LEGITIMULT

WP 5 – Legitimate Crisis Governance and Trust

Lead beneficiary: UAnt

Participants: Eurac; UiB; ULEI; FUBe; IDEA

Start month: M1; **End month:** M36

Goal: Explanation and analysis of the impact of governments' Covid-19 measures at different levels on citizens' trust in governments.

Public trust in government is an important element of democratic legitimacy. WP 5 analyses how various Covid-19 measures implemented at different government levels influenced citizens' trust in governments at the local, regional, national or European level. To do so, it conducts a set of vignette experiments in a group of European countries. In a second step, a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is carried out to identify the conditions that lead to a high or a low level of trust in governments at different levels. Based on the insights of these studies, WP 5 formulates a set of policy recommendations on the type of measures and government levels and their combination that solicitate a high level of citizens' trust in governments' crisis governance.

Objectives

<u>Objective</u>: <u>Explain whether and to what extent the measures taken by different government levels to fight the pandemic affect citizens' trust in various government levels</u>

WP 5 relates to the overall objectives by looking at the effect of Covid-19 policies and measures on democratic governance in EU/EFTA member states and the UK. Public trust in government is part of output legitimacy: governments are considered to be output-legitimate in the eyes of citizens to the extent that these citizens judge the actions of governments as justified. With respect to the pandemic, several factors have been examined to explain variation and evolution of trust: (perceived) health and economic threats, a rally-around-the-flag effect, and (perceived) performance and responsiveness of governments.

The dependent variable for WP 5 is citizens' trust in local, regional, national and European government levels. The first lead hypothesis is that trust in various levels of governments is affected by the decisions taken by various levels of government. These decisions show variation in content (containment, health, economic measures) and target (citizens, economic actors). Some measures have been very intrusive and originated very visibly from different levels of government. As citizens can distinguish between government levels, we expect that measures taken by different levels affect citizens' trust in these governments differently. The second lead hypothesis is that the effect of such decisions on citizens'

trust is mediated by the multilevel governance interactions among involved governments. Competences to take and implement containment measures and compensating social and economic measures are located at the different levels of government, from local to European. The intricate division of competences can affect speed and content of the response because government levels, sometimes with divergent ideological preferences and opposite ideas on policy strategies, need to engage in intergovernmental coordination. The expectation is that citizens' trust in government varies according to the levels that are competent to take specific types of decisions and how these levels engage in cooperation and coordination. Other variables, related to individual properties and features of the decision-making processes are included as control variables.

WP 5 applies two complementary explanatory research strategies. (1) A *vignette experiment* design determines under which conditions specific measures taken in a particular multilevel setting generate individual trust in government, controlled for individual level socio-demographics (such as gender, age, education, income), attitudes towards government, knowledge about the pandemic and social trust. (2) A *Qualitative Comparative Analysis* (QCA) analyses how different types of measures and the multilevel environment shape trust when controlling for country level contextual variables such as governance capacity and participation by stakeholders.

Description of work and methodology

The first step is a literature review of citizens' trust in multilevel governance contexts and trust related to times of crisis, resulting in a paper, presented within the consortium and published on the project website, and submitted as an open access article to a peer reviewed journal.

Then, UAnt – with support from UiB, ULEI and IDEA – performs quantitative and qualitative data collection. Both designs make use of the core datasets of the project on pandemic measures at the various levels and multilevel structures, constructed in WP 1 and consisting of original data collection and a compilation of existing data. WP 5 transforms these data into variables that can be used in the vignette experiments and QCA. Specific data for the v*ignette experiments* is collected by the vignette survey itself. Both the dependent variable (citizens' trust) and the individual level variables are probed in the survey. The data collection for each vignette study is carried out by using a representative sample of approximately 2.000 respondents (after non-response). To consider variation in national background, WP 5 runs vignette surveys in 4 geographically spread partner countries. To test the hypotheses, it needs 1 survey per country (2-3 hypotheses and 3 vignettes per survey). Hence, a total of 4 surveys is envisaged.

The *vignette experiments* aim to identify the conditions under which citizens put trust in different government levels. The scenarios offered to the respondents describe different types of crisis governance measures (containment, health, economic) taken by different levels of government (ranging from local over regional and national to the European level, and the involvement of other levels of government in decisions taken by an upper level), via different ways of multilevel decision-making (the moderating variables of multilevel governance, variation in executive dominance, experts' involvement, stakeholders' involvement). The vignettes make it possible to test whether it matters for citizens' trust which government level takes which crisis governance decisions and in what way. WP 5

uses a specific gender outlook related to multilevel governance.

Specific data for the QCA analysis derives from open-source datasets or data collected by consortium researchers (see WP 1)*. The dependent variable (outcome in QCA vocabulary) is citizens' trust in government as measured by Eurobarometer/European Social Survey data (at different points in time). The independent variables (conditions in QCA vocabulary) are the type of measures and country-level multilevel governance structures. Data for the other conditions do not require original data collection. Governance capacity derives from OECD (https://data.oecd.org) and Worldbank (https://data.worldbank.org) indicators; polarisation, executive dominance, and participation are indexed by the V-DEM project (https://www.v-dem.net/en/); crisis severity derives from ECDC data (https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en). The selected data is cross-checked with the relevant data from International IDEA's Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Indices (https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/#/indices/world-map). International IDEA also advises on case selection and additional methodological questions.

The *QCA* analysis identifies the combinations of conditions that lead to high citizens' trust and combinations that lead to low citizens' trust. QCA allows to run analyses for different levels of government. WP 5 envisages a crisp set QCA, allowing for a fine measurement of the independent variables. QCA requires a ratio of 3 to 4 cases for each explanatory condition. As UAnt – with contributions from FUBe and IDEA – envisages to examine the type of measures, the type of multilevel governance and several other control conditions (such as participation), it creates a subset of approximately 15 countries. The selection of the countries depends on the variation in the outcome and conditions to be established after the data collection in this WP and in WP 1, in coordination and discussion with International IDEA. The essence of a QCA analysis is to reduce the complexity of the data in the form of configurations of variables that define paths towards high and low levels of citizens' trust. In other words, the QCA output tells us what kind of measures have been taken in what kind of multilevel structures that spur citizens' trust in what kind of government levels. Overall, the hypothesis is that citizens put more trust in government if central crisis governance is based on cooperative intergovernmental decision-making, and that citizens put more trust in government when crisis governance measures are taken and implemented by lower levels of government.

Finally, WP 5 points policy-makers at various levels to the type of decisions that spur or do not spur trust, but also to the levels of government that citizens prefer to take measures and to the extent that citizens expect these levels to cooperate.

Deliverables of WP 5

D5.1 Working paper: literature review and methodology

D5.2 Working paper: research outline

D5.3 Submission of article for peer-review

D5.4 Dataset publication

D5.5 Submission of draft book chapter for edited volume