to 1996 first steps were taken towards a form of "negotiated programming" which was supposed to involve in line with the partnership principle governmental actors from different levels as well as private actors.<sup>5</sup> Notable progress was made during this period for instance with the creation of necessary legal instruments to coordinate these actors such as "programme accords" and "territorial pacts". However, the reform process at that time still suffered from insufficient planning and coordination, above all by the Ministry of Finance and the Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning (*Comitato Interministeriale per la Programmazione Economica*). The second reform period between 1996 and 2000 then proved much more successful. Crucial to this success was the establishment of the Department for Development Policies (*Dipartimento per le politiche di sviluppo*, DPS) in 1998. Since then this institution has fulfilled several important functions like serving as support structure for the design and implementation of regional development projects and initiating important reforms. Particular significant among the latter was the introduction of specific performance criteria to correspond to EU standards. Even though these measures did not remove at once the prevailing difficulties in taking full advantage of the structural funds, the performance during the planning period 1994-1999 is towards its end already characterized by notable improvements (Spina 2003).

A significant change occurred in the 1990s not only regarding the utilization of European funds but also concerning the process of formulating Italy's position towards EU regional policies. In this process regional actors have played an increasingly important

3. Law 488/1992.

4. The original piece of legislation is Law 59/1997 (*Bassanini 1*), modified and extended by Law 127/1997 (*Bassanini-bis*) and Law 191/1998 (*Bassanini-ter*) and implemented by several legislative decrees. These laws empowered regional and local authorities to the maximum extent possible without amending the constitution. A constitutional amendment further empowering these levels of government then followed in 2001.

5. In Law 104/1995 "negotiated programming" is defined as "regulation agreed between public actors or between the competent public bodies and one or more public or private parties for the implementation of various measures, aimed at a single development objective that require a comprehensive evaluation of the activities involved."

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role, which has resulted from intensive collaboration with the DPS and other activities at both the national and European level. Apart from its above-mentioned functions the DPS has acted as a remarkable integrating force by facilitating coalitions between national, regional and local governmental and non-governmental actors. It has done so above all within the so-called *comitatone* (large committee), a coordinating body involving the regions, trade unions and employers' associations. Especially the memorandums drafted by this forum in 2001 and 2002 attracted a lot interest and met with a very sympathetic response from the European Commission.<sup>6</sup> Equally at national level, the State-Regions-Conference has become an influential forum to develop Italy's position concerning EU regional policies, which is reflected in several policy documents and working groups dedicated to this issue. That this intergovernmental body has assumed such a role follows primarily from initiatives of the Northern and Central regions. Beyond Italy, increasingly vigorous networking and lobbying of the regions in Brussels is another indicator of a new activism concerning EU regional policies. Since the late 1990s politicians from the subnational level, remarkably also from so far less active Southern regions like Sicily and Campania, started to assume positions at European level, for instance in the Commission for Territorial Policy of the Committee of the Regions (COTER) and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) (Brunazzo 2006). Roughly at the same time, the regions began to cooperate more intensively with other Italian actors in Brussels such as the members of the European Parliament and the European Commission as well as the country's Permanent Delegation.

#### IV. THE EU, ITS REGIONAL POLICIES AND ITALIANS' IDENTIFICATION WITH EUROPE

As Italy is now after its turnaround during the 1990s much more actively involved in EU regional policies, both regarding its formulation and the exploitation of funds, the question arises whether this significant change has also impacted on public opinion. Traditionally, Italy has been a member state with a particularly favorable attitude towards the European integration project (Comelli 2011:2). As we will see below, this has in the last years changed significantly.

From a general point of view, identification with Europe, understood here as a positive attachment to it, is commonly interpreted as being an effect of three causes: benefits from the EU and its policies (e.g. regional policies), positive experiences in personal encounters with other Europeans (e.g. facilitated by ERASMUS) and active identity formation through collective narratives and symbols (e.g. European anthem, flag and motto) (Roose, 2010:6-8). When it comes to different groups in society, numerous studies have proven that people with higher education, better professional positions and higher income tend to show stronger attachment to Europe:<sup>7</sup> "... the most privileged socioeconomic groups are the most European. Owners, managers, professionals, and other white collar workers are more likely to think of themselves as Europeans than are blue-collar workers or service workers. Educated people, regardless of occupation, are also more likely to see themselves as European, and young people are more likely to do so than older people, as are people with higher incomes" (Fliegenstein 2008:145).

6. See European Commission, "First Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion" (2002), at 22.

7. See S. Duchesne and A.-P. Frogner, "Is there a European Identity?", in: O. Niedermayer and R. Sinnott (eds.), *Public Opinion and Internationalized Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995), 193-226; S. Dubé and R. Magni Berton, "How Does Income Influence National and European Identity?", in: D. Fuchs, Dieter R. Magni-Berton and A. Roger (eds.), *Euro-scepticism. Images of Europe among mass publics and political elites* (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2009) 73-90; R. Herrmann and M. B. Brewer, "Identities and Institutions: Becoming European in the EU", in: R. Herrmann, T. Risse and M. Brewer (eds.), *Transnational Identities: Becoming European in the EU* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 1-23, at 15.

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Whereas a considerable amount of studies has been conducted on European identification of socioeconomic groups, differences among regions in this regard are still an under-researched issue. In part, this is also due to a lack of reliable empirical data. With regard to Italy such data illustrating regional differences is neither collected upon Italian initiative nor by the EU. The Eurobarometer surveys typically focus on cross-country comparison and turn a blind eye on subnational entities.

Anyway, data from these surveys may give an idea of the extent to which Italians identify with Europe. Even if the Standard Eurobarometer does not contain a specific question on that issue,<sup>8</sup> questions about support for EU membership and benefits from it are interrelated with positive attachment to Europe. There has been extensive academic discussion about the links between a person's identification as something emotional on the one hand and its opinion about the EU on the other.<sup>9</sup> While it seems too much of a simplification that support is just "another expression" (Bruter 2003:23) of identification, the latter is certainly an integral part of support for any political system (Easton 1975). Quite often, the utilitarian perspective of benefits from EU membership or a specific policy is introduced as a third variable. Even though it seems intuitively plausible that benefits stimulate identification and support, this is not necessarily and generally so. For instance, it has been pointed out that farmers, even though benefitting greatly from the Common Agriculture Policies (CAP), do not demonstrate particularly high levels of identification or support (Risse 2005:297). It is not inconceivable that a similar pattern might also apply to regions benefitting from the EU's regional policies.

In this regard, the Flash Eurobarometer 384 on "Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU Regional Policy" provides some interesting data.<sup>10</sup> It is not surprising that in Italy and other countries, which have a large number of regions eligible for funds under the Convergence Objective, show a higher level of awareness of EU co-financed such projects. In Italy, the proportion of people who have heard about such projects is at 48% much larger than the EU average. But when it then comes to the question, whether these projects have had a positive impact, this is affirmed by only 51% of Italian respondents – less than in any other EU country. With 20% claiming that co-financed projects even had a negative impact, people in Italy are again more skeptical than anywhere else. Moreover, merely 9% of Italians think to have benefited personally, which is again one of the lowest percentages. Thus, notwithstanding the high number of projects and Italians' awareness of them, relatively few people see these projects as having positive effects on their lives. It is true that these data refer to Italy as a whole. But in view of the fact that the bulk of co-financed projects is concentrated in the Southern regions, it seems fair to assume that public opinion about EU regional policy is in this specific part of the country similar to the outcome of this survey or even more negative.

A lack of data concerning the regional level is also a major downside of the Standard Eurobarometer surveys, which measure – if not identification – at least people's

8. There is only the following question: "In the near future do you see yourself as Italian only, Italian and European, European and Italian or European only?" But this question appears to refer rather generally to identity than to identification with Europe, which is a specific issue within the broader discussion on European identity (see J. Roose, "How European is European Identity? Extent and Structure of Continental Identification in Global Comparison Using SEM" (2010) 19 Kolleg-Forschergruppe "The Transformative Power of Europe" Working Papers 1-22, at 5).

9. See for example I. Karolewski and V. Kaina (eds.), *European identity. Theoretical perspectives and empirical insights* (Münster: LIT, 2006); D. Fuchs, I. Guinaudeau and S. /Schubert, "National Identity, European Identity and Eurosepticism", in: D. Fuchs, R. Magni-Berton and A. /Roger (eds.), *Eurosepticism. Images of Europe among mass publics and political elites* (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2009), 91-112.

10. EC, Flash Eurobarometer 384, 2013.

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support and perception of benefits. In this regard, the data of the most recent survey illustrates concerning Italy again some interesting overall trends.<sup>11</sup> As far as the support for membership is concerned,<sup>12</sup> there is an obvious trend of constant decline. While at any point of time between 1973 to 2008 membership was a “good thing” for at least 63%, often exceeding even 80%, this view has since then found much less supporters and reached an all-time low of 39% in 2008. As emphasized above, benefits do not lead directly and necessarily to support and identification, but the three things are certainly interrelated in a more complex way. Thus, it is interesting to look also at survey data on this question. Whereas up until recently Italians had always taken the view that benefits of membership would on balance clearly predominate, the “no benefit” camp has almost prevailed several times since 2008.<sup>13</sup>

To sum up, most recent Eurobarometer data does not give a rosy picture of Italians’ view of both the EU and its regional policy over the last years. Next to a general disenchantment with politics, the economic crisis and its political management, these trends have been attributed to various reasons. One argument claims that with ever tighter European integration the increasing impact of the EU on people’s everyday lives have transformed it in their perception from an idealized abstract entity into an organization with both positive and negative effects (Greco 2006). Another argument contends that the EU has lost among Italians its reputation of epitomizing democracy, stability and prosperity. Traditionally, Italians have associated these characteristics with the countries of Northern Europe and through the alliance with them in the European integration process likewise with the EC/EU. Put simply, involvement in this process was based on the idea “to chain Italy to the Alps, in order not to let it sink into the Mediterranean.”<sup>14</sup> With the EU being regarded by Italians increasingly as not so democratic, stable and prosperous, it has lost part of its appeal Comelli 2011:4).

## V. CONCLUSIONS

For a long time, Italy neglected EU regional policies and focused instead on the SPM as a domestic instrument. Only the obvious failure of the latter prompted in the 1990s in conjunction with other internal and external factors a change towards a proactive approach regarding both the utilization of the structural funds and policy development. In return, the country had to open up to the impact of EU regional policies. This is clearly visible in the content of the fundamentally reformed post-SPM policies for regional development, for which European standards served as the public policy paradigm to follow. From an institutional perspective, the impact of EU regional policies is less clear. In Italy, the partnership principle certainly met already favorable conditions insofar, as continuous subconstitutional and later constitutional reforms have created strong regional actors. These were not only willing but also able to press the national government to grant them more participation regarding the management and development of regional policies. This suggests that the European impact has in this regard acted rather as a catalyst that reinforced domestic institutional change than as a proximate

11. EC, Standard Eurobarometer 80, 2013.

12. “Generally speaking, do you think that (your country’s) membership of the European Community (Common Market) is...?” (last asked in 05/2011). This question was last asked in May 2011.

13. “Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Community (Common Market)?” Also this question was last asked in May 2011.

14. “Incatenare l’Italia alle Alpi per non farla sprofondare nel Mediterraneo”, quoted in F. Nucara, “Il leader che volle il suo paese moderno e occidentale. In ricordo di Ugo La Malfa”, Website of the Partito repubblicano italiano, 27 March 2007, <http://www.pri.it/27%20Marzo%20Internet/NucUgoLaMalfaComm.htm>.

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cause of this change (Bull; Baudner 2004:1072-1073). Whereas this turnaround has increased the number of EU co-financed projects and public awareness of these, Italians are exceptionally skeptical regarding the general impact of these projects and their personal benefits. Negative public opinion, particularly throughout the last five years or so, seems to prevail also concerning EU membership and its benefits. Still, these trends may only give some idea of possible tendencies regarding Italians' identification with Europe, even more so in different regions. The lack of reliable data with regional focus and the complex interactions within the triangle benefits-support-identification further complicates such an endeavor.

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## **EU COHESION POLICY AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE UNITED KINGDOM AND CONTEXTS AND ISSUES FOR RESEARCH**

by **Jonathan Bradbury**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

While European cohesion policy expenditures are a major item in the EU budget there remains relatively little research of their effects on perceptions in the member states of the European Union. This paper addresses the United Kingdom, identifying the contexts to research in this case and the key issues for investigation. The paper has four principal aims. First, section one will establish how significant European cohesion policies have been to the United Kingdom. Section two will consider how the territorial dimension to UK government has heightened the political significance of EU cohesion policies in the UK. Section three then considers evidence of public perceptions of the European Union in the UK as a whole as well as in each nation and region of the UK. Section four then considers what key political variables should be included in analysing the relationship between the experience of EU cohesion policies and perceptions of the European Union.

### **II. EU COHESION POLICIES AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Soon after the UK joined the European Communities in 1973, and as a direct implication of its membership, the European regional development fund was created in 1974. Thereafter, EC regional policy was seen as a key policy through which money paid into the budget may be balanced by funding coming back to the UK. British local authorities were very active in the 1970s and 1980s in lobbying for funding, led by the larger Scottish and Welsh local authorities and in England the big cities of Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham. British local authorities were prominent in the Regions of Traditional Industry network (RETI) and the European-wide coalfield campaign that led to early objective one and objective two funding as well as the RECHAR programme for coalfield regeneration. The significance of regional policy was further enhanced by the introduction of the economic and social cohesion priority in 1988 which led to the doubling of structural funds and their subsequent growth as part of the programme to complete the single European market. This was strongly welcomed by sub-national government in the UK. Merseyside and Northern Ireland were classified as objective one regions, as they had less than 2/3 of the EU average GDP per capita. Other areas defined as declining industrial regions and therefore eligible for objective 2 funding were in England, Greater Manchester, West and South Yorkshire, parts of the North-East and Birmingham; and in Scotland, Strathclyde. Devon and Cornwall were funded as a rural area containing high economic and social deprivation under objective 5b (Goldsmith, 1997).

During the 1990s the principal focus of the EU was the consolidation of the single market and progress towards economic and monetary union. In this context, the UK was able to maintain a position as a strong beneficiary of cohesion policy and it played a major role in regional policy in the UK (Bache, 2008). In this period one might also have expected greater EU cohesion funding for Wales due to the decline of the coal and steel industries and the loss of thousands of heavy industry jobs. This left both skills base (unemployability) and unemployment problems. However, Wales

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got relatively little funding until the redrawing of the regional boundaries in Wales in 1998. Under this exercise much of West Wales and Valleys qualified for objective one funding for the first time for the 2000-2006 period, while the rest of Wales was eligible for objective 3 support (Wyn Jones and Rumboul, 2012). This was to prove to be a significant addition to UK eligibility for cohesion funding as following the expansion of European Union membership in the 2000s and the consequent radical redrawing of the regional funding map cohesion funding for the UK was cut in half. Even so in the 2007-13 period two regions in the UK (West Wales and the Valleys, and Cornwall and the Scilly Isles), unusually among regions in Western member states, still qualified as convergence regions, as they had again failed to achieve more than 75% of average EU GDP. The Scottish Highlands and Islands received funding as phasing out regions and Merseyside and South Yorkshire as phasing in regions; and with 6.2 billion Euros regional competitiveness and employment funding for projects in other parts of the state, the UK received overall 9.5 billion Euros.

In preparations for the 2014-2020 financial framework there were two major challenges potentially constraining cohesion policy: first, new member state regions with greater need; and second fiscal austerity in response to the financial and currency crises that beset the EU during the 2010s. It is to be expected that these may have significantly eroded the importance of cohesion policy for the UK. Despite this, for the 2014-2020 financial framework the UK was allocated around 11.8 billion Euros. West Wales and the Valleys and Cornwall and the Scilly Isles continue to qualify as less developed regions. A wide range of areas have qualified as transition regions: the Scottish Highlands and Islands; Northern Ireland; Devon; Shropshire and Staffordshire; East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire; South Yorkshire; Lancashire; Tees Valley and Durham; and Cumbria. The rest of the UK, including the major focus of economic development in London and the South East, is classified as more developed. Even so there is a strong governance infrastructure geared towards seeking European Regional Development Funding related to innovation, ICT, developing small and medium sized enterprises and a low carbon economy, or European Social Fund support for specific projects (europa:eu, 2014).

Overall, therefore, while there is something of a rise and fall narrative to the scale of cohesion policy funding in respect of the UK, its significance to poorer areas but also to other areas has remained fairly constant even into the 2014-20 period. Across the UK Scottish Enterprise, Welsh Government and in England the local enterprise partnerships (LEPS) in conjunction with local authorities, a range of quangos and third sector bodies, are geared up to the seeking and usage of European cohesion funds. In exploring the relationship between EU cohesion policy and perceptions of the EU the UK is a good case to study.

### III. UK TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EU COHESION POLICIES

The political significance of EU cohesion policy has been further heightened in the UK by the existence of historic nations (Scotland and Wales) and regions (Northern Ireland), each with strong national identities distinct from that of the state as a whole. They have long been recognised in the territorial governmental structures of the state, with implications for the focus placed at the sub-state level on how EU cohesion policy might be applied. Even in the period between the 1970s and 1990s, when EU regional funding began, there were territorially defined central government departments for each of the historic nations of Scotland and Wales and the contested region of Northern Ireland, each with a secretary of state in the UK cabinet. Consequently, the secretaries of state for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all became

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a focus for lobbying and accountability within their respective territories with regard to how well they were accessing and using EU regional funds. This became particularly controversial during the period of the Thatcher/Major Governments (1979-97) as there were strong criticisms that because the Conservative party was Eurosceptic, Conservative secretaries of state in Scotland and Wales in particular were failing to maximise EU funding, and failed to ensure that EU funding was genuinely additional to state regional aid.

In England, the vast majority of the state, there also emerged some English regional consciousness in this era that was focused on making the most of European cohesion policy. This was not so much at the popular level as at the governance level. Local government during the 1980s and 1990s increasingly sought to establish regional consortia of local authorities to give themselves greater collaborative capacity in relating to Europe. In 1994 the administrative regional dimension to English government was recognised by the Major Government when it reorganised all of its regional offices of central government departments into one coherent structure of Government Office for the English regions. Thereafter, the issue of managing good regional partnerships between central and local government bodies and other governance stakeholders within each region in relation to EU cohesion policies became one of the Government Offices' key responsibilities. In a similar way to the territorial departments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, they also became a key focus for lobbying and accountability over the formation and implementation on the ground of EU cohesion policies (see Bradbury and Mawson, 1997).

Critiques of UK central government eventually led to the Labour Government, led by Tony Blair and elected in 1997, to introduce a new elected tier of regional government for the historic nations and regions: the Northern Ireland Assembly, Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales. Since 1999 the UK Parliament has devolved extensive powers to these bodies, including responsibility for EU cohesion policies and the parliament/assemblies have provided the new focus for accountability. The establishment of democratic devolution has had potentially far reaching consequences as it has created the opportunity to place the development and scrutiny of EU cohesion policy under distinctive designs of representative democracy, the influence of regionally defined approaches to political economy and distinctive decentralised approaches to governance. Such institutional reform was of course in large part driven by the politics of national identity but the institutionalisation of identity politics has created the further potential for consideration of EU cohesion policy in terms of a heightened sense of regional interests. A major part of why the devolved bodies were created in Scotland and Wales was also because of the belief that decentralised government could help to improve their economies and give them a greater voice in Europe; twin ambitions that were brought together in the opportunity to manage EU cohesion policies. Parties vying for office in each of these territories, therefore, approach EU cohesion policy as one of the key policy issues over which to compete, heightening the territorial dimension to the political significance of EU cohesion policy quite significantly (see Bradbury, 2008).

This state of affairs was intensified by the success of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in becoming the largest party in the Scottish Parliament in 2007 and forming a minority government, and then actually winning an overall majority in 2011. In 2014 the SNP was able to hold a referendum on independence in which they campaigned on a policy of an independent Scotland combined with membership of the European Union. As an independent state and with more autonomy in decision-making, the SNP argued that Scotland could thrive economically and develop a stronger role in the EU, accessing more support and making more of that support. In practice, the referendum resulted in a No vote by 55-45%, but the campaign established greater

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credibility to arguments for an independent Scotland and made the issue of how well Scotland could access the benefits of EU membership within the UK even more salient. This has served only to intensify party competition over issues like EU cohesion policy. In the same period, the Welsh nationalist party, Plaid Cymru, also made it in to government in Wales, going into coalition with Labour between 2007 and 2011. Plaid Cymru, like the SNP, promote a policy of independence in Europe and have strongly criticised Labour's stewardship in the Welsh Government of EU funding since 1999. Whilst, the electoral fortunes of Plaid Cymru fell back in 2011, the political pressure on Labour to perform on EU cohesion policy was keenly felt.

The increasing assertion of Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish claims since the late 1990s generally has not been matched in the English regions, though the significance of the regional dimension to government has remained strong. Between 1997 and 2010 the Blair-Brown Labour Governments offered the opportunity for English regions to embrace elected government but with little success. A referendum on the creation of an elected greater London Authority was successful in 1999 but a referendum for an elected regional assembly for the North East in 2004 resulted in a very emphatic 'no' vote. No further regional devolution was attempted. Thereafter, with the exception of Greater London, Labour developed the English regions through the introduction of regional development agencies. In 2010 the incoming Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government, with the exception of the retained Greater London Authority, dismantled the regional machinery of government in England returning the focus for English government firmly to local government. This remained the state of play ahead of the 2015 General Election and was set to continue if the Conservatives were re-elected. However, the regional collaborative operations of local government remained strong and as part of the debate about balancing the devolution of power across the UK after the Scottish independence referendum the Labour Party argued for greater power across England's regions. This received an enthusiastic response from England's big cities in the Midlands and North, intent on gaining fiscal devolution and more freedom from central control. Overall, while the political saliency of EU cohesion policy funding has not grown in prominence in English regional government in the same manner as in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, it has certainly not diminished and may rise again in the context of further debate about elected regional government in England.

#### IV. THE UK AND PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPE

Despite the UK's membership of the EU and strong engagement with policies like cohesion policy, public perceptions of Europe in the UK are among the most disengaged and critical in the European Union. Between the early 1990s and early 2010s support for EU membership generally declined across Europe from over 70% to an average of just over 50%. But even within this broader context the UK was one of the states exhibiting least support, typically averaging between 30-40% support for membership (Hix and Hoyland, 2011). In recent years British consciousness and resentment against the implication of European Union membership has developed significant new momentum. This has in turn led to growing support for the UK Independence party (UKIP), which wishes the UK to leave the EU and demands an immediate referendum. UKIP topped the poll in the 2014 European elections in the UK, including victories in six of the nine English regions (see table 1). In Autumn 2014 UKIP also won two UK parliament by-elections to place pressure on all of the other parties to reconsider their approach to EU membership.

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**Table 1: Vote Share in the 2014 European Parliament Elections (%)**

|        | UK   | London | South East | South West | East England | West Midlands |
|--------|------|--------|------------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| Cons   | 23.9 | 22.5   | 31.0       | 28.9       | 28.4         | 24.3          |
| Green  | 7.8  | 8.9    | 9.1        | 11.1       | 8.5          | 5.3           |
| Lab    | 25.4 | 36.7   | 14.7       | 13.8       | 17.3         | 26.7          |
| LibDem | 6.9  | 6.7    | 8.0        | 10.7       | 6.9          | 5.6           |
| SNP/PC | 3.2  |        |            |            |              |               |
| UKIP   | 27.5 | 16.8   | 32.1       | 32.3       | 34.5         | 31.5          |

|        | East Midlands | Yorkshire & Humber | North East | North West | Wales | Scotland |
|--------|---------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-------|----------|
| Cons   | 26.0          | 19.2               | 17.7       | 20.1       | 17.4  | 17.2     |
| Green  | 6.0           | 7.9                | 5.2        | 7.0        | 4.5   | 8.1      |
| Lab    | 24.9          | 29.3               | 36.5       | 33.9       | 28.1  | 25.9     |
| LibDem | 5.4           | 6.3                | 5.9        | 6.0        | 4.0   | 7.1      |
| SNP/PC |               |                    |            |            | 15.3  | 29.0     |
| UKIP   | 32.9          | 31.1               | 29.2       | 27.5       | 27.6  | 10.5     |

Index; Cons = Conservative; Lab=Labour; LibDem=Liberal Democrats; SNP=Scottish National Party; PC=Plaid Cymru; UKIP=UK Independence Party

Source: Compiled from [www.bbc.co.uk/news/events/vote2014/eu-uk-results](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/events/vote2014/eu-uk-results) (accessed 3 February 2015)

Pressure from UKIP resulted in a promise by the Conservative Party if re-elected in 2015 of a referendum on whether to stay in the European Union or not after a renegotiation of the terms of UK membership. Labour and the Liberal Democrats also moved to positions where they promised to hold an in-out referendum if during the 2015-2020 UK Parliament term there is a proposed major transfer of powers from states to the EU under a new EU treaty. This is obviously a more conditional position on holding a referendum but nevertheless it reflects the fact that between 2010 and 2015 all the major British-wide parties had to engage with the debate about the conditions that would make an in/out referendum necessary. Regular polling by YouGov suggests that there is considerable scope for fluctuation in voting intentions in a possible EU membership referendum. In January 2014 a YouGov poll indicated a 46-36 split between those saying they would vote to leave against those wishing to stay. In January 2015 this had turned round to leave a 43-38 split in favour of those wishing to stay (I, 27/1/2015, p5). The data suggests that concerns about the implications of EU membership may still not lead to a vote to leave, but even so, it suggests the result of such a referendum would be very close.

Table 1 is also revealing for showing differences between the nations and regions of the UK in their support of UKIP. Support for UKIP is most marked in the majority of the regions of England, slightly less marked in Wales and the Northern English regions, and is least marked in London and Scotland. Table 2 also reveals differences between England, Wales and Scotland on EU referendum voting intentions. This may add to a view that UK scepticism about the EU should be more properly understood as an English view. However, one should not get too carried away by the differences exhibited in either table. Though England is more Eurosceptic than Wales, Wales has still clearly exhibited high levels of support for UKIP and for a No vote in a possible

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referendum. Equally, while Scotland exhibits less interest in UKIP and more positive support for EU membership, one should not make too much of Scotland's relative pro-Europeanness. Seen in a broader European rather than simply British comparative context, Scotland emerges as simply more in the mainstream of the generally Eurosceptical turn of opinion across Europe rather than actually being comparable to the most pro-EU countries. Equally, across the UK there are common concerns with respect to the EU over the free movement of people and immigration, followed by crime and security. Concerns about immigration from recent EU entrant member states is one of the key campaigning tools of UKIP, and this appears to have had a broad appeal as evidenced by the fact that UKIP was able to win at least one MEP seat in each territory in the 2014 European elections, including Scotland.

**Table 2: Intended vote in an In/Out Referendum**

|                                    | England (%) | Wales (%) | Scotland (%) |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Vote to stay in the European Union | 37          | 39        | 48           |
| Vote to leave the European Union   | 40          | 35        | 32           |
| Non-voter / Don't know             | 22          | 26        | 20           |

Source: Report by Scottish Centre on Constitutional Change, University of Edinburgh, Survey April 2014, N=4,421. See [www.cardiff.ac.uk/wgc/2014/04/29/national-identity-plays-a-key-role-in-voters-views-on-Europe/](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/wgc/2014/04/29/national-identity-plays-a-key-role-in-voters-views-on-Europe/) accessed 3rd February 2015

## V. EU COHESION POLICIES AND UK PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPE: KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH

The central concern is of course to consider the relationship between the experience of EU cohesion policies in the UK and these relatively negative perceptions of the European Union. In doing so, the UK's potential gains from EU cohesion policy can easily be over-estimated. Its financial significance in the context of the size of government budgets is still relatively small. Nevertheless, economists have still been keen to evaluate the effects of EU cohesion policy on regional economies. In addition, three other key variables in determining the broader political and social significance of EU cohesion policy have emerged. First, the European Commission made the process of cohesion policy making as important as the policy itself, with great importance being attached to participation by economic and social groups in project development. Second, the perceptions of the cohesion policies produced has been important, focusing on whether policy analysts believe there has been a clear strategy, whether it has produced synergies with other regional government strategies and/or improvements of policy implementation. Finally, communication strategies have been significant, focusing on how well funding opportunities have been disseminated to potential local partners; how aims of EU cohesion policy have been promoted, and how well its benefits have been translated to the public.

Some evaluations in the regions of the UK in these terms indicate that in practice the experience of EU cohesion policy may have contributed to sceptical perceptions of the EU. For example in Wales the Welsh Government was generally criticised in the 2000-06 period for lacking a coherent strategy (Entwhistle et al, 2007) and lacking an openness in encouraging participation by civic groups which contributed to lack of capacity and reach in the implementation of the strategy (Royles, 2006). The

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implementation of EU objective one regional aid in Wales in the 2007-13 period was similarly open to many criticisms about the coherence of strategy and lack of imagination in developing projects (Guildford, 2013). Consideration of the experience of EU cohesion policy obviously needs to be taken further; to assess economic effects, policy process, strategic policy development and communication strategy in the UK's regions that have strongly engaged with EU policy. Further analysis may well provide a more complex picture but as part of this we may learn much more about how the implementation of EU cohesion policy has contributed to the UK's troubled engagement with European integration.

It is important though not to consider the importance of cohesion policy to UK perceptions of the EU in isolation from other key factors. Explaining public attitudes in member states to the European Union has stimulated a broad-ranging research debate, which has identified a wide range of other key political variables that could do much to clarify the reasons for the UK's relatively poor perceptions of the European Union (see Hix and Hoyland, 2011; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010). By taking these into account we may be able to explore more clearly the relative significance of the experience of EU cohesion policy in explaining perceptions of the EU in the UK, both as a whole and across its nations and regions. Four sets of variables are itemised here to illustrate the breadth of the research agenda:-

**(1) Underlying political differences.** There is an in-built aspiration in European integration to seek to encourage member states to converge on political norms and accordingly political differences are often couched in terms of length and form of commitment to broad principles of democratic government. Despite this, three political differences between the UK and much of the rest of the EU can be highlighted which may explain UK perceptions of Europe and differences within UK regional attitudes. First, there is variation over types of democratic principles applied, notably varying between proportional consensual styles of government and majoritarian adversarial parliamentary systems. Secondly, there is variation over the model of political economy applied and how that frames approaches to economic development and welfare state provision. Thirdly, there is variation over the system of governance that reflects levels of state-society engagement, and roles for interest and civil society groups, in policy making and implementation. The UK is identified with majoritarian adversarial parliamentary government, neo-liberal political economy and market governance models of service delivery, complemented by closed network governance, all of which may be seen as distinctive from the EU mainstream. Political analysis of the UK's stateless nations and regions nevertheless offers variation from British central government practice towards engagement with semi-PR electoral systems, more consensual styles of government and more inclusive non-marketised modes of governance, and continued adherence to social democratic models of the welfare state. In relating this variation in underlying political differences within the state to variations in perceptions of the EU we also of course need to keep in mind analysis of where public attitudes lie on left-right and authoritarian-libertarian survey scales and whether these also vary across nations and regions.

**(2) Contingent political factors.** There are two key issues that have been identified as important to perceptions of the EU and have particular bearing in analysis of the UK. First, social scientists have tracked declining public trust in their domestic politicians in most EU states and considered whether growing distrust of domestic politicians feeds through into similar distrust of the EU. Equally though they are conscious that it is possible for the EU to be considered more positively by electorates in contrast with their own government. In the UK declining trust in domestic politicians has been a major issue and whether representatives in the

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devolved parliaments and assemblies have any greater levels of trust is something we need to know more about. It appears that declining trust in domestic politicians in the UK is accompanied by low trust in EU institutions but we know little about the relationship and how this might vary across nations and regions in the UK.

Secondly, a factor that is particularly pertinent is the relationship between public attitudes to national identity and their approaches to the EU. For example, it is possible for national identities to be (i) constructed as exclusive identities both at state and sub-state levels and for this to harbour negative attitudes to the EU; (ii) as identities that may be felt as nested among other identities, in which European-ness has been or can be accommodated; or (iii) as identities submerged by that of the state and which can view the EU as a supportive identity context to subvert any continued association with the state in which they are currently located. In the case of the UK actually all three possibilities have been observed, although their relevance is strongly politically contested. In the Scottish Independence referendum in 2014 the third option was the one most actively promoted by the Yes Campaign. Meanwhile the No campaign's approach was rooted in option (ii) but given the lack of really positive support for the EU it was couched more in terms of multi-level identities purely in a British context related to the practical necessity of European membership best secured by being in the UK.

**(3) Realities and perceptions of economic benefit.** Research needs to examine economic growth rates and their association with EU membership or policies. This is of course as much a case of perception as well as reality. In this context the UK's relatively low level of association of economic performance with EU membership can be contrasted with its near neighbour, Ireland, where economic fortunes have been perceived as strongly intertwined. In the period since 2007 there has been a particular need to consider how regions have fared following the financial crisis and the onset of policies that have both cut public spending and raised taxes. What has been the perceived role of the EU and its broader economic effects? Recent comparative research has actually suggested that the global financial crisis did not bring economic factors substantially back in as a cause of Euroscepticism and even less so in those countries relatively less affected by the crisis (Serricchio et al, 2013). The UK undoubtedly was affected by the crisis but not as radically as some states.

**(4) Group interests.** Analysis also needs to drill down in to the study of how groups respond to the EU. Previous comparative research has identified a scale of positiveness towards EU membership starting with the most pro EU groups and ending with least pro EU groups as follows: students, followed by professionals, senior private sector managers, middle managers, manual workers, farmers, white collar employees, small business owners, service sector employees, the unemployed and skilled workers. On this basis it is logical to expect the most developed national and regional economies with a big university sector, professional classes, large head quartered companies and a prosperous farming sector to be the most pro-EU, and the regions characterised by small scale business, larger public sectors and high unemployment to be the least. Analysis of these factors could explain why Scotland exhibits slightly more pro-European perceptions than Wales given that Scotland conforms more to the more developed economy model and Wales to the small-scale business, large public sector model. Something we know little about, however, is how cohesion policy impacts on the relationship between group interests and views of Europe. Further research needs to focus on the related significance of class, age, gender, religion, and education, and how all these factors relate to attitudes to migration.

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There are of course other issues that may affect attitudes towards the EU, notably social composition and how it changes over time, and the effects of education. Equally, the political context and role of the media in communicating news events and informing public attitudes can produce dramatic shifts in perceptions of the EU. Examination of these issues is as relevant to an examination of the UK as for any other case. It underlines the complexity of isolating policy effects on public attitudes, and indeed whether it is even realistic to expect European cohesion policy to be ever more than one factor among many shaping perceptions of the EU in the member states and regions in receipt of funding.

**V. CONCLUSION**

The paper has addressed key contexts to and issues for research in the case of the UK regarding the relationship between European cohesion policies and perceptions of the European Union. Section one identified the extensive role that European cohesion policies have played and continue to play in UK national and regional governance. Section two clarified why the importance of EU cohesion policy has been heightened by the fact that from the late 1990s EU cohesion policy has become part of the complex set of political battles both between central and devolved government and within devolved territories between parties vying for office. Section three demonstrated that despite this importance of EU cohesion policy the UK is one of the least positive states about the benefits of EU membership. There are differences of perceptions of the European Union across the nations and regions of the UK but these are differences of degree of Euroscepticism rather than between sceptical and strongly positive sentiment. The final section explored how the experience of EU cohesion policy can be conceptualised as a set of variables that may have impacted on UK perceptions of the EU; and then itemised a number of key political variables that may more broadly explain perceptions of the EU. It remains open to question as to whether variables relating to EU cohesion policy have ever had any independent effect on perceptions of EU membership. This raises a long standing analytical debate between positions which isolate on the one hand the importance of the dynamics of European integration to domestic attitudes to the EU, and on the other the continued dominance of domestic politics in understanding attitudes to the EU.

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**CONCLUDING REMARKS****by Mario Kölling**

Fundación Manuel Giménez Abad

The EU regional policy not only financed during the past decades the construction of kilometres of roads and rails, the EU funds contributed to economic and investment growth, internal and external economic stability, as well as improved the labour market situation in the EU. In the current programming period 2014-2020, EU regional policy will invest again around a third of the EU budget in order to reduce the economic, social and territorial disparities among the EU member states and its regions. In 2014-2020 key areas will be in line with the Europe 2020 strategy of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Although the academic literature has not yet reached a consensus on whether the policy promoted economic opportunities and cohesion among European regions, there are tangible and concrete benefits that the cohesion policy has produced. Nevertheless assessing the impact of the EU regional policy is not an easy task, especially if we try to establish a link between this policy and the identification of citizens with Europe. In this context besides the traditional questions of – who gets what and why, as well as, whether the money is well spent – there is a new question emerging regarding the contribution of this policy to a positive identification with the European project or to the emergence of a European identity among the beneficiary population.

At a time of widespread fiscal austerity, the EU cohesion policy provided one of the few sources of funds that did not suffer cutbacks. Moreover EU funds accelerated the GDP growth in some member states and, therefore, alleviated the effects of the global economic crisis. Nevertheless these benefits of cohesion policy did not translate into an improvement in the opinion of the European Union and its institutions. During the past few years data on opinions of citizens related to the benefits of EU membership reflected primarily the impact of the crisis on people's opinion on the EU.

The EU cohesion policy follows the same set of rules and regulations in all member states. But there is a variety of European regions with regard to the level of implication in the EU cohesion policy. Some regions have been receiving structural aid for decades, although in other regions these resources have been reduced progressively, in addition to regions which have only received structural aid at a low or very low level. In this sense EU regional policies have also affected EU citizens in different ways. In fact there is a significant variation of public opinion and of concepts of the EU (variety of perception within the EU member states, but also within societies, as well as to a variation over time), on top of there seeming to be a positive relation between the identification with Europe and the benefits from the EU and its policies (e.g. regional policies).

In our publication we tried to analyse more in detail this interrelation of the EU regional policy with the identification for the EU integration. For this purpose we studied five EU member states (United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Poland and the Czech Republic) with different territorial organisation, institutional history, distinct cultural identities, as well as, administrative and governance functions.

Spain and Italy are two countries which benefited for a long time from the EU cohesion policy. Both countries have had a population characterised by a traditionally very positive attitude towards the EU integration project and where the public awareness of EU regional policy seem to have increased recently. However Spaniards and Italians are exceptionally sceptical regarding the general impact of these projects and their personal benefits. A negative public opinion, particularly throughout the last five years or so, seems to prevail concerning EU membership and its benefits. Notwithstanding, these

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trends may only give some idea of possible tendencies regarding the identification with Europe and the figures may also turn into a more positive perception once the crisis has been overcome.

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Poland and the Czech Republic only recently started to benefit from the EU re-distributive policies. Especially in Poland citizens consider EU membership increasingly as a positive and beneficial phenomenon. Thanks to the cohesion policy, the divergence between both countries, in comparison to “old” EU member states, has been reduced, even though there is still a substantial difference overall. The pressure from the EU to adopt the ‘acquis communautaire’ in the pre-accession phase induced the decentralisation and regionalisation process of governmental systems in Poland and the Czech Republic. Since 2004 regional governments have been systematically gaining more competence in management of regional policy and funds. Moreover, the range of actors involved in the implementation of regional policy significantly widened. However, in the Czech Republic administrative decentralization seemed to have increased corruption at the regional level, which led the government to return to centralize the allocation of European funding. While the corruption in regional policy may play a negative role in the question of the identification of Czechs with the EU, Polish citizens consider that Poland profits more as a state than they do as individuals. Despite their acknowledgment of positive effects of EU membership, Polish citizens define themselves above all through nationality and a European identity is less pronounced.

The EU Regional Policy in the Czech Republic and its impact on European identification of Czech citizens

The management and Impact of EU Cohesion Policy – lessons from member states – the case of Spain

The EU Regional Policy and the identification with Europe The case of Italy

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**Concluding remarks**

The EU regional policy also played an important role in the UK, nevertheless the country is one of the least positive states about the benefits of EU membership. There are differences of perceptions of the European Union across the nations and regions of the UK but these are differences of degree of Euroscepticism rather than between sceptical and strongly positive sentiment. Moreover, from the late 1990s EU regional policy has become part of a complex set of political battles between central and devolved governments added to within devolved territories.

## Annex

## Créditos

In order to conclude we can confirm the heterogeneity across member states, both with regard to the impact of EU regional policy and also with regard to the identification with the EU. All authors underlined the interrelation of the EU regional policy with endogenous and exogenous conflicts, e.g. the consequences of the economic crisis (Spain), the strong identification with national policies (Italy); the decentralisation in Poland, the corruption in the Czech Republic or political battles between central and devolved governments as well as the general Euroscepticism in the UK. These conflicts played a very important role in determining the interrelation between public opinion and EU regional policy.

In our publication we tried to offer an attempt towards a better understanding of the relationship between European regional policies, local and regional identities and the perception of the added value of the EU by its citizens. According to Prof. Bradbury, it remains open whether variables relating to EU cohesion policy have ever had any independent effect on perceptions of EU membership. In other words, there is a long standing analytical debate between positions which isolate on the one hand the importance of the dynamics of European integration to domestic attitudes toward the EU, and on the other the continued dominance of domestic politics in understanding attitudes regarding the EU.

However, because of the characteristics of the EU regional policy, the effect of the policy on a positive identification with the European project has only been analysed with regard to its output dimension. Nevertheless, direct participation mechanisms and a stronger implication in the design of the programmes could increase the identification of citizens with this policy. ■

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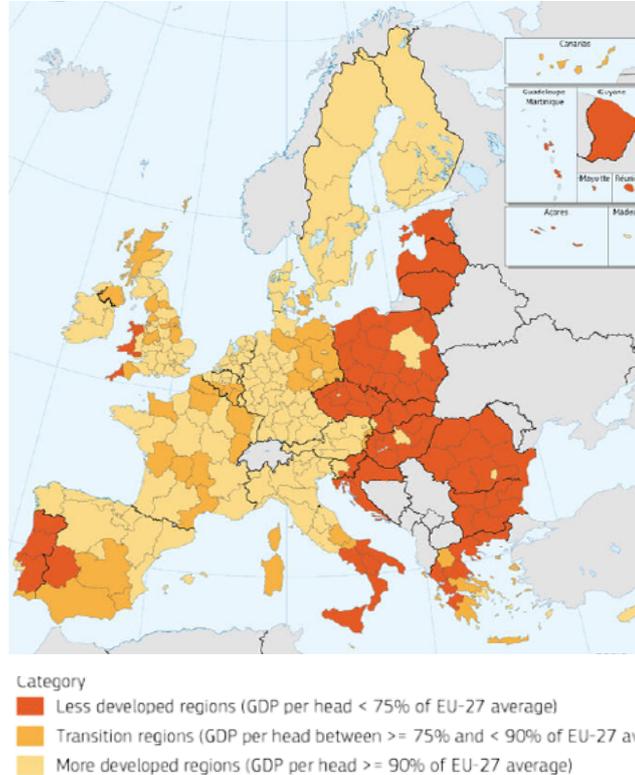
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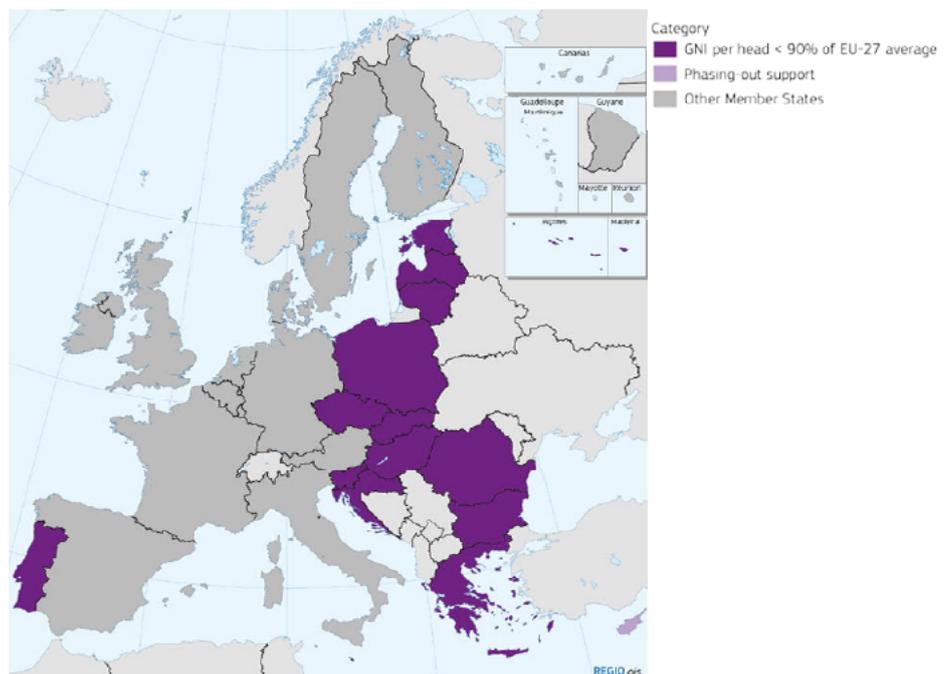
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**Map 1: Regions eligible for Structural Funds by category 2014-2020**



Source: European Commission (2014), Sixth Report for Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion.

**Map 2: Countries eligible for Cohesion Fund by category 2014-2020**



Source: European Commission (2014), Sixth Report for Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion.

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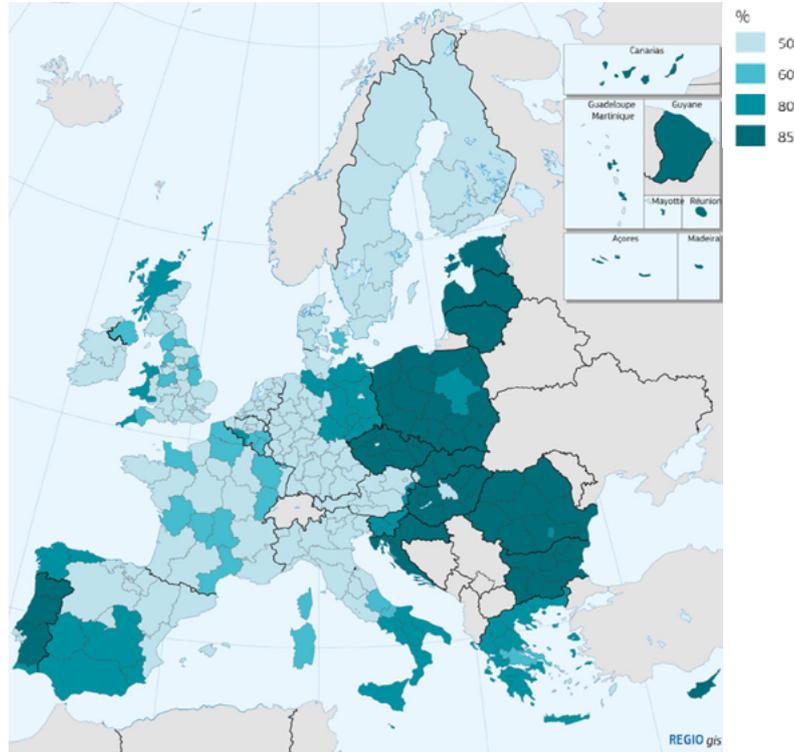
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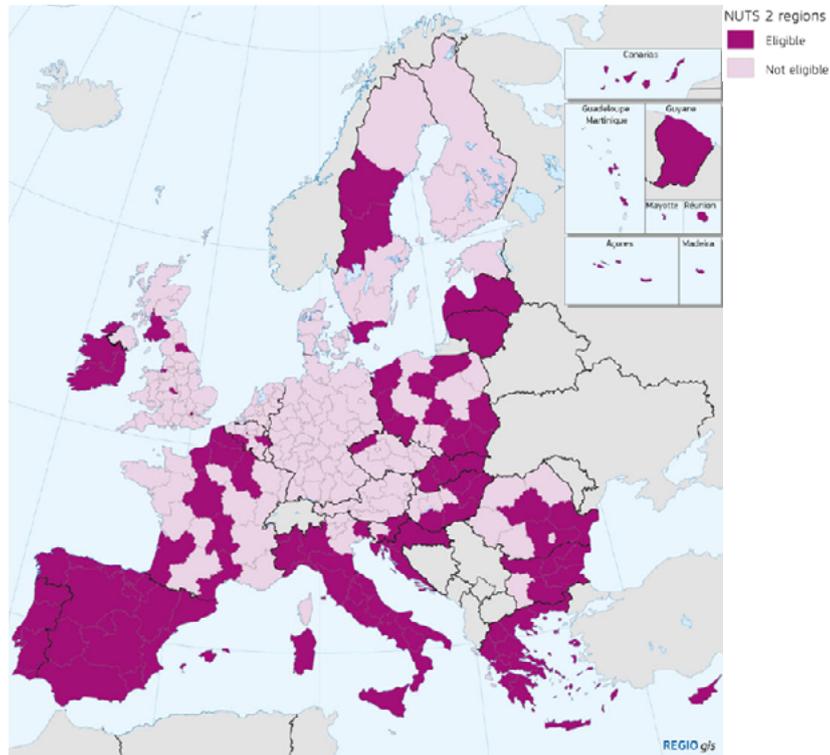
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**Map 3: Investment for growth and Jobs goal: maximum co-financing rate for Structural Funds support, 2014-2020**



Source: European Commission (2014), Sixth Report for Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion.

**Map 4: Regions eligible for Youth unemployment initiative 2014-2020**



Source: European Commission (2014), Sixth Report for Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion.

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**Table 1: Standard Eurobarometer (2011) 75 – Question: Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union is/would be...?**

|   |          | Une bonne chose |        | Une mauvaise chose   |        | Une chose ni bonne, ni mauvaise |        | NSP  |        |
|---|----------|-----------------|--------|----------------------|--------|---------------------------------|--------|------|--------|
|   |          | A good thing    |        | A bad thing          |        | Neither good nor bad            |        | DK   |        |
|   |          | Eine gute Sache |        | Eine schlechte Sache |        | Weder gut noch schlecht         |        | WN   |        |
| %   |          | EB              | Diff.  | EB                   | Diff.  | EB                              | Diff.  | EB   | Diff.  |
|   |          | 75.3            | EB     | 75.3                 | EB     | 75.3                            | EB     | 75.3 | EB     |
|   |          |                 | 73.4** |                      | 73.4** |                                 | 73.4** |      | 73.4** |
|    | EU 27    | 47              | -2     | 18                   | 0      | 31                              | 2      | 4    | 0      |
|    | BE       | 65              | 1      | 11                   | -1     | 23                              | 0      | 1    | 0      |
|    | BG       | 48              | 1      | 10                   | 2      | 38                              | -1     | 4    | -2     |
|    | CZ       | 31              | 0      | 19                   | 3      | 48                              | -3     | 2    | 0      |
|    | DK       | 55              | -11    | 16                   | 4      | 28                              | 7      | 1    | 0      |
|    | DE       | 54              | 4      | 16                   | -4     | 26                              | -1     | 4    | 1      |
|    | FF       | 49              | -3     | 9                    | 2      | 40                              | 1      | 2    | 0      |
|    | IE       | 63              | -3     | 12                   | 2      | 18                              | 0      | 7    | 1      |
|    | EL       | 38              | -6     | 33                   | 12     | 28                              | -6     | 1    | 0      |
|    | ES       | 55              | -4     | 17                   | 5      | 22                              | -1     | 6    | 0      |
|    | FR       | 46              | 2      | 19                   | -5     | 33                              | 4      | 2    | -1     |
|    | IT       | 41              | -7     | 17                   | 0      | 36                              | 5      | 6    | 2      |
|   | CY       | 37              | 4      | 25                   | -4     | 36                              | -1     | 2    | 1      |
|   | CY (toc) | 46              | -4     | 18                   | 0      | 30                              | 9      | 6    | -5     |
|  | LV       | 25              | -1     | 21                   | 2      | 51                              | -1     | 3    | 0      |
|  | LT       | 49              | 1      | 16                   | 2      | 31                              | -3     | 4    | 0      |
|  | LU       | 72              | 2      | 13                   | 1      | 13                              | -4     | 2    | 1      |
|  | HU       | 32              | -6     | 22                   | 7      | 44                              | -1     | 2    | 0      |
|  | MT       | 42              | -5     | 18                   | -3     | 37                              | 7      | 3    | 1      |
|  | NL       | 68              | -1     | 12                   | 1      | 19                              | 0      | 1    | 0      |
|  | AT       | 37              | 1      | 25                   | 2      | 36                              | -4     | 2    | 1      |
|  | PL       | 53              | -9     | 10                   | 2      | 33                              | 6      | 4    | 1      |
|  | PT       | 39              | -4     | 26                   | 5      | 30                              | -1     | 5    | 0      |
|  | RO       | 57              | 2      | 11                   | 0      | 28                              | -2     | 4    | 0      |
|  | SI       | 39              | 0      | 21                   | 5      | 39                              | -4     | 1    | -1     |
|  | SK       | 52              | -7     | 10                   | 3      | 37                              | 4      | 1    | 0      |
|  | FI       | 47              | 2      | 19                   | -4     | 33                              | 3      | 1    | -1     |
|  | SE       | 56              | 2      | 17                   | -3     | 25                              | 1      | 2    | 0      |
|  | UK       | 26              | -3     | 32                   | -1     | 37                              | 6      | 5    | -2     |