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Solidarity towards immigrants in European welfare states

van Oorschot W. Solidarity towards immigrants in European welfare states
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The concern that immigration could threaten the sustainability of the European Social Model is a reason to have a closer look at popular images of immigrants in the context of European welfare states. The focus is on Europeans' informal solidarity towards immigrants relative to other vulnerable groups in society. Using data from the European Values Survey 1999/2000 we find that in all European countries the public is least solidaristic towards migrants, in comparison with elderly people, sick and disabled people and unemployed people. Contrary to expectation, there is little relation between welfare state characteristics and people's solidarity, while the relative solidarity towards immigrants is higher in culturally more diverse countries. As expected, the relative solidarity towards immigrants is lower in countries with a more negative opinion climate towards immigrants and in poorer countries of Europe.

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Key words: welfare state, solidarity, immigrants, public opinion

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Introduction

The relationship between immigration and welfare has become a much-debated issue in recent years. One important element in the debate is a concern that immigration, especially from non-EU countries, may threaten the sustainability of the 'European Social Model' and its national varieties (e.g. Bommes & Geddes, 2000). American scholars who draw a parallel with the American situation articulate particularly strong warnings in this respect. The main thrust of their arguments is that cultural diversity has a negative effect on the comprehensiveness and generosity of welfare, especially if welfare use is associated with a subordinate minority. When immigrants reach the point where they form the largest part of welfare users in European countries, and immigrants as a group are subjected to negative images – conditions which apply to both African-American and Hispanic people in America – the societal legitimacy of welfare arrangements as a whole may diminish quickly (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Freeman, 1986).

The American warning is intriguing, and a reason to take a closer look at the relation between immigration and welfare. The main focus here is on popular attitudes towards immigrants, more specifically, on the informal solidarity that Europeans feel towards immigrants relative to other vulnerable groups in society. It is a well-established fact that negative, ethnic prejudices are quite strong among native Europeans (Ben Brika, Lemaine & Jackson, 1997), but it is known that other vulnerable groups, e.g. unemployed people, are also the subject of negative popular images (Fridberg & Ploug, 2000). Therefore, the American warning should be taken more seriously if it can be shown that, especially in comparison with other groups of needy people, the public's solidarity is lowest towards immigrants. This kind of information has been lacking thus far, and will be presented in this article.

Firstly, for a number of European countries, the position of immigrants on a rank order of informal solidarity will be described in comparison with the position of elderly people, disabled and sick people and unemployed people. By informal solidarity we mean people's expressed concern with the living conditions of groups.[1] Questions are: what is the typical rank order of such informal solidarity, and are there are differences between countries and social categories? Are immigrants the new 'undeserving poor', as Bommes and Geddes (2000) suggest in the conclusion of their book *Immigration and Welfare*? Secondly, the focus is on the degree to which people's solidarity towards immigrants differs from their solidarity towards the other groups.

[1] Formal solidarity regards the degree to which people actually take part in and contribute to collectively (state) organised arrangements for the improvement of the living conditions of groups in society.

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Do Europeans make only marginal differences here, or are the differences substantial? And thirdly, do European welfare states differ in their national levels of informal solidarity towards immigrants.[2] If so, what kinds of countries and welfare state characteristics are related to such levels? The data used are from the European Values Study 1999/2000.

First, however, we will briefly discuss the more general debate on the relation between immigration and welfare. This will put the analysis into a wider perspective and will help to develop a number of hypotheses regarding the factors that influence national levels of informal solidarity towards immigrants.

Immigration and the welfare state

There seems to be only one, be it an often-recognised, perspective in which immigration is seen as contributing positively to the longer-term sustainability of European welfare states. It is based on the argument that, within the next decades, in many European countries the demographic situation will lead to a serious mismatch between a larger population of elderly people and a too small segment of people of working age. The influx of migrants into European welfare states is seen as a solution to this demographic problem (e.g. Brochmann & Hammar, 1999). According to the United Nations, the numbers of migrants that would be necessary to maintain present ratios of working age versus elderly people in European countries are vast (several million per year on a European basis, for many years to come), and much higher than immigration numbers have been thus far (UN, 2000). The demographic need for increased immigration in itself is rarely questioned, but Holzmann and Muenz (2004) suggest that political and public support might fall short.

They may be right in this, because negative perspectives on the relation between migration and welfare tend to dominate the discourse. Basically, there are two types of arguments in relation to why immigration would pose a threat to the sustainability of European welfare states: one is economic, the other sociological. Economic arguments warn against the social expenditure costs related to immigration, which could undermine the fiscal viability of the welfare system in the longer run. Immigrants may constitute an extra fiscal burden if they are disproportionally dependent upon welfare, and especially if they choose to come to countries with high welfare levels. There is ample evidence that the first is true, especially regarding non-EU immigrants, who, in many European countries, are over-represented among users of unemployment, social assistance and family benefits (e.g. Boeri, Hanson & McCormick, 2002; EUMC, 2003; Muenz & Fassmann, 2004). The evidence regarding the question of whether, and to what degree, immigrants choose countries with better welfare arrangements is scarce. There is some evidence in the USA that states with higher social transfers attract more immigrants (Borjas, 1999), but in Europe the little evidence there is, is contradictory. One longitudinal study, which compared the percentage increase of immigrants among 15 European countries over the period 1970–2000, does not show any particular relation with type of welfare regime. Nor is there a relation with social spending (Menz, 2004). Another study, using the 1999 data of the European Community Household Panel, concludes that countries with more generous replacement rates of unemployment and assistance benefits have relatively more migrants (De Giorgi & Pellizzari, 2003). The authors interpret their findings as proof of a welfare magnet mechanism. Whether, in the long run, extra welfare costs for migrants would outweigh their contribution to the production of welfare, or not, is, of course, another issue raised by economists, but one that is very difficult to answer with any empirical certainty. Freeman (1986), who reviews some studies, is very sceptical. He concludes that 'one is free to believe more or less what one wishes about the *economic impact* of migration because the facts are so much in dispute'.

Sociological arguments for a problematic relation between immigration and welfare sustainability have in common that immigration would undermine the societal legitimacy base for a comprehensive and solidaristic welfare state. A central argument is that immigration implies ethnic, linguistic and/or racial diversity which would break down the homogeneous identity and broad sense of solidarity that laid the ground for national, encompassing welfare arrangements. Freeman (1986) is quite explicit in his view that welfare states are closed systems of individuals sharing social goods on the basis of experiencing fellow feeling. It is not without reason, he contends, that welfare states developed hand-in-hand with the nation state. Immigration, according to Freeman, threatens European welfare state communities for several reasons. One is that it divides the 'natural' constituency of the welfare state, which is formed by the working class, unions and social democracy more generally. Secondly, it would erode the normative consensus about welfare redistribution by increasing the awareness of identity differences in terms of 'us' versus 'them'. Both types of factors have prevented the development of the American welfare state and by analogy they would form a threat for Europe's present-day welfare states. In addition, Freeman (1986) asserts, immigration in Europe has stimulated reactionary and nationalist politics, at the same time helping to shift the ideological centre of European politics to a more neo-liberal and anti-welfare

[2] Of course, an interesting question is also which individual and contextual factors determine individual people's solidarity towards migrants. Due to space restrictions here, we report on our analysis regarding this question in a forthcoming article.

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direction. All this, Freeman (1986) interprets as an Americanisation of European welfare states.

In Europe, Freeman's views have met with endorsement as well as critique. Wolfe and Klausen (1997), for instance, agree that welfare state building has been a process of nation state building. In their view, the European values and forms of welfare distribution are universal in character and require a degree of consensus around citizenship and the common good, in as much as they require a national solidarity. The solidarity necessary to sustain a welfare system in a multicultural society requires people to identify with strangers, but it is questionable whether this condition is met in present-day European countries (see Miller, 1995). As for the problematic labour base constituency of welfare states, Ryner (2000) sees a link with the recent shift from a Keynesian welfare state to a neo-liberal welfare regime, with a greater emphasis on need and self-reliance. This shift has a negative effect on the social protection of all vulnerable groups, including immigrants, but in the present-day multicultural welfare state, alliances among such groups are inhibited seriously because they are divided by internal competition, discrimination and xenophobia. Concerning the political factor, Kitschelt (1995) argues that indeed there is a link between the rise of right-wing politics and immigration, which fact, in his view, may lead to a magnification of 'us' versus 'them' resentments regarding social transfers.

However, Freeman also meets critique. Goul Andersen (2005), for instance, argues that a difference should be made between situations where racial and cultural diversity precede efforts of welfare state building (as in the USA), and situations where multiculturalism emerges in welfare states that are already established (as in Europe). In the latter case, one factor is that the institutional and political set-up may be able to control and mitigate distributional conflicts raised by diversity. An important second factor is that it can be questioned whether modern electorates would be willing to give up social rights in view of increased immigration (see Banting, 1998). What is more, although in many European countries right-wing parties have increased their electoral share, especially among the working classes, by linking up with and stimulating anti-immigrant feelings, they are typically not advocating anti-welfare policies, because this would run counter to the interests of their new constituency (Faist, 1996).

Given this difference in views and arguments, it is important to raise the empirical question of whether it is true that diversity is related to lesser welfare support and spending. Unfortunately, there are only a few studies, offering fragmented evidence, and with regard to the situation in Europe the evidence is not convincing.

On a global scale, as well as in the USA, it seems to be the case that racial fractionalisation, particularly, is related to lower levels of (support for) social spending. Alesina and Glaeser (2004) present evidence that in a sample of 56 countries, racial fractionalisation is negatively correlated with social spending ($r = -0.66$). There is also a negative relation with linguistic fractionalisation. When controlling for countries' gross domestic product (GDP), however, the correlation diminishes substantially. They also show that in the USA, aid for families with dependent children (AFDC) levels, as well as popular support levels, are lower in states with a higher percentage of black population (see Hero and Tolbert, 1996). However, whether this global and American evidence has any significance for the European situation remains to be seen. Alesina and Glaeser's (2004) evidence shows that all the European countries in their sample differ relatively very little in racial fractionalisation, but quite substantially in welfare spending as a share of GDP, suggesting that within Europe there is no correlation between the two. This is precisely what Taylor-Gooby (2005) found in a study where he repeats Alesina and Glaeser's analysis for 22 OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, while introducing other political, economic and demographic control variables. Racial fractionalisation negatively affects social spending only in a model that includes the USA. In a model excluding the USA, the impact of racial fractionalisation disappears completely. In a model with 17 European countries only, the only effect is from the proportion of left-wing seats in a country's parliament. Taylor-Gooby (2005) concludes that, in Europe, left-wing politics substantially counteracts the impact of greater diversity on the European social model. Whether the causality is as Taylor-Gooby (2005) suggests (left-wing politics defending the welfare state against legitimacy loss due to increased diversity) rests unclear for the moment. Swank and Betz (2003) suggest an opposite causality, arguing that it is the comprehensive welfare state itself that forms a barrier against diversity-based retrenchment. In an empirical analysis of national elections in 16 European nations from 1981 to 1995, they found that more universal welfare states in Europe directly depress the vote for far-right-wing parties, and thus weaken a possible attack of welfare chauvinism on the universal welfare state. In their view, it is not left-wing politics defending the welfare state, but the welfare state defending against (far) right-wing politics. Whatever the underlying mechanism, politics seem to matter in Europe, resulting in a mitigation of the relation between diversity and welfare spending. That politics matters is also the outcome of two other studies. Soroka, Banting and Johnston (2004) analyse the relation between changes in migrant stock and changes in welfare spending as a share of GDP for 18 OECD countries. Comparing figures from 1998 with those from 1970, they conclude that growth in spending was less in countries with a

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stronger increase in migrant numbers, while it was less hampered in countries with more left-wing seats in the governing coalition. In addition, Banting (1998), in his study on the effects of ethno-linguistic diversity on government transfers to households in 15 Western democracies over the period 1965–1980, finds an overall negative correlation. However, additional analyses of different groupings of countries lead to the conclusion that the consociational democracies of Europe, with their tradition of consensual policy making, have been able to accommodate ethno-linguistic diversity and welfare redistribution, while in other countries, such as the USA, the combination of such diversity and political fragmentation has constrained redistributive efforts.

In short, there is little and fragmented evidence about the relation between racial, or ethno-linguistic, diversity and welfare spending. It seems that certain political features of European welfare states have thus far prevented the negative effects that some would expect when drawing a parallel with the American experience. The new cultural diversity seems not to have eroded the European Social Model, as yet. This is not to say that the American warning should be ignored. In our view, an important aspect of the issue is how, and to what degree, the solidarity of Europeans towards immigrants differs from their solidarity towards other groups in society.

The relative solidarity towards immigrants

A rank order of informal solidarity

In our view, there are good grounds to expect that informal solidarity towards immigrants as a group tends to be low. This is because the group of immigrants in Europe is subjected to negative prejudice (Ben Brika et al., 1997) and, based on an 'us versus them' identity differentiation mechanism, one can assume that people are less concerned with the living conditions of such groups generally. However, one can also expect that informal solidarity towards immigrants tends to be lower than people's solidarity towards other vulnerable groups, such as elderly people, sick and disabled people and unemployed people. Assuming that informal solidarity is generally lower towards groups that one perceives as less deserving, deservingness theory may clarify this expectation. In deservingness literature, five central criteria are distinguished, which people usually apply when assessing an individual's or a group's deservingness (van Oorschot, 2000): (i) control over neediness: people who are seen as being personally responsible for their neediness are seen as less deserving (if at all); (ii) level of need: people with greater need are seen as more deserving; (iii) identity: needy people who are more similar and closer to 'us' are seen as more deserving; (iv) attitude: more deserving are those needy people who are likeable, grateful, compliant and conforming to our standards; and (v) reciprocity: more deserving are those needy people who have contributed to our group before (who have 'earned' our support), or who may be expected to be able to contribute in future. Migrants can be expected to score particularly badly on the criteria of identity and reciprocity, while in the public's eye most migrants may also be accused of having put themselves in a situation of welfare dependency. Although the public usually has some doubts about whether unemployed people are themselves to blame for their unemployment or not (e.g. Furnham, 1982; Halvorsen, 2002), unemployed people as a group will score better on the criteria of identity and reciprocity (the latter especially in countries with contributive unemployment insurance schemes). Compared with unemployed people, sick and disabled people will usually be seen as more deserving, because in their case there will be much less doubt about the involuntariness of their neediness. The most deserving group, however, will be the elderly. They cannot be blamed for their age, they are close to 'us' (they are our parents and grandparents, we ourselves hope to live to an old age), they have extra age-related needs, they have earned their share in their productive life stage, and they are not seen as an ungrateful and demanding group. So, regarding the rank-order of informal solidarity, our hypothesis is that the declining order will be: elderly people, sick and disabled people, unemployed people, immigrants. We assume that this order will be the same in all countries of our sample, and we will analyse whether it will be the same over social categories.

Notwithstanding that informal solidarity towards migrants will be lowest as a general rule, some people might place them far off all other categories, while others may not make such a big difference. It is this relative informal solidarity towards migrants that we are specifically interested in here. Are there national differences, and if so, to what kind of country and welfare state characteristics are they related?

Relative informal solidarity towards immigrants and country characteristics

We know of no studies in which the relationships between welfare state characteristics and people's attitudes towards immigrants are analysed explicitly and directly. We know only of Banting's study (Banting, 2000) where an indirect measure of mass support for welfare is related to immigrant influx and welfare regime type. Seeing mass support as reflected in the degree to which welfare states in recent years have reduced or upheld their social rights systems, Banting concludes that social-democratic and corporatist regimes have been more successful in incorporating new immigrants without eroding mass support for the welfare state. It

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is in countries where the welfare state traditionally has a weaker base and relies more heavily on means-tested benefits '. . . that new forms of cultural diversity have tended to weaken support for redistribution generally or for inclusive definitions of social programmes' (Banting, 2000: 25). From this, one may deduce the hypothesis that the relative informal solidarity towards immigrants is at about an equal level in corporatist and social-democratic welfare states, and that this level is higher compared with liberal welfare states. However, nothing is specified for the Southern European welfare states, nor for the Eastern European welfare states. If we take Banting's (2000) findings a step further, one can hypothesise that in Southern European countries the solidarity at issue would be lower than it is in the social-democratic and other corporatist European countries in our sample, and perhaps higher than in Europe's liberal welfare states. Given the non-comprehensive or residual character of the Eastern European welfare states (Kovacs, 2003), one could assume that here the solidarity towards immigrants comes close to, or is even less than, that of the liberal welfare states. Since, in a European context, a welfare state's social spending as a share of GDP is closely related to its place in a regime type category, we will not specify separate hypotheses for the relation between spending and solidarity, other than that we expect this relation to be positive, i.e. more spending goes with higher relative informal solidarity towards immigrants.

As for other country characteristics, we will explore the influence of a series of cultural, political and structural indicators. The review of the debate on the relation between immigration and welfare in the previous section points to the possible relevance of a country's cultural diversity, its opinion climate regarding migrants and political factors. In line with the main thrust of the literature, one could assume that cultural diversity is associated with a lower relative solidarity towards immigrants. This, then, could be the result of a situation in which diversity would be associated with stronger negative images of immigrants. Alternatively, it is not that difficult to imagine that diversity is associated with a less negative climate, because, for instance, it might teach people to understand 'others', to deal and live with them without feeling threatened culturally or economically. Some evidence in favour of this perspective is provided by Scheepers, Gijsberts and Coenders (2002), who found that European people who live in urban areas where there are much higher concentrations of immigrants are less negative about civil rights for immigrants as a group, than are Europeans living in rural areas. Another cultural variable is a country's level of interpersonal and institutional trust, which in Canada was found to mediate the (weak) negative relation between 'visibility of minorities' and welfare support (Soroka, Johnston & Banting, 2003). We will explore the possible influence of trust, assuming that higher trust relates to higher relative solidarity towards immigrants. The underlying mechanism could be that in countries with more trust, people on the whole may feel less threatened by immigrants, people may have greater confidence in the real neediness of immigrants, they might have greater confidence in immigrants' efforts to be self-sufficient and they may rely more on their government's ability to cope with migration-related problems.

Regarding political factors, the review suggests that left-wing influence, as well as a consociational character of policy making, mitigates the possible negative effect of migration on welfare support. With the indicators at hand, we assume that a greater dominance of left-wing egalitarianism results in higher relative solidarity towards immigrants generally. Regarding left-wing influence, we can avail of an index of the left–right character of successive cabinets (for the non-Eastern European countries only). We have no direct measure of consociationalism, but a proxy might be the degree to which a country's population is politically engaged and active. One could assume that in a more politically engaged and active society, the formation of strong negative attitudes towards minority groups may be more difficult, because of a wider and more open social debate on salient issues. This may result in a higher relative solidarity towards immigrants.

To these factors we add some structural variables, which indicate the degree to which a country might afford to treat immigrants as an equally deserving category. The idea is that people may be more relaxed towards immigrants' welfare if they live in a richer country, if unemployment is lower and if there is less poverty. In such circumstances, immigration may be less associated with economic threat.

To be sure, countries differ in their immigration histories and policies (see e.g. Boeri et al., 2002), which are both factors that might affect people's solidarity towards immigrants. However, such effects are very difficult to untangle, because most countries cannot be attributed to a single category. For example, The Netherlands and France have a history of post-colonial immigration in the 1950s (and 1980s), labour immigration in the 1960s and 1970s and humanitarian immigration in the 1990s. A second reason is that immigration characteristics co-vary with welfare state characteristics, as a result of which the welfare state effect and immigration history effect cannot be separated clearly. Especially the Southern European welfare states are an example here, since they have in common that their immigration history is one of the recent past and includes both large numbers of humanitarian immigration as well as immigration from the post-socialist European countries. Given our main focus on the relationships with welfare state, for these

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reasons we will not include countries' immigration histories and policies as independent variables.

Data and methods

Our data source is the European Values Study (EVS) survey, 1999/2000, fielded in 33 European countries (http://www.europeanvalues.nl). We confine our analysis to the 18 countries we have adequate additional, aggregate data for at the time of analysis: France, UK, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, The Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The country samples consist of at least 1,000 and at most 2,000 respondents each. Our pooled dataset contains 23,852 individual cases.

Dependent variable: the relative informal solidarity towards immigrants

Our central dependent variable measures people's informal solidarity towards four groups of needy people, operationalised by the EVS survey question:

> To what extent do you feel concerned about the living conditions of:
> - Elderly people in your country.
> - Unemployed people in your country.
> - Immigrants in your country.
> - Sick and disabled people in your country.
>
> (1 = not at all, 2 = not so much, 3 = to a certain extent, 4 = much, 5 = very much).

Our assumption is that respondents' level of concern reflects their informal solidarity towards the groups. The rank order of felt concern thus reflects the rank order of solidarity[3]: The higher the score, the higher the relative solidarity. The relative solidarity towards immigrants is measured as the difference between people's concern with immigrants (which was consistently found to be lowest) and people's concern with elderly people (which was consistently found to be highest). We are aware that the term 'immigrants' in the survey question is an unspecified category, leaving room for interpretation of what type of specific immigrant groups respondents had in mind when answering the question. This might differ not only between individual respondents, there might be country differences as well, depending on the colonial historical and geographical origin and/or the social visibility of specific immigrant groups in countries, amongst other reasons. As is the case in most of the European-wide surveys of popular prejudice towards immigrants, we assume that the overall association is with ethnic minorities coming from non-EU countries.

Independent variables: country characteristics

Welfare regime type is measured with a modified Esping-Andersen typology that includes the four ideal types of the social-democratic Scandinavian, the liberal Anglo-Saxon, the conservative-corporatist Continental and the budding Mediterranean welfare regimes (Arts & Gelissen, 2002), added with a group of former communist Eastern and Central European welfare states.

Welfare effort is measured by a country's total social spending as a percentage of GDP. To average out some of the difference in GDP development between countries, we took the arithmetic means of welfare effort over a certain period [1990–1998 for the Western European countries from the OECD Social Expenditure Database 2001; 1996–1998 for the Eastern and Central European countries from Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -gestaltung (GVG) (2002)].

Cultural diversity is measured with several indicators. First, there are the indexes of ethnicity, language and religious fractionalisation from Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat and Wacziarg (2003). In addition, we have two alternative indicators of the degree of ethnic diversity. One is immigration rate as the number of non-national immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants of a country, and another the number of foreign-born citizens as a percentage of all citizens of a country. The immigration rates are taken from the European System of Social Indicators of ZUMA, Mannheim (http://www.gesis.org/ZUMA/). They are based on various sources and consist of country averages over the period 1985–1998 (Western countries), and over the period 1988–1999 (Eastern countries). The rates of foreign-born citizens are from the OECD, which critically discusses the validity and reliability of European migration rates for use in international comparison (Dumont & Lemaitre, 2004). National statistics of 'immigrants', on which such rates are based, vary rather widely in definition of an 'immigrant'. The OECD report suggests a better comparable measure of foreign-born nationals, which is calculated from the OECD-countries' censuses of the year 2000 that asked for people's country of birth and nationality.

[3] An alternative interpretation is that expressed concern reflects the degree to which people perceive the living conditions of group A as problematic, with problem awareness possibly related to the perceived or actual level of social protection for group A offered by the state. This 'problem awareness' interpretation assumes that, if in a country the social protection of group A is lesser than that of other groups, more people will say that they are (more) concerned with the living conditions of group A relative to the other groups, and group A will get a higher score on the variable. However, what this study will show is that this is not the case: informal solidarity is consistently highest towards elderly people and sick and disabled people, which are the groups all European welfare states offer better protection to, than to the unemployed and immigrant groups.

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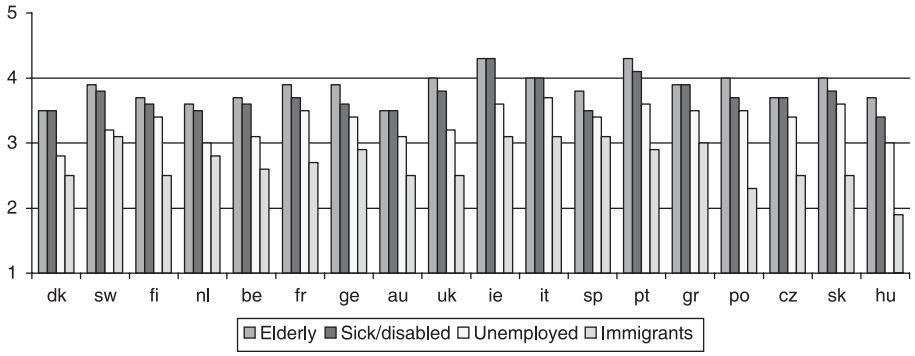


Figure 1. Rank order of informal solidarity by country (national averages). Countries abbreviated as follows: dk, Denmark; sw, Sweden; fi, Finland; nl, The Netherlands; be, Belgium; fr, France; ge, Germany; au, Australia; uk, UK; ie, Ireland; it, Italy; sp, Spain; pt, Portugal; gr, Greece; po, Poland; cz, Czech Republic; sk, Slovakia; hu, Hungary.

Aspects of the opinion climate regarding immigrants are measured as national averages of respondents' answers to three questions, regarding whether or not people would like to have immigrants as neighbours, whether employers should give priority to national people over immigrants when jobs are scarce, and how strict government should be in controlling people from less developed countries who come to work in the country.

Two indicators measure trust. As is common in other European surveys (e.g. International Social Survey Program (ISSP), European Social Survey (ESS), interpersonal trust is measured as the average of respondents' answers to the question: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?' [no-yes]. Institutional trust is measured by a summative scale measuring people's confidence in the (welfare) state institutions of 'the police', 'the social security system', 'the health care system', 'parliament', 'the civil service', 'the justice system' (alpha reliability = 0.80).

Left-wing influence is measured by the so-called Schmidt-index of cabinet composition for the period 1991–1999, as presented in Armingeon, Leimgruber, Beyeler and Menegale (2004). Categories are: (i) hegemony of right-wing parties; (ii) dominance of right-wing (and centre) parties; (iii) parties between left and right wings; (iv) dominance of social-democratic and other left-wing parties; (v) hegemony of social-democratic and other left-wing parties. The index figures are not available for the Eastern European countries.

Political activity is measured by national averages on two composite measures. One measure, about active political engagement, detracts people's score on a number of a list of activities they would certainly not do, from their score on the number of the activities from the same list they once did. The list includes: signing a petition, joining in boycotts, attending lawful demonstrations, joining unofficial strikes, occupying buildings or factories. The second measure, about passive political engagement, adds people's score on two relevant questions. One asks about how often they discuss politics with friends, and the other about the frequency with which they follow politics in the media.

We measure a country's level of wealth by its 1994–1999 average GDP per capita relative to the yearly EU15 index in purchasing power standards (PPS) (*source*: Eurostat website, 12-09-2003).

Poverty rates are measured as the per cent population below 60 per cent of the national median equivalised income for 2001 (*sources*: Western EU countries, Eurostat Statistics in Focus 2004/16; Eastern EU countries, Eurostat Statistics in Focus 2004/12).

Unemployment rates are for 1998 (*source*: United Nations, 2000).

Results

The rank order of informal solidarity

Our hypothesis was that the public would feel most solidarity towards elderly people, closely followed by sick and disabled people, next there would be unemployed people, and the solidarity towards immigrants would be lowest. As Figure 1 shows, this is exactly what is found in 12 of our 18 European countries. In the six other countries (Denmark, Austria, Ireland, Italy, Czech Republic and Greece), the difference with the universal rank order is that the solidarity towards elderly and sick and disabled people is at an equally high level. This is not a substantial, but a marginal, deviance from the general pattern.

In some countries, especially in the highly developed welfare states of Denmark, Sweden and The Netherlands, informal solidarity seems mainly to be differentiated along two groups: elderly, sick and disabled people on the one hand, and unemployed people and immigrants on the other. In most other Western and Southern European countries, the scores for elderly, sick and disabled people are quite similar, but there are larger

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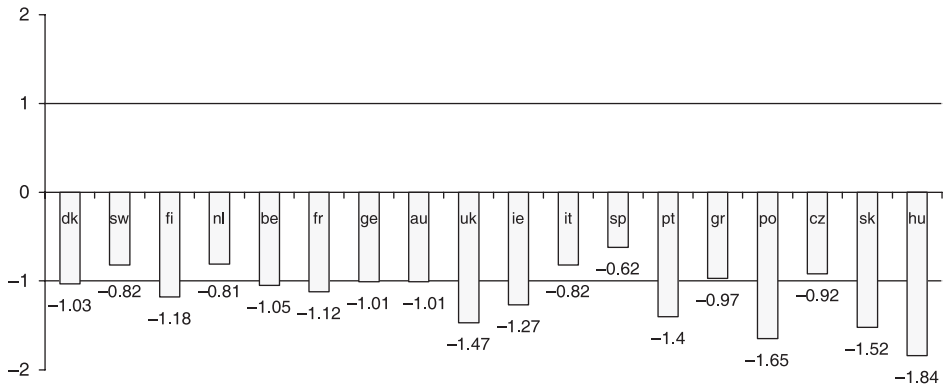


Figure 2. Relative solidarity towards immigrants by country (national averages, d.f. 17, F = 95.893; p < 0.001). Countries abbreviated as follows: dk, Denmark; sw, Sweden; fi, Finland; nl, The Netherlands; be, Belgium; fr, France; ge, Germany; au, Australia; uk, UK; ie, Ireland; it, Italy; sp, Spain; pt, Portugal; gr, Greece; po, Poland; cz, Czech Republic; sk, Slovakia; hu, Hungary.

differences between the solidarity towards unemployed people and immigrants. A typical pattern for the Eastern European countries seems to be that the scale distance between immigrants and the other groups is relatively large, while the distances among the other three needy groups are relatively small. How these differences can be explained is uncertain. One could speculate that where national resources for social protection are low, people tend to differentiate their solidarity more strongly on the basis of identity (in order to preserve the little there is for 'ourselves'), while in a context of affluence people tend to differentiate solidarity more along lines of incapacity, i.e. the control criterion.

Table 1. Relative informal solidarity towards immigrants by regime type.

Welfare regime type	Mean relative solidarity	n	SD
Scandinavian	−1.001	3	0.178
Continental	−1.001	5	0.116
Anglo-Saxon	−1.365	2	0.141
Southern European	−0.952	4	0.328
Central and Eastern European	−1.483	4	0.395
Total	−1.139	18	0.325

Between groups sum of squares: 0.861; within groups: 0.940; F: 2.976; Significance: 0.06. SD, standard deviation.

Relative deservingness of immigrants: country level

Between countries, the degree to which people show solidarity towards immigrants and elderly varies more than the solidarity rank order. Figure 2 shows that national averages in relative solidarity vary between −0.62 in Spain and −1.85 in Hungary. The figure does not show clear interpretable patterns, but it seems that informal solidarity towards immigrants is, on average, somewhat higher in the Western European continental countries (with the exception of Portugal), and somewhat lower in the European Anglo-Saxon and Eastern European countries (with the exception of the Czech Republic).

How national differences in relative solidarity towards immigrants can be explained is a question to which there are no answers yet to be found in the literature. To explore possible factors we analysed the bivariate correlations between our relative solidarity measure and welfare state characteristics, as well as national averages of our independent variables. Note that, due to the small number of countries, multivariate analyses are not meaningful.

As for welfare state characteristics, our findings point to small differences in national levels of relative solidarity. Regarding welfare spending we find a positive correlation at the aggregate level of 0.342, with a significance level of 0.165. At most, this can be interpreted only as a very weak relation. Decomposed by regime type, our findings in Table 1 also show that differences are very small.

These findings partly support our hypothesis, where it assumes that the relative solidarity towards immigrants is about equal between the social-democratic and corporatist welfare states, and that it will be lower in the liberal welfare states and the non-comprehensive, residual welfare states of Eastern European countries. However, there is nearly as much within-type variation as there is variation between types. But what really disrupts the general picture is the fact that the group of Southern European countries shows the highest average. This does not fit with their less comprehensive nature and their lesser spending compared with the central Western and Nordic European countries. Had one looked only at the case of Porthgal, with at the case of Portugal, with its low level of relative solidarity, the overall hypothesis would have seemed to hold. However, Portugal is an outlier in its group. Additional analyses, in which we compared the national means of our independent variables between group members,

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Table 2. Bivariate Pearson correlations with relative informal solidarity towards immigrants.

Culture	
Cultural diversity	
Ethnic fractionalisation	0.221
Language fractionalisation	0.531*
Religious fractionalisation	0.034
Rate of foreign-born citizens	0.521*
Immigration rate	0.275
Opinion climate	
Nationals (right . . . left)[a]	
Immigrants not as neighbour (not . . . no problem)	0.663**
Nationals priority over immigrants when jobs are scarce (yes . . . in between . . . no)	0.516*
Immigrant numbers in (prohibit . . . anyone)	0.644**
Trust	
Interpersonal trust (low . . . high)	0.525*
Institutional trust (low . . . high)	0.069
Politics	
Political engagement	
Active political engagement (low . . . high)	0.646**
Passive political engagement (low . . . high)	0.240
Left-wing influence	
Cabinet compositions (right . . . left)[a]	0.484
Structure	
Wealth (GDP per capita)	0.584*
Poverty rate	–0.140
Unemployment rate	0.105

Aggregate level, n = 18.
[a] Exclusive of Eastern European countries.
Correlation is significant at: * the 0.01 level (2-tailed); ** the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

reveal that Portugal had exceptional scores on some of them. Typically, as we shall see later, these are variables that are related significantly to informal solidarity: the Portuguese people have more negative opinions on immigrants generally, less of them are politically active and they have less trust in others. Note that in the group of Eastern European countries there is also an outlier present, which is the Czech Republic, with a higher level of relative solidarity. Here, compared with the other Eastern European countries, people are less negative on immigrants generally and they are more politically active.

As for other country characteristics, the results of our exploratory analyses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows, firstly, that national averages of relative solidarity towards immigrants are associated with cultural factors, such as countries' cultural diversity, their opinion climate regarding immigrants and their trust levels. With regard to cultural diversity, it is striking that all correlations are positive (although not all are statistically significant). This means that, on the whole, cultural diversity tends to go together with a higher relative solidarity towards immigrants. In other words, people who live in countries with a more diverse population put immigrants as a group less far off from other needy groups on a scale of informal solidarity. This seems to refute the general idea that cultural diversity puts pressure on the recognition of immigrants as a category deserving of support. How this can be explained is left open for discussion. We speculate that cultural diversity might, in a way, teach a population to understand 'others', to deal and live with them without feeling threatened culturally or economically. A closer look at Table 2 shows us that it is especially the degree to which different languages are spoken in a country that is strongly associated with relative solidarity. Language differences within European countries are not recent phenomena stemming from modern migration. Instead, they go way back in history, as in Spain, Switzerland and Belgium. Our data suggest that traditional experiences with language differences form a basis for making a smaller distinction between the solidarity towards traditional vulnerable groups in society and towards immigrants. Cultural diversity in terms of religious differences, or of ethnic differences as a combination of racial and language fractionalisation, is of no particular influence among the European countries of our sample. This also counts for our measure of immigration rate, which is based on rather diverse (national) statistical sources that differ quite substantially in their definition of a migrant. A more comparable measure of the proportion of foreign-born national citizens shows a strong positive relation.

As for opinion climate regarding immigrants, Table 2 shows, as expected, that the relative solidarity towards immigrants is higher in countries with a more positive, or should we say a less negative, set of opinions, regarding whether one would rather not have migrants as a neighbour, whether one feels that, in case of vacancies, nationals should get priority over migrants and whether the influx of migrants should be limited.

Our trust indicators show that the relative solidarity towards immigrants is higher in countries with a higher level of interpersonal trust. The underlying mechanisms could be that in such countries people on the whole may feel less threatened by immigrants, people may have greater confidence in the real neediness of immigrants, they might have greater confidence in immigrants' efforts to be self-sufficient, etc. The degree of institutional trust does not make a difference.

Political factors seem to be relevant, especially the degree to which a country's population is actively engaged in political behaviour, such as striking, signing petitions, taking part in boycotts and demonstrations and occupying buildings and factories. These kinds of activities, on the whole, seem to create a context in which people differentiate less between their solidarity towards immigrants compared with other needy groups. The exact causal mechanism is not clear, but it might be that active political engagement is a manifestation of a more consociational political system in which there is more room for an open social debate on salient issues,

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such as immigration-related problems. Such debate may contribute to a better understanding of the position of migrants and thus to greater solidarity. Passive political engagement does not have a strong effect, although there is a positive relation as in the case of active engagement. Although, as expected, the relation of the influence of left-wing politics in successive cabinets with relative solidarity towards immigrants is positive, in our sample it is not statistically significant.

Regarding our structural variables, Table 2 shows that higher poverty rates and higher unemployment rates, which might induce a stronger (perceived) pressure of migration on resources for the needy, do not matter for a country's level of relative solidarity towards immigrants. This is in line with the finding of Bruecker et al. (2002) that at the aggregate level prejudice against immigrants, as measured in Eurostat surveys, is hardly related to a country's economic characteristics, such as its unemployment level. What does play a role, though, is a country's level of wealth. People in richer countries, on the whole, show more solidarity towards immigrants relative to other needy groups.

Conclusions and discussion

Some American scholars have warned Europe against heading towards an Americanisation of its welfare states. Based on American experiences, their argument is that cultural diversity, stemming from the increased influx of migrants in Europe, may have a negative effect on welfare support and spending. If, in Europe, welfare recipients are likely to be mostly from a migrant background, and if the public feel little solidarity towards migrants, a strong anti-welfare sentiment could arise, as is traditionally present in the USA, where it is based on negative images of African-Americans and Hispanics. For Europe, it is true that migrants (from non-EU countries) are over-represented in the populations of welfare dependents, and migrants as a group are the objects of rather strong prejudice among European native people. As our findings here have shown, it is also consistently true that the informal solidarity Europeans feel towards migrants is low, when compared with solidarity shown towards other vulnerable groups. However, there is no proof that, thus far, an American-type process has taken place in Europe. Empirical evidence seems to show that, up till now, the so-called European Social Model has been able to ward off the possible consequences of increased cultural diversity. It seems that politics, in particular, has played a part in this, although the exact mechanism is not clear. Some claim that left-wing parties have been able to mitigate the effects of cultural diversity on welfare spending, others argue that it is the comprehensiveness of European welfare states proper that has been able to take the wind out of right-wing parties' sails.

Our analyses show that, in Europe, there is little relation between welfare state characteristics and feelings of informal solidarity. People in Southern European states show somewhat more solidarity towards migrants, but Portugal is a strong outlier in this group. Showing a bit less solidarity are people in the liberal welfare states of the UK and Ireland, as well as in the residual welfare states of Eastern Europe, but here the Czech Republic is a clear outlier. We did not find a significant relation with welfare spending. This suggests that higher spending welfare states in Europe are not faced with stronger anti-solidaristic sentiments towards migrants among their populations compared with lower spending states, as is indeed the current situation. What is more, our data show that differences in immigration rates have no influence on relative solidarity towards migrants, and even that a higher rate of foreign-born citizens goes together with higher relative solidarity.

It might nevertheless be that European governments feel pressed to adapt their, more or less comprehensive, welfare state in relation to migration and cultural diversity. Events may occur which in themselves are not related to welfare, but which may impact ideas on any issue related to migration and cultural diversity. Terrorist attacks by fundamental Muslims is, of course, an example that springs to mind here. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that rhetoric about the negative impact of migration on the sustainability of European welfare systems is present in most countries. An interesting question then is which form future adaptations of welfare would take. Would European governments opt for bringing down the social protection of all of its citizens alike? Banting (1998) and Goul Andersen (2005) think not, and they may be right in their view that the social expectations embedded in the European welfare state will condition the response of Western democracies. They question whether and why modern electorates would easily surrender social benefits in the face of increasing cultural diversity. In case they are right, one can imagine two possible alternatives for governments: to limit the influx of migrants in order to prevent them having access to comprehensive welfare and/or to reduce social rights for migrants only. Both alternatives are already put into practice by European welfare states, especially the former (see e.g. Boeri et al., 2002; Bommes and Geddes, 2000). As for the latter, it is known that several countries have reduced social rights for refugees and asylum seekers who do not (yet) have the official status of citizen. An important alternative measure could be to substantially lengthen the period in which newly arrived migrants have to wait before becoming entitled to the full benefits and services of a country's welfare system, irrespective of whether they would or would not yet have permanent residence. Thus far, except for Denmark, where there is

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a waiting period of seven years before newcomers can be entitled to full rather than partial social assistance, there are no examples of countries that have seriously taken this route, but there is discussion of it in several countries. Our findings reported here indicate that the public at large might not object to this idea, since migrants, as a group, are consistently at the bottom of the public's solidarity scale. However, introducing a dual welfare system could mean a definite step towards an 'Americanisation of welfare'. The welfare for 'them, immigrants' will then always be questioned and be at permanent peril of further deterioration.

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