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# Regional Integration Support: A Positive Externality toward Migration Attitudes

TOBIAS BÖHMELT<sup>1</sup> and VINCENZO BOVE<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Government, University of Essex, Colchester

<sup>2</sup>Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry

## Abstract

Public opinion in favor of regional unification is usually seen as key for successfully implementing such integration projects. We argue that, as a positive externality, it can also foster support for migration. Focusing on the case of Europe, we use in-group and out-group dynamics as a starting point and claim that citizens who are more supportive of EU unification tend to have dual-identity and more cosmopolitan attitudes, which is linked to more support for migration from outside the region. We employ hierarchical models using all existing rounds of the European Social Survey and complement this with a panel-data analysis based on the German Longitudinal Election Data to exploit the individual-level evolution of attitudes over time. The empirical findings strongly support the theoretical expectations, and they shed new light on our understanding of how public attitudes toward migration are formed.

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**Keywords:** EU support; EU skepticism; public opinion; migration; quantitative analysis

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## Introduction

A large literature documents that public opinion is a key factor in the study of regional integration, affecting policymakers' decision-making at times significantly. In the European context, which is also the focus of this research, public attitudes influence European Union (EU) politics through a variety of channels such as demonstrations and elections, and public support is key for the acceptance of EU law at the domestic level and the success of the integration project as a whole (Gabel, 1998). Accordingly, scholars have explored the extent to which public opinion is an important component of European integration and why citizens vary in their views toward this (McLaren, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006; Dinas and Pardos-Prado, 2012; Hobolt and de Vries, 2016; Kentmen-Cin and Erisen, 2017; de Vries, 2018). Particularly relevant for our study, recent works show how perceived potential cultural and identity threats posed by the influx of immigrants affect opposition to European integration, especially in light of the fact that enlargement implies freedom of movement within the single market and may be eventually linked to common immigration policies (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Kentmen-Cin and Erisen, 2017; Koopmans and Michalowski, 2017)<sup>1</sup>. While this research has produced important knowledge about the determinants of views on European integration, it has also displaced attention from the positive externalities that citizens' support of EU unification may actually generate. The following article addresses this gap as we examine theoretically and empirically how attitudes toward EU integration form public opinion on migration.

Scholars have developed and investigated several theories to explain the drivers behind people's attitudes toward immigrants (for comprehensive overviews, see, Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). Individual-level characteristics, such as socio-economic status, left-right self-placements, or deep-seated psychological differences as well as country-level economic and political characteristics seem to matter (Haubert and Fussell, 2006; Mayda, 2006; Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010; Dinesen *et al.*, 2016; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014; Bello, 2017). Particularly after 2015, when an unprecedented number of people arrived in the EU, traveling across the Mediterranean Sea or overland through Southeast Europe, understanding public attitudes toward non-European migrants within their host communities has become an urgent task for academics and practitioners. Against this background, we argue that in-group and out-group dynamics play a central role in explaining opinion formation on immigration, especially in the context of the EU. One perspective here posits that regional integration projects are a first step toward the construction of broader communities with open and universalistic values (Archibugi, 1998; Eriksen, 2009). Eller *et al.* (2017), among others, challenge the notion that legislations cannot alter strong customs ('mores'). Using a large field study, they show how intergroup contact affects prejudice before and after a structural change from segregation to integration. This means that the effect of intergroup contact is also driven by the social structure that frames intergroup relations (Eller *et al.*, 2017).

In this sense, the process of EU integration provides this very social structure that can interact with the way people categorize in-group and out-group members and thus generate positive contact effects. It has also fostered a dual identity, i.e., a European identity coexists with national ones in a mutually reinforcing relation (Klandermans *et al.*, 2004; Hooghe and Marks, 2005), while the experience of regional integration can form cosmopolitan beliefs by promoting openness and tolerance (Eriksen, 2009; Kuhn, 2015; Dinesen *et al.*, 2016; Bello, 2017). In other words, citizens who are more supportive of EU unification tend to be more

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<sup>1</sup> The special issue of *European Union Politics*, edited by Kentmen-Cin and Erisen (2017), discusses various aspects of the state of the existing research on immigration and support for European integration. De Vreese (2017) summarizes the main findings and lessons learned.

open, globalized, and are more likely to develop a cosmopolitan identity. Furthermore, the process toward a supranational identity is argued to have just moved the external boundaries of the in-group from national to EU borders (Schlenker, 2013). When subscribing to these claims, we should expect EU integration support to result in more supportive immigration sentiments and more positive attitudes toward immigrants, including non-European born individuals.

For a systematic analysis of public attitudes toward migration, we draw on data from all relevant European Social Survey (ESS)<sup>2</sup> rounds as well as individual-level panel data from the German Longitudinal Election Data (GLED)<sup>3</sup>. We combine macro and micro-level variables in hierarchical models to address limitations when using either macro or micro-level data alone. Most importantly, the correlation between group means of two variables at the macro level may lead to the wrong inferences about individual-level correlation (Robinson, 1950; Freedman, 1999). Hence, using only aggregate data to infer about individual-level parameters can be problematic. Moreover, there may be direct effects on individual behavior beyond what we might expect given the specific individual values when, e.g., the average economic prosperity of a region has ‘effects on an individual over and above the effects of the individual’s economic status’ (Greenland, 2001, p.1343). As such, recent research recommends integrating observations at all levels, particularly individual (which examines exposures and responses of individuals) and contextual levels (examines exposures and responses of aggregates of individuals) (see Fortin-Rittberger *et al.*, 2016; Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). Accordingly, we employ hierarchical models on the ESS data before using individual-level panel data from the GLED.

Our results suggest that supportive regional integration views, in our case within the European context toward EU unification, are positively associated with public acceptance of non-European migration. The larger the support for EU unification, the more favorable is an individual’s view toward migration from outside Europe. This finding makes a three-fold contribution. First, we put forward and test a theoretical argument on how public opinion toward migration can be affected by regional integration support. Whereas previous studies (e.g., Kessler and Freeman, 2005; Curtis, 2014; García-Faroldi, 2017) look at the correlation between immigration attitudes and views of European integration, systematic theoretical arguments are generally missing and there is hardly a specific focus on how the latter can actually lead to the former. Second, we look at how the support for EU unification leads to less hostility toward migrants from what can be defined as a classical out-group. We thus depart from earlier work that may have a stronger focus on migration from other EU countries (Curtis, 2014). Third, previous research disproportionately relies on cross-sectional data, which are unable to control for important influences that are likely to be correlated with public support toward integration projects and out-group prejudice such as the degree of nationalism (Haubert and Fussell, 2006; Curtis, 2014; Bello, 2017). We use hierarchical models and individual panel data to address some of these concerns. In the panel-data analysis, we analyze the individual evolution of attitudes in a longitudinal approach while controlling for individual fixed-effects. In the hierarchical-model setup, we supplement macro-level variables with individual-specific information to leverage complementarities. This significantly contributes to our understanding of how people’s views of migration are formed and shows that public opinion in favor of EU unification has a thus far unidentified positive externality.

## **I. Public Opinion toward Migration and Attitudes on EU Integration**

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<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://www.gesis.org/en/elections-home/gles/>.

The literature on the determinants of attitudes toward immigration is centered on the idea that identity shapes intergroup relations. Less supportive views usually emerge when members of an out-group are perceived as a threat to one's own in-group. The nature of these threats can vary and are related to either competition over material resources or symbolic and intangible constructs. The first approach in this context, labeled by Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) the political-economy explanation, is rooted in self-interest accounts: individuals concerned with labor opportunities and fiscal pressure have negative views on immigration. Under the assumption of perfect substitutability between natives and immigrants, low-skilled workers feel more threatened by the arrival of immigrants, thus supporting more restrictive immigration policies (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001); conversely, countries with more high-skilled workers exhibit higher levels of support for immigration (Mayda, 2006).

The second strand of literature focusing on intangible threats has accumulated strong and consistent empirical support. This socio-cultural perspective on immigration attitudes does not, however, deny the importance of economic considerations. In fact, symbolic threats can be directed toward culture, social life, and also the economy. The key point is that self-interest explanations based on individuals' economic conditions are less relevant than sociotropic factors (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). For example, perceptions of immigrants as a threat to the national economy are associated with more hostility toward migration regardless of personal economic conditions (Citrin *et al.*, 1997).

Social psychologists have focused more specifically on individual-level factors that help explain attitudes toward immigration within the framework of social identity theory. Different from personal identity, social identity is rooted in group membership and concerns intergroup relation and conflict (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Importantly, individuals will aim for positive social identity to boost self-esteem by favorably comparing their in-group to an out-group (Brown, 2000). It follows that social identity theory addresses in-group bias against the out-group even when there are no explicit or objective causes of conflict. Realist conflict theorists have argued that social identity processes interact with instrumental motivations and real threats (e.g., security and jobs) and exacerbate negative attitudes (Sherif, 1966). Social psychologists stress, however, that fears do not have to be material as symbolic and perceived threats to group integrity foster prejudice as well. This is consistent with recent research showing that individuals are overwhelmingly worried about social effects of immigration and less about their personal security (Erisen and Kentmen-Cin, 2017). That said, the fact remains that individuals will try to boost their self-esteem by finding a superior feature of one's own group compared to an out-group (Brown, 2000; Erisen, 2017).

Hence, social identity theory explains in-group favoritism, with some studies finding that national identification by itself is a strong predictor of xenophobic attitudes (Brown *et al.*, 2001). Relatedly, opinion formation on immigrants largely depends on individuals' identification with their in-group. The perceived threat posed by immigration shapes attitudes toward migrants only if individuals identify themselves with the nation and prioritize that identity. But it is likely that EU membership *per se* can alter how in-groups and out-groups are defined in the first place. When multiple identities are available, individuals can 're-categorize themselves' in ways that reduce distinctions between groups that used to be separate (Curtis, 2014, p.523). Specifically, identifying as an EU citizen promotes contact and positive attitudes toward the newly defined in-group, which now encompasses former out-group members. Furthermore, EU identity may not have to replace the national identity in order to exert this positive influence (Curtis, 2014). In fact, in one of its formulations, contact theory predicts optimal effects in reducing prejudice when re-categorization to the superordinate group follows previous salient categorization at the subgroup level (Pettigrew, 1998). By doing so sequentially, individuals can first acknowledge salient intergroup

differences and then, over the course of subsequent interactions, re-categorize themselves and out-group members under an overarching, superordinate group membership (Eller and Abrams, 2004).

Even in its earliest formulation, though, contact theory does not predict positive changes due to and as a consequence of contact *per se*. Allport (1954) points to shared common goals, equal status, and institutional support for contact as essential factors for successful interactions. In absence of these pre-conditions, contact may even induce adversarial associations. Another important condition for the generalization of positive attitudes to a whole out-group is the typicality of the out-group members with whom contact takes place. In their Common In-Group Identity Model (CIIM), Gaertner and Dovidio (2014) highlight the trade-off of dual identities in which first contact may generate a less positive attitude toward the out-group because of the salience of the subgroup identity. Yet, exactly because of this salience, positive contact is more likely to be generalized to the out-group as a whole, particularly so when out-group members are ‘typical’ representatives of their group (Dovidio *et al.*, 2003). Indeed, pleasant contact reduces stereotyping and negative prejudice toward the specific out-group members, but can also extend to other members of the out-group if the individual is representative of the group. This makes positive contact not just an interpersonal, but an intergroup event (Pettigrew, 1998). While the existence of a single, inclusive group identity may not satisfy people’s simultaneous necessities for both distinctiveness and inclusion with a large group membership like nationality, a dual identity is more likely to develop positive out-group feelings (Brewer, 1996; Eller *et al.*, 2017). Extensive literature supports the idea that this strategy makes differences less salient and reduces distinctiveness – thus discrimination – among groups. When the relevant groups are represented by natives and immigrants, the need for superordinate identities is inevitable, because the identity boundaries for natives are linked to ethnicity and language, especially in Europe (Erisen, 2017). With national identity boundaries being impermeable to immigrants, non-natives can resort to European identification as a superordinate group. According to Erisen (2017), immigrants have more incentives to identify as European than natives exactly for this reason. Hence, the contact model and the social identity theory ultimately converge to a dual-identity model in which the superordinate identity reduces prejudice by mediating contact and allowing generalization of positive attitudes both among natives and migrants.

More recently, Eller *et al.* (2017) remind us that legislative changes can affect behavior, opportunities, and how inter-group contacts can decrease prejudice. In light of experimental research and cross-sectional surveys, they show that the way intergroup and superordinate categorization drive prejudice also depends on the ‘externally imposed structure of the intergroup context. When groups are clearly categorized as different and this is legitimized by institutional support (in Allport’s, 1954, terms), it may be that people’s acceptance and understanding of the intergroup structure attenuates tendencies towards prejudice. [...] Such a situation might be reflected by state-approved multiculturalism, or by federalism, for example, which support a ‘live and let live’ perspective on group differences’ (Eller *et al.*, 2017, p.23; see also Bello, 2017). We argue that the process of EU integration has created the potential for social psychological processes and levels of categorization to reduce prejudice, also fostered such dual identity, and induced more cosmopolitan attitudes in European citizens. Consequently, EU integration support may result in more positive attitudes toward immigrants.

At first sight, though, the link between EU integration and cosmopolitanism may not be obvious as arguments against this relationship can be made in light of a variety of studies. As commonly claimed, free movement of people established by the EU integration process has led to heightened preoccupations about immigrations’ economic impact (McLaren, 2002; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Van Klingerren *et al.*, 2013). Perceived threats from out-

groups are found to promote higher levels of Euroskepticism, possibly because individuals identify the abolition of borders as a source of these threats (McLaren, 2002). Regional integration may ultimately reinforce in-group preferences and diminish support for immigration. After all, the EU comprises a community of members (see also Bello, 2016) and conditions for membership do exist. These communitarian traits within the EU could suggest that European identity is not compatible with cosmopolitanism (Schlenker, 2013). Interestingly, however, Schlenker (2013) reveals that both civic and cultural constructions of EU identity are positively associated with cosmopolitan attitudes; only ethnic construction, i.e., a European parent as a requirement for being European, is negatively associated with these, if only weakly. According to García-Faroldi (2017), European identity is mostly built on civic grounds, thus indicating that the positive roles of civic and cultural traits in an EU identity lessen the potential negative effect of ethnic constructs. Finally, the idea that EU integration recreates nationalist in-group dynamics at a larger scale is questioned by the fuzziness of the EU as supranational entity. On one hand, this is because only a small percentage of Europeans identify themselves as exclusively EU, while the vast majority claims a dual identity (Zürn, 2018). If anything, this suggests that EU boundaries may *not* provide much of an ‘anchorage point for delimitation’ of new in-groups and out-groups (Schlenker, 2013, p.36). On the other hand, and more importantly for public attitudes, European citizens do not necessarily use the EU as reference for ‘us’ (EU) and ‘them’ (non-EU). McLaren (2001) finds that when asked about allowing entry of immigrants from EU and Southern Mediterranean countries, the majority of respondents give identical answers for both groups. In a survey experiment in Denmark, Dinesen *et al.* (2016) report that skills rather than country of origin better explain immigration attitudes.

In its institutional dimension, cosmopolitanism does not necessarily have a global scope (Haubert and Fussell, 2006; Kuhn *et al.*, 2018). Support for the EU and self-identification as ‘European’ entails a cosmopolitan stance to the extent that it legitimizes a supranational authority (Held, 2002; Kuhn *et al.*, 2018). In this context, Archibugi (1998, p.219) adequately portrays the EU as ‘the first international model, which begins to resemble the cosmopolitan model’. Importantly, again, cosmopolitan preferences do not obliterate other embedding; rather, individuals can identify with a variety of communities, including the national. Data show that both cosmopolitan beliefs and attachment to the EU have increased over time. From 1999 to 2009, the percentage of Europeans that felt at least somewhat attached to Europe has grown from 58 percent to 75 percent. Coupled with a decrease from 31 percent to 20 percent of respondents exclusively identifying with their nation, this suggests the emergence of a dual identity. Furthermore, since 2005 the level of cosmopolitan feelings moved up from 41 percent to 64 percent (Schlenker, 2013).

The experience of regional integration and the development of a dual identity moderate in-group vs. out-group positioning, and foster cosmopolitan beliefs by promoting openness and tolerance, all traits linked to positive immigration attitudes. Instead of re-entrenchment toward in-groups, the increased possibility and frequency of transitional movement enables shared experiences that fuel collective identities and a ‘we-feeling’ (Kuhn, 2015). We move from the idea that European integration represents the cosmopolitan prototype and vanguard (Eriksen, 2009), which might truly promote supportive immigration sentiments. Ultimately, we thus expect that and empirically test in the following whether EU integration results in more positive attitudes toward immigrants.

## **II. Research Design and Empirical Analysis**

Our empirical approach is two-fold: first, we merge individual-level data using all relevant rounds<sup>4</sup> of the European Social Survey (ESS) and employ hierarchical models; second, we use individual-level panel data from the German Longitudinal Election Data. We start with the ESS research design and discussion of findings, before moving to the panel-data analysis based on the GLED. The ESS is one of the most methodologically rigorous regional cross-national survey projects. Initiated in 2002, there are eight rounds so far covering more than 30 European states until 2016. The ESS's chief advantage is that survey practices are harmonized to reduce the likelihood that different results between countries are driven by alterations in how the survey is conducted in each state. To this end, the ESS has developed strict guidelines for consistent methods of fieldwork. These practices require, among others, a random sampling design of residents 15 years and older (no quota sampling), one-hour face-to-face interviews, a target response rate of 70 percent, and a minimum of 2,000 respondents per country. These characteristics make the ESS particularly useful for our purpose. In the ESS analysis, we also use aggregated contextual data, which are exogenous to individual-level units, such as economic indicators or the level of democracy. When theories are based on the assumption that individuals are affected by the context in which they operate, the combination of individual and contextual-level data is encouraged (see Fortin-Rittberger *et al.*, 2016; Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010).

### ***ESS Data Analysis***

#### *Dependent Variable and Methodology*

For the ESS data analysis, we merge all integrated data files of all relevant rounds of the ESS covering 2002-2016 (including ESS round 8, edition 2.0). The individual constitutes our unit of analysis. With these specifications, our initial sample ultimately comprises more than 200,000 individuals from more than 30 states since 2004.<sup>5</sup> The outcome variable for the ESS analysis is based on the ESS survey question '[t]o what extent do you think that your country should allow immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe'<sup>6</sup>. Possible answers include 'allow many to come and live here', 'allow some', 'allow a few', and 'allow none'. We first deleted all individuals who have not responded to this question or expressed no opinion ('do not know') before transforming this item into a binary variable capturing attitudes in favor of outside migration (1) or not (0); the 'allow many' and 'allow some' categories are merged into a single value of 1, while the 'allow a few' and 'allow none' categories pertain to the value of 0 of the new dichotomous item. We thus end up with a variable measuring individual attitudes towards outside-Europe migration, which theoretically ranges in [0; 1] with 1 indicating that an individual perceives migration from outside Europe as favorable.

Due to this hierarchical nature of our data, we use a random-intercept approach (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). Hence, we incorporate a country-level as well as a year-level intercept to account for the specific hierarchical, three-level nature of the pooled data set in each of the models. This accounts for unobserved heterogeneity at the year and country levels (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2009). Both random intercepts are modeled according to a normal distribution (Gelman and Hill, 2009). We include in all estimations a sample weight combination of population size and a post-stratification weight as suggested by the ESS documentation.

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<sup>4</sup> ESS rounds are relevant when comprising the EU unification question, i.e., rounds 2, 3, 4, and 6-8. ESS rounds 1 and 5 do not include the EU integration item.

<sup>5</sup> The sample also includes, with varying years covered, Turkey and Israel. Our results are robust when omitting these two states, however.

<sup>6</sup> A question not linked to the degree of wealth/poverty of immigrants' home countries does not exist in the surveys.

*Explanatory Variables: EU Unification and Control Items*

Our main explanatory variable is people's attitudes toward regional integration projects, primarily in a European context. To this end, we focus on the following ESS survey item: '[t]hinking about the European Union, some say European unification should go further. Others say it has already gone too far. What number on the scale [0 to 10] best describes your position?' High scale values indicate less Euroscepticism i.e., people believe that unification should go further and we expect to find a positive and statistically significant relationship with the outside-Europe migration public opinion item, our dependent variable.

We also control for a series of other variables that may either be seen as alternative determinants of individuals' attitudes toward outside-Europe migration or correlate with people's support for EU unification (see also Curtis, 2014; Bello, 2017). First, we consider a respondent's age and gender. Women might systematically differ from men in attitudes toward migration, while older individuals tend to be more conservative and, hence, could be less likely to see outside-Europe migration as something they might want to support. We exclude respondents below the age of 18 as they usually cannot vote in national elections and drop respondents who indicated to be older than 105.

We also control for the economic status of a respondent via an individual's level of education, their unemployment status, and household income. First, *Education* is an ordinal variable capturing the highest level of education and receives values between 0 (not possible to harmonize into the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)) and 7 (higher tertiary education). Second, *unemployment* receives a value of 1 unless a respondent indicates that s/he is (self-) employed or working for a family business. Third, a decile approach is applied when measuring household income in the ESS. The categories of that variable are national and based on deciles of the actual household income range in the given country. *Household Income* thus receives a value between 1 and 12, with higher values standing for a respondent's household belonging to a wealthier one.

In addition, there are individuals' general beliefs and issue position we consider. First, the *mean voter position*, or the left-right self-placement, is arguably one of the most robust predictors of attitudes toward migration. The more 'conservative' or 'right' individuals tend to place themselves, the less likely it is that they are in favor of more immigration into their countries, regardless of whether this comes from within Europe or outside. The ESS provides the following survey item to measure individuals' left-right self-placement: '[p]eople sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right.' Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right'? Second, the ESS asks people about their *religiosity*; the variable follows an ordinal scale and ranges between 0 (not religious at all) and 10 (very religious). Finally, Curtis (2014, p.524f) highlights the importance of individuals' *security* concerns and whether they were born in the country they live in. For the former, security concerns are captured via an ordinal variable that measures on a 6-point scale whether people see it as very much important to live in a secure and safe environment (6) or not at all (1). We expect this item to be negatively signed. For the latter influence, the ESS provides a binary indicator, which we expect to be negatively signed: if a respondent was born outside the country in which they currently live in, they should be more open towards migration from outside Europe.

We also take into account several variables at the country level. First, there is the population size (stock) of immigrants and refugees living in a country. We take data from the World Bank (Özden *et al.*, 2011) that defines migrants as people born in a country other than that in which they permanently live. Refugees are included in this variable, as are persons in refugee-like situations and asylum seekers. Hence, this variable captures the entire population of foreign-born individuals living in a state. We replaced any missing observations in these variables by 0s and added the value of 1 before taking the natural logarithm. The final

variable, *Migration Population (ln)*, then provides information on the (logged) size of foreign-born populations per country-year. Second, more democratic forms of government allow for more deliberative decision-making and facilitate free speech while more democratic countries could also be more open to regional integration or immigration. While all our sample states are formally democratic, there are still differences across them in the actual level of democracy, and we control for its variation by including the *polity2* item from the Polity IV database (Marshall and Jaggers, 2016). This is a 21-point scale ranging from  $-10$  to  $10$ , with higher values for states with more democratic institutions. In our sample, the item ranges in  $[4; 10]$  and has a mean value of about  $9.299$ . Third, we control for population and income at the country level. Both variables are log-transformed to account for their skewed distributions and taken from the World Bank Development Indicators. We control for population size of a state as more diverse views and heterogeneous attitudes are expected to emerge with larger populations. The World Bank's population item comprises all residents regardless of legal status or citizenship, but refugees not permanently settled are excluded. GDP per capita is measured in constant 2000 USD and is defined as the gross domestic product divided by midyear population. Income captures the economic situation in a country at the macro level: especially when economic conditions are more difficult, people tend to perceive migration as less favorable (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Curtis, 2014). Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the variables we just discussed.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Obs.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
Public Opinion Outside Migration	264,209	0.467	0.499	0	1
EU Unification	247,236	5.123	2.679	0	10
Mean Voter Position	237,336	5.150	2.250	0	10
Religiosity	273,246	4.717	3.037	0	10
Native	275,489	0.906	0.293	0	1
Age	275,776	49.054	17.955	18	105
Education	275,102	3.113	2.237	0	7
Household Income	211,153	5.462	2.784	1	12
Security	267,589	4.686	1.208	1	6
Gender	275,644	0.541	0.498	0	1
Unemployed	275,776	0.094	0.292	0	1
Democracy	275,776	9.299	1.391	4	10
Population (ln)	275,776	16.336	1.303	12.585	18.788
GDP per capita (ln)	275,776	10.196	0.783	7.221	11.528
Migration Population (ln)	241,794	13.980	1.306	11.755	16.308

### *Findings*

The main models of our first set of analyses are provided in Table 2. Models 1 and 2 omit all control variables, but include random intercepts for countries and years. The two estimations only differ in the inclusion (Model 2) or exclusion (Model 1) of year-fixed effects. Model 3 adds the individual-level controls to Model 1, but we omit the country-level covariates, which are then introduced in Model 4. The table entries allow for a direct interpretation of coefficient direction and statistical significance only, but we summarize the more substantive quantities of interest of Models 1 and 4 in Figure 2.

Coming to our main hypothesis, Table 2 and Figure 2 provide strong support for our expectation. Regardless of model specification, *EU Unification* is positively signed and statistically significant in all model estimations. Adding or dropping variables does not alter the substance of this finding. Figure 2 sheds more substantive light on this result. When moving from the minimum to the maximum of *EU Unification*, the probability of having favorable views on outside-EU migration increases from about 30% to 70 percent.

The control variables are mostly significant and in the expected direction. Older individuals, those who have more conservative views on the left-right self-placement, natives, and people with security concerns tend to see migration more skeptical. On the other hand, females, wealthier, and more educated individuals are more in favor of outside-EU migration. Interestingly, unemployed respondents are associated with fewer prejudices against immigrants, perhaps because perceived economic threats, in terms of job competition or the fiscal burden placed by immigrants on public finance, are already picked up by income and education. The result for GDP per capita at the country level mirrors the income finding at the individual level, and we also see that more democratic states tend to have more positive public attitudes toward migration.

Table 2: Public opinion on migration and European integration

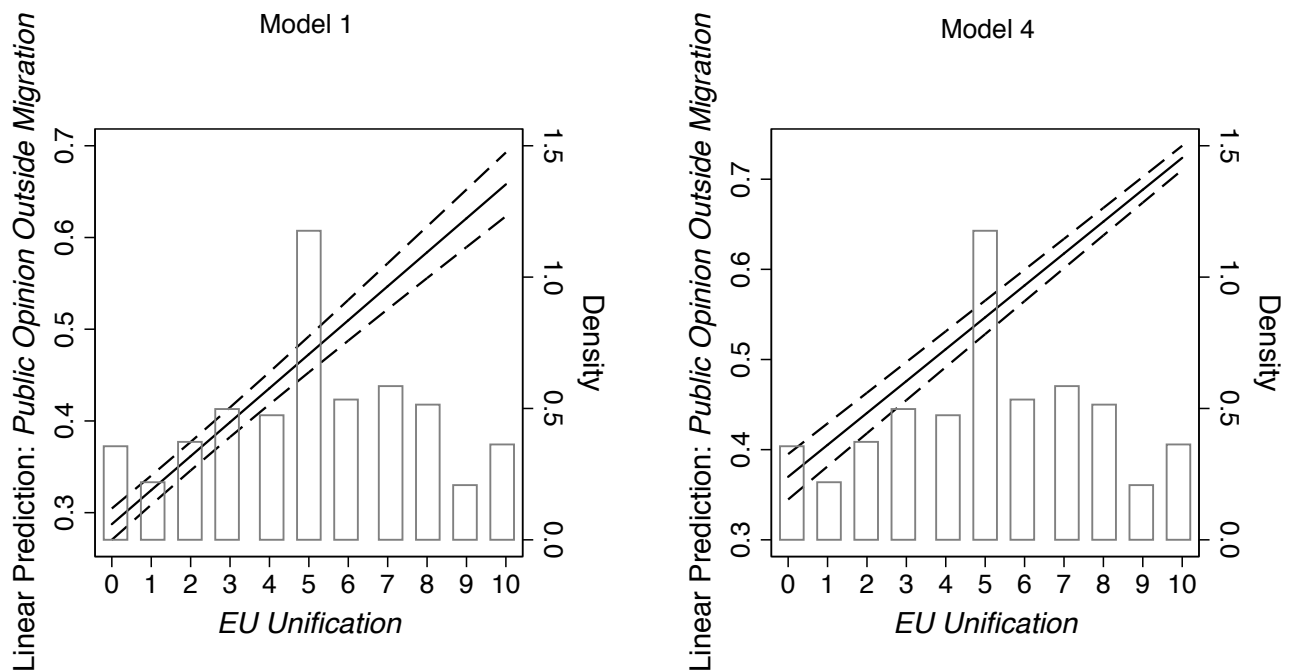
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
EU Unification	0.037 (0.002)**	0.037 (0.002)**	0.032 (0.002)**	0.035 (0.001)**
Mean Voter Position			-0.026 (0.002)**	-0.030 (0.001)**
Religiosity			0.005 (0.001)**	0.006 (0.001)**
Native			-0.072 (0.014)**	-0.067 (0.012)**
Age			-0.002 (0.000)**	-0.002 (0.000)**
Education			0.031 (0.002)**	0.033 (0.001)**
Household Income			0.008 (0.001)**	0.009 (0.000)**
Security			-0.025 (0.002)**	-0.026 (0.002)**
Gender			0.004 (0.002)*	0.007 (0.002)**
Unemployed			0.008 (0.008)	0.001 (0.005)
Democracy				0.045 (0.012)**
Population (ln)				0.009 (0.011)
GDP per capita (ln)				0.079 (0.015)**
Migration Population (ln)				0.019

Constant	0.288 (0.010)**	0.279 (0.012)**	0.577 (0.025)**	(0.014) -1.086 (0.209)**
Obs.	240,421	240,421	168,248	152,194
Random Intercepts for Years and Countries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Temporal Fixed Effects	No	Yes	No	No

Source: ESS, all waves.

Table entries are coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Figure 1. Linear predictions of *Public Opinion Outside Migration*



*Note:* Graph shows linear predictions of *Public Opinion Outside Migration* while holding all other covariates constant at their means; dashed lines signify 90 percent confidence interval; histograms illustrate distribution of *EU Unification*.

### ***German Longitudinal Election Study Analysis***

#### ***Dependent Variable and Methodology***

We also perform an analysis based on different data – the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), which is a genuine longitudinal data set at the individual level. What follows

then not only allows us to assess the validity of our findings from the ESS analysis with different data, but also to exploit the longitudinal nature of the GLES. That is, for some questions and some rounds of the GLES, the same individuals have been interviewed over time – a feature that is not given for the ESS. Still, the availability of questions limits our analysis to mainly two waves: 1 and 12, while the EU integration item is based on waves 3 and 10.<sup>7</sup> All these waves are sufficiently distant to exploit relevant changes in our core variables. For the outcome variable in the following, we focus on people’s opinion on whether the means of entry for immigration should be more limited or eased. Respondents could reply on a scale from 1 (ease means of entry) to 7 (limit means of entry). This question was included in both GLES waves 1 and 12. We reverse the direction of the variable to simplify its interpretation, with higher values now corresponding to more positive attitudes towards immigrants. Using the information over time, our dependent variable is then based on the changes in opinion across the waves. Eventually, we obtain a variable that ranges in [-6; 6] with values above 0 standing for individuals who became more open to immigration from wave 1 to 12, values below 0 pertaining to immigration attitudes that became more restrictive, and 0 standing for no change in people’s attitudes. We rely on OLS for the model estimations.

*Explanatory Variables: EU Unification and Control Items*

The GLES variable on *EU Unification* mirrors the one from the ESS. On a scale from 1-7, people were asked what they think of the European integration process, with 1 standing for European integration should move forward and 7 signifying integration has already gone too far. Similar to the outcome variable in this analysis, we use the inverse of the original variable and rely on the first difference, i.e., how individuals’ views have changed over the waves (3 and 10). Our final variable ranges in [-6; 6] with values above 0 standing for individuals who became more supportive of the European integration project from wave 3 to 10, values below 0 pertaining to more skeptical views, and 0 standing for no change in people’s attitudes. Next to this item, we control for a set of socio-demographic variables, which are all taken from the GLES. First, we consider a respondent’s age at the end of wave 12 and gender. The GLES sample is almost evenly divided into males and females, while the average age is 53 years at the end of wave 12.

We also control for the economic status of a respondent via an individual’s level of education, their unemployment status, and household income. First, education is an ordinal variable capturing improvements in the level of education over the two waves and receives values between 0 (no change in education) and 4 (maximum change in education, which is from no high-school degree to A levels). Second, the individual-level unemployment variable receives a value of -1 if a respondent became unemployed between wave 1 and wave 12, 0 if there was no change in the employment status, or 1 if a previously unemployed individual secured employment by wave 12. Third, a decile approach is applied when measuring income in the GLES, ranging from below 500 Euros per month and per household (1) to 10,000 Euros and more (13). Our final variable, *Household Income*, is also based on changes between the two waves to capture differences in household wealth across time and ranges in [-10; 11]. Additionally, we control for individuals’ general beliefs and issue position. First, there is the mean voter position in terms of a respondent’s change in the left-right self-placement. This item’s operationalization mirrors the measure described in the ESS analysis, except we focus on inter-wave changes. In addition, the GLES asks people about how religious they are; the variable follows an ordinal scale and ranges between 1 (very religious)

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<sup>7</sup> In more detail, a question about the EU unification process is included in waves 3, 6, 10, and 15-17. Several of the other variables, in particular the controls, are merely considered for waves 1 and 12 (or adjacent ones). With a few to maximize sample size and compatibility, we then opted for waves 3 and 10 for *EU Unification*.

and 5 (not religious at all). Similar to the other controls, our final variable captures individual changes in religiosity. Table 3 summarizes the variables we use for the GLES analysis.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Public Opinion Migration	2,119	-0.188	1.584	-6	6
EU Unification	2,194	0.433	1.679	-6	6
Mean Voter Position	1,769	0.076	1.823	-10	10
Religiosity	2,275	-0.061	0.694	-4	3
Age	2,725	52.939	13.775	22	87
Education	2,307	0.077	0.333	0	4
Household Income	2,222	0.411	1.686	-10	11
Gender	2,725	0.505	0.500	0	1
Unemployed	2,725	-0.061	0.694	-1	1

### Findings

The GLES models are summarized in Table 4. Model 5 only comprises our main variable of interest, while Model 6 simply includes the controls. Model 7 is the full estimation as we include both *EU Unification* and the controls, while Model 8 mirrors Model 7 except we omit those individuals who have not changed their view on European integration over the two waves. First, the result for *EU Unification* mirrors what we report in the previous analysis. The variable is positively signed throughout the models in Table 4. Hence, if a respondent became more supportive of European integration by one unit, migration support was higher by about 0.113-0.173 units over time. This is a quite large effect, given that the standard deviation of the dependent variable is about 1.6. Figure 2 underlines this as we depict the change in the expected value of *Public Opinion Outside Migration* when increasing *EU Unification* by one unit. As we can see in Figure 2, the coefficient of *EU Unification* is statistically different from 0 at conventional levels, and of the same order of magnitude of other important drivers of migration attitudes, such as age or education, albeit in the opposite direction.

Table 4: Public opinion on migration and European integration

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
EU Unification	0.125 (0.021)**		0.113 (0.023)**	0.173 (0.036)**
Mean Voter Position		-0.103 (0.021)**	-0.091 (0.021)**	-0.162 (0.036)**
Religiosity		-0.073 (0.056)	-0.102 (0.056)	-0.170 (0.089)
Age		-0.010 (0.003)**	-0.009 (0.003)**	-0.014 (0.005)**
Education		-0.218 (0.126)	-0.141 (0.127)	-0.259 (0.206)
Household Income		-0.011 (0.025)	-0.009 (0.025)	-0.013 (0.040)
Gender		-0.225 (0.079)**	-0.208 (0.079)**	-0.349 (0.129)**
Unemployed		0.224 (0.186)	0.143 (0.192)	0.293 (0.331)

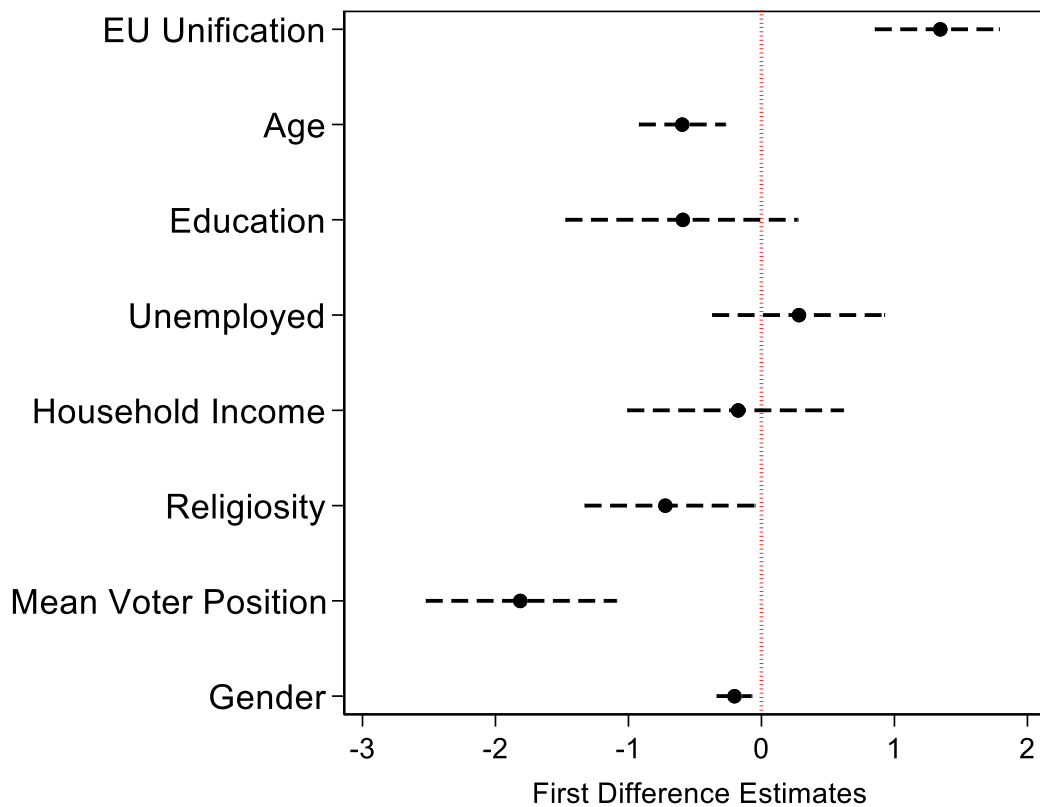
Constant	-0.248 (0.037)**	0.472 (0.174)**	0.379 (0.174)*	0.577 (0.284)*
Obs.	1,820	1,522	1,478	886
Only Change in Public Opinion Migration	No	No	No	Yes

Source: GLES.

Table entries are coefficients; robust standard errors in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Finally, there seems to be a systematic difference between males and females in our sample in that the former have less positive views toward migration. Older respondents are also less supportive of migration, as one would expect. *Unemployment* is statistically insignificant according to Figure 2, so are *Education* and *Household Income*. The results for *Mean Voter Position* are similar to what we have found and discussed above: people on the right of the left-right spectrum are less supportive of migration and more in favor of restricting immigration. Unlike what we found in the ESS analysis, though, more religious people in Germany tend to have less positive migration views. Note, however, that previous findings on the impact of religion-based variables on migration attitudes are largely inconclusive and more research is needed to investigate how the variety of dimensions of religiosity may have differential effects on prejudice against migrants (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). In addition, the variable is only significant at the 10 percent level in Table 4.

Figure 2: First differences *Public Opinion Outside Migration*



*Note:* Graph shows first differences for the expected values of *Public Opinion Migration*, while holding all other covariates constant at their medians; horizontal bars signify 90 percent confidence interval; first difference of 0 marked with red vertical dashed line; graph based on Model 8.

## Conclusion

To successfully manage the recent global migration and refugee ‘crises’ requires not only political will, but also supportive publics that see immigration favorably. In democracies, national governments are particularly unwilling to adopt unpopular policies not to lose office and power (Anderson *et al.*, 2017). Migration and its corresponding policies are not an exception here (e.g., Helbling and Kalkum, 2018). Hence, public attitudes on immigration are extremely relevant for political leaders and understanding the drivers behind these is as important to the public as to the academic discourse. But how are citizens’ attitudes toward immigration formed? A number of recent studies accounts for variations in perceptions and public opinion across individuals and countries. As a key driver of attitude towards immigration is the in-group vs. out-group positioning, we have advanced the claim that EU unification attitudes and dual identity can moderate this difference and alter how groups are defined in the first place. The largely continuous process of political and economic integration within Europe, with an increasing number of people crossing national borders, has reduced the relevance of cultural barriers among member states. The strengthening and widening of European integration has transformed national identities so that more people identify themselves as part of a supra-national community. This process of regional integration fostered cosmopolitan attitudes and, in turn, contributed to positive views toward immigration. To test our expectation, we employed hierarchical models on all relevant data rounds of the ESS before using individual-level panel data from the GLED. The evidence consistently suggests that respondents with positive attitudes toward European integration also tend to have more pro-immigration sentiments.

Future research should analyze the relation between public opinion toward migration and European integration conditional on three key factors: the size and type of the foreign-born population in a country, the opportunity for direct contact, and the type of state responses. First, recent research shows that the type of immigration matters and that higher exposure to permanent immigrants leads to more tolerant attitudes toward outsiders, whereas large number of short-term immigrants can induce more skeptical views (Bello, 2017). The ESS comprises different attitudinal variables representing tolerance toward immigration of the same or different race or ethnic group and immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe (see, e.g., Czaika and Di Lillo, 2018). Disaggregating the type of immigration into settlement status, duration, and country of origin, and looking at how EU integration has different impacts on different out-groups seems in light of this a fruitful avenue for future research.

Second, contact itself can elicit negative stereotyping or decrease prejudice against immigrants, depending on the frequency, depth, and circumstances. While previous studies often used immigration flows to proxy for exposure, we need better data on opportunities for and frequency of contact to effectively take into account whether, e.g., ethnic or religious groups are segregated, or other hurdles to the opportunity for direct contact exist.

Third, immigrants are more likely to create tensions with local populations and intergroup anxiety when countries are unprepared to manage large population movements or are unfamiliar with these emergencies (see Böhmelt *et al.*, 2019). Distrust of migrants is often heightened by economic hardship and increased contact with out-group members in times of crisis can elicit negative stereotyping and reinforce – rather than reduce – anti-immigration stances (García-Faroldi, 2017). The provision of integration programs for migrants such as language-training or labor-market support is not only important for their economic integration and fiscal contribution, but also facilitates the political and social integration into

host societies and improves the odds of positive interaction with native communities. Ultimately, this can further increase the positive effect of the regional integration project. Because of the lack of empirical studies on key mechanisms, there is a crowded agenda for future research in this area.

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