

THE ROMANIANS' SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF NATO AND EU

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There is a wide spread idea nowadays (according to European level surveys and assertions) saying that Romanians show the highest sympathy (from all EU candidate countries) for the European and NATO integration processes because they are among the poorer populations on the continent. We thus tried, first of all, to see whether we could actually find a link between the high support for the integration process and the low economic status of Romanians. At the same time, we attempted to analyze the relationship between this high support and the Romanians' level of information concerning the two institution we are trying to be a part of: The European Union and NATO. The paper will try to show in what way and with what intensity is the Romanians attitude towards NATO and EU influenced by poverty and by their knowledge about these two international organizations. The first part of this research is a secondary analysis of a prestigious biannual national-level survey whereas the second part consists of a research concerning NATO and EU social representations among students.

First Part

Secondary Analysis on Public Opinion Barometer October, 2002

Introduction

"Integration" has been a very fashionable word in the last five or six years, in Romania. Although there is a lot of public debate concerning this subject, public opinion surveys show that Romanians have a low information level when it comes to NATO and EU. They express their sympathy for different international structures but they do not know – for instance – what the EU institutions are or what the NATO mission is. Moreover, they are not informed about what the process of "integration" consists of - from a military or economical point of view. International public opinion surveys also show that Romanians' support for "integration politics" has increased in the last few years, while decreasing in the other European countries. How can this phenomenon be explained? Could there be a link between the Romanians' positive attitude towards integration politics (NB: the highest in Europe) and their low welfare level, their economic expectations? Can we rightfully assume that behind this positive attitude belies in fact the strive for economic benefits?

In order to answer to these questions and to reveal some attitude patterns among regular people, we chose to conduct a secondary analysis on a national bi-annual survey: The Public Opinion Barometer (POB). Ever since 1994, POB is a "traditional" survey led by the most prestigious research institutes in Romania, with Open Society Foundation support. The survey is based on an

omnibus questionnaire and it includes social, political and economical items, as well as questions concerning attitudes, values and every-day aspects of people's lives. More recently, in order to reflect the integration process, POB has taken into consideration people's attitudes towards NATO and EU. We thus developed our secondary analysis on the Public Opinion Barometer issue of October, 2002.

POB Methodology

POB is based on a variable sample that has increased (since the year 2000) from 1200 to approximately 2200 individuals. Consequently, the number of questionnaire items and the overall duration of the interviews has also increased (the duration of one interview is about 60 minutes now). In 1995, the sampling schema has been standardized making data comparison possible. The sample is based on four stratum criteria: Romanian cultural area (18 categories); type of residential area (urban/rural); size of urban area (4 categories) and respectively level of rural area development (3 categories). POB data is representative for the Romanian population of over 18 years of age with a sample error of +/- 2, 3%.

Hypothesis

We will analyze Romanians' opinions about NATO and EU in relation to: (1) the life standard and the expectations related to personal welfare, (2) the level of information about NATO and EU.

We presume that the relation between the life standard and the level of information (as independent variables) - on one hand, and the individual opinions about NATO and EU (as dependent variable) - on the other, is mediated by the perceived economical situation of the individual himself, of the group he belongs to and of his country. In other words, the attitude towards NATO and EU is influenced: (1) in what the economic dimension is concerned: by the perceived welfare situation of the individual, of the group he belongs to (neighbors, relatives, friends) and of the country (the general economic situation); (2) in what the informational dimension is concerned: by the informational level in general, and also by the sources of information (personal sources, group sources or media sources).

We also assume - in a broader sense - that NATO / EU social representations are mainly confused (not clearly distinctive in individuals minds). It is highly probable that individuals have a positive image on all kinds of "western institutions" and they accept them uncritically as being "better" or "welfare providing".

First of all we will analyze in what way does the perceived / real *life standard* influence individual's opinion about NATO and EU.

Life standard

Comparative surveys among certain European countries (ex. *The Eurobarometer* in the candidate countries, research initiated by The European Commission) show that Romanians score highest when it comes to positive perception and trust investment in the European Union: 80 % declare that EU is “good”, 70% have a positive image towards EU, 74% trust EU¹. At the same time (and not surprisingly, some would argue), the Romanian life standard is one of the lowest in Europe: the annual income per capita is about 1500 euros, compared to 3170 euros - the average individual annual income in other candidate countries². Therefore, we cannot find Gunter Verheugen³’s declaration related to Eurobarometer results surprising: “*most of the inhabitants of the candidate countries support the integration process of their country in the EU and they want to enjoy the benefits of this integration in their daily life*”⁴. At this point, it is important to notice and stress words such as “benefits” and “daily life” because public debate in Romania also claims that Romanians’ image of NATO and EU is less related to geo-strategical and macro-economic factors and more to concrete and daily benefits which seem to predominate. In other words a major part of public opinion analysts in Romania argue that the Romanians’ positive image of NATO and EU is strictly related to personal economic advantages (this means that the individual dimension of perception would prevail over the national dimension).

In order to test these presumptions we used POB October 2002 data, and we analyzed subjective and objective indicators of the Romanians’ life standard: (1) the individuals’ perception of their own life standard today and also compared to 1989; (2) the individuals’ perception of their life standard as compared to their neighbors, (3) how individuals think that “things are going on in our country” and how they “appreciate – in general - the lives of people living in Romania”; (4) the average individual income, as declared by the respondents; (5) the degree of housing comfort (number of rooms, the presence of hot water and / or heating in the houses and so on).

Data Analysis

For methodological reasons we divided the POB sample in two groups of subjects, using as criteria the answer to the following questions: “In general, your opinion about EU is “very bad”, “bad”, “good” or “very good”?” and “In general, your opinion about NATO is “very bad”, “bad”, “good” or “very good”?”. We made a distinction between the subjects who had a rather a

¹ The data was collected using a questionnaire realized around Europe, with a sample of 12000 individuals, in October, 2001 (<http://europa.eu.int>).

² source: The European Commission, 1998.

³ the commissar for European enlargement

⁴ *apud*. Gilles Ferreol (2002). “The Central and Eastern European Countries in front of European Union Enlargement: Stakes and Perspectives”; in Adrian Neculau (coord.). *Us and Europe*. Iasi: Polirom.

positive opinion about NATO/EU (those whose answer was either “good” or “very good”) and the subjects who had a rather negative opinion about NATO/EU (those whose answer was either “bad” or “very bad”). To simplify the analysis we named the first group – group A and the last one – group B. Taking into account the above-mentioned distinction, we will try to correlate the Romanians’ opinions about NATO/EU to their life standard (on the three dimensions that we have discussed above: personal, group and national dimension).

For the **first dimension** – the personal one – we considered questions concerning: 1) how the respondents appreciated their own life, their life standard, their money, their general income, their financial situation, as compared to the past, but also to the future; 2) their objective life standard, indicators revealing the real family income in the last month, housing comfort etc.; 3) how they perceived the benefits of the integration (having in view their chances of getting a job, of getting paid etc.)

Table 1 shows the results of a comparative analysis on both considered groups (A and B) in relation to their perceived life standard. Subjects from group B perceived their own economical situation more negatively, were more unsatisfied with their lives, more pessimistic than the others about their future and, objectively speaking, poorer. It is interesting to note that even though individuals from group B admitted (but in less proportion than those from group A) that their personal wages would probably grow after the EU integration, they tended to evaluate the effects of the “integration process” on their personal life more *negatively* than the others.

Table 1. The results of the comparative analysis among groups of people with positive opinions about UE (group A) and respectively negative opinions about UE (group B).

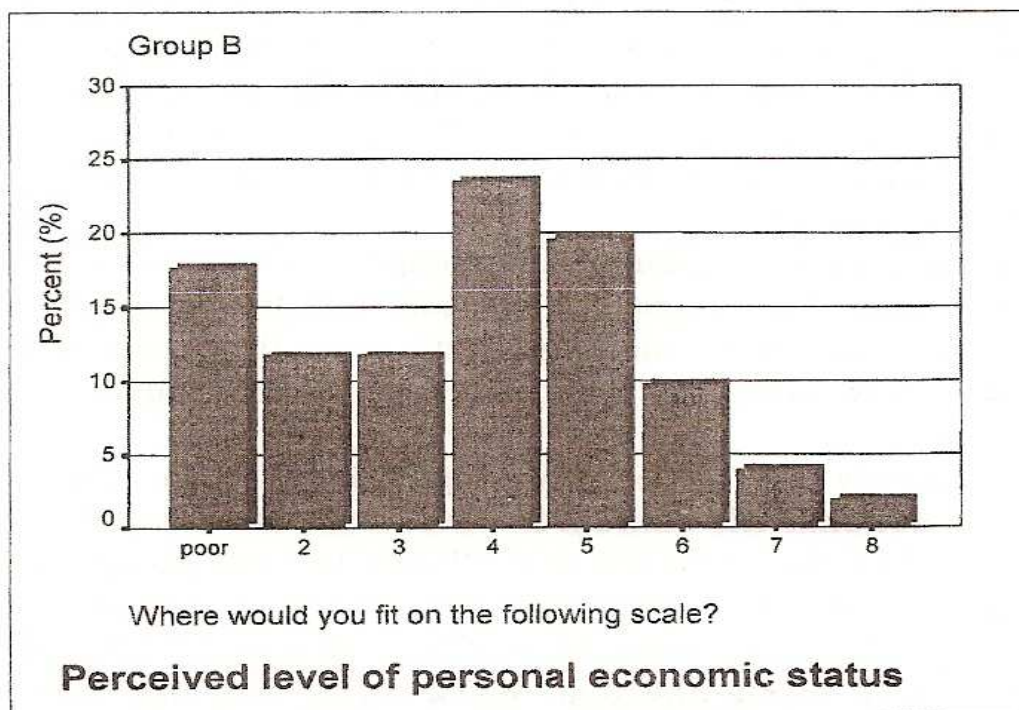
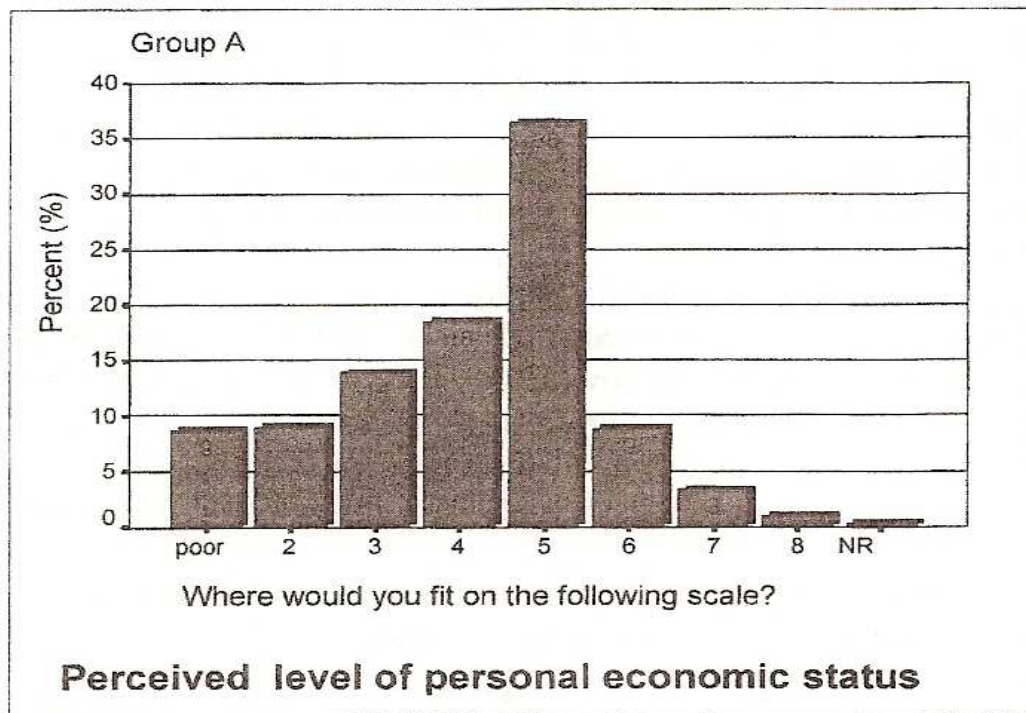
	Question POB October 2002	Group A*		Group B	
Perceived life standard	How satisfied are you with the way you live?	↓	61,6 %	↓	80,4 %
		↑	37,6 %	↑	19,6 %

*In order to simplify the data interpretation we used the sign “↓”, for the negative answers (such as „totally unsatisfied”, „not so satisfied”, „worse”, „will decrease”, „negative effects”); the sign “↔” for neutral answers (such as “will be the same” “neither satisfied, or unsatisfied”, “will not grow” and “nor will it increase or decrease”) and the sign “↑” for the positive answers (such as „very satisfied”, „satisfied”, „better”, „positive effects”, „will increase”).

	Question POB October 2002	Group A *		Group B	
	How is your life now, as compared to one year ago?	↓ ↔ ↑	31 % 48,6 % 20,1 %	↓ ↔ ↑	62,7 % 21,6 % 15,7 %
	How do you think you will live in one year's time?	↓ ↔ ↑	19,5 % 34,8 % 38,2 %	↓ ↔ ↑	43,1 % 25,5 % 17,6 %
	Is your life standard better, worse or the same as in 1989?	↓ ↔ ↑	41,2 % 27,7 % 29 %	↓ ↔ ↑	66,7 % 17,6 % 15,7 %
	How satisfied are you with the money you earn?	↓ ↑	74,7 % 24,5 %	↓ ↑	87,2 % 13,8 %
Integration benefits perception	When Romania will enter the EU, do you think that your income and that of your family will...	↓ ↔ ↑	4,1 % 51,7 % 34 %	↓ ↔ ↑	29,4 % 9,8 % 49 %
	When Romania will enter the EU, do you think that your chances to find a job will...	↓ ↔ ↑	4,6 % 32,9 % 17,2 %	↓ ↔ ↑	25,5 % 5,9 % 23,5 %
	What kind of effects do you think the EU integration will have on yourself?	↓ ↔ ↑	3,4 % 13,3 % 79,4 %	↓ ↔ ↑	37,3 % 39,2 % 17,6 %

We also found the answers' distribution to the following question extremely revealing: "In all societies there are people who define themselves as being poor and others who define themselves as being rich. Where would you fit on the following scale? – from 1 = "poor" to 10 = "rich". Nobody from group A (those with positive opinions about NATO / EU) nor from group B (those with negative opinions about NATO / EU) declared to be "rich" so there are practically no "9" and "10" values on the graphic. Those from group B tended to evaluate themselves as being poorer than those belonging to group A, and, as we can see in *Graphic 1*, there are more answers cumulated under the no. "5" value. We should also note the high interest of the respondents in the above-mentioned topic (questions related to poverty), shown by a very small percentage of missing values (non-answers) in group A and inexistent missing

values in group B. This probably shows that this is a topic that people are concerned about and think of very often, since they were eager to answer.



Graphic 1. The perceived level of economic status: Group A and Group B.

Objective indicators sustain the same subjective perception of personal life standard. Consequently, 47,1% of respondents from group B as compared to only 35,9% respondents from group A, don't have a bathroom and 52,9% from B group (as compared to 41,4% from A group) don't have a toilet in their houses. Furthermore, only 15, 7% from group B (27, 6% from group A) have heating in their houses and 17, 6 % from group B (28% from group A) have warm water. At the same time, the average income per capita is lower in group B (approximately 50 euros per month) as compared to group A (approximately 70 euros per month).

In conclusion, on the personal welfare dimension, the respondents who considered themselves as being poor and who actually *are* poorer are also those who have more negative opinions towards NATO / EU and who think more about the negative effects of the "integration process". All of this comes to contradict the idea that Romanians have a more positive image about NATO / EU just *because* they imagine major changes in their personal life standard after the "integration".

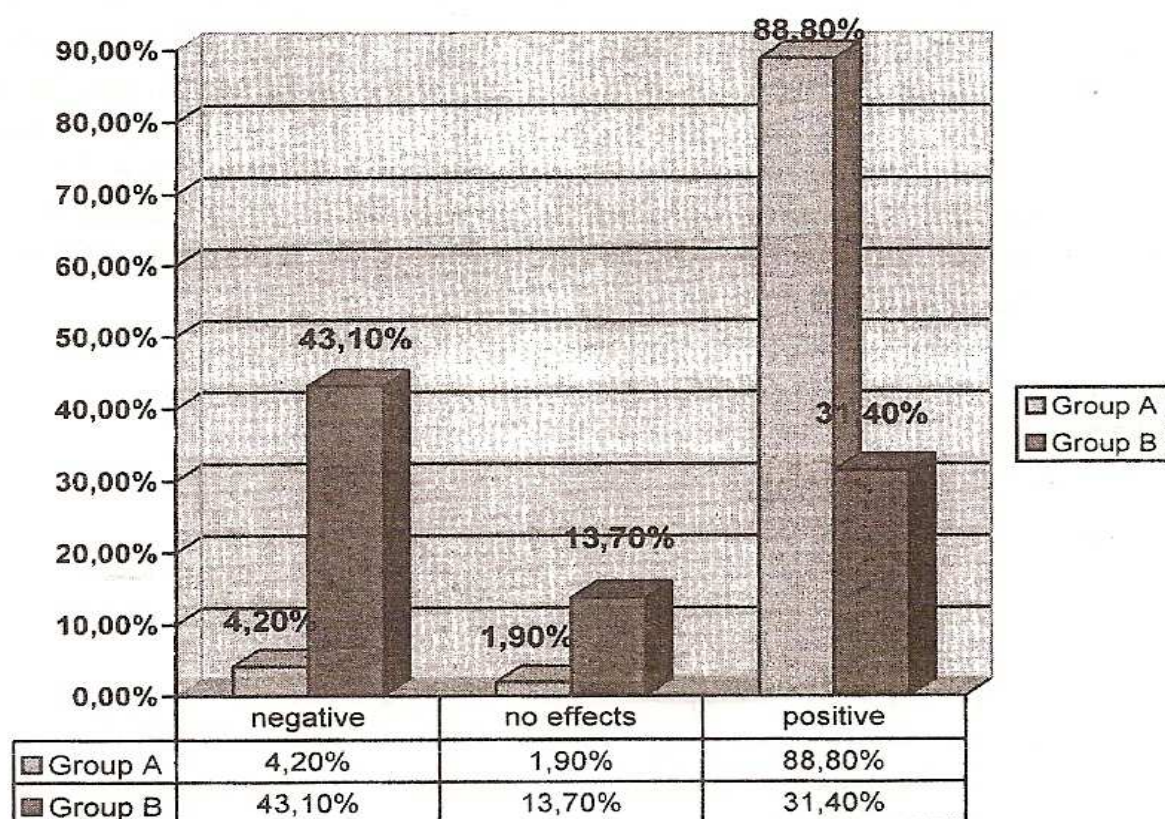
In order to analyze the **group dimension** of the life standard perception, we took into consideration the following questions: "How is the life of the people from your town/village now as compared to one year ago?" and "Is your present life standard better, worse or similar to the one of your neighbors and your friends?" The distribution of the answers to these questions was also different among group B and group A: 62, 75% of the respondents from group B (and only 39,1% from group A) considered that in their town/village, people's lives became worse than last year. And 54, 9% from group B (only 27, 85 % from group A) evaluated their personal life standards as being worse than those of their neighbors and friends.

The differences between group A and group B are more significant on the personal dimension than on the group dimension: thus the pessimists are more pessimistic and the optimists are more optimistic when they evaluate their own economic situation than when they evaluate a more general situation (using the group as an anchor).

We can identify the same answering pattern when discussing the perception of the **national life standard**. Those with more negative opinions about NATO and EU also consider that "things are not going well in the country" and appreciate that people's life standard has decreased since 1989. About 86 % from group B (as compared to 50 % from group A) considered that Romania is going in a wrong direction. When saying this, they admitted that they were thinking about the life standard and the unemployment rate. Also 66, 7% of group B (44% of group A) considered that the life standard in the country had decreased compared to one year ago. The pessimists are also pessimistic when it comes to the future. No less than 35,3% from group B (9,9 % from group A) appreciated that the economic situation of the country would be worse

in the future and no more than 17.6% from group B (41,8% - group A) appreciated that the economic situation of the country would improve in the future.

Concerning the effects of the European integration on Romania, *Graphic 2* shows the differences between group A and group B. We can notice that only 4,2% from group A considered that European integration would bring “only negative effects” or “more negative than positive effects” on the country, while 43,1% of the respondents from group B gave the same answers.

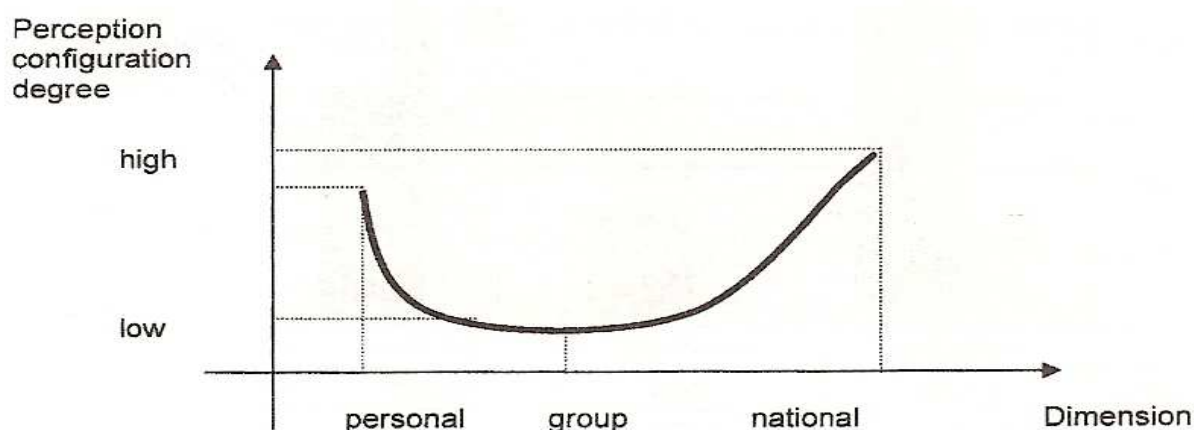


Graphic 2. The perceived effects of EU integration on the country

It seems that the benefits of NATO integration are perceived to be more relevant on the *national level*, while those of EU integration on the *personal level*. Those who have positive opinions towards NATO / EU are “less worried” about a possible terrorist attack on Romania (only 35,1% from group A declared they were “worried” and “very worried” while 66,7% from group B declared they were “worried” and “very worried”). At the same time, respondents from group A are more confident that NATO would help Romania in a possible attack, than respondents from group B (91,1% from group A believe that NATO would “certainly” or “probably” intervene while only 51% from group B believe the same thing). We can say that those who have positive opinions about

NATO / UE are generally more optimistic, less worried about a possible terrorist attack and take more into consideration the benefits of “integration”. Conversely, those who have negative opinions towards NATO/EU are generally more pessimistic, less confident, more worried about possible terrorist attacks and stress more the disadvantages of the integration processes.

Analyzing all three dimensions of the perceived life standard: personal level, group level and national level, in relation with opinions about NATO and EU, we can say that the personal and national economic dimensions are more clearly structured on people minds, as compared to the group dimension. More precisely the missing values on questions related to personal and national dimensions are lower (people are used to evaluate things on these dimensions). Similarly (as we noted before), the differences between group A and group B are more evident on the personal and national dimensions (they can be seen as better predictors for positive/ negative evaluations towards NATO and EU). We can consider that the degree of perception configuration is different on these three dimensions (as well as its influence) and that its representation is “U”-shaped, like in the graphic below.



Graphic 3. The influence of personal, group and national economic dimension in the way people evaluate EU and NATO.

Halo Effect: general positive or general negative perception

In conclusion we can make two assertions. On one hand - that there is a relation between life standard (real or perceived) and individual opinions towards NATO / EU (ex. individuals with a high life standard also have more positive opinions about NATO / EU). But the nature of this relation is not simple, nor direct. The influence of the life standard on individual opinion is differentiated on three levels: personal, group and national economic level; we have also proved that personal and national economic levels are more structured – being, at the same time, better predictors in explaining opinion distribution

about NATO and EU. This means that our initial hypothesis was partially confirmed.

On the other hand, individuals who consider themselves as being less poor tend to be more optimistic about "integration" and to give more credit to international structures. Those who perceived themselves as being poorer are more skeptical in what the "integration process" is concerned, and more pessimistic regarding the future of the country. We can talk about a generalized optimism and also about a generalized pessimism, about a *halo effect*: the optimism/pessimism on one dimension extends over the other dimensions and tends to become a life strategy or approach.

Information level

In this part of our research we will try to define the relationship between the level of information and the Romanian's declared attitude towards NATO / EU. We will start by making a methodological distinction between the self-declared level of information and the real level of information with regard to NATO and EU. We based our analysis on the self-declared level of information as presented by the following POB question: "Using a scale from 1 to 10, how informed do you feel about EU respectively NATO?" After that we took into consideration some quantitative indicators: the intensity of media exposure (press, radio, TV) and the intensity of the individual's contacts with other countries. We presumed that the level of information about NATO and EU increased if the individuals were more exposed to media and if they had some direct or indirect contacts with other countries (either by travelling, working or just by having relatives or friends abroad).

While trying to determine the nature of the above-mentioned relationship (level of information -- individuals opinion about NATO / EU), we will proceed to a differentiated analysis as in the previous section of this research. We used the same methodological separation between group A (those who have a rather positive opinion towards NATO and EU) and group B (those who have a rather negative opinion towards NATO and EU). Also for methodological reasons we re-coded the variables to the following questions: "In Romania some people know a lot of things about UE, its policies and institutions, whereas others don't know anything. Where do you find yourself on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 = "I don't know anything about EU" and 10 = "I know everything about EU" and "In Romania some people know a lot of things about NATO, its policies and institutions, whereas others don't know anything. Where would you fit on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 = "I don't know anything about NATO" and 10 = "I know everything about NATO". We transformed this 10-point scale in a 5-point simplified one: (1) low level of information, (2) low to medium level of

information, (3) medium level of information, (4) medium to high level of information, (5) high level of information.

The analysis cross-tables with the information level and the opinion (rather positive/negative) about NATO and EU can be found below. The *chi square* test was significant for $p=0,000$ - so we are entitled to claim that there is a relation between the self-declared level of information and the opinion towards NATO and EU.

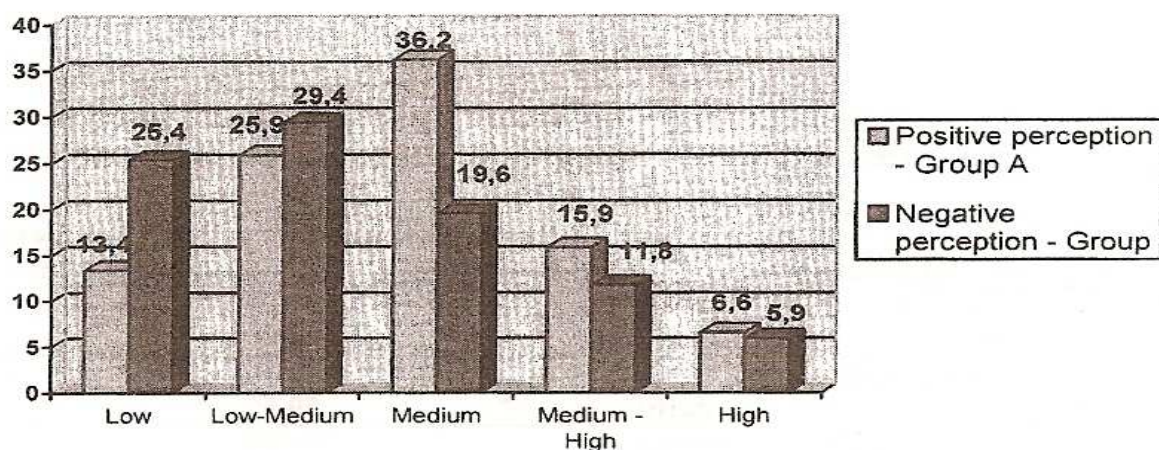
Table 2. The relation between the declared level of information concerning EU and opinions about EU

		Level of information concerning EU					Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	
EU Opinion	Negative	39	36	23	13	9	120
	Positive	242	420	569	247	104	1582
Total		281	456	592	260	113	1702

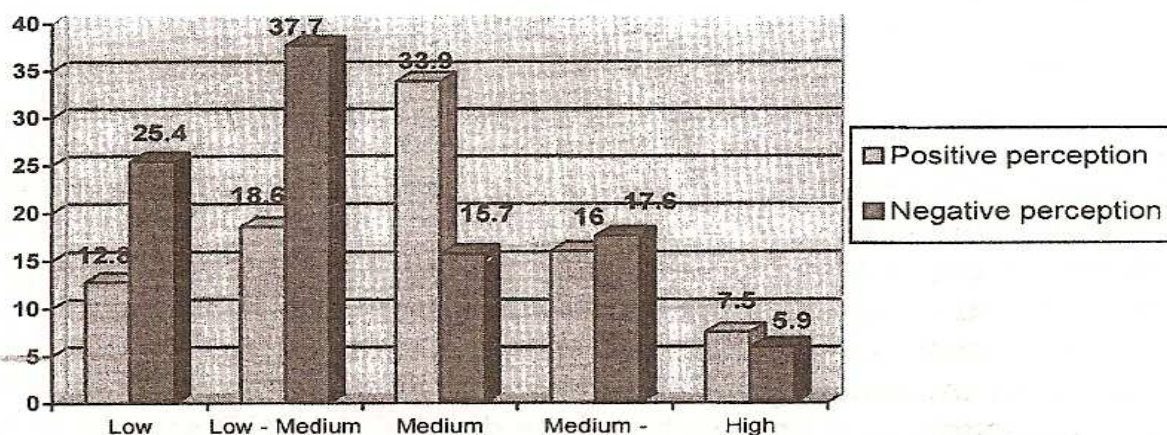
Table 3. The relation between the declared level of information concerning NATO and opinions about NATO

		Level of information concerning NATO					Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	
NATO Opinion	Negative	43	30	31	24	6	134
	Positive	251	473	527	245	119	1615
Total		294	503	558	269	125	1749

We can ask ourselves what kind of relation is there between the level of information and opinions towards NATO/EU. We can notice, from *Graphic 4*, that the respondents who had negative opinions about NATO / EU also had lower levels of information than those with positive opinions.



Graphic 4. EU : Level of Information



Graphic 5. NATO: Level of information

It is interesting to see that the level of information concerning NATO seems to be higher than the one concerning EU, for both groups (A and B). Thus 23,5% from both group A and B had a higher-than-the-average information level about NATO; 22,55 % from group A and 17,7% from group B had a higher-than-the-average information level about EU.

These assumptions are confirmed by quantitative indicators as well: individuals from group A read the newspapers more often, watch more television and listen more to the radio than individuals from group B. The table below shows the quantitative indicators that we analyzed. In order to better emphasize the differences between the two groups we will only show the polar answers: "daily" and "never", excluding moderate answers such as: "few times per week", "few times per month", "less than once per month".

Table 4. The relation between opinions about NATO/EU and objective indicators of informational level

How often		Positive perception NATO / UE	Negative perception NATO / UE
...do you read the newspapers?	never	18,4%	39,2%
	daily	23,8%	17,6%
... do you listen to the radio?	never	13,5%	27,5%
	daily	59 %	33,3%
... do you watch TV?	never	4,5%	19,6%
	daily	80,5%	54,9%

At the same time, individuals from group A seem to be much more informed about Romania's request to become a NATO⁵ and EU member. Only 1,5% and respectively 1,6% from group A had never heard about this request, as compared to 7,8% and respectively 9,8 % from group B.

When we focused on "international contacts" we found that those with a positive image towards NATO / EU have also traveled or worked abroad more extensively than the others (36, 6% - compared to 33,3%); the same thing happened with people who declared that they had relatives abroad (25,7% from group A - compared to 21,6% from group B). We can see that in this case the differences are not so obvious (only aprox. 3-4 %) so we can presume that "international contacts" is not such a strong predictor for our analysis.

We continue with a more detailed analysis on the way the level of information influences people's opinion towards NATO and EU. We used the same methodological approach and we divided the POB sample in three groups using the predicted level of information as separation criteria. We thus identified three major groups: (1) individuals with a low information level, (2) individuals with a medium information level and (3) individuals with a high information level. Consequently, we tried to determine the differences between these three groups in what their EU and NATO evaluation is concerned. We selected six items (from the POB questionnaire) concerning the effects of integration for the EU evaluation and we analyzed the differences among these three groups. Some of the items are related to the perceived effects on the individuals' personal life (*personal dimension*) and the others to the perceived effects on a national level (*national dimension*).

⁵ On the time the data have been collected Romania wasn't yet invited to join NATO .

Table 5. The difference between groups (with low, medium and high level of information) concerning perceived effects of EU integration

Effects of EU integration (Questions from POB – October 2002)	Dimension
What kind of effects do you think that Romanian EU integration will have on yourself ?	<i>Personal (P)</i>
What kind of effects do you think that Romanian EU integration will have on the country ?	<i>National (N)</i>
Do you believe that after Romanian EU integration, the population income will increase, decrease or be the same?	<i>National (N)</i>
Do you believe that after Romanian EU integration, your personal income and that of your family will increase, decrease or be the same?	<i>Personal (P)</i>
Do you believe that after Romanian EU integration, the unemployment rate will become higher, lower or be the same?	<i>National (N)</i>
Do you believe that after Romanian EU integration, your chances of finding a job will increase, decrease or be the same?	<i>Personal (P)</i>

We tried to see which one of the two (personal or national) is the prevailing dimension for each group (with low, medium or high information level) considering the NATO / EU evaluation. In other words, which one of these groups is concerned more with the personal benefits and which one is concerned more with the national benefits.

**Table 6. Predominant dimension of evaluation
- groups with different levels of information**

	Low information group	Medium information group	High information group
Predominant dimension	-	P / N	P

Individuals with a low information level considered that EU integration would be accompanied by the increase of Romanians' incomes but it would have negative effects on the country. So the perception of UE is confused among individuals from this group and we could not find a predominant dimension. We could argue that they have a so-called "false negative non-attitude" (P. Converse, 1964) - assertion also sustained by the higher number of missing values in this group.

Respondents from the second group (with a medium level of information) declared in a higher degree that EU integration would be accompanied by positive effects on a national level, especially on the unemployment rate and on the population incomes. We can thus find both dimensions of evaluation in this

case (personal and national, P/N). Compared with the low information group, the medium information group proved more structured and also more positive evaluations towards EU.

The third group, with the high level of information, offered the most complex evaluation on the integration process. Individuals here considered that the effects of the "integration" would be almost zero on a national level, the unemployment rate would be the same, the population incomes would not grow or even will decrease, that the personal incomes would be the same but, in general, the effects on Romanians' personal lives would be positive. We can therefore notice the predominance of the personal dimension (P), in a moderate positive way. People from this group considered in a higher proportion that the overall effects of European integration would have a more positive impact on their personal lives (86,9%) than on the country (national effects - 80,3%). The other groups considered that the integration process would rather bring benefits to the country than to their personal lives: 67,8%- national benefits, 57,6%- personal benefits, for the low information level group and 87,5% compared to 77,3% for the medium information level group.

For NATO evaluation we used some items from the POB questionnaire that could be differentiated on two dimensions: National (N) costs, National (N) benefits, as in the table below.

Table 7. The difference between groups (with low, medium and high level of information) concerning perceived effects of NATO integration

Effects of NATO integration (Questions from POB – October 2002)	Dimension
If Romania becomes a NATO member, do you believe that NATO will intervene if Romania is attacked by another country?	<i>National (N) – benefit</i>
How worried are you about terrorist attacks on Romanian territory?	<i>National (N) – cost</i>
Would you agree or not with NATO military drill on Romanian territory?	<i>National (N) – cost</i>
Would you agree or not with regular flights in the Romanian air space?	<i>National (N) – cost</i>
Would you agree or not with the settlement of NATO troops on Romanian territory?	<i>National (N) – cost</i>
Would you agree or not with the establishment of military bases on Romanian territory?	<i>National (N) – cost</i>
Would you agree or not with the sending of national troops in NATO missions?	<i>National (N) – cost</i>

When talking about NATO we have to particularly take into consideration the national dimension: costs and benefits that individuals perceive to apply to the country and only indirectly to their own personal life. After analyzing the data, differentiated on the three groups (with different levels of information), we can conclude that:

1. When the level of information grows, people are less worried about the possibility of a terrorist attack.
2. When the information level grows, individuals become more confident about NATO help in case that Romania would be attacked (91, 8% from those with a high information level and 73,7% from those with a low information level). We can presume that highly informed individuals are aware of Article 5 from the North Atlantic Treaty which claims that any attack of one of NATO members will be considered as a direct attack towards all members ("all for one and one for all").
3. When the information level grows, people approve more with the responsibilities that NATO membership claims for. "The establishment of military bases" on Romanian territory is the most unacceptable implication, and then follows "troops settlement", "military drill", "regular flights in national air space", and the last one "sending national troops in NATO missions"- this last "cost" being the most acceptable for Romanians.

The data analysis shows that NATO and EU evaluations are different in relation with the individual's level of information and in relation with personal and national dimension of perceived costs and benefits.

Conclusions

First of all, the relation presumed by the Eurobarometer: that positive opinions about EU are related to the low life standard of the respondents *is not confirmed* by our secondary analysis. On the contrary, the poorer the people are, the higher their negative opinions about EU and about NATO. When people consider themselves to be poor and actually *are* poor (according to objective indicators) - they do not show support for the integration process.

Generally speaking, Romanians evaluate effects of EU integration rather from a personal perspective and effects of NATO integration rather from a national perspective.

Second of all, there is a relation between the Romanians' level of information and their attitude towards NATO/EU. The better informed people are, the higher their support for NATO missions and EU integration; this relation is mediated by the evaluation of costs and benefits on a national and a personal level.

Second part

A Research Concerning NATO and EU Social Representations among Students

The data analysis presented above emphasizes the opinions distribution about NATO and EU and also some variables that determine such distribution: the information level and the life standard of the respondents. In this second part we would like to know more about the structure of the social representation about NATO and EU, namely, which are the common and the distinctive features of these social representations.

Social representations are images about reality, "the way people interpret and think about aspects of daily life" (A. Neculau, 1995). They are not only "images from our mind" but also the expression of norms and values of a specific group in a social-cultural context. There is a deep link between the individual who achieves the social representation and the object of the representation, in a way that individual gives interpretations to social reality (to represented reality) according to his cognitive and value patterns. So by analyzing social representations, we can conclude also about social reality and about the construction of reality in a subjective way.

Social Representation theory has been initiated by Serge Moscovici (1961) who re-considered an old concept proposed by Emile Durkheim (*Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives*, 1898 and *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, 1912). Then social representations studies were developed all over the world on two different directions: (1) one structural direction (Jean Claude Abric, 1984) who stresses more on the idea of "core" and "peripheral elements of social representation. The core is the rigid part of social representation according to what we establish the significance of the flexible one; (2) the theory of organized principles (W. Doise, 1986) which claimed that the opinions, the attitudes of peculiar groups are determined by some social regulations, that can be named "social representations". In our research we will rather prefer this second approach of social representations and we consider them more like maps of interpreting the reality, based on communication, common language and based on group experience.

We developed an explorative survey based on questionnaire among a group of 207 students from four faculties: Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, SNSPA, Bucharest (FCRP), Faculty of Political Science, SNSPA, Bucharest (SP), Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance (SAS), Bucharest, Faculty of Engineering University of Pitesti (MT). The data has been collected between 15 and 30 April 2003 and -for the sample homogeneity- all the respondents were students in first year of faculty.

Sample structure

Age: 18 - 20 years	166 students (80,1%)
21 - 24 years	35 students (40,0%)
over 24 years	3 students (1,4%)
missing values	3 students (1,4%)
Total	207 students (100%)
Sex: feminine	123 (59,7%)
masculine	83 (40,3%)
missing values	1 (0,4%)
Total	207 students (100%)
Place of residence: urban	185 (89,4%)
rural	22 (10,6%)
Total	207 students (100%)
Faculty: FCRP	58 (28%)
SP	53 (25%)
SAS	44 (21%)
MT	52 (25%)
Total	207 students (100%)

Our sample is not representative (compared to the overall Romanian student population), but we considered it an available sample based on which we were able to analyze the way social representations towards NATO and EU are structured.

In the research instrument (questionnaire) we used the *semantic differential*, first introduced by Charles E. Osgood, George J. Succi and Percy H. Tannenbaum (1957), a technique that has been standardized in social research. The Semantic differential allows us to emphasize the cognitive elements which structure individual's evaluations on some particular stimulus (in our case- NATO and EU). We used nine bi-polar scales, grouped on EPA (Evaluation, Potency, Activity) and we analyzed where the respondents placed NATO and EU on those dimensions. The bi-polar scales had 7 points (1 represented the negative point and 7 the positive point) and they could also show the direction and the intensity of individual's attitude. We compared the scores (moderate means of answers) for each of the nine scales and also for the three considered dimensions (Evaluation, Potency and Activity). The following tables reflect the scores obtained after the data analysis.

**Table 8. Scores for the scales related to EU social representation
(1 – very much in favour; 7 – very much against)**

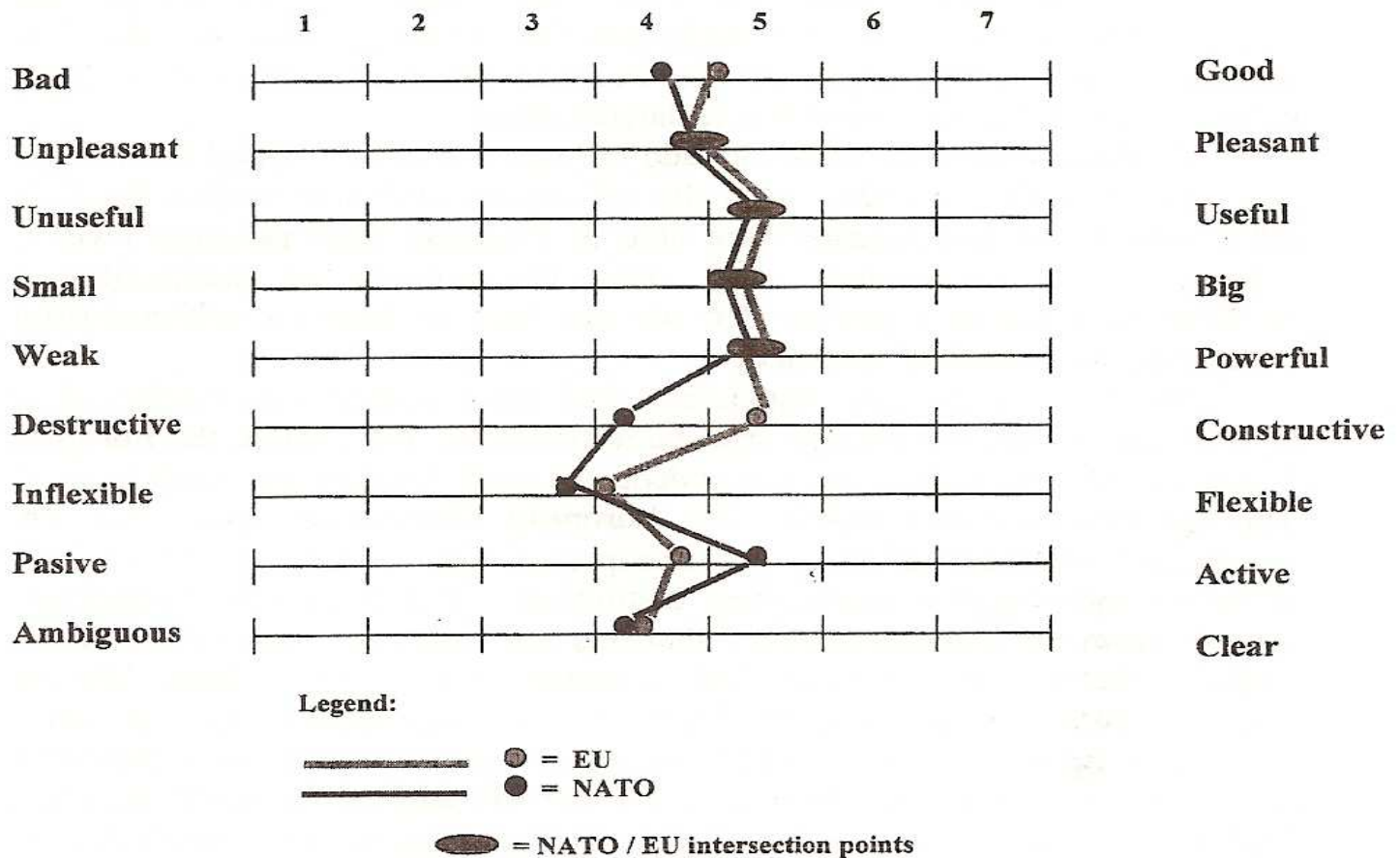
Score EPA	Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Scale	Frequency	Score scale
Evaluation 5,02	Good	2	9	11	47	42	57	32	Bad	200	5,09
	Pleasant	3	3	18	66	48	44	17	Unpleasant	199	4,77
	Useful	2	14	12	30	44	59	43	Useless	204	5,20
Potency 5,17	Big	4	4	12	42	52	55	28	Small	197	5,09
	Powerful	3	4	17	32	55	67	26	Weak	204	5,14
	Constructive	4	8	2	23	66	70	29	Destructive	202	5,30
Activity 4,43	Flexible	8	18	27	78	45	20	5	Inflexible	201	4,06
	Active	4	15	22	34	54	49	24	Passive	202	4,79
	Clear	3	15	34	50	47	38	14	Ambiguous	201	4,46

**Table 9. Scores for the scales related to NATO social representation
(1 – very much in favour; 7 – very much against)**

Score EPA	Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Scale	Frequency	Score scale
Evaluation 4,83	Good	5	15	16	65	49	31	18	Bad	199	4,52
	Pleasant	3	3	18	66	48	44	17	Unpleasant	199	4,77
	Useful	2	14	12	30	44	59	43	Useless	204	5,20
Potency 4,81	Big	4	4	12	42	52	55	28	Small	197	5,09
	Powerful	3	4	17	32	55	67	26	Weak	204	5,14
	Constructive	1	17	28	62	38	35	9	Destructive	200	4,20
Activity 4,52	Flexible	1	20	42	56	41	19	7	Inflexible	199	3,88
	Active	4	4	21	21	39	51	57	Passive	198	5,35
	Clear	5	22	33	44	48	28	20	Ambiguous	202	4,33

The social representation of NATO and EU is in general a positive one among students and we can identify some common elements on the following axes: “pleasant-unpleasant”, “useful-useless”, “big- small” and “powerful-weak”. Thus both NATO and EU are seen as useful, powerful, big and pleasant international institutions. The EU representation is more positive compared to NATO, especially on the Activity dimension. The respondents see EU as more “constructive”, more “flexible”, “clearer”, and “better” than NATO, and NATO

is being seen as more “active” than the EU. If individuals assimilated the two institutions when it came to attributes such as “good”, “useful”, “pleasant”, they made a clear distinction between them concerning the Potency and especially the Activity dimension. Thus they represented the fact that NATO is a military organization while EU is based on social and economic purposes.



Graphic 6. Social representation of NATO *versus* EU.

The research instrument included questions about the information level of the respondents (self –evaluated) about NATO and EU: “How informed do you consider yourself about the European Union?” and “How informed do you consider yourself about NATO?”- just like the questions were analyzed from the POB – in the first part of this analysis, but we also measured the real information level using a group of items that referred to general knowledge about EU and NATO. We could compute an individual index that measured the real informational level.

The maximal value of the information index towards NATO was “8”, the minimal value “0”, and the mean value “4”. In the same way, the index of information towards EU had a maximal value of “9”, minimal value of “0” and

mean value of "3,87". The students from our sample were averagely informed about NATO and EU. Significant differences have been found between the students from the Faculty of Political Science (SP) and the students from the Faculty of Engineering (MT) when it came to EU, the first group being the best informed and the last one the least informed of all. About the NATO level of information, significant differences have been found between the political science students (the best informed) and the sociology students (the least informed). As we had expected, the Political Science students were better informed than the others on both calculated indexes.

To these observations we can add the fact that the measured information level significantly correlated with the self-appreciated information level. In other words, the respondents were able to diagnose their personal level of information in an accurate way. This observation has methodological implications because it proves that we can trust in people's self-evaluation concerning their level of information.

We can say that the respondents had more general information about NATO and EU and not enough specific information. Thus, about the European Union institutions, most of the respondents declared that they are "well known": The European Council (44%), The European Commission (41, 5%), The European Parliament (38,2%), The European Court of Justice (47,8%). But when we introduced a non-existent institution – The European Committee – 24,25% from the subjects declared that this was also "well known". Thus we found a *placebo* effect that applied to almost half of the students. We can presume that their information level is not as solid and specific as they declare.

The opinions about NATO correlated with the index of information about NATO. The Bravais-Pearson coefficient has been found significant (for a probability level $p = 0,004\%$). The more informed students are towards NATO, the more positive their opinion is about NATO. This issue sustained the results of our analysis on POB. And also the opinions towards EU are in relation to the index of information about EU (*chi square* – 60,275, $p = 0,002 < 0,005$) even if the coefficient of correlation r is not significant.

Our research purpose was also to emphasize how could some economical or professional values influence students' opinions about NATO and EU. Again, we tried to validate the presumption that peoples' positive images about NATO and EU are related to personal economic benefits. In order to achieve this purpose, we used the *Work Values Inventory* realized in 1960 by D. E. Super and adapted by S. Chelcea in Romania (1993/1994). The *Work Values Inventory* is a sociological instrument designed to measure professional values grouped on 15 dimensions: altruism, aesthetic values, intellectual stimulation, professional success, independence, prestige, leadership, economic benefits, and professional safety, and physical ambiance, relations with superiors, relations with colleagues, life style, variety and creativity. Three items correspond to

each dimension, and in total the Inventory contains 45 items related to professional life; the respondents are supposed to evaluate all these issues according to a five-point scale: from "very important" to "without importance". In this way we can compare the scores for each dimension inside one group or between different groups in order to understand the prevalence of a specific value and its implication on behavior.

For our present research we only took into consideration 10 dimensions (30 items) which were relevant to the discussed subject: *altruism* (items 2, 20, 21), *intellectual stimulation* (items 1, 15, 26), *professional success* (items 9, 11, 30), *independence* (items 5, 13, 28), *prestige* (items 6, 18, 23), *economic benefits* (3, 14, 27), *professional safety* (items 7, 12, 29), *leadership* (items 10, 16, 25), *life style* (items 8, 17, 24), *variety* (items 4, 19, 22) –see Annex. The students' opinions towards EU were linked to the „intellectual stimulation” values, „professional success”, „prestige”, „professional safety”, „economic benefits” and to „variety” (*chi square* was significant for $p = 0,000$). We found that „intellectual stimulation” and „professional safety” were correlated with the respondents' evaluation of EU. ($r = 0,178$, $r = 0,200$, $p < 0,005$). In this way, we could conclude that the students who valued an intellectually stimulating and secure work were also those who had positive opinions about EU.

The opinions about NATO were related - in a higher degree - with „altruism” and „life style”. Thus students tended to appeal on distinctive personal values when expressing their opinions about NATO and EU.

Conclusions

Both NATO and EU are being seen as useful, big, powerful and pleasant international structures. The EU representation is more positive as compared to NATO among the respondents. And EU has been seen as more „constructive”, more „flexible”, „clearer” and „better” than NATO. In the same time, NATO has been seen as more „active” than EU. We can't say that students have confused images about these two international institutions but on the contrary, that they differentiate between them, even if their level of information is a medium one.

Positive opinions about NATO and EU are based on a complex value spectrum: intellectual stimulation, professional success, prestige and professional safety, when it comes to EU and altruism and life style, when it comes to NATO.

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Annex

***Work Values Inventory* (D.E. Super, 1960), adapted by S. Chelcea in Romania (1993/1994). The dimensions used for the present research**

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. To have the possibility to solve new problems all the time. | of living a full day. |
| 2. To help the others | 10. To have authority over the others. |
| 3. To obtain a salary raise. | 11. To have the possibility of work evaluation based on results. |
| 4. To have frequent changes at work. | 12. To be sure that you have always something to work on. |
| 5. To have freedom of choosing the rhythm of work. | 13. To decide for yourself . |
| 6. To have high professional prestige | 14. To obtain a salary that rises proportionally with the life cost. |
| 7. Not to be afraid of unemployment. | 15. To have the possibility of talking about the things you are preoccupied of . |
| 8. To fulfill yourself in the way you want. | 16. To use your leadership capacity. |
| 9. To permanently have the feeling | 17. To have the life standard you |

want.

18. The others to be aware of the importance of the work you do.
19. Not to do the same thing all the time.
20. To have the feeling of helping the others.
21. To contribute to the happiness of others.
22. To be involved in different things.

23. To be admired.
24. To have the lifestyle you want.
25. To organize and plan the work of others
26. To always be intellectually stimulated.
27. To earn as much as necessary to live a decent life.
28. To be you own supervisor.
29. To be sure that you would obtain a job in the same firm, if the old position is removed.
30. To be able to know the results of your work