

Chapter 12

Perceptions of Social Challenges in Europe. Disentangling the Effects of Context, Social Structure, Religion, Values and Political Attitudes to Identify Potential Drivers of Societal Change



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Abstract In this chapter I address three current social questions that are central for Europe, namely redistribution, ethnocentrism and environmental awareness. By analyzing perceptions of European citizens in a cross-national perspective it becomes clear that these pressing issues will remain major sources of dissent due to notable value cleavages between and within European states. The aims of my empirical approach, using the data of the four recent waves of the European Values Study (1990, 1999, 2008, 2017) are threefold. First, a cluster analysis based on relevant macro-indicators is conducted to distinguish certain groups of countries with a similar political, economic, social, and cultural profile. As a second step, attitudes towards those social challenges based on a well-functioning operationalisation are depicted using the last wave of the EVS. Additionally, single indicators (using mean comparisons) are analysed over the four time points to highlight the evolution of citizen's perceptions to those societal challenges. The last part of the analysis computes separate regressions for each country cluster to derive the main antecedents of those attitudes using sociodemographic and structural characteristic, basic value orientations, religious indicators, political opinions and aspects of social inclusion. In general, the study reveals deep value polarisations between major European areas. These divisions are likely to increase in the current pandemic crisis.

Keywords Preference for redistribution · Cultural diversity · Environmental concerns · European Values Study · Value cleavages · European integration

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12.1 Introduction

Europe has undergone a period of multiple crises (Cotta and Isernia 2020) in recent decades. The global economic crisis in 2008 and the Euro-crisis afterwards, the ‘summer of migration’ in 2015, and the current COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing side effects of this crisis have increased economic, political, and cultural cleavages between European regions and have deepened value polarisations within the states (Aschauer and Mayerl 2019). Citizens of Europe are today living in an era of insecurity (Bauman 2008) and are witnessing a rise in societal tension. Solidarity is primarily based on a sense of belonging. Those groups that are included in the framing of solidarity are given the status of full citizens and receive recognition. But there is little evidence that notions of the common good are being extended to the European level or beyond (Gosewinkel 2020) and that a cosmopolitan vision (Beck 2006) that encompasses immigrants or peripheral countries and world regions beyond Europe is shared by the majority of the people. In the aftermath of the pandemic, social engagement on pressing global problems such as the climate crisis appears to be paralysed and must be reinvigorated. The framing of solidarity tends to be more and more exclusive (Poferl 2010). Only those who are considered to be integrated in society (mostly through a meritocratic view of individual achievement that neglects notable structural barriers for inclusion) are accordingly included in the cognitive concept of deservingness (van Oorschot 2000). These tendencies towards a renewed authoritarian capitalism (Deppe 2013) at the macro level, together with the ongoing pressure in European societies to achieve, might further increase egocentric attitudes at the micro level. Notable studies of recent years also point to those in the middle class increasingly following the logic of competition (Nachtwey 2016) and subordinating themselves under the norm of efficiency, which potentially leaves less space for altruism (Bröckling 2007).

But in general – recognising the diversity of Europe – we should refrain from conclusions that are too general. It must be stated that European countries clearly differ with regard to economic prosperity or the quality of democracy, as well as the level of perceived embeddedness by citizens. Additionally, solidarity is shaped by religious roots, basic values, and perceptions of political and social functioning in society (Quandt and Lomazzi, Chap. 7, this volume). The focus of this chapter is to assess long-term developments regarding perceptions of central social challenges and to detect the drivers to achieve a broader scope of solidarity (from the national to the transnational to the global level). Because of the comprehensive measurement of all concepts in the European Values Study (EVS), it is possible to present empirical findings concerning all of these dynamics throughout Europe. The empirical part follows mainly an exploratory approach to analyse (1) the cross-national differences in citizens’ perceptions of the three identified main challenges, namely preferences for redistribution, the approval of multicultural society, and environmental consciousness (2) the attitudinal dynamics over time and (3) to detect certain drivers explaining a stronger alignment on solidarity. Several research questions guide the empirical approach:

- Are European citizens still in favour of a higher appreciation of the welfare state (potentially as a countermovement to the gradual corrosion of social benefits due to neoliberalism) (Streeck 2013)?
- Do European citizens generally adapt to the reality of cultural diversity or is the influx of culturally and religiously distant groups still seen as a powerful invasion of Europeans' territories?
- Is the increasingly intense climate debate leading many individuals to focus on protecting the environment?

After analysing the main trends in European regions, it is a key aim of the study to detect the main antecedents of those crucial elements of societal change in a diversified Europe:

- Are the attitudinal cleavages that appear around these central challenges due to the social context? Does this mean that embeddedness in certain prosperous or peripheral areas in Europe sets the direction of values?
- Or is social structure mainly responsible for a different interpretation of states of societal crises?
- And how is social structure interwoven with aspects of religion, basic values, and political attitudes to explain these perceptions of social challenges?

The data set of the EVS, which is used in this chapter, refers to the version from October 2020 (European Values Study 2020). Most countries conducted the survey in 2018, and the latest country included in the file is Portugal (where the fieldwork was conducted between January and March 2020).¹ I decided to focus on all European Union (EU) member states and on the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states and to exclude all EU accession candidates and countries of the former Soviet Union. The aims of my empirical approach are threefold and guide the structure of my chapter. First, a cluster analysis based on theoretically derived macro indicators in Europe is conducted to distinguish certain groups of countries with a similar political, economic, social, and cultural profile (see Sect. 12.2). As a second step in the empirical analysis, all social challenges based on a sophisticated and well-functioning operationalisation are depicted using the most recent wave of the EVS. Additionally, single indicators are analysed integrating three earlier waves (1990, 1999, 2008) of the survey to trace the evolution of those perceptions of societal challenges all over Europe (see Sect. 12.3). The last part of the analysis adopts a comprehensive sequential regression design to assess the impact of sociodemographic and structural characteristics, religious indicators, and basic values as well as the impact of indicators of political and social inclusion on those three major challenges separately for each country cluster. Thus, we can assess how the main antecedents can explain preferences for redistribution, the approval of multiculturalism, and environmental consciousness, and how causal relations might be different among European regions.

¹All data refers, therefore, to pre-COVID-19 times. At least in the final section, however, I will discuss future challenges witnessing the current pandemic crisis.

12.2 Towards an Empirically Grounded Typology of a Diversified Europe

Despite the central aim of the EU cohesion policy to reduce regional discrepancies (Becker et al. 2018), economic inequalities between European member states have been growing over recent decades. In the first decade of the millennium this was quite a logical consequence of eastern enlargement, but the clear mission of the EU was to move forward to a strong unity in diversity (Haller 2009). In the course of the global financial crisis in 2008, the south of Europe was particularly exposed to the fiscal crisis and was confronted for a long period with a deep economic and social crisis (Bach 2015). After a slight economic recovery could be seen, the refugee crisis shocked Europe and particularly increased the value cleavages between political liberalism in Western Europe and neo-conservatism in Eastern Europe (Bluhm and Varga 2018).

The current state of the EU represents a united territory that can be characterised by a concentration of power in the centre and fragmentation of influence at the peripheries (Kreckel 2004). Different varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001) and structures of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1990; Esping-Andersen 1999) shape Europe; these are historically grounded and seem to be rather resistant to significant cutbacks. *Liberal welfare states* such as the UK or Ireland emphasise the role of the free market, while *conservative welfare states* (such as Germany, Austria, and France) are based more on the Bismarck model, where social security is linked to social status and employment relationship. The original intention of the British economist and social reformer William Beveridge to guarantee a universal security system for the whole population is more closely fulfilled in the *social democratic welfare regimes* of Scandinavia. A fourth type of welfare regime was later suggested for Southern European states, which were for instance classified as familialistic (Ferrera 1996). Otherwise, it is not easy to incorporate Eastern Europe in these schemes. Kollmorgen (2009) opts for a further distinction of three additional welfare types. The Baltic states demonstrate similarities to liberal welfare regimes, while the Visegrád countries, together with Slovenia, are best classified as minimalistic welfare states in line with the Bismarck style. The last group of countries is represented by the economic latecomers Bulgaria and Romania. The strong role of state actors and institutions is still evident, and social security benefits only exist in a rudimentary sense (Kollmorgen 2009). Schröder (2013) highlights that varieties of capitalism and welfare structures also go hand in hand with certain cultural characteristics of the nation states. The prevailing ethic of Calvinism is – in his view – mainly responsible for the reliance on individual freedom and the implementation of liberal forms of capitalism in the Anglo-Saxon context. Catholicism in continental and Southern Europe has favoured the development of social hierarchies in society and influenced the formation of conservative welfare states together with coordinated market economies. Even in Eastern Europe, where religion lost importance in the era of communism, the different features of the welfare states are based on cultural and religious foundations. In the central Eastern European States Catholicism partly maintained its influence (for example, predominantly in Poland but also in Lithuania), while the other Baltic States (Latvia and Estonia) were more

strongly affected by Protestantism. The peripheral countries in Southeastern Europe form a third region, where the Christian Orthodox Church prevailed and has led to a cultural proximity to the Soviet Union (Kollmorgen 2009). According to Boatcă (2019), even today it is possible to distinguish between a dominant view of a heroic Western Europe (seen as the centre of progress and modernisation) and a decadent Southern Europe (reflected by loss of power) and an epigone East (with a strong ambition to catch up with Western European standards of living).²

These theoretical perspectives on a diversified Europe (Aschauer 2016) should be enriched by an empirical typology of major European regions based on economic, political, and cultural discrepancies. In a first step, it is necessary to define crucial societal conditions that can indicate political, economic, social, and cultural characteristics. Table 12.9 (see Appendix) gives an overview of the social indicators (based on the year 2018), which were used in the study.³

To classify certain European regions based on 25 European countries, I computed a hierarchical cluster analysis using the quadratic Euclidian distance⁴ as the heterogeneity measure, and Ward's linkage method.⁵ The decision on the adequate number of clusters is based on a visual interpretation of the dendrogram (Fig. 12.1). Using the threshold of a normed distance of five, four different major European areas appear. The first group of countries consists of all wealthy and prosperous states of Western Europe. Interestingly, the second class of countries is represented by all countries that showed signs of crisis over recent years. Great Britain is included in this cluster, together with all the Mediterranean countries of Southern Europe. Besides this classification of Western Europe, two different clusters of Eastern Europe also appear. It is notable that similarities arise between all countries that form the Visegrád group (together with Slovenia). The Baltic states, together with Bulgaria and Romania, form the fourth and final cluster representing the most easterly countries of the EU.⁶

A simple descriptive table highlighting the means and the standard deviations (Table 12.1) gives some insight into the distribution of the indicators.⁷ Concerning

²Boatcă also mentions a forgotten Europe which is best reflected by the colonial regions in the Caribbean. These islands have never been included in the conceptions of European modernity.

³As already mentioned in footnote 1, 22 countries of the EU took part in the EVS 2017 wave. In addition, three EFTA countries – Switzerland, Iceland, and Norway – have been included in my study.

⁴The nine indicators (see Table 12.1) needed to be standardised (with z-transformation) because of different scaling.

⁵This method is generally interpreted as the most empirically sound method to derive certain clusters (Wiedenbeck and Züll 2010).

⁶It is notable that broader classifications of Europe seem to be plausible too. A threshold of 10 allows the separation of the prosperous West from the South (including Great Britain with signs of crisis) and the East of Europe.

⁷Here you can also evaluate the plausibility of this cluster solution. The standard deviation of the whole sample (last column) should always be higher than the standard deviation within the clusters (the homogeneity principle). This is nearly always the case. There are only two exceptions (the unemployment rate varies between the states with signs of crisis, with Great Britain demonstrating

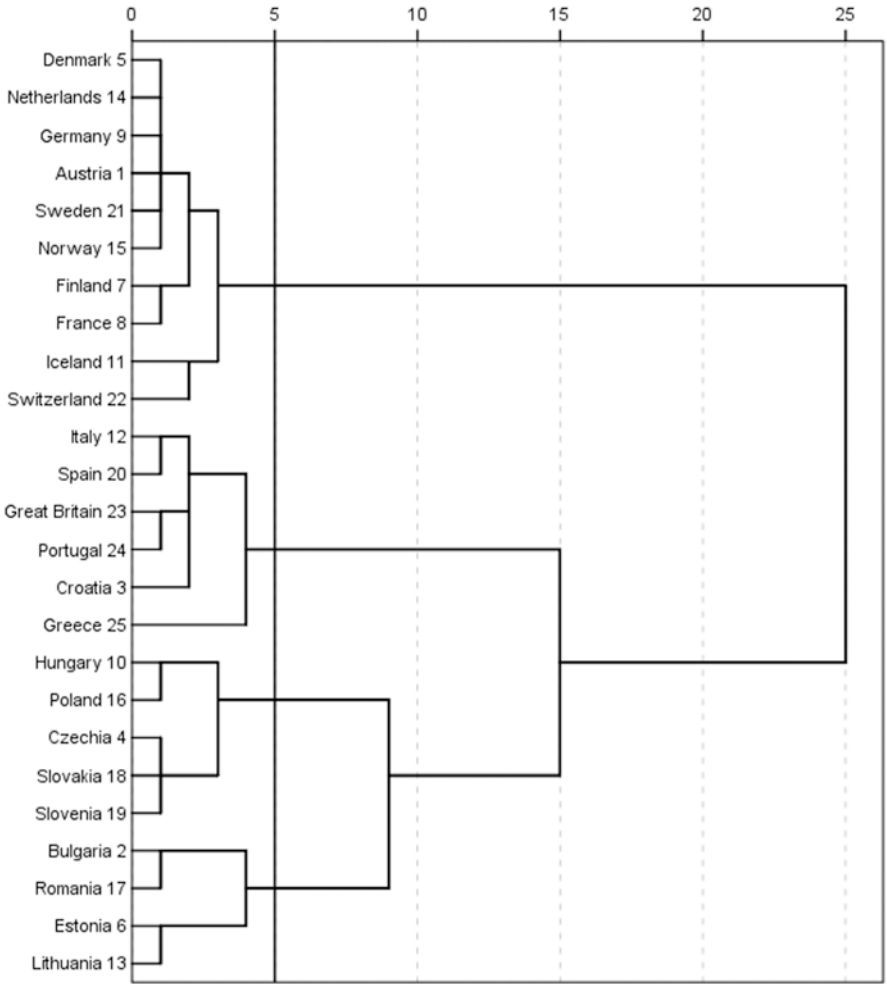


Fig. 12.1 Dendrogram of the cluster analysis (quadratic Euclidean distance with Ward linkage)

economic indicators, the highest gross domestic product (GDP) can be observed in the prosperous countries, although economic progress (based on the indicator GDP growth) is generally higher in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe. Concerning inequality, the Gini index, the unemployment rate, and the proportion of people living in poverty are rising in the crisis states (particularly in Southern Europe), but are permanently at crisis level in the Baltic states and in Southeastern Europe. When

a lower rate, and the quality of democracy varies within the Baltic countries and Southeastern Europe, with Estonia and Lithuania performing better than Romania and Bulgaria). All clusters have significant discrepancies in the mean values, indicating a high heterogeneity between the clusters.

Table 12.1 Mean values of standard deviations of the central indicators in the four clusters

	Prosperous states (mainly EFTA, Western Europe) (<i>n</i> = 10)		States with signs of crisis (GB, Southern Europe) (<i>n</i> = 6)		Visegrád countries and Slovenia (<i>n</i> = 5)		Baltic states, Southeastern Europe (<i>n</i> = 4)		Total (<i>n</i> = 25)	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
GDP per capita in PPS (EU mean = 100)	128.5	16.17	83.5	17.2	78.6	9.63	70	14.63	98.36	29.17
GDP growth rate (in %)	2.23	1.03	1.93	0.77	4.44	0.97	3.97	0.64	2.88	1.36
GINI index	27.42	1.96	32.37	1.43	24.96	3.24	35.55	3.78	29.42	4.43
Unemployment rate (in %)	5.12	1.96	10.8	5.62	4.28	1.61	5.25	0.82	6.34	3.9
Poverty and social exclusion (in %)	16.82	1.59	25.78	3.59	16.64	2.91	29.5	3.97	20.96	6
Public debt (% of GDP)	52.3	21.7	116.83	40.68	54.28	16.1	24.8	12.3	63.78	40.18
Expenditure on social protection in PPS per Head (2017)	10,917.7	1,085.5	6,203.4	1,632.1	4,804.8	719.6	3,325.8	589.3	7,349.0	3,287.4
Quality of democracy	0.92	0.03	0.86	0.06	0.77	0.1	0.78	0.14	0.86	0.10
Proportion of people with migration background (in %)	15.8	5.8	11.9	2.0	5.5	3.9	6.1	6.0	11.2	6.3

turning to public debt Great Britain and countries in the South stand out with extraordinarily high levels. Expenditure on social protection is decreasing from the West to the East, as is the quality of democracy. Here, recent developments in the Visegrád countries indicate a trend towards an erosion of democratic achievements, which leads to their occupation of the last position in this indicator (but with roughly the same value as in Southeastern Europe). It is also clearly visible that cultural diversity is a reality mainly in Western Europe, while many countries in Eastern Europe still have rather low proportions of immigrants.

The cluster analysis thus clearly supports the perspective of centre-periphery structures in Europe (Vobrubá 2007) and strengthens the view of highly diverse regions, not only with regard to economic discrepancies, but also concerning democratic achievements and cultural diversity. This classification of four major European areas (the prosperous West, states with signs of crisis, the Visegrád countries, and the Baltic states and Southeastern Europe) seems to reflect a theoretically plausible and empirically sound typology, which is a good starting point to take contextual effects all over Europe adequately into account.

12.3 Central Societal Challenges and Temporal Dynamics – A Europe-Wide Perspective

When we turn our focus to societal challenges in Europe, recognition and social inclusion represent key issues to guarantee a high level of societal functioning. Despite certain varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001), the evaluation of success in Europe remains hegemonic and hierarchical, whereby ongoing struggles of redistribution take place (Honneth 2003). Nancy Fraser (2003), in her well-known debate with Axel Honneth, reintroduces the economy and states that the ‘economic logic of the market interacts in complex ways with the cultural logic of recognition’ (Fraser 2003: 245). She therefore argues for a perspectival dualism that unites violations of recognition at the economic and cultural levels. It is evident in the orientation of politics that recognition struggles are not only framed by issues of redistribution, but also increasingly in terms of cultural and religious identity. People embed their fellow countrymen, often artificially, into an imaginary community, and this is supposed to form a protective space against ‘foreign powers’ from above or infiltration tendencies from below (for example, migrants with deviant cultural practices or those who refuse to ‘perform’). This leads to the ultimate conclusion that immigrants are only accepted if they are ready to adapt culturally or at least to make an appropriate contribution to society. It is clear that the diverse minorities in many European societies – permanently assessed by their ‘integration success’ – are also internally characterised by change, contradictions, and strong socio-economic contrasts. The dilemma of multiculturalism is most likely to be overcome if recognition and redistribution are advocated as equal justice postulates (Fraser 2003) and culture is interpreted not in a static but in a dynamic way (Hauck

2006). In this respect it also seems necessary to view preferences for redistribution and the approval of cultural diversity as two central societal challenges, both of which enable recognition and thus social integration for broader parts of society.

Adding a temporal perspective, we are also confronted with the dilemma of ongoing capitalism and ecological damage (Dörre 2020), because strategies for overcoming the economic crisis tend to contribute to the aggravation of the ecological crisis. With the potential revival of economic growth after the pandemic or with impressive economic growth rates in emerging countries, nothing is gained for global climate. This dilemma is expressed with precision by Sturn and van Treeck (2010):

The great inequality forces more growth and hinders it at the same time. Only more growth makes it possible to effectively strengthen the lower income groups, and less inequality ultimately reduces the need for growth. Admittedly, it is unclear whether the environment can wait that long. (Sturn and van Treeck 2010: 20).

In addition to the crisis of capitalism and ecology, liberal democracy is also increasingly under threat, as many citizens follow the opinion that politicians cannot provide solutions to these pressing societal issues. Blühdorn et al. (2020), who also appear as key theorists of democracy in the current discourse around sustainability, are even more pessimistic, and assume that politics of unsustainability will prevail in the future. In their view, it is plausible that many democratic and authoritarian regimes all over the world will defend the existing economic order and may widely ignore the ticking time bomb of the climate crisis. In various sociological approaches (Giddens 1984; Crouch 2008) hope is placed on social movements. The more engaged individuals become, the more subversive influences can be exerted on institutions, successively forcing a realignment of global climate policy. In the ideal case, global protests (such as the ‘Fridays for future’ movement) would lead to a notable societal shift towards increased environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour in Europe.

To grasp citizens’ perceptions on the three societal challenges, I now present a first overview of descriptive results on those issues, illustrating the mean attitudes in all countries belonging to the sample. Besides these international comparisons, it is crucial to analyse attitudinal trends in a long perspective (over the last four waves of the EVS 1990, 1999, 2008, and 2017) to assess if citizens in the EU and EFTA countries follow a uniform path towards progressive values or if there are signs of a conservative backlash (Norris and Inglehart 2019) towards a legitimisation of inequalities, higher perceptions of ethnic threat, or a turn away from recognising environmental issues.

The EVS provides a unique opportunity to measure these three central challenges in a sophisticated way in the most recent survey wave (2017) as well as in a long-term perspective (with single-item indicators).⁸ Table 12.2 gives an overview

⁸The differentiated scales measuring all dependent variables can be seen in the Appendix, see Table 12.10.

Table 12.2 The perceptions of key social challenges in the countries and in the clusters of the EU and EFTA states – a descriptive overview

Cluster analysis Europe	EU-EFTA States	Preference for redistribution	Ethnocentrism	Environmental awareness	Preference for redistribution		Ethnocentrism vs approval of cultural diversity		Environmental awareness		Reliability (Cronbach's α)		
		% agree	% agree	% agree	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	PR	CD	EA
Prosperous Western European states	Denmark	52.7	35.6	59.3	6.37	2.01	4.92	2.08	3.50	0.78	0.68	0.76	0.66
	Finland	50.1	48.0	40.5	6.89	1.82	5.32	2.20	3.64	0.73	0.74	0.82	0.68
	Iceland	58.8	29.0	45.6	7.11	1.87	6.55	2.17	3.56	0.70	0.67	0.79	0.65
	Norway	50.4	32.5	52.4	6.92	1.76	5.27	1.89	3.49	0.90	0.63	0.68	0.66
	Sweden	35.0	11.5	72.2	5.83	1.80	5.86	2.18	3.76	0.74	0.54	0.77	0.70
	Austria	62.2	51.6	46.4	7.24	1.94	4.36	2.28	3.58	0.92	0.61	0.82	0.79
	France	57.7	43.2	50.8	6.09	1.96	5.59	2.46	3.36	0.99	0.55	0.81	0.73
	Germany	48.1	29.7	55.8	6.91	1.81	5.31	2.11	3.71	0.76	0.44	0.74	0.69
	The Netherlands	43.8	40.7	34.9	6.28	1.69	4.84	2.15	3.41	0.76	0.52	0.83	0.70
	Switzerland	60.5	58.0	55.2	6.60	1.87	4.99	2.16	3.67	0.78	0.57	0.81	0.70
States with signs of crisis		51.9	38.0	51.3	6.62	1.85	5.30	2.17	3.57	0.81			
	Great Britain	47.2	38.4	53.7	5.93	1.72	5.80	2.40	3.40	0.78	0.41	0.85	0.74
	Croatia	62.9	70.6	65.5	6.93	2.32	4.98	2.48	3.05	0.85	0.63	0.70	0.71
	Italy	48.4	67.2	49.8	7.27	1.94	4.36	2.34	3.46	0.80	0.68	0.82	0.73
	Spain	52.7	43.5	45.5	7.01	2.00	5.92	2.53	3.52	0.83	0.55	0.86	0.74
	Portugal	55.7	60.1	37.0	6.91	1.85	5.39	2.27	3.39	0.84	0.55	0.82	0.77
	Greece (snowball sample) ^a	45.5	39.8	70.2	6.38	1.92	5.04	2.32	3.47	0.75	0.56	0.86	0.72
	52.1	53.3	53.6	6.74	1.96	5.25	2.39	3.38	0.81				

Visegrád countries and Slovenia	Czechia	56.9	81.4	37.5	4.96	2.02	3.37	2.10	3.20	0.87	0.49	0.78	0.77
	Hungary	51.0	84.4	41.1	6.23	2.09	3.38	2.36	3.32	0.79	0.51	0.79	0.69
	Poland	23.7	74.0	44.5	5.74	2.23	4.87	2.39	3.18	0.80	0.65	0.77	0.70
	Slovakia	61.4	85.0	28.5	6.12	2.10	3.78	2.01	3.25	0.87	0.67	0.84	0.78
	Slovenia	47.6	72.1	63.1	6.07	2.06	5.08	2.16	3.19	0.71	0.48	0.74	0.65
Baltic states and Southeastern Europe		48.1	79.4	42.9	5.82	2.10	4.10	2.20	3.23	0.81			
	Bulgaria	44.9	84.5	42.1	6.03	2.05	3.61	2.11	3.00	0.77	0.45	0.69	0.73
	Romania	30.5	78.5	58.1	6.64	2.36	4.89	2.80	3.10	0.91	0.56	0.77	0.67
	Lithuania	66.9	86.8	20.8	7.23	1.86	4.37	2.14	2.87	0.78	0.65	0.85	0.80
	Estonia	42.3	69.8	49.0	6.45	2.16	4.72	2.23	3.46	0.77	0.65	0.73	0.67
		46.2	79.9	42.5	6.59	2.11	4.40	2.32	3.11	0.81			

^aThe data on Greece are based on a snowball sample and people are disproportionately better educated. Thus the sample cannot be seen as representative and the data should be treated with caution. Here the data on Greece are depicted for illustrative purposes only.

of the descriptive results and of the internal consistency of the scales in all countries.⁹

In general, we can state that preferences for redistribution are rather high in nearly all countries of Europe, which were integrated in the study. In Southern Europe in particular, citizens are recognising sharp inequalities and clearly strive for the equalisation of incomes. In liberal Great Britain, also belonging to the cluster of crisis states, the picture is different, because here a lower mean value (5.9) compared to other states could be observed. Interestingly, in highly prosperous countries with established welfare states, the preferences for redistribution are still higher than in other countries. Austria is a notable example in this respect, with a mean value of 7.2, closely followed by Iceland. In the social democratic welfare states of Scandinavia the mean values are considerably lower, indicating that people are already satisfied with the social security system in the country. Interestingly, the two clusters of Eastern Europe are also quite heterogeneous when it comes to combating income inequalities. While people in the Visegrád countries seem to react rather indifferently to existing levels of inequality, the citizens in the Baltic states as well as in Romania or Bulgaria express higher levels of concern. This may be due to the neoliberal orientation of the Baltic countries and the minimalistic social security measures in Southern Europe (Kollmorgen 2009).

When it comes to ethnocentrism and to environmental concerns, we see a much clearer East–West divide compared to what we see with the challenge of redistribution. It is notable, however, that large proportions of people in Western and Southern Europe have already acquired experience with multiculturalism, and the majority express a rather positive view of multicultural society. Iceland can be presented as an advocate for accepting multiculturalism, but in Sweden, Great Britain, and Spain the impression is widely positive too. Otherwise, the enlarged standard deviations point to major divisions within society, and it becomes clear that cultural diversity is a major source of dissent in Western Europe. The mean value of Denmark, Austria, and Italy is already below the scale mean of 5, indicating that the majority in society perceive an ethnic threat.

When moving to Eastern Europe, we can see that people react far more critically towards migration. They disregard multiculturalism, especially in Czechia, in Hungary, and in Slovakia, as well as in Bulgaria where the mean value already falls below 4. Obviously, the anti-immigrant discourse in Eastern Europe influences citizens, although their societies are still quite ethnically homogeneous (Bluhm and Varga 2018).

Turning to environmental awareness, the ranking of European countries follows a similar direction compared to attitudes towards immigrants. The mean values are

⁹The reliability coefficient (here Cronbach's α) allows us to assess the quality of the measurement (the last columns at the right end of Table 12.2). The quality of the measurement is extraordinarily high when it comes to cultural diversity (the Cronbach's α coefficient ranging from .68 in Norway to .86 in Spain), it is of similar quality when it comes to environmental consciousness (ranging from .65 in Iceland to .80 in Lithuania), and it is mostly sufficient when it comes to the measurement of preferences for redistribution (ranging from .41 in Great Britain to .74 in Finland).

higher in prosperous Western European states, they lose ground in Great Britain and Southern Europe, and they are considerably lower in the two Eastern European regions.¹⁰ To select some examples from Western Europe, environmental care is highest in Sweden, Germany, and Switzerland and it is decreasing slightly in Portugal and Croatia.

When it comes to the Visegrád countries, all countries roughly represent the European average and the means are quite homogeneous. Turning to far Eastern Europe, environmental care does not really seem to be an issue. The lowest value can be seen in Lithuania, while Estonia is a notable outlier, with people seeming to be more dedicated to the environment.

Unfortunately, these differentiated scales have not been used in earlier waves of the EVS, but the survey gives us the opportunity to compare at least single items over time. To simplify the comparison, all indicators are dichotomised.¹¹ Concerning redistribution, the participants in the surveys had to judge if they are in favour of individual efforts for progress in society or in favour of equalising incomes. Concerning anti-immigrant sentiments, participants were asked if employers should give priority to the native people (compared to immigrants) when jobs are scarce. Regarding pro-environmental behaviour, people had to indicate if they are willing to contribute part of their income towards the environment.¹² When we start with the four graphs in the first row of Fig. 12.2 summarising the mean values in the European regions we can derive the following trends in the countries (Fig. 12.2):¹³

- In the prosperous Western European states, ethnocentrism decreases over time and the approval of multicultural diversity is growing. But about 40% of the citizens are still in favour of privileging the native population in the labour market when jobs are scarce. A clear downward trend in ethnic prejudice is visible in most of the countries, but there are also some exceptions (for example, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland), where ethnic prejudice has grown again over recent years. It is also obvious that preferences for redistribution seem to have increased to the year 2010 but have been decreasing slightly in the last wave of the EVS in most countries. This is clearly visible in Austria, where preferences

¹⁰This tendency can be seen in the values referring to the whole cluster (marked in bold). It is just a simple computation of the mean based on all countries without taking different population size into account.

¹¹Thus, the values represent the proportion of people in a given country agreeing with the statement.

¹²When we correlate the indicators at the national level, the ranking of the 24 nations (excluding Greece because the sample cannot be seen as representative) is quite similar. Spearman's Rho, analysing discrepancies in the ranks, leads to a correlation of .52 concerning redistribution, -.75 concerning ethnocentrism, and .27 concerning the environment. The insignificant correlation of the two measurements of environmental awareness can be due to the gap between environmental consciousness (measured by four items) and pro-environmental behaviour (the single-item measure). This gap is intensively researched in the field of environmental education and sociology (ElHaffar et al. 2020).

¹³Specific time points are missing because not every country has taken part in every survey wave. Greece is not included here because the most recent wave cannot be seen as representative.

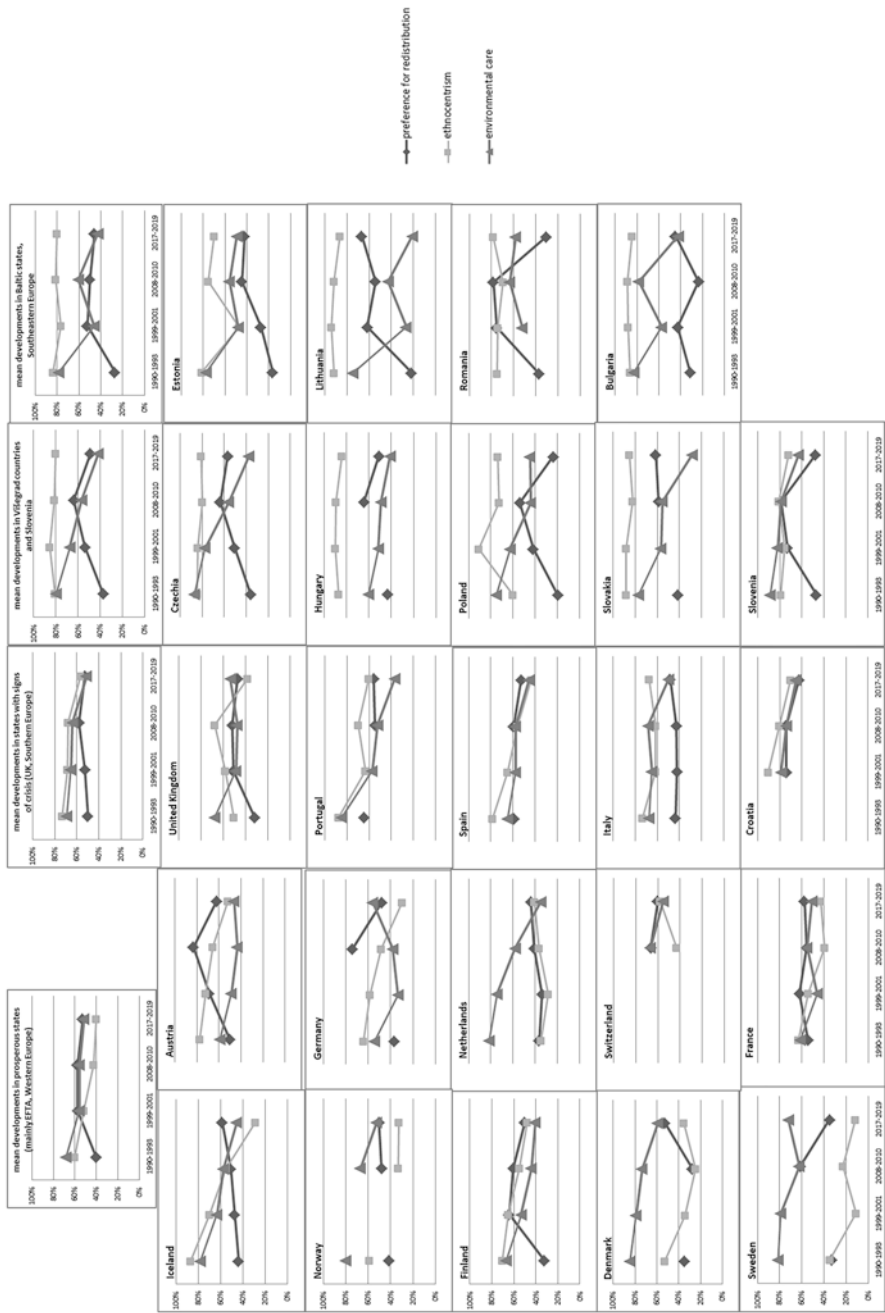


Fig. 12.2 Perceptions of societal challenges in Europe – trends over different survey waves in all participating countries in this study

for redistribution reached an extraordinarily high level in 2008 and then started to decrease again. Similar trends are visible in Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden. It is also highly relevant that pro-environmental behaviour is not increasing over time.¹⁴ It seems that fewer people in the year 2018 are ready to give a small part of their income to save the environment. Here, the picture in the prosperous countries is quite diverse. On the one hand, Iceland, Norway, Finland, and the Netherlands clearly confirm this decreasing trend, while there is an upswing of pro-environmental behaviour in Germany, in Sweden, and to a limited extent in Austria.

- These tendencies of shrinking attitudes towards the environment are even more pronounced in those states that have been deeply exposed to conditions of economic crisis over the last decade. Here too, preferences for redistribution have been rising only to a limited extent, and no clear trend is visible over the last 10 years. The only notable tendency is the erosion of ethnic prejudice in many countries. This is clearly visible in Portugal, Spain, and Croatia across all survey waves, while in Italy this trend is less pronounced. In Great Britain ethnic prejudice was on the rise until 2010, but has clearly decreased over the last 10 years.
- When we look at the temporal dynamics in Eastern Europe, we can observe one notable discrepancy. Anti-immigrant views are widespread in all countries, and this trend is quite stable over time. We can also detect quite a sharp downward trend when it comes to pro-environmental behaviour. While large parts of the population were willing to spend part of their income on the environment in the 1990s, these motivations have changed over recent decades. There are no exceptions to this downward trend in the Visegrád countries, but there is more variation in the Baltic states and in Southeastern Europe. We can see, for instance, that the attitude is rather stable in Estonia and Romania, while there is a large variance over time in Bulgaria and Lithuania. When it comes to preferences for redistribution, these needs seem to be growing in Eastern Europe as well. Large parts of the population demand a fair income distribution. In Czechia, in Slovenia, and Hungary in particular, the proportions of citizens arguing for redistribution rose until the year 2008. Interestingly those needs are now decreasing in many Eastern European countries. Only in Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, and Slovakia are the people still struggling for a more equal society, while in the other countries the public mood is shifting in the opposite direction.

¹⁴This observable tendency might also signal higher income pressures in a time where societal pessimism is growing (Steenhoven 2016; Aschauer 2017).

12.4 Religiosity, Basic Values, and Political and Social Attitudes – Efforts to Untie the Gordian Knot of Potential Drivers of Solidarity

When we review contemporary Europe, it is beyond dispute that we live in highly individualised and pluralised societies (Münch 2010), which are also susceptible to increasing polarisations (Lessenich and Nullmeier 2006). Besides enduring value divisions relating to social class, Western European countries face the ongoing pressure to regulate the relations of different religious groups demanding *cultural* recognition in the public sphere. The field of religion is also becoming more diversified, and is characterised by processes of individualisation, privatisation, and subjectivity (Knoblauch 2018). Processes of secularisation and religious pluralisation (Berger 2014) go hand in hand with ongoing value changes. Empirical research on values has so far shown that value shifts take place quite slowly and that basic values serve as important cultural markers and have their historical foundations as well (Rudnev et al. 2016).

Concerning Inglehart's (1977) famous modernisation approach, the so-called silent revolution from materialist values (for example, security and order) to post-materialist values (for example, self-realisation and universalism) seems to have stagnated and can potentially be proven for Western European countries only.¹⁵ These shifting proportions between materialist and post-materialist value priorities are, of course, closely linked to moral values as well as religious orientations. Early research by Inglehart and Appel (1989) has confirmed that a rise in post-materialism goes hand in hand with liberal values and a potential decline in conventional religious beliefs. It can be generally assumed that a higher relevance of religion in society encourages the preservation of traditional family constellations. On the other hand, the impact of religiosity on values related to women's labour market participation might be weaker because of emancipation effects over recent decades (Voicu 2009). Emancipatory values (Welzel 2013) might not necessarily be connected to secularisation. Post-materialists tend to search for a deeper meaning in life, which may lead to a higher interest in new approaches to religion and spirituality.

Referring to the level of political and social attitudes, recent studies show that indicators of political distrust (Linden and Thaa 2011), future pessimism (Steenvoorden 2016), and societal malaise (Aschauer and Mayerl 2019) are powerful concepts to explain a shift to defensive values. If people have the impression that they are powerless to influence the direction of society, this might contribute to their

¹⁵From Inglehart's (1977) point of view, the prevailing value orientations always reflect the state of society (the socio-economic environment) (deficiency hypothesis). In the course of prosperous social development, a change in values consequently occurs with a delay, because individuals primarily retain the values they acquired during socialisation (socialisation hypothesis).

susceptibility to right-wing populism, a renaissance of nativism,¹⁶ and various forms of Euroscepticism. These criticisms of the way democracy works in Europe can go hand in hand with a rising preference for strong leaders who promise to bring order to chaos and restore social stability or ethnic homogeneity, regardless of the fact that such homogeneity is illusory in a globalised world. Of course, those features are often due to a lack of social inclusion in society. As Robert Putnam (1993) has already stated, membership in organisations and voluntary engagement are crucial to create personal and generalised trust and to provoke higher levels of societal integration.

In this respect, religiosity could also be a protective factor that increases social inclusion in society and could compensate for political alienation, because it is often associated with more altruistic behaviour; for example, religious people are more often active in volunteer work (Hoof 2010). Altogether, trying to disentangle all those effects of religiosity, values, and political ideology on key perceptions of societal challenges is really like untying a Gordian knot. It is additionally puzzling to guarantee an empirically sound operationalisation and to analyse the main causal dynamics with regard to different levels of explanation. That is why I strive for rather comprehensive concepts to explore the relations between those levels. The following two tables highlight the descriptive results regarding religiosity and values (Table 12.3) as well as political attitudes and aspects of social inclusion (Table 12.4) in all countries selected for this study.¹⁷

Besides religious denomination, which is not depicted in the table, I can derive five indicators measuring religiosity. Using the self-declarations of the respondents, it is firstly possible to distinguish between a secular identity, a spiritual orientation, and conventional beliefs in a personal god. Additionally, I computed two scales measuring the extent of religious beliefs as well as the frequency of religious practice. In line with other chapters in this volume (S. Pickel and G. Pickel, Chap. 5, this volume), it turns out that secularisation is highest in the prosperous Western European societies, although there is considerable variance between the countries. Southern Europe (mainly Catholic) and Southeastern Europe (mainly Orthodox Christian) are illustrative examples where beliefs in a personal god, beliefs in a spiritual life force, and religious beliefs and practices are still higher (Table 12.3).

The Visegrád countries are somewhat in between, again with a high variance across countries. Poland is a notable exception, where traditional Catholic beliefs are still the highest all over Europe and the frequency of religious practice is the greatest of all countries. All other countries belonging to the Visegrád group can be positioned in the European average.

¹⁶The term nativism can be seen as a combination of nationalism and xenophobia. Nativists follow an ideology ‘which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (‘the nation’’) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the nation-state’s homogeneity’ (Mudde 2010: 1173).

¹⁷The operationalisation is depicted in the Appendix (see Tables 12.11 and 12.12 for further information).

Table 12.3 Religiosity and basic values in the countries and in the clusters of the EU and EFTA states

Cluster analysis Europe	EU–EFTA states	'No spirit, God or life force' % yes	'Spirit or life force' % yes	'Personal God' % yes	Index of religious beliefs <i>Mean</i>	Index of religious practice <i>Mean</i>	Gender attitudes: women at home <i>Mean</i>	Gender attitudes: men more suited for career <i>Mean</i>	Moral values: cheating and corruption <i>Mean</i>	Moral values: moral rigorism vs liberal values <i>Mean</i>	Mate- rialists % yes	Post-mate- rialists % yes
Prosperous Western European states	Denmark	27.3	37.2	13.6	1.18	2.39	1.63	1.49	1.68	7.47	8.7	12.6
	Finland	18.0	36.0	30.2	1.42	2.86	1.92	1.64	1.95	6.67	9.9	25.0
	Iceland	16.6	39.4	31.1	1.80	2.66	1.91	1.43	1.96	7.04	19.1	18.2
	Norway	25.0	33.9	17.6	1.36	2.62	1.63	1.28	1.87	6.79	7.1	18.4
	Sweden	27.5	43.0	9.5	1.20	2.20	1.63	1.28	1.97	7.24	2.7	25.3
	Austria	14.6	45.8	28.2	2.01	3.23	2.30	1.60	2.03	6.12	18.9	24.3
	France	22.5	32.3	20.6	1.61	2.36	2.04	1.46	2.52	6.30	19.7	24.1
	Germany	24.0	41.5	21.7	1.53	2.83	2.10	1.59	1.66	6.38	7.6	35.4
	The Netherlands	25.0	34.7	18.3	1.32	2.54	2.00	1.69	2.02	7.05	16.2	18.1
	Switzerland	12.1	58.1	17.5	1.75	2.90	2.23	1.62	2.00	6.28	18.3	20.2
States with signs of crisis	Great Britain	21.3	40.2	20.8	1.52	2.66	1.94	1.51	1.97	6.73	12.8	22.2
	Croatia	20.6	39.8	23.3	1.50	2.54	2.10	1.71	1.85	6.28	9.1	28.7
	Italy	7.1	39.4	42.5	2.49	4.12	2.42	1.81	2.18	4.21	22.7	18.5
	Spain	9.2	48.2	30.2	2.51	4.01	2.58	1.81	1.85	5.18	21.9	18.2
	Portugal	15.4	29.5	36.7	1.74	2.99	1.84	1.48	3.23	6.30	19.8	29.3
	Greece	7.0	18.9	65.2	1.93	3.44	2.31	1.79	1.84	4.54	37.2	13.2
	Greece (snowball sample)	7.2	29.8	54.0	2.30	4.09	2.06	1.68	3.55	5.61	10.2	28.5
		11.1	34.3	42.0	2.08	3.53	2.22	1.71	2.41	5.35	20.1	22.7

Visegrád countries and Slovenia	Czechia	28.6	38.7	6.9	1.18	2.07	2.51	2.16	2.39	6.01	26.1	12.8
	Hungary	18.2	30.4	33.4	1.88	2.97	2.52	2.01	1.97	4.74	26.9	18.3
	Poland	5.6	17.8	64.9	3.04	4.94	2.56	2.01	1.83	4.23	16.0	26.4
	Slovakia	14.3	36.0	33.7	2.16	3.62	2.48	2.31	3.11	5.29	32.0	9.8
	Slovenia	12.4	51.6	20.3	1.56	2.93	2.33	1.87	1.92	5.94	11.6	24.5
Baltic states and Southeastern Europe		15.8	34.9	31.8	1.96	3.31	2.48	2.07	2.25	5.24	22.5	18.3
	Bulgaria	8.7	41.3	41.8	1.74	3.39	2.56	2.17	1.58	4.18	48.1	1.4
	Romania	2.1	51.5	32.9	3.13	5.20	2.50	2.07	2.17	3.28	30.9	9.5
	Lithuania	11.6	27.1	43.8	2.74	3.58	2.70	2.20	2.69	4.50	30.4	5.4
	Estonia	16.7	53.4	13.5	1.29	2.21	2.30	1.99	2.05	5.10	16.8	15.0
		9.8	43.3	33.0	2.22	3.59	2.51	2.11	2.12	4.26	31.5	7.8

Visegrád countries and Slovenia	Czechia	5.65	2.30	3.14	6.98	3.22	2.15	1.78	3.32	2.34	21.9
	Hungary	6.10	2.27	3.36	5.77	2.94	1.64	2.00	3.39	2.48	16.4
	Poland	6.24	2.28	3.61	4.98	3.17	1.25	1.62	3.13	2.29	14.5
	Slovakia	5.60	2.16	3.22	6.32	2.92	2.54	1.91	3.29	2.30	16.6
	Slovenia	4.88	2.13	3.44	6.14	3.21	1.49	1.67	3.26	2.17	30.2
		5.69	2.23	3.35	6.04	3.09	1.81	1.80	3.28	2.32	19.9
Baltic states and Southeastern Europe	Bulgaria	5.46	2.35	3.34	3.90	3.16	1.26	1.94	3.25	2.23	17.8
	Romania	5.93	2.01	3.41	4.15	3.28	1.77	2.00	3.01	2.00	15.3
	Lithuania	5.88	2.25	3.08	5.87	2.88	1.69	1.83	3.21	2.20	18.0
	Estonia	5.71	2.46	3.39	6.57	2.87	1.36	1.87	3.37	2.48	23.6
		5.75	2.27	3.31	5.12	3.05	1.52	1.91	3.21	2.23	18.7

Turning our focus to basic values, I refer to the classical Inglehart index to derive the proportion of materialists and post-materialists in the country.¹⁸ There is a clear path towards traditionalism from Western Europe to Southern Europe to Eastern Europe. The proportion of materialists is rising from the North to the South and from the West to the East, and reaches a clear peak in Southeastern Europe (especially in Bulgaria, followed by Romania and Lithuania). Besides classical measurement, the EVS provides an extensive item battery to analyse moral pluralism in Europe.¹⁹ The first factor refers to a rigid morality vs liberal attitudes (denying vs accepting homosexuality, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, suicide, having casual sex or artificial insemination). The second scale refers to cheating and corruption and thus to behaviours where people gain personal benefits (at the cost of others). While liberal attitudes evolve in Western Europe, the mean values clearly lag behind in central Eastern Europe (in Poland in particular) and are lowest in Southeastern Europe. Interestingly, the ranking of cheating and corruption is somewhat different. Here, countries in Southern Europe (such as France, Spain, or Greece) reach extraordinarily high levels, while Eastern European countries rank far behind. The high level of corruption at the political level (Kostadinova 2012) could contribute to the population's clear opposition to these kinds of practice.

Additionally, it was possible to derive two main facets of gender attitudes based on seven items. The first item battery refers to attitudes giving women the main responsibility for childcare and housework, while the second scale deals with men being more suitable than women for professional careers. In all European countries the scale mean hints at rather progressive attitudes, but the mean across the Southern and Eastern European clusters stands for more traditional gender roles compared to Western European states.

After assessing these potentially rather stable value orientations in European societies, I now turn to the level of political attitudes and aspects of social inclusion. To grasp political ideology, the left–right scale is often used, although weaknesses have been often reported concerning this measurement (Barberá et al. 2017). Fortunately, it is possible to use three sophisticated indicators in the EVS to measure political distrust, an approval of further surveillance in society, and susceptibility towards autocracy. The latter indicator in particular should serve as a good proxy measurement of authoritarian tendencies. Besides those indicators, political interest,

¹⁸The Inglehart index consists of four statements and people have to choose their top two priorities. If both priorities refer to materialist values, the people count as materialists; if they have chosen the other priorities, they count as post-materialists. If they have a mixed ranking, they are considered as mixed type (rather post-materialist or rather materialist according to their preference). From an empirical point of view, there are extensive discussions (Klages 1992) if a ranking of value priorities leads to reliable results. Apart from the question of the reliability of the measurement, it is even more important whether the four socio-political goals can validly capture the people's value horizon. The objective 'fight against rising prices' in particular has been the subject of massive criticism, because this indicator reacts particularly sensitively to economic crises and is demonstrably influenced by the given inflation rate.

¹⁹The respondents are confronted with 15 divergent behaviours and they have to indicate on a 10-point scale if these behaviours are justified or not.

national pride, and attitudes towards European enlargement are used to further highlight political engagement, patriotism, and national vs European identification.

These comprehensive measurements of political orientations are supplemented by three aspects pointing to social inclusion. All three indicators refer to social capital, where the approach of Putnam (Putnam and Goss 2001) recommends the use of voluntary engagement as well as social trust in given societies. The multiplicity of indicators allows us to distinguish between personal trust towards familiar members and generalised trust towards strangers (see Table 12.12 in the Appendix for further information).

Reviewing the political orientations of the citizens in European countries, we can see that the left–right scale reflects a rather normal distribution, while there is a slight tendency towards the right of the political spectrum in Eastern Europe. This is particularly visible in countries where parties of the political right have been in power since 2018 (for example, Hungary or Poland). Political interest is higher in the prosperous countries of Western Europe, with Germany in the leading position. Interestingly, national pride and EU-scepticism are higher in the West than in the East. Here, the mean in nearly all countries is clearly above the scale mean of 5.5, which indicates that the majority of the citizens in most countries share the opinion that EU integration has gone too far. Only in those EU states that are performing more weakly economically is support for European integration still high (for example, Romania and Bulgaria). The high level of EU-scepticism goes hand in hand with clear signs of political disenchantment. Here, distrust is lowest in Northern Europe, but it already reaches critical levels in France and in Great Britain and points to widespread political alienation in Croatia, Greece, and various Eastern European countries (for example, Czechia, Poland, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria). Susceptibility to autocracy is in general very low in Europe, and the scale mean in most countries is around 2 on a 10-point scale. This means that the clear majority of people are still convinced about Western democracy. On the other hand, there is a rising tendency towards authoritarianism when it comes to Southern Europe and the Visegrád countries in particular. A higher susceptibility to autocracy is seemingly not connected with a higher approval of surveillance. Here, Scandinavian countries in particular seem to have fewer problems with the disclosure of private data compared to other countries.

Turning to aspects of social inclusion, it becomes clear that civic participation is higher in the prosperous Western European countries, while at the same time only a small minority in Southern and Eastern European countries are voluntarily engaged. While interpersonal trust, which refers to social cohesion at the micro level, is high in nearly all of the participating countries, a clear discrepancy in generalised trust is visible between the West and the East. An openness to broader social networks that seems to be given in Western Europe might enable more access through weak ties (Granovetter 1973). The higher relevance of bonding in the South and East of Europe might be connected to ethnocentrism, because people in Italy, Greece, Slovenia, or Romania more often do not trust people they do not know personally or who are of another nationality or religion.

Table 12.5 Pearson's *r* correlations of all concepts measuring religiosity, basic values, political attitudes, and aspects of social inclusion (European level, pair-wise correlations)

Concepts	Variables	No spirit, god or life force	Spirit or life force	Personal god	Index of religious beliefs	Index of religious practice	Ingelhart index	Women at home	Men more suited for career	Cheating and corruption	Moral rigorism vs liberal values	Left-right scale	Interest in politics	National pride	EU-scepticism	Political alienation	Autocracy	Approval of surveillance	Voluntary engagement	Personal trust	General trust
Religion	Believing in no spirit, god, or life force	1																			
	Believing in spirit or life force	-.367**	1																		
	Believing in personal god	-.275**	-.506**	1																	
	Index of religious believers	-.501**	.066**	.534**	1																
	Index of religious practice	-.407**	-.007	.530**	.694**	1															
Basic values	Ingelhart index	.093**	.071**	-.147**	-.134**	-.137**	1														
	Gender attitudes: women at home	-.160**	-.047**	.207**	.266**	.266**	-.221**	1													
	Gender attitudes: men more suited for career	-.074**	-.076**	.146**	.148**	.148**	-.201**	.550**	1												
	Moral values: cheating and corruption	.017**	-.022**	-.024**	-.004	-.066**	.005	.030**	.098**	1											
	Moral values: moral rigorism vs liberal values	.233**	.107**	-.361**	-.411**	-.466**	.236**	-.471**	-.367**	.100**	1										
	Political Left-right scale	-.090**	-.026**	.120**	.148**	.153**	-.168**	.153**	.155**	.005	-.172**	1									
	Interest in politics	.057**	.050**	-.061**	-.085**	-.036**	-.174**	-.151**	-.086**	-.101**	.188**	-.014**	1								
	National pride	.090**	-.011*	.102**	.119**	.123**	-.109**	.062**	.028**	-.139**	-.122**	.172**	.017**	1							
	EU-scepticism	.003	.013*	-.029**	-.021**	-.042**	-.050**	.072**	.031**	-.003	.027**	.118**	-.005	.016**	1						
	Alienation	.009	.019**	-.048**	-.018**	-.035**	-.016**	.097**	.023**	.083**	-.064**	-.061**	-.276**	-.166**	.074**	1					
Social inclusion	Susceptibility to autocracy	-.037**	-.056**	.059**	.057**	.042**	-.137**	.185**	.209**	.196**	-.234**	.059**	-.158**	.008	.029**	.061**	1				
	Approval of surveillance	-.017**	.010	-.009	-.003	.013*	-.098**	.010	.014**	-.036**	.037**	.122**	.057**	.097**	.072**	-.165**	.036**	1			
	Voluntary engagement	-.014**	.042**	-.016**	.004	.063**	.080**	-.121**	-.100**	-.045**	.100**	-.015**	.162**	.009	-.012*	-.121**	-.071**	.043**	1		
	Index personal trust	.042**	.002	-.038**	-.086**	-.051**	.066**	-.186**	-.126**	-.144**	.162**	-.015**	.167**	.116**	.005	-.250**	-.092**	.073**	.139**	1	
	Index generalised trust	.038**	.042**	-.053**	-.101**	-.069**	.156**	-.272**	-.221**	-.098**	.286**	-.105**	.224**	.014**	-.042**	-.267**	-.126**	.064**	.166**	.535**	1

* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01

Table 12.5 gives a first overview of how all of these concepts are interrelated at the European level. This correlation matrix allows us to confirm that religiosity is strongly connected with basic values. The three indicators, namely believing in a personal god as well as the index of religious belief and religious practice, are moderately connected with materialist value priorities and traditional gender roles and strongly connected with moral rigorism. The correlations turn out to be weaker when it comes to political attitudes, and they are roughly non-existent when analysing aspects of social inclusion. At the opposite pole are secular individuals, who can be more often classified as post-materialists and clearly favour liberal values. On the other hand, relations to political attitudes or social inclusion turn out to be weak again. Interestingly, citizens believing in a spirit or alternative life forces have more in common with secular individuals than with traditional believers. They are more inclined to follow liberal moral values and they often locate themselves on the post-materialist side of the value spectrum.

When we move to the level of political attitudes and indicators of social inclusion, we find weaker correlations between the concepts. Political interest is negatively correlated with political alienation and leads to a higher level of social inclusion. Besides this, susceptibility to autocracy is connected with traditional gender attitudes and moral rigorism, but the relations turn out to be weak when we refer to correlations with religion.

We can thus really speak of two higher-order levels of potential impact factors. Conventional religiosity is often connected to basic values highlighting conservatism, which might have a stable impact on perceptions of societal challenges. But there is another dynamic of political alienation and social disintegration that fuels critical attitudes towards societal progress too.

12.5 Detecting the Main Individual Dynamics to Perceptions of Social Challenges in the EU – Region-Specific Sequential Regression Models

The main aim of this final empirical approach is to provide an exploratory overview of the main antecedents regarding religion, basic values, political attitudes, and aspects of social inclusion on perceptions of societal challenges. I will shortly refer to the main impact factors that explain preferences for redistribution, attitudes towards cultural diversity, and environmental care at the individual and Europe-wide level.

12.5.1 The Drivers of Individual Needs for Redistribution

When we first review potential drivers of preferences for redistribution, religion might play a role, but it might lose weight when other explanatory levels are added. For example, religious beliefs (Scheve and Stasavage 2006) and altruistic values (Kangas 1997) are reported as notable drivers of group solidarity. When it comes to religious affiliation, preferences for redistribution could be more pronounced among Catholics and Muslims, while these might be reduced among Protestants because of a higher emphasis on the performance ethic (Jordan 2014). Analysing the effects of basic values and political attitudes, the division between right-wing ideology and legitimising social inequalities and preferences for a higher economic balance in the left-wing spectrum of society is one of the most important dividing lines in the European context (Alesina and Giuliano 2011). Thus, it is expected that people following post-material and liberal values as well as locating themselves on the left side of the political spectrum are more in favour of redistribution.

The most consistent results are generally found with regard to socio-economic background. Women generally express a higher preference for redistribution because men are assumed to be more competition-oriented (d'Anjou et al. 1995). While a strong leaning towards the performance principle is evident in the middle age groups, willingness to allow social support measures seems to increase again with older age (Koster 2013). Naturally, an essential factor to explain individual preferences for redistribution is income. Here, research continues to be strongly oriented towards the Rational Choice model of Meltzer and Richard (1981), who attribute the willingness to contribute to social compensation to self-interest. As a rule, the less privileged part of the population tries to achieve a fairer distribution of income. If a certain status is reached, the relation turns in the opposite direction. In addition, the research shows unanimously that with an increasing number of completed years of education (Jæger 2006) there is a decreasing level of support for measures to reduce income disparities. This is also reflected in older comparative studies, which confirm that attitudes towards redistribution are typically found to be less common among higher classes (Svallfors 2004). However, one must be careful to avoid oversimplification. While people belonging to more privileged groups may be less in favour of redistribution, they may follow a more universal logic with a commitment to equal citizenship. Although people at the lower end of society may be more in favour of redistribution in general, they may follow a more selective logic excluding certain outgroups. These outgroups do not belong to the 'moral' deservingness criteria (van Oorschot 2000) because people imply that certain groups lack willingness to perform (for example, the long-term unemployed) or are (culturally) excluded from society.

12.5.2 *The Drivers of Approving Cultural Diversity*

When we turn to attitudes towards cultural diversity, the antecedents of ethnic prejudice are the focus of numerous studies for decades and have thus been extensively empirically documented (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010). Interestingly, results that refer to religion are still discussed controversial and it is still an open question as to whether religion increases or decreases prejudice (Polak and Schuster, Chap. 6, this volume). Allport and Ross (1967) found that those who have an exclusive understanding of religion (and thus place their own religion above others) are more susceptible to ethnic prejudice, while those with an inclusive understanding of religion show more tolerance. For example, Rebenstorf (2018) found in a study based on the 2008 EVS data that an exclusive understanding of religion ('There is only one true religion') is accompanied by a stronger rejection of Muslims as neighbours, while an inclusive approach ('Every religion contains truths') leads to greater acceptance. In line with this research, it is assumed that conventional religious beliefs and practices are associated with a traditional (more exclusive) understanding of religion and therefore increase ethnic prejudice. It seems plausible that a spiritually oriented lifestyle might cross boundaries between in- and outgroups and could promote values such as universalism and diversity (Saroglou et al. 2009). In a recent study with regard to anti-Muslim sentiments, Aschauer (2020) found that when Austrians see a deeper meaning in a religious life they react with more tolerance towards Muslims.

When we refer to the impact of values and socio-psychological dynamics on ethnocentrism, we can go back to the origins in the research on the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al. 1950). The concept of right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer 1981) in particular is still often used in research, but it is now supplemented by the 'other' authoritarian personality that highlights more strongly aspects of upward mobility and is characterised by a social dominance orientation (Sidanius and Pratto 1999; Duckitt 2001). Other socio-psychological research approaches up to the 1960s and focuses more on the role of norms and values in ethnic prejudice. We can assume that a post-material orientation leads to a stronger approval of multicultural society, while people who are more aligned to materialist values exhibit higher levels of prejudice (Scheepers et al. 2002). We can potentially speak of a rigid spectrum of conservative values such as the reliance on classical gender roles, patriotism, and susceptibility to authoritarianism, which leads to a denial of cultural diversity.

These important subjective dynamics are supplemented by classical socio-structural and sociodemographic characteristics influencing attitudes towards immigrants. Here, research leads to quite consistent results. Educational level is generally identified as one key determinant of ethnic prejudice (Hello et al. 2002; Coenders and Scheepers 2003). Higher age reduces solidarity towards immigrants, while no clear results or mixed results are found regarding gender (Chandler and Tsai 2001). Another consistent result is that people living in urban areas exhibit lower levels of prejudice (Coenders and Scheepers 2008; see also Polak and Schuster, Chap. 6, this volume). Cross-national research demonstrates that, particularly in Western Europe, the aforementioned conditions considerably influence negative attitudes towards

immigrants, as opposed to in Eastern Europe, where often only weak explanations are found (Zick et al. 2008; Coenders and Scheepers 2003; Hjerm 2001).

12.5.3 *The Drivers of Environmental Concerns*

Over recent years, research on environmental care and green consumption has increased remarkably as a result of the ongoing salience of the topic in the academic and public sphere. The indicators used to assess environmental concerns belong to the New Environmental Paradigm focusing on general beliefs that recognise the interdependence between human actions and environmental consequences (Weaver 2002).

Concerning religiosity, impressions of valuing God-given nature might lead to higher environmental care and to a higher sensitivity regarding potential destructive consequences of economic functioning on the global climate. On the other hand, older studies show that the link between religion and environmental policy is almost non-existent (Hornsby-Smith and Procter 1995). So, similar to the drivers of preferences for redistribution, no direct effect is expected from religion because other factors (especially values and political attitudes) might play a more important role. The evolution of post-material values has always been connected to ‘higher-order’ needs (Maslow 1954) provoking environmental preservation and voting preferences for green parties (Inglehart 1990).

When we refer to political ideology, it is obvious that environmental concerns are located more on the left side of the political spectrum than on the right. It can be assumed that a morally rigorous attitude, a preservation of traditional gender arrangements, and a strong tendency towards autocratic systems also causes a decrease in environmental concerns. Also, a recent impressive study (Birch 2020) using World Values Survey data has confirmed that environmental polarisation at the elite level has increased the left–right divide in citizens’ views of climate change. It is assumed that this divide is even deeper in the Western regions of Europe, leading to higher effect sizes of those political impact factors.

When it comes to sociodemographic and socio-structural background factors, various studies confirm that women are more sensitive towards the environment than men (Dietz et al. 2002). There is also a clear educational effect, meaning that individuals with a higher level of education turn their focus to global empathy and are thus more willing to perceive an individual responsibility for climate change. Compared to other factors such as income or social status, it also seems that education has the highest impact on awareness of environmental issues (Longhi 2013). Concerning age, it is expected that younger individuals are more open towards the environment in Southern and Eastern Europe, while this effect may lose importance in the Western European context. On the other hand, Southern and Eastern European countries are more entangled in conflicts of distribution and identity, which make environmental protection less salient in the public sphere. In this respect, it can also be assumed that effect sizes regarding environmental concerns (and thus

polarisations) are higher in Western Europe than in Eastern European countries (Franzen and Meyer 2010).

12.5.4 Empirical Results on the Main Drivers Explaining Perception of Societal Challenges

The following sequential regression design should enable a comprehensive overview of the main causal relations and potentially diverse impacts across countries and regions. The religious background and various aspects of religiosity are treated as independent variables (level 1). Religious aspects and basic values (level 2) might be strongly connected to political attitudes and might further influence perceptions of social inclusion (level 3). To account for sociodemographic and socio-structural factors, classical indicators such as gender, age, marital status, children in the household, and domicile, as well as education, status, and income are selected as additional control variables (level 4).

All regressions are computed separately in all four European cluster regions and country dummies are also included to additionally control for country effects (level 5).²⁰ We start by analysing the explanatory factors on preferences for redistribution in all European regions (Table 12.6).

In the first regression it becomes clear that religion is not an issue in all regions because the explained variance is very small. Just two small effects remain, which are mainly relevant in Western Europe. It seems that belonging to a free church and expressing higher conventional religious beliefs go hand in hand with higher preferences for redistribution in prosperous states. In the European crisis states in particular, religious practice leads to higher preferences for redistribution.

When accounting for values too, the explained effect sizes are growing only slightly. On the other hand, the predictors remain rather stable and exert direct influences on preferences for redistribution. Interestingly, a notable difference appears between Western and Eastern Europe. While post-materialism favours preferences for redistribution in the prosperous countries, materialist values account for higher demands for redistribution in the Eastern European context. This is also visible when we refer to moral rigorism vs liberal values. While there is no effect in Western Europe, moral rigorism leads to a greater need for social security benefits in Eastern

²⁰ All indicators that are used in the regression analysis appear empirically sound and reflect an appropriate measurement (see the [Appendix](#) for a further review of indicators). Pairwise deletion was used to guarantee a sufficient sample size. This is not the ideal strategy, because it can lead to bias (Urban and Mayerl 2018). However, the sample size is very large in the regions, and this might compensate for outliers influencing the data. Additionally, multicollinearity is only a minor issue in all regressions. Thus, it is assumed that the parameters and the significance levels are estimated correctly. All variables are either dummy coded or fulfil the requirements of metric scales. In all tables the standardised coefficients (first column) as well as the unstandardised coefficients (second column) are illustrated. Only significant effects are depicted with significant levels of $p < 0.05^*$, $p < 0.01^{**}$ and $p < 0.001^{***}$.

Table 12.6 Sequential regression explaining preferences for redistribution in European regions

Levels of analysis	Predictors	Indicators	DV preference for redistribution				
			Prosperous states (AT, DK, FI, FR, DE, IS, NO, SE, CH, NL)	Crisis states (HR, IT, ES, GB, PT)	Visegrád countries and Slovenia (HU, PL, SK, SI, CZ)	Southeastern Europe (EE, LT, BU, RO)	
Effect sizes (adj. R^2)	Model 1 (Religion)		0.3	2.8	2.1	3.6	
	Model 2 (+ values)		2.5	3.2	3.2	5.9	
	Model 3 (+ political and social attitudes)		18.1	31.4	20.4	20.7	
	Model 4 (+ demographic and structural factors)		20.1	32.9	22.4	22.4	
	Model 5 (+ country effects)		22.8	34.7	25.5	23.3	
Religion	Confession (Ref. other)	Roman Catholic					
		Protestant					
		Free church/Non-conformist/ Evangelical	0.03 (0.29*)				
		Muslim					
		Orthodox					
	Self- declaration (Ref. don't know)	no spirit, God, or life force					
		spirit or life force					
		personal God					
	Index of religious beliefs		0.06 (0.08***)				
	Index of religious practice			0.04 (0.04*)			

Country effects	Reference Country	The Netherlands		Portugal		Czechia		Estonia	
	Country 1 (Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania)	0.09	0.63***			0.17	0.87***		
	Country 2 (Denmark, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria)	-0.03	-0.14*					-0.15	-0.74***
	Country 3 (Finland, Spain, Slovakia, Romania)	0.05	0.39***			0.19	1.01***		
	Country 4 (France, GB, Slovenia)			-0.21	-1.04***	0.12	0.70***		
	Country 5 (Germany)								
	Country 6 (Iceland)	0.04	0.31***						
	Country 7 (Norway)	0.04	0.32***						
	Country 8 (Sweden)	-0.12	-0.97***						
	Country 9 (Switzerland)								

standardised and unstandardised coefficients, only significant predictors are shown (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$)

Europe. Interestingly, moral values justifying cheating and corruption and traditional gender arrangements lead to slightly higher preferences for redistribution.

When it comes to political attitudes and aspects for social inclusion, two indicators, namely the left–right orientation and susceptibility to autocracy, are particularly strong predictors and equally relevant in all European regions. When people position themselves at the political right and show a clear preference for autocracy, they particularly legitimise social inequality. Political distrust also seems to decrease preferences for redistribution, especially in the region of the Visegrád countries. Interestingly, EU-scepticism increases demand for redistribution in southeastern countries and the Baltic states, while in Western Europe criticism of EU enlargement decreases efforts to reduce inequalities.

The effects of sociodemographic and structural aspects are less important and widely confirm the results achieved in former studies (Svallfors 2004; Jæger 2006). Indeed, people with lower educational qualifications who also have lower income levels and belong to a lower social status express higher demands for redistribution. The same is true for the gender effect, where women exhibit higher preferences than men in all regions except the Baltic states and Southeastern Europe. Interestingly, while older people favour redistribution in prosperous Western European states, the effect changes the direction when focusing on states in Southeastern Europe. In general, the model can explain more than one-third of the variance in European crisis states and about one-quarter of the variance of preferences for redistribution in the other European regions.

The second societal challenge refers to perceptions of an ethnic threat vs the approval of a multicultural society (Table 12.7).

Here, religion is more important because, despite the integration of control variables, most of the effects remain stable and exert a direct influence. While Catholics (in all regions except Southeastern Europe) and Protestants (in the prosperous countries) express a higher level of prejudice compared to other confessions, Muslims seem to be far more tolerant towards multiculturalism, especially in the two Western European regions.²¹ On the other hand, it seems that people believing in one god or being more involved in religious practice are more tolerant towards a multicultural society (S. Pickel and G. Pickel, Chap. 5, this volume). Interestingly, the effect of religious beliefs clearly turns out to be significant in Eastern Europe. The more Eastern European citizens follow Christian beliefs, the higher are their perceptions of an ethnic threat.

When it comes to values, we observe the classical value divide between conservative and progressive values with regard to the explanation for ethnic prejudice, and these divisions are more pronounced in Western Europe. Materialists are more critical of immigration, while this effect is weaker in Eastern Europe. Traditional gender roles capturing the meaning that women should stay at home contribute to

²¹ These effects have to be treated with caution. ‘No denomination’ was not included in the model to avoid a high correlation with a secular self-declaration. As a consequence, the sample size is quite low in several countries. Some religious groups are also only represented by a limited number of people in certain countries.

Table 12.7 Sequential regression explaining the approval of multiculturalism in European regions

Levels of Analysis	Predictors	Indicators	DV perception of an ethnic threat vs approval of multiculturalism						
			Prosperous states (AT, DK, FI, FR, DE, IS, NO, SE, CH, NL)		Crisis states (HR, IT, ES, GB, PT)		Visegrád countries and Slovenia (HU, PL, SK, SI, CZ)		Southeastern Europe (EE, LT, BU, RO)
Effect sizes (adj. <i>R</i> ²)	Model 1 (Religion)		3.7		4.9		2.5		0.9
	Model 2 (+ values)		18.0		15.4		15.3		4.8
	Model 3 (+ political and social attitudes)		30.7		24.9		23.1		9.4
	Model 4 (+ demographic and structural factors)		31.4		25.9		24.2		10.6
	Model 5 (+ country effects)		36.7		26.4		29.2		13.7
Religion	Confession (Ref. other)	Roman Catholic	−0.06	−0.27*	−0.07	−0.43**	−0.10	−0.69*	
		Protestant	−0.08	−0.34**			−0.11	−0.91**	
		Free church/Non-conformist/ Evangelical							
	Self- declaration (Ref. don't know)	Muslim	0.10	1.29***	0.10	1.85***			
		Orthodox							
		no spirit, God or life force							
		spirit or life force							
	personal God	0.04	0.22**						
	Index of religious beliefs					−0.06	−0.09*	−0.18***	
	Index of religious practice		0.03	0.04*	0.08	0.09**			

(continued)

Table 12.7 (continued)

Levels of Analysis	Predictors		Indicators	DV perception of an ethnic threat vs approval of multiculturalism							
				Prosperous states (AT, DK, FI, FR, DE, IS, NO, SE, CH, NL)		Crisis states (HR, IT, ES, GB, PT)	Visegrád countries and Slovenia (HU, PL, SK, SI, CZ)		Southeastern Europe (EE, LT, BU, RO)		
Values	Inglehart index (ref. post-materialism)	materialist	-0.08 -0.09 -0.06	-0.53*** -0.43*** -0.31***	-0.08 -0.07 -0.06	-0.46*** -0.37*** -0.31**	-0.17 -0.11 -0.08	-0.90*** -0.55*** -0.40***	-0.07 -0.07 -0.07	-0.38* 	
		Gender roles: women at home			-0.11	-0.34***	-0.08	-0.29***	-0.07	-0.25***	
		Gender roles: men more suited for career			-0.06	-0.22***					
	Moral values: justify cheating and corruption			0.02	0.04*						
	Moral values: moral rigorism vs liberal values (abortion, euthanasia, suicide, homosexuality)			0.04	0.04**	0.15	0.16***	0.11	0.11***	0.15	0.19***
	Political and social attitudes	Left-right scale		-0.17	-0.18***	-0.09	-0.10***	-0.06	-0.06***	0.09	0.09***
		Interest in politics		0.04	0.09***	0.05	0.13**	0.08	0.19***		
		National pride		-0.07	-0.20***			-0.04	-0.12*	0.05	0.17**
		EU-scepticism		-0.15	-0.13***	-0.15	-0.13***	-0.14	-0.12***	-0.07	-0.06***
		Political distrust		-0.10	-0.35***	-0.06	-0.21**			-0.05	-0.18*
Preference for autocracy		-0.03	-0.05***								
Approval of surveillance		-0.09	-0.26***	-0.06	-0.17***	0.04	0.12*	-0.06	-0.17***		
Voluntary engagement											
Index personal trust									-0.06	-0.29**	
Index generalised trust			0.18	0.67***	0.16	0.62***	0.18	0.64***	0.18	0.62***	

Table 12.7 (continued)

Levels of Analysis	Predictors	Indicators	DV perception of an ethnic threat vs approval of multiculturalism					
			Prosperous states (AT, DK, FI, FR, DE, IS, NO, SE, CH, NL)		Crisis states (HR, IT, ES, GB, PT)		Visegrád countries and Slovenia (HU, PL, SK, SI, CZ)	
			The Netherlands		Portugal		Czechia	
Country effects	Reference Country							
	Country 1 (Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania)		-0.06	-0.47***	-0.06	-0.40**		
	Country 2 (Denmark, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria)		-0.04	-0.21**	-0.13	-0.71***	0.25	1.48***
	Country 3 (Finland, Spain, Slovakia, Romania)		0.09	0.87***			0.12	0.72***
	Country 4 (France, GB, Slovenia)		0.12	0.89***	-0.09	-0.52*	0.22	1.47***
	Country 5 (Germany)		0.04	0.25**				
	Country 6 (Iceland)		0.20	1.61***				
	Country 7 (Norway)							
	Country 8 (Sweden)		0.06	0.54***				
	Country 9 (Switzerland)		0.03	0.20**				

standardised and unstandardised coefficients, only significant predictors are shown (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$)

ethnic prejudice in all countries except in Southeastern Europe and the Baltic states. While moral values allowing cheating and corruption go hand in hand with ethnocentrism, liberal values exert a direct link to the approval of multiculturalism.

The effects of political attitudes seem to be strongly driven by values. That is why most of the predictors turn out to be rather weak, though they all follow the proposed direction. Again, the effects seem to be more relevant in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe. While the left–right divide can serve as an additional explanation for ethnocentrism in prosperous countries, this effect turns out to be insignificant in all other regions. The preference for autocracy in particular is once again a strong predictor of ethnocentrism. While political distrust and EU-scepticism contribute only a little to the explanation for ethnic prejudice, political interest seems to be quite an important driver to increase tolerance towards diverse ethnic groups. Interestingly, all these effects exert a weaker influence in the Visegrád countries; here, only susceptibility to autocracy remains a significant explanatory factor. The index of generalised trust is also a remarkable impact factor in all regions. This is also due to the fact that the items concerning trust towards strangers point in a similar direction to ethnic prejudice.

Turning to the level of social demography and social structure, education emerges as a stable explanatory factor, although the coefficients are somewhat weaker in Eastern Europe. Interestingly, while lower income reduces the approval of a multicultural society in Southern Europe and Great Britain, there is a reverse effect of income in Southeastern Europe and the Baltic states. Here, the negative age effect, meaning that younger people are more tolerant, still persists, while it has disappeared in all other European regions. There is a marginal tendency that people living in urban areas act in a more tolerant way and that women are slightly more tolerant than men, although this effect exists in prosperous Western European states only. Similar to preferences for redistribution, we find quite a lot of country differences signalling that there are still substantial differences in ethnic prejudice between the countries. When we compare the effect sizes between the regions, it becomes clear that the divisions between religion, values, political attitudes, social structure, and country-wide differences are highest in prosperous Western states and are seemingly growing in Southern Europe and in the Visegrád states, and the effect sizes turn out to be significantly weaker in Southeastern Europe.

The last societal challenge refers to environmental consciousness (Table 12.8).

Here, religious aspects again lose importance when other explanatory levels are included. Interestingly, Roman Catholics and Protestants in particular perceive fewer environmental concerns, at least in the region of the Baltic states and in south-eastern areas. It can also be confirmed that people following a spirit or life force and who practise religion more frequently are more dedicated to nature in the Western countries, while spirituality also exerts an impact in Southern Europe. Conservative vs progressive values act again as major drivers of pro-environmental attitudes. Here, those individuals who declare themselves as post-materialists in particular turn their focus to the environment. Additionally, being against cheating and corruption, favouring progressive ideologies regarding gender equality, and approving liberal values lead to a higher relevance of the environment. These effects are consistent

Table 12.8 Sequential regression explaining environmental awareness in European regions

Levels of analysis	Predictors	Indicators	DV environmental consciousness					Visegrád countries and Slovenia (HU, PL, SK, SI, CZ)	Southeastern Europe (EE, LT, BU, RO)		
			Prosperous states (AT, DK, FI, FR, DE, IS, NO, SE, CH, NL)		Crisis states (HR, IT, ES, GB, PT)						
Effect sizes (adj. R^2)	Model 1 (Religion)		2.1		2.3		1.8		4.8		
	Model 2 (+ values)		17		17.5		12.3		10.5		
	Model 3 (+ political and social attitudes)		21		20.9		15.5		13.1		
	Model 4 (+ demographic and structural factors)		23.1		21.6		16.5		14.7		
	Model 5 (+ country effects)		25		24.8		17.6		16.9		
Religion	Confession (Ref. other)	Roman Catholic					-0.09	-0.21*	-0.26	-0.47**	
		Protestant								-0.08	-0.35*
		Free church/Non-conformist/ Evangelical									
		Muslim									
		Orthodox						-0.04	-0.38*		
	Self-declaration (Ref. don't know)	no spirit, God or life force									
		spirit or life force	0.07	0.11***	0.07	0.12**					
	Index of religious beliefs	personal God									
	Index of religious practice							0.06	0.03*		
			0.05	0.02***							

Values	Inglehart index (ref. post-materialism)	materialist	-0.07	-0.16***	-0.05	-0.10*	-0.05	-0.10*	-0.08	-0.14*
		rather materialist	-0.07	-0.11***	-0.05	-0.09**			-0.07	-0.12*
		rather post-materialist	-0.04	-0.07***	-0.05	-0.09*				
	Gender roles: men more suited for career	Gender roles: women at home	-0.07	-0.09***	-0.09	-0.11***	-0.12	-0.15***		
		Gender roles: men more suited for career	-0.14	-0.19***	-0.11	-0.15***	-0.09	-0.11***	-0.12	-0.14***
		Moral values: justify cheating and corruption	-0.10	-0.07***	-0.13	-0.07***	-0.11	-0.06***	-0.08	-0.04***
		Moral values: moral rigorism vs liberal values (abortion, euthanasia, suicide, homosexuality)	0.07	0.03***	0.12	0.05***	0.10	0.04***	0.05	0.02*
	Political and social attitudes	Left-right scale	-0.11	-0.04***						
		Interest in politics	0.06	0.06***	0.07	0.06***			0.08	0.08***
		National pride								
		EU-scepticism	-0.03	-0.01**					-0.05	-0.01*
		Political distrust	-0.03	-0.04**						
		Preference for autocracy	-0.08	-0.04***	-0.12	-0.05***	-0.16	-0.06***	-0.14	-0.06***
		Approval of surveillance	-0.02	-0.03*	-0.05	-0.05**				
		Voluntary engagement	0.03	0.05***	0.05	0.11**	0.03	0.07*	0.04	0.08*
		Index personal trust					-0.05	-0.09*		
		Index generalised trust	0.09	0.13***	0.08	0.11***	0.09	0.11***		

(continued)

Table 12.8 (continued)

Levels of analysis and structural factors	Predictors	Indicators	DV environmental consciousness				
			Prosperous states (AT, DK, FI, FR, DE, IS, NO, SE, CH, NL)	Crisis states (HR, IT, ES, GB, PT)	Visegrád countries and Slovenia (HU, PL, SK, SI, CZ)	Southeastern Europe (EE, LT, BU, RO)	
Sociodemographic and structural factors	Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)		0.09	0.15***	0.04	0.06*	
	Age in years		-0.07	0.00***	-0.05	0.00*	-0.07
	Marital status (Ref. single)	married/registered partnership					
		widowed					
		divorced/separated					
	Children in own household						
	Domicile (Ref. countryside)	5,000–20,000 inhabitants (small cities)					
		20,000–100,000 inhabitants (middle-sized cities)					
		100,000–500,000 inhabitants (large cities)					0.05
		500,000 and more (metropolitan areas)					0.07
	Education (Ref. tertiary)	lower education (ISCED)	-0.07	-0.15***	-0.07	-0.12**	-0.08
		medium education (ISCED)	-0.02	-0.04*	-0.06	-0.10*	-0.06
	ISEI status measure			0.06	0.00**		
	Income (Ref. high income)	low income	-0.03	-0.05*			-0.06
		middle income					-0.04

Country effects	Reference Country	The Netherlands		Portugal		Czechia		Estonia	
	Country 1 (Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania)	0.08	0.23***	-0.19	-0.4***			-0.13	-0.26**
	Country 2 (Denmark, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria)	-0.05	-0.12***			-0.06	-0.12*	-0.25	-0.48***
	Country 3 (Finland, Spain, Slovakia, Romania)	0.06	0.21***			0.07	0.15**	-0.18	-0.34***
	Country 4 (France, GB, Slovenia)	0.05	0.15***	-0.16	-0.32***	-0.07	-0.16**		
	Country 5 (Germany)	0.08	0.21***						
	Country 6 (Iceland)								
	Country 7 (Norway)	-0.03	-0.10**						
	Country 8 (Sweden)	0.03	0.10**						
	Country 9 (Switzerland)	0.12	0.27***						

Standardised and unstandardised coefficients, only significant predictors are shown (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$)

across all regions, but they are somewhat weaker in Southeastern Europe and the Baltic states.

It is interesting that when it comes to political ideology, this level of explanation is not as important as are basic values. The left–right orientation has an influence on pro-environmental attitudes solely in prosperous Western countries. The index measuring susceptibility to autocracy seems to be far more important to explain a lack of sensitivity towards the environment, because here a significant effect is found in all regions. Besides values, it is primarily civic engagement that seems to be able to set a pro-environmental agenda. The study reveals that political interest and voluntary engagement are equally relevant for environmental concern in all regions. Notably, generalised trust also strengthens global empathy and leads to a higher environmental awareness.

Regarding sociodemographic impact factors, it is interesting that the well-confirmed gender effect holds for prosperous Western countries and for the Visegrád states only. Age still exerts a significant negative influence in all European regions, meaning that the younger generation in particular expresses a higher level of environmental concern. While the educational effect points to a higher level of environmental consciousness among highly qualified individuals, the income effect leads in a similar direction too. Here, rich people in Southeastern Europe in particular recognise the issue of climate change as one of the main societal challenges of the future.

It is obvious that value divides are also rising with regard to climate change in European societies. It is possible to explain a quarter of the variance in Western Europe, but the effects are weaker again when it comes to certain dynamics in the Visegrád countries, in states in Southeastern Europe, or in the Baltic countries.

12.6 Summarising the Results: Future Challenges in the EU and Drivers of Societal Change

Although all results of this study refer to pre-pandemic times, this extensive study has clearly revealed existing polarisations in values and perceptions within European countries and between major European areas. These divisions are likely to deepen rather than diminish in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Concerning the health situation, at the time of writing there is hope for Europe that there is an end at sight. But regarding economic effects and further political disagreement about future European developments, it is quite obvious that Europe remains under pressure and that European integration may face a longer period of political stagnation. The exposure to economic and fiscal states of crisis (in the aftermath of the pandemic), the challenge of heightened political tensions between major European areas, and the social challenges due to identity and redistribution conflicts will prevail, and will potentially leave less space for combating the climate crisis. But it must be noted that country differences are still strong and play a major role in mitigating the effects of crises and driving the public mood in certain directions. The empirical cluster analysis (see Sect. 12.2), which was conducted to confirm the

image of highly diverse European regions, even extends those views. It was clearly visible that welfare state regimes (Esping-Andersen 1999) and historical conditions (Boatcă 2019) influence the formation of basic cultural values and indicate a high level of cultural diversity within Europe that cannot be easily brushed away by political efforts for European integration (Bach, 2015).

But at least the temporal analysis of evolving European trends over time enables us to expect potentially higher levels of social cohesion and inclusion. Although inequalities have been growing between and within European member states (Fredriksen 2012), demands to guarantee a higher social balance between classes are quite strong in Europe. Reviewing the history of capitalism during recent decades, Streeck (2013) proposes that the capitalist class itself has triggered off the renaissance of market dominance. It succeeded in re-establishing neoliberalism since the 1980s, which leads to a gradual corrosion of the modern comforts of the welfare state. But when we focus on public perceptions and aim for monitoring public opinion, the temporal analysis clearly shows that preferences for redistribution have grown over the last decade, being highest at the time of the economic crisis in 2008 (Fig. 12.2). It can be assumed that in these current pandemic times, voices for an appropriate distribution of wealth will become louder again and the issue of redistribution will receive greater attention. But one central argument – especially witnessing the consequences of the pandemic – refers to the future scope of solidarity. Besides a general trend towards redistribution, it is highly plausible that social groups who are not fulfilling the deservingness criteria (van Oorschot 2000) – such as migrants – might be further excluded from society. But interestingly, the empirical data indicates a reverse trend. At least in Western European countries, the population seems to be getting used to cultural diversity and is becoming increasingly open to immigrants. Otherwise, in countries where political discourses of cultural anxiety (Grillo 2003) prevail, and especially in the Eastern European context, perceptions of an ethnic threat remain extraordinarily high. This discrepancy between embracing cultural diversity in the West and strictly avoiding immigration in the East seems to be one of the major causes of dissent in a future unified conception of Europe.

The dividing lines between European regions and within European countries also become visible when we focus on environmental awareness. Here, I assume that concerns about climate change are more likely to cross the threshold of heightened attention in flourishing economic times. This sober view of the environmental crisis may seem to be a cause for disillusionment, but it corresponds with the empirical findings in this study. The time comparison over several survey waves shows that the willingness to spend a part of income on the environment has decreased significantly in almost all Western European countries. This might be due to strong fears of social decline, increasingly affecting the squeezed middle classes in European societies. Environmental protection thus remains an issue for the elites in society, who are generally able to live out their freedoms and adopt a cosmopolitan ethic (Beck and Grande 2004). It remains open as to whether this higher level of environmental awareness is connected with a clear pro-environmental behaviour, because the results of the attitudinal dynamics in this chapter cannot be translated to concrete actions (ElHaffar et al. 2020). In this vein, it should be rather easy for national

political actors to continue to promote a policy of non-sustainability (Blühdorn et al. 2020). Many citizens, especially in Eastern Europe, still follow a materialistic value orientation combined with a rejection of liberal Western views. These gaps between political liberalism in Western Europe and neo-conservatism in Eastern Europe (Bluhm and Varga 2018) probably further inhibit the defining of a common strategy of sustainability within the EU.

In general, it makes sense to speak of *enduring and emerging cleavages* in Europe. When we refer to dynamics of religious affiliation, beliefs, and practices as well as to basic values, these elements seem to be deeply culturally and historically grounded (Eisenstadt 2001). While conventional religious beliefs strongly correlate with traditional world views, we can see that secularism (with Protestant countries in the North taking up the leading role) increases progressive world views. The existing cleavage between conservative values and liberal world views (partly) influenced by religion still has a lot of power to explain current perceptions of an ethnic threat vs. an approval of multicultural society or environmental concerns. It is additionally important to refer to impact factors that are working in different directions to explain ethnic prejudice in Western and Eastern Europe. In Western Europe a higher education level and a higher status seem crucial to cope with social complexity and for people to feel more secure in different interaction settings (Meeusen et al. 2013). In Eastern Europe the education effect turns out to be weaker, the age effect is still more relevant, and higher income groups seem to promote conservative values contrary to Western Europe.

Besides these enduring factors, I would like to define political attitudes and aspects of social inclusion as *emerging* driving forces of current perceptions of societal challenges. Here, the susceptibility to autocracy is seemingly a strong force in reducing preferences for redistribution, perceiving an ethnic threat, and neglecting the issue of climate change. This explanatory factor is a strong predictor in all European geographical areas. Paradoxically, in Western Europe people in precarious positions in particular seem prone to favour values such as achievement and competition, they tend to follow the right-wing logic due to widespread insecurities (Jost et al. 2003), and they diminish their scope of solidarity (Bréchon, Chap. 8, this volume). But the middle classes also become more susceptible to the turn to authoritarian dominance combined with animosities towards outgroups. These dynamics are also visible within higher classes of society when it comes to preferences for redistribution. Those parts of society who are the winners of the current performance logic evince more strongly an egocentric logic and argue for clear class distinctions (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Additionally, we witness a rise in *ethnocentrism* at the bottom of society as disadvantaged groups try to defend their precarious wealth and status by excluding outgroups. In Eastern Europe, the material inequalities between the winners and losers of the system transition might be even larger, whereby the privileged parts of society are still more inclined to favour conservative values and to secure their wealth. While those struggles for recognition (Honneth 1992) become especially visible in conflicts of distribution, we witness an intensified logic of irreconcilability (Dubiel 1997) when it comes to cultural diversity. The debates about a sustainable economy have not affected the general public mood in the same way, even though lines of division in society point in a similar direction.

These preliminary conclusions to disentangle the complex relations between religion, values, and politics and to adequately take social structure and regional contexts into account are, of course, just a starting point for further and more specific research. The pandemic and the resulting social turbulence reflect a good time frame to step in, because it acts like a spotlight (Polak 2020). It makes visible those actors who are urgently needed to maintain society's ability to function. It shines a light on heroes in the care sector who are saving lives through their tireless work. It identifies clearly those groups who are more exposed to health and economic dangers through precarious employment, and it sheds light on the various dimensions of inequality.

In this respect, the empirical findings in this chapter resemble the finding of a needle in the haystack that is a complex European reality. The gaps between generations, social classes, and major European regions also clearly reveal that reactions to the pandemic are highly diverse. They range from forms of radical engagement (by means of protest) to cynical pessimism over a pragmatic acceptance of political measures to heightened future concerns or even a sustained optimism. Depending on how political actors shape perceptions of reality and on which way the pendulum swings, widespread perceptions of the crisis naturally have a subversive influence on institutional dynamics. It seems crucial that the middle class of European societies remain stable and keep its future optimism. This will ultimately determine whether cleavages in Europe grow further or new paths towards social cohesion and a larger scope for solidarity are taken in the future.

Appendix

Table 12.9 Operationalisation of macro indicators for cluster analysis

Levels of Analysis	Indicators	Data Source
Economic sphere	GDP per capita in PPS 2018 (100 = EU-mean)	Eurostat: Code tec00114
	GDP growth rate 2018 (compared to previous year)	Eurostat: Code tec00115
Political sphere	Public debt 2018 (% of GDP)	Eurostat: Code SDG_17_40
	Expenditure on social protection 2017 (PPS/inhabitant)	Eurostat: Code tps00100
	Quality of democracy ^a	University of Würzburg
Social sphere	GINI index 2018 (0–100)	Eurostat: Code ilc_di12
	Unemployment rate 2018 (15–74 years, % of population)	Eurostat: Code une_rt_a
	Poverty and social exclusion 2018 (% of population)	Eurostat: Code t2020_50
Cultural sphere	Proportion of people with migration background	Eurostat: Code migr_pop3ctb

^aConcerning the measurement of quality of democracy see <https://www.demokratiematrix.de/ranking>

Table 12.10 The long-term measurements and the scales to measure the three central social challenges based on indicators of the EVS

	Social challenges	Indicators
<i>Timely comparisons of dependent variables (EVS 1990–2018)</i>	<i>Preference for redistribution</i>	Preferences for individual efforts or for equalising incomes (original scale from 1 to 10, dichotomised variable measures the proportion of agreement (≥ 6) (EVS v106))
	<i>Perception of an ethnic threat</i>	When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to (nation) people rather than immigrants (original scale from 1 = agree to 5 = disagree, dichotomised variable measures the proportion of agreement (< 3) (EVS v80))
	<i>Environmental awareness</i>	Giving part of income for the environment (original scale from 1 = agree to 5 = disagree, dichotomised variable measures the proportion of agreement (< 3) (EVS v199))
<i>Operationalisation of dependent variables for regression designs (EVS 2018)</i>	<i>Preference for redistribution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments tax the rich and subsidise the poor (EVS v133) • People receive state aid for unemployment (EVS v136) • The state makes people's income equal (EVS v139) (11-point scale from 0 = against democracy to 10 = essential characteristic of democracy)
	<i>Perception of an ethnic threat vs approval of multicultural society</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrants take jobs away vs do not take jobs away (EVS v185) • Immigrants make crime problems worse vs do not make crime problems worse (EVS v186) • Immigrants are a strain on the welfare system vs are not a strain on the welfare system (EVS v187) (10-point scale from 1 = left pole to 10 = right pole)
	<i>Environmental awareness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment (EVS v200) • There are more important things to do in life than protect the environment (EVS v201) • There is no point in doing what I can for the environment unless others do the same (EVS v202) • Many of the claims about environmental threats are exaggerated (EVS v203) (5-point scale from 1 = agree strongly to 5 = disagree strongly)

Table 12.11 The operationalisation of religiosity and basic values in the EVS 2017

Attitudes	Indicators	Scale characteristics
Religiosity	Confession (v52)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six categories (1 = Roman Catholic, 2 = Protestant, 3 = Free Church, Nonconformist, Evangelical, 4 = Muslim, 5 = Orthodox, 6 = Other)
	Self-declaration (v62)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which statement is closest to your beliefs? (1 = no spirit, god or life force, 2 = spirit or life force, 3 = personal god, 4 = I do not know what to think)
	Index of religious beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you believe in: God? (v57) (0 = no, 1 = yes) • Do you believe in: life after death? (v58) (0 = no, 1 = yes) • Do you believe in: hell? (v59) (0 = no, 1 = yes) • Do you believe in: heaven? (v60) (0 = no, 1 = yes) (summative index from 0 = believe in nothing to 4 = believe in everything)
	Index of religious practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often do you attend religious services? (v54) • How often do you pray outside religious services? (v64) (7-point scale from 1 = daily, more than once a week to 7 = never)
Basic values	Inglehart index (v111_4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • four categories (from 1 = materialist to 4 = post-materialist)
	Gender roles: women at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child suffers with working mother (v72) • Women really want home and children (v73) • Family life suffers when woman has full-time job (v74) • Man's job is to earn money; woman's job is to look after home and family (v75) (4-point scale from 1 = do not agree to 4 = fully agree)
	Gender roles: men more suited for career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men make better political leaders than women (v76) • University education more important for a boy than for a girl (v77) • Men make better business executives than women (v78) (4-point scale from 1 = do not agree to 4 = fully agree)
	Moral values: justify cheating and corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you justify: claiming state benefits? (v149) • Do you justify: cheating on tax? (v150) • Do you justify: accepting a bribe? (v152) • Do you justify: avoiding a fare on public transport? (v159) (10-point scale from 1 = never justified to 10 = always justified)
	Moral values: moral rigorism vs liberal values (abortion, euthanasia, suicide, homosexuality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you justify: homosexuality? (v153) • Do you justify: abortion? (v154) • Do you justify: divorce? (v155) • Do you justify: euthanasia? (v156) • Do you justify: suicide? (v157) • Do you justify: having casual sex? (v158) • Do you justify: artificial insemination or in-vitro fertilization? (v161) (10-point scale from 1 = never justified to 10 = always justified)

Table 12.12 The operationalisation of political and social attitudes in the EVS 2017

Attitudes	Indicators	Scale characteristics
Political Attitudes	<i>Left-right scale (v102)</i>	• 10-point scale from 1 = left to 10 = right
	<i>Interest in politics (v97)</i>	• 4-point scale from 1 = not at all interested to 4 = very interested
	<i>National pride (v170)</i>	• 4-point scale from 1 = not at all proud to 4 = very proud
	<i>EU-scepticism (v198)</i>	• 10-point scale from 1 = EU enlargement should go further to 10 = gone too far
	<i>Political distrust</i>	• Trust in parliament (v121) • Trust in political parties (v130) • Trust in the government (v131) (4-point scale, 1 = a great deal to 4 = none at all)
	<i>Susceptibility to autocracy</i>	• People choose their leaders in free elections (v135_rec) • Civil rights protect people from state oppression (v138_rec) • Women have the same rights as men (v141_rec) (11-point scale from 0 = essential for democracy to 10 = against democracy)
Social attitudes	<i>Approval of surveillance</i>	• Government: public area under video surveillance (v205) • Government: monitor all information exchanged on the internet (v206) • Government: collect information about anyone without their knowledge (v207) (4-point scale from 1 = should have the right to 4 = should not have the right)
	<i>Voluntary engagement (v21)</i>	• Did you do voluntary work in the last 6 months? (0 = no, 1 = yes)
	<i>Personal Trust</i>	• How much you trust: your family? (v32_rec) • How much you trust: people in your neighbourhood? (v33_rec) • How much you trust: people you know personally? (v34_rec) (4-point scale from 1 = do not trust at all to 4 = trust completely)
	<i>Generalised Trust</i>	• How much you trust: people you meet for the first time? (v35_rec) • How much you trust: people of another religion? (v36_rec) • How much you trust: people of another nationality? (v37_rec) (4-point scale from 1 = do not trust at all to 4 = trust completely)

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