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MAIN ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

ANNEX: DATA ON TRUST IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

**Meeting of the Public Governance Committee at Ministerial Level
Rotterdam, The Netherlands
27-28 November 2005**

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DATA ON TRUST IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR¹

Executive summary

This document analyses citizens' trust in the public sector in the OECD countries. It summarizes available opinion data about trust in the civil service, and compares levels of trust between countries and institutions.

Trust in government and in the public sector: assumptions and contingencies

1. Governments should not strive for maximal trust, but for an optimal level of trust.
2. This optimal level of citizen trust in government is contingent upon the political and administrative culture of a country, and may thus be different in different countries.
3. A certain level of distrust in government is healthy and may be functional because it serves as a guarantee for accountability. In fact, balances of power and audit are institutionalised expressions of distrust.
4. A certain level of citizen distrust in the civil service may be functional for public sector reforms.

Levels of trust in government and in the public sector

5. Despite assertions that there is a constant decline in citizens' trust in the public sector, there often are no suitable time-series data for supporting these statements.
6. In most countries, there is no solid evidence of a general decline of trust in political and administrative institutions, and there are significant fluctuations.
7. In many countries, the civil service is by no means the least trusted institution.
8. Despite many claims about changes in trust in the public sector or about citizens' preferences, empirical data supporting these claims does often not exist, is unreliable, or even contradicts this popular wisdom.
9. General statements about levels of trust in institutions ignore the wide diversity between countries and institutions.
10. Trust in the public sector is embedded in deeper citizen-state relationships. Changes in trust can therefore only be interpreted taking differences in administrative cultures and in citizens' expectations into account.

¹ Prepared for the OECD by Dr. Steven Van de Walle, Steven Van Roosbroek and Prof. Dr. Geert Bouckaert of the Catholic University of Leuven

Public sector performance and trust

11. There is no evidence of a direct causal link between the performance of government, and citizens' trust in government.
12. The accumulated evidence in OECD countries suggests that trust is a cause, precondition and consequence of reform. A well-functioning public sector is necessary, but in itself insufficient for building trust in the public sector.
13. Trust should be part of public sector reform objectives and strategies.
14. Erosion of public trust may follow from ill-designed public sector reforms.

Executive implications

Trust-building measures

15. Different citizen expectations vis-à-vis government in OECD member countries imply that a uniform strategy for building trust or for reforming the public sector may not exist.
16. Pro-active strategies may be needed towards groups of citizens with extremely low levels of trust.
17. Trust-building measures include strategies at all levels: concrete service delivery, the broad sector policy, and strengthening core state institutions.
18. Improving service delivery quality alone is not sufficient. Specific trust management strategies need to focus on how this quality is perceived by citizens (perception management), and efforts need to be made to bring actual service delivery in line with citizens' expectations and vice-versa (expectation management).

Trust-sustaining measures

19. Trust is a permanent concern. Governments need to be pro-active rather than just react when there is a crisis. Sustained political interest in the functioning and perception of public services is the best strategy.
20. Absence of distrust is no reason to neglect public services. Nurturing the trust capital already present in the public sector is a much more effective and cheaper strategy than attempting to restore trust after years of neglect or after a crisis. Once lost, trust may be hard to restore.

1. Introduction²

1. Citizens' trust in the public sector has come to take a central place in the public sector reform discourse (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Yet, participants in the debate often take low levels of public satisfaction with service delivery and a permanently declining citizens' trust in the public sector for granted. Where sufficient data are available, evidence of such a decline is disputed, and more often, data are simply not available for mapping reliable trends.

2. In this paper, we present the available survey material for comparing citizens' trust in the public administration both across countries and across time. Where possible, data refer to all OECD member countries. Sometimes, however, analysis only relates to a subset of countries due to absence of data in certain countries.

3. First, we give an overview of general levels of confidence in institutions, and subsequently analyse trust and confidence in the public administration and civil service more in detail. Where possible, time-series data are provided, and citizens' attitudes towards the administration are compared to attitudes towards parliaments and politicians.

4. We then indicate how public sector performance and trust are related and show how many national governments have engaged in measuring and analysing trust.

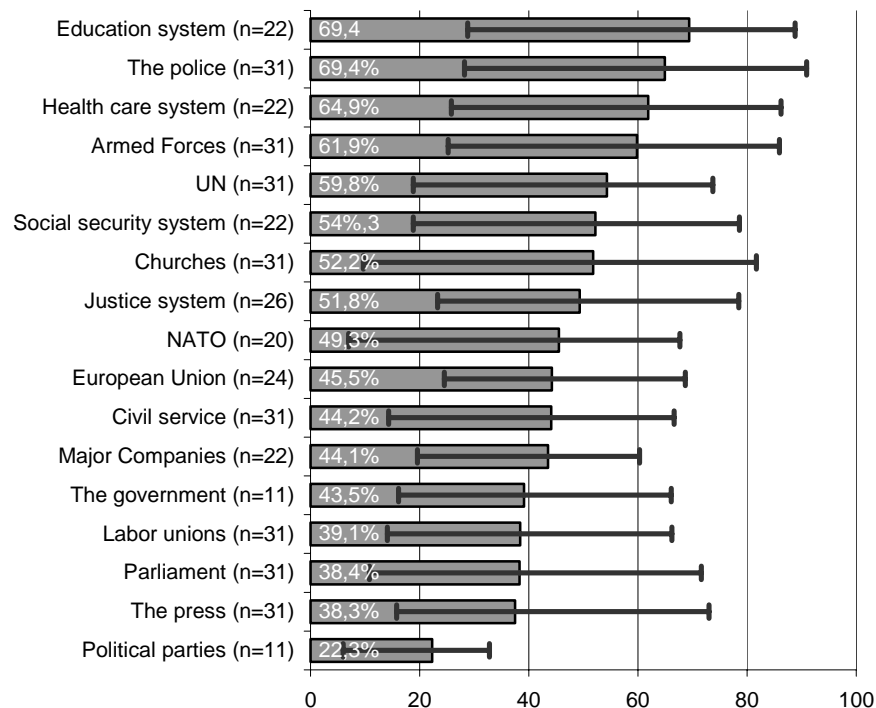
5. Finally, these findings are integrated in long-term trends in trust in government, and we show how in different countries citizens may have different expectations vis-à-vis government.

2. Confidence in institutions: setting the scene

6. Concepts of 'trust' and 'confidence', are frequently used interchangeably in polls and surveys, and are often meant to measure citizens' overall attitude towards institutions. In this paper, we are concerned with citizens' attitude towards the public sector in general, and our use of confidence, trust, or other evaluative attitudes towards government is determined by its context in the empirical material we are referring to.

7. First we take a brief look at the data of the World Values Study (WVS). This survey has been organised in four waves since 1981: 1981, 1990, 1995-1997 and 1999-2000. All OECD member countries have participated in one or more waves. Below we show the percentage of respondents who indicated having 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in the different institutions. The figure also shows the highest and the lowest score for each institution, and in how many OECD countries (n) the confidence question was asked. Some institutions have not been included in all countries.

2 We would like to thank Isabel Corte-Real, Pedro Magalhães, Masao Kikuchi, Keiichi Muto, and Charles Vincent for providing some of the data used, and for their help in interpretation.

Figure 1: Confidence in institutions, OECD mean, lowest-highest mean per country

Source: World Values Study 1999-2000, OECD countries. Separate statistics for Northern Ireland

8. The bars in Figure 1 confirm that variations in confidence are quite high. Institutions that are trusted in one country may not be trusted in others. Within countries, different groups in the population may have fundamentally different opinions about certain institutions, but these variations are not reflected in these country-level data.

9. The **civil service**, which is our main concern in this paper, receives very positive evaluations in Korea, Turkey, Luxembourg, Ireland and Iceland (> 55% confidence) but negative ones in the Czech Republic, Greece, Mexico and New Zealand (< 30% confidence). Confidence in **parliament** is low in Greece, the Czech Republic, Japan, Korea, Mexico and New Zealand (< 25%). It is high in Iceland, Luxembourg and Norway (> 60%).

10. Overall, the educational system and the police enjoy the highest levels of confidence. **Political parties** do poorly in general, and this negative evaluation is quite consistent, even though the measurement of confidence in political parties only covers 11 countries. In New Zealand, just 6% of the respondents expressed a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the political parties. Variation is quite high for the armed forces and the churches, suggesting highly diverse opinions across the OECD. Confidence in the **churches** is quite high in Mexico, the USA, Poland, Portugal, Italy, Turkey and Slovakia, but very low in e.g. Japan and the Netherlands. Similarly, the **armed forces** enjoy high confidence in Turkey, the USA, Finland and Great Britain (over 80% expressing quite a lot or a great deal of confidence), but less than 40% expresses confidence in the army in Belgium, Austria and the Czech Republic. In Australia, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Italy and Slovakia, citizens do not have confidence in the **justice system**, while confidence is high in Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Austria (> 65%). In Greece, Mexico and the Czech Republic, the **police** enjoy very low levels of confidence (< 35%), as opposed to Denmark, Finland and Norway, Iceland, Ireland and New Zealand, where confidence is high (> 80%).

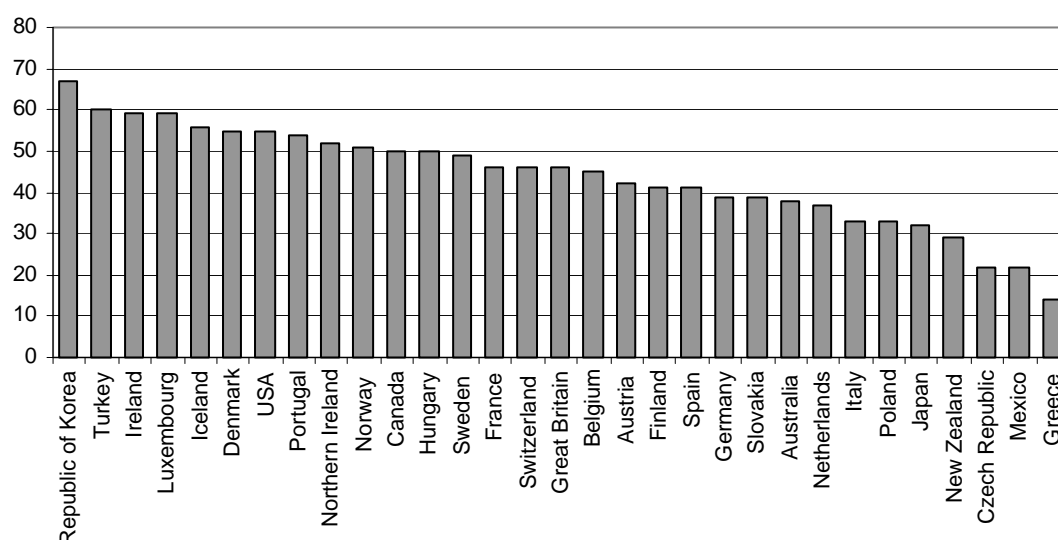
3. Is the public sector facing a crisis of confidence?

11. In this section, we specifically focus on citizens' trust in the civil service and public administration. We give an overview for all OECD member countries, and discuss detailed trends and evolutions for selected countries.

3.1 Trends in the World Values Study

12. A question on confidence in the civil service was included in the World Values Study (WVS) in all OECD countries. The WVS was organised in several waves (1981, 1990, 1995-97, 1999-2000), but not all countries were included in all waves. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents expressing 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in the civil service. The technical appendix provides exact question wording and full results.

Figure 2: Confidence in the civil service, World Values Study, OECD countries, % showing a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the civil service



Source: World Values Study, 1999-2000 wave, except for Australia, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland, where 1995-1997 wave was used

13. There are large differences among the OECD member countries. Confidence is rather low in countries such as **Greece, Japan, Mexico** and the **Czech Republic**. On the other hand, we see very high levels of confidence in the civil service in **Turkey, Korea, Luxembourg** and **Ireland**. The World Values Studies do not reveal clear trends over time (see technical appendix). In most countries, there are fluctuations, not general declines. A universal decline has not taken place, as far as available data allows us to conclude (see also Stoyko, 2002). This contradicts the commonly held belief that confidence in the civil service is constantly declining. Some detailed changes in a number of countries are explored in section 3.4.

3.2 Relative confidence in the civil service

14. We can compare confidence across countries in two different ways: confidence in a specific institution, compared to confidence in other institutions in the respective country; or confidence in a certain institution in a country compared to the confidence in that institution in other countries. A problem with the latter approach is that cultural variety may account for the differences. To compensate, the following discussion reviews the relative position of confidence in the civil service in each country, compared to confidence in other institutions.

15. In reviewing confidence in five of the state's 'core' institutions: armed forces, police, parliament, justice system and civil service, confidence in each is compared to the average of these institutions in that country. Average institutional confidence is high to very high for the Scandinavian countries bar Sweden, but also in e.g. Turkey. In the Czech Republic, Mexico and Greece, confidence is very low. It is also rather low in Belgium, Japan, Italy and Hungary.

16. Table 1 shows that, relative to the national average over the 5 core institutions, confidence in the civil service is the highest in Korea, Hungary, Belgium and Ireland. Despite the quite low absolute confidence in the civil service in Belgium compared to confidence levels in other countries, confidence in the civil service is actually quite high in a Belgian context. Internationally, Norway is ranked 10th in terms of confidence in the civil service (see Figure 2), but compared to confidence levels in the other institutions in Norway, confidence in the civil service is actually quite low.

**Table 1: Intra-country comparison of confidence in institutions:
High and low confidence relative to national average**

	<i>Civil service</i>	<i>Parliament</i>	<i>Police</i>	<i>Justice system</i> ³	<i>Armed forces</i>
High	1. Korea 2. Hungary 3. Belgium 4. Ireland	1. Iceland 2. Netherlands 3. Spain 4. Luxembourg	1. New Zealand 2. Ireland 3. Australia 4. Finland	1. Austria 2. Denmark 3. Switzerland 4. Iceland	1. Greece 2. Slovakia 3. Great Britain 4. Japan
Low	1. Finland 2. Greece 3. Norway 4. New Zealand	1. Korea 2. New Zealand 3. Ireland 4. USA	1. Greece 2. Slovakia 3. Mexico	1. Portugal 2. Australia 3. Slovakia 4. Italy	1. Iceland ⁴ 2. Austria 3. Sweden 4. Netherlands

Source: World Values Study

3.3 *Interpreting satisfaction with public services*

17. Negative overall views of government often coincide with quite positive evaluations of specific services. This means that distrusting attitudes towards the civil service may coexist with very positive evaluations of some specific agencies, such as the fire department, the municipal administration or the postal system (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999; Goodsell, 1983; Katz, Gutek, Kahn, & Barton, 1977). This suggests that citizens' overall view of the civil service does not just follow from experienced performance (Van de Walle, Kampen, & Bouckaert, 2005; Van de Walle, 2004). Processes of attitude formation explain part of this divergence. In formulating an opinion, people tend to use the most easily accessible facts and ideas (Zaller, 1996). Actual experience with a service will dominate in a customer satisfaction survey, while citizens are likely to refer to their overall image of government or to stereotypical images of the bureaucracy when expressing an overall opinion of the public administration.

18. Certain types of services consistently receive higher scores than others. Fire departments are almost always evaluated much more positively than others, such as road repair services. This is illustrated in Table 2.

3 Confidence in the justice system was not measured in Canada, Japan, Mexico, the United States and Korea.

4 Even though Iceland does not have an army, a question on confidence in the armed forces was included in the 1999-2000 World Values Study. This may explain the low score (5,5% expressing a great deal of confidence in the armed forces).

Table 2: The relativity of absolute satisfaction

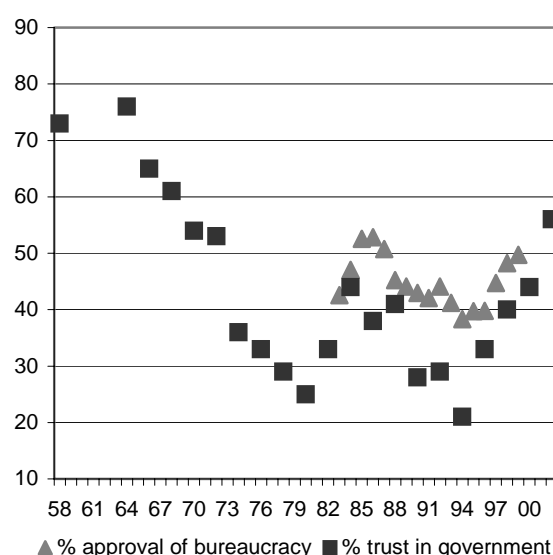
% satisfied	Citizens First, Canada (2000)	People's Panel, UK, (2000)	American Customer Satisf. Index (2000)	Miller & Miller, USA (1991)	Working on Government, Belgium, Flanders (2003)
Fire services	80	77	/	81	83
Libraries	77	83	/	79	76
Garbage disposal	74	79	74	78	69
Social insurance (benefits)	71	69	84	/	/
Parks	71	75	73	72	/
Passport	65	72	73	/	/
Police	64	67	62	71	47
Tax administration	55	64	51	/	33
Child support services	55	47	/	56	43 (day care)
Road maintenance	47	46	/	58	58 (street cleaning)

Source: Taken and adapted from Vincent, 2005

3.4 *Trust in the civil service: some detailed changes in selected countries*

19. Apart from the World Values Survey data, more detailed data is available for most EU and North American countries. In other countries, specific reports or surveys give us a good overview of attitudes towards the public administration, although they do not provide detailed trends (Pharr, 2000; Papadakis, 1999; Barnes & Gill, 2000).

20. In the **United States**, most authors refer to the 'National Election Studies' data and the sharp decline in trust since the late 1950s. The recovery since 1994, however, is often neglected. Webb, Yackee and Lowery find that assessments of bureaucratic performance vary markedly over time in the US, yet their bureaucracy approval index strongly correspond to Presidential and Congressional approval ratings and economic expectations.

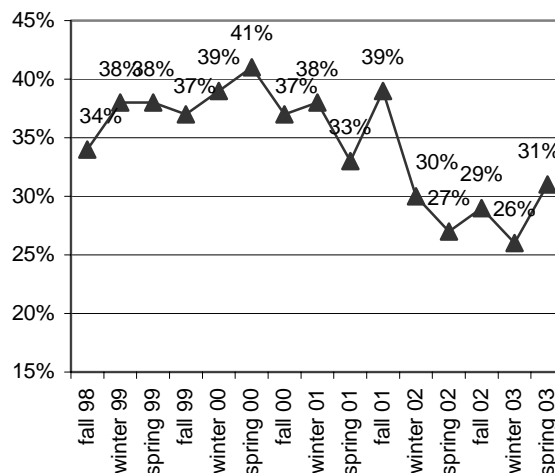
Figure 3: Trust in government index and approval of the bureaucracy, USA, 1958-2002

Source: National Election Studies (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes/>); Webb Yackee & Lowery, forthcoming

21. In **Canada**, confidence in the civil service is stable according to World Values Study data (see technical appendix). Several surveys are available for mapping recent developments, including the bi-

yearly 'Citizens First' survey organised since 1998. The 'Listening to Canadians' survey includes a question '*Generally speaking, how would you rate the performance of the Government of Canada*'.

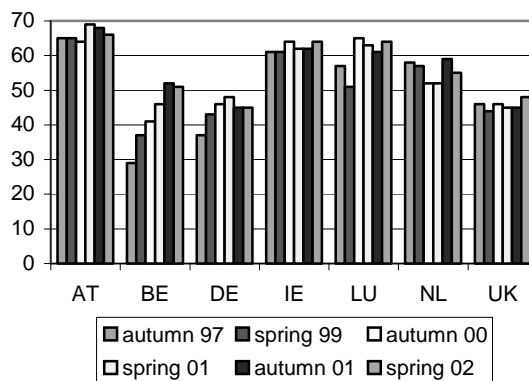
Figure 4: Evaluation of Canadian government performance, 1998-2003 (% saying good performance)



Source: Adapted from Communication Canada, Listening to Canadians Communications Survey (spring 2003)

22. In most **European countries**, recent trends can be mapped using Eurobarometer data. Trust in the civil service was included several times since 1997, with the last measurement in spring 2002. Of the EU15 countries included in the 1997 and 2002 EB surveys, only three face a decline in trust. The technical appendix offers more detailed statistics.

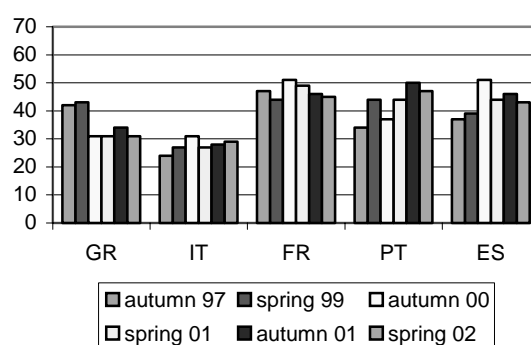
Figure 5: Trust in the civil service, OECD member countries covered in Eurobarometer, % trust



Source: European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer

23. In **Belgium**, we see one of the strongest increases in trust among EU countries. Of all EU countries, trust in the civil service is the highest in **Austria, Luxemburg** and **Ireland**.

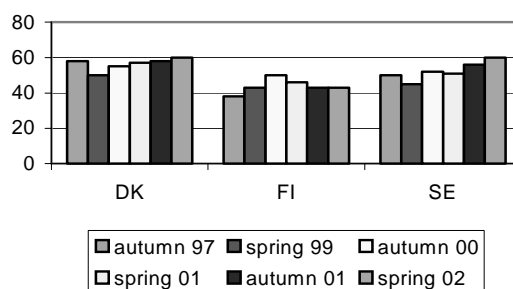
Figure 6: Trust in the civil service, Southern European OECD member countries covered in Eurobarometer, % trust



Source: European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer

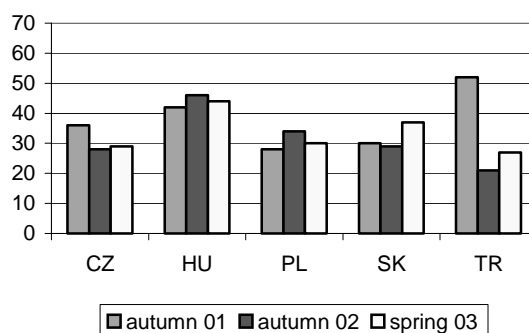
24. In Southern European countries, levels of trust are lower overall, with a mere 30% trusting the civil service in **Italy**. Patterns are quite diverse. A decline occurred in **Greece** after 1999, and there is a slight upward trend in **Portugal**.

Figure 7: Trust in the civil service, Scandinavian OECD member countries covered in Eurobarometer, % trust



Source: European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer

25. Levels of trust are traditionally quite high in the **Scandinavian countries**, and are increasing in **Sweden**. Apart from Scandinavia, we find similar high levels of trust only in Luxembourg, Austria, Ireland and the Netherlands. With just 43% in 2002, trust in the civil service is quite low in **Finland**.

Figure 8: Trust in the civil service, other OECD member countries covered in Eurobarometer, % trust

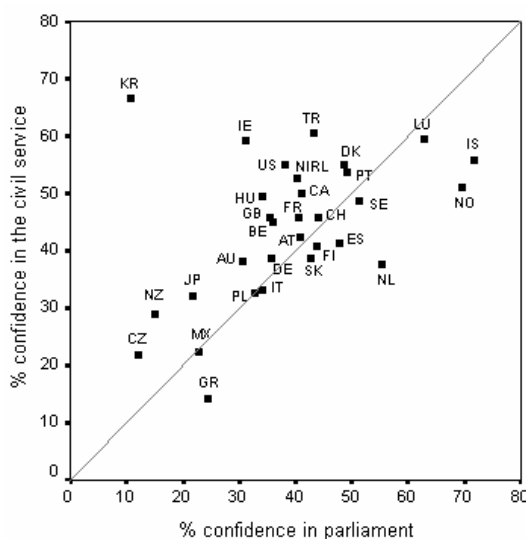
Source: European Commission, Candidate Countries Eurobarometer

26. In **Turkey**, trust in the civil service halved from 52% in 2001 to 27% in 2003. Trust is exceptionally high in **Hungary**: among Central and Eastern European countries, only in Estonia is it higher.

4. How does trust in the civil service relate to trust in other institutions?

4.1 *Trust in politicians and trust in bureaucrats*

27. The World Values Study does not contain a specific item on confidence in politicians, but it does measure **confidence in parliament** for all OECD member countries. We compare these scores to confidence in the civil service.

Figure 9: Confidence in parliament and in the civil service

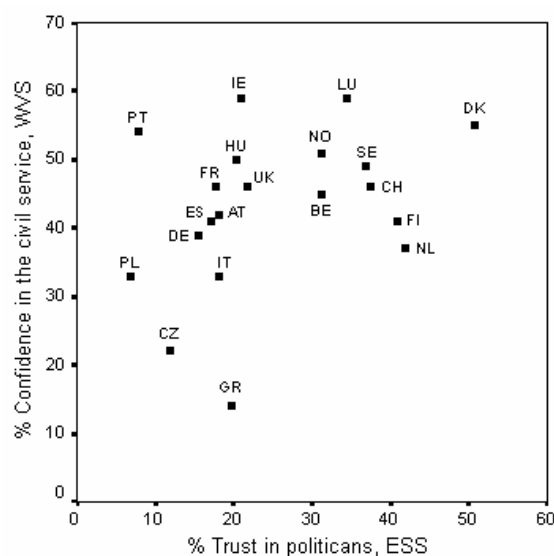
Source: World Values Study 1999-2000 wave, or last available

28. The scores are quite similar for most countries. In **Norway**, **Iceland** and **the Netherlands**, confidence in parliament is higher than that in the civil service. In **Ireland**, **Turkey** and **Korea**, and indeed in most countries, confidence in the civil service is higher than that in parliament. Differences are small for the other countries. Confidence is low in both institutions in **Greece**, **Mexico** and the **Czech Republic**. Note that the numbers for some countries relate to the mid-90s. The situation in **Korea** is quite particular,

because the country combines very high confidence in the civil service with very low confidence in parliament.

29. Parliament is of course different from politicians. The European Social Survey (ESS) measured trust in politicians in a number of European countries. Unfortunately, good data on all OECD countries do not exist, nor is there an internationally comparable subjective evaluation of 'the civil servant' or 'bureaucrat'. Figure 10 compares trust in politicians (ESS) with confidence in the civil service (WVS).

Figure 10: Trust in politicians and confidence in the civil service

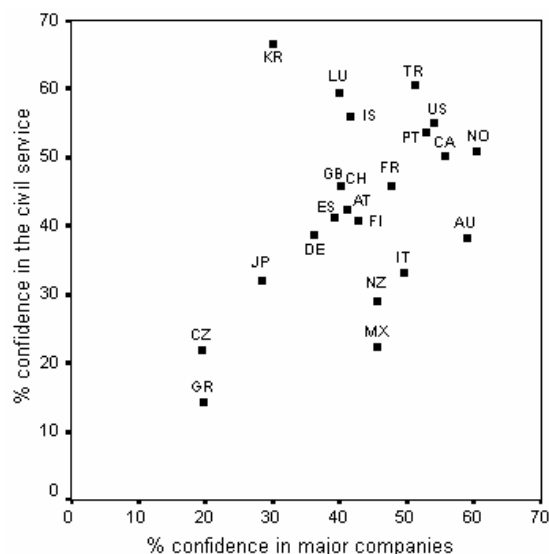


Source: World Values Study 1999-2000 wave; European Social Survey, round 1 (2002/3)

30. Trust in politicians is very low in all **Southern- and Central-European countries** included in the figure. In most **Scandinavian countries** as well as **the Netherlands** and **Switzerland**, trust in politicians is somewhat higher. Measurement scales are different, but it is clear that in most countries, confidence in the civil service is higher than trust in politicians.

4.2 Confidence in major companies and in the civil service

31. The World Values Study did not measure confidence in companies or business in general, but only confidence in major companies. Figure 11 shows that the level of confidence in the civil service is quite similar to that in major companies. In **Korea, Luxemburg** and **Iceland**, citizens evaluate the civil service more positive than the major companies. In **Mexico, Australia, New Zealand**, and **Italy**, it is the other way round.

Figure 11: Confidence in the civil service and in major companies

Source: World Values Study 1999-2000 wave, or last available

5. Relevance of trust: An increase in governments' attention for public trust

32. Many OECD governments are increasing their efforts to monitor citizens' attitudes towards government and the public administration. Table 3 provides a non-comprehensive overview of some initiatives.

Table 3: Governments' attention to trust in the public sector

Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A seminar on 'Trust in the public sector' was organised in Australia by the National Institute for Governance (2005). The lack of data makes it difficult to map trends, but concerns about trust certainly exist, as is shown by discussions at the Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia on public confidence in the public sector (Ryan, 2000).
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Federal government called for research on perceptions of public service delivery (2005). The Flemish regional government commissioned a series 'Working on Government' surveys (2002-2004), and is working on a confidence barometer (2005-2006).
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong tradition of regular large-scale surveys in government has emerged (Sims, 2001). Citizen, customer, and employee surveys are related in a single service value chain. The bi-annual Citizens First survey deals with what citizens think about the services they receive, while the Listening to Canadians surveys deal with government communication and measures Canadians' views on public policy priorities. It also outlines how the Government of Canada serves Canadians in response to those priorities (www.communication.gc.ca). The Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (www.iccs.isac.org) coordinates several initiatives.
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey on citizens and the public sector (The Danish Ministry of Finance, 1998)
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive use of trust and satisfaction indicators in the Finnish public sector (Holkeri & Nurmi, 2002) Research project on trust in ministries commissioned by government, 2000-01 (Harisalo & Stenvall, 2004)
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> La <i>Charte Marianne</i>, launched in 2005, aims to make the public service more accessible, responsive and welcoming. It includes regular surveys of citizens' expectations of and satisfaction with public services.

Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A major research project on trust in government has started at the Institute of Administrative Management (2005).
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In 2003, the 'Belevingsmonitor' was launched as a monthly survey on trust in government
New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working Paper for the State Services Commission, entitled 'Declining government performance? Why citizens don't trust government' (Barnes & Gill, 2000)
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opinion poll on the assessment of public services by citizens and society (1993)
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Cabinet office prepared several documents and organised seminars on satisfaction with public services at all levels of the government (Donovan, Brown, & Bellulo, 2001; Moore, Clarke, Johnson, Seargeant, & Steele, 1998), and measured public sector customer satisfaction in a 'perceptions of reform' project (http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/opsr/). ▪ At the local level, the Audit Commission launched a broad project on trust and corporate governance in public institutions, including an opinion survey (Audit Commission & MORI Social Research institute, 2003; Audit Commission, 2003). ▪ A number of omnibus surveys has been organised on the public's views and experiences of public services in Northern Ireland (www.rpani.gov.uk, Knox & Carmichael, 2003). ▪ On the academic side, new major research on public attitudes within the UK ESRC Public services programme is about to begin.
USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several non-profit initiatives have measured citizens' attitudes towards public service(s) at large in the USA, such as The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (1998) or the Council for Excellence in Government's and Ford Foundation's Partnership for Trust in Government (1999). ▪ In 1999, the Panel on Civic Trust and Citizen Responsibility, with Paul Volcker as chairman, issued 'A government to trust and respect: rebuilding citizen-government relations for the 21st century'.

6. Do public sector reforms lead to trust?

6.1 *A well-functioning public sector may increase trust, but not necessarily*

33. There is no evidence of a direct and causal link between the performance of government, and citizens' trust. Bok (1997) compared the effectiveness of American government in the 1990s with that in the 1960s. He did so from an observation that trust and confidence had dropped. He found that performance has increased in a large number of domains but that in a few instances effectiveness has decreased. Barnes and Gill (2000) replicated Bok's study with New Zealand data. They found improved performance in most fields, but a drop in public trust. Suleiman observed that patterns of distrust in Western countries do not correspond to patterns of NPM reforms (Suleiman, 2003: 65).

34. While a better performing public sector may help to restore trust, the erosion of public trust may also be a potential hidden cost of public sector reforms. Badly designed public sector reforms may erode trust. Performance improvements may corrode trust if they entail centralisation and if this is seen to lead to a concentration of executive authority. Decentralisation may stimulate public concern about a loss of control. Contracting out may lead to less openness, making the public sector vulnerable to scandals. Attracting staff from the private sector may lead to a decline of public service ethics (Roberts, 1998). Long periods of reform may engender reform fatigue and therefore no longer result in increased trust. Increased transparency makes public sector deficiencies more visible to citizens. Reform may also fail, or be seen to have failed by certain groups. Reform failure, however, has not received much attention thus far (Temmes, 2003). Large-scale reforms of the administration are said to have coincided with a decline in trust in New Zealand, because the new transparency created new expectations, because the scope and speed of the reforms made them unpopular, and because citizens did not understand the reforms due to a lack of communication (OECD, 2001). Uncertainties arising during periods of reform can undermine trust, and reforms create expectations and new demands. Reform projects may make expectations rise faster than improvements can be made (Aberbach & Rockman, 2000: 8).

6.2 *Trust is a precondition for public sector performance*

35. High levels of public trust stimulate public sector productivity, since trusting citizens are more willing to comply with regulations and procedures (Levi, 1996), lowering transaction costs (Fukuyama, 1995). Having trusting citizens may influence the willingness to make sacrifices during a crisis (Tyler, 2001), to obey the law (Tyler, 1990), to vote, to pay taxes (Torgler, 2003) or to serve in the military (Levi, 1997). Public distrust leads to a shrinking policy agenda, as policy leaders do not dare to take the lead on initiatives when trust is low, as they fear public resistance (Hetherington, 2001).

36. Significant absence of public trust may lower civil servants' morale (Aberbach & Rockman, 2000: 21). Policy-makers emphasizing the failures of their own public service in order to justify reforms may undermine trust of civil servants and citizens.

37. Overall, trust and public sector performance interact in vicious and virtuous circles. Citizens approaching public services with very low expectations may be faced with a self-fulfilling prophecy, as his or her attitude may not stimulate the front-level bureaucrat to deliver outstanding service. Satisfied customers motivate public sector staff, and having high satisfaction ratings may support an organisation in budget negotiations leading to budgets that allow them to perform even better. An organisation that is trusted becomes an employer of choice, and may thus attract the best and the brightest, which could eventually increase performance.

38. Higher levels of interpersonal trust not only increase government performance, but also the performance of large firms. An increase in trust raises judicial efficiency, bureaucratic quality and tax compliance, as well as the share of large firms in total GDP, and lowers corruption. In other words, 'trust facilitates all large-scale activities, not just those of government' (La Porta, Lopez-de Silanes, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1997: 335). Putnam's classic 'Making democracy work' claims that the performance of regional governments in Italy is facilitated by an infrastructure of civic communities (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993).

6.3 *Conclusion*

39. A direct causal relation between the performance of the public sector and citizens' overall evaluation of government is unlikely (Van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003). However, the accumulated evidence in OECD countries suggests that trust is a cause, precondition and consequence of reform. Administrative reform and a well-functioning public sector are necessary, but insufficient, conditions for building trust in the public sector.

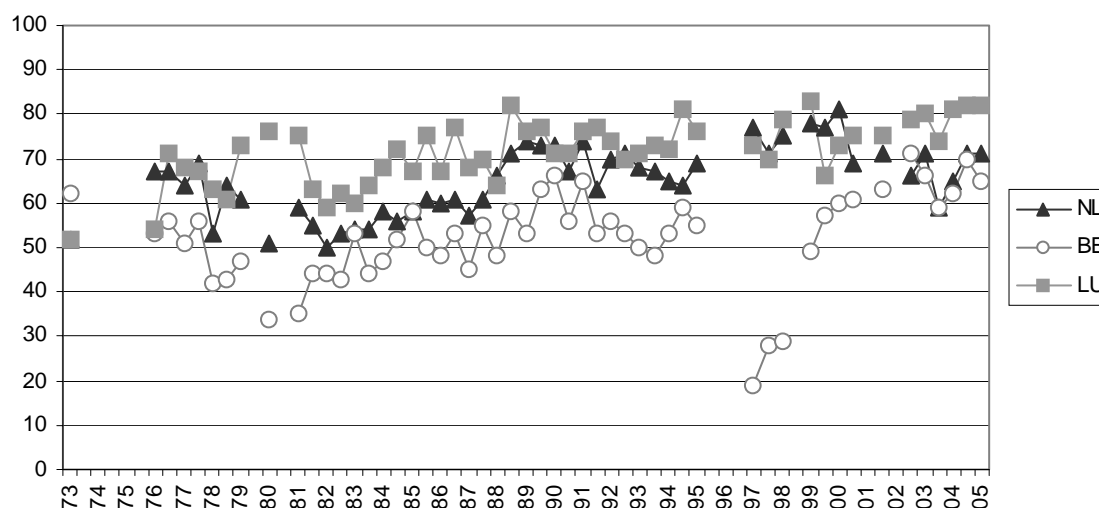
7. *Are there any long-term trends?*

40. Despite assertions that there is a constant decline in citizens' trust, there are few time-series data supporting these statements. Where such data are available, the indicators are mostly imperfect proxies, and do not show clear downward trends in trust. One of the few available data sources for cross-national time series is the European Commission's Eurobarometer. Unfortunately, it only includes EU countries and candidates. In many other countries, fewer data are available for mapping trends.

41. The Eurobarometer contains a question about satisfaction with democracy, often used as a proxy for trust in government because of its broad coverage of countries: '*On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in <country>*'. Satisfaction with democracy is far from perfect as an indicator for measuring and comparing trust in government (Linde & Ekman, 2003; Canache, Mondak, & Seligson, 2001), but it remains one of the few available. Measurement started in the early 1970s. We show the percentage of respondents stating that they are very or fairly satisfied. The figures below group countries roughly according to accession date to the

EU. Normally, satisfaction with democracy is measured twice a year. An interrupted line indicates where this has not been the case. In many Central and Eastern European countries, measurement of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy started rather late, and so cannot be calculated.

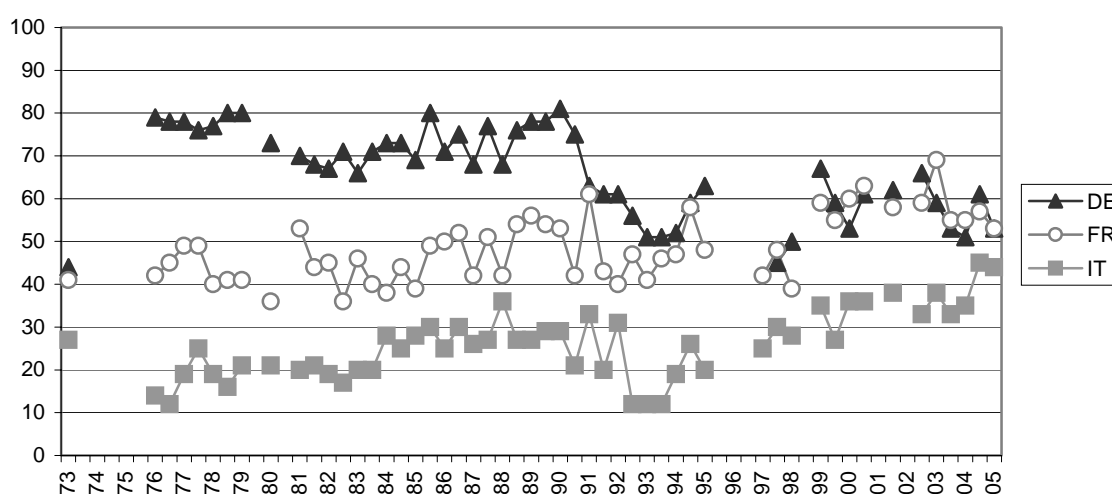
Figure 12: Satisfaction with the way democracy works, % satisfied, 1973-2005
Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg



Source: European Commission: Standard Eurobarometer

42. In the three Benelux countries, there seems to be an overall upward trend in satisfaction. **Belgium** experienced a drop in the mid-90s, probably due to the major Dutroux-paedophilia scandal and the scandal's political fall-out. The decline in 1996 is the steepest for all EU countries since measurement started. In the **Netherlands**, there was recently a decline in satisfaction, possibly related to the rise of the populist politician Fortuyn and the *Leefbaar* political parties. This decline is also visible in the surveys organised by the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2005).

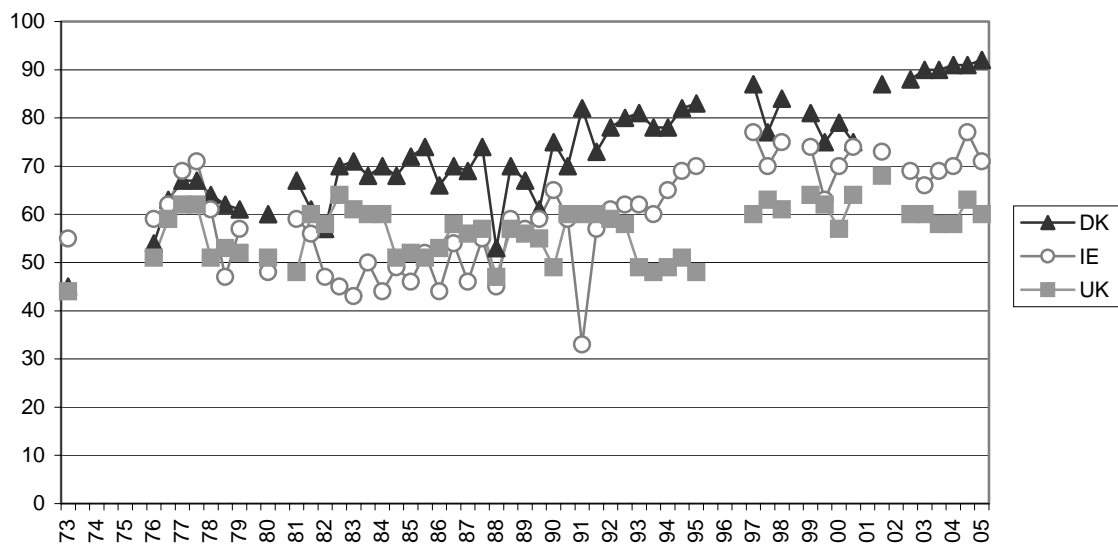
Figure 13: Satisfaction with the way democracy works, % satisfied, 1973-2005
Germany, France, Italy



Source: European Commission: Standard Eurobarometer

43. The trend in **Germany** is rather misleading, because the trend line originally only referred to West-Germany. The drop corresponds to the inclusion of East-Germany (Niedermayer, 2001). Satisfaction levels are very low in **Italy**, but there seems to be a positive trend. The decline in 1993 could be explained by the corruption scandals related to the *Tagentopoli* investigations (Suleiman, 2003: 77).

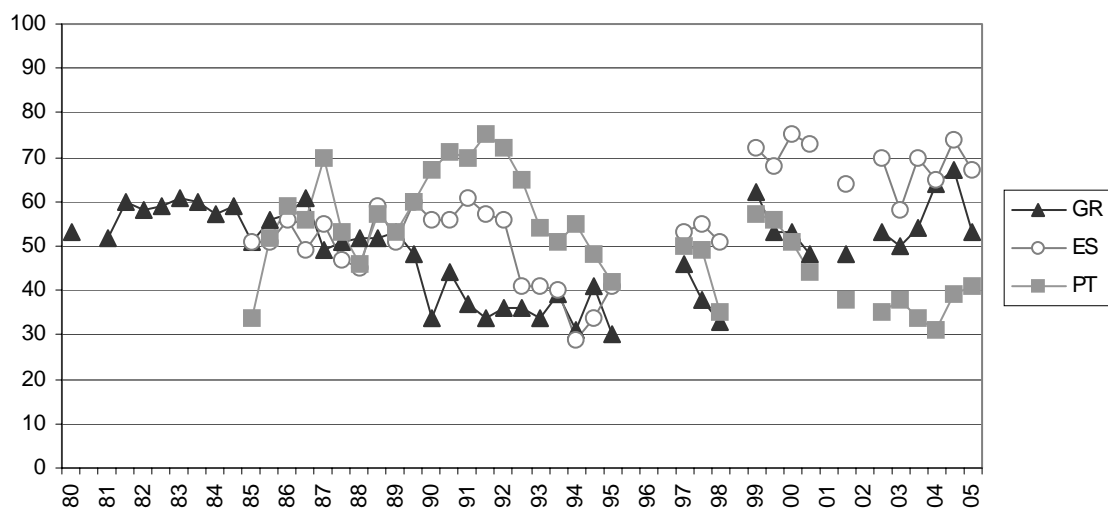
Figure 14: Satisfaction with the way democracy works, % satisfied, 1973-2005
Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom



Source: European Commission: Standard Eurobarometer

44. In **Ireland**, we find an unexplained decline in 1991. Generally, there is a positive trend. In **Denmark**, there seems to be a trend of rising satisfaction, bringing Denmark to an astonishing 92% level of satisfaction in 2005. The high and rising levels of trust in Denmark suggests that studying this particular case may offer new insights into the phenomenon of trust in government.

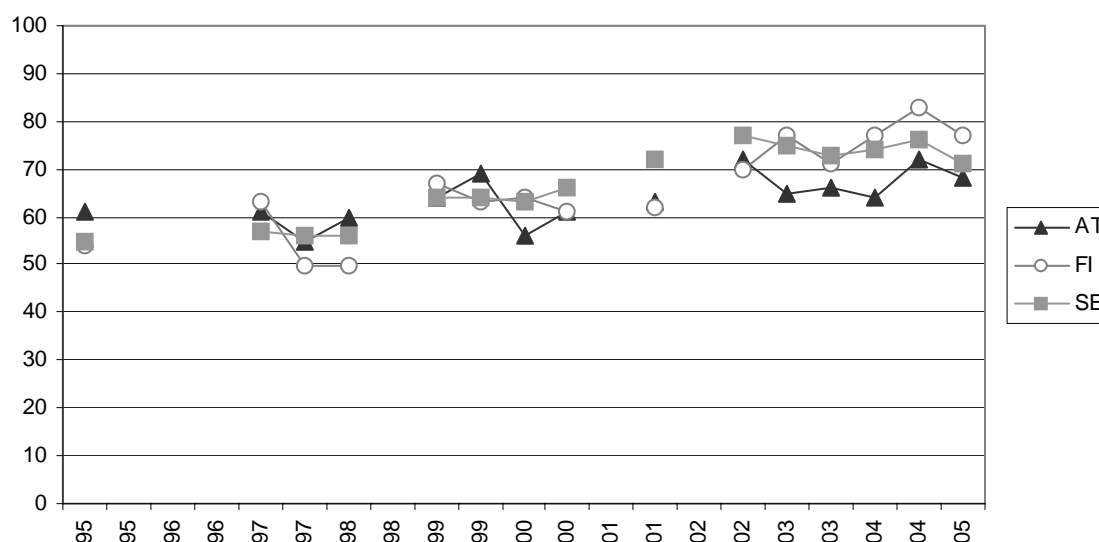
Figure 15: Satisfaction with the way democracy works, % satisfied, 1980/1985-2005
Greece, Spain Portugal



Source: European Commission: Standard Eurobarometer

45. In Greece, Spain and Portugal, measurement started later. In **Spain**, there is an unexplained drop in 1993-1994. There were a number of scandals in that period, but Montero *et al.* (1999) do not consider the decline significant. In **Greece**, there are quite strong fluctuations. The sharp decline in **Portugal** after 1991-92 is said to be partly due to the stability of the political situation between 1985 and 1991, and partly due to increasing political tension after that, joined by a sharp rise in unemployment.

Figure 16: Satisfaction with the way democracy works, % satisfied, 1995-2005
Austria, Finland, Sweden

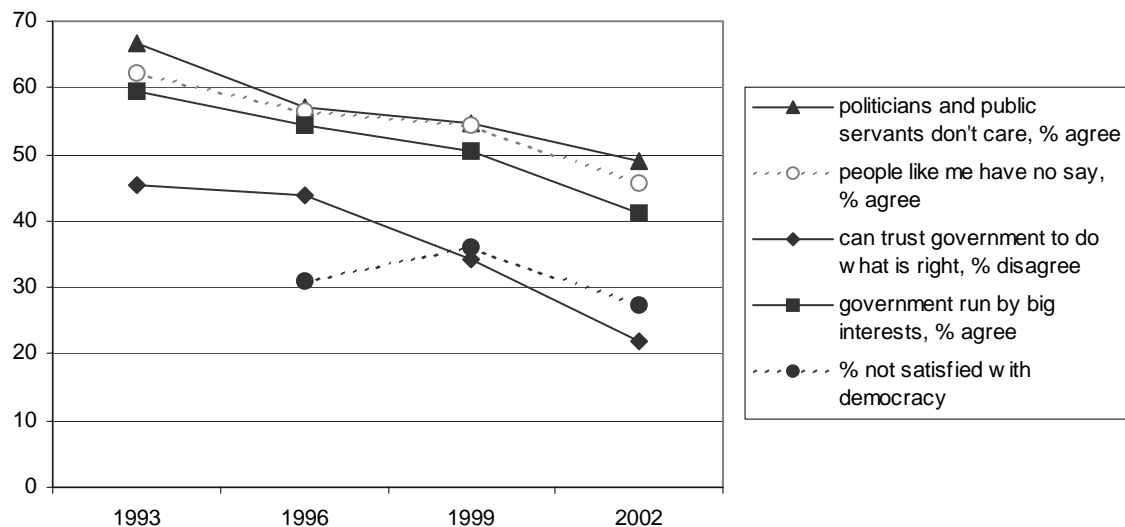


Source: European Commission: Standard Eurobarometer

46. The time-series for **Finland**, **Austria** and **Sweden** only started in 1995, but the data thus far suggest an increase in satisfaction.

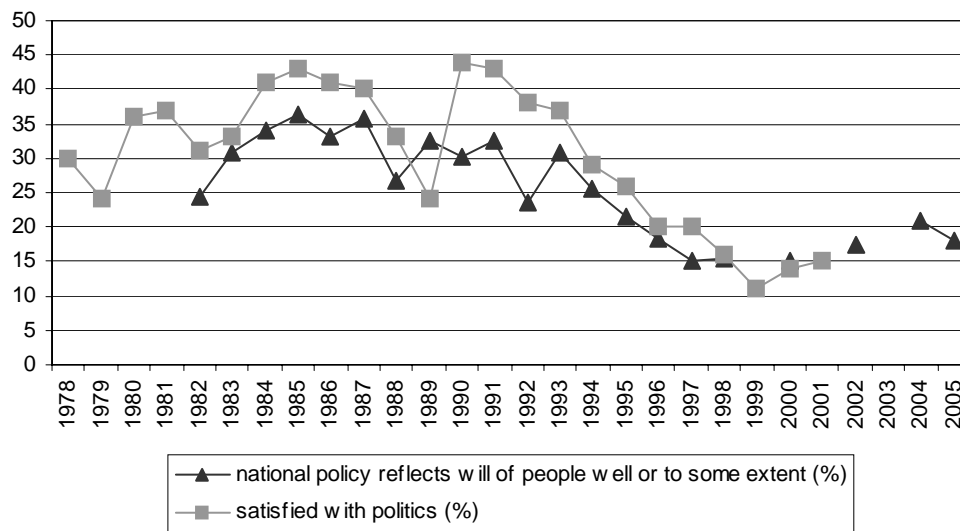
47. There is a strong tradition of measurement in the **United States**. Trust in government has been measured in the National Election Studies since 1958. As shown above in Figure 3, trust has been on the increase since 1994. Between 1964 and 1980 there was a steady decline in trust, with a brief resurgence in the first half of the 1980s.

48. In **New Zealand**, the New Zealand Election Study contains a number of items related to trust in government and in the democratic institutions. These are: *I don't think politicians and public servants care much about what people like me think*; *People like me don't have any say about what the government does*; *You can trust the government to do what is right most of the time*; *The New Zealand government is largely run by a few big interests*; and: *On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in New Zealand?* Figure 17 clearly indicates there is a positive trend. Some additional information on New Zealand is available in a 2000 State Services Commission Working Paper (Barnes & Gill, 2000).

Figure 17: Changing trust, New Zealand, 1993-2002

Source: New Zealand Election Study, www.nzes.org

49. In **Japan**, the political satisfaction indicator shows a constant decline between 1991 and 1999.

Figure 18: Evolutions in trust in Japan, 1978-2005

Source: "How well do you feel that national policy reflects the will of the people?" Prime Minister's Office, Public opinion survey on society and state, Tokyo, Foreign Press Center. "In general, are you satisfied with politics today, or are you dissatisfied?". Somewhat satisfied + satisfied. Note that there have been frequent changes in question wording. Asahi Shimbun Tokyo Morning Edition. We use the statistics for December, except for 1989 and 1991. Figure based on statistics assembled by Pharr 1997 & 2000, and by Keiichi Muto & Masao Kikuchi.

50. In **Canada**, some long-term trends may be constructed, but these are limited because of changing question-wording and irregular surveys. In the last decade, however, data are increasingly available. Negative attitudes towards political parties and the House of Commons are increasing, yet there has not been a generalised decline of confidence in representative institutions. There has been a significant increase in the number of people who believe that many in government are corrupt, and that tax money is wasted (Mendelsohn, 2002).

51. There are no suitable time-series for the **Korea**. Some limited information is available in the New Korea Barometer Survey (1997-1999), and, more recently, in the East Asia Barometer Survey, and in articles not using time-series (Rose, Shin, & Munro, 1999). Data availability is, surprisingly, quite limited in **Australia**. The country did not participate in all World Values Study waves, and so data are only available from 1983 and 1995 (Papadakis, 1999). For the other countries not mentioned in the paragraphs above, the World Values Survey remains the main source for time-series data. Sometimes, it is possible to construct trends using national-level election studies (e.g. **Norway**).

8. Different expectations

52. In the classic view, (dis)trust is the result of a clash between citizens' expectations and government's actual performance (Pharr & Putnam, 2000: 21). Citizens' expectations, however, are not always known, and may change over time. In international comparisons, it is shown that citizens of different countries have different expectations. Again, the World Values Study provides the best available data. The WVS contained a question on the most important aim for the country in the next ten years. Respondents could choose four answers: 'maintaining order in the nation', 'giving people more say in important government decisions', 'fighting rising prices' and 'protecting freedom of speech' (see technical appendix).

53. Over 40% of all citizens in OECD member countries saw maintaining order in the nation as the single most important priority for the country. Almost 30% thought giving people more say in government should be the top priority. 'Fighting rising prices' and 'protecting freedom of speech' is the number one priority for 15% of all respondents.

Table 4: Most important aims for the country

% most important	Maintaining order in the nation	Fighting rising prices	Giving people more say	Protecting freedom of speech
Australia	23	11	40	26
Austria	36	7	33	24
Belgium	38	17	25	20
Canada	22	16	40	22
Czech Republic	56	10	26	8
Denmark	59	3	17	22
Finland	52	13	24	11
France	43	19	24	14
Germany	42	16	32	10
Greece	40	15	36	9
Hungary	53	28	17	2
Iceland	57	9	25	9
Ireland	37	18	36	8
Italy	32	12	39	17
Japan	34	16	45	5
Republic of Korea	43	35	18	4
Luxembourg	45	11	30	14
Mexico	32	30	22	16
Netherlands	41	6	17	37
New Zealand	33	9	44	14
Norway	66	4	14	16
Poland	40	27	28	4

Portugal	33	32	26	9
Slovakia	48	30	18	4
Spain	36	21	25	18
Sweden	45	3	32	20
Switzerland	32	18	16	34
Turkey	26	28	27	19
United States of America	33	10	32	25
Northern Ireland	41	21	28	11

Source: World Values Study, most recent data for each country (1995 and 1999/2000 wave)

54. There are some striking differences among the countries. In the Netherlands, 37% of respondents consider 'protecting freedom of speech' as the country's top priority, in contrast to 2% in Hungary. To make these patterns more visible, six different country-clusters can be distinguished.

- **Cluster A:** This cluster contains countries where 'maintaining order in the nation' is identified as the top priority for the country. Few people selected 'fighting rising prices' as first priority. This cluster includes all Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Denmark and Norway, Iceland, and Finland) as well as the Czech Republic and Luxemburg.
- **Cluster B:** The inflation rate in these countries is higher than in most other OECD member countries, hence, fighting rising prices is high (on average 30%) on the citizens' agenda. In all four countries (Hungary, Slovakia, the Republic of Korea and Poland), protection of freedom of speech is not considered a top priority (< 5%).
- **Cluster C:** In these countries, giving people more say in important government decisions and the protection of freedom of speech are considered as the country's the most important goals for the next 10 years. This cluster contains Italy, and the Anglo-Saxon countries (Australia, Canada, Austria, United States, Italy and New Zealand), but excludes Northern Ireland
- **Cluster D:** No logical connection seems to exist between these countries (Greece, Ireland, Germany and Japan). Overall, priorities in this cluster are quite similar to the OECD average, with a somewhat higher emphasis on 'giving people more say in important government decisions' and a lower emphasis on the protection of freedom of speech.
- **Cluster E:** Just as in cluster D, these countries (Belgium, Spain, France, Portugal, Mexico and Turkey, but also Northern Ireland) are quite similar to the OECD average. In countries with lower GDP/capita (Turkey, Mexico and Portugal) fighting rising prices is seen as an important problem by 30% of the population.
- **Cluster F:** There are only two countries in this cluster: The Netherlands and Switzerland. For over one third of all respondents, the protection of freedom of speech is a top priority.

9. Conclusion

55. This paper analysed data on citizens' trust in the public sector, compared levels of trust in the civil service internationally, and mapped trends in trust in government. The data problems are significant.

- An increasing number of governments are organising their own surveys for measuring citizens' attitudes towards the public sector. Unfortunately, they all use different methods and questionnaires. In the social science survey research community, attention for the public

administration has always been limited. This means that hardly any survey questions on the public administration have been included in most international surveys. The lack of good data has resulted in cross-country and cross-time comparisons based on incomparable data, or on data of questionable origin and quality. However, an increasing amount of good data is becoming available, but in-depth international analysis in the public administration community (both administrations and research institutions) is, as yet, weak. Despite their popularity, single, short opinion polls about citizens' attitude towards the public sector are not particularly useful for policy-makers, because they tell us little about trends, fluctuations, cross-country differences, and causes for these attitudes. Data availability is now quite good in some EU member countries (Finland, UK), and Canada. In many countries, good practices in measuring trust in the public sector are emerging.

- Generally, and despite the popular conviction, there is little evidence of a general downward trend of either trust in government or trust in the civil service.
- There are considerable differences among the OECD member countries, not only in levels of trust, but also in the expectations citizens have of government.
- The level of trust in the civil service is quite similar to that in other institutions. The generally held belief of a 'despised bureaucracy' does not hold. Still, there are countries where trust in the civil service is very low.
- Citizens' attitudes towards the civil service may be strongly affected by political factors.
- Trust does not seem to be automatically increased by improvements in government effectiveness. Similarly, where there is low trust in the public sector, this is not necessarily due to the performance of the public sector.
- A certain level of trust may be necessary for administrative reforms to be successful.
- Public trust may be eroded by ill-designed public sector reforms.

Technical Appendix

For a detailed overview of available survey material for studying citizens' attitudes towards the public administration, please consult (Bouckaert, Van de Walle, & Kampen, 2005).

World Values Study

<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

Confidence: *'Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or none at all?'* Confidence in civil service and parliament was included in every OECD member country.

Expectations: *'There is a lot of talk these days about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. On this card are listed some of the goals which different people would give top priority. If you had to choose, which of the things on this card would you say is most important?'*

- Maintaining order in the nation
- Giving people more say in important government decisions
- Fighting rising prices
- Protecting freedom of speech

Table 5: Confidence in the civil service, World Values Study, OECD countries, % showing a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the civil service

(n= number of respondents)

Country/Region, confidence	%	1981	1990	1995-1997	1999-2000	Rank	n in last wave
Australia		47		38		23	(n=2005)
Austria			42		42	18	(n=1438)
Belgium		46	42		45	17	(n=1853)
Canada		51	50		50	11	(n=1851)
Czech Republic			34		22	29	(n=1869)
Denmark		47	51		55	6	(n=978)
Finland		53	33	34	41	19	(n=1009)
France		52	49		46	14	(n=1574)
Germany		32	38 ⁵	48 ⁶	39	21	(n=1954)
Greece					14	31	(n=1129)
Hungary		74	50		50	11	(n=953)
Iceland		34	46		56	5	(n=944)

⁵ Only value for West-Germany is shown. Value for East-Germany: 18.

⁶ Value for East-Germany: 41.

Ireland	54	59		59	3	(n=973)
Italy	27	25		33	25	(n=1944)
Japan	31	34	38	32	27	(n=1249)
Republic of Korea	88	61	78	67	1	(n=1149)
Luxembourg				59	3	(n=1097)
Mexico	23	28	41	22	29	(n=1353)
Netherlands	44	46		37	24	(n=985)
New Zealand			29		28	(n=1082)
Norway	58	44	51		10	(n=1116)
Poland		79	35	33	25	(n=1008)
Portugal		36		54	8	(n=917)
Slovakia		30		39	21	(n=1225)
Spain	39	35	42	41	19	(n=2290)
Sweden	46	44	45	49	13	(n=941)
Switzerland			46		14	(n=1137)
Turkey		50	67	60	2	(n=4507)
Great Britain	47	46		46	14	(n=903)
United States of America	58	60	51	55	6	(n=1133)
Northern Ireland	59	57		52	9	(n=904)

Source: cd-rom; ICPSR 2790, World Values Surveys and European Values Surveys, 1981-1984, 1990-1993, and 1995-1997, 1st ICPSR version, February, 2000

Eurobarometer

http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion.

Satisfaction with democracy: The Eurobarometer measures satisfaction with democracy: *'On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [name country]'*? Generally, very satisfied and fairly satisfied are combined.

Trust: *'Now, I would like to ask you about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it, or tend not to trust it?'*

Table 6: Trust in the civil service, OECD member countries covered in Eurobarometer
 Combined % of “very satisfied” and “fairly satisfied”

<i>% trust</i>	<i>autumn 97</i>	<i>spring 99</i>	<i>autumn 00</i>	<i>spring 01</i>	<i>autumn 01</i>	<i>spring 02</i>	<i>autumn 02</i>	<i>spring 03</i>
Austria	65	65	64	69	68	66		
Belgium	29	37	41	46	52	51		
Czech Republic					36		28	29
Denmark	58	50	55	57	58	60		
Finland	38	43	50	46	43	43		
France	47	44	51	49	46	45		
Germany	37	43	46	48	45	45		
Greece	42	43	31	31	34	31		
Hungary					42		46	44
Ireland	61	61	64	62	62	64		
Italy	24	27	31	27	28	29		
Luxemburg	57	51	65	63	61	64		
Netherlands	58	57	52	52	59	55		
Poland					28		34	30
Portugal	34	44	37	44	50	47		
Slovakia					30		29	37
Spain	37	39	51	44	46	43		
Sweden	50	45	52	51	56	60		
Turkey					52		21	27
UK	46	44	46	45	45	48		

Source: European Commission, Candidate Countries Eurobarometer & Standard Eurobarometer

Note: Number of respondents = approximately 1000 face-to-face interviews per EU member State except Germany (2000), Luxemburg (600), United Kingdom (1300, including 300 in Northern Ireland)

European Social Survey

<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

Trust in politicians: *'Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust'*. For the figures, trust was calculated by adding scores in categories 6-10.

Country codes

<i>Code</i>	<i>Region/country</i>
AT	Austria
AU	Australia
BE	Belgium
CA	Canada
CH	Switzerland
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
GB	Great Britain
GR	Greece
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IS	Iceland
IT	Italy
JP	Japan
KR	Republic of Korea
LU	Luxemburg
MX	Mexico
NIRL	Northern Ireland
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
NZ	New Zealand
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
SE	Sweden
SK	Slovakia
TR	Turkey
US	United States

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