



Working Paper

International experience and national contexts

Measuring attitudes towards the EU in cross-national research

M. Livia García Faroldi

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Editorial Note:

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Abstract

Since the early nineties, public opinion on European topics has become increasingly important for the development of the integration process. This working paper focuses on two factors that influence attitudes towards the EU: international experience of individuals and national contexts. Although individuals who have contacts with other European countries and citizens tend to be more supportive of the EU, their attitudes, opinions and images also develop through their national cultures, which frame their way of perceiving things. To confirm the influence of both variables, this paper proposes an instrument for measuring international experience and tests it using data from two Eurobarometer surveys, carried out in 1997 and 2001. Results confirm the importance of international experience, especially for people with a high level of such experience, although individual experience is shaped by national contexts. Analyses show that national context is a key factor in understanding the support for or opposition to the integration process.

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1. Introduction: how individual experience and national contexts shape attitudes towards the EU

The European Union is a political construct like no other in the international system. How to describe this construct has been debated, but what is interesting for our purposes is that—after decades of perceiving the EU as a project driven by elites and during which citizens showed a “permissive consensus” (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1971)—the importance of EU citizens in understanding the ongoing integration process has increased in recent years, especially since the approval of the Treaty on European Union in the early nineties. The question then is what factors influence Europeans’ attitudes towards the EU. Many responses have been suggested. Sociologists and political scientists have studied how a certain type of attitude could affect support for international institutions. More concretely, the European Union has been the main focus of attention since Inglehart’s hypothesis (1970) that people with postmaterialist values and higher levels of cognitive mobilization have a more positive attitude towards the EU. Another example of this interest is empirical research on trust among EU citizens (Niedermayer, 1995, Scheuer, 1999, Scheuer and Schmitt, 2004). Trust is one of Deutch’s main concepts in defining “sense of community”. Deutch (1957) believes that this sense requires mutual trust, a “we-feeling” and a partial identification in terms of self-images and interests. These conditions apply to any type of community, including international ones. As Scheuer (1999:30) indicates, “the notions of *identification* and *we-feeling* are compatible with modern theories of intergroup relations. Their starting point is the distinction between ingroups and outgroups. (...)The evolution of a sense of community among EU citizens is the result of ingroup formation” (author’s italics).

The notions of “we-feeling” and “ingroup formation” are related to social psychology and have been used for analysing European identity and attitudes towards the EU, as we will see in next section. But before I focus on social identity theory, I would like to point out that one way of strengthening Europeans’ “we-feeling” is to reduce prejudices among them. This reduction could be achieved through personal contact with people from other European countries. One of the most obvious ways of increasing international contacts is travel. Mobility of EU citizens is now easier and more frequent because the barriers have disappeared in the Common Market. European institutions are very conscious of this fact and state that this mobility “encourages the sharing of cultures and promotes the concept of European citizenship”¹. In fact, one of the research projects funded by the European Commission in the Fifth Framework Programme has as its main objective to study whether the intra-EU migrant has a stronger sense of “Europeanness” and develops bicultural identities. Scholars participating in this project link this type of identity to contacts from the host country (Recchi and Nebe, 2003). Nevertheless, individuals do not have experiences in a *vacuum*. They are part of social groups, and their values, norms and common understandings shape their lives and the meaning they attached to their experiences. Attitudes towards the EU are no exception: European citizens’ image of the EU is filtered by national or subnational cultures (Díez Medrano, 2003).

¹ “Action Plan for Mobility” (2000), cited in Recchi and Nebe (2003).

Because both international experience and national contexts could shape attitudes towards the EU, the aim of this paper is to study this influence and the interaction of these factors. In order to perform the analysis, I develop an instrument for measuring international experience. I then apply this instrument to explain attitudes towards the EU, taking into account national contexts. For this purpose, I use two Eurobarometer surveys (EB) carried out in 1997 and 2001.

2. Objectives and hypotheses

We specify two main objectives of this research: (i) to test whether international experience is relevant in explaining attitudes towards the EU after controlling for several socio-demographic variables usually included in this type of analysis and that have shown their relevance in earlier research; and (ii) to study the interactions between international experience and national contexts. The second goal seeks to determine which of the two factors is more important for shaping attitudes towards the EU. For example, what would be the attitude of a person with high international experience who lives in a Euro-sceptical country? of the individual who has never been abroad but is a citizen of a Euroenthusiastic member? The aims mentioned above are connected to three hypotheses:

- (i) international experience has a positive impact on attitudes towards the EU (and European identity, although this last variable is not studied here);
- (ii) national contexts (macro-level) are more important than background variables (individual-level) that have traditionally been used to explain these attitudes;
- (iii) national contexts are more important than international experience when the latter is low, but international experience is more important than national context when international experience is high.

These hypotheses are supported by two theoretical approaches: the social identity theory and the sociological tradition, which study how frames influence the individual's perceptions, attitudes and opinions. Both require further discussion before I explain the construction of the dependent and independent variables.

One of the most important theories of intergroup relations, the social identity theory, was developed by Tajfel (1981). Social identity is conceived as the knowledge people have of belonging to certain social groups along with the emotional and evaluative significance that they themselves give to that belonging. Individuals seek to obtain a positive evaluation of themselves, and part of this positive self-identity is satisfied by belonging to social groups. Social identity can only be defined by means of the effects of the social classifications that segment the social environment of an individual in his or her own group and in other groups. In other words, the "positive aspects of social identity" and the reinterpretation of the attributes and commitment to social action only take on significance in relation to, or in comparison with, other groups.

The social identity theory can be applied to study EU citizens as a social group. For this social group to exist, their belonging to the EU must contribute to positive aspects of people's social identity. If this is not the case, they will not feel that they are members of this group. The examples of Spain and the United Kingdom could throw light upon this requirement. For Spain, joining the ECC in 1986 meant overcoming a long period of political and economic isolation and becoming part of a group of European democracies. Consequently, this membership implied strong rewards for Spaniards' identity. Because the EU is perceived as a prestigious social group, being member has a positive effect on the social identity of Spaniards. Conversely, British people have a strong sense of being different from Europe and fear losing their national identity and culture (Díez Medrano, 2003). This perception of threat to their national identity is characteristic of the British², although other factors should be taken into account to explain Euroscepticism in this country. As Spiering observes (2004:146), this phenomenon is "a product of national practices which in themselves have little to do with either 'Europe' or the European Union: the rituals of an adversarial political system and the commercial needs of the written press".

Recent research on attitudes to European integration has focused on the importance of the type of identification held by individuals. People who are afraid that European integration could mean the loss of their national identities (their culture, their language) develop negative attitudes towards the EU (McLaren, 2004). The way people think about their identities—that is, whether they feel exclusively national or maintain a dual identity with a European component—is a great predictor of Euroscepticism (Hooghe and Marks, 2004). For example, Carey (2002) found that the likelihood of supporting the EU is only 26.4 per cent when an individual feels very attached to the nation and not attached to Europe. Conversely, those who maintain a dual identification and feel attached to both the nation and Europe have a 72.5 per cent probability of supporting the EU. Most findings on the interaction between these identities show that they are compatible, with the exception of Great Britain, as mentioned above. For example, Duchesne and Frogner (1995) find a polarisation between cosmopolitans and locals: the development of a European identity is related to the weakening of local attachments, not the weakening of national identities. More recently, Citrin and Sides (2004) show that those (a minority) who identify more with Europe than with their country, feel very attached to their countries and very proud of them. Scholars who have participated in the EURONAT project (Ruiz Jiménez *et al*, 2004) also conclude that the emergence of European identities does not weaken national ones.

If European and national identities may be compatible, however, we can ask what mechanisms explain how a person identifies with the EU to a greater or lesser extent and develops relatively positive or negative attitudes toward it. One of the factors (mentioned above and to be explained in more detail later) is the individual's national framework. This is not the only explanation, however. In this study, I argue that international experience could be also an important factor for explaining attitudes towards the EU and European identity (as well as attitudes towards other international institutions). Gaertner and his colleagues (1999) explain how this could happen: when individuals categorise people, including themselves, their levels of category inclusiveness may change. It is possible that intergroup bias

² Cfr. European Commission report *Perceptions de l'Union européenne*, 2001, p. 44.

could decrease in either a recategorisation process, in which members of two different groups are induced to conceive of themselves as a single, more inclusive superordinate group rather than as two separate groups; or a decategorisation process, in which members are induced to conceive of themselves and others as separate individuals or to have more personalised interaction. One example of the recategorisation process is the creation of European citizenship in the 1992 Treaty on European Union. This new social category facilitates citizens' group feeling³, while the decategorisation process could occur when people must interact directly with members from different groups, contrasting their personal experiences with social stereotypes present in their own groups.

Nevertheless, contacts alone are not enough. Familiarity with individuals from other ethnic groups reduce prejudice if they are interpreted as pleasant, and the likelihood of this interpretation increases in cases of voluntary, personal, cooperative contact between persons of equal status (Boehnke *et al*, 2007). This is why student exchange programmes are considered to be one way of increasing the importance of the European identity and positive attitudes towards the EU. Among such programmes, the Erasmus program is the most important. Since the start of the programme in 1987, 1,500,000 students have benefited from an Erasmus fellowship. In its report *Erasmus success stories. Europe creates opportunities*, the European Commission (2007:4) remarks: "Countless student reports tell of the impact ERASMUS has had on the personal lives and personal development of the participating students -and also how ERASMUS has enhanced their perception of being European citizens". Applying the social network perspective, De Federico (2003) shows that a process of declassification and reclassification occurs among Erasmus students. They change their perception of the concept "foreigner" when they refer to their friends of other nationalities. Even British students who live in another European country for one year and who have grown up in a very sceptical national context regarding European integration consider themselves Europeans to a greater extent than do their fellow nationals. These students observe that living abroad increased their awareness of belonging to a "European cultural space" (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003).

The second theoretical background in this work is related to frame theory. The concept of "frame" was developed by Newcomb (1953), who pointed out that attitudinal objects are not perceived in a *vacuum*, but in a given context that is determined by previous experience. The frame of reference functions like a perceptual context that exerts a selective influence on the way of perceiving things. People who are members of the same group tend to acquire similar frames of reference, because it is particularly important for the members of a group to be able to communicate with each other about issues of common interest. Attitudes will be similar insofar as people perceive the issue in question as falling within the frame of reference of the same goal. Shared frames of reference are the social norms⁴. Díez

³ As De Federico (2007:686) argues: "The state and the institutions of order are the most important and powerful agents of identification and categorization, as they try to obtain, if not a monopoly, a majority control of not only legitimate physical violence, but also legitimate symbolic violence, which includes the power to name, identify, categorize and enunciate what is what and who is who".

⁴ Newcomb indicates two reasons why members of a group might disagree: the first is that two members of the same group are also members of other groups whose attitudes towards the issue in question differ from those of the group to which both belong; the second is that people from the same group can perceive a common object in the same way except in so far as their own interests regarding this object are opposed. This last

Medrano (2003) is one of the authors who has used this tradition recently to study attitudes towards the EU in Great Britain, Germany and Spain. Frames not only have a national base but vary across sociodemographic and political groups. Nevertheless, we focus our attention on national frames: “because national states remain a key socialisation agency and the bounded space within which individuals spend most of their lives, worldviews and thus framing processes differ across nations. (...) Frames mediate the effect of micro and macro sociological factors on people’s attitudes toward European integration” (Díez Medrano, 2003:6).

In recent years, scholars have been aware of the importance of taking national contexts into account in studying attitudes towards the EU and European identity. The different factors that they stress can be classified as economic and political. The first perspective has been called “sociotropic utilitarianism”. Its general hypothesis is that aggregate levels of support for the EU in a country could be explained using macroeconomic indicators, such as GDP, unemployment, EU budget returns or intra-EU trade (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Anderson and Reichert, 1996, McLaren, 2006). Yet other scholars argue that “we have rather little evidence that the EC or European unification are evaluated in primarily economic terms” (Bosch and Newton, 1995:101). Regarding political factors, Anderson (1997) proposes using domestic politics to explain EU support. His reasoning is that European citizens have a low degree of information about the European Union; that is, their knowledge is limited. The question is then how people can form opinions about the EU. Anderson argues that feelings about national government play a prominent role. Those who are not satisfied with their government or the way democracy works in their own country tend to project this feeling onto the EU. The opposite occurs with people satisfied with their national political system. Anderson introduces the satisfaction with democracy as a robust measure for this “proxy” model, because in the European context this variable expresses the degree of satisfaction with the way democracy is working at the time of the survey. Other authors have shown the connection between the outcomes in Maastricht Treaty’s referenda and national politics (Franklin, Van der Eijk and Marsh, 1995). Kritzinger (2003) analysed four countries and concluded that national evaluations influence attitudes towards the EU.

Some authors argue for different reasoning, while maintaining the stress on national political factors: citizens who evaluate their national institutions negatively tend to evaluate European institutions in positive terms. Sánchez-Cuenca (2000:153) admits that “without controlling for supranational variables, as Anderson does, domestic variables such as satisfaction with democracy have a positive impact on support. But (...) once supranational variables such as satisfaction with European institutions are controlled for, the sign of the domestic variables is inverted, so that a better opinion of the national government produces a decrease in support for integration”. He confirms his hypothesis with an analysis of the desired rhythm of integration in the EU-15, taking into account different national political factors as well as European ones.

reason supports the utilitarian approach to EU attitudes, as we will see below (*cf.* Chapter 8, “The Formation of Group Norms”, pp. 221-255).

3. Measuring attitudes towards the European Union and international experience

This section explains the variables I have used as dependent and independent variables for testing the influence of international experience on attitudes towards the EU. First, I focus on the construction of two indexes of European attitudes: the EU meaning index and the EU future support index. Second, I use two questions to measure international experience: the number of countries the respondent has visited in the previous two years and whether he/she has contacts abroad.

3.1. Measuring attitudes towards the EU

The selection of the Eurobarometers in this study was determined by the fact that the research requires a survey that includes both European attitudes and international experience. This limitation meant choosing EB 47.2 and EB 55.1 (see Section 3.2. for more details). Unfortunately, these surveys did not include the most common items used by researchers for measuring attitudes towards the EU, such as whether the country has benefited from being member of the EU or if the membership is a good or bad thing. The EBs do include, however, two multiple response questions for measuring what the EU means for the respondent and what changes the EU will have brought in ten years. Both questions are directly related to attitudes towards the EU and have been used as dependent variables in our work to construct two indexes. The exact formulations of these two questions are:

** Which of the following statements best describe(s) what the EU means to you personally?*

- a) A way to create a better future for young people (positive)*
- b) A European government (instrumental.)*
- c) The ability to go wherever I want in Europe (instrumental)*
- d) Guaranteed lasting peace in Europe (positive)*
- e) A means of improving the economic situation in Europe (instrumental)*
- f) A way to create jobs (instrumental)*
- g) A way to protect the rights of citizens (positive)*
- h) A lot of bureaucracy, a waste of time and money (negative)*
- i) Just a dream, a utopian idea (negative)*
- j) The risk of losing our cultural diversity (negative)*
- k) Other (spontaneous)*
- l) DK*

** Taking everything into consideration, what will the EU have brought in ten years time?*

- a) A better quality of life for most people (positive)*
- b) More opportunities for people like me to find work (positive)*
- c) More equality between men and women (positive)*
- d) Less discrimination against foreigners and people from other cultures or ethnic groups (positive)*
- e) More difficulty in making decisions because more countries will have joined (negative)*
- f) A higher level of unemployment (negative)*
- g) The use of the Euro as the single currency in Europe (pragmatic)*
- h) It will be easier to travel, study, work and live anywhere in Europe (pragmatic)*
- i) More social problems (redundancies, strikes, disputes) (negative)*
- j) There won't be a EU anymore (spontaneous)(negative)*
- k) Other (spontaneous)*
- l) Other*
- m) DK*

From the first multiple response question, I developed the so-called “EU meaning index”. After eliminating the categories “other” and DK, I divided the responses into three groups, which are mentioned in brackets: positive meanings (options a, d, and g), negative meanings (h, i, and j) and instrumental meanings (b, c, e, and f). Although instrumental meanings could be considered, at least in part, as related to a positive attitude (this is, in fact, the rational actor hypothesis for explaining support to the EU), I prefer to separate them for two reasons. First, they could be considered more “rational”, less “affective” than the rest of positive responses. Although the response “European government” has a clear political content that is absent from the other items, it has been included here because its ambiguous formulation does not permit us to assess whether respondents are thinking of a European government as something positive, negative or neutral, or simply as an actual fact. Second, if I include them as positive meanings, the index (result of subtracting negative responses from positive ones) will always be positive, as there will be 7 positive answers and 3 negative ones. This grouping will always produce three positive and three negative items.⁵ I excluded instrumental responses from the index (as well as people who did not select any of the possible answers) and analysed these respondents separately. Of course, a respondent (with either a positive or negative value in the index) could also select instrumental responses. In fact, in EB 47.2, 22.5 per cent of the people who have other responses also mentioned a European government (27.7 per cent in EB 55.1), 37 per cent free mobility (41.3 in 2001), 32.9 per cent improving economic situation (31.8 in EB 55.1) and 31.5 per cent a way to create jobs (27.8 per cent four years later). The index runs from -3 to +3. Nevertheless, the causal analyses use a simplified version, with 5 values (very negative for -3 and -2/ fairly negative for -1/ neutral for 0/ fairly positive for +1 and +2/ very positive for +3)⁶

Table 3.1.1. Dimensions of EU meaning index, 1997 (principal component analysis)

	Component		
	1	2	3
	Negative	Positive/instrumental	Positive
Better future	-.305	.637	.082
European government	-.166	-.631	.331
Go wherever in Europe	.155	.421	.391
Peace in Europe	-.061	.049	.606
Improving economic situation	-.456	-.097	.262
A way to create jobs	-.184	.569	.260
Protect citizen rights	-.079	.053	.673
A lot of bureaucracy	.676	-.087	-.045
A utopian idea	.572	-.072	-.119
The risk of losing our cultural diversity	.573	-.094	.225
Explained variance	18.5%	11.7%	11.2%
Total explained variance: 41.4%			
Extraction Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation			
Rotation converged in 6 iterations			
N= 8,882			

⁵ Another possibility for balancing the two types of responses is to weight them, giving lower weight to positive than to negative ones. For my purposes, however, it is better to distinguish positive from instrumental options.

⁶ The correlation between the seven-item index and the five-item index is above 0.98 ($p < 0.01$) for both years.

Table 3.1.2. Dimensions of EU meaning index, 2001 (principal component analysis)

	Component		
	1	2	3
	Positive/instrumental	Negative	Instrumental
Better future	.204	-.252	.650
European government	.283	-.157	-.680
Go wherever in Europe	.354	.019	.257
Peace in Europe	.629	.046	.067
Improving economic situation	.541	-.190	-.201
A way to create jobs	.362	-.096	.500
Protect citizen rights	.649	.005	.100
A lot of bureaucracy	-.053	.688	-.074
A utopian idea	-.105	.640	.063
The risk of losing our cultural diversity	.096	.608	-.088
Explained variance	18%	12.1%	11.6%
Total explained variance: 41.7%			
Extraction Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation			
Rotation converged in 5 iterations			
N= 8,913			

I expect that negative responses load on the same factor and instrumental ones are grouped together, but not necessarily alone because they could share a factor with some positive responses. To check the three categories I have created, I made a principal component analysis for each year (Tables 3.1.1 and 3.1.2). In both EBs, three dimensions emerged that were composed of quite similar items, although their order differs for the two years. The total amount of variance explained is around 41.5 per cent in both years. In 1997, the dimension that explains a higher amount of variance is composed of negative meanings of the EU, while in 2001 positive and instrumental items compose the first loading factor. In both years, instrumental meanings are grouped with positive ones (the only case in which an instrumental response loads with critical meanings of the EU has a negative value relative to them). However, these four items are not all located together in the same dimension. It is quite surprising that two responses that correlated strongly *a priori* (improving economic situation and a way to create jobs) belong to different factors. The explanation for this phenomenon may be that respondents selected only one of the responses precisely because they are perceived to be very similar. One can conclude that the most robust (stable) factor is the one with negative statements. It is worth paying attention to the peculiar behaviour of the item most closely related to politics, that is, the European government, which shows a negative value when compared to “better future” and “a way to create jobs” in both years. The latter have positive values and share the factor with it. It is difficult to interpret this result without further research, but it seems that people who tend to mention the political aspect of the EU (the government) do not select the economic aspect (jobs) or the positive one (better future) as other meanings.

With the second question, I construct the “EU future support index”. I decided to use this name because the responses chosen allow me to deduce whether attitudes towards the EU are positive or

negative regarding the future. I proceeded in a similar way, deleting the “other responses” and DK and dividing the remaining responses into positive (a, b, c, and d), negative (e, f, I, and j) and what I would like to call “pragmatic” answers, that is, the two responses concerning the use of the Euro and free mobility (options g and h). I call them “pragmatic” because in 1997 (EB 47.2) a majority of countries were involved in an effort to adjust their economies to the “Maastricht criteria” in order to join the single market with a single currency few years later. At the moment of the EB 55.1 field (2001), this was a reality. Thus, although these pragmatic responses may also be related to positive attitudes towards the EU, it did not seem very “enthusiastic” to select only these categories. In addition, freedom of mobility was already a reality in both moments of the surveys. Thus, selecting the Euro and free mobility like that which the EU will bring about in ten years represents a pragmatic approach to the future, although it could be related to positive attitudes towards the EU. As in the previous case, people who selected only pragmatic responses were not included in the index (nor were people who did not select any of the possible answers) and were analysed separately. In EB 47.2, people who selected other responses mentioned the Euro in 41.4% of the cases and free movement in 47.2%. IN EB 55.1, the result was 49.7% and 47.0%, respectively. The index runs from -4 to +4. Nevertheless, for crosstabs for the causal analyses, I used a simplified version, with 5 values (very negative for -4 and -3/ fairly negative for -2 and -1/ neutral for 0/ fairly positive for +1 and +2/ very positive for +3 and +4)⁷.

Table 3.1.3. Dimensions of EU future support index, 1997 (principal component analysis)

	Component		
	1	2	3
	Negative	Pragmatic/positive	Positive
Better quality of life	-.346	-.209	.551
More job opportunities	-.427	.126	.274
More gender equality	.097	.074	.785
Less discrimination against foreigners	-.103	.427	.382
More difficulties for making decisions	.480	.360	-.154
More unemployment	.709	-.216	.116
The single currency	-.017	.605	-.020
It will be easier to travel, study, work abroad	-.147	.695	-.097
More social problems	.745	-.067	-.015
There won't be a EU anymore	.012	-.294	-.193
Explained variance	18.2%	13.1%	10.9%
Total explained variance: 42.2%			
Extraction Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation			
Rotation converged in 6 iterations			
N= 8,864			

⁷ The correlation between the nine-item index and the five-item index is above 0.95 ($p < 0.01$) for both years.

Table 3.1.4. Dimensions of EU future support index, 2001 (principal component analysis)

	Component		
	1	2	3
	Negative	Pragmatic	Positive
Better quality of life	-.207	-.178	.618
More job opportunities	-.130	.112	.550
More gender equality	.148	-.003	.699
Less discrimination against foreigners	-.023	.369	.449
More difficulties for making decisions	.498	.394	-.098
More unemployment	.741	-.180	.035
The single currency	-.061	.710	-.031
It will be easier to travel, study, work abroad	-.072	.732	.072
More social problems	.763	-.021	-.083
There won't be a EU anymore	-.090	-.189	-.181
Explained variance	16.8%	14.4%	12.3%
Total explained variance: 43.5%			
Extraction Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation			
Rotation converged in 5 iterations			
N= 8,810			

To check the three categories created, I performed a principal component factor analysis. The results are shown in Tables 3.1.3. and 3.1.4. I expected that negative responses would be grouped in one factor and pragmatists would correlate positively among them. As with the other positive responses, although to a lesser extent than in the previous principal component analysis, three dimensions were found in both EBs. The total explained variance is slightly greater in 2001. For both years, it is higher for this question than for the question on EU meaning. In both analyses, the first dimension (which explains a higher amount of variance) is composed of negative responses to what the EU will bring in the future. As “there won't be EU” (that is, a spontaneous option mentioned by less than 2% of the respondents, see Table 4.1.1.3), the highest value is negative and is located in the second dimension, with pragmatic responses. This means that people who tend to be pragmatic do not believe that the EU will disappear in the near future. In conclusion, the principal component analysis shows even more robust results for this question than for the previous one, results perfectly adapted to my classification.

The two indexes have a correlation of 0.532 ($p < 0.01$) for both years. This correlation implies that both indexes measure different but connected phenomena. This result could be due, in part, to the design of the questions, because items are not equivalent in them. It could also be related, however, to the fact that one question asks about the EU's present and the other about its future. When surveys include an evaluation of the present and future economic situations, correlations are high but not perfect. For example, in EB 68 (2007) 58 per cent of citizens claim to be satisfied with the situation of the European economy, but only 45 per cent consider that this situation will be the same over the next twelve months.

3.2. Measuring international experience

Some scholars have studied the impact of international experience on attitudes towards the EU, but they have not included an item for measuring the number of international contacts, whether friends or kinship relationships (Green, 1999). Scholars who have taken this aspect into account perform qualitative research without a representative sample (Boehnke *et al*, 2007). Other empirical research has focused on specific groups, such as international students (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003, De Federico, 2003), intra-EU migrants (PIONEUR project), people living on EU borders (Boehnke *et al*, 2007, Schmidberger, 1998) or high-skilled migrants who frequently use Eurostar trains (Favell, 2008). My research focuses on young people age 15 to 24 years in the EU-15. It was my intention to study the whole population, but I was limited by the type of question relevant to testing my hypothesis. Only two Eurobarometers (EBs) included items that could be used as a “proxy” for international contacts while at the same time asking questions directly related to attitudes towards the EU. Both surveys involved a special youth sample. These items are exactly the same in both surveys (EB 47.2 and EB 55.1). Using them (9,818 and 9,731 respondents, respectively) enables me to compare responses of young people in two moments in time, 1997 and 2001.⁸ Indeed, these two years have special significance for EU integration. In 1997, the Amsterdam Treaty was signed, revising the Maastricht Treaty. 2001 is the last year national currencies circulated in the 12 member countries of the Euro-zone, since the Euro became the only currency among these countries on January 1, 2002. In other EBs with a representative sample from the entire population, one of these two elements (international contacts or attitudes towards the EU) was not present, so it was impossible to use them together.

Both EBs were dedicated to the use of foreign languages and include two questions that could be used as “proxies” for international experience. The first question asked “*which of the 15 EU countries have you visited in last two years*”. I created a variable with 3 categories: no visiting of EU countries, visiting 1 or 2 countries, visiting 3 or more countries. For the purposes of the research, it would be better to have a measure of all the countries that the respondent has ever visited, because a timespan of the last two years lacks precision as indicator of international experience, especially in the case of older respondents. On the one hand, a young person might have travelled abroad for the first time in last two years, such that the measure overestimates her experience; on the other, a person who has not travelled in last two years for personal reasons but has been abroad many times before would not be seen as having international experience. Unfortunately, information on the entire life of the respondent is not available in the EB selected. I therefore used trips in last two years as a “proxy” for countries that someone has ever visited.

⁸ The questions which adjust better to my hypothesis are only present in one Eurobarometer (EB 28.1, 1987) There are two questions related to international experience that could be used as independent variables. The first asks what number of EC countries “*have you already visited, for any reason at all*”. The second question states: “*Have you ever been abroad? If yes, taking together all the times that you have been abroad, including holidays as well as other trips, how much time altogether spent abroad?*” As dependent variables, the EB includes questions such as the benefit of the membership for the country. I have not used this Eurobarometer for 3 reasons: first, I cannot compare the results with later years because in EB 47.2 and EB 55.1, other questions have been included; second, this EB was carried out in 1987 a time at which the international European context was very different from than in 1997 and 2001, and mobility to other countries was more restricted; third, in 1987 two countries (Spain and Portugal) had just joined the ECC and three more were not yet members (Austria, Finland and Sweden).

The second question was multiple response and asked the reason for going to the countries visited (and was thus filtered by the first question). The possible answers were:

- a) *To visit the country, spend my holiday*
- b) *In a youth exchange programme*
- c) *To learn or to improve the language*
- d) *To study*
- e) *To work, on business*
- f) *For medical reasons*
- g) *To meet my girlfriend/boyfriend*
- h) *To live there with my family*
- i) *Others (spontaneous)*

This question is used as a “proxy” for determining the person’s international contacts. It has been assumed that all options except spending holidays, medical reasons and others (“other” being ambiguous because it does not include the exact reason given by respondents), probably imply contact with other Europeans (from the host country or from others), so I created a dichotomous variable to differentiate among those respondents who mentioned some reason that could imply personal interaction with others Europeans and people who did not mention those reasons. This is a conservative measure in two ways. First, a person could have contacts with people from other countries without travelling—for example when the foreigner lives in the respondent’s country—and this relation affects attitudes. Second, although it is probable that you make friends when you spend your holidays in another country (even if this is a short period or a weak relation), people who answer that they travelled for their holidays have been considered as not having contacts. Indeed, if we take into account that the measure refers only to the two years prior to the interview, we can be sure that we are not overestimating the number of international contacts young people have abroad.⁹

Other scholars (Green, 1999) have used language skills as a measure of international experience. Both EBs ask, *“apart from your mother tongue, which of these languages can you speak well enough to take part in a conversation?”* I could have included this question as a third measure of international experience. There is no doubt that speaking other European languages fluently could increase the opportunities of meeting people from other countries, but it is not absolutely necessary. People can travel to other countries although they do not speak the host language and these trips could influence their perceptions and attitudes towards the EU in any case. People can also meet foreigners who speak their mother tongue, so it is not compulsory for them to speak another language. Indeed, people whose languages share a common origin (such as Italian and Spanish, for example) do not need to speak the foreign language to understand and be understood. One could also question the appropriateness of the question, because its formulation is subjective: how much is “well enough”? Lastly, differences in language skills are great among EU countries, and these differences depend on multiple factors (geographical situation, one or more official languages in the country, educational systems...) that are difficult to control in this research. Nevertheless, I repeated all of the analyses in Section 5 using the EU meaning index and EU future support index as dependent variables and including the

number of foreign languages respondents speak as the independent variable (results not shown here). In 1997, this variable is significant on only two occasions. In 2001, however, the relevance of languages is higher. In short, this variable replaces the number of trips as a significant variable when the EU future support index is considered, while travelling to other countries retains its significance when the EU meaning index is studied. In any case, since the explained variance of the models that include the language variable is quite similar to that of models without it, I have not used it in the following analyses.

4. Application of the instrument for measuring attitude towards the European Union and international experience

After explaining the construction of the two dependent variables (EU meaning index and EU future support index) and the selection of the two variables for measuring international experience, the first part of this section shows how these variables are distributed among the EU member states. The second part focuses on socio-demographic variables that could influence attitudes towards the EU (sex, age, education and occupational status) according to different theoretical approaches that will be explained and on how these variables are distributed among the countries.

4.1. Descriptive analysis: distribution of the EU meaning index, EU future support index and international experience in the EU members

4.1.1. EU meaning index and EU future support index

As we can see in Table 4.1.1.1, the most common answer to what the EU means for young people is the same in both years: free mobility (an item whose relevance increased over 4 percentage points, from 34.8 to 39.1). The second and third responses are different in both years: in 1997, a better future is very close to the mobility item. A bit farther away, we find the creation of jobs, selected by almost 30% of young people. Four years later, a European government and improving the economic situation are the answers most frequently mentioned. We can see, then, that a more affective meaning was present in 1997 and a more political one in 2001 (at a time of great debate on EU enlargement, the necessity of a Constitution and the reinforcement of political institutions, and a time when the European Central Bank had already been created and had made decisions on economic issues, etc.). The third answer is economic. Although it is not the same in 1997 and 2001, both items are “instrumental”. Factor analysis shows that they are related to positive responses. The less frequently selected items are negative, such as those that see the EU as an unrealistic utopia or as a threat to cultural diversity.

⁹ It is clear that direct contact is not the only type of contact two people could have, given the different modes of communication through Internet currently available.

Table 4.1.1.1. Frequencies of the responses to EU meaning (multiple response question)

	1997	2001
Better future	34.2	28.1
European government	26.2	31.2
Free movement	34.8	39.1
Peace	24.1	22.7
Improving economic sit.	34.0	31.1
Creation of jobs	29.4	24.4
Protect rights of citizens	13.1	15.9
Bureaucracy	14.4	11.9
Utopian idea	7.6	5.1
Losing cultural diversity	12.0	11.0
Other	1.1	1.5
DK	5.0	7.9
N	8,882	8,913

Source: EB 47.2 and 55.1. Weighted sample.

Table 4.1.1.2 shows how many people could be considered “instrumental”. This category was created as a result of a principal component analysis (see Section 3.1.) and refers to people who only mention as significant the EU items related to economic issues or European government. The table also includes the percentage of respondents who scored in the EU meaning index and/or those who did not answer the question. The importance of instrumental people has increased over time (almost 5 percentage points), as does the proportion of people who do not answer the question (3 points). Obviously, this means that the proportion of respondents included in the index is lower in 2001. If we look to the distribution of the index, a majority of the respondents attribute a fairly positive meaning to the EU, very negative responses have decreased slightly and very positive ones have increased. We can conclude that, among people who do not only see the EU from an economic point of view and who have an opinion about it, its meaning is more positive in 2001 than in 1997.

Table 4.1.1.2. Frequency of instrumental responses, EU meaning index and no answers (percentage)

	1997	2001
Only instrumental responses	24.1	28.7
Other type of responses (index) (with or without instrumental responses selected)	70.1	62.7
Distribution of the index:		Distribution of the index:
* Very negative: 7.1		* Very negative: 6.3
* Fairly negative: 19.5		* Fairly negative: 18.9
* Neutral: 8.8		* Neutral: 6.7
* Fairly positive: 45.0		* Fairly positive: 46.2
* Very positive: 19.7		* Very positive: 21.9
No answer selected	5.5	8.7
N	9,400	9,760

Source: EB 47.2 and 55.1. Weighted sample.

The frequency of response to the second index (Table 4.1.1.3) shows that the future for young people is related to the Euro and free mobility (the two pragmatic responses), although in 1997 currency takes second place and in 2001 (a few months before the Euro actually became the currency of 12 member states) has greater presence in the minds of young people. Free mobility has quite a similar percentage in both years. The third response is more opportunities, although it is followed closely by less discrimination against foreigners. Both aspects are positive, although the first has an economic perspective, while the second is more related to politics and society. Lastly, negative responses constitute the lowest responses, although their percentage is higher than in the case of the EU meaning index. The least mentioned item is the one stating that the EU will not exist in ten years, an answer that has decreased, perhaps because the creation of the Euro and a really unified market has been seen as the proof of the stability of the EU.

Table 4.1.1.3. Frequency of responses to what the EU will bring in 10 years (multiple response question)

	1997	2001
Better quality of life	23.3	25.0
More opportunities	29.9	28.3
More gender equality	16.1	16.7
Less discrimination	28.8	27.4
Difficult decisions	22.5	21.6
Higher unemployment	14,5	10.7
Use of the Euro	41,8	48.1
Free movement	47.7	45.1
More social problems	17.8	13.3
Won't be EU	1.5	0.9
Other	0.8	0.6
DK	5.5	9.5
N	8,864	8,810

Source: EB 47.2 and 55.1. Weighted sample.

Table 4.1.1.4 shows the number of pragmatists, the distribution of the EU future support index and the percentage of nonresponses. Both the index and pragmatism are the result of the principal component analysis discussed in Section 3.1: pragmatists are defined as respondents who have only selected the Euro and/or freedom of movement as what the EU will bring in the future), while people who select other types of responses have a score in the index. We can see that the number of pragmatists is less than a half of that of instrumentalists and has increased less than the former. Of course, it could be that the development of the two constructs (the first with two items and the second with four) has influenced this result. However, it could also be argued that, when young people think about the EU in the future, they project additional ideas not related to economic issues. Interestingly, the number of nonrespondents in 2001 is almost double than in 1997. Very negative responses have decreased and very positive ones increased, although both are less frequent than in the EU meaning index.

Table 4.1.1.4. Frequency of pragmatic responses, EU future support index and no answers (percentage)

	1997	2001
Only pragmatic responses	11.1	13.5
Other type of responses (index) (with or without pragmatic re- sponses selected)	83,2	76.7
	Distribution of the index:	Distribution of the index:
	* Very negative: 3.3	* Very negative: 2.1
	* Fairly negative: 25.3	* Fairly negative: 23.6
	* Neutral: 11.7	* Neutral: 10.4
	* Fairly positive: 52.9	* Fairly positive: 55.6
	* Very positive: 6.9	* Very positive: 8.4
No answer selected	5.7	9.7
N	9,400	9,760

Source: EB 47.2 and 55.1. Weighted sample.

Table 4.1.1.5 shows the distribution of the responses to the two indexes in EB 47.2. Regarding the EU meaning index, we first observe that the difference between the countries with the most and least frequent negative responses is very high: 13.3 per cent for East Germany and 1.3 per cent for Ireland (Italy is very close, with 1.6 per cent). Second, the percentage of very positive responses is almost three times that of negative ones, and the differences in relative terms among countries are lower: Italy and Luxembourg have the highest percentages (28.1 per cent) and Sweden the lowest (11.3 per cent). The EU support index offers an outlook with some differences: no Irish respondent expresses a very negative view of the future, but Greece and Spain replace Italy as the countries with the lowest percentage (although Italy is below the EU-mean). The countries with the most positive responses are Ireland and Finland (9.7 per cent), a striking result in the second case since Finns also gave fewer negative responses than the mean, a trend that does not fit with the traditional sceptical position of this country towards integration (see, for example, McLaren, 2007 and Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000). Ireland and Finland are followed by Italy and the UK, also an unexpected result. We will return to these results in Table 4.1.1.7.

Table 4.1.1.5. EU meaning index and EU future support index (1997)

	EU meaning index					N
	Very negat.	Fairly negat.	Neutral	Fairly posit.	Very posit.	
France	9.2	18.3	12.0	40.4	20.1	460
Belgium	12.7	27.0	11.0	32.7	16.6	415
The Netherlands	6.5	21.5	10.0	42.2	19.8	412
Germany (West)	8.1	22.8	12.3	34.1	22.6	438
Italy	1.6	10.9	5.6	40.6	28.1	457
Luxembourg	3.4	15.2	12.8	40.6	28.1	151
Denmark	16.1	24.6	12.9	31.6	14.8	488
Ireland	1.3	11.5	4.4	64.9	17.9	404
United Kingdom	7.4	24.6	6.7	43.4	17.9	454
Greece	5.2	14.9	8.3	48.8	22.8	481
Spain	6.4	22.5	3.6	54.2	13.3	351
Portugal	2.6	13.9	7.1	52.5	23.9	441
Germany (East)	13.3	17.9	9.5	39.9	19.4	483
Finland	10.6	29.1	9.4	37.0	13.8	453
Sweden	13.8	30.7	13.8	30.4	11.3	481
Austria	10.2	22.9	10.7	36.3	19.9	466
EU-15	7.1	19.5	8.8	45	19.7	6,614

	EU future support index					N
	Very negat.	Fairly negat.	Neutral	Fairly posit.	Very posit.	
France	3.9	30.9	15.0	44.6	5.7	508
Belgium	7.3	42.3	14.4	30.9	5.1	496
The Netherlands	2.9	31.6	14.2	44.0	7.2	481
Germany (West)	7.5	36.6	14.6	35.9	5.4	501
Italy	1.1	14.0	6.5	70.2	8.3	523
Luxembourg	2.4	26.0	18.9	49.8	2.8	185
Denmark	1.8	36.2	15.5	41.9	4.7	497
Ireland	-	9.5	7.9	72.9	9.7	511
United Kingdom	2.9	20.6	11.0	58.2	8.2	609
Greece	0.8	28.5	9.0	58.2	3.5	532
Spain	0.7	14.5	10.0	68.9	7.9	479
Portugal	1.5	18.6	11.2	61.0	7.7	530
Germany (East)	9.0	37.0	11.0	37.5	5.5	528
Finland	0.5	23.8	14.7	51.2	9.7	509
Sweden	4.3	42.0	16.1	33.2	4.4	510
Austria	5.9	31.9	14.1	40.4	7.7	545
EU-15	3.3	25.3	11.7	52.9	6.9	7,824

Source: EB 47.2. Weighted sample by country and for EU-15

Table 4.1.1.6. shows the same indexes for the year 2001. Ireland maintains first position with the lowest percentage of negative responses to EU meaning, although the percentage has increased. Sweden is the most negative country. The most positive responses come from Luxembourg, followed by France and the Netherlands. Regarding future support, Ireland and Italy have the lowest percentages of very negative values of the index, followed by Spain and Portugal, these two countries also provided

the highest percentages of very positive answers. As Finland now has a more negative position, it is possible that the result shown earlier was determined by contextual factors, such as having joined the EU only two years before the EB was performed.

Table 4.1.1.6. EU meaning index and EU future support index (2001)

EU meaning index						
	Very negat.	Fairly negat.	Neutral	Fairly posit.	Very posit.	N
France	3.8	17.0	6.8	43.1	29.3	418
Belgium	5.1	17.0	7.8	43.8	26.3	438
The Netherlands	7.3	16.1	8.9	38.5	29.2	515
Germany (West)	8.1	17.4	9.3	46.1	19.1	393
Italy	3.1	11.1	3.0	59.1	23.7	409
Luxembourg	3.4	6.3	5.0	48.1	37.3	132
Denmark	7.1	19.0	11.3	41.1	21.5	487
Ireland	2.1	16.7	3.7	62.4	15.1	319
United Kingdom	8.3	31.7	5.9	41.0	13.1	321
Greece	4.1	26.5	8.9	43.5	17.1	471
Spain	7.8	20.0	3.9	48.2	20.1	348
Portugal	2.7	9.4	8.0	57.1	22.9	379
Germany (East)	9.1	19.9	8.9	38.4	23.6	462
Finland	11.5	34.1	8.1	37.2	9.1	412
Sweden	15.4	32.6	8.4	9.1	14.4	420
Austria	8.4	21.4	11.1	39.7	19.4	454
EU-15	6.3	18.9	6.7	46.2	21.9	6,115

EU future support index						
	Very negat.	Fairly negat.	Neutral	Fairly posit.	Very posit.	N
France	0.8	24.5	12.8	53.4	8.5	499
Belgium	2.2	30.5	12.9	47.3	7.1	512
The Netherlands	0.7	30.8	12.8	48.1	7.6	575
Germany (West)	4.8	31.0	13.0	45.5	5.6	464
Italy	0.4	13.9	8.3	69.6	7.7	462
Luxembourg	1.6	18.8	13.3	54.5	11.8	165
Denmark	1.0	25.3	13.6	54.0	6.0	487
Ireland	0.4	10.0	7.9	71.1	10.6	442
United Kingdom	2.6	23.3	6.7	58.9	8.5	497
Greece	1.1	25.4	8.3	52.6	12.6	533
Spain	0.8	18.4	6.2	61.6	13.1	466
Portugal	0.9	12.0	8.8	71.6	6.8	491
Germany (East)	6.8	33.2	13.0	39.1	7.9	537
Finland	1.2	22.9	14.4	56.8	4.8	473
Sweden	3.6	36.3	14.2	40.5	5.3	501
Austria	3.7	25.6	15.2	46.9	8.5	532
EU-15	2.1	23.6	10.4	55.6	8.4	7,490

Source: EB 55.1. Weighted sample by country and for EU-15

Table 4.1.1.7. Instrumental and pragmatic responses (1997 and 2001)

1997									
	Instrumental responses				Pragmatic responses				N
	% instrum.	% other resp.	% no answer	Total	% pragmat.	% other resp.	% no answer		
France	21.8	76.7	1.5	600	France	12.7	84.6	2.7	600
Belgium	23.2	69.2	7.6	600	Belgium	8.1	82.6	9.3	600
The Netherlands	27.5	68.7	3.8	600	The Netherlands	17.6	80.1	2.3	600
Germany (West)	21.9	73.0	5.2	600	Germany (West)	10.6	83.5	6.0	600
Italy	21.7	76.2	2.1	600	Italy	9.6	87.2	3.2	600
Luxembourg	17.2	75.3	7.5	200	Luxembourg	5.1	92.6	2.3	200
Denmark	14.5	81.3	4.2	600	Denmark	12.3	82.8	4.8	600
Ireland	26.1	67.4	6.5	600	Ireland	8.9	85.2	5.9	600
United Kingdom	25.0	56.7	18.3	800	United Kingdom	9.0	76.1	14.9	800
Greece	18.6	80.2	1.2	600	Greece	9.9	88.6	1.5	600
Spain	38.0	58.5	3.5	600	Spain	16.0	79.8	4.2	600
Portugal	25.0	73.6	1.5	600	Portugal	8.6	88.3	3.2	600
Germany (East)	15.4	80.5	4.1	600	Germany (East)	5.0	88.1	6.9	600
Finland	21.8	75.5	2.7	600	Finland	13.2	84.8	2.0	600
Sweden	16.9	80.1	3.0	600	Sweden	11.4	85.0	3.6	600
Austria	17.6	77.7	4.8	600	Austria	5.0	90.8	4.2	600
EU-15	24.1	70	5.5	9,400	EU-15	11.1	83.2	5.7	9,400

2001									
	Instrumental responses				Pragmatic responses				N
	% instrum.	% other resp.	% no answer	Total	% pragmat.	% other resp.	% no answer		
France	26.1	69.4	4.5	602	France	13.4	82.8	3.7	602
Belgium	28.8	65.9	5.2	665	Belgium	18.4	77.0	4.6	665
The Netherlands	27.7	68.7	3.6	749	The Netherlands	19.0	76.7	4.3	749
Germany (West)	27.9	63.4	8.8	621	Germany (West)	10.8	74.7	14.5	621
Italy	29.2	68.6	2.2	596	Italy	17.7	77.5	4.8	596
Luxembourg	27.6	65.2	7.2	202	Luxembourg	10.4	81.5	8.1	202
Denmark	17.5	79.5	3.0	613	Denmark	17.1	79.5	3.5	613
Ireland	31.8	56.1	12.1	568	Ireland	10.5	77.9	11.7	568
United Kingdom	27.7	41.2	31.1	778	United Kingdom	9.2	63.8	27.0	778
Greece	21.2	76.3	2.5	618	Greece	10.8	86.2	3.0	618
Spain	38.5	57.9	3.6	601	Spain	16.1	77.5	6.4	601
Portugal	35.5	61.9	2.7	613	Portugal	17.4	80.1	2.5	613
Germany (East)	20.4	71.7	7.9	644	Germany (East)	7.4	83.4	9.2	644
Finland	31.0	66.4	2.7	620	Finland	21.2	76.3	2.5	620
Sweden	26.4	69.6	4.0	604	Sweden	11.1	83.0	5.9	604
Austria	22.9	73.0	4.1	622	Austria	8.4	85.5	6.1	622
EU-15	28.7	62.7	8.7	9,760	EU-15	13.5	76.7	9.7	9,760

Source: EB 47.2 and 55.1. Weighted sample by country and for EU-15

Lastly, Table 4.1.1.7 shows a different picture: how many instrumentals are present in each country and how many people did not choose any of the available items about what the EU is and will bring in the near future. The results confirm the distinctiveness of the UK. This country has a very large percentage of people who did not answer the questions in both years. Indeed, the differences among Britain and the other EU members are considerable. For 1997, almost one fifth of British youth did not answer what the EU means for them, and only one in six responded to what the EU will bring in the future. In 2001, the percentages are even higher: almost one third did not select items for the first question and more than one fourth for the second. It is now easier to interpret results shown in Tables 4.1.1.5 and 4.1.1.6. Here, the UK was not among the group of countries with most negative views. Indeed, in 1997 it was in the group of countries with the most positive attitudes regarding the future. We can conclude that many young people in the UK do not hold an opinion (or at least do not express it) but, among people who have opinions, the responses are not so different from other European members.

4.1.2. International experience

If we take into account that there are no restrictions for moving within the EU space, we can conclude that the international experience of young Europeans it is not very high (Table 4.1.2.1). More than four out of ten of these young people have not travelled in last two years (this does not imply that they do not have international experience, only that they it is not recent). About one in six has travelled very frequently (three or more countries). Of the 60 per cent of respondents who have travelled in last two years, only 28 per cent mentioned one or more reasons for travelling that could imply having contacts with people from other countries.

Table 4.1.2.1. Frequency of people who travel and have international contacts

	1997	2001
Visit EU countries		
* None	43.0	40.9
* One or two	41.4	42.0
* Three or more	15.6	17.1
N	9,400	9,760
Reasons to have contacts		
* Reasons mentioned	28.0	28.8
* Reasons not mentioned	72.0	71.2
N	5,341	6,115

Source: EB 47.2 and 55.1. Weighted sample.

The 2001 EB included EU candidate countries among those visited by the respondent in the previous two years. Nevertheless, I only used responses from EU-15, as including candidate countries would have made it more difficult to compare results with EB 47.2, which did not include such countries. I tested the percentage of people who mentioned candidate states, and 80 per cent of the sample had not visited any of these countries. Among the 20 per cent who had visited a candidate state, 15.1 per cent visited only one and 3.6 per cent two countries. A comparison among the total number of candi-

date countries visited and the total number of EU countries visited shows that only 4.8 per cent of the sample had visited more candidate countries than members of the EU, 52.7 per cent visited more members than candidates, and 42.5 per cent visited the same number (the majority of this 42.5 per cent had not been abroad in last two years).¹⁰

Table 4.1.2.2. Distribution of international experience among EU countries (%)

1997						
	No trips in last 2 years	Trips to 1 or 2 countries	Trips to 3 or more countries	N	Have contacts (only who travelled)	N
France	37.2	45.4	17.4	600	41.5	377
Belgium	22.1	45.3	32.6	600	17.9	467
Netherlands	10.5	38.7	50.8	600	25.0	537
Germany (West)	21.2	54.1	24.7	600	27.6	465
Italy	54.4	38.8	6.8	600	29.8	274
Luxembourg	3.3	14.5	82.3	200	35.0	192
Denmark	9.4	41.5	49	600	43.3	542
Ireland	42.9	48.3	8.9	600	27.0	342
UK	49.1	40.7	10.2	800	18.3	407
Greece	82.6	14.4	2.9	600	30.7	104
Spain	70.0	25.3	4.7	600	19.8	180
Portugal	51.3	43.9	4.8	600	22.3	292
Germany (East)	38.2	47.2	14.6	600	19.7	370
Finland	19.6	65.9	14.5	600	19.3	478
Sweden	16.5	46.7	36.8	600	25.2	501
Austria	29.5	54.6	15.9	600	35.6	423
UE-15	43.0	41.4	15.6	9,400	28	5,341
2001						
	No trips in last 2 years	Trips to 1 or 2 countries	Trips to 3 or more countries	N	Have contacts (only who travelled)	N
France	33.1	52.3	14.6	602	38.7	409
Belgium	15.4	45.2	39.3	665	22.1	571
Netherlands	7.2	32	60.8	749	28.7	703
Germany (West)	21.9	50.2	27.9	621	24.8	510
Italy	56.9	35.2	7.9	596	36.9	292
Luxembourg	5.5	18.1	76.3	202	41.5	192
Denmark	9.8	42.6	47.6	613	46.5	562
Ireland	34.6	53.7	11.7	568	18.2	377
UK	44.4	44.3	11.3	778	20.0	456
Greece	83.1	13.3	3.6	618	38.8	130
Spain	69.3	26.5	4.1	601	29.0	186
Portugal	57.2	37.8	5.0	613	17.4	268
Germany (East)	38.5	49.6	11.9	644	22.3	506
Finland	31.3	55.5	13.2	620	22.2	488
Sweden	13.5	51.3	35.2	604	28.4	542
Austria	28.1	53.5	18.4	622	37.1	501
UE-15	40.9	42.0	17.1	9,760	28.8	6,115

Source: EB 47.2 and 55.1. Weighted sample by country and for EU-15.

¹⁰ It should be noted that the percentage of people who have been never abroad differs from one variable to the other, although the second was filtered by the first, so this gap should be due to codification errors.

Table 4.1.2.2 shows the distribution of international experience among countries. The differences are important. We find some countries where the majority of the young people have travelled and others where more than half have not travelled in last two years. The ranking is very similar in both years. Among the first group we find small countries located in the geographical centre of Western Europe, such as Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium, but also the three Northern countries. On the other side, the lowest degree of international experience is found in Greece (less than 20%) and Spain (around 30%). The number of trips may be related in part to geographical reasons (other countries are more accessible, the cold weather motivates travel to warmer regions of Europe in winter, people travel to beaches in the summer) and economic reasons (in general, the richer the country, the higher the number of trips among their young population). Countries with a higher percentage of citizens who have travelled also have more frequent international contacts, with some exceptions. In 1997, France is the country with most international contacts among travellers, followed by Denmark and Luxembourg. Four years later, Denmark ranks first, followed by Luxembourg, France and Greece.

4.2. Controlling for alternative explanations

I used four variables to control for alternative explanations: sex, age, age at which education ended, and occupational status. Different theories consider each of these variables important in explaining support for the EU. This section presents these theoretical approaches briefly. Education and occupational status are used by the utilitarian approach to explain attitudes towards the EU. This theory, which gained acceptance in the nineties, proposes that attitudes adopted towards the EU will depend on how Community policies influence the individual, particularly policies related to liberalisation of the market, given that these initiatives affect the population in a diverse way. Gabel and Palmer (1995) have developed this perspective, testing three hypotheses: first, a citizen's support for integration would be positively related to his/her level of education and occupational skills; second, wealthy citizens are more likely to benefit from capital liberalisation; and third, Europeans residing near borders with other EU members benefit more from increased economic interaction between the neighbouring countries. They present evidence from multivariate analyses that supported these hypotheses. However, they recognise that this evidence is not conclusive because the analyses did not include controls for several alternative explanations. A few years later, Gabel (1998) examines five theories of support for integration, and analysis shows that utilitarian theory provides the most robust explanation. More recently, other authors have found a positive relationship between better occupations and higher education and income and support to the EU (Carey, 2002; McLaren, 2006 and 2007).¹¹ The following analyses will test whether people with higher education and higher occupational status are more supportive of the EU.

¹¹ As shown before, "sociotropic utilitarianism" includes national economic variables. We focus on the individual perspective, although national *dummies* included in the analysis are partially related to national economic variables.

Age and, again, education are important factors in the cosmopolitan theory developed by Inglehart (1970, 1971, 1977a, 1977b, 1990). For this American political scientist, the political changes undergone by advanced industrial societies are caused indirectly by the social development and unprecedented levels of economic wealth reached after the Second World War. Inglehart expects support for European integration and European Union to grow. On the micro-level, two independent variables influence the formation of attitudes: political value-orientations and the level of political skills (what he calls "cognitive mobilisation"). The author distinguishes between two orientations, materialist and post-materialist, and posits that European integration fits better with the value-orientation of post-materialists than with that of materialists because 1) materialists are less cosmopolitan and have a rather narrow-minded view; and 2) post-materialists have a greater need than materialists to fulfil a certain need to belong. Because the nation-state is too materialist for them, this need can be satisfied by identifying with or attaching themselves to the European idea. As to the second variable, skills determine whether a person is capable of processing information at a certain level of abstraction, such as information about European integration. Inglehart uses the concept "abstraction" to indicate the ease with which individuals can understand political messages and relate them to their own thoughts and personal situation. In most cases, distance from the source is a good indicator of the level of abstraction. The author expects people with a higher level of political skills to see the European Union as more familiar and less threatening than people with a lower level.

Janssen (1991) tests Inglehart's hypotheses and finds that, once we control for cognitive mobilisation, post-materialist values have no effect on the support for European integration or identification with the EU. It is thus the capacity for understanding complex political events that makes people fear the EU less; if they have more information about it, they tend to support it. Since Janssen's study, many authors have found a positive association between cognitive mobilisation and support for the EU (Carey, 2002; McLaren, 2006 and 2007). Unfortunately, the Eurobarometers used in these analyses did not include the postmaterialist index or the cognitive mobilisation index. Due to its close relation, however, education could be used as a "proxy" for cognitive mobilisation. (Inglehart [1998] also proposed this solution in the absence of the cognitive mobilisation index). In 1970, Inglehart showed that, when cognitive mobilisation is omitted, education level becomes the most important factor associated with Europeanism, but the impact of education disappears when cognitive mobilisation is introduced. More recently, Duchesne and Frogner (1995:218) demonstrate that "education appears to have become an important factor in its own right and cannot be replaced by cognitive mobilisation".

Unfortunately, if an association is found in next analyses between the dependent variables and education, it is not possible to evaluate whether this correlation is due to utilitarian or cosmopolitan reasons. Another type of variable would have to be included to assess this. International experience is one possible variable and is probably more strongly linked to the cosmopolitan than to the utilitarian approach. In fact, Deutch (1952) also developed the cosmopolitan approach, and models based on his work pay special attention to the role that structural variables such as the frequency of trips abroad or living in

other European countries play in developing a cosmopolitan vision, a reasoning that it is partially followed (due to the partial information available) in this research.

Age and sex are the other two control variables. As both surveys focused on young people (15-24), with the maximum gap between the youngest and the oldest respondents being only nine years, we expect this variable to be less relevant than in research that uses a sample of the whole adult population (for example, Inglehart's hypothesis about postmaterialist values states that young people are more postmaterialist and more Europeanist than the rest of the population). Following the socialisation hypothesis, we could expect younger people (at least in countries that joined the EU later) to have more positive attitudes towards the EU because, in contrast to the older generations, this supranational institution has been present in their daily lives (and in their text books) since the beginning of their memories. As to sex, many scholars have noticed that women are less enthusiastic about the EU than men, although few studies have explored this gender gap systematically (for an exception, see Nelsen and Guth, 2000). This result is not surprising, however, given that much empirical research has shown that women are less involved in politics than men. As Van Deth points out (2000:248), there are three major explanations of this gap: the socialisation explanation (men and women are socialised in different gender roles during childhood), the situational explanation (the private and isolated roles of many adult females limit their opportunities for political involvement), and the structural explanation (institutions discriminate against women, leading to structural under-representation of women). Women in both samples are young and have lived their childhoods in a more egalitarian context where differences in gender roles tend to decrease while social institutions tend to increase women's representation. Indeed, because most women have not experienced the roles mentioned by the situational explanation, I do not expect differences between young men and women in their attitudes towards the EU. If any difference is to be found, men are expected to mention more positive meanings of the EU and have more positive expectations about the future than women.

Education level was measured by the item that asks at what age the respondent ended full time-education. As the percentage of students was 41 per cent in 1997 and 47 per cent in 2001 and I wanted to include students in the analysis, I considered their age at the moment of the interview as the age at which they finished full-time education (a continuous variable). Another possible option would have been to consider them as a nominal category (although this is a risky assumption with the internal heterogeneity of such a large group). However, since as I use "students" as a category in occupational status, it would have been impossible to use level of education as a nominal category and occupation simultaneously. In any case, I am not interested in the knowledge that students have at the moment of the interview or whether or not they will continue their studies. Following the cosmopolitan approach, my interest is most related to the socialisation process that takes place in the education system, through which students learn such values as tolerance, non-violent discussion of different opinions, moderation, etc. The important fact then becomes how long the person has been exposed to these values. Lastly, occupational status was measured with the scale created by the EB, which combined the original 18 items of the question into seven: self-employed, manager, manual worker, other white collar workers, housekeeper, unemployed, and student.

As level of education and occupational status are clearly related, I repeated all the regressions, first using only education and then including only occupational status. The results are not very different, and the explained variance always decreases very slightly when one of these items is absent. In the case of the regressions with education only, its significance for studying the EU meaning index in 1997 and the EU future support index increases in both years. The role of education is less important for studying instrumentalism, but it is relevant in both EBs for explaining pragmatism. When education is not included, the occupational category of manual worker usually becomes significant, although sometimes housekeeper or unemployed is the category that changes when compared with the regression with education.¹² I have used education as a continuous variable, although I collapsed the lower and upper categories in Table 4.2.1 (14 or less and 21 to 24). Either the relations among these variables and the two indices are not significant or their values are lower than 0.1.

Table 4.2.1. Frequency of age, sex, education and occupation (%)

	EB 47.2 (1997)	EB 55.1 (2001)
Sex		
* Male	51.1	50.1
* Female	48.9	49.9
N	9,400	9,760
Age		
* 15-19	46.7	50.0
* 20-24	53.3	50.0
N	9,400	9,760
Age ended full-time education		
* 14 or less	5.3	4.0
* 15	11.5	12.1
* 16	20.6	19.6
* 17	12.8	16.6
* 18	16.4	17.6
* 19	12.0	12.0
* 20	7.1	5.9
* 21 to 24	14.4	12.2
N	9,400	9,760
Occupational status		
* Self-employed	2.3	2.1
* Manager	2.6	2.6
* Manual worker	27.6	25.3
* Other white collar	9.7	9.0
* Housekeeper	3.3	3.2
* Unemployed	13.3	10.6
* Student	41.2	47.3
N	9,400	9,742

Source: EB 47.2 and 55.1. Weighted sample.

¹² I also repeated the analyses using a dummy variable for education, people who had ended their studies before or after 18 years of age, but the results are very similar to the continuous variable. Because the Beta coefficients were sometimes lower for the dummy variable, I prefer not to use them, as they have less information than the continuous variable.

5. Explaining attitudes towards the EU

Section 3 describes how the two dependent variables for measuring attitudes towards the EU and the two independent variables for measuring international experience were constructed; Section 4 was dedicated to explaining their distribution among EU members. This section tests the hypotheses about how international experience and national contexts influence attitudes towards the EU. The section is divided into three parts: first, the two indexes (EU meaning index and EU future support index) are studied as dependent variables and multiple linear regression analyses are carried out to find out which factors influence them. The second part is dedicated to the study of instrumentalism and pragmatism. For this purpose, I created two *dummy* variables, with value 1 for those who chose only instrumentalist or pragmatist responses and value 0 for people who mention other answers. I then performed logistic regression analyses. Respondents who did not answer the question were deleted from the analysis. The last part focuses on the relevance of national contexts for explaining attitudes towards the EU.

The entire section presents four models and two types of regressions. The first model tests the hypothesis about influence on international experience. International experience was measured with two items (see Section 3.2. for details). The second was filtered by the first: that is, only people who have travelled in the last two years were asked about their reasons for travel to determine whether they had international contacts. I performed two analyses: the first used so-called “international experience I”, which includes only the question about how many countries the respondent has visited in the previous two years. The variable has three categories: “no travel” for people who have not visited other European countries in the previous two years, “low travel” for those who visited one or two countries and “high travel” for individuals who have been to three or more countries. In the second analysis, “international experience II” adds to the previous item a *dummy* variable that distinguishes those who mention reasons for contacts abroad from those who do not provide reasons. The first type of regression includes “international experience I” as independent variable in the first model. The second type includes “international experience II”. We must take into account that using one or the other measure implies different sample size, since the first question filters the second. In addition, the profile of the respondents may differ. All respondents were asked to respond to the first question to ensure that the sample is representative of the national population. As we have seen in Table 4.1.2.2, however, some countries have a small percentage of people who have travelled in the previous two years. In these countries, the sample decreases considerably when the second variable is used. In countries where the majority of young people travel frequently, both samples are almost identical.

The second model adds individual variables: sex (value 0 for women and 1 for men), age and age at which they ended full-time education (two continuous variables) and occupational status (the reference category is to be student, and the other categories are: self-employed, manager, manual worker, other white collar, housekeeper, and unemployed). The third and fourth models take into account national contexts. The third model includes a contextual variable: the moment the respondent’s country joined the EU, with the lowest value (1) for the founder States and the highest (6) corresponding to Austria,

Finland and Sweden¹³. Many scholars have found that historically the level of support is higher among the founders of the ECC (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995, Martinotti, 1995, Anderson and Reichert, 1996). For example, in their analysis of EU support using individual-level and cross-national variables, Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) showed that length of membership is the most consistent influence among the macro-level variables for 1982, 1986, and 1990. Indeed, other researchers showed that different variables explain EU support among the countries (Gabel, 1998).

The fourth model excludes this last variable and includes *dummy* variables for each country. I want to test whether national frames are important in explaining attitudes towards the EU. Previous research on EU topics has shown the importance of national context. After analysing the impact of several types of variables in France, Italy, Germany, Great Britain and Spain, for example, Rother and Langner (2004) concluded that “the impact of social-demographic variables can be explained to a large extent by country influences” (p.26). Duchesne and Frogner (1995) found that socio-demographic variables have a stronger effect in less developed countries of the EU. I also wish to test the socialisation hypothesis in the case of East and West German respondents. Those interviewed were born between 1973 and 1982 (in the case of the survey carried out in 1997) and 1977 and 1986 (in 2001 survey). Their early lives occurred in very different contexts, and as children or teenagers they witnessed German unification. Although some scholars (see Rother and Langner, 2004, Santacreu and Albert, 2004) do not find relevant differences in attitudes towards the EU using Eurobarometer data, Díez Medrano (2003) observes some differences (and also strong similarities) in national frames in East and West Germany regarding the evaluation of the EU. In my study, the United Kingdom is analysed as a whole, adding Northern Ireland and Great Britain, due to the small number of cases in the Northern Ireland sample. I have repeated the analyses distinguishing both territories (regressions not shown here), and the coefficients either always go in the same direction unless one is significant and the other not. However, if we add all cases in the UK category, the result is significant. I take France as the reference category because I want as baseline one of the founding countries but not a small one. The three possible candidates were thus Germany, France and Italy. Italy is not a good case for comparing with the others because it has been one of the strongest supporters of the EU since the beginning, while Germany has suffered many changes in the last 20 years due to unification and thus constitutes a very peculiar case. France occupies a middle position in the international comparison between sceptical positions and Euroenthusiastic ones, so it is an appropriate reference group for the rest of the countries.

As we have seen, international experience is very unevenly distributed among EU members. It will thus not be surprising that, before we control for countries (that is, in Models 1, 2, and 3), travelling and having contacts are negatively related to the two indexes, as some of the most experienced young people are from Eurosceptical Northern members and some of the least experienced from Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal, traditional supporters of the EU. If a positive association is found *before* the inclusion of other countries, we could conclude that the individual experience of the respondent is

¹³ It should be noted that East Germany came to be considered a member of the EU in 1989, so it has a value of 5. The rest of the values are: 2 for Denmark, Ireland and UK, 3 for Greece, 4 for Spain and Portugal.

more important than national context, or the contrary if there is a negative correlation. If the association is negative but changes sign *after* adding the countries, we could conclude that national contexts frame the international experience of respondents. However, if we hold country constant, international experience is an important factor for explaining support to the EU. A third option is that the relevance of international experience vanishes after the inclusion of countries, a phenomenon that should be interpreted as showing that national context is more important than individual experience.

Regarding national contexts, I expect: (i) the length of membership affects the attitudes towards the EU positively. As the lowest number corresponds to the founder countries and the highest to Northern states, the association should be negative with the two indexes; and (ii) because national contexts will be important even after controlling for sex, age, education and occupation, the majority of countries will differ from France, the reference category.

Analyses will also test hypotheses about the association among socio-demographic variables and attitudes towards the EU. These hypotheses were explained in the previous section: (1) there is no difference between young men and women, who have grown up in a more egalitarian context; (2) younger people are expected to be more supportive than older ones; (3) people in lower social positions and who benefit to a lesser extent from the integration process (the unemployed, housekeepers and manual workers) will be less supportive than students and managers; (4) level of education is positively related to support for the EU.

Lastly, we will analyse the profile of instrumentalist and pragmatist attitudes. I expect that both phenomena are associated with less educated people and with lower social status and with younger people with less international experience, as all of these groups have less knowledge of the EU than the others. As the reasons for joining the EU differ among countries and are shaped by national contexts, it is interesting to test whether some countries are more instrumental or pragmatist than others.

Many analyses have been carried out (a regression with four models with each type of international experience for each of the four dependent variables for each of the years). I have selected two regressions from 1997 with the first measure of international experience and two from 2001, using the second measure to determine whether international experience is significantly associated with attitudes towards the EU as well as the influence of national frames. My aim here is not to maximise the explained variance but to check the usefulness of the tool created for measuring international experience and to test the hypotheses mentioned above.

5.1. Explaining the EU meaning index and the EU future support index

As we can see in Table 5.1.1., the first measure of international experience (the number of trips in the last two years) is negatively associated (both low and high travel) with a positive meaning of the EU, even if we control for age, sex, education, occupation and length of the membership (Models 1 to 3). This negative correlation disappears when countries are added (Model 4), so we can conclude that national contexts frame the international individual experience. Regarding the other individual-level variables with a significant relation to EU meaning, we observe that the older generations are less supportive and that education is positively related once we control for national context. This means that education shows the opposite pattern to international experience: taking all of the samples together, there is no difference between more or less educated people but, if the effects of countries are fixed, more educated people attribute a more positive meaning to the EU. This result is anticipated by both the utilitarian approach and Inglehart's theory. To fill out the first perspective, we must see what happens with occupational status. Models 2 to 4 show only one significant category, housekeeper, but the relation is not predicted by utilitarian scholars: housekeepers (who usually have a low education level and low occupational skills) attribute a more positive meaning than students, even after controlling for age, sex and education. Further, this significance increases when countries are included in the analysis. The supposed losers (manual workers, unemployed) or winners (managers) of the integration process are no different from students. It seems, then, that the utilitarian approach is only partially confirmed when international experience is included in the model.

Regarding the macro-level variables, Model 3 shows that earlier joiners are more supportive than later ones. In the last model, 7 out of 15 countries differ from France with a significance of *** $p < 0.001$. Interestingly, the UK is not one of these countries. The three Northern states (especially Sweden) are less supportive than France, while Italy, Ireland, Greece and Portugal are more supportive (especially Italy), but not Spain. All benefit from EU resources (the first four through structural funds, the last because many European institutions are located in its territory). All of the models are significant, and the addition of the country *dummies* triples the amount of explained variance.

Table 5.1.1. Predictors of EU meaning index (1997, multiple regression)

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	3.537***	4.337***	4.582***	4.110***
International experience I				
* Number of trips (reference: no travel)				
- Low travel	-.046*	-.045**	-.041**	.013
- High travel	-.052***	-.051***	-.058***	.025
Socio-demographic variables				
Sex (reference: male)		-.012	-.013	-.015
Age		-.133***	-.138***	-.136***
Age ended education		.036	.034	.050**
* Occupational status (reference: students)				
Self-employed		.022	.023	.008
Manager		.013	.017	.011
Manual worker		-.002	.003	.006
Other white collar		.015	.016	.009
Housekeeper		.043**	.043**	.047***
Unemployed		.002	.002	.003
Wave of EU membership				
Countries (reference: France)				
Belgium				-.049**
The Netherlands				.022
Germany (West)				-.008
Italy				.118***
Luxembourg				.030*
Denmark				-.074***
Ireland				.087***
United Kingdom				.005
Greece				.056***
Spain				.006
Portugal				.075***
Germany (East)				-.005
Finland				-.062***
Sweden				-.100***
Austria				-.011
Adjusted R²				
	.002	.014	.023	.063
F of the model				
	9.134***	10.061***	15.214***	19.689***
N				
	7,174	7,174	7,174	7,174

Beta coefficients. * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Source : EB 47.2.

Table 5.1.2 shows the results when the EU future support index is the dependent variable. In this case, travelling (both low and high levels) is negatively associated with future support, as it was in the previous case. In the fourth model, however, high travel maintains its significance but reverses the sign of the relation, becoming positive. Results from this last model demonstrate that national context frames individual experience but, in the case of people with an “international profile” (three or more countries visited in the last two years), domestic context is less important than travel experience in shaping their attitudes towards the EU. We see some similar patterns in the regressions shown in Table 5.1.1. First, coefficients of age show that younger generations are more supportive of the EU; second, education has a positive association with the dependent variable when countries are included in the model; finally, length of membership is also relevant and older members have a more positive image of the future than newer members, although it should be noted that the strength of the latter is much lower than it is in the EU meaning index regressions. Two categories of occupational status are significant now, but each is only relevant in one model: manual workers are less supportive than students in Model 2 (before the macro-level effects are taken into account), and housekeepers have a more positive vision of the future in Model 4, when countries are included.

In the last model, eight countries show a relevant difference with France ($p < 0.001$). Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Finland are more supportive of the EU than France, while Sweden and Belgium are less supportive. Both results from Finland and UK are consistent with the frequencies of the EU future support index shown in Table 4.1.1.5. The UK pattern is congruent with our suggestion that, among people who do answer the question in this country, support for the EU is no lower than in other countries. It is indeed higher than in one of the founders in 1997. This is remarkable. In contrast to the EU meaning index regressions, West Germany and East Germany are less supportive than France ($p < 0.01$), and Luxembourg and Denmark do not differ from it. Finland is an interesting case, because it is less supportive than France regarding the actual meaning of the EU but more positive when evaluating the future of the EU. Again, we see that all models are significant and the impact of the national context is even higher than before, because the explained variance is five times higher when country *dummies* are included.

Table 5.1.2. Predictors of EU future support index (1997, multiple regression)

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	3.401***	4.103***	4.173***	3.752***
International experience I				
* Number of trips (reference: no travel)				
- Low travel	-.044***	-.045***	-.043***	.014
- High travel	-.066***	-.066***	-.069***	.033*
Socio-demographic variables				
Sex (reference: male)		-.001	-.001	.000
Age		-.122***	-.123***	-.125***
Age ended education		.025	.024	.037*
* Occupational status (refer. students)				
Self-employed		.015	.015	.009
Manager		.005	.006	.005
Manual worker		-.033*	-.032	-.026
Other white collar		.001	.001	.011
Housekeeper		.021	.022	.025*
Unemployed		-.011	-.011	-.012
Wave of EU membership				
Countries (reference: France)				
Belgium				-.065***
The Netherlands				.022
Germany (West)				-.046**
Italy				.156***
Luxembourg				.002
Denmark				-.005
Ireland				.163***
United Kingdom				.114***
Greece				.045**
Spain				.120***
Portugal				.102***
Germany (East)				-.031*
Finland				.069***
Sweden				-.059***
Austria				.002
Adjusted R²	.003	.018	.019	.096
F of the model	14.916***	14.415***	14.062***	34.773***
N	8,285	8,285	8,285	8,285

Beta coefficients. * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Source : EB 47.2.

5.2. Instrumentalism and pragmatism

This section focuses on the respondents who selected only one or more of the instrumental options when asked about the meaning of the EU and pragmatist options when they were asked to define the EU's future. The independent variables included in these analyses have a lower explanatory capacity concerning instrumental and pragmatist attitudes than when we consider the EU meaning index and EU future support index. Few of these factors show significant associations with instrumentalism and pragmatism, and even the national context is less relevant here than in the previous section. Thus, using these factors, instrumental and pragmatist youth are not so different from their peers. Further research is needed to explain this type of attitude.

Table 5.2.1 shows the results of logistic regressions for explaining instrumentalism. As we can see, the only variable that is relevant in every model in which it is included is having international contacts: people who mention reasons for having contacts abroad are less instrumental than the rest. No background variable is significantly associated with instrumentalism, nor is the moment of joining the EU. The impact of national frames is lower than before, but four countries differ from France in their level of instrumentalism. While Denmark is less instrumental than the baseline, Ireland, the UK and Spain are more so. This phenomenon could be explained as follows. On the one hand, Denmark is a Eurosceptical country. Because Danish respondents have probably selected negative responses, in addition to instrumental options, they have been included in the EU meaning index (see Table 4.2.1.6). On the other hand, both Spain and Ireland benefit from EU membership and consider it in strongly economic terms. In addition, Britons are less involved in European issues, and the "less demanding" responses to questions about the meaning of the EU are the most obvious ones (the economic options). British individuals who have a negative opinion probably do not express it but rather prefer not to select any answer.

If we compare previous results with pragmatism regressions (Table 5.2.2), we see only one pattern in common: international experience. People who have made acquaintances with people abroad are less pragmatic than the rest. In this case, other individual variables are relevant. Education is positively associated with pragmatism, but only before we include the national fixed effects. This pattern is probably due to the different education systems of EU members. In any case, the significance of this variable is not very high and coefficients are low. One occupational category is also relevant before the countries are analysed: managers have less likelihood of being pragmatists than do students. This result could confirm the utilitarian hypothesis that the "winners" in the integration process have a more positive vision of what the EU will bring in the future. The moment of joining the EU is here significant and negatively associated with the dependent variable. Founders are less pragmatic than newer members. Finally, only three countries differ from France: Austrian and East German youth are less pragmatic and Finnish youth are more so. Pragmatism was a variable created by adding "Euro" and "free mobility" responses in the question of what the EU will bring in the future. It seems that Finnish citizens give more importance to these aspects than do Austrians and East Germans, who have evaluated the future more negatively than others (see Table 4.1.1.7).

Table 5.2.1. Predictors of instrumentalism (2001, logistical regressions)

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	.434***	.974	1.039	.896
International experience II				
Have contacts	.803**	.816**	.816**	.860*
* Number of trips (reference: low travel)				
High travel	.939	.959	.945	1.019
Socio-demographic variables				
Sex (reference: male)		.960	.958	.951
Age		.960	.960	.963
Age ended education		.996	.997	.990
* Occupational status (refer. students)				
Self-employed		.990	.990	.981
Manager		1.206	1.209	1.213
Manual worker		1.085	1.089	1.103
Other white collar		1.226	1.224	1.231
Housekeeper		1.107	1.097	1.044
Unemployed		1.146	1.146	1.115
Wave of EU membership			.980	
Countries (reference: France)				
Belgium				1.219
The Netherlands				1.150
Germany (West)				1.027
Italy				1.327
Luxembourg				1.046
Denmark				.688*
Ireland				1.533**
United Kingdom				1.910***
Greece				.981
Spain				1.898**
Portugal				1.160
Germany (East)				.768
Finland				1.354
Sweden				1.109
Austria				.813
Pseudo-R²	.002	.004	.005	.018
Chi-square	14.537**	28.338**	30.274**	114.731***
N	5,971	5,964	5,964	5,964

Odds ratio. * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Source : EB 55.1.

Table 5.2.2. Predictors of pragmatism (2001, logistical regressions)

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	-1.664***	-2.011	-1.855***	-1.569***
International experience II				
Have contacts	.794**	.780**	.782**	.809*
* Number of trips (reference: low travel)				
High travel	1.096	1.075	1.033	1.042
Socio-demographic variables				
Sex (reference: male)		1.095	1.087	1.090
Age		.956	.954	.954
Age ended education		1.068*	1.070*	1.042
* Occupational status (refer. students)				
Self-employed		1.148	1.141	1.215
Manager		.525*	.527*	.661
Manual worker		1.035	1.042	1.143
Other white collar		1.042	1.035	1.210
Housekeeper		.570	.556	.588
Unemployed		1.210	1.206	1.208
Wave of EU membership				
Countries (reference: France)				
Belgium				1.284
The Netherlands				1.314
Germany (West)				.744
Italy				1.287
Luxembourg				.705
Denmark				1.114
Ireland				.869
United Kingdom				.920
Greece				.832
Spain				1.475
Portugal				1.157
Germany (East)				.429**
Finland				1.519*
Sweden				.789
Austria				.504**
<hr/>				
Pseudo-R²	0.001	0.005	0.006	0.018
Chi-square	8.467*	31.446**	39.347***	110.967***
N	5,921	5,914	5,914	5,914

Odds ratio. * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Source : EB 55.1.

5.3. The importance of national contexts for shaping attitudes towards the EU

The regression analyses in last two sections demonstrate the importance of taking into account national contexts for explaining attitudes towards the EU. Table 5.3.1 summarises the effects of national context in each of the four dependent variables (EU meaning index, EU future support index, instrumentalism and pragmatism) in 1997 and 2001, once we control for sex, age, education, occupational status and international experience. We include only EU members whose Beta coefficients and *odds ratios* are large enough to be considered stable.

Table 5.3.1. National context effects. Countries that differ significantly from France in attitudes towards the EU (Beta coefficients ≤ -0.05 or ≥ 0.05 and *odds ratio* ≤ 0.7 or ≥ 1.3). Control for sex, age, education, occupational status and international experience

Linear regressions	International experience I	International experience II	Logistical regressions	International experience I	International experience II
EU meaning index 1997			Instrumentalism 1997		
	Italy (+)	Italy (+)		Netherlands (+)	Netherlands (+)
	Ireland (+)	Denmark (-)		Denmark (-)	Denmark (-)
	Greece (+)	Ireland (+)		Ireland (+)	Ireland (+)
	Portugal (+)	Greece (+)		UK (+)	UK (+)
	Finland (-)	Portugal (+)		Spain (+)	Spain (+)
	Sweden (-)	Finland (-)			East Germany (-)
		Sweden (-)			
EU meaning index 2001			Instrumentalism 2001		
	Denmark (-)	Luxembourg (+)		Denmark (-)	Denmark (-)
	UK (-)			Ireland (+)	Ireland (+)
	Greece (-)	Denmark(-)		UK (+)	UK (+)
	East Germany (-)	UK (-)		Spain (+)	Spain (+)
	Finland (-)	Finland (-)		Portugal (+)	
	Sweden (-)	Sweden (-)			
	Austria (-)	Austria (-)			
EU future support index 1997			Pragmatism 1997		
	Luxembourg (+)	Italy (+)		Luxembourg (-)	Luxembourg (-)
	Italy (+)	Ireland (+)		Spain (+)	East Germany (-)
	Ireland (+)	UK (+)		Portugal (-)	
	UK (+)	Spain (+)		East Germany (-)	Austria (-)
	Spain (+)	Portugal (+)		Austria (-)	
	Portugal (+)				
	Finland (+)				
	Sweden (-)				
EU future support index 2001			Pragmatism 2001		
	Netherlands (-)	Netherlands (-)		Belgium (+)	East Germany (-)
	West Germany (-)	East Germany (-)		Netherlands (+)	Finland (+)
	Italy (+)	Italy (+)		Italy (+)	Austria (-)
	Ireland (+)	Ireland (+)		East Germany (-)	
	Spain (+)	UK (+)		Finland (+)	
	Portugal (+)	Portugal (+)		Austria (-)	
	East Germany (-)	East Germany (-)			
	Sweden (-)				

Source: EB 47.2 and EB 55.1.

Regarding the EU meaning index, Finland and Sweden are the only two countries that differ systematically from France in both years, while also showing the two measures of international experience. They are less supportive of the EU than the reference category, while Italy and Ireland are more supportive for both regressions in 1997. Denmark, the UK and Austria are less supportive in 2001. Greece stands out as the only country to change its signs in relation to France from one year to another. As this occurs only for “international experience I” and the pattern is not repeated in the EU support index, we suspect that this change may be due to a contextual factor in Greek politics and not to structural reasons. Nordic countries’ Euroscepticism has been demonstrated by many scholars, as in a study by Sánchez-Cuenca (2000). Sweden, Finland and Denmark are the countries that desire a slower rhythm of integration (3.8 on a scale from 1 to 7), while McLaren (2007) finds that citizens from these countries see fewer personal advantages in EU membership and are less supportive of the idea that policies will be decided jointly by national and European governments. This scepticism is related to economic and cultural concerns. These countries fear that European integration puts their welfare state at risk (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000). Nordic values such as democracy, transparency and gender equality could be threatened (Sunnus, 2004).

Regarding the EU future support index, Italy, Ireland and Portugal are significantly different from France and their coefficients are higher in all regressions, followed by Spain and the UK, which differ on three occasions and are similar to the baseline in 2001, if we use the first international measure for the former and the second measure for the latter. Here again, we can see that British youth who decide to answer questions related to the EU are not so different from the rest. Indeed, they may be more Euroenthusiastic than citizens from a founder country such as France. It is also remarkable that two of the traditional supporters of EU integration, the Netherlands and Germany (both West and East), are more critical about the future than France. This result is in line with a change in attitudes towards the EU that some scholars detect at the beginning of this decade. For example, Bush and Knelangen (2004:87) state that Germans fear that increase of immigration affects German wage levels and social standards negatively. This fear would explain why only 10 per cent of the population expected their personal situation to improve after enlargement. At this time, Germans were the most pessimistic about enlargement, followed by Austria and the Netherlands. A similar trend may be observed in the Netherlands (Harmsen, 2004), where a critical discourse about the EU coincided with the country’s becoming a net contributor to the EU budget in the early 1990s. Later, the impact of enlargement and the credibility of the EU’s institutions were discussed.

The case of Ireland requires separate comment. Although Ireland continues to be one of the strongest supporters of the EU, the analyses show that something changed in the late 1990s. In 1997, the Irish attributed a more positive meaning of the EU than did the French, but this pattern does not continue in 2001. The fact that political discourse in 2001 was focused on the Nice Treaty referendum has probably influenced this result, “cooling” the Euroenthusiastic respondents. Gilland (2004:182) notes when analysing the “No” victory in the Nice referendum in 2001 that “Anti-Nice campaigners did not see themselves as insular or necessarily anti-European or indeed opposed to enlargement, simply critical of the EU model of European integration as advanced in this Treaty (...) The No campaign’s argu-

ments pertained to touchstones in Irish politics and Irish political culture, as well as to a particular perception of Ireland's national interest. Fears for the future of Ireland's tradition of military neutrality, and fears that the Treaty would open the door to liberal abortion laws were long-standing concerns in the context of the EU membership". Results from the EU future support index confirm this interpretation, because Irish citizens show a more positive attitude towards the future than the French in 1997 and 2001.

As we have seen, national contexts are not so relevant when instrumentalism and pragmatism are the focus of attention. Nevertheless, we observe some results. Denmark shows a less instrumental opinion and Spain, Ireland and the UK a more instrumental one. All differ from France in both years. For an attempt to interpret this phenomenon, see the previous section. It is interesting to observe that the Netherlands differ from France in 1997 but not in 2001. Finally, pragmatism is less widespread in East Germany and Austria than in France in both years and in Luxembourg in 1997. It is more frequent in Finland in 2001. Respondents from East Germany and Austria tend to choose negative responses about the future more frequently and respondents from Luxembourg positive ones, while Finnish youth prefer to select noncommittal answers (Euro and free mobility). We have already explained the East German context and how it might influence attitudes towards the EU, so here we focus briefly on the Austrian pattern. Pelinka (2004) argues that Austria only joined the EU in 1995, due to its permanent neutrality after the Second World War. This fact has strongly influenced its attitudes towards the EU. As we have seen in discussing German pessimism about enlargement, new members have been one of the sources of Euroscepticism in Austria, as it is the EU member most affected given that it shares borders with four of the ten new members.¹⁴

6. Conclusions

As explained in Section 2, the main objectives of this work are two: (i) to test whether international experience is relevant in explaining attitudes towards the EU after controlling for several socio-demographic variables that are usually included in this type of analysis and that have shown their relevance in earlier research; and (ii) to study the interactions between international experience and national contexts. The analysis included here show that international experience (even when we control for age, sex, education and occupation) influences attitudes towards the EU, even though national contexts also shape these attitudes. This partially confirms the first and third hypotheses explained in Section 2, especially in the case of people with moderate experience. The second hypothesis is fully corroborated. Regressions with the EU meaning index as the dependent variable show that travelling abroad is significantly related to EU meaning, but its relevance disappears when country variables are included. In contrast, when we analyse the EU future support index, we find that people who travel

¹⁴ Additionally, the diplomatic boycott of the Austrian government at the beginning of this decade (because of the coalition of the ÖVP and the FPÖ, led by the polemical Eurosceptic Jörg Haider) was considered by many Austrians to be a sanction against the whole country. Nevertheless, the boycott did not have a negative impact on Austrian attitudes, and the great majority of Austrians said that joining the EU had been the right decision (Pelinka, 2004).

frequently to other European member countries have a more positive vision of what the EU will bring in the future, even when national contexts are included in the model as a fixed effects model. Indeed, the most relevant individual variable in analysing instrumentalism and pragmatism is precisely international experience, measured as contact with people from other countries. The instrument developed here has proven useful for studying how attitudes are shaped by individual experiences with other national contexts and people. Such experience could lead to a process of recategorisation or decategorisation of the ingroup, facilitating the sense of “Europeanness” and a more positive attitude towards the EU. As to national frames, on all occasions the best models by far are those that include national fixed effects model. Further, in the case of the two EU indexes, the majority of countries differ from the baseline, France. Nevertheless, national contexts are not very significant in studying instrumentalism and pragmatism. More research is needed to determine what type of variable could influence this type of response.

The analyses shown in this work demonstrate how important it is to take into account national frames in explaining attitudes towards the EU (a finding that could be extended to other international institutions). National contexts can be important, even if we compare attitudes of two populations that have been separated for several decades. Regressions have shown that, in many cases, East and West German respondents hold common attitudes towards the EU. For example, significant differences have not been found between them regarding the EU meaning index and the EU future support index. This result confirms the finding by Díez Medrano (2003) that both territories share a similar cognitive frame on European integration, even though they were separated for decades. This author also concludes, however, that economic justifications mainly determine attitudes towards integration in East Germany. We reach a similar conclusion if we analyse the slight difference between East and West Germany regarding pragmatism: the former is less pragmatic than the latter. This means that East Germans are less likely to choose the Euro and freedom of movement as defining the future of the EU. I compared responses between East and West German respondents one by one for all items included in the question about what the EU will have brought in ten years (results not shown here). The conclusion of this detailed comparison is that Eastern Germans mention aspects directly related to the economy more frequently than their Western peers, although opinions are divided as to the economic consequences of the EU. On the one hand, many Germans believe that unemployment will increase (27.1 per cent in East Germany and 19.6 per cent in West Germany, in 1997; 22.6 per cent and 15.2 per cent in 2001) and that there will be more social problems (33 per cent and 30.4 per cent, respectively, in 1997; 28.9 per cent and 21.7 per cent in 2001). At the same time, East German youth have more expectations about the positive economic effects of being member of the EU. They expect the EU to bring more job opportunities (31.9 per cent and 23.9 per cent in 1997; and 32 per cent and 25.7 per cent in 2001, respectively). East German youth are more concerned about the economy when they think of the EU, and their opinions are divided among those who fear the future and those who have positive expectations.

One of the most striking results of these regressions is that “the uniqueness of the British” is not so unique, at least if we observe their answers to the question about EU meaning and the European fu-

ture. In fact, they are not the most sceptical and sometimes even have a more positive attitude than France. But Britons are unique in another sense: they choose not to answer questions about the EU to a greater extent than the rest. In 1997, almost one fifth of British youth did not answer what the EU means for them. One in six did not answer what the EU will bring in the future. Four years later, the percentages are even higher; almost one third did not select items from the first question and more than one fourth from the second. On analysing the characteristics of these nonrespondents (results not shown here), we can summarise: they occupy the less rewarded positions in society: women with a low level of education and housekeepers or the unemployed. And they seldom travel abroad. These respondents may not have answered the question, as they believe they do not have enough information. Or they may have a negative vision of the EU but prefer not to express it. It is not hard to imagine that these are the same people who fear losing national culture and traditions if the European integration goes further. In fact, among British young people who decide to select one or more options about the meaning of the EU, the percentage who select "losing cultural diversity" is slightly higher than the EU-average in 1997 and, surprisingly, slightly lower in 2001.

It is worth mentioning briefly what sociodemographic variables have shown relevance, even after controlling for international experience and national contexts. Few variables pass the test. Among them, education level is significantly associated with three dependent variables. It has a positive relation with the EU meaning and the EU future support index *when* national contexts are taken into account and also a positive association with pragmatism *before* the country *dummies* are present in the analysis. Thus, education shows its importance in shaping attitudes towards the EU and does so in the sense that Inglehart's and the utilitarian hypotheses predict. However, the results only weakly support the rational approach. Manual workers have a more negative vision of the future than students (but only before national context variables are included). On the other hand, housekeepers express a more positive meaning and a better vision of the future than students. This poor result is probably due to the fact that almost a half of the sample is composed of students who have not yet held a job. Another individual factor reveals its importance in the case of both indexes: age. Younger generations are more supportive than older ones. This may occur because, in countries that join later, the process of socialisation has developed in an EU context. One could also argue, however, that young people have a lower level of knowledge about politics and become more critical when this level increases.

This paper also corroborates previous research on the different attitudes towards the EU among founding and other members. Reasons for joining the EU are different in the original six countries, because founders were concerned with establishing a peaceful context to enable cooperation. This explains why even young people who have not directly experienced the war or post-war period mention "peace" as one of the important meanings of the EU when they are nationals of the founding members. In 2001, more than one third of this young generation selected the meaning of the EU in France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and more than one fourth in East and West Germany and Belgium. Only Italians, more concerned with economic aspects because their country was (and still is) the least developed of the first members of the ECC, mention this option to a lesser extent (20%). This

phenomenon also confirms that dominant frames stem from the most relevant elements in national political cultures, such as their experience of Second World War (Díez Medrano, 2003).

We have seen that the majority of young people maintain a rather positive attitude towards the EU, the number of respondents with a positive value in the indexes being much higher than the number with a negative value. Nevertheless, in recent years a “discursive shift” has been detected (Harmsen and Spiering, 2004) in many countries regarding European integration. The general pattern in this new discourse is the key role of national interest and national identities, which are perceived to be threatened by the integration process. The relevance of national identities for understanding this new trend has been discussed by many scholars, because Euroscepticism is closely related to exclusive nationalities and national values. Although most political parties in EU member countries support the EU, criticism is increasingly visible in small political formations. As Harmsen and Spiering indicate (2004:31 and 33), “an ‘anti-European’ stance has formed part of the more general ‘anti-system’ discourse of parties on the periphery of national party systems. ‘Europe’, in other words, emerges as one of several elements which differentiate ‘protest’ parties from the ‘mainstream’ or ‘cartel’ parties which, in alternation, exercise governmental responsibility”.

Our results show that the percentage of young people who do not answer what the EU means for them and what it will bring in the future increased during the late 1990s, while negative responses have decreased and positive ones have increased. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the increasing complexity of EU institutions and policies has led part of the public opinion to be more reticent in recent years, as this public cannot follow EU issues. Young people, less experienced in the political arena than other citizens, could be the first to follow this trend: those who have an opinion are (slightly) more supportive of the EU, but fewer than before express an opinion. This year, 2009, will witness elections to European Parliament and Ireland’s second attempt to approve the Lisbon Treaty. All this will occur in a context in which the economic crisis will worsen the political environment, a situation almost paralysed since the rejection of the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands in 2005. At such a critical moment for the process of European integration, when citizens must decide what kind of Europe they want, political institutions should be able to narrow the gap between the less engaged public opinion of the EU members and the more supportive attitude of mainstream parties.

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