



PERCEIVE Final Conference

An improved Cohesion Policy
for a stronger EU

June 19th 2019

Brussels



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GRANT AGREEMENT NUMBER 693529

Citizens' perception of the Cohesion Policy and support for the European Union

Enrique López-Bazo and Vicente Royuela,
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Motivation



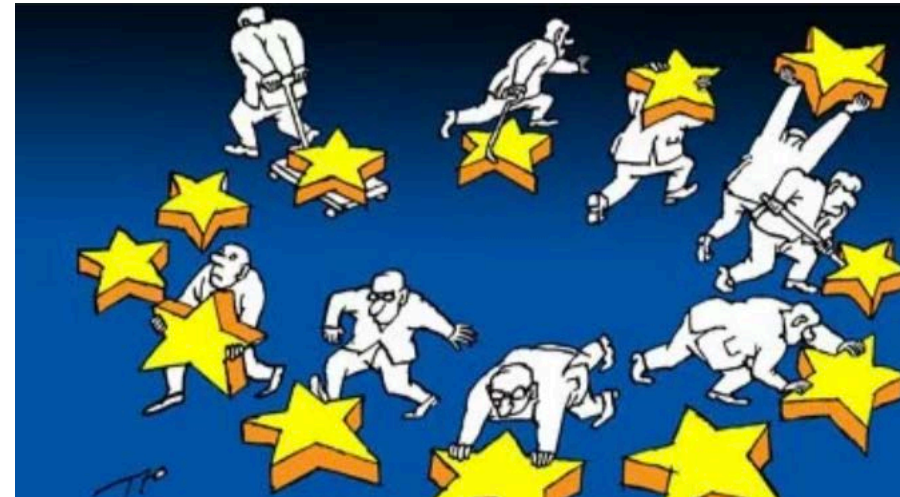
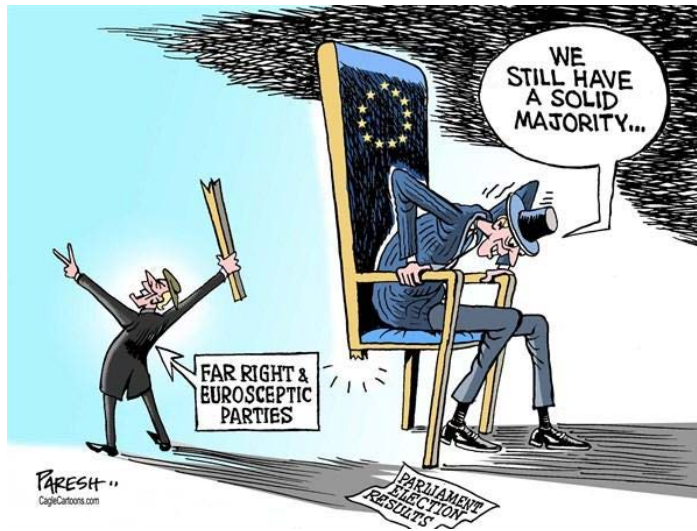
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Motivation



Why interest in Cohesion Policy?



Strongest impact on people everyday lives



Main policy tool of the EU



Expression of redistributive function of EU



Motivation



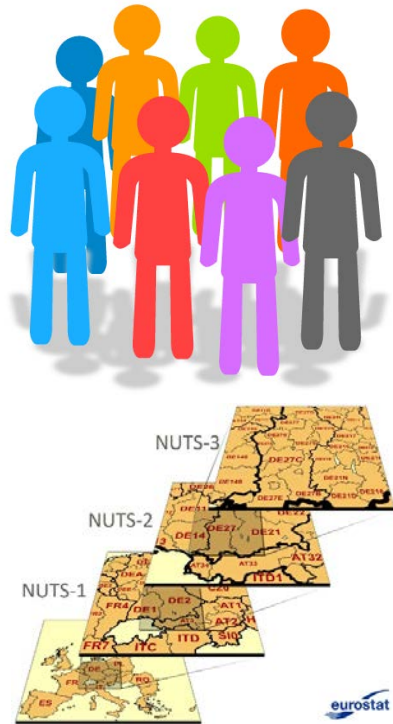
Objectives



Does perception of CP affect citizens' support for the EU?



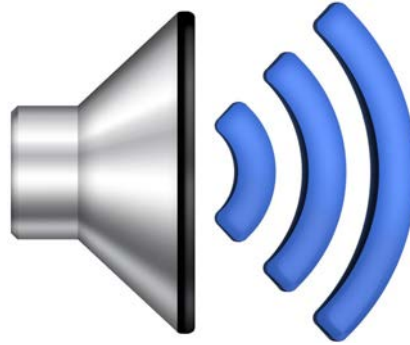
Objectives



Does impact of CP on citizens' perception of the policy and support for the EU vary across territories & groups of individuals?



Objectives



Does communication of CP encourage perception of the policy and, eventually, support for the EU?

Related evidence

Mechanisms and determinants of **citizens' opinion of process of European integration** have been widely studied in last decades:

Cognitive
mobilization
/ Political
awareness

Political
values /
Political
cues

National
identity

Political-
institutional
confidence



Related evidence

Significant effect of the **self-perception** of the **socio-economic situation of the individual**:

Utilitarian theory:
individuals tend to
have a positive view of
the EU if integration
benefits them in a way
or another

Political economy
determinants and
Winners/Losers of
integration



Related evidence

Objective socio-economic conditions can shape the perception of the EU in different population groups

Some studies have focused on the **specific role of CP**: mixed evidence on effect of amount of structural funds in the region on citizens' support for European integration!

Evidence on the effect of **intensity of CP on awareness and perception of personal benefits** is still scarce.



Assumptions

CP is a **key element of the EU project**, but this vision may **not be shared** by important sectors of the population.

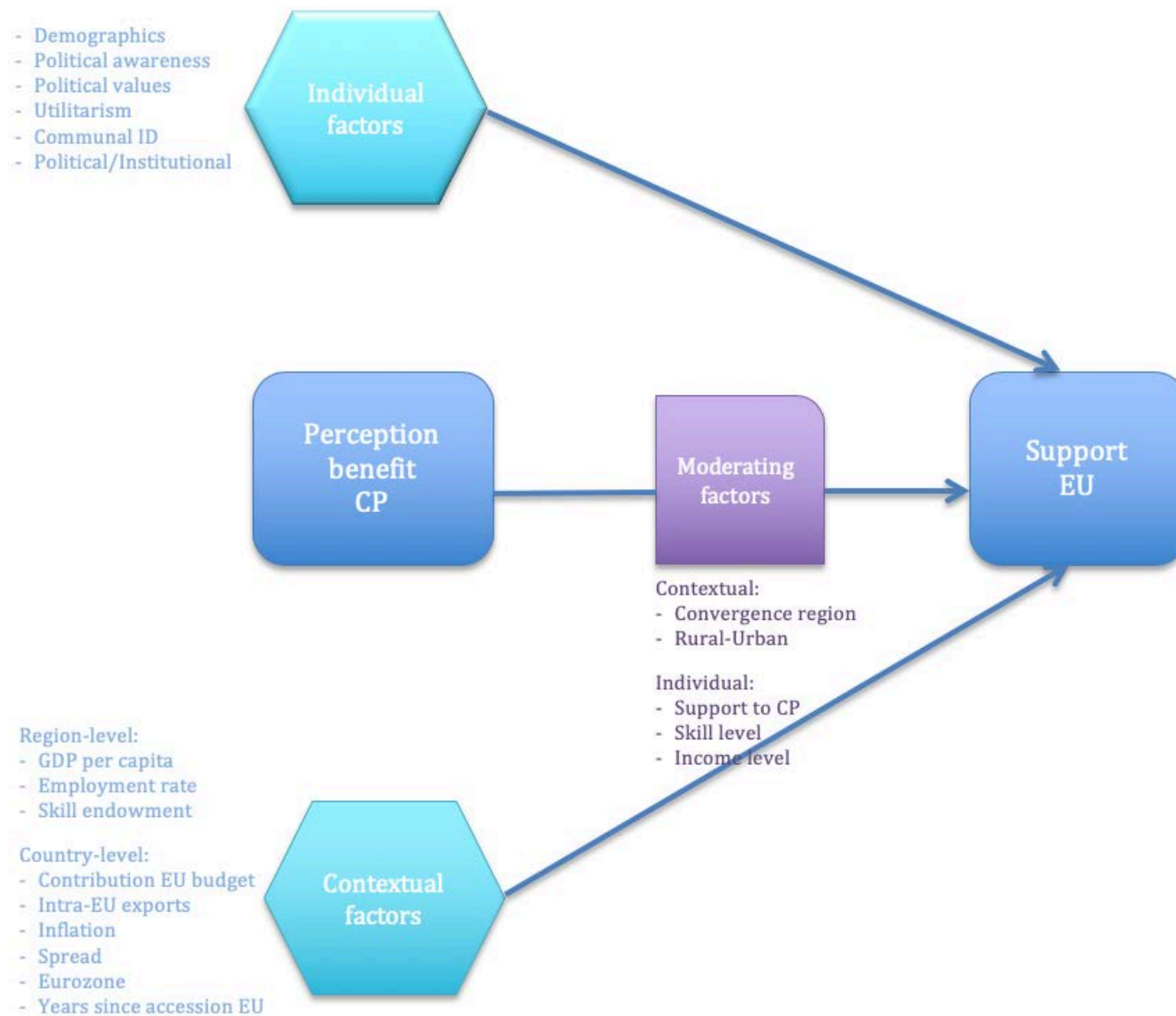
Public **awareness of CP varies across and within European countries and regions** → affect how CP shapes the citizens' support for the EU.

Individuals do not make a conscious connection between the intensity of the CP in the region and support for the EU.

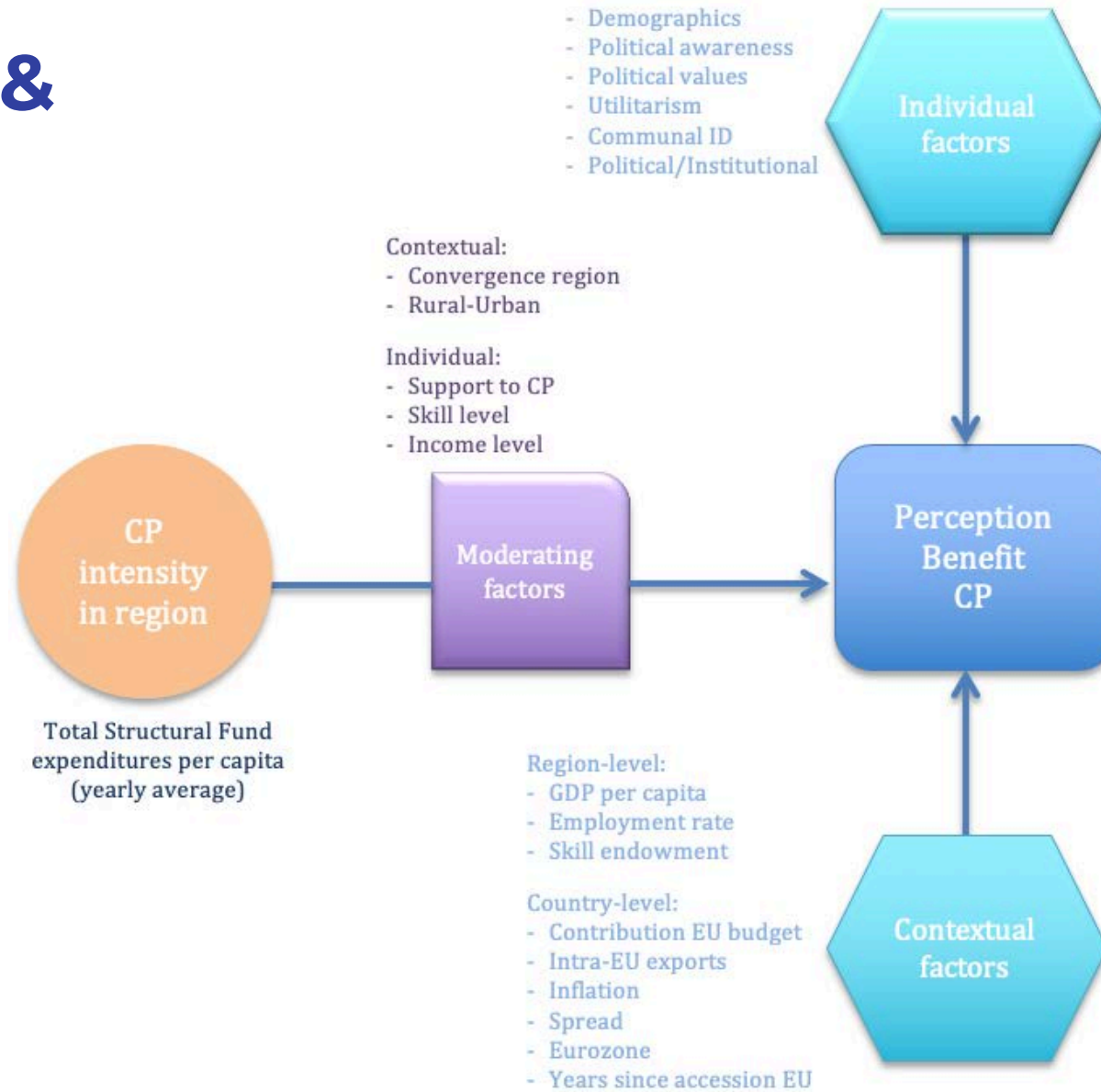
Indirect effect is assumed: **CP funds increase perception of the policy** which, in turn, **can favour EU support**.



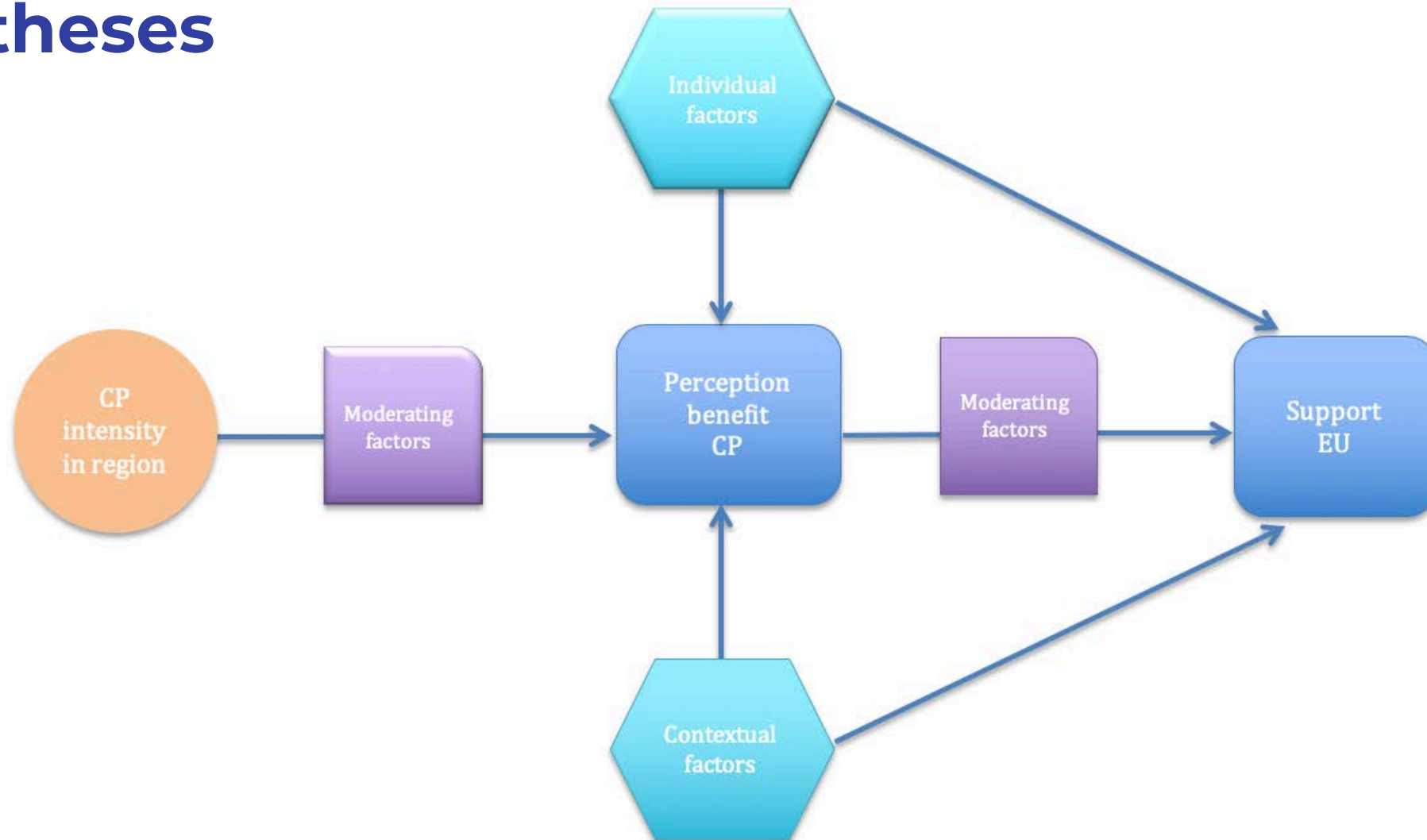
Framework & hypotheses



Framework & hypotheses



Framework & hypotheses



PERCEIVE Survey (D1.2)



17,147 (18+ by CATI) respondents from **15 EU countries** (AT, BG, EE, FR, DE, HU, IT, LV, NL, PL, RO, SK, ES, SE, UK). Interviewed in spring-summer of **2017**.

Unique feature: combines questions about **support for the EU** and **perception of CP**. Plus rich set of individual determinants of identity and demographic and background information of respondents.

Data

PERCEIVE Survey merged with **QoG EU Regional Dataset (D2.1)**



Total annual SF expenditures pc (2007-13)

Eligibility as Convergence region (2007-13)

Socio-economic determinants such as GDPpc; employment rate, education, ...

merged with **EUROSTAT** and **EC country data**

Net budgetary balance; intra-EU exports;
Inflation; Spread gov't bonds; ...



Key variables

Support for the EU

In general, do you think that (YOUR COUNTRY'S) EU membership is: a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad, not sure. (UK not included).

Recoded as binary variable: Support EU project (*membership is a good thing*); Lack of support (*membership is a bad thing, neither good nor bad, not sure*)

Respondents from UK: *If the referendum were held today, how would you vote? Leave, Stay, Didn't vote, Refused/d/k*

Support EU project (*Stay*); Lack of support (*Leave, didn't vote, refused/d/k*)

Perception of personal benefit of CP

To your knowledge, have you ever benefited in your daily life from any project funded by the EU? Yes; No



Key variables

CP intensity in the region

Annual average Total Structural Fund expenditures per capita in the region in the programming period 2007-2013.

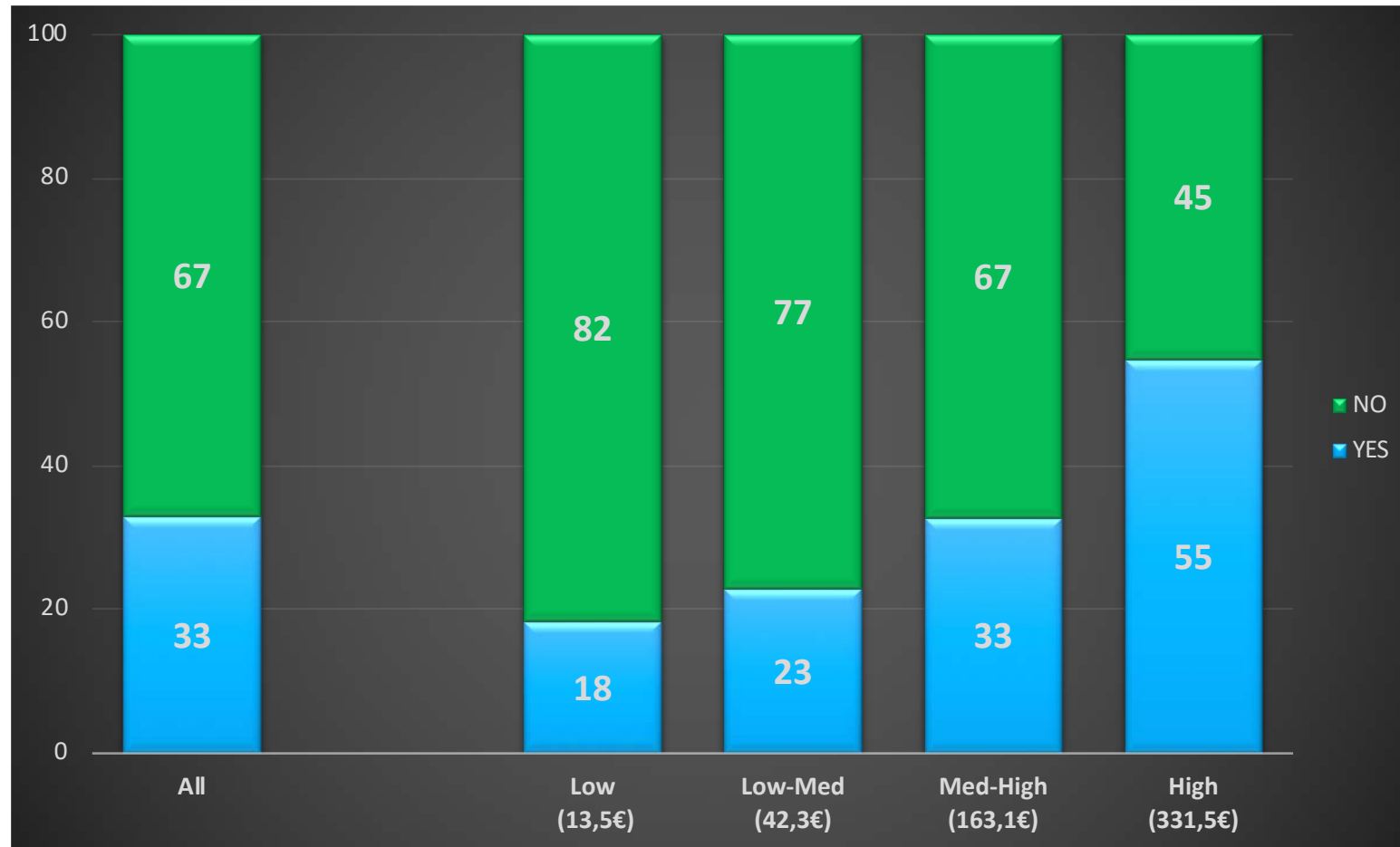
It combines regional OP and estimate of national OP expenditures in the region (based on population; considering the Cohesion goals).

Results are robust to alternative measures (e.g. SF data published in March 2018).



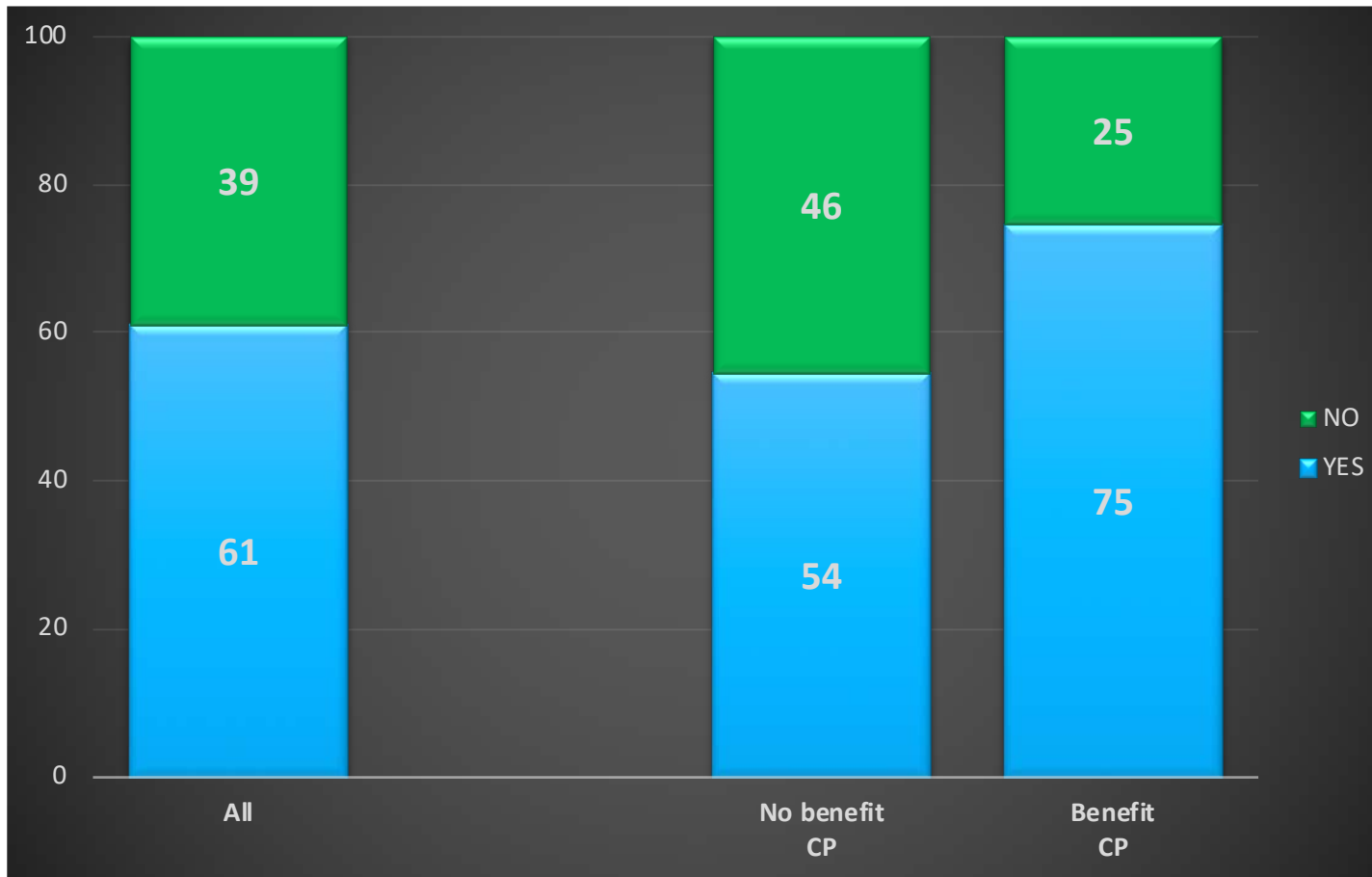
Descriptive evidence

Perception of personal benefit of CP by intensity of the policy in the region



Descriptive evidence

Support for the EU and perception of personal benefit of CP



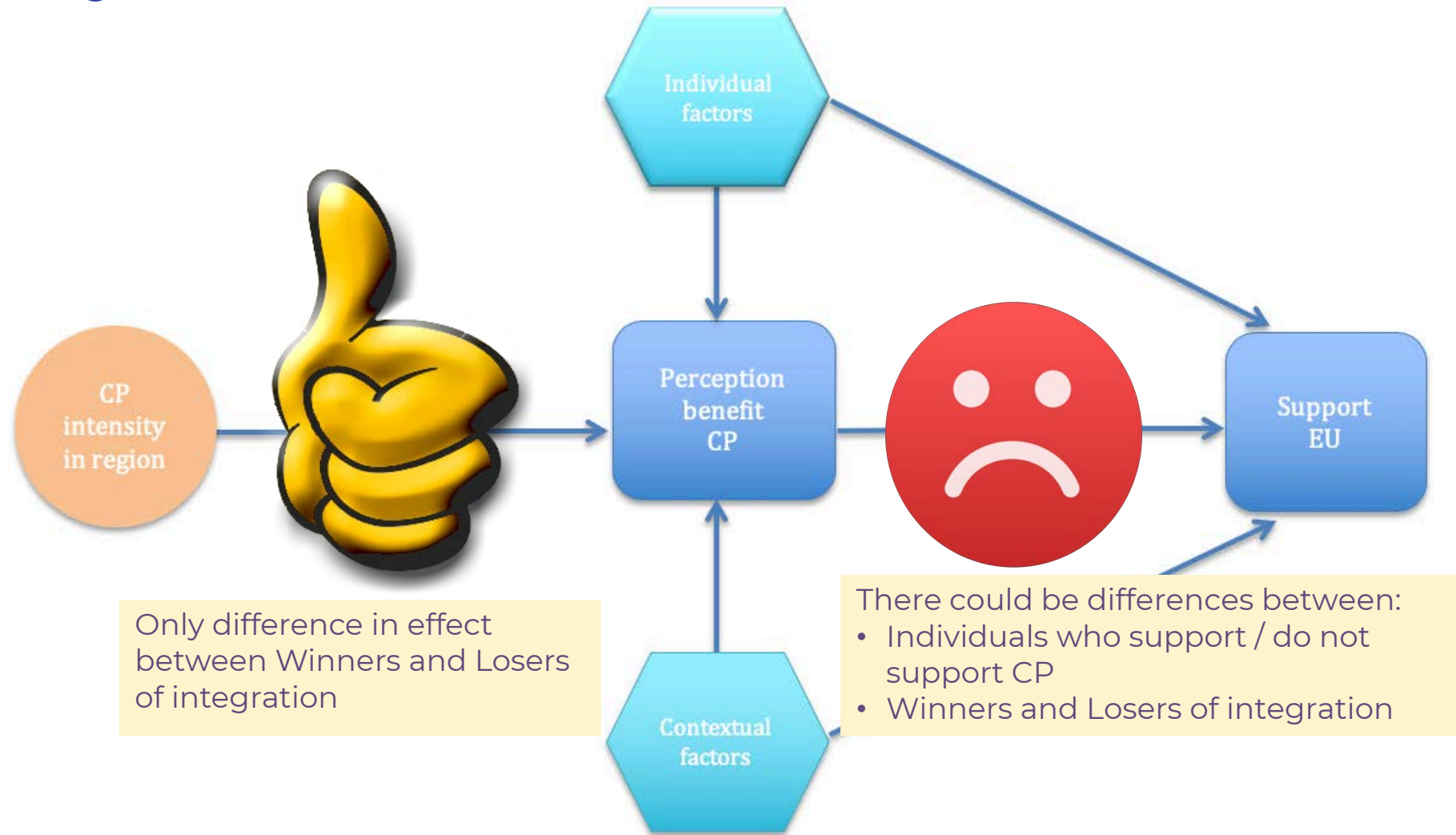
Estimate of effects

	Personal benefit CP	Support EU
Structural Fund exp. pc	0.0706*** (0.0175)	
Personal benefit CP		-0.0504 (0.1054)

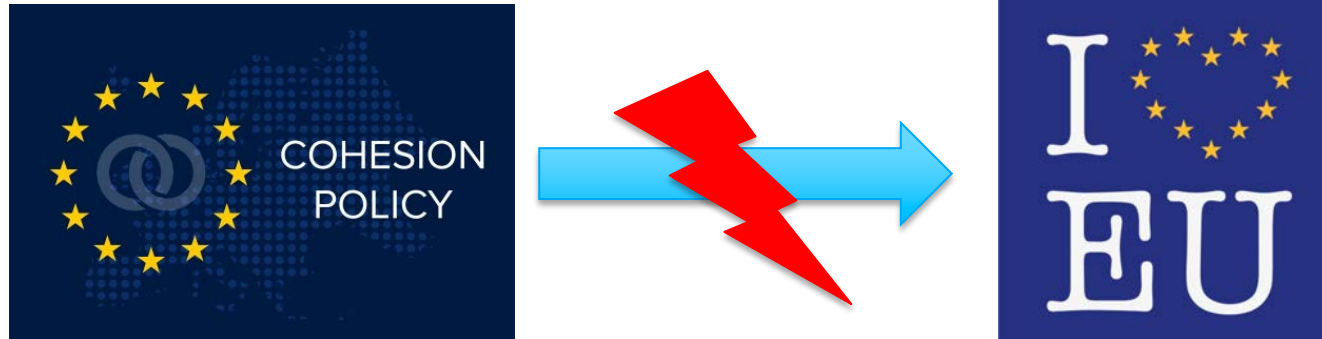
Estimate of effects from specifications that include Individual and Reg/Cntry controls



Summary of results



Concluding comments



Communication of CP has not been effective in promoting support for the EU

No improvement expected by increasing citizens' perception of the policy (billboards, plaques, posters, media exposure, ...)

Need to strengthen the link CP perception → EU support

More sophisticated tools / messages? #CohesionAlliance / Video competitions / "Did you know" campaign / Photo exhibitions / "RegioStars awards" / Debates about CP / #EUinmyRegion / Cohesion@30 / ...

Targeted to specific population groups?



Concluding comments



Council conclusions on "Making Cohesion Policy more effective, relevant and visible to our citizens" (April 2017)

(12) RECOGNISES that further efforts are required by Member States and the Commission to increase the visibility and the positive image of Cohesion Policy and the ESI Funds, and to show that they represent a tangible and beneficial manifestation of the EU in the daily life of European citizens by providing them with better living and working conditions as well as better opportunities for the development of skills. In this context, and in order to further increase the visibility of the policy, both towards EU citizens and political decision-makers, INVITES:

- a) Member States to communicate the advantages Europe offers to citizens;
- b) the Commission and Member States, including their managing authorities, to enhance cooperation on their communication strategies on Cohesion Policy and the ESI Funds (...); in this context, LOOKS FORWARD to the upcoming Commission action plan on communication;
- c) the Commission to outline and disseminate good practice on communication measures which can best illustrate the positive contribution made by Cohesion Policy and the ESI Funds, in particular towards improving the life of European citizens on the ground;
- d) beneficiaries and authorities of the Member States to communicate widely and in a systematic way the results, benefits and long term impact of the policy;
- e) all stakeholders to make the best use of available communication tools, including new communication techniques, to increase the visibility of the policy in a way adapted to the needs of relevant target groups;



Concluding comments



EU Commissioner for regional policy "Bringing opportunities to Europeans: Communicating together the results of EU Cohesion Policy" (May 2017)

Based on the 25 April conclusions of the GAC meeting stating that **Member States and the Commission** need to scale up their efforts to **increase the visibility of cohesion policy**, this document aims to provide more concrete elements on the implementation of the seven proposed actions.

This **communication campaign** must rest on two principles:

1. **Communicating on cohesion policy is a shared responsibility**. For practical as well as political reasons, the **European Commission cannot, and should not be the driving force behind it**. **Member States, local and regional authorities and civil society** should all play their due role to ensure these proposals are implemented with the best possible impact. The Member States have a legal obligation to provide information about the projects funded by cohesion policy, (...)
2. To avoid reinventing the wheel, **most proposed actions should use existing tools** such as the 'EU in My Region' campaign, which is already implemented in most Member States, or the European Commission's campaign to communicate the concrete benefits of the EU for citizens. (...). By the same token, the **European Commission's representations and the Europe Direct Information Centres** as well as the **European Parliament's information offices** should be mobilised.



Thank you.

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