The Impact of Immigration on Attitudes toward the EU: Evidence from a Three-Country Survey Experiment

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**Abstract:**

Immigration is one of the important issues that influence attitudes toward the EU. It is unclear, however, what causal mechanisms explain this link. *Is the causal mechanism rooted in identity the only causal mechanism involved? Or do other causal mechanisms play a role as well?*In an analysis of data from an original framing experiment conducted in Germany, Italy, and Czechia, I find that in Italy, exposure to information about negative consequences of immigration leads to more negative attitudes to the EU. This effect happens via causal mechanisms rooted in economic concerns and national politics rather than via the identity mechanism. In Germany and Czechia, the analysis finds no systematic relationship. Overall, this study shows that receiving information about negative consequences of immigration is related to attitudes toward the EU to a lesser degree and via different causal mechanisms than existing literature would have us expect.

**Introduction**

Mass immigration is one of the challenges that face the European Union today. Many European Union (EU) citizens are opposed to the idea of immigration from countries outside the EU. This opposition to immigration is seen as one of the drivers of public opposition to the EU itself (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Hobolt, 2016). Political parties that oppose EU membership use immigration as one of the issues that mobilize voters against the EU. At the same time, mass public support is one of the key components that are essential in keeping the European Union together. As the Brexit referendum has demonstrated, without mass public support, the EU is at risk of disintegration. Given the importance of public support for the EU and the salience of immigration as a political issue (Dennison and Geddes, 2019), this paper examines how immigration from countries outside the EU affects mass public attitudes toward the EU.

We know from the existing research that attitudes to immigration and public support for the EU are related (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Hobolt, 2016; McLaren, 2007). People who oppose immigration tend to oppose European integration as well. The explanation for this relationship focuses on identity. Immigration is seen as introducing unfamiliar elements to the cultural space of the nation-state. The EU can be seen in a similar way - as a political structure that threatens the specific culture of the given nation-state. For these reasons, the two attitudes are argued to be related. However, it is not clear from the existing literature whether this identity-based causal mechanism linking the issue of immigration to attitudes to the EU is the only causal mechanism at work. A causal mechanism based on economic concerns may play a role as well. Individuals who fear the consequences of immigration on jobs and wages may view the EU as a political actor responsible for more immigration and, therefore, oppose the EU. In addition, past research has shown that support for national political institutions is one of the sources of support for the EU. If views of immigration policy depress support for the national government, attitudes to the EU may be affected as well via this causal mechanism rooted in domestic politics. This paper, therefore, addresses the puzzle about the causal mechanisms and asks the following research question: *What are the causal mechanisms linking the issue of immigration to attitudes to the EU?*

In order to address this research question, I analyze data from an original framing experiment. The experiment was conducted via an online survey in three countries: Germany, Italy, and the Czech Republic. The experiment exposed respondents to negative information about immigration policy framed in three different ways. First, the information was framed in terms of the causal logic emphasizing identity. The second frame emphasized the causal mechanism focusing on the economic consequences of immigration. The third frame highlighted the causal mechanism rooted in domestic politics. The subsequent analysis examined which frame, and by extension, which causal mechanism, has the greatest impact on attitudes to the EU.

Based on the data from the experiment, I find that the effect of negative information about immigration policy on attitudes to the EU strongly varies by country. In Germany and Czechia, such information elicits no systematic effect. In Italy, exposure to negative information about immigration policy leads to lower support for the EU. Furthermore, I find that the causal mechanisms involving a cost/benefit calculation or references to domestic politics are responsible for the link between exposure to information about negative consequences of immigration and support for the EU in Italy. This is in contrast to the existing literature, which emphasizes cultural concerns as the key causal mechanism connecting the issue of immigration to support for the EU. The cross-national diversity of findings suggests that the issue of immigration is a greater threat to public support for the EU in some countries than in others.

In addition to these main findings, I find that in some instances, the relationship between information about immigration and support for the EU is moderated by political sophistication and by age. Overall, however, this study shows that exposure to information about negative consequences of immigration largely does not change attitudes toward the EU. When a change in attitudes to the EU happens, it is driven by the causal mechanism focused on immigrations' economic consequences and by the causal mechanism rooted in domestic politics. Overall, these findings suggest that the direct impact of new impulses or disruptions, such as the immigration crisis, on public attitudes towards the EU may be more limited than expected.

In presenting these findings, I first discuss the existing literature, identify gaps in the literature, and formulate hypotheses. Then I define the key concepts and describe the data and variables. The empirical analysis and discussion of the findings then follow. The concluding part summarizes the results and proposes further research.

**Literature review and causal explanations**

Support for the European Union is an attitude that individuals hold about the EU. In this study, it is defined in a broad sense as a set of individuals' favorable or unfavorable orientations toward the European Union. Existing literature shows that citizens' support for the EU has diverse sources. The existing studies identify three broad groups of causal explanations for why individuals support the EU. The first source of support for the EU focuses on economic considerations. According to this view, individuals support the EU because they see the EU as beneficial to their own wellbeing or to the wellbeing of their country (Dellmuth and Chalmers, 2018; Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007; Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Hakhverdian, et al., 2013; Mau, 2005; Torcal, et al., 2012). In figuring out their opinion on the European Union, an individual thinks about the benefits and the costs of EU membership, and if, in their view, benefits outweigh costs, the individual has a supportive opinion. If costs outweigh benefits, the individual is not supportive of the EU. Because this theoretical approach includes such cost/benefit calculation, it is labeled the *utilitarian logic.*[[1]](#footnote-1)

The second explanation of mass public support for the EU puts emphasis on culture and identity, rather than on utilitarian considerations. This approach can be referred to as the 'cultural explanation' or the 'logic of identity' (Harteveld, et al., 2013). Individuals who perceive the membership in the EU as a cultural threat to their country tend to be less supportive of the EU (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Hobolt and de Vries, 2016; McLaren, 2006). Similarly, individuals who feel an exclusive national identity tend to be less supportive of the EU, while individuals who have, at least partially, a European identity are more supportive of the EU (Carey, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2004; Weßels, 2007). Overall, this approach emphasizes identity and culture as the key factor that influences individuals' attitudes to the EU.

The third explanation of public support for the EU employs an entirely different logic. According to this view, individuals know too little about European integration to be able to make their opinions on the EU directly. Instead, in forming their opinion about the 'faraway' European Union, individuals take their opinion of the national political institutions and extrapolate it onto the EU. This causal mechanism is referred to as the 'logic of extrapolation' (Harteveld, et al., 2013). In line with this logic, empirical studies find that citizens who trust the national political institutions in their country are more supportive of the EU (Anderson, 1998; Harteveld, et al., 2013; Hobolt and de Vries, 2016; Munoz, et al., 2011).

How does the issue of immigration fit into the theories that explain public support for the EU? There is ample evidence that attitudes toward immigration and attitudes toward European integration are related. Individuals who oppose immigration tend to oppose the EU as well (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Hobolt, 2016; Hobolt and de Vries, 2016; McLaren, 2007). The causal explanation behind this relationship usually turns to identity and culture. Individuals who oppose immigration view people coming from other countries as a new unwelcome element that threatens the national cultural space. Individuals who hold these views perceive the EU in a similar light - as a supranational political entity, threatening the cultural space of the national polity (Hobolt and de Vries, 2016). Furthermore, thanks to the open borders within most of the EU, the European Union enables migration across nation-states' borders. Individuals opposing immigration may then view the EU as a structure that enables immigration and oppose the EU for this reason as well (Hobolt, 2016).

The immigration crisis that began in early 2015 likely reinforced the importance of immigration as one of the factors influencing public support for the EU. In early 2015, large numbers of migrants began to come to the EU. Immigration from outside the EU thus became one of the top European Union's political topics. The European Union was forced to react and grapple with this challenge. This immigration crisis was not only a policy challenge. It was a political challenge as well. Immigration from countries outside the EU was unpopular with many European citizens. Eurosceptic political parties capitalized on this fact and used the issue of immigration to increase political support for anti-EU political platforms.[[2]](#footnote-2) Mass immigration is, therefore, often viewed as one of the factors that contributed to Eurosceptic attitudes among the European public in recent years.

Even though the European level of government and the national level of government are both responsible for formulating and implementing immigration policy, policies formulated by the European Union were crucial in dealing with the immigration crisis that began in late 2014. The distribution of competencies requires the EU to "combat and reduce irregular immigration" (Schmid-Drüner, 2019). This includes, among other things, securing external borders and setting the conditions for legal residence of third-country nationals in EU member states. EU member states, on the other hand, regulate the flow of migrants seeking work in the EU. EU's immigration policy is implemented by member states, but the EU redistributes resources to assist states that are processing more incoming migrants. Overall, this distribution of competences between the EU and the member states means that any response to the high immigration flows must be reached at the European level of government.

Even though immigration is such a key topic in today's EU politics, we know relatively little about how the issue of immigration influences mass public support for the EU. Although the existing literature shows that attitudes towards immigration and mass public support for the EU are linked, little is known about the mechanisms that link the issue of immigration to mass public attitudes toward the EU. Does the issue of immigration affect support for the EU through the utilitarian logic, the logic of identity, or the logic of extrapolation? This is the main research question investigated in the present paper.

In order to address the research question, I analyze data from an original survey experiment that included three experimental treatments and one control condition. The experimental treatments exposed respondents to three messages about the negative impact of immigration. Each message was framed to correspond to one of the three logics that help individuals form their attitudes toward the EU: the utilitarian logic, the logic of identity, or the logic of extrapolation. By comparing the level of support in the respective experimental groups and the control group, the analysis is able to detect the effect of these three messages on support for the EU. As the baseline expectation for the analysis, I expect that exposure to either of the three negative messages will result in lower support for the EU:

*H1: Individuals exposed to an experimental treatment will have lower support for the EU than individuals in the control group.*

Each of the three experimental treatments is designed to highlight a different causal logic connecting immigration and attitudes to the EU. Out of the three causal logics, the logic of identity is emphasized by the existing literature as the explanation connecting immigration to attitudes to the EU (McLaren, 2002). The relationship between immigration and public support for the EU is viewed as the result of cultural or identity considerations. Migrants coming to EU member countries often speak a different language and have different cultural and religious traditions than the native population. Many native citizens of EU member countries view this cultural diversity as threatening to their own cultural and religious traditions. Thanks to the immigration crisis of 2015, the EU has become a very visible actor in relation to this cultural threat (Hatton, 2017). The EU had been an active political actor during the height of the immigration crisis. Citizens are, therefore, likely to view the EU as an entity that plays an important role in the regulation of migrant flows. Furthermore, the perception of the EU as an actor enabling mass immigration and thus threatening the national culture is enhanced by the fact that borders within the EU practically do not exist in most cases. Many European citizens, therefore, may develop a negative view of the EU because of this identity-based causal mechanism.

According to the utilitarian logic, support for the EU is a result of a cost/benefit calculation. Depending on whether benefits outweigh costs or the other way around, individuals support or oppose the EU. Opinion on immigration and immigration's impact on one's life can well be part of this calculation. There is a popular image that migrants "steal jobs and depress wages." If the utilitarian causal mechanism is at work, individuals believe that the EU immigration policy is allowing too much immigration and, as a result, the EU is negatively influencing the job market in their country. The beliefs about the impact of the EU's immigration policy then lead to lower support for the EU. Such a causal connection between opinions on immigration and support for the EU is of a utilitarian nature because the reason why opposition to immigration leads to lower support for the EU is based on a calculation of costs and benefits for the job market or on the individual's job prospects.

Finally, the issue of immigration may influence public support for the EU through the logic of extrapolation. While the European Union's policymaking related to the immigration crisis has been fairly visible in the news, it is likely that some individuals still view immigration through the lens of national politics. This means that citizens view the national government as the primary policymaker on the issue of immigration. For these citizens, the European Union is a distant political structure, about which they know little. When citizens are asked about their opinion on the EU, they take their opinion of the national political institutions and apply it to the EU as well. For example, an individual is troubled by the consequences of immigration, and she is not satisfied with how the national government handles the issue of immigration. As a result, her trust for the national government declines. Lower trust in the national government then spills over to the area of attitudes towards the EU and lowers her support for the EU. In this case, the connection between the issue of immigration and support for the EU follows the logic of extrapolation because the individual is considering immigration in the context national, rather than European, politics.

Public opinion literature shows that the issue of immigration has a powerful influence on trust in national political institutions and that this influence happens via the causal mechanism related to identity (McLaren, 2015). In public opinion literature that touches specifically on immigration and public support for the EU, the logic of identity is the primary causal mechanism emphasized in the existing literature (McLaren, 2002). In addition, there are studies showing that identity considerations are a highly powerful predictor of support for the EU (Hobolt and de Vries, 2016; Hooghe and Marks, 2004). I, therefore, expect that out of the three experimental treatments, the experimental treatment based on the logic of identity will have the strongest effect.

*H2: In a comparison of individuals in the three experimental groups, individuals exposed to the cultural experimental treatment will have lower support for the EU than individuals in either of the other two experimental groups.*

In addition to the main effects of the experimental treatments, the analysis below examines whether the size of the treatment effect varies depending on the respondent's political sophistication or age. I expect that the effect of the treatment will be stronger among more politically sophisticated respondents (Druckman and Nelson, 2003) and among younger respondents (Jennings and Markus, 1984; Stoker and Jennings, 2008).

In sum, we know from the existing research that the issue of immigration and attitudes towards the EU are related. We do not know very well, however, which causal mechanisms connect the issue of immigration and public support for the EU. The present paper investigates this question by analyzing data from an original framing experiment conducted in Germany, Italy, and Czechia. The next section describes the experiment in greater detail and presents the operationalization of key concepts.

**Data and variables**

In order to answer the research questions about the relationship between the issue of immigration and attitudes to the EU, I have collected data in an experiment embedded in an online public opinion survey. The experiment is a framing experiment in which immigration policy in the EU is presented via three different frames. Each frame is designed to emphasize characteristics that are key to one of the three causal mechanisms under study. The treatment validation included in the questionnaire evaluates whether respondents were successfully manipulated into thinking about immigration within the frame emphasized by the treatment. The experiment then answers the following question: Does exposure to information framed in a specific way influence attitudes to the EU? A positive answer to this question means that exposure to particularly framed information influences respondents' attitudes to the EU. It further shows that the mechanism emphasized by the particular experimental treatment is the mechanism behind this influence.

The data collection for this experiment took place in February - April 2019 in three countries: Germany, Italy, and the Czech Republic. The countries were selected to represent diverse characteristics of EU member states as much as possible in a sample of three: small as well as big countries are represented; Eurozone members as well as non-members; countries on the EU's external border as well as inner EU member countries; countries from the West and the East, as well as from the North and the South. In addition, the three countries are diverse in their aggregate level of public support for the EU, which is the dependent variable in this study. Ideally, the experiment would have been conducted in all EU member states. This was not possible, however, due to funding limitations. Having a diverse set of countries provides that next best option and allows examining the research question at hand in a variety of contexts that exist within the EU.

The survey experiment had a pre-test-post-test format. The data were collected in two waves, with an approximately three-week break between the two waves. In the first wave of the survey, some sociodemographic data were collected, as well as measurements of the dependent variable. In the second wave of the survey, data on a few more measurements of political attitudes were collected. After that, respondents were randomly exposed to one of the experimental conditions or a control condition, and measurements of the dependent variable were taken again. The survey experiment included three experimental groups and one control group. The experimental treatments consisted of three different versions of a short text about the negative effects of immigration. More details about the experimental treatments appear further below.

The data were collected in an online public opinion survey managed by Qualtrics, a survey data-collection company. A total of 1,844 respondents took part in the first wave of the survey (614 in Germany, 615 in Italy, and 615 in Czechia). The sampling in the first wave employed quota on education and age. Approximately 68 percent of the respondents who participated in the first wave took part in the second wave as well. Therefore, a total of 1,260 respondents took part in both waves (411 in Germany, 419 in Italy, and 405 in Czechia).

Attitudes towards the EU are the dependent variable in this analysis. Existing studies show that attitudes to the EU are multidimensional. According to Boomgaarden et al. (2011), there are five dimensions of attitudes to the EU: *negative affection, identity, performance, utilitarianism and idealism, and strengthening*. *Negative affection* represents the fear of European integration's effects on national culture. Individuals show this type of attitude if they feel threatened by the EU, angry about the EU, or afraid of the EU. The *identity* dimension captures how strongly the individual feels as a citizen of the EU or whether she feels close to other Europeans. The *performance* dimension represents citizens' satisfaction with how well the institutions of the EU work. It can be measured by survey items such as trust in the European Parliament or a belief that the EU's decision making is transparent and democratic. *Utilitarianism and idealism* pertain to the individual's perceived benefits from EU membership. Survey items such as an evaluation of EU membership as being a good or bad thing represent this dimension of support for the EU.And finally, the *strengthening* dimension represents citizens' opinions on deepening the integration of the EU or enlarging the EU's borders (Boomgaarden, et al., 2011).

In the present study, each of these five dimensions of attitudes to the EU is measured by one survey item. Table A in the appendix provides an overview of how each of the five dimensions is measured. All dimensions of support for the EU are measured on a 0 to 10 scale. In order to capture citizens' attitudes to the EU in all their breadth, I aggregate these five dimensions into one broad attitude towards the EU by calculating a mean index out of them. A principal component analysis shows that these five survey items have one underlying dimension. The results of the principal component analysis are reported in Table B in the appendix. Even though the five survey items measure different aspects of attitudes toward the EU, they, together, represent one overall attitude to the EU. The resulting mean index that serves as the dependent variable ranges from 0 to 10. Higher values indicate more positive attitudes toward the EU.

Exposure to information about immigration is the key independent variable in the analysis. The variable is operationalized as an experimental treatment that consists of a short text. The text first introduces the topic of immigration as an important political issue. Then it describes the negative effects of immigration policy and names a political entity (the EU or the national government) that is responsible for these negative effects.

The survey experiment included three experimental groups and one control group. The three experimental treatments were designed to examine different causal mechanisms through which the issue of immigration may be related to support for the EU. The three mechanisms under study are the utilitarian logic, the logic of identity, and the logic of extrapolation.

The first experimental treatment text is designed to test whether information about immigration influences support for the EU via the utilitarian logic. The utilitarian logic emphasizes the calculation of costs and benefits of EU membership as the key mechanism through which individuals form attitudes to the EU. The experimental treatment text, therefore, focuses on the economy. The text first introduces the topic by stating that immigration from countries outside the EU is the matter at hand. Then it states that many people perceive the immigration policy of the European Union as negatively affecting the economy and as having both individual-level and macro-level consequences. By highlighting immigration as a matter of European politics and by emphasizing its economic consequences, this treatment tests whether immigration and public support for the EU are connected through the utilitarian logic.

The short paragraph below presents the first experimental treatment text in full. The second and the third experimental treatments are constructed along the same lines (the full texts of the other treatment texts are in the appendix). The underlined phrases in the text differ across the three experimental treatments. Non-underlined phrases remain the same across the three treatment texts.

***European Union's immigration policy poses a threat to jobs and wages***

*Today, immigration from countries outside the European Union is one of the most discussed political issues. The European Union's immigration policy allows some people from countries outside the EU to come and live in our country. Many people think that the European Union's immigration policy will lower wages and increase unemployment among our country's citizens. Some, for example, believe that the European Union's immigration policy will threaten the jobs and wages of citizens of EU member states. Others are concerned that the EU's immigration policy will increase the level of taxation and threaten the job benefits of citizens in EU member states.*

The second experimental treatment is designed to test whether information about immigration influences public support for the EU through the logic of identity. The logic of identity puts emphasis on culture and identity as the key elements involved in the formation of attitudes towards the EU. Therefore, instead of highlighting the potential economic consequences of immigration, this treatment text focuses on the potential impact on culture and traditions. This treatment also mentions the EU as the actor who is responsible for immigration policy. Instead of threatening jobs and wages, immigration is presented as threatening "our country's Christian heritage and the use of German/Italian/Czech as the main language" and threatening "how we observe our traditional holidays or the way we talk to each other in everyday conversations." By presenting immigration as an issue that is the European Union's responsibility and by highlighting the cultural impact of immigration, this treatment will test whether the issue of immigration and public support for the EU are related through the logic of identity.

The third experimental treatment aims at investigating whether information about immigration and support for the EU are related via the logic of extrapolation. According to the logic of extrapolation, individuals know too little about the EU to be able to evaluate the costs and benefits of EU membership. Political actors at the national level are, however, much more familiar to the respondents. Therefore, when asked about their attitudes to the EU, people take their opinions on political actors in the national political arena and extend these attitudes to the EU. The experimental treatment testing this logic, therefore, presents the national government as the political actor who designs immigration policy. The text then states that immigration is making the country a "worse place to live" and that "the provision of social and healthcare services" and "the quality of public transport as well as the quality of education" will be negatively affected. The treatment text thus focuses on making immigration a national political issue and on presenting the negative consequences of immigration without specifying whether the consequences are cultural or economic.

The control group is the fourth group in this experiment. Individuals who were randomly assigned to the control group read a neutral text of similar length as the treatment text. The control text did not mention immigration. The text was about the types of legal acts in the European Union. This topic was chosen because it is not related to immigration, and it is unlikely that it elicits a strong positive or negative emotion that could influence public support for the EU. The full texts of all three experimental treatments and of the control text are provided in the appendix.

Right after the respondents were exposed to one of the experimental treatments or the control text, the flow of the questionnaire provided space for a treatment-validation exercise. Respondents were asked to summarize the paragraph they had just read in two or three words and write the words as a write-in response. The results of the analysis of the write-in responses are reported in Table B in the appendix. Overall, the results show statements by respondents in the treatment groups were much more likely to be negative than statements by respondents in the control group. Respondents in the treatment groups were also more likely to mention immigration and to mention it in a negative way. In addition, respondents in each of the three experimental groups were more likely to mention items specific to their treatment: Individuals in the cultural treatment group mentioned culture more often than individuals in other groups. Similarly, respondents in the economic treatment group and national-politics treatment were more likely to mention the economy and national politics, respectively. This treatment validation shows that the treatment was successful in manipulating the respondents into thoughts about the negative effects of immigration policy and that these thoughts did emphasize different frames in each of the three treatment groups.

**Analysis**

Before moving to the main analysis, I present descriptive statistics for the dependent variable. Figure A in the appendix shows histograms depicting the distribution of the dependent variable. The histograms are overlaid with a standard normal curve to ease interpretation. Tables D and E in the appendix provide additional descriptive information about the dependent variable. In general, support for the EU is well spread across the 0 - 10 range. In both survey waves in Germany and in the first wave in Italy, it has a slight negative skew. In Czechia, support for the EU is relatively normally distributed in both waves. An examination of the mean values shows that Germany has the highest support for the EU, and Czechia has the lowest support for the EU. In addition, these descriptive statistics show that in all countries, the mean slightly decreased from wave 1 to wave 2. The analysis further below will examine whether this decline can be attributed to the experimental treatments.

The main analysis of the data uses a statistical model. Since support for the EU, the dependent variable, ranges from 0 to 10, it is possible to use OLS regression as the method of analysis. The statistical models presented further below have a simple setup:

where is the attitude towards the EU in Wave 2 of the survey, is the attitude towards the EU in Wave 1 of the survey, represents dummy variables indicating the experimental treatments. The variables take on the value of 1 if the individual was exposed to the treatment and 0 if the individual was in the control group. The independent variable indicating the treatment appears in the models in two forms: 1) as a simple dichotomy indicating experimental group (any of the three) vs. control group; 2) each of the three experimental groups is entered in the model as one dummy variable. The control group is always the base category. is a set of dummy variables controlling for country-specific effects. Germany is the base category. The country dummies are only entered in models that include data from all three countries. Some models are run on data from each of the three countries separately. These country-specific models do not include the country dummies.

First, I test hypothesis 1, which expects that individuals who were exposed to the treatment will have lower support for the EU in the second wave of the survey than individuals who read the control text. Table 1 reports the results of this analysis. The first column reports the regression coefficients for the pooled model, in which all three countries are included. Columns 2-4 report individual models for each of the three countries. The regression coefficients for variable *Treatment* tell us whether there is a systematic effect of the treatment. Neither the pooled model nor the Czech or German samples show a systematic effect of the combined treatment on support for the EU. In Italy, the treatment has a moderately strong negative effect. Those who were exposed to the experimental treatment in Italy have, on average, 0.37 points lower support for the EU than those who did not read the experimental treatment about immigration. In sum, hypothesis 1 is supported only by data from Italy. Data from Germany and Czechia do not support hypothesis 1.

[Tables 1 and 2 about here]

In hypothesis 2, I expect that, out of the three experimental treatments, the treatment focused on culture will have the strongest effect. In order to test this expectation, I run a similar regression model as above. This time, however, each treatment group is entered as a separate dummy variable. The control group is the base category. Table 2 reports the results. The first column shows the pooled model and columns 2-4 show country-specific models. Even when each of the three treatments is entered as a separate variable, reading about the negative effects of immigration has no systematic effect on support for the EU in either the pooled sample or the German or Czech samples.

While data from the Czech and German samples do not support hypothesis 2, neither do data from the Italian sample. This more parsimonious analysis shows that in Italy, the cultural treatment has no systematic effect on support for the EU. The economic treatment and the treatment focused on national politics have a systematic negative effect on support for the EU. This suggests that the issue of immigration is related to support for the EU through the utilitarian logic and the logic of extrapolation, rather than through the logic of identity. The effects are moderately strong. Reading about the negative effects of European immigration policy framed in economic terms makes individuals, on average, 0.5 points less supportive of the EU, compared to individuals in the control group. Reading about negative consequences of the national immigration policy lead to 0.36 points lower support for the EU, compared to individuals in the control group.

In sum, the analysis shows that there is a significant cross-country variation in the extent to which exposure to negative information about immigration influences support for the EU. While in Germany and Czechia, reading about the negative consequences of immigration lead to no systematic change in support for the EU, in Italy, reading such information lead to a decline in support for the EU. In contrast to the expectations of the second hypothesis, exposure to negative information about immigration influences support for the EU through the utilitarian logic and the logic of extrapolation, rather than through the logic of identity.

Nevertheless, the lack of a systematic effect of negative information about immigration on support for the EU in two out of three countries in the sample is puzzling. It is possible that the effect of the experimental treatment is moderated by the individual characteristics of the respondents. If this is the case, information about immigration may influence support for the EU only in specific subgroups of respondents, rather than in the sample as a whole. The next section explores these moderating effects.

***Robustness checks: Moderating effects***

The analysis below examines whether the size of the treatment effect varies depending on the respondent's political sophistication or age. Based on the existing research, I expect that the treatment effect will be stronger in more politically sophisticated respondents (Druckman and Nelson, 2003) and in younger respondents (Jennings and Markus, 1984; Stoker and Jennings, 2008).

First, I examine the moderating effect of political sophistication. I measure political sophistication as political knowledge. Details about the measurement are provided in the Appendix. In order to examine the moderating effect, I estimate a series of interaction regression models. A large and significant regression coefficient for the interaction term will indicate that the size of the treatment differs depending on the level of respondents' political sophistication. Full results are reported in the Appendix (Tables F and G). The results show no significant moderating effect of political sophistication in models that combine all three treatments into one variable and also in the models on the data from the pooled three-country sample.

The results from the Czech sample suggest a significant moderating effect of political socialization on the effect of the economic treatment. However, a closer examination of the results (Figure 1a) shows that the confidence intervals around the estimated values are too large within the 0-3 scale of the moderating variable. The results from Germany are similar. Although the coefficient for interaction between political sophistication and the economic treatment is positive and statistically significant, a more detailed look at the results (Figure 1b) shows that the interactive relationship is not significant within the actual range of the moderating variable. Therefore, in substantive terms, political sophistication does not exert a significant moderating effect on the economic treatment in either Czechia or Germany.

[Figure 1 about here]

In Italy, the regression coefficient for interaction between the cultural treatment and political sophistication is negative and statistically significant. Figure 1c shows that among individuals with a high level of political sophistication, the cultural treatment has an effect. Within the group of highly politically sophisticated, those who were exposed to the cultural treatment have a lower support for the EU than those in the control group. This provides partial support for hypothesis two. Nevertheless, according to the predicted values, there is no significant difference in the level of support for the EU within the other three levels of political sophistication. Therefore, although this result provides evidence in support of hypothesis two, it is rather weak evidence.

The next moderating effect examined here is the moderating effect of age.[[3]](#footnote-3) Again, I run a series of regression models in which I interact age (in years) with the experimental treatment. Most of the results do not show any significant moderating effect of age (full results are in Tables H and I in the Appendix). Only the model on the Czech sample shows a moderating effect of age on the economic treatment. As Figure 1d shows, the economic treatment has a statistically significant effect among the youngest and the oldest respondents in the sample. Among the very young, those exposed to the economic treatment have lower support for the EU by about 1 point, on average, than respondents in the control group. This corresponds to the theoretical expectations. In contrast, old respondents exposed to the treatment have higher support for the EU than respondents in the control group. This result is the opposite to what was expected in the hypotheses. It might be the case that older respondents see the EU as a positive actor in the immigration crisis, despite the negative tone of the treatment. However, it is difficult to provide a more comprehensive explanation without further research.

**Conclusion**

This paper examined how the issue of immigration influences attitudes toward the EU. Although we know from the existing research that attitudes to immigration and attitudes to the EU are related, it is unclear what causal mechanisms explain this relationship. The existing literature is unclear on whether the logic of identity, the causal mechanism emphasized in the existing literature, is the only causal mechanism involved or whether the utilitarian logic and the logic of extrapolation are at play as well. I answer this question by analyzing data from an original framing experiment, which took place in three EU member countries: Germany, Italy, and Czechia.

The experiment exposed randomly selected respondents to negative information about immigration policy. The negative information about immigration policy was framed in three different ways. The first frame emphasized utilitarian calculation as the causal mechanism, the second emphasized identity, and the third frame presented immigration in the context of national politics. I then analyzed the extent to which each of these frames influenced public support for the EU. The analysis showed that there is substantial cross-country variation in the outcomes. While in Germany and Czechia, the negative information about immigration policy had no systematic effect on support for the EU, in Italy, there was a moderately strong negative effect. The relationship between exposure to information about immigration and support for the EU in Italy is explained by the utilitarian logic and the logic of extrapolation. Therefore, while the existing literature emphasizes cultural concerns as the key causal mechanism connecting the issue of immigration to support for the EU, I find no effect of the identity logic. I find some effect of the other two causal mechanisms but only in one of the three countries under study. This cross-national diversity of findings suggests that the issue of immigration is a greater threat to public support for the EU in countries than in others. In addition, these findings show that receiving information about negative consequences of immigration is related to attitudes toward the EU to a lesser degree and via different causal mechanisms than existing literature would have us expect.

In addition to these main effects, I examined whether any personal characteristics of the respondents moderate the effect of the experimental treatment. I found that the effect of the treatment is, to a limited extent, moderated by political sophistication of the respondent and by their age.

We may speculate why these effects are so diverse. This study found no main effects in Germany and Czechia. It may be the case that the media space in these countries is saturated with information about immigration that reading one more text about this topic makes no difference. It might also be the case that attitudes to the EU in Germany and Czechia are more stable than in Italy. As a result, learning a piece of negative information does not change these attitudes.

A ceiling effect is another possible explanation of the null finding in the German and Czech samples. It may be the case that individuals who are most prone to being influenced by the negative information about immigration had already had an extremely low level of support for the EU. The limitations of the measurement scale did not allow them to report even lower support for the EU after being exposed to the treatment.

Nevertheless, this null result in the German and Czech samples does not necessarily mean that there is no connection between the issue of immigration and support for the EU in these two countries. One possibility is that, rather than being in a causal relationship, attitudes to immigration and attitudes to the EU are two manifestations of the same underlying disposition: A tendency toward either cosmopolitanism or nationalism. According to existing studies, both attitudes to immigration and attitudes to the EU are influenced by economic and cultural concerns (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014; Hobolt and de Vries, 2016; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). Even if there is a common underlying basis from which both attitudes are stemming, it does not rule out the possibility of a causal connection between the issue of immigration and attitudes to the EU. The immigration crisis of 2015 created a considerable disruption of the status quo in the policy issue of immigration. The European Union was clearly an actor involved in managing this difficult situation, with hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers coming to the EU. In terms of temporal ordering, the immigration crisis came first; the EU's reaction followed. It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that information about how immigration is handled will influence how Europeans view the EU. Rather than there being no causal relationship between the issue of immigration and opinions on the EU, it is possible that the influence of the issue of immigration on support for the EU is a more long-term process and that a brief survey experiment like this is ill-equipped to gauge this process. Future panel studies or cross-sectional time-series studies may help clarify this question.

Overall, this paper sheds light on the question of how immigration from countries outside the EU influences mass public attitudes towards the EU. Arguably, the results presented in this manuscript open more questions than they answer. A cross-country diversity in the relationship between the issue of immigration and attitudes to the EU is one of the most visible findings of this study. The question of what this relationship looks like in other EU member countries remains to be answered in further research. The diversity of results presented in this paper suggests that taking the country-level context into account is very important in the study of this topic. Examining the relationship between the issue of immigration and support for the EU in other EU member states will provide a clearer understanding of how mass immigration influences the European Union.

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Table 1. The effect of the experimental treatment (any of the three) on support for the EU.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All | Czechia | Germany | Italy |
| countries |  |  |  |  |
| EU support (lag) | 0.865 | 0.852 | 0.887 | 0.852 |
|  | (0.015)\*\*\* | (0.028)\*\*\* | (0.025)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* |
| Treatment | -0.040 | 0.146 | 0.150 | -0.373 |
|  | (0.085) | (0.149) | (0.149) | (0.145)\*\* |
| Czechia | -0.168 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.091)\* |  |  |  |
| Italy | -0.122 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.089) |  |  |  |
| Constant | 0.634 | 0.393 | 0.361 | 0.834 |
|  | (0.128)\*\*\* | (0.191)\*\* | (0.202)\* | (0.193)\*\*\* |
| *R*2 | 0.73 | 0.71 | 0.75 | 0.72 |
| *N* | 1,250 | 402 | 413 | 435 |

Cell entries are regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

Statistical significance levels: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p <0.01.

Table 2. The effect of the three experimental treatments on support for the EU.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All | Czechia | Germany | Italy |
| countries |  |  |  |  |
| EU support (lag) | 0.864 | 0.850 | 0.883 | 0.852 |
|  | (0.015)\*\*\* | (0.028)\*\*\* | (0.025)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* |
| Treatment: Culture | 0.060 | 0.175 | 0.289 | -0.254 |
|  | (0.104) | (0.181) | (0.181) | (0.176) |
| Treatment: Economy | -0.140 | 0.010 | 0.129 | -0.507 |
|  | (0.104) | (0.181) | (0.182) | (0.177)\*\*\* |
| Treatment: National | -0.043 | 0.253 | 0.032 | -0.362 |
|  | (0.104) | (0.182) | (0.180) | (0.180)\*\* |
| Czechia | -0.168 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.091)\* |  |  |  |
| Italy | -0.123 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.089) |  |  |  |
| Constant | 0.638 | 0.403 | 0.386 | 0.830 |
|  | (0.128)\*\*\* | (0.192)\*\* | (0.203)\* | (0.193)\*\*\* |
| *R*2 | 0.73 | 0.71 | 0.75 | 0.72 |
| *N* | 1,250 | 402 | 413 | 435 |

Cell entries are regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

Statistical significance levels: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p <0.01.

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Figure 1. Predicted level of political support in individual countries; by levels of political sophistication or age. Selected treatment groups vs. the control group.

**APPENDIX**

Table A. Measurements of attitudes towards the EU.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dimension of support for the EU** | **Measured by...** | **Operational definition (the survey question)** |
| Negative affection | Feeling threatened by the EU | To what extent do you feel threatened by the European Union? Not at all threatened (0), Very threatened (10). Before the analysis, the coding of this item was reversed. |
| Identity | Feeling a citizen of the EU | For the following statement, please tell us to what extent it corresponds or not to your own opinion: You feel you are a citizen of the European Union. No, definitely not (0)/ Yes, definitely (10) |
| Performance | Trust in the EP | How much do you trust the following institutions? ... The European Parliament. Don't trust at all (0), Fully trust (10) |
| Utilitarianism | Support for EU membership | We would like to know your opinion on membership in the European Union. Generally speaking, do you think that your country's membership of the European Union is a very bad thing, a very good thing, or something in between? Very bad thing (0), Very good thing (10) |
| Strengthening | Support for further unification | Some people say that European unification should go further. Others say it has already gone too far. Using this scale, what number on the scale best describes your position? Unification has already gone too far (0), Unification should go further (10) |

Table B. Principal component analysis on the underlying measurements that make up the mean index which serves as the dependent variable.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Factor 5 |
| Eigenvalue | 3.57 | 0.54 | 0.36 | 0.31 | 0.22 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Factor loadings on Factor 1** |  |  |  |  |  |
| The EU is a threat | 0.76 |  |  |  |  |
| Feel an EU citizen | 0.85 |  |  |  |  |
| Trust in the EP | 0.83 |  |  |  |  |
| Support for EU unification | 0.87 |  |  |  |  |
| Support for EU membership | 0.91 |  |  |  |  |
| *N* | 1142 |  |  |  |  |

**More details about data collection**

The data were collected in an online public opinion survey managed by Qualtrics, a survey data-collection company. A total of 1,844 respondents took part in the first wave of the survey (614 in Germany, 615 in Italy, and 615 in Czechia). The sampling in the first wave employed quota on education and age. Approximately 68 percent of the respondents who participated in the first wave took part in the second wave as well. Therefore, a total of 1,260 respondents took part in both waves (411 in Germany, 419 in Italy, and 405 in Czechia).

Respondents were contacted by Qualtrics and invited to fill out the survey. Each respondent received a small financial compensation for their time spent on the survey. The invited respondents come from a pool of volunteers who had previously agreed to be contacted in order to respond to online surveys. This type of sample is not representative of the population in the way probability samples are. The sample mirrors the population, however, in terms of the distribution of two variables that are important in relation to attitudes to the EU: education and age. Even though probability samples are the highest standard in public opinion research, they are often not available due to a lack of sufficient resources. The experimental nature of this study allows a quota sample to be a suitable alternative for situations when a probability sample is out of reach.



Figure A. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variable (index of attitudes to the EU).

Table C. Analysis of the treatment-validation exercise.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Group | | | |
| **Overall tone of the statement** | **Treatment: Culture** | **Treatment: Economy** | **Treatment: National** | **Control group** |
| Negative | 40.75 | 43.53 | 42.41 | 11.69 |
| Neutral | 20.06 | 17.35 | 21.52 | 70.78 |
| Positive | 2.51 | 0.63 | 0.95 | 0 |
| Other | 36.68 | 38.49 | 35.13 | 17.53 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| **Statement tone about immigration** |  |  |  |  |
| Negative | 30.41 | 31.23 | 33.23 | 0 |
| Neutral | 15.67 | 113.88 | 17.09 | 0.65 |
| Positive | 0.94 | 0.32 | 0.63 | 0 |
| Immigration not mentioned | 52.98 | 54.57 | 49.05 | 99.35 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| **Statement explicitly mentions the EU** |  |  |  |  |
| Yes | 10.4 | 13.4 | 3.5 | 0 |
| No | 89.6 | 86.6 | 96.5 | 100 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| **Statement mentions culture** |  |  |  |  |
| Yes | 18.81 | 0 | 0.32 | 0 |
| No | 81.19 | 100 | 99.68 | 100 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| **Statement mentions the economy** |  |  |  |  |
| Yes | 0.31 | 30.6 | 1.27 | 0.32 |
| No | 99.69 | 69.4 | 98.73 | 99.68 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| **Statement mentions national politics or institutions** |  |  |  |  |
| Yes | 4.7 | 0.63 | 22.15 | 0.65 |
| No | 95.3 | 99.37 | 77.85 | 99.35 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Note: Entries are percentages with each group. Category "Other" includes respondents who did not provide a summary of the text but instead expressed a normative evaluation of the text.*

Table D. Descriptive statistics. Wave 1 of the survey.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Support for the EU | Mean | Std. deviation | Min | Max | N |
| Country |  |  |  |  |  |
| All three countries | 5.59 | 2.45 | 0 | 10 | 1250 |
| Germany | 5.86 | 2.52 | 0 | 10 | 416 |
| Italy | 5.6 | 2.46 | 0 | 10 | 438 |
| Czechia | 5.3 | 2.31 | 0 | 10 | 405 |

Table E. Descriptive statistics. Wave 2 of the survey.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Support for the EU | Mean | Std. deviation | Min | Max | N |
| Country |  |  |  |  |  |
| All three countries | 5.34 | 2.45 | 0 | 10 | 1250 |
| Germany | 5.68 | 2.58 | 0 | 10 | 413 |
| Italy | 5.32 | 2.48 | 0 | 10 | 436 |
| Czechia | 5.02 | 2.35 | 0 | 10 | 402 |

**Details on the measurement of the moderating variables (political sophistication and age)**

I measure political sophistication as political knowledge. The measure of political knowledge is an additive index. It is a sum of answers to the following three political knowledge items that respondents were asked to evaluate as true or false: "The EU currently consists of 28 Member States", "The members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of each Member State", and "Switzerland is a member of the EU." Correct answers are coded as 1, incorrect as 0. The resulting additive index ranges from 0 to 3.

Age is measured as age in years.

Table F. The effect of the experimental treatments (any of the three) on support for the EU.

Moderating variable: Political sophistication.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All | Czechia | Germany | Italy |
| Countries |  |  |  |  |
| EU support (lag) | 0.859 | 0.840 | 0.876 | 0.854 |
|  | (0.015)\*\*\* | (0.028)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* |
| Treatment | -0.063 | -0.253 | 0.639 | 0.005 |
|  | (0.207) | (0.375) | (0.399) | (0.343) |
| Pol. sophistication | 0.088 | 0.019 | 0.302 | 0.119 |
|  | (0.082) | (0.139) | (0.140)\*\* | (0.160) |
| Pol. sophistication\*treatment | 0.010 | 0.186 | -0.223 | -0.226 |
|  | (0.092) | (0.157) | (0.161) | (0.185) |
| Czechia | -0.153 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.091)\* |  |  |  |
| Italy | -0.056 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.094) |  |  |  |
| Constant | 0.463 | 0.415 | -0.256 | 0.619 |
|  | (0.206)\*\* | (0.339) | (0.360) | (0.328)\* |
| *R*2 | 0.73 | 0.71 | 0.76 | 0.72 |
| *N* | 1,250 | 402 | 413 | 435 |

Cell entries are regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

Statistical significance levels: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p <0.01.

Table G. The effect of the three experimental treatments on support for the EU.

Moderating variable: Political sophistication.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All | Czechia | Germany | Italy |
| Countries |  |  |  |  |
| EU support (lag) | 0.860 | 0.844 | 0.871 | 0.858 |
|  | (0.015)\*\*\* | (0.028)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* |
| Treatment: Culture | 0.298 | 0.262 | 0.543 | 0.697 |
|  | (0.252) | (0.447) | (0.502) | (0.419)\* |
| Pol. sophistication | 0.086 | 0.015 | 0.306 | 0.118 |
|  | (0.082) | (0.139) | (0.140)\*\* | (0.160) |
| Culture\*Pol. soph. | -0.116 | -0.040 | -0.123 | -0.587 |
|  | (0.112) | (0.187) | (0.201) | (0.231)\*\* |
| Treatment: Economy | -0.260 | -0.772 | 1.162 | -0.270 |
|  | (0.245) | (0.425)\* | (0.493)\*\* | (0.408) |
| Economy\*Pol. soph. | 0.062 | 0.397 | -0.453 | -0.140 |
|  | (0.110) | (0.182)\*\* | (0.197)\*\* | (0.220) |
| Treatment: National | -0.225 | -0.025 | 0.200 | -0.366 |
|  | (0.261) | (0.504) | (0.489) | (0.419) |
| National\*Pol. soph. | 0.081 | 0.119 | -0.091 | 0.003 |
|  | (0.114) | (0.206) | (0.196) | (0.223) |
| Czechia | -0.153 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.091)\* |  |  |  |
| Italy | -0.061 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.093) |  |  |  |
| Constant | 0.461 | 0.400 | -0.230 | 0.599 |
|  | (0.206)\*\* | (0.338) | (0.359) | (0.326)\* |
| *R*2 | 0.73 | 0.72 | 0.76 | 0.73 |
| *N* | 1,250 | 402 | 413 | 435 |

Cell entries are regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

Statistical significance levels: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p <0.01.

Table H. The effect of the experimental treatments (any of the three) on support for the EU. Moderating variable: Age.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All | Czechia | Germany | Italy |
| countries |  |  |  |  |
| EU support (lag) | 0.862 | 0.844 | 0.886 | 0.849 |
|  | (0.015)\*\*\* | (0.028)\*\*\* | (0.025)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* |
| Treatment | 0.025 | -0.898 | 0.473 | 0.359 |
|  | (0.302) | (0.528)\* | (0.543) | (0.517) |
| Age | -0.005 | -0.030 | 0.002 | 0.007 |
|  | (0.006) | (0.011)\*\*\* | (0.010) | (0.010) |
| Age\*treatment | -0.002 | 0.026 | -0.007 | -0.017 |
|  | (0.007) | (0.012)\*\* | (0.011) | (0.011) |
| Czechia | -0.198 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.093)\*\* |  |  |  |
| Italy | -0.145 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.090) |  |  |  |
| Constant | 0.865 | 1.658 | 0.267 | 0.566 |
|  | (0.291)\*\*\* | (0.499)\*\*\* | (0.489) | (0.486) |
| *R*2 | 0.73 | 0.71 | 0.75 | 0.72 |
| *N* | 1,248 | 402 | 411 | 435 |

Cell entries are regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

Statistical significance levels: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p <0.01.

Table I. The effect of the three experimental treatments on support for the EU. Moderating variable: Age.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All | Czechia | Germany | Italy |
| countries |  |  |  |  |
| EU support (lag) | 0.862 | 0.846 | 0.881 | 0.850 |
|  | (0.015)\*\*\* | (0.028)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* |
| Treatment: Culture | 0.170 | -0.677 | 0.804 | 0.372 |
|  | (0.374) | (0.660) | (0.688) | (0.630) |
| Age | -0.005 | -0.030 | 0.002 | 0.007 |
|  | (0.006) | (0.011)\*\*\* | (0.010) | (0.010) |
| Culture\*Age | -0.002 | 0.021 | -0.011 | -0.015 |
|  | (0.008) | (0.015) | (0.014) | (0.014) |
| Treatment: Economy | -0.362 | -1.720 | 0.304 | 0.188 |
|  | (0.363) | (0.629)\*\*\* | (0.657) | (0.616) |
| Economy\*Age | 0.005 | 0.042 | -0.004 | -0.016 |
|  | (0.008) | (0.015)\*\*\* | (0.014) | (0.014) |
| Treatment: National | 0.331 | -0.311 | 0.419 | 0.551 |
|  | (0.369) | (0.617) | (0.683) | (0.651) |
| National\*Age | -0.009 | 0.014 | -0.008 | -0.022 |
|  | (0.008) | (0.015) | (0.014) | (0.015) |
| Czechia | -0.204 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.093)\*\* |  |  |  |
| Italy | -0.152 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.090)\* |  |  |  |
| Constant | 0.872 | 1.642 | 0.293 | 0.557 |
|  | (0.290)\*\*\* | (0.498)\*\*\* | (0.490) | (0.487) |
| *R*2 | 0.73 | 0.72 | 0.75 | 0.73 |
| *N* | 1,248 | 402 | 411 | 435 |

Cell entries are regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

Statistical significance levels: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p <0.01.

**Examining moderating effects of education**

It is also possible that the effect of the experimental treatment is moderated by individuals' position in the labor market. Workers who are have a higher position in the labor market, which makes them less vulnerable to the labor-market consequences of mass immigration. These workers would, therefore, be less sensitive to the effects of the treatment than individuals whose job is more directly affected by mass immigration. I test for this possible moderating effect by introducing an interaction between the treatment and the level of education. Although education is not a perfect measure of labor market position, it is available in the data and it captures labor market position reasonably well. Tables J and K (below) report the results. The substantive conclusion from these results is that education does not influence the magnitude of the effect of the experimental treatment. The analyses reported above is, therefore, robust to the moderating effect of education.

Table J. The effect of the experimental treatment

on support for the EU. Moderating variable: Education.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All | Czechia | Germany | Italy |
| countries |  |  |  |  |
| EU support (lag) | 0.859 | 0.851 | 0.880 | 0.847 |
|  | (0.015)\*\*\* | (0.027)\*\*\* | (0.025)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* |
| Treatment | -0.185 | -0.041 | 0.199 | -0.572 |
|  | (0.168) | (0.410) | (0.274) | (0.255)\*\* |
| Education | 0.065 | 0.165 | 0.207 | -0.065 |
|  | (0.119) | (0.306) | (0.186) | (0.183) |
| Education\*treatment | 0.132 | 0.150 | -0.061 | 0.203 |
|  | (0.136) | (0.334) | (0.216) | (0.210) |
| Czechia | -0.182 | 0.211 | 0.188 | 0.927 |
|  | (0.091)\*\* | (0.388) | (0.273) | (0.259)\*\*\* |
| Italy | -0.097 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.089) |  |  |  |
| Constant | 0.595 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.175)\*\*\* |  |  |  |
| *R*2 | 0.73 | 0.71 | 0.75 | 0.72 |
| *N* | 1,250 | 402 | 413 | 435 |

Cell entries are regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

Statistical significance levels: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p <0.01.

Table K. The effect of the three experimental treatments

on support for the EU. Moderating variable: Education

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All | Czechia | Germany | Italy |
| countries |  |  |  |  |
| EU support (lag) | 0.859 | 0.852 | 0.876 | 0.851 |
|  | (0.015)\*\*\* | (0.028)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* | (0.026)\*\*\* |
| Treatment: Culture | -0.020 | 0.047 | 0.369 | -0.399 |
|  | (0.208) | (0.500) | (0.344) | (0.313) |
| Education | 0.065 | 0.165 | 0.209 | -0.068 |
|  | (0.119) | (0.305) | (0.186) | (0.183) |
| Culture\*Education | 0.072 | 0.105 | -0.085 | 0.146 |
|  | (0.168) | (0.407) | (0.271) | (0.258) |
| Treatment: Economy | -0.289 | -0.493 | 0.237 | -0.597 |
|  | (0.195) | (0.466) | (0.346) | (0.287)\*\* |
| Economy\*Education | 0.149 | 0.406 | -0.114 | 0.096 |
|  | (0.159) | (0.371) | (0.274) | (0.247) |
| Treatment: National | -0.228 | 0.385 | -0.013 | -0.781 |
|  | (0.212) | (0.479) | (0.336) | (0.346)\*\* |
| National\*Education | 0.156 | -0.120 | 0.013 | 0.384 |
|  | (0.167) | (0.384) | (0.257) | (0.277) |
| Czechia | -0.182 | 0.209 | 0.212 | 0.908 |
|  | (0.091)\*\* | (0.388) | (0.274) | (0.260)\*\*\* |
| Italy | -0.098 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.089) |  |  |  |
| Constant | 0.596 |  |  |  |
|  | (0.175)\*\*\* |  |  |  |
| *R*2 | 0.73 | 0.71 | 0.76 | 0.72 |
| *N* | 1,250 | 402 | 413 | 435 |

Cell entries are regression coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses.

Statistical significance levels: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p <0.01.

***Experimental treatment texts and the control text***

1) Experimental treatment - economic frame

*Please, read the following paragraph from a news article.*

**European Union's immigration policy poses a threat to jobs and wages**

Today, immigration from countries outside the European Union is one of the most discussed political issues. The European Union's immigration policy allows some people from countries outside the EU to come and live in our country. Many people think that the European Union's immigration policy will lower wages and increase unemployment among our country's citizens. Some, for example, believe that the European Union's immigration policy will threaten the jobs and wages of citizens of EU member states. Others are concerned that the EU's immigration policy will increase the level of taxation and threaten job benefits of citizens in EU member states.

2) Experimental treatment - cultural frame

*Please, read the following paragraph from a news article.*

**European Union's immigration policy poses a threat to cultural traditions**

Today, immigration from countries outside the European Union is one of the most discussed political issues. The European Union's immigration policy allows some people from countries outside the EU to come and live in our country. Many people think that the European Union's immigration policy threatens the culture and traditions in our country. Some, for example, believe that the European Union's immigration policy will endanger our country's Christian heritage and the use of our language as the main language. Others are concerned that the EU's immigration policy will threaten how we observe our traditional holidays or the way we talk to each other in everyday conversations.

3) Experimental treatment - national-politics frame

*Please, read the following paragraph from a news article.*  
   **The unpopular immigration policy of the national government**

Today, immigration from countries outside the European Union is one of the most discussed political issues. The national government's immigration policy allows some people from countries outside the EU to come and live in our country. Many people think that the national government's immigration policy will make our country a worse place to live. Some, for example, believe that the national government's immigration policy will threaten the provision of social and healthcare services. Others are concerned that the national government's immigration policy will threaten the quality of public transport as well as the quality of education in our country.

4) Text read by the control group

*Please, read the following paragraph from a news article.*

**Policymaking in the European Union**

The European Union is responsible for governing in many areas of policymaking. Depending on the policymaking goal, different types of law are issued. A regulation, for example, is a type of legal act that is directly binding. A directive, on the other hand, only sets out a goal and EU member countries pursue the goal in their own way. Some areas of policymaking are outside the EU's power and are left to independent decision making by EU member states.

1. Though the term "logic of rationality" is used by some of the previous studies (Harteveld, et al. 2013), the term may be misleading by suggesting that the logic of identity is irrational. The term *utilitarian logic* better captures the essence of this causal mechanism while still preserving a clear terminological connection to previous studies on public attitudes to the EU. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example, in the 2017 German federal election or the 2017 French presidential and parliamentary elections. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In addition to the moderating effects of political sophistication and age, I have examined the moderating effect of education. The analysis did not find any moderating effect of education. The results are presented in the Appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)