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The EU Crisis and Citizens Support for a European Welfare State

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Abstract

Some scholars have argued that the only way to resolve the Euro crisis would be to further pursue the path of deepening the integration process by institutionalising a European welfare state. In this paper we question whether a Europeanised welfare system would be supported by European citizens. We argue that the legitimacy of a harmonisation of national welfare regimes is established if two conditions are met: Firstly, if a majority of citizens support a Europeanised social policy, and secondly, if potential cleavages which structure attitudes towards European social policy are relatively weak. Using data from a survey conducted in Germany, Poland, and Spain, descriptive findings show that a majority supports the idea of Europeanisation of social policy. Further, multivariate analysis prompts the conclusion that the chances of the emergence of social cleavages are relatively small. This brings us to an optimistic conclusion: We suppose that the potential for political mobilisation against Europeanisation of social policy is rather low.

1. Introduction

With the Euro and sovereign debt crisis, the European Union has experienced one of the worst crises since its inception. However, many of the political measures taken to address the crises lead not to less but to greater, deeper integration. Firstly, the wealthier Eurozone members have made enormous financial resources available to the highly indebted member states, with these loans and guarantees leading to a hitherto unseen degree of intra-European wealth redistribution. Secondly, national economic, labour and social policies are to a large extent no longer determined by national governments, but by European and international institutions. Loans and guarantees have been associated with hardships within the indebted countries, which have been forced to change their long term economic policies to reduce national debt and improve their credit ratings. Austerity measures have led to a market downturn, to an increase in unemployment, to pension cuts, tax increases, freezes of public spending, all of which has led to social conflicts and political instability.

Some observers have argued that the only way to resolve the Euro crisis would be to further pursue the path of deepening the integration process by expanding the European Union into a genuine political and social union, by establishing a European supranational democracy and a European welfare state (Habermas, 2013; Bofinger et al. 2012). Implementing the idea of a social union consisting of European wide social standards and a more active role of the European Union within the field of social policy is seen as a strategy for rescuing the European project, and fighting social exclusion, youth unemployment and social inequality in the member states (e.g. Habermas, 2013; Allespach and Machnig, 2013; Nida-Rümelin et al., 2013). The idea that nation states are the sovereign subjects of the treaties should be abandoned and instead, the European Union should gain juridical and fiscal powers from the nation states to establish a supranational social policy.¹

This position has been criticised by some scholars, who interpret it as utopian. Wolfgang Streeck (e.g. 2012, 2013a, 2013b), in his pessimistic assessment of the future

¹ Undoubtedly, long before the current crisis began, the EU had already developed several strategies to “modify market outcomes to facilitate transactions, to correct market failures, and to carry out regional, inter-class, or intergenerational redistribution” (Leibfried and Pierson, 1999: 43). The EU has fostered the harmonisation of certain minimum social standards and introduced binding rules of non-discrimination in the labour market; it has enforced social rights that EU citizens enjoy when residing in EU countries other than that of origin. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was established to coordinate relevant EU-wide social policy issues. Structural funds notably support social inclusion in regions disposing less than the average gross domestic product. Most importantly, the European Social Fund is aimed at realising economic and social convergence by strengthening employability in the workforce in less economically developed regions. However, despite all these efforts, a uniform European social security system has yet to emerge (Bähr, 2010: 117; Leibfried and Pierson, 1999; Ferrera, 2005).

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

Unfortunately, we know very little about the extent to which people would support a Europeanised social policy, even though citizens' acceptance and support is significant for decision makers due to the fact that, in democracies, they are structurally dependent on the support of their citizens. If a vast majority of citizens of a country opposes a certain policy, governments will reject or at least be reluctant to support that policy.

In this article we ask to what degree Europeans support the notion that the EU should harmonise national welfare regimes and play a decisive role in reducing unemployment and setting minimum wages Europe-wide. We argue that the legitimacy of harmonisation of national welfare regimes is given if two conditions are met (Gerhards & Lengfeld, 2012): Firstly, if a majority of citizens support a Europeanised social policy, and secondly, if potential cleavages which structure attitudes towards European social policy are rather weak. Following classical cleavage approach, citizens' attitudes may form a basis for political mobilisation if they are organised by political entrepreneurs, e.g. political parties (Lipset, 2001). We distinguish two dimensions of potential cleavages: cleavages between countries structured by their level of wealth and social spending on the one hand and socio-structural and cultural cleavages on the other, running between different groups of citizens holding different socio-economic positions or different cultural values.

In section 2 we derive three broader hypotheses from the existing literature which can help us to explain citizens' attitudes towards Europeanisation of social policy. (1) Some scholars argue that support rates for a Europeanised social policy should be rather high due to processes of Europeanisation at the institutional level. (2) Others come to a more sceptical conclusion, arguing that the process of opening up national borders will first of all challenge the traditional symbolic code of equality held by citizens. Therefore, a majority of European citizens would reject a Europeanised social policy. In addition, country differences must be taken into consideration. The higher the scope of social spending in a nation, the fewer citizens will accept social policy dictated by the EU. (3) A third group of scholars argues that a citizen's socio-economic and cultural background is decisive when it comes to explain attitudes towards Europeanised social policy. It is assumed that, in particular, people who lack economic resources and hold more traditional values or right wing political orienta-

tions will oppose the notion of a Europe-wide welfare state and will form the constituency of a new cleavage structure.

In section 3, we elaborate on the data set, the methods and variables used in our study. We rely on a survey conducted in three EU member states – Poland, Spain, and Germany. In section 4 we examine the extent to which respondents support the idea of harmonising social policy at a European level and how one can explain citizens' attitudes with regard to the different hypotheses discussed in section 2.

Descriptive findings show that a majority supports the idea of Europeanisation of social policy. Using multivariate analysis, we test whether and to what extent preferences towards Europeanised social policy are influenced by respondent's citizenship, socio-economic position (employment position, social class position, educational degree) and cultural characteristics (political beliefs, societal values). Results further show that those respondents who reject Europeanisation of social policy cannot be characterised to any significant extent in terms of socio-economic factors, and are only slightly more likely to be associated with cultural factors. The cleavages that structure people's attitudes are thus relatively weak. This brings us to an optimistic conclusion (section 5). We suppose that the potential for political mobilisation against Europeanisation of social policy is rather low.

2. Explaining Citizens Attitudes towards a Europeanised Social Policy

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

2.1 Institutional Europeanisation leads to Europeanisation of Solidarity

Richard Münch (2010: 28ff.) argues that economic integration changes the mode of solidarity within and between nation states. Based on a Durkheimian approach, Münch states that cross-border interactions replace former nation-state based mechanical solidarity by a transnational organic solidarity characterised by two attributes. First, individual rights are enhanced, enabling access to scarce resources within each member state. These rights have been institutionalised by the Four Freedoms and extended by the European Court of Justice. Second, economic integration evokes a fundamental change in the structure of attitudes towards distributive justice. The formerly dominant principle of equality of results, characteristic for most of the national welfare-state systems in Europe, gives way to attitudes of Europeanised equality of opportunities. Generally speaking, universalised equality attitudes arise in social spaces where individuals are integrated by cross border-networks, established by a common European law. "What is emerging in this process is a European Society establishing a new type of solidarity and a new type of legal order focused far more on the cult of the individual than the national legal orders did before" (Münch, 2010: 33).

In a similar manner, Beck and Grande assume that European citizens will increasingly agree with the establishment of European redistribution measures (Beck and Grande, 2007). They state that the increasing permeability of borders between the EU member states, as well as the decreasing permeability of EU's external borders, weakens the people's support of solely national conditioned redistribution policies. Taking these arguments together, it could be assumed that EU citizens will orient towards transnational responsibilities and thus demand broader European social policy, especially since they are faced with an absence of the nation states' capacity to cover emerging social risks. As argued in the introduction, recent fiscal crises and massive economic decline in some of the member states may have escalated citizens' acceptance of transnationalised redistribution systems.

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

2.2 The Persistence of the Nation State

In contrast to these rather optimistic interpretations, at least four factors indicate that the outlined development of the support of a European-wide welfare state is not very likely (Faist, 2001). First, implementing a European-wide welfare system means extending equality principles culturally and institutionally anchored at the nation-state level to the European level. This would be done by reorganising existing resource allocations and life opportunities among the citizens of all member states (Ferrera, 2005). However, this generalised equality arrangement would come into conflict with the organically evolved symbolic codes, moral bindings and collective identity definitions prevailing in the respective nations. Thus, a strong European identity seems to be needed as a prerequisite for the willingness of transnational solidarity. As survey research shows, such identity does not seem to exist (Fligstein, 2009; Immerfall et al., 2011).

Second, the adoption of a European social security system may involve huge costs due to some fundamental changes at the national level (De Swaan, 1990: 9). It is well known that the national welfare systems differ according to the life risks they insure, the scope of services which cover each risk, different social benefits and financing principles, and interconnection to other social key institutions, especially the family, the labour market and the education system (Hantrais, 2000: 21; Leibfried and Pierson, 1999: 32). Due to the fact that constructing a European welfare system would lead to a massive readjustment of the national organisation of welfare, citizens may interpret this as a threat to their current individual welfare status.

Third, empirical findings do not suggest strong support for relocating social policy competences from national to EU level. Since the beginning of the 2000s, Eurobarometer surveys have asked several times whether decisions within the field of health, social welfare, unemployment and pensions should be made by the respective national governments, or made jointly within the European Union. Data show that a huge majority of the respondents in EU-25 and later EU-27 countries have been in fa-

avour of decisions being made solely by the nation state, without changes over time. In the field of health care and social welfare policy, preferences for national decision making have in fact increased, from 59 per cent in 2001, to 67 per cent in 2005 and 68 per cent in 2011. Comparable findings have been present for the nation states' responsibilities to set pensions (2005: 74 per cent; 2008: 73 per cent; 2011: 73 per cent) and to tackle unemployment (2001: 44 per cent; 2005: 57 per cent; 2008: 59 per cent; 2011: 58 per cent) (European Commission, 2002: 56, 2008: 8, 2011: 76; European Commission 2005: 99).

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

H2a: A majority of European citizens will reject a Europeanised social policy.

Alongside aggregated approval rates at the EU level, we have to take country differences into account. This is due to the fact that establishing a European system of joint social policy affects existing national welfare states to different degrees (Mau, 2005: 80). Faced with the possibility of a harmonised European welfare state, raising social expenditures in countries with low social protection may lead to a reduction of social benefits in highly developed welfare states. The same holds true for Europeanised policies which do not explicitly harmonise existing welfare regimes but are aimed at fighting specific social problems like youth unemployment. In this case, citizens from countries with high social protection may fear increasing financial burdens, i.e. rising taxes, which stem from additional transfers from national governments to the European budget. Regarding our three countries under investigation, there are huge differences within the scope of social expenditures. In 2009, Germany spent USD 10.000 per citizen on social expenditures (per head, at current prices and current PPP's). This was followed by Spain (USD 8.400), and Poland (USD 4.100) (OECD 2014). Thus, we expect the Germans to be least supportive, whereas Spaniards and Poles should be more in favour of Europeanised social policy.

H2b: The higher the scope of social spending in a nation, the less citizens will accept social policies carried out by the EU.

2.3 Socio-economic and Cultural Cleavages

Support for Europeanised social policy might not only be influenced by the people's national citizenship but also by their socio-economic position and their cultural values. Social cleavage theory distinguishes between socio-economic and cultural characteristics (Lipset, 2001; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Kriesi et al., 2008).

a) Socio-economic Status

In accordance with studies from welfare state research, we assume that the acceptance of redistribution policies varies with the extent to which citizens depend on the national social welfare state. The lower the socio-economic status of the individu-

al, the greater their dependence on the spending of the national welfare state. Therefore, unemployed and low-skilled individuals support redistribution policies through the national welfare state to a greater extent than individuals who have jobs or belong to the service class (Andreß and Heien, 2001; Cnaan et al., 1993; Edlund, 2007). Applying this reasoning to our research question, one can assume that people with low socio-economic status are afraid of losing social benefits if the nation state transfers part of its social policy competence to the European level. Accordingly, we assume that individuals with low socio-economic status and those who directly depend on government transfer payments are more likely to reject the Europeanisation of social policy (see Mau, 2005; Berg, 2007).

We consider three indicators to measure the socio-economic status: employment status (unemployed, employed, not in labour force or retired, in training), occupational class position (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 2003) and the educational level of a person. A person's level of education indicates his or her socio-economic status. Additionally, education impacts on the level of cognitive mobilisation of a person. Cognitively mobilised people tend to question traditional world views and practices (Inglehart, 1990; Achterberg and Houtman, 2006) and speak out against exclusion of foreigners (Coenders and Scheepers, 2003; Raijman et al., 2008.). Since the introduction of Europeanised social policy extends the solidarity area to foreigners, as all Europeans have the same social rights, we suspect that the approval of Europeanised social policy increases with an increasing level of education.

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

b) Cultural Characteristics

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

Furthermore, numerous studies have shown that rejection of access to social benefits varies according to the respondent's political beliefs. The more a person is oriented to the political right, the more likely he or she is to reject the opening up of the na-

tional welfare state to foreigners (Scheepers et al., 2002: 26; Raijman et al., 2003: 386; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2009: 410). To the left of the spectrum, people are probably more likely to agree with universalistic distribution regimes that do not differentiate by ethnic or national origin. From this point of view, a European social policy is one of the preconditions for implementing transnational solidarity. Thus, we assume that the more leftist a person is oriented, the more he/she will approve of a Europeanised social policy.

As is shown in prejudice research, people who fear losing their national identity and people who favour ethnic and cultural homogeneity in their own society are unlikely to accept welfare benefits to foreigners (Scheepers et al., 2002; Pettigrew, 1998; Semyonov et al., 2006). The institutionalisation of a European welfare would be tied to equal entitlement to welfare benefits for all European citizens. At the same time, the nation-state would lose its political autonomy. Hence, one can assume that citizens who hold nationalistic attitudes will at the same time reject the idea of a Europeanised social policy.

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

H3b: People who are in favour of post-materialistic values, who do not hold nationalistic attitudes, who are oriented to the political left, and identify with the European Union are more supportive of the idea of Europeanised social policy than citizens who hold the opposite characteristics.

3. Data, Variables, Methods

We rely on a survey conducted in 2009 in European member states Germany, Poland, and Spain. The study was funded by the German Research Foundation. For financial reasons, we were not able to survey the citizens of all EU countries. In selecting the countries, we were guided by the hypothesis of modernisation theory which states that national societies go through different stages of socio-economic development which impact on social spending and in turn on the citizens' value orientations. Thus, the three countries correspond to different levels of modernisation and different levels of public social spending. Although they represent different types of welfare states – Germany can be categorised as conservative, Poland as post-communist and Spain as southern-European – there is little variance in the dominant principle of the organisation of social security. All systems are more or less built on the classical

Bismarckian principle of interlinking social benefits to the employment status of a citizen. This country selection allows us to isolate the impact of a nation's public social spending on attitudes towards social policy which is desirable for reasons of minimising complexity.

In each country, about 1.000 eligible voters older than 17 years and living in private households were interviewed. In Germany and Spain we made use of CATI interviews, and due to low landline coverage, CAPI in Poland. In all countries, sampling was stratified by comparable multi-stage procedures to choose the respective respondent of the household by Kish-Selection-Grid. The survey was carried out by the national subsidiaries of "TNS Opinion and Social" and coordinated by the German TNS subsidiary "TNS Infratest Dimap".

Respondents were asked to evaluate each of the following items:

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

These items cover two different aspects of Europeanisation. The first assesses the respondent's general attitude towards harmonising social policy by establishing a common welfare system, whereas the others highlight specific issues of labour market related social policy. Both are assumed to be well known by the respondents and have been discussed at EU level (see European Commission, 2014; Gerhards, 2007). The questions were answered on a 4-point scale ranging from 'totally agree', 'tend to agree' through 'tend to disagree' to 'totally disagree'. The wording of the three questions signals that Europeanisation may lead to a rise in costs for the individual. It has been shown that people often deviate from their attitudes if they anticipate costs and unpleasant consequences (i.e. Diekmann and Preisendörfer, 2003). If the potential negative consequences of the idea of a Europeanised social policy are noted, attitudes measured will be more resilient and reliable.

We have conducted a principal component factor analysis by assuming that the three items represent a latent variable. As shown in Table A2 (see appendix), all items load on one factor (loadings ranging from 0.74 to 0.85). The high reliability of this scale is documented by an Eigenvalue of 1.99 and a Cronbach's Alpha of .78. Subsequently, this scale functions as dependent variable OLS regressions (with robust standard errors). All independent and dependent variables are described in more detail in Table A1 in the appendix.

To test the hypotheses formulated in section 2, we will first provide relative frequencies. In the next step we will present the results of stepwise expanded OLS regressions.

4. Empirical Results

Table 1 shows relative frequencies of the cumulated approval rates. It is evident that a majority of EU citizens agree with the implementation of European wide welfare policies. Approval rates vary between 62 per cent for a uniform welfare system and 70 per cent for fighting unemployment. These findings support hypothesis 1 and contradict hypothesis 2a, assuming that national path dependencies of social security and the lack of strong transnational identity lead to great scepticism towards a Europeanised welfare state. The results also differ from previous Eurobarometer survey results which indicate that a majority of respondents prefers social policy to be located at the nation-state level (see section 2.2). Our results are especially noteworthy since the items included reference to possible disadvantages of Europeanisation, which – in principle – should have caused greater scepticism. Additionally, we find only small differences between the three items. Consequently, our results suggest that the three strategies for Europeanising social policy are equally important to the respondents. Contrary to hypothesis 2a, the results indicate that benefits of harmonised European social policy outweigh the disadvantages of losing national independence.

Table 1: Attitudes towards Europeanised Social Policies (approval rates in %)

	Uniform Social Welfare System	Fighting Unemployment in poorest M.S.	European Minimum Wage	N
All Countries ¹	62.9	70.7	69,8	2.061
- Germany	46.4	56.3	58.1	825
- Spain	68.2	74.6	75.2	457
- Poland	78.8	83.2	83.7	779

Notes: Source: European Equality Survey 2009; relative frequencies; approval and disapproval rates have been merged respectively; weighted, rounded. ¹additionally rounded by population size.

This conclusion, however, needs a little refinement when looking at the different countries. Hypothesis H2b assumes that the expected benefit of Europeanised social policy decreases with the extent of welfare state protection in a country. The more social benefits citizens are entitled to, the less advantageous Europeanisation is for them, since social benefits might need to be reduced or payments to the welfare sys-

tem might be increased to finance less developed welfare states. The results confirm this assumption. In Germany we find the least support among respondents; only 46 per cent support the idea of a uniform social welfare system across the whole EU. In Poland the lowest amount per capita is spent for social purposes in comparison to Germany and Spain, and we find the highest level of support for a Europeanised social policy in Poland. The approval rates of the Spaniards lie between those of the Germans and Poles. Obviously, here we find evidence of our alleged prosperity effect: The high approval rates of the three countries can be put down to the less developed state of southern European and eastern European countries. Thus, hypothesis 2b seems to be confirmed.

As discussed in section 2.3, support for Europeanised social policy might also be influenced by the individual's socio-economic background as well as by cultural attitudes. We have assumed that people with low socio-economic status and lower levels of education are more likely to reject Europeanisation of social policy than those with higher socio-economic status and higher education (H3a). Furthermore, we have assumed that people who favour post-materialistic values, who do not hold nationalistic attitudes, who are oriented to the political left, and identify with the European Union are more supportive to the idea of Europeanisation of social policy than citizens who hold the opposite characteristics (H3b).

Table 2 displays the results of the regression analyses. First, we see that – among the two control variables – age exerts a strong positive effect on the support of Europeanised social policy. Model 2 indicates that members of the routine non-manual class are more sceptical than members of the service class. However, we do not find a strong cleavage structure between upper and lower classes. Already when controlling for education, the significant differences between routine non-manual and service class disappear (see Model 3). Contrary to our expectations, persons who are not or are no longer employed hold more negative attitudes towards Europeanised social policy than unemployed respondents. However, this effect disappears after controlling for cultural characteristics (Model 4).

Compared to university graduates, less educated people are more likely to oppose Europeanisation of social policy. Again, this effect disappears when controlling for cultural characteristics in model four. We do not find evidence of socio-economic cleavages, except a very weak difference between attitudes towards Europeanised social policy among unemployed and employed respondents respectively. This result is in line with results of other studies (Mau, 2005; Berg, 2007: 124ff.).

Model 4 additionally considers cultural characteristics. The results indicate that respondents who hold post-materialist attitudes, left-wing attitudes and people who identify with the European Union are in favour of Europeanised social policy. People who identify solely with their nation-state tend not to be. However, the strength of the effects is moderate at best.

Table 2: Europeanised Social Policy: Determinants of Acceptance (all countries)

	M1	M2	M3	M4
Age	.09*** (3.53)	.13*** (3.58)	.14*** (3.84)	.15*** (4.04)
Sex (1=male)	.04 (1.74)	.03 (0.98)	.02 (0.92)	.00 (0.05)
Employment position (ref.: unemployed)				
not in labor force/retired		-.13* (-2.35)	-.12* (-2.26)	-.09 (-1.71)
Student/apprentice		.01 (0.30)	-.00 (-0.08)	-.01 (-0.25)
Employed		-.09 (-1.78)	-.10 (-1.94)	-.09* (-2.07)
Occupational class position (ref: service class)				
Routine non-manuals		-.07* (-2.47)	-.05 (-1.68)	-.03 (-0.89)
Petty bourgeoisie, farmers		.00 (0.10)	.02 (0.89)	.02 (1.00)
Skilled workers		-.03 (-1.29)	-.00 (-0.11)	.02 (0.61)
Semi-/unskilled workers		-.03 (-1.35)	-.01 (-0.49)	-.01 (-0.25)
Class position not reported		-.07 (-1.91)	-.05 (-1.47)	-.03 (-1.12)
Education (ref. University degree)				
without graduation			-.04 (-1.36)	.01 (0.21)
less than secondary school			-.09* (-2.43)	-.03 (-0.83)
Secondary school			-.06 (-1.58)	-.01 (-0.44)
High school			-.02 (-0.61)	.01 (0.21)
Inglehart-Index (Ref. materialist)				
mixed type				.03 (0.92)
post-materialist				.14*** (3.95)
Nationalism				-.11*** (-4.20)
Political orientation (0 = left, 10 = right)				-.10*** (-4.13)
Identification with Europe (1 = Europe & mixed type)				.13*** (4.91)
Country (ref. Germany)				

Spain	.26*** (10.96)	.27*** (10.88)	.25*** (9.71)	.25*** (9.90)
Poland	.27*** (13.57)	.28*** (12.87)	.27*** (11.69)	.32*** (13.28)
Constant	-.72*** (-8.19)	-.57*** (-3.91)	-.50** (-3.30)	-.44*** (-2.52)
R ²	.11	.12	.12	.19

Source: EES 2009, N=2.061, own calculations, linear regressions with robust standard errors, weighted (population size & socio-demographic composition). β coefficients are displayed, t-values in parentheses, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

We performed the same regression analyses separately for the three countries (results are not shown here). With few exceptions, the results confirm our previous findings. In all three EU countries age exerts a positive influence on attitudes towards Europeanised social policy. Employment status does not have an effect in Germany and Poland – but it does in Spain, where unemployed respondents do not reject Europeanisation of social policy, but non-working respondents including retirees as well as employed people do. The pro-European attitudes of unemployed Spaniards may be an indirect result of high unemployment in this country. In 2009 Spain had an unemployment rate of 18 per cent – the highest rate in the EU (OECD 2013). We can assume that unemployed Spaniards expect greater help from the EU than from their own government. Furthermore, we do not find evidence for socio-economic cleavages, with two exceptions of educational effects in Spain and Poland. Moreover, with regard to cultural characteristics, the country specific regressions reveal the same results as the regressions across all countries. In Germany and Spain, we find the previously shown effects of post-materialism, nationalism, left-right self-placement and European identity on attitudes towards Europeanised social policy. In Poland, however, the effects of these variables are not significant.

Overall, our analysis does not support hypothesis 3a: People with low socio-economic status and low levels of education are not more likely to reject Europeanisation of social policy than individuals with a better socio-economic and educational background. Cultural characteristics are more important, such that hypothesis 3b is supported by our analysis. However, the impact of cultural characteristics on citizens' attitudes is rather small.

Differences between countries seem to be more important as the results in the lower part of Table 3 indicate. In comparison to Germans, the citizens of the two other countries support the idea of a unified European social policy to a greater extent. These effects stay stable across the four models. The final model reveals that the largest attitudinal differences exist between Germans and Poles. Comparing explained variances of the models one to four depicts that the country variables add the greatest explanatory power to the models. Thus, hypothesis 2b is confirmed, as citizens of states with low welfare expenditure want a Europeanisation of social policy. However, this result is challenged by our descriptive results which have shown that even in

Germany – a country with the highest social welfare spending of the three researched countries – a narrow majority supports Europeanised social policy.

5. Conclusions

What do the empirical results mean for the legitimacy of a Europeanised social policy? We have argued that the legitimacy of harmonisation of national welfare regimes is present if two conditions are met. Firstly, a majority of citizens supports a Europeanised social policy, and secondly, potential cleavages which structure attitudes towards it are rather weak.

Our empirical analyses have shown that the citizens of the three EU countries, Germany, Poland, and Spain, consent to a large extent to the idea of Europeanised social policy. A surprisingly large majority in the three EU countries claims to support European-wide uniform social standards even if this would lead to an increase in taxes or social spending. However, multivariate analysis also shows that two cleavages are likely to arise: First, individuals with materialistic, nationalist and political right-wing orientations especially reject Europeanisation of the national welfare systems. One may expect that right wing parties will fight Europeanisation of social policy in national political systems as well as in the European Parliament. However, the size of the effect of the regression coefficients indicates that these conflict structures are only moderate. Accordingly, the likelihood of politicisation of this conflict seems rather low.

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

As discussed in the opening section, some scholars see expanding the European Union into a real political and social union, establishing a European democracy and welfare state as the only way to overcome the current Euro crisis. This position has been criticised by other scholars and interpreted as utopian. Overall, our empirical

results appear to support those who are in favour of strengthening European social integration.

However, critics may argue that we have set the bar for a successful European integration quite low by only focusing on citizens' support for a European welfare system. In the current European crisis, more binding and more intense forms of social integration are probably needed, since this concerns issues of redistribution of resources (the 'bail-outs'). The question, then, is whether solidarity measures such as redistribution are supported by the citizens of the European Union. We have discussed this question in more detail elsewhere (Gerhards & Lengfeld, 2012). Recent polls show that the acceptance of solidarity between European countries is greater than is sometimes assumed in the public debate. As seen in July 2012, for example, 50 per cent of Germans surveyed supported transfers to bolster the finances of indebted EU countries. In addition, up to 43 per cent of Germans were willing to pay 0.5 per cent of their own income to help the indebted countries (Lengfeld et al., 2012). However, respondents also differ in terms of which countries should receive aid. When asked about specific recipient countries in July 2012, almost two thirds of Germans were willing to provide aid to Portugal (68 per cent), Ireland (62 per cent), Spain and Italy (56 per cent), but only 38 per cent were willing to assist the highly indebted and politically unstable Greece. We suspect that these differences are due to the fact that respondents consider the economic policy of Greece not to be in line with what they believe to be adequate in times of crisis. Further studies show that citizens choose to express solidarity only when the highly indebted EU countries meet certain conditions. On the one hand, they require that there is no misuse of aid funds, and loans and guarantees should be used to undertake structural reforms so that there is a realistic chance that the loans can be repaid (European Parliament, 2012). As with solidarity within the nation-state, it seems that, for transnational aid to be ongoing, the best guarantee of solidarity is to sanction and punish abuses and violations.

Secondly, we argue that, on the basis of other survey results, European citizens want their weakly regulated financial system to come under stricter controls, and the upper social classes to accept more responsibility for the mandatory measures for managing the crisis. Thus, between two-thirds and 90 per cent of respondents to recent Eurobarometer surveys would like to see a European financial transaction tax and demand more transparency in financial markets (European Parliament, 2012; European Commission, 2011). In another survey, this time from Germany, nine out of ten citizens believed that banks should provide their own emergency rescue funds through a self-financed mechanism. These findings speak for themselves: Those who caused the crisis, people who have exorbitantly high incomes, should come under stricter democratic controls and should make contributions to improve public welfare.

Thus, empirical evidence suggests that Europe's social integration does not end with the mere acceptance of a European welfare system. A surprisingly large proportion of EU citizens are willing to support other EU countries financially and desire

uniform standards of accountability for the system's beneficiaries and for those who caused the crisis. We arrive therefore at the conclusion that the European elites must show greater courage despite the dramatic crisis in the EU, and promote the European project rather than capitulating to a recurrence of re-nationalisation.

However, the conclusions which can be drawn from our analysis should be limited in two respects: Firstly, the European Union consists of 28 member countries, but our investigation was carried out in only three member states. Although we have chosen the three countries according to systematic criteria, we cannot state that we have captured all the variances between the 28 countries. Second, our analysis relates solely to the attitudes of individual citizens. The activities of interest groups, political parties, governments and other political actors were not investigated. These actors can, in fact, adopt and shape citizens' attitudes and feed into the political process. Our study does not allow us to say whether and how political elites affect the attitudes of citizens, and thus generate new cleavages.

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Appendix: Table A1: Variables and Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Definition	All	Germany	Spain	Poland
Age	Age in Years	48.7 (17.7)	51.8 (17.5)	45.5 (16.5)	49 (18.6)
Sex	0 female	52.9	50.7	51.2	56.9
	1 male	47.1	49.3	48.8	43.1
Employment position	Employed	48.6	52	53.7	40.2
	not in labor force/retired	37.2	39.3	27.7	44.7
	Student/ apprentice	5.6	4.6	5.6	6.5
	Unemployed	8.6	4.2	13.1	8.6
Occupational Class Position	Service class	30.1	49.4	25.1	15.8
	Routine non-manuals	25.7	26.9	28	22
	Petty bourgeoisie, farmers	9	5	6.5	15.5
	Skilled workers	20.2	7.4	21.3	31.9
	Semi-/unskilled workers	6.8	6.1	10.2	3.9
	Class position not reported	8.4	5.2	9	10.9
Education	without graduation	11.1	1.4	11.2	20.4
	less than secondary school	27	31.6	22.5	26.9
	Secondary school	14.4	28.9	8.3	6.2
	High school	29.5	23.8	30.9	33.8
	University degree	18.1	14.3	27.1	12.8
Inglehart Index	Materialist	25.3	11.3	18.6	46.3
	mixed type (Materialist/post-materialist and Post-materialist/materialist)	53.5	51.7	59.1	49.5
	Post-materialist	21.3	37	22.3	4.2

Nationalism	A high share of foreigners leads to a dilution of [national] culture and way of life. 1 totally agree, 2 tend to agree, 3 tend to disagree, 4 totally disagree	2.4 (1.0)	2.4 (1.0)	2.2 (1.1)	2.5 (0.9)
Political orientation	In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". How would you place your views on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?	4.8 (2.6)	4.8 (1.9)	4.4 (2.9)	5.4 (2.7)
Identification with Europe	Do you think of yourself predominantly as ...? [Nationality] only [Nationality] and European; and European only	38.5 61.5	32.8 67.2	24.8 75.2	57.1 42.9
N		3006	1000	1006	1000

Notes: European Equality Survey, frequencies in percent, where indicated mean and standard errors in parentheses.

Appendix: Table A2: Principal Component Factor Analysis: Acceptance of Europeanised Social Policy

Item	Factor loadings
a. EU: uniform social welfare system	.85
b. EU: fight unemployment in poorest member countries	.83
c. EU: uniform minimum wage	.74
Eigenvalue (1 Factor)	1.96
Cronbach's Alpha	.74

Notes: Source: European Equality Survey 2009; N=2.714; unrotated factor loadings