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A Matter of Mistrust in Political Parties?
Protest Participation by Climate-Conscious Citizens
in Post-Pandemic Europe

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List of Abbreviations

avg.	average
CCI	Country cluster
CCC	Climate-conscious Citizens
ESS	European Social Survey
FFF	Fridays for Future
MPP	Mistrust in Political Parties
PP	Protest Participation
TPP	Trust in Political Parties

1. Introduction

With the outbreak of the Covid-19-pandemic in 2020 the situation of climate protests has changed massively. The time before the pandemic (2018/19) was characterised by mass strikes for the climate from Fridays For Future (FFF). The pandemic brought this period to an end and mass mobilisation for climate policy issues appears to have come to a stillstand.¹ Meanwhile more radical climate protest groups emerged, characterised by using civil disobedience as form of protests and by a clear distinction from the political decision-making processes in European democracies.² In this context even representatives of Green political parties, making nearly the same climate policy demands, have distanced themselves from this more radical parts of the climate movement.³ In contrast, the phase before the pandemic was shaped through a strong relationship between Green parties and the climate movement. The first ones benefited from the protests, as they brought key issues of Green parties into the public consciousness, by criticising parties with governmental responsibility and finally supported Green parties on their own way from the opposition into the government of at least seven European countries.⁴ At the same time, the climate movement benefited from the medial and political attention for their protests and political aims which enabled them to strengthen their potential for mobilisation. The pandemic jeopardised this relationship of trust on which climate protesters have been able to rely by shifting away the attention from the climate to the pandemical crises. The aim of this paper is to analyse and to examine, whether there is something like a new post-pandemic kind of relationship between political parties and climate protest participants in Europe. To this purpose, this paper focuses on climate-conscious citizens (CCC) and analyses their motivations for protest participation (PP), drawing on approaches from the fields of protest and trust research. As van der Meer understands political trust “[...] as the glue that keeps the system together and as the oil that lubricates the policy machine”⁵, this paper is instead based on the assumption that post-pandemic relations are based on constructive mistrust, and that this mistrust leads to PP. Following this assumption, the guiding research question in this paper is *how mistrust in political parties (MPP) has affected PP by CCC in post-pandemic Europe?*

¹ Endre Borbáth, Swen Hutter, Environmental protests in Europe, in *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2024, online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2024.2390701>.

² Marco Bitschnau, Seeking attention, provoking reactance: Radical climate activism after Covid-19, in *European View* 23 (1), 2024, p. 80-86.

³ Nils C. Kumkar, Die Radikalisierung der Radikalisierungsbehauptung: Zum Diskurs über die Letzte Generation, in *Soziopolis: Gesellschaft beobachten*, 2022, online: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-83240-7>.

⁴ As Fabel et al. found, the share of votes for the Green party in Germany increased in areas where FFF protest participation was high. See Marc Fabel, Matthias Flückiger, Markus Ludwig et al., The relationship between the youth-led Fridays for Future climate movement and voting, politician and media behaviour in Germany, in *Nature Human Behaviour* 9, 2025, p. 481-495.

⁵ Tom W.G. van der Meer, The deeply rooted concern with political trust, in Sonja Zmerli (ed.), *Handbook on Political Trust*, Cheltenham 2017, p. 1-15, p. 1.

To get closer to this question there is a literature review first, based on the current state of research on the characteristics of climate protest participants before the pandemic and from trust research, regarding the influence of political trust on PP in Europe (Chap. 2). Building on this current state of research a theoretical model is being developed which makes it possible to differ between trust, mistrust and distrust in political parties (Chap. 3.1). This paper assumes that only MPP leads to PP, because CCC view on political parties with scepticism regarding their ability to solve climate policy issues, and this leads to constructive political participation while distrust or a high level of trust do not. In Chap. 3.2 hypotheses will be formulated that make the development from before to after the pandemic analysable. Corresponding analyses based on data from the European Social Survey (ESS) follow in Chap. 4 which is divided into two parts. A first descriptive part gives attention to the development of trust in political parties (TPP) and PP in the last decade in Europe. In the second part, multivariate logistic regression analyses are used to evaluate the influence of MPP on PP and to identify other influential factors in European countries. The results are discussed in Chap. 5 with a critical reference to the state of research followed by the conclusion in Chap. 6 which not only summarises the key findings of this paper but also includes an examination of the limitations of this research approach and the validity of the results.

2. The relationship between trust and (climate) protest

MPP and TPP are understood as only one aspect of political trust, which usually also includes trust in other institutions and actors like trust in the parliament, the government and politicians in general.⁶ However, the current state of research does not allow a general statement to be made on the question whether high or low levels of political trust encourage PP.⁷ Some studies show that citizens with a higher level of political trust prefer to use institutionalised forms of participation like voting in elections.⁸ Citizens with low political trust instead would prefer non-institutionalised forms of participation and use protest as their way to act politically.⁹ Especially a low level of trust in the national parliament is identified as a key factor for PP.¹⁰ As the same study shows, PP results as well from a high level of social trust in people in general and from

⁶ Bas Denters, Oscar Gabriel, Mariano Torcal, Political confidence in representative democracies. Socio-cultural vs. political explanations, in Jan W. van Deth, José R. Montero, Anders Westholm (ed.), *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies. A comparative analysis*, London/New York 2007, p. 66-87.

⁷ Oscar W. Gabriel, Participation and political trust, in Tom W. G. van der Meer, Sonja Zmerli (ed.), *Handbook on Political Trust*, Cheltenham/Northampton 2017, p. 228-241.

⁸ Marc Hooghe, Sofie Marien, A comparative analysis of the relation between political trust and forms of political participation in Europe, in *European Societies* 15 (1), 2013, p. 131-152.

⁹ Ebe Ouattara, Eefje Steenvoorden, The Elusive Effect of Political Trust on Participation: Participatory Resource or (Dis)incentive?, in *Political Studies* 72 (4), 2024, p. 1269-1287.

¹⁰ Alexia Katsanidou, Christina Eder, Vote, party, or protest: The influence of confidence in political institutions on various modes of political participation in Europe, in *Comparative European Politics* 16 (2), 2018, p. 290-309.

being politically interested. In this sense, FFF protesters demonstrate a high top-down political understanding, combined with high trust in science to use protest as an appeal to politicians to recognise scientific findings on climate crises and to act in accordance to them.¹¹ This suggests that their protest operates within the political system rather than against it and that there is a basic level of trust in the political system, although not to the same extent in all institutions and actors. On the other hand, research on social-media-posts has shown that FFF groups are more distrustful in the political system than institutionalised and established climate actors such as Greenpeace or WWF.¹² But that should not be understood as protesting against the system at all. Calls for a system change, in turn, are made by the more radical parts of the climate movement such as Extinction Rebellion or Last Generation and even here, there is no strong evidence to understand them as dangerous for the political system.¹³ But in contrast to FFF these more radical parts tend to be much more distrustful of political parties and the most other political institutions.¹⁴ Interestingly, the same study finds that around a third of all interviewees in this study is a member of a political party which means that party membership is not automatically an indicator for TPP or trust in the political system in general.

The results of a study on the motivations of protest participants in Europe from 2009 to 2013 fundamentally questions the link between mistrust and PP.¹⁵ Here, the half of all participants exhibited mistrust in the parliament while the other half was more trusting. However, the differences between the two halves appeared to have been a more significant factor in and for the understanding of PP in this paper. Compared to the trusting protesters, distrusting ones are less educated, less satisfied with the way how the democracy works, and show much more extreme politically left positions.¹⁶ As this study was conducted in the time of financial crises and protests against the politics of austerity, their results are not surprising and should be seen with caution in regard to climate protest participants. Nevertheless, research found that FFF protest participants are not mainly “rich kids”, but they vary due to their socioeconomic circumstances, and the movement is able to mobilise across all social classes.¹⁷

¹¹ Anders Svensson, Mattias Wahlström, Climate change or what? Prognostic framing by Fridays for Future protesters, in *Social Movement Studies* 22 (1), 2023, p. 1-22.

¹² Act EU, Report (including policy recommendations) on variation in political trust across policy areas of climate change, migration and gender, 2025.

¹³ Kumkar, Radikalisierung.

¹⁴ Clare Saunders, Brian Doherty, Graeme Hayes, A new Climate Movement? Extinction Rebellion's Activists in Profile (CUSP Working Paper, No. 25), 2020.

¹⁵ Jacquélien van Steklenburg, Bert Klandermans, In Politics we trust...or not? Trusting and Distrusting Demonstrators compared, in *Political Psychology* 39 (4), 2018, p. 775-792.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 789.

¹⁷ Donatella della Porta, Martín Portos, Rich kids of Europe? Social basis and strategic choices in the climate activism of Fridays for Future, in *Italian Political Science Review* 53 (1), 2023, p. 24-49.

It seems to be necessary to take a view on studies which have examined PP, the climate movement, and political trust on a region-by-region and country-by-country perspective to proof differences resulting from cultural and historical backgrounds. At least this seems to be one reason why climate protests before the pandemic led to the highest protest mobilisation in modern history in Austria, Czechia, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom and at the same time to relatively low mobilisation in Hungary, Norway, Portugal, and Slovenia.¹⁸ In Southern Europe, where protests in the 2010s arose mainly against the European politics of austerity and the weak economical situation, the influence of trust in political institutions on PP has not shown the same strength in all countries.¹⁹ While young people with low trust in political institutions and low satisfaction with the condition of democracy were more likely to participate in protests in Greece and Spain, this connection cannot be seen for Italy at the same time.²⁰ However, it was found in all three countries that being interested in political processes is an influential factor for PP. It remains to be determined what exactly encourages PP in the climate movement in Southern Europe.

In post-communist eastern European countries, where a decline of political trust could be observed in the 2000s, this development did not lead to a measurable increase of protests.²¹ If we distinguish between the different political institutions that can be trusted, then political parties are those which receive the lowest level of trust in all institutions. And there is also a difference to Northern, Western, and Southern European countries in the political orientation of protesters. While these indicate in all other European regions mainly a politically left orientation, eastern European protesters more tend to a centralised political orientation or split into a politically left and a politically right orientation.²² This could be based on the situation, that politically left groups which could mobilise for protests are less common in Eastern Europe in difference to the other European regions and also political parties that mainly focus on climate policy can be found here less frequently.²³ If we distinguish between young climate-conscious people, those who participated in FFF protests and those who did not, we can see that even in countries like Hungary FFF protesters are more likely to have a politically left orientation in difference to the

¹⁸ Borbáth, Hutter, Environmental protests.

¹⁹ Mario Pianta, Paolo Gerbaudo, In Search of European Alternatives: Anti-Austerity Protests in Europe, in Mary Kaldor, Sabine Selchow (ed.), *Subterranean Politics in Europe*, London 2015, p. 31-59.

²⁰ Martín Portos, After the Storm: Comparing the Determinants of Young People's Protest Behaviour Across South European Contexts, in *Politics and Governance* 13, 2025, online: <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.9179>, p. 15.

²¹ Gergo Závecz, Post-communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe, in Tom W. G. van der Meer, Sonja Zmerli (ed.), *Handbook on Political Trust*, Cheltenham/Northampton 2017, p. 440-460.

²² Endre Borbáth, Theresa Gessler, Different worlds of contention? Protest in Northwestern, Southern and Eastern Europe, in *European Journal of Political Research* 59 (4), 2020, p. 910-935.

²³ Ondřej Císař, Rhapsody in Green. Environmental movements in East Central Europe, in Maria Grasso, Marco Giugni (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Movements*, Oxon/New York 2022, p. 32-44.

non-protesters.²⁴ In addition, Eastern European FFF protesters have shown a higher dissatisfaction with the way their democracies work and with political institutions like the parliament and the government.²⁵ For Hungary this high dissatisfaction with the democracy is attributed to their politically left orientation and their role in an opposition party, which confirms observations by other studies, that political views that differ too sharply from the governmental ideology lead to PP.²⁶

To summarise, it remains ambiguous whether trust or distrust has an influence on PP and to what extent this might have changed because of the pandemic.²⁷ Instead of analysing Europe as one it seems to be more fruitful to focus on different European countries separately. This can lead to new findings about the motivations for PP in different European countries and of the general interest in this paper: the influence of MPP on PP. For this purpose, this paper uses a different approach and focuses only on CCC and segregates the mistrusting ones from the trusting and distrusting others.

3. Mistrust as the mobilising factor for protest participation

3.1. Three categories of political trust

According to Harding's model of trust, TPP can be understood as follows: CCC trust political parties to do something against the climate crises because they assume that parties, in turn, have an interest in gaining their political support.²⁸ The relationship of trust that develops in this context is situational, as it can take different forms at different times and it is relational, as it always comes from the CCC's subjective perspective and their interpretation of the parties' actions.²⁹ Furthermore, it is defined by the relative insecurity felt by the CCC regarding the vagueness of the parties' actions. This vague future of the relationship can generate political trust, distrust or mistrust, depending on what CCC expect how parties will act next. Mistrust in this sense means the lack of trust, which nevertheless has the potential to mobilise sceptical citizens to articulate their political expectations and call on parties to act accordingly.³⁰ This

²⁴ Dániel Mikecz, From environmentalism to activism: comparing environmentalist students and Fridays for Future protesters in Hungary, in *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 33 (2), 2025, p. 465-481.

²⁵ Aron Buzogány, Dániel Mikecz, Piotr Kocyba, Differences within global movements: insights from FFF climate protests in Western and Eastern Europe, in *Environmental Politics*, 2026, online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2026.2623726>, p. 15.

²⁶ Borbáth, Gessler, Different worlds, p. 929.

²⁷ Instead, it is much clearer that political trust has positive influences on election participation, voting choice and political preferences. See Daniel Devine, Does Political Trust Matter? A Meta-analysis on the Consequences of Trust, in *Political Behavior* 46 (4), 2024, p. 2241-2262.

²⁸ Russell Hardin, Do we want trust in government?, in Mark E. Warren, *Democracy and Trust*, Cambridge 2010, p. 22-41, p. 26.

²⁹ Van der Meer, Zmerli, Rooted concern, p. 4f.

³⁰ Jack Citrin, Laura Stoker, Political Trust in a Cynical Age, in *Annual Review of Political Science*, 21 (1), 2018, p. 49-70, p. 50.

situation is the base for PP which addresses the political system with political demands and is based on the assumption that the CCC's expectations will not be realised without protest. High political trust or confidence is connected to not protesting as problem-solving skills of political parties are not doubted in this case. In contrast, distrust represents an attitude that parties cannot be trusted as a matter of principle and individual actions such as protests will do nothing to change this situation. Political distrust is no protest behaviour in a constructive sense but leads to a lack of the believe in a better future made by political actors such as parties. Here, all forms of behaviour that are against the existing system, as well as citizens who do not want to participate in politics (anymore) can be brought together.

This trichotomous understanding helps to see why the relationship between trust and protest is not always clear. A lack of trust or a decline in trust cannot automatically be attributed to distrust – it could be constructive mistrust as well. Some researchers tend to call political trust as confidence and only use the term trust for social, interpersonal trust.³¹ A terminological distinction like this makes sense in a research context where a clear distinction must be drawn between social trust and trust in political institutions, for example, to examine interactions between these two concepts. In the context of this paper, it is especially with a view on the following data analyses much more effective to differ between the three categories trust, mistrust, and distrust, even if the focus is mainly on the protest mobilisation by political mistrust.

3.2. Mistrust in political parties as a key factor in post-pandemic protest mobilisation

According to Klandermans, individual protest mobilisation follows four steps.³² Firstly, potential protesters need sympathy for a specific topic they could protest for. This first step is the reason to only focus on CCC as it can be assumed that they are all interested in the issue of climate protection and climate policy. Secondly, they need knowledge about specific protest events. For that, interest in political processes is as essential as the knowledge about or belief in the political impacts of protests. Mistrusting CCC are sceptical but not disillusioned, so they could have this knowledge and this belief. Thirdly, they must be motivated to participate in protests in the third step. This is the main focus of this paper and the expected link between mistrust and PP. Mistrust in the willingness of political parties to act, coupled with the belief that protest can lead them to do so, is the driving force behind PP. Lastly, and in the fourth step, the concrete PP follows which is connected to individual aspects of mobility. This last step is

³¹ Sonja Zmerli, Kenneth Newton, José R. Montero, Trust in people, confidence in political institutions, and satisfaction with democracy, in Jan W. van Deth, José R. Montero, Anders Westholm (ed.), *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies. A comparative analysis*, London/New York 2007, p. 35-65.

³² Bert Klandermans, Mobilization and Participation: Social-Psychological Expansions of Resource Mobilization Theory, in *American Sociological Review* 49 (5), 1984, p. 538-600.

for the research interest of this paper negligible but can be taken for larger to differ between those who want to participate in protests and actually do so, and those who want to but are unable to do so due to various circumstances. It could be imagined that this inability to protest could lead to political distrust, as there is no catalyst.

The state of research has led to the expectation that there are differences between different European regions and countries. Especially in Eastern Europe political parties that mainly focus on climate policy issues are relatively weak. At the same time, the civil society in these countries is weaker too, and climate protests therefore less common or attract fewer citizens.³³ Furthermore, the state of research indicates that stable and strong democracies are more likely to raise critical-minded citizens, who participate more frequently in forms of participations such as protests.³⁴ For these reasons, hypotheses are formulated on the basis of the assumption that CCC are rooted in the contexts of their countries, which again are rooted in a region of countries that are comparable in historical and cultural terms. To evaluate whether high (low) PP arises in phases with a weak (strong) level of TPP in a country and to identify differences between countries the first hypothesis is as follows:

h.1.1) Countries where TPP is below the average for their region show an above-average rate of PP among CCC.

h.1.2) Countries where TPP is above the average for their region show a below-average rate of PP among CCC.

Especially under exceptional circumstances like in the time of the pandemic it is much more difficult for parties to place climate policy claims in the public. Medial and political attention is limited and always focused on the supposedly most important topic.³⁵ Nevertheless, worries about the climate crises have not decreased for CCC but the level of trust in parties should have had so. Some researchers argue that more radical forms of protest emerged in the pandemic to fight against the lack of attention for the climate crises.³⁶ For the second hypothesis it is assumed that CCC before the pandemic had a higher level of TPP than after the pandemic:

³³ Endre Borbáth, Swen Hutter, Are Political Parties Recapturing the Streets of Europe? A Cross-regional Study of Party Protests in the Great Recession, in: Hanspeter Kriesi, Jasmine Lorenzini, Bruno Wüest (ed.), *Contention in Times of Crisis Recession and Political Protest in Thirty European Countries*, Cambridge 2020, p. 251-272.

³⁴ Daniela Braun, Swen Hutter, Political trust, extra- representational participation and the openness of political system, in *International Political Science Review* 37 (2), 2016, p. 151-165.

³⁵ Matthew R. Sisco, Sara M. Constantino, Yu Gao et al., Examining evidence for the Finite Pool of Worry and Finite Pool of Attention hypotheses, in *Global Environmental Change* 78, 2023, online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2022.102622>.

³⁶ Bitschnau, Seeking attention.

h.2) Before the Covid-19-pandemic, CCC in European countries had more TPP as they had after the pandemic.

As it is assumed that there is a connection between MPP and PP, and the pandemic was the contributing factor that reinforced this connection, then MPP should have increased the likelihood of PP after the pandemic. Instead, before the pandemic should be no visible connection between MPP and PP. The assumed connection will be tested with a third hypotheses:

h.3.1) Before the pandemic, MPP had no significant impact on PP by CCC.

h.3.2) After the pandemic, MPP had a significant impact on PP by CCC.

4. Analysing the impact of mistrust on protest participation

4.1. Climate-conscious citizens in the European Social Survey

To test the hypotheses, data sets from the ESS will be analysed.³⁷ Their data based on face-to-face interviews enables it to analyse for this paper the relevant characteristics of respondents in European countries.³⁸ Therefore, ESS-data from the collecting waves 6 to 11 is used for testing the hypotheses h.1.1, h.1.2 and h.2 and for comparing the development of TPP and PP over a longer period of time between countries. This avoids misinterpreting a low or high level of trust before or after the pandemic as a striking development if there is actually a long-term trend. The 6th wave was conducted between 2012 and 2013 in the context of financial and economic crises and therefore marks the end of the last great cross-European phase of protest before the start of the climate protests in the late 2010s.³⁹ Furthermore, the ESS surveys from the 9th and 11th waves are considered to be of particular relevance for testing h.2, h.3.1 and h.3.2. While the 9th wave was conducted right in the middle of the global climate protests and before the pandemic between August 2018 and January 2020, the 11th marks the first survey after the pandemic between March 2023 and December 2024. Nevertheless, this paper integrates not all European countries but has to accept the conditions of the data sets. As waves 6, 9 and 11 are the most important ones for this paper, only those countries with given data for these time phases are included. In some cases, therefore, data for individual countries are missing for survey waves 7, 8, and 10. Moreover, to ensure comparable conditions, only countries that were

³⁷ All data analyses for this paper were made with SPSS, version 31.0.0.0 (117).

³⁸ Until the pandemic and the 10th wave of the ESS in 2020-2020, data was collected via face-to-face interviews. Since then, the data collection method has been switched to self-completion. See online: European Social Survey, Data Collection: Face-to-Face Methodology, online: <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/methodology/methodology/data-collection-f2f>. Last proofed: 23.03.2026.

³⁹ This is particularly true of Southern Europe, whereas in Northern, Eastern, and Western Europe, PP in the context of the financial crises was more limited. See Hanspeter Kriesi, Overall Trends of Protest in the Great Recession, in Hanspeter Kriesi, Jasmine Lorenzini, Bruno Wüest, Silja Hausermann (ed.), *Contention in Times of Crisis. Recession and Political Protest in Thirty European Countries*, Cambridge 2020, p. 77-103.

members of the European Union throughout the entire period are included. This paper follows the previous state of research on different protest conditions in Europe and compares first of all the included sixteen countries in North-Western Europe (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden), Southern Europe (Cyprus, Portugal, Spain), and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia).

The ESS includes TPP, measured on a scale from 0 (very low) to 10 (very strong), as the important independent variable for the analyses in this paper.⁴⁰ A challenge for measuring and comparing Europewide trust emerges from cultural differences, which result from different understandings of trust between the respondents. In this regard, ESS data sets have proved particularly suitable, as the responses to the trust questions in its surveys are equivalent across countries.⁴¹ That means while using ESS data and its items for trust in parties it can be assumed that the respondent in one European country understands trust in almost the same way as the respondent in another European country. In addition, ESS conducts PP during the year before the survey by using a dummy variable, which will be used as the dependent variable in this paper.⁴² As a key aspect for protest mobilising the sympathy for the issue has been identified. Therefore, it is necessary to identify those respondents in the total sample, who are theoretically positively receptive for climate policy issues – these fulfil the first criteria to be considered as CCC.⁴³ In all relevant ESS waves the respondents were asked to which extent they are similar to a person who believes that it is necessary to take care for nature and the environment.⁴⁴ The following analyses only include those respondents, who classified themselves in this question with the highest or second highest score. For sure, this item is ambiguous and some respondents could have understood it in an apolitical but close-to-the-nature-lifestyle sense. To exclude these respondents, as they are theoretically not receptive for protests and a connection to the climate

⁴⁰ The question in the interviews was ” Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust.” See for the example of the 6th wave European Social Survey, ESS Round 6 Source Questionnaire, London: Centre for Comparative Social Surveys (City University London), 2012, p. 5.

⁴¹ Cary Wu, Rima Wilkes, Finding critical truster: A response pattern model of political trust, in *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 59 (2), 2018, p. 110-138.

⁴² Up to the 9th wave, the specific question related to participation in a legal demonstration. Since the 10th wave, the question has asked about participation in a public demonstration. In this paper, both items are treated as synonymous. See for the example of the 11th wave European Social Survey, ESS Round 11 Source Questionnaire, London: ESS ERIC Headquarters c/o City (University of London), 2022, p. 10.

⁴³ The item “worries about climate change” has proven to be a useful indicator of support for climate policy and personal climate protection measures. Unfortunately, however, this item was not included in the 9th survey, meaning it cannot be used to compare the pre- and post-pandemic periods. For further details on this item, see Thijs Bouman, Mark Verschoor, Casper J. Albers et al., When worry about climate change leads to climate action: How values, worry and personal responsibility relate to various climate actions, in *Global Environmental Change* 62, 2020, online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2020.102061>.

⁴⁴ „Please listen to each description and tell me how much each person is or is not like you [...] He strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to him.” For the example of the 11th wave see European Social Survey, Round 11, p. 84/87.

movement cannot be guaranteed, the analyses only includes those respondents with a (very) high value for political interest.⁴⁵ Also research on protest has identified political interest as an indicator for PP.⁴⁶ A last reduction of the subsample is made out of the reasons of conformity and cynicism based on research on political trust. Here, cynic or disillusioned citizens have been identified as respondents who mistrust all political institutions in the same way and with the lowest possible level of trust.⁴⁷ Conformist citizens, in turn, answer all questions about political trust consequent with the same and highest value. All respondents are excluded from the subsample who do not show any variation in their answers about political institutions.⁴⁸ Consequently, and as a side effect, all cases are excluded in which respondents did not answer the questions critically or show strong political trust or strong distrust. This leaves us with CCC from sixteen European countries who are highly interested in climate policy and whose responses fulfil the criteria for critical citizens. They fulfil the conditions for PP and its to evaluate, to which extent MPP can mobilise them for it. Tab. 1 in the appendix illustrates the proportion of the subsample in the total sample, divided by the included countries.

Descriptive statistical analyses are used to test the hypotheses h.1.1, h.1.2 and h.2. Thereby, the historical development of average (avg.) trust of CCC in political parties from 2012 to 2024 can be followed. Therefore, every country is illustrated in a line graph with the other countries of its European region illustrating the avg. values of political trust per country (Fig. 1, 3, and 5). In addition, other line graphs illustrate the percentage of CCC participating in protests corresponding to the same time periods and groups of countries (Fig. 2, 4, and 6). To accept h.1.1 and h.1.2 countries with a higher level of trust as the avg. of all countries in their region should show a lower quote of PP and in the opposite direction, countries with below-avg. trust should show a higher PP. Tab. 2 in the appendix provides details on the data used for the graphs, together with their respective statistical indicators.

4.2 The development of trust in political parties and protest participation (2012-2024)

4.2.1. Northern and Western Europe

Fig. 1 illustrates the development of the avg. level of TPP and Fig. 2 the development of PP by CCC for Northern and Western Europe. Finland and the Netherlands show for all years mean values of trust above the Northern- and Western European avg. At the same time, PP in these both countries is always below the avg. in this group. Sweden also shows mean values of trust

⁴⁵ “How interested would you say you are in politics [...]?” For the example of the 11th wave see European Social Survey, Round 11, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Katsanidou, Eder, Vote, p. 300.

⁴⁷ Wu, Wilkes, critical truster, p. 122f.

⁴⁸ This includes items on trust in parties, parliament, and politicians.

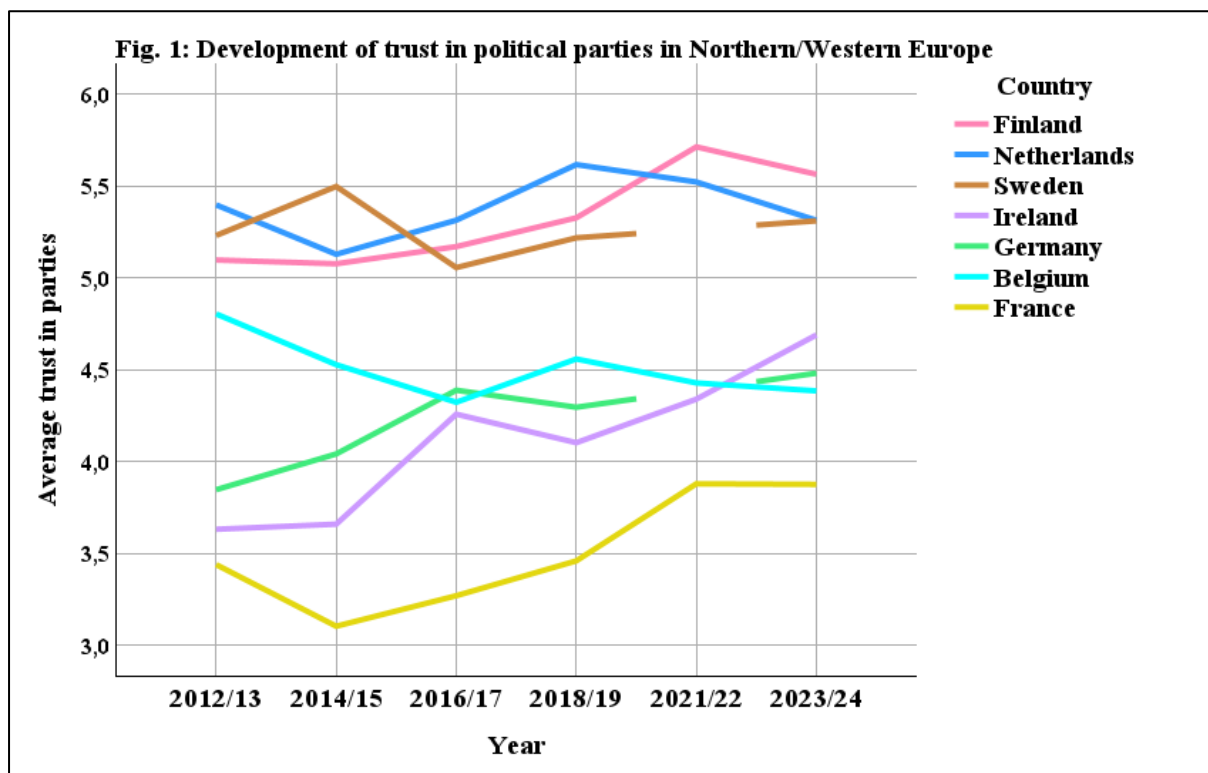


Fig. 1: *Development of trust in political parties in Northern/Western Europe* shows the avg. levels of trust in political parties (on a scale of 0-10, where 10 represents maximum trust) among CCC, by year and for the respective countries, based on respondents' self-assessments in ESS6-11. Own illustration based on data from ESS6-11. Data for Germany and Sweden is missing in ESS10 (2021/22).

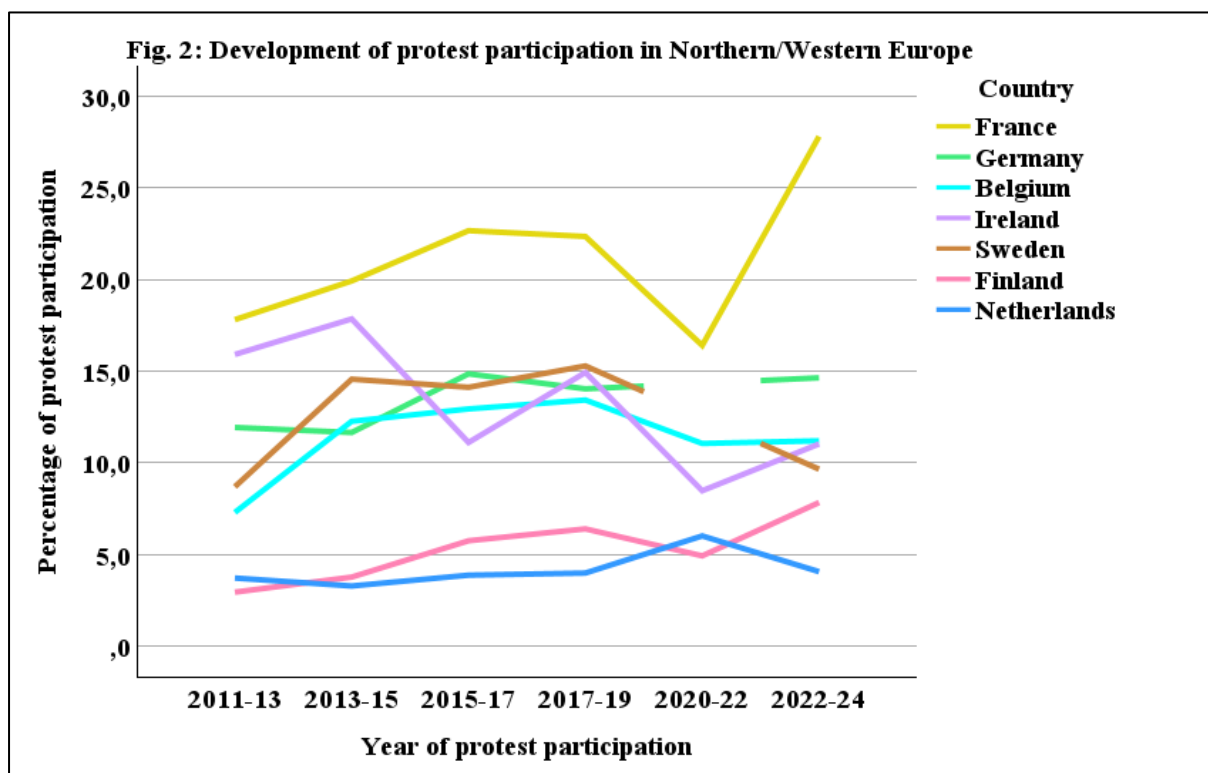


Fig. 2: *Development of PP in Northern/Western Europe* shows the percentage of CCC participating in protests each year for the respective countries, based on respondents' answers in ESS6-11. Own illustration based on data from ESS6-11. Data for Germany and Sweden is missing in ESS10 (2020-22).

above the avg. but only had from 2011-2013 (8.7% to 9.7% in the regional avg.) and from 2022-24 (9.7% to 11.6% in the avg.) a lower PP quote than the avg. In France and Germany, the situation is completely different. They are two countries in this group with constant mean values of trust below the avg. Even if there is no data for Germany in the year 2021/22, it is visible that PP here always stays above the avg. of all Northern- and Western European countries. Ireland, instead, illustrates a case where TPP is always below the avg., but PP was only higher than the avg. in the years 2011-2013 (15.9% to 9.7% in the avg.), 2013-2015 (17.9% to 11.4% in the avg.), and 2017-2019 (14.9% to 12.7% in the avg.). Belgium is the only country in this group with a switch from the countries with a level of trust above the avg. (till 2014/15) to the group of countries with a level of trust below it. For Belgium PP only was below the avg. of this group in both the first survey wave (2012/23) and in the last survey wave (2023/24).

About h.1.1 it can be therefore concluded that, for Northern- and Western Europe, the relationship between below-avg. levels of trust and above-avg. levels of PP holds true for Germany and France throughout the entire period. For Belgium (2016-2022) and Ireland (2012-2015 and 2018/19) it holds true only for specific years. Hypothesis h.1.2 can be confirmed for the complete period under observation in the cases of Finland and the Netherlands, but for Sweden only for 2012/13 and 2023/24. It seems that the home country of the FFF movement is a country of TPP, but the climate movement was able to mobilise CCC here in comparison to Finland – the Scandinavian counterpart in this sample. These results lead to the assumption that a connection between MPP and PP could be given for France and Germany, even though this does not seem to be a newer situation after the pandemic in both countries. When comparing the levels of trust in parties before the pandemic (2018/19) with those after the pandemic (2023/24) in complete Northern and Western Europe, it is important to note that trust has risen from an avg. of 4.66 to 4.85. The only countries in this region where the level of trust has decreased are Belgium (4.56 to 4.38) and the Netherlands (5.62 to 5.31). With regard to h.2 it has to be noted that in Northern and Western Europe it can only be confirmed for these two countries.

4.2.2. Southern Europe

Fig. 3 shows the development of TPP in three Southern European countries Cyprus, Portugal, and Spain, Fig. 4 illustrates the corresponding development of PP in these countries. It should be noted that the avg. TPP of all three countries has increased from 2.68 (2012/13) to 3.43 (2023/24) but remains well below the avg. for Northern and Western Europe (4.85 in 2023/24). Particularly Spain has had a steady increase in trust, rising from a mean value of 2.33 (2012/13) to 3.49 (2023/24). In Cyprus the avg. level of trust reached in 2018/19 a maximum of 3.30 before it decreased over the pandemic again (2.92 in 2023/24) and, for the first time in this

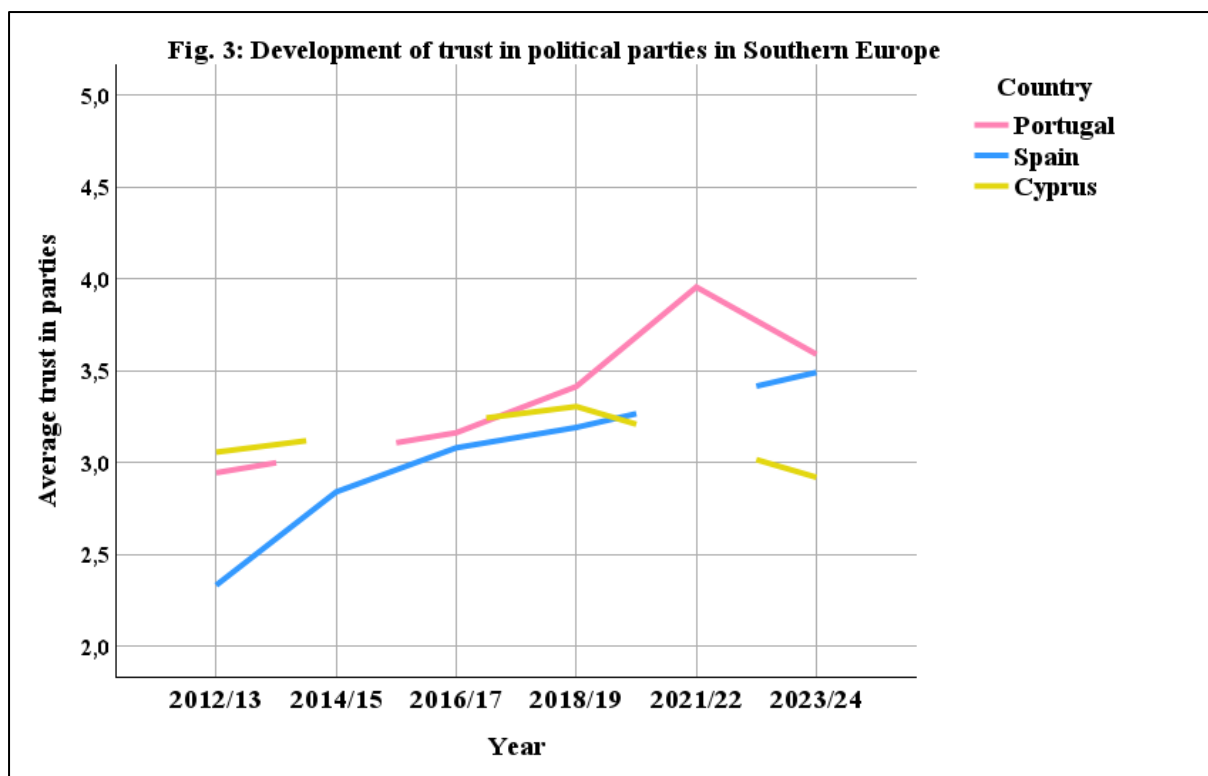


Fig. 3: *Development of trust in political parties in Southern Europe* shows the avg. levels of trust in political parties (on a scale of 0-10, where 10 represents maximum trust) among CCC, by year and for the respective countries, based on respondents' self-assessments in ESS6-11. Own illustration based on data from ESS6-11. Data is missing for Cyprus in ESS7 (2014/15), ESS8 (2016/17) and ESS10 (2021/22), for Portugal in ESS 7 (2014/15) and for Spain in ESS 10 (2021/22).

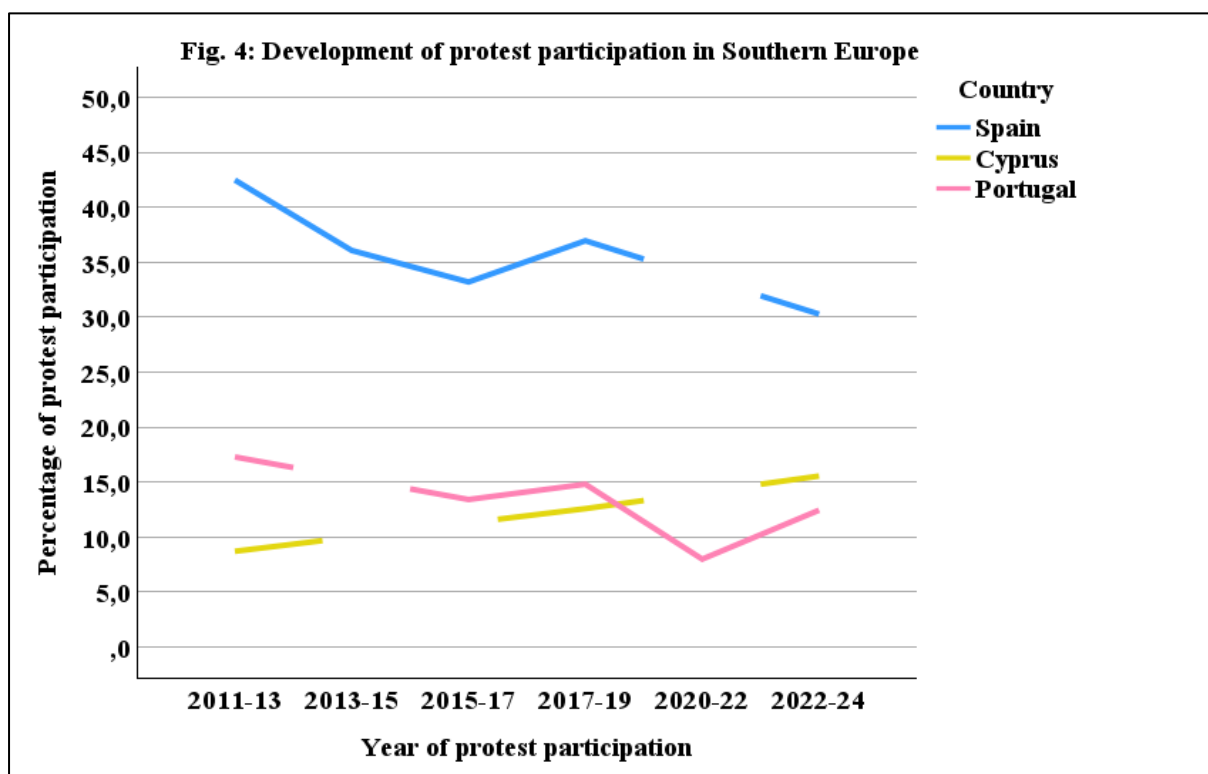


Fig. 4: *Development of PP in Southern Europe* shows the percentage of CCC participating in protests each year for the respective countries, based on respondents' answers in ESS6-11. Own illustration based on data from ESS6-11. Data is missing for Cyprus in ESS7 (2014/15), ESS8 (2016/17) and ESS10 (2021/22), for Portugal in ESS 7 (2014/15) and for Spain in ESS 10 (2021/22).

period, recorded a lower level of trust than Spain. Portugal scored till the pandemic a steady increase of trust till a mean value of 3.95 (2021/22), before the level decreased through the pandemic (3.59 in 2023/24). Due to the partial lack of data in Southern European countries and the significant over-representation of Spanish respondents in the subsample, it is far more difficult to compare the situation here between the countries. If we focus only on the waves from 2012/13, 2018/19, and 2023/24 – as data is available for all three countries – Cyprus and Portugal show a higher avg. level of TPP than Spain. At the same time, PP was lower in both of these countries than in Spain. After the pandemic (2023/24), this situation has changed in Southern Europe. Now Portugal still has a higher level of TPP and a relative PP below the avg. of Southern Europe but in Spain TPP was for the first time above the avg. while PP remained as well above the avg. Cyprus, instead, had the lowest level of trust after the pandemic for the first time between these countries but received a higher PP than Portugal now (15.6% to 12.5%).

This means that as long as Spain had the lowest level of TPP, it also had the highest rate of PP. This confirms h.1.1. However, PP in Spain remained steady above the values of all other European countries observed in this paper, even if the value decreased steadily from a long-term perspective. For Cyprus it cannot be noted with a view on 2023/24 that the mean value of trust below the avg. led to a PP above the avg. However, Spanish PP also over-affects the overall avg. of Southern Europe, so it must at least be noted that PP in Cyprus has been rising since 2011. Furthermore, it is difficult to say whether the steady higher level of TPP and the relative low PP in Portugal confirms h.1.2. Again, the comparison with Spain based on these data is statistically difficult. For Southern Europe, h.2 can only be confirmed in the case of Cyprus. Here, TPP decreased over the pandemic from a mean value of 3.30 to 2.92. It is worth noting that PP increased during the pandemic, which makes Cyprus an interesting case for the following regression analysis. Portugal could be an interesting case as well, as trust rose significantly during the pandemic and PP decreased, before returning to the pre-pandemic levels after the pandemic.

4.2.3. Eastern Europe

TPP in the avg. is higher in Eastern Europe than it is in Southern Europe. Since 2012/13 the mean value increased with every survey from 3.24 to 3.92 (2023/24). Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 show the corresponding values for Eastern Europe. Estonia, Hungary, and Lithuania received for every survey a value above the Eastern European avg. (except for 2018/19). Bulgaria, Poland, and Slovenia, instead, were always below that avg. PP remained steady in all surveys till 2017 with an Eastern European mean value between 5.1% (2015-2017) and 5.9% (2013-2015). For 2017-2019, the time of FFF mass strikes across Europe a weak increase in PP on 7.6% is

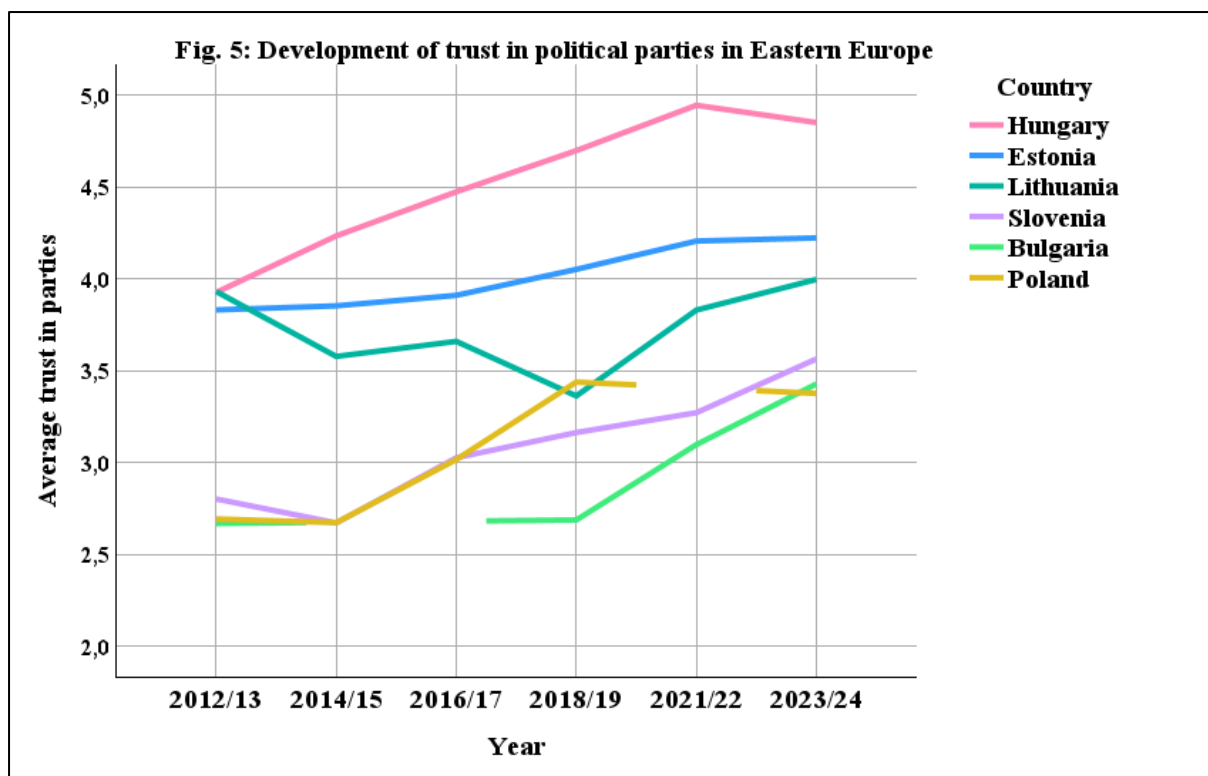


Fig. 5: *Development of trust in political parties in Eastern Europe* shows the avg. levels of trust in political parties (on a scale of 0-10, where 10 represents maximum trust) among CCC, by year and for the respective countries, based on respondents' self-assessments in ESS6-11. Own illustration based on data from ESS6-11. Data is missing for Poland in ESS10 (2020-22) and for Bulgaria in ESS 7 (2013-15) and ESS 8 (2015-17).

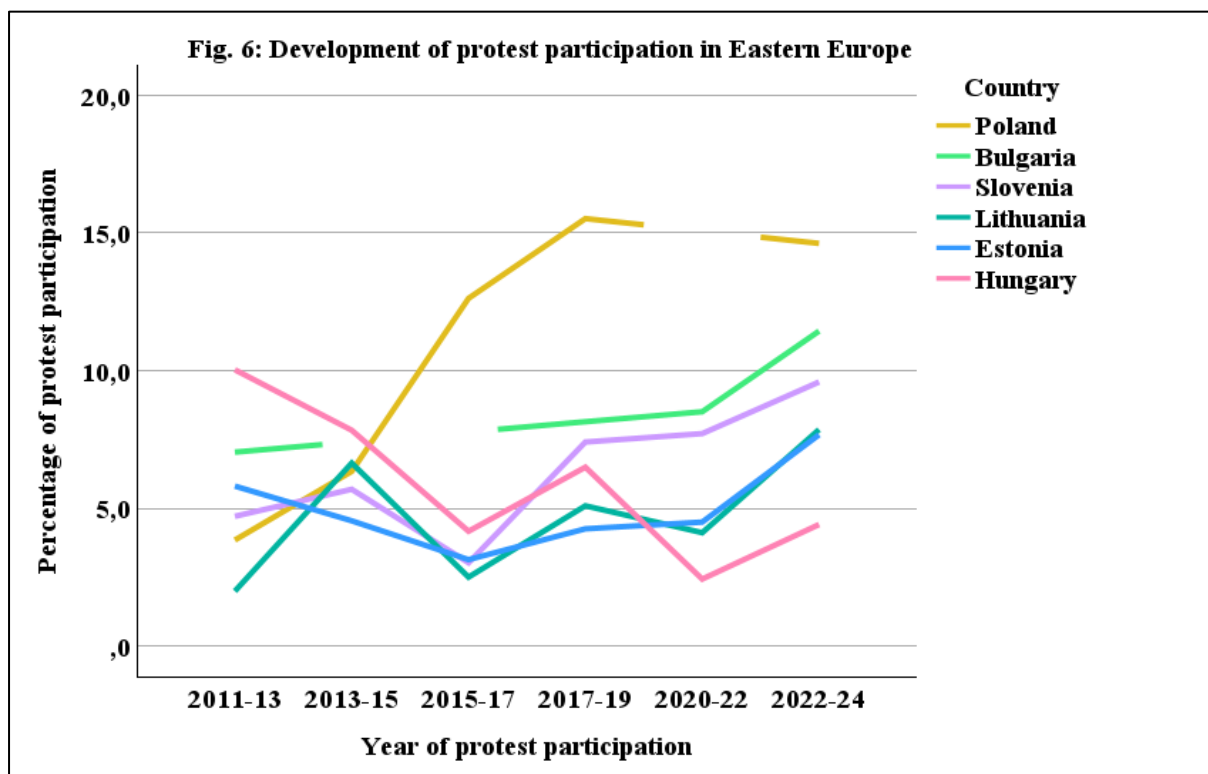


Fig. 6: *Development of PP in Eastern Europe* shows the percentage of CCC participating in protests each year for the respective countries, based on respondents' answers in ESS6-11. Own illustration based on data from ESS6-11. Data is missing for Poland in ESS10 (2020-22) and for Bulgaria in ESS 7 (2013-15) and ESS 8 (2015-17).

notable, before PP decreased again on a mean value of 5.9% in the pandemic (2020-22). After the pandemic, PP increased again to the Eastern European maximum of 9.3% (2022-24). The post-pandemic situation brought a maximum value of PP for Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovenia but at the same time, TPP increased to a maximum level for these countries as well. Only Poland recorded a marginal decline in PP compared with the pre-pandemic survey (15.5% to 14.6%), although it still has the highest level of PP in complete Eastern Europe. Poland indicates since 2013-15 PP above the Eastern European avg. while TPP is below the avg. For Bulgaria, at least where data is available, all surveys in which PP is above the avg. TPP is below it. This simultaneity can be found for Slovenia just since the pandemic. For those reasons, h.1.1 can be accepted for Eastern Europe, as Bulgaria confirms it in all surveys, Poland in most of it, and Slovenia at least since the pandemic. Following h.1.2 Estonia, Hungary and Lithuania should have a constantly low PP quote below the avg. For Estonia, this is evident. But in Hungary and Lithuania it can be seen just for the observations since 2015-17. H.1.2 can be confirmed at least for the most surveys and countries under observation. Meanwhile, all Eastern European countries, except for Poland, indicate a strong increase of TPP after the pandemic in comparison to the time before it. In Poland, the mean value of trust weakly decreased from 3.44 (2018/19) to 3.37 (2023/24). Therefore, h.2 must be rejected for Eastern Europe, as TPP increased over the pandemic in general.

To summarise, the situation between the countries of all three regions is very different. This finding is at least in harmony with research. All three regions differ in their avg. level of trust and in their avg. of PP. Furthermore, the cross-European situation of TPP is one of MPP. If we understand 5.00 as the centre value of a 0-10-scale of trust and define everything what is underneath of this value as MPP, only Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden are countries where MPP is not the avg. feeling of CCC. Nevertheless, this MPP does not affect PP in an obvious way so far. So, for the next step in this analysis, countries are being removed from their regions and are reunited in country clusters (CCI), which reflect similar developments before and after the pandemic. These CCI are:

CCI1) Cyprus and the Netherlands are those countries, where TPP declined while PP increased. Here, MPP should have affected PP only after, but not before the pandemic.

CCI2) In Belgium and Poland, TPP and PP declined at the same time. There could be a positive effect from MPP on PP too if the decline of PP at all is based on a reduction of participation abilities (e.g. fewer protest events).

CCI3) In Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden TPP increased while PP declined. Ireland, where TPP was below the avg. and PP above it, there should have been

only before the pandemic a positive effect of MPP on PP. In the other countries, instead, there should have been no significant effect neither before nor after the pandemic.

CC14) There should not have been any significant effect before or after the pandemic from MPP on PP in Bugaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, and Slovenia as these countries showed an increase in TPP and PP over the pandemic.

4.3 The statistical influence of mistrust in political parties on protest participation

To verify the influence of MPP on PP and the hypotheses h.3.1 and h.3.2, for each of all 16 countries two multivariate binary logistic regressions analyses are calculated. All of them provides information whether MPP before and/or after the pandemic has had a significant effect on the likelihood of PP in these countries. Each regression analysis is calculated hierarchically with two models: The first one includes only the control variables and excludes MPP. The second model also includes MPP as a new dichotomous variable, indicating whether a respondent mistrusts political parties or not.⁴⁹ The comparison of both models provides clarification for the question, whether MPP effects PP positively and whether MPP can make the overall model more representative and increases its power of explanation about PP. For this purpose, the r^2 values of the two models are compared with each other.⁵⁰ The control variables for the first model are from findings of the state of research. Here, trust in other political institutions and actors (national parliament and politicians), satisfaction with the national government and the way the democracy works, political orientation on a left-right scale, age, gender, educational background and social trust (trust in people in general) are included.⁵¹ It is necessary to note that trust in science is an important indicator as well, especially because climate protesters like FFF show this in opposition to trust in politicians.⁵² Unfortunately, this variable was only collected in the 9th wave of the ESS but not in the 11th wave, so it cannot be included in the regression model to verify a difference between the time before and after the pandemic. For a detailed overview of the results of the statistical regression models, please refer to the tables in the appendix (Tab. 3, 4, and 5).

⁴⁹ The variable “Trust in political parties“, with its 10 response options, was recoded for this. All values below the central point of the scale (5) are defined as MPP.

⁵⁰ Nagelkerke’s r^2 provides information on the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the regression model. R^2 can take values between 0 and 1, with a value close to 1 indicating a model that could perfectly explain the variance in the dependent variable. If adding MPP increases the r^2 values, it contributes the understanding of PP. See Nico J. D. Nagelkerke, A Note on a General Definition of the Coefficient of Determination, in *Biometrika* 78 (3), 1991, p. 691-692.

⁵¹ All variables for political and social trust, satisfaction with the government and the democracy are coded on a scale from 0 (no trust at all/ completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely trust/ satisfied).

⁵² Svensson, Wahlström, Climate change, p. 5.

For CC11 (Tab. 3), the statistical model in both countries is more significant for PP after the pandemic than before it. In the Netherlands, the model only is significant after the pandemic and indicates, as Cyprus, a higher r^2 value for after the pandemic. However, MPP does not play a significant role in these models, even if the corresponding predictor changed for both countries from a value <1 to a value >1 in comparison between before and after the pandemic. This suggests a trend indicating that MPP is more likely to lead to PP after the pandemic than before it.⁵³ The non-significant predictor and the weak model fit of the pre-pandemic survey, however, leave this statistically uncertain. Instead, PP in both countries is affected by a politically left orientation, and dissatisfaction with the way democracy works. For the Netherlands, this is firstly significant after the pandemic. In summary, post-pandemic PP in the Netherlands and Cyprus by CCC is the result to dissatisfaction with the democratic system. In addition, for Cyprus, increasing trust in politicians is also significant. This might be explained by the reason that CCC have shown a large sympathy for special politicians that have been opposed to the political system and have promised reforms to the existing democratic system. As PP to the same time was a reaction of politically left CCC, this could be attributed to protests for other than climate reasons. The models for CC12 (Tab. 3) are much less efficient to explain PP after the pandemic, even if they are both significant for both countries at both times. However, MPP only had a significant role in Poland after the pandemic, but a negative one. This means that MPP reduced the likelihood of PP here and for that reason CC12 cannot verify h.3.1 and h.3.2. In comparison with CC11 it is notable that dissatisfaction with democracy has no significant effect on PP, but with the government for Belgium and Poland after the pandemic. Apart from that, being politically left and well educated are predictors that explain PP in a better way. In Belgium, PP is a fact for CCC under the age of 30.

There is an uneven picture between the countries in CC13 (Tab. 4). While the post-pandemic model is much more efficient than the pre-pandemic model in Ireland, Portugal, and Sweden, the opposite can be observed for Hungary and Spain. In addition, MPP has a negative influence on PP after the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the predictor shows a value >1 , which is not significant, but different to the pre-pandemic one. But this is no definite relationship. Instead, dissatisfaction with the government in Ireland has a significant influence on PP. For all the other countries of CC13, political trust has played almost no effective role for PP by CCC. Only Portugal indicates increasing trust in the parliament as a significant reason for PP. All the countries in CC13 share well educated and politically left CCC as protest participants.

⁵³ In the case of the predictor MPP, a value >1 indicates a positive influence of MPP on PP.

Finally, CCl4 confirms that MPP has no significant influence on PP after the pandemic (Tab. 5). Indeed, in Finland and Germany MPP leads to a decline of the likelihood to protest. Again, being politically left has a significant impact on PP, even in countries like Bulgaria, Estonia and Lithuania, although the models are not significant here. Among the predictors of political trust in Finland, France and Slovenia dissatisfaction with the government has emerged to the primary factor of PP. Interestingly, France is the only country from those observed in this paper where increasing social trust has a significant influence on PP. Being well educated is as in the other country clusters with the exception of France and Slovenia an uniting factor for PP in the countries of CCl4.

5. Mobilising climate-conscious citizens to protest – no matter of mistrust?

Following h.3.1 MPP should not have an influence on PP before the pandemic. The regression analyses have shown that this was the case for all countries, although some countries showed odds ratios >1 , which would suggest that MPP influenced PP if the values were significant. As they are not, h.3.1 can be confirmed. In opposite to the identified CCl after the descriptive analyses, this is not only connected with high TPP above the regional avg., as countries with TPP below the avg. and high PPP showed no positive influence of MPP on PP before the pandemic as well. The expectation according to h.3.2 is that after the pandemic MPP should have a positive influence on PP. Accordingly, following the descriptive analyses and clustering, the countries in CCl1 and CCl2 should exhibit this. Indeed, some countries show predictors with odds ratios >1 but there is no positive significant effect in any of these countries. On the contrary, CCl2 shows that MPP tends to prevent PP. In the countries of CCl3 and CCl4, as expected, MPP has no significant influence on PP after the pandemic. It therefore follows that h.3.2 must be rejected. That leads in combination with the confirmation of h.3.1 to the result that MPP has not become an influential factor to explain PP by CCC after the pandemic. The relationship of trust, but through the results of the descriptive analyses it is better to speak of a relationship of mistrust, between CCC and political parties has not changed due to the pandemic in favour of PP.

Instead, Finland, Germany, Ireland, and Poland are countries in which MPP has led to influence PP negatively, what requires explaining. These countries have in common that Green parties were in the national government in 2023/24 or had just lost their place in government (Germany and Ireland, Finland till September 2023). Poland received in December 2023 a change from a far right to a liberal government, which has been identified in research as the political

orientation of CCC in Eastern Europe.⁵⁴ However, this assumption leads to a conflict with the complete results of the regression models. These have showed that for Finland, Ireland, and Poland a decrease in satisfaction in the government increased the likelihood of PP. For Germany, the corresponding predictor and its odds ratios was not significant but pointed in the same direction. This suggests that PP in these countries is not against political parties but against the national government. It is worth looking for affiliation between CCC and environmental parties and whether such an affiliation is given to governmental or opposition parties. Following the other significant predictors, CCC are mostly politically left and well educated and in some countries under 30 years old. These results are in line with the state of research.⁵⁵

Although this means that MPP has not encouraged PP after the pandemic, this paper can nevertheless help to shed light on the factors that have emerged as significant across countries in the analyses. For all Scandinavian, Western European and Southern European countries a connection between being politically left and the likelihood to protest is obvious. In Eastern Europe this is only given to Poland and Slovenia which thus stand out of the current state of research, which has not recognised PP by CCC in Eastern Europe as a phenomenon associated with a politically left orientation.⁵⁶ As this connection was not given in Poland before the pandemic, future research could analyse the reasons why post-pandemic PP by CCC in Poland is a newly politically left thing.

Finally, it is worth noting critically an aspect of current research on political trust and participation. Here, trust in the parliament is understood as the main and sometimes only factor to measure political trust in representative democracies, because the parliament holds the key position in representative democracies.⁵⁷ The results of this paper lead instead to the assumption that trust in the parliament is a relatively weak indicator for measuring political trust at all by focusing on the group of CCC and on PP. Declining trust in the parliament only had a significant influence on PP in Finland, Spain, and Sweden after the pandemic. At the same time, increasing trust was significant for Cyprus, Finland, and Portugal. That leads to the result, that trust in the parliament can have a positive and negative influence on PP in different countries to different times. For measuring political trust in the whole of Europe and its influence on PP it is not sufficient to refer only to this factor.

⁵⁴ Buzogány, Mikecz, Kocyba, Global movements, S. 12.

⁵⁵ Miriam Matejova, Peter Spáč, The Greta Generation: How the Climate Protests Unite Europe's Youth, in *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 67 (2), 2025, p. 22-29.

⁵⁶ Buzogány, Mikecz, Kocyba, Global movements, S. 16.

⁵⁷ Van Steklenburg, Klandermans, Politics, S. 776.

6. Conclusion

This paper had its focus on the question, whether MPP had a positive influence on PP by CCC after pandemic in Europe. Therefore, a theoretical model was built up that included only critical citizens with a special affection to care for nature and environment and analysed the reasons of PP for these citizens. Based on the current state of research on protest and trust the situation for European countries was examined separately. It was revealed that CCC in Northern and Western Europe have a higher level of TPP than those in Southern and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, a cross-European trend is notable that indicates a Europewide increase in TPP, even though the avg. of CCC in Europe is mistrustful in political parties. But there are strong differences in PP between the countries of a region. A similar Europewide development, in this case, is not notable. The same conclusion is to make for the factors of PP. On the base of the development of TPP and PP in the last decade clusters of countries were created in this paper but, again, differences between countries inside of these clusters based on the results of regression analyses were strong. Ultimately, it cannot be determined that MPP has a positive influence on PP by CCC after the pandemic. That means that the relationship between the climate movement, its protesters and political parties has not got worse due to the pandemic. Instead, Finland, Germany, Ireland, and Poland reveal a contrary trend: being trustful in political parties encourages PP by CCC. In this paper, this was attributed to the fact that, as trust in the government declines, CCC criticise the climate policy of the government but continue to support the party they identify with, regardless of whether it is part of the government. This suggests that the parties' problem-solving abilities are not being called into question here and it could be seen stronger than the problem-solving ability of the government. Further research should prove this assumption to evaluate to what extent especially environmental parties with governmental responsibility receive some kind of protection from CCC, even if those are completely mistrustful or dissatisfied and protest the government.

The approach of research used in this paper was confronted by some challenges, which further research should avoid. Firstly, CCC are one for the context of this paper constructed group of people that should be specified by future large surveys. This could be done by adding some more items about climate behaviour. Secondly, it cannot be ruled out that all CCC with PP only participated in climate protests. On the one hand, they could have protested in more than only one protest for different reasons and the reasons for PP are not made of the climate issue or the MPP. On the other hand, it cannot even be said that they have protested in at least on climate protest. In future, survey designs could include more items about the reasons why and in which kind of protest protesters participated to support large data analyses on PP. In conclusion, it should be emphasised that the connection between mistrust and PP will remain a relevant area

of research in the future, because publicly effective protests always have an impact on society, political actors and their majorities, as FFF demonstrated before the pandemic. At the very least, there is no evidence to suggest that political trust is suffering as a result. Increasing TPP is a Europe wide trend – and that matters for representative democracies.

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Appendix

Tab. 1: Proportion of CCC in the total sample

Region/ Country	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
Northern/Western	89,587	27,201	30.4%
Belgium	10,106	2,971	29.4%
Finland	11,104	4,569	41.1%
France	11,713	2,950	25.2%
Germany	22,358	6,036	27.0%
Ireland	13,778	3,688	26.8%
Netherlands	10,283	3,744	36.4%
Sweden	10,245	3,243	31.7%
Southern	22,711	4,294	18.9%
Cyprus	3,457	487	14.1%
Portugal	7,687	1,430	18.6%
Spain	11,567	2,377	20.5%
Eastern	60,718	12,395	20.4%
Bulgaria	9,415	1,662	17.7%
Estonia	11,189	3,215	28.7%
Hungary	10,954	1,767	16.1%
Lithuania	11,340	1,582	14.0%
Poland	10,214	1,963	19.2%
Slovenia	7,606	2,206	29.0%
Total	173,016	43,890	25.4%

Table shows the absolute (*n*) and relative (*f*) proportion of CCC in the total sample of ESS surveys 6-11 (*N*) per country. Own illustration based on ESS 6-11 data.

Tab. 2: Descriptive statistics – TPP and PP per country per year

ESS Wave	Region/ Country	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean trust</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>PP (%)</i>
6	Northern/Western	5,022	4.44	1.877	9.70
	Belgium	521	4.80	2.020	7.30
	Finland	814	5.10	1.926	2.90
	France	539	3.44	1.998	17.80
	Germany	1,269	3.85	1.977	11.90
	Ireland	641	3.63	2.174	15.90
	Netherlands	619	5.40	1.721	3.70
	Sweden	619	5.23	1.804	8.70
6	Southern	926	2.68	2.214	27.30
	Cyprus	217	3,06	2,293	8,70
	Portugal	265	2,94	2,060	17,30
	Spain	444	2,33	2,216	42,50
6	Eastern	2,509	3,24	2,229	5,80
	Bulgaria	550	2,67	2,033	7,00
	Estonia	616	3,85	2,173	5,80
	Hungary	319	3,92	2,315	10,00
	Lithuania	199	3,93	2,477	2,00
	Poland	464	2,69	2,081	3,80
	Slovenia	361	2.80	2.051	4.70
6	Total	8,457	3.89	2.250	10.50
7	Northern/Western	5,240	4.46	2.104	11.40
	Belgium	538	4.53	1.916	12.30
	Finland	823	5.08	1.988	3.80
	France	517	3.10	2.056	19.90
	Germany	1,387	4.04	1.989	11.70
	Ireland	576	3.66	2.138	17.90
	Netherlands	639	5.13	1.828	3.30
	Sweden	760	5.50	1.836	14.60
7	Southern	?	?	?	?
	Cyprus	?	?	?	?
	Portugal	?	?	?	?
	Spain	522	2.84	1.993	36.10
7	Eastern	1,883	3.42	2.190	5.90
	Bulgaria	?	?	?	?
	Estonia	614	3.85	2.072	4.50
	Hungary	267	4.23	2.256	7.80
	Lithuania	288	3.58	2.315	6.60

ESS Wave	Region/ Country	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean trust</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>PP (%)</i>
7	Poland	347	2.67	2.031	6.30
	Slovenia	367	2.67	1.940	5.70
7	Total	7,645	4.09	2.191	11.70
8	Northern/Western	5,008	4.55	2.033	12.20
	Belgium	510	4.32	1.931	12.90
	Finland	747	5.17	1.964	5.70
	France	525	3.27	2.007	22.70
	Germany	1,279	4.39	1.953	14.90
	Ireland	752	4.26	2.096	11.10
	Netherlands	589	5.31	1.705	3.90
	Sweden	606	5.05	1.891	14.10
8	Southern	803	3.11	2.182	25.80
	Cyprus	?	?	?	?
	Portugal	298	3.16	2.276	13.40
	Spain	505	3.08	2.126	33.20
8	Eastern	1,931	3.61	2.225	5.10
	Bulgaria	?	?	?	?
	Estonia	604	3.91	2.032	3.10
	Hungary	288	4.47	2.301	4.20
	Lithuania	281	3.66	2.375	2.50
	Poland	396	3.02	2.244	12.60
	Slovenia	362	3.02	1.999	3.00
8	Total	7,742	4.17	2.166	11.80
9	Northern/Western	4,930	4.66	2.068	12.70
	Belgium	499	4.56	2.002	13.40
	Finland	762	5.33	1.885	6.40
	France	528	3.46	1.936	22.30
	Germany	1,094	4.29	2.070	14.00
	Ireland	710	4.10	2.147	14.90
	Netherlands	626	5.62	1.571	4.00
	Sweden	711	5.22	1.926	15.30
9	Southern	883	3,28	2,166	26,50
	Cyprus	135	3,30	2,286	12,60
	Portugal	269	3,41	2,173	14,80
	Spain	479	3,19	2,127	37,00
9	Eastern	1,956	3,60	2,178	7,60
	Bulgaria	223	2,69	2,122	8,10
	Estonia	517	4,05	2,006	4,30
	Hungary	234	4,70	2,188	6,50
	Lithuania	274	3,36	2,202	5,10

ESS Wave	Region/ Country	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean trust</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>PP (%)</i>
9	Poland	332	3.44	2.124	15.50
	Slovenia	376	3.16	2.065	7.40
9	Total	7,769	4.24	2.182	13.00
10	Northern/Western	2,617	4.91	2.030	8.70
	Belgium	410	4.43	2.012	11.10
	Finland	669	5.71	1.830	4.90
	France	450	3.88	1.904	16.40
	Germany	?	?	?	?
	Ireland	458	4.34	2.154	8.50
	Netherlands	630	5.52	1.667	6.00
	Sweden	?	?	?	?
10	Southern	?	?	?	?
	Cyprus	?	?	?	?
	Portugal	326	3.95	2.038	8.00
	Spain	?	?	?	?
10	Eastern	2,007	3.74	2.254	5.90
	Bulgaria	582	3.10	2.142	8.50
	Estonia	489	4.20	2.020	4.50
	Hungary	247	4.94	2.356	2.40
	Lithuania	315	3.83	2.255	4.10
	Poland	?	?	?	?
	Slovenia	374	3.27	2.183	7.70
10	Total	4,950	4.37	2.199	7.60
11	Northern/Western	4,384	4.85	1.984	11.60
	Belgium	493	4.38	1.940	11.20
	Finland	754	5.56	1.803	7.80
	France	391	3.87	1.988	27.80
	Germany	1,007	4.48	1.994	14.60
	Ireland	551	4.69	2.032	11.00
	Netherlands	641	5.31	1.722	4.10
	Sweden	547	5.31	1.906	9.70
11	Southern	834	3.43	2.240	22.10
	Cyprus	135	2.92	2.379	15.60
	Portugal	272	3.59	2.129	12.50
	Spain	427	3.49	2.246	30.30
11	Eastern	2,109	3.92	2.229	9.30
	Bulgaria	307	3.43	2.014	11.40
	Estonia	375	4.22	1.979	7.70
	Hungary	412	4.85	2.398	4.40
	Lithuania	225	4.00	2.308	7.90

ESS Wave	Region/ Country	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean trust</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>PP (%)</i>
11	Poland	424	3.37	2.188	14.60
	Slovenia	366	3.56	2.062	9.60
11	Total	7,327	4.42	2.157	12.20

Table shows the number of cases (*n*) per country/region per year, the corresponding mean value for trust in political parties (on a scale 0-10), the standard deviation, and the percentage of those who participated in a demonstration (*PP*).

Times of data collection:

ESS6: 2012-13, ESS7: 2014-15, ESS8: 2016-17, ESS9: 2018-19, ESS10: 2021-22, ESS11: 2023-24. ?= Missing data, no data collection

Tab. 3: Multivariate binary logistic regression - Country Clusters 1 and 2

Model/Predictor	Cyprus		Netherlands		Model/Predictor	Belgium		Poland	
Model 1	9	11	9	11	Model 1	9	11	9	11
Constant (B)	5.447***	-2.896**	-2.471	0.498	Constant (B)	-0.925	-1.964**	3.615***	2.424***
Polit. orientation	1.285*	0.712***	0.814*	0.690***	Polit. orientation	0.762***	0.795***	1.049	0.846***
Education level	1.177	1.870***	0.968	1.161	Education level	1.110	1.259**	1.381***	1.210**
Age (<30)	0.000	1.992	5.415***	2.189	Age (<30)	0.906	2.715**	0.843	0.612
Gender (female)	0.967	0.562	0.863	0.574	Gender (female)	0.765	1.057	1.859*	1.087
Trust politicians	0.654	1.746***	0.891	0.933	Trust politicians	1.198*	1.122	1.065	1.075
Trust parliament	2.518***	0.922	1.063	1.105	Trust parliament	1.118	1.037	1.153*	1.011
Social trust	1.261	0.910	1.076	0.868	Social trust	0.956	0.973	1.042	1.020
Sat. Government	0.964	1.005	0.954	0.917	Sat. Government	0.779**	0.899	0.692***	0.884*
Sat. Democracy	0.572**	0.707*	1.004	0.748**	Sat. Democracy	0.977	0.894	1.049	1.129
Model significance	***	***	*	***	Model significance	***	***	***	***
Nagelkerke's r ²	0.336	0.410	0.093	0.157	Nagelkerke's r ²	0.124	0.097	0.231	0.113
Model 2	9	11	9	11	Model 2	9	11	9	11
Constant (B)	5.170***	-3.073	-2.094	0.409	Constant (B)	-0.412	-1.558	3.659***	-1.690**
Polit. Orientation	1.278*	0.710***	0.814*	0.689***	Polit. Orientation	0.762***	0.791***	1.049	0.856**
Education level	1.184	1.869***	0.965	1.158	Education level	1.125	1.281**	1.380***	1.236**
Age (<30)	0.000	1.906	5.428***	2.181	Age (<30)	0.893	2.755***	0.840	0.595
Gender (female)	0.957	0.548	0.858	0.580	Gender (female)	0.741	1.033	1.854*	1.091
Trust politicians	0.631	1.776***	0.864	0.943	Trust politicians	1.108	1.074	1.069	0.966
Trust parliament	2.507***	0.928	1.051	1.107	Trust parliament	1.119	1.026	1.154*	1.007
Social trust	1.258	0.910	1.076	0.869	Social trust	0.951	0.971	1.042	1.026
Sat. Government	0.972	0.998	0.954	0.920	Sat. Government	0.775**	0.895	0.692***	0.888*
Sat. Democracy	0.570*	0.714*	0.995	0.748**	Sat. Democracy	0.982	0.892	1.050	1.108
Mistrust in parties	0.800	1.176	0.729	1.098	Trust Parties (low)	0.625	0.695	1.037	0.470*
Model significance	**	***	!	***	Model significance	***	***	***	***
Nagelkerke's r ²	0.337	0.411	0.094	0.157	Nagelkerke's r ²	0.129	0.101	0.231	0.127
<i>N</i>	121	120	601	614	<i>N</i>	487	473	312	369

Table shows odds ratios indicating the extent to which a predictor influences protest participation. A value >1 (<1) is interpreted as an increase (decline) of the likelihood of protest participation if the predictor increases by one unit or reaches the given category. Data is based on ESS9 (2018-19) and ESS11 (2023-24). Levels of sig.: *** = 0,01, ** = 0,05, * = 0,1, ! = no model sig.

Tab. 4: Multivariate binary logistic regression - Country Cluster 3

Model/Predictor	Hungary		Ireland		Portugal		Spain		Sweden	
Model 1	9	11	9	11	9	11	9	11	9	11
Constant (B)	-6.488***	-3.539***	-0.295	-0.754	-1.494*	-4.949***	0.112	-1.326**	-1.222*	-1.934**
Polit. orientation	0.975	0.938	0.810***	0.735***	0.778***	0.957	0.765***	0.842***	0.757***	0.692***
Education level	1.980***	1.528**	1.050	1.280**	1.190**	1.705***	1.132**	1.154***	1.056	1.215*
Age (<30)	4.059***	1.914	3.190***	0.929	0.437	0.954	1.620*	1.627	1.648	1.572
Gender (female)	0.276*	0.617	1.011	0.703	0.882	1.019	1.327	1.349	1.012	1.480
Trust politicians	0.959	0.947	0.956	1.062	1.194	1.039	1.113*	1.047	1.086	1.020
Trust parliament	0.790	0.965	0.994	0.925	0.941	1.251*	0.896*	1.104	0.881*	0.997
Social trust	1.366*	1.016	1.030	1.027	1.089	0.863	1.050	1.051	1.078	1.084
Sat. Government	1.249	0.880	0.794***	0.837*	0.931	0.912	1.012	0.907	1.102	0.974
Sat. Democracy	0.869	0.919	1.056	0.963	0.976	0.984	0.910	0.958	0.967	0.895
Model significance	***	**	***	***	**	***	***	***	***	***
Nagelkerke's r ²	0.294	0.208	0.145	0.161	0.126	0.197	0.200	0.112	0.124	0.164
Model 2	9	11	9	11	9	11	9	11	9	11
Constant (B)	-6.022***	-3.215**	-0.459	0.611	-1.874*	-5.092***	-0.009	-1.499**	-1.510**	-1.494
Polit. Orientation	0.971	0.936	0.810***	0.717***	0.768***	0.957	0.766***	0.844***	0.757***	0.693***
Education level	1.974***	1.545**	1.051	1.279**	1.183**	1.704***	1.130**	1.152***	1.054	1.209*
Age (<30)	4.268*	1.919	3.217***	0.888	0.442	0.964	1.621*	1.630	1.625	1.578
Gender (female)	0.285*	0.616	1.011	0.713	0.881	1.019	1.333	1.346	1.012	1.470
Trust politicians	0.904	0.914	0.969	0.944	1.251	1.052	1.126	1.066	1.114	0.982
Trust parliament	0.790	0.966	0.998	0.912	0.947	1.255*	0.898*	1.110	0.887*	0.998
Social trust	1.367*	1.016	1.028	1.019	1.091	0.863	1.050	1.050	1.080	1.080
Sat. Government	1.260	0.877	0.797***	0.829*	0.931	0.915	1.013	0.908	1.105	0.974
Sat. Democracy	0.864	0.912	1.058	0.942	0.978	0.984	0.909	0.959	0.969	0.881
Mistrust in parties	0.671	0.720	1.138	0.400**	1.443	1.109	1.106	1.148	1.243	0.693
Model significance	***	**	***	***	**	***	***	***	***	***
Nagelkerke's r ²	0.296	0.170	0.145	0.177	0.130	0.197	0.200	0.113	0.125	0.167
<i>N</i>	219	374	664	514	254	249	460	403	667	525

Table shows odds ratios indicating the extent to which a predictor influences protest participation. A value >1 (<1) is interpreted as an increase (decrease) of the likelihood of protest participation if the predictor increases by one unit or reaches the given category. Data is based on ESS9 (2018-19) and ESS11 (2023-24). Levels of significance: *** = 0,01, ** = 0,05, * = 0,1, ! = no model significance.

Tab. 5: Multivariate binary logistic regression - Country Cluster 4

Model/Predictor		Bulgaria		Estonia		Finland		France		Germany		Lithuania		Slovenia	
Model 1	9	11	9	11	9	11	9	11	9	11	9	11	9	11	9
Constant (B)	-2.195*	-4.306***	1.780	-5.600***	-3.821***	-2.970***	-0.446	-0.298	-2.032***	-1.380**	-4.411***	-4.153***	-4.432***	0.142	-4.432***
Polit. orientation	1.005	1.237**	0.866	1.305**	0.695***	0.761***	0.843***	0.760***	0.724***	0.640***	1.041	0.938	0.815**	0.821**	0.815**
Education level	1.088	1.334**	1.018	1.355*	1.017	1.423***	0.982	1.108	1.193***	1.251***	1.086	1.171	1.637***	0.858	1.637***
Age (<30)	2.485	4.147**	1.488	2.325	4.555***	2.622**	1.651	2.546***	2.123***	3.414***	1.538	2.566	0.942	5.329***	0.942
Gender (female)	1.036	0.473*	1.041	0.593	1.657	1.387	0.728	0.776	1.057	0.744	0.597	0.318*	1.248	1.434	1.248
Trust politicians	0.766	1.187	0.953	0.975	0.938	1.014	0.976	0.970	0.959	0.990	0.941	1.090	1.050	0.692***	1.050
Trust parliament	1.211	0.986	0.972	0.878	1.352**	0.886	0.982	1.102	0.984	1.029	1.009	1.068	0.858	1.075	0.858
Social trust	0.861	1.000	1.050	0.996	1.303**	1.069	1.200***	1.140*	1.110**	1.056	1.144	1.085	1.229*	1.057	1.229*
Sat. Government	0.598**	1.039	0.975	1.098	0.766**	0.745***	0.838**	0.757***	0.930	0.974	0.882	0.930	0.757*	0.751**	0.757*
Sat. Democracy	1.576*	0.762*	0.902	1.043	0.966	1.122	0.988	0.989	1.063	0.969	1.275	1.159	1.197	1.070	1.197
Model significance	!	**	!	!	***	***	***	***	***	***	!	!	**	***	***
Nagelkerke's r ²	0.149	0.134	0.035	0.073	0.251	0.272	0.145	0.301	0.124	0.198	0.074	0.110	0.158	0.226	0.158
Model 2															
Constant (B)	-2.305	-5.345***	-	-5.640***	-3.636***	-1.060	0.079	0.286	-1.917***	-0.716	-1.572	-3.300*	-3.735***	-0.132	-3.735***
Polit. Orientation	1.006	1.226**	0.876	1.306**	0.698***	0.750***	0.840***	0.762***	0.725***	0.634***	0.983	0.943	0.806**	0.824**	0.806**
Education level	1.092	1.351**	1.016	1.354*	1.017	1.413***	0.986	1.136	1.196***	1.250***	1.104	1.169	1.682***	0.856	1.682***
Age (<30)	2.536	3.474*	1.486	2.320	4.496***	3.345***	1.662	2.508**	2.110***	3.234***	1.133	2.738	0.930	5.499***	0.930
Gender (female)	1.040	0.477*	1.025	0.592	1.656	1.306	0.726	0.766	1.060	0.736	0.563	0.322*	1.253	1.419	1.253
Trust politicians	0.772	1.302	0.923	0.979	0.913	0.874	0.927	0.907	0.947	0.942	0.700*	1.013	0.959	0.713**	0.959
Trust parliament	1.208	1.004	0.967	0.880	1.354**	0.834*	0.985	1.097	0.982	1.016	0.989	1.029	0.864	1.078	0.864
Social trust	0.857	1.009	1.052	0.996	1.300**	1.056	1.201***	1.135*	1.109**	1.047	1.203	1.086	1.227*	1.052	1.227*
Sat. Government	0.597**	1.070	0.974	1.098	0.766**	0.752***	0.839**	0.746***	0.930	0.966	0.917	0.933	0.743**	0.751**	0.743**
Sat. Democracy	1.582**	0.750*	0.897	1.044	0.965	1.081	0.980	0.986	1.061	0.966	1.142	1.147	1.229	1.065	1.229
Mistrust in parties	1.105	2.191	0.762	1.037	0.838	0.218***	0.628*	0.578	0.911	0.627*	0.095***	0.500	0.473	1.323	0.473
Model significance	!	**	!	!	***	***	***	***	***	***	!	!	**	***	***
Nagelkerke's r ²	0.149	0.146	0.036	0.073	0.251	0.298	0.152	0.310	0.124	0.203	0.180	0.119	0.168	0.227	0.168
N	171	279	493	344	745	737	504	364	1,062	977	216	177	333	331	333

Table shows odds ratios indicating the extent to which a predictor influences protest participation. A value >1 (<1) is interpreted as an increase (decrease) of the likelihood of protest participation if the predictor increases by one unit or reaches the given category. Data is based on ESS9 (2018-19) and ESS11 (2023-24). Levels of significance: *** = 0,01, ** = 0,05, * = 0,1, ! = no model sig.