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# Do Citizens Support EU Cohesion Policy? Measuring European support for redistribution within the EU and its correlates

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## Do Citizens Support EU Cohesion Policy? Measuring European support for redistribution within the EU and its correlates

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### ABSTRACT:

As the European Union enters into the next decade, its leaders seemingly strive towards more future integration rather than less, despite the recent setback of Brexit and the rise of anti-EU populist parties. In his state of the Union in 2018, Jean Claude Juncker emphasized s 'European solidarity'. One key policy 'expression of solidary' would be Cohesion Policy and the Structural Funds, which are "the only real, significant redistributive mechanism in the EU..." (Fratesi 2017). . Despite elite commentary, we know surprisingly little about what EU citizens think of the rationale behind the policy of Cohesion – e.g. economic redistribution within the EU. As part of the PERCEIVE Horizon2020 project, we launched a unique survey to investigate how citizens feel about economic integration within the Union, where 17,200 citizens were interviewed. In this paper, we show how we measure support for the policy, the results as well as a host of correlates. Our analysis shows the variation in citizens' support for EU Cohesion policy between countries, how support varies between demographic groups, as well as the extent to which support is correlated with utilitarian and ideational factors as well as cue taking. Implications for future developments of this policy are discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** European Union; Cohesion Policy; Redistribution; Public Opinion; Survey Research.

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** F35; F53; R11; R58.

### ¿Apoyan los ciudadanos la política de cohesión de la UE? Medida del apoyo europeo a la redistribución dentro de la UE

### RESUMEN:

A medida que la Unión Europea ingresa en la próxima década, sus líderes aparentemente luchan por más integración futura en lugar de menos, a pesar del reciente revés del Brexit y el surgimiento de los partidos populistas anti-UE. En su estado de la Unión en 2018, Jean Claude Juncker hizo hincapié en la "solidaridad europea". Una política clave de "expresión de solidaridad" sería la Política de Cohesión y los Fondos Estructurales, que son "el único mecanismo redistributivo real y significativo en la UE..." (Fratesi 2017). A pesar de las opiniones de la élite, sorprendentemente sabemos poco sobre lo que piensan los ciudadanos de la UE sobre la lógica detrás de la Política de Cohesión, de la redistribución económica dentro de la UE. Como parte del proyecto PERCEIVE Horizon2020, llevamos a cabo una encuesta única para investigar cómo se sienten los ciudadanos acerca de la integración económica dentro de la Unión, entrevistando a 17.200 ciudadanos. En este documento, mostramos cómo medimos el apoyo a la política, los resultados y

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una serie de elementos relacionados. Nuestro análisis muestra la variación en el apoyo de los ciudadanos a la política de cohesión de la UE entre países, cómo varía el apoyo entre los grupos demográficos, así como la medida en la que el apoyo se correlaciona con factores utilitarios e ideológicos. Se discuten las implicaciones para futuros desarrollos de esta política.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Unión Europea; Política de cohesión; Redistribución; Opinión pública; Encuesta de investigación.

**CLASIFICACIÓN JEL:** F35; F53; R11; R58.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cohesion Policy currently constitutes the second largest budget item of the European Union<sup>1</sup>. While several recent studies have tested models explaining support for EU bailouts to member states in need (Bechtel et al. 2014; Kuhn and Stoeckel 2014; Bauhr and Charron 2018) or greater economic integration (Daniele and Geys 2015), none to date have actually tested the extent to which citizens support the general, and continual occurrence of inter-EU redistribution. And while several rounds of Eurobarometer surveys have asked about awareness of EU Cohesion/Regional policy, there has been a lack of attempt in fact gauge the public's actual opinion of this important policy, which make up roughly one third of the EU budget. This study introduces newly collected data of what is to the best of our knowledge one of the first investigation of European public opinion that attempts to directly capture attitudes of EU Cohesion Policy.

The primary objective of the data collection, carried out through the Horizon 2020 funded research program PERCEIVE (*“Perception and evaluation of Regional and Cohesion Policies by Europeans and Identification with the values of Europe”*), is to investigate citizen knowledge, attitudes and experience with Cohesion policy, along with elucidating factors – both original to the project and others drawn from the literature – that are associated with support (or lack thereof) for the policy in question. The survey includes over 35 substantive questions as well as seven demographic and background questions of the respondents. In all, 17,147 interviews were carried out in 15 EU member states, which represent 85% of the total EU28 population.

The questions included in the survey are grounded in the burgeoning academic literature on public support (and scepticism) for European Integration. The majority of these questions are included to provide researchers with as many tools as possible to test various theories about why citizens would support (or not) the idea of Cohesion Policy. Cohesion policy includes structural funds, and is a set of transfers that go from wealthier EU member states to predominantly to regions (e.g. sub-national units) that fall below a certain threshold of economic development<sup>2</sup>. The proportion of funding for this policy in relation to the overall EU budget is sizeable (roughly 1/3<sup>rd</sup>) – and for a comparative perspective, the expenditures on Cohesion policy during the 2014-2020 budget period equate to roughly 57 billion Euros per year, which is just greater than the total public annual expenditure of Finland in 2013 (OECD.stat)<sup>3</sup>.

The paper here presents a motivation for the questions included, with focus on how to measure support for a Cohesion Policy. Since cohesion policy is a policy that a majority of EU citizens have never heard of, we also introduce how we dealt with this in the survey design to gain more valid responses of support (or lack thereof). Finally, the paper elucidates individual level correlates with support for the policy according to expectations from the literature on EU integration and posits several paths forward for future research with the use of the dataset. The dataset, along with a codebook, are made freely available for scholarly use online<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For details, see: [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-budget/expenditure\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-budget/expenditure_en)

<sup>2</sup> For more information on Cohesion Policy, its history, outcomes and critics, see Piattoni and Polvarari (2016).

<sup>3</sup> <https://stats.oecd.org/>

<sup>4</sup> The data can be accessed here: <https://zenodo.org/communities/perceiveproject/search?page=1&size=20>

## 2. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR REDISTRIBUTION WITHIN THE EU

The literature on public support for European integration or more recently Euroskepticism (e.g., Hooghe 2007; Hakhverdian et al. 2013), has made significant advances in recent years. This literature has sought to explain why citizens would support or be skeptical towards European integration in general and, more recently, specific policies related to it. The explanations entail everything from benchmarking, or cue taking based on the national political context, to more utilitarian or identity driven explanation (Hobolt and De Vries 2016; Bauhr and Charron 2018, Bauhr and Charron 2019). These explanations are in turn often seen as the reason why support for the EU and its policies varies across different segments of the population or societal groups such as citizens' level of education, gender or income.

Research on both domestic and international redistribution (i.e. Alesina and Ferrera 2005) suggest that redistributive preferences can partly be derived from economic self-interest, i.e. that support should be stronger among citizens that rely on the welfare state and in countries with poor macroeconomic performance. Yet unlike aid transfers from the wealthiest countries to the poorest ones or interpersonal transfers from wealthy to poor individuals, Cohesion policy involves geographic, inter-EU transfers – that is to say resources from some of the wealthiest states, to regions that are well above the world average. Due to its redistributive nature, support for specific policies such as Cohesion policy could also be influenced by different factors than integration in general. In the literature on EU integration, attachment with the Europe is often seen as an important explanation for support for the EU (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hobolt and de Vries 2016; Börzel and Risse 2018). Conversely, holding an exclusive national identity is seen as detrimental to support for EU integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hobolt and de Vries 2016; Börzel and Risse 2018). Furthermore, studies show that cosmopolitanism may be important for support for the EU and its policies (Paxton and Knack 2012; Bechtel et al 2014; Daniele and Geys 2015)<sup>5</sup>. Some recent evidence suggests that civic European identity predicts support for inter-EU redistribution, while a religious European identity does not (Bauhr and Charron 2020).

Studies also point to the notion of benchmarking being important for citizens' assessment of policies and that citizens' use cues of their own domestic (or regional) institutions as a heuristic when assessing the EU and support for EU integration, such as economic performance or corruption. This idea originates from Hoffmann (1966), who posited that national legitimacy could be a potential obstacle to future European integration. Building on this, Andersson (1998) suggests that since citizens oftentimes have insufficient knowledge about Europe, they base their assessment of the EU on perceptions of national level institutions. Benchmarking the EU based on domestic institutions could lead to one of at least two potential outcomes. On the one hand, citizens could use "cues" or heuristics based on domestic institutional performance, which they presumably know more about and simply transfer their level of trust in domestic institutions to international ones. This type of cue-taking based on the domestic political contexts thus typically reproduce patterns of trust or dissatisfaction across the multilevel government system; citizens that are dissatisfied with their own domestic institutions are likely to be dissatisfied also with international institutions, such as the EU and vice versa.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, some have pointed to 'compensation' at the individual level as well – and consequently that one's preferences for further EU integration instead will be higher (lower) in settings with poorer (better) performing institutions. Kritzinger (2003) finds that individual assessments of one's own nation state are negatively associated with

<sup>5</sup> Bechtel et al. (2014) show that German citizens that express cosmopolitan and altruistic views are significantly less likely to oppose financial bailouts for crisis-stricken EU countries; a finding supported by Daniele and Geys looking at an EU-wide sample (2015).

<sup>6</sup> This implies that positive (negative) evaluations of national institutions increase (decrease) support for the EU and its policies among citizens – what has been called the '*congruence*' hypothesis. For instance, Munoz et al (2011) find that individual level trust in national level institutions positively predicts trust in EU parliament. Others find evidence that positive (negative) individual level evaluations of one's own domestic institutions predict positive (negative) attitudes about the EU and satisfaction with EU democracy (Rorscheider 2002; Hobolt 2012). Armigeon and Ceka (2014) look at the dynamic relationship and find that aggregate drops in national trust have caused a reduction in EU trust, yet others find less consistent patterns when comparing prior to and after the financial crisis (Serricchio et al 2013).

support for EU integration in the EU's four largest members, yet she finds mixed evidence with respect to the link between citizens' assessments of national level economy and EU integration support. Others find 'compensation' effects with sociotropic level variables. For example, Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) that finds that people living in countries with higher levels of corruption tend to trust the EU more on average, a factor which the authors argue conditions national level trust.

However, the vast majority of studies on public support for the EU do not focus directly on economic redistribution.<sup>7</sup> Factors explaining general levels of support for or trust in the EU may be different from the factors explaining public support for specific policy transfers to the EU, such as intra EU financial assistance, bailouts or Cohesion Policy (Kuhn and Stoeckel 2014; Bauhr and Charron 2018). These policies often come with a more concrete price tag, and economic redistribution within the EU can be perceived to be fundamentally different from the market liberalization often associated with EU integration efforts (Kuhn and Stoeckel 2014). Support for redistributive policies may therefore require a different level of or form of solidarity across borders.

However, a comprehensive analysis of support for cohesion policy would have to build on an analysis of what exactly it is that we seek to investigate and the potential pitfalls involved in doing so. Unlike inter-personal transfers from the wealthy to the poor within countries, or international foreign aid from the world's most developed to least developed areas, the redistribution within the EU is neither inter-personal, nor necessarily to the world's 'most needy' areas. This type of redistribution, as well as the contemporary relevance of this question in particular for the EU, offers a number of potentially interesting avenues for future research. This is where we see that our new survey contributes to the advancement of the field, and an issue to which we turn next.

### 3. INTRODUCING THE SURVEY

The PERCEIVE original survey is intended to help researchers better understand the micro and macro level dynamics that drive support (or lack thereof) of EU regional policies. The survey includes over 35 substantive questions as well as seven demographic and background questions of the respondent. Each respondent is geo-coded at the NUTS 1, NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 level. The fieldwork was conducted during the summer of 2017 by an international survey firm based in Rheims, France (Efficiency3, 'E3'). The results were returned to the researchers in September, 2017.

The interviews were conducted in several countries and used sub-contracting partners in others<sup>8</sup>. In all, 17,147 interviews were carried out in 15 EU member states (see appendix for full sample and response rates). The respondents, from 18 years of age or older, were contacted randomly via telephone in the local language. Telephone interviews approximately 12-15 minutes in length were conducted via both landlines and mobile phones, with both methods being used in most countries. All interviews were made by

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<sup>7</sup> Recently, scholars have investigated how domestic cues condition support for economic integration and intra-EU financial bailouts more specifically. For example, Kuhn and Stoeckel (2014) point to more national economic heuristics – people living in countries that have higher GDP per capita are predicted to support EU economic integration less, in particular when they have strong national identity. Daniele and Geys (2015) report mixed findings on the effect of national deficits and debt on citizen support for various economic forms of integration. Bauhr and Charron (2018) argue that low quality of domestic institutions undermines societies collective action capacity and in particular the willingness to pay taxes and trust in governments redistributive capacity. This suggests, much in line with a "congruence" hypothesis (Muñoz et al 2011; Kristinger 2003; Andersson 1998), that citizens' use "cues" about domestic government performance to form opinions about the likelihood that international aid and financial assistance will reach desired ends. However, research increasingly suggests that public support for the EU is multifaceted (Boomgaarten et al 2011) and the factors explaining public support for sending financial assistance to other countries in times of need may consequently be different than the factors explaining public support for Cohesion policy, an annual budget expenditure. Furthermore, much of this economic integration literature focuses one or few countries, such as Germany (for example, Bechtel et al 2014), thus we still have a limited understanding how institutional and economic contexts are used as cues for citizens' support of ideas regarding economic integration.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.efficiency3.com/en/accueil/index.html>. For names of the specific firms to which Efficiency 3 sub-contracted in individual countries, please write [cati@efficiency3.com](mailto:cati@efficiency3.com)

employees with at least one year of professional experience and used *Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing* (CATI)<sup>9</sup>. Decisions about whether to contact residents more often via land or mobile lines was based on local expertise of market research firms in each country, with mobile being first choice in all cases.

With respect to mobile phone respondents, randomized digit dialling was employed, while for landlines, the sampling method employed was the ‘next birthday method’. The next birthday method is an alternative to the so-called ‘quotas method’. When using the quota method for instance, one obtains a (near) perfectly representative sample – e.g. a near exact proportion of the amount of men, women, certain minority groups, people of a certain age, income, etc. However, as one searches for certain demographics within the population, one might end up with only ‘available’ respondents, or those that are more ‘eager’ to respond to surveys, which can lead to less variation in the responses, or even bias in the results. The ‘next-birthday’ method, which simply requires the interviewer to ask the person who answers the phone who in their household will have the next birthday, still obtains a reasonably representative sample of the population. The interviewer must take the person who has the next coming birthday in the household (if this person is not available, the interviewer makes an appointment), thus not relying on whomever might simply be available to respond in the household. So, where the quota method is stronger in terms of a more even demographic spread in the sample, the next-birthday method is stronger at ensuring a better range of opinion.

#### 4. MEASURING CITIZEN SUPPORT FOR COHESION POLICY

Measuring public support for Cohesion Policy is not as straightforward as other policy areas, such as support for the Euro, which can be asked more or less directly. For example, previous Eurobarometer surveys of ‘Awareness of Regional Policy in the EU’ show a relatively consistent and low level of awareness throughout the EU over the past eight years in which the question was asked to the public<sup>10</sup>.

In addition, the Eurobarometer has also tried to indirectly capture the level of support for Cohesion – by asking “do you support investing on ‘all regions’ or ‘only poor regions’ for example. Such question formulation is insufficient for our purposes for two reasons. First, the Eurobarometer survey has not allowed for people NOT to support this idea – that is top say giving people an option of ‘not wanting to spend at all’ or something to this effect. Second, there is not a sense of the intensity with which people may or may not like the idea of CP. Our original measures of support for this policy aim to remedy these shortcomings.

Due to relatively low awareness of the policy in question – in particular in wealthy northern EU countries (Eurobarometer 2013; 2015), respondents are given a bit of primer information about the policy in question prior to the question.

The priming information is then followed by the following question of support:

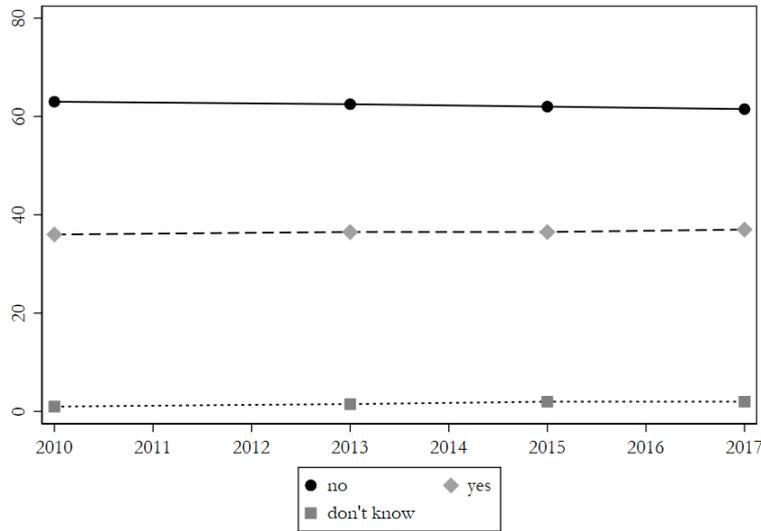
*“In your opinion, the EU should continue this policy, where wealthier countries contribute more, and poorer EU regions receive more funding.” 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3. Disagree, 4. Strongly disagree, 5. don’t know*

Figure 2 shows a breakdown by country. Here the bar graph shows the proportion of respondents who ‘strongly agreed’ and ‘agreed’. The results reveal some significant country-level differences. While all countries on average show a relatively high degree of support for CP in general (weighted country average = 79%), there is a 24% gap between the lowest supporter (Netherlands 67%) and the highest (Slovakia 91%). Newer member states (in general the largest recipients of CP) are most likely to agree with Q20 –

<sup>9</sup> Between 12%-15% of all interviews were randomly check for quality control by supervisors, with no reported irregularities.

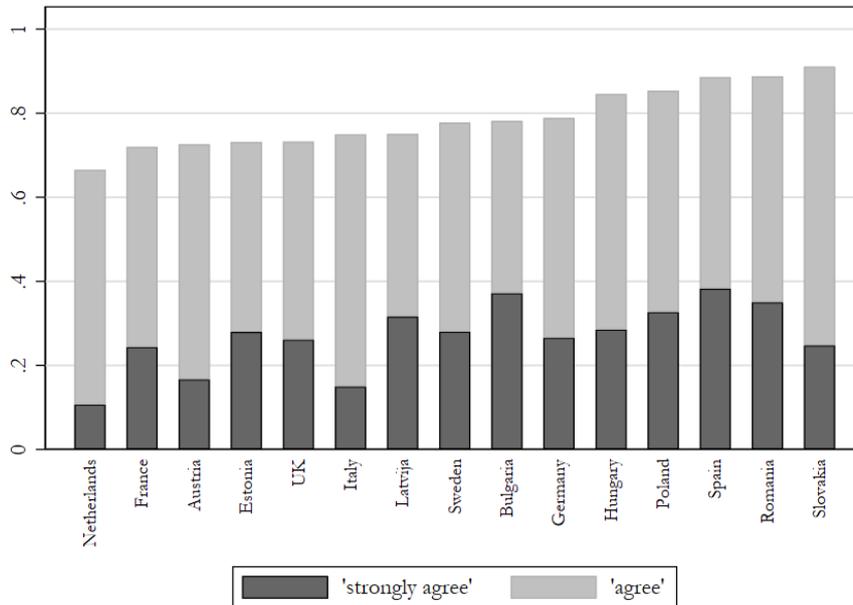
<sup>10</sup> The question was framed in each Eurobarometer survey: “Europe provides financial support to regions and cities. Have you heard about and EU co-financed projects to improve the area where you live?”

**FIGURE 1.**  
**Awareness of EU Regional Policy**



**Note:** weighted EU averages of each response reported.  
**Source:** Eurobarometer.

**FIGURE 2.**  
**Support for Cohesion policy (strongly agree and agree) by country**



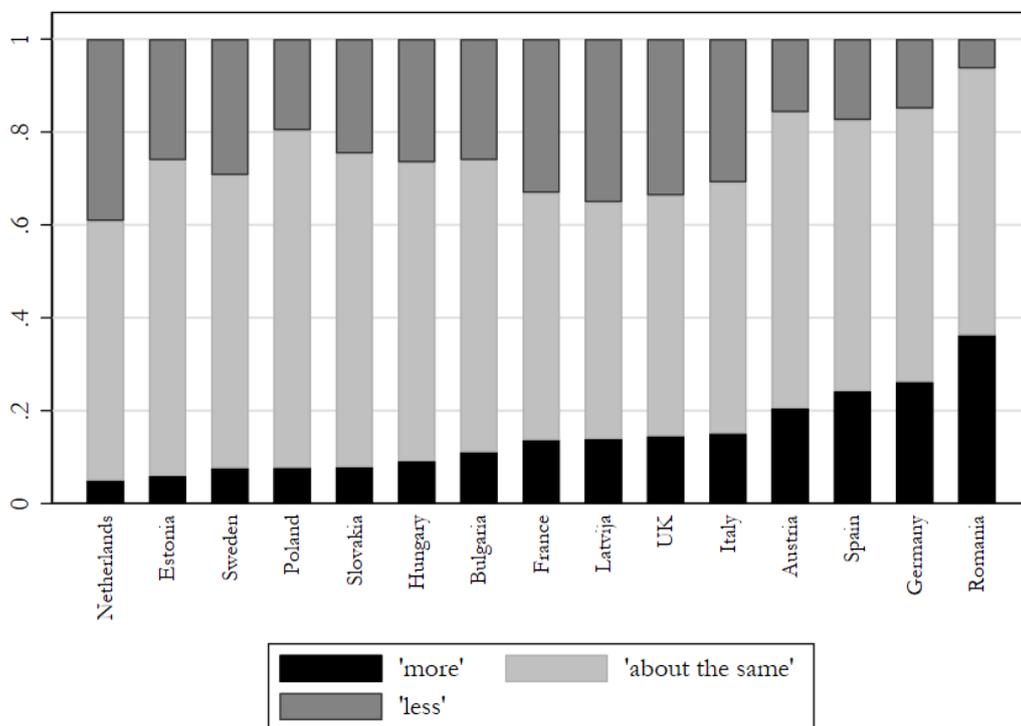
**Note:** weighted percentages reported. Sample weighted average is 79% for strong agree or agree.

with the highest support coming from Slovakia, Romania, Poland and Hungary, with E15 country Spain also in the top five. Older members, with the exception of Estonia, tend to be less favorable. Looking at the two responses separately, Bulgaria and Spain have the highest proportion of ‘strongly agree’, while Netherlands and Italy have the lowest in such response category.

Next, we add a dimension of ‘intensity’ of support, which we draw from Bechtal et al (2014). Intensity is measured by one’s willingness for their home country to contribute more to this policy than the current status quo. Here the respondents are asked about whether they would like tax money from their own countries to go more, about the same or less toward this policy. Figure 3 summarizes the findings by country.

*In your opinion, compared with what it spends today, should (COUNTRY) contribute, more, about the same, or less to this EU policy? 1. More, 2. About the same, 3. Less*

**FIGURE 3.**  
**Preferences for spending by country**



**Note:** weighted proportions reported.

Again, there are fairly clear-cut differences from country to country in terms of preferences for more or less spending on CP from one’s own country. Romanian’s are on average the most enthusiastic, with 36% of respondents claiming that they would like their country to send more money toward CP, with just 6% saying less. Germany, Spain and Austria are more on the supportive side as well; all having larger proportions of respondents saying ‘more’ than ‘less’. On the other side, respondents from the Netherlands are least supportive of investing more from their country’s tax base toward CP, with 39% saying ‘less’, and just 5% saying ‘more’. In 6 of the countries in the sample – Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Sweden, Estonia and Netherlands, we see support for more contributions from one’s own country on Cohesion Policy is under 10%, and all but four are under 20% in this respect. However, over 30% of people in France, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, and UK want to spend less. People in Estonia and Poland are either the most satisfied (or the most indifferent) to Cohesion Policy, as roughly 70% or more support their country spending ‘about the same’.

## 5. THE QUESTIONS: POSSIBLE CORRELATES OF SUPPORT FOR COHESION POLICY

The questions included in the survey are grounded in the academic literature on public support (and scepticism) for European Integration. Investigating citizen attitudes to cohesion policy is somewhat uncharted territory, despite the prominence of Cohesion Policy in the EU budget. Thus the questionnaire is a mix of novel and established questions.

As per accounting for established ideas, we draw on a rich literature of public support for EU integration, along with the emerging literature on public support for inter-EU economic redistribution and financial support (recently, see Daniele and Geys, 2015; Bansak et al., 2016; Stoeckel and Kuhn, 2017; Bauhr and Charron 2018). Most all studies point to several standard explanatory factors of public support for EU integration in general – ‘utilitarian’, ‘ideational’ and ‘cue-taking’ (see Hobolt and de Vries 2016). For ‘utilitarian’/ (self-interest) type we sought to include survey items that captured both individual level and sociotropic items. As per the individual’s own circumstances, we capture measures of income, level of education, one’s place in the labor market. As per sociotropic items, we inquire about subjective views of the economic situation in their region, and the relative performance of the current economy relative to five years ago as well (see Gabel 1998) along with the self-placement of one’s region relative to all others in the EU in economic terms (Balcells et al 2014).

A second line of relevant explanatory factors highlighted in the literature are political attitudes, values and ideology have strong explanatory power (Hooghe and Marks 2005; 2009; McLaren, 2002). Here we attempt to capture these established factors in several ways, along with incorporating newer ideas about European identity from the PERCEIVE project. As per established items, it is more or less established by now that strong, exclusive national identity with one’s country is consistently found as critical negative predictor of support for EU policies and that strong identity/attachment with Europe tends to correlate with support for further policy integration (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Risse 2014). In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to place their attachment to three levels of governance – regional, national and European on a 0-10 scale. One’s political party also serves as an important heuristic as citizens tend to take cues from the platforms of party elites (Steenburg and Jones 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2009) and several studies have found that ‘cue taking’ effects regarding EU support work through one’s political party (Hobolt 2007; Stoeckel and Kuhn 2017), thus we inquire about which party the respondents support. Political values could also be confounding factors in our model. We designed several questions in the survey to account for the ‘gal-tan’ dimension (Kitschelt 1994)<sup>11</sup>, as respondents with higher ‘tan’ values have found to be both less supportive of EU integration and more prone to rating corruption in their institutions as higher (Hooghe and Marks 2009). Left-right ideology and preferences for domestic redistribution could also play a role in preferences for a redistributionary policy such as Cohesion (Bansak et al 2016). We account for this factor via a question on the extent to which respondent’s feel their own government should ‘take measures to reduce income levels’ in their country (0-10).

Adding to this line of research, we include several, more in depth questions about specific channels of European identity, with five questions drawn up by the researchers of PERCEIVE, meant to capture various dimensions of European identity, such as civic, cultural and utilitarian (Bruter 2003).

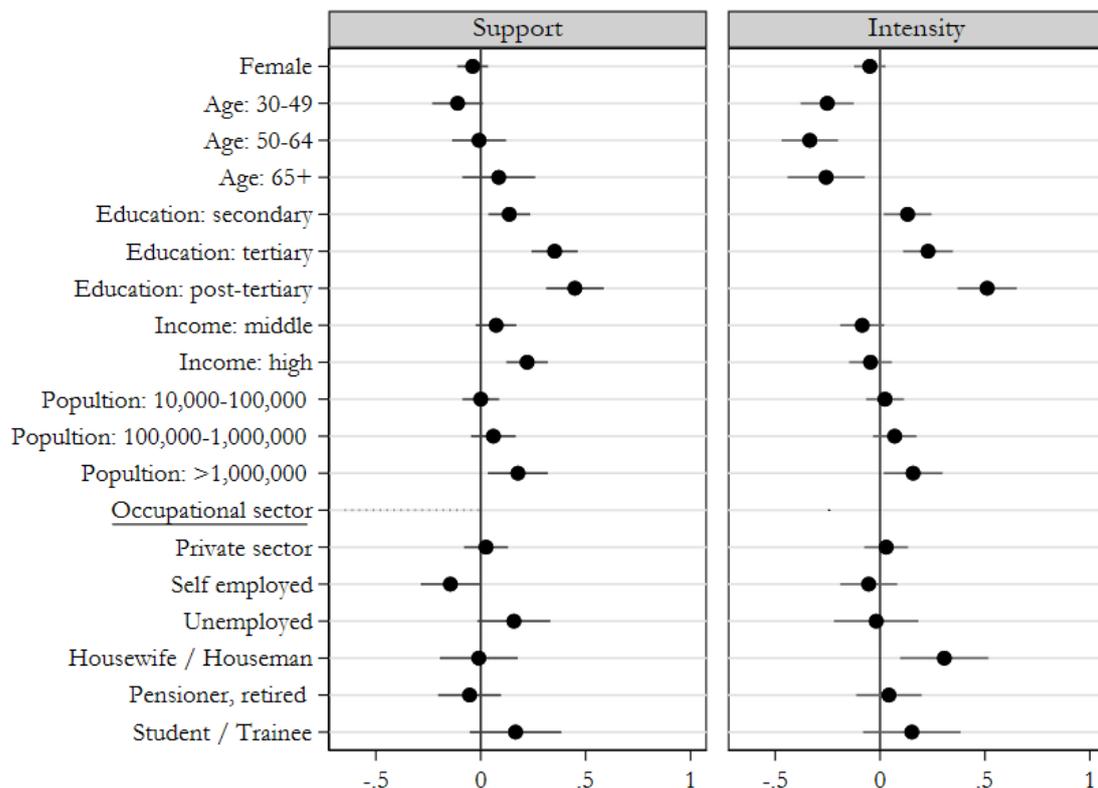
Another fruitful line of research in the EU public opinion literature is the extent to which citizens use domestic proxies to determine their support for EU integration and various policies (Anderson 1998; Sanchez-Cuenca 2000). Here we are interested in incorporating our ideas about perceptions institutional quality ‘Quality of Government’ (QoG) and corruption in a multi-level structure. As recent studies have

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<sup>11</sup> The survey questions regard the extent to which people feel the Christian religion is an essential ‘European value’, the extent to which respondents want to ‘restrict immigration’ and the extent to which respondents would prefer a ‘strong leader’ who can ‘get things done in spite of parliamentary rules of elections’. The question formulations are found in the appendix.

shown the limitations of utilitarian models that explain support for the EU (see Crescenzi et al., 2019), we expect our focus on perceptions of institutional quality to be salient in explaining support for EU policies, in particular in a time of diminished trust and political polarization across Europe (Algan et al., 2017). We ask respondents the extent to which the respondents perceive corruption in their own national and regional governing institutions as well as those of the European Union. As institutional and administrative quality is now a key goal of EU Cohesion policy (Charron et al., 2019), this topic has clear policy relevance. A full list of the survey’s questions and formulations can be found in the appendix.

**FIGURE 4.**  
**Ordered logit estimates of support and intensity for Cohesion Policy: Demographic factors**



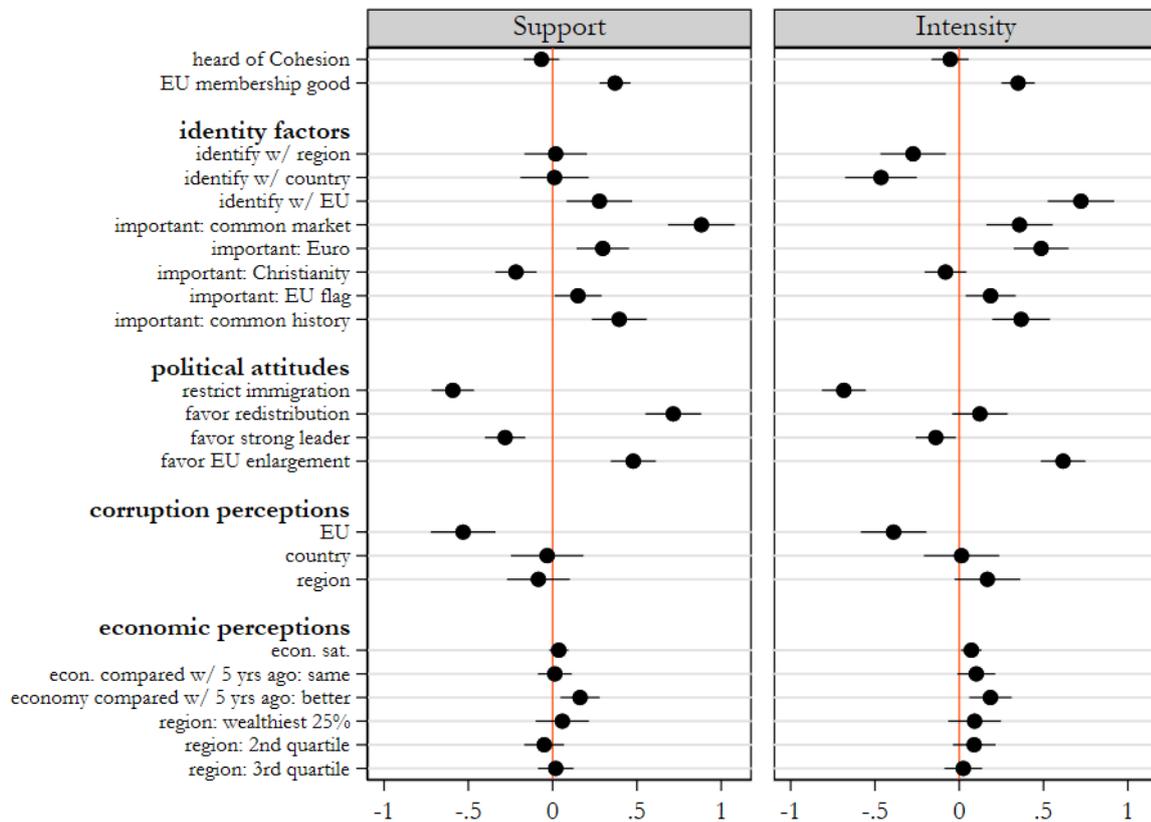
**Note:** Effects (logged odds) presented with 95% confidence intervals. Models include survey design weights and country fixed effects (not shown).

Labor market position is in line with Bechtel et al (2014) findings in that students and retirees show more intensity of support for the policy (compared with public sector employees), while differences in the public and private sector are ambiguous, also found in Kuhn and Stoeckel (2014). The self-employed also support the policy less on average. Finally, we find no systematic gender effects, and age, when accounting for occupation, is a slight negative predictor of intensity.

Figure 5 build on the models in Figure 4 and adds the additional attitudinal, identity a political factors to the model. For the sake of presentation, the demographic and occupational factors are not shown, yet are included in the estimations. We find several noteworthy factors that are strongly associated with positive views of Cohesion Policy, all things being equal. First, positive assessments of EU membership relates with support and intensity for EU redistribution. Second, geographic identity has a mixed relationship with the outcomes. Holding constant all other factors, a stronger regional and national identity play no role in the support outcome, yet reduce the willingness to contribute financially from

one's home country (intensity). On the other hand, a stronger identity with the Europe is positively correlated with both outcomes.

**Figure 5.**  
**Ordered logit estimates of support and intensity for Cohesion Policy: Attitudes, Identity and Political Beliefs**



**Note:** marginal effects reported (95% confidence intervals) from ordered logit estimation. All models include the demographic variables from Figure 1, along with design weights and country fixed effects. All variables are scaled between 0 and 1 for purposes of comparison. In terms of the identity questions, the phrase ‘important’ refers to the importance a respondent places on that item with respect to what it means to ‘be European’.

Third, we include several specific components of European identity, along the lines of the multi-dimensional ‘civic’ and ‘cultural’ ideas of Brueter (2003). For these five questions, respondents are asked about the relative importance of these items in terms of what it means to ‘be European’ (see appendix for exact wording). The models shows that believes that the EU common market is what constitutes ‘being European’ have the strongest, positive association with the two outcomes, while the Euro currency and a ‘shared history’ also are positive indicators. Beliefs that the EU flag is important have a small positive effect, while believing that the Christian religion is what unites Europe leads to less support of Cohesion Policy on average.

Political attitudes also have strong effects on the two outcomes. Those that maintain that immigration in their home country should be more restricted and profess to want a ‘strong leader’ ruling their country are significantly less likely to favor Cohesion, either in terms of overall support or intensity, while those that favor EU enlargement in general express the opposite. We see some mixed results for attitudes of redistribution; while this attitude is positively related with support, it is negligible in terms of intensity.

Perceptions of corruption across the three levels of governance also have mixed effects. While citizens who view the EU as corrupt, *ceteris paribus*, are less supportive of Cohesion, attitudes on regional or national level corruption have ambiguous effects on the two outcomes. Finally, perceptions of the economy play a slight role, with current economic satisfaction having a positive and significant effect on willingness to contribute, and positive retrospective assessments (economy better than five years ago) correlating positively with both outcomes. Other factors are negligible.

## 6. CONCLUSION

While future European integration may partly build on a willingness to share resources across borders, we have thus far had very limited knowledge about the extent to which European citizens' actually support the EU's most significant tool for redistribution: cohesion policy. This study introduces a new survey on public support for cohesion policy and its determinants. This survey offers opportunities to gain insights into public support for this policy. The survey can be used to understand differences between different countries, regions, demographic groups as well as to investigate potential explanatory factors and effects of support for this policy, and is, to the best of our knowledge, the most comprehensive survey in this field thus far.

Although the survey is to the best of our knowledge the first comparative regional level survey that investigates the determinants of support for cohesion policy, the survey is firmly rooted in the impressive body of work on the determinants of European integration and support for specific EU policies. In addition, the regional level focus of this study offers many advantages relative to the country level for anyone interested in analyzing pan European patterns, for research or policy purposes.

Since patterns of support for specific EU policies may potentially look very different from patterns of regime level type of support for the European union or integration in general, understanding both determinants of and effects of public support for cohesion policy is an interesting research avenue to explore for anyone interested in redistributive preferences and social solidarity across borders. Understanding these patterns and correlates is also interesting for anyone concerned about future directions of European integration, since public support, skepticism or resentment of these policies can potentially pose important obstacle to the implementation of cohesive policies across Europe.

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## APPENDIX

### FURTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE SURVEY

This study presents an original survey that is intended to help researchers better understand the micro and macro level dynamics that drive support (or lack thereof) of EU regional polices. The survey includes over 35 substantive questions as well as seven demographic and background questions of the respondent; geo-coded at the NUTS 1, NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 level. The survey was funded largely in part from an EU Horizon 2020 grant (GA number 693529). The fieldwork was conducted during the summer of 2017 by an international survey firm based in Rheims, France (Efficienc3, 'E3'), who have conducted several other large EU-wide surveys on behalf of the EU Commission. The data was delivered to the authors in September 2017.

E3 conducted the interviews themselves in several countries and used sub-contracting partners in others<sup>12</sup>. In all, 17,147 interviews were carried out in 15 EU member states. The respondents, from 18 years of age or older, were contacted randomly via telephone in the local language. Telephone interviews approximately 12-15 minutes in length were conducted via both landlines and mobile phones, with both methods being used in most countries. All interviews were made by employees with at least one year of professional experience and used *Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing* (CATI). Between 12%-15% of all interviews were randomly check for quality control by supervisors, with no reported irregularities. Decisions about whether to contact residents more often via land or mobile lines was based on local expertise of market research firms in each country, with mobile being first choice in all cases. For purposes of regional placement, respondents were asked the postcode of their address to verify the area/ region of residence if mobile phones were used.

### SAMPLING METHOD

Ideally, a survey would be a mirror image of actual societal demographics – gender, income, education, rural-urban, ethnicity, etc. However, sampling on demographics is much more costly. Based on E3's expert advice, to achieve a random sample, the 'next birthday method' was employed. The next birthday method is an alternative to the so-called quotas method. When using the quota method for instance, one obtains a (near) perfectly representative sample – e.g. a near exact proportion of the amount of men, women, certain minority groups, people of a certain age, income, etc. However, if one searches for certain demographics within the population, one might end up with only 'available' respondents, or those that are more 'eager' to respond to surveys, which can lead to less variation in the responses, or even bias in the results. The 'next-birthday' method, which simply requires the interviewer to ask the person who answers the phone who in their household will have the next birthday, still obtains a reasonably representative sample of the population. The interviewer must take the person who has the next coming birthday in the household (if this person is not available, the interviewer makes an appointment), thus not relying on whomever might simply be available to respond in the household. Therefore, where the quota method is stronger in terms of a more even demographic spread in the sample, the next-birthday method is stronger at ensuring a better range of opinion.

The next-birthday method was thus chosen because we felt that what we might have lost in demographic representation in the sample would be made up for by a better distribution of opinion. In attempt to compensate for some key demographic over/under-representation, we provide weights based on age and gender for each region, comparing the sample drawn to actual demographic statistics from

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.efficence3.com/en/accueil/index.html>. For names of the specific firms to which Efficienc 3 sub-contracted in individual countries, please write [cati@efficence3.com](mailto:cati@efficence3.com)

Eurostat. A breakdown of the sample response rate, landline vs. mobile phone use, etc. is listed in the table below by country.

### SAMPLE AND FURTHER SURVEY INFORMATION

The survey included 15 EU countries. These 15 countries in this sample represent over 85% of the proportion of the EU population. Countries were selected for purposes of the selected case study reports as well as on the bases of variation with respect to geography, size, and institutional quality. The countries in the sample of this survey are the following and they are often referred to via the following official abbreviations:

**TABLE A1.**  
**Sample information**

Country	Abbreviation	respondents	Mobile rates	landline rates	response rate	refusal rate
Austria	AT	1000	30%	70%	10,0%	46,5%
Bulgaria	BG	503	82,10%	17,90%	32,0%	21,0%
Estonia	EE	5000	92%	8%	13,5%	38,0%
France	FR	1500	65%	35%	10,0%	26,0%
Germany	DE	1500	35%	65%	12,5%	46,5%
Hungary	HU	1000	100%	-	22,0%	33,0%
Italy	IT	2000	38,5	61,5	16,2%	9,3%
Latvia	LV	500	100%	0%	13,0%	24,0%
Netherlands	NL	500	57%	43%	9,8%	29,1%
Poland	PL	2000	80%	20%	12,1%	15,7%
Romania	RO	1015	100%	0%	10,0%	47,0%
Slovakia	SK	1014	100%	0%	10,0%	48,0%
Spain	ES	2014	68%	32%	7,5%	17,1%
Sweden	SE	580	5,5%	94,5%	12,5%	28,3%
UK	UK	1500	37%	63%	12,5%	46,5%
Total= 17147						

### SURVEY QUESTIONS USED IN ANALYSIS (SEE MAIN TEXT FOR DEPENDENT VARIABLES)

#### *Awareness of Cohesion Policies*

In general, have you ever heard about the following EU policies? (yes, no) *a. EU Cohesion Policy, b. EU Regional Policy, c. Structural Funds, d. any EU funded project in your region or area?*

#### *Attitudes on EU membership*

In general, do you think that (YOUR COUNTRY'S) EU membership is: *a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad, not sure.*

#### *Attitudes on EU enlargement*

"The EU should continue to let more countries become members, under the condition that they meet all of EU's membership requirements" (0-10, 0=fully disagree, 10=fully agree)

### ***Corruption perceptions***

‘On a 0-10 scale, with ‘0’ being that ‘there is no corruption’ and ‘10’ being that corruption is widespread, how would you rate the following institutions?’

*a. the European Union, b. your country, c. your region*

### ***Territorial identity***

‘On a 0-10 scale, with ‘0’ being ‘I don’t identify at all, and ‘10’ being ‘I identify very strongly’, how strongly you identify yourself with the following?’:

*a. your region, b. your country, c. Europe perceptions of one’s relative regional wealth within EU.*

### ***Perceptions of regional wealth***

In terms of the per person economic wealth, as in GDP per head, if we were to rank all EU regions from wealthiest to poorest and put them into four equal groups, with group 1 being the wealthiest group and 4 the poorest group, which of the 4 groups do you believe your region is in today?”

*a. Group 1 (In the wealthiest 25% of EU regions), b. Group 2, c. Group 3, d. Group 4 (The poorest 25% of EU regions)*

### ***Economic satisfaction***

“How satisfied are you with the current economic situation in your region today?”

*(1-4, very satisfied – very unsatisfied)*

### ***Attitudes on redistribution***

(COUNTRY’s) national government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels among people in (COUNTRY) (0- fully disagree – 10 fully agree)

### ***Gal Tan***

1. (COUNTRY) should have more restrictions on immigration than it does today (0- fully disagree – 10 fully agree)
2. (COUNTRY) should have a strong leader that can solve problems quickly, who does not have to worry about elections and parliamentary rules. (0- fully disagree – 10 fully agree)
3. People have many different opinions about what ‘being European’ means. On a scale from 0-10, where ‘0’ means “not at all important” and ‘10’ means “very important”, how important are the following for you in terms of ‘being European’?
  - a. The right for all EU citizens to live and work in any other EU country
  - b. Having the Euro currency
  - c. The Christian religion
  - d. Having a European flag and passport
  - e. Sharing a common European history and culture

