

# **THE OTHER SIDE OF OPINIONS**

## **EXPLORING THE POLICY PREFERENCES OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS ON LABOUR MIGRATION**

ARIANNA SANTERO E FRANCESCO TARANTINO

### **Abstract**

Do EU citizens' preferences on labour migration policies vary across countries and years according to individual socio-demographic characteristics? Do they follow respondents' personal experience of the national economic situation or are they ideologically driven by political orientations and general attitudes towards immigrations? These questions have direct implications not just for understanding the evolution of opinions about migration policies across Europe but also for actual policy-making. Through descriptive and multivariate analysis of the rich dataset produced over four editions (2008-2011) of the international comparative poll Transatlantic Trends on Immigration (TTI), this article aims to understand which type of immigration policy approach is preferred by European citizens, how polarized are such preferences and which role is played, by individual variables in shaping them. Our ultimate goal is to throw new light on the relationship between public opinions and migration policy-making.

*Keywords: Attitudes to immigration; Labour Migration; Policy Preferences; Policy making-Opinion gap.*

## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

The current economic crisis has certainly slowed down immigration flows towards Europe, although these remain sizeable. Besides, labour demand, although overall weakened, still represents one of the main drivers of international migration. Nevertheless, recent national policy responses, in setting up different selection and admission criteria, have differed significantly and in the last years a more selective policy approach was observed among European countries<sup>i</sup>.

These responses include a wide range of measures and a variety of mixes of labour migration policies and their functional equivalents have been adopted in each European country, producing effects in the national labour markets<sup>ii</sup>.

Nevertheless, in this framework of an overall more selective policy-making in Europe, opinions and attitudes towards immigration do not seem to have deeply changed and worsened, unlike what is usually expected in times of economic crisis (OECD, 2010: 122).

The linkages between migration policies and public opinion have been widely studied in the last decades. However, whether opinions are structured by actual policy choices, among other factors, or rather policy-making is influenced by public opinion (or both) is still debated in the literature. Indeed, the answer to this question is not so straightforward and what is instead evident is the existing gap between policy-making and public opinion on immigration, usually interpreted as a gap between restrictive public opinions and expensive policies. European governments have often adopted more restrictive admission policies, at least on a discursive and rhetorical level, justifying this choice as a

---

<sup>1</sup> Dataset used in this article was kindly provided by German Marshall Fund of the United States. We are especially grateful to Astrid Ziebarth, Director of the Migration & Society Program of GMFUS. Special thanks go also to Professor Pierangelo Isernia and to Dr. Kaat Smets for essential support in using TTI dataset.

response to citizen's concerns about the impact of immigration in national labour markets.

Therefore, in order to understand labour migration policy-making evolution in Europe it is necessary to explore individual attitudes and preferences with regard to different admission criteria of labour immigrants. The link between policy preferences of the general public and policy-making, in the specific field of labour migration, has been scarcely analyzed, although a large body of research has investigated the broader issue of general attitudes towards immigration.

The international comparative survey Transatlantic Trends on Immigration (TTI) allows to analyze how individual preferences and attitudes towards immigration have changed in some European (and north-American) countries, over a key period, namely throughout the years of the economic crisis (2008-2011)<sup>iii</sup>.

TTI 2011 topline results, in fact, show that, despite the economic crisis, attitudes towards immigration in the United States and Europe remain largely stable. Perceptions of immigration as a problem or an opportunity have changed little since 2009 so that differences are more relevant across countries rather than across years. British and Spanish respondents, for example, display more worried attitudes toward immigration and, especially in the UK, respondents are specifically worried about the competition with immigrants in the access to the welfare system and the labour market. Other surveys confirm widespread hostility towards new immigration in the UK compared with other European countries (Saggar and Drear, 2001; Ipsos MORI 2008-2009). Conversely, in France, Germany and Italy attitudes are generally more open. For example the share of respondents who think that their country has too many immigrants has declined in the last decades and a growing social and cultural acceptance toward immigrants emerges (Abali, 2009).

Starting from a thorough review of the literature, this paper aims at understanding, first,

which types of labour migration policies (LMPs) are preferred by European citizens, second, how much these preferences are polarized and, finally, which role is played by individual characteristics in shaping them. More specifically, two fundamental policy options will be taken into account: preferred length of stay of immigrants (i.e. temporary or permanent) and prerequisites for admission for working purposes (concerning in particular skill level and job status). Moreover the paper aims to shed new light on the relationship between public opinions and migration policy-making, with specific attention to the labour migration field.

## **1. Studying opinions on immigration**

Two relevant theoretical issues will be considered and dealt with in this article : a) the relationship, and the alleged gap, between opinions and policy-making; b) the role of individual characteristics in shaping policy preferences towards immigration.

### *1.1 Opinions and policy-making: the chicken-and-egg dilemma*

As stated by Zaller, «any opinion is the marriage of information and predisposition: information to form a mental picture of the given issue, and predisposition to motivate some conclusions about it” (Zaller, 1992: 6). ‘Attitudes’ and ‘preferences’ are generally treated in the literature as more specific concepts than the broader one of ‘opinions’. In this article we will focus on policy preferences toward specific admission criteria of labour migrants although we also consider general attitudes towards immigration<sup>iv</sup>.

Preferences are defined as the dynamic results of rational, personal and social considerations. They change on the basis of what people like, what people are expected to do or to like, what is possible and what they are used to do. In other words,

preferences not only depend on attitudes but also on other personal and contextual factors (Ruitenberg and De Beer, 2012).

The analysis of opinions toward immigration is generally included in studies on the determinants of migration policy-making . Within this broad theoretical field, there are some literature strands focusing more on the role of public opinion and general attitudes toward immigration, or more specifically of preferences over particular migration policies. According to Scheve and Slaughter (2001), in order to understand actual policies and related political conflict, it is important to know who supports more or less restrictive policies and why. Only when preferences on specific migration policies are analyzed, a convincing account of cross-countries and over-time variation in policy-making can be developed (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001).

However, the relation between public opinions and policy-making is still debated and it represents a typical example of a chicken and egg question. Do opinions influence policy-making or rather the opposite? Bauer and others authors, for example, showed that it is difficult to guess to what extent popular sentiments toward immigration are in line with policies or instead policies are in line with sentiments (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmerman, 2000: 24). According to their study, carried out in 12 OECD countries, there are indications that immigration policies adopted affect natives' sentiments toward immigrants<sup>v</sup>. Citizens of countries selecting immigrants on the basis of their skills are more likely to think that immigrants are generally good for economy than those of countries which receive mainly immigrants for humanitarian reasons (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmerman, 2000: 24).

Many analysts have suggested that there is a gap between public opinion and policy development on immigration while others showed that this 'attitudes-policy gap' is probably overestimated and public attitudes are informed, stable and not randomly biased (Lahav, 2004: 1176). Conversely, according to Facchini and Mayda 'public

opinion is most likely the main political-economy force that reduces the current size of migration flows' (Facchini and Mayda, 2008: 26). In other words, according to them, opinions against immigration would influence restrictive admission policies and the gap between negative individual opinions in the general public and actual expansive policies would essentially be determined by other relevant factors such as pro-immigrant lobbies activity. Furthermore, according to Facchini and Mayda, national policymakers would 'not have full control on migration inflows through their policies' and this hypothesis would explain better the 'public opinion puzzle' (Facchini and Mayda, 2008: 26).

The issue is strictly related to the 'control gap debate' started more than fifteen years ago with Cornelius, Martin and Hollifield's reflections about the alleged gap between restrictive goals of immigration policy (laws, regulations, executive actions etc.) and expansive policy outcomes in this area producing the 'paradox of immigration policies' in Western States (Cornelius, Martin and Hollifield, 1994: 3).

Boswell distinguished two aspects of this paradox: on one hand it is possible to investigate why migration policies, implemented to stop or control flows, do not provide desired results and, on the other hand, the question is why national government do not conduct restrictive policies although these seems to be really appreciated by citizens (Boswell, 2007: 75). Likewise Joppke has asked in his study 'why liberal states accept unwanted immigration' (Joppke, 1998). The answer is that policy-making is influenced by several factors (economic needs, international norms, historical environment, interest groups and electoral competition models) and not simply by public opinions.

However, the empirical evidence drawn from the TTI data presented here seems to challenge one of the key assumptions in the 'control gap debate', namely the idea that public opinion are necessarily negative towards immigration and that policies react to this with a more restrictive approach. TTI topline results clearly show that opinions toward immigration, during the economic crisis period, have not dramatically worsened

while, at the same time, policy-makers across Europe adopted more restrictive measures, often justifying this by public opinion orientation. In other words it is possible to notice a gap between opinions and labour migration policy-making opposite to that observed by part of literature. In the following pages we will try to bring this reflection forward, by giving some insights on the possible causes of such a gap through an empirical study of association between individual characteristics and resources and policy preferences.

Our general hypothesis is that the gap between restrictive migration policies and stable, or even more open, opinions towards specific labour admission criteria could be related to the fact that preferences are associated with cultural and ideological factors rather than with economic factors while restrictive policy-making and restrictive political and public discourse over immigration are more influenced by contextual economic factors. For this purpose it is important to clarify which role is played by individual variables in shaping preferences and attitudes toward immigration.

### *1.2 Explaining attitudes and preferences toward immigration: the role of individual variables*

Some studies emphasize more the role of contextual factors (economic, ideological, socio-cultural, institutional) in shaping preferences and attitudes (Bauer et al. 2000, Mayda 2006, OECD 2010, O' Rourke and Sinnott 2006): residents of countries with more selective migration policies tend to be less worried about the consequences of immigration (OECD, 2010). Similarly, Bauer showed that citizens are more favourable to immigration if immigrants are selected to meet labour market needs (Bauer et al. 2000). Economic climate, is a relevant factor in shaping attitudes and preferences toward immigration although the specific effect of the current economic crisis on opinions toward immigration is still relatively unexplored. Kessler and Freeman (2005), for instance,

showed that in the period 1993-2000 in 15 European countries, when the economic situation deteriorated opinion turned against immigration.

Nevertheless, individual preferences and attitudes towards immigration, cannot be explained only by contextual factors and they reflect different ways to evaluate the issue (OECD, 2010: 123). Hence, most research on opinions toward immigration aimed at understanding which role is played by individual characteristics in shaping attitudes and preferences. In this paper we will follow this approach although we will not disregard the influence of external factors, because the two dimensions are not mutually exclusive in shaping attitudes and preferences.

The empirical approach generally adopted in these studies measures the correlation between the degree of openness towards immigration and specific individual characteristics (such as age, gender, level of education, level of income). The influence of specific individual variables over opinions has generally been explained by looking at the role played by three main dimensions: a) economic dimension, b) political-ideological one and c) socio-cultural one. All these dimensions are strictly related and concurrently influent.

The economic dimension is key in explaining individual attitudes and policy preferences. In particular, two hypothesis are used to explain the association between individual economic resources and opinions about immigration: 1) the perceived impact of immigration on the national labour market, 2) the perceived impact of immigrants on public finances and the welfare system. The first approach, based on a 'labour market competition hypothesis' explains attitudes against immigration and preferences for more restrictive LMPs looking at the competition for available jobs in the labour market between local workers and immigrants (Berg 2009, Kunovich 2013, Quillian 1995, Scheve and Slaughter 2001). The second approach 'welfare state immigration impact hypothesis' explains attitudes against immigration and preferences for more restrictive or



selective LMPs, looking at the supposed negative effects of newcomers on the social protection system (Facchini and Mayda, 2009)

Depending on the chosen approach, different individual variables are used to explain preferences and attitudes variation. Facchini and Mayda, for example, found that income level of respondents is crucial in shaping preferences over immigration and beliefs over the supposed impact of newcomers over the social protection system (Facchini and Mayda, 2009). The two authors showed, as well, that income level can be differently associated with preferences on immigration according to the level of skills of immigrants arriving in a given country. In countries where immigrants are unskilled relative to natives, individual income is negatively correlated with pro-immigration preferences, while the correlation changes sign in destination areas characterized by skilled migration (Facchini and Mayda, 2012). Scheve and Slaughter showed that unskilled workers in USA are more likely to oppose immigration, relative to skilled workers (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). This finding confirms the labour market competition hypothesis although some authors highlighted, as well, the importance of skill level of immigrants in the country: 'individual skill of people would be positively correlated with pro-immigration attitudes in countries where immigrants are on average unskilled, while it is negatively correlated with attitudes in countries where immigrants are on average skilled, relative to the native population' (Facchini and Mayda, 2012: 184; Mayda, 2006). The effect of skills seems to work around the labour market competition hypothesis also because skills do not play any effect if respondents are outside the labour force. Also occupational status, (active or inactive) seems to be an important factor in shaping attitudes.

The cultural and ideological dimensions are relevant, as well, to explain attitudes and preferences towards immigration. Political orientation, for example, plays a great role in influencing preferences on migration policies. According to Pardos-Prado, less research has been conducted on the impact of ideological structures on the formation of attitudes

toward immigration. The author shows that 'broad ideological structure, in terms of left-right self-placement, is an important cognitive determinant of attitudes towards migrants when the direct experience of competition for scarce resources is lower' (Pardos Prado, 2011: 999). In other words, an individual in a situation of low socio-economic vulnerability does not perceive an immigrant as a threat and generally uses ideological categories to build and shape his/her own attitudes toward immigration (Pardos Prado, 2011).

Recently other authors emphasized the role of national feelings (Ok Jeong, 2013), human values (Davidov and Meuleman, 2012) or psychological determinants (Knoll, 2013) in shaping attitudes or immigration policy preferences.

Within the cultural explanatory dimension we can also give an account to the role played by the educational level. Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007), for example, using ESS 2002 dataset (European Social Survey), showed that educational level of respondents is a relevant factor in shaping policy preferences not only concerning labour market competition but also cultural diversity in the host country. The most educated respondents, are more open to cultural diversity and are more inclined to believe in immigration benefits for the national economy. According to OECD (2010) education is strongly correlated with income level and it is not always possible to accurately distinguish the effects of these two variables. In general less educated and poorer respondents are less favourable to low-skilled immigration than the others in line with both the competition hypothesis on the labour market and the supposed impact of immigrants on welfare benefits (OECD, 2010: 125, Facchina and Mayda 2009, Facchini, Mayda, 2012: 185). Bauer and his colleagues have comparatively analyzed the impact of individual characteristics on policy preferences and attitudes. Although the results have not explained main differences across countries, they indicated that more educated and employed respondents seem to be less inclined to think that immigrants take jobs

away from natives (Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmerman, 2000: 20).

To sum up, many studies addressed the general issue of opinions toward immigration. Despite the richness of questions proposed in these surveys, most of these studies focused on analyzing and explaining general attitudes towards immigration or individual perception of immigration while only a small number of studies focused on migration policy preferences.

## **2. Data and methods**

For our analysis we use data from 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 TTI dataset. The TTI survey has involved approximately 1000 individuals per year and country, with the exception of Spain, where the survey was not carried out in 2008, so the total sample size amounts to 19.019 respondents. TTI data contain information about immigration as a socio-political issue, opinions about immigrants and consequences of immigration, but also on individual policy preferences, as well as information on socio-economic characteristics of the respondents (Gustin and Ziebarth, 2010). In the next pages we will try to understand which type of immigration is preferred by European citizens, and which role is played by individual characteristics and resources in shaping such preferences, by focusing on two specific policy preferences on LMPs: the preference for permanent as opposite to temporary migration<sup>vi</sup> (PPT) and the preference for skilled immigrants, even if they do not have a job<sup>vii</sup> - (PSJ).

We assume that preferences for policies allowing the entry of high-skilled immigrants (even without a job) and the permanent stabilization of legal immigrants, are rooted in political orientation and in attitudes towards immigration and not only in the occupational situation of respondents. For this reason, preferences have not showed dramatic changes from 2008 to 2011 in the countries considered, despite the harder economic

conditions. We hypothesize, as well, that preferences towards permanent immigration policies are not only related to the (real or perceived) risk of competition in the labour market, but also to political-ideological and cultural dimensions.

To test these hypothesis we first present descriptive statistics exploring how preferences about LMPs vary according to individual characteristics across countries and over years. We analyze PPT in years 2008-2011 and PSJ in 2011<sup>viii</sup>.

In the previous paragraph we have singled out the most relevant explanatory dimensions of the association between individual characteristics and LMPs preferences: (a) economic; (b) political-ideological; (c) cultural. According to some authors (Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Haubert and Fussell, 2006; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001) there is a correlation between individual economic resources and attitudes towards immigrants. TTI survey does not include questions about income, so we operationalize the economic dimension by considering respondents' position in the labour market. Information about job are often used to study individual positioning in the social stratification as well as a proxy of individual financial resources at the moment of interview. Occupation, thus, can be assumed as an important factor in shaping LMPs preferences (Kunovich, 2013). We use a variable on occupational status which takes on the values 1 through 3. Respondents with an occupational status 1 have the highest position in the labour market, while those with a status of 3 have the lowest, such as manual workers or respondents without a professional activity<sup>ix</sup>. This variable allows us to test the labour competition hypothesis by distinguishing inactive, unemployed and low-qualified respondents from the others. We choose to empirically define the political-ideological dimension as political orientation and attitudes about immigration. We recode the 7-levels scale about political orientation into three levels: 'Left', 'Centre' or 'Right' oriented and use the answers about considering immigrants as a problem more than an opportunity as a proxy of attitudes about immigration. Cultural dimension is taken into

account using information about respondents' level of education (1 for primary education and 3 for tertiary education).

We consider also respondents' demographic characteristics: age and gender. We treat the variable age as categorical (18-34, 35-54, 55 and over).

To determine which predictor variables are statistically significant we have then estimated a binomial logistic regression for PPT. Our outcome variable is binary: prefer permanent immigration or not. Our predictor variables, according to main literature findings, are: socio-economic resources (proxied by occupational status), cultural resources (level of education is considered as a proxy), and political orientation (left-right self placement)<sup>x</sup>, controlled by age and gender.

### **3. Results**

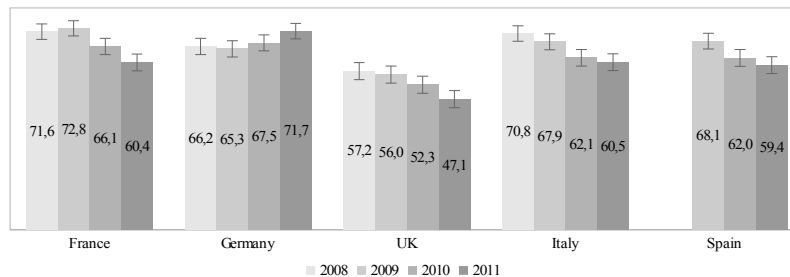
#### *3.1. Descriptive statistics: the puzzling landscape of European citizens' policy preferences*

##### 3.1.1 Permanent versus temporary immigration (PPT)

Most Europeans, across countries and years, think that legal immigrants should be given the opportunity to stay permanently (61%) while only a minority of them think that they should be admitted only on a temporary basis and then required to return to their country (see Fig. 1). This preference on average has slightly decreased in the period considered, shifting from 67,2% in 2008 to 60,8% in 2011. With the exception of the German case, less affected by the economic crisis over the period considered, where data shows an opposite trend and where the number of respondents thinking that legal immigrants should be given the opportunity to stay permanently in their country has heightened

during the last four years. This could also be the result of a more open public discourse on immigration in Germany, compared to other European countries in the last years, which may have translated into a more widespread acceptance of immigration as a permanent feature of society (Laubenthal, 2012). Also in other countries, however, this preference *remained prevalent* (Fig. 1). In other words, over the last years, European citizens remained on average strongly oriented toward a permanent immigration in their countries, despite a worsening of the economic situation. This preference trend represent the starting point in our analysis.

Fig. 1 – Question about permanent *versus* temporary immigration. Percentage of respondents who answered “They should be given the opportunity to stay permanently” per year and country, with 95% CIs.

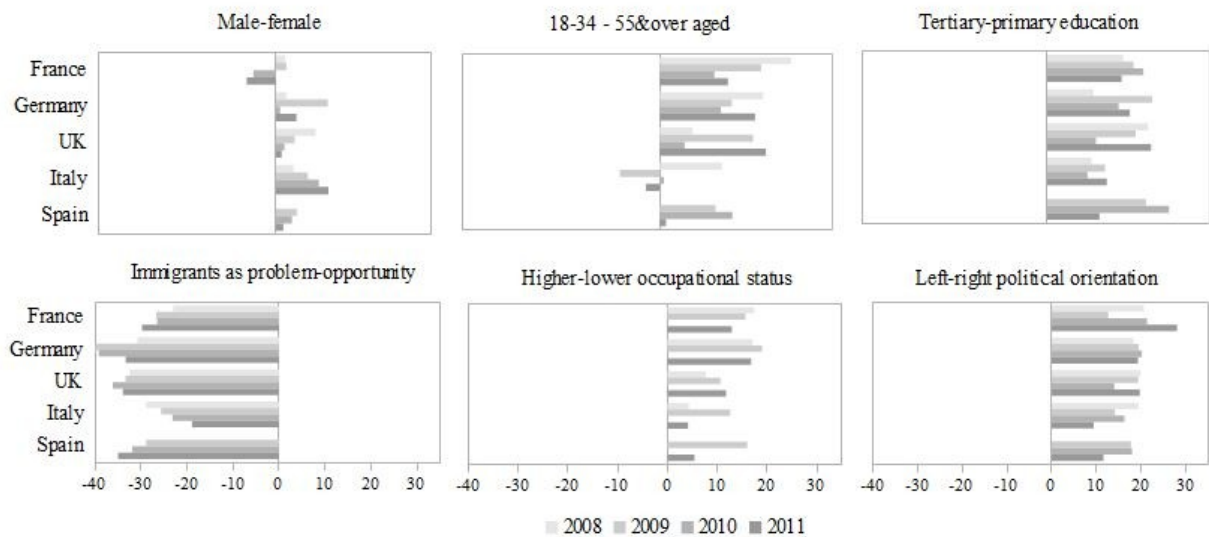


Note: N<sub>08</sub>=3956 missing<sub>08</sub>= 47; N<sub>09</sub>= 4941 missing<sub>09</sub>= 71; N<sub>10</sub>= 4914 missing<sub>10</sub>= 88; N<sub>11</sub>= 4915 missing<sub>11</sub> = 85.

Source: TTI.

TTI micro-data allow to analyze variations and changes in this policy preference between the five European countries over a period in which the crisis has gradually deployed its effects (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 - Question about permanent *versus* temporary immigration. Differences on preferences to permanent migration (percentage points per year and country).



We have started looking at the co-variation between the position in the labour market and permanent immigration policy preferences. If skilled employees and self-employed face less competition with immigrants in the labour market than manual workers, less qualified or unemployed persons, we therefore might expect to find among the former the highest percentages of preferences about policies favouring permanent immigration. European citizens with higher occupational status are more favourable than respondents with lower status to the stabilization of immigrants in all countries and in all years considered. Only in Italy in 2008 and 2011 the covariance is not statistically significant. Italy emerges as the only country in which higher class does not express strong pro-

permanent immigration sentiments compared to other countries in two of the three years considered (Fig. 2).

The literature considered also age and education as key factors influencing preferences about migration policies (Facchini and Mayda 2009, Facchini and Mayda 2012; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; OECD, 2010). In particular, as shown in Figure 2, the younger and higher educated tend to be on average more favourable toward permanent migration, during the period considered. In 2011 French respondents with tertiary education are 16,1 percentage points more likely to choose the item '*Legal immigrants should be given the opportunity to stay permanently*' than French those with primary education (in Germany 17,8; UK 22,4; Italy 12,9; Spain 11,3). In other words, younger and more educated people are more open to immigrants and more likely to accept permanent immigration.

The other variable considered as relevant in our hypothesis, concerning ideological dimension, is political orientation. Left-oriented individuals on average show higher percentage of preferences for permanent immigration compared to Right-oriented ones in all countries and years considered (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2 shows also that general attitudes about immigrants are strongly associated with variation in policy preferences. Respondents who consider immigration a problem rather than an opportunity clearly prefer temporary migration, with percentage differences always above 15% and up to 35% in Germany, Spain and the UK.

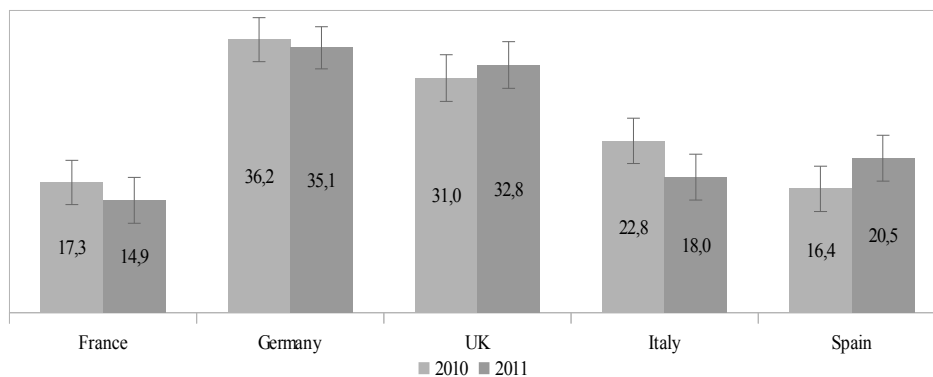
To sum up, descriptive statistics on PPT provide support for the hypothesis concerning the association of cultural and ideological dimensions with LMPs preferences, and weak findings about covariation of economic resources.

### 3.1.2 High-skilled without a job vs low-skilled labour immigrants (PSJ)



TTI surveys also collected information regarding preferences on employability characteristics of immigrants that a country should admit. We thus continue our descriptive exploration by considering another dimension of immigration policies: the opposition between supply- or demand- driven labour migration. On average, European citizens tend to be more favourable to admit high-skilled immigrants rather than low-skilled ones, in all countries considered. This preference is more evident especially in Germany and in the UK, while in other countries the difference is less pronounced<sup>xi</sup> (TTI, 2011). We explore this topic considering a specific question proposed in TTI surveys in 2010 and 2011 which combines two admission criteria of immigrants: education level and presence of a job offer as requirements to enter the country. As we can see in figure 3, results change when admission criteria combine skills with job offer. The percentage of those who prefer skilled immigrants without a job are lower than 40% across Europe. Only the Germans and the British express relatively greater favour for this option (over 30%).

Fig. 3 – Question on preferences on high educated immigrants without a job offer *versus* immigrants with a job offer. Percentage of respondents who answered “Give preference to immigrants with high level of education even if they don't have a job offer” per year and country, with 95% CIs.



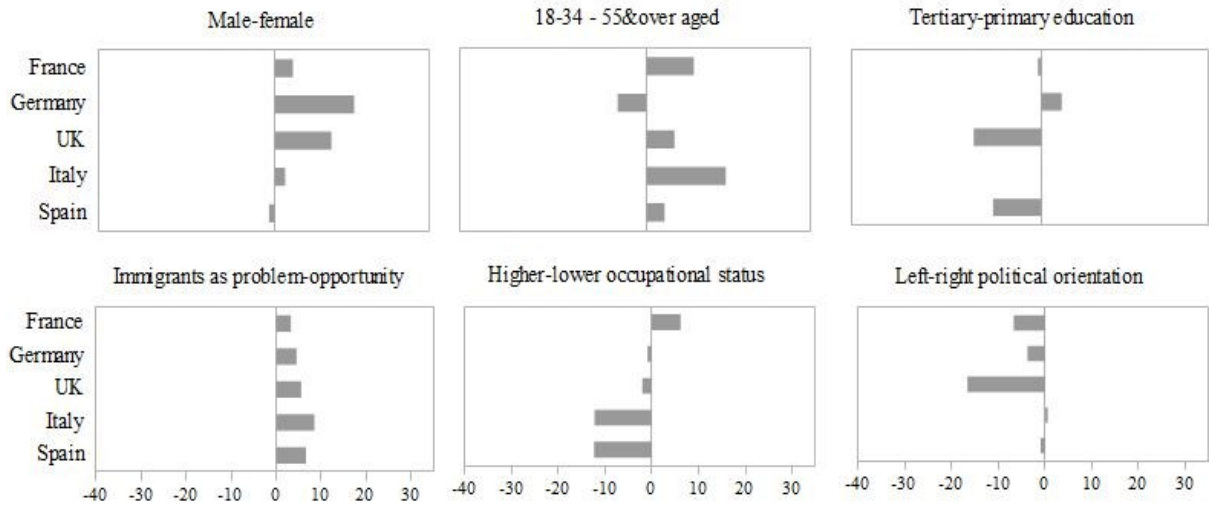
Note:  $N_{10} = 4217$  missing $_{10} = 785$ ;  $N_{11} = 4247$  missing $_{11} = 753$ .

Source: TTI, Topline Results 2012

Therefore, results show that European citizens' PSJ are oriented toward low-skilled immigrants coming in their countries with already a job offer. Most European citizens, from the five countries selected, give a strong importance to a job offer as an admission requirement. But, at the same time, preferences across Europe are substantially diverging from one country to another: unlike the PPT previously studied, the preferences for immigrants with a job, even if not qualified, compared to skilled but jobless immigrants vary greatly between countries. Respondents from France, Italy and Spain give a stronger importance to a job offer as admission requirement, compared to people from Germany and United Kingdom (Fig. 3).

Looking at how the distribution of individual characteristics covariates with this specific preference we found that in countries where average respondents are more likely to accept skilled immigrants without a job (Germany and UK), this preference is expressed to a greater extent by males than females. In other countries, gender difference is not statistically significant. In other words, being a British male or a German male increases the probability of preferring admission of high-skilled immigrants without a job offer (Fig. 4)<sup>xiii</sup>.

Fig. 4 – Differences on preferences to immigrants with high level of education even if they do not have a job offer (percentage points per country, year 2011)



Among the youngest (18-34 years), the percentage of those who prefer admission of skilled immigrants without a job exceeds 10% of the corresponding one among those over 55 in France and in Italy. In other words, age covariates significantly with preferences about high-skilled immigrants only for Italian and French, while in other countries youngest people seem not to be more likely to prefer this option (Fig. 4).

Only in the UK and Spain graduate respondents (higher level of education) express less favour, than lower educated respondents, towards skilled-without a job offer immigration (Fig. 4). Spanish and British high-skilled respondents, therefore, seem to prefer admission of less competitive immigrants in their countries, with already a job offer and lower skills to be spent in the national labour market. This result can be surprising especially because Spain and UK, according to latest TTI results published in 2013, are the only two countries where citizen's concerns about impact of immigrants on social services decreased from 2011 to 2012 (Source: TTI).

Looking further at the covariation of PSJ with respondents' position in the labour market, we see in Figure 4 that in Italy and Spain, the percentage of those who prefer supply-driven labour migration policies is higher among those who occupy lower positions in the

labour market (unemployed or manual workers). The higher class in Italy and Spain seems to be more hostile to skilled-without a job immigrants. In Italy, this result is in line with what we will see about preferences on permanent immigration: Italians with higher occupational status seem to be more unfriendly to permanent immigration than other European élites (Fig. 2). In Spain, this trend could be related to the decreasing Spanish employment rate<sup>xiii</sup>.

Unlike the case of preferences about qualified immigrants, by introducing the dimension of having or not a job offer the percentage differences related to political orientation are no longer statistically significant. Only in the UK conservatives (who stands to the 'Right' orientation) would prefer to have more skilled immigration without work 17 percentage points more than those who declared to be 'Left' political oriented (Fig. 4).

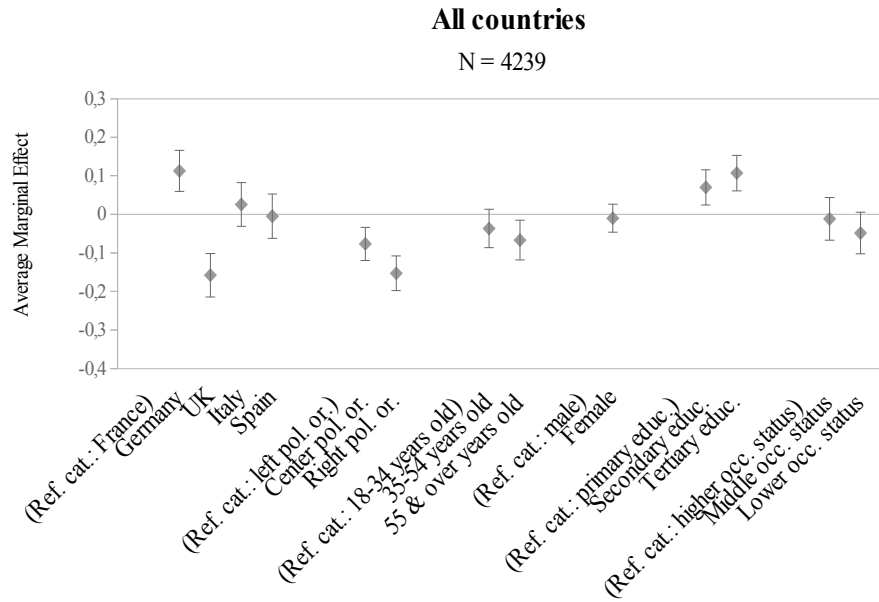
In relation to preferences for skilled-immigrants without a job, distribution of general attitudes of European citizens towards immigration is not statistically significant, except in Italy and Spain where, actually, there is a counterintuitive result: immigration-hostile respondents say they prefer skilled-without a job immigrants. It should be noted, however, that respondents may have had some problems in correctly understanding the question or in taking a clear position in this respect, or still there is in this case a possible problem on lack of equivalence of concepts in this question across country and over time, a recurrent problem in studies about attitudes towards immigrants (Davidov and Meuleman, 2012). We find that a quite high missing rate (on average 14%, with covariation profiles not normally distributed) suggests to be very cautious in considering these percentage differences. What we can say is that despite on average skilled immigration is preferred by Europeans, the distribution of preferences about supply versus demand-driven labour immigration are more ambiguous. In Germany and the UK, where the labour market is more fluid and, in the German case at least, the economic crisis has less affected employment inclusion of workers (both native and immigrants),

results show a greater willingness to admit skilled immigrants without a job, who are potentially qualified competitors. This availability is not observed in countries such as Spain, where also highly-skilled natives in these times of hardship struggle to find a job and may thus feel vulnerable towards external competitors.

### *3.2. Multivariate analysis*

We finally present the results regarding the association between individual characteristics and the propensity to favour permanent immigration, testing the association of ideology (political orientation), cultural resources (level of education) and economic resources (occupational status) net of age and gender. We estimate the average marginal effects for the conditional probability of being favourable about permanent immigration in 2011. The marginal effects presented are calculated on the basis of binomial logistic models. The variable 'country' has been included among the control variables (Fig. 5 'all countries')<sup>xiv</sup>.

*Fig. 5 – Average Marginal Effects with 95% CIs for the probability of preferring permanent vs temporary immigration in 2011.*



Note to Fig. 5: values around zero indicate no effect, above zero positive effect (increase in the probability of preferring permanent immigration rather than temporary), below zero negative effect (decrease in the probability of preferring permanent immigration). Age and education are correlated but no interaction effect has been found in the models. We have also tested separately for an overall interaction effect of political orientation with age and political orientation with occupational status, but they are not statistically significant. The same analyses were also conducted for 2008, 2009 and 2010: the estimates are not significantly different from the results presented in Figure 5, except for what is explicitly mentioned below.

Figure 5 shows the results for the probability of preferring permanent rather than temporary immigration. The reference categories for the variables considered are: being French citizens; left-wing respondents, young people (18-34 years of age); males, individuals with primary education; respondents with high occupational status.

According to the estimates, after controlling for all the other individual characteristics, right-wing political orientation decreases the probability of preferring permanent rather than temporary migration by almost 20 percentage points compared to left-wing orientation. Higher level of education is associated with a higher conditional probability of preferring permanent immigration. In contrast, *ceteris paribus*, the association between the occupational status and the outcome is not significant.

Nevertheless, interesting differences across countries can be observed (Fig. 6, in Annex). The negative association between right political orientation and the expected value of the dependent variable is statistically significant in all countries and in all years considered (with the only exception of Italy in 2011 and France in 2009). With respect to tertiary education, the probability of preferring permanent immigration increases for Spain, UK (but not in 2010), Germany (not in 2008), for France (not in 2011 and 2008). For Italy, educational level does not seem to be significantly associated with changes in the probability of an increase/decrease in the outcome. For Spain it is possible to identify a constant structure of policy preferences, shaped by political orientation and education, while in Italy we have found less stable results. Italy is also the only country in which gender (in 2009 and 2011) and not having a professional activity (in 2010) show a statistically significant association with this LMPs preference.

Finally, two remarks regarding the control variables are necessary. As assumed in the previous paragraph, Italy is also the only country in which being women is associated with a decrease in the probability of preferring permanent immigration (around minus 10%, see Fig. 6 in Annex). In UK age seems to be associated with a reduction in the propensity to prefer permanent immigration. In other countries our findings reflect the difficulties observed in the literature to offer a theoretically stable justification of the covariation of age and gender with attitudes toward immigration (OECD, 2010: 127).

There are many studies on attitudes towards immigrants, also considering macro factors at national or regional levels (Careja and Andreß, 2013; Citrin et al., 1997; Markaki and Longhi, 2012), and on the other hand a lot of studies on the impact of immigrants on the labour markets of the receiving societies (for example, Brücker *et al.*, 2013). Instead, less research has focused specifically on the European citizens' preferences regarding LMPs, despite the fact that popular fear of economic competition with immigrants is often rhetorically cited as the basis for legitimizing restrictive labour migration policy-making. According to the results presented, the ideological dimension (political orientation, general attitudes towards immigration and education level) seems to have, on average, a clear and stable association with preferences about labour migration policies across Europe, also during the economic crisis. Despite the labour market competition hypothesis, we have not found significant findings to support the statement that occupational status plays a relevant role. These results seem to support theories on mechanisms underlying the LMPs preferences that incorporate non economic factors such as values and psychological dimension (Davidov and Meuleman, 2012; Haubert and Fussell, 2006; Knoll, 2013; Pardos-Prado, 2011).

#### **4. Conclusions**

In this article, we have tried to understand which type of immigration policy approach is preferred by European citizens, how polarized are such preferences and which role is played by individual characteristics in shaping them. We have carried out a cross-country analysis, using TTI dataset 2008-2011 of individual preferences towards two fundamentally different labour immigration policy approaches regarding admission criteria and the time frame of immigration in five European countries, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK.



Our analysis has shown that ideological and cultural resources play a key role in shaping preferences toward different labour migration policies. Political orientation stands out as most relevant variable, especially regarding the time of permanence of immigrants. In all countries left-oriented citizens are more likely to prefer permanent immigration instead of temporary immigration and right-oriented people are more likely to prefer temporary immigration. Level of education, likewise, is an important characteristic in shaping preferences for permanent immigration, especially in Spain (where not only tertiary education but also secondary education play a strong role), Germany and the UK. Germany, Spain and the UK, therefore, have a more stable structure of preferences toward permanent immigration while Italy and France show a less stable structure of this preference: in Italy gender seems to play a role in 2010 and 2011 (male respondents are more in favour of permanent immigration than women) while in France, in all years except in 2009, younger respondents seem to be more in favour of permanent immigration rather than older respondents.

The effect of the education variable, therefore, is quite in line with our expectation although, in contrast with the dominant literature, it does not play the same role in all countries and for both policy choices. Unexpectedly, individual employment situation is irrelevant because, in both preferences observed, being inactive in the labour market seems not to be a condition in favour of a preference for temporary and low- skilled immigrants with a job. For this reason, in this analysis we do not have evidence in support of labour market competition hypothesis to explain closer policy preferences towards labour immigrants.

Ideological resources (political orientation and attitudes towards immigration) also play a key role in shaping preferences towards admission criteria. Left-oriented citizens, as well as citizens looking at immigration as an opportunity rather than a problem, are more likely to prefer admission of high-skilled immigrants without a job offer. Gender, as well,

plays a role in shaping this preference. Women are more likely to prefer admission of low-skilled immigrants with already a job offer. This result, first, confirms the hypothesis that general attitudes can help to explain also preferences toward immigration policies (OECD, 2010). Secondly, it is possible to argue that gender-effect on admission criteria preferences are influenced by negative perception of women on effect of immigration in the labour market or, rather, in the social protection system. In other words, women would be less likely to prefer high-skilled immigration without a job offer because, due to their role in the labour market and in the host societies, they are more concerned about competition of new-comers in the labour market and, more probably, about negative influence of immigrants on welfare services.

Our ultimate goal was to shed new light on the relationship between public opinions and migration policy-making. According to prevailing public discourse in many European countries, restrictive trend of labour migration policy-making would be strongly opinion-driven. But actually, despite the worsening economic condition, opinions do not seem to have undergone major changes. For this reason, there seems to be a gap between policy-making and opinions, in the specific field of labour migration, with some differences across countries due to different LMPs frameworks and, probably, to different public and political discourse on immigration. Such a gap between policy-making and opinions suggests that policy-makers have a distorted perception of public opinion and, probably, only the 'dark side' of opinions – characterized by fear and concern - is considered when measures and policies have to be adopted. This article shows that another 'side of opinions' emerge when citizens are asked to express preferences and attitudes towards specific admission criteria or policies. It is important also to note that we considered those questions of TTI referring explicitly to 'legal' immigrants admission criteria. In other words, when individuals are asked about 'legal' immigration rather than general 'immigration' another side of opinions, more open and less concerned, emerge.

Another explanation of the gap can be found looking at the other relevant drivers influencing policy-making. This is probably influenced more by other drivers like lobbies activities, interest groups, electoral or budget needs. In other words, restrictive policy-making is more influenced by contextual and economic factors, as well as by 'dark side of opinions'. Conversely, as showed in this article, attitudes and preferences toward specific labour migration policies are more influenced by cultural and ideological factors. This difference would explain part of the gap.

## References

Abali O. S., 2009, German Public Opinion on Immigration and Integration. Washington, DC, Migration Policy Institute.

Bauer T., Lofstrom M. and Zimmermann K.F., 2000, Immigration Policy, Assimilation of Immigrants and Natives' Sentiments towards Immigrants: Evidence from 12 OECD countries, IZA discussion paper no. 187.

Berg J.A. 2009, White Public Opinion Toward Undocumented Immigrants: Threat and Interpersonal Environment, *Sociological Perspectives*, 52, 39-58.

Bolzendahl C. and Myers D., 2004, Feminist Attitudes and Support for Gender Equality: Opinion Change in Women and Men, 1974-1998, *Social Forces*, 83, 759-790.

Bonjour S., 2011, The Power and Morals of Policy Makers: Reassessing the Control Gap Debate, *International Migration Review*, 45 (1), 89-122.

Boswell C., 2007, Theorizing Migration Policy: Is there a Third way?, *International Migration Review*, 41 (1), 75-100.

Brücker H., Jahn E. J., Upward R., 2013, Migration and Imperfect Labor Markets: Theory and Cross-Country Evidence from Denmark, Germany and the UK, IZA Discussion Paper, N. 6713.

Careja R. and Andreß H.-J., 2013, Needed but Not Liked – The Impact of Labor Market Policies on Natives' Opinions about Immigrants, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 47 (2), 374-413.

Chan T. W., Birkelund G. E., Aas A.K. & Wiborg Ø., 2010, Social Status in Norway, *European Sociological Review*, 1, 1–18.

Citrin J., Green D. P., Muste C., Wong C., 1997, Public Opinion Toward Immigration Reform: The Role of Economic Motivations, *The Journal of Politics*, 59, 3, 858-881.

Cornelius W.A., Martin P.L., Hollifield J.F., 1994, Introduction: The Ambivalent Quest for Immigration Control. In Cornelius W.A., Martin P.L., Hollifield J.F., 1994, *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, Stanford University Press, 3-41.

Davidov E. and Meuleman B., 2012, Explaining Attitudes Towards Immigration Policies in European Countries: The Role of Human Values, in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38 (5), 757-775.

Erikson R. and Goldthorpe, J. H. 1992, *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility Industrial Societies*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Facchini G. and Mayda A.M., 2008, From individual attitudes towards migrants to migration policy outcomes: Theory and evidence, *Economic Policy*, 23, 651–713.

Facchini G. and Mayda A.M., 2009, Individual Attitudes towards Immigrants: Welfare States Determinants Across Countries, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 91, 2, 291-314.

Facchini G. and Mayda A.M., 2012, Individual Attitudes Towards Skilled Migration: An Empirical Analysis Across Countries, *The World Economy*, 183–196.

Gustin D. and Ziebarth A., 2010, Transatlantic Opinion on Immigration: Greater Worries and Outlier Optimism, *International Migration Review*, 44 (4), 974–991.

Hainmueller J. and Hiscox M. J., Educated Preferences: Explaining Attitudes Toward Immigration in Europe, *International Organization*, 61 (2), 399-442.

Haubert J. and Fussell E., 2006, Explaining Pro-Immigrant Sentiment in the U.S.: Social Class, Cosmopolitanism, and Perceptions of Immigrants, *International Migration Review*, 40 (3), 489–507.

Ipsos-MORI, 2008, Attitudes toward Immigration. <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/53/Attitudes-Towards-Immigration.aspx>

Ipsos-MORI, 2009, Attitudes towards Immigration. <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/53/Attitudes-Towards-Immigration.aspx>

Jeong H.O., 2013, Do National Feelings Influence Public Attitudes Towards Immigration? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39 (9), 1461-1477.

Joppke C., 1998, Why Liberal States Accept Unwanted Migration, *World Politics* 50 (2), 266-293.

Kessler A.E. and Freeman G.P., 2005, Public Opinion in the EU on immigration from outside the Community, *Journal of Common Market Study*, 43, 825-850.

Knoll B. R., 2013, Implicit Nativist Attitudes, Social Desirability and Immigration Policy Preferences, *International Migration Review*, 47 (1), 132–165.

Kroska A. and Elman C., 2009, Change in Attitudes about employed mothers: Exposures, Interests, and Gender Ideology Discrepancies, *Social Science Research*, 38 (2), 366-382.

Kunovich R. M., 2013, Labor Market Competition and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment: Occupations as Contexts, *International Migration Review*, 47, 3, 643–685.

Lahav G., 2004, Public Opinion Toward Immigration in the European Union. Does it matter?, *Comparative Political Studies*, 37, 10, 1151-1183.

Laubenthal B., 2012, Labour Migration Governance in Contemporary Europe. The case of Germany,

Markaki Y. and Longhi S., 2012, What Determines Attitudes to Immigration in European Countries? An Analysis at a Regional Level, Norface Migration, Discussion Paper No. 2012-32.

Mayda A. M., 2006, Who is Against Immigration? A Cross-country Investigation of Individual Attitudes toward Immigrants, *Review of Economic and Statistics*, 88, 3, 510-530.

O' Rourke K. H. and Sinnott R., 2006, The Determinants of Individual Attitudes Towards Immigration, *European Journal of Political Economy*, 22, 838-861.

Ok Jeong H., 2013, Do National Feelings Influence Public Attitudes towards Immigration?, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39 (9), 1461-1477.

Pardos-Prado S., 2011, Framing Attitudes Towards Immigrants in Europe: When Competition Does Not Matter, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37 (7), 999-1015.

Pickens J., 2005, Perceptions and Attitudes of Individuals, in Borkowski N. (ed.), *Organizational Behavior in Health Care*, New York, Jones & Barlett Publishing, 43-73.

Quillian L., 1995, Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe, *American Sociological Review*, 60(4), 586–612.

Ruitenbergh J. and De Beer P., 2012, The impact of attitudes and work preferences on Dutch's mothers' employment patterns, AIAS working paper no. 120, University of Amsterdam.

Saggar S. and Drean J., 2001, *Public Attitudes and Ethnic Minorities*, London: Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit.  
[www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/files/british.pdf](http://www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/files/british.pdf)

Scheve F. K. and Slaughter M. J., 2001, Labor Market Competition and Individual Preferences over Immigration Policy, *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 83 (1), 133-145.

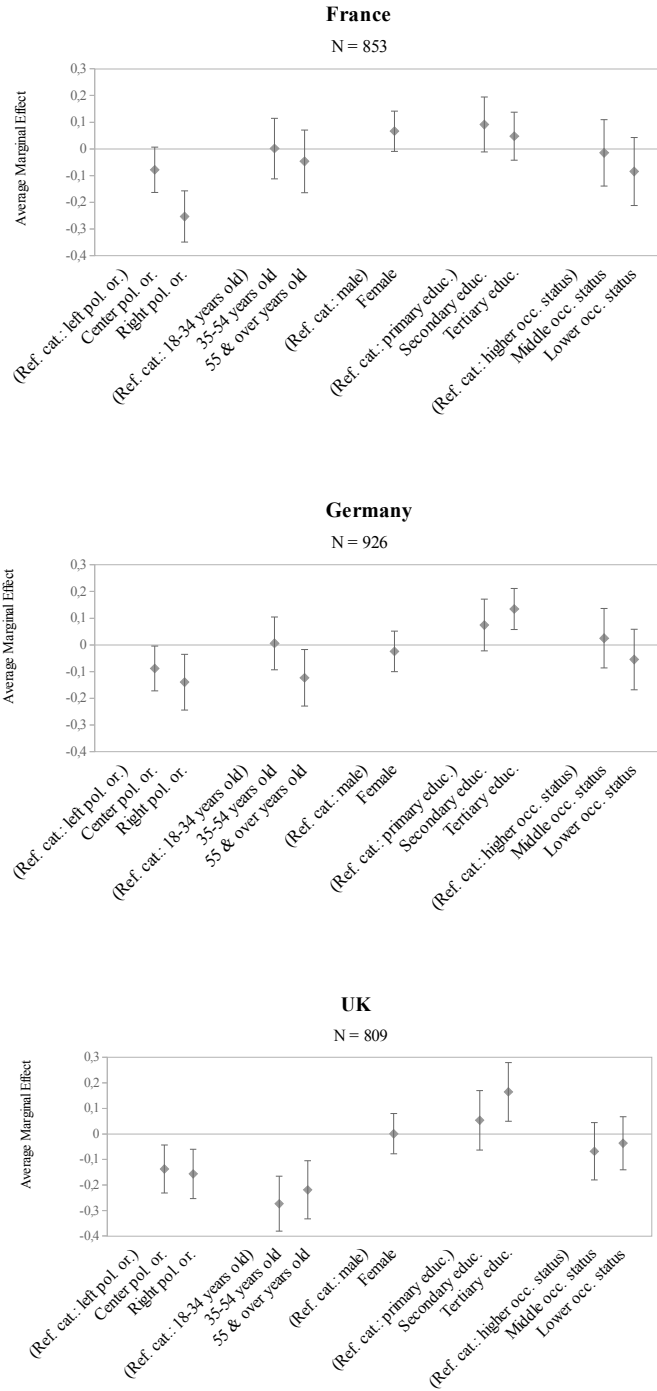
TTI, 2011, Transatlantic Trends: Immigration. Topline data 2011, 2-31. Available on <http://trends.gmfus.org>

Wilkes R., Guppy N. and Farris L., 2008, "No Thanks, We're Full": Individual Characteristics, National Context, and Changing Attitudes Towards Immigration, *International Migration Review*, 42 (2), 302–329.

Zaller, J.R., 1992, *The nature and origins of mass opinion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

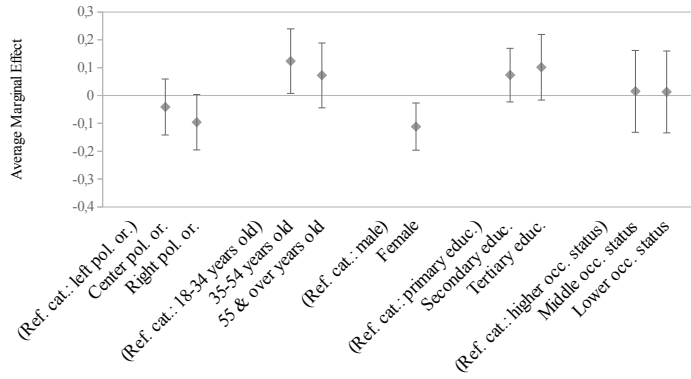
## ANNEX

Fig. 6 – Average Marginal Effects with 95% CIs of political orientation, age, gender, education and occupational status on the probability of preferring permanent immigration by country in 2011.



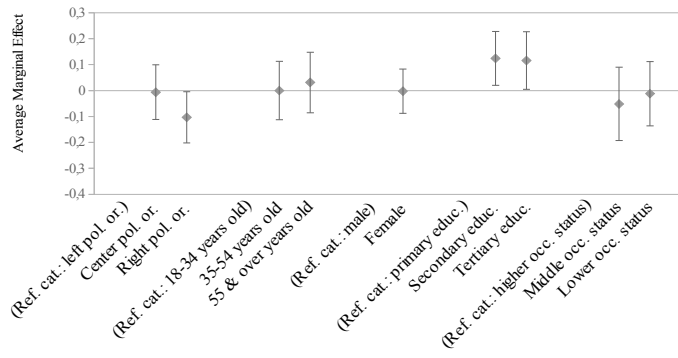
### Italy

N = 757



### Spain

N = 894





i Source: LabMigGov project. [www.labmiggov.eu](http://www.labmiggov.eu)

ii *Functional equivalents* (of labour migration policies in a narrow definition), as explained by Ferruccio Pastore in the introduction of this special issue, include all policies giving access to domestic labour markets to immigrants admitted for reasons *other than work*.

iii *Transatlantic Trends: Immigration* is a public opinion survey that addresses multiple aspects of the immigration and integration debate, including the effect of the economic crisis on attitudes toward immigration, immigrants' labor market impacts and effects on wages, and how governments are managing immigration, among others. The survey is a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), the Compagnia di San Paolo (Italy), and the Barrow Cadbury Trust (U.K.), with additional support from the Fundación BBVA (Spain).

iv Two main approaches to the understanding of attitudes can be distinguished in the literature. The "exposure-based" approach, considers attitudes as something developed by individuals in reaction to new ideas and situations (Pickens 2005, Bolzendahl and Meyers 2004). The "interest-based" approach, on the contrary, states that people adapt their attitudes to the present situation to better fulfil their needs and interest (Kroska and Elman 2009; Bolzendahl and Meyers 2004). In this approach attitudes would be more changeable during life, according to different situations and under the influence of relevant external factors.

v The countries considered in Bauer's study are: Usa, Canada, New Zealand, Uk, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Spain and Italy.

vi Question "*Some people think that LEGAL immigrants who come to (COUNTRY) to work should only be admitted temporarily and then be required to return vs. allowed to stay permanently. Which comes closer to your point of view?*".

vii Question "*In deciding which immigrants to admit to (COUNTRY), should the government give preference to immigrants who have a high level of education but no job offer, or should it give preference to immigrants who have a job offer in the (COUNTRY) but a lower level of education?*".

viii Wilkes and colleagues also grasped changing in national economic conditions impact on attitudes toward immigration by models separated by years (Wilkes *et. al.*, 2008).

ix Recoding of the variable in 2008, 2009 and 2011: "Higher occ. status" includes professional ex. lawyer, medical practitioner, architect, manager of a company, other self-employed, general manager, director or top manager and middle manager; "Middle occ. status" covers farmer, forester and fisherman self-employed, owner of shop, craftsman, civil servant, office clerk, other employee ex. salesman, nurse, etc.; "Lower occ. status" contains manual workers (supervisor, foreman, team manager, unskilled manual worker, etc.), without a professional activity (for more detailed statements about social and occupational stratification and classification see Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Chan *et. al.*, 2010). In 2010 we could distinguish only respondents with or without a professional activity.

x The models were also estimated by inserting the variable on general attitudes towards immigration as a predictor. However, because of the risk that this variable is endogenous to the dependent variable and the fact that the estimates do not change much compared to those presented, we removed it from the models.

xi Questions "*How much do you agree or disagree that the (COUNTRY) should allow more immigrants with a high/low level of education to come and live here?* Percentage of respondents agree that the country should allow more immigrants respectively with a high *versus* low level of education to come and live there in 2011: Germany 68,8 vs 21,9; UK 55,7 vs 17,3; Spain 68,9 vs 33,7; Italy 64 vs 40,6; France 53,6 vs 34,8 (Source: TTI).

xii Multivariate analysis controlled by political orientation support this statement.

xiii According to Eurostat, from 2008 to 2011, in Spain employment rate dropped by -6,6% while, in other countries the decrease was slighter (UK -2,2%, Italy -1,8%, France -1%; only in Germany employment rate

increased of +2,4% in the same period). Source: Eurostat, employment rate variation in percentage (2008-2011). Age group 15-64 years old.

xiv Then, separated models have been estimated for each country, France, Germany, UK, Italy and Spain (Fig. 6 in Annex).