How Do European Citizens Form their Views of the EU Public Administration? Exploring the Role of Heuristics

(Working Paper*)

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Abstract

Complex multi-level governance systems face a variety of challenges. As one of the most prominent multi-level administrative systems, the EU has experienced a legitimacy crisis for several years, with many citizens displaying skeptical or even hostile views of European integration in general and the EU's central bureaucracy specifically. Although citizens often hold such negative views of the EU public administration, they have almost no direct interactions with or substantive knowledge of this institution. Given these circumstances, we ask: How do individual citizens form their views of the EU bureaucracy? Our theory suggests that citizens frequently use mental shortcuts, specifically the "representativeness heuristic," to make inferences about the EU's administrative institutions. Empirically, we focus on the case of Romania and show that perceptions of domestic central and local bureaucracies are a significant predictor of perceptions of EU bureaucracies. These findings have wide-ranging academic and practical-political implications.

The most recent version of this paper may be obtained at the following URL:
http://www.janvogler.net/EU_Public_Administration.pdf

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1 Introduction, Literature Review, and Case Selection

In recent years, the study of complex multi-level governance systems has received significant attention in a variety of disciplines, including in the field of public administration (Howlett, 2009; Piattoni, 2010; Piattoni, 2012). Among others, scholars have identified different types of such systems (Hooghe and Marks, 2003), considered the institutional prerequisites for bureaucratic control and responsiveness along the administrative hierarchy (Kogan, 2017), investigated differences in the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms between local and central institutions (Hong, 2017), and examined the bureaucratic challenges of local governments in multilevel structures (Agranoff, 2018). The complex interplay between central, regional, and local administrations in multi-level systems as well as these administrations' individual challenges have been studied in settings as diverse as China (Zhu and Zhang, 2015; Zhu and Zhang, 2018), the US (Boushey and McGrath, 2016; Boushey and McGrath, 2019), Italy (Sicilia, Guarini, Sancino, Andreani and Ruffini, 2016), Britain (Bache and Flinders, 2004; Elston and Dixon, 2019), Germany (Benz, 2007), and Australia (Painter, 2001).

Possibly the most prominent multi-level administrative system is the European Union (EU) (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Marks, Hooghe and Blank, 1996; Scharpf, 1988). Yet one institutional component of its governance system receives significantly less scholarly attention than many other aspects: the bureaucracy that is subordinated to the EU's central political bodies. While there certainly are some studies on the EU's administrative framework (e.g., Bauer and Trondal, 2015; Bauer and Becker, 2014; Wessels, 2003),[1] to the best of our knowledge, there is practically no scholarly attention on how citizens form their views of the EU's public administration or how this relates to the phenomenon of *Euroscepticism*. Yet such a study would be of general relevance because, particularly in public discourses, the EU's central bureaucracy is frequently being singled out as a negative aspect of European

[1] See also the individual chapters by Benz (2015) and Grande and McCowan (2015) in the volume by Bauer and Trondal (2015).

integration (Bakshian, 2016; Gould, 2019; The Economist, 2017; Williams, 2019). This is related to the EU's broader legitimacy crisis, with a large number of European citizens displaying eurosceptic attitudes. Interestingly, although many citizens hold negative attitudes toward the EU's public administration in particular, the fewest have ever interacted with it in practice. In light of citizens' minimal interaction with and lack of concrete knowledge of the EU's bureaucracy, our research question is: What explains distrust and perceived levels of corruption in the EU bureaucracy at the level of individual European citizens?[2]

The related issue of Euroscepticism is a persistent and highly relevant phenomenon (Raunio, 2007; Torreblanca and Leonard, 2013; Usherwood and Startin, 2013) that has generated intense public and academic interest over the last three decades. It is often understood as a suspicious—if not oppositional (Krouwel and Abts, 2007) or even hostile (McLaren, 2007, 236-237)—view of EU institutions and integration (Leconte, 2010).[3] There has been an extensive debate regarding its origins and sources with respect to both political parties (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008*a*; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008*b*; Kopeckỳ and Mudde, 2002; De Vries and Edwards, 2009) and citizens (Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas and De Vreese, 2011; Hooghe and Marks, 2007; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010).[4]

Research has shown that "institutional distrust in the EU" is a key driver of eurosceptic

[2]Our partial focus on corruption is because it is a key inhibitor of democratic legitimacy. When political systems are perceived as corrupt, this can have severe consequences for the extent to which citizens accept them. Since the EU is often perceived to already have issues with democratic participation, corruption may have particularly strong negative effects on its legitimacy. Additionally, corruption is also a highly important subject in public administration research (e.g., Kwon, 2012; Olsen, Hjorth, Harmon and Barfort, 2018).

[3]In this study, we think of Euroscepticism as the entire range from suspicious to hostile views of the EU. In its more extreme forms, hostility toward the EU is likely also associated with demands for withdrawal, as exemplified by Brexit. This highlights Euroscepticism's relevance for the continent's future political organization.

[4]Moreover, studies have investigated Eurospecticism in a wide variety settings, among others including Britain (Daddow, 2013; Forster, 2003; Gifford, 2017), France (Benoit, 1997; Goodliffe, 2015; Milner, 2000), the Netherlands (Lubbers and Jaspers, 2011; Vollaard, 2006), Norway (Skinner, 2012), the new member states (Neumayer, 2008), and the Nordic countries (Archer, 2000; Raunio, 2007; Sitter, 2001). Furthermore, multi-country studies have analyzed Euroscepticism from a comparative perspective (Benedetto and Quaglia, 2007; Kuhn, 2012). Additionally, studies have analyzed its prevalence in newspapers (Rowinski, 2016), in the broader public discourse (De Wilde and Trenz, 2012), and as it relates to the financial crisis (Serricchio, Tsakatika and Quaglia, 2013).

attitudes (Abts, Heerwegh and Swyngedouw, 2009). This is not surprising because, as indicated above, the ("unelected") bureaucracy of the EU is seen by many as the worst aspect of EU integration (The Economist, 2017), being targeted by eurosceptics (Hanley, 2004, 693, 704; Startin and Krouwel, 2013, 68; Teubert, 2017) who consider the EU's administration the ideal type of "technocratic governance" (De Wilde and Trenz, 2012, 538).

Our theory, which seeks to explain the strong views that many citizens hold of the EU bureaucracy, is based on insights from psychology and behavioral economics regarding the use of heuristics (Gilovich, Griffin and Kahneman, 2002; Simon, 1957; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974):[5] Because the vast majority of European citizens have no interaction with the EU bureaucracy, most of them have to form their judgments based on inferences. One possible type of inference that citizens might apply are mental shortcuts based on previous experiences with public administration.

In particular, experiences with and perceptions of domestic local and central bureaucratic institutions may shape citizens' general view of public administrations, which then impacts their opinion of the EU bureaucracy. This process of making a judgment about the inherent qualities of object A based only on external commonalities with object B is an aspect of the "representativeness heuristic" (Kahneman and Tversky, 1972). In short, because the EU public administration also "represents" a public bureaucracy, knowledge from comparable domestic institutions may be used to evaluate it.[6]

Our claims may be perceived as contradictory to existing knowledge in the literature on attitudes toward the EU. Specifically, Sánchez-Cuenca (2000) suggests that poorly function-

[5]The field of public administration has already made use of the concept of heuristics in diverse settings (e.g., Jilke and Tummers, 2018; Olson, 2016; Pedersen, Stritch and Thuesen, 2018; Teodoro and An, 2018).

[6]The general notion that citizens may hold views regarding the EU's bureaucracy as a specific and *distinguishable* institution—and a key component of the EU's overall structure—is supported by the bureaucracy's frequent mentioning in public discourses, including in popular media and tabloids (without those outlets providing substantive information on it, however). This argument is empirically supported by the fact that more than 85% of our respondents answered specific questions on the EU bureaucracy, meaning a low non-response rate. The combined facts that (1) the EU's bureaucracy is often mentioned in public debates and (2) a large number of citizens are willing to express their views about it, adds further relevance to an investigation of how their perceptions are formed.

ing national institutions will *increase* general support for EU integration. In his framework, from the perspective of citizens, the EU generally represent a possible *substitute* that compensate for failing institutions at the national level. However, it is extremely important to make a nuanced comparison: Sánchez-Cuenca focuses on EU integration as a *broad concept*, which is not limited to membership in the EU's political-administrative institutions but also includes access to the common market and the freedom of movement among others. From a different perspective, we investigate citizen attitudes toward a *highly specific* EU institution, namely the EU's bureaucratic apparatus. Even if citizens broadly support EU integration, they may still hold skeptical or hostile views toward the EU bureaucracy—views that, following our theory, could be partially derived from a representativeness heuristic.

Although this paper deals with distrust in the EU's bureaucracy specifically, its results are of much wider significance. Distrust in political and administrative institutions can generally undermine the functioning of democracies (Lenard, 2008; Whiteley, Clarke, Sanders and Stewart, 2016), among others by fueling perceptions of corruption (Wroe, Allen and Birch, 2013). Thus, this phenomenon is not limited to the EU, but can be observed in many political systems and at different time periods (Hart, 1978). Moreover, while the "representativeness heuristic" has not been widely used as an explanatory factor in existing studies, comparable dynamics have already been observed with respect to other aspects of the EU. For instance, a study by Anderson (1998) has shown that "domestic proxies" (e.g., satisfaction with the political system) are frequently involved in forming support of EU integration.[7] Several scholars have demonstrated that such dynamics can be observed in Central and Eastern Europe specifically (Christin, 2005; Cichowski, 2000; Tverdova and Anderson, 2004).

To test our theory, we use data from a survey with 1,001 Romanian citizens. We have chosen Romania as an appropriate testing ground for multiple reasons. First, citizen atti-

[7]Similar findings are obtained by Brosius, van Elsas and de Vreese (2020) and their relationship to our results is discussed in the conclusion.

tudes toward the EU—an organization with significant emphasis on free markets and the rule of law—are especially interesting in the young democracies of Eastern Europe, many of which do not have a long history of civic political participation as they only transitioned to democracy three decades ago (Beyme, 1996). In those countries, in which democracy is often not fully consolidated yet (Coman and Tomini, 2014; Dimitrova, 2018), the EU's legitimacy can be seen as being of significantly greater relevance to long-term political development.

Second, while in Eastern Europe there has been widespread criticism and skepticism of the EU and the integration process (Neumayer, 2008; Torreblanca and Leonard, 2013), Romania is a case with a population that is split when it comes to supporting the European project: Although the country features a Eurosceptic party—the *Greater Romania Party* (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008*a*, 12)—this party is not of high electoral relevance and a slight majority (52%) of the population holds pro-European attitudes (Commission, 2019; Topaloff, 2012, 198). Furthermore, the country represents a good mix of people who consider themselves well informed (42%) and not well informed (57%) about European matters (Commission, 2019).[8] Importantly, attitudes toward European integration in Romania, such as the EU's general image or trust in the EU, are relatively stable over time (Commission, 2017*a*), indicating that our 2017 survey does not come from a year with significant movements in attitudes.

Moreover, the ruling parties of many Eastern European countries have signaled that they are dissatisfied with the EU administration or have been in open conflict with it (The Economist, 2018; The Guardian, 2018). The Romanian parliamentary majority and the EU have experienced similar disputes over planned judicial reforms (Reuters, 2018). It is possible that these clashes have strengthened the *perceived distinction* between national institutions and EU institutions. If this is true, it means that Romania presents a hard test case for our

[8]De facto knowledge of the EU reflected these patterns, with an average (by question) of 57% of respondents being able to answer factual knowledge questions on European integration correctly in 2017 (the year when we conducted our survey) (Commission, 2017*b*).

theory based on perceived similarities.[9]

Furthermore, Romania is an ideal case for testing our theory because its domestic bureaucracy is considered having a long history of involvement in corruption (Gallagher, 2005). The country consistently ranks among the most corrupt European countries in databases such as the one by Transparency International (2019), with 17% of all public service users reporting the payment of bribes (and possibly a much higher number of undetected cases). Similarly, a detailed report by GAN Integrity (2017) confirms that Romania has a "serious problem" with corruption. Under such circumstances, we can expect that corruption is a salient issue and that there are sufficiently many people who have been exposed to corrupt practices, which could then influence their perceptions of other bureaucracies via the representativeness heuristic. Moreover, if we strictly follow the framework of Sánchez-Cuenca (2000), under circumstances such as those found in Romania, we would expect that not only a slight, but a *vast* majority of citizens hold positive views of the EU. Yet a substantial proportion of Romanians are eurosceptic, which requires an alternative explanation. Accordingly, because of both (1) the frequency of corruption and (2) a key empirical puzzle that cannot be explained by existing theories, Romania is an appropriate testing ground.

Third, by focusing on a single country, we can hold certain factors constant which may impact attitudes towards the EU, such as the size of the domestic welfare state (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000) and national political structures.

In short, while stuyding the EU's public administration—which is part of one of the most prominent multi-level administrative systems (Hooghe and Marks, 2001)—we connect to the Euroscepticism literature (e.g., Leconte, 2010). Specifically, we investigate distrust in the EU bureaucracy because such institutional distrust drives Euroscepticism (Abts, Heerwegh and Swyngedouw, 2009). Our theoretical argument is that, because most citizens have no exposure to or interaction with the EU's central administration, people use heuristics—views

[9]Since we obtain positive results despite these conditions, we count this in favor of the theory.

of domestic public administration—to form their opinion of it. Finally, as detailed above, for both empirical and theoretical reasons, Romania is an ideal case for this study.

We proceed as follows. First, we discuss Euroscepticism and institutional distrust in public administration. Then, we develop our theory regarding the application of heuristics. Subsequently, we introduce our empirical approach and data. In the following section, we present comprehensive information on the empirical results. Finally, we discuss the results of our analysis and their theoretical and practical implications.

2 Theory

In this section, we first discuss institutional distrust in public administration and Euroscepticism. Subsequently, we develop a theory based on heuristics—specifically the *representativeness heuristic*—to explain some of the variation in institutional distrust toward the EU. We also consider the possibility of reverse causality, reciprocal causation, and two further challenges to our argument.

2.1 The Impact of Euroscepticism and Institutional Distrust in Public Administration

The EU has long suffered from negative attitudes among a subset of citizens—Eurospecticism is a persistent phenomenon that is unlikely to evaporate anytime soon (Usherwood and Startin, 2013). As an institution above all affiliated national governments—and with some uncertainty about who exactly its primary constituents are—far away from the daily life of most people, it is sometimes difficult for citizens to identify with the EU (Harteveld, Meer and De Vries, 2013; Peitz, Dhont and Seyd, 2018).

Even though it may be difficult for citizens to develop trust in an institution that is supposedly so far away from their lived realities, a minimum of positive attitudes towards

the EU may be necessary to preserve its political stability. Most importantly, the events related to the British exit from the EU show how wide-ranging the effects of distrust in the EU and its fundamental institutions can be (Henderson, Jeffery, Liñeira, Scully, Wincott and Wyn Jones, 2016; Hobolt, 2016; Peitz, Dhont and Seyd, 2018; Vasilopoulou, 2016). As Brexit demonstrates, if a majority of citizens do not have trust in the EU or perceive it as corrupt, this could lead to the organization's disintegration in the long run.

There are many reasons for why distrust in EU institutions is of relevance to Euroscepticism. One reason is that many citizens do not know leading EU personnel by name, giving relatively greater weight to the reputation of *institutions* over *persons*. At the same time, EU institutions likely receive less attention than domestic institutions in national educational systems. Thus, while citizens typically gain at least basic familiarity with their domestic political-administrative institutions, which could form the foundation for a minimum of trust in the domestic political system, they likely cannot develop a similarly strong foundation with respect to trust in the EU, which could have severe negative consequences (cf. Abts, Heerwegh and Swyngedouw, 2009).

The problem of institutional distrust in the public administration is an issue that is not limited to a single country or society. For instance, in the US, conservative media has recently promoted a theory of the "deep state" as a source of misbehavior and corruption (Chaffetz, 2018; Lofgren, 2016). The exact meaning of the term is somewhat ambiguous but it generally refers to 'unelected' bureaucrats who are in high positions and are accused of following a partisan political agenda and/or undermining the democratically elected government.

In short, Euroscepticism is a potentially 'explosive' phenomenon. If scepticism towards the EU grows stronger, it could ultimately lead to the disintegration of the EU as a political entity. Moreover, the underlying issue of institutional distrust in the public administration is a transnational phenomenon that can be observed in other contexts as well—most prominently in current American politics.

2.2 The Application of Heuristics to Form Judgments of the EU Bureaucracy

Most employees of the relatively small EU public administration are located in Brussels. Only approximately 43,000 people work for it (32,000 for the European Commission, 7,500 for the European Parliament, and 3,500 for the European Council) (European Union, 2020). Relative to other political units of comparable size, this is a tiny number. The small size of the EU's central bureaucracy becomes apparent when compared to, for instance, more than 2 million employees in the American federal public administration. Due to the central bureaucracy's small numerical size, few EU citizens have ever had direct contact with it.[10]

Therefore, when asked about the extent to which they trust or distrust the EU bureaucracy, almost all European citizens *cannot* make a judgment based on direct interactions with any EU bureaucrat. Considering this marginal level of real exposure, how do people make judgments under conditions of uncertainty? Which reference points do they use?

It could be assumed that people could obtain concrete, substantive information about the EU bureaucracy from others, including newspapers, TV, friends, or family. However, comprehensive news coverage of the EU—in which wide-ranging and systematic information on policies and outcomes is provided—is typically limited to major events, such as the introduction of the Euro or Brexit. Media coverage of other EU-related issues used to be marginal (De Vreese, 2001; Peter, Semetko and De Vreese, 2003) and has somewhat increased with recent Europe-wide events (Bijsmans, 2017; De Wilde, 2011; Van Spanje and De Vreese, 2014), but remains at low levels compared to the top issues in domestic politics. This is especially true for the EU bureaucracy: While it is often simplistically portrayed as

[10]It is important to note that one of the key reasons for the small size of the EU bureaucracy is that national governments are primarily responsible for implementing EU policies. Even though national governments play a major role in this process and prevent the direct exposure of EU citizens to the EU public administration, citizens often have a very strong opinion of the EU bureaucracy itself, which is the object of inquiry here.

a group of 'unelected bureaucrats' in tabloids[11]—which gives citizens the notion that it is a key, distinct aspect of the EU—these portrayals typically do not provide citizens with any substantive or systematic information on its institutional framework and characteristics.

Considering the little real exposure to the European bureaucracy and the limited substantive coverage of the EU public administration in most news media outlets, it is likely that people use some form of heuristics to make judgments about the EU bureaucracy. The investigation of such heuristics has been prominent in the disciplines of psychology and behavioral economics. For example, in their seminal study, Tversky and Kahneman (1974) describe a number of key heuristics that are frequently used by humans to make inferences about phenomena they do not have complete information on.

The heuristic that is most relevant to us in the context that we study is the so-called "representativeness heuristic." When people observe a phenomenon that they do not have precise information on, they potentially use their knowledge of related phenomena to form a view or judgment about it. This is an extremely common mental shortcut which has a great danger to lead to cognitive biases and the incorrect judgment of specific situations (Kahneman and Tversky, 1972; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974).

The representativeness heuristic is used in a large variety of contexts, including in situations in which we would typically expect rational decision making (based only on the available information) to absolutely dominate, such as entrepreneurial decisions (Wickham, 2003). Furthermore, it is even used in decisions that may determine life or death, such as diagnoses by medical professionals. For instance, Brannon and Carson (2003) show that nurses judged the sources of patient symptoms in part based on patient characteristics that were unrelated to the concrete symptoms of the case at hand.[12]

[11] Please note that, while these portrayals could have an effect on the variables of interest, we control for a large number of socio-demographic factors, including education levels, that jointly cover media preferences (e.g., preferences for tabloids).

[12] For a comprehensive overview of the use of heuristics in clinical decision-making, see also Cioffi (1997).

With respect to perceptions of the EU administration, we can apply the representativeness heuristic to make some straightforward predictions. Many people can make concrete judgments about their domestic public administration because they are exposed to it a relatively high frequency, for instance through local public service delivery or local reporting (James, 2007; Poister and Henry, 1994; Van Ryzin, 2004). Specifically, in Romania—the site of our empirical test—a number of public services are administered by the local public administration, ranging from the simple procedure of applying for an ID card to requesting financial assistance from the government or a business permit. Given this relatively high frequency of direct exposure (compared to direct exposure to the EU bureaucracy) and accurate local media information, people are more likely to form concretes views of their local public administration.

Furthermore, citizens are likely also exposed to reports of the experiences of family members and friends who also directly interact with the domestic public administration.[13] Thus, more concrete and comprehensive exposure to the domestic public administration partially allows citizens to form a more concrete and comprehensive picture of the quality of institutions, including on issues such as corruption levels.

Although there is less exposure to and interaction with the central public administration, it is still more likely that either people themselves or some of their friends and relatives have some form of concrete exposure to this bureaucracy, too. Even if exposure to domestic central institutions occurs rarely, people likely have significantly greater first-hand and second-hand experience with the national bureaucracy than with the EU's administration.

Considering greater exposure to and likelihood of interaction with the domestic local and central bureaucracy, administrative institutions at those two levels are likely to shape the views of most people about how public administrations function generally and what their fundamental characteristics are. This more precise knowledge about the conditions of local

[13]This will be reflected in the question wording at the local level.

and national public administrations can be used as a basis to make inferences about comparable phenomena with similar characteristics, specifically the EU public administration. Thus, without much further knowledge regarding the true underlying levels of corruption or other properties of the EU administration, EU citizens can be expected to (partially) use their knowledge of domestic bureaucracies to form an opinion of the EU bureaucracy.

With respect to perceptions of corruption and trust/distrust in the EU administration, we can derive four hypotheses from the above discussion:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals who perceive their domestic local public administration to be more corrupt will perceive the EU public administration to be more corrupt as well.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who perceive their domestic central public administration to be more corrupt will perceive the EU public administration to be more corrupt as well.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals who have more trust in their domestic local public administration will have more trust in the EU public administration as well.

Hypothesis 4: Individuals who have more trust in their domestic central public administration will have more trust in the EU public administration as well.

2.3 The Possibility of Reverse Causality or Reciprocal Causation

Is it possible that experiences with the EU bureaucracy drive perceptions of domestic bureaucracies? Or could there be reciprocal causation? With respect to major political institutions of the EU, such as the Parliament or the Commission (as represented by the Commissioners themselves, not the administrative body working for them), one could certainly make a strong case for such an argument of reverse causality or reciprocal causation (e.g., De Vries, 2018). The reason is that citizens that consume daily news are regularly exposed to concrete information about these major political institutions. However, very different dynamics arguably apply to the *EU bureaucracy* subordinated to these political bodies.

With respect to the EU public administration, the possibility of reverse causality or reciprocal causation only credibly exists for a very marginal number of EU citizens, i.e. those that directly and frequently interact with the EU's bureaucracy. As indicated earlier, this important circumstance also differentiates our study with its focus on heuristics from previous studies that deal with "proxies" (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000) or "cues" (Hooghe and Marks, 2005) regarding more general EU matters, such as overall support for European integration.[14] Considering both the social and geographical distance between the EU administration and most citizens (with the exception of the inhabitants of Brussels, Frankfurt, Luxembourg, and Strasbourg)[15], not only the exposure but also the level of accuracy of information is likely to be substantially higher with respect to domestic bureaucracies. Thus, considering the marginal number of EU civil servants and the extremely limited exposure of citizens to the EU administration, the possibility of reverse causality is equally marginal.

All in all, the above discussion indicates that we have to carefully differentiate between (1) the EU in general and overall support for integration, (2) perceptions of *political* institutions and prominent EU representatives, and (3) perceptions of the *bureaucratic-administrative* bodies subordinated to these political institutions. Only the latter is our focus here.

2.4 A First Challenge to the Argument: General Trust into Public Institutions

Our theory suggests that experiences with very specific institutions, i.e. local and central domestic public administrations, shape perceptions of *comparable* institutions of the same kind at another level, namely the EU public administration. The comparability of institutions at both levels allows for the use of the representativeness heuristic. Citizens likely

[14]Because these studies focus on more general subjects, views toward which are likely based on a larger number of factors, their arguments cannot be applied in the same way to the highly specific area we study.

[15]These are the European cities in which the main EU governmental bodies are located.

perceive other institutions, such as the police or courts, as distinct organizations that are not equivalent to bureaucracies. Thus, the representativeness heuristic would not work in such cases.

However, what if this theory about a specific heuristic based on comparable public institutions is actually part of an *overall* trust in public institutions? This would mean that the results obtained might be more directy related to an 'overall world view of public institutions.' For example, some people may simply have overall greater levels of trust in all state institutions. In this case, it is not a heuristic based on comparable institutions, but more part of an individual's 'global perception of public institutions.'

In order to account for this alternative explanation, we consider trust in two additional public institutions, namely courts and the police. If we find a robust relationship to those two institutions, it would strengthen the argument that we merely observe general institutional trust instead of the application of the representativeness heuristic specifically.

We can derive a first rival hypothesis from the above discussion:

Hypothesis 5: Individuals who have more trust in several types of public institutions (specifically the police and courts), have higher levels of trust in the EU bureaucracy.

2.5 A Second Challenge to the Argument: Historical Influence Factors

Existing studies show that there are historical legacies with respect to trust in some public institutions (Becker, Boeckh, Hainz and Woessmann, 2016; Vogler, 2020). During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Romania was partially ruled by the Habsburg Empire, which allows us to control for the possible impact of historical imperial rule on perceptions of EU administration. Doing so is important because the Habsburg Empire also was a "supranational organization" and the historical experience with this institution could shape both

present-day perceptions of domestic public administration (Becker et al., 2016; Vogler, 2020) and perceptions of the EU administration. Thus, we need to test if there are any historical legacies that might explain differential trust into public institutions.

We can derive a second rival hypothesis from the above discussion:

Hypothesis 6: Levels of trust in the EU bureaucracy and levels of perceived corruption differ across the historical imperial borders of the Austrian Empire.

3 Empirical Test

In this section, we introduce the dataset and discuss all relevant variables. The data represent a sample of Romanian adults from both urban and rural areas. The interviews were conducted face-to-face by trained specialists of the Romanian survey firm INSCOP.

A total of 1,001 adults were surveyed in April and May 2017. The sample was chosen at random. Specifically, based on a random sampling methodology following a combination of address-based and systematic random sampling, trained specialists (with a majority having 5-10 years of experience in this field) chose the street, house number, and person to be interviewed. The interviewer received a route (with the streets of potential respondents) and applied the "skip interval" method in order to select house numbers, blocks, and apartments. To ensure that no subset of the population was systematically excluded, interviews were conducted on both weekdays and weekends, often in the afternoon. Because of this sophisticated random choice procedure and the extensive coverage of days and times throughout the week, the sample is representative of Romania's overall population. Participants were not financially compensated.

3.1 Key Dependent Variables

In order to test our theory, we use two different key dependent variables: (1) *Trust in the EU Bureaucracy* and (2) *Perceived Corruption in the EU Bureaucracy*.

Trust in the EU Bureaucracy: The first of our two key dependent variables is the level of trust/distrust in the EU's bureaucracy. It is based on the following question: "How much do you trust or distrust the central bureaucracy of the European Union?" Respondents were able to give their reply on a 7-point scale, ranging from high levels of trust to high levels of distrust. Further details on this indicator can be found in the appendix.

Perceived Corruption in the EU Bureaucracy: The second key dependent variable is the perceived level of corruption in the EU's bureaucracy. It is based on the following question: "Do you agree or disagree with the statement that corruption is a problem of the European Union's central bureaucracy?" Respondents were able to give their reply on a 7-point scale, ranging from high levels of trust to high levels of distrust. Further details on this indicator can be found in the appendix.

Why do we use two different indicators instead of creating a composite measurement? In this respect, it is important to note that trust in the EU bureaucracy and perceived levels of corruption are two distinct phenomena, which only have a weak statistical relationship. Neither is a significant predictor of the other one in the framework of a linear regression and their correlation is weak ($|cor| < 0.1$). For further details see Table 1. The absence of a strong relationship between these indicators, which may seem counter-intuitive, actually supports the notion that judgments of the EU bureaucracy are not based on concrete information.[16]

[16]Importantly, this weak relationship between trust and perceptions of corruption does *not* exist for national local and central bureaucratic institutions (here, the correlation between these measures is significant), which indicates that this is *not* a matter of question wording.

Table 1: Relationship: Trust/Perceptions of Corruption

	Dependent variable:
	Trust in EU Bureaucracy
Perc. Corruption of EU Bur.	−0.056
	(0.037)
Constant	0.649***
	(0.060)
Observations	853
R^2	0.003
Adjusted R^2	0.002
Note: OLS	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

3.2 Key Explanatory Variables

Based on our theory, the key explanatory variables relate to trust and perceived levels of corruption in domestic bureaucracies at different levels (central and local). The detailed questions and answer scales underlying those variables can be found in the appendix.

Trust in the Domestic Central Public Administration: We expect that this variable is a significant predictor of trust in the EU bureaucracy.

Trust in the Domestic Local Public Administration: We expect that this variable is a significant predictor of trust in the EU bureaucracy.

Perceived Levels of Corruption in the Domestic Central Public Administration: We expect that this variable is a significant predictor of perceived levels of corruption in the EU public administration.

Perceived Levels of Corruption in the Domestic Local Public Administration: We expect that this variable is a significant predictor of perceived levels of corruption in the EU public administration.[17]

[17] An important difference between the question related to the central level and the local level is that, at the local level, we explicitly ask about views formed in part on direct experiences. We did this because at this level, citizens are most likely to have concrete firsthand exposure. Subtle differences in question wording could lead to slightly weaker results, which biases the test against the researchers.

3.3 Alternative Explanatory Variables

Based on the Euroscepticism literature and the challenges to our theory discussed in section 2, we present several alternative explanatory variables below. The detailed questions and answer scales underlying those variables can be found in the appendix.

The Direction of the Domestic Economy: Perceptions of the country's economic fortunes could be influential in terms of the evaluation of bureaucratic performance. The argument that macroeconomic conditions influence perceptions of the EC/EU is shown in several existing studies (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Garry and Tilley, 2009). Thus, we include satisfaction with the general direction of the economy.

The Economic Effect of EU Membership on the Domestic Economy: Perceptions of the *specific* effect that the EU has on the national economy could be even more decisive when it comes to evaluations of EU institutions (cf. Anderson and Reichert, 1995).[18] Therefore, we include a variable capturing this perceived effect.

Trust in Local Police: As a first control variable for general trust in public institutions (an alternative theory discussed in section 2), we include trust into the local police.

Trust in Courts: As a second control variable for general trust in public institutions (an alternative theory discussed in section 2), we include trust into courts.

Previous Habsburg Rule: Even though the EU did not exist at the time of historical imperial rule through the Habsburgs, there could be cultural legacies of the perception of state institutions which may lead to differential perceptions of EU institutions (Bădescu and Sum, 2005; Vogler, 2020). Thus, we include a dummy variable reflecting this possibility.

[18] A similar argument, namely that the financial costs/benefits of EU membership in terms of financial contributions are of importance is also suggested by Eichenberg and Dalton (1993).

3.4 Additional Covariates

In addition to all of the above variables, we introduce a number of additional covariates. All of these covariates could partially explain perceptions of EU institutions. The detailed questions and answer scales underlying those variables can be found in the appendix.

Location Type: Urbanized areas often have different socioeconomic structures and conditions, which could affect views of supranational organizations (Surwillo, Henderson and Lazaridis, 2010; Thompson, 2003). Accordingly, we differentiate between three types of communes: (1) Municipalities (most urbanized), (2) cities (mix of urban and rural), and (3) communes (most rural). Our baseline category is "city" and we introduce dummies for municipalities and communes.

Respondent Age: In previous studies, age has been an inconsistent predictor of attitudes toward the EU (Anderson and Reichert, 1995; Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Curtis and Nielsen, 2018; Rohrschneider, 2002). However, in the case of Romania, age might matter: Younger people grew up with Romania already being a part of the EU. Older people experienced Romania under communist/socialist rule. These different experiences may be an important factor influencing views of the EU.

Public Administration Work Experience: People who have worked in public administration previously may perceive bureaucracies differently than people who have only experienced bureaucracies from the outside.

Education Level: Previous studies on Euroscepticism have shown that education is a factor for explaining individuals' attitudes toward the EU (Gabel, 1998; Hakhverdian, Van Elsas, Van der Brug and Kuhn, 2013; Lubbers and Jaspers, 2011). Education levels appear to matter most in less wealthy member states of the EU (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010), meaning that they should be of significant influence in Romania.

Income Level: In addition to perceptions about the current national level of economic

growth, personal economic fortunes could have an impact on attitudes toward the EU bureaucracy (Gabel, 1998; Gabel and Palmer, 1995). Thus, we include a control for income.

Female: Although gender has been shown to not be a significant predictor of EU support, it is regularly included as a control variable in studies of Euroscepticism (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; McLaren, 2007). Accordingly, we include a variable differentiating between men and women.

Capital: The Romanian capital of Bucharest not only has a slightly different administrative organization than the other areas of Bucharest, which could have an impact on perceptions of public administration. Additionally, it is the most densely populated area of the country and attracts a large number of young people and foreigners. Due to its very different social structure, we include a dummy for the capital.

3.5 Descriptive Summary Statistics

Table 2 shows descriptive summary statistics for all variables that are used in the empirical test.

Variable	**n**	**Min**	$\mathbf{q_1}$	$\bar{\mathbf{x}}$	$\tilde{\mathbf{x}}$	$\mathbf{q_3}$	**Max**	**IQR**
Trust in EU Bureaucracy	961	-3	0	0.62	1	2	3	2
Perc. Corruption in EU Bur.	865	-2	0	0.82	1	2	3	2
Direction of the Economy	995	-3	-2	-0.26	0	1	3	3
EU Economic Effect on Econ.	980	-3	0	0.56	1	2	3	2
Trust in Central PA	996	-3	-1	0.12	1	1	3	2
Corruption in Central PA	969	-2	1	1.73	2	3	3	2
Trust in Local PA	997	-3	0	0.93	1	2	3	2
Corruption in Local PA	805	-3	-1	0.26	1	1	3	2
Trust in Police	881	-3	1	0.93	2	2	3	1
Trust in Courts	797	-3	-1	0.71	1	2	3	3
Habsburg Part	1001	0	0	0.41	0	1	1	1
Age	997	18	35	48.67	49	62	89	27
Work Experience in PA	970	0	0	0.04	0	0	1	0
Education	991	0	0	1.46	2	2	4	2
Income	893	0	2	2.61	3	3	7	1
Female	1001	0	0	0.51	1	1	1	1
Capital	1001	0	0	0.04	0	0	1	0

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Empirical Analysis

4 Results

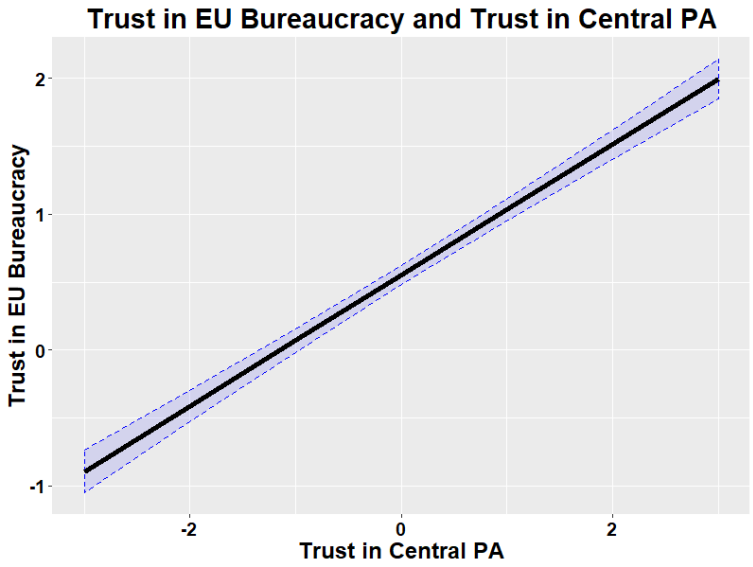
In this section, we present the results of our statistical analysis. We show that perceptions of domestic institutions are a significant predictor of perceptions of EU institutions. This is true for both *levels of trust/distrust* and *perceived levels of corruption in the EU administration*.

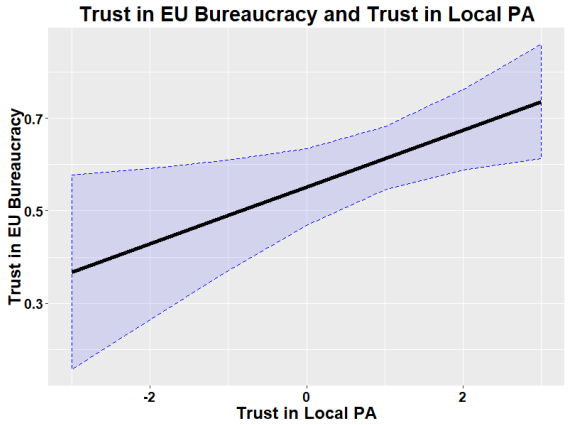
4.1 Trust in the EU Bureaucracy

We begin the presentation of our empirical results with an analysis of the determinants of *trust in the EU bureaucracy*. In Table 3, we show the results of a large number of different regressions. The first and second regressions consider trust in domestic central and local bureaucracies, respectively. The third regression considers both factors simultaneously. In the first three regressions, both *trust in the central public administration* and *trust in the local public administration* are significant predictors of *trust in the EU bureaucracy* when not controlling for additional factors. The effect of *trust in the central public administration* on *trust in the EU bureaucracy* is particularly strong and generally ranges from a .364 to .506 increase in the latter for a 1-point change in the former.

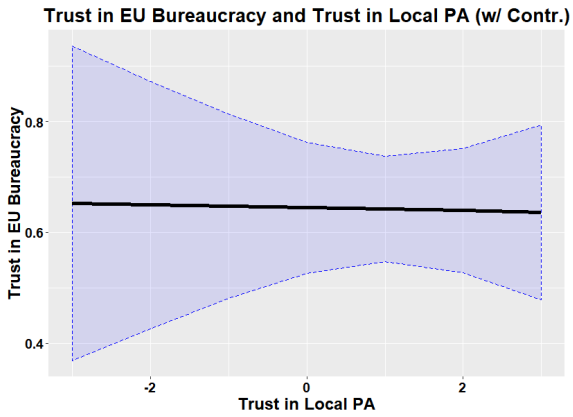
Figure 1 and Figure 2 graphically demonstrate the effect that trust in domestic institutions has on trust in the EU administration. Figure 1 and Figure 2 are based on regression three and regressions three and six, respectively. As the first graph reveals, the relationship between perceptions of central institutions and the EU bureaucracy is particularly strong. In regressions two and three, perceptions of local institutions also have a statistically significant effect, but this effect is generally less substantively influential. Most importantly, once a set of control variables is included, the local effect is no longer significant.

Figure 1: Trust in the EU Bureaucracy





(a) Trust in the EU Bureaucracy



(b) Trust in the EU Bureaucracy (w/ Contr.)

Figure 2: Trust in the EU Bureaucracy

In regressions four to seven, we add a number of covariates to check if the results hold when controlling for potentially confounding factors. We find that perceptions of central bureaucratic institutions continue to show a statistically significant effect. However, perceptions of local public administrations are no longer statistically significant. We discuss possible reasons for this pattern below and in the conclusion.

Table 3: Trust in the EU Bureacuracy

	Dependent variable:						
	Trust in EU Bureaucracy						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Trust in Central PA	0.506***		0.482***	0.391***	0.367***	0.367***	0.364***
	(0.024)		(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.037)
Trust in Local PA		0.301***	0.062**	0.047	−0.004	−0.003	−0.026
		(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.029)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.043)
Direction of Econ.				−0.032	−0.001	−0.001	0.001
				(0.026)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.033)
EU Effect on Econ.				0.368***	0.347***	0.346***	0.311***
				(0.027)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.036)
Trust in Police					0.030	0.030	0.026
					(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.040)
Trust in Courts					0.053*	0.053	0.059*
					(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.035)
Habsburg Part						0.021	0.002
						(0.090)	(0.105)
Commune							−0.216
							(0.136)
Municipality							−0.153
							(0.147)
Age							0.003
							(0.003)
Work in PA							0.302
							(0.253)
Education							−0.005
							(0.049)
Income							−0.009
							(0.051)
Female							0.066
							(0.099)
Capital							−0.175
							(0.322)
Constant	0.549***	0.331***	0.494***	0.297***	0.348***	0.340***	0.438
	(0.042)	(0.056)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.060)	(0.070)	(0.288)
Observations	959	959	957	937	711	711	611
R^2	0.308	0.087	0.311	0.427	0.433	0.433	0.409
Adjusted R^2	0.308	0.086	0.309	0.425	0.429	0.428	0.394

Note: OLS *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

4.2 Perceptions of Corruption in the EU Bureaucracy

We continue with *perceptions of corruption in the EU bureaucracy* as the outcome variable. In Table 4, we show the results of a large number of different regressions. The first and second regressions consider perceptions of corruption in domestic central and local bureaucracies, respectively. The third regression considers both factors simultaneously. In the first three regressions (and in all subsequent regressions), perceptions of corruption at both bureaucratic levels are significant predictors of *perceptions of corruption in the EU bureaucracy* when not controlling for additional factors.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 graphically demonstrate the effect that perceptions of corruption in domestic institutions have on the same concept with respect to the EU administration. Both figures are based on regression three. Similar to the previous results obtained with respect to levels of trust, the relationship between perceptions of central institutions and the EU bureaucracy is particularly strong. As indicated above, another similarity is that, while perceptions of local institutions also have a statistically significant effect on perceptions of the EU bureaucracy in this case, this effect is generally less substantively influential.

Figure 3: Perceived Corruption in the EU Bureaucracy

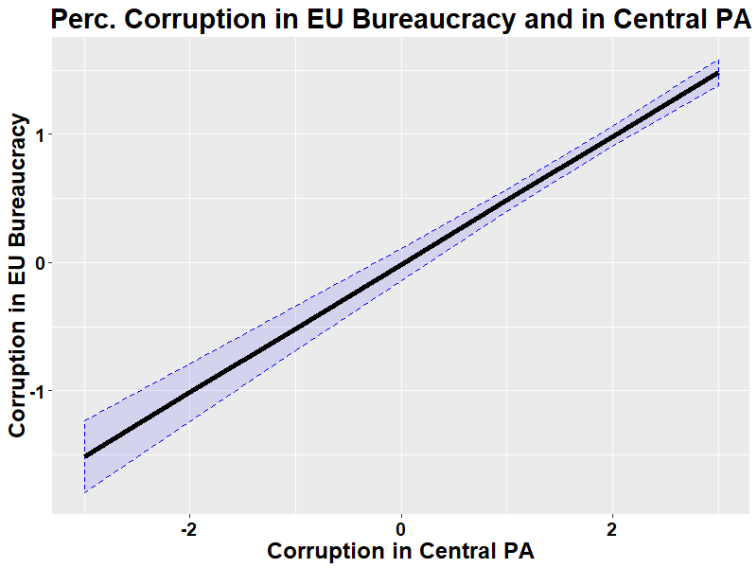
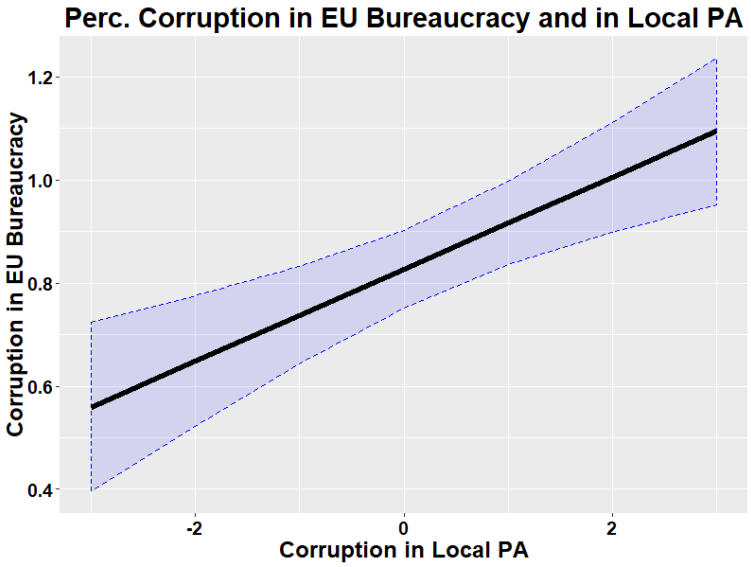


Figure 4: Perceived Corruption in the EU Bureaucracy



In regressions four to seven, we add a number of covariates to check if the results hold when controlling for potentially confounding factors. We find that perceptions of central bureaucratic institutions continue to show a statistically significant effect. Additionally, other than with respect to levels of trust discussed above, perceptions of corruption in local public administrations remain a significant predictor as well. The effects of both *perceptions of corruption in the central public administration* and *perceptions of corruption in the local public administration* are consistently significant and show a substantive influence. Specifically, when it comes to explaining *perceptions of corruption in the EU administration*, a 1-point increase in local corruption perceptions leads to a change of between .089 and .182, and a 1-point increase in central corruption perceptions leads to a change of between .499 and .539.

Table 4: Perceptions of Corruption in the EU Bureaucracy

	Dependent variable:						
	Perceived Corruption in EU Bureaucracy						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Perc. Corr. in Central PA	0.533***		0.499***	0.524***	0.539***	0.537***	0.522***
	(0.031)		(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.047)
Perc. Corr. in Local PA		0.182***	0.089***	0.100***	0.104***	0.103***	0.105***
		(0.030)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.036)
Direction of Econ.				0.078***	0.074**	0.075**	0.086**
				(0.029)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.037)
EU Effect on Econ.				−0.029	−0.080**	−0.083**	−0.102**
				(0.033)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.043)
Trust in Police					0.016	0.014	0.028
					(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.043)
Trust in Courts					0.026	0.025	0.011
					(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.040)
Habsburg Part						0.055	0.162
						(0.109)	(0.125)
Commune							−0.135
							(0.156)
Municipality							0.131
							(0.169)
Age							−0.001
							(0.004)
Work in PA							−0.124
							(0.329)
Education							0.119**
							(0.056)
Income							−0.050
							(0.061)
Female							−0.004
							(0.116)
Capital							−1.222***
							(0.424)
Constant	−0.095	0.782***	−0.039	−0.047	−0.096	−0.111	−0.071
	(0.068)	(0.052)	(0.074)	(0.077)	(0.096)	(0.101)	(0.346)
Observations	859	705	700	687	533	533	458
R^2	0.258	0.050	0.271	0.283	0.293	0.293	0.304
Adjusted R^2	0.257	0.049	0.269	0.279	0.285	0.284	0.280

Note: OLS *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

4.3 Summary and Discussion

The empirical analysis has demonstrated that trust/distrust and perceptions of corruption in local and—in particular—in central bureaucracies are a crucial and consistent determinant of perceptions of the EU bureaucracy. Since the vast majority of citizens have very little real exposure to the EU administration and to EU bureaucrats, it is most likely that their views of domestic institutions inform their views of EU institutions based on the representativeness heuristic.

The argument that the representativeness heuristic is crucial in explaining the observed patterns is strengthened by two specific results. First, views of the central public administration are both substantively and statistically more decisive in terms of influencing a respondent's view of the EU administration than views of the local public administration. This is in line with the representativeness heuristic because the domestic central bureaucracy can be considered more comparable to the EU administration than the local bureaucracy.

Furthermore, the rival hypothesis that we merely observe an individual's general level of trust in public institutions does not find support. Both *trust in police* and *trust in the courts* are not significant predictors of either trust or perceptions of corruption in the EU administration. This further strengthens the argument that the representativeness heuristic—which is limited in its claims to comparable kinds of institutions—is at work here, not a form of general trust in public institutions.

5 Conclusion and Implications

Within the steadily growing literature on multi-level administrative systems (Agranoff, 2018; Hong, 2017; Hooghe and Marks, 2003), the European Union certainly is one of the most complex and internally heterogeneous cases, persistently generating intense scholarly interest (Benz, 2015; Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Marks, Hooghe and Blank, 1996; Scharpf, 1988).

Despite these high levels of scholarly interest, there still is a scarcity of studies on *perceptions* of the European Union's central public administration, which is surprising, considering that it is an essential part of its multi-level administrative system. Our study seeks to fill these and other important gaps by speaking to three different literatures. First, we advance the study of multi-level governance through a contribution that focuses primarily on interdependence in perceptions of public administration at various administrative levels. Second, we add the crucial analytical tool of heuristics to the broader literatures on institutional distrust and Euroscepticism.[19] Third, we present one of the first studies that focuses on citizen perceptions of the EU bureaucracy, an organization that impacts the lives of more than 400 million citizens, making it an institution of enormous real-world significance.

The study of distrust in the EU bureaucracy is of particular importance because institutional distrust drives Euroscepticisim (Abts, Heerwegh and Swyngedouw, 2009)—a widespread and persistent phenomenon among a substantial subset of EU citizens. Eurosceptic attitudes have contributed to decisions of great political, economic, and social relevance, such as Brexit (Henderson et al., 2016; Hobolt, 2016; Peitz, Dhont and Seyd, 2018; Vasilopoulou, 2016). Thus, our study has both academic and practical-political implications.

Considering the extremely low level of direct interaction and substantive knowledge that most European citizens have with and of the EU administration, we aim to explain how they form their views of those institutions. Theoretically, we argue that perceptions of the EU public administration may be (partially) based on mental shortcuts or heuristics based on domestic experiences. Due to minimal concrete information about the EU administration, citizens use experiences with and views of comparable domestic institutions as a reference point for their views of the EU bureaucracy. Thus, we suggest that the *representativeness heuristic* may be at work when people form their opinions of the EU administration.

[19] As elaborated throughout the manuscript, even though "proxies" (Anderson, 1998) or "cues" (Hooghe and Marks, 2005) share some similarities with heuristics, there are also crucial differences.

This contribution goes beyond existing research in multiple important ways: It goes beyond previous and more abstract notions of "proxies" (Anderson, 1998) and "cues" (Hooghe and Marks, 2005) (which have often been applied to more general subjects, such as broad support for European integration) by, first, systematically developing a clear theoretical concept of heuristics and, second, deriving empirical expectations for a highly specific dimension of the EU's institutional framework. Although this highly specific aspect of EU integration, namely the EU bureaucracy, is often referred to in the public discourse, it has received little attention from scholars of Euroscepticism up to this point. Third, as indicated above, we also connect typically separate literatures on topics as diverse as multi-level administrative systems, heuristics, attitudes toward the EU, and trust in government institutions.

In the empirical analysis, which is focused on the case of Romania, we have found that perceptions of domestic local and central bureaucracies indeed have a strong impact on perceptions of the EU administrations. We show that the impact of perceptions of central institutions is substantively greater and statistically more significant. This may be due to the more similar character of the central public administration and the EU administration. Furthermore, we have not found any statistical association with trust in other public institutions, meaning that our results are not driven by general institutional (dis)trust (which is an important confirmation that it is indeed the representativeness heuristic that is at work).

To what extent can we generalize the results above? Romania certainly is distinct from some other EU countries due to its very high level of corruption, which made it an ideal case for our study. At the same time, there are several EU countries that also suffer from non-negligible levels of domestic corruption, including Hungary, Bulgaria, Malta, or Poland. The study at hand was conducted in a single country because it allows us to hold certain domestic factors, such as the size of the welfare state, constant. However, in the future, it would be desirable to extend the study to other countries and verify if we can observe the same pattern there. There could be intervening variables, such as different national cultures,

that mediate the relationship of institutional distrust and Euroscepticism. For instance, Italy is often thought of as a case in which citzens have little trust in their own government but more trust in the European project.

Our results have important academic and political implications. This study shows that academics who investigate specific institutional aspects of Euroscepticism should always take domestic experiences and perceptions of *comparable* domestic institutions into account. They may be crucial for explaining variations in their outcomes. Moreover, certain political inferences may be drawn as well: In order to reduce skepticism of EU institutions, European citizens may need more direct exposure to or concrete information about the EU's public administration, so that they can form opinions on them separately from other institutions of a similar kind. This echoes previous arguments about a more general "communication deficit" that the EU is subject to (De Vreese, Banducci, Semetko and Boomgaarden, 2006).

How do our results compare to existing work? As touched upon earlier, at first glance our results *appear* to be inconsistent with Sánchez-Cuenca (2000) because he finds that poorly functioning national institutions (as indicated by high corruption and low social expenditures) increase support for European integration in a broad sense. However, a crucial difference to Sánchez-Cuenca is that we focus only on a single, highly specific factor of Euroscepticism, namely *trust in European public administrative institutions*. Sánchez-Cuenca, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the much broader concept of general support of European integration that may be built on a larger number of subcomponents. Specifically, there may be other, alternative mechanisms, through which poorly functioning national institutions could *increase* support for European integration.

For instance, people who view their domestic government as corrupt (which is generally known to inhibit economic growth) may be primarily interested in the *economic* benefits of EU integration, which could form the basis of their support. Alternatively, these people may be less inclined to be nationalistic, which may also have a positive impact on attitudes

towards the EU. Therefore, future studies could consider a variety of causal mechanisms through which perceptions of domestic institutions ultimately affect scepticism of EU integration more broadly—beyond the very specific type of distrust analyzed here.[20] In sum, this discussion indicates that future research should take into account how different causal mechanisms could affect support for EU integration in possibly divergent ways.

Moreover, the results obtained here also speak to a recent contribution by De Vries (2018): Like De Vries, this study highlights that Euroscepticism is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that can potentially be broken up into many different dimensions, including skeptical views of the EU public administration as a subcomponent.[21] Furthermore, despite some differences in the line of argument, our findings confirm the results by De Vries that (national) benchmarks and mental shortcuts—resembling the heuristics discussed here—are crucial to how people think about the EU. Similarly, results by Brosius, van Elsas and de Vreese (2020) about the general extrapolation from the national to the supranational level are also confirmed by us. However, in this study we did not randomize the questions, so we cannot assess the impact of question ordering as Brosius, van Elsas and de Vreese do.

All in all, while our findings may be perceived to be at odds with Sánchez-Cuenca (2000) (a notion that, as discussed above, is not necessarily accurate), they corroborate the results of several previous studies, wich have found that citizens often make positive/negative judgments regarding the EU based on the perceived positive/negative performance of national governments or the domestic political-economic situation (e.g., De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; De Vries, 2018; Franklin, Marsh and McLaren, 1994; Garry, Marsh and Sinnott, 2005). Future contributions can further build upon the insights gained here by exploring panel data

[20] When analyzing levels of support for EU integration in a broad sense, it is also important to note that—in comparison with bureaucratic institutions of the EU—people can be assumed to be more familiar with and more exposed to (media) information about major political institutions and processes, such as the European Parliament or the European Commission. More exposure to concrete information could be a strong factor in their judgments of EU integration in general.

[21] Regarding different types of eurosceptics as a related phenomenon, see also Weßels (2007).

and extending this research to other EU member states. Most importantly, future research could also examine if these insights about the European Union's administrative system can be transferred to multi-level governance systems in other world regions and in different cultural/institutional contexts—possible studies that would be of critical interest to the field of public administration.

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6 Online Appendix

In the appendix, we show the underlying questions and coding of our empirical measurements.

6.1 Coding of Key Variables

6.1.1 Key Dependent Variables

Trust in the EU Bureaucracy: "How much do you trust or distrust the central bureaucracy of the European Union?"

1. Completely trust (3)
2. Mostly trust (2)
3. Slightly trust (1)
4. Neither trust nor distrust (0)
5. Slightly distrust (-1)
6. Mostly distrust (-2)
7. Completely distrust (-3)

Corruption in the EU Bureaucracy: "Do you agree or disagree with the statement that corruption is a problem of the European Union's central bureaucracy?"

1. Strongly agree (3)
2. Mostly agree (2)
3. Slightly agree (1)
4. Neither agree nor disagree (0)
5. Slightly disagree (-1)
6. Mostly disagree (-2)
7. Strongly disagree (-3)

6.1.2 Key Explanatory Variables

Trust in the Domestic Central Public Administration: "How much do you trust or distrust the central bureaucracy of Romania?"

1. Completely trust (3)

2. Mostly trust (2)
3. Slightly trust (1)
4. Neither trust nor distrust (0)
5. Slightly distrust (-1)
6. Mostly distrust (-2)
7. Completely distrust (-3)

Trust in the Domestic Local Public Administration: "How much do you trust or distrust the local public administration?"[22]

1. Completely trust (3)
2. Mostly trust (2)
3. Slightly trust (1)
4. Neither trust nor distrust (0)
5. Slightly distrust (-1)
6. Mostly distrust (-2)
7. Completely distrust (-3)

Perceived Levels of Corruption in the Domestic Central Public Administration: "Do you agree or disagree with the statement that corruption is a problem of Romania's central bureaucracy?"

1. Strongly agree (3)
2. Mostly agree (2)
3. Slightly agree (1)
4. Neither agree nor disagree (0)
5. Slightly disagree (-1)
6. Mostly disagree (-2)
7. Strongly disagree (-3)

[22]Please note that, in terms of question wording, we use slightly different terminology at the local level by referring to "local public administration." It is important to acknowledge that the negative connotation of the term "bureaucracy" could potentially lead to differences in evaluations. Yet the average difference between the two sets of indicators, is only at approximately 0.8 and 1.47 for trust and corruption, respectively, indicating that such concerns may not have a substantial influence on the overall results.

Perceived Levels of Corruption in the Domestic Local Public Administration: "Thinking about your own experiences and what you have heard from others, how common is it that people make informal payments to the local public administration to speed up bureaucratic procedures or ensure a positive response to a request (for example, to ensure that a request for a business permit will be approved)?"

1. Extremely common (3)
2. Very common (2)
3. Slightly common (1)
4. Neither common nor uncommon (0)
5. Slightly uncommon (-1)
6. Very uncommon (-2)
7. Extremely uncommon (-3)

6.1.3 Alternative Explanatory Variables

The Direction of the Domestic Economy: "Generally speaking, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the direction of Romania's economy?

1. Very satisfied (3)
2. Mostly satisfied (2)
3. Slightly satisfied (1)
4. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (0)
5. Slightly dissatisfied (-1)
6. Mostly dissatisfied (-2)
7. Very dissatisfied (-3)

The Economic Effect of EU Membership on the Domestic Economy: "Generally speaking, does Romania's membership in the European Union have a positive or negative effect on Romania's economy?"

1. Very positive (3)
2. Mostly Positive (2)
3. Slightly positive (1)
4. Neither positive nor negative (0)

5. Slightly negative (-1)
6. Mostly negative (-2)
7. Very negative (-3)

Trust in Police: "How much do you trust or distrust the local police?"

1. Completely trust (3)
2. Mostly trust (2)
3. Slightly trust (1)
4. Neither trust nor distrust (0)
5. Slightly distrust (-1)
6. Mostly distrust (-2)
7. Completely distrust (-3)

Trust in Courts: "How much do you trust or distrust the courts?"

1. Completely trust (3)
2. Mostly trust (2)
3. Slightly trust (1)
4. Neither trust nor distrust (0)
5. Slightly distrust (-1)
6. Mostly distrust (-2)
7. Completely distrust (-3)

Previous Habsburg Rule: These data were coded based on previous studies on imperial legacies in Romania (Vogler, 2020).

1. Historical Habsburg Territory (1)
2. Not Historical Habsburg Territory (0)

6.1.4 Additional Covariates

Here we present coding information on two additional covariates (for which the coding was not described in detail in the empirical test section).

Education Level: "What is the highest level of education that you have obtained?"

1. No high school degree (0)
2. High school finished without baccalaureate (1)
3. High school finished with baccalaureate (2)
4. Bachelor's degree (3)
5. Master's degree (4)
6. Doctoral degree (4) (No respondent chose this option)

Income Level: "What is the monthly net income of your household (after taxes) (without any unemployment benefits)?"

1. Less than RON 500 (1)
2. RON 500-1,499 (2)
3. RON 1,500-2,999 (3)
4. RON 3,000-4,999 (4)
5. RON 5,000-7,999 (5)
6. RON 8,000-11,999 (6)
7. RON 12,000-16,000 (7) (No respondent chose this option)
8. More than RON 16,000 (8) (No respondent chose this option)
9. All members of my household are retired (0)
10. No members of my household are working (0)