

Trends in attitudes towards migration in Europe. A comparative analysis

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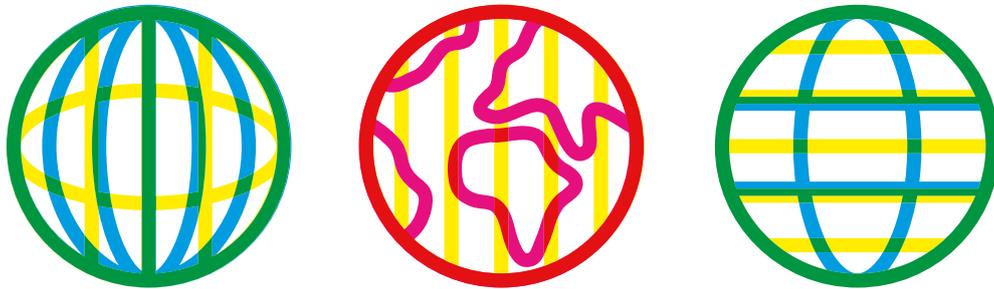
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A comparative analysis

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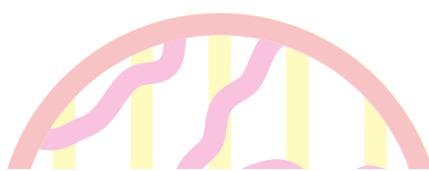
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Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	7
2. What do Europeans think about migration? Conceptual framework.....	9
3. Data and structure of the report	11
4. Findings	14
4.1 Attitudes on migration: a look at the data	14
4.2 Attitudes on migration: structural cleavages between citizens are present.....	21
4.3 Time trends	27
5. Conclusion.....	33
6. Appendix.....	38



List of Figures

Figure 4.1. General attitudes about migrants in Europe (2018) 14

Figure 4.2. Perceived impact of migration on crime levels, taxes and services, and number of jobs in country 15

Figure 4.3. General attitudes about migrants by country in Europe (2018). Do migrants make the country a better place to live in? 16

Figure 4.4. General attitudes about migrants by country in Europe (2018). Do migrants make the country a better place to live in? Geographical distribution 17

Figure 4.5. Migration policy preferences in Europe (2018). To what extent should your country allow people from... 18

Figure 4.6. Qualification for immigration in Europe (2014)..... 19

Figure 4.7. Refugee policy preferences (2016) 20

Figure 4.8. Sociodemographic differences in general attitudes about migration 22

Figure 4.9. Sociodemographic differences in migration policy attitudes 23

Figure 4.10. Political differences in general attitudes about migration..... 24

Figure 4.11. Political differences in migration policy attitudes..... 25

Figure 4.12. Populist radical right voters want to close national borders for migrants from poor non-European countries 26

Figure 4.13. General attitudes about migrants by country in Europe (2002-2018) 28

Figure 4.14. Migration policy preferences regarding migrants from poor countries outside Europe – Western and Anglo-Saxon Europe (2014-2018)..... 30

Figure 4.15. Migration policy preferences regarding migrants from poor countries outside Europe – Scandinavian countries (2014-2018) 30

Figure 4.16. Migration policy preferences regarding migrants from poor countries outside Europe – Eastern Europe and Baltic countries (2014-2018) 31

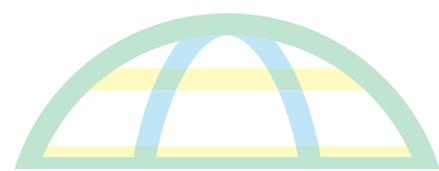
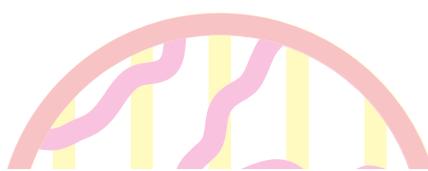
Figure 4.17. Migration policy preferences regarding migrants from poor countries outside Europe – Southern Europe (2014-2018) 32

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Overview of analysed survey questions 12

Abstract

This report examines the evolution in attitudes towards migrants and migration in Europe. Concretely, the report investigates and discusses the changes in the perception of migrants and attitudes towards migration between 2002-2018 using the European Social Survey data. Both the evolution of migration perceptions within countries and the cross-national evolution across European countries are discussed and illustrated visually. The analyses indicate that most Europeans are either ambivalent or relatively positive about migration. Further, important between-country differences are present in Europe. Central and Eastern European countries are especially negative about migration, and they have also grown more negative in the wake of the 2015-2016 refugee crisis. Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries, in contrast, hold more positive views. In fact, in most European countries, citizens have become more supportive of tolerant immigration policies over the examined period, though few are supportive of an open border policy. Finally, certain categories of citizens in the sample tend to exhibit lower levels of support for migration. Citizens with lower levels of income and education, (radical) right-leaning political attitudes, low levels of trust, and the elderly, are on average more negative about migrants and open border policies.





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1. Introduction

The 2015-2016 refugee crisis focused Europe's attention once more on the issue of migration. While Europe has always been characterised by migration, debates on the desirability of migration gained prominence again in the wake of the influx of refugees, caused by the Syrian conflict (De Coninck, Ogan & d'Haenens, 2021; Rea et al., 2019). Even before this crisis, the number of people migrating to Europe was rising steadily, while emigration numbers remained stable (Eurostat, 2021). Hence, researchers and policymakers alike have been concerned about the societal consequences of this growing diversity. Populist and radical right parties have criticised migrants for causing higher crime levels, and undermining the national culture (Mudde, 2013; Rydgren, 2013). Within national media, news covering migrant groups tends to be negative, and often connected with topics such as crime or terrorism (Damstra, Jacobs, Boukes & Vliegthart, 2021; Meeusen & Jacobs, 2017). Additionally, prejudiced frames are observed on online media, where citizens discuss the cost of migration for their countries (Yantseva, 2020).

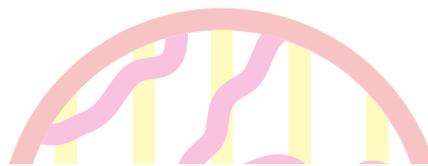
Given these negative narratives on migration, the question could be raised what European citizens think about migrants. Are Europeans, on average, sceptical about migration? At first sight, it looks like Europe is in an impasse, where negative sentiments are being fostered by anti-immigrant parties and populist discourse. The OPPORTUNITIES project (Horizon 2020) argues that such crises can also lead to opportunities. A dramatic migration challenge can be redirected towards an opportunity to reiterate European values, and to change the way European citizens think about migration. In particular, the OPPORTUNITIES project seeks to support a shift from a crisis and negative perspective on migration and refugees to a fair dialogue on migration and integration. OPPORTUNITIES aims to change narratives on migration through creating fair narrative conditions, where all stakeholders have an equal say, and through the organisation of cross-talks. In these cross-talks, citizens, migrants and stakeholder organisations will pilot the concept of a level telling field and create more welcoming narratives on migration at the local level.

This report contributes to the OPPORTUNITIES project, through analysing citizens' perceptions of migrants in Europe over the past two decades (2002-2018) on the basis of the European Social Survey. It is relevant to study migration attitudes in the context of migration narratives, as attitudes shape narrative conditions. When citizens hold negative views on migration, or when migrants are perceived as a threat, this provides fertile ground for hostile narratives. Moreover, dominant narratives or framing in the media and political debates shape citizens' attitudes on migration, leading to self-reinforcing feedback loops (Bresnahan, Yan, Zhu & Hussain, 2019; De Coninck, Mertens & d'Haenens, 2021; Frazer, Robinson, & Knobloch-Westernwick, 2021; Jacobs, Hooghe & de Vroome, 2017). For instance, the consumption of newspapers and TV news that apply more neutral frames on migration, has been associated with more positive attitudes towards migrants (De Coninck, Mertens & d'Haenens, 2021). These feedback loops between negative narratives and attitudes also have political consequences: when a more hostile atmosphere towards migration is present, policymakers tend to implement stricter migration policies (Esipova et al., 2015).

In this report, we contribute to the tasks set out in Work Package 4 of the OPPORTUNITIES project, which stipulates the following research goals:

- Understand the evolution in changing attitudes towards migration across European countries.
- Understand the impact of the refugee crisis of 2015-2016 on citizens' perceptions of migration and migrants.
- Identify how factors at the individual level are associated with citizens' perceptions of migration and changes therein.

In the following section, we give a short overview of the literature on migration attitudes, and define the key concepts used in this study. Afterwards, we present data and analyses on the main trends in migration attitudes in Europe during the last two decades.



2. What do Europeans think about migration?

Conceptual framework

In the face of the large influx of migrants and refugees in 2015-2016, and increasingly polarised and sceptical narratives of migration in media and political debates (Crawley & McMahon, 2016), the question as to what Europeans think about migrants and immigration policies became prominent. The challenge is that it is often unclear what people mean when talking about migration. Terms such as “regular” and “irregular” migration, refugees versus economic migration, expats, “deserving” migrants, open versus closed migration policy, resettlement policies, family reunification etc. are all commonly applied (Jeannet, Heidland & Ruhs, 2021; Rea et al. 2019). This immediately points to the fact that migration is a multifaceted process, and in consequence, that attitudes towards migration itself are also multidimensional. In what follows, a short overview is provided of what types of migration attitudes are commonly studied, and which contextual and individual level drivers shape these attitudes (Meuleman, Abts, Slootmaeckers & Meeusen, 2019; Van Hootegeem, Meuleman & Abts, 2020). It should be noted that these definitions follow the definitions included in the glossary on migration developed by the OPPORTUNITIES project¹.

9

In this report, and studies on migration in general, a first and important **distinction** is made between preferences regarding **refugees** in particular, and **migrants** in general. A refugee is “*a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country*” (UNHCR, 2021). A migrant, in contrast, in the legal European definition, is a person who establishes his/her residence in a third country or moves back from a third country to his/her own country (European Commission, 2020). As such, the term “migrant” is much more interchangeable, and may refer to various types of individuals and forms of mobility (family reunification, economic migration, studying abroad...). In the case of refugees, it becomes more obvious that such individuals had to flee their own country for humanitarian reasons, implying that attitudes on refugees may be more clear-cut, and welcoming. In consequence, researchers tend to make a distinction between the types of newcomers they are studying: refugees or migrants in general (Jeannet, Heidland & Ruhs, 2021; Van Hootegeem, Meuleman & Abts, 2020).

A next important distinction in migration attitudes lies in **individual threat perceptions**: to what extent do citizens believe that migration is posing a threat for themselves and their country? **Group conflict theory** (GCT) (Blumer, 1958; Blalock, 1967) posits that people may feel anxious about migration. The “in-group”, so the argument goes, wants to protect their social structures from the competition of “outsiders”. The main assumption behind this theory is that valuable societal resources within a society are scarce (jobs, housing, access to healthcare, etc.), and that migration increases competition over such valuable resources. Further, members of the in-group seek to protect their social identity, irrespective of whether they can safeguard their socioeconomic position (Scheepers, Gijssbert & Coenders, 2008). In consequence, the “ingroup” or “native” population is expected to look at migration from an economic and cultural threat perspective.

Migration may firstly cause **economic threat perceptions**. Authors speculate that low-skilled migration leads to increased competition over blue-collar jobs, which makes the labour classes and

¹ . See <https://www.opportunitiesproject.eu/resources/glossary>.

lower income groups more negative about migration. Studies have also suggested that in dire economic times, citizens become more negative about migration in general (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Schneider, 2008; Semyonov, Rajiman, & Gorodzeisky, 2006), and are also more likely to vote for radical right parties that propose to reduce migration (Rooduijn & Burgoon, 2018). Citizens further tend to be reluctant to give migrants access to welfare state services (van Oorschot et al., 2017). In European countries where migrants are on average more likely to be unemployed or dependent on social benefits, citizens will reduce their support for income redistribution and social policies (Burgoon, 2014).

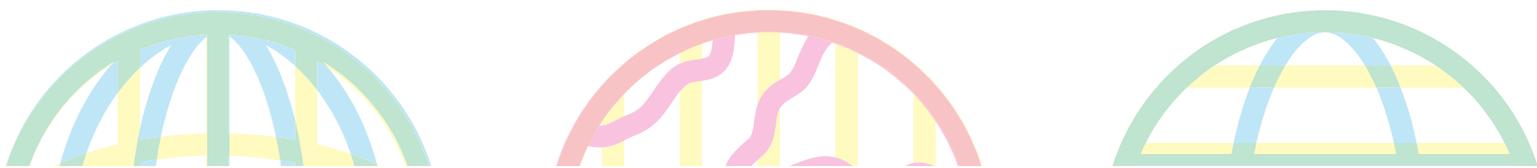
Secondly, citizens could also think that migration poses a **cultural or ethnic threat to their society**. They may seek to protect “Western values” from perceived undue outsider influences, such as “Islamisation”. Cultural or ethnic threat perceptions run along several lines. There are those citizens who are concerned with protecting their national culture, identity, and language. Others worry that migrants do not adhere to modern Western values, such as gender equality, or LGBTQ rights. Either way, migrants are assumed to have values that clash with the values of the receiving country (Blumer, 1958; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Van Hootegeem, Meuleman & Abts, 2020).

Following the group conflict theory, citizens’ migration preferences should thus be studied through threat perceptions: **to what extent do citizens think that migration poses a cultural or economic threat to one’s society?** These studies also tend to differentiate by **countries of origin of migrants**, as well as **individual attributes of migrants**. Migrants that are perceived as less threatening, because they, for instance, come from a neighbouring country, or bring in skills needed in one’s economy, will more likely be welcomed (Gorodzeisky & Semyonov, 2016; Van der Linden, 2017; Van Hootegeem, Meuleman & Abts, 2020).

A closely related literature studies migration preferences through the lens of **deservingness**. In this field of the literature, it is also argued that attitudes on migration depend on the individual characteristics of migrants. Migrants that share the values of the host population, who are motivated to learn the local language and customs, or migrants that will contribute to the economic growth and social capital of the host nation in the future, are more likely to be welcomed (De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020).

Finally, there are studies which look beyond negative or positive perceptions of migrants and migration, and that look specifically at **policy preferences**. These studies examine to what extent countries should have an open border policy, what levels of migration can be acceptable, and what forms of integration policies should be implemented. The drivers of these policy preferences tend to be closely aligned with those of migration attitudes in general. Policy preferences tend to be more welcoming when migrants are seen as deserving, or when humanitarian concerns are causing their migration (Jeannet, Heidland & Ruhs, 2021; Rea et al. 2019; Van Hootegeem, Meuleman & Abts, 2020).

What should be clear from this brief overview of the literature on **migration preferences or attitudes** (terms which will be used interchangeably in this report), is that these are **multidimensional**. Consequently, this report examines several (changing) attitudes. The most important distinction this report makes is between preferences regarding **migration overall, and migration policy preferences**. Further, where possible, it distinguishes between threat perceptions (economic and cultural threats), and attitudes towards different groups of migrants (refugees, migrants from the same ethnic group as the host population, etc.). In what follows, a detailed overview of the data and methods is presented.



3. Data and structure of the report

This report uses the European Social Survey (ESS) to analyse the following research questions: what attitudes towards migration exist across European countries, and did they change in the past two decades? What was the impact of the refugee crisis of 2015-2016 on these attitudes? Do we observe differences between citizens? The European Social Survey is a high-quality international survey, that includes questions on a variety of social, political and economic topics, including on migration preferences (European Social Survey, 2021). It has been organised every two years since 2002 and covers a wide range of European countries in terms of geography (Eastern/Western/Central/etc.) and EU-membership. In total, 9 waves have currently been organised in over 30 countries, and the last wave dates back from 2018. Over 400,000 respondents have already participated in this study. The ESS' high quality is guaranteed using probability sampling (the ESS is representative for national populations of 15-plus and over), and the use of face-to-face interviews (rather than online surveying). In the 2002 and 2014 waves, additional question batteries on attitudes towards migration were incorporated in the survey. In sum, the ESS provides key information on citizens' attitudes towards migration. Appendix A provides more information on the survey and its participating countries.

The empirical sections are structured into three major parts. **First**, the report descriptively explores **to what extent citizens think positively about migration, and what migration policies they prefer**. Average values between citizens and countries are explored. These analyses investigate to what extent citizens think that migration has a positive impact on their country (e.g., does migration lead to a more prosperous economy, or a more diverse cultural life), or rather poses a threat, in keeping with group conflict theory. The analyses also explore what groups of migrants are welcomed by European citizens: individuals from their own ethnicity or from a different ethnic background? The analyses differentiate between attitudes regarding refugees and other types of migrants. Table 3.1 provides the reader with a detailed overview of all ESS questions under examination.

The second section examines to what extent **structural differences between citizens matter to their perceptions/attitudes on migration?** Several authors have pointed out that ideological and social cleavages between citizens are crucial to explain migrant attitudes. In keeping with group conflict theory, the general hypothesis is that citizens that are more "well-to-do" (e.g., are richer, or better educated), left-wing, in favour of globalisation, and citizens who feel more connected to their society, are more positive about migration. These citizens are expected to be more positive, because they dispose of more social and economic resources, are more tolerant, and less prejudiced about migration. In consequence, they feel less threatened by it (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Meuleman, Abts, Slootmaeckers & Meeusen, 2019; Rustenbach, 2010). Hence, this section explores if citizens' political preferences, and their social background explain differences in their migration preferences. The first two sections employ cross-sectional ESS data, and report statistics on the basis of the latest year available (which for most cases is 2018, otherwise 2014) for Europe as a whole, and per country.

Table 3.1 Overview of analysed survey questions

Migration variable	Answering categories
Migration policy preferences (asked in all rounds)	
<p>To what extent do you think your country...</p> <p>A) Should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most people from your country to come and live here</p> <p>B) How about people of a different race or ethnic group?</p> <p>C) How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow many to come and live here 2. Allow some 3. Allow a few 4. Allow none
General attitudes about migrants in Europe (asked in all rounds)	
<p>Would you say it is generally bad or good for your country's economy that people come to live here from other countries?</p>	<p>10-point scale, which ranges from bad for the economy (0), to good for the economy (10)</p>
<p>Would you say that your country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?</p>	<p>10-point scale, which ranges from cultural life undermined (0), to cultural life enriched (10)</p>
<p>Would you say that your country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?</p>	<p>10-point scale, which ranges from worse place to live (0), to better place to live (10)</p>
Refugee policy preferences (asked in 2002 and 2014)	
<p>The government should be generous in judging people's applications for refugee status</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree strongly 2. Agree 3. Neither agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Disagree strongly
<p>Granted refugees should be entitled to bring close family members</p>	
<p>Most refugee applicants are not in real fear of persecution in their own country</p>	
Perceived impact of migration (asked in 2002 and 2014)	
<p>Are your country's crime problems made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries?</p>	<p>10-point scale, which ranges from crime problems made worse (0), to crime problems made better (10)</p>
<p>Most people who come to live here work and pay taxes. They also use health and welfare services. On balance, do you think people who come here take out more than they put in or put in more than they take out?</p>	<p>10-point scale, which ranges from generally take out more (0), to generally put in more (10)</p>
<p>Would you say that people who come to live here generally take jobs away from workers in [country], or generally help to create new jobs?</p>	<p>10-point scale, which ranges from take jobs away (0), to create new jobs (10)</p>
Qualifications for immigration preferences (asked in 2002 and 2014)	
<p>Please tell me how important you think each of these things should be in deciding whether someone born, brought up and living outside your country should be able to come and live here. How important should it be for them to</p> <p>A) Have good educational qualifications</p> <p>B) Be able to speak the country's official language</p> <p>C) Come from a Christian background</p> <p>D) Be white</p> <p>E) Have work skills needed in your country</p> <p>F) Committed to the way of life in your country</p>	<p>10-point scale, which ranges from extremely unimportant (0), to extremely important (10)</p>



The third and final section turns to **time trends**: how did citizens' migration attitudes change over the last two decades? Did attitudes change because of the 2015-2016 refugee crisis? The analyses in this section compare migration policy preferences between 2014 and 2018 (before and after the refugee crisis), and study if a (budding) shift in attitudes is occurring. They also explore trends in migration attitudes over the longer time period, from 2002 to 2018. This analysis helps to determine which European countries exhibit more negative attitudes toward migration over time, or whether some countries became more supportive of migration.

Methodologically, the report relies on descriptive analysis of patterns and trends. The presented averages and percentages in the figures below are weighted to ensure that they are representative for the populations under study.

4. Findings

This section of the report gives an overview of the main attitudes on migration that exist in Europe. It focuses on the individual drivers of migration attitudes, and provides key trends over time.

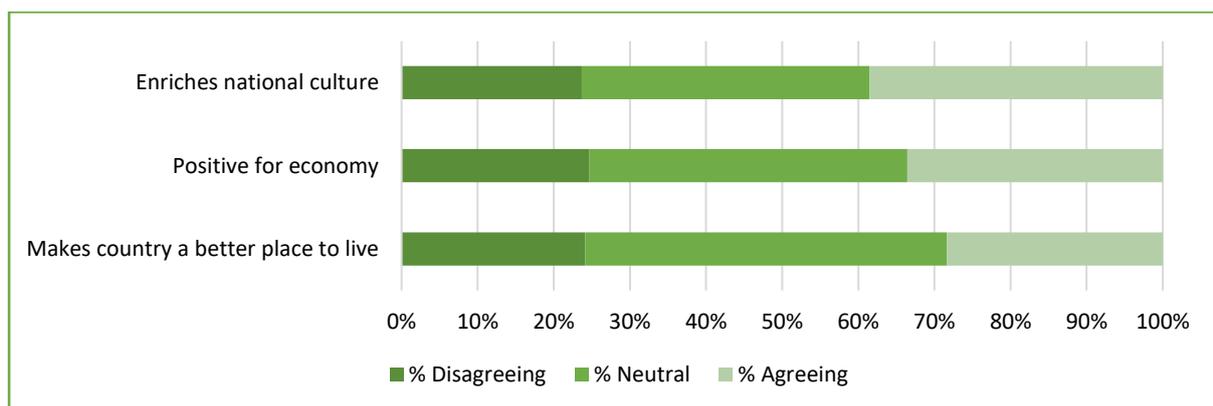
4.1 Attitudes on migration: a look at the data

Figure 4.1 provides a general overview of migration attitudes in Europe in 2018. It depicts citizens' perceptions about how positive migration is for their country: is it positive for their national culture, the economy, and their country as a place to live? These questions are designed to tap into migration threat perceptions, as posited by the group conflict theory. First, about 25% of the respondents believe that migration is a bad thing or "threatening" for their country. Altogether, about 50% of the respondents tend to hold a rather neutral view on migration, and almost a third of the respondents are positive about migration. These findings mirror previous research, which found that not all Europeans are sceptical about migration (Heath & Richards, 2016; Rea et al., 2019), and tend more positive than the negative frames applied in the media suggest them to be (De Coninck, Mertens & d'Haenens, 2021). Further, the respondents do not seem to make a distinction between these indicators on the perceived consequences of migration: percentages are similar for economic, societal, and cultural threat perceptions.

The questions on migration threat perceptions reported in Figure 4.1 were included in every wave of the European Social Survey, and will be explored in more details in the following sections (4.2 and 4.3) when the report looks at differences between citizens, and time trends.

Figure 4.1. General attitudes about migrants in Europe (2018)

Percentages reported



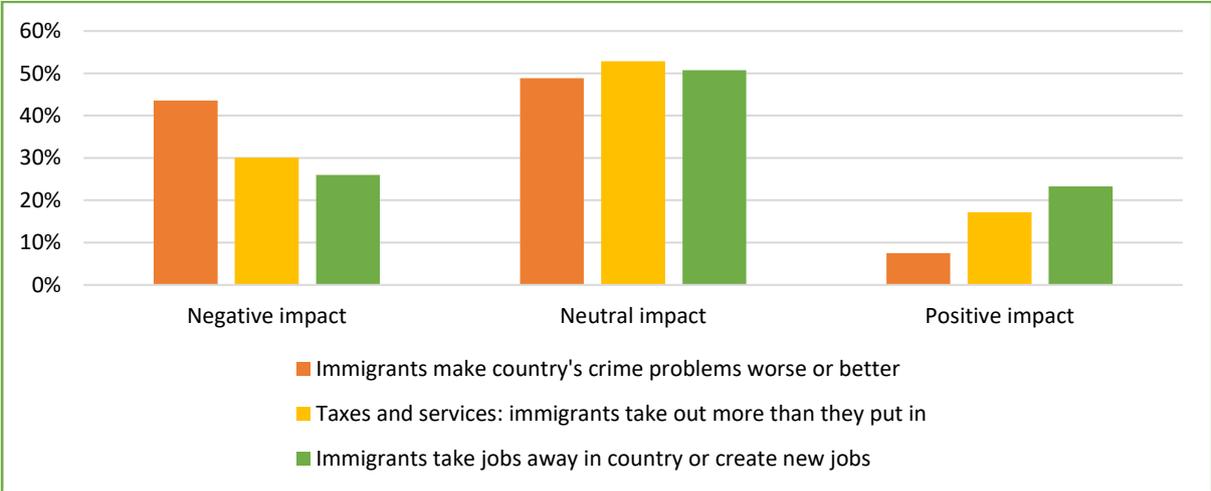
Note: weighted data reported (dweight). Original questions were on a 0-10 point scale. Original values are recoded such that 0-3 implies disagreeing, 4-6 indicates being neutral, and 7-10 indicates being positive about migration.

Source: European Social Survey, 2018.

Figure 4.2, analyses questions on general migration preferences that were only asked in two specific waves of the European Social Survey. These two waves include specific question batteries on migration attitudes. Figure 4.2 reports 2014 data on the perceived impact of migration on one's country: does it lead to more crime? Do migrants profit more from taxes and services than the native population? Do they create new jobs? These questions are designed to tap into threat and deservingness perceptions of migrants. They are particularly relevant to study, as these perceptions can have important consequences for the extent to which citizens feel positive about migration, or support open migration policies (De Coninck, Mertens & d'Haenens, 2021).

Figure 4.2. Perceived impact of migration on crime levels, taxes and services, and number of jobs in country

Percentages reported



Note: weighted data reported (dweight). Original questions were on a 0-10 point scale. Original values are recoded such that 0-3 implies disagreeing, 4-6 indicates being neutral, and 7-10 indicates being positive about migrants.

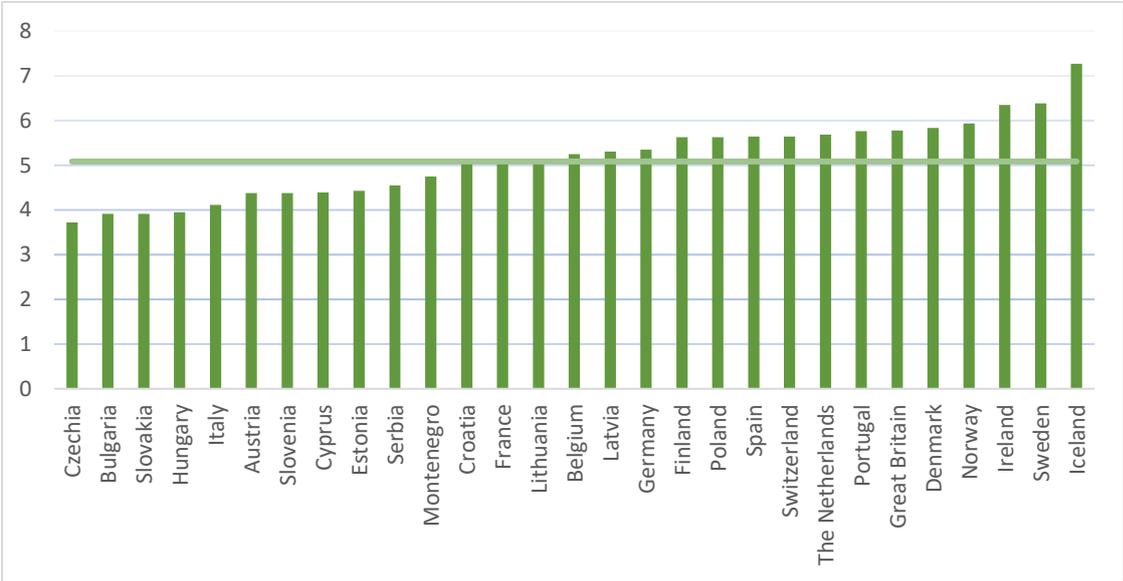
Source: European Social Survey, 2014.

From Figure 4.2, it can be observed that most respondents tend to be relatively neutral about the impact of migration on the three areas under analysis. There is also a subset of the population that is negative about migration across the board: roughly 25-30% of the respondents in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 rated all possible consequences of migration as negative. There is one exception to this: many Europeans believe that immigration leads to higher crime rates. Over 40% of the respondents strongly believe that more immigration means more crime, and less than 10% of the respondents indicate that immigration might alleviate crime levels.

Thus far, the Figures mapped attitudes about migration for the European population as a whole. However, important **between-country differences** are present too. Figure 4.3 depicts country level averages on the question if migration makes one's country a better place to live (2018 data reported). The original questions ranged from 0 (worse place to live) to 10 (better place to live). The horizontal line depicts the European average (i.e., the average value on this question across all respondents).

Figure 4.3. General attitudes about migrants by country in Europe (2018). Do migrants make the country a better place to live in?

Average values (0-10 scale) reported



Note: weighted data reported (dweight). The question was asked on a 0-10 point scale, where 0 indicates makes the country a worse place to live, and 10 indicates makes the country a better place to live. The horizontal line depicts the European average. Source: European Social Survey, 2018.

The European average is 5.08 on this question, which indicates that attitudes towards migration are not necessarily hostile – on average – on the European continent. Countries with the most welcoming attitude towards migration are found in the north of Europe: The Scandinavian countries (e.g., Iceland or Sweden), and the Anglo-Saxon countries (cf. Ireland and the UK). However, also several Western (e.g., Germany, Switzerland) and Southern (e.g., Spain and Portugal) European countries have country averages that are well above the European average. At the other side of the spectrum, many Eastern and Balkan countries, but also Italy and Austria, record negative opinions about migration: respondents of these countries, on average, believe that migration makes their country a worse place to live.

Several explanations exist for such cross-national differences. First, it appears that economically well-to-do countries (e.g., Sweden) are on average more positive about migration, which is in line with the ethnic threat argument. Second, the extent to which countries are historically migrant-receiving countries (e.g., Great Britain), and their level of social cohesion (e.g., Norway) also seem to lead to more positive attitudes (Claassen & McLaren, 2021; Rustenbach, 2010). In addition to historical and cultural explanations, it can be speculated that the politicisation of migration and refugees are a cause of these cross-national differences. A more negative political rhetoric, and a polarisation of the issue of migration, could lead to more negative attitudes towards migration, which might explain the more hostile views in, for instance, Austria or Hungary (Rea et al., 2019).

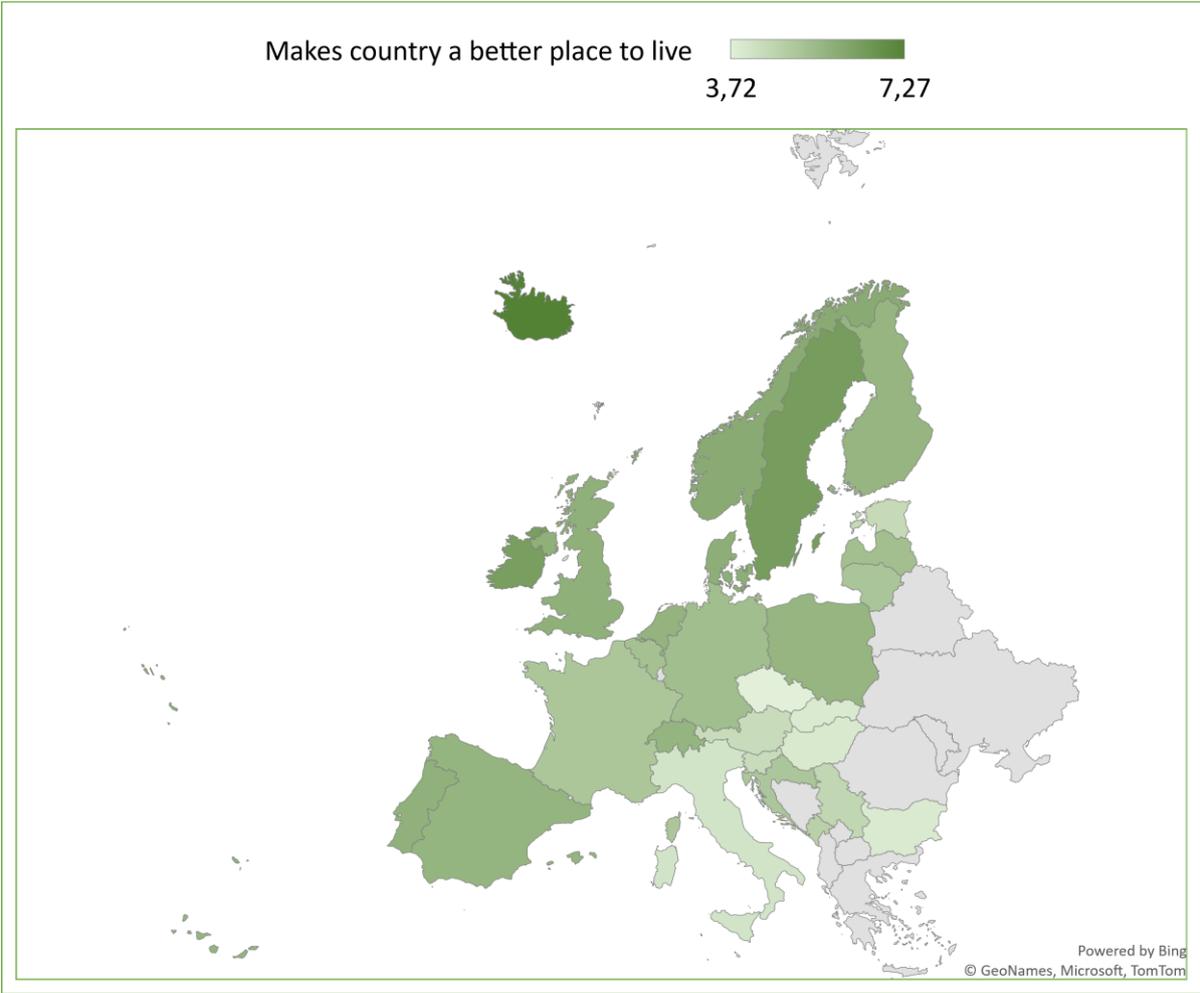
Figure 4.4 presents these averages on a European map. In this map, it becomes even clearer that attitudes towards migration are strongly structured geographically: negative attitudes tend to be



clustered in Central and Eastern Europe. Within subsequent reports of the OPPORTUNITIES project, we will explore the explanatory factors behind these geographical divides more in depth.

Figure 4.4. General attitudes about migrants by country in Europe (2018). Do migrants make the country a better place to live in? Geographical distribution

Average values (0-10 scale) reported.



Note: weighted data reported (dweight). The question was asked on a 0-10 point scale, where 0 indicates makes the country a worse place to live, and 10 indicates makes the country a better place to live.

Source: European Social Survey, 2018.

Above Figures trace average levels of attitudes towards migration, but do not provide information about citizens' policy preferences. **Policy preferences** on migration can be defined as preferences on who should be allowed to enter one's country, and when? In that regard, Figure 4.5 depicts to what extent respondents think that different types of migrants should be allowed to enter their country, whereby a distinction between three types of migrants is made: migrants with the same ethnic background as the majority population, migrants with a different ethnic background as the majority population, and migrants from poorer countries outside of Europe. The advantage of making this distinction is that one can study to what extent "ethnic threat" concerns are part and parcel of citizens' migration policy preferences. If citizens fear "out-groups", the analyses should point at lower support for migration of other ethnicities (Jeannet, Heidland & Ruhs, 2021; Meuleman, Abts, Sloopmaeckers & Meeusen, 2019).

The findings indicate that over 70% of Europeans would allow at least some migration of people of the same ethnic "in-group", but this number drops to 50% in the case of the different "out-groups" under study. Altogether, Europeans are wary of too much migration: even for the "in-group", only about 25% of the respondents would allow many migrants. Hence, **Europeans do not favour, on average, an open-border migration policy.** Further,

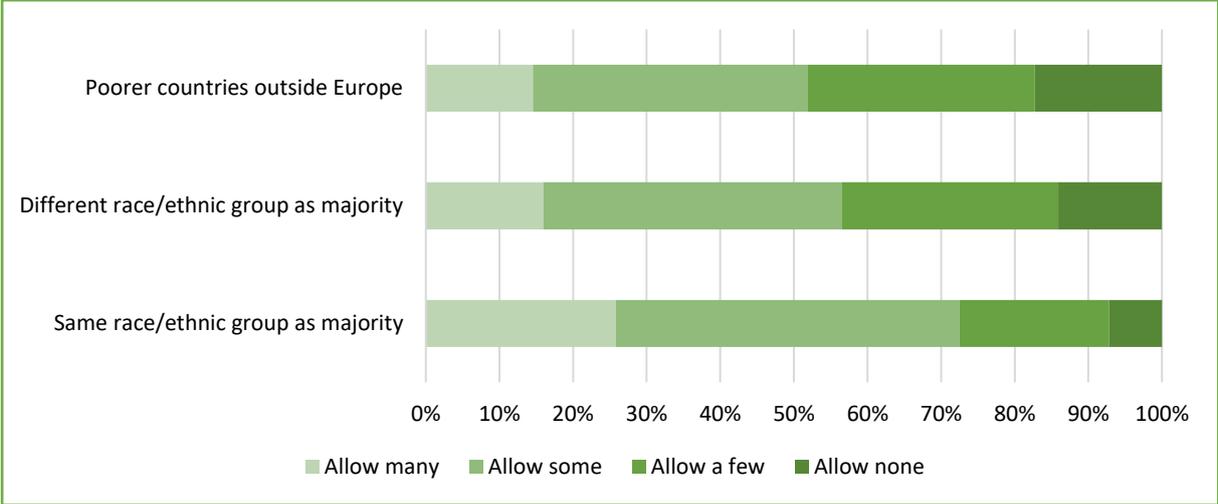


Figure 4.6 plots the desirable characteristics of migrants. From this

Figure 4.6, it becomes clear that **migrants who are allowed to enter the country, are those who are perceived as deserving** (in keeping with De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020). Respondents tend to favour those migrants that are well-educated and possess the necessary skills to benefit the host country's economy. Important to note is **that most Europeans do not think it is important to have a Christian background or be white. What matters is whether a migrant can integrate him/herself.** This is exemplified by the strong consensus that a commitment to the way of life of the country, and being able to speak the national language, are crucial conditions for qualification for migration.

Figure 4.5. Migration policy preferences in Europe (2018). To what extent should your country allow people from...

Percentages reported

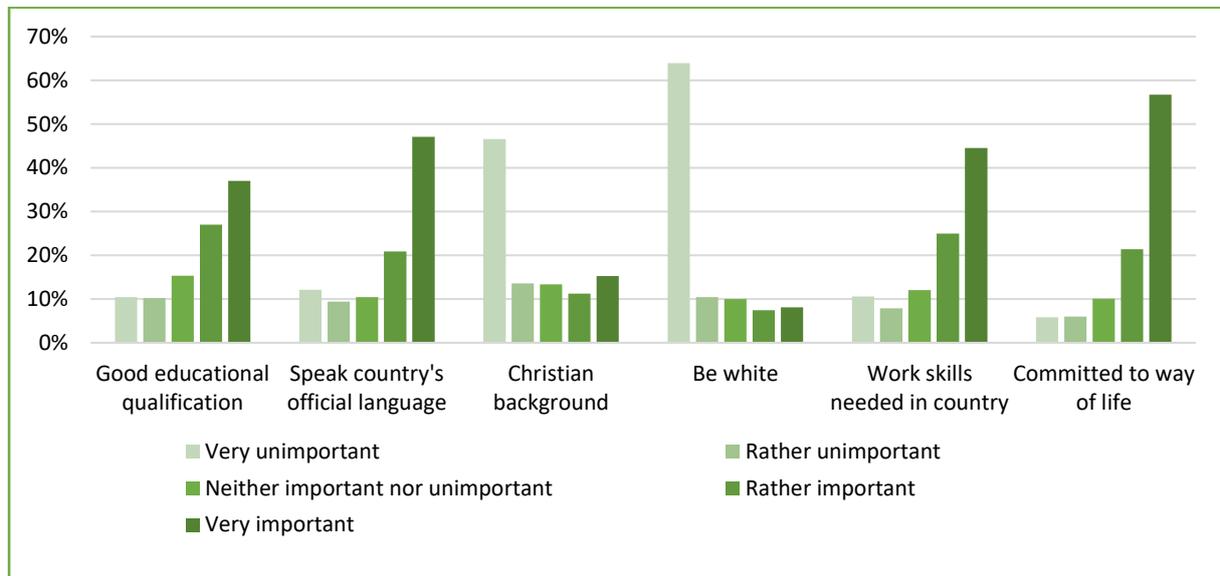


Note: weighted data reported (dweight).
 Source: European Social Survey, 2018.



Figure 4.6. Qualification for immigration in Europe (2014)

Percentages reported



Note: weighted data reported (dweight). Original 0-10 point scale (0: extremely unimportant; 10: extremely important) recoded such that 0-2 is very unimportant, 3-4 is rather unimportant, 5 is neutral, 6-7 is rather important, 8-10 is very important.

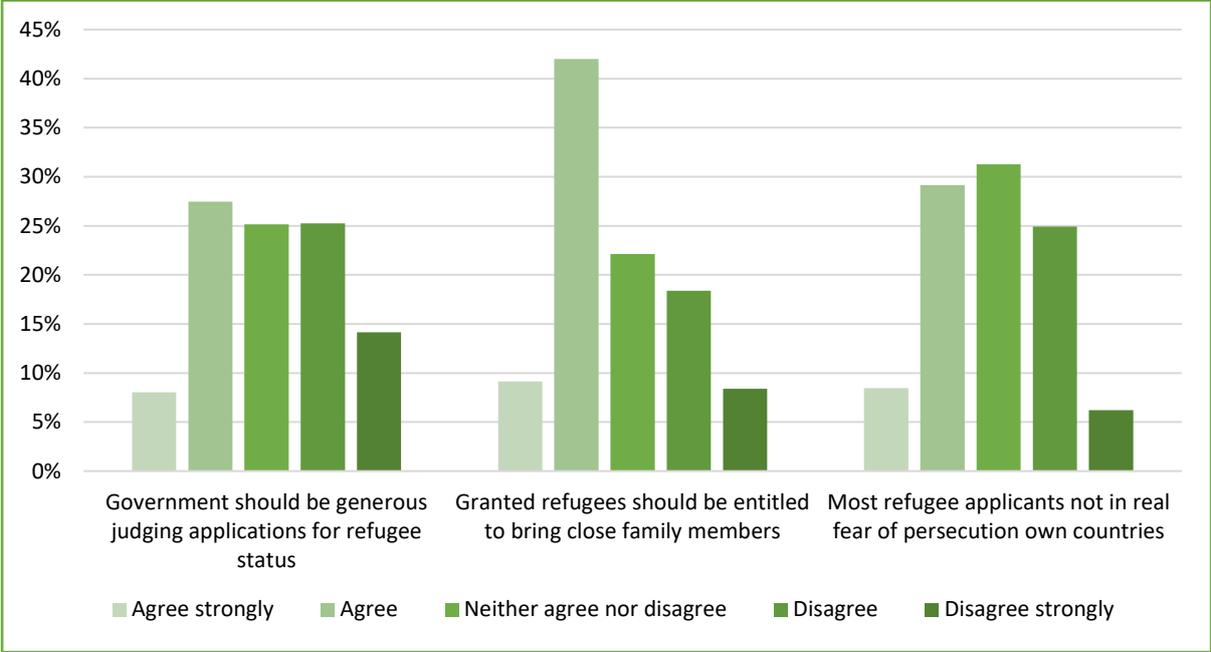
Source: European Social Survey, 2014.

Figure 4.7, presents **policy preferences regarding refugees** in particular. It is important to make this distinction, because the logic behind public attitudes towards this specific subgroup of migrants is different. Refugee policy preferences are more strongly driven by a humanitarian logic, as refugees are fleeing from danger in their home country. In consequence, past research has highlighted that the moral dimension regarding refugee preferences is more salient, and can motivate citizens to accept refugees, even though they do not think migration overall is in the national interest (Jeannet, Heidland & Ruhs, 2021). Hence, it could be expected that there will be more support for policies dealing with refugees in particular, rather than migrants as a whole. On the other hand, as refugees mainly come from conflict-ridden countries outside Europe, the opposite could also be true. As refugees tend to be poorer, have a different religion and ethnic background from the majority population, more restrictive policy preferences could also be observed (De Coninck et al., 2018). Either way, the literature on migration policy preferences argues that refugee policy preferences are distinct from migration policy preferences as a whole.

Figure 4.7 plots to what extent respondents think that governments should be generous when dealing with refugee applications. About 35% of all respondents agree with this statement, 25% are neutral, and about 40% disagree with this statement. This response pattern roughly reflects the answers on the general attitudes towards migration questions, and on the questions on overall migration policy preferences. **About one third of the respondents are (strongly) in favour of accepting refugees, but an equally sized group remains sceptical.** This is also mirrored in citizens' opinions on whether refugees are in any real danger in their home countries. Over one third of the respondents actually believe that refugees are not in any danger, and less than half believe that they are in danger. Both findings might reflect ongoing media debates about refugees, and the perceived symbolic or security threat they pose to European societies (d'Haenens, Joris & Heinderyckx, 2019; Kovar, 2020).

Figure 4.7. Refugee policy preferences (2016)

Percentages reported



Note: weighted data reported (dweight).
 Source: European Social Survey, 2016.

At the same time, respondents are on average supportive of the idea that refugees can bring their close family members to Europe. **Once refugees are seen as deserving (cf. their application was approved), respondents tend to favour a (relatively) generous refugee policy.** This finding is in line with previous studies on settlement deservingness, which found that citizens are on average supportive of refugee policies if the latter are perceived as being in a “needy” situation (De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020; Jeannet, Heidland & Ruhs, 2021).

To conclude, this section explored whether the narrative of crisis, which has been dominant in migration debates since the 2015-2016 refugee crisis, is reflected in the public opinion. Thus far, a nuanced picture has emerged. Altogether, Europeans are relatively positive about migrants, and favour policies that welcome migrants and refugees – to some extent. On the basis of the available data, no strong differences between how Europeans think about migrants in general, and refugees in particular are uncovered. Some European countries are more positive about migration than others (e.g., Scandinavian countries versus Central European countries). There also seems to be a subset of the population that is especially critical of accepting migrants or refugees. The next section turns to the question on who are the people that express more negative, and positive views.



4.2 Attitudes on migration: structural cleavages between citizens are present

As discussed thus far in this report, attitudes towards migration are multidimensional. In that light, despite the clear between-country differences discussed in the previous section, it is equally true that important within-country differences in migration preferences are present (Gorodzeisky & Semyonov, 2016; Heath & Richards, 2016). This section takes stock of structural cleavages in European migration attitudes, and considers the driving forces behind citizens' migration preferences at the individual level. In line with the previous section, a distinction is made between policy preferences, and attitudes about migration in general.

The question of migration has been politically divisive in Europe for decades. In consequence, researchers have sought to explore what is driving migration preferences. Group conflict and social identity theories have suggested that **causes of migration preferences are closely aligned with threat perceptions**. Although studies use different terminologies, key causes of migration preferences boil down to whether citizens believe that migrants do or do not pose a threat for themselves or their country (Meuleman, Abts, Sloopmaeckers and Meeusen, 2018; Rustenbach, 2010; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001).

Threat perceptions may first and foremost be generated through **economic competition**. Citizens that dispose of more resources, tend to be more tolerant about migration. For instance, more educated migrants meet more tolerant attitudes from locals, because education provides citizens with knowledge and skills that facilitate entry in the labour market, while citizens with a higher income are less worried about the economic competition migrants pose. Further, higher educated citizens tend to be more open towards diversity and hold more liberal attitudes in general, regardless of economic competition (Ersanilli & Präg, 2021; Gorodzeisky & Semyonov, 2016; Rustenbach, 2010).

Threat perceptions are also caused by feelings of **cultural marginality and societal integration**. When citizens feel that they are part and parcel of their society, and can shape the direction that their society is heading towards, they tend to feel less threatened by growing diversity. There is ample research demonstrating that citizens who have high levels of trust in other people and institutions, are more positive about migration. Further, being in touch with migrants may also lead to more supportive preferences (Allport, 1954; Ivarsflaten, 2005; McLaren, 2012; Rustenbach, 2010). Racial prejudice, and the sentiment that one's national identity is under threat, in contrast, undermine welcoming attitudes towards migrants (Meuleman, Abts, Sloopmaeckers & Meeusen, 2018).

Citizens' **political affiliation** also plays a crucial role. Right-leaning citizens, and populist radical right voters especially, tend to be more sceptical about migration, and they often vote for right-wing parties because the latter promise to curb levels of migration (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Rydgren, 2013). Citizens who favour EU-integration, in contrast, tend to be favourable of living in a more diverse country. Citizens who participate more in politics, and feel that they have a say in how their country is governed, are also more likely to be positive about migration (Rustenbach, 2010).²

It should be noted that this overview of drivers of migration preferences is by no means exhaustive. The choice of this report is to zoom in on the role of sociodemographic and political characteristics, as these characteristics are closely associated to the group conflict theory discussed in the conceptual framework.

In terms of sociodemographic factors, the report will explore the role of income and education, which is expected to be related to more positive attitudes towards migration (cf. economic threat literature). Societal integration is operationalised through citizens' age, place of residency and gender. The elderly, men, and citizens living in rural areas are hypothesised to be more negative about migration, as previous research suggests that these groups feel less connected to society. In contrast, urban dwellers, and females are expected to be more positive about migrants (Czaika & Di Lillo, 2018; Meuleman, Abts, Sloopmaeckers & Meeusen, 2018; Van Hootegeem, Meuleman & Abts, 2020).

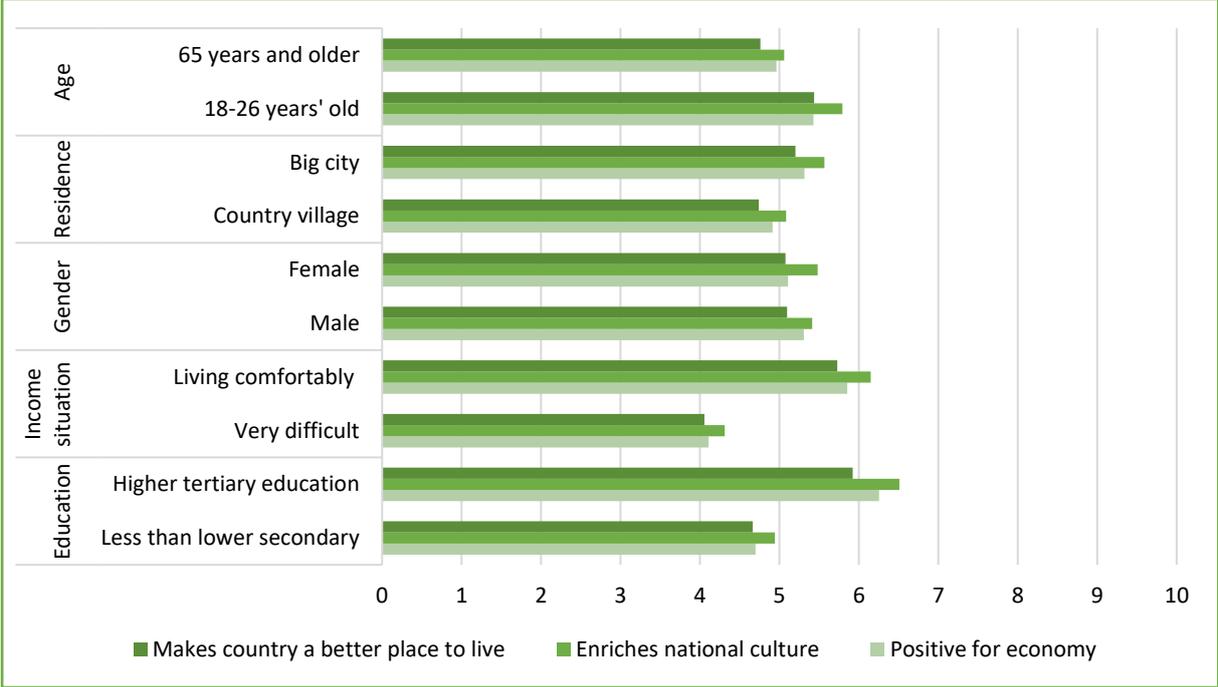
² Several authors point at the role of contextual effects, such as the influx of migrants in a country, and the role of economic conditions in explaining how citizens think about migrants (Claassen & McLaren, 2021; Gorodzeisky & Semyonov, 2016, Rustenbach, 2010). We will explore this in future reports.

The report further includes various indicators of the respondents' political affiliations. Specifically, the report analyses the role of one's political orientation (left-leaning, or right-leaning), and whether the respondents are in favour of EU integration. It also examines if political trust and trust in other people are positively associated with tolerant migration preferences. Finally, the report studies if more politically active people are also more in favour of migrants and open border policies. Appendix B offers an overview of how the report operationalises the sociodemographic and political characteristics.

The literature argues that economic competition and societal integration matter for citizens' opinions about migration. Hence, Figure 4.8 shows how sociodemographic differences shape general attitudes about migration, and in Figure 4.9, a similar exercise is conducted for migration policy preferences. The first observation is that the **elderly are, on average, more negative** about migration: they think that migration threatens their country, and they would be in favour of very restrictive migration policies. Differences between men and women, and rural or urban dwellers are less pronounced. **Urban dwellers are slightly more positive about migration** (but the difference is not very substantial), and **no differences between men and women** are observed. In sum, these indicators of **societal integration** point to some differences between citizens, though **differences remain relatively limited** (even between the age groups).

Figure 4.8. Sociodemographic differences in general attitudes about migration

Average values (0-10 scale) reported



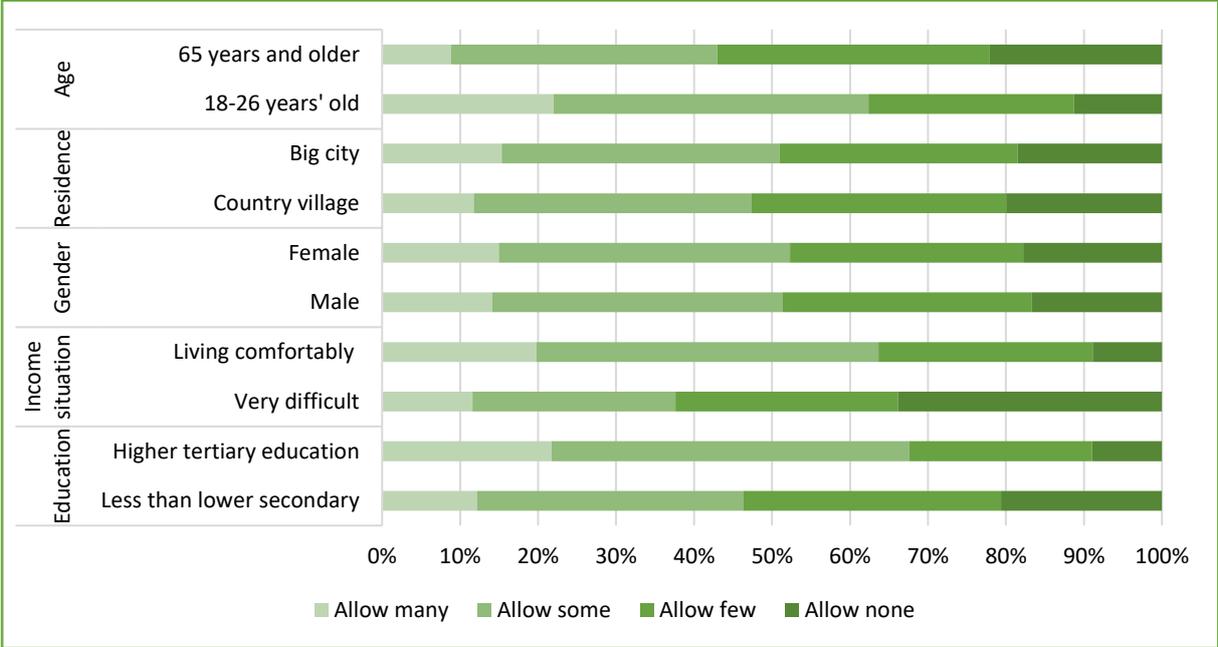
Note: weighted data reported (dweight). The questions were asked on a 0-10 point scale, where 0 indicates that immigration makes the country a worse place to live/cultural life is undermined/is bad for the economy, and 10 indicates that immigration makes the country a better place to live/cultural life is enriched/is positive for the economy.

Source: European Social Survey, 2018.



Figure 4.9. Sociodemographic differences in migration policy attitudes

Percentages reported



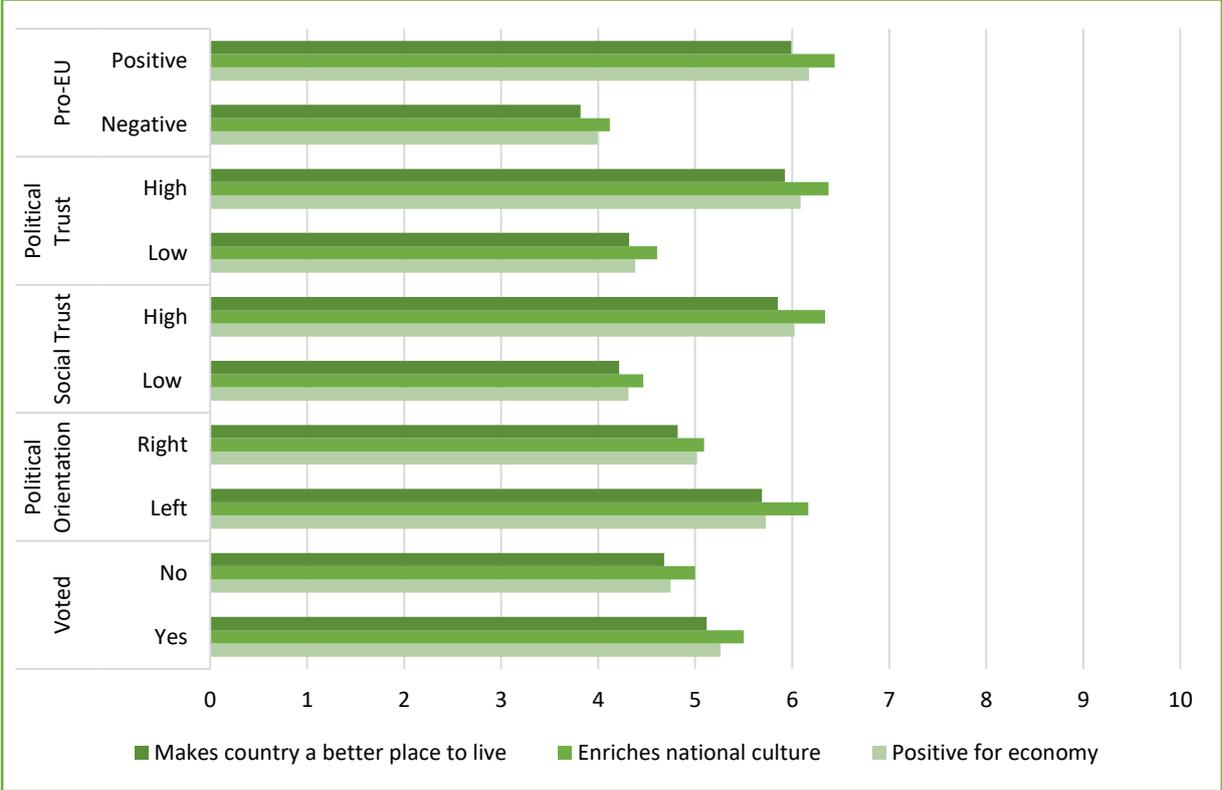
Note: weighted data reported (dweight).
 Source: European Social Survey, 2018.

Much larger differences are noted when examining the role of income and education: mean values on general migration attitudes are almost two points apart. The respondents with a low income (a very difficult income situation), have an average score of about 4 on the general migration attitudes questions, while the rich have an average of about 5.5 (living in a comfortable income situation) (on a 0-10 point scale). With regards to migration policies (Figure 4.9), about 65% of the higher educated and high-income respondents support lenient migration policies. Only about 40% of the poorer and shorter educated respondents are equally positive. In consequence, there is **clear evidence for the economic threat mechanism**, which specifies that citizens with more socioeconomic resources will feel less threatened by the potential economic competition of migrants.

Another important driver of citizens' support for migration, is connected to political differences. Hence, Figure 4.10 and Figure 4.11 focus on how political affiliations matter. These Figures depict strong differences between citizens. Left-leaning citizens, citizens that are in favour of EU integration, citizens that express high trust in others and in their political actors, and citizens who casted a vote during their last national elections, are all more positive about migration. They tend to believe that migration is good for their country, its economy and cultural life. Of these citizens, over 60% support an open migration policy (they would allow at least some, or many migrants). Political differences, in consequence, clearly matter, as migration attitudes seem to align with liberal and global attitudes, and trust. Furthermore, these political differences are more pronounced than differences based on indicators on societal integration and economic threat.

Figure 4.10. Political differences in general attitudes about migration

Average values (0-10 scale) reported



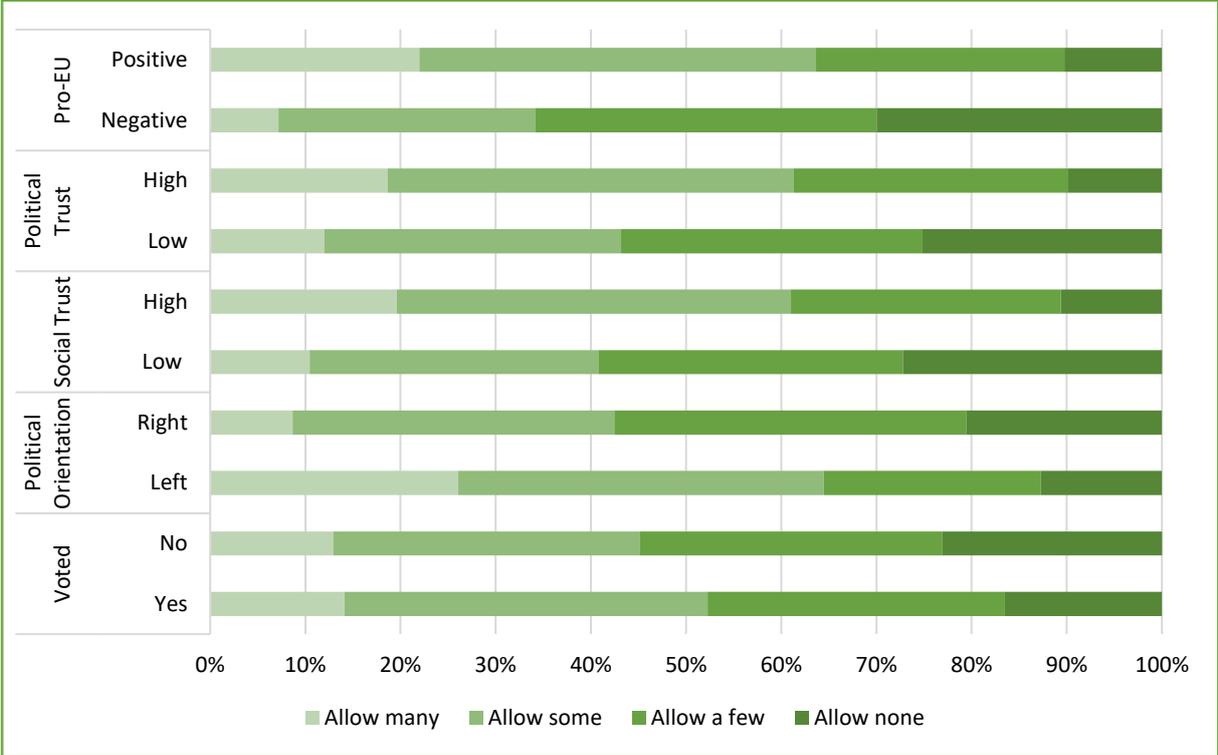
Note: weighted data reported (dweight). The questions were asked on a 0-10 point scale, where 0 indicates that immigration makes the country a worse place to live/cultural life is undermined/is bad for the economy, and 10 indicates that immigration makes the country a better place to live/cultural life is enriched/is positive for the economy. Original questions on political orientation, social trust, trust in parliament (political trust), and EU attitudes were on a 0-10 point scale. Original values recoded such that 0-3 implies left/low trust/negative EU attitude, 4-6 indicates being at the centre of the political spectrum/having average trust/neutral stance towards the EU, and 7-10 indicates being right-wing/high trust/pro-EU. Voting is yes, I turned out during last national parliamentary elections, or no, I did not do so.

Source: European Social Survey, 2018.



Figure 4.11. Political differences in migration policy attitudes

Percentages reported



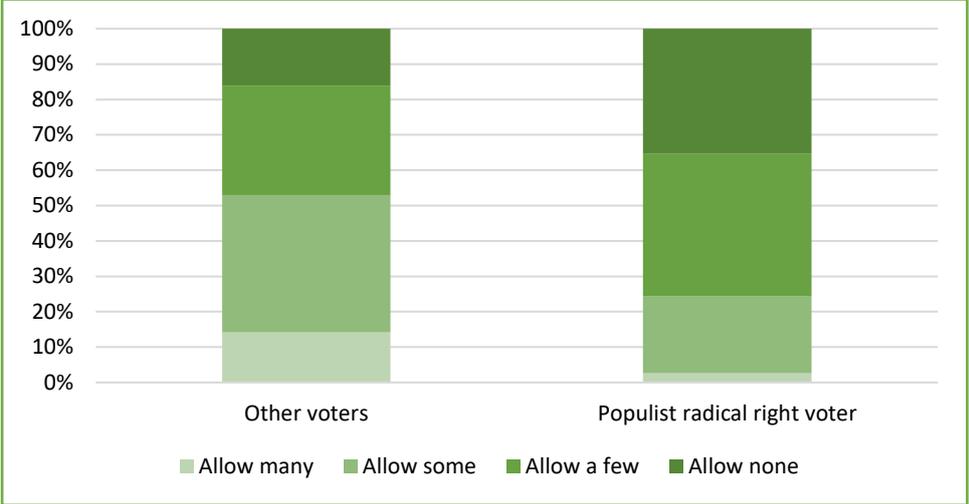
Note: weighted data reported (dweight). Original questions on political orientation, social trust, trust in parliament (political trust), and EU attitudes were on a 0-10 point scale. Original values recoded such that 0-3 implies left/low trust/negative EU attitude, 4-6 indicates being at the centre of the political spectrum/having average trust/neutral stance towards the EU, and 7-10 indicates being right-wing/high trust/pro-EU. Voting is yes, I turned out during last national parliamentary elections, or no, I did not do so. Source: European Social Survey, 2018.

Figure 4.12 examines an additional political cleavage in migration preferences. This Figure 4.12 investigates the claim that populist radical right voters are especially against migration (Rydgren, 2013)³. Clearly, they are: 35% of all populist radical right voters within the European Social Survey say that they do not want any migrants to be allowed in their country, versus about 15% in the remainder of the electorate (which includes other right-wing citizens). While over 50% of all other voters would allow at least some migrants to come to their country, only 25% of populist radical right voters support this. Figure 4.12 does not show if the 2015-2016 inflow led to an increase in vote shares for populist and radical parties, but these findings highlight that citizens’ political preferences are closely connected to their migration preferences.

³ See Appendix C for an overview of how we operationalised “populist radical right voting”.

Figure 4.12. Populist radical right voters want to close national borders for migrants from poor non-European countries

Percentages reported



Note: weighted data reported (dweight).
 Source: European Social Survey, 2016.

This section examined if several individual level characteristics are associated with specific migration preferences. It found clear evidence for the idea that economic threat perceptions, political affiliations, and social integration matter for citizens' opinions about migration. Additional analyses (not shown here), also confirm that these cleavages are present in each of the European countries under study (though the gap between citizens sometimes varies in size, depending on the country under examination). Hence, **disagreement on the issue of migration seems a likely feature of public debate and policymaking on migration in the years to come.**



4.3 Time trends

Section 4.1 explored country differences in migration attitudes. The present section studies the between-country differences in more depth and over time. Did Europeans change the way they think about migration, and migration policies? Did the refugee crisis of 2015-2016 make an impact?

4.3.1 Attitudes on migration across the years (2002-2018)

To study if citizens have changed their attitudes about migration in the last two decades, Figure 4.13, plots time trends by country. It shows the percentage of respondents that are positive about migration within a given year per country (in keeping with the cross-sectional statistics in Figure 4.1). To be more precise, the percentage of people who think that (a) their country's economy, or (b) cultural life is enriched by migration, or (c) who believe that migration makes their country a better place to live in, is reported. To explore whether we can descriptively see that the 2015-2016 refugee crisis had a structural impact on attitudes, a vertical line is added in 2015. If a shift in attitudes occurred, we should see a decrease (or increase) of positive attitudes towards migration in the years afterwards.

The results corroborate earlier analyses (e.g., Figure 4.4) that highlight the important between-country differences in terms of levels of positive attitudes about migration. Countries such as Iceland, Sweden or Ireland are much more positive about migration than countries such as Czechia or Slovakia. When it comes to time-trends, however, less clear regional dynamics can be observed. First, **in about half of the countries, migration attitudes have remained relatively stable between 2002 and 2018.** Levels may fluctuate to some degree, but no systematic upward or downward trend can be discovered. Countries with stable attitudes can be found in all European regions, and they include Austria, Czechia, Estonia, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Importantly, these countries are quite divergent in their initial levels of support for migration. In other words, it is not the case that the "positive countries" remained positive, while the countries with more negative perceptions recorded an increase in threat perceptions.

Second, there are more countries where an upward trend in positive attitudes on migration is present (i.e., Belgium, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden), **than countries where there is a clear downward trend** (Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, and Italy). These findings are in line with the conclusions of earlier work on the European Social Survey by Heath and Richards (2016). The countries where a downward trend is observed usually already had relatively low levels of support for migration (with the exception of Italy).

In sum, **the 2015-2016 crisis seems to have had a relatively limited impact on citizens' general attitudes on migration.** Figure 4.13 shows a (short-term) decline of positive attitudes about migration in, for instance, Austria, Estonia, Lithuania, or Norway. In most countries, however, the migration crisis does not lead to an immediately discernible decline in positive attitudes towards migration.

Finally, what is clear from this Figure 4.13 is that attitudes on migration are context-specific: no explicit European-wide trends are observed. Hence, national-level causes of changing attitudes should be sought, including changing narratives on migration, the role of government composition or partisan cues, etc. (Claassen & McLaren, 2021; Van Hootegeem, Meuleman & Abts, 2020). In that light, it could be especially meaningful to study why in some countries, such as Portugal, the general population has become significantly more positive about migration in recent years.

Figure 4.13. General attitudes about migrants by country in Europe (2002-2018)
 Percentages reported. The start of the migration crisis (2015) is indicated with a vertical line.



Note: weighted data reported (dweight). Original questions were on a 0-10 point scale, where 0 indicates that immigration makes the country a worse place to live/cultural life is undermined/is bad for the economy, and 10 indicates that immigration makes the country a better place to live/cultural life is enriched/is positive for the economy. The percentage of respondents who gave an answer between 7-10 are depicted here as being positive about migration per year and country.

Source: European Social Survey, 2002-2018.



4.3.2 Impact of the 2015-2016 refugee crisis on migration policy preferences

The 2015-2016 crisis seems to only have had a limited impact when analysing questions on migration attitudes in general. However, it could be the case that citizens did not update their normative preferences about migration, but became more concerned about its management. In keeping with this idea, this section studies if the crisis influenced migration policy preferences. The “Europe is in crisis”, and “under pressure” frames applied in national media, for instance, could motivate citizens to become more concerned about border management (Jacobs, Hooghe & De Vroome, 2017; Yantseva, 2020). The integration of Syrian refugees was an additional important political topic of debate (De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020). Hence, **it could be hypothesised that citizens mainly changed their preferences on what policies** are necessary to ensure that migration is managed in an orderly manner.

Further, this section explores the question if **the refugee crisis led to a polarisation in migration policy preferences**. Several authors have argued that Western citizens are becoming more polarised with regards to their political preferences (Bosancianu, 2017; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015). The question of migration is a crucial case in point here, where studies have suggested that being in favour of an open and globalised society (with lenient migration policies), versus a more traditional and closed one (with strict migration policies), is a key “second” dividing line in European politics. The 2015-2016 refugee crisis rendered this cleavage more salient for citizens, which again could further induce attitude polarisation (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Kriesi et al., 2012). Based on this literature, it could therefore be hypothesised that after the refugee crisis, a wider gap between those groups that are strongly in favour, or against, open migration policies could be observed. In keeping with this idea, fewer citizens should hold “neutral” values, as the increasing salience of a political cleavage is expected to lead to more clearly structured political preferences.

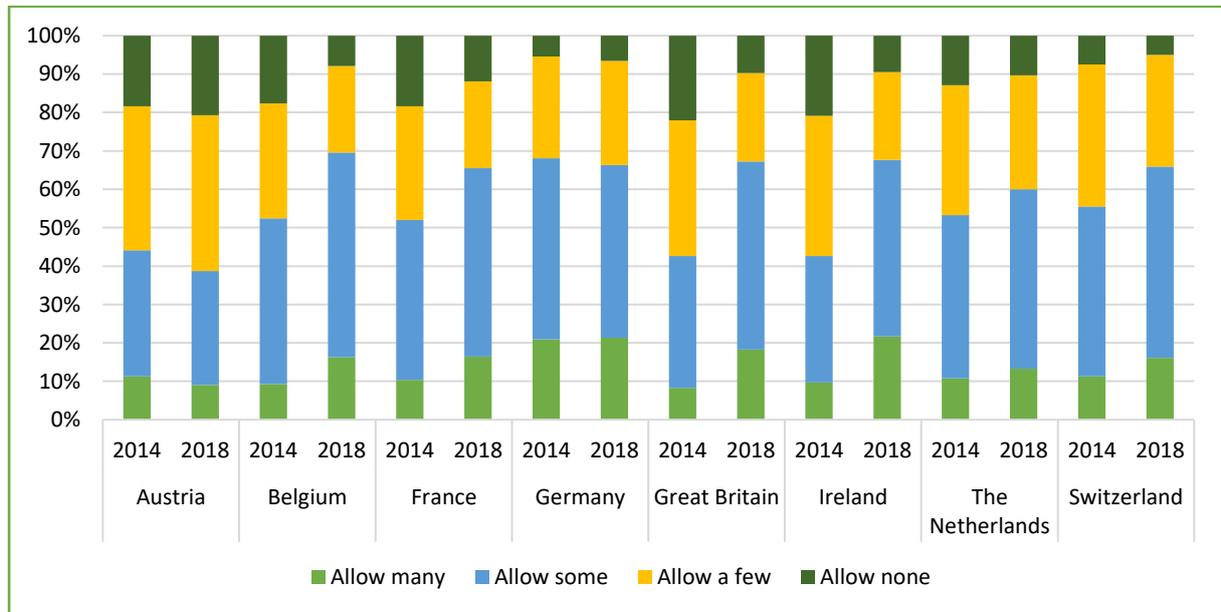
The next figures investigate migration policy preferences, and how they changed between 2014 and 2018. Given the important between-country differences observed earlier, the figures are ordered by European country and by regional blocks. The Figures present data on policy preferences towards migrants from poor countries outside Europe, under which most of the Syrian refugees, but also migrants from Somalia, Libya, Eritrea or Venezuela could be categorised. Additional analyses (not shown here) demonstrated that the trends are the same for migrants of the same ethnic group.

Figure 4.14 studies changes in policy preferences in **Western and Anglo-Saxon Europe**. **In almost all countries, attitudes have shifted towards more open policy preferences**: in Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland, a higher percentage of respondents would allow at least some or many migrants to migrate to their country. In Germany, policy preferences remained stable: Merkel’s “*Wir schaffen das-policy*”, did not lead to more tolerance for open borders in this country. The analyses only show a growing hostility towards an open migration policy in Austria, which is in line with the growing negativity of Austrians toward migration in general. The analysed do not depict different patterns between ethnic groups, nor is a growing polarisation in migration policy preferences in these countries observed. It is not the case that fewer people have neutral stances, and that more people actively support/reject an open border policy.

In the **Scandinavian countries** (Figure 4.15), **similar trends are found**. Almost all nations became more positive about an open migration policy (regardless of the group of origin), except for the Swedes, who became slightly more negative (from a high base). Further, there is no tendency towards polarisation.

Figure 4.14. Migration policy preferences regarding migrants from poor countries outside Europe – Western and Anglo-Saxon Europe (2014-2018)

Percentages reported

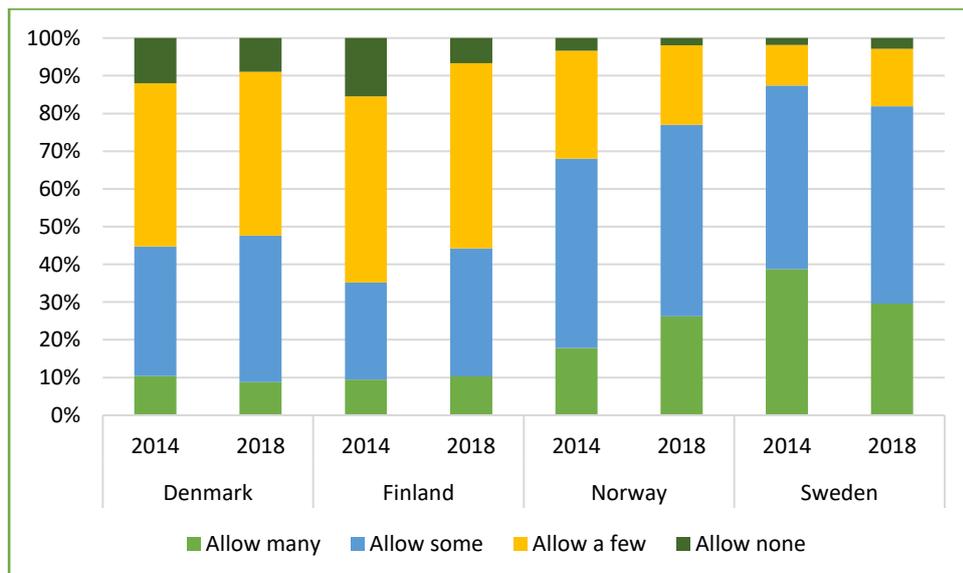


Note: weighted data reported (dweight).

Source: European Social Survey, 2014 & 2018.

Figure 4.15. Migration policy preferences regarding migrants from poor countries outside Europe – Scandinavian countries (2014-2018)

Percentages reported



Note: weighted data reported (dweight).

Source: European Social Survey, 2014 & 2018.



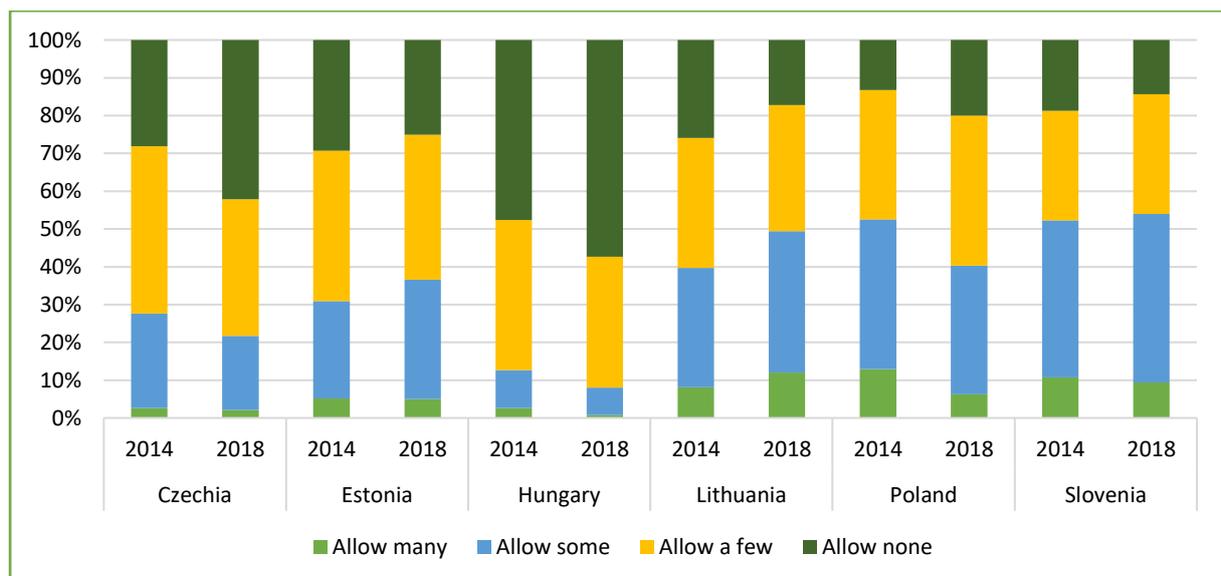
The countries described thus far exhibit a relatively positive trend about open migration policies across the years: fewer than 20% of their populations would not allow any migrants in their country. The story is different for several Eastern and Central European countries, or the Baltic states, where previous analyses indicated that citizens are more hostile towards migrants (Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.13). Figure 4.16 explores how the refugee crisis changed the attitudes of their citizens. Here, a much more mixed picture is observed. **The population of Czechia, Hungary and Poland became more negative about an open migration policy.** By 2018, less than half of Hungarians would allow any migrants whatsoever in their country. In Lithuania, and Estonia, citizens became more open, while public opinion in Slovenia remained relatively stable. These divisions are striking: not only were Central and Eastern Europeans already more sceptical about open migration policies, but they are also becoming ever more sceptical.

Moving to southern Europe, supportive attitudes on open migration policies are seemingly on the rise in Spain and Portugal (Figure 4.17). In keeping with the boost on attitudes about migration in general, Portugal also has a notably strong increase in support of an open border policy.

In conclusion, based on the questions analysed in this section, it cannot be stated that Europeans have – on average – become more negative about open borders. In fact, in most countries, the opposite held true: people support more welcoming policies. Having said that, most citizens still prefer controlled levels of migration, as section 4.1 concluded. Further, **the suggestion that public opinion would become more polarised on the issue of migration does not hold true either.** The analyses do not indicate that a growing size of the population is strongly against migration, versus a group that becomes especially positive. This is good news for decision-makers, as most Europeans still hold relatively neutral views on migration policy. Having said that, there is a **slight polarisation between countries: almost no countries recorded stable levels of migration policy support, either they became more positive, or more negative.** Hence, it might be increasingly difficult to reconcile these conflicting visions at the EU-decision making level.

Figure 4.16. Migration policy preferences regarding migrants from poor countries outside Europe – Eastern Europe and Baltic countries (2014-2018)

Percentages reported

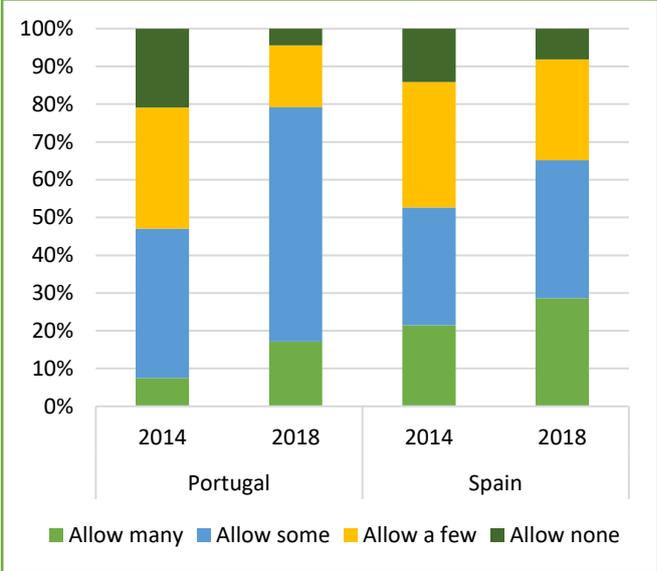


Note: weighted data reported (dweight).

Source: European Social Survey, 2014 & 2018.

Figure 4.17. Migration policy preferences regarding migrants from poor countries outside Europe – Southern Europe (2014-2018)

Percentages reported



Note: weighted data reported (dweight).
Source: European Social Survey, 2014 & 2018.



5. Conclusion

The OPPORTUNITIES project argues that every crisis also involves opportunities: through the creation of more inclusive and forward-looking narratives of migration, a more successful integration of newcomers can be achieved, and social cohesion strengthened. Narratives on migration, however, do not emerge suddenly, they are shaped by events, such as the 2015-2016 refugee crisis, and importantly, they are shaped by what citizens think about migration. In consequence, this report studied attitudes on migration and addressed the following goals:

- Understand the evolution in changing attitudes towards migration across European countries.
- Understand the impact of the refugee crisis of 2015-2016 on citizens' perceptions of migration and migrants.
- Identify how factors at the individual level are associated with citizens' perceptions of migration and changes therein.

A first key conclusion of this report is **that European attitudes on migration are not outspokenly negative**. Only about 25% of European citizens were against migration, and felt that migration threatens their country's way of life, culture and economy. **Most Europeans can on average be categorised as neutral or lukewarm supporters of migration**. Governments are supported to allow some to many migrants, as long as they are not too generous. There is little support for a full open border policy, and asylum applications should be carefully evaluated. In this perspective, Europeans think that migration comes with both costs and benefits. Most people feel that migration could increase crime levels, and would cost more in terms of taxes than migrants would bring in. However, almost half of the respondents also agreed that migration enriched their national culture. Europeans tend to be more favourable towards migrants when migrants are seen as "deserving", e.g., when they make an effort to integrate in their country, bring in skills needed in the economy, or have a similar ethnic background. In sum, Europeans do not unequivocally support migration, but it cannot be concluded either that they are hostile towards migrants.

Average levels of migration preferences, however, do not tell us about how these are distributed across Europe. In that light, **a second conclusion of this report is that important cleavages are present between European countries**. Migration attitudes are predominantly negative in Central-Eastern European countries, Austria and Italy (i.e., migration is considered threatening, and a closed border policy is preferable). Scandinavian and Western European countries are more positive about migration. However, these country-averages hide underlying differences. Citizens that feel more economically threatened by migration (e.g., the poor), that are less well integrated in their society (e.g., those with low social trust), and right-wing citizens, for instance, tend to be more negative about migration. **These divisions imply that both at the national and European level, decision-making on migration will most likely remain challenging and divisive, as attitudes diverge widely**.

Turning to changes in attitudes over time, an interesting paradox is appearing. **The third conclusion of this report is that in most European countries, attitudes on migration** (e.g., the extent to which it is a threat for one's country) **have remained rather stable** in the last two decades. In some European countries, attitudes even became slightly more welcoming. Altogether though, the analyses do not suggest that Europeans have fundamentally changed the way in which they think that migration has an impact on their society, on average. In contrast, **in the face of the 2015-2016 refugee crisis, citizens did update their policy preferences: in most European countries, citizens became more favourable towards an open border policy**. Some Central-Eastern European countries are the exception here though (e.g., Hungary): they became more negative about migration in general, and prefer more restrictive policies towards migration.

Self-evidently, this report comes with its limitations. In this report, we examine the descriptive trends in support for migrants and migration policies across Europe, through reporting country or European level averages. In the following reports, we will apply more advanced statistical techniques, and examine the changes in attitudes towards migration in Europe at the individual and country level, and their political consequences more in depth. The societal cleavages we uncovered, for instance, may not be of equal political relevance in all countries under study. Future reports will also study if specific country profiles and individual profiles can be established with regards to migration preferences.

Migration, and the integration of newcomers, will remain key policy challenges in European countries in the years to come. What this report has demonstrated, is that attitudes on migration in Europe do not yet reflect the occurrence of an “impasse” or a “crisis” of hostile attitudes, in which polarised groups of society are fundamentally disagreeing on migration. As most Europeans have relatively neutral views on migration, there is ample scope to create a level telling field, where all voices in the migration debate can be heard and fairer narratives may be developed.



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6. Appendix

Appendix A. Overview of participating countries and number of respondents in the European Social Survey (2002-2018)

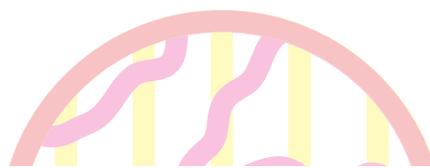
	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	Total
Austria	2257	2256	2405	/	/	/	1795	2010	2499	13222
Belgium	1899	1778	1798	1760	1704	1869	1769	1766	1767	16110
Bulgaria	/	/	1400	2230	2434	2260	/	/	2198	10522
Croatia	/	/	/	1484	1649	/	/	/	1810	4943
Cyprus	/	/	995	1215	1083	1116	/	/	781	5190
Czechia	1360	3026	/	2018	2386	2009	2148	2269	2398	17614
Denmark	1506	1487	1505	1610	1576	1650	1502	/	1572	12408
Estonia	/	1989	1517	1661	1793	2380	2051	2019	1904	15314
Finland	2000	2022	1896	2195	1878	2197	2087	1925	1755	17955
France	1503	1806	1986	2073	1728	1968	1917	2070	2010	17061
Germany	2919	2870	2916	2751	3031	2958	3045	2852	2358	25700
Great Britain	2052	1897	2394	2352	2422	2286	2264	1959	2204	19830
Greece	2566	2406	/	2072	2715	/	/	/	/	9759
Hungary	1685	1498	1518	1544	1561	2014	1698	1614	1661	14793
Iceland	/	579	/	/	/	752	/	880	861	3072
Ireland	2046	2286	1800	1764	2576	2628	2390	2757	2216	20463
Israel	2499	/	/	2490	2294	2508	2562	2557	/	14910
Italy	1207	/	/	/	/	960	/	2626	2745	7538
Latvia	/	/	/	1980	/	/	/	/	918	2898
Lithuania	/	/	/	/	1677	2109	2250	2122	1835	9993
Luxemburg	1552	1635	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	3187
Norway	2036	1760	1750	1549	1548	1624	1436	1545	1406	14654
Poland	2110	1716	1721	1619	1751	1898	1615	1694	1500	15624
Portugal	1511	2052	2222	2367	2150	2151	1265	1270	1055	16043
Russia	/	/	2437	2512	2595	2484	/	2430	/	12458
Slovakia	/	1512	1766	1810	1856	1847	/	/	1083	9874
Slovenia	1519	1442	1476	1286	1403	1257	1224	1307	1318	12232
Spain	1729	1663	1876	2576	1885	1889	1925	1958	1668	17169

Sweden	1999	1948	1927	1830	1497	1847	1791	1551	1539	15929
Switzerland	2040	2141	1804	1819	1506	1493	1532	1525	1542	15402
The Netherlands	2364	1881	1889	1778	1829	1845	1919	1681	1673	16859
Turkey	/	1856	/	2416	/	/	/	/	/	4272
Ukraine	/	2031	2002	1845	1931	2178	/	/	/	9987
Total	42359	47537	43000	54606	52458	52177	40185	44387	46276	422985

Source: *European Social Survey*.

Appendix B. Coding scheme individual level characteristics

Variable	Information on coding
Age	The original numeric scale (which ranges from 15-90) was recoded. Categories presented are respondents with an age between 18 and 26 years' old, and with an age of 65 and older.
Place of residence	Based on the question: "Which phrase best describes the area where you live". Categories in bold are reported in the report. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A big city 2. The suburbs or outskirts of a big city 3. A town or small city 4. A country village 5. A farm or home in the countryside
Gender	Respondents were coded as male or female.
Income situation	Based on the question: "Which of the descriptions comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?" Categories in bold are reported in the main report. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Living comfortably on present income 2. Coping on present income 3. Finding it difficult on present income 4. Finding it very difficult on present income
Education	Based on ES-ISCED scale. Categories in bold are reported in the main report. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ES-ISCED I less than lower secondary 2. ES-ISCED II lower secondary 3. ES-ISCED IIIb lower tier upper secondary 4. ES-ISCED IIIa upper tier upper secondary 5. ES-ISCED IV advanced vocational, sub-degree 6. ES-ISCED V1 lower tertiary education, BA level 7. ES-ISCED V2 higher tertiary education, >= MA
Voted	Based on the question: "Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]?" Respondents could answer Yes, No, or that they were not eligible to vote. We report the answers of those who were eligible to vote.
Political orientation	Based on the question: "In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?" Respondents with values of 0-3 are coded as "left-wing". Respondents with values of 7-10 are coded as "right-wing".
Social trust	Based on the question: "generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please tell me on a score of 0 to 10, where 0 means you can't be too careful and 10 means that most people can be trusted".



	<p>Respondents with values of 0-3 are coded as having low social trust.</p> <p>Respondents with values of 7-10 are coded as having high social trust.</p>
Political trust	<p>Based on the question: "Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust." We use trust in the national parliament as an indicator of political trust.</p> <p>Respondents with values of 0-3 are coded as having low political trust.</p> <p>Respondents with values of 7-10 are coded as having high political trust.</p>
Pro-EU	<p>Based on the question: "Now thinking about the European Union, some say European unification should go further. Others say it has already gone too far. What number on the scale best describes your position?"</p> <p>0 means that unification has already gone too far, 10 means that unification should go further.</p> <p>Respondents with values of 0-3 are coded as being against the European Union.</p> <p>Respondents with values of 7-10 are coded as being in favour the European Union.</p>

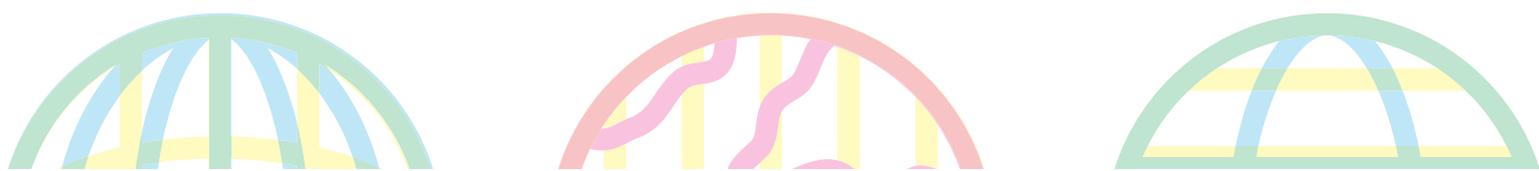
Source: *European Social Survey, 2018.*

Appendix C. Code scheme of populist voters

Voters who casted a vote for any of the following parties in the last national parliamentary elections were coded as populist radical right voters. The original coding scheme was replicated from Goubin, S., & Hooghe, M. (2021). Do welfare concerns drive electoral support for the populist radical right? An exploratory analysis. *Acta Politica*. doi: [10.1057/s41269-021-00201-y](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41269-021-00201-y)

Country	Populist voter
Austria	Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria) (FPÖ)
Belgium	Vlaams Belang
Czechia	Úsvit přímé demokraci (Dawn National Coalition) (DNC)
Finland	Perussuomalaiset (True Finns) (TF)
France	Front National (FN)
Germany	Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)
Hungary	Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance (FIDESZ-MPSZ) Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)
Italy	Lega Nord (Northern League) (LN) Brothers of Italy (Fdl)
The Netherlands	Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom) (PVV)
Norway	Progress Party (FrP)
Poland	Law and Justice Party (PiS) Kukiz '15 (Kukiz '15)
Sweden	Swedish Democrats (SD)
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party (SVP) Ticino League (LdT)
United Kingdom	United Kingdom's Independent Party (UKIP)

Sources: Rooduijn et. al. (2019) (*PopuList*), Holger & Manow (2019), and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Polk et al. 2017).





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