Europe’s turning point on migration?
Politics, policy and predictions ahead of the 2019 elections

#OPAM
Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration

• Focuses on public attitudes to migration in Europe and worldwide

• Draws on the fullest range of existing relevant public and private data

• Explains variation in public attitudes to migration across countries, across time, across different groups of citizens and across the life course within individuals.
Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration
Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration

Academic Research

• Journal articles
• Books
• Working papers

Policy Dialogue

• Collaboration with European institutions, NGOs, think tanks...
• Newspaper articles
• Blogs
• Social media #opam
Europe’s turning point on migration?

- How have attitudes to migration changed during the 2014-2019 parliament?
- Why have anti-immigration parties become more successful during this parliament?
- What next for 2019-2024?
Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration

Introduction
Attitudinal change
Behavioural change
Prediction
Conclusion

Public attitudes on migration: rethinking how people perceive migration
An analysis of existing opinion polls in the Euro-Mediterranean region

Impact of Public Attitudes to migration on the political environment in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

james.dennison@eui.eu
Current perception of attitudes

‘Europeans are turning against immigration because of increasingly negative media coverage which pushes voters into the hands of the radical right’

‘Misinformation has distorted voters’ perceptions of the real situation’
Do you feel positively or negatively to immigration of people from other EU states?
(source: Eurobarometer)
Do you feel positively or negatively to immigration of people from outside of the EU?

(source: Eurobarometer)
Do you feel positively or negatively to immigration of people from other EU member states? Net positive

- Sweden
- Ireland
- Finland
- Luxembourg
- Denmark
- United Kingdom
- Lithuania
- Germany
- Poland
- Spain
- Netherlands
- Estonia
- Austria
- Portugal
- Belgium
- European Union
- Croatia
- Slovenia
- France
- Hungary
- Bulgaria
- Romania
- Greece
- Malta
- Italy
- Latvia
- Slovakia
- Cyprus
- Czechia

Do you feel positively or negatively to immigration of people from outside of the EU? Net positive

- Sweden
- United Kingdom
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- Portugal
- Belgium
- Austria
- Netherlands
- Romania
- Germany
- European Union
- Finland
- France
- Croatia
- Denmark
- Italy
- Lithuania
- Malta
- Poland
- Slovakia
- Cyprus
- Hungary
- Greece
- Estonia
- Bulgaria
- Latvia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Sweden

08/11/2018
08/11/2014
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<tr>
<td>4/1/18</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**What does the EU mean to you personally?**
(source: Eurobarometer)
Are you for or against a common European policy on migration? (source: Eurobarometer)
Attitudes to a common European policy on migration

(Source: Eurobarometer, 2014-2018)
Do you agree that your national government/the European Union has responded well to the refugee crisis? (Ipsos)

National Government
- Hungary
- Poland
- Serbia
- Germany
- Italy
- UK
- Belgium
- Sweden
- Spain
- France

European Union
- UK
- Poland
- Serbia
- Germany
- France
- Spain
- Belgium
- Hungary
- Italy
- Sweden

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
Polling for anti-immigration parties in 15 western European countries, January 2005 to June 2018
Figure 2. Percentage responding 'immigration' to the question 'What do you think are the two most important issues facing our country at the moment?'
Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, UK. May 2005-March 2018.
Figure 3. Percentage responding ‘immigration’ to the question ‘What do you think are the two most important issues facing our country at the moment?’ for countries including Cyprus, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Portugal, and Spain. May 2005-March 2018.
Figure 4. Percentage responding ‘immigration’ to the question ‘What do you think are the two most important issues facing our country at the moment?’ Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia. May 2005-March 2018
Figure 5. Percentage responding ‘immigration’ to the question ‘What do you think are the two most important issues facing our country at the moment?’ Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Turkey. May 2005-March 2018
Issue salience of immigration and Catalan independence and polling for Vox
Number of irregular arrivals (reaching Spain via coast) and levels of concern over immigration in Spain.

- Number of irregular arrivals in Spain
- % of people listing immigration as a top 3 concern
% responding ‘immigration’ to ‘What do you think are the two most important issues affecting our country at the moment?’ and % of seats going to radical right parties in EP elections.
% responding ‘immigration’ to ‘What do you think are the two most important issues affecting the EU at the moment?’ and to ‘What do you think are the two most important issues affecting our country at the moment? and % of seats going to radical right
Europe’s turning point on migration?

• How have attitudes to migration changed during the 2014-2019 parliament?
  • Generally became more positive
  • Important caveats by type of immigration and country

• Why have anti-immigration parties become more successful during this parliament?
  • Salience! ... more broadly ‘salience, stigma and supply’
  • Salience largely resulting from reality of immigration ... plus feedback loops of party coverage and media coverage

• What next for 2019-2024?
  • More anti-immigration parties in the EP ...
    • If 2019 is the first European EP elections, many more!
  • European have *somewhat* moved on from ‘crisis’ ... for now
Individual-level attitudes to immigration

• Ok, so attitudes are stable, suggesting context doesn’t matter much.

• But there’s still significant variation. Then where does that variation come from? Why are some people anti and some pro?

• ... a lot of work has gone into this ...
What are the causes of variation in attitudes to immigration?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Socialisation</th>
<th>Attitudinal</th>
<th>Contextual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality types</td>
<td>Parent's views</td>
<td>Left-right positioning</td>
<td>Media reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral foundation</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Contact with immigrants</td>
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<td>Human Values</td>
<td>Early peer group</td>
<td>Libertarian-authoritarian</td>
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<td>Lived abroad</td>
<td>Anti-establishment sentiment</td>
<td>Local immigration rates</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Economic competition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban/rural</td>
<td>Xenophobia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Migrant background</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What to do with so many findings?

• There’s no reason to necessarily believe that not all of these are right
• Multiple causal mechanisms are related, and often indeed reliant, upon one another.
• All have direct and indirect effect
• Some are distal (big effects, hard to change)
• Some are proximal (small effects, easier to change)
Use ‘funnel of causality’ method

Attitudes to immigration

Proximal effects (weak & unstable)

Distal effects (strong & stable)

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Use ‘funnel of causality’ method

Psychological predisposition
- Early life norm acquisition (parents, schooling, community)
- Tertiary education
- Lifestyle (family, children, living abroad, attachment to place)

Personality type
- Political attitudes
- Ideology (right-wing; fiscal / social conservatism)
- Political alienation

Moral foundation
- Contact (empathy / threat)
- Neighborhood safety /crime
- Party cues / media influence
- Economic competition

Distal effects (strong & stable)

Proximal effects (weak & unstable)

Attitudes to immigration

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Let’s look at how values affect attitudes

[Diagram showing a model of values and attitudes with axes for Self-Transcendence, Openness to Change, Self-Direction, Conformity, Conservation, Self-Enhancement, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Security, Power, and Achievement.]

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Four of these explain a lot
Attitudes to emigration

- More consistent results...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political and economic context in host country</th>
<th>Socio-demographics</th>
<th>Existing migrant networks</th>
<th>Media effects</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Logistical support</td>
<td>Media connections</td>
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<td>Information flows</td>
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<td>State capacity</td>
<td>Economic dissatisfaction</td>
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<td>Law and order</td>
<td>Education</td>
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U-curves
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Why this report?</th>
<th>What attitudes?</th>
<th>Explaining attitudes</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

U-curves
Six recommendations

1. **Media matters.** Attitudes to migration vary strongly between individuals according to the type of media they access, even when controlling for other issues.

2. **National challenges demand national solutions.** Countries may develop guidelines for responsible and sensitive coverage of migration.

3. **Consensus is more likely to emerge when discussing more specific types of migration,** this should take into account the migrants’ background, host community needs, and the means available to implement a consensus based policy.

4. **Hard facts alone do not convince.** Individuals have different values.

5. **Simplification of migration related issues should be avoided.** Migration should be reported not as a singular, bi-polar issue but as a nuanced, complex one.

6. **Nuanced, balanced communication can help avoid polarisation.** While there are some individuals who are very pro- and very anti-migration, most individuals are in the middle. By adopting polemic language, they are forced to pick a side.
Why this report?
What attitudes?
Explaining attitudes
Communication
Recommendations

Thank you!

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Why OPAM?

• Demand from policy-makers for analyses of the causes of attitudes to migration
• Widespread misunderstanding of public attitudes (even fear!)
• Attitudes to immigration treated as ‘special’
• In collaboration with Ipsos MORI, create a go-to centre for pan-EU analyses bringing data and knowledge together
Current perception of attitudes...

‘Europeans are turning against immigration because of increasingly negative media coverage which pushes voters into the hands of the radical right’

‘Misinformation has distorted voters’ perceptions of the real situation’
Europeans aren’t turning against immigration!

Is your country made a better or worse place to live by immigration?  
(Source: European Social Survey; 0-10 average)

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... not even after the migrant crisis...

Percent respondents with positive attitudes to non-EU immigration
(Source: Eurobarometer)
So how do we explain this?
Percent saying ‘immigration’ is one of top two issues affecting my country, 2008-2017
(source: Eurobarometer)
Yet there is significant variation!

Perceived effect of immigration on the economy – all Europeans
(source: ESS 2015)
Yet there is significant variation!

Perceived effect of immigration on culture – all Europeans
(source: ESS 2015)
Yet there is significant variation!

Perceived effect of immigration on government accounts (source: ESS 2015)
Yet there is significant variation!

Perceived effect of immigration on crime (source: ESS 2014)
Attitudes vary but are stable. So where do they come from?

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No shortage of explanations...

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What to do with them all? Funnel of Causality:
What to do with them all? Funnel of Causality:

- Psychological predisposition
  - Early life norm acquisition (parents, schooling, community)
  - Tertiary education
  - Lifestyle (family, children, living abroad, attachment to place)
- Personality type
- Moral foundation
- Distal effects (strong & stable)
- Proximal effects (weak & unstable)

- Political attitudes
- Ideology (right-wing: fiscal / social conservatism)
- Political alienation

Contact (empathy / threat)
Neighborhood safety / crime
Party cues / media influence
Economic competition

Why OPAM?
National level
Individual level
Messaging
Conclusion

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Let’s start with human values
Four of these explain a lot
To conclude

• Attitudes to immigration are stable, even becoming more favourable.
• Yet radical right is growing at faster rate
• Latent anti-immigration attitudes are activated by immigration rates and perceptions of disorder
• Result of most important predictors of attitudes – human values
• Future messaging and policy could take more balanced ‘value-based’ approach
Attitudes to the effects of immigration are fairly similar between countries

Is immigration good or bad for the economy?
(Source: European Social Survey; 0-10 average)