

Public Opinion towards Labour Market Reforms in Europe

A Multidimensional and Dynamic Perspective on Attitudes

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To Imke and Fenna

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Christopher Buß, Mannheim, 03.08.2017

List of Empirical Articles

This cumulative dissertation consists of four separate articles that deal with a common theme – public opinion towards labour market related policies. The framework illustrates the research agenda and the theoretical framework of this dissertation as well as the results of these four articles:

- I. A Multidimensional Analysis of Attitudes towards Labour Market Policies in Europe
- II. Public Opinion towards Workfare in Europe: Polarization of Attitudes in Times of Austerity?
Revise & resubmit to the *International Journal of Social Welfare*
- III. How Unemployment Experience Affects Support for the Welfare State: A Real Panel Approach
European Sociological Review, 32(1), 81–92. With Elias Naumann and Johannes Baer.
- IV. Public Opinion towards Targeted Benefits for the Unemployed: A Vignette Study on the Perceived Deservingness of the Unemployed
Fourthcoming in the *Journal of European Social Policy*

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FRAMEWORK

Summary of Research Agenda, Theory, Methodology, and Results

1 Introduction

Reforms of the labour market rank high on the political agenda of European governments, in particular since the rapid increase in unemployment rates during the economic and financial crisis. Policymakers seek to reduce unemployment by deregulating the labour market and activating the unemployed (Barbieri and Cutuli, 2016). Similar to other European countries, the French government introduced a major reform to the labour law to deregulate employment protection and other aspects of working contracts. However, such reform proposals often encounter strong resistance from segments of the workforce. In France, protests reached a peak when protesters marched to the street and a general strike caused a shortage of gasoline in spring 2016.¹ A better knowledge of public opinion can advance our understanding of the reasons for such strong opposition to reforms in the labour market. Thus, this dissertation analyses attitudes towards various aspects of the labour market.

The main focus is on three policies with an extensive impact on labour markets in recent years. The first important trend, the “activation paradigm”, emerged in the late 1990s and led to a rebalancing of the rights and responsibilities of the unemployed. Active labour market policies (ALMP), like training or job counselling, assist the unemployed in finding a job (Weishaupt, 2011). At the same time, the jobless are increasingly obliged to accept job offers to avoid sanctions and benefit cuts (Handler, 2003; Mead 1986). As a second trend, labour market policies become more targeted, providing varying rights and responsibilities to different social groups. For instance, young unemployed are subject to stricter conditions and harsher sanctions if they do not comply with their obligations (Larsen, 2008; van Oorschot *et al.*, 2017). A third trend constitutes the flexibilisation of the labour market and reduced employment protection in particular at the margins of the labour market (Barbieri, 2016; Ebbinghaus and Eichhorst, 2006).

Two aspects of public opinion are central to my research interest – the *level* and the *determinants* of support for reforms. The first research topic concerns the extent and level of support for central elements of labour market policies. I investigate the question of how the

¹ “Protesters in France Take to Streets Over Proposed Changes to Labor Law”, New York Times, March 09 2016.

European public evaluates the rights and responsibilities of unemployed people, flexibilisation of employment contracts and increasing targeting of labour market policies. In addition to this, I am interested in whether the political reforms and the recent economic crisis had an impact on the public's perspective of these policies. Furthermore, differences in public opinion among European countries are examined. The second major research topic is concerned with the patterns of societal cleavages in regard to attitudes. How do the position on the labour market, socio-economic status and deep-rooted values influence the individual stance on these issues? Furthermore, did cleavages between socio-economic groups increase in recent years?

This dissertation is comprised of four empirical articles that address these research questions with a variety of methodological approaches. The research strategy is based on the combination of two comparative and two single-case studies respectively. *Article I* takes a multidimensional perspective by analysing the statistical relationship between attitudes towards five policy dimensions in several European countries. For instance, do individuals, who favour generous unemployment benefits, also support an extensive use of activation policies? In addition, this article investigates whether institutional configurations of the labour market affect the level of public support in different countries. *Article II* focuses on attitudes towards workfare reforms over a period of two decades in Europe. The article investigates the “polarisation hypothesis”, claiming that public opinion on social policy has become more polarised over time. *Article III* uses Dutch panel data to examine the effect of the economic crisis on public opinion towards unemployment benefits. In particular, I am interested in whether job loss leads to a persistent increase in support for the public provision of unemployment benefits. *Article IV* employs a vignette design to study attitudes towards targeted labour market policies in Germany. In this part of the dissertation, I analyse whether respondents assign different rights and responsibilities to benefit claimants based on the recipient's age, ethnicity, work history, or family status.

The thesis contributes to the state of the literature in three regards. First, it takes into account the *multidimensional structure* of attitudes towards labour market policies. While most studies in this research field focus only on the social rights of benefit recipients, the four articles put the spotlight on related policy measures that have received far less attention (Blekesaune

and Quedagno, 2003; van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014; Wendt, Mischke and Pfeifer, 2011). Second, I adopt a *dynamic perspective* and longitudinal data to analyse the change of individuals and public opinion over time. The majority of studies in this research area employ cross-sectional data, and are thereby limited in their ability to cumulate knowledge on reform dynamics and political change (Svallfors, 2010a). The third contribution concerns the application of *methods of causal inference*, such as survey experiments and the use of panel methodology. These methods allow for the establishment of causal mechanisms behind individual attitude formation more firmly than regression analysis, which is conventionally used in this field (Freedman *et al.*, 2010).

The following chapter illustrates the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 continues with the research agenda and research questions. Next, I discuss relevant developments and policies concerning the labour market in recent years. Chapter 5 presents the research design and the methodological approaches. The framework paper concludes by describing and discussing the findings of the four empirical papers.

2 Theoretical Framework and State of Research

2.1 The Political Relevance of Attitudes

Attitudes are the central concept of this dissertation and can be defined as an individual's evaluation of a specific object, such as a person, behaviour or institution, with some degree of favour or disfavour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Kulin, 2011; Rokeach, 1973). Accordingly, I define attitudes towards labour market policies as an individual's positive or negative evaluation of the institutions, rules and regulations of the labour market.

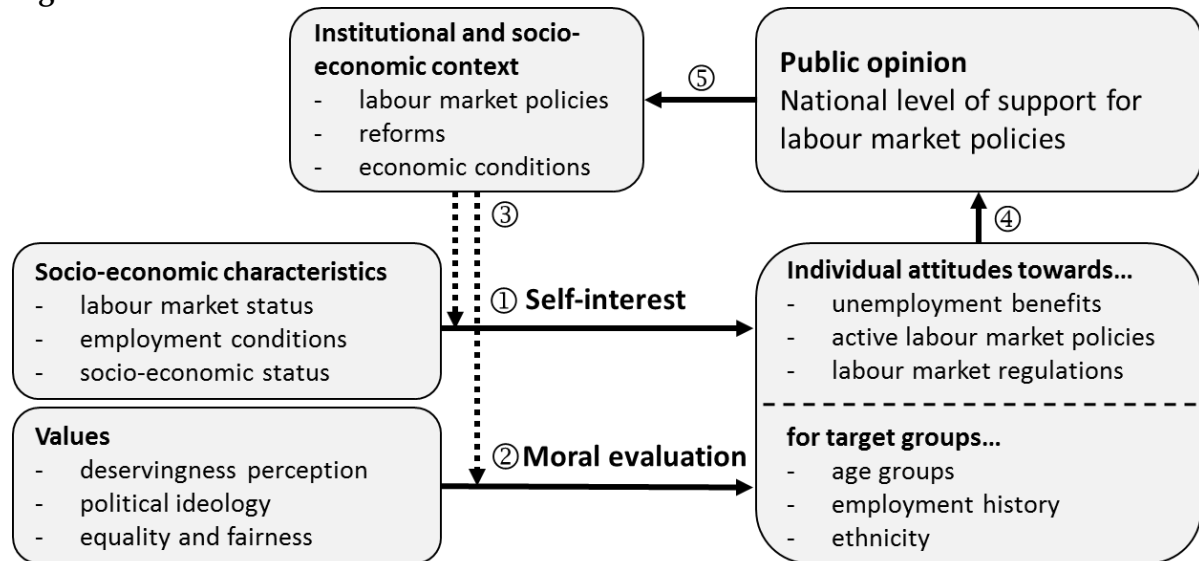
Major theories in social science draw on the assumption that mass opinion is formative for the actions of policymakers and thereby the shape of the welfare state. For instance, Pierson (1996: 176) has proposed that “politicians are likely to pursue strategies that will not damage their chances for re-election”. In a similar vein, Esping-Andersen (2000) has suggested that the institutions of welfare state regimes are a consequence of the population's popular demand for social protection. Empirical work on policy responsiveness provides some evidence for a linkage between public opinion and policy (Brooks and Manza, 2006; Burstein, 1998; Wlezien and Soroka, 2012). Politicians align their policies with public opinion in particular when influential interest groups defend the interest of their members (Buss and Bender, 2017; Ebbinghaus and Naumann, 2017). Accordingly, attitudes towards social policy are of particular interest for social scientists and policymakers alike because of the potentially large effect on the outcomes of the political system.

There is a growing body of literature on attitudes towards the welfare state. The majority of studies deal with the popular demand for the different social programmes, particularly health care (Jordan, 2010; Wendt *et al.*, 2010), pensions (Fernandez and Jaime-Castillo, 2013), and benefits for the jobless (Fraile and Ferrer, 2005). Unemployment benefits are considerably less popular than the more universal programmes of the welfare state, because the majority of the population expects to be a net contributor to the social system (Baslevent and Kirmanoglu, 2011). Moreover, reforms of labour market policies involve clear conflicts of interest, leading to a much stronger polarisation of public opinion than in other, more uncontested policy fields. For these reasons, it is particularly relevant to study public opinion towards reforms in this controversial policy field.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework that underpins the four empirical chapters. This framework is based on the theoretical assumptions of methodological individualism – macro phenomena, such as the rules and regulations of the labour market, are explained through the behaviour (and attitudes) of individual agents (Coleman, 1994; Weber, 1922).

Figure 1 Theoretical framework



Across disciplines, social science scholars distinguish two motivations that underlie behaviour and attitudes: interests and values (see Article III). The first theoretical approach emphasises the self-interest of actors when explaining policy preferences. Individuals support a policy if they expect to benefit from it, whereas they oppose it if their individual costs are higher than the expected gains (Arrow ① in Figure 1) (Iversen and Soskice, 2001). A second line of argument proposes political ideology and deep-rooted values as key explanations for political preferences. From this perspective, support for welfare policies is linked to ideological differences about the appropriate role of the state, considerations of equality and fairness, and the perceived deservingness of the unemployed (Arrow ②) (Kulin and Svallfors, 2013; Mau and Veghte, 2007; van Oorschot, 2006). A third decisive factor is represented by the institutional and economic context. The context conditions moderate both the self-interest calculations and the group's perceived deservingness (Arrow ③) (Buss, Ebbinghaus and Naumann, 2017). The aggregation of individual attitudes on the societal level can be conceptualised as “public opinion” (Tönnies, 1922) or the “public

sphere” (Arrow ④) (Habermas, 1990). In attitude research, *public opinion* is represented by the average national support for a policy on an abstract scale in a survey question. The theoretical framework indicates a reciprocal relationship between public opinion and societal context. On the one hand, attitudes are important drivers of policy reforms as politicians react to public opinion (Arrow ⑤) (Brooks and Manza, 2006). On the other hand, the institutional context shapes individuals’ views on social policy.

2.2.1. *Self-Interest*

The political economy tradition proposes self-interest as an individual’s main motivation to support social policy. This argument claims that those who (expect to) depend on social security are more in favour of generous benefits (Iversen and Soskice, 2001). Self-interest is for the most part derived from a wide range of socio-economic characteristics. Research shows that the position in the labour market, in particular unemployment, is strongly related to support for redistributive policies (Margalit, 2013). The risk of layoff (Hacker, Rehm and Schlesinger, 2013; Rehm, 2009), temporary employment and part-time work (Marx, 2014a; 2014b) are positively related to support for social policy as well. In addition, individuals with a high socio-economic status, measured by occupation, income or educational attainment, are more likely to support generous policies for the unemployed and other needy groups (Baslevent and Kirmanoglu, 2011).²

2.2.2. *Moral Evaluation*

A second line of argument proposes that ideological differences about the proper role of the state and considerations of equality and fairness are linked to support for welfare policies (Mau, 2003). Individuals who embrace self-transcendence and reject values of self-enhancement are more likely to endorse generous welfare state arrangements (Kulin, 2011). Furthermore, support for generous social policies is stronger if the beneficiaries are perceived as being deserving of help (van Oorschot, 2000; 2006). This argument builds on the assumption that target groups of social policy score differently on five criteria – the level of *need*, their *control* over their neediness, their *attitude* towards support, the level of

² There is, however, a discussion about the redistributive and the insuring nature of the benefit system. In particular in countries with a strong focus on the insurance principle, unemployment benefits cannot be seen as solely redistributive policy in favour of individuals with a weak position in the labour market (Rehm, Hacker and Schlesinger, 2012).

reciprocity and past contributions, and their *identity* (Cook, 1979; van Oorschot, 2000). The higher a social group scores on these criteria, the more the public is willing to support them.

2.2.3. *Institutional and Economic Context*

Support for the welfare state is generally strong across Europe but considerable national differences exist concerning the approval of policy programmes. A large number of studies indicate that the institutional set-up of the welfare state and the economic context have a substantial impact on public opinion (Andreß and Heien, 2001; Fraile and Ferrer, 2005). The (often implicit) assumption of these studies is that the context mediates the effects of self-interest, values and deservingness perception on attitudes (③ in Figure 1). The effect of the *economic context* on attitudes towards social policy is a longstanding question in attitude research (Jeene, van Oorschot and Uunk, 2014; van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014). Most arguments suggest that support for generous policies for the unemployed is stronger in times of economic decline. Economic downturns increase the (perceived) risk of future job loss among the employed. Because of the increased likelihood of becoming unemployed, those in work favour more generous policies for the unemployed (Fraile and Ferrer, 2005). Furthermore, most jobless are considered as more deserving because they are held less responsible for their situation when few jobs are on offer to them (Buss, Ebbinghaus and Naumann, 2017). In addition to the economic situation, the *institutions* of the labour market play an important role in shaping attitudes (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Larsen, 2007). There is a growing literature on policy feedback effects of the policies and institutions of the welfare state on public opinion (Jordan, 2013; Kumlin and Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Svallfors, 2010b). Policies could either generate their own support (positive feedback) or undermine themselves (negative feedback). Previous studies lend some support to negative feedback effects. When benefits for the unemployed are limited, as in Southern and Eastern European countries, public opinion is often quite positive towards an expansion of social policy. In countries with more generous benefits, public opinion tends to be more sceptical (Jeene and van Oorschot, 2014; van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014).

3 Research Agenda – Attitudes towards Labour Market Reforms

This dissertation examines the *level* and the *determinants* of support for labour market policies in Europe. The first topic concerns the level of support for labour market policies. How popular are unemployment benefits, ALMPs, and labour market regulation in different parts of Europe? The second research topic is connected to the pattern of support for different attitudinal dimensions. This part of the dissertation investigates how attitudes are shaped by respondent's interests, values and perceptions. The two topics are divided into six sub-questions (Table 1).

Table 1 Research topics and research questions

Research topic	Research question	Article
The <i>level</i> of popular support for labour market policies in Europe	1. To what extent does the public support the rights and responsibilities of unemployed individuals	I – IV
	2. Are attitudes towards different dimensions of labour market policies related to each other?	I & IV
	3. Do European societies differ in their support for labour market policies?	I & II
	4. How did support for labour market policies develop over time?	II & III
<i>Determinants</i> of attitudes towards labour market policies	5. How do individual socio-economic characteristics influence support for different policy dimensions?	I – IV
	6. Does support for a policy depend on the characteristics of the group that this policy targets?	IV

3.1 The Level of Popular Support for Labour Market Policies

A substantive part of the scientific literature on welfare state attitudes investigates the popularity of different welfare state programmes (Blekesaune and Quedagno, 2003; Linos and West, 2003). This research focuses on the question of how resources should be distributed between different needy groups such as the sick, the old and the unemployed. Universal welfare programmes like health care and the pension system generally receive stronger support than more targeted benefits for unemployed people (van Oorschot, 2000).

While an extensive body of research deals with attitudes towards the generosity of unemployment benefits, attitudes towards activation and the flexibilisation of the labour market only recently caught the attention of researchers (Fossati, 2013; Gallego and Marx, 2016; Jeene and Roosma, 2017). To contribute to this thriving research agenda, all empirical articles tackle the first research question – how does the public evaluate the rights and the responsibilities of unemployed people? Should unemployment benefits be conditional on the behaviour of the unemployed and be cut if certain obligations are not fulfilled? Or should access to these benefits be unconditional and universal?

The second research question is concerned with how attitudes towards different facets of the labour market are related to each other (Article I & IV). In contrast to the predominantly unidimensional perspective in attitude research, the four empirical articles take into account the multidimensional structure of this policy field. Recent studies that investigate the multidimensional structure of welfare state attitudes suggest that individuals distinguish between different aspects of the welfare state, including the extent, the results, and the outcomes of social policy (Roosma, Gelissen and Oorschot, 2013; van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012). Similarly, I argue that individuals who prefer generous benefits do not necessarily favour the strong role of the state in other areas. For example, some individuals might prefer generous benefits, strict conditions and a flexible labour market at the same time. Accordingly, I expect attitudes towards different dimensions of labour market policies to be only moderately correlated (Article I & IV).

Third, this dissertation takes a comparative perspective by examining attitudinal differences between countries and poses the following question – to what extent do European societies differ in their support of activation policies and labour market regulation (Article I & II)? A large number of studies analyse whether attitude patterns correspond to the welfare typology by Esping-Andersen (1990). Because of conceptual and methodological difficulties, studies do not provide a clear-cut picture concerning the relationship between welfare support and regime typology (Andreß and Heien, 2001; Arts and Gelissen, 2001; Jaeger, 2005; Larsen, 2007; Svallfors, 2010a). In general, support for generous unemployment benefits seems to be strongest in Mediterranean countries and weakest in liberal welfare states, in particular in the United Kingdom (Jeene and van Oorschot, 2014; van Oorschot and

Meuleman, 2014). More recently, scholars have begun to investigate the impact of economic and institutional indicators on the national level of support. These studies indicate that high unemployment rates increase support for benefits (Jeene and van Oorschot, 2014; Jeene, van Oorschot and Uunk, 2014) and the generosity of the welfare system is negatively correlated with support for benefits (van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014). In contrast to the comprehensive research on the institutional determinants of attitudes towards unemployment benefits, there are, to my knowledge, no cross-national studies on public opinion towards activation policies and regulation (see Buss, Ebbinghaus and Naumann, 2017 for an exception).

The fourth research question is related to the dynamics and the development of attitudes over time. In this part of the dissertation, I am interested in how changes in the societal context affect support for social policy. For example, I address the question of whether support for ALMPs has decreased since these “activation turns” in European countries in the 1990s (Article II). Furthermore, did the economic crisis affect the public’s perception of the rights of the unemployed (Article III)? Due to the limited availability of longitudinal data, the majority of studies in this research field provide a static picture of attitudes (Svallfors, 2010a). Thus, it is important to understand the conditions of attitudinal change to gain a deeper understanding of reform dynamics.

3.2 Individual Determinants of Attitudes towards Labour Market Policies

This dissertation examines individual determinants of attitudes and how they translate into cleavages in society. The theoretical framework in Chapter 2.2 has outlined how self-interest and moral evaluations shape individual attitudes towards redistributive policies such as unemployment benefits. The fifth research question asks to what extent the same determinants apply to other policies such as activation and regulation (Article I – IV). Some scholars contend that benefits, regulation and activation policies appeal to different social groups. Rueda (2005; 2007) argues that support for an extensive regulation of the labour market is strongest among workers with a close attachment to the labour market. From this perspective, labour market outsiders who are unemployed or occupy precarious jobs prefer less protection of existing full-time jobs. In a similar vein, Tepe and Vanhuyse (2013) argue that labour market insiders in secure full-time employment benefit increasingly from

ALMPs and favour higher spending on these policies. Empirical evidence for these claims, however, is rare and inconclusive (Emmenegger, 2009; Guillaud and Marx, 2014).

The sixth research question examines to what extent policy support depends on the perceived deservingness of the policy's target group (Article IV). Van Oorschot and Roosma (2017) argue that "who should get what and why" is back on the agenda of European policymakers. Benefit recipients are subject to different rules, depending on age, family status and work experience. For instance, strict conditions and harsh sanctions apply in particular to young unemployed people (Larsen, 2008). Despite the political relevance of targeted welfare benefits, attitude research treats the unemployed as a single, homogenous group. In contrast, I argue that respondents hold contrasting attitudes towards different groups – for example, they prefer benefits for an older worker with a long working history over benefits for a young individual that has not contributed to the social system so far. While previous studies focused primarily on entitlements of migrants versus natives (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran, 2016; Kootstra, 2016; 2017), this dissertation takes a broader perspective of the rights and responsibilities of the diverse group of benefit recipients.

4 European Labour Markets –Trends and Reforms

Far reaching trends like globalisation, deindustrialisation, and changing employment patterns put labour markets in developed countries under pressure (Clasen and Clegg, 2012). Deindustrialisation and technological change lead to an expansion of the service sector which provides more low-paid jobs than the industrial sector. These developments result in a stronger polarisation of the income distribution. At the same time, non-standard forms of employment such as part-time and temporary contracts are on the rise, in particular for women and the young (Emmenegger *et al.*, 2012). Part-time employment increased from about 16 per cent to about 22 per cent within two decades, mainly because female labour market participation expanded.

These trends have fuelled the discussion about an increasing dualisation and a growing divide between labour market insiders and outsiders (Lindbeck and Snower, 2001). Insiders work in well-protected full-time employment whereas outsiders occupy atypical work and face several risks such as bad job prospects, low income, and the exclusion from certain welfare state benefits (Rueda, 2005).

The central elements of every recent reform of the labour market deals with the following questions – how much money should the unemployed receive? How can employment agencies incentivise unemployed people to find a new job? To what extent should workers be protected from dismissal? Is the government responsible to create jobs for those who cannot find work? Analytically, I distinguish between five policy dimensions:

- Generosity of unemployment benefits
- Enforcing policies, such as conditions to receive benefits and sanctions
- Enabling policies, in particular active labour market policies
- Direct job creation
- Employment protection

4.1 Benefit Regimes

Benefits for jobseekers were in the past mostly organised as a two-tier system, based on unemployment insurance and unemployment assistance. Benefits from unemployment insurance replace a share of the previous income if claimants fulfil certain criteria such as sufficient contribution periods. Unemployment assistance is provided subsequent to the

expiration of entitlement and its payments are lower than those from the insurance system. In recent decades, however, there has been a general trend towards benefit homogenisation whereby differences between the tiers are diminished and “social rights, expressed in terms of benefit generosity and entitlement, tend to become less dependent on previous labour market achievements and positions than in the past” (Clasen and Clegg, 2012: 142).

Negatively incentivising policies encourages unemployed individuals to re-enter the labour market when they have an opportunity to do so. These *enforcing measures* include strict job search requirements and eligibility criteria, a broad definition of a suitable job and sanctions in the case of a breach of benefit conditions (Weishaupt, 2012). There was a steep increase in conditions to receive unemployment benefits and the strictness of sanctions in particular in the 1990s (Knotz, 2015). In this process, payment of unemployment benefits became more restrictive as the unemployed had to fulfil certain obligations to become eligible (Larsen, 2008). In its most extreme form, this concept has been implemented as a workfare approach primarily in Anglophone countries. Unemployment is no longer a status right for all citizens but a contractual relationship that stipulates benefit rights in exchange for duties to seek work (Handler, 2003).

4.2 Active Labour Market Policies and Job creation

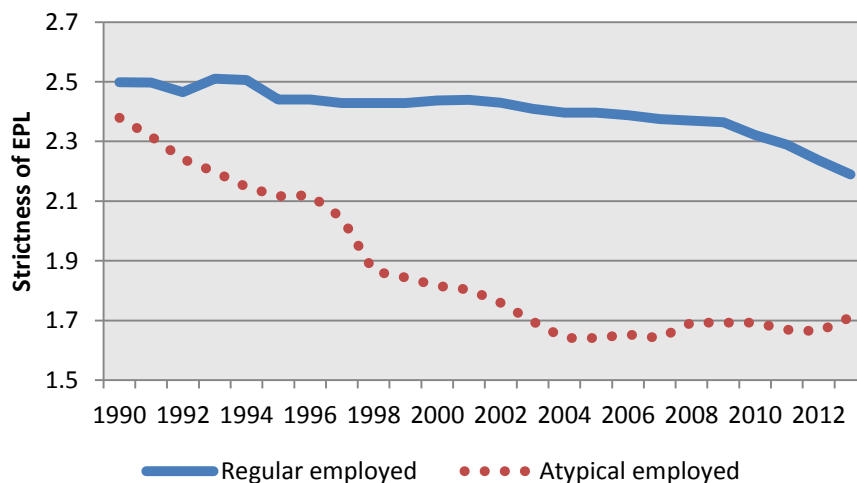
Enabling policies and in particular active labour market policies (ALMPs) improves the skills and competencies of the unemployed through training programmes and offers them job counselling to increase their human capital (Dingeldey, 2007; Weishaupt, 2012). The roots of these policies go back to the “manpower policies” in the 1950s, which became prominent in Western European countries from the late 1980s onwards, advocated by the OECD and the European Employment Strategy of the European Commission (Weishaupt, 2011). As a last resort, governments can rely *directly create jobs* to reduce unemployment rates at the cost of higher spending by the state (Armingeon, 2007; Bonoli, 2010). The main target group of this policy is the long-term unemployed and disabled individuals who face several obstacles to re-entering the workforce (Dar and Tzannatos, 1999).

4.3 Employment Protection Legislation

Employment protection legislation (EPL) concerns all laws that regulate working contracts such as the requirements for the dismissal of workers and the regulation of temporary forms of employment (Barbieri, 2016). A common critique among labour economists concerns the potential negative effects of employment protection on employment. Extensive regulation might hinder the reintegration of long-term unemployed and inactive persons and increase the segmentation of the labour market (Ebbinghaus and Eichhorst, 2006). Therefore, flexibilisation of the labour market ranks high on the political agenda of national governments and international organisations (Davidsson and Emmenegger, 2012).

Figure 2 depicts the development of EPL for regular and temporal contracts since 1990. There is a clear trend towards less protection, especially for the non-regular employed. Flexibilisation took place mainly as 2-tier reforms that reduced job protection for agency workers and other atypically employed while holding up the protection for the full-time employed (Emmenegger *et al.*, 2012).

Figure 2 Employment protection legislation in the OECD

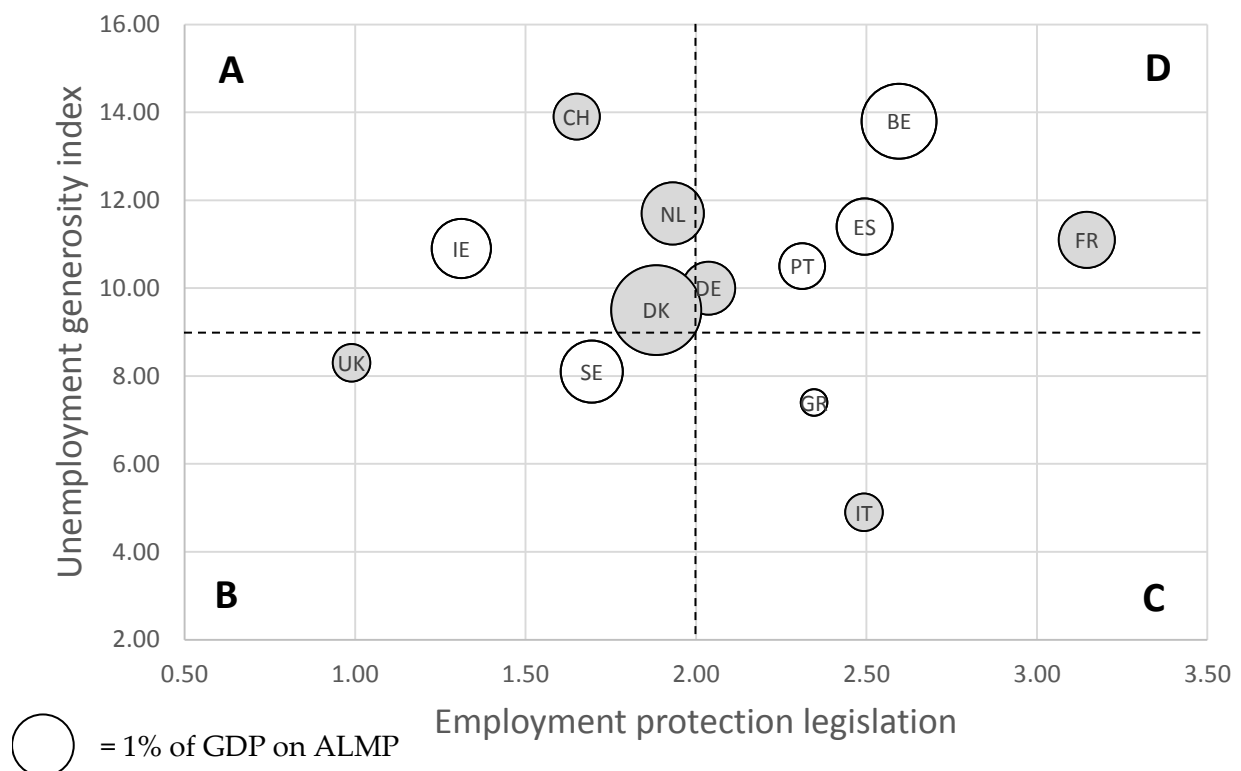


Source: OECD Employment Database

4.4 Labour Market Regimes in Europe

Seven European countries – Denmark, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, France and Italy – are of particular importance for this dissertation. Figure 3 illustrates how these countries differ in their institutional configuration concerning unemployment benefit generosity (y-axis), labour market regulation (x-axis) and spending on ALMPs (size of the markers).

Figure 3 Unemployment benefits, employment protection and spending on ALMP



Notes: Unemployment generosity index takes into account the replacement rate, length of payment and qualification period in 2011 (Scruggs, 2014); employment protection legislation: individual and collective dismissal of regular and temporary workers (OECD, 2013). Spending on ALMP as percentage of GDP indicated by the size of the different markers (OECD, 2013). Adapted from Fossati (2013).

Using a two by two table, four different policy combinations can be distinguished analytically. In the upper left quadrant (A), Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland provide generous benefits with a medium protection of existing jobs. Because this approach combines labour market flexibility with generous social security, it is often referred to as *flexicurity* (European Commission, 2013; Wilthagen, Tros and van Lieshout, 2004). In the quadrant on the lower left (B), the United Kingdom follows a liberal approach by providing neither job security nor generous benefits. The third cluster (C) is represented by

Italy, a country that focuses more on the protection of jobs than of income. Continental welfare states like France (and Germany until the mid-2000s) provide generous benefits and strictly regulate the labour market (D).

Table 2 Institutional indicators in the seven countries under consideration

	DK	NL	CH	UK	IT	DE	FR
<i>Cluster</i>	A	A	A/B	B	C	A/D ³	D
<i>Unemployment benefits</i>							
Generosity	9.50	11.70	13.90	8.30	4.90	10.00	11.10
Conditions for benefits (0 few–1 many)	0.25	0.63	0.58	0.65	0.75	0.55	0.5
<i>ALMP</i>							
Spending on ALMP (per cent of GDP)	2.3	1.1	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.8	1.1
<i>Employment protection</i> (0 none–3.5 extensive)							
For regular contracts	2.39	2.93	2.18	1.60	2.98	2.95	2.67
For temporary employment	1.38	0.94	1.13	0.38	2.00	1.13	3.63
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	4.2	4.8	3.3	3.7	6.7	3.2	6.3

Notes and sources: Unemployment generosity index takes into account the replacement rate, length of payment and qualification period, 2011 (Scruggs, 2014); unemployment rate (Eurostat, 2015); conditionality: obligations, sanctions and definition of suitable jobs (Knotz, 2015); ALMP: all active measures as spending of GDP (OCED, 2013); employment protection (OECD, 2013).

This chapter provides background knowledge on how these countries combine labour market policies in distinct ways. This illustration will serve as a foundation for the analysis of attitudinal differences. However, the chapter does not aim at providing an encompassing analysis of labour market developments, but rather a broad categorisation of the respective institutional configurations. Table 2 provides detailed information on each policy dimension for the seven countries under consideration.

³ Germany and France share several institutional similarities that result in their classification as conservative welfare states by Esping-Andersen (1990). However, recent reform trajectories in Germany have decreased employment protection in particular for the atypically employed, thereby moving the country closer to cluster A (see Figure 4 and Chapter 4.4.2 for a detailed discussion).

4.4.1. *Denmark the Netherlands, and Switzerland – Flexibility and Security*

Denmark is widely considered to be a prototype for the flexicurity approach, characterised by extensive ALMPs, a generous unemployment insurance system and low levels of job security regulations (Madsen, 2008). Even though there is no universally agreed-upon definition of flexicurity, all concepts emphasise the balance between flexibility of the labour market and social security of employees after job loss (Ferrera, Hemerijck and Rhodes, 2001; Wilthagen, Tros and van Lieshout, 2004). The concept has been widely advocated by the European Commission (2006) and other international organisations. Danish unemployment benefits are organised in voluntary schemes which are mostly administered by trade union-linked funds in the so-called Ghent system (Clasen, 2008). Denmark's involvement in activation became prevalent in the 1990s and spending on ALMP accounts for 2.3 per cent of the GDP – more than in any other European country (Kvist and Pedersen, 2007). In recent years, the focus has shifted from training and skill enhancement to enforcing measures in a workfare-oriented system (Kananen, 2012).

The Netherlands adapted an alternative way to combine a flexible labour market with social security but are not considered a prototype of the flexicurity approach due to limited spending on active labour market policies (1.1 per cent of the GDP).⁴ Flexible, non-standard work types are very widespread and labour market reforms in the late 1990s were intended to sustain this flexibility while providing extensive social rights to the atypically employed (Visser, 2002). Employees in atypical, flexible employment are granted “social security rights which are similar to those for persons in standard employment” (Viebrock and Clasen, 2008: 315). For example, temporary agency workers are provided with rights to training, wage guarantees and supplementary pensions. At the same time, they face a high level of insecurity and employment protection is much weaker than for the regularly employed (see Table 2) (Viebrock and Clasen, 2008).

Switzerland has one of the well-performing labour markets with a low unemployment rate, high employment ratio and a moderate level of earnings inequality (Bonoli and Mach, 2001: 83). It combines very generous unemployment benefits with one of the most deregulated labour markets in Europe (Marti *et al.*, 2007). Dismissal protection is very limited not only

⁴ See Article I for a detailed description of the benefit system in the Netherlands.

for the atypically, but also the regularly employed. In this way, it combines core elements of the flexicurity approach but investment in ALMP is among the lowest in Europe with only 0.6 per cent of the GDP.

4.4.2. *Germany and France – Insider-Outsider Divides in Conservative Welfare States*

The labour market regime in Germany is traditionally characterised by strong labour market regulations for regular workers and a benefit system that emphasises status maintenance through insurance benefits based on previous contributions. From the 1990s onward, persistent high unemployment rates stimulated reforms with the aim to deregulate employment contracts and reduce unemployment benefits, in particular for those on the margin of the labour market (Ebbinghaus and Eichhorst, 2006). The *Hartz reforms* in the mid-2000s aimed at a deregulation of atypical employment contracts and fostered the expansion of the low pay sector, in particular for women in the service sector (Dingeldey, 2011). Payments from unemployment insurance were restricted to one year and became increasingly conditional on the job search activities of the unemployed. Furthermore, benefit cuts were introduced for those who do not meet these obligations (see Article IV for a detailed description). According to Palier and Thelen (2010; 2012), these reforms resulted in a strong dualisation between workers in standard employment who enjoy relatively strong protection against loss of employment and income, and the increasing share of employees with atypical contracts who do not enjoy the same security (see Table 2: 2.95 for regular workers in contrast to 1.13 for the atypically employed).

France shares some institutional similarities with Germany as a Bismarckian welfare state. In both countries the labour market has become more segmented and, as Palier and Thelen (2010: 119) argue “dualism is now explicitly underwritten by state policy”. Similar to the German case, atypical employment has increased dramatically but rather as a consequence of a broader change toward flexibility-oriented management than due to intentional deregulation (Marx, 2012). There have been only “timid attempts to make labour markets more flexible” as employment protection of regularly employed has remained unchanged and regulation of temporary contracts has even tightened (Clegg, 2012: 255). Activation policies represent a more integrative approach with less emphasis on conditions and sanctions (Marx, 2012; Palier, 2010).

4.4.3. *The United Kingdom – the Liberal Approach*

The United Kingdom represents a liberal approach to the labour market. Since major reforms were enacted in the Thatcher era in the 1980s, the United Kingdom has one of the most flexible labour markets in Europe with little protection against dismissal for regular and atypical contracts. Unemployment protection is based on a de facto single-tier system with means-tested benefits on a low level (Clasen, 2011; Clasen and Clegg, 2003). The United Kingdom maintains a workfare system with strict requirements to seek work while receiving benefits (Deeming, 2015). ALMP were introduced by the Labour government in the 1990s but gradually revoked afterwards and are provided on a rather modest level today.

4.4.4. *Italy – Labour Market Dualisation in a Rudimentary Welfare State*

Despite some recent efforts for a more flexible labour market, Italian employment protection laws are among the strictest in Europe (Jessoula, Graziano and Madama, 2010). At the same time, the social security net is underdeveloped and patchy (Pfeifer, 2012). Unemployment benefits are based on previous earnings and mainly benefit those with long contribution periods. Furthermore, there is little investment in training policies and eligibility criteria for benefits are rather strict. Even more than in Germany and France, the Italian labour market is characterised by a strong division between labour market insiders and outsiders (Jessoula and Alti, 2010).

5 Research Design, Data and Methods

The research strategy relies on cross-national and single country studies, with both cross-sectional and longitudinal survey data (Table 3). The first two articles take a comparative, cross-national approach whereas the remaining two articles focus on attitudes in the Netherlands and Germany to analyse the mechanisms behind the formation of attitudes. The four articles share a common research interest but use different methods and data sources to investigate attitudes towards different aspects of the labour market. Table 4 presents the country selection, data source and analytical approach for each article.

Table 3 Analytical strategy of the dissertation

	Comparative study	Case study
Cross-sectional	Article I (6 countries, 2010)	Article IV (DE, 2016)
Longitudinal	Article II (23 countries, 1990–2008)	Article III (NL, 2008–2014)

5.1 Comparative Studies

Two cross-national studies in this dissertation investigate public support for unemployment benefits, welfare and labour market regulations in a selection of European countries. The case selection of the first article follows the logic of a “most different” framework (Przeworski and Teune, 1970). As illustrated in Chapter 4, the six countries present prototypes of different labour market regimes. The second article uses a broader selection of cases, analysing attitudes in 23 European countries. Ebbinghaus (2005) points out that every quantitative comparative study faces the problem of non-random case selection. Because the two comparative studies explore attitudinal differences between countries in a descriptive and explorative way, I argue that the issue of selectivity is less severe than in other studies applying methods of statistical inference on the country level.

Table 4 Research questions, data, country selection, and methodological approaches

<i>Title</i>	<i>Research question</i>	<i>Policy dimensions</i>	<i>Countries</i>	<i>Data, Time & Method</i>
<i>Article I</i>				
A Multidimensional Analysis of Attitudes towards Labour Market Policies in Europe	How do attitudes towards different dimensions of LMP relate to each other?	Benefits, job creation, enforcement, enablement, regulation	IT, FR, DE, CH, DK, UK	NCCR democracy, 2010, Structural equation modelling
<i>Article II</i>				
Public Opinion towards Workfare Policies in Europe: Polarisation of Attitudes in Times of Austerity?	Did societal cleavages concerning attitudes towards enforcing policies increase over the last decades?	Enforcement	IT, FR, DE, CH, DK, UK, NL and others	European Value Study (EVS), 1990–2008, OLS regression analysis
<i>Article III</i>				
How Unemployment Experience Affects Support for the Welfare State: Real Panel Approach	Does experience of job loss increase support for unemployment benefits?	Benefits	NL	Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS), 2008–2013, Panel fixed effects
<i>Article IV</i>				
Public Opinion towards Targeted Benefits for the Unemployed—A Vignette Study on Perceived Deservingness of Target Groups in Germany	Does the public support targeted labour market policies?	Benefits, enforcement	DE	German Internet Panel (GIP), 2016, Vignette study with OLS regressions

5.1.1. *Article I – A Multidimensional Analysis of Attitudes*

Article I analyses and compares attitudes towards five attitudinal dimensions in six European countries. Most international surveys, such as the European Social Survey (ESS) and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), are not suitable for this research endeavour as they provide questions on merely two policy dimensions – the responsibility of the state to provide (1) a decent standard of living, and (2) jobs for the unemployed. One of the few cross-national opinion surveys that focuses on different facets of the labour market is provided by the *The National Center of Competence in Research: democracy*.⁵ The article makes use of 13 questions in this dataset that deal with different aspects of the labour market. The data was collected in six countries in October 2010. From a large opt-in panel a representative subsample of all individuals aged 16–75 was invited to participate in the survey. The data provide a good representation of the population with respect to age, employment status, and sex.

The article applies structural equation modelling (SEM), a statistical framework that can handle latent, unobserved concepts reflected by manifest answers to survey questions. For example, individuals' positions towards activation policies are measured by their stance towards various aspects of this policy. Furthermore, SEM allows for comparing the quality of different models with several fit indices, which can be used to test if a multidimensional model of attitudes is appropriate (Brown, 2015). Only recently, have scholars in attitude research begun to use the potential of SEM to investigate the structure of political attitudes (Roosma, Gelissen and Oorschot, 2013; van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012).

5.1.2. *Article II – Public Opinion towards Obligations for the Jobless*

Article II addresses the question of whether public opinion towards activation policies has become more polarised over time. The article uses a broad set of 23 countries to analyse the development of societal cleavages over time. The data comes from the *European Value Study* (EVS), a repeated cross-sectional international survey that was conducted in 1990, 1999 and 2008. The main dependent variable of interest in this data asks respondents whether an unemployed person should take any job available in order not to lose their unemployment

⁵ I am grateful to the research team of IP 11, in particular Flavia Fossati, for providing me with the data.

benefits or whether the unemployed should have the right to refuse a job they do not want without consequences. This question captures two related aspects of enforcing policies, namely the strictness of obligations for benefits and the appropriate punishment if benefit recipients fail to comply with these conditions.

Article II applies multilevel modelling, which has become a standard approach for analysing attitudes in several countries. These models take into account the hierarchical structure of the data in which individuals are nested within countries. With these models it is possible to decompose the variance on the individual and the contextual level, correct for biases that result from the hierarchical nature of the data, and to control for compositional effects (Hox, 2010; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2008). The intertemporal dimension adds another layer of complexity to the analysis because attitudes not only differ between countries, but also between points of time within countries.

5.2 Single Country Studies

The comparative studies are complemented with two case studies that focus on the mechanisms of individual attitude formation. The majority of studies in this research field rely on regression analysis to establish a statistical relationship between the characteristics of an individual and his or her evaluation of social policy. Therefore, the two case studies apply methods of causal inference to identify the *causal* determinants of support for labour market policies. Article III uses longitudinal data and fixed effects regressions to investigate if job loss indeed leads to elevated support for unemployment benefits. Article IV makes use of a vignette design in which respondents judge the rights and responsibilities of benefit recipients whose personal characteristics are randomly altered. The second part of the dissertation shifts the focus from a comparative perspective to individual case studies in the Netherlands and Germany. As I will argue in more detail in Article I, the Netherlands represents a least-likely case to test the self-interest argument because of the generous benefits that are provided in this country. Germany is an interesting case to study public opinion on activation policies as the *Hartz reforms* introduced far-reaching sanctions and conditions for benefit recipients (Mohr, 2012).

5.2.1. *Article III – Individual Experience of Labour Market Risks and Political Preferences for Social Policy*

The third article investigates the question of whether the experience of unemployment leads to a change of attitude. The study uses the dataset *Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences* (LISS), which offers a true probability sample of the Dutch population (Scherpenzeel and Das, 2010). While this study was completed online by the respondents, the panel recruitment was performed using traditional offline methods. Households without the necessary technological infrastructure were provided with loan equipment in order to enable their participation (Blom *et al.*, 2015). The dependent variable, a question about the responsibility of the government to provide unemployment benefits, was part of the LISS in 2008 and 2013. Because respondents were asked about their views on social benefits at two points of time, it is possible to assess whether intermediate job loss had an impact on the respondent's view on social policy.

Traditional cross-sectional surveys are well suited to investigate attitudinal differences between social groups but fail to establish a causal relationship between explanatory factors and attitudes—for example, unemployment is correlated with a stronger support of generous welfare benefits. This does not necessarily mean that individuals actually *change* their attitudes when becoming unemployed. To establish this relationship more firmly, Article III uses a fixed effects (FE) approach which relies solely on the changes within individuals over time and controls for all time-constant individual characteristics (Halaby, 2004). One of the main advantages of this method is to control for any time-invariant personal characteristics of respondents.

5.2.2. *Article IV – Public Opinion towards Targeted Benefits for the Unemployed*

Article IV, the second case study, investigates to what extent respondents' support for unemployment benefits, conditions and sanctions is affected by the characteristics of the benefit recipient. Strict conditions and sanctions have been introduced in Germany in the last decade, making the country a particularly fruitful case to study attitudes towards these policies. Like the LISS, the *German Internet Panel* (GIP) is a probability-based online survey that provides equipment to respondents without access to the internet. The panel focuses on political and economic attitudes and reform preferences through bimonthly online

interviews (Blom, Gathmann and Krieger, 2015). Data collection for the vignette experiment took place in January 2016.

Article IV uses a vignette design to randomly modify several personal characteristics of a fictitious benefits recipient such as age, ethnicity, and family status. Each respondent evaluates the rights and responsibilities of one unemployed person in relation to three policies – generosity of benefits, conditions to receive benefits and sanctions after misbehaviour. The vignette design allows for assessment of the relevance of several of the benefit recipient's characteristics simultaneously as well as their interdependent effects. Furthermore, vignettes reduce the problem of social desirability as respondents are not asked directly about socially sensitive topics such as the discrimination of migrants vis-à-vis the native population (Auspurg and Hintz, 2015).

6 Results

Table 5 illustrates the results of the four empirical chapters. The national context, respondents' socio-economic characteristics and the target group of the policy affect the popularity of labour market policies in different ways.

Table 5 Empirical results in a nutshell

Policy dimension	Strongest support in...	Socio-economic groups who express strongest support	Target groups who receive strongest support
Unemployment benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italy • France 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unemployed • Insecure employed • Mixed results for educational attainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older workers • (Single) parents • Natives
Job creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unemployed • The low educated 	-
Enabling policies	Small and mostly non-significant differences	Small and mostly non-significant differences	-
Conditions to receive benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Kingdom 	Depends on condition	Depends on condition
Sanctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Kingdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed • Low educated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed with favourable behaviour
Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denmark • Switzerland • Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed • Highly educated 	-

6.1 Level of Support for Labour Market Policies

The first research question asked how the public evaluates the rights and responsibilities of unemployed individuals. The results show that most Europeans hold their government accountable for the fate of the unemployed by providing unemployment benefits, jobs, and training courses (Article I). However, I find that the majority of the population supports strict obligations as well. Only six per cent of the population does not name any precondition for the unemployed to receive benefits. About two thirds of the population agrees that unemployed individuals should take any job that is available or otherwise lose their entitlements (Article II & IV). About 40 per cent of German citizens agree with the statement that unemployed individuals should be obliged to move to another city and participate in training if this increases their chances for re-employment. Most people also

favour a cut of entitlements for the unemployed who do not comply with these obligations. For example, respondents cut benefits by about 40 per cent if an unemployed individual repeatedly misses an appointment with the employment agency (Article IV).

The second research question concerned the dimensionality of attitudes towards different labour market policies. The results support the dissertation's initial proposition of a multidimensional attitudinal perspective on attitudes. Individuals held a predominantly differentiated view of labour market policies that cannot be reduced to a common scale of "government responsibility". While some individuals advocate generous benefits, but only for those they perceive as "deserving", others prefer universal and unconditional, but less generous benefits for the unemployed. Accordingly, there is only a modest correlation between attitudes towards different policy instruments (Article I & IV). In addition, the results support the argument that the impact of socio-economic characteristics such as education, gender and income differ among policy dimensions. While male workers with a decent education and high income tend to support extensive labour market regulations and generous benefits, female employees with a low education are on average more in favour of social security and job creation programmes (Article I)

The third research question inquired about national differences regarding public opinion. I find that European societies differ considerably in their support for different aspects of the labour market. The populations in Denmark and Switzerland express strong support for a stricter regulation of the labour market while social protection for the unemployed is rather unpopular. The Danes are the most sceptical about attaching obligations to unemployment benefits. Respondents in France and Italy favour fewer regulations and more generous benefits for the unemployed. Public opinion in Germany favours strong protection of the unemployed and a regulated labour market. The population in the United Kingdom expresses the most negative positions towards unemployed individuals by supporting strict conditions and harsh sanctions. The results give some indication about the general relationship between institutional and economic contexts and attitudes. In regard to the *institutional* context, the results suggest that the population expresses limited support for policies that are already extensively used in their countries (Article I). Furthermore, the populations in countries with generous social protection tend to prefer stricter conditionality

for access, in order to protect the generous benefits against any misuse. In regard to the *economic* context, I find that economic growth and the unemployment rate are significantly related to support for conditionality. Individuals living in wealthier countries are more likely to be in favour of stricter conditions to access benefits, whereas a high unemployment rate reduces such support (Buss *et al.*, 2017).

Fourth, I posed the question concerning how public opinion has changed over time in light of political reforms and the recent economic crisis in Europe. I find that the introduction of stricter enforcement policies since the late 1980s has not resulted in a backlash in public opinion against these policies. Support for conditionality and sanctions even increased in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and most post-communist countries. Furthermore, there are no signs of societal polarisation on this issue over time (Article II). In economic crisis support for generous unemployment benefits increases, in particular among those who are directly affected by job loss (Article III).

6.2 Individual Determinants of Attitudes

The fifth and sixth research questions were concerned with the individual determinants of attitudes. They posed the question asking how attitudes towards the rights and responsibilities are related to the respondent's and the target group's characteristics. In the following I present the results for the two research questions by policy dimension. I find a substantial increase in an individual's support for generous *unemployment benefits* after job loss, backing the results of previous studies with cross-sectional data (Article III). Respondents allocate significantly more money to those individuals who are close to retirement age, take care of a child and have a foreign background (Article IV). Support for *obligations* depends on the educational attainment of the respondent. Respondents who graduated from university expect the unemployed to participate in training measures and to look for work in other cities, whereas those with a lower educational attainment are more likely to support the obligation to "take any job available" (Article II & IV). *Enabling policies*, such as training and job counselling, are the most popular policy instruments among the population. About two thirds of respondents expect unemployed people to participate in training measures. There is no effect of income or political ideology on the individual position towards these policies, but respondents with a university degree are more in favour

of extensive training policies (Article I & IV). There is also strong support for a strict *regulation of the labour market* in most countries. In contrast to expectations from the dualisation literature, I do not find a strong divide between labour market insiders and outsiders. Those without employment are even more in favour of stronger dismissal protection, probably because of their anticipated weak position in the labour market. However, I find stronger support for regulation among males and those with a high educational attainment, lending some support to the expectations of the dualisation literature (Article I).

7 Discussion

The starting point of this research endeavour was the fragmented scientific knowledge concerning public opinion towards labour market reform programmes. This incomplete picture hampers researchers' and politicians' ability to understand why some reforms provoke much resistance while others pass the legislative process barely unnoticed. To tackle this research gap, the four empirical articles provide a nuanced and encompassing illustration of public opinion towards the rights and responsibilities of unemployed individuals. The findings have important implications for the political economy of labour market reforms in European welfare states and provide several directions for future research.

According to Handler (2003: 230), the meaning of social benefits has changed from social rights that come with the status of citizenship, to a conditional right, dependent on the fulfilment of certain obligations. In line with this policy shift, the public's solidarity with unemployed individuals is bound to the expectation that the jobless take necessary measures to regain employment. Reciprocity is a leading principle when it comes to the social rights of the jobless, as indicated by strong support for certain activation measures and conditions to receive benefits. Accordingly, the position of European citizens towards support for the jobless can be described as "conditional solidarity". These findings suggest that reforms emphasising the responsibilities of job seekers can build on broad public support while universal schemes such as unconditional basic income protection are received with less enthusiasm. Popular approval is less likely if benefit cuts and activating reforms affect individuals who have "earned" their rights by contributing to the welfare system, such as, for example, old workers with a long contribution period.

This dissertation is related to a recent approach in the welfare state literature that takes into account the multidimensionality of attitudes towards social policy (Baute *et al.*, 2017; Gallego and Marx, 2016; Roosma, van Oorschot and Gelissen, 2014; van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012). In line with this literature, I find that individuals do not hold a uniform view of the government's role in society, but evaluate policy programmes separately based on their self-interest and moral ideas. Accordingly, societal groups express preferences for different compositions of labour market policies. Cleavages, based on social status and labour market

position, depend on the specific policy issue at stake. These results align with arguments by Häusermann (2010: 7) who, analysing positions of interest organisations, found a “plurality of cross-cutting conflict lines [...] in a *multidimensional space* in which reform politics unfold”. Policymakers use these cross-cutting interests to tie up reform packages that appeal to a larger share of voters. A recent example is the proposal by the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) to extend the duration of unemployment benefit for those individuals who participate in further education.⁶ My results indicate that a large part of the population expresses reservations against the expansion of social benefits, but favours training policies as a condition to receive these benefits. The combination of both measures in one reform package can be seen as an attempt to attract more voters and win them over for this policy proposal. Another method to increase political support is to focus retrenching reforms on specific recipient groups. The results suggest that the young unemployed and foreigners are perceived as particularly undeserving in society when it comes to eligibility for unemployment benefits. Accordingly, retrenching and activating reforms quite often target these two groups.

In addition, one can infer from the results at which point in time political reforms of the labour market have the greatest chance of implementation. I find increasing approval for generous unemployment benefits in times of economic decline. Public support increases sharply among individuals who lose their job, but also among individuals who are not directly affected by the crisis. A reasonable explanation suggests that in economically difficult times the unemployed are perceived as more in need, and also the individual fear of loss of work becomes greater. However, retrenching welfare state reforms are more often carried out in times of economic recession when the problem pressure is highest because of tight public budgets. For example, the strong cuts in the social systems of Southern European countries were carried out under the pressure of international donors in the European economic crisis. These reform programmes were met with demonstrations and strong resistance by major parts of the population. My results suggest that in times of crisis, the unemployed are seen as less responsible for their situation and therefore perceived as

⁶ “Arbeitslosengeld Q: Länger Arbeitslosengeld trotz freier Stellen?”, Zeit Online, March 05 2017.

more deserving. In addition, retrenching reforms in Southern Europe concerned people who are viewed as most deserving of help – the old and those with a long work history.

The results show substantive differences in the assessment of labour market policy among European societies. The population evaluates policies more negatively when they play an important role in the institutional set-up of the national labour market. For example, individuals prefer on average a more flexible labour market if they experience very strict protection against dismissal in their country. The spillover of concepts across national borders, coordinated by international organisations, might have contributed to an approximation of political ideas among European societies. However, European populations have converged in their attitudes towards workfare policies and sanctions over the last decades. In countries in Eastern and Central Europe in particular, there has been a decline in the willingness to grant the unemployed a minimum social subsistence level without conditions (Buss, Ebbinghaus and Naumann, 2017).

This work is subject to a number of limitations. First, the influence of institutional context conditions on attitudes could not be tested with statistical methods such as multilevel analysis. For such an investigation, an international comparative data set, which asks for specific labour market policies in a larger number of countries, is necessary. The data set used in Article I is a first step in this direction, but includes too few countries to check the postulated relationships with statistical methods. The forthcoming wave of the European Social Survey will close this gap, as this survey includes items on activation policies. This data set will enhance scientific understanding of the institutional conditions for attitudes. In addition, the author uses the EVS data (also used in Article II) to examine the influence of the context conditions on attitudes towards activating policies (Buss, Ebbinghaus and Naumann, 2017).

A second restriction concerns the distinction between unemployment insurance and social assistance. In order to measure attitudes towards the generosity of unemployment benefits, I relied on items which generally refer to state aid for "the unemployed". This general question, however, does not take into account the differences between insurance benefits and social benefits. While insurance services are limited in duration and are based on past earnings, social benefits contain a much greater redistribution element. In addition,

insurance benefits are more closely linked to the principle of reciprocity, since they are paid out from contributions paid so far by the insured. From the theoretical considerations, the expectation is that the preferences for unemployment insurance and social benefits for the unemployed differ according to the expected unemployment and the previous earnings.

A third limitation is that political attitudes were investigated and not the resulting actions such as electoral decisions or participation in demonstrations. Thus, no direct implications for implementing political reforms can be inferred. If, for example, individual policy dimensions have very low salience and only play a minor role in electoral decisions, the attitudes of the population on this issue may also have little effect on policy outcomes. In addition, political positions are bundled by interest organisations, such as trade unions, which indirectly influence the reform process. The extent to which the positions of these organisations correspond to the members' interests has not been addressed in this dissertation (see Buss and Bender, 2017).

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ARTICLE I

A Multidimensional Analysis of Attitudes Towards Labour Market Policies in Europe

Abstract

This article examines attitudes towards labour market policies from a multidimensional perspective. Due to data restrictions, past studies in attitude research focused exclusively on the social rights of the unemployed and treated preferences implicitly as unidimensional. This one-dimensional view hampers our understanding of public support for reforms, as policymakers combine labour market policies in various ways. Therefore, this article proposes a multidimensional model of attitudes that covers five distinct policies: social protection, job creation, enabling, enforcing, and regulation. Using confirmatory factor analysis and a novel dataset from six European countries, this article shows that attitudes towards these policies are mainly independent of one another. Respondents prefer different arrangements of labour market policies and evaluate these policies separately. One reason for this finding is that individual determinants of attitudes differ between policy dimensions. While unemployment has a similar impact on all dimensions, the effect of socioeconomic status differs between policies. The finding of multidimensionality is supported by substantial attitudinal differences between the six countries under consideration. These findings have implications for our understanding of public support for labour market reforms as well as for the design of future surveys in this research field.

1 Introduction

During the last decades, major political conflicts centred on the adequate level of unemployment benefits. Today, the labour market has become a multi-dimensional policy field (Clasen and Clegg, 2011). Deregulation and stricter requirements for receiving unemployment benefits have become prominent among social democratic and conservative governments (Weishaupt, 2011; Vlandas, 2013). These reform proposals caused major demonstrations in Italy, Spain, Greece and other European countries during the economic crisis and showed that public opinion can be a major obstacle to policy reform. Thus, it is essential for social scientists and policymakers to understand which social groups support or oppose specific reform proposals (Giger, 2012). Yet, previous research in this field has largely ignored attitudes towards the policies that emerged in the era of activation, considering only the redistributive elements of the welfare state (Fossati, 2013; Gallego and Marx, 2016).

This article extends the usual focus on social benefits by looking into attitudes towards relevant and yet disregarded dimensions of labour market policies and shedding light on the individual determinants of these attitudes. The items which are conventionally used in attitude research capture only one aspect of labour market policies and ignore other policy measures that are relevant for the political debate. To overcome this restricted view, this article employs a multidimensional framework that covers five distinct policy measures: social protection, job creation, enabling, enforcing, and regulation of the labour market. Confirmatory factor analysis is used to examine how attitudes towards these dimensions relate to each other and if a multi-dimensional perspective is justified. The analysis is based on a survey that was conducted in six European countries in 2010.

The multidimensional perspective on attitudes has implications for policy support on the societal level. A large body of the literature in this research field explores how societies differ in their overall level of support (Fraile and Ferrer, 2005; Larsen, 2007). Due to a scarcity of internationally comparable data on attitudes towards labour market policies, past studies focused mainly on public opinion towards benefit provision. The comparative part of this analysis seeks to understand how attitudes towards the five policy dimensions relate to each other at the national level and to what extent they are shaped by institutions of the

labour market. Furthermore, I demonstrate the political consequences of the multidimensional model through analysing the individual determinants of attitudes towards the five policies. Labour market reforms are enacted by changing reform coalitions and facilitated by policy packages that compensate reform losers with gains on another policy dimension (Knotz and Lindvall, 2015). Knowing which social groups support these policy dimensions can help our understanding of successful reforms.

After outlining the argument, I review the literature on labour market policies and derive five distinct policy dimensions. Then, I present the data and method and I proceed with the empirical findings from the confirmatory factor analysis and multivariate regressions. The last section concludes with a discussion of the results and future pathways for research.

2 Theory

2.1 Multidimensionality of Attitudes

The welfare state literature, particularly in respect to public attitudes, tends to focus on the redistributive elements of the welfare state and the social rights of benefit recipients at the expense of other policy dimensions (e.g. Arts and Gelissen, 2001; Blekesaune and Quedagno, 2003; Linos and West, 2003; Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014). Standard question items in several cross-sectional surveys ask about the government's responsibility to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed. These questions focus on an important aspect of social policy but ignore other facets of the labour market. This neglect would be less severe if we knew that attitudes were one-dimensional. In a one-dimensional model, individuals can be placed on a continuum that ranges between extensive demands for policies and refusal to accept any intervention of the government. From this point of view, individuals have a general opinion of to what extent the government should intervene in society and rely on this view when they evaluate specific policies. If this perspective was correct, we would see a high correlation between attitudes towards unemployment benefits and other policy measures such as labour market regulation and activation. This study challenges this perspective and investigates to what extent individuals distinguish between five dimensions of labour market policies: the level of social protection for the unemployed, job creation by the government, enabling the unemployed to find a new job, enforcing stricter conditions for benefits, and regulating the labour market.

Two main arguments support a multidimensional perspective at the national and the individual level. First, institutional differences concerning labour market policies in Europe might lead to distinct patterns of support. The six countries under investigation combine these policies in different ways. While some countries provide generous benefits but foster flexible labour markets and extensive spending on training, others combine generous benefits with strict regulations and low spending on activation (Palier and Thelen, 2010; Viebrock and Clasen, 2008). Furthermore, dominant theories in welfare state research recognise the multidimensional structure of welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Estevez-Abe et al., 2001; Iversen and Soskice, 2001). Political institutions influence attitudes in several ways and are key factors to understand public opinion (Kumlin and Stadelmann-Steffen,

2014). Accordingly, populations might prefer different configurations of labour market policies (see Chapter 2.3).

Second, social groups care about different aspects of social policy and few individuals are interested into a general expansion of social policy on all dimensions. Individual self-interest is one of the main drivers behind attitudes towards social policy (Jæger, 2006). Accordingly, support for unemployment benefits is stronger among those who benefit most, namely the unemployed, the low educated and those with a low income (Blekesaune and Quedagno, 2003; Fraile and Ferrer, 2005). In contrast, the main beneficiaries of labour market regulation are presumably employees in regular employment and individuals with a decent education and income (see Chapter 2.4).

The unidimensional perspective has been contested by recent research. Studies investigating the multidimensional structure of attitudes towards the welfare state show that individuals distinguish between different aspects of the welfare state, including the extent, the results, and the outcomes of social policy (Roosma et al., 2013; 2014; Sabbagh and Vanhuyse, 2006). Gallego and Marx (2016) provide evidence, using an experimental conjoint design, that most respondents want more spending on unemployment programmes but differ in their opinion how to fund these policies. Another study shows that attitudes towards activation policies are weakly related to attitudes towards benefits (Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012).

Findings from previous studies as well as the outlined arguments suggest that attitudes towards various labour market policies represent distinctive dimensions and cannot be reduced to one underlying factor. This is not to say that these dimensions are entirely uncorrelated as some policies appeal to the same target group. For example, generous benefits and job creation constitute redistributive elements in favour of the unemployed. Furthermore, an underlying ideological orientation might influence all dimensions to some extent. However, weak correlations between attitudes towards the five dimensions would suggest that a detailed analysis of different policy dimensions is necessary for a deeper understanding of reform success.

2.2 Five Dimensions of Labour Market Policies

This study investigates attitudes towards the five policies that are most relevant concerning reforms of the labour market in recent years: social protection, job creation, enabling, enforcing and regulation. The first dimension covers measures to *protect* the unemployed and the working poor. One important aspect of these ‘passive’ labour market policies concerns benefits for the unemployed. Most countries organise these as insurance systems in which the extent of benefits depends on previous earnings. Those who do not qualify for insurance benefits have to rely on tax-funded, means-tested minimum income benefits (Pfeifer, 2012). Both insurance benefits and social assistance benefits imply a redistributive element as they transfer financial resources between individuals with a low unemployment risk to those with a higher risk.

Job creation makes up the second dimension of labour market policies. Governments have two options to stimulate employment growth. On the one hand, they can provide subsidies to private-sector employers to encourage them to hire unemployed workers. On the other hand, they can directly create jobs in the public sector (Bonoli, 2010). European governments have applied both strategies extensively in the post-war period. These policies immediately reduce unemployment rates at the cost of higher state spending and frictions in the labour market (Armingeon, 2007).

The aim of active labour market policies (ALMP) is to improve labour market mobility and adjustment, facilitate the reemployment of workers, and enable people to take new job opportunities (OECD, 2014). Since the ‘activation turn’ in the 1990s, European governments have sought to increase levels of employment by activating the jobless. ALMP follow a strategy of carrot and stick by balancing the rights and responsibilities of the unemployed. While often summarised under the common term ‘activation’, we have to distinguish between two very different approaches to activation, namely enforcing and enabling policies (Dingeldey, 2007; Torfing, 1999). *Enforcing* policies encourage the unemployed to re-enter the labour market when they have an opportunity to do so. These policies assume that some unemployed people lack motivation and incentives to take up a job. To encourage their efforts, benefits are increasingly linked to obligations such as conducting job-searches (Weishaupt, 2011). Proponents of *enabling* policies assume that the unemployed lack the

necessary skills to re-enter the labour market. By offering counselling and training courses to those who struggle to find a job they expect to increase the human capital of the unemployed (OECD, 2014).

Governments also *regulate* the labour market through employment laws and regulations of collective bargaining (Ebbinghaus and Eichhorst, 2006). Employment protection legislation restricts employers' rights to hire and fire workers. These regulations differ regarding the length of the notice period, the generosity of severance pay, and the possibility of reinstatement following unfair dismissal. They are often treated as one important barrier to job creation, figuring prominently in the policy recommendations of international organisations and national reform programmes (Emmenegger, 2009a). In the last decades, policy makers have sought to create a more flexible, deregulated labour market (Eichhorst and Marx, 2011; Hinrichs and Jessoula, 2012).

2.3 Attitudinal Differences Between European Countries

One aspect of this analysis is how attitudes towards the five dimensions relate to each other on the national level. Does a strong support for benefits go hand in hand with supporting other measures for the unemployed? Independence of attitudes on the national level could help to explain why European governments follow such different paths in governing their labour markets. This study compares attitudes in the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and Italy. These countries represent different approaches to the labour market, combining social protection, activation, and regulation in various ways.

Denmark and Switzerland represent examples of a 'flexicurity' approach by combining flexible labour markets with generous social protection for the unemployed (Viebrock and Clasen, 2008). Denmark supports this approach with high spending on active labour market policies and strict conditions for receiving benefits (Kvist and Pedersen, 2007). Labour market regulation is much stronger in Italy and France. Germany has enacted several reforms to deregulate the labour market in recent years, in particular for the atypical employed (Dingeldey, 2011). Governments in Italy and France face strong resistance from parts of the population against similar reforms in their countries. France and Germany

provide quite generous unemployment benefits that are strongly related to previous earnings while Italians are provided a patchy security net (Palier and Thelen, 2010). The UK combines low means-tested benefits with a flexible labour market and very low spending on ALMP (Pfeifer, 2012).

A large body of literature has sought to understand how institutional arrangements are shaping attitudes (Buss et al., 2017; Hall and Taylor, 1996; Larsen, 2007; Pfeifer, 2009). Several mechanisms have been proposed for policy feedback effects, pointing at distributive mechanisms and interpretive effects (Pierson, 1993). Policies can generate their own support (positive feedback) or undermine themselves (negative feedback). Previous studies lend some support to negative feedback effects. When benefits for the unemployed are limited, as in Southern and Eastern European countries, public opinion is often quite positive towards an expansion of social policy. In countries with more generous benefits public opinion tends to be more sceptical (Jeene et al., 2014; Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014). From this perspective, diverging configurations of labour market policies should result in national differences concerning the patterns of attitudes. The population in countries with a flexicurity approach (Denmark and Switzerland) might demand stricter regulation of the labour market and less generous benefits. In contrary, we would expect stronger support for a deregulated labour market in countries with a strict regulation, such as in France and Italy.

2.4 Individual Determinants of Labour Market Attitudes

This analysis also seeks to understand if individual characteristics are related in a similar way to attitudes towards different policy dimensions. Across disciplines and research topics, social science scholars emphasise self-interest as a main motivation that underlies behaviour and attitudes. This argument claims that those who (expect to) depend on state benefits support more generous benefits (Cusack et al., 2006; Iversen and Soskice, 2001). Previous studies find clear support for this argument concerning attitudes towards social protection. The unemployed and those at risk to losing their job express a more positive view on generous benefits (Fraile and Ferrer, 2005; Naumann et al., 2016). Furthermore, individuals with high income and decent education oppose generous benefits because they are likely to be net-contributors to the social system (Meltzer and Richard, 1981).

I expect similar determinants for job creation and enforcing policies as for attitudes towards social protection because these policies appeal to the same social groups. Job creation programs provide public work opportunities primarily for the low-skilled. Enforcing policies, such as conditions for benefits and sanctions, provides additional burdens to the unemployed while relieving tax payers' financial burdens. For these reasons, similar cleavages are expected for social protection, job creation and enforcement.

The determinants of attitudes towards enabling policies are less predictable. On the one hand, the unemployed are the main beneficiaries of enabling policies as training measures increase their chances of finding a new job. On the other hand, the net-contributors to the social system, in particular well-paid employees with a decent education, have reasons to support enabling measures as well. They can hope to pay fewer taxes if training policies decrease unemployment rates. Additionally, training policies require the active participation of the unemployed and indicate their willingness to find a job. Thus, they might be more popular than other policies that do not require reciprocal actions by the unemployed. In conclusion, attitudinal cleavages concerning enabling policies are likely to be much smaller than for social protection, job creation and enforcement.

Contradicting theoretical arguments exist on the effect of unemployment on preferences for regulation. On the one hand, dismissal protection safeguards the employed at the expense of the jobless, the low-skilled and other individuals with a precarious labour market position. From this perspective, disadvantaged groups prefer a more flexible labour market that eases their transition into employment. On the other hand, an extended self-interest argument suggests that those groups are not necessarily stronger supporters of deregulation. First, individuals do not only consider their immediate situation but also future changes. Prospects of upward mobility and future jobs can influence one's position towards policies (Guillaud, 2013). Second, labour market laws also affect the respondent's family and friends. If a respondent's household mainly relies on one income, he/she might be better off with extensive dismissal protection. Empirical findings on this topic are inconclusive. Guillaud and Marx (2014) find a positive association between unemployment and support for a flexible labour market in France. In contrast, Emmenegger (2009b), using international survey data from the mid-1990s, finds labour market outsiders to be equally sympathetic to

job security laws as individuals with a secure job. These conflicting results could be caused by the different periods of time and countries selected.

In conclusion, I expect similar societal cleavages based on employment status, income, and education concerning the dimensions social protection, job-creation and enforcing. However, the effects of these individual characteristics are expected to be smaller or even reversed for enablement and regulation because individuals with a favourable position in the labour market might have an interest in supporting job-protection and more training measures.

3 Data, Variables, and Method

3.1 Data

The research centre *NCCR democracy* collected the data with an online survey in Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the UK, and Switzerland in October 2010. These cases were selected to represent contrasting approaches with different combinations of social protection, regulation, and ALMP. From a large opt-in panel a representative subsample of all individuals aged 16–75 was invited to participate in the survey. The data provides a good representation of the population with respect to age, employment status, and sex. However, individuals aged 45–60, the unemployed, and men are slightly overrepresented in the sample (Table A3). Weights correct for the distribution of age groups and gender. The sample contains 8,716 respondents, about 1,500 from each country. After excluding respondents with a highly unlikely answering pattern, like identical answer to all questions, 8,407 respondents were left for the analysis.

3.1.1. Variables

The survey includes 13 items on attitudes towards labour market policies, divided into two batteries of statements. Respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Table 1 lists these items and Table A4 provides the exact wording of the questions. The order of the items is randomised to avoid ranking effects. Two variables are included to measure respondents' position on the labour market: current occupational status (employed, unemployed, not active on the labour market); and the risk of job loss within the next 12 month (very likely or not very likely). Additionally, I include the socio-demographic variables sex, age (squared), income (three categories), and education (three categories).

3.2 Methodological Approach

I conceptualise attitudes towards the five dimensions as unobserved, latent variables that are reflected by the manifest answers to survey questions. Therefore, a statistical framework is needed that can handle latent variables. Both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) (Gelissen, 2000) as well as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Sabbagh and Vanhuyse, 2006) are used in this research field. CFA has two distinct advantages over EFA. It allows for an empirical

test of a model based on theoretical considerations and, at the same time, provides the opportunity to compare the quality of different models with several fit indices (Brown, 2015).⁷ Based on the results of the CFA, individual scores for the five dimensions are calculated by averaging over the respective items of each dimension. The scores provide the basis for the analysis of multidimensionality. I assess the strength of the relationship between the attitudinal dimensions on the individual level with a correlation matrix. The second part of the analysis applies multivariate regressions with individual characteristics and country-dummies as independent variables. The results are used to assess differences between countries and individual determinants of the five dimensions. The methodological approach, combining CFA and regression analysis, allows for a comparison with previous studies on this topic (Van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2012).

Cross-national research on attitudes comes with some methodological challenges that researchers often neglect. Linguistic and contextual differences hamper the comparability of attitudes (Davidov et al., 2014). For example, respondents from a country with a high minimum wage might understand questions about this policy differently than respondents from a country without such a law. To establish a valid comparison of concepts across countries, it is necessary to test for measurement invariance using multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). For this aim, factor loadings are constraining to be equal across countries.⁸ If the constrained model compares well to an unconstrained model, we can assume that in all countries the items are related to each other in a similar way. As I will show in the following section, the attitudinal items have a similar meaning in all countries under consideration.

⁷ Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) values less than 0.07 indicate a close model fit. For the comparative fit index (CFI), values greater than 0.95 indicate a satisfactory model fit (Hooper et al., 2008).

⁸ I follow the suggestions in the recent literature (Meuleman, 2012) to relax those loading constraints that are substantially and significantly lower than in other countries.

4 Results

4.1 The Dimensionality of Attitudes Towards Labour Market Policies

Table 1 presents the means and the standard deviations for the 13 attitude items. Averages range from 2.3 points to 4.0 points on a 1 to 5 scale. The most favoured policies concern the active reintegration of the unemployed and expanding training courses. The standard deviation is an indicator for the polarisation of attitudes. The items ‘job for everyone’, ‘better off should pay more for the unemployed’ and ‘minimum wage’ are the most controversial within and between countries.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and factor loadings for attitudes towards labour market policies

Dimension / Items	Mean	Standard deviation		Factor loadings
		within-country	between-country	
<i>Social protection</i>				
Better off pay more for unemployed	3.38	1.26	0.33	0.63
Solidarity with the unemployed	3.39	1.03	0.19	0.74
Standard of living of unemployed	3.14	1.07	0.16	0.66
Minimum wage	3.59	1.13	0.36	0.63
<i>Job creation</i>				
Job for everyone	3.52	1.20	0.35	0.82
Creation of jobs	3.55	1.13	0.16	0.72
<i>Less enforcement (reversed)</i>				
Efforts to adapt to labour market	2.34	1.01	0.15	0.82
Should accept privations	2.65	1.17	0.21	0.76
Individual responsibility	2.39	1.03	0.27	0.75
Sanctions on job decline	2.33	1.15	0.30	0.70
<i>Enablement</i>				
Reintegrate unemployed	4.10	0.85	0.06	0.71
Training courses	3.96	0.94	0.13	0.61
<i>Regulation (reversed)</i>				
Dismissal protection	3.38	1.19	0.19	-

Source: NCCR Survey, 2010. Standardized factor loadings are obtained from confirmatory factor analysis.

Increasingly complex factor models test whether labour market attitudes are unidimensional or, in line with theoretical expectations, represent partially independent dimensions (Brown,

2015). The first model assigns all items to one single dimension. The fit indices for this model by far exceed the established thresholds for an acceptable fit (Model 1 in Table A1: RMSEA 0.206; CFI 0.802). With few exceptions, factor loadings do not exceed the value of 0.6. This finding is robust to the exclusion of any of the variables.

In the second model, all items are assigned to the five policy dimensions. The dimension *social protection* covers three questions about redistribution to the unemployed and their rights to a decent standard of living. Minimum wages are meant to increase the standard of living of the working poor and therefore represent the social protection dimension. Two variables concerning the obligation of the government to create *jobs* represent the second dimension. The *enforcing* dimension consists of four variables concerning the individual responsibilities of the unemployed and possible sanctions for misbehaviour. The fourth dimension captures attitudes towards policies that *enable* the unemployed to find a new job through reintegration and training with two items. Finally, one item about relaxing protection against dismissal represents the *regulation* of the labour market. To ease the interpretation, scales for enforcement and regulation are reversed so higher values signal more intervention of the government in the labour market.

This five-dimensional model offers a much better description of the attitudinal structure than the previous unidimensional model. The goodness of fit indicators indicate a good fit (RMSEA 0.057; CFI 0.986). Most factor loadings exceed the value of 0.7 and none depicts a value below 0.6 (Table 1, column 4). Several other theoretically feasible specifications show a significantly poorer fit. For example, when preferences for minimum wage and dismissal protection are assigned to the same latent factor, loadings are far below the established thresholds (0.227 and -0.518 respectively). Adding dismissal protection to any of the other dimensions reduces the model fit considerably. Additional tests show that the five-dimensional model offers a good description of the data in all six countries. Fit indices still show an acceptable fit when loadings are constrained to be equal across countries (Table A1, Models 3–5).

The next step analyses the relationship between the five dimensions. The indices for social protection, job creation and enforcement show a high internal consistency with Raykov's (2001) scale reliability coefficient above 0.7. The enabling scale is moderately consistent with a coefficient of 0.57.

Table 2 Correlation matrix for dimensions of labour market policies

	Social protection	Job creation	Enforcement	Enablement	Regulation
Social protection	-				
Job creation	0.54				
Enforcement	0.35	0.18			
Enablement	0.36	0.31	-0.03		
Regulation	0.13	0.03	0.24	0.09	-

Source: NCCR Survey, 2010.

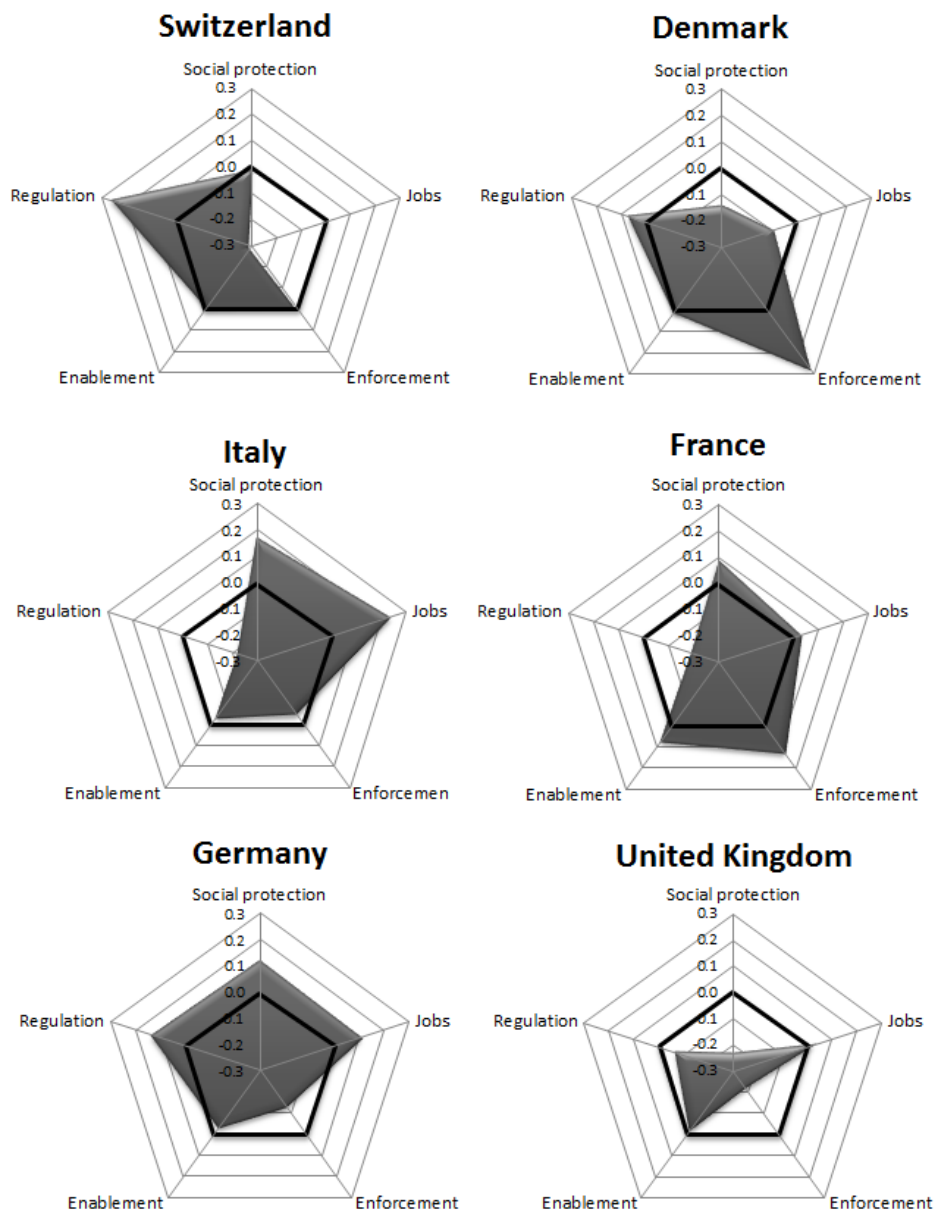
Table 2 presents a correlation matrix for the five attitudinal dimensions. Kühnel and Krebs (2007) provide the rule of thumb that correlation coefficients below 0.2 suggest a weak link and those above 0.5 a strong relationship. Attitudes towards social protection are strongly related to preferences for job-creating measures by the government (Pearson's r : 0.54) and moderately correlated with support for both activation dimensions. Additionally, job creation and enablement display a medium positive relationship (Pearson's r : 0.31). The remaining dimensions, however, show none or a very weak connection. For example, those who support generous unemployment benefits are not necessarily in favour of a regulated labour market. This resonates well with the concept of flexicurity, which combines a flexible labour market with extensive social protection. Moreover, individuals distinguish clearly between the two elements of ALMP, as attitudes towards enablement and enforcement are not significantly related to each other. The correlations for each country individually obtain similar results.³ In conclusion, attitudes towards labour market policies are best represented by a five-dimensional model, which is in line with the theoretical expectations.

4.2 Differences Between Countries

This section reports national differences concerning attitudes towards the policy dimensions. It tests the assumption that public opinion is influenced by the existing policies and that populations show contrasting patterns of support. The grey areas in Figure 1

indicate attitudes towards the five dimensions in each country based on multivariate regressions (Table A2). Dark lines in each graph represent the average policy support across all countries. For example, support for social protection in Italy is about 0.2 points higher than the average across all countries.

Figure 1 Average attitudes for labour market policies by country



Note: Results are based on the multivariate regression in Table A2

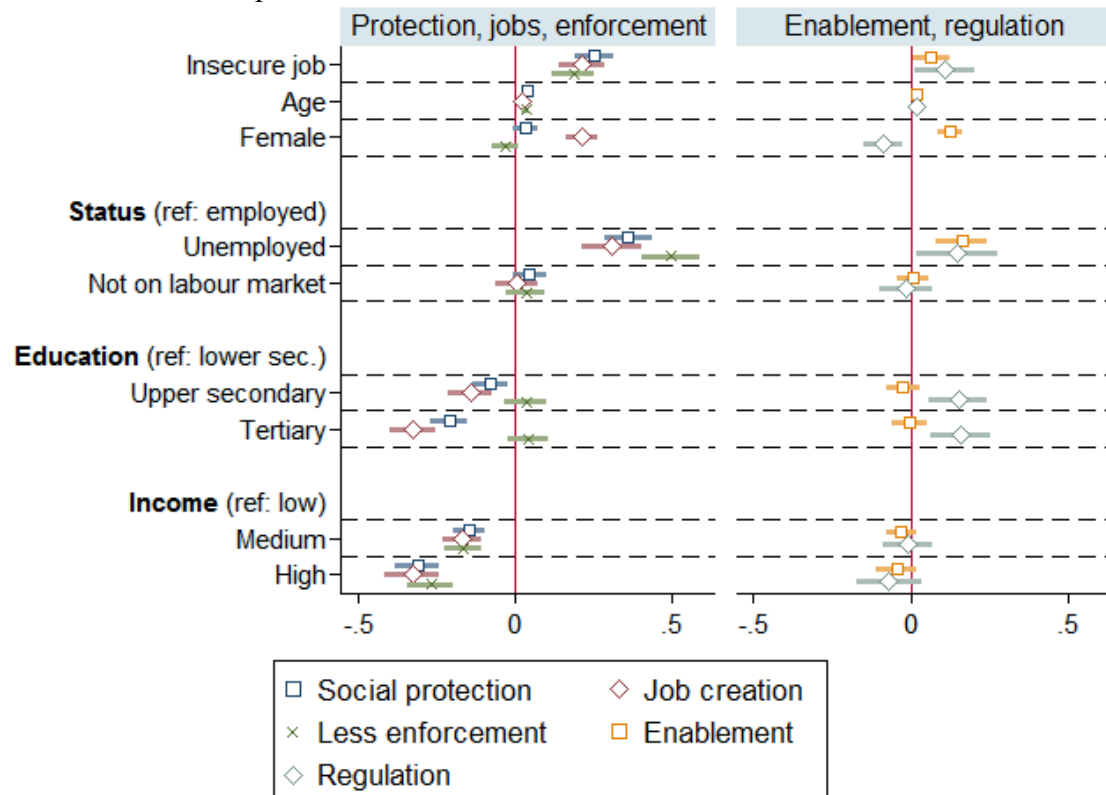
European populations differ considerably in their preferences for labour market policies. Public opinion often contradicts existing policies, lending support to the theory of negative feedback effects. For example, the populations in Denmark and Switzerland, prototypes of

the flexicurity approach, express strong support for a stricter regulation of the labour market while social protection for the unemployed is rather unpopular. Interestingly, the Danes are the most sceptical about attaching obligations to unemployment benefits, possibly due to the important role of (enforcing) activation policies in this country. Respondents in France and Italy, countries with highly regulated labour markets, favour fewer regulations and more generous benefits for the unemployed. Public opinion in Germany favours strong protection of the unemployed and a regulated labour market. This might be a reaction to far-reaching policy reforms towards retrenchment of unemployment benefits and a more flexible labour market. British respondents oppose generous benefits and prefer attaching more stringent obligations to these benefits. Despite an already flexible labour market, support for more regulation is slightly below the average. Overall, these results indicate that a multidimensional model contributes to understanding of distinct national patterns of policies and attitudes. In line with previous research, the institutions of the labour market are shaping these patterns.

4.3 Individual Determinants of Labour Market Attitudes

In the next step, five separate regressions test the relationship between individual characteristics and policy preferences (Figure 2 and Table A2).⁹ The models include labour market position and socio-economic characteristics as independent variables.

Figure 2 Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for individual determinants of attitudes towards labour market policies



Note: Results are based on the multivariate regression in Table A2

Unemployment and fear of job loss have significant positive effects on all dimensions and results in stronger support for generous benefits, jobs creation, activation policies and regulation of the labour market. The positive effect on attitudes towards regulations contradicts the assumptions that labour market outsiders favour weak employment protection. A possible explanation might be that the unemployed are not short-sighted and hope to benefit from protections against dismissal in the future. The effect is positive in all countries and is particularly strong in Denmark.

⁹ Individual country results are not shown but can be provided upon request.

The effects of the socio-demographic variables, however, vary between policy dimensions. Women, compared to men, are stronger supporters of job creation and enablement but oppose stricter regulations of the labour market. A potential reason might be the weaker integration of women into the labour market that makes job creation in the public sector more attractive and protecting existing jobs less relevant for women. High-income earners and individuals with a low risk of unemployment are most likely to be net contributors to the social system. In line with this argument, high earnings and educational attainment are associated with a strong rejection of social protection and job creation. However, income and education are not significantly related to attitudes towards enablement, possibly because activation policies are perceived as less costly or even relieve the tax burden for net-contributors. Furthermore, a decent education even shows a positive relationship with attitudes towards labour market regulation.

In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates that socio-demographic characteristics have varying effects on support for different policies. Individuals with less education and income as well as females tend to support generous benefits and job creation whereas proponents of regulation policies are more often highly educated males. These results help to explain why attitudes towards regulation are only weakly correlated with other attitudinal dimensions.

5 Conclusion and Discussion

This article proposed a multidimensional framework of attitudes by arguing that preferences for job creation, enforcement, enablement, and regulation do not necessarily coincide with attitudes towards redistributive social policy. Confirmatory factor analysis with data from six European countries showed that policy preferences correspond to five attitudinal dimensions. Aside from a strong correlation between attitudes towards social protection and job creation, the five attitude dimensions do not show a strong relationship. Similarly to how policy makers combine these policies differently in each country, we cannot speak of a common scale of ‘government responsibility’ when it comes to the labour market.

Preferences for the five policy dimensions differ widely between countries and the results back previous findings concerning negative policy feedback effects on attitudes. Public opinion seems to contradict existing policies. For example, flexibilisation of the labour market is most popular in countries with extensive dismissal protection and vice versa. However, the question emerges how attitudes translate into political actions. Major demonstrations against a more flexible labour market have taken place in Italy and France, while my results indicate a weak support for regulation in these countries. The ways in which social groups are affected by the different policy dimensions might help to explain why some reforms provoke stronger resistance of the population than others. The analysis revealed differences in the impact of individual characteristics on attitudes. Net contributors to the welfare system strongly oppose expanding unemployment benefits and job creation. In contrast, a high social status does not influence preferences for enabling policies and depicts a positive effect on support for stricter labour market regulations.

There are some limitations to this study. First, it does not distinguish between specific target groups such as the long-term unemployed, older workers, and labour market entrants. As policies become more targeted at specific groups, we should pay more attention to the criteria of deservingness that individuals connect to these groups. Second, the comparative part of this analysis was restricted to few European countries. Future surveys, like round 8 of the ESS, will provide comparable data on attitudes towards activation. This will make it possible to study the link between labour market institutions and attitudes in more detail.

These findings have important implications for the design of future surveys. Items on the generosity of social policy cover an important aspect of the welfare state. However, to study the intertwined relationship between attitudes and institutional change we have to refine our questions. Overall, research on policy preferences moves steadily from a broad perspective to more policy related attitudes. Following this line of research will be rewarding for our understanding of the overall legitimacy of the welfare state, public protests, and reform successes.

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7 Appendix

Table A1 Goodness of fit indices for confirmatory factor analysis model

No.	Configuration	Chi ²	d.f.	CFI	RMSEA
M1	Pooled sample, one dimension	19372.195	54	0.802	0.206
M2	Pooled sample, five dimensions	1376.012	48	0.986	0.057
M3	Multigroup, structural coefficients	1836.646	288	0.985	0.062
M4	Multigroup, loadings (partial)	2195.635	318	0.982	0.065
M5	Multigroup, loadings + intercepts (partial)	4739.659	488	0.985	0.079

d.f., degrees of freedom; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; CFI, comparative fit index.

Pooled sample, N = 8407

Table A2 Determinants of attitudes towards labour market policies

	Social protection	Job creation	Reduction of enforcement	Enablement	Labour market regulation
<i>Occupational status</i> (ref.: employed)					
Unemployed	0.360*** (9.34)	0.307*** (6.33)	0.494*** (10.52)	0.163*** (3.98)	0.148* (2.28)
Not on labour market	0.046 (1.73)	0.007 (0.20)	0.033 (1.10)	0.009 (0.37)	-0.015 (-0.36)
Insecure job	0.251*** (7.91)	0.212*** (5.77)	0.184*** (5.45)	0.066* (2.26)	0.109* (2.24)
Age	0.038*** (7.07)	0.021** (3.10)	0.033*** (5.53)	0.018*** (3.33)	0.020* (2.40)
Age ²	-0.000*** (-5.80)	-0.000** (-3.03)	-0.000*** (-5.99)	-0.000 (-1.84)	-0.000* (-2.10)
Female	0.035 (1.75)	0.212*** (8.52)	-0.032 (-1.45)	0.125*** (6.59)	-0.088** (-2.81)
<i>Education</i> (ref.: lower secondary)					
Upper secondary	-0.079** (-2.78)	-0.142*** (-4.06)	0.034 (1.02)	-0.023 (-0.85)	0.153** (3.25)
Tertiary	-0.210*** (-6.91)	-0.325*** (-8.74)	0.042 (1.24)	-0.004 (-0.14)	0.161*** (3.32)
<i>Income (ref.: low)</i>					
Middle income	-0.146*** (-5.81)	-0.170*** (-5.39)	-0.166*** (-5.73)	-0.030 (-1.20)	-0.008 (-0.19)
High income	-0.310*** (-8.65)	-0.326*** (-7.51)	-0.268*** (-7.23)	-0.044 (-1.33)	-0.068 (-1.27)
Missing	-0.173*** (-5.03)	-0.211*** (-4.99)	-0.115** (-2.97)	-0.099** (-2.90)	-0.057 (-1.07)
<i>Country (ref.: UK)</i>					
Germany	0.456*** (15.46)	0.152*** (4.14)	0.158*** (4.98)	0.017 (0.59)	0.249*** (5.62)
France	0.375*** (11.83)	0.048 (1.25)	0.418*** (11.94)	0.114*** (4.16)	-0.081 (-1.70)
Italy	0.444*** (15.06)	0.240*** (6.38)	0.187*** (6.03)	0.002 (0.06)	-0.176*** (-3.86)
Switzerland	0.224*** (7.58)	-0.355*** (-9.40)	0.177*** (5.94)	-0.008 (-0.31)	0.305*** (7.26)
Denmark	0.177*** (5.63)	-0.043 (-1.09)	0.566*** (17.51)	0.051 (1.80)	0.244*** (5.36)
Constant	2.388*** (20.55)	3.326*** (23.04)	0.683*** (5.21)	3.435*** (29.86)	1.777*** (9.83)
Observations	8407	8407	8407	8407	8407
R ²	0.126	0.080	0.078	0.037	0.026

Source: NCCR Survey, 2010. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. OLS regression. Results are weighted for composition of age groups and gender.

Table A3 Representativeness of the NCCR survey compared to the population

	Eurostat	NCCR
<i>Age categories</i>		
15-29	23.8%	22.7%
30-44	27.9%	25.9%
45-60	27.6%	34.9%
60-74	20.7%	16.6%
Unemployed	7.5%	9.1%
Male	49.5%	50.6%

Sources: Eurostat, NCCR

Table A4 Items on attitudes towards labour market policies.

Item	Wording
<i>Question statements</i>	“Here is a list with statements about the job market and unemployment. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements”
Better off pay more for unemployed	Better off people should pay more towards supporting the unemployed
Solidarity with the unemployed	There should be more solidarity with unemployed people
Standard of living of unemployed	Unemployed people should be able to maintain their standard of living
Efforts to adapt to labour market	Unemployed people should make more effort to adapt to the needs of the labour market
Should accept privations	Unemployed people should be willing to accept privations (such as longer journeys to work, moving house)
Job for everyone	It should be the government’s responsibility to ensure a job for everyone who wants one
Individual responsibility	Unemployed people should accept more responsibility for themselves
Reintegrate unemployed	Active steps should be taken to reintegrate unemployed people
<i>Question measures</i>	“Please, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these approaches to fighting unemployment”
Sanctions on job decline	Tougher sanction against people who refuse to accept a reasonable offer of a job
Creation of jobs	Creation of jobs by the state
Training courses	More training courses for unemployed people
Dismissal protection	Relaxation of rules protecting employees against dismissal
Minimum wage	Higher minimum wage

Scale for both questions: 1: Strongly disagree – 5: Strongly agree.

Table A5 Independent variables

Variable	Question / construction of item
<i>Occupational status</i>	
Employed	Working full-time or part time
Unemployed	Unemployed and actively looking for a job or available for a job
Other	In education, permanently sick, retired, military or community service or housework
Insecure job	Now, we would like you to think about what might happen during the next 12 months. How likely would you say it is that you will become unemployed in the next 12 months and will be looking for work for at least four consecutive weeks? Would you say it is... [Not at all likely 1 – Likely 4]
Income	Using this scale, please indicate which letter describes your household's total income after tax and compulsory deductions, from all sources? If you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate. Use the part of the scale that you know best: weekly, monthly or annual income. [9 point scale]
Education	What is the highest educational level you have obtained, i.e. diploma or certificate awarded, or examination passed? Please tick only the highest one. [scale depending on country]

ARTICLE II

Public Opinion towards Workfare Policies in Europe

Polarization of Attitudes in Times of Austerity?

Abstract

Increasing wage inequality, strong labour market divides and welfare retrenchment are widely believed to result in more polarized public opinion towards the welfare state. This study tests the polarization hypothesis with one of the most likely issues to yield political conflicts – workfare policies. Since the 1980s, job seekers are increasingly obliged to accept job offers to avoid benefit cuts. The study examines public opinion data on workfare policies from 23 European countries in the years 1990-2008 with multi-level regression analysis. Individuals who are most affected by workfare – the unemployed, the poor, and the young – most strongly oppose workfare concepts. Against theoretical expectations, there is no evidence for increasing polarization of attitudes in Europe. Attitudinal cleavages based on employment status, income, and education remain stable. Differences in the attitudes of age groups even dissolve because younger cohorts increasingly favour strict conditions for unemployment benefits, which results in a convergence of attitudes towards workfare. The results suggests that warnings of increasing social conflicts and an erosion of solidarity in European societies are exaggerated.

Revise & Resubmit at the International Journal of Social Welfare.

1 Introduction

Social inequality, one of the central themes of the social sciences, is back in the public debate in Europe. Far reaching societal trends in the labour market have contributed to the expansion of inequalities in recent decades (OECD, 2015). Post-industrial labour markets are characterized by an intensifying dualization by which the workforce is increasingly divided into privileged insiders and disadvantaged outsiders (Emmenegger, Häusermann, Palier, & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2012b; Lindbeck & Snower, 1988). In addition, economic, demographic and social changes put pressure on the welfare state, which has entered a phase of "renegotiation, restructuring, and modernization" after a rapid expansion in the post-war period (Pierson, 2001). Moreover, income inequality has risen since the 1970s in most developed countries (Piketty, 2014).

These societal transformations do not only expand economic disparities, but also contribute to social divides in society. Scientists and political observers assess "deep and abiding cultural fragmentation" (Hunter, 1994, vii) and a trend "towards ideological polarization in domestic and social concerns" (Wyszomirski, 1995, p. 37). While several studies focus on ideological polarization in the US (DiMaggio, Evans, & Bryson, 1996; Evans, 2003), few studies investigate long-term trends in public opinion cleavages in Europe (Naumann, 2014). The present study addresses this issue and examines whether public opinion actually became more polarized. A wide dispersion of attitudes might undermine the moral foundation of the welfare state and result in major political conflicts. Accordingly, polarization of attitudes in regard to social policies "may well be as pivotal as overall public support in explaining policy reforms" (Rehm, Hacker, & Schlesinger, 2012, p. 387).

Previous studies indicate that public opinion regarding health care and pensions did not become more polarized in recent years. Attitudinal cleavages in these policy fields based on age, class, gender and political ideology appear to be rather stable over time (Naumann, 2014; Svallfors, 2004, 2011). I argue that health care and pension programs are the least likely cases to find increasing cleavages because of the great popularity of these programs among the European population (van Oorschot, 2006). To put the polarization hypothesis to a stricter test, the present study investigates attitudes towards a policy that is much more contested and divides the population clearly into winners and losers – workfare. Workfare

policies restrict access to unemployment benefits to provide incentives for job-seekers. Unconditional social rights based on citizenship (Marshall, 1950) are increasingly seen as promoting “passivity among the poor [and] a culture of dependency” and are replaced by certain obligations as preconditions to be accepted as a full member of society (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, 355 f.). The unemployed are increasingly obliged to accept offers and actively seek work to avoid sanctions and benefit cuts (Handler, 2003). Workfare concepts were first applied in the US in the late 1970s and spilled over to European politics from the 1980s onwards (Handler, 2009).

The empirical analysis relies on public opinion data from the European Value Study that covers the years 1990, 1999 and 2008 in 23 European countries. Regression analysis is applied in each year to investigate if the relevant societal cleavages based on several socio-demographic characteristics have become more pronounced over time. The contribution of the present study to existing research is twofold. First, the study moves beyond a static cross-sectional analysis and provide a comparative study of how attitudinal cleavages concerning workfare policies have changed over a period of two decades. Second, it extends the usual focus on social benefit rights by investigating attitudes towards the social legitimacy of benefit obligations. While there is a large literature on the individual determinants of attitudes towards the rights of the unemployed (Fraile & Ferrer, 2005), only a few recent studies focus on job-seekers’ responsibilities (Fossati, 2017; Jeene & Roosma, 2017).

2 Theory

2.1 Individual Determinants of Public Opinion towards Workfare

Before I argue how societal developments might have increased attitudinal cleavages in regard to workfare policies, I turn to the development of these policies and discuss which societal cleavages one can expect. An "activation turn" has been taking place since the late 1980s, aiming at a stronger integration of non-employed persons into the labour market (Weishaupt, 2011). Policy makers introduced a new balance between the rights and responsibilities of job-seekers. On the one hand, unemployed individuals receive support to find employment through counselling and training courses. On the other hand, unemployment benefits are subject to stricter conditions, such as active job search and the acceptance of appropriate job offers (Dingeldey, 2007; Weishaupt, 2012). The definition of suitable job offers has been extended and job-seekers are obliged to accept an offer with lower payment and qualification requirements than their previous workplace (Knotz, 2012). Unemployment is no longer a status right for all citizens but a contractual relationship that stipulates benefit rights in exchange for duties to seek work (Handler, 2003). This *workfare* approach has been most consistently implemented in Anglophone countries. Already in the late 1980s, the conservative administration under Thatcher introduced stricter regulations (Finn & Schulte, 2008). Unemployment benefits and social benefits have been linked to more stringent conditions in other developed countries as well, but extent and timing of these reforms differs (Handler, 2009). Workfare reforms reshaped traditional egalitarian and collectivist elements of the welfare state in Nordic countries and in particular in Finland (Kananen, 2012; Kildal, 2001). Most continental European countries are latecomers in regard to these reform efforts. However the German *Hartz* reforms went beyond the attempts in most other European countries by introducing a range of workfare measures (Eichhorst, Grienberger-Zingerle, & Konle-Seidl, 2008).

In view of these far-reaching reforms, surprisingly little is known about the individual determinants of attitudes towards workfare policies. Research has been almost exclusively on the rights of benefit recipients and ignored their responsibilities (Fraile & Ferrer, 2005). Previous research reveals that two basic motivations help explain attitudes towards social policy: self-interest and values.

First, the rational self-interest argument suggests that those individuals who (expect to) depend on state benefits are more in favour of generous policies (Iversen & Soskice, 2001). For example, job-loss leads to stronger support for unemployment benefits (Margalit, 2013; Naumann, Buss, & Bähr, 2016). The first part of this study is concerned with the question of whether attitudes towards workfare policies are shaped by similar socio-economic characteristics of the respondent. I assume current unemployment to be the strongest determinant of self-interest in regard to workfare policies. Conditions for benefits and sanctions impose additional burdens on the unemployed and lead to a restraint of their benefits if they decline a job offer. The employed, in contrast, can expect a reduction in their tax burden if strong activation policies leads to a lower unemployment rate and thus reduces the costs for the social system (Fossati, 2017). Thus, I expect unemployed individuals to oppose political measures that put additional pressure on them, in turn decreasing their support for workfare policies. Not only current unemployment, but also the risk of becoming dependent on state benefits, has been shown to increase support for generous social policies (Iversen & Soskice, 2001; Rehm et al., 2012). Accordingly, individuals with an elevated risk of becoming unemployed, for instance the lower educated, should be more critical towards strict monitoring of their job search efforts and the obligation to accept every job offer. Furthermore, I expect that individuals with a low income oppose workfare policies because they are on average more often dependent on unemployment benefits than the financially affluent (Achterberg, Van der Veen, & Raven, 2014). Lastly, young individuals are more often affected by workfare policies because they have an elevated risk to become unemployed and are exposed to the harshest workfare measures in most European countries (Larsen, 2008). In conclusion, unemployment, low educational attainment, small income, and young age, are negatively correlated to support for workfare policies (Hypothesis 1). Second, political sociology stresses the importance of normative orientations such as values, reciprocity, norms and justice beliefs for the formation of attitudes (Kulin & Svallfors, 2013; Mau, 2003). I assume that a strict work ethic that emphasise values such as diligence, eagerness, and commitment to work is positively correlated with support of workfare policies (Hypothesis 2).

2.2 Increasing Attitudinal Cleavages in the Era of Workfare?

In the next step, the discussion turns to the question of whether reaching societal trends such as welfare state retrenchment, segmentation of the labour market, increasing economic inequalities, and demographic change might have contributed to increasing societal cleavages in regard to workfare policies.

First, I argue that retrenching policies and labour market dualization result in a polarization of attitudes between individuals who depend on unemployment benefits and others who see themselves primarily as net contributors to the social security system. According to scholars of the “new politics” approach, industrialized countries have entered a phase of restructuring and retrenchment of social policy after a steady expansion of the welfare state in the post-war period (Bonoli, 2005; Pierson, 2001). The introduction of demanding activation policies, and in particular the implementation of stricter conditions for unemployment benefits, can be seen as such an attempt to recalibrate the welfare state (Häusermann, 2012). According to Pierson (1996, 2001), political conflicts between interest groups follow a different logic in times of welfare state retrenchment compared to times of expansion. In the “golden age” of the welfare state, welfare reforms were concerned with redistributing additional benefits to new social groups. Even though conflicting interests might emerge between net-payers and beneficiaries of these policies, expanding social policies are usually less contested (Giger & Nelson, 2011). Retrenching reforms such as a stricter access to unemployment benefits are expected to provoke much stronger opposition among those who are most affected. While the affected groups seek to defend their benefits, net payers are more inclined to accept reforms and cut-backs (Naumann, 2014).

Moreover, the argue that increasing segmentation of European labour markets results in more pronounced attitudinal divides based on the position in the labour market (Burgoon & Dekker, 2010; Lindvall & Rueda, 2014). Secular trends such as deindustrialization and globalization have contributed to an increasing divide between individuals with secure, well paid jobs on the one hand and unemployed and precariously employed on the other hand (Emmenegger, Häusermann, Palier, & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2012a). Insider-outsider theory suggests that Insiders occupy protected full-time employment, whereas a growing share of outsiders is either job-less or works under unfavourable conditions such as in involuntary

part-time or temporary contracts (Lindbeck & Snower, 1988, 2001). These different labour market opportunities affect political attitudes of the two groups. Labour market outsiders such as the unemployed express stronger support for active and passive labour market policies, redistribution, and left-wing political parties (Marx, 2014; Schwander & Häusermann, 2013). I expect that as labour market divides become more pronounced, the attitudinal cleavage between the employed and the less well-off increases. To sum up, the new politics approach and insider-outsider theory suggest increasing social divides between unemployed and employed individuals (Hypothesis 3).

Second, increasing divides in the labour market and the emergence of non-standard work have contributed to rising income inequality in most European countries since the late 1970s (Emmenegger et al., 2012b). Since then, the Gini coefficient rose by about 10 per cent in OECD countries because of a steep increase of top incomes and stagnation at the lower end of the social ladder (OECD, 2015). Arguments that take the Meltzer-Richard model (1981) as the point of departure claim that attitudes towards redistributive policies are more divided in economically unequal societies because of the opposing interests at both ends of the income spectrum (Pontusson & Rueda, 2008). Increasing inequalities should therefore lead to a more polarized public. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2008) argue that increased polarization of the party system in the US since the 1970s is a result of an increasingly unequal distribution of wealth in this time period. In a similar way, increasing inequalities in Europe would lead to diverging interests based on individuals' financial situation, as high earners become increasingly opposed to (unconditional) social benefits for the needy, and the financially vulnerable see workfare measures as a potential threat to their social rights. A similar argument applies to educational attainment which is highly correlated to economic success. Following the assumptions of the Meltzer-Richard model, I test the assumption that individuals with high and low income and education become more polarized in their attitudes towards workfare (Hypothesis 4).

Third, I argue that the introduction of workfare policies affects young and old differently, thereby increasing the attitudinal gap between generations. The notion of a "generation gap" goes back to the early work of Karl Mannheim (1928), who attributed different attitudes and values of generations to the common experience of important historical events

in the formative years of adulthood. Different experiences of workfare policies when entering the labour market could shape the view of the young on workfare, because in most countries these policies were particularly targeted at (long-term) unemployed young individuals (Larsen, 2008). From this perspective, the young who are increasingly targeted by workfare policies should become more opposed to them. In addition, I argue that the demographic transition and population aging might intensifies the conflict between old and young generations. In the developed world, the share of pensioners in the population has increased, even though countries differ in the extent of this development (Dyson, 2013). The rising costs of the pension system lead to a greater burden on social systems, which increases conflicts over resources between recipients of different programs of the welfare state (Svallfors, 2008). Under the stress of stagnating pensions and an increase in the retirement age, older individuals could be striving to reduce the social costs of unemployment benefits. Empirical studies show that individuals take their own interest more into account when they are forced to trade-off between different social systems (Busemeyer & Garritzmman, 2017). Thus, the fifth hypothesis suggests that attitudinal cleavage between old and young individuals increases over time (Hypothesis 5).

Yet, in the literature there is little evidence that attitudes towards universal welfare programs such as health care and pensions became more polarized. Ebbinghaus and Naumann (2017) find no clear indication of increasing polarization in regard to spending for pensioners and unemployed individuals, but limit their analysis to Germany and the United Kingdom. Naumann (2014) finds stable cleavages based on employment status, age, political ideology and health status concerning attitudes towards government responsibility for health care. Results by Svallfors (2004, 2008) suggest persistent conflicts based on social class and age. Quadagno and Pederson (2012) indicate only a slightly increasing discontent between pensioners and the working population when it comes to the provision of pensions by the state. I argue that health care and pensions are the least likely policy fields to assess if public opinion has become more polarized over time. Both welfare programs are widely popular because even net contributors expect to benefit from these programs at a later stage in their lives. Furthermore, old and sick individuals are viewed as particularly deserving of help (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). I assume that if European societies have become more polarized, this trend is most visible for contested policies such as workfare policies, which

divide the population clearly into contributors and beneficiaries. Furthermore, while public support to the welfare state remains stable at a high level, there is declining support for welfare provision for the unemployed (Ebbinghaus & Naumann, 2017; Pearce & Taylor, 2013) and “a growing population [...] does not believe that unemployment policies are a vital part of state responsibility” (Edlund, 2009, p. 140). This negative trend could indicate that support for unemployment benefits decreases among the main contributors to the welfare state. In conclusion, retrenching workfare policies, increasing inequalities, and population aging point to a polarization of public opinion towards social policy. If these assumptions hold true, the overall distribution of attitudes will become more dispersed and the share of strong advocates and opponents of workfare policies in society will increase (Hypothesis 6).

3 Data & Method

The data comes from the European Value Study (EVS), a repeated cross-sectional international survey that was conducted in 1990, 1999 and 2008.¹⁰ After list wise deletion for missing data 75,957 respondents remain in the sample. Twenty-three countries provided data at all three points of time. East and West Germany are analysed separately because important attitudinal differences remain due to socialization in different economic systems (Alesina & Fuchs-Schündeln, 2007; Svallfors, 2010). Support for workfare is measured on a 1 to 10 scale with an item that asks whether an unemployed person should take any job available in order not to lose their unemployment benefits (10) or whether the unemployed should have the right to refuse a job they do not want without benefit consequences (1). This item captures two related aspects of workfare, namely the strictness of obligations for benefits and the appropriate punishment if benefit recipients fail to comply with these conditions. Four socio-economic characteristics are particularly important for this study – employment status, income, education, and age. In addition, as control variables I include respondent's union membership, sex, family status, and social assistance receipt in the previous five years. The statistics for the independent variables can be obtained from Table A1 in the Appendix.

The variable on work ethic is measured with an index that is constructed out of four items. On a five point scale, respondents are asked to indicate to what extent they agree to the following statements – (1) it is humiliating to receive money without having to work for it; (2) people who don't work turn lazy; (3) work is a duty towards society; (4) work should always come first, even if it means less spare time.

The analysis of attitudes towards workfare policies proceeds in three steps. In the first step, I use multilevel regression analysis to assess the individual determinants of attitudes towards workfare policies in 2008, the most recent year for which data are available. Multilevel analysis has become the standard approach in comparative attitude research because it leads to unbiased standard errors when the data are nested and it is suited to deal with unobserved between-country variation (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2008).

¹⁰ The survey was conducted at slightly later points of time in Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia (all in 1991), Romania (1993), Slovenia (1992), Belgium (2009) and Finland (2000, 2009).

The second step of the analysis tests the magnitude of social conflicts in regard to workfare policies in all three years. For this aim, separate regression models are calculated for six country clusters in each year. Based on regional and institutional similarities the 23 countries are allocated to six regional clusters to account for the differences in the societal and political development – Central Europe, Continental Europe, Southern Europe, Nordic countries and Anglo-phone countries. The Central European cluster is composed of Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and East Germany. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania represent the Baltic cluster. The continental European cluster contains Austria, Belgium, France, The Netherlands and West Germany. Portugal, Spain and Italy constitute the Southern European cluster. The Nordic cluster is comprised of Denmark, Sweden and Finland. The Anglo-Phone world is represented by the United Kingdom and Ireland. Without doubt, there is still great variation within each country cluster despite their institutional and economic similarities. The present analysis does not aim at providing a perfect clustering of countries but rather to simplify the complex data structure and to detect the important trends in regard to societal cleavages. Several other configurations of country clusters, e.g. a common cluster for Central European and Baltic states, are tested and do not yield significantly different results.

The third part of the analysis investigates whether the overall societal polarization of attitudes has increased with two measures – standard deviation and the share of the population that takes a very positive or very negative stance towards workfare (DiMaggio et al., 1996). Respondents answering 1 or 2 on the scale are counted as strongly against and those answering 9 or 10 as strongly in favour of the workfare concept.

4 Empirical Findings

4.1 Individual Determinants of Attitudes towards Workfare

The first step of the empirical analysis tests the hypothesis that unemployment, low educational attainment, low income, and young age are negatively related to support for workfare policies. Table 1 presents the results of a multi-level multivariate regression with attitudes towards workfare policies as the dependent variable in 2008.

In line with Hypothesis 1, unemployment is strongly correlated to disagreement with the workfare concept. On average, employed individuals agree about 1.2 points more (on the 1 to 10 scale) with the statement that job-seekers should take any job available or otherwise lose their right to receive benefits. Also in agreement with the hypothesis, respondents who receive a decent income or have reached retirement age are stronger supporter of workfare policies than their poorer and younger peers. Inconsistent with expectations, respondents with at least upper secondary education are significantly more sceptical about strict conditions for unemployment benefits than their less educated counterparts. The reason could be that respondents were asked about their opinion on the strict obligation to “take any job available”. Many individuals with primary school education might not be particularly selective in their choice of employment as their chances for attractive workplaces are limited. Therefore, the lower educated do not consider the condition to take any available job as a strong obligation. The higher educated, in contrast, are less inclined to take any job irrespective of its payment and required qualification level. Overall, the results lend only partially support for Hypothesis 1 and contradict previous findings concerning the impact of education on attitudes towards social policy. In regard to the remaining variables, membership of a trade union, being female and living in a single household are also negatively correlated with support for workfare policies.

Model 2 includes the respondent’s attitudes towards work ethic in addition to the socio-demographic variables in Model 1. It becomes evident that work ethic is an important predictor for opinions towards workfare. Each point on the four-point work ethic scale increases support for work obligations by about 0.7 points. Together with actual unemployment, work ethics are the most important determinant of public opinion towards

workfare. Accordingly, not only self-interest, but also the perspective on work is important in defining attitudes, thereby confirming Hypothesis 2.

Table 1 Support for workfare policies in 23 European countries in 2008

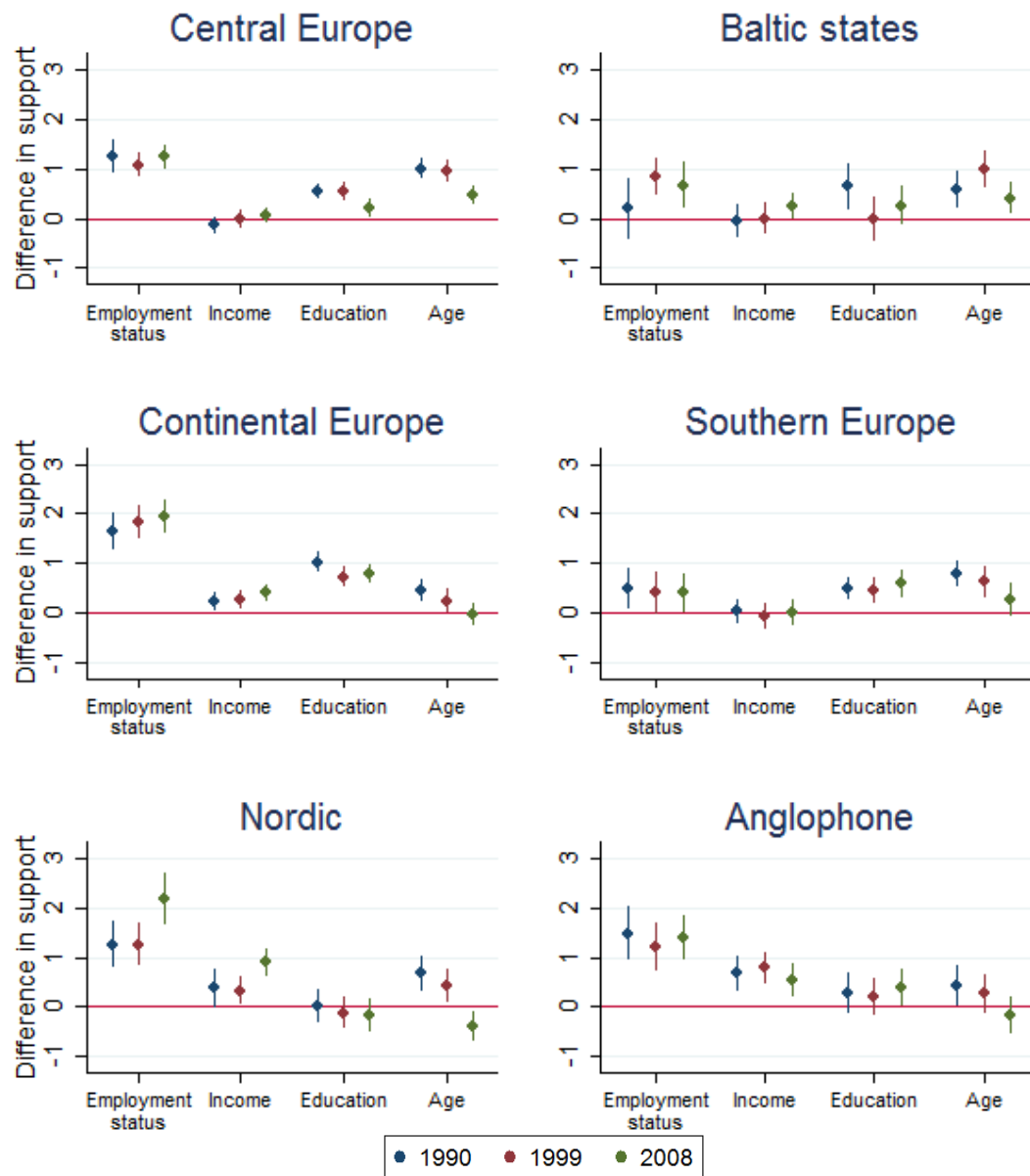
	Model 1	Model 2
<i>Employment status</i>		
Full-time employed (ref.)		
Part-time	-0.01	0.06
Self-employed	0.21 **	0.19 *
Unemployed	-1.17 ***	-1.00 ***
Not in labour market	-0.16 **	-0.07
<i>Education</i>		
Primary	0.48 ***	0.49 ***
Lower secondary (ref.)		
Upper secondary	-0.28 ***	-0.25 ***
Tertiary	-0.39 ***	-0.28 ***
<i>Income</i>		
Low (ref.)		
Medium	0.03	0.04
High	0.18 ***	0.24 ***
<i>Age</i>		
15-34 years (ref.)		
35-54 years	-0.06	-0.08
55-64 years	0.16 **	0.02
>65 years	0.60 ***	0.30 ***
Social assistance in the past	-0.40 ***	-0.33 ***
Union membership	-0.32 ***	-0.28 ***
Female	-0.08 *	-0.05
<i>Family status</i>		
Married		
Living with partner	-0.16	-0.10
Single	-0.10 **	-0.05
Work ethic (1-5 scale)		-0.69 ***
Constant	6.80 ***	8.43 ***
Interclass correlation	4.11	3.85
Explained variance (%)	3.50	7.63
<i>N (individuals)</i>	24736	24736
<i>n (countries)</i>	23	23

Note: Multi-level linear regression with unstandardized coefficients

4.2 The Development of Societal Cleavages over Workfare Policies

The second part of the empirical analysis evaluates whether the European public became more divided on the contested policy issues of workfare in the decades after 1990. To test the assumption of deepening social divides, the regression model from Table 1 is run for six separate country cluster in the years 1990, 1999 and 2008. From these models, Figure 1 depicts visually the coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the four socio-economic characteristics of interest – age, employment status, education, and income.

Figure 1 Attitudinal cleavages between social groups by country cluster, 1990-2008



Note: Results obtained from OLS-regressions for each year with the same covariates as in Table 2 and including country dummies. Cleavages refer to net differences between the following groups: employed – unemployed; age group 15-34 – age group 55-64; tertiary education - lower secondary education; income: poorest third – richest third.

The more distant the coefficient is located from the zero-line, the stronger the impact of the respective characteristics. For example, in Central Europe the difference between employed and job-seekers is around 1.2 points on the 10 point scale in 1990. If one of the cleavages became more important over time, there would be an upward trend over the years. It is important to note that cleavages might grow in one region and diminish in others, depending on the societal developments in the respective countries.

4.2.1. *Cleavages based on employment status*

The attitudinal gap between employed and unemployed individuals is most pronounced in Continental Europe (about 2 points) and smallest in Southern Europe (about half a point). This finding indicates that cleavages are influenced by the specific institutional and economic context. In contrast to expectations from new politics approach and insider-outsider theory, there is no visible trend towards more pronounced divides concerning employment status. For example, in Central Europe the gap is constant at around 1.2 with a small and non-significant drop in the year 1999. Only in the Nordic countries did the individual labour market position become more important for defining attitudes as support for workfare grows among the employed between 1999 and 2008. In Sweden, Denmark and even more in Finland, the enactment of workfare reforms stimulated a modest shift “from welfare to workfare” in the 2000s (Kananen, 2012). These reforms might have increased the acceptance of conditions for unemployment benefits, or vice versa, the shift in attitudes may have triggered these reforms. In conclusion, Hypothesis 3 can only be confirmed for the Nordic cluster and must be rejected for the rest of Europe.

4.2.2. *Cleavages between the rich and poor*

Income is overall positively correlated with support for workfare, but the relationship is significant only in Continental Europe, Northern Europe and in the Anglophone countries. In contradiction to (implicit) expectations from models in political economy, there is no indication of an increasing attitudinal gap between the richest third and the poorest third in society. The Nordic countries are the only exception as the relevance of income for attitudes towards workfare significantly increased between 1999 and 2008. Again, the institutional shift in this period might have triggered the change towards greater acceptance of workfare among high income earners. Low educational attainment does have a positive effect on

support for welfare policies, but the relationship is only significant in Central, Continental and Southern Europe. Overall, there is weak support for Hypothesis 4, which calls into question whether social status, defined by income and education, has become a more important predictor of attitudes over time. Again, Nordic countries were the only exceptions with some evidence for an increasing divide between rich and poor in 2008.

4.2.3. *The generational divide*

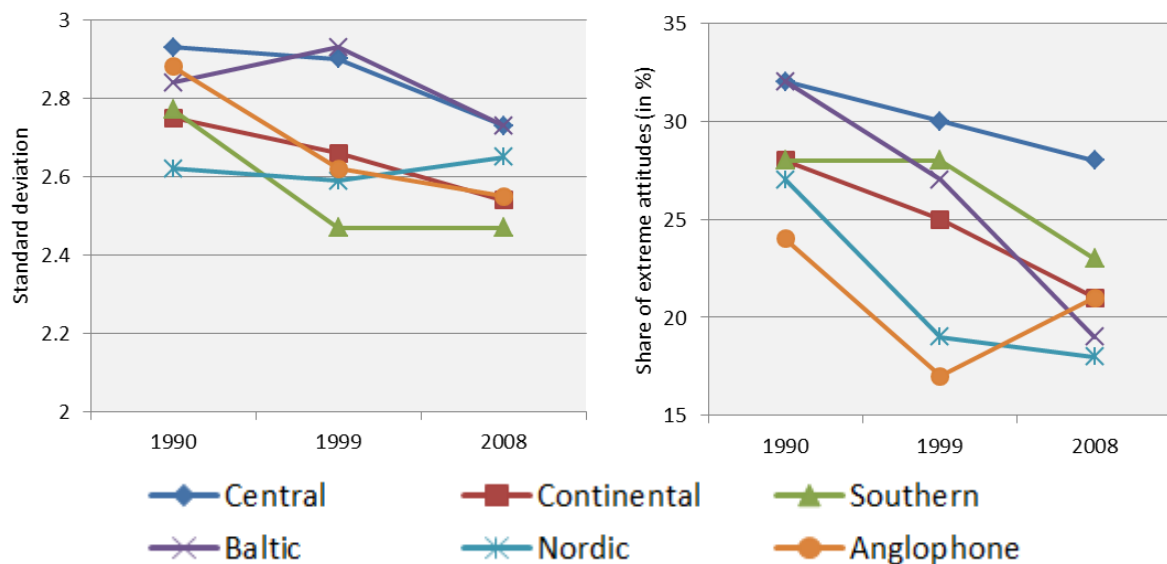
Hypothesis 5 claims that the gap between young and old becomes more pronounced over time as a reaction to increasing generational conflicts. Initially, young individuals are significantly less in favour of workfare policies than the elderly in all regional clusters. This finding resonates with the argument that young individuals are more often affected by workfare policies and are generally more in favour of generous social benefits. However, the cleavage between young and old is in decline in all regions except the Baltic states until 2008. The age gap becomes insignificant (for $p < 0.05$) in Southern Europe, Continental Europe and the Anglophone countries. The gap decreases significantly in Central Europe and even becomes negative in the Nordic countries, which indicates stronger support for workfare policies from the younger generation in 2008. Overall, there is an indication that the generational conflict in regard to demanding activation policies has even decreased in the decades since 1990, thereby clearly contradicting Hypothesis 5.

4.2.4. *Overall Polarization of Attitudes*

The previous section has shown that most societal cleavages concerning workfare policies remain stable while the attitudinal difference between young and old even decreased. The final step of the analysis investigates the overall trend of attitude polarization (Hypothesis 6). Figure 2 presents two measures that are illustrative in this regard. The left panel in the figure displays the average standard deviation of the dependent variable for each regional country cluster in each year. This measure represents the dispersion of attitudes, which give a good indication of how contested a policy is in the respective regions. The right panel depicts the share of the population that takes an extreme position on workfare, either strongly opposing or strongly advocating the concept. This measure is examined because even small electoral groups with extreme positions in favour or against a salient policy can

be important advocates for reform. The corresponding numbers for this Figure can be found in Table A3 in the Appendix.

Figure 2 Polarization of attitudes towards workfare, 1990-2008. Standard deviation (left) and share of extreme attitudes (right) by country cluster and year



Conditions for unemployment benefits are a quite controversial topic. Initially in 1990, about 30% of the population chose one of the extreme categories, substantially more than a normal distribution of attitudes around the mean would suggest. However, this controversy concerning workfare policies is on decline across Europe. Both measures, standard deviation and the share of extreme positions, show a decline in the years 1990 to 2008. The average standard deviation declines from 2.82 to 2.63 and the share of respondents with an extreme position towards workfare drops by about 10 percentage points. However, in the Nordic cluster the standard deviation remains rather stable but the share of extreme attitudes declines from around 27% to 18%. Overall, there seem to be a convergence of attitudes towards workfare policies in European societies. The main factor behind this trend seems to be the increased similarity of attitudes between young and old generations.

5 Discussion

The present study has illustrated the controversy around the issue of workfare policies in European societies. While previous studies found little disagreement concerning the social rights of deserving recipient groups such as the sick and pensioners, attitudes towards work obligations for the unemployed are highly contested, as indicated by a vast dispersion of attitudes on this issue. Workfare is less popular among those who are directly affected by these measures – the unemployed and the poor. The young, who are one of the primary targets of activating measures initially show a stronger opposition than citizens who have reached retirement age. Overall, a large part of the population supports extensive duties of the unemployed and the strongest opponents are those with limited potential for political mobilization – the (long-term) unemployed and the poor. These results help to explain why the use of workfare policies has expanded in past years despite a strong divide in public opinion.

There is no indication that attitudinal cleavages became more pronounced in the period between 1990 and 2008. These results call into question the (sometimes implicit) assumption in attitude research that increasing societal divides result in a stronger polarization of public opinion. Differences in attitudes towards social policy on the basis of labour market position, income and education have remained stable over time. This result suggests that warnings of an increase in social conflicts and eroding solidarity are exaggerated. Social divides with regard to social policy have not been strengthened. The Nordic countries represent the only exception because societal cleavages became more pronounced in Sweden, Denmark and Finland. The reason might be that workfare reforms reshaped the traditional egalitarian and collectivist elements of the Nordic welfare state in the 2000s (Kildal, 2001). The introduction of stricter conditions represented a turnaround for the once universal Scandinavian welfare state and might have provoked stronger opposition against workfare in parts of the population.

Attitudes toward demanding activation policies even converged gradually as age groups became more similar in their views on demanding activation policies since 1990. Some conclusions can be drawn regarding differences between birth cohorts because data from three points of time were analysed. The result suggests that the cohorts born in the 1980s

show greater support for workfare policies in their youth than previous generations at the same age. As a result, young and old age groups do not differ much in their attitudes to workfare at the end of the 2000s. Socialization effects could play a role here. The young generation that was socialized in the 1980s and 1990s grew up in a society in which benefits are conditional on the behaviour of the unemployed. They might be less generous than their parent's generation because the institutional environment provides an important framework for the socialization of values and attitudes and positive feedback effects on attitudes.

This study is subject to some limitations that should be taken into account when drawing conclusions from the results. First, the latest data for the analysis were available for the year 2008, before the consequences of the financial and economic crisis became visible. This crisis resulted in aggravated inequalities, rising unemployment rates, and cuts in the social system, with possible consequences for public opinion and the intensity of societal cleavages. The analysis should be expanded when attitudinal data for more recent years become available. Second, this study was restricted to attitudes towards workfare. Public opinion could have become more polarized in regard to political issues that are even more politicized, such as immigration. Yet, as far as attitudes towards the welfare state are concerned, there is little reason to believe that European societies have become more divided on the responsibilities of job-seekers.

6 References

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7 Appendix

Table A1 Descriptive statistics in 2008

	Mean	Standard deviation
Dependent variable	6.439	2.69
<i>Employment status</i>		
Employed	0.443	0.50
Part-time	0.061	0.24
Self-employed	0.046	0.21
Unemployed	0.056	0.23
Not in LM	0.394	0.49
<i>Education</i>		
Primary	0.032	0.18
Lower secondary	0.170	0.38
Upper secondary	0.334	0.47
Tertiary	0.464	0.50
<i>Income</i>		
Low	0.340	0.47
Medium	0.362	0.48
High	0.298	0.46
Union membership	0.120	0.33
Female	0.552	0.50
<i>Family status</i>		
Married	0.525	0.50
Living with partner	0.027	0.16
Single	0.449	0.50
<i>N</i>	25695	

Table A2 Dependent variable, mean and standard deviation in 1990, 1999 and 2008

	1990		1999		2008		Change 1990-2008	
	mean	SD	mean	SD	mean	SD	Mean	SD
AT	7.42	2.63	7.19	2.62	6.85	2.68	-0.57	0.05
BE	6.29	3.01	6.05	2.83	6.60	2.57	0.31	-0.44
BG	4.36	2.89	5.72	3.15	6.61	3.15	2.25	0.26
CZ	6.64	2.81	6.33	2.68	6.94	2.55	0.3	-0.26
DK	6.43	2.82	6.13	2.74	6.07	2.62	-0.36	-0.20
EE	4.23	2.63	4.6	2.56	5.75	2.79	1.52	0.16
FI	7.53	2.36	5.84	2.65	6.11	2.69	-1.42	0.33
FR	6.60	2.81	6.50	2.93	5.34	2.84	-1.26	0.03
HU	5.77	3.08	6.67	2.90	7.02	2.67	1.25	-0.41
IE	5.72	2.90	5.44	2.67	6.18	2.64	0.46	-0.26
IT	7.29	2.69	7.59	2.43	7.46	2.47	0.17	-0.22
LV	3.70	2.86	5.36	3.01	5.53	2.73	1.83	-0.13
LT	5.21	3.06	5.62	3.25	5.96	2.66	0.75	-0.4
NL	6.04	2.37	5.72	2.25	6.50	2.19	0.46	-0.18
PL	6.19	3.08	6.81	2.94	6.31	2.55	0.12	-0.53
PT	6.46	2.95	6.37	2.61	6.68	2.40	0.22	-0.55
RO	5.43	3.15	6.01	3.41	6.03	3.24	0.60	0.09
SK	5.74	3.13	6.34	2.75	6.83	2.46	1.09	-0.67
SI	7.93	2.46	7.40	2.68	7.31	2.57	-0.62	0.11
ES	6.38	2.75	6.56	2.43	5.85	2.52	-0.53	-0.23
SE	7.14	2.61	7.04	2.38	6.55	2.63	-0.59	0.02
UK	5.51	2.86	5.95	2.59	6.87	2.51	1.36	-0.35
DEW	6.54	2.76	7.29	2.46	7.18	2.34	0.64	-0.42
DEE	5.43	2.92	6.03	2.86	6.58	2.54	1.15	-0.38
Average	6.08	2.82	6.27	2.74	6.46	2.63	0.38	-0.19

Central Europe: Bulgaria (BG), Czech Republic (CZ), East Germany (DEE), Hungary (HU), Poland (PL), Romania (RO), Slovakia (SK), Slovenia (SI)

Continental Europe: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), France (FR), Netherlands (NL), West Germany (DEW)

Southern Europe: Portugal (PT), Spain (ES), Italy (IT)

Baltic states: Estonia (EE), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT)

Nordic countries: Denmark (DK), Sweden (SE), Finland (FI)

Anglo-Phone: United Kingdom (UK), Ireland (IE)

Table A3 Dispersion of attitudes towards workfare by European region

	Central Europe			Continental Europe			Southern Europe		
	1990	1999	2008	1990	1999	2008	1990	1999	2008
Mean	5.99	6.41	6.70	6.60	6.52	6.40	6.61	7.06	6.71
SD	2.93	2.90	2.73	2.75	2.66	2.54	2.77	2.47	2.47
Extreme position	0.32	0.30	0.28	0.28	0.25	0.21	0.28	0.28	0.23
Support	0.20	0.21	0.21	0.22	0.20	0.15	0.21	0.24	0.19
Opposition	0.12	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.07	0.04	0.04
<i>N</i>	8851	7952	8573	6309	5601	6068	4468	2768	2508

	Baltic states			Scandinavia			Anglo-Saxony		
	1990	1999	2008	1990	1999	2008	1990	1999	2008
Mean	4.39	5.19	5.77	6.97	6.33	6.26	5.57	5.70	6.58
SD	2.84	2.93	2.73	2.62	2.59	2.65	2.88	2.62	2.55
Extreme position	0.32	0.27	0.19	0.27	0.19	0.18	0.24	0.17	0.21
Support	0.09	0.13	0.11	0.23	0.13	0.12	0.12	0.09	0.17
Opposition	0.23	0.14	0.08	0.04	0.06	0.07	0.11	0.07	0.04
<i>N</i>	2549	2520	3637	2350	2638	2985	2193	2063	1924

Note: Values refer to the mean across countries within regional clusters.

ARTICLE III

How Unemployment Experience Affects Support for the Welfare State

A Real Panel Approach

Abstract

This article investigates whether self-interest as compared to values or ideological dispositions shape individual attitudes towards the welfare state. Causal interpretations of how self-interest, values and welfare state attitudes are linked have been difficult to sustain so far as the research mainly relies on static, cross-sectional analyses. We address this empirical challenge using data from the Dutch LISS panel (2008-2013) that covers the period of the international economic crisis. We investigate how individuals change their attitudes in times of economic hardship. Our findings confirm theoretical expectations that people change their support for unemployment benefits in reaction to changes in their individual material circumstances. Job loss and drops in household income lead to an increased support for public provision of unemployment benefits. The analysis also suggests that this attitude change is persistent. After the temporarily unemployed have found a new job they do not return to their pre-unemployment attitude. In contrast, individual support for other domains of the welfare state such as health care or pensions is not affected by changes in individual material circumstances. Our results show that individual material circumstances and thus self-interest have a sizable effect on how individuals change their welfare state attitudes.

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1 Introduction

Are individual political preferences shaped by material circumstances and thus linked to individual self-interest, or are they mostly determined by values and deep-rooted ideological views? This is a long-standing question in the social sciences (Downs, 1957; Marx, 1973 [1859]), which has recently gained renewed attention due to its high societal relevance in times of economic crisis (Jæger, 2006; Kulin and Svallfors, 2013; Marx, 2014; Owens and Pedulla, 2014; Rehm, Hacker and Schlesinger, 2012). More than eight million employees lost their jobs in the recent European economic crisis (Eurostat, 2015). As a reaction, reforms of the labor market rank high on the political agenda in several countries. There is convincing evidence that individual attitudes and public opinion are an important factor determining welfare reforms (Brooks and Manza, 2006; Pierson, 1994). In this respect it is crucial for our understanding of the reform process to know whether and how people change their welfare policy preferences in reaction to increased labor market risks and unemployment experience.

The political economy tradition in this research field proposes self-interest as an individual's main motivation to support welfare policies. This argument claims that those who (expect to) depend on state benefits are more in favor of these policies (Iversen and Soskice, 2001). Research shows that the position in the labor market and in particular unemployment, but also the risk of layoff and low income, are correlated with support for generous welfare policies (Marx, 2014; Schwander and Häusermann, 2013). Despite its dominant role in the literature, the self-interest argument and its empirical evidence has been questioned for a number of reasons. The main challenge for the robustness of findings is that results are almost exclusively based on cross-sectional data. The evidence is thus based on correlations between self-interest related indicators and attitudes, leaving the causal link between the two unclear. It is questionable to infer from a correlation that job loss leads to an actual *change* of political preferences. For example, unobserved characteristics such as childhood socialization might be causally related to both political preferences and the likelihood to become unemployed.

A second line of argument proposes political ideology and deep-rooted values as key explanations of political preferences. Ideological differences about the proper role of the

state, considerations of equality and fairness, but also the perceived deservingness of the unemployed, are linked to support for welfare policies (Kulin and Svallfors, 2013; Mau and Veghte, 2007; van Oorschot, 2006). Although self-interest and values are sometimes presented as competing explanations most research agrees that the two are not mutually exclusive and concede that both, interests and values, matter. Moreover, some recent studies even suggest a complex interaction of material self-interest and political ideology and that political ideology moderates the way in which people perceive and react to changes in their material circumstances (Brooks and Manza, 2013). This might be one reason why characteristics such as education or gender are often used to indicate both self-interest and values. Such interdependence of self-interest and values makes it empirically difficult to disentangle the impact that self-interest and values have in the process of attitude formation.

In this paper we attempt to address these challenges by using a within-subject research design and track individuals' support for welfare policies in "times of crisis". We make use of newly available panel data, covering the period from 2008 to 2013 in the Netherlands, to investigate whether sudden "shocks" to material circumstances lead to changes in individual welfare attitudes. We examine different types of economic shocks, namely job loss and a drop in household income. With our analysis we can clearly identify how self-interest shapes support for welfare policies above and beyond value-related considerations. Our research design thus gets closer to an experimental design and overcomes some of the empirical challenges that have hampered existing research in providing a clear test of the self-interest argument. It is important to stress at this point that our study is designed to isolate the effect of material conditions on welfare attitudes, i.e. to evaluate whether self-interest is a cause of attitude change. The adoption of an effect-of-causes framework relegates "the much more challenging goal of addressing the relative role of alternative causes in explaining outcomes to a secondary issue" (Gangl, 2010: 23). Thus, we do not deny that values also play a role in shaping welfare attitudes but concede that the of our research was not to examine all possible causes of an attitude change (in a causes-of-effect framework).

Although convincing in their methodological identification, recent research which examines panel data from the US, Canada or the UK (Jæger, 2006; Rehm, Hacker and Schlesinger,

2012; Stegmueller, 2014) are restricted in their validity to the institutional context of liberal welfare states. Liberal welfare states are a most-likely case to find an effect of unemployment on support for welfare policies since they provide only limited unemployment benefits, making job loss a serious threat to material circumstances. In contrast, conservative or social-democratic welfare regimes provide more generous unemployment benefits. The consequences of a job loss for material circumstances are less severe. Hence, our analysis of the Netherlands not only increases the external validity of existing research to another institutional setting, but also provides a less likely and more convincing case to test the self-interest argument (Gerring, 2007).

Our findings show that people change their support for unemployment benefits in reaction to changes in their material circumstances. Most importantly, job loss leads to an increased support for unemployment benefits. We perform a set of placebo tests to increase confidence in our identification strategy. In contrast to support for unemployment benefits, support for other life-course related domains of the welfare state such as health care or pensions is not affected by changes in individual material circumstances (Jensen, 2012). This finding supports our claim that the change in individual attitudes is the result of self-interest related considerations and cannot be attributed to a more general, ideological re-orientation in times of crisis. Moreover, in contrast to recent findings by Margalit (2013), this attitude change is rather persistent and does not disappear after people have regained employment.

2 What shapes individual support for welfare policies – self-interest or values?

Across disciplines and research topics social science scholars distinguish two motivations that underlie behavior and attitudes: interests and values. For instance, Lindenberg (1990) distinguishes between ‘homo sociologicus’ and ‘homo oeconomicus’ explanations, Elster (1990) speaks of selfishness versus altruism, Fehr, Fischbacher and Gächter (2002) of self-interest and strong reciprocity, and Hall and Taylor (1996) distinguish between ‘calculus’ and ‘cultural’ explanations.

Whereas it seems to be quite uncontroversial what self-interest is, the definition of values and its distinction from attitudes needs some explanation. Attitudes have been defined in a variety of ways, but at the core is the notion of evaluation of specific objects (Petty *et al.*,

1997). “Attitude may be conceptualized as the amount of affect for or against some object” (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975: 11). Following these definitions, we understand welfare attitudes as individuals’ evaluation of and their support for welfare policies. In contrast, values are not related to specific objects but provide “general and relatively stable internal criteria for evaluation” (Hechter et al., 1999: 405). Examples of such internal criteria include altruism, reciprocity or considerations about social justice. In this article we follow existing research on welfare attitudes and distinguish self-interest and values as the main determinants of attitudes (see for example, Linos and West, 2003; Kulin and Svallfors, 2013; Jæger, 2008). In the following section we discuss both perspectives, review related empirical findings and deduct hypotheses.

Figure 1 gives a brief overview of our expectations. The y-axis of each panel denotes support for welfare policies, our dependent variable. Our main explanatory factor is the employment status as the most relevant self-interest related factor. The x-axis shows changes in the employment status over time. The first panel illustrates two hypotheses. First, the value perspective of stable attitudes and no reaction to changes in material circumstances (H_0). Second, the self-interest perspective suggesting that a change in material circumstances leads to a change in welfare support (H_1). More specifically, after people lose their job they are expected to increase their support for welfare policies. The right panel in Figure 1 adds re-employment after job loss as an event and contrasts two versions of the self-interest perspective (Opp, 1999). A narrow self-interest argument assumes that only objective material circumstances are relevant and predicts that support drops to the initial pre-unemployment level when one finds a new job (H_2). In contrast, a wider self-interest perspective also takes perceived constraints (e.g. future labor market risks) into account. This leads to the expectation that past experience of unemployment increase the perceived risk to become unemployed again which in turn is a motivation for people to maintain their stronger support for welfare policies even after having found a new job (H_3).

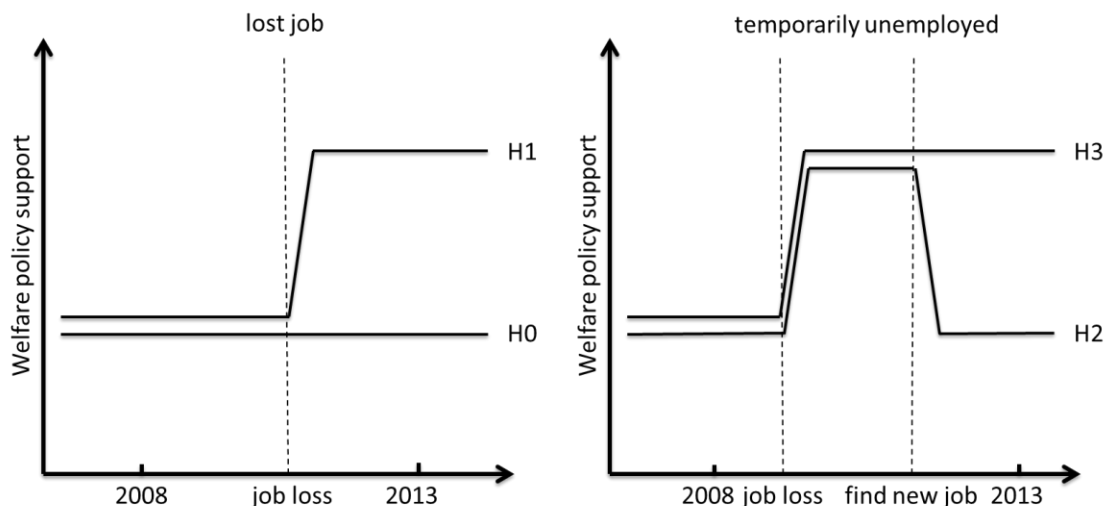


Figure 1 Support for welfare policies and changes in employment status, adapted from Margalit (2013: 83)

A first theoretical approach that seeks to explain support for welfare policies focuses on values. This political-sociological approach assumes that people have deep-rooted, relatively stable values concerning basic questions such as how wealth within a society should be distributed or whether the state or the market should play a dominant role in structuring the economic life within a society (for example Mau and Veghte, 2007; Svallfors, 2007). People then deduct more specific policy preferences from these core values. The idea that values are important determinants of people's behavior and their attitudes is also a core claim of cultural sociology. Drawing on Weber and Parsons, these accounts see culture as a repository of beliefs, values, and identities that motivate people's behavior and their attitudes. These values are mainly shaped through socialization processes that take place in childhood and are assumed to remain largely stable over time (Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004; Joas, 2000; Fraley and Roberts, 2005). Current evolutionary accounts even argue that some values such as altruism or strong reciprocity are part of the human nature (Fehr and Fischbacher, 2003). Both explanations suggest that values are not affected by short term changes in material circumstances over the life course. Accordingly, more specific attitudes towards the welfare state should be independent of changes in material self-interest. Following the values perspective we expect that losing one's job has no effect on support for unemployment benefits (H_0 , left panel in Figure 1). Empirical research repeatedly shows that left-leaning people are more in favor of a strong welfare state than people with a right political ideology (Jæger, 2008). Egalitarian values are associated with stronger support for

redistributive policies (Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003). Also, deservingness perceptions play an important role in shaping support for welfare policies (van Oorschot, 2006).

The political economy approach emphasizes the interests of actors when explaining policy preferences (Iversen and Soskice, 2001). Individuals support a policy if they expect to benefit from it, whereas they oppose a policy if their individual costs are higher than the expected benefits. The unemployed show stronger support for generous welfare policies compared to the employed who mainly bear the costs for these policies (Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Fraile and Ferrer, 2005). Also, poorer individuals support redistributive policies because they expect to benefit from them. In contrast, richer individuals are likely to oppose redistributive policies because they cannot expect to benefit from redistribution but have to pay for it via their taxes (Fraile and Ferrer, 2005; Jæger, 2006). From this perspective, political preferences should react to changes in individual material circumstances. Those in stable employment with a more skeptical view on welfare policies become more supportive if they lose their job or lose substantive parts of their income (H_1).

However, the empirical evidence supporting this claim is based on cross-sectional data and provides us with a static picture only. Such analyses entail the risk that the association between unemployment and support for welfare policies is spurious (Jæger, 2013). With cross-sectional data we cannot decide whether the unemployed are more in favor of redistributive policies because they are unemployed *or* because they hold more egalitarian values or other ideological positions that might have increased their likelihood to become unemployed (we will discuss these methodological challenges in more detail in the Methods section). Also, cross-sectional data only allows us to compare unemployed with employed respondents, not accounting for the possibility that becoming unemployed has different effects on attitudes than regaining employment.

Our final set of hypotheses tests whether losing and re-gaining a job has different effects on support for welfare policies. Let us assume that an individual finds a new job after some time of unemployment. We are interested whether the individual adapts his support to the new situation or whether the increase in support due to the unemployment experience is persistent. We propose two alternative predictions (Opp, 1999). In a narrow version of the self-interest argument individuals are shortsighted and consider only their current economic

situation. After people move out of unemployment and/or increase their income they should withdraw their support for redistributive policies. Because their expected utility from these policies decreases they fall back on their pre-unemployment, baseline support. This argument suggests that past experiences of unemployment are not correlated with attitudes (H₂). In contrast, a wider version of the self-interest argument not only looks at the “objective” current economic situation of each individual, but takes into account the risks of becoming unemployed in the future (Iversen and Soskice, 2001). As a reaction to the unemployment experience individuals update their beliefs about their vulnerability on the labor market and perceive a higher risk to become unemployed in the future. An increased risk to become unemployed is linked to stronger support for welfare policies (Hacker, Rehm and Schlesinger, 2013; Marx, 2014) so that past experiences of unemployment lead to a persistent change of attitudes (H₃).

3 The impact of unemployment on political preferences from a longitudinal perspective

Due to limited data availability only very few studies exist that use longitudinal panel data. In this section we review the most recent advances in the field and highlight the contribution of our study.

Findings indicate a substantial impact of unemployment on political preferences in the US. Focusing on redistributive preferences, Hacker, Rehm and Schlesinger (2013) argue that economic shocks such as job loss increases individual worries about the future and in turn leads to higher support for welfare policies (see also Owens and Pedulla, 2014). As for the persistence of the effect, Margalit (2013) shows that attitude change is not long-lasting and support decreases immediately after individuals regained employment. All three studies examine the US in the recent economic crisis, i.e. between 2006 and 2011. Studies before the economic crisis examining other countries suggest only a limited or no influence of unemployment on support for welfare policies. Jæger (2006) finds some support for the self-interest hypotheses but no effect of unemployment on attitudes in Canada. Stegmüller (2014) observes a surprising stability of attitudes towards redistribution in the UK and no effect of unemployment.

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As previous research suggests the effect of unemployment seems to depend on the institutional and on the economic context (e.g. Jæger, 2013). Liberal welfare states and in particular the US are different from more generous European welfare states. Low and means tested benefits make unemployment a drastic event that results in a pronounced income loss in the US. Consequences of unemployment are not buffered by the welfare state which might strengthen the effect of job loss on welfare policy support. Moreover, overall support for the welfare state is considerably lower than in Europe. High support may lead to ceiling effects and the mistaken conclusion that unemployment has no effect in Europe.

By investigating attitude change in the Netherlands between 2008 and 2013 we extend previous research from liberal welfare contexts to a social-/Christian-democratic welfare state. Pfeifer (2012) describes the Netherlands as an “extensive protection – functioning labour market type” that has generous replacement rates in case of unemployment for an extended period of time and that also provides generous social assistance. Until 2013 unemployment benefits in the first two months after job loss amount to 75% of the earning base, 70% are paid for up to 38 months (Wind, 2014). The context of extensive protection and a functioning labor market makes unemployment in the Netherlands far less threatening for individuals’ standard of living and their material circumstances. Thus, compared to liberal welfare states unemployment affects individuals’ material circumstances far less in social-democratic welfare states. Therefore, unemployment is a ‘weaker treatment’ in social-democratic welfare states and it is thus less likely to have an effect on attitudes. In addition to merely increasing the external validity of existing findings from liberal welfare states, the social-democratic welfare context provides a less-likely and thus more convincing test of the self-interest hypothesis.

The Dutch labor market was only moderately affected by the economic crisis. The unemployment rate in the Netherlands increased from very low 3.1% to 6.7%, compared to an increase from 7.0% to 10.8% in the EU (Eurostat, 2015). On the one hand the Dutch case only provides a moderate “crisis scenario”. On the other hand, an increase from 3% to 7% can also be taken as a qualitative shift from a context of full employment with only frictional unemployment to a “crisis” context with cyclical unemployment. These differences in the

economic situation should serve as a qualification when drawing conclusions about the impact of the crisis on individual attitudes.

4 Data, variables and method

4.1 Data

We use data from the Dutch “Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences” (LISS) panel. The LISS panel offers a true probability sample of the Dutch population. While the actual studies are completed online by the respondents, the panel recruitment was performed using traditional offline methods. Households without the necessary technological infrastructure were provided with loan equipment in order to enable their participation (Scherpenzeel and Das, 2010).

Our dependent variables were part of the LISS panel in 2008 and 2013. We follow previous research and restrict our sample to those who can potentially experience a period of unemployment, namely those respondents in working age between 18 and 65 years who were not retired (Owens and Pedulla, 2014; Emmenegger, Marx and Schraff, 2015). 2365 respondents of this target population completed the questionnaire in 2008. 1183 respondents participated in the repeated module in 2013. Restricting the sample to respondents that were either employed or unemployed in 2008 and 2013 leaves us with 879 cases for our longitudinal analysis.

Potential threats for the validity of our findings are the representativity of the sample and non-random attrition. Scherpenzeel and Bethlehem (2010) compared the LISS panel with a face-to-face survey and found no important differences regarding most socio-demographic characteristics. Nonetheless, compared to official population statistics young respondents, men and those without tertiary education are slightly underrepresented in the panel (Table A1 in the online appendix). We should keep these differences in mind when drawing conclusions about the average change of attitudes in the Netherlands.

Each year about 10% of the respondents stop to participate in the survey (Scherpenzeel, 2014). Such attrition rates are comparable to those of offline administered, face-to-face panels. As for non-random attrition from the panel, our own analysis shows that apart from the young other standard socio-demographics such as gender, education and

employment status are not associated with an increased tendency to attrite. In sum, young respondents, those without tertiary education and the unemployed are slightly underrepresented in our final sample compared to official population statistics (Table A1 in the online appendix).

4.2 Support for welfare policies and labor market status

We use the support for government's responsibility to provide unemployment benefits as our main independent variable. Support is measured on scale ranging from "it should not be the government's responsibility at all" (0) to "it should be entirely the government's responsibility" (10). The support for welfare policies is available for two other domains of the welfare state, namely health care and pensions (Table A2). We use these two items for our robustness checks. The items on government's responsibility are widely used in the literature on attitudes towards the welfare state (Rehm et al., 2012; Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Baslevent and Kirmanoglu 2011).

Our main independent variable is the *employment status* of the respondent. Whereas our dependent variable is only available in 2008 and in 2013, individual socio-demographic variables are repeatedly asked in the LISS panel. This allows us to reconstruct a monthly employment history for the period between the two welfare attitude modules. Five possible employment histories exist: (1) respondents with continuous employment, (2) respondents that lost their job and found a new one by 2013, (3) respondents that lost their job, (4) respondents that were unemployed in 2008 and then found and kept employment until 2013, and (5) those that were continuously unemployed between 2008 and 2013. Another self-interest related variable is *household income* that is measured as the disposable post-tax, post-transfer household income from all sources. We adjust income for inflation and for the household size using the OECD-modified scale.

In the descriptive analysis we also use age, gender and education as explanatory variables. In the longitudinal analyses time-constant variables are dropped since they cannot explain changes in the support for welfare policies.

4.3 Methodological approach

Studies based on cross-sectional data are faced with some challenges. One important problem is the omitted-variable bias. It might well be that job loss is the cause for an increased support for welfare policies. Another plausible explanation, however, would be that other unobservable characteristics influence support for welfare policies but also the position on the labor market. For example, an upbringing that emphasizes the importance of individual achievement in life could increase success on the labor market as well as decrease support for a strong role of the state in providing welfare. A second methodological challenge refers to the conceptualization and operationalization of self-interest and values. For example education is related to self-interest as it is an important determinant of labor market success. But education is, per se, also linked to socializing values. Relying mainly on cross-sectional data welfare attitudes research thus has difficulties to establish causality between self-interest, values and welfare attitudes. It is of course preliminary evidence for how individuals change their welfare attitudes in respect to their material circumstances when, for example, unemployed individuals are more supportive of the welfare state compared to employed individuals. However, the essential question is how people *change* their welfare attitude after their material circumstances *have changed*, i.e., after they have lost their job.

We use a fixed effects (FE) approach which relies solely on the changes within individuals over time and controls for all time-constant individual characteristics (Halaby, 2004). The main strength and purpose of FE modeling is to control for the effects of any time-invariant personal characteristics of respondents (Gangl, 2010), stable values very much included. Our evidence about the effect of unemployment experience on welfare attitudes thus is robust to and indeed implicitly controls for whatever personal values respondents might hold. FE regressions assume parallel trends of treated and untreated group in case no treatment would have been made. Standard errors are potentially serially correlated in panel data. For this reason, we use panel-robust standard errors that relax the assumption of independent observations of one individual at several points of time (Rogers, 1993). We control for possible period effects by including a period dummy in our regressions.

5 Results

Figure 2 shows the individual change of attitudes towards unemployment benefits from 2008 to 2013. About one quarter of the respondents gave the same answer in 2008 and 2013. 35% of the respondents only slightly increases or decreases its support by one point. Roughly 18% of the respondents substantively withdraw their support for unemployment benefits. The remaining 22% sees the government more responsible in 2013 than five years before. A potential explanation for this slight increase in support might be the economic crises and an increasing number of unemployed. Can changes in the material circumstances and thus self-interest explain these attitude changes?

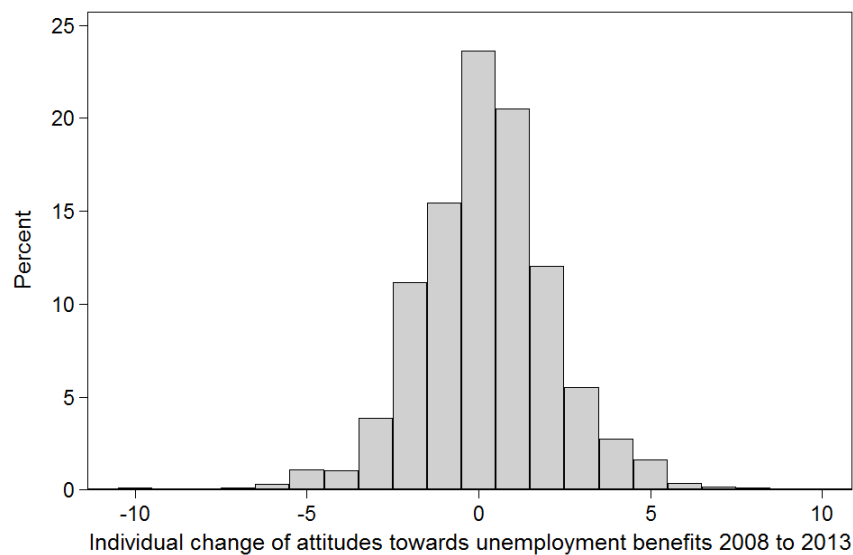


Figure 2 Change of attitudes towards unemployment benefits 2008-2013

This is the main question for our longitudinal analysis. According to the self-interest argument, we would expect that those who lose their job become more supportive of unemployment benefits. We distinguish five groups according to their employment histories between 2008 and 2013 (Table 1). The majority of respondents (89.1%) were continuously working. From those with some unemployment experience, 5.1% were only temporarily unemployed and found a new job after on average 13 months. 4.2% lost their job and had not found a new one by 2013, whereas 0.8% were unemployed in 2008 and then found and kept this until 2013. 1% of our sample was continuously unemployed between 2008 and 2013. A comparison of the socio-demographic composition of these groups in 2008 shows,

not surprisingly, that unemployment is no random “treatment”. Low educated men with a lower income are more likely to experience unemployment.

	Continuously working		Temporarily unemployed		Lost job	
Sample share	90.4%		5%		4.6%	
Length of unemployment between 2008-13 (in month)	0.03	0.25	14.14	9.56	19.53	13.70
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>In 2008</i>						
Support for UE benefits	6.02	1.83	5.57	2.32	6.08	1.70
Income (€ per month and person)	1.815 €	0.77	1.685 €	0.60	1.728 €	0.70
Left-right ideology	5.24	2.08	5.03	2.28	4.53	2.15
Female	0.51	0.50	0.45	0.50	0.45	0.50
Age (years)	43.7	10.06	41.3	9.83	48.63	9.83
Tertiary education	0.40	0.49	0.24	0.43	0.45	0.50
<i>Changes from 2008 to 2013</i>						
Support for UE benefits	0.20	2.04	1.12	1.82	0.87	2.00
Left-right ideology	0.08	1.37	-0.10	2.17	-0.38	1.58
Income (€ per month and person)	281.22 €	0.60	162.09 €	0.61	-82.96 €	0.77

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for three groups with different labor market success, 2008 and 2013

Despite these differences the three groups in employment only slightly differ in their support for unemployment benefits in 2008 (Table 1 and Figure 3). Those who later experience unemployment are initially even a bit more skeptical about unemployment benefits. As previous research shows the unemployed (i.e. those that found a job and the continuously unemployed) are more in favor of unemployment benefits. Except for the continuously unemployed, all four groups increase their support for unemployment benefits from 2008 to 2013. This increase is much stronger for those who experienced periods of unemployment. These changes support our self-interest hypothesis but could also be the result of a change in income. Moreover, a re-orientation of more general political values might also cause a change of support for unemployment benefits.

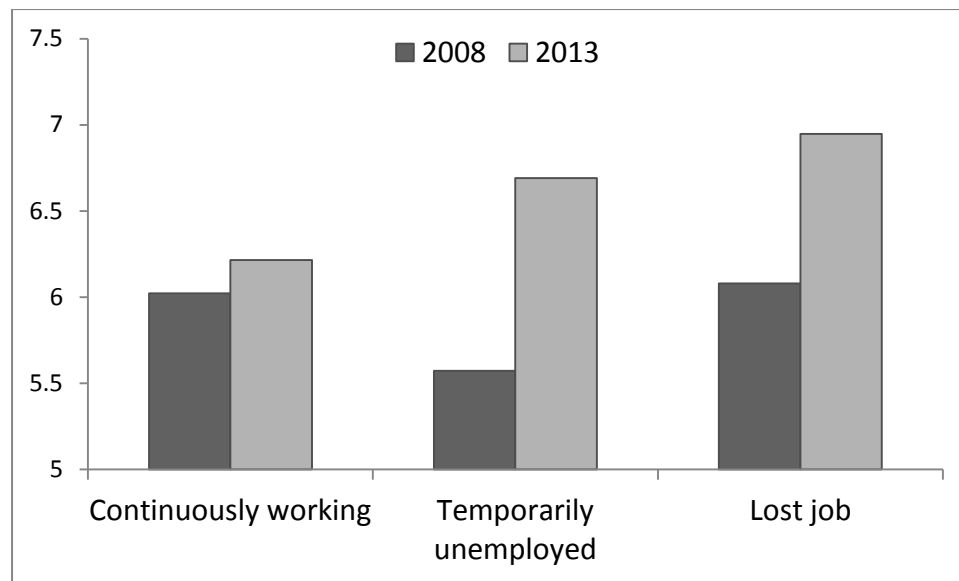


Figure 3 Mean support for unemployment benefits depending on labor market success

To test these explanations we estimate a FE-regression (Table 2). The FE model blocks the influence of time-constant variables such as gender, race, personality, values and school education. These variables do not need to be included in the model. By including a year dummy we make sure that no period effects are responsible for the individual attitude changes we seek to explain. The FE model thus focuses only on the within-person variance, i.e., we focus on the explanation how individuals change their support for unemployment benefits.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ref.cat.: Continuously working			
Temporarily unemployed	0.92** (0.29)		0.90** (0.29)
Lost job	0.67* (0.33)		0.59+ (0.32)
Changes in HH income (in 1000 €)		-0.25* (0.12)	-0.22+ (0.11)
Change from 2008 to 2013	0.19** (0.07)	0.34** (0.08)	0.26** (0.08)
Constant	6.15**	6.46**	6.53**
N	836	836	836

Standard errors in parentheses

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2 Support for government responsibility for the unemployed. FE regressions, unstandardized coefficients.

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We start our analysis with our main explanatory variable related to self-interest, the labor market status. The year dummy shows how the continuously employed (i.e. our reference category) changed their attitude over time. Also those not directly affected by job loss become more supportive of unemployment benefits (+0.15 points). Respondents who lose their job increase their support for unemployment benefits by 0.72 points compared to those with continuous employment. This increase is even stronger for those who were only temporarily unemployed between 2008 and 2013 and have found a new job by 2013 (+1.0 point). The comparison of standardized coefficients provide similar results and are provided in the Appendix (Table A3). These are substantial attitude changes that are comparable in size to the strongest predictors of welfare attitudes in previous research. For example, Baslevant and Kirmanoglu (2011) use the same dependent variable and show that moving 1 point on a 11-point left-right scale decreases support for unemployment benefits by 0.1 points. The attitude difference between catholic and Jewish or Muslim respondents is approximately 0.5 points.

This is strong support for our hypothesis that people adapt their political preference to their material circumstances. Moreover, our results suggest that the effect of unemployment on attitudes is not short-lived but persists for some time. Respondents that were unemployed in 2008 and found a job between 2008 and 2013 follow the general trend of the continuously working respondents and further increase their already high support although they are not unemployed any more when re-interviewed in 2013. Also, those respondents only temporarily unemployed within the five years of observation do not return to their more skeptical pre-unemployment attitude. Finally, the continuously unemployed are the only group that withdraws their support. Due to small case numbers this effect is not significant. Also, the continuously unemployed started from a very high level of support in 2008 and are still the group with the strongest support in 2013. Nevertheless, such a change against the general trend of increasing support suggests that the crisis and increasing unemployment rates might be perceived differently by the continuously unemployed.

Surprisingly the increase of support for unemployment benefits seems to be even stronger among the temporarily unemployed compared to those who lost their job and have not found a new one by 2013 (see also Table A3 for standardized coefficients). Although the

difference between the two estimates does not reach the usually applied levels of statistical significance we would like to offer a tentative explanation for this striking pattern. From our point of view, the reason for this unexpected difference is related to socio-demographic differences between the two groups. The temporarily unemployed are on average younger, lower educated and were more skeptical about unemployment benefits in 2008 than those respondents that lost their job and have not found a new one by 2013. First, the temporarily unemployed should be less 'constrained' to increase their support by a ceiling effect of the answer scale. Second, as the temporarily unemployed are younger, some of them might experience unemployment for the first time in their life and thus perceive unemployment as more consequential. Moreover, the unemployment experience might have increased their perceived unemployment risk (to their objective risk as low educated employees) and the expectation to become unemployed in the future. This might be part of the explanation for why we observe such a surprising catching-up of the temporarily unemployed to the attitude of those that lost their job but did not find a new one by 2013. Our interpretation of the results is thus linked to heterogeneous reactions to the unemployment experience. As already noted above, we do not find evidence that finding a new job countervails the effect of losing a job.

In model 2, we test an alternative measure of self-interest. Those respondents that had to cope with a drop in their income increased their support for unemployment benefits. Job loss and changes in income are interrelated. One can assume that those individuals in a precarious financial situation are more likely to support social policies. At the same time, becoming unemployed reduces the income that is available to the household. For this reason we test in model 3 if the effect of unemployment on attitudes is only an indirect one through income. As expected, the effect of job loss slightly decreases since one consequence of being unemployed is a drop in income. The effect of temporary unemployment remains unaffected, possibly because the temporarily unemployed respondents found a new job with a similar income (see changes in income at the bottom of Table 1). In sum, job loss has an effect beyond the merely financial consequences. At the same time a decreasing income also leads to stronger support for unemployment benefits. We take this as evidence for the self-interest hypothesis which stated that changes in the material circumstances (i.e.

unemployment experience or drops in income) have an effect on support for unemployment benefits.

Government responsibility for...	... the unemployed	... the elderly	... the sick
Ref: Continuously working			
Temporarily unemployed	0.90** (0.29)	0.47 (0.38)	0.36 (0.35)
Lost job	0.59 (0.32)	0.33 (0.24)	0.26 (0.19)
Changes in household income	-0.22+ (0.11)	-0.01 (0.13)	-0.14 (0.08)
Change from 2008 -> 2013	0.26** (0.08)	-0.25*** (0.07)	-0.24*** (0.06)
Constant	6.40***	7.66***	8.60***
Observations	836	836	836

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 3 Support for government's responsibility for the unemployed, the elderly and the sick, FE regressions, unstandardized coefficients.

5.1 Alternative explanation: general support for government's responsibility

Although the values perspective usually assumes that values are stable and not affected by changes in material circumstances, we address concerns that it is not a change in material circumstances but a political re-orientation that has caused the change in welfare attitudes. Job loss might result in an increased feeling of insecurity and vulnerability and eventually lead to an increase in the general support for government's responsibility to provide welfare. For example, people might also increase their support for health care out of a general demand for more protection. In contrast, if the effect of job loss on support for unemployment benefits is solely due to changes in the material circumstances and individual self-interest, unemployment experience should not have any impact on preferences for life-course related social policy programs such as health care or pensions (Jensen, 2012). Investigating the impact of unemployment on attitudes towards two other domains of the welfare state (i.e., elderly care and health care) thus provides a robustness test for our hypotheses (Table 3). We find that becoming unemployed has no significant effect on support for the two other policy domains. We take this as additional support for our claim that the effect of job loss on support for unemployment benefits is driven by individual self-interest.

6 Discussion and conclusion

Is support for the welfare state based on deep-rooted values or driven by individual self-interest? Our study supports the self-interest hypothesis and shows that changes in material circumstances lead to changes in support for the welfare state. After people lose their job they increase their support for unemployment benefits. In this respect our examination of the Netherlands as a more generous social-democratic welfare state provides a least-likely test for the self-interest hypothesis. A series of robustness checks using support for other policy domains as placebo measures further buttresses our claim that the observed changes in individual attitudes are the result of self-interest related considerations and cannot be attributed to a more general, ideological re-orientation in times of crisis.

In contrast to Margalit's study from the US our results suggest that the effect of unemployment on attitudes is persistent and that people do not immediately return to their more skeptical, pre-unemployment attitude after re-employment. Such persistence might reflect that unemployment experience leads to an increased perceived unemployment risk which in turn results in stronger preference for protection against these risks (Iversen and Soskice, 2001; Marx, 2014). Also, own unemployment experience might fundamentally change perceptions of how deserving of public support the unemployed are (van Oorschot, 2006). Increased deservingness of the unemployed would additionally contribute to a persistent effect of unemployment experience on welfare attitudes.

The theoretical implications of our study are twofold. We find clear evidence that attitudes are shaped by self-interest. Moreover, the persistence of the attitude change supports the assumption of a wide version of the rational choice theory in which risks and expectations about future periods of unemployment play an important role in shaping attitudes. We should emphasize again that our study was not designed to judge whether self-interest is more important than values in affecting attitudes. Moreover, we are convinced that both self-interest and values matter for attitude formation. Nevertheless, our focus on attitude change has revealed a weakness of the values perspective. If we assume that values are stable over time they cannot explain *per se* how people change their attitudes. So, either one needs to relax the assumption of deep-rooted, stable values to reduce their over-deterministic character (for a similar discussion in the sociology of culture see Vaisey, 2009).

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Empirically this would call for studies that examine whether also values such as egalitarianism or deservingness perceptions change over time. Or, as a second alternative to include stable values in the explanation of attitude change, future research would need to conceptualize them as moderators of self-interest. For example, Brooks and Manza (2013) show that respondents react differently to economic circumstances depending on their partisan affiliation.

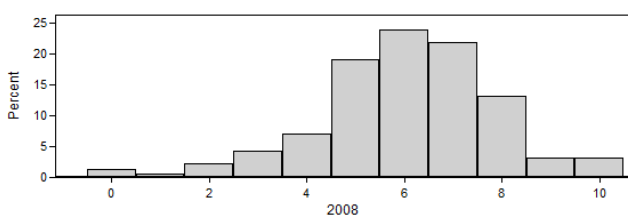
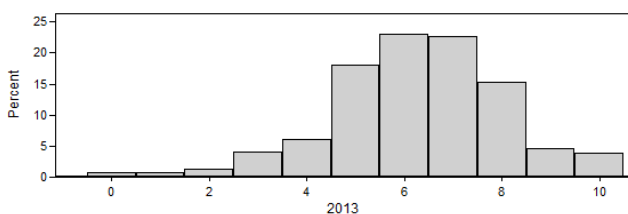
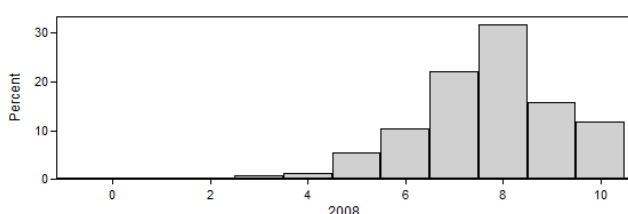
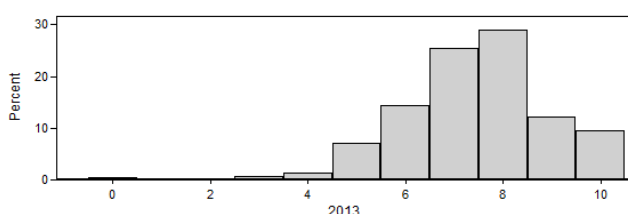
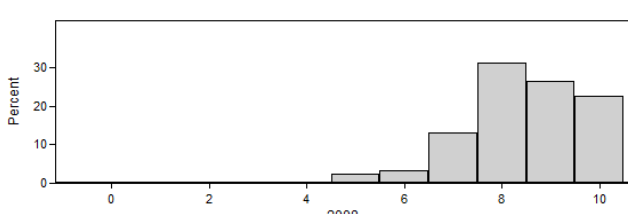
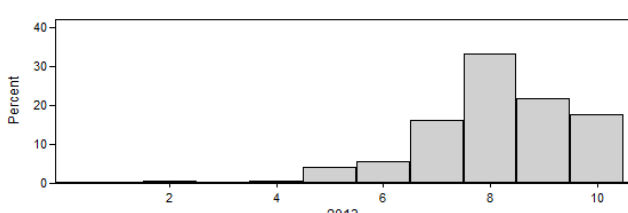
The increasing availability of panel data provides methodological leverage in causally explaining welfare attitudes. With the upcoming possibility to cover longer periods of time new challenges arise. One is to disentangle immediate short-term effects of unemployment that are possibly related to self-interest from incremental, long-term effects that are possibly related to values. Welfare attitudes research would be well-advised to see this not only as a methodological but also as a theoretical enterprise for future research.

Table A1 Representativeness of the LISS Panel compared to the Dutch Population

	Statistics Netherlan d 2008	LISS 2008	LISS 2008 (non- attriter)	LISS 2008 (our sample)	Statistics Netherlan d 2013	LISS 2013 (our sample)
Age categories						
18-29	22.3%	17.0%	10.1%	12.3%	23.5%	5.2%
30-39	21.7%	23.6%	21.4%	24.8%	19.2%	17.5%
40-49	24.1%	28.8%	29.5%	33.6%	24.2%	30.5%
50-65	31.9%	30.7%	39.0%	29.4%	34.2%	46.8%
Female	49.7%	57.5%	56.5%	51.5%	49.8%	51.4%
Tertiary education	27.8%	33.1%	34.3%	38.9%	29.3%	42.3%
Unemployed	3.1%	2.8%	2.4%	2.2%	6.7%	4.4%
Observations		2365	1183	879		879

Sources: Data for age categories, sex and household composition from Statistics Netherlands. Data for tertiary education and unemployment rate from Eurostat. Reference group 18-65 years.

Table A2 Support for government's responsibility to provide welfare benefits

Question text	Frequency distribution	Year	Mean	SD
...ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed		2008	6.03	1.84
		2013	6.28	1.77
...ensure a reasonable standard of living for the old		2008	7.66	1.56
		2013	7.42	1.55
...ensure adequate health care for the sick		2008	8.37	1.40
		2013	8.11	1.40

Question Text: People have different views on what the responsibilities of governments should or should not be. For each of the tasks I read out please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much responsibility you think governments should have. 0 means it should not be governments' responsibility at all and 10 means it should be entirely governments' responsibility.

Table A3 Support for government responsibility for the unemployed.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ref.cat.: Continuously working			
Temporarily unemployed	0.16** (0.04)		0.16** (0.04)
Lost job	0.10* (0.05)		0.10* (0.05)
Found job	0.02 (0.04)		0.02 (0.04)
Continuously unemployed	-0.03 (0.05)		-0.04 (0.05)
Changes in HH income (in 1000 €)		-0.14 (0.09)	-0.14 (0.09)
2013 (Ref.cat: 2008)	0.08* (0.04)	0.14** (0.04)	0.10** (0.04)
Constant	6.17** (0.00)	6.17** (0.00)	6.17** (0.00)
<i>N</i>	879	879	879

FE regressions, standardized coefficients

Panel-robust standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

ARTICLE IV

Public Opinion towards Targeted Labour Market Policies

A Vignette Study on the Perceived Deservingness of the Unemployed

Abstract

The issue of welfare targeting is back on the political agenda in European welfare states. Benefit recipients are subject to different rules, depending on age, family status and work. For instance, strict conditions and harsh sanctions apply in particular to young unemployed people. This article investigates public opinion towards welfare targeting in three policy areas – unemployment benefits, conditionality of benefits and sanctions – and utilises a factorial vignette experiment presented within a representative German survey. The results suggest strong support for welfare targeting. Respondents are more likely to offer generous benefits and fewer obligations and sanctions to unemployed people who are elderly, have caring responsibilities, are of German ethnicity and have high job seeking ambitions. The negative effect of foreign ethnicity is moderated by the ideological standpoint of the respondent, highlighting the mechanisms underlying welfare chauvinism. Accordingly, policy support strongly depends on the individual circumstances of the affected target group.

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1 Introduction

In recent years, policy makers introduced a new balance between the rights and responsibilities of the unemployed to improve their motivation to engage in job seeking activities (Weishaupt, 2011; Handler, 2003). The payment of benefits is increasingly conditional on the behaviour of the welfare recipient and failure to comply with these conditions is sanctioned with benefit cuts. However, the rules and regulations concerning the level of benefits, conditions to receive them and the harshness of sanctions differ widely between different target groups. For instance, young unemployed people identified as responsible for losing jobs who show little effort to find new employment face stricter conditions and harsher sanctions than other benefit claimants (Larsen, 2008). Accordingly, current reforms of the labour market need to address the fundamental moral question of the welfare state concerning “who should get what under which conditions” (Jeene, 2015). The need for reforms highlight the importance of the social legitimacy of targeted welfare schemes (van Oorschot et al., 2017).

This article investigates if targeting of social rights and obligations is rooted in the public’s considerations of fairness and solidarity. It inquires how the public evaluates the rights and responsibilities of benefit recipients with different personal characteristics. Three policy dimensions related to unemployment benefits are examined – the generosity of benefits, the conditions to receive them, and sanctions in case these obligations are not met. The article investigates the effects of five personal characteristics on support for these policies – the recipient’s age, child caring responsibilities, the reason for unemployment, job search efforts, and ethnicity. Based on deservingness theory, I argue that policy support depends on respondents’ images of benefit recipients. For example, respondents might view a single mother, who is highly motivated to find employment, as more entitled to receive benefits than a childless single who refuses to apply for work. Furthermore, I test the assumption that the personal characteristics affect attitudes towards various aspects of labour market policies in different ways. The public may expect parents of young children to look for a job, but grant them the right to decline employment if the working conditions are incompatible with their parenting responsibilities.

The present study contributes to the current state of literature in three ways. First, it focuses on different recipient groups. The majority of studies in this field treat the unemployed as a collective, homogenous group and focus on the distribution of public resources between different social programs (Svallfors, 2010; Wendt et al., 2011; van Oorschot, 2000). Recent studies indicate that certain characteristics such as age (Larsen, 2008), disabilities (Jeene and Roosma, 2017) and the number of children (Hörstermann and Andreß, 2015) influence the public's support. A systematic review of the relevant characteristic, however, is so far missing. Second, I take into account the multidimensionality of welfare state attitudes by analysing three relevant aspects of unemployment benefits – generosity of benefits, conditionality and sanctions. Previous studies focus almost exclusively on attitudes towards social rights, while ignoring other facets of the labour market such as obligations of benefit claimants (Fossati, 2017; Gallego and Marx, 2017). Third, an innovative experimental vignette design is applied. The characteristics of a fictitious benefits recipient are randomly modified. Each respondent evaluates the rights and responsibilities of one unemployed person in relation to the three policies. The vignette design allows to assess the relevance of several characteristics simultaneously as well as their interdependent effects. Furthermore, the method reduces the effect of socially desirable responses to sensitive topics such as the rights of foreign benefit claimants because respondents are asked about their preferences in an indirect way (Auspurg and Hintz, 2015).

In a first step, I provide a review of the rights and responsibilities of different target groups in the German labour market. Next, I describe how certain characteristics of the recipient group influence their perceived deservingness. Thereafter, the data, operationalization of terms and methods are described. In the results section, I discuss the effect of both the recipient's and the respondent's characteristics on preferences for labour market policies in the experimental vignette study. The article concludes with a discussion of the results and future directions for research.

2 Theory

2.1 Targeting of Benefits, Conditions and Sanctions

This section elaborates on the prevalence of welfare targeting concerning three facets of the labour market in Germany – unemployment benefits, conditionality of benefits and sanctions. Like most other European countries, German rules and regulations related to the labour market account for the individual's socio-economic characteristics and behaviour such as age, work history, family situation and job seeking activities.

The unemployment compensation system consists of two pillars – an insurance benefit based on previous income and a flat-rate benefit which is paid after the first year of unemployment (*Arbeitslosengeld II*). Because of the constitutional requirement to ensure a “life in human dignity” the benefit level is adjusted to the needs of the recipient, depending on his age and the number of children in the household (Fleckenstein, 2012). Young, childless adults receive 324 €, and 400€ after they turn 25 years old. Parents responsible for a young child receive 634€, and 779€ when they are single parents (Code of Social Law II, § 20). The second policy under consideration concerns the conditionality of unemployment benefits. In order to motivate benefit recipients and increase their job-seeking activities, the *Hartz* reforms introduced strict conditions to receive benefits in the mid 2000's. The unemployed have to fulfil certain requirements in order to be eligible for the full amount. These requirements include the obligation to apply for suitable jobs, participate in training measures and to attend meetings with an employment agency case manager. As a third policy, non-compliance with an obligation results in a cut of unemployment benefits. For example, case managers can suspend benefit payments for up to three months for those who quit their job without “a good reason” or failed to provide proof of job-seeking activities (Dlugosz et al., 2014). A general guideline suggests to cut benefits by 10 per cent after the first infringement and by 30 per cent after the second, but case managers have some flexibility to decide how to account for infringements (Kumpmann, 2009). The rules and regulations concerning obligations and sanctions differ between target groups and are considerably stricter for the young unemployed. They lose benefits entirely after missing a second appointment with the agency or refusing a job offer (Clasen and Clegg, 2007). Furthermore, case managers are requested to take the circumstances of the beneficiary into

account. Accordingly, job offers that require a long commute may be compulsory for unemployed people without family but not for single mothers.

2.2 The Perceived Deservingness of Welfare Recipients

The rules and regulations of the German welfare system distinguish between specific target groups. However, does the general population perceive it is justified to treat benefit claimants differently based on their individual circumstances? One line of argument explains attitudes towards social policy with the respondent's political values and the perception of the recipient's deservingness (van Oorschot, 2000; de Swaan, 1988). According to this line of reasoning, the level of public support for a particular groups depends on how deserving they are perceived based on five criteria – (1) the group's control over its situation, (2) its display of gratefulness, (3) the level of reciprocity in regard to past or future contributions to society; (4) shared identity, and (5) the level of need (Cook, 1979; van Oorschot, 2000). Research in this tradition focuses on the popularity of welfare programs that favour different recipient groups. Unemployment benefits are consistently found to be less popular than pensions and health care, because of the “rather widespread doubt about unemployed people's willingness to work and about proper use of benefits” (van Oorschot 2006: 25) and the predominantly negative image of the job-less in the media (Golding and Middleton, 1982).

I suggest a more fine-grained perspective on deservingness of benefit recipients. The general term of “the unemployed” does not capture a diverse group of individuals who score very differently on the deservingness criteria. One can imagine two individuals who have recently lost their job. A father of three who worked continuously in his life and has lost his job due to bankruptcy of his employer. And a young man in his twenties who rarely was in employment and quit his job because he did not like it. Most citizens will not grant the same social rights to both individuals and not demand the same responsibilities.

I pay particular attention to five characteristics of individuals that potentially influence their perceived deservingness – their age, display of good work ethic, responsibility for children, and ethnicity. With the exception of the latter, these characteristics define the rights and responsibilities of unemployed individuals in the German welfare system. Furthermore, studies indicate their high relevance for deservingness perceptions. Hörstermann and

Andreß (2015) find German respondents to provide more generous benefits to individuals who have children, show active efforts to find work and who are not responsible for their job loss. Support for work obligations is weaker for disabled individuals than it is for social assistance recipients and long-term unemployed, in particular if the unemployed are young and childless (Jeene 2015; Jeene and Roosma, 2017). Larsen (2008), using conventional survey data from Australia, finds that respondents attach stricter obligations to young unemployed people compared to the old. While these studies support the assumption that individuals take into account the circumstances of the benefit recipient when evaluating rights and responsibilities, the present study compares systematically the effect of the recipient's characteristics across different policy measures. I argue that the recipient's personal characteristics and behaviour have distinct effects on respondent's attitudes towards rights and responsibilities of the unemployed.

First, I expect respondents to grant more rights and fewer obligations to the unemployed nearing retirement age compared to individuals at the beginning of their working career. One reason is the limited chance of reemployment for workers at the end of their working life. Employment rates are considerably lower in older age groups, partly because employers may assume older workers have an out-of-date skillset (Büsch et al., 2009). Thus, the old appear less in *control* of their situation. A similar argument could be made about young people in most European countries, but youth unemployment is comparatively low in Germany. In line with the deservingness criteria of *reciprocity*, older unemployed people presumably receive more support because they contributed to the social system in their working life and thus earned their right to support. Furthermore, respondents might perceive certain obligations, for example participation in training programs and regional mobility, to be more suitable for young unemployed people because of the working career ahead of them.

H1: Unemployed individuals close to retirement age receive more generous benefits, are subject to fewer conditions and receive less extensive sanctions in comparison to young unemployed. In particular, they are less often obligated to participate in training and move to another city.

Second, I assume a positive effect of child caring responsibilities on the perceived deservingness of welfare recipients. In light of the discussion on an aging society, the public might see parenting as a contribution to society, thereby satisfying the deservingness criteria of *reciprocity*. From a social investment perspective, respondents might want to ensure that parents are able to provide a decent environment for the development of their children. Furthermore, child poverty is a reoccurring theme in the public debate as a high share of children live in households that depend on social assistance (Corak et al., 2008). Therefore, the perception of children's *neediness* presumably increases respondents' willingness to support families with greater benefits. The perception of need could be stronger for single-parents because they cannot rely on additional income from a partner. Additionally, parents must coordinate their working life with their family responsibilities and are less flexible in their temporal availability. Therefore, respondents might grant parents the right to decline jobs that conflict with family obligations.

H2: In comparison to childless singles, parents receive more generous benefits, are subject to fewer conditions (in particular to take any available job and to move to another city) and receive less extensive sanctions. Respondents should grant even more rights and less responsibilities to single parents.

Third, according to deservingness theory, those who are not responsible for their job loss and make efforts to find a new job should receive more support. Unemployed who quit their job exhibit more *control* over their situation than those who involuntarily lose their job. Sending applications and participating in training measures indicates the recipient's willingness to contribute to the social system.

H3: Unemployed individuals who are not responsible for their job loss and show a high motivation to find a new job receive more generous benefits, are subject to fewer conditions and receive less extensive sanctions.

Fourth, respondents should grant more extensive support to those with whom they share a similar (ethnic) *identity*. Ethnic discrimination is based on racial sentiments and the belief that the social system should primarily benefit one's "own" ethnic group (van der Waal, J. et al., 2010). Studies on welfare chauvinism support this argument, indicating that the

population judges migrants more harshly than native unemployed people (Reeskens and van der Meer, 2017; Kootstra, 2016). Natives allocate less benefits to migrants, in particular if they come from culturally distant societies (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran, 2016). However, the effect of the recipient's ethnicity might be moderated by the cultural and political values of the respondent. A right-wing orientation is generally associated with "stereotyping, prejudice, intolerance, and hostility toward a wide variety of outgroups" (Jost et al., 2009: 325). Therefore, the discriminatory effect is likely to be stronger among individuals on the right end of the political spectrum.

H4: In comparison to the native unemployed, those with a name indicating a foreign background receive less benefits, more conditions, and more sanctions. This effect is stronger for respondents who are located on the right end of the political spectrum.

2.3 The effect of self-interests on attitudes

A second line of arguments suggests that individual self-interest, based on the respondents socio-economic characteristics, defines his or her attitudes towards social policy (Iversen and Soskice, 2001). Individuals who (expect to) depend on unemployment benefits are more in favour of generous policies (Blekesaune and Quadagno, 2003; Fraile and Ferrer, 2005). Experiences of unemployment (Naumann et al., 2016; Margalit, 2013) and low job security (Marx, 2014) are important determinants of preferences for generous social policies. Furthermore, individuals with low human capital prefer generous social policies and a redistributive welfare state, whereas highly skilled individuals can rely on the expectation that their education pays off in the market, protecting them from long-term unemployment (Schwander et al., 2015).

The question emerges to what extent the employment status, unemployment risk, and educational attainment have a comparable influence on attitudes towards conditionality and sanctions. Individuals distinguish between different aspects of the welfare state (Roosma et al., 2013), but only few studies investigate the individual determinants of attitudes towards conditionality and sanctions (Fossati, 2017). Job-seekers and the low educated are more likely than others subject to certain obligations (job search requirements, training, etc.) and have a higher risk to receive sanctions and benefit cuts. Thus, a narrow self-interest

perspective suggests a similar effect of labour market position and educational attainment on attitudes towards conditions and sanctions as on preferences for unemployment benefits.

H5: Unemployment, high job insecurity, and low educational attainment are positively related to support for unemployment benefits and negatively related to support for conditions and sanctions.

3 Data & Method

3.1 Data

The data for the empirical analysis was provided by the German Internet Panel (GIP), a probability-based longitudinal online survey, which focuses on political and economic attitudes and reform preferences through bimonthly online interviews. The respondents were recruited in person and are representative of both the online and the offline population aged 16–75 in Germany (Blom et al., 2015). Data collection took place in January 2016. Each of the 3,015 respondents evaluated one vignette.

3.2 The Vignette Design

In the factorial survey experiment each respondent received one text describing a fictitious unemployed person (the vignette) and evaluated the rights and responsibilities of this person. The personal characteristics of the fictitious unemployed person were randomly assigned. In comparison to traditional surveys, the randomized “treatment” allowed for estimating the causal effect of the recipient’s characteristics. Respondents were forced to weigh different attributes and integrate these aspects into an overall judgement. Furthermore, the use of vignettes reduced the problem of social desirability because respondents were not directly asked about socially sensitive topics such as the discrimination of migrants vis-à-vis the native population (Auspurg and Hintz, 2015). The combinations of the five attributes resulted in a universe of 40 vignettes (Table 1).

Table 1 Attributes and values of the vignettes

Attributes	Values
Name	Peter Müller; Ali Öztürk
Age	20-; 40-; 60-years-old
Reason	because he quit his job; because of the bankruptcy of his company
Motivation	was not very active in looking for a job and has sent only a few applications; was very active in looking for a job and has sent many applications
Parenthood	Single and has no children; Single parent with one child, age three; Married and parent of one child, age three
Appointment	Missed appointment with the employment office for the first / second time

The vignette read as follows (the randomly assigned characteristics appear in squared brackets) – “[Ali Öztürk/ Peter Müller] is [20/ 40/ 60] years old. For the previous two years, he was employed in a company and is now unemployed because [*he quit his job/ of the bankruptcy of his company*]. He was [*not*] very active in looking for a job and has sent [*only a few/ many*] applications. [Ali Öztürk/ Peter Müller] is [*single and has no children/ single parent with one child of age three/ married and parent of one child of age three*]”.

3.2.1. Variables

After reading the vignette, respondents evaluated the rights and responsibilities of the unemployed individual. The first question concerned the appropriate level of unemployment benefits after one year of unemployment. The respondent indicated the level of benefits the unemployed person should receive per month on a scale from 0 to 1000€, in addition to rent and energy costs. Each respondent received information regarding benefits a single adult receives under the current legislation. In this way, the results did not depend on respondents’ previous knowledge. The second question concerned the conditions the unemployed person must fulfil in order to receive the full amount. The respondent could choose to select multiple of the three obligations – move to another city for work, take any job available and participate in training measures. The third question dealt with a three month benefits cut after the recipient failed to attend a meeting with the employment agency. A randomized attribute indicated if the benefits recipient missed one or two appointments with the agency. The scale for this question ranged from a 0 to 100 percent cut of previous benefits.

The effects of the recipient’s characteristics on the generosity of unemployment benefits and harshness of sanctions were analysed using linear regressions. Logistic regressions were used for the three conditions to receive benefits. Because of the experimental design, it was unnecessary to include control variables. However, as I was also interested in the effect of the respondent’s characteristics and their interaction with the vignettes, several background variables were added to the regression models that showed a significant effect on attitudes towards welfare state attitudes in previous studies (Fraile and Ferrer, 2005). Employment status was measured in three categories, namely employed, unemployed and not on labour market. The variable for job security was based on the self-assessment of the respondent that

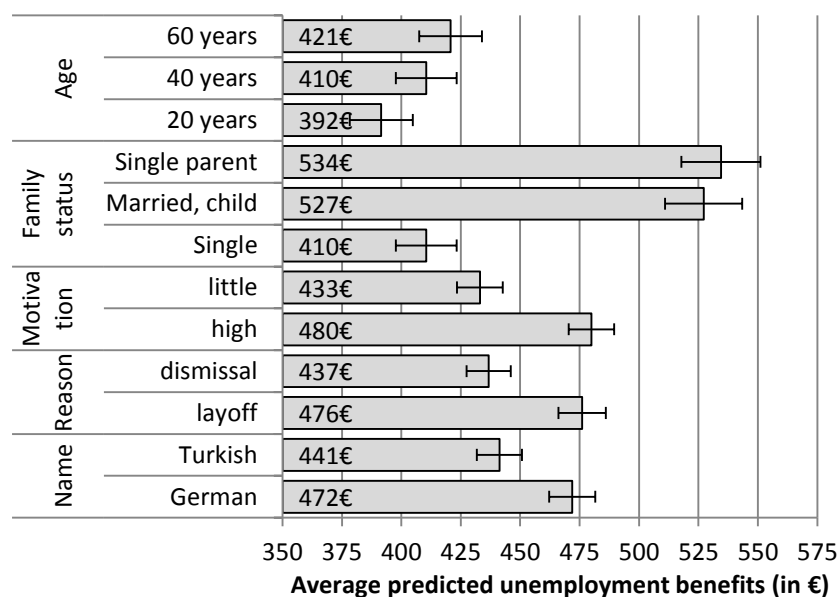
job loss was very or rather likely. The highest educational attainment was measured in three categories: lower secondary education, upper secondary education and a university degree. Political ideology was based on a self-assessment on a left-right scale that ranges from 1 to 11. Age was included in 13 categories spanning a range of five years. Both variables, age and political ideology, were centred to the mean in order to facilitate interpretation. A dummy variable for East and West is included because of the persisting differences in attitudes between the regions. Table A1 in the Appendix provides a description of the sample.

4 Results

4.1 The Level of Unemployment Benefits for Different Target Groups

Table 2 presents the results for the dependent variables – unemployment benefits, sanctions and three conditions for benefits – regressed on the five randomly assigned characteristics of the unemployed person and the background variables of the respondent. In the first step, the empirical analysis focuses on the first dependent variable, the generosity of unemployment benefits (Model 1). Figure 1 illustrates the predicted average benefits based on the recipient's characteristics. On average, respondents allocate about 456€ to the recipients. The allocated amount of benefits, however, differs widely between target groups.

Figure 1 Average unemployment benefits distributed to different target groups in €



Note: Values for age groups refer only to childless recipients to ensure comparability between groups

Concerning the age of the benefit recipient, respondents allocate 29€ more benefits to a sixty-year-old than a 20-year-old. There is a premium of 19€ for those who are 40-years-old, although this difference is not significant. In line with the current legislation, the perceived deservingness increases with age, motivating the public to grant more extensive social rights to those who have contributed to the social system in the past.

Table 2 The influence of recipient's and respondent's characteristics on attitudes towards benefits, sanctions and conditions

	(1) Benefits (€)	(2) Benefits (€) + Interaction	(3) Sanction (per cent)	(4) Condition: Move to another city	(5) Condition: Training	(6) Condition: Take any job available
<i>Recipient:</i>						
20 years	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
40 years	19.23	19.20	-2.69	-0.08	-0.06	0.10
60 years	28.74 **	27.90 **	-3.35 *	-0.75 ***	-0.70 ***	-0.06
<i>Family status</i>						
Single	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Single parent	121.22 ***	121.00 ***	-2.97	-0.56 ***	-0.29 *	-0.36 **
Married parent	114.91 ***	114.79 ***	-0.23	-0.42 ***	-0.09	-0.31 *
Reason: lay off	38.22 ***	38.31 ***	-2.15 *	0.04	0.10	-0.16 *
Motivation: high	45.72 ***	46.07 ***	-3.05 **	-0.06	0.07	-0.11
German name	29.63 ***	29.72 ***	0.02	-0.27 ***	-0.12	-0.24 **
2nd appointment			14.74 ***			
<i>Respondent:</i>						
Female	6.91	7.01	0.53	0.09	-0.10	0.15
<i>Status</i>						
Employed	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Not in lm	-2.52	-3.19	-2.00	-0.09	-0.14	-0.24 *
Unemployed	73.54 ***	72.84 ***	-11.54 ***	-1.29 ***	-0.08	-1.14 ***
Insecure job	40.89 *	40.78 *	-7.15 *	-0.75 **	-0.27	-0.46
<i>Education</i>						
Lower sec.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.

Upper sec.	7.10		7.90		-0.81		0.13		0.31	**	-0.35	***
Tertiary	35.01	***	35.21	***	-3.38	**	0.37	***	0.47	***	-0.34	***
East	-31.08	***	-31.19	***	3.08	*	-0.59	***	-0.20	*	-0.17	
Age	17.36	**	17.27	**	-0.58	**	0.01		0.06		-0.16	*
Age2	-1.08	*	-1.07	*			0.00		-0.01		0.01	*
Ideology	-9.09	***	8.11		1.92	***	0.10	***	-0.00		0.10	***
Ideology resp. X name recip.			-11.31	**								
Constant	388.79	***	388.45	***	17.50	***	-0.26		1.18	***	-0.66	*
<i>R²-overall</i>	0.154		0.156		0.103		0.050		0.028		0.026	
<i>R²- recip. var. only</i>	0.131		0.131		0.076		0.018		0.013		0.007	
<i>R²- resp. var. only</i>	0.028		0.030		0.030		0.032		0.016		0.019	

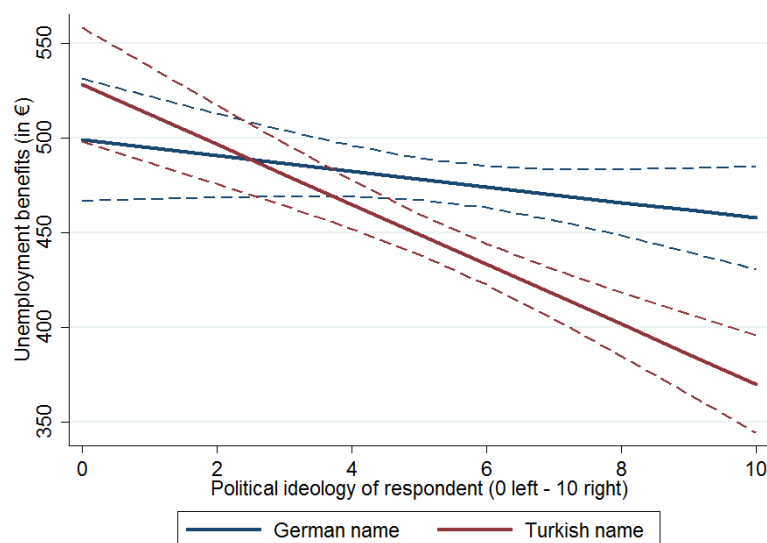
Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. N=3015

Models 1-3: OLS regressions. Models 4-6: Logistic regressions, pseudo R^2

An analysis of independent variables reveals children have the biggest effect on attitudes towards unemployment benefits. A single parent (534€) and a married parent (527€) receive significantly more benefits than a single person without children (410€). However, this benefit premium for parents is far below the additional 237€ that unemployed parents with young children receive based on current legislation. Respondents might underestimate the financial costs of a young child. Furthermore, the difference between single parents and married parents is small and not significant. In this regard, the respondents' opinions depart from the current social security law which grants additional benefits to single parents to account for their increased financial burden. Negative stereotypes of single parents, in particular concerning those without work, could be responsible for the relatively small benefit premium for single parents in the experiment.

The motivation of the unemployed and the reason for unemployment play an important role for the amount of benefits respondents granted to the recipient. Individuals who are not responsible for their job loss and those who show strong effort to regain employment receive significantly more unemployment benefits than those who quit their job and appear unmotivated to find a job (additional 38€ and 46€ respectively). This finding highlights the importance of the deservingness criteria *reciprocity* for the perceived deservingness of the unemployed. Efforts to keep a job or find a new one are rewarded by the respondents.

Figure 2 The generosity of unemployment benefits for native and Turkish benefit claimants, depending on the political ideology of the respondent



Note: Predicted values with 95 per cent confidence intervals. Results are obtained from Model 2 in Table 2.

The last characteristic concerns the ethnicity of the unemployed indicated by his name. Individuals with a Turkish name receive 30€ less benefits than those with a German name. This difference is highly significant and comparable to the gap between the young and the old. This result confirms previous findings by Kootstra (2016) who found a similar effects for the perceived deservingness of migrant groups in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The question emerges, however, to what extend this effect is mediated by the political ideology of the respondent. To test for this, Model 2 in Table 2 introduces an interaction term between the recipient's name and the respondent's political ideology. This term is negative and highly significant, indicating a much stronger positive effect of the German name on attitudes for individuals on the political right. Figure 2 displays the predicted unemployment benefits based on the political ideology of the respondent and the name of the benefit recipient. While respondents on the political left do not significantly distinguish between a German and a Turkish recipient, this difference is increasingly pronounced for individuals on the right, up to 75€.

4.2 Conditions and Sanctions for the Unemployed

In this section, the analysis turns to two related aspects of labour market policies, namely conditions for benefits and sanctions in case of a breach of the employment agency's rules (Model 3-6, Table 2). Across all vignettes, about 64 percent of the respondents agree that the unemployed should take any job available in order to receive unemployment benefits without cuts. 37 percent of respondents support forcing the unemployed to move to another city for a job. Approximately the same share of respondents agree that participating in training courses should be mandatory for the unemployed in order to keep their benefits. Support for these conditions depends on the individual circumstances of the unemployed, but not as much as respondents' preferences for generous benefits. Moving to another city or taking up work that conflicts with caring responsibilities is a higher burden for parents and accordingly less popular for parents than single people receiving benefits. Furthermore, those close to retirement age are less often required to move to another city or participate in training activities. Many respondents might see less value in these measures for the old, considering the limited time left in their working life. Interestingly, there are no significant differences concerning obligations for the two younger age groups. This suggests that respondents do not place an additional penalty on the young unemployed. Turkish

unemployed people are more often required to move to another city or take any job available than native unemployed.

In the next step of the survey process, the respondent was informed that the unemployed person failed to attend an appointment with the case manager at the employment agency. An additional experimental condition determines if the unemployed person missed the appointment for the first or second time. The average cut of benefits across all respondents is about 25 percent for the first infringement and 40 percent for the second. It is clear from this finding that repeated misbehaviour is punished by the respondents. Interestingly, preferences for unemployment benefits and sanctions are only mildly correlated (Pearsons R^2 -0.247). A substantial proportion of the population is quite generous when it comes to unemployment benefits but give harsh sanctions if the unemployed do not comply with rules.

Attitudes towards sanctions are to a lesser extent influenced by characteristics of the unemployed than preferences for benefits and conditions. Only age, the cause for unemployment and the motivation of the recipient exhibit weak effects on attitudes. It seems that respondents base their assessment of possible sanctions primarily on the behaviour of the unemployed. Those who did not display “grateful” behaviour from the beginning are punished more severely than those who demonstrated a commitment to benefits procedures. The name of the welfare recipient does not have a significant effect on the extent of benefit cuts. Turkish and German unemployed people are granted different levels of benefits, but receive the same punishment when they breach the rules of the employment agency by not attending an appointment. The reason might be that ethnic stereotypes lead to higher expectations towards native unemployed people, resulting in a stronger punishment if they exhibit socially undesirable behaviour. In other words, the positive reputation of a native unemployed person diminishes as soon as his behaviour contradicts stereotypes.

Table 2 provides the explained variance of models that include either the characteristics of the respondent or the recipient. The latter models provide larger predictive power which indicates the importance of the target groups’ characteristics on individual attitudes towards labour market policies. In addition, the total explained variance is lower for conditions than it is for benefit generosity and sanctions. Attitudes towards conditions are less dependent on

who is affected by these policy measures than attitudes towards the other two policies. Furthermore, the continuous measurement for benefits and sanctions leave more leverage for respondents to differentiate between recipient groups.

4.3 The Influence of the Respondent's Personal Background on Attitudes

Table 2 provides information on the impact of several of the respondent's background characteristics on attitudes towards unemployment benefits, conditions and sanctions. In line with previous research on this topic, being unemployed and at risk of job loss substantially increases support for generous social policy. The unemployed grant on average about 73€ more benefits than the employed. In line with Hypothesis 5, the unemployed are significantly less likely to support conditions and benefit cuts.

Individuals with higher levels of education grant more generous benefits and are more reluctant to sanction the unemployed than their less educated counterparts. This is a surprising finding because higher education is usually associated with a more sceptical view of the welfare state. Most likely, the answering scale with actual benefit levels instead of abstract values explains this deviation from previous studies' findings. Respondents must decide on the amount of money they deem sufficient for a decent standard of living. The highly educated, often equipped with good employment and income, might have a different view on this than those who struggle to meet costs of living and are used to living with few financial resources. At the same time, university graduates are more likely to support the conditions "moving" and "training" but less in favour of "taking any job available", thereby lending only partially support to Hypothesis 5. Again, this finding is rooted in the living standards related to education and social class. The highly educated have higher regional mobility and participate more often in further education. Therefore, the well-educated expect the unemployed to make similar investments in their working career. In contrast, the obligation to "take any job available" is seen as more problematic by highly educated individuals who generally select specific jobs best fit to their skillset (Hensen et al., 2009).

Consistent with previous studies, right political ideology is linked with a strong negative effect on attitudes towards benefits. However, this effect becomes positive and loses significance once an interaction with the name of the recipient is introduced in Model 2.

Accordingly, the political view of the respondent does not have an effect on preferences for benefits when native German recipients are considered. This finding confirms Hypothesis 4 and indicates that the political right is not per se the strongest opponent of the welfare state. A substantive part of the negative attitudes towards the welfare state can be attributed to welfare chauvinism.

5 Discussion

The trend towards increasingly targeted policies in European labour markets served as the starting point for this research endeavour. Although targeted policies are increasingly common across many European countries, few extant studies investigate the legitimacy of targeted benefits and activation policies. This study found solid support for welfare targeting, showing that attitudes towards different facets of unemployment benefits are heavily influenced by certain characteristics of the affected unemployed. Individuals who are close to retirement, care for a young child, have no foreign background, and make strong efforts to find a new job are on average granted more generous benefits. Similar effects were found in regard to attitudes towards conditionality of benefits and sanctions. For example, unemployed people with children are less often required to move to another city or take inappropriate job offers, but are expected to participate in training courses and are sanctioned as often as other individuals.

The findings have important implications for our understanding of popular reform support and for future research. First, instead of focusing on the distribution of resources between different social programs, research should pay more attention to the rights of specific target groups of social policy. While unemployment benefits are rather unpopular for some groups, others such as parents and highly motivated job-seekers receive significantly more support. Second, the effects of the recipient's characteristics differ between policy dimensions. Apparently, respondents take into account the consequences of sanctions and benefit cuts for different benefit claimants. If children are affected by these measures, respondents are more reluctant to restrict the rights of the unemployed individual. Given that conditions and sanctions are an essential part of recent labour market reforms, this finding highlights the need to broaden the scope of attitude research beyond the redistributive elements of the welfare state. Third, from a methodological perspective the usefulness of an experimental vignette approach for the study of political attitudes was demonstrated.

The results of this study are subject to some limitations. First, this study does not provide a strict test for the different deservingness criteria. For example, the public might grant the older unemployed more rights either because they have (presumably) contributed more to

the social system or because their chances for reemployment are lower. Further studies should use more elaborate descriptions of the benefit recipient to assess the importance the public attaches to additional characteristics of the recipient. In addition, the analysis considered only male recipients. Respondents might draw a distinction regarding the responsibilities of unemployed women and men and gender norms might result in fewer obligations for women with child care responsibilities. Second, this study was limited to attitudes towards labour market policies in Germany. Future research should explore if targeted welfare policies are seen as legitimate in other policy areas such as health care and pensions. Furthermore, the question arises to what extent the results can be generalized to other countries. For example, attitudes might be more independent of the benefit recipient's characteristics in Nordic universal welfare states where benefits more often have the character of unconditional social rights. Third, the high degree of conformity between public opinion and the social rights of different target groups lead to questions regarding the direction of the causal relationship. Did policy makers react to public opinion when they introduced major changes or did benefit system reform lead to a differentiated view on the rights of the unemployed amongst the public? Regardless of the answer, research on targeting of the welfare state will remain an important topic in the years to come.

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7 Appendix

Table A1 Descriptive results

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<i>Dependent variables:</i>				
Unemployment benefits (€)	456.518	193.47	0	1000
Sanction (%)	32.562	28.98	0	100
Move to another city	0.368	0.48	0	1
Participate in training	0.642	0.48	0	1
Take any job	0.356	0.48	0	1
<i>Respondent:</i>				
Female	0.487	0.50	0	1
<i>Education:</i>				
Lower secondary	0.485	0.50	0	1
Upper secondary	0.219	0.41	0	1
Tertiary	0.296	0.46	0	1
<i>Labour market status:</i>				
Employed	0.632	0.48	0	1
Not on labour market	0.342	0.47	0	1
Unemployed	0.026	0.16	0	1
Insecure job	0.030	0.17	0	1
East Germany	0.210	0.41	0	1
Age (13 categories)	7.152	3.10	1	13
Political ideology (centred)	0.000	1.77	-4	6

N= 3,015