

LEGITIMACY OF LABOR MARKET POLICY: PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS WELFARE STATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR JOB CREATION

YONAS ABRHA ASNAKE¹

ABSTRACT: *This article tests a number of hypotheses for explaining the effects of personal and contextual characteristics on attitudes towards the government's role in job creation. To this end, data from the European Social Survey (ESS4-2008) on 25 European countries are analyzed using a multilevel regression method. The result indicates that Europeans are likely to assign high government responsibility for job provision. Self-interested attitudes toward government responsibility appear to be greater among certain groups holding peripheral labour market status. Sociopolitical ideologies, perceived welfare policy and target group evaluations are also likely to influence attitudes towards government responsibility. On top of that, a set of indicators reflecting self-interest, sociopolitical ideology and evaluative beliefs proved roughly equal amounts of explanatory power that could disclose the tensions in popular attitudes towards labour policy intervention. At the macro level, it is social protection generosity rather than economic context that matters for inter-country divergences in popular attitudes towards employment provisions of welfare states.*

KEYWORDS: *European welfare state, labour policy attitudes, perceived performance, economic interest; ideology, unemployment; social policy generosity; European Social Survey*

¹ *Yonas Abrha Asnake* is a faculty member in the Department of Management at Kotebe University of Education, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; mail address: yonasabrha409@gmail.com. This paper was supported by the Department of Management, Kotebe University of Education.

INTRODUCTION

Postindustrial societies are increasingly grappling with a range of social risks, primarily driven by capitalist market forces. Modern welfare states are developed and sustained to protect citizens against these risks – socioeconomic insecurities, inequalities, and forms of exclusion (Rawls 1999; Roosma et al. 2014). However, the stability and consolidation of the welfare state are contingent upon broader public support (Larsen 2006). Understanding the nature and sources of public attitudes towards welfare state policies is therefore crucial for both theoretical insight and practical policy reform. Comparative survey research has explored micro- and macro-level mechanisms for explaining broader welfare attitudes (Rothstein 1998). Meanwhile, studying policy-specific attitudes merits special attention in the sense that welfare state legitimacy is multidimensional, with different domains, having divergent causes and consequences (Wendt et al. 2011; Roosma et al. 2013).

This article focuses on public attitudes toward government responsibility for job creation because labor market policy has been highly contentious and sparked sharp academic and political debates (Ebbinghaus–Naumann 2018). European comparative research also confirms that support for the unemployed and unemployment benefits is generally lower than support for other forms of welfare provisions (Wendt et al. 2011; Van Oorschot – Meuleman 2014; Van Oorschot et al. eds 2017). Moreover, with the rise of automation and persistent unemployment, job creation continues to be a central concern throughout Europe, particularly for the middle class (Dallinger 2013). Despite its importance for social policy, *public attitudes towards the government's role in job creation* have received far less attention than other dimensions, such as pensions, childcare, healthcare, or unemployment benefits (Van Oorschot – Meuleman 2012; Gugushvili – Van Oorschot 2020; European Commission 2020; Basna 2023).

The concept of ‘public attitudes toward government responsibility for job creation’ refers to *public feelings towards the welfare state, such as whether it should intervene to ensure a job for every citizen who wants one*. To investigate this concept, the article draws on both macro and micro-level theories to offer a more comprehensive explanation of public attitudes towards state responsibility for job creation. This approach helps to identify and reduce spurious relationships that disappear when exposed to multiple control variables.

Furthermore, the article addresses three core research questions: What degree of government responsibility for job creation do citizens demand in various European countries? Which individual-level interests, ideologies, and/or evaluative beliefs influence preferences for government intervention in job

provision? What effect do social protection policies and/or the unemployment rate have on public attitudes toward the state's involvement in employment generation?

The following section reviews basic theories, formulates specific hypotheses, presents the data and methods, and reports the regression results, followed by a conclusion and discussion.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD WELFARE STATE POLICY: PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND HYPOTHESES

Public opinion research has distinguished two broad dimensions of welfare policy attitudes: normative attitudes (what the state should do) and evaluative attitudes (what the state does). Research claims that normative attitudes are more stable and diffused when measuring welfare state legitimacy (Dalton 1999; Easton 1975). This article will therefore explore the *direct* and *immediate* effects of both individual and contextual characteristics on normative attitudes toward government intervention in the labor market.

Micro-level characteristics and welfare policy attitudes

Literature often employs economic interest and/or social ideology to explain the factors shaping welfare attitudes (Gelissen 2002; Ebbinghaus–Naumann 2018). For instance, attitudes toward the unemployed and unemployment benefits depend more on differing economic interests and ideological/moral beliefs (Jensen–Petersen 2017).

Additionally, some studies have found a significant relationship between cognitive orientations – individuals' perceived evaluation of target groups and welfare performance – and their attitudes towards specific policy (Kumlin 2004; Svallfors et al. 2012; Roosma et al. 2014). Thus, it can be argued that a combination of interest, ideology, and cognitive beliefs should directly shape public sentiment regarding the welfare state's responsibility for job creation. To explore this further, three competing micro theories are reviewed below.

Self-interest theory assumes that the immediate, rational, material utility maximization motives embedded in one's social structure will shape welfare attitudes (Gelissen 2008; Kumlin 2007; Svallfors et al. 2012). The self-interest hypothesis holds that individuals with identical resource and risk profiles – systematically related to labor market structure – share common economic

interests. Accordingly, people who expect or receive fewer material advantages are more likely to back government intervention that protects them against the vagaries of the labor market. For instance, empirical evidence shows that socioeconomic status and risk perceptions are among the strongest predictors of attitudes towards the unemployed and unemployment benefits (European Commission 2020).

One proxy indicator of a person's labor market position is their subjective assessment of *household income*. From a self-interest perspective, high-income earners – who are net taxpayers – are more likely to oppose policy intervention than low-income earners – who are net welfare recipients – based on a cost-benefit calculus. *Social class* is another common measure of self-interest in policy attitude studies. Prior studies have argued that a new social class has emerged in postindustrial society, shaped not only by differences in vertically marketable skills that produce more or less material benefits, but also by variations in horizontal work logic that lead to more or less stable and protected jobs (Oesch 2006; Ebbinghaus–Naumann 2018). In this context, citizens with a peripheral position in terms of vertical and/or horizontal labor market dimensions are expected to defend government intervention.

Welfare research also draws attention to the role of the *welfare transfer class* in sustaining and expanding welfare policies. The transfer classes (like the unemployed, pensioners, the disabled, and others) are more likely to support welfare benefits/services than those in paid employment (Gelissen 2002; Blomberg et al. 2012). Proponents of “consumption cleavage theory” also claim that variations in welfare consumption directly shape popular beliefs about government involvement (Kumlin 2004: 126). Moreover, research suggests that past experiences of unemployment and future unemployment risk are key factors influencing attitudes toward government intervention (Svallfors et al. 2012). Evidence confirms that individuals with realized or unrealized risk of unemployment are more positive about unemployment benefits and the unemployed (Furåker–Blomsterberg 2003; Van Oorschot – Meuleman 2014). Accordingly,

H1: Self-interest hypothesis: Citizens with peripheral labor market status will have more positive attitudes towards government responsibility for job creation than those in central labor market positions.

In contrast, *socio-cultural theory* posits that values and ideologies related to social justice, equality, and collective responsibility are more prominent in shaping welfare attitudes (Kulin–Svallfors 2013). A commonly used indicator of cultural values and ideologies is individuals' self-placement on the left-right

political spectrum. Individuals on the left who feel that resources are distributed unjustly tend to support a strong government that provides safety nets and promotes equality of outcomes. In contrast, those with right-wing political ideology advocate a free market system over government institutions as the most efficient mode of resource distribution, calling for a rollback of welfare handouts (Woshinsky 2007). Groups with a ‘moderate’ political ideology are generally assumed to favor a free market system tempered by safety-net programs that assist the less fortunate.

Cultural theory also posits that a *system of social beliefs*, embedded in individuals’ everyday experiences, can affect their attitudes toward welfare state policies (Woshinsky 2007; Svallfors et al. 2012). Ideas about egalitarianism and meritocracy reflect individuals’ beliefs about equality and equity, respectively, in the distribution of economic resources. Accordingly, those favoring egalitarian over meritocratic principles of income distribution are more likely to support government intervention. In relation to moral authority, research appears to conceptualize it along a libertarian-authoritarian spectrum (Woshinsky 2007). On the libertarian end, individuals tend to value personal liberty, freedom, and self-reliance, advocating the weakest state intervention possible. In contrast, those at the authoritarian end are more inclined toward aggression, submission, and conventionalism, approving intrusive government that may amount to blind faithfulness and unquestioning conformity. Supporting this view, European survey data confirm a positive linkage between authoritarian orientation and preferences for government intervention (Mewes–Mau 2012; Staerklé et al. 2012). Gender norms and expectations also play a crucial role in shaping individuals’ opinions on government responsibilities (Inglehart 1991). Citizens with traditional sex-role beliefs (male-breadwinner ideals) support the concept of a working husband responsible for the family’s economic well-being and a caregiving wife in charge of managing family affairs. Conversely, those with beliefs in sex-role egalitarianism (the dual-breadwinner model) prefer families in which both partners contribute equally to supporting the family’s economy and share housework. Consequently, individuals’ receptiveness to egalitarian sex roles, including women’s right to work, tends to be related to a stronger endorsement of government interference aimed at promoting equal job opportunities.

H2: Sociopolitical ideology hypothesis: public attitudes towards government responsibility for job creation will be more positive among citizens with left-wing political ideals, egalitarian income distribution, moral authoritarianism, and sex-role egalitarianism than among persons with more commitment to right-wing politics, a meritocratic income distribution, moral libertarianism, and sex-role traditionalism.

Performance evaluation theory offers an alternative perspective on attitudes toward government responsibility. As cognitive assessments of real-world conditions, evaluative beliefs involve judgments about government performance or the appropriateness of public affairs and the neutrality of economic interests and cultural values (Kumlin 2007; Van Oorschot – Meuleman 2012; Mackonytė et al. 2014). One argument, known as the *government overload / improvement hypothesis*, espouses that greater dissatisfaction with policy performance may lead to more positive attitudes toward government intervention. This seemingly inverse relationship could be the outcome of a demand for improvement on poorly performing policies or feelings of tax overburden associated with sustaining better-performing policies (Van Oorschot – Meuleman 2012; Mackonytė et al. 2014). A contrarian *reward / punishment hypothesis* suggests a positive association between perceived policy performance and welfare state attitudes. Empirical evidence supports this view, reflecting that citizens tend to reward better policy performance with stronger support and penalize poor performance with weaker support (Blomberg et al. 2012; Gugushvili – Van Oorschot 2020). For instance, the more negative perceptions of the unemployed, the less public support for government intervention in the form of unemployment benefits (Van Oorschot – Meuleman 2014).

H3A: Performance overload hypothesis: Higher dissatisfaction with welfare state performance will lead to more positive attitudes toward welfare state responsibility for job creation.

H3B: Performance reward/punishment hypothesis: Favorable evaluations of government performance should give rise to positive attitudes towards policy intervention in the domain of job creation.

To accurately assess welfare attitudes, it is important to consider gender, age, education, migration status, and employment sector as key control variables. According to the self-interest theory, women tend to demonstrate greater support for welfare policies due to their relatively less privileged economic positions. From a cultural theory perspective, women's more welfare state-oriented approach is attributed to societal expectations that assign them caregiving roles, which reinforce the belief in the government's responsibility to provide care for society (Kuechler 1991). Education can influence welfare attitudes in two ways: through self-interest, education often leads to increased personal income and material advantages, which can undermine support for welfare policies; and through a cultural approach, education induces commitment to social rights and collective responsibility.

The self-interest perspective also identifies age-based differences in welfare state attitudes (Busemeyer et al. 2009; Svallfors et al. 2012). Members of younger groups with lower earnings and a higher risk of unemployment tend to be more welfare-minded than adults in the career advancement phase, who have secured jobs and accumulated wealth. The elderly, who are more vulnerable to lifecycle risks than labor market risks, tend to compete for limited resources, which can foster exclusionary attitudes toward labor market policies. From a cultural perspective, the younger generation has gradually experienced welfare cutbacks and conditionality, possibly shifting their values away from support for collective wellbeing (Inglehart 1991). In addition, trade union membership is more likely to be associated with endorsement of labor market interventions, as people join unions primarily to collectively influence government and boost workers' well-being (Gelissen 2002). Public employees, who derive their careers and economic rewards from government, are generally more supportive of more welfare state benefits/services (Kumlin 2004). Migrants, who often hold disadvantaged labor market positions, also tend to favor government involvement (Reeskens – Van Oorschot 2015).

Macro-level characteristics and welfare policy attitudes

Research on welfare attitudes primarily distinguishes between two categories of contextual effects: institutions and socioeconomic pressure (Van Oorschot et al. eds. 2017; Ebbinghaus–Naumann 2018). Studying multiple contextual variables simultaneously remains challenging due to the limited number of sample countries and the strong reciprocal relationship among these variables. Therefore, this paper focuses on two widely used proxy variables – social protection expenditure and unemployment rate – representing institutional and socio-economic forces, respectively.

Institutional theory explains the linkage between actual social policies and welfare policy attitudes (Rothstein, 1998; Kumlin, 2004). Based on self-interest theory, citizens in countries with more generous social expenditures tend to exhibit a higher level of welfare state-mindedness, as a larger segment of the population directly benefits from welfare transfers and services. Additionally, social justice theory claims that the type of welfare arrangements to which individuals are habituated matters most in shaping their welfare attitudes. For instance, exposure to generous welfare schemes can promote positive experiences, leading people to support such policy arrangements.

H4: Social policy generosity hypothesis: Popular attitudes towards welfare state responsibility for job creation will be more positive in countries with more generous social expenditure than in countries with less social spending.

The unemployment rate, as a typical proxy variable, contributes to the formation of policy attitudes due to its direct impact on citizens' lives and frequent media coverage (Von Beyme 1991). However, empirical research demonstrates mixed results on how the unemployment rate influences attitudes towards government involvement (Ebbinghaus–Naumann 2018). One view is that attitudes toward government intervention will be more favorable in countries experiencing massive unemployment, as people become more aware of the issue through social networks and mass media. For instance, Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003) find a positive relationship between unemployment rate and popular attitudes towards unemployment benefits. In contrast, another perspective notes that in countries with higher unemployment rates, people tend to oppose policy interventions more than those in nations with lower unemployment rates. This may be explained by the increasing awareness of the rising opportunity costs of taxation, leading individuals to prioritize personal over collective well-being. Supporting this, Ebbinghaus and Naumann (2018) find a rather negative relationship between the unemployment rate and welfare state support. Similarly, a European comparative study found that images of the unemployed become more negative when there is a higher long-term unemployment rate (Buffel – Van de Velde 2019).

H5A: Economic crisis hypothesis: Public support for government responsibility for job provision will be stronger in countries where there is widespread unemployment pressure than in those states with low unemployment pressure.

H5B: Economic crisis hypothesis: Citizens in welfare states with high rates of unemployment more weakly support welfare state responsibility for job creation than those living in countries with low unemployment rates.

DATA AND METHODS

This study utilized data from the fourth wave of the European Social Survey, conducted in 2008, with a particular focus on the welfare attitudes module. The dataset included 38,048 cases (using design weight replication) from 25 European nations.² The margin of observation across countries ranged from 2.7% in Slovenia to 6.6% in the United Kingdom. Macro-level information was extracted from the European Statistical Office (Eurostat) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Concerning measurements, the *outcome variable* captures popular attitudes toward the welfare state's responsibility for job creation. This variable is operationalized using a single-item, which asks respondents to indicate *how much responsibility they think governments should have to ensure a job for everyone who wants one*. Eleven answer categories are provided, where 0 – 'it should not be the government's responsibility at all,' and 10 – 'it should be entirely the government's responsibility.'

At the individual level, five variables are used to operationalize the concept of self-interest. *Subjective household income* is constructed with a questionnaire item measuring how respondents feel about their current household's income (categorized into four dummies: 'living comfortably,' 'coping,' 'difficult,' and 'very difficult'). *Social class* is defined using Oesch's 5-class schema, which includes the following categories: higher-grade service class, lower-grade service class, small business owners, skilled workers, and unskilled workers. *Welfare transfer class* is gauged through employment status, with the following dummy categories: employed, unemployed, retired, disabled/sick, and others outside the labor force. *Unemployment risk* is measured by asking respondents how likely it is that they will be unemployed in the next 12 months (recoded into five dummies: 'not at all likely,' 'not very likely,' 'likely,' 'very likely,' 'not applicable,' and 'don't know'). *Unemployment experience* is operationalized using an item asking whether respondents have ever been unemployed and seeking work for a period of more than three months (dummy variables with yes – 1; no – 0).

The concept of sociopolitical ideology is operationalized through the following four variables. *Political ideology* is constructed by collapsing an 11-point scale survey item into four dummy categories: 'left' (0–4), 'center'

2 The study covers Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Switzerland (CH), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Spain (ES), Finland (FI), France (FR), United Kingdom (GB), Greece (GR), Croatia (HR), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), Latvia (LV), the Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Sweden (SE), Slovenia (SI), and Slovakia (SK).

(5), 'right' (6–10), and 'do not know' (88). *Economic equality belief* is measured through a 5-point Likert scale item on whether large differences in income are acceptable to reward talents and efforts (recoded into dummy variables: 'meritocratic' ('agree strongly' and 'agree'), 'neutral' ('neither agree nor disagree'), 'egalitarian' ('disagree' and 'disagree strongly'), and 'do not know.' *Moral authority* is constructed via a battery item asking for agreement with the following statement: "Schools must teach children to obey authority." Responses are recoded into 'authoritarian' ('agree strongly' and 'agree'), 'neutral' ('neither agree nor disagree'), and 'libertarian' ('disagree' and 'disagree strongly'). *Gender traditionalism* is measured by a 5-point scale survey statement that states: "Men should have more rights to jobs than women when jobs are scarce." The item is reverse-coded as 1 ('disagree strongly') to 5 ('agree strongly').

Perceived evaluations of policy performance are measured using five indicators. *Perceived unemployment magnitude* is operationalized with the statement: "Of every 100 people of working age in [country], how many would you say are unemployed and looking for work?" An 11-point scale item is collapsed into dummy variables 'low' (0–9), 'moderate' (10–19), 'high' (20–39), 'very high' (40 or more), and 'do not know.' *Public image of the unemployed* is gauged using a survey battery: "Most unemployed people do not really try to find a job," with responses ranging from 1 ('agree strongly') to 5 ('disagree strongly'). *Perceived youth-job opportunities* are measured through a question asking about the respondent's satisfaction with opportunities for young people to find their first full-time job, with responses ranging from 0 ('extremely bad') to 10 ('extremely good'). Perceptions of the *benefit system's effectiveness* are captured through a survey question: "Many with very low incomes get less benefit than legally entitled," rated using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 ('agree strongly') to 5 ('disagree strongly'). Controlling variables also include gender, education, age, union membership, migrant status, and employment sector.

At the macro level, two explanatory variables are included. *Social policy generosity* is operationalized using the five-year average (2004–2008) of total social protection expenditure per inhabitant, measured in purchasing power standard (PPS).³ *Unemployment pressure* is captured through the five-year average (2004–2008) long-term unemployment rate.⁴

Additionally, this study employs multilevel regression analysis to investigate the relationship between a single outcome variable at the individual level, on the

3 The analysis includes a single year (2008) of social expenditure data for Croatia. Missing country-level data are also imputed using the nearby points while calculating a five-year average index.

4 Switzerland's unemployment data comes from the OECD, given its absence in the Eurostat database.

one hand, and explanatory variables at both the individual and country levels, on the other. The study estimates parameters using *random intercept modeling* and the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method. A mathematical equation for the random intercepts model is denoted as follows (Hox et al. 2017):

$$Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{p0}X_{pij} + \gamma_{0q}Z_{qj} + v_{0j} + e_{ij}$$

In this equation,

- Y_{ij} is the outcome variable, attitudes to welfare state responsibility for the individual respondent i ($i=1 \dots n_i$) in country j ($j=1 \dots J$)
- γ_{00} is the overall intercept of the regression equation; is the regression coefficient for explanatory variables p ($p=1 \dots P$) and
- X_{pij} is the explanatory variable p for the individual respondent i in country j .
- While γ_{0q} is the regression coefficient of country-level explanatory variables q ($q=1 \dots Q$) and
- Z_{qj} is the explanatory variable measured at the country-level,
- v_{0j} and e_{ij} represents the residual error terms (random effects) at country- and individual-levels, respectively.

DESCRIPTIVE AND MULTILEVEL REGRESSION RESULTS

Descriptive results

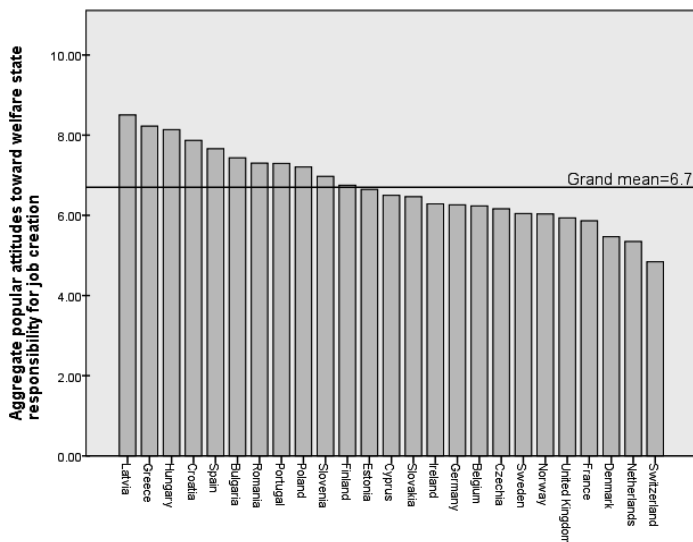
Legitimacy of the welfare state's responsibility for job creation

To understand the broader context of labor market policy legitimacy, it is essential to first describe the degree of government intervention people desire in relation to job creation in different European countries. Figure 1 presents aggregate attitudes toward government responsibility for job provision across 25 European countries. The cross-country average of popular attitudes is roughly 6.7 points on a 0–10 scale, where a higher score represents stronger support, suggesting generally positive sentiment regarding state intervention in job creation. Notably, almost all welfare states in the sample disclose supportive attitudes above the midpoint (5), demonstrating widespread support for state involvement. However, there are some cross-national variations in attitudes. Latvian respondents most strongly support government responsibility for job creation policy, with the average score approaching 8.5. In contrast, Switzerland

exhibits the lowest level of support for government responsibility, with an average score closer to 4.8, reflecting relatively less welfare state-mindedness.

When examining inter-country patterns, two worlds of welfare states clearly emerge: Northern/Western Europe *versus* Southern/Eastern Europe. Aggregate attitudes towards government responsibility appear to be more positive in most Eastern and Southern European countries, while a number of Western and Northern European countries show less favorable attitudes. There are some notable exceptions to the two worlds of the welfare state. For instance, the Czech Republic – an Eastern European country – is identified with relatively stronger disapproval of the welfare state, while Finland, despite its Northern location, is associated with relatively more favorable views towards government intervention in job creation.

Figure 1. Public attitudes towards the government's responsibility for job creation (country average, 0–10 scale)



Source: European Social Survey, 2008. Cases weighted by design and population size.

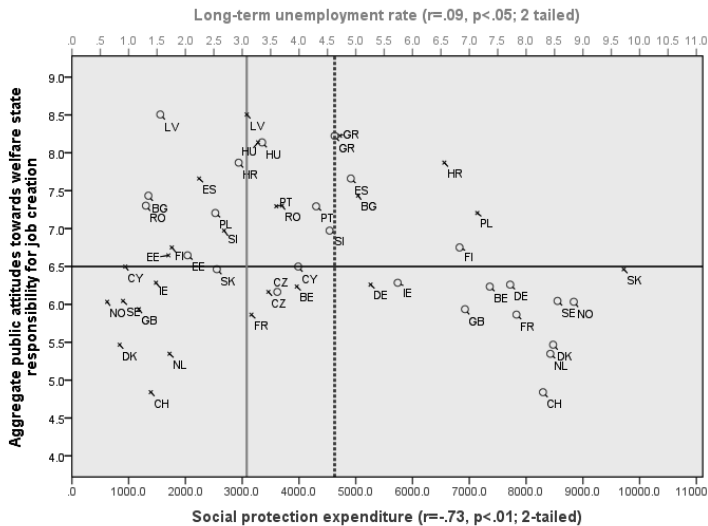
Social protection, unemployment rate, and labor policy attitudes

Figure 2 describes the relationship between national characteristics and aggregate public attitudes toward welfare state responsibility. First, matrix cells

where a solid horizontal axis intersects a dashed vertical axis (with circular markers denoting each country's location) illustrate the correlation between social protection spending and aggregate public attitudes. A striking pattern emerges: there is a clear West/North *versus* South/East cleavage. Higher levels of social protection spending, coupled with less positive public attitudes toward government responsibility for job creation, are found in nearly all Northern and Western welfare states. Finland is an exception to this pattern, demonstrating high social protection expenditure alongside more favorable public attitudes.

In contrast, many Southern and Eastern European countries are associated with the opposite pattern – lower levels of social expenditure in tandem with more favorable attitudes towards government responsibility. However, a few exceptions exist within these countries, exhibiting lower levels of social expenditure along with less positive attitudes. Generally, the pattern is statistically robust: the statistical analysis confirms that a very strong and significantly negative correlation ($r = -0.73$; $p < 0.01$) exists between social expenditure and aggregate attitudes toward government responsibility.

Figure 2. Connection between social protection expenditure / long-term unemployment rate and attitudes towards government responsibility for job creation



Source: European Social Survey, 2008; Eurostat/OECD, 2004–2008. Cases weighted by design and population size.

Note: The solid and dashed vertical axes represent the median values of social protection expenditure and long-term unemployment rate, respectively.

In the figure, matrix cells with a solid vertical axis intersecting a solid horizontal axis display scatter plots of countries (denoted by X markers), illustrating the relationship between long-term unemployment rates and public attitudes. Here, a more dispersed pattern emerges, clouding the North/West *versus* a South/East divide. It appears that several countries in Northern and Western Europe tend to exhibit comparatively lower long-term unemployment rates and less positive public attitudes. In contrast, higher long-term unemployment rates and more favorable public attitudes are common in many Southern and Eastern European countries. However, this pattern is not statistically robust, manifesting a very weak and insignificantly positive correlation between unemployment rates and public attitudes ($r=0.09$, $p < 0.05$).

Socioeconomic interest, ideology, and evaluative beliefs

Appendix Table A1 presents preliminary data, highlighting the concentration and diffusion of interests, ideological, and evaluative beliefs across European countries. Accordingly, nearly half of the respondents fall into the middle-income working class, paid workers, and low-unemployment-risk categories. Additionally, about two-thirds of respondents reveal no experience of unemployment. When combining ‘agree’ and ‘agree strongly’ responses, around two-thirds of the respondents favor values and ideologies such as income egalitarianism, moral authoritarianism, and traditional gender roles. In contrast, the political spectrum is more evenly distributed across left, center, and right ideologies. Moreover, respondents are less critical of the magnitude of unemployment, but more critical of youth employment opportunities and the effectiveness of benefit systems. In contrast, respondents are almost evenly divided regarding their image of the unemployed.

Multilevel regression results

This section presents the results of multilevel regression models that connect micro- and macro-level explanatory factors with the outcome variable. As a primary stage of multilevel analysis, the intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) predicted from an intercept-only model decomposes the total variance into individual-level (6.022) and country-level (0.863) variance components. Thus, inter-country variance in popular attitudes toward government responsibility for job provision is roughly 12.5% of the total variance. The ICC seems sufficiently

high to capture cross-national differences in attitudes, as well as to justify the use of multilevel regression models.

Model 1 of Table 1 introduces variables reflecting economic self-interest, ideological orientation, and evaluative beliefs, along with standard control variables. The *self-interest hypothesis (H1)*, that citizens with peripheral labor market status tend to have more positive attitudes towards government responsibility, is partially confirmed. Consistent with self-interest theory, preferences regarding the government's role in job creation are stronger among people who are 'finding it difficult' and 'very difficult' to manage on their present income than those who are living comfortably. Conversely, there are statistically insignificant attitudinal variations between those 'coping' on current income and those 'living comfortably.' As expected, the strongest approval of government responsibility comes from unskilled and skilled workers, followed by lower-grade service class and small business owners. The effect of welfare transfer classes is not fully substantiated. Surprisingly, the unemployed are associated with statistically insignificant and less favorable attitudes than those in paid employment. In contrast, the retired and others outside the labor force tend to support government intervention, although the effects lose statistical significance. Contrary to expectations, neither previous unemployment experiences nor perceived future unemployment risk significantly influences attitudes towards the government's role in job creation.

Moreover, the *socio-political ideology hypothesis (H2)* is strongly supported by the findings (Model 1). As predicted, citizens with a right-wing political ideology demonstrate significantly less positive attitudes toward government responsibility for job creation than those at the center, and have much lower support than those on the left. Similarly, attitudes toward government intervention are more positive among egalitarians than those who favor meritocratic income distribution. Moral authoritarians, rather than libertarians, had stronger support for welfare state intervention, as expected. In contrast to results concerning Hypothesis 2, gender traditionalism is positively and significantly associated with attitudes towards government responsibility for job creation.

The *performance overload/improvement hypothesis (H3A)*, which posits that policy performance is inversely related to public attitudes towards welfare policy, obtains empirical support. Specifically, individuals who perceive the unemployment magnitude as 'small' demonstrate a stronger rejection of job creation policies. Conversely, those who see unemployment magnitude as 'moderate' are even more supportive than those who perceive it as 'large' and 'very large.' Consistent with the *performance improvement hypothesis*, greater dissatisfaction with youth employment opportunities is associated with stronger support for government responsibility for job creation. As projected, effective

use of welfare benefits is more likely to reduce support for government-driven job initiatives. Finally, the *performance reward / punishment hypothesis (H3B)* is also validated. A more favorable public image of the unemployed leads to stronger and statistically significant support for the government’s involvement in job creation.

After controlling for individual-level variables, national contextual factors are systematically introduced (Models 2 through Model 4) to analyze cross-national influence. Surprisingly, the *social policy generosity hypothesis (H4)* is substantiated in the opposite direction. Contrary to the hypothesis that more generous social expenditure promotes more supportive attitudes towards government responsibility, Model 2 shows a strong, statistically significant, and negative relationship between social protection spending and national public support.

In Model 3, the effect of long-term unemployment aligns with the *economic crisis hypothesis (H5A)*, although it lacks statistical significance. Thus, countries with high levels of long-term unemployment are associated with insignificant but positive support for the government’s responsibility for job creation. Moreover, controlling for social protection spending in Model 4, the effect of unemployment rate turns out to be negative, statistically non-significant, and weaker in magnitude, aligning with the *economic crisis hypothesis (H5B)*.

Table 1. Results of multilevel analysis for public attitudes towards government responsibility (N=38,048)

FIXED EFFECTS	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS				
Gender (ref.: Male)	0.20*** (−0.10)	0.20*** (−0.10)	0.20*** (−0.10)	0.20*** (−0.10)
Age	−0.01*** (−0.09)	−0.01*** (−0.09)	−0.01*** (−0.09)	−0.01*** (−0.09)
Educational attainment	−0.03*** (−0.13)	−0.03*** (−0.13)	−0.03*** (−0.13)	−0.03*** (−0.13)
Union membership (ref.: No)	0.13*** (0.06)	0.13*** (0.06)	0.13*** (0.06)	0.13*** (0.06)
Migrant status (ref.: Yes)	−0.23*** (0.06)	−0.23*** (0.06)	−0.23*** (0.06)	−0.23*** (0.06)
Employment sector (ref.: Private sector)				
Government sector	0.20*** (0.09)	0.20*** (0.09)	0.20*** (0.09)	0.20*** (0.09)
Other sector	0.21* (0.03)	0.21* (0.03)	0.21* (0.03)	0.20* (0.03)
Not applicable	0.17* (0.08)	0.17* (0.08)	0.17* (0.08)	0.17* (0.08)
Subjective income (ref: Living comfortably)				
Coping	0.18 (0.09)	0.17 (0.09)	0.17 (0.09)	0.17 (0.09)
Difficult	0.33*** (0.13)	0.33*** (0.13)	0.33*** (0.13)	0.33*** (0.13)
Very difficult	0.39*** (0.10)	0.39*** (0.10)	0.39*** (0.10)	0.39*** (0.10)

Table 1. (Continued)

FIXED EFFECTS	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Social class (ref.: Higher-grade service class)								
Lower-grade service class	0.19***	(0.07)	0.19***	(0.07)	0.19***	(0.07)	0.19***	(0.07)
Small business owners	0.21***	(0.06)	0.21***	(0.06)	0.21***	(0.06)	0.21***	(0.06)
Skilled workers	0.29***	(0.14)	0.29***	(0.14)	0.29***	(0.14)	0.29***	(0.14)
Unskilled workers	0.33***	(0.13)	0.33***	(0.13)	0.33***	(0.13)	0.33***	(0.13)
Missing	0.12	(0.03)	0.12	(0.03)	0.12	(0.03)	0.12	(0.03)
Welfare transfer class (ref.: Paid work)								
Unemployed	−0.08	(−0.02)	−0.08	(−0.02)	−0.08	(−0.02)	−0.08	(−0.02)
Retired	0.13**	(0.05)	0.13**	(0.05)	0.13**	(0.05)	0.13**	(0.05)
Sick/disabled	0.14	(0.02)	0.14	(0.02)	0.14	(0.02)	0.14	(0.02)
Others outside the labor force	0.20**	(0.06)	0.20**	(0.06)	0.20**	(0.06)	0.20**	(0.06)
Unemployment experience (ref.: No)	0.05	(0.02)	0.05	(0.02)	0.05	(0.02)	0.05	(0.02)
Unemployment risk (ref.: Not at all very likely)								
Not very likely	−0.04	(−0.02)	−0.04	(−0.02)	−0.04	(−0.02)	−0.04	(−0.02)
Likely	0.05	(0.02)	0.05	(0.02)	0.05	(0.02)	0.05	(0.02)
Very likely	0.13*	(0.03)	0.13*	(0.03)	0.13*	(0.03)	0.12*	(0.03)
Not working	0.12**	(0.05)	0.12**	(0.05)	0.12**	(0.05)	0.12**	(0.05)
Don't know	−0.05	(−0.01)	−0.05	(−0.01)	−0.05	(−0.01)	−0.05	(−0.01)
Political ideology (ref.: Right)								
Center	0.16***	(0.07)	0.16***	(0.07)	0.16***	(0.07)	0.16***	(0.07)
Left	0.33***	(0.15)	0.33***	(0.15)	0.33***	(0.15)	0.33***	(0.15)
Don't know	0.37***	(0.12)	0.37***	(0.12)	0.37***	(0.12)	0.37***	(0.12)
Economic equality (ref.: Meritocratic)								
Egalitarian	0.38***	(0.16)	0.38***	(0.16)	0.38***	(0.16)	0.38***	(0.16)
Neutral	0.11**	(0.04)	0.11**	(0.04)	0.11**	(0.04)	0.11**	(0.04)
Do not know	0.44**	(0.06)	0.44**	(0.06)	0.44**	(0.06)	0.44**	(0.06)
Moral authority (ref.: Libertarianism)								
Authoritarianism	0.36***	(0.15)	0.36***	(0.15)	0.36***	(0.15)	0.36***	(0.15)
Neutral	0.04	(0.01)	0.04	(0.01)	0.04	(0.01)	0.04	(0.01)
Gender traditionalism	0.10***	(0.12)	0.10***	(0.12)	0.10***	(0.12)	0.10***	(0.12)
Perceived unemployment magnitude (ref.: Small)								
Medium	0.17***	(0.07)	0.17***	(0.07)	0.17***	(0.07)	0.17***	(0.07)
Large	0.37***	(0.16)	0.37***	(0.16)	0.37***	(0.16)	0.37***	(0.16)
Very large	0.65***	(0.23)	0.65***	(0.23)	0.65***	(0.23)	0.65***	(0.23)
Do not know	0.51***	(0.15)	0.51***	(0.15)	0.51***	(0.15)	0.51***	(0.15)
Public image of the unemployed	0.16***	(0.18)	0.16***	(0.18)	0.16***	(0.18)	0.16***	(0.18)
Perceived youth job opportunities	−0.09***	(−0.22)	−0.09***	(−0.22)	−0.09***	(−0.22)	−0.09***	(−0.22)
Benefit systems effectiveness	−0.21***	(−0.20)	−0.21***	(−0.20)	−0.21***	(−0.20)	−0.21***	(−0.20)

Table 1. (Continued)

FIXED EFFECTS	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
COUNTRY-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS				
Social protection expenditure		−0.0001** (−0.32)		−0.0001* (−0.32)
Unemployment pressure			0.07 (0.16)	−0.003 (−0.001)
Intercept	13.79*** (6.69)	14.44*** (6.69)	13.23*** (6.70)	14.46*** (6.70)
RANDOM EFFECTS				
Residual variance	5.498***	5.498***	5.498***	5.498***
Random intercept variance	0.361**	0.258**	0.337**	0.257**
% variance reduction level 1	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089
% variance reduction level 2	0.582	0.701	0.609	0.701
MODEL FIT				
−2 Log Likelihood	172,940	172,932	172,939	172,932
Akaike Information Criterion (AIC)	173,030	173,024	173,031	173,026

Source: European Social Survey, 2008; Eurostat, 2004–2008.

Note: Significance level ***: $p < 0.001$; **: $p < 0.01$; *: $p < 0.05$.

Cases were weighed by design and deleted list-wise. Entries include standardized regression coefficients (β) in parentheses.

Overall, the strongest individual-level predictor of attitudes towards job creation policy is perceived policy performance, including the perceived magnitude of unemployment, perceived youth job opportunities, perceived effectiveness of benefit systems, and public image of the unemployed. Similarly, supportive attitudes tend to be stronger among individuals who favor income egalitarianism, authoritarians, gender traditional roles, and left-wing political ideologies. Additionally, those from the unskilled and skilled working class, as well as lower-income groups, tend to show more favorable attitudes.

The socio-structural factors – such as gender, age, education, migration status, union membership, and employment sector – are also statistically significant. Favorable attitudes towards employment creation policy are more common among women, migrants, union members, and public sector employees, whereas older individuals and those with higher educational attainment are generally less supportive.

In terms of variance components, the entire individual-level factors account for approximately 9% of inter-individual variance in attitudes toward the government’s role in job creation (Model 1). Notably, they account for around 58% of the between-country variance, reflecting strong compositional effects. When contextual level variables are introduced, social expenditure (Model 2) and long-term unemployment rate (Model 3) account for roughly 70% and 61% reductions in between-country attitudinal variations, respectively. Concerning

model fit, the deviance and AIC measures indicate that Model 2, with a smaller AIC, provides the best fit compared to the other models with larger AICs.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This article explains how both individual- and country-level characteristics shape public attitudes toward the government's role in job creation across 25 European nations, a policy domain that remains understudied in the welfare state literature. Job creation is also conceptually distinct from other dimensions of welfare state responsibility, as it addresses employment rights to a greater degree. Drawing on the European Social Survey, this article examined three key questions and tested a range of hypotheses to better understand the role of individuals' self-interest, ideology, and evaluative beliefs, as well as the macro-level institutional and economic roots of attitudes towards state intervention for job creation.

The primary objective was to examine the scope of government responsibility for job creation that citizens demand in various European countries. Public attitudes toward the welfare state's responsibility for job creation are substantially more positive across Europe, echoing a reservoir of support for job creation initiatives. However, significant regional difference exists: job creation policy is more popular in Southern and Eastern Europe than in Northern and Western Europe, highlighting divergent welfare policy expectations.

The second objective was to distinguish which indicators of self-interest, ideology, and cognitive perception *directly* shape attitudes toward the government's responsibility for job creation. Consistent with self-interest theory, individuals in peripheral labor market positions – such as low-income earners – proved to have more positive attitudes toward job creation policies. Possibly, this group is a net beneficiary of welfare schemes intended to endorse policy intervention. Conversely, the more affluent, who hold central labor market positions, express strong disapproval of job creation policies, possibly due to their lesser reliance on welfare schemes or fear of a tax burden in financing the schemes (Van Oorschot et al. 2008).

In line with the self-interest perspective, skilled and unskilled working-class individuals, as well as those in low-grade service jobs, show more positive attitudes toward the state's responsibility to support job creation policies. This could also be attributed to their marginal labor market positions – low wages, limited duration contracts, unstable jobs, and precarious working conditions. Notably, small business owners show relatively favorable attitudes, possibly

expecting economic benefits from creating employment opportunities. This finding supports Oesch's (2006) labor market stratification study, reflecting the salience of the new social class structure in postindustrial society.

Surprisingly, the policy attitudes of welfare transfer classes are fragmented. The attitudinal cleavage between the employed and unemployed is minimal, possibly due to the fluidity of labor market transitions. However, economically inactive welfare transfer groups (students, retirees, homemakers, and those doing military or community service) exhibit more positive attitudes, perhaps owing to their heavy reliance on the welfare contributions of the active labor force. Contrary to self-interest theories, neither past nor future unemployment risks directly contributes to policy attitude formation. This supports the argument that broader socio-tropic experiences and perceptions matter more than personal experiences and risks in shaping attitudes toward welfare policy (Kumlin 2004).

Cultural values and norms remain powerful drivers of public attitudes towards job creation policy. Individuals with left-wing politics, egalitarian orientations, authoritarian beliefs, and traditional gender norms show greater acceptance of government-led job generation. In contrast, those with postmodern cultural mores – favoring right-wing politics, meritocracy, libertarianism, and gender equality – are more likely to reject the government's responsibility for job creation. This finding underscores the prominence of ideology and cultural values on welfare state attitudes across Europe.

The results also validate performance evaluation theory. Positive evaluations of policy performance (such as perceived unemployment level, youth-job opportunities, target benefits allocation) are linked with less support for the government's responsibility for job creation, consistent with performance overload/improvement logic (Van Oorschot – Meuleman 2012). In other words, good performance tends to undermine support for government intervention. Conversely, a favorable public image of the unemployed boosts support for the government's responsibility for job creation, reflecting performance reward/punishment theory. Thus, citizens tend to reward the positive behaviors of welfare-dependent groups and punish those welfare recipients who exhibit negative behaviors.

Another main goal of the study was to investigate whether social policy generosity and/or unemployment pressure contribute to country-level differences in policy attitudes. At the macro level, public disapproval of government intervention is greater in welfare states with more generous social spending. This inverse relationship aligns with diminishing marginal return theory (Gelissen 2008) and the thermostat public opinion metaphor (Ebbinghaus–Naumann 2018). On the contrary, unemployment pressure appears to have a limited effect,

suggesting general welfare generosity matters more than the actual economic crisis in shaping welfare state attitudes.

Some social groups – including women, youth, the less educated, union members, migrants, and public sector employees – exhibit positive sentiments towards state responsibility for job creation. However, it remains unclear whether self-interest, social ideology, or evaluative belief drives their preferences, as key variables pertaining to these theoretical dimensions are fairly controlled and difficult to disentangle within the study's framework.

Overall, the findings indicate that public attitudes towards government responsibility for job creation are shaped by a combination of interest, ideology, and evaluative perceptions, with ideology and evaluative beliefs proving more prominent than self-interest. Cross-country variation is best explained by generous welfare policy rather than unemployment pressure. These findings imply the multifaceted and nuanced nature of public attitudes formation concerning welfare policy issues.

Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge the study's limitations and outline future research directions. The cross-sectional design prevents an analysis of attitudinal changes over time. The multilevel study, constrained by a limited number of sample countries, restricts the simultaneous inclusion of multiple contextual factors. It is plausible that future research should explore the mediating and/or moderating roles of evaluative beliefs and cultural ideologies in shaping the legitimacy of job creation policies. It may also explore how evaluative beliefs and ideologies/cultural values moderate and/or mediate the effect of national contexts in influencing policy attitudes. Extending multilevel models and longitudinal studies could also deepen understanding of how national contexts interact with individual ideology and evaluative belief to shape attitudes toward government responsibility for job creation.

REFERENCES

- Basna, K. (2023) Economic strain in post-communist countries and the rest of Europe: Attitudes towards the unemployed and the old. *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 37, No. 3., pp. 1110–1129, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/08883254221131595>.
- Blekesaune, M. – J. Quadagno (2003) Public attitudes toward welfare state policies: A comparative analysis of 24 nations. *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 19, No. 5., pp. 415–427, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/19.5.415>.

- Blomberg, H. – J. Kallio – O. Kangas – C. Kroll – M. Niemelä (2012) Attitudes Among High-Risk Groups. In: Svallfors, S. (ed.): *Contested Welfare States: Welfare Attitudes in Europe and Beyond*. Chapter 3, pp. 43–60. Stanford (US), Stanford University Press, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11126/stanford/9780804782524.003.0003>.
- Buffel, V. – S. Van de Velde (2019) Comparing negative attitudes toward the unemployed across European countries in 2008 and 2016: The role of the unemployment rate and job insecurity. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 31, No. 3., pp. 419–440, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edy015>.
- Bussemeyer, M. – A. Goerres – S. Weschle (2009) Attitudes towards redistributive spending in an era of demographic aging: The rival pressures from age and income in 14 OECD countries. *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 3., pp. 195–212, DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1084997>.
- Dallinger, U. (2013) Public support for redistribution: What explains cross-national differences? *Journal of European Social Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 4., pp. 333–349, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928710374373>.
- Dalton, R. (1999) Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies. In: Norris, P. (ed.): *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*. Chapter 3, pp. 55–77, Oxford (UK), Oxford University Press, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198295685.003.0003>.
- Easton, D. (1975) A re-assessment of the concept of political support. *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5, No. 4., pp. 435–457, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400008309>.
- Ebbinghaus, B. – E. Naumann (2018) The Popularity of Pension and Unemployment Policies Revisited: The Erosion of Public Support in Britain and Germany. In: Ebbinghaus, B. – E. Naumann (eds.): *Welfare State Reforms Seen from Below: Comparing Public Attitudes and Organized Interests in Britain and Germany*. Chapter 7, pp. 155–186, Cham (Switzerland), Palgrave Macmillan, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63652-8_7.
- European Commission (2020) *Attitudes towards adequacy and sustainability of social protection systems in the EU*, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and Applica sprl, Publications Office, DOI: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/04757>.
- European Social Survey (2016) ESS round 8 module on welfare attitudes – Question design final module in template. London (UK), ESS ERIC Headquarters University London, <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>.
- Furåker, B. – M. Blomsterberg (2003) Attitudes towards the unemployed. An analysis of Swedish survey data. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, Vol. 12, No. 3., pp. 193–203, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2397.t01-1-00005>.

- Gelissen, J. (2002) *Worlds of Welfare, Worlds of Consent? Public Opinion on the Welfare State*. International Comparative Social Studies, Vol. IV., Leiden (NL), Brill, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047401339_001.
- Gelissen, J. (2008) European scope-of-government beliefs: The impact of individual, regional and national characteristics. In: Van Oorschot, W. – M. Opielka – B. Pfau-Effinger (eds.): *Culture and Welfare State: Values and Social Policy in Comparative Perspective*. pp. 247–267, London (UK), Edward Elgar.
- Gugushvili, D. – W. van Oorschot (2020) Perceived welfare deservingness of the unemployed in Eastern versus Western Europe: Similar levels but different degrees of polarization? *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 68, No. 1., pp. 42–52, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2020.1727751>.
- Hox, J. – M. Moerbeek – R. van de Schoot (2017) *Multilevel Analysis: Techniques and Application*. 3rd edition, New York (US), Routledge Academic, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315650982>.
- Inglehart, M. R. (1991) Gender Differences in Sex-Role Attitudes: Topic Without a Future? In: Reif, K. – R. Inglehart (eds.): *Eurobarometer: The Dynamics of European Public Opinion Essays in Honour of Jacques-René Rabier*. Chapter 10, pp. 187–200, London (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-21476-1_10.
- Jensen, C. – M. B. Petersen (2017) The deservingness heuristic and the politics of health care. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 61, No. 1., pp. 68–83, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12251>.
- Kuechler, M. (1991) The Dynamics of Mass Political Support in Western Europe: Methodological Problems and Preliminary Findings. In: Reif, K. – R. Inglehart (eds.): *Eurobarometer: The Dynamics of European Public Opinion Essays in Honour of Jacques-René Rabier*. Chapter 16, pp. 275–293, London (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-21476-1_16.
- Kulin, J. – S. Svallfors (2013) Class, values, and attitudes towards redistribution: A European comparison. *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2., pp. 155–167.
- Kumlin, S. (2004) *The Personal and the Political: How Personal Welfare State Experiences Affect Political Trust and Ideology*. New York (US), Palgrave Macmillan, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403980274>.
- Kumlin, S. (2007) Overloaded or Undermined? European Welfare States in the Face of Performance Dissatisfaction. In: Svallfors, S. (ed.): *The Political Sociology of the Welfare State: Institutions, Social Cleavages, and Orientations*. Chapter 3, pp. 80–116, Stanford (US), Stanford University Press, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11126/stanford/9780804754354.003.0003>.

- Larsen, C. A. (2006) *The Institutional Logic of Welfare Attitudes: How Welfare Regimes Influence Public Support*. 1st Edition, Aldershot (UK), Ashgate Publishing.
- Mackonytė, G. – C. Lomos–W. van Oorschot (2014) Perceived magnitude of unemployment: A dark horse in the literature on public attitudes towards governmental responsibilities to the unemployed? *Baltic Journal of Political Science*, No. 3., pp. 27–49, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15388/BJPS.2014.3.4872>.
- Mewes, J. – S. Mau (2012) Unraveling Working-Class Welfare Chauvinism. In: Svallfors, S. (ed.): *Contested Welfare States: Welfare Attitudes in Europe and Beyond*. Chapter 5, pp. 119–157, Stanford (US), Stanford University Press, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11126/stanford/9780804782524.003.0005>.
- Oesch, D. (2006) Coming to grips with a changing class structure: An analysis of employment stratification in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. *International Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 2., pp. 263–288, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580906061379>.
- Rawls, J. (1999) *A Theory of Justice. Revised edition*. Harvard (US), Harvard University Press, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674042582>.
- Reeskens, T. – W. van Oorschot (2015) Immigrants' attitudes towards welfare redistribution: An exploration of the role of government preferences among migrants and natives across 18 European welfare states. *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4., pp. 433–445, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcv003>.
- Roosma, F. – J. Gelissen – W. van Oorschot (2013) The multidimensionality of welfare state attitudes: A European cross-national study. *Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 113., pp. 235–255, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-012-0099-4>.
- Roosma, F. – W. van Oorschot – J. Gelissen (2014) The preferred role and perceived performance of the welfare state: European welfare attitudes from a multidimensional perspective. *Social Science Research*, Vol. 44., pp. 200–210, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2013.12.005>.
- Rothstein, B. (1998) *Just Institutions Matter: The Moral and Political Logic of the Universal Welfare State*. Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511598449>.
- Staerklé, C., – T. Likki – R. Scheidegger (2012) A normative approach to welfare attitudes. In S. Svallfors (Ed.) *Contested Welfare States: Welfare Attitudes in Europe and Beyond*. Chapter 4, pp. 81–118. Stanford (USA), Stanford University Press.
- Svallfors, S. (2004) Class, attitudes and the welfare state: Sweden in comparative perspective. *Social Policy & Administration*, Vol. 38, No. 2., pp. 119–138, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2004.00381.x>.

- Svallfors, S. – J. Kulin – A. Schnabel (2012) Age, Class, and Attitudes Toward Government Responsibilities. In: Svallfors, S. (ed.): *Contested Welfare States: Welfare Attitudes in Europe and Beyond*. Chapter 6, pp. 158–192, Stanford (USA), Stanford University Press, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11126/stanford/9780804782524.003.0006>.
- Uunk, W. – W. Van Oorschot (2019) Going with the flow? The effect of economic fluctuation on people's solidarity with unemployed people. *Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 143, No. 3., pp. 1129–1146, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-2023-z>.
- Van Oorschot, W. – B. Meuleman (2012) Welfare Performance and Welfare Support. In: Svallfors, S. (ed.): *Welfare States: Welfare Attitudes in Europe and Beyond*. Chapter 2, pp. 25–57, Stanford (US), Stanford University Press, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11126/stanford/9780804782524.003.0002>.
- Van Oorschot, W. – B. Meuleman (2014) Popular Deservingness of the Unemployed in the Context of Welfare State Policies, Economic Conditions and Cultural Climate. In: Kumlin, S. – I. Stadelmann-Steffen (eds.): *How Welfare States Shape The Democratic Public: Policy Feedback, Participation, Voting, and Attitudes*. Chapter 12, pp. 244–268, Cheltenham (UK), Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Van Oorschot, W. – M. Opielka – B. Pfau-Effinger (2008) The Culture of the Welfare State: Historical and Theoretical Arguments. In: Van Oorschot, W. – M. Opielka – B. Pfau-Effinger (eds.): *Culture and Welfare State: Values and Social Policy in Comparative Perspective*. Chapter 1, pp. 1–26, Cheltenham (UK), Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Van Oorschot, W. – F. Roosma – B. Meuleman – T. Reeskens (eds. 2017) *The Social Legitimacy of Targeted Welfare*. Cheltenham (UK), Edward Elgar Publishing, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785367212>.
- Von Beyme, K. (1991) Post-Modernity, Postmaterialism and Political Theory. In: Reif, K. – R. Inglehart (eds.): *Eurobarometer: The Dynamics of European Public Opinion Essays in Honour of Jacques-René Rabier*. Chapter 18, pp. 309–332, London (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-21476-1_18.
- Wendt, C. – M. Mischke – M. Pfeifer (2011) Welfare states and public opinion: Perceptions of healthcare systems, family policy and benefits for the unemployed and poor in Europe. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 23, No. 4., pp. 558–561, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edr043>.
- Woshinsky, O. (2007) *Explaining Politics: Culture, Institutions, and Political Behavior*. New York (US), Routledge, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203933183>.

APPENDIX

Table A1. Descriptive statistics and questionnaire sources

Variables	Sources	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL FACTORS	ESS 2008					
Welfare state responsibility for job creation	D15	46,945	6.71	2.62	0	10
Subjective household income	F33	47,013			0	
Living comfortably on present income			0.27	0.44	0	1
Copying on present income			0.45	0.50	0	1
Finding it difficult on present income			0.20	0.40	0	1
Finding it very difficult on present income			0.08	0.27	0	1
Social class	F12, F13, F24 (or partner F39, F42, F43)	47,489				
High-grade service class			0.14	0.35	0	1
Low-grade service class			0.15	0.36	0	1
Small business owners			0.10	0.30	0	1
Skilled working class			0.31	0.46	0	1
Unskilled working class			0.19	0.39	0	1
Missing			0.11	0.31	0	1
Unemployment risk	D47	47,380				
Not at all likely			0.31	0.46	0	1
Not very likely			0.22	0.43	0	1
Likely			0.12	0.33	0	1
Very likely			0.07	0.26	0	1
No longer working/ never worked			0.24	0.43	0	1
Do not know			0.03	0.17	0	1
Welfare class	F8a-c (post coded)	47,324				
Paid work			0.51	0.50	0	1
Unemployed			0.06	0.23	0	1
Retired			0.22	0.41	0	1
Sick/disabled			0.02	0.15	0	1
Others outside the labor force			0.10	0.30	0	1
Unemployment experience	F27	47,108	0.26	0.44	0	1

Table A1. (Continued)

Variables	Sources	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Political self-placement	B23	46,599				
Left			0.28	0.45	0	1
Center			0.28	0.45	0	1
Right			0.31	0.46	0	1
Do not know			0.13	0.33	0	1
Economic quality beliefs	D1	47,436				
Meritocratic			0.55	0.50	0	1
Indifferent			0.20	0.40	0	1
Egalitarian			0.24	0.43	0	1
Do not know			0.02	0.13	0	1
Moral authority	D2	47,265				
Authoritarian			0.80	0.40	0	1
Indifferent			0.11	0.32	0	1
Libertarian			0.09	0.29	0	1
Gender traditionalism	D6	46,799	2.32	1.20	1	5
Unemployment magnitude	D7	47,424				
Small			0.22	0.41	0	1
Medium			0.27	0.44	0	1
Large			0.27	0.44	0	1
Very large			0.15	0.36	0	1
Do not know			0.09	0.29	0	1
Public image of the unemployed	D40	46,616	2.97	1.10	1	5
Perceived job opportunities	D14	46,262	4.14	2.38	0	10
Benefit systems effective	D41	43,010	3.39	0.97	1	5
Gender	F2	47,465				
Female			0.53	0.50	0	1
(Male)			0.47	0.50	0	1
Age	F3	47,337	46.65	18.17	15	123
Full years of education	F8	47,121	12.16	4.04	0	50

Table A1. (Continued)

Variables	Sources	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Trade union membership	F30	47,158				
Yes			0.41	0.49	0	1
No			0.59	0.49	0	1
Migration status	C28	47,379				
Yes			0.08	0.27	0	1
No			0.92	0.27		
Employment sector	F23	45,331				
Government sector			0.29	0.45	0	1
Private sector			0.58	0.49	0	1
Other sector			0.03	0.16	0	1
Not applicable			0.10	0.30	0	1
COUNTRY-LEVEL FACTORS		Eurostat/OECD				
Long-term unemployment	Eurostat	47,489	3.25	2.13	0.62	9.72
Social protection expenditure	Eurostat/OECD	47,489	5,175.28	2,528.31	1,302.47	8,839.45

Sources: European Social Survey, 2008; Eurostat/OECD 2004–2008.