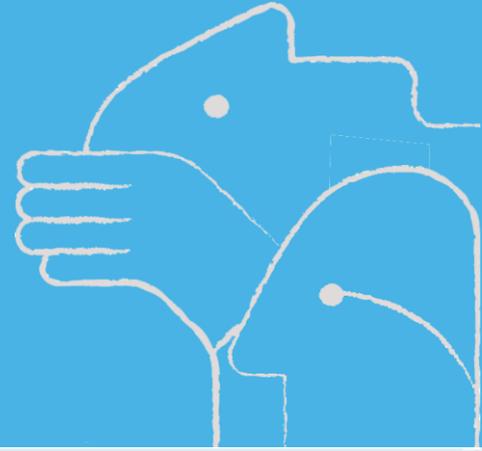
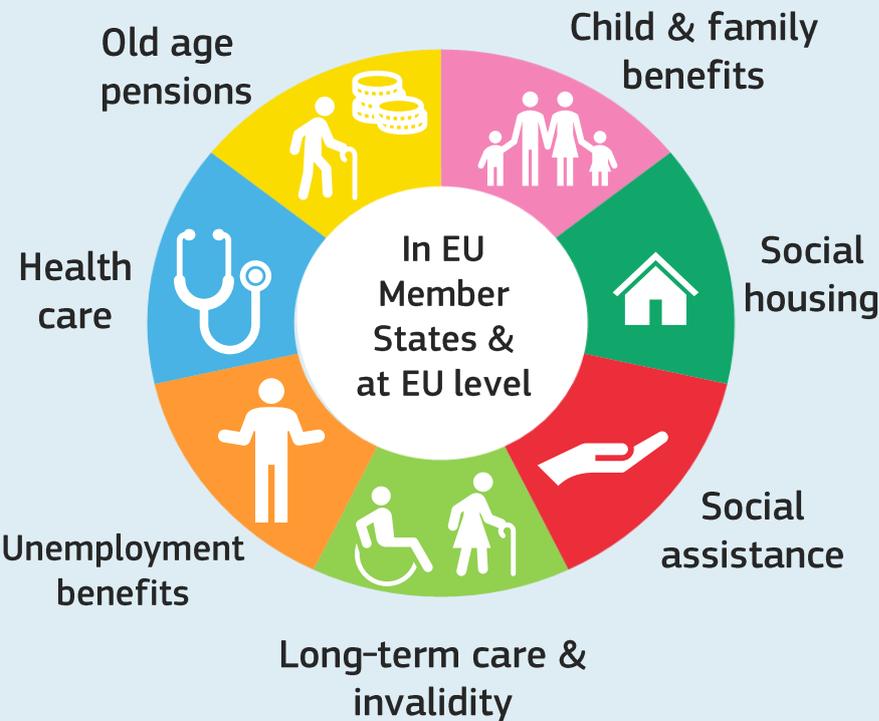


Study on

Attitudes towards adequacy and sustainability of social protection systems in the EU



A study to map attitudes towards & to understand factors that affect the demand for social protection & solidarity



Method:

New analysis of surveys + review of previous studies

Attitudes towards policies are shaped by **individual** & **contextual** factors



- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| - socio-economic position | - affluence of country |
| - benefit reciprocity | - public spending |
| - education attainment | - inequality |
| - health status | - business cycle (unemployment levels) |
| - labour market status | - institutional design |

Key factors to consider

The **welfare state** is a **complex concept**.

Peoples' attitudes towards **welfare** are multi-dimensional. In their opinions, people distinguish between:

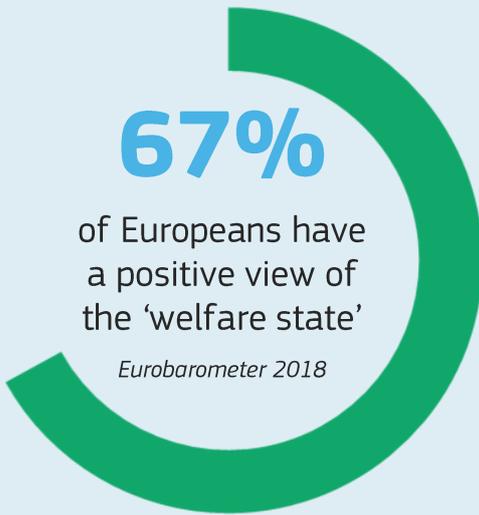
- substantive aspects
- redistributive aspects
- procedural aspects
- outcomes

The relative importance of the various factors **varies by country and over time**.

In general, Europeans

support the goals and objectives of the welfare state.

are **critical** about costs and quality of services.



Attitudes **differ** substantially across **countries** and **regions** in Europe.

Positive view of welfare state:

- highest in  Finland 91%
- lowest in  France 34%

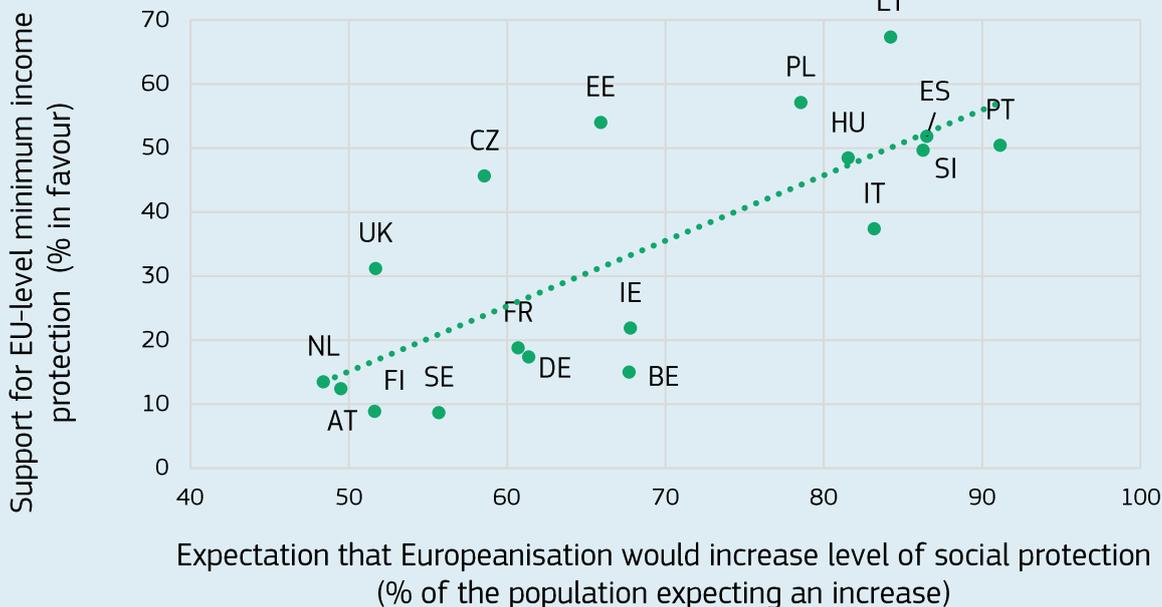
Though attitudes to welfare systems have been very stable over time, the **COVID-19 pandemic** may lead to **shifts in attitudes** – though as yet it's too soon to tell.

- More **data needs to be collected** to
- keep abreast of **new developments**
 - **test** existing theories more thoroughly
 - better **inform** policy-makers.

In **southern and eastern European countries**, there is **strong support** for EU-level social policy, driven by the expectation that this would help to improve social welfare provision.

In the strong welfare states of **northern Europe**, there are **signs of concern** among people that this could lead to a lower standard of social protection.

Support for an **EU-level minimum income protection scheme** vs expectations that EU involvement would increase the level of social protection – country averages



There are only a few concrete proposals for EU-level measures that could be tested.

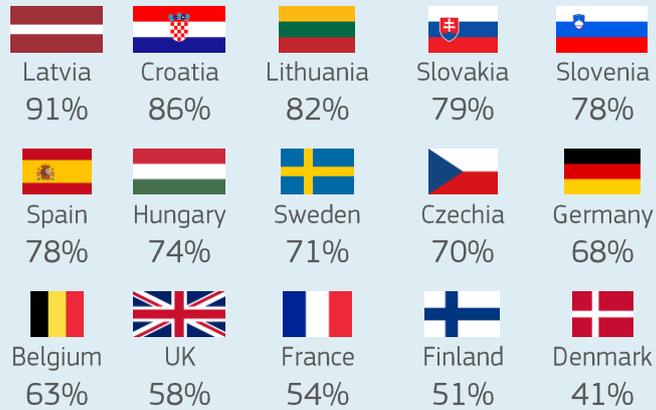
Earlier surveys show support for an EU-level minimum income protection scheme varies to some extent with expectations that EU involvement would increase the level of social protection.

Source: European Social Survey, Wave 8 (2016–2017)

There is much support for the idea of the **government being responsible** for providing a **decent standard of living for the elderly**.

People in several EU Member States regard the **quality** of the state pension system as low, which suggests discontent with the level of pensions.

Most respondents support **increasing government spending** on pensions. Support tends to be higher in countries with low levels of pension spending and high levels of poverty among the elderly:



Source: ISSP, Role of Government (Wave 4) (2016)

Public support for family policies is generally high throughout Europe.

This is especially so among parents and younger people.

Support for higher benefits varies, but it tends to be greater in countries where current levels of provision are low (e.g. southern European countries):



Source: ESS 2016

Europeans have **mixed opinions** about the state of healthcare services in their countries, but the way healthcare services are perceived **improved in many countries between 2008 and 2018**.

The **COVID-19** pandemic could make people more favourably disposed towards the healthcare system, but we must wait for surveys to see if this is the case.

Even **before the COVID-19 pandemic**, around 40% of Europeans considered that the **EU should invest** in health care as a priority.



Many Europeans are **concerned** about having **access to good and affordable long-term care for the elderly**.

In 2017, two-thirds of people thought the **government should be the primary provider of care for older people**.

Most considered that the cost of care should be paid for from public funds, but few (especially young people and those on low income) would be willing to pay more taxes to cover this.

Many **carers** feel that they lack help and appreciation from public authorities and would like to receive **more support**. This is particularly the case among those aged 50-64 and lone carers.

Future research is needed to fill in the **gaps in knowledge** about this and **more data from surveys** is required to make this possible, as well as to throw light on any shift in attitudes towards long-term care after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The share of people experiencing **housing insecurity** seems to be rising in the EU, though up-to-date data are lacking.

On average, people tend to be **satisfied with the quality of social/municipal housing**.

But satisfaction is lower in a number of southern and eastern European countries where social housing is underdeveloped or of poor quality.

Nearly 1 in 5 people are willing to **pay an additional 2% of their income** in tax or contributions for **affordable housing** in the 15 EU Member States covered by the OECD-RTM survey.



Support for increasing unemployment benefits paid to those out of work is **generally lower** than support for improving other welfare benefits, such as pensions, healthcare or childcare benefits.

Europeans are on average quite suspicious of the unemployed and have doubts about their willingness to look for work.

People generally **agree** that **governments should be responsible for supporting the unemployed**, but are critical of the current schemes for doing this.

There is a high level of support for reforming unemployment schemes by **investing more in education and training** for those affected.

Support for the notion that those in need should be guaranteed a basic level of support is very high across European Member States.

However, in countries with higher rates of material deprivation and lower spending on social protection benefits, support for guaranteeing that basic needs are met is relatively low.

There is a clear divide between people in the more prosperous **northern and western European countries**, who tend to be positive about current income support schemes for covering basic needs, and those in the less prosperous **southern and eastern European** countries, who tend to be very critical of current schemes for supporting those in need.