

Social Europe: A New Integration-Demarcation Conflict?

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Introduction

Since the 1970s, the concept of the Western welfare state and its concrete manifestations in specific social policies have become substantially challenged by, among others, a trend towards globalisation. In European societies, European integration is the most visible instance of globalisation that affects the social protection systems of the member states. Although the European project started out as an economic endeavour (Rhodes & Mény, 1998; Scharpf, 2002), the European Union (EU) has gradually assumed considerable authority in social policy as well (Leibfried, 2015). The EU has taken various regulative actions in the domains of equality

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and working conditions, for example, and a considerable share of the EU-budget is devoted to regional redistribution. Furthermore, supranational constraints to the member states' fiscal and budget policies have put limits to the redistributive options available to the national welfare states, especially during the economic crisis (Giubboni, 2014; Heise & Lierse, 2011). The concept of 'Social Europe' refers precisely to the variety of European-level policy measures that, directly or indirectly, affect the social welfare of citizens in the various member states (Martinsen & Vollaard, 2014). Social Europe thus comprises market-making policies as well as regulative actions in the domains of equality, working conditions, health and safety (Falkner, 2010).

The increasing importance of Social Europe constitutes a veritable shift of the boundaries of solidarity along geographic, socio-economic and institutional lines. Ferrera (2005) understands European integration as a process of de-bounding and de-structuring of the national welfare state. Whereas social sharing builds on *closure*, European integration rests on *opening* the boundaries of the national welfare state. The basic spatial architecture of social citizenship is at stake: Social Europe affects the territorial reach of solidarity, the identity of its constituent communities and the ultimate source of legitimate authority for the creation and enforcement of social rights. Social Europe implies a solidarity shift that could create new structural conflicts between winners and losers of European integration. The (dis)advantages of Europeanisation are distributed unequally and citizens are differently affected by Social Europe depending on their socio-economic position and their social attitudes (Bartolini, 2005; Ferrera, 2005; Kriesi et al., 2008).

This chapter attempts to shed light on this emerging conflict on the issue of Social Europe from the perspective of the welfare state.¹ Using data of the Belgian National Election Survey (BNES) 2014, we investigate whether citizens' attitudes towards Social Europe reflect a new conflict between winners and losers of European integration. Concretely, we analyse whether various dimensions of attitudes towards European-level social policymaking are patterned along structural positions (such as education or occupation) and/or subjective dispositions (e.g. economic concerns, identities or socio-economic attitudes).

Theoretical Background

Social Europe: De-Bounding and De-Structuring the National Welfare State

To understand the relevance of the solidarity shift Social Europe sets off, it is necessary to investigate the origin and character of the national welfare state. The creation of national welfare states has not only affected the economic sphere but was also instrumental for the process of nation building. In this sense, Ferrera (2005) speaks about ‘bounded structuring’: the national welfare state provides an internal structuring that levels market inequalities and pacifies class conflicts, but at the same time restricts the circle of solidarity and creates a community of national citizens (i.e. external bounding; Ferrera, 2005; Rokkan, 1975).

Europeanisation challenges this nationally bounded design of the welfare state fundamentally. European integration started out as a project with open economies and closed welfare states, in which economic growth resulting from market liberalisation would preserve the autonomy of the nationally bounded welfare states (Giubboni, 2014; Rhodes & Mény, 1998; Scharpf, 2002). However, the idea of separate tracks for the economic and social arena soon turned out to be impossible, because both domains are intrinsically intertwined. The implementation of EU competition rules and the four freedoms of circulation (goods, capital, services and persons) inevitably erode national social sovereignty and destructure the national membership boundaries. The freedom to provide services in other EU member states, for example, has introduced international competition in the market of (semi-)private insurance schemes (e.g. second-pillar pension arrangements). The freedom of movement of workers initiates new migration movements. Combined with the principle of non-discrimination of EU-nationals, this enabled the provision of social benefits to nationals residing outside the country or to foreign newcomers who did not contribute to the national welfare schemes. Besides, the supranational constraints to the member states’ fiscal and budget policies—intensified with the new rules of the Stability Pact and the Fiscal Compact—limit the redistributive options available to the national welfare states (Giubboni, 2014; Heise & Lierse, 2011).

The EU thus has gradually and increasingly assumed authority in social policy domains over and beyond what is directly tied to the creation of a common market (Leibfried, 2015). The concept of ‘Social Europe’ refers to European-level social policymaking that affects the social welfare of citizens in the various member countries (Martinsen & Vollaard, 2014). Social Europe comprises market-correcting policies as well as regulative actions in the domains of equality, working conditions, health and safety (Falkner, 2010). Furthermore, a considerable share of the EU-budget is devoted to interregional redistribution by means of structural funds (aiming to reduce regional disparities in income, wealth and opportunities; Allen, 2010). Also, the use of the open method of coordination to harmonise national policies in the areas of health, pension reform and social inclusion can be subsumed under the umbrella term Social Europe (Pochet, 2005).

Following Ferrera (2005), European integration should be understood as a process of de-bounding and de-structuring of the national welfare state. Whereas social sharing builds on closure, European integration rests on opening, blurring the spatial demarcations and closure practices that nation states have built to protect themselves. The ‘scope of justice’—i.e. the question who is included in the moral community and subject to fair redistribution—is at stake (Opotow 2001; Wenzel 2000). The first steps towards European-level social policymaking could be seen as the seeds of processes of re-bounding and re-structuring at a higher level of decision-making (Ferrera, 2005: 43). Yet, current evolutions might also lead to a destabilisation of long-standing patterns of institutionalised solidarity. In this sense, Europeanisation not only creates and expands common markets, but also constitutes a fundamental solidarity shift (Münch, 2010).

The Multidimensional Character of Social Europe

Given that Social Europe comprises a variety of policy principles and instruments, we assume a multidimensional perspective. We distinguish four faces of Social Europe that can be ordered from less to more intrusive to the bounded nature of the national welfare state (for a more

detailed argumentation, see Baute, Meuleman, Abts, & Swyngedouw, 2018b). The first and least intrusive aspect of Social Europe relates to efforts by the EU to facilitate an upward convergence of the social policies of the member states. This is mainly obtained through binding and non-binding EU *social regulations*, for instance in the fields of health and safety at work, working conditions and equality (Falkner, 2010). The regulatory angle of Social Europe does not contradict the basic principles of national welfare states, but rather reinforces national-level social protection. In addition to social regulations, the open method of coordination was introduced to facilitate an upward convergence of social standards through mutual learning and peer pressure (de la Porte, 2013).

A second aspect of Social Europe, *member state solidarity*, involves financial redistribution between the EU countries (Sangiovanni, 2013). Currently, member state solidarity is implemented through various structural funds, which aim to reduce regional disparities in income, employment, investment and growth within the EU (Allen, 2010). The fiscal aid to Eurozone countries, which overturned the 'no bailout clause' during the European sovereign debt crisis, is also considered as an instrument of international redistribution (Bechtel, Hainmueller, & Margalit, 2014). In essence, member state solidarity provides financial assistance from more affluent regions to poorer ones, on top of existing forms of institutionalised solidarity within member states. This face of Social Europe thus requires financial solidarity that crosses the border of the national welfare states but does not erode the autonomy of member states to implement national social policies.

A third cornerstone of Social Europe is the development of an *EU-wide social citizenship* (Faist, 2001; Magnusson & Stråth, 2004; Schall, 2012). This implies that EU citizens acquire access to other member states' social security schemes and that already-earned social security rights are transferrable between member states. Currently, EU citizens are entitled to equal social benefits and services as nationals, but there is no European standard as the amount, scope, type and duration of benefits depend on the country of residence (Gerhards & Lengfeld, 2015: 141). The creation of an EU-wide social citizenship space that coincides with the EU's territorial borders operates according to a dynamic that

strongly opposes the logic of the nationally bounded welfare states (Ferrera, 2005).

The fourth and most intrusive face of Social Europe involves policy instruments that establish *interpersonal solidarity* bonds between citizens from different EU countries (Sangiovanni, 2013). Such policies have not yet been implemented but are debated in the form of a European unemployment insurance scheme (Dullien, 2013), a European minimum income benefit (Baute & Meuleman, 2020; Peña-Casas & Bouget, 2014) and a European child benefit (Levy, Matsaganis, & Sutherland, 2013). Such European social protection schemes would introduce new redistributive mechanisms and would enforce a more direct financial solidarity between EU citizens. Current proposals for interpersonal solidarity include a basic level of contributions and benefits based on a low common denominator between member states, that could be topped up by the member states with national payments.

Winners and Losers of European Integration: A New Integration-Demarcation Conflict?

To varying degrees, the different forms of Social Europe open up and redraw the boundaries of the national welfare states. These emerging processes of de- and re-bounding have the potential to “disturb the existing distribution of material resources and life chances among natives” (Ferrera, 2005: 229) and could create a new structural conflict between winners and losers of European integration. After all, the (dis)advantages of Europeanisation are distributed unequally and affect citizens differently, depending on their socio-economic position, social experiences and ideological orientations (Bartolini, 2005; Ferrera 2005; Kriesi et al., 2008). Drawing on the seminal work of Kriesi, the emerging conflict between winners and losers of Social Europe can be conceptualised as a new cleavage between proponents of integration and advocates of demarcation (Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008). The losers of Europeanisation are expected to seek protection and favour the maintenance of national boundaries (demarcation), while the winners of Europeanisation are more likely to support the opening of the national boundaries and socio-economic

deregulation (integration). As the Brexit referendum shows, this emerging integration-demarcation conflict has a large potential for political mobilisation and can reshape the national political space (Katsanidou & Otjes, 2016).

Due to the complexity of Social Europe, the conflict between winners and losers of European integration is not a dichotomous one but crystallises in a highly complex set of different positions regarding the role the EU should play in social policy. A crucial dimension structuring the possible policy options refers to the spatial architecture of solidarity, ranging from ‘defensive re-bounding’ (i.e. reactivating the boundaries of the national welfare state and returning from the path towards European integration) versus ‘European re-bounding’ (i.e. strengthening the so-called EU social dimension) (Ferrera, 2005). The middle position on this continuum implies a merely regulatory role for the supranational level. The nature of the integration-demarcation conflict can furthermore differ considerably across countries. In the strong welfare states of Northern and Western Europe, fear might arise that Europeanisation will result in a downward harmonisation and a deterioration of the quality of social benefits and services. In the less extensive welfare states of Eastern and Southern Europe, on the other hand, individuals might hope that European-level social policy will enhance the level of social protection. Empirical studies indeed reveal that support for EU welfare responsibility varies across nations: generous national welfare provisions seem to obstruct support for EU-level social policymaking (Baute & Meuleman, 2020; Burgoon, 2009; Gerhards, Lengfeld, & Häuberer, 2016; Mau, 2005; Ray, 2004).

The Impact of Structural Positions and Social Dispositions

The backbone of the theoretical arguments developed above is that individuals’ support for Social Europe is contingent on whether they are among the so-called losers or winners of the process of Europeanisation. The losers of globalisation are those persons who see their opportunities protected by national boundaries, and who perceive weakening of

national boundaries as a threat to their life chances, social status and social security. The winners from globalisation, by contrast, are those who benefit from the new opportunities arising from globalisation and who see their life chances enhanced (Kriesi et al., 2008, pp. 4–5). The winner/loser status can be defined in terms of the structural positioning of individuals in the social hierarchy. High-skilled groups who are employed in sectors with a strong international component are in a position to benefit from the mobility options Europeanisation offers. Lower educated classes—especially those employed in locally embedded sectors that are opened up for international competition—have far less exit options. Furthermore, socio-economically vulnerable groups whose security hinges on national welfare arrangements might more often fear that Europeanisation leads to a loss of social protection (Baute, Meuleman, Abts, & Swyngedouw, 2018a). In sum, we hypothesise that *lower educated persons (H1a), production workers (H1b), those with a lower income (H1c) and persons making use of welfare benefits (H1d) are less supportive of Social Europe.*

However, the perceived consequences of European integration are not only a matter of structural positions, but are mediated by social experiences, identities and normative preferences. Drawing on the literature on Euroscepticism, we identify various social dispositions—in particular, economic concerns, socio-economic attitudes and identity—that are expected to influence support for Social Europe. First, following the utilitarian approach, support for Social Europe can be primordially seen as a matter of economic interests and concerns (Abts, Heerwegh, & Swyngedouw, 2009; Gabel, 1998; McLaren, 2007). In this view, the legitimacy of European integration hinges on the cost-benefit appraisals citizens make about the economic impact of the European project on themselves and their social environment. Yet, one cannot take for granted that social groups who are objectively losers of the European project also subjectively feel that economic interests are threatened. The subjective winners/losers thesis therefore stresses the importance of subjective evaluations of economic conditions rather than of objective social structural variables. An additional distinction can be made between egocentric and sociotropic economic concerns. Egocentric economic

concerns relate to the experience that the individual economic and financial situation is unfavourable or might become so in the near future. The sociotropic variant refers to concerns that the economic situation of the collective (e.g. the interest of the own social group or the nation) is being threatened (Gabel, 1998). We hypothesise that *egocentric (H2a) as well as sociotropic economic concerns (H2b) decrease support for Social Europe*, although previous research indicates that sociotropic concerns have a more decisive impact on attitudes towards European integration than egocentric perceptions (McLaren, 2002).

The opposition between integration and demarcation is furthermore crosscut by a left/right conflict about the desirability of redistribution and the role of the government (Roller, 1995; Hooghe & Marks, 1999, 2008). The idea of supranational policymaking is founded on the premises that too much economic inequality is harmful for societies, and that the government should intervene actively in reducing such inequalities. In that sense, support for equality-reducing measures—that are today organised primarily at the national level—could spill over to support for Social Europe (Baute, Meuleman, & Abts, 2019). A few existing studies on this topic confirm that support for redistribution within countries (Kleider & Stoeckel, 2018) and support for increased social spending (Beaudonnet, 2014) are indeed conducive to support for financial solidarity between EU member states. A larger number of studies have focused on the relationship between left-right ideology and support for Social Europe and have found that left-leaning persons are more enthusiastic about the Europeanisation of social policy (Ciornei & Recchi, 2017; Gerhards & Lengfeld, 2015; Gerhards et al. 2016; Ray, 2004; Vandenbroucke et al. 2018). Therefore, we hypothesise that *individuals with egalitarian views (H3a) and those at the left of the political spectrum (H3b) show greater support for Social Europe*.

Finally, identity and a sense of belonging are crucial elements in citizens' willingness to share with others (Börner, 2013). Often, the solidarity circle is confined to those who are closer to 'us', while the 'other' are seen as undeserving of social welfare (van Oorschot, 2000). Therefore, one could expect that individuals who identify strongly with the nation would oppose the de-bounding of the national welfare state,

while those with a strongly developed European identity would favour establishing solidarity bonds across boundaries of member states (Baute, Abts, & Meuleman, 2019; Berg, 2007; Ciornei & Recchi, 2017; Gerhards & Lengfeld, 2015; Kuhn, Solaz, & van Elsas, 2018; Stoeckel & Kuhn, 2017; Mau, 2005). In the Belgian case, the competing presence of national and subnational identities (i.e. Belgian national versus Flemish/Walloon regional identity) adds an additional layer of complexity to this scheme. The dominant representation of Flemish identity tends towards the ethnic ideal type, that views identity as a static cultural heritage that is passed on along blood lines and considers outgroup members as a threat. The Walloon and Belgian identities, conversely, rather follow the logic of the republican representation, that conceives the nation as a dynamic contract and is more open to newcomers who are willing to accept the basic rules operative in a particular territory (Billiet, Maddens & Beerten, 2000). Because of the presence of a strong ethnic component in the Flemish identity, we expect that *strong identification with Flanders over Belgium decreases support for Social Europe (H4a), while this is not the case in Wallonia (H4b)*.

Data and Methods

Data Set: The Belgian National Election Study

To test these hypotheses, we analyse data from the 2014 Belgian National Election Study (BNES) organised by the Institute for Social and Political Opinion Research at the University of Leuven (ISPO-KU Leuven) (Abts et al. 2015). A register-based probability sample of Belgians entitled to vote in the 2014 elections was surveyed by means of computer-assisted personal interviews (response rate 47%). Upon completion of this face-to-face interview, respondents were asked to fill out a 20-page drop-off questionnaire containing a module gauging attitudes towards Social Europe. Applying the principles of Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014), we were able to convince 74% of the respondents to fill out and send back the drop-off questionnaire

($N = 1403$). To correct for differential non-response, post-stratification weights for gender, age and education are used during the analyses.

Indicators

Attitudes towards Social Europe—Following our multidimensional conceptualisation of Social Europe (Baute et al., 2018b), we distinguish between four attitudinal dimensions that refer to a specific aspect of supranational intervention in social policy and are measured by multi-item measurements (see Table 4.1 for exact question wording and frequency distributions). For the regression analysis, we construct indices containing the mean score of these items.

To measure support for *social regulations*, we use respondents' evaluations of four obligations imposed by the EU on employers to protect health and safety at work, maximum weekly working hours, minimum terms of paid leave and minimum terms of maternity leave. Attitudes towards *member-state solidarity* are operationalised through three items referring to redistribution between the richer and poorer EU member states. These items relate to supporting member states in economic difficulties, the size of international money transfers and the necessity for solidarity between EU member states. Opinions about *EU social citizenship* are measured by four items concerning citizens' views regarding towards the access of EU citizens to social benefits and protection in Belgium. One item concerns the principle of non-discrimination, two items relate to prioritizing nationals and one item refers to the conditionality of social protection. Lastly, the dimension of *interpersonal solidarity* is measured by means of two items referring to support for EU measures to reduce income disparities and support for a system of solidarity among all EU citizens.

Structural characteristics—We study educational attainment, occupational status and (subjective) income and benefit as indicators of winner/loser status. Educational level is measured by respondents' highest level of education completed, distinguishing between (1) lower secondary education or less, (2) higher secondary education and (3) tertiary education. We use the occupational class scheme developed by Oesch (2006)

Table 4.1 Question wording and frequency distributions of items measuring support for Social Europe ($N = 1403$; weighted for age, gender and education)

Below are a number of measures that the European Union has taken in recent years. Can you indicate for each of the following measures whether it is a (very) good or a (very) bad thing that the EU has taken these measures?

		<i>A very bad thing</i>	<i>A bad thing</i>	<i>Neither good nor bad</i>	<i>A good thing</i>	<i>A very good thing</i>
Social regulations	D30_1	0.22	1.33	9.42	58.71	30.32
		The EU imposes a number of obligations on employers to protect the health and safety of workers				
	D30_2	1.68	9.39	25.40	43.60	19.93
		The EU prohibits a workweek of more than 48 hours (including overtime) for workers in the EU member states				

D30_4	The EU posits that workers in the EU member states are entitled to paid leave for a period of at least 4 weeks	0.17	2.17	14.68	53.23	29.76
D30_5	The EU obliges all EU member states to provide at least 4 months of paid maternity leave to women who gave birth	1.28	5.92	20.67	42.87	29.26

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

		The following statements are about solidarity between member states of the European Union. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?				
Member state solidarity		Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
D33_1	Rich EU countries such as Belgium should always support other member states that experience serious economic difficulties	6.34	28.3	37.62	25.59	2.15
D33_2	Too much tax money is going from the prosperous EU countries to the poorer EU countries	2.49	13.9	43.73	33.11	6.76

		2.06	9.03	37.54	42.83	8.54
D33_3	The solidarity between the richer and poorer EU countries should not be broken					
	Now we would like to ask your opinion on whether EU citizens should have access to social security in Belgium. By EU citizens we mean people who have come to Belgium from other EU member states and live here. Social security provides citizens with an income in case of illness, unemployment and disability. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?					
		<i>Completely disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Completely agree</i>
D15_1	EU citizens should receive the same social facilities as Belgians	10.49	27.83	30.32	26.58	4.77
D15_3	In the allocation of social benefits Belgians should have priority over EU citizens	4.10	22.41	25.15	36.31	12.03

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

D15_4	EU citizens should first have a job before they gain access to social services	1.37	6.91	17.32	45.65	28.75
D15_5	Let's support the poor in our country first, before we help the poor coming from other EU countries	2.54	10.27	22.23	33.39	31.58
	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?					
		Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
Q121_3	A system of solidarity between all EU citizens needs to be established	2.50	13.44	23.00	54.43	7.63
Q121_7	The EU should take measures to reduce income differences between all EU citizens	1.50	18.04	27.75	43.98	8.73

that not only includes a vertical dimension (hierarchy of the position) but also distinguishes between different logics of work (e.g. technical versus interpersonal) and is therefore well-suited to study post-industrial class structures. Concretely, we distinguish between (1) self-employed professionals and large employers, (2) small business owners, (3) technical (semi-)professionals, (4) production workers, (5) (associate) managers, (6) clerks, (7) sociocultural (semi-)professionals, (8) service workers and (9) those who have never worked and can therefore not be categorised in one of the previous groups. Subjective income is measured by means of the respondents' assessment of their household income (not enough, just enough, enough, more than enough). Dependency on the national welfare state is measured by a dummy variable flagging whether the respondent or a household member made use of welfare benefits in the past two years. Finally, we also include age (in years) and gender in the models.

Social dispositions—*Egocentric economic concerns* are measured by means of two items capturing whether people assess that their personal or familial economic situation has deteriorated in the recent years (Q96—'Please try to remember your standard of living five years ago. Compared to your current situation, do you feel things have gotten worse, have gotten better, or remained the same?' and Q116—'To what extent have the incomes or employment of you or your family members been affected by the current economic crisis?'). *Socio-tropic economic concerns* are gauged by asking the respondent they 'expect the economy will evolve in the next five years?' (five-point scale from 'strongly deteriorate' to 'strongly improve'). To measure *(sub)national identity*, we use the so-called Moreno question (Moreno, 2006) that invites respondents to position themselves on a 5-point continuum ranging from exclusively Flemish/Walloon to exclusively Belgian. To indicate positions on the socio-economic cleavage we employ egalitarianism as well as left-right positioning. *Egalitarian values* are measured by a sum scale of three five-point Likert items regarding the need to reduce income differences and the role of the government herein. Higher values represent more egalitarian views. Political *left-right self-placement* is measured on an 11-point scale from 0 (left) to 10 (right).

More information regarding the question wording and descriptive statistics of these items can be found in Appendix to this chapter.

Results

Measuring Support for Social Europe

As a first step in this analysis, we employ second-order confirmatory factor analysis to verify whether the items in the BNES are appropriate measurements of citizens’ attitudes towards Social Europe. In the second-order factor model, we define four first-order latent variables—representing the various faces of Social Europe—that are measured directly by the indicators shown in Table 4.1. In addition, we specify a second-order factor that underlies the four separate dimensions of Social Europe, and thus captures the common denominator of support for the various aspects of supranational social policymaking (see Fig. 4.1). This analysis makes it possible to study whether the different faces of Social Europe can be discerned in the public opinion of Belgian citizens and at the same time reveals how strong the common component of support for Social Europe is (Baute et al., 2018b).

After the inclusion of one error correlation,² the model fit is good: the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) equals 0.035, which is well below cut-off point 0.060. Furthermore, the comparative

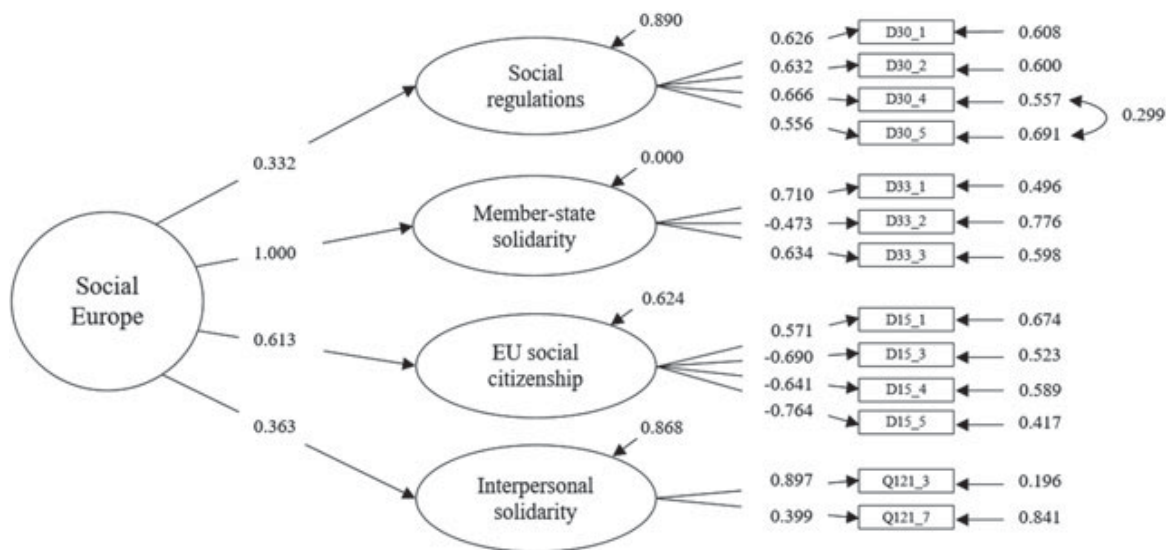


Fig. 4.1 Second-order CFA model measuring attitudes to Social Europe (Note: $N = 1402$, $\chi^2 = 168.257$, $df = 61$, $RMSEA = 0.035$, $SRMR = 0.045$, $CFI = 0.954$, $TLI = 0.942$. All parameters are significant at the $p < 0.001$ level [Source BNES 2014])

fit index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) are sufficiently close to 1. This implies that the second-order factor model proves an adequate description of the observed correlations between the 13 items.

The first-order factor loadings (see Fig. 4.1) give an indication of the measurement quality of the survey items. The factor loadings are (in absolute terms) generally larger than 0.40, and in 9 out of 13 cases even larger than 0.60. This implies that the items share a considerable part of their variance with the latent variables they are purported to measure and that the amount of random measurement error in the items is acceptable. Item q121_7 has a loading just below 0.40 but is kept in the model so that we can continue working with a multi-item measurement of interpersonal solidarity. In other words, the items are sufficiently valid and reliable indicators of the four latent variables. These results indicate that the four dimensions of Social Europe—social regulations, member state solidarity, EU social citizenship and interpersonal solidarity—are reflected in the opinion structure of the Belgian citizens. Support for Social Europe is clearly multidimensional: endorsing that the EU attempts to harmonise national welfare states by imposing minimum standards can be separated from supporting transfers between member states or organising solidarity between individuals across national borders.

The four separate dimensions should not be seen as completely independent but are interrelated instead. This is evidenced by the fact that a second-order factor (i.e. general support for Social Europe) can be identified that taps into the communality of the four dimensions. The second-order factor loadings express the amount of overlap between general support for Social Europe and the specific dimensions and vary considerably in strength. First-order factor member state solidarity has the highest factor loading. This factor loading equals 1,³ which implies that member state solidarity overlaps completely with second-order factor support for Social Europe. Apparently, citizens' opinions on whether richer member states should support the less affluent ones coincides fully with their general views on Social Europe. In the public's eye, member state solidarity is the primary aspect of Social Europe. This is not completely unexpected, as the EU's various structural funds, which redistribute money from the more-affluent to the less-affluent member states, are the kernel

of existing Social Europe. EU social citizenship shows a strong connection with the second-order factor as well. The second-order factor loading equals 0.613, implying that views on granting social rights to EU migrants are for almost 40% determined by one's general outlook on Social Europe. Social regulations and interpersonal solidarity are much more loosely connected with the second-order factor (with loadings of 0.332 and 0.363, respectively, implying that just over 10% of the variance of these factors is shared with the general factor). General support for Social Europe apparently does not strongly determine preferences for social regulations and EU-wide interpersonal solidarity. Social regulations and interpersonal solidarity are not central issues in the integration-demarcation conflict around Social Europe. A plausible reason for this finding is that social regulations strengthen rather than challenge nationally bounded welfare. Concrete forms of interpersonal solidarity have not been established at this point, making this issue too abstract to create a clearly crystallised political conflict.

Determinants of Support for Social Europe

To investigate whether citizens' opinions reflect an emerging conflict between winners and losers of European integration, we estimate the impact of a series of structural characteristics and social dispositions on support for Social Europe (see Table 4.2). We start with a OLS regression model explaining support for Social Europe in general (based on a mean score of the four respective indexes) but subsequently also highlight the differences with models analysing the four different dimensions of Social Europe.

The structural characteristics are of little relevance in explaining general support for Social Europe. Regarding occupational position, only the small business owners and the group that has never worked deviate significantly from the production workers (i.e. the reference category). Differences between other occupational categories are too small to be significant, rejecting H1b. Furthermore, persons who perceive their income as insufficient or who make use of welfare benefits do not hold significantly

Table 4.2 OLS regression models explaining Social Europe and its dimensions

	Social Europe	Social regulations	EU social citizenship	Member state solidarity	Interpersonal solidarity
Age	0.04	-0.06	-0.01	0.07*	0.12***
Gender					
<i>Male (ref. cat.)</i>					
<i>Female</i>	-0.02	0.17**	-0.12*	-0.06	-0.02
Education					
<i>Lower secondary or less</i>	-0.31***	-0.14	-0.47***	-0.33***	0.10
<i>Higher secondary</i>	-0.28***	-0.05	-0.37***	-0.27***	-0.05
<i>Tertiary (ref. cat.)</i>					
Occupation (Oesch class scheme)					
<i>Self-employed prof. & large employers</i>	0.01	-0.49*	0.19	0.28	-0.07
<i>Small business owners</i>	-0.21*	-0.50***	-0.03	-0.08	-0.03
<i>Technical (semi-)professionals</i>	0.04	-0.02	0.12	0.30*	-0.31*
<i>Production workers (ref. cat.)</i>					
<i>(Associate) managers</i>	0.09	-0.13	0.15	0.30*	-0.13
<i>Clerks</i>	-0.02	-0.05	0.05	0.08	-0.21*
<i>Socio-cultural (semi-)professionals</i>	0.14	0.01	0.17	0.31**	-0.17
<i>Service workers</i>	0.02	-0.12	0.11	0.12	-0.08

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

	Social Europe	Social regulations	EU social citizenship	Member state solidarity	Interpersonal solidarity
<i>Never worked</i>	0.25*	-0.14	0.24*	0.50***	0.03
Subjective income					
<i>Not enough (ref. cat.)</i>					
<i>Just enough</i>	0.04	0.13	0.07	0.05	0.01
<i>Enough—more than enough</i>	0.12	0.16	0.21	0.08	0.02
Benefit use in household					
<i>No (ref. cat.)</i>					
<i>Benefit use in household</i>	-0.01	-0.05	0.07	0.04	-0.06
Improvement in standard of living	0.02	-0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03
Experienced impact of the crisis					
<i>Not at all (ref. cat.)</i>					
<i>A bit</i>	-0.08	-0.19**	-0.04	-0.11	0.10
<i>Strong to very strong</i>	0.01	-0.05	-0.06	-0.02	0.11
Expectation economy					

	Social Europe	Social regulations	EU social citizenship	Member state solidarity	Interpersonal solidarity
<i>(strongly) deteriorate remain stable</i>	-0.23***	-0.13	-0.20**	-0.22**	-0.05
<i>(strongly) improve (ref. cat.)</i>	-0.13*	-0.09	-0.13*	-0.19**	0.08
Political left-right placement					
Left	0.30***	0.20***	0.34***	0.13*	0.09
Center (ref. cat.)					
Right	-0.24***	-0.09	-0.15*	-0.20**	-0.22***
Egalitarianism	0.18***	0.16***	0.02	0.08**	0.20***
National identity					
More to only Flemish/Walloon	-0.49***	-0.12	-0.52***	-0.42***	-0.22*
Equally Flemish/Walloon than Belgian	-0.28***	-0.12	-0.29***	-0.19*	-0.11
More to only Belgian Region					
Flanders (ref. cat.)					
Wallonia	-0.06	0.23**	-0.23**	-0.11	0.03
Interaction identity x region					
Wallonia*more Flem/Wal	0.30	0.21	0.43*	0.25	-0.06
Wallonia*Equally Flem/Wal	0.27*	0.16	0.35**	0.03	0.13
N	1302	1293	1293	1293	1296
R² (adjusted)	0.18	0.13	0.15	0.10	0.11

Note ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05. Results are weighted for age, gender and educational level

different opinions on Social Europe compared to those in a more prosperous financial situation (rejecting H1c and H1d). This pattern refutes the hypothesis that especially individuals confronted with material hardship and active in occupations that are vulnerable for international competition are opposed against social integration. The only structural indicator that does have a sizeable impact is education. As expected, lower educated display lower levels of general support for Social Europe (confirming H1a). Persons with a lower secondary degree (or lower) and a higher secondary degree score, respectively, 0.31 and 0.28 standard deviations lower than those with a tertiary degree. Clearly, the lower educated show stronger opposition against opening up the national boundaries of solidarity. As none of the other indicators of socio-economic status has a substantial effect, it is unlikely that this educational gradient of support is driven by material self-interest, however. Besides improving prospects on the labour market, education also leads to the socialisation of tolerant values and openness for change.

The various indicators of economic concerns convey a similar message. The two indicators of egocentric economic concerns—the perceived evolution of one's standard of living and experienced impact of the economic crisis—are not significantly related to general support for Social Europe. Contrary to hypothesis 2a, concerns for the personal material well-being do not translate into opposition against supranational involvement in social policymaking. Conversely, the sociotropic variant of economic concerns is a relevant predictor of attitudes towards Social Europe. Persons who think that the economy (rather than their own position) will deteriorate (-0.23) or remain stable (-0.13) are significantly less positive about EU-level social policymaking (confirming H2b). Resistance against a European social project is thus rooted in concerns about economic prosperity of the nation rather than in personal cost-benefit calculations.

The relevance of group-based consideration rather than individualist arguments is also evident from the impact of (sub)national identities on support for Social Europe. Interestingly, identification interacts with region of residence (Flanders vs. Wallonia) in a meaningful manner. In Flanders (the reference category), an outspoken effect of identification is found. Flemish residents who identify with Flanders (-0.49) or who

feel equally Flemish as Belgian (-0.28) are considerably more critical of a European social project compared to the residents who identify with Belgium in the first place (see H4a). In French-speaking Belgium, the relationship between (sub)national identity and support for Social Europe is significantly weaker and virtually non-existent: residents in Wallonia who identify primarily with this subnational category (-0.19) or who feel equally Belgian as Walloon (-0.01) do hardly differ from persons who identify with Belgium in the first place (H4b). This finding can be understood from the predominantly ethnic social representation of the Flemish identity that conceives outgroups as a threat and is therefore critical to open up boundaries of solidarity. In Wallonia, where the dominant representation of identity is republican in the first place, such gradient is not found.

Probably the most consistent predictors of general support for Social Europe relate to ideological stances on the socio-economic left-right cleavage. Persons valuing a more equal distribution of economic resources are significantly more likely to endorse involvement of the EU in social policy (confirming H3a). Furthermore, those who position themselves left on the political spectrum have more positive attitudes towards Social Europe than those in the political centre, while support for Social Europe is weakest at the right-hand side of the political spectrum (confirming H3b). Clearly, the integration-demarcation cleavage does not cross-cut the socio-economic left-right cleavage completely but is—to a certain extent—aligned with it. That the European social project is especially welcomed by the political left illustrates how preferences regarding the role of government and redistribution can spill over from the national to the supranational level (Baute, Meuleman, et al., 2019).

Table 4.2 shows similar explanation models for each of the four first-order dimensions of Social Europe. The deviating patterns provide insight in the differential nature of the various faces of Social Europe. In the second-order CFA (Fig. 4.1), *member state solidarity* was identified as the most visible aspect of Social Europe for the general public. Not surprisingly, the predictors of support for member state solidarity largely mirror those for support for Social Europe in general: A low educational level, sociotropic economic concerns, a strong Flemish

identity and a rightist position on the socio-economic cleavage form an obstacle to supporting solidarity between European member states. Support for *EU social citizenship*—that is, providing EU migrants access to the national welfare system—follows a partially different logic. For this dimension, the impact of education and (sub)national identity is most outspoken, while preferences for egalitarian redistribution are irrelevant. The question whether EU migrants should be allowed into the national solidarity circle appears to be foremost a cultural issue rather than a socio-economic one. Support for *social regulations* shows a yet another logic. The idea that the EU imposes minimum standards for social policy is significantly less popular among the self-employed and employers—i.e. the occupational categories that traditionally oppose market regulation by the government, irrespective of the governmental level. Furthermore, social regulations are considerably more supported in Wallonia than in Flanders. *Interpersonal solidarity*, finally, shows the least outspoken pattern of predictors. This form of solidarity is not structurally patterned but is instead mainly related to ideological positions (left-right placement and egalitarianism). The fact that this form of solidarity does currently not exist at the level of the EU and is not strongly politicised can explain the weak predictive power of this model for interpersonal solidarity.

Conclusion and Discussion

Over the last decades, the EU has become increasingly involved in social policymaking. The growing importance of Social Europe challenges the nationally bounded character of contemporary welfare states. This chapter investigated whether this solidarity shift creates a new structural conflict between losers (who favour demarcation of the national boundaries) and winners (who favour integration) of Europeanisation. To answer this question, we analysed public opinion data from the Belgian National Election Study 2014 measuring various dimensions of attitudes towards Social Europe.

Our results reveal meaningful variation in citizens' opinions related to Social Europe. Using a novel measurement instrument, four different

attitude dimensions can be distinguished, each referring to a different aspect of supranational social policymaking. These four dimensions are not independent, but can to some extent be collapsed into a general pro vs. contra Social Europe dimension. Interestingly, we find that member state solidarity is the primary face of Social Europe for the Belgian public. Citizens have redistribution between states in mind when they think about a shift of solidarity arrangements towards the supranational level, rather than interpersonal solidarity, imposing social regulations or granting EU migrants access to the national welfare state.

The question whether the general dimension of support for versus opposition against Social Europe can be considered as a new integration-demarcation cleavage requires a nuanced answer. On the one hand, attitudes towards Social Europe are not strongly embedded in social structure or egocentric economic concerns. Citizens' stance on Social Europe cannot be understood as a simple function of one's socio-economic status and self-interest. The European question is thus not a straightforward dichotomous conflict between objective winners and losers of Europeanisation. This point is also illustrated by the finding that education—a variable with a strong cultural component—is the only background characteristic with a consistent impact on attitudes towards Social Europe.

On the other hand, the absence of social structural effects does not imply that there is no potential for a political conflict on the issue of Social Europe. However, rather than objective positions, the so-called subjective experiences and social dispositions shape one's stance on Social Europe. Sociotropic concerns about the future of the economy as well as a strong Flemish identity (i.e. a subnational identity strongly aligned with the ethnic ideal type of citizenship) are clear obstacles to support an expansion of the solidarity circle beyond the nation state. On the contrary, persons with egalitarian views who define themselves as left of the political spectrum are stronger supporters of supranational solidarity arrangements. So far, however, the opposition between integration of European welfare systems and demarcation of national welfare has not been an issue of strong political mobilisation in Belgium. The harmonisation of welfare systems through social regulations, for example, is supported by a very large proportion of the population. Debates

on interpersonal solidarity between citizens from different member states have only started recently and have not led to clearly crystallised attitude patterns in the population yet. Our results show, however, that the redistribution between member states (member state solidarity) is most likely to become the prevalent issue of political conflict—at least in affluent EU member states. Because of the nature of this specific distributional mechanism, we assume that the definition of winners and losers strongly coincides with national boundaries and is conditional of the country's level of prosperity. International comparative research is needed to verify to what extent these Belgian findings generalise to other, especially less affluent, EU member states.

Notes

1. Our conceptualisation of Social Europe is not exhaustive, as we for instance do not include the social dialogue or collective bargaining at the EU-level, which can also be considered as important components of Social Europe. Given our focus on the welfare state, however, these aspects are beyond the scope of this contribution.
2. Modification indices suggested to add an error correlation between items d30_4 and d30_5. The error correlation between these two items measuring social regulations is theoretically justified, as both items deal with particular forms of leave for employees.
3. Because the estimate for standardised loading slightly exceeded one (i.e. the estimate is inadmissible) we constrained it to one.

Appendix

See Tables [A.1](#) and [A.2](#).

Table A.1 Descriptive statistics for the structural positions and social dispositions

Variable	Mean/%	S.D.	N
Age	51.7	17.53	1403
Gender			1403
<i>Male</i>	49.18		
<i>Female</i>	50.82		
Educational level			1403
<i>Low</i>	27.37		
<i>Middle</i>	32.22		
<i>High</i>	40.41		
Occupation (Oesch)			1380
<i>Self-employed professionals and large employers</i>	2.39		
<i>Small business owners</i>	9.64		
<i>Technical (semi-)professionals</i>	4.93		
<i>Production workers</i>	18.33		
<i>(Associate) managers</i>	7.9		
<i>Clerks</i>	13.91		
<i>Socio-cultural (semi-)professionals</i>	17.9		
<i>Service workers</i>	15.36		
<i>Never worked/exercised a profession</i>	9.64		
Subjective income			1400
<i>Not enough</i>	6.21		
<i>Just enough</i>	29		
<i>Enough to more than enough</i>	64.79		
Benefit use in household			1401
<i>No</i>	75.95		
<i>Yes</i>	24.05		
Improvement in standard of living	2.93	0.84	1401
Impact of the crisis			1400
<i>Not at all</i>	27.64		
<i>A bit</i>	53.29		
<i>Strong to very strong</i>	19.07		
Expectation economy			1381
<i>(Strongly) deteriorate</i>	38.45		
<i>Remain stable</i>	34.76		
<i>(Strongly) improve</i>	26.79		
Ideology			1364
<i>Left</i>	27.42		

(continued)

Table A.1 (continued)

Variable	Mean/%	S.D.	N
<i>Centre</i>	36.29		
<i>Right</i>	36.29		
Egalitarianism	3.76	0.74	1403
National identity			1389
<i>More to only Flemish/Walloon</i>	24.48		
<i>Equally Flemish/Walloon than Belgian</i>	35.06		
<i>More to only Belgian</i>	40.46		
Region			1403
<i>Flanders</i>	65.07		
<i>Wallonia</i>	34.93		

Table A.2 Measurement of egalitarianism

Variable	Item	Responses	Mean (S.D.)	Factor loading
Q52_1	The differences between classes ought to be smaller than they are at present	1 = completely disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neither agree, nor disagree 4 = agree 5 = completely agree	3.90 (0.88)	0.673
Q52_2 (recoded)	The differences between the high and the low incomes should stay as they are		3.79 (0.93)	0.617
Q52_3	The government should reduce income differentials		3.60 (1.03)	0.651

Note Egalitarian values are measured by an index of the mean score on three items. Citizens were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statement; (1) the differences between classes ought to be smaller than they are at present, (2) the differences between the high and the low incomes should stay as they are and (3) the government should reduce income differentials. Responses were recorded with high scores signifying egalitarian values

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