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# **Conditional Solidarity: Social Class, Experiences of the Economic Crisis, and Welfare Attitudes in Europe**

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**Abstract:** The aftermath of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis of 2007/2008 turned out as a veritable “stress test” for European welfare states. Aiming to stabilize citizens’ living conditions and mitigate socio-economic hardship, European governments have engaged in active crisis management. Yet, the protective capacities of European welfare states vary, as does individuals’ exposure to crisis-induced social risks. Hence, the crisis has impacted countries and the members of different social classes unequally. Against this backdrop, this paper asks how Europeans’ perceptions of the personal impact of the crisis are associated with their welfare attitudes, focusing on variations between social classes and across nations. Using cross-sectional Eurobarometer survey data from 2010 for 27 European countries, I find that perceived crisis impact is associated with greater support for welfare state responsibility and redistribution. However, this association is not homogeneous but moderated by an individual’s class position as well as national economic conditions and social spending levels. More specifically, on the individual level, perceived crisis impact is associated with more favourable welfare attitudes not only among its traditional supporters – such as the working class or the unemployed – but also among its traditional opponents, notably the self-employed. Furthermore, where social spending is higher, welfare state support is less strongly related to perceived crisis impact, suggesting that more encompassing welfare states mitigate the subjective impacts of the crisis. However, redistribution appears to be slightly more contested between those affected and those not affected by the crisis under better economic conditions. Given the challenges facing welfare states across Europe, it remains to be seen how stable a basis of popular support can be formed on these grounds.

**Keywords:** attitudes, Great Recession, Europe, social class, redistribution, welfare state

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# **Conditional Solidarity: Social Class, Experiences of the Economic Crisis, and Welfare Attitudes in Europe**

## **1 Introduction**

The aftermath of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis of 2007/2008 proved to be a veritable “stress test” for European welfare states (Hemerijck 2013: 347). Shortly after the financial crisis broke out, European governments engaged in active crisis management by providing bank bail-outs, cutting taxes to stimulate the economy, and raising social expenditures (Pontusson and Raess 2012; Starke et al. 2013; Van Hooren et al. 2014). By 2010, these efforts – together with the consequences of the ensuing economic downturn – had culminated in a pronounced fiscal crisis that added cutbacks in social spending and welfare retrenchment to the political agenda (Farnsworth and Irving 2015; Heins and de la Porte 2015; van Kersbergen et al. 2014). Caught in a “double bind” of rising social protection expenditures and declining government revenues” (van Kersbergen et al. 2014: 884), many European nations – especially on the European periphery – have since enacted cuts in social benefits, raised retirement ages, deregulated labour markets, and cut civil servant salaries (Hemerijck 2013: 370), leaving social investment policies among the few measures still actively pursued (Kvist 2013; van Kersbergen et al. 2014).

In combination with a political discourse emphasizing the need for fiscal consolidation, such a climate of austerity can instigate public opinion – which is usually supportive of the welfare state in Europe – to become more favourable of welfare state retrenchment (Marx and Schumacher 2016). Thus, while public opinion is generally an important factor in explaining the persistence of welfare states despite demographic and economic challenges (Brooks and Manza 2006), the Great Recession and its consequences pose a challenge for welfare state solidarity in Europe.

Against this backdrop, the present article revisits Europeans' perceptions of the Great Recession and their welfare attitudes during the midst of the crisis in 2010, when the Greek sovereign debt crisis had sparked an intense public debate about austerity and welfare state reform across Europe. The main research question is how Europeans' perceptions of the personal impact of the crisis relate to their welfare attitudes. Because the impact of the crisis has been heterogeneous among individuals as well as countries, I further investigate how individuals' social-class position as well as national economic conditions and social protection moderate the association between the perceived personal impact of the crisis and welfare attitudes. In so doing, I aim to contribute to the existing literature in three ways:

First, several existing studies have analysed how objective macro-economic conditions or individual crisis experiences, such as job loss or income losses, influence citizens' welfare state support (e.g., Blekesaune 2007, 2013; Jeene et al. 2014; Jaeger 2013; Kam and Nam 2008; Margalit 2013; Owens and Pedulla 2014; Naumann et al. 2015). So far, however, scant attention has been paid to the extent to which citizens themselves report being affected by economic crises (however, see Ragnarsdottir et al. 2013; Chzhen 2015; Mertens and Beblo 2016) and how this relates to their welfare attitudes. Nevertheless, a focus on citizens' subjectively perceived crisis impact can shed light on an important complementary perspective since people themselves might feel affected in more ways than research on objective crisis experiences – which are usually pre-defined by the researcher – may account for. Individuals' crisis experiences are thus not restricted to job loss or decreases in income but may, for instance, also involve worries about retirement security or relate to concerns about the consequences of the crisis in their communities.

Second, most studies on the impact of objective macro-economic conditions and crisis experiences on welfare attitudes imply a homogenous impact of crises across social groups since these studies pay little attention to potential class-specific variations on the economic crisis's impact on citizens' welfare attitudes. It is important to note, however, that crisis impacts

such as unemployment are “class risks” (Esping-Andersen 1999: 40) and that the social consequences of economic downturns are distributed unevenly among individuals. Social classes thus likely differ in the extent to which they report being impacted by economic crises, and the implications of their crisis experiences for their welfare attitudes may thus also vary (Kluegel 1987; Soroka and Wlezien 2014). I hence examine how an individual’s class position moderates the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes.

Third, research on welfare attitudes during the Great Recession has so far focused on liberal nations (Brooks and Manza 2013; Kenworthy and Owens 2012; Soroka and Wlezien 2014), but this paper examines how welfare attitudes vary across 27 European countries. These countries differ both in the macro-economic impact of the Great Recession and in their welfare systems’ protective capacities and policy responses (Pontusson and Raess 2012; Starke et al. 2013; Van Hooren et al. 2014). Thus, the article also sheds light on how macro-economic and institutional conditions moderate the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes.

Based on cross-sectional survey data from the Eurobarometer 2010, my analyses reveal that welfare attitudes tend to be more favourable in countries in which a larger share of the population reports an impact of the economic crisis, particularly in Eastern and Southern Europe and Ireland. This association also holds at the micro-level as welfare attitudes are more favourable among those reporting a personal impact of the crisis. Perceptions of a personal crisis impact are thus indeed associated with greater welfare state solidarity, yet this solidarity is not unconditional. As the multilevel analyses demonstrate, the relation between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes is moderated by individuals’ class position as well as national economic conditions and social protection. On the one hand, perceived crisis impact boosts pro-welfare attitudes among traditional welfare state supporters, such as the unemployed, the working class, and pensioners. On the other hand, this perceived impact is also associated with more favourable welfare attitudes among traditional welfare state opponents, notably the self-

employed. Cross-nationally, the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes is weaker in countries with higher levels of social spending, such as in Northern and Continental Europe, suggesting that encompassing welfare states might mitigate the subjective impact of the crisis. However, differences in redistributive preferences between those affected and those not affected by the crisis are slightly more pronounced when growth rates are higher, indicating potential distributive conflicts under conditions of economic recovery. Given sustained fiscal and economic challenges across Europe, popular welfare state support appears far from self-evident under current conditions.

This paper proceeds as follows: The next section outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework and formulates hypotheses about which groups in Europe were most affected by the crisis, how this effect should relate to their social policy preferences, and how these perceptions differ across countries. Section 3 explains the data and analytical strategy, and Section 4 presents the results. In the concluding section (5), the implications of the findings for the prospects of welfare state solidarity in times of austerity are discussed.

## **2 Welfare State Attitudes and Economic Crisis: Theoretical Considerations and Previous Evidence**

To conceptualize the relationship between Europeans' perceptions of the personal impact of the Great Recession and their welfare attitudes, I rely on theoretical considerations originally developed in studies on the impact of objective economic conditions on welfare attitudes and outline these considerations in Section 2.1. Because the personal impact of the Great Recession varies across social classes, this section also discusses how the role of perceived crisis impact for welfare state support should vary according to individuals' class positions. Furthermore, I am interested in how perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes vary across a larger sample of European nations that differ in the macroeconomic impact of the crisis and their welfare systems' protective capacities. Therefore, Section 2.2. maps out the major differences between

European countries in this regard and derives hypothesis as to how perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes might vary cross-nationally. Figure 1 maps out this conceptual framework schematically.

--- Figure 1 about here ---

## **2.1 Theoretical Framework: Micro-Level Foundations of Welfare State Support during Hard Times**

Several studies have investigated how objective macro-economic conditions – particularly economic crises – influence citizens' welfare attitudes (Blekesaune 2007, 2013; Blomberg and Kroll 1999; Jaeger 2013; Kam and Nam 2008; Sihvo and Uusitalo 1995). However, somewhat less attention has been paid to how citizens themselves subjectively assess the impact of economic downturns on their personal situations (but see Chzhen 2015; Mertens and Beblo 2016; Gudmundsdottir 2013) and how this impact is in turn related to their welfare attitudes. Therefore, the theoretical considerations that underpin studies on the relation between objective economic conditions and welfare attitudes serve as the starting point for the present analysis.

In investigating welfare attitudes, similar to Blekesaune (2007: 396), I focus on *demand for greater state responsibility for social provision* and on *support for redistribution* for two reasons: First, these items map onto two fundamental goals of the welfare state, i.e., *security* (through the provision of a safety net of last resort) and *equality* (Roosma et al. 2013; Flora et al. 1977), and have been covered extensively in the research literature (Goerres 2014; Svallfors 2010). Second, while both dimensions of welfare attitudes are likely associated with people's perceived crisis impacts, attitudes towards the security dimension might be somewhat more sensitive to people's crisis experiences than their redistributive preferences because insecurity becomes a salient – and possibly widespread – issue during hard economic times (Hacker et al. 2013). The strength of the association between citizens' perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes may therefore vary between both dimensions.

Theoretically, studies on the impact of objective economic conditions on welfare attitudes usually begin with the so-called “governmental protection hypothesis” (Blekesaune 2007: 393; 2013; Jaeger 2013): Support for welfare provision and redistribution is expected to increase during periods of economic hardship and to decrease during periods of economic growth and prosperity. The mechanism underlying this relationship has been predominantly located in individuals’ *self-interest* (Blekesaune 2007; Jaeger 2013). Because economic crises increase citizens’ exposure to social risks like unemployment, income loss, and material hardship, they directly affect citizens’ self-interest in social protection, thereby amplifying citizens’ support of the welfare state (Moene and Wallerstein 2001). Thus, citizens who are negatively affected by an economic crisis – for instance, due to the loss of a job or a drop in disposable income – are expected to be more supportive of the welfare state and redistribution than are those who are not affected (Margalit 2013; Naumann et al. 2015; Owens and Pedulla 2014).<sup>1</sup>

Empirical studies of individual social policy preferences using longitudinal data support this conjecture as becoming unemployed (Margalit 2013; Naumann et al. 2015) or experiencing income losses due to economic downturns (Owens and Pedulla 2014) have been shown to increase an individual’s likelihood to support the welfare state. Moreover, previous research suggests that during hard times, the overall socio-political climate becomes more favourable to the welfare state as both the unemployed and social-assistance recipients come to be seen as more deserving (Jeene et al. 2014), support for cuts in unemployment benefits is lower (Fraile and Ferrer 2005), and aggregate welfare state support is higher (Blekesaune 2007: 400) than during good economic times. Interestingly, this increase in welfare state support extends to people who would otherwise not be supportive of the welfare state. Blekesaune (2013) has shown that people in higher socio-economic positions, who are less likely to be affected by

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<sup>1</sup>Other factors, such as insecurity about one’s own standard-of-living or empathy with crisis victims, have been recently suggested as mechanisms behind welfare state support in hard times (Blekesaune 2013; Owens and Pedulla 2014). So far, however, few studies have been able to empirically separate the influence of these factors.

economic downturns and are less dependent on the welfare state, are more supportive of redistribution when they live in countries in which more people experience economic hardship (Blekesaune 2013: 69). In summary, although no studies that explicitly link perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes exist, based on the evidence established above, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

*H1: Perceived personal crisis impact is positively associated with welfare attitudes.*

It is important to note that the consequences of economic crises are distributed unevenly across society (Eurofound 2012; Rueda 2012). Thus, individuals in different social groups may vary in their subjective assessments of the personal impacts of the crisis, and so, too, may the implications of these assessments for individuals' welfare attitudes. In general, members of disadvantaged social groups can be expected to be exposed to greater social risks during economic downturns than can members of privileged groups. During the Great Recession in Europe, young people, low-skilled workers, and men were particularly at risk of becoming unemployed, whereas the labour market participation of older workers and women continued to rise or remained stable (Commission 2015: 45; OECD 2014: 19-20). This trend is reflected in people's subjective assessments of economic hardship and their perceived impact of the crisis as previous studies have found that low-income earners, the low-skilled, young people, and households with children were more likely to report a personal impact of the crisis (Chzhen 2015; OECD 2014: 22).

Because members of disadvantaged groups have fewer economic resources with which to cushion the material consequences of economic downturns (at least over longer periods of time), they depend on state-sponsored benefits to maintain their standard-of-living to a greater extent than do members of privileged groups (Kluegel 1988). Moreover, members of disadvantaged groups often have smaller social networks than do members of privileged groups (Mewes 2010), which could serve as a source of additional or complimentary social support

during economic crisis (Reeskens and van Oorschot 2014). Based on this information, I formulate the following hypothesis:

*H2:* The association between perceived personal crisis impact and welfare attitudes should be stronger if a person is a member of a disadvantaged social class rather than a privileged one.

Importantly, individual experiences of economic crises are embedded in larger economic and institutional contexts. European countries differ considerably in the macro-economic impact of the crisis (OECD 2014; Rueda 2012) and in their welfare systems' capacity to cushion the impact of the crisis (OECD 2014; Pontusson and Raess 2012; Starke et al. 2013). Therefore, the relation between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes is likely to vary across European countries.

## **2.2 Perceived Crisis Impact and Welfare State Attitudes across Europe**

As a consequence of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis, economic growth in the European Union severely declined between 2008 and 2009. While recovery began in 2010, the European Commission noted in 2015 that growth rates still remained below pre-crisis levels and the foundations for sustained economic recovery appeared unstable (Commission 2015: 16). Similarly, after a period of steadily declining unemployment across the European Union, the EU-28 unemployment rate rose sharply in the wake of the crisis from 6.8 percent in early 2008 to 9.7 percent in mid-2010. Following a slight decline, unemployment increased further between 2011 and 2013, reaching a rate of 10.7 percent by the end of 2013 (Eurostat 2015). With regard to citizens' subjective assessments, the perceived impact of the crisis was greater in countries with worse economic performance (Chzhen 2015).

However, the impact of the crisis has been uneven across Europe as some countries were more vulnerable than others (Commission 2015; Eurofound 2012). Southern and Eastern European countries – notably Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Slovakia, among others – have been

considerably impacted and experienced severe economic setbacks and deteriorations in citizens' living conditions (Arechavala et al. 2015; Eurofound 2012). The two Anglophone countries in the EU, Ireland and the United Kingdom, have also been severely affected. By contrast, the impact of the crisis has been less pronounced – though by no means negligible – in the Scandinavian and Continental European countries, where, for example, Finland and France have been particularly affected (Commission 2015; OECD 2014).

These differences in macro-economic impacts are amplified by the fact that although social spending rose across Europe in response to the crisis, this increase was smallest in the countries affected most, which signals differences in countries' capacities to cushion the effects of economic downturns (OECD 2014: 36-37). Despite ongoing processes of welfare state transformation and reform across Europe, European welfare states still vary in their institutional design and generosity (Esping-Andersen 1990; Scruggs and Allan 2006; Castles and Mitchell 1993) as well as in their social and labour market policy responses to the crisis (Chung and Thewissen 2011; Starke et al. 2013; Van Hooren et al. 2014). Overall, social protection is encompassing and comparatively generous in the social-democratic welfare states of Scandinavia (Kautto 2010) and the conservative-corporatist regimes in Continental Europe (Palier 2010). By contrast, it is fragmented and less generous in the Mediterranean welfare states of Southern Europe (Ferrera 2010) and least generous and residual in the liberal welfare states of the Anglophone nations (Castles 2010) and in Eastern Europe (L. J. Cook 2010).<sup>2</sup> Consequently, in response to the 2008 crisis, spending on measures supporting the labour market and households was higher in the encompassing welfare states of Scandinavia and Continental Europe, whereas Southern and Eastern European countries spent little on such

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<sup>2</sup> Along these lines, European countries' labour market and social policy responses to the crisis have varied not only according to the severity of the downturn, but partly also, as some have argued, in accordance with their overarching approaches to social protection and welfare regimes (Chung and Thewissen 2011; Starke et al. 2013; Van Hooren et al. 2014). While such claims are not uncontested (Hörisch and Weishaupt 2012), short-time working schemes have been most notably devised in the coordinated market economies of Scandinavia and Continental Europe, but they have also been introduced in some Central and Eastern European countries (Leschke and Jepsen 2012: 296).

measures (Leschke and Jepsen 2012: 296). This cross-national divergence is aggravated further by pressures for fiscal consolidation and associated cuts in social spending, which began to replace governments' initial fiscal stimuli in 2010 (Obinger 2012) and play a larger role in Southern and Eastern European countries that receive financial assistance from European and international institutions (OECD 2014; Leschke and Jepsen 2012: 297).

What does this imply for cross-national differences in Europe in terms of how perceived crisis impact is associated with welfare attitudes? Prior research has indicated that attitudes are more favourable towards the welfare state in countries with adverse economic conditions (Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003; Blekesaune 2007; Jaeger 2013). Hence, support for the welfare state or redistribution can be expected to be higher in countries in which unemployment rates are high or growth rates are low, respectively. Additionally, prior research has revealed that welfare state support and redistributive preferences are higher in more extensive welfare states, i.e., in countries with higher levels of social spending (Dallinger 2008; Svallfors 2010). Against this backdrop, two hypotheses on the direct impact of macroeconomic conditions and social protection on welfare attitudes can be advanced:

*H3a:* Welfare attitudes should be more favourable in countries with adverse economic conditions (high unemployment, low growth) and less favourable in countries with better economic conditions (low unemployment, high growth).

*H3b:* Welfare attitudes should be more favourable in countries with higher levels of social spending, and vice versa.

Apart from such direct effects, contextual factors can also be expected to moderate the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes. Specifically, encompassing welfare states might be more effective in mitigating the impact of economic downturns on citizens (Rueda 2012; Starke et al. 2013), and the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes might thus be weaker in countries with higher levels of social spending. Moreover, adverse economic conditions might even raise awareness of the negative

consequences of economic crises among those not affected, thereby attenuating attitudinal cleavages and the contestation of welfare attitudes between those affected and not affected (Blekesaune 2013: 61; Kluegel 1987: 85). Thus, the following expectations of the moderating influence of social protection and macroeconomic conditions can be hypothesized:

*H4a:* The association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes should be weaker in countries with higher levels of social spending.

*H4b:* The association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes should be weaker in countries with higher levels of unemployment or lower rates of economic growth, respectively.

While the Great Recession has amplified interest in how economic conditions affect welfare state attitudes, most existing studies have examined liberal Anglo-Saxon nations (Brooks and Manza 2013; Kenworthy and Owens 2012; Soroka and Wlezien 2014). Surprisingly, however, these studies deviate from the established pattern of findings described above. For the U.S., Brooks and Manza (2013: 728-729) actually report a decline in support for social policy between 2008 and 2010,<sup>3</sup> while Kenworthy and Owens (2012: 209) find no noteworthy changes over a longer time-frame spanning the 1970s to the 2000s. Similar results have been obtained for the United Kingdom, as Soroka and Wlezien (2014: 123) report a decline in support for redistribution and welfare spending. In a rare study of the impact of the crisis on redistributive attitudes in Europe, Polavieja (2013) finds no change in support for redistribution between 2004 and 2010, and economic conditions appear to only have a minor impact on redistributive preferences (Polavieja 2013: 270).

While an analysis of the change in Europeans' welfare attitudes over time is beyond the scope of this article, the present text broadens the scope of existing research by investigating how citizens' subjective assessments of the crisis relate to their welfare attitudes in 27 European

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<sup>3</sup> Case studies of Finland from the 1990s have also found evidence of declining welfare support during economic crisis (Blomberg and Kroll 1999; Sihvo and Uusitalo 1995).

countries. Such a comparative perspective is particularly important because European countries differ in the macro-economic impact of the crisis as well as in their welfare states' capacities to cushion its consequences.

### **3 Data, Variables, and Methods**

#### **3.1 Data**

The analyses are based on comparative survey data from the Eurobarometer (EB 74.1), which was fielded between August and September 2010. This survey contains various attitudes towards the Global Financial and Economic Crisis and the welfare state in one dataset. While some of the questions regarding the personal impact of the crisis were replicated in 2011 (EB 76.1), unfortunately, no items on welfare state attitudes were included in the later Eurobarometer survey, and it is thereby not possible to analyse how crisis perceptions and welfare attitudes are associated over time.<sup>4</sup>

Samples for the Eurobarometer surveys were drawn in a stratified multi-stage random sampling design and include about 1,000 respondents aged 15 and above in most European countries (in Germany, separate samples for West and East Germany were drawn that include about 1,000 and 500 respondents, respectively). I analyse data for 27 European nations: the UK, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia. After deleting 1,423 cases with missing information, the final sample contains 25,212 individuals nested in 27 countries. Due to this hierarchical data structure, multilevel modelling is used in the multivariate analyses (see Section 3.3), with variables referring to individual characteristics

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<sup>4</sup> A slightly different version of the item on the personal impact of the crisis was fielded in an earlier Eurobarometer survey in 2009 (EB 71.1), but again, no items on the welfare state were included at that time.

treated as Level-1 variables and variables referring to characteristics of countries defined as Level-2 variables.

### 3.2 Variables

The first *dependent variable* for measuring people's welfare attitudes is an item that asks respondents whether they demand greater government responsibility for social provision. The question wording is: "And which of these statements comes closest to your view: (1) The (NATIONALITY) Government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for; (2) People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves; (3) It depends." This item is recoded in a dummy-variable (1 = "The [...] Government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for," 0 = "People should take more responsibility themselves" + "It depends").<sup>5</sup> The second dependent variable is an item measuring support for redistribution between the rich and the poor. The question wording is: "The (NATIONALITY) Government should ensure that the wealth of the country is redistributed in a fair way to all citizens. (1) Totally agree, (2) tend to agree, (3) tend to disagree, (4) totally disagree." To facilitate a comparison between both dependent variables in the analyses, this item is also recoded in a dummy variable (1 = "totally agree" + "tend to agree", 0 = "tend to disagree" + "totally disagree").<sup>6</sup> At the macro level, there is a moderate positive correlation between both variables ( $r=0.59$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), indicating that while they both measure favourable attitudes towards the welfare state, they refer to distinct dimensions that are not interchangeable (security and equality; see Section 2.1). At the micro level, the correlation between support for greater state responsibility for social provision and redistributive

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<sup>5</sup> Alternatively, I also recalculated the multivariate analyses with the "it depends" category coded as missing. While the results did not differ substantially from the analyses presented in the empirical section, such a coding would result in a loss of over 2,500 cases. Thus, I decided to keep to the coding as described above. Furthermore, additional analyses using the original categorical coding with multinomial logit models (with country-level fixed effects) also provided similar results.

<sup>6</sup> Again, I conducted a robustness check using the original coding in an ordered logistic multilevel model, which produced essentially similar findings.

preferences is smaller and varies among countries, ranging from 0.03 in Luxembourg to 0.27 in the Czech Republic. I therefore choose to analyse both items separately and not to combine them into an index.

The central *independent variable at the individual level* (Level 1) is an item that measures perceived crisis impact and asks about the impact of the crisis on respondents' personal situation. The question wording is: "To what extent do you consider that the current crisis is or is not having an impact on each of the following? [...] Your personal situation [...]. (1) Very significant impact, (2) fairly significant impact, (3) not really having an impact, (4) no impact at all." The item is recoded in a dummy variable (1 = "very/fairly significant impact", 0 = "not really an impact/no impact at all"). Furthermore, as indicators of respondents' social position, I also include their class position and educational level. Socio-demographic control variables include gender and age. Respondents' class position is measured using the European Socio-Economic Classification (ESEC) (Rose and Harrison 2007) and coded into five occupational class categories here:

- ESEC 1 ("service class"): Higher professionals and semi-professionals, engineers, managers, owners of large firms, higher administrative, technical, and management occupations
- ESEC 2 ("intermediate employees"): Higher-grade white-collar workers
- ESEC 3 ("small employers and self-employed"): Petit bourgeoisie or independents
- ESEC 4 ("lower white collar"): Lower white-collar workers
- ESEC 5 ("lower technical and routine"): Higher-grade blue-collar workers, skilled workers, semi- and non-skilled workers.

In addition to respondents' occupational class, the ESEC-scheme also takes individuals not currently in paid employment into account. While the unemployed are treated as a separate category, the original classification suggests assigning a class position to other people outside the labour market – i.e., housewives or pensioners – according to their last occupation (Rose

and Harrison 2007: 470). However, because the interest of this article lies in citizens' welfare attitudes and as pensioners constitute an important "transfer class" (Alber 1984), I code pensioners and those otherwise out of the labour force (i.e., housewives and students) as separate categories. Therefore, in addition to the five occupational class categories, the class scheme used in the analyses also incorporates the unemployed, pensioners, and those outside the labour force for other reasons as additional categories. Educational level within the Eurobarometer is measured via the respondent's age at which formal education was completed and is recoded into three categories: primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Gender is also included as a dummy variable (1 = female, 0 = male), and age is recoded in four groups of roughly equal size to depict potential curvilinear effects: 34 years and below, 35 to 49 years, 50 to 64 years, and 65 years and above.

At the macro-level (Level 2), three indicators are used to capture cross-national differences in the macroeconomic impact of the crisis and the extent of social protection: country-specific unemployment rates (data provided by Eurostat), GDP growth rates (data provided by the OECD and the World Bank), and social spending as a share of GDP (data provided by Eurostat). All of these indicators are averaged over the years 2007-2009 to ensure that contextual factors precede the survey's fieldwork.<sup>7</sup> In the multivariate analyses, all macro-variables are grand-mean centred. Because all individual-level variables are categorical, no centring was applied here. Table A.1 in the Appendix provides descriptive statistics on all variables.

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<sup>7</sup> Instead of averaging over the years 2007-2009, I alternatively calculated changes in the macro-level measures between 2007 and 2009 (as well as between 2008 and 2010) and included these changes in the multivariate models together with the levels in 2007 (or 2008, respectively) as base value. However, the only statistically significant effect in this alternative operationalization could be found for the level of unemployment in 2007. Therefore, I decided to use averages over the years 2007-2009 as macro-variables (alternative analyses are available upon request).

### 3.3 Methods

First, I use descriptive methods (scatterplots, correlations) to analyse how perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes are associated cross-nationally. Second, in the multivariate analyses, I examine how this association is shaped by individual and contextual characteristics. To do so, I estimate multilevel logit regression models (random intercept) that correspond to the multilevel structure of the data (individuals clustered in countries). Multilevel models correct for biases in point estimates and standard errors resulting from the hierarchical structure of comparative survey data, i.e., the nesting of individuals (Level 1) within countries (Level 2) (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2008). The advantage of these models is that they allow for the simultaneous inclusion of variables at the individual and country levels, thereby permitting an assessment of which individual- and country-level variables are associated with which welfare attitudes. Furthermore, cross-level interactions between variables at both levels can be included. I estimate random-intercept models because I assume that the effects of the individual-level predictors do not differ across countries – i.e., they are fixed – whereas the random effect at the country-level takes into account the fact that average welfare attitudes may vary across nations. The following formula presents the basic regression equation (cf. Guo and Zhao 2000: 447):<sup>8</sup>

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Logit}(\text{Pr}(\text{welfare attitudes}_{ij}=1)) = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Perceived Crisis Impact}_{ij} + \beta_2 \text{Social Class}_{ij} + \\ & \beta_3 \text{Education}_{ij} + \beta_4 \text{Age}_{ij} + \beta_5 \text{Gender}_{ij} + \beta_6 \text{Economic Growth}_j + \beta_7 \text{Unemployment Rate}_j \\ & + \beta_8 \text{Social Expenditures}_j + \mu_j \end{aligned}$$

In this combined equation, the subscript  $i$  denotes the individual level (Level 1), and the subscript  $j$  denotes the country level (Level 2). Thus, the parameters  $\beta_1$  to  $\beta_5$  denote the regression coefficients for the independent variables at Level 1 (individuals), while  $\beta_6$  to  $\beta_7$

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<sup>8</sup> All analyses are conducted with Stata 12 by using the `xtmelogit` command to estimate the multilevel logistic regressions based on maximum likelihood estimation (for details see Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2008: 248, 258-261).

denote the regression coefficients at Level 2 (countries), which only vary across countries;  $\beta_0$  refers to the intercept, and  $\mu_j$  is the random effect at the country level.

In a first step of the multivariate analyses, I estimate the regression equation above with Models M1a and M1b. These models test Hypothesis 1, which expects a positive relation between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes, and Hypotheses 3a and 3b, which expect more favourable welfare attitudes when growth is low and/or unemployment is high and/or when social spending is high, respectively. In a second step, in Models M2a and M2b, interaction terms between perceived crisis impact and social class are added. These models test Hypothesis 2, which expects the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes to be moderated by social class. Finally, in a third step, Models M3a and M3b include a cross-level interaction term between perceived crisis impact and the macro-level variables (growth rate, unemployment rate, social spending). These models test Hypotheses 4a and 4b, which expect the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes to be moderated by economic conditions (growth rate, unemployment) and social spending (for an overview, see Figure 1).

As a robustness check, I also tested model specifications using country-level fixed effects, which produced very similar results at the individual level (cf. Tables A.2a and A2b in the Appendix). However, as Hypotheses 3a/3b and 4a/4b refer to contextual indicators, I present the findings for the random intercept multilevel specification.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Descriptive Results**

First, I examine how the perceived impact of the crisis is correlated with support for the welfare state and preferences for redistribution at the macro level. It is important to not interpret these associations causally. Figures 2a and 2b plot the share of respondents who report that the crisis has had a personal impact on them against the share of respondents who demand greater state

responsibility for social provision and support redistribution, respectively. Figure 2a illustrates that demand for greater state responsibility for social provision is positively related to the share of people reporting an impact of the crisis ( $r = 0.63$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). More specifically, high levels of demand for greater welfare state responsibility go together with large shares of respondents who report being affected by the crisis in Southern and Eastern European countries, such as Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, and Ireland. These results support the general expectation formulated in Hypothesis 1. Moreover, they might reflect the fact that in Southern and Eastern Europe, in particular, state-sponsored social protection is limited and social assistance schemes that act as safety nets of last resort are often weakly developed (if not completely absent), thereby providing benefits below the poverty threshold (Ferrera 2010; Bahle et al. 2011).

However, as this correlation is of moderate strength, some deviations can also be observed. Most notably, while high shares of respondents reporting an impact of the crisis can be found in Slovenia, Lithuania, and Estonia, as well as in the United Kingdom and Belgium, welfare state support in these countries is comparatively low (below 50 percent). By contrast, welfare state support is strong in Germany and to a lesser extent in Austria and Finland, but the share of respondents reporting an impact of the crisis in these countries is comparatively low. Moreover, in countries in which the share of respondents who report a personal impact of the crisis is about or below 30 percent, there appears to be no clear relation between perceived crisis impact and welfare state support (Denmark, Sweden, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Finland, Austria, Germany).

--- Figures 2a and 2b about here ---

Figure 2b reveals that the correlation between perceived crisis impact and support for redistribution is smaller ( $r=0.4$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) than for welfare state support. This is evidenced by the fact that support for redistribution varies less across European countries (between 69 percent in

the Czech Republic and 97 percent in Malta) than does demand for greater state responsibility for social provision (between 27 percent in the Netherlands and 76 percent in Greece). Nevertheless, a pattern similar to that described above can be observed: Support for redistribution is positively associated with the share of people reporting an impact of the crisis, and vice versa. Specifically, high levels of support for redistribution can be observed in countries in which large shares of the population report an impact of the crisis, especially in Southern and Eastern Europe, as in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. As in the case of welfare state support, these findings are in line with Hypothesis 1 and may reflect the macro-economic impacts of the crisis combined with limited social protection. Again, however, the correlation is a moderate one, and there are exceptions to the general trend. Specifically, opinions in countries in which a third or less of the population reports having been affected by the crisis appear to be somewhat split: While support for redistribution is high in Austria, Finland, and Germany, it is lower in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Luxembourg.

In summary, the descriptive findings support the expectation of Hypothesis 1, namely that perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes – defined here as support for state responsibility for social provision and redistributive preferences – are positively correlated. As these findings refer to correlations at the macro-level, they may involve an ecological fallacy. Therefore, the following multivariate analyses investigate whether perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes are also associated at the individual level when controlling for relevant individual and contextual variables. Furthermore, I scrutinize whether this relation is moderated by respondents' class position and the national institutional and economic context.

## **4.2 Multivariate Results**

Before discussing the findings in detail, an examination of the intraclass correlation (ICC) for the empty models without any explanatory variables (estimates not shown) provides

information about the proportion of variance that can be attributed to the country level.<sup>9</sup> The higher the ICC is, the more heterogeneous European countries are with regard to welfare attitudes. The ICC values for the empty models in Table 1 indicate that about 8 percent of the variation in Europeans' support for the welfare state ( $\tau^2 = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and about 11 percent of the variation in their redistributive preferences ( $\tau^2 = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) can be attributed to the macro level. This points to non-trivial and statistically significant country-level variation that justifies multilevel modelling.

--- Table 1 about here ---

Looking at the effect of perceived crisis impact on support for the welfare state in Model 1a (cf. Table 1), respondents who report an impact of the crisis prove to be more likely to support the welfare state than are those who do not (all else being constant), which is in line with the descriptive findings and Hypothesis 1. The impact of social class follows established patterns (F. L. Cook and Barrett 1992; Svallfors 1997, 2010): Intermediate employees, the routine non-manual and working classes, and the two "transfer classes" (Alber 1984) – the unemployed and pensioners – are more likely to demand greater state responsibility for social protection, whereas members of the upper service class are significantly less likely to do so. Among the control variables, those with lower education, younger people, and women are significantly more supportive of greater state responsibility for social provision. Among the macro-level indicators, only the level of unemployment significantly affects welfare state support, which is in line with Hypothesis 3a.

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<sup>9</sup> Formally, the intraclass correlation  $\rho_I$  is defined as the proportion of group-level variance compared with the total variance:  $\rho_I = \frac{\tau^2}{\tau^2 + \sigma^2}$ , whereby  $\tau^2$  refers to the population variance *between* groups (in this case, countries) while  $\sigma^2$  refers to the population variance *within* groups (in this case, individuals), which is fixed to  $\sigma^2 = \pi^2/3$  (=3.29) in the case of random intercept models (Guo and Zhao 2000: 454). Between- and within-group variance together constitute the total variance (Snijders and Bosker 1999: 17). Hox (2010: 244) suggests that in general, intraclass correlations of .05, .10, and .15 can be considered as small, medium, and large, respectively.

Examining support for redistribution in Model 1b in Table 1, the pattern of effects is essentially similar. Perceived crisis impact is significantly associated with greater support for redistribution, which is in line with the descriptive results and Hypothesis 1. Additionally, it is primarily the intermediate employees, the routine non-manual and working class, as well as the unemployed and pensioners who are more supportive of redistribution. Furthermore, women and the low-skilled are also more likely to support redistribution. Examining the macro variables, redistributive preferences tend to be higher in countries with more unemployment, but the coefficient misses conventional significance levels and is significant only at the 10-percent level. Thus, there is weak support for Hypothesis 3a with regard to redistributive preferences.

When comparing the unexplained macro-level variance of the empty models with the full models, we find that including the individual and contextual variables reduces the unexplained macro-level variance by 46 percent for welfare state support and by 30 percent for redistributive preferences. This finding is more-or-less the same across all models.<sup>10</sup>

How is the relation between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes moderated by social class? Does perceived crisis impact matter more among the lower social classes as expected by Hypothesis 2? Models 2a and 2b in Table 1 empirically test this expectation by including an interaction term between perceived crisis impact and social class; to simplify the interpretation, Figures 2a and 2b depict this interaction graphically by plotting how the average marginal effects of perceived crisis impact on support for state responsibility and redistribution differs across social classes.

--- Figures 3a and 3b about here ---

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<sup>10</sup> Including the individual and contextual variables reduces the unexplained macro-level variance by 42 percent in Model M2a and by 46 percent in Model M3a. For redistributive preferences, including the individual and contextual variables reduces the unexplained macro-level variance by 30 percent in all models (M1b, M2b, and M3b.)

The findings reveal that there are commonalities as well as differences between both dependent variables in how social class matters. One notable commonality is that the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes – i.e., welfare state support and redistributive preferences, respectively – is particularly strong among the self-employed (see Figures 2a and 2b). While perceived crisis impact appears to boost pro-welfare attitudes among traditional welfare state supporters – such as the unemployed, pensioners, and the lower classes in the case of redistribution – it also seems to shift attitudes in favour of welfare state policies among traditional welfare state opponents, i.e., the self-employed. This is only partially in line with Hypothesis 2, which expected perceived crisis impact to matter more among the lower classes. However, it is important to note that the self-employed are a rather heterogeneous group across and within countries, with both professional and unskilled forms of self-employment having gained in importance in comparison with traditional crafts-based self-employment (Arum and Müller 2004: 430). Moreover, traditional and unskilled self-employment is more prevalent in countries with higher levels of family-based social capital, while professional self-employment is more prevalent under conditions of very rigid or very flexible labour market regulation (Arum and Müller 2004: 432).<sup>11</sup>

With regard to the differences between both dependent variables, more interaction terms between perceived crisis impact and social class are significant for redistributive preferences than for welfare state support (cf. Models 2a and 2b). Looking more closely at the findings, Model 2b reveals that the main effect of perceived crisis impact on redistributive preferences becomes insignificant once the interaction terms are included. This means that the redistributive

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<sup>11</sup> Examining the extent of self-employment across countries by using the Eurobarometer data, comparatively high shares of self-employed respondents can be found in some Southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Cyprus), while low shares of self-employed respondents exist in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Denmark, Finland), with the other nations lying in between. When examining the educational background of the self-employed, the highest shares of self-employed with tertiary education can be found in the Nordic countries (between 58 and 85 percent of the self-employed), whereas the lowest shares of self-employed respondents with tertiary education (between 7 and 17 percent of the self-employed) are observed in Continental European countries (Germany and Austria) and in parts of Southern Europe (Italy, Portugal, Malta, Cyprus) as well as in parts of Eastern Europe (Slovakia, Romania, the Czech Republic).

preferences of respondents from the service class who report being affected by the crisis do not differ significantly from those of unaffected service-class members (see also Figure 3b). Compared with this group, perceived crisis impact boosts redistributive preferences among members of most other classes (i.e., the intermediate class, the self-employed, the working class, those not in the labour force, the unemployed, and pensioners). With regard to the demand for greater state responsibility, by contrast, perceived crisis impact significantly increases pro-welfare attitudes among the service class, as well. Thus, while perceived crisis impact does not increase the redistributive preferences of the higher classes, it affects these classes' support of greater state responsibility for social provision, thereby implying that the security dimension of welfare attitudes appears to be less contested between higher and lower classes than does the equality dimension.

--- Table 2 about here ---

--- Figures 4a and 4b about here ---

Moreover, Hypotheses 4a and 4b expected the association of perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes to be moderated by levels of social spending and economic conditions, respectively. Models 3a and 3b in Table 2 therefore test whether the influence of perceived crisis impact on welfare attitudes is moderated by contextual factors, such as GDP growth, unemployment, or social spending. Examining the support of state responsibility for social provision in Model 3a (cf. Table 2), we find that only social spending significantly moderates the effect of perceived crisis impact. Figure 4a depicts this interaction graphically: In countries with higher levels of social spending, the average marginal effect of perceived crisis impact on the demand for greater state responsibility for social provision is smaller than in countries with lower levels of social spending. This suggests that – as expected in Hypothesis 4a – encompassing welfare states apparently mitigate the subjective consequences of the crisis for citizens as perceived crisis impact matters less in countries with higher levels of social

spending. However, as the overlapping confidence intervals indicate, the main difference here is between countries with higher and lower levels of social spending, while smaller differences in social spending do not significantly affect the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare state support. Looking at redistributive preferences in Model 3b (cf. Table 2), we find that the influence of perceived crisis impact is significantly moderated by economic growth but not by the other contextual variables. Figure 4b reveals that in countries with higher levels of economic growth, the average marginal effect of perceived crisis impact on the support of redistribution is greater than in countries with lower levels of economic growth. This suggests that – in line with Hypothesis 4b – differences in redistributive preferences between those reporting the impact of the crisis and those reporting no impact are greater in countries with better economic conditions, whereas redistributive preferences appear to be somewhat less contested under adverse economic conditions. Again, overlapping confidence intervals here also indicate that the main difference in the association between perceived crisis impact and redistributive preferences is between countries with low (or negative) economic growth as compared with countries with high (or positive) economic growth.

In summary, these results suggest partial support for Hypotheses 4a and 4b, indicating that the extent to which Europeans' perceptions of a personal crisis impact are related to their welfare attitudes is shaped by the larger socio-political and economic differences between the countries in which they live.

## **5 Discussion and Conclusion**

This article has investigated how Europeans' perceptions of the personal impact of the Great Recession during the midst of the crisis are associated with their welfare attitudes. Previous studies have mostly focused on the impact of objective economic conditions on welfare attitudes (Blekesaune 2007, 2013; Jaeger 2013; Sihvo and Uusitalo 1995; Jeene et al. 2014). As these studies have rarely considered the group-specific impacts of economic downturns

(however, see Kluegel 1987), I asked how social class moderates the association between subjective crisis impact and welfare attitudes, considering both the security and equality dimension of attitudes. Furthermore, whereas the existing research on welfare attitudes during the Great Recession has so far primarily looked at Anglo-Saxon countries (Brooks and Manza 2013; Kenworthy and Owens 2012; Soroka and Wlezien 2014), I have analysed differences in perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes across 27 European countries, thereby also taking into account the moderating influence of macroeconomic and institutional variation.

My findings are in line with the “governmental protection hypothesis” reported in previous research, suggesting that citizens’ welfare attitudes appear to be more favourable under harder economic conditions (Blekesaune 2007, 2013; Jeene et al. 2014; Jaeger 2013; Page and Shapiro 1992; Kam and Nam 2008). During the midst of the crisis in 2010, levels of popular support for the welfare state and redistribution tended to be higher in countries in which more people reported an impact of the crisis, especially in Eastern and Southern Europe and Ireland. Perceptions of a personal crisis impact are also associated with greater support of the welfare state and redistribution at the individual level, even after controlling for various socio-demographic and contextual factors. Thus, being impacted by the crisis tends to be associated with greater welfare state solidarity.

However, this association is not homogeneous, but is instead moderated by individuals’ class position as well as national economic conditions and the degree of a country’s social protection. Whether crisis experiences translate into favourable welfare attitudes – and hence, into greater welfare state solidarity – is conditional in two ways:

- First, the multilevel analyses reveal that the strength of this association differs along the lines of social classes. Perceived crisis impact not only boosts pro-welfare attitudes among traditional welfare state supporters, such as the unemployed, the working class, and pensioners; notably, perceived crisis impact also appears to shift attitudes in a more favourable direction towards the welfare state among its traditional opponents,

especially the self-employed. However, as the data used are cross-sectional, it is not possible to determine the extent to which this might result in a persistent shift in attitudes or whether it is a transitory phenomenon, with attitudes becoming more critical of the welfare state as the crisis recedes and economic conditions improve. Existing longitudinal studies provide conflicting evidence on this question: While Margalit (2013) used data from the US during the Great Recession to suggest a transitory effect of crisis experiences (such as unemployment or income loss) on welfare support, Naumann et al. (2015) used data from the Netherlands to find a more persistent effect. Given the availability of comparable longitudinal survey data, future research might investigate this shift in attitudes from an explicitly comparative perspective to see if differences in welfare state generosity and institutional design affect whether crisis experiences lead to transitory or persistent changes in welfare state support. Moreover, as discussed previously, the self-employed are a rather heterogeneous group across Europe (Arum and Müller 2004), and country-specific analyses would thus be needed that scrutinize their position towards the welfare state during economic downturns in greater detail and to take into account the gender-specific composition of the self-employed as well as variation in their educational backgrounds. However, due to the small number of self-employed respondents and the insufficient information on the specific type of self-employment in the Eurobarometer data, such an analysis is beyond the scope of this paper. The findings at least point out that the welfare attitudes of the self-employed under changing economic conditions warrant greater scientific attention, thus signalling an important avenue for future research.

Moreover, the findings also indicate that while perceptions of a personal crisis impact increase support for greater welfare state responsibility among members of the service class, they do not significantly affect these individuals' redistributive preferences. Thus, members of the upper classes might support providing more security if they report that

the crisis has had an impact on them, but they do not necessarily also favour greater equality. The equality dimension of welfare attitudes appears more contested between higher and lower social classes than does the security dimension.

- Second, the association between perceived crisis impact and welfare attitudes also varies cross-nationally in accordance with the extent of social protection and economic conditions. While the demand for greater welfare state responsibility is less strongly associated with perceived crisis impact in countries with higher levels of social spending, the relation between perceived crisis impact and preferences for redistribution tends to be slightly stronger in countries with higher economic growth. This suggests that while encompassing welfare states appear to mitigate attitudinal cleavages between those affected and those not affected by economic hardship with regard to overall welfare state responsibility, redistribution is slightly more contested between these two groups under more favourable economic conditions. Thus, while perceived crisis impact increases the demand for greater welfare state responsibility – especially in less developed welfare states – it is related to slightly stronger preferences for greater redistribution when economic growth is higher, possibly indicating that those affected by economic hardship demand their “fair share” as the economy picks up again.

In summary, experiencing a personal impact of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis of 2007/2008 is associated with greater support of welfare state responsibility and redistribution, but the strength of this relation varies across social groups and countries. Future research should therefore investigate in more detail the heterogeneous effects of experiences of economic hardship (unemployment, income loss) on welfare state support for different social groups and across different national contexts, preferably from a longitudinal perspective.

What are the implications of these findings for the prospects of welfare state solidarity in Europe? The combination of lean and/or fragmented pre-existing welfare systems and measures to reduce social spending due to “institutionalized austerity” (Streeck 2012: 137)

involves greater contestation of welfare state support between those affected and unaffected by the crisis, particularly with regard to the Southern and Eastern European countries hardest-hit by the crisis. Moreover, distributive conflicts between these two groups may intensify when their economies eventually recover and begin growing again. Given that these countries have faced pronounced cutbacks in social spending and have been on a path of welfare reform and retrenchment since 2010 (Heins and de la Porte 2015; Hemerijck 2013), the crisis indeed serves as a “stress test” for welfare state solidarity between different social groups in countries where the need for social protection is greatest. Furthermore, while traditional welfare state opponents, such as the self-employed, appear to hold more positive welfare attitudes if – and only if – they are personally affected, it is not possible to say with the data used here whether this represents a transitory or permanent shift in attitudes. Given the challenges facing European welfare states in light of austerity and prolonged economic difficulties, it remains to be seen how stable a basis of popular support for social policy can be formed on these grounds.

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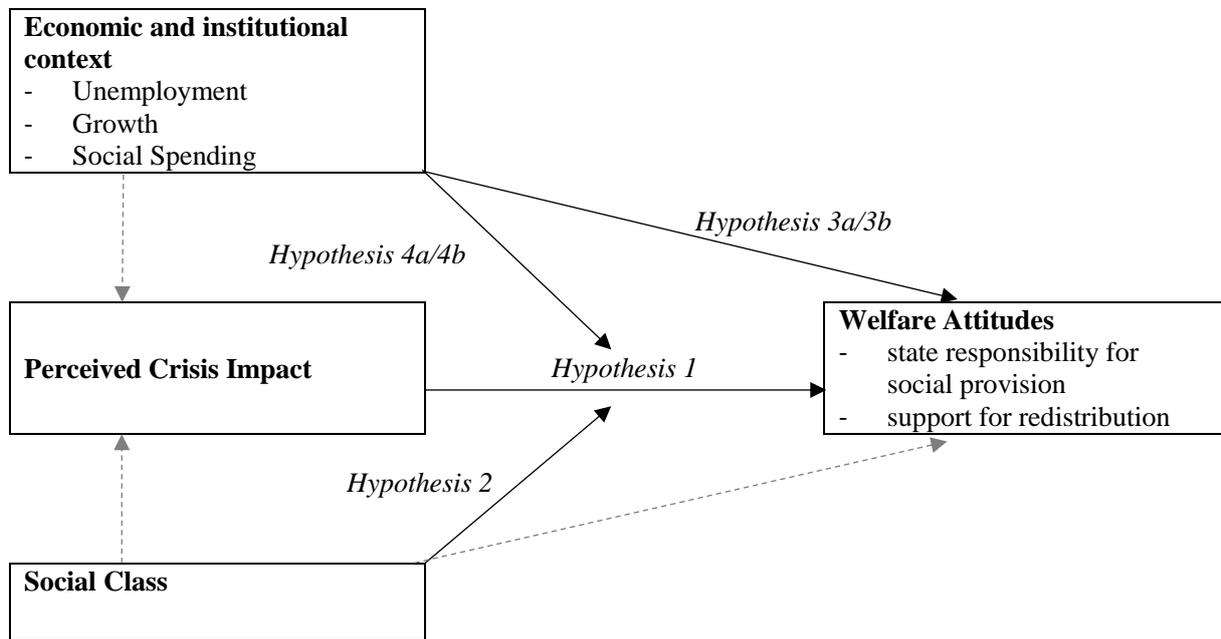
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## Figures

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses**



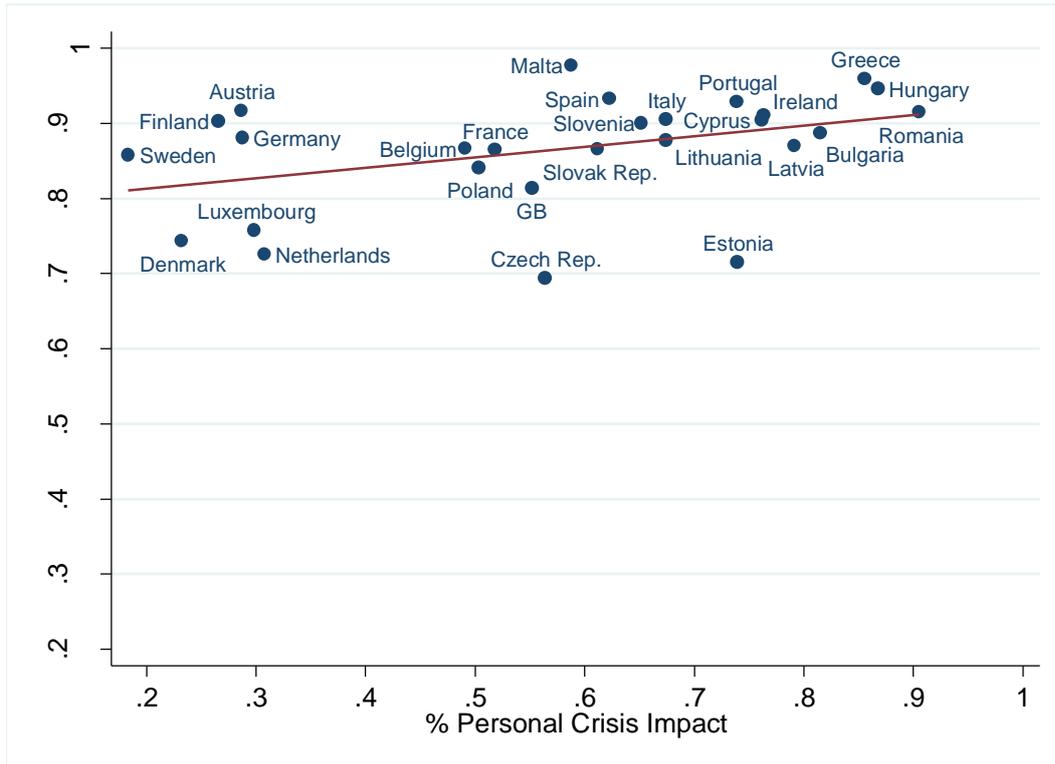
Source: own depiction, solid arrows denote hypothesized relationships; dashed arrows denote relations on which no specific hypothesis are formulated.

**Figure 2a: Perceived Crisis Impact and Welfare State Support across Europe**



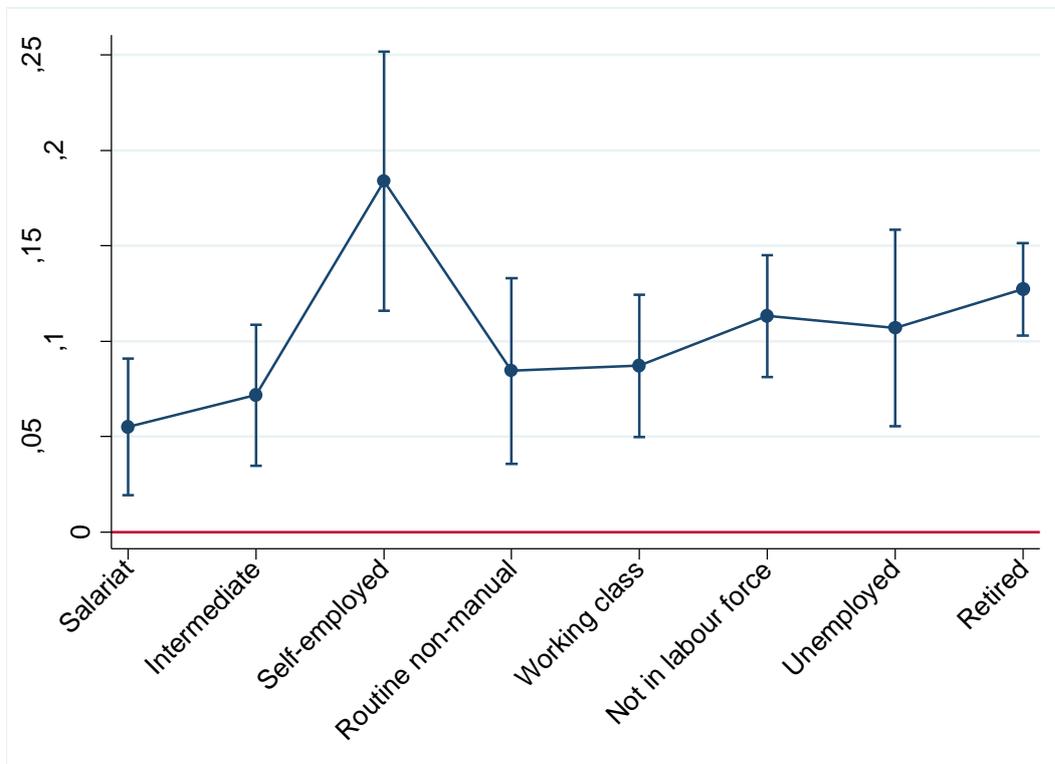
Source: Eurobarometer 2010 (74.1),  $r=0.63$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $N=27$

**Figure 2b: Perceived Crisis Impact and Support for Redistribution across Europe**



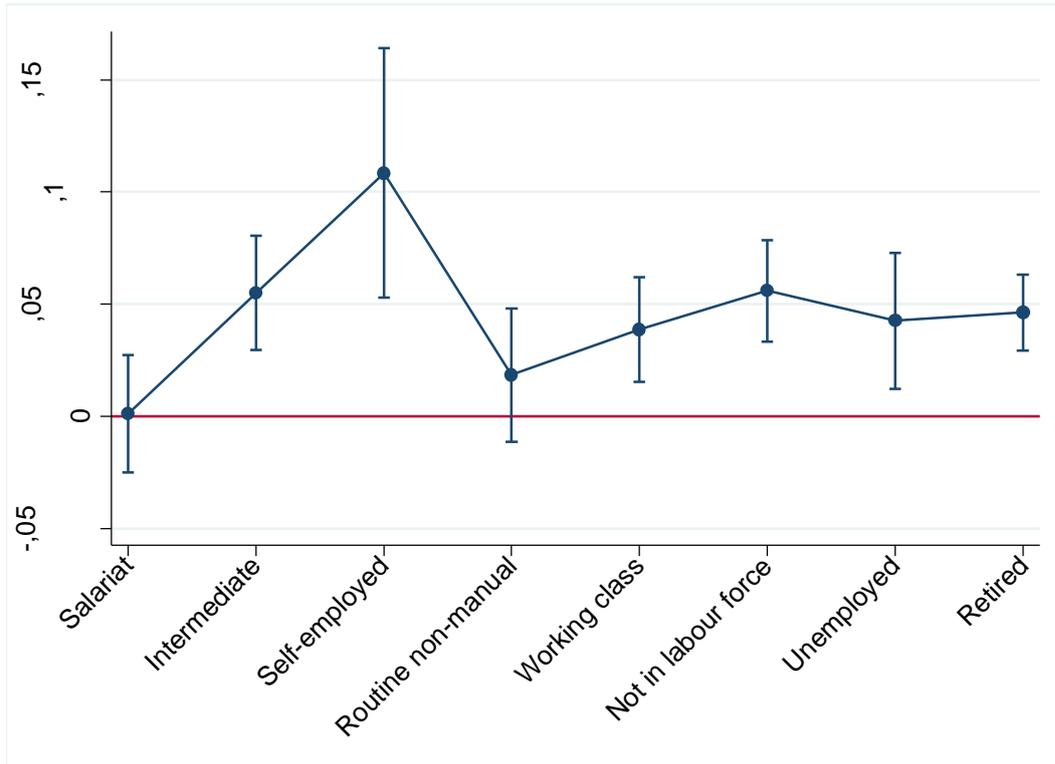
Source: Eurobarometer 2010 (74.1),  $r=0.40$ ,  $p<0.05$ ,  $N=27$

**Figure 3a: Perceived Crisis Impact, Social Class and Welfare State Support**



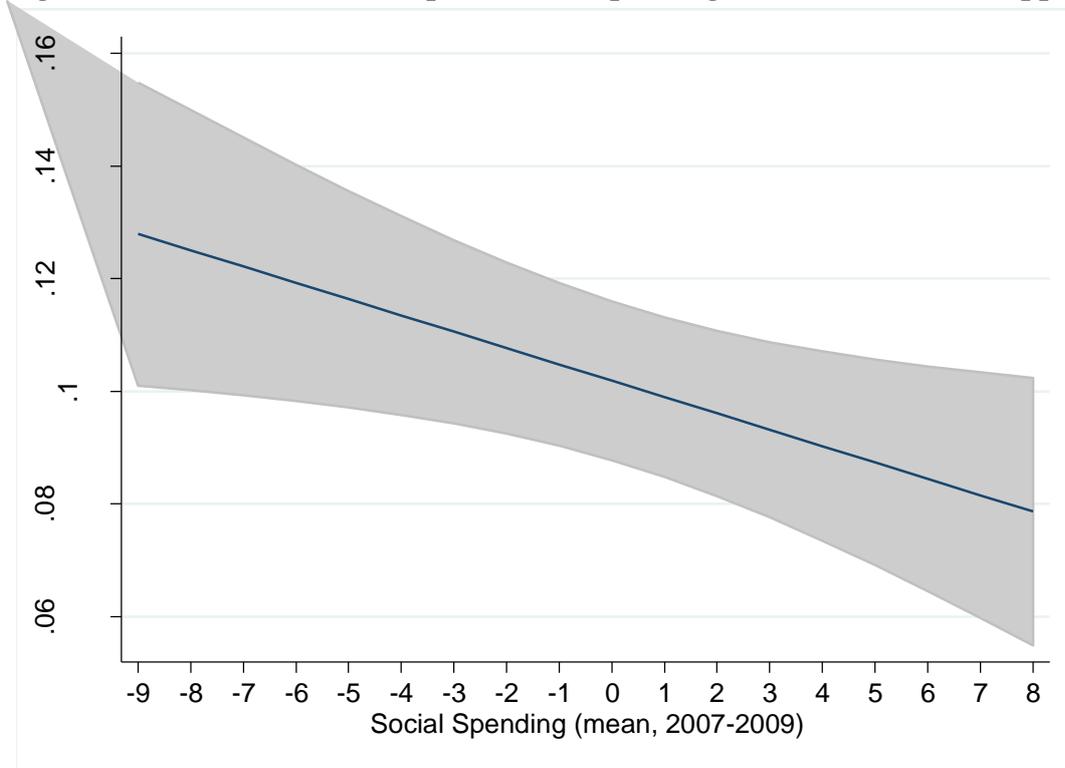
Note: Average marginal effects of perceived crisis impact for different social classes on welfare state support, fixed part of model 2a only

**Figure 3b: Perceived Crisis Impact, Social Class and Support for Redistribution**



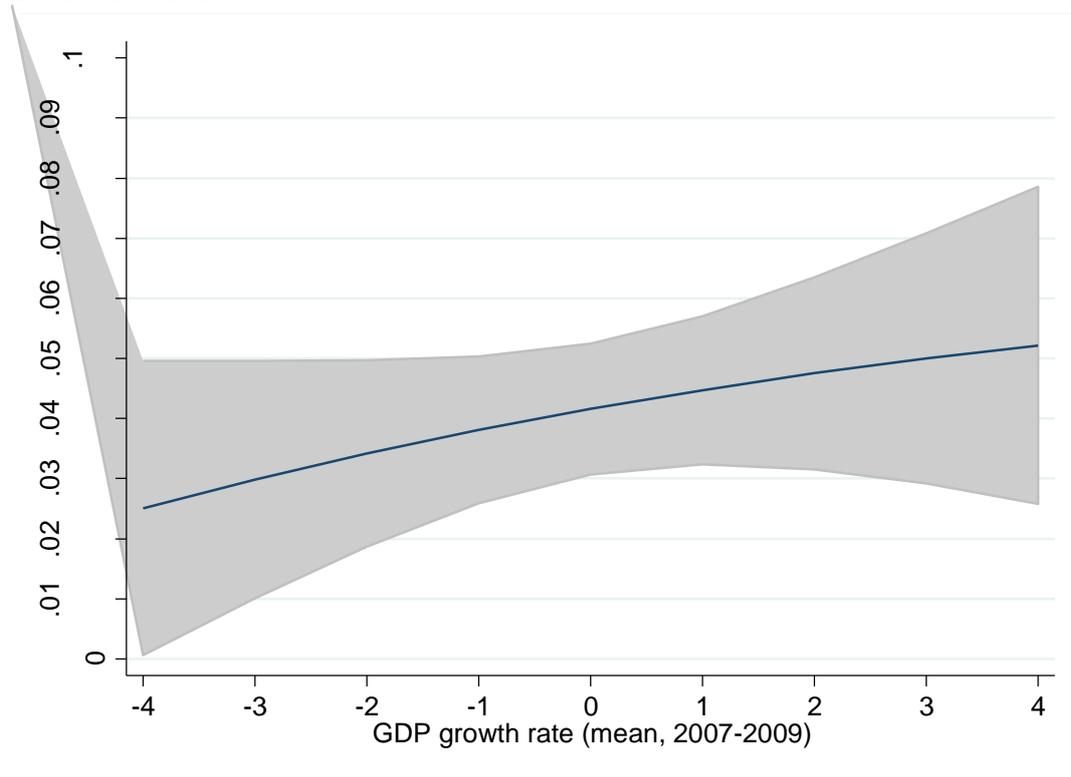
*Note:* Average marginal effects of perceived crisis impact for different social classes on redistributive preferences, fixed part of model 2a only

**Figure 4a: Perceived Crisis Impact, Social Spending and Welfare State Support**



*Note:* Average marginal effects of perceived crisis impact for different levels of social spending (centered) on welfare state support, fixed part of model 3a only

**Figure 4b: Perceived Crisis Impact, Economic Growth and Preferences for Redistribution**



*Note:* Average marginal effects of perceived crisis impact for different levels of economic growth (centered) on preferences for redistribution, fixed part of model 3a only

## Tables

**Table 1: Multilevel Results –Welfare Attitudes, Crisis Experiences and Social Class**

	M1a		M1b		M2a		M2b	
	Welfare State Support		Redistributive Preferences		Welfare State Support		Redistributive Preferences	
<b>Micro Variables (Level 1)</b>								
Constant	-0.67***	(-6.69)	0.99***	(7.06)	-0.57***	(-5.33)	1.16***	(8.03)
Social Class (ref. = service class)								
Intermediate employee	0.16**	(2.98)	0.34***	(4.83)	0.14 <sup>+</sup>	(1.78)	0.13	(1.35)
Self employed & small employers	-0.04	(-0.48)	0.19 <sup>+</sup>	(1.74)	-0.38**	(-2.76)	-0.22	(-1.42)
Routine non-manual	0.30***	(4.62)	0.56***	(6.21)	0.24**	(2.62)	0.49***	(3.91)
Working Class	0.39***	(7.00)	0.67***	(8.41)	0.33***	(4.04)	0.48***	(4.32)
Not in labor force	0.37***	(6.71)	0.50***	(6.73)	0.24**	(3.21)	0.26**	(2.66)
Unemployed	0.71***	(11.30)	0.91***	(9.52)	0.58***	(5.13)	0.62***	(3.91)
Retired	0.27***	(4.59)	0.56***	(6.91)	0.11	(1.57)	0.35***	(3.64)
Perceived Crisis Impact	0.42***	(14.22)	0.40***	(9.23)	0.23**	(3.01)	0.01	(0.09)
Education (ref. = tertiary)								
Primary	0.43***	(9.78)	0.45***	(6.53)	0.43***	(9.70)	0.45***	(6.49)
Secondary	0.19***	(5.84)	0.16***	(3.58)	0.19***	(5.78)	0.16***	(3.52)
Age (ref. = 65+)								
<35	0.14*	(2.42)	0.09	(1.02)	0.13*	(2.31)	0.09	(0.98)
35-49	0.12*	(2.04)	0.10	(1.14)	0.11 <sup>+</sup>	(1.90)	0.09	(1.05)
50-64	0.11*	(2.36)	0.20**	(2.80)	0.10*	(2.10)	0.19**	(2.64)
Female	0.09***	(3.40)	0.20***	(5.08)	0.09***	(3.42)	0.20***	(5.14)
<b>Interaction Terms</b>								
Intermediate*crisis impact					0.07	(0.63)	0.47***	(3.43)
Self employed*crisis impact					0.55**	(3.25)	0.82***	(3.80)
Routine non-manual*crisis impact					0.12	(0.97)	0.18	(1.02)
Working class*crisis impact					0.14	(1.27)	0.42**	(2.79)
Not in labour force*crisis impact					0.24*	(2.43)	0.54***	(3.99)
Unemployed*crisis impact					0.24 <sup>+</sup>	(1.82)	0.55**	(2.79)
Retired*crisis impact					0.30***	(3.34)	0.46***	(3.97)
<b>Macro Variables (Level 2)</b>								
Growth Rate (07-09)	0.07	(1.57)	0.06	(1.06)	0.07	(1.55)	0.06	(1.05)
Unemployment Rate (07-09)	0.11**	(2.90)	0.10 <sup>+</sup>	(1.81)	0.11**	(2.89)	0.10 <sup>+</sup>	(1.82)
Social Spending (07-09)	0.00	(0.19)	0.02	(1.11)	0.00	(0.17)	0.02	(1.09)
Between-country Variance ( $\tau^2$ ) empty model	0.28***	(-4.51)	0.42***	(-3.02)	0.28***	(-4.51)	0.42***	(-3.02)
Between-country Variance ( $\tau^2$ ) full model	0.15***	(-6.60)	0.29***	(-4.10)	0.16***	(-5.33)	0.29***	(-4.14)
Log Likelihood empty model	-16651.85		-9339.88		-16651.85		-9339.88	
Log Likelihood full model	-16332.42		-9134.47		-16321.79		-9119.33	
ICC empty model	0.08		0.11		0.08		0.11	
ICC full model	0.04		0.08		0.04		0.08	
N (individuals)	25212		24749		25212		24749	
N (countries)	27		27		27		27	

Source: Eurobarometer 2010, 74.1, own calculations; unstandardized logit coefficients, t-statistics in parentheses, continuous level-2 variables are grand mean-centered, <sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 2: Multilevel Results – Welfare Attitudes, Crisis Experiences and Contextual Factors**

	M3a		M3b	
	Welfare State Support		Redistributive Preferences	
<b>Micro Variables (Level 1)</b>				
Constant	-0.69***	(-6.82)	0.98***	(7.06)
Social Class (ref.=service class)				
Intermediate employee	0.16**	(2.97)	0.34***	(4.82)
Self employed & small employers	-0.04	(-0.44)	0.19+	(1.74)
Routine non-manual	0.29***	(4.61)	0.56***	(6.20)
Working Class	0.39***	(7.02)	0.67***	(8.39)
Not in labour force	0.37***	(6.73)	0.50***	(6.71)
Unemployed	0.71***	(11.30)	0.91***	(9.51)
Retired	0.27***	(4.61)	0.56***	(6.89)
Perceived Crisis Impact	0.43***	(14.33)	0.39***	(9.01)
Education (ref.=tertiary)				
primary	0.43***	(9.80)	0.45***	(6.53)
secondary	0.19***	(5.84)	0.16***	(3.60)
Age (ref.=65+)				
<35	0.14*	(2.45)	0.09	(1.07)
35-49	0.12*	(2.08)	0.10	(1.20)
50-64	0.11*	(2.38)	0.21**	(2.83)
Female	0.09***	(3.38)	0.20***	(5.07)
<b>Macro Variables (Level 2)</b>				
Growth Rate (07-09)	0.07+	(1.70)	0.03	(0.57)
Social Spending (07-09)	0.01	(0.74)	0.03	(1.27)
Unemployment Rate (07-09)	0.12**	(2.99)	0.11*	(2.04)
<b>Cross-Level Interaction Terms</b>				
Growth rate*Perceived Crisis Impact	-0.01	(-0.60)	0.05*	(2.16)
Social Spending*Perceived Crisis Impact	-0.01*	(-2.42)	-0.01	(-0.98)
Unemployment Rate*Perceived Crisis Impact	-0.01	(-0.58)	-0.02	(-1.06)
Between-country Variance ( $\tau^2$ ) empty model	0.28***	(-4.51)	0.42***	(-3.02)
Between-country Variance ( $\tau^2$ ) full model	0.15***	(-6.60)	0.29***	(-4.12)
Log Likelihood empty model	-16651.85		-9339.88	
Log Likelihood full model	-16329.48		-9131.05	
ICC empty model	0.08		0.11	
ICC full model	0.04		0.08	
N (individuals)	25212		24749	
N (countries)	27		27	

Source: Eurobarometer 2010, 74.1, own calculations; unstandardized logit coefficients, t-statistics in parentheses, continuous level-2 variables are grand mean-centered, +  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table A1: Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	SD
<b>Micro-level Variables</b>		
Perceived Crisis Impact	0.57	(0.50)
Support for Welfare State Responsibility	0.54	(0.50)
Support for Redistribution*	0.86	(0.34)
Social Class		
Service Class	0.13	(0.33)
Intermediate Employee	0.12	(0.33)
Self-employed + Small employers	0.04	(0.19)
Routine non-manual	0.07	(0.25)
Working Class	0.12	(0.33)
Unemployed	0.16	(0.37)
Not in Labour Force	0.08	(0.28)
Retired	0.28	(0.45)
Education		
Primary	0.20	(0.40)
Secondary	0.47	(0.50)
Tertiary	0.33	(0.47)
Age		
<35	0.27	(0.45)
35-49	0.26	(0.44)
50-64	0.26	(0.44)
65+	0.21	(0.41)
Female	0.54	(0.50)
<i>N</i>	25212	
<b>Macro-level Variables</b>		
GDP Growth Rate (2007-2009)	0.13	(1.89)
Unemployment Rate (2007-2009)	7.4	(2.02)
Social Spending (% GDP, 2007-2009)	23.51	(5.62)

*Source:* Micro-Level variables = Eurobarometer 2010 (74.1), Macro-level variables see text; mean values, standard deviations in parentheses, \*N=24749

**Table A.2a: Alternative Fixed-Effects Specification**

	<b>M.A1a</b>	<b>M.A1b</b>	<b>M.A2a</b>	<b>M.A2b</b>
	Welfare State Support	Redistributive Preferences	Welfare State Support	Redistributive Preferences
<b>Micro Variables</b>				
Social Class (ref.= service class)				
Intermediate employee	0.16* (2.57)	0.34*** (5.08)	0.14 (1.58)	0.13 (1.51)
Self employed & small employers	-0.04 (-0.44)	0.19 (1.62)	-0.38** (-2.82)	-0.22 (-1.59)
Routine non-manual	0.30*** (4.73)	0.56*** (6.60)	0.24* (2.56)	0.49*** (4.74)
Working Class	0.39*** (6.31)	0.67*** (7.21)	0.33*** (3.95)	0.48*** (4.29)
Not in labour force	0.37*** (6.74)	0.50*** (7.39)	0.24*** (4.89)	0.26** (2.74)
Unemployed	0.71*** (9.10)	0.92*** (7.55)	0.58*** (5.72)	0.63*** (4.27)
Retired	0.27*** (4.11)	0.56*** (6.73)	0.12 (1.30)	0.35** (3.16)
Perceived Crisis Impact	0.42*** (8.07)	0.39*** (7.60)	0.22* (2.49)	0.00 (0.04)
Education (ref.=tertiary)				
primary	0.43*** (5.69)	0.44*** (4.17)	0.42*** (5.63)	0.44*** (4.14)
secondary	0.19*** (4.24)	0.16** (2.70)	0.19*** (4.21)	0.16** (2.63)
Age (ref. = 65+)				
<35	0.14+ (1.90)	0.09 (1.04)	0.13+ (1.78)	0.09 (0.96)
35-49	0.12+ (1.68)	0.10 (1.10)	0.11 (1.53)	0.09 (0.99)
50-64	0.11+ (1.77)	0.20** (2.80)	0.10 (1.60)	0.19* (2.56)
65+	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)
Female	0.09*** (4.12)	0.20*** (5.97)	0.09*** (4.23)	0.20*** (6.08)
<b>Interaction Terms</b>				
Intermediate*crisis impact			0.06 (0.57)	0.47*** (4.01)
Self employed*crisis impact			0.54** (3.01)	0.82*** (4.43)
Routine non-manual*crisis impact			0.12 (1.02)	0.18 (0.96)
Working class*crisis impact			0.14 (1.41)	0.42** (3.04)
Not in labour force*crisis impact			0.24* (2.35)	0.54*** (3.79)
Unemployed*crisis impact			0.25+ (1.90)	0.55** (2.96)
Retired*crisis impact			0.30** (2.81)	0.47*** (3.48)
<b>Country effects (ref. = France)</b>				
Belgium	-0.22*** (-22.68)	0.01 (1.33)	-0.22*** (-23.86)	0.01 (1.18)

Netherlands	-0.89*** (-54.22)	-0.69*** (-42.06)	-0.90*** (-53.28)	-0.70*** (-43.85)
Germany	0.41*** (35.06)	0.22*** (15.84)	0.41*** (34.58)	0.21*** (14.32)
Italy	0.51*** (33.14)	0.33*** (14.85)	0.51*** (32.96)	0.32*** (14.70)
Denmark	-0.22*** (-8.13)	-0.60*** (-22.35)	-0.23*** (-8.47)	-0.61*** (-22.44)
Ireland	0.17*** (9.44)	0.35*** (16.08)	0.18*** (10.32)	0.36*** (17.43)
GB	-0.43*** (-47.34)	-0.42*** (-30.81)	-0.43*** (-44.01)	-0.42*** (-29.86)
Finland	0.08*** (4.27)	0.53*** (24.48)	0.08*** (4.44)	0.53*** (24.75)
Sweden	-0.36*** (-15.04)	0.22*** (7.87)	-0.37*** (-14.88)	0.19*** (7.02)
Austria	-0.04** (-3.13)	0.63*** (34.05)	-0.05*** (-3.40)	0.62*** (32.15)
Greece	0.95*** (36.89)	1.20*** (38.34)	0.94*** (37.00)	1.17*** (36.39)
Spain	0.70*** (39.10)	0.60*** (24.36)	0.70*** (39.76)	0.59*** (23.79)
Portugal	-0.30*** (-9.02)	0.43*** (10.69)	-0.31*** (-9.01)	0.43*** (10.88)
Cyprus	0.65*** (40.21)	0.28*** (12.67)	0.65*** (40.15)	0.27*** (12.61)
Luxembourg	-0.78*** (-44.77)	-0.63*** (-47.08)	-0.79*** (-46.45)	-0.63*** (-45.42)
Malta	-0.06** (-2.64)	1.81*** (67.63)	-0.06** (-2.77)	1.80*** (71.32)
Bulgaria	0.26*** (13.78)	-0.00 (-0.03)	0.25*** (13.49)	-0.01 (-0.33)
Czech Rep.	0.03* (2.38)	-1.06*** (-57.33)	0.03** (2.70)	-1.06*** (-62.64)
Estonia	-0.36*** (-24.64)	-1.03*** (-60.35)	-0.35*** (-24.94)	-1.03*** (-67.32)
Hungary	0.45*** (19.35)	0.80*** (30.13)	0.45*** (18.95)	0.79*** (31.08)
Lithuania	-0.75*** (-48.64)	0.03* (2.15)	-0.75*** (-49.94)	0.04* (2.48)
Latvia	0.18*** (9.72)	-0.08** (-2.95)	0.19*** (10.34)	-0.07** (-2.66)
Poland	0.37*** (47.66)	-0.24*** (-23.41)	0.37*** (50.22)	-0.23*** (-22.91)
Romania	0.39*** (19.93)	0.35*** (14.16)	0.39*** (19.57)	0.33*** (13.77)
Slovenia	-0.52*** (-47.45)	0.28*** (24.15)	-0.52*** (-46.82)	0.28*** (26.06)
Slovak Rep.	0.57*** (51.00)	-0.04* (-2.33)	0.56*** (52.52)	-0.04** (-2.74)
Constant	-0.71*** (-10.98)	0.86*** (9.90)	-0.60*** (-7.98)	1.05*** (10.49)
N	25212.00	24749.00	25212.00	24749.00
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup> (McKelvey & Zavoina)	0.11	0.14	0.11	0.15

Source: Eurobarometer 2010, 74.1, own calculations; unstandardized logit coefficients, t-statistics in parentheses, standard errors clustered by country, +  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table A.2b Alternative Fixed-Effects Specification with Cross-Level Interactions**

	Welfare State Support	Redistributive Preferences
Social Class (ref.= service class)		
Intermediate employee	0.16* (2.55)	0.34*** (5.06)
Self employed & small employers	-0.04 (-0.43)	0.18 (1.58)
Routine non-manual	0.30*** (4.70)	0.56*** (6.64)
Working Class	0.39*** (6.32)	0.67*** (7.11)
Not in labour force	0.37*** (6.77)	0.50*** (7.38)
Unemployed	0.71*** (9.08)	0.91*** (7.53)
Retired	0.27*** (4.15)	0.56*** (6.71)
Perceived Crisis Impact	0.42*** (8.42)	0.39*** (8.03)
Education (ref.=tertiary)		
primary	0.43*** (5.69)	0.44*** (4.16)
secondary	0.19*** (4.22)	0.16** (2.70)
Age (ref.=65+)		
<35	0.14+ (1.94)	0.09 (1.07)
35-49	0.12+ (1.72)	0.10 (1.13)
50-64	0.11+ (1.78)	0.21** (2.82)
Female	0.09*** (4.08)	0.20*** (6.00)
<b>Interaction Terms</b>		
Social Spending*Crisis Impact	-0.01 (-1.36)	
Growth Rate*Crisis Impact		0.05* (2.06)
<b>Country Effects (ref. = France)</b>		
Belgium	-0.24*** (-14.14)	-0.00 (-0.24)
Netherlands	-0.92*** (-34.65)	-0.70*** (-44.58)
Germany	0.37*** (12.36)	0.22*** (16.34)
Italy	0.49*** (26.38)	0.37*** (14.14)
Denmark	-0.25*** (-7.19)	-0.59*** (-20.16)
Ireland	0.10* (2.13)	0.38*** (16.48)
GB	-0.47*** (-18.36)	-0.41*** (-28.87)
Finland	0.04 (1.11)	0.54*** (24.12)
Sweden	-0.39*** (-10.10)	0.22*** (8.42)

Austria	-0.08** (-2.73)	0.62*** (33.26)
Greece	0.92*** (31.08)	1.21*** (40.26)
Spain	0.64*** (14.53)	0.59*** (23.47)
Portugal	-0.34*** (-8.18)	0.44*** (11.14)
Cyprus	0.56*** (9.15)	0.21*** (4.49)
Luxembourg	-0.84*** (-18.29)	-0.64*** (-46.28)
Malta	-0.14* (-2.10)	1.77*** (49.07)
Bulgaria	0.13 (1.37)	-0.11* (-2.01)
Czech Rep.	-0.06 (-0.92)	-1.09*** (-41.13)
Estonia	-0.49*** (-5.47)	-0.89*** (-12.69)
Hungary	0.39*** (8.97)	0.87*** (21.91)
Lithuania	-0.86*** (-11.81)	0.04** (2.67)
Latvia	0.04 (0.36)	0.01 (0.27)
Poland	0.29*** (5.27)	-0.33*** (-7.47)
Romania	0.24* (2.44)	0.23*** (3.63)
Slovenia	-0.59*** (-13.22)	0.26*** (14.26)
Slovak Rep.	0.47*** (6.86)	-0.13** (-2.63)
Constant	-0.66*** (-7.95)	0.87*** (10.22)
N	25212	24749
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup> (McKelvey & Zavoina)	0.11	0.15

*Source:* Eurobarometer 2010, 74.1, own calculations; unstandardized logit coefficients, t-statistics in parentheses, standard errors clustered by country, +  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$