

15th conference 'Social Monitoring and Reporting in Europe'
Increasing divergence and changing social trends in Europe? Longer-
term developments and consequences of the pandemic
Online event, 9 March, 2021

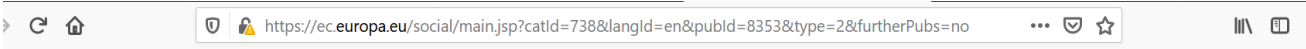
Social policy attitudes in EU member states: common trends and cross country heterogeneities

ISTVÁN GYÖRGY TÓTH

TÁRKI SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE



THE PAPER



13/11/2020

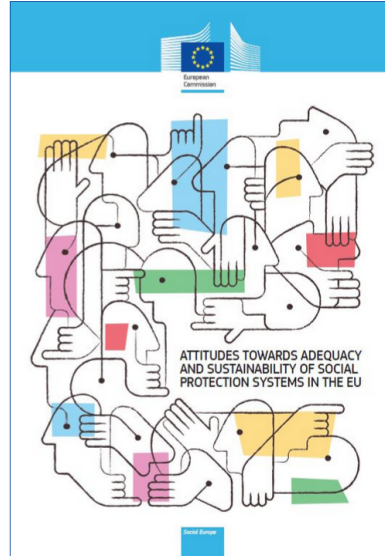
Attitudes towards adequacy and sustainability of social protection systems in the EU

en

Download

This study collects and reports policy-relevant evidence on the attitude of the citizens of the European Union towards social protection, with the intention of identifying the type of social contract that people favour. The paper provides an overview of the factors that influence the demand for social protection and solidarity, and explores the potential support for further EU-wide solidarity and protection.

The [executive summary](#) is available in French and English.



THE CLIENT

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Directorate C — Social Affairs

Unit C.2 — Modernisation of social protection systems



THE PEOPLE

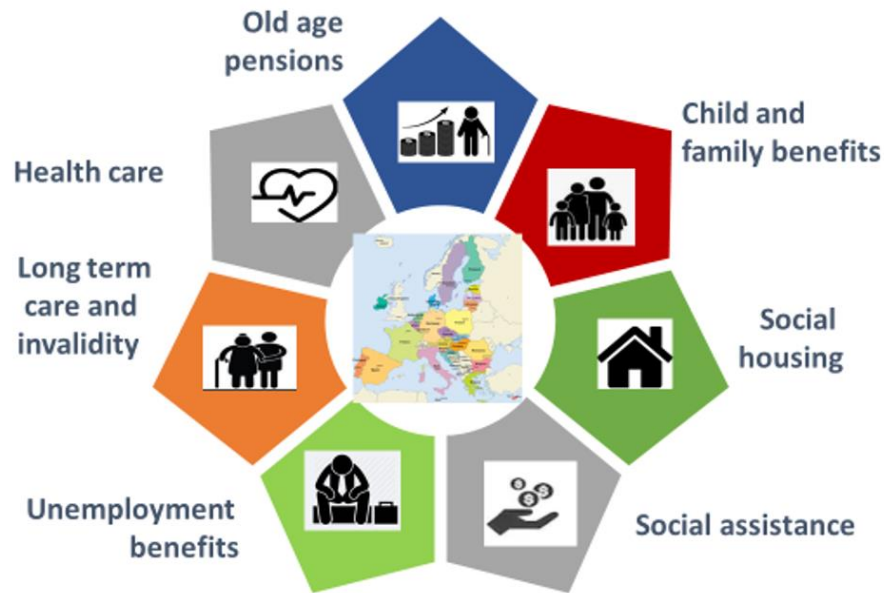
- István György Tóth (Tárki, team leader)
- Nicole Fondeville (Applica, project coordinator)
- Boglárka Herke (Tárki)
- Manos Matsaganis (Applica)
- Márton Medgyesi (Tárki)
- Bart Meuleman (Kresko Research)
- Erhan Özdemir (Applica)
- Femke Roosma (Tilburg University)
- Terry Ward (Applica)

THE CONTRACTORS



THEMES

Attitudes to national level social policies



Support for pan-European policy instruments



AIMS AND METHODS

for what?

- to map attitudes towards the pillars of social protection systems and
- to understand factors that influence the demand for social protection and solidarity

at what levels?

- national level (EU member states)
- pan-european level (EU)

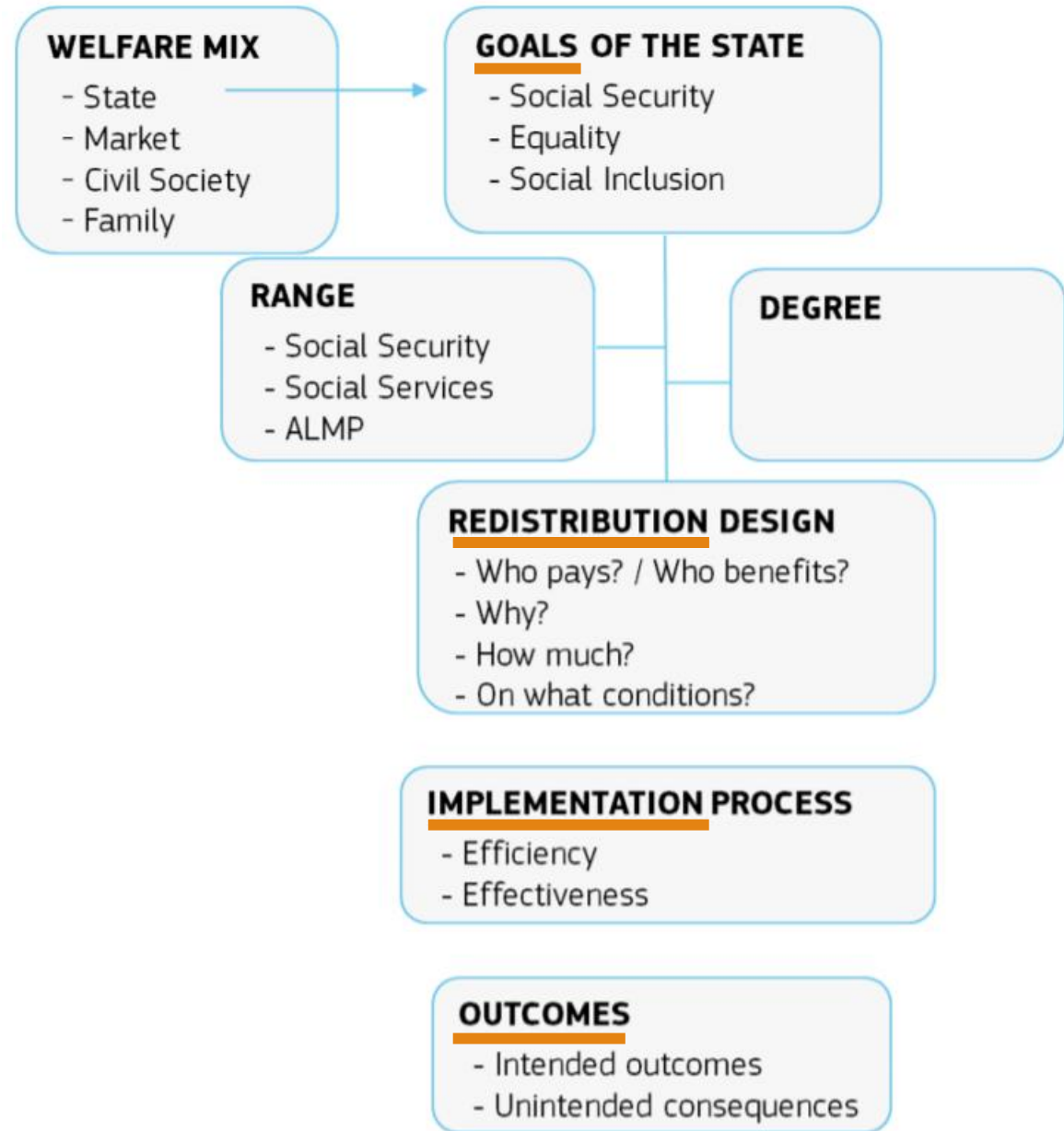
what methods?

- literature review
- genuine analysis of surveys
- Time series
- Cross section
- Multilevel analysis

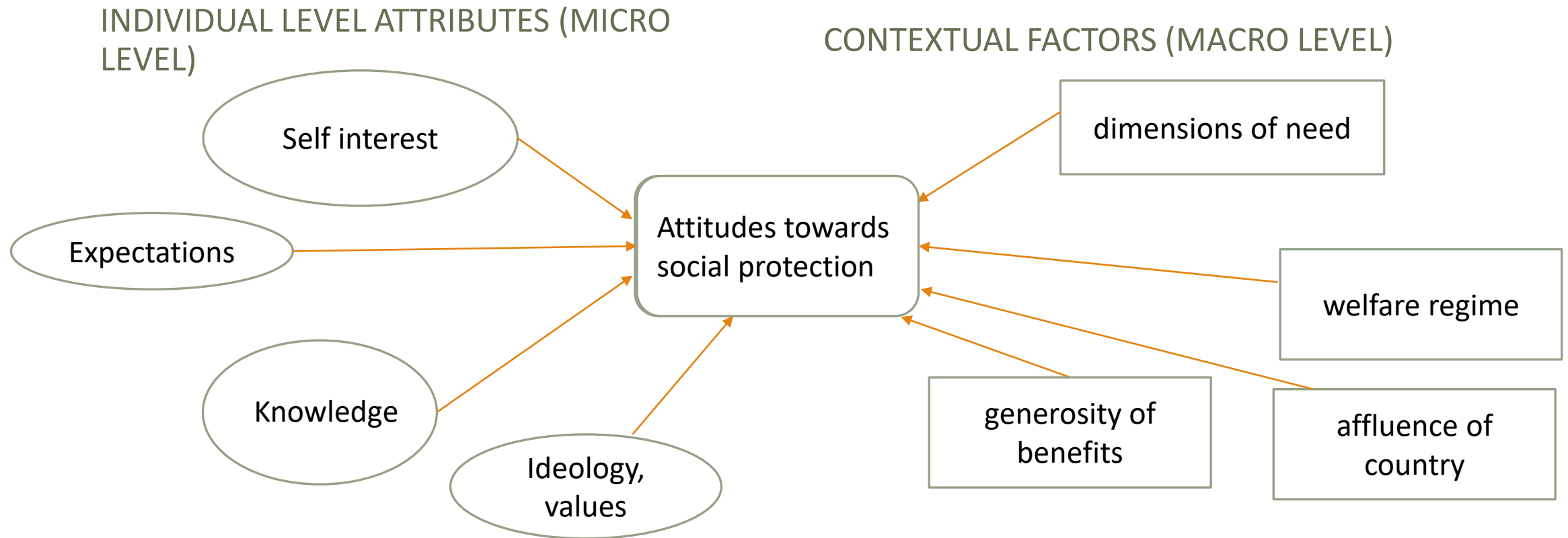
Note: no new surveys were conducted

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL NATURE OF WELFARE ATTITUDES

- no uniform attitude towards a welfare state
- welfare support has several dimensions:
 - **Substantive** (focusing on the main goals of WS)
 - **Redistributional** (tax side and benefit side as well)
 - **Procedural** (efficient and effective management)
 - **Evaluative** (of intended and unintended outcomes)



FACTORS THAT SHAPE ATTITUDES TO POLICIES – MULTILEVEL REGRESSION MODELS – THEORETICAL LEVEL, IN GENERAL



ATTITUDES TOWARDS WELFARE STATE IN GENERAL

General conclusions

In general, Europeans

support the goals and objectives of the welfare state.

are **critical** about costs and quality of services.

67%

of Europeans have a positive view of the 'welfare state'

Eurobarometer 2018

Attitudes **differ** substantially across **countries** and **regions** in Europe.

Positive view of welfare state:

highest in  (91%)

lowest in  (34%)

Northern and Western countries: relatively satisfied

Southern and Eastern countries: much more dissatisfied

⇒ Though attitudes to welfare systems have shown considerable stability over time, the **COVID-19 pandemic** may lead to important **shifts in attitudes**.

⇒ More **data should be collected** to

- **test** existing theoretical frameworks more thoroughly and
- better **inform** policy-makers.

ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS: AN EXAMPLE

To be explained: „social benefits and services in the country place too great a strain on the economy”

Data: pooled ESS data for 2008 and 2016, covering 26 countries

Individual factors: gender, age group, marital status, household size, educational attainment, employment status, political identification on a left-right scale, opinion about the performance of national government, the person’s subjective view of his/her economic situation.

Contextual factors: at-risk-of-poverty rate, the P90/P10 ratio of income inequality, the difference in the Gini coefficients for equivalised total household income before and after social transfers, net expenditure on social protection as a share of GDP and the Perception of Corruption Index (PCI).

Table B2. Linear regression results for agreeing with the statement that the social benefits/ services place too great a strain on the economy – contextual effects

	Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.	Coeff.	Std err.
Constant	3.998***	0.303	3.494***	0.334	2.438***	0.290	2.356***	0.374	2.545***	0.190
ESS wave										
2008	0.029	0.035	0.037	0.047	0.093	0.050	0.102	0.056	0.056	0.042
2016 (ref.)										
Controlled for all individual-level variables										
<i>Contextual var.</i>										
AROP	-0.054**	0.018								
P90/P10			-0.104	0.073						
Gini diff					0.033*	0.013				
% of Net Soc. Prot. Exp. in GDP							0.034*	0.017		
Perception of Corruption Index									0.008**	0.003
<i>Variance components</i>										
var(_cons)	0.077	0.021	0.056	0.011	0.070	0.023	0.067	0.018	0.082	0.018
var(Residual)	1.026	0.055	1.027	0.054	1.026	0.055	1.026	0.054	1.026	0.054
ICC	0.070	0.019	0.052	0.010	0.064	0.020	0.061	0.016	0.074	0.016
N country	26		26		26		26		26	
N observations	73,201		73,201		73,201		73,201		73,201	

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

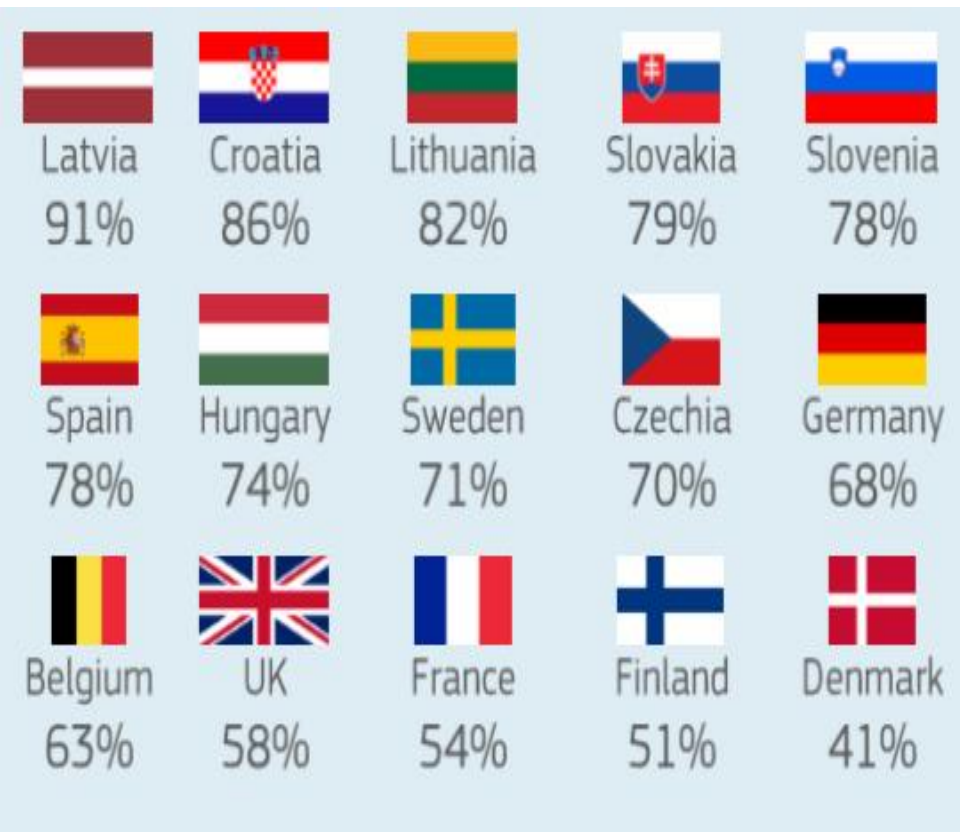
No AROP, P90/P10 and Gini data for HR in 2008 (2009 figures are used). EE included only in 2016.

No net social benefits expenditure data for FR and PL in 2008. The data are calculated according to the gross values in 2008 and the average ratio of net and gross values in the nearest three consecutive years with available data.

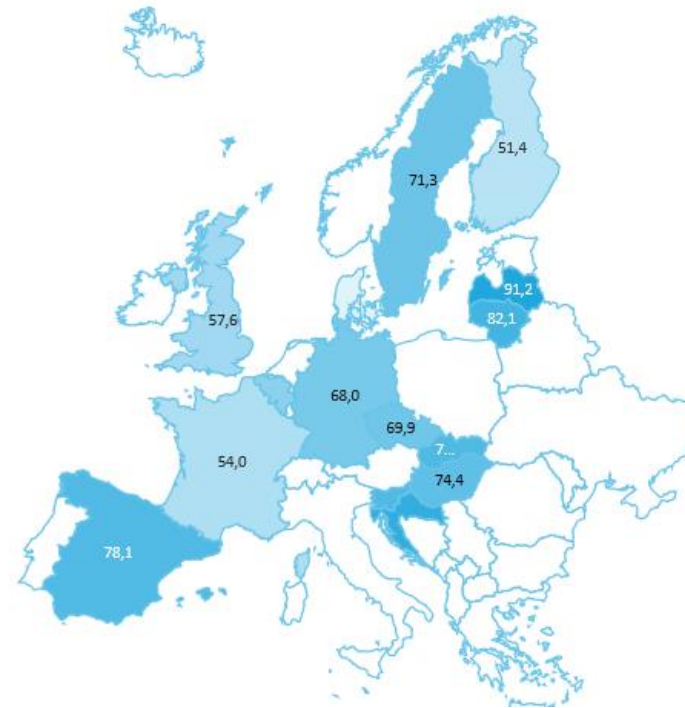
Source: ESS 2008/2016.

Welfare attitudes by policy domain

OLD AGE PENSIONS



PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE OR MUCH MORE GOVERNMENT SPENDING ON PENSIONS, 2016 (%)



Source: ISSP, Role of Government (Wave 4)

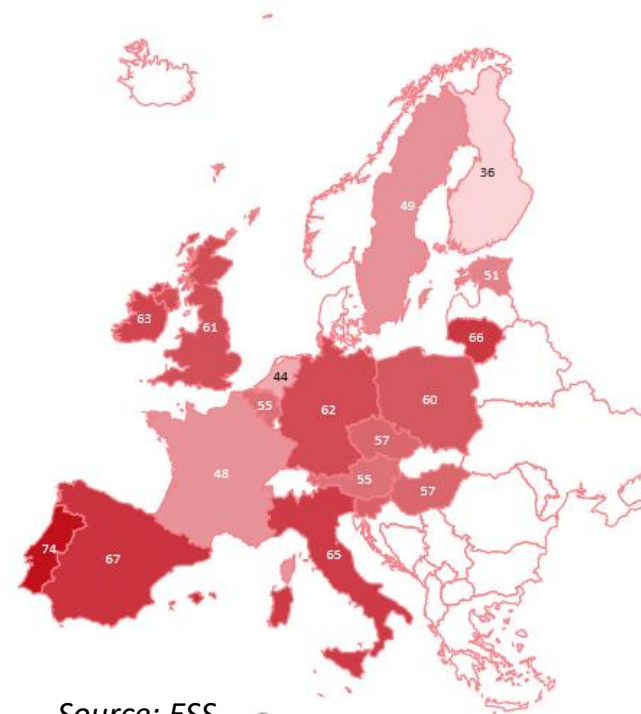
- High support for the government's responsibility of decent living for the elderly.
- Quality of the state pension system is considered low.
- Majority of respondents support increasing government spending on pensions.
- Support is higher in countries with low levels of pension spending and high levels of poverty among the elderly.

Source: ISSP, Role of Government (Wave 4) (2016)

CHILD AND FAMILY BENEFITS



PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS IN FAVOUR OF INTRODUCING EXTRA BENEFITS AND SERVICES FOR PARENTS TO MAKE IT EASIER TO COMBINE WORK AND FAMILY LIFE, 2016 (%)



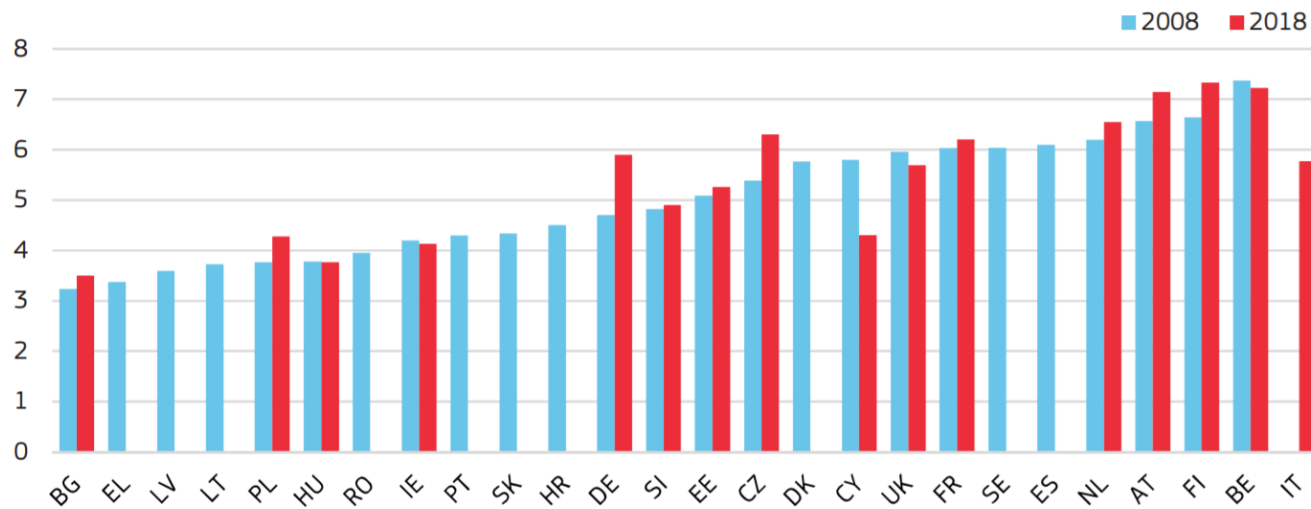
Source: ESS

- Public support for family policies is high throughout Europe.
- Parents, women and younger people show the highest support.
- Support for the introduction of extra benefits varies among EU member states: Southern European countries show greater demand (current level of provision is low), lower in others (eg. Finland, Netherlands, Sweden).

HEALTH CARE



Figure 21. Average scores for satisfaction with the state of healthcare services, 2008 and 2018 (mean scores on an 11-point scale)



Note: Data missing for several countries in 2018 (no data or unreliable findings because of insufficient number of observations).

Source: ESS



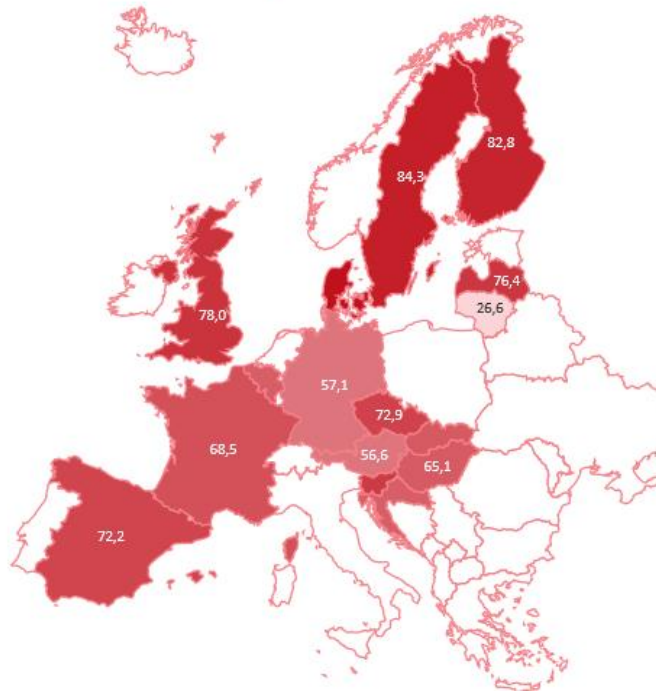
Before the Covid-19 pandemic, about 40% of Europeans considered that the EU should invest in health care as a priority.

There are mixed opinions about the state of the healthcare services, but this perception improved in many countries between 2008 and 2018. Covid-19 pandemic may make people more favourably disposed towards the healthcare system, but there have as yet been no surveys on this.

LONG TERM CARE AND INVALIDITY



PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO THINK THAT THE STATE SHOULD PRIMARILY PROVIDE CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE, 2017 (%)



Source: ISSP

- Many Europeans are concerned about sufficient access to good and affordable long-term care for the elderly.
- In 2017, two thirds of respondents thought that the government should be the primary provider of care for older people.
- For most, the cost of care for the elderly should be covered by public funds.
- Young people and those on low income would be willing to pay additional tax for this.
- Those aged 50-64 feel that they lack assistance and appreciation from the public authorities.
- Future research needed.

SOCIAL HOUSING



AVERAGE SCORES FOR SATISFACTION WITH THE QUALITY OF SOCIAL/MUNICIPAL HOUSING, 2016 (MEAN SCORES ON A 10-POINT SCALE; 1=VERY POOR, 10=VERY GOOD)



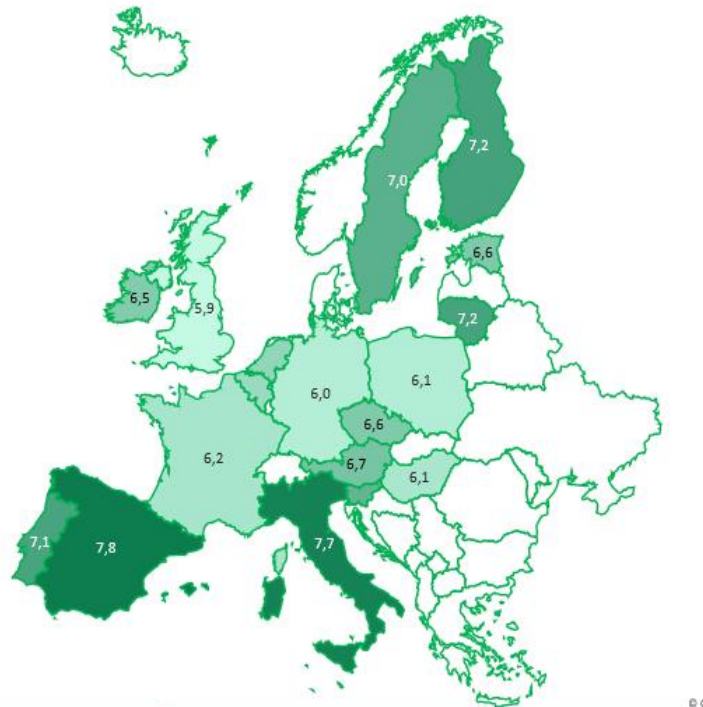
Source: EQLS

- Share of those experiencing housing insecurity rose from 18% in 2011 to 24% in 2016.
- Generally, people are satisfied with the quality of social/municipal housing.
- Satisfaction is clearly lower in Southern and Eastern countries - where social housing is underdeveloped or of poor quality.
- 1 of 5 respondents is willing to pay an additional 2% of their income in tax for affordable housing.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS



AVERAGE SCORES FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE A REASONABLE STANDARD OF LIVING FOR THE UNEMPLOYED, 2016 (MEANS, SCALE 0–10)



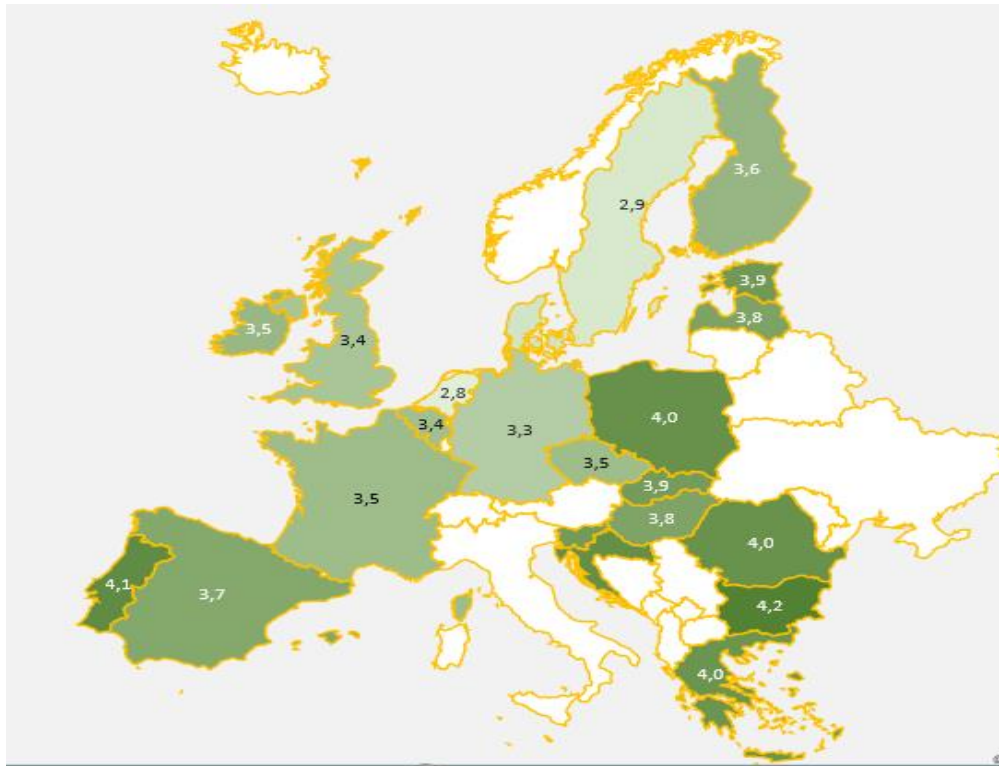
Source: ESS

- Support for the unemployed and unemployment benefits is generally lower than support for other welfare benefits.
- Typically, Europeans are quite suspicious of the unemployed and their willingness to find work.
- They believe governments should take care of an unemployment provision, but are critical about the current schemes.
- Reforming the prevailing scheme by investing in education and training is highly supported.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE



AVERAGE SCORES FOR BENEFITS INADEQUATE TO HELP PEOPLE IN REAL NEED, 2008 (MEANS, 5-POINT SCALE)

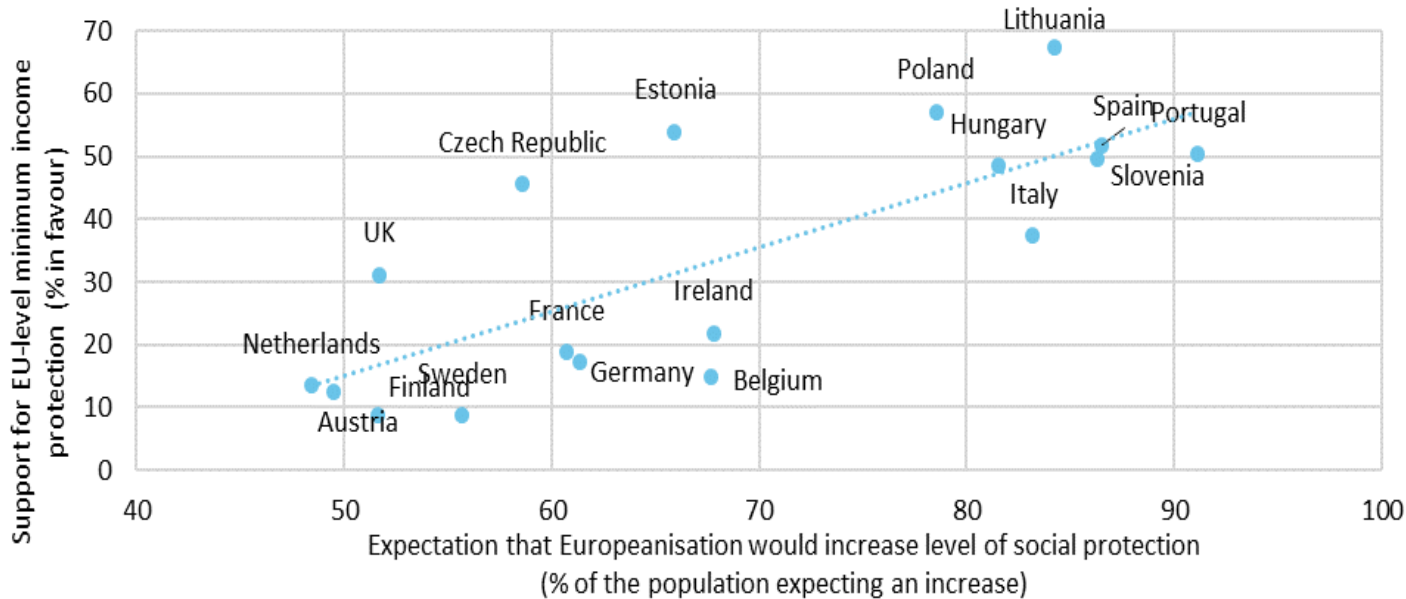


Source: ESS

- Support for the notion that those in need should be guaranteed that basic needs are met, is very high across European Member States – lower in countries with higher material deprivation
- Northern and Western countries are relatively positive about current benefits to cover basic needs; Southern and Eastern countries are very critical about present protection benefits.

SUPPORT TO PAN-EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY INSTRUMENTS

SUPPORT FOR AN EU-LEVEL MINIMUM INCOME PROTECTION SCHEME VS EXPECTATIONS THAT EU INVOLVEMENT WOULD INCREASE THE LEVEL OF SOCIAL PROTECTION – COUNTRY AVERAGES



Source: European Social Survey, Wave 8 (2016–2017)

- Only a few concrete proposals for pan-European instruments
- Support for an EU-level minimum income protection scheme correlates with expectations that EU involvement would increase social protection.
- Southern and Eastern members seem more supportive.

Q (vertical axis): the extent to which respondents would support an EU-wide social benefit scheme that guaranteed a minimum standard of living for the poor.

CONCLUSIONS



- Southern and Eastern European countries support the call for EU-level social policy, anticipating this would improve social welfare provision.
- Citizens in Welfare states of Northern Europe tend to fear this would lead to a diminution in the quality of social protection.
- While support for welfare interventions is general, domain-specific differences are prevalent, also by countries.
- Pensions, health receive more support, unemployment benefits attitudes are more structured
- Attitudes driven by deservingness, reciprocity, need and redistribution principles.
- Weight of individual-contextual factors varies over time and by country.
- Attitudes to welfare systems show considerable stability over time, however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, shifts in attitudes are presumable and therefore additional data collection is fundamental.