ABSTRACT WORKING PAPER 5.1

THE DYMANICS AND DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE WESTERN EUROPE, NEW MEMBER STATES AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES (UTARTU)

January 2013

This study investigates the dynamics and the determinants of social capital in Europe. The measures of social capital were composed on the basis of the EVS data with the help of confirmatory factor analysis. Altogether, four factors of social capital were extracted: general trust, institutional trust, formal networks and social norms. Changes in the levels of social capital components over the period 1990-2008 were calculated for 14 Western-European (WE) countries and for 10 new member states (NMS) from Central and Eastern Europe. The analysis of the determinants of social capital in year 2008 covered 20 Western-European countries, 10 new member states and additionally 15 neighbouring countries (NC). Comparison of the levels of social capital showed that in case of all social capital components, the levels were lower in NMS as compared to WE. In less developed NC-s institutional trust and social norms appeared to be stronger than in NMS, but lower than in WE. During 1990-2008, the average level of social capital decreased in NMS and increased in WE. However, the experiences of individual countries were rather diverse concerning the changes in different components of social capital, so no strong generalisations can be made on the basis of country groups. Among the determinants of individual-level social capital, socio-demographic and cultural-psychological factors were distinguished. Results of the regression analysis showed that most influential factors of social capital appeared to be education and satisfaction with democracy. Social capital also associates positively with age, income, and children, while there was negative relationship between social capital, town size and individualism. Finally, dummies for NMS and WE were significant predictors of lower levels of norms and networks, confirming that there are differences between country groups.