

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2024.73.01.21>

How to Cite:

Grigorova, D.S. (2024). Cultural aspects of model formation of socio-economic development in eu regions: a comparative analysis. *Amazonia Investiga*, 13(73), 252-262. <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2024.73.01.21>

Cultural aspects of model formation of socio-economic development in eu regions: a comparative analysis

КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ МОДЕЛИ СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО РАЗВИТИЯ РЕГИОНОВ ЕС: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ

Received: December 23, 2023

Accepted: January 28, 2024

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Abstract

The article reveals the actual problem of cultural influence on the socio-economic development of the regions in the European Union. The research goal is to compare socio-cultural differences, which are significant factors for determining the vectors of socio-economic development of European countries. The article presents the results of an empirical study of the cultural components of regional models of socio-economic development on the example of some countries of the European Union.

The research materials were official statistics and expert assessments obtained as a result of a survey of specialists from various academic research structures on the social network Twitter. The total number of respondents from 9 European universities was 900 people.

The research methodology is based on a socio-cultural approach, includes the methods of the general scientific group and of special methods: historiographic analysis of scientific literature on the research topic, the method of comparative analysis, the method of sociological survey, statistical analysis, quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Based on the empirical study, the following results were obtained: as the main cultural components that determine the specifics of the socio-economic development of the EU regions, the experts identified the historical context, national mentality, as well as value attitudes of behavior.

Key words: models of development of EU regions, regional economy, sustainable

Аннотация

В статье раскрывается актуальная проблема культурного влияния на социально-экономическое развитие регионов в Европейском союзе. Целью исследования является сравнение социокультурных различий, которые являются значимыми факторами для определения векторов социально-экономического развития европейских стран. В статье представлены результаты эмпирического исследования культурных компонентов региональных моделей социально-экономического развития на примере некоторых стран Европейского союза. Материалами исследования послужили официальная статистика и экспертные оценки, полученные в результате опроса специалистов различных академических исследовательских структур в социальной сети Twitter. Общее количество респондентов из 9 европейских университетов составило 900 человек. Методология исследования основана на социокультурном подходе, включает методы общенаучной группы и специальные методы: историографический анализ научной литературы по теме исследования, метод сравнительного анализа, метод социологического опроса, статистический анализ, количественные и качественные методы исследования. На основе эмпирического исследования были получены следующие результаты: в качестве основных культурных компонентов, определяющих специфику социально-экономического развития регионов ЕС, эксперты выделили исторический контекст, национальный

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development, socio-economic differences, culture of European countries.

менталитет, а также ценностные установки поведения.

Ключевые слова: модели развития регионов ЕС, региональная экономика, устойчивое развитие, социально-экономические различия, культура европейских стран.

Introduction

The topic relevance lies in the fact that the economic development of the European Union remains uneven and includes a number of problems that have yet to be solved. The researchers note that one of the most serious problems of European integration is that different regions of the EU implement different economic models. On the one hand, this enriches the economic policy due to the presence of different approaches to economic policy, and on the other hand, it hinders the development of a common policy on many issues (Bakry, 2023a, p. 189).

At present, it is customary to distinguish the following main modeling characteristic of the EU regions.

1. In Western Europe, the German model and the French model of development stand out. The economic (more precisely, socio-economic) model of post-war Germany was formed under the influence of several areas of scientific thought: the liberal Freiburg School, social liberalism and neoliberalism. In this model indicators of state activity in the economy are quite moderate by European standards. In recent years, the state quota (total expenditures of the federal, land and local budgets in relation to GDP) has fluctuated in the range of 45-46% of GDP (Groth, 2022, p. 22). The public sector employs about 15% of the working-age population, and the total tax quota (taxes, fees and social contributions) is at the average European level and amounts to about 40% of GDP (UNCTAD, 2023b). A special place in the economy is occupied by small and medium-sized businesses, whose contribution to the country's GDP is about 54%, they employ 58% of workers (UNCTAD, 2023a). Germany is one of the few developed countries that has retained a significant industrial sector in the economy. Its share in the structure of GDP is 25-26% (without construction). Key industries: machine-building complex (primarily automotive), chemical complex (including pharmaceuticals). The German economy has a pronounced export-oriented character. The

export quota for goods is 39% of GDP, and together with the export of services - 47.5% of GDP. In a number of key industries, the share of exports reaches 70% or more (UNCTAD, 2023a). The German economy demonstrates exceptional resilience, the country remains the leading economy of the EU (21% of its GDP) (UNCTAD, 2023b).

Unlike Germany, the specificity of the French model is the traditionally high role of the state in the economy and social sphere. France is among the countries with a very high level of human development, ranking 27th in the world, according to UNCTAD (UNCTAD, 2023b). The key problems of France's economic development remain the chronic state budget deficit (since 1975, the budget has never been reduced to a surplus, the deficit peaked in 2009 (7.2% of GDP) and in 2022 amounted to 3% of GDP) and the increase in public debt: 59 and 98% of GDP in 2000 and 2022, respectively (UNCTAD, 2023b). In the social sphere, one of the main problems is the aging of the population (in 2022, the share of people over 65 in the total number of inhabitants reached 22%), which leads to a deterioration in the demographic burden ratio of the older generation (32.5 in 2022 versus 24.3 and 25.6 in 2000 and 2010, respectively) and creates certain difficulties in the context of the crisis of social policy in the country (UNCTAD, 2023c). Another social problem is mass unemployment (8.5% in 2019, one of the highest rates in the EU), with a consistently high unemployment rate among those under 25 years of age - 20% of the population (UNCTAD, 2023b).

2. Southern Europe is represented by the model of economic development in Italy and Spain. The Italian economic system is characterized not only by economic pluralism, the combination of private and public property, but also by active state regulation, mainly through indicative planning. Italy is still characterized by regional disparities between the rich north and the catching-up south and, as a result, acute social contradictions and problems remain. About a third of the labor force is

concentrated in the south, but unemployment is more than 20% (more than 50% for young people) (UNCTAD, 2023b). As in other EU countries, Italy's economy is largely export-oriented. The Spanish model is characterized by a relatively low role of the state for European countries (public spending in 2022 amounted to 43% in relation to GDP versus 58% in France) (UNCTAD, 2023c).

The Spanish economic model is also characterized by the predominance of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, which employ almost 72% of the workforce (including 41% in microenterprises), which is significantly higher than the EU average (UNCTAD, 2023b). Thus, small business face a number of difficulties: they do not receive sufficient government support, have problems with entering the markets of other EU countries, and also lag behind companies from other EU countries in terms of internationalization. Spain lags far behind European leaders in the field of high technology, which may be due to the fact that R&D spending is insufficient, it amounts to 1.2% of GDP, while the EU average is 2% (UNCTAD, 2023a). As a result, Spain traditionally lags behind the EU as a whole in terms of the share of high-tech exports in total industrial exports – 7% versus 16% (26% in France) (UNCTAD, 2023a).

3. The socio-economic models in the countries of Eastern Europe are characterized by a combination of institutions of the liberal (Anglo-Saxon) economy, the institutions of the market economy (as in many countries of continental Europe) and the institutions of the socialist period that have been preserved in a modified form. Contrary to the expectations of the population that the first post-socialist governments in the CEE countries would contribute to the formation of a corporatist model of relations between labor and capital, similar to Western European countries, the labor market was farmed out to large TNCs (Bakry, 2023b, p. 106). Foreign investors were supporters of the deregulation of labor legislation following the experience of the Anglo-Saxon states and the individualization of labor relations.

As a result, the economic systems that have developed in them have become largely an institutional hybrid model. In the countries of Eastern Europe, corporate governance is built primarily on the basis of the relationship between

the heads of local branches and their headquarters, while local managers have limited powers: they can independently make decisions in the field of operational management, but strategic decisions are made in parent companies.

Another common feature of the economic models of Eastern European countries is the dominance of foreign capital in the economy. A specific feature of these models is economic development based on the borrowing of technologies. Within the framework of the above-described regional model, there are varieties. Among them, several can be conditionally distinguished: the model of the Baltic countries, the model of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and the model of Slovenia (UNCTAD, 2023c).

Literature review

All of the above data suggest that the regional development of the EU is heterogeneous, which is associated not only with historical, demographic, geographical and geopolitical factors, but also with the cultural characteristics of the countries of Western, Southern and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, the study of the cultural aspects of the socio-economic development of the EU countries will reveal not only material, but also subjective, cultural aspects that can have both positive and negative impact on economic development (Labianca, 2020, p. 1803).

Among the cultural aspects influencing the socio-economic development of the EU countries, researchers identify the following factors:

- mentality (Vogel and Will, 2023, p.47);
- historical context (Thatcher, 2019, p. 128);
- value behavioral attitudes (Serban et al., 2023, p. 420).

We take these aspects as criteria for comparative analysis in the empirical part of the study.

The historiography is quite extensive, but mainly focused on mathematical models and economic factors in the development of EU regions, taking into account some cultural differences. Thus, the theoretical aspects of regional development models in the EU are considered in the works by such authors as D. Soto-Oñate, G. Torrens (2022), V. Omelyanenko, O. Omelyanenko (2019), J. Premović, L. Arsić (2020), M. Proskurina (2022), B. Salikhov, I. Salikhova

(2022), I. Schäfer, Y. Khoudja, D. Grunow (2022).

Of methodological interest are the works by M. Jagódka & M. Snarska (2022), T. Juric (2023), M. Kruse, C. Somcutean, J. Wedemeier (2023), O. Labianca (2020), E. Mamatzakis, L. Neri, A. Russo (2023), T. Marzal (2023), since they present a matrix analysis of the economic models of EU development, a comparative analysis of cultural factors of regional development, etc.

At the same time, in the empirical works by L.H. Anders (2023), A. Bakry (2023a, 2023b), R. Brandtjen (2023), S. Ferran-Vila, G. Miotto, J. Rom-Rodríguez (2022), Garashchuk, Castillo, Rivera (2023), S. Groth (2022), R. Higgott (2020), the main emphasis is on the study of formal macroeconomic indicators, without taking into account the socio-cultural factors of regional development in the European Union.

Meanwhile, in the works by such authors, it is argued that a number of cultural aspects that distinguish the mentality of Western, Southern and Eastern Europe are the basic cultural invariant for modeling socio-economic development.

Table 1.

Distribution of respondents according to the criteria of European regions and academic institutions.

University and region	Respondents' number
Western Europe	1 expert group
Akron Graduate School for the Humanities (Germany)	15
Faculty of Humanities Sorbonne (France)	7
Ghent University (Belgium)	8
South Europe	2 expert group
International University of Languages and Media (Italy)	9
Autonomous University of Madrid (Spain)	6
Greek Open University (Greece)	15
Eastern Europe	3 expert group
State Eastern European University in Przemysl (Poland)	8
Eötvös University of the Humanities (Hungary)	8
Transylvanian University of Brasov (Romania)	14

Experts assessed the problem of the main cultural aspects on the models of socio-economic development in the EU countries. As a result, it was possible to identify common cultural aspects and transform them into three criteria: national mentality, historical context, and value attitudes of behavior.

The research methodology is based on a socio-cultural approach and includes the methods of the

Thus, the study of the cultural influence on the socio-economic models of the development of the EU regions will significantly supplement the existing historiography, as well as make a certain contribution to the scientific development of the general problem of the correlation between culture and the economy.

Materials and methods

The research materials were expert assessments obtained as a result of a survey of specialists from various academic research structures in the EU. The survey was conducted on the social network Twitter.

The total number of respondents was 900 people. Of these, a representative sample of 90 people was formed by the method of mechanical sampling (according to the principle of every tenth), divided into three expert groups of 30 people from 9 European universities.

A questionnaire was created for them with questions, the answers to which clarified the position of experts on the impact of cultural components on the socio-economic development of the EU regions.

general scientific group (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction), as well as a number of special methods: historiographic analysis of scientific literature on the research topic, the method of comparative analysis, the sociological survey (method of expert assessment, questionnaires), statistical analysis, quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Table 2.
Research methods by groups and research objectives

Method group	Research objectives
General scientific methods	Scientific synthesis of the information received Research of scientific literature on the research topic Sociological research,
Special methods	Statistical analysis survey results Quantitative and qualitative research methods.

For processing 90 questionnaires with survey data we used a special program Neural Designer, a tool for advanced, predictive and prescriptive

analytics. All qualitative data (respondents' answers) were translated into quantitative format.

Table 3.
Criteria for the influence of cultural aspects to the socio-economic development in EU regions

Criterion	Framing expert review
The national mentality impact on regional economic model	Expert assessment with comments on effect (positive / negative)
The historical context impact on regional economic model	Expert assessment with comments on effect (positive / negative)
The value behavioral pattern on regional economic model	Expert assessment with comments on effect (positive / negative)

Experts analyzed the impact of cultural aspects on the regional development models in the EU countries, giving their comments on what kind of effect such an impact gives - positive or negative.

These comments were reflected in the questionnaire as additional information, which made it possible to identify in more detail the experts' position on each of the criteria (Table 4).

Table 4.
Methodology for assessing the criteria of problems in two categories

Criterion	Rating scale
National mentality	1-3 low level
Historical context	4-6 average level
Value behavioral attitude	7-10 high level

All three criteria were evaluated by experts on a 10-point scale, according to the increasing influence of a particular cultural aspect on the model of socio-economic development in each region: 1-3 low level, 4-6 medium level, 7-10

high influence level. The empirical study consisted of three stages: 1) preliminary stage; 2) the main stage; 3) analysis of the results (Table 5).

Table 5.
Timing and content of the stages of empirical research

Research stage	Stage content	Timing
Preliminary stage	Negotiations with potential respondents regarding participation in the study. Formation of a representative sample and formulation of the questionnaire.	1-12 February 2023
Main stage	Conducting a survey on the social network Twitter, collecting expert answers.	14 March 2023
Analysis of results	Analyzing results using a statistical Neural Design program	22 March - 18 April 2023

The empirical study was conducted from February 1 to April 18, 2023. The results of the empirical study are shown below.

Results and discussion

Based on the results of a survey in the first group of respondents from universities in Africa and Europe, the following results were obtained (Figure 1).

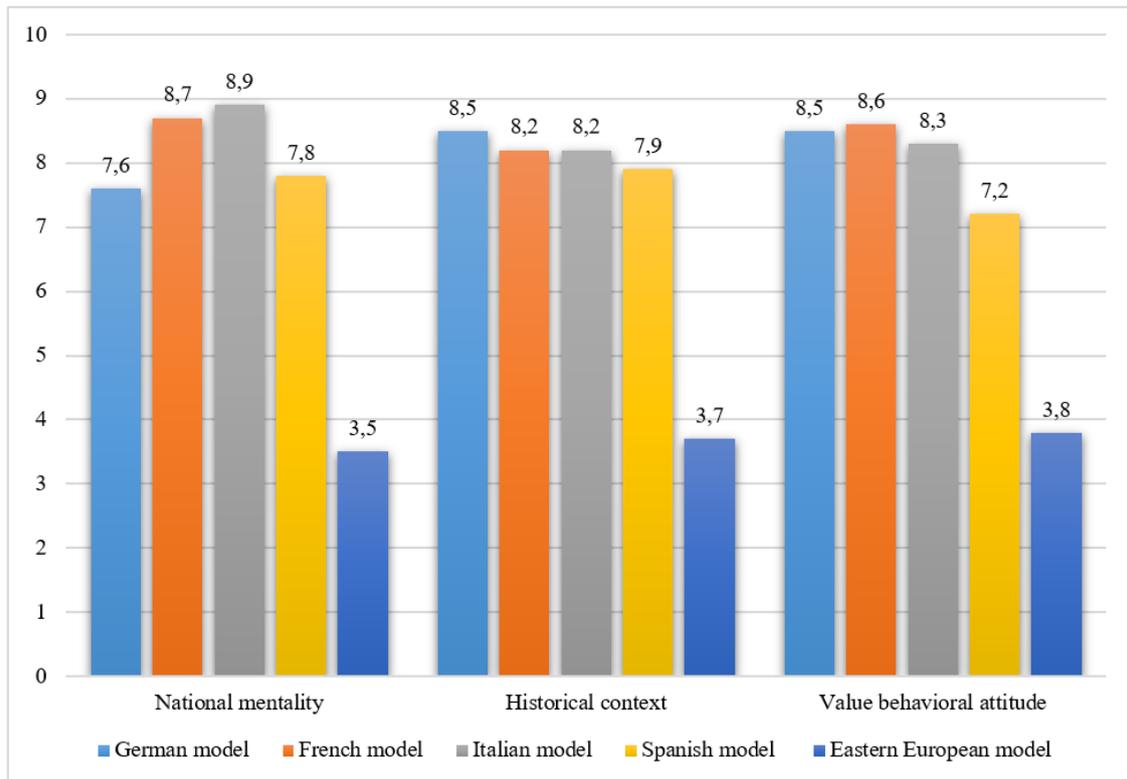


Figure 1. Assessment by 1st expert group of cultural components' influence on models of socio-economic development (compiled by the author using the Neural Designer program)

As can be seen from the data shown in Figure 1, the experts in the first group (Western European universities) highly appreciated the level of influence of all three components on the models of socio-economic development in Western European countries, except for Germany, as well as on the countries in Southern Europe. According to experts, the mentality and historical context are less important than value behavioral attitudes for the German development model.

At the same time, the experts noted the moderate influence of the cultural context on the socio-economic development of Eastern Europe, arguing that the region was characterized by a «historical trauma of socialism» and a «painful exit from the socialist economy to a new market model».

Similar results were obtained in a survey of the second group of respondents from universities in Southern Europe (Figure 2).

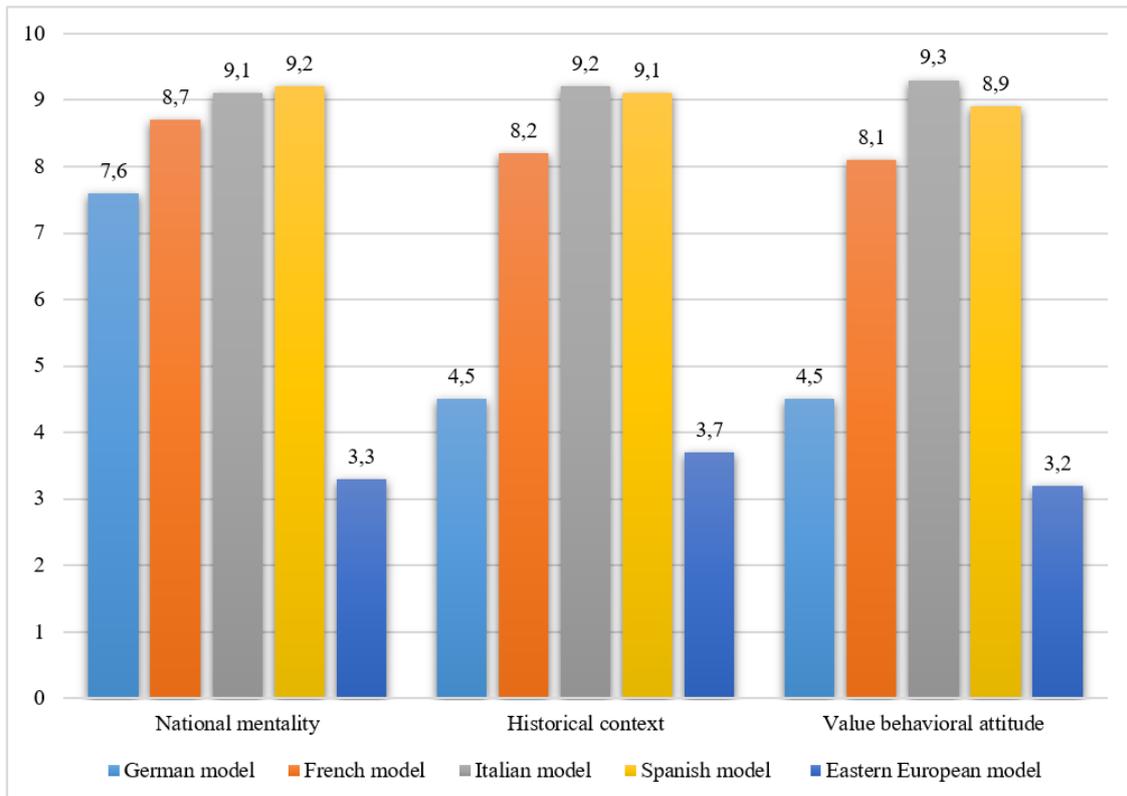


Figure 2. Assessment by 2nd expert group of cultural components' influence on models of socio-economic development (compiled by the author using the Neural Designer program)

As can be seen from the data in Figure 2, experts from the Southern European Universities rated at a high level the influence of all cultural components on the models of Western Europe (including Germany) and on the models of Southern Europe. According to experts, cultural aspects have a moderate influence only on the countries of Eastern Europe.

On this, the two groups of experts were in complete agreement. However, in this group, no

explanation was given for the position why cultural components have a moderate influence in Eastern Europe. According to experts, cultural influence is most high in the models of Western and Southern Europe.

Opposite results were obtained in the third group of respondents from universities in Eastern Europe (Figure 3).

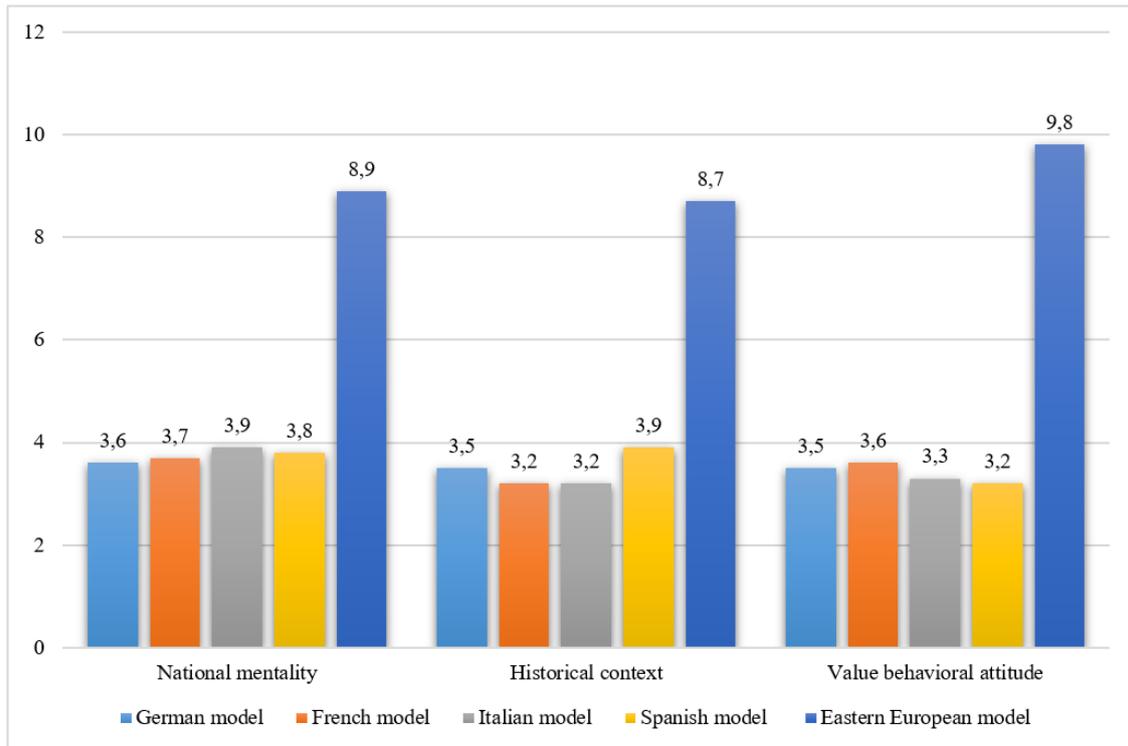


Figure 3. Assessment by 3d expert group of cultural components' influence on models of socio-economic development (compiled by the author using the Neural Designer program)

Researchers from Eastern European Universities stated that cultural aspects have the greatest influence on the formation and development of the socio-economic models in Eastern Europe, in particular Poland, Romania and Hungary. Experts at an average level assessed the influence of cultural factors on the models of socio-economic development of Western and Southern Europe. The development of Germany and France was especially critically assessed as «the countries least exposed to the cultural context».

For the experts in the 3d group, the influence of the mentality and historical context on the

formation of the model of socio-economic development of the countries of Eastern Europe is certainly decisive.

That is, even at the level of our results, we can see the heterogeneity and polarization of expert opinion regarding the influence of cultural factors on regional models. Experts from Western European countries believe that Eastern European countries are the least affected, while experts from Eastern European universities believe that, on the contrary, Eastern European models are most strongly influenced by the historical context, mentality and values.

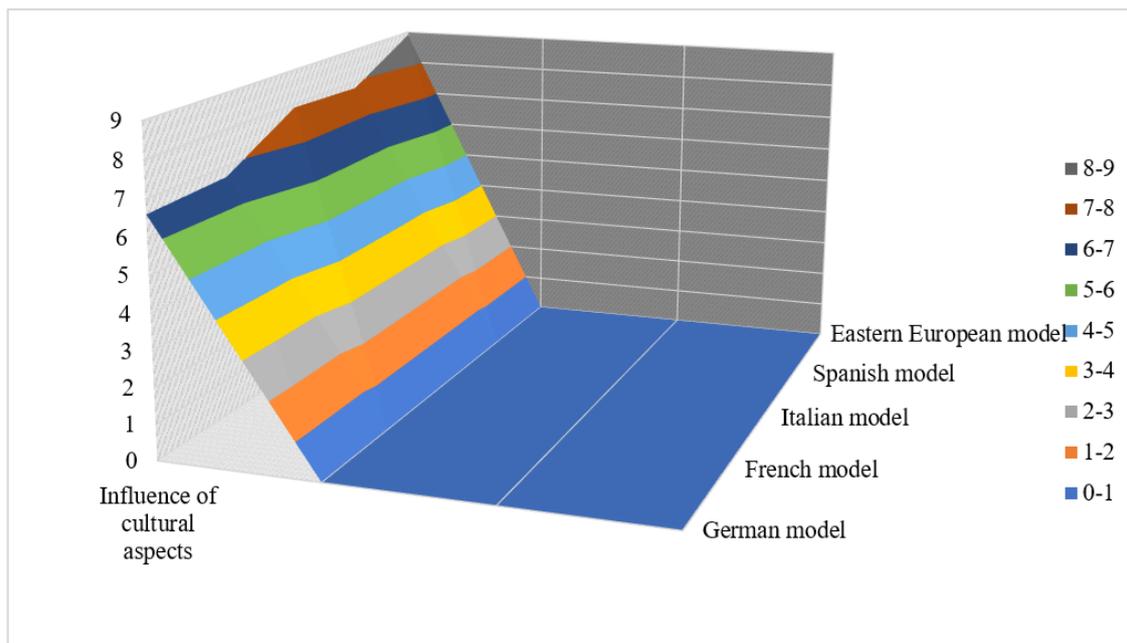


Figure 4. The overall profile of the influence of cultural components, identified by experts from universities in Western, Southern and Eastern Europe. (compiled by the author using the Neural Designer program)

Figure 4 shows that the average score for each of the models analyzed by the experts allows us to speak about the relatively strong influence of cultural factors on the models of socio-economic development of the regions of the European Union. However, the general trend is extremely difficult to identify, since the opinions of experts turned out to be opposite in relation to the countries of Eastern Europe.

The results of our study regarding the influence of mentality on the socio-economic models of the EU countries are partially confirmed in the works by such authors as V. Vogel and D. Will (2023), I. Zvarych, O. Zvarych (2021), A. Serban et al., (2023), D. Soto-Oñate, G. Torrens (2022), M. Thatcher (2019), T. Tsekeris, S.K. Papaioannou (2021).

The results obtained on the dominant role of cultural factors for the formation of the socio-economic model of the countries of Eastern Europe are confirmed in the studies by such authors as O. Labianca (2020), E. Mamatzakis, L. Neri, A. Russo (2023), T. Marzal (2023), J. Premović, L. Arsić (2020), M. Proskurina (2022), B. Salikhov, I. Salikhova (2022), I. Schäfer, Y. Khoudja, D. Grunow (2022).

Indirectly, our results regarding the influence of the historical context on the socio-economic models of Western and Southern Europe are confirmed in the works by such authors as A. Garashchuk, Castillo, Rivera (2023), S. Groth

(2022), R. Higgott (2020), M. Jagódka, M. Snarska (2022), T. Juric (2023), M. Kruse, C. Somcutean, J. Wedemeier (2023).

The influence of behavioral values on the formation of the models in Southern Europe is also considered in the works by such researchers as L.H. Anders (2023), A. Bakry (2023a), A. Bakry (2023b), R. Brandtjen (2023), S. Ferran-Vila, G. Miotto, J. Rom-Rodríguez (2022).

Nevertheless, despite the rather wide topic coverage in the scientific literature, the problem of cultural influence on the socio-economic development of the regions in the European Union requires further empirical research.

Conclusion

Based on the empirical results, we state the following conclusions:

1. The method of expert assessments has identified the following main cultural aspects that can influence the models of socio-economic development of various regions of the European Union. Most experts agree that the historical context and mentality have the greatest influence on the development of the countries of Western and Southern Europe. At the same time, regarding the cultural influence on the development of Eastern Europe, the opinions of experts were divided into

completely opposite ones: Western European and Southern European experts argue that cultural factors played a moderate role in shaping the socio-economic model of Eastern Europe, while experts from Eastern Europe are confident in the determining influence of cultural and historical factors on the socio-economic development in the region.

2. The conducted empirical research confirms the fact that the European Union is heterogeneous not only in economic but also in cultural terms, since even at the expert level there is no consensus on the degree of key cultural components impact on the development of socio-economic models in the EU regions. This result also confirms the need for further qualitative research to identify in more detail the influence of cultural factors on the economy of the European Union.

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