Why confidence in the police varies between European countries?

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Question: "Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0 – 10 how much you personally trust each of institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust".
Instrumental explanation

- Instrumental vs. procedural explanation (Tyler et. al.)
- Instrumental: trust in the police is based on the effectiveness of police work
- Fear of crime and victimization -> low level of trust in the police
- Basic ideas of community policing:
  - Visibility
  - Accessibility
  - Approachability
Procedural explanation

• People trust in the police, if police is treating them fairly, ethically acceptable way -> police –citizens co-operation

• Wesley G. Skogan: “Asymmetry in the impact of Encounters with Police” (Policing & Society 16 (2), 99-126)

• Critical question from the point of view minorities: e.g. the results of EU-MIDIS
Empirical evidence

• For both of those hypothesis: yes
• However:
  – empirical research mainly from USA and UK;
  – survey questions are measuring more images than real experiences on police work
  – study-designs mainly based on individual-level data
• Is police work in Nordic countries or in Germany really more effective, fair and impartial than in some other European countries? We don’t know.
• How to explain country-level differences of trust?
• Three country-level explanations: Welfare-state, Quality of governance and Social capital
Figure 1. Public expenditures on police services and social protection in some European countries 2010. Source: Eurostat.
Figure 1. Generalized trust score for police officers vs. other respondents. Estimated marginal means from LM by country.
Conclusions

• Explaining society-level differences needs society-level explanatory variables
• Safe society for all, reliable administration, social capital -> easy to trust in the police
• Much more national and comparative research is needed