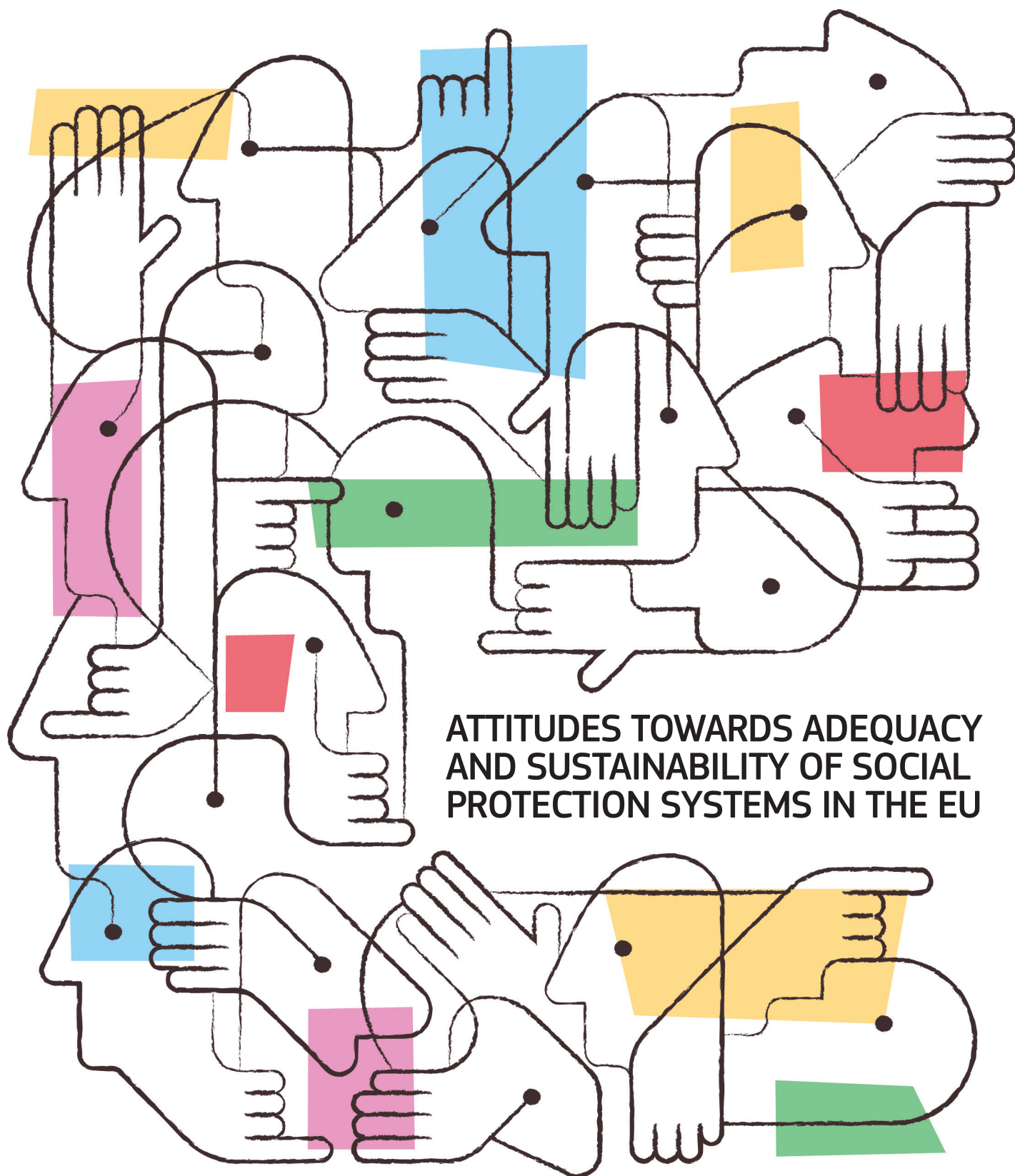




European
Commission



ATTITUDES TOWARDS ADEQUACY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN THE EU

Social Europe

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Attitudes towards adequacy and sustainability of social protection systems in the EU



This report was prepared under contract No VC2019/0050 signed between Applica sprl and the European Commission DG EMPL Unit C2., relating to the tender No VT/2019/001 “Study on the Adequacy and Sustainability of Social Protection Systems: Attitudes in the EU”.

The project was managed jointly by Applica sprl (Belgium, lead partner) and Tarki Social Research Institute (Hungary), with the participation of Kresko Research in the person of Bart Meuleman and the Stichting Katholieke Universiteit Brabant (Tilburg University) in the person of Femke Roosma.

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The team benefitted from the contributions of the Advisory Board of the project including Stefan Liebig (DIW, Berlin), Wim Van Oorschot (KU Leuven), Frank Vandenbroucke (University of Amsterdam) and Krzysztof Zagórski (Kozminski University Warsaw).

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PDF ISBN 978-92-76-23346-6 doi: 10.2767/04757 KE-03-20-649-EN-N

Manuscript completed in September 2020

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020



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Abstract

Social protection systems across the EU have undergone many reforms over the past few decades and are currently facing significant fiscal, social and political pressure. As a result, the future adequacy and sustainability of the European welfare state is an increasing concern in Member States, and there is an ongoing debate at EU level. This study collects and reports policy-relevant evidence on the attitude of the citizens of the European Union towards social protection, with the intention of identifying the type of social contract that people favour. The paper provides an overview of the factors that influence the demand for social protection and solidarity, and explores the potential support for further EU-wide solidarity and protection.

The research builds on a thorough literature review, on a uniquely comprehensive collection of relevant European datasets and on systematic, theory-driven analysis of the available surveys. Throughout the study, the ambition is – to the extent the data availability permits – to cover all EU Member States, regardless of their period of membership, level of economic development and type of welfare system. Conclusions for policy developments are drawn, together with suggestions for further empirical work on the field.





Executive summary

The role of **comprehensive welfare states**, which are one of the defining features of European societies, has been **substantially challenged** in recent decades by increased global economic competition and by a series of social trends such as demographic ageing, new family arrangements, technological change and corresponding labour market developments. Pressures caused by rising expenditures and shrinking revenues, under the circumstances of changes in the world of work, make reforms especially difficult for national governments in the EU.

The process of adjustment, redesign and reform implementation necessitates a thorough and **clear understanding of citizens' preferences towards, and evaluations of, social protection systems**, both as regards the coverage of people and of risks, and as regards the parametric features of various institutions. The research undertaken within the frame of this study maps attitudes towards the various pillars of social protection systems (child and family benefits, old-age pensions, unemployment benefits, social assistance, health care, long-term care and invalidity, and social housing). In addition, the attitudes of European citizens to pan-European social policies are analysed and presented.

The study provides a thorough **overview of existing academic and policy literature** on attitudes towards various principles of the social contract underlying the operation of welfare states in general, and of various institutions in the listed social policy fields in particular. This is followed by a presentation of the results of **quantitative analyses** carried out on available international datasets, as well as national case studies.

The study is unique, as no comparable study exists covering all these social policy fields in this depth, utilising such a wide range of variables – in terms of explanatory as well as explained variables. In addition, a unique feature of this research is that in all seven fields (plus on a pan-European level), the analysis of individual (socioeconomic and attitudinal) and contextual variables (national institutional parameters, economic development and distributional features) is carried out within a unified theoretical frame, and within a harmonised data structure (to the extent that it was meaningful and feasible).

Within the time frame of the observed period, **several major shocks** to the operation of European societies have occurred – including: the 2008-2009 financial crisis; the current economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic; and the severe migration crisis in and after 2015. While most of these events were expected to have a fundamental effect on attitudes towards social protection policies in the Member States and at the European level, there was, in many cases, a remarkable stability over the time period in question. Some of these shocks can already be measured and identified, while the full effects of others will only be seen in the years to come.

General findings

There is strong evidence that, generally speaking, the **legitimacy of the European-style welfare state is strongly entrenched among Europeans**. The vast majority of Europeans show concern for the well-being of others who face social risks, as well as for their own welfare. There is strong support for a social contract in which the government intervenes to redistribute resources to tackle risks and differential life chances. A concern that economic differences should not become too large



(a desire for some level of redistribution by government) is widespread and is an important driver of attitudes towards welfare. At the same time, attitudes reflect the ‘deservingness’ principles of (social) insurance and reciprocity (with certain types of benefits tied to contributions) as well as the principle of need.

The weight given to each of these justice principles varies over time and across countries, and depends on the nature of particular policy arrangements: for pension and family policies, contributory principles are more pronounced than they are, for example, for health and long-term care provisions, where the need principle is of greater importance.

While there is strong support for a social contract that involves active government redistribution of welfare, **substantial numbers of European citizens are critical of the efficiency, effectiveness and unintended side-effects of the welfare state.** For example, the discontent in several EU Member States over the quality of the state pension system can be traced to a low assessment of the performance of the system, combined with a strong preference for government to take responsibility for providing a decent level of income for the elderly. When there is discontent, it relates mostly to tax costs or to ideological elements of thinking about social policies: many believe that benefits place too great a strain on the economy, and the proportion in the different countries who do so correlates closely with the share who think that social services and benefits will tend to discourage people from working or for caring for one another.

When it comes to the determinants of welfare attitudes, it turns out that both **individual factors** (socio-economic characteristics, values and normative beliefs) **and contextual factors** (institutional set-up and economic conditions) clearly **shape welfare-related preferences.** Among individual factors, self-interest turns out to be a relevant factor (i.e. people tend to support more strongly the policies they – or people close to them – have a personal interest in): people’s perceptions of the risk of becoming unemployed and of their employment situation are related to their attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment benefits; support for family benefits is strongest among parents, younger people and women; the elderly are more likely than others to support pension policies; and those on lower incomes are more in favour of public health care.

However, **ideological beliefs** (such as universalism or egalitarianism) **often outweigh the impact of self-interest.** In particular, considerations of ‘deservingness’ appear to be important in shaping normative beliefs on welfare, as the differences in attitudes towards different target groups show. The need to support the sick and the elderly is almost universally accepted, while arrangements for supporting the poor and the unemployed generally gain less acceptance, and support for family benefits is somewhere in between. These differences between target groups point to the fact that the judgement of individuals as regards fairness is informed by considerations relating to control (i.e. responsibility), a favourable attitude, reciprocity, (shared) identity and need.

Besides individual differences, sizeable cross-country differences in welfare attitudes can also be observed. In that respect the general pattern can be characterised in terms of a divide between (on the one hand) eastern and southern countries and (on the other) western and northern countries. This pattern suggests that cross-national differences can be traced back to **country-specific contextual factors:** less favourable economic conditions and lower levels of social protection lead to lower levels of satisfaction with current arrangements. In addition to these general geographical patterns, actual perceptions of the operation of various policies also leave their mark on welfare attitudes. Support for increasing spending on pensions is higher in countries where spending is currently relatively low and where poverty among the elderly is high. Similarly, there is a greater dis-



satisfaction with the current benefits to protect those in real need in countries with high levels of material deprivation, inequality and low spending on social benefits. In some instances, the pattern of differences between countries reveals positive feedback effects: people tend to develop a preference for the particular schemes that are actually implemented in their country.

Key findings by domain

Public support for **family policies** is generally high throughout Europe; however, parents, women and younger people show especially high support. The results show a positive correlation between level of provision and support for existing benefits and services; on the other hand, they also show that there is greater demand for further benefits in countries where the current level of provision is low (e.g. most of the southern and eastern European countries). These findings suggest that support for existing family benefits and services could be increased by improving their quality (or coverage), while improved services and benefits could reduce the demand for further benefits and services.

Analysis of the data shows, in general, a nearly unanimous support for the idea that it is the government's responsibility to provide a **decent standard of living for the elderly**. At the same time, respondents in several EU Member States regard the quality of the state pension system as low, which suggests discontent with the pension systems currently in place. This is especially the case in south-eastern Europe, the Baltic states, Slovakia and Slovenia. Support for ensuring a decent standard of living for the elderly increases with age and declines with social status (as measured by education level or subjective status position). Assessment of the quality of the pension system, however, is more positive among the elderly and those with high incomes or education.

Support for the unemployed and unemployment benefits is generally lower than support for other welfare benefits, such as pension, healthcare or childcare benefits. Europeans are, overall, quite suspicious of the unemployed and their willingness to find work. These perceptions are especially strong in eastern European countries and the UK. Nevertheless, an overall majority of Europeans believe that the government should be responsible for providing a decent standard of living for the unemployed. At the same time, satisfaction with the current provisions is low, especially in eastern and southern European countries. These attitudes seem to be relatively stable over time (between 2008 and 2016). Support for reforming unemployment schemes by investing more in education and training programmes at the expense of spending on unemployment benefits receives moderate to high support. Eastern and southern European countries show less support for this – although in those countries, too, the majority favours such a reform. Those with high education levels, in particular, are more inclined to support the reform of unemployment benefits. A more generous unemployment protection system seems to generate its own support (and vice versa); generous unemployment protection might be introduced and maintained especially in countries where there is greater support for it.

Support for the notion that those in need should be guaranteed that their basic needs will be met is very high across European Member States. However, in countries with greater material deprivation and lower spending on social protection benefits, support for the notion of guaranteeing people's basic needs is relatively low. As far as the assessment of **the adequacy of benefits to protect those in need** is concerned, people are in general more critical. There is a clear geographical divide here as well, with the citizens of northern and western countries tending to be relatively positive about the ability of current benefits to cover basic needs, whereas people from southern and eastern European countries are very critical of current protection benefits.



Europeans have mixed opinions about the state of the **healthcare services** in their countries. The way healthcare services are perceived improved in many countries between 2008 and 2018. It could be that the Covid-19 pandemic will make people more favourably disposed towards healthcare systems, but there is as yet no evidence on this from large-scale surveys. Preliminary opinion polls show only that trust in healthcare systems has been reinforced since the outbreak. Satisfaction with health services relates mainly to their availability, accessibility and affordability; but individual characteristics can also have an impact. While age does not seem to have a significant influence, gender and income level do. Women are less likely than men to have a favourable view of the state of the healthcare services in their country. And those who find it very difficult to live on their present income are less likely to be satisfied (in line with the findings of previous studies), since they tend to have more difficulty in accessing affordable and good-quality health care. Satisfaction with the healthcare system also varies considerably between countries, with particularly low levels in eastern European countries. In addition, in the majority of these countries in 2013, almost half of respondents supported the idea that the EU should invest in health care as a priority (while less than 40% of respondents shared this view in most western European countries).

Many Europeans are concerned about having sufficient access to good and affordable **long-term care for the elderly**. This feeling might even have strengthened since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Europeans also consider that the role of the state is key to the funding of long-term care for the elderly. For most, government should cover the cost of care for the elderly; but few people (in particular, young people and those on low incomes) would be willing to pay additional tax for this. It seems there is an age after which concerns about elderly care matter: those aged 50-64 tend to support the idea that government should provide elderly care more than do other groups, which could be because many of them care for elderly parents or are close to the age when they themselves might need care.

Social housing is a policy and institutional setting for which we lack a proper and commonly accepted EU definition. In addition, given that housing markets work very differently in different Member States, it is difficult to provide properly comparable data on attitudes to the role of non-market forces in housing provision. Caution is warranted, therefore, when cross-national data on this topic are interpreted. Nevertheless, the availability and affordability of decent housing has become an important economic and social concern in the EU over recent years. The share of the total population experiencing housing insecurity rose in the EU from 18% in 2011 to 24% in 2016, according to EQLS data. Future research should also analyse any shift in attitudes that has occurred towards social services and social housing in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, given that it has hit poorer communities particularly hard.

Organising solidarity at the EU level

With regard to the support for organising solidarity at the **supra-national, European level**, popular legitimacy depends crucially on the particular form of EU involvement concerned (whether social regulations, Member State solidarity, EU-wide social citizenship or cross-border interpersonal solidarity). Support for solidarity schemes that enhance existing national systems (such as social regulations or additional benefit schemes) are endorsed most strongly.

The results presented in this report provide indications regarding the opportunities, as well as the challenges, for developing EU-level social policy evaluations.

The level of **endorsement of EU involvement in social policy**, however, **differs widely across Member States**. In southern and eastern European countries, in particular, there is strong support



for EU-level social policy, driven by the expectation that the involvement of the EU will provide an opportunity to improve social welfare provision. In the strong welfare states of northern Europe, there are signs of anxiety among the population that EU involvement could lead to a diminution in the quality of social protection. It should further be noted that attitudes towards organising solidarity at the EU level are only weakly related to demographic and social indicators (such as education, employment status or income).

The results, therefore, also have implications for the **design of EU-level policy initiatives and proposals in respect of social protection**. For example, the findings of this report might contribute to preparation of the action plan for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights; the forthcoming Green Paper on ageing; and the planned presentation (in 2021) of a new European Child Guarantee, as an important means of fighting poverty and ensuring that children have access to basic services.

Need for further research

While attitudes to welfare systems show considerable stability over time, in the extraordinary times that we are living through after the sudden **outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic**, it is reasonable to anticipate that there may have been some important shifts in attitudes. Most Member States have been under some form of lockdown, with schools closed in many places; restrictions imposed on movement within and between countries; health and other social services coming under immense pressure; and many non-essential economic activities ceasing (and those that have continued operating at far below their normal levels). In addition, a great many people have experienced reduced working time, lay-offs or redundancy. Therefore, attitudes to a wide range of social policies (most notably to unemployment protection schemes and health schemes) may also have changed substantially. This will necessitate some follow-up work and new studies on changing welfare attitudes in Europe.

In addition, there is a **need for additional data collection** to enable the existing theoretical frameworks to be tested more thoroughly and policy-makers to be informed in a more detailed way. There is a strong need to gradually build a cross-national, long-term time series of carefully conceptualised measurements of welfare attitudes, building on but extending the running welfare-attitudes modules of the European Social Survey. However, it would be even more useful to start collecting cross-national panel data; this would allow a more stringent test of causal mechanisms. In addition, some clearly under-researched areas such as attitudes towards long-term care and invalidity, as well as social housing, should also be included in further empirical data collection exercises.

Besides more traditional survey approaches, **more frequent use of vignette studies and survey experiments** would also be helpful in shedding light on the causal mechanisms underlying welfare preferences. In light of the possibility that people may not have a particular attitude towards policies, insights into the level of knowledge about the current arrangements in place would increase understanding. Finally, more (cross-national) qualitative research and mixed-methods research would be helpful in understanding underlying reasoning on such complex, multidimensional phenomena as the welfare state, especially in a comparative and cross-national perspective.





Résumé analytique

Le rôle de l'**État-providence étendu**, qui est l'une des caractéristiques fondamentales des sociétés européennes, **est sérieusement remis en question** ces dernières décennies par l'intensification de la concurrence économique mondiale et par une série d'évolutions sociales telles que le vieillissement démographique, les nouvelles structures familiales, l'évolution technologique et l'évolution correspondante du marché du travail. Les pressions exercées par l'augmentation des dépenses et la diminution des recettes, compte tenu de l'évolution du monde du travail, rendent les réformes particulièrement difficiles pour les gouvernements nationaux dans l'UE.

Le processus d'adaptation, de refonte et de mise en œuvre des réformes exige une **compréhension approfondie et claire des préférences des citoyens à l'égard des systèmes de protection sociale et des évaluations de ces systèmes**, tant en ce qui concerne la couverture des personnes et les risques, que les caractéristiques des différentes institutions. Les recherches entreprises dans le cadre de cette étude montrent les opinions vis-à-vis des différents piliers des systèmes de protection sociale (allocations familiales, pensions de vieillesse, allocations de chômage, assistance sociale, soins de santé, soins de longue durée et invalidité, logement social). En outre, les opinions des citoyens européens à l'égard des politiques sociales paneuropéennes sont analysées et présentées.

L'étude offre une **vue d'ensemble exhaustive de la littérature universitaire et politique existante** sur les opinions envers les différents principes du contrat social, lesquels sous-tendent le fonctionnement des États-providence et des diverses institutions dans les domaines de la politique sociale. Elle présente ensuite les résultats des **analyses quantitatives** effectuées sur les ensembles de données internationales disponibles, ainsi que des études de cas nationales.

L'étude est unique dans la mesure où il n'existe pas d'étude comparable couvrant tous ces domaines de la politique sociale de façon aussi approfondie, en utilisant un large éventail de variables – variables explicatives et expliquées. De plus, une caractéristique unique de cette étude réside dans le fait que pour les sept domaines et le niveau paneuropéen, l'analyse des variables individuelles (socio-économiques et comportementales) et contextuelles (paramètres institutionnels nationaux, développement économique et caractéristiques de distribution) est effectuée dans un cadre théorique unifié et avec une structure de données harmonisée (dans la mesure où ceci était significatif et réalisable).

Au cours de la période observée, **plusieurs chocs majeurs** ont bousculé le fonctionnement des sociétés européennes, dont la crise financière de 2008-2009, la crise économique actuelle provoquée par la pandémie de Covid-19, et la crise migratoire à partir de 2015. Alors que la plupart de ces événements devaient affecter fondamentalement les opinions envers les politiques de protection sociale dans les États membres et au niveau européen, il y a eu, dans de nombreux cas, une stabilité remarquable au cours de la période. Certains de ces chocs peuvent déjà être mesurés et identifiés, tandis que d'autres n'auront de véritables effets que dans les années à venir.

Conclusions générales

Il y a de fortes preuves que, d'une manière générale, la **légitimité du modèle européen d'État-providence est fortement ancrée parmi les Européens**. La grande majorité des Européens se préoccupent de la protection sociale des personnes confrontées à des risques sociaux, ainsi que de



leur propre protection sociale. Il existe un fort soutien en faveur d'un contrat social dans lequel le gouvernement intervient pour redistribuer les ressources afin de faire face aux risques et aux différences d'opportunités dans la vie. La crainte que les différences économiques ne deviennent trop importantes (le désir d'un certain niveau de redistribution par le gouvernement) est répandue et constitue un facteur important des opinions. Dans le même temps, les opinions sont influencées par les principes de « mérite » de l'assurance (sociale) et de réciprocité (certains types de prestations doivent être liés aux cotisations), ainsi que par le principe des besoins.

Le poids accordé à chacun de ces principes de justice varie au fil du temps et d'un pays à l'autre et dépend de la nature de certains arrangements: pour les politiques de retraite et de famille, les principes contributifs sont plus prononcés qu'ils ne le sont, par exemple, pour les dispositions relatives à la santé et aux soins de longue durée, où le principe des besoins est plus important.

Bien qu'il y ait un fort soutien en faveur d'un contrat social impliquant une redistribution active par le gouvernement, **un nombre important de citoyens européens critiquent l'efficacité, l'efficacité et les effets secondaires imprévus de l'État providence**. Par exemple, le mécontentement dans plusieurs États membres de l'UE à l'égard de la qualité du système de retraite public s'explique par une faible évaluation des performances du système, conjuguée à une forte préférence pour que le gouvernement assure un niveau de revenu décent aux personnes âgées. Lorsqu'il y a un mécontentement, celui-ci est lié principalement à des coûts fiscaux ou à des éléments idéologiques : beaucoup pensent que les prestations exercent une pression trop lourde sur l'économie ; la proportion de ceux qui pensent cela dans les différents pays est étroitement corrélée avec la proportion de ceux qui pensent que les services sociaux et les prestations tendront à décourager les gens de travailler ou de prendre soin les uns des autres.

En ce qui concerne les déterminants des opinions, il s'avère que les **facteurs individuels** (caractéristiques socio-économiques, valeurs et croyances normatives) **et contextuels** (organisation institutionnelle et conditions économiques) **façonnent clairement les préférences**. Parmi les éléments individuels, l'intérêt personnel s'avère être un facteur pertinent (c.-à-d. que les gens ont tendance à soutenir les politiques pour lesquelles ils – ou les personnes qui leur sont proches – ont un intérêt personnel plus important) : la perception qu'ont les gens du risque de se retrouver au chômage et de leur situation d'emploi est liée à leur attitude à l'égard des allocations de chômage et des chômeurs ; le soutien aux prestations familiales est le plus important parmi les parents, les jeunes et les femmes, tandis que les personnes âgées sont plus susceptibles que les autres de soutenir les politiques de retraite et les personnes à faible revenu sont plus favorables aux soins de santé publics.

Cependant, les **croyances idéologiques** (telles que l'universalité ou l'égalitarisme) **l'emportent souvent sur l'intérêt personnel**. En particulier, les considérations liées au « mérite » semblent importantes dans l'élaboration des croyances normatives, comme le montrent les différences d'opinion envers divers groupes cibles. La nécessité de venir en aide aux malades et aux personnes âgées est presque universellement acceptée, tandis que les dispositifs visant à aider les pauvres et les chômeurs sont généralement moins acceptés et le soutien aux prestations familiales se situe quelque part entre les deux. Ces différences entre les groupes cibles indiquent que le jugement des individus en matière d'équité s'appuie sur des considérations liées au contrôle (c'est-à-dire la responsabilité), à une attitude favorable, à la réciprocité, à l'identité (partagée) et au besoin.

Outre les différences individuelles, d'importantes différences peuvent également être observées entre les pays. À cet égard, il existe un écart entre, d'une part, les pays de l'Est et du Sud et, d'autre



part, les pays de l'Ouest et du Nord. Ceci laisse penser que les différences entre les pays peuvent être liées à des facteurs contextuels propres à chaque pays : des conditions économiques moins favorables et des niveaux de protection sociale moins élevés se traduisent par une satisfaction moindre à l'égard des arrangements actuels. Outre ces éléments géographiques, la perception réelle du fonctionnement des diverses politiques influence également les opinions. Le soutien à l'augmentation des dépenses de retraite est plus important dans les pays où les dépenses sont actuellement relativement faibles et où la pauvreté chez les personnes âgées est élevée. De même, il y a un plus grand mécontentement à l'égard des prestations actuelles pour protéger ceux qui sont dans le besoin dans les pays où les niveaux de privation matérielle et d'inégalité sont élevés et où les dépenses en prestations sociales sont faibles. Dans certains cas, l'évolution des différences entre les pays révèle des effets positifs en retour: les personnes ont tendance à développer une préférence pour les programmes particuliers qui sont effectivement mis en œuvre dans leur pays.

Principales conclusions par domaine

Le soutien public aux **politiques familiales** est généralement élevé dans toute l'Europe; cependant, celui-ci est plus élevé parmi les parents, les femmes et les jeunes. Les résultats montrent une corrélation positive entre le niveau de prestation et le soutien aux prestations et services existants. Ils montrent également que la demande de prestations supplémentaires est plus forte dans les pays où le niveau actuel de prestations est faible (par exemple, dans la plupart des pays d'Europe du Sud et de l'Est). Ces résultats laissent penser que le soutien aux prestations et services familiaux existants pourrait être accru en améliorant leur qualité (ou leur couverture), tandis que l'amélioration des services et des prestations pourrait réduire la demande en prestations et services supplémentaires.

L'analyse des données montre, d'une manière générale, un soutien quasi unanime à l'idée qu'il incombe au gouvernement d'assurer un **niveau de vie décent aux personnes âgées**. Dans le même temps, les personnes interrogées de plusieurs États membres de l'UE considèrent que la qualité du système de retraite public est faible, ce qui suggère une insatisfaction à l'égard des systèmes de retraite actuellement en place. C'est particulièrement le cas en Europe du Sud-Est, dans les États baltes, en Slovaquie et en Slovénie. Le soutien à l'aide visant à assurer un niveau de vie décent aux personnes âgées augmente avec l'âge et diminue avec le statut social (mesuré par le niveau d'instruction ou le statut subjectif). Toutefois, la qualité du système de retraite est évaluée plus positivement par les personnes âgées et les personnes à revenu élevé ou ayant un niveau d'instruction élevé.

Le soutien aux chômeurs et aux allocations de chômage est généralement inférieur à celui accordé aux autres prestations sociales, telles que les pensions, les soins de santé ou les prestations de garde d'enfants. Les Européens sont, dans l'ensemble, assez méfiants envers les chômeurs et leur volonté de trouver un emploi. Ces perceptions sont particulièrement fortes dans les pays d'Europe de l'Est et au Royaume-Uni. Néanmoins, dans l'ensemble, la majorité des Européens estiment que le gouvernement devrait assurer un niveau de vie décent aux chômeurs. Dans le même temps, la satisfaction à l'égard des dispositions actuelles est faible, en particulier dans les pays d'Europe orientale et méridionale. Ces opinions semblent relativement stables au fil du temps (entre 2008 et 2016). La réforme des régimes de chômage, en investissant davantage dans les programmes d'éducation et de formation au détriment des dépenses d'allocations de chômage, bénéficie d'un soutien modéré à élevé. Les pays d'Europe orientale et méridionale y sont moins favorables, même si, dans ces pays également, la majorité est favorable à une telle réforme. En particulier, les personnes très instruites sont plus enclines à soutenir la réforme des allocations de chômage. Un système de protection contre le chômage plus généreux semble générer son propre soutien (et vice versa) ; une protection



généreuse contre le chômage pourrait être introduite et maintenue, en particulier dans les pays où elle bénéficie d'un soutien plus important.

L'idée selon laquelle les personnes dans le besoin devraient avoir la garantie que leurs besoins fondamentaux soient satisfaits reçoit un très fort soutien dans les États membres de l'Union européenne. Toutefois, dans les pays où la privation matérielle est plus importante et où les dépenses consacrées aux prestations de protection sociale sont moins élevées, l'appui à la notion de garantie des besoins fondamentaux de la population est relativement faible. En ce qui concerne l'évaluation de **l'adéquation des prestations**, les gens sont généralement plus critiques. Il existe ici également une nette fracture géographique, les citoyens des pays du Nord et de l'Ouest ayant tendance à être relativement positifs quant à la capacité des prestations actuelles à satisfaire les besoins fondamentaux, alors que les citoyens des pays d'Europe du Sud et de l'Est sont très critiques à l'égard des prestations actuelles.

Les Européens ont des opinions mitigées sur l'état des **services de santé** dans leur pays. La perception des services de santé s'est améliorée dans de nombreux pays entre 2008 et 2018. Il se pourrait que la pandémie de Covid-19 rende les gens plus favorables au système de santé, mais il n'y a pas encore de preuves à ce sujet dans les enquêtes à grande échelle. Les sondages d'opinion préliminaires montrent seulement que la confiance dans les systèmes de santé a été renforcée depuis l'épidémie. La satisfaction envers les services de santé est principalement liée à leur disponibilité, leur accessibilité et au fait qu'ils soient financièrement abordables ; mais des caractéristiques individuelles peuvent aussi avoir un impact. Bien que l'âge ne semble pas avoir d'impact significatif, le genre et le niveau de revenu ont une influence. Les femmes sont moins susceptibles que les hommes d'avoir une opinion favorable sur l'état des services de santé dans leur pays. Et ceux qui éprouvent des difficultés à vivre avec leurs revenus actuels ont moins de chances d'être satisfaits (ce qui est conforme aux résultats d'études antérieures) car ils ont tendance à avoir plus de difficultés pour accéder à des soins de santé abordables et de bonne qualité. La satisfaction à l'égard du système de soins de santé varie également considérablement d'un pays à l'autre, avec des niveaux particulièrement faibles dans les pays d'Europe de l'Est. En outre, dans la majorité de ces pays en 2013, près de la moitié des personnes interrogées ont appuyé l'idée que l'UE devrait investir en priorité dans les soins de santé (alors que moins de 40 % des interrogés partageaient ce point de vue dans la plupart des pays d'Europe occidentale).

De nombreux Européens se soucient d'avoir un accès suffisant à des **soins de longue durée** de qualité et abordables pour les personnes âgées. Ce sentiment pourrait même s'être renforcé depuis l'apparition de la pandémie de Covid-19. Les Européens considèrent également que le rôle de l'État est essentiel pour le financement des soins de longue durée pour les personnes âgées. Pour la plupart, le gouvernement devrait prendre en charge le coût des soins aux personnes âgées; mais peu de personnes (en particulier les jeunes et les personnes à faible revenu) seraient disposées à payer un impôt supplémentaire pour cela. Il semble qu'il y ait un âge au-delà duquel les préoccupations concernant les soins aux personnes âgées comptent : les personnes de 50 à 64 ans sont plus favorables que les autres à l'idée selon laquelle le gouvernement devrait fournir des soins aux personnes âgées, ce qui pourrait être dû au fait que nombre d'entre elles s'occupent de parents âgés ou sont proches de l'âge où elles pourraient avoir besoin de soins.

Le **logement social** est un cadre politique et institutionnel pour lequel il n'y a pas de définition européenne appropriée et communément acceptée. En outre, étant donné que les marchés du logement fonctionnent très différemment d'un État membre à l'autre, il est difficile de fournir des données suffisamment comparables sur les opinions à l'égard du rôle des forces non marchandes dans l'offre



de logements. La prudence est donc de mise lors de l'interprétation des données transnationales sur ce sujet. Néanmoins, la disponibilité de logements décentes et abordables est devenue, ces dernières années, une préoccupation économique et sociale importante dans l'UE. Selon les données EQLS, la proportion de la population totale en situation d'insécurité de logement est passée de 18 % en 2011 à 24 % en 2016. Les recherches futures devraient analyser également tout changement d'opinion envers les services sociaux et le logement social suite à la pandémie de Covid-19, étant donné qu'elle a touché particulièrement les communautés les plus pauvres.

Organisation de la solidarité au niveau de l'UE

En ce qui concerne le soutien à l'organisation de la solidarité au **niveau supranational et européen**, la légitimité populaire dépend fondamentalement de la forme particulière d'implication de l'UE (qu'il s'agisse de la réglementation sociale, de la solidarité entre les États membres, de la citoyenneté sociale à l'échelle de l'UE ou de la solidarité interpersonnelle transfrontalière). Les régimes de solidarité qui améliorent les systèmes nationaux actuels (tels que les réglementations sociales ou les régimes de prestations supplémentaires) sont les plus fortement soutenus.

Les résultats présentés dans ce rapport fournissent des indications sur les possibilités, ainsi que sur les défis, pour développer des évaluations de la politique sociale au niveau de l'UE.

Toutefois, le **niveau d'approbation de la participation de l'UE à la politique sociale varie considérablement d'un État membre à l'autre**. Dans les pays d'Europe du Sud et de l'Est, en particulier, la politique sociale au niveau de l'UE bénéficie d'un large soutien, motivé par l'espoir que la participation de l'UE sera l'occasion d'améliorer la protection sociale. Dans les États-providence forts de l'Europe du Nord, il y a des signes d'inquiétude au sein de la population quant au fait que l'implication de l'UE pourrait entraîner une diminution de la qualité de la protection sociale. Il convient en outre de noter que les opinions à l'égard de l'organisation de la solidarité au niveau de l'UE ne sont que faiblement liées aux indicateurs démographiques et sociaux (tels que l'éducation, la situation en matière d'emploi ou le revenu).

Les résultats ont donc également des implications pour la **conception d'initiatives et de propositions politiques au niveau de l'UE en matière de protection sociale**. Par exemple, les conclusions de ce rapport pourraient contribuer à la préparation du plan d'action pour la mise en œuvre du pilier européen des droits sociaux ; le prochain livre vert sur le vieillissement ; et la présentation prévue (en 2021) d'une nouvelle garantie européenne pour l'enfance, qui constitue un moyen important de lutter contre la pauvreté et d'assurer l'accès des enfants aux services de base.

Nécessité de recherches supplémentaires

Bien que les opinions à l'égard des systèmes de protection sociale montrent une stabilité considérable au fil du temps, dans les temps extraordinaires que nous vivons après l'**apparition soudaine de la pandémie de Covid-19**, il est raisonnable de prévoir qu'il puisse y avoir d'importants changements d'opinions. La plupart des États membres ont fait l'objet d'une forme de confinement, les écoles étant fermées dans de nombreux endroits, les restrictions imposées à la circulation à l'intérieur des pays et entre les pays, la santé et les autres services sociaux soumis à d'énormes pressions, et de nombreuses activités économiques non essentielles se sont arrêtées (et celles qui ont continué de fonctionner l'ont fait à des niveaux bien inférieurs à leur niveau normal). Par ailleurs, un grand nombre de personnes ont connu une réduction du temps de travail ou des licenciements. Par conséquent, les opinions vis-à-vis d'un large éventail de politiques sociales (notamment les régimes de protection contre le chômage et les régimes de santé) peuvent avoir considérablement changé.



Cela nécessitera un certain suivi et de nouvelles études sur l'évolution des opinions en matière de protection sociale en Europe.

De plus, il est **nécessaire de collecter des données supplémentaires** pour que les cadres théoriques existants puissent être testés de manière plus approfondie et que les décideurs soient informés de manière plus détaillée. Il est absolument nécessaire de construire progressivement une série chronologique transnationale à long terme de mesures soigneusement conceptualisées des opinions en matière de protection sociale, en s'appuyant sur les modules d'opinions sociales en cours d'exécution de l'Enquête sociale européenne, et en les élargissant. Cependant, il serait encore plus utile de commencer à collecter des données de panel transnationales. Cela permettrait de tester plus rigoureusement les mécanismes de causalité. En outre, certains domaines manifestement insuffisamment étudiés, comme les opinions à l'égard des soins de longue durée et de l'invalidité, ainsi que le logement social, mériteraient également d'être inclus dans des exercices supplémentaires de collecte de données empiriques.

Outre les méthodes d'enquête plus traditionnelles, une **utilisation plus fréquente des études de vignette et des enquêtes** serait également utile pour éclairer les mécanismes de causalité qui sous-tendent les préférences en matière de protection sociale. Compte tenu de la possibilité que les gens n'aient pas d'opinion particulière sur les politiques, un aperçu des connaissances sur les dispositions actuelles permettrait d'améliorer la compréhension. Enfin, davantage de recherches qualitatives (internationales) et de méthodes de recherche mixtes seraient utiles pour comprendre le raisonnement sous-jacent sur des phénomènes aussi complexes et multidimensionnels que l'État-providence, en particulier dans une perspective comparative et transnationale.



Introduction

The existence of a comprehensive welfare state, as a modern social institution taking responsibility for social protection and the fair redistribution of life chances, is one of the defining features of European societies. However, the concept of the welfare state and its concrete manifestations in specific social policies have come to be substantially challenged in recent decades. Increased international economic competition threatens the redistributive capacity of national welfare states (Korpi and Palme, 2003). At the same time, the national welfare states face a series of ‘new social risks’ associated with post-industrialisation – such as demographic ageing, new family arrangements and labour market developments (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Taylor-Gooby et al., 2017). In addition, rising social benefit expenditure, combined with declining government revenue and increased fiscal pressure led to an era of relative austerity as Member States attempted to reduce, or at least restrain, government borrowing (Hemerijck, 2013). As a response to these challenges, European countries have implemented major welfare reforms of various types (retrenchment, recalibration and also partly extension) and have adopted new perspectives on the goals and approaches of the welfare state (notably activation and social investment) (Hemerijck, 2013; Palier, 2010). Within this rapidly changing context, the EU is increasingly providing a framework for the domestic processes of welfare state change (Ferrera, 2003), as illustrated by the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed in 2017.

The combination of challenges and reform results in intensified discussions about the generosity, universalism and scope of the welfare state, as well as about the criteria governing who deserves what and why (Van Oorschot et al., 2017). These key debates address the need for and the fairness of redistributive, solidaristic relationships between, for example, generations (European Commission, 2004; Kohli, 2005), genders (Knijn and Komter, 2004; OECD, 2007), the rich and the poor (Guillaud, 2013), the native population and immigrants (Kymlicka and Banting, 2006; Van Oorschot, 2008; Naumann and Stoetzer, 2018) and citizens from different EU countries (Baute et al., 2018b; Gerhards and Lengfeld, 2015). A recurring theme in these debates is the increased emphasis on individual responsibility and the accusation that welfare provisions undermine individual autonomy, damage traditional social ties and weaken private forms of solidarity and self-help. All this contributes to rising concerns for the future sustainability of the European welfare states, not only in economic and political terms, but especially in terms of social legitimacy (Taylor-Gooby, 2011). To understand the policy process, it is essential to generate knowledge regarding people’s perspectives on the organisation of social protection and possible alternative futures for the welfare state.

This study should be seen in the context of a broad debate on the future of social protection systems, and on discussions relating to the action plan for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Green Paper on ageing. The evidence collected and presented could also be used to support the EU Member States in modernising their social protection systems, or the EU in possibly introducing a Union-wide scheme to supplement what exists at the national level (such as an unemployment reinsurance scheme, as has been suggested).



The general aim of the study is to collect and report policy-relevant evidence on the attitudes of people in the EU to social protection. Its four main objectives are:

- to identify the type of social contract (in terms of rights and obligations) that is favoured by people;
- to provide a clear overview of the (micro- and macro-level) factors that influence the demand for social protection and solidarity;
- to explore the potential support for further EU-wide solidarity and protection;
- to draw up a set of evidence-based recommendations for policy developments at both the national and the EU level and for analytical developments at the EU level.

The social protection systems are understood as being composed of nine broad domains: (1) pensions, (2) health care, (3) long-term care, (4) unemployment, (5) family benefits (including maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions), (6) social assistance, (7) social services, (8) provisions for accidents at work and occupational diseases and (9) invalidity benefits.¹

With respect to the nature of redistribution implied by various social policies, there are three strands that are considered: (A) between rich and poor, (B) between employed and unemployed and active and inactive and (C) between generations.

Each system of social policy concerning the domains on which the study focuses may contain elements of A, B and C type redistribution; and vice versa, each of the three types of redistribution may exist in all policy domains. In addition, characteristics of the systems might differ in terms of other dimensions, such as being based on social insurance or universal principles, which might matter for each of the three (A, B and C) types of redistribution.

When defining the geographical scope, it is clear that for all comparative analyses, an attempt needs to be made – insofar as data availability permits – to cover all EU Member States, regardless of their period of membership, level of economic development or type of welfare system.²

The study makes use of a large number of cross-country surveys for the EU Member States and presents, where possible, an analysis covering the whole EU. In addition, the national surveys available have been investigated for a set of countries that adequately represent the geographical and historical heterogeneity of the European Union.³ The point of analysing national cases is to complement the main analysis of EU-level surveys, as well as to give an indication of the national context and/or trends in different countries.

The first section of the report presents the methods used for the literature review and for the descriptive and multivariate analysis. The second section covers the general attitudes towards welfare state and social policies. In particular, it analyses the type of social contract favoured by Europeans and the factors that shape preferences. The third section presents welfare attitudes for each domain covered by the study, i.e. child and family benefits, old-age pensions, unemployment benefits, social assistance, health care and other domains (long-term care, social services other than health services and child care, accidents at work and invalidity). The fourth section investigates whether there is support for organising solidarity at the European level. And the final section presents the overall conclusions, as well as policy recommendations.

1 This list and the definition of domains are taken directly from the original technical specifications of the study.

2 In certain cases, for benchmarking or topic-relevant comparisons, it is also important to include non-EU countries. Throughout the report, we take a pragmatic approach to this.

3 There is less focus on the UK than on other countries under review, due to Brexit.



1. Methods

The study is based on a thorough literature review, on a systematic assessment of the available datasets and on genuine analysis of international and national surveys. A brief description of methods comes in this section. Further methodological details can be found in the annexes and footnotes to the actual analysis.

1.1 Scoping literature review

While preparing for the empirical analysis, we carried out a systematic scoping review of the literature (Jesson et al., 2011) on welfare attitudes and attitudes towards redistribution, which involves employing a critical analysis of the existing theories, the quality of the empirical evidence and the extent to which the evidence provides support (or otherwise) for the theories.

The scope of the review was defined by focusing on the main objectives of the research. The intention was to systematically search for relevant literature in the available databases – Google Scholar, Web of Science, ScienceDirect – using keywords related to the research objectives, general words related to welfare attitudes, and more specific words referring to specific social policies. The search was not limited to a specific time period. The findings were corroborated with the available electronic libraries on welfare attitudes, in order to gain a complete overview of the sources available.

Studies were selected that fitted within the scope of the analysis, based on: (1) whether they assess people's preferences, opinions and attitudes regarding welfare states, welfare systems and welfare programmes; (2) whether their study involves (a selection of) EU Member States; and (3) the quality and scientific relevance of the study.

After selecting the sources, the studies were read critically, summarised and organised by topic, aims and outcomes. A systematic meta-analysis of the existing literature was carried out, with a particular focus on the qualitative analysis of selected country experience.

Finally, the results were synthesised and compiled in a review of the literature. An overview was created, arranging the available knowledge and assessing the theories, hypotheses and empirical outcomes. Gaps in the literature were also identified and discussed.

1.2 A mapping of available surveys and methodological aspects

Mapping of the international and national surveys available was undertaken to investigate their potential value-added for the study and the availability of microdata. This also required an assessment of the reliability of the results collected through the existing surveys and studies.



When selecting the international datasets to be used for the analysis, the following criteria were applied:

- geographical coverage: to be selected, surveys needed to provide data for the maximum number of Member States;
- time coverage and timeliness: those surveys with the most recent data were given priority in the data analysis. In addition, surveys that are conducted periodically were chosen, in order to examine any existing trends in social protection attitudes;
- content: the surveys which have collected the most relevant data on social protection attitudes (i.e. relevance for drawing comparisons and providing insights).

At the end of the selection process, the following three groups of datasets were selected for the cross-national analyses (see Annex 1 for details):

GROUP A (core surveys)

- European Social Survey (ESS) (waves between 2002 and 2018)
- International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) (waves between 1999 and 2017)
- European Values Surveys (EVS) (waves 1999, 2007 and 2017)
- European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) (four waves: 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2016)
- Eurobarometer (waves between 1999 and 2019)
- Behavioural Study on the Effects of an Extension of the Access to Social Protection for People in All Forms of Employment (2018)

GROUP B (surveys with important value-added)

- OECD Risks that Matter Survey (OECD-RTM) (2018)
- Life in Transition Survey (LITS) (waves 2006, 2010 and 2016)

GROUP C (surveys which could potentially be included in the case of special needs)

- Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) (Module IV (2011-2016) on Distributional Politics and Social Protection)
- Investing in Education in Europe: Attitudes, Politics and Policies (INVEduc) (2014)

Throughout the report, an examination of national surveys complements the main analysis of EU-level surveys and gives an indication of the national context and/or trends in different countries. This provides a supplementary view of attitudes, especially when the national surveys are carried out regularly and provide information on more recent trends than do the international surveys.

A short account of methodological choices and a description of the limitations is provided in Annex 1.



1.3 Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis performed includes a simple descriptive statistical analysis to present cross-national differences and time-series developments, as well as advanced multivariate and multilevel analyses. In addition, in order to uncover the individual-level and contextual determinants of preferences for social protection, a wide array of multivariate techniques is employed in the present report. The analytical approach adopted depends on the specific nature of the datasets, whether they are cross-national or national.

In the case of cross-sectional cross-national data (single point in time), multilevel regression models (Hox et al., 2017) are applied below. These models are used in the social sciences when the structure of the data is hierarchical: that is, when individuals (level 1 units) in the population are grouped into clusters (households, school classes, countries – level 2 units). Multilevel models take account of the interdependence between individuals from the same cluster by adding a random intercept at the country level; as a result, they yield valid standard errors (Snijders and Bosker, 2012). In addition to individual-level explanatory variables, the models also enable group-level explanatory variables to be introduced. In addition, random slopes can be added to take account of cross-level interaction effects and of the fact that the effect of particular individual predictors varies across countries.

As regards preferences for social protection, potentially important individual-level explanatory variables consist of basic demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender, marital status, number of children); aspects relating to the socio-economic status of respondents (e.g. education, employment status, social class and household income); and more subjective factors (e.g. ideological and political affiliation, social and institutional trust, attitudes towards migrants, experience of past mobility and expectations about future mobility).

In order to explain cross-country variance and socio-economic factors of attitudes towards various social policy measures in multivariate (and multilevel) statistical analysis, country-specific macro (contextual) variables need to be controlled for. Relevant context variables vary by domain. However, in each of the domains, it is possible to distinguish between dimensions of need (share of elderly or young, people without work, etc.), policy effort (expenditure for a particular purpose, etc.) and the relative generosity of benefits (wage-pension ratio, per capita family expenditure, etc.).

The individual-level and country-level (contextual) variables selected for each domain covered by this study are presented in the sections on determinants of attitudes.

The terms on the left-hand side of the equation, those that the equation is trying to explain, consist of the social protection functions or domains. Multidimensionality is also examined.

1.4 Reflections on the availability of data relating to attitudes towards social protection

Prior to reporting the results of our statistical analysis, we provide a couple of reflections on the availability of suitable data for the study of attitudes towards welfare protection, and give indications on how data availability could be improved in the future. These reflections are based on the mapping of available surveys and indicators presented in Section 1.2.



1.4.1 Limitations in data availability

The mapping exercise reveals that, while there is an abundant amount of empirical data available on welfare-related opinions in Europe, there are several shortcomings that lead to important knowledge gaps. Notably, the scattered nature of the available data presents an obstacle to constructing a systematic, comprehensive overview of welfare attitudes across the EU. At least three major shortcomings in the data are evident.

First, while there are various national data sources available on a range of welfare topics (such as perceptions of risk, social justice preferences, satisfaction with welfare arrangements, beliefs about the sustainability of welfare systems, opinions on particular target groups), these sources lack comparability, because of differences in survey design and the wording of questions. International surveys that ask welfare-related questions across a wide range of countries are few and far between. International surveys such as Eurobarometer, the European Values Study or the International Social Survey Programme do contain some welfare-related items, but these are too often limited in scope (see also the second point below). Data availability is even more limited when the interest lies in examining trends in attitudes cross-nationally. Designing surveys with this specifically in mind has the potential to deliver more robust insights into how attitudes react to changes in individual and contextual circumstances. Lack of data that are comparable over time and across countries considerably limits our understanding of the impact of institutional arrangements and economic conditions on welfare attitudes. A notable exception is the European Social Survey (ESS), which has run extensive modules on welfare attitudes (ESS 2008 and 2016), and a module on social justice (ESS 2018).

Second, from our review it appears that, all too often, the survey questions used lack any clear-cut conceptualisation. The nature of welfare attitudes is multidimensional: in their attitudes, people distinguish clearly between the various dimensions of the welfare state, and the distinct variations between these yield very different findings (as analyses in Section 2.3 of this report will confirm). To gain a complete picture, it is necessary for surveys to cover these different dimensions. Currently, many surveys are confined to one or a very limited number of dimensions (often related to the preferred role of government), or use items that mix elements of various dimensions (causing confusion about which concept is actually measured). What is needed is a clearer and more nuanced conceptualisation and translation of welfare attitudes into survey questions. A notable difficulty in this respect is how to formulate survey questions that function equivalently in different national policy contexts, but at the same time are not so general that they fail to capture support for specific policies. Another challenge for questionnaire design is related to the level of knowledge that respondents are assumed to have. To respond to these issues, we suggest having more experimental studies on how opinion-poll surveys could better simulate actual policy situations, where policy-makers and voters have very different amounts of information.

A third limitation is that certain – often more recently introduced – policy domains are covered very poorly in survey projects, compared with others. Although attitudes towards pensions and unemployment benefits have been measured quite extensively, there are far fewer data available on, for example, invalidity benefits, long-term care arrangements, accidents at work or support for social housing. In addition, data are currently lacking on the increased involvement of the EU in social policy, despite the relevance of this trend. A notable challenge here is that the technical complexity of particular policy domains (especially when national and pan-European levels of politics also need to be distinguished) often surpasses the knowledge of lay respondents and exceeds the cognitive effort that can be asked of people in a survey context. An example of this is that respondents often do not take account of the (national and EU-level) costs that are associated with policies, thus



artificially increasing the demand for social protection (at both levels). This is a clear limitation of welfare attitude surveys, and could be overcome by more experimental approaches, such as vignette studies.

1.4.2 Improving data availability

Because of the above, there is a need for additional data collection to enable the existing theoretical frameworks to be tested more thoroughly and policy-makers to be informed in a more detailed way. This main challenge is not so much to collect more data in a scattered manner, but to construct systematic data collection that is conceptually well founded and whose methodology is properly designed. Although the availability of cross-sectional, cross-national survey data on welfare attitudes has improved considerably (e.g. through initiatives by the European Social Survey or Eurobarometer), there is still a strong need to gradually build a cross-national, long-term time series of carefully conceptualised measurements of welfare attitudes. The welfare attitudes modules of the European Social Survey may be regarded as a step in the right direction. However, it would be even more useful to start collecting cross-national panel data (or at least cross-sectional studies with shorter time intervals, but with identical sets of questions); this would allow a more stringent test of causal mechanisms.

Besides more traditional survey approaches, more frequent use of vignette studies and survey experiments would also be helpful in shedding light on the causal mechanisms underlying welfare preferences. In light of the possibility that people may not have a particular attitude towards policies, insights into the level of knowledge about the current arrangements in place would increase understanding. Finally, more (cross-national) qualitative research and mixed-methods research would be helpful in understanding underlying reasoning on such complex, multidimensional phenomena as the welfare state, especially in a comparative and cross-national perspective.





2. General attitudes towards welfare state and social policies

Key points

- The term 'welfare state' conjures up a positive image for the majority (67%) of Europeans. In particular, people are very positive about the welfare state's goals and range of influence. People also tend to accept giving government a bigger role in providing benefits and services; but this does not seem to be always reflected in the willingness to accept higher taxes. Nevertheless, a majority of respondents (69% on average) in the EU countries surveyed by the OECD Risks that Matter Survey in 2018 favour higher taxes on the rich in order to provide for the poor.
- In general, worse economic conditions, higher levels of unemployment, and higher levels of poverty and inequality seem to stimulate support for government intervention; but they also tend to prompt dissatisfaction with the current provisions. Eastern and southern Europeans combine a positive attitude towards the goals and role of government with a more critical attitude towards the welfare state's efficiency and policy outcomes. On the other hand, western and northern European attitudes towards the different dimensions of the welfare state seem to be more related to a fundamentally positive or negative stance towards the general concept.
- Welfare preferences are also influenced by individual factors, such as self-interest and ideological disposition (i.e. justice beliefs, deservingness perceptions or value preferences), as well as by (mis)information. Around 4 in 10 Europeans believe that social services and benefits place too great a strain on the economy. The share of those who think this correlates closely with the share who think that social services and benefits tend to discourage people from working and make them less willing to care for one another. It seems that ideological elements play a key role here.
- People's welfare attitudes are not necessarily a consistent and homogeneous set of beliefs. They should instead be understood as a sometimes contradictory mix of substantive, redistributive, procedural and evaluative elements. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis to examine underlying attitudes show that, while people see the welfare state as substantially just, they criticise its efficiency, its effectiveness and its unintended outcomes. Respondents in northern and western European countries are, however, more positive about the outcomes and efficiency of the welfare state than are those from eastern and southern European countries.
- If we compare 2008 and 2016, the results show reduced support for government involvement in income protection for the elderly and the unemployed. There is, however, rather more support for a stronger government role in the provision of childcare services. The biggest attitude change is in people's perception of the impact of the welfare state on businesses: substantially fewer people agree that social benefits and services cost businesses too much in terms of taxes and charges.



2.1 What type of social contract is favoured by Europeans?

The social contract that is favoured by people is a complex issue that has been approached from various perspectives. Some studies (Roosma et al., 2013; Sihvo and Uusitalo, 1995a; Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012c) show that attitudes towards a particular social contract can be decomposed into separate yet interdependent dimensions that can be organised into a multidimensional framework. Meanwhile, other studies analyse the perceived affordability of the social protection system and its financing. This sub-section presents the relevant literature on this and also includes a descriptive analysis of general attitudes.

2.1.1 A multidimensional approach to welfare attitudes

Early welfare opinion studies (Coughlin, 1979, 1980; Taylor-Gooby, 1982, 1983, 1985) concluded that public support for the idea that the state should provide welfare for its citizens was very high and stable across European countries. At the same time, however, these studies revealed attitudinal ambiguity, as people tended to combine welfare support with the view that there was abuse of the system, excessive bureaucracy and an unfair division of taxation (Edlund, 1999; Goul Andersen, 1999; Svallfors, 1999a). Taking stock of the social legitimacy of the welfare state, therefore, requires a multidimensional perspective that distinguishes between various attitudinal dimensions (Cnaan, 1989; Roosma et al., 2013; Sabbagh and Vanhuysse, 2006; Sihvo and Uusitalo, 1995a; Svallfors, 1991).

Examining Dutch public opinion data, Van Oorschot and Meuleman (2012c) proposed a multidimensional perspective on welfare attitudes that was later systematised and tested in a comparative perspective by Roosma et al. (2013). These approaches underline the fact that the welfare state is a complex concept and that people are likely to have ambivalent or contradictory attitudes: being positive towards some dimensions and critical of others. Based on a theoretical framework defining conditions for welfare state legitimacy, Roosma et al. (2013) define several dimensions of welfare support, including substantive, redistributive, procedural and outcome-related dimensions (see Figure 1). The *substantive* dimensions of support refer to people's opinions on the main goals of the welfare state (should the welfare state redistribute to tackle poverty and inequality, provide social security or promote social inclusion?); on the range of welfare state policies (in which areas of social need should government intervene); and on the degree of welfare state intervention (in what policy areas should the government increase or decrease social spending?). As regards *redistributive* design, two dimensions are distinguished: who is regarded as deserving of benefits; and who should contribute to funding those benefits. *Procedural* dimensions of support contain opinions on the implementation of welfare: how efficient and effective is the welfare state in terms of bureaucracy, welfare abuse and underuse? In addition, dimensions relating to the *outcomes* of the welfare state are defined: are the intended outcomes (tackling poverty and inequality) reached, and how are the unintended consequences (strains on the economy and consequences for moral hazard) assessed? (See Roosma et al., 2013).

Although these dimensions to some extent have a common denominator – that is, a general pro versus contra welfare dimension – they are distinct concepts in their own right, in the sense that individuals can combine positive assessments of some aspects of the welfare state with a critical view of others (Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012c). In an overview study, Roosma et al. (2013) find that, across European countries, people are very positive about the welfare state's goals and range. Several studies also show that support for the principles of the welfare state and the role of government is stable over time and quite robust across economic shocks and changes in policy (Brooks and

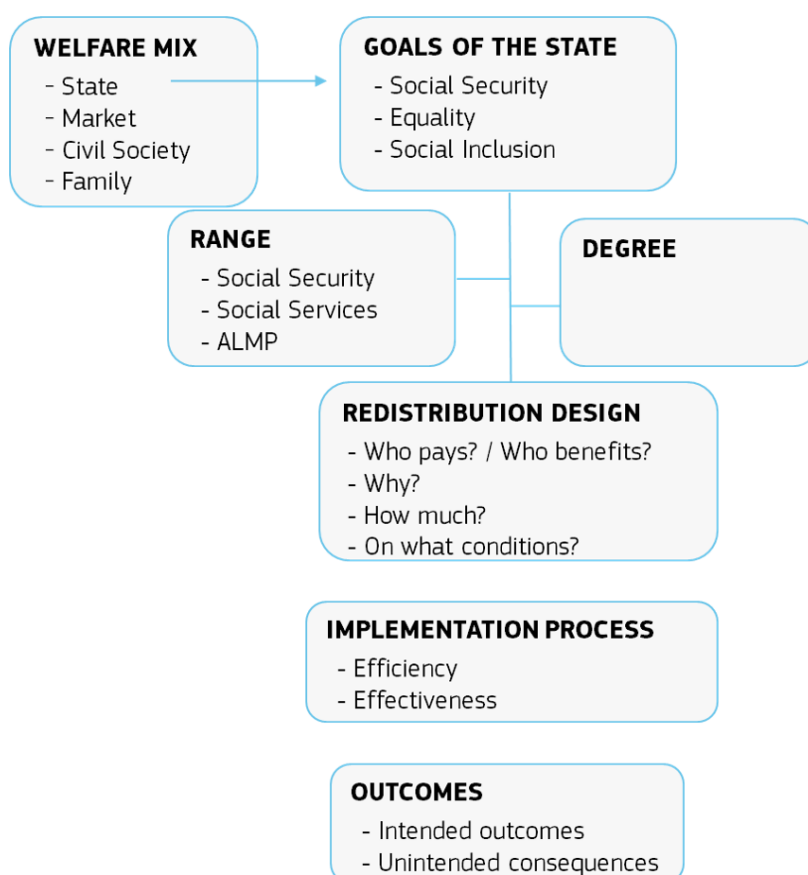


Manza, 2008; Jeene et al., 2014; Sihvo and Uusitalo, 1995b; Svallfors, 1995, 2011). At the same time, people are critical of the welfare state's efficiency, effectiveness and policy outcomes.

This conclusion is, for example, supported by the recent Risks that Matter Survey, organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Many people both inside and outside Europe are clearly dissatisfied with social protection. They consider benefits to be inadequate and unfairly distributed. As a response, they want more – rather than less – social protection (OECD, 2019). A clear divide between European countries is evident with respect to multidimensional welfare attitudes. Eastern and southern Europeans combine a positive attitude towards the goals and role of government with a more critical attitude towards the welfare state's efficiency and policy outcomes, while western and northern Europeans' attitudes towards the different welfare state dimensions seem to be more related to a fundamentally positive or negative stance towards the welfare state (Roosma et al., 2014a). In similar vein, Fábíán et al. (2014) find that there are cross-country variations in demand for further redistribution, with the highest levels in favour in Greece and Cyprus and the lowest in the Netherlands.

This multidimensional model implies that people's welfare attitudes are not necessarily a consistent and homogeneous set of beliefs, but should instead be understood as a sometimes contradictory mix of substantive, redistributive, procedural and evaluative elements. A full analysis of the legitimacy of the welfare state, therefore, has to take account of this variety of attitudinal dimensions.

Figure 1 The multidimensional nature of welfare attitudes



Note: ALMP – active labour market policies

Source: Roosma et al. (2013)



2.1.2 Perceived affordability and the financing of the social protection system

An important dimension in assessing support for the social protection system is whether or not people believe that the system can be afforded and how it should be paid for. Unfortunately, not much comparative research exists on this topic.

Some studies provide limited descriptive statistics (Fridberg, 2012; Goul Andersen et al., 1999), but studies that assess factors explaining perceptions of affordability of provision are scarce (Roosma and Reeskens, 2016). The ESS 2008 included two questions that asked people whether or not they believed that the pension and healthcare systems were likely to be affordable in the future: about 40% of respondents (in 23 European countries) believed that the pension system was not affordable at the current level of benefits, while around a third thought the same about the healthcare system. On the other hand, 45% and 48% of respondents, respectively, believed that the pension and healthcare systems were affordable at the current level of provision, and 15% and 18%, respectively, thought an increase in the level of provision was affordable (Roosma and Reeskens, 2016).

Differences in perceptions of affordability of the pension and healthcare systems can be explained only to a limited extent by individual characteristics; rather, the differences are related to contextual factors. In general, people who are politically more right-wing, those who have lower trust in institutions and in fellow citizens, and people under the age of 65 are more likely to believe that health care and pensions will become unaffordable in the future. People with higher (subjective) incomes and tertiary education are, however, less likely to believe this (Roosma and Reeskens, 2016). At a contextual level, Roosma and Reeskens (2016) found a positive correlation between social spending and the perceived unaffordability of pensions and health care, but they found that the ratio of the number of elderly to the number of working-age people had no significant effect, and nor did the level of GDP per head.

As regards attitudes towards financing the social protection system, the evidence of broad enthusiasm for a bigger role for government in providing benefits and services is not always matched by a willingness to accept higher taxes. In the European Social Survey (ESS) 2008 survey, around a third of respondents (from 22 European countries) expressed support for spending more on benefits and services and for increasing taxes at the same time; meanwhile, almost 30% indicated that they would prefer to have lower taxes and less spending on benefits and services (the other third or so of respondents were indifferent) (Roosma et al., 2013).

The OECD Risks that Matter Survey also indicates that around a third of the population would be reluctant to pay more for benefits and services (OECD, 2019). Backing for a 2% tax rise to secure higher benefits varies across different benefits and services. Some 40% of respondents in the OECD countries would be willing to pay more for better pensions and health care,¹ while between 20% and 27% of respondents were willing to pay higher taxes for increased spending on long-term care for the elderly, education, affordable housing and invalidity and unemployment benefits. Support was higher among those most at risk (OECD, 2019).

This relatively strong support for (more) spending on social benefits and services and, at the same time, a reluctance to accept higher taxes to pay for it, has led scholars to conclude that ‘people want something for nothing’ (Citrin, 1979). But others argue that people simply want to shift the burden onto someone else or make the tax system fairer (Edlund, 2003). There is a sizeable corpus of

1 This is an average, which conceals the differences in income and organisation of welfare systems between OECD countries. Those countries where people are more likely to be willing to pay more in tax for better health care are Ireland (51% of respondents), Portugal (49%), Greece and Chile (both 48%), while those where people are the most likely to say they would be prepared to pay an extra 2% of the income in tax for better pensions are Israel (49%), Chile (51%) and Lithuania (53%).



literature (especially American) on attitudes to taxation; this focuses on opposition to taxes (Bartels, 2005; Citrin, 1979; Svallfors, 2011) and – more relevantly for financing the social protection system – on the distribution of taxes between different income groups (Bernasconi, 2006; Confalonieri and Newton, 1995; Edlund, 1999; Roosma et al., 2015b).

Studies on the distribution of taxes show strong support for distributing taxes in a more progressive manner. Findings suggest that a significant proportion of Europeans believe that people on higher incomes should pay more tax and those on lower incomes should pay less (Bernasconi, 2006; Confalonieri and Newton, 1995; Edlund, 1999; Roosma et al., 2015b). However, the proportion of survey respondents who believe that taxes are correctly distributed is relatively large (though the data are from 2006) (Roosma et al., 2015b). In addition, there is a group that opposes all taxes (confirming results from the US) and another group that wants to relieve the burden on the middle class especially (Roosma et al., 2015b), in line with the notion that the middle class suffers from high taxation (Wilensky, 1975). It seems that perceived inequality correlates strongly with demand for redistribution and perceived conflict between rich and poor (Cruces et al., 2013; Engelhardt and Wagener, 2014; Gimpelson and Treisman, 2018; Bussolo et al., 2019; Choi, 2019).

As regards perceptions of the distribution of benefits in relation to contributions, the results show that the majority of Europeans (55%) support the principle that people should receive the same amount of unemployment benefit, regardless of their contribution to the social protection system (Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2013). However, in the case of pensions, survey respondents tend to opt either for the principle that higher contributions should result in higher pensions (the equity principle) (45%) or for the argument that they should result in the same level of pension for everyone (the equality principle) (43%) (Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2013). This supports the idea that an equal distribution is preferred for benefits that cover risks that are more difficult to predict and control. However, for the social risk of getting old, equality is also strongly favoured by the public (Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2013). Country differences are very small in relation to attitudes towards unemployment benefits; but on pensions, there are variations between countries that are mostly explained by welfare generosity (which leads to more support for equal distributions) and the institutional design of the system (the actual distribution is a reflection of the preferred distribution) (Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2013).

Box 1. Taxation and the welfare state in Greece

In Greece, the survey What Greeks Believe, commissioned since 2015 by diaNEOsis, includes a question on whether respondents favoured ‘high taxes and a strong welfare state’ or ‘low taxes and lower state provision’. Over the past five years, the shift in the balance of opinion has been large: the share of those who favoured high taxes and a strong welfare state dropped from almost 50% in April 2015 to 30% in December 2019; conversely, the share of those in favour of low taxes and lower state provision rose from 39% to 62%. The shift in opinion is reflected in the electoral swing towards the conservative party under its current liberal leadership. Support for low taxes and lower state provision increased steadily with age (e.g. 57% in the age group 25–34 vs 71% among those aged over 65), and declined with education (63% among respondents with a secondary school diploma vs 53% among those with a postgraduate degree). Even more surprisingly, support for low taxes and lower state provision was highest among those on low incomes and those who (in a different question) reported that they found it hard to make ends meet.



2.1.3 Empirical evidence on general attitudes

As is shown in the literature review above, the welfare state is a complex concept, and people tend to have ambivalent or contradictory attitudes towards it. Many aspects can be investigated: how people think the welfare state contributes to social cohesion (or social peace); how it helps economic prosperity in general; how it enhances national competitiveness; its capacity to alleviate poverty, etc. In this sub-section, we focus on one particular aspect of the welfare state: we present some data on how Europeans evaluate its general costs and whether they would be prepared to pay more tax to fund it, and what the perceived effects of the welfare state are.

In 2018, according to the findings of the Eurobarometer survey, the term ‘welfare state’ conjured up a positive image for two thirds (67%) of all Europeans, although there were differences between countries. The share of those holding a positive view of the welfare state was largest in Finland (91%) and Sweden (89%). At the other extreme, in France only 34% said the term brought to mind something very or fairly positive.

Across Europe, in the early years of the global financial crisis, when social expenditure rose counter-cyclically (from 25% of GDP in 2007 to 29% in 2009), the share of positive views of the welfare state did not change significantly (68% in 2007 and 70% in 2009). Thereafter, during the Eurozone crisis, when social spending barely moved on average, positive views of the welfare state fell sharply (to nearly 63% in 2014), only to increase more recently as the economy recovered (see Table A1 in the Annex).²

When asked whether the welfare state was too expensive, less than half of respondents (46%) in 2014 thought it was, down from 54% in 2009 (see Table A2 in the Annex). The share of those who agreed with the statement was highest in France (64%), where welfare spending in relation to GDP is the highest in the EU. On the other hand, in Sweden, where social spending is also high, only 22% thought the welfare state too expensive.

In general, it is unlikely that respondents use other countries as a benchmark when they think about whether the (national) welfare state is too expensive or not. It seems more likely that their views are based on their own experience. In other words, people consider whether the welfare state is too expensive (or not, as the case may be) in relation to how it used to be, or relative to the perceived benefit from the taxes and contributions they pay. In this framework, the (objective) fact that taxes and social spending are both high in Sweden is less relevant to the (subjective) view of the overwhelming majority of respondents that the welfare state is not too expensive. Partial support for this is perhaps offered by the finding that the correlation between changes in welfare spending as a proportion of GDP and changes in the share of those who find the welfare state too expensive – at the country level and over the period 2009-2014 – is positive ($r=0.33$) (Figure 2).

In 2009, nearly two thirds of respondents (63%) in Europe agreed that *‘a high level of healthcare, education and social spending must be guaranteed, even if it means that taxes might increase’*. In 2014, that share had fallen to 46%. The shift in opinion was not so much towards the contrary view that *‘taxes should be decreased even if it means a general lower level of healthcare, education and social spending’* (although the share of those who thought that did rise from nearly 19% in 2009 to 23% in 2014). Rather, it was the share of those who answered *‘it depends’* – that grew from 12% to 25% between the two years (Table A3 in the Annex).

2 The literature review above also shows that poorer economic conditions seem to increase dissatisfaction with the current provisions (see, for instance, Roosma et al., 2014a).



Box 2. Crises, economic hardship and welfare attitudes: Finland and Hungary

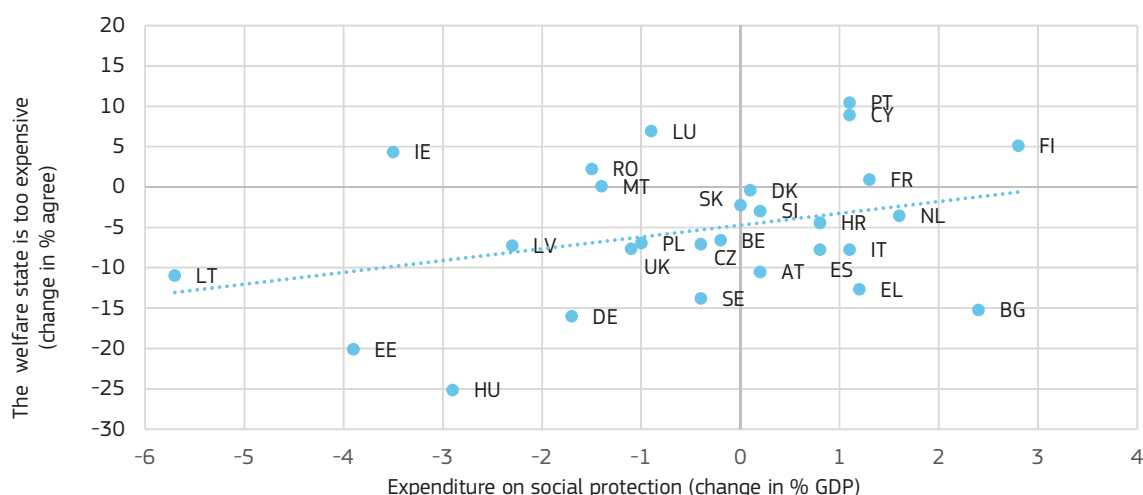
After years of unprecedented growth during the 1980s, the **Finnish economy** was hit by a severe economic crisis in the early 1990s. During the first three years of the decade, GDP fell by about 13%, while unemployment rose from under 4% to almost 18%. The government responded to this gloomy economic situation with tight fiscal policies and cuts in welfare benefits (especially in unemployment and family benefits). Between 1993 and 2000, social expenditure dropped from 38% to 30% of GDP (Uusitalo, 1996). Regular survey data regarding public opinion on government intervention are collected by the Finnish Gallup Inc. (see Sihvo and Uusitalo, 1995b, for a more detailed report): these show that, prior to the 1990s, between 15% and 20% of Finns were convinced that social security had developed too rapidly (while more than 50% deemed the pace of development appropriate, and more than 20% regarded it as too slow). After 1990, however, at the point when economic growth turned negative, the percentage of respondents who were against continuous government intervention rose substantially, first to 23% (1991) and then to 33% (1992). A similar trend was observed for attitudes towards cuts in various welfare programmes (see Sihvo and Uusitalo, 1995b). Additional analyses furthermore revealed that the change in public opinion was not confined to particular social categories, but spanned the population.

The recession which started in 2008 in **Hungary** resulted in increased unemployment (from around 8% to around 10%) and a fall in GDP and net real incomes (of 5%) between 2007 and 2009. Meanwhile the collapse of the mortgage market (and of lending as a whole) made it very difficult to smooth consumption over time for those families most in need. Inflation, stagnating wages and cuts in social spending led to falling real incomes. The period following the 2007–2012 recession saw GDP growth accompanied by practically zero (or a low level of) inflation, sharply reduced unemployment and increasing employment (albeit initially achieved via a large-scale public-works programme to encourage many inactive people to re-enter the labour market). A recent study (Tóth and Branyiczki, 2018), based on the 2007 and 2016 Tárki Household Monitor survey microdata, investigated how the attitudes of people to social policies changed.¹ In general, attitudes to people getting ahead in life shifted between 2007 and 2016, with a move towards bitterness and scepticism. In 2016, only around a quarter of respondents thought that personal effort, ambition and hard work were the primary source of material prosperity, compared with well over a third in 2007. Shifts in the demand for a protective state (measured by the preference for the state to take responsibility for the fate of people in general, for providing jobs and for higher spending on health care, education and social transfers) were less pronounced. Contrary to what was observed for Greece and Finland above, there was a slight increase in the demand for state protection and redistribution (the demand for state intervention in job creation even declined a little, probably due to the extended public-works programme introduced by the government in 2011). The results suggest that the main drivers of attitudes towards the factors underlying social advancement (more precisely perceptions of the relative importance of the role of the state vis-à-vis the individual in material advancement) are not economic cycles and individual utility, but deeper, more persistent social structures and cultural attitudes.

1 Most notably, the focus of the research was on how income, employment and consumption shocks affect the attitudes of members of the same household towards sources of social advancement and towards the role of the state in providing social protection. Thus, the focus was on whether financial difficulties or uncertainties experienced during a global economic crisis shift preferences as regards the protective role of the state.



Figure 2 Social expenditure vs welfare state perceived as too expensive (change 2009-2014)



Source: Eurobarometer, ESSPROS

In Sweden, in 2014, some 85% of respondents were in favour of a high level of welfare provision, even at the cost of higher taxes (only 4% took the opposite view). Large majorities in favour of a high welfare/high tax regime were also observed in the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland and the UK. Only in a handful of countries in the eastern and southern parts of Europe (Romania, Greece, Slovakia, Croatia, Latvia and Italy) did the opposite view prevail. Possible explanatory factors for these cross-country differences could relate to general levels of affluence in the countries concerned, patterns of distribution with regard to beneficiary groups (defined by ethnic or regional cleavages in the various countries) or other factors specific to previous national experience or cultural traditions. It is clear at the moment that the differences are only partly explicable in terms of what seem to be plausible factors and that further research is required to investigate the underlying reasons for them.

The OECD Risks that Matter Survey 2018 asked respondents whether they agreed that the government should tax the rich more than is currently the case, in order to support the poor. In all EU countries surveyed, a majority of respondents favoured higher taxes on the rich, in order to provide for the poor. Support for Robin Hood-like redistribution (taxing the rich/supporting the poor) was strongest in Portugal (80%), Greece (79%) and Germany (77%), and weakest in Estonia (52%), Poland (54%) and Denmark (55%). The unemployed were more in favour of taxing the rich in most countries (and in Poland, France and the Netherlands by a very wide margin), but not in Ireland. Rather unsurprisingly, respondents in the high-income group (unsatisfactorily defined as the top one third of the income distribution, unadjusted for household size) were less keen on higher taxes for the rich. That was the case in all countries.

The European Social Survey asks respondents whether they agree that the government should reduce differences in income levels.³ Overall, the average share of responses in favour of redistribution has fluctuated between 69% and 75% (in the countries participating, which differ in each wave): in 2018, the figure was 75%. Bulgaria (87% in 2018) registered the highest share of positive responses, with Italy (86%) a close second. At the other end of the spectrum, in 2018 only 49% of respondents in the Czech Republic agreed that the government should reduce income

³ Responses have been available in two-yearly intervals since 2002, though coverage is incomplete: not all EU Member States have participated in all ESS waves.



inequalities, followed – at a considerable distance – by respondents in the Netherlands (62%). Sweden, in 2016, also scored low (62%) on this dimension: that could mean a relative satisfaction with the generally low level of inequality (so no need for further redistribution) or it could signal dissatisfaction with the cost of redistribution (already perceived to be high).

A further set of ESS questions, asked in 2008 and 2016, concerned the perceived effects of the welfare state. Only 38% of all respondents in the 18 EU Member States that participated in 2016 thought that social services and benefits placed too great a strain on the economy. (In 2008, when 25 countries took part in the ESS, the EU average was 40% – see Table A4 in the Annex.) Shifts in opinion over time are also interesting. In Hungary, the share of those who agreed that social services and benefits placed too great a strain on the economy fell from 52% in 2008 to nearly 32% in 2016. Meanwhile, in Portugal it rose from 42% to 57%. In most countries, perhaps surprisingly, the elderly tended to be more worried than the general population about the negative effects of the welfare state on the economy: the difference was largest in Sweden (8 pp), followed by Germany (7 pp). At the other extreme, in Spain, the share of those who thought that the welfare state placed too great a strain on the economy was lower among the elderly (31%) than among the general population (39%) in 2016. As might be expected, respondents who were in employment at the time of the survey were more likely than the general population to think that the welfare state placed too great a strain on the economy. In 2016, the difference was greatest in Portugal (65% vs 57%). In Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, those living comfortably were 7-7.5 percentage points more likely than the general population to stress the negative effects of the welfare state on the economy. By contrast, in Germany and the Netherlands, the more affluent were 2-2.5 percentage points less likely to take that view.

On the whole, negative views of the welfare state at the country level tended to correlate. The share of those who agreed that social benefits and services placed too great strain on the economy correlated fairly closely with the share of those who thought that they discouraged people from working ($r=0.75$) and made them less willing to care for one another ($r=0.70$). And the same with positive views: the share of respondents who agreed that social benefits and services prevented widespread poverty correlated closely with the share of those who thought that they lead to a more equal society ($r=0.81$). However, the correlation was not perfect: in Germany, over two thirds of respondents (69%) agreed that the welfare state prevented widespread poverty, but less than half (46%) also thought that it contributed to a more equal society. Naturally, it is possible to hold the view that the welfare state has a negative effect on the economy (or discourages work effort, or crowds out voluntary care) and at the same time believe that it has a positive effect on income distribution (in the sense that it reduces poverty and inequality). For instance, in France, a majority of respondents (53%) were worried that the welfare state placed too great a strain on the economy, but two thirds (66%) admitted that it prevented widespread poverty. By contrast, in the Netherlands, concern with the negative effects of the welfare state on the economy was far less common (24%), and the share of respondents who thought that the welfare state was successful in preventing widespread poverty was greater (73%).



Box 3. Attitudes in Denmark and Romania towards migrants and ethnic minorities

In **Denmark**, despite reforms following the 2008 financial crisis, the welfare state is still known for its generous and universalistic benefits and services for elderly and children, and in the domain of health care (Greve, 2016). These generous provisions have led to the notion that Denmark is an ideal 'welfare magnet', attracting low-skilled immigrants with generous benefits (Agersnap et al., 2019). There has also been intense social and political debate about immigration and the welfare state, including the expression of strong anti-immigrant sentiments. Data from the European Values Survey (EVS)¹ show a significant increase in support for the idea that immigrants place a strain on the welfare system. Whereas in 2008 more than 55% agreed with this statement, by 2017 the figure had increased to over 62%. Less than 20% in 2017 believed that immigrants were not a strain. On the other hand, people are concerned about the living conditions of migrants: in 2008, six years after the introduction of severe cuts to benefits for migrants, almost 40% of Danes were (very) concerned about the living conditions of migrants. In 2017, almost 50% indicated their concern. Although Danish respondents seem to fear the impact of the influx of migrants on their generous welfare system, at the same time they are increasingly concerned about the social rights of those self-same migrants. This development might be interpreted as a version of the 'progressive dilemma': what is the trade-off between diversity and solidarity? (See Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2012.)

In **Romania**, since austerity measures were introduced in 2009–2010, there has been a tendency in periodic media campaigns and political discourse to blame the poorest social groups for being 'socially assisted' (Popescu et al., 2016). There is a long-standing conceptual ambiguity that contributes to the stigmatisation of certain groups, or even the 'ethnicisation' of some interventions, with the Roma or the 'undeserving poor' carrying the blame. As a result, it seems there is an overlap of attitudes towards some interventions (e.g. an increase in child allowance) and attitudes towards Roma or the 'undeserving poor'. Data show that in 2013, 54% of Romanians believed that unemployment benefits should be given only to those who had previously contributed to the system, irrespective of need; meanwhile, 25% and 17%, respectively, would cut public funding for child-raising benefits and child allowance (IRES, 2013). Interestingly enough, surveys carried out before the crisis show a wider acceptance of social support for certain social groups (Voicu, 2005).

1 The European Values Survey (EVS) contains two relevant questions on welfare states and immigration. In the surveys of 2008 and 2017, respondents were asked to what extent they believed that immigrants put a strain on the welfare system. Respondents could indicate their response on a ten-point scale. In the EVS waves of 1999, 2008 and 2017, a survey question was included asking how concerned people were about the living conditions of immigrants. Answers were given on a five-point scale, indicating whether respondents were 'very much', 'much', 'to a certain extent', 'not so much' or 'not at all' concerned about the living conditions of immigrants.

2.2 Which individual and contextual factors shape evaluations and preferences?

Attitudes towards social policy and welfare states are not uniform across Europe, but display important differences from country to country. There are also differences between individuals within countries (see, for instance, Ervasti et al., 2012; Svallfors, 2012). This sub-section summarises the main findings as regards differences between individuals, as well as contextual determinants of assessments of, and preferences for, welfare arrangements.



2.2.1 Individual factors: social-structural positions and ideological disposition

As regards individual determinants, studies of welfare attitudes generally point towards two classic sets of drivers of welfare preferences: on the one hand, self-interest; on the other, social norms or an ideological desire for the common good (Jæger, 2006b). The self-interest approach is rooted in rational choice theory and assumes that humans are rational beings that support policies and welfare arrangements if the expected personal gain (today or in the future) outweighs the anticipated cost. In consequence, people in disadvantaged socio-economic positions (because of their higher probability of becoming welfare dependent) or people who are more likely to benefit from specific welfare provisions are expected to show greater support for redistribution and welfare provision (Andreß and Heien, 2001; Hasenfeld and Rafferty, 1989). The self-interest approach typically looks at socio-economic factors, such as education, income, work or occupational status and social class, to explain support for welfare benefits in general. And for specific targeted benefits or services (such as old-age pensions, health care and family support), specific predictors – age, health conditions or having children – are used to explain welfare preferences (Goerres and Tepe, 2010).

The idea that a person's financial situation affects his or her redistribution preferences is a central theme in political economy as well. The well-known median voter hypothesis (Meltzer and Richard, 1981) postulates that individuals are rational beings that attempt to maximise their marginal utility. In consequence, those whose earnings fall below the average will demand more redistribution. A more nuanced version for explaining welfare support by material factors is given by Rehm (2016), who argues for risk profiles in terms of social-structural positions. In his view, individuals are well aware of the different risks they are exposed to, and the extent to which they support social insurance or redistribution depends crucially on their perceptions of these risks.

Generally, empirical research indicates consistent, but sometimes small, effects on various dimensions of welfare state support. People who are dependent on welfare benefits, have relatives who rely on welfare benefits, or belong to a social category that is generally more at risk of becoming dependent on welfare benefits are stronger supporters of, and are less critical of, the welfare state (d'Anjou et al., 1995; Linos and West, 2003; Svallfors, 1995; Svallfors et al., 2012); meanwhile those on higher incomes are more averse to redistribution (Finseraas, 2009; Meuleman, 2019).

There is more convincing evidence that subjective perceptions of risk (rather than objective social-structural positions) affect welfare support (Rehm, 2016).⁴ Given the rise of non-standard forms of work (e.g. part-time or temporary work or self-employment) in European societies, self-interest theory offers an interesting perspective to study the impact of these employment conditions on assessments of and preferences for social protection. Those employed in non-standard forms of work tend to see social protection as inadequate. As a response, a large proportion of them would like to enrol in benefit schemes (especially unemployment benefits), and believe it is necessary to prepare for retirement because statutory pensions will be very low. Behavioural experiments indicate that these groups have a clear preference for social protection, and a vast majority are willing to accept earnings that are 12% lower, in exchange for adequate social protection (Open Evidence, 2018). These findings temper the claim of Rehm (2016) that technological change will affect the risk pool in such a way that willingness to support social policy will be eroded.

A second theoretical framework emphasises the role of normative considerations, value frameworks and ideological beliefs. According to this theory, welfare opinions are embedded in a broad and coherent system of ideological preferences that serves as a set of guiding principles in the life of an

⁴ Further, there are several other tests showing significant results when material position is defined in the context of expectations. For a very thorough overview and evidence, see Rueda and Stegmueller (2019).



individual (Feldman and Zaller, 1992; Jæger, 2006b, 2008). In the relevant literature can be found a variety of – often at least partially overlapping – conceptualisations and operationalisations of the normative component. Most frequently, left-right political position is used as a catch-all ideological dimension. The research in question shows that left-leaning individuals are more supportive of government intervention and the welfare state (Jæger, 2006b; Papadakis and Bean, 1993; Alesina and Giuliano, 2011). However, it is open to question how much can be learned from this finding, since favouring redistribution is itself part of the definition of the political left (Rehm, 2016).

A more focused approach investigates the extent to which preferences for particular principles of distributive justice – such as equality, equity or need (Deutsch, 1975; Hülle et al., 2017) – are related to welfare state support (Mau, 2003). A recurrent finding is that a preference for egalitarian distribution stimulates welfare support (Brezna, 2010; Jæger, 2006b, 2008; Van Oorschot et al., 2012; Sabbagh and Vanhuysse, 2006; Staerklé et al., 2012). The three principles of social justice are conceptually strongly related to the principles of deservingness that people employ to determine whether they are willing to support particular welfare arrangements (Meuleman et al., 2019). According to deservingness theory, support for welfare provisions is stronger when these provisions are targeted at social groups that meet particular ‘deservingness criteria’. The deserving are people who are not responsible for their neediness, who are grateful for the help they receive, who reciprocate or have reciprocated in the past, who belong to our group and who are in real need of help (Van Oorschot et al., 2017). The deservingness framework has found strong support over time and in different contexts, while the importance attached to the different deservingness criteria varies across social-structural categories (Gielens et al., 2019; Jeene et al., 2013; Meuleman et al., 2019).

In addition, value theories – such as the theory of Basic Human Values, developed by Schwartz (1992) – also support the importance of ideological beliefs, as universalist values are found to correlate substantially with welfare support (Kulin and Svallfors, 2013; Kulin and Meuleman, 2015). Importantly, self-interest and ideological dispositions (such as justice beliefs, deservingness perceptions or value preferences) do not exclude each other, but offer complementary explanatory frameworks to understand individual differences in preferences regarding solidarity and the future of the welfare state (Laenen, 2019). Other studies also link support for the welfare state provisions to the personality characteristics of respondents (Tepe and Vanhuysse, 2020).

Another strand of research – focusing on pension systems, in particular – addresses the impact of (mis)information on support for redistribution and policy reform. Boeri et al. (2001) used a special survey in four countries (Italy, Spain, France and Germany) to study how well informed people were about the pension system and whether they would opt out of it if they could. They concluded that misinformation about the pension system was rife, and they also showed that having more accurate information affected people’s opinions of the system. Younger, better-educated and more-informed respondents tended to be more willing to accept a pension reform plan with partial opt-out and mandatory savings. Other studies have used survey experiments to show the effect of information on the preferences for pension reform. For instance, Boeri and Tabellini (2012) conducted an experiment on a sample of Italian adults aged 20–45. Before filling in a questionnaire, half of the sample – randomly selected – was asked to read a brief description of the Italian pension system, containing information that would enable them to answer the factual questions in the questionnaire. The authors showed that this increased both the information those respondents had about the pension system and their willingness to accept reforms that involved a retrenchment of pension rights (increasing the retirement age or reducing pension benefits). Similar survey experiments have been



carried out in other countries, for example Hungary (Csontos et al., 1998) and Norway (Finseraas and Jakobsson, 2014).

A few studies, focusing exclusively on Finland, address the difference in support between the elite and the general public and show that the gap is considerable. Although support for the welfare state is also to be found among the elite (politicians, businessmen, civil servants, etc.), they tend to prefer more means-tested options and private provisions (Forma, 1999). The elite are also more in favour of welfare cuts, as they believe them to be necessary (Blomberg and Kroll, 1999; Blomberg et al., 2018; Forma, 1999). Street-level bureaucrats see welfare beneficiaries as more deserving, whereas administrative benefit officials adopt a more critical stance than the general public (Kallio and Kouvo, 2015).

2.2.2 Contextual factors

The comparative surveys available on welfare attitudes provide evidence that sizeable and systematic differences exist between the welfare opinions of people living in different countries. Drawing on the seminal book of Esping-Andersen (1990) on welfare regime types, several comparative studies have attempted to understand cross-national differences in terms of different ‘worlds of welfare’ attitudes (Andreß and Heien, 2001; Arts and Gelissen, 2001; Bean and Papadakis, 1998; Gelissen, 2000; Jæger, 2006a; Larsen, 2005; Svallfors, 1997). These studies report stronger support for the general goals of the welfare state (redistribution and tackling poverty and equality) and state intervention in the social democratic welfare states, and less in the liberal welfare states, but clear ‘worlds of welfare’ were not found (Bean and Papadakis, 1998; Brooks, 2012; Gelissen, 2000). Attitude patterns cut across welfare regimes, and attitudinal diversity within welfare regimes seems to be more important than the differences between regimes (Brooks, 2012). Later studies have pointed out that the cross-country differences can best be captured by a European east-west divide in welfare attitudes, in the sense that eastern European countries show lower levels of satisfaction with current provisions, as well as a stronger demand for government intervention (Lipsmeyer and Nordstrom, 2003; Roosma et al., 2013).

A deeper insight into the contextual determinants of welfare preferences is available if we break the regime types down into variables and investigate the impact of contextual predictors. The release of the European Social Survey modules on welfare attitudes (in 2008 and 2016) provided an important impulse in this direction (Ervasti et al., 2012; Svallfors, 2012). A steadily growing number of studies have linked the multiple dimensions of welfare support to economic, institutional, demographic and cultural or political context variables (Ervasti, 2012; Iversen and Soskice, 2006; Kenworthy and McCall, 2008; Meuleman and Chung, 2012; Roosma et al., 2014a, 2014b; Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012a; Van Oorschot et al., 2012).

Generally, poorer economic conditions, with higher levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality (with a different impact for different distributions of inequality), seem to stimulate support for government intervention (Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Jeene et al., 2014), but also instigate dissatisfaction with the current provisions – a pattern that could explain the east-west divide in welfare attitudes (Roosma et al., 2014a). Economic downturns and rising unemployment are also specifically associated with support for the unemployed. While some studies argue that support is lower in worse conditions, as people feel they are in competition over scarce resources (Alt, 1979; Durr, 1993; Goul Andersen, 1992; Kuivalainen and Erola, 2017), others claim – and empirically confirm – that worse economic conditions and higher unemployment increase support for generous



unemployment benefits, because then people feel that benefit claimants are less to blame for their situation (Bryson, 1997; Fridberg and Ploug, 2000; Hills, 2002; Uunk and Van Oorschot, 2019).

The political economy literature has devoted particular attention to income inequality as an economic context factor shaping support for redistribution. Given that income distributions tend to be right-skewed, the median voter will support redistributive policies because his/her income is below the mean. The more that income distributions are right-skewed, the larger the distance between the median and the mean income and the larger the support base for redistribution (see, for example, Meltzer and Richard, 1981). Empirical evidence for this median voter theory is mixed, however. Various studies indeed report that income inequality encourages support for redistribution (Dallinger, 2010; Finseraas, 2009; Jæger, 2013; Schmidt-Catran, 2016). Yet others present evidence of a negative effect of income inequality on welfare support (Bowles and Gintis, 2000; Dion and Birchfield, 2010) – the so-called Robin Hood paradox. Still others report a V-shaped effect (Moene and Wallerstein, 2001, who emphasise the social insurance elements of the welfare state, rather than its vertical redistribution aspects) or conclude that a significant relationship is absent (Lübker, 2007; Kenworthy and McCall, 2008). Work by Fábíán et al. (2014) suggests that preferences for redistribution are more strongly influenced by the lower part of the income distribution (i.e. below the median) than by the upper part (i.e. above the median). Along similar lines, but focusing on the distribution of risks, rather than income, Rehm (2016) posits that skewness in the risk pool crucially shapes the legitimacy of social insurance and redistribution: for risk distributions that are top-heavy (that is, a large share of the population has high risk exposure), the median risk is higher than the mean, which creates the support base for an expansion of social policy. Several studies attribute the lack of a stable correlation between inequality and preferences for redistribution to the importance of perceptions of inequality (that can be biased) in explaining preferences for redistribution (Cruces et al., 2013; Engelhardt and Wagener, 2014; Gimpelson and Treisman, 2018; Bussolo et al., 2019; Choi, 2019).

A long-standing research question concerns the relationship between the policy context, on the one hand, and welfare-related public opinion, on the other. The causality of this relationship is disputed, however. According to the policy responsiveness theory (Brooks and Manza, 2008), public opinion has constraining effects on policy-making: in democratic societies, either policy-makers (tend) to take measures that are aligned with the preferences of the general public, or they are punished electorally and replaced by others who are willing to do so. Yet at the same time, policy feedback theory (Mettler and Soss, 2004; Kumlin and Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014) claims that policies can be seen as normative frameworks that are internalised by people and that shape public opinion. Both frameworks therefore predict congruence between the actual policy context and public attitudes, but have conflicting perspectives on the causality of the relationship.

Most of the studies investigating the relationship between policy context and welfare attitudes rely on cross-sectional data and are accordingly unable to determine causality. In the absence of better policy indicators that are available across countries, various studies have used social expenditure as an indicator of welfare generosity. Jæger (2006a) finds that total social expenditure is correlated with higher levels of support for government intervention, but the effect is curve-linear, in the sense that as expenditure increases, support levels off. Van Oorschot et al. (2012) find that social expenditure stimulates positive perceptions about the social effects of welfare, but at the same time increases fears about economic and moral side-effects. Roosma et al. (2015a) report that perceptions of benefit underuse are significantly weaker in countries with high levels of expenditure. However, the use of total social expenditure as a measure of welfare generosity has been criticised, as it is heavily influenced by the amount of social need in society, and does not necessarily, therefore, reflect



how generous a system is for individual recipients. Indicators of benefit receipt, net replacement rates, coverage levels (Scruggs, 2006; Otto, 2018) or indices capturing specific policy efforts such as targeting or selectivity (Marchal and Van Lancker, 2019; Kenworthy, 2011; Marx et al., 2013) could be promising alternatives, but they have not been used frequently in attitudes research.

The demographic characteristics of a country are also taken into account. Roosma and Reeskens (2016) use the context of population ageing to predict perceived welfare costs, but find no significant effect. Studies that analyse welfare chauvinism often use migration flows or ethnic heterogeneity, but generally come to inconclusive results (e.g. Brady and Finnigan, 2014). Additionally, changes in the political climate and cultural values are related to welfare opinion and – it is suggested – specifically change ideas about personal responsibilities among welfare recipients (Jeene et al., 2014; Roosma et al., 2015a; Weaver et al., 1995).

It should be noted that the bulk of the available research is on how contextual variables at the national level shape evaluations of, and preferences for, social policy. However, this ‘methodological nationalism’ could conceal regional differences within nation states. Factors that show strong intra-national heterogeneity – such as economic production and growth, income inequality, or migration numbers – are especially likely to create regional divides in welfare attitudes. Eger and Breznau (2017), for example, find a negative relationship between, on the one hand, the regional percentage of foreign-born people and, on the other, support for redistribution and a comprehensive welfare state.

2.2.3 Determinants of general attitudes towards social protection

Many studies have explored the factors underlying general attitudes towards social protection. However, given the recurring political debate on the burden imposed by spending on social protection in a number of countries across the EU, it is of particular interest to examine the factors that seem to determine preferences for more spending (or alternatively, for lower taxes). The multivariate analysis set out below provides an insight into the extent to which individual characteristics and contextual factors, or country-level features, help to explain variations in the relative number of people agreeing with the statement that *‘social benefits and services in the country place too great a strain on the economy’*. This is a question included in various waves of the European Social Survey and has five possible answers (from 1=agree strongly to 5=disagree strongly).⁵ The analysis examines the relationship between those who agree with the statement and the various factors identified, to see which of the latter are most strongly associated with the particular view expressed.⁶ To do this, pooled ESS data for 2008 and 2016, covering 26 countries, are used.

The individual-level factors examined are gender, age group, marital status,⁷ household size, educational attainment, employment status, political identification on a left-right scale, opinion about the performance of national government, and the person’s subjective view of his/her economic situation.⁸ This last factor has four possible values, ranging from ‘living comfortably’ to ‘very difficult to cope’. This is used instead of household income, as data on that are not available for Bulgaria,

5 To analyse the level of agreement with this statement in a rational way, the order of the categories in the dependent variable has been reversed (i.e. 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

6 In technical terms, a linear regression analysis is carried out using a mixed-effects model, with the ESS question being the dependent variable and the various personal characteristics being (fixed-effect) independent variables, along with the country-level (random-effect) factors.

7 Marital status may have an effect on entitlements to child related or other benefits, hence having a potential impact on attitudes.

8 Most of these variables have been examined in previous studies.



Cyprus or Slovakia, and for the other countries the information is missing in around 20% of cases on average.

The country-level, or contextual, factors are the at-risk-of-poverty rate, the P90/P10 ratio of income inequality, the difference in the Gini coefficients for equivalised total household income before and after social transfers (i.e. the difference the latter makes to income inequality), net expenditure on social protection as a share of GDP (i.e. gross expenditure less taxes and social contributions paid by benefit recipients),⁹ and the Perception of Corruption Index (PCI). This last is included to test the idea that willingness to pay for social protection may be influenced by people's views on whether or not governments can be trusted with taxpayers' money.

Several models are estimated. In Model 1, only the individual-level characteristics are included (i.e. no contextual factors). In Models 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, each of the five contextual variables listed above is included in turn, along with the individual-level factors (see Table B1 in the Annex).¹⁰

Individual-level variables

As regards the effect of the individual-level factors, there is no significant difference between men and women in their views on whether the strain imposed on the economy by the welfare state is or is not too great. There are, however, some differences across age groups, with those aged 50-64 less likely than those in the 65+ age group to agree with the statement. On the other hand, those who are married are more likely to agree with the statement than those who have never been married, but there is no difference between those living in households of different sizes. This might indicate that being married matters to some extent, whereas the number of children does not seem to influence attitudes.

In addition, the subjective economic situation, level of educational attainment, employment status and political identification do make a significant difference. Respondents who find it very difficult to cope are less likely to take the view that the welfare state places too great a strain on the economy than are those respondents who live comfortably. This is in line with self-interest literature, which argues that people in a disadvantaged situation are likely to show greater support for redistribution and social welfare provision than those who are comfortably off. Nevertheless, the results show that the low educated (who tend also to be more socially disadvantaged than average) and those with a 'medium' level of education (i.e. who have completed upper secondary education or post-secondary non-tertiary education) are more likely than those with higher education to think that the welfare state places too great a strain on the economy. Interpretation of these results is not straightforward: they might reflect less knowledge about the actual cost of the welfare state; but they may also relate to notions of deservingness and how social assistance benefits are perceived in various national contexts. Ideological beliefs do indeed seem to play a key role here: those who are politically to the right of centre are more likely to agree with the statement than those who are on the left.¹¹

9 The P90/P10 ratio is included in the analysis, as it shows the overall household income inequality during the year of the survey. On the other hand, the differences between the Gini coefficients before and after social transfers show the impact of social policies in reducing income inequality in the country. This variable is different from net social protection expenditure as a share of GDP, as the latter indicator shows only expenditure, and not the impact of expenditure on reducing the inequality.

10 In addition, an 'empty' model is examined, which includes neither the individual nor the contextual factors, but only the different countries, in order to see how much of the variation in people's views on the effect of social protection on the economy can be explained by what might be termed random factors. The results indicate that such factors explain some 5% of the variation. On the other hand, the year when people were surveyed (2008 or 2016) has no significant effect in the models on the views expressed by respondents.

11 In fact, the question itself is value-loaded in the way that it is worded, in that it presupposes that the welfare state places a strain on the economy, suggesting that the only issue is whether or not it is too great.



However, the actual approval rating of the government's performance seems to have no influence on the general attitude to the cost of the welfare state.

The self-employed are more likely to agree that the welfare state places too great a strain on the economy than are those in paid employment or who are not in work at all; this may indicate that the burden they feel of social contributions and taxes is greater than for other groups, which tend to pay less (or nothing at all) in contributions. It may also be that they feel aggrieved about being excluded from social protection coverage in a number of countries (see Open Evidence, 2018).

Contextual-level variables

As regards the contextual factors, variations in the P90/P10 ratio (i.e. in the degree of income inequality) (Model 3) make no significant difference to respondents' views on the strain placed by the welfare state on the economy; meanwhile, differences in the at-risk-of-poverty (AROP) rate (Model 2), in the Gini coefficient before and after social transfers (Model 4), in net expenditure on social protection as a share of GDP (Model 5) and in perceptions of corruption (Model 6) do seem to affect people's views on this. Respondents in countries where the AROP rate is high are less likely to attach importance to the strain placed on the economy by the need to finance the system than are those in countries where it is lower. This may be because people in countries with high at-risk-of-poverty rates see the need for a large welfare state. This could explain the finding that the difference in the Gini coefficient before and after social transfers also affects the proportion agreeing with the statement, in the sense that the greater the reduction in income inequality as a result of social transfers, the greater the likelihood that respondents believe the welfare system places a strain on the economy.¹² These results are in line with the findings of the literature, that poorer economic conditions and higher AROP rates tend to stimulate support for government intervention (Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Jeene et al., 2014).

The level of perceived corruption also seems to affect respondents' attitudes: those living in countries where the level of perceived corruption is high are more likely to believe that the welfare system puts a strain on the economy than those living in countries where the level of corruption is lower. This confirms that willingness to pay for social protection is influenced by people's views of whether or not governments can be trusted with taxpayers' money (e.g. Edlund, 1999; Goul Andersen, 1999). Perceived corruption also negatively affects how people perceive the quality of health, long-term care and childcare services (Eurofound, 2019a).

2.3 Analysis of multidimensionality

In the literature on welfare state attitudes, for decades scholars have suggested studying opinions on the welfare state in a multidimensional perspective, instead of assuming that people are either pro- or anti-welfare state (Cnaan, 1989; Sihvo and Uusitalo, 1995a; Svallfors, 1991; Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012c). However, the unavailability of comparative cross-national data hampered systematic analysis until 2008, when the European Social Survey ran a module with a broad range of questions about support for, and the functioning of, the welfare state. In what follows, the different dimensions of welfare state legitimacy are theoretically distinguished and the results of a study that compares a multidimensional model of welfare attitudes with a model which assumes that people have either a pro- or an anti-welfare attitude are presented (Roosma et al., 2013).

¹² A large difference between the pre-redistribution and post-redistribution Gini might also mean that the level of spending (i.e. the level of taxes) is also large in the country, hence they might also determine attitudes towards the 'strain' imposed.



2.3.1 Conditions and dimensions of welfare state legitimacy

A theoretical framework of welfare dimensions distinguished four conditions for the welfare state to be legitimate – substantive, redistributive and procedural justice and just outcomes (Roosma et al., 2013; Roosma, 2016; Rothstein, 1998) – along which nine *dimensions* of welfare support should be analysed. *Substantive* justice can be obtained if people consider *the goals* and *range* and *degree* of government activities to be just. Questions relate to whether the welfare state should redistribute, tackle poverty and inequality and promote social inclusion, as well as to the domains in which the government should take a role and increase or decrease social spending (Roller, 1995). *Redistributive* justice refers to dimensions that assess, on the one hand, *who is deserving* of benefits and on what conditions, and, on the other hand, *who should contribute* (more or less) to the welfare state in terms of taxes and contributions (Roosma et al., 2015b; Van Oorschot, 2006). Both substantive and redistributive justice refer to what, according to the people, the welfare state should do. *Procedural* justice entails making sure that the implementation of welfare benefits and services is *efficient* and *effective*. People's evaluations of the welfare bureaucracy, levels of free riding and welfare abuse, and of welfare non-take-up are central here. The question is: to what extent is the welfare state able to redistribute in a fair, simple and cheap manner (Roosma et al., 2014b; Rothstein, 1998)? Finally, the condition of *just outcomes* refers to the evaluation of welfare benefits and services and their unintended consequences. Does the welfare state succeed in tackling poverty and inequality and providing sufficient benefits and services for those who need it and are deserving of it (*intended outcomes*)? And to what extent do people perceive *unintended outcomes*, for instance for the economy, or moral or social consequences of a (strong) role of the welfare state (Van Oorschot, 2010)?

2.3.2 Uni- or multidimensional welfare attitudes

In their 2013 article, Roosma, Gelissen and Van Oorschot analyse the data from the European Social Survey 2008 for 22 European countries (including non-EU Member States Switzerland and Norway) in several steps. After inspecting descriptive statistics and correlations between the different dimensions, they ran a confirmatory factor analysis to examine underlying attitude structures, in order to answer the question of whether people tend to have a uniform idea about the welfare state (i.e. they are in favour of it or against it) or whether their opinions towards different dimensions differ. Finally, they analysed the differences between European countries. They used data for 26 variables from the ESS 2008 welfare module (see Table B2 in the Annex). All variables were assigned to seven of the nine dimensions presented above. Unfortunately, no items were available for the two dimensions of the redistributive justice condition.

Descriptive statistics showed for the pooled data (41,507 respondents) that support for the *goals* and *range* dimensions is very high: respondents strongly agreed that the government should redistribute more to reduce income differences and should be responsible for various social security benefits and social services. For the *degree* dimension, it was found that 29% of respondents in the sample preferred lower taxes and lower social spending, but 35% wanted the government to raise taxes to spend more on social benefits and services. Half of respondents believed that the health-care and tax authorities are *efficient*, while a third does not. Europeans were most critical of the effectiveness of the welfare state because of abuse and underuse of welfare benefits. On the whole, people were less positive about its outcomes: although most respondents agreed that the welfare state attains its main goals of preventing poverty and promoting equality (*intended outcomes*), about half of them believed that the intended policy outcomes (such as benefit levels and the quality of services) are inadequate. About 40% thought the welfare state harms the economy and causes moral hazard, while about the same proportion disagrees.

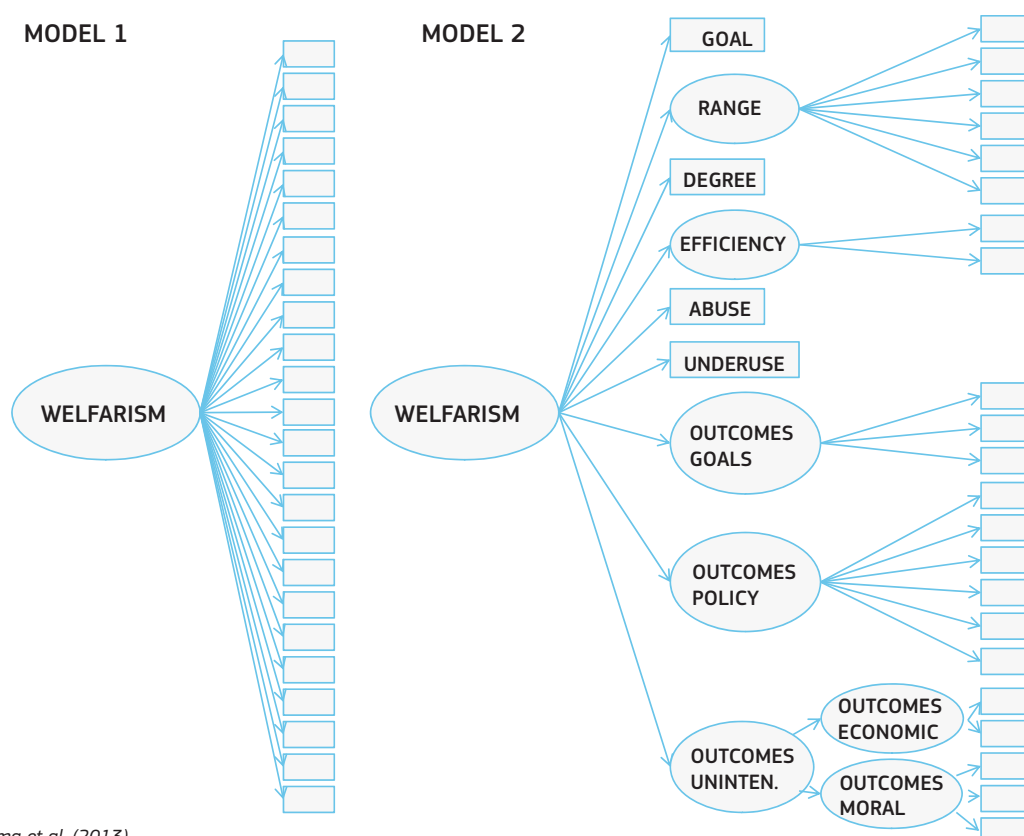


Overall, this suggests that people see the welfare state as substantively just: people in European countries are very positive about the welfare state's goals and range. But they are critical of its efficiency and effectiveness – and especially of the unintended outcomes of the welfare state. Analysis of the correlations between the dimensions shows that the relations between the different dimensions are not generally high, and the dimensions are largely independent of one another.

The uni-dimensionality or multidimensionality of the models were tested with two confirmatory factor analyses (Figure 3), using the statistical program Mplus. Model 1 hypothesised that all items load on one latent factor that represents a general attitude towards the welfare state, while Model 2 included six latent variables for the dimensions that were measured by more than one item.¹³ A third-order factor was included to define what all latent dimensions have in common; however, it is assumed that this third-order factor has only a weak relationship with the underlying items.

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis show that the second model has a substantially better model fit than the first. Model 1 has a poor model fit (CFI=.350; RMSEA=.127) while Model 2 has a good (RMSEA=.044) or acceptable (CFI=.925) model fit.¹⁴ This suggests that a multidimensional approach, with a specific underlying attitude structure, fits the data better than the assumption that people have either a pro- or an anti-welfare attitude.

Figure 3: Models for confirmatory factor analysis



Source: Roosma et al. (2013)

¹³ The dimension of redistributive justice is missing, because no matching items were available in the survey.

¹⁴ RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation and CFI = comparative fit index, both indices to characterise the fit of the models in structural equation modelling.



In a final step in the analysis, differences between European countries are studied. Both models are estimated for the regions of northern and western European countries (Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden) and southern and eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia). The two country groupings are chosen on the basis of the differences found in the descriptive statistics of the individual items.

For both country groupings, Model 2 is the better-fitting model. Differences occur both in support for the different dimensions and in the relationship between the dimensions. While respondents in both regions are supportive of the goals and range of the welfare state, respondents in northern and western European countries are more positive than respondents in eastern and southern European countries about the outcomes and efficiency of the welfare state.

In the latter region, respondents are more likely to combine a positive attitude towards what the welfare state should do with a more critical attitude towards the welfare state's efficiency and intended outcomes. In northern and western welfare states, there is more evidence of a general welfare attitude that is fundamentally either positive or negative. This general welfare attitude partly influences attitudes towards the various dimensions.

2.3.3 Comparing welfare attitudes in ESS 2008 and 2016

Several items featuring in the ESS 2008 survey are repeated in the ESS welfare attitude module of 2016. But unfortunately, not all 2008 items were included, and for each dimension the number of indicators was reduced, which makes a repetition of the multidimensional analysis presented above impossible. What can be done is to give an overview of the change in support for the different (sub) dimensions of the welfare state.

Table 1 presents an overview of the 16 items included in the 2008 and 2016 surveys that match the multidimensional framework. For each item, the mean (and standard deviation) is shown for both years, for the 17 European countries that were included in both surveys (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland).¹⁵

Table 1 shows a pattern of relatively limited welfare attitude change. Indeed, on some welfare dimensions no significant change can be observed. The results show a positive change in the evaluation of health care and the perceived standard of living of the unemployed, while the perceived standard of living of pensioners is evaluated rather more negatively. There is less support for government involvement in the domain of income protection for the old and the unemployed.

There is, however, rather more support for a stronger government role in providing childcare services. Slightly fewer people see abuse of welfare benefits. In addition, people seem to be more satisfied with the state of health care and the standard of living of the unemployed.

The strongest attitude change can be found for the item measuring the perceived impact of the welfare state on businesses. Substantially fewer people agree that social benefits and services cost businesses too much in terms of taxes and charges. This might be an effect of the impact of the

15 The estimates of the survey year (2016) from a random intercept multilevel regression model, controlled for individual-level control variables (subjective income, employment status, educational level, political affiliation, age and gender), are presented. These estimates indicate the direction and significance of the change in attitudes for the full sample of countries. To make effect size comparable, the dependent variables are standardised.



Table 1. Welfare dimensions and their descriptive statistics (2008 and 2016)

Welfare dimensions	Scale	Mean (std) 2008	Mean (std) 2016	Effect size of year 2016
Goals				
<i>Should the government reduce differences in incomes?</i>	1-5	3.77 (1.04)	3.83 (1.02)	0.038 ***
Range				
<i>Government responsibility to provide a decent standard of living for the old</i>	0-10	8.17 (1.77)	7.89 (1.83)	-0.153 ***
<i>Government responsibility to provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed</i>	0-10	6.53 (2.21)	6.37 (2.20)	-0.050 ***
<i>Government responsibility to provide childcare services for working parents</i>	0-10	7.49 (2.09)	7.71 (2.08)	0.093 ***
Implementation				
<i>Abuse: Many manage to obtain benefits/services to which they are not entitled</i>	1-5	3.67 (0.94)	3.57 (0.98)	-0.071 ***
<i>Abuse: Most unemployed people do not really try to find a job</i>	1-5	3.10 (1.09)	3.02 (1.10)	-0.018 **
<i>Underuse: Many on very low incomes get less benefit than they are legally entitled to</i>	1-5	3.34 (0.96)	3.33 (0.95)	-0.016
Outcomes				
<i>Intended: Social benefits/services prevent widespread poverty</i>	1-5	3.46 (0.96)	3.51 (0.95)	0.017 *
<i>Intended: Social benefits/services lead to a more equal society</i>	1-5	3.25 (0.99)	3.27 (0.99)	0.012
<i>Intended: Perceived state of health care</i>	0-10	5.42 (2.38)	5.79 (2.38)	0.103 ***
<i>Intended: Perceived standard of living of pensioners</i>	0-10	4.72 (2.14)	4.77 (2.21)	-0.078 ***
<i>Intended: Perceived standard of living of the unemployed</i>	0-10	3.86 (1.92)	3.68 (1.97)	0.117 ***
<i>Unintended: Social benefits/services place too great a strain on the economy</i>	1-5	3.13 (1.04)	3.09 (1.06)	0.009
<i>Unintended: Social benefits/services cost businesses too much in taxes/charges</i>	1-5	3.29 (1.03)	2.93 (1.07)	-0.249 ***
<i>Unintended: Social benefits/services make people lazy</i>	1-5	3.21 (1.11)	3.23 (1.12)	0.029 ***
<i>Unintended: Social benefits/services make people less willing to care for one another</i>	1-5	3.12 (1.04)	3.12 (1.07)	0.005

Note: N=64,704; N countries=17; Population and design weights applied according to ESS standards.

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: ESS.

financial and economic crisis: people are more likely to reject the neoliberal discourse that social protection harms businesses.

2.4 Summary

The welfare state is a complex concept, and people tend to have ambivalent attitudes towards its various dimensions. However, the term 'welfare state' conjures up a positive image for the majority of Europeans. In particular, people are very positive about the welfare state's goals and range. The literature also shows that people in general are in favour of a relatively large role for government in providing benefits and services, although this does not seem to be always reflected in a willingness to accept higher taxes.



Around 4 in 10 Europeans consider that social services and benefits place too great a strain on the economy. The proportion that believes this correlates closely with the share of those who think that social services and benefits tend to discourage people from working and make them less willing to care for one another. It seems that ideological elements play a key role here. Indeed, the results of the multilevel analysis show that respondents with at least a university degree, those who find it very difficult to cope, and those politically to the left of centre are less likely to take the view that the welfare state places too great a strain on the economy than are those with a lower level of education, those living comfortably, and those politically to the right of centre. Those aged 50-64 are also less likely than people in the 65+ age group to agree with the statement. In addition, respondents in countries where the at-risk-of-poverty rate is high are less likely to agree with the statement than are those in countries where it is low; and the greater the reduction in income inequality as a result of social transfers, the greater the likelihood that respondents are concerned about the effect on the economy.

People's welfare attitudes are not necessarily a consistent and homogeneous set of beliefs. They should instead be understood as being affected by a sometimes contradictory mix of substantive, redistributive, procedural and evaluative elements. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis to examine underlying attitude structures show that while people regard the welfare state as substantively just, they are critical of its efficiency, its effectiveness and its unintended outcomes. Respondents in northern and western European countries are more positive about the outcomes and efficiency of the welfare state than are respondents in eastern and southern European countries.

When comparing 2008 with 2016, the results show a tendency towards less support for government involvement in protecting the income of the elderly and the unemployed. There is, however, rather more support for a stronger government role in providing childcare services than there used to be. Fewer people also see abuse of welfare benefits than in the past. In addition, people seem to have become more satisfied with the state of health care and the standard of living of the unemployed.

The strongest change in attitude is in relation to people's perception of the impact of the welfare state on businesses, with a declining proportion of respondents agreeing that social benefits and services cost businesses too much in terms of the taxes and charges they pay.



3. Welfare attitudes by domain

The mix of assessments of and preferences for a particular social contract varies across social policy domains and the social groups that are the primary target of these. Welfare arrangements in respect of pensions, health care, family benefits, unemployment and social assistance, for example, are based on different logics of social justice (Meuleman et al., 2019). Deservingness theory (Cook, 1979; De Swaan, 1988; Larsen, 2008a; Van Oorschot, 2000, 2006) offers an interesting theoretical vantage point to understand why support for redistribution varies across target groups and policy domains. This theory states that individuals employ five basic deservingness criteria: Control, Attitude, Reciprocity, Identity and Need (hence CARIN, see Van Oorschot et al., 2017). These distinguish between people who are considered to be entitled to the resources of the welfare state and those who are not:

- Control: people are perceived to be more deserving when the need is caused by external situations beyond the person's control.
- Attitude: the public prefer beneficiaries who are compliant and grateful.
- Reciprocity: people who do something in return for their help are seen as more deserving.
- Identity: people see those 'close to them' as more deserving.
- Need: people are more willing to provide help if the intensity of the need is greater.

Note that these deservingness principles are rooted in the distinct logics of redistributive justice, namely equality, equity and need (Miller, 1999; Rothstein, 1998).

Numerous studies have shown differences and nuances in public support for specific target groups and policy domains, and redistributional designs can be understood in terms of deservingness opinions. In general, it is found that support for universal programmes (such as health care and education) or programmes targeted at deserving groups (such as the elderly (Koster, 2018) or the disabled) receive more support than do programmes for groups that are perceived to be less deserving, such as the unemployed (Bonoli, 2000; Ferrera, 1993; Kangas, 1995; Taylor-Gooby, 1982). Based on International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data, Edlund (2009) shows that support for policies that benefit highly deserving groups, such as the elderly or those in need of health care, are very stable across time and societies, while attitudes towards groups perceived as 'less deserving' (such as the unemployed) are more volatile across time and space. However, the available research also shows that, despite these different logics of social justice, Europeans generally tend strongly to support welfare state policies (Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Gelissen, 2000; Papadakis and Bean, 1993; Roller, 1995). The public endorses not only universal social services (such as health care and education) or income support for a deserving group (such as the elderly), but also services that provide the less-deserving unemployed with a reasonable standard of living. This support for the goals and the role of the welfare state is generally high across Europe; but especially the eastern European countries stand out for their appreciation of government activity concerning social policies (Roosma et al., 2013).

This section presents the findings regarding popular support for pensions, health care, family benefits, unemployment benefits and social assistance, as well as other policy domains (e.g. long-term care, accidents at work and invalidity). Perceptions of the adequacy and sustainability of these



domains are reviewed, as are preferences for particular policy designs, while implications for various key forms of redistribution (between rich and poor, between generations, between the active and inactive) are highlighted.

3.1 Child and family benefits

Key points

- *Public support for family policies is generally high throughout Europe; however, parents, women and younger people show even higher support. These differences are explained in the literature by the self-interest of these groups.*
- *The results of the two multilevel models presented in this chapter are, however, quite mixed in relation to self-interest. The first model investigates attitudes towards government responsibility for providing public childcare services, and the results provide evidence of higher support among groups with self-interest. The second model investigates whether respondents would be in favour of introducing new benefits and services for working parents, with the cost covered by increased taxes. In this model, of the 'self-interest' groups only parents show significantly higher support; inactive people (excluding those who care for children or the chronically ill people, or homemakers) are also more supportive than are those in paid work. These results show that mention of the cost of the proposed new benefits modifies the attitudes towards family benefits.*
- *The results of the two models also vary regarding age groups, highlighting the absence of relevant variables (such as grandparent status) that might help to better understand the attitudes of older age groups.*
- *As for the contextual variables, on the one hand the results show a positive correlation between level of provision and support for existing benefits and services; on the other hand, they also show that there is greater demand for further benefits in countries where the current level of provision is low (e.g. most of the southern and eastern European countries). These findings suggest that support for existing family benefits and services could be increased by improving their quality (or coverage), while improved services and benefits could reduce the demand for further benefits and services.*

3.1.1 Overview of the literature

General attitudes towards family policies

Family policy includes a variety of benefits, such as child allowance, tax credits, parental leave benefits, as well as services such as child care. These benefits may serve different policy goals, including: income replacement for parents caring for small children; the reduction of child poverty; increased fertility; the promotion of gender equality; or enhancing developmental outcomes of children in early childhood education and care services, which could also improve labour market prospects of individuals in the future. As such, family benefits imply redistribution between generations, between rich and poor and between the active and inactive.

Ainsaar (2012) analyses preferences for different domains of social policy in 18 European countries, based on the ESS 2008/2009 data. Descriptive statistics show that government responsibility is strongly endorsed in the child-related domains examined (adequate childcare services for working parents; paid leave from work for people who temporarily have to care for sick family members),



with support highest in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Hungary, and lowest in the Netherlands, the UK, France, Slovakia, Poland and Belgium. The study confirms that parents with children show greater support for the government providing child care or organising parental leave schemes, while people without children find other domains (job security, unemployment benefits, health care, social security for the elderly) more important. However, the difference was rather small and was significant only in the case of Cyprus, the UK, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Wendt, Mischke, and Pfeifer (2011) explore preferences for a series of different family policy measures (including parental leave, child allowance, flexible childcare arrangements or tax advantages), using data from the Flash Eurobarometer 247 survey (2008), covering 15 countries. From the measures listed, access to more flexible childcare arrangements was selected as the highest or the second-highest priority in 12 countries. In southern European countries, around 80% ascribed high priority to this, while people were more divided in Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands, where less than 60% prioritised it. Increasing tax advantages was the second-most-supported measure in general, with Portugal (86%) and Sweden (40%) the extremes. Those measures supported least often were 'incentives for fathers to take parental leave' (46%) and 'longer paid parental leave' (47%).

The role of the current policy context in shaping attitudes was underlined by a qualitative study by Chung et al. (2018). The issues that were emphasised by the participants in democratic forums organised in four countries (Germany, Norway, Slovenia and the UK) were connected to the design of the welfare state, the current provision of family policies and ongoing national debates. Germans stressed the importance of recognising reproductive work as paid work, while Norwegians focused on the issue of the flexible and equal use of parental leave. The UK participants highlighted the relevance of policies designed to help women to return to the labour market. Similarly, Slovenian participants emphasised the role of the state in supporting women's participation in the labour market.

Another set of studies emphasising the impact of institutional context on attitudes examined the role of the communist experience in shaping attitudes (Lewin-Epstein et al., 2000; Saxonberg and Sirovátka, 2008; Valentova, 2007). Lewin-Epstein et al. (2000) compared the attitudes of (former) East Germans, (former) West Germans, Israelis and immigrants to Israel from the Soviet Union, using data from the ISSP 1994. Family policy support was measured through statements expressing support for maternity leave for working mothers and financial benefits for working parents. The results showed a post-socialist characteristic in attitudes, as the East Germans and Soviet immigrants showed the highest support for family policies, followed by Israelis. West Germans were the least in favour of these measures.

In addition, Valentova (2007) compared the attitudes in the EU-15 Member States and those in new EU entrants (after the enlargement of 2004), using data from the International Population Policy Acceptance Survey (IPPAS). The results revealed that people in the new entrants (mainly central and east European countries) gave priority to state intervention via services (education and housing), while people in the EU-15 Member States supported work-family reconciliation policies the most (parental leave; better day care for children; flexible working hours). Financial help (lower income taxes, allowances for the birth of each child and for parents, caring for children, larger family allowance) was ranked second in importance in both groups of countries.

Studies on opinions towards specific family policy measures

A number of studies explore attitudes specifically towards parental leave schemes (Stropanik et al., 2008; Valarino, 2019; Valarino et al., 2017). Valarino (2019) analysed 27 OECD countries, using data from ISSP 2012. The results show high support for paid parental leave, as only 1 respondent in



10 believed that the state need not provide such a benefit. On the other hand, the preferred length of leave varies from an average of six months in liberal welfare regimes to 2-3 years in central and eastern Europe. In central and eastern European countries (except for Poland and Slovenia), the majority does not support a gender-equal division of paid leave, while gender-equal and partly gendered divisions are popular solutions in social democratic welfare states. While Stropnik et al. (2008) found only a weak correlation between parental leave and satisfaction with its length on the basis of IPPAS data, analyses carried out using ISSP 2012 data found a stronger relationship. Both the analysis of Valarino (2019) and the comparison of Austria, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States by Valarino et al. (2017) indicate that the current leave schemes, and therefore welfare regimes, have a determining role in shaping attitudes (which in turn, also means a positive feedback mechanism in this area). In addition, the level of dissatisfaction with the length of the leave is lower in those countries where parents could take longer leave. Not only satisfaction, but also support for the gender-equal division of paid leave is influenced by the current provision. It is higher in countries where incentives for fathers are embedded in the present scheme, such as in Sweden (Valarino, 2019).

Other studies have investigated attitudes towards public child care (Chung and Meuleman, 2017; Goerres and Tepe, 2010, 2012; Guo and Gilbert, 2014; Mischke, 2013). While support for this is generally strong, there are notable differences between countries. Mischke (2013) examined the attitudes on the issue in 12 southern, Nordic and western European countries, using data from the ESS 2008/2009. Support was relatively high (at least 80%) in Germany, the southern European countries and the Nordic part of Europe. Support was weaker (approximately 60%) in the Netherlands, Ireland and the UK. On the other hand, satisfaction with childcare services was relatively low in the southern European countries and Ireland. The level of satisfaction was moderate in the UK, Germany and France. The majority of people were satisfied with current services only in Finland and Sweden.

The findings of the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) for 2016 showed that users tend to be more satisfied with childcare services than the general public. In 2016, the average score of satisfaction with the services on a 10-point scale was 7 among users, while it was 6.7 among the general public (Eurofound, 2019a). Parents using childcare services might be more satisfied with its quality, as they have more information on it, and also because the services help them in the reconciliation of work and family life (Eurofound, 2019b). Chung and Meuleman (2017) also investigated the attitudes of parents using the dataset of ESS 2008/2009, and separated three clusters of 22 European countries, based on support for and satisfaction with public child care. The first cluster consisted of Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary and the Nordic countries, where both support and satisfaction were high. In the countries in the second cluster (Latvia, Bulgaria, Germany, Slovenia and southern Europe) support was also relatively high; but it was coupled with a low level of satisfaction. In the third cluster, assessment of the current provision was relatively low, as was support for it. The Czech Republic, Belgium, Poland and France made up a sub-group of this cluster, with a somewhat higher level of satisfaction with current provision than the other sub-group, composed of Romania, Slovakia, Ireland and Great Britain (i.e. the UK, excluding Northern Ireland).

Chung and Meuleman (2017) found that the characteristics and assessment of the current provision are the most important factors explaining support for public child care. Their analysis covered 22 countries, using data from ESS 2008/2009. The results revealed that the perceived quality of public child care is positively correlated with support for the service; which suggests that the development of related institutions could further increase support for childcare services. Besides the current provision, self-interest factors also significantly influenced attitudes. For instance, mothers



– and especially those working many hours – were more supportive, while people with tertiary education and a higher level of income were less supportive.

The results of Guo and Gilbert's (2014) analysis of 12 countries, based on the same dataset, also showed that women in full-time employment with young children were more likely to be in favour of public child care. Age, as another self-interest factor, also proved important (Goerres and Tepe, 2012; Mischke, 2013), as the results showed that young people were more in favour of public child care than were older people. In addition, elderly people were relatively likely to support public childcare services, in cases where they were experiencing a high level of intergenerational solidarity (Goerres and Tepe, 2010). Besides self-interest, the data indicate that ideologies also matter. Both Chung and Meuleman (2017) and Guo and Gilbert (2014) found that people with more egalitarian views were more supportive of public child care. Attitudes towards gender equality (Guo and Gilbert, 2014; Mischke, 2013) and economic equality also influenced the level of support, though, interestingly, the latter had a stronger effect (Guo and Gilbert, 2014). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between those placing themselves on the left of the political spectrum and those placing themselves on the right, the former being significantly more in favour of the state taking responsibility for childcare provision (Goerres and Tepe, 2012).

Stropnik et al. (2008) analysed the attitudes towards child allowances in 10 countries in the central, eastern and western parts of Europe, using data from IPPAS (2002/2003). The results showed that people in most of the countries would prefer an income-dependent child allowance scheme, rather than a universal one. People generally do not support schemes that differentiate the amount of benefit according to the birth order or the age of children. More recent findings from the Flash Eurobarometer 247 survey (Gallup Organization, 2008) showed that the vast majority of people (70-80%) in southern European and central and eastern European countries give high priority to increasing child allowances and tax advantages for families. There is significantly lower support for these policies in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, where less than 40% of the population believe that increasing their amount should be one of the top priorities of the state.

3.1.2 Empirical analysis of attitudes

Attitudes towards family policy

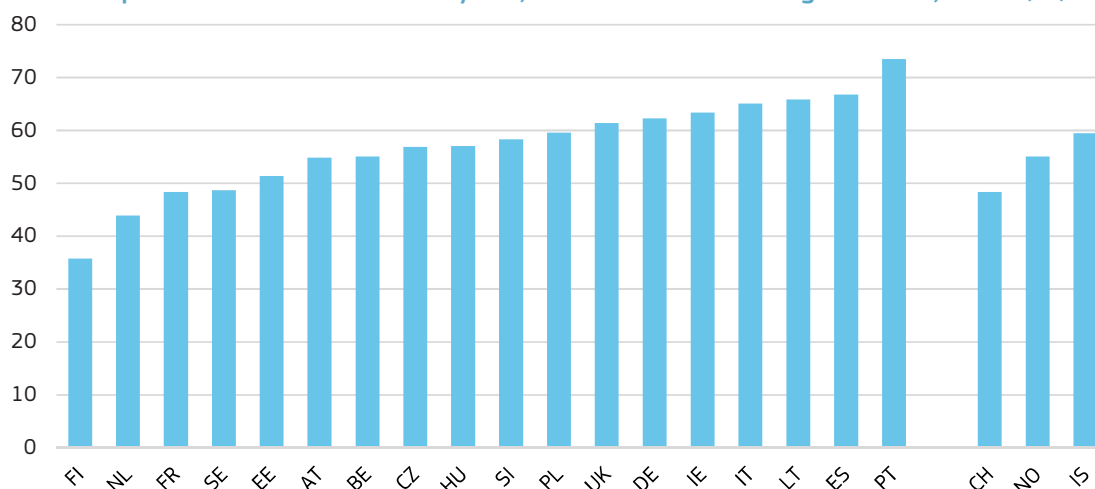
Previous studies show that family benefits are generally highly supported throughout Europe. However, some of the earlier investigations did not use survey questions that take into consideration the public cost of spending more on family policies. The ESS 2016 asks people's opinions about government spending on policies to improve the work-life balance, explicitly stating that this could entail increases in taxes.¹

As Figure 4 shows, 74% of respondents in Portugal in 2016 supported the introduction of extra benefits to improve the work-life balance for parents, even if it meant an increase in taxes. Other southern European countries Spain (67%) and Italy (65%) also show high support, as does Lithuania (66%). The lowest support for the idea was to be found in Finland (36%), though agreement was also low in the Netherlands (44%), France (48%) and Sweden (49%). This pattern seems to be in accordance with previous findings (Wendt et al., 2011): support for implementing further benefits is lower in those countries where the level of current provision is higher.

1 The exact question is: 'Would you be for or against the government introducing extra social benefits and services to make it easier for working parents to combine work and family life, even if it means much higher taxes for all?' Answers were recorded on a scale ranging from 1 – strongly against to 4 – strongly in favour.



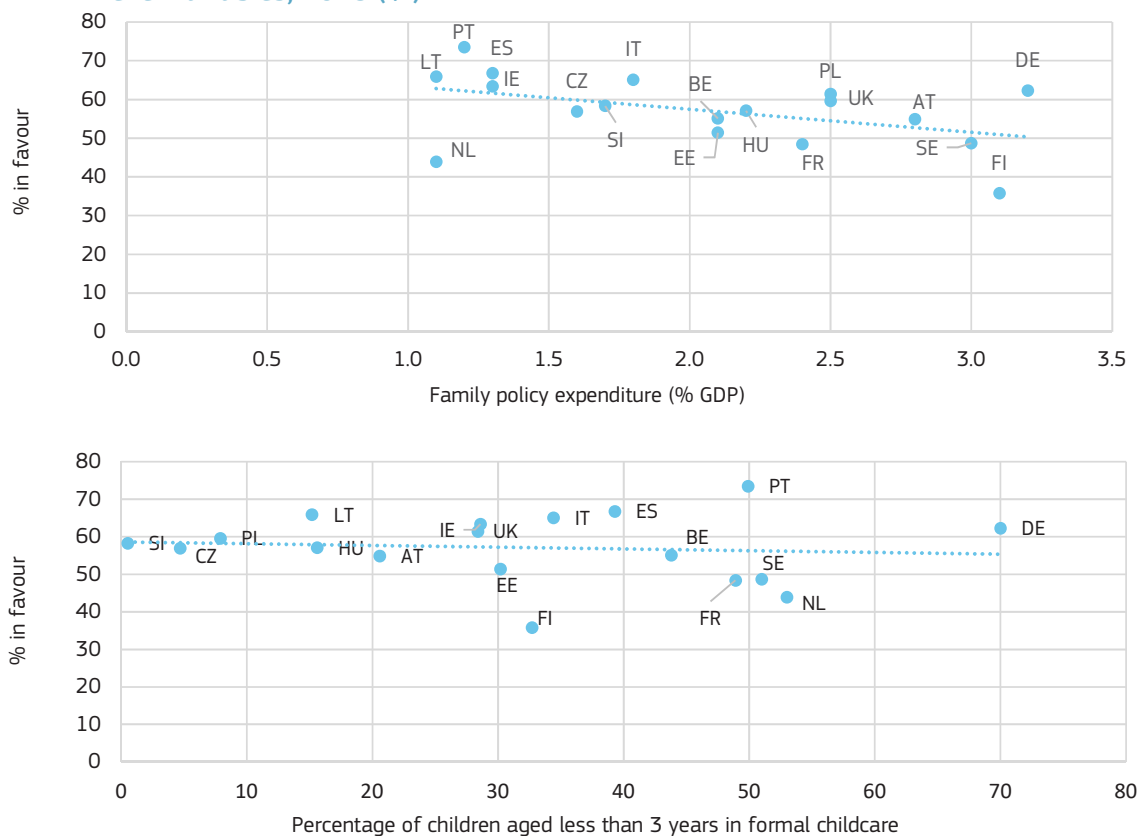
Figure 4. Percentage of respondents in favour of introducing extra benefits for parents to help reconcile work and family life, even if this means higher taxes, 2016 (%)



Source: ESS 2016

The data in Figure 5 also show that a higher level of public spending on family support may be combined with low levels of support in some countries (such as Finland, Sweden and France), while in some other (mostly eastern and southern European) countries the support for extra benefits is high, whereas the level of family policy expenditure is relatively low. There is no significant correlation

Figure 5. Percentage of respondents in favour of introducing extra benefits and services for parents to make it easier to combine work and family life, by selected country-level variables, 2016 (%)



Source: ESS 2016; Eurostat 2016



Box 4. Family policy and its popular acceptance in Poland

A quite developed (and quite costly) family-oriented welfare policy exists in Poland. It centres largely on direct financial transfers, rather than on the development of welfare services, despite the fact that Poles have expressed a preference for in-kind services (CBOS, 2018). Since 2015, the '500+' policy has been implemented in the country. This scheme provided around EUR 120 per month to families for a second and each subsequent child up to the age of 18; this was a very radical move, as low-income families with 3-4 children or more could often double their income. It has to be stressed that '500+' was not means-tested, so the richest families receive it as well. Right after the introduction of the '500+' policy, as many as 78% of Poles reported hoping that it would benefit society as a whole, even though only 36% expected to receive the benefit. In addition, almost half of the population expressed a concern that such expenses would harm the economy (CBOS, 2016). The '500+' policy was further extended in 2019: now all children receive the allowance, first and only children included. The universal '500+' programme has overshadowed the earlier and continuing programme of tax reductions for parents with children (means-tested). There are also a few smaller programmes to support families with children. Current policy puts Poland's very high among European countries in terms of the share of family benefits – as well as share of direct financial transfers – in total welfare expenditure and, in consequence of the share of welfare receipts in overall family income.

between the percentage of children under the age of 3 in public childcare services and support for family measures. In addition, there is high internal variance in support within that group of countries with high enrolment rates (compare support rates in the Netherlands, Sweden and France with those in Portugal and Spain, for example).

Attitudes towards child-related leave and childcare services

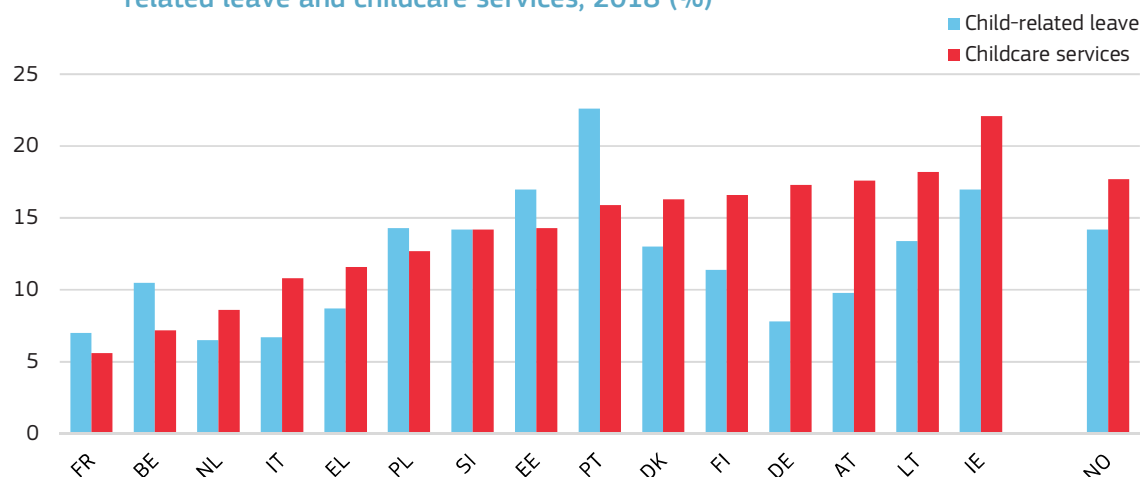
Another survey (the OECD Risks that Matter Survey of 2018) enables an analysis of support for further elements of family policies using contingent valuation methods. The preferences for various social policies were tested by attaching a conditional 'tax price-tag' (another 2% of income tax/social security contributions) to the approval for additional spending on a specific service.²

The proportion of people who would be prepared to pay additional taxes for better provision of child-related leave is largest in Portugal, Ireland and Estonia, while support for child care is highest in Ireland and Lithuania (Figure 6). On the other hand, the Dutch, the French, the Germans, the Italians and the Greeks are among the least supportive as regards both measures. A low female employment rate seems to explain the results for Italy and Greece, while a high part-time employment rate may explain the less supportive attitudes of the Dutch. Although length of paid parental leave seems to be positively related to the level of support for greater spending on child-related leave, Portugal and Ireland are outliers: the length of available paid leave for mothers is quite short in those countries, but at the same time, there is widespread support for greater spending on parental leave (Table A5 in the Annex). In contrast to the case of parental leave, total public expenditure on early childhood education and care is inversely related to support for greater public spending on child care (Table A6 in the Annex). Following the general trend, Ireland and Portugal show a high level of support for greater spending (to increase the current low level of spending), whereas in France – where actual spending is high – there is little support for a further increase.

2 The following question relating to two specific policies (child-related leave and childcare services) is in the OECD Risks that Matter survey (2018): 'Would you be willing to pay an additional 2% of your income in taxes/social contributions to benefit from better provision of and access to: a) child-related leave; b) childcare services; c) education; d) unemployment benefits/services; e) healthcare; f) disability benefits/services; g) affordable housing; h) pensions; i) long-term care for the elderly; j) public safety.'



Figure 6 Percentage of respondents willing to pay an additional 2% in income tax for child-related leave and childcare services, 2018 (%)



Note: Countries are ordered according to the figures for childcare services.

Source: OECD-RTM

Changes in attitudes towards public child care

Another relevant, but less frequently investigated question related to attitudes towards family policy is how stable those attitudes are over time. There are not many sources with available time-series data, but the ESS Wave 4 (2008) and Wave 8 (2016) make it possible to examine the change in preferences as regards public child care.³ Attitudes remained quite stable in the UK and Sweden (changes in the mean scores are minimal and insignificant),⁴ whereas there are statistically significant changes in all the other countries. People in Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Belgium, France, Ireland, Switzerland, Norway, Estonia, and Slovenia became more supportive (increases of 0.83, 0.61, 0.58, 0.42, 0.32, 0.31, 0.27, 0.23, 0.2, 0.15 and 0.15 points, respectively, on a scale of 0-10); meanwhile the Hungarians, Spanish, Finns and Dutch became less supportive of government involvement in organising childcare services (reductions of 0.76, 0.34, 0.16 and 0.16 points) (Figure 7).

Support for family policy in comparison with other policy fields

While family policies in general are well supported, it is also interesting to investigate the relative importance attached to spending on family policies versus other welfare benefits. For this purpose, the results of survey experiments from the INVEduc (Investing in Education in Europe: Attitudes, Politics and Policies) project are presented.⁵ The first experiment used a split sample to test trade-off choices on spending preferences: education and families or old-age pensions and unemployment benefits. One half of the sample were asked whether they would be in favour of extra spending on education and families, at the expense of old-age pensions and unemployment benefits; the other half of the sample was asked the opposite.⁶

³ The surveys include the following question: 'And how much responsibility do you think governments should have to ensure sufficient child-care services for working parents?'

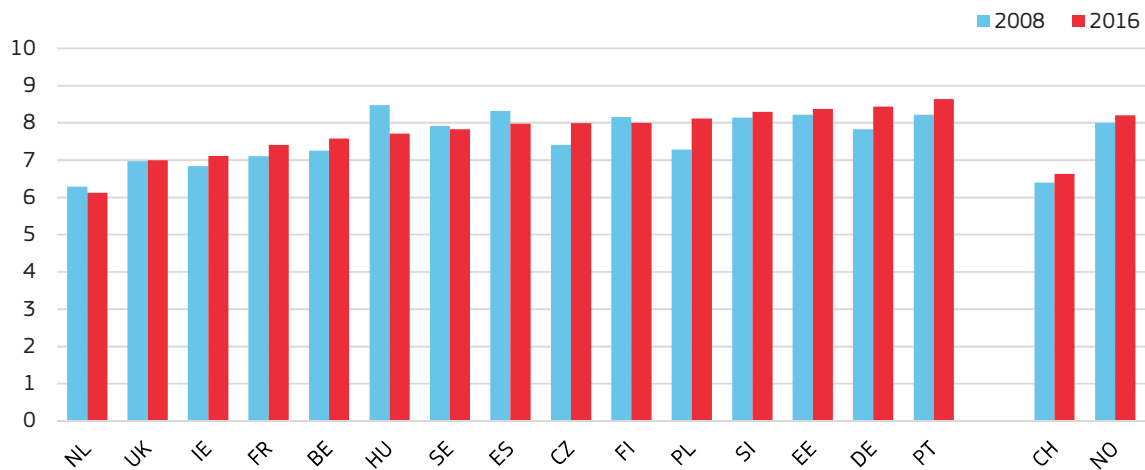
⁴ ANOVA-tests were applied separately for each country.

⁵ The disadvantage of the database is that it does not cover any eastern European countries.

⁶ The sample was split into two halves, and half of the respondents were asked to express their view on statement 1) below, while the other half got statement 2); agreements were coded on a five-point scale: 1) To be able to finance more spending on education and on families, the government should cut back spending on old-age pensions and unemployment benefits; 2) To be able to finance more spending on old-age pensions and unemployment benefits, the government should cut back spending on education and on families.

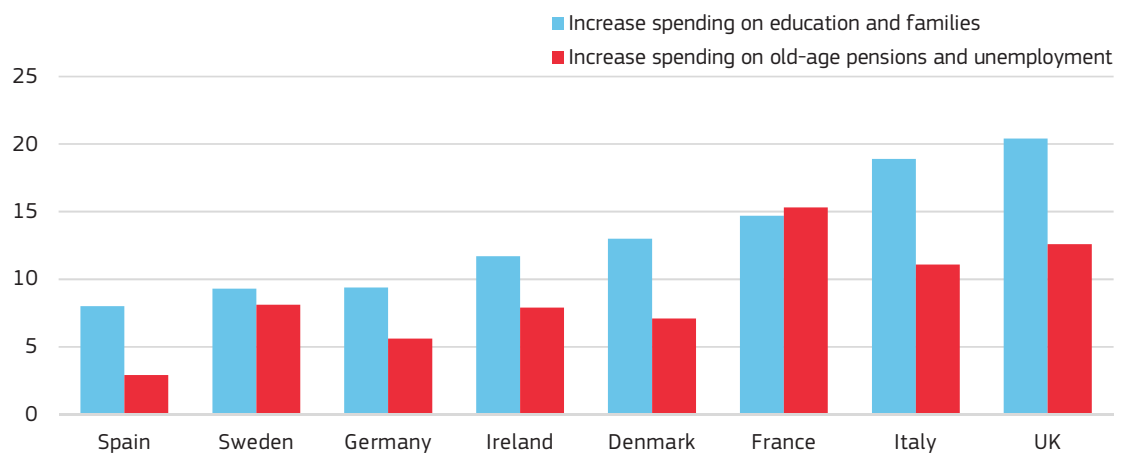


Figure 7. Average values for the agreement that childcare services for working parents are the government's responsibility, in 2008 and 2016 (mean scores on an 11-point scale)



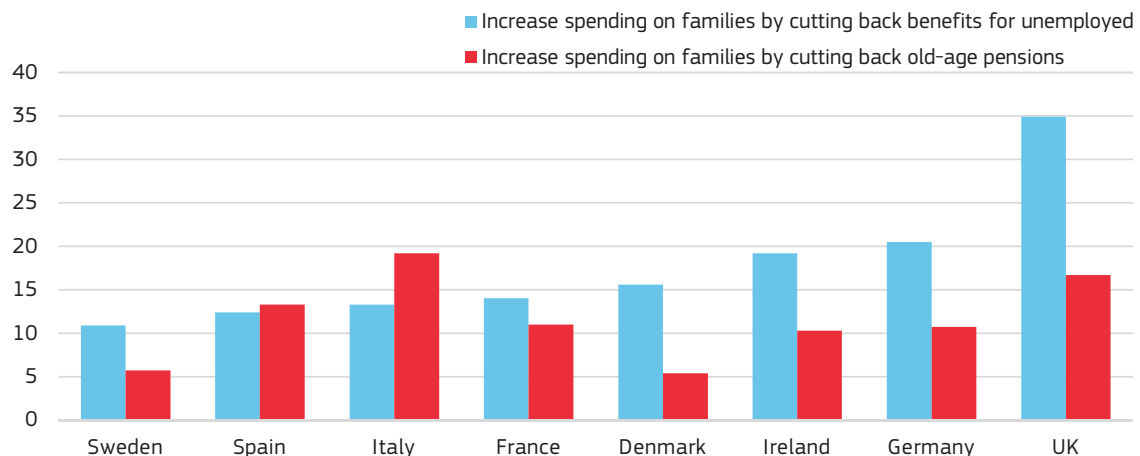
Note: ESS 2008=51,671; ESS 2016=43,744
Source: ESS

Figure 8. Percentage of respondents in favour of increasing spending on families and education versus unemployment benefits and old-age pensions – results from split samples, 2014 (%)



Note: N(1)=3,734; N(2)=3,679
Source: INVEduc

Figure 9. Percentage of respondents in favour of increasing spending on families by cutting back on unemployment benefits or old-age pensions – split samples, 2014 (%)



Note: N(1)=2,223; N(2)=2,251
Source: INVEduc



Figure 8 shows the share of the two samples agreeing (either strongly agree or agree) with the proposition. On average, support was relatively low in the case of both split samples, indicating that there was no large gap between the popularity of these different policy fields. However, support for increasing spending on education and families was somewhat higher in all countries, apart from France (where the level of agreement was around 15% in both samples). The share of respondents who agreed with increasing spending on families and education at the expense of old-age pensions and unemployment benefits was highest in the UK, Italy and France, and lowest in Spain.

Further questions (also using split samples) investigated especially support for spending on families at the expense of (1) old-age pensions and (2) unemployment benefits.⁷ The results show that in most countries (with the exceptions of Spain and Italy), people are more in favour of cutting back unemployed benefits than old-age pensions in order to increase support for families. The UK is an outlier on this point: almost 35% would support increased spending on family policies at the expense of unemployment benefits, whereas in the other countries the figure was around 10–20% (Figure 9).

3.1.3 Multivariate analysis of determinants of attitudes towards family benefits

In this section, the results of multivariate analyses are presented to provide an insight into how individual-level (age, gender, socio-economic characteristics, etc.) and country-level characteristics (female employment rate, proportion of children, etc.) influence support for benefits and services targeted at families with children. For this purpose, two of the items presented above were selected from the ESS Wave 4 (2008) and Wave 8 (2016). The ESS was favoured over the other databases that contain questions related to family policy attitudes because it has the largest number of participating European Union countries.

The first model analyses public attitudes towards government responsibility for providing childcare services for working parents, using ESS data from 2008 and 2016. For this model, multilevel linear regression is applied, as the variable is measured on an 11-point scale.

A review of the literature shows that this question has previously been analysed by several authors (Chung and Meuleman, 2017; Goerres and Tepe, 2012; Mischke, 2013); however, those studies relied solely on the data of Wave 4 (2008). Furthermore, Chung and Meuleman (2017) analysed especially the attitudes of parents; Goerres and Tepe (2012) analysed only Germany; and Mischke (2013) investigated the attitudes using a sub-sample of European countries (12 countries). By contrast, this analysis covers the attitudes of the public from 24 countries of the European Union, including two waves of data in the case of 15 countries.

The second model investigates support for extra benefits and services for working parents, with the public cost of higher taxes for all. This item is measured on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly against) to 4 (strongly in favour). This item was dichotomised for the analysis – whether

⁷ The sample was split into four parts. Two of the four received a question related to spending on families versus other policy areas; the other two received a question related to spending on education and other policy areas. The questions related to families (analysed in the text above) were the following (each sub-group received only one question): (1) Imagine the government plans to enact reforms involving a 10% increase in the budget for financial support and public services for families with young children; and wants to finance this by cutting the benefits for the unemployed. Would you ... strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree? (2) Imagine the government plans to enact reforms involving a 10% increase in the budget for financial support and public services for families with young children; and wants to finance this by cutting old age pensions. Would you ... strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree?



respondents are (strongly) against (0) or (strongly) in favour of (1) the introduction of extra benefits – and so the analysis applies multilevel logistic regression. This item was asked only in Wave 8, and therefore here the analysis relies on data collected in 2016 for 18 European Union countries. The investigation of this question is interesting, as it takes into consideration the public cost of spending more on family policies, whereas previous studies mostly analysed attitudes towards family benefits and services based on survey questions without such information.

The same independent variables are introduced in the two models to investigate attitudes based on redistribution between rich and poor, between employed and unemployed and active and inactive, and between generations: subjective income, employment status (paid work, unemployed, inactive and homemakers or caring for children/other relatives, inactive due to other reasons (education, permanently ill or disabled, retired, community or military service), age in bands (15-30, 31-39, 40-49, 50-64, 65 and older). Furthermore, the models also contain the most important self-interest variables, such as gender, education,⁸ a combined variable if the respondent lives with underage children, and the age of the youngest child.⁹ Moreover, the first model controls for the year of the survey by including a dummy variable (see Table B3 in the Annex).

To investigate country-level effects, the analyses include spending on family/child benefits as a percentage of GDP; spending on family/child benefits per child under 19 (generosity); the proportion of children under the age of 6 in formal child care; average weekly hours of children under 6 in formal child care; the female employment rate (age 25-49); the part-time employment rate (age 25-49); the proportion of the population aged 0-15 years; and the proportion of families with at least three children (among families with children) (see Tables B4 in the Annex).

Individual-level variables

Model 1 – Government responsibility to ensure childcare services for working parents

Regarding the first model, the results are in line with previous findings. Self-interest variables do affect public attitudes: women and people on lower incomes are more supportive of government responsibility for providing childcare services for working parents. Like some earlier studies (Goerres and Tepe, 2012; Mischke, 2013), our analysis also shows age differences: people in their thirties (31-39) (the main group with young children) are significantly more supportive than people aged 15-30 and 40-49; however, the attitudes of people aged 50-64 and 65+ do not differ significantly from those of the 31-39 age group – perhaps because many of them have (young) grandchildren. However, it is not possible to test this hypothesis, as there is no variable for grandparent status.

The results also show that parents of young children (under the age of 6 and aged 6-11) are more supportive than people who do not live with underage children, whereas there is no significant difference regarding the attitudes of parents of older children (12-17) and people who do not live with underage children. This result again suggests the role of self-interest in attitudes, as public childcare services are usually provided for younger children. Furthermore, the difference between those who do not live with underage children and those who are not parents but live with at least one underage child (a group that mostly consists of older siblings) is not significant. This finding might show that other relatives are not involved in caring tasks, and therefore they are not as interested in

⁸ Our classification related here to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) as follows: ISCED 1–2: low; ISCED 3–4: middle; ISCED 5+: high.

⁹ Coding was: 1=no underage child in the household; 2=the respondent lives with at least one underage child who is not her/his child; 3=the respondent lives with at least one of her/his children and the youngest child is (4) under 6 or (5) aged 6–11 or (6) aged 12–17).



supporting public childcare services as are parents. However, this category covers respondents living with children in all age categories (0-17); it is possible, therefore, that attitudes also differ within this category depending on the age of the children. However, the analysis does not include these groups separately, as the group sizes are small.

Model 2 – Introducing extra social benefits and services to make it easier for working parents to combine work and family life, even if that means much higher taxes for all

The results of the second model are quite interesting. From self-interest variables, only the age of the youngest child has a significant effect. In this case, as with the first model, the results show that parents with children under the age of 12 are more in favour of introducing extra family benefits than are people who do not live with an underage child. Neither gender nor subjective income has a significant effect on this variable. As regards education, the results stand in contrast to previous findings: people with a high level of education are significantly more likely to be in favour of the new benefits than are those with a low level of education.

The results show furthermore that while inactive people who are homemakers or look after children are significantly less likely to be in favour of the new benefits than those who are in paid work, people with other inactive status (i.e. retired, in education, permanently ill or disabled) are significantly more in favour of new benefits. On the one hand, these findings show that extra benefits and services do not motivate homemakers to enter the labour market. On the other hand, people with other inactive status (and lower tax obligations) probably find it easier to agree with the proposition than people in paid work, who do not feel that the extra benefits and services warrant paying extra taxes.

Contextual variables

Model 1 – Government responsibility to ensure childcare services for working parents

From the seven contextual variables included, only two have a significant effect on this dependent variable. The first variable with a significant effect is the proportion of children (0-15), which shows a negative correlation. Accordingly, countries with a higher proportion of children are less supportive of government responsibility for public child care. This finding may seem contradictory, as one might think that people in those countries where the proportion of children is higher would find the government more responsible, as the demand is also higher. But as previous findings have shown (Chung and Meuleman 2017), families with more children are less supportive than families with one or two children; therefore, support could be lower in countries where the proportion of children is higher, due to the larger share of families with three or more children. If the model includes the share of families with at least three children (instead of the proportion of children), the results also reveal a negative correlation. As Chung and Meuleman (2017) also suggested, one possible explanation for the less positive attitudes of families with more children is that childcare services are unnecessary for older children when parents have to stay at home with younger children. Second, parents in large families might take the deliberate decision that one of them will stay at home for a longer period to take care of the children.

From the indicators regarding the current provision, only average weekly hours spent in formal child care explains support for public child care. While it correlates positively with support, the enrolment rate in itself does not explain the attitudes. Support is, therefore, lower in those countries where children spend less time in public child care, but it is not lower in those countries where a smaller proportion of children are enrolled.



The female employment rate, the part-time employment rate (the Netherlands is excluded, due to its extremely high figure for part-time employment), family policy spending and family policy generosity do not explain the attitudes. One possible reason why the indicators of family policy spending and family policy generosity do not explain the attitudes is that these indicators cover general family policy spending, which encompasses many benefits and services – not just public childcare services.

Model 2 – Introducing extra social benefits and services to make it easier for working parents to combine work and family life, even if that means much higher taxes for all

From the applied contextual variables, only family policy expenditure explains the attitudes (after the Netherlands is excluded). The Netherlands is an extreme case regarding family policy expenditure: a low level of family policy spending goes hand in hand with a low level of support for introducing extra benefits for working parents. Government spending on family policies becomes significant once the Netherlands is excluded, showing that support for extra benefits is significantly higher in those countries where current spending is lower. Furthermore, as Germany is an outlier regarding family policy generosity (both support and generosity are high), it is also reasonable to test whether the exclusion of this country modifies the results. However, the effect of family policy generosity is insignificant even after the exclusion of Germany.

Formal childcare use might not explain this variable, as the question probes people's attitudes towards any type of benefits and services that could help in combining work and family life for working parents: childcare services form only one segment. While the proportion of children explains attitudes towards government responsibility for providing public childcare services, it does not explain this variable. The proportion of children (and family size) explains attitudes towards childcare services, but not towards family benefits and services in general.

3.1.4 Summary

The literature shows that family policy measures in general are highly supported by the public throughout Europe. Studies also show, however, that parents in general (and parents with young children in particular), women and people on low income are even more supportive. These findings seem to be universal across different types of family benefits and services.

The results of the current analysis, however, show that most of these effects are missing when people are asked whether they would be in favour of introducing extra benefits and services for working parents, even if that meant higher taxes. While parents with young children are significantly more in favour of these new benefits as well, there are no significant differences in the case of the other self-interest variables. The missing effect regarding gender could be a consequence of the question itself, which was more general than earlier investigations that focused on attitudes towards schemes that are more connected to traditional care arrangements (e.g. childcare services or parental leave). The missing difference regarding income is, however, most probably caused by mention of the costs associated with the new benefits. People on lower incomes seem more supportive of the idea of new benefits – so long as there are no costs involved. The analysis also showed that people with inactive status (excluding those who are caring for children or long-term ill people, or homemakers) are more likely to be in favour than are those in paid work – again, most probably because of the mention of the costs associated with the new benefits.

Some of the studies also found differences between age groups (Goerres and Tepe, 2012; Mischke, 2013), with the general finding that older people are less supportive of family policies. Our results rather contradict these analyses: on the one hand, the attitudes of people over the age of 49 do



not differ significantly from those of people in their thirties regarding government responsibility for providing public child care; on the other hand, our results show no age differences regarding support for the introduction of extra benefits and services for working parents (with the public cost of increased taxes). While the study of Goerres and Tepe (2012) showed that intergenerational solidarity (measured as the frequency with which family members meet) positively influences the support among older age groups for government responsibility for providing public child care, it is reasonable to imagine that grandparent status could also explain these attitudes.

For a more detailed investigation of the generational differences, therefore, it would be essential to include a variable on grandparent status; this is currently missing from the ESS surveys. While Wave 4 did include a related question, it only asked whether people had grandchildren aged between 15 and 30; and Wave 8 did not contain any connected questions. In the investigation of attitudes towards public child care, it would be more important to include a variable on whether people have grandchildren under the age of 15. Grandparent status, as an indirect self-interest variable, might help to explain the attitudes of older age groups towards public childcare services – and family benefits in general. Some other surveys – such as the Life in Transition Survey – ask whether the respondent lives with any of their grandchildren; however, this approach is still not perfect, as most grandparents do not live with their grandchildren.

Similarly, another defect of the ESS questionnaire is that it only asks whether the respondent has a child who lives in the same household as the respondent. While the questionnaire does contain an additional question whether the respondent has or has ever had a child, it is not possible to separate out those non-custodial single parents who currently have underage children, as the question is too vaguely phrased. Therefore, it is not possible to investigate the attitudes of non-custodial single parents. They might form a relatively small group in datasets such as ESS; but even if their separate analysis is not feasible, it would still be reasonable to include them as parents in similar analyses. The EQLS questionnaire contains more direct questions asking whether the respondent has at least one child who lives in a separate household and how many of them are under the age of 18; however, the exact age of the children is not specified.

Another shortcoming of the ESS data is that Wave 8 does not include the question on the subjective assessment of the quality of childcare services that was included in Wave 4 and that proved to be one of the most important explanatory variables in the analysis by Chung and Meuleman (2017). For a detailed investigation of the reported positive feedback effect – namely, that a higher level of satisfaction goes together with a higher level of support – time-series data would be essential.

Further investigation of how the characteristics of current provision are related to attitudes is also relevant because the literature and this analysis show mixed results. On the one hand, there is evidence that better provision of a service or benefit is accompanied by greater support. On the other hand, it is also observable that support for further benefits and services is higher in those countries where current provision is poorer. These findings suggest that support for existing family benefits and services could be increased by improving their quality (or coverage), while high-quality services and benefits could reduce the demand for further benefits and services. The results also show that within the broad field of family policy there are separate mechanisms related to different benefits and services: some of the indicators explain attitudes towards public child care, but not general attitudes towards the introduction of new family benefits.



3.2 Old-age pensions

Key points

- Earlier literature (using data from the early 2000s) found evidence of a very high level of support for the government's role in providing for the elderly. These studies also report that respondents tend to prefer those pension schemes (pay-as-you-go, occupational or private) that are relatively more important in their respective countries. Earlier research on the support for various pension reform options suggests widespread disapproval of retrenching current pension rights (reducing benefits or raising the retirement age). Generally, support for reform alternatives outside the pension system (e.g. fighting unemployment, cutting spending in other areas) tends to exceed that for reforms within it.
- Analysis of more recent data shows, in general, nearly unanimous support for the idea that it is the government's responsibility to provide a decent living for the elderly. At the same time, respondents in several EU Member States regard the quality of the state pension system as low, which suggests discontent with the pension system. This is especially the case in south-eastern Europe, the Baltic states, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- The generally strong support for providing a decent standard of living for the elderly does not imply that all social categories are equally supportive. The multivariate results reported here are in line with earlier findings: support for providing a decent standard of living for the elderly increases with age and declines with social status (as measured by education level or subjective status position). Within-country differences in the support for pension spending follow a similar pattern: support for increasing pension expenditure is higher among the elderly and lower among those with higher education or higher social status. Assessment of the quality of the pension system, however, is more positive among the elderly and those with high income or education.
- Relatively little variation between countries in support for the government's role in providing for the elderly is to be found in the data. There is more variability between countries with respect to the preferences for increasing pensions spending: agreement with this proposition ranges from 40% to 90% in EU Member States. Support for increasing pension spending is higher in countries with relatively low levels of pension spending and high levels of poverty among the elderly. This explains why respondents in eastern European countries, such as Latvia or Lithuania, are the most supportive of an increase in government spending on pensions.

3.2.1 Overview of the literature

Attitudes towards government responsibility for the old and towards pension spending

Several studies analyse general attitudes towards government involvement in various social policy areas, including pensions, using data from the ISSP Role of Government module (fielded five times between 1985 and 2016). These surveys include a question about respondents' opinions on whether it should or should not be the government's responsibility to provide a decent standard of living in old age. In another question, this survey asks respondents whether they would like to see more or less public spending on specific areas of social policy, including old-age pensions, keeping in mind that agreeing with more spending might require a tax rise to pay for it. Analysing the first four waves of the ISSP Role of Government data, Deeming (2018) finds near-universal support for the right to a decent standard of living in old age in the eight EU countries present in all four



waves. Lipsmeyer (2003) found a high level of support for government responsibility to provide for old age in the eastern European countries as well, and Van Oorschot and Meuleman (2012b) reported similar findings on the basis of ESS data. An explanation for this very strong demand for government intervention can be found in the low levels of satisfaction with current pension provisions. ESS data for 2008 show that country averages for the perceived standard of living of the elderly range from 1.5 to 6 on a scale of 0-10 (Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012b). This combination of low satisfaction and high support for redistribution can be interpreted as a call for governments to improve pension provisions.

Given that pension systems are a key factor in redistribution between the generations, the presence of age cleavages in support of pensions is of particular importance. Some authors argue that differences between age groups are relatively minor (e.g. Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Kohli, 2008), while other studies show important differences between age groups in many countries (De Mello et al., 2017). Busemeyer et al. (2009) compare the importance of age and class in explaining welfare attitudes in different domains, using the ISSP 1996 data. In the case of pensions, the picture is mixed: in some countries, age seems to be more important in predicting support for an increase in pension spending, while in others the effect of income is stronger.

In the study of Ahn and Kim (2014), class-related variables have smaller effects than age in the case of pensions. Effects of the variable 'age' in cross-sectional data can reflect cohort, period and life-cycle dynamics. Sørensen (2013) uses age-period-cohort models to separate these elements out on the basis of data from the first four waves of ISSP data. The study concludes that the life-cycle effect in the case of government responsibility for providing for old-age is considerably smaller than the simple age effect for this variable, reflecting the importance of cohort effects. Even if age cleavages are important, that does not mean that population ageing inevitably leads to more intergenerational conflict. Emery (2012) and Hess et al. (2017) show that the strength of the age effect is not correlated with measures of population ageing, indicating that population ageing does not intensify intergenerational conflict. Another interesting result is that of Fernández (2013), who shows that countries with higher poverty rates among the elderly have significantly smaller retiree/non-retiree cleavages in support of public pension provision. The author interprets this as a sign of broad reciprocity that mitigates the effect of self-interest. Hess et al. (2017) suggest that active-ageing policies are able to mitigate intergenerational conflict.

Preferences for particular policy designs and pension reform

Although government responsibility for providing a decent standard of living for the elderly is very widely supported, this policy objective can be achieved through pension systems with different designs. Some studies ask respondents' preferences as regards specific characteristics of the pension system. One issue analysed by several studies is whether pensions should be provided by the government (pay-as-you-go (PAYG) pensions), by employers (occupational pensions) or by private contracts. Gelissen (2001) investigates respondents' opinions on the organisation of the pension system in two waves of the Eurobarometer (EB 37.1 in 1992 and EB 44.0 in 1995). According to the results, people in most European welfare states widely endorse the provision of pensions by the state. Compared to liberal welfare states,¹⁰ people in corporatist welfare states show a stronger

¹⁰ Liberal welfare states tend to have low levels of expenditure on social protection. The system is tax funded and offers mean-tested minimum benefits (Ireland and the UK). By contrast, corporatist welfare states tend to have a high level of public expenditure and to allow benefit recipients to maintain their level of income (the system is insurance based and provides benefits that rise as contributions increase). However, they often offer few benefits for those outside the insurance, and penalise those in unstable, non-traditional or part-time job situations. (Within this category there is a small sub-group formed of the countries of southern Europe, which have certain traits in common). Social democratic welfare states tend to reduce social cleavages and are characterised by universality. The tax burden is, however, high (Nordic countries).



preference for employer-provided pensions; meanwhile in Mediterranean welfare states, the public expects relatively more from the state. People in social democratic welfare states are no more supportive of the state providing pensions than they are in liberal welfare states.

Analysing a later wave of the Eurobarometer study, from 2001 (EB 56.1), Janky and Gál (2007) and Van Groezen et al. (2009) also found evidence of a ‘status quo effect’, in the sense that respondents tend to prefer those schemes (PAYG, occupational or private) that are relatively more important in their respective countries. Van Groezen et al. (2009) show that those whose retirement income consists mainly of occupational pensions have a significantly higher probability of preferring occupational pensions and a lower probability of preferring public pensions than most (all other things being equal). Having a private pension also means a stronger preference for that kind of pension provision.

Opinions on intragenerational redistribution in the pension system were studied by Reeskens and Van Oorschot (2013) using data from the ESS 2008. Respondents had to choose whether pension benefits should be higher for high earners (equity principle), for low earners (need principle), or whether they should be equal for both groups (equality principle). According to the results, Europeans are divided between the equity and equality principles, while the need principle was selected by a smaller section of the population. Reeskens and Van Oorschot (2013) also found that preferences for particular social justice principles are correlated with characteristics of the pension system in the respective countries: in countries where earnings-related schemes are in place, individuals are significantly more likely to support the equity principle over the equality principle, whereas residents of countries with a universal system of pension redistribution are less likely to prefer the equity principle to equality.

Population ageing is putting pressure on the sustainability of pension systems in many EU Member States. To guarantee sustainability, countries are implementing reforms of the system (or are considering doing so). The basic options for parametric reform of the pension system are to increase the revenue inflow by raising taxes or social security contributions or to reduce the outflow from it, by cutting pensions or raising the retirement age. There are also policies outside the pension system that could improve financial sustainability, such as increasing employment rates, cutting spending in other areas or encouraging migration. A number of articles have studied public opinion on these reform options for the pension system. Several studies use data from a Eurobarometer survey (EB 56.1) conducted in 2001, which has a more detailed set of questions regarding opinions about pension systems and reforms. Frommert et al. (2009) show that retrenching current pension rights (reducing benefits or raising the retirement age) and measures to increase immigration are commonly rejected. They find a great variety of possible reform approaches that are acceptable to people, including increasing pension contributions, privatising pensions, enlarging the financial base by cutting spending in other areas, fighting unemployment and increasing female employment.

Generally, support for reform alternatives outside the pension system (e.g. combating unemployment, cutting spending in other areas) tends to exceed that for reforms within it (Frommert et al., 2009). The tendency to prefer external over internal reform is most pronounced in countries where public pensions are the dominant source of old-age income – i.e. conservative and southern European welfare states. In liberal and social democratic welfare states, support for increasing pension contributions is quite strong (compared with external solutions), while the other internal reform options appear to be equally unpopular in all countries. Also, cutting existing pension benefits is the least popular option in countries with a liberal welfare state, where pension replacement rates



are lowest. Despite these differences the authors find that the patterns of support for reforms are relatively homogeneous: attitudes seem to be similar across welfare-state regimes, countries, socio-demographic groups and time.

Other studies confirm that increasing the retirement age is not a widely acceptable reform scenario. Jaime-Castillo (2013) studied opinions on three pension reform options, using the same Eurobarometer data. In all countries, a relative majority of public opinion supports allowing the free choice of private pension plans, whereas raising the retirement age is the least preferred option in all of the countries examined; support for raising contributions comes somewhere between the two. Janky and Gál (2007) also show that only a minority support the idea of a higher retirement age. They find that in general, in countries with a more generous pension system, respondents are less likely to support an increase in the retirement age. Boeri et al. (2002) show that – even among individuals who are aware that the pension system is unsustainable – opposition to reform is strong.

Velladics et al. (2006) study opinions on pension reform in 12 countries, using a different dataset. In the International Population Policy Acceptance Survey (IPPAS; Wave 2, 2003) respondents had to choose their preferred option for reforming the pension system from a list of six reform possibilities. Taking all the countries together, the most acceptable options were to raise taxes (31%) and abolish early-retirement schemes (28%). The least popular options were to reduce pension benefits and require children to support their parents (5%). More or less the same ranking was found in all the countries. In every country, there was support for the proposition that people should work longer, either by abolishing early retirement or by raising the retirement age.

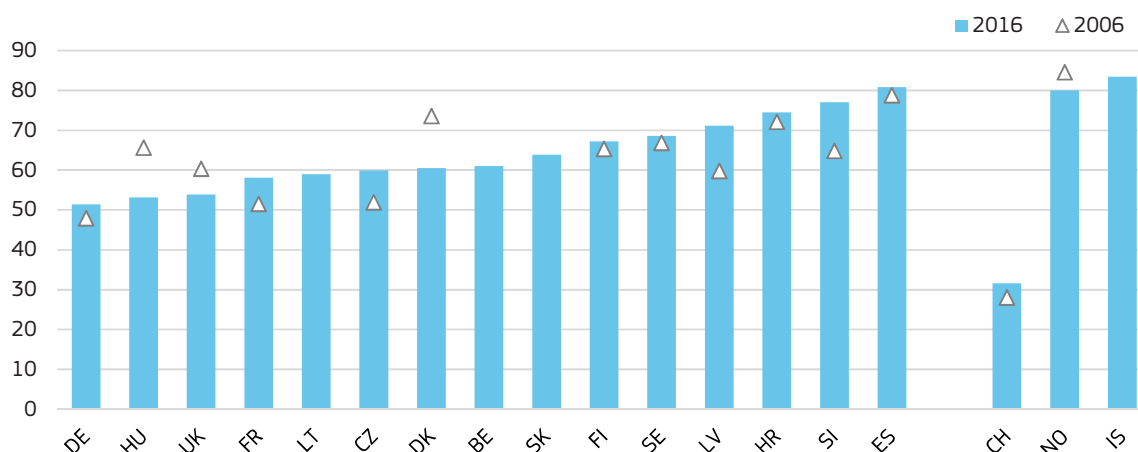
Some studies analyse how opinions on reform depend on the existing policy context and the suggested policy reforms, and seek positive or negative feedback effects of policies on attitudes. Fernández and Jaime-Castillo (2012), using data from Eurobarometer (EB 66.3, year 2006), found that in countries with a higher statutory retirement age, citizens are more likely to endorse a postponement of the retirement age (positive feedback). In contrast, negative feedback effects prevail in the case of social security contributions: in countries with higher contribution rates, people are less likely to support further increases. They also find that in countries with higher elderly poverty, people are less likely to support cuts to pension benefits. Naumann (2014) uses four waves of Eurobarometer data (2004-2009) to study the feedback effects of reforming the legal retirement age on attitudes measured the following year. In contrast to the results of Fernández and Jaime-Castillo (2012), increasing the retirement age is found to lead to a significant drop in acceptance of further raising the retirement age, thus supporting the negative-feedback-effects hypothesis.

3.2.2 Empirical analysis of attitudes

The above review of the literature on attitudes towards pensions revealed that many studies used ISSP Role of Government or European Social Survey data to analyse general attitudes towards pensions, while to study attitudes towards specific pension reforms more specialised surveys were used, such as Eurobarometer 56.1 or the Population Policy Acceptance Study. These surveys included more detailed sets of questions on attitudes towards different pension reform options. Unfortunately, similarly detailed comparative surveys have not been conducted in more recent years. Here, three data sources are used to capture different aspects of the most recent attitudinal patterns. The ISSP Role of Government modules are used to examine changes in general attitudes towards the pension system over time (between 2006 and 2016). To study attitudes towards different pension reform options, the OECD Risks that Matter Survey (OECD-RTM) and Flash Eurobarometer surveys are used.



Figure 10. Percentage of respondents who agreed strongly that it is the government's responsibility to provide for the old, 2006 and 2016 (%)



Note: % of those saying 'definitely should'

Source: ISSP, Role of Government (Waves 3 and 4)

General attitudes towards providing for the elderly

The ISSP Role of Government surveys investigate respondents' opinions about government responsibility in various areas.¹¹ Respondents show nearly unanimous support for the proposition that government should provide a decent standard of living for the old. In every EU Member State covered by the data, more than 90% of the sample agreed that providing for the elderly 'definitely should' or 'should' be the role of the government. If only strong support (i.e. 'definitely should') is considered, the Member State that shows the highest level of agreement was Spain (see Figure 10). Similar levels of agreement were found in non-EU countries (Iceland and Norway), where around four fifths of respondents agreed with the proposition. The lowest level of agreement was in Germany – but even there, 51% responded that providing for the old should definitely be the government's responsibility. Hungary and Great Britain also showed relatively low support for government intervention in favour of the elderly (51–53% strong support). Among the non-EU countries, agreement with the statement was even lower in Switzerland, with only 31% of respondents stating that providing a decent standard of living for the old should definitely be the government's responsibility. Comparing 2016 to 2006 (where available), we see increasing agreement with the proposition in Slovenia, Latvia, the Czech Republic and France, while agreement declined in Denmark, Hungary, Great Britain and, to some extent, Norway.

Attitudes towards spending on pensions

For an analysis of preferences on spending on pensions, we turn to data from the ISSP Role of Government module. It investigated people's desire for greater spending in various areas in the face of warnings about the need for tax rises to cover the increase.¹²

11 The question asks: 'On the whole, do you think it should or should not be the government's responsibility to provide a decent standard of living for the old?' Answers were recorded on a four-point scale: definitely should be, probably should be, probably should not be, definitely should not be.

12 The question was as follows: 'Please show whether you would like to see more or less government spending in each area. Remember that if you say "much more", it might require a tax increase to pay for it.' Answers were coded on a five-point scale: spend much more, spend more, spend about the same, spend less, spend much less. A similar item also forms part of the OECD Risks that Matter survey: 'Government should increase spending on pensions, even if it means that taxes will rise and some other programmes may have to be cut.' Answers were coded on a five-point scale: 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.



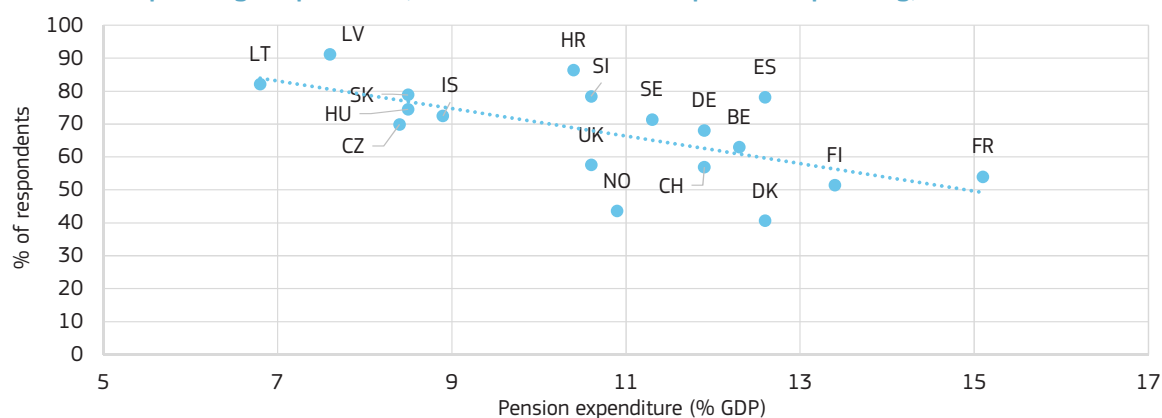
Box 5. Attitudes towards the public pension systems in Spain and Ireland

In the 1990s in **Spain**, there was a growing interest in subscribing to private pension funds, and this was accompanied by an appreciable degree of trust in private fund managers, which would include banks (and other entities). Around half of Spaniards thought it would be good to offer the choice of continuing with contributions in order to receive a public pension or leaving the system and putting the money in a private pension fund (Pérez-Díaz et al., 1997). However, the economic crisis raised concerns about future savings and the sustainability of the existing system. In 2013 and 2014, one household in five reported that it had previously saved for retirement but currently had no possibility of doing so; and 77% expressed their concern about the future of the public pension system (this share rose to 81% in 2017). Moreover, in 2014, over 40% did not believe that the pension system would be operational and functioning in the future (BBVA, 2014).

A major reform of **Ireland's** state, private and public service pension provision was announced in February 2018. In launching the five-year Roadmap for Pensions Reform, the taoiseach (prime minister) confirmed that the government's key goals were to 'create a fairer and simpler contributory pension system where a person's pension outcome reflects their social insurance contributions, and, in parallel, create a new and necessary culture of personal retirement saving in Ireland' (Mulligan et al., 2019). In 2018, when looking beyond the next decade, pensions were by far the most common concern for Irish people: 70% of the Irish listed 'financial security in old age' as one of the top three risks (OECD, 2019). Five years earlier, the Irish had already expressed a strong aversion to any system that would not address poverty among the elderly (Abid et al., 2013). A study showed in particular that people believed that state pensions were inadequate to guarantee a normal life after retirement: in their view, they did not allow people to engage in certain activities that they believed constitute a 'normal' life in retirement, such as going on holiday, spending time with grandchildren or friends, or paying for transport, particularly in rural areas (Mulligan et al., 2019).

As Figure 11 shows, in 2016, 90% of respondents in Latvia agreed that the government should spend more on pensions (despite the 'price tag' attached to the idea). Agreement was only marginally lower in Croatia and Lithuania. At the other end of the spectrum, people in the Nordic countries were far less convinced that the government should spend more on pensions: only between 30% and 40% agreed with this in Denmark and Norway, and the figure was also relatively low in Finland.

Figure 11. Percentage of respondents who would like to see more or much more government spending on pensions, and current levels of pension spending, 2016

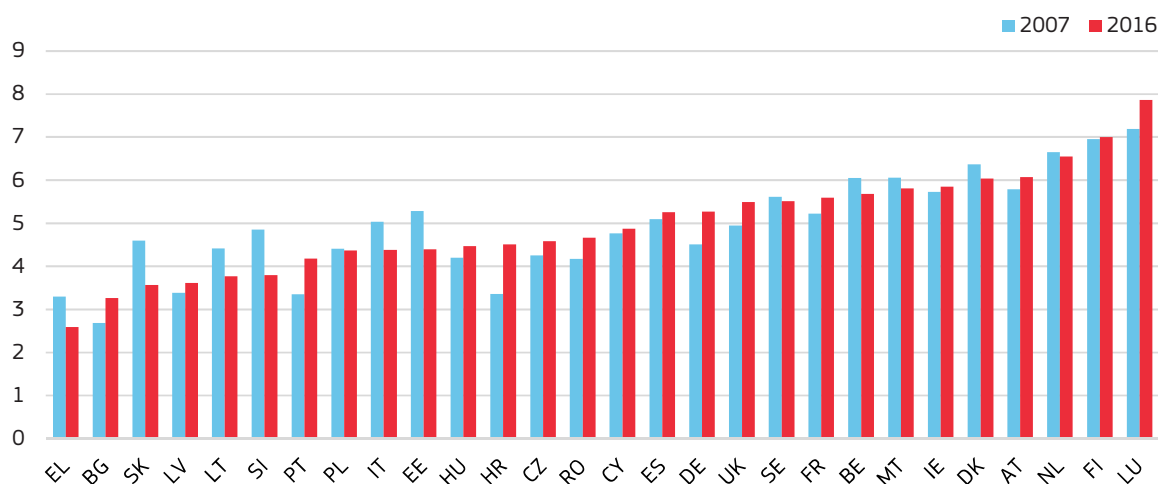


Note: The question's wording warns respondents that increasing pension spending might necessitate a tax increase to pay for it.

Source: ISSP, Role of Government (Wave 4) and Eurostat database



Figure 12. Average scores for quality of state pension system, in 2007 and 2016 (mean scores on a 10-point scale; 1=very poor, 10=very good)



Source: EQLS

Figures for western European countries (France, Belgium and Germany) were in the middle of the range (agreement at between 50% and 70%). Figure 11 also suggests that – in line with expectations – support for a spending increase is negatively correlated with the current level of pension expenditure in the country: support for a further increase is lower in countries where current spending on pensions is higher. As this question involves a comparison with the actual level of pension spending, the patterns are different from those found in Figure 10.

Comparison of the ISSP survey data for 2006 and 2016 reveals that among respondents in the Czech Republic, Sweden and Slovenia, support for increasing pension spending rose in this period. On the other hand, support for increasing spending on pensions declined in Denmark, Finland and Great Britain, as well as Norway.

Opinions on the quality of the pension system

Evaluation of the quality of the pension system shows important variations between EU Member States. Respondents in 2016 in Luxembourg rate the quality of the pension system highest (7.9 on a 10-point scale), and respondents in Finland (7.0) and the Netherlands (6.5) also consider the pension system to be of high quality. At the other end of the spectrum, Greece attracts the most unfavourable rating for its pension system (2.6). Bulgaria, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia also have average scores of below 4. Comparing Figures 11 and 12 it would seem that those countries where satisfaction with the quality of the pension system is low tend to prefer more pension spending, while support for increased pension spending is lower in countries where respondents are more satisfied with the quality of the pension system.

Support for pension reform options

Among the questions relating to pension reform options, more recent comparative data can be found in the OECD-RTM and Flash Barometer surveys. Importantly, the OECD survey puts an additional 2% tax price tag on the preference for better pensions.¹³

¹³ The questionnaire asks the following question about willingness to pay higher contributions for better pensions: 'Would you be willing to pay an additional 2% of your income in taxes/social contributions to benefit from better provision of and access to pensions?' (yes/no answers recorded).



Figure 13 shows that the greatest willingness to pay more in contributions for better pensions is in Lithuania, where 53% of respondents would be willing to pay more tax. The lowest figures are to be found in the Netherlands (25%), Belgium (29%) and France (29%). Figure 13 also suggests that willingness to pay more tax is lower in countries with a more generous pension system (i.e. with a higher replacement ratio).

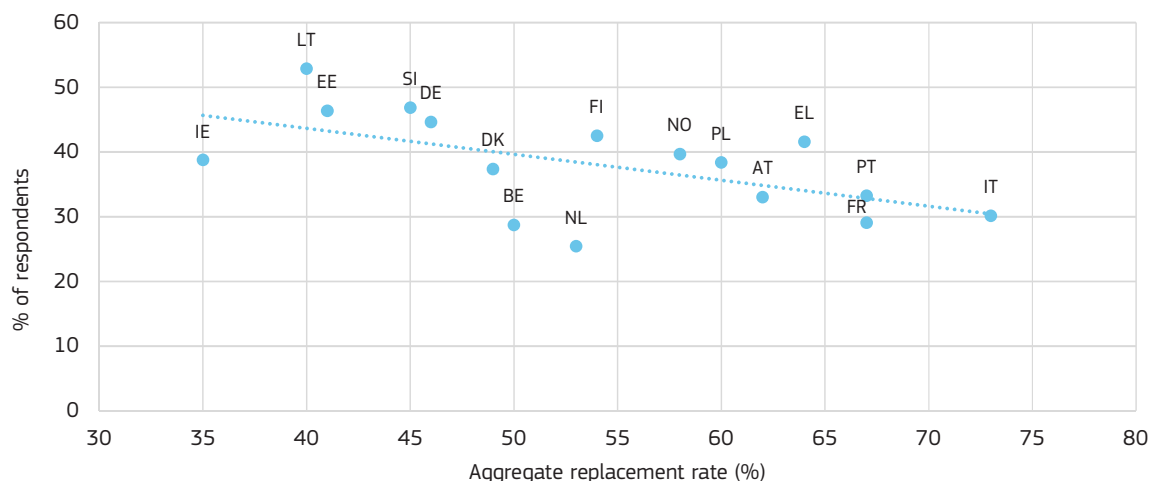
Support for raising the retirement age has been examined in recent Flash Eurobarometer surveys, which ask the opinions and attitudes of people living in countries within the Eurozone. People were asked whether they agreed with increasing the retirement age,¹⁴ which is one possible economic reform that governments could implement in order to improve the financial sustainability of the pension system.

In 2019, agreement with raising the retirement age was highest in Ireland, followed by Austria (Figure 14). The lowest levels of agreement were in Latvia, Germany, Portugal and Lithuania. Agreement with raising the retirement age is lower in countries where more important increases in the retirement age have been introduced over the past decade.

Looking at changes in attitudes towards increasing the retirement age reveals that support for this measure declined in most of the countries between 2011 and 2019. The biggest fall was observed in Slovenia and the Netherlands. Exceptions to this tendency are Ireland and Luxembourg, where support for increasing the retirement age did not decline.

When interpreting these findings, one has to keep in mind that people often have inaccurate information about the characteristics of the pension system (Boeri et al., 2001, 2002; Eurofound, 2016) and that having more accurate information could increase the willingness to accept reforms that reduce pension rights, such as an increase in the retirement age (Boeri and Tabellini, 2012). At the same time, low and declining support for an increase in the retirement age does not necessarily mean that people would like to stop working earlier. Data from 2011 Eurobarometer show that

Figure 13. Percentage of respondents willing to pay higher contributions and the aggregate pension replacement rate, 2018

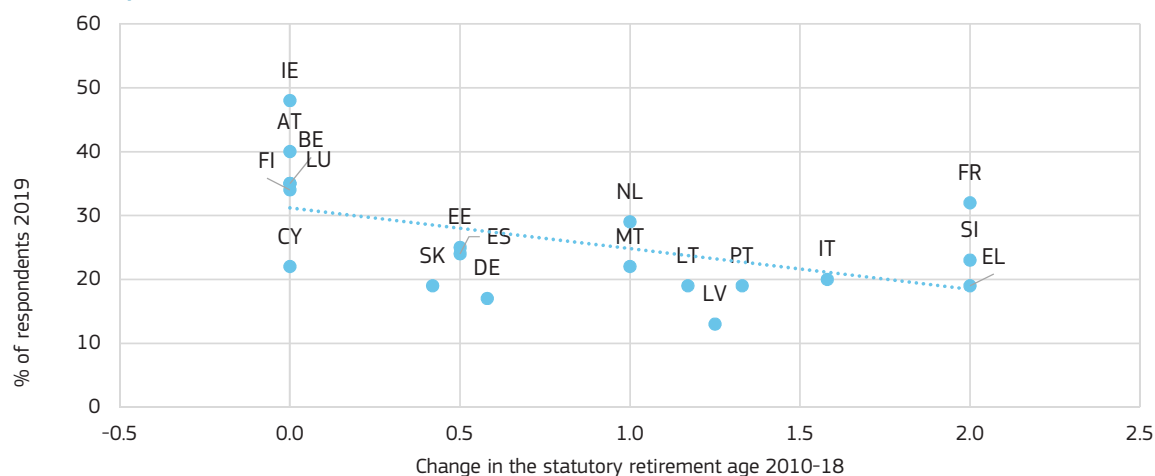


Source: OECD-RTM survey and Eurostat database

14 The exact question was: 'Governments in all euro-area countries are implementing various economic reforms, such as labour market reforms, pension, social security or healthcare reforms, reforms of education systems or market reforms to open sectors to competition. Would you agree or disagree with the following statements related to such reforms? The retirement age should be increased to ensure sustainability of the pension system.' (agreement recorded on a five-point scale: 1 – totally agree to 5 – totally disagree).



Figure 14. Percentage of respondents who agree with raising the retirement age in 2019 (%), by recent change in statutory retirement age during 2010–2018 period (age in years)



Source: Flash Barometer FB481 (10/2019) and Eurostat database

a large majority of people in employment would prefer partial retirement (working part time and receiving a partial pension) to full retirement (Eurofound, 2016). Another Eurobarometer survey in 2012 indicated that one third of people wanted to continue working beyond the pension age, with 60% agreeing that people should be able to do so (Eurofound, 2012).

3.2.3 Multivariate analysis of determinants of attitudes towards old-age pensions

In the multivariate analysis, the aim is to look more closely at the factors associated with attitudes towards the government's role in pensions, using relatively recent data and taking into account individual-level factors and contextual variables at the same time.

After reviewing potential comparative data sources, two items from the ISSP Role of Government module data were chosen for the multivariate analysis. The latest wave of this study, with a reasonable number of EU Member States covered, was conducted in 2016 and allows a comparison with data from 2006. As was mentioned in the descriptive data analysis, both time points included two items about general attitudes towards the government's role in the domain of pensions. The first asks respondents whether the government 'should provide a decent standard of living for the old'. Responses were coded on a 4-point scale, from 'definitely should not' to 'definitely should'. The other dependent variable used in the analysis is based on the survey question which asks respondents whether they would like to see more or less government spending in the area of pensions, given that an increase in pension spending might require a tax rise to pay for it. Responses were coded on a five-point scale, with categories 'spend much less', 'spend less', 'spend about the same', 'spend more' and 'spend much more'. In addition, data from the EQLS on quality assessment of the pension system were also analysed, using the question 'In general, how would you rate the quality of the state pension system?', where responses were coded on a 10-point scale (1=very poor quality to 10=very good quality).

In the case of government responsibility to provide for the old, we dichotomised the original 4-category scale ('definitely should' was coded as 1; other categories as 0) and used multilevel logistic regression. Dependent variables with at least five categories were treated as interval-level



variables and multilevel linear models were used to estimate the regression coefficients. Linear models were found to work well for these variables, while using models for ordinal variables would complicate the estimation procedure. Models were run on a pooled sample of countries from the available years.

The pension system mirrors the multiplicity of redistributive functions of the welfare state, which include redistribution between generations, redistribution between income groups or redistribution by gender. In modern societies, the pension system is a major instrument for redistributing income over the life-cycle, in order to finance consumption during the inactive elderly phase of life. In practice, in most of the countries, this is achieved by redistributing income between working members of society – who pay contributions to the system – and retired members, whose pensions are financed by these contributions. Thus, age is crucial to identify beneficiaries and contributors to the pension system, and it is expected that attitudes towards spending on pensions will also depend on age. In the following analysis, four age groups will be considered: 18-30, 31-49, 50-64 and 65+. State pension systems might also perform redistribution between income groups, subsidising the low-income group, whose pension based on the contributions they have made would be too low. For this reason, income was also included in the analysis as an independent variable. As a measure of income, the data allow the inclusion of subjective income: where respondents place themselves on a 10-point scale from lowest to highest position. Three categories of subjective income were used: low (1-3), middle (4-6) and high (7-10). As education is an important aspect of socio-economic status, the educational level of the respondent was also included. Three categories were formed on the basis of years of formal schooling completed: low (0-8 years), middle (9-12 years) and high (13 years or more). Attitudes towards pension expenditure might also differ by employment status, as the inactive do not earn pension entitlements. Therefore, the models also take into account employment status, subdivided into three categories: working, unemployed and inactive. Additional individual-level variables included in the analysis were gender and marital status.

Multilevel models also allow us to test the impact of contextual variables. In this analysis, we included the old-age dependency ratio and certain characteristics of the pension system of each country, such as level of pension expenditure (as a percentage of GDP), the aggregate replacement ratio, the at-risk-of-poverty rate for the elderly and the effective age of retirement. The expectation was that in countries with relatively restricted pension provision (low replacement ratio or high effective retirement age) or high levels of poverty among the elderly, support for the role of government in providing for the elderly or increasing pension spending would be higher.

Individual-level variables

Women show stronger support than men both for the role of government in providing for the elderly and for increasing spending on pensions (see Table B5 in the Annex). This may be explained by the generally more pro-redistribution attitudes of women and by their position in the labour market (lower wages, shorter working career) – on the basis of which they are entitled to lower pensions. Probably also linked to their weaker labour market position is the finding that women are less satisfied with the state pension system than are men. Women were also found to be more worried about having insufficient income in retirement compared with men (Eurofound, 2018).

Our analysis shows statistically significant differences in attitudes between age groups. As expected, older respondents – those aged 46-64 and 65+ – are more supportive of the government's role in providing for the elderly than those aged 18-30. Being over 65 increases the odds of agreeing with the proposition that providing for the elderly should definitely be the responsibility of the government by a factor of 1.8, compared with the youngest age group. Age also has a significant effect



on preferences about spending on pensions: the older the respondents, the greater their support for increasing spending on pensions. Average support among those aged 65 or over is 0.29 points higher (measured on the scale 1-5) than among those aged below 30, controlling for other factors. In addition, the elderly have, in general, a more favourable view of the quality of the state pension system than do younger age groups. A possible explanation might be that younger groups factor in how they expect the systems to evolve by the time they reach retirement age, while those over 65 evaluate the current situation.

Measures of social status have a negative effect on support for the government's role in providing for the elderly and on support for increasing spending on pensions. The support for these propositions is lower among the better-educated and those whose subjective status is higher, while it is higher among those with lower labour market status (the unemployed and the inactive). On the question of support for an increase in pension spending, subjective status and education seem to have a similar (negative) effect. On the other hand, respondents with higher income and higher education seem to take a more favourable view of the state pension system.

There was no significant general change between 2006 and 2016 in terms of support for the government's role in providing for the elderly or for increasing government spending on pensions. No general change can be seen either in the quality assessment of the pension system during the period studied.

Contextual variables

Variance components of the multilevel models show that variation between second-level units (country-years) forms a relatively small part of the total variance of the attitudes studied here. On the question of support for the government's role in providing for the elderly, the variation at the country-year level accounts for 5% of total variation; on the issue of support for increased spending on pensions, it is 12%; and on the subject of the quality of the state pension system, it is 23%. To explain this variance, contextual variables were included in the model (old-age dependency ratio, level of pension expenditure, the aggregate replacement ratio, the at-risk-of-poverty rate for the elderly and the effective age of retirement). Although literature suggests that people's knowledge about pension system characteristics and the demographic situation tends to be limited (Boeri et al., 2001, 2002; Eurofound, 2016) these might still affect welfare preferences in the pension domain.

Tables B6a-b in the Annex show estimates for these contextual variables on the issue of the government's role in providing a decent living for the elderly. The first five models show coefficients from models which include one contextual variable at a time, together with the individual-level variables discussed earlier. Models 6-9 all include the actual level of pension spending (as a percentage of GDP), together with one of the remaining contextual factors (and the individual-level variables).

Two interesting results emerge from the analysis. Support for the government's role in providing for the elderly is greater in countries where the effective retirement age is higher. It would seem that respondents in countries where access to pension provisions is restricted and where people tend to retire later seek greater government involvement. The old-age dependency rate has a negative effect on support for the government's involvement, suggesting that public opinion might be aware to some extent of the difficulties caused by population ageing for the sustainability of pensions. The important role of information is also underlined by the experimental literature, which shows that providing information about the dependency ratio reduces opposition to reforms that decrease government's involvement, e.g. raising the retirement age (Naumann, 2017).



On the issue of support for an increase in pension spending, the actual level of pension expenditure has a consistent negative effect. Support for increased pension spending is thus higher in countries with relatively lower levels of pensions. The other interesting finding is that support for increased pension spending is higher in countries with a higher at-risk-of-poverty rate among the elderly. This effect remains significant when the level of pension expenditure is also included in the model.

With regard to assessment of the quality of the pension system, there is evidence that people tend to rate the state pension system higher in countries with greater pension expenditure and a lower old-age dependency ratio (at least when both of these are controlled for). Respondents also take a more favourable view of the pension system if poverty among the elderly is lower.

3.2.4 Summary

The descriptive analysis of the data showed in general nearly unanimous support for the government's responsibility to provide a decent living for the elderly. At the same time, respondents in several EU Member States consider the state pension system to be of low quality, which suggests discontent with the pension system – especially in south-eastern Europe, the Baltic states, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Although support for provision for the elderly is high across different strata of the population, some interesting differences are to be found between social groups. The multivariate results reported here are in line with earlier findings, which show that age and social status both have an effect on attitudes towards pensions, reflecting the role of the pension system in redistribution between age groups (and over the life-cycle) and between income groups. Support for provision for the elderly increases with age and declines with social status (as measured by level of education or subjective status). In terms of support for pension spending, similar within-country differences are found: support for increased pension expenditure is higher among the elderly and lower among those with higher education or higher social status. Quality assessment of the pension system is more positive among the elderly and those with high income or education.

There is considerable variability between countries in the preferences for increasing pension spending: agreement with this proposition varies between 40% and 90% in EU Member States. Support for increased pension spending is higher in countries with a relatively low level of pension spending and a high level of poverty among the elderly. This explains why respondents in eastern European countries such as Latvia or Lithuania are the most supportive of an increase in government spending on pensions. It can also be seen that assessments of the quality of the pension system are more favourable in countries with higher level of spending and lower poverty among the elderly.

Unfortunately, recent comparative data sources include very limited information on public attitudes towards pension system attributes (e.g. state vs private vs occupational pensions or intragenerational redistribution) and preferences for pension reform options. Earlier literature (using data from the early 2000s) found evidence that respondents tended to prefer those pension schemes (PAYG, occupational or private) that are relatively important in their respective countries (Janky and Gál, 2007; Van Groezen et al., 2009). Similarly, research found that support for the view that pension benefits should be based on contributions paid is higher in countries where earnings-related schemes are in place (Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2013). Earlier research on the support for various pension reform options suggests that retrenching current pension rights (reducing benefits or raising the retirement age) and measures to increase immigration are commonly rejected (Frommert et al., 2009). Generally, support for reform alternatives outside the pension system (e.g. fighting unemployment,



cutting spending in other areas) tends to exceed support for reforms within it. There is, however, clearly a need for more recent comparative evidence on these issues, in order to monitor changes in attitudes over the past two decades.

3.3 Unemployment benefits

Key points

- *Support for the unemployed and unemployment benefits is generally lower than support for other welfare benefits, such as pensions, healthcare or childcare benefits. Europeans are overall quite suspicious of the unemployed and their willingness to find work. These perceptions are especially strong in eastern European countries and the UK.*
- *Nevertheless, overall Europeans believe that the government should be responsible for providing a decent standard of living for the unemployed. At the same time, satisfaction with the current provisions is low, especially in eastern and southern European countries. These attitudes seem to be relatively stable over time (between 2008 and 2016).*
- *Support for reforming unemployment schemes by investing more in education and training programmes at the expense of spending less on unemployment benefits receives moderate to high support. Eastern and southern European countries show less support for this – although in those countries, too, the majority favours such a reform. Especially the highly educated are more inclined to support the reform of unemployment benefits.*
- *Socio-economic status and risk perceptions are the strongest predictors of attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment benefits. The more likely people are to become unemployed and to have to rely on unemployment benefits (including those who already do), the more strongly they believe that the government should provide a reasonable standard of living, the more positive the image they have of the unemployed, and the more critical they are about their current standard of living, as well as proposals to reform the unemployment scheme.*
- *A more generous unemployment protection system seems to generate its own support; or vice versa, generous unemployment protection might be introduced and maintained especially in countries where there is greater support for it. Countries that spend more on unemployment benefits and active labour market policies (ALMP), where unemployment benefits are more generous, are likely to have higher levels of solidarity with the unemployed; perceptions of the unemployed are more positive and there is greater support for providing them with a reasonable standard of living.*

3.3.1 Overview of the literature

Attitudes towards government responsibility to provide for the unemployed

Whether and under what conditions the government should provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed (by providing unemployment benefits) has been widely investigated in welfare attitude studies. Analysing data from the European Social Survey 2008/2009, Van Oorschot and Meuleman (2012a, 2014) find that a majority of Europeans are of the opinion that the government should be responsible for providing for the unemployed. At the same time, they are less optimistic about the current standard of living of the unemployed: in most countries, their standard of living is scored at below 5 on a scale of 0-10. A clear relationship exists between support for government intervention and satisfaction with the current provisions. In countries where people perceive



the standard of living of the unemployed to be relatively low, there is more likely to be a stronger demand for government intervention (this is the case in many eastern European countries). Where the standard of living of the unemployed is deemed to be acceptable, support for unemployment benefits is lower (mostly in western Europe) (Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014).

Support for the unemployed and unemployment benefits is generally lower than support for other welfare benefits, such as pensions, healthcare or childcare benefits (Roosma et al., 2014a): the unemployed are regarded as among the least deserving target groups for social policy (Laenen, 2019; Van Oorschot, 2006). Moreover, support for unemployment benefits is more subject to change (Edlund, 2009) and depends more on different interests and ideological worldviews (Jensen and Petersen, 2017; Roosma, 2019). However, at the same time it must be said that a large majority of people in Europe want a strong role for the government in providing for this group (Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Roosma et al., 2014a).

The fact that support for government intervention to target the unemployed is lower than for pensions or healthcare policies is related to the public image of the unemployed and their perceived deservingness. Many studies report relatively negative perceptions of them: there is a broadly endorsed idea that welfare can discourage the unemployed from working; across European countries there is doubt about whether they are willing to work and suspicion that benefits are abused (Furåker and Blomsterberg, 2003; Furnham, 1982; Larsen, 2002; Roosma et al., 2015a). Over time, images of the unemployed as welfare scroungers have become more widespread (Bullock et al., 2001; Larsen and Dejgaard, 2013; Lepianka, 2017; Sage, 2012). These images coincide with lower support for unemployment benefits than for social policies in other welfare domains: the more negative the images of the unemployed, the less support there is for government to provide benefits (Lødemel and Trickey, 2001; Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014). The unemployed are regarded as among the least deserving target groups for welfare (Van Oorschot, 2006), and this is especially true of the younger unemployed (Houtman, 1997; Laenen, 2019; Larsen, 2002).

A recent European comparative study showed that images of the unemployed become more negative the higher the long-term unemployment rate and/or the more it increases (Buffel and Van de Velde, 2019), while a trend analysis (1975–2010) of the Dutch case shows that in times of high general unemployment, people are more supportive of the unemployed (Uunk and Van Oorschot, 2019). These differences in outcomes might be explained by the difference in the long-term, as against the general, unemployment rate. If people rely on benefits for only a short time, they are more likely to find a job and get out of their dependent situation. Uunk and Van Oorschot (2019) also show that perceptions of the unemployed become more negative in times of economic downturn.

Negative opinions about the unemployed are held by those with more secure jobs (Buffel and Van de Velde, 2019). Other studies have shown that when the social distance grows (i.e. inequality increases), it is more difficult for the majority to identify with the unemployed, and their willingness to support them declines (Carriero and Filandri, 2019). People feel more solidarity with their unemployed compatriots than they do with the unemployed from other European countries (Kuhn and Kamm, 2019) or from other ethnicities (Buss, 2019). Having more direct or indirect experience of (risks) of unemployment makes people more positive about the unemployed and unemployment benefits (Furåker and Blomsterberg, 2003; Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014). Changes in individual material circumstances tend to lead to a change in attitude towards unemployment benefits, while attitudes towards health care and pensions remain stable. Job loss leads to increased support for unemployment benefits, and this change is persistent (Naumann et al., 2016).



Attitudes towards specific policy designs: conditionality and sanctioning

In a context of negative attitudes towards the unemployed, it is no surprise that welfare benefits, and especially unemployment and social assistance benefits, should have become more conditional over recent decades. More obligations have been attached to social rights (Buss et al., 2017; Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018) and welfare recipients have been made more responsible for avoiding their inactivity, so as to prevent people relying on welfare as far as possible (Clasen and Clegg, 2006; Gilbert, 2004; Immervoll and Scarpetta, 2012). This welfare conditionality, or ‘doing something in return’ for (unemployment) benefits finds great support among the general public across different European countries (Buss et al., 2017; Jeene and Van Oorschot, 2015; Laenen and Meuleman, 2019; Larsen, 2008b; Roosma and Jeene, 2017).

The same goes for sanctioning the unemployed who do not want to cooperate with the conditions imposed on them (Buss, 2019; Naumann et al., 2019). Here also people tend to be stricter towards the younger unemployed: the older unemployed are punished less for not accepting job offers (Buss, 2019; Naumann et al., 2019). In countries with relatively high unemployment and stricter ALMPs, people are more in favour of sanctioning (Naumann et al., 2019).

3.3.2 Empirical analysis of attitudes

In the literature, attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment benefits are examined in single countries, as well as in cross-country studies. Researchers rely on the available data from comparative datasets, such as the ISSP and ESS. The responsibility of the government for ensuring a reasonable living standard for the unemployed is among the attitudes most often analysed in the welfare state literature (see, for instance, Bean and Papadakis, 1998; Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Jæger, 2007; Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014). The survey question appears in the ISSP survey of 2006, 2009 and 2016 and the ESS survey of 2008 and 2016.¹⁵

Since the release of the ESS 2008 welfare module, the efforts of the welfare state in respect of unemployment protection have also been assessed (measured by the perceived standard of living of the unemployed) (Roosma et al., 2014b). It shows Europeans’ opinions about the living standards of the unemployed in EU Member States. Rather than showing the level of support for government intervention, it provides an insight into how people in Europe see the needs of the unemployed in their country.

As both the preferred role and the perceived performance of the welfare state in providing social security for the unemployed were included in the repeated ESS welfare attitude module in 2016, it is relevant to examine which individual and contextual characteristics explain opinions towards unemployment policies, and to see whether there is any substantial change in these welfare attitudes over time. Although in general there is substantial stability in attitudes, perceptions of the unemployed are among the most changeable, influenced by economic developments (Buffel and Van de Velde, 2019).

In addition, the ESS welfare modules of 2008 and 2016 provide an indication of how people perceive the unemployed. As mentioned in the literature review, the unemployed are often viewed critically and tend to be regarded more negatively than other target groups. Moreover, contextual circumstances

¹⁵ Unfortunately, we were unable to combine these data to give an extensive overview of the development of support for the role of government in providing for the unemployed, as the surveys use different scales to measure support. ISSP 2006 and 2016 measure support on a four-point scale; ISSP 2009 on a five-point scale; and ESS 2008 and 2016 on an 11-point scale. As the ESS covers the largest number of EU countries across the two waves (although not all countries were included in both waves), we present support for this item here.



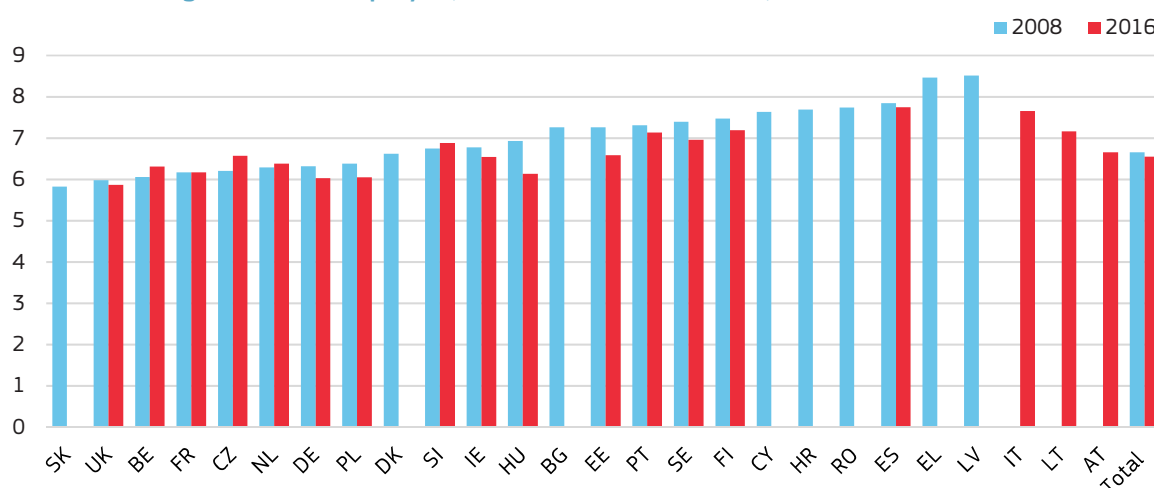
can influence these perceptions. As well as individual and contextual indicators, changes in negative attitudes towards the unemployed can, therefore, potentially provide important insights.

To add to previous insights from the literature, descriptive and multivariate statistics are presented below. These show support for a move towards activation in unemployment protection. The selected variable from ESS measures support for a different approach to improving the living standards of the unemployed: it proposes reducing unemployment benefit and investing more in education and training programmes to achieve better integration of the unemployed into the labour market. It is available for 2008 and – so far as it is possible to tell – has not been analysed in any previous studies.

The following four variables measuring support for unemployment benefits are selected from the available datasets: the preferred government responsibility for providing a decent standard of living for the unemployed (ESS 2008 and 2016);¹⁶ the perceived standard of living of the unemployed (ESS 2008 and 2016);¹⁷ negative attitudes towards the unemployed (ESS 2008 and 2016);¹⁸ and support for spending more on education for the unemployed at the cost of unemployment benefits (ESS 2016).¹⁹

Figure 15 presents the support for government intervention on unemployment. The data show that there is relatively high support for the role of government in ensuring a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed in all EU Member States. Only in the UK and Slovakia were mean scores below 6 (on a scale of 0-10). Support is especially high in southern EU countries: Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Cyprus. But there is also high support in some eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria,

Figure 15. Average scores for government responsibility to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed, 2008 and 2016 (means, scale 0-10)



Source: ESS

16 The exact question was as follows: 'How much responsibility do you think governments should have to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed?' Answers were recorded on a scale of 0-10, with 0 indicating 'should not be governments' responsibility at all' and 10 – 'should entirely be governments' responsibility'.

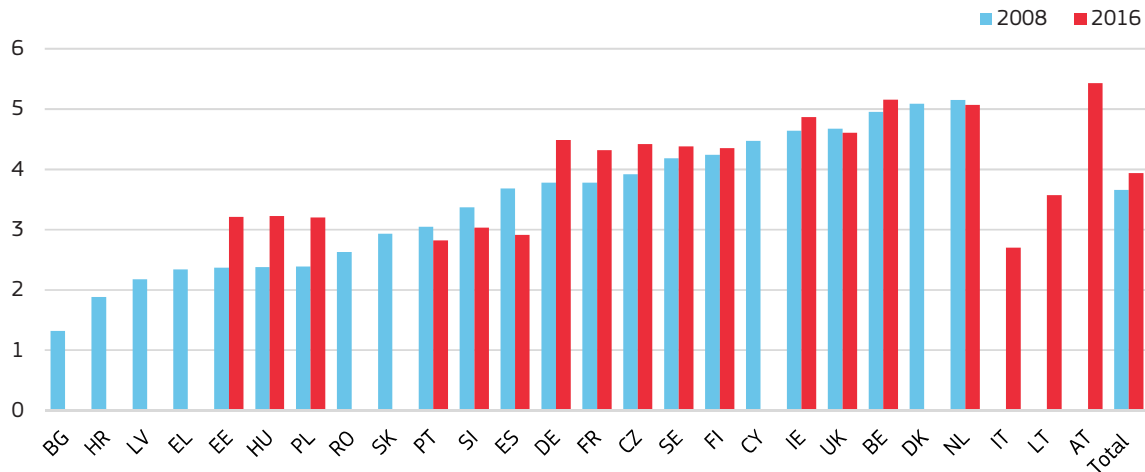
17 The exact question was as follows: 'What do you think overall about the standard of living of people who are unemployed?' Answers were recorded on a scale of 0-10, with 0 indicating 'extremely bad' and 10 – 'extremely good'.

18 The exact question was: 'How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about people in [country]. Most unemployed people do not really try to find a job.' Answers were recorded on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree); the scale is recoded so that a higher score indicates stronger agreement.

19 The exact question was: 'Would you be for or against the government spending more on education and training programmes for the unemployed at the cost of reducing unemployment benefit?' Answers were recorded on a scale of 1 (strongly in favour) to 4 (strongly against); the scale is recoded so that a higher score indicates stronger endorsement.



Figure 16. Average scores for the evaluation of the standard of living of the unemployed, 2008 and 2016 (means, scale 0-10)



Source: ESS

Croatia, Romania and the Baltic countries, as well as in Finland and Sweden. This might be explained either by differences in activity rate or by differences in public spending on unemployment benefits (see the multivariate analysis below).

The differences between the waves in the mean scores of each country (present in both waves) are very small. Despite the financial and economic crisis and political developments, people seem hardly to have changed their opinions about the role of the government in providing social security for the unemployed. The differences are insignificant for five of the EU-15 Member States: France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. There is a small, but significant, increase in support for the role of government in Belgium and the Czech Republic. Meanwhile, there is a small and significant reduction in support in Germany, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Poland and Sweden. Note that differences in the total mean scores cannot be compared, because the sample of countries changes.

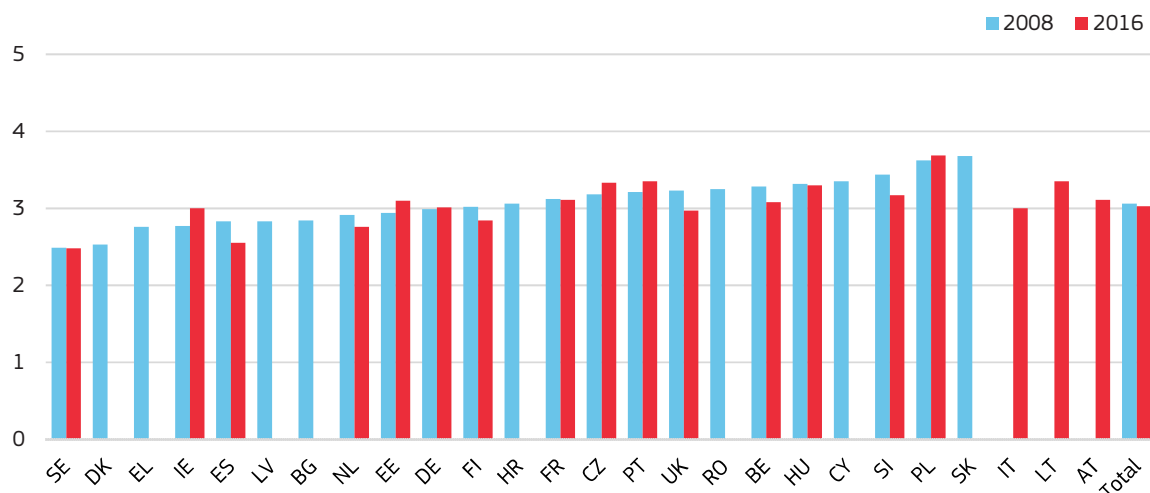
Compared with the relatively large support for the role of government in ensuring a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed, Europeans are very critical about the actual standard of living of the unemployed. Only in Austria (2016), Belgium (2016), Denmark (2008) and the Netherlands is the mean score higher than the scale mid-point (5). In Bulgaria (2008), Estonia (2008), Spain (2016), Greece (2008), Croatia (2008), Hungary (2008), Italy (2016), Latvia (2008), Poland (2008), Portugal (2016), Romania (2008) and Slovakia are mean scores below 3 – close to the scale end ‘extremely bad’ (Figure 16).

Again, the descriptive statistics presented in Figure 16 indicate that differences between the 2008 and 2016 waves are small. In most countries, the assessment of the standard of living of the unemployed improved (marginally) in 2016 compared with 2008; the exceptions were Portugal and Spain – the countries that implemented strict austerity measures during the crisis. For the Netherlands, the UK and Finland, the differences between the waves are insignificant. (Note that again differences in the total mean scores cannot be compared, because of changes in the sample of countries.)

Figure 17 shows the country means for the years 2008 and 2016 for perceptions of the unemployed. Overall means are around the scale mid-point, but there is significant variation between countries. The perception that ‘most unemployed people do not really try to find a job’ is relatively widespread in eastern European countries and the UK. Overall, the perceived lack of willingness to



Figure 17. Average scores for the perception that ‘most unemployed people do not really try to find a job’, 2008 and 2016 (means, 5-point scale)

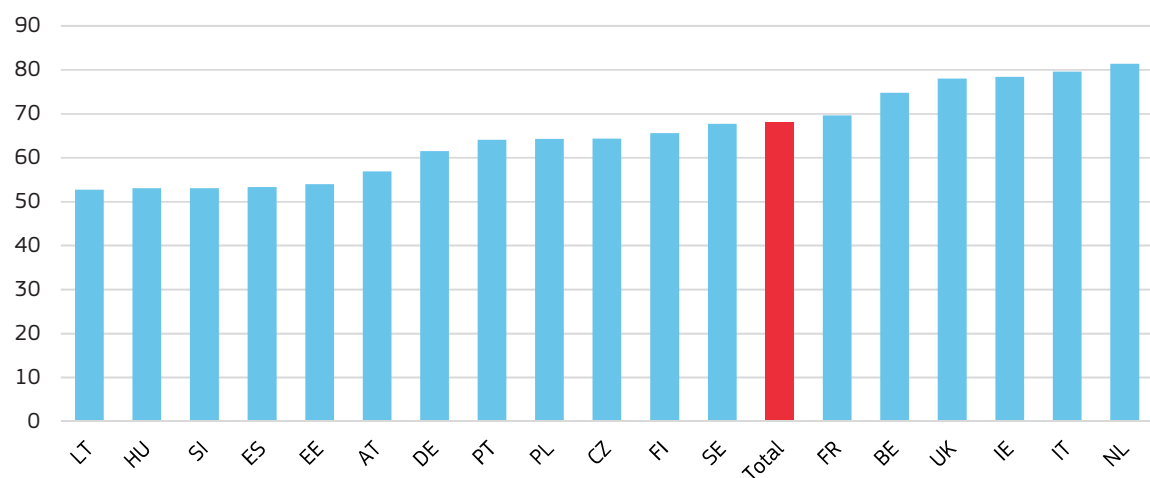


Source: ESS

find a job does not seem to change substantially between 2008 and 2016 (but note that differences in the total mean scores cannot be compared because of changes in the sample of countries). However, there are marked changes within countries (except for Germany, France, Hungary, Poland and Sweden). In Belgium, Spain, Finland, the Netherlands, Slovenia and the UK, people became less negative about the unemployed between 2008 and 2016; meanwhile, in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland and Portugal, they became more negative. These descriptive statistics suggest that people are quite suspicious of the unemployed and their willingness to find work, which might explain the lower support for unemployment benefits than for other types.

Figure 18 presents the percentage of respondents in each country that agree with the proposition that governments should invest in education for the unemployed rather than in benefits.²⁰ Overall, Europeans support investing more in education and training programmes and spending less on unemployment benefits. This suggests a strong endorsement for social investment programmes, at the

Figure 18. Percentage of respondents who strongly agreed with spending more on education/training for the unemployed at the expense of benefits, 2016 (%)



Source: ESS

20 Note that there was no scale mid-point: respondents were ‘forced’ to choose.



cost of spending on social protection. Support is especially high in France, Belgium, the UK, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands. People in eastern and southern European countries show less enthusiasm for investing in education at the expense of unemployment benefits; but even in these countries, where the standard of living of the unemployed is assessed as poor, a (slight) majority favours the social investment approach over social protection.

3.3.3 Multivariate analysis of determinants of attitudes towards unemployment benefits

This multivariate analysis provides an insight into which social groups (age groups, gender, different socio-economic groups, etc.) support or are critical of welfare policies targeted at the unemployed, and which contextual factors influence the support or critical attitudes of Europeans towards the unemployed and unemployment policies.

The four different attitudes introduced in the descriptive analysis above function as dependent variables in the multivariate analysis. The item measuring support for (1) government responsibility to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed and (2) evaluation of the standard of living of the unemployed are both measured on an 11-point scale (with a higher score indicating a better assessment). Support for the proposition that (3) 'most of the unemployed do not really try to find a job' is measured on a five-point scale. For these three variables, multilevel linear regression analysis is applied. Item (4) – whether a respondent is for or against spending more on education and training programmes for the unemployed at the expense of reduced spending on unemployment benefits – is measured on a four-point scale. This item is dichotomised for respondents who indicate that they are (strongly) in favour or (strongly) against. Hence, multilevel logistic analysis is applied to examine which social groups are likely to favour the proposition.

The first three variables mentioned are measured in two waves of the ESS survey (2008 and 2016). Because the descriptive analysis shows that the differences between the two waves are small, the models for these three items control for the year of the survey by including a dummy variable. The fourth variable is only present in ESS 2016.

The same independent variables are introduced to analyse support among different social groups: age in bands (18-30 (reference category), 31-45, 46-64, 65+), gender (men are the reference category), education (low, middle and high), subjective income (living comfortably on present income, coping on present income, finding it difficult on present income, finding it very difficult on present income), employment status (paid work, unemployed actively looking for a job, unemployed not looking for a job, out of the labour force (in education, sick or disabled, retired, homemakers, doing community or military service)) and perceptions of the risk of becoming unemployed (not looking for work, not at all likely, not likely, likely, very likely).

As contextual variables, the following are included: activity rate (the percentage of economically active (employed+unemployed) persons in relation to the total population aged 20-64), public expenditure on unemployment relief, including spending on ALMPs as a percentage of GDP, and the generosity of labour market policies (using the net replacement rate of unemployment benefits at 67% of the average wage). All variables are retrieved from Eurostat and taken from one year before the ESS surveys (i.e. 2007 and 2015, respectively).



Individual-level variables

The results show that groups who are more likely to rely on benefits themselves, or are closer to the group of unemployed people and/or can better empathise with them are more likely to support unemployment policies and the unemployed. People who indicate that they find it very difficult to make ends meet are more likely than people with higher subjective incomes to support a stronger role for the government in providing a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed and to perceive the standard of living of the unemployed to be bad. Also, people on lower subjective incomes are less likely to believe that 'the unemployed do not really try to find a job' and are least enthusiastic about 'spending more on education and training programmes for the unemployed at the expense of reduced unemployment benefits' (see Table B7 in the Annex).

The direction of the effects mentioned above is also found for people who are unemployed or who perceive a higher risk of becoming unemployed. Especially the unemployed actively looking for work support a stronger role for government, are more critical of the outcomes of the current unemployment benefits, perceive less welfare abuse by the unemployed and are less in favour of investing in education at the cost of unemployment benefits. These results show that perceptions about the unemployed and unemployment policies are influenced by a respondent's own socio-economic situation and risk perceptions. The greater the (perceived) need for income support (in the future), the stronger the demand for an active role for the government in providing income security, and the greater the solidarity with the unemployed.

Educational background has a strong effect on perceptions about the unemployed. Highly educated people are less likely to believe that the unemployed do not really try to find a job. They are, however, rather more in favour of activation policies (spending more on education) at the cost of unemployment benefits. People with mid-level education seem a bit less likely than those with a lower or a higher level of education to be in favour of a stronger role for government in providing a decent standard of living for the unemployed. The well educated are more critical of the living standards of the unemployed. All in all, controlled for individual characteristics that express self-interest, the educational level of respondents seems to play a role in terms of their values: the better-educated show more solidarity with the unemployed than do those with medium or lower education; but at the same time, they are more inclined to support the reform of unemployment benefits, rather than simply placing responsibility in the hands of the government.

The effects of gender are small. Women are a bit more likely to support a stronger role for government in providing a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed, but they are less likely to support investment in education and training at the expense of unemployment benefits. Age effects are absent in analysing support for the role of government. Interestingly, respondents in the age category 46-64 are most critical of the outcomes for the unemployed. This might be explained by the fact that in this age category, people who become unemployed are less likely to find a job again than are people in younger categories. People in the youngest age bracket are more likely to support the reform of unemployment benefits, with more spent on education at the expense of unemployment benefits.

Contextual variables

There are no significant effects found for the outcome variables measuring evaluation of the standard of living of the unemployed and support for reform of the unemployment benefit system. It is unexpected that the effect of public expenditure and the generosity of a country's unemployment benefits on the perceived standard of living of the unemployed should be insignificant. The direction



of the effect is also the opposite of what might be expected: higher spending and generous benefits would be expected to lead to better evaluated outcomes for the unemployed (see Tables B8a-b in the Annex).

Instead, there are three significant effects found on support for the role of government in ensuring a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed. In countries where the activity rate is higher, people are less likely to demand a stronger role for government in providing for the unemployed. In countries where public expenditure on unemployment benefits is higher and benefits are more generous, support for a stronger government role is also greater. Moreover, higher public expenditure on unemployment benefits seems to reduce the perception that the unemployed do not try to find a job.

In sum, in countries with more generous unemployment benefits and higher levels of spending on unemployment benefits, people express greater solidarity with the unemployed than is the case in less generous countries. It seems that generous unemployment protection generates its own support. Or vice versa, generous unemployment protection may be introduced and maintained especially in those countries where there is greater support for it.

3.3.4 Summary

There is a broad body of literature on attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment benefits. Compared to other social policies, support for the unemployed is generally lower. It is argued that the unemployed are among the 'least deserving' target groups for social policy, and images of the unemployed tend to be rather negative. By analysing 2008 and 2016 ESS data, we can confirm that Europeans are overall quite suspicious of the unemployed and their willingness to find work. Perceptions that the unemployed 'do not really try to find a job' are especially strong in eastern European countries and the UK. This might explain the lower support for unemployment benefit than for other forms of benefit.

Despite this negative image, Europeans still believe that the government should be responsible for providing a decent standard of living for the unemployed. A majority was in favour of this, in both 2008 and 2016. The differences between 2008 and 2016 in perceived outcomes for the unemployed are also small, but at the same time differences between countries are relatively large. All Europeans seem relatively dissatisfied with the standard of living of the unemployed in their country, but the criticism is particularly acute in some eastern and southern European countries.

Support for reforming the unemployment scheme by investing more in education and training at the expense of reduced spending on unemployment benefits also finds support across Europe, but especially in France, Belgium, the UK, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands. In eastern and southern European countries show less support, although the majority still favours this reform.

When individual determinants of unemployment attitudes are considered, it is found that socio-economic status and risk perceptions play the most prominent role in explaining attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment benefits. If people are unemployed – or in a more precarious position or feel that they may become unemployed soon – they express more positive opinions about the role of government in providing for the unemployed, and are more critical of the current standard of living of the unemployed. These groups express a more positive perception of the unemployed and are more critical about the proposition to reform the unemployment scheme by investing more in education and training at the expense of reduced spending on unemployment benefits.



Contextual effects seem to suggest that a strong role for government in the field of unemployment protection generates its own support; or vice versa, generous unemployment protection might be introduced and maintained especially in countries where there is greater support for it. Countries that spend more on unemployment benefits and ALMPs, where unemployment benefits are more generous, are likely to have higher levels of solidarity with the unemployed; perceptions about the unemployed are more positive and there is greater support for providing a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed.

All in all, on the one hand, respondents are critical of the unemployed, but on the other hand they express concern about their living standards. It is likely that people differentiate between different groups of the unemployed in different circumstances; however, these nuances are not (yet) captured by the relatively general survey questions. Future research should take the opportunity to consider differences between different groups of the unemployed: for instance, those laid off versus those fired for good reason; younger or older unemployed; unemployed with or without savings, etc. Also, future studies could focus more on the conditions that are attached to unemployment benefits. Sanctions and work obligations seem to attract a high level of support, but more detailed information is needed about what conditions are considered fair by the general public and under what circumstances. Vignette studies and survey experiments may be used to test more precise attitudes towards supporting the unemployed in different circumstances and with different conditions attached. Finally, support for (new) types of active labour market policies and alternative provisions to support the unemployed – for instance, through education and (re)training, or by providing a guaranteed job – should also be examined.

Policy-makers should be aware of the (relatively) negative image of the unemployed as a target group for social policy. However, in countries with more generous unemployment provisions, the images are less negative and the unemployed are better supported. It could very well be the case that generous provisions create their own support.

3.4 Social assistance

Key points

- *Support for the notion that those in need should be guaranteed that their basic needs will be met is very high across European Member States.*
- *Assessment of the adequacy of benefits to protect those in need is more critical: there is a clear geographical divide, with the citizens of northern and western countries tending to be relatively positive about the ability of current benefits to cover basic needs, and people from the southern and eastern European countries very critical of current protection benefits.*
- *In countries with greater material deprivation and lower spending on social protection benefits, support for the notion of guaranteeing people's basic needs is relatively lower. In countries with higher levels of material deprivation, inequality and lower spending on social protection benefits, people are more dissatisfied with the current benefits to protect those in real need.*
- *Especially people in a more precarious socio-economic position are more likely to be concerned about the adequacy of benefits to protect those in real need. Women, the better-educated and those who have experienced unemployment in the past are among the strongest advocates of guaranteeing basic needs.*



- *More information on support for more specific ideas for social assistance or minimum income protection schemes is needed. What does the general public believe are the conditions and levels of means testing that should be attached to these benefits? Who should be included in these schemes? And what exactly is understood by 'basic needs'?*

3.4.1 Overview of the literature

Attitudes towards guaranteeing basic needs

Social assistance benefits and minimum income schemes function as a last safety net, provided by the welfare state (Pfeifer, 2009). The minimum income schemes in EU Member States differ substantially in their characteristics. Some countries have schemes open to all who do not have the means to support themselves; other countries (and regions) have schemes with more restricted eligibility and coverage. Schemes also differ as to the extent to which they provide adequate levels of income support to cover basic needs. Moreover, although there is a tendency to improve efforts to integrate people into society and the labour market, many countries do not succeed in effectively linking ALMPs to minimum income schemes (ESPN, 2015; Marchal et al., 2014). This leaves many individuals at risk of poverty and creates an issue of long-term dependency on these schemes. In addition, it is argued, the schemes suffer from high rates of (perceived) non-take-up, high levels of bureaucracy and stigmatisation of beneficiaries (ESPN, 2015; Van Oorschot and Roosma, 2015).

Compared to some other social policies, public support for social assistance or minimum income schemes has not been extensively studied in the European context. When people are asked about the idea of society guaranteeing that basic needs (such as food, housing, clothing, education and health) are met, support for this is very high across European countries: guaranteeing basic needs is seen as essential for a just society. Although the distributive justice principles of equality and equity are also embraced by the public, support for the need principle is even greater (Arts and Gelissen, 2001; Forsé and Parodi, 2009). In 1999, 90% of Europeans found it important or very important (indicated on a five-point scale) (Forsé and Parodi, 2009), and country averages were in the upper 10% of the scale (Arts and Gelissen, 2001). As the variation is small, there are no large differences between social groups (even if groups with lower incomes are rather more likely to endorse the needs principle than are groups with higher incomes) (Arts and Gelissen, 2001; Reeskens and Van Oorschot, 2013).

Aside from a high level of support for the general principle of guaranteeing basic needs, when it comes to specific social policy schemes the support is less self-evident. This is partly the case because the concepts used are interpreted differently. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, social assistance schemes (also referred to as minimum income protection schemes) are accessible to those who have no other source of income (although in some countries, eligibility rules are stricter than in others). Social assistance benefits are, by definition, means tested. A guaranteed basic income, however, can be interpreted either as a social assistance benefit, providing a basic income in case of need, or (a more precise definition) as a universal benefit – at a basic level, but for all citizens, regardless of income or the employment situation, and by definition not means tested.

Scholars suggest that support for means-tested minimum income protection programmes is, in general, lower than for programmes with wider coverage, since the majority of society is unlikely to become dependent on it (Goodin and Le Grand, 1987; Kangas, 1995; Korpi and Palme, 1998; Moene and Wallerstein, 2003; Pfeifer, 2009). This argument follows from the idea that people support benefit schemes primarily out of self-interest – a claim that is refuted by other research (Kenworthy, 2011; Marx et al., 2013).



This claim is also hard to assess, as the availability of cross-national data is limited. There is an indicator in Eurobarometer that measures attitudes towards government involvement in guaranteeing a basic income (without further defining it): this indicator could be interpreted either as a true unconditional universal basic income or as a means-tested income at a basic level for those with no other source of income. In the ESS Wave 8 (2016/2017), support for a – currently not implemented – unconditional universal basic income is measured, with the survey question introduced with a full definition.

However, both the indicator included in Eurobarometer and that used in the ESS reveal substantial support for providing a basic income or minimum income protection. Support for a ‘guaranteed basic income’ (Eurobarometer data 2001) is high, with country averages between 55% (western Germany) and 85% (Ireland) (Pfeifer, 2009), while support for a full unconditional universal basic income (ESS data 2016) is between 38% in Sweden and 80% in Lithuania (Roosma and Van Oorschot, 2019).

Pfeifer (2009) shows that in countries that have more generous welfare systems and lower unemployment rates, support for social assistance benefits is lower: there is less need for stronger state involvement. On the other hand, in countries with less generous protection systems and higher unemployment rates, people are more likely to demand a guaranteed basic income from the state (Pfeifer, 2009). Support for an unconditional universal basic income is especially high in countries with relatively high levels of material deprivation (Roosma and Van Oorschot, 2019). As expected, the indicators show that especially people on lower incomes and those who are unemployed support social assistance to provide people with basic necessities (Pfeifer, 2009; Roosma and Van Oorschot, 2019). Overall, this leads to the conclusion that people support the idea that the poor have to be provided with basic necessities, though there is stronger demand for minimum income protection in countries where the actual need is greater, as well as among individuals who are most likely to benefit from it (Forma, 1997; Roosma and Van Oorschot, 2019).

Means testing as a distinguishing element of social assistance

Despite these general assessments of support for social assistance for the poor, minimum income provisions themselves have several elements that reduce specific support for these types of benefit. Because they are targeted at ‘those in real need’, there are strict criteria of eligibility and means testing (Van Oorschot and Roosma, 2015). Means testing contains several discrediting elements, adding to the stigma of poverty as such (Rothstein, 2001; Titmuss, 1970; Van Oorschot and Roosma, 2015), as it is evident that those who claim the benefit are unable to secure sufficient economic welfare by themselves, which undermines the (increasingly) valued ethic of ‘self-responsibility’ (Van Oorschot, 2000). Poverty is often seen as being caused by laziness, not wanting to work or lack of effort (Furåker and Blomsterberg, 2003), and the welfare state is criticised for discouraging people from working (Ervasti, 1998, 2012). Means-tested benefits are also more often associated with welfare abuse or benefit fraud (Goul Andersen, 1999; Laenen, 2018; Roosma et al., 2014b; Rothstein, 2001). And there is lively academic debate about the effectiveness of means testing versus universalism in poverty alleviation (Brady and Bostic, 2015; Kenworthy, 2011; Korpi and Palme, 1998; Marx et al., 2013; Nelson, 2007). In line with the self-interest argument, support for means-tested benefits is lower than for more universal policy programmes (Forma, 1997; Kangas, 1995) and low-income targeting is associated with lower support for redistribution (Brady and Bostic, 2015).

With regard to means testing for Finnish social benefits, Kangas (1995) found that working-class people and left-wing voters were more in favour of means testing in programmes that were universal at the time, while they opposed further means testing in programmes targeted at the poor



(Kangas, 1995). For conservatives and the non-working class, Kangas (1995) found the opposite pattern. In the Danish case, Goul Andersen (2012) found support for means testing from people with the highest level of education; while in Finland, Forma and Kangas (1999) found evidence that education and political affiliation had no effect on support for means testing, but that women were especially against it. Forma and Kangas (1999) showed that preferences for means testing in certain programmes were very context dependent.

However, means testing and targeting can be a characteristic of different types of welfare benefit and contribution-based schemes, such as unemployment benefits. Negative perceptions relating to means testing can therefore have broader implications for social policy support. For instance, using data from the 2006 Dutch Welfare Opinions Survey, Laenen (2018) shows that people in the Netherlands see just as much benefit fraud, complexity and inefficiency in the social assistance programmes as in contribution-based unemployment benefits (see also Roosma and Jeene, 2017), whereas the more universal pension system is viewed in a much more positive light (Laenen, 2018).

Because of the discrediting elements of means testing and the administration involved, benefits with higher levels of selectivity suffer more from (perceived) non-take-up (Gugushvili and Hirsch, 2014; Roosma et al., 2014b). Non-take-up can be caused by ignorance of social rights or administrative mistakes or because of fear of stigmatisation or out of shame. And non-take-up is something that Europeans are concerned about: a majority of the public believes that the benefits to help people in real need are inadequate and that people often receive fewer benefits than they are entitled to. This idea is stronger in eastern and southern European countries (where minimum income protection schemes are often absent or of poor quality (Marchal et al., 2014; Natili, 2016)), in countries with higher unemployment rates and lower social spending levels, and among people with lower socio-economic status (Roosma et al., 2014b).

Social assistance as an element in the redistribution between rich and poor

Social assistance schemes have explicit and purposeful redistributive effects from rich to poor. Although vertical redistribution is a complex issue that is related to a great many policy issues (including taxation) and various policy arrangements contain such redistributive elements, it is relevant to go deeper into the extensive literature analysing general support for redistribution between the rich and the poor to reduce income inequality. The availability (for multiple years and countries) of survey data from the ISSP, the ESS, European/World Value Survey and Eurobarometer has encouraged numerous researchers to examine whether people believe that ‘the government should reduce differences in income levels’ (Jæger, 2013; Schmidt-Catran, 2016; Schmidt, 2012). Support for redistribution between the rich and the poor is high and stable over time and across countries. Analysing long-term time series based on the British Social Attitudes Survey (UK) and the General Social Survey (US), Meuleman (2019) reaches a similar conclusion.

Yet there are differences in the impact of contextual and individual-level factors that are widely examined. In explaining variation in support for redistribution between the rich and the poor, studies have found differences between self-interest, political orientation (Jæger, 2006b), social class and political trust (Svallfors, 1999b), demographic factors, beliefs as regards social mobility and insider/outsider divisions (Linos and West, 2003), income levels (in interaction effects with inequality levels) (Finseraas, 2009; Keller and Tóth, 2013) and culture and national identity (Hjerm and Schnabel, 2012; Luttmmer and Singhal, 2011). Both self-interest and political ideology seem to shape support for redistribution (lower socio-economic classes and more left-wing people being more in favour of redistribution); but social class seems to matter more in liberal countries. For social trust, no strong effects are found, while insider/outsider divisions do matter. Beliefs about social mobility vary



between institutional contexts, as beliefs about getting ahead diminish support for redistribution in liberal welfare states, but hardly affect support in Nordic and Continental welfare states. Cultural effects among immigrants, leading to a preference for redistribution, are strong and remain so even in the second generation.

Other studies focus on the contextual effects on support for redistribution: effects of income inequality (Dallinger, 2010; Finseraas, 2009; Jæger, 2013; Keller and Tóth, 2013; Lupu and Pontusson, 2011), social spending (Jakobsen, 2011), regime types (Jæger, 2006a; Jakobsen, 2011; Svallfors, 1997) and alternative measures of institutional context (Jæger, 2006a). They find that attitudes towards redistribution vary across regimes, but that the impact of regime types is minimal. At best, authors find 'mixed support' for the regime hypothesis. Instead, income inequality seems to be a stronger predictor of support for redistribution by the state. However, a shortcoming of these studies is that they are based on cross-sectional data, which casts doubts on the causal effects (Jæger, 2013; Schmidt-Catran, 2016). Both Jæger and Schmidt-Catran adopted a pseudo-panel approach to overcome this. Both studies find a positive within-country effect of income inequality on support for redistribution. Increasing income inequality within countries leads to stronger support for redistribution. Jæger also finds a negative effect for economic growth within countries. Yet, hypotheses about the differences between countries lack evidence: no support is found for the effect of differences in regime types, social spending or unemployment levels.

3.4.2 Empirical analysis of attitudes

In the literature, there is not much research into specific support for social assistance or minimum income protection, due to the fact that detailed and cross-national data on support for these types of scheme are not available. Support for the more abstract notion of guaranteeing that people have their basic needs covered is, however, often analysed. Support is very high, especially among those who need it the most and in countries where effective minimum income protection schemes are absent (Arts and Gelissen, 2001; Pfeifer, 2009). This support is examined below, using recent data from the European Values Survey (EVS) 2017 and data from the EVS 1999. Unfortunately, it is not possible to compare the data from the two survey waves properly, as the survey items are measured on different scales (a five-point scale in 1999; a four-point scale in 2017). The proportion of respondents who believed a guarantee of basic needs for all to be (very) important is presented below for both years. The percentage for 2017 is expected to be higher than in 1999, as there was no scale mid-point offered to respondents in 2017.

In addition, attitudes towards the adequacy of minimum income protection in EU Member States are examined. As there are substantial differences between EU countries in terms of the level and coverage of minimum income protection (ESPN, 2015), it is interesting to analyse the differences between countries. Data are available from the ESS survey, but unfortunately only for 2008.

The following two variables measuring support for social assistance are selected from the available datasets: support for guaranteeing basic needs (EVS 1999 and 2017),²¹ and assessment of the benefits provided to cover need (ESS 2008).²² (Available calibration weights and population size weights (for total scores) are applied;²³ for the EVS 2017 data, only those data that were collected

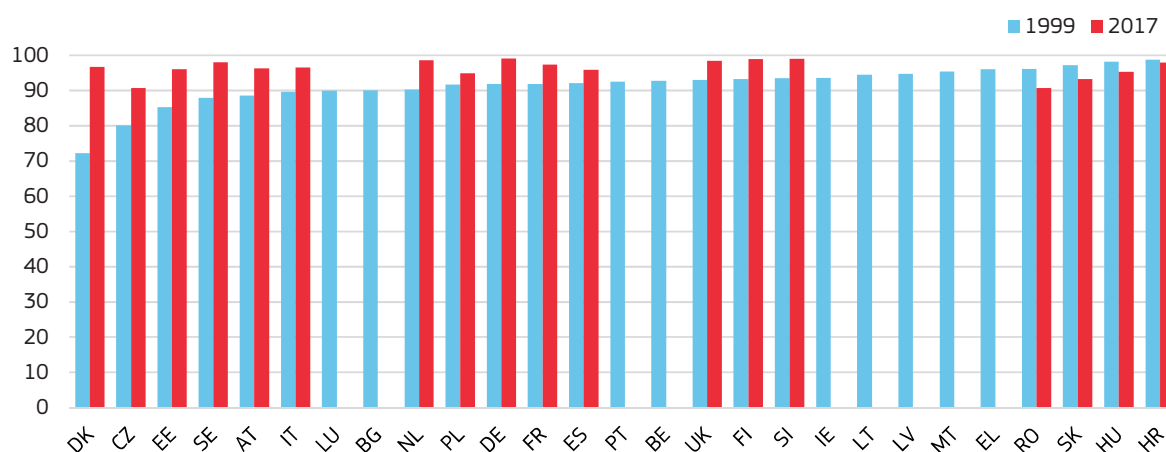
21 The exact question was: 'What should a society provide? Guaranteeing that basic needs are met for all, in terms of food, housing, clothing, education, health.' In 1999, the responses could range from 1 – very important to 5 – not at all important. In 2017, a four-point response scale was provided: 1 – very important; 2 – quite important; 3 – not important; 4 – not at all important.

22 The exact question was: 'There are insufficient benefits in [country] to help the people who are in real need.' There was a five-point response scale provided, with 5 indicating 'strongly agree' to 1 indicating 'strongly disagree'.

23 Note that there is a problem with the calibration weights for the 2017 data. This will be resolved with the new release in April.



Figure 19. Percentage of respondents declaring that it is (very) important to guarantee that basic needs are met, 1999 and 2017 (%)



Note: Country averages; 1999 – five-point scale; 2017 – four-point scale
Source: EVS

through face-to-face interviews (CAPI mode) were used, as the differences between modes of data collection can be substantial.)

Figure 19 shows extremely high support in both 1999 and 2017 for the proposition that society should guarantee that everyone has their basic needs provided for. Although there is more variation in 1999 (partly because of the nature of the question), in most countries over 90% of respondents considered it (very) important to meet everyone's basic needs. Only in Denmark, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Sweden, Austria and Italy was agreement below this.

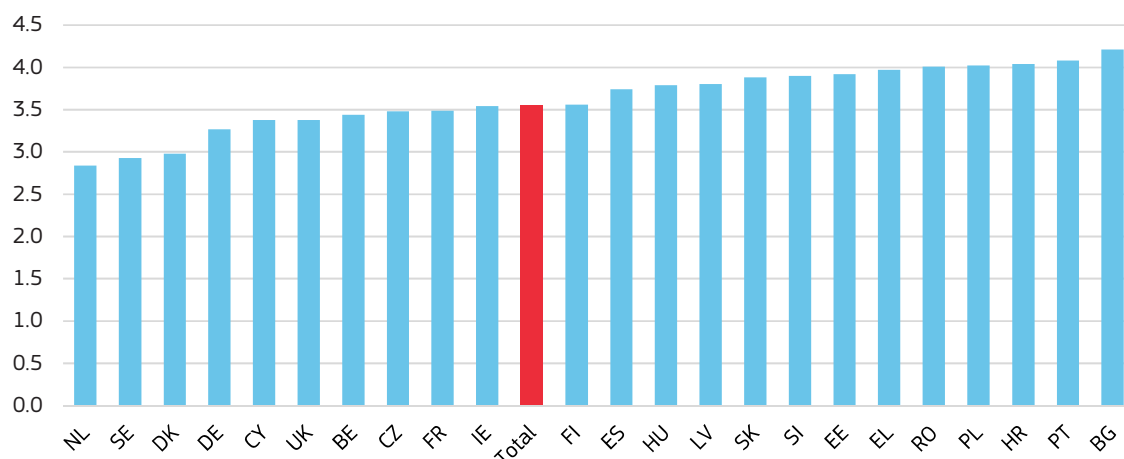
In 2017, in almost all countries agreement lay between 95% and 100%. Only in eastern European countries was support somewhat lower: especially in Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Box 6. Social assistance in Italy

In Italy, where social assistance has traditionally been fragmented and rudimentary, anti-poverty policies were first timidly expanded in the early 2010s, and then significantly strengthened after 2017. A guaranteed minimum income scheme (GMI) – called *Reddito di inclusione* (Rei) – was legislated in 2017 and introduced nationwide in January 2018. That was replaced by a more generous scheme – *Reddito di cittadinanza* (RdC) – from April 2019, which is actually a rather conventional means-tested cash benefit, conditional on participation in job-search activities. According to ESS data for Italy, overall a majority of respondents were in favour of both schemes, although support for universal basic income (UBI) (59%) was significantly lower than for guaranteed minimum income (79%). Support for UBI was highest among the young (67% in the age group 15-29) and lowest among the middle-aged (53% in the age group 45-64). Support for GMI also peaked among the young (84% in the age group 15-29), then fell with age (to 74% among those aged 65+). Econometric analysis (Sacchi et al., 2020), restricted to those currently or recently employed, showed that support for GMI was robust across the board, but was even stronger among those in favour of redistribution and of access to social benefits by migrants (especially when they work, or after one year). As regards support for UBI, it tended to rise with perceived exposure to the risk of becoming unemployed in the next 12 months.



Figure 20. Average scores for benefits inadequate to help people in real need, 2008 (means, 5-point scale)



Note: Country means (scale 1–5)

Source: ESS

Comparison with the 1999 data is complicated because of the differences in measurement scales, but the Czech Republic stands out for having somewhat lower support in both waves. For Denmark, Sweden, Estonia and Austria, support in 2017 was among the highest; meanwhile, in Romania and Slovakia, agreement was among the highest in 1999.

Figure 20 sets out Europeans' assessment of whether their country provides sufficient benefits to help people in real need. Higher scores show greater agreement with the proposition that a country's benefits are inadequate. The graph shows a clear geographical divide between, on the one hand, the eastern and southern European countries (with country means higher than 3.5 on a scale of 1–5) and, on the other, the northern and western European countries (with country means of between 2.8 (the Netherlands) and 3.5 (Finland)). This might be explained by differences in social spending or differences in the generosity of the welfare state. Only Cyprus and the Czech Republic are exceptions to this tendency.

3.4.3 Multivariate analysis of determinants of attitudes towards social assistance

In this multivariate analysis, the determinants of support for benefits that provide for people in real need and the evaluation of the current benefits on offer are analysed at both the individual and the contextual level.

As there are no repeated cross-sectional data available on support for social assistance, one of the two indicators of support for people's basic needs being met is selected for analysis in a multilevel model. The 2017 EVS wave is used, as the data are more recent. The variable is measured on a four-point scale with a very skewed distribution; therefore, a dummy variable is created to indicate whether people do (1) or do not (0) support a guarantee that the basic human needs will be met. Multilevel logistic regression analysis is applied. The second indicator, from ESS 2008, evaluates the adequacy with which basic needs are met on a five-point scale. Therefore, a multilevel linear regression model is used.

As the two indicators are from different surveys, the independent variables differ slightly. The same independent variables are introduced to analyse the support among different social groups: age



bands (18-30 – the reference category), 31-45, 46-64, 65+), gender (men are the reference category) and education (low, middle and high). For the EVS data, objective income is used (deciles); while for the ESS data, subjective income (living comfortably on present income, coping on present income, finding it difficult on present income, finding it very difficult on present income) is added to the model, because of the high percentage of missing values for the objective income item. Both models use items to measure work status. For the EVS variable, this includes paid work (reference), paid work of fewer than 30 hours a week, self-employed, retired, homemaker, student, unemployed, disabled and other (including military service). For the ESS indicator, work status could be paid work (reference category), unemployed actively looking for a job, unemployed not looking for a job, retired, homemaker, student, disabled, other (including community or military service). Finally, in the model using the dependent variable from EVS, past experience of unemployment was selected; meanwhile, in the ESS model, perceptions of the risk of becoming unemployed (not looking for work, not at all likely, not likely, likely, very likely) were added.

The following contextual variables were included: severe material deprivation, gross social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP, inequality of equivalised disposable household income (Gini index) and interdecile P50/P10 ratios. The first three indicators were retrieved from Eurostat; the fourth from the OECD. The data used are from the year before the ESS and EVS surveys (i.e. 2007 and 2016, respectively). The indicator for interdecile ratio P50/P10 is only used for the EVS 2017 variables, because the data for too many countries were missing for 2007.

Individual-level variables

There is a strong effect of gender in both models. Women are more likely to support the idea that basic needs ought to be met, and are also more likely to believe that current benefits for those in need are inadequate. We see a similar pattern among people with a high level of education: they are stronger in their support for a guarantee that everyone's basic needs will be met and are more critical in their evaluation of the current benefits available to help those in need (see Table B9 in the Annex).

If we consider age, then there is only a borderline significant effect for the age category 46-64 in the first model: this age group is more likely to endorse the proposition that basic needs should be met. However, in the evaluation of current benefits, it is the youngest age group that is more likely to believe that benefits are inadequate, followed by the age group 46-64; respondents aged 65 and over are the least likely to agree that benefits are inadequate.

There is no effect of objective income on people's support for social assistance benefits. However, subjective income has a strong effect on the evaluation of current benefits for those in real need: respondents who indicate that they find it (very) difficult to make ends meet on their current income are more likely to believe that the current benefits to help people in real need are inadequate. Also, respondents who indicate that they are very likely to become unemployed are more critical of the benefits available to help people in need.

Work status has a stronger effect on people's support for a guarantee that basic needs will be met. Interestingly enough, it is especially students and those in paid work who are more likely to agree with the proposition, while the self-employed, homemakers, those employed for fewer than 30 hours a week and (surprisingly) the unemployed are less likely to agree with it. However, those who have experienced unemployment in the past are more supportive of a guarantee that basic needs will be met. This might be explained by the fact that those who are currently unemployed (and who rely on unemployment benefits) feel that they are in competition with people in need for whatever social



assistance is available, whereas people who were previously unemployed can be more empathetic towards those in need (as they have experienced need themselves).

Contextual variables

The results show that – contrary to what might be expected on the basis of previous studies – greater severe material deprivation in a country reduces the likelihood that people will support a guarantee that basic needs will be met. Rather, it is in countries where social spending on social protection benefits is higher (as a percentage of GDP) that support for such a guarantee is higher. This could be interpreted as indicating that support for a generous minimum income scheme reinforces itself. In countries where the demand for such a scheme is higher, the schemes are more generous and there is less poverty. There is no effect visible for inequality (irrespective of whether it is measured by Gini or by the interdecile P50/P10 rate – see Table B10 in the Annex).

As regards the contextual effect on the evaluation of benefit adequacy, the opposite pattern is found: in countries with higher levels of severe material deprivation and higher levels of inequality, people are more inclined to consider the current benefits available to help people in real need to be inadequate. On the other hand, higher social protection expenditure (as a percentage of a country's GDP), leads respondents to be more satisfied with the current benefits.

3.4.4 Summary

Public support for providing a minimum income is not self-evident. From the available studies it is known that in general large numbers of people support the abstract notion of guaranteeing to cover basic needs. However, if more specific information is provided – for instance, on the conditions of the benefit and means testing – support is lower.

The descriptive analysis in this report, based on data from both EVS and ESS, shows that, on the one hand, there is indeed (still) a high level of support for a guarantee that the basic needs of those in need will be met. In both 1999 and 2017, a very large majority of respondents in all European countries under examination agreed with the proposition. However, respondents were more critical in their assessments of the adequacy of the benefits to protect those in need. There is a clear geographical divide, with respondents from northern and western countries tending to be relatively positive about the ability of current benefits to cover basic needs, and those in southern and eastern European countries being very critical.

The multivariate analysis revealed that in countries with higher levels of material deprivation and inequality, people are more likely to believe that benefits are inadequate. Meanwhile, generous social protection in a country reduces dissatisfaction with benefits targeted at those in real need.

Unexpectedly the multivariate analysis also showed that in countries with higher levels of severe material deprivation and lower spending on social protection benefits, support for the notion of guaranteeing that basic needs are met is lower. Although it should be taken into account that this concerns a small proportion of the population under examination, the direction of the effect is notable. It suggests that greater support for guaranteeing that basic needs in a country are met results in a more generous protection system with less poverty. Meanwhile, in countries where popular support for the proposition is lower, social protection is also at a lower level, economic development is lower and poverty levels are higher.



With regard to social groups, it may be concluded that people in a more precarious socio-economic position are more likely to be concerned about the adequacy of benefits to protect those in real need. In particular, women, the better-educated and those who have experienced unemployment in the past are the strongest advocates for a guarantee that people's basic needs will be provided for.

Future research needs to examine support for more specific notions of social assistance or minimum income protection schemes. What does the general public believe are the conditions and levels of means testing that should be attached to these benefits? Who should be included in these schemes? And what exactly is understood by 'basic needs'? More detailed survey information is required, taking into account the fact that there are large differences in minimum income protection schemes between the European Member States. In addition, qualitative research could lead to greater insights into the underlying reasoning of people.

Regarding the evaluation of the current protection schemes, the big differences between countries and the contextual effects of material deprivation, inequality and spending on social protection benefits suggest that the satisfaction with social benefits that protect those in need can be increased through more generous benefits.

3.5 Health care

Key points

- *Europeans have mixed opinions about the state of the healthcare services in their countries. The way healthcare services are perceived improved in many countries between 2008 and 2018. It could be that the Covid-19 pandemic will make people more favourably disposed towards the healthcare system, but there is as yet no evidence about this from large-scale surveys. Preliminary opinion polls show only that trust in healthcare systems has been reinforced since the outbreak.*
- *Satisfaction with health services relates mainly to their availability, accessibility and affordability; but individual characteristics can also have an impact. While age does not seem to have a significant influence, gender and income level do. Women are less likely than men to have a favourable view of the state of the healthcare services in their country. And those who find it very difficult to live on their present income are less likely to be satisfied; this is in line with the findings of previous studies, since they tend to have more difficulty in accessing affordable and good-quality health care.*
- *Satisfaction with the healthcare system also varies considerably between countries, with particularly low levels in eastern European countries. In addition, in the majority of these countries in 2013, almost half of respondents supported the idea that the EU should invest in health care as a priority (while less than 40% of respondents shared this view in most western European countries).*
- *The prevailing view in Europe is that the state should play a key role in both the provision and the financing of health care. People are attached to the principle of fairness in health care in the majority of EU Member States, and are opposed to a system that provides only basic medical services. They also favour state-funded health care, but are reluctant to pay additional taxes to finance any improvement.*
- *Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, and leaving aside the tax implications, a large share (around 40%) of Europeans considered that the EU should invest in health care as a priority.*



After the pandemic and the plaudits lavished on healthcare workers, the proportion of those who are concerned and the strength of feeling are both likely to have increased; but by how much and whether the increase will be sustained are subjects for future research.

3.5.1 Overview of the literature

General attitudes towards health care

The literature on the legitimacy of healthcare systems strongly stresses the need to distinguish between endorsement of the principles guiding public and accessible health care (the substantive justice component) and assessment of how health care is organised (the just outcomes component) (Kohl and Wendt, 2004; Rothstein, 2001) (a similar distinction exists between 'is' and 'ought' attitudes to welfare provision more generally). Despite the increasing reliance on private funding, European healthcare systems share the basic principle that governments play a dominant role in regulating the financing, production and consumption of services. Therefore, in a European setting, the first dimension of healthcare legitimacy implies the normative belief that widespread public-sector responsibility for health care is preferable (Roller, 1995). Just outcomes presuppose positive assessments by people of how government has actually implemented health care in relation to what it had promised (Rothstein, 2001).

In contrast to the first dimension, this second dimension of legitimacy therefore depends on actual experience of care received (Kohl and Wendt, 2004; Rothstein, 2001). Missinne et al. (2013) analyse the preferred role of government, as well as healthcare satisfaction, using data from 24 countries in the European Social Survey Wave 4 (2008/2009). The study reports very high levels of support across Europe for state responsibility for health care. The strength of support is very similar to what is found in the case of government intervention to help the elderly; this is not surprising, given the partial overlap between old age and sickness and the similarity of deservingness characteristics of both groups. By contrast, satisfaction with the healthcare system varies considerably from country to country, with particularly low levels to be found in eastern European countries. Using ISSP data from 2011, Karaeva (2016) reports that in post-socialist, western European, Nordic and liberal countries, the vast majority favour government intervention in various medical activities (such as preventive examinations, combating HIV/AIDS or organ transplant surgery) and oppose a healthcare system in which the government only provides basic medical services. This pattern of high levels of substantive legitimacy combined with lower and more volatile outcome legitimacy is found in other studies that use different data sources as well (Gelissen, 2000; Jæger, 2006a; Marmor et al., 2010; Mossialos, 1997; Wendt et al., 2010).

A recurring question in the literature is whether individuals' health and risk exposure are related to attitudes towards public health care. According to the self-interest theory, the elderly and those in poor health are expected to be more supportive of public health care, because government intervention serves their material interests. The same argument could hold for individuals with lower socio-economic status, who not only have a substantially higher probability of having health problems (Mackenbach et al., 2008; Marmot et al., 1991; Robert and House, 2000; Whitehead and Dahlgren, 1991) but are also dependent to a greater extent on public healthcare provision, because they lack the financial means to obtain private care (Van Oorschot, 1999). Moreover, the patient-satisfaction literature suggests that low-income groups receive a lower standard of care, resulting in lower satisfaction levels (Hall and Dornan, 1990; Malat, 2001). Missinne et al. (2013) and Gevers et al. (2000) report that support for the public provision of health care is slightly stronger among those in (subjective) poor health, but the effects are too small to provide convincing support for the self-interest argument. Self-interested behaviour regarding health could also be influenced by aversion to risk, as



tested by James and Savedoff (2010), who showed that people are motivated by self-interest – with healthier people being less supportive of solidarity with the sick – in low-income countries. More risk-averse individuals are likely to be much more sensitive to potential future losses than those who are less risk-averse, and tend to be more supportive of redistributive mechanisms as a hedge against such adverse events (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2001).

Furthermore, socio-demographic variables, such as age, educational attainment or income, only have a relatively small impact in most studies. Interestingly, Jensen and Naumann (2016) show – using a flu epidemic during the fieldwork for ESS Wave 4 (2008/2009) as a natural experiment – that increased risk exposure seems to reduce support for public health care (rather than increase it, as self-interest theory would predict). The explanation as to why self-interest arguments do not apply to support for public health care might be that self-interest theory presupposes that individuals are well informed, whereas people have a serious lack of information about the medical conditions they experience and the health care they need. Since every individual could potentially become reliant on health care, it can be argued that good-quality health care is in the interests of the whole population, and not only of those in poor health. In this sense, the individual could best secure his own interests by securing the interests of the group (Arhinful, 2003). In this context of uncertainty – and given that an adequately functioning healthcare system is in the interests of the population as a whole – ideological factors tend to play a more important role than self-interest in explaining support for public health care (Azar et al., 2018; Missinne et al., 2013), which is in line with findings regarding support for other welfare domains. In contrast to support for public health care, satisfaction with the healthcare system is positively related to good subjective health (Missinne et al., 2013; Wendt et al., 2010).

The impact of policy design and support for policy reform

Several studies investigate how preferences and perceptions regarding healthcare legitimacy are shaped by the characteristics of the healthcare system (Gevers et al., 2000; Kohl and Wendt, 2004; Missinne et al., 2013; Wendt et al., 2010). Given the very limited cross-national variation in support for public health care, it is not surprising that support is not related to the institutional context – it is strongly present across institutional conditions (Missinne et al., 2013; Wendt et al., 2010). In contrast, satisfaction levels are more strongly influenced by institutional characteristics, because of association with actual experience (Wendt et al., 2010). Kohl and Wendt (2004) and Missinne et al. (2013) show that a higher level of public healthcare expenditure is strongly related to higher satisfaction. At the aggregate level, the availability of healthcare facilities is also positively related to satisfaction (Kohl and Wendt, 2004). Popic and Schneider (2018) indicate that the lower levels of healthcare satisfaction in eastern Europe can be explained by the lower overall healthcare expenditure, larger out-of-pocket payments and the smaller number of general practitioners in these countries. Negative perceptions of hospital or specialist care quality seem to bring overall healthcare ratings down in some countries, and a series of problems of access (such as long waiting times, the cost of accessing specific services, unequal treatment) negatively influence opinions (Eurofound, 2019a).

A limited number of studies have assessed the legitimacy of specific redistributive designs in respect of health care. Azar et al. (2018) use data from the 2011 ISSP Health Module to gauge the popularity of public funding and the willingness to pay extra taxes to improve care. The results indicate that people across the socio-economic hierarchy favour state-funded health care. Rather than by self-interest, support seems to be driven by egalitarian values. Rogge and Kittel (2016) investigate the extent to which the public favours taking individual-based criteria (such as age, health-related behaviour or family situation) into account when making decisions about which patients to



prioritise. Between 39% and 47% of respondents across 28 ISSP countries favour taking account of whether patients are children, whether they smoke, or whether they have a dependent child. In addition, various demographic and self-interest factors seem to determine the likelihood of people being in favour of taking individual-based criteria into consideration.

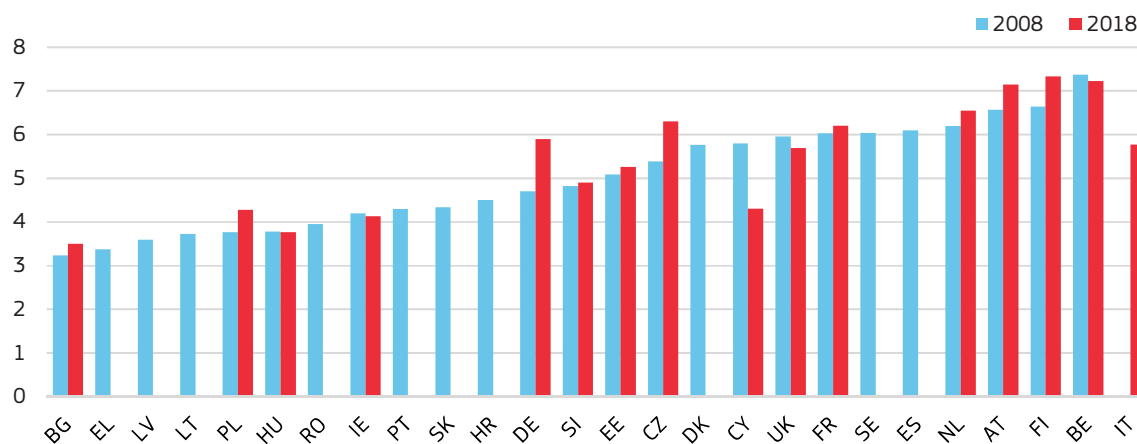
3.5.2 Empirical analysis of attitudes

Overall, Europeans tend to have a fairly mixed opinion about health services in their country. In less than half of EU Member States (France, Luxembourg, Austria, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and the UK), people were, on average, fairly satisfied or very satisfied with the health services over the period 2002-2018, whereas in the majority of countries, the average perception was rather negative, according to data from the European Social Survey (ESS) (see Table A7 in the Annex).

Between 2008 and 2018, however, the way in which health services were perceived improved in most countries, apart from Belgium, Ireland, Cyprus and the UK (see Figure 21). In Cyprus, however, the introduction of a general healthcare system in 2019-2020 may now have changed perceptions: although there have been no patient satisfaction surveys yet, the general view is that the new system has been embraced by all citizens, because of the significant advantages it has over the old system (i.e. universal coverage, easier access to doctors without the waiting lists of the old system and relatively low co-payments) (Theodorou, 2020).

It could well be that the Covid-19 pandemic itself changes attitudes towards healthcare systems. Jensen and Naumann (2016) found that an increased exposure to risk because of a flu epidemic seemed to reduce support for public health care. However, the surveys and opinion polls carried out in April 2020 seem to show that the Covid-19 crisis has tended to increase trust in health services. The first results of a large-scale online survey launched by Eurofound across the EU at the beginning of April 2020 to gauge the impact of the pandemic show that in the hardest-hit countries (Spain, Belgium, Italy and France), trust in the healthcare system was higher than the EU average (Eurofound, 2020a). In Greece, an opinion poll (with a sample of 1,250) conducted between 8 April and 15 April found that 57% of respondents trusted the welfare state, while 75% thought the pandemic had increased trust (diaNEOsis, 2020).

Figure 21. Average scores for satisfaction with the state of healthcare services, 2008 and 2018 (mean scores on an 11-point scale)



Note: Data missing for several countries in 2018 (no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations).

Source: ESS



Box 7. The perception of the state of health care in Spain

The Spanish National Health System (NHS) is intended to ensure equal access to healthcare services for all citizens. The service is publicly funded and divided into two levels: primary and specialist. It is decentralised, giving Autonomous Communities funding from general taxation to provide the same basic services; they may also choose to add other (non-NHS-funded) treatment or care.

Between 2008 and 2011, nearly half of respondents to the *CIS Barometer* considered that the health-care system was working well, even if some changes were needed. However, this proportion dropped to 45% in 2014, and by 2018 had increased only marginally to 47%. Many problems appeared after the government made spending cuts in response to the substantial deficit in funding the system, coupled with the overall budget crisis (in 2015, nearly 64% of Spaniards thought that too few resources from the state budget were allocated to health care). In particular, people were not very satisfied with the state of emergency services in public hospitals (43% of people in 2014 thought that the emergency services had deteriorated). They also referred to difficulties in getting an appointment to see a doctor. In 2018, 87% pointed to long waiting lists and 68% to the overcrowding of hospital emergency services as particular issues.

As a result, the use of private health services has increased in recent years. In 2018, 78% used private health care because it was quicker to get treatment and 37% because they could go to a specialist directly without consulting their GP. Moreover, growing numbers of people are taking out private health insurance. The evidence indicates that a complex combination of factors¹ shaped demand for supplementary insurance during the financial crisis (Eurofound, 2014, 2020c).

1 For instance, the loss of employer-provided insurance increased problems with the public services – longer waiting times and higher charges, etc.

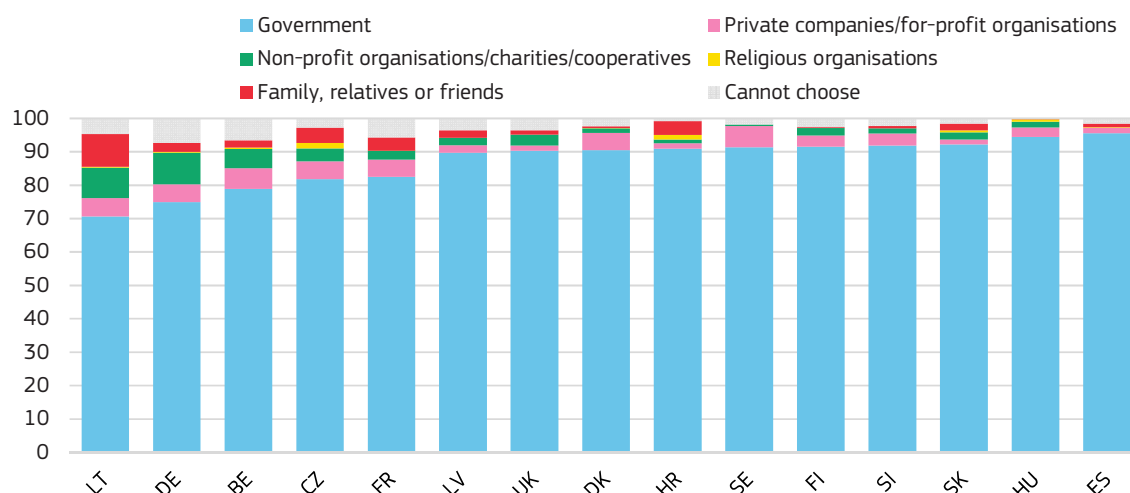
With regard to the level of satisfaction with health care, one might find a number of determinants. In particular, according to ESS data, those who find their economic situation very difficult tend to assess the state of health services more negatively than do those with higher income levels (see Table A8 in the Annex), which may be because they receive a lower standard of care according to the patient-satisfaction literature. Support for health care seems also to be driven by egalitarian values, but the feeling of fairness varies a lot from one country to another. The ISSP 2009 included a question on whether it is just or not for richer people to have better health care. Most people in the majority of EU Member States reported finding it unjust; but in Great Britain,²⁴ more than 4 interviewees in 10 believed it was fair. Those who disagreed most were in Belgium, France, Croatia, Cyprus and Hungary (see Table A9 in the Annex). In France, for instance, two thirds were in favour of health insurance benefiting ‘everyone without distinction between social categories and professional status’ (67% in 2017) (DREES, 2018). However, less than half thought ‘that they have the same quality of care’ regardless of income level (47% in 2015) or place of residence (45% in 2015). Positive views on this had, nevertheless, increased by 6 percentage points since 2000 (DREES, 2016).

For Europeans, the state has a key role to play in the provision and financing of health care, as indicated in the literature. In almost half of the 15 EU countries covered by the OECD Risks that Matter Survey 2018 (i.e. in Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia), over half of respondents considered that the government should provide better health care so that they and their family could feel more economically secure (see Table A10 in the Annex).

24 Northern Ireland is not covered in ISSP 2009.



Figure 22. Distribution of individuals according to their opinions about who should provide health care for the sick, 2016 (%)



Note: Many EU Member States are missing because there are no data or unreliable findings due to an insufficient number of observations. Northern Ireland is not covered.

Source: ISSP

In 2016, according to ISSP data, the vast majority of people across the EU (from 71% in Lithuania to 96% in Spain) considered that the provision of health care is primarily the responsibility of the government (Figure 22). In all countries surveyed, with the exception of Lithuania, less than 5% of the population believed that family and friends should provide health care for the sick. Similarly, no more than 6% thought that private companies should be healthcare providers.

Most Europeans also consider that health should be the first or second priority for extra government spending.²⁵ In 2016, the percentage varied from 50% in Italy to 81% in Latvia. Perhaps not surprisingly, the wish for additional funding for health care is higher in countries where healthcare spending relative to GDP is low (see Table A11 in the Annex).

Nevertheless, Life in Transition Survey (LITS) 2016 data show that almost half of respondents want more spending on health care, even if the level of spending is already relatively high. In Germany, for instance, 48% considered health a priority for additional funding, even though spending was already higher than in most other European countries. Here, however, growth in healthcare expenditure since the early 2000s has been modest, in spite of the provision of a growing number of services, and there is low satisfaction with the health system in general, with more people seeing a need for major reform than in most other countries surveyed (Busse and Blümel, 2014).

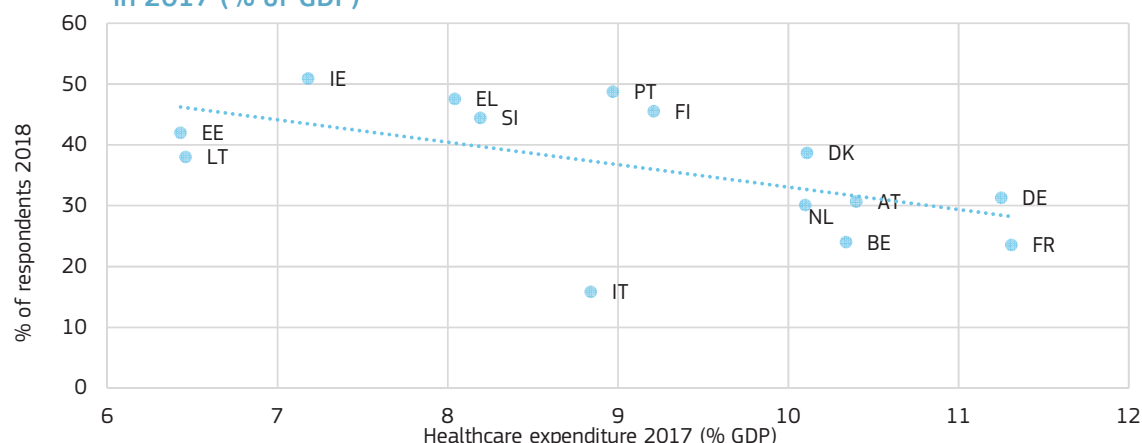
Asked if they would be willing to pay more in tax if the money raised were used to improve the public health system (LITS dataset),²⁶ most people said no, even if they thought that more public funding was needed (see Table A12 in the Annex). This tendency is confirmed by analysis of OECD-RTM data. There is a significant negative correlation between the willingness to pay an additional 2% in tax for better healthcare provision and healthcare expenditure relative to GDP ($r=-0.56$) (Figure 23).

25 In its 2006, 2010 and 2016 waves, the Life in Transition Survey (LITS) included the question: 'In your opinion, which of these fields should be the first priority for extra (government) investment? And the second priority? Healthcare.' However, the number of countries covered varied considerably from one year to the next, making comparisons over time difficult.

26 In its 2010 and 2016 waves, the LITS included the question: 'Would you be willing to give part of your income or pay more taxes, if you were sure that the extra money was used to improve the public health system?' However, the number of countries covered varied a lot from one year to the next, making comparisons over time difficult.



Figure 23. Percentage of respondents declaring that they would be willing to pay an additional 2% in tax for better healthcare provisions in 2018 (%) vs healthcare expenditure in 2017 (% of GDP)



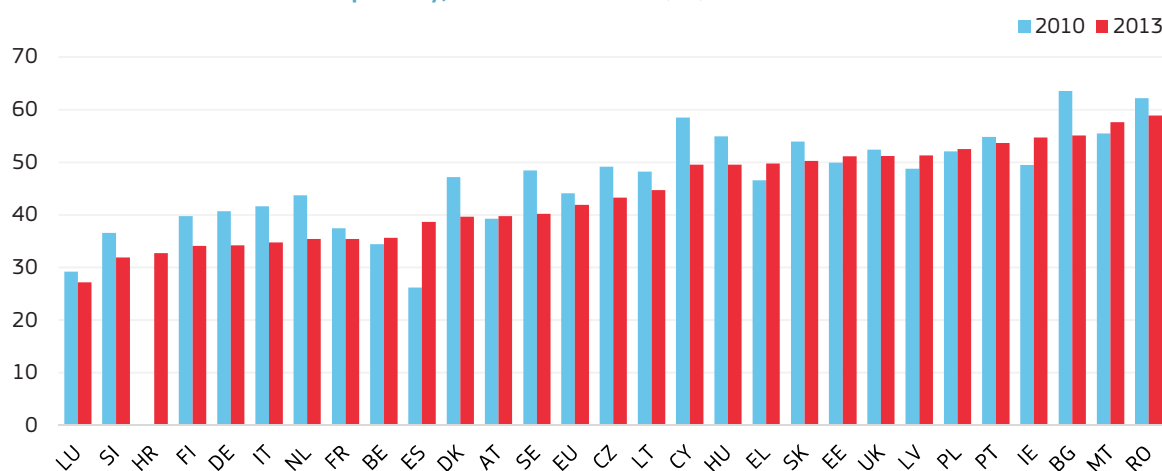
Note: Many EU Member States are missing because there are no data or unreliable findings due to an insufficient number of observations in OECD-RTM.

Source: OECD-RTM; Eurostat

Box 8. Financing the healthcare system in France

According to DREES Barometer data, over 80% of people in France believe that ‘health spending is too high because the system is not well managed’ (82% in 2017). On the other hand, 67% believe that ‘there is no reason to limit spending, because health is beyond price’. To reduce the public deficit on health care, people are strongly in favour of taxing pharmaceutical companies more (81% of interviewees in 2015, 82% in 2016, 78% in 2017), and of limiting health professional charges (81% of interviewees in 2015, 80% in 2016, 84% in 2017). Proposals which reduce personal income are mostly rejected. In 2016, 58% of people were opposed to limiting reimbursements, 78% were against an increase in contributions, and 84% objected to reducing social security coverage for long-term illness. As regards their own health expenses, over 60% considered that co-payments were too high (62% of respondents in 2015, 58% in 2017) (DREES, 2016, 2017a, 2018).

Figure 24. Percentage of respondents who believe that the EU should invest its resources in health care as a priority, 2010 and 2013 (%)



Note: No data for HR in 2010

Source: Eurobarometer



Around 4 in 10 Europeans also think that the EU should invest in health care as a priority. In 2010, more than half the population of nine EU Member States supported the idea (with over 60% in Bulgaria and Romania) (Figure 24). The support, however, decreased between 2010 and 2013 in many countries, with the exception of some countries hit by the economic downturn (in Spain, in particular, the share of those who thought that the EU should invest in health care rose from 26% to 39%). Data also show that those on low income tend to be more in favour of EU funding: in 2010, for instance, nearly 48% of that group supported the idea, compared with 43% of those who considered themselves to be in the 'high' socio-economic class (see Table A13 in the Annex). This trend could well be reinforced by the Covid-19 pandemic, but as yet there have been no surveys to confirm it.

3.5.3 Multivariate analysis of determinants of attitudes towards health care

The multivariate analysis set out below provides insights into the sections of the population (age groups, men and women, socio-economic groups, etc.) that are satisfied with the state of the health services in their country and why. The analysis is based on the nine ESS waves conducted between 2002 and 2018. Data are available for 26 EU Member States (data for Malta are missing) and the UK in the different waves. The data can be pooled to cover all years and all countries (including the UK).²⁷

The individual-level factors examined are gender, age group, educational attainment, subjective general health status, employment status, attitudes towards the performance of national government and the person's subjective view of their economic situation. This last factor has four possible values, ranging from 'living comfortably' to 'finding it very difficult to cope'.

The country-level, or contextual, factors are the share of gross healthcare social protection expenditure (other than sick leave) in GDP, the number of medical doctors per 100,000 population, and years of healthy life expectancy at birth (HALEO).²⁸

Four models are estimated in order to examine the effect of the individual-level and contextual factors on favourable perceptions of the state of the national health services. The first model includes only the individual-level factors; in the three other models, each of the contextual variables listed above is included in turn with the individual factors (see Table B11a-b in the Annex).

Individual-level variables

The results show that women are less likely than men to be satisfied with the state of the health services in their country. Age, on the other hand, does not seem to have much effect on the results: there is no difference in the level of satisfaction between those aged 65 and over and younger age groups, though those aged 50-64 do tend to be less satisfied than other people. Although respondents with secondary education are slightly less satisfied with the state of the health services than are those with tertiary education, there is no difference between the latter group and those with only basic education. Students seem to be more satisfied than others; and the unemployed, those in retirement and other inactive also have a more positive perception of the state of the health services

²⁷ The multivariate mixed effects linear regression method is selected as the multivariate analysis technique because the dependent variable is an 11-point scale question (0=not at all satisfied to 10=extremely satisfied). Using a multilevel model allows us to control the random effects of the variation across the countries. According to the intraclass correlation coefficient for the empty model, some 20% of the variance is due to the differences across countries. Even after adding the fixed effects variables in the models, the variance in the random effects intercept remains significant.

²⁸ According to the WHO definition, healthy years expectancy at birth is the 'average number of years that a person can expect to live in "full health" by taking into account years lived in less than full health due to disease and/or injury' (<https://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/indhale/en/>).



than all those in employment. On the other hand, there is no statistically significant difference between the self-employed and employees.

Interpreting these results is not straightforward, and it is important to note that the estimated effects of the variables considered on attitudes tend to be very small. The way people perceive the state of the health services can be related to the amount of information they have about the system, their perceptions of the quality of health services and their difficulties in accessing affordable services. It may also be related to their own health (or their perception of their own health). In this respect, the literature indicates that satisfaction with the healthcare system is positively related to good subjective health (Missinne et al., 2013; Wendt et al., 2010). The findings confirm that the higher the subjective general health of respondents, the higher the level of satisfaction with the state of health care in the country.

The results also show a significant relationship between satisfaction levels and household income. The level of dissatisfaction with health services increases gradually as income falls. This is in line with the findings indicated in the literature and with evidence from the EQLS, where people with a low or medium level of income report concerns over the quality and affordability of health services (Eurofound, 2018, 2019a).²⁹

There is also a significant relationship between the level of satisfaction with health care and assessment of the national government's performance: the lower the satisfaction with government, the lower the satisfaction with the health services. This might be explained by the fact that people expect the government to provide proper services, and tend to assess the performance of the government and health (as well as other services provided) similarly.

Contextual variables

The literature shows that higher expenditure on health care and better availability of healthcare facilities are related to higher satisfaction levels. This is confirmed by the results of this study. An increase in the share of healthcare expenditure in GDP or an increase in the number of doctors per 100,000 population results in a higher satisfaction level, though both variables are only marginally significant at the 5% level. On the other hand, years of healthy life expectancy do not appear to have a statistically significant effect on satisfaction levels.

3.5.4 Summary

Europeans have mixed opinions about the state of the healthcare services in their countries. The descriptive analysis shows that the way in which health services are perceived improved in many countries between 2008 and 2018. It could also be that the Covid-19 pandemic will make people more favourably disposed towards the healthcare system, but there have as yet been no surveys on this. Preliminary opinion polls show only that trust in the healthcare system has been reinforced since the outbreak.

Satisfaction with the healthcare services relates mainly to their availability, accessibility and affordability; but individual characteristics can also have an influence in some cases, though it tends to be small. While age does not seem to have a significant influence, gender and income level do. Women are less likely than men to have a favourable view of the state of the health services in

²⁹ However, in the case of dissatisfaction with being informed or consulted about care (primary or hospital/specialist), people in the top income quartile are more likely to express dissatisfaction than those in the third quartile, perhaps because of higher expectations (Eurofound, 2019b).



their country. Those who find it very difficult to live on their present income are less likely to be satisfied, which is in line with the findings of previous studies, since they tend to have more difficulty in accessing affordable and good-quality health care.

The prevailing view in Europe is that the state should play a key role in both the provision and the financing of health care. People in the majority of EU Member States are attached to the principle of fairness in health care and are opposed to a system that provides only basic medical services. They also favour state-funded health care, but are reluctant to pay additional tax to finance any improvement, especially where health expenditure is high relative to GDP. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, and leaving aside the tax implications, the majority of Europeans considered that the EU should invest in health care as a priority. After the pandemic and the plaudits heaped on healthcare workers, the proportion of those who are concerned and the strength of feeling are both likely to have increased; but by how much and whether the increase will be sustained are subjects for future research.

3.6 Long-term care and invalidity

Key points

- *Many Europeans are concerned about sufficient access to good and affordable long-term care for the elderly. It seems there is an age after which concerns about elderly care matter: those aged 50-64 tend to support the idea that the government should provide elderly care more than do other groups, which could be because many of them care for elderly parents or are close to the age when they themselves might need care.*
- *In 2017, ISSP data covering 16 EU Member States showed that around two thirds of respondents thought that the government should be the primary provider of care for older people.*
- *Europeans also consider that the role of the state is key to the funding of long-term care for the elderly. For most, the government should cover the cost of care for the elderly; but few people (in particular, young people and those on low income) would be willing to pay additional tax for this.*
- *Many carers feel that they lack assistance and appreciation from the public authorities and would like to receive more support. This is particularly the case among those aged 50-64 and lone carers.*
- *Few studies have been undertaken – and very little data are available – on long-term care and invalidity. Often the datasets available cover only a limited number of EU Member States. In particular, the lack of data and research at the EU level on invalidity benefits makes it difficult to analyse this area. Research is needed to fill this gap.*
- *Future research should also analyse the shift in attitudes towards long-term care after the Covid-19 pandemic, given that it has hit residents in care homes particularly hard.*

3.6.1 Overview of the literature

The academic literature regarding social policy evaluations and preferences has focused predominantly on the broad domains discussed above. For other domains, little systematic research exists (a fact that might be especially painful when – due to the Covid-19 epidemic – there is a pressing need for data on such provisions as care homes, etc.). Some survey data are available, however, on attitudes towards access to long-term care and on perceptions of invalidity.



The OECD-RTM survey shows that having access to long-term care is an important concern. About one third of respondents across an array of OECD countries identify having access to long-term care as a top-three concern for them or their immediate family in the coming year. Out of a range of policy areas (including health care, education and housing), people are least satisfied with the provision of long-term care for the elderly. On average across countries, about half of respondents state that there is inadequate access to good and affordable long-term care for the elderly. On the other hand, satisfaction with long-term care arrangements is somewhat higher in countries that spend more in this area. A quarter of respondents were willing to pay more in taxes to improve long-term care (OECD, 2019).

The literature on preferences for long-term care arrangements shows that these depend to a large extent on personal, environmental, social and cultural aspects. Most respondents express a preference for receiving long-term care in their familiar physical and social environment when care needs are moderate (Lehnert et al., 2019). On the one hand, those who are dependent on others express a wish to preserve their personal and social identity, self-image, independence and dignity (Bradley et al., 2002; Lehnert et al., 2019). On the other hand, caregivers' attitudes towards formal care providers (perceived usefulness and quality, affordability, and social environment), and their psychological well-being (perceived health, activity restrictions, and mastery), as well as social norms (family burden and caregiving expectations) and the availability of support, tend to influence the use of long-term care (Bradley et al., 2002). Home care is often the preferred arrangement for both caregivers and care recipients (McCann, 1988; Wang et al., 2004). Elderly people with chronic illnesses who do not receive informal care and live in countries with generous long-term care funding are less likely to prefer family-based care and more likely to prefer state-based care (Mair et al., 2016).

Research on attitudes towards invalidity benefits is even scarcer. A survey of those employed in non-standard work in 10 EU Member States shows that schemes to protect against accidents at work and invalidity are deemed important, but do not figure among the top priorities. On a scale of 1-99, invalidity benefits and benefits in the case of accident/occupational disease rate an average importance score of 52 and 54, respectively. This is lower than schemes to protect against unemployment (69), old age (64) and sickness (59), but higher than schemes for maternity/paternity benefits (39) (Open Evidence, 2018). Similarly, the OECD-RTM survey shows that only 22% of respondents are ready to pay more tax for better invalidity benefits and services. This, however, is marginally higher than those willing to pay more for better unemployment benefits and services (21%) but significantly less than those prepared to pay for better health care (38%) (OECD, 2019).

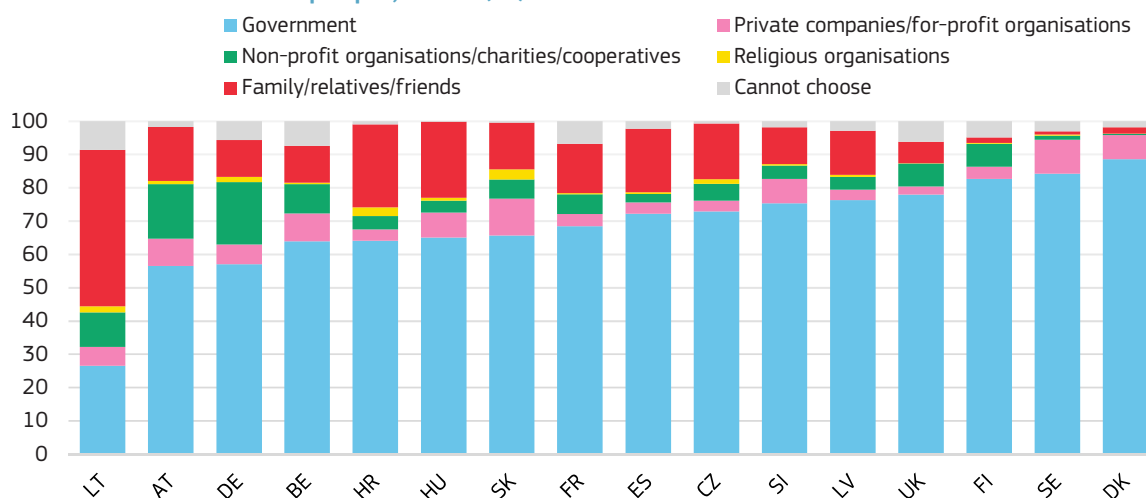
3.6.2 Empirical analysis of attitudes

As indicated above, adequate access to good and affordable long-term care for the elderly is a concern for many Europeans (OECD, 2019). Fairness in the provision of long-term care services is also a concern: according to EQLS data, long-term care services are perceived to treat people less equally than health services (Eurofound, 2019a).

Europeans think that the role of the state is key, in terms of both the provision of and the funding for long-term care for the elderly. In 2017, the vast majority of respondents (almost 7 in 10) thought that the government should be the primary provider of care for older people (Figure 25). On the other hand, the proportion who thought that the family or relatives should be the main providers varied from 11% in Belgium and Slovenia to 25% in Croatia and 47% in Lithuania. (There is a cultural element here, as, according to ISSP data, 85% of Croatians and 79% of Slovaks in 2017 agreed that children have a duty to look after their elderly folk, compared with just 27% of Swedes and 45% of



Figure 25. Distribution of people according to their opinions on who should primarily provide care for older people, 2017 (%)



Note: Many EU Member States are missing because there are no data or unreliable findings due to an insufficient number of observations. 2016 data for BE and LV. Northern Ireland is not covered.

Source: ISSP

Finns.) It should also be noted that, on average, more women than men supported the idea that the family should take care of the elderly (respectively 23% and 19% in 2017 for the countries covered by ISSP). This is despite the fact that (informal) caregivers tend to be mainly women across the EU (Eurocarers, 2017) and that women experience a greater caregiving burden than men (Swinkels et al., 2017; Mosquera Metcalfe et al., 2019). Indeed, women tend to provide more demanding and intensive forms of daily care than men (Eurocarers, 2017), but some studies show that this difference tends to be reduced as people get older, with men spending more time on caregiving after the age of 70 (Arber and Ginn, 1995; Vlachantoni, 2010; ONS, 2013; Glauber, 2016).

The elderly have been the main victims of the Covid-19 pandemic – particularly those in institutional care – and it is likely that attitudes towards long-term care for the elderly will shift after the outbreak. However, there are as yet no surveys available to check whether or not such a shift has occurred.

Analysis of the ISSP 2012 data shows that most people in the majority of European countries thought that the government, or public funding, should primarily cover the cost of care for the elderly. This was particularly the case in Denmark (77%), Spain (69.5%), Portugal (67%) and Austria (61%). On the other hand, the majority of respondents in a few countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Poland) believed that the family should cover the costs (see Table A14 in the Annex). It should also be noted that in several countries (Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Lithuania, Germany, Austria and France), a significant share of respondents (more than 10%) did not know what to reply or had no opinion.

Despite the fact that most Europeans would like public funds to cover the costs relating to elderly care, very few would like to pay additional taxes for this. According to OECD-RTM data covering 15 EU countries, nearly three respondents out of four are not willing to pay an additional 2% of their income in tax or contributions to provide for long-term care for the elderly. Opposition to this proposition seems to be stronger among young people and those on low income. On the other hand, over a third of respondents in Denmark, Estonia and Finland indicated that they would be willing to pay higher taxes.



Box 9. Carers in three EU Member States

While most Europeans would like the state to provide long-term care for the elderly in need, in practice a large number of Europeans are themselves primary carers. The examples below show that the elderly prefer to be cared for by relatives; meanwhile, carers are asking for more support and consideration.

In **France**, over one in five respondents to the DREES Barometer indicated that they provide regular and voluntary help to a dependent elderly person (22% in 2015). A large majority of them felt that they lacked assistance and appreciation of their role from the public authorities (73%, compared with 24% who felt sufficiently helped or appreciated). According to them, the public authorities should open day centres for those in need of care during the week (37%). It is also felt that financial assistance is needed (24%), as is training (17%) and more scope to organise their working time (17%). This is in line with the preferences and needs of informal caregivers in other countries (Plöthner et al., 2019).

Most elderly people would like to stay at home. For instance, the share of people in France who consider it inconceivable to live in an old people's home increased by 11 percentage points between 2004 and 2017 (67% did not want to live in such a home in 2017) according to data from the DREES Barometer. In addition, 28% of people reported that they, or someone close to them, used formal home care¹ in France in 2016 – one of the largest proportions in Europe – according to the EQLS (Eurofound, 2019b).

In **Spain**, a large majority of interviewees (CIS Barometer) preferred to be cared for by family members (in 2015, 83% thought that family members would provide care), and almost half said they would like to live in their own home if they needed help.

In **Northern Ireland**, there is a strong preference among respondents for government to prioritise spending on home care services, as opposed to residential care, with 72% of people taking this view in 2010 and with strong consensus across the age groups. For older people, by far the greatest fear is having to leave their own homes (ARK, 2018). About a third were also worried about ill treatment in care homes, although a third also saw the positive side – that there would always be somebody there if they needed help and people felt that it would be quite difficult to get personal care at home. In 2010, around 15% of people aged over 18 were providing some kind of informal care to the elderly (mostly to a family member); this figure had varied little since 1994, when it was first included in the Northern Ireland Social Attitudes Survey. However, between 1994 and 2010, the proportion of people who were providing informal care for 30 hours a week or more increased from 10% to nearly 20%. As a result, 60% of female and 51% of male informal carers said that they felt under pressure either most or some of the time (Gray et al., 2012).

1 i.e. nursing home care, home help or personal care, or home nursing care.

There is virtually no correlation between willingness to pay additional taxes for better provision of long-term care for older people and the percentage of GDP spent on long-term care services, and therefore the correlation is less pronounced than in the case of health care ($r=-0.12$) (Figure 26).

In the 15 EU Member States covered by the 2016 Life in Transition Survey (LITS),³⁰ the relative majority of respondents believed that people with disabilities deserve support from the government (the proportion varied from 44% in Hungary to 80% in Greece). However, when asked about the form of support, opinions differed across Europe. In Ireland, for instance, more than three respondents in four in 2017 believed that people with a disability should have priority over others when it comes to social housing (78%), hospital waiting lists (78%) and increased welfare benefits (77%) (NDA,

30 In its 2010 and 2016 waves, the Life in Transition Survey (LITS) included the question: 'Which of the following groups of citizens deserve support from the government? And which is the most important? Disabled.' However, the number of countries covered varied a lot from one year to the next, making comparisons over time difficult.

**Box 10. Financing long-term care for the elderly in France and Northern Ireland**

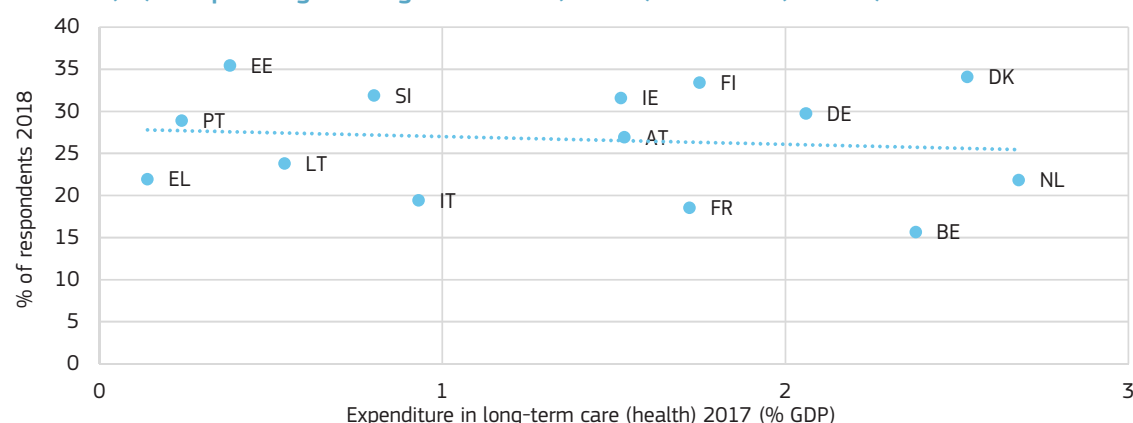
In **France**, according to the findings of the DREES Barometer, people are largely in favour of the creation of a fifth branch of social security dedicated to long-term care (85% of respondents in 2017). As regards the funding for this, more than half (56%) believe that it should be financed by the state – but only in part; otherwise it should be supplemented by contributions to private or social insurance funds by the people themselves. In 2015, 6 out of 10 people felt the state and public authorities bear the main responsibility for financially supporting the elderly in need of care. This view was prevalent among all sections of the population, but especially among those aged 30 and over (62%); it was also more common among the poorest households (70%, compared with 54% among the wealthiest). More than other age groups, young people felt that it is up to children and families to manage the care of the elderly (36%) (DREES, 2016, 2018).

Half of those interviewed were in favour of the creation of a specific contribution to cover long-term care. But only a third wanted this contribution to be compulsory for all.

In 2015, half of respondents in the **Northern Ireland** Life and Times (NILT) survey said that they had not thought about, or made any plans for, how they might fund their future care and support needs. Only 17% had made any provision at all – for example, by saving money or buying property. A small proportion (5%) expected their family to help fund their care, while 8% felt there was nothing they could do. Among respondents, across all income groups, there was strong support for social care to be funded through a special tax collected over everyone's lifetime to ensure that care, when needed, would be provided free at the point of use (64%) (ARK, 2018).

In 2010, opinion in Northern Ireland was divided fairly evenly between those who believed that the government should pay and those who believed that it should be the person in need of care, in combination with the government. Where the person is not well off, there was a greater feeling that the government should pay. Older respondents (aged 65 and over) were particularly likely to think that it should be the government that should pay. However, even among those who were not well off, a third felt that people themselves should contribute something. There was no support for a system whereby the person in need of care pays everything, and there was a widespread view that individuals and government should share the costs (Gray et al., 2012).

Figure 26. Percentage of respondents declaring that they would be willing to pay an additional 2% tax for better provision of/access to long-term care for the elderly in 2018 (%) vs spending on long-term care (health)¹ in 2017 (% GDP)



Note: Many EU Member States are missing because there are no data or unreliable findings due to an insufficient number of observations in OECD-RTM.

Source: OECD-RTM; Eurostat

1. Personal care services (activities of daily living – ADL) should be considered as long-term care (health). For details, see <http://www.oecd.org/health/health-systems/37808391.pdf>.



Box 11. Perceptions of care responsibilities in the Netherlands

In 2008, about 20% of respondents to the Dutch survey Cultural Changes (*Culturele Veranderingen*)¹ agreed with the view that family, friends and neighbours should be primarily responsible for caring in cases of long-term illness or disability; and while this share increased to 40% in 2010, it fell back to 23% in 2016 – only slightly above the 2008 figure. Fewer women than men agreed with the proposition – perhaps reflecting the fact that it is they who are most often expected to take on caring responsibilities (Bracke et al., 2008; Swinkels et al., 2017). The public's attitude thus shows considerable volatility over this eight-year period. The Social Support Act was introduced in 2007, and it could be that the 2008 figure reflected a relatively low level of support for the notion that the family and social network should take more responsibility for caring for those in need. However, attitudes changed during the recession years, perhaps as other priorities for government spending came to the fore. The subsequent decline in support for the idea that the family and social network should be more responsible for caring tasks came after the extension of the Social Support Act in 2015, as part of a wider welfare reform, which involved the decentralisation of various social policies from the national government to the local authorities. Municipalities acquired greater responsibility for social support (an extension of the Social Support Act). This reform was accompanied by spending cuts and an even more explicit shift in caring responsibilities from government to family. Thus, the rise in support for the attitude that government should be responsible for long-term care for the elderly in need is perhaps a reaction to this.

1 The Dutch survey Cultural Changes (*Culturele Veranderingen*) is a survey run by the Netherlands Institute of Social Research (SCP), and has been conducted since 1975 (generally every two years); it aims to determine what views 'the Dutchman in the street' has on society and culture, and how these views change over time. Cultural Changes is conducted face to face with respondents aged 16 years and older, with a net response of 2,000 people.

2017). In France, while people are largely in favour of greater solidarity with the disabled, they are much more divided on the provision of support to them all, regardless of income (they considered that support should be provided to those most in need) (DREES, 2017b). In 2017, 84% of respondents thought it normal for a person with a disability to have a minimum income higher than that of a person without any disability (DREES, 2019).

3.6.3 Multivariate analysis of determinants of attitudes towards long-term care

This multivariate analysis provides insights into those sections of the population (age groups, gender, different socio-economic groups, etc.) that support the idea that the government should have primary responsibility for providing long-term care for the elderly. The analysis is based on ISSP data for the 2016 and 2017 waves and covers 15 EU Member States, plus the UK. Because of the small number of countries, it is not possible to estimate country-level effects reliably, and therefore, the focus is on the effect of individual-level factors (see Table B12 in the Annex).³¹

The individual-level factors examined are gender, age groups, educational attainment, marital status, size of the household, employment status, and household income level (as equivalised household income quintiles).

The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between men and women, between those with different levels of income or between those with different marital status. However,

31 The multilevel mixed effects logistic regression model is used, as the dependent variable is dichotomous. The intraclass correlation coefficient for the empty model suggests that some 10% of the variance in the model is explained by the variation across the countries involved in the analysis.



there is some relationship between level of education and the view that the government should be the main provider of long-term care for the elderly: those with basic schooling (or no education) are more likely to consider the government responsible for this than are those with tertiary-level education. The lower the level of education, the greater the support for government responsibility. This finding is somewhat difficult to interpret: although it might appear to reflect the effect of differing income levels (since income varies with education), in practice there is no evidence of a relationship between income and this particular view.

As regards the effect of age, it does seem that those in the younger age groups are less likely than those aged 65 and over to believe that the government should provide long-term care for the elderly. Perhaps not surprisingly, those in retirement are also more in favour of receiving support from the state than other groups. Interestingly, those aged 50-64 are more likely to support the idea that the government should provide care for the elderly than are the elderly themselves. This could reflect the fact that the people concerned may be approaching an age when they are in need of care; or else they are already often taking care of elderly parents and therefore realise the need for support from government. This is in line with national studies that show that carers in particular are in favour of more government involvement in caring.

In line with this, the results also indicate that those living in larger households are less likely to call for government support than those who live alone.

3.6.4 Summary

There are few studies that have been undertaken – and very limited data are available – on long-term care and invalidity.

The available data show, however, that many Europeans are concerned about adequate access to good and affordable long-term care for the elderly. It seems that there is an age above which long-term care becomes an issue. The multivariate analysis indicates that those aged 50-64 tend to support the idea that the government should be responsible for providing long-term care for the elderly, which could reflect the fact that people in this age group are already often taking care of elderly parents and so are more aware of the need for government support.

Europeans consider the role of the state to be of key importance in both the provision and the funding of long-term care for the elderly. The literature indicates that satisfaction with long-term care arrangements is somewhat higher in those countries that spend more in this area. In the majority of EU Member States, most people consider that the government, or public funding, should take primary responsibility for covering the costs of care for the elderly, but few people (in particular young people and those on low income) are willing to pay additional taxes for this.

Many carers also feel that they lack assistance and appreciation of their role from public authorities, and would like to receive more support. This is particularly the case among lone carers, who lack the help that those living in larger households can get from other family members.

Old people have been the main victims of the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular those in institutional care, and it might well be the case that attitudes towards long-term care for the elderly change in the future as a result. However, as yet no surveys have been carried out to confirm this – or, more generally, to determine whether the pandemic has altered attitudes to social services, and if so, to what extent. Future surveys are awaited to throw light on this.



3.7 Other social services: social housing

Key points

- *The absence of a common EU definition of 'social housing' and the fact that the housing market works differently in different Member States, as well as a lack of data and research at the EU level on attitudes towards social housing, make it difficult to analyse this area. Perceptions regarding social housing should therefore be interpreted with care and further research is needed on this.*
- *The availability and affordability of decent housing has become an important economic and social concern in the EU over recent years. The share of the total population experiencing housing insecurity rose in the EU from 18% in 2011 to 24% in 2016, according to EQLS data.*
- *Social, or municipal, housing can reduce the extent of housing insecurity by increasing the amount of affordable accommodation available. On average, people tend to be relatively satisfied with the quality of social/municipal housing. However, satisfaction is lower in a number of southern and eastern European countries where social housing is underdeveloped or of poor quality.*
- *Nearly 1 in 5 respondents are willing to pay an additional 2% of their income in tax or contributions for affordable housing in the 15 EU Member States covered by the OECD-RTM survey.*
- *Future research should also analyse any shift in attitudes towards social services and social housing that has occurred in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, given that it has hit poorer communities particularly hard.*

3.7.1 Overview of the literature

In the case of social housing, which can be included in a broad definition of social services, there are very few (comparative) opinion data. Existing studies are mostly for the US (Rosie Tighe, 2010, 2012). One explanation for the lack of studies in Europe could be that housing policies differ widely across countries, and are relatively hard to measure and quantify (Dewilde, 2017). Dewilde (2017) notes that concepts of 'home ownership', 'public renting' and 'social housing' have different meanings in different countries. Although housing policies have been a relevant but 'wobbly' (Torgersen, 1987) pillar under the welfare system, housing is unlike social benefits and services, in that it is mainly provided and (re)distributed by the market. Housing policy consists of a wide range of instruments (e.g. subsidies, direct and indirect fiscal measures, implicit support) to correct market imperfections and ensure that a right to housing exists (Dewilde, 2017; Fahey and Norris, 2011). But even similar policies can have different outcomes, depending on the institutional context. Therefore, differences between European countries are often captured in what have been termed 'housing regimes' (Dewilde, 2017; Kemeny, 2001). These regimes reflect differences in levels and forms of state intervention versus the role of markets and families, and distinguish access to (outright) home ownership and the type and size of the (social or public) rental market (Dewilde, 2017). It has been found in recent years that welfare arrangements and economic affluence have gained in importance, as housing regimes become more commodified; that is, more dependent on the market (Dewilde, 2017).

In consequence, perceptions regarding social housing should be interpreted with care, as contextual circumstances and issues of definition can play an important role. The OECD Risks that Matter Survey is one of the few (recent) comparative surveys to include indicators of support for social



housing. The results reveal widespread support for affordable housing across OECD countries. While older respondents worry more about illness, disability and pensions, around a third of younger respondents listed affordable housing among their top three concerns. Those on low incomes tend to be more concerned. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that rising rents and house prices impose a heavier burden on the young (OECD, 2019).

A large majority of respondents indicate that they have no access to good-quality affordable public housing. Indeed, more affordable housing is one of the top four priorities of what people 'need most from government', and around a quarter of respondents report being willing to pay more tax to get more affordable housing (OECD, 2019).

In addition, the demand for affordable housing is a higher priority in more affluent countries than in low-income ones (OECD, 2019). This might be a result of the fact that, in the countries concerned, house prices have escalated in recent years.

3.7.2 Empirical analysis of attitudes

As indicated above, a number of issues limits analysis of attitudes towards social housing in EU Member States. First, the affordable housing sector works differently in different Member States (Pittini et al., 2019) which makes comparisons across the EU difficult. Second, despite the existence of common elements in defining social housing across Member States,³² there is no common EU definition of social housing, encompassing the legal status of the landlord, rent regime, funding method or target population (European Parliament, 2013). Third, and most importantly, analysis is impaired by the lack of data, as social housing is poorly covered by cross-national surveys. As a result, the approach presented in this section does not include an analysis of the determinants of attitudes towards social housing but only examines the attitudes themselves.

Housing is increasingly attracting attention in public debate. The availability and affordability of decent housing has become an important economic and social concern in the EU over recent years. The share of those experiencing housing insecurity³³ rose in the EU from 18% in 2011 to 24% in 2016 according to EQLS data (Eurofound, 2020b). Housing insecurity is particularly high in most European capital cities, and among those in privately rented accommodation or living in poverty (Pittini et al., 2017; Inchauste et al., 2018; Eurofound, 2020b). On the other hand, housing insecurity is relatively low among people living in social or municipal housing and among those who own their homes without a mortgage (Eurofound, 2020b) in countries where the share of social housing is large or where government spending on housing support is high (European Construction Sector Observatory, 2019). It seems then that social housing could reduce housing insecurity by increasing the amount of affordable housing.

Respondents to the EQLS questionnaire were asked in 2011 and 2016 to rate the quality of a number of public services,³⁴ including social/municipal housing, on a scale from 1=very poor quality to 10=very high quality. Social housing was often rated lower than other services, which could perhaps

32 i.e. a mission of general interest, the objective of increasing the supply of affordable housing, and specific targets defined in terms of socio-economic status or the presence of vulnerabilities.

33 Housing insecurity captures the proportion of the population who think it possible that they may need to leave their accommodation because they cannot afford it.

34 i.e. health services; education system; public transport; childcare services; long-term care services; social/municipal housing; and state pension system.



Box 12. Social housing in France

More and more people in France are concerned about housing because of the cost burden it represents. According to DREES Barometer data, 64% of respondents reported being 'personally concerned' about housing in 2017 (62% in 2016). This concern is particularly high in the Paris conurbation and in medium-sized towns (between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants), where over two thirds of people are worried about housing. Tenants are also more worried than homeowners: 72% of those in social housing and 74% of those in private housing were 'deeply' or 'quite' concerned in 2017, as against 53% of homeowners.

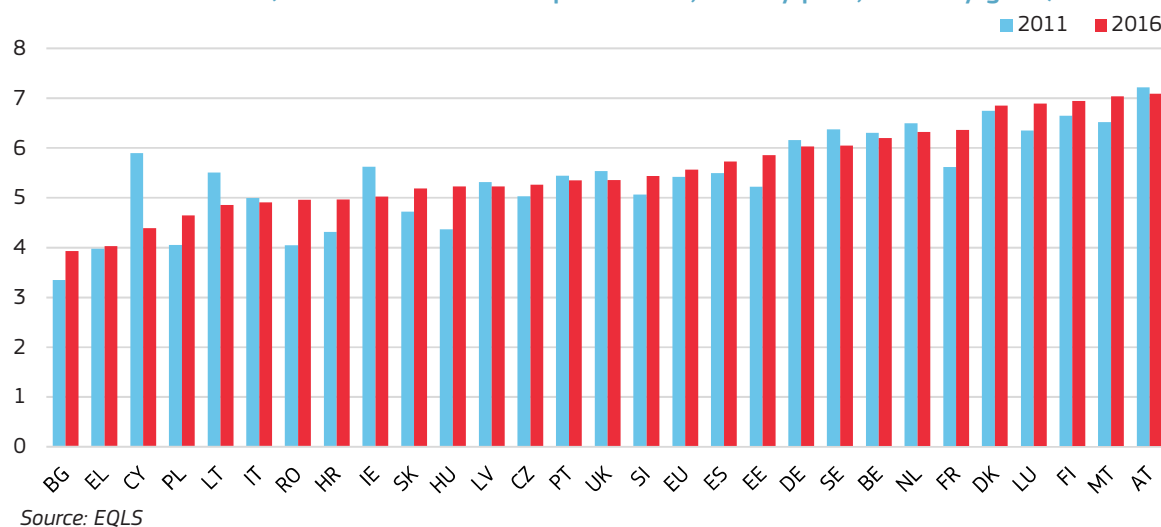
Social housing makes up a large part of rental accommodation in France. At the end of 2016, over 40% of tenants of unfurnished accommodation were living in social housing, and 1.8 million people were on the waiting list (the latter figure including those already living in social housing who wanted to move).

Two thirds of the population believe that social housing should target low-income families or people in great economic distress. But the majority of people (around 60%) are not in favour of obliging better-off tenants to leave, provided they pay additional rent. An increasing proportion of people are also in favour of middle-class families having access to social housing (the proportion rose from 24% in 2013 to 32% in 2017).

be because people generally give higher ratings to services they use, and social housing is used by only a small number of people³⁵ (Eurofound, 2017).

On average in the EU, people seem to be relatively satisfied with the quality of social/municipal housing, though there are large variations between countries (Figure 27). In 2016, social/municipal housing was perceived as being of poor quality in eight countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Poland, Lithuania, Italy, Romania and Croatia) and good quality in Denmark, Luxembourg, Finland, Malta and Austria.

Figure 27. Average scores for satisfaction with the quality of social/municipal housing, 2011 and 2016 (mean scores on a 10-point scale; 1=very poor, 10=very good)



³⁵ In 2016, there were just 14 EU countries where at least 5% of respondents lived in social housing (Eurofound, 2017).



Interpreting these results is not straightforward. It could be that differences are partly explained by the fact that social housing in some countries focuses on particularly low-income groups (Eurofound, 2017). In countries where this is the case (e.g. Italy) perceived quality is lower than in countries where it is used by much larger and broader groups (e.g. the Netherlands) (Eurofound, 2017).

Attitudes towards the quality of social housing could be linked to the difficulty in accessing affordable housing because it is underdeveloped or because access is limited. For instance, in Greece rented social housing has never been developed (Kandylis et al., 2018), which could partly explain the low perceived quality of it. In addition, perceived unfairness in access to a limited 'amount' of social housing could perhaps influence perceived quality in some countries,³⁶ but further research is needed to verify this.

Of course, the poor quality of social housing in terms of access to essential needs (such as water and electricity) could also explain low perceived quality rates. For instance, in Romania the social housing stock is insufficient to meet needs and is of poor quality (in terms of access to drinking water, hot water provision, sewerage, electricity etc.) with people living in overcrowded dwellings (Alpopi et al., 2014). In Bulgaria too, the public social housing programme is inadequate in terms of both quality and quantity, because local government, which is required to provide social housing, sometimes finds it difficult to target those in need and lacks the technical capacity to plan and implement social housing projects (World Bank, 2017).

Nevertheless, when asked what should be a priority for extra government spending (the LITS questionnaire included only 15 EU Member States in 2016), very few people selected housing (among the options) in Bulgaria and Greece (3.5% and 4% respectively) while the number was relatively high in the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland (21%, 22% and 24% respectively).

On the other hand, according to 2018 OECD-RTM data covering 15 EU countries, nearly 1 in 5 respondents are willing to pay an additional 2% of their income in tax or contributions to increase the amount of affordable housing. There is some correlation between the willingness to pay additional tax for affordable housing and spending on housing as a share of GDP ($r=0.31$). Support is relatively strong in Finland (34%) and Ireland (32%), where spending on housing relative to GDP is among the highest in the EU (0.8% and 0.5% respectively), and relatively weak in Italy (8%). Support is also stronger among young people than older age groups (in the EU countries covered, an average of 26% of those aged under 25 expressed a willingness to pay extra tax for affordable housing, compared with less than 16% of those aged 50 and over) and among those with relatively low household income (22% as against under 16% for the other age groups).

3.7.3 Summary

Analysis is difficult in this area, due to the lack of a common EU definition of social housing, differences in the way that housing is supported across countries, the lack of cross-national data, and the limited research on attitudes towards social housing. The results of the surveys that have been undertaken therefore need to be interpreted with care, and further research is needed to fill in the gaps in knowledge. This is particularly the case after the Covid-19 pandemic, to see whether there is a shift in attitudes towards social services and social housing.

The availability and affordability of decent housing has become an important economic and social concern in the EU over recent years. The share of the population reporting housing insecurity rose

³⁶ Eurofound has shown that the perceived lack of fairness in access to healthcare, long-term care and childcare services has a negative impact on the perceived quality of these services (Eurofound, 2019a).



in the EU from 18% in 2011 to 24% in 2016, according to EQLS data. The provision of more social housing could potentially reduce such insecurity.

On average people tend to be relatively satisfied with the quality of social/municipal housing, though the proportion is smaller in a number of southern and eastern European countries where social housing is underdeveloped or of poor quality. Nevertheless, few people in these countries see housing as a priority for additional government expenditure. On average, in the 15 EU Member States covered by LITS in 2016, just 16% of respondents believe that housing should be a spending priority and fewer than 1 in 5 are willing to pay an additional 2% of their income in tax or contributions for affordable housing in the 15 EU countries covered by the OECD-RTM survey.





4. What is the support base for European-level solidarity?

Key points

- *Over the past decades, a noteworthy trend has been that the EU has increasingly taken initiatives that have repercussions for social policy-making in the Member States. This trend can be seen as the start of a shift – admittedly gradual and still very partial – in decision-making regarding social policy from the national to the supra-national level. This ‘Social Europe’ has different faces, from implementing social regulations, through installing Member-State solidarity and EU-wide social citizenship, to proposals for the establishment of cross-border interpersonal solidarity bonds.*
- *Support for EU-level solidarity arrangements depends heavily on the specific aspect of Social Europe concerned and is domain-specific. Solidarity schemes that reinforce nationally existing systems (e.g. social regulations or additional benefit schemes) receive the strongest support.*
- *Attitudes towards EU involvement in social policy differ widely across countries. In southern and eastern European countries, especially, there is quite outspoken popular support for EU-level social policy. This support is, in important ways, driven by the expectation that EU-level solidarity will lead to an improvement in social welfare. In the strong welfare states of northern Europe, the population feels less need to organise solidarity at the EU level, and fears exist that this might lead to a decrease in the quality of social protection.*
- *Attitudes towards organising solidarity at the EU level are only weakly related to demographic and social-structural indicators (such as education, activity status or income). The support base is distributed relatively homogeneously across individual-level characteristics. Country-level variables – such as national social expenditure, material deprivation or EU transfers received – are more relevant to understand citizens’ attitudes towards organising solidarity at the EU level.*

4.1 Overview of the literature

Over recent decades, one notable trend in welfare policy reform has been the Europeanisation of social policy. Although the European project started out as an economic endeavour (Rhodes and Mény, 1998; Scharpf, 2002), the EU has taken a variety of initiatives that – directly or indirectly – have repercussions for social policy-making. As such, the EU has gradually become more involved in social policy (Leibfried, 2015). Supra-national constraints on Member States’ fiscal policies have placed limits on the redistributive options available (Giubboni, 2019; Heise and Lierse, 2011). Moreover, the EU has taken various regulatory measures in respect of equality and working conditions, for example; and a considerable share of the EU budget is devoted to regional redistribution. The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017 has made official the European ambition to protect citizens’ social rights even further by means of supra-national policy initiatives. The concept of Social Europe refers precisely to the variety of European-level policy measures that, directly or indirectly, affect the social welfare of people in the various Member States (Martinsen and Vollaard,



2014). Social Europe, therefore, comprises market-making policies, as well as regulatory measures on equality, working conditions, and health and safety (Falkner, 2010).

Various data sources provide an insight into general attitudes towards EU involvement in social policy-making (Beaudonnet, 2012; Mau, 2005; Ray, 2004). Berg (2007) analyses Eurobarometer 62.0 data from 2004 to investigate the preferred level of decision-making for various policy domains (national level versus EU level). Support for EU intervention in social domains ranges roughly from 35% for health and welfare to 65% for supporting poor regions. Using similar data from Eurobarometer 54.1, Mau (2005) indicates that support for EU involvement in health and social welfare is correlated with the level of current national welfare provision. In countries with a more developed welfare system (e.g. the Nordic countries), opposition to EU-level social policies tends to be stronger. Baute et al. (2018a) indeed show, using data from the European Values Study 2008, that fears of EU integration having a negative impact on social security are significant, especially in countries with higher levels of social spending.

A multidimensional perspective on attitudes towards Social Europe

Theoretically as well as empirically, it is possible to distinguish various dimensions of attitudes towards Social Europe that go beyond preferred levels of decision-making. Based on the insight that Social Europe comprises a variety of policy principles and instruments, Baute et al. (2018b) propose a multidimensional perspective to understand people's opinions and preferences, distinguishing between four dimensions. The available studies that focus on separate dimensions sometimes necessarily rely on national data sources, as cross-national data are lacking. A first dimension of Social Europe relates to efforts by the EU to facilitate an upwards convergence of social policies in Member States. This is mainly obtained through binding and non-binding EU social regulations, for instance in the fields of health and safety at work, working conditions and equality (Falkner, 2010). Among Belgian respondents, support for such regulatory intervention by the EU is very strong (over 60%) (Baute et al., 2018b).

A second aspect of Social Europe – member-state solidarity – involves financial redistribution between the EU countries (Sangiovanni, 2013). Currently, this is implemented through various Structural Funds, which aim to reduce regional disparities in income, employment, investment and growth within the EU. Lengfeld et al. (2015) investigate two Eurobarometer waves and show that a narrow majority of Europeans support the idea of helping crisis-hit countries financially. Experimental survey data from Germany furthermore show that people's socio-economic positions are far less predictive of their stance on bail-out than are ideological dispositions, such as altruism and cosmopolitanism (Bechtel et al., 2014).

A third cornerstone of Social Europe is the development of an EU-wide social citizenship (Faist, 2001; Magnusson and Stråth, 2004; Schall, 2012). This implies that EU citizens acquire access to other Member States' social security schemes, and that already-earned social security rights are transferable between Member States. Currently, EU citizens are entitled to equal social benefits and services as nationals, but there is no European standard, as the amount, scope, type and duration of benefits depend on the country of residence. Although opinion on the granting of social rights to non-nationals is often studied in literature on welfare chauvinism (e.g. Mewes and Mau, 2012; Van der Waal et al., 2010), very few studies focus on the Europeanisation of social rights in particular. A notable exception is the study by Gerhards and Lengfeld (2015), who use German SOEP data collected in 2006 to demonstrate that a majority of Germans support granting social rights to EU citizens.



The fourth – and most intrusive – dimension of Social Europe involves policy instruments that establish interpersonal solidarity bonds between people from different EU countries (Sangiovanni, 2013). Such policies have not yet been implemented, but are being debated in the form of a European unemployment insurance scheme (Dullien, 2013), a European minimum income benefit (Peña-Casas and Bouget, 2014) and a European child benefit (Levy et al., 2013). Using the welfare-attitudes module included in ESS 2016, Baute and Meuleman (2020) find that support for an EU-wide minimum income scheme varies widely across countries and is strongly driven by the expectations citizens have of the impact of the Europeanisation of social policy.

Besides this differentiation according to policy principles, attitudes towards Social Europe also seem to be domain-specific. A survey in 11 Member States analysed by Genschel and Hemerijck (2018) illustrates that solidarity in the case of natural disasters, for example, is substantially more popular than redistribution to deal with unemployment or debt burdens. In similar vein, experimental evidence shows that assistance to other EU Member States receives greater support when the budget is spent on health care than when unemployment is concerned (Beetsma et al., 2020). Clearly, the legitimacy of EU-level solidarity is contingent on whether the needy situation is beyond the control of the particular Member State. In this respect, the domain-specificity of attitudes towards Social Europe shows a stark resemblance with deservingness considerations made regarding the national welfare state.

Individual drivers of support for EU-level solidarity

The increasing importance of the social dimension of the EU constitutes a veritable shift of the boundaries of solidarity along geographic, socio-economic and institutional lines. Ferrera (2005) understands European integration as a process of de-bounding and de-structuring the national welfare state. Whereas social sharing builds on closure, European integration rests on opening up the boundaries of the national welfare state. Importantly, Social Europe implies a solidarity shift that could create new structural conflicts between winners and losers of European integration. After all, the (dis)advantages of Europeanisation are distributed unequally and affect people differently, depending on their socio-economic situation, social experience and ideological orientation (Bartolini, 2005; Ferrera, 2005; Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008). Drawing on the seminal work of Kriesi, the emerging conflict between ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of Social Europe can be conceptualised as a new cleavage between proponents of integration and advocates of demarcation (Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008). The ‘losers’ of Europeanisation are expected to seek protection and to favour the maintenance of national boundaries (demarcation), while the ‘winners’ are more likely to support the opening of national boundaries and socio-economic deregulation (integration).

The empirical literature reviewed above, however, indicates that socio-economic positions (that be seen as indicators of winner-loser status) have a relatively limited impact on public attitudes towards Social Europe (Meuleman et al., 2020) – even more limited than in the case of attitudes towards the national welfare state. Opposition and support for Social Europe are linked to several key ideological factors. First, stronger transnational identification with fellow Europeans contributes to support for EU-level intervention in social policy (Baute et al., 2019; Mau, 2005). Kuhn et al. (2020), for example, provide evidence of how support for the cross-border aspects of an EU-level unemployment reinsurance scheme is strongly linked to general EU orientations (while more domestic aspects, such as generosity, taxation or conditionality, are more strongly aligned with the left-right cleavage). The impact of European identification can – among other ways – be understood on the basis of the identity criterion: people show greater willingness to share with others who are seen as part of the in-group. Second, support for EU-level policy is, to a certain extent, aligned with



attitudes towards the national welfare state: individuals who are concerned about the well-being of others, who have a distaste for inequality and who favour the principle of government intervention are more supportive of both EU-level and national-level social policy (Baute et al., 2019; Bechtel et al., 2014). The specific design of redistributive and insurance policies at the supra-national level also affects popular support, as a vignette study by Vandenbroucke et al. (2018) shows.

Contextual factors related to support for EU-level solidarity

Citizens' support for supra-national solidarity arrangements is not only influenced by individual characteristics, but is also contingent on various contextual factors, as various studies show (Brinegar and Jolly, 2005; Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007; Baute et al. 2018a; Baute and Meuleman, 2020). After all, it is not only individuals, but entire countries that can potentially win or lose from European integration, depending on the prevailing economic and social conditions.

A first contextual explanation relates to the level of social protection that is attained by the national welfare system. Attitudes towards EU-level solidarity are formed in the light of existing national provisions, since national welfare states currently are the primary providers of social welfare. As such, the generosity of national provisions functions as a benchmark against which the desirability of EU involvement in social policy is measured. In countries with more generous national provisions, citizens see less of a need to implement an additional layer of supra-national social protection. Citizens of these countries might even fear that the quality of national social services might deteriorate (Bernaciak, 2014), and doubt whether other Member States have an effective administration to organise fair redistribution. By contrast, in welfare states with less generous social protection, citizens might hope that social standards and social protection levels will improve as a result of the EU's intervention in welfare issues (Mau, 2005; Roosma, 2016). This thesis is supported by previous studies showing that citizens are less supportive of EU competences over social policy in EU Member States where social spending is higher (Beaudonnet, 2012; Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007; Mau, 2005; Ray 2004). Empirical studies also show that citizens in more-advanced welfare states evaluate the EU's impact on social security more negatively and are less willing to transfer social competences to the European level (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007; Gerhards et al., 2014; Mau, 2005; Ray, 2004; Baute et al. 2018a; Baute and Meuleman 2020; Burgoon, 2009). A second (but similar) line of argumentation could be developed regarding the impact of national economic conditions on citizens' attitudes towards EU-level solidarity. One might expect that – especially in countries with poorly performing economies and high levels of inequality (and consequently less beneficial social conditions for the population) – the demand for EU-level solidarity would be stronger. Third, financial transfers within the EU can be a relevant source of public support for EU-level social policy. As financial transfers are often used for programmes that aim (directly or indirectly) to improve social welfare, positive net transfers could contribute to a support base for EU-level solidarity arrangements. Empirical research shows that residents of countries that receive positive net transfers not only show greater support for European integration overall (Anderson and Reichert, 1996; Brinegar and Jolly, 2005; Haller, 2008; Hooghe and Marks, 2004), but are also more positive about the impact of European integration on social protection (Baute et al., 2018a). More up-to-date research is needed to see if this continues to be the case.

The insight that contextual factors influence citizens' support for EU-level solidarity suggests that the health crisis linked to the Covid-19 pandemic could potentially change – either positively or negatively – the views Europeans have about solidarity at the EU level. Indeed, preliminary empirical evidence points in this direction. A recent survey showed that half of the French and German respondents rated cooperation between European countries in the fight against the Coronavirus outbreak as



fairly good or very good. By contrast, just 30% of Italians shared this view, while more than half of the Italians thought that the EU would be weaker after the crisis (Kantar, 2020a). Another opinion survey carried on at EU level shows that around two thirds of respondents (69%) agree that ‘the EU should have more competence to deal with crises such as the Coronavirus pandemic’ (Kantar, 2020b). The health crisis might have the potential to change the level of trust in the EU: although the April 2020 Eurofound survey showed that, on average, trust in the EU was lower than trust in national government (Eurofound, 2020a), the second round of the Eurofound survey indicates that trust in the EU has rebounded while trust in government has gone down (Eurofound, 2020d). Just prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, de Ruijter et al. (2020) explored support among the Dutch for risk pooling in the purchase and accessibility of pharmaceuticals relevant to major outbreaks. The authors argued that the joint procurement, stockpiling and allocation of medical countermeasures is a key component of true European solidarity, besides maintaining the integrity of the Single Market.

4.2 Empirical analysis and determinants of attitudes

Descriptive analysis

Despite the relevance of this topic, comparative survey data regarding popular preferences for EU-level solidarity are scarce. Several past Eurobarometers have measured the extent to which citizens think that social welfare should be either a purely national competence or rather be organised jointly by national and EU institutions. Figure 28 plots – for the available time points and countries (organised by region) – the percentage of the population that thinks that the national and the supra-national levels should be jointly responsible for social welfare (as opposed to being the exclusive responsibility of the national level). This figure yields relevant insights regarding cross-time and cross-country patterns. First, striking regional differences exist regarding preferences in favour of involvement of the EU in social welfare. In the strong welfare states of northern Europe, there is little enthusiasm for (partly) shifting responsibility for organising social welfare to the EU: in Sweden, Denmark and Finland, only about 10% of the population favours this option. This is in stark contrast to southern Europe, where support for EU involvement in social welfare exceeds 40% in most countries (Malta and Spain are exceptions here, but support is still above 20% in those countries). In eastern European countries, a relatively strong support base (mostly 30–50%) can be observed as well. With scores mostly between 20% and 30%, countries in western Europe are situated somewhere in between northern Europe, on the one hand, and eastern and southern Europe, on the other. This pattern of regional differences seems to suggest that contextual factors, such as the national arrangements in place and the general economic conditions, indeed shape support for organising solidarity at the European level. Second, across the time period surveyed (2008–2011), preferences for EU involvement in social welfare are quite stable.

The Eurobarometer data presented in Figure 28 have certain limitations, however. First, the time series for this variable was discontinued in 2011. As a result, a more recent assessment of public opinion is missing. Second, the preferred level of decision-making measured in Eurobarometer has been shown to be a far-from-ideal indicator. Rather than specifically gauging the actual support base for EU-level social policy, this item captures preferences for more decision-making at the EU level in general, as Baute et al. (2018a) demonstrated. The ESS data collected in 2016–2017 (Wave 8), however, allow us to construct a more recent and direct account. This survey was conducted in 18 EU Member States and included two measurements that are particularly relevant for the issue at hand. First, respondents were asked whether they thought the level of social benefits and services in their country would become higher or lower if more decisions were made by the European Union, rather than by national governments (five-point answer scale, ranging from much higher to much



Figure 28. Preferred decision-making level for the area of social policy – proportion of the population in favour of joint decision-making between EU and national government (%) (ordered by region)



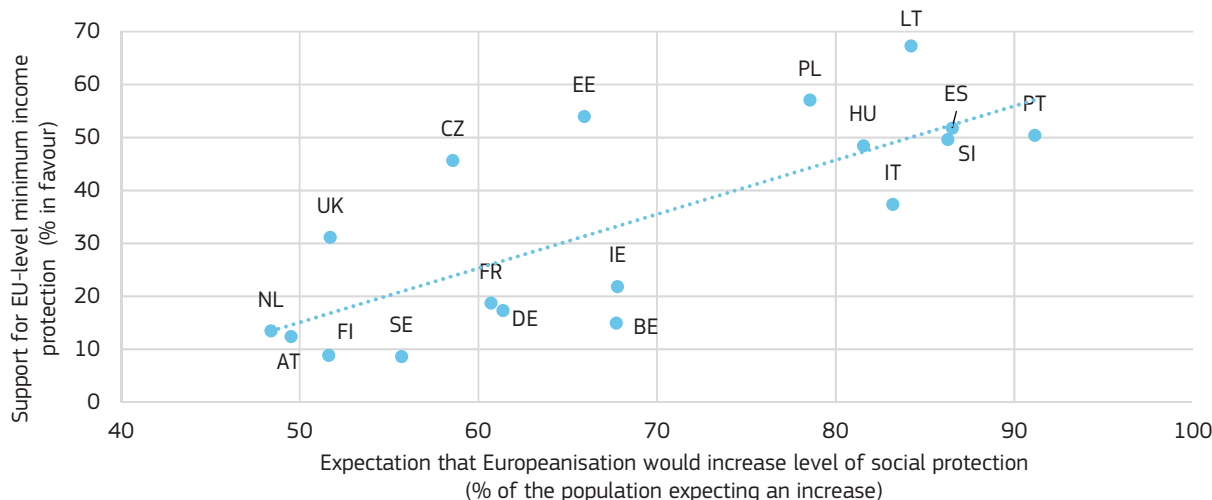
Source: Eurobarometer 2008–2011

lower). Second, respondents were asked about the extent to which they would support an EU-wide social benefit scheme that guaranteed a minimum standard of living for the poor. This question explicitly mentioned the following features of such a benefit scheme: (1) The purpose is to guarantee a minimum standard of living for all poor people in the European Union, (2) The level of social benefit that people received would be adjusted to reflect the cost of living in their country, (3) The scheme would require richer European Union countries to pay more into the scheme than poorer European Union countries. Respondents could use a four-point scale (ranging from strongly in favour to strongly against) to indicate their preference.

Figure 29 displays, for each country, what percentage of respondents thought that EU involvement would lead to (much) higher benefits, as well as the percentage that supported an EU-wide minimum income benefit scheme. First of all, the proposal for a European minimum income protection scheme was quite widely supported: the support base is over 50% in all but two countries (Austria and the Netherlands) and even exceeds 80% in six countries (Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Italy, Hungary and Lithuania). That these numbers are considerably higher than those on the Eurobarometer question can probably be explained by the fact that this ESS question did not set EU involvement in opposition to national competencies (the proposal was for an *additional* layer of social protection, rather than a shift in responsibility). For the question regarding the expected impact of EU involvement on benefit levels, the country averages varied considerably as well. In countries such as Sweden and



Figure 29. Support for an EU-level minimum income protection scheme vs expectations that EU involvement would increase the level of social protection – country averages in 2016–2017



Source: European Social Survey, Wave 8 (2016–2017)

Finland, less than 10% of the population expected EU involvement to strengthen social protection. Yet in Portugal, Spain, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland, more than half of the population perceived supra-national policy-making as a means of strengthening social protection. Both variables are strongly related. Specifically, two clusters of Member States emerge: in the northern and western countries, only a relatively small proportion of the population expected EU involvement to increase

Box 13. Support for different aspects of Social Europe in Belgium

The Belgian National Elections Study (BNES) of 2014 includes a module showing agreement with various statements regarding four dimensions of attitudes towards Social Europe. Support for social regulations – such as four weeks' paid leave, four months' maternity leave, or a working week of a maximum of 48 hours – is very strong. For each of the social-regulation items, support exceeds 60%, and in some cases even 80%. These extremely high levels of support should be understood in the light of the specific nature of social regulations. These are policy instruments that do not contradict the basic principles of national welfare states, but rather reinforce national-level social protection. The dimensions of member-state solidarity and social citizenship create more division in the population. About half of Belgians agree with the statement that 'the solidarity between the richer and poorer EU countries should not be broken' while 40% think that 'too much tax money is going from the prosperous EU countries to the poorer EU countries'. About one third of Belgians are of the opinion that 'EU citizens should receive the same social facilities as Belgians', while roughly half of respondents favoured prioritising Belgians over other EU citizens. The principle of reciprocity seems to be an important driver of scepticism regarding EU-wide social citizenship: almost three quarters of respondents stated that 'EU citizens should first have a job before they gain access to social services'. Finally, there seems to be a substantial support base for implementing new schemes implying interpersonal solidarity: more than half of respondents favoured a system of solidarity between all EU citizens and intervention by the EU to tackle income inequalities.

In sum, support for EU-level solidarity hinges on the intrusiveness of such measures vis-à-vis the national welfare state and various deservingness concerns (such as identity). A clear picture of popular support requires survey instruments to distinguish clearly between various aspects of Social Europe.



benefits, and support for EU-level income protection is moderate; conversely, in eastern and southern European countries, strong support for a European income protection scheme goes hand in hand with the expectation that supra-national policy-making would improve social welfare. This suggests that fears of a decrease in the quality of social protection inhibit support for EU-level solidarity in the north and west, whereas the hope that the EU would enhance the nationally existing schemes creates support for Social Europe in the east and south (see also Baute and Meuleman, 2020).

Individual and contextual determinants of attitudes towards EU-level social policy

To gain deeper insight into the various factors driving attitudes towards EU-level solidarity schemes, a multilevel model is estimated for the two indicators from ESS Wave 8. Because expectations that EU involvement will increase social protection are measured on a five-point scale, a linear multilevel regression is applied. The four-point scale measuring support for an EU-level minimum income scheme was dichotomised – (strongly) in favour versus (strongly) against – and logistic multilevel modelling was applied. In both models, we make use of the same set of individual and contextual indicators. At the individual level, the following variables are introduced: gender, age category (15–30, 31–45, 46–64, 65 and older), education (low, middle and high), subjective income (living comfortably on present income, coping on present income, finding it difficult on present income, finding it very difficult on present income), activity status (paid work, unemployed actively looking for a job, unemployed not looking for a job, retired, homemaker, student, disabled, other), and benefit use (indicating whether or not social benefits are the main source of household income). As contextual-level factors at the national level, we use the following variables: expenditure on social protection benefits (as a percentage of GDP), inequality of equivalised disposable household income (Gini index), percentage of the population experiencing severe material deprivation, and the net transfers that Member States receive from the EU (as a percentage of their gross national income). All contextual indicators refer to 2016. The first three are taken from the Eurostat database, while the fourth is taken from the budget of the EU (European Commission, 2017). First, models with individual variables only are estimated. Subsequently, the effects of contextual variables are estimated one by one (in order to deal with the low sample size at the country level).

Table B13 in the Annex shows that both ESS indicators contain significant amounts of cross-national variation (as captured by the random intercept variance). This confirms what was seen in Figure 29: expectations regarding the impact of EU involvement and support for EU-level social policy schemes both vary widely across countries. The individual characteristics turn out to have very little explanatory power, however. Some differences between age categories can be observed. Compared to respondents in the age bracket 15–30 (i.e. the reference category), older cohorts are less convinced that EU involvement will increase benefit levels in their country and are less likely to support an EU-level income protection scheme. The effects of the other variables are less consistent across the indicators. Educational level turns out to be related to expectations about the impact of EU-level policy-making on benefit levels: concretely, the better educated respondents are, the less optimism they have regarding their expectations. While education is not related to support for an EU-level income protection scheme, activity status is. The retired and the unemployed – those who are actively looking for work, as well as those who are not – have significantly higher probability of supporting a European income protection benefit. These effects should not be overstated, however: effect sizes are small (and significance is mainly driven by the large sample size at the individual level). Other variables, such as gender, subjective income or benefit use, do yield noteworthy effects. The main message of these models with individual-level characteristics is that attitudes towards solidarity at the European level are socially not strongly structured, and instead are distributed rather homogeneously across social categories.



Tables B14 and B15 in the Annex provide the results for the national-context variables. Expectations regarding the impact of EU involvement on benefit levels not only vary widely across countries, but moreover, the pattern of differences is neatly aligned with the contextual variables (Table B14). Citizens' expectations are most optimistic in those countries that have relatively low levels of social expenditure, high levels of income inequality and material deprivation, and a positive balance regarding EU transfers. Taken separately, each of these indicators has a significant effect on expectations regarding the impact of Social Europe on benefit levels (which is telling, given the small sample size at the country level). Unfortunately, the number of EU Member States included in ESS Wave 8 is too small to disentangle which of the context effects (which are clearly interrelated) drive the differences in citizens' expectations. Nevertheless, we can conclude that the combination of relatively weak welfare national systems and less prosperous economic conditions gives citizens hope that the EU can improve social welfare. Among citizens in strong welfare systems and more prosperous economic conditions, conversely, there are stronger concerns that EU involvement could harm the national protection schemes. Interestingly, the context-variable studies here are far less predictive of the between-country differences in support for an EU-level income protection scheme (Table B15). For this dependent variable, only severe material deprivation produces a significant effect, in the sense that a context with strong deprivation increases the probability that citizens will support EU-level social policy-making.





Conclusions

The literature review and the analyses presented in this report attempt to answer several important questions regarding the attitudes of European citizens towards various aspects of solidarity and welfare redistribution.

First, the results clearly show the *preferences of Europeans for the type of social contract* they would like (in terms of its scope and the underlying redistributive principles), as well as their assessment of the *adequacy and sustainability of current welfare provisions*. There is strong evidence that, generally speaking, the legitimacy of the European-style welfare state is strongly entrenched among Europeans. When we look at differences between countries, changes over time and the specific features of national policy arrangements, the vast majority of Europeans show concern for the well-being of others who face social risks, as well as for their own welfare. There is strong support for a social contract in which the government intervenes to redistribute risks and life chances.

In public opinion polls, various elements of the distinct principles of social justice can be discerned. The concern that economic differences should not become too large (a desire for some measure of equality) is widespread and is an important driver of attitudes towards welfare. At the same time, attitudes also reflect the principles of (social) insurance (groups that have contributed are regarded as more deserving); but the principle of need is also important (support should go to those in need, and particularly to those *most* in need). The weight that people give to each of these principles is not constant over time, and nor is it the same across countries. It also depends on the nature of particular policy arrangements: for pension and family policies, contributory principles are more pronounced than they are, for example, for health and long-term care provisions, where the need principle is of greater importance. As regards the amount that should – according to respondents – be spent on various policies, in the case of family benefits, for example, there is greater demand for further benefits in those countries where the current level of provision is low.

The strong support for a social contract that involves active government redistribution of welfare does not, however, imply that the current arrangements are considered adequate. Substantial numbers of European citizens are critical of the efficiency, effectiveness and unintended side-effects of the welfare state. While, for example, there is very broad support for the idea that it is the government's responsibility to provide a decent level of income for the elderly, the discontent in several EU Member States with the quality of the state pension system can be traced to a low assessment of the performance of the system.

The financing of the welfare system also gives rise to discontent. When funding through taxation or social contributions is mentioned explicitly in survey questions, support for welfare drops off substantially. According to the above analysis, around 4 in 10 Europeans consider that social services and benefits place too great a strain on the economy; the proportion in the different countries correlates closely with the share who think that social services and benefits tend to discourage people from working and make them less willing to care for one another. It seems that ideological elements play a key role here.

However, rather than being a consistent and homogeneous set of beliefs, welfare-related attitudes and preferences should be understood as a sometimes contradictory mix of substantive, redistributive, procedural and evaluative elements. This has consequences for the political economy of



reform at the national level, since assembling support for any reform initiative depends heavily on whether or not reformers can master the interaction between these conflicting and contradictory opinions. The broadening of the coverage (relating to people's own interest in the policy) and/or deservingness of the target groups may be important aspects of successful welfare state policies (in terms of legitimacy).

Second, this report has attempted to uncover which factors – both individual (socio-economic characteristics, values and normative beliefs) and contextual (institutional set-up and economic conditions) – shape welfare-related preferences. As regards the individual factors, several effects point in the direction of self-interest being important (i.e. people support the policies they have a personal interest in). For example, people's perceptions of the risk of becoming unemployed and of their employment situation are related to their attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment benefits. Similarly, support for family benefits is strongest among parents, younger people and women, while the elderly are more likely than others to support pension policies, and those on lower incomes are more in favour of public health care.

However, the apparent effects of socio-demographic factors on people's preferences are too limited to consider self-interest to be the decisive factor behind support for welfare. The review of the literature indicated that ideological beliefs (such as universalism or egalitarianism) often outweigh the impact of self-interest. In particular, considerations of 'deservingness' appear to be important in shaping normative beliefs on welfare, as the differences in attitudes towards different target groups show. The need to support the sick and the elderly is almost universally accepted. Arrangements for supporting the poor and the unemployed generally gain less acceptance (though even in these cases, Europeans largely support the idea of guaranteeing a minimum income for those in need). Support for family benefits is somewhere in between. These differences between target groups can be understood in terms of deservingness theory, which states that the judgement of individuals as regards fairness is informed by considerations relating to control, attitude, reciprocity, identity and need.

The presence of sizeable differences between countries in terms of welfare attitudes points to the relevance of contextual factors relating to welfare beliefs. In particular, satisfaction with the performance of the welfare state and its procedural legitimacy varies across EU countries (levels of substantive legitimacy are more uniform across countries). The general pattern can be characterised in terms of a divide between (on the one hand) eastern and southern countries and (on the other) western and northern countries: this suggests that less favourable economic conditions and lower levels of social protection lead to lower levels of satisfaction with current arrangements. The results presented here, therefore, do not support the notion that attitude patterns relate to welfare regimes discerned in the literature. Rather, attitudes, while obviously originating in historical developments, are also formed by situational factors that shape the economic and social policy context in Member States.

Support for increasing spending on pensions, for example, is higher in countries where spending is currently relatively low and where poverty among the elderly is high. And in countries with high levels of material deprivation, inequality and low spending on social benefits, there is greater dissatisfaction with the current benefits to protect those in real need. To some extent, relative dissatisfaction in the eastern and southern countries with the performance of welfare systems leads to a louder call there for government intervention – in other words, the principle of welfare redistribution is not called into question.



In some instances, the pattern of differences between countries reveals positive feedback effects: people tend to develop a preference for the particular schemes that are actually implemented in their country. As regards pensions, for example, respondents tend to prefer the scheme (pay-as-you-go, occupational or private) that is most important in their country. In countries that spend more on unemployment benefits and active labour market policies, and where unemployment benefits are more generous, people express greater solidarity with the unemployed. This suggests that particular policy designs generate their own support. In relation to family policies as well, a positive correlation is evident between levels of provision and support for existing benefits and services.

There is also greater demand for additional benefits in countries where the current level of provision is low (e.g. in most of the southern and eastern European countries). In addition, in the case of social assistance benefits, there is a clear geographical divide in Europe, with people in northern and western countries tending to be relatively positive about the ability of current benefits to cover basic needs, and people in the southern and eastern countries being very critical of the protection that the benefits currently provide. The latter point relates to the level of benefits, but it may perhaps also reflect the particular context in which social benefit schemes in the southern and eastern European countries operate.

The results shed some light, too, on the *extent of support for organising solidarity at the supra-national, European level, as well as on the drivers of such support*. Over the past few decades, the EU has – both intentionally and unintentionally – assumed increased responsibility for social policy-making at the supra-national level. Empirical evidence shows that support for organising solidarity at the EU level depends crucially on the particular form of EU involvement concerned (whether social regulations, member-state solidarity, EU-wide social citizenship or cross-border interpersonal solidarity). Support for solidarity schemes that enhance present national systems (such as social regulations or additional benefit schemes) are more strongly endorsed than arrangements that replace national systems.

The results presented in this report provide indications regarding the opportunities, as well as the challenges, for developing EU-level social policy evaluations. The findings illustrate that supra-national initiatives to improve social security have the potential to garner wide support, particularly among citizens of Member States with weaker protection systems. Yet, successful policy innovation has to reckon with the fear that exists in more strongly developed welfare states about a loss of social protection.

The level of endorsement of EU involvement in social policy, however, differs widely across Member States. In southern and eastern European countries, in particular, there is strong support for EU-level social policy, driven by the expectation that the involvement of the EU will provide an opportunity to improve social welfare provision. In the strong welfare states of northern Europe, there are signs of anxiety among the population that EU involvement could lead to a diminution in the quality of social protection. It should further be noted that attitudes towards organising solidarity at the EU level are only weakly related to demographic and social indicators (such as education, employment status or income).

The results, therefore, also have implications for the planning of EU-level policy innovations and efforts to create new institutional arrangements as regards the renewed European Commission Work Programme. Most importantly, the findings of this report might contribute to preparation of the action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights; the forthcoming ageing report; the discussions on how to advance the instrument on fair minimum wages for workers in the EU; the



proposal envisaged for a European Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme to support those in work and protect those who have lost their jobs because of external shocks, notably by helping them to reskill; the planned presentation (in 2021) of a new European Child Guarantee, as an important means of fighting poverty and ensuring that children have access to basic services; and the reinforced Youth Guarantee, to help young people get the education, training and job opportunities they need.

While attitudes to the welfare systems show considerable stability over time, in the extraordinary times that we are living through after the sudden outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is reasonable to anticipate that there may have been some important shifts in attitudes. Most Member States have been under some form of lockdown, with schools closed in many places; restrictions imposed on movement within and between countries; health and other social services coming under immense pressure; and many non-essential economic activities ceasing (and with those that have continued operating at far below their normal levels). In addition, a great many people have experienced reduced working time, lay-offs or redundancy. Meanwhile, a large proportion of those who have been able to continue to work more or less full time are operating from home. This has given fresh meaning to the notion of reconciling work and family life, as people with children have had to cope with having them at home, after the closure of creches, nurseries and schools. All this may have contributed to important changes in attitudes related to the importance and operational practices of proper public healthcare systems and care homes for the elderly. Also, the sudden and widespread unemployment shock (which clearly bears no relation to anything like personal merit or individual responsibility) means that attitudes to unemployment protection schemes may also have changed substantially. This will necessitate some follow-ups and new studies on changing welfare attitudes in Europe.



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Annex 1. Datasets – list and descriptions

A1.1 List of existing cross-national data sources used in the study

Group A (core surveys)

European Social Survey (ESS): The ESS provides data on a range of aspects relating to social behaviour and attitudes; it enables exploration of the interaction of these with changes in the institutional context. There is a required minimum effective achieved sample size in all participating countries. Datasets for all waves between 2002 and 2016 are available online and free of charge. The ESS core data cover many social and political issues, such as media use, social and public trust, and political interest and participation, as well as views on governance, moral, political and social values, well-being and health. Moreover, in different individual waves, ad hoc modules have been applied on various topics. ESS Wave 4 (2008/2009) and Wave 8 (2016) include a Welfare Attitudes module, in which data were collected on the attitudes of individuals towards various benefits types in the country and towards the role of government in the distribution of income. Furthermore, in ESS 2016, respondents were asked for their attitudes towards an EU-wide social benefits scheme.

International Social Survey Programme (ISSP): The ISSP is a cross-national collaboration programme. It conducts annual surveys on various topics in the field of social sciences. It was founded in 1984. Since then, 57 countries have been involved in its various waves. Each country in the programme is represented by academic organisations, universities or survey agencies. All data and documentation collected are available free of charge. The sample size varies from 1,000 to 2,000 respondents. Modules on attitudes towards different aspects of the social protection system have been implemented in various ISSP waves. The related questions are asked in the Role of Government (1985, 1990, 1996, 2006 and 2016 waves) and Social Inequality (1987, 1992, 1999, 2009 and upcoming 2019 waves) modules. Moreover, questions on attitudes towards parental leave were asked in the Family and Changing Gender Roles module (1988, 1994, 2002 and 2012 waves), and data on attitudes towards the healthcare system were/will be gathered by the Health and Healthcare module (2011 and 2021 waves). Not all 28 Member States have been involved in all ISSP waves: the number of EU countries participating in the programme has changed over time. The widest participation was in 2009 (Social Inequality), and in the 2002 and 2012 waves (Family and Changing Gender Roles).

European Values Survey (EVS): EVS started in 1981, and since then the survey has been conducted every nine years. The latest wave was in 2017. Its core questionnaire has been repeated over time. The EVS is based on representative sampling of the resident adult population of each country. The survey has an enhanced methodology to obtain the utmost data quality. The national surveys conducted under the EVS follow the guidelines designed to ensure quality and consistency. EVS data and documentation are available free of charge. The EVS and the World Values Survey (WVS, which is similar in coverage, themes and waves) are two large-scale, cross-national and longitudinal survey research programmes. These two surveys have a large number of questions replicated in more than 300 surveys between 1981 and 2014. The trend variables and data are available; these have been harmonised using a common dictionary agreed by the EVS and WVS. Moreover, there are repeated cross-sectional EVS data for the 1981, 1991, 1999, 2008 and 2017 waves. The EVS data include variables for attitudes towards the claiming of social benefits, government's role in providing social services and benefits, immigrants' effects on the welfare system and the efficiency of the healthcare system.



European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS): The EQLS has been conducted by the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions in Dublin since 2003, at four-yearly intervals, in all EU Member States. The most recent wave was in 2016. The survey collects information on a range of aspects contributing to the well-being of the people interviewed, including the jobs that they do and the conditions surrounding them, their income levels, education, the state of their housing, their family circumstances, their health, their work-life balance and overall satisfaction with life. A significant limitation on analysis, however, is imposed by the relatively small sample size in the individual countries – 2,000 people in larger countries and 1,000 in the others. Nevertheless, there is reasonable continuity between surveys, which means that changes over time – between 2003 and 2016, between the pre- and post-crisis period – can be examined. The EQLS collects detailed data on people's perception of the quality and implementation of public services (including long-term care in waves 3-4).

Eurobarometer: The Standard Eurobarometer has been conducted since 1974. Around 1,000 face-to-face interviews are conducted in all the countries involved in the survey. Two Eurobarometer reports are published every year. New and independent samples are drawn for each wave. Since 1989, the samples have been selected by multistage random probability method. In addition to the Standard Eurobarometer, ad hoc Flash Eurobarometers are conducted at the request of the European Commission. The purpose of these ad hoc surveys is to gather instant information for the EU Commission by focusing on specific target groups, as and when required. Finally, some additional qualitative studies are also conducted under Eurobarometer, in order to examine the motivations, feelings and reactions of selected social groups towards a given subject or concept. These qualitative data are collected by using discussion groups or through non-directive interviews. Special Eurobarometer 467 (autumn 2017) and 479 (autumn 2018) are the most recent waves to have included questions on attitudes to social protection issues in the EU.

Behavioural Study on the Effects of an Extension of the Access to Social Protection for People in All Forms of Employment: This study was conducted in 2018 by Open Evidence, in consortium with the London School of Economics (LSE) and the University of Valencia, on behalf of the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion). The study examined the impact of extending social protection coverage to include the rising number of people in non-standard employment and the self-employed; methods of accessing information; attitudes to risk; socio-economic factors influencing people's willingness to pay for social protection; and the factors affecting individuals' concerns about their future living conditions. In this regard, a cross-country survey was carried out in 10 Member States; the total size of the sample was 8,000 individuals. The questionnaire included questions on the attitudes of employed individuals towards the coverage of certain types of benefits and alternative scenarios for different conditions related to social protection coverage at work, the ranking of the importance of work-related benefits (including professional diseases and invalidity) and willingness to pay for enrolling in voluntary social protection schemes.

Group B (recommended surveys)

OECD Risks that Matter Survey (OECD-RTM): This survey was conducted in 2018. The study was held to explore individuals' perceptions of the social and economic risks they face, and their opinions about the reaction of the government to their concerns. It covered 21 OECD countries (15 of them EU Member States). In total, 22,000 people were interviewed for the survey. The questionnaire included questions on attitudes to and perceptions of current welfare benefits and social services (including long-term care for the elderly), individuals' expectations of further/future social benefits and social



services, government's role in better income distribution, need to reform the welfare system, willingness to pay for more benefits/services and deservingness for receiving benefits.

Life in Transition Survey (LITS): This survey is conducted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), in collaboration with the World Bank, and it examines the effect of transition on the lives of people in regions, and people's opinions about democracy, the role of the state and prospects for the future. To date, three waves have been conducted. The theme of the 2006 wave was people's experiences and attitudes, and it was conducted in 29 countries. The topic of the 2010 wave was 'After the Crisis', and 34 countries participated. The most recent wave was in 2016 and was entitled 'A Decade of Measuring Transition'. The survey collected data on individuals' attitudes to reducing income inequality, the government's priority for expenditure (including social protection), people's willingness to pay for different types of benefits, and the deservingness of various social groups for government support (e.g. disabled, the elderly, etc.). The datasets are free of charge and available online.

Group C (other surveys for consideration)

Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) – Module IV (2011-2016) – Distributional Politics and Social Protection: The CSES started in 1996, and four waves were carried between then and 2016 by participating countries from different regions of the world. In the last wave (covering 2011-2016), redistributive policies and social policy were chosen as the main theme, in order to examine voters' attitudes on those policies. Thus, the data from this survey allow analysis of the relationship between political institutions and voter reaction to spending constraints. In this, the module makes reference to the economic crises of preceding years. The datasets are available online and free of charge. The final release covers 45 election studies from 2011 to 2016 (and 16 EU Member States).

Investing in Education in Europe: Attitudes, Politics and Policies (INVEduc): This was an academic research project conducted between 2013 and 2018. The purpose was to examine citizens' preferences on education policy-making in Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. As a part of the project, a quantitative survey was carried out in 2014, in which overall 8,900 individuals were interviewed. The data involve variables on attitudes towards the pensions/retirement system, the methods and priorities in financing social spending (including health, unemployment benefits, old-age pensions, social assistance and family support, childcare services and – mainly – education), deservingness of financial support for education and willingness to pay more for education services.

Reconciling Economic and Social Europe: Values, Ideas and Politics (RESceU):¹ This was a five-year research project, which started in 2014 and which was funded by the European Research Council (ERC). The project aimed to explore the links between the nation-based welfare state and the European Union, and their consequences for the mutual relationship between those two spheres. The project examined the reasons behind the weakening elective affinity between national welfare systems and the EU, and the possibility of reconciliation. In this project a quantitative survey of elite and mass opinion on Europe-wide redistribution was carried out (not national social policies) in France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom; it was conducted in autumn 2016 and involved 9,326 respondents. The questionnaire included questions on attitudes to the openness of the national social protection systems for non-nationals, the effects of EU integration on national

1 The institutions/researchers that conducted the RESceU survey were contacted. However, the research team was unable to gain access to this data source.



social security systems, pan-European solidarity for measures against poverty, social investments and mutualisation of risks, common EU social insurance schemes for supporting intra-EU mobility and extra-EU immigration.

Solidarity in European Societies:² The project Empowerment, Social Justice and Citizenship (SOLIDUS) focuses on the nature and extent of European solidarity. The main purpose of the study is to examine policies, programmes and actions based on solidarity that have been successful in improving citizens' living conditions. It explores the key factors that favour (or limit) solidarity with a social and/or political impact. In this regard, the Transnational European Solidarity Study (TESS) was conducted in 2016 in Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, France, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden. The overall sample size was 12,500. Respondents were asked whether they approved of helping people in need in other EU countries, and whether they supported redistribution between rich and poor.

YouGov survey (How strong is public support for European solidarity?):³ This study was carried out in 2018 as one of the activities of the high-level State of the Union Conference, organised by the European University Institute (EUI) to reflect on the European Union. The survey was conducted in Great Britain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Spain, Italy, Poland, Lithuania and Greece and involved 11,200 respondents. It explored EU citizens' perceptions of and attitudes towards their voice in the EU, climate change, terrorism and employment opportunities. It also canvassed their opinion on financial support for other EU countries in the event of high unemployment, a large debt burden or a refugee crisis; the importance of unemployment benefits, childcare services and old-age pensions; satisfaction with the current services in these domains; and the role of government in these areas.

A1.2 A methodological assessment of the international surveys used in the report

After accessing the survey data listed above, a further analysis of content was conducted by using the metadata files (questionnaires, codebooks, web pages of the studies, etc.) and the raw data files to identify the variables to be analysed in the current project. This phase was also necessary to examine other methodological issues, such as coding of the variables, differences between the questionnaire and recorded data (such as non-comparable measurement scales), missing values, weighting and other unexpected inconsistencies. Following the content analysis, the variables in each dataset were classified under the social protection domains that are covered.

Although all selected datasets for the analysis match at least one of the three selection criteria we used, there are some methodological limitations that affect the empirical findings in almost all cases. These are as follows:

- The sample size is very small in all of these surveys. Despite the (relatively) larger sample in ESS and EVS (up to 3,000 respondents in some countries), the number of respondents is limited to 1,000 to 1,500 in the other studies. The figures in Eurobarometer are as low as 500 in some countries (such as Luxembourg or Cyprus). The small number of cases affects the statistical reliability of the findings, especially for groups such as the unemployed or specific age categories for which the number involved is relatively small.

2 It should be noted that the data request for SOLIDUS was rejected due to data access restrictions until 2022.

3 The institutions/researchers that conducted the YouGov survey were contacted, the research team was unable to gain access to this data source.



- The only two surveys that cover all EU Member States in every wave are Eurobarometer and EQLS. None of the other survey data used in the analysis include all Member States at the same time, though a large majority of the countries may be represented. In addition, some participating countries are not represented in consecutive waves of the same study. This issue is evident mainly for ISSP, ESS, EVS and LITS, and so it is not possible to examine trends in the EU total, except in the case of Eurobarometer and EQLS.
- In addition, although it is of diminishing relevance because of Brexit, the UK is not fully covered in some datasets. In ISSP, the UK is fully covered in the waves between 1999 and 2006, but Northern Ireland was excluded from the survey from 2009. Similarly, the LITS 2010 covers only Great Britain (i.e. not Northern Ireland).
- There are also major differences in the data collection methodology of the surveys over time. Although surveys such as Eurobarometer, EQLS, ISSP, EVS and ESS include questions repeated in all waves, the wording of even these questions may change across the waves. The full comparability of the same variable(s) over time is, therefore, reduced in some cases. In addition, it also happens that a question may be asked in some waves, but not in following ones. This results in loss of opportunity to analyse trends, as well as lack of timeliness of the analysis.
- There are methodological differences in collecting the basic socio-demographic and socio-economic background variables across surveys. For instance, in Eurobarometer, actual data on the highest education level attained by a respondent and his/her household income are not collected. Instead, the age when the respondent stopped full-time education and his/her self-declared (subjective) socio-economic class are asked. Accordingly, level of education can only be proxied by school leaving age. On the other hand, in spite of household income and education level being included in the ESS and other opinion surveys (i.e. those that are not specifically designed to uncover income situations), there are significant numbers of missing cases for income; this prevents the relationship between the responses given and the income of respondents being analysed.
- The sampled population of Eurobarometer covers the nationals of the survey country and people from other EU Member States living there. Non-EU nationals residing in the country are excluded. When the evidence for socio-economic and labour market disparities between the native-born population and migrants from non-EU countries in some Member States is considered, the results of the Eurobarometer analysis of social protection attitudes is likely to be biased, compared with the other surveys analysed (as those excluded might have different views). It should be noted that, according to the Eurostat population statistics, the proportion of non-EU nationals aged 15 and over and residing in an EU country was 4% (22.3 million) in the overall population in January 2018; this figure was 5% (20.9 million) in the EU-15 countries.

With regard to these limitations, the research team has developed an approach for obtaining the most reliable results with reasonable comparability, both across the countries and over time:

- The results of the content analysis were shared with all members of the research team. In addition, the same master data files were used by all team members.
- For the descriptive analysis, a conscious attempt has been made to make it simple: basic socio-economic categories are defined in some detail, so that reliability remains ensured for smaller overall case numbers in the various tables. Gender, broad age groups, economic activity status and household income or self-defined socio-economic class are used for the



basic tables in a simple form. These background variables are also related to the main objectives of the project, which are to analyse the variations in social protection attitudes (A) between rich and poor, (B) between employed and unemployed and active and inactive and (C) between generations.

- All analyses are conducted using weighted data,⁴ wherever population weights for the country are available. Moreover, wherever necessary, data are analysed by weight for the larger units (the EU or a segment of it, in the case of pooled analyses).
- In cases where the question wording varies over time, social protection attitudes observed in different years are not put in the same series (or else warnings are issued).

A1.3 Notes on the availability and limitations of national surveys investigated in the report

While preparing national case descriptions, the team collected information on the availability and suitability of national datasets for the analysis.

The countries selected for more scrutiny in this study are broadly representative of the range of national situations across the EU. These countries are Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the UK. While making this selection, the intention was to achieve a balanced representation of EU countries in terms of their:

- geographical position (for example Austria, Belgium, France and the Netherlands being in the group of Continental countries; Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal in the Mediterranean area; Denmark, Finland, Sweden representing the Nordic countries; Hungary, Poland and Romania in central and eastern Europe; and the UK and Ireland off the European mainland;
- institutional arrangements (welfare regimes), the countries between them covering the 'social democratic', the 'continental corporatist', the 'liberal', the 'Mediterranean' and the 'post-transition' regimes;
- spending patterns, the countries including big spenders, with expenditure on social protection relatively high relative to GDP (such as France, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries) and low spenders in central and eastern Europe, with expenditure low relative to GDP;
- tax arrangements, the countries including regimes with both high rates of tax on income and expenditure and with low rates, and with both progressive rate schedules and flat rate ones.

Limitations on the analysis include (for certain countries or certain periods) lower level of coverage, breaks in series, unavailability of surveys on special topics, etc. Most notably, a number of problems were encountered for several countries; as a result, some countries may be better covered than others.

- Relevant surveys are not available in some countries (e.g. Cyprus).⁵
- For several countries, the surveys are not carried out regularly or are out of date (e.g. the Irish Social and Political Attitudes Survey (ISPAS) was conducted just once, in autumn 2001).

⁴ The reason is that all these surveys are implemented by stratified sampling procedures; and the final weights provided in the datasets involve the sampling design and non-response rates. Thus, weighted analysis is essential to obtain the representative results both for the total population and for the sub-groups.

⁵ There is no suitable opinion survey for Cyprus (other than the cross-national ones).



- The literature based on these national surveys provides extensive information on preferences, and further analysis seems unnecessary in some cases. In the UK, for instance, there is a large body of literature presenting the results of the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA), which has been conducted at the national level annually since 1983 by the National Centre for Social Research, and includes questions on attitudes towards welfare policies, healthcare services and the role of government in public spending, services and welfare policies. Another example is the *Enquête sur la connaissance et les opinions des modalités de financement de la protection sociale* in France. This survey was conducted in 2017 and includes questions on perceptions of financial arrangements, social protection and future expectations. The report produced by the *Haut Conseil du financement de la protection sociale* in 2018 provides in-depth analysis on the basis of this survey, and further analysis is not necessary.

Findings from national surveys have been included in the report, either in boxes or directly in the main text. They were used to provide additional insight into attitudes towards particular areas of social protection. Some questions from the *baromètre d'opinion de la Drees*⁶ in **France** were used to determine attitudes towards housing, health care and long-term care. Some questions from the CIS Barometer⁷ in **Spain** were also used to assess attitudes to health care. **Denmark** was covered by studying the so-called welfare chauvinism on the basis of the ESS survey for the years 2008 and 2016. In the **Netherlands**, attitudes towards a shift in caring responsibilities and/or increased activation were studied using data from the national dataset Cultural Changes⁸ until 2016. For **Hungary**, the interrelationship of shocks from the crisis and redistributive attitudes, as well as attitudes towards getting ahead in society were analysed from repeated blocks of questions in the regular Tárki Household Monitor Surveys in autumn of 2007 and spring of 2016. To cover **Greece**, it was decided to insert the results of a study on people's views on the relationship between taxation levels and welfare provisions, carried out in April 2015. For **Italy**, there was a short-lived guaranteed minimum income legislated in 2018, replaced by a means-tested benefit after a short while; the ESS data show attitudes to this change. Attitudes to old-age pensions are compared in **Spain** and **Ireland** in a special comparative box. For **Belgium**, the 2014 module of the Belgian National Elections Study (BNES)⁹ was analysed to show attitudes towards the different elements of Social Europe.

6 The DREES Opinion Barometer is a follow-up opinion poll. It has been implemented in metropolitan regions of France every year since 2000. The latest poll was conducted in 2018. The survey collects data on people's perceptions of and attitudes towards health, social protection (health insurance, retirement, family, disability-dependency, poverty-exclusion), inequalities and social cohesion. The sample covers around 3,000 people, selected by quota sampling.

7 *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS) has conducted these opinion polls every month (except for August) since 1985 in Spain. Random sampling techniques are used, and the sample size of each wave is around 2,500 people. The questionnaire contains a set of questions from which the 'poll indicators' are calculated. Each wave also includes other questions on particular political or social issues.

8 The Dutch survey Cultural Changes (*Culturele Veranderingen*) is a survey run by the Netherlands Institute of Social Research (SCP), and has been conducted since 1975 (generally every two years); it aims to determine what views 'the Dutchman in the street' has on society and culture, and how these views change over time. Cultural Changes is conducted face to face with respondents aged 16 years and older, with a net response of 2,000 people.

9 This survey was organised among a probability-based sample of Belgian voters. The survey consisted of a face-to-face section, as well as a drop-off self-completion questionnaire. Over 1,400 respondents participated in both parts of the survey.





Annex 2. Tables – descriptive analysis

Table A1. Proportion of individuals perceiving the welfare state as a positive thing (total), 2007-2018 (%)

	2007	2009	2014	2018
BE	73.8	65.5	60.5	68.8
BG	72.6	89.5	80.7	82.4
CZ	66.6	65.0	59.8	62.2
DK	91.2	87.8	84.5	86.1
DE	73.4	83.5	72.2	81.2
EE	88.2	89.7	77.9	82.8
IE	57.3	45.7	45.9	64.3
EL	79.3	89.5	81.5	82.4
ES	89.0	87.1	75.0	84.9
FR	31.3	35.6	30.5	33.8
HR	61.8	69.3	62.3	70.7
IT	64.0	67.8	53.7	56.7
CY	88.5	86.4	69.6	68.8
LV	85.2	73.9	60.5	62.0
LT	79.9	76.1	71.8	74.9
LU	69.6	62.0	45.7	57.5
HU	72.4	77.8	66.6	78.4
MT	74.5	70.2	72.6	67.8
NL	72.9	75.1	51.5	64.1
AT	79.3	77.4	86.0	83.7
PL	73.3	70.0	69.3	74.4
PT	44.5	58.0	55.3	75.0
RO	88.1	81.6	73.6	70.3
SI	79.5	71.4	57.5	58.1
SK	78.5	71.7	60.4	63.5
FI	93.5	93.6	90.8	90.8
SE	87.0	87.5	89.5	89.3
UK	61.9	61.0	61.6	57.2
EU	68.4	70.3	62.7	67.0

Source: Eurobarometer.



Table A2. Proportion of individuals who agree with the given statements for the current situation of the social welfare system of the country (total), in 2009 and 2014 (%)

	2009			2014		
	Enough Coverage	Serves as a model for other countries	Too expensive for society	Enough Coverage	Serves as a model for other countries	Too expensive for society
BE	69.1	72.8	58.5	76.5	72.2	51.9
BG	8.2	3.2	49.3	7.7	2.9	34.1
CZ	33.2	15.1	59.5	29.8	11.0	52.4
DK	59.2	79.1	36.5	72.7	80.7	36.1
DE	61.8	62.0	54.0	72.6	73.5	37.9
EE	18.8	9.8	58.4	23.1	14.1	38.3
IE	54.0	29.5	57.1	49.8	24.0	61.4
EL	14.6	12.2	73.7	9.5	3.7	61.1
ES	66.9	63.5	42.3	58.7	60.1	34.6
FR	68.0	81.0	63.4	74.1	76.6	64.4
HR	19.3	12.2	53.9	21.0	11.0	49.5
IT	36.8	28.4	51.0	29.9	22.6	43.3
CY	26.1	17.1	40.6	12.0	6.8	49.6
LV	6.3	2.4	67.3	10.2	6.1	60.0
LT	12.9	6.7	56.2	21.0	8.4	45.2
LU	82.0	76.7	26.5	85.8	78.3	33.4
HU	32.3	12.5	76.5	24.3	15.5	51.4
MT	54.1	35.6	62.3	59.6	49.9	62.4
NL	75.3	74.8	46.5	75.6	67.9	42.9
AT	50.3	50.2	47.1	74.5	61.4	36.6
PL	19.8	11.7	61.0	17.8	11.9	54.0
PT	16.9	13.2	43.7	18.0	14.4	54.1
RO	15.7	8.1	41.5	13.3	9.1	43.7
SI	34.9	22.0	63.8	26.6	12.5	60.8
SK	27.2	14.2	58.3	24.2	9.6	56.0
FI	65.7	70.0	33.7	74.7	72.7	38.8
SE	49.6	69.5	35.6	48.5	67.0	21.8
UK	52.3	47.9	55.5	60.5	53.6	47.8
EU	47.9	45.7	53.6	50.7	47.3	46.4

Source: Eurobarometer.



Table A3. Opinions of individuals about welfare state provisions (total), in 2009 and 2014 (%)

	2009				2014			
	Higher level of social spending, taxes increase	Lower level of social spending, taxes decrease	It depends	Don't know	Higher level of social spending, taxes increase	Lower level of social spending, taxes decrease	It depends	Don't know
BE	60.2	25.7	11.1	3.0	53.6	25.9	18.8	1.7
BG	73.8	11.9	10.0	4.3	43.8	15.0	30.2	11.0
CZ	62.0	29.3	4.7	4.0	41.6	32.8	18.9	6.7
DK	80.2	12.7	6.0	1.1	67.6	11.8	18.7	1.9
DE	61.1	22.8	11.2	4.9	54.0	16.8	24.9	4.3
EE	63.9	18.0	14.4	3.6	40.2	17.7	35.8	6.3
IE	64.7	10.4	15.4	9.4	48.2	17.9	26.9	7.0
EL	59.4	12.2	21.9	6.6	24.6	39.9	29.5	5.9
ES	61.2	14.3	17.3	7.2	48.2	13.7	32.9	5.2
FR	68.8	15.7	7.4	8.0	46.5	21.2	22.9	9.4
HR					34.5	42.6	17.9	4.9
IT	54.1	16.7	22.3	6.9	28.3	32.1	30.1	9.5
CY	77.6	12.9	8.3	1.2	35.6	33.7	27.5	3.3
LV	44.1	34.7	14.7	6.5	26.7	31.4	35.2	6.7
LT	42.9	40.5	11.0	5.6	31.6	32.3	30.6	5.5
LU	75.7	11.9	6.7	5.7	56.8	13.0	24.3	6.0
HU	55.8	28.2	8.2	7.8	40.6	30.0	25.7	3.7
MT	56.0	17.2	17.0	9.8	61.3	10.7	22.7	5.3
NL	78.1	10.6	7.9	3.3	67.3	9.6	20.7	2.4
AT	43.4	27.4	24.5	4.7	38.9	27.7	29.0	4.3
PL	57.4	22.3	9.5	10.8	37.4	34.1	16.9	11.6
PT	61.5	13.5	17.9	7.1	39.5	26.7	28.4	5.4
RO	50.4	26.2	12.4	10.9	24.5	53.1	15.8	6.7
SI	43.3	37.0	16.4	3.3	31.6	33.7	30.2	4.5
SK	59.9	35.0	2.8	2.3	30.3	42.6	16.5	10.6
FI	84.1	12.4	3.2	0.3	69.9	15.8	11.6	2.7
SE	83.5	10.0	4.2	2.3	84.7	4.4	8.7	2.2
UK	76.7	13.7	6.6	3.0	56.3	12.3	25.6	5.9
EU	63.3	18.6	12.0	6.1	46.0	22.8	24.6	6.6

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations. For the EU: weighted average.
Source: Eurobarometer.



Table A4. Proportion of individuals who agreed with various statements on social benefits/services (total population), in 2008 and 2016 (%)

	2008						2016					
	They place too great a strain on economy	They prevent widespread poverty	They lead to a more equal society	They make people lazy	They make people less willing to care for one another		They place too great a strain on economy	They prevent widespread poverty	They lead to a more equal society	They make people lazy	They make people less willing to care for one another	
BE	38.4	68.5	67.7	42.2	42.6		37.3	69.4	65.4	41.5	39.5	
BG	21.1	30.2	17.8	38.2	29.5							
CZ	39.6	52.4	30.7	46.0	37.0		44.5	52.1	32.9	52.3	40.1	
DK	27.0	68.5	58.6	31.6	38.4							
DE	37.6	65.3	43.3	40.6	41.7		28.7	68.6	45.7	43.1	43.2	
EE	17.2	51.5	42.0	21.7	16.3		21.2	44.4	37.3	28.6	20.1	
IE	58.2	69.2	51.6	62.7	38.6		49.4	63.8	53.2	57.8	39.5	
EL	33.3	54.9	58.1	18.8	21.2							
ES	37.1	51.3	54.4	39.9	33.1		38.6	58.1	59.3	33.1	32.8	
FR	52.6	64.7	58.2	48.4	49.4		53.0	66.4	55.1	52.2	50.0	
HR	36.4	44.5	45.4	35.6	30.9							
IT							29.9	42.1	47.2	25.9	28.1	
CY	38.1	75.1	77.1	25.9	21.1							
LV	25.2	33.4	27.7	17.9	14.6							
LT	19.3	43.7	33.6	25.1	20.3		32.8	34.2	26.6	41.3	29.3	
LU												
HU	52.3	19.4	11.5	44.2	39.7		31.7	31.7	28.1	41.0	28.3	
MT												
NL	25.1	73.6	64.1	41.5	44.4		23.5	73.3	62.5	41.6	42.3	
AT	33.2	64.5	34.6	38.1	33.8		31.9	72.2	58.6	41.0	40.0	
PL	27.1	43.5	34.8	45.9	43.1		32.6	50.1	41.3	59.5	47.1	
PT	41.5	52.5	48.4	44.1	34.7		57.1	55.6	50.7	63.0	62.4	
RO	41.1	42.5	33.4	32.5	25.6							
SI	34.1	44.9	45.8	49.9	37.7		38.9	50.5	48.8	50.8	44.4	
SK	54.1	46.0	33.5	43.0	35.9							
FI	19.6	61.0	65.8	33.6	36.6		32.9	66.2	67.9	36.7	34.1	
SE	25.6	65.0	62.9	36.1	25.5		24.0	61.8	63.2	35.0	22.1	
UK	50.5	55.1	40.7	65.2	47.2		52.6	55.7	36.6	56.5	43.5	
EU	39.7	56.2	45.9	44.3	39.7		38.4	58.4	48.4	44.6	40.5	

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations. EU totals represent the average of the Member States with available data at the current ESS wave.
Source: ESS.



Table A5. Percentage of respondents willing to pay additional 2% of own income for child-related leave, and selected country-level variables, 2018

	Willing to pay additional 2% of own income for child-related leave	Female employment rate	Length of total paid leave (weeks)
BE	10.5	60.7	32
DK	13.0	71.3	50
DE	7.8	72.1	58
EE	17.0	71.4	166
IE	17.0	63.3	26
EL	8.7	45.3	43
FR	7.0	61.9	42
IT	6.7	49.5	48
LT	13.4	71.6	62
NL	6.5	72.8	16
AT	9.8	68.6	60
PL	14.3	60.8	52
PT	22.6	66.9	30
SI	14.2	67.5	52
FI	11.4	70.6	161
NO	14.2	72.6	91

Note: Female employment rate from 15 to 64 years (percentage of total population).

Source: OECD-RTM survey, Eurostat and OECD databases.

Table A6. Percentage of respondents willing to pay additional 2% of own income for childcare services, and selected country-level variables

	Willing to pay additional 2% of own income for childcare services 2018	Female employment rate 2018	Total public expenditure on early childhood education and care (% GDP) 2015 or latest available
BE	7.2	60.7	0.8
DK	16.3	71.3	1.2
DE	17.3	72.1	0.6
EE	14.3	71.4	0.8
IE	22.1	63.3	0.3
EL	11.6	45.3	
FR	5.6	61.9	1.3
IT	10.8	49.5	0.6
LT	18.2	71.6	0.8
NL	8.6	72.8	0.6
AT	17.6	68.6	0.7
PL	12.7	60.8	0.6
PT	15.9	66.9	0.4
SI	14.2	67.5	0.5
FI	16.6	70.6	1.1
NO	17.7	72.6	1.3

Note: Female employment rate from 15 to 64 years (percentage of total population). Empty cells indicate no data.

Source: OECD-RTM survey, Eurostat and OECD databases.



Table A7. Average values for satisfaction with the state of health services in country nowadays (total population), 2002-2018 (11-point scale)

	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
BE	6.94	7.19	7.31	7.38	7.43	7.67	7.49	7.37	7.23
BG			2.64	3.24	3.01	2.89			3.50
CZ	4.91	5.32		5.39	4.63	5.49	6.09	6.01	6.30
DK	6.31	6.43	6.08	5.77	6.32	6.89	6.49		
DE	4.86	4.71	4.44	4.70	4.80	5.78	5.94	6.18	5.90
EE		4.26	4.23	5.09	6.04	5.05	5.29	5.02	5.26
IE	4.02	4.06	3.97	4.19	4.12	4.09	4.22	4.04	4.13
EL	3.96	4.75		3.38	3.05				
ES	5.37	5.71	6.03	6.09	6.39	5.21	4.78	5.37	
FR	5.65	5.85	6.30	6.03	6.03	6.50	6.31	6.43	6.21
HR				4.50	5.07				
IT	4.76	4.68				4.93		5.29	5.77
CY			6.32	5.80	5.38	5.09			4.30
LV			3.99	3.59					
LT				3.73	4.10	4.90	5.03	4.85	
LU	7.13	7.10							
HU	3.73	3.33	3.24	3.78	3.87	3.98	3.40	3.96	3.77
MT									
NL	5.58	5.65	5.94	6.20	6.35	6.52	6.03	6.27	6.55
AT	6.74	6.53	6.70	6.57	8.33		6.64	7.19	7.15
PL	3.90	3.10	3.88	3.76	3.78	3.44	3.47	3.91	4.27
PT	3.32	3.55	3.67	4.30	4.56	4.09	4.56	5.25	
RO			3.77	3.95					
SI	4.77	4.90	5.17	4.82	5.69	5.62	4.59	4.76	4.90
SK		5.76	3.95	4.33	3.84	3.85			
FI	6.61	6.89	6.96	6.64	6.93	6.87	6.83	7.21	7.33
SE	5.12	5.15	5.82	6.04	6.24	6.28	5.74	5.67	
UK	4.90	5.39	5.22	5.96	6.27	6.26	6.02	5.78	5.70
EU	4.98	5.04	5.10	5.21	5.43	5.50	5.56	5.71	5.74

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations. EU totals represent the average of the Member States with available data at the current ESS wave.

Source: ESS.



Table A8. Average values for satisfaction with the state of health services in country nowadays, by subjective household income level, in 2008 and 2018 (11-point scale)

	2008					2018				
	Living comfortably	Coping	Difficult	Very difficult	Total	Living comfortably	Coping	Difficult	Very difficult	Total
BE	7.6	7.4	7.1	6.9	7.4	7.6	7.2	6.7	6.7	7.2
BG	3.7	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.2	4.4	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.5
CZ	6.0	5.6	4.9	4.0	5.4	6.5	6.4	6.1	5.6	6.3
DK	5.8	5.8	5.1		5.8					
DE	5.1	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.7	6.1	5.7	5.9	5.3	5.9
EE	5.7	5.2	4.6	4.6	5.1	5.9	5.3	4.8	4.5	5.3
IE	4.5	4.2	3.9	3.8	4.2	4.5	4.0	3.6	4.0	4.1
EL	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.1	3.4					
ES	6.2	6.2	5.9	5.6	6.1					
FR	6.5	5.8	5.7	5.9	6.0	6.5	6.2	5.8	5.5	6.2
HR	5.0	4.3	4.1	4.9	4.5					
IT						6.1	5.8	5.5	5.4	5.8
CY	5.9	5.7	5.9	5.8	5.8	4.2	4.6	4.2	3.6	4.3
LV	4.5	4.0	3.5	2.8	3.6					
LT	4.3	3.9	3.7	3.0	3.7					
LU										
HU	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.8	4.0	3.5	3.3	3.8
MT										
NL	6.3	6.1	6.3	5.4	6.2	6.8	6.3	5.7	5.4	6.5
AT	6.5	6.7	6.0	6.5	6.6	7.4	7.1	6.8	6.0	7.1
PL	3.7	3.9	3.7	2.7	3.8	4.7	4.3	4.0		4.3
PT	4.6	4.4	4.1	3.9	4.3					
RO	4.2	4.2	4.0	3.4	4.0					
SI	4.9	4.7	5.3	4.1	4.8	5.0	4.9	4.7	4.3	4.9
SK	4.3	4.6	4.0	4.2	4.3					
FI	6.9	6.7	6.3	5.6	6.6	7.7	7.3	6.9	5.8	7.3
SE	6.1	5.9	5.5	6.4	6.0					
UK	6.2	5.9	5.6	5.4	6.0	6.0	5.6	5.2	5.1	5.7
EU	5.9	5.2	4.7	4.1	5.2	6.2	5.6	5.3	4.9	5.7

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations. Cells with italic font indicate findings with low reliability because of small number of observations. EU totals represent the average of the Member States with available data at the current ESS wave.

Source: ESS.



Table A9. Proportion of individuals agreeing with the statement that it is just for rich people to have better health care (total pop.), in 2009 (%)

Country	Percentage
BE	5.4
BG	12.4
CZ	27.7
DK	19.0
DE	12.3
EE	25.2
IE	
EL	
ES	26.0
FR	2.6
HR	8.8
IT	15.8
CY	9.7
LV	12.9
LT	27.3
LU	
HU	7.4
MT	
NL	10.2
AT	12.2
PL	16.9
PT	12.1
RO	
SI	8.5
SK	14.8
FI	21.8
SE	13.9
GB*	42.3
EU	17.6

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations. EU totals represent the average of the Member States with available data at the current ISSP wave. *Northern Ireland is not covered.

Source: ISSP.

Table A10. The proportion of individuals declaring that better health care is necessary to feel economically more secure (total), 2018 (%)

Country	Percentage
BE	41.1
BG	
CZ	
DK	39.3
DE	39.8
EE	52.9
IE	61.3
EL	61.9
ES	
FR	41.1
HR	
IT	47.3
CY	
LV	
LT	53.0
LU	
HU	
MT	
NL	46.1
AT	42.0
PL	62.0
PT	56.4
RO	
SI	52.8
SK	
FI	37.4
SE	
UK	
EU	46.2

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations. EU totals represent the average of the Member States with available data at the current OECD-RTM wave.

Source: OECD-RTM.



Table A11. Proportion of individuals who mentioned health as the first or second priority for extra government expenditure (total), 2006–2016 (%) and healthcare expenditure in 2016 (% of GDP)

	Health as a priority for extra government expenditure			Healthcare expenditure (% of GDP)
	2006	2010	2016	2016
BE				10.30
BG	87.5	84.1	77.7	8.23
CZ	71.2	75.8	66.3	7.15
DK				10.18
DE		62.3	47.6	11.13
EE	75.0	64.3	69.5	6.50
IE				7.38
EL			64.4	8.28
ES				8.97
FR		60.4		11.48
HR	67.8	51.4	52.5	6.83
IT		70.5	50.4	8.88
CY			73.7	6.79
LV	74.1	75.4	80.9	6.21
LT	81.5	67.9	63.2	6.64
LU				5.47
HU	80.0	71.1	72.1	7.13
MT				
NL				10.30
AT				10.42
PL	75.4	68.2	73.8	6.52
PT				9.04
RO	75.6	84.5	74.2	4.99
SI	64.8	60.4	56.3	8.50
SK	84.3	75.5	74.8	6.98
FI				9.43
SE		70.8		10.98
GB*		65.7		9.70

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations. *Northern Ireland is not covered by LITS.

Source: LITS; ESSPROS database.



Table A12. Proportion of individuals willing to pay extra taxes for an improved public health system (total), in 2010 and 2016 (%)

	2010			2016		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
BE						
BG	50.4	39.5	10.1	44.8	44.6	10.6
CZ	39.4	51.4	9.2	39.8	52.4	7.9
DK						
DE	23.9	73.7	2.4	36.8	53.8	9.5
EE	39.1	51.1	9.8	48.8	41.7	9.5
IE						
EL				42.5	55.4	2.1
ES						
FR	61.7	37.5	0.9			
HR	55.6	36.6	7.8	59.5	31.5	9.0
IT	37.3	60.1	2.6	38.3	52.6	9.1
CY				56.7	38.0	5.2
LV	41.4	51.0	7.7	48.1	47.9	4.0
LT	31.5	57.8	10.7	44.4	48.0	7.6
LU						
HU	30.6	64.7	4.7	33.8	59.6	6.6
MT						
NL						
AT						
PL	32.0	60.2	7.8	37.9	53.9	8.2
PT						
RO	45.3	44.8	9.9	35.3	49.8	14.8
SI	47.8	51.1	1.1	41.9	52.5	5.6
SK	37.8	45.6	16.6	18.8	71.1	10.1
FI						
SE	75.6	21.0	3.4			
GB*	63.6	33.1	3.3			
EU	43.8	52.2	4.1	38.0	53.0	9.1

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations. EU totals represent the average of the Member States with available data at the current LITS wave. *Northern Ireland is not covered.

Source: LITS.



Table A13. Proportion of individuals mentioning that the EU should invest its resources in health care as a priority, by self-defined socio-economic class, 2010 and 2013 (%)

	2010				2013			
	Low	Middle	High	Total	Low	Middle	High	Total
BE	35.9	33.9	36.2	34.4	40.3	34.9	35.2	35.6
BG	64.1	63.3	63.3	63.8	57.8	51.5		55.4
CZ	45.4	50.3	53.2	49.4	45.4	42.1	50.3	43.6
DK	57.1	47.3	41.9	47.3	42.9	40.5	35.7	39.8
DE	43.2	39.9	44.5	40.9	26.7	35.8	37.3	34.2
EE	48.2	52.5	38.1	50.4	50.5	51.9	47.3	51.2
IE	52.9	48.9	53.2	50.0	57.0	54.9	51.8	54.9
EL	61.3	45.3	34.5	46.6	53.9	49.4	41.4	50.6
ES	32.8	23.8	36.1	26.3	38.1	38.5	45.6	38.7
FR	39.2	37.2	29.2	37.7	34.9	36.1	30.3	35.6
HR					33.1	32.1	36.6	32.6
IT	49.5	40.1	38.2	41.3	39.9	33.5	34.3	34.9
CY	64.1	56.6	55.7	58.5	51.3	51.3		50.7
LV	49.4	48.6	46.7	48.8	46.0	52.1	58.4	51.2
LT	46.5	49.6	43.2	48.2	45.6	45.4	32.9	44.5
LU	26.5	31.0	22.7	29.3	30.4	27.5	21.1	27.3
HU	57.5	53.7	40.7	55.0	51.4	48.8	35.7	49.7
MT	63.4	54.4	57.1	55.5	59.5	56.3	63.9	57.4
NL	37.7	45.2	42.1	43.8	61.5	36.0	28.4	35.2
AT	48.1	40.1	32.0	40.1	44.7	39.2	37.4	39.8
PL	53.3	53.9	41.3	52.8	50.0	54.0	53.8	52.9
PT	57.9	53.0		55.5	54.7	52.8		53.8
RO	65.1	61.0	59.7	62.3	58.0	58.9	64.2	59.1
SI	36.7	36.9	36.4	36.8	39.2	30.3	30.0	32.2
SK	53.6	55.8	46.3	54.0	50.0	50.2	49.5	50.1
FI	43.6	39.7	40.1	40.3	41.7	32.9	34.1	34.6
SE	66.9	48.1	43.0	48.7	38.8	41.9	37.0	40.6
UK	55.3	53.2	47.2	52.5	47.4	52.6	48.5	51.5
EU	47.9	43.2	43.0	44.2	42.7	42.0	41.3	42.1

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations. Cells with italic font indicate findings with low reliability because of small number of observations.

Source: Eurobarometer.



Table A14. Distribution of individuals according to their opinions about who should cover the costs of care for the elderly (total), 2012 (%)

	Themselves/ family	Government/ public funds	Cannot choose
BE	42.6	45.3	12.1
BG	59.3	35.1	5.5
CZ	45.4	45.8	8.8
DK	16.7	77.3	6.1
DE	32.7	53.9	13.4
EE			
IE	38.4	50.9	10.8
EL			
ES	25.3	69.5	5.2
FR	29.8	54.4	15.8
HR	56.9	40.1	3.0
IT			
CY			
LV	42.3	53.1	4.5
LT	32.8	54.0	13.2
LU			
HU	57.5	38.6	3.9
MT			
NL	29.1	59.3	11.6
AT	24.4	61.3	14.3
PL	48.0	44.0	8.0
PT	30.2	67.2	2.6
RO			
SI	41.5	51.3	7.2
SK	34.1	60.9	5.0
FI	25.2	64.5	10.3
SE	12.3	81.2	6.5
GB*	32.2	54.5	13.4
EU	33.7	55.4	10.8

Note: Empty cells indicate no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations.

EU totals represent the average of the Member States with available data at the current ISSP wave.

*Northern Ireland is not covered.

Source: ISSP.



Annex 3. Tables – multivariate analysis

Table B1. Linear regression results for agreeing with the statement that the social benefits/ services place too great a strain on the economy – individual-level effects

	Empty		Model 1	
	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.
Constant	3.029***	0.046	3.088***	0.078
<i>Individual-level indicators</i>				
Gender				
Female			-0.025	0.020
Male (ref.)				
Age groups				
15-24			-0.019	0.039
25-49			-0.020	0.031
50-64			-0.050**	0.016
65+ (ref.)				
Marital status				
Married			0.049**	0.016
Divorced/separated			0.041	0.029
Widowed			0.039	0.026
Never married (ref.)				
Household size				
2			0.004	0.025
3			0.001	0.028
4			-0.002	0.025
5+			-0.049	0.042
1 (ref.)				
Highest educational level attained†				
Low			0.169***	0.028
Medium			0.113***	0.025
Other			0.118	0.133
High (ref.)				
Economic activity status				
Employed			-0.116***	0.023
Unemployed			-0.159***	0.032
Student/trainee			-0.196***	0.016
Retired			-0.158***	0.018
Other inactive			-0.190***	0.022
Compulsory military service			-0.287***	0.048
Self-employed (ref.)				
Self-defined HH income				
Coping			0.025	0.016
Difficult			-0.022	0.035
Very difficult			-0.127***	0.029
Don't know			-0.050	0.047
Living comfortably (ref.)				
Position on political spectrum				
Left (0-3)			-0.323***	0.055
Right (7-10)			0.192***	0.035
Don't know			-0.059*	0.029
Centre (4-6) (ref.)				



Table B1. Linear regression results for agreeing with the statement that the social benefits/ services place too great a strain on the economy – individual-level effects (continued)

	Empty		Model 1	
	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.
Performance of national government (11-point scale)				
0-2			-0.031	0.024
3-4			-0.017	0.021
5-7			-0.015	0.025
Don't know			-0.183	0.226
8-10 (ref.)				
ESS wave				
2008			0.043	0.044
2016 (ref.)				
Variance components				
var (_cons)	0.051	0.009	0.053	0.009
var (Residual)	1.066	0.059	1.027	0.054
Intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC)	0.046	0.008	0.049	0.008
N country	26		26	
N observations	73,201		73,201	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

†Those with a 'low' level of education are respondents with lower secondary education or less who have completed basic schooling at most; those with 'medium' education level are respondents who have completed upper secondary education or post-secondary non-tertiary education; and those with a 'high' level of education are respondents, who have completed tertiary education. The 'other' category refers to respondents whose education level cannot be classified.

Source: ESS 2008/2016.



Table B2. Linear regression results for agreeing with the statement that the social benefits/ services place too great a strain on the economy – contextual effects

	Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.
Constant	3.998***	0.303	3.494***	0.334	2.438***	0.290	2.356***	0.374	2.545***	0.190
ESS wave										
2008	0.029	0.035	0.037	0.047	0.093	0.050	0.102	0.056	0.056	0.042
2016 (ref.)										
Controlled for all individual-level variables										
Contextual var.										
AROP	-0.054**	0.018								
P90/P10			-0.104	0.073						
Gini diff					0.033*	0.013				
% of Net Soc. Prot. Exp. in GDP							0.034*	0.017		
Perception of Corruption Index									0.008**	0.003
Variance components										
var(_cons)	0.077	0.021	0.056	0.011	0.070	0.023	0.067	0.018	0.082	0.018
var(Residual)	1.026	0.055	1.027	0.054	1.026	0.055	1.026	0.054	1.026	0.054
ICC	0.070	0.019	0.052	0.010	0.064	0.020	0.061	0.016	0.074	0.016
N country	26		26		26		26		26	
N observations	73,201		73,201		73,201		73,201		73,201	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

No AROP, P90/P10 and Gini data for HR in 2008 (2009 figures are used). EE included only in 2016.

No net social benefits expenditure data for FR and PL in 2008. The data are calculated according to the gross values in 2008 and the average ratio of net and gross values in the nearest three consecutive years with available data.

Source: ESS 2008/2016.



Table B3. Operationalisation of welfare state dimensions – ESS data 2008 Wave 4

Dimension	Scale		Number of items	ESS code
Goals	1-5	(Strongly) agree to reduce income levels	1	B30
Range	0-10	Government should be responsible for... ensuring jobs for everyone who wants one (1), health care for the sick (2), a reasonable standard of living for the old (3) and for the unemployed (4), child care (5) and for providing paid care leave (6)	6	D15-D20
Degree	0-10	Increase taxes and spend more on social benefits and services (10)	1	D34
Implementation: Efficiency	0-10	The healthcare system (1) and tax system (2) are (extremely) efficient	2	D30-D31
Implementation: Effectiveness – Abuse	1-5	Disagree with: many people manage to obtain benefits to which they are not entitled	1	D42
Implementation: Effectiveness-Underuse	1-5	Disagree with: many people get less benefit than they are legally entitled to	1	D41
Outcomes goals	1-5	(Strongly) agree that: social benefits and services lead to a more equal society (1), less poverty (2) and make it easier to combine work and family life (3)	3	D22, D23 D26
Outcomes policy	0-10	The state of education (1), the state of health care (2), the standard of leaving of the old (3), and of the unemployed (4), the provision of affordable childcare services (5), and opportunities for young people to find a job (6) are (extremely) good	6	B28, B29, D11-D14
Outcomes economic	1-5	(Strongly) disagree with: the welfare state places too great a strain on the economy (1), and costs businesses too much in taxes and charges (2)	2	D21, D25
Outcomes moral	1-5	(Strongly) disagree with: the welfare state makes people lazy (1), less willing to care for one another (2) and less willing to look after themselves and their family (3)	3	D27-D29

Note: For the exact wording of the 26 survey questions, we refer to the European Social Survey 2008/2009. Abuse and underuse do not form a reliable scale (average Cronbach's alpha for 22 countries was only 0.32) and therefore items are included separately.

Source: Roosma (2016) (based on Roosma et al., 2013).



Table B4. Multilevel models for two attitudes towards family benefits and services – individual-level effects

	Linear regression		Logistic regression	
	(1)		(2)	
	Government responsibility to ensure childcare services for working parents		Introducing extra social benefits and services to make it easier for working parents to combine work and family life, even if it means much higher taxes for all	
	(11-point scale) 2008/2016		(in favour (1) or against (0)) 2016	
	Coeff.	Std err.	Odds ratio	Std err.
Intercept	7.59***	0.14	1.318	0.154
Year 2016	0.27*	0.14	-	-
Individual-level indicators				
Female (male is ref.)	0.22***	0.03	0.996	0.030
Age (31-39 years is ref.)			0.967	0.060
15-30	-0.16*	0.08	0.974	0.045
40-49	-0.14**	0.05	0.873	0.067
50-64	-0.08	0.06	0.839	0.105
65+	-0.27	0.14	0.996	0.030
Education (low is ref.)				
middle	-0.01	0.05	1.021	0.058
high	-0.08	0.06	1.292**	0.103
Subjective income (living comfortably on present income is ref.)				
coping on present income	0.12**	0.04	1.004	0.060
difficult on present income	0.31***	0.09	0.923	0.075
very difficult on present income	0.39***	0.11	0.840	0.093
Work status (paid work is ref.)				
inactive	0.04	0.05	1.109**	0.044
unemployed, looking for job	-0.01	0.06	0.940	0.069
unemployed, not looking for job	-0.22	0.18	0.917	0.158
inactive – homemaker, looking after children or other persons	-0.05	0.06	0.878*	0.057
Age of youngest child (ref. is no child under 18 in the household)				
child in the household/ respondent is not parent	-0.01	0.08	0.987	0.024
under 6	0.44***	0.04	1.437***	0.102
6-11	0.22***	0.06	1.006	0.071
12-17	0.02	0.04	1.006	0.102
Variance components				
Group	0.36**	0.11	1.158**	0.063
Residuals	3.89***	0.17		
N country	24		18	
N observations	72,318		31,998	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; N 2008 (39,995); N 2016 (35,450); Post-stratification and population weights are applied.
Source: ESS 2008/2016.



Table B4a. Multilevel models for two attitudes towards family benefits and services – contextual effects I

Linear regression								
(1) Government responsibility to ensure childcare services for working parents (11-point scale) 2008/2016								
	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7 (without NL)	Model 8	Model 9
	Coeff. Std err.	Coeff. Std err.	Coeff. Std err.	Coeff. Std err.	Coeff. Std err.	Coeff. Std err.	Coeff. Std err.	Coeff. Std err.
Intercept	7.59*** [0.14]	7.59*** [0.14]	7.58*** [0.14]	7.55*** [0.14]	7.59*** [0.14]	7.73*** [0.12]	7.57*** [0.13]	7.57*** [0.13]
Year 2016	0.27* [0.14]	0.27* [0.14]	0.27* [0.14]	0.27* [0.14]	0.27* [0.14]	0.27* [0.14]	0.27* [0.14]	0.27* [0.14]
Controlled for all individual-level variables								
Contextual indicators								
GDP spending family policy	-0.02 [0.13]							
Family policy generosity		-0.01 [0.09]						
Formal childcare use (under age 6)			-0.17 [0.12]					
Average weekly childcare use				0.36** [0.12]				
Female employment rate (age 25-49)					-0.05 [0.12]			
Part-time employment rate (age 25-49)						-0.20 [0.12]		
Proportion of population (0-15)							-0.37** [0.08]	
Proportion of families with at least three children (/ families with children)								-0.37*** [0.09]
Variance components								
Group	0.36** [0.12]	0.36*** [0.12]	0.33*** [0.09]	0.24** [0.08]	0.36*** [0.11]	0.23*** [0.06]	0.24** [0.09]	0.24** [0.09]
Residuals	3.89*** [0.17]	3.89*** [0.17]	3.89*** [0.17]	3.89*** [0.17]	3.89*** [0.17]	3.86*** [0.17]	3.89*** [0.17]	3.89*** [0.17]
N country	24	24	24	24	24	23	24	24
N observations	72,318	72,318	72,318	72,318	72,318	69,014	72,318	72,318

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.
Source: ESS.



Table B4b. Multilevel models for two attitudes towards family benefits and services – contextual effects II

Logistic regression									
(2)									
Introducing extra social benefits and services to make it easier for working parents to combine work and family life even if it means much higher taxes for all (in favour (1) or against (0))									
2016									
	Model 2	Model 2 (without NL)	Model 3	Model 3 (without DE)	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7 (without NL)	Model 8
	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)
Intercept	1.318* [0.155]	1.411*** [0.147]	1.310* [0.153]	1.208 [0.131]	1.321* [0.149]	1.314* [0.142]	1.328* [0.154]	1.361** [0.148]	1.313* [0.143]
Controlled for all individual-level variables									
Contextual indicators									
GDP spending family policy	0.831 [0.094]	0.767** [0.073]							
Family policy generosity			0.889 [0.096]	0.805 [0.091]					
Formal childcare use (under age 6)					0.950 [0.065]				
Average weekly childcare use						1.090 [0.094]			
Female employment rate (age 25-49)							0.911 [0.062]		
Part-time employment rate (age 25-49)								0.956 [0.078]	
Proportion of population (0-15)									0.861 [0.104]
Variance components									
Group	1.122** [0.049]	1.076** [0.029]	1.144** [0.050]	1.128** [0.04]	1.155* [0.067]	1.149** [0.059]	1.148** [0.068]	1.144* [0.066]	1.136** [0.056]
N country	18	17	18	17	18	18	18	17	18
N observations	31,998	30,425	31,998	29,323	31,998	31,998	31,998	30,425	31,998

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; N 2016 (35,450).

Source: ESS 2016.



Table B5. Results on individual-level determinants of attitudes towards pensions

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Government responsibility to provide decent living for the old		Increase government spending on pensions		Quality of the state pension system	
	Logistic regression (4-point scale dichotomised) 2006/2016		5-point scale 2006/2016		10-point scale 2007/2011/2016	
	Odds ratio	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.
Intercept	2.044***	0.296	3.964***	0.071	4.635***	0.224
Year 2007					-0.124	0.323
Year 2016	0.963	0.180	-0.023	0.095	-0.004	0.310
Individual-level indicators						
Female (male is ref.)	1.320***	0.030	0.112***	0.008	-0.057**	0.019
Age (15-30 years is ref.)						
31-45	1.225***	0.044	0.054***	0.013	-0.180***	0.034
46-64	1.638***	0.057	0.218***	0.012	-0.176***	0.045
65+	1.789***	0.077	0.292***	0.015	0.168**	0.053
Subjective status (low is ref.)						
lower middle	0.808***	0.031	-0.090***	0.012		
upper middle	0.702***	0.028	-0.157***	0.013		
high	0.634***	0.032	-0.242***	0.017		
Income (lower quartile is ref.)						
lower middle					0.176***	0.030
upper middle					0.327***	0.032
highest quartile					0.388***	0.036
income missing					0.208***	0.042
Education (low is ref.)						
middle	0.967	0.039	-0.052***	0.013	0.048	0.031
high	0.722***	0.030	-0.214***	0.013	0.191***	0.043
Work status (paid work is ref.)						
Unemployed	1.189***	0.062	0.062***	0.017	0.335***	0.048
Out of labour force	1.048	0.032	0.055***	0.010	0.119***	0.032
Married (not married is ref.)	0.965	0.024	-0.039***	0.008		
Living alone (with partner is ref.)					-0.040	0.031
Variance components						
Group/random intercept	0.285	0.071	0.074	0.018	1.410	0.188
Residuals			0.555	0.004	4.578	0.098
N country	33		33		84	
N observations	38,827		38,406		86,501	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: ISSP.



Table B6a. Results on contextual factors behind attitudes towards pensions

Government responsibility to provide decent living for the old, logistic regression (4-point scale dichotomised) 2006/2016									
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)
Intercept	3.415** (1.463)	3.023* (1.642)	9.041*** (5.835)	0.000*** (0.001)	1.552 (0.369)	3.903* (2.282)	9.393*** (6.148)	0.001** (0.001)	2.331 (1.299)
Year 2016	1.000 (0.185)	1.001 (0.193)	1.281 (0.271)	0.815 (0.131)	1.009 (0.186)	1.015 (0.193)	1.269 (0.27)	0.836 (0.137)	1.024 (0.188)
Controlled for all individual-level variables									
Contextual indicators									
Pension expenditure	0.949 (0.039)					0.954 (0.042)	0.986 (0.043)	0.974 (0.034)	0.966 (0.042)
Replacement ratio		0.444 (0.482)				0.683 (0.778)			
Old-age dependency			0.939* (0.025)				0.943* (0.028)		
Effective retirement age				1.152*** (0.042)				1.146*** (0.042)	
Elderly AROP					1.015 (0.011)				1.012 (0.011)
Variance components									
Group/ random intercept	0.271 (0.068)	0.280 (0.070)	0.243 (0.061)	0.194 (0.049)	0.267 (0.067)	0.270 (0.068)	0.242 (0.061)	0.191 (0.048)	0.262 (0.066)
N country	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33
N observations	38,827	38,827	38,827	38,827	38,827	38,827	38,827	38,827	38,827

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: ISSP.



Table B6b. Results on contextual factors behind attitudes towards pensions

	Increase government spending on pensions, 5-point scale 2006/2016				Quality of the state pension system, 10-point scale, 2007/2011/2016			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)
Intercept	4.606*** (0.257)	4.641*** (0.303)	4.608*** (1.246)	4.178*** (0.220)	3.156*** (0.772)	6.103*** (0.912)	10.351** (3.635)	5.178*** (0.750)
Year 2007					-0.289 (0.323)	-0.190 (0.315)	-0.178 (0.321)	-0.332 (0.319)
Year 2016	0.024 (0.084)	0.032 (0.099)	0.025 (0.085)	0.052 (0.073)	-0.242 (0.293)	0.328 (0.343)	0.040 (0.325)	-0.178 (0.289)
Controlled for all individual-level variables								
<i>Contextual indicators</i>								
Pension expenditure	-0.066*** (0.019)	-0.064** (0.020)	-0.066*** (0.018)	-0.046** (0.017)	0.032 (0.058)	0.147** (0.055)	0.036 (0.057)	0.022 (0.055)
Replacement ratio	0.018 (0.502)				2.495 (1.686)			
Old-age dependency		-0.002 (0.014)				-0.121** (0.043)		
Effective retirement age			0.000 (0.019)				-0.097 (0.054)	
Elderly AROP				0.013** (0.004)				-0.036* (0.015)
<i>Variance components</i>								
Group/random intercept	0.053 (0.013)	0.053 (0.013)	0.053 (0.013)	0.041 (0.010)	1.332 (0.188)	1.247 (0.188)	1.34 (0.188)	1.293 (0.188)
Residuals	0.555 (0.004)	0.555 (0.004)	0.555 (0.004)	0.555 (0.004)	4.578 (0.098)	4.578 (0.098)	4.578 (0.098)	4.578 (0.098)
N country	33	33	33	33	84	84	84	84
N observations	38,406	38,406	38,406	38,406	86,501	86,501	86,501	86,501

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.
Source: ISSP.



Table B7. Multilevel models for four attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment policies – individual-level effects

	Linear regression						Logistic regression	
	(1) Government responsibility to ensure reasonable standard of living for the unemployed (11-point scale) 2008/2016		(2) Evaluation of the standard of living of the unemployed (11-point scale) 2008/2016		(3) Most unemployed do not really try to find a job (5-point scale) 2008/2016		(4) Spending more on education and training programmes for the unemployed at the cost of reducing spending on unemployment benefit (in favour (1) or against (0)) 2016	
	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Odds ratio	Std err.
Intercept	6.624***	0.146	4.248***	0.237	3.343***	0.064	3.239	0.380
Year 2016	-0.132**	0.040	0.276	0.175	-0.049	0.052		
Individual-level indicators								
Female (male is ref.)	0.082**	0.026	-0.034	0.029	0.017	0.012	0.912***	0.022
Age (15-30 years is ref.)								
31-45	-0.083	0.044	-0.173 ***	0.035	0.013	0.018	0.793***	0.031
46-64	0.096	0.052	-0.449 ***	0.044	-0.094**	0.029	0.672***	0.023
65+	0.014	0.069	-0.350***	0.048	0.075*	0.036	0.757***	0.032
Subjective income (living comfortably on present income is ref.)								
coping on present income	0.074*	0.029	-0.101**	0.029	0.073*	0.032	0.857***	0.024
difficult on present income	0.381***	0.062	-0.402***	0.043	0.040	0.041	0.761***	0.031
very difficult on present income	0.692***	0.081	-1.039***	0.060	-0.157*	0.066	0.537***	0.036
Education (low is ref.)								
middle	-0.113*	0.050	0.009	0.037	-0.122***	0.032	1.008	0.032
high	-0.064	0.094	-0.164***	0.046	-0.450***	0.062	1.074*	0.038
Work status (paid work is ref.)								
unemployed actively looking for work	0.332***	0.071	-0.351***	0.057	-0.290***	0.032	0.802***	0.050
unemployed not looking for work	0.165*	0.084	-0.261***	0.070	-0.210***	0.043	0.877	0.079
out of labour force	0.089*	0.044	-0.165***	0.027	-0.092**	0.031	1.006	0.031
Unemployment risk perception (not at all likely is ref.)								
not very likely	-0.000	0.032	-0.061	0.047	-0.073***	0.019	0.906**	0.029
likely	0.112**	0.034	-0.079*	0.032	-0.015	0.024	0.857**	0.039
very likely	0.262**	0.085	-0.324**	0.104	-0.124***	0.030	0.701***	0.038
not working/looking for work	0.272***	0.053	-0.159***	0.038	-0.056	0.039	0.920*	0.035
Variance components								
Group/random intercept	0.387	0.094	0.961	0.185	0.082	0.023	0.192	0.067
Residuals	4.452	0.173	3.227	0.101	1.104	0.046		
N country	24		24		24		18	
N observations	71,661		73,672		71,164		31,891	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; Design and population weights are applied; N (2008) = 39,995 and N (2016) = 36,995.
Source: ESS 2008/2016.



Table B8a. Models for four attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment policies – contextual effects

Linear regression						
	(1) Government responsibility to ensure reasonable standard of living for the unemployed (11-point scale) 2008/2016			(2) Evaluation of the standard of living of the unemployed (11-point scale) 2008/2016		
	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)
Intercept	10.580*** (1.649)	6.460*** (0.184)	xxx	2.601 (7.843)	5.000*** (0.569)	4.569* (2.259)
Year 2016	-0.008 (0.069)	-0.149*** (0.036)	xxx	0.224 (0.222)	0.373** (0.143)	0.277 (0.183)
Controlled for all individual-level variables						
Contextual indicators						
Activity rate	-0.052* (0.022)			0.021 (0.102)		
Public expenditure on unemployment relief +ALMP		0.133* (0.063)			-0.620 (0.323)	
Generosity of labour market policies			0.042*** (0.006)			-0.002 (0.028)
Variance components						
Group	0.413 (0.089)	0.401 (0.100)	0.408 (0.194)	0.868 (0.180)	1.785 (0.350)	0.745 (0.126)
Residuals	4.451 (0.173)	4.457 (0.187)	4.423 (0.175)	3.227 (0.101)	3.184 (0.093)	3.242 (0.102)
N country	24	24	22	24	24	22
N observations	71,661	69,809	68,271	70,642	68,821	67,258

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; N (2008) = 39,995 and N (2016) = 36,995.

Source: ESS 2008/2016.



Table B8b. Multilevel models for four attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment policies – contextual effects

	Linear regression			Logistic regression		
	(3) Most unemployed do not really try to find a job (5-point scale) 2008 / 2016			(4) Spending more on education and training programmes for the unemployed at the cost of reducing spending on unemployment benefit (in favour (1) or against (0)) 2016		
	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)
Intercept	4.520** (1.510)	3.478*** (0.086)	3.861*** (0.748)	26.370 (52.915)	2.142** (0.503)	14.242* (14.779)
Year 2016	0.012 (0.080)	0.001 (0.029)	0.045 (0.051)			
Controlled for all individual-level variables						
Contextual indicators						
Activity rate	-0.016 (0.020)			0.974 (0.025)		
Public expenditure on unemployment relief +ALMP		-0.127* (0.050)			1.245 (0.151)	
Generosity of labour market policies			-0.006 (0.009)			0.982 (0.012)
Variance components						
Group/random intercept	0.073 (0.018)	0.065 (0.018)	0.087 (0.023)	0.180 (0.063)	0.152 (0.054)	0.172 (0.060)
Residuals	1.104 (0.046)	1.109 (0.048)	1.101 (0.046)			
N country	24	24	24	18	17	18
N observations	71,164	69,314	67,852	31,891	30,089	31,891

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; N (2008) = 39,995 and N (2016) = 36,995.

Source: ESS 2008/2016.



Table B9. Multilevel models for two attitudes towards social assistance – individual-level effects

Logistic regression			Linear regression		
(1) Guaranteeing basic needs: (very) important to guarantee that basic needs are met (dummy variable) 2017 (EVS)			(2) Insufficient benefits to help people who are in real need (5-point scale) 2008 (ESS)		
	Odds ratio	Std err.		Coeff.	Std err.
Intercept	26.530***	6.004	Intercept	3.634***	0.071
<i>Individual-level indicators</i>			<i>Individual-level indicators</i>		
Female (male is ref.)	1.445***	0.114	Female (male is ref.)	0.068***	0.013
Age (15-30 years is ref.)			Age (15-30 years is ref.)		
31-45	1.105	0.120	31-45	-0.116***	0.033
46-64	1.290*	0.155	46-64	-0.088**	0.034
65+	1.134	0.195	65+	-0.123*	0.048
Education (low is ref.)			Education (low is ref.)		
middle	0.747**	0.067	middle	-0.006	0.021
high	1.361**	0.159	high	-0.171***	0.030
Income (in 10 deciles)	1.008	0.016	Subjective income (comfortable on present income is ref.)		
Work status (paid work 30 hours a week is ref.)			coping on present income	0.169***	0.033
paid work fewer than 30 hours a week	0.556***	0.081	difficult on present income	0.338***	0.054
self-employed	0.574***	0.087	very difficult on present income	0.493***	0.053
retired	0.884	0.126	Work status (paid work is ref.)		
homemaker	0.584***	0.088	unemployed actively looking for work	-0.030	0.060
student	2.382**	0.715	unemployed not actively looking for work	0.022	0.041
unemployed	0.670*	0.115	retired	0.036	0.038
disabled	1.051	0.349	homemaker	-0.018	0.024
other/military service	1.474	0.750	student	-0.003	0.070
Unemployment experience	1.467**	0.171	disabled	0.101*	0.040
			other/community or military service	0.048	0.040
			Unemployment risk perception (not at all likely is ref.)		
			not very likely	-0.016	0.013
			likely	0.048	0.029
			very likely	0.103***	0.024
			not working/looking for work	0.047	0.034
<i>Variance components</i>			<i>Variance components</i>		
Random intercept	0.431**	0.173	Group	0.099	0.026
			Residuals	0.929	0.071
N country	18		N country	21	
N observations	20,092		N observations	37,287	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: European Values Survey 2017 (N = 24,789); European Social Survey 2008 (N = 36,995).



Table B10. Multilevel models for two attitudes towards social assistance – contextual effects

	Logistic regression			Linear regression		
	(1) Guaranteeing basic needs: (very) important to guarantee that basic needs are met (dummy variable) 2017 (EVS)			(2) Insufficient benefits to help people who are in real need (5-point scale) 2008 (ESS)		
	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Odds ratio (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)	Coeff. (std err.)
Intercept	38.944*** (10.861)	42.047* (66.247)	3.798* (2.261)	3.337*** (0.093)	2.364*** (0.485)	4.304*** (0.212)
Controlled for all individual-level variables						
<i>Contextual indicators</i>						
Severe material deprivation	0.940** (0.022)			0.013** (0.004)		
Inequality (Gini)		0.983 (0.052)			0.038* (0.015)	
Social protection benefits as % of GDP			1.083** (0.025)			-0.039*** (0.009)
<i>Variance components</i>						
Group/random intercept	0.267 (0.120)	0.419 (0.175)	0.225 (0.101)	0.068 (0.018)	0.071 (0.024)	0.057 (0.017)
Residuals				0.932 (0.071)	0.932 (0.072)	0.932 (0.071)
N country	17	17	18	20	19	20
N observations	19,040	19,040	20,092	35,981	34,861	35,981

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: European Values Survey 2017 (N = 24,789); European Social Survey 2008 (N = 36,995).



Table B11a. Multilevel mixed effects linear regression results for the perception of state of health services in country nowadays (11-point scale) – individual-level effects

	Empty		Model 1	
	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.
Constant	5.121***	0.229	7.438***	0.258
Individual level indicators				
Gender				
Female			-0.288***	0.066
Male (ref.)				
Age groups				
15-24			0.083	0.152
25-49			-0.196	0.113
50-64			-0.239**	0.083
65+ (ref.)				
Highest educational level attained†				
Low			0.081	0.043
Medium			-0.072**	0.022
Other			0.359***	0.085
High (ref.)				
Economic activity status				
Other employed			-0.010	0.035
Unemployed			0.178**	0.052
Student/trainee			0.243***	0.048
Retired			0.181*	0.071
Other inactive			0.193***	0.050
Compulsory military service			0.073	0.171
Self-employed (ref.)				
Subjective general health status				
Good			-0.195***	0.030
Fair			-0.377***	0.042
Bad			-0.506***	0.050
Very bad			-0.821***	0.094
Don't know			-0.541*	0.224
Very good (ref.)				
Self-defined HH income				
Coping			-0.204***	0.029
Difficult			-0.309***	0.039
Very difficult			-0.554***	0.046
Don't know			-0.521**	0.164
Living comfortably (ref.)				
Performance of national government (11-point scale)				
0-2			-2.386***	0.125
3-4			-1.571***	0.099
5-7			-0.870***	0.065
Don't know			-1.529***	0.141
8-10 (ref.)				
ESS wave				
2002			-0.642***	0.117
2004			-0.571***	0.107
2006			-0.503*	0.205
2008			-0.322	0.223
2010			-0.167	0.229



Table B11a. Multilevel mixed effects linear regression results for the perception of state of health services in country nowadays (11-point scale) – individual-level effects (continued)

	Empty		Model 1	
	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.
2012			-0.040	0.123
2014			-0.140	0.127
2016			-0.033	0.075
2018 (ref.)				
Variance components				
var(_cons)	1.354	0.272	0.870	0.190
Residuals	5.326	0.187	4.588	0.130
ICC	0.203	0.035	0.159	0.031
N country	27		27	
N observations	326,004		326,004	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

† Those with 'low' level of education are respondents who did not complete any school, or who completed basic schooling or lower secondary education; those with 'medium' education level are respondents who completed upper secondary education or post-secondary non-tertiary education; and those with a 'high' level of education are respondents who completed tertiary education. 'Other' refers to respondents whose education level cannot be classified in any ISCED category.

Source: ESS 2002–2018.



Table B11b. Multilevel mixed effects linear regression results for the perception of state of health services in country nowadays (11-point scale) – contextual effects

	Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.
Constant	5.356***	0.820	4.860***	1.105	10.315***	2.688
ESS wave						
2002	-0.288	0.195	-0.195	0.243	-0.855***	0.152
2004	-0.283	0.151	-0.208	0.162	-0.747**	0.219
2006	-0.241	0.175	-0.211	0.145	-0.637**	0.234
2008	-0.115	0.178	-0.073	0.188	-0.406	0.261
2010	-0.169	0.229	0.009	0.201	-0.228	0.257
2012	-0.032	0.127	0.072	0.112	-0.104	0.170
2014	-0.155	0.134	-0.090	0.122	-0.163	0.137
2016	-0.013	0.068	-0.017	0.073	-0.041	0.077
2018 (ref.)						
Controlled for all individual-level variables						
<i>Contextual variables</i>						
% of gross healthcare exp. in GDP	0.363*	0.149				
Medical doctors per 100,000 population			0.007*	0.003		
Healthy years lived					-0.039	0.038
<i>Variance components</i>						
var(_cons)	0.644	0.153	1.124	0.322	1.104	0.221
Residuals	4.575	0.126	4.577	0.126	4.586	0.129
ICC	0.123	0.026	0.197	0.047	0.194	0.033
N country	27		27		27	
N observations	326,004		326,004		326,004	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

No HELEO data before 2004, and for some countries in particular years after 2004; they have been extrapolated according to the changes in the nearest consecutive three years.

No data for medical doctors per 100,000 inhabitants and gross healthcare social protection benefits data for 2018; 2017 data are used.

No data for medical doctors per 100,000 inhabitants and gross healthcare social protection benefits data for some years in CZ, DK, FI and SE; they have been extrapolated according to the changes in the nearest consecutive three years with available data.

Source: ESS 2002-2018.



Table B12. Multilevel mixed effects logistic regression findings for attitudes towards government as the primary elderly care provider

	Empty		Model 1	
	Odds ratio	Std err.	Odds ratio	Std err.
Constant	2.717***	1.170	1.931**	0.354
Individual-level indicators				
Gender				
Female			1.008	0.033
Male (ref.)				
Age groups				
15-24			0.818	0.084
25-49			1.190	0.180
50-64			1.306**	0.106
65+ (ref.)				
Marital status				
Married			0.941	0.041
Divorced/separated			0.941	0.050
Widowed			0.954	0.059
Never married (ref.)				
Household size				
2			1.018	0.056
3			0.962	0.029
4			0.835**	0.047
5+			0.820***	0.020
1 (ref.)				
Highest educational level attained				
Low			1.283*	0.134
Medium			1.174**	0.053
High (ref.)				
Economic activity status				
Other employed			1.142	0.125
Unemployed			0.997	0.136
Student/trainee			1.191	0.191
Retired			1.259**	0.095
Other inactive			1.069	0.082
Compulsory military service			N/A	N/A
Self-employed (ref.)				
Household income quintiles				
First			1.170	0.131
Second			1.127	0.118
Third			1.069	0.085
Fourth			1.005	0.079
Fifth (ref.)				
ISSP wave				
2016			0.909	0.071
2017 (ref.)				
Variance components				
var(_cons)	0.359	0.111	0.392	0.118
ICC	0.098	0.027	0.106	0.029
N country	16		16	
N observations	26,755		26,753	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: ISSP 2016 and 2017.



Table B13. Multilevel models for two indicators of attitudes towards EU involvement in social policy – individual-level effects

	Linear regression			Logistic regression		
	Expectation that EU involvement increases social protection			Support for EU-wide income protection scheme		
	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coeff.	Sign.	Std err.	Odds ratio	Sign.	Std err.
Intercept	3.092	***	0.087	1.793	***	0.147
Individual-level indicators						
Female (male is ref.)	0.000		0.012	0.993		0.023
Age (15-30 years is ref.)						
31-45	-0.093	***	0.024	0.897	***	0.040
46-64	-0.102	***	0.023	0.935		0.039
65+	-0.071	*	0.030	0.838	**	0.059
Education (low is ref.)						
middle	-0.051	*	0.024	1.028		0.032
high	-0.096	**	0.035	0.995		0.034
Work status (paid work is ref.)						
unemployed actively looking for work	0.044		0.029	1.266	***	0.053
unemployed not actively looking for work	0.005		0.041	1.340	***	0.067
retired	0.086		0.052	1.246	*	0.101
homemaker	0.081	*	0.039	1.101		0.081
student	-0.006		0.026	0.946		0.053
disabled	0.004		0.025	1.046		0.052
other/community or military service	0.018		0.035	1.108		0.114
Subjective income (living comfortably on present income is ref.)						
coping on present income	0.006		0.017	1.007		0.027
difficult on present income	0.033		0.022	1.104	*	0.040
very difficult on present income	0.060		0.040	1.006		0.065
Benefit use	-0.026		0.022	1.096	*	0.042
Variance components						
Group/random intercept	0.220	**	0.075	0.348	**	0.121
Residuals	0.750	***	0.006	1.000		
N country		18			18	
N observations		31,277			33,138	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: European Social Survey, Wave 8 (2016-2017).



Table B14. Multilevel models for the expectation that EU involvement increases social protection – contextual effects

Linear regression												
Expectation that EU involvement increases social protection												
	Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	Coeff.	Sign.	Std err.	Coeff.	Sign.	Std err.	Coeff.	Sign.	Std err.	Coeff.	Sign.	Std err.
Intercept												
Controlled for all individual-level variables												
<i>Contextual indicators</i>												
Social protection benefits as % of GDP	-0.059	***	0.018									
Inequality (Gini)				0.070	**	0.027						
Severe material deprivation							0.074	***	0.020			
EU transfers										0.285	***	0.055
<i>Variance components</i>												
Group/random intercept	0.119	**	0.042	0.167	**	0.059	0.139	**	0.049	0.098	**	0.035
Residuals	0.750	***	0.006	0.750	***	0.006	0.750	***	0.006	0.750	***	0.006
N country	18			18			18			18		
N observations	31,277			31,277			31,277			31,277		

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: European Social Survey, Wave 8 (2016-2017).



Table B15. Multilevel models for the expectation that EU involvement increases social protection – contextual effects

Logistic regression												
Support for EU-wide income protection scheme												
	Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	Odds ratio	Sign.	Std err.	Odds ratio	Sign.	Std err.	Odds ratio	Sign.	Std err.	Odds ratio	Sign.	Std err.
Intercept												
Controlled for all individual-level variables												
<i>Contextual indicators</i>												
Social protection benefits as % of GDP	0.961		0.024									
Inequality (Gini)				1.074		0.037						
Severe material deprivation							1.089	**	0.030			
EU transfers										1.193		0.109
<i>Variance components</i>												
Group/random intercept	0.317	**	0.113	0.300	**	0.108	0.241	**	0.087	0.317	**	0.114
Residuals	1.000			1.000			1.000			1.000		
N country		18			18			18			18	
N observations		33,138			33,138			33,138			33,138	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Source: European Social Survey, Wave 8 (2016-2017).

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