How Europeans see Europe: structure and dynamics of European legitimacy beliefs

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Citation for published version (APA):
Chapter 2

Design of the study

We argued in Chapter 1 that research on EU legitimacy and its dynamics is hampered by the fact that the structure of the European belief system is unknown and that the assignment of indicators to concepts usually relies on untested textual interpretation of the question wording. Since no agreement exists on what is actually measured by familiar survey questions, results of different analyses are more likely to lead to disputed findings than to cumulative knowledge. Without valid measurement, the modelling of legitimacy processes has no sufficient empirical basis on which the appropriateness of different legitimacy theories can be tested. The present study aims at overcoming these flaws by constructing valid comparative measurement instruments for relevant legitimacy beliefs and by developing models that allow to test which of the rivaling theories applies (or apply). The analyses devoted to charting the structure underlying European attitudes are reported in Chapter 3. The subsequent modelling of legitimacy dynamics and the test of rivaling legitimacy theories is presented in Chapter 4.

The present chapter introduces basic theoretical concepts and methodological strategies that are required for the execution of our research project. Section 2.1 describes the belief system approach and sketches the analytical strategy by which the structure of the European belief system will be assessed. Section 2.2 outlines the conceptual framework by means of which dynamics can be modelled using data from a single point in time. Section 2.3 explains the comparative strategy that is followed in the different stages of the study and that allows comparing legitimacy dynamics across countries. Section 2.4 presents the data base of this study, a Eurobarometer trend study that forms part of the European Election Study of 1994.
Design of the Study

2.1 Finding structure in European attitudes

The identification of relevant dimensions of European attitudes and the construction of valid comparative measurement instruments for them presuppose the assessment of the structure of the European belief system. This section describes general assumptions and methodological decisions we make when designing the strategic analytical approach of the study of attitude structures. (1) We argue that the research question requires an approach that is partly inductive in character. (2) We assume that European attitudes exist and that they are structured as belief systems, so that insights from other attitude research can be applied to European attitudes. (3) We describe how an analysis of latent attitude structures can be designed that facilitates the identification of the major elements of the European belief system.

2.1.1 Inductive approach

The study of the structure underlying European attitudes in this monograph is partly inductive, i.e. it is not based on pre-existing conceptual distinctions and ideas about empirical interrelations between concepts. Many scholars of European attitudes have proposed their own conceptualisations and typologies of European attitudes and their measurement (see Chapter 1 Section 1), but the implications thereof have rarely been subjected to in-depth empirical scrutiny. This study does not start from any particular conceptualisation. It rather takes the opposite way: it starts out from the responses to a large set of survey questions on European integration and the European Union and analyses the underlying attitude structure. The resulting structure is then interpreted substantively in terms of its relevance to existing conceptualisations. Results of this inductive study can be used in further research to formulate hypotheses on the structure of European attitudes and test them on new data sets.

The inductive approach makes a number of ex-ante assumptions on the research object – European attitudes – without which it would be impossible to design a strategy and method of analysis. The starting point is that we distinguish between people's responses to survey questions – their beliefs – and their attitudes. Beliefs are manifest and directly observed, whereas attitudes are latent and not directly observed. Observed variables are conceptualised as functions of latent variables, i.e. concrete, observed beliefs are embedded in and shaped

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1 Obviously, the research is not just inductive, as it has at its base existing survey questions that at some time were (deductively) formulated by researchers with specific conceptual ideas in mind. Nevertheless, here we do not want to 'buy into' their conceptualisations and therefore we subsequently approach these items in a more inductive manner.
by underlying, latent attitudes. Dimensional analysis starts out from this distinction between manifest and latent variables: it uses the observed variables to identify latent ones. Investigating attitude structure thus means identifying latent attitudes that shape the observed beliefs.

Our approach makes use of probabilistic item test theory (Mellenbergh 1989, 1994). Manifest variables – indicators – are shaped by latent ones – concepts – and can therefore be used to measure the latter. The stronger the impact of the latent concept on manifest indicator, the more validly the indicator can be used to measure the latent concept. The causal link between manifest indicators and latent concepts is probabilistic. Contrary to classic test theory that assumes identity between indicator and concept, probabilistic test theory states a less deterministic relationship between observed indicators and latent variables. This has two implications.

Firstly, a latent concept can affect more than one observed indicator. Consequently, several indicators can be used to measure the latent concept. Identifying concepts proceeds by distinguishing which indicators can be regarded to derive from the same latent variable and which not. Indicators affected by the same latent variable share a common variance that is determined by the latent variable. The common variance can be used to identify the latent variable and to measure it. Mapping the latent structure underlying manifest indicators thus means clustering observed indicators according to their common variance. When a large array of indicators is clustered in this way, the latent variables (or traits) can become visible in the cluster structure and reveal the topology of the latent structure.

Secondly, an indicator is not shaped by one latent concept exclusively. Additional sources of variance also affect observed indicators, namely other latent concepts and measurement error. Single-item ad-hoc measurement is therefore risky. The variance of the single indicator may reflect only to a certain extent the impact of the latent variable. When the size of this share in unknown, it is impossible to determine how accurately a single indicator measures the latent trait. The validity of the indicator, i.e. the performance in measuring the latent trait, is proportional to the share of the variance determined by the latent trait. With single-indicator measurement, the validity of the measurement cannot be assessed. Multiple-item measures based on indicators whose common variance is determined by the latent concept overcomes such risks. Validity becomes measurable and is increased when measurement is based on the common variance of several items anchored in the latent variable. Reliability is increased in multiple-item measurement because measurement error partly cancels out when several indicators are combined into a composite measure.

The dimensional analysis in Chapter 3 starts out from observed indicators in order to detect the underlying latent structure of European attitudes. By
clustered indicators according to their common variance, we identify latent concepts. Separate clusters of indicators point to distinct latent concepts. The inspection of which indicators do or do not relate to a latent concept helps to substantively interpret the latent concept. Indicators that reflect the same concept can be used for the construction of measurement instruments. The performance of a composite measure is one of the results of the analysis. After the analysis in Chapter 3 is completed, we can describe the identified latent structure underlying European attitudes, and simultaneously construct valid measures.

2.1.2 Elements of a belief system

The basic assumption of this study is that beliefs are structured in one way or another, i.e. that they are not merely random noise. Given the fact that the European Union is a very recent entity compared to the nation states that are its component parts, it is reasonable to assume that attitudes towards the EU will be less well developed and structured than national political attitudes. The small impact of European attitudes on electoral behaviour has sometimes been explained with this notion. Debates on European legitimacy have pointed to various factors that allegedly hamper the development of distinct attitudes of support for European integration in general and legitimacy for the EU in particular: the remoteness of the European level of government from citizens’ every-day life, the lack of transparency of its political process, and the democratic deficit of the European political system. Unlike the nation states, the EU lacks a single political arena, a self-conscious European public and a European party system in which European questions are debated (e.g. Neidhart et al. 2000; Wessels & Schmitt 2000; Schmitt 2002). In addition, the EU as attitude object is not fixed but constantly evolving by the accession of new member countries and the coming into effect of new treaties. In this way, the EU towards which the attitudes are formed is a “floating referent” (Inglehart 1970c). For all these reasons, it is commonly assumed that citizens develop less clear-cut attitudes towards the EU than towards their nation state.

On the other side, the European Union has strongly gained in visibility and perceptibility for the European citizens, particularly since 1989. In the year 1994 when the data were collected, the EU enjoyed greatly increased visibility. Since the Maastricht Treaty, which attracted much attention in all member countries, the saliency of the European frame for national politics has become continuously more evident, as exemplified e.g. by budgetary discipline required to fulfil the Maastricht criteria for European Monetary Union. In many respects, the EU is an increasingly important actor in policies and it impinges on people’s welfare by way of legislation and regulation. The increasing importance
and visibility of European governance can be expected to make people aware of the EU and to foster the development of beliefs and attitudes towards it.

We do not only assume the mere existence of European beliefs, but also that they are differentiated and structured. To each of the various facets of the EU that one can distinguish, citizens may respond in a different fashion. European citizens may hold different attitudes on abstract matters (such as e.g. political unification or the political or economic benefits flowing from EU membership), or on very specific policies (such as e.g. the regulation of the European soccer market). We expect citizens to have differentiated attitudes on the EU to the degree that they are aware of these different facets of the EU, while at the same time maintaining some kind of linking between these differentiated attitudes that, after all, are also interconnected in the real world.

If European attitudes are differentiated yet interlinked in similar ways as is the case with attitudes towards other multi-faceted objects, general insights from attitude research can be applied. From attitude research in psychology and political science, we can expect European attitudes to form a belief system, “a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence” (Converse 1964:209). The strength and density of the linkages between the elements define the demarcation between the belief system and its environment, which consists of attitudes and belief systems towards other objects and of real-world experiences. Elements of a belief system are more strongly linked to each other than to elements of other belief systems, although links between different belief systems can be expected to exist. The variety of attitudes that individuals hold is thus structured by patterns of stronger and weaker relationships. From this general perspective, belief systems are clusters of attitudes that can be clearly distinguished from their environment and that show an internal structure.

The internal structure can be characterised by attitude objects and by levels of abstraction. Attitudes are defined by the attitude objects they are directed to. “Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular object or entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Chaiken 2001:899). Different objects thus provoke their own attitudinal responses. When people regard objects as related in some sense, it is likely that they establish associative links between the respective attitudes. These links generate interdependence between attitudes that are more closely linked than others. The reasons for regarding attitude objects as related can be logical, psychological or social in origin (Converse 1964). Attitudes within a belief system that cluster around closely related objects form attitude dimensions. The links stabilise the attitude structure because they make the attitudes maintain a certain degree of consistency. When one attitude changes, another attitude linked to it needs to change as well in order to preserve consistency. Attitude dimensions can thus
be regarded as more generalised attitudes that exist on a higher level of abstraction. Belief systems can embrace various distinct attitude dimensions which structure and stabilise the attitudes contained in the belief system.

Belief systems are structured at various levels of abstraction. Figure 2-1 presents the schematic structure of a belief system which has been derived from psychological attitude research (Eagly & Chaiken 1993, 1998). Beliefs are concrete and observable opinions about an object. All beliefs that are formed towards the same attitude object express the attitude towards this common referent. Beliefs are manifest and directly observed by means of e.g. survey questions. Attitudes are latent constructs that can be charted by assessing the common core of beliefs that relate to the same attitude object. Attitudes themselves may be clustered along a dimension when they relate to distinct but closely linked objects. Attitude dimensions are latent constructs on a higher level of abstraction than attitudes. They can be detected by mapping the relationships between sets of attitudes. This sheds light on how attitudes are linked in people's minds. The belief system can encompass several attitude dimensions. The distinction between the belief system and its environment is seen as a step-change in the strength and density of the relations between constituent attitudes. The linkages between the elements of a belief system are stronger and more densely patterned than the linkages of these elements with other ones outside the belief system.

**Figure 2-1:** Elements of the European belief system

![Diagram of belief system](image)

We will investigate the European belief system by analysing in succession the beliefs, attitudes, attitude dimensions and their interrelations. The methodological approach designed to carry out this project is based on latent structure analysis.
2.1.3 Latent structure analysis

Mapping the latent structure behind beliefs on European integration and the EU requires specific methods. In very general terms, these methods proceed by detecting the common core of a set of variables by means of assessing their common variance. The degree to which variables relate to the same latent concept determines the extent of their common variance. The latent concept is the source of the common variance of all related variables. Figure 2-2 illustrates this: latent variable Z influences both observed variables X and Y (one-sided arrows), which therefore share some common variance (two-sided arrow). Nevertheless, indicators that measure the same latent trait can have different distributions because they may differ in ‘difficulty’.

Figure 2-2: Schematic view on latent structure analysis

Our analysis is designed for a belief system in which we distinguish three levels of abstraction (see Section 2.1.2). This necessitates a sequence of analyses which – layer by layer – expose the latent underpinnings of European attitudes. Different statistical methods will be applied for each level of abstraction. The choice of the statistical method for latent structure analysis depends on (assumptions about) the nature of the data. This nature is expected to be different for different levels of abstraction of the European belief system. Coombs’ (1964) theory of data may help to explicate this. Coombs sees data as expressing relations between different real-world elements, such as persons, survey items, etc. He offers a classification based on two distinctions.

The first distinction is whether the data are thought to represent relations between members of one set or two different sets of elements. Responses to many kinds of survey data can be thought to derive from characteristics of the stimuli and characteristics of the respondents at the same time. If so, the data express a relationship between stimuli and individuals, i.e. two different sets of elements. If, however, people are asked to indicate which of a selection of elements is most strongly characterised by a certain feature, the responses
can conceivably be thought to express only relations between the characteristics of stimuli, i.e. one set of elements.²

The second distinction pertains to the character of the relationship that is expressed in the data. Coombs distinguishes here dominance relations from proximity relations. The first exists when one element exceeds the other in one way or another, e.g. a specific response to a stimulus can be regarded as indicative of the respondent ‘mastering’ the stimulus. Proximity exists when two elements ‘match’, i.e. these elements are considered to be ‘similar’ or ‘close’ with respect to a certain features.

Table 2-1 displays the four-fold table with the typology of data types that appears when the two distinctions are combined as well as some of the statistical methods that apply to each kind of data. Stimulus comparison data is analysed with Thurstone scales. For single-stimulus data, Guttman scaling and related techniques such as Rasch or Mokken scaling are appropriate. Similarities can be investigated with factor analysis or multidimensional scaling (MDS) methods. Analysing preferential choice requires e.g. unfolding techniques.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation between objects</th>
<th>Dominance</th>
<th>Proximity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sets of elements</td>
<td>Single stimulus</td>
<td>Preferential choice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guttman/Mokken</td>
<td>Unfolding scales</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rasch scales</td>
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<td>Two sets</td>
<td>Stimulus comparison</td>
<td>Similarities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thurstone scales</td>
<td>Factor analysis</td>
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<td>MDS</td>
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We will proceed by clustering the elements of the European belief system from concrete to abstract. First, beliefs are clustered according to the attitudes they relate to. The survey data that we will analyse are – in our view – single-stimulus data.³ They include information about two sets because at the heart of questions on EU support lies the notion of the relationship between individual and stimulus, i.e. between the citizen and the EU. Put in spatial terms: the more individuals support European integration, the closer they are to

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² This interpretation would presume that respondents’ characteristics play no role in their responses, i.e. that they function merely as replications and that differences in their responses are not related to respondent traits.

³ These data will be described in detail in Section 3.1, which is dedicated to the demarcation of the items belonging to the European belief system.
the object on a latent trait that describes all possible positions between absolute support and complete rejection. The relation between individual and stimulus can often be interpreted as a dominance relation. An item is ‘easier’ as compared to the position of the individual when the degree of the individual’s support is larger than what is required for a positive answer to the item. A more ‘difficult’ item requires a higher degree of support for a positive answer. For this reason, cumulative scaling is the appropriate method to cluster items according to attitudes. The method we will apply is Mokken scaling, a probabilistic version of cumulative scaling.

When we advance to cluster attitudes according to dimensions, we assume that the data carries information about similarities. The underlying question of this analytical step is which attitudes relate to objects that are closely linked in the mind of the individual and therefore form a common attitude dimension. It makes use of information about one set the elements (stimuli) in order to assess the proximity between them. The method we therefore apply is (confirmative) factor analysis.

The assessment of the structure underlying European attitudes proceeds in three steps. The first step is to demarcate from a large number of survey items the ones that should be contained in our analyses, and those that can be disregarded. In other words: which of many survey items can tentatively be thought to be part of a European belief system? Starting with the notion that a belief system implies some kind of linkage between its elements, we can cast our net wide and discard those items that hardly share any variance with other ones. This analysis is reported in Chapter 3 Section 1.

The second step is to cluster items on the basis of homogeneity of meaning to respondents. Here the question is whether items measure the same latent trait, i.e. whether sets of items can be thought to measure the same underlying attitude. This task can be fruitfully fulfilled by means of Mokken scales. The analysis results in a number of latent traits, each of which can be measured by a score derived from the responses to a subset of items. This is presented in Chapter 3 Section 2.

The third step consists of determining the relationships between the latent traits that were discovered in the second step. The fact that a set of items can be distinguished in two subsets, each measuring a different latent trait, does not imply that the two subsets are orthogonal. The question how the scores on different latent traits are interrelated is addressed by way of Lisrel analysis (or covariance structure analysis). It results in a schematic representation of the European belief system, the elements comprised in it and the relationships between them. This will be reported in Chapter 3 Sections 3 and 4.
2.2 Finding dynamics in structure

Having identified the major dimensions in European attitudes (Chapter 3), we can engage in the investigation of the dynamics within the belief system and tackle questions regarding the evolution of European legitimacy (Chapter 4). In order to be able to derive dynamic patterns from static data, we need a notion of how the dynamics in a belief system operate and how patterns of dynamics can be detected and modelled.

2.2.1 System dynamics

For this purpose, we focus on the links that connect the elements (attitude dimensions) in the belief system. The elements connected by links form a network in which each element can impact on any other element to which it is connected by a link (Read et al. 1997). The links are conceived as associative connections that imply consistency constraints between two elements (Abelson & Rosenberg 1958; Anderson 1983). These constraints have been formed by repeated common activation of the links. The strength of the constraint increases the more often the two elements have been thought together in the past (Runkel & Peizer 1968; McClelland & Rumelhart 1981; Thagart 1989; Eagly & Chaiken 1993). We can measure these constraints in terms of causal effects between two elements. In this way, the size of a causal effect between two elements that we can estimate from the data captures the degree of constraint to consistency formed by repeated associative activation. Links that have been activated more often in the past are stronger than others that have been activated less often.

The constraint implied in such links is not a one-way ticket. Each of the two elements can impose constraints of consistency to the other. But the reciprocal constraints do not have to be equally strong. The direction in which the link between the elements has been activated more often creates a stronger constraint as compared to the direction in which the link has been activated less often. We can determine in which direction the link has been activated more often by estimating reciprocal effects between two elements and determining which of the two effects is larger. In this manner, we can touch on past dynamics by assessing present constraints implied in the links between the elements. We will use this approach for the analysis of European legitimacy dynamics.

The fact that the elements are connected by links makes the system behave like a network. When one element changes, it activates the links that connect it to other elements and induces them to change in order to satisfy the constraints implied in the links. These elements are also linked to other elements and activate the respective constraints. In this way, change in one ele-
ment can have repercussions throughout the entire system (Read & Miller 1994; Read et al. 1997). This approach implies, of course, that constraints that transmit change can also transmit resistance to change.

We assume that the European belief system has undergone during its formation several important waves of sequential activation that have left their traces in the links that can currently be observed between the elements, much like water carves structures into stone. Each time that the individual wants to extend or refine the belief system, it returns to the most basic attitudes and derives from there constraints for new attitudes in order to be consistent with the already-existing ones. The strongest paths of activation should therefore start with the most fundamental attitudes of the system and from there proceed to others which are derived from them. The analytical task therefore consists in detecting these traces and reconstructing the paths by which formative waves of activation have proceeded through the system in the past.

2.2.2 External sources of internal change

Tracing the patterns left by previous waves of activation requires the identification of a starting point in order not to get lost in a labyrinth of traces. Moreover, a system that includes constraints to consistency tends towards a state of balance in which all the constraints implied in the links are satisfied and internal dynamics come to a standstill. In order to investigate dynamics, we need to introduce an impact of the environment impinging on the belief system that causes change in one element. Then we can observe what sequence of activations occurs in the system, starting from the particular element that was externally influenced. Similarly, we can introduce an impact that causes change in another element of the system and observe the subsequent pattern of activations. Hence, by specifying external sources of change in terms of factors in the environment that impinge on the elements of the belief system, we can investigate internal repercussions in terms of sequential activation of links. Moreover, by assigning external factors to each element in the belief system, we can capture the whole interplay of activation implied in the links simultaneously.

A necessary condition for the modelling of dynamics is thus a precise specification of the factors of the environment that impinge on the belief system and an adequate identification of the specific element via which the external factor ‘hits’ the belief system. This is a different approach to study determinants of European attitudes as is used in previous research. We do not ask whether an external factor has an impact on the belief system, but on which element of the belief system the external factor does impinge. The correct assignment of external factors to elements of the belief system is indispensable to uncover the traces of previous activations in the system.
2.2.3 Patterns of dynamics

Sequences of activation can be modelled by causal paths running through the system. These causal paths are composed of characteristic sequences of single pair-wise effects that represent the dominant constraint in each pair of elements. We need to know the dominant direction in the recursive effects within each pair of dimensions in order to detect these causal paths. Then, we can reconstruct the causal paths of previous dynamics by putting the dominant effects into a sequence of causal effects.

The causal paths can be uni-directional so that waves of activation pass through the system only once. But they may also involve feedback loops that start additional cycles of activation. In this way, these models are suitable to test the legitimacy theories because they can in principle take the form that would derive from each of the rivaling theories. Unidirectional patterns of causal paths can support either the integrationist view or the utilitarian view, which both state that one decisive attitude dimension shapes all the others. Feedback patterns, conversely, could support the Eastonian view which includes the possibility that effects run in both directions and not only one.

Our approach, although sketched here only along general lines, allows us to tackle the question which of the legitimacy processes that are hypothesised in the literature can be traced in our data. It is innovative because it allows to address questions of dynamics in belief systems and to specify the various legitimacy theories in terms of empirical models that can be supported or rejected. The exact modelling procedure will be described in greater detail in Chapter 4 Section 2, when the structure of the European belief system is known and the details of the procedure can be explained in more concrete terms. The point we want to make here is that with the application of an approach that bridges the gap between past dynamics and present structures, it is possible to model not only past attitude dynamics but also the current dynamics of legitimacy beliefs. On this basis, the present study will be able to overcome the obstacles in the investigation of European legitimacy that are posed by static data and thus to contribute to a better understanding of how European legitimacy evolves.

2.3 The comparative challenge

The central interest in this study is to investigate the evolution of European legitimacy by testing which of various legitimacy theories applies best. For this purpose, we make use of the comparative approach in order to have a whole range of countries that can support or reject the rivaling legitimacy theories. This research interest requires us to explicate our comparative
methodology. In order to compare legitimacy dynamics across countries, we need models of belief systems and of the external factors impinging on them that have identical specifications. Only then can the modelling of internal dynamics proceed under identical conditions and thus yield unequivocal comparisons.

The first question that needs to be raised in this context is why we consider the European public, subdivided into national publics, to be an adequate population for the comparative investigation of legitimacy processes. We think this a useful research starting point because all European citizens are similarly exposed to the common stimulus of European integration and the EU. Yet, at the same time the nation state remains to be the prime reference point for the formation of political attitudes (van Deth 1995). This is reflected in the fact that country membership is the strongest explanatory factor for people’s support for the EU (Shepherd 1975; Deflem & Pampel 1996). For this reason, we assume that comparing the publics of the member states provides a “most similar systems” design (Przeworski & Teune 1970:32ff) in which the single cases can be used to test the applicability of propositions implied in the legitimacy theories.

A major condition for approaching legitimacy dynamics in this way is that the relevant legitimacy beliefs are modelled in identical fashion across countries. This is very demanding because it requires that the structure of the European belief system is similar across countries; otherwise, comparative measurement instruments cannot be developed at all (Przeworski & Teune 1970). Whether the structures of the European belief systems are actually similar enough to allow the development of comparative measures remains an open empirical question. Scholars have regularly pointed to quite different degrees of support in EU member countries (e.g. Hewstone 1986; Inglehart & Reif 1991; Palmer & Gabel 1995; Niedermayer 1995; Marsh 1999). In contrast to what is often thought, this does not rule out the possibility of a belief system that is identically structured in all member countries. Even if positions of individuals or publics on the attitudes vary, the underlying attitude structure can be identical.

The reason for expecting similarity of attitude structures is the existence of a common stimulus, the European Union, that contains the same set of institutions, procedures and rules for all citizens in all countries (Dalton & Ei-

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4 Van der Eijk & Franklin (1996) conclude that the electorates of the member states of the Union can be regarded to constitute a single, European electorate in 1989. Their research question was a different one, however, than the one addressed here.
Design of the Study

Until today, most scholars paid attention to country differences in levels of EU support and attributed these to contextual factors such as population size, economic power, duration of membership, etcetera. Comparisons of levels, however, assumes in practice that the underlying attitude structure is the same. But national publics can also have different (structures of) perceptions and understandings of the EU (e.g. Belot 2000), which makes it imperative to empirically test for similarity in structure of European attitudes. We determine the degree of cross-country similarity of attitude structures by assessing the structure within each country and then comparing these across countries (Przeworski & Teune 1970). This approach guides the design of the analysis of the structure of the European belief system in Chapter 3. For each measure that we construct, we will assess its structural comparability across countries.

2.4 The European Election Study 1994

The empirical basis of the research reported in this monograph is a survey drawn from the European Election Study 1994. The EES'94 consists of two pre-electoral and two post-electoral surveys (all independent cross-section studies). The first post-electoral survey – conducted in the direct aftermath of the 1994 European election – is the core electoral study (van der Kolk et al. 1997; Schmitt & Thomassen 1999), while the remaining three surveys are Eurobarometer studies, mainly containing questions about European integration and the European Union. Many questions are asked in identical form across the surveys of the EES'94, which makes possible the replication of findings on similar data.

In this study, we use the data from the fourth survey, i.e. the second post-electoral study (Eurobarometer 42, conducted in December 1994) because this study offers by far the richest variety of questions on attitudes towards European integration and the European Union. Most questions are phrased in a form that is not bound to the specific time period of December 1994. Because of this, the relevance of the analyses extends far beyond the period of ultimo 1994, at least in so far as the associations and connotations of words and

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5 One could, of course, argue against this reasoning by a social constructivist perspective, emphasising that the same set of institutions does not have to evoke the same connotations, associations and emotions in different contexts, owing to differences in culture, national institutions and patterns of politicisation in different settings. The approach advocated here, obviously, does not necessitate to take a stand between such rivalling perspectives other than on the basis of empirical analysis.
terms in the survey questions have not changed since then. The survey questions can be classified into four categories.

The first group of questionnaire items includes a series of questions on support that are regularly asked in Eurobarometer surveys and that have become standard indicators in European attitude and election research. As discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1, there is little agreement in the literature about the conceptual meaning of these items. We include them in the latent structure analysis in order to learn about their meaning, i.e. the latent concepts they measure.\(^6\)

The second group of questions is associated with period-specific developments in European integration, namely the Treaty of the European Union (Maastricht Treaty) and the anticipated extension of the Union with Austria, Sweden and Finland in 1995. The Maastricht Treaty raised major attention in all European publics because it introduced projects of political unification (the scope of European government is increased, the role of the European Parliament is strengthened, and European citizenship is established) as well as the common currency. Before the Maastricht Treaty, European integration consisted mainly in the form of economic harmonisation. Thereafter, it is increasingly characterised by political unification. The European Election Study 1994, conducted in the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty, offers a unique opportunity to investigate how attitudes towards economic harmonisation and political unification relate to each other.

The third group of questions deals with democratic representation in the EU, how it is perceived at the time of interviewing and how it should be in the future. In more general terms, these questions deal with the democratic ideal underlying the process of European integration. As long as the European Union has not found its final institutional form, attitudes partly relate to a hypothetical object. Including these questions in the dimensional analysis of European attitudes allows us to discover how attitudes on specific issues and on the general aspirations of the European project are connected.

The fourth group of questions relates to factors that in all likelihood do not form part of the European belief system, but that are correlates (or even causes) of the elements thereof. It comprises indicators of socio-economic characteristics and measures of other attitudes that are expected to be related to European attitudes.

\(^6\) The outcomes of our investigation of latent structure, and thus of the meaning of these items, should be of help to other investigators who want to exploit the wealth of time series from the Eurobarometer studies more validly than by assigning indicators to concepts in ad-hoc fashion.
Schmitt et al. (1997) deposited the EES'94 as public domain data at the Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung in Cologne. Like in all Eurobarometer surveys and European Election Studies, all survey questions are phrased identically in all member countries — apart from translation into the national languages — to assure a maximum degree of comparability. About 1000 respondents were interviewed per country, 500 in Luxemburg and 300 additional respondents in Northern Ireland. By weighting national publics according to their population size, the separate surveys can be combined into a representative sample of the EU population.

A central question in the study of European attitudes is whether or not attitude structures are identical in all member countries of the EU. This requires including two levels of context in the analysis: national and European. The national context, however, will not in all cases be identical with the nation state. For three of the twelve member countries, we distinguished separate segments because their internal homogeneity was considered insufficiently self-evident for sensibly treating them as single units. Within the United Kingdom, we distinguish Great Britain from Northern Ireland. Since British and Northern Irish publics take very different views on national issues, it seems plausible that they differ in their views on the EU as well. Germany is divided into East and West because both publics may be expected to differ in relevant experiences and conditions. If contextual conditions have an impact on the formation of European attitudes, we cannot expect Germans from East and West to show identical structures in European attitudes. The Belgium survey is split into a Flemish and a Walloon component because of the increasing federalisation of the Belgian state which is reflected in the development of different regional party systems. In the UK and Germany, separate samples were drawn when the survey was conducted. The two Belgian publics were not sampled separately but post hoc distinguished on the basis of regions.

In sum, fifteen geographic units — further referred to as ‘countries’ or ‘publics’ — are distinguished. Table 2-2 displays their sample sizes in terms of numbers of completed interviews (unweighted) and EU population share (weighted). The analysis of structure and dynamics uses unweighted data because these questions do not require population estimates of averages or proportions. Only for description of levels or distributions are representative (weighted) data called for. Countries are displayed in the same order in the ta-

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8 Flanders: Limburg, Oost-Vlaanderen, West-Vlaanderen, Vlaams Brabant, Antwerpes.
   Wallonia: Hainaut, Namur, Liège, Luxemburg, Bruxelles, Brabant Wallon.
   The cross-check with other surveys of the EES'94 showed a good match between region and use of Flemish/Walloon language.
bles throughout the book (except Chapter 4 Section 5), in a rough geographical sorting from northwest to southeast, without thereby making any assumptions about country grouping. Countries are indicated in the tables by the three-letter abbreviations indicated in Table 2-2.

**Table 2-2:** European Election Study 1994: the 15 publics analysed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Interviews completed</th>
<th>EU Population share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEN</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRI</td>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>1,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIR</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRL</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGE</td>
<td>East Germany</td>
<td>1,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGE</td>
<td>West Germany</td>
<td>1,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET</td>
<td>the Netherlands</td>
<td>1,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLA</td>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAL</td>
<td>Wallonia</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUX</td>
<td>Luxemburg</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITA</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POR</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRE</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>13,063</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>