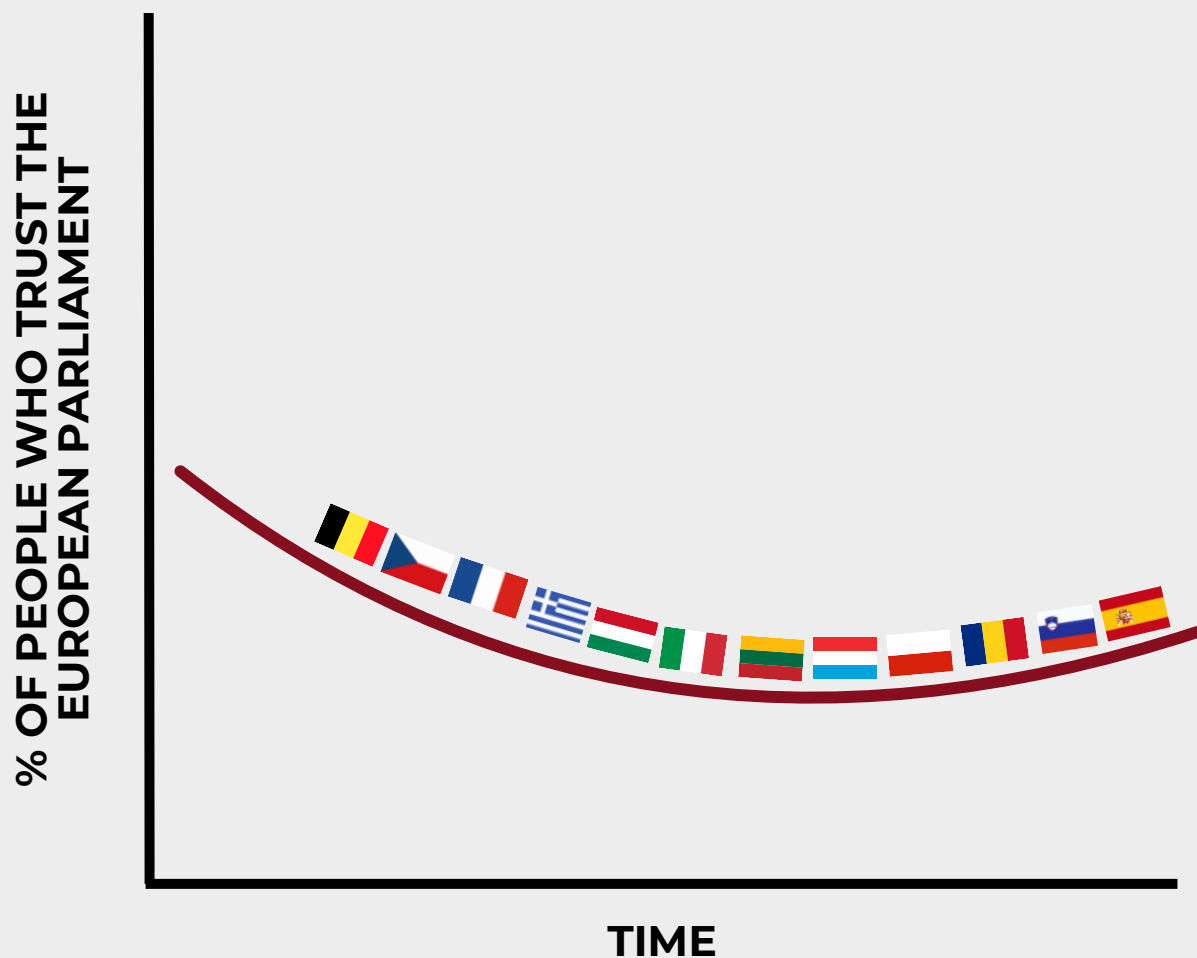


CAN WE RECOVER **TRUST** **IN THE EU?**



Some countries experienced a decline in trust in the EU following the financial and debt crises, but most of them have seen an upward trend in recent years.

This illustration is inspired by Janette Huttunen & Henrik Serup Christensen's graph, "Trends in trust in the European Parliament (EP), 2004 - 2021", in Deliverable 2.1 of the ActEU Project.

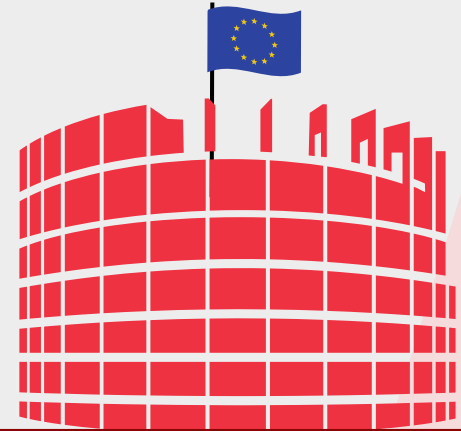
So, how does trust in the EU fluctuate?



THE **MANY** DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL TRUST



Existing literature assumes that political trust is one-dimensional, meaning that it works the same at all levels of governance



Trust in European institutions is a **SEPARATE** dimension from trust in national institutions



Political trust in the European institutions does not always evolve in the same way as trust in national institutions. Context, like the 2011 economic crisis, can influence both national and European trust, but its impact may be different.

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

European citizens are evaluating institutions at all levels

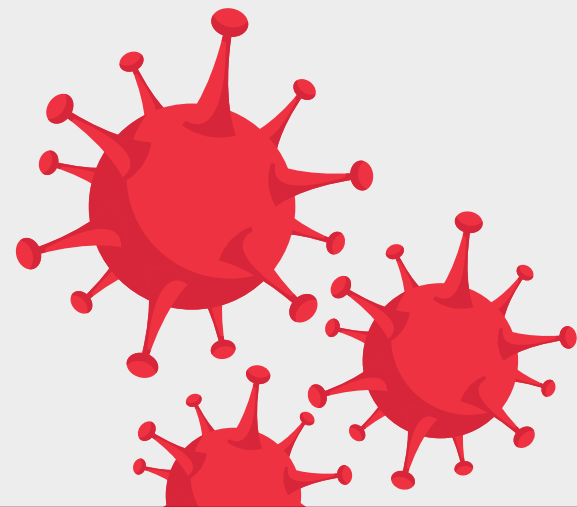
TRUST IN THE EU

VARIED, BUT RESILIENT



Financial crisis
Eurozone debt crisis

Trust levels were hit hard by economic crises, especially in Southern Europe & Ireland, but have since started to recover



Similarly, trust levels in some Member States seem to have dipped at the start of the COVID-19 crisis

KEY TAKEAWAY

Trust in the EU follows its own trajectory, influenced by specific events and actions

Trust can fluctuate in the short-term, but can stabilise (and even RECOVER) over time

TRUST IN THE EU

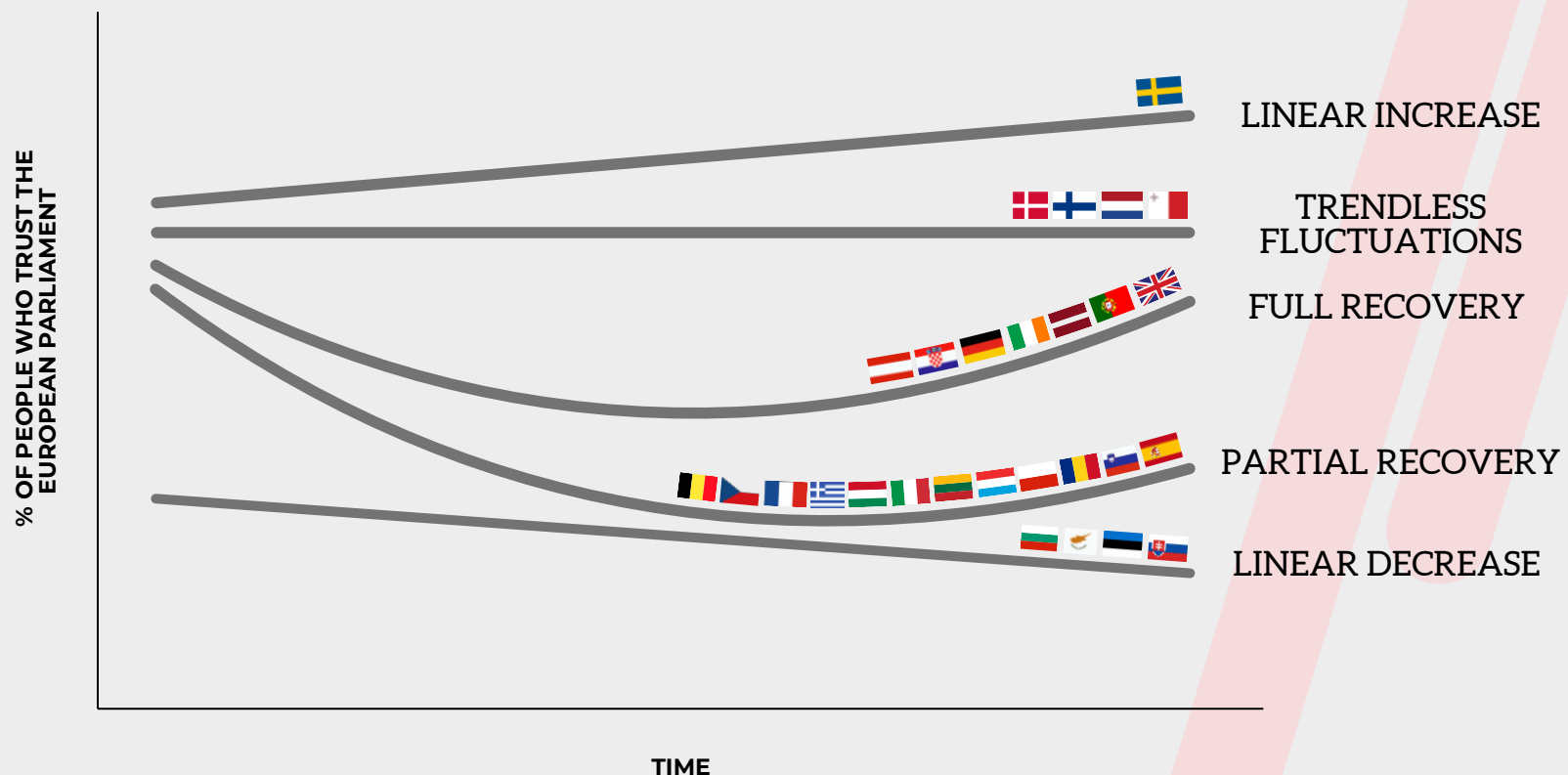
NATIONAL VARIATIONS

Trust in European institutions isn't the same everywhere - views vary widely across the EU!



For example

The trend in trust in the European Parliament from 2004 to 2021 present several national variations



This illustration is inspired by Janette Huttunen & Henrik Serup Christensen's graph, "Trends in trust in the European Parliament (EP), 2004 - 2021", in Deliverable 2.1 of the ActEU Project.

WHAT NEXT?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



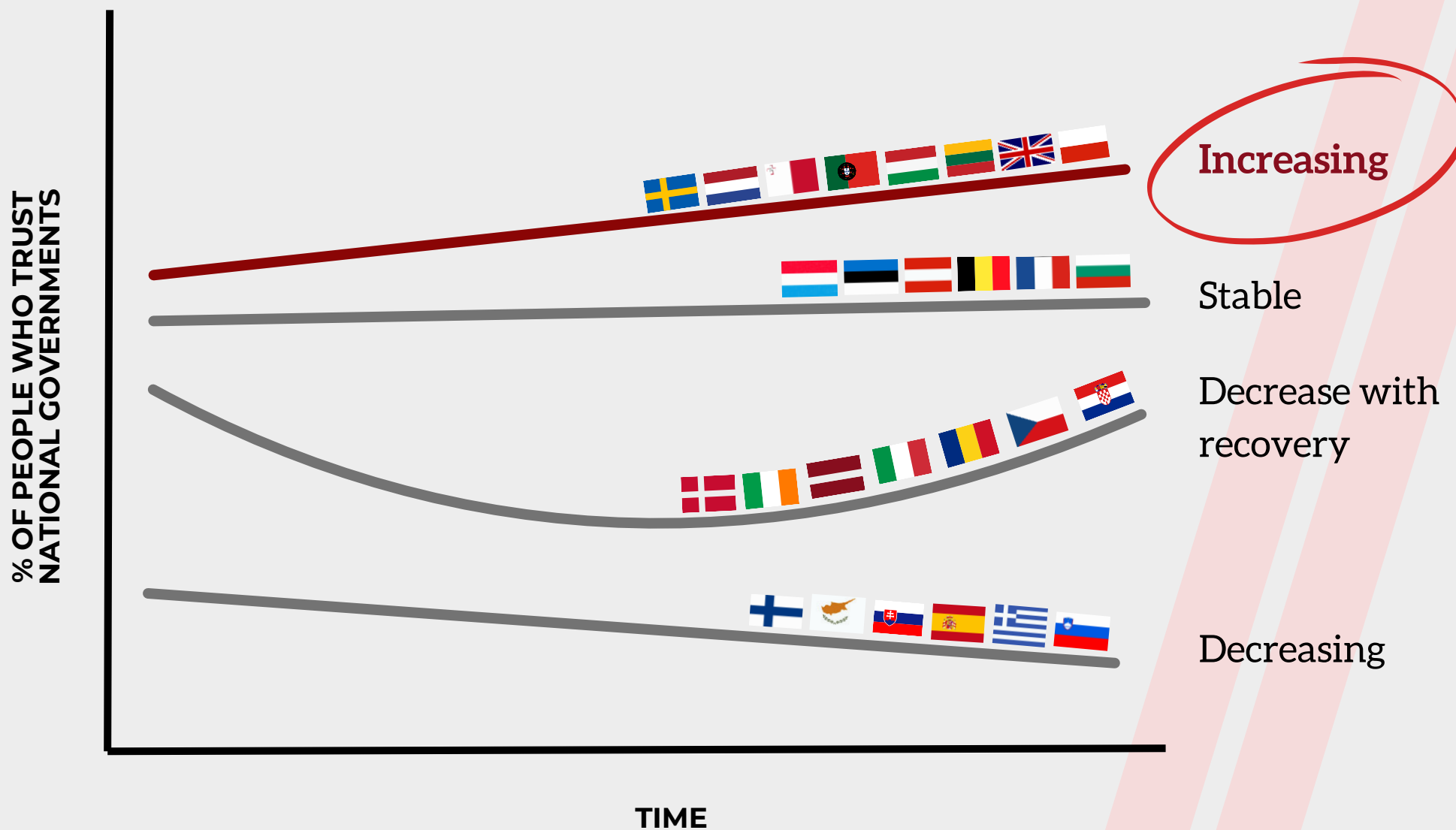
Despite extensive research on political trust, we still do not fully understand why these **cross-national variations and long-term trends** exist. Surveys rarely explore trust in a **multi-level context**, particularly towards subnational institutions and political actors

WE NEED BETTER EVIDENCE

Improving the EU-funded collection of survey items (eg. Eurobarometer, European Quality of Life Survey, European Social Survey) and **supporting existing research infrastructures** to harmonise existing data can be done if the European Commission facilitates and coordinates cooperation across survey infrastructures



IN 1/3 OF EU COUNTRIES AND THE UK, **TRUST IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS** IS IMPROVING



This illustration is inspired by Carles Pamies and Laura Morales's graphs, "Trends of trust in the national government by country and year, 2004–2021", in Deliverable 2.1 of the ActEU Project.

How does political trust work?



NATIONAL TRUST

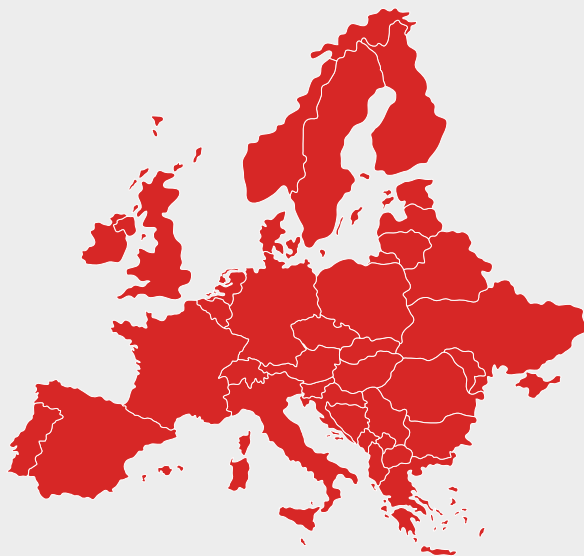
DIVERSE PATTERNS, NO UNIFORM DECLINE



Trust in national political institutions is more stable than trust in EU institutions



BUT trust trends differ between countries and across institutions. In some, trust is stable or improving; in others, it is decreasing



Regional clusters can also influence trust levels, but have less impact over time

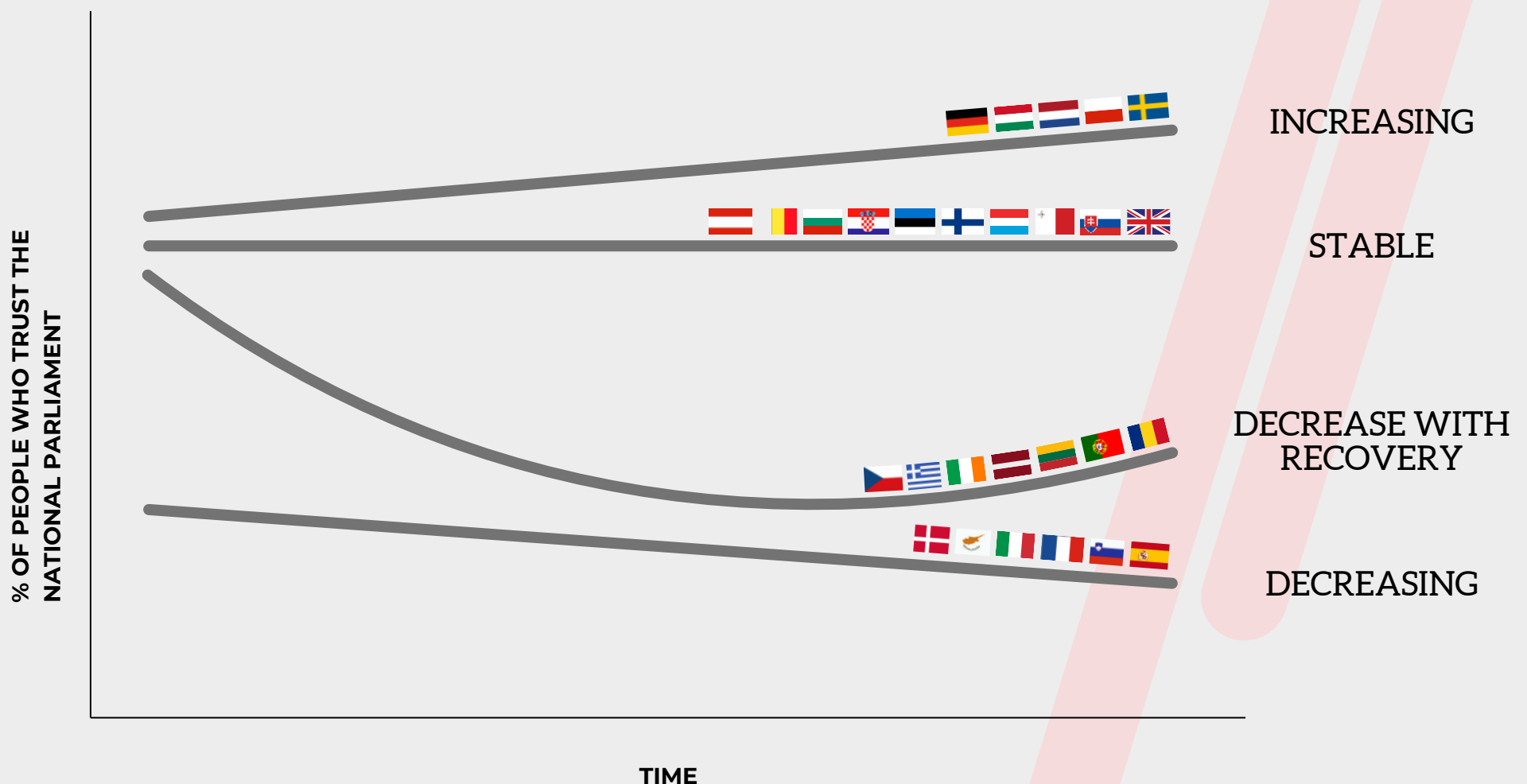
WHAT'S
THE
UPSHOT?

NATIONAL TRUST

KEY TAKEAWAY

While concerns exist, a nuanced approach is needed to address trust issues in different countries

There's no one-size-fits-all crisis of political trust in Europe



This illustration is inspired by Carles Pamies and Laura Morales's graphs, "Trends of trust in the national parliament by country and year, 2004–2021", in Deliverable 2.1 of the ActEU Project.

WHAT NEXT?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Despite extensive research on political trust, we still do not fully understand why these **cross-national variations and long-term trends** exist. Surveys rarely explore trust in a **multi-level context**, particularly towards subnational institutions and political actors

WE NEED TO APPRECIATE VARIETY

A one-size-fits-all solution will not work! The political trust crisis is **not the same across the EU**. Countries facing the biggest challenges need more attention from EU policy-makers, and **smart and tailor-made solutions can help rebuild trust**



ActEU

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Read the full report on the ActEU project website, and be sure to reshare using the hashtag #ActEU

Visit acteu.org today!



trans-
european
policy
studies
association

This infographic has been produced by the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) from the data and arguments included in the publication **“Report on the general dynamics of trust based on secondary data analysis”**, an ActEU research output authored by Henrik Serup Christensen, Janette Huttunen, Wit Hubert, Mikołaj Cześnik, Alexandros-Christos Gkotinakos, Eftichia Teperoglou, Jens Carstens, Laura Morales, Carles Pamies & Chiao Li, published in Open Access in 2024 on Zenodo

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