

DEMOCRACY SUPPORT IN EU CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

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Abstract

In the EU candidate countries the citizens' support for the democratic process is important for domestic democracy as well as the integration process.

Many factors contribute to explain democratic support (Dalton 2004), and many aspects should be considered in order to have a good understanding of the democratic processes that characterize the new democracies.

Focusing on economic expectations, political knowledge, political discussion and education, in this paper democracy support in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey is analyzed using two specific measures: support for political community and public institutions.

The principal results show weak ties between citizens and State. This is more evident in ex-communist countries where the effects of past totalitarian regimes linger as mistrust of citizens towards their public institution and low support for the democratic process. On the contrary, in Turkey the explicative models of democracy support are significant and consistent with citizens' support for the democratic process.

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Introduction

In 1993, the European Union's Heads of State and Government gathered in Copenhagen for the European Council and agreed upon a set of criteria for countries wishing to join the EU. Considering all political criteria at the base of the integration process, the democratic aspects appear to be determinant (Blondel *et al.* 1998) but also more difficult to obtain and maintain in real terms, especially if we think that the theoretical debate of "deficit democracy" is applicable to many European advanced industrial democracies (Norris 2003).

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Various analyses focusing on some European countries showed how democracy support is cyclical over time: from 1980 to 1999 some indicators of democracy support increased while others decreased, showing a fluctuant trend (Memoli 2006). Although it is difficult to claim that European countries are experiencing an erosion of democracy (Norris 1999), the citizens are always i) mistrustful of politicians, ii) sceptical about institutions and iii) disenchanted with the effectiveness of the democratic process (Dalton 2004).

In this way, the concept of democracy, as amply debated by Held (1996), and citizens' relative support for the ideals of democracy (cfr. Easton 1965) assume important roles in EU candidate countries where likely problems of legitimacy and confidence could affect the democratic process and EU integration.

Following Easton's theoretical frame (1965; 1975), in this work we focalize on Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey to analyze democracy support through two specific measures: political community and confidence in public institutions.

Many scholars have shown that political discussion (Norris 1999), political knowledge (Milner 2002) and some economic indicators (Lewis-Beck 1988; Clarke *et al.* 1993; Mishler and Rose 1999) are explicative of democracy support. By applying the same reasoning we verify how much these indicators explain two specific measures of democracy support.

The principal results obtained show marked differences between the excommunist countries and Turkey, a country where i) the democratic process appears more consolidated and ii) the explicative model fits the data better.

The Components of Democracy Support

When citizens say they support democracy, what do they effectively support?

The key to answering the question is in Easton's work (1965; 1975), which describes the elements at the base of democracy support considering the citizens' evaluation of the institutions (performance) and its components (parties and political actors), as well as the citizens' identification with the State.

The methodological approach adopted by Easton, who describes the functioning of the political system, is structured on the auto-regulation cybernetic model. The starting points are: considering political life as a behaviour system, distinguishing between environment and political system; the answers offered by the political system; and the feedback that permits the system to receive information on the environment (Easton 1965). Easton allows classification of political and institutional systems emphasizing differences and similarities among three specific political objects (political community, regime and authority) and five levels of political support (tab. 1).

The first object is the political community. It represents the nation or the political system in broad terms, and is defined as "*a group of people who come together to draw up some kind of constitution to regulate their political relationship... The particular structure of the relationship may change, the members of the system may be ranked, subdivided and rearranged politically so that the structural patterns are fundamentally altered. But as long as the members continue to evince an attachment to the overall group in which the changing interrelationships prevail... they will be supporting the existence of the same and continuing community*" (Easton 1965:178).

The second object that Easton individualized is the

regime, support for which refers to public attitudes toward the constitutional order of a nation. Norris (1999) distinguishes three levels of regime political support:

- *regime principles* that define the broad parameters within which the political system should function;
- *regime norms and procedures* that consist of rules or specific norms governing political actions;
- *regime institutions* that include orientations towards political institutions.

The third object that Easton individualized is the political authority, namely the context from which political elites emerge as state leaders. The studies on political authority show how it usually affects both the judicial institutions and the broader political system (Canache *et al.* 2001), but the reverse is not true. In fact, *“if a system is to be able to deal with its daily affairs of converting demands into binding decisions, it is not enough for the members to support the political community and the regime. It’s true, support for the structure of authority... would assure the perpetuation of the basic rules and structures through which demands might be processed”* (Easton 1965:215).

Table 1. Objects of Political Support

Political community
Regime: Principles
Regime: Norms and procedures
Regime: Institutions
Political authorities

Source: Dalton 1999

In his analysis, Easton also distinguished two types of citizen orientations (diffuse support and specific support). As did Almond and Verba (1963), who differentiated affective and evaluative beliefs to analyze “civic culture”.

Diffuse support is a deep-seated suite of attitudes towards politics and the operation of the political system, and is relatively impervious to change.

Easton’s strong concept of legitimacy shows, on one

hand, the close correlation between obedience and support for the State by the citizens, explicitly a political duty (Simmons 1979), and on the other hand, the capacity of the State to keep and mobilize citizen support for the existence and survival of the institutions (Simmons 2001).

Specific support refers to satisfaction with institutional outcomes. It is directed towards political or state elites’ actions. In this way, the specific support could be analogous to the “responsiveness” delineated by Pharr *et al.* (2000) as “democratic dissatisfactions”.

Easton tends to include both support for regime and political authorities under one concept, but we prefer to distinguish them by considering each one in a different way.

In table 2 we report and distinguish between affective and evaluative orientations that represent adherence to a values set (diffuse support), and relative evaluations, that reflect judgment on political phenomena (specific support). By combining the political levels and relative belief types, it is possible to get a map of citizen orientations towards policies and political systems along a continuum from diffuse support to specific support, and from the broadest level of political community up to political authorities, which represent the maximum level of specific support (Dalton 1999; 2004; 2005; Norris 1999).

This schema is necessary to distinguish among the various measures of political support and in order to reach a better comprehension of the significance of public attitude towards the political process.

The relationship between diffuse and specific support shows that they are not disconnected, especially when compared on a longitudinal level (Adman & Grossman 1983). Furthermore, if we consider that diffuse support also acts to absorb the effects of unpopular decisions (Gibson 1989; Tyler 1990), then it is possible for diffuse support to be high even when specific support is low.

Since Dalton (1999) suggests that comparisons among different levels of support are fundamental, because all measures of democratic support have the same weight for a political system (Easton 1975:437), in this work we consider political community and confidence in public institutions as measures of democracy support.

Democratic Legitimacy


Following Easton's schema, identification with the community is the best indicator of political identity. In fact, Almond and Verba (1963) used this indicator to analyze the "affective system" and they showed that the degree of selfidentification as American or English was a predictor of party or ideological identification. Two opposing theoretical positions emerge around

the use of this indicator:

- on one side, some scholars support the idea that attachment to one's own community (country) contrasts with the liberal virtues of impartiality and tolerance (MacIntyre 1995)²;
- on the other side, some authors show how patriotic sentiments are indispensable to stimulate confidence in institutions and in the political process (Damon 2001), as a critical part of the political process is trust of "others."

Adopting the latter perspective, a measure of democracy support is given by national pride (see Dalton 1999; 2004). In a practical way, this indicator, expressive of a strong attachment to the nation, acts as a storehouse of diffuse support when the political

Table 2. Political Support Levels

	Level of Analysis	Affective Orientations	Evaluations
Diffuse Support	Community	National pride	Best nation in which to live
		Sense of national identity	
	Regime: Principles	Democratic values	Democracy best form of government
	Regime: Norms and procedures	Participatory norms Political rights	Evaluations of rights Satisfaction with democratic process
	Regime: Political Institutions	Institutional expectations	Performance judgments
		Support party government	Trust in institutions
		Output expectations	Trust party system
Specific Support	Authorities	Identify with party	Trust bureaucracy Candidate evaluations Party support

Source: Dalton 1999

2. MacIntyre criticises the "Liberal" because the Utilitarian and Kantian morals at the base of their ideology contrast with the concept of patriotism. For more research see MacIntyre (1988).

system faces tense periods.

Overall, feelings of citizens toward their own nation³ are high (tab. 3). The highest levels are registered in Turkey, where 96,8% of citizens have high (very or fairly) national pride, while the lowest level is in Bulgaria (83,0%). Considering that more than 8 out of 10 citizens are very or fairly proud of their own country, national pride does not explain a deficit of democratic legitimacy in the EU candidate countries.

Many factors could affect this trend, but more important than the others is citizens' emotional attachment to their own country, as shown by McCrone and Surridge (1998) in the analysis of the relationship between national identity and national pride in some European countries (Britain, Western Germany, Sweden and Spain). National pride is possible where the legitimating of the political process is consolidated, but this is not the case in the candidate countries. Comparing national pride and national identity⁴ of the candidate countries by regression model ($R^2=15,8\%$), we see that the relationship is negative ($\text{beta}=-0,398$). Controlling moreover the relationship among countries ($R^2=22,7\%$), the connection between the two indicators is similar in terms of intensity

($\text{beta}=-0,370$) and statistically significant for all countries. These results further confirm how in the candidate countries citizens' support for the State is weak, just as the capability of the State to activate citizen support for the existence and survival of the public institutions is scarce.

Regime Institutions

Some studies use confidence in institutions as a specific measure of the affective quality of democratic support. This measure is characterized by two specific objects of analysis. Some scholars consider the "regime institutions" as equivalent to the public institutions, for example, parliament, parties, civil service and military (Orren, 1997), while others consider both public and private institutions (mass media, church, etc.; Lipset & Schneider, 1983); and yet others refer to concepts like trust, reciprocity and cooperation to identify the causes of social malaise (Putnam, 1995a, 1995b; Dalton, 1996).

Adopting the first way, we analyze the confidence in institutions focusing our attention on 5 public institutions: justice, police, political parties, national government and national parliament. Examining table 5, it is possible to see that among considered countries, Police is the only institution in which people have

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Table 3. National Pride (%)

	Very Proud	Fairly Proud	Not Very Proud	Not at All Proud	Total	N
Bulgaria	46,6	36,4	11,6	5,4	100,0	961
Croatia	61,5	28,1	8,7	1,7	100,0	990
Romania	53,3	34,8	9,5	2,4	100,0	997
Turkey	89,8	7,0	1,9	1,3	100,0	1.021
UE (25)	51,3	38,9	7,8	2,0	100,0	24.328

Note: Missing data are not included in the calculation of percentages. Statistical values computed only for the EU candidate countries: Goodman and Kruskal tau = 0,082; $p=0,000$.

Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

3. The question used is the following: "How proud are you to be (nationality)?"

4. This indicator is constructed with an additive logic considering the following aspects: i) attachment to own village-town, ii) attachment to own region, iii) attachment to own country (see Smith 1991).

Table 4. National Pride and National Identity

	Beta	t	Beta	t
National identity	-0,398*	-27,171	-0,370*	-26,169
Croatia			-0,147*	-8,500
Romania			-0,100*	-5,783
Turkey			-0,319*	-18,268
Constant ^A	3,010*	52,953	3,152*	54,656
R squared	0,158		0,227	
Standard Error	0,685		0,656	
Anova (Sig.)	0,000		0,000	
N	3.923		3.923	

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Note: The model is computed only on the Candidate countries. Missing data are not included in the calculation of percentages. A= Constant values are B. * $p < 0,001$.

Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

Table 5. Confidence in Public Institutions (%)

	Justice	Police	Political Parties	National Government	National Parliament
Bulgaria	23,2	49,8	12,8	29,9	19,9
Croatia	26,1	55,5	7,4	28,6	26,9
Romania	28,6	38,3	21,2	43,5	35,2
Turkey	67,3	70,0	25,2	81,8	78,8
EU (25)	49,6	64,2	20,4	41,4	44,5

Note: Table entries are the % of who has confidence in public institutions. Missing data are not included in the calculation of percentages.

Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

more confidence, with a range that goes from 38,3% in Romania, to 70,0% in Turkey.

Confidence in other public institutions yields lower percentages, particularly in political parties, which do not go beyond 26,0% anywhere, confirming again that in the EU candidate countries citizens are mistrustful about politics and sceptical about institutions. Besides, if we consider that under the communist regimes in Eastern Europe the judiciary system was politically subordinated to the Communist Party and deeply politicized (Magalhaes 1999), the low confidence could be a reflection of past mistakes.

Turkey is the only geographic context where confidence in institutions is very high. This tendency, considering the strong cultural identity that characterizes Turkey (see Gol 2003) is not unexpected, especially if we consider that attachment with own country is expressed, shaped and entrenched through institutions (Arnn 2005). So, where public institutions work well national identity is stronger, as confirmed by the Turkey data. This level of confidence is probably due to the capacity to differentiate the public institutions, as confirmed by low confidence in political parties (25,2%), and by institutions' outcome that connects strongly citizens and state.

From 2002 to 2004 confidence in parties, government and parliament has increased everywhere except in Bulgaria, where confidence in national government has remained flat (tab. 6).

The different percentage quotes obtained for each country show how the confidence in political institutions is increasing, especially in Turkey, but, at the same time, the low percentages as well as difference values registered in the other countries confirm the scarce support that citizens give to their political institutions. Considering citizens' disenchantment with politics, government and parliament, these results show that the relationship between citizens and political system is weak and needs strong reform to increase citizens' confidence and create new images for the public institutions.

Dimensions of Democracy Support

As explained in preceding pages, democracy support is composed of many dimensions and characterized by specific indicators. To understand the general level of democracy support, we considered in this work two out of four measures previously indicated: support for political community and confidence in public institutions.

Moving from Easton's distinction, at first we analyze the single indicators to understand the explicative capacity of each one and then the aggregation of both indicators.

In order to do this, we use factorial analysis, a technique

that reveals if there is an effective relationship between variables and the relationship's relative intensity (strength) among the responses to the questions in the survey and two latent measures of democracy support. Considering that one factorial dimension can be selected when its value is 1 or more (eigenvalue), in our sample we obtained 2 dimensions explicative of democracy support (tab. 8), which together explain 59,5% of total variance.

The first one, which explains 21,1% of the variance, is explicative of community and it is composed of national pride and attachment to citizens' own country.

The second one is explicative of regime (38,4%) and composed of five public institutions: justice, police, political parties, national government and national parliament.

These empirical results, though obtained on a limited set of indicators, are very similar in terms of aggregations among indicators, to those obtained by Klingemann (1999) and Dalton (2004).

All measures present high factorial correlations, which pinpoint how each factor is different from the others. Using the factors as a standardized factorial score, these two specific indicators serve as measures of democracy support.

Before concluding our analysis on democracy support dimensions, we must understand how these measures,

Table 6. Confidence in Political Institutions (2002-2004)

	political parties			national government			national parliament		
	2002	2004	Difference	2002	2004	Difference	2002	2004	Difference
Bulgaria	9	13	4	30	30	0	17	20	3
Romania	13	21	8	37	44	7	33	35	2
Turkey	16	25	9	46	82	36	47	79	32

Note: Table entries are the % of who has confidence in public institutions. Missing data are not included in the calculation of percentages. The data for Croatia aren't available for 2002.

Source: Elaboration on Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2002.2; Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

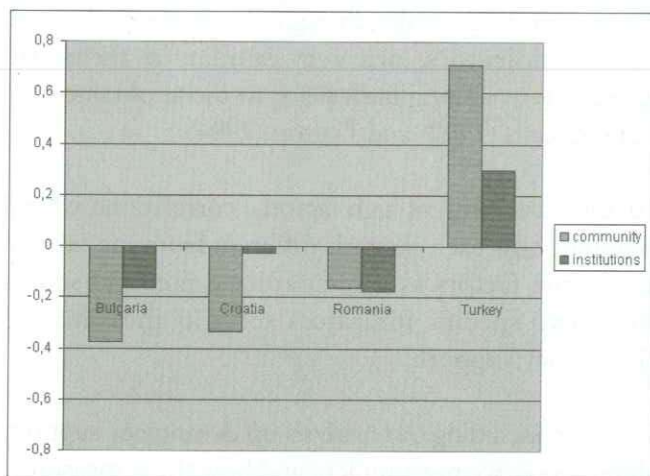
Table 7. Components of Democracy Support

		Community	Institutions
National pride		0,803	
National identity		0,803	
Confidence in Justice			0,757
Confidence in Police			0,667
Confidence in Political Parties			0,546
Confidence in National Government			0,805
Confidence in National Parliament			0,823
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	0,740		
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	0,000		
Eingevalue		2,966	1,198
% of variance explained		21,1	38,4

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Note: Extraction performed on EU candidate countries is obtained by Principal Component Analysis, while the structure of each factor is obtained by varimax rotation.

Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).



Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

Graph 1: Factors Scores of the Democracy Support

represented by factor analysis scores, characterize EU candidate countries.

As it is possible to see in graphic 1, only in Turkey there is an effective support for community and public institutions, while in the Eastern countries it is low, with clear differentiation in terms of scores between the measures.

In Bulgaria and Croatia institutional support is high compared to support for political community, while in Romania the levels are similar.

In conclusion, as a picture of democracy support, these measures show that in the EU candidate countries, with the exception of Turkey, the democratic process presents many legitimacy problems for the same states and scarce confidence in public institutions, aspects which, if not resolved could negatively affect the process of EU integration in the near future.

Democratic Citizenship: Political Discussion and Political Knowledge

A political community works when its citizens are willing to embrace its ideals and participate in its public institutions. If a state does not have energetic citizens who participate through political discussion and popular interest in community life, a political community is an empty system. In other words, without public involvement in the process, democracy loses legitimacy and support from the citizens (see Dalton 2005).

In the past, a citizen was seen as a person who often took part in the political life (to vote, for example) without political sophistication (Converse 1964) or lots of information (Berelson *et al.* 1954). Now many things have changed. Thanks to the evolution of mass media (television, see Norris 2000) and the increased educational content of media (Humphreys 1996), the public's political skills and resources have increased as well, especially if the phenomenon is analyzed across generations (Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996).

Moving from the idea, as the traditional theory of democracy prescribes, of an informed citizenry as a crucial element to democratic politics (Dahl 1979), we next focus on citizens' engagement in political discussion (Norris 1999) and political knowledge (Milner 2002).

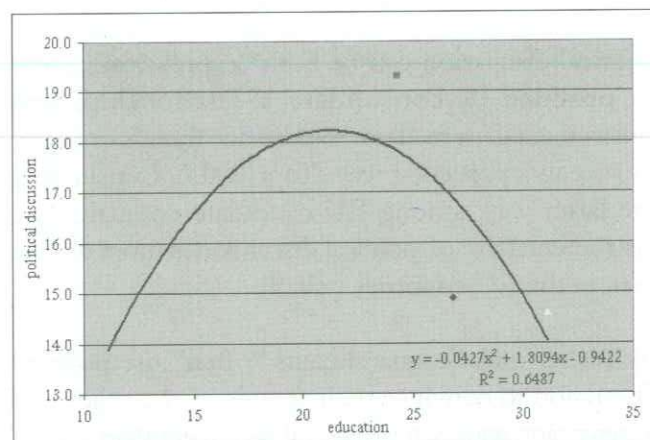
Considering people who "frequently" take part in political discussion, among the EU candidate countries the percentages are similar and rather low. Excluding Croatia, where almost 2 out of 10 citizens frequently discuss politics, in the other countries, the citizens that discuss politics regularly are not more than 15,0% (tab. 8). Given that the EU (25) countries have similar percentages, it is possible to understand how the behaviour in the EU candidate countries is similar to the behaviour in the EU countries.

However, Turkey's case is of particular interest. There, citizens claiming to have never discussed politics make

up the highest percentage out of all the countries considered. Many aspects affect political discussion but, as some scholars have showed (see Torgler & Schaltegger 2005), education appears to be a good predictor.

We adopt a polynomial regression model to juxtapose these two measures, and the results confirm our expectation ($R^2=0,649$): with increasing education level discussion of politics increases (graph. 2).

As it is possible to see, Turkey is the country where the educational level is very low, and the effect of this on political discussion is evident. Croatia is on the other end of the spectrum, the country where this relationship presents the highest percentage values.



Graph 2. Education Level by Political Discussion

Table 8. Political Discussion

	frequently	occasionally	never	Total	N
Bulgaria	14,9	52,8	32,3	100,00	986
Croatia	19,3	53,3	27,4	100,00	995
Romania	14,6	55,9	29,5	100,00	1.005
Turkey	13,8	41,8	44,4	100,00	1.021
EU (25)	16,0	57,3	26,7	100,00	24.708

Note: Missing data are not included in the calculation of percentages. Statistical values computed just on the EU candidate countries: Goodman and Kurskal tau=0,013; $p=0,000$.

Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

The problem of low general education level in Turkey is not new. In fact, according to the OECD⁵ (2001) analysis:

- 65% of the OECD population aged 25-64 has completed upper secondary while in Turkey only 22%;
- 1% of a typical age cohort in OECD countries possesses an advanced research degree such as a Ph.D, while in Turkey the ratio is less than half the OECD average;
- expenditure per student in southern European countries is less than half the OECD.

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How it is possible to understand, the education system in Turkey has many problems that likely affect not only the economic evolution (see Barro 1997), but also all the related aspects, including democracy support (see Clarke *et al.* 1993).

Political discussion can be both “expressive”, a way to produce or consolidate a relationship, and “instrumental”, a medium to persuade friends or family to vote in a particular way (Topf 2003). Considering the latter way, among EU candidate countries the instrumental use of political discussion is more diffuse than in the EU countries (tab. 9).

In Turkey and Croatia citizens “often” use political discussion to convince their friends of the validity of a viewpoint, with percentage values greater than 26,0%.

This practice is more attenuated in Romania, where only 17,2% of citizens “often” use political discussion as an instrument.

Anyway, it’s important to underline that this specific use of political discussion is more attenuated in the EU (25), where the citizens are more open to direct influence from the mass media.

Many scholars have showed that political discussion is a relevant component of democratic performance (Inglehart 1990), it is crucial for democratic citizenship (Almond & Verba 1963), and to have a genuinely representative government (Turner 2003). However, it is also true that citizens need to have at least a minimal understanding of the political system in which they express preferences and elect representatives (Niemi & Junn 1998:1).

Some studies show that citizens have little incentive to gather information about politics solely in order to improve their political choices (Downs 1957), so it is important, as Almond & Verba (1963) underline, to care about civic competence because it affects the stability of democracy. In fact, we cannot forget that for democracy to survive it needs support from the citizens (Klingemann, 1999).

Thus, the question we want to answer is: *what political knowledge do people have?* There are two ways to analyze

Table 9. Political Discussion to Convince Friends (%)

	often	from time to time	rarely	never	Total	N
Bulgaria	17,6	35,5	26,6	20,3	100,00	974
Croatia	26,1	37,0	19,6	17,3	100,00	992
Romania	17,2	30,0	27,9	24,9	100,00	1.002
Turkey	29,6	33,7	15,3	21,4	100,00	1.012
EU (25)	12,4	35,4	26,9	25,3	100,00	24.328

Note: Missing data are not included in the calculation of percentages. Statistical values computed just on the EU candidate countries: Goodman and Kruskal tau=0,010; p=0,000.

Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

5. OECD is Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

political knowledge (Lewendusky & Jakman 2003): some scholars use an individual item asking for a subjective assessment of respondents' level of knowledge about politics (see Bartles 1996), while other scholars use a series of factual questions and placement of parties or candidates built into a knowledge scale, where respondents are ranked depending on how many questions they correctly answer (Mondak, 2001; Gomez & Wilson, 2001). Both methods have associated drawbacks, but following Zaller (1992) in the analysis of the political knowledge in EU candidate countries, we will consider factual knowledge.

To assess interviewees' political knowledge we used two questions⁶, both designed to measure how much each country's citizens know about the EU⁷. Following Luskin and Bullock (2004), we combined incorrect and "don't know" responses⁸.

Among all the EU candidate countries there are minimal differences of political knowledge, but the scores

obtained are far from those of the EU average (1,01; tab.10). Croatia and Turkey, with a number of correct answers equal to 0,51 and 0,49 respectively, are the countries that know more about some EU political aspects. Romania and Bulgaria are on the opposite end, where there is a low level of political knowledge (0,32 and 0,31 respectively).

Although political knowledge scores are low, if we consider, on one hand, that political knowledge is a functional and indispensable factor for a democracy to work well (Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Milner 2002) and on the other hand, that the scores for correct answers given by citizens of European countries are not very high, we can conclude that Croatia and Turkey are on the right path to increase EU political knowledge, even if much will depend also on media and educational systems.

Economy and Democracy

Many scholars underline the indivisible connection that ties economy and democracy (Infantino 1993).

Table 10. The Measures of Political Knowledge

	Bulgaria	Croatia	Romania	Turkey	EU (25)
the Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of the EU	27,0	43,4	26,7	36,5	60,0
the last European elections took place in June 2002	4,6	8,2	5,1	12,6	41,4
mean (0=all answers incorrect; 2=all answers correct)	0,31	0,51	0,32	0,49	1,01

Note: The percentage values are relative to the correct answer. Missing data are not included in the calculation of percentages.

Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

6. While single-nation surveys increasingly include a battery on common political knowledge, the same cannot be said for comparative research. In this work, in absence of specific questions of political knowledge on the interviewees' own countries, we analyzed European political knowledge focusing on three things that citizens would normally need to know in order to make informed choices in voting or otherwise participating in politics.

7. The scarcity of indicators has forced us to select indicators about political knowledge on Europe and not on the citizens' nation.

8. The research on political knowledge works by exploring the validity of knowledge measures and adopting specific recoding. Some researchers think that knowledge as a discrete count of correct answers provides a valid measure of knowledge only if it is appropriate to collapse the other two response categories - the incorrect answer and the "don't know" - into a single "absence of knowledge" grouping (see Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996; Luskin & Bullock 2004). Other scholars take a different approach: incorrect answers are one category, while "don't know" is treated as "partial information," and this specific modality is considered active information (Mondak 2000; Barbas 2002). In this work we chose the first approach.

The relationship is confirmed by studies addressing the new democracies, where a hard economic push could create a greater stability during the democratic transition. In fact, the unmet expectations of citizens and the eventual economic dissatisfaction could reflect negatively on the institutions and on the democratic consolidation process within a country (Diamond 1999). In this way, the economy is a factor that defines citizens' attitudes towards the democratic process (Anderson & Guillory 1997).

In the field of political science, many studies have examined this relationship considering retrospective/perspective and egocentric/national approaches (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier 2000) and identify these approaches as a satisfying explicative factor for the evaluation of government (Clarke *et al.* 1993).

If government performances do not meet the citizens' expectations, political and institutional support is damaged (Dalton 2004). Thus we analyzed economic expectations in the EU candidate countries considering the following aspects: economic, financial, employment and personal job.

The situation that emerges among our countries is not very optimistic: only in Romania and Turkey 4 out of 10 citizens see a future rosier than the present, especially with regards to economic and financial aspects (tab. 11).

In the other two countries, the citizens are wrapped in pessimism. The case of Bulgaria is a good example, where 7 out of 10 citizens are worried about their personal job. Just as much worry is generated by employment and economy, according to more than 4 out of every 10 Bulgarians. While in Croatia, the financial situation troubles citizens (54,4%).

However, the pessimistic trend is even worse in the EU (25) countries, with only 2 out of 10 people expecting a better situation in the future. The public's pessimism, as many studies have shown, is determined by the EU economic trend. In fact, during the recession in south-eastern Europe from 1997 to 1999, and again

in 2001, the slow-down in economic growth began in western countries and affected the markets of neighbouring countries (UNECE 2003). This situation has generated a flexion of employment in all candidate countries and an exponential increase in the youth unemployment rate, which in Bulgaria and Croatia is greater than 38,0%. Another serious situation was in Turkey, where from 2000 until the end of 2001, the GDP declined strongly (-12%), setting off a negative chain reaction in the entire internal labour market. As we can see, the negative effects produced by a weak economy both in EU countries and EU candidate countries have generated fears and worries among people and, consequentially, pessimism for the future.

Explicative Models of Democracy Support

The trend seen in the candidate countries shapes to two different groups: the ex-communist countries and Turkey. This division, social as well as political, has been generated fundamentally by old communist regimes that have negatively coloured the perception and evaluation that citizens have of their own political system. Thus, citizens in these countries may engage in a different breed of democracy support.

Analyzing the impact that political discussion, political knowledge and economic expectations have on two different measures of democracy support, there is a clear differentiation between the models.

According to our first model, economic expectations is the factor that produces the highest impact on the political community ($\beta=0,265$; tab. 12). The effect of this economic expectation index on the dependent variable shows that where there is economic wellbeing, the people are more inclined to give support for democracy. The importance of economic expectations is confirmed also by some studies on ex-communist countries that underline the role played by economic efficiency in producing support for the new political regime (Munro 2001), which evidences an instrumental and materialistic tie connecting the citizens of the EU candidate countries with their democratic political systems. In this way, the citizens have an ideal substantive version of democracy that emphasizes

Table 11. Future Economic Expectations

Economic					
	Worse	Same	Better	Total	N
Bulgaria	51,0	25,3	23,7	100,0	845
Croatia	37,1	47,6	15,3	100,0	945
Romania	32,6	23,1	44,3	100,0	889
Turkey	25,5	30,8	43,7	100,0	936
EU (25)	37,7	41,3	21,0	100,0	23.294

Chi square (Sig.)= 375,208 (0,000); Goodman and Kruskal tau: 0,051 - p= 0,000

Financial					
	Worse	Same	Better	Total	N
Bulgaria	55,1	25,8	19,1	100,0	918
Croatia	54,4	22,7	22,9	100,0	961
Romania	38,3	17,6	44,1	100,0	966
Turkey	42,1	20,2	37,7	100,0	961
EU (25)	55,2	21,5	23,3	100,0	24.083

Chi square (Sig.)= 189,667 (0,000); Goodman and Kruskal tau: 0,051 - p= 0,000

Employment					
	Worse	Same	Better	Total	N
Bulgaria	48,0	29,2	22,8	100,0	760
Croatia	30,6	50,8	18,6	100,0	938
Romania	30,6	34,8	34,6	100,0	853
Turkey	28,9	34,7	36,4	100,0	934
EU (25)	34,7	44,8	20,5	100,0	23.142

Chi square (Sig.)= 192,276 (0,000); Goodman and Kruskal tau: 0,028 p= 0,000

Personal Job					
	Worse	Same	Better	Total	N
Bulgaria	70,6	13,1	16,3	100,0	881
Croatia	67,4	14,0	18,6	100,0	781
Romania	50,5	14,2	35,3	100,0	691
Turkey	49,8	16,7	33,5	100,0	946
EU (25)	67,1	12,1	20,8	100,0	21.878

Chi square (Sig.)= 147,946 (0,000); Goodman and Kruskal tau: 0,030 p= 0,000

Note: Missing data are not included in the calculation of percentages. Statistical values computed just on the Candidate countries.

Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

socioeconomic elevation and delivery of desired services, especially in a context of scarce economic resources (see Bratton *et al.* 2005).

Like economic expectations, political discussion has a positive impact on support for the political community, but with a lower intensity ($\beta=0,086$). The same could also be said about political knowledge, even if the effect on the dependent variable is lower ($\beta=0,070$). In this way, these results confirm that by participating in the political system and democratic process a "citizen becomes consciously a member of a great community" (Mill 1991:238).

14 If we consider, on one hand, that formal educational attainment is the primary mechanism behind much citizenship (Hillygus 2005), and on the other hand that EU candidate country citizens have, on average, a low educational level, one might expect that low levels of mass literacy would inhibit popular support for democracy. In practice this is not the case. In fact, it is precisely among the less educated ($\beta=-0,170$) that support for community is highest, confirming that

although there is a structural education deficit, citizens have a clear idea about democracy support.

Excluding political knowledge ($t=1,613$), we obtain the same relationships when we control for the countries the explicative model of support for the community ($R=28,4$), but with a lower intensity, especially for indicators relevant to the education level ($\beta=0,051$). It depends, as the results obtained by control variable show, on the homogeneity of countries that brings about a decline of impact of each variable. Only in Turkey does the model yield significant results, confirming the idea that where communism did not mark the political process there is a greater likelihood that cultural and political aspects affect the democratic process.

A radically different situation is obtained in the same regression model when we consider the second measure of democracy support: institutions.

The model presents a low explained variance level ($R^2=0,005$) and the only statistically significant variable is education: those with a low education level have

Table 12. Democracy Support Regression Models

	community				institutions			
	Beta	t		Beta	t		Beta	t
Political discussion	0,086***	4,225		0,042*	2,270		-0,006	-0,265
Political knowledge	0,070**	3,483		0,030	1,613		0,017	0,773
Economic future expectations	0,265***	13,203		0,237***	12,830		0,032	1,502
Education	-0,170***	-8,408		-0,051**	-2,673		-0,061**	-2,854
Croatia				0,260	1,119		0,039	1,438
Romania				0,280	1,209		-0,042	-1,602
Turkey				0,445***	17,952		0,191*	6,681
Costant*	-0,344	-3,514		-0,758	-7,712		0,103	0,962
R square	0,123			0,284			0,005	
Standard Error	0,685			0,850			1,026	
Anova (Sig.)	0,000			0,000			0,019	
N	2207			2207			2207	

Note: The model are computed just on the Candidate countries. Missing data are not included in the calculation of percentages.

* Constant values are B.

Source: Elaboration on Eurobarometer 62.0 (Oct.-Nov. 2004).

greater confidence in public institutions ($\beta = -0,061$). The others variables considered in the model are not significant. The same situation is seen in the explicative model when a control variable (countries) is introduced: an increase in explained variance ($R^2 = 0,042$), but Turkey is the only country where this model could be effectively applied ($\beta = 0,191$).

Looking at our empirical results in the light of the fact that diffuse support is rooted in society by early democratic socialisation and experience, and is independent of the actions of political actors and specific material rewards (see Easton 1965), we can say that Turkey is the only country where the democratic process has effectively started moving towards consolidation. In the ex-communist countries, the low support for the political community and public institutions requires more effort by government and political actors and new reforms aimed at consolidating the relationship between citizens and state.

Conclusion

Democracy support in the candidate countries, excluding Turkey, is not high.

Citizens of eastern countries still feel the weight of communism, and the effects are present in the low scores on measures of support for political community and confidence in public institutions. For a democratic political system to survive, diffuse support is needed for a legitimate and effective assessment by its public, thus we can claim that among candidate countries, democracy support is still mired in pessimism.

This tendency is determined also by structural factors such as education level and some political aspects like low political participation and low knowledge of the political system. These negative factors worsen a relationship between citizens and political system already marked by past mistakes that are difficult to overcome.

But one aspect is salient, where citizens' expectations economic are high, people are more likely to support

their own political community. Therefore, the first step must be taken by political actors through a system of reforms that reassures citizens about the future and presses for support for a political system that still has difficulty engaging in the democratic process.

The independent variables considered in our two regression models allow us to explain diffuse support among citizens, confirming that where citizens participate actively (with discussion and knowledge) in the political process and are optimistic about the near economic future, support for the democratic process can increase. This is evident in Turkey, but not in the other countries where the communist shadow colors attitudes about the near future, especially with regards to support for public institutions. In this way, among the candidate countries, only in Turkey does the democratic process appear to be moving towards consolidation.

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