

## How Strong is European Solidarity?

Gerhards, Jürgen; Lengfeld, Holger; Ignácz, Zsófia S.; Kley, Florian K.; Priem, Maximilian

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# **Berlin Studies on the Sociology of Europe**

Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Soziologie, Garystraße 55, D-14195 Berlin

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## **How Strong is European Solidarity?**

*Jürgen Gerhards, Holger Lengfeld, Zsófia S. Ignácz,  
Florian K. Kley & Maximilian Priem*

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**Abstract**

In recent years, a series of crises have hit the European Union (i.e., the Eurozone crisis, the sovereign debt crises, the Great Recession, the refugee crisis, Brexit). Such precarious times have challenged solidarity both between European citizens, as well as between the Member States of the EU. The current paper investigates the degree of European solidarity in the European Union in the light of these developments.

The paper describes the preliminary findings of a recent research project conducted on European solidarity. We surveyed citizens of 13 Member States of the EU about their disposition toward (European) solidarity. An upcoming book will offer an elaborate theoretical framework about the existence of European solidarity. Additionally, this book will also present detailed results from the project and in-depth discussion of the findings. However, we decided to publish some of the descriptive results beforehand in the form of this report as the major findings of our study have high public and political relevance. The development of recent crises has been rather fast-paced, and is in contrast with the long wait that comes with the publication of academic texts. So, the latter process hinders the most important information to reach the public and policy makers as soon as possible and this report wishes to remedy it slightly.

In Chapter 1, we will elaborate on the conceptual framework of our study. By European solidarity, we understand a form of solidarity expanded beyond one's own nation state; recipients of solidarity are other EU countries, or citizens living in another EU country. In the first part of Chapter 1, we systematically distinguish between four different domains of European solidarity: (1) Fiscal solidarity, defined as citizens' willingness to support indebted European countries financially. (2) Welfare state solidarity, defined as citizens' strong agreement to support those in need – unemployed, sick, and the elderly – regardless of where they live in the EU, and to reduce inequality between rich and poor people in Europe. (3) Territorial solidarity, the willingness to reduce inequality between poor and rich EU countries. (4) Finally, the refugee crisis has raised the question of (4.1) external solidarity, defined as the support for the EU to grant asylum to refugees coming from outside of EU, and (4.2) internal solidarity, defined as a strong agreement with how Member States should share the burden of distributing refugees among themselves. In the second part of Chapter 1, we define different criteria for determining the strength of European solidarity.

In Chapters 2 to 5, we will apply the explicated criteria for the existence of European solidarity to each of the four domains of solidarity. By doing so, we can determine the strength of European solidarity in each domain of solidarity. As this report aims at giving a first overview of some of our results, we will apply two of the four theoretically developed criteria of European solidarity to the four domains only and present the corresponding descriptive results.

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<sup>1</sup> This report has also been published as "Arbeitsbericht des Instituts für Soziologie" (Nr. 75) at Universität Leipzig (<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:15-qucosa2-172648>).

Overall, our analyses reveal some unanticipated findings. Europeans altogether display a notably higher level of solidarity with citizens of other EU countries and EU states than many politicians and social scientists have so far presumed. This especially applies to the support of people in need (welfare state solidarity) and the reduction of wealth inequalities between rich and poor European countries (territorial solidarity), but also to the domain of fiscal solidarity. On top of this, European solidarity turns out to be more established than the global one.

However, this optimistic view is not valid for the domain of solidarity with refugees. Whilst citizens of western and southern European countries support both, the acceptance of refugees and the fair distribution of the incurring costs and burdens between European countries, the majority of people in eastern European countries do not share this point of view.

## 1. Theoretical Framework and Empirical Basis of our Study

### 1.1 Four Domains of Solidarity

The question “How strong is solidarity in the European Union” has become one of the most hotly debated topics among politicians and scholars during the last ten years. By European solidarity, we understand a form of solidarity that goes beyond one’s own nation state, and where the recipients of solidarity are other EU countries, or citizens of other EU countries. We distinguish between different domains of solidarity, each of the domains relate to one of the different crises the EU has had to face in the last ten years.

The first crisis is the European banking and financial crisis, resulting from mass insolvencies in the American real estate market. The financial crisis subsequently jeopardised the stability and liquidity of several major European banks. To save banks teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, some European Member States took out large government loans, which resulted in adverse deficits in their national budgets. The mismatch between drastically increased government debts and stagnating gross domestic product led to a devaluation of the (international) credit status of some European countries. Moreover, the sovereign debt crisis weakened the Euro currency as a whole and put the European Monetary Union (EMU) under pressure. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank (ECB), and not least of all, the EU Member States provided a series of financial support measures to tackle these institutional deficits, measures which were subsumed under the term “bailouts”. The Eurozone crisis reveals the underlying and more general question of to what extent the European Union is a community of solidarity, in which crisis-ridden countries can expect help from the wealthier countries. We call the financial support of indebted Member States from other Member States fiscal solidarity.

Second, we understand the ensuing economic crisis (also known as the Great Recession) as another distinct crisis that is a direct consequence of the sovereign debt crisis, which besieged some Member States. EU creditors set strict requirements: countries had to make extensive structural reforms as a condition of the bailout measures. While these policy actions meant to restore the sustainable growth of economies in the long-term, in some Member States these so-called austerity measures, however, even fostered an economic downturn in the short-term. In this context, austerity measures have further worsened the situation, especially in the stricken Mediterranean Member States, where the welfare state was comparatively weak even before the crisis (e.g. Gellissen 2000).

The economic crisis involves two different domains of European solidarity. In particular, austerity measures affected the most vulnerable groups in society, including the poor, the sick, the unemployed, and the elderly. In this context, the question of European welfare state solidarity became a relevant issue – a domain of solidarity that accounts for the support of people in need living within the territory of the European

Union, regardless of to which EU Member State they belong. Additionally, the economic crisis increased inequalities between Member States of the EU. Reducing inequality and wealth differences between Member States was, and still is, a key objective of the European Union. We define people's willingness to reduce inequality between poor and rich EU countries as territorial solidarity.

Lastly, a third crisis hit European countries that emerged independently of the former two. The heavy surge of refugees arriving from war-torn regions in the Middle East, especially from Syria, constituted the beginning of the so-called refugee crisis that peaked in 2015 (European Migration Network 2016). Regarding the refugee crisis, we distinguish between two different aspects of European refugee solidarity: external and internal refugee solidarity. On the one hand, we explore to what extent European citizens are willing to accept refugees from third countries. On the other hand, we investigate whether Europeans support the idea that refugees should be fairly distributed between the Member States of the EU.

In sum, we differentiate between four distinct domains of institutionalised European solidarity, behind each of which lies a particular sort of crisis, namely fiscal, welfare state, and territorial solidarity, as well as refugee solidarity. Regarding all four domains, we investigate the extent of solidarity among European citizens.

### *1.2 Criteria to Determine the Existence of European Solidarity*

How can one determine whether European solidarity exists? Based on an earlier project (Gerhards & Lengfeld 2015), we have developed a multistep concept of testing solidarity that will help us to determine the strength of European solidarity (Gerhards, Lengfeld, Ignácz, Kley & Priem forthcoming). The following criteria are significant for this.

(1) *Majority Support from the Population.* One can only speak of the existence of European solidarity if a majority of Europe's citizens accept this idea. The European Union is both a federation of states and a federal state on its own. Accordingly, European citizens have two roles in the constitution of the European Union: (1) as citizens of their home nation, and (2) as citizens of the European Union (Habermas 2011: 67). Thereby, it does not suffice if just the majority of all Europeans support the idea of European solidarity. The majority of citizens in each individual Member State must favour the idea of solidarity as well. Only such a double majority can ensure that the population in individual Member States will not feel overruled or heteronomous to others. For each of the four domains of solidarity (fiscal, welfare state, territorial, and refugee solidarity), we test whether such a double majority is empirically given.

(2) *European Solidarity in Relation to National and Global Solidarity.* The strength of European solidarity can only be relationally determined in comparison to other territorial spaces. Here, the comparison with national solidarity is especially relevant, because historically the nation state has been the central institution of solidarity – and in many ways still is. Simultaneously, globalisation processes may have led to the fact



that the entire world has become the frame of reference for solidarity. We thereby differentiate between three different territorial spaces of solidarity: (1) solidarity between citizens and regions of the same nation state, (2) solidarity between the citizens and states within the EU, and (3) solidarity with citizens and states outside of the EU. Empirically we determine the strength of European solidarity for each domain in relation to national and global solidarity. We thereby claim that an independent European space of solidarity exists, when European solidarity is stronger than the global one. However, we do not expect European solidarity to be more prevalent than national solidarity. Pertaining to the long history and influence of the nation state, this would not only be unrealistic, but theoretically implausible. Citizens are of course not just Europeans but at the same time, and more importantly, primarily, (still) citizens of their nation states.

(3) *The Resilience of European Solidarity.* One of the weaknesses of traditional attitudinal research is that it only reconstructs citizens' attitudes and values, yet does not further investigate their preparedness to stand up for their values. Above all, one can expect a high degree of support for values, when these values are socially desirable. This is likely to be the case on the issue of solidarity, since the term "solidarity" has a positive connotation. Therefore, we check European solidarity's capacity for withstanding social desirability by testing its resilience (Kuhn & Stoeckel 2014). For this, we have questioned people whether they would be prepared to pay more taxes in order to realise European solidarity. We examine the influence of the level of taxes on people's preparedness for solidarity.

(4) *Cleavages between Supporters and Opponents of European Solidarity.* The criteria defined so far are necessary, but not sufficient conditions to speak of the existence of European solidarity. In addition, the social and cultural background of people who reject European solidarity is also relevant. Opponents of European solidarity can turn out to be a societal dynamite if they succeed to organise among themselves, to mobilise politically, and to carry their interests into the political arena. We tie these considerations with theories of social and political cleavages (cf. Ferrera 2005; Kriesi et al. 2012; Grande & Kriesi 2015; Hutter, Grande & Kriesi 2016). The capacity for minorities to mobilise is more probable if the citizens rejecting European solidarity display common social characteristics. In cases where specific attitudes coincide with structural and cultural characteristics of respondents, social cleavages are likely to emerge, and the probability of disaffected minorities turning into an influential political force and forming a political cleavage increases. Therefore, another condition has to be fulfilled in order to speak of European solidarity: Those who oppose European solidarity should not form the basis for strong cleavages. We distinguish between two types of cleavages:

(4.1) *Social Cleavages:* We analyse the extent to which attitudes toward the different domains of solidarity can be explained through structural and cultural characteristics of the respondents and the countries in which they live. Most recent literature assumes that a new cleavage has emerged in the context of globalisation processes (Bornschieer 2010; Kriesi et al. 2012; Grande & Kriesi 2015; Hutter, Grande & Kriesi

2016; Hooghe & Marks 2009, 2018; Börzel & Risse 2018). On the one side, there are people considering globalisation and Europeanisation processes to be a positive phenomenon and support the opening up of their nation state, who want to grant people from other countries the same rights, and who welcome migration and consider it to enrich their country. On the other side are individuals interpreting the opening up of their own nation state as a threat, who believe that citizens from their own country are entitled to more rights than people from other countries, who oppose the uptake of migrants, and who do not consider this as an enrichment but rather as a threat to their own culture. Onawa Lacewell und Wolfgang Merkel (2013) describe the first group as cosmopolitans and the second as communitarians, whereas others speak of the latter group as nationalists. Both groups are not only characterised by different cultural orientations, but also by different socioeconomic features. Whilst cosmopolitans generally possess higher education levels, better income, have better and more secure careers, and in addition are internationally more connected, the opposite characteristics apply for communitarians (i.e., low education, unemployed or threatened with job loss, of a lower social class, and internationally less networked).

We presume that the advocates of European solidarity are more likely to be cosmopolitans and will display similar cultural and socio-economic characteristics, whilst the opponents to European solidarity have features that are typical of communitarians.<sup>2</sup> In the empirical chapters, we analyse whether a link between structural and cultural factors and attitudes toward European solidarity exist.<sup>3</sup>

(4.2) Political Cleavages: Structurally and culturally determined opponents of European solidarity then become politically relevant when they no longer linger in their latency, but actively express their political preferences. One of the most important modes of expressing one's political preference is during (national) elections, because governments emerge as a result of elections. In accordance, our survey extracts information on which party the respondent would prospectively vote for in the next (national) election. This allows us to analyse whether the opponents of European solidarity have preferences for specific parties, and thereby transfer their objectives into the political arena.

In Chapter 2 to 5, we will apply the explicated criteria to each of the four domains of solidarity. By doing so, we can determine the existence and strength of European solidarity for each domain of solidarity. As this report aims at giving a first basic overview of our results, we concentrate only on two of the four theoretically developed

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<sup>2</sup> Juan Díez Medrano and colleagues (2017), for example, showed that cosmopolitan orientations are positively correlated with the approval of the establishment of EU bailout funds.

<sup>3</sup> The admission of refugees, for example, can lead to an increase in competition in a country's labour market, especially for low-qualified, domestic workers. If refugees are interpreted as a threat to the socio-economic status of certain individuals, then the probability rises that these citizens will advocate the dominance of their nation state and speak out against solidarity with refugees. We thereby assume that an individual's unemployment, and also a country's unemployment rate has a negative influence on attitudes of solidarity.

criteria of European solidarity. Hence, we will test whether (1) the majority of European citizens and the majority of citizens in each Member State (a double majority) supports European solidarity, and (2) whether an independent European space of solidarity exists, in the sense that European solidarity is stronger than global solidarity in each of the four domains.

### *1.3 The Transnational European Solidarity Study (TESS)<sup>4</sup>*

Our findings are based on a comparative survey. The “Transnational European Solidarity Study” (TESS) was conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) in 13 European countries in the summer and autumn of 2016. Respondents in the survey are citizens eligible to vote in national elections in the respective country. The final sample consists of 12,500 respondents with approximately 1,000 respondents per country, including Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, France, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden. For Cyprus, 500 interviews were sufficient due to its scarce population.

TESS is part of a joint venture between two research groups: (1) the international research project Solidarity in Europe: Empowerment, Social Justice and Citizenship – SOLIDUS funded by the European Commission in the context of the Horizon 2020 research programme (Grant Agreement No. 649489), (2) and the research unit Horizontal Europeanization funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) (FOR 1539). A sub-team of SOLIDUS from the University of Leipzig as well as from the Freie Universität Berlin from the DFG group were responsible for developing, monitoring, and analysing the TESS. The commercial opinion poll company TNS Opinion and Social carried out the fieldwork in all countries in the investigation.

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<sup>4</sup> There exists another survey which partially overlaps with our study and which is part of a large project headed by Maurizio Ferrera entitled “Reconciling Economic and Social Europe: The Role of Values, Ideas and Politics” (REScEU). The survey covers seven EU countries (Ferrera, Pellegata & Ricci 2017). In this report, we will focus only on the presentation of the results of our study and will not compare the results with those of other studies.

## 2. European Fiscal Solidarity

With the European sovereign debt crisis, the European Union experienced one of the worst crises since its inception. The 2008 financial crisis that emerged in the US spilled over to European economies, and national governments had to stabilise their banks, which were threatened by massive loan defaults. Additionally, the economies experienced an economic recession starting in 2009. Both crises destabilised national budgets especially in the southern Member States, leading to the sovereign debt crisis and posing a threat to the Euro. In order to bolster the single currency, the EU, its Member States, and the IMF implemented financial measures by granting guarantees and loans to Eurozone countries facing serious financial difficulties, such as Greece, Portugal, Ireland, and Cyprus. A permanent, highly capitalised bailout for future crisis situations was established in the form of the temporary European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), followed by the permanent European Stability Mechanism (ESM). At the same time, the European Central Bank (ECB) purchased government bonds to support crisis countries. Ultimately, the Eurozone countries made a commitment to reciprocal, albeit limited, financial aid to balance national budgets.

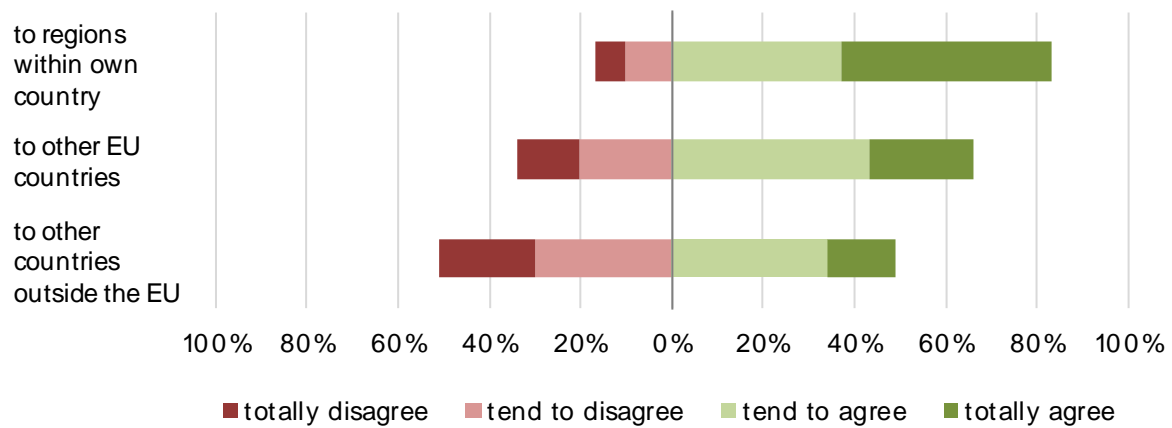
In the TESS survey, we raised the question of whether EU citizens are willing to show fiscal solidarity with Member States facing serious economic hardship. To answer this question, we followed our theoretical concept by measuring attitudes toward fiscal solidarity on three spatial levels: between regions within an EU Member State, between EU Member States, and between EU Member States and countries outside the EU.<sup>5</sup>

As Figure 1 shows, two thirds of all respondents agree with their country providing financial aid to EU countries. Hence, the first criterion for the existence of European solidarity is met. This holds also true for the second criterion: Fiscal solidarity with countries outside of the EU is significantly lower than fiscal solidarity with EU countries and the support is not shared by a majority of respondents. These results show that most respondents see the EU as an exclusive solidarity space that is distinct from the cosmopolitan idea of universal solidarity. Finally, results demonstrate that the nation state remains the dominant social space for supporting areas in financial crisis: A huge majority of 83% of respondents want to give financial help to suffering regions within their own country.

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<sup>5</sup> Wording of question (Q11) was the following: "We have learned in recent years that regions within countries as well as entire countries can fall into a severe debt crisis. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements." Q11A: "In times of crisis, the better off [GENERALREGIONNAME]s in [COUNTRY] should give financial help to other [GENERALREGIONNAME]s facing severe economic difficulties." Q11B: "In times of crisis, [COUNTRY] should give financial help to other EU countries facing severe economic difficulties." Q11C: "In times of crisis, [COUNTRY] should give financial help to other countries outside of the European Union facing severe economic difficulties."

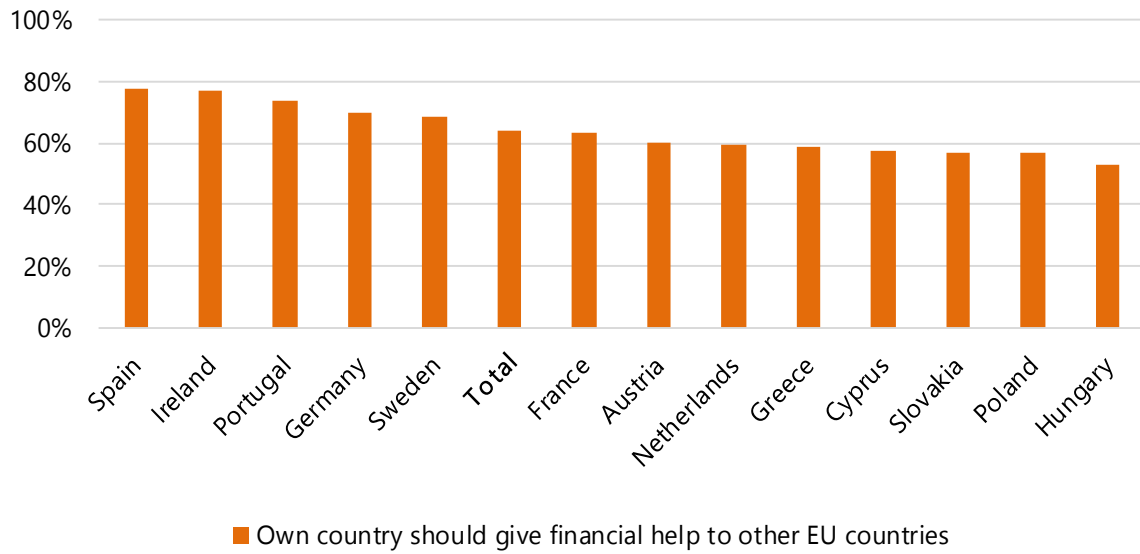
**Figure 1** Approval for bailouts in times of crisis by different spatial levels (relative frequencies)



Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 11,927, relative frequencies, only valid answers, weighted.

We have argued that it does not suffice if the majority of all Europeans support the idea of European solidarity. Instead, the majority in each individual Member State has to be in favour of the idea of solidarity as well. But how homogenous are attitudes of citizens across different EU countries toward European fiscal solidarity? As Figure 2 shows, the majority of citizens in all 13 surveyed countries were in favour of European solidarity. With this observation, the double majority criterion for the existence of European solidarity is fulfilled: Not only does the majority of all citizens across the EU support aid for crisis countries in the EU, but also the majority of people in each individual country.

**Figure 2** Approval for bailouts of other EU countries by country (relative frequencies)



Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 11,927, relative frequencies, only valid answers, weighted.

### Conclusion

The EU and the IMF established European bailout funds, such as the permanent European Stability Mechanism (ESM), to grant loans to Eurozone countries facing the most serious financial difficulties. While these measures have not gone unchallenged in Europe, the TESS survey findings point to great willingness to show fiscal solidarity. Two thirds of citizens in the countries we investigated agree with fiscal solidarity, and in general the majority did not reject it in any of these 13 countries. Hence, the double majority criterion of the existence of a European Solidarity is fulfilled. At the same time, citizens' willingness to help European crisis countries is admittedly lower than for regions within their own nation state. This level of willingness, however, is significantly higher than for countries that are not part of the EU. Thus, Europe undoubtedly constitutes a distinct space of solidarity.

### 3. European Welfare State Solidarity

EU Member States experienced severe cutbacks in economic growth rates and rising unemployment rates due to the Great Recession (Jenkins et al. 2013; Heidenreich 2016). However, the extent of the crisis differed between countries. In particular, the southern European countries experienced higher unemployment rates than western European economies (i.e., the creditors of the Eurozone crisis), who bounced back from the crisis faster and were able to stabilise unemployment rates more successfully. In addition, some measures for combating the sovereign debt crises in southern EU Member States have intensified the economic crisis and the arising social problems once again. The EU Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forced debtor countries to carry out sweeping reforms to their state budgets and economic structures. Although these so-called austerity measures targeted to reduce countries' debts, and to spark a period of economic growth in the long-term, they have worsened the situation for the most vulnerable people in crisis countries in the short-term. In light of these social problems, it is not surprising that in some Member States the demand for European welfare policies has increased. These requests mostly come from the indebted crisis countries' own governments and citizens, but also from left wing parties from the wealthier countries. The urge for a European social policy had already been expressed long before the Great Recession, though it certainly obtained a newfound virulence and articulation from it.

Against the backdrop of the Great Recession in 2008, this chapter focuses on two subdimensions of European welfare state solidarity: (1) attitudes toward an EU-wide social security, (2) attitudes toward reducing inequalities between rich and poor Europeans.

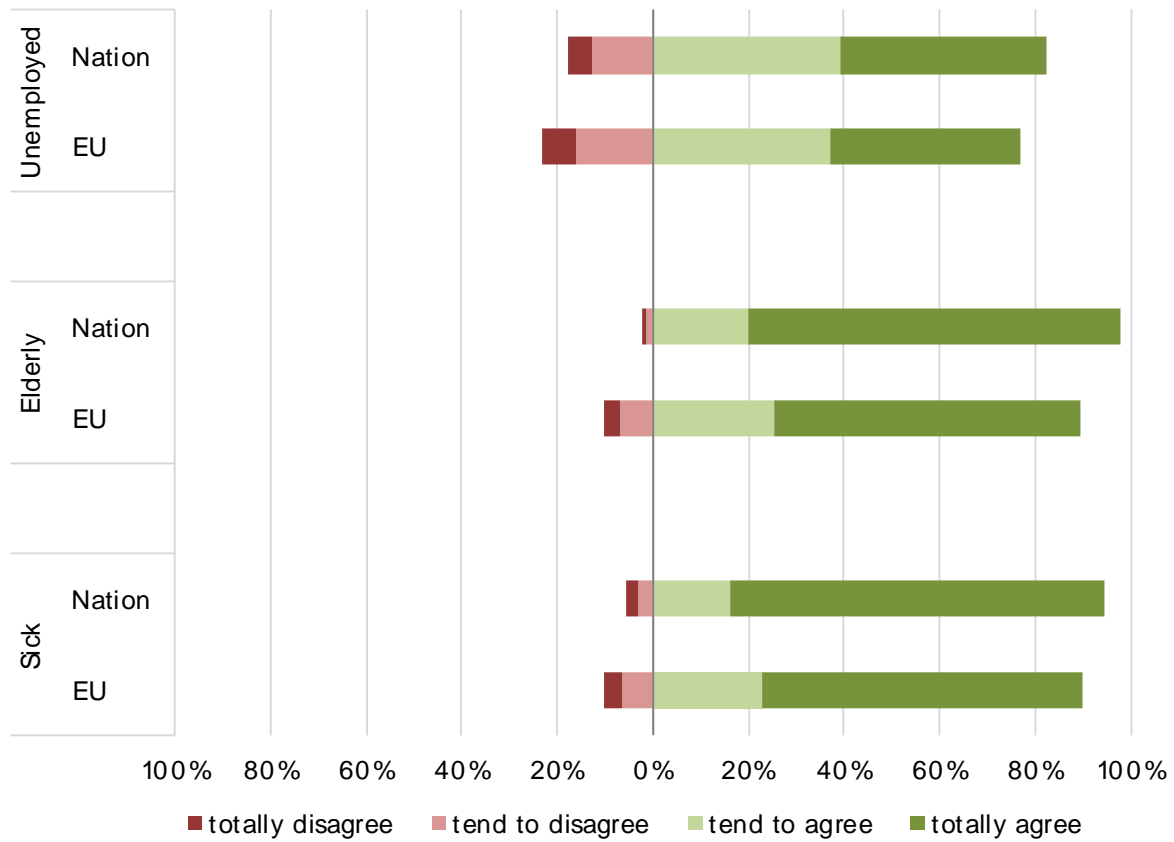
#### 3.1 Attitudes toward European Social Security

In this section, we investigate whether respondents agree that all EU citizens should be entitled to the same level of social security, regardless of in which Member State they live. We tested to what degree respondents think the European Union should be responsible for guaranteeing social security to the following vulnerable groups: (1) the sick, (2) the elderly, (3) and the unemployed. These social groups are typical recipients of welfare state support and encompass individuals who are in need.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Wording of question text (Q02): "Now please don't think about [COUNTRY], but about the European Union in Brussels and its responsibilities. Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree or totally disagree." Q02A: "The European Union should guarantee access to health care for everyone in the EU." Q02B: "The European Union should guarantee a decent standard of living for the elderly in the EU." Q02C: "The European Union should guarantee a decent standard of living for the unemployed in the EU."

**Figure 3** Approval for social security nationwide and in the EU (relative frequencies)

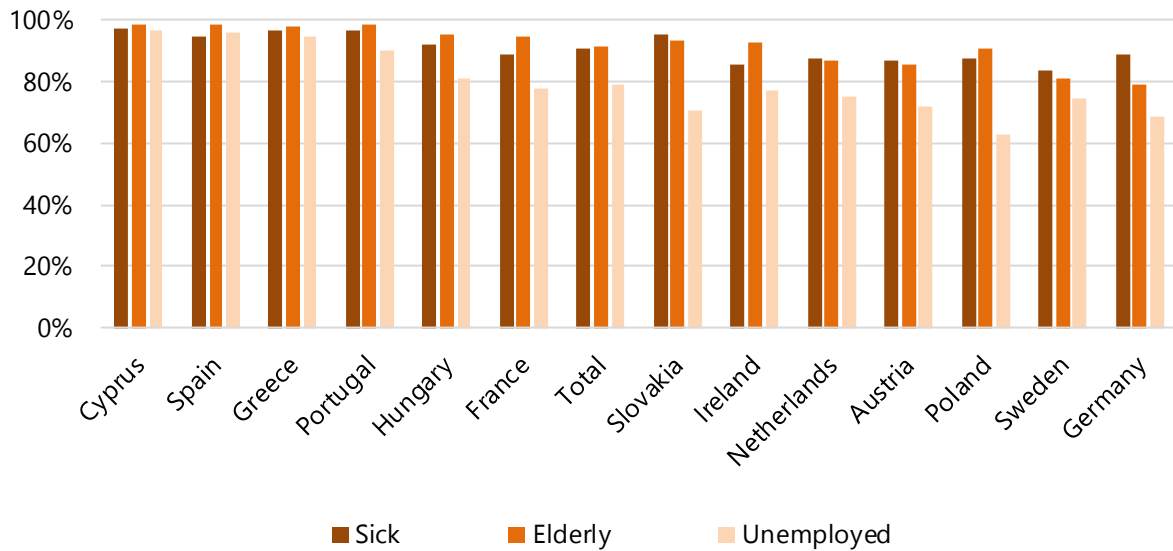


Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 12,015, relative frequencies with only valid cases, weighted.

Figure 3 depicts the distribution of answers aggregated across the 13 surveyed countries. In general, an overwhelming majority of respondents believe that the European Union should be responsible for the well-being of individuals from three mentioned social groups, irrespective of the reason for their vulnerability. Not only that, but a large percentage of respondents gave their full consent (by answering “fully agree”) to the notion of ensuring social security for all Europeans in all three items. Focusing on the differences between the three vulnerable groups, there are minor variations between the responses. 90% of respondents agree that the European Union should be responsible for sick and elderly Europeans. In contrast, 77% of respondents support the notion that the European Union needs to secure the standard of living of all unemployed Europeans. Despite the lower level of agreement, the latter rate still exceeds two-thirds majority. Thus, attitudes toward the three vulnerable groups meet the first criterion for the existence of European welfare state solidarity.



**Figure 4** Approval for helping people in need in other EU countries by country (relative frequencies)



Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 12,015, relative frequencies, only valid answers, weighted.

We further investigate how the national and the European level of solidarity relate to each other.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the other domains of solidarity, we did not measure the extent of welfare solidarity on the global level. Welfare solidarity needs a collective actor, such as the nation state or the EU, which distributes resources to vulnerable groups. Such an actor does not exist at the global level. Therefore, we have refrained from measuring solidarity on the global level in order to avoid unreliable answers.

When comparing the differences in attitudes toward national and European social security, we observe only marginally higher rates of agreement for the national level.

94% of individuals support the idea that national governments should guarantee sick people health care and 98% of individuals agree that national governments should guarantee the elderly decent living circumstances. On the other hand, only 82% of respondents want national governments to guarantee the unemployed a decent standard of living. This highlights two considerations. First, the national level serves as a reference to attitudes on the European level. Second, the two territorial levels do not differ from each other. Hence, Europe seems to be a similar space of solidarity as the nation state.

<sup>7</sup> Wording of question (Q01): "People have different views on what the [NATIONAL] government should be responsible for. Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree or totally disagree." Q01A: "The [NATIONAL] government should guarantee access to health care for everyone in [COUNTRY]." Q01B: "The [NATIONAL] government should guarantee a decent standard of living for the elderly in [COUNTRY]." Q01C: "The [NATIONAL] government should guarantee a decent standard of living for the unemployed in [COUNTRY]."

Figure 4 depicts that country differences show only minor variations. The majority of citizens in the 13 surveyed countries overwhelmingly are in favour of European welfare solidarity meaning that another criterion of the existence of a European solidarity is met. It is noteworthy that citizens from crisis-ridden Mediterranean countries facing high unemployment rates in the aftermath of the crisis show the highest approval rates for European social security. This is especially true for helping the unemployed. Since the welfare state is under the most pressure in these countries and unemployment rates are the highest, we can assume that these citizens would want the EU to solve their welfare issues, as their own national welfare state cannot cope with it. In contrast, in Austria, Poland, Sweden, and Germany, where unemployment has been low, citizens exhibit significantly less agreement with European social security than in the first group of countries (although the approval rates in these countries are still rather high).

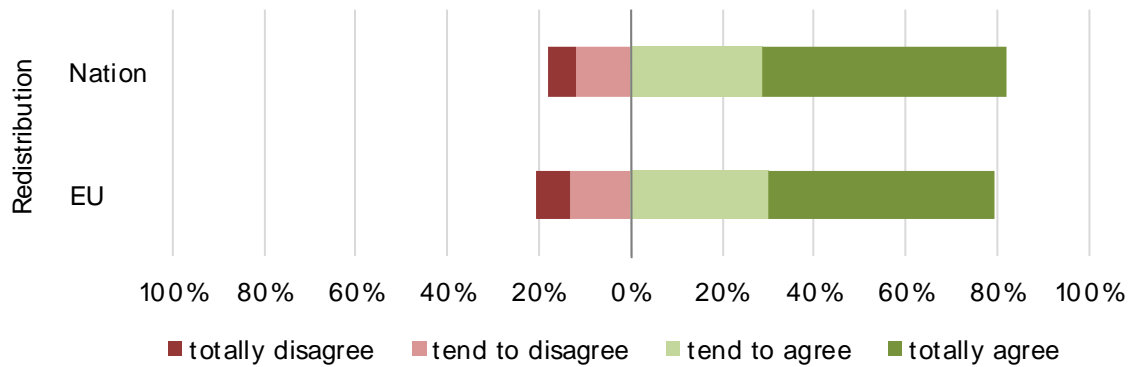
### *3.2 Attitudes toward European Income Redistribution between Poor and Rich People*

The second subdimension of welfare state solidarity focuses on the redistributive goal of welfare states. In this section, we investigated to what extent respondents think that income inequalities between rich and poor Europeans should be reduced.<sup>8</sup> Figure 5 shows that the majority of EU citizens exhibit a strong positive preference for the reduction of income inequality between the rich and the poor people at the European level. More than three quarters of respondents agree that the European Union should be responsible for the reduction of inequalities. This rate is just slightly lower than that for redistribution at the national level. This indicates that people accept Europe as a space of solidarity.

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8 Wording of question (Q01D): “The [NATIONAL] government should reduce income differences between the rich and poor in [COUNTRY].” Question text (Q02D): “The European Union should reduce income differences between the rich and poor in the EU.”

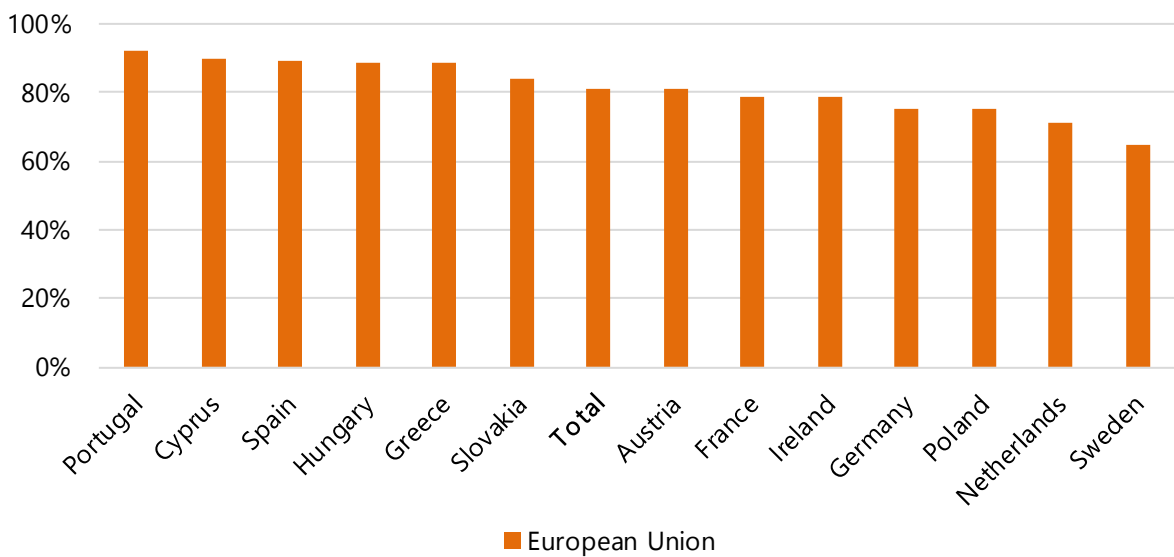
**Figure 5** Attitudes toward redistribution between rich and poor people nationwide and in the EU (relative frequencies)



Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 12,174, relative frequencies with only valid cases, weighted.

Looking at the country differences (Figure 6), we see that the majority in all countries support the idea that the EU should reduce inequality. Approval rates are highest in crisis-ridden countries. For example, in Cyprus more than 90% of the citizens support the idea that the EU should reduce the differences between rich and poor people. In contrast, wealthier countries are placed in the row of countries with the lowest approval rates for European redistribution. For example, Swedish respondents exhibit the lowest approval rates (64%).

**Figure 6** Support for redistribution between rich and poor people by country (relative frequencies)



Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 12,015, relative frequencies with only valid cases, weighted.

### *Conclusion*

In the course of the financial crisis, the Great Recession hit EU economies. Along with the austerity measures, the risk of not being able to reach decent standard of living amplified especially for the most vulnerable in southern European economies. Against this backdrop, our findings show that an overwhelming majority of European citizens supports the idea of a European welfare state solidarity. The approval rates for national and European welfare state solidarity differ only slightly. Unsurprisingly, we found the highest approval in the crisis-ridden countries for European welfare state solidarity. Overall, the citizens of all surveyed countries show a high level of welfare state solidarity, on which future European social policies can build on.

#### 4. European Territorial Solidarity

With the accession of twelve new Member States in 2004 and 2007, the European Union faced a huge increase in welfare disparities: In all new Member States the gross domestic product was far below the EU average (Eurostat 2017). Nevertheless, the new Member States experienced an increase in economic growth rates in the following years both in absolute and relative terms (Eurostat 2017). It seemed as if the economic convergence process, one of the central goals of the European Union (European Union 2012a: Article 3 (3); European Union 2012b: Article 174), was well on its way. The situation changed with the economic and Eurozone crises starting in 2008. Although at a slower rate than before, the new Member States, especially in eastern Europe, were able to further reduce their distance from wealthier states. Despite this, a new cleavage arose when the countries hit hardest by the crisis in southern Europe fell behind in economic terms. Until today, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Cyprus have barely been able to recover the economic position that they held within Europe's economic structure before 2008 (Eurostat 2017).

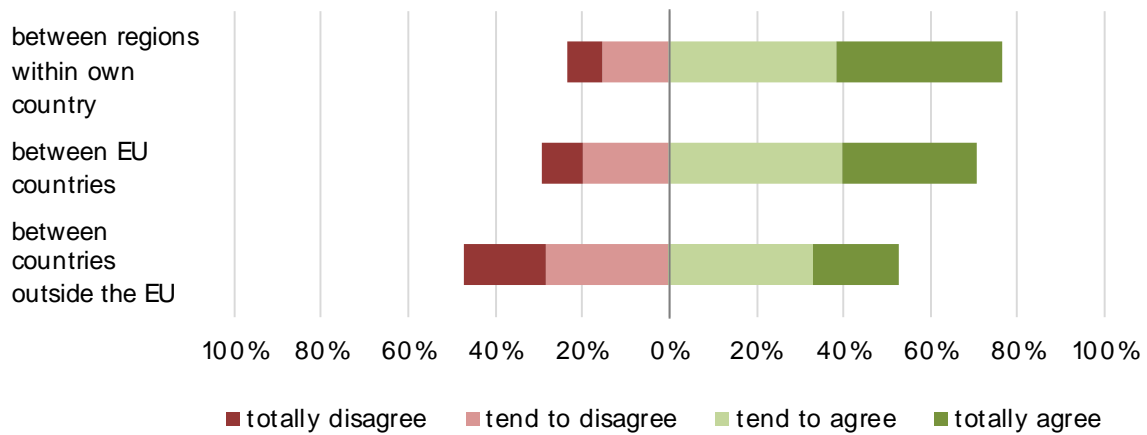
With the north-south divide reinforcing itself, spatial disparities seem to be one of the biggest challenges to the EU today. Whilst measures to tackle spatial disparities have existed within the European Union for several decades, they are limited in two ways. First, although they take up a big part of the overall EU-budget, they are restricted in their financial scope. Second, with the exception of funds like the European Solidarity Fund (ESF), established for providing financial help to countries in the event of natural disasters, such measures aim at enhancing the situation of subnational regions particularly by supporting projects in certain thematic fields. This chapter aims to describe citizens' attitudes toward the reduction of spatial disparities, the domain of solidarity coined *territorial solidarity*.

Within the TESS, we surveyed citizens' general attitudes toward the reduction of territorial disparities. According to our concept of solidarity, we measured attitudes toward territorial solidarity on three spatial levels: solidarity between regions within own nation state, between countries within the EU, and solidarity with countries outside of the EU.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Wording of question (Q17): "There are differences between rich and poor regions in a country, between countries in Europe, and also between countries in the world. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements." Q17A: "Differences between rich and poor [GENERALREGIONNAME]s in [COUNTRY] should be reduced, even if wealthier [GENERALREGIONNAME]s have to pay more." Q17B: "Differences between rich and poor countries in the EU should be reduced, even if wealthier countries in the European Union have to pay more." Q17C: "Differences between EU countries and poor countries outside of the EU should be reduced, even if EU countries have to pay more."

**Figure 7** Approval for reduction of spatial differences by different spatial levels (relative frequencies)

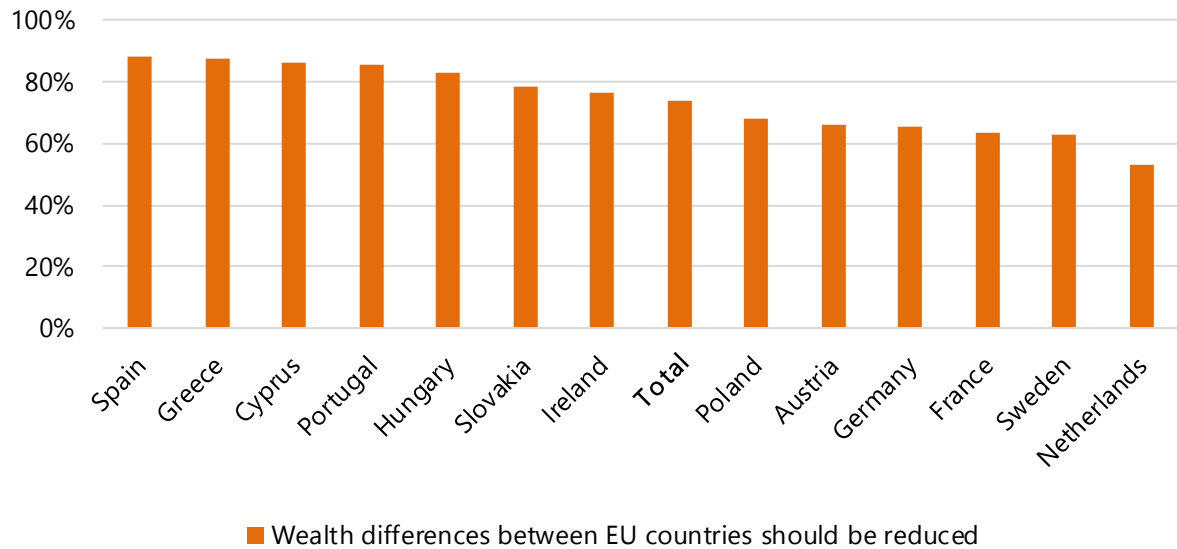


Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 11,843, relative frequencies, only valid answers, weighted.

Figure 7 shows that more than two thirds of the respondents favour the reduction of spatial differences among EU countries. Support for solidarity between different regions of a nation state is only slightly bigger. For a global reduction of wealth inequality, we find only a slight majority support. Thus, this indicates that Europe constitutes distinct space of solidarity for this domain as well.

Figure 8 depicts that a majority of respondents speak out for the reduction of disparities among the EU states in each surveyed country. This indicates that the double majority criterion for the existence of a European solidarity is fulfilled. Nevertheless, country differences are rather high, and homogenous clusters can be observed. In southern and eastern Member States, the idea of reducing disparities within the EU is highly approved. In contrast, western and northern European countries show the lowest rates of acceptance, ranging from Austria (66%) to the Netherlands (53%). Here Ireland, a crisis-stricken country, forms an exception with an acceptance rate above the average (76%). Thus, it seems that a country's economic and financial potential influences the degree its citizens supporting territorial solidarity.

**Figure 8** Approval for reduction of spatial differences between EU countries by country (relative frequencies)



Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 11,843, relative frequencies, only valid answers, weighted.

### Conclusion

While economic disparities between eastern and western European countries are slowly decreasing, a new north-south divide is rising in the aftermath of the economic crisis. In this chapter, we presented findings on the question of whether people are willing to reduce wealth disparities between spatial units (*territorial solidarity*), focusing particularly on the reduction of wealth between EU Member States. Our results show that a great majority of EU citizens agree on reducing disparities among countries within the EU. This majority exists in every country surveyed, even though levels of agreement vary highly, with higher levels of approval in southern and lower approval rates in northern and western European countries. Furthermore, the results imply that nation state are still the most important territorial space for reducing disparities, while the EU comes second before the global level.

As a consequence, further integration steps, like expanding the already established measures of redistribution (e.g. regional funds), could be accepted by the EU citizens and may help to improve the convergence process within the Union.

## 5. Refugee Solidarity

In recent years, various global crises such as war, famine, and poverty have quadrupled the number of refugees coming to Europe to over one million per year. This considerable increase in the number of asylum seekers created an administrative meltdown in several European countries and a breakdown of the European asylum registration system as a whole, hence bringing about the so-called European refugee crisis. This crisis is noted as starting in the summer of 2015, when Greece became completely incapable of registering all incoming refugees. Forced to seek asylum elsewhere, refugees made a trail along the so-called Balkan route, resulting in the temporary suspension of the Dublin rules in Europe.

The rationale to prevent as much unregulated influx of refugees as possible dominated most European governments' attempts to cope with the situation. Hungary closed its European borders to refugees. The EU signed a treaty with Turkey obliging the country to take back any refugees who illegally cross the border between Turkey and Europe. In return, the EU agreed to accept asylum seekers directly from Turkish refugee camps.

Moreover, the Commission and the European Council (EC) tried to tackle the asymmetric distribution of incoming refugees among the Member States. In retaliation, the Council voted for a quota system, which meant to resettle more than 120,000 refugees from Greece and Italy to countries that were not accommodating as many refugees. However, the Member States could not find common ground on this issue, so the EC had to implement the quota only on the back of a qualifying majority against the votes of the Visegrád group. Another drawback on this issue has been the slow implementation of the refugee quota. Many countries are expected to miss their target for the numbers of resettled refugees.

Against this backdrop of a European migration crisis, we explore two different solidarities at play: (1) external solidarity, which is the Europeans' solidarity with refugees themselves, and (2) solidarity among the EU countries, support to balancing the unequal costs for accommodating arriving refugees. In the TESS, we addressed both aspects of solidarity and operationalised them differently.

### 5.1 EU Citizens' Support for Refugees' Right to Stay

In order to measure the extent of solidarity with incoming refugees, we asked respondents whether refugees should have the right to stay in Europe. As there are different reasons and motives for why refugees want to come and stay in Europe, we distinguish between different groups of refugees.<sup>10</sup> Five of the seven items operationalise the

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<sup>10</sup> Wording of question (Q09): "People have different reasons for coming to the European Union. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with granting the right to stay for people who..." Q09A: "... are persecuted because they campaign for human rights." Q09B: "... are persecuted because they



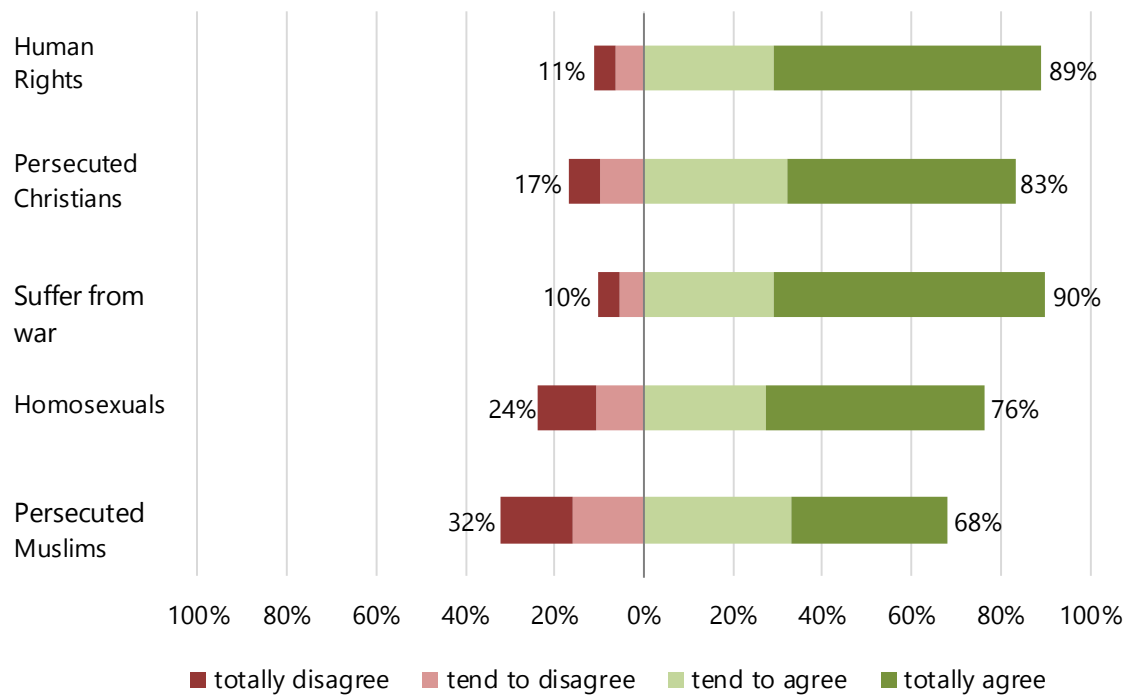
attitude toward a refugee whose reason for fleeing makes them eligible for asylum or subsidiary protection in Europe based on the Geneva Convention and relevant qualification directive. The causes for seeking asylum are (1) persecution because of campaigning for human rights, (2) one's religious denomination, (3) suffering from war, and (4) persecution relating to one's sexual orientation. Applying the criterion of Europe as a specific solidarity space that is distinguishable from the national and global level does not make sense in the case of refugee solidarity as refugees are people who come from outside of Europe. Therefore, in this section we will solely analyse whether the majority criterion is fulfilled.

As Figure 9 shows, at least two thirds of all respondents approve justifications that are in line with European asylum legislation. Nonetheless, there are significant differences between the levels of acceptance regarding refugee's different hypothetical reasons for abandonment. People who campaigned for human rights (89%), belong to a Christian minority (83%), or suffer from war (90%), are accepted as refugees more generously. The acceptance rate slightly decreases for Muslims (68%) and refugees persecuted because of their sexual orientation (76%).

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belong to a Christian minority." Q09C: "... suffer from a war." Q09D: "... are persecuted because they are homosexuals." Q09E: "... are persecuted because they belong to a Muslim minority." Q09F: "... hold occupational skills [COUNTRY] needs." Q09G: "...believe they will have better life prospects in Europe."

**Figure 9** Approval for accepting refugees in Europe by different reasons for seeking refuge (relative frequencies)

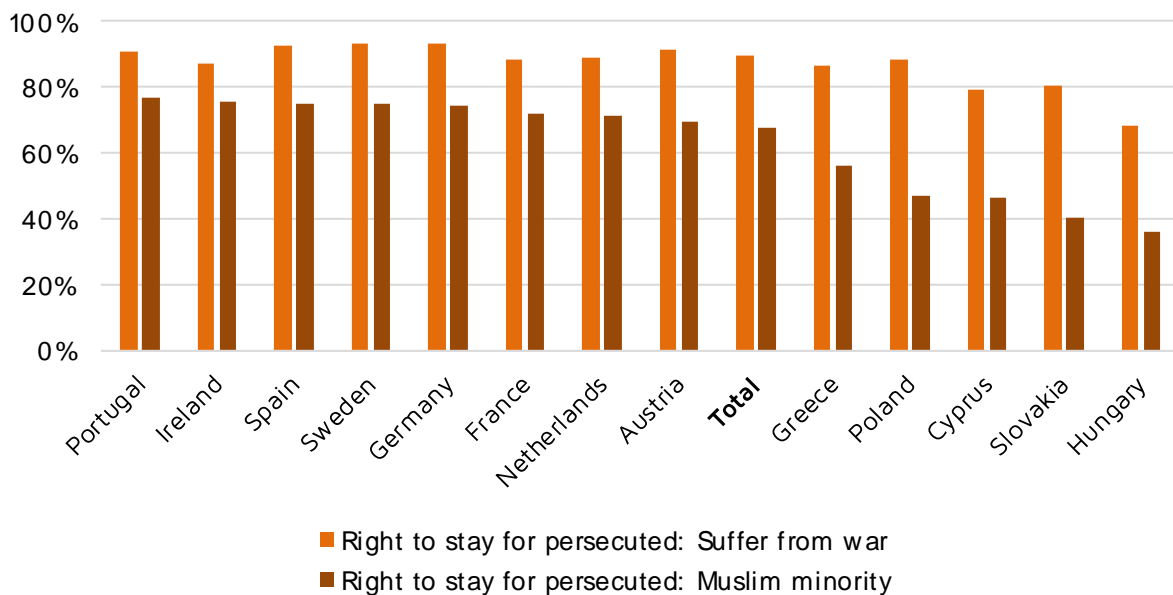


Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 11,296, relative frequencies, only valid answers, weighted.

Figure 10 displays country variation in the approval rates. What rings true for every country is that at least two thirds of respondents would approve the right to stay for refugees suffering from war. Yet, there are still notable differences between EU Member States. The highest approval rates can be found in Germany, Sweden, and Spain, whereas Cyprus, Slovakia, and Hungary make up the lower end of the table.

Turning to the approval rates of refugees who are persecuted because of belonging to a Muslim community, we can observe similar differences. Yet, in several countries there is no majority in favour of Muslim refugees' right to stay, even though the Geneva Convention grants these rights unconditionally. These countries are Cyprus (46%), and the Visegrád countries included in our survey: Poland (47%), Slovakia (41%), and Hungary (36%). Thus, the double majority criterion is not fulfilled for all groups of asylum seekers in all countries of the EU.

**Figure 10** Approval for accepting refugees that suffer from war or are of muslim denomination: country differences (relative frequencies)



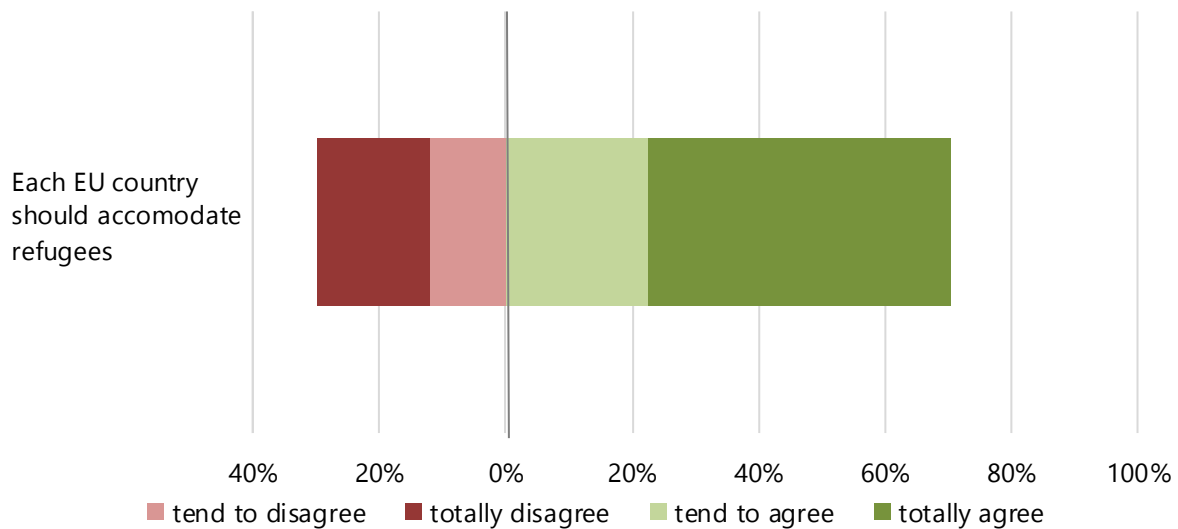
Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 11,296, relative frequencies, only valid answers, weighted.

## 5.2 Europeans' Willingness to Share the Burden in the Migrant Crisis

The refugee crisis has opened up a second question in relation to the concept of European solidarity: To what extent do Europeans support the idea that refugees should be fairly distributed among the Member States of the EU? To explore its nature, we designed two alternative distribution mechanisms that would go beyond the existing Dublin rules and have been intensively debated by the Member States:<sup>11</sup> (1) Every EU Member State should accommodate refugees and (2) Member States who do not accommodate refugees should pay compensation to those that take them. As the answers to these two items are highly correlated, we will discuss results concerning the first item only.

<sup>11</sup> Wording of question (Q08): "Recently, many refugees came to the European Union. I will now read out to you some statements about how the EU countries could tackle the refugee problem together. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements." Q08A: "Each EU country should be required to accommodate refugees." Q08B: "If an EU country does not want to let refugees in, it has to pay compensation to other countries that take them."

**Figure 11** Approval for redistributing refugees among all Member States (relative frequencies)



Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 11,789, relative frequencies, only valid answers, weighted.

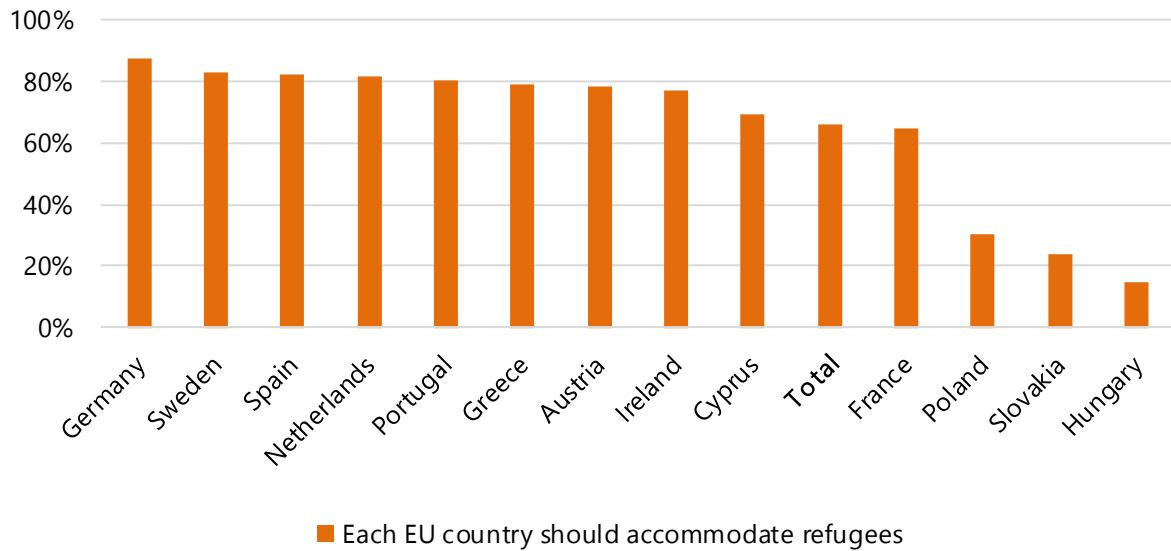
The approval rates indicate a solid majority for redistributing refugees among all Member States across the 13 surveyed countries, as Figure 11 shows. Thus, the first part of the double majority criterion is met. However, the rate of citizens approving redistribution measures within each country does not meet the 50 per cent threshold, as indicated by Figure 12. Thus, the second aspect of the double majority criterion is not fulfilled here.

The Visegrád countries (i.e., Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary) strongly disagree with the notion that each EU country should be required to accommodate refugees. The question of national identity and self-determination is of very high salience in these countries. So we hypothesize that this can stand in the background of attitudes. The inflow of foreigners is perceived as an affront to their culturally defined national identities, and any redistribution of refugees across the EU is rejected on account of it being an incursion into national sovereignty. Thus, in the case of internal solidarity (sharing the burden between the Member States) the second part of the double majority criterion is not fulfilled.

### Conclusion

The sharp increase in the number of refugees coming to Europe has raised two central questions of solidarity: (1) Are Europeans willing to grant asylum seeking refugees the right to stay, and (2) are Europeans willing to share the costs of accommodation and integration among each other. For the first aspect of refugee solidarity, our findings show that a majority of Europeans are willing to grant refugees the right to stay in Europe. However, this does not hold true for all the reasons for seeking asylum in all countries. In particular, in four of our 13 survey countries a majority of respondents

**Figure 12** Approval for redistributing refugees among all Member States: country differences (relative frequencies)



Source: TESS 2016, own calculations, N = 11,789, relative frequencies, only valid answers, weighted

reject the right to stay in Europe to people who had to flee because of their Muslim denomination, even though the Geneva Convention covers this right. These countries are Cyprus, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary.

It also becomes apparent that the disapproval of refugee solidarity is strongest in the Visegrád countries regarding the second aspect of refugee solidarity: the burden sharing. Although the overall approval rate for a redistribution mechanism reaches a two third majority, the majority of respondents from Poland, Slovakia and Hungary strongly oppose the idea of redistributing refugees between the EU Member States. Hence, the double majority criterion for a European solidarity is not fulfilled.

## 6. Summary of Findings

The question whether a solidarity between citizens of the European Union and among Member States exists became a virulent topic against the backdrop of the several crises' that hit the EU in the last ten years. We have distinguished between four domains of European solidarity, each of them relating to one of the European crises: (1) fiscal solidarity, (2) welfare state solidarity, (3) territorial solidarity, and (4) refugee solidarity.

In addition, we have defined four theoretically derived criteria to measure the strength of European solidarity. European solidarity exists when the following criteria are met: (1) The majority of all Europeans and a majority in each European country supports the idea of European solidarity. (2) Europe constitutes a space of solidarity distinguishable from both global and national solidarity. (3) EU citizens are prepared to sacrifice resources in defense of European solidarity. (4) Social and political cleavages between supporters and opponents of European solidarity are not pronounced.

For each of the four domains of solidarity we examined whether or not the four criteria are met by means of a survey conducted in 13 EU Members States in 2016. This report has focused on the first two criteria only and presented only some basic descriptive results. A forthcoming book will present the analyses of all criteria for all domains of solidarity with more sophisticated analytical tools.

For fiscal solidarity, the results show that two thirds of the respondents are willing to give emergency aid to EU crisis countries. Even if differences in levels of approval between the 13 countries are apparent, we find a majority in favour of European fiscal solidarity in all countries. Furthermore, European solidarity prevails somewhat less than the support for crisis regions within one's own nation state, but considerably more than the support for crisis countries that are not part of the EU. Thus, the first two criteria for European fiscal solidarity are fulfilled.

Regarding welfare state solidarity, we found that at least two thirds of the respondents approve the support of people at risk (unemployed, elderly, or sick) and endorse the redistribution of wealth between rich and poor people across the EU. Differences in approval rates per country are rather small. Although national welfare state institutions remain the first choice of our respondents, differences between the two territorial spaces are negligible.

Most EU citizens also support the idea of European territorial solidarity, i.e., the reduction of wealth differences between EU countries. More than 70% of respondents are in favour of reducing spatial differences between EU Member States. While support is slightly smaller in comparison to equalisation measures within the nation states, a global redistribution scheme would barely find a majority support. Again, the first two criteria are fulfilled for territorial solidarity.

Regarding refugee solidarity, our analysis reveals a more complex and differentiated picture. We find strong differences between countries although the overall approval rate for accepting refugees in Europe reaches a two-thirds majority in the whole

sample. The majority of citizens in Cyprus, and in the Visegrád countries (Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary), are not willing to grant refugees the right to stay in Europe if they were persecuted because of their Muslim denomination. A similar picture emerges in the analysis of attitudes regarding internal solidarity. Whilst citizens in all western and southern European countries support the idea that refugees should be distributed equally between the Member States, three quarters of Polish, Hungarian, and Slovakian citizens reject this suggestion. Of all the crises that the European Union faces, the refugee crisis challenges European solidarity the most.

Overall, our analyses of a survey conducted in 13 EU countries exposes quite surprising findings. European citizens altogether display a notably higher level of solidarity with citizens of other EU countries than many politicians and social scientists have presumed so far. This especially applies for the support of people in need (welfare state solidarity) and the reduction of wealth inequalities between rich and poor European countries (territorial solidarity), but also to the domain of fiscal solidarity. Furthermore, European solidarity turns out to be stronger than the global one. However, this optimistic view does not apply for the domain of refugee solidarity. Whilst citizens of western and southern European countries support both the acceptance of refugees and the fair distribution of the incurring costs and burdens between European countries, only a minority of people in eastern European countries share this point of view.

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## Appendix: TESS Research Design

The Transnational European Solidarity Survey (TESS) is a unique survey. It was conducted as a joint venture of two research teams from projects “SOLIDUS” (EU/Horizon 2020) and “Horizontal Europeanization” (DFG). The polling institute TNS infratest dimap Berlin and national subsidiaries from TNS Opinion and Social carried out the fieldwork in 13 European countries. The 12,500 interviews in the TESS survey were recorded between May and November 2016.

Unfortunately, polling in 13 EU countries does not allow us to survey a comprehensive picture of the European Union as a whole. Nevertheless, we aimed to have a broad spectrum of countries in our survey. This allowed us to explore the domains of solidarity as deep as possible. We took into account the following criteria for country selection:

- (1) Did a country receive financial help from an international fund or facility during the Eurozone crisis?
- (2) Is the country part of the Eurozone?
- (3) What kind of regime does the country’s welfare state belong to (liberal, social democratic, conservative, Mediterranean, post-socialist)?
- (4) Does the country presently have a rather eurosceptic or non-eurosceptic government?

We aimed to sample a diverse set of countries containing a balanced number of states on both aspects of each criterion. Therefore, we selected Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Spain, and Ireland as receivers of international funds and facilities due to the Eurozone and sovereign debt crises in our final sample. Sweden represents a social democratic welfare state regime as the only Scandinavian country in our sample. France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria are all part of the Eurozone. Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary represent younger EU Member States as well as central and eastern European countries. By selecting Poland and Hungary, we covered two non-Eurozone members as well. Figure A.1 displays our final country selection.

The two research teams jointly developed the master questionnaire. Subsequently, the master version was translated into the country languages by a professional translation office familiar with survey field research and was then counter-checked by a second translation company. Native speakers affiliated with the research teams finally checked each national questionnaire. These national splits have been adjusted for country specifics (e.g., country names and currencies mentioned in the survey text) and then pre-tested on a sample of 50 respondents per country. Before the fielding of the final questionnaire we made some minor adjustments based on the pre-test.

**Figure A.1** The 13 TESS countries

Source: Own depiction.

In order to acquire reliable data representative of each country's population, we considered two major constraints for the sampling. First, the various national landline/mobile phone mix of the gross sample was taken into account as a remarkable proportion of households do not have a landline phone these days. Therefore, CATI surveys that only rely on landline sampling are facing selective coverage problems. Infratest dimap Berlin is one of the leading institutes relying on current standard proportions used in Eurobarometer Flash surveys with varying landline/mobile phone quotas per country. For example, it is sufficient to conduct 10% of all interviews via mobile connections in Germany, whereas this same proportion is 50% in Poland. Columns 2 and 3 of Table A.1 list further details on country specific information on the landline coverage in our sample.

Second, to cover all regions of each country proportionally to the number of inhabitants, the numbers in the gross sample were stratified regionally by using the NUTS II regions. The gross sample was allocated to cells representing the NUTS II regions according to their share in the population. Within each cell, the dialled numbers were selected at random. Furthermore, only nationals eligible to vote in the national parliament elections in the respective country could take part in the TESS. In landline households with multiple members, the interview partner has been identified using the last birthday method.

Infratest dimap Berlin calculated two weighted variables, PFAKT and GESFAKT. These take into account the research design and compensate for the oversampling of certain regions and groups of people in particular social strata. PFAKT is applied when one is interested in national statistics and figures. GESFAKT weights the data in order to gain representative information for all of the thirteen TESS countries.

The fieldwork was coordinated by TNS Brussels, who is also responsible for coordinating the Eurobarometer surveys. In each survey country, we targeted the completion of 1,000 interviews, except for Cyprus (here, 500 interviews were sufficient due to its scarce population). In eleven out of the 13 countries, the fieldwork was conducted in June and July 2016. In France and Ireland, the fieldwork phase was set for October and November 2016. Column 1 of Table A.1 shows the detailed fieldwork periods for each country.

The average length of interviews ranges from 23 minutes in Cyprus to 32 minutes in Sweden. Given the fact that there were no differences between countries related to filtering or questions, the difference in length results from differences in local languages. Column 5 of Table A.1 documents the detailed interview length in each country.

Overall, net response rates (the share of completed interviews compared to interview attempts with eligible interviewees) ranged from 1.3% in Austria to 9.5% in Hungary (country details in column 6 of Table A.1).

**Table A.1** Country specific fieldwork information

Country	Fieldwork period 2016	Landline (in percent)	Mobile (in percent)	Number of net interviews	Average interview length	Response rate (in percent)
Austria	June 6 to July 6	49	51	n=1,010	30 min	1.3
Republic of Cyprus	June 7 to June 22	90		n=500	23 min	2.7
France	Oct 10 to Nov 5	90	10	n=1,002	27 min	5.3
Germany	June 6 to July 1	90	10	n=1,001	28 min	3.0
Greece	June 9 to July 1	80	20	n=1,000	24 min	5.1
Hungary	June 6 to June 30	52	48	n=1,001	29 min	9.5
Ireland	Oct 10 to Nov 14	70	30	n=1,000	25 min	2.6
The Netherlands	June 6 to July 5	90	10	n=1,000	29 min	5.5
Poland	June 6 to July 1	50	50	n=1,000	27 min	4.4
Portugal	June 6 to July 1	70	30	n=1,000	27 min	7.7
Slovakia	June 6 to July 5	30	70	n=1,000	29 min	7.6
Spain	June 6 to July 6	70	30	n=1,001	26 min	2.3
Sweden	June 7 to July 13	60	40	n=1,000	32 min	6.1