Analysis of the components of the intangible asset known as Citizen Engagement in the public sector

Análisis de los componentes del bien intangible Compromiso Ciudadano en el sector público

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Abstract:

Since the economic crisis of 2008, the public administration has shown increasing interest in establishing relations of trust with its citizens. Consequently, the concept of Citizen Engagement has become a recurrent object of study for academics who have extolled the virtues of public participation and collective deliberation as a fundamental component of a responsible democracy (Carpini *et al.*, 2004; Dahlgren, 2005; Carpini, 2009). However, investigations devoted to the definition of Citizen Engagement are rare, and only a few studies have tried to explain its components and how it can be activated. This article has three objectives, which are as follows: 1) to identify specific attitudes and behaviours that indicate engagement; 2) to explore and identify the factors of citizen engagement; and 3) to develop a set of suggestions to improve its management. In order to achieve the stated aims, a theoretical study of the concept has been carried out, followed by a factor analysis. Data has been obtained

Resumen:

Tras la crisis económica del 2008, la Administración Pública ha mostrado cada vez más interés por establecer relaciones de confianza con los ciudadanos. En consecuencia, el concepto de Compromiso Ciudadano se ha convertido en un recurrente objeto de estudio para los académicos, quienes ha exaltado las virtudes de la participación pública y la deliberación colectiva como un componente fundamental de una democracia responsable (Carpini et al., 2004; Dahlgren, 2005; Carpini, 2009). No obstante, son escasos los estudios que se han dedicado a la definición del Compromiso Ciudadano y pocos han tratado de explicar de qué se compone y cómo puede activarse. Este documento se plantea tres objetivos: 1) identificar actitudes y comportamientos concretos que expresen compromiso; 2) explorar cuáles son los factores del compromiso ciudadano y; 3) elaborar un conjunto de sugerencias para mejorar su gestión. Para ello se ha realizado un estudio teórico del concepto y, a con-

from European surveys of 2013 and refer to 27 countries on the continent. Finally, the article provides suggestions to institutions in order for them to establish relationships with their audiences.

Keywords:

Citizen engagement; intangible assets; public administration; public relations; communication; components.

tinuación, se ha desarrollado un análisis factorial. Los datos han sido obtenidos de encuestas europeas del año 2013 y se refieren a 27 países del continente. Finalmente, el artículo aporta sugerencias para que las instituciones establezcan relaciones con sus públicos.

Palabras clave:

Compromiso ciudadano, bienes intangibles, administración pública, relaciones públicas, comunicación, componentes.

1. Introduction: intangible assets in the public sector

The increase in social unrest following the economic crisis of 2008 has contributed to weakening the link between citizens and political leaders and has demonstrated the need for Administration to pay greater attention to the intangible assets that define its relationship with citizens. With the aim of verifying whether the management of such assets is the key to accurately addressing the problem of the current mistrust by the public sector, the focus of this study is to consider whether Citizen Engagement is one of the main intangible assets that requires reflection.

Kaplan and Norton (2004: 10-14) defined an intangible asset as the "knowledge that exists in an organization to create a distinct advantage", as well as the "capability of a company's employees to satisfy customer needs". According to their research, "an organization's intangible assets can easily represent more than 75 percent of its value", hence the importance for entities to differentiate themselves from competitors through strategies that create "value from both tangible as well as intangible assets".

Despite the fact that "the management of intangible assets is the foundation of growth among organizations (including those that are public)" (Sztompka, 1999 quoted in Canel and Luoma-aho, 2017: 29), it is the corporate sector that has devoted more attention and resources to its identification and care. Companies have recognized their intangible assets, differentiating between those that are generative (human capital, structural capital and relational capital) and those that are commercially exploitable (production costs, intangible property rights, client capital, demand, and management) (Torres, 1991; Bontis, Dragoneti, Jacobsen and Roos, 1999; Bossi, Fuertes and Serrano, 2001; Kernagham, 2003; García de Castro, Merino, Plaz and Villar, 2004; Kaplan and Norton, 2004; Ramírez, 2010). From that moment on, they have established strategies to align their intangible assets with their mission and vision, and to measure them as well (Kaplan and Norton, 2004).

Although reforms in the public sector have included the implementation of different management tools used in the business sector, it is complicated to apply certain corporate features, one of which concerns us, because of the differences between the two contexts. Among these differences is the difficulty on the part of Administration in defining outputs and measuring inputs. Moreover, the efficiency of the public sector is more complicated to assess, as its productive resources are mostly intangible (human resources and knowledge), its objectives are different, and the public it addresses is not the same (Ramírez, 2010).To these unique features, De Escalada (2007) adds another one of equal importance: "public

management deals with the behaviour of an entire system (macro management), while private management focuses on the problem of the individual parts (micro management)" (De Escalada, 2007: 7).

On this basis, the features of intangible assets in the field of public administration are so unique that their development is simultaneously difficult to manage as well as interesting and beneficial for the entire community. In this context, Canel and Luoma-aho (2017) propose the following definition of intangible assets in the public sector (Canel and Luoma-aho, 2017: 39):

> A non-physical asset that allows and gives access to tangible assets, is activated through communication, and is built on past events, or in other words, it is linked to the organization's behaviour; therefore, it gives rise to an identifiable resource from which both the organization and the stakeholders/citizens can expect a benefit or value (social, monetary, etc.) in the long term.

This paper explores Citizen Engagement from the perspective of intangible assets based on citizens' perceptions. Using survey data from twenty-seven countries as the basis, the study examines the components of this concept.

The structure of the document is as follows: the objectives, research questions and methodology will be presented in the following section; this is followed by several sections focusing on theory, where the concept of intangible assets is explained and the meaning of Citizen Engagement and its relationship with communication is developed; in the final part of the document, we present engagement data from twenty-seven countries and carry out a detailed analysis to examine the differences between the nations studied; finally, suggestions are provided for the purpose of improving communication in public administration.

2. Research questions and hypotheses

The research questions posed in this article and the associated hypotheses are as follows:

a) Is it possible to determine the attitudes and behaviours of citizens that indicate and make up the intangible asset known as Citizen Engagement?

Given the discrepancies in the literature regarding the indications that are considered commitment, the aim of this research question is to collect a series of attitudes and behaviours that help define the concept.

The answer to this question has been obtained through a study of the literature that has led to the concept of Citizen Engagement being viewed in two ways: a) as an action by a citizen who wants to get involved and; b) as an action that starts from Administration for the purpose of promoting citizen engagement. From the bibliographic review, the conceptual bases have been elicited in order to identify those measures of behaviour and attitude that are capable of demonstrating Citizen Engagement.

Next, a database was created to record the existing values regarding distinct variables related to attitudes and behaviours of the citizens of 27 European Union countries. By means of a factor analysis, it is possible to identify whether the intangible asset is composed of these variables, and if so, which ones.

From what has been stated above, the first hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: *It is possible to infer the meaning of Citizen Engagement from a set of individual attitudes and behaviours of citizens.*

b) Is it decisive for Public Administration to use good communication with its public in order to activate Citizen Engagement?

Based on the current ideas of researchers who believe that a citizen is engaged when Public Administration makes an effort to oblige them to become participants in public life, the second hypothesis has been formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2: *Citizen Engagement depends on the correct exchange of information between Administration and the public, which makes it essential for institutions to develop effective forms of communication.*

In order for information and communication to be the driving force in the process of activating Citizen Engagement, it is crucial to know its components, which is the main objective of this article.

3. Examining the components of the intangible asset known as Citizen Engagement

This article draws upon a previous definition of intangible assets in the public sector context (Canel and Luoma-aho, 2018: 77) to emphasise one of its assumptions: the existence of certain intangible assets depends on the recognition of those assets (someone must assign a given intangible asset to an organisation). Such intangibles are assets based on perception, and even though they cannot be created starting from ground zero, as they are backed by real experiences, they require communication if they are to be developed.

In this sense, we will focus on Citizen Engagement as an asset based on citizen perception.

Firstly, it is necessary to start with two clarifications regarding the use of the term:

– Since engagement is a widely accepted term in academic literature, engagement or commitment will be used interchangeably

– In order to give consideration to the term Citizen Engagement[1] as an intangible asset, its first letter will be written in capitals, both in Spanish and in English.

The concept of Citizen Engagement is a research phenomenon that has been enhanced in recent decades (Maurrasse, 2001; Ostrander, 2004; Cooper, Bryer and Meek, 2006: Dahlgren, 2009; Ekman and Amna, 2012; Brandsen and Honingh, 2015, among others), and consequently the concept has been changing. Today, engagement can be understood as a way of bridging the gap between citizens and traditional public institutions, the latter of which have been characterized by one-way communication and action.

In the academic field, the literature is extensive. Consequently, for the purposes of this paper it is useful to classify the contributions according to two perspectives: on the one hand, there are contributions that explore the meaning of citizen engagement from the perspective of citizenship (see, for example, Verba and Nie, 1972; Brady, 1999; Adler and Goggin,

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1   The idea of engagement is built on different aspects. Citizen Engagement is one of them and the focus of this article.

2005; Cooper, 2005; Teorell, Torcal and Montero, 2007); and on the other hand are contributions that analyse the specific actions that public institutions take to promote citizen involvement in the public realm (see, for example, Marlowe Jr, and Arrington-Marlowe, 2005; Yang and Callahan, 2007; Ellen Claes and Marc Hooghe; 2008).

The contributions of the bibliographic literature that have focused on the actions of citizens have determined that a person is committed when he or she decides to become involved of their own free will. Thus, engagement is "the action of ordinary citizens oriented toward influencing certain political outcomes" (Brady, 1999: 737). Cooper (2005: 534) defines it as "people participating alongside deliberative and collective action within a range of interests, institutions and networks, developing a civic identity and engaging people in governance".

The standpoint of the second group is based on the ideas of Keeter, Zukin, Andolina and Jenkins (2002: 2):

> Engaged citizens do not just suddenly develop an attitude of engagement. We must not expect a spontaneous explosion of commitment. Cultural norms are against the former, just as the laws of physics are against the latter.

Offering a very similar concept, Yang and Callahan (2007: 249) refer to the term "citizen participation efforts" as "government-initiated activities to foster citizen participation in administrative decision-making and management procedures". From their reflections, we can deduce that bureaucracy influences participatory processes, and the decision to participate is ultimately the citizen's response to an initiative from administration.

The vision of these authors combines the definitions of Marlowe and Arrington-Marlowe (2005), and Claes and Hooghe (2008), for whom citizen engagement needs a source to promote its creation. Citizens need extra motivation in order to want to become involved in the public sphere. In light of the above, it would seem that this impetus should come from public administration.

3.1. Motives for Citizen Engagement

What acts as a source of commitment? To answer this question, it is helpful to review the literature regarding the mental processes that produce engagement. Some theories have simplified the issue by ensuring that citizens' commitment depends only on the convergence of their expectations and reality. In this sense, Brown and Michel (2003) believe that if a citizen is satisfied with the actions of his or her government because they coincide with his or her previous perspectives, hopes or desires, then that citizen will be committed.

The World Bank (2014) claims that psychological and intangible factors such as a sense of civic duty and belonging are the motivations that prompt citizens to participate.

For Dahlgren (2005), an engaged citizen is one who does the following: 1) convinces him or herself that their participation is justified; 2) is motivated by the idea of contributing something to society; 3) is informed and acquires knowledge about the participatory process; 4) reaches a sufficient level of empowerment; and 5) participates.

Delli Carpini (2004) also believes that before reaching the level of engagement, a citizen goes through certain previous stages. Specifically, this author talks about three steps: 1) the understanding and acceptance of democratic values; 2) the

embracement, based on the first point, of attitudes and beliefs that are political and civic; and 3) the creation of strong opinions on public affairs.

Uslaner's (2003) ideas on the mental process of engagement do not follow a chronological or linear order, but instead, several possible sources of engagement activation can be deduced from his approach, acting independently or together, and they are as follows:

a. Social, economic and political factors: "People with more resources are more likely to participate" (Uslaner, 2003: 2)

b. Personal motivation for a specific cause: The root of interest in "becoming involved in politics, for example, is very different from that of volunteering" (p. 1);

c. Confidence in one's own ability to participate: "People who believe they can make a difference are those who are most involved in public life" (p. 3);

d. Trust[2] and satisfaction with the system: trust, on the one hand, is one of the most well developed concepts in relation to engagement (Yang, 2005; Yang and Callaham, 2007; Van der Walle, Van Roosbroek and Bouckaert, 2008). Uslander (2003) considers that "people who follow politics and who believe the system will respond to them -they trust the system- are also more likely to get involved" (p. 3). Satisfaction, on the other hand, is associated with better levels of engagement in society, yet some authors warn that this "has been weakened in almost all democratic countries" (Benedict and Moran, 2003: 3).

Of the four reasons that help in understanding why people mobilize, three of them (a, b and c) are related to purely individual issues, while only the last involves issues in which Public Administration is able to intervene. In other words, for there to be a commitment by citizens, public administrators must pay special attention to the levels of trust and satisfaction that they engender in the public.

3.2. Expressions of Citizen Engagement

By the word expresion, we mean the form in which engagement manifests itself. Possibly the most studied term in relation to types of engagement is participation, so that citizens are considered to show indications of engagement when they participate. The relationship between the two concepts has been so well developed by some authors (Verba and Nie, 1972; Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000; Brady, 1999; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Cooper, 2005; Teorel et. al, 2007; Ekman and Amna, 2012) that on many occasions they have blurred the nuances of both concepts and have proceeded to identify them as synonymous terms. The following are distinct expressions of engagement (Table 1): a) political or manifest actions; and b) public actions, also called latent participation.

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2   Trust, according to Offe (1999 quoted in Yang, 2005: 274), is understood in four aspects: 1) citizens' trust in their fellow citizens; 2) citizens' trust in government; 3) political elites' trust in other elites; and 4) political elites' trust in citizens.

Table 1. Manifest versus latent indications of Citizen Engagement

	Description	Examples of actions
POLITICAL or MANIFEST Action	These are based on the model of "service citizens": citizens follow the rules and act based on what they consider they "should" do.	Voting, compliance with the social order, or affiliation with political parties
PUBLIC or LATENT Action	These are based on the "engaged citizen" model: participation is expressed through solidary help, political independence, and activity of a civil society.	Donating money to charity, volunteering, participating in the public domain, participating in debates, etc.

Source: created by the author based on the bibliography reviewed

The reference source of the authors who refer to engagement as carrying out political actions is Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000). For him, engagement is shown by attending public meetings, participating in labour strikes or protests, voting, trusting in government, participating in organizations and labour unions, professing a religion, as well as trusting the rest of the community (interpersonal trust) through participation in associations. In the same vein, Verba and Nie (1972: 56-63) identified Citizen Engagement with actions taken by citizens to stimulate their relationship with public authorities. Examples of this could be voting, dedicating personal time to campaign activities (including membership or work for political parties and organisations, as well as monetary donations), signing petitions, or contacting public officials (Verba and Nie, 1972).

On the other hand, authors who move away from this political vision and argue that engaged citizens demonstrate their commitment through public or manifest actions especially include Ekman and Amna (2012), and Adler and Goggin (2005). The former point out that donating money, participating in social projects such as "building schools or constructing potable water supply systems in developing countries, or caring for the environment either by recycling or organizing car pool groups to commute to work", are all outstanding ways of expressing commitment (Ekman and Amna, 2012: 288). On the other hand, Adler and Goggin (2005: 241) also view Citizen Engagement as "activities carried out by common citizens who try to influence that which is of interest to others who are outside their own family and circle of close friends", to which they add that "an active citizen participates in the life of the community in order to improve the conditions of others" (p. 241).

Based on the literature, the indicators that the authors consider to represent Citizen Engagement are set out below (Table 2):

Table 2. Indicators of engagement according to the authors

	Indicators of *engagement*	Author/Authors
Political or manifest actions	Participation in associations	Putnam (1995), Brady (1999), Cooper (2005), Yang y Callahan (2007)
	Participation in labour strikes or protests	Putnam (1995)
	Electoral participation	Verba y Nie (1972), Putnam (1995), Teorell et al. (2007)
	Trust (in the system and public institutions)	Putnam (1995)
	Participation or affiliation in labour unions	Verba y Nie (1972), Putnam (1995)
	Signing petitions	Verba y Nie (1972)
	Contacting public officials	Verba y Nie (1972)
Public Actions	Support for social causes (including monetary donation, participation in social projects, care of the environment, etc.)	Ekman y Amna (2012)

Source: created by the author

3.3. The effects of Citizen Engagement

The authors concur in highlighting the relevance of having committed citizens for the development of Democracy. If participation is promoted, and if the context facilitates correct implementation, the effects that commitment can have on society are significant (Verba and Nie, 1972; Putnam, 1995; Brady, 1999; Keeter, et al., 2002; Cooper, 2005; Marlowe Jr. and Arrington Marlowe, 2005; Yang and Callahan, 2007; Teorell *et al.*, 2007; Ekman and Amna, 2012). With support from Teorell (et al., 2007), we have highlighted some of these positive effects as follows:

1. Participation enriches society and empowers citizens by making them informed and aware;

2. Citizen Engagement is an instrument for overcoming alienation and exclusion, and promotes trust as well. Feeling as if one is part of a community encourages the feelings of citizens to be in line with the activities of organizations and fosters an environment of trust;

3. Citizen Engagement through participation improves management results. "When public institutions are committed to working in partnership with the community to shape and create its future, objectives are best achieved through active and informed citizenship" (Marlowe Jr. and Arrington Marlowe, 2005: 13);

4. Participation fosters accountability, because if citizens are involved in public affairs, the probability that institutions will respond to inquiries from the public about the management of resources, assets and expenditures will be greater.

5. Participation strengthens public services and maximizes resources. Listening to the opinion of citizens creates a situation in which strategies are developed based on the needs of the population, and consequently the results of public management will be more satisfactory and effective.

6. Citizen Engagement creates beneficial relationships. It contributes to developing "a citizenry that is more capable of working together effectively to build a future" (2005: 13).

In summary, "emerging evidence shows that Citizen Engagement can lead to better medium-term, long-term, and final development outcomes in the appropriate contexts" (World Bank, 2014: 69).

In this article, and based on all of the above, Citizen Engagement is considered to be an instrument capable of "fostering citizenship values, improving accountability, enhancing trust in government, maintaining legitimacy, and making better decisions" (Kweit and Kweit, 1981; Barber, 1984; Thomas 1995; Feltey and Susel, 1998; Cooper, Bryer and Meek, 2006 cited in Coursey, Yang and Pandey, 2012: 572).

## 4. Communication as a tool to promote Citizen Engagement

Given that citizen participation is derived from the relationship between citizens and Public Administration, communication can be understood as the basis of commitment: only through effective communication can the required mutual understanding move forward.

This implies profound transformations in the management of communication and public policy to the extent to which fostering citizen involvement requires specific and precise knowledge of what citizens need and seek. With scant information about what interests most citizens, public organizations will find it difficult to connect with them. Therefore, public officials must work to obtain information about the public and promote a situation in which the public trusts in the role that Public Administration can carry out with regard to their concerns (Bovaird and Leaffler 2012).

In turn, establishing commitment requires the existence of a spirit of public service within the Administration through which administrators encourage and coordinate citizens in their public participation. Only in this way will the actions of Public Administration be "consistent with the needs, aspirations and values of its citizens" (Marlowe and Arrington-Marlowe, 2005: 4).

Moreover, public officials must also review their perspective on the role that they should carry out as well as the public's role in this new type of relationship. In the process of building Citizen Engagement, the World Bank describes the communicative relationship between citizens and government based on two central concepts: one is the way in which governments involve citizens in the decision-making process (and as such, the authority the latter grant to the government), and on the other hand, the level of interaction with them. Moving upward involves climbing a ladder that has the following steps (Figure 1): 1) Inform (provide citizens with fair and objective information that helps them understand the current problem, alternatives and solutions); b) Consult (request citizen feedback); c) Collaborate (involve citizens in the decision-making process) and; d) Empower (leave the final decision to the citizens).

Figure 1. The World Bank ladder of citizen engagement
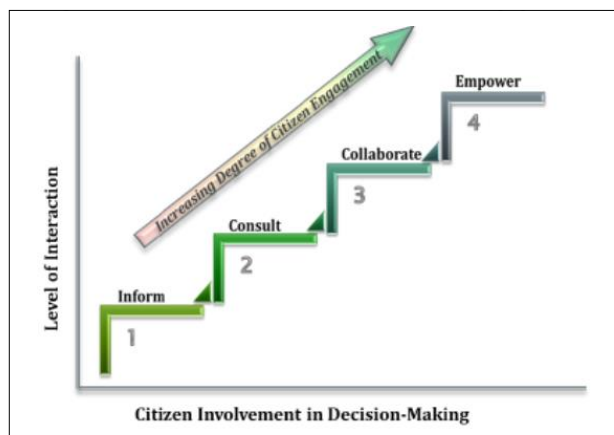
Source: World Bank (2014: 8)

From this point, two ideas of great interest emerge. The first is that increasing the degree of commitment implies a higher level of interaction between public organizations and citizens. The second is that success in this issue implies a transfer of power to society by public authorities.

5. Methodology

The quantitative analysis provides a comparative study of 27 European Union countries in which data on the indicators of commitment have been collected for the year 2013. Before presenting the variables, it should be noted that there are limitations in the development of any system of indicators. In this case, the main impediment was the fact that obtaining more up-to-date information on the issue to be analysed was not possible.

The specific characteristics of the study are described as follows:

1. To identify the actions by citizens that demonstrate Citizen Engagement. For this purpose, a classification of concepts was created taking as a reference the theoretical assessments of the authors cited in the first few sections of the article. The indicators identified are shown in Table 2. They are of three types: a) cognitive (based on perception); b) emotional (e.g., trust) and; c) behavioural (based on actions).

2. A search was conducted among different sources of variables capable of measuring the aggregated types of Citizen Engagement. Table 3 displays those that were found, and hence they were the basis of the factor analysis. Since the data on citizen attitudes and behaviour is limited, it is possible that some variables partially represent the concept sought.

Table 3. Variables that indicate Engagement

Type of expression	Associated variable	Source
Participation in associations	Opinion on the effectiveness of being an NGO member in influencing policy	Eurobarometer
Participation in labour strikes or demonstrations	Data not found in any database	
Electoral participation[3]	Opinion on the effectiveness of the local vote in influencing policy	Eurobarometer
	Opinion on the effectiveness of the national vote in influencing policy	Eurobarometer
Trust (in the system and public institutions)	Political system	Eurobarometer
	National parliament	Eurobarometer
	National government	Eurobarometer
	Political parties	Eurobarometer
	Local authority	Eurobarometer
	Legal system	Eurostat
	The Police	Eurostat
Participation/affiliation in a labour union	Data not found in any database	
Signing petitions	Have signed a petition in the last two years (yes or no)	Eurobarometer
Contact with public servants	Have expressed their own views to local/regional representatives	Eurobarometer
	Have expressed their own views to national representatives	Eurobarometer
Support of social causes	Belong to an organization of economic or social interest (yes or no)	Eurobarometer
	Have taken personal action against climate change (yes or no)	Eurobarometer
	Have tried to reduce the level of waste generated through recycling (yes or no)	Eurobarometer
	Willing to donate organs (yes or no)	Eurobarometer

Source: created by the author

3. A data search was carried out based on the selected variables in the following 27 European Union countries for the year 2013: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Republic of Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), Finland (FI), France (FR), Hungary (HU) Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), Lithuania (LT), Latvia (LV), Luxembourg (LU), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Sweden (SE), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK) and United Kingdom (UK) [4] .

4. The data were obtained from two databases: Eurobarometer and Eurostat. The surveys of the Eurobarometer monitored the evolution of public opinion in the Member States of the European Union (EU) with the aim of assessing

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3   Initially, the variable "exercising the right to vote" was sought to measure the term "electoral participation". However, in the end we chose to measure this action based on the effectiveness of the vote due to the impossibility of finding voting data for the 27 countries in the sample.

4   Although Croatia joined the European Union in 2013, the surveys for that year on which the article is based did not include data for that country.

the awareness and support by citizens of EU activities. The European Union's statistical office, Eurostat, provided high quality statistics for the continent.

5. All data analysed are for the year 2013. This year proved to be the most recent period with the largest aggregation of data on Citizen Engagement available for all 27 countries. The original data from the surveys can be found in the tables in Annex 1.

6. The analysis tool used was SPSS. "SPSS is one of the best known and most widely used software for conducting market research, as well as research related to sociology and psychology" (González, 2015: 5).

7. A factor analysis was carried out with the data obtained. This statistical analysis technique is generally used in exploratory data analysis as well as in building forecasting models. The selection of factors "is carried out in such a way that the first factor collects the largest possible proportion of the original variability; the second factor must collect the maximum possible variability not collected by the first factor, and so on" (Terrádez-Gurrea, 2012: 2). From all of the resulting factors, those that reflect the percentage of variability considered sufficient are chosen. In our case, the choice of four factors explains 83% of the information (Graph 1). The remaining factors (from the fourth onward) explain a very small portion of the information, which means that they are probably insignificant. The specific data of the variability that is explained can be found in Annex 3.

For a factor to be easily interpreted, it should have the following characteristics (Terrádez-Gurrea, 2012: 3): (a) the factor coefficients should be close to 1; (b) a variable should have high coefficients with only one factor; and (c) there should be no factors with similar coefficients. These requirements have been met as shown in the lists included in Annex 2.

In this analysis, the rotation method used was Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. This method, designed by Kaiser in 1958, makes an orthogonal rotation of the axes in order to facilitate the interpretation of the meaning of the factors. The result of this rotation makes it possible to get each of the variables as close as possible to 1 on only one of the factors, and as close as possible to 0 on all of the others. To go deeper into this issue, and see the specific results of all the variables with a rotated component, see Annex 2.

Graph 1. Number of factors according to the variability explained
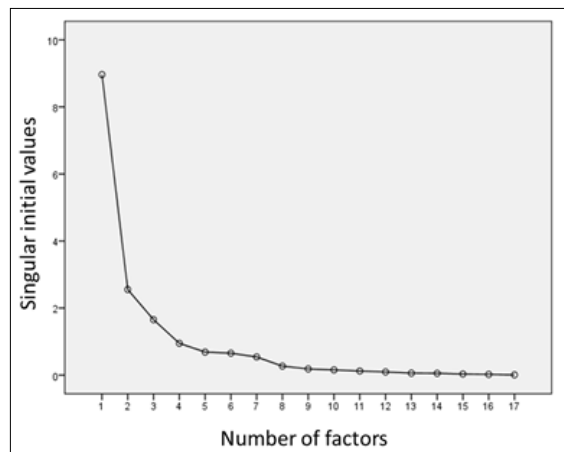
Source: created by the author

6. Results

The following outline has been followed for the presentation of the results obtained:

a. Explanation of the results of the factor analysis in order to identify which factors compose Citizen Engagement;

b. Description of the meaning of each of the factors and a provision of specific data regarding them.

The factor analysis, conducted based on the 17 variables selected according to the author's data (Table 3), resulted in a four-factor distribution (Table 4).

Table 4. Factor Analysis results with 17 variables

FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4
– Trust in the Political System (0,925) – Trust in Parliament (0,882) – Trust in Government (0,880) – Trust in political parties (0,876) – Trust in Local Authorities (0,851) – Trust in the legal system (0,877) – Trust in the Police (0,701)	– Organ donation (0,753) – Being a member of a social-economic organization (0,624) – Action against climatic change (0,872) – Recycling (0,838)	– Perception of the effectiveness of the local vote (0,748) – Perception of the effectiveness of the national vote (0,791) – Perception of the effectiveness of being a member of an NGO[5] (0,819)	– Signing petitions (0,712) – Speaking to local representatives (0,772) – Speaking to national representatives (0,601)
7 variables	4 variables	3 variables	3 variables

Source: created by the author

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5 These variables record the respondents' perception that voting (locally and nationally) and belonging to an NGO are effective in influencing political decisions.

The analysis seems to indicate the following:

a) Without a doubt, Factor 1 measures issues related to trust. As such, this factor was called the "trust factor".

The variables introduced with regard to this term are the following: trust in the police, in the legal system, the political system, political parties, the national government, the national parliament, and local public authorities.

As mentioned in the theoretical presentation, the term *trust* is closely related to participation in public life. This factor seems to have a decisive influence on citizens' decision-making activities regarding their role in the social and political context.

b) To understand factors 2 and 4, we must refer to the political and public nature of engagement, explained in the second paragraph of this article:

   – Political nature refers to "actions by ordinary citizens to influence certain policy outcomes" (Brady, 1999: 737), and is exemplified, among other actions, by the signing of petitions.

   – Public nature of engagement relates to behaviour that seeks to benefit the community, i.e. behaviour that shows solidarity (e.g. organ donation, recycling, etc.).

The results of the factor analysis seem to corroborate this distinction between the political and public aspects, since factor 2 reflects behaviours aimed at the common good (such as the willingness to donate organs, combat climate change, or recycle), and factor 4 corresponds to actions of a political nature, i.e. actions carried out to influence political outcomes (such as signing legislative petitions, or trying to influence political representatives through citizens expressing their own opinions). For this reason, they have been named "Social behaviour" (factor 2) and "Political behaviour" (factor 4). None of the variables introduced can avoid the conceptual logic of these factors.

c) Factor 3 gathers the variables that measure the respondents' perceptions of the degree to which public organisations are receptive to citizen opinion and the degree to which this opinion influences policy decisions. This factor was therefore called the "Receptivity" factor. No variable can avoid the conceptual logic of the factor.

The result of the factor analysis, through which understanding of the constructs underlying the data was sought, answers the first research question and confirms the associated Hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *It is possible to determine Citizen Engagement from a set of individual attitudes and behaviours of citizens.*

Looking at the meaning of each factor, one can see how Citizen Engagement is composed of both behaviours and perceptions. The fact that the perceptions (factors 1 and 3) determine whether a citizen is engaged means that with good communication, both the levels of trust as well as receptivity can be increased. The consequences of this situation is that the citizen who is more trusting and perceives that they are taken into consideration by public authorities will decide to participate more actively in the public sphere. In other words, public administration can activate the engagement of its citizens through communication.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to assert that the actions of Public Administration must be implemented and communicated so that citizens are aware of the areas of management that the public sector initiates along with the associated results.

Based on these results related to the composition of engagement and the opinions of the authors, we can confirm Hypothesis 2:

Citizen Engagement depends on the appropriate exchange of information between Administration and the public, which makes it essential for institutions to develop effective forms of communication.

7. Conclusions

The objectives of this article are as follows: 1) to identify specific attitudes and behaviours that reflect Citizen Engagement, and subsequently, the avenues for action through which individuals can be encouraged to become engaged in their communities; 2) to test which factors compose Citizen Engagement; and 3) to develop a set of suggestions to improve the management of Citizen Engagement.

After reviewing the idea of Citizen Engagement, its causes and consequences, and within the framework of the literature that views engagement as an intangible resource in the public sector, a search for assessments of citizen attitudes and behaviours that indicate Citizen Engagement in 27 EU countries was conducted.

In what follows, the author of this study has set out some conclusions through an interpretation made from the perspective of the theoretical framework presented in the first part of this paper, and of the results obtained from the empirical observation. Building upon this, some conclusions have been drawn on the concept of Citizen Engagement as well as on the operational implications of the research for public policy.

Regarding what creates Citizen Engagement.

1) *Some components of Citizen Engagement have been identified that differ from one another and are mutually exclusive.*

It can be concluded that identifying the attitudes and behaviours that comprise Citizen Engagement is clearly possible, and in the case of the citizens of the 27 countries studied in this research, such attitudes and behaviours are mutually exclusive and different from each other. The components are the following: "Social Behaviour", "Political Behaviour", "Trust" [in public institutions] and "Receptivity" (understood in this study as citizens' perception that public organizations are open to considering their opinions during the decision-making process).

2) *As a part of Citizen Engagement, social behaviour can be clearly differentiated from political behaviour.*

The analysis and resulting data have allowed for the identification of two different factors; these are termed "Political Behaviour" and "Social Behaviour". The first, which comprises attitudes and behaviours such as the signing of petitions by citizens or contacting local or national political representatives in order for citizens to express their personal opinions, corresponds to what Brady has pointed out with regard to the political nature of Citizen Engagement, which he describes as "actions by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing a certain political outcome" (Brady, 1999, p. 737). The second factor, composed of variables such as organ donation, recycling, fighting climate change, or belonging to an NGO, is associated with actions oriented to obtaining benefits for the community, expressed mainly through solidarity-based support.

Data from the 27 countries analysed seem to confirm that there is an increasingly widespread view of public life that is moving away from the political manifestations put forward by Putnam (1995), such as voting or participating in political demonstrations. This is what we might call an "engaged citizen" (Dalton, 2008, p. 81)—one who is politically independent and focuses on solidarity-based support and civic action.

3) *The predominance of social engagement over political engagement also indicates the predominance of latent participation over manifest participation.*

There seem to be similarities between the variables of the "Social Behaviour" factor and what Ekman and Amna (2012) regard as "latent forms" of engagement in other words, actions that go beyond political participation and are both observable and measurable, examples of which include signing a petition for a law, contacting a politician, etc. In addition to their essence of "not being aimed directly at influencing people who are in power" (p. 288), these actions are also less explicit, and therefore cannot be "directly or unequivocally classified as political participation" (p. 288). The elements of the "Social Behaviour" factor within this study focus on attitudes toward recycling, making donations to a charity, or participating in voluntary work, and as such involve participation in society and in public life, but they are types of involvement that have a less obvious manifestation.

4) *Trust is an important component of Citizen Engagement.*

Concerns with regard to declining citizen trust in government, in Public Administration, and in public services have become a permanent element of contemporary political discourse (Van der Walle, Van Roosbroek and Bouckaert, 2008). However, does the trust that citizens have in the public realm influence their level of commitment to Administration or to the rest of the community? As Yang and Callahan (2007: 251) affirm, "although citizen mistrust in government can discourage participation, public administrators might nevertheless realize that true participation is necessary in order to improve trust". In their opinion, "government may be limited by a lack of resources, but citizen participation can be used to build partnerships for the purpose of addressing such resource problems" (p. 251).

Throughout this article, the relationship between trust and participation has become evident, and according to the results it can be concluded that the "Trust" factor [in diverse public institutions] has been verified as a relevant part of Citizen Engagement, which confirms the idea that if institutions increasingly gain the trust of their citizens, the citizens will become more involved with public authorities in the development of public procedures for solving problems that both groups have in common.

5) *Trust that flows in the opposite direction, known as receptivity, is also an important part of Citizen Engagement.*

It can be concluded that citizens' perception of the trust that public authorities have in society with regard to decision-making is also an important component that activates citizen involvement in the public realm. This study has identified a factor of Citizen Engagement that explains the perceptions that citizens have about whether or not their opinion counts regarding the progress that their societies might achieve. It seems that when there is a perception that public administration trusts its citizens, and these citizens are therefore capable of influencing public life through their actions, it seems that there is a greater desire to participate and become involved.

This particular conclusion underscores the idea suggested by the literature that in conducting research focused on trust, it is necessary to look not only in one direction (how much citizens trust their country's public authorities) but also in the opposite direction (how much public authorities trust their citizens) (Bouckaert, 2012).

Operational implications.

   1) Governing authorities play an important role in sustaining participation.

Some authors have associated Citizen Engagement with the capacity of Public Administrations to involve their citizens (Keeter et al., 2002; Marlowe and Arrington-Marlowe, 2005; Yang and Callahan, 2007), and the results have confirmed the influence of policymakers in activating citizen engagement.

   2) It is necessary to differentiate the promotion of social behaviour from the promotion of political behaviour.

Moreover, it is necessary to assert the relevance of public policies that encourage citizens to engage in social and supportive behaviour, and that pursue the welfare of the community, disregarding partisan conflicts, or at least political influence. In this sense, it can be confirmed that the creation of new solutions for public issues that involve citizens and that contribute to improving the quality of public services is of great importance.

   3) In order to implement public policies that encourage Citizen Engagement, it is necessary to have corresponding efforts that focus on communication

Policies for promoting Citizen Engagement require communication aimed at developing a perception among the participating public of governmental behaviour that is more committed to citizen involvement. It has been stated throughout this article that Citizen Engagement is influenced by the exchange of information between Administration and the public, and on several occasions we have re-stated the view that is extensively described in the literature that a citizen who is informed about politics will participate in public life more actively and with more awareness than one who is not. Information and communication are fundamentally relevant in activating engagement.

8. Limitations and discussion

One of the limitations of this research is that the analysis is limited to the variables proposed, yet we are aware that these are not the only ones that exist. We want to emphasize that due to the lack of data for the specific year of study, we understand that there may be gaps in the data, and that reviews of other concepts related to public institutions are missing.

Regarding possible discussions that might result from this research, a proposal for investigation would be to study the role that communication could play in managing an Engagement Commitment. In this regard, the following ideas have been provided:

– Communication based more on dialogue between the actors that may be involved in solidarity-based forms of co-pro-duction will help to increase social behaviour;

– More effective communication regarding management results could encourage citizens to trust more in Public Administration, and consequently, to be more involved in such administration;

– Communication that is more effective could help to shape more well-informed citizens, who would therefore have greater awareness of the need to participate in public life;

– Bi-directional communication is capable of contributing to improvement in the level of "Receptivity", making citizens believe that their involvement in public life makes logical sense, that authorities take their involvement into consideration, and that the result will be a beneficial impact on the community.

In short, communication management can contribute to increasing the level of each of the factors that compose Citizen Engagement, and consequently, it can be concluded that communication is a tool that can engender Citizen Engagement.

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6   Document resulting from the Project "Diseño de un sistema de creación y gestión del conocimiento, desarrollo del capital intelectual de la Administración Pública: creación de redes de conocimiento para la mejora de la eficacia de las Administraciones Públicas en la sociedad de la información" with the support from the Ministry of Science and Technology, year 2000, National Plan for the Information Society, under the "Programme for the Promotion of Technological Innovation" (PROFIT) Call.

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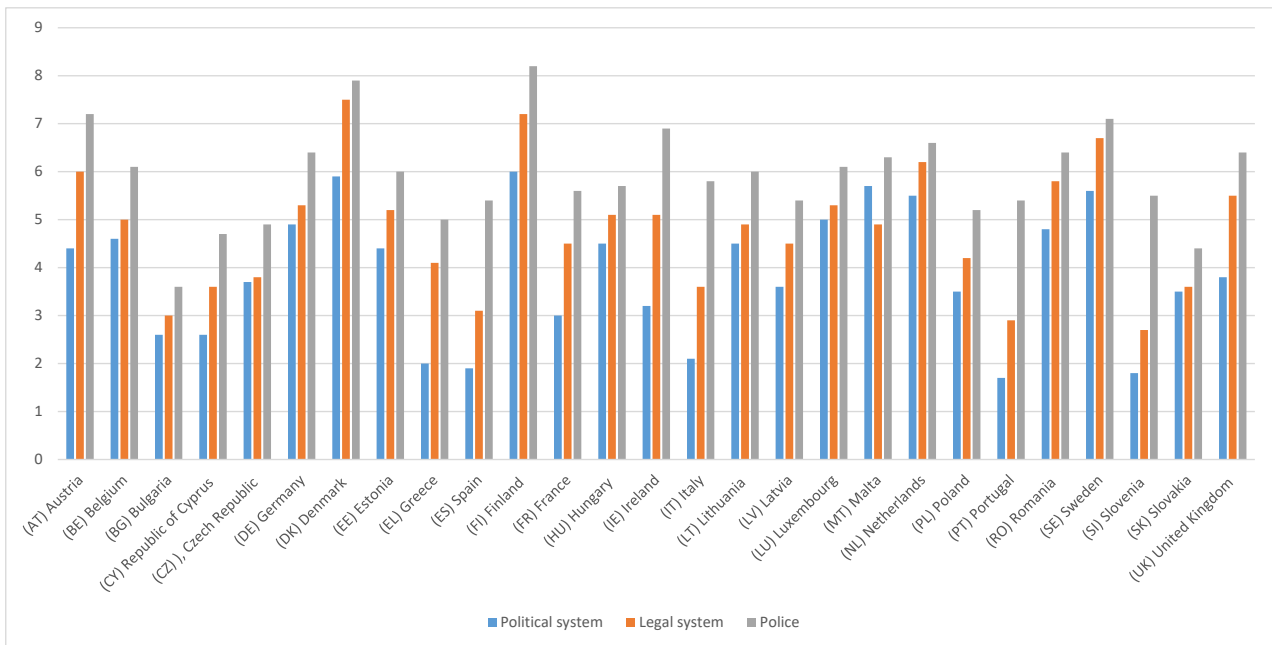
10. Annexes
Annex 1. Data from the polls consulted

Results of the variables of Factor 1 – "Trust" in public institutions and political parties by country
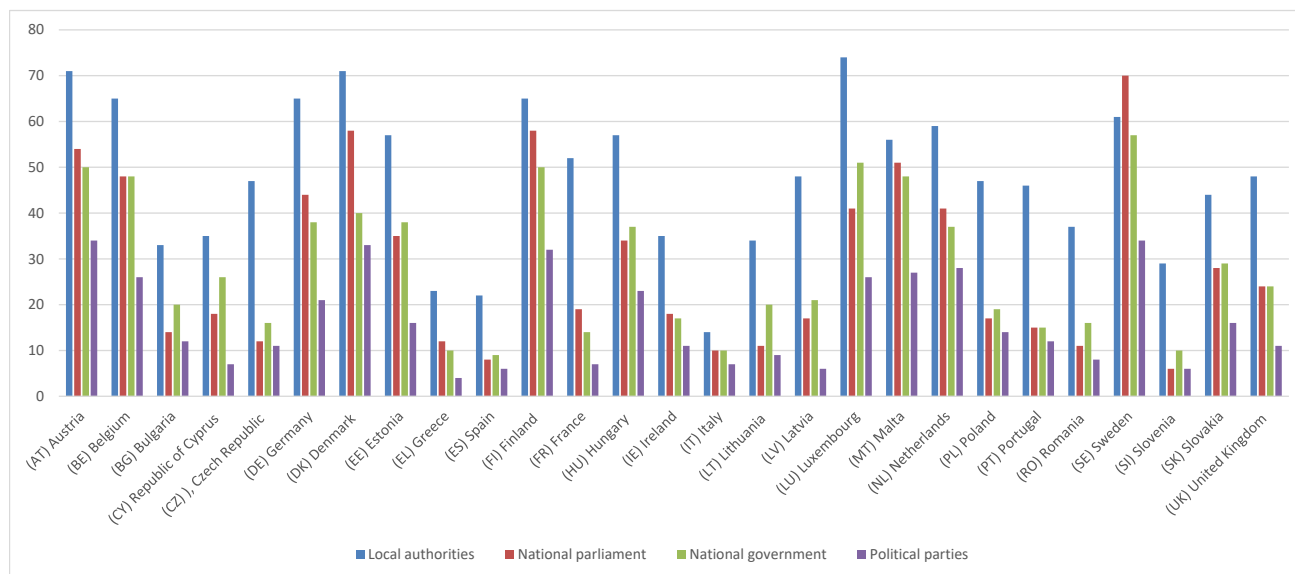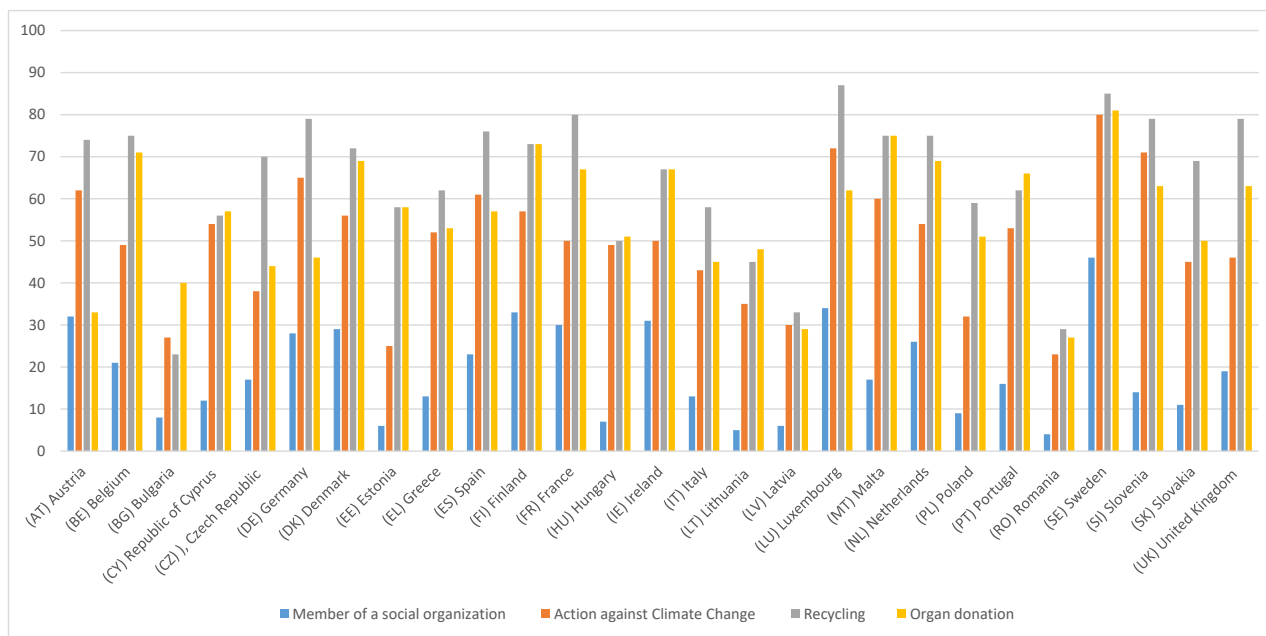

Source: created by the author

Results of the variables of Factor 1 – "Trust" in public institutions and political parties by country
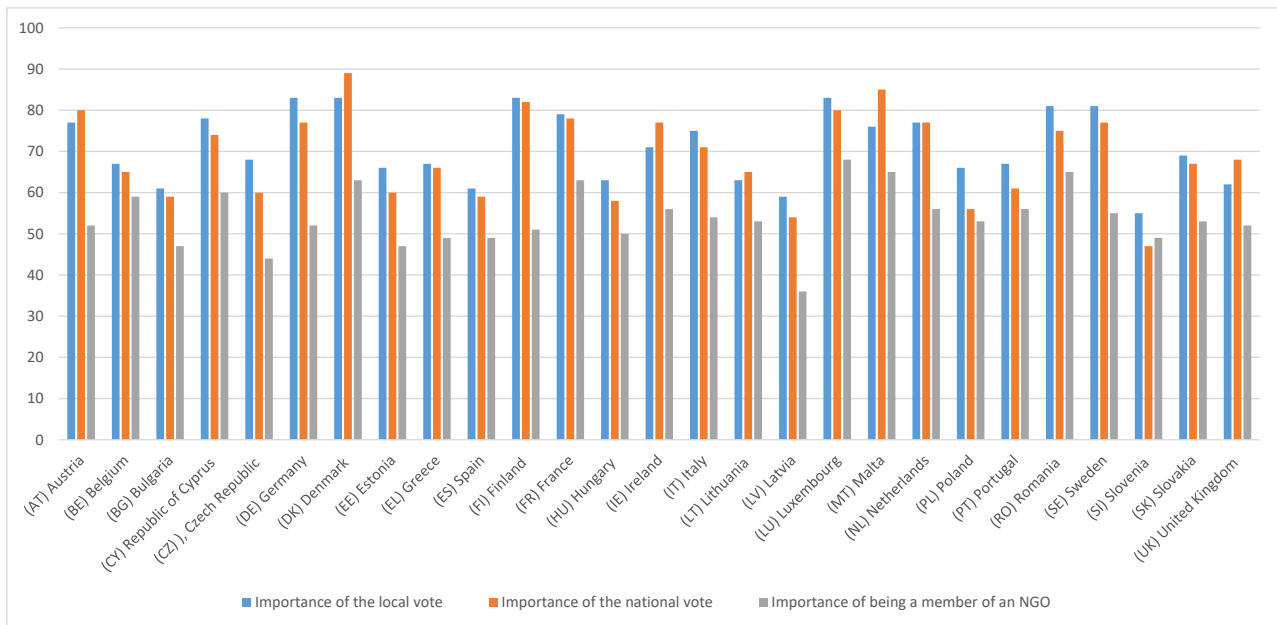

Source: created by the author

Results of the variables of Factor 2 - "Social behaviour" by country
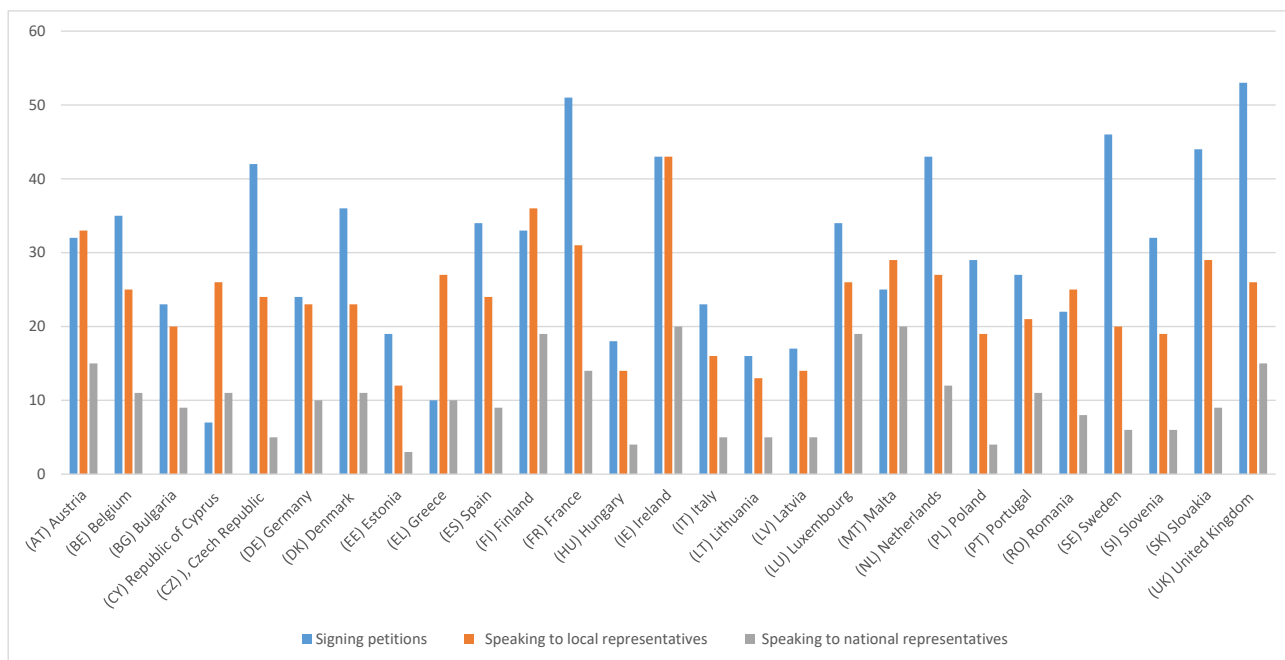

Source: created by the author

Results of the variables of Factor 3 "Receptivity" by country

Source: created by the author

Results of the variables of Factor 4 "Political behaviour" by country

Source: created by the author

Annex 2. Factor analysis results

	1	2	3	4
Trust in the Political System	0.925	-0.025	0.202	0.044
Trust in Parliament	0.882	0.369	0.173	0.036
Trust in the Legal System	0.877	-0.041	0.258	0.231
Trust in Political Parties	0.876	0.333	0.148	0.047
Trust in Government	0.873	0.315	0.155	-0.081
Trust in Local Authorities	0.851	0.227	0.078	0.092
Trust in the Police	0.701	0.153	0.282	0.316
Action against climate change	0.163	0.872	0.221	0.057
Recycling	0.190	0.838	0.116	0.345
Organ donation	0.182	0.753	0.171	0.159
Being a member of a social-economic organization	0.407	0.624	0.285	0.459
Effectiveness of being an NGO member	0.128	0.254	0.819	-0.063
Effectiveness of the national vote	0.492	0.126	0.791	0.222
Effectiveness of the local vote	0.492	0.122	0.748	0.056
Speaking to national representatives	0.128	0.262	0.551	0.601
Speaking to local representatives	0.150	0.386	-0.077	0.772
Signing a petition	-0.002	0.155	0.565	0.712
	7	4	3	3

Annex 3. Total variance presented with analysis of the main components

Factor	Singular initial values			Extraction sums of squared loadings			Rotation sums of square loadings		
	Total	% of variance	% accumulated	Total	% of variance	% accumulated	Total	% of variance	% accumulated
1	8.964	52.727	52.727	8.964	52.727	52.727	5.950	35.003	35.003
2	2.553	15.018	67.745	2.553	15.018	67.745	3.180	18.708	53.711
3	1.654	9.727	77.472	1.654	9.727	77.472	3.048	17.927	71.639
4	**.950**	**5.585**	**83.058**	**.950**	**5.585**	**83.058**	**1.941**	**11.419**	**83.058**
5	.688	4.045	87.102						
6	.654	3.847	90.949						
7	.541	3.185	94.134						
8	.268	1.575	95.709						
9	.184	1.083	96.793						
10	.154	.907	97.699						
11	.122	.716	98.415						
12	.096	.566	98.980						
13	.058	.340	99.320						
14	.053	.314	99.634						
15	.033	.195	99.829						
16	.021	.121	99.950						
17	.008	.050	100.000						