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Oxford University Study connects Social Inequality to EU Support in Central and Eastern Europe

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A new report reveals citizens in new EU member states are less likely to support the EU if they perceive or experience unfair societal access and market opportunities. In a forthcoming publication at the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Dr. Matthew Loveless, a post-doctoral researcher for the EUREQUAL project at Oxford University, analyzes support for the EU in the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe. The findings show that underlying political and economic values, positive experiences with democracy and market economy, and perceptions of social inequality correlate with support for the EU.

Citizens who held strong preferences for democracy and market economy were more likely to perceive the EU as having been helpful and supportive of their country. In addition, citizens reporting positive experiences with democracy and market economy were more likely to state positive views of membership. The most noteworthy finding, according to Dr. Loveless, is that perceptions of social inequality, such as access to healthcare, also may influence EU support. Citizens who perceive a great deal of social inequality were less likely to support the EU, even if they have strong underlying values and positive experiences with democracy and market economy.

The results for the report came from mass public surveys conducted in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia in 2007.

EUREQUAL is the acronym for 'Social Inequality and Why it Matters for the Economic and Democratic Development of Europe and its Citizens: Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective.' The fundamental aim of the EUREQUAL project is to create and disseminate knowledge that will facilitate the achievement of greater social equality between individuals, social cohesiveness in societies, democratic and market development, and the broader integration of Europe. EUREQUAL is funded by the EU Commission's 6th Framework Programme and is based at the University of Oxford, under the direction of Professors Stephen Whitefield and Geoffrey Evans and involvement from a consortium of 11 European universities and research institutes.

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If you would like more information on this topic, please contact Prof. Stephen Whitefield. You may find additional information at <http://eurequal.politics.ox.ac.uk/>.