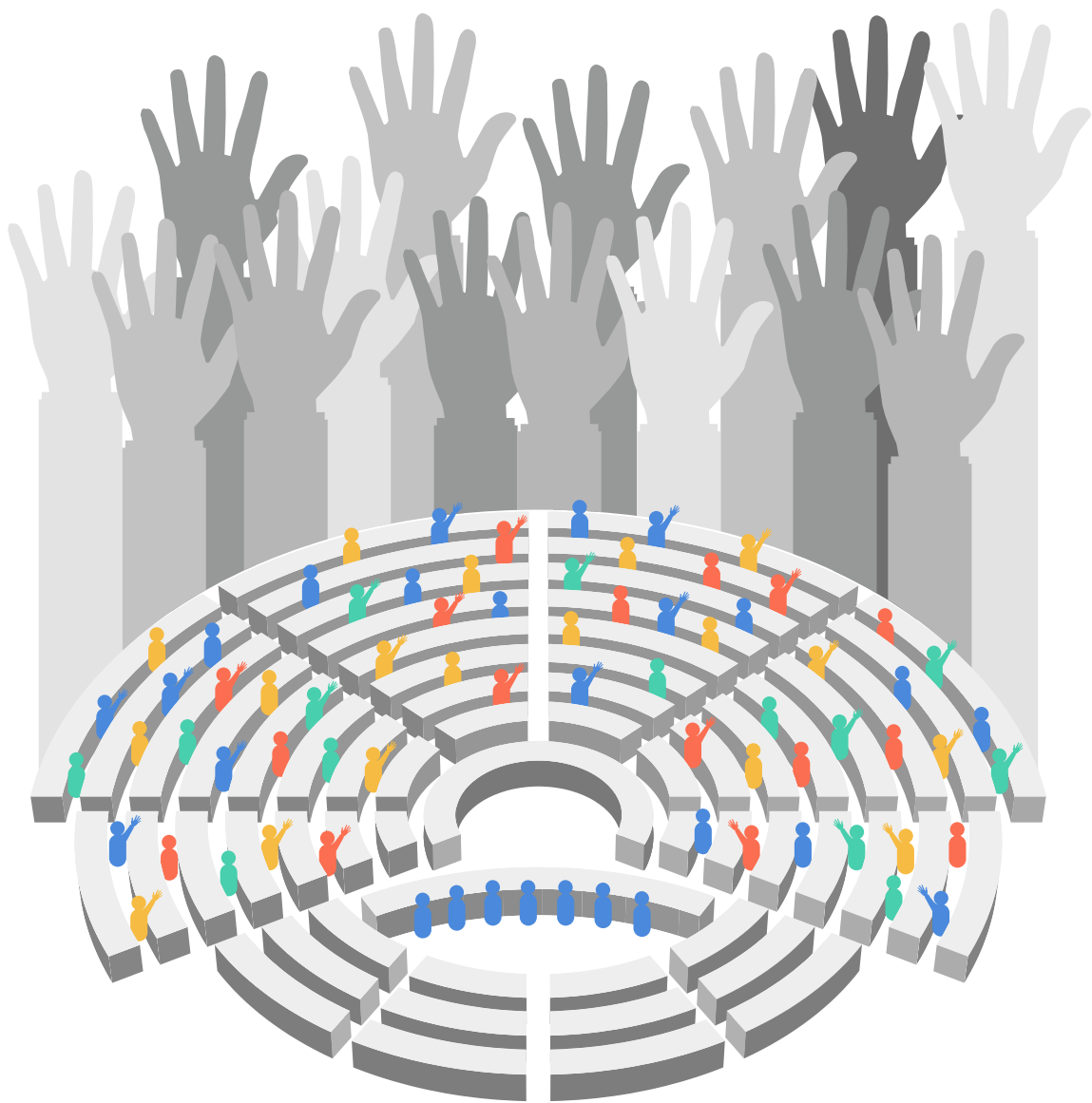


# Can Economic and Social Europe Be Reconciled?

Mass-Elite Differences in Attitudes  
toward Integration and Solidarity



Maurizio Ferrera - Alessandro Pellegata

**Università degli Studi di Milano - REScEU Project**

[maurizio.ferrera@unimi.it](mailto:maurizio.ferrera@unimi.it)

[alessandro.pellegata@unimi.it](mailto:alessandro.pellegata@unimi.it)

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Università degli Studi di Milano,  
Department of Social and Political Science,  
Via Conservatorio, 7

20122 Milano

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The public opinion survey that the REScEU project conducted at the end of 2016 revealed that most citizens living in the largest EU member states (excluding the UK) still believe in the EU and are ready to support a number of policy reforms aimed at constructively responding to the lines of conflict now characterizing EU politics (Ferrera and Pellegata 2017). Our data show that even most German citizens would support the introduction of EU-wide solidarity mechanisms. If this is the case, how is it possible that Eurosceptic minorities make the headlines all over the continent in public debates? Why have the solidaristic attitudes revealed by our and other surveys<sup>1</sup> been ignored during the political management of the crisis? To explore these puzzling questions, the REScEU project has undertaken a second survey aiming to tap elite attitudes. If the “supply” of more solidaristic policies is not in line with the potential demand for them, then it is

precisely to national political elites that we should turn our attention. If there is anything missing in European politics, it is not a pro-European electoral and social constituency but political leaders who are able to give a voice to this silent majority.

Our elite survey has investigated national samples of Members of Parliament (MPs) with the aim of examining:

- Their positioning on the four political divides identified by the REScEU theoretical framework: 1) EU mission (euro-liberal vs. euro-social), 2) cross-national solidarity (the readiness to help weaker member states), 3) free movement and cross-borders welfare rights (open or restricted), and 4) supra-national integration vs. national sovereignty;
- Attitudes toward policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening the social dimension of the EU;
- Opinions on the nature of the

current European crisis;

- Evaluations of the role of Germany and their own country during the crisis;
- Opinions about the referendum on Brexit, its consequences, and post-Brexit scenarios (mainly in the United Kingdom);
- Value/ideological orientations, international profile and networking activities, political background, and socio-demographic status.

The elite survey was conducted between the Spring of 2017 and the Spring of 2018.

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, the TransSol report 3.1 of June 2017, illustrating the results of their survey on individual forms of European solidarity (<https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2017/07/D3.1-integrated-WP3-report.pdf>) and results of the survey conducted in the framework of the Transnational European Solidarity Study (TEES) discussed in Gerhards et al. (2018).

# 2

## Key findings

1. **Political elites are more prone than public opinions of their countries to support the idea of an European Union whose main mission is to ensure fiscal stability.**
2. **MPs interviewed express high levels of support for the free movement principle and the mobility of citizens and workers.**
3. A clear majority of national representatives expresses a high level of diffuse support for the EU and believes that their countries have generally benefited from membership in the EU. However, **in all the countries analysed (especially in Italy, Poland, and the UK) after the outbreak of the Euro crisis, the level of diffuse support for the EU decreased.**
4. **A relevant North/South divide emerges among political elites for what concerns support for pan-European solidarity.**
5. **The core/periphery divide also emerges regarding the MPs' opinions about the behaviour of Germany during the economic crisis** and the general evaluation of Angela Merkel.
6. **National representatives tend to disagree about the potential way out of the crisis.**
7. **Cross-country differences, especially along the North/South divide, are much more pronounced among national representatives than in public opinion among their nationals.**
8. **MPs' ideological orientations and their partisan affiliation display a strong predictive power.**
9. **Apart from the UK, most political elites tend to believe that calling a referendum on a complex issue such as Brexit was a mistake.**
10. **British political elites are highly polarised along party lines concerning the consequences of the Brexit referendum and post-Brexit scenarios.** While most Conservative MPs believe that the British government should not call a new referendum on the UK-EU agreement, the majority of Labour and Scottish national MPs have an opposite opinion on this issue.

# 3

## Research design and methodology

### 3.1 Sample

The REScEU Elite Survey focused exclusively on representatives of national parliaments (in those countries with bicameral systems, interviews were sampled in the chamber with the highest political attributions, namely the lower chamber) in the same seven countries already included in the REScEU Mass Survey: France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom.

Conducting large-scale elite surveys often presents additional problems compared to those applying to the national public such as the difficulties of gaining access to interviews and MPs' reluctance to answer questions that are outside the scope of their expertise or that they are uncomfortable with. To these problems we should add the limited resources for the fieldwork stage. The minimum number of interviews was originally set to 70 in countries with large parliaments (more than 500 members) and to 50 in those with fewer seats. National samples are the following:

Country	Population	Sample	Proportion
France	556	60	11%
Germany	709	63	9%
Italy	630	75	12%
Poland	460	41	9%
Spain	350	59	17%
Sweden	343	69	20%
United Kingdom	650	22	3%
TOTAL		389	Mean: 11,5%

National samples presented here include only those MPs who have answered at least 50% of the questionnaire. Post-stratification weights and analyses that follow are based on these distributions.

Although we were not able to reach the original target in all the sample countries, on average, national samples represent 11.5% of the total population, which is in line with existing cross-country elite surveys. There are some dif-

ferences among the seven sample countries. The British House of Commons is underrepresented with only 3% of members interviewed, while the Swedish Parliament is slightly overrepresented (20% of members interviewed).

Country samples were designed to be as representative as possible of the actual composition of the national parliaments in terms of partisan affiliation. Size of the parliamentary groups was chosen as the main criteria for stratification. Looking at the pooled sample, respondents can be clustered according to their party affiliation to different political groups of the European Parliament:

EP political group	Population	Observations	Groups <i>(reaggregation)</i>	Obs. <i>(reaggregation)</i>
GUE/NGL	27	32	Left & Greens	53
Green	35	21		
S&D	116	119	S&D	119
ALDE	23	43	ALDE	43
EPP	114	83	EPP	83
ECR	45	23		
EFDD	43	26	Right	58
ENF	27	9		
En Marche (no Eurogroup)		21	En Marche	21
Non Attached	11	12	Non Attached	12
TOTAL		389		389

Unfortunately, some party groups in the European Parliaments are represented only by a few respondents. This undermines the possibility of conducting appropriate statistical analyses on the data. Therefore, for ease of presentation, we have decided to re-aggregate the MPs who answered our survey along the main political families present in most European party systems. More precisely, members of radical Left parties (GUE/NGL) and Greens are grouped into the category called “Left & Greens,” which represents the “new left” (the “GAL” pole of the GAL-TAN scale). On the other extreme, representatives of parties belonging to the three right-wing groups (ECR, EFDD, and ENF)

are clustered in the category called “Right,” which represents the “TAN” pole of the GAL-TAN scale. We have decided to consider French representatives belonging to “La Republique en Marche” as a separate category given that, at the time of the survey, this party was not affiliated to any political group in the European Parliament. Twelve respondents who are not attached to any EP political group are usually excluded from the analyses by partisan affiliation.

Although this choice is forced by the low number of members belonging to some political groups and, consequently, by the low number of respondents

in the survey, it might be questionable from a theoretical point of view. Thus, to justify our choice, we have analysed the positions of different parties according to the Chapel Hill Experts Survey (CHES) on the general Left-Right scale, the economic Left-Right scale, the cultural Left-Right scale (GAL-TAN), and their general orientations toward European integration<sup>2</sup>. Along all these policy and ideological dimensions, CHES data clearly show that different left-wing and green parties included in our survey show very similar orientations, as do right-wing parties.

In terms of political profile, our sample presents the following distributions:

Seniority		Previous experience at the executive level		Role in assembly or commission	
Newcomer	More legislatures	No experience	Previous experience	Ordinary member	Parliamentary role
51,4%	48,6%	72,8%	27,2%	84,6%	15,4%

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.chesdata.eu/> for data and documentation on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey.



**M**ore than half of the MPs who participated in our survey are experiencing their first legislature, and only 27.2% of them had previous executive experience at the local, regional, or national level. Finally, 15.4% of the sample has a role (secretary, speaker, vice-president, or president) in the national assembly or in a commission, while 84.6% of them are ordinary members.

In terms of socio-demographic status, the MPs included in the sample are distributed as follows:

Gender		Age		Education	
Male	Female	< 50 years old	> 50 years old	No university degree	University degree
70,5%	29,5%	33,4%	66,6%	27%	73%

30% of our pooled sample is represented by females, a percentage very close to that of the population (35%), while two thirds of respondents were at least 50 years old. 73% of the sample is represented by MPs who have a university degree.

## 3.2 Fieldwork and methods

The survey has been developed and conducted under the framework of the REScEU project “Reconciling Economic and Social Europe: Values, Ideas, and Politics” (Grant no 340534, P.I. Maurizio Ferrera) funded by an Advanced Grant of the European Research Council (ERC).

The survey has been conducted in the seven countries listed above between March 2017 and May 2018 adopting the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviews) method. The questionnaire was originally developed in English and then trans-

lated to the other languages by native speakers. Translations were cross-checked by different professional translators. The survey questionnaire has been uploaded online and administered through the web survey management platform of the LAPS (Laboratorio per le Analisi Politiche e Sociali) based at the University of Siena, Italy.<sup>3</sup> The survey was conducted by seven country experts hired by Centro di Ricerca e Documentazione “Luigi Einaudi” based in Turin, Italy and supervised by Alessandro Pellegata of the University of Milan (Italy).

Country	Legislatures covered	Initial date	End date	Average duration	Min. duration	Max. duration
France	14 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup>	28 March 2017	23 May 2018	14min 45sec	5min 15sec	35min 36sec
Germany	18 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup>	16 March 2017	23 May 2018	18min 48sec	6min 26sec	57min 7sec
Italy	17 <sup>th</sup>	13 March 2017	23 May 2018	18min 41sec	6min 15sec	1h 10min 16sec
Poland	8 <sup>th</sup>	21 March 2017	18 May 2018	21min 52sec	9min 28sec	48min 43sec
Spain	12 <sup>th</sup>	15 March 2017	06 May 2018	17min 57sec	7min 15sec	43min 50sec
Sweden	2014-2018	14 March 2017	11 April 2018	16min 25sec	9min 20sec	30min 27sec
United Kingdom	2015-2017 2017-ongoing	27 March 2017	04 April 2018	15min 16sec	6min 43sec	34min 0sec

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.laps.unisi.it/>

## 3.3 Caveats and weights

In analysing and interpreting the results that emerge from the REScEU Elite survey, we should consider several caveats that typically apply to large-scale elite surveys on national MPs:

- The sample size is quite small. This is also because the number of countries sampled and, as a consequence, the entire population on which we have built the sample – national representatives – is small. This aspect should induce scholars to be cautious in generalising the results.
- Some countries are underrepresented compared to others. This is especially the case for the UK. However, it is important to note that the questionnaire administered to British respondents mainly focuses on MPs' attitudes toward Brexit. This aspect excludes the UK from most of the comparative analyses.
- Some parties are underrepresented compared to

others. This is true especially for small right-wing parties whose members have Eurosceptic orientations and feel less comfortable with a questionnaire entirely devoted to topics such as EU integration and European solidarity.

- In relation to the previous point, it is worth noting that in countries adopting majoritarian electoral systems (France and the UK), some interesting parties that are strongly underrepresented in their national parliaments are not represented in the survey (e.g. Front National and UKIP).

To correct misrepresentation in the sample, we applied two different post-stratification weights when we conducted our analyses:

- **Country size in the EP X party affiliation in the EP:** this weight allows us to adjust our sample for the number of representatives that each member state has in the European Parliament and, at the same time, for the number of MPs affiliated with each political group in the European Parliament. This weight has been used for analyses conducted on the pooled sample of respondents.
- **Partisan affiliation in the national parliaments:** this weight allows us to adjust our sample for the number of MPs belonging to each party represented in the national parliaments of the member states included in the sample. It has been used for cross-country comparisons.

## 3.4 Main lines of inquiry

The analyses that follow aim to present the most relevant findings that emerged from the REScEU Elite Survey. The tables and figures show frequency distributions of the answers respondents gave to questions about their general attitudes toward EU integration and EU-wide solidarity and their preferences for specific initiatives and policies aiming to strengthen the European Social Union. For all those items included in the REScEU Mass Survey, MPs' attitudes are compared with opinions expressed by the general public to detect similarities and differences between them.

We present the aggregate view obtained from the pooled sample of respondents, but we also make cross-country comparisons between political elites and public opinions. We also break down elites' attitudes by their

affiliation to the main party families present in most European party systems and the European Parliament.

The report also displays several significant associations between national representatives' attitudes and preferences and their background features. Apart from their partisan affiliation and ideological leanings, we considered aspects such as the MPs' international profiles (EU politicism) and their networking, measured through their affiliation to interest groups, think tanks, and trade unions or associated categories. Furthermore, we analysed the seniority of legislators, their role in the parliament, and their previous political experience at the local, regional, and national levels. Finally, we considered their socio-demographic characteristics: gender, age, education, and occupation before entering the parliament.

# 4

## The four lines of conflict on European integration and solidarity

**D**uring the last couple of decades, the EU has witnessed a growing tension between the social and economic dimensions of integration. The REScEU project has broken down this tension into four distinct lines of conflict:

**1** The first revolves around the policy priorities and overall mission of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and pits the supporters of a neo-liberal project centred on market-making and monetary/fiscal stability against a euro-social, growth/employment-oriented project supported by public investments and accompanied by a stronger social dimension.

**2** The second line of conflict has to do with the issue of fiscal stability and, ultimately, cross-national transfers. The major divide here – core against peripheral Member States – is rooted in economic interests and highly entrenched in cultural worldviews and mainly runs from North to South.

**3** The third line has to do with free movement, solidarity vis-à-vis outsiders, and access to domestic welfare on the side of other EU nationals. On one hand, we find the supporters of pan-European free movement and non-discrimination; on the other hand, there are supporters of social and cultural closure. This line of conflict has a recognisable geographical dimension running from East to West.

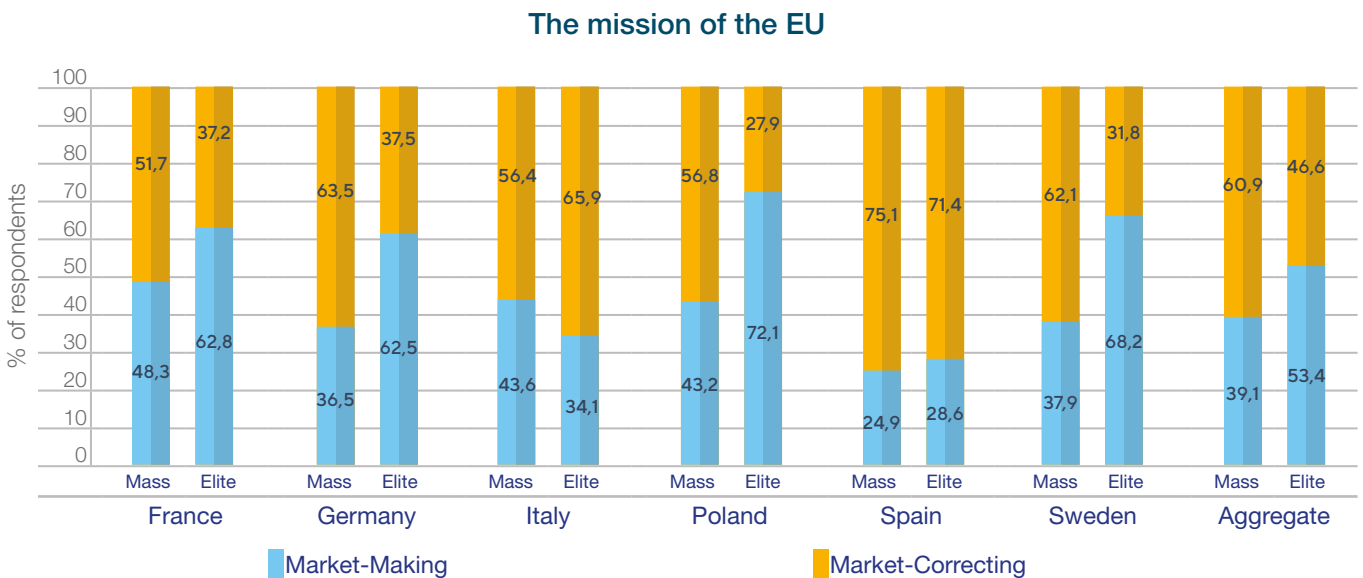
**4** Finally, the fourth line of conflict concerns the “powers of Brussels” vis-à-vis the defence of domestic models and practices, especially in the social sphere. Eurosceptical formations have taken root almost everywhere, increasing in strength and impact. In addition to the theme of immigration and, more generally, of “opening,” Eurosceptic parties point the finger at the excessive bureaucracy and technocratic nature of the decisions of Brussels, claiming a return to “peoples’ self-determination.”

**L**et us examine the results of our elite survey for each of the four lines of conflict. For most of the tables and figures, we will compare the results of both the mass and the elite surveys.

# 4.1 The mission of the EU: strengthening or correcting the power of markets?

Figure 1.

The Mission of the EU by member state.



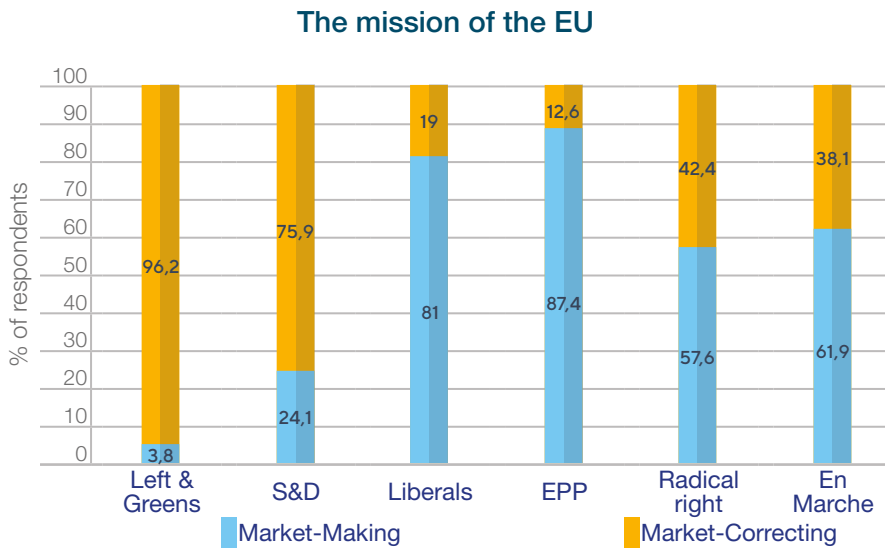
At the aggregate level, political elites tend to assign more weight to market-making (52.7%) than to market-correcting. This is in rather stark contrast with public opinions, which tend to prefer a more socially oriented EU (39.1%).

The market-making preference is shared by the majority of MPs in the various countries except for Italy and Spain, whose elites show a greater alignment with mass opinions. By contrast, in France, Germany, Poland, and Sweden, while public opinions tend to be

more oriented toward market-correcting, political elites tend to be more oriented toward market-making.

**Figure 2.**

The mission of the EU by party affiliation.



**Note:** Wording of the question: “In your opinion, which of the following objectives should be given top priority at the EU level? 1) Ensuring fiscal stability as well as the international competitiveness of the EU industry; 2) Ensuring high levels of social protection and social welfare for all EU citizens.”

A breakdown by partisan affiliation shows that MPs whose party is linked to the Left & Greens and to the Social-Democrats are strongly in favour of market-correcting. Liberals and Populares are strongly in favour of market-making. Right-wing MPs seem to be polarised: 57.6% of them are pro market-making while the other 42.4% support market-correcting, presumably to promote protectionist measures to safeguard national economies.

**Table 1.**

The Mission of the EU by background features of MPs.

	Marketing making	Marketing correcting	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>				
Left	14,1%	85,9%	133	100%
Centre	64,7%	35,3%	149	100%
Right	79,1%	20,9%	81	100%
<b>Trade union membership/affiliation</b>				
Not a member	64,9%	35,1%	187	100%
Member	39,4%	60,6%	166	100%
<b>Job in the public sector</b>				
Private	64,2%	35,8%	165	100%
Public	44,4%	55,6%	167	100%

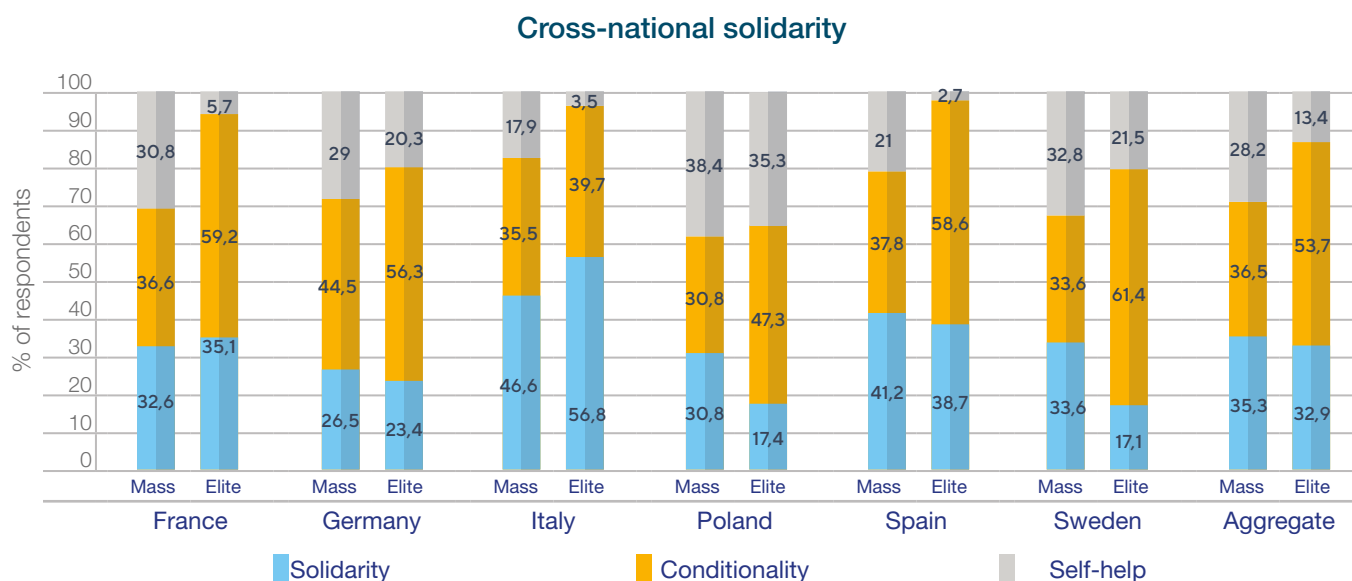
**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi<sup>2</sup> test.

There is a strong association between opinions on the mission of the EU and ideological leanings, with right-wing MPs being more oriented toward market-making. MPs who are members of a trade union or a professional category tend to support market-correcting, while those who are not members prefer market-making. Job experiences before entering parliament are also associated with opinions on the EU mission. MPs who were employed in the public sector tend to prefer the market-correcting option.

## 4.2 Cross-national solidarity: creditor vs. debtor countries

Figure 3.

Financial help to weaker member states by country.



**Note:** Wording of the question: “During the crisis, a number of Member States in severe economic and financial conditions have asked for help from the EU. This has led to the adoption of new common rules on the provision of financial support to heavily indebted countries. Please indicate which of these statements comes closest to your view. Financial support from the EU should... 1) ...be granted without conditions, in the name of solidarity between EU citizens and states; 2) ...take the form of soft loans because all Europeans are in the same boat; 3) ...be accompanied by precise conditions for repayment and domestic policy reform so as not to put the Monetary Union at risk; 4) ...be offered voluntarily only by those countries that consider it to be in their national interest; 5) ...not be provided because Member States should take responsibility for their own problems instead of asking money from foreign taxpayers; 6) ...not be a task for the EU to deal with.”

This figure shows responses related to the second line of conflict, which essentially refers to the clash between the logic of fiscal stability, austerity, and national responsibility on one hand and the logic of shared responsibility and solidarity on the other hand. To capture respondents’ feelings toward this issue, they were asked about their

attitudes on “if and how financial support should be given to indebted countries in severe financial difficulties” and to indicate “who is to blame for the economic crisis.” As was done for the mass survey, the six possible options included in the question were grouped into three macro-options: 1) a solidaristic option, i.e. readiness to provide financial support

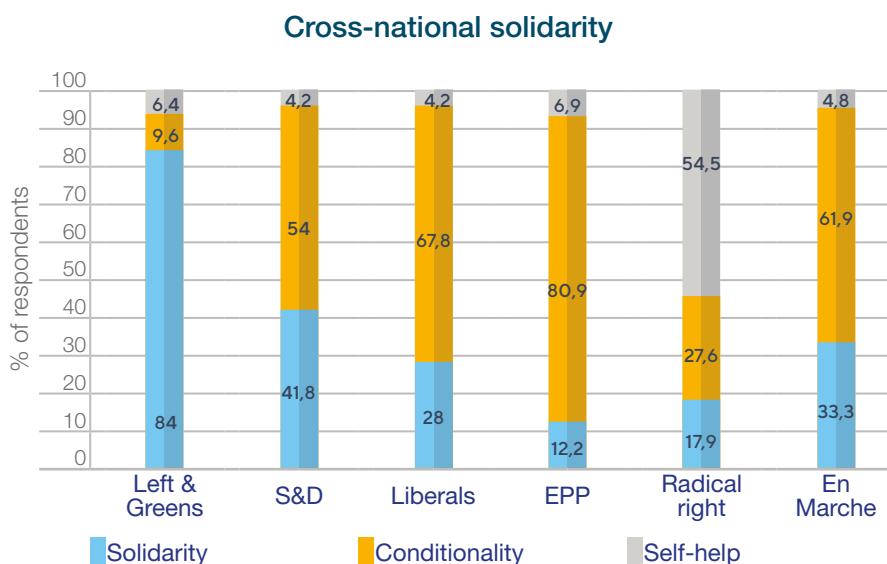
to member states in difficulty; 2) a conditionality option, i.e. essentially the status quo whereby financial assistance is conditional on an adjustment program agreed with the Troika; 3) a self-help option, the idea that each member state should be responsible for its own financial stability.



At the aggregate level and in all the countries apart from Italy, conditionality gains the majority (or plurality) of preferences. This is particularly true in France, Germany, Sweden, and Spain. Compared to mass opinions, political elites express a higher propensity to support the conditionality regime and a lower preference for both solidarity and self-help. Only in Italy are most MPs in favour of solidarity, and this support is higher among elites than in the public opinion. A relevant share of Polish, Swedish, and German MPs support national responsibility. The figure shows a rather huge mass-elite difference in the share of support for self-help in France (probably due to the low response rate of the FN MPs in our sample).

Figure 4.

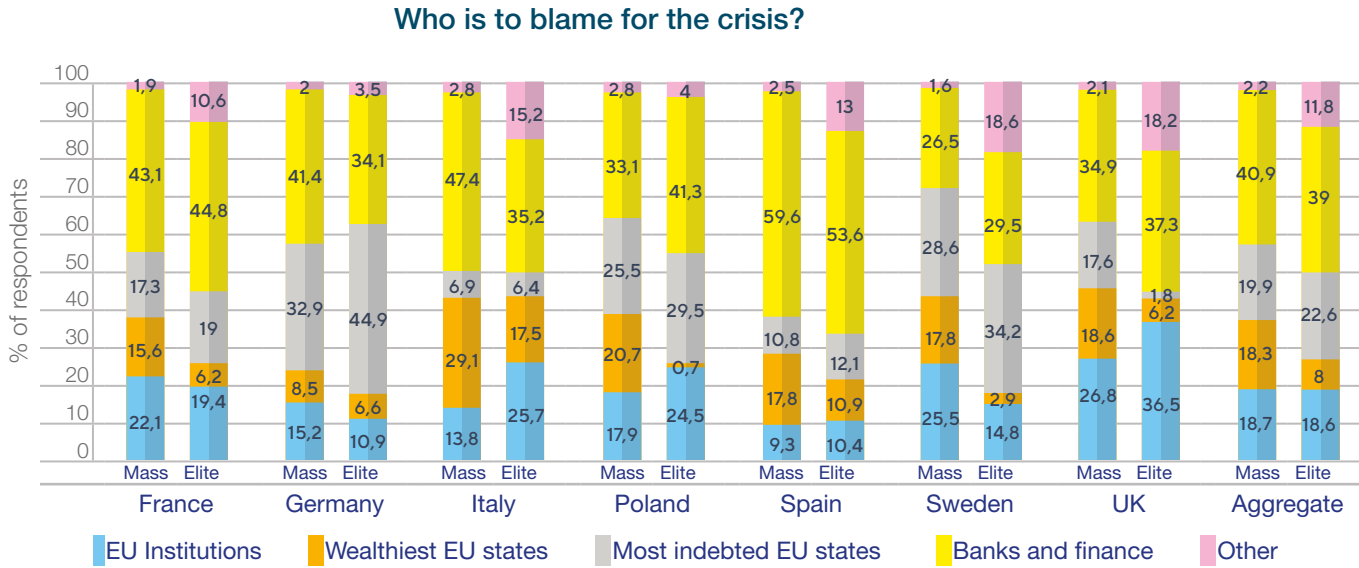
Financial help to weaker member states by party affiliation.



In terms of partisan affiliation, there is very large support for conditionality among mainstream parties (including the Social-Democrats with 54%). As expected, MPs affiliated with left-of-centre parties display a higher support for solidarity as opposed to national responsibility, which is preferred by the majority of radical right MPs.

Figure 5.

Who is to blame for the crisis by country.



**Note:** Wording of the question: “Different actors may be considered responsible for the current economic problems of the EU. Who do you hold as the most responsible? 1) The institutions of the EU; 2) the wealthiest EU member states; 3) the most indebted EU member states; 4) banks and financial institutions; 5) other.”

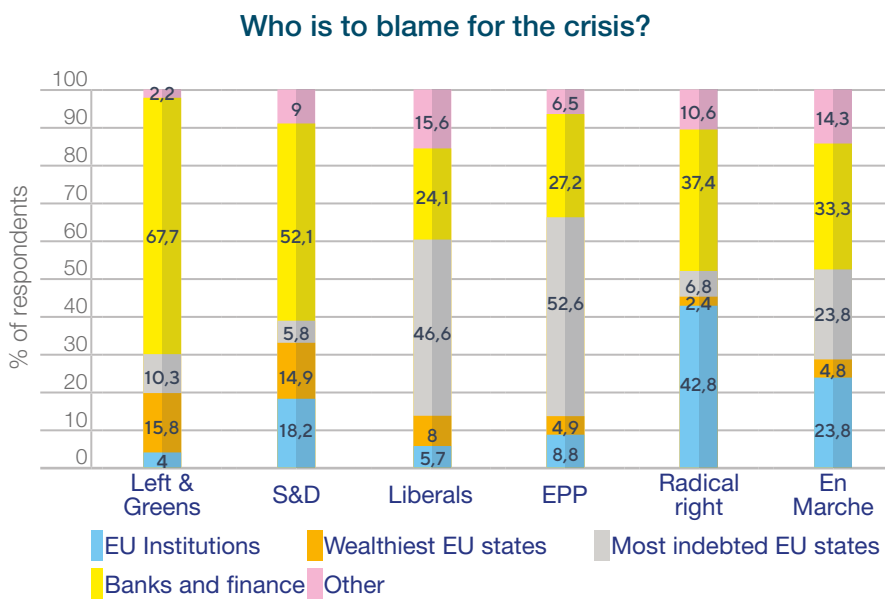
At the aggregate level, there seem to be very similar preferences between voters and political elites: a plurality of MPs in our sample blame banks and financial institutions for the crisis (39%) followed by most indebted EU member states (22.6%) and EU institutions

(18.6%). Only 8% of them blame the wealthiest member states. If we look at cross-country differences in France, Poland, and especially Spain (due to the crisis of the credit sector), the plurality of the interviewed MPs blames banks and financial institutions for the current EU crisis. More

than 25% of Italian MPs and more than 36% of British MPs attribute major responsibilities to EU institutions for the EU crisis. The plurality of German and Swedish MPs tend instead to blame the most indebted member states. This share is higher among the elites than among voters.

**Figure 6.**

Who is to blame for the crisis by party affiliation.

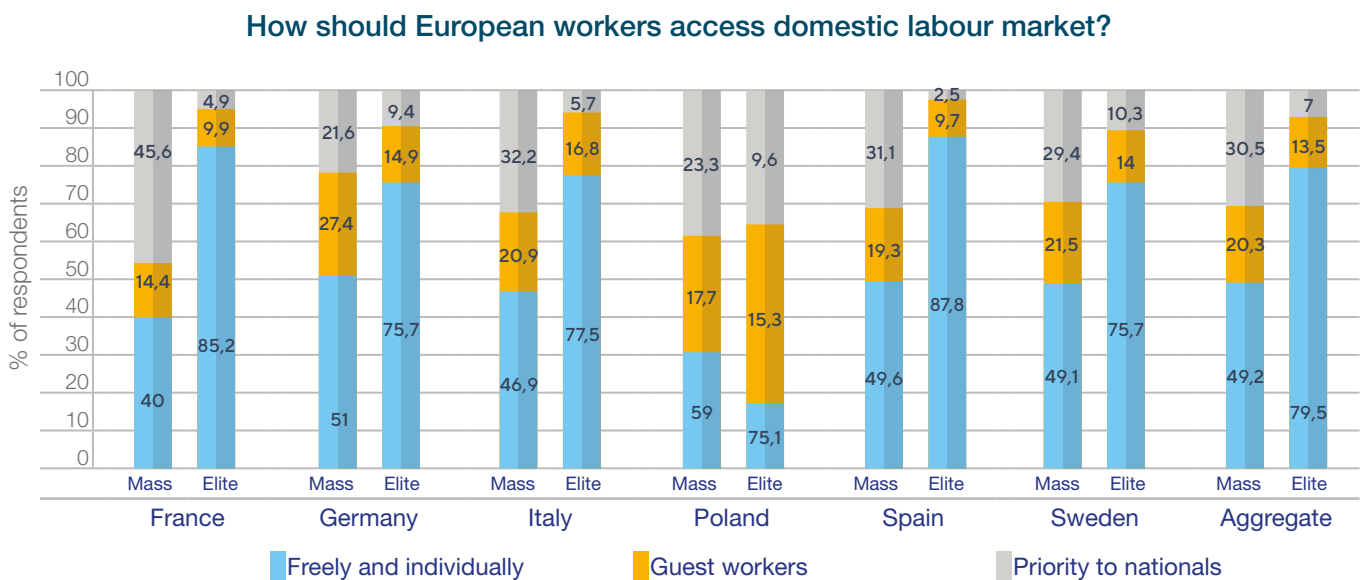


Members indirectly associated with the Left & Greens and the Social-Democrats tend to attribute major responsibility for the crisis to banks and financial institutions, while the Liberals and Populars tend to blame the most indebted EU member states. Right wingers mainly blame EU institutions.

# 4.3 Opening vs. closure: free movement and foreigners' access to domestic labour market and welfare

Figure 7.

Access to domestic labour markets by country.



**Note:** Wording of the question: “According to EU law, EU citizens are allowed to work in every Member State. How do you think EU citizens of other nationalities that come to work in our country should access the labour market? 1) Freely and individually, just like my national fellows; 2) As guest workers and only as long as they keep the job that let them in [COUNTRY]; 3) [NATIONALITY] workers should have priority access to jobs and employment services.”

At the aggregate level, there is huge support (79.5%) for free movement and access to domestic labour markets by workers coming from other EU member states. No substantial cross-country differences among political elites are noticeable. Elite attitudes on this front seem much more open than those of voters. This is true especially in France, where the electoral system has given a disproportionate number of seats to Macron’s party, La République en Marche, in the last voting round.

The support for free movement is very high among all party groupings except for the radical right, which is more inclined toward a “guest worker” regime or to giving priority to national workers in accessing domestic labour markets.

The table shows a clear inverse linear relationship between ideological preferences (L-R scale) and support for free movement. MPs affiliated with think tanks tend to support free movement of workers more than MPs who have no links with think tanks. MPs without a university degree tend to prefer exclusionary measures.

Figure 8.

### Access to domestic labour markets by party affiliation.

How should European workers access domestic labour market?

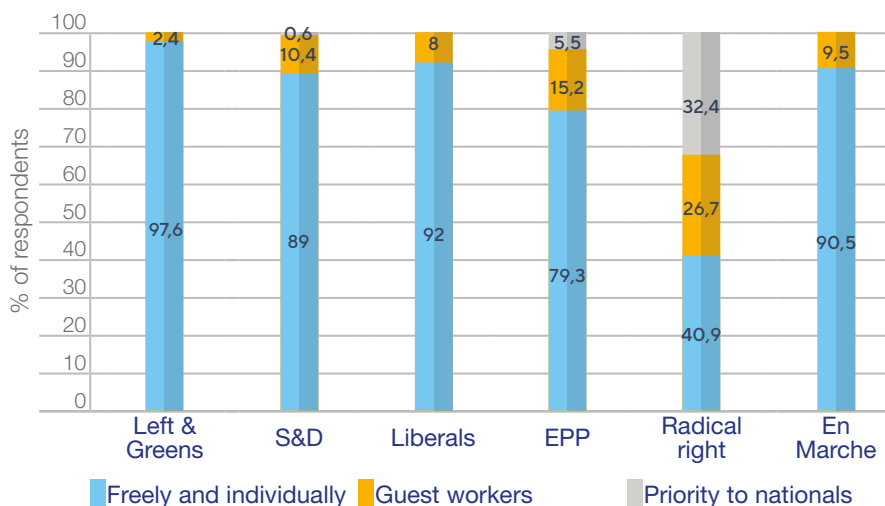


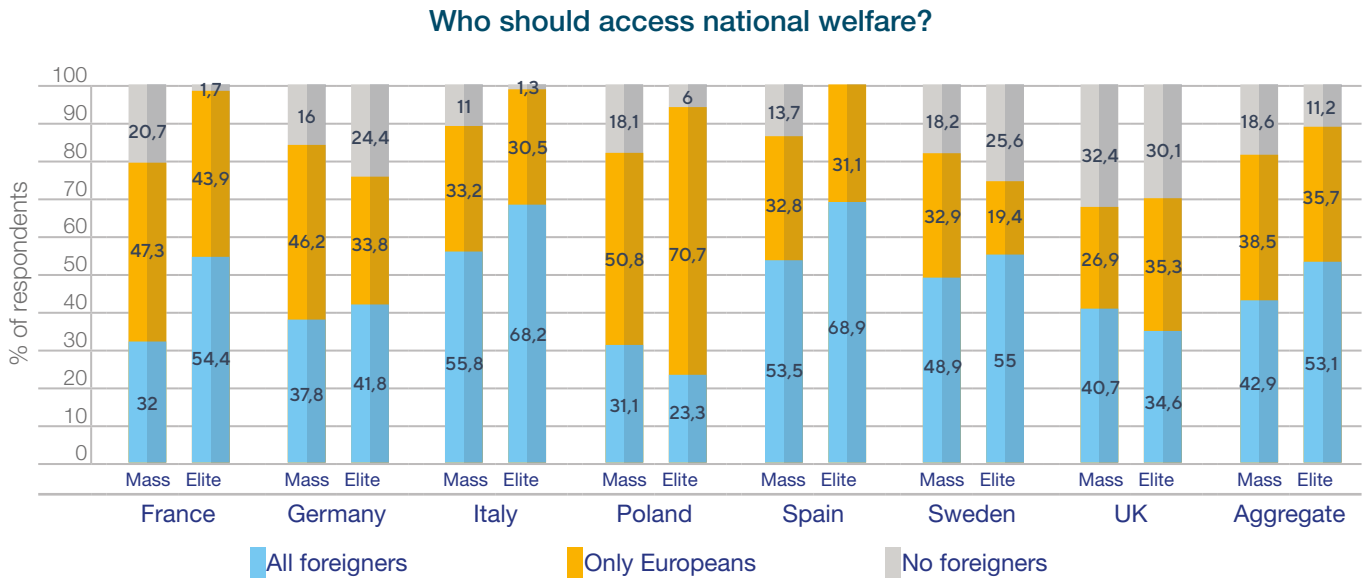
Table 2. Access to domestic labour markets by political orientation and background features of MPs.

	Freely and individually	Guest workers	Priority to nationals	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>					
Left	95,5%	4,3%	0,2%	132	100%
Centre	77,7%	12,9%	9,4%	150	100%
Right	51,4%	29%	19,6%	82	100%
<b>Affiliation to think tank</b>					
Not affiliated	72,5%	16,1%	11,5%	328	100%
Affiliated	85,8%	9,6%	4,6%	98	100%
<b>University degree</b>					
No degree	69,5%	13,9%	16,7%	97	100%
Degree	79%	14,5%	6,5%	254	100%

**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi<sup>2</sup> test.

Figure 9.

Access to welfare benefits by country.

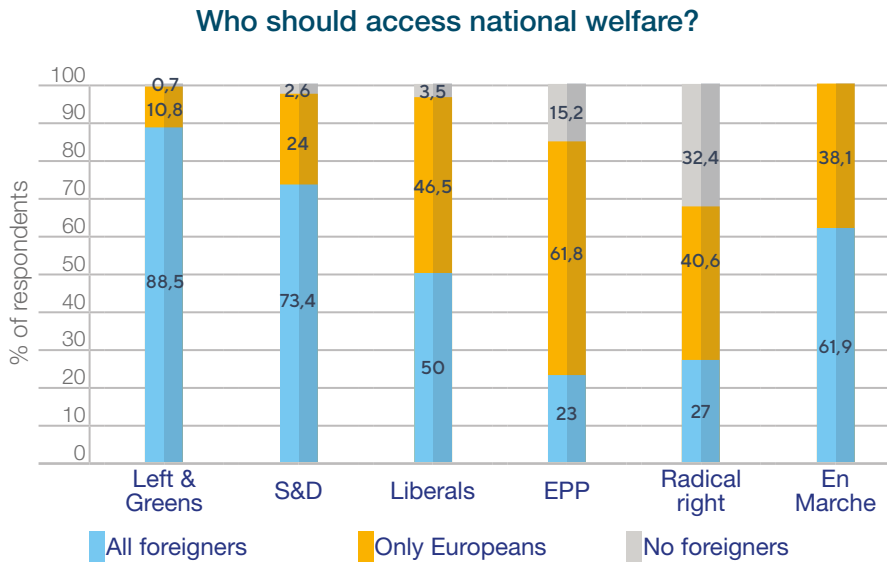


**Note:** Wording of the question: “Which of these three statements on the access to social security benefits by citizens of other EU Member States comes closest to your own point of view? 1) All foreigners legally resident in [COUNTRY] should have the same social security benefits as the [NATIONALITY]; 2) Only nationals of other EU Member States, legally resident in [COUNTRY] should have the same social security benefits as the [NATIONALITY]; 3) A foreigner, even if legally resident in [COUNTRY], should not have the same social security benefits as the [NATIONALITY].”

At the aggregate level, most interviewed MPs (53%) support cross-border welfare rights. As in the case of access to domestic labour markets, support is higher among political elites than among voters. Cross-country differences among elites are, however, more pronounced in this case. A noticeable share of chauvinist attitudes is present among German, Swedish, and British MPs. In Poland (and partly also in France), there is a preference for the “only EU” option.

**Figure 10.**

Access to welfare benefits by party affiliation.



The table confirms that there is a significant difference between Left & Greens and Social-democrats on one hand and Liberals, Populares, and the radical right partisans on the other hand. En Marche MPs in this case side with the Left in being more supportive to opening. Populares show a strong propensity toward limiting access only to EU citizens, while the Liberals seem polarised between full and restrictive opening. Right wing MPs are in turn polarised between restrictive and exclusionary measures.

**Table 3.**

Access to welfare benefits by ideological leanings and previous occupation of MPs.

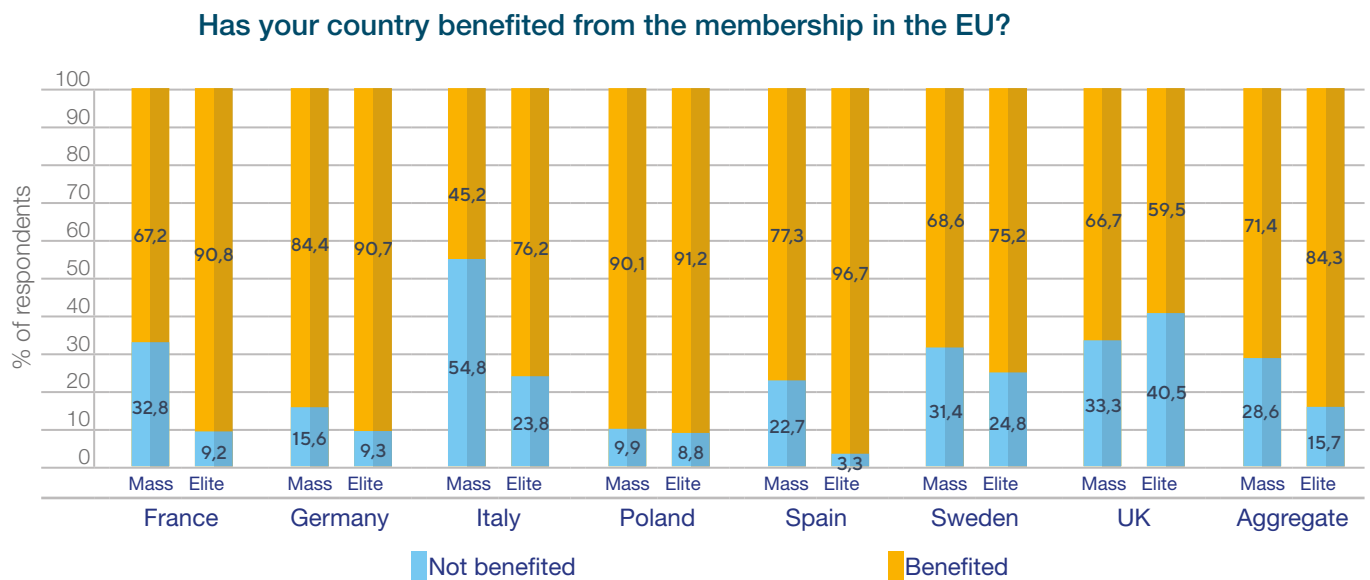
	Freely and individually	Guest workers	Priority to nationals	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>					
Left	78,6%	19,5%	1,9%	143	100%
Centre	46,7%	42%	11,3%	153	100%
Right	19,3%	51,7%	29%	90	100%
<b>Job in public sector</b>					
Private	41,6%	40,4%	18%	178	100%
Public	56%	33,8%	10,2%	177	100%

**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi2 test.

# 4.4 The powers of Brussels: supranational integration vs. national sovereignty

Figure 11.

The benefits of membership by country.



**Note:** Wording of the question: “Taking everything into consideration, would you say that [COUNTRY] has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union? 1) It has benefited; 2) It has not benefited.”

In the pooled sample, more than eight MPs over 10 believe that their country has overall benefited from EU membership. High levels of EU support are noticeable in France, Germany, Poland, and

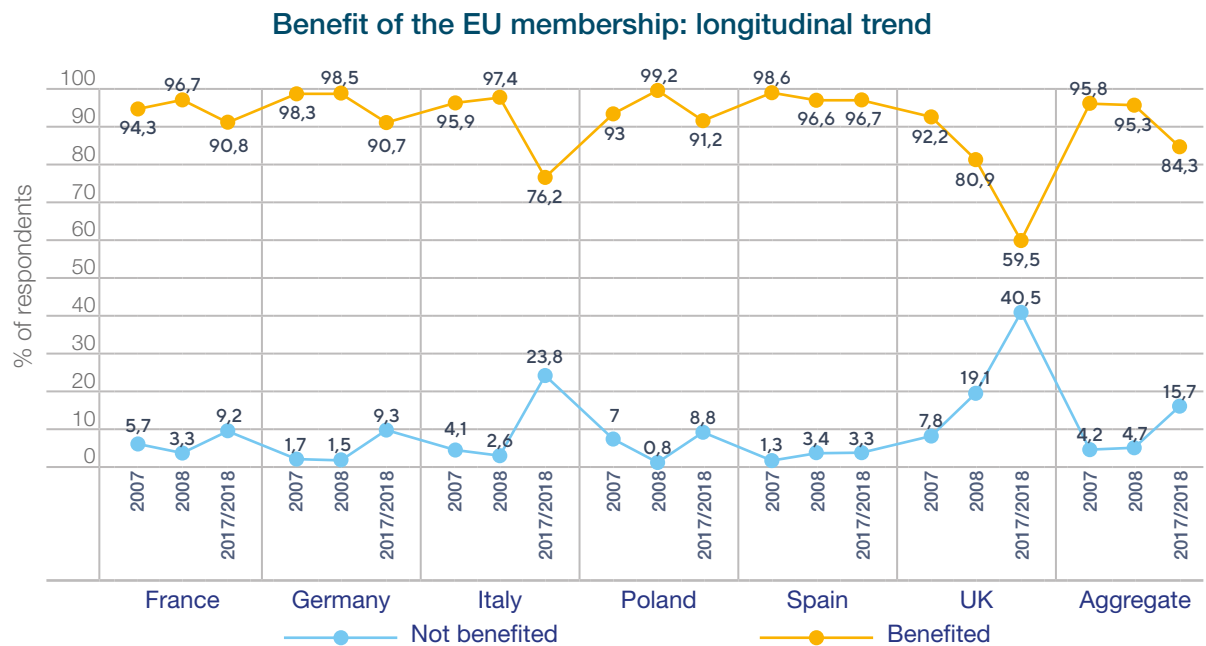
Sweden. By contrast, almost one MP out of four in Italy and Sweden believes that their country in general has not benefited from EU membership. This share reaches 40% in the UK. Since this que-

stion was not included in the RE-ScEU Mass survey conducted at the end of 2016, we have compared elites’ support for the EU with public attitudes gathered from the answers they gave to the very



Figure 12.

The benefits of membership: longitudinal trend.

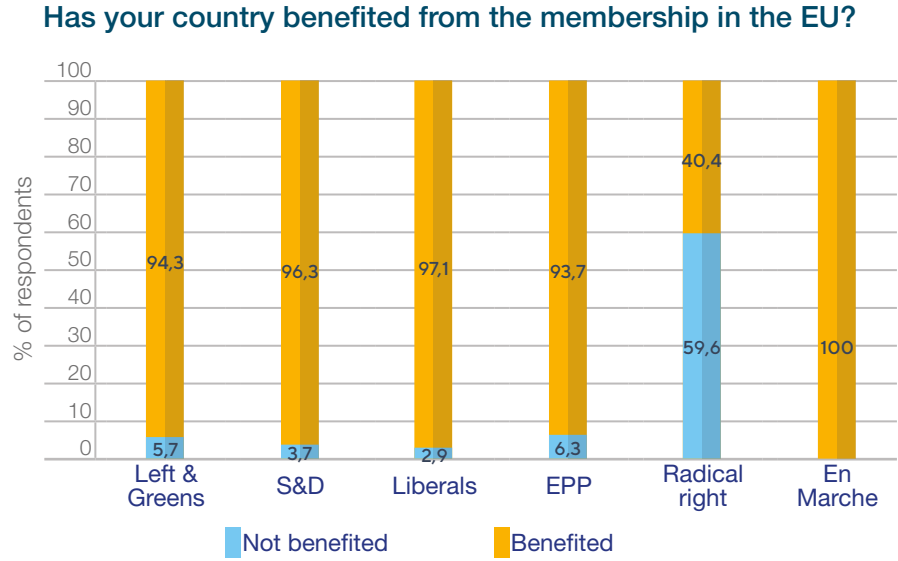


same question administered in the Eurobarometer 88.1 (October 2017). Interestingly, in the pooled sample, as well as in six countries out of seven, the general public tends to be more sceptical about the benefits their country received from being a member of the EU than political elites. Mass-elite differences are particularly evident in Spain (19.4 points), France (23.6 points), and above all in Italy (31 points). Although Italian elites are among the most Eurosceptic (not benefited = 23.8%) in our sample, an impressive 54.8% of the

sampled citizens do not support the EU. The UK instead is the only country in which diffuse support for the EU is lower among national representatives (59.5%) than among citizens (66.7%).

The same question was also included in the two waves of the elite survey conducted in 2007 and 2009 in the framework of the InTune research project (Best et al. 2012). Although we could rely only on three time points, this allowed us to make a comparison of political elites' attitudes toward their country membership in the EU before and after the Eurozone crisis. In five out of six countries included in both InTune and REScEU samples (Sweden was not sampled in InTune, while Spain does not pre-

**Figure 13.**  
The benefits of membership by party affiliation.



sent a relevant change over time), the share of MPs' general support for the EU slightly rose between 2007 and 2009 and then decreased after the outbreak of the Eurozone crisis in 2017-2018. The fall in EU support by national representatives is particularly evident in Poland (-8 points), Italy (-21.2 points), and the UK (-31.4 points). It is worth noting that, while during the administration of the survey British and Polish parliaments presented a conservative and Eurosceptic majority, in the Italian Chamber of Deputies (2013-2018), centre-left parties had the majority of seats.

Figure 13 shows a very positive evaluation of EU membership among Left & Greens as well as mainstream parties (Social-democrats, Liberals, and Popolars). Most MPs belonging to right-wing parties expressed a negative evaluation. Compared to previous conflicts, in investigating MPs' opinions on the vertical divide contrasting supranational integration versus national sovereignty, country-level differences are less evident while individual level factors are more relevant.

**Table 4.****Access to welfare benefits by ideological leanings and socio-demographics of MPs.**

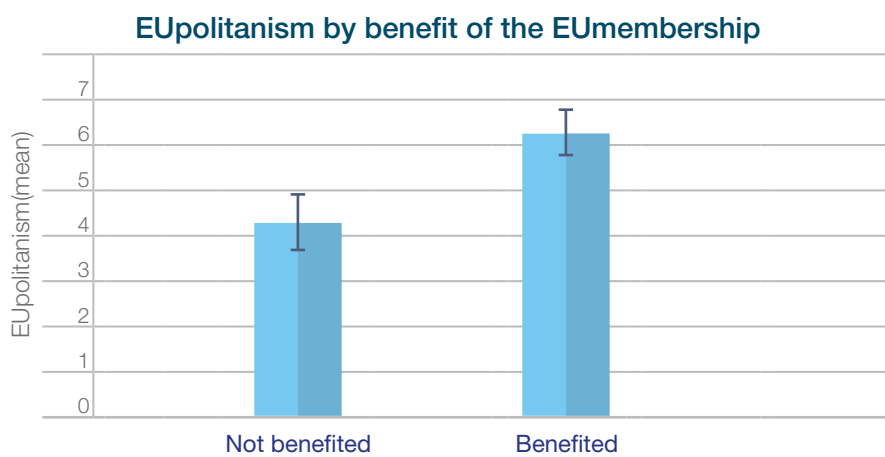
	Not benefited	Benefited	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>				
Left	9,4%	90,6%	142	100%
Centre	17%	83%	154	100%
Right	37,6%	62,4%	90	100%
<b>Affiliation to think tank</b>				
Not affiliated	24%	76%	283	100%
Affiliated	10%	90%	105	100%
<b>Seniority</b>				
Senior	15,4%	84,6%	182	100%
Newcomer	25%	75%	207	100%
<b>Age</b>				
25-49	25,4%	74,6%	141	100%
50+	17,8%	82,2%	248	100%
<b>Education</b>				
No university degree	36,2%	63,8%	106	100%
University degree	15,2%	82,2%	266	100%
<b>Job in public sector</b>				
Private	28,9%	71,1%	177	100%
Public	11%	89%	179	100%

**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi<sup>2</sup> test.

As Table 4 shows, evaluations regarding EU membership tend to be more positive according to some background characteristics of MPs:

- MPs with left-leaning preferences are more positive toward the EU than MPs with centre and right-leaning preferences;
- MPs affiliated with think tanks are more positive compared to those non-affiliated;
- Senior MPs (on more than one legislature) are more positive compared to newcomers;
- Older MPs (50 years or older) are more positive compared to younger ones;
- MPs who have a university degree are more positive compared to less-educated ones;
- MPs who were employed in the public sector before entering the parliament are more positive compared to those employed in the private sector.

**Figure 14.**  
EUopolitanism and evaluation of EU membership.

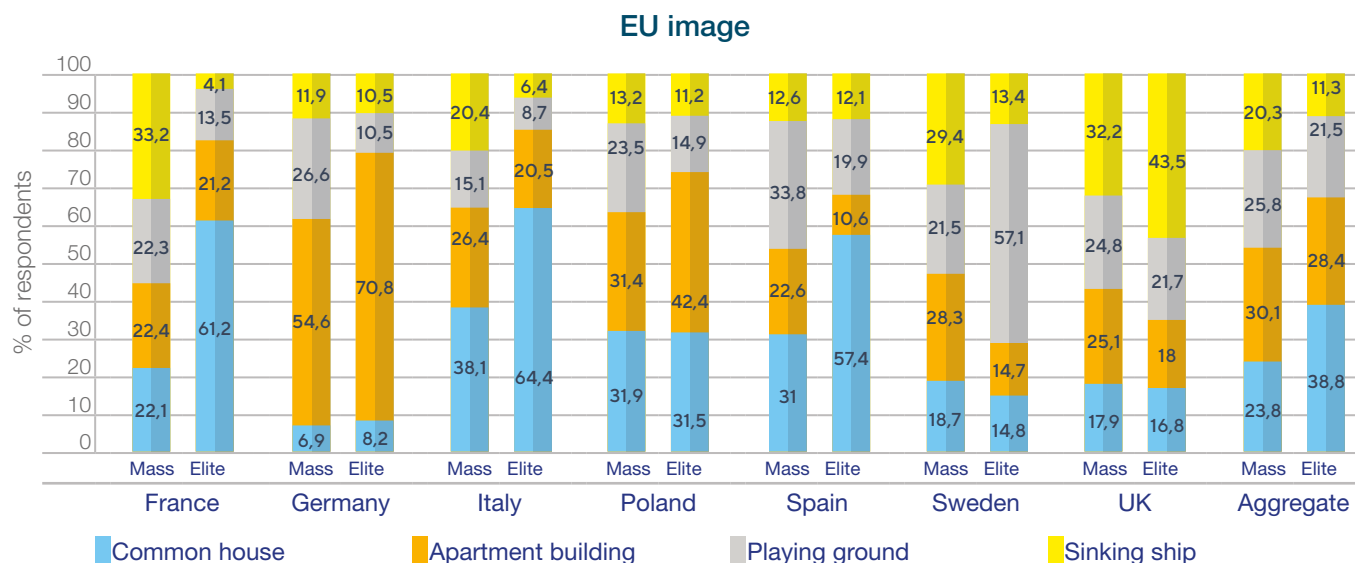


In the analysis of REScEU’s mass survey we investigated the association between “EU-politicism,” which refers to the degree of experience and/or familiarity with EU member states different from the respondent’s and attitudes toward EU integration and solidarity. We have also constructed a similar index for elites aiming to capture the international profile and networking of national representatives.<sup>4</sup> As can be seen by the bar chart plotted in Figure 14, the association between EU-politicism and a positive evaluation of EU membership is strong and significant. MPs who believe that their country has benefited from EU membership tend to present higher EUopolitanism scores.

<sup>4</sup> EUopolitanism is an additive index based on five survey items: 1) Has the respondent ever studied or worked in another EU country? 2) How often does the respondent inform him/herself through media from countries other than his/her own (response categories: every day; once in a week; from time to time; never). 3-5) Has the respondent had contacts during the last year with 3) European interest groups, 4) social movements and NGOs, or 5) parties of other EU countries. Answers are coded through a Likert scale whose categories are: “Yes, at least once a week,” “Yes, at least once a month,” “Yes, at least once every three months,” “Yes, at least once a year,” or “No contacts last year.” Cronbach alpha equals 0.73, indicating that the EUopolitanism index has a satisfactory level of internal consistency

Figure 15.

## The image of the EU by country.



**Note:** Wording of the question: “In talking about the European Union, media and people sometimes use the following images. Could you please indicate which one comes closest to your view? 1) The EU is the common house of all European citizens; 2) The EU is like an apartment building: national people live next to each other like good neighbours; 3) The EU is a playing ground that facilitates (mutually advantageous) economic exchanges among Member States and citizens; 4) The EU is a sinking ship: member States should escape it as fast as they can.”

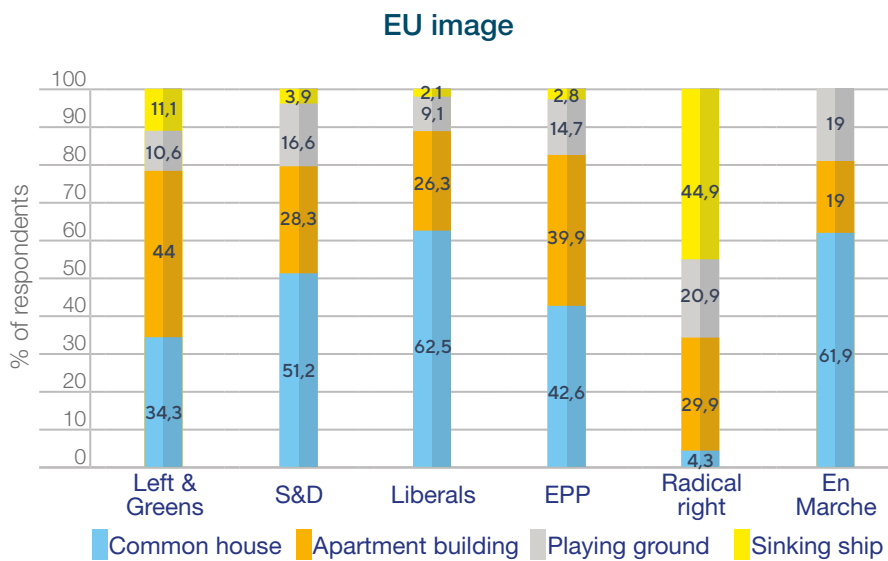
At the aggregate level, slightly less than 40% of MPs support the idea of the EU as a common house for all European citizens. This image is followed by the apartment building (28.4%), the playing ground (21.5%), and the sinking ship (11.3%).

Support for the image of the EU as a common house is higher among political elites than among citizens. Cross-country differences among MPs are in line with differences among voters; support for the “common house” image is majoritarian among French, Italian, and Spanish MPs. More than 70%

of German MPs opt for the idea of the EU as an apartment building. High levels of support for this position are also found in Poland. The majority of Swedish MPs prefers the idea of the EU as a playing ground. Finally, more than 43% of British MPs considers the EU as a sinking ship that should be abandoned as soon as possible.

**Figure 16.**

The image of the EU by partisan affiliation.



**Table 5.**

The image of the EU by ideological leanings and by individual features of MPs

	Common house	Apartment building	Playing ground	Sinking ship	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>						
Left	51,2%	30,9%	10,4%	7,5%	142	100%
Centre	38,5%	35,7%	17,4%	8,4%	153	100%
Right	15,3%	28,7%	21,8%	34,2%	90	100%
<b>Trade union membership</b>						
Not a member	41,7%	28,7%	15%	14,6%	195	100%
Member	28,2%	37,7%	17,2%	16,9%	182	100%
<b>Education</b>						
No university	20,8%	31,7%	22,5%	25%	106	100%
University	41,6%	32,8%	12,8%	12,8%	266	100%

**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi<sup>2</sup> test.

The image of the EU as a common house is supported especially by mainstream parties (Social-democrats, Liberals, and Populars). 44% of Left & Greens MPs prefer the idea of an apartment building in which national people live next to each other like good neighbours. 45% of right-wing MPs

instead consider the EU as a sinking ship.

The idea of the EU as a common house for all European citizens finds higher support among:

- MPs who place themselves on the left side of the L-R scale, compared to those located in the cen-

tre or the right;

- MPs who are members of trade unions compared to those who are not members;
- MPs who have a university degree compared to less-educated ones.

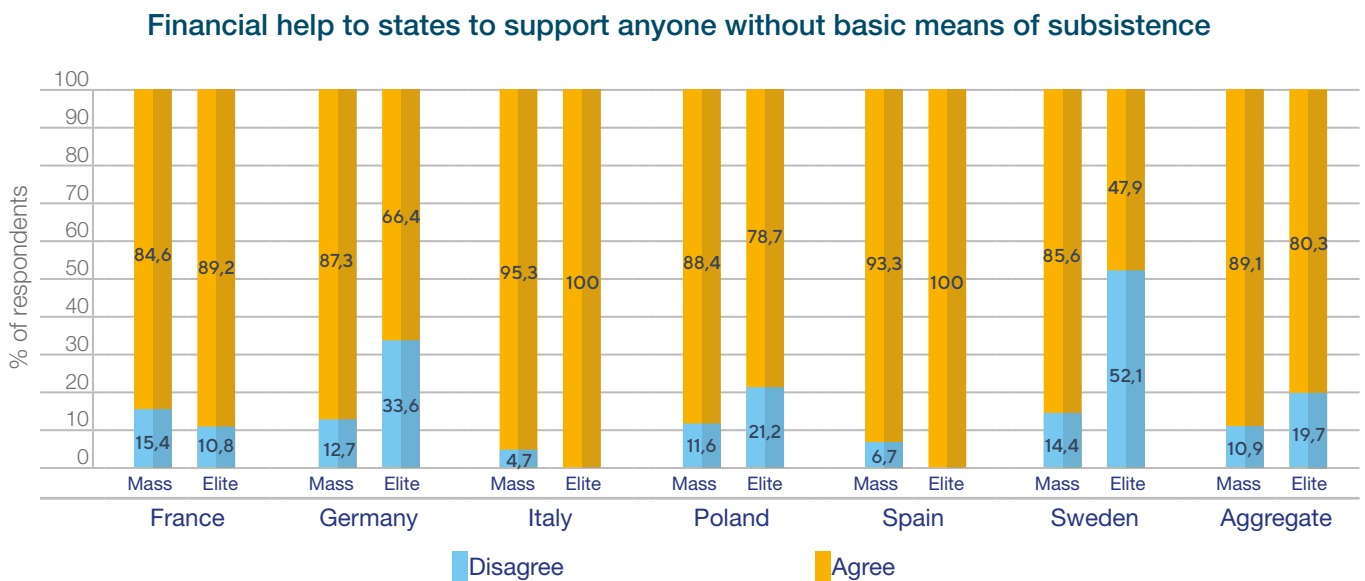
# 5

## Policies for a more social Europe

### 5.1 Pan-European solidarity: EU wide poverty and unemployment scheme

Figure 17.

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (basic assistance) by country



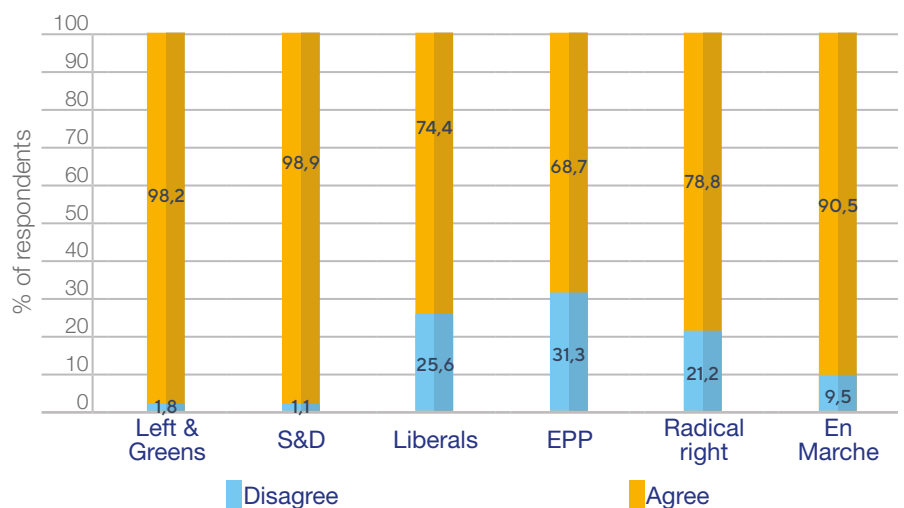
**Note:** Wording of the question: "EU Member States have decided that their economic and social policies should be brought closer together. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: In case of a very severe financial crisis in a given Member State, the EU should make sure that no citizen of that state remains without means of subsistence (food, shelter, essential medicines, etc...) 1) Strongly agree; 2) Somewhat agree; 3) Somewhat disagree 4) Strongly disagree " Agree = (1)+(2); Disagree = (3)+(4).

The 2016 REScEU Mass Survey included several questions aimed at capturing potential support for strengthening the EU social dimension through specific measures dealing with the fight against poverty and unemployment, economic and social investments, and migration. We repeated such questions for the elite survey as well. Some of the policy proposals evoked by our questions have already entered the public debate within the wider discussion on the idea of establishing a fully-fledged European Social Union.

At the aggregate level, our data show very large support (more than 80%) in favour of providing financial help to make anyone without basic means of subsistence among both voters and MPs. However, at the elite level, we note several cross-country differences that mass survey data do not show. Large groups of Swedish (52.1%), German (33.6%), and Polish (21.2%) MPs are not in favour of such policy proposal. In the Swedish sample, most MPs do not support this initiative. By contrast, we note high support in France and especially in Italy and Spain, where the entire sample of respondents supports this measure.

**Figure 18.**

**Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (basic assistance) by partisan affiliation.**  
**Financial help to states to support anyone without basic means of subsistence**



There are high levels of support for this kind of measure among Left & Greens and Social-democrats. Among Liberals, Populists, and right-wing party members, the share of MPs who do not support this measure ranges from 20% to 30%.



**Table 6.**

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (basic assistance) by individual features of MPs.

	Disagree	Agree	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>				
Left	2,1%	97,9%	134	100%
Centre	19,6%	80,4%	150	100%
Right	26,5%	73,5%	83	100%
<b>Affiliation to think tank</b>				
Not Affiliated	19,1%	80,9%	335	100%
Affiliated	8,1%	91,9%	98	100%
<b>Education</b>				
Ordinary member	18,4%	81,6%	336	100%
Parliamentary role	7,4%	92,6%	68	100%

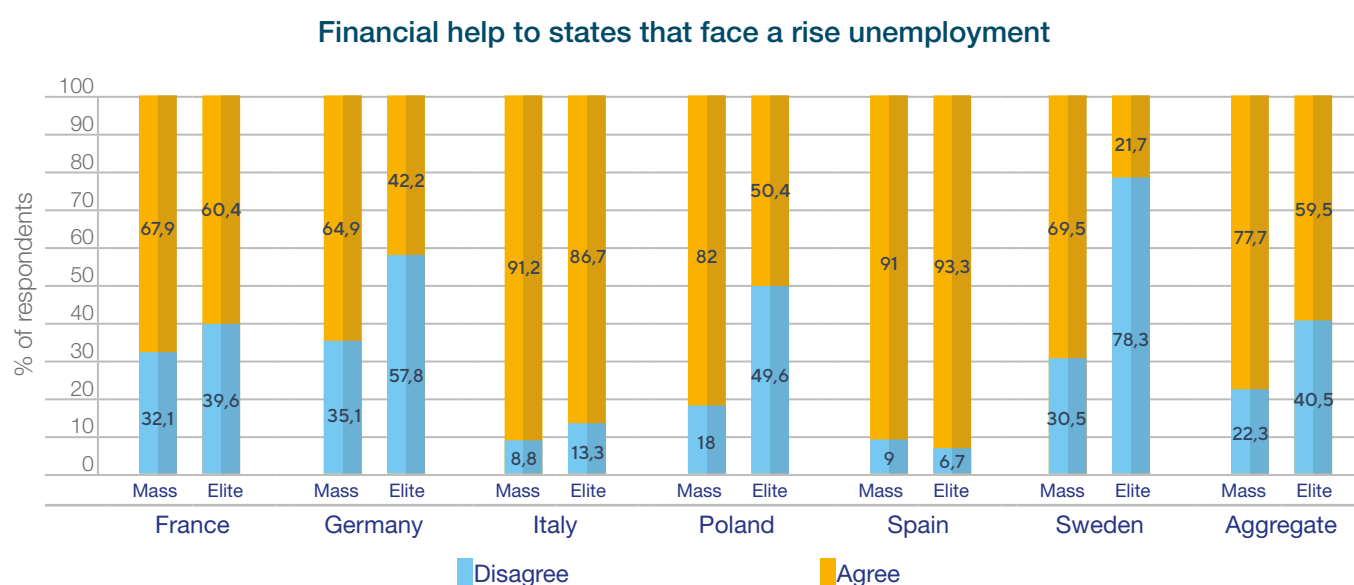
**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi<sup>2</sup> test.

To help anyone without basic means of subsistence is significantly higher among:

- MPs with left wing orientations compared to those with centre and right-wing leanings;
- MPs affiliated with think tanks compared to those not affiliated;
- MPs with a role in the assembly or in a commission compared to ordinary members.

**Figure 19.**

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (unemployment) by country.



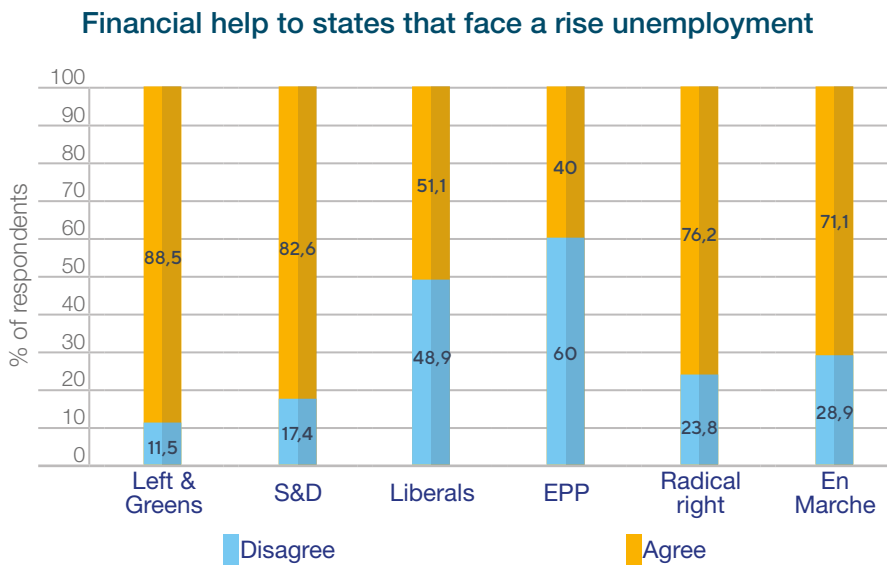
**Note:** Wording of the question: “EU Member States have decided that their economic and social policies should be brought closer together. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: The EU should equip itself with a budget large enough to provide substantial financial help to Member States facing a sudden rise in unemployment rates 1) Strongly agree; 2) Somewhat agree; 3) Somewhat disagree 4) Strongly disagree ” Agree = (1)+(2); Disagree = (3)+(4).

Opposition to EU-wide solidarity is more evident if we analyse MPs’ readiness to introduce financial help to states that face a sudden rise in unemployment. 40.5% of MPs in our aggregate sample are not in favour of this measure compared to 22% of

voters. Cross-country differences are evident. Most German and Swedish MPs disagree with this proposal. Also, 40% of French MPs and 49% of Polish MPs are not in favour of this measure. By contrast, in Italy and Spain, about 90% of the MPs support this initiative.

**Figure 20.**

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (unemployment) by party affiliation.



The opposition to financial help to states that face a sudden rise in unemployment is particularly evident among Liberals and Populares. About a quarter of MPs from the Radical Right and La République en Marche oppose the measure as well. Support is higher among the Socialists and Democrats and especially among the left-of-centre MPs. This result is also confirmed by the association between elite support for financial help to states that face a sudden rise in unemployment and their political orientations on the traditional left-right dimension. Support for this policy is particularly high among left-wing MPs and decreases moving toward the right pole of the scale.

**Table 7.**

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (unemployment) by ideology

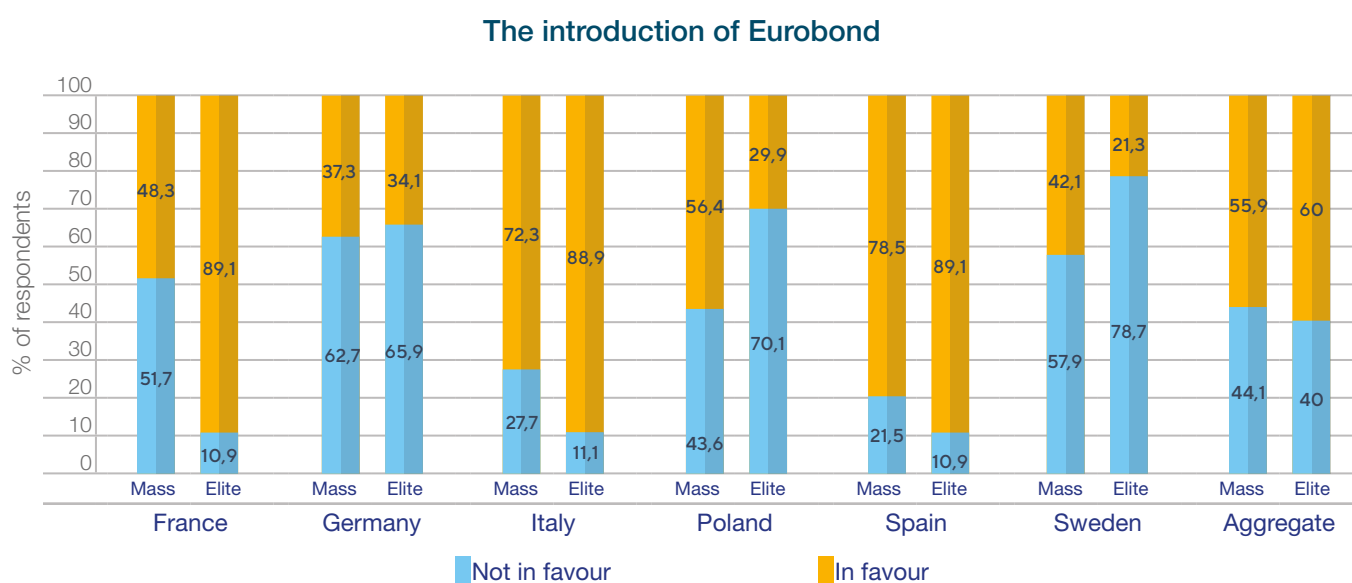
	Disagree	Agree	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>				
Left	12,9%	87,4%	134	100%
Centre	39,9%	60,1%	150	100%
Right	63,6%	36,4%	83	100%

**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi<sup>2</sup> test.

## 5.2 Pan-European solidarity: mutualisation of risks

Figure 21.

Support for the introduction of Eurobonds by country.



**Note:** Wording of the question: “Thinking about the European Union over the next 10 years, can you indicate whether you are in favour or against the following: The introduction of European bonds (a.k.a. Eurobonds) 1) Strongly in favour; 2) Somewhat in favour; 3) Somewhat against 4) Strongly against” In favour = (1)+(2); Not in favour = (3)+(4).

Support for Eurobonds shows interesting variations. In general, six MPs out of ten in our pooled sample are in favour of the introduction of Eurobonds, a figure slightly higher than what is observed among voters (56%).

However, in Germany, Poland, and Sweden, a clear majority of MPs (70% on average) does not support the introduction of Eurobonds. In these countries, especially Poland and Sweden, opposition is higher among elites than among voters. In France, Italy,

and Spain, MPs tend to be more in favour of Eurobonds than voters. This difference is particularly pronounced in France, mainly due to the overrepresentation in Parliament of La République en Marche as a consequence of the electoral system.

**Figure 22.**

Support for the introduction of Eurobonds by party affiliation.

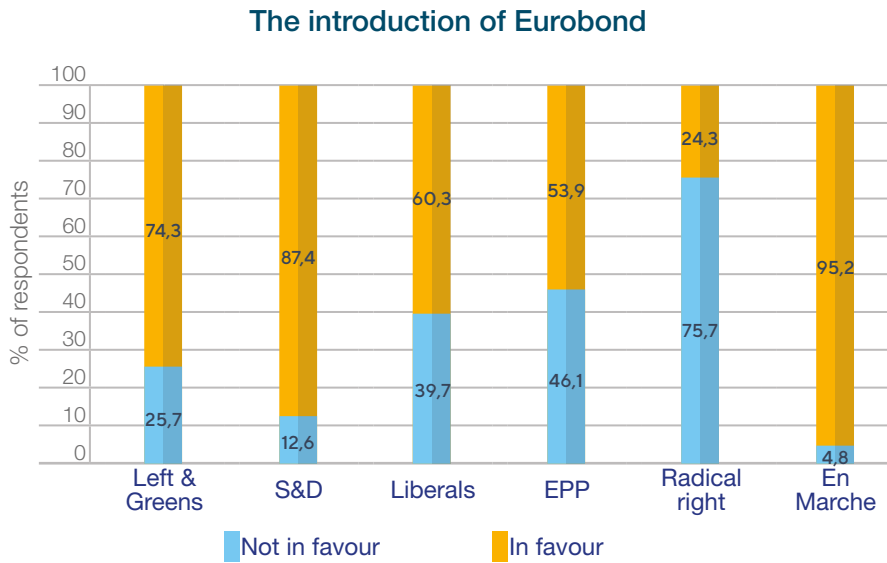


Figure 22 shows the usual strong association between opinions on the introduction of Eurobonds and partisan affiliation. Three MPs out of four among those who belong to a radical right party are against the introduction of Eurobonds. The issue is highly contentious also among Populars

whose sample is split down the middle. While 40% of Liberals are against the Eurobonds, more than 90% of the MPs belonging to La République en Marche are in favour of their introduction. Interestingly, the opposition to Eurobonds is higher among left-wing and green MPs (26%) than among Social-democrats (13%).

**Table 8.**

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (unemployment) by individual features of MPs.

	Not in favour	In favour	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>				
Left	17,9%	82,1%	134	100%
Centre	39,8%	60,2%	150	100%
Right	64,5%	35,5%	83	100%
<b>Affiliation to interest Group</b>				
Not affiliated	36,7%	63,3%	309	100%
Affiliated	66,9%	33,1%	46	100%

**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi<sup>2</sup> test.

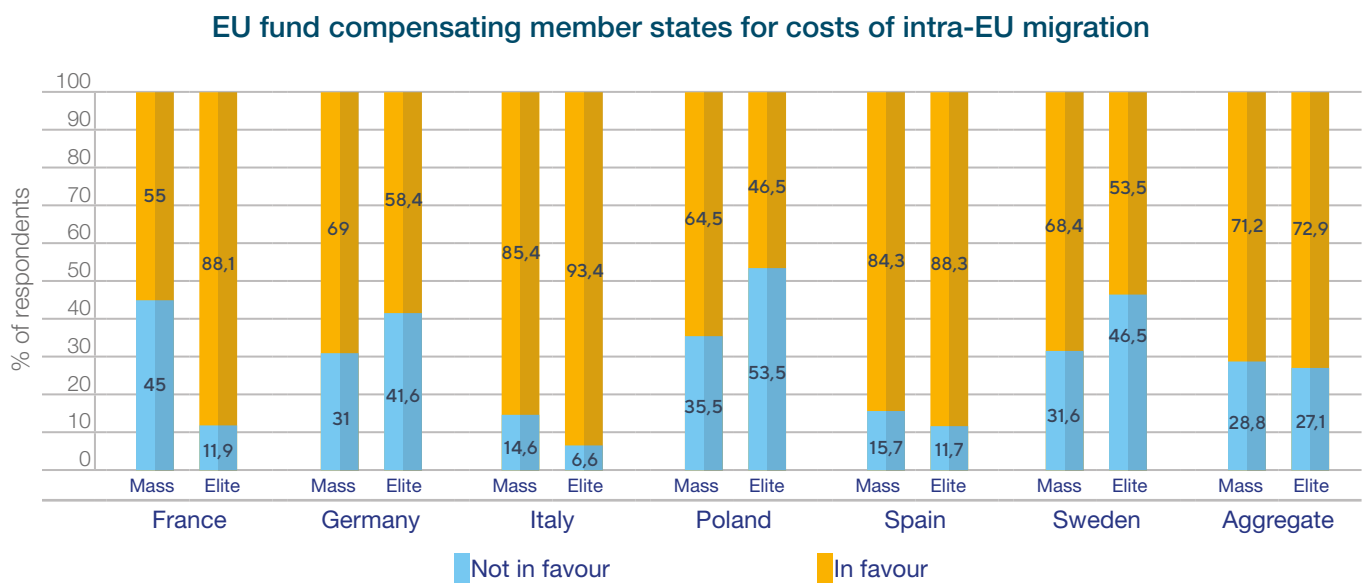
Support for the introduction of Eurobonds is significantly higher among:

- MPs with left wing orientations compared to those with right-wing leanings and those located in the centre;
- MPs not affiliated with interest groups or consulting agencies compared to those affiliated.

# 5.3 Pan-European solidarity: Support for mobility and immigration

Figure 23.

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (Migration Fund) by country.



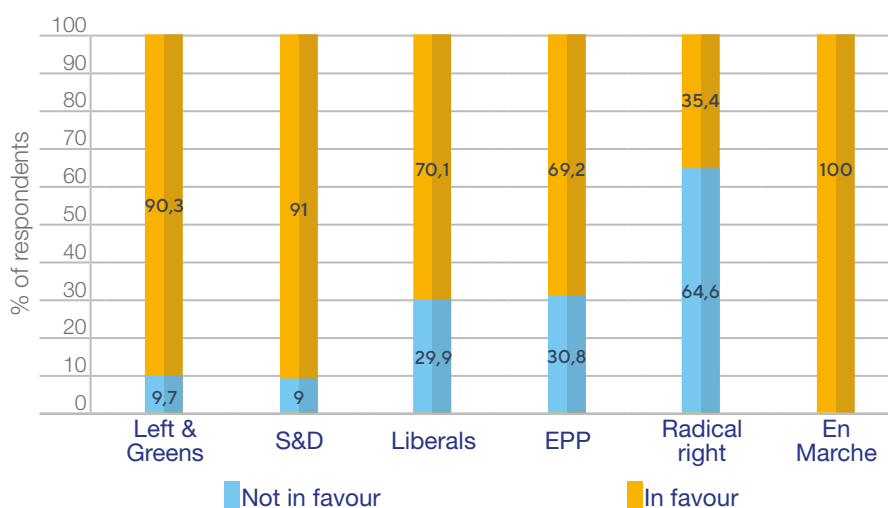
**Note:** Wording of the question: “Thinking about the European Union over the next 10 years, can you indicate whether you are in favour or against the following: The introduction of a common EU fund compensating national governments and local communities for the costs related to immigration from other EU Member States. 1) Strongly in favour; 2) Somewhat in favour; 3) Somewhat against 4) Strongly against” In favour = (1)+(2); Not in favour = (3)+(4)

At the aggregate level, MPs are in favour of an EU fund compensating member states and local communities for the costs of intra-EU migration. There are, however, notable differences at the country level. Support is higher among French, Italian, and Spanish MPs but lower in Germany, Poland, and Sweden. In these three countries, opposition is higher among elites than voters. In Poland, more than 50% of respondents are against this fund.

**Figure 24.**

**Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (Migration Fund) by partisan affiliation.**

**EU fund compensating member states for costs of intra-EU migration**



In this case, there is a strong linear relationship between support for an EU fund compensating member states and local communities for the costs related to immigration and partisan affiliation/ideological leanings. Moving from left to right, the share of MPs against this fund increases. Only among right-wing parties are most MPs against this fund. Furthermore, support for this fund is higher among MPs affiliated with think tanks compared to those who are not affiliated (see Table 9).

**Table 9.**

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (Migration Fund) by individual features of the MPs.

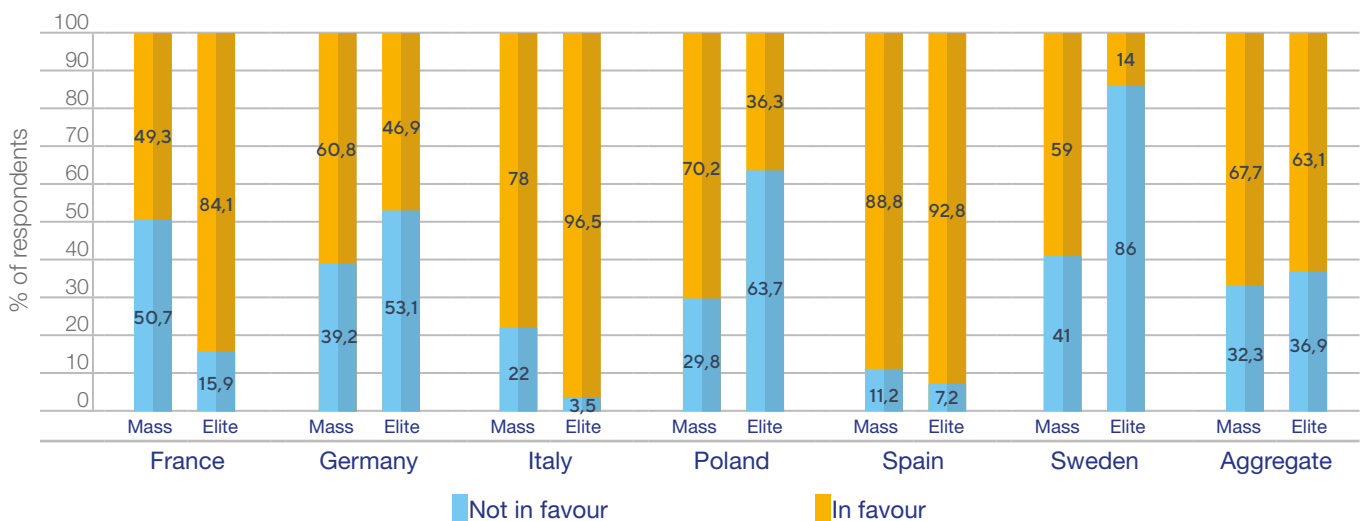
	Disagree	Agree	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>				
Left	2,1%	97,9%	134	100%
Centre	19,6%	80,4%	150	100%
Right	26,5%	73,5%	83	100%
<b>Affiliation to think tank</b>				
Not Affiliated	19,1%	80,9%	335	100%
Affiliated	8,1%	91,9%	98	100%

**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi<sup>2</sup> test.

**Figure 25.**

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (Migration Fund) by country.

**A common EU social insurance scheme that covers intra-EU migrant workers**



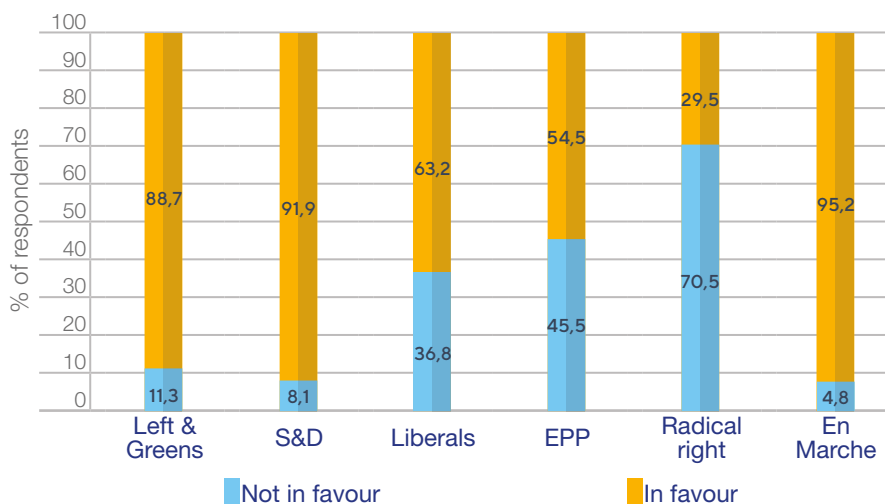
**Note:** Wording of the question: “Thinking about the European Union over the next 10 years, can you indicate whether you are in favour or against the following: The introduction of a common EU social insurance schemes (healthcare and unemployment) that cover intra-EU migrant workers. 1) Strongly in favour; 2) Somewhat in favour; 3) Somewhat against 4) Strongly against” In favour = (1)+(2); Not in favour = (3)+(4)



At the aggregate level, most MPs are in favour of an EU common social insurance scheme that covers intra-EU migrant workers. Support is higher among Spanish MPs (in line with mass opinions) and even more among Italian MPs, whose favour for this option is much greater than at the mass level. French MPs are also highly favourable, while the majority of voters are against this option. In Germany, a relatively slight majority of MPs are against it in contrast to a large majority of voters who would support the fund. The gap between voters (favourable) and MPS (contrary) is even higher in Poland and Sweden, where an impressive 86% of the sample opposes the EU social insurance scheme for intra-EU migrant workers.

Figure 26.

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (Migration Fund) by partisan affiliation.  
**A common EU social insurance scheme that covers intra-EU migrant workers**



We can observe the familiar strong association between support for a common social insurance scheme and partisan affiliation/ideological leanings. Moving from left to right on the ideological scale, the share of favourable MPs declines. MPs belonging to a party affiliated with the EPP are highly polarised, but the slight majority is in favour of this measure. Only among right-wing parties is the majority against this fund.

**Table 10.**

Support for policies fostering pan-European solidarity (Migration Fund) by individual features of the MPs.

	Disagree	Agree	N	
<b>L-R self-placement</b>				
Left	6,1%	93,9%	134	100%
Centre	35,5%	64,5%	150	100%
Right	66,2%	33,8%	83	100%
<b>Affiliation to interest group</b>				
Not Affiliated	32,1%	67,9%	312	100%
Affiliated	60,5%	39,5%	46	100%

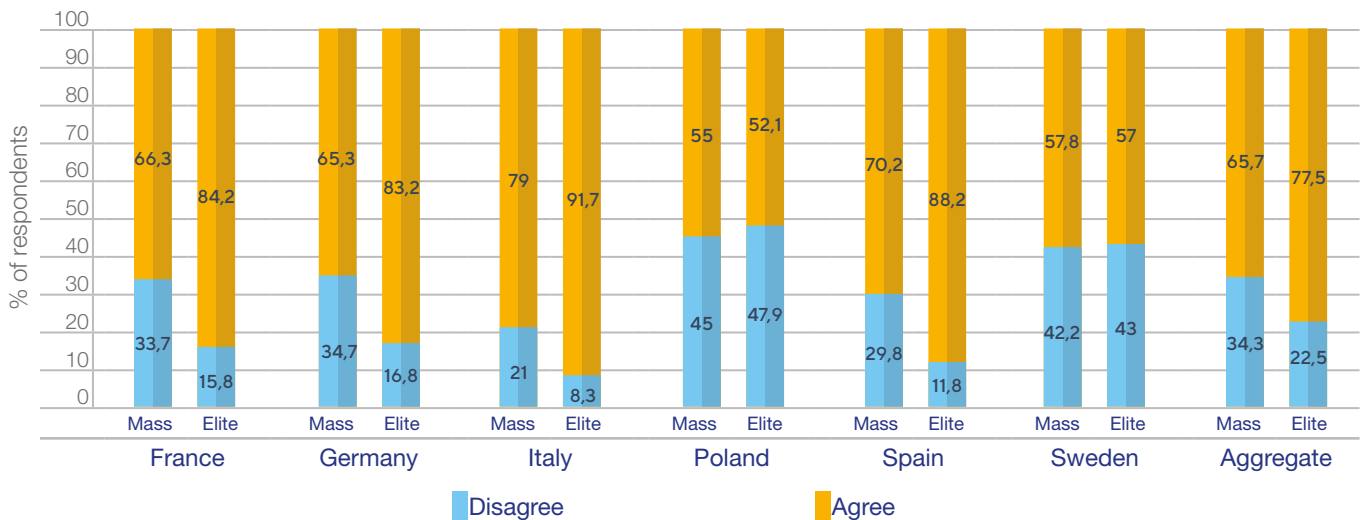
**Note:** All the associations reported in the table are significant according to the Chi<sup>2</sup> test.

Support for the proposal of establishing an insurance scheme is higher among MPs not affiliated to interest groups compared to those affiliated

**Figure 27.**

Who should decide on extra-EU immigration by country.

**Decisions on extra-EU migration should be taken in Brussels**



**Note:** Wording of the question: "EU Member States have decided that their economic and social policies should be brought closer together. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: Decisions about controls at the EU external border and about the status of extra-EU immigrants and refugees should be made in Brussels. 1) Strongly agree; 2) Somewhat agree; 3) Somewhat disagree 4) Strongly disagree " Agree = (1)+(2); Disagree = (3)+(4).

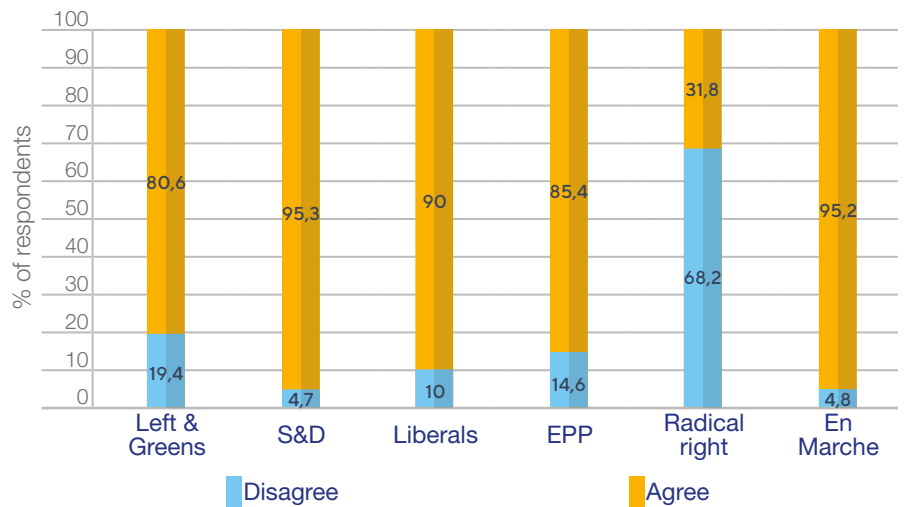
The refugee and immigration crisis has created a mounting series of policy, social, and political problems, especially in the CEEC countries and the Southern countries. A fierce debate has emerged on the merits/demerits of the institutional status quo (the Dublin regulation) and its distributional consequences. Such a debate has also addressed the thorny issue about who should decide (and thus take responsibility) for choices and policies related to extra-EU immigration.

Figure 27 shows that at the aggregate level, more than three out of four MPs agree with the statement that decisions on extra-EU immigrants should be made in Brussels. This percentage is higher than what was observed at the mass level. Cross-country differences are not really pronounced at the elite level. In all six countries, the majority of MPs agree with shifting responsibility to the EU level. Lower support is noticeable among Polish and Swedish MPs.

**Figure 28.**

### Who should decide on extra-EU immigration by partisan affiliation.

**Decisions on extra-EU migration should be taken in Brussels**



MPs of all party groupings show high levels of support for a greater EU involvement in migration issues. Only among radical right MPs do we find a majority that does not support this view.

# 6

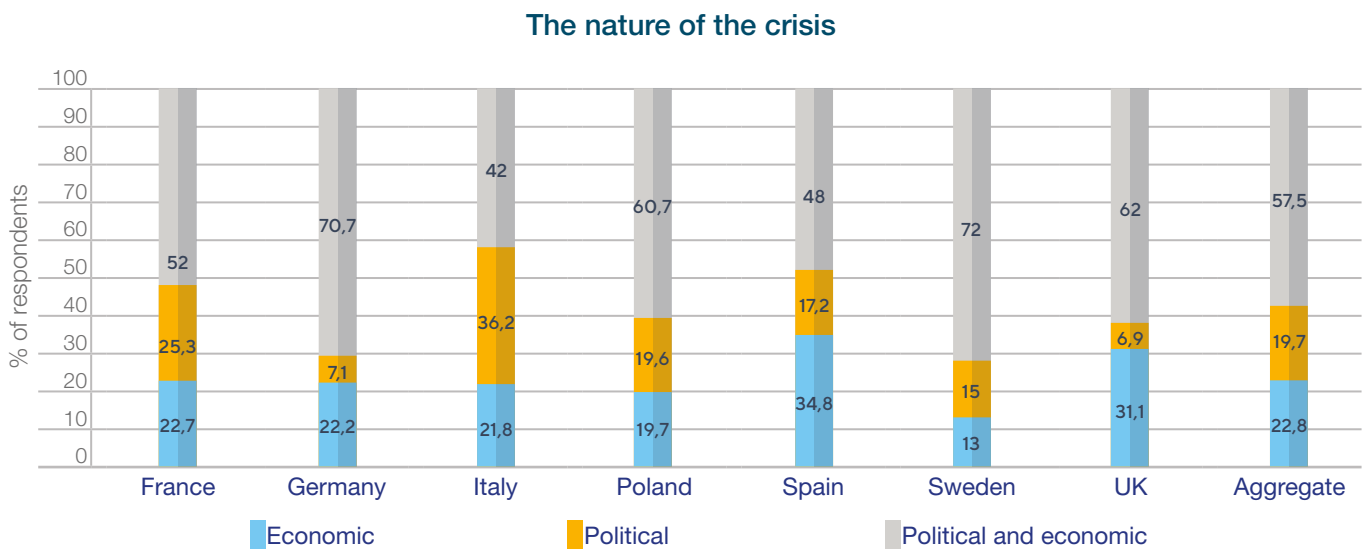
## The nature of the crisis and the behaviour of EU member states and leaders

This section explores the views of MPs on the post-2008 crisis: its nature, consequences, the way in which the crisis was ma-

naged by leaders, and the role of the biggest member state, i.e. Germany. Such questions were not included in the mass survey, given their degree of complexity.

Figure 29.

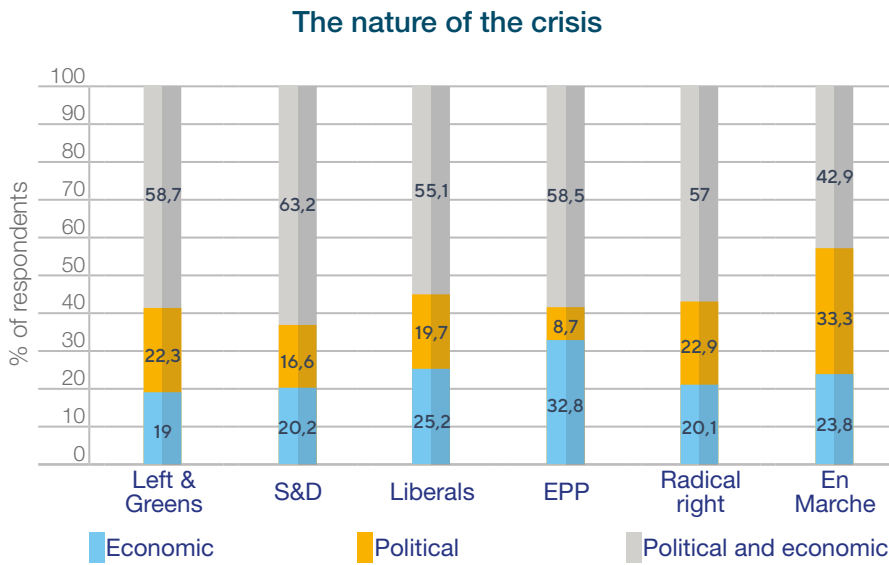
The nature of the crisis by country.



**Note:** Wording of the question: "Some commentators argue that the EU is currently experiencing a major political crisis, along with an economic one. Could you please indicate which of the following statements comes closest to your view? 1) The EU is experiencing an economic crisis that is also producing political discontent areas among certain social groups; 2) The EU is experiencing both an economic and a political crisis with distinct causes and effects; 3) The EU's long-standing political crisis has hampered its ability to respond to the financial crisis of 2008.

**Figure 30.**

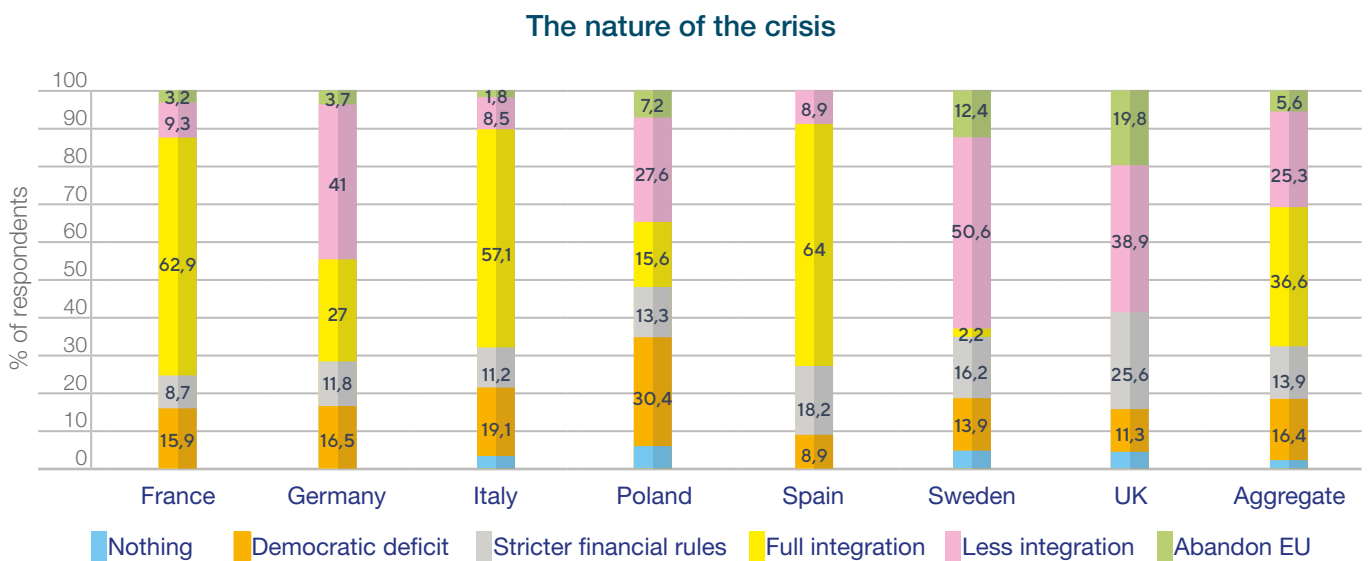
The nature of the crisis by party affiliation.



At the aggregate level, the majority of MPs believe that the nature of the post-2008 crisis is both political and economic. 33% of them believe it is mostly political while another 24% think it is essentially an economic crisis. Cross-country differences are not very pronounced. In all seven countries included in the survey, most respondents agree on the political-economic nature of the crisis. In Italy, 42% of MPs emphasise the political dimension, while in Spain, 34.8% emphasise the economic dimensions. There seems to be very little difference across parties. Irrespective of their party affiliation, most MPs believe that the nature of the crisis is both political and economic.

**Figure 31.**

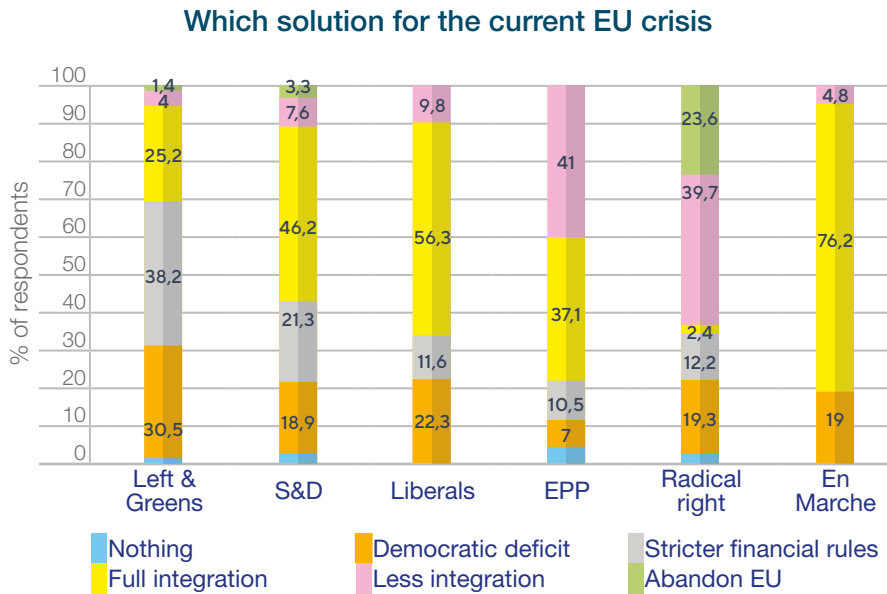
Which solution for the current EU crisis by country



**Note:** Wording of the question: "In your opinion, what should the EU do to alleviate the effects of the current crisis? 1) Nothing. Political discontent will disappear once the economy recovers and living standards rise again; 2) The EU should address its long-standing democratic deficit, with the EU becoming more similar to a parliamentary system; 3) The EU should adopt stricter rules on financial speculation and international economic transactions; 4) The EU should move towards a full political and fiscal union; 5) The EU should limit cooperation to a few core areas. Member states which have an interest in closer integration should make specific agreements among themselves; 6) The EU project should just be abandoned. National democracy and sovereignty should be reaffirmed.

**Figure 32.**

**Which solution for the current EU crisis by party affiliation.**



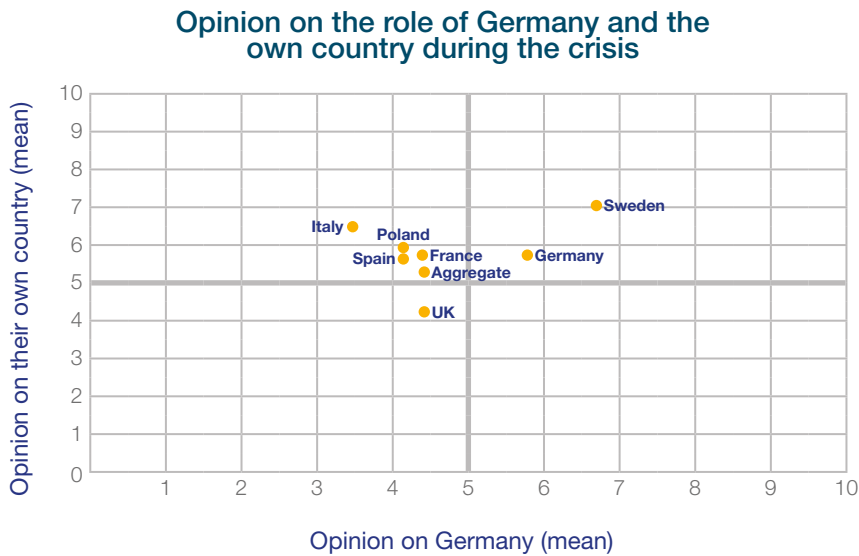
The plurality of Polish respondents emphasises instead the democratic deficit issue. At the partisan level, more than 38% of left-wing and green MPs would favour imposing stricter rules on financial speculation and international economic transactions. The plurality of Social-democrats and Liberals opts for a full political and fiscal union. Populares are highly polarised; 41% of them favours less integration while on the opposite another 37% is for full integration. 40% of right-wing MPs want less integration, while 24% want to exit the EU.

If we move from the nature of the crisis to the possible solutions, interesting cross-country and cross-partisan differences emerge. The majority of French, Italian, and Spanish respondents believe that full political and fiscal integration might help the

EU to overcome the crisis. The plurality of German and British respondents and the majority of Swedish MPs believe that a possible solution might be less integration (a “two-speed Europe”). 20% of British MPs are in favour of abandoning the EU altogether.

**Figure 33.**

Views on the behaviour of Germany by country.



**Note:** Wording of the questions: “Using a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates “a self-interested hegemon” and 10 indicates “a solidaristic leader,” how would you describe Germany’s political and diplomatic behaviour during the Euro crisis? By and large, Germany behaved as...” / “Using a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates “a self-interested actor” and 10 indicates “a solidaristic actor,” how would you describe our country’s political and diplomatic behaviour during the Euro crisis? By and large, [OUR COUNTRY] behaved as...”

It cannot be denied that Germany, as the largest member state and the biggest economy in the EU, has played a key role during the crisis. The graph plotted in Figure 33 displays on the X-axis the average MP’s opinion on the behaviour of Germany during the crisis on a 0-10 scale with 0 meaning “the

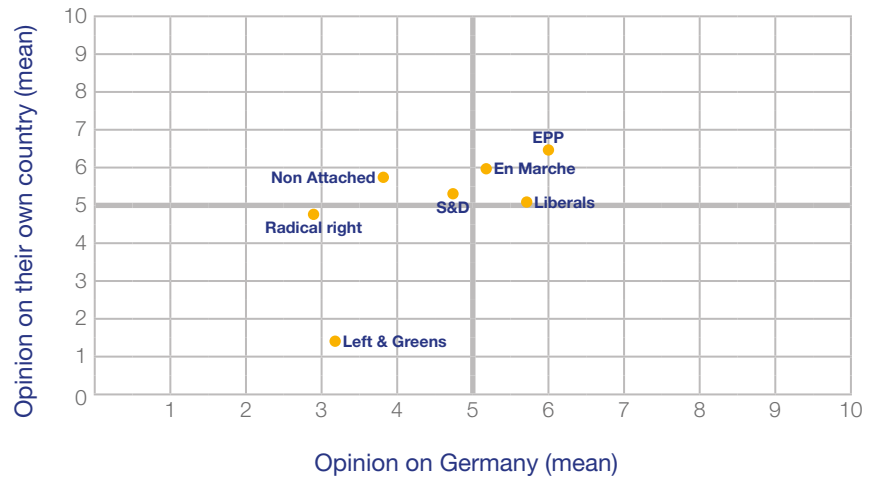
behaviour of a self-interested hegemon” and 10 meaning “the behaviour of a solidaristic leader.” On the Y-axis, the graph displays the average MP’s evaluation about the behaviour of their country during the crisis on the same 0-10 scale.

We plotted the seven countries according to their MPs’ average scores on these two scales. The MPs of our aggregate seven country sample tend to express a negative judgement of the role played by Germany during the crisis (overall average score 4.4), but they have a moderately positive opinion about their own country (overall average score 5.5). This combined judgement (negative for Germany and positive for their own country) is quite clear among the MPs of France, Poland, Spain, and especially Italy (upper-left quadrant). By contrast, German MPs have a positive opinion of the role played by their country (overall score 5.7). Swedish MPs are particularly satisfied with both Germany’s (6.6) and Sweden’s (7) behaviour. British MPs have a negative view of both Germany and the UK (lower-left quadrant).

**Figure 34.**

**Views on the behaviour of Germany by party affiliation.**

**Opinion on the role of Germany and the own country during the crisis**



In Figure 34, the MPs' average scores on the two scales illustrated above are plotted according to their partisan affiliation. What is immediately noticeable is that there are more differences among parties than among countries. MPs affiliated with the EPP, the Liberals and La Republique en Marche have a positive opinion on both Germany's and their own country's behaviour (upper-right quadrant). The average scores given by social-democratic MPs are very close to the middle of both scales. Radical right MPs express a very negative judgement of the role of Germany (2.9) but a positive opinion of their own country (5.7) (upper-left quadrant). Left-wing and Green MPs have a very negative view of both Germany's (3.2) and their own country's role (2.4) (lower-left quadrant).

**Figure 35.**

**Views on the behaviour of Germany by L-R self-placement.**

**Opinion on the role of Germany during the crisis by L-R self-placement**

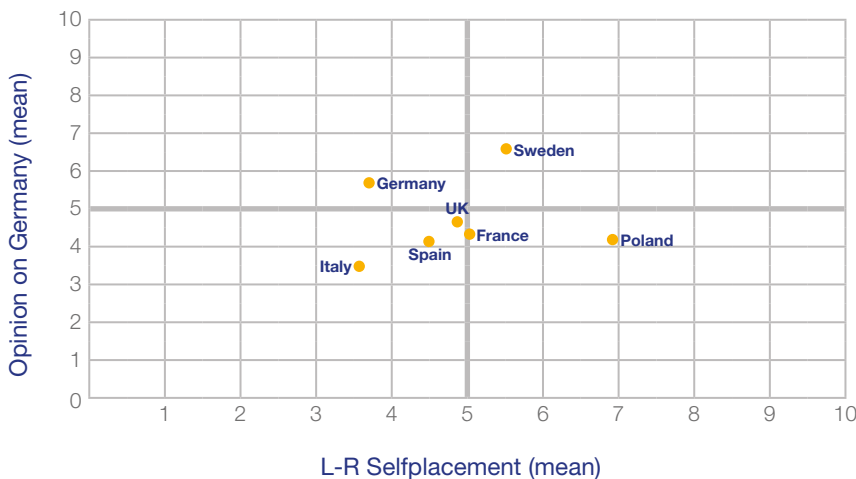


Figure 35 plots the average scores of MPs from each country by self-placement on the 0-10 L-R scale (X-axis with 0 meaning extreme left and 10 meaning extreme right) and by their views on the behaviour of Germany (Y axis). In countries where the MPs' average score tends toward the left, we also observe a more negative evaluation of Germany. At the time of our survey, Italy had the most leftist parliament and the most negative view of Germany's role. By contrast, Sweden had the second most right-leaning parliament and the most positive evaluation of Germany. Poland stands out as an exception. It had a right-wing parliament but a negative judgement of Germany. The correlation between left-right self-placement and MPs' opinions on the behaviour of Germany is rather high ( $r=0.26$ ).

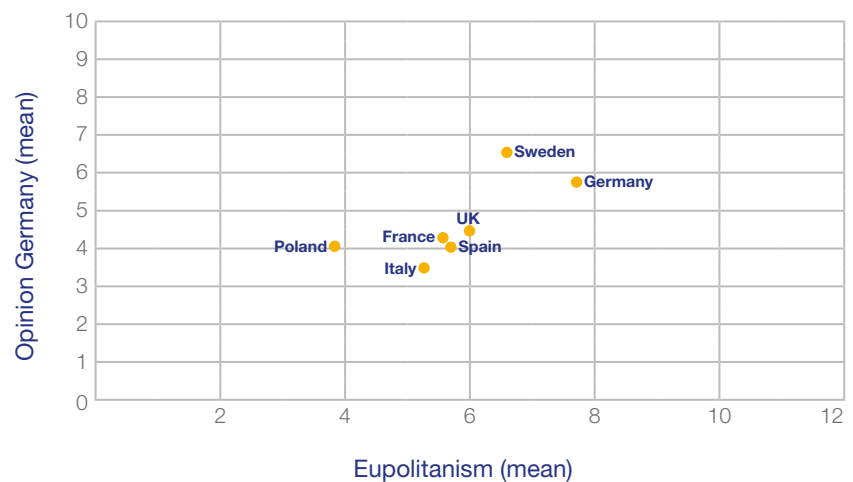


The second most right-leaning parliament and the most positive evaluation of Germany. Poland stands out as an exception. It had a right-wing parliament but a negative judgement of Germany. The correlation between left-right self-placement and MPs' opinions on the behaviour of Germany is rather high ( $r=0.26$ ).

Figure 36.

### Views on the behaviour of Germany by EUopolitanism

Opinion on the role of Germany during the crisis by EUopolitanism

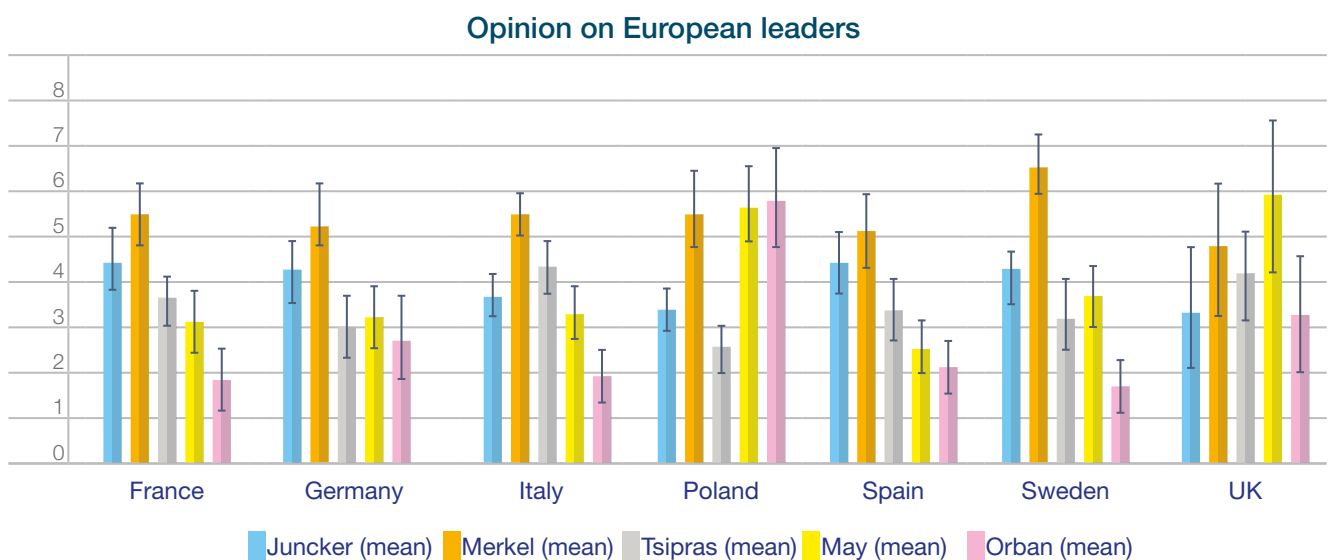


In the graph above, we plotted the average scores of countries on the 0-12 EUopolitanism scale (X-axis), with 0 representing a low EUopolitan profile and 10 representing a high EUopolitan profile, and the 0-10 scale about the judgement of Germany. We detected a positive and significant, although not particularly

strong, association between EUopolitanism and MPs' judgement of Germany's behaviour during the crisis ( $r=0.19$ ). Swedish and German MPs show the highest EUopolitanism score and the most positive judgement of Germany's role during the crisis. Polish and Italian MPs present the opposite pattern.

**Figure 37.**

Views on various EU leaders by country.



**Note:** Wording of the question: “Using a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about the following political leaders? Jean-Claude Juncker / Angela Merkel / Alexis Tsipras / Theresa May / Viktor Orbán.”

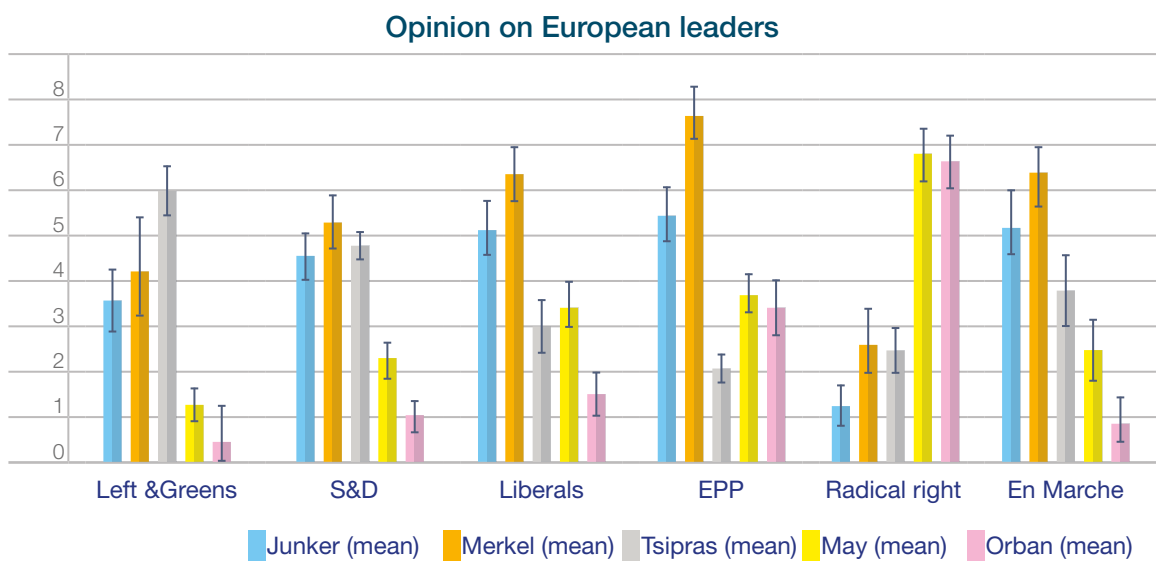
While the behaviour of Germany during the recent crisis is not always positively judged, the MPs in our aggregate sample tend to like Angela Merkel. In all countries except for the UK, MPs rate Angela Merkel with a score higher than 5 on a 0-10 scale on average, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like. In Fran-

ce, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Sweden, the German Chancellor is the most preferred leader among those included in the questionnaire. In Poland, Merkel is slightly overcome by Theresa May and Viktor Orbán. Orbán received very low scores in all the other countries. Tsipras received better evaluations in Italy and the UK compared to other countries, but in none of the

sample countries did he receive a score higher than 5. The evaluation of the European Commission President Juncker does not show significant variation across countries and was lowest in Poland and the UK. Theresa May is the most preferred leader among the British MPs followed by Angela Merkel.

**Figure 38.**

Views on various EU leaders by party affiliation.



Evaluations according to partisan affiliation reflect the various leaders' partisanship. Angela Merkel, followed by Juncker, is the most preferred leader among EPP, ALDE, La République en Marche, and S&D representatives. Among the latter, the German chancellor is followed by Tsipras. Tsipras is the most preferred leader among left-wing and green MPs. Theresa May and Viktor Orbán are the most preferred European leaders among right-wing MPs.

# 7

## An insight into Brexit

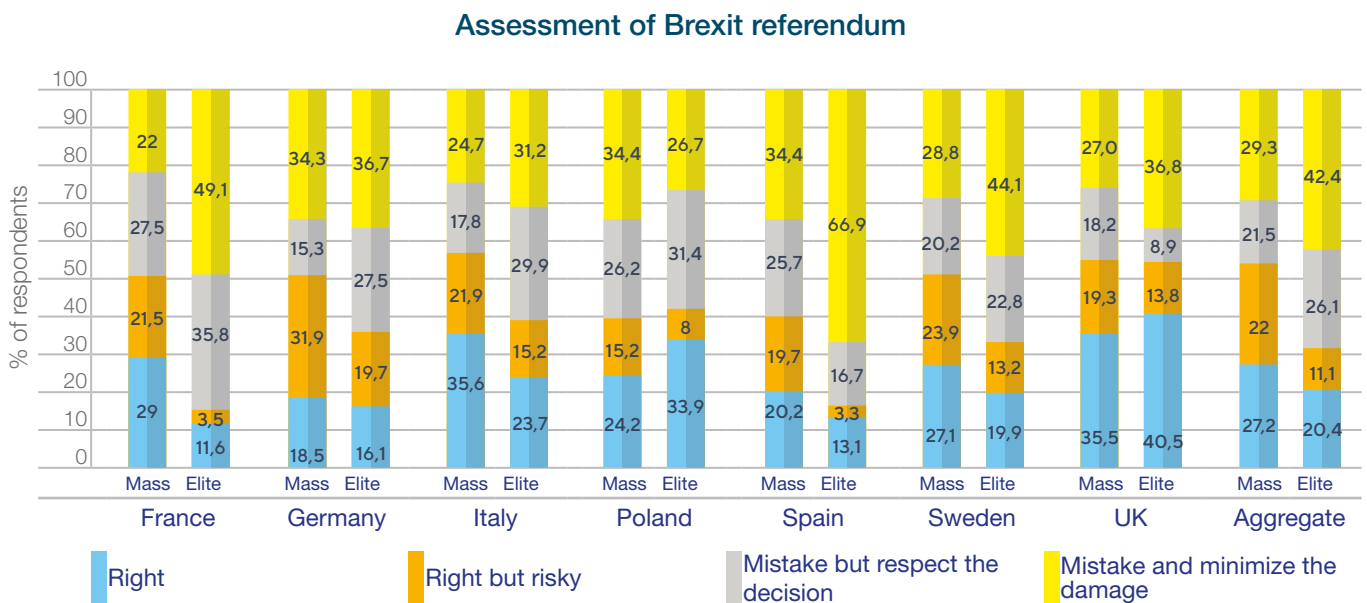
Almost two years after the referendum with which a majority of British voters decided that the United Kingdom should leave the EU, Brexit still represents a

highly polarising issue for British public opinion and political elite and a thorny problem for Theresa May's government. The way in which the British government deals the UK withdrawal from

the EU and sets the future UK-EU political and economic relationship is a turning point in both recent British political history and the European integration process.

Figure 39.

### Assessment of the Brexit referendum by country.



**Note:** Wording of the question: "On the last 23rd of June, through a referendum, British citizens voted that the United Kingdom should leave the European Union. Please indicate which of these statements on the opportunity to call such a referendum comes closest to your view. 1) It was a right decision because any peaceful expression of the popular will should be welcomed; 2) It was a right decision, even though it can be risky to hold a referendum on such a complex issue; 3) It was a mistake to hold a referendum on such a complex issue but the British government has to respect its outcome; 4) It was a mistake to hold a referendum on such a complex issue and now British institutions must find a way to minimise damage from its outcome."

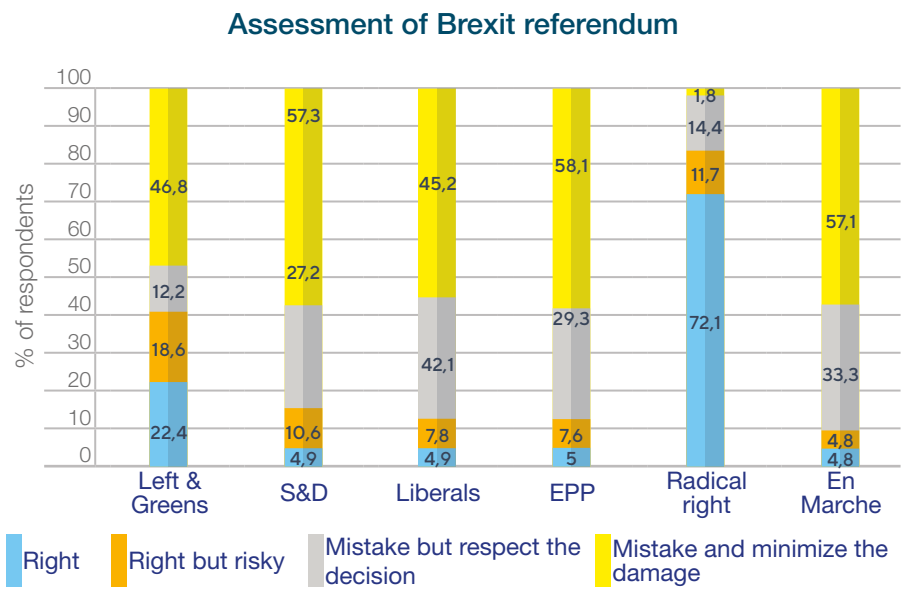
The REScEU Elite Survey elaborates a largely different questionnaire for the UK aiming to tap British MPs' opinions on Brexit, its potential consequences, and future scenarios once the UK will have abandoned the EU. Some of the questions were also included in the 2016 REScEU Mass Survey, while others have been administered only to the elite.

First, we asked MPs in all seven sample countries their attitudes toward the very decision of calling a referendum on Brexit. Overall, more than 40% of MPs interviewed believes that calling a referendum on Brexit was a mistake, and now the government should try to minimize the damage. This view finds greater support among political elites than among voters. 26% of MPs answered that the referendum was a mistake, but the government should now respect the outcome, and 20% of them believe it was the right decision. The idea that calling a referendum on such a complex issue as Brexit was a mistake is preferred by the plurality or majority of MPs in all the sample countries apart from the UK. In all these countries, the share of MPs who negatively assessed the referendum is higher than the share of voters expressing the same view.

In the UK, MPs are more polarised than the public opinion. While 40.5% of MPs believe that calling a referendum on Brexit was the right decision, 37% of them think it was a mistake, and the government should try to minimize the damage.

Figure 40.

### Assessment of the Brexit referendum by party affiliation.



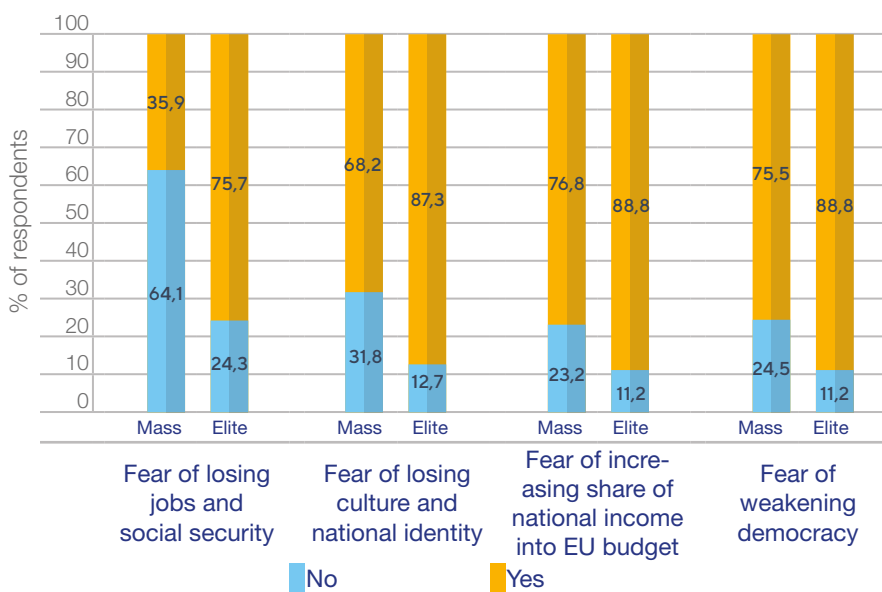
In all the party families, apart from the radical right, large majorities of MPs believe that calling a referendum on Brexit was a mistake. 45% to 58% of them believe that now the Bri-

tish government should try to minimize the damage. Among right-wing parties, 72% of MPs believe that letting the people decide on such an important issue was the right decision.

**Figure 41.**

Which concerns about the integration process affect the outcome of the Brexit referendum?

Which concerns about the integration process affect the outcome of the Brexit referendum



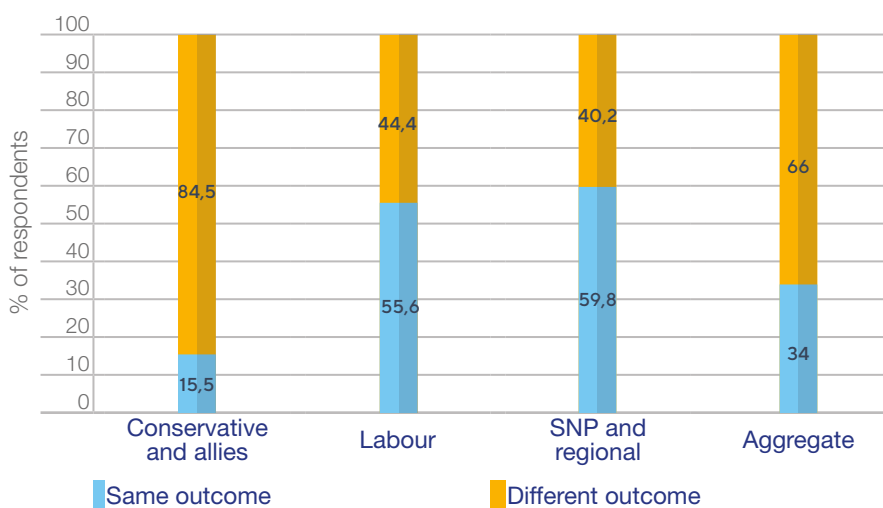
In another question, we asked British MPs which concerns about the integration process most affected the outcome of the Brexit referendum. In general, more than three out of four MPs believe that concerns about 1) a loss of jobs and social security, 2) a loss of culture and national identity, 3) an increasing share of the national income into the EU budget, and 4) the weakening of national democracy as a consequence of the integration process affected voters' decision to vote "Leave" in the Brexit referendum. MPs tend to be more concerned about British voters on all these aspects, especially regarding the loss of jobs and social security.

**Note:** Wording of the question: "Some people have fears about the process of European unification. Please indicate whether or not you believe the following concerns influenced the final outcome of the "Brexit" referendum: 1) The loss of jobs and social security; 2) The loss of national identity and culture; 3) A growing share of national income being paid into the EU budget; 4) A weakening of national democracy."

**Figure 42.**

Outcome of the referendum in case of major concessions by the EU by party affiliation.

**Outcome of referendum in case of major concessions by the EU**

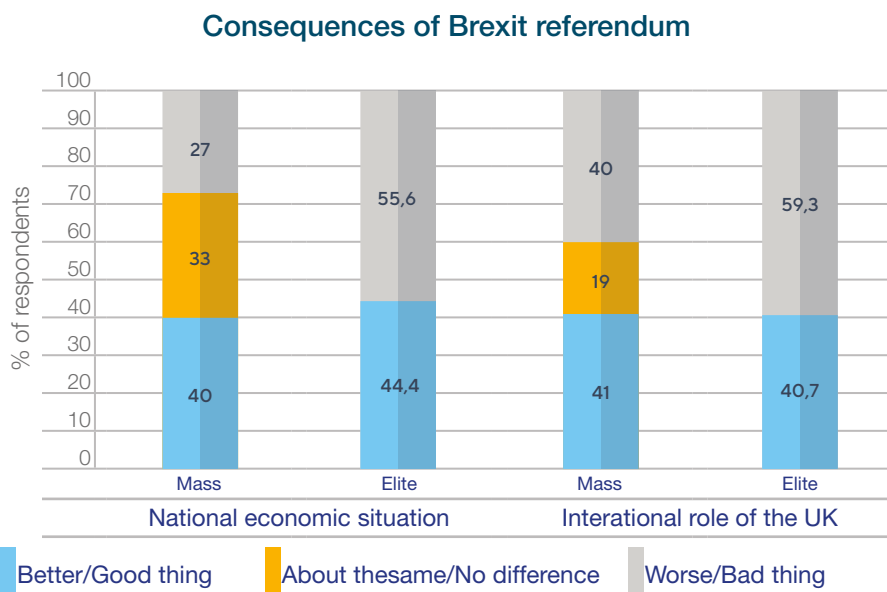


As Figure 42 shows, while more than eight out of ten Conservatives and DUP MPs believe that the outcome of the referendum would have been different if the EU institutions had made major concessions to Cameron’s government, the majority of Labour and SNP MPs think that the outcome would have been the same.

**Note:** Wording of the question: “Do you think that the outcome of the referendum would have been different, had the EU made major concessions to the UK in order to keep it as a Member State? 1) The outcome would have been different, had the EU made major concessions to the UK; 2) The outcome would have been the same regardless of any concession made by the EU.”

**Figure 43.**

Opinion on the consequences of Brexit referendum.



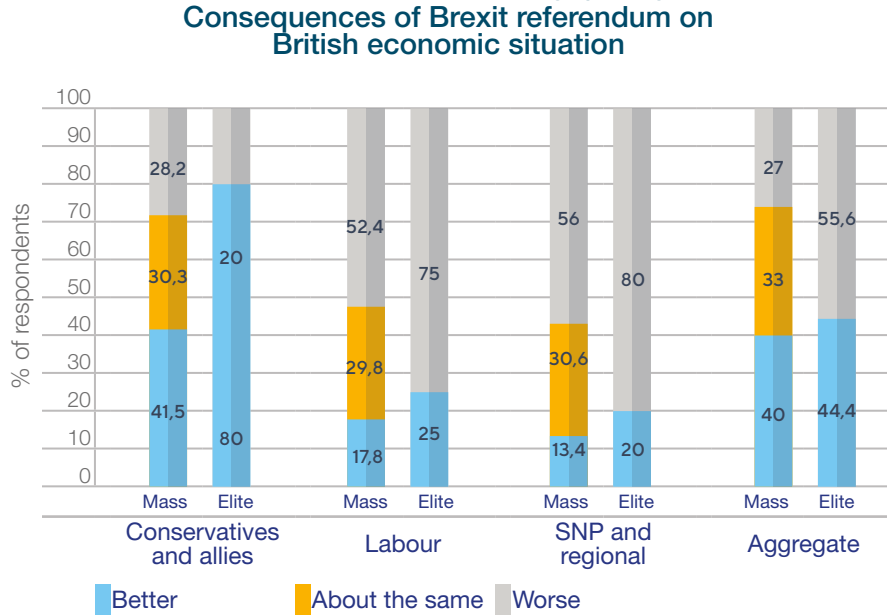
While only 27% of British respondents who participated in the REScEU mass survey believe that the national economic situation worsened in the 12 months after the referendum, this percentage reached 56% among British MPs. In the same way, the majority of British MPs believe that the international role of the UK worsened after the outcome of the referendum, while the mass sample is split down the middle.

**Note:** Wording of the question: “Considering the outcome of the “Brexit” referendum, would you say the situation of the national economy in the UK over the next 12 months will improve a lot, will improve somewhat, will get somewhat worse or will get a lot worse; will stay about the same / To what extent do you think that the outcome of the “Brexit” referendum it is a good or bad thing for the international role of the UK?”



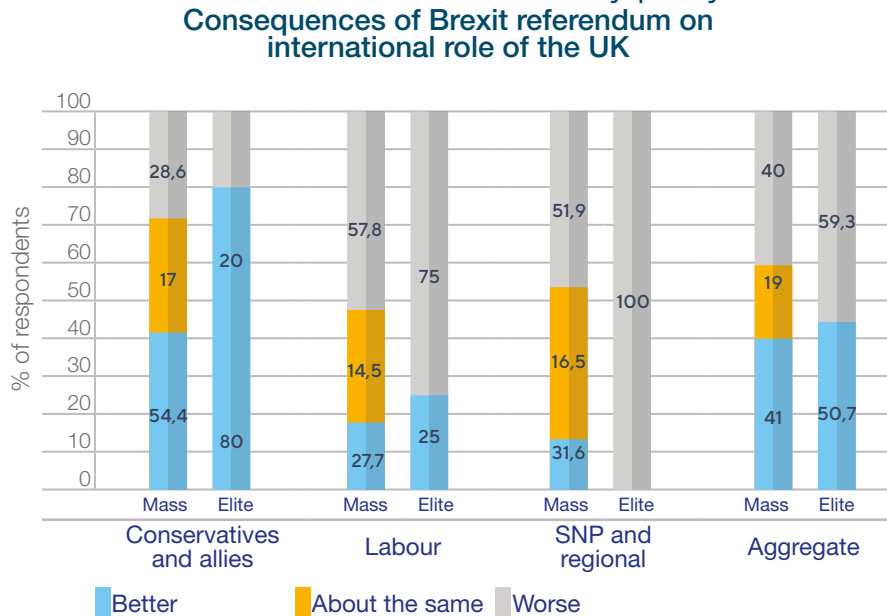
**Figure 44.**

Opinion on the consequences of Brexit referendum on British economic situation by party affiliation.



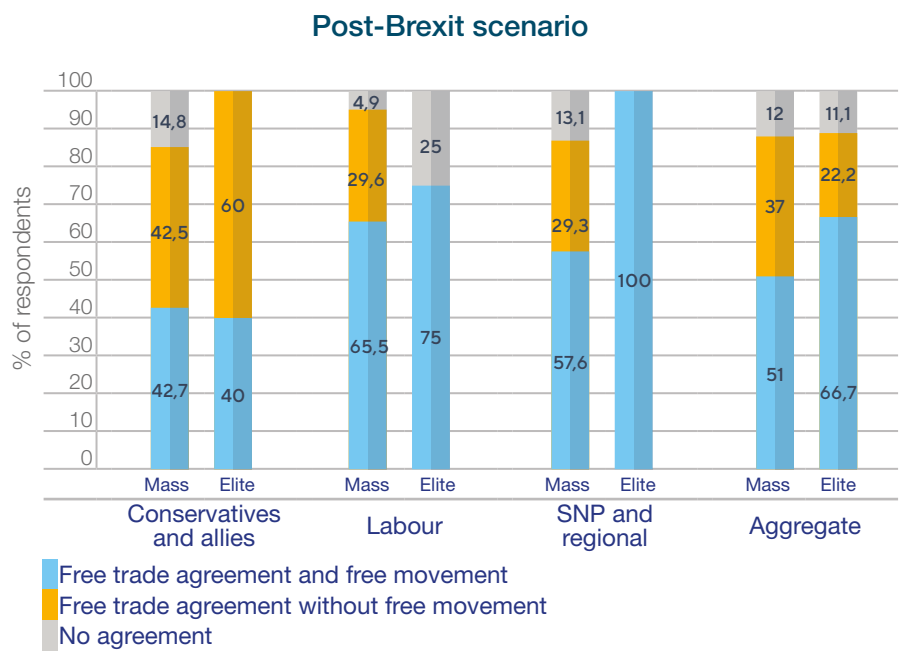
**Figure 45.**

Opinion on the consequences of Brexit referendum on the international role of the UK by party affiliation.



Concerning opinions on the consequences of the referendum, there are important differences according to the partisan affiliation of respondents, including voters and national representatives. Conservatives and DUP MPs are more optimistic than citizens who voted for these parties in the 2015 national elections regarding both the situation of the national economy and the international role of the UK. Labour and SNP MPs tend to be more pessimistic than citizens, supporting these parties on both these aspects.

**Figure 46.** Opinion on the future UK-EU relationship by party affiliation.



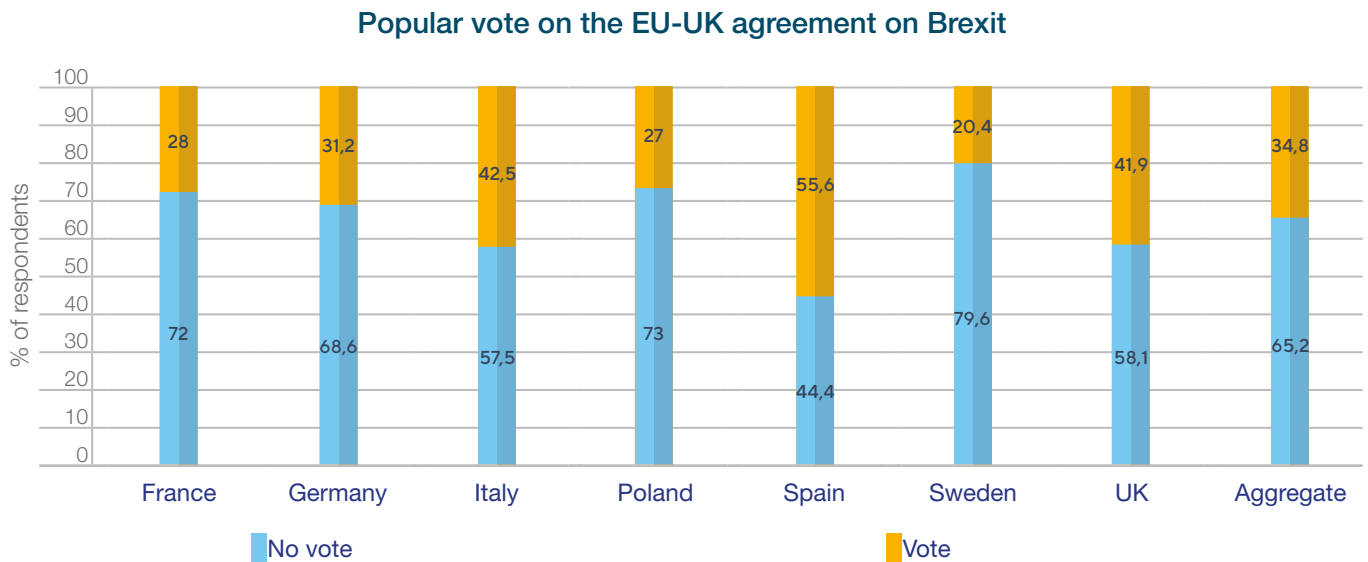
**Note:** Wording of the question: “Some commentators suggest that the British government may now be willing to sign a new free trade agreement with the EU. Which of the following statements come closest to your view? 1) The British government should negotiate a new free trade agreement with the EU, even if this means allowing EU citizens to freely live and work in the UK; 2) The British government should negotiate a new free trade agreement with the EU but only if this means not allowing EU citizens to freely live and work in the UK; 3) The British government should not negotiate a new free trade agreement with the EU at all.”

We now turn to analyse mass and elite attitudes over the withdrawal agreement establishing the future UK-EU relationship that the British government is negotiating with the European Commission and the other European leaders. British political elites are more prone than the general public to accept a new UK-EU free trade agreement that allows citizens coming from EU member states to live and work in the UK. However,

attitudes toward the UK-EU future relationship differ along party lines. Conservatives and DUP MPs are polarised on this issue. While 60% of them prefer a new free trade agreement that does not allow freedom of movement of EU citizens, the other 40% would opt for a “softer” Brexit, which allows EU citizens to live in the UK. 75% of the Labour party MPs prefer the “softer” solution as well, but the other 25% prefer a “no-deal solution.”

Figure 47.

Opinions about a popular vote on the UK-EU withdrawal agreement by country.

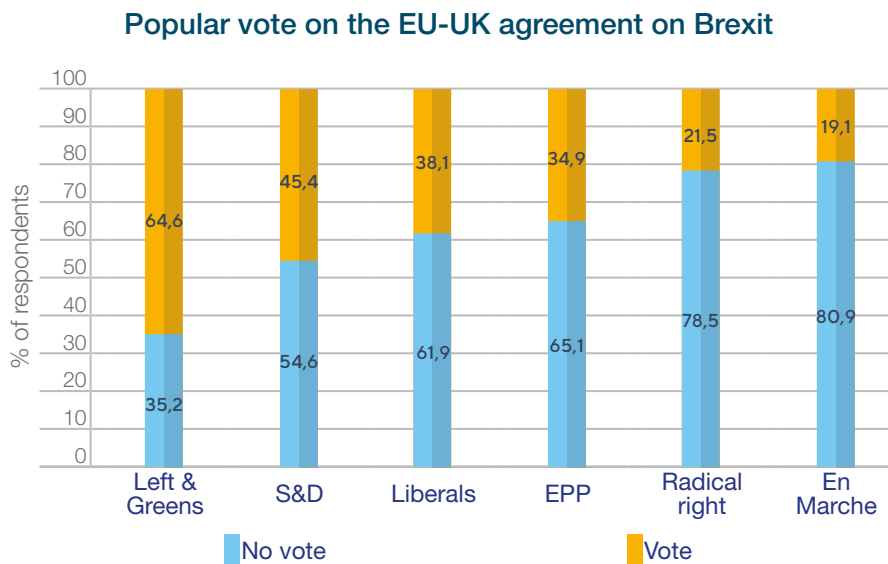


**Note:** Wording of the question: “Some politicians and commentators suggest that the intergovernmental agreement that the UK needs to conclude before its actual withdrawal from the EU should be confirmed by a popular vote. Do you agree with this position? 1)Yes; 2) No.”

We also asked MPs whether they believe that the withdrawal agreement Theresa May negotiated with the EU should be confirmed by a popular vote or not. In six out of seven member states included in our sample, the majority of MPs believe that the withdrawal agreement should not be the object of a new popular vote. Only in Spain, more than 56% of MPs approve the idea to call a new referendum to allow voters to decide on it.

**Figure 48.**

Opinions about a popular vote on the UK-EU withdrawal agreement by party affiliation.



Overall, the association between MPs' attitudes toward a popular vote on the withdrawal agreement and their partisan affiliation is linear. The share of MPs who oppose the idea of a second referendum that would let British citizens decide on the withdrawal agreement linearly decreases moving from left to right.

**Table 11.**

**Motivations behind the support for a popular vote on the withdrawal agreement.**

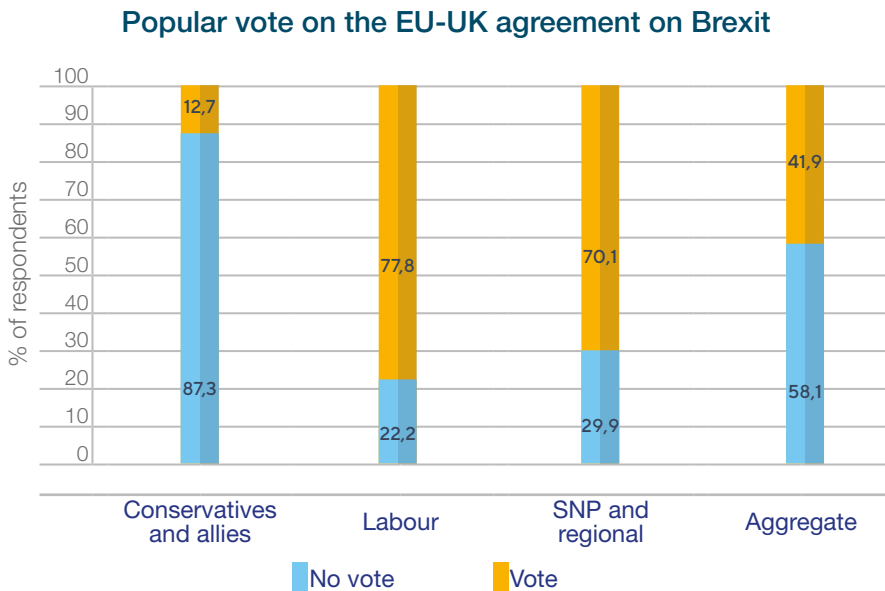
Attention to the public	<b>Vote</b>
Opportunity to turnover the result	83,5%
	16,5%
	<b>No vote</b>
Confusion	25,6%
Excuse to turnover the result	74,4%

**Note:** Wording of the question: "Among the reasons why you agree with holding a second referendum, which of the following statements comes closest to your position? 1) A second referendum would be an opportunity to finally bring the substantive aspects and effects of Brexit to the attention of the public; 2) A second referendum would be an opportunity to overturn the problematic result of the first referendum / Among the reasons why you disagree with holding a second referendum, which of the following statements comes closest to your position? 1) A second referendum would be a mistake because it would be even more complex and confusing for the voter than the first referendum; 2) A second referendum would be just an excuse to overturn the legitimate result of the first referendum."

To shed more light on this issue, we also asked MPs in all seven sample countries which factors motivated their choices. 83% of MPs who are in favour of a new vote on the UK-EU agreement think that this should be an opportunity to bring such an important treaty to the attention of the public. 74% of those who oppose the idea of a new referendum on the withdrawal agreement believe instead that this should only be an excuse to overturn the result of the first referendum.

**Figure 49.**

**Opinions about a popular vote on the UK-EU withdrawal agreement by party affiliation (only in the UK).**



Focusing only on the British sample, we detect relevant differences according to the MPs' party affiliations. While 87% of MPs belonging to the Conservative Party or the Democratic Unionist Party are not in favour of a new popular vote on the withdrawal agreement, 78% of Labour MPs and 70% of the MPs affiliated with the Scottish National Party are in favour of calling a new referendum to ratify the agreement.

# 8

## Conclusions and recommendations

European integration took off and then developed through time as an elite project, facilitated by the “permissive consensus” of domestic voters. Our data confirm that national elites maintain a high degree of diffuse support for the integration process. In general, however, they tend to emphasize the economic dimension of the EU: market making, monetary unification, free movement. They are less keen when it comes to expanding the EU’s role in the social domain.

This “social hesitancy” is not completely in line with mass preferences. The elite-mass incongruence is especially pronounced when specific policy measures are considered. This distance stands out in particular for proposals related to financial help to member states facing sudden rises in poverty and unemployment – among the most dramatic developments during the recent

crisis, which hit with particular virulence the European periphery. It must also be noted that some forms of pan-European solidarity are currently on the EU agenda, so preferences on these issues have a special political relevance today.

Even right-wing voters (the so-called populists) would favor a more social Europe. According to the common wisdom the last decades – and especially the current one – have witnessed a shift from permissive consensus to constraining dissensus. However, it seems that the latter has not affected the social side of integration. When examining the declining support and loss of trust vis-à-vis the EU, one should thus seriously consider the hypothesis that such development may reflect less a desire to defend national sovereignty in general rather than a disillusionment about the EU’s capacity to provide social protection in hard

times or even be responsible for the increasing vulnerability many people are perceiving. Support for a more social Europe is clearly observable also among Eurosceptic voters.

The social hesitancy of elites may be linked to pragmatic and feasibility considerations. As one would expect, it tends to vary according to left-right orientations. But hesitancy and the opposition to social Europe reaches its peak among the political elites of Northern member states – in our sample, especially Sweden and Germany. These elites are much more socially frigid than their own voters. And the highest degree of opposition is found among the German Christian democrats – the party of Merkel, Schäuble and Weidman, the champions of austerity since the beginning of the crisis.

The North-South divide at the elite level thus stands out as the core source of political conflict and ideational contrast in the EU today. This divide has revived an image of the EU as a utilitarian project driven by (mainly short-term) cost-benefit considerations by each member state. While it would be naïve and unreasonable to neglect the weight of these motivations in any process of multi-national integration, the radicalization of the emphasis on “who pays and who gains” was not the only way to approach the crisis. Other, less divisive narratives could have been chosen, compatible with (objective or potential) citizen dispositions.

This line of reasoning does not aim at justifying the behavior and policies of the Southern elites and their responsibility for some important aspects of the crisis. In addition, there is certainly a high degree of opportunism in

Southern preferences for “solidarity”. However, the challenge for Europe now is less to determine who was/is right, but to move beyond short-term utilitarianism. For Southern elites, this means engaging and supporting concrete measures to regain credibility in terms of fiscal stability and compliance with EMU norms. For Northern elites, this means overcoming their inclination to “nationalize” blame and praise, acknowledging that EMU is not a mere collection of intrinsically determined national economies, but a complex adaptive system that requires a future-oriented “systemic” government, beyond short termism in the calculation of national gains and losses.

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