

**PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE EU'S CRISIS MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE:
THE CASE OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

By

Petra Varhegyi

Submitted to Central European University-Private University

Department of Political Science

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Political Science

Supervisor: Professor Mariyana Angelova



Vienna, Austria

2021

ABSTRACT

The coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on the every-day life of European citizens. People's personal and work environment were transformed, and certain restriction measures had to be introduced top down in order to keep everyone safe and healthy. Crisis management requires expertise, decisive action, proper funding, institutional support, and well-organised logistics. No matter whether national governments and EU institutions decided on the curtailing of civil liberties or on the prioritisation of the economy, at the end of the day, citizens' attitude towards decision-makers has been influenced by the crisis and the values and principles of the political system have been challenged. This thesis examines why some people were satisfied with the EU's crisis management performance while others less so.

The existing public perception literature argues that European citizens have pre-existing beliefs about the EU and about the role it plays in crises. It is believed that these attitudes can explain satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance and that these can be defined through three explanatory variables: readiness to increase the decision-making power and the means of the EU and trust in the European executive.

To measure public perception, the 2020 standard Eurobarometer cross-country survey data is used. Interviews were conducted from July to August 2020. Approximately 27 000 participants' responses are analysed to understand public satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. The significance of this research is twofold: on the one hand, the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic challenge the fundamental values of the EU, and, on the other hand, the pandemic's potential consequences can potentially impact European (dis-) integration, Euroscepticism and the return of "big government". The results are useful for both policy-makers and researchers interested in public opinion and invested in the idea of the potential enlargement of the EU's competencies to manage salient events and to become a powerful crisis manager in the future.

LIST OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
LIST OF TABLES	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
1.1 SATISFACTION WITH CRISIS MANAGEMENT	7
1.2 READINESS TO DELEGATE MORE DECISION-MAKING POWER	9
1.3 READINESS TO DELEGATE MORE MEANS	11
1.4 TRUST.....	13
CHAPTER 2: THEORY	17
2.1 CRISIS AS A CONCEPT.....	17
2.2 CRISIS MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE.....	18
2.3 CRISIS IMPLICATIONS: MORE OR LESS INTEGRATION	19
2.4 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION	21
2.5 HYPOTHESES	22
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN.....	28
3.1 DATA.....	28
3.2 DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	29
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	32
4.1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS.....	32
4.2 REGRESSION ANALYSIS.....	36
4.2.1 MAIN EXPLANATORY VARIABLES' IMPACT ON SATISFACTION	37
4.2.2 CONTROL VARIABLES' IMPACT ON SATISFACTION	39
4.2.3 INTERACTIONS WITH DIFFICULTY OF COPING	40
CONCLUSION.....	42
APPENDICES	46

APPENDIX A. CONTROL VARIABLES.....	46
APPENDIX B. BOXPLOTS.....	47
APPENDIX C. LINEAR REGRESSION	47
APPENDIX D. ORDINAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION	49
BIBLIOGRAPHY	51

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Satisfaction with the EU's crisis management	32
Figure 2 Satisfaction and more decision-making power to the EU.....	34
Figure 3 Satisfaction and more means to the EU	35
Figure 4 Satisfaction and trust in the EU	35

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Descriptive analysis.....	33
Table 2 Regression analysis	36

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 (hereon coronavirus) illness has abruptly changed people's lives in December 2019. The virus spread quickly among the Chinese community in December 2019 and from there on globally. The slow introduction of prevention measures, the lack of prompt infrastructure, medical equipment and personnel, and an effective cure became a tremendous issue worldwide (Bongardt, Torres 2020). European states identified their first patients at the end of January 2020 (Goniewicz et al. 2020:3). European leaders reacted quickly to the upsurge of coronavirus patients. As of time of writing more than a million Europeans have lost their lives to and forty-six million have been infected by this deadly virus (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control 2021).

Every crisis experienced by the European Union (EU) has been a unique challenge to the functioning and to the benefits of the Union. As a community of shared values, the very sentiments of solidarity and unity that hold the EU together and the Union's existence have been called into question. The Euro crisis was financial in nature, the Brexit crisis identity-based and the migration crisis social. While all of these events were highly salient, none of them contested the core democratic principles of the Union as much as the coronavirus crisis. The fundamental difference of this pandemic lies in the fact that it tests Europeans' pre-existing beliefs about the EU and that it impacts civil liberties such as the freedom of movement and assembly, among many.

Not only citizens, but the national governments and the EU's institutions have also been facing a challenge like never before, as decision-makers had to face not only the health aspect of the pandemic, but the significant economic devastations caused by the lockdowns, increased unemployment rates and the growing recession as well (Baekgaard et al. 2020:1). Due to a collective decision by the heads of government, travel restrictions and national lockdowns were introduced in the EU's member states multiple times, as the increased number of infected came

in three waves. Due to the nature of this crisis internal borders had to be closed to prevent the spread of the virus from one country to the next. Hence, the Schengen agreement had to be suspended temporarily for non-essential travel. These measures challenged the EU's utmost principles and values: integration, solidarity, democracy and freedom (von der Leyen 2020).

In the first few months of the pandemic Europeans abided by the national governments' and EU institutions' rules of nation-wide lockdowns, curfews, travel restrictions, and hygiene guidance to a large degree (de Vries et al. 2020:5; Fetzer et al. 2020:3). Additionally, public perception towards executives has improved significantly. This can be explained by the "rally 'round the flag" theory (Mueller 1970:21), according to which in times of external crises people seek help from the incumbents and show wide support to the measures and actions they put in place. Polls have shown that European leaders' support has followed the same trend in the short-term (e.g. Bol et al. 2021:501). For example, Emmanuel Macron's, Angela Merkel's, Sebastian Kurz's and Boris Johnson's levels of popularity have all increased by twenty to thirty percent (Erlanger 2020). In Western Europe satisfaction with democracy has improved by 2.8-3.2 percent and trust in the cabinet by 2.4-3.2 percent (Bol et al. 2021:501). However, as the pandemic went on for months, public perception changed, and people updated their views as leaders have become directly responsible for the management of the consequences of the crisis (de Vries et al. 2020:9).

Due to the EU's role of upholding unity among the member states and standing as the manager of global issues, its crisis management performance has been receiving significant attention from the public during the coronavirus pandemic. Perceptions of how the EU deals with this crisis are important because citizens' evaluations might have detrimental effects for future support for the EU project and further European integration. If the EU proves to be successful in the management of the pandemic, then trust and support for the EU may increase significantly. If however the EU is perceived to fail, then potential disintegration, exits from

the Community, the strengthening of national politics may increase, and a political crisis might come about.

In the EU's context, a political crisis usually means that European integration and the EU's legitimacy and competence are called into question. Kriesi (2020:11-12) has also called the phenomenon the crisis of representation. Accordingly, citizens feel as if their respective government or political community was not able to manage the crisis in a fashion that overlaps best with their personal view. The impact of the political crisis on political actors revolves around the extent of the initial crisis in temporal, economic, social terms (Roberts 2003:51). The larger the impact, the worse the consequences for the political elite in power (Kriesi 2015:26). But a crisis can also bring about an opportunity for the ruling elite to make structural changes to the political system and introduce new reforms. For example, the 2007-9 Great Recession generated a new legal instrument and a financial stability mechanism to avoid jeopardizing the European monetary area to another financial crisis and instead ensure stability and security (Csaba 2016:117). Meanwhile, the climate crisis which reached its window of opportunity among policy makers in 2019 and resulted in a New Green Deal to prevent a climate catastrophe hitting Europe (Fitch-Roy, Benson, Mitchell 2019:87-8). Consequently, perceptions of the EU's performance during the coronavirus pandemic are essential to be understood by the academic community and decision-makers in order to know whether citizens are in favour of further European integration and whether such a dire crisis can challenge citizens' pre-existing views about the EU.

The academic community responded quickly to the pandemic's societal impact and started to measure public perception towards national measures in March 2020. About a dozen studies have been published so far which predominantly focused on Western European changes in incumbent support (de Vries et al. 2020), political attitudes, trust and satisfaction with democracy (Bol et al. 2021), political preferences in a local election (Leininger, Schaub 2020),

public support to governmental actions and mental health (Fetzer et al. 2020), the “rally ‘round the flag” phenomenon due to lockdowns and trust in democratic institutions (Baekgaard et al. 2020) and perceptions towards civil liberties, global decision-makers and economic measures (Amat et al. 2020). Yet, the initial fear of the pandemic settled by the first half of 2020 (Gebrekal 2020) and questions of executive performance have emerged (Krastev, Leonard 2020).

This paper will fill two gaps in the literature. Firstly, citizens’ satisfaction with the national incumbents’ performance has been applied to the coronavirus pandemic to a limited extent (see Bol et al. 2021 as an exception) and not at all to the EU’s performance during the current crisis. Hence, the first contribution is filling this gap by examining public perception of the EU’s crisis management performance in the literature. Secondly, it is believed that the chosen explanatory variables can determine whether this extraordinary coronavirus crisis has challenged citizens’ European identity and thereby explain people’s satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance. The explanatory variables will be: 1) the desire to increase the EU’s decision-making power, 2) willingness to delegate more means to the EU, and 3) trust in the EU. Whether or not citizens are supportive of the increased decision-making power of the EU is significant because of further European integration. While the increase of its financial means so that it can achieve its political objectives is important because it shows increased support of its work. Finally, trust in the EU means that people can rely on the EU to make good decisions and perform the crisis management well. These explanatory variables are often used in the existing literature to explain satisfaction with democracy. However, they are rarely employed for the evaluation of the European executive’s crisis management performance. Hence, this is the second gap to be filled.

In terms of the theoretical analysis, retrospective voting theory will be used. This theory has been borrowed from the voting behaviour literature but can also be applied to the satisfaction literature. Retrospective voting theory directly focuses on satisfaction with

incumbent performance in crisis situations. If citizens are satisfied with the executive's performance, then they will show continuous support. If not, then they will punish the incumbent. The theoretical expectations include that trust in the EU, and the desire to increase its decision-making power and financial means will be significant factors in explaining satisfaction. These expectations are well supported by the literature on satisfaction with the EU, which argues that citizens have a European identity which ensures support of the EU's managerial oversight in global salient events such as climate change or international terrorism. Since this pandemic is also a large-scale crisis it can be anticipated that Europeans will respond similarly.

With regards to the research design, this thesis examines public satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance during the coronavirus outbreak in the 27 member states of the EU based on the standard Eurobarometer survey data fielded from July to August 2020. Around 1000 participants from each country were asked to share their opinion about the EU's decision-making power, the financial means it holds to achieve its political objectives and trust in the EU, among many things.

The findings of the descriptive and regression analyses reveal that readiness to increase the EU's decision-making power and trust in the EU lead to increased satisfaction with the EU's crisis management during the current pandemic, but willingness to delegate more means to the EU does not. The implications include that citizens are supportive of further European integration and that they believe that the EU has their best interest at heart. Furthermore, it is clear that citizens have a positive perception of the EU and even a dire pandemic cannot change their European identity and their pre-existing beliefs about the EU.

The paper is organised as follows: Firstly, the gap in the currently rapidly growing literature about the coronavirus crisis will be discussed. The three aspects that this thesis considers explanatory of satisfaction with the EU's performance are: 1) Readiness to delegate

more decision-making power to the EU; 2) Readiness to delegate more means for it to achieve its political objectives; and 3) trust in the EU to make the right decisions. Hence, these explanatory variables will be analysed in the EU's context. Secondly, the key concepts of "crisis" and "rally 'round the flag'" will be discussed. Then, the theoretical expectations of the retrospective voting theory will be examined. As mentioned above, this theory is expected to explain perceptions of incumbents' performance, even if it does not involve the act of voting. Fourthly, the hypotheses and the research design of the study will be presented. Fifthly, the findings of the regression analyses will be explained in detail. Finally, the main implications of the paper will be concluded, and further avenues of research will be presented.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Crises attract significant academic attention in Europe because the EU can be caught up in various crises due to its involvement in numerous areas of policy- and decision-making. Most studies focus either on the aftermath of the crisis or on public attitudes towards the mechanisms and institutional changes that are introduced to reduce the impact of a particular crisis (see eg. Csaba 2016; Braun, Tausendpfund 2014). Satisfaction with the EU's managerial work in crises has been, however, largely ignored by the academic literature, hence, this paper will make a contribution by examining satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance.

1.1 SATISFACTION WITH CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The academic literature has begun to examine the initial impact of the pandemic on satisfaction to specific governmental crisis measures, such as lockdowns (e.g. de Vries et al. 2020; Bol et al. 2021), in the national contexts. De Vries et al. (2020) and Bol et al. (2021) examined the experience of a handful of Western European countries at the beginning of the pandemic and studied the change in public perception towards their incumbents. De Vries et al. (2020:19) confirmed that Italians' perception towards their incumbent and the incumbent's party significantly improved, as lockdowns were introduced. Although the authors did not analyse satisfaction with crisis management per se, support for the crisis managers' performance and the abovementioned "rally 'round the flag" effect were clearly detectable (Ibid.:27).

In terms of evaluation of the incumbents' performance, Bol et al. (2021:501-2) found that people rallied around their incumbents to a lesser extent in Western Europe than what de Vries et al. (2020:27) showed in Italy. However, they found that satisfaction with democracy has increased to a larger extent (Bol et al. 2021:501). They also discovered that these changes in public perception were triggered by the introduction of lockdowns and other protective

measures. Meanwhile, Fetzner et al. (2020) conducted a survey in 58 countries at the beginning of the pandemic to find out how people perceived other citizens' and the governments' reaction to the coronavirus outbreak. They were able to show that about sixty percent of the respondents were not satisfied with their governments' response to the pandemic (Ibid.:5). This was due to the public's belief that the governments' actions were not strict enough (Ibid.:6). But as the governments introduced further protective measures, public perception and trust in the governments improved (Ibid.). The results demonstrate that tangible action by the government can change the public perception of crisis management performance significantly.

The abovementioned studies have made significant progress in understanding how people evaluate incumbents' management of the current pandemic in certain countries, based on country-level indicators. However, cross-country European studies have not yet been conducted to address citizens' satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. This is where this paper makes a contribution, by testing explanatory variables' effect on satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. The number of factors that can impact public satisfaction towards the EU are numerous.

Hobolt (2012:94-96), for example, used political participation, confidence in the European and national parliaments, quality of national institutions, economic state of the country, satisfaction with the national cabinet, the level of financial support from the EU, political knowledge and citizens' responsibility attribution to the EU to analyse citizens' satisfaction towards the EU during the financial crisis. The author found that citizens are more satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU, compared to their respective country (Ibid.:92). Furthermore, middle class, well educated, knowledgeable people with a strong European identity and those supportive of further integration are more satisfied with democracy in general (Ibid.:99).

Based on the existing literature on satisfaction with the EU's crisis management, three performance-evaluative factors have been chosen: readiness to delegate more decision-making power to the EU, willingness to increase the European executive's financial means, and trust in the European institutions to make the right decisions. These variables are believed to explain satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance because they demonstrate a pre-existing European identity and support for the European project. European identity is important because it has been shown by Hvidman (2019:265) in a related study that it is exceptionally difficult to alter people's prior attitude about a political institution, in the author's research the public sector once citizens have evaluated that particular institution's performance. Hence, it is argued here that a similar conclusion can be drawn when it comes to Europeans' perception of and support for the EU and for the work it pursues.

1.2 READINESS TO DELEGATE MORE DECISION-MAKING POWER

The academic literature has somewhat overlooked citizens' desire to allocate more decision-making power to the EU until recently. The exceptions include Hobolt and Tilley (2014) who studied the extent to which citizens are open to increase the decision-making powers of the EU. They argued that public perception is based on Europeans' personal convictions about the EU, which they use to decide which executive should have power to make decisions (Ibid.:796, 807). In other words, they rely on their pre-existing beliefs about the EU and their European identity to allocate power. If they are supportive of the EU, European integration and the EU institutions' work, then they are open to increase its decision-making power and vice versa. Instead of the term satisfaction, Hobolt and Tilley (2014) use people's "performance evaluations" of certain policy areas such as climate change, or health care to find out whether there is a correlation between EU support and positive performance evaluation (Ibid.:808). They show that citizens with pro-EU attitude are more likely to delegate more

decision-making powers to the EU and evaluate its performance positively (Ibid.:809). Meanwhile, citizens who are EU-sceptics are less likely to allocate decision-making power to the EU and more likely to criticize its performance (Ibid.). Hence, by being ready to give more decision-making power, people can signal their commitment to the EU and indicate satisfaction with the executives involved.

Previous crises, mainly the Euro crisis and experiments about crises (e.g. Amat et al. 2020:10), have shown that citizens prefer to delegate more powers to the EU to manage wide-scale crises such as global terrorism or climate change. Hobolt and Wratil (2015:245) based on Eurobarometer data, for example, showed that during the 2009-10 Euro crisis people regarded the EU's institutions more competent to manage the crisis than domestic executives. This can be interpreted as Europeans wanting their domestic incumbent to deal with national issues because they understand the cultural, social and economic needs of their country and the EU to play a managerial role of harmonising the member states' actions (Amat et al. 2020:8-9).

In the case of the coronavirus outbreak, Amat et al. (2020) analysed public perception in Spain towards the local, national, European and global executives' crisis response in January-March 2020. The authors were interested whether public satisfaction with the crisis management is related to readiness to delegate more decision-making power to certain levels of decision-making. The authors examined whether respondents preferred a regional, national, European or global response to the coronavirus pandemic (Ibid.:8-9) and compared the preferred levels of decision-making for various types of salient events (Ibid.:10). The results showed that participants chose the national level only in the case of the coronavirus outbreak (Ibid.). While in the cases of climate change and security threats they trusted the EU to manage the crises and were most satisfied with its previous crisis management performances (Ibid.).

According to Amat et al.'s (2020:8) explanation, satisfaction with the local and national decision-makers stems for the fact that at the time of data collection the Spanish government

and local authorities have overtly dominated the responses to the crisis. Hence, citizens could only evaluate their satisfaction based on their experiences with the local and national decision-makers. This, thus, does not mean that they were dissatisfied with the EU's management of the crisis, but that the first few months of the crisis were dealt with by lower levels of government. Amat et al. (2020) also do not address the possibility of reverse causality in their study which may be caused by fact that citizens were asked about their satisfaction with different levels of authorities and their delegation of more decision-making power based on their experience of the coronavirus outbreak.

This paper will, hence, contribute to the literature by focusing on whether people are ready to delegate more decision-making power to the EU or not. If they do, that may mean that they identify with the EU's sentiment. Therefore, it is likely that they will be satisfied with the EU's crisis management performance as well due to their European identity. Meanwhile, they will be dissatisfied with it if they are not committed to the European project. However, readiness to delegate more decision-making power might also mean that citizens believe that the pandemic should be solved at a higher level of decision-making. This paper cannot explore this latter possibility due to the limitations of the data, but further research should examine it.

1.3 READINESS TO DELEGATE MORE MEANS

According to Pavlov (2015:23), the EU was never meant to and was never equipped to become a crisis management actor. Instead it was rather forced into this position, despite its limited knowledge or background in the practice of crisis management, due to international conflicts that it got involved in (Ibid.). In terms of the EU's competence to manage the coronavirus crisis, the EU is meant to play a managerial role of coordinating the responses of the member states, overseeing the quality of the health services and allocating funding for

research, medical equipment, vaccines, or digital technology which can be helpful to track the spread of the virus (European Commission 2020a).

Readiness to increase the means of the EU so that it can manage issues have been analysed in studies before (e.g. Leininger, Shaub 2020:8; Ashworth, de Mesquita, Friedenberg 2018:42; Amat et al. 2020:7; Karp, Banducci, Bowler 2003:278). There are many reasons why citizens may want to support the transfer of further means to executives. It is believed by this paper, that the delegation of more means leads to satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance because of citizens' pre-existing belief that a strong European community with sufficient means can best manage issues. Thus, those who have a pro-EU attitude in general will be ready to delegate more means to the EU and use their European identity to evaluate their level of satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance.

In regards to the current health crisis, Amat et al. (2020) studied Spanish citizens' desire to increase the financial means of the local, national, European or global authorities during the first few months of the coronavirus outbreak and their satisfaction with the managers of the crisis. They found that people were significantly more willing to allocate resources to the regional or national levels than the other two (Ibid.:9). Furthermore, they found that people were more satisfied with the EU's response in previous global crises (Ibid.:10). These results may be related to Spanish participants' stronger connection to their local and national decision-makers and less so to the European and global ones. We also cannot state that citizens preferred to allocate more resources to the local and national executives and not to the EU because they were satisfied with the crisis management of the former two but not with the latter because Amat et al. (2020) looked at readiness to delegate more means to the EU and satisfaction with the EU's crisis management separately.

Based on Amat et al.'s (2020) results, the question arises whether people prefer national governments to manage the pandemic because they do not consider the coronavirus outbreak a

large-scale event. Or whether the measurement of citizens' satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance was impacted by the timing of their data collection. When the survey was conducted local and national incumbents dominated the decision-making process as Amat et al. (2020:8) explain. The former gap of people prioritising national incumbents' crisis management should be filled by further research. In the meantime, this paper will address the latter gap, namely, the issue of early public perception research when the national authorities had much more power than the EU. This gap will be filled by examining satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance in July-August 2020. If it is true that citizens are willing to give more means to the EU that may indicate satisfaction with its crisis management performance based on their pro-EU conviction and support for the EU's role as a decision-maker.

1.4 TRUST

Trust is a significant factor of performance-based evaluations because those who trust an executive, anticipate good governance. Therefore, if there is widespread distrust in the political institutions' performance, then the whole political system loses some of its public support (Wessels 2015:95). Trust is also a retrospective measure, which presumes an expected outcome from decision-makers in the future, based on past experience (Ibid.). Trust is, hence, often used as a measure of the extent to which people's policy-preferences get translated into decisions (Dahl 1989:30). Trust has been used in relation to the coronavirus outbreak as well (e.g. Bol et al. 2021:498; Baekgaard et al. 2020:7, Amat et al. 2020:10; De Vries et al. 2020:4; Sibley et al. 2020:626).

During the current coronavirus crisis political participation has been restricted and bottom up approaches have been overshadowed by governmental authority. Krastev (2020) called the phenomenon "the return of big government". Hence, the European institutions

(mainly the European Council and the European Commission) and member state governments have become the sole actors responsible to make decisions in order to manage the consequences of the pandemic. This association of power in the hands of three groups of actors have meant that the public has barely got a chance to influence the approach the crisis managers have taken and instead was willing to comply with top down instructions and was forced to trust incumbents (Amat et al. 2020:2). The lack of civil control has had a significant impact on the otherwise rather individual liberty-centred approach that citizens are used to in Europe when it comes to exercising their rights and freedoms (Ibid.). Due to the nature of the pandemic their civil liberties have been limited top down and they have become reliant on governments and the EU (Krastev 2020).

According to recently published studies about government action during the pandemic, trust is an important consideration for citizens. Baekgaard et al. (2020:7) studied the “rally ‘round the flag” effect following the announcement of a nation-wide lockdown in Denmark in March 2020 and confirmed that not only trust towards the government but towards democratic institutions has increased as well, even though the latter did not play a crisis manager role.

Whereas in a large cross-country study approximately forty percent claimed distrust towards their incumbents and forty-five percent felt like their government did not respond to the pandemic well enough (Fetzer et al. 2020:5). However, the introduction of lockdowns and other protective measures increased trust and support towards governments significantly (Ibid.:6). The authors conclude that mental health played a significant role in citizens’ assessment of trust in and satisfaction with their government’s performance (Ibid.:5), but they do not explain whether the relationship between mental health, trust and satisfaction is correlational or causal.

Similarly to Fetzer et al. (2020), Bol et al. (2021:501-2) also showed that trust in the national executives increased in Western Europe by 2.4-3.2 percent (Ibid.:501) as lockdowns

got implemented and that satisfaction with democracy increased by 2.8-3.2 percent (Ibid.). However, the authors fail to discuss the relationship between these findings. Instead they simply report on these results.

According to Amat et al.'s (2020:12-4) results, those who were exposed to the virus directly or indirectly, were more likely to support top-down actions and trusted the national decision-makers somewhat more than the European ones (Ibid.). As it was discussed in previous sections, Amat et al.'s (2020) findings should be considered with a grain of salt as according to their own explanation, their data collection happened very early on in the pandemic when European decision-makers did not get a chance to influence the management of the coronavirus outbreak, but national governments did.

It is clear that there is a relationship between trust and satisfaction that interests the academic community. Hence, trust will be used as the third explanatory variable of satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance because it is likely that due to citizens' European identity and pre-existing beliefs, those who trust the EU will also be satisfied with its crisis management performance. In other words, trust impacts the level of satisfaction because citizens have a European attitude which they rely on when they evaluate their satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. Although trust will not be conditioned by exposure to the virus, as this question did not appear in the 2020 Eurobarometer questionnaire that this paper uses.

To conclude, based on the existing literature, a gap lies in satisfaction with the EU's performance during the coronavirus outbreak six months into the crisis, on the one hand. And, on the other hand, the above discussed three explanatory factors' impact on satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance: 1) readiness to increase the EU's decision-making power, 2) readiness to delegate more means to the EU and, 3) trust in the EU. It is clear that

satisfaction is based on citizens' evaluation of executive performance, but it is uncertain how or whether the public's perception towards the EU's managerial work changes in crisis situations. So why are some people satisfied with the EU's crisis management performance, while others less so?

To this paper's best knowledge, this research question has not been studied in the literature before. Satisfaction as a concept has been used for performance-evaluation to study public perception towards the way democracy works in the EU (e.g. Hobolt 2012). And the explanatory variables that are employed here have been utilized before, but not in this combination to explain satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance in the whole EU.

The following chapters will reveal that from a theoretical standpoint people's evaluation is retrospective and from an analytic standpoint, readiness to delegate more decision-making power and means to the EU, and trust in it will be important exploratory variables of satisfaction.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY

The academic literature uses several definitions to explain what the terms “crisis” and “crisis management” mean, and it uses different theories to justify its desired framing of the event. The following chapter will clarify the abovementioned concepts and discuss retrospective voting theory and the “rally ‘round the flag” effect in order to develop the hypotheses afterwards, using the relevant literature on public perceptions of the EU’s crisis management performance.

2.1 CRISIS AS A CONCEPT

There are a number of definitions of crises that are commonly used in the political science literature. One among these is Verba’s (1965:555), which describes crises as ‘salient events like wars, revolutions, overt challenges to governmental legitimacy- in which passions are aroused and the very survival of the system is often at stake’. Meanwhile, others have called crises “moments of truth” and “a return of politics” (van Middelaar 2016:496). As ‘events or developments widely perceived by members of relevant communities to constitute urgent threats to core community values and structures’ (Boin, Hart, McConnell 2009:83-4). Or as ‘processes in which the structure of a system is called into question’ (Offe 1976:31).

Crises in the EU are crucial moments when further European integration is possible, if the issue at hand gets politicized, in other words brought into the political sphere (Hutter, Kriesi 2019:997; Kriesi 2016:34). But crises are also occasions when the values and principles of the EU can get questioned, which otherwise ensure a sense of community among Europeans. Disintegration and Euroscepticism can feed off of incompetency to manage these salient events and the presence of trust, solidarity and unity may be doubted. Moreover, a country’s EU membership and the very need for the European project to exist may be challenged.

2.2 CRISIS MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

Crisis management in the EU is a complex process due to its multilevel political decision-making system. Both horizontally (member states-EU institutions) and vertically (political actors-citizens) there are questions about decision-making and trust which are called into question at salient times. To simplify the network of actors involved and accountable in European politics, Kriesi (2015:19-20) divided them into five main groups. Not in order of importance, these are: (1) inter- and supranational actors (primarily EU institutions), (2) the member state governments, (3) national oppositions, (4) voters and (5) civil society. Cooperation and competence among the key actors also determine the success of the crisis management (Kriesi 2015:19-20). If those involved perform in an unsatisfactory manner according to the public, then the initial crisis, no matter its nature, is likely to lead to a political crisis. EU political crises tend to come about through the mobilization of the challengers of the EU. These actors can either be national governments, the opposition or civil society. If it is their incentive to organise people to support their cause or reject the EU's actions, then mobilization will most likely take place (Kriesi 2015:23).

There are also a few observable principles that emerge when the EU has the task to manage a crisis. These are the principles of solidarity (e.g. Pavlov 2015:28), responsibility, unity and a common European approach (e.g. Anghel, Drachenberg 2020:2). However, it is not guaranteed that these principles are fulfilled. In fact, Schweiger (2017:188) argues that solidarity and collective decision-making have been absent in most European crisis management action. Instead, incumbent governments are prone to deal with issues nationally or locally because they can act more quickly and efficiently (Ibid.).

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of shared responsibility between the member states and the EU's institutions is called the principle of subsidiarity (European Parliament 2021). For example, it is the member states' task to decide on national lockdowns, compulsory mask

wearing and the allocation of resources for persons and businesses. But it is the EU's competency to coordinate strategies on the EU's internal borders, oversee implementation and maintain solidarity and unity when it comes to medical supplies (Goniewicz et al. 2020:3-4). The consolidated version of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (2016) set out the shared, exclusive and supporting competencies of the EU and the member states. According to the EU's principles, issues should be dealt with on the lowest level of decision-making, if possible. If the issue however requires a national and a European response, the EU institutions have the expertise to manage the problem best and share the responsibility with the member states.

2.3 CRISIS IMPLICATIONS: MORE OR LESS INTEGRATION

Despite the EU's *sui generis* status, its many successes have been overshadowed by the small- and large-scale crises that challenged its commonality. Some argue (see e.g. Grande, Hutter 2016:3) that European integration has been a project of the visionary elites who thought they represented the best interest of the public up until the EU's legitimacy crisis and the Euro crisis in the 1990s-2000s. European integration used to only be discussed by European leaders and elites, which Hooghe and Marks (2009:5) called "permissive consensus". This was due to the fact that people were not interested or involved in EU politics and even when they were given a chance to influence European decision-making, they viewed EP elections as "second-order elections" (Reif and Schmitt 1980:3).

According to Hooghe and Marks (2009:2), the phenomenon changed as people's national identity became the focus of European politics which led to the replacement of the permissive consensus phenomenon by "constraining dissensus". "Constraining dissensus" entails the increased importance of public opinion for the EU's legitimacy (Hobolt, de Vries 2016:414) due to larger participation in politics among the masses, increased

interconnectedness due to globalization and the politicization of the EU (Hooghe, Marks 2009:5).

The change in people's relationship to the EU is important because without public support and trust, the EU's accountability and the need for further European integration can be challenged by internal and external actors (Hobolt, de Vries 2016:414). Citizens have already reaffirmed that they evaluate the European integration project positively (Ibid.:415-6) and they trust the EU to make competent decisions during salient events (Harteveld, van der Meer, de Vries 2013:553). Trust in the EU and support for further integration is also dependent upon people's European identity (Hooghe, Marks 2005:423; Harteveld, van der Meer, de Vries 2013:546). European identity means that people have a personal attachment to the European community and feel a sense of belonging to Europe (Carey 2002:391-2). Identity has increased significance during crises because the stakes are higher compared to non-crisis times (Hobolt, de Vries 2016:426).

Studies have shown that those who have a European identity are more supportive of European integration in general (Ibid.:390) and their perception of the EU is more difficult to change because of this connection (Caporaso, Kim 2009:24, 29-30). Hvidman (2019:265) also argued that once citizens identify with a political institution, their pre-existing beliefs about that institution get stabilized. For this reason, this paper believes that European identity will be central to understand whether people's readiness to delegate more decision-making power, more means and trust in the EU leads to different levels of satisfaction with the EU's crisis management. Their pro- or anti-EU attitude is believed to be important when evaluating satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance compared to more distant actors because they have a strong conviction that European solidarity and unity is required to solve crises. The implications of the current health crisis, hence, concern not only the EU's role in citizens' lives but the future of European integration as well.

2.4 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

This thesis borrows the retrospective voting theory from the economic voting literature, despite the fact that it is not interested in any action of voting. Retrospective voting theory is used because it focuses on public satisfaction towards incumbents in international crises and economic recessions (Merolla, Zechmeister 2013:599). Accordingly, if voters are satisfied with the incumbent's performance retrospectively, they will support it in the future as well (Campbell, Dettrey, Yin 2010:1083). In a study, Merolla and Zechmeister (2013:600) examined whether partisanship conditioned public perception of the executive in salient events. They used the retrospective voting theory and the "rally 'round the flag" concept and found that partisanship played a conditioning role on public opinion in the case of a security crisis (Ibid.:610).

The concept of "rally 'round the flag" (Mueller 1970:21) supposes that the incumbents are viewed favourably by the public if the perceived threat is induced externally and the government is seen as the defender of the nation, hence, people show support. Meanwhile, if the crisis originates from inside the country, then people judge the executive as incompetent and is inclined to punish it in the electoral booth (Ibid.). According to Mueller (1970:21-2) it should also be expected that internal crises cause more cleavages, while external ones unify the nation. Hence, whether people perceive the current consequences of the pandemic as internal or external will impact their satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance.

Retrospective voting theory and the "rally 'round the flag" phenomenon are separate concepts which complement each other well. Since the retrospective voting theory focuses on incumbents' performance, this paper will use it to examine public perception of the EU's crisis management performance during the pandemic. If the retrospective voting theory is applicable to the coronavirus pandemic, then the EU's public support should have increased at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 when the public was satisfied with the EU's crisis

management and rallied around the European executive because the crisis was considered predominantly external. This paper examines the period six months into the crisis when the “rally ‘round the flag” effect may have decreased somewhat as the EU started to oversee internal problems such as travel restrictions, and vaccination strategies and citizens were able to evaluate the performance of the European executive based on previous experience. Furthermore, it is likely that European identity, similarly to partisanship in national elections, will play a conditioning role on public perception and satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance as the literature on retrospective voting theory suggested (Merolla, Zechmeister 2013:600). Future research should examine changes in the “rally ‘round the flag” phenomenon and retrospective evaluations over time as the pandemic proceeds.

2.5 HYPOTHESES

This paper suggests that people’s level of satisfaction will be based on whether they are ready to increase the decision-making power of the EU, whether support the EU’s increased means for it to achieve its political objectives and whether they trust the EU. Satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance will be used as the dependent variable. Satisfaction with democracy is often used to measure support for democratic decision-making and the way democracy operates in a political system (Hobolt 2012:91; Hoerner, Hobolt 2020:1840), whether that is cross-national (e.g. Anderson, Guillory 1997:66) or European (Rohrschneider 2002:467; Karp, Banducci, Bowler 2003).

Satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance has been chosen as it is the most commonly used variable in EU surveys to determine public perceptions of the European executive’s performance, in terms of the way democracy works in Europe (Hobolt 2012:91). Its goal is to capture public opinion about the way the system works, instead of general support for the EU (Ibid.). Hoerner and Hobolt (2020:1840), for example, call satisfaction a “mid-range

concept” because theoretically satisfaction is not based on the incumbents’ day-to-day decisions, nor on the long-term, general attitude to the government, but somewhere in-between. Satisfaction can also be implemented into the EU’s crisis management literature, because a crisis is a salient event which requires individual decisions, but can last for a while, hence, falls into that “mid-range” that Hoerner and Hobolt (Ibid.) imply. Similarly, Scharpf (1999:12) also argues that it is actually satisfaction with the performance of the EU to competently manage salient events that establishes its accountability in the eye of the public.

Moving on to the explanatory variables, it will be analysed whether readiness to delegate more decision-making power to the EU in general (IV1) can lead to satisfaction with its crisis management performance. Increased decision-making power was chosen as an explanatory variable of satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance during the coronavirus outbreak because it can capture the extent to which citizens are supportive of the EU.

In multilevel-systems, such as the European Union, the dismantling of lines of decision-making power is a difficult task. Some policy areas are meant to be tackled on the national level and only receive European attention, if the issue requires expertise, that is possessed overly or exclusively by the EU’s institutions. Despite the wider public being largely unaware of the complicated lines of responsibility (León, Jurado, Garmendia Madariaga 2018:662), it has been empirically shown that people are able to allocate power to the correct level of decision-making (see e.g. León 2011; Arceneaux 2005), whether that is the national or European level.

In crisis situations member state governments and EU institutions have the authority to determine a solution to the crisis on behalf of citizens. Collective decision-making between these levels is the most desired outcome (Baumgartner, Mahoney 2008:15) because it ensures stability from a wide range of opinions and expertise, but there are certain areas in which member states enjoy sole responsibility such as health care (European Commission 2020b). When it comes to the coronavirus crisis, the EU and the member states share the responsibility

because the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU (2016) assigns both actors to get involved in ‘common safety concerns in public health matters’ (EU 2016). Meanwhile, certain areas of decision-making fall into the member state governments’ competence (e.g. travel restrictions), while others in the EU’s (e.g. oversee implementation of collective decisions). In the case of the coronavirus crisis, questions about the role of the EU and who to make decisions, the EU or member states, emerged among citizens.

If citizens indicate support for the EU’s increased decision-making power that signifies that they identify with the EU and that they are pleased with the way the EU works. Readiness to delegate more decision-making power to the EU leads to satisfaction with its crisis management performance because people rely on their European identity when they evaluate their satisfaction with the EU as a manager of the crisis.

H1: Those who agree that more decisions should be taken at the EU level are more likely to be satisfied with the EU’s crisis management performance during the coronavirus outbreak.

H1b: It is expected that the impact of increased decision-making power on satisfaction is weaker for those who found it more difficult to cope with the measures taken by the EU to fight the coronavirus outbreak.

Turning to the second explanatory variable, readiness to increase the EU’s means will be examined to understand whether people think that the EU should be given better financial means to deal with crises in the future (IV2). Especially in large-scale crises like the coronavirus outbreak, the EU can play an important managerial role through oversight and the reallocation of funding to those member states, which are struggling the most. However, it cannot perform its role unless proper funding is given to it. The question to be employed uses the term better means, but essentially financial means should be understood by it.

Citizens do not have the authority to increase the EU's budget by any means. But if they signal support for an increase of the EU's means so that it can achieve its political objectives, that gives the EU some legitimacy, when lobbying for it with the national incumbents. Readiness to delegate more means to the EU leads to satisfaction with its crisis management performance because people rely on their European identity when they evaluate their satisfaction with the EU as a manager of the crisis.

H2: Those who believe that the EU should have greater financial means given its political objectives are more likely to be satisfied with the EU's crisis management performance during the coronavirus outbreak.

H2b: It is expected that the impact of increased means to the EU on satisfaction is weaker for those who found it more difficult to cope with the measures taken by the EU to fight the coronavirus outbreak.

Finally, trust will be assessed because it is a good measure of support for the EU (IV3). Citizens anticipate good governance from the EU's institutions and rely on decision-makers to have their best interest at heart. Trust is a retrospective estimate, as it is an advancement into the future based on previous experience. Trust is also significant because without it, incumbents lose their source of accountability and legitimacy which can lead to political or legitimacy crises which have happened to the EU before. The 2015 refugee crisis, the 2016 Brexit referendum and the culmination of the climate crisis challenged the EU's institutions' and member state governments' responsiveness repeatedly. These crises impacted people's relation to the EU as citizens began to demand more accountability from European leaders in return for their years of trust and support (Schweiger 2017:188). Meanwhile, EU institutions also started to count on citizens' trust to reinforce their legitimacy and accountability (Hobolt, de Vries 2016:414).

Consequently, during crises public perception depends on whether the EU stays true to its role and to its promises and whether it can be trusted to perform good governance.

The coronavirus pandemic has put both decision-makers and citizens in unusual circumstances. On the one hand, decision-makers both on the national and European levels were forced to face a dangerous health crisis like never before. They were also given an opportunity to exercise their legitimacy and have almost complete authority over citizens' lives. On the other hand, people had to trust and rely on their governments and the EU to ensure their safety. This increased control over their rights and freedom of movement, assembly, private information, and to operate a business put citizens in a vulnerable position in which they had to accept that their freedom can be partially restricted for the greater good.

Trust can, hence, explain satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance because it shows that even when citizens do not have complete authority over their lives, and when their circumstances are difficult due to the pandemic, if they trust these European executives and the political system of the EU, then continued support for the European project is most likely in the future. Trust in the EU, hence, leads to satisfaction with its crisis management performance because people rely on their European identity when they evaluate their satisfaction with the EU as a manager of the crisis.

H3: Those who trust the EU are more likely to be satisfied with the EU's crisis management performance during the coronavirus outbreak.

H3b: It is expected that the impact of trust on satisfaction is weaker for those who found it more difficult to cope with the measures taken by the EU to fight the coronavirus outbreak.

The conditional hypotheses, H1b, H2b and H3b, test how the difficulty of coping with the restricting measures, more specifically the confinement measures, conditions the impact of people's trust, willingness to delegate powers and means to the EU on satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. Public perception is shaped by people's impressions of how well they and their country are performing politically and economically compared to other nations and institutions, including the EU (Goldberg, Brosius, de Vreese 2021:3). If citizens feel like they are doing well then they will be more satisfied with the European executive's crisis management performance. While if they perceive their circumstances negatively, then they will be more likely dissatisfied with the incumbent's performance during the crisis (Ibid.).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

Eurobarometer surveys are conducted multiple times a year to assess European citizens' attitude to the EU's institutions, European Parliament (EP) elections and specific events. These surveys give researchers trustworthy, up-to-date data on a wide-scale of topics to better understand the issues of Europe, which citizens are concerned with. According to the latest Special Eurobarometer survey (EB 94.1) ninety-two percent of Europeans claim that their voices should be included in the EU's decisions to a larger extent (European Commission and European Parliament 2020:14). This is why survey research was chosen.

3.1 DATA

This thesis will use the dataset of Eurobarometer 93.1 (European Commission 2021b). The data was collected by Kantar Public, commissioned by the European Commission Directorate-General for Communication. The survey ran from 9th July 2020 to 26th August 2020. The sample includes approximately 33 000 respondents from the 27 EU member states and from five countries which have been negotiating EU accession (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey) and the UK. However, since this paper is concerned with the perception of citizens who live in EU member states, only EU member states' data will be utilized. As a result, the dataset will include about 27 000 observations by approximately 1000 participants from each country. Respondents aged 15 years and above were interviewed either face-to-face where possible due to governmental regulations or online, if not. Representativeness per se population size, gender, age, and region was guaranteed for (Ibid.).

3.2 DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Originally, respondents were asked to judge each question in the questionnaire from one to four or to five, where one meant the most positive answer and four/five the least positive one. All responses were, hence, reversed during the data processing so that the scales run from negative to positive as the numbers increase. ‘Don’t know’ answers were excluded from the data because the current discussion is interested in opinionated respondents, while it understands that the choice of ‘don’t know’ may also reflect an opinion.

The dependent variable to be used goes as follows: ‘In general, how satisfied are you with the measures taken to fight the coronavirus by the European Union?’ Respondents were offered four answers, ranging from 1 ‘not at all satisfied’, 2 ‘rather not satisfied’, 3 ‘fairly satisfied’ and 4 ‘very satisfied’.

The first independent variable is: ‘Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statement. More decisions should be taken at the EU level.’ Those questioned were able to choose from 1 ‘totally disagree’, 2 ‘tend to disagree’, 3 ‘tend to agree’, or 4 ‘totally agree’. Meanwhile, the second independent variable reads: ‘With which of the following two statements do you most agree with?’. People could either say 1 ‘The EU’s financial means match its political objectives.’ or 2 ‘The EU should have greater financial means given its political objectives.’. The third independent variable is: ‘Please tell me if you tend to or tend not to trust the EU’. Here 1 means ‘tend not to trust’, 2 means ‘tend to trust’. Finally, the question about the difficulty of coping with the pandemic measures was the following: ‘Thinking about the measures taken to fight the coronavirus outbreak, in particular the confinement measures, would you say that it was an experience easy or difficult to cope with?’. Here 1 meant ‘Very difficult to cope with, and even endangering your mental and health conditions’, 2 ‘Fairly difficult to cope with’, 3 ‘Both easy and difficult to cope with’, 4 ‘Fairly

easy to cope with’, and 5 meant ‘Very easy to cope with, and even an improvement to your daily life’.

The issue of a potential reverse causality emerged during the assessment of the variables. For example, it is hard to tell whether trust in the EU leads to increased satisfaction or vice versa. This paper argues that the causal mechanism between the independent variables and satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management is the pre-existing belief in the European project and support for the EU as the actor most capable of ensuring cooperation between the member states during a crisis. The Eurobarometer questionnaire that is used here asks respondents to assess their level of trust in the EU and their opinion about the increase of decision-making power and means to it twice. Firstly, participants are invited to evaluate their level of trust, readiness to delegate more decision-making power and means to the EU in general. Secondly, they are requested to evaluate their trust in the EU, and their willingness to increase the EU’s means based on their perception of the EU’s crisis management during the pandemic. Therefore, in order to mitigate the problem of reverse causality, readiness to increase the decision-making power, increase the means and trust in the EU in general were chosen as independent variables and similar, but pandemic-related ones on trust and readiness to increase its means as controls. The controls were added to avoid reverse causality because it is possible that satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management also leads to more trust, openness to give more means and decision-making power to the EU.

Furthermore, satisfaction with the respective national government’s crisis management is also included as a control to isolate national political influence. The national perspective was introduced because citizens often assess the functioning of the EU’s executive compared to the national government and vice versa (Hobolt 2012:91-92). However, in the same study Hobolt (2012:101) did not find evidence for people using their dissatisfaction with the national political

situation to judge the European one, as Sánchez-Cuenca (2000:166) showed about a decade earlier.

Other control variables will include gender, age, the level of education, and the level of objective knowledge about the EU to help minimize the risk of omitted variable bias. Previous research (e.g. Hobolt 2012; Rohrschneider 2002) has shown that these socio-demographic factors impact satisfaction with the executive's performance. Information in particular will be important because empirical evidence has shown (e.g. Hobolt, Wratil 2015:242 on the Euro crisis) that as the media coverage of an aspect of the crisis (i.e. the EU's crisis management performance) increases, the public becomes more knowledgeable and informed, and hence, can better determine satisfaction with the correct actor. Three information questions will be, thus, used to test the respondents knowledge about the way the EU works and about the EU's institutions to build a knowledge variable.

The hypotheses are tested with linear regressions and an ordered logistic regression is used as robustness check since the dependent (satisfaction) variable is ordered. The possible responses are: 'not at all satisfied', 'rather not satisfied', 'rather satisfied' and 'very satisfied'. Country fixed effects were included in the models as well to control for cultural, social, historical or other characteristics that are specific to that country. Interested readers can look at the complete regression table in Appendix C for the OLS and Appendix D for the ordered logit regression.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

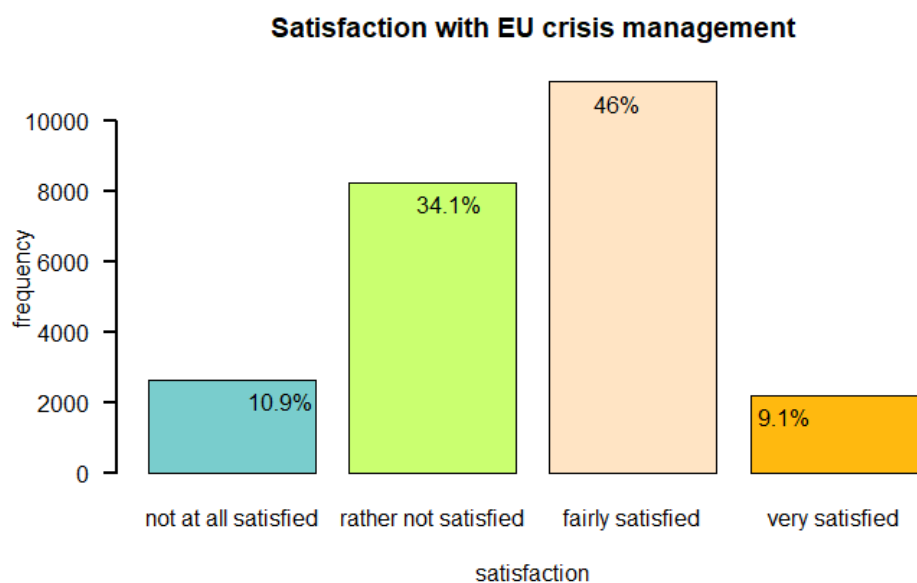
The distribution of dependent variable is visualized on a bar chart, first. Then, the relationship between the dependent and independent variables are presented below using boxplots with a short description of each. Finally, the regression table is presented, and the most significant findings are explained in detail.

4.1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The discussion of the findings begins with a descriptive analysis of the dependent variable, satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. *Figure 1* shows that the data are close to normally distributed.

Figure 1 Satisfaction with the EU's crisis management

Source: Eurobarometer 2020 (93.1)



The distribution above also shows that 'fairly satisfied' was the most commonly chosen answer. Eleven thousand respondents, 46 percent of all participants chose this answer. Approximately 8000 people said 'rather not satisfied' which is 34.1 percent of all responses on this question. 'Very satisfied' and 'not at all satisfied' received about the same share of the responses; 9.1 and 10.9 percent, respectively. Meanwhile the descriptive analysis in *Table 1*

Descriptive statistics						
Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl (25)	Pctl (75)	Max
<i>Dependent variable</i>						
Satisfaction with EU	2.5	0.8	1	2	3	4
<i>Explanatory variables</i>						
More decisions	2.7	0.9	1	2	3	4
More means	1.5	0.5	1	1	2	2
Trust in EU	1.5	0.5	1	1	2	2
<i>Controls</i>						
More means to EU based on coronavirus performance	3.3	0.7	1	3	4	4
Trust in EU based on coronavirus performance	2.7	0.7	1	2	3	4
Satisfaction with national government	2.9	0.9	1	2	4	4
Attachment to EU	2.6	0.9	1	2	3	4
Citizen of EU	3.0	0.9	1	2	4	4
View of EU	3.3	0.9	1	3	4	5
Coping with pandemic	3.2	1.1	1	2	4	5
Age	51.3	17.8	15	37	66	99
Gender	1.5	0.5	1	1	2	2
Education (leaving age)	27.2	23.3	0	18	24	99
Knowledge	0.9	0.3	0	1	1	1
Note: 'Don't know' answers have been removed; N varies for each variable. ¹						

illustrates that the mean of satisfaction with the EU's crisis management was 2.5, which falls into the 'rather not satisfied' column.

Table 1 Descriptive analysis

Source: Eurobarometer 2020 (93.1)

¹ Nsatisfaction=24 145; Nmore decisions=24 951; Nmore means=24 896; Ntrust=24 470; Ncoping=26 627; Nmore means to EU based on coronavirus performance=25 793; Ntrust in EU based on coronavirus=26 262; Nattachment to EU=26 308; Ncitizen of EU=26 395; Nview of EU=26 545; Ncoping=26 627; Nsat. national gov., age, gender, education leaving age, knowledge=26 681.

The focus of this paper is the explanatory variables' effect on satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. The plots below (*Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4*) were created from the raw data to illustrate the levels of satisfaction given evaluations of increased decision-making power to the EU, additional financial means to the EU and based on trust in the EU.

Figure 2 Satisfaction and more decision-making power to the EU

Source: Eurobarometer 2020 (93.1)

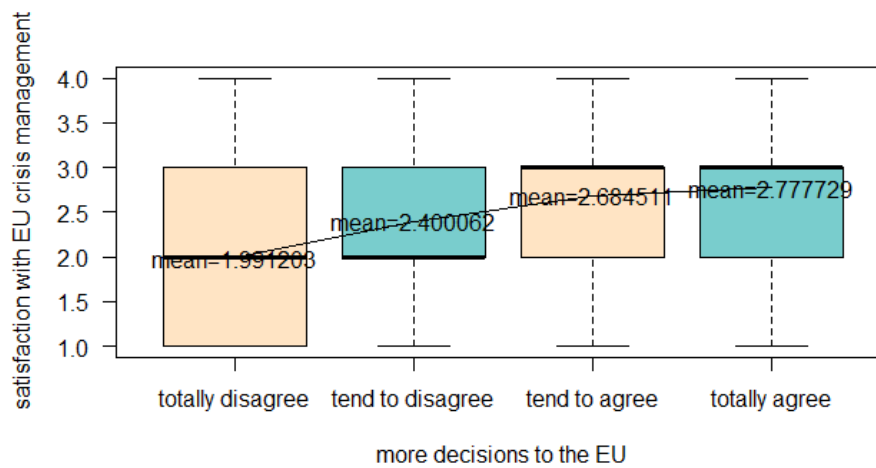


Figure 2 shows that those who totally agree or tend to agree that more decisions should be made on the European level, are also more satisfied with the EU's management of the pandemic. While those who tend not to agree or do not agree at all with the delegation of more decision-making power to the EU, are also less satisfied with the EU's performance to handle the crisis.

Figure 3 Satisfaction and more means to the EU

Source: Eurobarometer 2020 (93.1)

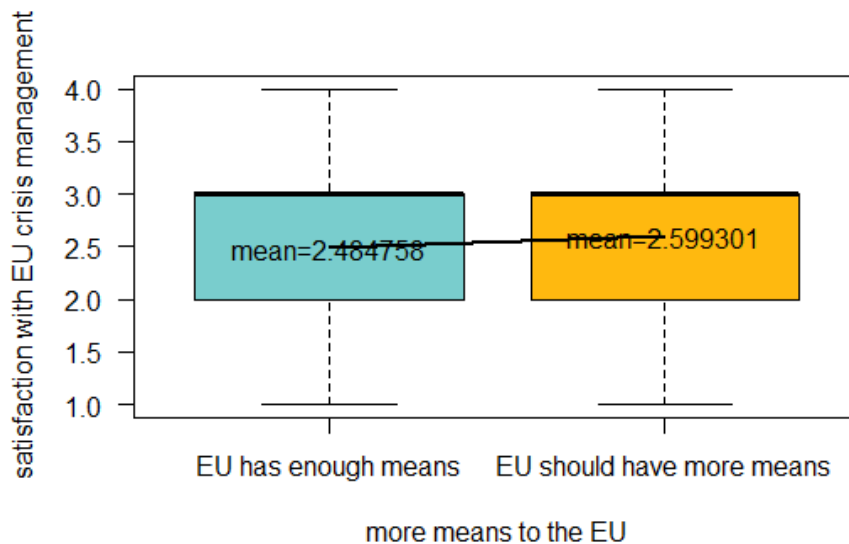
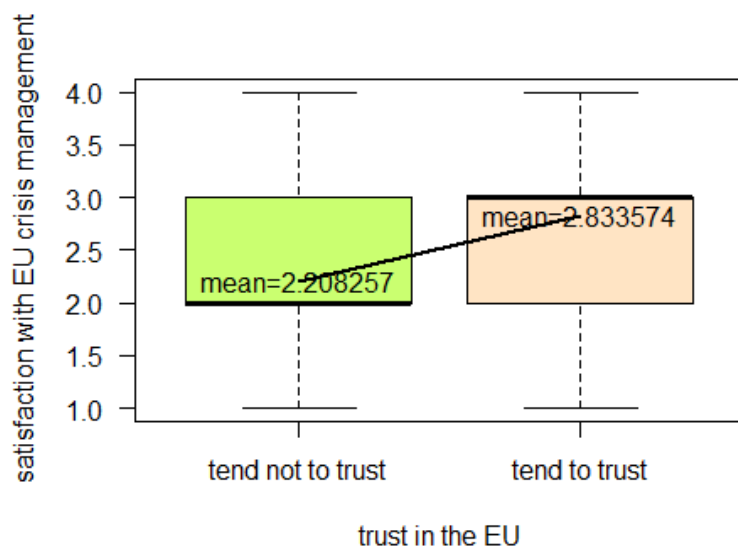


Figure 3 reveals that those who believe that the EU should receive more means to achieve its political objectives and those who argue that the EU already owns enough means for its conduct are both rather satisfied than dissatisfied with its crisis management practice during the coronavirus pandemic.

Figure 4 Satisfaction and trust in the EU

Source: Eurobarometer 2020 (93.1)

Finally, Figure 4 indicates that those who tend to trust the EU are more satisfied with its work to oversee the crisis. While those who tend not to trust the EU in general are less satisfied with its crisis management performance.



4.2 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

To determine change in the level of satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance, linear regressions were conducted (*Table 2*). Linear regressions were chosen as the methodology to test whether the explanatory variables are able to predict the dependent variable and to determine which explanatory variables are statistically significant predictors of the outcome. Then an ordinal logit regression analysis was run as a robustness check because the dependent variable (satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance) was categorical, ordinal. The ordinal logistic regression reveals substantively similar results (see Appendix D) to the linear regression. EU member states were included in the models so that within-country effects would not impact the results. The country fixed effects are not reported in *Table 2*. An interested reader can find the fixed effects coefficients in Appendix C.

Table 2 Regression analysis

Dependent variable	Satisfaction	
	Model 1 (no interactions)	Model 2 (interactions)
<i>Explanatory variables</i>		
More decisions by EU	0.1*** (0.01)	0.1*** (0.01)
More means to EU	0.01 (0.01)	0.03 (0.03)
Trust in EU	0.1*** (0.01)	0.1*** (0.03)
<i>Controls</i>		
More means to EU based on coronavirus performance	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Trust in EU based on coronavirus performance	0.3*** (0.01)	0.3*** (0.01)
Satisfaction national government	0.3*** (0.01)	0.3*** (0.01)
Attachment to EU	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)
Feeling like a citizen of the EU	0.01** (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)
View of EU	0.1*** (0.01)	0.1*** (0.01)
Coping with pandemic	0.001 (0.004)	0.02 (0.02)
Age	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)
Gender	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)
Education (leaving age)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Knowledge	-0.1*** (0.02)	-0.1*** (0.02)
<i>Interactions</i>		
Coping x More decisions by EU		0.003 (0.004)
Coping x More means to EU		-0.005 (0.01)

Coping x Trust in EU		-0.01 (0.01)
Constant	0.3*** (0.04)	0.2*** (0.1)
Observations	20 431	20 431
R2	0.4	0.4
Adjusted R2	0.4	0.4
Residual Std. Error	0.6 (df=20 389)	0.6 (df=20 386)
F Statistics	406.1*** (df=41; 20 389)	378.5*** (df=44; 20 386)
Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		
Country fixed effects coefficients are included in Appendix C		

There are two models in *Table 2*. Model 1 presents the findings without the influence of interactions between the explanatory variables ('More decisions by EU', 'More means to EU', 'Trust in EU') and difficulty to cope with the pandemic measures. While Model 2 shows the coefficients with these interactions. Both models include eleven control variables. Some of which are identity-based. For example, the delegation of more means to the EU based on its performance during the pandemic or satisfaction with the respective national government's performance. Attachment to the EU, whether people feel like they are a citizen of the EU, their view of the EU and difficulty to cope with pandemic measures are also used as controls. Other control variables contain for personal characteristics, such as age, gender, education leaving age, and knowledge about the EU. The control variables are explained in detail in Appendix A.

4.2.1 MAIN EXPLANATORY VARIABLES' IMPACT ON SATISFACTION

Table 2 indicates that two out of three explanatory variables, readiness to delegate more decisions to the EU and trust in the EU, have statistically significant positive effects on satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis at the one percent level for these two.

As expected by H1, readiness to increase the decision-making power to the EU in general, leads to larger satisfaction with the EU's management of the current coronavirus pandemic. If the 'more decisions to the EU' was increased by one unit, satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance would show an increase of 0.1 points. Hence, if we

change ‘totally disagree’ to ‘tend to disagree’ then there would be an observable increase of 0.1 points in satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance. If, however, we change from ‘totally disagree’ to ‘totally agree’ then there would be a 0.4 points change in satisfaction.

As anticipated by H3, trust in the EU is also an important explanatory factor of satisfaction with the EU’s work as the manager of the coronavirus outbreak. A full unit increase of ‘trust in the EU’ would increase satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance by 0.1 percent. Similarly to the previous explanatory variable, if we change from ‘tend to trust’ to ‘tend not to trust’, then satisfaction with its crisis management performance would increase by 0.1 points.

However, the delegation of more means to the EU did not show statistically significant results. Those who agree that more means should be delegated to the EU to achieve its political objectives, are more satisfied with its crisis performance (H2), but this effect is not statistically significant. Here, an increase of 0.01 points could be observed on satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance, if ‘more means to the EU’ was increased by one unit. For example, if we change from ‘the EU has enough means’ to ‘the EU should have more means’, then satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance would only change by 0.01 points. As it was already visible from Figure 3 in the descriptive analyses, the delegation of more means to the EU did not show a significant relationship with satisfaction. Hence, this explanatory variable cannot explain satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance very well.

4.2.2 CONTROL VARIABLES' IMPACT ON SATISFACTION

Turning to the most significant control variables, 'trust in EU based on coronavirus performance' reveals that those who evaluated their level of satisfaction based on the EU's crisis management and not in general terms, are also more satisfied with its performance during the current crisis. A one unit increase in 'trust in the EU' would lead to a 0.3 points increase in satisfaction with the EU's performance of the crisis. Similarly, those who are satisfied with their respective national government's performance are also satisfied with the EU's performance. Here a one unit increase from 'rather satisfied' to 'very satisfied' with the national executive's performance leads to a 0.3 points increase in satisfaction with the European executive's performance. Hence, people are more satisfied with the EU's crisis management performance than with the national governments'. The implication of this finding includes, for example, that when the topic of Euroscepticism is brought up, the EU can justify its role because the European public is more satisfied with its work during the coronavirus outbreak than with the member state governments' work. Meanwhile, those who have a positive view of the EU in general, are also more satisfied with its performance during the coronavirus pandemic. Here a 0.1 point increase in satisfaction can be expected if we change from 'fairly positive' to 'very positive' and 0.4 points from 'very negative' to 'very positive'.

However, similar to the explanatory variable about increased means to the EU in general, its matching control variable about the delegation of more means to the EU based on its crisis management performance during the coronavirus crisis also showed an insignificant and even negative relationship to satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. Thus, those who think that the EU has enough means to manage the coronavirus pandemic, are more satisfied with its management of the crisis. Furthermore, those who are less knowledgeable about European politics are more satisfied with the EU's performance, but the level of education does not seem to show significant changes in satisfaction with its crisis management work.

4.2.3 INTERACTIONS WITH DIFFICULTY OF COPING

Moving on to the interactions of the independent variables with the level of coping. The results in *Table 2* show that there was a negative, but not statistically significant impact on satisfaction with the EU's performance when it comes to trust and readiness to increase its financial means interacted with coping (H2b and H3b, respectively). Meanwhile, a positive, but statistically not significant impact was shown on satisfaction when it comes to increased decision-making power to the EU interacted with coping (H1b). These results, hence, contradict the findings of Goldberg, Brosius, de Vreese (2021:3) who found that those who believe they are doing unwell during the crisis will be dissatisfied with the incumbents' performance and vice versa. Instead, it can be concluded that whether or not people found it difficult to cope with the confinement measures, this difficulty did not have a significant impact on satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. It must be acknowledged that doing well or unwell, which Goldberg, Brosius, de Vreese (2021) analysed, is not exactly the same as finding it difficult to cope with the restricting measures that were introduced due to the coronavirus outbreak. This finding, however, still may have an important implication for the EU because it shows that even in a terrible situation, like a pandemic, citizens support the EU and have confidence in its abilities.

The previous, theoretical chapter of this paper argued that increased decision-making power and increased means to the EU, and trust in the EU are significant explanatory factors of satisfaction with the EU's performance during the current pandemic. The findings of the descriptive and regression analyses find some evidence to support the first and the third expectations. Readiness to delegate more decision-making power to the EU, and trust in the European executive lead to a similar ratio of increased satisfaction with its crisis management performance during the coronavirus outbreak. However, there is no evidence that readiness to give more means to the EU would lead to significant changes in satisfaction with its performance. Hypotheses 1 and 3, hence, showed statistically significant positive results at the

one percent statistical significance level, but H2 did not. Furthermore, it has been shown that citizens' attachment to the EU, belonging to the European citizenry and their positive view about the EU are important factors of satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. Meanwhile, the conditional hypotheses (H1b, H2b, H3b) did not appear to be statistically significant. This means that the difficulty of coping with the confinement measures did not impact people's satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance.

The implications include that even in extraordinarily difficult situations, like the current coronavirus outbreak, European citizens have confidence that the EU will do its best to manage the crisis and that they can trust its abilities.

CONCLUSION

Crisis situations can challenge people's perceptions of political actors and systems. They may confront them with an alternative scenario compared to the one that existed before the crisis. Crises can also have considerable short- and long-term consequences for the political and economic systems of their country and for the communities they are a part of. Therefore, salient events can compel citizens to pose important questions of whom to delegate decision-making power and means to and whom to trust and support. Citizens' perspective about the extent to which they are willing to give up some of their fundamental rights and freedoms for the greater good may also be tested by crises.

This thesis focused on public satisfaction with the European incumbents' performance of the coronavirus outbreak. Academics so far have published about a dozen studies which examine citizens' impression of their national executives and the restricting measures that were introduced by these actors. The academic literature, however, has not yet paid attention to satisfaction with the performance of the EU institutions as crisis managers six months into the crisis, on the one hand, and whether readiness to delegate more decision-making power, more means and trust in the EU impacts satisfaction with its crisis management performance, on the other hand. This paper, thus, contributed to filling these two gaps.

It borrowed retrospective voting theory from the economic voting literature and the "rally 'round the flag" phenomenon that commonly occurs in a crisis situation to explain the levels of satisfaction. These theories are often used in EU studies, but rarely to explain satisfaction with the EU's crisis management. Then, it analysed EU-wide survey data to find out why some people were satisfied with the EU's crisis management around six months after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, while others less so. The analysis of public satisfaction within the first year of the pandemic is significant because it can foreshadow the implications of the crisis for European policy-makers and researchers.

A cause-centred, deductive research strategy was employed to explain satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. The explanatory variables included Europeans' readiness to delegate more decision-making power to the EU, readiness to increase the EU's means to manage its political objectives, and trust in the EU in general. The causal mechanism between these variables is that those who have a stable European identity, pre-existing beliefs about the EU and its role as the political actor and crisis manager will tap into their identity when they evaluate their level of satisfaction. To better understand the relationship between these variables it used the dataset of the 2020 Eurobarometer (93.1) survey and it conducted descriptive and linear regression analyses with the use of individual-level and country-level control variables. It also included interactions between the explanatory variables and difficulty of coping with the pandemic measures, in particular confinement measures.

Turning to the findings, this thesis confirmed that two out of the three explanatory variables have statistically significant effects on the dependent variable. These were: readiness to delegate the more decision-making power to the EU and trust in the European executive. Meanwhile, readiness to delegate more means to the EU showed positive, but not statistically significant effects on satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance. Hence, the study found support for the first and third hypotheses, and these results can be generalized to public perception of the EU's crisis management performance.

This thesis believes that European studies research and European policy-makers will benefit greatly from this study's findings. The data from July-August 2020 suggest that people were somewhat divided in their evaluations about the EU's handling of the coronavirus outbreak at the time. The results showed that citizens were rather satisfied than dissatisfied with the EU's management of the crisis. They also reveal that citizens' satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance is dependent upon their willingness to delegate more decision-making power to the EU (H1), and upon their trust (H3) that the European executive has their

best interest at heart. Meanwhile, the results show that there is some support for the increase of the EU's financial means in order for it to achieve its political goals (H2). Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that the explanatory variables are conditioned by people's European identity as they use their pro-EU attitude when they evaluate their satisfaction with the EU's crisis management performance.

The limitations in this study include the impact of potential confounding variables, such as readiness to increase the EU's decision-making power based on its management of the coronavirus outbreak, which was not asked by the Eurobarometer survey. Furthermore, reverse causality cannot be ruled out completely. The latter limitation could be overcome by further research if there was a question in the survey, that directly addressed the EU's role in the public's eye during crises. If it turns out that people view the EU as a crisis manager which should be responsible for the coordination of the individual member states' responses to the crisis, then we could state that satisfaction originates from trust and the receptivity to increased decision-making power without a doubt.

Nonetheless, further research should re-test citizens performance evaluation of the EU from September 2020 onwards. This is due to the fact that the EU took on new jobs of crisis management in this period. Firstly, it became responsible for the planning of the European vaccination strategy and for ordering vaccines in the name of the member states (European Commission 2020c). As the coronavirus crisis progressed into this "vaccination stage", public perception may have changed. Hence, it is important that our knowledge about the public's satisfaction with the EU's performance is updated. Secondly, the EU started to issue loans up to one-hundred billion Euros as social bonds within the SURE (Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency) instrument, which is meant to help alleviate member states' sudden financial burdens and expenditures caused by the pandemic (European Commission 2020d). Furthermore, a recovery plan with a budget of 750 billion Euros called

“NextGenerationEU” (European Commission 2020e) was introduced to help member states fight the economic and social challenges after the pandemic. These financial instruments may also impact public perception as governments begin investing into social and economic programs to support citizens and companies. Thirdly, the European Commission proposed a Digital Green Certificate in March 2021 which is meant to give back Europeans’ freedom to travel easily and safely (European Commission 2020f). The easing of travel restrictions may also influence citizens’ perceptions of the EU’s crisis management, as the limitation of travelling was a significant constraint on Europeans’ lives.

Instead of isolationism, European values, principles and collective decision-making was prioritised by member states (European Commission 2020g), whenever it was possible, despite the coronavirus outbreak’s dire consequences. A unified Europe is still desired, hence, not only by member state governments, but they are invaluable merits for European citizens as well (von der Leyen 2020). The possible implications of the coronavirus pandemic for the future of the European Union are manifold. A potential economic recession, increased unemployment and political mishaps induced by the crisis (Baekgaard et al. 2020:1) will most likely impact citizens’ view of the EU as the manager of coordinated action among the member states. Based on the data from July to August 2020, it can be argued confidently that Europeans’ commitment to the European project is alive and trust in the EU is strong. Hence, EU decision-makers’ legitimacy is well-supported to make further steps of integration. The results of this study showed that citizens trust the EU and are ready for the EU institutions’ decision-making power to be extended in general. Moreover, Europeans’ satisfaction with the EU’s crisis management performance was prevalent during the studied period. However, even as the consequences of the crisis change, it is essential for the EU to continually prioritise citizens’ best interest, otherwise European citizens may become dissatisfied and disappointed with the EU’s performance and will most likely punish it.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. CONTROL VARIABLES

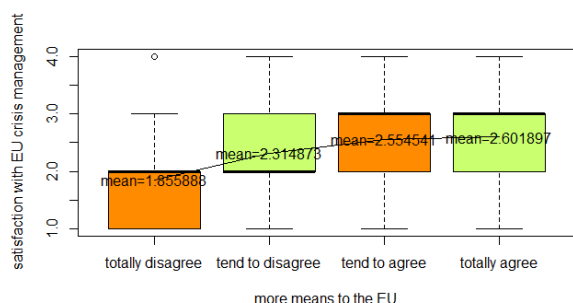
The first control variable was a question about people's willingness to delegate more means to the EU based on its management of the crisis: 'Thinking about the consequences of the coronavirus outbreak, please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree or totally disagree with: The EU should be given the means to better deal in the future with crises, such as the coronavirus outbreak'. The answer options were: 1 'totally disagree', 2 'tend to disagree', 3 'tend to agree', 4 'totally agree'. The second control variables asked respondents about their trust in the EU based on their experience during the pandemic so far: 'Thinking about the EU's response to the coronavirus outbreak, to what extent do you trust or not the EU to make the right decisions in the future?'. 1 'do not trust at all', 2 'tend not to trust', 3 'tend to trust' and 4 'totally trust' were the choices. The third control variable was: 'In general, how satisfied are you with the measures taken to fight the coronavirus outbreak by your national government?'. Here the answers 1 'not at all satisfied', 2 'rather not satisfied', 3 'fairly satisfied', and 4 'very satisfied' were offered. The fourth control variable was: 'Please tell me how attached you are to the EU.'. 1 'not at all attached', 2 'not very attached', 3 'fairly attached', and 4 'very attached' were the options. The fifth control variable was: 'For each of the following statements, please tell me to what extent it corresponds or not to your own opinion: You feel you are a citizen of the EU.' The answers were: 1 'no, definitely not', 2 'no, not really', 3 'yes, to some extent', and 4 'yes, definitely'. The sixth control variable was the following: 'In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?'. 1 was 'very negative', 2 'fairly negative', 3 'neutral', 4 'fairly positive', and 5 'very positive'. The seventh control variable asked participants about how well they coped with the restricting measures: 'Thinking about the measures taken to fight the coronavirus outbreak, in particular the confinement measures, would you say that it was an experience easy or difficult to cope with?'. Here 1 meant 'Very difficult to cope with, and even endangering your mental and health conditions', 2 'Fairly difficult to cope with', 3 'Both easy and difficult to cope with', 4 'Fairly easy to cope with', and 5 meant 'Very easy to cope with, and even an improvement to your daily life'.

The individual control variables are age, gender (1 man, 2 woman), education leaving age. The latter asked: 'How old were you when you stopped full-time education?'. Finally, the level of knowledge was measured based on three objective questions where true or false answers could be given: 'The Euro area currently consists of 19 member states.' 'The members of the

European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of each member states.’ ‘Switzerland is a member state of the EU.’

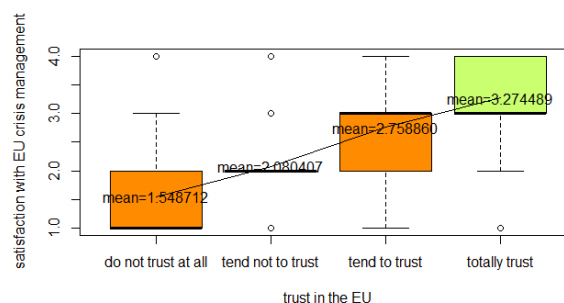
APPENDIX B. BOXPLOTS

The boxplots below were created to see whether the descriptive analysis would give different results if pandemic-related evaluation were used. As it was explained in the research design,



Source: Eurobarometer 2020 (93.1)

Figure 5 Reversed causality check



Source: Eurobarometer 2020 (93.1)

Figure 6 Reversed causality check

the survey included questions where participants were asked to evaluate their level of trust and their receptivity to increase the means of the EU based on their perception of the way the EU managed the coronavirus outbreak. These variables are, thus, visualized in *Figure 5* and *Figure 6*.

APPENDIX C. LINEAR REGRESSION

Dependent variable	Satisfaction	
	Model 1 (no interactions)	Model 2 (interactions)
<i>Explanatory variables</i>		
More decisions by EU	0.1*** (0.01)	0.1*** (0.01)
More means to EU	0.1 (0.01)	0.03 (0.03)
Trust in EU	0.1*** (0.01)	0.1*** (0.03)
<i>Controls</i>		
More means to EU	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Trust in EU	0.3*** (0.01)	0.3*** (0.01)
Satisfaction national government	0.3*** (0.01)	0.3*** (0.01)
Attachment to EU	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)
Feeling like a citizen of the EU	0.01** (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)
View of EU	0.1*** (0.01)	0.1*** (0.01)
Coping with pandemic	0.001 (0.004)	0.02 (0.02)
Age	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)
Gender	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03 (0.01)

Education (leaving age)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Knowledge	-0.1*** (0.02)	-0.1*** (0.02)
<i>Countries</i>		
BE	-0.1*** (0.03)	-0.1*** (0.03)
BG	0.1*** (0.03)	0.1*** (0.03)
CY	-0.1** (0.04)	-0.1** (0.04)
CZ	-0.2*** (0.03)	-0.2*** (0.03)
DE-E	-0.2*** (0.04)	-0.2*** (0.04)
DE-W	-0.2*** (0.03)	-0.2*** (0.03)
DK	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
EE	-0.1*** (0.03)	-0.1*** (0.03)
ES	-0.2*** (0.03)	-0.2*** (0.03)
FI	-0.1*** (0.03)	-0.1*** (0.03)
FR	-0.2*** (0.03)	-0.2*** (0.03)
GR	-0.2*** (0.03)	-0.2*** (0.03)
HR	-0.000 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)
HU	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
IE	0.01 (0.03)	0.1 (0.03)
IT	-0.1*** (0.03)	-0.1*** (0.03)
LT	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
LU	-0.4*** (0.03)	-0.4*** (0.03)
LV	-0.1*** (0.03)	-0.1*** (0.03)
MT	-0.2*** (0.04)	-0.2*** (0.04)
NL	-0.3*** (0.03)	-0.3*** (0.03)
PL	0.2*** (0.03)	0.2*** (0.03)
PT	-0.1 (0.03)	-0.1* (0.03)
RO	0.2*** (0.03)	0.2*** (0.03)
SE	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
SI	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
SK	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
<i>Interactions</i>		
Coping x More decisions by EU		0.003 (0.004)
Coping x More means to EU		-0.005 (0.01)
Coping x Trust		-0.01 (0.01)
Constant	0.3*** (0.04)	0.2*** (0.1)
Observations	20 431	20 431
R2	0.4	0.4
Adjusted R2	0.4	0.4
Residual Std. Error	0.6 (df=20 389)	0.6 (df=20 386)
F Statistics	406.1*** (df=41; 20 389)	378.5*** (df=44; 20 386)
Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

APPENDIX D. ORDINAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION

Dependent variable	Satisfaction	
	Model 1 (no interactions)	Model 2 (interactions)
<i>Explanatory variables</i>		
More decisions by EU	0.2*** (0.02)	0.2*** (0.1)
More means to EU	0.04 (0.03)	0.1 (0.1)
Trust in EU	0.3*** (0.04)	0.5*** (0.1)
<i>Controls</i>		
More means to EU	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Trust in EU	1.1*** (0.03)	1.1*** (0.03)
Satisfaction national government	1.1*** (0.02)	1.1*** (0.02)
Attachment to EU	0.1*** (0.02)	0.1*** (0.02)
Feeling like a citizen of the EU	0.04* (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)
View of EU	0.2*** (0.02)	0.2*** (0.02)
Coping with pandemic	0.01 (0.01)	0.1 (0.1)
Age	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)
Gender	0.1** (0.03)	0.1** (0.03)
Education (leaving age)	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)
Knowledge	-0.2*** (0.1)	-0.2*** (0.1)
<i>Countries</i>		
BE	-0.3*** (0.1)	-0.3*** (0.1)
BG	0.5*** (0.1)	0.5*** (0.1)
CY	-0.3** (0.1)	-0.3** (0.1)
CZ	-0.7*** (0.1)	-0.8*** (0.1)
DE-E	-0.6*** (0.1)	-0.6*** (0.1)
DE-W	-0.6*** (0.1)	-0.6*** (0.1)
DK	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)
EE	-0.5*** (0.1)	-0.5*** (0.1)
ES	-0.6*** (0.1)	-0.6*** (0.1)
FI	-0.4*** (0.1)	-0.4*** (0.1)
FR	-0.5*** (0.1)	-0.5*** (0.1)
GR	-0.5*** (0.1)	-0.5*** (0.1)
HR	-0.03 (0.1)	-0.03 (0.1)
HU	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)
IE	-0.01 (0.1)	-0.01 (0.1)
IT	-0.4*** (0.1)	-0.4*** (0.1)
LT	0.04 (0.1)	0.04 (0.1)
LU	-1.5*** (0.1)	-1.5*** (0.1)
LV	-0.4*** (0.1)	-0.4*** (0.1)
MT	-0.9*** (0.1)	-0.9*** (0.1)
NL	-1.0*** (0.1)	-1.0*** (0.1)
PL	0.6*** (0.1)	0.6*** (0.1)
PT	-0.2* (0.1)	-0.2* (0.1)
RO	0.6*** (0.1)	0.6*** (0.1)
SE	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.2 (0.1)

SI	-0.1 (0.1)	-0.1 (0.1)
SK	0.03 (0.1)	0.03 (0.1)
<i>Interactions</i>		
Coping x More decisions by EU		0.01 (0.02)
Coping x More means to EU		-0.02 (0.03)
Coping x Trust		-0.004 (0.03)
Observations	20 431	20 431
Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amat, F., Arenas, A., Falcó-Gimeno, A., & Muñoz, J. (2020). Pandemics meet democracy. Experimental evidence from the COVID-19 crisis in Spain, 1-31.
- Anderson, C. J., & Guillory, C. A. (1997). Political institutions and satisfaction with democracy: A cross-national analysis of consensus and majoritarian systems. *American Political Science Review*, 66-81.
- Anghel, S., & Drachenberg, R. (2020). The European Council as COVID-19 crisis manager: A comparison with previous crises. *European Parliamentary Research Service*, 1-4.
- Arceneaux, K. (2005). Does federalism weaken democratic representation in the United States?. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 35(2), 297-311.
- Ashworth, S., Bueno de Mesquita, E., & Friedenberg, A. (2018). Learning about voter rationality. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(1), 37-54.
- Baekgaard, M., Christensen, J., Madsen, J. K., & Mikkelsen, K. S. (2020). Rallying around the flag in times of COVID-19: Societal lockdown and trust in democratic institutions. *Journal of Behavioral Public Administration*, 3(2), 1-12.
- Baumgartner, F. R., & Mahoney, C. (2008). The two faces of framing: individual-level framing and collective issue-definition in the EU. *European Union Politics*, 9(3), 435-449.
- Boin, A., 't Hart, P., & McConnell, A. (2009). Crisis exploitation: political and policy impacts of framing contests. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(1), 81-106.
- Bol, D., Giani, M., Blais, A., & Loewen, P. J. (2021). The effect of COVID-19 lockdowns on political support: Some good news for democracy?. *European Journal of Political Research*, 60(2), 497-505.
- Bongardt, A., & Torres, F. (2020). Lessons From the Coronavirus Crisis for European Integration, 130-131.
- Braun, D., & Tausendpfund, M. (2014). The impact of the Euro crisis on citizens' support for the European Union. *Journal of European Integration*, 36(3), 231-245.
- Campbell, J. E., Dettrey, B. J., & Yin, H. (2010). The theory of conditional retrospective voting: Does the presidential record matter less in open-seat elections?. *The Journal of Politics*, 72(4), 1083-1095.
- Caporaso, J. A., & Kim, M. H. (2009). The dual nature of European identity: subjective awareness and coherence. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(1), 19-42.
- Carey, S. (2002). Undivided loyalties: Is national identity an obstacle to European integration?. *European Union Politics*, 3(4), 387-413.
- Csaba, L. (2016). Banking and Fiscal Union in Europe: a Solution or a Trap?. In *Nationalstaat und Europäische Union*, 109-122.
- Dahl, R. (1989). *Democracy and Its Critics*. Chapter 2. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- De Vries, C. E., Bakker, B. N., Hobolt, S., & Arceneaux, K. (2020). Crisis Signaling: How Italy's Coronavirus Lockdown Affected Incumbent Support in Other European Countries. Available at SSRN 3606149.
- Erlanger, S. (2020). Coronavirus Has Lifted Leaders Everywhere. Don't Expect That to Last. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/15/world/europe/coronavirus-presidents.html>. [Accessed on: 28.04.2021].
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2021). Covid-19 Europe. Available at: <https://qap.ecdc.europa.eu/public/extensions/COVID-19/COVID-19.html#global-overview-tab>. [Accessed on: 13.05. 2021].
- European Commission. (2020a). Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL amending Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 as regards specific measures to provide exceptional flexibility for the use of the European Structural and Investments Funds in response to the COVID-19

- outbreak. COM/2020/138 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020PC0138>. [Accessed on: 29.04. 2021].
- European Commission. (2020b). EU Health Policy. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/health/policies/overview_en. [Accessed on: 26.04. 2021].
- European Commission (2020c). Coronavirus: the Commission signs first contract with AstraZeneca. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1524. [Accessed on: 28.05. 2021].
- European Commission (2020d). SURE. The European instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/financial-assistance-eu/funding-mechanisms-and-facilities/sure_en. [Accessed on: 28.05. 2021].
- European Commission. (2020e). Recovery plan for Europe. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en. [Accessed on: 26.04. 2021].
- European Commission. (2020f). Coronavirus: Commission proposes a Digital Green Certificate. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_1181. [Accessed on: 28.05. 2021].
- European Commission. (2020g). Coronavirus response. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response_en. [Accessed on: 09.06. 2021].
- European Commission (2021a) Standard Eurobarometer 94. Winter 2020-2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_1867. [Accessed on: 09.05.2021].
- European Commission. (2021b). Eurobarometer 93.1 (2020). *GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7649 Data file Version 1.1.0*.
- European Commission & European Parliament. (2020). Special Eurobarometer survey No. 500 (EB94.1). Future of Europe., 1-46.
- European Council (2020). The Council's response to crises (IPCR). COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/ipcr-response-to-crises/>. [Accessed on: 20.04. 2021].
- European Parliament. (2021). The Principle of Subsidiarity. Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/7/the-principle-of-subsidiarity>. [Accessed on: 27.04. 2021].
- European Union. (2016). Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Part One-Principles, Title I-Categories and Areas of Union Competence, Article 4. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/tfeu_2016/art_4/oj. [Accessed on: 27.04.2021].
- Fetzer, T. et al. (2020). Global Behaviors and Perceptions at the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. (No. w27082). *National Bureau of Economic Research*.
- Fitch-Roy, O., Benson, D., & Mitchell, C. (2019). Wipeout? Entrepreneurship, policy interaction and the EU's 2030 renewable energy target. *Journal of European Integration*, 41(1), 87-103.
- Gebrekal, T. (2020). What Worries the World-October 2020. Available at: <https://www.ipsos.com/en/what-worries-world-october-2020>. [Accessed on: 29.04.2021].
- Goldberg, A. C., Brosius, A., & de Vreese, C. H. (2021). Policy responsibility in the multilevel EU structure–The (non-) effect of media reporting on citizens' responsibility attribution across four policy areas. *Journal of European Integration*, 1-29.
- Goniewicz, K., Khorram-Manesh, A., Hertelendy, A. J., Goniewicz, M., Naylor, K., & Burkle, F. M. (2020). Current response and management decisions of the European Union to the COVID-19 outbreak: A Review. *Sustainability*, 12(9), 3838, 1-12.

- Grande, E. & Hutter, S. (2016). Introduction: European Integration and the Challenge of Politicization. In Hutter, S., Grande, E. and Kriesi, H. (eds) *Politicizing Europe. Integration and Mass Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 3-31.
- Harteveld, E., Meer, T. V. D., & de Vries, C. E. (2013). In Europe we trust? Exploring three logics of trust in the European Union. *European Union Politics*, 14(4), 542-565.
- Hobolt, S. B. (2012). Citizen satisfaction with democracy in the European Union. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 50, 88-105.
- Hobolt, S. B., & De Vries, C. E. (2016). Public support for European integration. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19, 413-432.
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2005). Calculation, community and cues: Public opinion on European integration. *European Union Politics*, 6(4), 419-443.
- Hobolt, S. B., & Tilley, J. (2014). *Blaming Europe?: Responsibility without accountability in the European Union*. Oxford University Press.
- Hobolt, S. B., & Wratil, C. (2015). Public opinion and the crisis: the dynamics of support for the euro. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(2), 238-256.
- Hoerner, J. M., & Hobolt, S. B. (2020). Unity in diversity? Polarization, issue diversity and satisfaction with democracy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(12), 1838-1857.
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2009). A postfunctionalist theory of European integration: From permissive consensus to constraining. *British Journal of Political Science*, 1-23.
- Hutter, S., & Kriesi, H. (2019). Politicizing Europe in times of crisis. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(7), 996-1017.
- Hvidman, U. (2019). Citizens' evaluations of the public sector: Evidence from two large-scale experiments. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 29(2), 255-267.
- Karp, J. A., Banducci, S. A., & Bowler, S. (2003). To know it is to love it? Satisfaction with democracy in the European Union. *Comparative Political Studies*, 36(3), 271-292.
- Krastev, I. (2020). Seven early lessons from the coronavirus. *European Council on Foreign Relations*.
- Krastev, I. & Leonard, M. (2020). Europe's pandemic politics: How the virus has changed the public's worldview. Available at: https://ecfr.eu/publication/europes_pandemic_politics_how_the_virus_has_changed_the_public_worldview/. [Accessed on: 29.04.2021].
- Kriesi, H. (2015). Political mobilization in times of crises: The relationship between economic and political crises. *Austerity and protest: Popular contention in times of economic crisis*, 19-33.
- Kriesi, H. (2016). The Politicization of European Integration. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(Annual Review), 32-47.
- Kriesi, H. (2020). Is there a crisis of democracy in Europe?. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 1-24.
- Leininger, A., & Schaub, M. (2020). Voting at the dawn of a global pandemic., 1-14.
- León, S. (2011). Who is responsible for what? Clarity of responsibilities in multilevel states: The case of Spain. *European Journal of Political Research*, 50(1), 80-109.
- Merolla, J. L., & Zechmeister, E. J. (2013). Evaluating political leaders in times of terror and economic threat: The conditioning influence of politician partisanship. *The Journal of Politics*, 75(3), 599-612.
- Mueller, J. E. (1970). Presidential popularity from Truman to Johnson. *The American Political Science Review*, 64(1), 18-34.
- Offe, C. (1976). "Crisis of Crisis Management": Elements of a Political Crisis Theory. *International Journal of Politics*, 6(3), 29-67.
- Pavlov, N. (2015). Conceptualizing EU Crisis Management. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 20(1), 23-42.

- Reif, K., & Schmitt, H. (1980). Nine Second-Order National Elections—A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results. *European Journal of Political Research*, 8(1), 3-44.
- Reiser, M., & Hebenstreit, J. (2020). Populism versus technocracy? Populist responses to the technocratic nature of the EU. *Politics and Governance*, 8(4), 568-579.
- Roberts, K. M. (2003). Social Correlates of Party System Demise and Populist Resurgence in Venezuela, *Latin American Politics and Society* 45, 32, 35-57.
- Rohrschneider, R. (2002). The democracy deficit and mass support for an EU-wide government. *American Journal of Political Science*, 463-475.
- Sánchez-Cuenca, I. (2000). The political basis of support for European integration. *European Union Politics*, 1(2), 147-171.
- Scharpf, F. W. (1999). *Governing in Europe: Effective and democratic?*. Oxford University Press.
- Schweiger, C. (2017). The Legitimacy Challenge. In *The European Union in Crisis*, edited by Desmond Dinan, Neil Nugent, William E. Paterson, 188-211.
- Sibley, C. G., Greaves, L. M., Satherley, N., Wilson, M. S., Overall, N. C., Lee, C. H., ... & Barlow, F. K. (2020). Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdown on trust, attitudes toward government, and well-being. *American Psychologist*.
- Van Middelaar, L. (2016). The return of politics – The European Union after the crises in the Eurozone and Ukraine, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 54 (3), 495–507.
- Verba, S. (1965). Comparative political culture. In *Political Culture and Political Development*, edited by Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, Princeton U Press, 512-560.
- Von der Leyen, U. (2020). Statement by President von der Leyen on Emergency Measures in Member States. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/el/statement_20_567. Accessed on: [20.04.2021].
- Wessels, B. (2015). Political culture, political satisfaction and the rollback of democracy. *Global Policy*, 6, 93-105.