

Attitudes towards immigrants: micro and macro effects

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Extended Abstract

Introduction and motivation

There are some questions in the field of social studies which stay as an always actual topic for theoretical and empirical researches. Migration is one hot topic which is nowadays examined from more and more perspectives and it is related from classical anthropology through sociology and demography to economic and political studies but in the same time psychology also has a stand on it. Even, as a new trend,¹ the question of migration is nuanced with the phenomena of transnational migration and transmigrants, (Basch-Glick Schiller-Szanton Blanc 1994) resulting that some scholars start to speak about *old* and *new* types of migration (Van Hear 1998, Guarnizo-Smith 1998 in Remennick 2009, Favell 2008).

However, a further increment of transnationalism for the migration studies is that while for a long time studies were concentrating on the problems of immigrants in the recent years emigrants – their legal statuses, their emotional/legal/economic and other kinds of relations to their home – also became the center of interest (Halász 2009: 40). Putting it in another context and adding another aspect, we can say that basic forms of international migration are the asylum seekers where motivations are mainly of political kind and labor migration where people aim to find better (and better paid) jobs in another country. Sometimes these two forms cannot be easily separated, motivations are mixed and even migrants can have an interest to hide their true motivation.

¹ Though studying migration through a transnational lens goes back to a period of almost two decades, scholars tend to refer to this kind of approach as a new trend in the migration studies, and as a result most of the authors start their analysis with first defining the concept of transnationalism and transnational migration, which is visible in the amount of definitions we can enumerate. See for example: Basch-Glick Schiller-Szanton Blanc 1994, Faist 1999 in. Yeoh et al. 2003, Wallace-Stola 2001, Levitt-De Wind-Vertovec 2003

Nevertheless, this paper does not deal with the process itself and its forms and directions or the push and pull factors. Nor does this paper deal with the question of the emigrant inflows, the target group of the analysis is not the migrating population but the inhabitants in the 'receiving' countries where migrants tend to arrive. Thus, we intend to investigate how the majority population feels about the migrant minority.

The importance and the relevance of the topic and our approach to it is also supported by the fact the European Social Survey includes applicable items in its core module². For our analysis we use data from all the now available six rounds of European Social Survey, we will use the items developed in the above mentioned core module, as these questions are available in all rounds of the survey. Using the ESS data set, on the one hand means that we enumerate ourselves among the scholars who also use these data for the analysis of topics on migration, thus our paper has the aim to compare and complete the already available findings. On the other hand it means we do not analyze the topic for the US population which is one of the greatest receiving countries. However, a coherent Europe based analysis is a relevant topic, moreover, that the question of integrating immigrants is one of the most important policy oriented questions of the European Union, taking into consideration the recent and constantly ongoing debates³ on the enlargement of the Schengen Area also.

Background of the study

While overviewing several studies on the attitudes towards immigrants, it can be stated that scholars usually rely on large scale cross-national surveys, among which the ESS is one of the most popular for the analysis on the European case(s). In the same time other surveys of the kind are also often used by researchers, to name some of these: World Values Survey (WVS), International Social Survey Program – National Identity module (ISSP-NI), European Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), Eurobarometer etc. The multitude and the variety of these large scale cross-national surveys show the opportunity for well-grounded and adequate studies. Moreover, the fact that most of the large scale international surveys contain questions on the attitudes towards immigrants and migration – moreover, these questions are repeated in more or all of the rounds of the survey – underlines again the importance of the topic.

Regarding the main determinants of the attitudes towards immigrants the literature enumerates both economic and noneconomic factors. It is a salient hypothesis, that one reason for the rejection of immigrants is the fear that foreigners seek the already few workplaces so locals/natives will be the losers of the job-seeking competition as immigrants accept the same jobs for significantly lower wages. This argument is in correlation with the other salient determinant, the one that states that the highest education one has the more acceptable they will be, especially towards the *under educated masses* of immigrants as they will not have to feel their jobs in insecure. On the contrary, the lower educated local population is in direct competition with the similarly educated immigrants (Heinmueller-Hiscox 2007, Mayda 2006). However, these hypotheses do not always match the data, as Heinmueller and Hiscox concluded on their analysis on data from the first round of the ESS⁴ that they have not found support for the idea that the less educated resident population would have negative attitudes against the immigrant populations deriving from the fear of labor-market competition. One

² Even the rotating module in ESS Round 1 (2002) was devoted to attitudes towards immigration and ESS Round 7 (2014) will replicate this module.

³ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2438646/French-Foreign-Minister-Romania-Bulgaria-allowed-Schengen-zone.html>

⁴ It has to be mentioned that the first round of the ESS had the most detailed migrant module of the existing six rounds.

aspect which though seemed correlating with educational levels of respondents was rather the aspect of cultural acceptance of the immigrants, as more educated respondents seemed to be less racist or dismissive with immigrants and they were who favored more the cultural diversity which is also believed to be beneficial for the (receiving) country from cultural but economic points of view also (Heinmueller-Hiscox 2007). On the other hand, we can find examples for the first hypothesis also in other researches (Mayda 2006), thus in our paper we will also take into consideration the above mentioned correspondence.

The above detailed hypothetical relations are typical examples of one aspect of the researches focusing on the attitudes on immigrants, namely the individual characteristics and socio-economic features that shape the respondents' attitudes toward immigrants. Among these features in many cases demographic particularities (such as aging) are taken into consideration (Coebanu-Escandell 2010).

Another division is brought into account in the shaping of ideas and attitudes on immigrants by Malchow-Møller et. al., one that is related to the characteristics of the immigrants. They claim to focus on the image and level of acceptance toward the immigrants originating from poor countries, as the most debated policy questions are related to immigration from such countries, they say (Malchow-Møller et. al. 2008).

Further levels of explanations, completing the ones mentioned above, are the *contextual level theories*, as Coebanu-Escandell (2010) call them, or macro level explanations, as we intend to treat them. After analyzing the micro determinants of the patterns of attitudes towards immigrants, many researchers tend to have a look on the macro determinants, such as economic indicators, welfare state typology and the rate of migration observed on country and regional level, to name the most common ones. Markaki and Longhi (2013), following Schlueter and Wagner (2008) and Rustenbach (2010) emphasize the importance of the regional division, as, they say, the role of the regions has more relevant influence on shaping the individuals' attitudes towards immigrants, as the country level explanation may not determine that much if the country or example is too big. However, being able to divide the data on regional levels also is highly dependent on the characteristics of the data used for analysis. In our forthcoming paper we intend to complete the individual level analysis with country level macro analysis. As an extension of the explaining variables, we will include not only the above mentioned indicators (economic indicators, welfare state typology and the rate of migration) but also the levels of democracy and general level of satisfaction observed in the country. This will be somewhat parallel to the individual level analysis, where the political orientation is also an explaining variable. As for the rate of migration (the amount of immigrants in a country) we intend to use both the data available in the ESS dataset, but also external data too. More detailed descriptions of the variables see below.

Data, measures, methods

The following paper will analyze the attitudes towards migration and immigrants on a longitudinal and cross-country European survey data in order to identify the possible micro (socio-demographic) and macro determinants of the patterns of acceptance and/or rejection towards immigrants across Europe. In particular, we focus on two aspects of this issue, namely the attitudes to *levels of immigration* and the *reasoning for (not) accepting migrants*. Accordingly, two types of attitudes are distinguished: one refers to the opinion on immigration from the perspective of '*quantity*' (to what extent should people be allowed to immigrate to the country?); the other one refers to the evaluation of immigration from the

perspective of *'quality' or perception* (is immigration good or bad in terms of economy, cultural life or living conditions in the country?). Given these dependent variables defined, the paper will investigate micro level (individual) and macro level (country level) influences on attitudes towards immigration.

The analysis is based on the European Social Survey data. So far, ESS has 6 rounds fielded in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2012. We intend to use five items for defining the dependent variables of the analysis. Two items approach the attitude towards the size of immigration asking respondents about allowing more or less immigrants:

- a) belonging to a different race or ethnic group from the majority population in the receiving country;
- b) coming from the poorer countries outside Europe.

Another three items refer to the quality side of immigration, the perceived benefit or detriment for the country if immigrants tend to arrive:

- a) is it generally bad or good for the country's economy if migrants arrive from other countries?
- b) is the country's cultural life generally undermined or enriched by migrants coming from other countries?
- c) is the country made a worse or a better place to live by those migrants coming to live there from other countries?

Here it has to be mentioned, that in line with the previous studies in the field, it seems adequate to separate the second measure that refers to the quality of the impact of immigrants into *economic* and *cultural* components.

The most recent 2012 ESS dataset includes 24 nations: Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, United Kingdom, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, Kosovo. When we focus on a cross-sectional analysis, at descriptive level, these countries' rank order will be investigated in terms of inhabitants' positive attitudes towards immigration. In a next stage, a country typology can be developed on the ground of attitudes towards immigration using the method of cluster analysis.

Given that ESS has started in 2002, possibilities are limited to examine changes over time, the data cover only 10 years. Moreover, only the 15 countries that participated in all waves can be analyzed from a temporal perspective in order to analyze the changing positions of the countries in the comparative rank order. These 15 countries are Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, United Kingdom, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia. Apparently, time series analysis would bring a selection effect in the examination of changes in attitudes towards immigration over time.

Going beyond the descriptive level, multivariate analysis will also be applied. For this purpose a set of explanatory variables is used; individual characteristics like education or political-ideological preferences are considered, on the one hand, and country level features like extent of immigration or level of democracy in the country are taken into account, on the other hand. During this course, the impact of the individual and country level measures on the attitudes, separately for those on the 'quantity' and the 'quality' of the immigration and provides an empirical test of the hypotheses.

See below the intended explanatory variables enumerated.

For individual (micro) level analysis we intend to use the following variables:

- a) education (number of school years completed)
- b) age division
- c) experiencing unemployment
- d) financial situation (subjective evaluation)
- e) political orientation in terms of left - right placement

For country (macro) level analysis we selected so far the following measures:

- a) number of immigrants registered in the country in the ESS data – completed with external macro data from OECD sources as a second measure, thus to have the opportunity for comparison also
- b) type of the country where migrants come from according to the ESS data – completed with external statistical sources (OECD) again
- c) unemployment rate (from external sources)
- d) level/quality of democracy (aggregated at country level)
- e) general level of satisfaction (aggregated at country level)

Expected results (hypotheses)

At country level, we expect that higher size of immigrant population and more liberal political climate in a country will result in more tolerant attitudes towards immigration. We hypothesize that anti-immigrant attitudes are rather based on stereotypical vision and prejudice than on actual experience (Ceobanu-Escandell 2010; but see more: Kunovich 2002, 2004; Gang et al. 2002; Semyonov et al. 2006, 2007; Wilkes et al. 2007). The type of the country (outside of Europe, ex-socialist states) from where migrants arrive to the receiving country can also influence the attitudes towards immigration.

For temporal changes, negative attitudes towards immigration could have perhaps increased over time in the last 10 years. However, this finding is not necessarily general; it may be more characteristic for nations which receive migrants in larger amount.

At individual level, we expect that respondents with higher status and with leftwing / liberal political orientation express more tolerance towards immigrants as compared to their counterparts with lower status and rightwing political orientation. With respect to the economic vs. cultural components of the evaluation of immigration, we assume that education will be a stronger predictor for the cultural aspect, while unemployment or financial situation will stronger affect the economic reasoning.

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