

WHEN DO OTHER EU COUNTRIES DESERVE SOLIDARITY? ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF DESERVINGNESS ATTRIBUTIONS ON EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY IN A SURVEY OF 10 COUNTRIES

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Abstract

In July 2020, EU member state governments agreed on a debt-financed 750 billion Euro recovery instrument to react on the pandemic crisis, a historical new. The policy found wide-spread support among Europeans. European solidarity is not dead, after all. I argue that the pandemic differs from previous crises in that it didn't allow for blame games.

From the welfare state literature, we know that people assess the deservingness of other societal groups - the unemployed, the old, the sick - and condition their willingness to show solidarity accordingly. Existing research remains however limited on the effect of cross-border deservingness attributions. In a context of European fiscal solidarity, people would have to estimate the deservingness of whole countries and its political leadership, rather than a societal group.

This paper examines whether and how individuals' responsibility attributions of other EU countries (and their political leadership) affect their willingness to show European fiscal solidarity. Using survey data in ten EU countries from REScEU (Ferrera et al., 2019), I show that responsibility attributions do explain attitudes on European fiscal solidarity.

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Introduction

The European reaction to the pandemic crisis and the ensuing economic consequences of the lockdown measures as a response to the first Covid infection wave caught some observers by surprise. Public opinion was remarkably more in favour of showing solidarity with crisis countries than just a decade before, when the financial crisis hit the Eurozone. European solidarity is not dead, after all, as some observers had concluded after the arguably disastrous crisis management of the early 2010s (Beramendi and Stegmueller, 2016).

The two crises differ in various ways, notably in two key dimensions. One, the pandemic hit every country similarly. It was a symmetric shock. While crisis responses differed in their intensity and time, all countries struggled with rising infection rates and health sectors that were threatened to reach the limitations of their capacity. Secondly, the pandemic crisis was deemed an exogenous shock. Whereas in the financial crisis, discourse notably in the so-called Northern debtor countries revolved around the responsibility of Southern countries for their misery (Chalániová, 2013, Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2021). The appearance of the new Corona virus was not attributed to actor failure but considered a natural given.

The pandemic crisis suggests that deservingness does play an important role in the formation of European solidarity attitudes. From the welfare state literature, it is known that people assess the deservingness of other societal groups - the unemployed, the old, the sick - and condition their willingness to show solidarity accordingly. Systematic research remains however limited on the effect of cross-border deservingness attributions on European solidarity attitudes.

In the following, I will first provide a review of existing research on European fiscal solidarity and identify where deservingness attributions fit in the bigger picture. Then, I will show that deservingness attributions play an important role and that they interact with known determinants of European solidarity. The subsequent section will test my argument using statistical analysis of a multi-country survey. The last part will draw conclusions.

Determinants of European fiscal solidarity

I understand European fiscal solidarity as the “preparedness to share financial resources” with people in other European countries who are worse-off or in need, through actions

and funds mobilized by state institutions, including the EU. This definition is based on Stjernø (2004: 2) and specifies the interest in European solidarity of this contribution. It further highlights that European solidarity has different dimensions that need not be closely related (e.g, migration solidarity), and that this is about the fiscal dimension of solidarity. While the term fiscal solidarity is also used in federalism research, where it usually denotes the solidarity between territorial entities (see, for instance, Duff and Treichel, 2014), the interest here is exclusively in individual level attitudes.

The literature body has mostly emphasized the individual level explanations of European fiscal solidarity – that is, why some individuals are more likely than others to show solidarity with other Europeans. In broad terms, these findings can be subsumed in three branches: (1) (perceived) self-interest; (2) worldview, identity and ideology; and (3) (perceived) institutional performance.

The case for self-interest in European solidarity is both theoretically and empirically weak. Most studies find that its effect is either null (see, for instance, Bechtel, Hainmueller et al., 2017) or nuanced (see, for instance, Kuhn, Solaz et al., 2018). This is consistent with the idea that individuals lack the resources and motivation to be fully informed (Armingeon, 2020). People have limited knowledge about the amounts at stake and how they personally tend to gain and lose from such measures, rendering it difficult for them to perform cost-benefit analyses. Instead of egocentric self-interest, individuals gauge their sociotropic self-interest, that is, they do evaluate how their country stands to gain or lose from such measures. European solidarity is more widely shared in countries in which citizens expect to be on the receiving end of such a solidarity (Bremer, Kuhn et al., 2021).

As the effect of utilitarian considerations is rather weak for European solidarity, ideological considerations as well as identity are more effective predictors. Citizens with an exclusive national identity are less likely to support EU integration in general (Kanthak and Spies, 2018: 112). Nicoli, Kuhn et al. (2020) show that individuals with a European identity are more likely to support policies that involve cross-country redistribution. Relatedly, cosmopolitan individuals are also found to be more willing to redistribute internationally (Kuhn, Solaz et al., 2018: 1773). Political ideology, on the contrary, seems to be less clear of a predictor. While some studies do find that left-wing political beliefs increase the willingness to show European solidarity (Gerhards, Lengfeld et al., 2016,

Pellegata and Visconti, 2021), others do not or only in a nuanced manner (Kuhn and Kamm, 2019).

Finally, perceived institutional performance is relevant as well. Trust in the EU has been found to have a positive effect on support for redistributive policies (Ciornei and Recchi, 2017). Other factors, such as perceptions of national-level corruption or political knowledge are found to play a mediating role on the willingness to show solidarity (Armingeon, 2020, Bauhr and Charron, 2020).

Why deservingness attributions matter

The role and effect of recipient attributes is a topic that has received much less attention in the research of European solidarity. European solidarity is a somewhat special case of solidarity because it stretches the human boundaries of solidarity, believed to be one of the fundamental tenets of human behaviour (Choi, Poertner et al., 2019). People have a tendency to favour those that have the same nationality and live in the same national territory (see Costa-Font and Cowell, 2015, also Kuhn and Kamm, 2019). Against this perspective, the solidarity observed in the context of the EU, the solidarity with other Europeans beyond the borders of one's country - with out-group members, really - is a curiosity.

The importance of deservingness is a well-researched feature of individual attitudes towards the welfare state. Individuals have preferences of what they want their tax money to be spent for, and to whom (see Van Oorschot, 2000). Van Oorschot (2000) studies the deservingness of welfare recipients in national contexts and identifies five dimensions: control, need, identity, attitude, and reciprocity (ibid.: 35). Recipients' control over their neediness, or their responsibility for it, is found to be the most important of these features, followed by identity (ibid.).

Deservingness has been shown to be relevant in the context of welfare state policies. Van Oorschot (2006) shows that Europeans generally agree on the deservingness of certain groups (such as the unemployed, the sick, the retired) and that deservingness evaluations moderate their support for the welfare state. In the context of European solidarity, research remains unsystematic, although there is some indication that they do matter: For instance, Bechtel, Hainmueller et al. (2014) find that the support for bailouts among German individuals is moderated by whom is likely to receive support (see also

Katsanidou, Reinl et al., 2021). Bechtel, Hainmueller et al. (2017) also shows that the conditions of fiscal support are relevant for individual attitudes.

At first sight, the notion that everyday citizens are able to evaluate the deservingness of other countries seems far-fetched. Few citizens, even if interested in politics in general, will be able to give consistent, coherent and factual assessments of matters such as the structure of public expenditure, the social conditions, and so on, of other countries, even at times of high salience, such as has been the case during the financial crisis.

This consideration notwithstanding, citizens are very well capable of an assessment of deservingness of other countries, just as they are capable of assessing the deservingness of unemployed or the sick or the retired. Following the argument of Petersen (2015), humans continue to use the heuristics of small-scale societies and apply them to political questions of redistribution. According to him, the deservingness heuristic is a universal automatism that stems from evolutionary processes. One mechanism by which individuals make these judgements is through the deployment of stereotypes (Hjorth, 2016). These stereotypes may come from a wide range of informational source of different quality. For instance, there is evidence that geography and climate have an impact on people's national stereotypes (Linssen and Hagendoorn, 1994). Another notable influence of stereotypes, arguably, is cues from political elites. During the economic and financial crisis, much of public debate in many so-called "creditor countries" was about whether countries in acute fiscal need are deserving (Chalániová, 2013). The then widely used acronym 'PIGS' (and later 'PIIGS') to denote the countries in need of fiscal support (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain) is a case in point. Even in the absence of detailed knowledge about the macro-economic situation and the public spending of a country, individuals are generally able to judge the deservingness of this country by relying on cues.

Because these deservingness attributions are heavily stereotyped, they remain vague and unspecific. Deservingness judgements are made on a given nationality, and as such, there is no distinction between decision-makers and politicians of a country on the one hand and its ordinary citizens on the other hand. In these mental representations, potential recipient countries of European solidarity form one homogeneous. Governments and politicians who implemented unsustainable public expenditures and the citizens who would benefit from a regional investment programme financed by an EU fund do not

usually receive the benefit of distinction. They are, in the eyes of everyday citizens, one. Citizens are blamed for their governments wrong-doings, and solidarity is conditional on the perceived responsibility of these governments, even if it would benefit everyday citizens. Taking these considerations into account, the first hypothesis to be tested goes as follows:

H1: Individuals who think that other countries are at own fault for their economic disadvantage are less likely to show European fiscal solidarity than individuals who do not think so.

Because deservingness attributions – more specifically, attributions of undeservingness – are also “tool” by which certain groups are “othered”, those individuals with a more narrow, nationally oriented sense of identity, are particularly prone to mediate their willingness to show European fiscal solidarity. Evidence shows that identity and deservingness are indeed closely tied (see, for instance, Kootstra, 2016). For European fiscal solidarity, I argue that the implication is that deservingness attributions are more significant among those without a cosmopolitan European identity.

It is well understood that people with European identities are in general more likely to show European fiscal solidarity (see for instance Verhaegen, 2018, Lahusen and Theiss, 2019, Nicoli, Kuhn et al., 2020). However, one needs to appreciate the complexities of a European identity. Identities can be separate, cross-cutting, nested, or blended, and they are context-dependent (Risse, 2015). They are also mutually dependent, and research suggests for instance that strong regional identities are associated with European identities (Fitjar, 2010).

The question is not so much if people feel European. Different people have different reasons for feeling European, and what implications they attach to that feeling (Pichler, 2009). Territorial identities, including a European identity, need to describe a vision of “good and just political and social orders” (Risse, 2015: 26). Whereas the expression of some form of identification with Europe is widespread in relevant surveys, individual interpretations of the meaning of this identity differ widely. In this sense, I argue that European identity requires further precision.

As the European reunification process is cosmopolitan in nature as it transcends historical borders, I argue that it is a *cosmopolitan European identity* that can better explain the willingness to show solidarity with other Europeans (Pichler, 2009) The concept of

cosmopolitanism is gaining traction in attitude measurement. Some scholars go as far as to see the emergence of a new political cleavage between cosmopolitans and parochials (De Vries, 2018) to explain recent political events such as the vote in the United Kingdom to leave the EU. Cosmopolitans are described as outward-looking and open to other cultures, and they acknowledge and positively value the interconnectedness with other political communities. They see themselves as citizens of the world or feel a connectedness towards supranational identities and put less meaning on the limits of national borders, which leads them to share more concern with others outside of their own community (Inglehart and Norris, 2016, Kuhn, Solaz et al., 2018). Cosmopolitans are found to identify more strongly with Europe and to have a more open definition of Europe (Pichler, 2009). Finally, they have been shown to be more willing to contribute to means of international redistribution, in European contexts (Kuhn, Solaz et al., 2018, Medrano, Ciornei et al., 2019) as well as in more global settings (such as foreign aid, Paxton and Knack, 2012).

This concern for others outside of their own community is what mitigates the effect of deservingness attributions. Even when cosmopolitan Europeans deem nationalities to be at their own fault for their situation, they do not reduce their willingness to show European fiscal as severely as those individuals without a cosmopolitan European identity. Non-cosmopolitans, on the contrary, use the deservingness attribution as a mechanism to justify their unwillingness to show European fiscal solidarity.

H2.1: Individuals with a cosmopolitan European identity are more likely to show European fiscal solidarity than individuals without a cosmopolitan European identity.

H2.2: Individuals with a cosmopolitan European identity are less likely to reduce their willingness to show European fiscal solidarity, even if they consider that other countries may have mismanaged their economy.

Since deservingness attributions are dependent of cues, national context influences the salience of deservingness. The expectation is that deservingness becomes salient where the costs of European fiscal solidarity are the most salient, that is, in economically stronger countries in which citizens expect to be at the giving end of a solidarity scheme. The inverse is equally plausible: In economically less affluent countries, citizens are more

likely to expect to be at the receiving end of a solidarity scheme. Accordingly, their concern for deservingness of others is less relevant (Vasilopoulou and Talving, 2020).

Finally, there is the institutional argument that national welfare institutions shape the way citizens think about solidarity and concepts of deservingness, neediness and belonging (Larsen, 2008). In countries with a strong welfare regime that provides far-reaching universal welfare and reduces income inequality between citizens, institutions foster beliefs of social solidarity. On the contrary, in less extensive conservative welfare regimes, measures of mean-testing and lower levels of generosity of welfare create boundaries between a perceived population majority and a deviant group of welfare dependents (ibid.). Deservingness judgements are primed when the welfare state is organized on a more selective basis, using means-testing. This makes the otherness of recipients more visible and invites debate about their deservingness (Kymlicka, 2020). In line with this argument, Van Der Waal, De Koster et al. (2013) find that populations in liberal and conservative welfare regimes are more prone to welfare chauvinism than in Socialdemocratic welfare regimes.

There is little systematic research on the link between national welfare state institutions and European solidarity attitudes. As concerns perceptions of EU integration, studies show that citizens perceive European integration as a threat to the viability of welfare state (Beaudonnet, 2015). In more effective welfare states, notably lower-income individuals who depend the most on welfare are less likely to support European integration. Even though there is evidence that attitudes on specific EU policies become diversified (see Kanthak and Spies, 2018), because EU policies remain low salience issues, individuals with limited political sophistication are guided by their general beliefs on the state of EU integration. Policies of European fiscal solidarity raise issues of both the depth and width of EU integration (i.e., ‘how much solidarity, and with whom?’), and individuals’ willingness to show solidarity is thus guided by general beliefs (Franchino and Segatti, 2019).

As concerns attitudes on social Europe, a broader concept that encompasses European solidarity, Baute, Meuleman et al. (2019) investigate both theoretically plausible directions – the spillover effect and the obstacle effect. For their sample of Belgian citizens, they find that high levels of support for the principles of the welfare state have a positive effect on attitudes on social Europe, including on European solidarity. Assuming

that European solidarity and welfare state solidarity are nurtured by the same latent beliefs about community and interdependence, I will assume that in more extensive welfare states, the relevance of the deservingness heuristic is lower, and support for European solidarity is higher.

H3.1: The importance of attributed responsibility is higher in countries with a higher GNI per capita than in countries with a lower GNI per capita.

H3.2: The importance of attributed responsibility is lower in countries with a more extensive welfare state than in countries with a less extensive welfare state.

Methodology and data

The empirical analysis relies on the data provided by the mass survey conducted by the research project REScEU (Donati, Pellegata et al., 2021). This survey was conducted in summer 2019 – before the pandemic crisis – in ten member states of the EU with a respective sample size of about 1500 respondents per country. The national samples are stratified by gender, age, education, and region of residence. Participants were interviewed using the CAWI methodology. The country sample includes member states that reflect the theoretical diversity relevant to the topic. In total, the sample includes 15149 individual respondents. I will first present the choice for operationalizations and have a preliminary data analysis, before going more in-depth.

Dependent variable

As the goal of this research is to identify if there is an effect of deservingness assessments on European fiscal solidarity, the dependent variable is the willingness to show *European fiscal solidarity*. In operational terms, the following survey item captures the concept:

“To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: All EU Member States, including (COUNTRY), should contribute to a common EU fund to help any other Member State facing potential severe economic and financial difficulties in times of crisis.”

Respondents answer on a fully-labelled 4-point Likert scale, or they indicate that they “don’t know”.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of the dependent variable for all countries of the sample. The labels show the share of the respective category relative to the national sample. Two

thirds indicated that they either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree”. On the flip side, about 27 percent of the sample overall said they “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree” with the creation of such a fund.

There is noteworthy variation among countries of the sample. The lowest share of individuals willing to show solidarity is found in Finland, with 47% of respondents indicating strong or some agreement. The highest level of solidarity is found in Spain, where 81% or respondents either strongly or somewhat agree. In each of the countries, “somewhat agree” is the most common response.

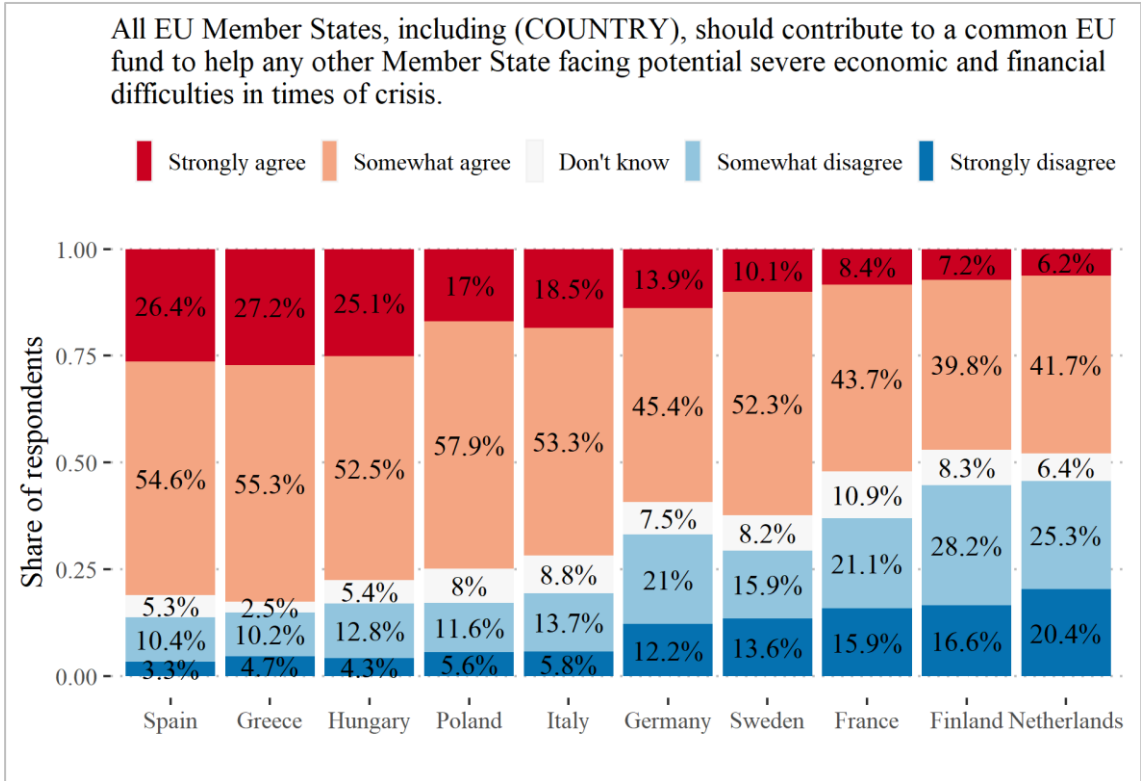


Figure 1. There are high levels of support for the creation of a common EU fund to help any other Member State facing potential severe economic and financial difficulties.

For the purpose of further analysis, the response scale to the question on the creation of a common EU fund has been recoded to a binary variable where 1 indicates that individuals ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agree, and 0 means the individuals at least ‘somewhat’ disagreed. The loss of information by this operation is limited. It allows to more precisely estimate the threshold between agreement and disagreement and avoids having to deal with the ambiguities of ordinal data.

For the purpose of robustness checks, I construct an additional variable that takes into account the response to a follow-up question in which respondents are asked if they would

be willing to support a 1% increase in their income tax for this purpose. Here, I encode respondents who agree with the creation of a common EU fund and are willing to contribute to it personally as ‘1’, and those who do not as ‘0’.

Independent variables

The attributed responsibility of recipients is captured with the following item:

“During the crisis some member states have done better than others (e.g. in terms of unemployment, poverty or growth rates). Please indicate to what extent do you agree with the following statements: The weaker member states have mismanaged their economy and public finances.”

Respondents answer on a fully-labelled scale from 1 to 4, whereas 1 signifies strong agreement and 4 means strong disagreement, or they indicate that they don’t know.

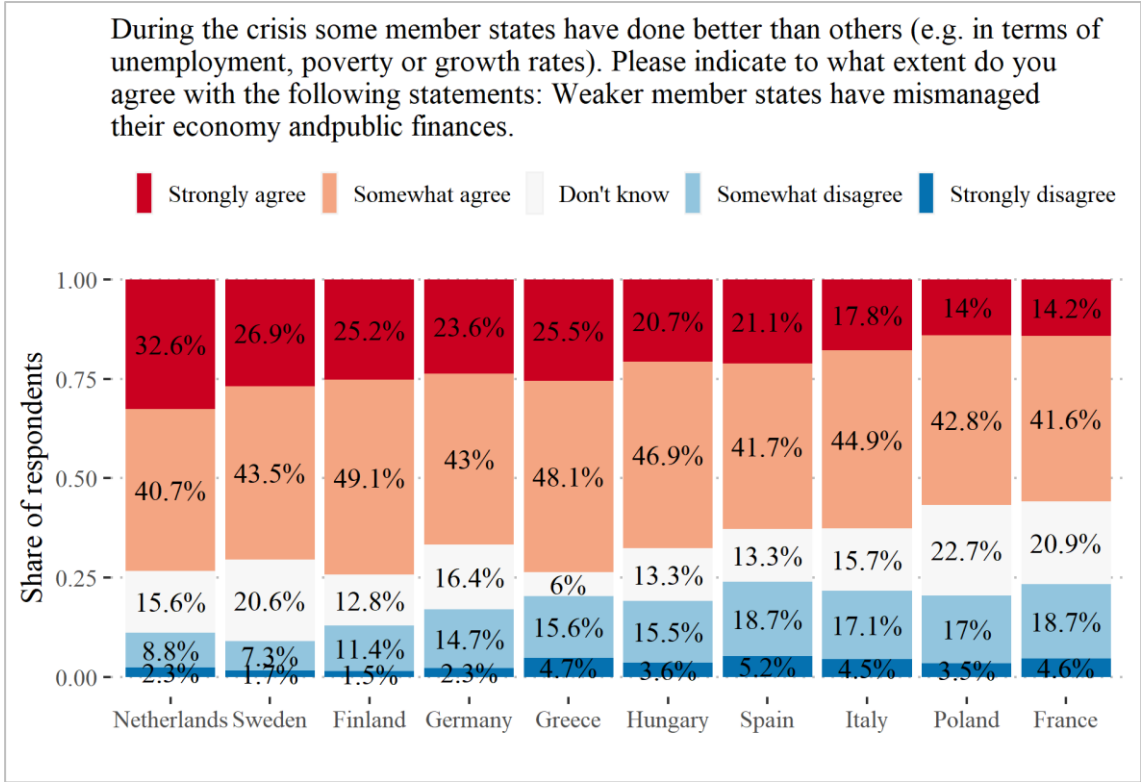


Figure 2. Few individuals disagree with the statement that weaker member states have mismanaged their economy and public finances.

It should be noted that in the survey design, the measurement of deservingness in the survey is not immediately connected to the question block about solidarity. It stands to argue that the empirical relation measured here, if there is any, is likely to be lower than in a methodological setup where the question of deservingness is primed immediately before asking for the individual willingness to show solidarity.

Figure 2 depicts the distribution of responses to this item for all countries in the sample. There are two relevant observations: First, the distribution is strongly biased towards agreement, with roughly two thirds of respondents saying they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement. On the other side, only about 17,8% of the respondents said they “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree”, with the later constituting only roughly 3,4% of the sample. Almost 16% of the sample indicated that they don’t know.

Perhaps surprisingly, variation between member states is very low. The proportion of respondents who strongly or somewhat agree ranges from 56% (France) to 70.9% (Sweden). Furthermore, the salience of the subject varies by country as well. In Greece, where the crisis affected people the most, “Don’t know” answers are at the lowest. In countries where the crisis had less of an impact (such as Germany) or in non-Eurozone countries like Poland and Sweden, “Don’t know” answers are quite frequent.

Table 1 presents the bivariate relationship between the dependent variable and the attributed responsibility. All respondents who answered with “Don’t know” to either of the items were excluded. As with the dependent variable, for this purpose and all further analysis, I have transformed the responsibility attribution variable to a binary variable.

Table 1. Bivariate relationship between endorsement of a common EU fund and the evaluation of member state efforts in the crisis.

	<i>European fiscal solidarity</i>		<i>Total</i>
	0: No	1: Yes	
<i>Weaker member states have mismanaged their public finances.</i>			
0: No	655 25.1 %	1958 74.9 %	2613 100 %
1: Yes	2963 30.5 %	6767 69.5 %	9730 100 %
Total	3618 29.3 %	8725 70.7 %	12343 100 %

$$\chi^2=28.571 \cdot df=1 \cdot \varphi=0.048 \cdot p=0.000$$

The numbers indicate that there is a somewhat weak relationship between the two variables, as shown by the value of the Phi coefficient. The relationship is statistically

significant at $p < 0.01$. This suggests that, overall, individuals who believe weaker member states have mismanaged their economies during the crisis are more likely to indicate that they disagree with the creation of a common EU fund for times of crisis. On the other hand, individuals who do not believe that weaker member states have mismanaged their economies are more likely to endorse the creation of a common EU fund. Given that the hypotheses suggest that the effect is, among others, moderated by macro-economic context and is more relevant in some countries than in others, this is an encouraging first finding in support of the outlined hypotheses. Indeed, the bivariate relationship between the two variables is not the same for every country. In the country with the lowest GNI per capita in the sample, Greece, the relationship is statistically not significant. The strongest correlation is measured in Finland, where the Phi correlation coefficient is 0.147, showing a medium strong, statistically significant correlation.

Cosmopolitan European identities are captured by a combination of three survey items. I will follow authors such as De Vries (2018) and Kuhn, Solaz et al. (2018) who operationalize cosmopolitanism using measurements of openness towards other cultures, and the concern for wellbeing of others outside of one's community – specifically, in other EU countries. In addition, a measurement of the identification of respondents with the EU is also included.

Openness towards other cultures is captured by a survey item that asks whether the respondent believes that cultural life is enriched by people coming from other countries. Respondents answer on an end-labelled scale from 0 to 10, whereas 0 stands for the belief that the cultural life is enriched, and 10 stands for the belief that the culture is undermined. Respondents can refuse to answer and indicate that they don't know.

The concern for wellbeing of others outside of one's can only be captured indirectly. In one survey questions, respondents are asked:

“The European Union does various things to support citizen's rights, but some say that it could do more. Which of the following things would enhance your feeling of being a European citizen?”

Seven options are provided:

1. A more harmonised European social protection system, based on common principles and standards
2. The possibility of earmarking a small fraction of my income tax directly to the EU instead of (COUNTRY)

3. Greater support for studying and working in any other EU member states or moving there after retirement
4. More tangible EU support for the social needs of people like me or of the area where I live
5. A common scheme in all EU member states to enhance work training for young people and life-long learning for all adult workers
6. More decisions regarding social policy should be taken at the EU level
7. Don't know"

Respondents choosing the first option will be assumed to have concern for the wellbeing of others outside their community. While options 4 and 6 refer to a Europeanised social protection, response option 4 makes more salient the personal benefits of such a scheme, whereas option 6 is less concrete than option 1. Respondents who chose the first option are encoded as 1, all other respondents are encoded as 0.

Finally, respondents are asked whether they are proud to be European citizens. Respondents answer on a fully-labelled scale from 1 to 4, where 1 signifies strong agreement and 4 means strong disagreement, or they indicate that they don't know.

The three responses are used to reflect the degree of cosmopolitanism and will be kept as individual independent variables. While not the most elegant option, the creation of a cosmopolitanism index brings its own theoretical and econometric challenges. In addition, the theoretical assumptions predict an interaction effect with one particular subdimension of cosmopolitanism, which requires this variable to be included individually in any case.

Control variables

In addition to the independent variables, control variables of demographics as well as political ideology are included. Political ideology is measured in form of a self-placement on a partially labelled scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates "Left" and 10 indicates "Right". For income, respondents are asked how comfortable they can live on their present income. This variable will be kept as a categorical variable in the statistical model. Education is measured in terms of formal educational degree. Responses are grouped in three categories: "Tertiary", "Up to upper secondary", and "lower secondary". Again, this variable will be kept as a categorical variable. Age is measured in years and ranges from 18 to 70. As specification tests revealed that the effect of age is not linear, respondents were grouped in three categories (18-34, 35-54, 55-70) in the regression models.

Macro-level data

As theory includes expectations about the impact of the macro-context on individual attitudes, it is necessary to include such variables in the analysis. Given that the number of countries included in the study is limited to ten, it is necessary to keep the number of macro-level predictor variables to a strict minimum in order to ensure an unreliable estimation.

Table 2. Overview of country-level variables

Country	GNI per capita in 2019, relative to EU average	Welfare state effectiveness
Finland	1.115	0.808
France	1.084	0.772
Germany	1.234	0.695
Greece	0.658	0.612
Hungary	0.71	0.727
Italy	0.972	0.579
Netherlands	1.284	0.702
Poland	0.705	0.656
Spain	0.908	0.582
Sweden	1.213	0.64

Source: Own calculations, based on Eurostat and OECD.

The economic situation is captured by the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita in 2019, relative to the average GNI of the EU of the same year. Values range from 0.658 (Greece) to 1.284 (Netherlands).

For the operationalization of the welfare state type, I have opted to calculate the ratio of the share of people under risk of relative poverty (less than 50% of the median income) *before* taxation and transfers and the share of people under risk of relative poverty *after* taxation and transfers. For instance, in Italy, the share of people under risk of relative poverty is 0.337 before and 0.142 after taxation and transfers. This “welfare state effectiveness score” is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{0.337-0.142}{0.337} = 0.579.$$

This score thus shows the share of citizens who are under the risk of relative poverty before taxes but who are lifted out of it through taxation and welfare. E.g., 57.9% of Italians under risk of relative poverty are alleviated from this risk by the taxation and welfare state system in Italy. Of course, a single measure cannot fully capture the effect

of the welfare state. The advantage of this measurement item is that it avoids the complexities of diverging welfare state typologies (see Powell, Yörük et al. (2020: 81)), and also takes into account the role of taxation in the distribution of welfare. It ranges from 57.9% (Italy) to 80.8% (Finland). Perhaps surprisingly, it is only weakly correlated ($r=0.31$) to the GNI variable for the sample here.

From a theoretical point of view, it would be worthwhile to include further macro-level variables, notably whether a country is part of the Eurozone (which is the case for Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain) and whether it has participated in a so-called bailout programme (which is the case for (Greece, Italy, and Spain). The latter may be particularly relevant as the survey makes reference to the economic and financial crisis, and because in the affected countries, EU solidarity measures may be associated with austerity, which likely reduced people's willingness to show solidarity in these countries. Admittedly, there may be a confounding effect, considering that some of the bivariate correlations are fairly high ($r=-0.77$ between the welfare state effectiveness and the bailout dummy). I opted to not include them in the statistical modelling.

On missing data

Before going in depth, the issue of Don't know answers needs to be addressed. For both key variables, the European fiscal solidarity as well as the attribution of responsibility, the share of these answers is considerable (see Figure 1, Figure 2). Encoding these answers as missing values and applying listwise deletion is unsatisfactory, as it reduces the sample size from initially 15.149 respondents to 10.078 in the model including all independent and control variables.

More importantly, the occurrence of Don't know answers is not completely at random. There are theoretical reasons to believe that they do not constitute measurement error. Rather, the survey item correctly measures that some respondents do not have an opinion. As outlined, European politics is not something that many citizens have mentally stored and easily available opinions about. It is not uncommon in surveys on political affairs to find that lower formal education or socio-economic status in similar contexts have an effect on the likeliness of a Don't know answer (Purdam, Sakshaug et al., 2020). Ignoring this may introduce bias.

While it cannot be excluded that the data is ‘Missing Not at Random’ (MNAR, that is, the likelihood of missingness depends on the answer to the very question), such effects are usually observed for survey items of social desirability or high sensitivity (i.e., income). While there are no analytical tools to verify this assumption, the relevant survey items do not seem to lend themselves to such effects and do not touch on issues with which social desirability is associated. At the same time, the occurrence of Don’t know answer is found to be associated to all control variables, that is, gender, age, income, and education. To classify the missingness thus as “Missing Completely at Random” (MCAR) would also constitute an inappropriate handling of the data.

Thus, I have opted to apply simple-random sampling imputation for selected variables. This approach replaces missing values (that is, Don’t know answers) with randomly imputed values drawn from the distribution of known values of the given variable. Considering the country-level differences, a respondent of a given country draws their random value from the distribution of known values of this country. The rationale of this approach is the assumption that, if respondents without an opinion were forced by the survey design to make a decision, their decision would be effectively a random choice (Kroh, 2006). Essentially, this procedure introduces white noise.

I have imputed data for the dependent variable, as well as for the responsibility attribution variable and the Pride to be a European citizen variable. For all other variables, there are either no missing values (e.g. gender, age) or the missingness of values is plausibly MNAR (income, political self-placement, immigration stance).

I have used the imputed data in parallel to the data with missing values. The results of the regression analysis making use of imputed data are somewhat different in the magnitude of most coefficients, but do not show any qualitative differences. None of the statistically significant variables becomes insignificant, nor vice versa. In the following, I will refer to the analysis based on imputed data. The regression results of the data without imputation are shown in table A1 in the Appendix.

Regression analysis

The survey comprises data from ten different EU countries. As the exploratory data analysis revealed, there is some variation between countries. Since the number of groups (i.e., countries) is very low, standard errors for the level 2 independent variables in a

hierarchical logistic regression model are likely to not be reliable (see also Moineddin, Matheson et al., 2007). Instead, I have opted to use standard logistic regression (since the dependent variable has been rescaled to a binary variable) and to apply cluster-robust standard errors.

Table 3 presents the results of the regression. Model 1 includes the deservingness attribution variable as well as the control variables. Model 2 extends model 1 by including the cosmopolitanism variables. Model 3 extends model 2 by including the macro-level variables. Finally, model 4 adds interaction effects. Since age, education and income are not statistically significant for any of the models, the coefficients are not shown to improve legibility of the table.

The measures of goodness-of-fit all point in the desired direction. ANOVA confirms that the inclusion of macro-level variables as well as the inclusion of interaction effects leads to a statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) improvement of the fit of the model.

To go a bit further in the choice of model, I have investigated whether the models are actually improving in terms of correctly estimated cases. For this purpose, a predicted probability larger than 0.5 is considered as estimating a positive response, and a predicted probability lower than 0.5 is considered estimating a negative response. 72.3% of the respondents expressed at least some willingness to show European fiscal solidarity. This implies that an empty model that expects everyone to be willing to show European fiscal solidarity would be right in 72.3% of the cases. Compared to this, model 1 in fact performs slightly worse, at 72.1%. Model 2 improves slightly to 75.3%, model 3 estimates 76.2% of cases correctly. Lastly, Model 4 estimates 76.3% of cases correctly. All models are better in correctly identifying positive cases than identifying negative cases (e.g., model 4 correctly estimates 78.3% of positive cases, but only 63.8% of negative cases).

For the non-categorical and non-dichotomous variables, the assumption of linearity between their values and the log(odds) of the dependent variable has been inspected. Because this assumption was violated for numerical transformations of the income variable and the education variable, the categorical variables have been kept instead. Since the linearity assumption also did not hold for the age variable in years, this has been transformed to three categories.

Table 3. Logistic regression with cluster-robust standard errors for European fiscal solidarity, imputed data

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Attributed responsibility of recipients	-0.22 (0.17)	-0.31 (0.13)	-0.25 (0.16)	3.47 (0.31)*
Gender (1: Woman)	-0.11 (0.02)*	-0.18 (0.03)*	-0.18 (0.03)*	-0.19 (0.03)*
Political self-placement	-0.16 (0.02)*	-0.08 (0.03)	-0.09 (0.02)*	-0.09 (0.02)*
Immigration stance		-0.11 (0.02)*	-0.11 (0.01)*	-0.11 (0.01)*
Proud to be European citizen		1.21 (0.09)*	1.12 (0.08)*	1.11 (0.08)*
Concern for others		0.31 (0.03)*	0.35 (0.04)*	0.34 (0.12)*
GNI per capita in 2019, relative to EU average			-1.55 (0.26)*	-0.79 (0.23)*
Welfare state effectiveness			-4.73 (0.22)*	-1.80 (0.36)*
Attributed responsibility x Concern for others				0.00 (0.12)
Attributed responsibility x GNI per capita				-0.96 (0.19)*
Attributed responsibility x Welfare state effectiveness				-4.00 (0.51)*
AIC	12297.20	11311.60	10858.71	10813.87
BIC	12378.78	11415.43	10977.38	10954.80
Log Likelihood	-6137.60	-5641.80	-5413.36	-5387.94
Deviance	13779.47	12650.84	12118.90	12064.82
Num. obs.	12294	12294	12294	12294

Note: * $p < 0.01$. Population weights included. Age, income and formal education are not shown as the coefficients are non-significant for any of the models. Intercept is not shown.

Problems of multicollinearity have been investigated for the third model rather than for full model including interaction effects, as these are expected to reveal multicollinearity. No anomalies have been identified.

The results are also for the most part robust to the alternative specification of the dependent variable. Some variables lose their significance. This is the case for the two macro level variables GNI per capita and the welfare state effectiveness. Unsurprisingly, the subjective income variable become significant. Respondents who stated they are “coping on present income” or that they “find it difficult on present income” are less likely to show European fiscal solidarity than those that live “comfortably on present income”. In addition, the interaction effect of concern for others and deservingness attributions becomes statistically significant. However, this is contrary to the theoretical expectations, as the model predicts that those who show concern for others outside one’s community reduce their willingness to show European solidarity more than those that do not have concern for others. Table A2 in the Appendix shows the complete regression table for the alternative specification.

Interpretation of results

Support for hypothesis 1 is mitigated at best. Effect size of the coefficient is small, and in model 1 and 3, it is statistically not significant (at $p < 0.01$). In model 3, which does not take into account any hypothesised interaction effects, individuals who think other countries mismanaged their economy have a probability of 77% to be willing to show solidarity, compared to 83% probability as compared to those individuals who do not believe so, all else being equal.

However, the relationship is not straightforward and cannot be generalized for all Europeans. It becomes socially relevant only when taking into account interaction with contextual factors.

Hypothesis 2.1 is strongly supported. Individuals with a cosmopolitan European identity are more likely to show European fiscal solidarity, and considerably so. All else being equal, individuals with the highest scores on the three measures for cosmopolitanism European identity have a predicted probability of about 95% to show European fiscal solidarity, compared to 55% among individuals with the lowest cosmopolitan score. Hypothesis 2.2 find some although weak support. The fact that deservingness attributions become relevant only when cosmopolitan measures are included suggests that cosmopolitans are less prone to make such deservingness attribution. Whereas the interaction term of the other-regarding component of cosmopolitanism and deservingness

attributions is not significant, the visual inspection suggests otherwise. As Figure 3C shows, among those with concern for others outside one’s community, diverging deservingness attributions do not seem to matter. Only among those who do not have such concern, deservingness attributions seem to reduce the willingness to show European solidarity. It should be noted however that effect sizes are rather marginal.

Hypothesis 3.1 is supported. The interaction effect with the national GNI per capita shows that the effect of responsibility attributions is stronger in richer countries. Figure 3A shows how the predicted probability of European fiscal solidarity changes as a function of national GNI per capita and responsibility attributions (0=no responsibility attribution, 1= responsibility attribution). On the left side, among individuals in the economically less affluent countries, the effect of responsibility attributions on solidarity attitudes is hardly distinguishable from zero. However, in countries that are above average affluent, individuals who think weaker countries mismanaged their economies are much less likely to be willing to show solidarity.

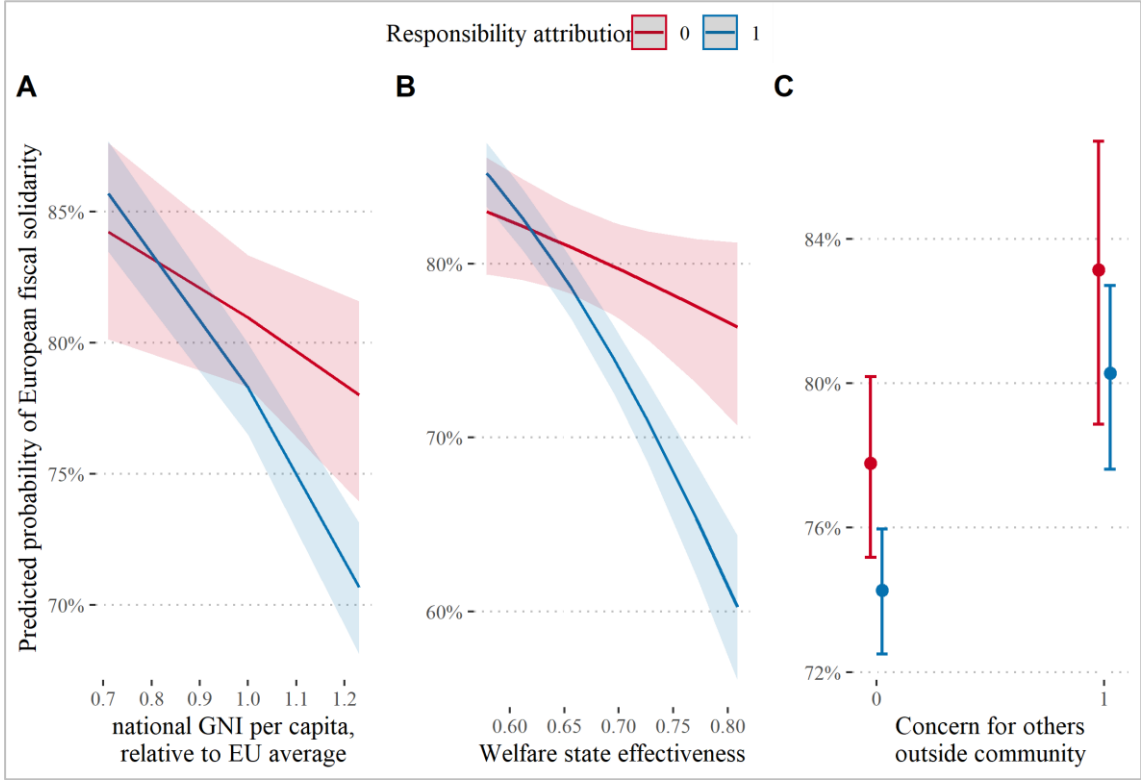


Figure 3. Interaction effects of deservingness attributions. Predicted probability of European fiscal solidarity with 0.99 confidence intervals, based on model 4.

The evidence contradicts hypothesis 3.2. Figure 3B shows how the predicted probability of European fiscal solidarity changes as a function of welfare state effectiveness and

deservingness attributions. Citizens who do not think weaker member states mismanaged their economies have the same probability to show solidarity almost regardless of what kind of welfare state they live in. On the contrary, citizens who do think weaker member states mismanaged their economies reduce their willingness to show solidarity in those countries with a more effective welfare state, but not in those countries with a less effective welfare state. This is in contradiction with the theoretical expectations that predicted the exact opposite effect. The results indicate that there is no socializing effect of welfare states that makes its citizens more willing to show solidarity in general. Rather, this finding lends support to the argument that citizens perceive European integration, especially policy integration that requires the pooling of fiscal resources, as a threat to national welfare systems.

Looking at the control variables, gender has a persistent and non-negligible effect. Women are less likely to support European fiscal solidarity than men. More left-wing individuals are more likely to show European fiscal solidarity as well. Age and education do not have significant effects. Subjective income only becomes relevant when personal contributions are made salient.

Conclusion

This paper examined the role of deservingness attributions for European solidarity attitudes. Despite the growing complexities as the political-territorial level of political action increases, and the complex multi-level interplay of governance in the European Union, the analysis shows that individuals do take deservingness into account.

However, the empirical results show that deservingness attributions do not function the same across Europe, and that there is significant country variation in the attachment people make to deservingness attributions. In economically better performing countries, the importance of deservingness is much higher than in economically less affluent countries. This can be explained by the fact that the salience of costs is much higher here than in economically weaker countries that expect to be at the receiving end. Similarly, the effect of the welfare state has an influence on the relevance of deservingness attributions for European solidarity. However, unlike postulated, the more effective a welfare state, the more important deservingness attributions become. The welfare state does not provide a solidarity socialization that makes people solidary regardless of political level and potential beneficiaries. Rather, the (sociotropic) concern for the own

level of welfare leads citizens to emphasize the deservingness of others, and makes people less likely to show solidarity with other Europeans.

On the individual level, the analysis demonstrates that cosmopolitan European individuals do not significantly differ from other individuals in the way they treat deservingness attributions. The concern for others outside of one's community leads cosmopolitans to regard their deservingness attributions less than others. Of course, it should be highlighted that the analysis of cross-sectional survey data allows for correlational conclusions, but not for any kind of causal inference.

From a scholarly perspective, these findings highlight the importance of receiving countries in the determination of European solidarity. People do consider who it is they are supposed to show solidarity. This does not only concern deservingness, but also wider questions of reciprocity, gratitude and stereotyping. Existing research has so far mostly focused on the individual determinants of solidarity, but the findings here suggest that part of variation is due to the receiving country, not the individual.

From a conceptual point of view, further work is needed to unveil the mechanisms at play. That mostly underinformed everyday citizens are capable of forming deservingness attributions of other countries is, from a rational point of view, surprising, given that a large volume of information would be necessary to make such claims. Future research will need to explore the role of stereotyping and media- and elite-cueing that is taking place. To investigate this, it is also necessary to go beyond the use of mere cross-sectional data.

As concern policy, these insights can provide an explanation why the general public opinion in the EU during the pandemic crisis was so much more willing to support measures of European solidarity than compared to the economic and financial crisis only a couple of years before. Attributions of responsibility for countries in crisis were considerably less hegemonic.

Forward-looking, politicians need to be conscious of the cueing effect their actions and words carry. Depicting other nationalities as less deserving of solidarity is an effective strategy in reducing support for European solidarity.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Logistic regression with cluster-robust standard errors for European fiscal solidarity, without imputed data

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Attributed responsibility of recipients	-0.26 (0.21)	-0.41 (0.15)*	-0.36 (0.19)	3.87 (0.39)*
Immigration stance		-0.10 (0.02)*	-0.09 (0.02)*	-0.09 (0.02)*
Pride to be European citizen		1.39 (0.09)*	1.32 (0.10)*	1.31 (0.10)*
Concern for others		0.27 (0.05)*	0.30 (0.04)*	0.17 (0.15)
Political self-placement	-0.17 (0.02)*	-0.08 (0.04)	-0.09 (0.03)*	-0.09 (0.02)*
Gender (1: Woman)	-0.10 (0.03)*	-0.18 (0.05)*	-0.19 (0.05)*	-0.20 (0.04)*
GNI per capita in 2019, relative to EU average			-1.48 (0.31)*	-0.54 (0.31)
Welfare state effectiveness			-5.05 (0.29)*	-1.75 (0.38)*
Attributed responsibility x Concern for others				0.16 (0.16)
Attributed responsibility x GNI per capita				-1.19 (0.21)*
Attributed responsibility x Welfare state effectiveness				-4.47 (0.61)*
AIC	9635.71	8737.85	8376.16	8328.96
BIC	9715.11	8838.91	8491.65	8466.11
Log Likelihood	-4806.85	-4354.93	-4172.08	-4145.48
Deviance	10884.82	9857.97	9426.72	9370.42
Num. obs.	10078	10078	10078	10078

Note: * $p < 0.01$. Population weights included. Age, income and formal education are not shown as the coefficients are non-significant for either of the models. Intercept is not shown.

Table A2. Logistic regression with cluster-robust standard errors for European fiscal solidarity, alternative specification, without imputed data

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Responsibility attribution	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.24 (0.11)	-0.22 (0.12)	2.01 (0.39)*
Gender (1: Woman)	-0.31 (0.05)*	-0.38 (0.03)*	-0.40 (0.03)*	-0.41 (0.03)*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Education (Ref.: tertiary)				
upper secondary	-0.17 (0.12)	-0.07 (0.12)	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.08 (0.08)
up to lower secondary	-0.12 (0.04)*	0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.04 (0.09)
Income (Ref.: Living comfortably on present income)				
Coping on present income	-0.30 (0.10)*	-0.30 (0.10)*	-0.37 (0.08)*	-0.38 (0.08)*
difficult on present income	-0.42 (0.16)*	-0.29 (0.15)	-0.41 (0.11)*	-0.41 (0.11)*
very difficult on present income	-0.45 (0.11)*	-0.22 (0.10)	-0.38 (0.08)*	-0.38 (0.08)*
Political self-placement	-0.13 (0.02)*	-0.06 (0.02)*	-0.07 (0.01)*	-0.07 (0.01)*
Immigration stance		-0.09 (0.01)*	-0.09 (0.01)*	-0.09 (0.01)*
Proud to be European citizen		1.29 (0.10)*	1.21 (0.10)*	1.21 (0.10)*
Concern for others		0.20 (0.05)*	0.24 (0.05)*	0.46 (0.05)*
GNI per capita in 2019, relative to EU average			-1.48 (0.38)*	-0.67 (0.40)
Welfare state effectiveness			-1.61 (0.63)	-0.43 (0.58)
Responsibility attribution x Concern for others				-0.30 (0.11)*
Responsibility attribution x GNI per capita				-1.04 (0.27)*
Responsibility attribution x Welfare state effectiveness				-1.69 (0.63)*
AIC	11463.46	9980.15	9816.38	9790.16
BIC	11543.66	10081.20	9931.87	9927.30
Log Likelihood	-5720.73	-4976.08	-4892.19	-4876.08
Deviance	13024.77	11354.19	11123.79	11089.87
Num. obs.	10078	10078	10078	10078

Note: *p < 0.01. Population weights included. Age is not shown as the coefficients are non-significant for either of the models. Intercept is not shown.