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# LOOKING BEHIND THE CULTURE OF FEAR

Cross-national analysis of attitudes towards migration

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EBERT**   
**STIFTUNG**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of our analysis is to investigate potential factors behind the extreme cross-country differences in the levels of anti-migrant attitudes in European countries. Fear and rejection of migrants and foreigners is so widespread in some European countries that it can be seen as a socially-shared norm, while in others acceptance of migrants and ethno-racial diversity is a widely shared value. With the recent wave of mass migration (also referred to as the refugee crisis) these attitudes became especially significant in terms of the room European governments have to design and implement policies for migrant integration, and also the potential for such policies to be successful.

There is no simple explanation for these country-level differences in attitude, such as, for example, the extent of migration or the size of the migrant population. There are some countries where the size of migrant population is minor, while anti-migrant attitudes are extremely widespread, while in countries with a large migrant population there are widely varied attitudes towards migrants. Most studies, when trying to explain these differences, focus on some of the most basic individual background factors such as demography (gender, age, residence), level of social inclusion (educational qualification, income, or the risk of poverty) and political attitudes. These are all valid and useful explanations, but they might lack the complex perspective which comes of taking into account less elementary or hard-to-measure social factors. In this study we go one step further and try to integrate into the explanation of attitudes towards migrants various macro-level differences that are characteristics for countries and not individuals, such as economic development, the functioning of key institutions, and the presence and situation of migrant population.

For this purpose we will use already-existing data, and integrate information stemming from different data sets. The core information (attitudes towards migrants) originates from the [European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#), which is a survey covering a significant number of EU member states, and has been conducted every second year since 2002. The data presented in this analysis is a snapshot taken in fall 2014 and spring 2015; that is, before the refugee crisis began. The reasons for using these data are manifold: first, we consider this dataset as, methodologically, the highest quality comparative data on attitudes towards migration. Secondly, this survey's focus on migration is exhaustive and thus allows a multidimensional analysis of the construction, as well as the potential factors triggering anti-migrant attitudes. But most importantly, we used this dataset because longitudinal analysis shows that attitudes are very stable social constructions that change only very slightly and very slowly. In addition to ESS data we use macro level data of EUROSTAT on the level of economic development, and the share of the population exposed to the risk of poverty and social inequalities. Additionally, we use data on corruption from Transparency International, on policies of migrant integration from MIPEX and the various indicators of migrant inclusion from EUROSTAT.

## How to measure attitudes towards migrants?

Measuring attitudes is, in general, not an easy task. Measuring attitudes on migration or migrants across many countries, languages and cultures is even more complex, for the simple reason that people may have very different perceptions of the core concept of ‘migrant’ and ‘migration’. Also, there may be a variety of forces driving such attitudes. Avoiding a lengthy discussion of the extensive academic and methodological discussion on the measurement problems concerning attitudes, we will describe four aspects here and argue for the use of three of them for this paper.

The first and most commonly-used approach to measuring attitudes towards migrants is to estimate the social distance between the respondent and an imaginary migrant. This approach was elaborated by E.S. Bogardus<sup>1</sup> to empirically measure people's willingness to participate in social contacts of varying degrees of closeness with members of diverse social groups, such as racial and ethnic groups. The scale asks people the extent to which they would accept a member of a given group as a friend, as a close relative by marriage, as a neighbour or as a boss. The European Social Survey (ESS) makes it possible to measure the social distance toward migrants, as the 2015 round (R7) included three questions eliciting the respondents' feelings about having a migrant as a boss, a close relative through marriage or a close friend.<sup>2</sup> The weakness of this measure is that it homogenizes the ‘migrant’ and does not allow the respondent to differentiate between the wide variety that characterizes this population.

Another approach to eliciting attitudes towards migrants is to investigate the diversity of the concept of ‘migrant’ and find out about the reasons that lie behind acceptance or rejection (and varieties thereof). The ESS includes a set of questions inquiring about these aspects. How migrants coming from poor or rich countries outside Europe and within Europe are envisioned, or the level to which migrants of different racial, religious backgrounds would be welcomed. The survey also inquires into the acceptance of specific racial/ethnic/religious migrant groups such as Muslims, Roma and Jewish people.

A next aspect regarding attitudes towards migrants is very practical: it measures the level of acceptance/rejection based on the perceived potential of newly arriving migrants to integrate. These questions ask the respondent how important they think aspect of integration, such as the proficiency of the national language, educational qualification, and the potential for labour market integration and cultural inclusion are in deciding whether a

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<sup>1</sup> Emory S. Bogardus. "A Social Distance Scale." *Sociology and Social Research* 17 (1933): 265-271

<sup>2</sup> The actual questions were:

Social distance (Bogardus): How much would you mind or not mind if someone of a different racial group or ethnic background...

– Was appointed to be your boss?

– Married to a close relative?

– Do you have any close friends who are of a different race or ethnic group?

person can come and settle in the country<sup>3</sup>. The weakness of this approach is that it focuses exclusively on attitudes towards allowing/rejecting the arrival and settling of migrants, and gives no information on those who are living in the country already.

Among the many potential ways of measuring attitudes towards migration and migrants, a final avenue of enquiry involves apprehending the fears respondents have about migrants and migration in general. There are always real concerns that motivate people to reject certain groups of people, such as an existential threat, fear of competition, or the threat of unfamiliar cultures becoming dominant in their communities. These feelings are real even if the danger is sometimes less so, thus mapping them may lead to a better understanding of the reasons underlying such attitudes. The ESS includes questions about the root of rejection being the protection of jobs<sup>4</sup>, of welfare services<sup>5</sup>, and of crime<sup>6</sup>. Also, looking at media news and political discourses we can see that a significant part of these fuel the sense of refugees and mass migration as a threat to home societies:

**FIGURE 1: REPRESENTATION OF FEAR AND THREAT IN THE MEDIA**



<sup>3</sup> Please tell me how important you think each of these things should be in deciding whether someone born, brought up and living outside [country] should be able to come and live here:

...have good educational qualifications?

...be able to speak [country's official language(s)]?

...have work skills that [country] needs?

...be committed to the way of life in [country]?

<sup>4</sup> Using this card, would you say that people who come to live here generally take jobs away from workers in [country], or generally help to create new jobs?

<sup>5</sup> Most people who come to live here work and pay taxes. They also use health and welfare services. On balance, do you think people who come here take out more than they put in or put in more than they take out?

<sup>6</sup> Are [country]'s crime problems made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries?

In this analysis, we use a complex indicator constructed from questions on social distance (Bogardus scale), the core fear of migrants and migration in general, and the extent to which people reject migrants from poorer countries outside Europe. We do so because these three areas highlight very relevant factors in general attitudes to migration today: how inclusive the majority environment in a country is for long term migrants, and the fears that drive rejection or acceptance of newly arriving migrants from the recent wave of refugees.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

### Description of the complex indexes measuring attitudes towards migration used in the analysis

For the sake of this analysis we will use the following complex indexes as dependent variables that we aim to explain in the analysis: **(1) Social Distance Index; (2) Fear Index; and (3) Rejection Index.** These represent different, but equally important facets of attitudes towards migration and migrants and focus on somewhat different subgroups of migrants (migrants in general, Third Country Nationals from poorer countries, migrants of other ethnic and/or racial background). These three measures, though strongly intersecting with each other, still represent different focal points, and indicate the strength of acceptance or rejection.

#### *Social Distance Index*

The composite index measuring **social distance** is constructed from two questions in the ESS questionnaire: acceptance of someone of migrant background as a boss and as a close relative through marriage<sup>7</sup>.

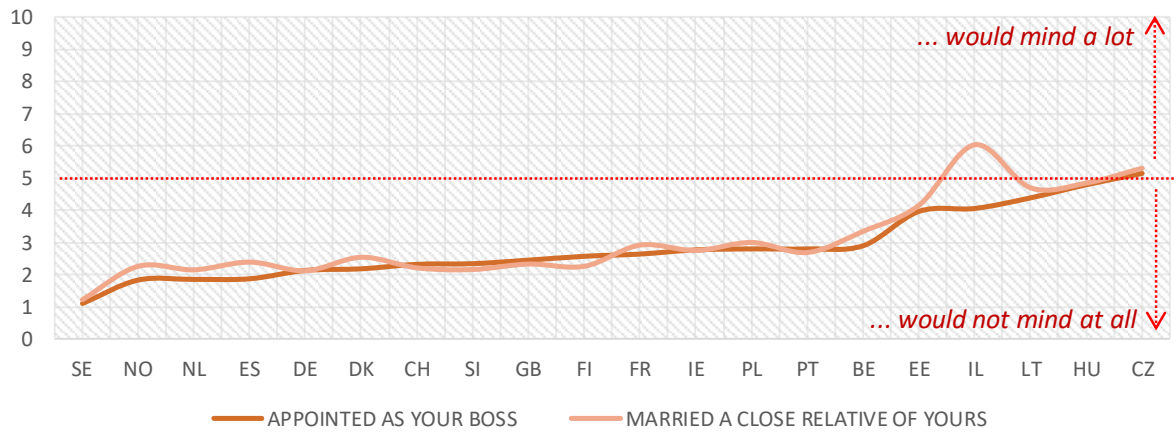
Figure 2 demonstrates that although in most countries respondents are more open (or would mind less) having a migrant as their boss than as a close relative, there are significant differences between countries. It is conspicuous that while, on average, respondents from countries with very small migrant populations (post-communist countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania and Estonia) refuse to have a migrant as a close relative, respondents in EU member-states with significant migrant populations such as Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark or Great Britain would generally not mind having someone with a migrant background in their families. At the individual level, the index

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<sup>7</sup> How much would you mind or not mind if someone of a different racial group or ethnic background...  
 – Was appointed as your boss?  
 – Married a close relative of yours?

measuring the level of social distance used in further analysis is the mean value of the answers for the two questions (each ranging from 0 to 10). On the country level, we use the mean of the fully-weighted country sample.

**FIGURE 2: SOCIAL DISTANCE BY COUNTRY (AVERAGE)**



**Fear index**

To assess the **level and content of fear that drives attitudes towards migration** we constructed a model of the sources of fear including five components of perceived danger: labour market threat, welfare threat, crime threat, cultural threat and religious threat. The following chart gives an insight into the content of the indicator we have constructed

**FIGURE 3: INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS OF FEAR INDEX**

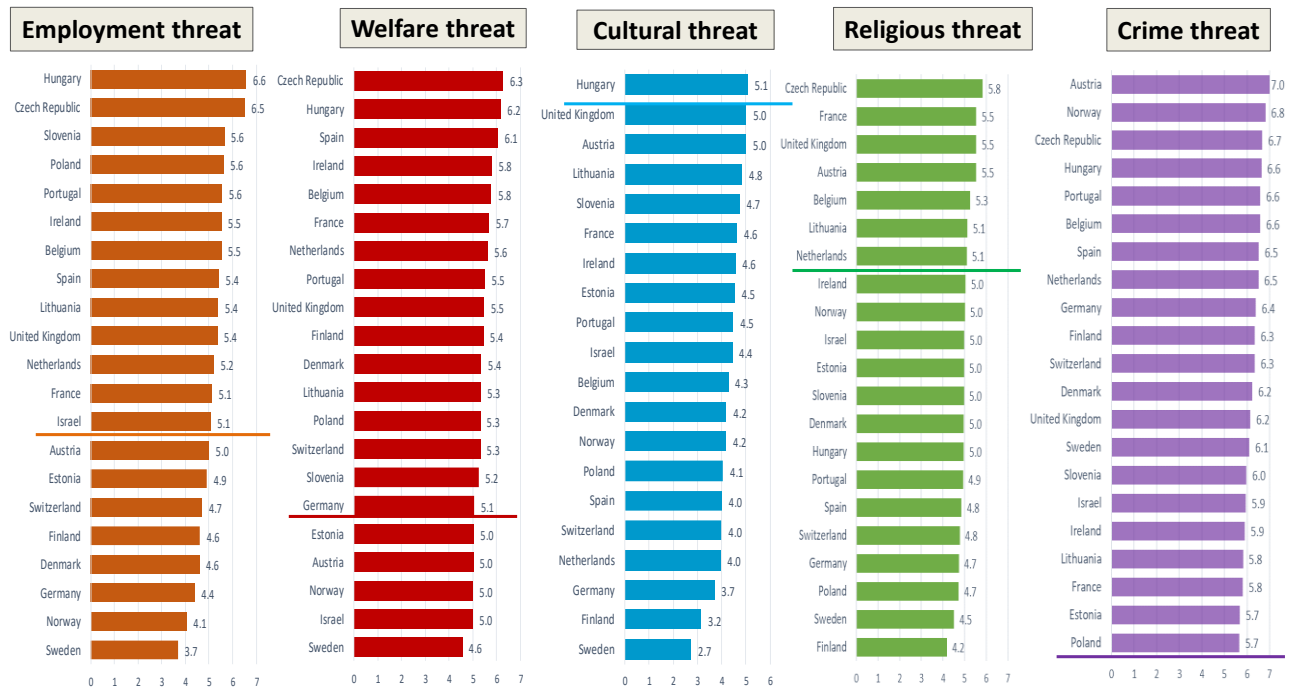


The figure below shows the national averages of the five fear factors individually. Values below 5 mean that the average of the opinions in the given country is more positive in terms



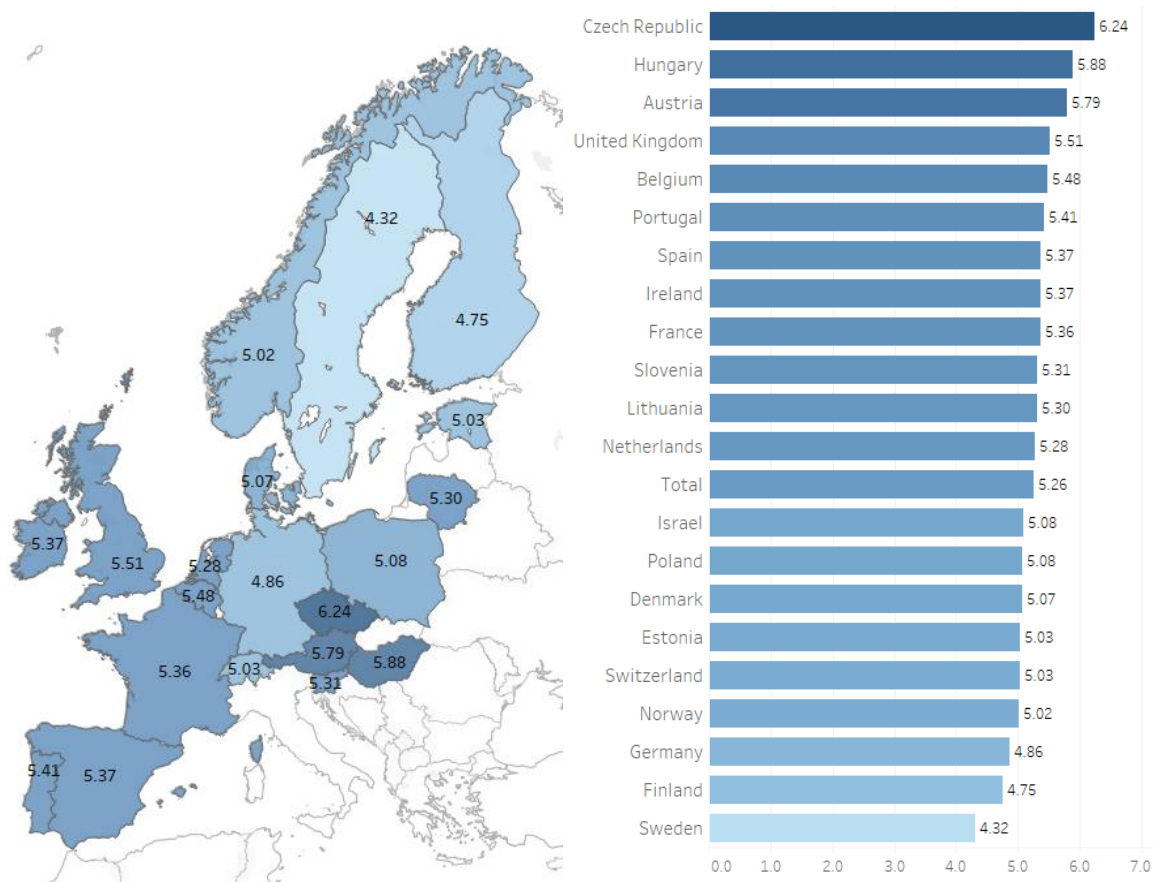
of how migration affects the given sphere, 5 is neutral and values over 5 mean that people on average in the given country think that migration endangers the given sphere.

**FIGURE 4: DIFFERENCES IN INTERNAL COMPOSITION OF THE FEAR INDEX**



It is clear that people in all European countries see migration as most threatening in terms of crime, while culture – in most countries – is seen as being enriched by migration. At the same time, migration is seen as an existential threat (labour market or welfare threat) in poorer countries of the EU characterized by higher unemployment rates and a weaker welfare state. People in Hungary and the Czech Republic seem to be afraid of migration in all respects, while Sweden, Norway, Germany and Estonia see migration as more enriching than endangering their country in terms of economic or cultural quality. The other countries represent a mixed picture. Austrians, for example seem on average to feel that migration enriches their culture and economy, but are also strongly inclined to view it as a potential source of crime.

Using all five spheres listed above we constructed a composite index of FEAR the distribution of which is shown in the chart and map below:

**FIGURE 5: VALUES OF THE COMPOSITE FEAR INDEX IN EUROPE**


Technically, the individual level FEAR index used later in the analysis is the mean value of the five elements of respondent's perceived threat, while the country level data is calculated as a simple national mean of the individual FEAR index.

### Rejection Index

Finally, a third index by which we will measure attitudes towards migration in this analysis is a very simple one: at a macro-level it shows the share of those who would reject migrants without consideration any migrants coming from poorer countries outside Europe. This index is constructed from a single ESS question<sup>8</sup>. We focus on those who stated that nobody should be allowed to come and live to the respondent's country from poorer countries outside Europe. On the country level we use the share of respondents belonging to this group in each country. For the individual level analysis (see later) we revert to the original form of the question, using the ordinal scale with four categories.

<sup>8</sup> To what extent do you think [country] should<sup>8</sup> allow people from the poorer countries outside Europe?  
1: Allow many to come and live here; 2: Allow some; 3: Allow a few; 4: Allow none; (8: Don't know)

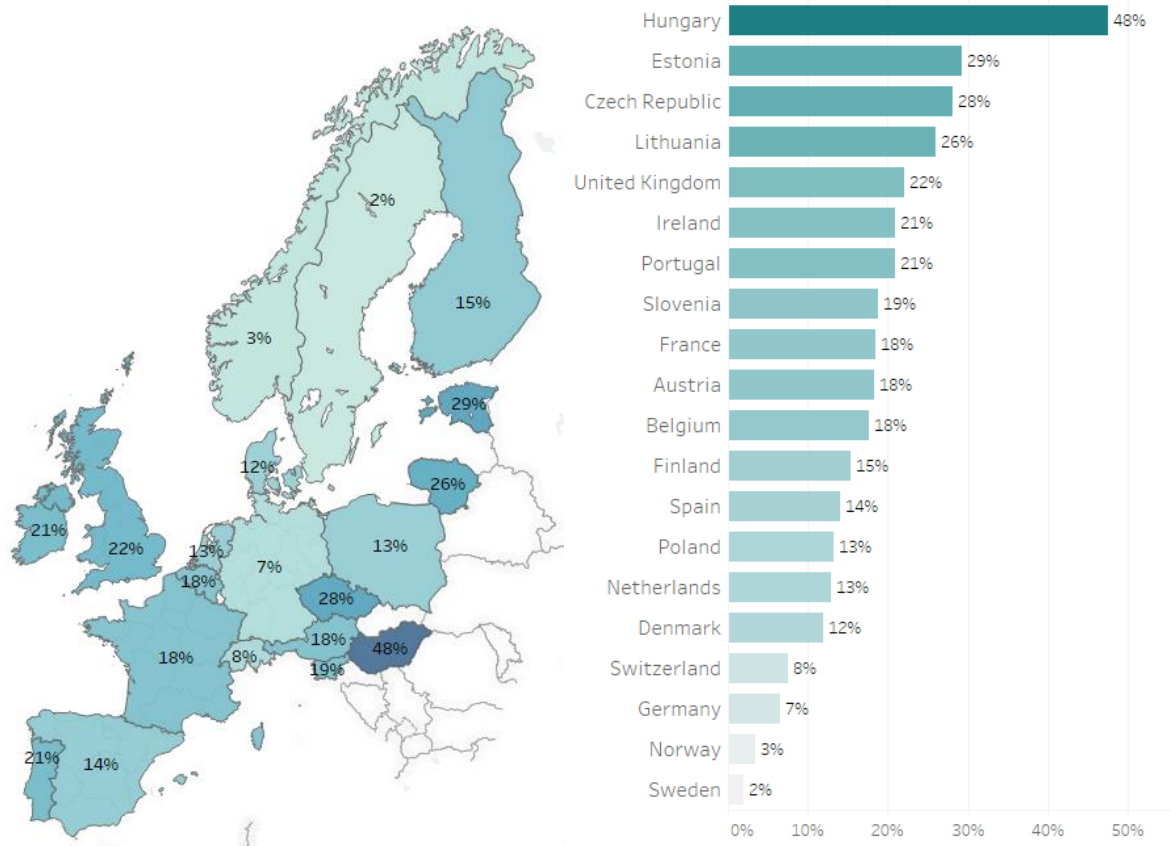
**FIGURE 6: VALUES OF THE REJECTION INDEX IN EUROPE**


Figure 6 demonstrates that complete rejection of TCN migrants is most widespread in Hungary, where almost half of the population thinks that nobody should be allowed to come and settle in the country. In other post-communist countries, such as Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Estonia this opinion is shared by somewhat more than quarter of the population. People in countries with the highest number TCN migrants (Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands) are the most considerate: there are hardly any who share the opinion that all TCN should be refused without consideration.

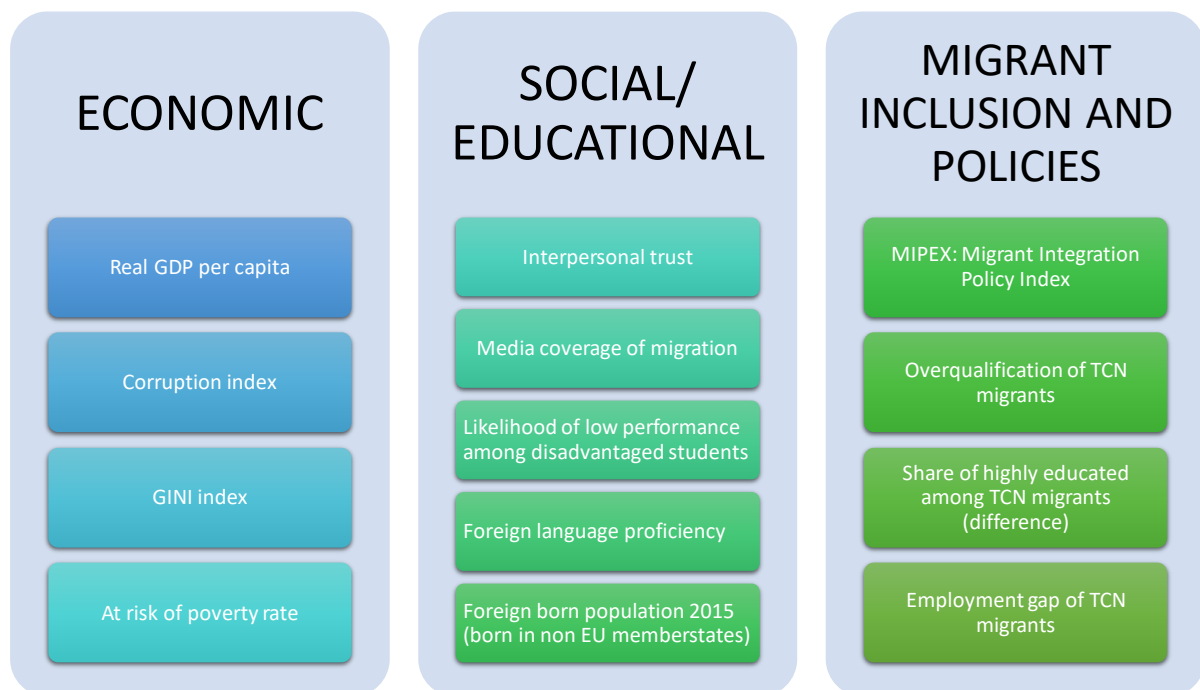
### 3. COUNTRY (MACRO) LEVEL FACTORS BEHIND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION

The next step was to identify several macro-level factors that may potentially have a direct or indirect effect on attitudes towards migration. These are used as independent variables in the analysis:

- economic factors such as the level of economic development; level of perceived corruption, and trust in state institutions;
- social and political factors that enable the home population to be open towards migrants: social inequalities characteristic of the country; social cohesion and non-discrimination, individual trust, second language skills of the home population; media content on migration and equity in education.
- and factors influencing the chances of migrant inclusion such as the size of TCN migrants in the country, their labour market characteristics; quality of migrant inclusion policies.

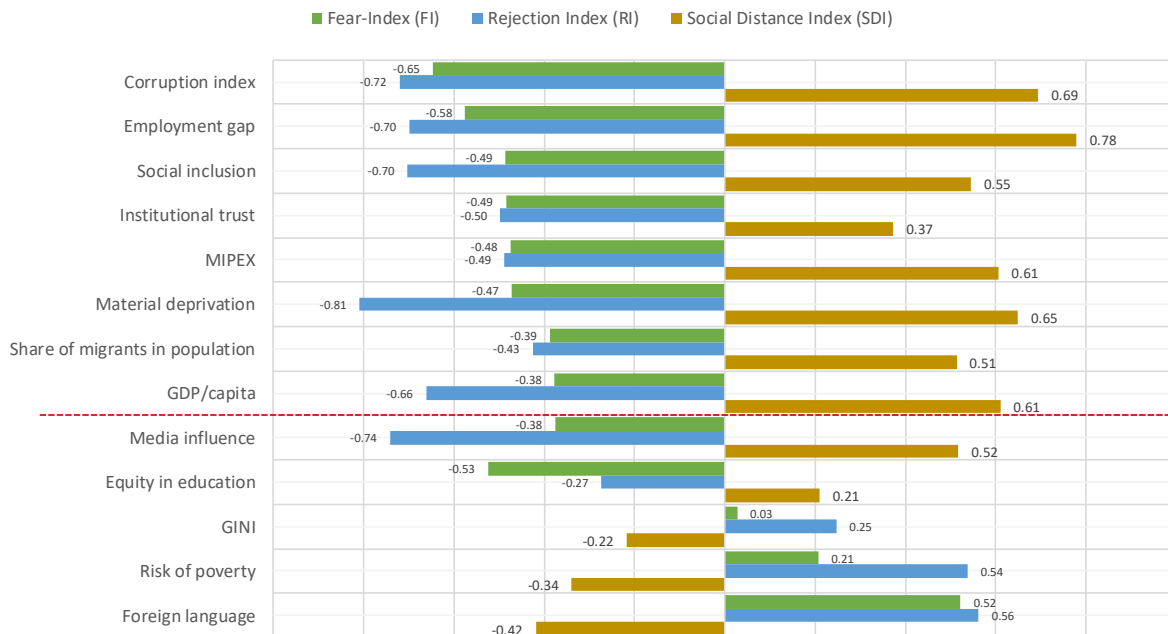
On a wider scale, we presume that these macro level characteristics of a country define the stability and cohesion of the country, the strength of the tissue of its society and thus influence its self-confidence and potential to welcome migrants.

**FIGURE 7: MACRO-LEVEL ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND MIGRATION POLICY RELATED FACTORS USED TO EXPLAIN CROSS-COUNTRY DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDE TOWARDS MIGRATION**



Following the collection of data representing (some of) these factors we ran a statistical analysis revealing the strength of the relationship between these and each of the three indexes representing attitudes towards migration (Social Distance Index (SDI), Fear Index (FI), Rejection Index (RI)). The following chart summarizes this preliminary analysis.

**FIGURE 8: CORRELATIONS OF COUNTRY LEVEL FACTORS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRANTS**



Statistically significant correlations (relationships) were found in the case of some of the factors related to the functioning of the countries' economies. In more economically-developed countries (countries with a higher **GDP/Capita**) acceptance of migrants is generally higher<sup>9</sup>. **General levels of trust in institutions** and the perceived level of **corruption** seem to correlate strongly with the acceptance of migrants too.<sup>10</sup> Translating these findings, we may say that in countries with a higher level of trust in state institutions, and lower level of perceived corruption, anti-migrant attitudes are significantly less widespread. Social inequalities measured by income (GINI) and the level of poverty (measured by the EU SILC 'at risk of poverty rate') did not seem to be correlated with attitudes about migration on a country level, while non-income based measures of poverty and social cohesion do correlate with anti-migrant attitudes. As for indicators of the presence and integration of migrants, we found some important correlations there too: the **share of third-country nationals** within the entire population correlates with SDI, meaning that the larger the share of migrants in a society, the less social distance is detectable. We found that the **labour market characteristics**

<sup>9</sup> Person Corr. for SDI = 0.61 ( $p=0.006$ ) and for RI = -0.662 ( $p= 0.001$ ).

<sup>10</sup> The former correlates with the level of rejection and fear from migrants but not with social distance while the later correlates very strongly with all three indexes.

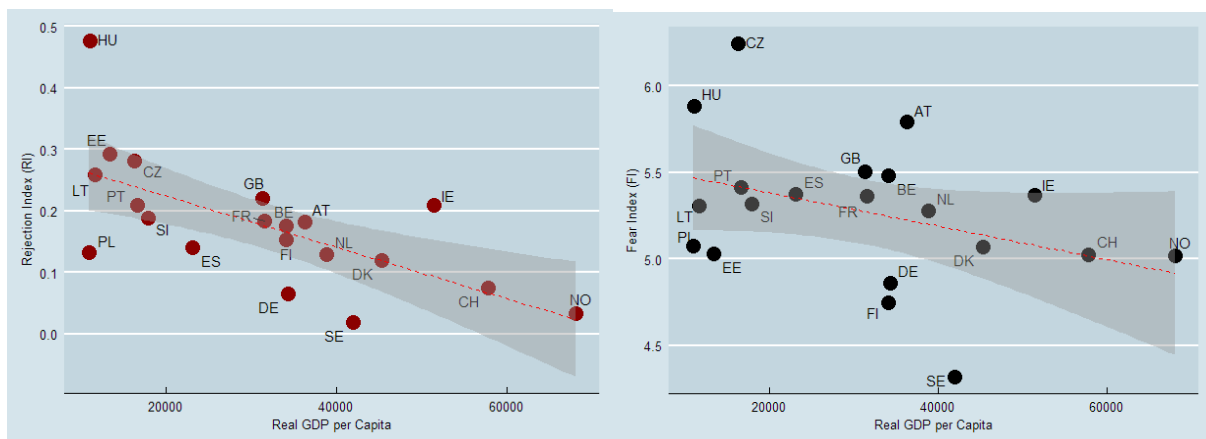
as well as the **extent and quality of inclusion policies** correlate very strongly with all three indexes.

## Country level factors

### Economic factors

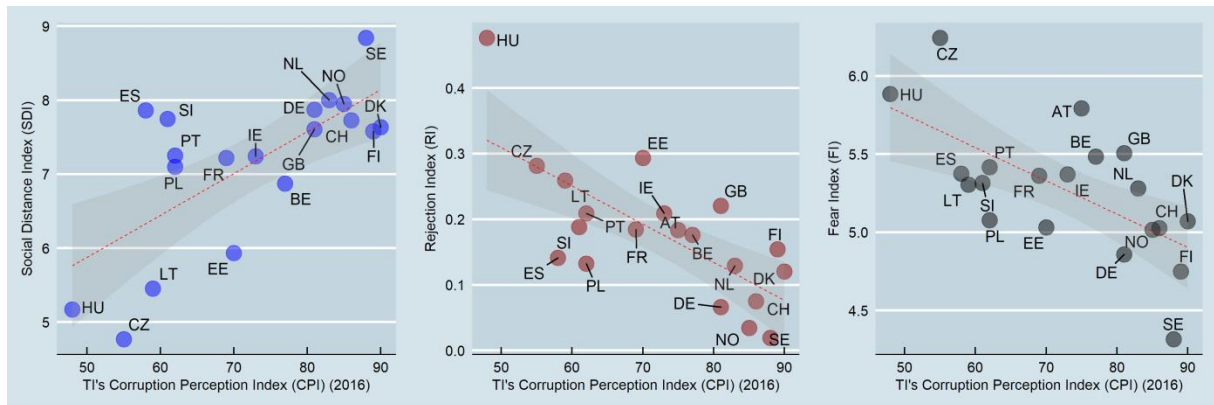
The two charts below represent how strongly GDP/capita is related to the Rejection and Fear indexes. They show very similar patterns: people living in higher GDP/capita countries are generally more welcoming of migrants. Although general wealth is more explicitly correlated with the Rejection Index, the pattern is very similar in both cases: Nordic countries with the highest GDP/capita are the most receptive, while new EU member-states with the lowest GDP/capita are the most hostile. We may suspect that it is not GDP/capita that influences attitudes towards migrants, but other characteristics linked to both wealth and tolerance, such as distinct historical paths, experiences with migrants, and the structure of their societies. There are some exceptions in the larger picture: one is Ireland which with a relatively high GDP/capita represents a more hostile environment for migrants, and to some extent Poland, where rejection of migrants is around average in spite of its relatively low GDP/capita and similar social and political history to other new EU member-states.

**FIGURE 9: THE RELATION BETWEEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRANTS**



Another important characteristic of an economy's functioning is the presence and level of corruption and trust in state institutions. Our model includes the index constructed by Transparency International, which captures the informed views of analysts, businesspeople and experts in countries around the world. The perceived level of corruption is a good indication of a society's strength, and of the stability of its political, economic and social foundations. Comparing these two – at first glance rather distant – national characteristics, we found surprisingly strong relationships. In fact, it was the strongest of all the indicators we examined.

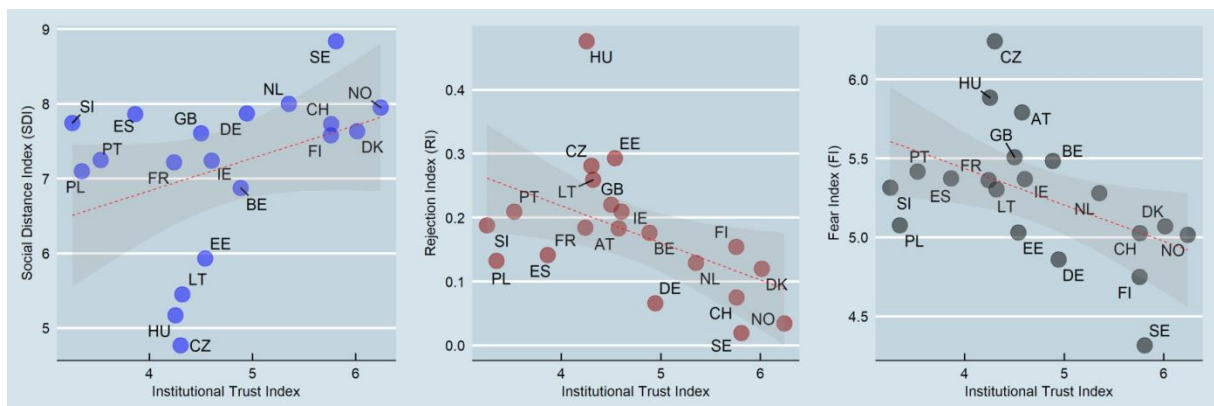
**FIGURE 10: THE RELATION BETWEEN THE INDEX OF PERCEIVED CORRUPTION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION**



All three indexes, social distance, rejection of migrants and fear of migration, show strong and statistically significant correlation with corruption: It is very clear that in countries characterized by higher level of perceived corruption the refusal of migration is more widespread. What could be the mechanism behind this relation? Corruption is a major threat to the democratic functioning of societies and its basic prerequisite, the rule of law. Most importantly, from the point of view of this analysis, corruption corrodes the economic and social fabric of society. It undermines people's trust in the political system, in its institutions and its leadership. Amid feelings of defencelessness, with rules not applied to all equally, people will feel insecure and distrustful, and this kind of insecurity fuels fear of the perceived 'other'.

We naturally examined the correlation between the three indicators measuring various aspects of attitudes towards migrant with the general level of trust towards institutions of the society and the state. On a country level we found only a slight relationship between institutional trust and the rejection (RI) and fear of migrants (FI).

**FIGURE 11: THE RELATION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL TRUST AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION**

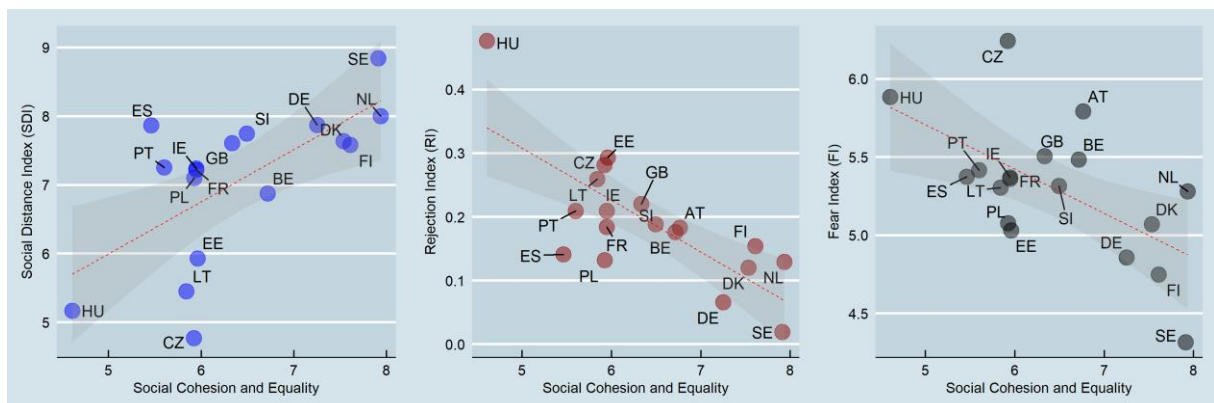


The correlation is much smaller (Pearson: 0,48 and 0,49) than we expected. However, later in the analysis we will show that while on a macro level (using country averages) trust does not correlate very strongly with attitudes towards migration, on a micro level (comparing individual lack of trust) is one of the most significant predictors of anti-migrant attitudes.

### *Factors related to the potential of society to receive migrants*

The next set of areas in our analysis also relates to the potential for the country of immigration to be an inclusive environment. Our hypothesis was that social inequalities significantly influence the level of anti-migrant attitudes: We presumed that the higher the social inequalities characterizing a country, and the larger the population at risk of poverty, the less open and receptive its population can be towards migrants. This hypothesis could not be validated using income-based indicators of social inequalities and poverty: GINI index as well as EUROSTAT's 'At-Risk of Poverty Rate' doesn't correlate significantly with any of the indicators measuring attitudes towards migration. The reliability of income-based indicators is questionable in countries with higher levels of corruption. Therefore we checked non-income based indicators of social inequalities, EUROSTAT material deprivation and SGI's Social Cohesion Index, which in addition to including characteristics related to the society's inclusiveness (gender and racial inequalities, (non)discrimination of physically challenged population and inclusion policy measures)<sup>11</sup>. We found that these indicators show very significant correlation (at a level between 0,6 and ,75) with all three indicators measuring attitudes towards migration.

**FIGURE 12: THE RELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL COHESION INDEX (SGI) AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION**



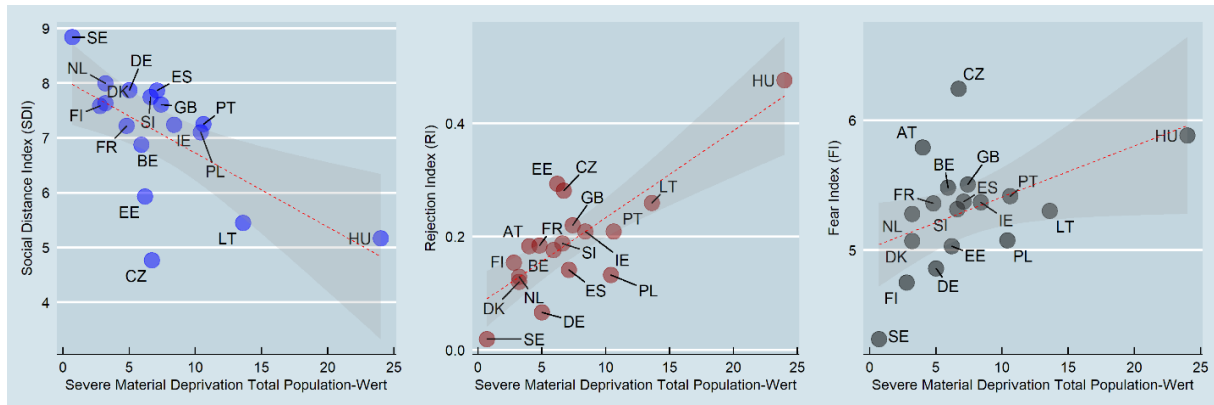
The chart presents the strong relationship between the complex measure of social cohesion and equality, and measurements of attitudes towards migrants. However, it is apparent that rejection is the strongest feeling: the share of those who rejected migrants of any background

<sup>11</sup> For more details see: Daniel Schraad-Tischler, Christof Schiller, Sascha Matthias Heller, Nina Siemer. 2017. Social Justice in the EU –Index Report 2017. Social Inclusion Monitor Europe. Bertelsmann Stiftung.



without any consideration. In societies with little social cohesion & equality (including weak social inclusion policies and weak anti-discrimination measures) fear of migrants is also significantly stronger than in more equal and integrated societies.

**FIGURE 13: THE RELATION BETWEEN SEVERE MATERIAL DEPRIVATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRANTS**



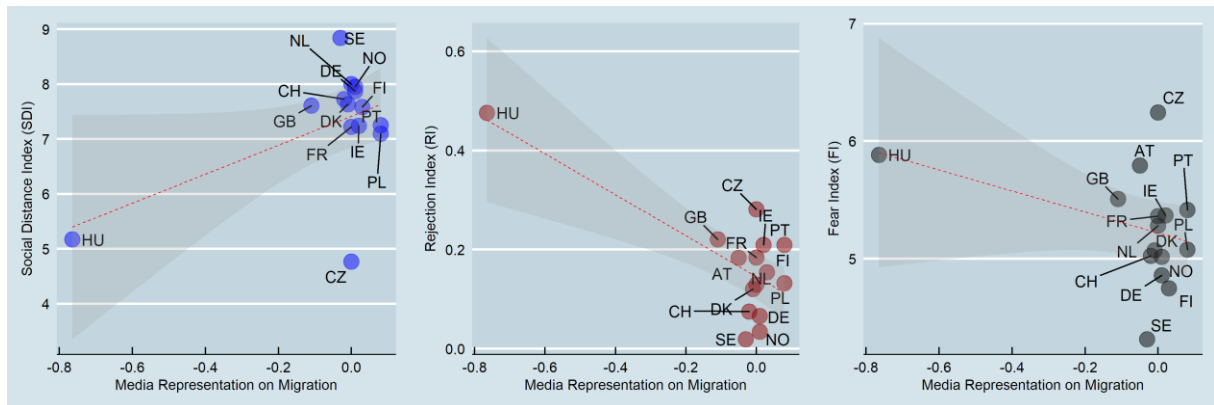
The proportion of the population that lives in dire material circumstances, in deep and enduring poverty, also correlates strongly with the spread of anti-migrant attitudes. This is closely related to the previous area: social cohesion. It is very likely that it is not those living in deep material deprivation per se who increase anti-migrant attitudes, but the lack of solidarity in a society that allows a large share of its community to live in dire circumstances correlates with general xenophobic attitudes, including the rejection of newcomers, especially if they are perceived as needing support.

With regard to the potential for the country of immigration to be inclusive, we also looked into public and media discourses about migrants and migration. Our opportunities to measure media content were restricted, but, connected to the ESS, a coding of media content (ESS Media Claim) is conducted during the period of survey fieldwork. This dataset includes basic information about the weight and direction of claims published in the news media<sup>12</sup>. A composite index combining these two characteristics (prevalence of the topic of migration and the direction – positive or negative – of claims) shows significant correlation with attitudes towards migration.<sup>13</sup> Translating these findings, we may claim that the more emphatic and negative media representation of migrants and migration is, the more rejection can be detected in the society. Measuring statistically significant relationship became difficult thanks to Hungary's 'trolling' of the European map: in the charts below we can see that Hungary is a complete outlier. Its media coverage of migration related news was not only extremely heavy but also enormously negative.

<sup>12</sup> News published on the two largest newspapers' front page are coded. One of them is a leading conservative the other a leading social democratic paper.

<sup>13</sup> Person Corr. for RI = -0,74 (p: 0,001)

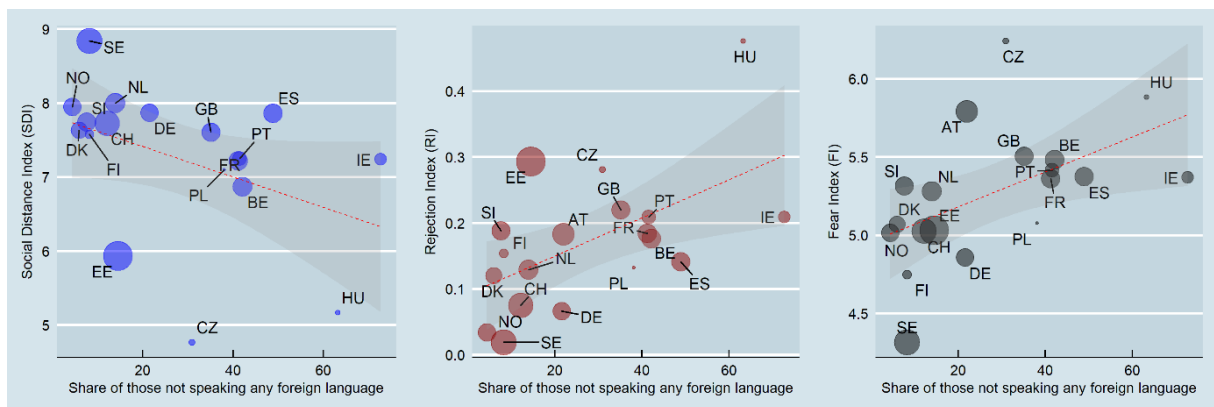
**FIGURE 14: THE RELATION BETWEEN MEDIA COVERAGE OF MIGRATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION**



The case of Hungary is due to the interplay of a massive governmental anti-migrant communication campaign<sup>14</sup> and the lack of a diverse media arena amid already xenophobic public sentiments. It is very obvious that the heavy securitizing campaign emphasizing the threat that migrants supposedly pose to the country, obscuring basic concepts such as migrant and refugee, greatly influenced the fear of the unknown and homogenized migrants.<sup>15</sup> For the rest of Europe the media influence is less direct.

And finally, looking into macro level factors of the potential of receiving migrants we checked for the share of those who can speak any language other than their native language.

**FIGURE 15: THE RELATION BETWEEN FOREIGN LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION**



Our hypothesis was that in mono-ethnic and mono-cultural countries foreign language knowledge may add to the receptiveness of migrants. People who don't speak any foreign

<sup>14</sup> See for example Haraszi M. 2015. Behind Viktor Orbán's War on Refugees in Hungary. *New Perspectives Quarterly*. 32(4)37-40

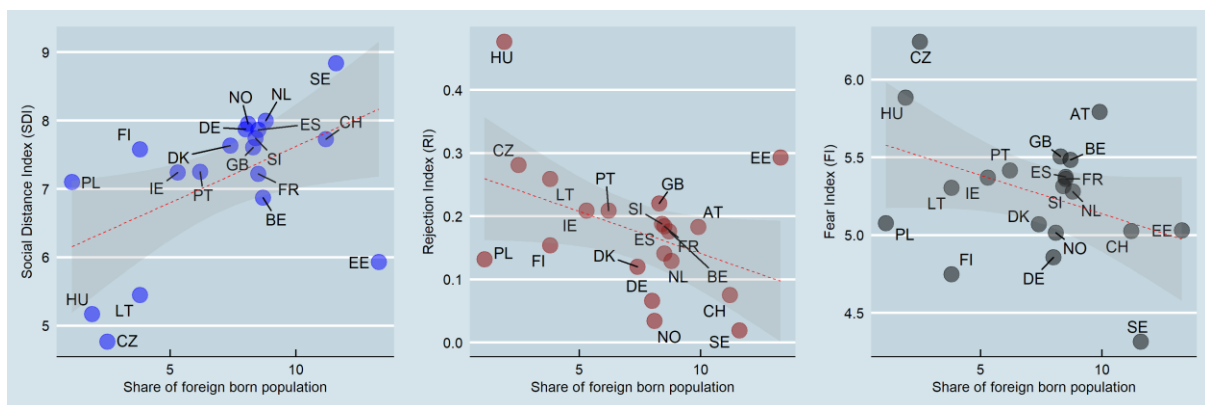
<sup>15</sup> For a detailed analysis of the media coverage of the refugee crisis in Hungary and Austria see: Messing and Bernáth 2017. Security threat or humanitarian crisis? The infiltration of political meaning-production. The coverage of the refugee crisis in the Austrian and Hungarian media. Budapest: CMDS Working Paper. <https://cmds.ceu.edu/sites/cmcs.ceu.hu/files/attachment/article/1041/infiltrationofpoliticalmeaning.pdf>

languages are less likely to be open to foreigners and are unable to obtain knowledge about the world outside their country's boundaries except through local sources. Social psychology's claim is that the main source of xenophobia is fear of the 'other' coming from lack of individual experience (contact) and knowledge about this 'other'. Lack of foreign language knowledge may feed both these deficiencies.

### *Factors related to migrants and their potential to integrate*

Attitudes towards migrants can of course be related to actual experiences with a migrant population. Looking into the data we found that there is a strong correlation between the population share of migrants and attitudes towards them. Countries with a negligible share of migrants are the most hostile, while in countries where migrants' presence in the society is large are actually the most tolerant.

**FIGURE 16: THE RELATION BETWEEN THE SHARE OF FOREIGN BORN POPULATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION**

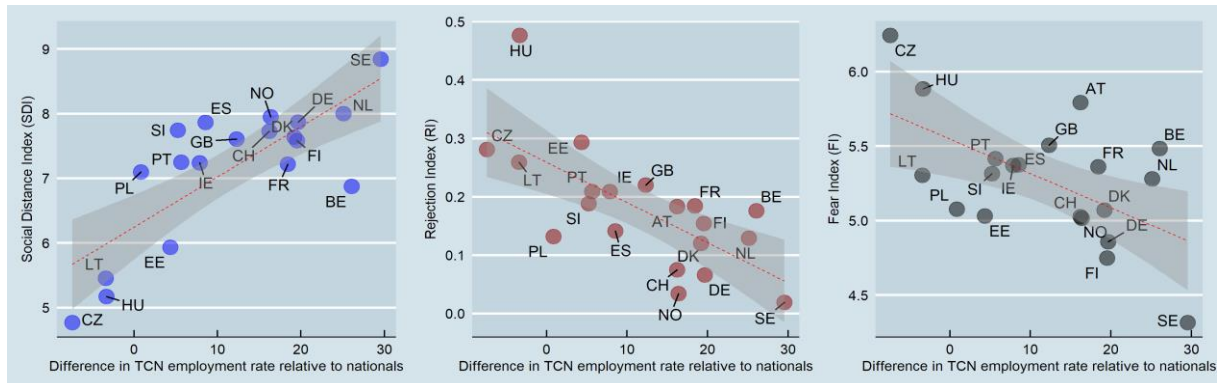


The chart demonstrates that Central-East European countries, which have the lowest share of migrants (below 2%) are the most hostile towards migrants, while countries with a high share of migrant population (Nordic countries, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Benelux countries and the UK) represent welcoming or at least non-hostile attitude towards migrants. There are some outliers: Austria, which has a relatively high share of migrants, seems to be rather hostile towards migration, while Poland, with a very small number of migrants, is rather open to migration. Based on the result of the macro-analysis, we may state that it is not the actual experience of migration that make a country's population hostile towards migrants, but just the opposite: a country lacking the experience of immigration produces more fear and rejection, both of the phenomenon itself and of individuals. The micro level analysis shows this relationship even more explicitly.

Another important aspect of migrants' presence in a country is their social and labour market inclusion. We analysed these aspects by calculating the gap in employment rates between migrants and the host society. Results are somewhat unexpected; there is statistically

significant correlation between the two aspects but running counter to what we would have expected.

**FIGURE 17: THE RELATION BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT GAP OF MIGRANTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION**



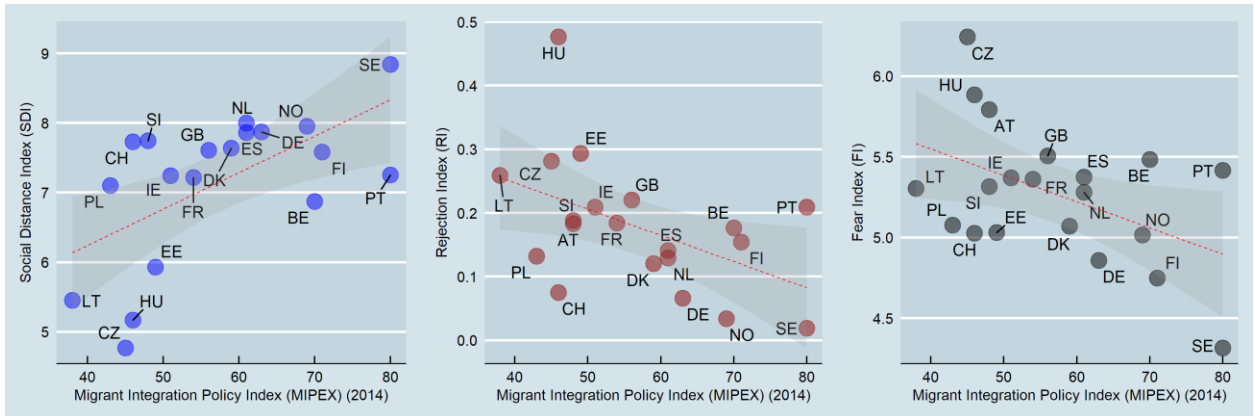
Rejection and fear of migrants are greatest in countries where they are doing best in terms of labour market inclusion. In Hungary, Czech Republic and Lithuania their employment rates are similar or even higher to that of the local population, though these are the most hostile countries. At the same time, in Nordic countries, France, Germany, Benelux countries, where there is an employment rate disadvantage for migrants of over 10% (or even over 20%) rejection is average or low.

Finally, we also checked whether the extent and quality of migrant inclusion policies may have an effect on the acceptance of migrants among the home population. Using the Migrant Policy Index (MIPEX)<sup>16</sup> we found significant correlation here as well. MIPEX is a complex composite index (including 167 policy indicators) for a country's inclusion policies looking into the presence and quality of various fields of inclusion such as labour market, education, political participation, health, residence and anti-discrimination. The index is a useful tool to evaluate and compare what governments are doing to promote the integration of migrants in all the countries analysed<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup>Huddleston, Thomas; Bilgili, Ozge; Joki, Anne-Linde and Vankova, Zvezda (2015) Migrant Integration Policy Index

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.mipex.eu/methodology>

**FIGURE 18: THE RELATION BETWEEN MIGRANT INCLUSION POLICIES (MIPEX) AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION**



The chart shows that there is indeed a relationship between cleverly-designed and well-implemented governmental measures aiming for the soft and effective inclusion of newcomers and their acceptance. The outlier in this respect is Portugal, which has very high scores of MIPEX, though rejection of migrants is not particularly high, and Switzerland and Poland, where migrant inclusion policies are weaker than average but migrants seem to be more accepted than in many EU member states.

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## 4. EXPLAINING FEAR FROM MIGRATION AT INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

The first stage of our analysis focused on explaining macro-level differences between countries in Europe. Summarizing complex attitudes into simple numbers and aggregating values at country level is a legitimate method for understanding the “big picture”. Its drawbacks, however, are also clear. The most important is that it disregards individual level differences. A country-level indicator conceals variances between distinct groups of people characterized by divergent socio-economic status and other ‘soft’ factors, such as personal experiences, attitudes and other beliefs that might have an impact on individual opinions on migration and foreigners in general.

### Methodology

In order to capture intra-country patterns explaining fear from various perceived threats related to migration, we performed an individual-level multi-variate analysis. We used the same dataset as in the previous chapter (ESS Round 7). The main difference is that out of the three composite indexes only the ‘Fear-Index’ has been used here as a response (dependent) variable, and the explanatory (predictor) variables were also related to individual characteristics. As a cross-sectional survey, the ESS consists of individual country-based representative samples. We therefore applied the same multiple linear regression model for each country in the dataset. We chose this method because of our preliminary hypothesis about the existence of distinct national patterns in terms of the set of variables with significant explanatory power.

The following chart summarizes the initial model that we applied for all countries separately.

1. Gender, age, level of education and type of settlement were included as demographic variables. Level of education was limited to a dummy variable measuring the possession of any tertiary education degree, while for the type of settlement two separate dummy variables were included in the model referring to rural and large city areas.
2. The second group of explanatory variables involved various attitudinal and belief measures. Interpersonal trust is a composite index calculated from the three items in the ESS questionnaire measuring trust towards others<sup>18</sup>. Institutional trust summarizes the level of trust in the country’s parliament, politicians, political parties,

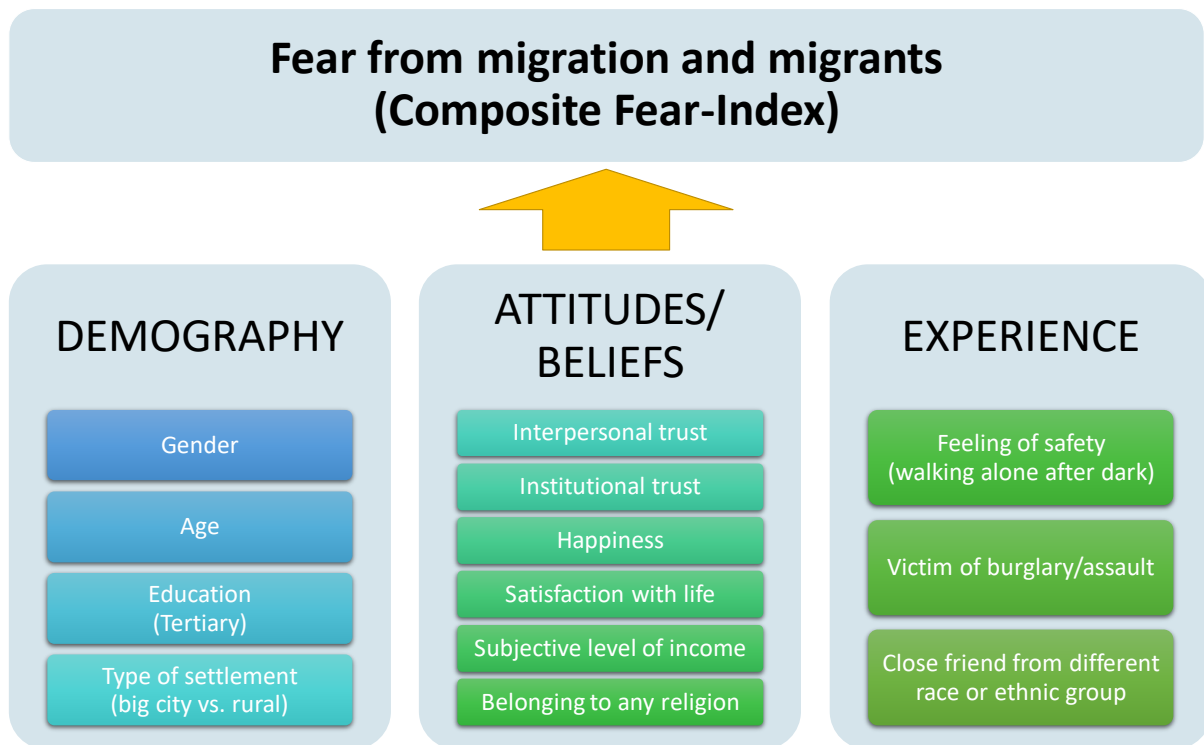
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<sup>18</sup> 1. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?; 2. Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?; 3. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves? (For each question, a 0 to 10 scale was used. The interpersonal trust index denotes a simple mean of the three items.

the legal system, and the police. Level of happiness<sup>19</sup>, life satisfaction<sup>20</sup>, persistence of income difficulties<sup>21</sup>, and belonging to any religion<sup>22</sup> were also included.

3. The third group of variables represent some direct/indirect experiences that relate to one's feeling of (in)security<sup>23</sup>; and the information on whether the respondent has any contact with people of a different race or ethnic group.<sup>24</sup>

**FIGURE 19: THEORETICAL MODEL FOR EXPLAINING FEAR RELATED TO MIGRATION**



<sup>19</sup> Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?

<sup>20</sup> All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?

<sup>21</sup> Finding it difficult or very difficult on present income. (

<sup>22</sup> Do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination?

<sup>23</sup> How safe do you – or would you - feel walking alone in this area after dark?; Have you or a member of your household been the victim of a burglary or assault in the last 5 years?

<sup>24</sup> The positive value of the dummy variable denotes those who *never* or *less than once a month* have any contact with people of a different race or ethnic group.

## Results

The overall results of the analysis<sup>25</sup> show that for each country we were able to calculate a model with a significant regression equation.<sup>26</sup>

**TABLE 1: MODEL SUMMARY**

No.	Country	No. of explanatory variables (p<.05)	Adjusted R square (R <sup>2</sup> )	No.	Country	No. of explanatory variables (p<.05)	Adjusted R square (R <sup>2</sup> )
1	Austria	4	0.38	11	Slovenia	6	0.21
2	Belgium	8	0.3	12	Spain	4	0.2
3	Germany	7	0.26	13	Norway	8	0.2
4	France	6	0.25	14	Estonia	8	0.19
5	United Kingdom	5	0.25	15	Switzerland	7	0.18
6	Netherlands	10	0.24	16	Czech Republic	7	0.18
7	Denmark	5	0.23	17	Portugal	8	0.18
8	Sweden	7	0.23	18	Lithuania	9	0.16
9	Ireland	5	0.22	19	Hungary	8	0.12
10	Finland	8	0.21	20	Poland	7	0.11

The two most important explanatory variables significant in all countries were the (1) **level of interpersonal trust**, and (2) **having contact with people of a different race or ethnic group**. The (3) **level of institutional trust** and (4) **having tertiary education** were similarly present in all but one countries' models, and finally (5) **feeling unsafe when walking alone in the respondent's area after dark** (significant for 15 countries) could be named as the commonly important factors explaining the dependent (fear) variable.

Overall, we can conclude that the level of fear originating from various perceived threats (labour market, welfare, crime, cultural, and religious) linked to migration depend on how much trust one has towards other members of the society, and how much he/she trusts the most important institutions of the state. Higher levels of both type of trust contribute to lower levels of fear. Similarly, participating in higher education and obtaining a degree are also very powerful indirect predictors of less fear. Our results also confirm the reason for the existence of the contact-theory. Having regular contacts with people who belong to a different race or ethnic group significantly reduces the level of fear from migration. Moreover, the subjective

<sup>25</sup> For the sake of cross-national comparability of the results, the 'enter' method was used for the multiple linear regression. Explanatory variables p<0.05 were treated as significant.

<sup>26</sup> Four to ten predictors explained 11 to 38% of the variance by country. Adjusted R square was the highest in Austria, Belgium, Germany, France and the UK (>=.25), while in Poland, Hungary and Lithuania it was only about one third. (<=0.12).



feeling of safety or danger when walking alone in dark is an additional powerful predictor of fear of migration in many countries.

**These results suggest that apart from the rather evident circumstances of having tertiary level education and living in a safe neighbourhood, it is the general “social health” of any given society, reflected in the level of integration, trust, cooperation, openness to others, etc. that shape those complex attitudes that could fuel or constrain the very human fear from those threats that might be created by migration.**

The strength of these five factors varies from country to country: in some of them it is strong, while in others it is rather moderate (Appendix Fig. 1). In case of interpersonal trust and tertiary education, there is no notable difference across countries, indicating that these two factors are more or less equally important everywhere. (Appendix Fig. 16/A and C) Differences are somewhat notable for institutional trust (which, for instance, is not part of the model in Hungary; see Appendix Fig. 16/B) with the common trend that its impact is higher in those countries where the general level of institutional trust tends to be higher. Having contact with people of a different race or ethnicity is more important in the Czech Republic, Austria, Belgium and Hungary, and a less important (but still significant) factor in several other countries. It is important to note that the country-effect is not relevant here, so it does not really make a difference if a country has many or just a few people who have such contacts with others. In other words, if somebody has the chance to meet others of a different race or ethnicity, it definitely acts against fear. Finally, feeling safe at dark did not qualify as part of the model in five countries – mostly in Scandinavia and in the Baltic states. In the remaining countries the personal feeling of physical safety is an additional element of fear reduction at a much more general level.

The following explanatory variables were part of the regression models in fewer than half of the countries: gender, age, type of settlement, happiness, life satisfaction, religion, and income difficulties. It indicates that, in general, someone’s basic demographic characteristics – apart from the level education – did not play a significant part in developing fear towards migration. Being a woman, being younger and living in large cities decreased the level fear in some countries, while living in rural areas was a predictor of a higher level of fear. Feelings of happiness and being satisfied with life also act against fear, but only slightly. And finally, one of the most interesting results is that a person’s financial situation, as measured by having income difficulties, was a (weak) part of the explanatory model in only three countries. In other words, fear is basically unrelated to one’s material existence.

Figure 20 includes a few country profiles showing the strength of explanatory variables by country (comparable in the form of standardized  $\beta$  values). Interpreting such statistical results is not always straightforward, because coefficients indicate only the impact, but not the actual value of any factor. The figure shows some of the most typical patterns of explanatory variable strengths in six selected countries. The figures show which variables – apart from the five general factors already mentioned – contribute to the level of fear. Positive values (in green)

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tend to increase, while negative values (in red) decrease the level of fear. Results show that age appears to have an individual effect in the UK and in Sweden: being older means having a greater level of fear. Gender also seems to have an effect in Sweden, Czech Republic, Austria and Hungary, but not in the other countries. The role of location (the respondent's settlement type) also varies from country to country. In those countries where it had a significant effect, living in a big city generally decreases fear (in Germany and in Sweden), and living in a rural area increases the level of fear (in Austria and in France).

Interpreting and understanding the set of explanatory factors by country requires careful analysis beyond the scope of this working paper. However, it is clear that besides the common patterns, every country is different. The "standard" ingredients are always "flavoured" by some country-specific characteristics that go against the idea that there is a fully unified model of fear, but the general roots are common.

**FIGURE 20: STRENGTH OF EXPLANATORY VARIABLES BY COUNTRIES**  
(STANDARDIZED  $\beta$  VALUES)



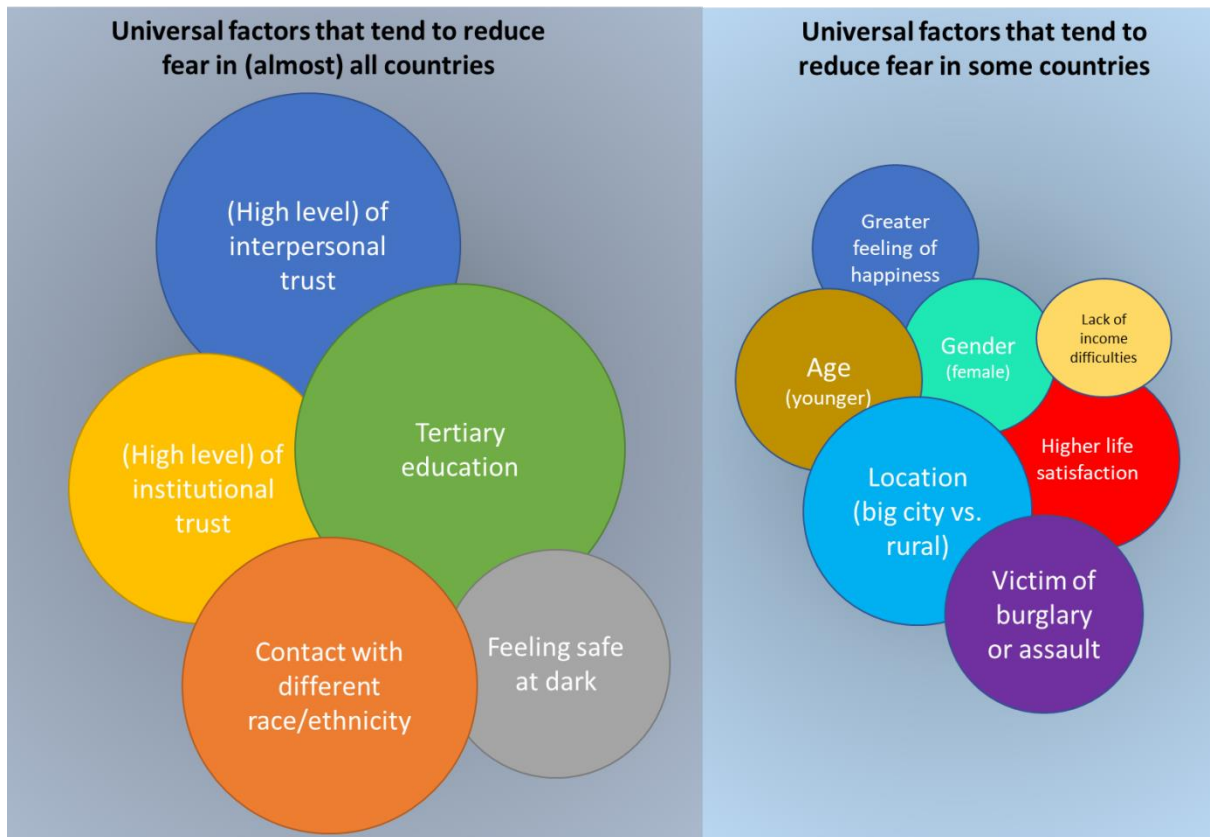
## SUMMARY

Our analysis has investigated some potential factors behind the extreme cross-country differences in attitudes towards migrants and migration in European countries. Fear and rejection of migrants and foreigners is a commonly shared feeling in some countries, while in others acceptance of migrants and ethno-racial diversity is a widely shared value. In our analysis we presented three aspects of those sentiments which form attitudes: social distance from migrants, perception of migration as a threat, and rejection of migrants. These three aspects are interlinked, but present different types of emotions: social distance measures the feelings people have about having a migrant (without further specification) in a close relationship, fear is a complex feeling incorporating the perception of migrants and migration as a threat to various spheres of life (employment, welfare, culture, religion or safety), while rejection is the most explicit expression of anti-migrant attitudes.

In our analysis we identified several country-level factors that seem to influence the differences in attitudes between countries. Among factors characterizing society, the most significant are the level of social cohesion and inclusion, and the share of those who live in severe material deprivation. Income based measures of inequalities, however, don't seem to correlate with attitudes towards migration. Among economic factors, the general level of economic development and, even more, the perception of corruption influence country-level differences in attitudes. Finally, we found that the extent and quality of migrant inclusion policies, together with the population share of migrants correlated significantly with attitudes towards them. Namely, in countries with a high population share of migrants, good-quality migration policies attitudes towards migrants are significantly more positive.

The analysis of individual factors influencing attitudes towards migrants supported the above macro-image. Five factors popped out that correlated very strongly with attitudes towards migrants / migration in all countries.

**FIGURE 21: VISUALIZATION OF FACTORS WITH SIGNIFICANT EXPLANATORY POWER**  
(BASED ON F STATISTICS AND STANDARDIZED  $\beta$  VALUES)



Trust is the most significant factor predicting attitudes towards migrants. Trust, both in terms of how much trust people have in their fellow citizens and how much trust they have in the major institutions of the state (parliament, politicians and political parties, the legal system and the police) seems to be at the core of the feeling of safety that allows acceptance of and solidarity with migrants. This is very much in line with the macro-analytical finding on how much the perceived level of corruption correlates with attitudes. The other very important factor is contact: People who have friends or close acquaintances from other ethnic or racial minority groups seem much more positive towards migration. This shows that the greatest source of fear towards migration is the lack of familiarity and personal experience. Again, this correlates strongly with the macro-level analysis' finding on how the presence of a migrant population influences attitudes on the national level. Finally, the only demographic factor that influences attitudes in all countries is education; the larger the share of people with tertiary education in the country, the more accepting of migrants they are.

Missing or weak correlations are similarly telling; it is not income difficulties that play an important role in the refusal of migrants. Also, age seems to have a much smaller influence than expected: although it is true that elderly people are more likely to refuse migrants than young people, this influence is less strong than the factors listed above. Urban versus rural residence plays a role, but only in some countries: cities (where, incidentally, most migrants

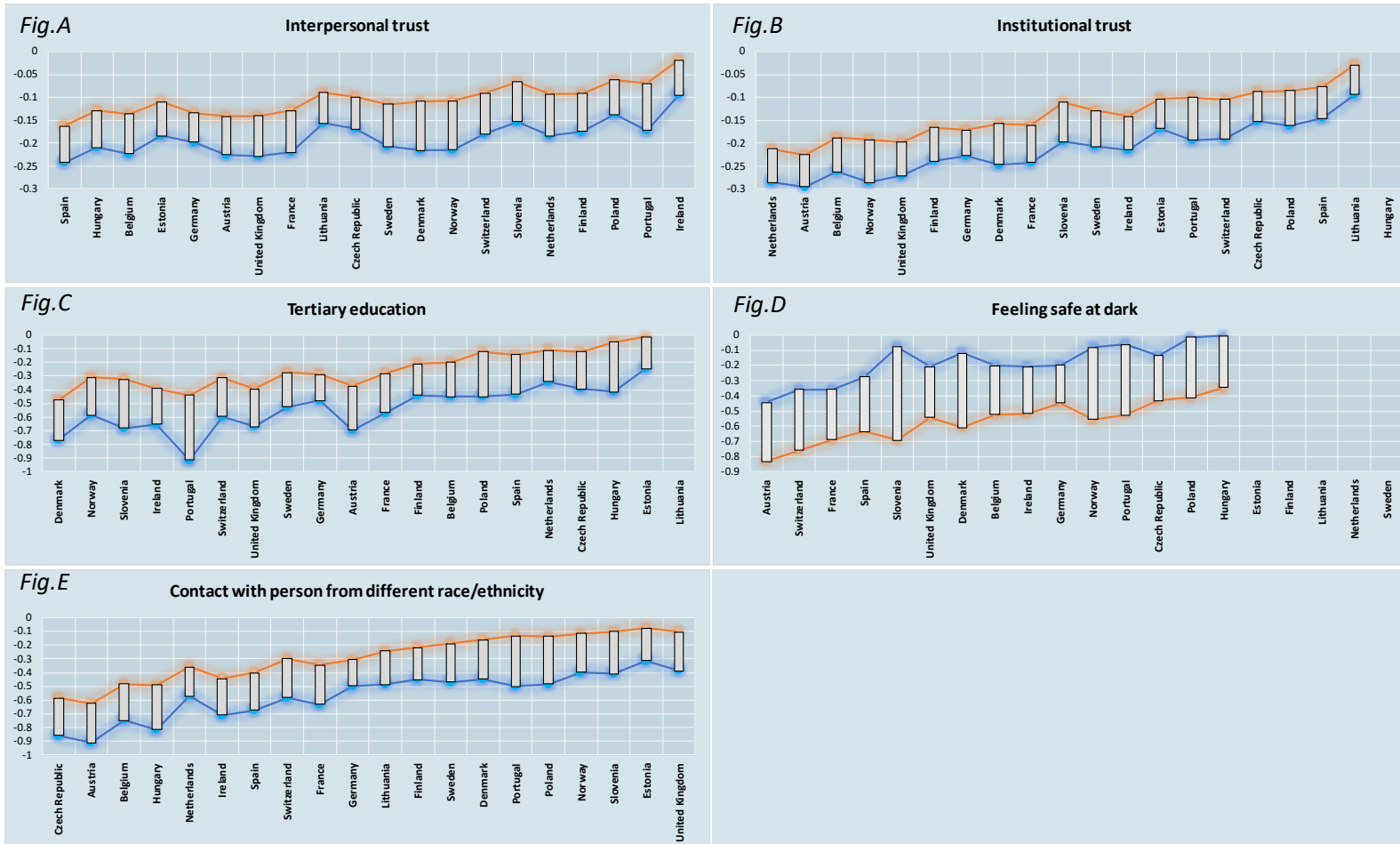
live) seem less fearful of migrants. And interestingly, soft characteristics, such as satisfaction with life or happiness, are not very significant in determining attitudes towards migrants.

Based on this analysis, the big picture is the following: people in countries with a large migrant population, with a high level of general and institutional trust, low level of corruption, a stable, well performing economy and high level of social cohesion and inclusion (including migrants) fear migration the least according to the data from 2014-15. To put it in simple terms, people are fearful in countries where the basic tissue of society is damaged, where people don't trust each other or the state's institutions, and where social cohesion and solidarity are weak. In Durkheim's term, countries that may be characterized as having social anomie are prone to anti-migrant hatred. And they are probably fearful in general terms; migrants are only a perfect target to express their fears, especially if they have little personal experience with them. Thus, our opinion is that widespread and homogenizing anti-migrant attitudes in some countries have little to do with migrants; they are rather a consequence and expression of people's lack of safety and security, and a symptom of deep-rooted problems in the society.

However, as mentioned in the introduction, the data analysed here are a snapshot taken before the mass arrival of refugees from war-torn areas of the Middle East. Although longitudinal analysis of attitudes towards migration shows that they are very stable and enduring, the shock the refugee crisis in Europe in 2015-16 may have changed this picture. Therefore, we plan to explore new data which the European Social Survey collected in fall 2016 and spring 2017 about how attitudes towards migration, acceptance / rejection, and the perceived threat have altered in the past two years. Do we need to reconsider the map of attitudes in Europe with new regional and social disparities, or will the current patterns endure? To answer that question we will have to wait until spring 2018, when the compiled dataset for all participating countries becomes available for analysis.

## 5. APPENDIX:

APPENDIX FIGURE 1 CONFIDENCE INTERVALS OF UNSTANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS



This figure shows the confidence intervals (standardized coefficients  $\pm 2SE$ ) for those explanatory variables that proved to be significant for all countries (except for institutional trust in Hungary).

APPENDIX TABLE 1. RESULTS OF THE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Country	Coefficients																Model summary
		(Constant)	Interpersonal trust	Contact	Tertiary education	Institutional trust	Feeling of safety at dark	Location: big city	Feeling of happiness	Gender	Location: rural	Belonging to any religion	Victim of burglary or assault	Age	Satisfaction with life	Income difficulties	Adjusted R square
AT Austria	Unstandardized	9.662	-0.183	-0.768	-0.534	-0.26	0.638	-0.51	-0.12	-0.191	0.247					0.24	0.38
	Standardized	0	-0.18	-0.21	-0.129	-0.291	0.127	-0.139	-0.111	-0.53	0.65					0.39	
BE Belgium	Unstandardized	8.085	-0.179	-0.615	-0.326	-0.226	0.363	-0.342									0.3
	Standardized	0	-0.188	-0.199	-0.16	-0.279	0.93	-0.93									
CH Switzerland	Unstandardized	6.892	-0.135	-0.442	-0.454	-0.148	0.559				0.325			0.55			0.18
	Standardized	0	-0.156	-0.152	-0.154	-0.173	0.134				0.116			0.67			
CZ Czech Republic	Unstandardized	8.362	-0.134	-0.72	-0.26	-0.12	0.284		-0.74	-0.25							0.18
	Standardized	0	-0.172	-0.219	-0.79	-0.172	0.83		-0.98	-0.85							
DE Germany	Unstandardized	7.512	-0.166	-0.41	-0.386	-0.199	0.323	-0.17	-0.74								0.26
	Standardized	0	-0.183	-0.138	-0.132	-0.247	0.88	-0.53	-0.86								
DK Denmark	Unstandardized	8.566	-0.162	-0.34	-0.623	-0.23	0.364		-0.84	-0.27			-0.164		0.84		0.23
	Standardized	0	-0.159	-0.1	-0.25	-0.236	0.7		-0.86	-0.69			-0.47		0.89		
EE Estonia	Unstandardized	7.17	-0.147	-0.195	-0.129	-0.136			-0.64				0.14				0.19
	Standardized	0	-0.183	-0.68	-0.45	-0.191			-0.9				0.182				
ES Spain	Unstandardized	7.353	-0.23	-0.536	-0.288	-0.111	0.456		-0.53	0.133	0.251	-0.383			0.54		0.2
	Standardized	0	-0.22	-0.173	-0.85	-0.141	0.11		-0.63	0.43	0.81	-0.118			0.75		
FI Finland	Unstandardized	7.688	-0.133	-0.335	-0.326	-0.23				-0.219				0.5			0.21
	Standardized	0	-0.144	-0.119	-0.118	-0.252				-0.8				0.75			
FR France	Unstandardized	7.805	-0.174	-0.49	-0.425	-0.22	0.523				0.36	-0.142			-0.43		0.25
	Standardized	0	-0.173	-0.144	-0.124	-0.222	0.138				0.93	-0.44			-0.64		
GB United Kingdom	Unstandardized	8.75	-0.185	-0.246	-0.533	-0.235	0.377	-0.392					-0.276	0.1		0.25	0.25
	Standardized	0	-0.175	-0.68	-0.148	-0.265	0.9	-0.1					-0.59	0.98		0.53	



<b>HU Hungary</b>	Unstandardized	6.361	-0.17	-0.652	-0.235		0.174			-0.161			0.369			0.12
	Standardized	0	-0.213	-0.192	-0.64		0.5			-0.52			0.54			
<b>IE Ireland</b>	Unstandardized	7.929	-0.57	-0.576	-0.522	-0.179	0.362		-0.131			-0.383	0.275		0.265	0.22
	Standardized	0	-0.6	-0.174	-0.155	-0.194	0.91		-0.148			-0.99	0.6		0.68	
<b>LT Lithuania</b>	Unstandardized	7.398	-0.124	-0.364		-0.61		0.236	-0.133							0.16
	Standardized	0	-0.172	-0.128		-0.9		0.84	-0.192							
<b>NL Netherlands</b>	Unstandardized	7.78	-0.139	-0.465	-0.226	-0.25										0.24
	Standardized	0	-0.146	-0.181	-0.84	-0.325										
<b>NO Norway</b>	Unstandardized	8.232	-0.161	-0.257	-0.446	-0.239	0.318	-0.191								0.2
	Standardized	0	-0.158	-0.9	-0.158	-0.268	0.66	-0.63								
<b>PL Poland</b>	Unstandardized	6.054	-0.1	-0.31	-0.287	-0.124	0.212					-0.293	0.247			0.11
	Standardized	0	-0.138	-0.92	-0.91	-0.169	0.54					-0.64	0.57			
<b>PT Portugal</b>	Unstandardized	6.779	-0.121	-0.318	-0.678	-0.147	0.293					0.339				0.18
	Standardized	0	-0.132	-0.96	-0.155	-0.173	0.67					0.99				
<b>SE Sweden</b>	Unstandardized	7.188	-0.162	-0.329	-0.399	-0.168		-0.24		-0.246				0.11		0.23
	Standardized	0	-0.169	-0.17	-0.139	-0.22		-0.69		-0.86				0.147		
<b>SI Slovenia</b>	Unstandardized	7.129	-0.11	-0.254	-0.53	-0.154	0.386	-0.247				0.187	-0.175			0.21
	Standardized	0	-0.146	-0.89	-0.156	-0.24	0.66	-0.71				0.67	-0.62			