

This is a pre-print of the following article: Gerhards, Jürgen, Holger Lengfeld & Julia Häuberer. 2016. Do European Citizens Support the Idea of a European Welfare State? Evidence from a Comparative Survey Conducted in three EU Member States. *International Sociology* 31(6): 677-700.

Do European citizens support the idea of a European welfare state? Evidence from a comparative survey conducted in three member states of the EU
Jürgen Gerhards, Holger Lengfeld & Julia Häuberer

Abstract

Some scholars have argued that the only way to resolve the Euro crisis would be to further deepen the integration process by institutionalising a European welfare state. In this paper we question whether a Europeanised welfare system would be supported by citizens of three member states of the EU. We argue that the legitimacy of a harmonisation of national welfare regimes would be established if a majority of citizens supports a Europeanised social policy. Using survey data from Germany, Poland and Spain, descriptive findings show that indeed a majority supports the idea of Europeanisation of social policy. Further, multivariate analyses show that those respondents who reject Europeanisation of social policy cannot be characterised to any significant extent in terms of socio-economic factors, and are only slightly more likely to be associated with cultural factors. The cleavages that structure people's attitudes are thus relatively weak. This brings us to the rather optimistic conclusion that the potential for political mobilisation against Europeanisation of social policy in the three countries under investigation is rather low.

Keywords: European integration, Europeanisation, social policy, social cleavages, survey research

Undoubtedly, long before the recent Euro and sovereign debt crisis began, the EU had developed several strategies to “modify market outcomes to facilitate transactions, to correct market failures, and to carry out regional, inter-class, or intergenerational redistribution” (Leibfried and Pierson, 1999: 43). The EU has fostered the harmonisation of certain minimum social standards and introduced binding rules of non-discrimination in the labour market; it has enforced social rights that EU citizens enjoy when residing in EU countries other than that of origin. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was established to coordinate relevant EU-wide social policy issues. Structural funds notably support social inclusion in regions disposing less than the average gross domestic product. And the European Social Fund aims at realising economic and social convergence by strengthening employability in the workforce in less economically developed regions. However, despite all these efforts, a uniform European social security system has not emerged, as many scholars have pointed out (Bähr, 2010: 117; Ferrera, 2005; Leibfried and Pierson, 1999).

Some observers have argued that the only way to resolve the Euro crisis would be to further pursue the path of deepening the integration process by expanding the European Union into a genuine political and social union, including a European supranational democracy and a European welfare state (Bofinger et al., 2012; Habermas, 2013). Implementing the idea of a social union consisting of European wide social standards and a more active role of the European Union within the field of social policy is seen as a strategy for rescuing the European project, and fighting social exclusion, youth unemployment and social inequality in the member states (e.g. Allespach and Machnig, 2013; Habermas, 2013; Nida-Rümelin et al., 2013). The idea that nation states are the sovereign subjects of the treaties should be abandoned and instead, the European Union should gain juridical and fiscal powers from the nation states to establish a supranational social policy.

This position has been criticised by other scholars, who interpret it as utopian. Wolfgang Streeck (e.g. 2012, 2014), in his pessimistic assessment of the future of the European

Union, argues that societal conditions for a democratisation of the European Union and the institutionalisation of a European welfare state are not present at all. Processes of renationalisation are more likely than further steps of Europeanisation. Other scholars have argued that the institutionalisation of a European welfare state would be rejected by poorer EU countries as well as by richer ones. Citizens of poorer countries may fear that higher social standards will lead to less economic growth, tied to increasing unemployment. Citizens living in EU member states that are economically prosperous may fear a reduction of social standards along with the unification of European welfare policy (Scharpf, 2002).

Unfortunately, we know very little about the extent to which people would support a Europeanised social policy; to our knowledge, there is no dataset available which covers all member states of the EU. In this article we rely on a survey which was conducted in three member states of the EU in 2009. We ask to what degree citizens in these three member states of the European Union support the notion that the EU should harmonise national welfare regimes and play a decisive role in reducing unemployment and setting minimum wages Europe-wide.

Based on a broader concept of European social integration recently proposed by Gerhards and Lengfeld (2015), we argue that the legitimacy of harmonisation of national welfare regimes is given if a majority of citizens support a Europeanised social policy. The idea that legitimacy ultimately rests upon recognition by citizens refers to Max Weber's (1985) concept of legitimacy. Weber determined that the legitimacy of specific policies and the whole political system must be empirically coupled with popular citizen support. Citizens' acceptance and support is significant for decision makers due to the fact that, in democracies, political elites structurally depend on voters' support. If a vast majority of citizens of a country opposes a certain policy, governments will reject or at least be reluctant to support that policy. Hence, legitimacy is produced ultimately by citizens' beliefs in the legitimacy of policies and political institutions. In the case of our study, if a majority supports the idea of a European

welfare state then we would conclude that the European welfare state is politically legitimated.

Furthermore, we distinguish between beliefs of legitimacy on the one hand and its social anchoring on the other. Even if a majority of voters supports the idea of a Europeanised social policy, stability of support is not necessarily given. Minorities who reject the idea of equality for all Europeans could mobilise to shift public opinion to their favour, or constitute a large enough minority to block legislation. Following classical cleavage theory, citizens' attitudes may form a basis for political mobilisation if they are organised by political entrepreneurs, e.g. political parties (Lipset, 2001). In the context of a Europeanised social policy, potential cleavages might emerge at two different levels: at the aggregate level between countries structured by their level of wealth and social spending, and at the individual level, running between different groups of citizens holding different socio-economic positions or different cultural values.

In the next section we derive two broader hypotheses from the existing literature which can help us to explain citizens' attitudes towards Europeanisation of social policy. Based on controversial discussions in the literature, we assume that a majority of European citizens rejects a Europeanised social policy. In addition, country differences must be taken into consideration. The higher the scope of social spending in a nation, the fewer citizens will accept social policy dictated by the EU. Finally, a citizen's socio-economic and cultural background might be decisive when it comes to explaining attitudes towards Europeanised social policy. In particular, it is assumed that people who lack economic resources and hold more traditional values or right-wing political orientations will oppose the notion of a European-wide welfare state and will form the constituency of a new cleavage structure.

In the second section, we elaborate on the data set, the methods and variables used in our study. We rely on a unique survey conducted in three EU member states – Poland, Spain, and Germany. In the third section, we examine the extent to which respondents in the three

countries under investigation support the idea of harmonising social policy at a European level and how one can explain citizens' attitudes with regard to the different hypotheses discussed in the next section.

Descriptive findings show that a majority supports the idea of Europeanisation of social policy. Using multivariate analyses, we will test whether and to what extent preferences towards Europeanised social policy are influenced by respondent's citizenship, socio-economic position (employment position, social class position, educational degree) and cultural characteristics (political beliefs, societal values). Results will show that those respondents who reject Europeanisation of social policy cannot be characterised to any significant extent in terms of socio-economic factors, and are only slightly more likely to be associated with cultural factors. The cleavages that structure people's attitudes are thus relatively weak. This brings us to the rather optimistic conclusion that the potential for political mobilisation against Europeanisation of social policy in the three countries under investigation is rather low.

Explaining citizens' attitudes towards an Europeanised social policy

It remains an open question whether people support the emergence of a European welfare state and what factors impact on citizens' attitudes. One can derive different broader hypotheses from the existing literature.

A Europeanisation of solidarity?

Whereas some scholars argue that support rates for a Europeanised social policy should be rather high due to processes of Europeanisation at the institutional level, others come to a more sceptical conclusion, arguing that the process of opening up national borders will first of all challenge the traditional symbolic code of equality held by citizens. Starting with the optimistic position, Richard Münch (2010: 28) argues that economic integration changes the mode of solidarity within and between nation states. Based on a Durkheimian approach, Münch states

that cross-border interactions replace former nation-state based mechanical solidarity by a transnational organic solidarity characterised by two attributes. First, individual rights are enhanced, enabling access to scarce resources within each member state. These rights have been institutionalised by the Four Freedoms and extended by the European Court of Justice. Second, economic integration evokes a fundamental change in the structure of attitudes towards distributive justice. The formerly dominant principle of equality of results, characteristic for most of the national welfare-state systems in Europe, gives way to attitudes of Europeanised equality of opportunities. Generally speaking, universalised equality attitudes arise in social spaces where individuals are integrated by cross-border networks, established by a common European law (Münch, 2010: 33). In a similar manner, Beck and Grande assume that European citizens will increasingly agree with the establishment of European redistribution measures (Beck and Grande, 2007). They state that the increasing permeability of borders between the EU member states, as well as the decreasing permeability of EU's external borders, weakens the people's support of solely national conditioned redistribution policies. Taking these arguments together, it could be assumed that EU citizens will orient towards transnational responsibilities and thus demand broader European social policy, especially since they are faced with an absence of the nation states' capacity to cover emerging social risks.

In contrast to these rather optimistic interpretations, at least three factors indicate that the outlined development of the support of a European-wide welfare state is not very likely (Faist, 2001). First, implementing a European-wide welfare system means extending equality principles - culturally and institutionally anchored at the nation-state level - to the European level. This would be done by reorganising existing resource allocations and life opportunities among the citizens of all member states (Ferrera, 2005). However, this generalised equality arrangement would come into conflict with the organically evolved symbolic codes, moral bindings and collective identity definitions prevailing in the respective nations. Thus, a strong European identity seems to be needed as a prerequisite for the willingness of transnational

solidarity. As survey research has shown such identity does not seem to exist (Fligstein, 2009; Immerfall et al., 2011).

Second, the adoption of a European social security system may involve huge costs due to some fundamental changes at the national level (De Swaan, 1990: 9). It is well known that the national welfare systems differ according to life risk coverage, social benefits and financing principles, and interconnections to other social key institutions, especially the family, the labour market and the education system (Hantrais, 2000: 21; Leibfried and Pierson, 1999: 32). Thus, convergence of the national systems to a European model is empirically hardly to observe (i.e. Alsasua et al., 2007; Avdeyeva, 2006). Due to the fact that constructing a European welfare system would lead to a massive readjustment of the national organisation of welfare, citizens may interpret this as a threat to their current individual welfare status, regardless of the level of security and social benefits a national system provides (see also hypothesis H2).

Third, some empirical findings do not suggest strong support for relocating social policy competences from national to EU level. Since the beginning of the 2000s, Eurobarometer data show that a huge majority of the respondents in EU-25 and later EU-27 countries have been in favour of decisions being made solely by the nation state, without changes over time.¹ Although these questions do not directly measure attitudes towards a European welfare state, the results indicate that citizens are rather sceptical that the EU should be in charge to tackle welfare state policies.

These three rather sceptical arguments lead us to the following conclusion:

H1: A majority of European citizens will reject a Europeanised social policy.

¹ In the field of health care and social welfare policy, preferences for national decision making even increased, from 59 per cent in 2001, to 67 per cent in 2005 and 68 per cent in 2011. Comparable findings have been present for the nation states' responsibilities to set pensions and to tackle unemployment (European Commission, 2002: 56, 2005: 99, 2008: 8, 2011: 76).

Alongside aggregated approval rates at the EU level, we have to take country differences into account (Mau, 2005: 80). Faced with the possibility of a harmonised European welfare state, raising social expenditures in countries with low social protection may lead to a reduction of social benefits in highly developed welfare states. The same holds true for Europeanised policies which do not explicitly harmonise existing welfare regimes but are aimed at fighting specific social problems. In this case, citizens from countries with high social protection may fear increasing financial burdens, which stem from additional transfers from national governments to the European budget. In contrast, people from countries with low social protection may speak out in favour of raising the level of social benefits in order to enhance their individual welfare.

H2: The higher the scope of social spending in a nation, the fewer citizens will accept social policies carried out by the EU.

Socio-economic and cultural cleavages

We argue that high approval rates are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the legitimacy of a European welfare state. Citizens objecting to the idea of a European welfare state may constitute a socio-structurally or culturally homogeneous group and build the basis for a politically mobilised cleavage (Kriesi et al., 2008; Lipset, 2001; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), a cleavage which can be picked up by national as well as European political groups and parties, and transmitted into the decision-making process. We assume that existing cleavages will make it much more difficult to establish a European welfare state.

Socio-economic status. In accordance with studies from welfare state research, we assume that the acceptance of redistribution policies varies with the extent to which citizens depend on the national social welfare state (Andreß and Heien, 2001; Cnaan et al., 1993; Edlund, 2007). Thus, one can assume that people with low socio-economic status are afraid of losing social benefits if the nation state transfers part of its social policy competence to the European

level. Accordingly, we assume that individuals with low socio-economic status and low household income and those who directly depend on government transfer payments are more likely to reject the Europeanisation of social policy (Berg, 2007; Mau, 2005).

We consider four indicators to measure the socio-economic status: employment status, occupational class position, equivalent household income and educational attainment. The latter not only indicates a person's socio-economic status, but also the level of cognitive mobilisation. Cognitively mobilised people tend to question traditional world views and practices (Achterberg and Houtman, 2006; Inglehart, 1990) and speak out against exclusion of foreigners (Coenders and Scheepers, 2003; Raijman et al., 2008). Since the introduction of Europeanised social policy extends the solidarity area to foreigners, as all Europeans have the same social rights, we suspect that the approval of Europeanised social policy increases with an increasing level of education.

H3a: People with low socio-economic status, people on low income, and the less educated, are more likely to reject Europeanisation of social policy than those with higher socio-economic status, high income and higher levels of education.

In contrast to *H3a*, the effect of socio-economic status on attitudes toward Europeanised social policy may depend on the degree of generosity of a national welfare state. So in countries with a low social expenditure rate, persons with low income may favour a European welfare system. Due to the low extent of social security in their home country, they may perceive an active European Welfare state to increase their social welfare. In contrast, in countries with a high social expenditure rate the socially deprived will perceive Europeanisation as a threat to the extent of social spending they presently depend on. Thus, we formulate a cross-level hypothesis combining hypotheses H2 and H3a using personal income as an indicator for wealth.²

² We have chosen personal income instead of other socio economic variables for modelling the statistical interaction effect as interactions between variables with several nominal answer categories (education, occupational class) are difficult to interpret.

H3b: In countries with low scope of social spending, people with low income will approve Europeanised Social policy to a higher extent than they will do in countries with high scope of social spending.

Cultural characteristics. When expressing support for European-wide social policy, people may not only pursue their interests but follow their cultural orientations. These values might constitute the basis for a cultural cleavage (Kriesi et al., 2008). Referring to the seminal work of Ronald Inglehart (1997), we proceed from the hypothesis that post-materialists are more likely to support the idea of Europeanisation of social policy than materialists. Materialist values include satisfying economic living conditions, security, national identity, and national exclusion. Post-materialist values, in contrast, are characterised by the desire for self-fulfilment and participation, internationalism, and the opening of national borders. From the perspective of post-materialism, the nation-state is not a legitimate entity to restrict the scope of solidarity. Thus, people who believe in post-materialism are more likely to prefer equal access to social benefits for all Europeans.

Furthermore, numerous studies have shown that rejection of access to social benefits varies according to the respondent's political beliefs. The more a person is oriented to the political right, the more likely he or she is to reject the opening up of the national welfare state to foreigners (Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2009: 410; Raijman et al., 2003: 386; Scheepers et al., 2002: 26). To the left of the spectrum, people are probably more likely to agree with universalistic distribution regimes that do not differentiate by ethnic or national origin. In contrast, more right-wing oriented individuals are likely to prefer redistribution according to particularistic criteria like nationality. Thus, we assume that the more leftist a person is oriented, the more he/she will approve of a Europeanised social policy.

As is shown in prejudice research, people who fear losing their national identity and people who favour ethnic and cultural homogeneity in their own society are unlikely to accept

welfare benefits assigned to migrants (Pettigrew, 1998; Scheepers et al., 2002; Semyonov et al., 2006). The institutionalisation of European-wide welfare would be tied to equal entitlement to welfare benefits for all European citizens. At the same time, the nation-state would lose its political autonomy. Hence, one can assume that citizens who hold nationalistic attitudes will at the same time reject the idea of a Europeanised social policy.

Finally, research has shown that people with a European identity support the European integration process, while citizens identifying exclusively with their nation tend to oppose it (Bruter, 2005; Risse, 2010). We suppose that European identity is positively associated with support for open access to social benefits for all EU citizens. This is indicated by studies which deal with the willingness to support a social policy coordinated by the EU. It was shown that support for European social policy increases with the degree of identification with Europe (Mau, 2005). Thus, persons who identify only as nationals will reject European social policy.

H4: People who are in favour of post-materialistic values, who do not hold nationalistic attitudes, who are oriented to the political left, and identify with the European Union are more supportive of the idea of Europeanised social policy than citizens who hold the opposite characteristics.

Data, variables, and methods

In order to test these hypotheses, it is desirable to have data disposable which covers all member states of the European Union. Unfortunately, all comparative surveys which are available for secondary analysis (e.g. European Social Survey, Eurobarometer, International Survey Study Programme) contain items which measure peoples' attitudes towards the welfare state on the *nation state level* only. There is no survey which attempted to operationalise people's attitudes towards a European welfare state. The fact that attitudes towards the welfare state are measured on the nation state level only is a typical example of what other scholars have called

‘methodological nationalism’ – the assumption that the nation state is the natural form of society in the modern world (e.g. Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002).

In this study we rely on a survey which was conducted in 2009 and funded by the German Research Foundation “Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft” (see Gerhards and Lengfeld, 2015, for the following details on methodology). For financial reasons, we haven’t been able to survey the citizens of all EU countries, so we selected Germany, Poland, and Spain. This selection was guided by modernisation theory which states that national societies go through different stages of socio-economic development, which impact on social spending and in turn on the citizens’ value orientations. Thus, the three countries correspond to different levels of modernisation and of public social spending. As shown in table 1, Germany as the wealthiest country provided the highest level of social expenditures per capita in 2009, followed by Spain and Poland. Although the countries represent different types of welfare regimes – Germany can be categorised as conservative (Esping-Andersen, 1990), Poland as post-communist (Cook, 2007) and Spain as rudimentary type (Leibfried, 1992) – there is little variance in the dominant principle of the organisation of social security. Table 1 additionally displays that all systems are more or less built on the classical Bismarckian principle of interlinking social benefits to the employment status of a citizen and thus on people’s contributions. This structural homogeneity allows us to isolate the impact of a nation’s public social spending on attitudes towards social policy which is desirable for reasons of minimising complexity. Although we have selected the three countries in our study systematically we do not claim that our results are representative for all 28 member states of the EU.

Table 1 here

The basic population in the three surveyed countries consists of citizens of voting age living in private households and holding citizenship status in the country they live in. In Germany and Spain data was gathered by means of Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

The necessary precondition for telephone interviewing is the sufficient coverage of households with landline connections. Because in Poland this precondition was not given (68 per cent coverage of households with landline numbers), Computer Assisted Personal Interviews were carried out.

For the *German* survey a multi-stage household sample based on official area units (federal states, Nielsen areas, administrative regions, districts) and on BIK-indicators (10 point scale) was used. The telephone numbers were randomly drawn for each municipality, and the surveyed person from a household was chosen by means of the Kish grid on the basis of a random number generator. The survey was conducted between May 14th and May 31st, 2009. In *Spain*, the sample was drawn in a similar manner to that in Germany (clusters according to regional levels, “Random Digit Dialing” method). The random sampling of target persons within the household was chosen with the “Last Birthday” question. Data was collected between May 25th and June 3rd, 2009. In *Poland*, a multistage- sampling procedure was used based on first stage sampling units (“census clusters” in cities, and “enumeration districts” in rural areas that are comprised of at least five buildings). Country-wide samples were drawn on the basis of the latest available official statistical districts. The sample points were chosen according to the 16 regions (NUTS2) and local size. For a sample of 1,000 interviews about 200 sample points were drawn. Based on the starting address, in rural areas every third and in urban areas every fifth address was contacted. The target person was selected by Kish grid method. The survey was conducted between May 20th and June 3rd, 2009.

The survey was carried out by the national partners of “TNS Opinion and Social” network and coordinated by the German TNS subsidiary “TNS Infratest Dimap”. In each country, about 1,000 people were interviewed. Net response rates were 47.6 per cent in Germany,

41.3 per cent in Poland, and 29.9 per cent in Spain. In order to correct for sampling biases, data has been weighted considering age groups, sex, region, and urbanisation.³

Respondents were asked to evaluate each of the following items:

- There should be a uniform social welfare system across the whole EU, even if this leads to an increase in taxes and social spending.
- The EU should fight unemployment in its poorest member states, even if this means that [country of respondent] would have to pay more money to the EU.
- There should be a uniform minimum wage across Europe, even if this means that some people in richer countries would have to work for substantially less money.

(Scale: totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, totally disagree)

These items cover two different aspects of Europeanisation. The first assesses the respondent's general attitude towards harmonising social policy by establishing a common welfare system, whereas the others highlight specific issues of labour market related social policy. Both are assumed to be well known by the respondents and have been discussed at EU level (see European Commission, 2014; Gerhards, 2007). The wording of the three questions signals that Europeanisation may lead to a rise in costs for the individual. It has been shown that people often deviate from their attitudes if they anticipate costs and unpleasant consequences (i.e. Diekmann and Preisendörfer, 2003). If the potential negative consequences of the idea of a Europeanised social policy are noted, attitudes measured will be more resilient.

We have conducted a principal component factor analysis by assuming that the three items represent a latent variable. Indeed, results show that all items load on one factor (eigenvalue =1.99, Cronbach's Alpha =.78). This scale functions as dependent variable in linear regressions with robust standard errors. All independent variables are described in Table A1 in

³ One may assume that there might be a selection bias due to low net response rates. So, randomly selected interviewees who strongly oppose European integration may be more likely to refuse to participate in the survey. Nonetheless, it is not very likely that this bias has occurred in our survey. First, the study's topic was not explicitly mentioned when respondents were contacted by interviewers. In addition, refusal and dropout rate were low (e.g., in Germany the refusal rate was 0.4 per cent, and dropout rate was 1.6 per cent).

the appendix. To test the hypotheses formulated in the second section, we will first provide relative frequencies. In the next step we will present the results of stepwise expanded linear regressions including all researched countries and regressions for each country separately.

Results

As Table 2 shows, a majority of citizens of the three countries agree with the implementation of European-wide welfare policies. Overall, approval rates vary between almost 60 per cent for a uniform welfare system and 68 per cent for fighting unemployment. Hence, the harmonisation of national welfare regimes appears to be legitimised. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is disconfirmed.

Table 2 here

This conclusion, however, needs refinement when looking at the different countries. As formulated in hypothesis H2, the expected benefit of Europeanised social policy should decrease with the extent of welfare state protection in a country. The more social benefits citizens are entitled to, the less advantageous Europeanisation is for them, since social benefits might need to be reduced or payments to the welfare system might be increased to finance less developed welfare states. The results seem to confirm this hypothesis: In Germany being the country with the highest degree of social spending generosity (see Table 1), we found the least support among respondents, and for Poland where the lowest amount per capita is spent for social purposes, highest approval rates are displayed.⁴ Hence, findings confirm the alleged prosperity effect – at least for the three countries of our study: The high approval rates of the three countries can be put down to the less developed state of southern European and Central Eastern European countries.⁵

⁴ The unemployment rate doesn't seem to play a significant role in explaining country differences. In 2009 (when our survey was conducted) unemployment rates in Spain and Poland were quite different (18.0 vs 8.1 per cent, see Table 1), but approval rates are very similar in both countries.

⁵ In addition, attitudes towards welfare redistribution are shaped by other macro-economic conditions. In times of economic depression, individuals are more likely to demand redistribution policies, while the opposite

As discussed in the first section, support for Europeanised social policy might also be influenced by the individual's socio-economic background as well as by cultural attitudes which may both form a basis for political mobilisation if they are organised by political entrepreneurs, e.g. political parties (Lipset, 2001). Table 3 displays the results of the regression analyses. First, we see that – among the two control variables – age has a positive and significant effect on the support of Europeanised social policy. We additionally inserted a squared age term to check for a non-linear effect. This variable indeed indicates a reverse u-shaped relationship between the respondent's age and the dependent variable (only in Model 5 the coefficient became insignificant on the 5 per cent level with $t=1.95$). Taken both age effects into account, data reveal that the youth and the elderly support the idea of a Europeanised social policy to a lesser extent than the middle-aged.⁶

Contrary to our hypothesis H3a, Model 2 indicates that the unemployed who are more likely to receive social benefits hold more positive attitudes towards Europeanised social policy than the employed. Thus, this effect suggests that for the unemployed a Europeanised social policy seem to be an effective measure to improve their living conditions, independent from the degree of national social policy which is controlled by country membership in all regression models. However, in Model 5 this effect loses its significance. Model 2 further shows that members of the routine non-manual class are more sceptical than members of the service class. However, we do not find a clear cleavage structure between upper and lower

seems to be true in times of economic growth (Jæger, 2013). Furthermore, economically well developed countries and countries with high levels of social expenditure feature less support for redistribution than economically less developed countries and countries with low levels of social expenditure (Dallinger, 2010; Gerhards 2007: 104).

⁶ Other studies have shown that age is related to the self-interest of the respondent (Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003; Svallfors et al., 2012). So, younger people are more in favour of welfare benefits for children whereas the elderly are more likely to be in favour to improve the pension system. Unfortunately, our data set does not include items which operationalise concrete welfare measurements which might influence different age groups differently. It might be, however, that in our study the middle aged assume that they will profit more from a European welfare system than younger and older respondents. One explanation might be that they expect a higher level of protection against labour market related risks which may lead to greater negative consequences for economic well-being (i.e. sustenance payment for children and spouse) than for those who are situated at the beginning or the end of their career.

classes. When controlling for education, the significant difference between routine non-manual and service class disappears (see Model 3).⁷

Table 3 here

Model 3 reveals that compared with university graduates, less educated people were more likely to oppose Europeanisation of social policy. Again, this effect lessens when controlling for cultural characteristics in Model 5. As before, we do not find evidence of socio-economic cleavages, except a very weak difference between attitudes towards Europeanised social policy among unemployed and employed respondents respectively. This result is in line with results of other studies which analysed attitudes towards the welfare state on the nation-state level (Berg, 2007: 124; Mau, 2005).

Model 4 additionally includes the respondent's net equivalent household income (in PPP). However, there is no significant income effect. Even if one removes social class and education from the equation, income does not impact on attitudes towards a European welfare state.

Model 5 additionally considers cultural characteristics. The results indicate that respondents who hold post-materialist attitudes, left-wing attitudes⁸ and people who identified with the European Union were in favour of Europeanised social policy, whereas people who hold nationalistic attitudes were opposed to it. However, effects are relatively weak. Differences between countries seem to be more important as the results in the lower part of Table 3 indicate. The regressions display attitudes towards Europeanised social policy of Spaniards

⁷ By predicting the effects of education and occupational class simultaneously (Model 3), we assume that the class position reflects the current labour market opportunities of a citizen, while the educational variable measures the degree of cognitive mobilisation.

⁸ Some scholars have argued that 'welfare state chauvinism' can be found on the extreme right as well as on the extreme left (van der Waal et al., 2010; Mewes and Mau, 2012). In order to test this hypothesis we have calculated an additional regression model which takes a squared term of the left-right variable into account. This allows us to test whether there exists a converted u-shaped correlation between left / right, and attitudes towards a European welfare state. However, the empirical results do not support this assumption. While the main effect remains stable there is a weak positive but insignificant effect of the squared term (results are not reported in the table, but available on request).

and Poles in comparison to those of the Germans as the reference category. The results indicate that citizens of Spain and Poland support the idea of a unified European social policy to a greater extent than Germans do. These effects stay stable across the five models. Findings reveal that the largest attitudinal differences exist between Germans and Poles indicated by a significant regression coefficient of .31. Comparing explained variances of the models one to five depicts that the country variables add the greatest explanatory power to the models. Thus, hypothesis H2 is confirmed, as citizens of states with high welfare expenditure tend to reject the Europeanisation of social policy. However, this result is challenged by our descriptive findings which have shown that even in Germany – a country with the highest social welfare spending of the three researched countries – a narrow majority supports Europeanised social policy.⁹

Finally, in model 6 we inserted an interaction term in order to prove H3b assuming that in countries with a low social expenditure rate (in our sample: Spain and Poland), people with low income will approve Europeanised social policy to a higher degree than they will do in countries with a high social expenditure rate (Germany). Findings reveal that in contrast to Germany, there is a negative income effect in Poland. This means that in Poland, respondents earning a low income agreed to a higher degree on Europeanised social policy than Germans with a low income did. Between Germany and Spain there is no difference in the income effect. This can be traced back to the fact that the difference in size of social expenditure between Germany and Spain is smaller than between Germany and Poland (see also Table 1).

In addition, we performed the same regression analyses separately for the three countries (see Table 4). With few exceptions, the results confirm our previous findings. In Spain, age exerts a positive influence on attitudes towards Europeanised social policy; and in Poland

⁹ We additionally calculated regressions using the three single items as independent variables. However, findings have been almost the same; only the explained variance of the minimum wage regression was smaller compared to the other two items.

both age variables do. More important, we do not find evidence for socio-economic cleavages, with two exceptions of educational effects in Spain and Poland. Moreover, with regard to cultural characteristics, the country specific regressions tend to reveal the same results as the regressions across all countries. In Spain, we found the previously shown effects of post-materialism, nationalism, and European identity on attitudes towards Europeanised social policy. In Germany, significant effects for nationalism and identification with Europe appeared, but in Poland, all indicators were insignificant.¹⁰

Table 4 here

Overall, our analysis does not support hypothesis H3a, neither if one takes all countries together into consideration nor if one calculates the regressions for the three countries separately: People with low socio-economic status and low levels of education do not reject Europeanisation of social policy to a higher degree than individuals with a better socio-economic and educational background. Due to the fact that cultural characteristics indeed are influential, our findings support H4. Individuals with post-materialist attitudes and who identify with Europe tend to support unified European social policy, while individuals with nationalist attitudes and who hold right-wing orientations tend to reject it.

Conclusions

What do our empirical results mean for the legitimacy of a Europeanised social policy? We have argued that the harmonisation of national welfare regimes would be legitimated if a majority of citizens support a Europeanised social policy. Unfortunately, for financial reasons we were not able to survey citizens from all European member states, but from three countries of the EU only – Germany, Poland, and Spain. Empirical results for these three countries have

¹⁰ In Poland there is a high drop-out of cases due to missing values of the income and left-rights variables. When skipping these variables, the sample size raised to N=711, but effects do not substantially change, except of one significant effect of the unskilled working class dummy.

shown that citizens consent to a large extent to the idea of Europeanised social policy. A surprisingly large majority in the three EU countries claims to support European-wide uniform social standards even if this would lead to an increase in taxes or social spending. Hence, in these countries under investigation, the Europe-wide harmonisation of national welfare regimes seems to be legitimated.

However, multivariate analyses have shown that two cleavages are likely to arise: First, individuals with materialistic, nationalist and political right-wing orientations especially rejected Europeanisation of the national welfare systems. One may expect that right-wing parties will fight Europeanisation of social policy in national political systems as well as in the European Parliament. However, the size of the effect of the regression coefficients indicates that these conflict structures are only moderate. Accordingly, the likelihood of politicisation of this conflict seems rather low.

Secondly, we find a significant difference at the country level, namely between Germany on the one hand and Spain and Poland on the other. We explain this difference by the fact that Germans are afraid of having to bear high costs if a European welfare system becomes institutionalised – either because Germany is seen to pay the bill for a Europeanised welfare system, or because German citizens' benefits would be lowered. One can assume that this German scepticism may also affect intergovernmental negotiations in the European Council. The German government could slow down the Europeanisation of social policy since this policy is supported only by a part of the German population. Otherwise, findings indicate that a (narrow) majority of German respondents supports the notion that the EU addresses unemployment in the poorest member countries, the idea of harmonised European minimum wage and the introduction of uniform social standards. The wording of the items indicated that Europeanisation of social policy will raise individual costs. Even under this condition, a clear majority of citizens in Spain and Poland, and a narrow majority in Germany speak in favour of Europeanisation of social policy.

However, the conclusions which can be drawn from our analysis should be limited for four reasons: Firstly, the European Union consists of 28 member countries, but our investigation was carried out in only three of them. Although, we have chosen the three countries according to the level of general modernisation and social spending rate, we cannot state that we have captured all the variances between the 28 countries. Thus, further research is needed. Secondly, although we applied a Mixed Mode survey including CATI and CAPI to use the advantage of reducing coverage error, we could not accommodate all possible selection or measurement effects caused by the different interview modes (Vannieuwenhuyze et al., 2010). Thirdly, our analysis relates solely to the attitudes of individual citizens. The activities of interest groups, political parties, governments and other political actors were not investigated. These actors can, in fact, adopt and shape citizens' attitudes and feed into the political process. Our study does not allow us to say whether and how political elites affect the attitudes of citizens, and thus generate new cleavages. Finally, our data do not allow to test if citizens' general attitudes towards welfare redistribution influence attitudes towards a European welfare state. High approval rates on Europeanised social policy may indicate that respondents generally speak out for raising social expenditure, no matter on which level – national or European. Additional analyses from European Social Survey 2008 show (detailed results are available on request) that Polish and Spanish respondents (as citizens of countries with low GDP compared to Germany) are indeed more in favour of (national) welfare state redistribution than the Germans are. However, country differences are quite small. Thus, these findings cannot be seen as a clear vote against enhancing social policy at the European level.

What conclusions can be drawn from our findings? As discussed in the opening section, some scholars see expanding the European Union into a real political and social union, establishing a European democracy and welfare state as the only way to overcome the recent Euro crisis. This position has been criticised by other scholars and interpreted as utopian. Although our study is limited to three countries only the findings appear to support those who are

in favour of strengthening European social integration. However, critics may argue that we have set the bar for a successful European integration quite low by only focusing on citizens' support for a European welfare system. To overcome the Euro crisis, more binding and more intense forms of social integration are probably needed, since this concerns issues of redistribution of resources (the 'bail-outs'). The question, then, is whether solidarity measures such as redistribution are supported by the citizens of the European Union. We have discussed this question in more detail elsewhere (Gerhards and Lengfeld, 2015). Polls showed that the acceptance of solidarity between European countries is greater than sometimes assumed in the public debate. As seen in July 2012, for example, 50 per cent of Germans surveyed supported transfers to bolster the finances of indebted EU countries (Lengfeld et al., 2015). In addition, up to 43 per cent of Germans were willing to pay 0.5 per cent of their own income to help the indebted countries (Lengfeld, 2015). Further studies showed that citizens chose to express solidarity only when the highly indebted EU countries meet certain conditions. On the one hand, they required that there is no misuse of aid funds, and loans and guarantees should be used to undertake structural reforms so that there is a realistic chance that the loans can be repaid (European Parliament, 2012; Lengfeld et al., 2015). As with solidarity within the nation-state, it seems that, for transnational aid to be ongoing, the best guarantee of solidarity is to sanction and punish abuses and violations.

Secondly, European citizens want their weakly regulated financial system to come under stricter controls, and the upper social classes to accept more responsibility for the mandatory measures for managing the crisis. Two thirds of the respondents of a Eurobarometer from 2012 were in favour of a European financial transaction tax (European Parliament, 2012: 20). In the Standard Eurobarometer survey 76 from autumn 2011 about 90 per cent of the respondents supported stricter regulations against the possibility of tax avoidance and spoke out against the existence of tax havens as well as favouring more transparency in capital markets. Another 79 per cent deemed it just to regulate wages in the financial sector (like e.g. bonuses

for stock traders) and 65 per cent approve of taxes on speculative profits (European Commission, 2011: 18). In another survey, this time from Germany, nine out of ten citizens believed that banks should provide their own emergency rescue funds through a self-financed mechanism. These findings speak for themselves: Those who caused the crisis, people who have exorbitantly high incomes, should come under stricter democratic controls and should make contributions to improve public welfare.

Thus, empirical evidence suggests that Europe's social integration does not end with the mere acceptance of a European welfare system. A surprisingly large proportion of EU citizens are willing to support other EU countries financially and desire uniform standards of accountability for the system's beneficiaries and for those who caused the crisis. We arrive therefore at the conclusion that the European elites must show greater courage despite the dramatic crisis in the EU, and promote the entire European project rather than capitulating to a recurrence of renationalisation.

References

- Achterberg P and Houtman D (2006) Why do so many people vote ‘unnaturally’? A cultural explanation for voting behaviour. *European Journal for Political Research* 45: 75–92.
- Allespach M and Machnig J (2013) A change in course towards a social Europe. In: Grozelier AM, Hacker B, Kowalsky W, Machnig J, Meyer H and Unger B (eds) Roadmap to a social Europe. Social Europe report, pp. 92–94 Available at: http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/roadmap_to_social_europe_sej_oct_2013.pdf (accessed 15 June 2015).
- Avdeyeva O (2006) In support of mothers’ employment: limits to policy convergence in the EU? *International Journal of Social Welfare* 15: 37–49.
- Alsasua J, Bilbao-Ubillos J and Olaskoaga J (2007) The EU integration process and the convergence of social protection benefits at national level. *International Journal of Social Welfare* 16: 297–306.
- Bähr H (2010) *The politics of means and ends. Policy instruments in the European Union*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing.
- Beck U and Grande E (2007) *Cosmopolitan Europe*. Cambridge: Polity Books.
- Berg L (2007) *Multi-level Europeans. The influence of territorial attachment on political trust and welfare attitudes*. Göteborg: University of Göteborg.
- Bofinger P, Habermas J and Nida-Ruemelin J (2012) The case for a change of course in European policy. Available at: <http://www.social-europe.eu/author/peter-bofinger-juergen-habermas-and-julian-nida-ru/> (accessed 15 June 2015).
- Blekesaune M and Quadagno J (2003) Public attitudes toward welfare state policies. A comparative analysis of 24 nations. *European Sociological Review* 19: 415–427.
- Bruter M (2005) *Citizens of Europe? The emergence of a mass European identity*. Houndmills: Palgrave.
- Cnaan RA, Hasenfeld J, Cnaan A and Rafferty J (1993) Cross-cultural comparison of attitudes toward welfare state programs: Path analysis with log-linear models. *Social Indicators Research* 29: 123–152.
- Coenders M and Scheepers P (2003) The effect of education on nationalism and ethnic exclusionism: An international comparison. *Political Psychology* 24: 313–343.
- Cook LJ (2007) *Postcommunist welfare states: reform politics in Russia and Eastern Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Dallinger U (2010) Public support for redistribution: What explains cross-national differences? *Journal of European Social Policy* 20: 333–349.

- De Swaan A (1990) Perspectives for transnational social policy. Preliminary notes. *Cross-national Research Papers 2*: 7–22.
- Diekmann A and Preisendörfer P (2003) Green and greenback: The behavioral effects of environmental attitudes in low-cost and high-cost situations. *Rationality and Society* 15: 441–472.
- Edlund J (2007) Class conflicts and institutional feedback effects in liberal and social democratic welfare regimes. In: Svallfors S (ed) *The political sociology of the welfare state*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 30–79.
- Erikson R and Goldthorpe JH (1993) *A constant flux: A study of class mobility in industrial societies*. Oxford: Carendon Press.
- Esping-Andersen G (1990) *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- European Commission (2002) *Eurobarometer. Public opinion in the European Union*. Report no. 56. Brussels: Directorate-General Press and Communication. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb56/eb56_en.pdf (accessed 15 June 2015).
- European Commission (2005) Eurobarometer 64. Die öffentliche Meinung in der europäischen Union. Bruxelles: Generaldirektion Kommunikation. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_de.pdf (accessed 15 June 2015).
- European Commission (2008) *Eurobarometer 69.5. The European Union Today and Tomorrow*. Brussels: Directorate-General for Communication. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69_part3_en.pdf (accessed 115 June 2015).
- European Commission (2011) *Standard Eurobarometer 76. Public opinion in the European Union*. Report. Brussels: Directorate-General for Communication. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76_agreport_en.pdf (accessed 15 June 2015).
- European Commission (2014) European employment strategy. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=101&langId=en> (accessed 15 June 2015).
- European Parliament (2012) Crisis and economic governance V: European Parliament Eurobarometer (77.2) Summary. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2012/crise_V/eb_77_2_crisis_and_economic_governance_V_en.pdf (accessed 15 June 2015).
- Faist T (2001) Social citizenship in the European Union. Nested membership. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 39: 37–58.

- Ferrera M (2005) *The boundaries of welfare. European integration and the new spatial politics of social protection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fligstein N (2009) Who are the Europeans and how does this matter for politics? In: Checkel JT and Katzenstein PJ (eds) *European identity. Contemporary European studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 132–166.
- Gerhards J (2007) Cultural Overstretch? Differences between old and new member states of the EU and Turkey. New York: Routledge.
- Gerhards J and Lengfeld H (2015): *European Citizenship and Social Integration in the European Union*. London: Routledge.
- Gorodzeisky A and Semyonov M (2009) Terms of exclusion: Public views toward admission and allocation of rights to immigrants in European countries. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35: 401–423.
- Habermas J (2013) Democracy, solidarity and the European crisis. Available at: <http://www.social-europe.eu/2013/05/democracy-solidarity-and-the-european-crisis-2/> (accessed 15 June 2015).
- Hantrais L (2000) *Social policy in the European Union*. Basingstoke: Hampshire, Macmillan Press.
- ILO (2010) *International labour office world security report 2010/2011. Providing coverage in time of crisis and beyond*. Geneva: ILO.
- Immerfall S, Boehnke K and Baier D (2010) Identity. In: Immerfall S and Therborn G (eds) *Handbook of European Societies. Social transformations in the 21st Century*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 325–353.
- Inglehart R (1990) *Culture shift in advanced industrial society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart R (1997) *Modernization and postmodernization. Cultural, economic and political change in 43 societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jæger MM (2013) The effect of macroeconomic and social conditions on the demand for redistribution: A pseudo panel approach. *Journal of European Social Policy* 23: 149–163.
- Kriesi H, Grande E, Lachat R, Dolezal M, Bornschier S and Frey T (2008) *West European politics in the age of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lengfeld H (2015) Die Kosten der Hilfe. Europäische Fiskalkrise und die Bereitschaft der Deutschen zur Zahlung einer europäischen Solidaritätssteuer. In: Rössel J, Roose, J (eds) *Empirische Kultursoziologie. Festschrift für Jürgen Gerhards zum 60. Geburtstag*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 381–405.

- Lengfeld H, Häuberer J Schmidt S (2015) Is there a European solidarity? Attitudes towards fiscal assistance for debt-ridden European Union member states. Working Paper, available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2597605 (accessed 14 June 2016).
- Leibfried S (1992) Towards a European Welfare State. In: Ferge Z and Kolberg JE (eds) *Social Policy in a Changing Europe*. Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 245-278.
- Leibfried S and Pierson P (1999) *European social policy. Between fragmentation and integration*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Lipset SM (2001) Cleavages, parties and democracy. In: Karvonen L and Kuhnle S (eds) *Party systems and voter alignments revisited*. London: Routledge, pp. 3–9.
- Lipset SM and Rokkan S (1967) Cleavage structures, party systems and voter alignments. An introduction. In: Lipset SM and Rokkan S (eds) *Party systems and voter alignments. Cross-national perspectives*. New York: Free Press, pp. 1–64.
- Mau S (2005) Democratic demand for a social Europe? Preferences of the European citizenry. *International Journal of Social Welfare* 14: 76–85.
- Mewes J and Mau S (2012) Unraveling working-class welfare chauvinism. In: Svallfors S (ed) *Contested Welfare States: Welfare Attitudes in Europe and Beyond*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 119–157.
- Münch R (2010) *European governmentality: The liberal drift of multilevel governance*. New York: Routledge.
- Nida-Rümelin J, Hirschel D, Meyer H, Meyer T, Möller A, Scheer N, Schwan G and Schwengel H (2013) The case for a fundamental reform of the European Union. We need a Europe that is truly social and democratic. Social Europe Occasional Paper. Available at: <http://www.social-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/OccPap3.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2015).
- OECD (2013) Key short-term economic indicators: Harmonised unemployment rate. Available at: <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=21760#> (accessed 15 June 2015).
- Pettigrew TF (1998) Reaction toward the new minorities of Western Europe. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 77–103.
- Raijman R, Davidov E, Schmidt P and Hochman O (2008) What does a nation owe non-citizens? National attachments, perception of threat and attitudes towards granting citizenship rights in a comparative perspective'. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 49: 195–220.

- Raijman R, Semyonov M and Schmidt P (2003) Do foreigners deserve rights? Determinants of public views towards foreigners in Germany and Israel. *European Sociological Review* 19: 379–392.
- Risse T (2010) *A community of Europeans? Transnational identities and public spheres*. New York: Cornell University.
- Scharpf FW (2002) The European social model: Coping with the challenges of diversity. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40: 645–70.
- Scheepers P, Gijberts M and Coenders M (2002) Ethnic exclusionism in European countries: Public oppositions to civil rights for legal migrants as a response to perceived threat. *European Sociological Review* 18: 17–34.
- Semyonov M, Raijman R and Gorodzeisky A (2006) The rise of anti-foreigner sentiment in European societies, 1988-2000. *American Sociological Review* 71: 426–449.
- Streeck W (2012) Auf den Ruinen der Alten Welt: Von der Demokratie zur Marktgesellschaft. *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 12: 61–72.
- Streeck W (2014) *Buying time: The delayed crisis of democratic capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Svallfors S, Kulin J and Schnabel A (2012) Age, class, and attitudes towards government responsibilities: in search of the mechanisms. In: Svallfors S (ed) *Contested welfare states: welfare attitudes in Europe and beyond*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 158–193.
- Van der Waal J, Achterberg P, Houtman D, de Koster W and Manevska K (2010) Some are more equal than others. Economic egalitarianism and welfare chauvinism in the Netherlands. *Journal of European Social Policy* 20: 350–63.
- Vannieuwenhuyze J, Loosveldt G and Molenberghs G (2010) A method for evaluating mode effects in mixed-mode surveys. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74(5): 1027–1045.
- Weber, Max (1985) *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (edited by Johannes Winckelmann). Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr.
- Wimmer, A and Glick Schiller N (2002) Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks* 2: 301–334.