Informing immigration policy using the European Social Survey

Wednesday 28 March 2018, 12.30-5.30pm
Thon Hotel EU, Brussels

Agenda:
12.30-2pm: Lunch
2-2.30pm: Eric Harrison, European Social Survey
2.30-3pm: Laura Morales, Sciences Po
3-3.30pm: Lindsay Richards, Centre for Social Investigation (CSI) Nuffield, University of Oxford
3.30-3.45pm: Coffee break
3.45-4.15pm: Alice Ramos, University of Lisbon
4.15-4.45pm: Francesca Borgonovi, OECD, and Artur Pokropek, Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission
4.45-5.30pm: Panel discussion
Eric Harrison, European Social Survey
An introduction to the ESS and attitudes towards immigration

The European Social Survey (ESS) welcomes you to this special event on immigration at Thon Hotel EU in Brussels.

The ESS is an academically driven survey using the highest methodological standards. Every two years, up to 40,000 face-to-face interviews are conducted in participating countries on a wide range of subjects. Since our first survey was fielded in 2002, ESS data on immigration has been widely used.

Analysis using Google Scholar by Brina Malnar (University of Ljubljana) found that 3,554 publications included our data (2003-16). Of these, 430 were found to be on the topic of immigration - the second largest category behind politics and democracy (803).

Following the refugee crisis of 2015, the topic of immigration has become more important than ever for politicians and policymakers - it is perhaps the biggest single challenge facing Europe. We hope that ESS data on the topic will continue to stimulate well-informed debate and evidence-based policy across the continent.

In Round 1 (2002) of the ESS, a module specifically on immigration was included. Our Round 7 (2014) module on immigration was built on the design of the ESS Round 1 module, allowing for direct comparisons using the same measures.

The 2014 module also included some new concepts as well as detailed questions about specific groups of migrants. As with all of the modules we include in the ESS, we are thankful to the external questionnaire design teams who worked on the immigration modules that were included in both Round 1 and Round 7. Their collaboration with the ESS meant that each immigration module included in the survey was designed to the highest possible standards.

Anthony Heath (CSI Nuffield, University of Oxford) led the external questionnaire design team for the immigration module in Round 7 and we will hear from his colleague, Lindsay Richards, about their latest research at the event today.

Round 1-3 data forms the basis for the research that will be presented by Laura Morales (Sciences Po) on ethnicity, prejudice and anti-discrimination policies, whilst Alice Ramos (University of Lisbon) used Round 7 data to understand the impact of biological and cultural racism on attitudes towards immigrants and public policies on immigration.

The ESS includes data on a wealth of other attitudinal indicators, and it is this data that was used to inform a new OECD report authored by Francesca Borgonovi. That report - The Resilience of Students with an Immigrant Background: Factors that shape Well-being
- used The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey and was supplemented with eight pooled rounds of ESS data. Francesca will present some of this research alongside Artur Pokropek (European Commission).

This illustrates the importance of all our data collected since 2002: now that we have fielded eight rounds of the survey, academics can pool data from a number of rounds to give a voice to minority groups that have been under-represented in much of the past analysis of ESS data.

In addition to our special modules on immigration, each round of our survey includes several items on immigration as part of the main section. This was extended further in Round 8 (2016) to include three items on refugees.

The first Round 8 data release was published in October 2017 and included preliminary data for 18 countries. The full dataset - that should include survey responses from all 24 countries who undertook fieldwork - will be released in May 2018.

Some of the more impressive research using the ESS amalgamates our data with that from other sources. In the graph below we include the mean response to one of our survey items on whether immigration is good or bad for the economy, and plot this alongside GDP per capita data from Eurostat. This shows that richer countries tend to be more open to immigration.

Thank you for attending our event today, and we hope that you learn as much from our invited experts as we will.
In increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-racial societies, discrimination against ethnic and racial minorities is a problem that policy-makers have been trying to address for decades. Several studies have shown that, in addition to its moral and socio-economic consequences, discrimination has an impact on the physical and mental health of those who feel discriminated against.

European governments have confronted the need to combat prejudice, racism, and direct and indirect discrimination by enacting in the past few decades anti-discrimination legislation and policies of varying intensity and approach. Additionally, since 2000, EU countries have been transposing and implementing EU non-discrimination law in ways which have interacted with their own pre-existing approaches to this issue. Yet, there is little evidence of how much the different ways of addressing the social problem of discrimination are or are not effective in reducing the feelings and experience of discrimination of ethnic and racial minorities.

Indeed, the social processes by which discrimination occurs are complex and multifaceted, and so are the social and political processes by which individuals come to perceive or realise that they are being discriminated against. Often, discrimination is indirect or is covert and, hence, individuals need to interpret their negative experiences through a broader framework that puts their personal incidents in perspective and in relation to a social category of people who face unequal treatment due to some shared attribute.

A multiplicity of factors operate at various levels to make people feel discriminated against. At the individual level, being aware of and alert to discriminatory practices and structures is related to processes of identification with a social group, ideological thinking and, more generally, cognitive sophistication. At the societal level, it is evident that there is a large cross-national variation with respect to which groups are subject to discrimination. Though most ethnic and racial minorities are subject to some form of prejudice from majority populations, it is clear that some groups face greater exclusion and discrimination.

This study looks simultaneously at the interplay of these three broad sets of factors - individual, societal and
For this purpose, the study relies on data from a survey of approximately 900 migrant-origin and 300 autochthonous individuals in each of ten European cities gathered in the context of the FP6 Localmultidem project and the Multicultural Democracy in Europe network, and includes information for a wide variety of migrant-origin minority groups in locations with sufficiently different policy approaches to ethnic and racial discrimination: Barcelona, Budapest, London, Lyon, Geneva, Madrid, Milan, Stockholm and Zurich.

After placing the feelings of discrimination of the population as a whole in context in the seven countries for which we have data with the European Social Survey, the study focuses in particular on migrant-origin minorities.

After demonstrating - with descriptive analyses - that feelings of discrimina-
tion are not always consistent with the patterns one would expect if policies were deemed successful, the study employs multivariate modelling to examine how individual, societal and policy-level factors account for the feelings of discrimination that migrant-origin individuals hold.

At the individual level, we assess how human and social capital shape the grievances related to ethnic discrimination of migrant-origin individuals. At the societal level, we examine the extent to which and how the patterns of autochthonous prejudice and ethnic interaction relate to migrant-origin individuals' feelings of discrimination. At the policy level, we test whether more protective policies against ethnic and racial discrimination result in migrant-origin individuals feeling less discriminated against.

The results suggest that, at the individual level, some degree of politicisation is related to perceptions of discrimination, as interest in politics is positively associated with feelings of discrimination.

We find no support for the view that second generations (the children of immigrants) will be more frustrated in their expectations of equal treatment and, hence, perceive discrimination more often than first generations (individuals who migrated themselves). However, age is curvilinearly related to such perceptions, suggesting that middle-aged migrants are more exposed to discriminatory practices than the young and the old.

By contrast, our results lend support to the view that migrants who are Muslim experience greater discrimination - and our results on prejudice from the majority population corroborates this belief. And, contrary to our agnostic position with regard to gender, our results show clear evidence that women are less likely to experience or perceive discrimination on the grounds of their migrant origin.

With regard to the social capital factors, the results lend further support to the ‘politicisation’ of perceptions of discrimination approach. Individuals who are involved in at least one association are more likely to express feelings of discrimination, and so are those who are involved in primarily ‘ethnically bonding’ associations. However, the ethnic homogeneity of personal relations seems to have no effect on the experience of discrimination: it neither buffers nor fosters those perceptions.

Turning to the societal and policy-level factors, our results are mixed - partly due to the substantial correlation between these two aspects. Whereas there is no significant effect of the patterns of prejudice against each of the migrant groups, the findings suggest that anti-discrimination policies and legislation has an effect...
that is counter-intuitive: more protective environments are associated with higher feelings of discrimination by way of politicising the issue. However, it is important to note that when the policy-level variable is excluded from the models, the variable on prejudice becomes significant, thus suggesting that its correlation with policies is concealing its effect. Overall, this study suggests that the development of feelings of discrimination is a complex psychological, social and political phenomenon and that the evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-discrimination policies by resorting only to survey studies of citizens’ perceptions of discrimination can mislead policymakers and policy analysts into concluding that they are not effective or counter-productive.
Contested boundaries: consensus and dissensus in European attitudes to immigration

Immigration remains one of the most contentious contemporary political issues in Europe, as shown by the rise of anti-immigrant radical right parties in several European countries. Moreover, within many European countries, the public appears to be deeply divided in their views of immigration, and there are clear national differences across Europe in willingness to accept refugees. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to map these divisions between European publics in their attitudes towards migrants.

Opposition to immigration has been largely understood in terms of threat. Thus, threat to the prerogatives of the dominant group has been postulated as the major driver of anti-immigrant sentiment. Most often, this threat has been conceptualised in economic terms and this can help explain why anti-immigrant sentiment is especially prevalent among those in less-skilled jobs who are particularly vulnerable to competition from labour migrants.

However, economic threats fail to explain the strong relationship between levels of education or age and anti-immigrant sentiment. More recently, therefore, there has been increasing attention paid to theories of cultural threat - threats to the traditional ways of life of the society, and especially threats from culturally-distinct non-Christian groups such as Muslims.

The relative importance placed on economic and symbolic threat is likely to differ not only between social groups but also across European countries, reflecting differing economic interests, histories of past immigration, and contemporary discourses surrounding immigration.

Considering economic threat first, Western European countries such as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the UK have received large numbers of labour migrants. In contrast, some Eastern European countries have received relatively little labour migration and some have been countries of net emigration rather than immigration. One would therefore on these grounds expect economic threat to be relatively more significant in western countries than in eastern ones. On the other hand, the large volumes of labour migration to western countries is a matter of demand for labour as well as supply of migrants. Business interests in many of these countries remain...
highly supportive of labour migration. One might therefore expect these countries to be more polarised, along economic lines, than those in Eastern Europe.

A separate theme relates to the fact that migration flows to different countries also differ in their cultural distinctiveness from the majority group. In several but by no means all west and north European countries there have been large inflows of migrants from Muslim countries. This is particularly the case in France, for example, but there have also been substantial proportions to Slovenia and Ireland, as well as to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland (in the latter countries, no doubt, linked to the Muslim character of many contemporary flows of asylum seekers).

Our central aims in this paper, then, are to explore differences in sentiments both between and within countries, and their interplay. We attempt to move the discussion forward in two ways. Firstly, we draw on new questions, included in the ESS for the first time in 2014, about willingness to accept culturally distinct groups of migrants such as Muslims. Secondly, we base our investigation both on between and within country differences in public attitudes and sentiments. In doing so, we expand the discussion on the attitudinal profile of countries, moving beyond a categorisation of countries based purely on their mean scores and additionally taking into account the degree of homogeneity and heterogeneity within each society.

Using multilevel latent class analysis, we find important differences both between countries and between publics within countries. While, as a first approximation, we can think of individuals and countries as being generally more or less favourable to immigration, with Sweden and North European countries being the most favourable and Hungary and some other East European countries being the least favourable, this approximation misses crucial distinctions which are important both theoretically and practically.

Firstly, at the individual level, our analysis distinguishes what we label Restrictive, Selective and Open attitude profiles. Members of the Restrictive Class tend to exhibit strong, insider versus outsider, boundaries against migrants, being generally unfavourable to immigration and making relatively little distinction between different sorts of migrant. Members of the Open Class tend to have weaker or blurred boundaries against migrants and are generally more favourable. In contrast, members of the Selective Class, while relatively generous overall, take a more differentiated view of immigration with stronger boundaries against Jewish
and Muslim migrants than against other sorts of migrant.

Secondly, at the country level, the analysis distinguishes three interpretable sets consisting of what can be termed the Czech, Ireland and Norway models respectively. In the Czech model we find the highest proportions of individuals belonging to the Restrictive class, while in the Norway model we find the fewest members of this class. However, the modal class in this latter set is the Selective Class, not the Open. Furthermore, individuals within this Nordic set tend to be the most evenly distributed between the three classes. In other words, countries in this set are actually the most heterogeneous. They also display the greatest socio-demographic polarisation in attitudes.

In other words, countries in the Norway set, despite their high average favourability towards migrants, are far from consensual or united. Categorising countries simply as more or less favourable may therefore miss the point. Among some countries that are on average quite favourable towards immigration, we still find considerable percentages of individuals classified as restrictive, e.g. 43 per cent in Denmark 42 per cent in Belgium and 37 per cent in Switzerland. In these countries it appears that attitudes are rather...
polarised. This polarisation is likely to be relevant for understanding why far right political parties can have considerable success even in countries which are relatively favourable to immigration.

These findings clearly indicate that we need to have a more sophisticated view of symbolic boundaries. Most strikingly we emphasise the high degree of heterogeneity within the publics of North and West European countries. To put this matter somewhat differently, the nature of the symbolic boundaries are contested within these countries. Different groups within these countries have very different ideas of where the boundaries lie, or indeed whether they should be any boundaries at all.

### Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of attitude types within each country set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1: The Czech model</th>
<th>Class 2: Ireland model</th>
<th>Class 3: Norway model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Selective</td>
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<td>b/se</td>
<td>b/se</td>
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<th>-0.011*</th>
<th>-0.007*</th>
<th>-0.019*</th>
<th>-0.001</th>
<th>-0.016*</th>
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<tr>
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<td>0.206*</td>
<td>0.065+</td>
<td>0.301*</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.374*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[0.075]</td>
<td>[0.049]</td>
<td>[0.037]</td>
<td>[0.053]</td>
<td>[0.045]</td>
<td>[0.055]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education (7-point ISCED)</td>
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<td>0.068*</td>
<td>0.157*</td>
<td>0.175*</td>
<td>0.114*</td>
<td>0.245*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[0.024]</td>
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<td>[0.011]</td>
<td>[0.016]</td>
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<td>Household income deciles</td>
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<td>-0.199*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Country dummies</td>
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| N | 9,082 | 14,654 | 11,202 |

Notes: multinomial logistic regression models with Restrictive as the omitted category. Country dummies are included but coefficients not shown; * indicates statistical significance at p < 0.05, + p < 0.1.
Alice Ramos, University of Lisbon

The impact of biological and cultural racisms on attitudes towards immigrants and immigration public policies

This summary is based on the following paper: Ramos, Alice, Cicero Pereira Jorge Vala, (accepted) The impact of biological and cultural racisms on attitudes towards immigration public policies. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. Routledge.

Racism as a multidimensional belief

Overall, previous studies have shown that it is not normative to express openly negative attitudes towards members of groups who have historically been targets of racialization (e.g. Dovidio and Gaertner, 1998; Pettigrew and Meertens 1995; Vala, Lopes and Brito, 1999; Vala, Lopes and Lima, 2008; Pérez, 1996; Arcuri and Boca, 1996). However, a line of research measuring automatic associations between words (e.g. positive vs negative) and targets of evaluation (e.g. whites vs blacks) showed that racial prejudice remains active at an implicit or unconscious level (Gaertner and McLaughlin, 1983).

Even so, the explicit measures introduced in the ESS questionnaire revealed that racism is better understood today considering its complex roots in the attribution of different biological and cultural essences to human groups, and sustained the hypothesis about the bi-dimensionality of racism, one based on genetic essences and another on cultural essences. These results are important because, as far as we know, they constitute the first empirical demonstration of the complexity of racist beliefs through representative samples across Europe. Moreover, descriptive statistics suggest that biological racism is not supported by the majority of people, albeit 29 per cent of the 30,000 people inquired did manifest acquiescence.

As shown in figure 1, the cultural based inferiority of some social groups is less anti-normative than the biological one - only three countries expressed higher scores of biological racism (Estonia, Hungary and France). Among all the other countries, there are countries where 30 per cent or more of the respondents believe in the natural superiority of some human groups (Belgium, Switzerland, Finland, Ireland, Slovenia, Great Britain, Portugal, Estonia, Czech Republic, France and Hungary), but there are also countries with percentages below 15 per cent (Sweden, The Netherlands, Norway). However, in the latter group we find a significant amount of people that express cultural racism. A different
pattern, corresponding to high levels of agreement on biological and cultural racism, can also be found (e.g. Portugal, Czech Republic).

These findings can contribute to today’s conceptual debate about the nature of racism in European societies, the social inequalities it promotes and the psychological and political processes it involves (e.g. Balibar, 1991; Leach, 1991; Walker, 2004; Vala, 2013; Ford, 2008). Significantly, our explicit measure of biological racism also has ecological validity, since it showed a much stronger correlation than expected ($r = .43$, $p < .05$), with the results of the implicit racial bias measured across European countries by Harvard University’s Project Implicit.

Racism: a predictor of opposition to immigration and ethnicist criteria

The determinants of opposition to immigration have been studied from different theoretical perspectives: group conflict (e.g. Bobo 1988; LeVine and Campbell 1972); contact (e.g. Pettigrew 1998); threat perception (e.g. Esses, Haddock and Zanna 1993; Coenders, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2004); prejudice (e.g. Pereira, Vala and Leyens 2009) and values (e.g. Ramos, Pereira and Vala 2016) are some examples. Although motivated by different factors, opposition to immigration is a relatively stable attitude. For instance, between ESS Round 1 (2002) and ESS Round 7 (2014) the average...
change observed among those who completely reject immigrants was +1.8 per cent, and among the most open +4.2 per cent.

As Figure 3 illustrates, those that think their country should allow immigrants with some restrictions represent the majority. This pattern leads us to the debate on public policies about migrations, and specifically to the criteria that should be established for selecting those who can come or not. With few exceptions (e.g. Pherson and Green, 2010), this issue has received little attention.

Comprehensively, the less immigrants should be allowed, the stronger is the preference for ethnicist selection criteria. But what motivates people that consider that being white, Christian and able to speak their own language should be criteria to select immigrants?

According to our findings, those that express higher levels of biological and cultural racism, being the stronger relationship the one associating biological racism and support for ethnicist criteria. Although the support for ethnicist criteria being presently relatively low, this can become a more salient issue...
with the discourse of the right-wing and its claims for the preservation of cultural and religious identity.

However, the norm of anti-racism still impels people to find justifications for their options. In fact, threat perceptions (realistic and symbolic) mediate the relationship between racism and discriminatory attitudes, and biological racism needs further justification than cultural racism. In other words, people use feelings of threat as shields to hide their racist beliefs, claiming that restrictions to immigration are required because immigrants take jobs, engage in criminal activities or undermine the natives’ culture. Furthermore, this effect varies according to the Quality of Democracy (2014). Two explanations may be at the basis of this mechanism. Firstly, threat perceptions legitimise discrimination because they permit the racist nature of underlying feelings of threat to remain unveiled. Moreover, the need of legitimation becomes stronger as the anti-racist norm pressure increases, which is the case in countries that score higher in Quality of Democracy and where the egalitarian values are also deeply disseminated at the institutional level.
An estimated 4.8 million migrants arrived at OECD countries in 2015 (OECD, 2016) and while the recent wave of migration has reinforced a long and steady upward trend in the share of foreign-born populations residing in OECD countries, 2015 figures represent a sudden and sizeable increase over the number of arrivals registered in 2014 (OECD, 2016). The ability of societies to withstand the pressures on social cohesion posed by migration flows depends on the long-term integration of immigrants, which reflects their capacity to adapt and become part of both labour markets and social networks in countries of destinations (OECD, 2018).

Education is often considered an important element for promoting long term integration processes because it enables immigrants to acquire skills that will lead them to enter the labour market, and because education systems help migrants understand the culture and the traditions of their country of destination (OECD, 2018). However education can also play an important role in shaping the attitudes native populations hold towards immigrants. The literature has identified two key mechanisms that drive the formation of native populations’ attitudes towards migration: competition over social and economic resources (e.g. Blumer 1958; Bobo 1988; Olzak 1992) and threat to the cultural and national homogeneity of society (e.g. Castles, Haas, and Miller 1993; Fetzer 2000).

Education can determine individuals’ subjective experiences of economic threat and cultural threat overall but also, and crucially, at times of crisis, such as those that Europe witnessed in 2015 due to the sudden and major inflow of refugees from war-torn nations. First, attitudes towards migration maybe driven by the fear (or lack of fear) of labour-market competition from migrants. Individuals with high levels of education may be protected from labour market competition from low skilled immigrants (d’Hombres and Nunziata, 2015) and, therefore, not only will not fear but will, in fact, benefit from labour market complementarities with immigrant workers. Individuals with high levels of education are also less dependent on public provision of social and welfare services, and therefore may also be less likely to see new arrivals as a source of competition over scarce welfare arrangements. Second, education fosters individuals’ information processing abilities and, as a result, better educated individuals may be better placed to interpret and evaluate migration phenomena, enabling them to evaluate the potential long-term effects that migration can bring to host countries. Better educated individuals may also be less likely to construct their personal identity more in individualistic terms rather than base it on membership to a homogeneous group, such as the local, regional or national community.

We used data on countries that participated in last three rounds (Rounds 6-8) of the European Social Survey to identify how the role of education in shaping opposition to migration through economic, general and cultural threat changed between 2012 and 2016. Round 7 was implemented in 2014, just before the migration crisis hit European countries.
Round 8 was implemented in 2016, right after the peak in arrivals. We also look at Round 6 which was implemented in 2012 to identify if any changes between 2014 and 2016 deviated from recent trends or reflected a continuation of changes in public opinions towards migration. Countries covered in our analysis include: Belgium (BEL), Switzerland (CHE), Czech Republic (CZE), Germany (DEU), Estonia (EST), Finland (FIN), France (FRA), Great Britain (GBR), Israel (ISR), Netherlands (NLD), Norway (NOR), Poland (POL), Slovenia (SVN) and Sweden (SWE).

Our key outcome indicator, individuals’ opposition to migration, is measured by four questions in ESS: 1) ‘to what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here?’ 2) ‘how about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country]?’ 3) ‘how about people from the poorer countries in Europe?’ and 4) ‘how about people from the poorer countries outside Europe?’ Response options were 1 (many), 2 (some), 3 (a few), and 4 (none).

Our key explanatory factors are individuals’ educational attainment and economic, cultural and general threat. Each threat indicator is represented by a single item measured on a 10 category scale. Economic threat is measured through responses to the question ‘would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]’s economy that people come to live here from other countries?’ Cultural threat is measured through responses to the question ‘would you say that [country]’s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?’ General threat is measured through responses to the question ‘is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?’ Educational attainment was measured through an indicator of the number of years of schooling that the respondent reported having attended.

Figure 1. Theoretical model and estimated relationships, pooled sample of ESS countries for rounds 6, 7 and 8)
All models control for age, gender, whether the respondent was born in the country of residence, if the respondent has children, the respondent’s subjective financial situation, respondent’s employment situation and if the respondent lives in a big city, in the suburbs or outskirts of a big city, in a town or a small city, in a country village, farm or in the countryside.

Figure 1 describes our theoretical model and estimated relationships based on the pooled sample of ESS countries that participated in all three most recent rounds of ESS (6-8). Figure 1 illustrates the key associations that are the focus of our study, namely the direct association between education and opposition to migration, as well as the indirect effects of education on opposition to migration through economic, cultural and general threat. Figure 1 indicates that the association between education and individuals’ sense of economic, cultural and general threat is negative: individuals who attended school for longer report lower levels of economic, cultural and general threat. By contrast, the association between economic, cultural and general threat and opposition to migration is positive: individuals report greater opposition to migration when they believe that migration is bad for the economy, for the cultural life of the country or that the country is made a worse place because of international migrants. Crucially, our study reveals that more than 75 per cent of the total association between education and opposition to migration (into direct and indirect effects through economic, cultural and general threat) as well as average levels of opposition to migration.

The right panel of Figure 2 suggests that, in most countries, individuals expressed lower opposition to migration in 2016 than in 2014, a decrease which reflected an additional drop in opposition after the decrease that can be observed between 2014 and 2012. The decrease is statistically significant at the 5% level in all countries except for Slovenia. Poland and the Czech Republic are the only countries in our sample that experienced a significant increase in opposition to migration.

The left panel in Figure 2 suggests that the role played by education in shaping individuals’ attitudes towards migration differs depending on the country in which they live. For example, in Slovenia, France, and Great Britain education plays an important role in shaping attitudes towards migration while in Norway and the Czech Republic the role of education is substantially weaker. Cross-time comparisons reveal that effects are generally stable over time. In Ireland, Germany and Israel the overall association between education and opposition to migration became weaker over time while it increased in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Discussion

Education is often considered an important element to foster openness to diversity and ensure that individuals are willing and are able to develop trust towards others, that they are open to diversity, do not perceive migration phenomena as a threat and hold positive attitudes towards migrants. However, much less is known about the mechanisms that facilitate education’s role in promoting tolerant attitudes and, in particular, how individuals with different levels of education react to changes in their environment. We
examined data from the last three waves of the European Social Survey to identify if the increase in asylum seekers and refugees in European countries that occurred in 2015 determined changes in individuals’ attitudes towards migration and, in particular, if individuals’ educational level shaped the way in which individuals reacted to changing circumstances. Our results reveal that in many countries opposition to migration decreased over the period with a large degree of heterogeneity across countries in the extent to which education shapes opposition to migration both directly and indirectly through economic, cultural and general threat. Next, we will examine in greater depth between country variations over time as well as whether nature of the humanitarian nature of the migration flows that occurred in 2014 shaped the results we found.

Figure 2. Decomposition effects of education on opposition to migration (left panel) the average levels of opposition to migration (right panel) for countries
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