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## Perspectives on the Political Legitimacy and Future of the European Union

By  
**Jessica Frydenberg<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract.** The confidence that Informed Citizenry and their Economic Elites have in the European Union were assessed. Survey data, from the 2009 Eurobarometer 72.4 with a sample size of 8,499 citizens, from 27 European nations, were supplemented with interviews with two professionals knowledgeable about EU politics and content analyses of current events, such as the EU debt crisis, the rise in terrorist attacks, the British Referendum, and the immigration crisis. Although both citizens and elites were confident about the EU's future, voices of informed citizenry shaped the confidence in the EU more than economic elites. These findings substantiated the Systemic Coupling theoretical model more than the Power Elite model and contributed to the empirical literature on citizens' trust in the EU and transnational political systems. Additional cross-temporal examination of citizens' confidence in the EU and the roles of new media are warranted.

### INTRODUCTION

The ongoing economic uncertainty in the European Union (EU), the unprecedented influx of immigrants and refugees, and the growing threat of terrorism, have raised questions about the long-term legitimacy, stability, and resilience of the EU. Little has been done by the EU administration to successfully address doubts in the hearts of its citizens. Can the EU administration turn things around for Europe? Does the EU administration have the power, the drive, and the resources to restore its citizens' faith in the institution's ability to address Europe's problems, and if so how would they go about doing that?

In 1958, following the Second World War, the European Economic Community (EEC) was formed in the hopes of peacefully bringing Western European countries together. Six nations, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands, were

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the first to join in forming the EEC to foster economic cooperation, minimize conflict between different European nations, and encourage democracy in member states. The EEC quickly grew and evolved to be a unique and powerful economic and political union that addresses policy areas ranging from human rights, the environment, security, climate change, and external relations with non-EU nations (Europa, European Union 2016). With its core values based in the rule of law and respect for human rights and a fundamental purpose of fostering, promoting, and reinforcing social, political and economic harmony amongst European nations, the organization was officially renamed the European Union (EU) in 1993. As of 2015, the EU is comprised of 28 member states, covering over 4 million square kilometers (just over 1.5 million square miles) and protecting the rights of approximately 508 million inhabitants (Europa, EU 2016). To this day, these core values of human rights, democracy, and rule of law continue to be EU's driving force and the root of its success but also the challenges they still face.

It is in this historical context that my research on EU citizens' confidence in the European Union, particularly in its political legitimacy, is located. With the rise in terrorism and immigration and the lingering effects of the economic crises in Member States, understanding citizens' faith in the EU administration is important now more than ever to ensure the successful and stable future of the institution. It is also important to recognize that EU citizens' confidence is dependent on their location on the political, social, and economic hierarchy. The political and economic elites, arguably the ones who benefit the most from the work and policies of the EU, are likely to have a more positive view of the EU and its legitimacy than the average citizen who has fallen through the cracks and whose needs are not addressed by their political leaders. Part of why the British, for example, voted to leave the European Union was that they felt only the EU elitists who ran the EU benefitted (Robertson 2016; Frum 2016). So whose European Union is it? Does it belong to the political elites or to the average citizen?

To address these questions, confidence of citizens in the EU and its political legitimacy were examined through a dual lens, that of the political elites versus the average citizen. On the one hand, confidence could be all about how knowledgeable the average citizen is about the EU, its policies, and the organization's responsibilities to the citizens. On the other hand, one could argue that it is really about one's stake in how strong and stable the economic health of the EU, irrespective of knowledge. In other words, it would not matter how informed citizens are, but it would be the political and economically healthier citizens, the elites, that dominate the workings and future of the European Union.

Knowledgeable citizens are vital for democracy to function properly; they are the voices that can drive changes in their lives to protect their rights, and liberties. If citizens are not informed adequately about the purpose of an institution and its policies, they will be unable to be engaged in a way that is truly representative of their needs and expectations. Because the European Union deals with not only economics, but also issues of justice, migration, environment, and human rights, it is necessary that citizens know and understand these issues in order for the EU administration to enact changes that will benefit the wider population.

In addition to how much working knowledge citizens have of the EU and its policies, their quality of life and economic health can also shape their opinions of the Union's future. Even though the EU strives to improve the living standards, human dignity and freedom of all its citizens, it is quite likely that the economic and political elites benefit more from the system than the average citizen. If the elites are satisfied with their lives they may have more faith in the EU and the European leadership. In contrast, if the EU and its leaders cannot reduce disparities, the less privileged citizens are likely to lose confidence in the EU. It is reasonable to assume that those who have not benefitted as much from the system hold the EU responsible for their poor economic health and quality of life. The day-to-day experiences and standards of living of citizens are likely to define their confidence in the EU.

In short, both the informed EU citizen and the EU elites have the power to influence confidence in the EU. A comparative assessment of the voices of knowledgeable citizenry and elites will be useful to the EU administration as it shapes its future policies. Because the EU is so vast and diverse, in terms of the history of its member states and because citizen confidence in the system can be expected to vary by region, analyses need to be disaggregated by EU regions, as in Western, Eastern, and Mediterranean nations. Findings from this study will add to the scholarship of the EU's future as well as the sociology of transnational politics and government.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Scholars of the extant literature reviewed below have focused on the political legitimacy of the EU, particularly trust in the EU and how informed citizens were about EU policies. Because the European Union is by nature a multilevel governing body that is structurally deeply intertwined with national governments, it has been argued that EU citizens who trust their own national governments were more likely to extrapolate that trust to other supranational political levels. EU scholars also found that citizens' knowledge about the European Union, its history, governing bodies and their respective policies, can influence, both directly and indirectly, whether they trust and support the EU. Some researchers have also noted contradictions in the way citizens' quality of life and their economic health shaped faith in the future of the EU.

### **The Struggle for EU Legitimacy**

The struggle for EU legitimacy, both political and economic, is waged in the minds of the average citizen as well as its elites. Scholars have found that the political legitimacy and authority of the EU as an organization has fluctuated over the years depending on the context and environment at the time. Moreover, the Union constantly reshapes itself to better fit the needs of the people it serves. The EU's legitimacy was also measured by whether EU citizens were satisfied with their lives and felt that they were benefitting

from being in an EU Member State. Other scholars argued that citizens' confidence in the EU comes down to how well educated and knowledgeable citizens were about the EU, its history and its policies. The ways the EU administration communicated information regarding the EU and how much knowledge citizens had largely influenced what citizens demanded of the organization and if they believed in its legitimacy.

### EU Political Legitimacy

At the heart of the European Union lays the ambiguous understanding and definition of the organization itself, McCormick (2014) argued. He posited that scholars, on the one hand, have defined the EU as a form of multi-level governance or consociationalism,<sup>2</sup> while other researchers have left the definition vague, calling it an international organization that oversees politics and economics across European nations. McCormick formally defined the EU as an international organization that is embedded in an intergovernmental system in which leaders from the governments of member states work together and create a singular set of policies, currency, market, and trade. The fluid and ambiguous nature of the EU create challenges for citizens as well as for the key players and leaders involved to understand and legitimate the organization.

The struggle for political legitimacy and political trust is a story as old as the European Union and European integration itself and only continues to reinforce the vague definitions and roles of the EU (Sternberg 2013). Sternberg, in her work on the legitimacy of the European Union, asserted that the organization, despite surviving some of the most severe crises to date, is encountering growing skepticism and concern about how trustworthy and legitimate the Union itself is.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the EU citizen's understanding of legitimacy is much more fluid and continuously changing depending on the context at the time. Initially, the EU was created and was legitimized by European nations' unspoken desire and agreement to create and maintain peace and prosperity across Europe, to serve the common good of the people. Over time, this view of legitimacy became much more about economic integration with goal of creating a common market objective. With the Maastricht Treaty<sup>4</sup>, otherwise referred to as the Treaty on European Union, the integration discourse evolved to include classic democratic ideals and related reforms. Through her detailed study of the historical meaning of EU legitimacy, Sternberg argued that European Union leaders continue, to this day, to struggle with formally defining and creating legitimacy around the organization, particularly with regards to what the EU should and should not be doing and how well the Union is meeting citizen expectations.

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<sup>2</sup> Consociationalism is "a form of democracy which seeks to regulate the sharing of power in a state that comprises diverse societies (distinct ethnic, religious, political, national or linguistic groups), by allocating these groups collective rights" (Reut Institute, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Sternberg 2013: 1, 187-192.

<sup>4</sup> The Maastricht negotiations took place in 1992 wherein leaders from various European nations met with the goal and intention of creating the first single [European] currency, the Euro, across sovereign nations in the modern world.

Other scholars have devoted attention to the shifting understanding of the nature of the EU. Beetham and Lord (2013), for example, while acknowledging legitimacy as something affiliated to political authority, noted that the EU is constantly changing to fit the needs of the organization and the people it serves. They defined legitimacy as a framework used to analyze and explain the different types of EU member governments and how and why citizens abide by the legal and political laws of organizations like the European Union or a national government. Beetham and Lord argued that political legitimacy of the EU and the European political space essentially comes down to the interactions, and intrinsic connections, between the EU and its member states. To these authors, political authority is only deemed legitimate and recognized if it is (a) legal, “acquired and exercised according to established rules”, (b) normative “the rules are justifiable according to socially accepted beliefs, and (c) democratically legitimate “positions of authority are confirmed by the express consent or affirmation of appropriate subordinates, and by recognition from other legitimate authorities” (p.3).

EU political legitimacy has also been approached from the opposing end of the legitimacy-illegitimacy spectrum. Scholars, like Rousseau (2014), used a democratic deficit model and problems with legitimacy, to explain the failure of the EU to practice and operate in a democratic fashion. Rousseau, in his analysis EU’s democratic deficit, found that legitimacy, or more pointedly illegitimacies of the EU, came in two primary forms. Input-oriented legitimacy, based on the collective identity of the people, the average citizens, is “government by the people” (p.11) while out-put oriented legitimacy is dependent on common interests and goals, a “government for the people” (p.11). In both forms, new forms of decision-making, reliant on transparency and public participation, was deemed more popular and legitimate by the average citizen than the traditional, behind the scenes, methods of decision making and discussion between business and political leaders with minimal deliberation, benefitting primarily the elites.

Political legitimacy is also a matter of trust, with its breadth of meaning and importance to all individuals, their nations, and transnational institutions. In the EU political context, extrapolation of citizens’ trust in the health of their national institutions to the EU has swung both ways. Researchers have empirically documented a positive association between citizens’ trust in national institutions and their trust in larger EU organizations. Hartevelde (2013) defined trust as fundamental to a social system because it diffuses support through all levels of society. Political trust is the glue that keeps the political system together and is the “prime expression of [political] legitimacy” (p.543). Using data from the June – July 2009 Eurobarometer survey 71.3, administered in 30 Member States with approximately 1000 respondents per State, Hartevelde found the logic of extrapolation<sup>5</sup> to be the most influential in citizens’ confidence in the EU while the logics of identity<sup>6</sup> and rationality<sup>7</sup> to have little to no impact. Citizens’ confidence in the EU was

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<sup>5</sup> The Logic of Extrapolation: If people were generally optimistic and trusting of things, it is highly predictable that they would be trusting of other institutions, people or situations. In short, if citizens trusted their national political institutions, they are likely to have faith in the European Union as well.

<sup>6</sup> The Logic of Identity: Trust arose when citizens were able to identify with the state and its institutions because it [trust] is diffused through the community.

almost entirely rested on citizens' trust in national institutions, regardless of their rational evaluation or emotional affiliation. The more they trusted their national governments, the more likely they were to trust the European Union too.

A more specific form of extrapolation is how trust in domestic local governments translated into trust in supranational political institutions. Arnold et al. (2012) in their study of trust in EU institutions using 2005 – 2010 Eurobarometer survey data, found citizens' trust in domestic institutions and local governments cultivated greater confidence in EU institutions. However, extrapolated trust was conditional to specific countries; domestic corruption levels explained away the positive association between trust in national institutions and the EU. Besides, when national corruption levels were low, citizens trusted their non-political and national institutions more than the EU.

On the other hand, researchers have also found a negative relationship between citizens' trust in national institutions and the European Union. In Munoz, Torcal, and Bonet's (2011) analyses of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th waves of the European Social Survey (completed in 2004, 2005 and 2008 in all the then twenty-seven EU member states), trust in the national and European parliaments were intrinsically interdependent but also negatively extrapolated. Trust in a national institution or the local government created an upper limit standard in the minds of citizens, a standard they used to evaluate the EU and its institutions. In other words, the more citizens trusted their local government and institutions, the less confidence they had in the EU. But, when citizens had little trust in their national institutions, they tended to have more confidence in EU institutions.

### Economic Legitimacy of Institutions and Citizens

The collective and individual quality of life of EU citizens has been another influential dimension of the EU's legitimacy and citizen confidence in the EU. The Euro deficit, the rise in terror and crisis of legitimacy, and political ideologies, amongst other things, led the EU parliament and the EU to introduce a variety of economic reforms in the hopes of increasing citizen support and legitimacy of the European Union.

Kumlin (2009), using the 2002 wave of the European Social Survey in 24 countries in and around Europe, discovered that citizens' confidence in and support of the EU was significantly lower in larger member nations that adequately protected the health and wellbeing of its citizens. In other words, citizens' who judged their quality of life as fairly good or great were more distrustful of the EU. In Western European countries, trust in the EU as a political institution was also directly fueled by their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with national public services and organizations. Dissatisfied European citizens from nations that provided robust welfare benefits distrusted and blamed the EU for their misgivings. Kumlin concluded that citizens' trust in the EU was dependent on

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<sup>7</sup> The Logic of Rationality: Confidence is the rational result of citizens' evaluations of the benefits received from the EU or other political institutions, more specifically aspects that served their personal interest or that they personally benefitted from.

perceptions of whether the EU member nation protected and cared for its citizens, especially those with financial or social needs.

More specifically, citizens' quality of life, measured by their socio-economic resources, perceived benefits from EU membership and life satisfaction, positively shaped confidence in the EU (Arnold 2012). The more satisfied citizens were with their quality of life and economic health, the more confidence they had in the EU. On the other hand, the economic debt crisis, which negatively impacted much of Europe and resulted in rising unemployment rates and lower wages, left citizens questioning what the EU was doing to ensure their economic wellbeing. With a rise in terror and conflict, citizens, who had most at stake, questioned whether the EU was ensuring their safety and protecting their needs. In either case, when the EU citizens were unhappy, insecure, or felt that the EU was not performing its duties socially, politically or economically, they blamed the EU and trusted the Union less. In short, when citizens' quality of life was threatened, so was their confidence in the EU.

### Intersections of Political and Economic Legitimacy

Quality of life and its relation to political trust, however, are not quite so clear-cut and often incorporate citizens' personal values and political views. Using the public opinion polls from the 2008 Eurobarometer 69, Primozic (2009), found that personal values had little to no effect on citizens' confidence in the EU with the exception of how citizens' viewed democracy and solidarity. In Member States where citizens valued democracy, there was more confidence in national institutions. Similarly, member country citizens who valued solidarity voiced more trust in the EU than in their national institutions.

When it comes to whether or not the European Union is deemed legitimate, one has to consider the individuals or groups in charge. Crespy (2014), in her critical account of the need for a reappraisal of conflict in the EU around the issue of democratic legitimacy and deliberative democracy<sup>8</sup>, argued that EU governance is largely elitist and technocratic. The operations of the EU are entirely elite-based, reliant upon those who hold power, privilege or resources in society. Crespy found that dissenting voices of the average citizens were often excluded and undermined the democratic legitimacy of the EU polity. In other words, it was the power elite stakeholders that ultimately controlled and organized the European Union. She argued that the EU must create a deliberative, transparent, and equal democracy [for all to participate in]. By permitting all citizens, but especially the average citizen, to channel their views and voice their concerns to the EU, they are not only participating in the deliberative decision making process and policy output, but are as a consequence, helping create a better quality of life that does not benefit only the elite (pp. 82-83).

On balance, the definition of quality of life and economic health in the EU comes down to who is defining it: the political and economic elites or the average citizen. The

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<sup>8</sup> Deliberative or discursive democracy is a form of democracy in which conflict-based discussion and deliberation are central to the decision-making process within the EU (Crespy 2014: 88).



average citizen, whose voice is typically dismissed, does not benefit as much from the EU economic and political system as the political and economic elites.

### Citizens' Working Knowledge of Institutions

Political legitimacy of and citizens' trust in the EU also comes down to how informed and knowledgeable citizens are about the European Union. Karp (2003), in his study of cognitive mobilization (citizens' knowledge), institutional confidence and economic benefits of the EU, found that citizens' lack of knowledge about the EU was one of the largest impediments to their evidence based evaluation the EU's performance. Citizens, in the Oct – Nov 1999 Eurobarometer 52.0 survey (a face-to-face survey questionnaire of about 30,000 EU citizens), who had a solid understanding of the EU, positively evaluated the EU's success. However, perception of costs and fewer benefits from being a part of the EU led to more negative views about the European Union.

Transparency in communication between leading political actors in the governing body and EU citizens is essential for creating an informed citizenry. Meyer (1999), in his study of political communication in the EU, found that a technocratic mindset and associated language, and resultant lack of transparency and poor communication about policies and procedures eroded public trust in the legitimacy and success of the EU. For example, policy documents shared publicly to encourage transparency and political action were "riddled with technocratic jargon and little explanation" (p.629). As a result, key issues and policies that may have been of public interest were lost in the complex and distorted methods of communication. Consequently, he posited that the European Commission failed their duties to achieve democratic legitimacy and public support. Meyer concluded that, transparency, as in strong, clear, and direct public communication, is vital to the success and political legitimacy of any governing body.

A specific illustration of the legitimacy impediments of opaque communication was seen when Central and Eastern Europe were added into the EU beginning in 2004 (Stefanova 2016). The technocratic jargon language led to euro skepticism. The institutional and technical nature and language of the European Union's expansion into Central and Eastern Europe was inadequate to garner public support and confidence in the new EU member states. In fact, the political elite and the EU administration dismissed the average citizen's negative views of the EU's expansion. To the elites, this accession as "a major opportunity in political and economic terms" and communicated it as so with the public (p.278). But this story of the EU's expansion resulted in several negative consequences for the political legitimacy and citizen trust in the EU. By and large, it decreased public support because of negative perceptions of the benefits of EU membership and frustration with the lack of transparent communication (281-282). Stefanova concluded that the EU administration's failure to communicate with and address the concerns of the average citizen resulted in an unfortunate decline in not only the EU's political legitimacy but also in citizens' faith in the democratic image of EU and its future.

Informed knowledge about the EU also had the power to change citizens' demands of and expectations from the EU administration and related political institutions. Hobolt (2012), in her study of the intrinsic relationship between the national governments, EU institutions and citizens, concluded that the more knowledgeable citizens were, the more they demanded, and expected better quality change and action, from not only their national state but also from the EU. Her research found this to be true at all levels, personal, national, and EU, in the 2009 27 Members States European Elections Studies (EES); "over half [of the citizens] are fairly or very satisfied with how democracy works in the EU – slightly more than the proportion of citizens who are satisfied with democracy in their own country" (p.100). The more citizens understood how EU democracy worked procedurally, the more knowledge-based their opinions on the EU's effectiveness were. There was an immediate sense of public ownership in the institutions, regardless of one's level in society, and a desire to be a part of the decision-making process, a rather anti-elitist perspective. This perspective was reinforced by Sternberg (2013: 80) who argued that there was an inherent need to align integration with citizen desires in order for the EU to address the expectations of the citizens and achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the EU citizens. In short, citizens' satisfaction with and faith in the EU was not based on a single legitimating factor, but rather citizens' trust in national, state, and EU institutions and their knowledge of the EU itself.

Citizens' knowledge of major events and crises across Europe and in their home nations also shaped their confidence in political institutions such as the EU. The 2009 EU Debt Crisis for example, not only negatively impacted most European economies but has drastically changed public opinion on the economic future and viability of the European Union. Corbu (2013), who used interviews with eleven economic experts and a national survey of about 1002 citizens in Romania, concluded that citizens with little to no knowledge of the EU and current events across Europe were more likely to use utilitarian criteria, what is most practical and attractive to them personally, to evaluate the EU and its legitimacy post-Euro crisis. Most of Corbu's respondents felt more optimistic about the EU's future than the future of Romania or of their personal situations. On balance, Corbu asserted that major crisis, such as the Euro Crisis, did not drastically diminish European citizens' confidence in the EU; in fact, the majority believed that the EU would be able to turn things around, even if not immediately.

On balance, knowledgeable citizens have the power to drastically change public opinion about the viability of the European Union, at the member nation and the citizen levels. Trust in the European Union seemed to be centered on knowledgeable citizens, their informed demands and expectations of the EU, as well as their sense of public ownership in the performance and success of national and broader public institutions.

### **State of Scholarly Knowledge about EU Legitimacy**

It is evident that at the heart of citizens' confidence in the European Union is how politically and economically legitimate their citizens saw the organization as well as how informed and educated they were about EU policies and EU history. While the research

linking citizens' trust in the EU system to their knowledge of political institutions and quality of life was illuminating, their conclusions were conflicting. For example, Haartveld (2013) and Arnold (2012) found that citizens' trust in the national institutions were positively associated with their faith in EU's political legitimacy while Munoz, Torcal, and Bonet (2011) and Kumlin (2009) discovered a negative relationship between citizens' confidence in national and EU-wide institutions. Likewise, the logic of extrapolation from Haartveld (2013) were contradictory. Primovic (2009) and Arnold's (2012) work on quality of life and economic health also proved incongruous. Despite these mixed results, there is general agreement that everything boils down to trust, the backbone of society, which is vital to ensuring successful democracy. And that informed citizenry had more confidence in both their national institutions and the EU, compared to their less informed counterparts.

The research presented in this paper, attempted to reconcile some of these contradictions by comparatively assessing the impact of knowledge and economic health on citizen confidence in the EU. Moreover, it relied on the most recent data available from the Eurobarometer survey. These updated findings will be useful to the EU administration as they work on re-examining their policies and reforms to garner more public support and trust.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

This study explored citizens' confidence in the future of the European Union to understand the roles that its stakeholders, the elites and average citizens, might play in shaping its future. More specifically, how might EU citizens' confidence in the EU and in the organization's future, be shaped by citizens' knowledge of the EU and/or their economic health? Answers to these questions can offer clues into whether the political legitimacy of the EU will be defined by the political elite, the average citizen, or both. Regional differences were also examined to assess how confidence in the EU and its political legitimacy might vary depending on the regional context. Content analyses of sample current events and regional news about the political elite and the average citizen were used to illustrate the regional differences in the Eurobarometer survey findings. The formal research question posed was, "How do informed EU citizenry and economic health impact their confidence in the European Union?"

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

Trust in social institutions is a vital component to the success or failure of major institutions and democracies. Organizations that enjoy a large degree of public support and trust tend to also have more political legitimacy thereby making them more effective and valuable to its members. But, how do organizations build trust in their effectiveness? And is trust in organizational effectiveness widely shared across the

society? Or is trust the prerogative of the elite and not the masses? This study, which evaluated the relative roles of informed citizenry and their quality of life on citizens' confidence in the EU, tested these alternative perspectives on organizational efficiency.

Parsons' Structural Functionalism (Parsons 1975; Powers 2010) is theoretically useful in explaining organizational effectiveness and trust from the average EU citizens' perspective; organizations are most effective when the average citizen is involved. On the other hand, theories of political and power elites (Domhoff 2005; Gilens 2014) offer a counter perspective: effective organizations meet the needs of and are determined by the elites and not so much the average citizen. In other words, there will be a direct relationship between what the elites want and need, and what the organization accomplishes, leaving the average citizen out of the equation (Hage & Dewar 1973).

Irrespective of whether organizations serve the elites or the average citizen, how is organizational efficiency achieved? Applied to the EU, an argument can be made that in order for EU citizens' to have confidence, the Union needs to be efficient. According to the Principle of Organizational Efficiency (Powers 2010), long-term organizational efficiency and effectiveness is a positive function of (a) success in maintaining uniform mission awareness and accurate institutional history, (b) depth of commitment to minimizing repetition of past mistakes and taking other steps to improve performance, (c) organizational capacity for assessing challenges and instituting change without interrupting normal operations, and (d) adequacy of alignment of training, information, resources, and operational authority with the tasks people are called on to perform in their roles (Powers 2010: 173). Stated from an EU standpoint, its administration will find ways to maintain organizational effectiveness in order to garner citizens' support and confidence. But whose support and confidence is the EU trying to gain and keep? Is it the power elites or the average citizens?

### **Model of Systemic Coupling**

The European Union's organizational efficiency, seen from a Systemic Coupling perspective within a Structural Functionalist worldview, would posit that, other things being equal, the ability of an organization to maintain its mission focus is a positive function of tight systemic coupling. In other words, an effective organization will maintain (a) a stable shared awareness of common ends, (b) open and honest lines of communication (c) effective allocation of resources with mission involvement, and (e) have people at different locations within the system with a sense of common fate (Powers 2010: 165). A weakly coupled system, in contrast, is a function of individuals or structures in society becoming autonomous and independent units from one another.

Applied to the research question at hand, the European Union will be evaluated by its citizens as doing its job poorly by citizens who have limited knowledge of EU goals and policies. To the extent that the EU does not maintain transparency and fails to build and promote stable awareness and knowledge of the Union's purpose or policies to its citizens, the whole system will be deemed to be not only weakly coupled but also not

faithful to its values of peace, stability and prosperity for all EU citizens (Europa, 2016). In other words, the more knowledge and understanding provided by the EU to the average citizen, and the more transparent the organization's purpose, policies, and functioning, the more likely the average citizen is to have confidence in the EU as a legitimate political institution. If citizens do not think that the performance of the Union is efficient and effective, then the system will have to change to ensure the needs of the people are better met, their trust is kept, and their citizens feel like they are being well cared for. In other words, as captured by the Form Follows Function principle of Structural Functionalism (Powers 2010: 153), widespread patterns of structural change emerge as systemic responses to meet new needs or correct for poor performance in the face of old and emerging needs.

Following these theoretical lines of reasoning, it was predicted that Informed Citizenry will have a stronger positive influence, than citizens' Economic Health, on members' Confidence in the European Union, net of EU regions and demographics (**Hypothesis 1**). The more working knowledge and understanding the average citizen has about the EU (Informed Citizenry) and its benefits to them, the more likely they will be to endorse the political legitimacy of the EU and view its future positively.

### Theory of the Power Elite

On the contrary, it could be argued that it is not the average citizen but rather the power elite that control the EU's future. In a power elite organizational model, the elite not only control and protect the most important power sources of society, they also have the resources to interject their interests and will into the mainstream societal structures and institutions (Lopez 2013: pp. 1-3). To paraphrase George William Domhoff (2005), it is the power elites, with their resources and power to influence the makeup of the institutional structures and policies that benefit most from public institutions. They ensure that the system is set up in a way that prioritizes, privileges, and perpetuates their needs and interests over that of the average citizen.

In a political elite framework, it stands to reason that the power elites will be more likely to perceive the system as politically legitimate, trustworthy, and successful because their interests are protected and served (Gilens 2014). The average citizen who does not benefit as much, be it economically, politically, or socially, from the system will not be as confident about the future of the EU, likely blame the power elite for their misgivings, and question the EU's political legitimacy. Stated differently, the power elite who control and benefit from the system will be likely to accept the political legitimacy and have more confidence in the EU's future. In contrast, the average citizen might be more critical and negative of the EU. Following this power elite model, it was predicted (**Hypothesis 2**) that Economic Health of its citizens and nations will have stronger positive impact on citizens' confidence in the EU than Informed Citizenry, net of background characteristics of the citizens.

## METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCE

A mixed methods approach was used to test the competing perspectives of the power elite and the average citizen models on the EU's future. Secondary data from the 2009 Eurobarometer survey questionnaire were central to testing the hypotheses. Results from the survey analyses were elaborated on with the perspectives of professionals knowledgeable about the European Union and content analyses of journalistic reports of the British Referendum, the EU debt crisis, the immigration crisis, and the rise in terrorism. The professionals who were interviewed provided on-the-ground illustrations of stakeholders who control the political legitimacy and the future of the EU. The sample case studies of current events and regional news addressed the perspectives of the political elite, of the average citizen, or sometimes both.

### Secondary Survey Data

The "Eurobarometer 72.4: Globalization, Financial and Economic Crisis, Social Change and Values, EU Policies and Decision Making, and Global Challenges"<sup>9</sup>, a cross-national and cross-temporal interview questionnaire conducted on behalf of the European Commission was the source of the quantitative data for this paper. These surveys, based on a multistage, national probability sample of citizens from EU member states monitor public opinion in European Union member states. Opinions about the performance of the EU, various EU policies, economic recovery, responses to global threats, and basic demographical data are ascertained. The questionnaire interviews were conducted in English and French between October 23, 2009 and November 18, 2009 with 30,238 citizens in the 27 countries of the European Union<sup>10</sup>.

Because each EU nation and region has its own experiences and historical context, the analyses were disaggregated by major EU regions: Western (40.5%) and Eastern (41.0%) regions were represented more in the EU survey sample than the Mediterranean region (18.5%). The disproportionate regional representation was partly because both Western and Eastern regions are larger in terms of the number of countries it encompasses than the Mediterranean (Appendix A). As for citizen sample demographics, there was a fairly even split between male (46.5%) and female (53.5%) respondents. The sample was also evenly distributed across the six different age groups; the largest group was 55 – 64 years old (26.7%). These background characteristics and demographics amongst other quality of life factors (Corbu, 2013) have been shown to make a difference in how EU citizens thought about the future of the EU. Hence, they will be controlled for in the multivariate analyses.

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<sup>9</sup> Will be referred to as Eurobarometer 72.4 in the remainder of the paper.

<sup>10</sup> The original collector of the data, or ICPSR, or the relevant funding agencies bear no responsibility for use of the data or for the interpretations or inferences based on such uses.

## **Qualitative Methodology**

In keeping with a mixed methods design, the statistical analyses of the Eurobarometer survey were supplemented with content analyses of current events and regional news as well as two qualitative interviews. The two interviewees were professionals, from European Union member nations. Both were female ambassadors and officers, respectively for NATO and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to the EU. They were asked a series of questions via email about their thoughts on how EU citizens' confidence in the future of the EU is impacted by informed citizenry and their economic health. Refer to Appendix B for the consent form and the interview protocol.

Current events analyzed for this research included journalistic reports of major current issues such as the widespread migrant crisis, the British Referendum, the EU Debt Crisis, and the rise in terrorist attacks in Western Europe. These reports not only supplemented the quantitative EU regional differences and interviewee comments, but also updated the 2009 Eurobarometer findings. These current events also had the potential to shape EU citizens' confidence in the EU and its future.

## **DATA ANALYSES**

Three levels of statistical data analysis were used to examine and answer the research. The descriptive analyses, which drew a portrait of the EU sample, aided in setting the context for further explorations into the research question at hand. The preliminary glimpses into the roles of informed citizenry and their economic health in their confidence in the EU's legitimacy and future, offered in the bivariate analyses, were retested using multivariate regression analyses. It was in the multivariate analyses that the net comparative strengths of informed citizens versus their economic health in shaping citizen confidence in the EU were identified. A comparative regional analysis was also conducted and explicated with content analyses of regional current events.

### **Operationalization and Descriptive Analysis**

On balance, most EU respondents trusted the EU, even if they disagreed with certain policies or projects the Union has undertaken. Citizens also had elementary knowledge about the EU but did not know how the organization functions or which nations are members. Lastly, the economic and personal wealth of the EU citizens was in the middle class range; their economic wellbeing was not polarized at either end of the economic spectrum.

## Confidence in the EU

As the EU has been continuously hit with one crisis after another, confidence of their citizens continues to be a concern for the EU administration. Citizen views on both the strengths of the EU and its challenges were measured (Table 1.A.)<sup>11</sup>.

From the citizens' perspectives, the strengths of the EU lay in its positive future directions, its membership status, and overall satisfaction with the EU. Citizen respondents were more likely (58.6%) than not, to trust the EU, its Council (the main EU decision-making body, at 61.0%), and to be optimistic about the future of the EU (71.4%). On balance, EU citizens felt that the EU was fairly strong and successful in its mission; the average score on the EU strength index was 28.64 on a scale of 7.0 to 43.0 (Appendix C, Table 1.A.A.).

However, there was some reticence hesitation in the full-throated endorsement of the EU; the hesitation became clearer when looking at the citizens' opinions on the system's weaknesses (Appendix C, Table 1.A.B.). Some of the prominent complaints were that the EU had grown too rapidly (67.5%) and were short of ideas and projects (at the time of the survey, at 54.5%). As summarized by the cumulative index mean of 5.45 (on an index range from 2.0 – 8.0), EU respondents tended to be somewhat neutral, even slightly negative, when talking about the weaknesses of the EU system.

**Table 1.A. Confidence in the EU  
2009 Eurobarometer 72.4**

Concept	Dimensions	Values	Statistics			
			Total Sample (n = 13797)	Western Europe (n=5819)	Eastern Europe (n=5090)	Mediterranean (n=2374)
Confidence in the EU	EU Strengths	Mean	28.64	27.91	29.0	29.41 <sup>***</sup>
		(SD)	(6.09)	(6.47)	(5.80)	(5.82)
		Min–Max	7.0–43.0	7.0 – 43.0	9.0 – 43.0	10.0 – 43.0
	EU Weaknesses	Mean	5.45	5.58	5.21	5.70 <sup>***</sup>
		(SD)	(1.38)	(1.39)	(1.37)	(1.33)
		Min – Max	2.0 – 8.0	2.0 – 8.0	2.0 – 8.0	2.0 – 8.0
Index of Confidence in the EU <sup>1</sup>		Mean	34.1	33.45	34.21	35.12 <sup>***</sup>
		(SD)	(5.77)	(6.03)	(5.45)	(5.77)
		Min – Max	12.0 – 49.0	12.0 – 48.0	15.0 – 48.0	15.0 – 49.0

<sup>1</sup> Index of Confidence in the EU = Sub-Index of EU Strengths + Sub-Index of EU Weaknesses. Possible range: 12.0-49.0. Correlations among these indicators ranged from .06<sup>\*\*\*</sup> to .49<sup>\*\*\*</sup> at .000 significance level.

Overall, as of 2009, the average EU respondent lay somewhere in the middle, neither too confident nor too insecure in their faith and confidence in the European Union's

<sup>11</sup> A factor analysis of the confidence in the EU questions revealed two dimensions in the confidence index: one set highlighted the strengths of the EU while the second captured the EU's weaknesses. Therefore, the analyses were also split along these two dimensions when appropriate.



future; the overall confidence index mean was 34.1 on a range from 12.0 to 49.0. Interestingly, Mediterranean and Eastern European nation citizens were slightly more confident in the EU than their Western European counterparts.

It is not surprising that the moderate confidence recorded in the 2009 Eurobarometer survey has been further shaken by a number of tragic events that recently hit the EU member nations. Among these unfortunate events is the recent rise in the terrorist attacks, particularly in Western Europe. Britain, France, Turkey, Norway, Belgium, and Germany, have all faced terrorist attacks that have shattered the confidence and faith of citizens across the EU (Peek 2016). The physical damage caused by these horrific events was easy to see, the number of injured and dead was easy to count and to mourn, But, the fears and loss of confidence that many citizens experienced was even more poignant than the physical damages (Hope, Foster, Hughes 2016).

Dozens of journalists also hypothesized that each of these attacks were not about targeting a specific group of people or nation but rather the European Union as a whole (Pearce & Chad 2016), a perspective endorsed by EU leaders. As the European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, following the devastating Brussels airport attack, stated, “these attacks have hit Brussels today, and Paris yesterday, but it is Europe as a whole that has been targeted” (Pearce & Chad 2016). Similar waves of attacks that occurred in France in the year prior to the Brussels bombing, and more recently the lorry truck attacks in Nice and Berlin, to name a few, have brought to the forefront questions about the open borders across Europe and consequent vulnerability of Member States (Peek 2016). Some Eurosceptic European leaders, such as George Eustice, capitalized on these fears of vulnerability to stoke citizens’ distrust in their national governments and the governance of the EU (Hope, et al. 2016). Hope and his colleagues endorsed the rationale offered by Minister Eustice, a pioneer for border controls within the EU, that having stronger borders within the EU would allow national governments to protect their citizens from terrorism. In other words, using the influx of refugees and terrorist attacks in Western Europe to incite panic and fear, the media and political-economic leaders alike stoked distrust in the EU and its legitimate ability to serve and protect its citizens.

No doubt, there is no population in the world that is completely exempt from any sort of major atrocities, no matter how prepared and safe a city or region is. This being said, if the leadership of a particular nation or larger governing body like the EU is not able to meet the needs of its citizens and protect them from these horrific, large-scale acts of violence, then the average citizen will not only dismiss the legitimacy and success of the EU but also have little to no trust in the system. Under these challenging circumstances, citizens are more likely, than not, to vote to change their leaders and the political regime in its entirety (Peek 2016). Although this has yet to occur on a grand scale across the European Union, similar movements and structural changes have been witnessed around the world. A most notable example is the Arab Spring, which occurred less than a decade ago. What began with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a lower-class Tunisian street vendor, quickly spread like wildfire across the Middle East and North Africa resulting in episodes of unrest, disruptive activism, and the eventual

overthrowing of political leaders such as Mubarak [Egypt], Ben Ali [Tunisia], and Qaddafi [Libya] (Alimi & Meyer 2011). Because these authoritarian regimes dismissed and ignored the needs of average citizens and failed to protect all citizens, many decided to successfully fight back.

Added to the terrorist attacks and the ensuing political and economic turmoil, was the migrant or refugee crisis, which shook up the EU regions even more. The growing turmoil and civil unrest in the Middle East, which reached a peak in 2014, led to more than a million migrants, predominantly through Southeast Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, to come into the European Union, in search of a better life (BBC 2016). According to The Telegraph, a British newspaper, as of November 2015, more than 1 million refugees and migrants had illegally arrived in Europe; one in 22 of the migrants were deemed to be refugees by the UN refugee agency (Holehouse & Smith 2016). The count of refugees has been estimated to have grown even more and is believed to have reached record levels in 2017, as per the President of the European Union Council (Williams 2017).

The surge of refugees, along with other economic crises that the Union already faced, created a perfect storm of events that worsened the political turmoil in the continent. The refugee crisis occurred as the EU continent was attempting to recover from the debt and related economic disasters (The Economist 2016). The European Institute (European Affairs) noted that the EU debt crisis has “heightened anti-immigrant feelings” across the EU, amongst average citizens and political elites alike. This has resulted in a series of political crisis, not only about the internal and external EU border controls but also whether or not the EU administration is doing enough to protect its Member States and their EU citizens. Furthermore, political tensions in the EU have been steadily rising due to the disproportionate burden faced by the more economically sturdy member countries which must then care for the less economically stable nations in the Mediterranean and Eastern European regions. Making matters worse is the fact that EU Member States with weaker economies such as Greece, Italy, and Hungary, among other Eastern and Mediterranean EU nations have received the majority of migrants (BBC 2016; European Institute 2017).

Besides, many Western European and some Eastern European political leaders have argued that opening borders to migrants puts the lives of European citizens at risk and destabilizes the EU system in place (Hope et al. 2016). The polarized political sentiments around the migrant crisis created further rifts amongst EU Member States and with the EU because the discussions around the crisis have failed to incorporate all stakeholders involved. The typical complaints were that the EU was taking into consideration only the perspectives of the elites and the more powerful EU Member States, and did not acknowledge and incorporate the voices of the average citizens and nations being affected first hand. The average citizens’ growing concerns and distrust were a consequence of the clashes in voiced perspectives, or a lack there of, between the political elite and the average citizen.

The upcoming decades certainly promise to be pivotal to the future of the European Union and its political legitimacy. With the French elections coming up this spring, Eurosceptic Marine Le Pen looks to take power, return the French franc and hold a French referendum on EU membership (McDonald-Gibson 2017). Meanwhile, the British Prime Minister has formally begun the process of leaving the EU. In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders, a radical populist who was also calling for a vote to leave the EU and the “de-Islamization” of the Netherlands failed to win the elections but still managed to gain some seats (Deacon 2016; McDonald-Gibson 2017). Germany gears up for election in the fall and Italy in early 2018, both of whom have political parties calling for referendums on their respective country’s EU membership (The Economist 2017). As McDonald-Gibson (2017) stated in a recent Time article, “While populists [like Wilders and Le Pen] are creating new visions for the future, traditional European powers are scrambling to uphold the lofty ideals of the past. If they can’t find a way to fit in with the new world order [and re-instill confidence in its citizens], they might not have much of a future at all.”

### Informed Citizenry

One mechanism to improve citizens’ confidence in the European Union and their views on EU political legitimacy is through improving their knowledge and understanding of the EU structures, its history, and its policies. The concept of Informed Citizenry (Table 1.B) and its component indicators offered a generalized view of how educated citizens were about the European Union. Citizens’ breadth of knowledge and understanding of the EU and the EU administration was represented by both general knowledge of and understanding about its purpose as well as EU policies<sup>12</sup>.

On the face of it, citizens’ general knowledge of the EU remained fairly elementary; they knew little about the general purpose of EU organization, its history and functioning (Appendix D, Table 1.B.A.). More than half the EU respondents had difficulty answering a set of three true or false questions correctly (got question one wrong: 55.6%, got question two wrong: 18.1%, got question three wrong 56.1% respectively). With a cumulative mean of 3.71 on a knowledge index range of 0.0 – 6.0, it was evident that while citizens generally knew what the EU and its council was, they did not have general working knowledge of the EU processes and its history. This lack of clear understanding of the structure, history, and policies of the EU makes it difficult for citizens to offer evidence based judgements of whether the EU is fulfilling its role and to endorse the organization or not. Yet, EU citizens were quite positive about the effectiveness of EU policies enacted to combat the widespread economic crisis at the time of the survey (Appendix D, Table 1.B.B.). More than half the respondents viewed the EU policy efforts extremely positively and successful (range of 78% to 82.6%). That EU respondents were not very knowledgeable about EU policies but quite content with

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<sup>12</sup> Factor analysis of the informed citizenry questions revealed two main dimensions in the informed citizenry index: one set highlighted general EU knowledge of history and purpose while the second emphasized citizens’ knowledge of EU policies. Therefore, these analyses were also split along these two dimensions when appropriate.

the success of EU policies was recapped in the cumulative index of policy knowledge mean of 12.12 on an index that ranged from 4.0 – 16.0.

Overall, the average EU citizen was fairly informed with reasonable knowledge of the EU and its purpose (cumulative index of Informed Citizenry mean was 15.83 on a scale from 5.0 to 22.0). Interestingly, EU citizens from the Mediterranean nations were more knowledgeable about the EU and its history and policies in contrast to Western European citizens who had the least amount of knowledge. The vast majority of average citizens felt that they knew the role of the EU but had little to no understanding of how it works and the types of policies and work the Union actually does. To quote an International Staff Executive Officer for NATO (Interviewee #1), “the average informed citizen still understands very little of what is going on due to the vastness and complexity of the various institutes. They may have some idea of purpose but not much on policies.” In lacking even, the most basic knowledge of the EU and how it works, the average citizen is unable to recognize the ways in which the EU is succeeding or failing at addressing their specific needs and therefore will likely deem the EU to be slightly less legitimate and untrustworthy.

**Table 1.B. Informed Citizenry  
2009 Eurobarometer 72.4**

Concept	Dimensions	Values	Statistics			
			Total Sample	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Mediterranean
Informed Citizenry	Index of General EU Knowledge	Mean	3.70	3.72	3.72	3.58 <sup>***</sup>
		(SD)	(1.28)	(1.30)	(1.23)	(1.29)
	Min – Max (n)	0.0 – 6.0 (9176)	0.0 – 6.0 (4262)	0.0 – 6.0 (3251)	0.0 – 6.0 (1319)	
Policy Knowledge	Index of Policy Knowledge	Mean	12.12	11.78	12.15	12.93 <sup>***</sup>
		(SD)	(2.47)	(2.51)	(2.40)	(2.32)
	Min – Max (n)	4.0 – 16.0 (13015)	4.0 – 16.0 (5494)	4.0 – 16.0 (4769)	4.0 – 16.0 (2271)	
Informed Citizenry <sup>1</sup>	Index of Informed Citizenry <sup>1</sup>	Mean	15.83	15.57	15.83	16.63 <sup>***</sup>
		(SD)	(2.96)	(3.01)	(2.90)	(2.82)
	Min – Max (n)	5.0 – 22.0 (8832)	5.0 – 22.0 (4088)	5.0 – 22.0 (3121)	6.0 – 22.0 (1290)	

<sup>1</sup> Index of Informed Citizenry = Sub-Index of General EU Knowledge + Sub-Index of Policy Knowledge. Possible range: 5.0–22.0. Correlations among these indicators ranged from .03<sup>\*\*\*</sup> to .65<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and significant at .000 level.

The British Referendum (Brexit) in June of 2013 was a perfect example of what can occur when citizens' had poor understanding of the European Union and what EU membership entails. The Brexit vote, which had a 71.8% turnout, recorded that 51.9% of citizens voted to leave the EU versus 48.1% voting to stay in the EU (Hunt & Wheeler 2017), left many elites in disbelief. Despite pro-EU urgings from the leaders of the largest British political parties, the then Prime Minister David Cameron, major business leaders, trade unions, esteemed scientists and economists, and more, about 17.4

million British citizens voted to leave the EU (Chu 2016; Hunt & Wheeler 2017). The question is why?

In the months following Brexit, much has been written in the journalistic and scholarly circles about not only the repercussions of this decision on the average citizen and the economic well-being of the United Kingdom, but more importantly that the voters were largely uninformed and voted blindly to leave the European Union. British voters were quite unaware of even the most elementary political facts and history. Such lack of awareness became especially clear when the Google Trends Twitter account reported that in the hours after the poll closed, there was a 250 percent increase in people searching “what happens if we leave the EU” and “what is Brexit” (Walton 2016). In a survey of 1,000 people completed by Ipsos MORI, a market research company in the UK and Ireland, it was also concluded that British citizens’ perceptions of the British government and of the EU was way off from the actual facts and figures (Peck 2016). In Peck’s analyses, approximately 15% of British citizens, one in seven, were reported to believe in at least one Euro-myth, an exaggerated or invented story about nonsensical EU legislation or EU bodies (also, Wikipedia 2016). These inaccuracies and misunderstandings of the political systems in place and lack of awareness of the potential policy changes resulted in a major change not only for the UK but also for the entire European Union (Friedman 2016).

Some journalists placed the onus for the high levels of public ignorance on the media and the British politicians. On the other hand, others have posited that the Brexit vote goes beyond a simple lack of knowledge and actually has to do with the cultural, economic, and political divides in the country. Ben Chu (2016), The Independent’s Economics Editor and its previous chief lead writer, argued that “the crude majoritarian politics of this referendum has seen half of the population, a generally poorer, less well-educated and elderly half, effectively strip major freedoms and even a cherished identity from the other half, a more prosperous and predominantly younger half.” In either event, the average citizens, who barely had a rudimentary sense of the pros and cons of Brexit, voted to leave the UK (Friedman 2016). Ironically, the average poorly informed Brexit voter voted against his or her own economic interests; they were also the economically marginalized in the country (Economic Health). Brexit is the ultimate proof of the political and economic turmoil that an uninformed voting citizenry can unleash and perhaps explain why (in Table 1B), Western European respondents were slightly less informed than their Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean counterparts.

### Economic Elites and Their Wellbeing

While it has been argued that an average citizen has the ability to shape the perceived legitimacy and success of the EU, it is important to also recognize the power that the elites have in controlling the dominant view of the EU.

Economic Elites, and their economic standing, was examined by the economic success and wellbeing of EU citizens at two levels: (1) the individual level (Appendix E, Table

1.C.A.) and (2) the national level (Appendix E, Table 1.C.B.)<sup>13</sup>. Citizens from Western European nations were much better in personal and national economic health than their Eastern and Mediterranean counterparts. Western European citizens had a better quality of life and economic well-being, reflected in the economic index mean of 42.93 on a scale of 19.0 – 60.0. EU citizens from Eastern European and Mediterranean nations had about the same level of personal economic wealth but differed when it came to their nation's economic health; Eastern European citizens had a slightly higher national index mean (19.41) than their Mediterranean counterparts (18.76).

On a personal economic health level, the majority of the EU participants rated themselves as a part of the middle class of society, Boxes 4 – 7 on a scale of 1 to 10 (77.3%). From the citizens' perspective, their personal economic health lay in their economic standing within society as well as their satisfaction with their personal economic and financial situations. Citizen respondents were quite positive when asked about their lives; three quarters of citizens felt fairly, if not very satisfied with their lives (73.4%), and just over half judged their personal job (62.4%) and financial situations (60.9%) as good or very good. All things considered, while EU citizens' personal economic and financial health was neither good nor bad, they were comfortable with their economic status (personal health index mean was 21.5 on a scale of 7.0 – 34.0).

**Table 1.C. Economic Elites and Their Health  
2009 Eurobarometer 72.4**

Concepts	Dimensions	Values	Statistics			
			Total Sample	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Mediterranean
Economic Elites and Their Health	Personal Economic Health	Mean	21.5	22.66	20.54	20.88 <sup>***</sup>
		(SD)	(4.42)	(4.25)	(4.53)	(4.06)
		Min – Max	7.0 – 34.0	7.0 – 34.0	7.0 – 34.0	7.0 – 33.0
		(n)	(10756)	(4631)	(3851)	(1856)
	National Economic Health	Mean	19.54	20.05	19.41	18.76 <sup>***</sup>
		(SD)	(3.58)	(3.60)	(3.43)	(3.57)
Min – Max		9.0 – 30.0	9.0 – 30.0	9.0 – 30.0	9.0 – 28.0	
	(n)	(10971)	(4715)	(4008)	(1863)	
Index of Economic Health <sup>1</sup>	Mean	41.18	42.93	40.06	39.42 <sup>***</sup>	
	(SD)	(6.39)	(6.18)	(6.35)	(6.0)	
	Min – Max	17.0 – 60.0	19.0 – 60.0	18.0 – 60.0	17.0 – 57.0	
	(n)	(8788)	(3866)	(3125)	(1480)	

<sup>1</sup> Index of Economic Health = Sub-Index of Personal Economic Health + Sub-Index of National Economic Health. Possible range: 17.0 – 60.0. Correlations among these indicators ranged from .05<sup>\*\*\*</sup> to .07<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and significant at .000 level.

Although the EU Debt Crisis was only just beginning at the time of the survey, it is evident that the economic state at the national level was also important to EU citizens.

<sup>13</sup> Factor analysis of the economic health questions revealed two main dimensions in index economic health: one set reflected the personal economic and financial well-being of EU citizens while the second highlighted the national economic well-being and health EU member states. Therefore, the analyses were also split along these two dimensions when appropriate.

There was concern and negative sentiments from EU citizens when discussing the current state of their national and EU economies (Appendix E, Table 1.C.B.). The dominant view was that the national economy was doing rather badly or very badly (75%), as was their assessment of the European economy in general (63.6%). This being said, approximately half or more than half of EU citizens felt that the European economy was performing better or much better than other leading world economies such as the Chinese, the American, the Russian, and the Indian. As summarized by the cumulative mean of 19.54 on the index of national health which ranged from of 9.0 to 30.0, EU citizens tended to deem the health of the national and European economies as decent enough to get by, neither good nor bad.

Much has been written in the journalistic circles that the economic problems facing the European Union today go back to the global financial meltdown and euro-zone crisis of 2009 (Featherstone 2012; Mason 2016; Mcdonald-Gibson 2017). The EU Debt Crisis largely began taking its toll on nations across Europe in the final months of 2009, exposing not only the economic rifts between the rich Northern and Western European nations and the poorer South but also the “stagnant growth, high unemployment and public anger in member states of, say, Italy, Greece, and Spain,” nations of the Mediterranean EU region (Mcdonald-Gibson 2017). Despite the stabilization of the euro zone, the growth rates are still incredibly low for citizens in the Mediterranean and Eastern European regions (The Economist 2017). Moreover, unemployment rates continue to remain high and the European Central Bank (ECB) has become overwhelmed by the number of loans they have had to give out to nations across all of Europe (The Economist 2017).

Lord Howard, the former Tory leader, said: “The European Union, in its current form, is a flawed and failing project which is making many of its inhabitants poorer than they should or need be and is failing to keep its people safe. The first is a consequence of the euro, which has an exchange rate far too high for the crippled economies of southern Europe, though, because it is lower than the deutschmark would have been, helps to make Germany’s exports competitive. The second is a consequence of the Schengen agreement which, according to the former Head of Interpol ‘is like hanging a sign welcoming terrorists to Europe’” (Hope et al. 2016). Despite years of attempted austerity and severe economic reforms, many nations are still drowning in debts larger than that their economic output (Mason 2016; Kirk 2017). While the Western EU nations continued to flourish, many Mediterranean and Eastern EU nations floundered, causing even greater division between the elitist and the average nations (Mason 2016).

### Summary

Several conclusions are worth noting in the descriptive portrayal of EU citizens outlined above. (1) Most EU citizens positively viewed and trusted the European Union and its political legitimacy. Eastern and Mediterranean citizens were slightly more confident in the EU than their Western counterparts. (2) Although respondents did not understand either how the EU functions or what nations make up the member states, many were

able to identify some of the EU's policies and their effectiveness. In this regard too, EU citizens' from the Mediterranean had slightly more knowledgeable than their Western and Eastern counterparts. (3) As for their economic wellbeing, a majority of EU respondents were satisfied with their personal financial wellbeing, despite the stagnation in, or even worsening of their nation's economic situation. Yet, citizens felt that the national and European economies were doing well in comparison to other nations and regions of the world.

### Bivariate Analyses

To test for preliminary empirical relationships of Informed Citizenry and Their Economic Health with citizens' confidence in the future of the European Union, bivariate analyses were conducted. The preliminary correlations (Table 2 in Appendix F) indicated multiple strands in the potential strengths of informed citizenry and their economic health in shaping the future of the EU.

As might be expected, the more informed the citizens were and the better their economic health, the more confidence they had in the EU. However, EU citizens were much more likely to trust the EU ( $r = .53^{***}$ ) when they were informed than when they were satisfied with their economic wellbeing was healthy ( $r = .34^{***}$ ).

While not as strong as the knowledgeable citizenry and their economic health correlations, demographic factors were also related to EU confidence. Females ( $r = -.04^*$ ) and older EU citizens ( $-.07^{**}$ ) were slightly less confident than their male and younger counterparts respectively. Citizens from Mediterranean EU nations ( $r = .08^{**}$ ) had a bit more confidence in the EU and in its EU's future than their Western European counterparts ( $r = -.09^{***}$ ). Mediterranean nation citizens were also faintly more informed and knowledgeable about the EU than citizens from Western European nations (Mediterranean:  $r = .11^{***}$ ; Western:  $r = -.08^{**}$ ). On the other hand, the economic health of Western EU nations and their citizens ( $r = .24^{***}$ ) was twice as strong and healthy than their Eastern ( $r = -.13^{***}$ ) and Mediterranean ( $r = -.12^{***}$ ) counterparts. The robustness of the comparative net (of sex, age, and EU regions) influences of informed citizenry and their economic health on their confidence in the EU will be tested in the multivariate analyses presented in the subsequent section.

### Multivariate Regression Analyses

In the final analytical step, multivariate regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses about the net effects of Informed Citizenry and Their Economic Health on Confidence in the EU; sex, age, and EU regions were controlled. The analyses were also disaggregated by the three EU regions: Western, Eastern, and Mediterranean.



**Table 3. Regression Analyses of the Net Relative Impacts of Informed Citizenry and Economic Health on Confidence in the European Union; Beta ( $\beta$ ) Coefficients, 2009 Eurobarometer 72.4**

	<u>Confidence in the EU<sup>1</sup></u>		<u>Confidence in the EU<sup>1</sup></u>			
	Beta ( $\beta$ )		EU Strengths <sup>2</sup>		EU Weaknesses <sup>3</sup>	
<b>Informed Citizenry<sup>4</sup></b>	.45 <sup>***</sup>		.45 <sup>***</sup>		-.11 <sup>***</sup>	
<i>General EU Knowledge<sup>5</sup></i>	.24 <sup>***</sup>		.26 <sup>***</sup>		-.12 <sup>**</sup>	
<i>Policy Knowledge<sup>6</sup></i>	.34 <sup>***</sup>		.34 <sup>***</sup>		-.05 <sup>**</sup>	
<b>Economic Elites &amp; Health<sup>7</sup></b>	.25 <sup>***</sup>		.28 <sup>***</sup>		-.19 <sup>***</sup>	
<i>Personal Economic Health<sup>8</sup></i>	.17 <sup>***</sup>		.19 <sup>***</sup>		-.11 <sup>***</sup>	
<i>National Economic Health<sup>9</sup></i>	.14 <sup>***</sup>		.16 <sup>***</sup>		-.12 <sup>***</sup>	
Age <sup>10</sup>	-.03 <sup>*</sup>		-.03 <sup>*</sup>		.02 <sup>*</sup> .03 <sup>*</sup>	
Sex <sup>11</sup>	.00		.00		.00 -0.00	
Western Europe <sup>12</sup>	-.23 <sup>***</sup>		-.22 <sup>***</sup> -.21 <sup>***</sup>		-.03 <sup>*</sup> -.04 <sup>*</sup>	
Eastern Europe <sup>12</sup>	-.15 <sup>***</sup>		-.11 <sup>***</sup> -.10 <sup>***</sup>		-.15 <sup>***</sup> -.16 <sup>***</sup>	
<b>Model Statistics:</b>						
Constant	13.98	14.18	5.92	6.16	8.06	8.02
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.33 <sup>***</sup>	.33 <sup>***</sup>	.35 <sup>***</sup>	.36 <sup>***</sup>	.08 <sup>***</sup>	.09 <sup>***</sup>
DF 1 & 2	7 & 6275	9 & 6273	7 & 6275	9 & 6273	7 & 6275	9 & 6273

<sup>1</sup> Index of Confidence in the EU = Sub-Index of EU Strengths + Sub-Index of EU Weaknesses; range = 12.0 (low confidence) – 49.0 (high confidence).

<sup>2</sup> Sub-Index of EU Strengths: Range of 7.0 (fairly weak/not strong) – 43.0 (very strong/very confident). See Appendix C Table 1.A.A for index components.

<sup>3</sup> Sub-Index of EU Weaknesses: Range: 2.0 (not weak) – 8.0 (very weak/poor confidence). See Appendix C. Table 1.A.B for index components.

<sup>4</sup> Index of Informed Citizenry = Sub-Index of General EU Knowledge + Sub-Index of Policy Knowledge; range = 5.0 (no knowledge, uninformed) – 22.0 (knowledgeable, well informed).

<sup>5</sup> Sub-Index of General EU Knowledge: Range of 0.0 (no EU knowledge) – 6.0 (solid EU knowledge). See Appendix D. Table 1.B.A for index components.

<sup>6</sup> Sub-Index of Policy Knowledge: Range of 4.0 (little/poor policy knowledge)–16. (good/strong policy knowledge). See Appendix D. Table 1.B.B for index components.

<sup>7</sup> Index of Economic Elites, their Health: Sub-index of Personal Economic Health + Sub-Index of National Economic Health; Range of 17 (low/poor economic health)–60 (good/strong health).

<sup>8</sup> Sub-Index of Personal Economic Health: Range = 7 (poor personal economic health)–34 (strong personal economic health). See Appendix D. Table 1.C.A for index components.

<sup>9</sup> Sub-Index of National Economic Health: Range of 9.0 (poor national economic health)–30.0 (strong personal economic health). See Appendix D. Table 1.C.B for index components.

<sup>10</sup> Age: 1 = 15 – 24yrs, 2 = 25 – 34yrs, 3 = 35 – 44yrs, 4 = 45 – 54yrs, 5 = 55 – 64yrs, 6 = 65yrs and older

<sup>11</sup> Sex: 0 = Male, 1 = Female; <sup>12</sup> EU Regions: reference group is the other two regions.

\*\*\* <=p .001; \*p<=.05.

As was predicted from a Systemic Coupling framework, the more knowledgeable the average citizens were about the EU, its history and policies, the more confident and trusting they were of the EU (Beta = .45<sup>\*\*\*</sup>). While economic health also improved citizens' confidence in the EU, its impact was substantially smaller than how informed citizens were, by approximately two times (Beta = .25<sup>\*\*\*</sup>). Additionally, citizens from Western Europe were least confident in the European Union (Beta = -.23<sup>\*\*\*</sup>), followed by Eastern Europe (-.15<sup>\*\*\*</sup>); ergo, of the three regions, Mediterranean citizens were the most confident. Male and female EU citizens did not differ in their confidence. Even though older respondents (Beta = -.03<sup>\*\*</sup>) trusted the EU and its institutions less than their younger counterparts, the difference was minor.

The robustness of how knowledgeable citizens and economic elites shaped confidence in the EU was also verified in that these patterns did not differ across the three EU regions. Besides, irrespective of whether citizens' knowledge or economic wellbeing were disaggregated by their constituent dimensions, informed citizens overall had a greater positive impact on shaping the future of the European Union and its political legitimacy, more than the economic elites and their health.

While all members of the uneven economic and political EU felt the impacts of the debt crisis, it was those who were hit the hardest that truly viewed the EU negatively because they were yet to reap any benefits from the institution (Interviewee #2). Because of this, the middle and lower classes of the EU, the average citizen, have less EU confidence than their elitist counterparts. The economic elites of society, although were also hit, did not experience as much hardship or lose as much of their property and lifestyles as the average citizen because they already began with a greater amount of resources and privilege, and were only slightly negatively impacted by the crisis.

In a press conference last year, the former president of Poland, Donald Tusk stated, "All too often today, the European elites seem to be detached from reality" (Deacon 2016). He felt that their lack of interest in the well-being of all citizens of the European Union, had the power to not only change the EU agenda and to overlook the needs of the average citizen but also was one of the root causes of major events such as the British Referendum (Deacon 2016).

### **CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: Empirical and Applied**

Previous research had shown that both informed citizenry and citizens personal and national economic health had huge, but separate, impacts on citizens' confidence in the European Union and its legitimacy. There were however, no comparisons, to date, of the respective roles political elites and the average citizen played in shaping thinking about EU political legitimacy.

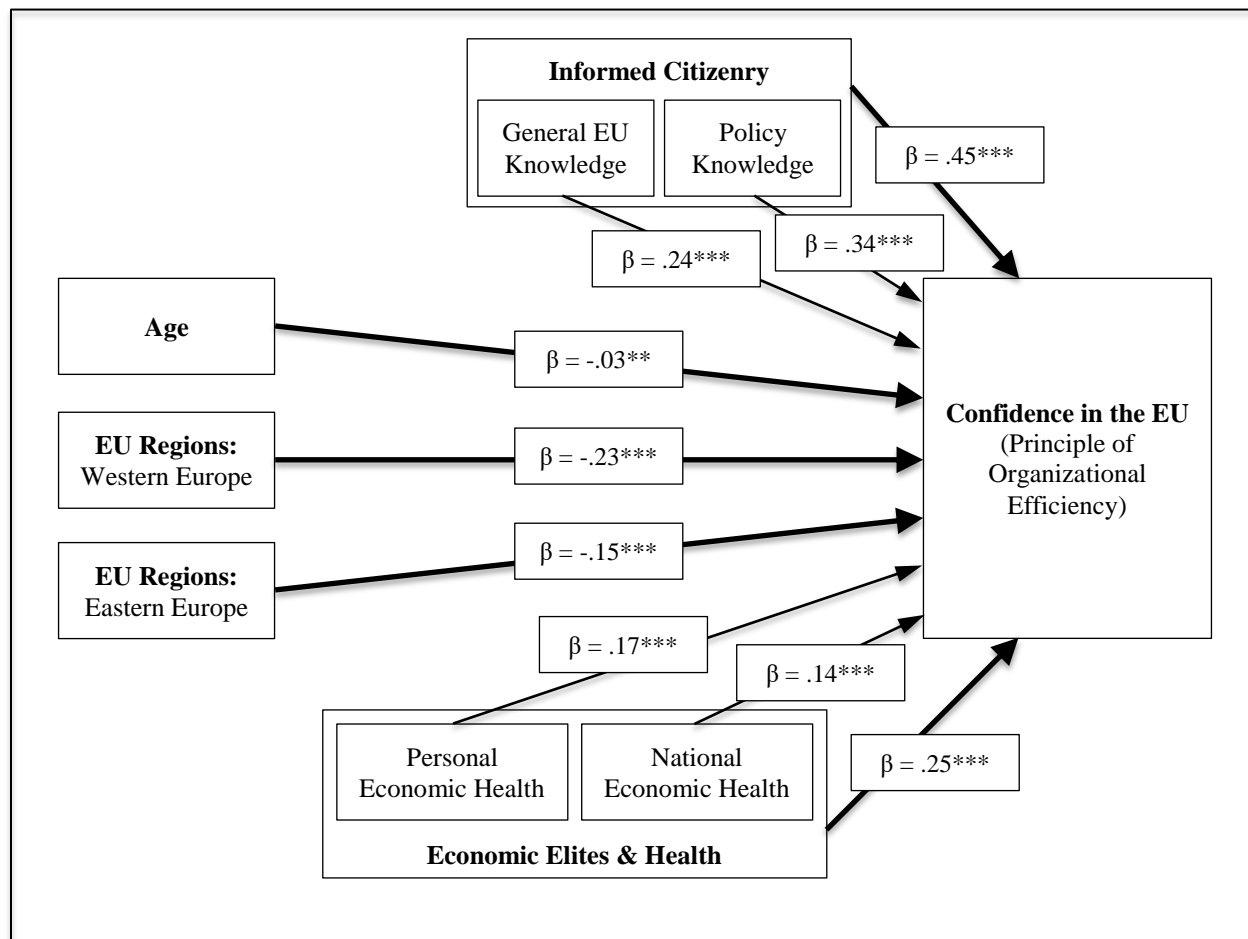
Important insights were gained about the strong role that informed citizens played in EU political legitimacy. While economic elites were important for politically legitimating the EU, their influence was not as important as that of the average citizen. The more knowledgeable and educated citizens were, the more likely they were to deem the EU as a legitimate political organization. Informed citizens are able to better understand whether or not their needs as average citizens are being met and well taken into account by their leaders; if they are not, they are able to more easily demand changes to be made. As for elites, the more economically healthy they were, the more they trusted the EU. Perhaps, unlike the average citizen who does not benefit as much from the system economically, politically, or socially, the elites control and benefit the most from the system and are more likely to be confident in the EU. The roles of informed citizenry versus elites were similar across the EU regions, even though Eastern European and the Mediterranean citizens both shared a slightly greater amount of trust in the EU than their Western EU counterparts.

These findings can inform the EU administration's attempts to develop new policies and reforms to garner more public support and trust. For example, providing more transparent and easily accessible information to the public, about their meetings, their policies and their reforms, allows citizens to be more informed about the EU and how it benefits them and their home nation. As Donald Tusk, the former president of Poland stated, "We must help people to restore faith in the fact that the EU should serve them, guarantee their protection and share their emotions" (Deacon 2016). By allowing the average citizen's voice to be heard and listening to and acknowledging their needs, the EU can better address the needs of all its citizens and its Member States as opposed to simply taking care of the political, economic, and social elites of the Union. Although the elites will be major players in the EU and political and economic reforms, it is evident that the average citizen yields much more power than the economic and political elites when it comes to the legitimacy and the future of the EU.

### **Theoretical Implications**

While there was support for both theoretical predictions, the set of Systemic Coupling and Form Follows Function concepts had more support for understanding EU citizens' confidence in the EU than the theory of power elites. On the one hand, when citizens lacked knowledge and awareness of the EU's purpose, the system and its citizens became not only weakly coupled but the EU also failed to achieve its main purposes of peace, stability and prosperity for its citizens. On the other, when there was sustained shared awareness and knowledge between the EU and EU citizens, the system became moderately coupled with citizens. In short, when citizens were fairly informed, the EU was able to garner citizens' trust by maintaining a degree of mission focus and a moderately coupled system.

**Figure 1**  
**Empirical Model of the Comparative Effects of Informed Citizenry and Economic Elites on Confidence in the European Union**<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>  
**2009 Eurobarometer 72.4**



<sup>1</sup> Refer to Table 3 for index coding;

<sup>2</sup> In the interest of clarity, the difference in sex ( $\beta = .00$ ) was not presented.

<sup>3</sup> The differences in the effects of sub-indices of Confidence in the EU were minimal. If interested, please contact the researcher.

Class-consciousness of power elites also shaped confidence in the EU but was not as influential as hypothesized by the Power Elite model. It is true that the more satisfied and economically healthy citizens were with their lives, the more confident they were in the EU and its institutions; yet the elites were not as impactful in influencing overall confidence in the EU as the average citizen. To quote the Maritime Affairs Attaché to the EU for the Republic of Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Interviewee #2), “following the economic downturn experienced across the EU in recent years, those who were hardest hit and those who have yet to feel any benefits from what was already a very uneven economic system, were more likely to view the EU negatively.” In other words, the middle and lower classes of the EU, the average citizen, unsurprisingly had the least amount of confidence in the EU. The lack of confidence

might be because of the economic and social support provided to them by the EU and/or their national institutions. The political and economic elite, while also hit, did not experience as much hardship as the average citizen. The elites, who had access to resources and privilege, felt that they were benefitting from the EU and therefore deemed the EU to be more trustworthy and legitimate.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for the Futures**

Like most studies, this research was not free of limitations. While valuable insights into the dominant role of the average citizen in shaping confidence in the European Union were gained, many unresolved questions still remain. For example, the research only captured only 36 percent of variability in EU citizens' confidence in the EU (Adjusted  $R^2 = .36^{***}$ ). This leaves much about citizens' EU confidence unexplained and opens up possibilities for future research.

From the multivariate analyses, it was clear that by and large, the more informed and knowledgeable citizens' were the more they tended to trust the European Union and the EU administration in a broad sense. But, as the NATO Executive Officer (Interviewee # 1) explained, the European Union is vast and complex in its structural make up of many smaller committees and institutions. Citizens and elite confidence will likely vary from institution to institution within the EU. For example, future research should focus on specific EU institutions such as the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU). Targeted attention to specific issues, such as human rights, trade, IT security or external relations, is also warranted.

Another fruitful research investigation is exploring regional differences in citizens' confidence in the EU and its political legitimacy. In the words of the Maritime Affairs Attaché to the EU (Interviewee #2), "While there is a general sense that citizens of many EU Member States are increasingly skeptical of the benefits of EU membership, it is important to recognize that EU citizens are not a homogenized group." In other words, more granular country specific analyses are needed. Each EU Member State has a different culture, context, history, demographics, and experiences. In Greece for example, one of the hardest hit nations by economic and immigration crises, reforms will likely be received differently than say in Belgium, the headquarters of the European Union (located in downtown Brussels), who was recently faced with horrific acts of terrorism. Western European nations have also experienced a surprising rise in terrorism and issues of xenophobia and Islamophobia. By recognizing and acknowledging these contextual differences, one can more accurately evaluate citizen and elite opinions on the legitimacy and success of the Union.

Additional research that delves into how the media, social media in particular, shape citizens' knowledge would provide more elaboration on citizens' trust in the EU and EU's political legitimacy. The way the EU administration communicates their policies and reforms could highlight not only the ways in which the EU succeeds or fails at maintaining transparent and easy to understand communication with their citizens but

also how it is perceived and influences the average citizen. Both interviewees spoke to the roles that the media played in many EU crises. The Maritime Affairs Attaché to the EU (Interviewee #2) noted the press highlighting the case of the British EU referendum as a product of the voices of the average citizen not being heard. Media also provided little information to help citizens understand the EU and the referendum in order to be more informed voters. The Maritime Affairs EU Attaché went on to further explain the nuanced role of the media and communication thusly:

“EU institutions are failing to communicate with their citizenry. The EU has had and continues to have an important role in the designation of social and human rights – on working conditions, social protection, poverty – yet since the economic downturn, the language of its communications has been too economically focused and it is failing to engage the media and hence its citizenry on these issues. It is too easy then for it be portrayed as has been the case a heartless bureaucracy whose primary concern is serving the interests of the market-it urgently needs to find” (Interviewee #2).

Finally, a methodological suggestion would be to update the quantitative analyses of the kind presented here with more recent and cross-temporal examination. Much has occurred since the data for the 2009 Eurobarometer 72.4 were collected; there has been a rise in terror attacks, the debt crisis, various reform policies, and conflict, to name a few. The world is quite different from the one captured by the Eurobarometer seven years ago. A cross-temporal analysis could identify changes in the ways the average citizens and elites shape the political legitimacy of the EU.

## APPENDICES

**Appendix A**  
**Table 1.D. Controls**  
**2009 Eurobarometer 72.4**

Concepts	Dimensions	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Socio-demographics	EU Regions	Q1A What is your nationality? (n=27654)	1 = Western Europe 2 = Eastern Europe 3 = Mediterranean	40.5% 41.0 18.5
	Demographics	D10 Sex/Gender (n=30238)	1 = Female <sup>1</sup>	53.5
		D11 How old are you? (n=30238)	1 = 15 – 24 years 2 = 25 – 34 years 3 = 35 – 44 years 4 = 45 – 54 years 5 = 55 – 64 years 6 = 65 years and older	12.6% 15.7 16.8 17.0 26.7 21.2

<sup>1</sup> QD10 (dummy interval): the omitted category Male is coded = 0.

**Appendix B**  
**Consent Form and Interview Protocol**  
*Consent Form*

Dear interviewee,

I am a Sociology Senior working on my Research Capstone Paper under the direction of Professor Marilyn Fernandez in the Department of Sociology at Santa Clara University. I am conducting my research European Union citizens' confidence in the European Union.

You were selected for this interview, because of your knowledge of and experience working in the area of European politics.

I am requesting your participation, which will involve responding to a series of open-ended questions about citizen's confidence in political institutions, more specifically the EU institutions, and what factors may impact this. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can answer as many of the questions as you have time permits. The results of the research study may be presented at SCU's Annual Anthropology/Sociology Undergraduate Research Conference and published (in a Sociology department publication). Pseudonyms will be used in lieu of your name and most likely the name of your organization in the written paper. You will also not be asked (nor recorded) questions about your specific characteristics, such as age, race, sex, religion.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call/email me at +1 (408) 981-2572 or [jfrydenberg@scu.edu](mailto:jfrydenberg@scu.edu) or Dr. Fernandez at +1 (408) 554-4432 or [mfernandez@scu.edu](mailto:mfernandez@scu.edu)

Sincerely,  
Jessy Frydenberg

By signing below you are giving consent to participate in the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature	Printed Name	Date
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If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, through Office of Research Compliance and Integrity at (408) 554-5591.

*Interview Schedule*

Interview Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the TYPE of Organization where you learned about (and/or worked) citizens' confidence in the EU and larger political institution?
2. What is your position in this organization (formal title)?
3. How long have you been in this position and in this organization?
4. In your professional judgment, how confident are EU citizens of the EU?
5. What are some factors that influence an individual's confidence and trust in the EU and in political institutions at large?
  - a. How about an Informed Citizenry, ie how much knowledge and understanding a citizen has of the EU, its purpose and its policies?
  - b. How about their Quality of Life, ie an individual's daily life on the ground, their lifestyle, job situation, financial situation, etc.?

6. Is there anything else about the confidence and trust of EU citizens in the EU that I should know more about?

Thank you very much for your time. If you wish to see a copy of my final paper, I would be glad to share it with you at the end of the winter quarter. If you have any further questions or comments for me, I can be contacted at [jfrydenberg@scu.edu](mailto:jfrydenberg@scu.edu). Or if you wish to speak to my faculty advisor, Dr. Marilyn Fernandez, she can be reached at [mfernandez@scu.edu](mailto:mfernandez@scu.edu).

**Appendix C**  
**Component Indices of Confidence in the EU**  
**Table 1.A.A EU Strengths (n = 13797)**  
**Eurobarometer 72.4, 2009**

Concept	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics	
Index of EU Strengths	QA7A	Generally speaking, do you think that (YOUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the EU is a good or bad thing?	3 = A good thing 2 = Neither nor 1 = A bad thing	55.2% 30.3 14.5
	QA9A	At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right or wrong direction in the EU?	3 = Right direction 2 = Neither nor 1 = Wrong direction	47.8% 23.4 28.8
	QA10	Do you tend to trust or not trust the European Union?	1 = Tend to trust <sup>1</sup>	58.6%
	QA11	In general, does the EU conjure up for you a positive or negative image?	5 = Very positive 4 = Fairly positive 3 = Neutral 2 = Fairly negative 1 = Very negative	8.1% 39.6 36.6 12.1 3.6
	QA12	What does the EU mean to you personally? <i>Positive Meanings:</i>		
		...Peace	1 = Mentioned <sup>2</sup>	28% (8456)
		...Economic prosperity	1 = Mentioned	21.2% (6411)
		...Democracy	1 = Mentioned	24.2% (7307)
		...Social protection	1 = Mentioned	13% (3929)
		...Freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU	1 = Mentioned	49.8% (15057)
		...Cultural diversity	1 = Mentioned	20.4% (6159)
		...Stronger say in the world	1 = Mentioned	24.3% (7335)
	...Euro	1 = Mentioned	35.3% (10659)	
QA12	What does the EU mean to you personally? <i>Negative Meanings:</i>			
	...Unemployment	1 = Not Mentioned <sup>3</sup>	85.7% (25913)	
	...Bureaucracy	1 = Not Mentioned	81.7% (24716)	
	...Waste of money	1 = Not Mentioned	82.0% (24790)	
	...Loss of our cultural identity	1 = Not Mentioned	88.5% (26753)	
	...More crime	1 = Not Mentioned	83.9% (25377)	
	...Not enough control at external borders	1 = Not Mentioned	85.8% (25954)	



QA14	Do you tend to trust or not trust the Council of the EU?	1 = Tend to trust	61.0%
QA18B	On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU?	4 = Very satisfied	7.7%
		3 = Fairly satisfied	54.3
		2 = Not very satisfied	30.3
		1 = Not at all satisfied	7.8
QA20	Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: What brings the citizens of the different countries together is more important than what separates them.	4 = Totally agree	32.5%
		3 = Tend to agree	51.6
		2 = Tend to disagree	13.2
		1 = Totally disagree	2.7
QA20	Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The EU is indispensable in meeting global challenges.	4 = Totally agree	32.2%
		3 = Tend to agree	46.0
		2 = Tend to disagree	16.3
		1 = Totally disagree	5.5
QA25	Would you say that you are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU?	4 = Very optimistic	9.6%
		3 = Fairly optimistic	61.8
		2 = Fairly pessimistic	23.7
		1 = Very pessimistic	5.0
Sub-Index of EU Strengths <sup>4</sup>		Mean (sd)	28.64 (6.09)
		Min – Max	7.0 – 43.0

<sup>1</sup> QA10 and QA14 (dummy interval): the omitted category Tend Not to Trust is coded = 0.

<sup>2</sup> QA12 (dummy interval): the omitted category Not mentioned is coded = 0.

<sup>3</sup> QA12 (dummy interval): the omitted category Mentioned is coded = 0.

<sup>4</sup> Sub-Index of EU Strengths = Nation Membership + EU Direction + EU Trust + Image of The EU + EU Personal Meaning+ Council of the EU Trust + Democracy Satisfaction + Citizens Brought Together + EU Indispensability + Future of the EU. Possible range: 7.0-43.0. Correlations among these indicators ranged from .06\*\* to .49\*\*\* and significant at .000 level.

**Table 1.A.B. EU Weaknesses (n = 13797)**  
**Eurobarometer 72.4, 2009**

Concept	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Index of EU Weaknesses	QA20 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The European Union has grown too rapidly.	4 = Totally agree	25.3%
		3 = Tend to agree	42.2
2 = Tend to disagree		27.3	
1 = Totally disagree		5.3	
Sub-Index of EU Weaknesses <sup>1</sup>	QA20 Do you you agree or disagree with the following statement: At the current time, the EU is short of ideas and projects.	4 = Totally agree	17.0%
		3 = Tend to agree	37.5
		2 = Tend to disagree	35.5
		1 = Totally disagree	9.9
		Mean (sd)	5.45 (1.38)
		Min – Max	2.0 – 8.0

<sup>1</sup> Sub-Index of EU Weaknesses = EU Growth Too Rapid + EU Idea Shortage. Possible range: 2.0-8.0. Correlation between these indicators was .28\*\*\* and significant at .000 level.

**Appendix D**  
**Component Indices of Informed Citizenry**  
**Table 1.B.A. General EU Knowledge (n = 11151 - 13731)**  
**Eurobarometer 72.4, 2009**

Concept	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Index of General EU Knowledge	QA13. Have you heard of the Council of the EU?	1 = Yes <sup>1</sup>	73.5%
	QA17. True or False: The EU currently consists of twenty-five member states.	1 = False (Correct) <sup>2</sup>	44.4%
	QA17. True or False: The Irish voted "yes" to the second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty held on October 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2009.	1 = True (Correct)	81.9%
	QA17. True or False: The Euro area currently consists of twelve member states.	1 = False (Correct)	43.9%
	QA19A. Do you tend to agree or tend to disagree with the statement: I understand how the European Union works.	1 = Tend to agree <sup>3</sup>	49.3%
	QA19B. Do you tend to agree or tend to disagree with the statement: The interests of (OUR COUNTRY) are well taken into account in the EU.	1 = Tend to agree	44.2%
Index of General EU Knowledge <sup>4</sup>		Mean (sd)	3.71 (1.28)
		Min – Max	0.0 – 6.0

<sup>1</sup> QA13 (dummy interval): the omitted category No is coded = 0.

<sup>2</sup> QA17 (dummy interval): the omitted category True/False (dependent on which is the correct answer) is coded = 0.

<sup>3</sup> QA19A/B (dummy interval): the omitted category Tend to Disagree is coded = 0.

<sup>4</sup> Index of General EU Knowledge = Heard of Council of EU + Member States + Lisbon Treaty + Euro Member States + How EU Works + Interests of Own Country in EU. Possible range: 0.0–6.0. Correlations among these indicators range from .03<sup>\*\*\*</sup> to .30<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and significant at .000 level.

**Table 1.B.B. Knowledge of Policy (n = 13334 - 13409)**  
**Eurobarometer 72.4, 2009**

Concept	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics	
Index of Knowledge of Policy	QC6	Certain measures aimed at combating the current economic and financial crisis are currently being discussed within European institutions. How effective would a more important role for the EU at an international level in regulating financial services be in combating the crisis?	4 = Very effective 3 = Fairly effective 2 = Not very effective 1 = Not at all effective	18.7% 59.3 18.9 3.0
	QC6	Certain measures aimed at combating the current economic and financial crisis are currently being discussed within European institutions. How effective would the surveillance and supervision by the EU of the activities of the most important international	4 = Very effective 3 = Fairly effective 2 = Not very effective 1 = Not at all effective	24.6% 53.4 18.6 3.4

financial groups be in combating the crisis?

QC6	Certain measures aimed at combating the current economic and financial crisis are currently being discussed within European institutions. How effective would a stronger coordination of economic and financial policies between all the EU member states be in combating the crisis?	4 = Very effective 3 = Fairly effective 2 = Not very effective 1 = Not at all effective	26.6% 56.0 14.9 2.5
QC6	Certain measures aimed at combating the current economic and financial crisis are currently being discussed within European institutions. How effective would a supervision by the EU whenever public money is used to rescue a financial institution be in combating the crisis?	4 = Very effective 3 = Fairly effective 2 = Not very effective 1 = Not at all effective	29.0 49.1 17.9 4.1

Sub-Index of Effective Combatting Measures <sup>1</sup>	Mean (sd) Min – Max	12.12 (2.46) 4.0 – 16.0
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<sup>1</sup>Index of Knowledge of Policy = EU Regulating Financial Services + EU Surveillance and Supervision + Member Coordination of EU Policies + Supervision by the EU. Possible range: 4.0–16.0. Correlations among these indicators ranged from .52\*\*\* to .65\*\*\* and significant at .000 level.

## Appendix E

### Component Indices of Economic Elites and Their Health

Table 1.C.A. Personal Economic Health (n = 12134 – 13797)  
Eurobarometer 72.4, 2009

Concepts	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics			
Index of Personal Economic Health	QA1	On the whole, how satisfied are you with the life you lead?	4 = Very satisfied 3 = Fairly satisfied 2 = Not very satisfied 1 = Not at all satisfied	20.2% 53.2 19.2 7.3		
		QA2A	How would you judge your current personal job situation?	4 = Very Good 3 = Rather good 2 = Rather bad 1 = Very bad	15.8% 46.6 23.4 14.3	
			QA2A	How would you judge the current financial situation of your household?	4 = Very Good 3 = Rather good 2 = Rather bad 1 = Very bad	8.3% 52.6 29.3 9.8
				QC5	Could you tell me whether you totally agree or disagree with the following statement: Overall the Euro has mitigated the negative effects of the current financial and economic crisis.	4 = Totally Agree 3 = Tend to Agree 2 = Tend to Disagree 1 = Totally Disagree

QD4	Thinking about your purchasing power, that is to say the things that your household can afford, if you compare to your present situation 5 years ago, would you say it has improved or gotten worse?	3 = Improved 2 = Stayed the same 1 = Got worse	16.8% 36.1 47.0
D15A	What is your current occupation?	1 = Non-Active 2 = Unskilled Workers 3 = Merchants 4 = Skilled Workers 5 = Managers 6 = Professionals	53.9% 3.4 4.5 25.5% 9.0 3.6
D61	On the following scale, step '1' corresponds to "the lowest level in the society"; step '10' corresponds to "the highest level in society." Could you tell me on which step you would place yourself?	1 = Box 1 – lowest level 2 = Box 2 3 = Box 3 4 = Box 4 5 = Box 5 6 = Box 6 7 = Box 7 8 = Box 8 9 = Box 9 10 = Box 10–to highest	1.7% 3.2 8.9 13.7 28.7 19.3 15.6 6.9 1.3 0.8

Sub-Index of Personal Economic Health <sup>1</sup>	Mean (sd) Min – Max	21.5 (4.42) 7.0 – 34.0
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<sup>1</sup>Sub-Index of Personal Economic Health = Life Satisfaction + Personal Job Satisfaction + Financial Situation Satisfaction + Mitigation of Negative Effects + Purchasing Power Change + Level in Society + Occupation. Possible range: 7.0 – 34.0. Correlations among these indicators range from .05 to .66\*\*\* and significant at .000 level.

**Table 1.C.B. National Economic Health (n = 11906 - 13797)  
Eurobarometer 72.4, 2009**

Concepts	Indicators	Values and Responses	Statistics
Index of National Economic Health	QA2a	How would you judge the current situation of the (Nationality) economy?	4 = Very Good 1.3% 3 = Rather Good 22.6 2 = Rather Bad 49.3 1 = Very bad 26.7
	QA2a	How would you judge the current situation of the European economy?	4 = Very Good 2.3% 3 = Rather Good 34.1 2 = Rather Bad 51.8 1 = Very bad 11.8
	QA2a	How would you judge the current situation of the world economy?	4 = Very Good 15.9% 3 = Rather Good 59.2 2 = Rather Bad 23.4 1 = Very bad 1.5
	QB5	Would you say that the European economy is performing better, performing worse or performing as well as the American economy?	3 = Performing Better 37.2% 2 = Performing As Well As 28.8 1 = Performing Worse 33.9
	QB5	Would you say that the European economy is performing better, performing worse or performing as well as the Japanese economy?	3 = Performing Better 28.9% 2 = Performing As Well As 20.1 1 = Performing Worse 51.0

QB5	Would you say that the European economy is performing better, performing worse or performing as well as the Chinese economy?	3 = Performing Better 2 = Performing As Well As 1 = Performing Worse	36.7% 15.3 48.0
QB5	Would you say that the European economy is performing better, performing worse or performing as well as the Indian economy?	3 = Performing Better 2 = Performing As Well As 1 = Performing Worse	60.4% 13.7 25.9
QB5	Would you say that the European economy is performing better, performing worse or performing as well as the Russian economy?	3 = Performing Better 2 = Performing As Well As 1 = Performing Worse	61.9% 16.3 21.9
QB5	Would you say that the European economy is performing better, performing worse or performing as well as the Brazilian economy?	3 = Performing Better 2 = Performing As Well As 1 = Performing Worse	64.9% 14.8 20.2

Sub-Index of National Economic Health <sup>1</sup>	Mean (sd)	19.54 (3.58)
	Min – Max	9.0 – 30.0

<sup>1</sup> Sub-Index of National Economic Health = National Economy + European Economy + World Economy + EU vs. American + EU vs. Japanese + EU vs. Chinese + EU vs. Indian + EU vs. Russian + EU vs. Brazilian. Possible range: 9.0 – 30.0. Correlations among these indicators range from .05\*\* to .65\*\*\* and significant at .000 level.

## Appendix F

**Table 2. Correlation Matrix: Indices of Confidence in the EU, Informed Citizenry, and Their Quality of Life, Eurobarometer 72.4, 2009 (n = 8832 – 13797)**

	Index: Confidence in the EU	Index: Informed Citizenry	Index: Economic Elites Their Health	Western	Eastern	Mediterranean	Sex	Age
Index of Confidence in the EU <sup>1</sup>	1.0	.53***	.34***	-.09**	.02	.08***	-.04*	-.07**
Index of Informed Citizenry <sup>2</sup>		1.0	.24***	-.08**	-.00	.11***	-.06*	-.01
Index of Economic Elites & Their Health <sup>3</sup>			1.0	.24***	-.13***	-.12***	-.07**	-.06*
Western <sup>4</sup>				1.0	-.65***	-.39***	-.05*	.12***
Eastern <sup>4</sup>					1.0	-.35***	.05*	-.08**
Mediterranean <sup>4</sup>						1.0	.00	-.02*
Female (1) <sup>5</sup>							1.0	-.05*
Age <sup>6</sup>								1.0

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

<sup>1</sup> Refer to Table 3 for index and variable coding.

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