

# Societal Wellbeing in Europe – a multidimensional measurement

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Wolfgang Aschauer  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Political Science and Sociology  
Division Sociology and Cultural Science  
University of Salzburg  
Austria

## Starting point: Living in an age of uncertainty

“Fear is there, saturating daily human existence as deregulation reaches deep into its foundations and the defensive bastions of civil society fall apart.” (Bauman, 2008, p. 17)

How to conceptualize and measure this widespread fears of EU citizens?

### **Malaise vs. societal wellbeing:**

- multidimensional approach to evaluate and measure new cleavages in social embeddedness, social recognition, trust and belonging

### **Main thesis:**

- Processes of destabilization (lack of resources) and feelings of discomfort (societal malaise) are mainly responsible for cross-national and interpersonal breaks in solidarity

## Positioning of the project

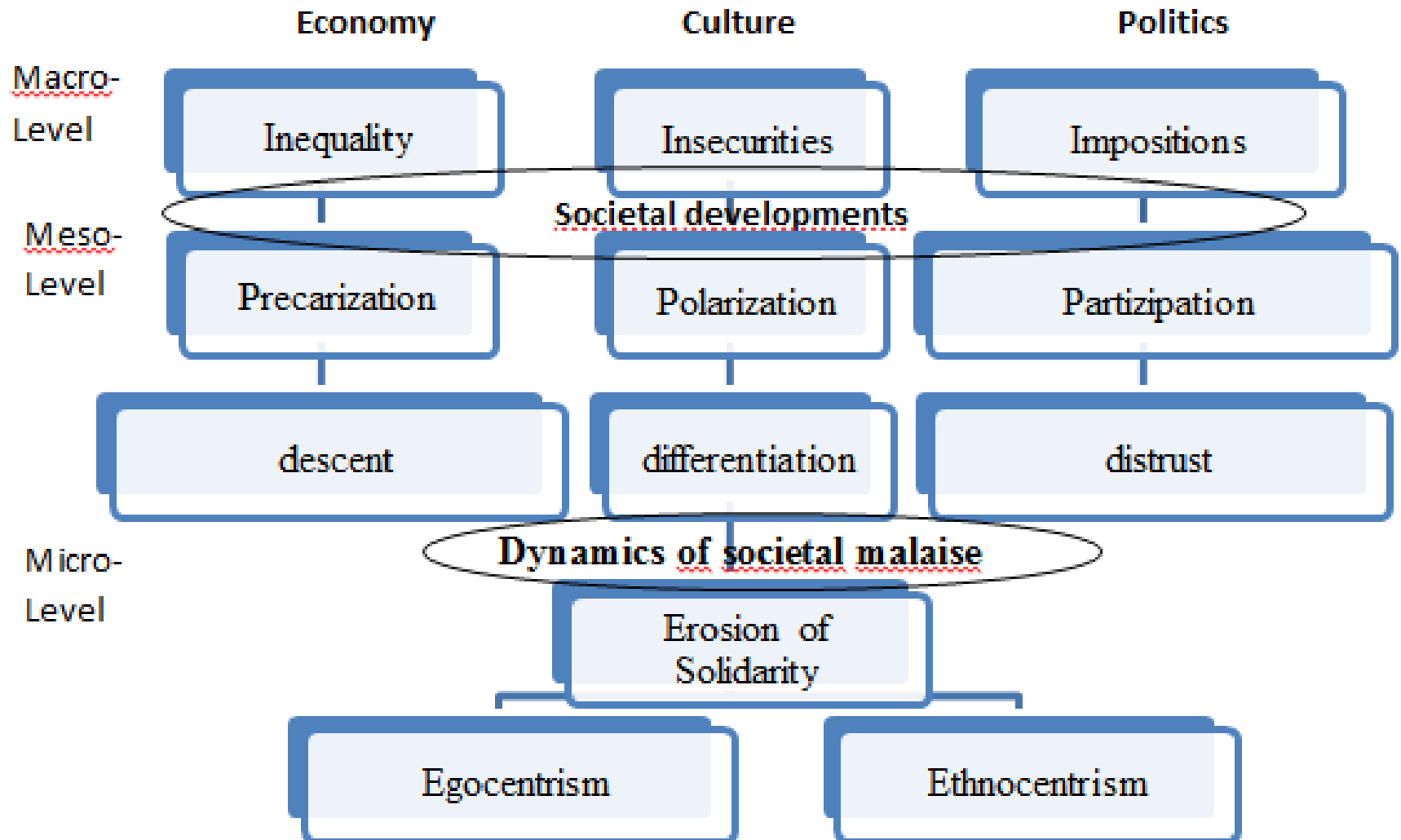
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- ❑ **Research field: European integration** (societal consequences of politically driven Europeanization and economic crises)
- ❑ **Theoretical approach:** a holistic and integrative approach of sociological theories on social integration
- ❑ **Research aim: Higher order observation of society** (*Vobruba, 2009*) based on empirical facts from survey data

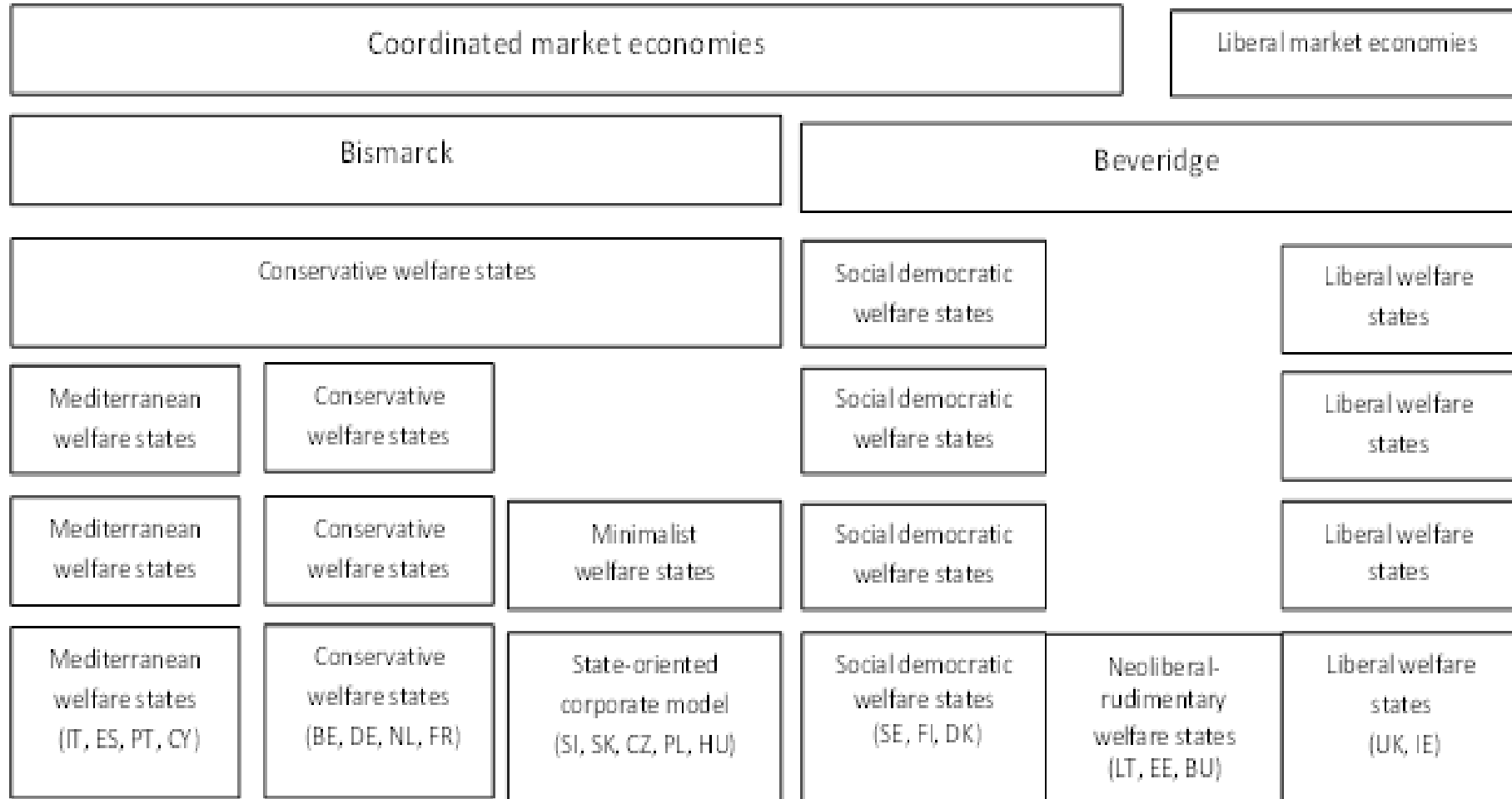
### ***Presentation of theoretical approach:***

- ❑ Defining levels of analysis and catchwords to reduce complexity
- ❑ Content-related: ***Economy, Politics and Culture***
- ❑ Explanation approach: ***Macro-, Meso- and Micro-Level***
- ❑ *Three I-Catchwords:* ***societal developments (Macro)***
- ❑ *Three P-Catchwords:* ***processes of destabilization (Meso)***
- ❑ *Three D-Catchwords:* ***characteristics of societal malaise (Mikro)***
- ❑ *Three E-Catchwords:* ***cultural consequences (AV)***

# Explanation model: catchwords



# Diverse European nations— a welfare state typology



## Empirical approach – Data sources

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- ❑ European Social Survey (2006, 2012)
- ❑ Leading cross-national survey instrument in Europe

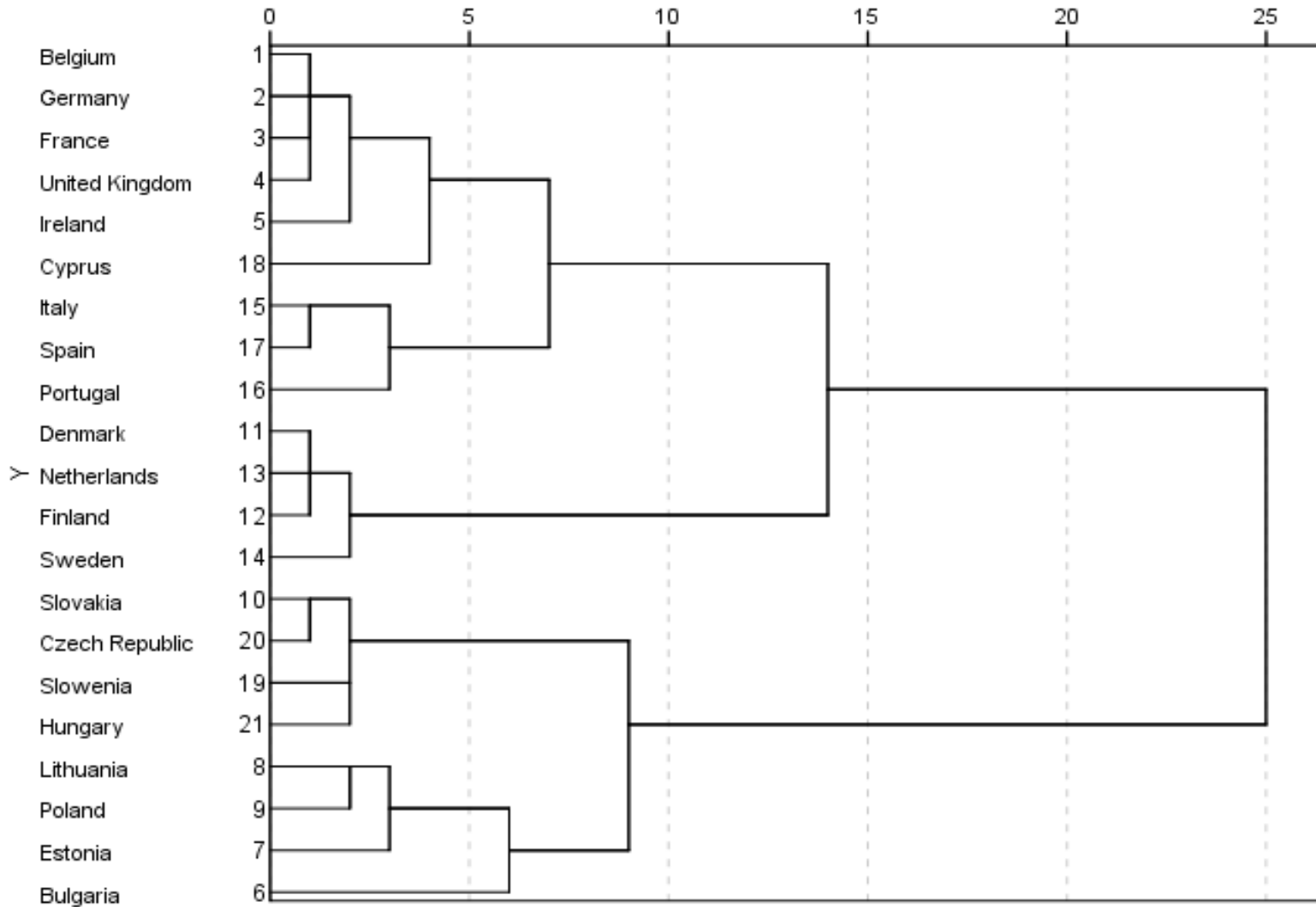
### **Advantages of high data quality:**

- ❑ Culture of documentation
- ❑ High participation rate of EU-countries (21 EU-countries 2012)
- ❑ Large representative samples ( $n \Rightarrow 1500$ )
- ❑ Same survey mode in every country (Face-to face)
- ❑ High target response rates ( $\sim 70\%$ )
- ❑ Measurement of theoretical concepts with a multiplicity of indicators

# Empirical approach – research questions

<b>Field of analysis</b>	<b>Research question</b>	<b>Hyptheses</b>	<b>Method</b>
<b>Explanatory factors</b>	<i>1) Is it justified to use a theoretical conception of multiple European Welfare worlds?</i>	H1: Economic, political and cultural macro-indicators are a sign of highly diverse developments within the EU.	Hierarchical cluster analysis based on selected Macro-indicators
<b>Equivalence testing</b>	<i>2) Is it possible to use the multidimensional conception of societal wellbeing for cross-national comparisons?</i>	H2: In an EU-wide comparison at least metric equivalence can be achieved. H3: Scalar equivalence can be achieved over time and within certain regions	SEM applying the Method of MGCFA (Multi Group Confirmatory Factor Analysis)
<b>Time and country comparison</b>	<i>3) Which EU countries are facing a decrease of societal wellbeing due to the crisis?</i>	H4: The majority of EU-member states are confronted with a decrease in societal wellbeing. H5: The increase of societal malaise is particularly visible within Southern Europe.	Comparison of latent mean values

# Research Question 1: hierarchical Cluster analysis





# Research question 1: homogeneity of clusters

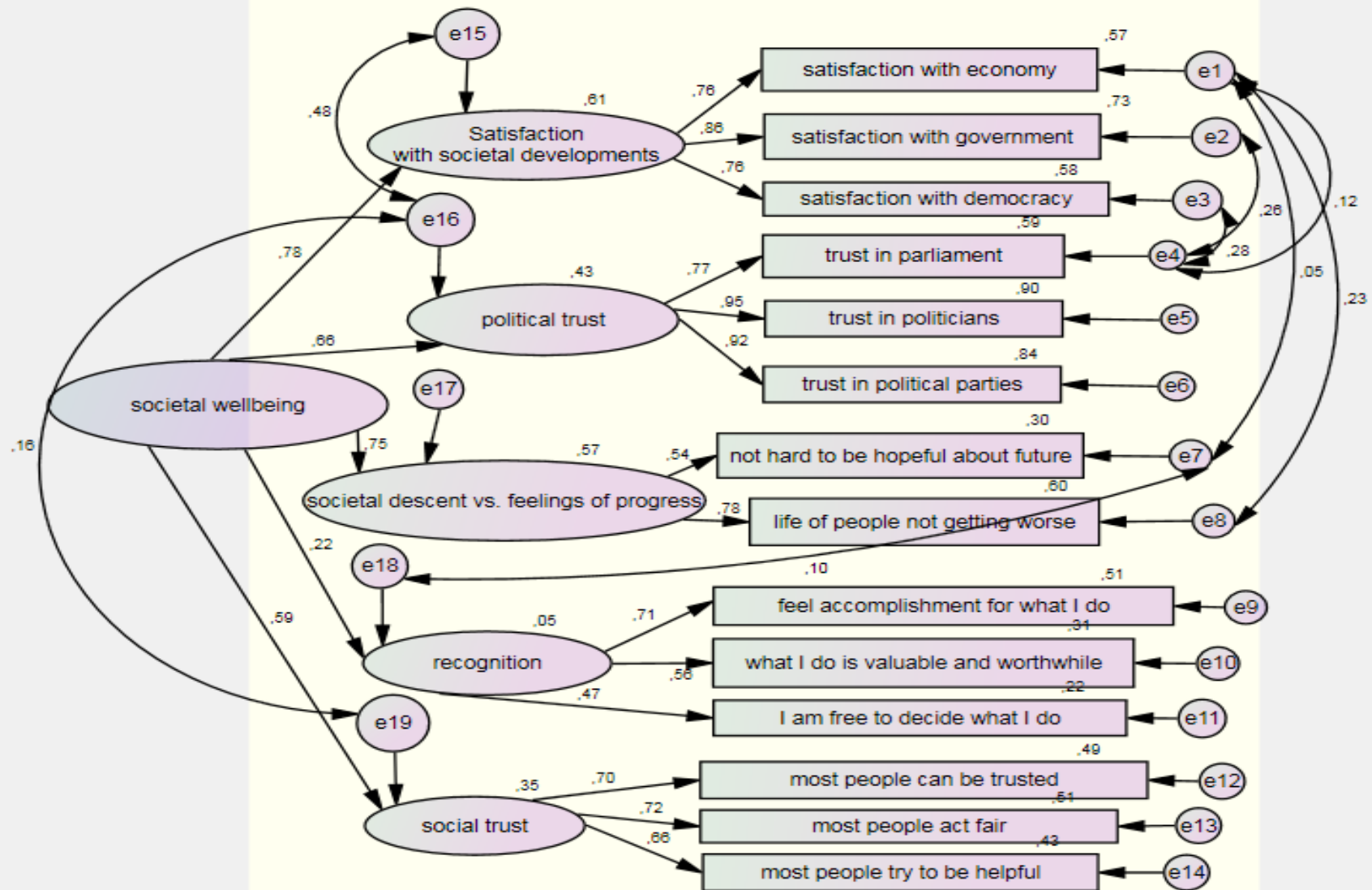
		Scandinavia and Netherlands (DK,SE,FI,NL)	Western Europe and Cyprus (FR, DE, BE, UK, IE, CY)	Southern Europe (IT,PT,ES)	Central Eastern Europe (SI,SK, CZ,HU)	Poland and baltic States (PL,EE, LT)	Bul- garia (BU)	Total
GDP per Capita in PPS	Mean	123,50	112,67	90,67	77,00	70,00	47,00	95,57
GDP Growth Rate (previous year)	Mean	-,42	-,22	-2,40	-,85	3,40	,60	-,13
GINI-Index	Mean	26,05	29,85	33,80	25,20	31,80	33,60	29,26
Poverty and Social Exclusion	Mean	16,70	23,58	27,80	21,98	27,53	49,30	24,36
Public debt	Mean	52,15	94,30	112,37	58,28	35,30	18,40	69,95
Quality of Democracy (KID)	Mean	9,70	8,90	8,27	8,73	8,80	7,30	8,84
Integration Policy	Mean	69,50	54,50	70,00	46,75	44,33	45,00	56,19
Migration background	Mean	10,18	14,98	10,20	5,48	7,53	1,20	9,85
Conservation vs. Openness to Change	Mean	,09	-,25	-,56	-,49	-,59	-1,00	-,36
Self enhancement vs. Self Transcendence	Mean	1,60	1,43	1,30	,78	,86	,79	1,21

## Research question 2:

### Operationalization of Societal Wellbeing (ESS 2006, 2012)

<b>Crises level</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Crisis of regulation (distrust)</b>	Dissatisfaction vs. satisfaction with societal developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction with economy (ESS Code: STFECO)</li> <li>• Satisfaction with national government (ESS Code: STFGOV)</li> <li>• Satisfaction with way democracy works (ESS Code: STFDEM)</li> </ul>
	Political distrust vs. political trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust in parliament (ESS Code: TRSTPRL)</li> <li>• Trust in politicians (ESS Code: TRSTPLT)</li> <li>• Trust in political parties (ESS Code: TRSTPRT)</li> </ul>
<b>Crisis of structure (descent)</b>	Fear of societal descent vs. feelings of societal progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard to be hopeful for the future (ESS Code: NHPFTR )</li> <li>• Situation of people in country gets worse (ESS Code: LFWRS)</li> </ul>
	Lack of recognition vs. acknowledgement of own talents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free to decide how to live my life (ESS Code: DCLVLF)</li> <li>• Feel accomplishment for what I do (ESS Code: ACCDNG)</li> <li>• What I do is valuable and worthwhile (ESS Code: DNGVAL)</li> </ul>
<b>Crises of cohesion (differentiation)</b>	Social distrust vs. social trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most people can be trusted (ESS Code: PPLTRST)</li> <li>• Most people try to be fair (ESS Code: PPLFAIR)</li> <li>• Most of the time people try to be helpful (ESS Code: PPLHLP)</li> </ul>

# Dimensions of societal wellbeing (CFA, Sample: EU 21, ESS 2012)



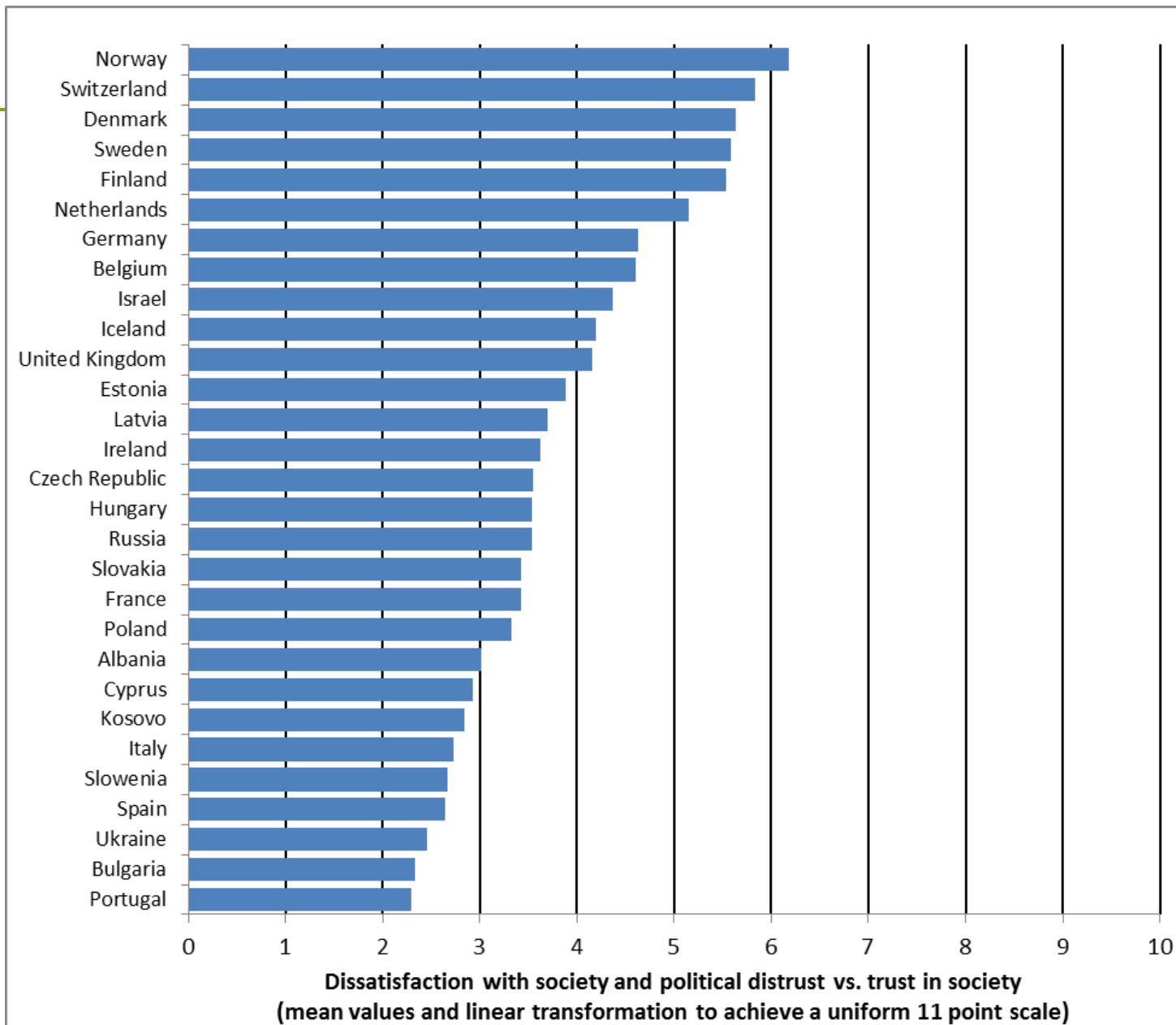
Standardized estimates chi-square=2846,802 df=64 rel.chi-square = 44,481  
p-value=,000 Cfi=,987 rmsea=,034 pclose=1,000

# MGCFA – equivalence testing

Region	Model	Chi <sup>2</sup>	df	Chi <sup>2</sup> / df	Sig.	RMSEA	PCLOSE	CFI
21 EU Countries	Configural invariance	5821,4	1344	4,33	p<0,001	0,009	1,000	0,980
	Metric invariance (first order factors)	7288,3	1524	4,78	p<0,001	0,010	1,000	0,974
	<b>Metric invariance (second order factors)</b>	<b>8055,6</b>	<b>1604</b>	<b>5,02</b>	<b>p&lt;0,001</b>	<b>0,010</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0,971</b>
	Scalar invariance (Indicators)	41791,1	1884	22,2	p<0,001	0,023	1,000	0,819
Social democratic (SE, DK, FI) No Intercept Invariance Item 2,9,12	<b>Partial scalar</b>	<b>1627,9</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>6,78</b>	<b>&lt; 0,001</b>	<b>0,032</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0,952</b>
Conservative (NL, BE, DE, FR) No intercept invariance Item 1,2,4, 8,9,14	<b>Partial scalar</b>	<b>3136,7</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>9,83</b>	<b>&lt; 0,001</b>	<b>0,032</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0,930</b>
Liberal (UK, IE)	<b>Skalar</b>	<b>1000,4</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>6,41</b>	<b>&lt; 0,001</b>	<b>0,033</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0,968</b>
Mediterranean (IT, ES, PT, CY) No intercept invariance Item 1,,4, 12,14	<b>Partial scalar</b>	<b>1844,2</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>5,68</b>	<b>&lt; 0,001</b>	<b>0,028</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0,946</b>
Eastern corporatist (CZ, SK, CZ, SI, PL) No Intercept invariance Item 1,3,4,11,14	<b>Partial scalar</b>	<b>3562,4</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>8,73</b>	<b>&lt; 0,001</b>	<b>0,029</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0,946</b>
Neoliberal-rudimentary (EE, LT, BU) No intercept invariance Item 1,2,4,8,9,12,14	<b>Partial scalar</b>	<b>2886,2</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>12,44</b>	<b>&lt; 0,001</b>	<b>0,041</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0,930</b>

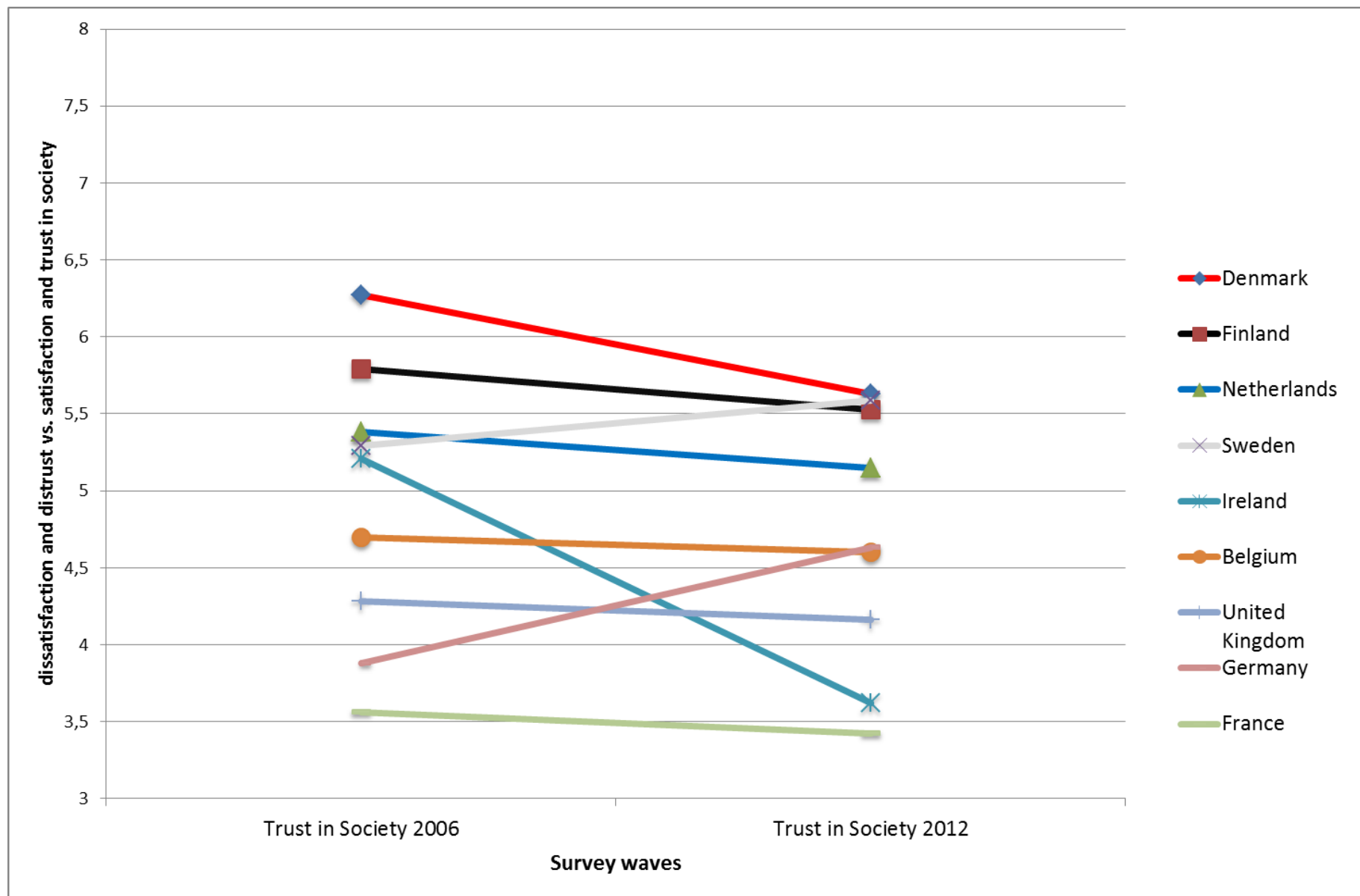
# Dissatisfaction, distrust vs. trust in society and progress

(Source: ESS 2012, all countries participating)



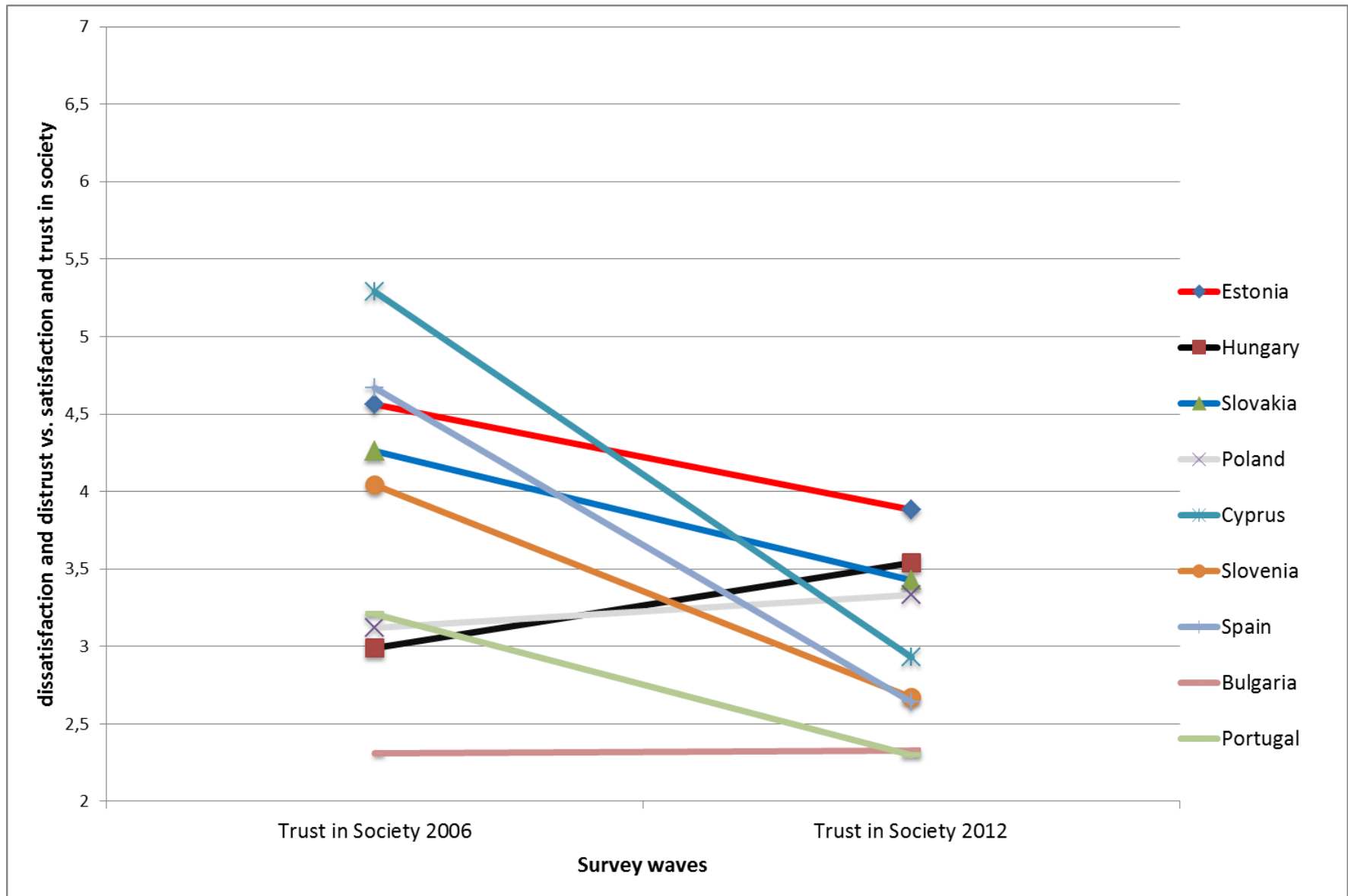
# Trust in the system in a time comparison – Western Europe

(Source: ESS 2006 und 2012, 18 EU countries)



# Trust in the system in a time comparison –

Southern and Eastern Europe (Source: ESS 2006 und 2012, 18 EU countries)



# Conclusions and prospects

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## **Main results:**

- Clear trend of a decreasing trust in society in many EU-countries
- Economic crises states lead to a loss of political legitimacy (threat of a crises of the political system)
- The state of a societal crises (lack of trust in social relations) is not visible yet, but certain countries (e.g. Cyprus, Bulgaria) reach critical thresholds

## **Achievements and further steps in methodology:**

- Research design of the main characteristics and certain challenges of the contemporary European malaise is established
- A holistic theoretical approach, a successful evaluation of the higher order model and the achievement of equivalence (temporal and cross-national) are considered as valuable steps of the analysis of contemporary societal challenges

## **Further tasks: full test of the explanatory model with open questions**

- How to deal with high complexity and wide range of explanatory variables?
- Multilevel-Modeling or separate regressions within European regions?
- Potentials to construct path models with SEM?



This report was presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> LCSR International Workshop “Social and Cultural Changes in Cross-National Perspective: Subjective Well-being, Trust, Social capital and Values”, which will be held within the XVI April International Academic Conference on Economic and Social Development.

April 8 - 10, 2015 – Higher School of Economics, Moscow.

[www.lcsr.hse.ru/en/seminar2015](http://www.lcsr.hse.ru/en/seminar2015)

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