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REMINDER

ROLE OF EUROPEAN MOBILITY AND ITS IMPACTS IN NARRATIVES, DEBATES AND EU REFORMS

Perceptions of the Impact of Immigration and Attitudes Towards Free Movement Within the EU: A Cross-National Study

WORKING PAPER

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Perceptions of the Impact of Immigration and Attitudes Towards Free

Movement Within the EU: A Cross-National Study

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Freedom of movement is a fundamental right for EU-citizens. This right is essentially related to immigration, as EU citizens are allowed to travel, work, and reside in any part of the Schengen area. This study analyses the relation between immigration attitudes and attitudes toward free movement. This is done with a special focus on the perceived impact of different migration groups from inside and outside of the EU.

Using an online survey in seven EU countries (Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the UK) we assed attitudes toward freedom of movement in the EU in relation to perceived impact from immigrants of Africa, the Middle East, as well as Eastern and Western Europe. Results show that immigration is rather perceived as a threat than a benefit, especially concerning crime and safety impacts. Perceived impact from the four migration groups are negatively associated with attitudes toward freedom of movement, with small differences between the countries under study.

Please note, all results and conclusions presented in this paper are preliminary and may be subject to change after further in depth analysis.



Introduction

Freedom of movement is a fundamental right for citizens of the European Union and one of its founding principles. It is highly appreciated by EU citizens (81% are in favour of it) and more than half (57%) perceive it as the most positive outcome of the EU (Commission of the European Communities, 2017). Free movement also grants EU citizens the right to work in any country of the EU and (under certain circumstances) access welfare services (e.g., housing, health, and education services) of the EU country to which they have moved. This leads to a tension between immigration and access to social rights, especially in high-income countries (Ruhs, 2013). Freedom of movement in its current form is increasingly questioned. In recent years, several (high-income) member states have called for more restricted access for EU workers to welfare benefits (Ruhs, 2017).

The present study analyses public opinion on free movement in Europe, specifically looking at geographical differences between EU countries. Additionally, we want to assess how attitudes toward free movement are linked to attitudes toward migration and migrants. We assume that immigration is perceived as a threat toward the host nation, which in turn leads to less favourable attitudes toward free movement.

There are two reasons why we need to understand attitudes toward free movement in relation to public opinion toward migration. First, public opinion can affect public policy, as parties of any kind need public support to get elected. In recent years, Europe has been witnessing the rise of far-right parties in mainstream politics, gaining more and more voters in countries across the continent (Golder, 2016). Recent election campaigns in Europe have featured the refugee crisis and potential threats posed by immigrants (e.g., in the German, Dutch, and Austrian elections). The electoral successes of right-wing parties can push mainstream parties toward a tougher line on immigration (Sides & Citrin, 2007). As will be elaborated on in the next section, such claims can be formed toward both, migration from outside of the EU as well as intra-EU migration. Thus, public opinion toward immigration might lead to changes in policy, for instance restrictions of free movement.

A second reason is that public attitudes toward immigration may influence the collective vision and perception of who is considered a member of the in-group (e.g., your



nation or, on a broader level, the EU). In Europe, we can observe far-right parties raising scepticism about the EU. An emphasis of a nationalistic, rather than a common EU perspective also affects who is considered worthy of receiving resources. One of the central aspects related to shared resources is the freedom of movement in the EU. This principle is under attack, when public opinion is against granting members of the EU access to the labour market outside of their country of origin. For instance, findings from the British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) indicate that the concern of uncontrolled immigration under the EU's freedom of movement rules was a main reason for Britain's vote to leave the EU (Curtice, 2017). In addition, an increased number of refugees from war zones in the Middle East and Africa have been arriving in the EU since 2015. They usually enter the EU through Spain, Greece or the Balkans. Yet, due to the Schengen Agreement, most European nation states have officially abolished passport and border control. It is thus easier for legal as well as for illegal immigrants to move from one EU member state to another, once they have crossed the external borders of the EU. At the same time, it is harder for them to enter the jobmarket than it is for intra-European migrants. Perceived threats from exploitation of the host nation's welfare services might result in anti-immigration attitudes. It remains unclear, whether EU citizens make a difference between migration from within and from outside of the EU and, how these perceptions affect attitudes toward free movement. This paper thus seeks to analyse, (1) how attitudes toward free movement are distributed in the EU and (2) how these attitudes are affected by the perceived impact from different migrant groups.

Factors Shaping Attitudes Toward Immigration and Free Movement

Explanations for (negative) attitudes toward immigrants and immigration mainly stem from two strands of theory: Realistic group conflict and social identity theory (Bobo & Hutchings, 1996). Both strands of theory state that immigrants are perceived as a threat (e.g., economically) to individual members of the host nation or the host nation itself. Realistic group conflict theory focuses on cost-benefit considerations and is described in the first part of this chapter. Social identity theory is concerned with cultural differences between immigrants and members of the host nation. As apposed to perceived realistic threats described above, it linked to rather symbolic threats, such as cultural values and identity. This is described in the second section. Although perceived realistic and symbolic threats



have often been treated as rival explanations for attitudes, it is plausible that they are complementary on an issue such as immigration (Burns & Gimpel, 2000; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004). Research analysing both kinds of threats suggests that immigration attitudes are related to both, perceived realistic as well as perceived symbolic threats but the latter seem to have a stronger effect on immigration attitudes (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001; Schmuck & Matthes, 2017; Schneider, 2007; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sniderman et al., 2004; Valentino et al., 2017).

Realistic Threats - Perceived Economic and Safety Impacts from immigration

Realistic group conflict is based on the idea that groups are competing for scarce resources (Bobo & Hutchings, 1996; Quillian, 1995). When forming zero-sum beliefs, one group's gain is the other group's losses. Following this reasoning, immigrants are a perceived threat to resources such as jobs, welfare services, and housing because they take away jobs, welfare benefits, and housing that are meant for members of the host society (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010; Sides & Citrin, 2007).

Such perceived threats may apply either to society as a whole or particular groups within the host society; especially those who perceive themselves as already facing unfair treatment and that are already competing for scarce resources (Bobo & Hutchings, 1996; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Quillian, 1995). Immigrants willing to work for (be)lowmarket wages represent competitors on the job market and may be perceived as threats for large groups of the host country. For instance, negative attitudes toward foreigners are likely to be more pronounced among socioeconomically weak and vulnerable populations due to fear of competition, among male, less educated, and older individuals (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001; Schmuck & Matthes, 2017; Semyonov, Raijman, & Gorodzeisky, 2008; Semyonov, Raijman, Tov, & Schmidt, 2004).

Yet, anti-immigration attitudes are not necessarily based on individual gains or losses but on how immigration is perceived to affect your in-group, i.e., your whole nation (Burns & Gimpel, 2000; Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997; Quillian, 1995; Valentino et al., 2017; Wilson, 2001; Wong, 2007). On a societal level, immigrants may be perceived as a risk as they need access to healthcare, settlement services etc. (Aalberg, Iyengar, & Messing, 2012;



Facchini & Mayda, 2008; Funk, 2000; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010). They may thus be perceived as potential tax burdens. Such sociotropic economic threats are signals of one's own prospective economic situation (Valentino et al., 2017). It is thus perfectly possible that objective measures of vulnerability to competition from immigrants (i.e., SES) do not accurately predict immigration attitudes (e.g., O'Neil & Tienda, 2010; Valentino et al., 2017). For instance, Citrin and colleagues (1997) found that personal economic circumstances play little role in opinion formation toward immigration policy. It was rather beliefs about the state of the national economy, anxiety over taxes, and generalized stereotypes that influenced restrictive sentiment toward immigration.

Still, immigration can pose a realistic threat to members of the host nation. Many studies have found that (highly) skilled immigrants are preferred over low skilled immigrants (e.g., Aalberg et al., 2012; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Valentino et al., 2017) and workers are preferred over refugees (Blinder, 2015). While many Europeans believe that immigration, and especially refugees are a burden to the host country because they take away jobs and social benefits (Dancygier & Donnelly, 2013), those attitudes differ within the EU. Citizens of Hungary, Poland, Greece, Italy, and France identify this as their greatest concern whereas the population in Sweden and Germany seem to see refugeeimmigration also as a chance to make their nation stronger because of their potential work force (Wike, Stokes, & Simmons, 2016).

Another way of perceived harm and thus a perceived realistic threat is concerned with aspects of security (Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012; Stephan, Renfro, Esses, White Stephan, & Martin, 2005; von Sikorski, Schmuck, Matthes, & Binder, 2017). From this perspective, immigration poses a security threat since immigration is thought to increase the likelihood of violence, crime, or terrorist attacks (Semyonov et al., 2008; von Sikorski et al., 2017). For instance, a global study shows that 6 in 10 respondents are concerned about terrorists entering the country pretending to be refugees (IPSOS, 2016). In the EU there is a widespread belief that immigration increases the likelihood of terrorism. These believes have been fuelled by the recent attacks in Paris and Brussels (Wike et al., 2016). Fears linking refugees and crime are much less pervasive, although nearly half of the respondents



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in Italy and Sweden say refugees are more to blame for crime than other groups (Wike et al., 2016).

Threats Related to Identity - Perceived Threats from Culturally Close vs. Culturally Remote Groups

Social identity theory states that individuals long to belong to a social group (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). They reflect the norms and values of their own group (i.e., the ingroup) in contrast to other groups (i.e., the out-groups). In general, individuals strive for a positive self-concept. Hence, they positively evaluate the group that is the basis of their social identity. As a result, they are affirmative toward the in-group as compared to outgroups.

Salient attributes such as language, religion, or skin colour lead to the perception of immigrants as the out-group. Immigration thus creates conflict between groups as they are linked to symbolic values (e.g., native speakers vs. non-native speakers, whites vs. non-whites, or Christians vs. Muslims). Hence, support for immigration depends on who the immigrants are (Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008). Research suggests that people tend to be more positive toward immigration from ethnically or culturally close than ethnically or culturally remote groups (Brader et al., 2008; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Igartua & Cheng, 2009; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Turper, Iyengar, Aarts, & van Gerven, 2014). In addition, highly salient out-groups are often viewed as rather negative (Mullen, 2001). In a comparative experimental design across eleven countries Valentino and colleagues (2017) found that while skin tone itself had little effect on attitudes toward immigration, immigrants from Muslim-majority countries elicited lower levels of support.

Most of the recent refugees to Europe are arriving from majority-Muslim nations, such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq (these three countries accounted for more than 53% of all 2015-16 asylum applicants in the EU; Wike et al., 2016; also see Konle-Seidl, 2018). In Europe, there are rather negative attitudes toward Muslims (Strabac, 2011; Strabac & Listhaug, 2008; von Sikorski et al., 2017). They are viewed as unwilling to participate in the broader society and as not wanting to adopt the nation's customs and way of life. Again, these attitudes differ within the EU, with Sweden, France, and the Netherlands holding



more positive attitudes toward Muslims than Greece, Hungary, Spain, and Germany (Wike et al., 2016). Furthermore, relatively few Europeans believe that diversity has a positive impact on their countries, with Sweden being most positive about it (36% believe an increasingly diverse society makes their country a better place to live; Wike et al., 2016). Right-wing parties succeeded in bringing the discourse on Islam and Muslim immigrants to the centre of the European immigration debate (Yılmaz, 2012). For instance, in Germany, the populist party AfD (Alternative for Germany) wrote the slogan "Islam is not a part of Germany" in their election manifesto (AfD, 2016). In a similar vein, the Dutch right-wing politician Geert Wilders stated "I don't hate Muslims, I hate Islam" (Traynor, 2008) , and the Austrian Freedom Party put up advertisements stating "home instead of Islam" ("Daham statt Islam"; Pajevic, 2006).

Most studies so far considered specific groups that elicit negative attitudes in the public. Other studies looked at how specific threats, e.g., cultural, economic, or security threats, attributed to immigrants as an out-group affect immigrant attitudes. The present study looks at both, specific groups and specific threats, and can thereby shed light on whether public opinion toward free movements varies with the perception of specific groups that may be more or less associated with specific threats.

Summary and Research Questions

The main research question of this paper is:

RQ1: How are attitudes toward free movement distributed within the EU?

We expect that attitudes toward immigration affect attitudes toward free movement. Free movement in the EU is associated with intra-EU immigration to the host country. As elaborated above, immigration can lead to perceived realistic and cultural threats. Hence, perceived threat from immigration should be associated with negative attitudes toward free movement. Following realistic group conflict theory, particularly migration groups from within the EU pose a potential threat to citizens of the host nation because they have immediate access to the labour market and (at least under certain circumstances) the welfare system. Migration from outside of the EU is more restricted. Hence, non-EU migrants are not a direct competition on the labour market for citizens of the host country (Ruhs, 2017). Yet,



even non-EU migrants may pose a threat as they might access the host country's welfare system (e.g., housing and healthcare services). Furthermore, an increased number of low-skilled immigrants – who might also come from non-EU countries – results in a larger supply of low-skilled labour, which might lead low-skilled natives to increasingly perceive this type of immigration as a threat to their own job or salary (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

Social identity theory proposes that salient attributes such as language, religion, skin colour, or clothing lead to the perception of immigrants as an out-group. Such attributes are tend to be associated with migrants from outside of the EU, mostly refugees migrating from Africa or the Middle East. Research comparing realistic and symbolic threats find the latter to have a stronger effect on anti-immigration attitudes (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001; Schmuck & Matthes, 2017; Schneider, 2007; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sniderman et al., 2004; Valentino et al., 2017). Compared to EU-migrants, non-EU migrants are a culturally remote group. From a social identity perspective, especially non-EU migrants pose a threat to the host nation. It remains unclear, whether EU-citizens differentiate in their migration related attitudes toward migrants from outside and migrants from within the EU. Thus, our second research question is:

RQ2: What are the public perceptions of the impact of intra-EU immigration and perceptions from immigration from outside of the EU?

There is no research to date on how attitudes toward migration affect attitudes toward free movement. Yet, free movement and migration are interdependent in the EU. Free movement facilitates labour migration and permanent migratory flows in the EU. It is possible, that perceived impact from immigration outlined above impacts attitudes toward free movement. Thus, our third research question asks:

RQ3: How do public perceptions of the impact of immigration affect attitudes towards free movement within the EU?



Method

Survey Design

An online-survey was carried out between December 6th 2017 and January 5th 2018 in seven countries of the European Union: Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. This is a diverse set of countries that for instance differ in terms of EU-membership history, attitudes toward immigration, socio-economic circumstances, geography and political systems. Thus, if general patterns can be identified across the selected countries, these patterns can most probably be identified elsewhere in the EU.

In each country, a sample of the population (18 and older) was assessed via online access panels. All respondents were approached through these online panels. Respondents were classified by socio-demographic characteristics into quotas set on age, gender, and region to ensure a representative sample. In total, 22862 respondents completed the interview¹ (length in minutes: M = 16.44, SD = 10.78).

Several steps have been taken to ensure the quality of the sample. Respondents were excluded who exhibited very short response times (i.e., interview duration 20% below the median time per country), an unusual amount of "don't know" answers (i.e., 40% of "don't know" answers), as well as aberrant response patterns (i.e., straight-lining) as identified by the fieldwork company. Furthermore, we excluded respondents, who (wilfully or by mistake) wrongly answered a trap question (i.e., a question asking the respondents to choose a specific answer from the questionnaire), while at the same time being unusually fast in filling out the questionnaire (i.e., interview duration 50% below the median time per country and per device). Based on these steps of quality assurance, 980 respondents were dropped from the dataset.

The final sample comprises 21882 respondents (51.8% female; M age = 47.8 years). All analyses have been weighted with a random iterative method based on the post-qualityassurance sample to reflect the demographic composition of the target population in the

¹ 34662 respondents agreed to take part in an interview, 235 were screened out because they do not reside in one of the seven countries under investigation, 8657 were screened out because their cross-quota (based on gender, age, and region) had enough cases, 2901 respondents abandoned the interview before answering all questions.



different countries. At this point, the weighting is based on gender, age, and region. This weighting method is under revision at this point and may be adapted for further analyses in the REMINDER project. For a detailed demographic description of the sample in the seven countries, see table 1.

	DE %	HU %	PL %	RO %	ES %	SE %	UK %
Gender							
Male	48.6	46.1	51.1	51.0	49.3	48.2	46.8
Female	51.4	53.8	48.9	48.9	50.7	51.8	53.2
Age							
18-24	7.53	10.4	9.5	12.0	7.9	9.07	10.6
25-39	21.11	24.4	26.3	27.9	25.0	22.4	24.3
40-54	28.00	24.9	22.7	28.4	28.9	26.1	26.8
55-64	17.7	23.9	24.6	22.5	14.9	15.9	15.1
65+	25.7	16.4	16.8	9.3	23.2	26.5	23.2
Education level ^a							
0	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.7	0.4	1.3
1	0.1	0.4	0.4	1.0	2.7	2.6	0.9
2	24.4	16.9	1.7	3.2	4.5	11.9	23.1
3	33.0	33.1	37.3	30.2	5.7	33.6	36.8
4	11.0	10.5	11.7	8.2	30.4	13.8	3.4
5	7.4	6.8	_b	4.3	16.3	17.5	4.5
6	10.6	19.2	12.4	36.5	26.9	12.2	19.9
7	12.3	11.2	34.5	14.8	10.1	6.5	8.9
8	0.9	1.5	2.0	1.6	2.7	1.6	1.1
Total	3232	3270	3400	3250	3230	3250	3237

Table 1: Sample

^a Education levels are based on ISCED Codes.

^b The international education level is not comparable in category 5 for Poland.

Measures

Perceived impact of immigration was assessed for immigrants of *four groups*: Africa, Middle East as well as Eastern and Western Europe (e.g., "Thinking about people immigrating to [country] from Africa. Would you say that immigrants from Africa...").



For each of those groups respondents indicated perceived impact of immigration on ten-point semantic differentials. Perceived impact was assessed with six items. Two items assessed perceived *economic* impacts (e.g. ...take jobs away in [country] vs. create new jobs in [country]); two *cultural* impacts (e.g. ...undermine the cultural life in [country] vs. enrich the cultural life in [country]) and two *security* impacts (e.g. ... make [country]'s safety problems worse vs. make [country]'s safety problems better). These perceived impact scores were added to a composite impact index for each group (high values indicating threats, low values indicating benefits; Africa $\alpha = .94$; Middle East $\alpha = .94$; Eastern European $\alpha = .93$; Western European $\alpha = .94$; see table 4 for means and correlations).

Attitude toward free movement within the EU was assessed with five items, tapping different aspects of free movement such as perceived impact on the economy, the labourmarket and the welfare system (e.g., "The movement of individuals between EU countries should be free to increase mutual understanding") on a five-point scale. They were added up to form a composite index (high values indicating favourable attitudes toward free movement; M = 3.28, $\alpha = .84$).

Additional Controls

Along the line of the realistic group conflict hypothesis, economic factors play a role for immigration attitudes. On the individual level, income correlates with attitudes toward immigration. Immigration threat perceptions are higher among individuals with lower income. Negative views of immigrants decrease with rising income (e.g., Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996; McLaren, 2003; Semyonov et al., 2008, 2004). To avoid nonresponse to the income question, a subjective measure assessed respondents' financial situation by asking respondents about their *difficulties of paying bills* ("During the last twelve months, would you say you had difficulties to pay your bills at the end of the month?"; three-point scale from 1 = almost never to 3 = most of the time). Further, *education* was assessed in the seven countries. Education was recoded by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) for the analysis. Lastly, *migration background* might also play a role in explaining immigration attitudes, and is often considered in empirical studies (e.g., Mayda, 2006; Schmuck & Matthes, 2017; von Sikorski et al., 2017). Migration background was thus added as control (one item, "Where you born in [country]?"; 94.4% = yes).



As further controls related to respondent's political attitudes, we assessed whether the European Union is perceived as a *good thing* with one item on a five-point scale (1 = it is a very bad thing, 5 = it is a very good thing; M = 3.56). We further added a *narrow citizenship* concept, based on three items assessed with the question "How important or not do you think each of the following is for being truly [nationality]?". Items addressed ethnic and civic factors, i.e. "to have been born in the country", "to be able to speak country's national language(s)" and to "follow country's customs and traditions" (based on Reeskens & Hooghe, 2010; see also Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). Respondents answered on a scale from 1 = not at all important to 5 = very important; M = 3.88, $\alpha = .64$).

Using trend data from the European Social Survey, Héricourt and Spielvogel (2013) find *media exposure* as an additional determinant of immigration attitudes. Finally, general media use to get informed about political events was assessed with one item each for online news use (M = 2.28), social media use (M = 2.75), television news use (M = 1.88), and printed newspapers (M = 3.02; 5-point scale from 1 = never to 5 = almost every day).

Results

In this section, we will first show how attitudes toward free movement are distributed in the seven countries under investigation. Perceived impact (i.e., threats and benefits) from the different migration groups on the host society will be presented separately. Lastly, we will show how these perceptions affect attitudes toward free movement in a regression model.

Attitudes Toward Free Movement in Seven EU Countries

Attitudes toward free movement are positive in the EU with means above the midpoint of the scale (see table 2). The UK is the only country below this midpoint, being the most negative country toward free movement in the EU. The most positive attitudes toward free movement are found in Romania followed by Poland, and Hungary. In Germany, Sweden, and Spain respondents are more neutral toward free movement, but still positive.



	DE	HU	PL	RO	ES	SE	UK
Μ	3.18	3.47	3.50	3.69	3.33	3.07	2.78
SD	0.88	0.85	0.86	0.81	0.84	0.92	0.85
Total	3015	2920	3034	2997	2992	2871	2911

Table 2: Attitudes Toward Free Movement in the EU

Composite index from 1-5; 5 indicating favourable attitudes toward free movement, 3 = neutral.

Perceived Impact by Immigrants

Looking at the overall perceived impact of immigration, we can observe that immigration is rather perceived as a threat than a benefit, as nearly all impact perceptions are above the midpoint of the scale, indicating higher perceived threat (see figure 1).

The highest perceived threats from immigration are related to crime and safety aspects. Economic and welfare aspects stemming from immigration are seen as less threatening, with cultural impact perceptions located somewhere in between. The impact perceptions differ between the immigration groups. In general, both groups from outside the EU trigger larger threat perceptions than the groups from within Europe. Western European immigrants are the only group that is perceived to have positive economic and cultural impact on society. Hence, they are seen as rather beneficial to the job market and culture of the host country as compared to all the other immigrant groups under investigation. This, however, does not apply to perceived safety perceptions.

Western European immigrants are perceived as a potential threat to safety. Yet, this perceived threat is substantially smaller than the threat attributed to other groups. On the contrary, immigrants from the Middle East are perceived as the most threatening immigration group concerning safety and cultural impacts on the host country. Concerning perceived economic impact, immigrants from the Middle East are perceived to equally threatening as immigrants from Africa. Eastern European immigrants are perceived as more threatening than Western European immigrants on all dimensions. Although they are



perceived as less threatening than the groups from outside of Europe, they are still perceived as a threat to the host country, rather than a benefit.

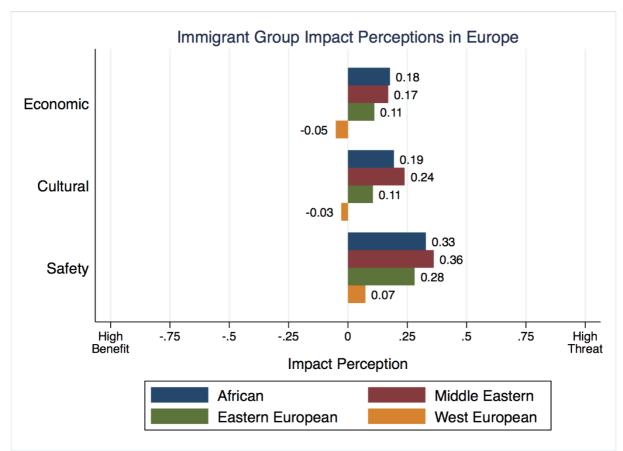


Figure 1: Immigrant Group Impact Perceptions in Europe (Overall Results)

N = 21882.

Note: For visual clarity, the original index was recoded from -1 (indicating high perceived benefits from immigration) to +1 (indicating high perceived threats from immigration).

To look at country differences in the perceived impact of the immigration groups, we combine the three threat dimensions described above into one composite threat index (see figure 2; ranging from -1 indicating high perceived benefits to +1 indicating high perceived threats). Especially Hungarians exhibit high threat perceptions, mainly associated with immigrants from Africa and the Middle East. The same pattern emerges for Germany, although Western European immigrants are not perceived as a threat but rather as a benefit. Especially for Western European immigrants we find country-specific differences in



impact perceptions: While they are seen as a benefit to the host country in Germany, Sweden, Poland, and Romania, they are perceived as a threat in Spain, in Hungary, and especially in the UK.

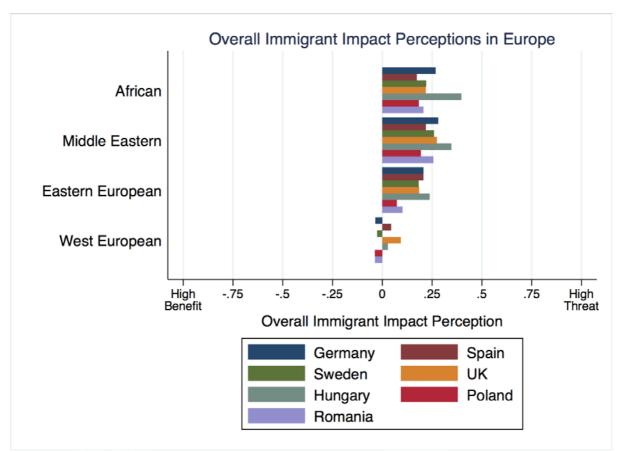


Figure 2: Immigrant Impact Perceptions in Europe (Country-Specific)

N = 21882.

Note: For visual clarity, the original index was recoded from -1 (indicating high perceived benefits from immigration) to +1 (indicating high perceived threats from immigration).



Effects of Perceived Impact of Immigration, Political Attitudes, and Media Use on Attitudes Toward Free Movement

In this section, we look at how different factors influence attitudes toward free movement in the EU. To do so, we turn to a multivariate analysis. We first test the effect of sociodemographic measures. In the next step, political attitudes are included. In the third model, we include the immigration impact perceptions toward the four different migrant groups, and in the last model, media use, as a contextual variable, is included.

Looking at the overall model including all seven countries (table 3), we observe a negative influence of gender on attitudes toward free movement; female respondents tend to be somewhat more negative than male respondents. In addition, the respondents who have difficulty paying bills are slightly more negative toward free movement. At the same time, older respondents, respondent with a migration background and those who are more educated are more positive toward free movement. Taken together, the sociodemographic measures (while controlling for country specificities using country-level fixed effects) explain about 14% of the variance in the attitudes toward free movement.

In the next step, we looked at the influence of political attitudes, namely the narrow citizenship concept and the perception that the EU is a good thing. Narrow citizenship shows a strong negative influence. Thus, the more a respondent agrees with the statements that one has to be born in the country, to speak the country's language, and to follow the country's customs and traditions to be truly a member of the host society, the lower her favourability toward free movement. In contrast, perceiving the EU as a good thing is strongly associated with positive attitudes toward free movement. In general, these two attitudes alone explain a large part of variance people's attitudes free movement in Europe (about 18% explained variance).

Perceived impact of immigration of the four different migrant groups are included in model 3. Migration impact perceptions regarding all four migration groups are negatively associated with attitudes toward free movement. Those who perceive immigration of these different social groups as a threat also show less favourable attitudes toward free movement in the EU. Comparing the four different migration groups, the negative impact is



larger for the two groups from Europe than for the two groups from outside of Europe; but only minimally. Perceived threat from African and Middle Eastern immigrants also negatively influences attitudes toward free movement, the impact is even smaller. Impact perceptions of immigration explain about 5% variance of the attitudes related to free movement in Europe. Thus, the narrow citizenship concept and the perception that the EU is a good thing explain over 10% points more of the variance than the perceived impact perceptions from the four migration groups.

In the last model, we integrated media use. Overall, only online news use is positively associated with attitudes toward free movement. Accordingly, the more people use online news outlets to get informed about political events, the more favourable they are toward free movement. Contrary, print news and social media news use affects attitudes toward free movement negatively. The more respondents use newspapers and social media to get informed about politics, the less favourable their attitudes toward free movement are. In total, however, the explanatory value of the media use variables is negligible.



Dependent variable: attitudes toward free movement (1-5)	Model 1 Sociodem ographic measures	Model 2 Add Political Attitudes	Model 3 Add Immigration Attitudes Toward Immigration Groups	Model 4 Add Media Use
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Gender (1=female)	-0.04***	-0.03***	-0.03***	-0.03***
Age	0.08***	0.11***	0.11***	0.11***
Migration background (1=yes)	0.04***	0.02**	0.01	0.01
Education	0.15***	0.08***	0.07***	0.06***
Difficulties paying bills	-0.04***	-0.01+	-0.01+	-0.01+
Narrow citizenship concept		-0.24***	-0.17***	-0.17***
EU "good thing"		0.36***	0.28***	0.28***
Africa ^a			-0.07***	-0.08***
Middle East ^a			-0.06***	-0.06***
Eastern Europe ^a			-0.09***	-0.09***
Western Europe ^a			-0.09***	-0.08***
western Lurope			-0.09	-0.08
Online news ^b				0.05***
Social media news b				-0.02*
Television news ^b				0.004
Print news ^b				-0.05***
$\triangle R^2$		0.18	0.06	0.00
Total R ²	0.14	0.32	0.38	0.38

Table 3: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Toward Free Movement in Seven Countries

N = 20,462. Country-specific fixed effects are included in all models.

^a high numbers indicate perceived threats, low numbers indicate perceived benefits.

^b high numbers indicate high use. ⁺ p<0.1; * p< 0.05; ** p< 0.01; *** p < 0.001



Country-specific regression models can be found in table 5 to table 11 in the appendix. The pattern described above is found in most countries, with small exceptions described in the following section. Gender only affects attitudes toward free movement in some countries (namely Germany, Poland, and Spain) but not in others. If there is a significant influence of gender, it always points into the direction of female respondents being less positive toward free movement. Age influences attitudes toward free movement positively in all countries under investigation. Accordingly, older respondents hold more favourable attitudes toward free movement than younger one's do. The UK is an exception, as age is negatively associated with attitudes toward free movement in the basic model. When dividing the sample in different age groups, the effect of age seems to be close to linear. Yet, younger ones are overall still more positive toward free movement than older ones (table 12). However, since younger respondents also tend to be more EU friendly – the effect of age alone turns insignificant when introducing EU attitudes.

The same effect applies for education (with Sweden being the only exception). On the country level, similar to the more complete models above, the influence of migration background vanishes. Difficulties in paying bills only shows an impact in Germany and Poland. In those two countries, those who face more difficulties paying their bills show less positive attitudes toward free movement.

As in the general model, the measures on narrow citizenship concept and perception of the EU being a good thing show the biggest impact on attitudes toward free movement in any country under investigation. Yet, their explanatory power varies. While they only explain 6% of the answering behaviour in Spain, they explain over 30% in Sweden and in the UK.

Most different effects between the countries can be found in the perceived impact from the different migration groups. Perceived impact of migration groups has the largest explanatory power in Spain (with 14% explained variance). Here, especially the perceived threat from Eastern European, as well as African immigrants negatively affects attitudes toward free movement. The explanatory power is rather low in Sweden, and in the Eastern European countries (2-3% explained variance). In the Eastern European countries Poland, Romania, and Hungary, perceived impact of Western European immigrants affects attitudes



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toward free movement negatively, while the other groups do not seem to have any influence. In the other countries under investigation, perceived impact of Western Europeans plays a role, but other migration groups do affect attitudes toward free movement as well. Sweden is the only exception with no significant impact from Western European immigrants on attitudes toward free movement. The effect of perceived threats from Eastern European immigrants is exceptionally high in the UK and Spain. In both countries, they exert the biggest negative effect on attitudes towards free movement compared to the other immigrant groups. Perceived immigration from outside of Europe affects attitudes toward free movement in Spain, the UK, Germany, and Sweden. Yet, the impact varies between countries. While it is especially immigrants from Africa and not immigrants from the Middle East affecting attitudes in Spain, this relationship is reverse in the UK. Both migration groups affect attitudes toward free movement in Germany and in Sweden. Again, while immigrants from Africa exert a larger influence in Germany than immigrants from the Middle East, this relationship is inverse in Sweden.

Looking at the influence of media, we find no effects (or effects close to zero) in Germany, Sweden, Spain, and the UK. In contrast, explanatory power of media use on attitudes toward free movement is a little larger in the Eastern European countries, with Hungary showing the largest amount of explained variance (3%). The impact of media use and whether the effects are positive or negative varies greatly between the countries.

Summary and Discussion

We find that attitudes toward free movement are most positive in Eastern European countries (Hungary, Poland, most positive in Romania). In contrast, the UK is the only country with overall negative attitudes toward free movement, with Germany, Sweden, and Spain somewhere in between. There are several possible reasons for this. First, the countries differ in their migration flows from inside the EU. In the UK, the fear of uncontrolled migration led to the Brexit vote. More than a year after UK's referendum to withdraw from the EU and a broad public discussion about possible negative consequences resulting from a "Brexit", citizens of the UK are still rather negative toward free movement.



Eastern European countries, on the other hand, are on the sending side of migration. Many work-migrants are sent from those countries (e.g., many Eastern European migrants are employed in the manufacturing and hospitality sector in Western European countries; Warrell, 2017). Romania is the only country under investigation not yet fully participating in the Schengen agreement. Positive attitudes toward free movement might reflect the hope to participate in the near future and the potential positive outcomes for Romanian citizen. This is supported by data of the Eurobarometer. Respondents in Hungary, Poland, and Romania perceive the free movement of people, goods, and services as one of the most positive results of the EU, and are rather for, than against the free movement of EU citizens to live, work, study and do business anywhere in the EU (Commission of the European Communities, 2016). Yet, at the same time, these countries seem to be a lot less positive toward inward free movement (i.e., immigration of other EU countries into the host country). For instance, data from the ESS7 (2014) shows rather negative attitudes towards free movement of workers from poorer European countries in Hungary, Estonia, and Latvia (for an overview see Mårtensson and Uba, 2018). Yet, this specific measure seems on the border between a measure of attitudes toward immigration and attitudes toward free movement. At least concerning Hungary, we see rather negative perceived impact of immigration in our data as well.

Notable, Swedes hold quite moderate perceptions toward free movement. This is interesting since previous research indicates that Swedish citizens often are placed in the top regarding positive attitudes toward immigration (e.g., Heath & Richards, 2016).

In the next step, we looked at the perceived impact of immigration. The highest perceived threats from immigration are related to crime and safety aspects. Economic and welfare aspects stemming from immigration are seen as less threatening, with cultural impact perceptions located somewhere in between. This underlines the importance of perceived safety threats in the research on immigration related attitudes, as most research to date tends to focus on the perceived cultural/symbolic threat versus the perceived realistic/economic threats (e.g., Scheve & Slaughter, 2001; Schmuck & Matthes, 2017; Schneider, 2007; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sniderman et al., 2004; Valentino et al., 2017).



Perceived threats concerning crime and safety impacts from immigration should not be ignored when studying immigration attitudes.

Lastly, we looked at different factors influencing attitudes toward free movement in the seven countries with a special focus on perceived impact from different migration groups. Looking at the influence of sociodemographic factors, age is influential in all countries. Older people tend to be more positive toward free movement than younger. This might be due to older people having become used to freedom of movement and thus perceiving potential restrictions on free movement as something affecting their fundamental rights, as well as them having known times when free movement was not possible. To look into this, personal experience with free movement needs to be taken into account in future research.

Education also positively influences freedom of movement. This is in line with research showing that highly educated individuals value multiculturalism to a higher extend than people with lower education (e.g., Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007). Furthermore, this is in line with research showing that people with lower education are more worried that immigration will increase the competition in the labour market (e.g., Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Malhotra, Margalit, & Mo, 2013). The labour market hypothesis also suggests that especially economically threatened individuals hold negative attitudes toward immigration (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001; Schmuck & Matthes, 2017; Semyonov et al., 2008, 2004). Yet, difficulties in paying bills only influences attitudes toward free movement in Germany and Poland but not in any of the other countries under investigation. This might be due to influences of their welfare state system or levels of migration flows that need further investigation in the future. It is also possible, that individuals in the other countries in the sample assess mobility impacts rather on a sociotropic level. Thus, not their individual economic situation, but rather the perceived economic situation of the country plays a role in immigration related (e.g., O'Neil & Tienda, 2010; Valentino et al., 2017) and thus free movement attitudes. This needs further investigation in the future.

Perceiving the EU as a good thing was very positively associated with positive attitudes toward free movement in all countries. However, the more respondents agreed to the narrow citizen concept, the less favourable were they toward free movement in Europe. On a broader level, this could be interpreted on a nationalistic vs. EU perspective. Thus, nationalistic



tendencies are associated with negative attitudes toward free movement (see Halikiopoulou et al. 2012 for the relationship between nationalism and Euroscepticism in general).

Looking at the perceived impact of the different migrant groups, we find that all migrant group perceptions were associated negatively with attitudes toward free movement. Thus, the more immigrants are perceived as a threat, the more people hold negative attitudes toward free movement. On the other hand, the more immigrants are perceived as a benefit the more people hold positive attitudes toward free movement in the EU. It is thus possible, that EU citizens are polarized in their attitudes toward free movement and that this polarization is associated with perceived impact from immigration. Hence, both dynamics could explain this effect, those who perceive immigration as a benefit and are thus positively inclined toward free movement and those who perceive immigration as a threat and are against free movement. The dichotomy of pro-free movement attitudes versus anti-immigrant needs further investigation.

This is important, as we also found that all migration groups under investigation tend to be perceived as a threat, rather than as a benefit by citizens of the host nation. These effects differed between the countries under investigation. In the Eastern European Countries Poland, Romania, and Hungary, perceived impact from Western European immigrants affects attitudes toward free movement, while the other groups do not seem to have an influence. Hence, in these countries we find a differentiation between EU-migration and migration from outside of the EU on mobility attitudes. This is an interesting finding, as it is known that these countries hold rather negative attitudes toward immigration (e.g., Heath & Richards, 2016). Immigration-related attitudes seem not to affect attitudes toward free movement in Eastern European countries. In contrast, perceived immigration from outside of Europe affects attitudes toward free movement in Spain, the UK, Germany, and Sweden. To explain these country-specific differences, further aspects such as migration flows within and from outside of the EU as well as aspects of the labour market and welfare services need to be taken into account in future research. The relationship between attitudes toward free movement and migration-related attitudes in Europe also needs further investigation.



Finally, we looked at the influence of media on attitudes toward free movement. In the overall model, media use's effects on attitudes toward free movement are mixed. This is interesting, as studies have shown that news media tend to focus on negative aspects of immigration, for instance by linking immigration to different kinds of threats (e.g., Horsti, 2016; Igartua & Cheng, 2009; Schemer & Müller, 2017). Yet, we found very different patterns for the influence of media use in the different countries, and differences among different media types. Explanations might be different media markets, differences in media trust, and of course, different patterns of the portrayal of immigrants and immigration (e.g., Cheregi, 2015; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). In the next step, research should link media use and media content, to get a clearer understanding of media effects on the topic of migration and free movement in the EU.



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Tables

Table 4: Means and Zero Order Correlations

	М	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1: narrow citizenship concept ^a	3.88	0.85	1					
2: EU "good thing" ^a	3.54	1.15	-0.11	1				
Immigration groups: ^b								
3: Africa	6.57	1.15	0.31	-0.28	1			
4: Middle East	6.68	2.06	0.31	-0.29	0.82	1		
5: Eastern Europe	6.27	2.08	0.25	-0.28	0.71	0.73	1	
6: Western Europe	5.52	1.97	0.19	-0.29	0.55	0.55	0.66	1

All variables correlate significantly p < 0.001.

^a measured from a scale from 1-5

^b measured on a scale from 1-10; high numbers indicate threats from immigration



Dependent variable: attitudes toward free movement	Model 1 Sociodem ographic measures	Model 2 Add Political Attitudes	Model 3 Add Immigration Attitudes Toward Immigration Groups	Model 4 Add Media Use
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Gender (1=female)	-0.06***	-0.07***	-0.06***	-0.07***
Age	0.12***	0.14***	0.16***	0.16***
Migration background (1=yes)	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.01
Education	0.17***	0.08***	0.06***	0.05***
Difficulties paying bills	-0.09***	-0.03*	-0.04***	-0.05***
Narrow citizenship concept		-0.26***	-0.17***	-0.17***
EU "good thing"		0.39***	0.30***	0.30***
Africa ª			-0.10***	-0.10***
Middle East ^a			-0.06*	-0.07*
Eastern Europe ^a			-0.09***	-0.09***
Western Europe ^a			-0.07***	-0.07***
Online news ^b				0.02
Social media news ^b				-0.03
Television news ^b				-0.02
Print news ^b				-0.02
$\triangle R^2$		0.24	0.06	0.00
Total R ²	0.07	0.31	0.37	0.37

Table 5: *Germany* Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Toward Free Movement

N = 2599.

^a high numbers indicate perceived threats, low numbers indicate perceived benefits.



Dependent variable: attitudes toward free movement	Model 1 Sociodem ographic measures	Model 2 Add Political Attitudes	Model 3 Add Immigration Attitudes Toward Immigration Groups	Model 4 Add Media Use
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Gender (1=female)	-0.06***	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02
Age	0.15***	0.14***	0.11***	0.13***
Migration background (1=yes)	0.01	0.00	-0.00	-0.00
Education	0.16***	0.07***	0.06***	0.04*
Difficulties paying bills	-0.05*	-0.03	-0.01	-0.00
Narrow citizenship concept		-0.16***	-0.12***	-0.11***
EU "good thing"		0.38***	0.31***	0.30***
Africa ^a			-0.06	-0.05
Middle East ^a			-0.03	-0.03
Eastern Europe ^a			-0.05*	-0.05*
Western Europe ^a			-0.11***	-0.10***
Online news ^b				0.14***
Social media news ^b				-0.05*
Television news ^b				-0.07***
Print news ^b				-0.09***
$\triangle R^2$		0.17	0.03	0.03
	0.00			
Total R ²	0.06	0.23	0.26	0.29

 Table 6: Hungary Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Toward Free

Movement

N = 2468.

^a high numbers indicate perceived threats, low numbers indicate perceived benefits.



Dependent variable: attitudes toward free movement	Model 1 Sociodem ographic measures	Model 2 Add Political Attitudes	Model 3 Add Immigration Attitudes Toward Immigration Groups	Model 4 Add Media Use
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Gender (1=female)	-0.06***	-0.04**	-0.05***	-0.05***
Age	0.27***	0.20***	0.17***	0.16***
Migration background (1=yes)	0.01	0.01	-0.01	-0.01
Education	0.11***	0.07***	0.06***	0.05*
Difficulties paying bills	-0.05***	-0.03	-0.04*	-0.04*
Narrow citizenship concept		-0.19***	-0.16***	-0.16***
EU "good thing"		0.34***	0.29***	0.28***
Africa ^a			-0.04	-0.05
Middle East ^a			-0.03	-0.03
Eastern Europe ^a			-0.02	-0.01
Western Europe ^a			-0.14***	-0.14***
Online news ^b				0.10***
Social media news ^b				-0.05***
Television news ^b				0.03
Print news ^b				-0.07***
$\triangle R^2$		0.16	0.03	0.01
	0 10			
Total R ²	0.10	0.26	0.29	0.30

Table 7: *Poland* Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Toward Free Movement

N = 2477.

^a high numbers indicate perceived threats, low numbers indicate perceived benefits.



Dependent variable: attitudes toward free movement	Model 1 Sociodem ographic measures	Model 2 Add Political Attitudes	Model 3 Add Immigration Attitudes Toward Immigration Groups	Model 4 Add Media Use
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Gender (1=female)	-0.08***	-0.06***	-0.04	-0.03
Age	0.13***	0.14***	0.14***	0.11***
Migration background (1=yes)	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02
Education	0.09***	0.07***	0.06***	0.05**
Difficulties paying bills	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01
Narrow citizenship concept		-0.08***	-0.08***	-0.08***
EU "good thing"		0.29***	0.26***	0.24***
Africa ^a			-0.04	-0.04
Middle East ^a			0.03	0.01
Eastern Europe ^a			0.00	-0.00
Western Europe ^a			-0.15***	-0.13***
Online news ^b				0.09***
Social media news ^b				-0.04
Television news ^b				0.08***
Print news ^b				-0.13***
$\triangle R^2$		0.09	0.03	0.01
	0.04			
Total R ²	0.04	0.13	0.16	0.17

 Table 8: Romania
 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Toward Free

Movement

N = 2534.

^a high numbers indicate perceived threats, low numbers indicate perceived benefits.



Dependent variable: attitudes toward free movement	Model 1 Sociodem ographic measures	Model 2 Add Political Attitudes	Model 3 Add Immigration Attitudes Toward Immigration Groups	Model 4 Add Media Use
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Gender (1=female)	-0.08***	-0.08***	-0.07***	-0.07***
Age	0.09***	0.12***	0.15***	0.14***
Migration background (1=yes)	0.08***	0.04*	0.03	0.03
Education	0.16***	0.15***	0.12***	0.11***
Difficulties paying bills	-0.04*	-0.02	-0.00	-0.00
Narrow citizenship concept		-0.24***	-0.16***	-0.16***
EU "good thing"		0.14***	0.12***	0.11***
Africa ^a			-0.12***	-0.12***
Middle East ^a			-0.05	-0.06
Eastern Europe ^a			-0.16***	-0.17***
Western Europe ^a			-0.10***	-0.09***
Online news ^b				0.07***
Social media news ^b				-0.03
Television news ^b				0.05*
Print news ^b				-0.03
$\triangle R^2$		0.06	0.14	0.00
Total R ²	0.05	0.11	0.25	0.25

Table 9: *Spain* Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Toward Free Movement

N = 2712.

^a high numbers indicate perceived threats, low numbers indicate perceived benefits.



Dependent variable: attitudes toward free movement	Model 1 Sociodem ographic measures	Model 2 Add Political Attitudes	Model 3 Add Immigration Attitudes Toward Immigration Groups	Model 4 Add Media Use
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Gender (1=female)	0.04*	0.03	0.00	-0.00
Age	0.04	0.09***	0.09***	0.10***
Migration background (1=yes)	-0.00	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02
Education	0.12***	0.04*	0.02	0.03
Difficulties paying bills	-0.02	0.03	0.01	0.01
Narrow citizenship concept		-0.37***	-0.23***	-0.23***
EU "good thing"		0.39***	0.31***	0.31***
Africa ª			-0.07*	-0.08*
Middle East ^a			-0.15***	-0.14***
Eastern Europe ^a			-0.09***	-0.09***
Western Europe ^a			-0.01	-0.02
Online news ^b				-0.01
Social media news ^b				-0.01
Television news ^b				-0.03
Print news ^b				0.01
$\triangle R^2$		0.33	0.02	0.01
Total R ²	0.02	0.35	0.39	.40

Table 10: *Sweden* Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Toward Free Movement

N = 2370.

^a high numbers indicate perceived threats, low numbers indicate perceived benefits.



Dependent variable: attitudes toward free movement	Model 1 Sociodem ographic measures	Model 2 Add Political Attitudes	Model 3 Add Immigration Attitudes Toward Immigration Groups	Model 4 Add Media Use
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Gender (1=female)	0.01	-0.00	0.00	0.00
Age	-0.14***	0.03	0.05***	0.07***
Migration background (1=yes)	0.11***	0.04***	0.02	0.02
Education	0.18***	0.08***	0.05***	0.06***
Difficulties paying bills	-0.05*	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01
Narrow citizenship concept		-0.31***	-0.20**	-0.19***
EU "good thing"		0.45***	0.31***	0.31***
Africa ^a			-0.03	-0.03
Middle East ^a			-0.11***	-0.11**
Eastern Europe ^a			-0.19***	-0.19**
Western Europe ^a			-0.05*	-0.05*
Online news ^b				0.01
Social media news ^b				0.01
Television news ^b				-0.03
Print news ^b				-0.03*
$\triangle R^2$		0.35	0.07	0.00
Total R ²	0.08	0.43	0.50	0.50

Table 11: United Kingdom Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Attitudes Toward Free Movement

N = 2580.

^a high numbers indicate perceived threats, low numbers indicate perceived benefits.



Table 12: Effect of Age on Attitudes Toward Free Movement in the UK

	18-24	2539	40-54	55-64	65+
Attitudes toward free movement N = 2911.	3.19	2.88	2.75	2.53	2.64





REMINDER

ROLE OF EUROPEAN MOBILITY AND ITS IMPACTS IN NARRATIVES, DEBATES AND EU REFORMS

The REMINDER project is exploring the economic, social, institutional and policy factors that have shaped the impacts of free movement in the EU and public debates about it.

The project is coordinated from COMPAS and includes participation from 14 consortium partners in 9 countries across Europe





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