

Economic Well-being and Support for the EC

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the mists of time, political institutions have striven for their legitimacy. On the one hand, institutions may attain this backing through people's unconditional attachment to the nation, religion or flag which the institution claims to represent.

On the other hand, institutions may try to get the blessing of their people through the appeal to the rewards which the institution may provide. Following this line of argument, the basic concern of the present chapter will be how the mere recognition that the EC is a rewarding institution is turned into a more crystalised form of legitimacy of the EC. I will call this process *'utilitarian support'*.

Clearly, this does not mean that the first line of argument is vain, or that allegiance to the nation, religion or other affective factors do not work to legitimate certain political institutions. It just means that examining such a possibility is the task of other projects.

Utilitarian Support

A process of conversion of rewards into support for the EC has been hypothesised before and the concept 'utilitarian support' has been widely used in the literature -e.g. Lindberg and Scheingold (1970, p. 40) and Shepherd (1975, ch. 5). More recently, it has been alluded to by Reif and Inglehart (1991, p. 7) as the outcome of *'a calculated appraisal of the immediate costs and benefits of membership in the Community'*. The common immediate origin of those is Easton's concept of *'specific support'* (cf. Easton, 1975).

It will be useful to keep in mind the existence of a difference between the variable which acts as the *cause* of the process (the rewards) from the *process* itself (the utilitarian support) because a *'mistake which is often made is that complex processes are described and labelled as single variables'* (Saris and Stronkhorst, 1984, p. 12). This error is far too common. One of its numerous illustrations is evident in Hewstone (1986, p. 157) when he argues that Britain displays a low utilitarian support meaning instead that the perception of rewards is scarce.

There have been several precedents of the hypothesis of utilitarian support in neighbouring disciplines as well. Indeed, the theory of European integration has claimed that some sort of recognition of rewards will precede any other feeling of a more enduring legitimacy (cf. Shepherd, 1975, ch. 6; and Hewstone, 1986, p. 43). Social psychology would hypothesise such a process, too. This is elegantly put by Hewstone (1986, p. 60) claiming that *'people develop favourable attitudes towards objects that are rewarding and unfavourable attitudes towards objects that are*

unrewarding'.

Once it has been established that my object of study is that type of support which is caused by the popular recognition that the EC provides certain rewards, the obvious controversy is which sort of rewards are we referring to -since the EC might deliver outcomes of a remarkably diverse character. There is a great difference between, on the one hand, receiving a payoff in terms of money, or on the other hand, receiving rewards such as political ones (e.g. the preservation of democracy if endangered), diplomatic ones (e.g. international prestige) or many others.

At this stage, it seems reasonable to differentiate those rewards of an strict economic nature from those which are non-economic. Needless to say, both kinds of rewards are worth analysing, but limitations inherent to all research efforts as well as the work distribution in the group would advise to make a choice between the two. Although any choice impoverishes the scope of the research, it also offers the advantage of thematic homogeneity, because only one kind of variable (either only economic or only non-economic) will have to be considered.

My choice for this chapter is to concentrate on economic rewards, leaving non-economic rewards for further research. This delimitation offers three interesting advantages.

First, the economic underpinnings of any utilitarian deliberation -although they are not the only ones- are clearly of primary importance, thus becoming unavoidable in any utilitarian analysis. In this sense, Dalton and Eichenberg (1990, p. 3) argue that *'at the base of any (...) utilitarian model of public support for the European Community must be considerations about its economic performance'*. Following the same line of argument, for Reif and Inglehart (1991, p. 7) utilitarian support may contain several different type of rewards *'with economic outputs being the most obvious type and perhaps the most widely appreciated one'*.

Second, economic rewards are less controversial than non-economic ones. Even rational choice theory -master in dealing with rewards- has found problematic the extension of their field from economic rewards to those of a different nature. For instance, Belluci (1991, p. 67) argues that *'since the rational actor model of voting behaviour is a general one, its range of applicability covers both economic and non-economic utilities. While there is much discussion with the assumption of individual rationality applied to non-economic interests, there are fewer questions about individual rationality with respect to economic utilities'*.

Third, the narrow definition of the rewards in terms of strict economic payoffs precludes a dangerous tautology (which is too common in rational choice studies): taking into account rewards of diverse nature may lead to seeing any reason

(manifest or implicit) of support for the EC as a reward -and thus, the support for the EC would be utilitarian almost by definition. A cogent critique of such an error is given by Hewstone (1986, p. 41-42) where he objects to the argument that any survey question about agreement with membership of the EC reflects a utilitarian attitude given its evaluative nature.

Economic Support

Following the reasoning so far, economic support is that support for the EC which is caused by the perception of economic rewards.

At a later stage, I am going to differentiate the economic elements I am referring to. For the moment, let me just state that eventually I may refer to both economic benefits directly derived from membership, as well as the more indirect improvement in economic conditions in member-states; which may be appropriated both by private individuals as well as by the member-states; which may be derived both from objective economic rewards as well as from its subjective assessments; and which may refer both to the benefits from the past as well as to the expectations of the benefits of the future.

The hypothesis that there is a relationship between the economic benefits received from the EC and support for it, is not particularly new -and probably it is even 'popular knowledge'. Indeed, all saloon-bar philosophers 'know' that the Italian net benefit is what produces their enthusiasm and the British burden is responsible for their reluctance.

Inglehart gives us a clear economic hypothesis when he affirms that *'favourable economic payoffs are conducive to -and perhaps even essential to- the processes of national and supranational integration'* (Inglehart, 1978, p. 69; and literally repeated in Reif and Inglehart, 1991, p. 7). He also argues (in Hewstone, 1986, p. xvi) that experience in European integration has shown that peoples can be won under favourable economic conditions. Following the same economically driven argument, Handley (1981, p. 335) claims that a crisis of support for the EC was derived from the economic crisis of the 1970s, but subsequently *'for most of the areas, the downward trend was reversed during the period, probably due largely to improvements in the economic recession'*.

Even integration theory (which is not particularly attentive to the role of public opinion in the process of integration) claims that economic rewards are very important for the process of integration. Nye (1971, p. 83-84) points to the importance of the perception of the distribution of economic benefits for the progress of the integration process.

The common thesis of all these references, and which will constitute my basic hypotheses is that economic well-being exercises an influence on support for the EC. This connection has been hypothesised also in voting studies, and there is some agreement (see Rattinger, 1991, p. 50) that the causal chain may originate in one of the two following: either personal direct experience with the economy, or the role of economic well-being as a political issue.

In the first case, personal experience with certain economic conditions, such as unemployment or inflation, may lead to blame the EC for them (further discussion on this point in section four). Also, economic benefits from Brussels, such as regional grants or aid for the agriculture, may be directly experienced and a consequent attitude may be taken.

In the second case, the majority of these economic variables are unknown for the general public. Only its discussion as a political issue through political elites and on the media can take those economic variables to the general public so people place themselves with respect to the EC. At this stage, it is irrelevant to me which of these two paths the causal connection follows. If a relationship was found, the causal connection would be subsequently discussed.

Plan of the Chapter

Following from the points made so far, three conditions have to be fulfilled if we are to speak of economic influence over the support for the EC. Three main questions will have to be addressed in the chapter.

1. Is the EC seen as an institution dealing with, economics? and if so, what level of influence is it seen to have on economic well-being? If this first question was not answered positively, any economic basis of support for the EC (empirically found afterwards) would be difficult to justify. We would have to face a curious paradox. On the one hand, this economic basis of support we are referring to, would imply that the EC seems to be judged according to the economic consequences it produces. But on the other hand, the unfulfillment of the first condition would indicate that citizens believe that EC policies have nothing to do with their own economic circumstances.

How could anybody judge an institution according to its economic consequences, and at the same time, believe that this institution has no significative economic consequences?

2. Does the level of support for the EC in the different member-states run parallel to (a) changes in the economic benefits received from the EC and/or (b) changes in the macro-economic conditions? If there was no evidence of a

relationship with any of the previous economic variables, no economic foundation of support for the EC would be defensible.

3. Do individuals which perceive high levels of economic benefits from membership, support the EC more than those who do not? If there was not an individual level correspondence, between economic benefits and support for the EC, then the previous findings in (2) would be merely the result of an ecological fallacy – i.e. the existence of regularities at high levels of aggregation which are inexistent at lower levels of aggregation.

Eventually, I may add a fourth question, which is: if it so happens that support for the EC is related to perceptions of benefits, in which causal direction does this relationship work?.

The first question is addressed in the next section -'the economic image of the EU'.

The second question had two parts and they are consequently analysed in two differentiated sections. One of them asked about the correspondence through time of the level of support for the EC and the change in the economic benefits derived from membership of the EC. Section 3 verifies the existence of such a correspondence. The second part of the question asked about the correspondence through time of level of support for the EC and the change in the economic conditions in the member-states. This one is dealt with in section 4.

The third question is examined in section four, which deals with the individual-level analyses of the relationship between support for the EC and the perceptions (and expectations) of benefits of membership.

II. THE ECONOMIC IMAGE OF THE EC

As I have stated, for the level of support for membership to be sensitive to changes in economic well-being, one of the necessary conditions is that the EC has to be perceived as related to economics.

The literature would seem to back this condition. For instance, Dalton and Eichenberg (1990, p. 3) affirm that '*the EC is first and foremost an economic community. The goals, activities and identity of the Community are still largely defined in terms of its economic policies*' and they lucidly go on to refer to a research by Dalton and Duval which found that sixty per cent of press coverage about the EC in Britain referred to economic matters. Taking into account all that, it seems reasonable that the EC is perceived as an institution which deals with economics.

That the EC has a primarily economic image would hardly look surprising, taking into account that the EC has dealt basically with economic policies, and also considering its former name 'European *Economic* Community'.

However, the precedents in the literature do not preclude a more empirical examination. We should be able to test the proposition that, among large numbers of people, the EC has the image of an institution which deals with economics. This should not mean that people see any other activity as alien to the EC (I would also expect it to be seen as engaged in international politics, for instance) but simply that economics is recognised as one of its primary competences.

Fortunately, the Eurobarometer Series (EB 27) provides us with an open-ended question about what image does the EC bring to people's minds. Open-ended questions are remarkably useful for questions such as the present one, in which we are interested in the unconscious reaction a concept (the EC) triggers in people's minds.

Table1

The first result which catches the eye in Table 1 is that the linkage of the EC with economics is certainly widespread among the peoples of the EC. More than 30% of the sample gave spontaneous economic images (such as those relating to the costs and benefits which membership produces on their country or on themselves, answers about the CAP, or about other common policies) compared with less than 20% who answered in terms of political images (such as images relating to internal political processes in the EC, international relations, or fundamental goals and values).

Particular attention should be paid to the fact that half the Greeks immediately related the EC to some economic aspect, followed by more than one third of the Irish, British and Germans who did the same. More than a quarter did so in Italy, Portugal, Spain, Denmark and France. Only among the Belgians (19%), Luxembourgers (17%), and Dutch (22%) the strength of the economic images is weak enough to be overtaken by the higher percentages of those who cited political images.

Among the economic images of the EC is worth underlining two dominant tendencies: firstly, the newcomers (Greece, Spain and Portugal) display a very high tendency to relate the EC to the costs and benefits which membership produces (or is likely to produce) in their own countries; and second, the CAP is the first thing to come to the minds of a substantial percentage of the British people.

All these results would seem to confirm the hypothesis that the EC is seen as an economic institution. However, it is worth stressing that the economic image of the EC ranks only second after the lack of any specific image about the EC. Indeed, about 40% of the sample, either did not answer the question or gave a neutral description of the EC -a neutral description which, according to the coders '*does not go beyond a general "translation" of European Community*' to some synonymous term (Eurobarometer no. 27, p. 4). This makes me think that although the results seem promising for my economic hypotheses, the lack of knowledge and the low saliency of the EC may put obstacles in the way of my work.

Further evidence of the dominant economic image of the EC is given by a question about the most striking development which has happened in the EC since its inception (EB 27).

Among the twelve, the choice of more than half of the people for the most striking development relates to economic issues -such as food, regional divergence, unemployment and free trade. This relegates to a second position the battery of political issues: 'development of cooperation and trust between countries that have been in conflict throughout their history' (which, however, ranks first if I do not collapse the eight possible choices into the two categories -economic and political), the frequent consultation between the governments of the twelve, and the setting of common EC institutions.

Table2

Ireland, Britain and Denmark display the highest emphasis on developments of an economic type. Conversely, the economic and political developments are more balanced in Germany, due to the extraordinary emphasis on the issue of 'trust among past enemies'. Luxembourg follows a pattern similar to the German one -just more marked. Spain and Portugal -somehow disoriented by a question not very meaningful for them- restrain themselves to display extraordinary levels of non response.

Among the economic developments, the food surpluses are especially overstressed in Denmark and the Netherlands, and especially in Britain; whereas the fear of unemployment due to competition is especially noticed in Ireland.

Still, some more data give a clearer image of the relative strength of economic and political images of the EC. Asked about what brings EC countries together (EB 27), the two equally dominant answers in the twelve were '*economic links*' and '*the making of world peace*' -both mentioned by two out of five of those interviewed. This result points again to the double nature of the EC, engaged both in economics and in international politics. Besides the great balance between the two, economic links are seen as the primary bond in Holland, Belgium, France and

Portugal; world peace is seen as pivotal in the EC for the Germans, the British, and the Irish; whereas the Danes, Luxembourgers, Italians, Spaniards, and Greeks keep the balance between the two.

Table3

The conclusion that can be drawn from these data is that as hypothesised, the economic image of the EC is common among the publics of the twelve. However, two main warnings have to be stressed. Firstly, the EC does not *only* have the image stated above, but it also gives the generalised impression of an institution dealing with international politics. The hold that either of these images of the EC has, is just a question of degree. Secondly, although the economic image is widespread, quite often the predominant view is precisely the lack of any image about it.

Despite these caveats, the hypothesis would seem verified. The importance of this point for the economic hypothesis is fundamental, since it is more likely that people are influenced by the economic performance of an institution when this institution is seen as economically related rather than when it is not. In a sense, the economic image of the EC prepares the field for its economic evaluation.

III. THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS FROM THE EC

As stated in the plan of the chapter, the next two necessary requirements for the verification of the economic type of support are (a) support for membership in the member-states has to be sensitive through time to changes in the economic benefits received from the EC; and/or (b) support for membership in the member-states has to be sensitive through time to changes in the macroeconomic conditions. This section will deal with the verification of the first hypothesis, leaving the second one for the next section.

The funds which the population receives from the EC in the form of expenses such as grants in agriculture or regional aid is already substantive. The EC spent a total of around ECU 50,000 million a year at the beginning of the present decade, and it is increasing year by year. These sort of revenues -as well as the contributions of each country to the budget- would be important enough to influence one's opinion about the EC if (and this is a big if) people were aware of them. Confronted with my objection that people are not aware of these magnitudes, some may argue that awareness is not really necessary -as I will show below. Being as it were, it may be argued that a relationship could exist between these economic magnitudes and a consequent attitude towards the EC.

For each country I could estimate one time series model which would relate

the evolution of the support for the EC (as a dependent variable) to the evolution of certain variables, which measure some objective economic benefits from the EC (as independent variables).

If I was to take into account some provisional results displayed elsewhere (Bosch, 1992), the growth of the CAP subsidies directed to each country could apparently contribute to increase support for membership in that country, whereas the country's share in financing the Community budget could seemingly decrease that support.

The alluded results will have to be kept under closer scrutiny, if they are to be taken into consideration. This is due to the fact that they could be the outcome of a statistical artifact, and not the outcome of a substantial underlying regularity. They may be artifactual because if both sides of the equation were continuously increasing during that period, the results could reflect just that common trend, and not an influence of one over the other.

This criticism is really serious because the consequences are lethal for the model; and because it is rather likely -given the shortness of the time series available so far. I will retake such an argument just before Table 4.

Notwithstanding the previous caveats, I have to accept that if those results were to be confirmed by more reliable data, they would suggest the existence of an evaluation of costs (the country contributions) and benefits (CAP revenues) and thus, an evaluation of how profitable the EC is. Therefore, the real question is whether the existence of such an evaluation is credible.

The argument against it is neat and common-sense. Populations do not know what is their contribution and how much do they get back from the EC. And we know that they do not know it. Thus, how could they act according to some information which they do not have?

This question allows for two answers. The first one is best exemplified by rational choice theory -even though the underlying reasoning is common to all positivist political science. It argues that it is not necessary for people to be conscious of their calculations, and thus, neither is it necessary to be aware of the actual costs and benefits involved in those calculations. It is enough for people to act *as if* the costs and the benefits were noticed and *as if* the calculations were made. The important point for this tradition is to check if people act as the calculations would predict them to act. If the predictions are right, then chances are that the hypothesis is right; and if predictions are wrong, then chances are that the hypothesis is wrong.

However, I would argue that a valid explanation requires not only predictive

power(1), but also a plausible description of how reality works. Here is where the second answer appears to be more fruitful.

The second answer would argue that people unaware of the economic benefits from the EC can not be influenced by them. Therefore, if a connection between the objective economic benefits and support for membership is observed, an intervening variable is needed in order to describe such a regularity in a plausible way.

In the introduction I said that, at that early stage, it was irrelevant which path the causal connection followed. Now, the announcement of such a path is needed.

It seems reasonable that political elites may have a fair idea of those costs and benefits. Elites transform that information into political issues for discussion. Although they may do this not to inform people, but for their own competitive purposes (electoral attacks over contrary positions, nationalist outbreaks...) the result may well be the formation of a perception -accurate or not- of the benefits which membership of the EC entails. For instance, Ms. Thatcher's emphasis on the British contribution to the EC budget might have produced the perception that the costs of membership were very high, even if the particular data about it were unknown to the general public.

Media specialists may also have a good understanding of the costs and benefits of membership. Particularly in such distant issues as the EC, the reports which the media specialists tend to produce on, for instance, the economic consequences of membership are often one of the few inputs which people have about the issue at stake. Another example will clarify this role. Spanish media tend to stress the revenues brought by such instruments as regional aid and social funds. This, in its turn, forms a perception of the benefits which membership brings to Spain but, needless to say, the actual revenues are again unknown. Thus, the media might also be at the origin of the perceptions of benefits from membership.

In conclusion, I would affirm that the connection between economic benefits from membership and support for membership may be explained by an intervening variable. Also, this mediation implies the possibility of formation of perceptions without knowledge of the actual economic benefits.

Therefore, it can be argued that this process is not necessarily the proof of individual rationality, but it is more the suggestion of a process of persuasion. A similar explanation is commonplace in the case of the influence of economic variables on national voting: *'the electoral effects of economic conditions are by no means a simple expression of economic rationality among voters; a good part of the economy's influence is indirect, mediated by elite activities'* (Jacobson, 1991, p. 33).

Hence, if we disentangle the causal chain, we will find an indirect process: in a first phase the economic benefits could create certain perceptions of economic benefits from the EC (through informed elites and media). In a second phase, these very perceptions of economic benefits will produce support for membership.

To estimate such an indirect process I have, once again, serious problems of artifactual results -especially with the first of the two phases. If both sides of the equation were continuously increasing, the results could reflect just that common trend, and not an influence of one over the other. This problem was previously suggested -but its diagnosis and remedy were postponed.

Some tests were carried out (see again Bosch 1992) to check whether the alluded results were or not artifactual. Neither the simple model mentioned above, nor the first phase of the present indirect model, were found to tolerate satisfactorily the tests. Therefore, I cannot maintain the existence of a relationship between the two sides of the equations: on the one side, the objective economic benefits from the EC; and on the other side, either support for membership (hypothesised in the simple model) or perceptions of benefits from the EC (hypothesised in the first phase of the indirect model).

So far, I cannot display any evidence of an alleged influence of the objective economic benefits over the attitudes towards the EC. A longer term observation, when the regular trends are broken by the ups and downs of longer periods, will allow a more reliable evaluation of the possible influences of those variables.

This difficulty is the reason why Table 4 only displays the second phase of the model: it shows the results of one time series analysis for each country, which relates support for membership (as a dependent variable) to the perception of benefits from the EC (as an independent variable).

Table4

It is in the second phase where we see that the indirect model is much more satisfactory than the direct model. First of all, this second phase of the indirect model did not show any problem of gathering just the effect of common trends instead of gathering a substantial effect. In addition, this second phase shows high levels of significance of the perceptions in several countries, and the percentage of explained variance is often high. This means that, in those countries, the perception of benefits is a very good predictor of support for membership.

The results split the twelve in three groups:

a) a first group of '*utilitarian*' countries, composed by Denmark, Britain, Ireland, and Greece; where the perceptions of benefits exercise a particularly

powerful influence over support for membership (high t-values) and where the explanatory power of such a relationship is very high (high R^2).

b) a second group of *'intermediate' countries*, composed by Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy; where although one can verify a certain link between the two variables, this does not show any high explanatory power (low R^2).

c) a third group of *'non-utilitarian' countries*, composed by Belgium, France, and -to the extent that the reduced number of time points allow me to refer to them- Spain and Portugal. In those countries, the results (low t-values) precludes any talk of an empirical relationship.

Although in some countries I have found a model which accounts for the support for membership satisfactorily, I am in doubt whether such a model explains the process under study at all. The hypothesis that support for membership depends on the perception of this being beneficial assumes two things: first of all, it assumes that the latter is qualitatively different from the former. Without such an assumption the explanation would be tautological. Second of all, it assumes that the perception of benefits was an intervening variable.

Let me begin with the analysis of the second assumption: the only sense that the perception of benefits had in the indirect model, was as an intervening variable. By which I mean, as a proxy of the objective economic benefits. This proxy of the objective economic benefits, once perceived, would exercise an influence over the support for the EC. But the first phase of the indirect model is not demonstrated so far. The fact that there is no verified link between the objective economic benefits and its perceptions, precludes the interpretation of the perception of benefits as an intervening variable. Therefore, I am left with an statistical relationship between perception of benefits from the EC and support from the EC.

(The fact that the perception of benefits does not act as a proxy of the objective economic benefits should not surprise. In fact, the wording of the survey question does not make explicit reference of the economic character of the benefits, being possible -indeed, probable- the interpretation of the question in terms of political benefits, diplomatic benefits, etc.)

As I say, I am left with an statistical relationship between perception of benefits from the EC and support from the EC, where (following the first assumption) the latter has to be qualitatively different from the former, if I want to prevent problems of tautology. But are they two qualitatively different variables?

Unluckily, the answer is not clear. The fact that the relationship fails in some countries, seems to be a guarantee of non-tautology. However, common sense would tell us that "support for the EC" and "perception of benefits from the EC" are likely to be understood as analogous by the survey respondent (even being two

different concepts for the scientific observer).

Moreover, even if I concluded that the two variables are different enough as not to be redundant, there would still exist a doubt over which direction the influence follows. Is it that people become pro-marketeter because they have perceived benefits from membership -as hypothesised so far? Or conversely, is the relationship in the opposite direction -i.e. is this very perception of benefits the consequence of a pre-existent sympathetic evaluation of the EC? As I cannot find it out here, the particular relationship between these two variables will be further analysed, at an individual level, in the next section.

IV. THE MACRO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

As I said, the economic hypothesis could be verified by the relationship tested in the previous section -verification which did not succeed too much- or by a relationship between the support for the EC and the evolution of the macro-economic conditions -relationship to be examined in this section.

As the reader will be aware, a growing field of research in political economy tends to relate economic conditions to electoral outcomes and the popularity of governments -the so called 'voting and popularity functions' (2). The basic hypothesis of these studies is that voters punish the parties which govern when the economy is bad, and that voters re-elect the leaders which are associated with good economic situations.

My intention is to extend this hypothesis from national support and voting to support for membership; and therefore hypothesise that the EC will receive higher levels of support when the economic situation is good and the support will decline when the economic situation also declines.

The reasoning behind the influence of the national macro-economic conditions on the level of support for membership is that some actions and policies of the EC may have an influence on the national macro-economic conditions -and it is these very conditions which define economic well-being. Therefore, macro economic conditions may affect support for membership *because* the EC has some responsibility in economic well-being.

This responsibility, however, has to be apparent to people if it is to produce a response at the level of public opinion. This is called 'attribution of responsibility' in the literature (e.g. Lewis-Beck, 1986, p. 108). In this case, attribution of responsibility means that people hold the EC (partly) responsible for the economic evolution in their respective countries. In other words, it refers to the perception that the EC not only is

involved in economics (which was verified in the last section), but its actions actually make a difference in this field.

Attribution of responsibility is not an easy process to explain, at all. Its causes, as well as the conditions for an institution to get responsibility attributed, would be matters for study in themselves -a study which I am not going to undertake. My more modest assignment is to stress its requirement for the success of the economic hypothesis.

This stress is merited because it has been demonstrated that certain factors tend to lower the level of attribution of responsibility of the institutions. The factors which dilute responsibility are:

- a) inexistence of party homogeneity in the executive (e.g. non-party governments and multi-party cabinets).
- b) instability of governments.
- c) weakness in the powers of the executive institutions -particularly in the powers for economic policy.

Paldam (1981, p. 194) abbreviates it to *'the main exceptions to the responsibility occur for weak and unstable governments in multi-party systems'*. Therefore, and given that the EC scores high at least in a) and c), it would not be surprising if there were very low levels of responsibility attributed to the EC. A failure of the model could be understood as a consequence of the non-fulfillment of the present necessary condition. Thus warned against failure, let me report the findings.

For each country I could estimate one time series model which would relate the evolution of the support for the EC (as a dependent variable) to the evolution of some variables which stand for the macro-economic conditions of the country, such as inflation, GNP growth, unemployment rate, etc (as independent variables).

If I was to take into account some provisional results displayed elsewhere (Bosch, 1992), exports to other EC countries could apparently contribute to increase support for membership. This result is parallel to those of Dalton and Eichenberg (1991) who found that exports to the EC was the only objective economic magnitude among the twelve to influence support.

In the second place, unemployment could seemingly reduce that support. The existence of an effect of unemployment on the parallel case of national voting is a hotly debated issue. My result, though, is similar to several studies for the German case (Rattinger, 1991) and for the French case (Lewis-Beck, 1986, p. 10).

The interpretation could be summarised by saying that people appreciate the economic opportunities and despise the economic misfortunes which an integrated

market provides -and the EC (partly) gets both the blame and the praise for it.

As in the previous section, an obvious criticism against these findings is based on the limited knowledge which the man-in-the-street may have about those macro-economic magnitudes. Once again, the critique goes: if people do not know these data, how could they be influenced by them? And once again the answer is that an intervening variable might be the link between the two. This indirect process consists of a first phase in which the macroeconomic conditions may influence people (through informed elites and the media) to create certain perceptions of the economic conditions; and only in a second phase, these perceptions of the economic conditions will produce support for membership.

Another possible criticism is also parallel to that revealed in the previous section: if both sides of the equation were continuously increasing during that period, the results could reflect just that common trend, and not an influence of one over the other. Some tests were carried out (see again Bosch 1992) to check whether the alluded results were or not artifactual. In this case, the results of the tests were slightly different, since the role of the unemployment rate seems to have some well established substantial influence, and not just artifactual. The remaining variables did not succeed in the tests.

Therefore, besides the influence of the unemployment rate, I cannot display any evidence of an alleged influence of the macro-economic conditions over the attitudes towards the EC. This is the reason why Table 5 only displays the second phase of the model: it shows the results of one time series analysis for each country, which relates support for membership (as a dependent variable) to the perception of economic conditions (as an independent variable), also called "economic evaluations".

Table5

The results displayed on Table 5 look rather gloomy. A first group of traditionally euro-skeptical countries (Britain, Denmark, Greece) show no significant relationship between the perception of macro-economic conditions and the support for the EC -or the relationship is in the opposed direction. I would presume that the model fails because, in these countries, the responsibility for the economic conditions is not attributed to the EC -which was a condition of the model.

A second group of countries which show no significant relationship between the perception of macro-economic conditions and the support for the EC, is constituted by France, Spain and Portugal. These countries were previously classified as '*non-utilitarian*' because they ignored certain economic variables in order to form their attitude towards the EC. I would presume that the model fails in these

countries due to a more enduring absence of economic motivations in the formation of their attitudes to the EC.

A third group is constituted by the remaining countries: Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands. The results for these countries show either very modest levels of significance (Germany), or low explicative power (Italy, Netherlands).

Therefore, the only noticeable relationship found in this section is a certain influence of the unemployment rate over support for the EC. However, this influence does not seem to operate through the economic evaluations of the people, and thus, it possibly has nothing to do with strictly economic motivations. It is more likely that the unemployment operates through a diffuse sense of general optimism or pessimism: a sort of 'feel-good' factor(3).

Besides the ambiguous role of the unemployment rate, I have to draw the conclusion that no other influence of the macroeconomic conditions over support for the EC was firmly established. Therefore, the hypothesis submitted to verification in this section did not seem to succeed the test.

V. THE PERCEPTION OF BENEFITS

The longitudinal analyses introduced in the two preceding sections presented several problems which have to be addressed in this section. First of all, there was the question of confirming the findings of the longitudinal section. If such confirmation was not full, the possibility of ecological fallacy would be most likely. Second of all, the role of the perception of economic benefits from membership was seen as pivotal but a question remained open about the direction of the relationship between this perception and the support for membership.

Addressing the first question, Table 6 displays the ordinal correlations (computed at individual level) between the perception of benefits from membership and support for membership at two recent points in time.

Table6

The data seem to confirm the findings from the last section -displayed on Table 4. Some countries like Denmark, Britain, Ireland and Greece, show a very strong connection between the two variables, confirming the findings of the previous section. Other countries, like Italy, France, and specially Spain, show a much lower correspondence, to the extent that some of the correlations are not statistically significant. The evolution of these data for some selected countries in the second half

of the 1980s is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

The figures make clear that most countries evidence a remarkable stability. The countries which were more utilitarian-oriented (Denmark, Ireland, Britain and Greece) stay at the top of Figure 1, for the whole period; whereas those which are less so, keep at the bottom. Only two oddities are evident. Portugal catches up with the more utilitarian-minded countries, after a very short period of adaptation. Spain stays at the bottom of the league, at incredibly low levels. Although a certain rise is evident for the last three years, it does not seem likely that it may leave that position even after a period of adaptation(4).

Surely, it has not gone unnoticed to the reader that a certain regularity is evident in this classification of countries. The euro-skeptic countries tend to be more utilitarian-minded, whereas the more pro-EC countries tend to be less so. This is due to the fact that certain sections in the more pro-EC countries support membership even when they do not perceive benefits from it -an attitude which is only feasible where the EC is accepted by a sort of national consensus.

Despite the evidence shown, the relationship is still controvertible. Indeed, it may be argued that, although the data confirm the connection between the two variables, the causal arrow may work the other way around -i.e. it is not that they are pro-marketeers because they have perceived economic benefits, but rather that this very perception of benefits is the consequence of a pre-existent sympathetic evaluation of the EC.

The issue of the direction of causality is one of those eternal problems in the social sciences -and, in most occasions, it is also unsolvable. It is this indetermination that would make me favour the existence of a two-way reinforcing process of interaction, rather than a one-direction causal influence.

Causal modelling is one technique which is able to help in similar debates. It may give a hint on the reciprocal relationship between two variables (e.g. perception of benefits and support for membership) provided that enough antecedents of each variable may be found which are reasonably independent -in its meaning- from the other variable. Therefore, I plan to address the question of the direction of causality, in further research, by the use of causal modelling.

Although a relationship is proven between the perception of benefits from membership and the support for membership, the particular nature of this relationship is still unclear. A further problem of this particular relationship, which this section will have to address, refers to its time dimension.

So far I have assumed that the variable which mattered was the perception of

past economic benefits from membership. Thus, the model had a clearly retrospective content. However, this is not the only possibility. In fact, voting studies have long discussed the retrospective versus prospective dichotomy (Alt, 1984; Fiorina, 1978 and 1981, and Chappel and Keech, 1985) to find that prospective specifications tend to be more powerful than retrospective ones. They tend to assume a more rational behaviour as well: why should people react to past benefits? After all, past is past! Future benefits, on the contrary, are something worth reacting to.

Following this line of argument, I will test a new hypothesis with a clear prospective content. I will use the expectations of future benefits from membership -instead of perceptions of past benefits- as a predictor of support for membership. Unfortunately, the expectations of benefits from membership have only been assessed in very specific points in time. I only have these sort of data for two countries (Spain and Portugal), and only at one point in time (Autumn 1985 -just before their accession). It is, at least, a propitious moment for such a question.

Table7

Table 7 displays how agreement with membership related to the expectations of *economic* benefits from membership in those countries.

The evidence reveal how such a relationship is very strong in both countries. Indeed, in this prospective analysis, the values of the correlations are much higher than in the previous retrospective one.

In the series of retrospective correlations which were showed on Table 6, Portugal did not display such high correlations until Autumn 1988. These prospective correlations present such high values even before entry! The Spanish case is even more satisfactory: the high value achieved by the prospective correlation just before entry, has not been reached by the retrospective correlations even after years and years of steady increase.

In conclusion, I could state that the expectation of economic benefits seems to be a much more effective predictor of support for membership than the perception of past benefits. Is this just another form of economic predominance? The following paragraphs elucidate why such a possibility does not seem likely.

In the same survey in which the newcomers were asked about the economic benefits which they expected from membership, they were also asked about the benefits which they expected membership would have on (a) the functioning of democracy in their country and (b) the role of their country in the world. The data for the three types of expectations (economic, political and diplomatic) were, rather

similar -the only difference being an slightly more positive outlook on the two latter. Moreover, the three expectations exercise a rather similar influence over support for membership.

Table8

Table 8 displays the three correspondent correlations which are -in both countries- much higher than the retrospective correlations reported in Figure 2. Thus, not only expectations of economic benefits, but also expectations of political and diplomatic benefits, are more effective predictors of support for membership than the perception of *past* benefits.

How to interpret this finding? One interpretation is in line with voting studies: prospective models are more effective than retrospective ones because, as economists argue, 'bygones are for ever bygone'. This interpretation accounts for the fact that economic expectations about the future exercise a more powerful influence than economic perceptions of the past. However, it does not account for the also successful influence which *political* and *diplomatic* expectations seem to exercise.

Another interpretation would state that the three expectations are, in fact, the manifestation of a common latent factor in those countries. This latent factor would be a sort of non-specific expectation of all sort of benefits from membership. I refer to a rather messianic trust that the EC would provide them with the much needed solution to all sort of problems of those countries.

The backing for this interpretation is that the three expectations display very high correlations among them: 0.80, 0.73 and 0.91 for Spain; and 0.87, 0.84 and 0.87 for Portugal (also a confirmatory factor analysis for the Spanish case confirmed that the three expectations may be the manifestation of such a latent factor -towards which they would maintain correlations higher than 0.9).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In order to recapitulate the findings of this paper, I should say that, even though a substantial part of the population sees the EC as an economic institution, the pretension to find an economic basis of the support for the EC has been refused. This could well be because an even more substantial part of the population has a much more diffuse image of the EC. Neither the economic benefits received directly from Brussels, nor the objective economic conditions of the country, seem to have too much influence on the attitudes towards the EC. Only the evolution of the unemployment rate may be seen as a danger to the support for the EC.

Although the evolution of the objective economy seems to be alien to the support for the EC, the more subjective perception of receiving benefits from the EC is certainly related to it. Particularly, in the more skeptical countries, this variable is an almost perfect predictor of support for the EC. On the contrary, in traditionally supportive countries, a part of the support seems to be alien to this utilitarian consideration.

Going from recapitulation to discussion, I want to introduce several issues for reflection. One of the first studies on attitudes towards the EC is helpful to introduce my first point for reflection. Shepherd (1975, p. 99) wondered whether, once confronted with the EC option, people may accept personal losses in order to achieve national economic improvements. Although such a question may hardly be in people's minds, it underlines a dilemma in the economic nature of the attitudes towards the EC: do these process of formation of the attitudes follow a criterion of individual benefits, or a criterion of collective benefits?

Following an adaptation of the concepts used in the studies of economic voting, I could state that 'pocketbook support' for the EC would exist if, for the settlement of one's position towards the EC, the subject takes into account only those economic rewards which may benefit to her *individually*; thus reflecting a purely egoistic process. Conversely, the 'sociotropic support' for the EC is derived from the consideration of those economic rewards which are directed to broader collectivities which the subject feels part of (e.g. one's nation), and thus, it is not purely egoistic.

If I pretend an evaluation of the findings following such a dichotomy I have to conclude that the few signs of economic support are of a sociotropic nature. Both the perception of benefits (or perception that "the country has benefitted from EC membership"), as well as the expectation of advantages for the country in several fields (economic, political and diplomatic), are variables which reflect the consideration of collective criteria and not only individual ones. Indeed, I suspect that the influence displayed by the unemployment rate should be understood as derived from a preoccupation for the collectivity rather than as a selfish calculation. Pocketbook variables like the evolution of the economy of the household, or inflation, incomes, and so on, reached values which did not even seem worth reporting.

This means that, as far as people take into account the economic well-being in order to form their attitude towards the EC, they seem to value much more the collective well-being rather than their own private one.

This conclusion coincides with the results of the only comparable study so far. Dalton and Eichenberg (1991, p. 11) conclude that *"the influence of sociotropic retrospective evaluations provides the best overall model of citizen support for the EC"*. Therefore, it seems that the sociotropic basis of the support for the EC is well

endorsed. It is also endorsed by numerous electoral studies at a national level. Sociotropic voting has been observed in a broad range of different cases and periods -such as Jacobson (1983), Abramowitz, Lover and Norpoth (1986) and, to a certain extent, Fiorina (1981) and Kiewiet (1983).

In addition to the previous, the success of the sociotropic model (and the failure of the pocketbook) in this case has an specific explanation, which is based on the peculiar nature of the EC. It would argue that it is understandable that people do not link the ups and downs of their *personal* economic situation to the EC, whereas they tend to do so in the case of the *national* economic situation. I should take into account that, by the nature of the EC, the economic consequences which membership has for the individual are often terribly remote. Also, people unconsciously associate the EC to the field of action of the nation-states and not to that of the individual citizens(5). Given this background, it seems just reasonable that the collective motivations of the sociotropic support are more influential than the selfish motives of the pocketbook one.

However, it might be argued in defence of the pocketbook process that, in those conditions of ignorance of the private economic consequences, the individual may take the collective economic consequences not as a genuine concern, but as a proxy for the former -thus spelling out a type of support not so distant from the pocketbook.

These reflections lead me to a second point for debate: the broader question of whether the results draw a process of formation of attitudes towards the EC with a base of individual rationality. It seems clear to me that the sociotropic process which has been described disputes this sort of interpretation; perhaps it does not preclude it, but certainly it does not make it more adequate. This is also the assessment which is often made by similar studies on national economic voting. For instance, Jacobson (1991, p. 34) reports that certainly '*general economic assessments ... influence individual voting decisions*', but he goes on to argue that '*although it is possible to interpret these findings as evidence of rational economic voting in the conventional sense, it is not at all clear that such an interpretation can be sustained*'. In conclusion, I would argue that the predominantly sociotropic nature of the process would stand against a purely egoistic rationality.

Let me now remind the reader that I have also found that the variables of an strict economic nature are not enough for a complete understanding of the process, the results would stand, also against a purely economic rationality.

The two previous results -taken together- seriously question the existence of an egoistic and strictly economic rationality -the so-called *narrow* rationality. A desperate attempt to defend rationality against these criticisms would be to introduce

a broader concept of rationality -either non-egoistic, or non-economic, or both. However, this broader concept of rationality introduces terrible problems of tautology. Moreover, it is very complex to refer to non-egoistic and non-economic rationality as *rational*.

A third point for reflection is based on the fact that objective economic data and their subjective appreciations display a rather different capacity of influence over support for membership. In principle, the fact that the perception of benefits displays a clearer influence (than the objective variables) would be hardly surprising. Following the hypothesis of the indirect models, this would happen because the influence displayed by the subjective perceptions evidences a less mediated association. Although the terminology could be subject to criticism, I could summarise the previous by saying that the perceptual variables are more successful than the objective variables because the former are causally closer to the dependent variable. This would just adapt to my case that old affirmation by Downs (1957, p. 38) which says that *'only benefits which voters become conscious of by election day can influence their voting decisions; otherwise their behaviour would be irrational.'* However, this does not seem to be the case. It is not that the objective benefits only act through their perceptions; it is just that they do not influence in any way.

Only subjective variables show a decisive influence over the support for the EC. This subjective appreciations of benefits -both the perception of benefits which have already been received from the EC, as well as the expectation to receive future benefits due to membership- have shown two important features. Firstly, they are not linked to their objective base (i.e. they are not a proxy for the objective benefits). Secondly, and they tell us that it does not make a lot of sense to refer (at mass level) to appreciations of economic benefits which are conceptually different of political benefits.

Therefore, everything indicates that the support for the EC is the consequence of an *unfounded* confidence (since it is not based on real facts) and a *diffuse* confidence (since the natures of the benefits are indistinguishable) that the CE is beneficial(6). It is my opinion that further research should inquire more affective explanations.

Table 1

	F	B	NL	D	I	LUX	DK	IRE	GB	GR	E	P
Economic	27	18	22	35	30	17	28	38	31	50	29	29
Political	17	21	35	21	31	28	17	14	14	11	9	5

The values shown indicate percentages over the total sample. The difference to 100% are no responses, neutral descriptions and images which were coded as not classifiable.

Table2

Table2

	F	B	NL	D	I	LUX	DK	IRE	GB	GR	E	P
Economic	55	53	58	44	50	42	62	69	64	46	37	41
Political	39	41	36	45	42	51	37	27	27	41	35	30
No Answer	5	7	8	11	8	8	13	9	10	13	29	28

The values shown indicate percentages. Columns may not add 100% due to rounding.

Table 3

	F	B	NL	D	I	LUX	DK	IRE	GB	GR	E	P
Economic of which "eco-economic links"	65.7 47	40.4 33	61.8 52	53.6 43	58.9 42	63.4 54	47.1 39	59.1 45	50.5 35	54.9 45	45.5 33	52.4 39
Defence	62.1	33.8	49.6	40.8	42.5	61.3	42.1	44.2	49.8	48.2	29.2	29.5
Ideals of which "world peace"	54.5 40	34.9 23	44.9 30	64.2 51	60.5 44	69. 53	51.5 36	66. 51	54.2 41	54.4 44	48.5 30	44.9 32
No Answer	4.4	38.3	5.8	9.1	6.	1.7	15.2	11.7	9.6	11.5	20.5	23.2

"Economy" includes two categories: "the economic links which they have developed with one another" and "the need to unite their efforts in order to master the technologies". "Defence" includes: "the wish to form a counter-balance to the superpowers" and "the need to defend themselves against outside threats". "Ideals" includes three opinions: "the efforts these countries make for peace in the world", "their culture and ways of life" and "the democratic and humanitarian values they share". Values shown are percentages over the total sample. Columns may not add 100% due to multiple answer.

	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	GB
Constant	80.7	-22.7	19.5	-2.6	63.0	37.5	-25.1	43.1	59.5	50.6	8.07
Perception of Benefits	-.23 (1.5 +)	1.20 (8.2)	.77 (3.6)	.97 (17.0)	.07 (.81*)	.52 (1.83+)	1.2 (13.5)	.47 (2.85)	.31 (2.54)	.23 (1.5*)	.89 (7.5)
R ²	.09	.83	.46	.95	.04	.14	.93	.34	.28	.11	.80
DW statistic	1.45	1.13	1.47	1.32	2.05	.90	2.13	2.00	2.13	2.13	.81

The period under analysis is from the second semester of 1983 to the second semester of 1990, which gives a n=15, except for Spain and Portugal where n=10; because the series begins on the first semester of 1986.
All coefficients are significative at 97% except those marked: + which are significative at 85%, and those marked * which are not significative.

Table5

	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	GB
Constant	72.9	38.8	59.5	41.3	69.4	57.5	71.9	78.6	80.6	65.6	39.5
Economic evaluation	.25 (6.3)	.07 (1.0*)	.11 (2.1)	-.56 (3.28)	.36 (1.79*)	-.09 (.76*)	.34 (7.1)	.15 (5.2)	.08 (4.8)	.12 (.42*)	.09 (1.05*)
R ²	.57	.00	.11	.36	.20	.01	.63	.47	.44	.10	.00
DW statistic	2.01	.71	1.58	.94	2.25	.40	.95	1.79	1.79	2.35	.33

The period under analysis is from the first semester of 1976 to the second semester of 1990, which gives a n=30, except for Spain and Portugal where n=10; because the series begins on the first semester of 1986, and Greece where n=18 because it begins on the first semester of 1982.

All coefficients are significative at 95% except those marked* which are not significative.

Table6

TABLE 6				
Correlations of perceptions of benefits and support for membership				
Country	Spring 1986		Spring 1989	
France	.69	(14.08)	.70	(14.21)
Britain	.85	(36.79)	.85	(29.19)
Germany	.77	(16.55)	.84	(25.94)
Italy	.72	(11.35)	.71	(8.99)
Netherlands	.79	(10.08)	.84	(10.65)
Denmark	.92	(29.96)	.88	(33.78)
Belgium	.83	(17.97)	.77	(12.41)
Luxembourg	.82	(5.95)	.76	(6.15)
Ireland	.89	(21.98)	.88	(11.05)
Greece	.93	(32.14)	.89	(14.67)
Spain	.18	(2.13)	.59	(8.71)
Portugal	.60	(11.31)	.82	(11.79)

Values are ordinal (gamma) correlations. T-values un brackets. In spring 1986, Northern Ireland was included in the British sample.

Table7

TABLE 7					
Support for membership by expectations of economic benefits					
Expects benefits?:	Very Much	-	-	Not at all	Total
Spanish membership is:					
A good thing	88.8	77.0	31.4	6.7	70.3
Neither	7.2	20.4	37.9	15.2	20.3
A bad thing	4.0	2.6	30.7	78.2	9.5
N:	146	448	111	22	728
Ordinal correlation: 0.70 (t:11.05)					
Portuguese membership is:					
A good thing	89.2	80.2	10.5	4.3	67.0
Neither	2.7	17.3	31.4	8.7	18.2
A bad thing	8.1	2.4	58.1	87.0	14.8
N:	37	415	86	23	561
Ordinal correlation: 0.87 (t:12.69)					
For ordinal correlations to be meaningful, no answers are excluded. Thus, missing cases are 275 for Spain, and 439 for Portugal. Values shown are column percentages.					

Table8

TABLE 8 Ordinal Correlations to be meaningful, no answers are excluded. T-values are displayed and the three Expectations of Benefits			
	Economic Exp.	Diplomatic Exp.	Political Exp.
Spain	0.70 (11.05)	0.61 (8.34)	0.54 (7.04)
Portugal	0.87 (12.69)	0.83 (10.23)	0.78 (8.84)
For ordinal correlations to be meaningful, no answers are excluded. T-values are displayed between brackets.			

Figure1

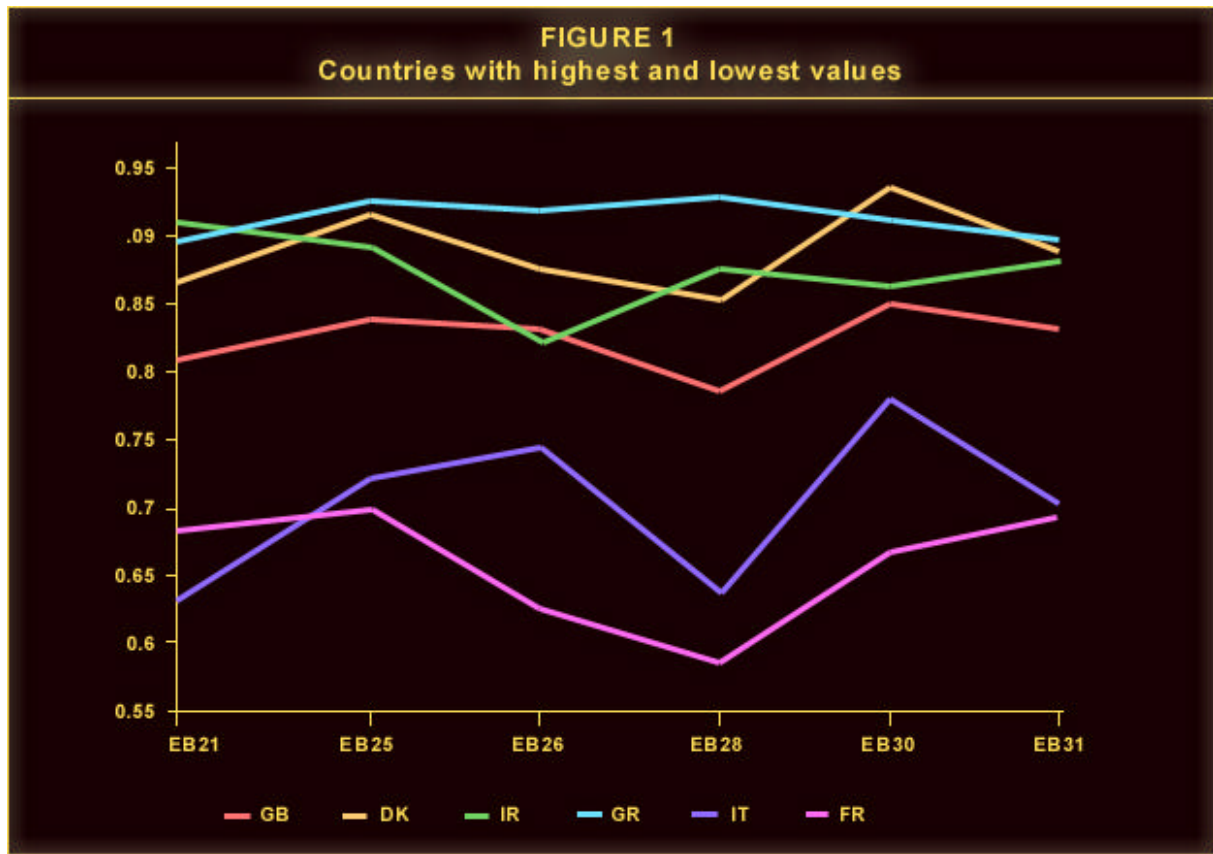
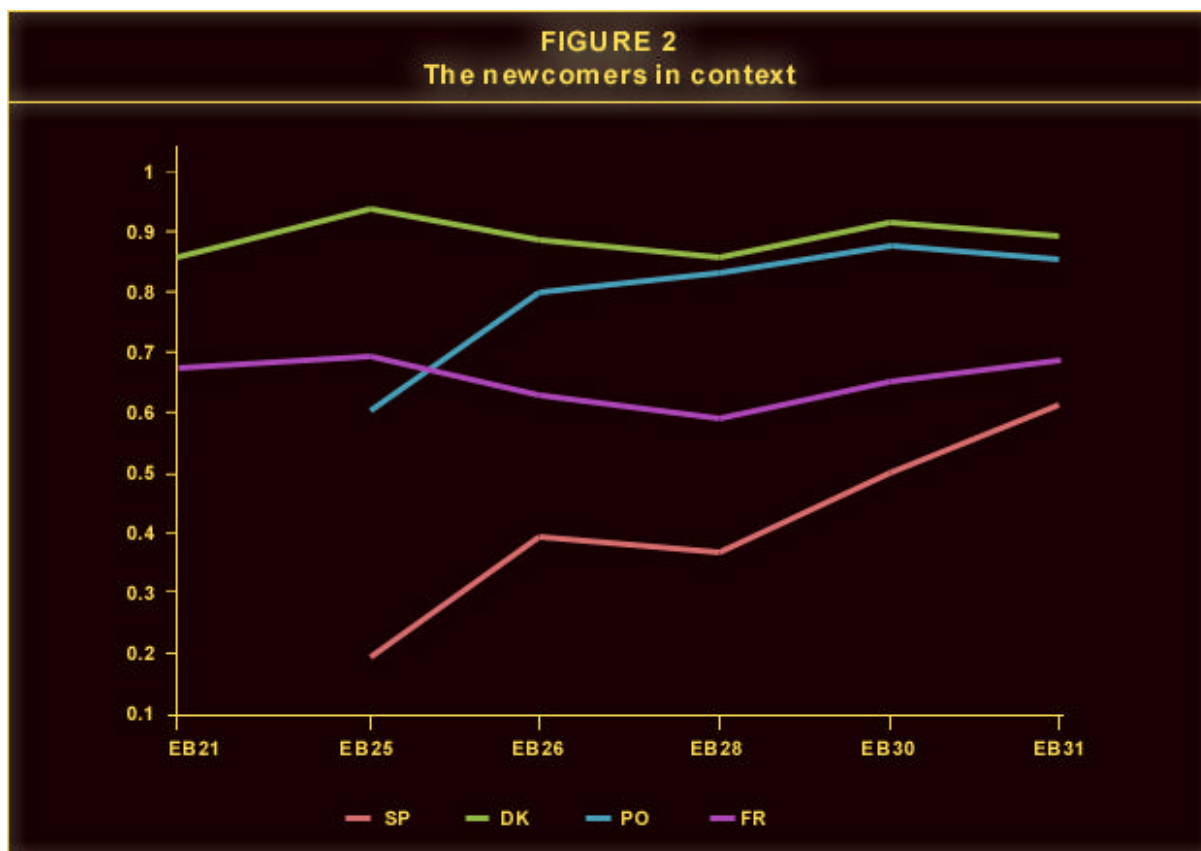


Figure2



NOTES

- (1) Sometimes, predictive power is not even necessary. For instance, seismology gives rather satisfactory explanations of earthquakes but it is not able to predict them at all.
- (2) Although a massive list of publications might be cited, one of the latest state-of-the-art accounts is Norpoth, Lewis-Beck and Way, eds. (1991), where the reader will find reference to all the relevant prior studies.
- (3) A non reported result endorses this interpretation. In Spain, the unemployment rate seems to influence support for the EC even before entry! If unemployment influences support to the EC irrespectively of being a member, it seems clear that this influence has to operate through other channels than the attribution of economic responsibility. It is in this context that the 'feel-good' interpretation becomes pertinent.
- (4) After one year of adaptation, Portugal shows stability. Greece showed no signs of variation when the series begins -four years after its entry. Thus, there is no reason to expect that Spain may sustain this rise in its correlations for long.
- (5) For instance, some data from the question alluded in Table 1 made clear that the national consequences of membership were immensely more salient to the publics than the individual consequences.
- (6) The formation of the subjective perceptions (and expectations) appears to be a decisive topic in order to understand the economic basis of the support for membership. In the parallel case of national voting studies, a similar need has been stressed. From this need, an strategy to undercover the media influence in the formation of economic perceptions has been devised by Sanders et al. (1991). An adaptation of such an strategy might prove useful in the future.

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