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Bachelor's Thesis

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Individual-level predictors of attitudes towards immigration
in Eastern and Western Europe

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INTRODUCTION

Immigration has become one of the most controversial political issues in Europe. Due to the current geopolitical situation, as well as demographic realities, the influx of migrants to the EU has constantly increased. According to the International Organization for Migration, more than a million migrants, including refugees, arrived in Europe by land and sea in 2015 (Migration Flows – Europe, 2016). The current migration crisis has also deepened the East-West rift. Eastern Europe, due to a different historical, political and economic background, has just recently started to develop a political cleavage concerning immigration issues, and so far it has caused serious tension.

The considerable electoral success of anti-immigration parties in various European countries shows that substantial numbers of citizens perceive immigration as having negative consequences, which leads them to prefer a more restrictive immigration policy (Spanje, 2011; „The march of...“, 2015; „The growth of the far-right...“, 2016). Polyakova (2015) demonstrates that immigration has a significant positive effect on support for radical right parties. In the broadest sense, radical right parties across Western and Eastern Europe combine a firm nationalist ideology with resentment aimed at immigrant or minority populations. What we are now witnessing is that while the European Union insists on a unified strategy for dealing with migration issues, national governments feel threatened by anti-immigration forces and, are reluctant to go against the wishes of their own people, resorting to policies based on their national loyalties not on the solidarity in the EU.

Therefore, immigration is a domain in which public opinion places significant constraints on public officials. A failure to agree on an action plan for tackling mass immigration to the EU has caused serious discord among EU member states, which is undermining the stability and solidarity of European Union. The relevance of public opinion thus dictates the need to further examine the individual-level factors that influence attitudes towards immigration.

The objective of this thesis is to identify individual-level correlates of people's attitudes towards immigration and to assess their effects comparatively in Eastern and Western Europe. The study examines how socio-economic status, satisfaction with politics and belonging to a religion or denomination affects attitudes towards immigration and

investigates whether these individual level determinants vary between Western and Eastern European countries. Moreover, it evaluates whether the share of foreign-born population in the country has a positive or negative effect on people's attitudes towards immigration. By enhancing our understanding of the dynamics of public opinion on immigration, the study helps build an empirical basis for a proactive, managed immigration policy in Europe.

This aim will be achieved by using quantitative research methods to analyze individual-level survey data from a large-n cross-national survey covering 15 countries and 27000 respondents. Additionally, macro-level data from Eurostat will be used. In order to establish whether attitudes towards immigration are shaped by the same factors in Eastern and Western Europe, I will run the regression separately for the two groups of countries. The research will show whether the overall attitudes in Western Europe are more positive than in Eastern Europe and moreover, whether the same individual-level predictors influence people's attitudes the same way in both of these regions.

Although the effects of various individual-level determinants on immigration have been researched before (Facchini *et al.* 2008; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Sides and Citrin 2007; Paas and Halapuu 2012), a new study with fresh data is necessary in order to map the latest trends and ascertain relationships between the key variables. Since this thesis also investigates how these factors might have a different impact in Western and Eastern Europe, it helps the policymakers to better understand the cleavage within Europe which hopefully contributes to an improved, informed, policy making process.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. The first part outlines the theoretical framework underlying research on public attitudes towards immigration and develops a set of hypotheses that will be tested in the empirical section of this study. These focus on various factors such as socioeconomic status, political efficacy, belonging to a religion or denomination, and the effect of foreign-born population in the country. The second part focuses on the empirical analysis. It will explain the data and methods used in this study, as well as the operationalisation of the main variables. Then it turns to simple descriptive statistics, before presenting the results and discussion of the regression analysis. The third and the final section summarises the main results and elaborates on the findings.

1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRATION AND THEIR DETERMINANTS

There is a wide array of literature available on the factors that influence individuals' attitudes towards immigration. This thesis focuses on three sets of individual level variables: socioeconomic status, political attitude and belonging to a religion or denomination. Also, it plans to evaluate the effect that foreign-born population has on attitudes towards immigration, and, in addition, it is concerned with the question of whether or not attitudes towards immigration are shaped by the same factors, and whether these factors have similar effects in Western and Eastern Europe. What follows is a brief overview of existing literature on previously mentioned topics that, with the help of recent studies, help pose a series of hypotheses for this paper.

1.1 Socioeconomic status

Two measures of socioeconomic status are selected: education and personal assessment of one's economic condition. Using the 1995 and 2003 rounds of the International Social Survey Program, Facchini *et al.* (2008), find that education has a significant and positive effect on pro-migration attitudes. Using data from European Social Survey 2003, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007) lend additional support to previous results by stating that higher education leads to higher support for all types of immigrants, explaining that this outcome is linked to cultural beliefs. Better educated respondents are significantly less racist because they believe cultural diversity benefits the host country, and its economy as a whole. Also, because gaining knowledge leads to exposure to a variety of experiences, it is more likely that these individuals develop broader empathetic capabilities (Rustenbach, 2010:67). Another theory links education to economic self-interest, saying that higher levels of education leads to improved skills and higher qualifications, which lowers the possible competition from immigrants in the labour market (Mayda, 2006). As a result, an individual feels a sense of greater economic security and is therefore more likely to be tolerant towards immigrants.

Feeling economically secure is an important factor in having a more positive attitude towards immigration. Various researchers, such as Polyakova (2015) and Sides and Citrin (2007), have discovered that the actual economic situation of a country does not have a statistically significant relationship with attitudes towards immigration or with increased support towards radical-wing parties. However, personal economic situation

seems to have an effect on anti-immigration sentiments. Facchini *et al.* (2008), find that income has a positive and significant effect on pro-migration attitudes. Likewise, Sides and Citrin (2007), using European Social Survey 2002-2003 data, find that personal economic concerns have a significant effect on attitudes towards immigration. Paas and Halapuu (2012) also suggest that lower socioeconomic risks and therefore more positive expectations towards the future result in more tolerant attitudes. All in all, people who are anxious about their economic well-being tend to be less trusting towards newcomers. Hence the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. A higher socioeconomic status is associated with a more positive attitude towards immigration.

1.2 Political trust and sense of efficacy

Political trust and a sense of efficacy have also been linked to anti-immigration tendencies. Political efficacy „indicates citizens’ personal confidence in and perceived influence that they have on government and political affairs“ (Hu, Rong; Sun, Ivan Y; Wu, Yuning, 2015:1013). It is a measure of internal beliefs about one’s capabilities to engage in the political process and the external confidence that the person has in the responsiveness of the government. Polyakova (2015), using World Values and European Values Surveys from 1990-2008, finds that lower political participation and trust slightly increases support for the radical right. Paas and Halapuu (2012) have discovered that those who trust their national institutions and politicians are more tolerant towards immigrants, explaining that people trust their institutions to keep them safe from the possible threats immigration might represent (2012:169). Espenshade and Hempstead (1996) write that people who are politically alienated are generally more negative towards immigrants. Politically alienated people often seek to place the responsibility of their problems elsewhere, blaming politicians and immigrants. A transparent and reliable political system, where people feel included and capable, might help to increase positive attitudes towards immigrants. Citizens who trust their government are more inclined to support government proposals and decisions, and politicians have a greater room to maneuver when it comes to difficult and urgent tasks such as the migration crisis. For this reason, the following hypothesis is posed:

H2. A higher sense of political efficacy and political trust is associated with a more positive attitude towards immigration.

1.3 Belonging to a religion or denomination

The final individual-level factor that has received considerable attention in current research is belonging to a religion or denomination. While some stress the positive effect of religiosity on attitudes towards immigrants (Knoll, 2009; Bohman and Hjerm, 2014), others find it to be associated with wider support for anti-immigration policies and broader prejudices (Bloom, Arikan, Courtemanche, 2015; Scheepers, Gijsberts, Hello, 2002). Scholars are divided about how to interpret these findings. Because religious groups compete for many of the same resources, they are likely to perceive groups with other convictions as threatening. Conflict could arise over differences in general core values. On the other hand, religious belief can be associated with values like solidarity, altruism and religious compassion. Interestingly, research by Hall, Matz and Wood (2010) about meta-study of religiosity and prejudice, found that the relationship between religiosity and prejudice has been steadily declining over time. Bohman and Hjerm (2014:948) also stress that the situation in Europe and the meanings of religion are changing since correlation between religiosity and anti-immigration attitudes has been somewhat declining between the ESS rounds. It would be interesting to see, whether the relationship between religiosity and pro-immigration attitudes is positive. Subsequently, this thesis proposes the following hypothesis:

H3. Individuals who belong to a particular religion or denomination are more likely to have a positive attitude towards immigration than people who do not belong to any particular religion or denomination.

1.4 Foreign-born population in the country

Race and ethnicity scholars have wrestled for decades with the question whether interracial/interethnic closeness produces hostility or harmony. Jeffrey C. Dixon (2006) states that there are two main theories regarding this question – group threat theory and contact theory.

According to group threat theory, a substantial minority population living close to the dominant group leads to economic and/or political threat and ultimately prejudice by the dominant group (Blalock, Hubert M Jr, 1967). Benjamin J. Newman, Todd K. Hartman and Charles S. Taber (2012) find that when the ethnic minority does not share the same language with the dominant group it also increases a sense of cultural threat, which in turn, increases support for restricting immigration levels or moreover, translates into a

desire to completely remove the group from society. However, it is important to note that most of the pro-group threat studies have been conducted in the U.S (Wagner, Ulrich et al., 2006:381). The lengthy historical development of anti-African American hostility may be much harder to break down with contact strategies when compared to the history of minority groups in Europe. The inhumane horrors closely felt in Europe during World War II paved a fertile foundation for powerful human rights ideas with a different understanding towards minorities than it was the case in the U.S.

Therefore it might be more applicable to turn to contact theory which states that a sizable minority population, living near the dominant group, may represent opportunities for contact between the minority and the dominant group which might help develop positive views of minority groups (Sigelman Lee et al, 1996). Thomas F. Pettigrew (1998), using several European samples, also indicates that although the deeply prejudiced avoid intergroup contact and resist the positive results, contact has some effect on the reduction of prejudice. Lauren M. McLaren (2003:927), using the Eurobarometer survey from spring 1997, finds that contact does have a significant effect on attitudes toward immigrants in the European context through mediating the effect of threatening environments, helping to produce lower levels of threat perception in contexts of high immigration. John Sides and Jack Citrin (2007:496) found that countries with large immigrant populations are not especially likely to oppose immigration but are even slightly more positive towards it. All in all, increased contact with others could lead to enhanced intercultural understanding, which would help not only reduce bias but also see others in personalised ways. Ergo, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: A higher percentage of foreign-born population in the country is associated with a more positive attitude towards immigration.

1.5 Eastern Europe versus Western Europe

The last aspect of current research derives from the reality that mass immigration is a much newer phenomenon in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe. Hansen (2003) writes that after the Second World War, due to a new demand for labour that could not any longer be satisfied domestically, Western European countries started to seek out labour migrants. With their economies slowing, all countries ended their primary migration in the beginning of 1970s, however that did not bring immigration to a halt.

Since the labour migrants were granted citizenship, they demanded unification with their families. The third step in the migration chain came with asylum seekers whose numbers started to rise in the 1980s and exploded in 1989. The result of these migration flows was a multicultural Europe. Eastern Europe, due to different historic background, has not had similar experiences with their Western neighbours. And in general, most Central and Eastern European countries have a very low percentage of pro-migration voters (Facchini *et al.*, 2008:664). Therefore, it could be expected that the different compositions of immigrant populations, different historic backgrounds and varied political and economic developments produce differences in attitudes towards immigration, and, possibly, a more positive attitude towards immigration in Western Europe compared to its Eastern Europe.

Accordingly, present research proposes the following hypotheses:

H5a. People living in Western Europe have a more positive attitude towards immigration compared to people living in Eastern Europe.

H5b. The individual-level predictors of attitudes towards immigration are the same in Eastern and Western Europe.

2. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Data and methods

The analysis is based on the European Social Survey Round 7 first edition database (ESS Round 7, 2014). The first edition includes data from 15 of the 22 countries in Round 7: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland. The fieldwork was mostly carried out between the time period of September 2014 to May 2015. However, in Hungary the interviews took place between April and June of 2015 and in Poland, between April and September of 2015. Estonia, the first one to finish, wrapped up the interviews in December 2014, while in Poland, field research was completed only in September 2015. That is a nine-month long difference in recording the answers, an important factor because the migration crisis started in 2015 and gained power all throughout the year. Thus we could possibly expect more negative attitudes in Poland than in Estonia.

The data consists of the answers of up to 27,000 respondents to an hour-long questionnaire, with an average country sample of about 1800 respondents. The European Social Survey is an academically driven cross-national survey that seeks to chart stability and change in social structure and attitudes in Europe since 2001. ESS features large nationally representative samples that provide a significant cross-national variation in economic, social and political contexts. The questionnaire contains a large range of socioeconomic and demographic questions and several rotating, topic-specific modules, one of which focuses on the issue of immigration. In addition to ESS survey data, Eurostat data of foreign-born population by country of birth – measured in percentage of of total population – is used to evaluate the effect that foreign-born population has on attitudes towards immigration (Eurostat, 2014).

The proposed research is based on quantitative techniques. Regression analysis is used to explore the relationships between individual-level predictors and foreign-born population in the country (independent variables) and attitudes towards immigration (dependent variable). In addition, an identical regression analysis will be conducted separately for Western and Eastern European countries, in order to find possible similarities or differences when comparing regression coefficients.

2.2 Operationalisation of variables

To measure attitudes towards immigration, the questions posed by the European Social Survey are used. ESS questionnaire included a series of scales about attitudes towards immigration referring to different areas of a country's life like economy, crime and culture. It would have been possible to use those area-specific questions to produce an index, but instead of that, one general question as a measurement of attitudes towards immigration was chosen. This was done because an index would give an equal weight to those area-specific immigration questions, not considering the fact that even when a person feels negative about one specific topic, for example crime, it does not necessarily mean that their general view of immigration is also negative. It is hard to grasp the different weights of specific questions and therefore a more general question appears to be more valid and suits this study better. Thus, the dependent variable – attitudes towards immigration – was measured by the following question: „Is country made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?“. The response categories ranged on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicated a belief that immigration makes the country a „worse place to live“ and 10 indicated the conviction that immigration would make the country a „better place to live“. Although we do not know exactly how stable these answers are, similar scale questions have also been used in previous studies (Sides and Citrin 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Paas and Halapuu 2012).

The independent variables of the current study are based on four different topics – socioeconomic status, political trust and efficacy, belonging to a religion or denomination and foreign-born population in the country. First, to measure the effect of socioeconomic status on attitudes towards immigration two independent variables are used: education and personal assessment of one's economic condition. The education variable was measured by number of years of education, whether full-time or part-time, completed by the respondent. To measure one's personal economic assessment the following question was used: „Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?“. Respondents were given these options: 1 – living comfortably, 2 – coping, 3 – finding it difficult and 4 – finding it very difficult. Since the answers were unevenly distributed, having 81% of the responses in the first two categories, two new dichotomous variables were created: very good economic assessment, based on the first answer, and poor economic assessment,

based on the third and fourth answer combined. Answer number two – coping with the present economic situation remained the reference category. The few "don't know" and missing answers were excluded from the sample.

Second, political trust and sense of efficacy is measured by three different independent variables. The study uses two following questions posed in the survey: „How much would you say that the political system in [country] allows people like you to have an influence on politics?“ and „How much would you say that politicians care what people like you think?“. Both of these questions were recorded on a scale from 0 to 10, where the endpoint 0 indicated a negative outcome „not at all“ and 10 indicated a positive outcome „completely“. The study also asks how satisfaction with the government influences the attitudes towards immigration and uses the following question: „Now thinking about the [country] government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?“, where the answers ranged from 0 to 10, 0 being extremely dissatisfied with government’s performance and 10 being extremely satisfied with government’s performance. Missing and „don’t know“ answers are excluded from the sample.

Third, belonging to a religion or denomination is measured by using a ESS question where respondents were asked whether they consider themselves as belonging to any particular religion or denomination. It is a dichotomous 'yes' or 'no' question. Again, missing and don't know cases are excluded. Lastly, to measure the effect of foreign-born population in the country, independent variable of foreign-born population – measured in percentage out of total population – is also added. This variable is measured using data from the Eurostat.

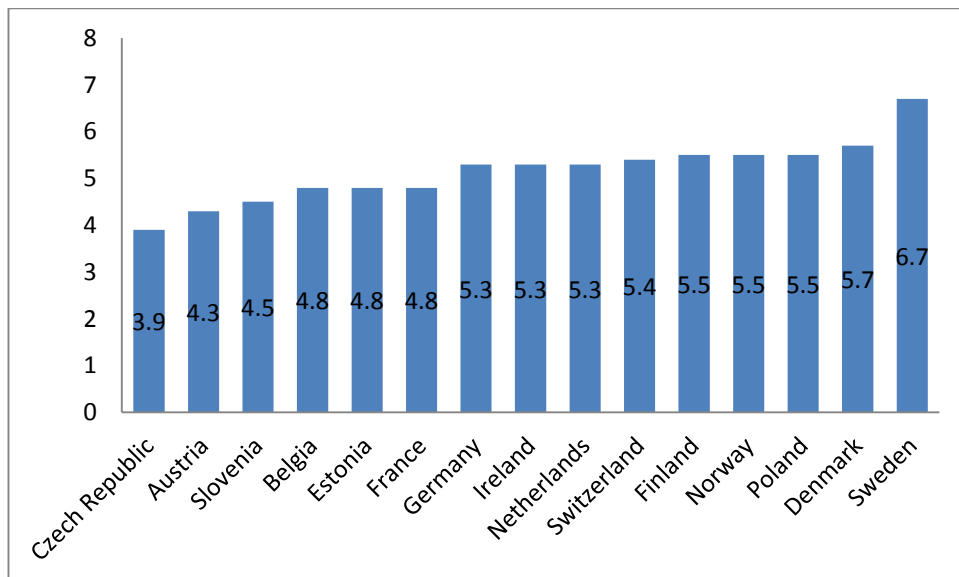
In order to find out whether there is a cleavage in Europe, the study has to divide the countries into two categories: Eastern and Western Europe. Eastern Europe will be used as a synonym to Eastern Bloc, which was the name used for the former communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, generally the Soviet Union and the countries of the Warsaw Pact (Satyendra, Kush, 2003:65). Thus, Eastern European countries in current research are Estonia, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia. Western European countries are the following: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Although Germany was divided and experienced both sides of the Iron Curtain, the Federal Republic of

Germany was considerably larger, both territory and population wise, and therefore Germany is identified as a Western European country.

2.3 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features of the data in a study. As previously mentioned, the dependent variable, attitude towards immigration, is measured on a scale from 0 to 10 (0 meaning a negative attitude towards immigration and 10 meaning a positive attitude towards immigration). Graph 1 shows that the means of attitudes towards immigration range between 3.9 and 6.7. The residents of the Czech Republic appeared to harbour the most doubts about immigration, with an average score of only 3.9 out of 10. The most positive attitude is found in Sweden – a country that has had liberal immigration policies for decades – where the mean is 6.7 points out of 10. When comparing the means in Eastern and Western Europe the latter has somewhat more positive attitudes towards immigration, as predicted. The mean in Western European countries is 5.3 while in Eastern Europe it is 4.6 points out of 10. Graph 1 provides a visual outcome of the same results having Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia – with a lower mean than the European average of 5.1 – all at the bottom half of the graph.

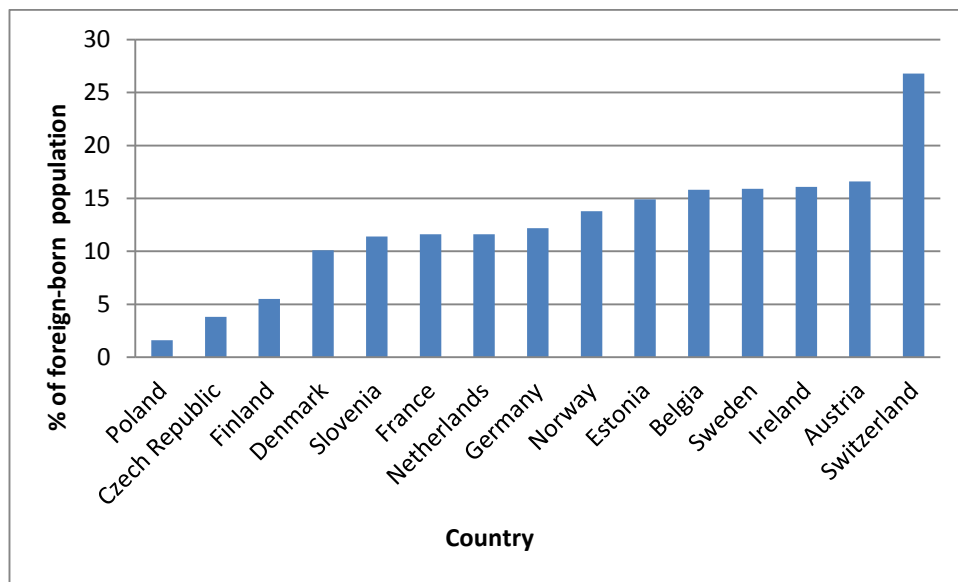
Graph 1. Means of attitudes towards immigration by country



Note: Measured on 10 point scale (0 – negative attitude towards immigration; 10 – positive attitude towards immigration).

Poland, as another Eastern European country, stands out in this sense, sharing the third most positive attitude with Finland and Norway with a mean of 5.5 points out of 10. It could have been assumed that Poland has a more negative attitude towards immigration because Poland finished the survey interviews in September 2015, when the migration crisis was already in full scale. Although Estonia wrapped up the interviews first (December 2014) out of all the countries under review, it has a more negative attitude than Poland. Other than Poland, other countries carried out their interviews in a similar timeframe. Accordingly, the differences in the field-work period are not significant enough to merit further attention.

Graph 2. Foreign-born population in the country (%)



The result of Poland having a significantly more positive attitude towards immigration might be connected to the data in Graph 2 that shows the percentage of foreign-born population in the country. Poland has the lowest percentage of foreign-born population among all European countries under review in this study. Hence, it might seem that having a small number of foreign-born people in the country might result to a more positive attitude towards immigration. Nevertheless this assumption does not hold with all of the countries analysed here, since, for example, Czech Republic, having the least positive attitude towards immigration, has also the second smallest percentage of foreign-born population in the country. Switzerland and Sweden are ranked high in both of the graphs. And, as Table 1 shows, it is evident that the mean of foreign-born population in Eastern European countries (7.9%) is significantly lower than in Western European countries (13.9%). Thus, the question arises of whether the lower foreign-

born population rates in Eastern European countries result in more negative attitudes towards immigration. A better explanation of the relationship between foreign-born population and attitudes towards immigration could be achieved using regression analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for individual-level interval variables

Variable	Mean in Eastern Europe	Standard deviation	Mean in Western Europe	Standard deviation
Possibility to influence politics*	2.5	2.3	4.1	2.6
Politicians care about your opinion*	2.5	2.2	3.9	2.4
Government satisfaction*	3.8	2.3	4.6	2.3
Education**	12.7	3.2	13.2	3.9

Note 1: *measured on a scale ranging from 0 to 10, where 0 is most negative answer and 10 most positive answer. **measured in years.

Table 1 provides simple descriptive statistics for individual-level interval variables on political efficacy and education. The means of political efficacy variables are relatively low, with under 5 points averages on a 10 point scale (0 being the most negative answer and 10 being the most positive answer). The views in Eastern European countries are more negative than in their Western counterparts. For example, when asked whether respondents think that it is possible for them to influence politics, the average answer in Eastern Europe was 2.5 points on a 10 point scale, when at the same time the same question got a 4.1 point average in Western European countries. The most negative tendencies showed in Slovenia with an average for the same question only being 1.9 points. The most positive proved to be Switzerland with a mean of 6.4 out of 10.

The same tendencies showed for other efficacy variables as well with Eastern Europe having a lower mean and the most negative views belonging to an Eastern European country and most positive views belonging to a Western European country. The differences were somewhat smaller when respondents were asked about government performance and the satisfaction with it. Regarding that question the difference between the mean in Eastern and Western Europe was more narrow (3.8 in Eastern Europe and

4.6 in Western Europe). Nevertheless, the same countries were on the opposite sides of the scale – Slovenia having the most negative tendencies and Switzerland having the most positive view of their government. All in all, the differences between the East and the West, when it comes to political efficacy, are definitely visible and it needs to be explored further.

The education variable shows only a slight disparity between the Eastern and Western European countries with the average years of schooling being 12.7 in the East and 13.2 years in the West. The lowest education variable mean is in Switzerland with an average of 11.1 years of schooling. This is due to the reality that the majority of Swiss students opt for vocational training instead of college („Who Needs College?..“, 2012). The highest average of 14.2 years of schooling is found in Germany. Since both extremes are Western European countries, no underlining conclusions can be made on this question with current data.

Another socioeconomic variable next to the education variable is the personal assessment of one's economic situation which is an ordinal variable with answers of: 1 – living comfortably, 2 – coping, 3 – finding it difficult and 4 – finding it very difficult. The results showed that 36% of the respondents are living comfortably and 46% of respondents are coping on present income. Only respectively 14% and 4% of respondents found it difficult or very difficult to manage on their present income. However, one's personal economic assessment is slightly more negative in Eastern Europe, where 29% of respondents find it difficult or very difficult to cope compared to Western Europe where only 14% of respondents feel the same way.

The religious belonging variable shows that 51.5% of the study's respondents identify themselves with some religion or denomination and 48.5% do not. Most religious country is Poland with 90.2% of respondents saying that they can be identified with a religion or denomination and the least religious country is Czech Republic with 83.0 % of respondents saying that they do not identify themselves with a religion or denomination. Having Eastern European countries in the opposite ends of the distribution might make it difficult to find a specific pattern between the East and West but it might be possible to find a pattern in Europe in general.

2.4 Results of regression analysis

A correlation matrix including all independent variables suggests that none of the variables are highly correlated and therefore, there is no problem with multicollinearity and a regression analysis can be carried out.

Robust linear regression is used instead of regular linear regression to control for heteroskedasticity. The combined regression p-value of the model is 0,000 which means that there is a statistically significant relationship between the dependent variable (attitude towards immigration) and the independent variables. Separate regression models for Eastern and Western-European countries show the same significant relationship. R-square shows the amount of variance of dependent variable explained by independent variables. In the combined regression the independent variables explain 16% of the variance in attitudes towards immigration. R-square in the Western-European regression model shows that the the model explains 18% of the variance in attitudes towards immigration. However, R-square in the Eastern-European regression is significantly lower, having two times lower explaining power than the Western-European regression with a R-square of 0.09. This could partly be explained by the fact that the respondent pool in Eastern Europe (6140 respondents) is significantly smaller than the respondent pool in Western Europe (19.856 respondents).

Moving to the specific independent variables and their relationships with the dependent variable, Table 1 shows that personal economic assessment has a moderate effect on one's attitude towards immigration. Good economic situation has a positive effect which means that when very good economic assessment increases, attitude towards immigration becomes more positive. However, rating one's economic situation difficult or very difficult has a stronger influence on person's attitude towards immigration than rating it a positive one. When positive economic assessment only has a moderate statistical significance in Western Europe then a poor economic assessment is significant in both West and the East. When negative economic assessment rises, attitude towards immigration also becomes more negative. Overall, economic assessment has a moderate effect, but poor economic situation has a larger effect in both East and West and especially in the East. It is true that people who are anxious about their economic well-being tend to be less trusting towards newcomers.

Table 1. Attitudes towards immigration in Eastern and Western European countries.
Results of regression analysis.

	Eastern Europe	Western Europe	Eastern and Western Europe combined
Personal economic assessment: very good	0.105 (0.073)	0.127*** (0.031)	0.149*** (0.029)
Personal economic assessment: poor	-0.263*** (0.064)	-0.206*** (0.048)	-0.215*** (0.038)
Education (years)	0.068*** (0.009)	0.097*** (0.004)	0.093*** (0.004)
Government satisfaction	0.094*** (0.014)	0.155*** (0.008)	0.131*** (0.007)
Personal assessment: possibility to influence politics	0.087*** (0.016)	0.106*** (0.008)	0.102*** (0.007)
Personal assessment: politicians care about your opinion	0.074*** (0.017)	0.123*** (0.009)	0.116*** (0.008)
Belonging to a religion or denomination	-0.709*** (0.055)	0.133*** (0.029)	-0.074** (0.025)
Foreign-born population in the country	0.011** (0.005)	-0.011*** (0.002)	-0.009*** (0.002)
Eastern-European country	-	-	-0.165*** (0.035)
Respondents in the model	6140	19856	25996
R ²	0.09	0.179	0.161
Constant	4.085	2.326	2.795

The figures are OLS regression coefficients with robust standard errors in parenthesis

Sources: European Social Survey 2014-2015

Note: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

The other socioeconomic measure, education, has a weak positive effect on person's attitude towards immigration. That means that more years in school result in a more positive attitude towards immigration, but the effect of education on attitudes towards immigration is not strong. Also, compared to the East, education has a slightly larger effect in Western Europe. Combining the first two results it can be said that the hypothesis that stated that a higher socioeconomic status is associated with a more positive attitude towards immigration, is correct. However, positive economic assessment and more years in school affect Western European countries more than Eastern European countries.

Political efficacy variables all have a slight positive effect on the dependent variable. The more person feels that the politicians care about their opinion, they have a chance to influence politics and that the government is doing a good job, the more positive he or she feels towards immigration. As two-tail p-values test shows, these results are also statistically significant. When comparing the results in Eastern and Western Europe, we see once again that the effect is stronger in Western Europe. Political efficacy does have a weak positive effect on attitudes towards immigration, but the effect is visibly larger in the West. Overall, the hypothesis of a higher sense of political efficacy resulting to a more positive attitude towards immigration is supported, but the correlation is yet again more important in Western Europe.

The next result is an interesting one because it has a strong negative effect in Eastern Europe but a moderate positive one in Western Europe. For each one-point increase in the religion variable in Eastern-Europe, attitude towards immigration decreases by 0,709 points. That means that people who belong to a religion or denomination in Eastern Europe, are highly more likely to have a more negative attitude towards immigration. Interestingly, the result in Western-Europe is a moderate positive one. Thus, religion variable has a different effect in the East and in the West. Belonging to a religion or denomination has a strong positive effect in Denmark (coef. 0.481), France (coef. 0.315) and Italy (coef. 0.634). Although, when looking at countries separately a couple of standalones can be noted. For example, the effect is also positive in two Eastern European countries – Poland (coef. 0.239) and Slovenia (coef. 0.104) – and some Western European countries like Switzerland (coef. -0.076) and Netherlands (coef. 0.027) have a weak negative effect. Only Western European country to stand out with a strong negative effect is Belgium with a regression coefficient of -0.341. The

paper predicted that individuals who belong to a particular religion or denomination are more likely to have a positive attitude towards immigration. The combined regression results prove this hypothesis to be false. However, the results vary between countries and regions. The results in Eastern Europe are strongly negative, while looking at Western European regression, we can see that the effect is a moderate positive one. There is a cleavage between the East and the West regarding this matter.

Foreign-born population in the country has a weak effect both in the East and the West. However, the effect in Eastern Europe is a positive one and in Western Europe a negative one, meaning that having a larger foreign-born population in Western Europe results to a slightly more negative attitude towards immigration. Western Europe has a significantly higher rate of foreign-born population and that results in a negative effect between attitudes towards immigration and the percentage of foreign-born population in the country. Eastern Europe has a lower number of foreign-born population and its effect is a positive one. Although the effects are weak, the results appear to be in line with the group threat theory. Previously stated hypothesis that assumed that having a higher percentage of foreign-born population in the country is associated with a more positive attitude towards immigration has proven to be false. Notwithstanding, the results are not strong enough to draw firm conclusions.

The last two hypotheses concern the differences and/or similarities in attitudes towards immigration in Eastern and Western European countries. The study proposed that people living in Western Europe have a more positive attitude towards immigration and that the individual-level predictors of attitudes towards immigration are the same in Eastern and Western Europe. Simple descriptive statistics showed that when comparing the means in Eastern and Western Europe the latter has somewhat more positive attitude towards immigration, as predicted. The mean in Western European countries is 5,3 when in Eastern Europe it is 4,6 points out of 10. Regression analysis supports the same claim since belonging to an Eastern European country category has a moderate negative effect on the attitudes towards immigration. The regression coefficient shows that Eastern European group belonging has a regression coefficient of -0,165. The result is considerable, and, as two-tail p-values test shows, significant. Therefore the hypothesis of Western Europe having generally a more positive effect towards immigration is a correct one.

However, the other East vs West hypothesis is a more complicated one. It predicted that the individual-level predictors influence attitudes towards immigration in the same way both in East and the West. Economic assessment, education and political efficacy act the same way in both East and the West, but the effects are stronger in the West. But, more importantly, the religion variable has opposite results in the two regression models. When religion has an overall moderate positive effect in Western Europe then the effect in Eastern Europe is a strong negative one. All in all, the individual-level predictors chosen for this study do not act the same way in Eastern and Western Europe and therefore the hypothesis has to be rejected.

3. CONCLUSION

More than a million migrants crossed into Europe in 2015, sparking a crisis as countries struggled to cope with the influx, and creating division in the EU over how best to deal with this crisis. The fact that immigration is a domain in which public opinion places significant constraints on public officials dictated the need to further examine the individual-level factors behind people's viewpoints on immigration. The main purpose of this paper was to find out what the individual-level predictors that influence attitudes towards immigration in Europe are, how strong their effects are, and, moreover, to assess their effects comparatively in Eastern and Western Europe to see whether the assumption of the East of Europe having generally a more negative attitude towards immigration than the West of Europe, is a correct one. This aim was achieved by using quantitative research methods based on individual-level survey data from a large-n cross-national survey (ESS) and macro-level data from Eurostat. The data sample is large – consisting of the answers of up to 27,000 respondents with an average country sample of about 1800 respondents.

The results show that three out of six hypotheses that were stated proved to be correct. First, the results strongly suggest that higher socioeconomic status is associated with a more positive attitude towards immigration. Better educated respondents face fewer socioeconomic risks and therefore have more positive expectations towards the future that result in a more tolerant attitude. It is possible that highly educated and economically secure people believe that cultural diversity benefits the host country. Also, people who are socioeconomically better off are likely to be less worried about competition on the labor market, which makes them more positive towards newcomers.

The second hypothesis tested in this study stipulated a positive relationship between political efficacy and attitudes towards immigration. Regression results suggest that a higher sense of political efficacy and political trust are associated with a more positive attitude towards immigration. Those who trust their national political institutions and politicians are more tolerant towards immigrants. This could be interpreted to mean that people who trust their institutions believe that these institutions can protect the population from the possible negative effects of immigration.

The empirical results of this study also confirm the expectation that people living in Western Europe have more positive attitudes towards immigration than people living in

Eastern Europe. These differences between the East and the West likely derive from the different compositions of immigrant populations, different historical backgrounds and varied political and economic developments in the East and the West. Many countries in Eastern Europe have only recently started to develop a political cleavage concerning immigration, while in Western Europe where these demographic changes have been taking place for almost half a century.

The most pronounced difference in the regression results between the East and West derives from the religion variable. It was expected that people who are religious are more empathetic and understanding towards newcomers, but religion only had a moderate positive effect in Western Europe. However, its effect in the East is strong and negative which means that people who belong to a religion or denomination in Eastern Europe, are highly more likely to have a more negative attitude towards immigration. The effect of religion in the combined model – which includes both the East and the West – was also negative, meaning that religious people are more likely to perceive groups with other convictions as being threatening.

Overall, the share of foreign-born population in a country has a weak negative effect on attitudes towards immigration in Europe. The effect in Eastern Europe is a positive one and in Western Europe a negative one. Thus, having a larger share of foreign-born population in Western Europe results in a slightly more negative attitude towards immigration. Although the effects are weak, the results appear to be in line with the group threat theory stating that a substantial minority population living close to the dominant group leads to economic and/or political threat and ultimately prejudice by the dominant group.

Lastly, the evidence suggests that not all individual-level predictors influence attitudes towards immigration the same way in Eastern and Western Europe. Economic assessment, education and political efficacy act the same way in both East and the West, although all the effects are stronger in the West, which is partly due to the larger respondent pool. However, the religion variable proved to be a gamechanger. When religion has an overall moderate positive effect in Western Europe, its effect in Eastern Europe is a strong negative one. This is something that stands out compared to other results and could be further explored in future studies.

All in all, socioeconomic situation, political efficacy, religious belonging and the percentage of foreign-born population in the country all have an effect on a person's attitude towards immigration. People who feel politically capable and content are also more positive towards state-related affairs because they simply blame the government less. Therefore, in order to have a cooperative country population, governments need to include people more, make civil participation widely accessible and have an open dialogue about these issues. It would also be helpful to put more emphasis on creating new jobs for the newcomers to minimise the struggle for the same resources. Because regarding the immigration matters there are a lot of hearsays, the government should do its best to explain the actual situation of the migrants and the benefits they receive. Since religious belonging has the strongest effect of all the variables, it would be interesting to know what causes such strong negative result and whether a better connection with people from other religious groups would lower the perceived threats, or even further deepen the sense of threat. When comparing the overall results regarding attitudes towards immigration in the East and the West the results are as predicted – the West has a more positive attitude towards immigration. Eastern Europe has just recently started to develop policies concerning new immigration. Therefore it is understandable that it is problematic to come up with a united European voice regarding the migration crisis.

This study provided a fresh set of results based on recent data. Testing our theoretical expectations against the latest data is important because the mindset of the society is always changing. The results will hopefully help build an empirical basis for a proactive, better informed immigration policy in Europe and provide ideas for future research. All in all, the study found that the attitudes in Eastern Europe are certainly more negative than the attitudes in the West. The flood of migrants and refugees, the largest movement of people Europe has seen since the end of Second World War, has raised doubt about open borders and provoked an argument over sharing the burden. More seriously, it has undermined stability and solidarity in the European Union. Eastern and Western Europe need to understand the public opinion in both of the regions, not only their own, in order to come to a compromise that is necessary to successfully tackle this ongoing crisis.

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KOKKUVÕTE

Suhtumine immigratsiooni ja seda mõjutavad indiviidi-tasandi tegurid Ida- ja Lääne-Euroopas

Immigratsioon on hetkel Euroopas üks aktuaalsemaid ja vastuolulisemaid poliitilisi teemasid. Tulenevalt praegusest geopoliitilisest ja demograafilisest reaalsusest on migrantide sissevool Euroopasse pidevalt kasvanud. Rahvusvahelise Migratsiooniorganisatsiooni kohaselt saabus 2015. aastal Euroopasse üle miljoni migrandi, sh pagulase. See nähtus on süvendanud lõhet Ida- ja Lääne-Euroopa vahel. Ida-Euroopa erineb Lääne-Euroopast ajaloolise, poliitilise ja majandusliku tausta poolest ja see on põhjuseks, miks on Ida-Euroopas tegu võrdlemisi uue probleemiga. Sellest tulenevad vaidlused ning suutmatus ühisele arusaamisele jõuda, on tekitanud vaid lisapingeid.

Kuna valitsused on poliitikate kujundamisel suuresti rahva arvamusest mõjutatud, on oluline aru saada, mis mõjutab immigratsiooni-teemalist avalikku arvamust. Seega ongi käesoleva töö eesmärk mõista, millised indiviidi-tasandi tegurid mõjutavad Euroopa elanike suhtumist immigratsiooni, milline on nende mõju, kas need tulemused on Ida- ja Lääne-Euroopas erinevad ning veelgi enam, kas Ida-Euroopas on inimeste suhtumine immigratsiooni üldiselt negatiivsem kui see on Lääne-Euroopas. Eesmärgi täitmiseks kasutati kvantitatiivseid meetodeid, mis põhinevad suurel indiviidi-tasandi Euroopa Sotsiaaluuringu valimil ja riigi-tasandi Eurostati andmetel. Esmalt viidi läbi regressioon kõikide riikide kohta ühiselt ning seejärel tulemuste võrdlemiseks ka Ida- ja Lääne-Euroopa kohta individuaalselt.

Töö algab teooria ning olemasoleva kirjanduse kirjeldusega, kus selgitatakse kolme indiviidi-tasandi tegurit: sotsiaalmajanduslikku tausta, poliitilist mõjusust ning religioosset kuuluvust. Lisaks neile indiviidi-tasandi teguritele peatutakse ka ühel riigi-tasandi teguril, et mõista milline on välismaal sündinud populatsiooni mõju immigratsiooni suhtumisel riigis. Püstitatakse järgnevad hüpoteesid:

H1. Kõrgema sotsiaalmajandusliku taustaga inimesed suhtuvad immigratsiooni positiivsemalt kui madalama sotsiaalmajandusliku taustaga inimesed.

H2. Kõrgem poliitiline mõjusust on seotud positiivsema suhtumisega immigratsiooni.

H3. Inimesed, kes kuuluvad mõnda religiooni, on üldiselt positiivsema suhtumisega immigratsiooni kui inimesed, kes end kuhugi religiooni kuuluvaks ei pea.

H4. Kõrgem protsent välismaal sündinud inimesi riigis on seotud positiivsema suhtumisega immigratsiooni.

H5. Inimesed, kes elavad Lääne-Euroopas, suhtuvad immigratsiooni positiivsemalt kui inimesed, kes elavad Ida-Euroopas.

H6. Indiviidi-tasandi tegurid, mis mõjutavad suhtumist immigratsiooni, on samad nii Ida- kui ka Lääne-Euroopas.

Uurimistöe empiiriline osa peatub esmalt põgusalt kirjeldaval statistikal, kus selgub, et Ida-Euroopa riikides on suhtumine immigratsiooni keskmiselt madalam kui Lääne-Euroopas. Järgneb regressioonianalüüs, kus joonistuvad välja suhted erinevate indiviidi-tasandi tegurite ning immigratsiooni suhtumise vahel. Tulemused on järgnevad. Hüpotees 1 on tõene – kõrgema sotsiaalmajandusliku taustaga inimesed suhtuvad immigratsiooni positiivsemalt. Kusjuures on efekt suurem Lääne-Euroopas. Hüpotees 2 leidis samuti kinnitust, tõestades, et inimesed, kes usaldavad oma valitsust ning tunnevad, et nad saavad poliitikat mõjutada, usaldavad valitsust ka immigratsiooni küsimustes. Hüpotees 3 ei leidnud tõestust, kuna religioosse kuuluvusega inimesed suhtuvad immigratsiooni negatiivsemalt. Eriti tugev ja statistiliselt oluline on see seos Ida-Euroopas kui samal ajal Lääne-Euroopas on tulemus vastupidine – kuuluvus religiooni on seotud veidi positiivsema suhtumisega immigratsiooni. Antud tulemus on regiooniti drastiliselt erinev. Hüpotees 4 ei leidnud samuti kinnitust, kuna selgub, et kõrgem välismaal sündinute arv riigis muudab ka suhtumise immigratsiooni veidi negatiivsemaks.

Mis puudutab erinevusi Ida- ja Lääne-Euroopas, siis tulemused näitavad, et Ida-Euroopa riikide hulgas on negatiivne suhtumine immigratsiooni tugevam. Seega leidis hüpotees 5 tõestust. Samas ei ole indiviidi-tasandi tegurite mõju kahes regioonis samasugune, mis tähendab, et hüpotees 6 ei leidnud kinnitust. Kuigi nii sotsiaalmajanduslik taust kui ka poliitiline mõjusused suurendavad nii Ida- kui ka Lääne-Euroopas tõenäosust, et individ suhtub immigratsiooni positiivselt, on religioonil kahes regioonis erinev mõju. Ida-Euroopas suurendab religioosne kuuluvus tugevalt tõenäosust, et inimene suhtub ka immigratsiooni negatiivselt. Vastupidiselt sellele on religioonil Lääne-Euroopas

immigratsioonile kergelt positiivne mõju. See nähtus vajab kindlasti põhjalikumat uurimist.

Käesolev migrantide vool on suurim, mida Euroopa on näinud alates Teisest Maailmasõjast ja see on tekitanud palju erimeelsusi üritades kokku leppida riikide rolli kriisi lahendamisel. Need erimeelsused on omakorda õõnestanud Euroopa üldist stabiilsust ja solidaarsust. Antud uurimistöö panus on seotud värskete tulemuste avaldamisega, kuna immigratsiooniga seotud tendentsid on ühiskonnas pidevalt muutumas ning uus info on hädavajalik. Lisaks annavad selle töö tulemused aluse edasisteks uurimistöödeks. Näiteks, miks on religioonil Ida-Euroopas niivõrd tugev negatiivne roll ning miks on kõrgem sotsiaalmajanduslik taust ja poliitiline mõjusid Lääne-Euroopas suurema kaaluga kui Ida-Euroopas. Mõlemad, nii Ida- kui ka Lääne-Euroopa peavad mõistma avalikku arvamust ning selle erinevust regiooniti, et jõuda kompromissile, mis on vajalik, et kriis edukalt lahendada.