



Individuals over institutions?

A study of trust in four EU Institutions and the heads of these institutions to test whether the personalization thesis applies to the level of the EU

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The study that lies before you was written to complete the master's programme *Governance and Public Policy* at the Utrecht School of Governance. This is a Dutch master, with a clear focus on the Dutch governance system and national policies and issues. From the very start, I knew I had a special interest in the European Union and its complex governance system. Therefore, it came as no surprise that I wanted to write my thesis on a subject related to the EU governance system. What might have come as a surprise is the focus on political leadership, the quantitative methods used to analyse data and the (controversial) decision to write my thesis in English. I found a lovely English saying that exactly captures this urge to do things differently, when you are encouraged not to: *the tall poppy syndrome*.

I am fully aware that my habit of doing things my own way can be challenging (or even annoying at times), and therefore I owe a big thank you to all the people that stuck with me through the learning process of writing a master thesis. First and foremost, I would like to wholeheartedly thank my supervisor Barbara Vis. Your endless patience, enthusiasm, critical feedback and input have guided me through this process. You have taught me to cope with academic setbacks without ever giving up, and I can honestly say that your guidance has made this thesis course bearable and (at times) even fun! A similar large shout out to Maurid and Lisa, my fellow students in this thesis course, who have read and re-read (and re-read...) all the versions of my thesis and challenged my assumptions in a very refreshing and interesting way. Thank you for bearing with me. Also a big word of thanks to my second supervisor Thomas Schillemans for your on-point feedback and new insights.

This research could not have been conducted without the willingness of all respondents to fill out the survey. Thank you so much for taking the time to contribute to this research. In addition, a special thanks to those persons who were able to share it within their network and educational institutions. This way I could take up students from all education levels that we know in the Netherlands. Without your help, this study would not have taken its current shape.

Finally, if there is one thing that I learned through this process is that a good researcher needs a good *sounding board*. On the academic side I owe a great thanks to Femke van Esch and Marij Swinkels, both experts in the field of leadership in the EU and endless sources of interesting input and ideas for this thesis. On the personal side, I would like to thank Lieuwe Burger, to whom I owe the initial idea for this research, and who has been subjected to the highs and lows in my mood during this entire process. Last but probably most important, I would like to thank all family and friends for bearing with me during this process. I appreciate your support a lot.

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Summary

The EU has been subjected to fierce criticism and distrust by its citizens ever since its establishment. An extreme and recent example of this dissatisfaction with the EU was the British leave-vote in the referendum on their EU membership, the so-called 'Brexit'. In addition, the largest survey measuring EU citizens' trust in the EU currently shows a cloudy image with low trust levels. The difficulty with trust, however, is that it is an abstract concept and its optimal measurement is widely debated. Besides, the EU is often seen as a distant and ambiguous governance system, where citizens are often in the dark on who is responsible for what. Therefore, it would be interesting to see where this distrust of EU citizens is exactly directed to. Is that toward the EU institutions, or the individual politicians at the EU level? This question is particularly relevant in light of the personalization thesis, which states that individual politicians are (becoming) more important in national political processes (for example in attributing votes in elections and translating the vague world of politics to practical terms and issues for people) than the institutions that they represent (such as political parties). At the national level, this personalization of politics is apparent in most liberal democracies, but whether this is the case at the EU level remains inconclusive. This research aims to fill that lacuna by studying the main question: *Do people have more trust in individual politicians than in institutions at the EU level?*

By means of a survey, I collected data on students' (studying in the Netherlands) trust levels in four EU institutions and the heads of these institutions to be able to answer this research question. The data showed that, in general, trust levels in the EU institutions were slightly higher than the trust levels in the heads of the EU institutions. These differences were so small, however, that they were negligible. Therefore, I concluded that EU institutions and the heads of those institutions are trusted similarly by students in the Netherlands. Their evaluations of EU institutions and heads of the EU institutions were moderately positive, with EU institutions scoring 7.67/10 on average and the heads of the EU institutions 7.14/10. This is mostly a positive finding for the EU, meaning that they are trusted moderately well by students in the Netherlands.

Besides this main finding, there were some other interesting observations. For example, that *education level* was the only variable that had a significant relation with trust in both EU institutions and the heads of these institutions. Higher educated students are significantly more trusting than are lower educated students. All other control variables, such as *gender*, *political sophistication* and *current employer*, did not significantly influence students' trust levels. Remarkably, many respondents did not answer all the trust questions on all EU institutions and heads of institutions (correctly). This led me to suspect that students in the Netherlands are not very knowledgeable of the EU institutions and the people that represent the EU institutions, or they are simply not very interested in these issues. This may have influenced the moderately positive image of the EU that this study has portrayed.

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1. Introduction: Individuals over institutions in the EU?

§1.1 The role of individual politicians and institutions at the EU level

“The standard EUROBAROMETER report No. 38 (...) gave a detailed explanation of (...) the chief reasons why the drive towards European integration is faltering. Once again, for the fifth time in a row, the EUROBAROMETER standard indicators of support for the European Union have generally fallen” (Eurobarometer, 1993).

The citation above indicates that the European Union has been dealing with issues of citizens’ support or trust¹ even before the EU’s official establishment with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993. Jumping ahead in time, the biannual Eurobarometer now shows a mixed image of citizens’ trust in the European Union. The EU average of citizens indicating to trust the European Union is currently on the rise, but it is still quite low (36%) in comparison to citizens indicating not to trust (56%)² the EU (Eurobarometer, 2016, p.92). Trust in the European Union has become a highly political issue over the past decades, partly due to the rise of populist parties³ which are quite vocal in expressing their discontent with the EU (Mudde, 2004).

Despite a slight growth over the last few years, trust in the European Union is still generally low and Euroscepticism is rampant (De Vries, 2018). The British no-vote in the Brexit referendum in June 2016 is an extreme, but clear example of citizens’ low trust levels in the EU. The problem with low levels of citizens’ trust in politics, including the political institutions, is that trust is essential to the proper functioning of a democracy (Hetherington, 1998, p.792; Levi & Stoker, 2000). Trust of citizens in political actors and institutions legitimizes their power and actions (Meyer, 1999).

The issue of political trust has been discussed extensively in the literature (for elaborate reviews see Levi & Stoker, 2000; Citrin & Stoker, 2018; Nannestad, 2008), but usually focuses on the trust relationship between citizens and their national institutions of representative democracy (see Newton & Norris, 2000, p.52). This is curious for two reasons. First, despite far-reaching integration efforts among the EU member states (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p.3), research on the relationship *between EU*

¹ Citizens support in government is well measured using the concept of trust, since trust is a concept that overlaps with (system) support (Easton, 1975) and that is often used in surveys on people’s attitudes towards governments (Citrin & Stoker, 2018).

² The remaining 8% either did not answer the question, or answered ‘don’t know’.

³ The Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), the French Front National or the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) are examples of populist parties, and although a consensus-based definition is lacking, some common denominators are that those parties all tend to be post-democratic and produced by the corruption of democratic ideals by *the corrupt elite* (Mudde, 2004, p.541).

citizens and the EU institutions is still scarce. The rare empirical trust research in the EU largely focuses on the levels of citizens' trust in the EU as a whole (e.g. European Social Survey, 2014/2015; the Eurobarometer is an exception). The EU, however, is such a large and remote political arena that many citizens cannot fully grasp what is going on and who is responsible for what (Armingeon & Ceka, 2014). The different institutions and a description of their core tasks can make the 'EU' more tangible for people. Therefore, it is important to break down this trust question and measure citizens' trust in the different institutions. Second, most research on political trust focuses on citizens' trust in (national) political institutions (Citrin & Stoker, 2018, p.2), and not on trust in *individual politicians*. This is interesting in the light of the 'personalisation thesis' which states that currently the focus in the political arena of many liberal democracies is on individual political actors, at the cost of political parties and other collective identities created in social organisations such as churches or other associations (McAllister, 2007; Karvonen, 2010; Adam & Maier, 2010). Again, this phenomenon has been studied extensively at the national level (for elaborate overviews see Poguntke & Webb, 2007; Karvonen, 2010), but not at the European level. This is particularly interesting because a recent study shows the tendency of personalization of EU politics in the news media (Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2015). For example, when you open a random newspaper in any of the member states of the EU, it is quite certain that you will find news coverage on politics in the EU. This news coverage has a clear focus on individual politicians rather than on institutions as the following news headlines illustrate: *Juncker: budget European Union needs to increase to fulfil new tasks such as defence and security* (de Volkskrant, 2018, translated from Dutch), *Donald Tusk: EU's 'heart still open to UK' over Brexit* (BBC, 2018), and *Juncker-Schulz Partnership a test for EU democracy* (Spiegel Online, 2016). Instead of the European institutions being central to these newspaper headlines, the persons who represent these institutions are being placed on centre stage.

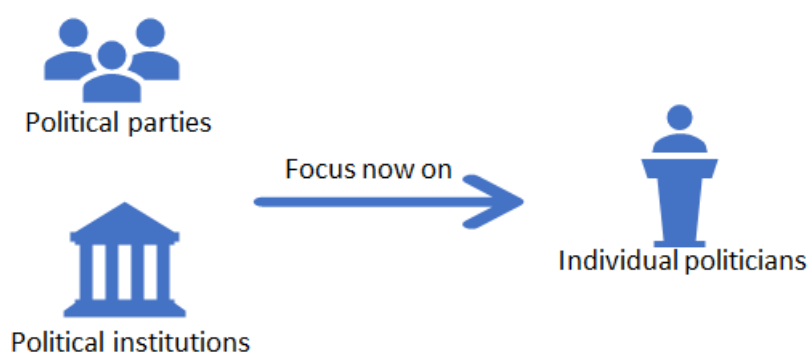


Figure 1. *Personalization thesis illustrated: Focus not on political parties and other political institutions, but on individual politicians.*

All this comes down to the following observation. At the national level, individual politicians are more important than the political institutions they represent (such as political parties) in determining how

citizens view politics and how they cast their votes (Webb, Poguntke & Kolodny, 2012, pp.86-87; Bittner, 2011; Gattermann, 2018). At the EU level, there are indications that the role of individual politicians has increased as well. Simultaneously, trust in the European Union is low, but we are still in the dark whether this distrust is directed towards the EU institutions or towards the individuals representing the institutions, since no trust research distinguishes between trust in the different EU institutions and the representatives of these institutions. This matters because if it appears that EU citizens tend to have more trust in the individual leaders at the EU level than in the EU institutions, it could mean that the democratic principles underlying the EU are being questioned. In that case not the incumbents of office are opposed by citizens, but the offices themselves. This has direct negative consequences for the legitimacy, sustainability and effectiveness of the EU governance system. For example, how can a governance system function when the people it is supposed to represent do not trust it (regardless of the incumbents of office)? Additionally, it would also point to a more prominent focus on individuals, at the cost of institutions, at the EU level. At the same time, the individual politicians can make the abstract EU policy arena more tangible for people by explaining the processes in a language that 'the people' can understand or by naming practical examples of policies. A higher trust level in individuals could be explained accordingly.

Either way, it is important to distinguish which specific actors are (dis)trusted by EU citizens. Therefore, this study aims to assess whether citizens' trust in individual politicians at the EU level is higher than their trust in the political institutions of the EU. One can see such a relationship at the national level of many liberal democracies (Poguntke & Webb, 2007), but no research exists into this relationship at the EU level. Therefore, the main question of this research is:

<i>Do people have more trust in individual politicians than in institutions at the EU level?</i>
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To address this question comprehensively and in a structured manner, I have formulated several sub-questions. The first is of a conceptual and operational nature, the second is a more theoretical sub-question, while the latter two are empirical questions:

- Sub-question 1: What is (political) trust and how is it defined and applied in this study?
- Sub-question 2: What is meant by personalization of politics, and can this concept be applied to the EU level?
- Sub-question 3: To what extent is there political trust in the following four EU institutions: the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the European Council?
- Sub-question 4: To what extent is there political trust in the following four heads of the EU institutions: Antonio Tajani, Jean-Claude Juncker, Mario Draghi, and Donald Tusk?

§1.2 Relevance

This research's scientific objectives are twofold. First it aims to contribute to the scarce literature on EU citizens' trust in the specific EU institutions, including not only the European Parliament (EP), the European Commission (EC) and the European Central Bank (ECB)⁴, but also the European Council – the institution that has the closest link to national politics since the heads of state are represented in that institution, which arguably makes it the supreme political body in the EU (Tallberg, 2008). Additionally, this research aims to address the lacuna in the scientific literature regarding citizens' trust in individual politicians at the EU level. This is done by measuring citizens' trust in both the EU institutions and the individuals representing these institutions, and by examining any differences between the two. By measuring both citizens' trust in individuals and institutions at the EU level, I aim to assess whether persons are more trusted than institutions in the EU, and if so, what the consequences of those findings are for the functioning of the EU. These could both be *positive*, in the sense that persons can make the EU more tangible and understandable for citizens, and *negative*, in the sense that by trusting persons over institutions, citizens could question the democratic principles upon which the EU was founded.

This research is also societally relevant. As explained in the beginning of the introduction, the EU suffers from low levels of citizens' trust. Finding out whether this discontent focuses on individuals or institutions matters for the legitimacy and the durability of the system. First, a focus on individual politicians over institutions has several consequences for the functioning of a democratic system such as the EU. For example, if the individual politicians in government are not trusted by the public, they will be pushed out of office without damaging the overall system. When the institutions are not trusted by the public, however, this poses a real threat to the democratic system as a whole, because the institutions cannot be 'pushed out of office' since they *are* the offices. In other words, if trust in persons is much higher than in institutions, this can mean that the legitimacy of the democratic system is being questioned by its citizens (Hetherington, 1998; Levi & Stoker, 2000). In that case, citizens do not blame politicians for underperforming, but question the democratic principles that form the foundations of the system. This is quite harmful for the sustainability, legitimacy and output (or policy) effectiveness of a regime, such as the European Union, operating in a democratic environment.

Second, the EU is a supranational (form of a) parliamentary system with multiple parties that compete for the votes of EU citizens in elections, but also with a strong role of the member states in EU decision making (Van Esch & Swinkels, 2015, p.1204). In combination with the institutional rules, this renders the EU governance structure fragmented. This fragmented governance structure was deliberately set up to ensure that decisions are always made in coherence with largely shared ideals (e.g. collective

⁴ Which are included in the Eurobarometer surveys on citizens' trust in EU institutions

party policies, the institutional arrangements and member states' national policies) to avoid the influence of individual actors (Van Esch & Swinkels, 2015; van Middelaar, 2013). More trust in individual politicians than in institutions at the EU level, or in other words a more person-centred political arena in the EU, would be interesting in light of this institutional set-up. What does it mean for the institutional arrangements of the EU (which were set up to prevent an influential role for individuals) if individual politicians would enjoy more trust from EU citizens than the institutions? Additionally, it could potentially mean that political leaders in the EU gain the feeling that they have earned personal mandates from voters, which in turn leads to greater independence from their parties (Webb et. al., 2012, p.94; Van Aelst et. al., 2012). Their individual decisions will be more influential than their party ideology, which impairs the democratic principles upon which the EU was essentially founded (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p.7).

§1.3 Structure notes

The remainder of this research will be structured as follows. In chapter two I explore the concept of (political) trust, and I formulate a suitable definition for this study. The chapter continues by establishing the operationalizations for measuring political trust. Chapter three focuses on the concept of personalization and explores its theoretical basis. Then the concept is applied to the level of the European Union, and expectations regarding the outcome of the study are formulated. For example, I expect that the heads of the institutions are trusted more than institutions themselves, and that education level plays a role in people's trust levels. Following, chapter four elaborates on the methods that were used to collect and analyse data. The validity, reliability and replicability of this study are highlighted. In chapter five, the results of the data analysis are discussed. The most relevant finding is that in this study, people do not trust EU institutions differently than the heads of the EU institutions. Based on the findings, two hypotheses are rejected, one is accepted and one remains inconclusive. Logically following the analysis chapter, chapter six will consist of conclusions based on the empirical evidence and I answer the main question by stating that, in this study, EU politicians are not trusted over EU institutions. With the most important side note that education level is a good predictor for peoples' trust levels in both the institutions and the heads of the institutions. I end this final chapter with a discussion of the limitations of this research and its contributions.

2. Political trust

In this chapter an answer to the first conceptual and operational sub-question is formulated. The first sub-question is:

Sub-question 1: What is (political) trust and how is it defined and applied in this study?

This chapter starts with an exploration of the concept *political trust*. The specific characteristics of trust are elaborated and the differences between specific trust and diffuse trust are highlighted, as well as their relevance for my research. Based on the findings in the existing literature, I discuss the operationalization for measuring political trust. Also, the most important independent variable is presented and both its theoretical relevance and operationalization are discussed. The closing paragraph summarizes the most important findings of this chapter.

§2.1 The concept of trust

The concept of trust is much debated in social science. Many scholars express their dissatisfaction with the ambiguity surrounding the concept, and the many possible definitions there are of trust (e.g. Hetherington, 1998; PytlikZillig & Kimbrough, 2016; Citrin & Stoker, 2018). There is even disagreement on the nature of the concept. Some see conceptions of trust as rational, whereas others see it as norm-driven (see Nannestad, 2008). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to elaborate on all those different definitions and other ambiguities, but an elaborate discussion is provided by PytlikZillig & Kimbrough (2016, pp.22-24). Despite the wide variety of approaches to the concept of trust, scholars seem to converge on some common denominators (PytlikZillig & Kimbrough, 2016, p.24). In all instances, trust is relational and domain specific (Citrin & Stoker, 2018). It involves a trustor (subject) and a trustee (object) that are somehow interdependent, and it involves a specific situation or action in which there is a risk for the trustor (PytlikZillig & Kimbrough, 2016). The figure below illustrates this relationship.



Figure 2. *Trust is relational and domain specific*

Besides being relational and domain specific, there seems to be a consensus on the perception that trust is also experienced as voluntary by the trustor (PytlikZillig & Kimbrough, 2016). Finally, trust relates to positive evaluations or expectations of something or someone. For the aspects of the concept of trust on which there is still much ongoing debate see PytlikZillig & Kimbrough (2016).

In this research, the focus is not on the general concept of trust, but on citizens' trust in political institutions and individuals in the political arena of the EU. More specifically, the focus is on trust in EU institutions and the heads of these institutions. This relationship can also be indicated by the term

political trust. Political trust builds on the basic principles of the concept of trust as explained above, in which citizens are the trustors and the trustees are either individual politicians, the governmental institutions or the government as a whole. Citrin & Stoker (2018, p.2) define political trust as follows: “Political trust is one of a family of terms, referring to citizens’ feelings about their government”. Having political trust therefore implies having positive feelings (evaluations or expectations) towards the government. A more comprehensive definition, including most of the basic principles for the definition of trust, is given by Hetherington (1998, p.791): “Scholars have defined political trust as a basic evaluative orientation toward the government founded on how well the government is operating according to people’s normative expectations”. This latter definition will provide the basis for the definition used in this research. Added to this definition is the basic principle that trust is voluntary (or at least experienced so by the trustor). This means that political trust in this research is defined as: *the basic, voluntary, and evaluative orientation of EU citizens towards the EU institutions and the heads of these institutions, based on how well they are performing according to people’s normative expectations*. Breaking this definition down shows that the trustors are EU citizens, the trustees are both EU institutions and the heads of these institutions, and the relationship between them is based on the evaluations of the trustees’ public performance by the trustors.

§2.2 Specific trust and diffuse trust

The previous paragraph ended with a definition of the concept trust and its characteristics, but what does that tell us about the receivers of trust: the trustees? In this paragraph a distinction is made between these objects of trust. Although Hardin (2013) argues that one can have trust in people, but not in institutions, most empirical research of political trust focuses on citizens’ trust in political institutions (Citrin & Stoker, 2018). To answer the main question of this thesis, I require operationalizations of both political trust in institutions and in individuals. In the literature, a similar distinction is made between trust in individuals and trust in institutions. Nannestad (2008, p.414), for example, differentiates between *particular trust* and *generalized trust*. Particular trust refers to trust in a particular person we know or at least have information on. Generalized trust, on the other hand, implies that one can trust strangers (persons, groups or institutions) without having specific knowledge of them or information on them. Moreover, Easton (1975) and Hetherington (1998) make an even more detailed distinction of trust. They distinguish between *specific system support* and *diffuse system support*. The first refers to the public’s trust in the current authorities and in the incumbent (individual) politicians as well as to citizens’ satisfaction with government outputs. Diffuse system support refers to the public’s trust in a regime’s institutions and fundamental principles. Following Easton’s reasoning, this distinction allows for members of a political system to oppose the incumbents of office while at the same time retain respect for the offices (Easton, 1975, p.437). Or as stated by Hetherington (1998,

p.792): “Specific support refers to satisfaction with government outputs and the performance of political authorities, while diffuse support refers to the public’s attitude towards regime-level political objects regardless of performance”. A recent study into Euroscepticism in the EU applies this distinction in theoretical conceptualizations of trust to the EU level (De Vries, 2018). In her study, De Vries (2018) classifies people’s negative attitudes towards the EU as *policy sceptic* and/or *regime sceptic*. Policy scepticism refers to individuals being sceptic towards the specific EU policies and policy outputs by the current EU authorities (specific support), and regime scepticism refers to the way in which the treaties, rules and procedures operate in practice (diffuse support), or in other words the underlying principles upon which the EU was built (De Vries, 2018, p.44). The results of this study showed that (citizens from) most countries under study are supporters of both the regime and the policies of the EU⁵ (De Vries, 2018). The other large part is regime sceptic⁶, meaning that their diffuse trust is low, while they do support the policy outputs of current authorities (De Vries, 2018, p.81). What De Vries (2018) did not look into, and where I will add to this study, is the role of individual politicians in citizens’ attitudes towards the EU (in chapter three the role of individual politicians in citizen’s trust is elaborated further). For example, are those who are regime sceptic also more supportive of individual politicians, since they can be seen as the ones that provide policy outputs? For that reason, this study focuses on individual politicians as an object of specific trust in the EU.

The importance of the distinction between specific and diffuse trust for my research is to emphasize the difference of political trust in institutions and in individuals. Political trust in individuals can be defined as *specific trust* and political trust in institutions as *diffuse trust*. Using the specific-diffuse distinction can clarify the consequences of differences in one’s trust between individuals and institutions. As stated in the introduction, lower levels of trust in the EU institutions (diffuse trust) than trust in the heads of these institutions (specific trust) may be worrisome, since the legitimacy of the system could then be called into question (Hetherington, 1998). In that case, EU citizens are not opposing the incumbents of office, but the offices themselves, which affects the durability and legitimacy of the governance system (Citrin & Stoker, 2018). Additionally, it would point to a more prominent focus on individuals, at the cost of institutions, at the EU level. Conversely, an erosion of trust in politicians (specific trust) has more indirect consequences for the democratic principles underlying regimes and is therefore a less serious threat to democracy than a loss of diffuse trust (Hetherington, 1998; Newton & Norris, 2000). As indicated by the specific-diffuse trust division, specific trust refers to the public’s evaluation of the performance of politicians or a government, and are therefore subject to greater short-term fluctuations than trust in institutions (Newton & Norris,

⁵ Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Estonia and Belgium (De Vries, 2018, p.81).

⁶ France, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Finland (De Vries, 2018, p.81)

2000). Nonetheless, if distrust in particular administrations or politicians sustains over a series of elections and government compositions, this may be an indication that citizens are beginning to question the regime (Hetherington, 1998). Later in this study, I identify whether EU citizens have more trust in the institutions or in the individual politicians representing the institutions.

§2.3 Measuring political trust: the dependent variable

There are a few publicly available databases that have information on European citizens' trust in European institutions (Eurobarometer, European Social Survey) but none of these include data on the public's trust in the heads of the institutions at the European level. For that reason new data must be collected. For the scope of this thesis, a comprehensive database with a representative group of respondents from the EU member states is not feasible. Nonetheless, it is interesting to study this question on a smaller scale. Specifically, the question at hand is: *Do people have more trust in individual politicians than in institutions at the EU level?* The (different) trust levels that people attribute to institutions and individual politicians is of interest to this study. How many people tend to trust individual EU politicians differently than EU institutions? As a first step towards a more comprehensive EU-wide research, I study this question by designing and conducting a survey which examines both respondents' trust levels in EU institutions, as well as their trust levels in individual politicians that 'represent' those institutions. These are the dependent variables of this study. In addition, some control variables are included in order to explain inter-personal differences between groups of citizens and their trust levels.

2.3.1 Measuring trust in institutions

Although a few methodological weaknesses of the Eurobarometer have been indicated, including the sampling method (Nissen, 2014), its data are widely used in social research on thoughts and feelings of European citizens (e.g. Leong & Ward, 2006; Inglehart & Reif, 1991). For this study, the part on political trust in European institutions is of particular interest. In the Eurobarometer, trust in three European institutions⁷ is measured by asking the following questions (Eurobarometer, 2016, p.84)⁸:

- *[and] Please tell me if you tend to trust or tend not to trust these European institutions. The European Parliament/The European Commission/The European Central Bank*
- *Answer categories: tend to trust, tend not to trust, don't know.*

⁷ The ECB, the EP, and the EC

⁸ QA14.1+2+3. Have you heard of the European Parliament? The European Commission? The European Central Bank?

QA15.1+2+3. And please tell me if you tend to trust or tend not to trust these European institutions. The European Parliament; The European Commission; The European Central Bank.

In a recent review on survey measures of political trust, criticism on this kind of questioning focused mainly on the limited response options (Citrin & Stoker, 2018, p.3). In response to that critique, a new trend is developing where more granular measures are used to measure trust (Citrin & Stoker, 2018). Those studies often use a scale from 0, which indicates no trust at all, until 10 which indicates full trust (e.g. European Social Survey; Coffé & Michels, 2014; De Vries, 2018, p.46). Following this new trend, a scale of 0 until 10 is used in this survey to provide more response options, with a neutral midpoint, and a continuous scale to measure trust. Respondents can attribute a broad array of levels of trust. This offers opportunities for a more precise indication of potential differences in trust between the institutions and the individuals. The response option 'Don't know' is intentionally left out, so that respondents are highly encouraged to answer the question on trust in institutions, even though they might not feel very strongly about these issues.

2.3.2 Measuring trust in individual politicians

In the case of individual politicians the situation is more ambiguous. There is no clear consensus on which variable measures public opinion on leaders best. The two that are most commonly used are *trust* and *trustworthiness*. Elaborate definitions of both trust and trustworthiness are provided by Levi & Stoker (2000, p.476; elaborations on the measurements of both variables can be found on pp.497-498). For the variable trust, the approach is similar to the question of trust in institutions. An example of such questioning is:

- Q: *please tell me if you tend to trust or tend not to trust these European leaders: Jean-Claude Juncker, Antonio Tajani, Mario Draghi, Donald Tusk.*
- Answer categories: *tend to trust, tend not to trust, don't know.*

The other variable mostly used in research which aims to uncover the public's opinion on individuals in the political spectrum is *trustworthiness*. This variable is measured by asking questions on three dimensions (Van Esch et. al., 2018): Competence, legitimacy, and honesty. Questions which relate to the concept of trustworthiness would be similar to: *Do you believe politicians are (dis)honest, do (not) know what they are doing, waste tax money/spend tax money well, serve special interests and not the people (or serve the people and not special interests) and try to do what is right?* (Levi & Stoker, 2000; van Oorschot et. al., 2006). These scales to measure *trustworthiness* have been tested and appeared valid and reliable⁹ (e.g. van Oorschot et. al., 2006, p.154; van Esch et. al., 2018, p.8).

⁹ With Cronbach's alpha measures all >0.80 (Bryman, 2012, p.170), meaning that these questions together measure trustworthiness (accurately).

The aim of this research is to measure the differences between one's trust in European institutions and in the individuals representing these institutions. For that reason, a similar approach for measuring trust in both subjects is required. That makes for comparable answers for both political trust in institutions and in individuals. Only when these can be compared, I can formulate an answer to the main question. Therefore, political trust in both individuals and institutions is measured as follows:

- *Please indicate to what extent you tend to trust (or not trust) institution/person: European Parliament, European Commission, European Central Bank, European Council / Antonio Tajani, Jean-Claude Juncker, Mario Draghi, Donald Tusk.*
- *Answer categories: 0 (no trust), 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (full trust)*

Again the response option 'Don't know' is intentionally left out, to encourage respondents to answer the question even though they might not feel strongly about trusting the leader.

2.3.3 Political trust and awareness

The survey starts with a question regarding the respondents' awareness of the EU institutions. For example: *Have you heard of the European Parliament?* (Eurobarometer, 2016). The answer options are in this case: Yes, No or Don't know. Only if the respondent answers this question affirmatively, the follow up question on trust is posed. This is based on the assumption that a person needs to be familiar with an institution before he or she is able to state anything about trusting that institution (Easton, 1975). For that reason, the response option 'Don't know' is included in this question. Once the respondents have answered the awareness question correctly, a few phrases on the core tasks of the institution are included in the question. This is to ensure that the respondents are fully aware of the differences between the institutions, so that they can make a well-considered decision on the trust questions.

The same goes for awareness of the individuals representing the institutions (van Esch et. al., 2018, p.8), although *recognition* of the correct name is sufficient in this case. Easton (1975, p.437) states that specific trust, or trust in individual political leaders, assumes that people are or become aware of them. This does not mean, however, that they need to be able to identify individuals by naming their names or describing their functions (Easton, 1975). This line of argumentation indicates that respondents do not need to be able to answer an open question on the names of the individual political leaders: it is already enough if people know that their function exists (Easton, 1975). A shortcoming of this line of argumentation is that it ignores the general assumption that trusting someone presumes that there is at least some basic form of knowledge on that person. If respondents do not know the leader at all, how can they say whether they trust him/her or not? Having taken this all into consideration, I assume that recognition of the correct name of the leader of the institution is sufficient to proceed to the

question of trust in the survey. A question of this sort is posed: *Please indicate which one of these three persons is the president of the European Parliament*. Response options are: one correct name, two false names¹⁰ and don't know. Only when the correct name is picked from the response options, the question on trusting the individual is posed. Moreover, to increase the number of respondents answering this question (correctly) the following sentence is shown together with this question: *Even though you are not 100% certain which person is the head of this institution, please indicate the one you think it is*. With this, respondents still have the option of answering 'Don't know', so the chances of random guessing are minimized, but at the same time they are encouraged to answer the question even if they are not completely sure that their answer is correct.

2.3.4 Political trust and education level: the independent variable

One of the demographic variables that is most commonly associated with social and political attitudes, like political trust, is social class¹¹ (Newton & Norris, 1999, p.9; Hetherington, 1998, p.794). In this study, the variable social class will be measured in education level for a couple of reasons. First, asking people about their class in society may be quite sensitive, as well as asking for their monthly income. Second, education levels seem to be a good indicator for social class as well as a good predictor of trust in governments (Coffé & Michels, 2014, p.4; Christensen & Lægreid, 2005, p.494). Therefore, the variable *education level* will function as the key independent variable in this study. In most cases, including the Netherlands, higher educated people tend to be more trusting towards governments than lower educated people under the condition that corruption is low (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Christensen & Lægreid, 2005, p.502; Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2001). The sample (which will be discussed in chapter 4) will focus on the student population¹² in the Netherlands and therefore the distinction between higher education, intermediate education and lower education in the Netherlands should be clear. After high school, there are three types of education levels in the Netherlands. The first is intermediate vocational education (MBO), which focuses on competency-based vocational training for specific working fields. The second is higher vocational education (HBO), and its institutions are also called universities of applied sciences. This is comparable to college level. After completing a HBO education of (usually) four years, students receive a bachelor's diploma. The third level is scientific education, also called university level. University education consists of a bachelor's program (usually three years) and a master's program (one to three years). Students and graduates from the higher

¹⁰ The order of the names is decided completely random by using the website www.random.org, to prevent any biases in the order of which the answers are presented.

¹¹ Social classes are defined here as a division of society based on economic distance (Marshall, 2006)

¹² Despite recent debates in the Netherlands on calling students from intermediate vocational education '*pupils*' and students from higher vocational education or university '*students*', I use the term students for the entire group that is enrolled in some kind of further education after high school in the Netherlands.

vocational education and universities are seen as the group of higher educated citizens, while students and graduates from the intermediate vocational education are seen as the intermediate educated citizens (Coffé & Michels 2014; NLQF, n.d.). There is only a very small part of the Dutch population that falls outside of these two categories (6%), forming the group of lower educated citizens. For analysing purposes, the group of HBO and University students is labelled *higher educated students* in this research, and the group of MBO students is labelled *lower educated students*. A more elaborate overview and discussion on the Dutch education system can be found in appendix 1.

The variable *education* is measured in the highest levels of education that respondents are enrolled in, with four ordinal response options: Intermediate vocational education (MBO 1,2,3,4), Higher vocational education (HBO bachelor), University bachelor and University master. The often used responses of 'primary school' and 'high school' are left out because only students of further education (after high school) can participate in the study.

2.3.5 Missing data

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, the trust question on the individual politicians will only be posed if the respondents are familiar with the institutions *and* can indicate the correct name of the president of that institution. The yearly Dutch report on citizens' position towards the EU shows that although the Netherlands scores relatively well regarding knowledge on the EU in comparison to other member states, only 35% of the Dutch respondents answered factual questions on the EU correctly (SCP, 2010, p.16). This leads me to expect that many respondents are not able to answer all the questions. Only when respondents answer both the trust questions on the institutions and the trust questions on the presidents of the institutions, I can compare the answers and indicate whether (s)he trusts institutions and persons differently. If there are many respondent only answering the questions on institutions, this does not mean that those answers are irrelevant. Those can still be used to indicate the trust levels in the different institutions, and that way add to the existing literature. These answers cannot, however, be used to answer the main question, which requires data on one's trust in institutions and trust in individual politicians. Therefore they will be left out in the analysis of the question whether there is a difference of citizens' trust between EU institutions and the individuals representing those institutions, but they will be taken up in the analysis for answering the questions regarding trust in institutions.

§2.4 Summary

The first sub-question, central to this chapter, is of a conceptual nature and also consists of an operational aspect. At the start of this chapter, I presented a definition of political trust in EU institutions and the heads of these institutions. Political trust in this research can be understood as: A

basic, voluntary evaluative orientation of EU citizens towards the EU institutions and the heads of these institutions, based on how well they are performing according to people's normative expectation. With that definition, the first part of the sub-question is answered. Subsequently, the importance of a specific-diffuse division of political trust was discussed connecting it to the potential consequences of the findings of this research, thus reinforcing the scientific and societal relevance of this study. Finally, the concept of political trust was operationalized and the key independent variable was presented. This answered the first sub-question, and helped to set the first steps towards operationalization.

3. Personalization of politics

This chapter aims to formulate an answer to the second, more theoretical, sub-question. The second sub-question is:

Sub-question 2: What is meant by personalization of politics, and can this concept be applied to the EU level?

Here, the concept of personalization is explored and applied to the political arena of the European Union. Based on the findings in the literature, and on the findings in the previous chapter, four hypotheses are formulated that are tested using the methods described in chapter 4.

As explained in the introduction, there is to some extent a personalization of EU politics in the news media (Gattermann, 2017). Instead of putting the relevant EU institutions central to their news coverage, the media tend to place individual politicians in the spotlight. The questions that will be addressed in this paragraph are: What exactly is this personalization of politics phenomenon? And is a similar personalization present in the trust relationship between EU citizens and the EU government?

§3.1 The personalization of politics phenomenon

In many western or liberal democracies, there is a clear focus on individual politicians in the political arena, instead of a focus on political parties or other institutions (Poguntke & Webb, 2007). These individual actors are perceived as more important in shaping citizens' political preferences than political parties or other institutions such as churches or associations (McAllister, 2007; Karvonen, 2010; Gattermann, 2018; Van Aelst et. al., 2012). This observation can be labelled *personalization of politics*. Beyond this observation is a larger shift in society concerning the process of individualization of social life (Bauman, 2001). This individualization of social life means that people see themselves first and foremost as individuals, rather than representatives of collectivities and groups, such as supporters of the same religion or political ideas. This trend in western societies has led to a declining importance of political parties in determining the political behaviour of citizens, and an ever more prominent role for individual politicians (Karvonen, 2010; Manin, 1997). For a more elaborate discussion on the differences between personalization of politics *as such* and as a *trend*, see the informative box on the next page.

In addition to the underlying trend of individualization of social life, Karvonen (2010, p.4) identifies two other developments in most liberal societies that form the causal foundation for the personalization of politics. The first is a decline in loyalty and identification of parties and ideologies by citizens (see also Gallagher, Laver & Mair, 2011, pp.304-309) and an increased focus on specific issues and individual political leaders. The second development is that the media have become the most important channels of political information and propaganda, which inherently favour persons over abstract issues and interests (see also Webb et. al., 2012, p.81). In contrast to political and social organisations in society, such as churches, schools, associations or other communities that often centre around abstract ideas, doctrines or ideologies.

In short, (1) the individualization of social life, (2) the declining importance of parties and (3) the importance of the media, which favours persons over abstract issues, have given rise to the personalization of politics in most liberal democracies. This leads to a focus on individual politicians in the national political arena. Whether this is also the case at the level of the EU remains unclear, since research into this area is scarce. Paragraph 3.2 will further explore this last question.

§3.2 A personalization of politics at the EU level?

The supranational political system of the European Union is not similar to the national system of representative democracy found in most Western European member states. Therefore, the line of argumentation that individualization of social life, together with a declining identification with political parties and a growing importance of individuals in the news media, cannot be applied indiscriminately to the EU. However, there is evidence that there is, to some extent, personalization of EU politics in the news media (Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2015). Although no clear pan-European trend exists (Gattermann, 2018), there are strong signs and empirical findings that indicate this personalized media coverage in the EU member states (see e.g. Van Aelst et. al., 2012, pp.209-210). In addition to the personalization of EU politics in the news media, there are also comprehensive levels of discontent of EU citizens with the political institutions in the EU (Eurobarometer, 2016). These events are similar to the developments underlying the personalization of politics *trend* in modern western democracies and therefore one could expect to see an enhanced role of individuals at EU level politics as well.

PERSONALIZATION OF POLITICS AS A TREND AND AS SUCH

In most research, the emphasis is on the development or trend of personalization of politics (e.g. Karvonen 2010, McAllister, 2007). In those cases a trend is observed in which individual politicians are becoming more important *over time*, at the cost of political institutions. This shift is visible, for example, in the Netherlands where people used to belong to a pillar (a social segment of society classified according to moral or religious views) which was the basis of voting behaviour of groups in society. While now it is an individualized country where electoral volatility is high (Spiecker & Steutel, 2001; Mair, 2008; Gallagher et. al., 2011, p.310). Such a trend can only be observed if one can measure trust in politicians and institutions on multiple moments in time.

In this research, however, the concept of personalization of politics *as such* is central. This is simply the observation that in many liberal democracies the popular focus is on individual political leaders (McAllister, 2007). This entails that individual political leaders are perceived as more important in shaping citizens' political actions or preferences than political parties or other institutions such as churches and associations.

The differences between those two forms can be indicated using the newspaper articles from the introduction, and comparing them with newspaper articles from a few years ago. Current newspaper articles have a clear focus on individuals politicians at the EU level and not on the institutions which they represent: *Juncker: budget European Union needs to increase to fulfil new tasks such as defence and security* (Peeperkorn, 2018), *Donald Tusk: EU's 'heart still open to UK' over Brexit* (BBC, 2018), and *Juncker-Schulz Partnership a test for EU democracy* (Müller, 2016). These are illustrations of personalization of politics *as such*, because the focus is on the person. Some years ago, however, the European institutions were still central to the news articles: *European Commission calls for quotas* (Spiegel Online, 2012), *European Commission wants to stimulate WiFi* (De Volkskrant, 2013), *Europarlement, mightier but not more beloved* (van der Velden, 1999). Comparing these articles with the articles that are currently in the newspapers, one can speak of a *trend* of personalization of politics over the years.

Box 1. *Distinction between personalization of politics as a trend and as such.*

In addition, there have been some institutional developments at the EU level increasing the role of individual politicians. One of which was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in Article 17, stating that the results of the European Parliament (EP) elections should be taken into account when selecting a new president of the European Commission. This resulted in the introduction of so-called *Spitzenkandidaten* by the main political groups in the EU (Schmitt, Hobolt & Popa, 2015). Each of the largest political groups in the EP put forward a lead candidate for the European Commission presidency, a *Spitzenkandidat*, who had a fair chance of taking that position when his or her political group turned out to 'win' the EP elections. With this personalization in EU politics, the political groups aimed for a higher voting turnout during the 2014 EP elections, which they did indeed achieve by this measure (Schmitt et. al., 2015). This is also an indication that EU citizens place higher importance on individual politicians than on institutions.

All this leads to the first, and most general, hypothesis:

H1: People have more trust in the heads of EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust)

More specifically, I expect this hypothesis especially to apply to people with lower levels of education¹³ because individual politicians, rather than political parties, tend to be more important for lower educated people (van Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2010). This means that people with lower education levels are more likely to have higher levels of specific trust (trust in individual politicians) than diffuse trust (trust in institutions). In addition, people with lower levels of education tend to be more supportive of populism¹⁴ in general, and populist parties specifically (Spruyt et. al., 2016, p.342; Bakker, Rooduijn & Schumacher, 2016, p.307; Bovens & Wille, 2014). Within populist parties, and populism in general, personalization plays a larger role than in non-populist parties (Van Holsteyn & Andeweg, 2010; Maarek, 2008). Personalization of politics thus has a more fertile ground with voters with lower levels of education. Extending this line of argumentation to the current study means that I can expect that lower educated people have more trust in the heads of the EU institutions, than in the EU institutions themselves. This, in turn, hints to personalization of EU politics. This leads to the following hypothesis:

¹³ With lower levels of education I refer to the group of people that did not follow any further education after high school and the group of people that enjoyed (intermediate) vocational education, also referred to as *intermediate educated citizens* in chapter two.

¹⁴ Populism here is defined following Cas Mudde's definition of the concept: "*Populism is an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous [...] groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people*" (Mudde, 2004, p.543).

H2: Especially lower educated people have more trust in the heads of EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust)

In contrast, higher educated people are not expected to show a similar trust relationship towards the EU politicians and EU institutions. As explained in chapter two, higher educated people are expected to have more trust in government in general (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Christensen & Lægreid, 2005, p.502; Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2001). Therefore, I expect this group (of higher educated people) to have higher trust levels in both institutions and individual politicians. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Higher educated people have higher trust levels in general (both diffuse and specific trust) than lower educated people

These hypotheses will be tested using the methods explained in chapter 4. If they are confirmed by this research, this has both positive and negative consequences. As discussed in subsection 2.1.2, a higher degree of political trust in individuals than in institutions could be detrimental for the democratic principles underlying the EU system. Additionally, low levels of trust in institutions would provide more leeway for Eurosceptic and populist parties and individuals (Nusselder, 2013, p.93), highlighting these pitfalls in democratic conditions in the EU. Conversely, a higher degree of trust in individual politicians than in institutions could also indicate that these individuals provide short-cuts for EU citizens to make sense of the ambiguous world of EU politics (Gattermann, 2017). Hence, it could make the EU political arena more accessible for citizens as it ‘humanizes’ the abstract and distant EU (Moy & Hussain, 2011, p.224).

If trust in individual EU politicians is higher than trust in the EU institutions, I cannot draw conclusions on whether there is a *trend* of personalization in the EU for two reasons. First, a trend of personalization of politics assumes that there is a *change* in citizens’ trust levels, moving from more trust in institutions (for example political parties) to more trust in individuals (Karvonen, 2010; McAllister, 2007). This research only measures citizens’ trust at one point in time, and therefore I cannot speak of a trend of personalization. Second, no data on this relationship between citizens and individual politicians and institutions are available for other moments in time. Therefore, I cannot indicate whether a trend or development of personalization of politics exists at the EU level. Nonetheless, if the data would show a significantly higher trust level in individuals than in institutions at the EU level, I could state that there is a focus on individuals in the EU political arena, which could be an *indication* of a more comprehensive trend of personalization of EU politics. This observation therefore relates to personalization of politics as such, and not to a trend of personalization of politics.

§3.3 The institutions and individual political leaders

The following European institutions will be taken up in the survey: the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the European Council. These are the most well-known (Eurobarometer, 2016) and largest institutions of the European Union, and are therefore most suitable for this research. In addition, these institutions have a clear ‘head’ or ‘leader’ of the institution, while for example the European Court of Justice does not. Table 1 offers an overview of the institutions, the heads of the institutions and their core tasks.

Institution	Leader/president	Core tasks
<i>European Parliament</i>	<i>Antonio Tajani</i> - assumed office: 17 January 2017 - tenure of office*: 17 months	The directly elected European law-making body which has additional supervisory and budgetary tasks
<i>European Commission</i>	<i>Jean-Claude Juncker</i> - assumed office: 1 November 2014 - tenure of office*: 43 months	The European executive body which initiates legislation, (partly) draws up legislation and enforces/implements legislation. It also implements the EU budget and decisions by the EP and European Council
<i>European Council</i>	<i>Donald Tusk</i> - assumed office: 1 December 2014 - tenure of office*: 42 months	The European institution which decides on the general political direction and priorities of the EU (with summit meetings of the heads of government ¹⁵ of the EU member states)
<i>European Central Bank</i>	<i>Mario Draghi</i> - assumed office: 1 November 2011 - tenure of office*: 79 months	The independent central bank of the EU which conducts the economic and monetary policy of the eurozone

Table 1. *The four European institutions under study, including their leaders and core tasks* (Bache et. al., 2011).

*Measured in months up to and including May 2018.

Table 1 shows that the different individuals for which political trust will be measured are all presidents of a large EU institutions. Research on personalization of EU politics in the news media indicates that the EU officials’ tenure of office (in the case of this specific study Members of the European Parliament) has a positive effect on their news coverage (Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2015). Additionally, a study into the use of Internet shows that the more experienced people are with the Internet, the more they tend to trust the Internet as a reliable source of information and for meeting people (Dutton, 2012). Although these studies do not cover the exact same topic as this thesis, it shows a general trend of increasing levels of visibility and trust the longer people know, or are familiar with, something or

¹⁵ In the case of France, head of state.

someone. This leads me to expect that the better people are familiar with political leaders, the more the leaders are being trusted. Therefore, tenure of office will be the first control variable and hypothesis four is as follows:

H4: People have more (specific) trust in longer serving political leaders in the EU than in political leaders who have been in office for a shorter period of time

§3.4 Theoretical roundup

This chapter aimed to find an answer to the second sub-question of this research. This sub-question is of a theoretical nature, and for that reason an answer sought in the existing literature. The chapter started with an exploration of the concept of personalization of politics, and its application to the EU. Personalization of politics, in this study, means that in a political system, individual politicians play a more important role than political institutions such as political parties, churches or other associations. One can speak of personalization in politics (as such) when individuals play the most prominent role in political processes (e.g. in attributing votes in elections). A distinction is made between the personalization of politics *as such*, and the *trend* of personalization of politics. In this research the focus is on personalization of politics *as such* at the EU level. Whether individuals are indeed more important than institutions in the trust relationship between EU citizens and the EU government is to be tested in the remainder of this study. For this, four hypotheses were drawn up in this chapter. These are summarized in table 2 below.

Hypotheses
Difference specific trust and diffuse trust
H1. <i>People have more trust in the heads of EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust)</i>
H2. <i>Especially lower educated people have more trust in the heads of EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust)</i>
General trust and education level
H3. <i>Higher educated people have higher trust levels in general (both diffuse and specific trust) than lower educated people</i>
Specific trust and tenure of office
H4. <i>People have more (specific) trust in longer serving political leaders in the EU than in political leaders who have been in office for a shorter period of time</i>

Table 2. *Summary of the hypotheses.*

4. Data and methods

In this chapter, the methods and techniques that are used to formulate an answer to the sub-questions and to test the hypotheses are discussed. This chapter starts with an explanation of the research design. Subsequently, the population and the sample are discussed and the data collection is elaborated on. Then, the ways in which the data are analysed are put forward. Lastly, the validity, reliability and replicability of this study are discussed.

§4.1 Research Design

The nature of this research can best be described as a combination of a cross-sectional and a comparative research design (Bryman, 2012, pp.59-75). This study collects data at one point in time, using an online survey. These are characteristics of a cross-sectional design (Bryman, 2012, p.59). The dependent variable in this study is the difference in citizens' trust levels between EU institutions and the heads of these institutions. Besides collecting data on this dependent variable, this study also aims to compare the average level of trust in institutions and the heads of the institutions. For that purpose, data are also collected on a range of independent- and control variables¹⁶, which are used to explain some of the differences in trust levels between groups of people. By indicating the trust levels in institutions and individuals separately, and any differences between them, makes that this research also has a comparative element.

The reason why a quantitative survey design was used to collect data, is that surveys provide valid and reliable means to measure trust (Citrin & Stoker, 2018). In addition, this research aims to explore whether persons are being trusted more than institutions at the EU level. For that, a relatively large group of respondents is necessary. This excluded the option for qualitative interviewing due to time and other resource limitations. A survey provided the excellent means for one researcher to collect large(r) amounts of data in a relatively short period of time (Bryman, 2012, pp.232-233).

§4.2 Population and sample

In this research I aimed to find out to what extent there is personalization of politics in the European Union. Or in other words, if people tend to trust individual EU politicians more than the EU institutions they represent. The ideal population for this research would be all EU citizens. This would have meant that a representative sample from all EU citizens needed to be drawn from the population. Unfortunately, due to the scope of this thesis and the limited financial resources available to the author, the survey respondents could not be selected completely at random from the population of EU citizens. For that reason, a smaller population and sample was chosen.

¹⁶ Gender, current employer, education level, political attitudes and political sophistication

4.2.1 Students

I chose the population of students in the Netherlands (including students from university, higher vocational education and intermediate vocational education) for a couple of reasons. This population is homogenous in the sense of age, which allows for comparable results to that age category. On the other hand, the population is also heterogeneous in the sense of male/female ratio and education levels. This population allows me to indicate whether there is a personalization of politics through the eyes of Dutch students. It additionally allows me to see whether students' trust in individuals and institutions, and the difference between those two, differs according to education levels. Research into citizens' trust levels in national governments shows that education level is a good predictor of trust levels in government (Coffé & Michels, 2014, p.4; Christensen & Lægreid, 2005).

A pitfall of choosing the population of students (in the Netherlands) is that it does not allow for a distinction based on the variable age, since the average age for graduation in the Netherlands ranges between 21.5 and 24.5 years of age, depending on the type of education (CBS, 2018). The variable age, however, is a less valid predictor of trust in governments than education level. For example, the Eurobarometer (2016, p.94) shows that young people seem to be more trusting of the EU than older people, whereas this relationship is reversed when looked at national governments. In that case, younger people are usually less trusting of governments than older people (Citrin & Stoker, 2018, p.9; Christensen & Lægreid, 2005, p.495). These mixed results make the variable age a less valid predictor of trust in government. For these reasons, the variable *age* was left out of the analyses.

Nonetheless, young people are usually more trusting of the EU (e.g. Eurobarometer, 2016). This is also the case in the Netherlands (Schmeets, 2018, p.7). The implication of working with the sample of students in the Netherlands to conduct a trust study into the different institutions and heads of the institutions in the EU, is that the average trust levels will probably be higher than when measured for the total population of people in the Netherlands, or even EU citizens. This is an expected bias that I should take into consideration when interpreting the results of the survey.

Additional reasons to choose the population of students (in the Netherlands) were the ability to differentiate based on the other independent variables (such as gender, political identification and political sophistication), and the relatively easy access to the population. Finally, it was important for this research – again taking into account the limited amount of time and the limited financial resources available to the author – to focus on a subgroup instead of the entire population of EU citizens or citizens in the Netherlands. In the end, randomness in sampling is more important than diversity when generalizing the findings (Bryman, 2012, p.201). Therefore, the sample was depicted from this

population as randomly as possible. Further elaborations on the data collection can be found in the next paragraph.

4.2.2 The Netherlands

One country was chosen to draw the sample from to ensure that the effects of national institutional arrangements and other contextual factors which could have an influence on the trust relationship between citizens and government (such as labour market conditions, the legal system and education system) were kept constant (Lau & Ngo, 1996). This way I was able to examine whether trust in institutions and individuals was affected by demographic and/or attitudinal variables. The Netherlands was partly chosen for practical reasons, for example that access to the population was relatively easy. Another practical reason was that most Dutch citizens (91%) are enrolled in at least some years of further education after finishing high school¹⁷ (Rijksoverheid, 2018). This makes the results not representative for the whole population (for example the variable *age* is left out), but it means that the results can account for a large part of the population, since most Dutch citizens enjoy at least some years of further education after high school. In addition, Dutch citizens are relatively knowledgeable regarding EU questions in comparison to other countries (SCP, 2010), which is advantageous regarding the data needed for the analyses. Knowledgeable citizens generally participate more in politics (Dassonneville, 2012), which positively influences their trust position towards government and can in that way influence the results of this study (for an elaborate discussion see subsection 4.3.2b).

Although using this sample means that the results cannot be generalized to the whole population of the Netherlands, let alone to the European Union as a whole, the results are applicable to the *student* population in the Netherlands and also (partly) to the *student* population in Finland, Germany, and Denmark. These four countries score similarly on a Eurosceptic scale regarding the European regime (diffuse trust) and European policies (specific trust) (De Vries, 2018, p.81). The same level of scepticism towards the European regime and European policies is a good predictor of more general attitudes towards the EU from those countries. Therefore, the results of this study can be an indication of the sentiment of the student populations of the Netherlands, Finland, Germany and Denmark regarding the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions.

¹⁷ 95% of the pupils in the Netherlands go from primary education on to secondary education. From there, only 4% leaves school without further education (intermediate vocational, higher vocational or scientific education). The numbers of students who do not finish their further studies with a diploma is drastically higher (31%). Nonetheless, this indicates that most Dutch citizens enjoy at least some years in some form of further education (intermediate vocational, higher vocational or scientific education) (Rijksoverheid, 2018).

Despite the (relatively) small and specific sample, the findings of this research are still very relevant. First, because no research has indicated the differences between one's trust in institutions and the individuals representing those institutions at the EU level. Second, because these findings are an interesting first step for further research into the phenomenon of personalization at the EU level in a more comprehensive fashion.

4.2.3 Sample size

The aimed sample size was $n=150$. Considerations regarding time and costs underlay this sample size, given that this thesis was limited in scope and only one researcher was available to collect data. The final sample size turned out to be larger with $n=206$. Most research on political trust, however, makes use of existing databases leading to very large sample sizes (e.g. Armingeon & Ceka, 2014, with $n=130,000$). In the case of this research, new data need to be collected, which explains the smaller sample size. The initial number of 150 was based on personal estimation of what was feasible in the limited amount time, and based on earlier (survey) research of Dutch students (although on different subjects) with sample sizes of $n=93$ (Steenman et. al., 2016) and $n=311$ (Schaufeli et. al., 2002).

§4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 Research instrument and access to respondents

For this study, a self-completion survey was used as the main research instrument. The questions in the survey were drawn-up, tested in a pilot within the researcher's own network¹⁸, adjusted where needed and only after that initial cycle, the finalized survey was used to collect data (Bryman, 2012, p.185). The survey was available online, by making use of the Qualtrics survey tool¹⁹. Data were collected by spreading the survey through e-mail, social media (such as Facebook, WhatsApp) and through face-to-face contact. For the latter method, I went to different locations of different Universities, HBO institutions and MBO institutions in different student cities, and asked bypassing students if they could fill out the survey. For this purpose I brought an iPad so the students could fill out the survey on the spot. Important here was that I did this on different days and times to reach as many different students as possible. The survey was conducted between 5 April and 18 May 2018. The three cities²⁰ where I approached students in person and asked them to fill out the survey, were Rotterdam, Utrecht and Zwolle²¹.

¹⁸ I have done a trial test within the Utrecht University Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance

¹⁹ www.qualtrics.com/

²⁰ Only three student cities could be visited due to time limitations

²¹ In each city at least $n=15$ students filled out the survey in person. In Zwolle the majority was from MBO ($n=17$), in Rotterdam from HBO ($n=5$) and University ($n=10$) and in Utrecht from MBO ($n=5$), HBO ($n=6$) and University ($n=5$).

The survey was available both in English and in Dutch, so I could include both Dutch students, and international students studying in the Netherlands²².

4.3.2 Control variables

In chapter 2, I elaborated upon measurements for political trust in institutions and individuals and for the basic knowledge questions on the EU institutions and the heads of those institutions. Also, the most important independent variable, education level, was discussed. In chapter 3 I touched upon the first control variable, the tenure of office of the individual politicians at the EU level. These are measured in months up to and including May 2018 (see table 1). In addition to those variables, some control variables were included in this study in order to explain differences between groups of individuals and their levels of trust. Both their theoretical significance and their operationalization are discussed. The variables were divided into two subsections: demographic variables and attitudinal variables.

a. Demographic variables

The demographic variables that are most commonly associated with social and political attitudes, like trust, are gender, social class and age (Newton & Norris, 1999, p.9; Hetherington, 1998, p.794). Social class, or education level, was discussed in chapter 2 since it is the most important independent variable for this research. The remainder of the demographic variables are discussed here.

To start with gender, it appears that women tend to be more supportive of the public sector than men (Christensen & Lægreid, 2005, p.495). This may be related to the trend that women's career basis, some time after they enter the labour market, is the public sector. Research confirms that one can expect employees of the public sector to be more trusting of governments (Christensen & Lægreid, 2005, p.495). Applying this line of thought to this study in the context of the EU governance system, I expect that women and employees of the public sector have higher trust levels in both EU institutions and the heads of the EU institutions. To correct for this, both measures on gender and current employer were included in the survey. *Gender* was measured as a dichotomous variable with female (1) and male (0), the latter acting as the reference group. A third answer option was added ('prefer not to say') regarding the discussions on gender neutrality in the Netherlands. The nominal measure *current employer* was coded into five categories: public sector employer, private sector employer, NGO employer, other and N/A (not applicable). This approach was chosen because only a difference in public sector and private sector employees was expected to influence trust levels towards

²² 36 students filled out the survey in English and 170 in Dutch. This does not mean that all of those n=36 are international students, since the standard language setting was English.

governments (Christensen & Lægreid, 2005, p.495), and NGOs can be considered a mixture of public and private.

b. Attitudinal variables

Besides the demographic variables, there were two attitudinal variables which were expected to influence respondents' trust levels in public institutions and individual politicians. The first concerned political attitudes; more specifically, how a person placed himself (or herself) on a left-right scale for political preferences. The evidence is mixed on how this influences one's trust levels. Some studies show that people who place themselves furthest to the left are generally expected to have the lowest political trust levels (Newton & Norris, 2000, p.9), while other studies demonstrate that affiliation with the left increases trust in governments (Christensen & Lægreid, 2005, p.500). Considering these mixed results, and having taking into account the rise of populist parties (which are often identified with either the far right or the far left, *and* most critical of current governments), I expect people who placed themselves furthest to the edges of the scale (either the far left or the far right), to have the lowest levels of diffuse trust²³. For this reason, a question on self-placement on a left-right scale was included in the survey. This was measured by means of a drag bar which constitutes a continuous scale.

The second attitudinal variable concerned political sophistication. Although this is a much debated variable and no unambiguous way of measuring it exists (Luskin, 1987), political sophistication can be seen as a concept representing citizens' political knowledge from which they make well-reasoned voting choices (Dassonneville, 2012, pp.20-21). Many variables can be used to measure political sophistication, but political knowledge is the best indicator for political sophistication (Dassonneville, 2012, p.21). People scoring 'higher' on the political sophistication variable tend to participate more in politics (Luskin, 1987, p.889), and therefore I can assume that they have higher levels of political trust in general. The variable *political sophistication*, or more specifically, political knowledge of the EU, was measured following the questioning in the Eurobarometer and an earlier research measuring political sophistication in the EU (Eurobarometer 2016; Armingeon & Ceka, 2014). In these studies, two statements were used to measure how politically sophisticated respondents were about EU matters. Respondents were asked to indicate whether two statements were true or false. The first was "the EU currently consists of 28 Member States". The second statement was "Switzerland is a Member State of the EU". Based on these statements, I constructed an ordinal variable with three values (0-2) by summing the number of correct values, and indicated the level of sophistication (Armingeon & Ceka, 2014; Kenski & Stroud, 2006).

²³ I specifically mention diffuse trust here since populism and personalization seem to go hand in hand (see chapter three) and therefore people who support populist parties may have higher levels of specific trust.

§4.4 Data analysis

First and foremost, this study aimed to indicate differences in (1) the levels of trust that people attribute to EU institutions and (2) the individuals representing these institutions. This can be indicated by using descriptive statistics which, for instance, the statistical computer program IBM SPSS can produce. For this, four ‘couples’ of institutions and heads of those institutions were established. These are summarized in table 3 below. Political trust was indicated for both the EU institution and the individual representing the institution, and (significant) differences between them were indicated per couple with a *Paired Samples t-Test*. This test allows to indicate statistically significant differences between two related sample means (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.61), which is the case when the two samples consist of the same group of respondents (as in this study). In other words, with this test I was able to indicate whether there is a significant difference²⁴ between students’ trust level in EU institutions and the heads of the EU institutions.

Couple #	EU institution	Head of EU institution
1	European Parliament	Antonio Tajani
2	European Commission	Jean-Claude Juncker
3	European Central Bank	Mario Draghi
4	European Council	Donald Tusk

Table 3. *Couples of EU institutions and Heads of institutions for data analysis*

To conduct a *paired samples t test*, I constructed a ‘difference’ variable by subtracting the ‘trust in institution’ variable from the ‘trust in person’ variable within each couple. Positive outcomes meant that people trusted individuals more than institutions, negative outcomes meant that people trusted institutions more than individuals and a score of 0 means that they trusted both actors equally. Following a significant outcome of the *paired samples t test*, a Cohen’s d test was conducted to measure the effect size of the differences.

Second, this research aimed to find out whether the key independent variable *education level* played a significant role in determining respondents’ trust levels. To see whether lower educated people had more specific trust than diffuse trust, descriptive statistics were used. In addition, the more general question whether higher educated students were more trusting towards the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions (compared to the lower educated students) was examined by means of a *standard multiple regression analysis*, also called an *ordinary least squares (OLS)* regression. This OLS regression allows to indicate to what extent respondents’ *education level* can predict differences in

²⁴ Statistically significant differences do not inherently mean *relevant* differences. For this study, a difference in trust of at least 1 whole point (on a scale from 0-10) is seen as a relevant difference.

their trust levels, while controlling for other important independent variables such as *gender* and *current employer*. I conducted such an OLS regression for both diffuse trust and specific trust.

Third, I tested whether the tenure of office of the heads of the EU institutions had an influence on the levels of trust they enjoyed. For that a *One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA* was used, because it allows to test for statistically significant differences between three or more sample means (Allen & Bennet, 2012). There are four heads of institutions, and this measure can indicate whether trust levels in each of these differ significantly from the others.

Finally, a multiple regression analysis was conducted (OLS regression) for the other control variables. Since the sample sizes were too small to regress all those control variables on the dependent variable at the same time, I left out the control variables that turned out insignificant in previous tests and tested the remaining control variables in multiple runs. In order to be able to test these variables in the OLS regressions, *education level*, *gender*, *current employer* and *political sophistication* were transformed into proxy or dummy variables. In the case of *education level*, higher educated students were expected to have higher trust levels and therefore the group of lower educated students was the reference category (0). For *gender*, females were expected to show more trust in institutions and persons and therefore males served as the reference group (0). People with a current employer from the public sector were expected to have higher trust levels, and therefore people with an employer not from the public sector served as the reference group (0). Finally, the variable *political sophistication* was recoded by assigning those who answered zero to one question correct, the value 0 (not politically sophisticated), and those who answered both question correct the value 1 (politically sophisticated).

§4.5 Validity, reliability and replicability

4.5.1 Validity

Validity is a criterion for good research and is mostly concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are drawn from a study. The concept of validity can be split up in three aspects: *measurement validity*, *internal validity* and *external validity* (Bryman, 2012, p.47). *Measurement validity* concerns whether the measurements used to operationalize concepts are valid. In other words, whether a concept measurement really reflects that concept. A commonly used test for measurement validity of multiple-item measures is the Cronbach's alpha, which grasps internal consistency. It has values between 1 (perfect internal consistency) and 0 (no internal consistency). The value of 0.8 is seen as the acceptable level of measurement validity for a concept, but much research also allows lower values to be sufficient (Bryman, 2012, p.170). The Cronbach's alpha test was conducted on the 'trust in institutions', 'trust in individuals' and 'political sophistication' measure, since these are the only multiple item concepts which are assumed to measure the same. The first two have a sufficient degree

of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha: .87 and .83 respectively), while the latter only has a Cronbach's alpha of .15. Apparently, people varied widely in answering these two knowledge questions. Despite the low Cronbach's alpha, this measure is still used since it appeared a valid way to measure political knowledge in larger samples (e.g. Eurobarometer). The measurement validity for the single-item measures is guaranteed by only using measures that have proven strong theoretical and methodological validity (Bryman, 2012; Berkvist & Rossiter, 2007, p.177; Wanous et. al., 1997).

Internal validity relates to the issue of causality (Bryman, 2012, p.47), and it is usually weak in research designs other than experiments, including this study. Only cohesion between variables are indicated using a cross-sectional and/or comparative research design, and no causal claims can be made. Nonetheless, some non-manipulable variables, such as gender and current employer, do make it possible to indicate causal relations between variables in this research because we can assume that these variables are 'given'. So if this study would for example show that gender is significantly related to higher levels of trust in individuals at the EU level, in the sense that women tend to trust individuals over institutions more than men, we can assume this relationship is causal because gender cannot be influenced by any other external factors²⁵. Therefore, these non-manipulable variables can explain both the variance and the (causal) direction of it in the dependent variable (Bryman, 2012, p.62). The *external validity* of this study is ensured by selecting students in The Netherlands as randomly as possible. However, by spreading the survey online through social media channels such as Facebook and Whatsapp, people in my own network might be slightly overrepresented. This effect is reduced by additionally collecting data on random days and times, in randomly selected students cities and the University, HBO and MBO institutions in those cities. This way a random sample is highly strived for, and the external validity can be ensured to a satisfactory extent.

4.5.2 Reliability and Replicability

Due to the specific outline of this research, it can easily be repeated. A comprehensive description of the steps taken during this study is provided, and the methods and techniques for data collection and analysis are elaborated upon extensively. In addition, the quantitative nature of this research also allows for easy replication. This enhances the reliability of the study.

Furthermore, reliability is strengthened by the stability or internal validity of measures (Bryman, 2012, p.169). In the previous paragraph, I explained that the Cronbach's alpha indicates the internal consistency of multiple item measures. For the single item measures, stability is of importance. Stability means that the results of one measure do not fluctuate from time to time. For most of the

²⁵ This line of argumentation is hypothetical and only serves as an elaboration of the point I am trying to make.

measures, stability can be ensured because the measures are factual and not subjective. For example, we know for a fact that age is stable (or stably increasing for that matter), so is gender, current employer and so on. The only measures which leave room for interpretation and fluctuation are the trust measures and the political attitudes measure (which requests respondents to place themselves on a left-right scale regarding their political position). The trust questions are, as explained earlier, commonly used in empirical research as a valid indication of citizens' feelings towards government (Citrin & Stoker, 2018). In addition, a more granular measure (with response options ranging from 0 until 10) was adopted since it provides room to better distinguish the differing levels of trust. This may disregard the stability of the measure, however, because respondents have more options to choose from and their answers may differ accordingly. Nonetheless, this seems to be the best measure to grasp citizens' trust towards institutions and individual politicians in detail (Citrin & Stoker, 2018) and therefore these measures on trust are used in this study. Regarding the political attitudes measure, I cannot foresee whether it is stable over time, which could affect the reliability of the study. Nonetheless, this measure grasps the respondents' opinion on their political position at one moment, which can still be a useful indicator or predictor for certain levels of trust of people with different political ideologies.

Additionally, the current employer measure only differentiates between public, private and non-governmental organizations, because it is expected that it matters for the levels of trust of citizens whether they are employed by the government or not. However, more sophisticated differences can exist among employees within the public sector for example. This study does not indicate those detailed differences, and only shows a potential difference for public, private or non-governmental organizations. This is sufficient for this study, but more segregated differences could be potentially interesting for further research.

For all measures, I am dependent on the honesty of online respondents for the reliability and validity of this study. Despite the factual nature of most of the questions, the honesty of respondents may be questioned (Parrey & Crossley, 1950; Rogers & Richarme, 2009). For example, people could use internet search engines to find out the correct answer to the questions while filling out the survey. In order to avoid this, I added a sentence on the introduction page of the survey stating that *'There are no correct or incorrect answers for this research'*. Despite these efforts, it could still be the case that some respondents use the internet in answering the questions (e.g. by searching online for the name of the head of one of the EU institutions). Although I do not expect this to happen on a large scale, I added a final question to the survey where all respondents could leave a comment or remark, for example to indicate such practices. Finally, the relatively large sample size also corrects for these biases.

5. Results

In this chapter I present the findings of this research. In the first paragraph I elaborate on necessary methodological assumptions for the statistical tests. In the second paragraph I show the general trends of trust among students from the Netherlands. In the subsequent paragraphs I discuss all four hypotheses and the findings are substantiated with data visualizations. In short, I find that there are no differences between students' levels of diffuse trust and specific trust, and that the only independent variable that has a significant effect on trust is *education level*.

§5.1 Normality assumption of the distribution of scores

Before discussing the results, I need to make a note regarding the necessity of a normal distribution for each variable (e.g. the variable *general trust in the heads of the institutions or trust in the European Parliament*) in most statistical tests that are conducted in this chapter (the *paired sample t test*, *OLS regression analysis* and the *ANOVA test*). This assumption of normality is a necessary condition for the tests, and if this assumption is violated the tests could potentially present biased results. The two tests for normality²⁶, which I conducted for the distributions of all *trust*-variables and some control variables, were significant (*Sig.* < .05) in each case. This means that the null hypothesis, stating that the data have been sampled from a normally distributed population, has to be rejected (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.38). In other words, the normality assumption in all groups of scores was violated. This means that the raw data are not normally distributed (see appendix 2: A.1 for the normality test scores).

Nonetheless, this poses no insurmountable difficulties, since the skewness can be explained and the distribution of the *residuals* is of more importance in conducting the analyses (Allison, 1999). To start with the latter, a large sample is the best medicine to this potential pitfall, or as Allison (1999, p.130) puts it: "When the sample is moderately large, we can dispense with the normality assumption entirely". A normal distribution of residuals is ensured with the sample size $n=206$. For attaining descriptive statistics of the individual variables (e.g. of *trust in institutions*) and for performing the regression analyses (e.g. the relationship between *education level and general trust*), the samples have to be relatively large ($n \geq 30$ is used as a rule of thumb). Additionally, research indicates that despite violation of the normality of a distribution, analyses of variance (ANOVA) are still robust (Schmider et. al., 2010). By taking these necessary measures and assuming the robustness of the tests, all parametric tests could be conducted in a reliable and valid manner. Second, the distributions show us that in general, students in the Netherlands have quite some trust in the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions. This shows in the way that most of the distributions are *negatively skewed* (Allen & Bennet, 2012). In this study, this means that most respondents answered the trust questions with a number on the right half of the scale (a 6 or above) where 10 was *full trust*. The distributions also appeared to be relatively normally distributed, with a peak around or near the mean (see figure 3).

²⁶ The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilkinson test (Allen & Bennett, 2012)

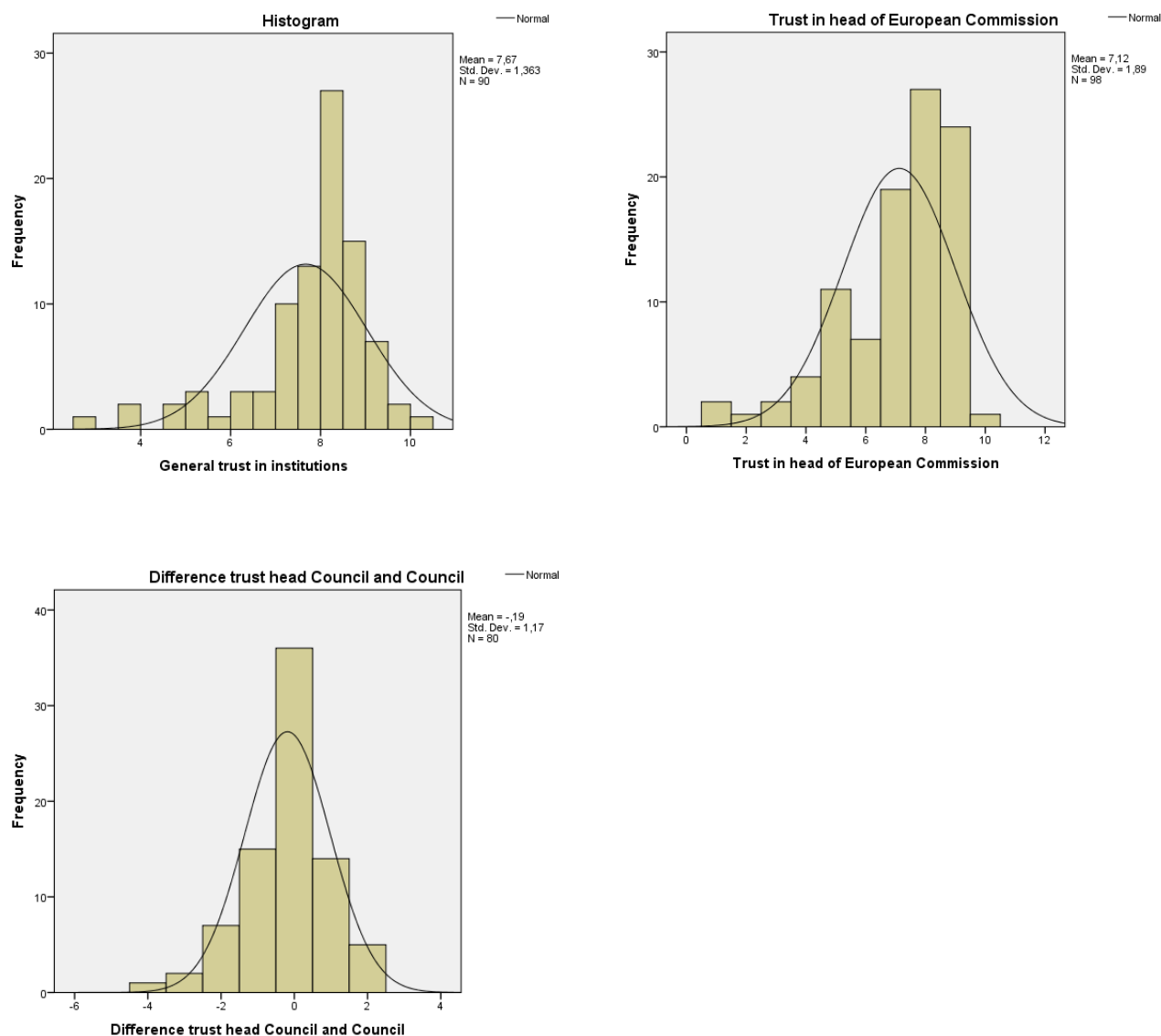


Figure 3. Three examples of the distribution of the different groups of scores (computed variable *general trust in institutions*, single variable *trust in the head of the European Commission*, and difference variable *Difference trust head Council and Council*). Note: the normal distribution curve is indicated with the black line. For the remaining graphs, see appendix 2: A.2.

The *negative skew* in the *general trust variables* can (partly) be explained by the fact that there are more higher educated people in the sample ($n=123$) than lower educated people ($n=57$). As I will show later in this chapter, people with higher education levels have significantly higher trust levels than those with lower education levels. Moreover, as explained earlier, younger people are generally more trusting of the EU. The student population in the Netherlands is (for the largest part) young and this has most likely contributed to the skewness in the distributions. For the *difference variables*, the trust levels that people attributed to institutions and the heads of the institutions do not differ much, and therefore many observations centre around the mean. This explains the large peak around zero, and with that the skewness of the distribution. Finally, the histograms of the *single variables* show a peak around the number 7-8, which can be explained by the reasoning that people tend to answer

moderately positive if they do not feel strongly about an issue. In more technical terms, this is called measurement error of an eleven-point scale (Coelho & Esteves, 2007, p.318).

§5.2 The overall picture of trust

Trust was measured in two ways, differentiating between specific trust and diffuse trust (also see chapter 2). Figure 4 below shows the mean trust levels and the standard deviations for each of the actors in the political arena of the EU.

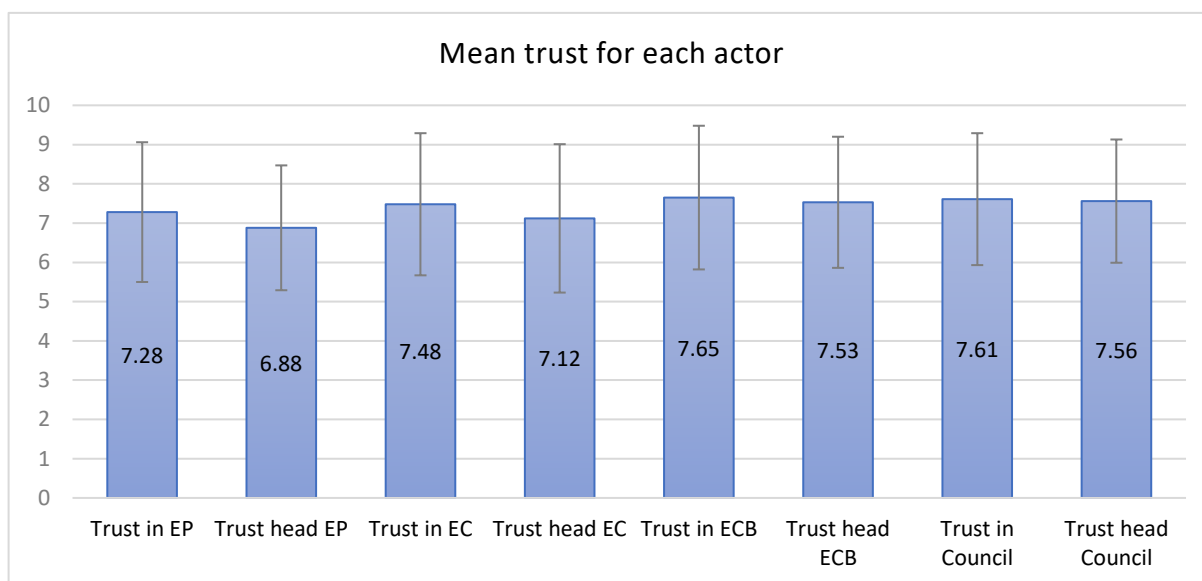


Figure 4. Mean trust levels for each actor and the accompanying SDs illustrated with error bars. Note: the error bars illustrate values of one SD above and one SD below the mean (this applies to all figures with error bars).

The distributions in figure 4 confirms that students from the Netherlands are generally quite trusting towards both the EU institutions and the heads of those institutions. All mean scores are well above six, which indicates ample levels of trust. An important note here is that the sample sizes differ per variable. The reason for this is that the survey was set up in such a way that the trust questions regarding the heads of the institutions were only posed under the condition that the trust question on the institutions *and* the questions of familiarity with the heads of the institutions were answered affirmatively. This led to a rather small number of people²⁷ who completed all the trust questions (on all institutions and on all persons). Instead of only looking at the answers of the students who filled out all the trust questions, I examined the answers to the trust questions of each institution and its head separately. This resulted in larger sample sizes for each pair. For the descriptive statistics of the individual variables (e.g. *trust in the EP* or *trust in Juncker*) I used *pairwise deletion* (Allison, 1999, p.79) to take up as many cases as possible. This means that people who did answer the trust question on

²⁷ n=40 (out of the total sample of n=206).

the institution but not on the head of the institution were taken up in calculating the mean and the SD for each variable. However, to be able to compare the levels of trust in institutions and heads of institutions, it is important that people filled out both trust questions. That way the groups that are compared remain similar in size, and the differences in trust that one person has in institutions and individuals becomes clear. Therefore, in comparing the trust levels (e.g. between the different institutions or between institutions and heads of institutions), I used *listwise deletion* (Allison, 1999, p.79) and I only included the cases in which both questions of trust were answered.

§5.3 More specific trust than diffuse trust?

This paragraph explores whether hypothesis one holds. The first hypothesis is the following:

Hypothesis 1. *People have more trust in the heads of EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust)*

5.3.1 General trust²⁸

Despite hints in the literature and media, indicating a trend towards personalization of EU politics, the data collected for this research paint a somewhat different picture. It appears that general trust in institutions is (slightly) higher than general trust in the heads of the institutions. This is contrary to what I was expecting in hypothesis 1. The results are illustrated in figure 5.

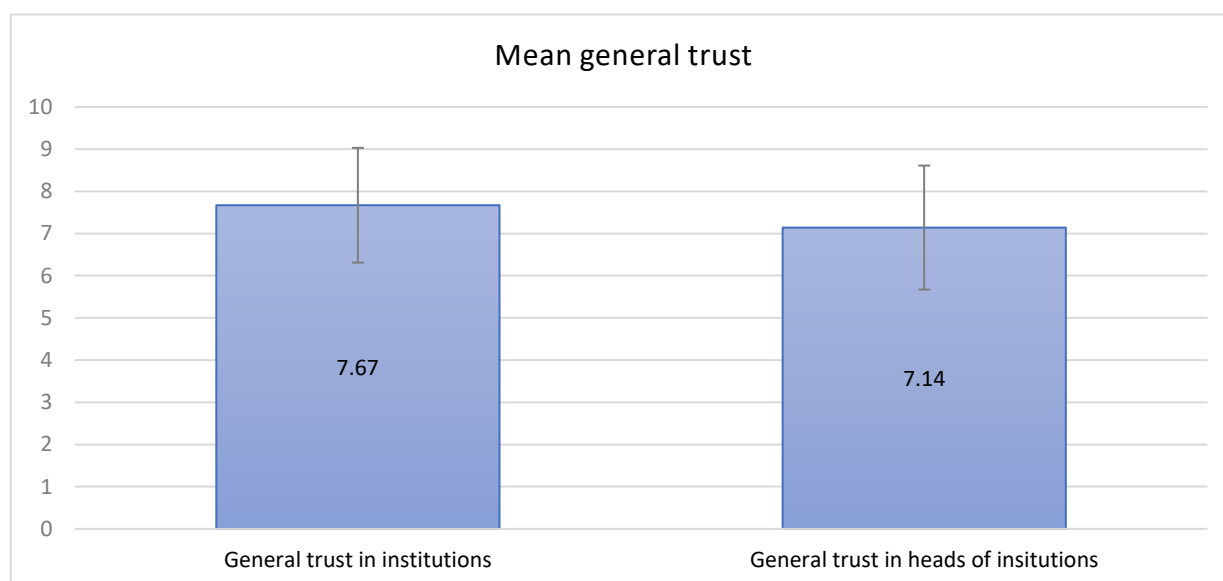


Figure 5. *General trust in institutions (n=90) and general trust in the heads of the institutions (n=40). The accompanying SDs are illustrated with error bars.*

To find out whether the differences between *general trust in institutions* and *general trust in the heads of the institutions* are significant, a *paired samples t test* was conducted (Allen & Bennett, 2012). The condition of a normal distribution for each group of scores also applies to this test of significance. This

²⁸ General trust variables are drawn up by combining the four variables on trust in institutions and by combining the four variables on trust in the heads of the institutions. For each variable, pairwise deletion was used.

was sufficiently guaranteed (see §5.1). To perform a t test, a *difference* variable needed to be established²⁹. From the descriptive statistics (see figure 4) I can observe that the general trust in institutions is higher than in persons. Therefore, I can expect a negative (below zero) outcome from the t test. Conducting a *paired samples t test* showed that there is a small statistically significant difference with $t(39) = -2.65$, $p(0.026) < 0.05$ at the level of $\alpha = .05$, between trust in the heads of the institutions and trust in the institutions at the EU level (see table 4 below). On average, students trusted institutions 0.32 points higher than persons (on an 11-point scale). However, this difference is so small that it is very likely to be the effect of sampling error or measurement error. Therefore I conducted a *Cohen's d* test to determine the effect size of the difference between the two related samples (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.69). The outcome was Cohen's $d = -.216$ which indicates a (very) small effect size.

In sum, I can conclude that the difference between the two groups is too small to hold the claim that there is an actual difference in citizens' trust in institutions and persons. In other words, students in the Netherlands do not trust the European institutions (diffuse trust) differently than the heads of these institutions (specific trust).

Paired samples test (general trust, n=40)				
Paired differences				
M = -.319	SD = .762	Std. Error Mean = .120	95% CI of the difference: -.562 (lower) ³⁰ -.075 (upper)	t = -2.647 df = 39 Sig. (2 tailed) = .012*

Table 4. The paired samples t test for general trust levels. * $p < .05$

5.3.2 Trust in the different institutions and heads of the institutions

The previous subsection showed that in general, the differences in trust between EU institutions and the heads of the EU institutions are negligible. In this subsection, the question whether there are significant differences between specific trust and diffuse trust is broken down to the four different institutions and their heads, and tested by *paired samples t tests*. For an illustration of the mean trust level per institution and the head of the institution, see figure 4. As a complement to figure 4, table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for each actor individually, and for the difference variables (hereafter indicated with *Dif.*) which were established for each 'couple'. As explained in §5.2, the descriptive statistics for each separate variable (trust in institution or trust in head of institution) were retrieved

²⁹ This *difference* (hereafter *dif.*) variable was set up by subtracting *general trust in institutions* from *general trust in the heads of institutions*.

³⁰ This value indicates that if I repeated this test a hundred times, in 95 instances the *maximum* difference in trust would be 0.56. This, again, shows that the differences between diffuse and specific trust are quite small.

by using *pairwise deletion* and the descriptive statistics and the tests with *dif.* variables were conducted using *listwise deletion*.

	European Parliament	European Commission	European Central Bank	European Council
Trust in institution	n=160 M = 7.28 SD = 1.78	n=124 M = 7.48 SD = 1.82	n=125 M = 7.65 SD = 1.83	n=110 M = 7.61 SD = 1.68
Trust in head	n=69 M = 6.88 SD = 1.59	n=98 M = 7.12 SD = 1.89	n=74 M = 7.53 SD = 1.67	n=80 M = 7.56 SD = 1.57
<i>Dif. Variable</i> ³¹	n = 69 M = -0.38 SD = 1.82	n = 98 M = -0.42 SD = 1.21	n = 74 M = -0.32 SD = 1.23	n = 80 M = -0.19 SD = 1.17
Paired samples t test	t(68) = -1.72, p(0.089) > 0.05, $\alpha = .05$	t(97) = -3.43, p(0.01)* < 0.05, $\alpha = .05$	t(73) = -2.27, p(0.026)* < 0.05, $\alpha = .05$	t(79) = -1.43, p(0.156) > 0.05 $\alpha = .05$
Cohen's d	x	d = -0.234 (small)	d = -0.189 (very small)	x

Table 5. *Results specific and diffuse trust broken down by institution.* *p < .05

The descriptive statistics indicate that there is not one couple in which the heads of the institutions are trusted *more* than the institutions themselves. This shows that the respondents' diffuse trust is higher than their specific trust at the EU level. The *paired samples t tests* show that only the difference between institution and head of institution is significant in the European Commission couple and the European Central Bank couple. In both cases the difference is only small, and the variance is relatively high³² (see figure 6 on the next page). The differences could thus very well be caused by measurement error or sampling error. Therefore, I have to conclude that in none of the couples the difference between respondent's trust in institutions and the heads of the institutions is noteworthy.

What is noteworthy, is that the institutions are substantially more familiar to the respondents than the heads of the institutions. This shows in the differences in sample sizes for the institutions and the heads of the institutions. For example, only 59.2% of the people who answered the trust question on the ECB, also answered the trust question on Draghi. This means that about 40% of the people who are familiar with the ECB are not familiar with, or could not indicate the correct name for, the leader of the ECB. The difference in familiarity with the institutions and their heads is substantial for each of the four couples. The implications of this will be discussed in §5.7 and in chapter 6.

³¹ Variables computed as: Trust head institution – trust in institution.

³² This is partly caused by outliers in the dataset for the difference variables.

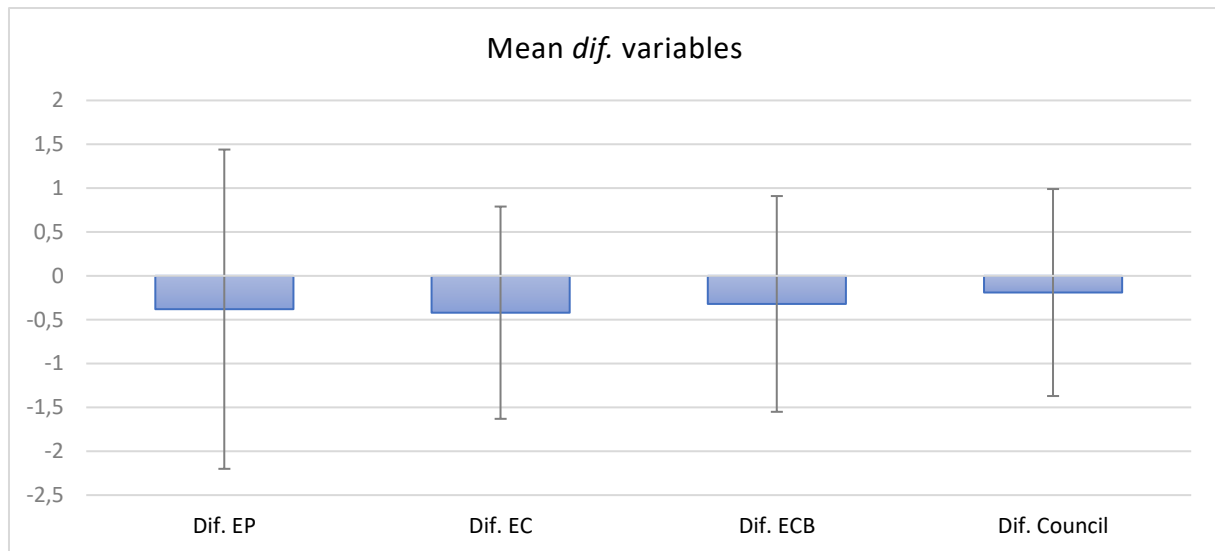


Figure 6. Means of the difference variables per couple and the accompanying SDs illustrated with error bars.

5.3.3 People do not have more specific trust than diffuse trust at the EU level

The findings from this paragraph show that there is no evidence for hypothesis 1 and consequently, I have to reject it. In other words, students in the Netherlands do not have more trust in the heads of the EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust). Even more specifically, there is no significant difference between students' trust levels in institutions or individuals. They tend to trust both actors similarly. Interestingly in light of the personalization thesis, students are substantially more familiar with the EU institutions, than with the heads of the institutions.

§5.4 Education level and (specific and diffuse) trust

5.4.1 Lower education level and specific trust

As explained in previous chapters, the education level of respondents is expected to influence their levels of trust towards EU institutions and the heads of the institutions. More specifically, students from intermediate vocational education (MBO) are expected to have more trust in the heads of the EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust). Hypothesis 2 is as follows:

H2. Especially lower educated people have more trust in the heads of EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust)

The respondents currently in (some form of) intermediate vocational education form the group of lower educated students in this research. The number of lower educated students who filled out the survey was n=57. Only six of them (10.5%) completed all eight trust questions³³. The appropriate

³³ From the group of higher educated students (n=123), 34 completed all eight trust questions, which is 27.6%.

measure to indicate whether there is a significant difference between lower educated students' trust in institutions and heads of the institutions is again a *paired sample t test*. In this case, however, the sample sizes for the difference variables of lower educated students' trust levels are too small to conduct such a test (EP n=9, EC n=11, ECB n=11, Council n=7). In this case I have to conclude that the collected data cannot provide an answer to this hypothesis and therefore, I cannot confidently accept or reject it.

What remains as a possibility is to see what the descriptive statistics show. These findings are summarized in table 6 and figure 7.

Lower educated students	European Parliament	European Commission	European Central Bank	European Council
Trust in institution	n = 34 M = 6.24 SD = 0.38	n = 20 M = 5.95 SD = 0.52	n = 19 M = 6.42 SD = 0.51	n = 16 M = 6.19 SD = 0.46
Trust in head	n = 9 M = 6.44 SD = 0.71	n = 11 M = 5.36 SD = 0.74	n = 11 M = 5.91 SD = 0.58	n = 7 M = 5.71 SD = 0.64
Dif. Variable ³⁴	n = 9 M = 0.89 SD = 1.97	n = 11 M = -0.91 SD = 0.83	n = 11 M = -0.18 SD = 1.54	n = 7 M = 0.14 SD = 1.07

Table 6. Results specific and diffuse trust lower educated students (only descriptive statistics).

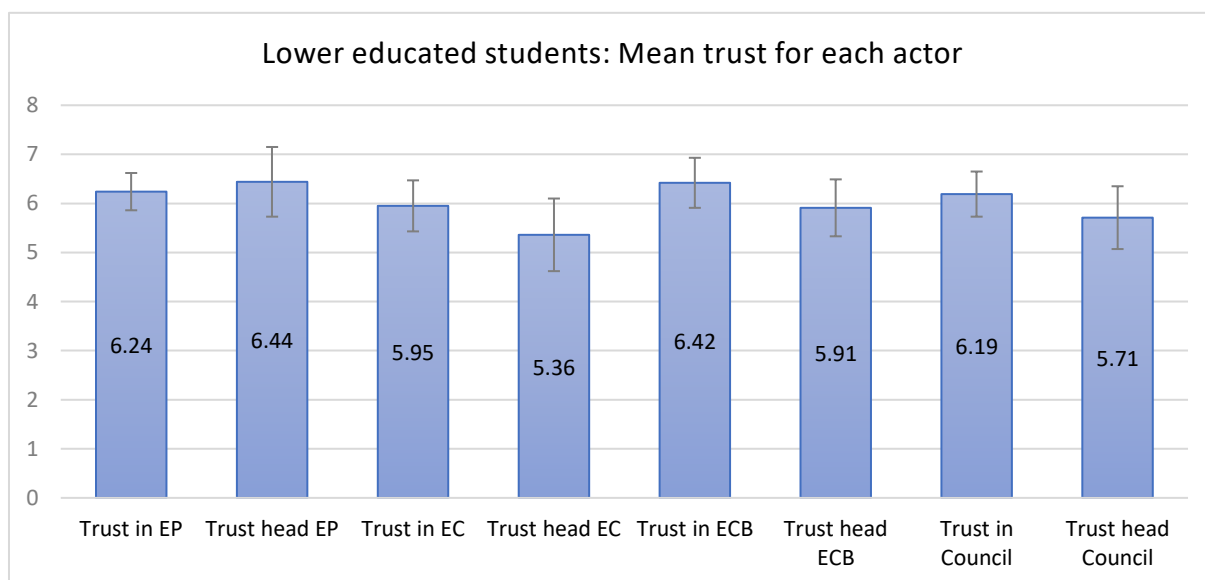


Figure 7. Mean trust levels of the group of Lower Educated (LE) students for each actor and the accompanying SDs illustrated with error bars.

Although interpretation of these findings should be done with care, since the sample sizes are too small to be able to state anything conclusively, three things are of interest. The first is that there are

³⁴ Variables computed as: Trust head institution – trust in institution (condition: education level low, by making use of a dummy variable for education)

two *positive* values in the difference variables. In the previous section, there were only negative values indicating that heads of the institutions are never trusted more than institutions. In the case of lower educated students, it appears that for both the European Parliament and the European Council the heads of the institutions are trusted somewhat more than the institutions themselves. Whether this really applies to the whole group of lower educated students requires a larger dataset. Second, lower educated students seem to be more critical than higher educated students, since the mean trust levels are lower than in the full dataset. The EU institutions score a 6.20/10 on average on the trust scale and the heads of the institutions only a 5.86/10 (see figures 4 and 7). However, this rather negative image could very well be caused by outliers which have a bigger effect in smaller sample sizes. In the next paragraph I discuss this issue further. Finally, the fact that most lower educated students did not answer these questions (correctly) is actually the most interesting finding. This indicated that either the students did not know the institution and/or head of the institution, or they did not want to answer the question. This, again, especially applies to the questions on the heads of the institutions. The implications of these findings will be discussed in more detail in §5.7 and in chapter 6.

5.4.2 Education level and trust in general

In the previous paragraph I explored the question whether lower educated students had more specific trust than diffuse trust. The remaining question is more general: are higher educated people more trusting towards the EU institutions and the heads of these institutions than lower educated people? The hypothesis regarding this issue is as follows:

H3. *Higher educated people have higher trust levels in general (both diffuse and specific trust) than lower educated people*

The best way to test this is by means of a multiple regression analysis, since that allows to control for other variables. The most suitable test in this case is an OLS regression (Ordinary Least Squares). The assumption is that higher levels of education lead to higher trust in both institutions and persons.

a. Diffuse trust

For the dependent variable *general trust in institutions or diffuse trust*, an estimate of the proportion of variance that can be accounted for by the predictor variables *higher education levels*, *gender* (female) and *current employer* (public sector) was established by means of an OLS regression. Together the predictor variables accounted for a significant 34.6% of the variance in general trust in institutions, $R^2 = .346$, adjusted $R^2 = .312$, $F(3, 58) = 10.22$, $p < .001$. A Cohen's f test for the effect size shows that this can be seen as a large effect ($f^2 = .53$).

If I look in more detail at this model, I can see that only the variable *high education level* is a significant predictor with $t(58) = 5.47$, $p < .001$. Here, the t statistic indicates whether or not each predictor

accounts for a significant proportion of unique variance³⁵ in diffuse trust. Neither *gender* nor *current employer* are significant predictors: $t(58) = .093$, $p = .926$ and $t(58) = .237$, $p = .813$, respectively. To what extent the different predictor variables influence the dependent variable is presented in table 7, where the unstandardized (B) and standardized (β) regression coefficients, and the squared semi-partial correlations (sr^2) of each predictor are reported.

	B [95% CI]	β	sr^2
Higher education level	2.67 [4.28, 6.31]**	.589	.34
Gender (female)	.029 [-.59, .65]	.010	.0001
Current employer (public sector)	.074 [-.55, .70]	.026	.000625

Table 7. *The different predictor variables in this regression model and to what extent they affect the dependent variable 'general trust in institutions'.* Note: $n = 61$, CI= confidence interval, B= unstandardized regression coefficients, β = standardized regression coefficients, sr^2 = squared semi-partial correlations. ** $p < .001$

The unstandardized regression coefficient for higher education (B) shows that after controlling for gender and current employer, higher educated people have (on average) 2.67 points more trust than not-higher educated people, or lower educated people. This is a relevant difference. The standardized regression coefficient for higher education level shows that higher educated people have (on average) .589 standard deviations more trust than lower educated people (after controlling for the other two variables). All in all, this multiple regression analysis shows that the only variable in this model that significantly influences people's diffuse trust is *higher education level*. More specifically, higher education levels lead to higher levels of general trust in institutions (diffuse trust).

Finally, of importance is that the assumptions underlying the OLS were not violated. Each variable in the regression was sufficiently normally distributed (see §5.1). There were few outliers in the dataset. To check whether the conclusions following the OLS regression hold when these outliers are absent, I removed them from the dataset and repeated the OLS regression. The outcome was that the total proportion of the three variables did not cover a significant amount of the variance in diffuse trust anymore, but the variable *high education level* was still the only variable that has a significant influence on diffuse trust (albeit now at $\alpha < .05$). Therefore, I can state that the outliers did not create biased results and the conclusions hold. In addition, the predictor variables all had tolerance values > 0.9 , which indicates that multicollinearity is not a problem in this model³⁶. Additionally, the *Mahalanobis distance* did not exceed the critical χ^2 value for $df = 3$ (at $\alpha = .001$) of 13.26 with maximum values of

³⁵ Unique variance is variance that cannot be explained by other predictors in the regression model (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.187)

³⁶ Predictor or independent variables with tolerance values < 0.1 are multicollinear with one or more other predictors (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.188).

9.95. therefore, I need not be concerned about multivariate outliers³⁷ (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.188). Finally, the normal distribution of residuals, and the assumptions regarding linearity and homoscedasticity of the residuals are not violated (see the figures in appendix 2: A.3).

b. Specific trust

For the dependent variable *general trust in individuals or specific trust*, I wanted to conduct a similar regression analysis to estimate the proportion of variance that can be accounted for by *higher education levels, gender and current employer*. However, the sample regarding these available data was too small ($n = 28$) to conduct a regression analysis and therefore the dependent variable of general trust was replaced by the heads of the institutions for which a large enough sample existed ($n > 50$), which was the case for three out of the four variables: *trust in the head of the European Commission* ($n = 65$), *trust in the head of the European Central Bank* ($n = 55$) and *trust in the head of the European Council* ($n = 55$)³⁸. In all three cases, none of the assumptions for a multiple regression analysis were violated (see appendix 2: A.4, A.5 and A.6).

For the European Commission, together the predictor variables *higher education level, gender (female) and current employer* (public sector) accounted for a significant (at $\alpha = .001$) 23.9% of the variance in specific trust in the **head of the European Commission**, $R^2 = .239$, adjusted $R^2 = .202$, $F(3, 62) = 6.49$, $p = .001$. As was the case in predicting general trust, the only variable that is a significant predictor for higher trust in the head of the European Commission is *higher education level* with $t(61) = 3.39$, $p = .001$ ($B = 2.16$ [.890, 3.43], $\beta = .38$ and $sr^2 = .14$).

The three predictor variables together accounted for a significant (at $\alpha = .05$) 23.1% of the variance in specific trust in the **head of the European Central Bank**, $R^2 = .231$, adjusted $R^2 = .187$, $F(3, 52) = 5.21$, $p = .003$. Again the only significant predictor for trust in the head of the ECB is *higher education level* with $t(51) = 3.88$, $p < .001$ ($B = 2.01$ [.97, 3.04], $\beta = .47$ and $sr^2 = .22$).

The three predictor variables together accounted for a significant (at $\alpha = .05$) 14.3% of the variance in specific trust in the **head of the European Council**, $R^2 = .143$, adjusted $R^2 = .094$, $F(3, 52) = 2.91$, $p = .043$. Again, the only significant predictor for trust in the head of the European Council is *higher education level* with $t(51) = 2.86$, $p = .006$ ($B = 2.11$ [.63, 3.59], $\beta = .37$ and $sr^2 = .14$).

Although I cannot conclude anything with certainty about the influence of education levels on the variable *general trust in the heads of institutions*, the data presented above convincingly shows that

³⁷ A multivariate outlier is a combination of unusual or deviating scores on at least two predictor variables (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.188).

³⁸ *Trust in the head of the European Parliament* has $n = 41$, which is a too small sample size when correcting for three independent variables.

for at least three out of the four heads of the institutions, higher education levels are associated with significantly more trust in the heads of the institutions. In these cases higher education level played a significant role in predicting the amount of specific trust one has.

5.4.3 Whether lower educated people have more specific trust remains inconclusive, but education level has a positive effect on peoples' trust in general (specific and diffuse trust at the EU level)

The data available to test hypothesis 2 were too limited and therefore I cannot accept nor reject it. There are indications that (in some cases) lower educated people have more specific trust than diffuse trust, but further research is necessary to be able to test whether this is indeed the case.

By means of the regression analyses I have demonstrated that from the three independent variables *gender, education level* and *current employer*, only education level plays a significant role in the trust levels of people (both diffuse and specific trust). The outcomes show that higher education levels lead to an increase in both diffuse trust (trust in institutions) and specific trust (trust in the heads of the institutions³⁹). Therefore, I can accept hypothesis 3, stating that higher educated people have higher trust levels (both diffuse and specific trust) than lower⁴⁰ educated people.

§5.5 Tenure of office and specific trust

As explained in chapter 3, the tenure of office of the heads of the EU institutions is expected to play a role in the trust levels that people attribute to them. More specifically, hypothesis 4 states:

H4. People have more (specific) trust in longer serving political leaders in the EU than in political leaders who have been in office for a shorter period of time

To find out, I conducted a *One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA* test, since it allows me to test for statistically significant differences between three or more sample means (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.109). What I aim to find out is whether people tend to trust some leaders over others, taking into account the moment when the leaders assumed office. Figure 8 provides an overview of the four leaders and the amount of months they have been in office.

Based on figure 8, I expect Tajani to be the least trusted, then Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk (with no mutual differences) and I expect Mario Draghi to be most trusted.

³⁹ In at least three out of the four heads of the EU institutions.

⁴⁰ Officially I should say *not-higher educated people*, but this group only consists of lower educated people since the 'other' answer category was coded as a missing value. For the readability I use lower educated people here.

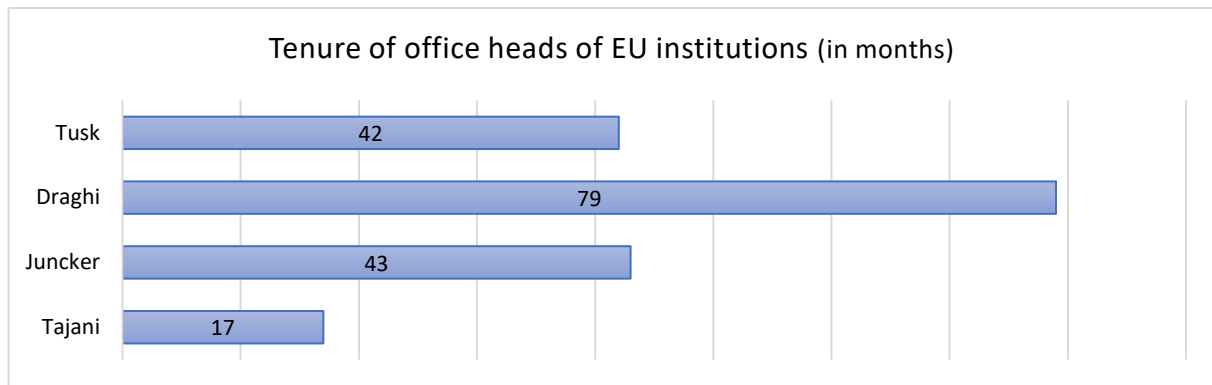


Figure 8. Overview of the four heads of institutions and the amount of time (in months) they have been in office.

The descriptive statistics of trust in these four leaders are summarized in figure 9 below. Here the cases were selected using *listwise deletion*, since the four groups will be compared. The descriptive statistics show that the differences in trust between the leaders are quite marginal. As expected, Draghi is trusted most but the other expectations proved not to be true. To test whether there are any significant differences between any of the leaders, an ANOVA test was conducted.

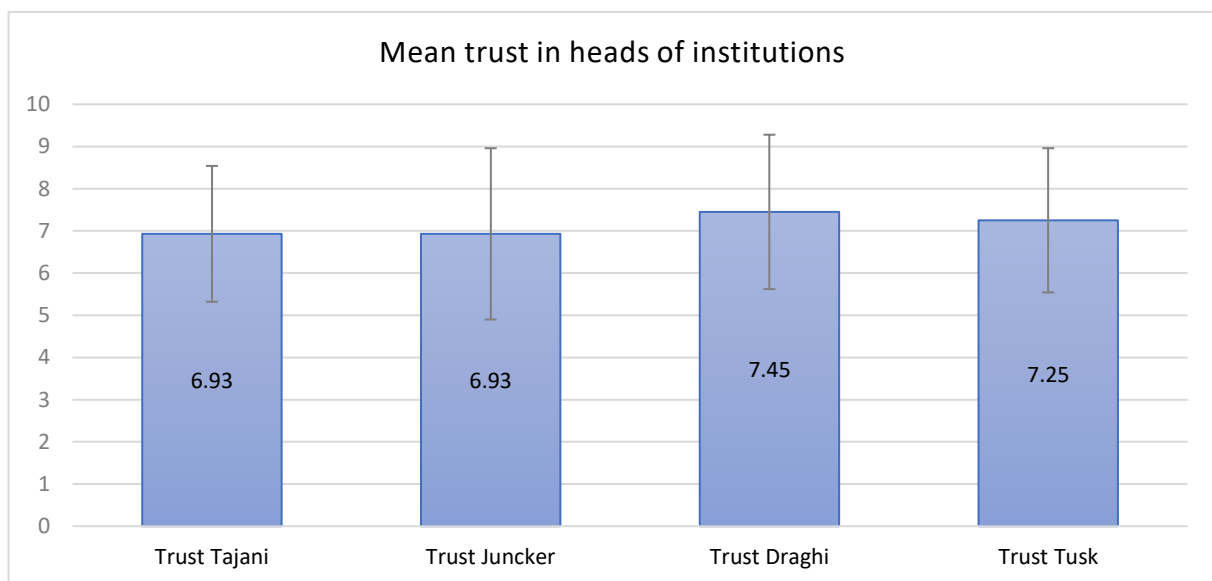


Figure 9. Mean trust in each of the heads of institutions and the accompanying SDs illustrated with error bars. $n=40$ for each group.

The outcome of the *One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA* test was $F(3, 117) = 1.84, p = .143, \eta^2 = .045$ ⁴¹ which is an insignificant result. This means that there are no significant differences in people's trust levels in the different heads of the institutions. So although the descriptive statistics show a (slightly) higher average of trust in the head of the ECB, these differences are too small to be statistically significant. With these findings hypothesis 4 has to be rejected. The heads of the institutions are trusted (approximately) equal, regardless of the amount of time they have been in office.

⁴¹ This is a measure of effect size and comparable to R^2 in the correlation analyses. .045 is seen as a small effect (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.117).

The necessary assumptions for this ANOVA test were met (see Appendix 2: A.7). The first assumption of this test is that the dependent variable is interval or ratio data, which is the case here (trust in the heads of the institutions was measured on a scale from 0 – 10). The normality distribution of each group of scores (trust in each head of the institutions) is acceptable (see §5.1). The homogeneity of variance was calculated by means of the Fmax test⁴² (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.116). Homogeneity of variance can be assumed when $F_{max} < 10$ (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.116). Here $F_{max}=1.596$, so I can assume that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated⁴³. Finally, the assumption of sphericity⁴⁴ was not violated (Maughly's test of sphericity: $p(.09) > .05$). Therefore, all assumptions for an one-way repeated measures ANOVA were met and the test should not present biased results (Allen & Bennett, 2012, pp.111-116).

§5.6 Remaining control variables and trust

In the previous paragraphs I found that *gender* and *current employer* do not significantly influence people's trust levels. I also found that the tenure of office of the heads of the institutions does not affect the levels of trust they enjoy. What remains to be tested is whether the control variables can explain part of the variance in people's trust levels. This, again, is done by multiple regression analysis, using the OLS technique.

Political attitudes, political sophistication and trust

For the dependent variable *general trust in institutions*, or **diffuse trust**, I examined to which extent the proportion of variance in trust can be accounted for by *political attitudes* (a continuous scale in which 0.00 represents radical left, and 1.00 radical right) and *political sophistication* (which was transformed into a dummy variable with 0= not politically sophisticated, and 1= politically sophisticated⁴⁵). The OLS regression analysis showed that the two variables together accounted for an *insignificant* 1.5% of variance in general trust in institutions, with $R^2 = .015$, adjusted $R^2 = -.009$, $F(2, 80) = .63$, $p = .535$. Neither variable was statistically significant (see appendix 2: A.8), and therefore I can conclude that these control variables do not play a large role in people's general trust levels in institutions.

The same accounts for the dependent variable *general trust in the heads of the institutions*, or **specific trust**. In this case the sample was a bit smaller ($n = 35$) so the results should be interpreted with care,

⁴² $F_{max} = (\text{largest sample variance}^2 / \text{smallest sample variance}^2)$.

⁴³ The variability in each group of scores should be approximately equal to be able to conduct an ANOVA test (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.112).

⁴⁴ The assumption of sphericity necessitates that the variability in the differences between the any pair of groups should be the same for each pair of groups (Allen & Bennett, 2012, p.112).

⁴⁵ 0-1 knowledge answer correct was coded as not politically sophisticated, and 2 answers correct was coded as politically sophisticated.

but the two independent variables accounted for an insignificant 2.2% of the variance in general trust in the heads of institutions, with $R^2 = .022$, adjusted $R^2 = -.037$, $F(2, 33) = .374$, $p = .691$. Again, neither variable was statistically significant (see appendix 2: A.9), and therefore I can conclude that political attitude and political sophistication do not play a significant role in people's trust levels in the heads of the EU institutions. None of the assumptions for a multiple regression analysis were violated.

In both cases, there were a few outliers which could have potentially biased the results from the OLS regression. As a *robustness check*, the regression analyses were conducted without the outliers but the results did not change extensively and similar conclusions applied.

§5.7 Comments and familiarity with the political actors

At the end of the survey, there was an open question on whether the respondents had any questions or remarks regarding the survey and/or the research. A few interesting comments were made that I would like to discuss, since they can be of explanatory value.

Many comments regarding the survey concerned the respondents' interest in and knowledge of the objects of trust in the EU. Some stated that they did not have much knowledge on the topic. For example: *"I don't know sh*t about EU politics"* or *"I actually don't know much about this, quite embarrassing!"*⁴⁶. Others were plainly not interested in the subject *"I am not really into these topics"*. Finally, some respondents left a comment regarding their trust levels: *"I do not have any trust in whatever Union it may be"*, or more moderately *"I notice that I have a lot of trust, but I don't know much about the content of it. Pretty weird actually [...]"*. These comments indicate that (some of) the respondents are either not really interested in the topic or have limited knowledge of it. This may explain the limited amount of respondents who were able to answer all eight trust questions. It may also indicate that these topics are not a big issue for students in the Netherlands.

What these comments thus suggest is a lack of connection between EU political actors and the students in the Netherlands. It seems that students do not feel strongly about these issues and therefore answer the trust questions moderately. Or they have only limited knowledge on the EU institutions and the heads of these institutions, and therefore do not answer the questions at all. This limited connection leads me to question whether the respondents do indeed have these moderate trust levels in the EU institutions and the heads of these institutions, or that they are plainly unfamiliar with or not interested in these subjects.

When I look at the number of people who answered the knowledge questions (*have you heard of the European Council or please indicate which one of these leaders is the head of the European*

⁴⁶ The quotes are translated from Dutch, see Appendix 3 for the original comments in Dutch.

Commission) it confirms the speculation that the respondents are quite unfamiliar with the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions. The descriptive statistics can be found in table 8.

EU institutions	Yes	No	Don't know & Missing ⁴⁷
Knowledge EP	170	21	15 (7.3%)
Knowledge EC	125	45	36 (17.5%)
Knowledge ECB	125	47	34 (16.5%)
Knowledge Council	111	51	44 (21.4%)
Heads of EU institutions	Correct name	Wrong names ⁴⁸	Don't know & Missing
Knowledge Head EP	70	33	103 (50%)
Knowledge Head EC	99	6	101 (49%)
Knowledge Head ECB	74	19	113 (54.9%)
Knowledge Head Council	80	19	107 (51.9%)

Table 8. *Frequencies of the answers to the knowledge questions.* Note: total sample for each variable n=206.

Especially the missing values for the heads of the EU institutions are numerous. This can partly be explained by the way the survey was set up (the knowledge question on the person was only posed *if* the respondent was familiar with the institution), so the missing values of the institutions immediately also apply to the heads of the institutions. Nonetheless, the number of people indicating the wrong names for the heads of the institutions or not answering the question at all was quite high.

These findings are interesting in light of the personalization thesis. That thesis is based on the notion that individual political actors can make the political arena more tangible for people, but it assumes that people know the politicians well. This is often the case at the national level, but the results from this paragraph show that the connection between students in the Netherlands and the EU political actors is weak. Therefore, questioning the respondents on their trust levels towards subjects that they are quite unfamiliar with, may have led to moderately positive answers, or no answers at all. The lack of knowledge on individual political actors may be the reason that students in the Netherlands do not trust these EU leaders more than the institutions that they represent. The implications of these findings for this study will be further elaborated upon in the next chapter.

⁴⁷ The respondents that did not answer this question at all (either because it was skipped in the survey logic or because they skipped the question themselves).

⁴⁸ The total of the two incorrect names that were chosen by the respondents.

§5.8 Summary

This chapter presented the data analysis for this research. It displayed the results from the survey on trust in EU institutions and the individual politicians representing these institutions. With that, it answered the final two sub-questions:

Sub-question 3: *To what extent is there political trust in the following four EU institutions: the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the European Council?*

Sub-question 4: *To what extent is there political trust in the following four heads of the EU institutions: Antonio Tajani, Jean-Claude Juncker, Mario Draghi, and Donald Tusk?*

In general, the EU institutions scored a bit higher on the trust questions (with an average of 7.67/10) than the heads of the EU institutions (with an average of 7.14/10). These numbers show an optimistic image of the attitudes of students in the Netherlands towards the EU at large. The different EU institutions are particularly trusted by the students in the Netherlands. Table 5 provided an overview of the trust levels in the institutions and the heads of the institutions separately. It shows that all institutions and leaders score quite well on the eleven-point trust scale, with the European Parliament scoring lowest of the institutions with a neat 7.28/10, and Antonio Tajani scoring lowest of the heads of the institutions with 6.88/10.

In addition, the only indicator of higher trust in both institutions and heads of the institutions at the EU level is *higher education level*. Students from higher education are significantly more trusting than are lower educated students. All other variables including *gender*, *current employer*, *political sophistication* and *political attitude* were not significant and therefore do not directly play a role in the trust question (at least in this study).

A side note to this rosy image of trust levels of students from the Netherlands in the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions was made in the final paragraph. The comments that the students provided led me to suspect that the moderately high trust levels are more of a consequence of disinterest and unfamiliarity with the subjects under study, than that it actually portrays how they feel about the EU institutions and the individuals representing the institutions. The substantial number of people that did not answer the 'knowledge' questions (correctly) reinforces this suspicion. A more elaborate discussion on this will follow in the next chapter.

6. Conclusions and reflections

In this chapter the conclusions of this study are discussed. The main question – *Do people have more trust in individual politicians than in institutions at the EU level?* – is answered negatively. This research showed that there is no difference in people's trust levels in institutions or individual politicians in the EU. The societal and scientific implications of this main finding are elaborated upon and some relevant side notes are highlighted.

§6.1 Individuals trusted over institutions in the EU?

This research started with the question: *Do people have more trust in individual politicians than in institutions at the EU level?* This question originated from the observation that in many liberal democracies, persons are taking a more prominent role in the national political arena than are institutions. Therefore, I expected that individual politicians at the EU level would be trusted more than the institutions they represent. However, the data collected for this research clearly painted a different picture. In the previous chapter I showed that, overall, students in the Netherlands have more trust in the EU institutions than in the people that represent those institutions. This means that there is no evidence that the personalization thesis applies to the EU level. The differences between trust in institutions and individuals were quite small, however, which leads me to conclude that they are negligible. The main finding of this study is therefore that the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions are trusted equally by students from the Netherlands.

When studying the results in detail, some nuances to this conclusion are appropriate. This especially applies to the findings in the group of lower educated students. Although the sample sizes are too small to say anything with certainty, the data seem to exhibit that this group of students has (at least sometimes) more trust in the heads of the institutions than in the institutions themselves. Specifically, this was the case in the European Parliament 'couple' and the European Council 'couple'. This finding fits well with the theoretical expectations formulated in the beginning of this study, based on the observation that lower educated people tend to place more importance on people in politics than on institutions in comparison to higher educated people. A potential explanation is that individual politicians can make politics more tangible and better understandable for them, and for that reason the leaders may be of more importance. However, whether this really is the case for the population of lower educated students in the Netherlands requires further research with larger sample sizes. In addition, lower educated students did not have more trust in the heads of the institutions than in the institutions themselves for the cases of the European Commission and the European Central Bank. To find out whether these findings hint towards a broader trend, or whether it is more likely to be a matter of personal preferences, also requires more comprehensive research.

Overall, this study shows quite an optimistic image. Students in the Netherlands are generally positively minded regarding the EU institutions and the heads of the EU institutions. All political actors

score fairly well on the eleven-point trust scale. On average the EU institutions score a 7.67 on the trust scale and the heads of the institutions a 7.14. This is good news for the European Union, which has been through rough and critical times, especially since the financial crisis that hit Europe in 2007. A side note that has to be made here is that this positive picture can be influenced by the overrepresentation of young people⁴⁹ and higher educated students, who are generally more trusting towards the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions. To illustrate this statement, for the group of lower educated students the EU institutions scored a 6.20 on average and the heads of the institutions a 5.86. The next paragraph will elaborate on this further.

§6.2 Education level as the only predictor of trust

The regression analyses showed that the only variable holding a significant relationship with political trust is *education level*. More specifically, higher educated students have significantly more trust in both the EU institutions and the people that represent those institutions. The overrepresentation of higher educated students in this study's sample (n=123 versus n=57 for lower educated students) may therefore result in an overly optimistic image of people's trust in the EU institutions and their heads. Additionally, the literature led me to assume that higher educated people are often more knowledgeable, and therefore more trusting, of EU politics. The results of this study do not completely align with that statement. The variable *political sophistication* (measuring respondents' political knowledge on the EU) is not significantly related to trust levels. This means that people who are more knowledgeable of EU politics are not necessarily more trusting of the EU institutions or the heads of the institutions. One of the comments illustrates this finding: *"I notice that I have a lot of trust, but I don't know much about the content of it. Pretty weird actually [...]"*. This finding is quite striking, implicating that one does not need to know much about an institution or political arena to be able to trust it.

Apart from education level, all the other independent variables were not significantly related to political trust. For example, females do not have significantly higher trust levels than men and people with employers from the public sector are not significantly more trusting of the EU institutions and individuals than those who do not have an employer from the public sector. Table 9 offers an overview of the four hypotheses and whether they were accepted, rejected or remained inconclusive.

⁴⁹ The complete sample consisted of young people and it is quite likely that this has led to higher trust levels, since young people (from the Netherlands) are more trusting towards the EU than elder people.

Hypotheses	Outcome
H1. <i>People have more trust in the heads of EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust)</i>	Rejected
H2. <i>Especially lower educated people have more trust in the heads of EU institutions (specific trust) than in the EU institutions themselves (diffuse trust)</i>	Inconclusive (sample sizes too small to run the statistical tests)
H3. <i>Higher educated people have higher trust levels in general (both diffuse and specific trust) than lower educated people</i>	Accepted
H4. <i>People have more (specific) trust in longer serving political leaders in the EU than in political leaders who have been in office for a shorter period of time</i>	Rejected

Table 9. *The four hypotheses and the outcomes summarized.*

§6.3 Contemplations and reflection

This research was initiated as a first step in filling the lacunae of trust research in individual politicians at the EU level. More specifically, the value of this research was that it offered a comparison between peoples' trust levels in EU institutions and the heads of those institutions. Following the classic distinction between diffuse and specific trust, I conceptualized more precisely the way people trust the different political actors at the EU level. With that I indicated that, at this moment in time, the personalization thesis does not apply to the level of the EU. In other words, persons are not trusted more than institutions in the EU.

Notwithstanding the value of this study, it has only been a first step towards research into the phenomenon of personalization at the EU level. An obvious limitation which I acknowledge is the limited sample size. Due to practical limitations, only the Netherlands was available as the pool for respondents, and to ensure random sampling I limited my focus to students. More comprehensive research with larger sample sizes from different member states and age groups could portray a more complete and detailed picture of the current status of peoples' trust in the different political actors at the EU level. Related to this issue is the overrepresentation of higher educated students in my sample. This could have influenced the generally positive image of the EU that came forward in this study. This also limited the ability to perform all statistical tests for lower educated students. Although I have put much effort in involving lower educated students in this study, future research should consider spending even more resources to ensure a sample in which both lower and higher educated students (or people) are represented equally.

If researchers face the same practical limitations as I did, I would recommend comparing their datasets with larger available datasets (such as the Eurobarometer, European Social Survey) on questions that are available in both. For example the question '*To what extent do you trust the European Parliament*'. This way the results on some questions can be compared with larger samples, and overlap and differences between the two can become apparent. This could help in defining to what extent the

results of your own dataset can be generalized to the wider public. Unfortunately, I was unable to perform such a cross-reference due to time limitations.

Furthermore, it would be of interest to discover the reasons underlying the absence of personalization of politics at the EU level. Why do we see this phenomenon at the national level but not at the EU level? Is it a matter of similar trust in institutions and individual politicians, or is it a matter of disinterest or unfamiliarity with these actors? For example, the limited knowledge on the individual politicians or disinterest in the EU at large by the respondents in this study may be of influence of their trust levels regarding these actors. In addition, the role of the media has been initiated in the scientific literature as a potential influencer in this debate, and it can be argued that examining whether EU institutions or the heads of the institutions are more often mentioned in the news coverage could contribute to the subject (e.g. Gattermann & Vasilopoulou, 2015; Gattermann 2018; Karvonen, 2010). I am convinced that in depth, qualitative research methods can shed light on the reasons why personalisation of politics is not occurring in the EU at this time. In interviews people could explain their reasoning for trusting (or distrusting) the different EU political actors, and hence the question why people trust the institutions more than the heads of institutions could be answered in more detail.

Regarding the methodologies used to formulate an answer to the research question(s), the most appropriate measures were chosen. Nonetheless, the concept of trust remains an ambiguous concept for which not one ideal way of measurement exists. A survey is a common tool to measure peoples' (political) trust, but it has some pitfalls as well. First, trust was measured on an eleven-point scale, which was conceived as a interval scale. Despite that this is a common procedure used in trust research, strict interpreters might not feel comfortable with such an interpretation since on an interval scale, the gaps between the intervals should be the exact same size (Bryman, 2012). For example the interval variable *age*, has precisely the same size 'gaps' between the intervals of 1 and 2 years, and 19 and 20 years. Trust, however, is not a 'clean' interval variable, since it could be argued that the differences between 5 and 6 'trust', is not equal to the difference between 7 and 8 'trust'. In other words, people can differ in their interpretations of the numbers related to trust on the scale. These difficulties were largely overcome in this study because the main question focused on whether there were any differences in the trust levels people attributed to the EU institutions and the heads of the EU institutions. Therefore, as long as the respondents interpreted the scales similarly for the institutions as for the heads of the institutions, no major problems occurred.

Second, not only the scale on which trust was measured can be interpreted differently, but also the concept of trust itself. People have different associations with the concept of trust. As stated in chapter 2, even scholars experience difficulties in finding common ground regarding the definition of trust, let

alone ‘the people’. A recent research into this subject states the following: “[...] people do consider different aspect of the EU and European integration when responding to attitude questions, and hence show variability in terms of their attitudes [...]” (De Vreese, Azrout & Boomgaarden, 2018, p.19). Based on their findings, the authors recommend specifying which aspect of trust (or support) you are measuring and not generalizing those findings to other aspects (De Vreese et. al., 2018, p.20). Taking into account the five dimensions of trust that De Vreese and colleagues distinguish⁵⁰ would be an opportunity to be even more specific in indicating peoples’ trust levels in the EU.

Finally, a potential caveat of this study was the question flow in the survey that was used to collect the data. I assumed that people had to have certain knowledge on the EU institutions to be able to recognize the leaders of those institutions. However, this assumption could be refuted by the personalization thesis itself. People might actually recognize the name of a person because, for example, it has been in the news a couple of times or because one can be inspired by his/her personality or personal actions in the political arena. This does not mean that one needs to know that this person is the head of a specific EU institution. The importance of the trust questions in this study was to find out whether persons or institutions instil more trust. Many people did not fill out the questions on trust in individuals because of the questioning flow. Therefore, I would recommend for future research to separate these questions and to pose all the questions, even though people indicate that they are not aware of the EU institutions.

§6.4 The relevance and importance of these findings

6.4.1 A rosy image for the EU?

The findings of this study are nonetheless important and interesting for a couple of reasons. First, in the light of the personalization of politics at the national level of many liberal democracies in the EU (among which the Netherlands), I expected individual politicians to play a more prominent role in people’s attitudes towards the European Union. The results of this study show that this is not the case. In their trust levels, students in the Netherlands do not discriminate between the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions. Students in the Netherlands do not only trust both actors equally, their trust levels are also moderately high. With average scores around 7 out of 10, the students portray that they are quite trusting towards the European Union. These are first and foremost positive findings for the European Union, because they do not indicate a discontent with the institutions at the EU level. These institutions form the foundation upon which the democratic system of the EU was founded, and

⁵⁰ “(1) EU effect, referring to feelings of fear of and threa by the EU, (2) a sense of European identity, (3) the performance and democratic functioning of the EU and its institutions, (4) utilitarian considerations, and (5) a strengthening of the EU” (De Vreese et. al., 2018, p.2).

therefore trust in these institutions is important. There was no evidence in this study that tended towards an erosion of the democratic principles underlying the EU political system, and this could very well be a positive sign for the effectiveness and durability of the EU. In the same vein, individual politicians are important actors in the translation from the vague, complex and ambiguous EU political arena to peoples' daily lives. Persons in politics can ensure that 'the people' feel listened to. Therefore, this study's outcome that there are no differences in students' diffuse or specific trust paints a favourable picture for the future of the EU.

6.4.2 Rosy image due to disinterest and unfamiliarity?

On the contrary, the positive attitude towards both the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions may also be caused by the respondents' lack of knowledge of and/or disinterest in the EU institutions and their heads. Some respondents even specifically stated their '*don't care*' attitude in the comments section at the end of the survey. Not feeling strongly about either of the two political actors may have led them to be moderately positive in answering the trust questions. Also, some respondents indicated to lack sufficient knowledge on the EU to be able to answer the questions of trust at all. This is interesting since the results show that there is no relationship between trust levels and the control variable *political sophistication* (which inherently measures knowledge on the EU). This means that people *feel* that their (lack of) knowledge on the EU influences their trust levels. At the same time, the knowledge questions on the EU institutions and the heads of the institutions show that a large part of the respondents is indeed unfamiliar with (some of) the institutions and the individual politicians. In chapter 5, I argued that the personalization thesis leans on the assumption that citizens are well familiar with the individual leaders. Studying this phenomenon at the EU level, where these individual politicians are less known than on the national level, may have caused some of the inconclusive results of this study. The personalization thesis states that persons can make the political arena more tangible for people, but if people are unfamiliar with the political actors, they can lead to even more confusion and ambiguity at the EU level. In other words, additional political actors in the EU can make EU politics even more difficult to disentangle (Gattermann, 2018, p.18). In sum, not feeling strongly about the political actors or not even knowing them may have led to a moderately optimistic image of the trust levels of students in the Netherlands in the EU institutions and the heads of the EU institutions.

6.4.3 Contributions and implications

One of the most interesting findings of this study was that higher educated students in the Netherlands are significantly more trusting of both EU institutions and the heads of those institutions than lower educated students. The implications of this finding are important. It means that education level still plays an important role in the attitudes of students from the Netherlands towards the EU. An

interesting avenue for future research is to find out the reasons why higher educated people are more trusting towards the EU than lower educated people. As a potential starting point, Bovens & Wille (2014) argue that the loss of trust by lower educated people in governments in general and the Dutch government in specific, is due to the underrepresentation of this group in government. Current governments consist largely of people with academic backgrounds, and the group of lower educated people is substantially underrepresented. They call this new form of meritocracy the 'diploma democracy' (Bovens & Wille, 2014, p.3). Extending this reasoning to the findings of this study that lower educated students from the Netherlands are significantly less trusting towards the EU institutions and the heads of those institutions, could be caused by the fact that there are few people 'like them' in the EU institutions. Future research could shed light on whether this is indeed true, and what other reasons exist for this observation. Either way, the finding that education level plays an important role in the attitudes by Dutch students towards the EU emphasizes the big challenge for the EU to more actively involve *all* people in the EU political arena, with a more specific focus on how to involve and satisfy the lower educated. Boven & Wille (2014) propose to do so by, for example, introducing more direct forms of participation for citizens or by obtaining a more active responsive attitude towards the needs of citizens (Boven & Wille, 2011).

Finally, the scientific contribution of this study is that it has made a first step in differentiating between specific trust and diffuse trust at the level of the European Union, and comparing the outcomes. It has aimed to contribute to the question whether the personalization thesis also applies to the level of the EU, which seems not to be the case for students in the Netherlands. Important now is that more comprehensive research is done in this field, explaining whether this lack of personalization of politics is more widely observed and whether it is because people actually trust the EU institutions and heads of the institutions similarly, or because people simply do not care or know enough about EU politics to make a distinction between the two.

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In the Netherlands 95% of the pupils from primary education (which is obligatory and open to all), go to secondary education. In secondary education there are three different levels, mostly meant as an preparation for follow up education. From secondary education, only 4% of the pupils leaves school without further education (intermediate vocational, higher vocational or scientific education). The numbers of students who do not finish their further studies with a diploma is drastically higher (31%). Nonetheless, this indicates that most Dutch citizens enjoy at least some years of further education after high school (intermediate vocational or MBO, higher vocational or HBO, and scientific education or WO). The figure below illustrates these educational flows.

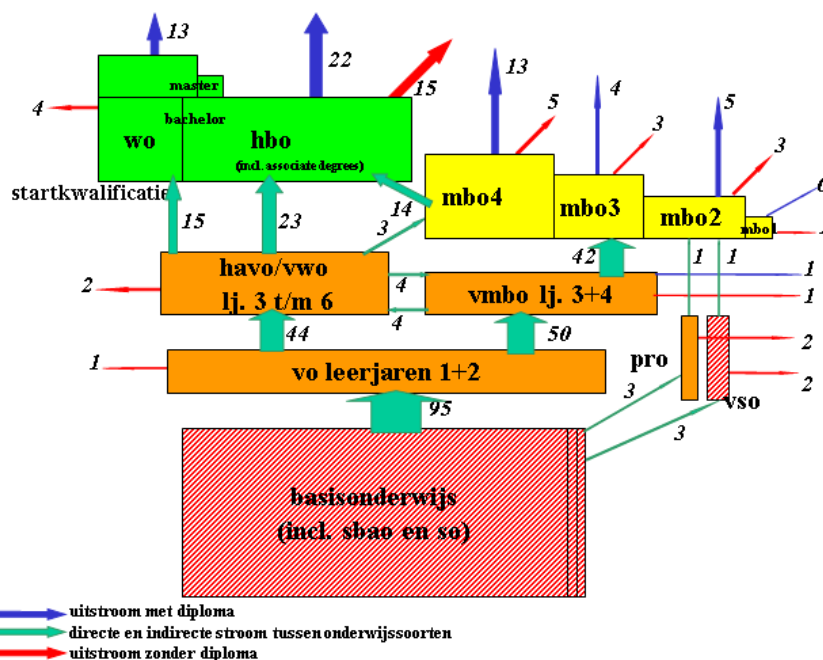


Figure A.1. Educational flows in the Netherlands (Rijksoverheid, 2018).

Appendix 2. Output SPSS

A.1 Normality test scores

Variables: General trust in institutions & general trust in the heads of institutions

<i>Tests of Normality</i>	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk
General trust in institutions	Statistic = .202; df= 90; p < .001	Statistic = .860; df= 90; p < .001
General trust in heads of the institutions	Statistic = .172; df= 40; p = .004	Statistic = .904; df= 40; p = .002

Variables: Trust in the four institutions (EP, EC, ECB, Council)

<i>Tests of Normality</i>	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk
Trust in the European Parliament	Statistic = .240; df= 90; p < .001	Statistic = .838; df= 90; p < .001
Trust in the European Commission	Statistic = .271; df= 90; p < .001	Statistic = .861; df= 90; p < .001
Trust in the European Central Bank	Statistic = .230; df= 90; p < .001	Statistic = .885; df= 90; p < .001
Trust in the European Council	Statistic = .226; df= 90; p < .001	Statistic = .899; df= 90; p < .001

Variables: Trust in the four heads of the institutions (Tajani, Juncker, Draghi, Tusk)

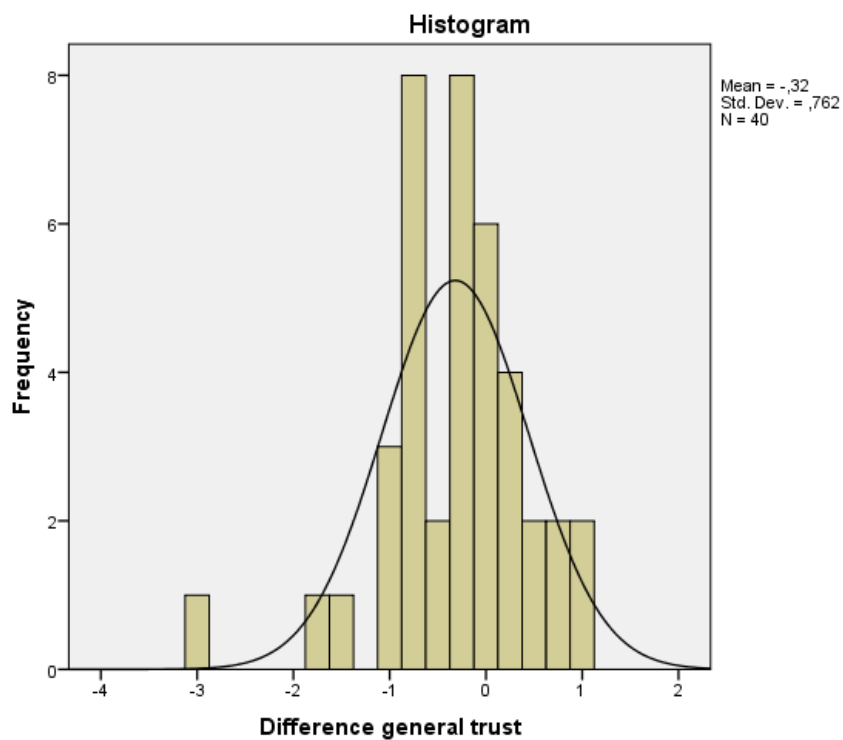
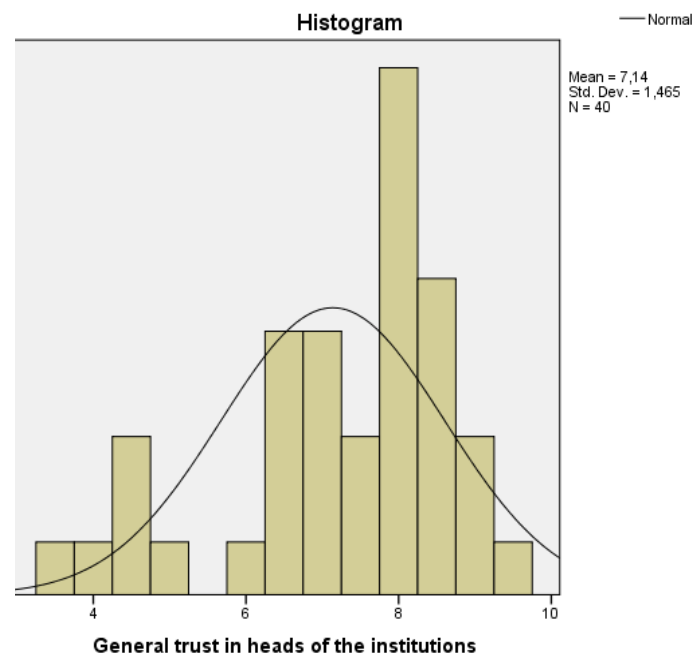
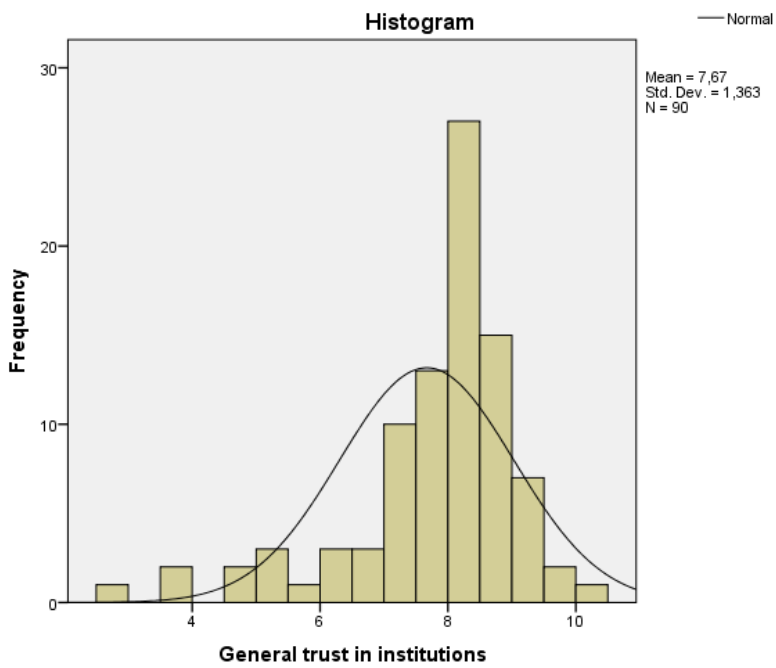
<i>Tests of Normality</i>	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk
Trust in head of European Parliament	Statistic = .269; df= 40; p < .001	Statistic = .825; df= 40; p < .001
Trust in head of European Commission	Statistic = .215; df= 40; p < .001	Statistic = .887; df= 40; p = .001
Trust in head of European Central Bank	Statistic = .268; df= 40; p < .001	Statistic = .867; df= 40; p < .001
Trust in head of European Council	Statistic = .195; df= 40; p = .001	Statistic = .944; df= 40; p = .049

Dif. Variables: EP, EC, ECB and Council

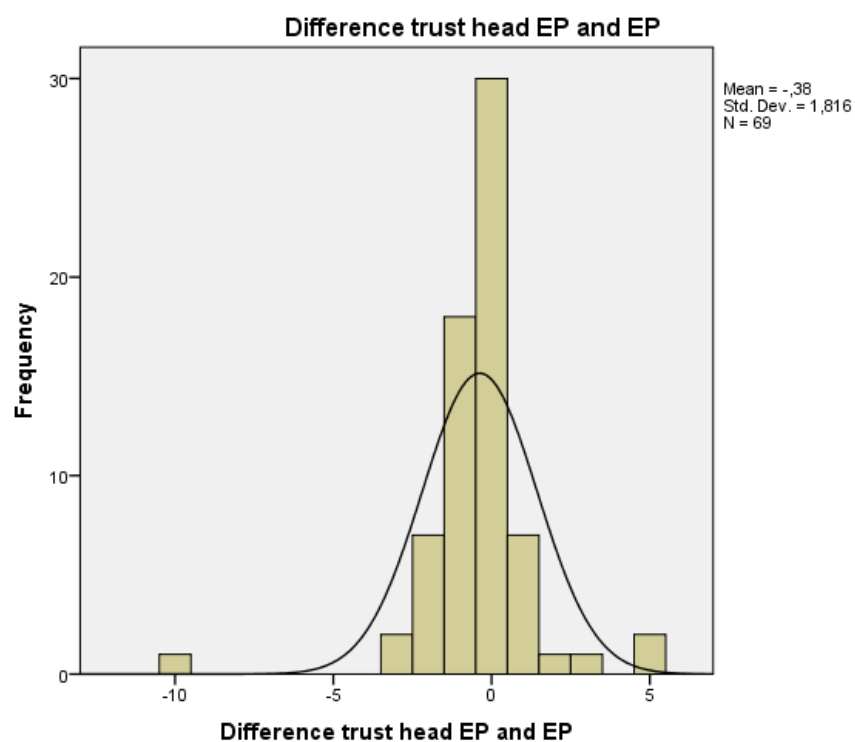
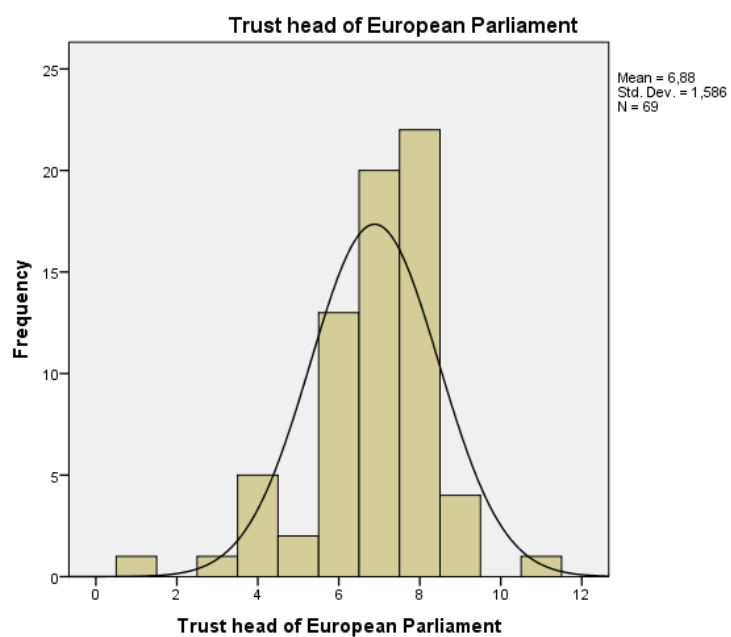
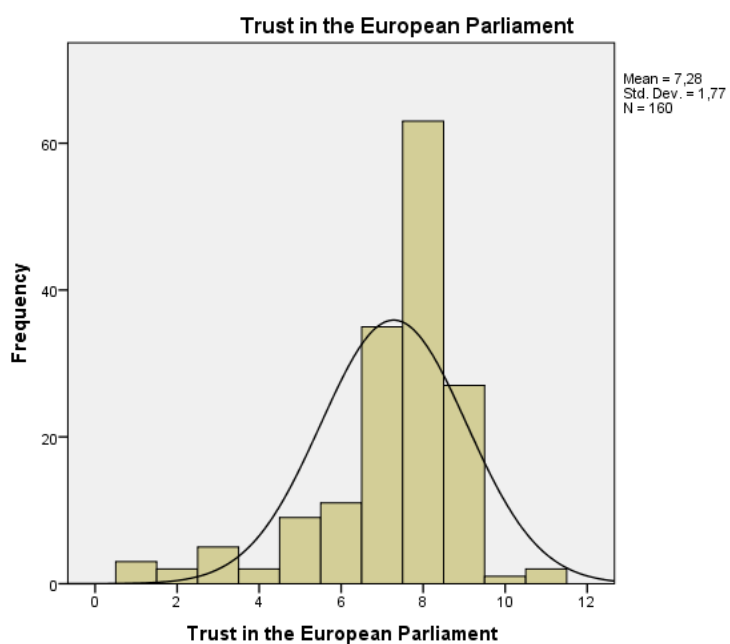
<i>Tests of Normality</i>	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk
Difference trust head EP and EP	Statistic = .270; df= 40; p < .001	Statistic = .649; df= 40; p < .001
Difference trust head COM and COM	Statistic = .217; df= 40; p < .001	Statistic = .869; df= 40; p < .001
Difference trust head ECB and ECB	Statistic = .247; df= 40; p < .001	Statistic = .889; df= 40; p = .001
Difference trust head Council and Council	Statistic = .216; df= 40; p < .001	Statistic = .925; df= 40; p = .011

A.2 Normality distribution graphs

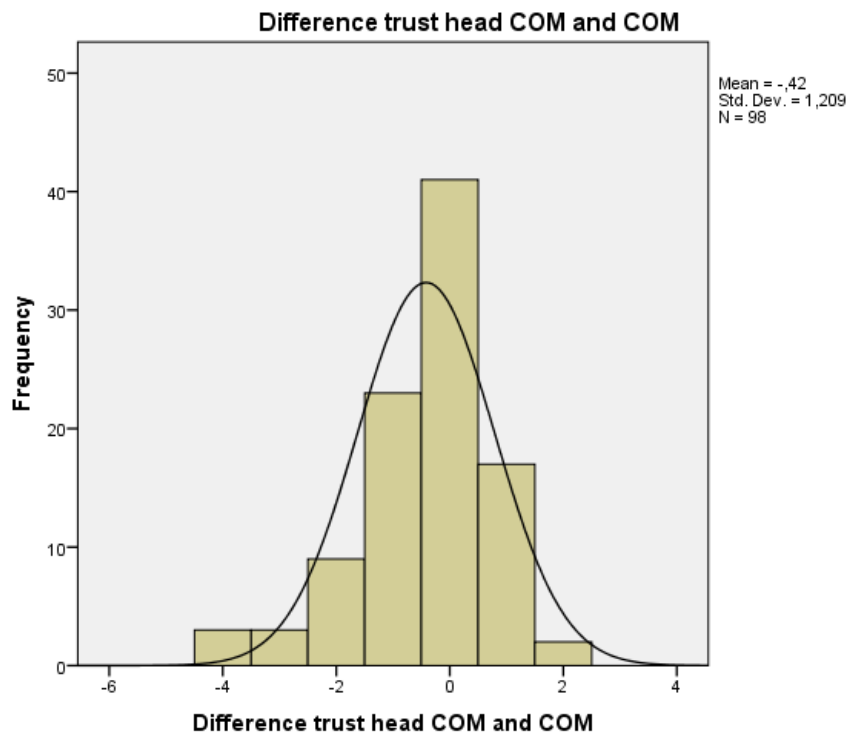
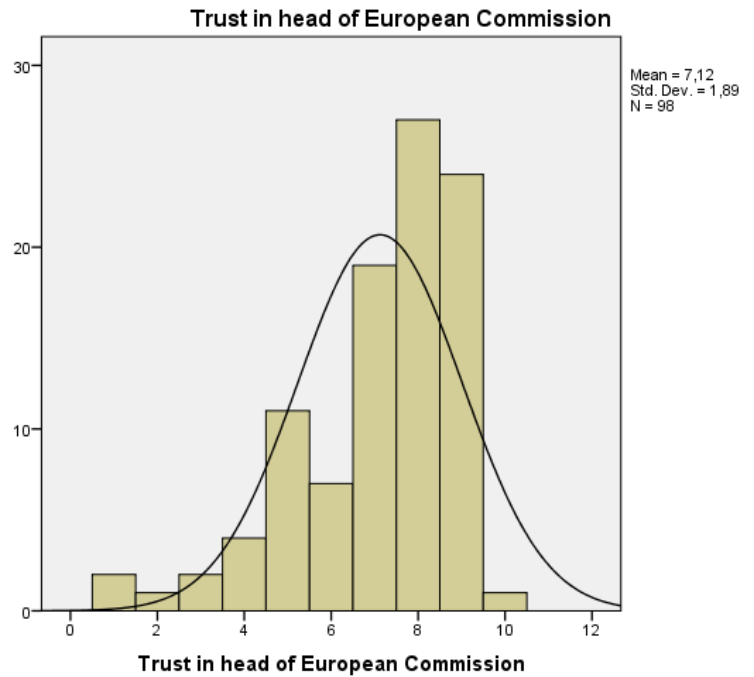
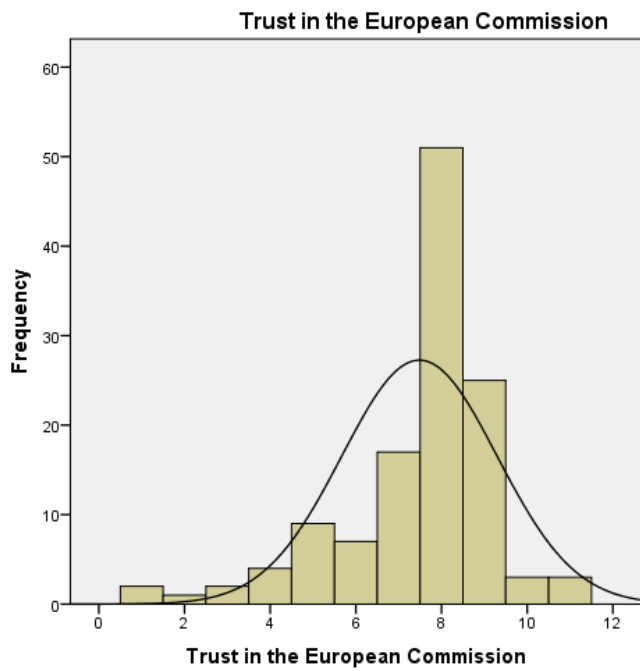
Variables: General trust in institutions, general trust in the heads of institutions & *dif.* variable



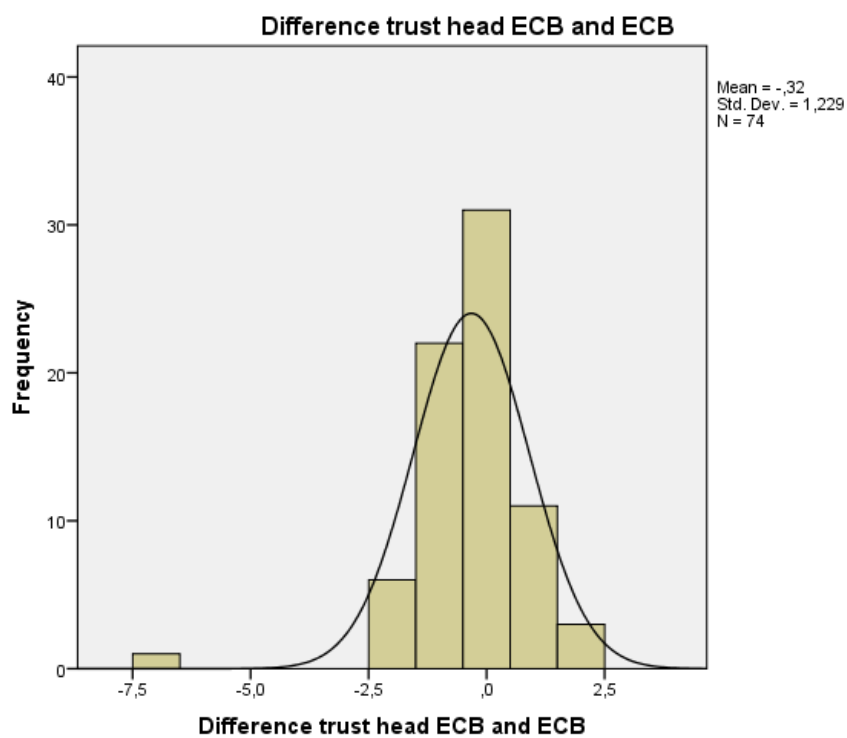
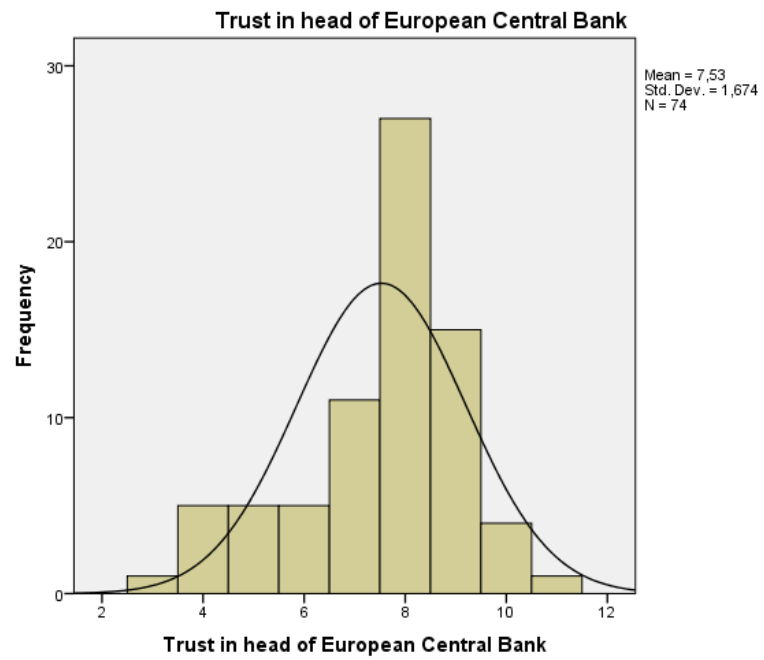
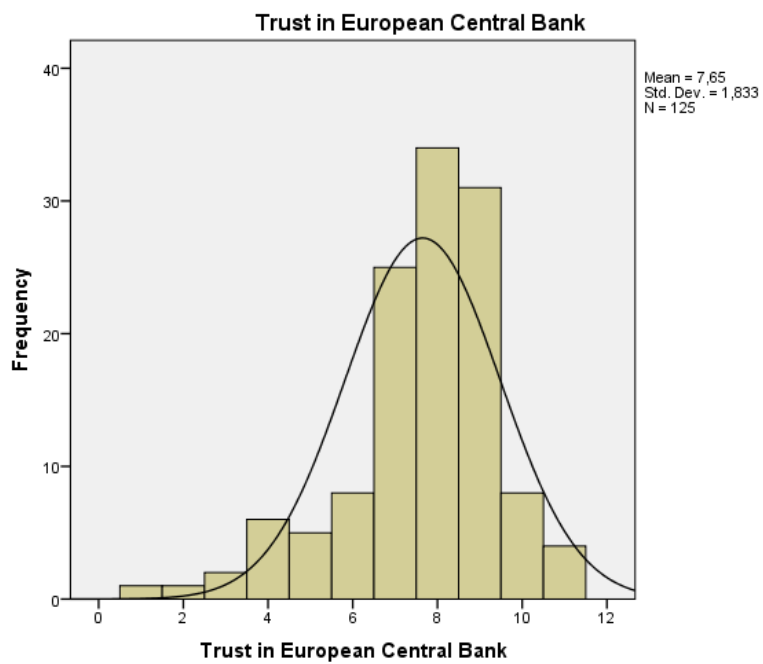
Variables: Trust in the European Parliament, trust in the head of the EP & *dif.* variable



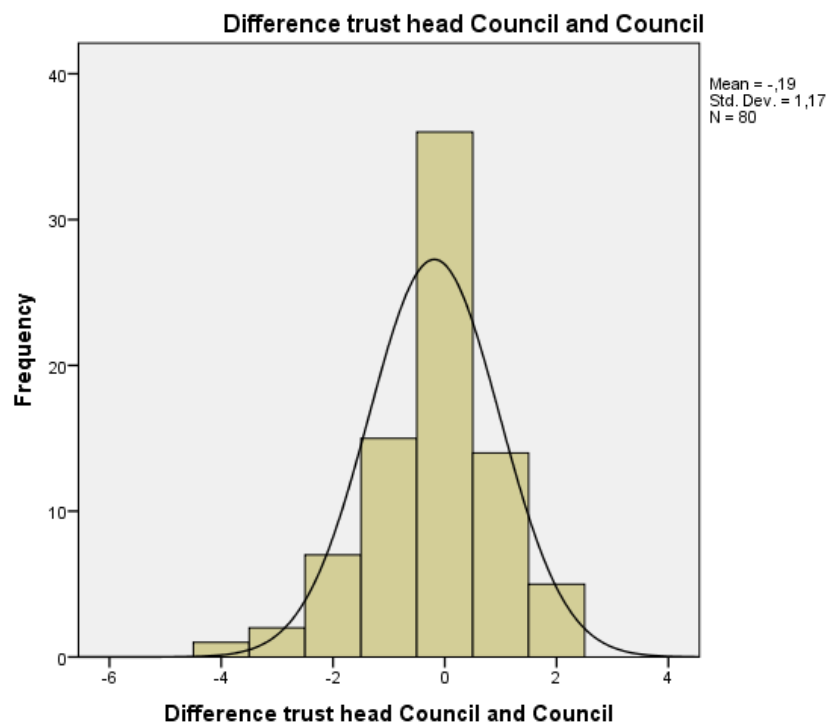
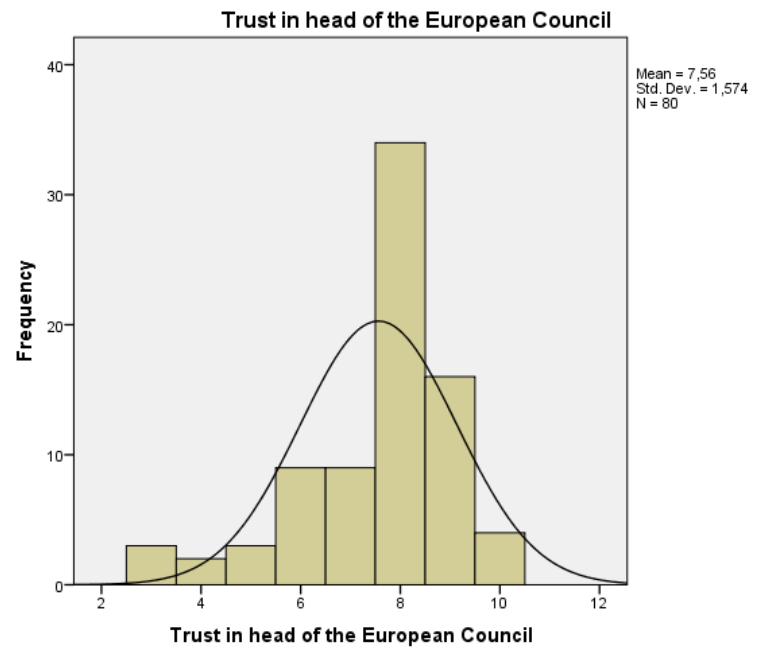
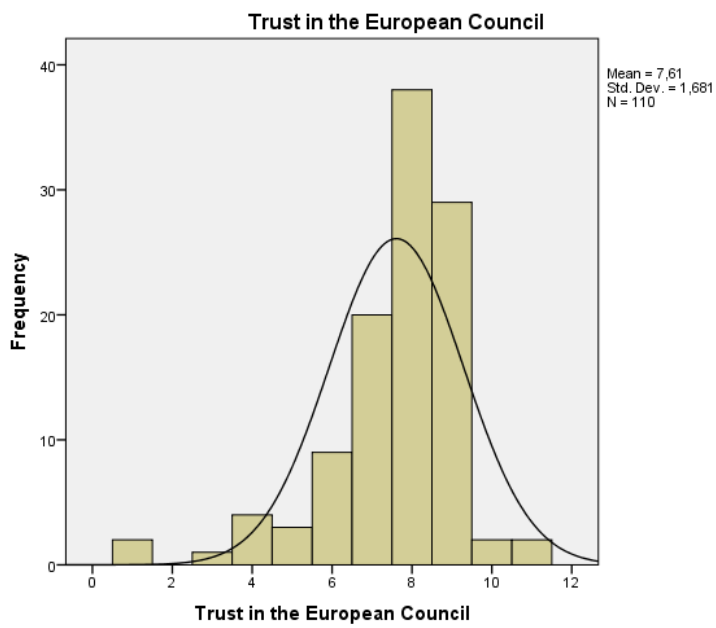
Variables: Trust in the European Commission, trust in the head of the EC & *diff.* Variable



Variables: Trust in the European Central Bank, trust in the head of the ECB & dif. Variable



Variables: Trust in the European Council, trust in the head of the Council & *diff.* variable

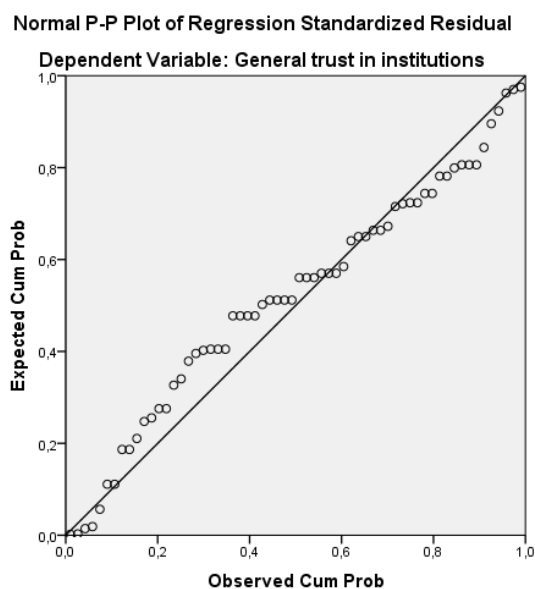
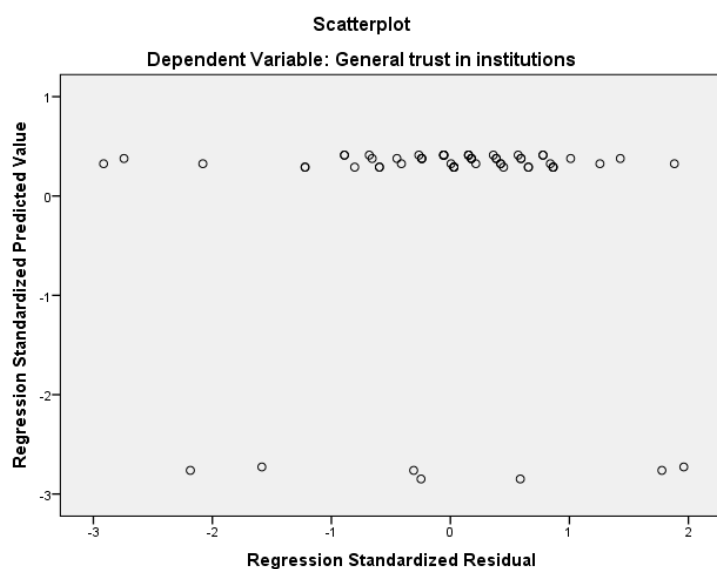


A.3 OLS regression analysis for the dependent variable *general trust in institutions* with control variables *high education level*, *gender (female)* and *current employer (public sector)*

<i>Coefficients for general trust in institutions</i>	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta (β)	t statistic & significance.	95% Confidence Interval for B*
Constant	5.296	.508		t = 10.434 (p < .001)	4.280 – 6.312
Dummy variable for education high	2.669	.488	.589	t = 5.474 (p < .001)	1.693 – 3.645
Dummy variable for gender (female)	.029	.311	.010	t = .093 (p = .926)	-.594 - .653
Dummy variable for current employer (public sector)	.074	.311	.026	t = .237 (p = .813)	-.550 - .697

*Lower bound – upper bound

<i>Residual statistics for the dependent variable: general trust in institutions</i>					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted value	5.30	8.07	7.72	.850	62
Std. predicted value	-2.849	.412	.000	1.000	62
Std. error of predicted value	.262	.508	.296	.072	62
Adjusted predicted value	4.89	8.23	7.72	.862	62
Residual	-3.494	2.351	.000	1.169	62
Std. Residual	-2.914	1.961	.000	.975	62
Stud. Residual	-3.011	2.165	.000	1.020	62
Deleted Residual	-3.731	2.864	.000	1.282	62
Stud. Deleted Residual	-3.250	2.238	-.008	1.054	62
Mahal. Distance	1.939	9.951	2.952	2.330	62
Cook's Distance	.000	.260	.025	.057	62
Centered Leverage Value	.032	.163	.048	.038	62

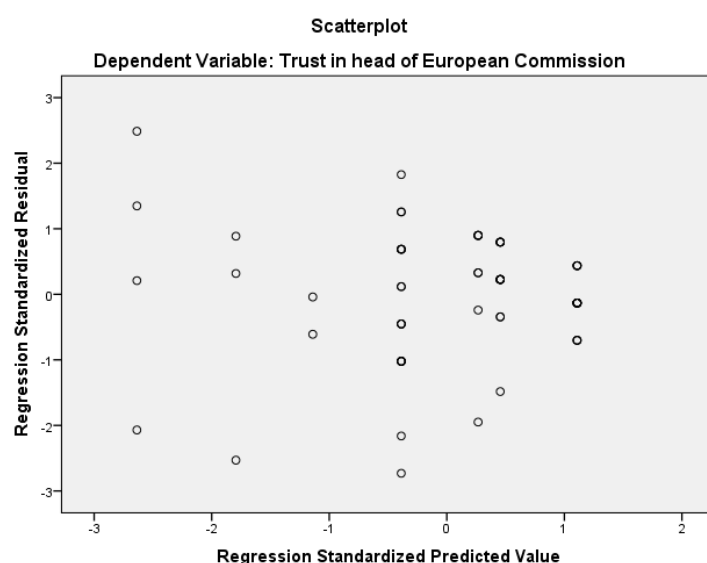


A.4 OLS regression analysis for the dependent variable *trust in the head of the European Commission* with control variables *high education level*, *gender (female)* and *current employer (public sector)*

<i>Coefficients for trust in head of European Commission</i>	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta (β)	t statistic & significance.	95% Confidence Interval for B*
Constant	4.633	.634		t = 7.304 (p < .001)	3.365 – 5.901
Dummy variable for education high	2.161	.636	.380	t = 3.399 (p = .001)	.890 – 3.432
Dummy variable for gender (female)	.628	.463	.156	t = 1.358 (p = .179)	-.296 – 1.553
Dummy variable for current employer (public sector)	.809	.446	.207	t = 1.815 (p = .074)	-.082 – 1.701

*Lower bound – upper bound

<i>Residual statistics for the dependent variable: trust in the head of the European Commission</i>					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted value	4.63	8.23	7.17	.961	66
Std. predicted value	-2.636	1.108	.000	1.000	66
Std. error of predicted value	.351	.691	.421	.097	66
Adjusted predicted value	3.98	8.29	7.16	.980	66
Residual	-4.794	4.367	.000	1.715	66
Std. Residual	-2.731	2.487	.000	.977	66
Stud. Residual	-2.787	2.667	.001	1.016	66
Deleted Residual	-5.109	5.023	.002	1.857	66
Stud. Deleted Residual	-2.956	2.812	-.005	1.043	66
Mahal. Distance	1.611	9.078	2.955	2.058	66
Cook's Distance	.000	.276	.021	.053	66
Centered Leverage Value	.025	.140	.045	.032	66

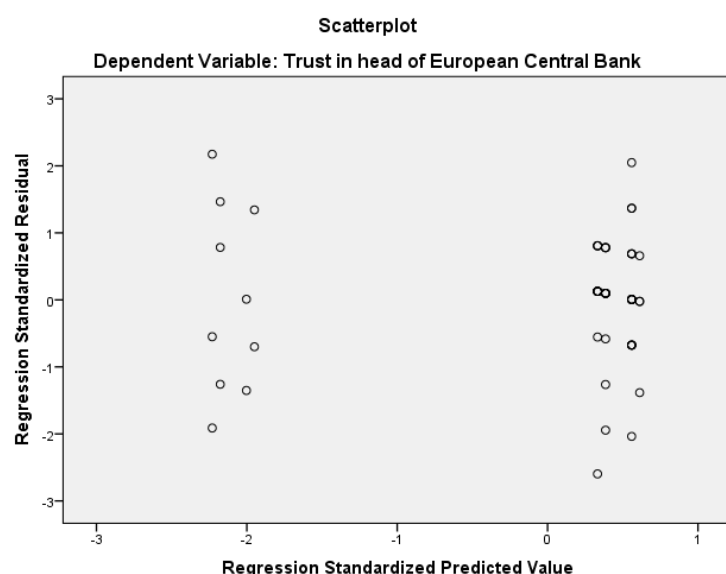


A.5 OLS regression analysis for the dependent variable *trust in the head of the European Central Bank* with control variables *high education level*, *gender (female)* and *current employer (public sector)*

<i>Coefficients for trust in head of European Central Bank</i>	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta (β)	t statistic & significance.	95% Confidence Interval for B*
Constant	5.986	.541		t = 11.064 (p < .001)	4.900 – 7.071
Dummy variable for education high	2.005	.516	.476	t = 3.884 (p < .001)	.969 – 3.042
Dummy variable for gender (female)	.042	.424	.013	t = .098 (p = .922)	-.810 – .893
Dummy variable for current employer (public sector)	-.178	.410	-.055	t = -.434 (p = .666)	-1.000 – .645

*Lower bound – upper bound

<i>Residual statistics for the dependent variable: trust in the head of the ECB</i>					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted value	5.81	8.03	7.55	.783	56
Std. predicted value	-2.230	.612	.000	1.000	56
Std. error of predicted value	.312	.591	.383	.086	56
Adjusted predicted value	5.28	8.24	7.55	.798	56
Residual	-3.814	3.192	.000	1.428	56
Std. Residual	-2.597	2.174	.000	.972	56
Stud. Residual	-2.674	2.347	.000	1.016	56
Deleted Residual	-4.044	3.721	-.001	1.562	56
Stud. Deleted Residual	-2.852	2.458	-.004	1.042	56
Mahal. Distance	1.496	7.933	2.946	1.910	56
Cook's Distance	.000	.228	.024	.045	56
Centered Leverage Value	.027	.144	.054	.035	56

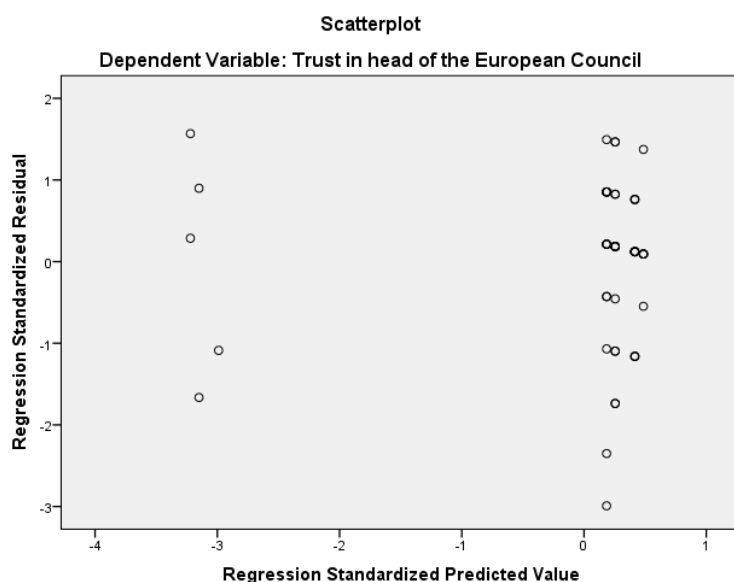


A.6 OLS regression analysis for the dependent variable *trust in the head of the European Council* with control variables *high education level*, *gender (female)* and *current employer (public sector)*

<i>Coefficients for trust in head of European Council</i>	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta (β)	t statistic & significance	95% Confidence Interval for B*
Constant	5.597	.743		t = 7.530 (p < .001)	4.106 – 7.089
Dummy variable for education high	2.114	.737	.371	t = 2.867 (p = .006)	.634 – 3.594
Dummy variable for gender (female)	.143	.442	.043	t = .324 (p = .747)	-.743 – 1.030
Dummy variable for current employer (public sector)	-.044	.435	-.013	t = -.100 (p = .921)	-.917 – .830

*Lower bound – upper bound

<i>Residual statistics for the dependent variable: trust in the head of the European Council</i>					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted value	5.55	7.86	7.55	.621	56
Std. predicted value	-3.220	.485	.000	1.000	56
Std. error of predicted value	.354	.784	.402	.114	56
Adjusted predicted value	4.87	7.94	7.55	.644	56
Residual	-4.668	2.446	.000	1.517	56
Std. Residual	-2.991	1.567	.000	.972	56
Stud. Residual	-3.073	1.773	.000	1.015	56
Deleted Residual	-4.927	3.130	-.001	1.659	56
Stud. Deleted Residual	-3.364	1.812	-.009	1.045	56
Mahal. Distance	1.845	12.891	2.946	2.803	56
Cook's Distance	.000	.263	.025	.051	56
Centered Leverage Value	.034	.234	.054	.051	56



A.7 One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA for trust in the heads of the institutions

	Mean	SD	N
Trust Tajani	6.93	1.607	40
Trust Juncker	6.93	2.030	40
Trust Draghi	7.45	1.825	40
Trust Tusk	7.25	1.706	40

	Mauchly's Test of Sphericity	Epsilon ⁵¹
Heads of the institutions (design: intercept)	Mauchly's W = .777 Approx. Chi ² = 9.530 Df = 5 p = .090	Greenhouse-Geisser = .875 Huynh-Feldt = .944 Lower-bound = .333

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity tests the null hypothesis that the error covariance matrix of the orthonormalized transformed dependent variables is proportional to an identity matrix.

<i>Tests of Within-Subject Effects</i>	Heads of institutions	Error (Headsinstitutions)
Sphericity assumed	SS ⁵² = 8.025 Df = 3 Mean square = 2.675 F = 1,841 p = .143 Partial Eta Squared= .045	SS = 169.975 Df = 117 Mean square = 1.453
Greenhouse Geisser	SS = 8.025 Df = 2.624 Mean square = 3.058 F = 1,841 p = .152 Partial Eta Squared= .045	SS = 169.975 Df = 102.341 Mean square = 1.661
Huynh-Feldt	SS = 8.025 Df = 2.831 Mean square = 2.835 F = 1,841 p = .147 Partial Eta Squared= .045	SS = 169.975 Df = 110.393 Mean square = 1.540
Lower-bound	SS = 8.025 Df = 1.000 Mean square = 8.025 F = 1,841 p = .183 Partial Eta Squared= .045	SS = 169.975 Df = 39.000 Mean square = 4.358

⁵¹ May be used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the averaged tests of significance. Corrected tests are displayed in the Tests of Within-Subjects Effects table.

⁵² Sum of Squares.

A.8 OLS regression for the dependent variable *general trust in institutions* and independent variables *political sophistication* (dummy) and *political attitudes*

<i>Model Summary. Predictors: Political Attitude, Dummy variable for political sophistication.</i>					
<i>Dependent Variable: General trust in institutions</i>					
R = .124					
R ² = 0.15					
Adjusted R ² = -.009					
Std. Error of the Estimate = 1.378					

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2.391	2	1.196	.630	p = .535
Residual	151.925	80	1.899		
Total	154.316	82			

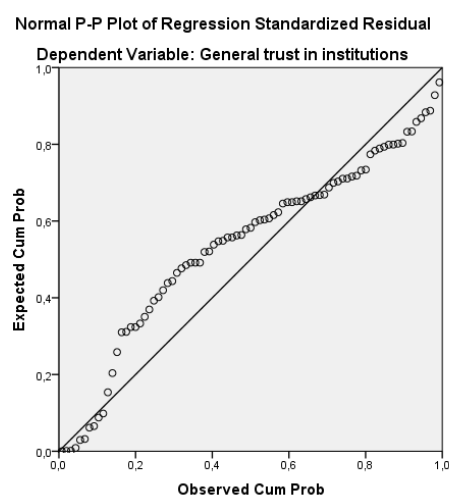
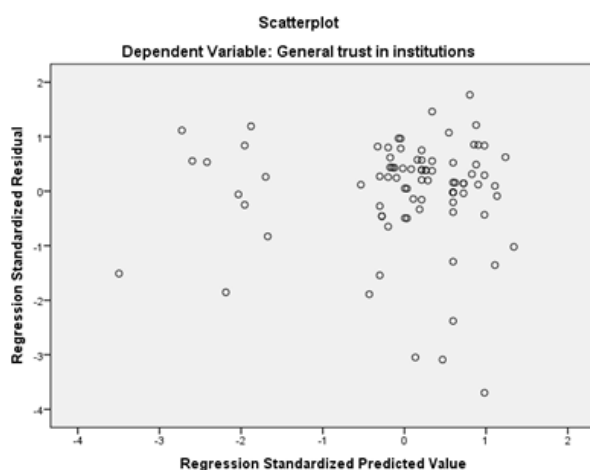
Dependent variable: General trust in institutions

Predictors: Political attitude, dummy variable for political sophistication

<i>Coefficients for general trust in institutions</i>	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta (β)	t statistic & significance.	95% Confidence Interval for B*
Constant	7.081	.579		t = 12.230 (p < .001)	5.929 – 8.233
Dummy variable for political sophistication	.458	.477	.114	t = 1.023 (p = .309)	-.432 – 1.348
Political attitude	.438	.823	.059	t = .532 (p = .596)	-1.199 – 2.076

*Lower bound – upper bound

<i>Residual statistics for the dependent variable: general trust in institutions</i>					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted value	7.08	7.91	7.68	.171	83
Std. predicted value	-3.495	1.339	.000	1.000	83
Std. error of predicted value	.162	.579	.246	.091	83
Adjusted predicted value	7.03	8.04	7.68	.179	83
Residual	-5.095	2.436	.000	1.361	83
Std. Residual	-3.697	1.767	.000	.988	83
Stud. Residual	-3.766	1.790	-.002	1.008	83
Deleted Residual	-5.285	2.499	-.004	1.418	83
Stud. Deleted Residual	-4.125	1.816	-.013	1.043	83
Mahal. Distance	.151	13.486	1.976	2.501	83
Cook's Distance	.000	.198	.014	.034	83
Centered Leverage Value	.002	.164	.024	.030	83



A.9 OLS regression for the dependent variable *general trust in the heads of the institutions* and independent variables *political sophistication* (dummy) and *political attitudes*.

Model Summary. Predictors: Political Attitude, Dummy variable for political sophistication. Dependent Variable: General trust in heads of institutions

R = .149

R² = 0.22

Adjusted R² = -.037

Std. Error of the Estimate = 1.403

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.475	2	.737	.374	p = .691
Residual	64.998	33	1.970		
Total	66.472	35			

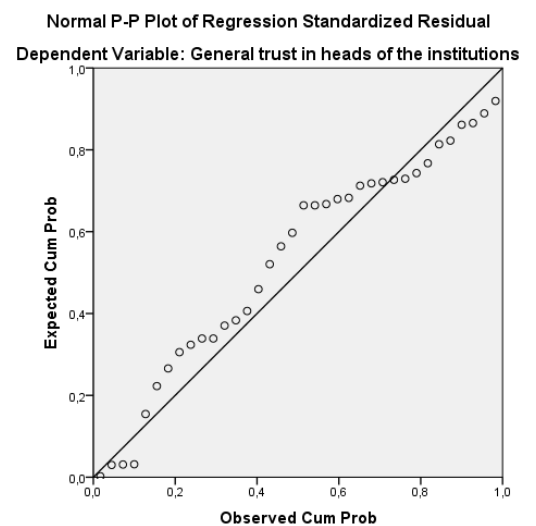
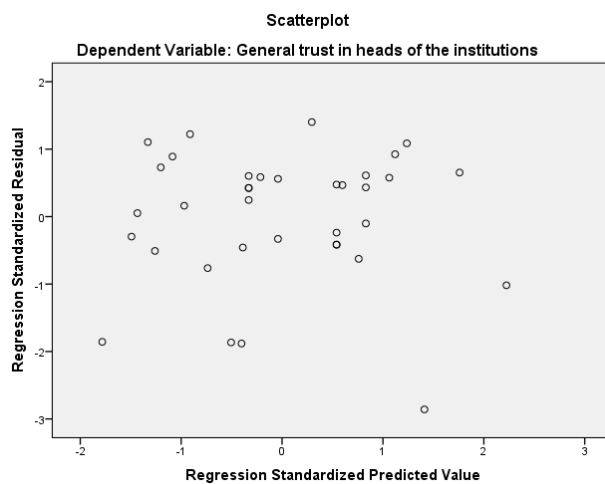
Dependent variable: General trust in heads of institutions

Predictors: Political attitude, dummy variable for political sophistication

<i>Coefficients for general trust in heads of institutions</i>	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized coefficients Beta (β)	t statistic & significance.	95% Confidence Interval for B*
Constant	6.532	1.034		t = 6.320 (p < .001)	4.429 – 8.635
Dummy variable for political sophistication	.146	.754	.034	t = .193 (p = .848)	-1.389 – 1.680
Political attitude	1.192	1.380	.151	t = .864 (p = .394)	-1.615 – 3.998

*Lower bound – upper bound

<i>Residual statistics for the dependent variable: general trust in heads of the institutions</i>					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted value	6.86	7.68	7.22	.205	36
Std. predicted value	-1.782	2.223	.000	1.000	36
Std. error of predicted value	.249	.754	.378	.147	36
Adjusted predicted value	6.32	8.03	7.23	.335	36
Residual	-4.012	1.967	.000	1.363	36
Std. Residual	-2.859	1.402	.000	.971	36
Stud. Residual	-2.991	1.625	-.004	1.038	36
Deleted Residual	-4.392	2.645	-.010	1.556	36
Stud. Deleted Residual	-3.450	1.669	-.024	1.097	36
Mahal. Distance	.125	9.131	1.944	2.552	36
Cook's Distance	.000	.530	.054	.114	36
Centered Leverage Value	.004	.261	.056	.073	36



Appendix 3. Comments from the survey

Comments – relevant (with education level in brackets):

- How are you going to give feedback to your respondents? (higher educated, hereafter HE)
- Ik heb de lidstaten niet geteld en houd het ook niet bij.. Vreemde vraag in dit onderzoek! (HE)
- Pas je op voor niet te veel USBO studenten, anders behoorlijke pro europa bias (HE)
- Ik heb niet zoveel met deze onderwerpen (Lower educated, hereafter LE)
- Ik heb geen vertrouwen in welke unie het dan ook mag zijn. (LE)
- Bedoelde u met "hoogst genoten opleiding" hoogst afgeronde opleiding? Ik ben uitgegaan van hoogst afgeronde. (other)
- I don't know shit about EU politics. (LE)
- Zelf weet ik erg weinig over de Europese politiek. Misschien dat studenten standaard lessen politiek krijgen? (LE)
- Ik ken de presidenten niet erg goed, dus het vertrouwenscijfers is niet écht ergens op gebaseerd (HE)
- Bent u bekend met? Weet dat het bestaat en algemene functies maar ik ben niet bekend met details. Details als vervonden personen etc. (HE)
- Ik weet hier eigenlijk echt weinig af. Best beschamend! (HE)
- Zonder het nieuws op tv zou ik niets weten over de Europese unie etc. We worden heel slecht ingelicht over deze onderwerpen naar mijn mening. (LE)
- Ik merk dat ik wel veel vertrouwen heb, maar er inhoudelijk niet zoveel vanaf weet. Best gek eigenlijk! Succes met het onderzoek. (HE)
- beetje moeilijke vragen voor jongeren. heel veel jongeren weten niet heel veel over politiek (LE)
- veel dingen waren voor mij onbekend (LE)

Irrelevant:

- succes met spss'en!!!!
- Liefs Sab!
- geen
- Ja, waarom krijg ik spam in mijn natschool, ik vind dit heel raar. Sorry
- KUSJES VAN JE BROERTJE
- Ik heb het vermoeden dat je uit de vragen die je krijgt op kunt maken dat je bepaalde vragen juist of onjuist beantwoord hebt. Ik weet niet of het de bedoeling is en of je hier rekening mee moet houden, maar ik wil het je in ieder geval meegeven!
- Ben wel benieuwd naar de uitkomsten!
- Nope
- Nope
- Suggestief en populair taalgebruik dat weinig professioneel lijkt. Voorbeelden: don't know of het gebruik van de woorden radicaal
- xoxox
- Ik ben wel benieuwd naar de goede antwoorden
- Ik vind links-rechts niet toereikend genoeg om een politieke voorkeur te omschrijven. Persoonlijk vind ik FVD (mijn voorkeurs partij) heel erg verschillen van bijvoorbeeld VVD en PVV.
- You are all working for the same devil; the zionists
- Nee
- Nou nee

- Nee
- Poar nemn
- Als je aangereden wordt is dat dan ook een ongeluk?
- Nee
- Nee