

# Collegio Carlo Alberto



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**National attitudes as a barrier to European citizenship rights?  
The case of parenthood, partnership and social rights  
across diverse family forms<sup>1</sup>**

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## Introduction

European efforts to converge national citizenship rights--social and civil--have yet to be very successful. The realization of more uniform citizenship rights is potentially hampered by negative national attitudes towards rights and a convergence of them in various member states. Yet little is known about these national attitudes. Large, cross-national surveys often contain a wide variety of attitudinal questions but rarely do they explicitly try to capture views about the role of the European Union. In addition, existing surveys and studies do not provide attitude data on the important yet understudied issue of social and civil rights of individuals in new and diverse family forms (e.g. the rights of gay and lesbian couples vs. heterosexual couples in relation to parenthood and partnership) and the extent to which such rights should be decided at the European or at the national level.

The expansive research on welfare state has long demonstrated the importance of attitudes in relation to social policy (Van Oorschot, 2007; Brooks and Manza, 2006; Raven et al., 2011). This scholarship shows how normative ideals relating to equity and redistribution differ across welfare states as well as how perceptions of inequality differ (Sachweh and Olafsdottir, 2010). Normative ideals relating to identity, reciprocity and blame help explain why individuals perceive various groups of citizens to be more or less deserving of welfare state support (Van Oorschot, 2007; Wright and Reeskens, 2013; Raven et al., 2011). For example, recent studies of welfare state attitudes have focused on the extent to which citizens feel immigrants are entitled to the same social, civil or economic rights that natives are. Individual level characteristics such as the ways citizens feel immigration affects the economy, their affiliation with national culture and their education, age and gender (Card et al., 2005; Masso, 2009) are important drivers of attitudes towards immigrants. But recent scholarship also points to the importance of the welfare state context. Artiles and Meardi (2014) show how national social protection policies can reduce hostility towards immigration, with attitudes towards immigration relatively more favourable in the Nordic and Continental countries.

Despite the wealth of research in this area, limited scholarship is available on national attitudes towards equality in social and civil rights for diverse family forms. Studies on attitudes towards homosexuality point to the importance of cross-national differences in attitudes (e.g. Van den Akker et al, 2013) but research on whether homosexual couples should be entitled to the same parenthood and partnership rights as heterosexual couples is absent. Moreover, research on public opinion towards European Union has so far neglected these areas of possible intervention and extension of rights. For example in the last Eurobarometer survey people were asked to express their opinion on the actual and desired role of the EU. The areas included were working, moving, studying, trading, voting, or receiving medical assistance. Items on family rights and opportunities were not mentioned. Given the continued efforts of the European

Union (EU) to achieve not only economic but social integration as well, understanding national attitudes towards social and civic rights for diverse families and towards the role the EU in the possible unification of such rights is of utmost importance. Given the growth of anti-EU parties in recent decades and growing Euroscepticism (Taggart, 1997) or indifference to EU integration practices (Van Inglegom, 2014), it remains equally important to gain insights into who people feel is responsible for deciding these matters.

Our paper addresses both of these shortcomings. Using cross-national data from a five-country pilot study among students (namely: Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Italy, and the Netherlands), this paper provides a first attempt at exploring differences in national attitudes across these two themes: family and reproductive rights of men and women living in diverse family forms and the expected role of the EU in this context. We start by looking at previous research on these topics, before outlining a profile of our five countries according to the relevant macro dimensions enlightened in the literature. We describe our study in section three before moving on to the results: what rights are individuals in favour of, and for whom? And what role is the EU expected to play, if any, in developing these rights? During the discussion of our findings, we also explore the validity and reliability of possible scales for measuring these attitudes. We close with a number of conclusions and a discussion of the implications of our research.

### **Explaining attitudes towards civil and social rights for diverse family forms: previous research**

The rights of family members differ across European member states. In this study, we have identified two types of family rights, broadly defined as *civil rights* and *social rights*. In our definition, civil rights can be understood as those regarding family formation and can be broken down into two subsets: partnership rights (e.g. the right to marry and to form a civil partnership) and parenthood rights (e.g. the right to adopt and to use assisted reproductive technologies). Social rights, instead, include a set of broadly defined *benefits* that families are sometimes entitled to, such as family allowances, parental leave, childcare access, housing benefits.

Cross-national variation in family attitudes, such as attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation (Aassve et al, 2013; Gubernskaya, 2010; Thornton and Philipov, 2009; Yucel, 2015), as well as the acceptance of homosexuality (Hooghe and Meeusen, 2013; Lottes and Alkula, 2011; Van den Akker et al, 2013) is widely researched. More precisely, Gubernskaya (2010) and Yucel (2015) show that attitudes towards marriage are changing across countries, becoming less traditional and more accepting of diverse family forms and patterns of childrearing. Gubernskaya (2010) investigates these changing attitudes in relation to both individual and country-level characteristics. The author concludes that significant cross-country variation in attitudes remains

unexplained once controlling for gender, educational level, employment status, marital status, and religiosity (frequency of attendance). This points to the need for further research on important contextual variables such as family laws and policies, demographic trends and media campaigns. Yucel (2015) builds on this research, demonstrating the effect of individual-level factors, such as religious beliefs and gender attitudes for determining attitudes towards marriage and children, while controlling for age, gender, type of residence (urban versus rural), immigrant status (natives versus foreign-born), education, political ideology, and having children. Macro-level indicators, including women's labour force participation, part-time work rates, fertility rates, birth, marriage and divorce rates as well as two indicators measuring overall gender equality, are provided as background information, but are not included in the analysis. Aassve et al (2013) include macro-level variables in their models and they find that in countries with higher levels of social capital and voluntary work (self-constructed variables measuring aggregate participation in social activities and work with voluntary organisations), individuals tend to be more permissive of diversity in family forms, both in terms of cohabitation and divorce.

In relation to attitudes towards homosexuality, Gerhards (2010) demonstrates the importance of institutional and cultural factors for explaining cross-national differences. Variation in the acceptance of homosexuality and marriage for homosexuals is driven by aggregate differences in the economic situation of a country (measured using the UN Human Development Index), education levels, the acceptance of post-materialist values (based on Inglehart's post-materialist index) and religion. Religious denomination matters less once integration into a religion (i.e. church attendance) is taken into account. In other words, in wealthier, well-educated countries, where post-materialist values dominate and diversity is tolerated, and where church attendance is lower, individuals tend to be more accepting of homosexuality and homosexual marriage.

Van den Akker et al (2013) confirm these findings, showing that people with strong religious beliefs and people who attend church often are more disapproving of homosexuality. Individual support for conventionalism and traditions increases the disapproval of homosexuality. Individuals living in religious countries are more disapproving of homosexuality than people living in secular countries, although the dominant religious denomination (Protestant, Roman Catholic or Orthodox) was found to be insignificant. Similar to Van den Akker and colleagues (2013), Hooghe and Meeusen (2013) study disapproval of homosexuality based on several individual and national level characteristics. The authors conclude that lower educated, older, religious respondents are more disapproving of homosexuality. In addition, they find that national legislation is important – in countries where there is full recognition of homosexual family formation (i.e. marriage), disapproval of homosexuality is the lowest. Attitudes towards homosexuality have also been found to differ significantly across European countries, with post-communist countries showing less approval of homosexuality than other countries (Lottes and Alkula, 2011).

Alongside attitudes towards diverse family formations, a significant amount of literature can be found on attitudes towards reproductive behaviors and rights. This includes research on attitudes towards children and childbearing. For example, Jones and Brayfield (1997) use data from the 1988 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) to study national attitudes towards the centrality of children in six European countries. They used various items to produce a statistically reliable pro-child attitude scale, concluding that Western Europeans do not share a common attitude towards the centrality of children in their lives. They attribute this primarily to country level differences, in particular cultural differences. Similarly, Robila and Krishnakumar (2004) find that gender attitudes and attitudes towards marriage are important determinants of the centrality of children in a society. While there is a growing literature examining attitudes towards the reproductive rights of homosexuals, this literature is based on either single-country studies or individual datasets. Existing comparative data on European attitudes (e.g. ESS, EVS, ISSP) provide no insights into these attitudes. Evidence from the US, for example, shows that individuals are generally more accepting of adoption by lesbian couples than by gay male couples (Herek, 2002) or that religion is an important driver of attitudes towards homosexual adoption (Whitehead and Perry, 2014). In the latter study, the authors find that religious practices (e.g. church attendance) and beliefs in Biblical texts on homosexuality are more important than religious denomination. The absence of comparative European studies in these areas highlights the need for exploration of national attitudes towards different forms of parenthood for diverse family forms.

In sum, previous research on the attitudes towards the social and civil rights of individuals living in diverse family forms emphasizes the importance of both structural, institutional and cultural factors in explaining variation across Europe. At the structural and institutional level, a country's economic situation, the laws and regulation concerning parenthood and partnership, levels of gender equality and the overall universality and generosity of social policy are possible important contextual variables to consider. In addition, cultural aspects such as religiosity, educational levels, aggregate trust in institutions, participation in social and voluntary activities and the presence of post-materialist values can influence attitudes towards partnership and parenthood rights.

### **The possible role of the EU?**

Attitudes towards family and reproductive rights of men and women living in diverse family forms and the role of Europe in converging these rights across member states also depend on general attitudes towards the European Union. What drives citizens to support or oppose European integration? In essence there are three main families of explanations. First, much previous research assumes that support is a function of an individual's evaluation of the costs and benefits of EU membership and delegating power to Europe, both for themselves and for their groups of reference. These evaluations are thought to differ by

education and class (Gabel, 1998), by subjective perceptions of one's economic and job stability (Christin, 2005), by the dominant type of capitalism in a country (Brinegar et al, 2004), and whether or not an individual is living in a country which is a net recipient of EU spending, or a net donor (Anderson and Reichter, 1996).

Other scholars point to the role of cultural factors more than economic calculus in shaping attitudes towards European Union. Support for integration is seen to be a consequence of the fit between the meaning of integration and post-materialistic values (Inglehart, 1977), which foster support for the EU. By contrast social identities and especially national identities are seen as constraining support for integration (Kriesi and Lachat, 2004; Diez Medrano, 2003; Carey, 2002).

For a long time, these two explanations, an economic and a cultural explanation, have been conceptualised and studied as mutually exclusive. Recently, however, a new line of research has pointed at the co-presence of both instrumental and cognitive/moral rationalities at the individual level, and of both structural and cultural factors at the macro level, and how these macro factors shape how much and in which way economic calculus and community identities affect attitudes towards Europe. For example, by performing multi-level analyses using Eurobarometer data, Hooghe and Marks (2005) argue that the cues that appear most relevant to European integration arise in domestic arenas and consist of an important interaction of political ideology, political parties and political elites. The implication of left and right for public opinion toward Europe depends on a country's political-economic institutions: contrary to what happens in other regimes, in social democratic regimes it is the left that oppose European integration, and the right that support it. Similarly, the effect of party affiliation on the degree and type of Euroscepticism depend on a country's overall party system and functioning: the greater the division among political parties and national elites on European integration, the more citizens oppose the integration process. Divisions among the national elite also mediate the effect of individual national identities: the deeper divisions are among national elites in a country, the more exclusive national identity tends to be (i.e., seeing oneself just as "Italian" or "German", rather than just as European or both European and Italian).

The connection between individuals' communal identity or self-interest and their attitudes toward the European union appears to be not only politically constructed, but also economically constrained. Garry and Tilly (2009) and Perez-Nievas and Lopez (2011) find that citizens with an exclusive sense of national identity tend to hold sceptical views of the EU, but the effect of self-identity is stronger in countries that are net contributors of the EU. In such states, they argue, citizens' identity-related concerns are not offset by funds arriving from the EU; rather, their concerns are likely to be reinforced by the fact that the EU is redistributing their taxes from their national group to other national groups.

According to other studies, the political basis of support for the EU lies not only in the domestic arena. The interplay between supranational and national politics is seen to be crucial. For example, Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) shows that support is higher in where corruption is higher and where welfare states are less developed. Evidently, adopting an instrumental view, the lower the opinion of the functioning of one's own national institutions and the higher the opinion of supranational institutions, the lower the opportunity cost of transferring sovereignty to Europe. This perceived effective gain from European membership can then have positive implications for developing 'European' feelings and not just a national *demos*, that is they might contribute to developing a European identity, an aspect considered essential for European democracy.

To sum up, citizens' support to be a part of the EU and to extend its sovereignty is embedded in political, economic and cultural contexts. Existing research shows that this support is higher in countries that are net recipients of EU spending, countries with a less developed welfare state, with higher levels of corruption, and countries with greater division among political parties and national elites. Moreover, the support for European integration increases when trust in national institutions and national economy is low.

Drawing on these three strands of literature, namely attitudes towards redistribution within and across welfare states, attitudes towards social and civil rights, and attitudes towards the role of Europe, it becomes clear that we can expect cross-country differences in attitudes towards social and civil rights for individuals living in diverse family forms and any attempts to harmonize these rights across the EU. How do our countries differ in their institutional and cultural settings according to the relevant macro dimensions enlightened in these strands of literature?

### **The institutional and cultural profile of our countries**

As outlined above, previous research has pointed out the importance of various institutional, economic and cultural factors in shaping attitudes towards family rights and the possible role of the EU. Our five-country study is too small to account for each of these factors in a multi-level analysis. However, we aim to provide a contextual background of our countries by outlining these macro-level factors below (see Table 1). Based on this table, we can assess how these institutional and cultural differences might affect attitudes towards the social and civil rights of individuals living in diverse family forms and the role of the EU in governing these rights.



Table 1: Profile of case countries according to various institutional, economic and cultural indicators

|   | DK    | NL    | ES    | IT    | HR    |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <i>Factors shaping attitudes towards family rights</i>          |       |       |       |       |       |
| <i>- Cultural factors</i>                                       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Religiosity index <sup>a</sup>                                  | -0.46 | -0.25 | -0.06 | 0.49  | 0.55  |
| Cohabitation percentage <sup>b</sup>                            | 11.5% | 9.3%  | 3.3%  | 2.0%  | 5.6%  |
| Autonomy levels <sup>c</sup>                                    | 85.26 | 70.73 | 53.00 | 49.67 | 57.45 |
| Educational levels <sup>d</sup>                                 | 79.6% | 76.0% | 56.6% | 59.3% | 82.9% |
| Participation in social and voluntary activities <sup>e</sup>   | 34%   | 44.7% | 35%   | 29.2% | ..    |
| Post-materialist values <sup>f</sup>                            | 16%   | 20%   | 8%    | 6%    | 5%    |
| <i>- Institutional factors</i>                                  |       |       |       |       |       |
| Law on registered partnership yes/no <sup>g</sup>               | Y     | Y     | Y     | N     | Y     |
| Registered partnership also for homosexuals <sup>h</sup>        | Y     | Y     | Y     | N     | Y     |
| Legalized same-sex marriage <sup>i</sup>                        | Y     | Y     | Y     | N     | N     |
| Adoption possible for homosexuals <sup>j</sup>                  | Y     | Y     | Y     | N     | N     |
| Assisted reproduction legislation                               |       |       |       |       |       |
| access for single women   | Y     | Y     | Y     | N     | Y     |
| access for lesbian couples <sup>k</sup>                         | Y     | N     | Y     | N     | Y     |
| Gender inequality index <sup>l</sup>                            | 0.056 | 0.057 | 0.100 | 0.067 | 0.172 |
| <i>- Economic factors</i>                                       |       |       |       |       |       |
| GDP per capita, relative to the EU-28 (set at 100) <sup>m</sup> | 124   | 131   | 94    | 99    | 61    |
| <i>Factors shaping attitudes towards EU</i>                     |       |       |       |       |       |
| <i>- Institutional factors</i>                                  |       |       |       |       |       |
| Distrust National Government <sup>n</sup>                       | 51%   | 48%   | 89%   | 74%   | 85%   |
| Distrust European Union <sup>o</sup>                            | 48%   | 48%   | 79%   | 55%   | 50%   |
| No support for a stronger EU <sup>p</sup>                       | 78%   | 53%   | 20%   | 26%   | 35%   |
| Control of corruption score <sup>q</sup>                        | 2,37  | 2,15  | 1,01  | -0,04 | 0,04  |
| Expenditure on social protection (as % GDP) <sup>r</sup>        | 34,6% | 33,3% | 25,9% | 30,3% | 21,1% |
| <i>- Economic factors</i>                                       |       |       |       |       |       |
| National Economic Situation <sup>s</sup>                        | 16%   | 39%   | 96%   | 94%   | 95%   |
| National Economic Prospect <sup>t</sup>                         | 53%   | 52%   | 30%   | 24%   | 15%   |
| National Quality of Life <sup>u</sup>                           | 7%    | 7%    | 65%   | 73%   | 84%   |
| EU contribution to Quality of life <sup>v</sup>                 | 36%   | 30%   | 58%   | 56%   | 36%   |
| <i>- Cultural factors</i>                                       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Exclusive national identity <sup>w</sup>                        | 37%   | 32%   | 27%   | 45%   | 37%   |
| Not feeling as a citizen of EU <sup>x</sup>                     | 26%   | 35%   | 28%   | 50%   | 44%   |

Sources:

<sup>a</sup> Verbakel & Jaspers (2010). Their index is based on a factor analysis of 8 items from the European Values Study (EVS 1999/2000) measuring the importance of religion in one's life and religious denomination.

<sup>b</sup> Data for DK, ES, IT and NL taken are data from 2010 and refer to individuals 20 years and older (OECD, 2013). Data for HR are for 2011 and refer to 15-69 year-olds (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

<sup>c</sup> Verbakel & Jaspers (2010). Data are based on aggregated individual scores on the following item from the EVS: Some people feel they have completely free choice and control over their lives, and other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them. Please use the scale to indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out?

- <sup>d</sup> Population aged 25-64 who have completed at least upper secondary education; Eurostat, 2014.
- <sup>e</sup> Based on European Social Survey Data (2012), taking an aggregate individual measure of the percentage of individuals that does some voluntary work at least once every six months versus those who do voluntary work less often or never. Data for Croatia is not available.
- <sup>f</sup> Eurobarometer, 2008; based on Inglehart's 1977 four-item materialism/post-materialism value index.
- <sup>g</sup> [http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/family/couple/registered-partners/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/family/couple/registered-partners/index_en.htm).
- <sup>h,i</sup> Pew Research Centre, 2015: <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/06/26/gay-marriage-around-the-world-2013/>; Jones Day law firm information, 2014: <http://www.samesexrelationshipguide.com/>.
- <sup>k</sup> Busardo et al. (2014) and NVOG (2010). In the Netherlands, single women and lesbian couples do not have explicit access to assisted reproductive technology under the law. Current legislation is ambiguous, particularly on the position of single women. It is unclear whether clinics can refuse ART to single women (NVOG, 2010). The Equal Treatment Committee in the Netherlands has, however, ruled it illegal to refuse ART to lesbian couples under the Equal Treatment Act.
- <sup>l</sup> United Nations Human Development Report (2014); data are for 2013: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>. The Gender Inequality Index is a composite measure of women's reproductive health, empowerment and economic position in society. For more information, see: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>.
- <sup>m</sup> This measure provides an indication of GDP per capita at in purchasing power standards in 2013, relative to the EU-28 zone. Using this value allows for a comparison of our countries relative to each other within the Eurozone. These statistics can be found at: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:GDP\\_at\\_current\\_market\\_prices,\\_2003%E2%80%932012%E2%80%932014\\_YB15.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:GDP_at_current_market_prices,_2003%E2%80%932012%E2%80%932014_YB15.png)
- <sup>n</sup> QA9.2 in Eurobarometr 2014: "How would you like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions: the (nationality) Government?" - here share in the overall population replying "Tend not to trust"
- <sup>o</sup> QA9.4 in Eurobarometr 2014: "How would you like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in European Union?" - here share in the overall population replying "Tend not to trust"
- <sup>p</sup> QA19a.5 in Eurobarometr 2014: "Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with: more decision should be taken at EU level" - here share in the overall population replying "Total disagree"
- <sup>q</sup> Control of corruption reflects perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain. This includes both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests. Point estimates range from about -2.5 to 2.5. Higher values correspond to better governance outcomes. Source: World Bank (reported in <https://www.transparency.org/>; data from 2010).
- <sup>r</sup> Eurostat 2012 (statistics on line)
- <sup>s</sup> QA2a.1 in Eurobarometr 2014: "How would you judge the current situation of the (nationality) economy?" - here share in the overall population replying "Total bad"
- <sup>t</sup> QA3a.2 in Eurobarometr 2014: "What are your expectations for the next twelve months for the economic situation in your country?" - here share in the overall population replying "Will be better".
- <sup>u</sup> QA2a.6 in Eurobarometr 2014: "How would you judge the current situation of the quality of life in your country?" - here share in the overall population replying "Total bad"
- <sup>v</sup> QA13.8 in Eurobarometr 2014: "Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with: Eu makes the quality of life better in Europe" - here share in the overall population replying "Total disagree"
- <sup>w</sup> QD3 in Eurobarometr 2014: "Do you see yourself as: (nationality) only; (nationality) and eurpean; european and (nationality); European Only" - here share in the overall population replying "(nationality) only"
- <sup>x</sup> QD1.1 in Eurobarometr 2014: "For each of the following statement, please tell me to what extent it corresponds or not to your opinion: you feel you are a citizen of the EU" - here share in the overall population replying "no, no really" or "no, definitely not"

Previous research has shown that in wealthier, well-educated countries, where post-materialist values dominate and diversity is tolerated, and where church attendance is lower, individuals tend to be more accepting of homosexuality, homosexual marriages and parenthood, and of "new" family forms as those deriving from cohabitation and divorce. Non-traditional attitudes on diverse family forms are also fostered by high levels of gender equality, high levels of participation in social and voluntary activities and by laws allowing also single women and men or homosexual couples to have access to partnership and parenthood rights. Table 1 shows that these contextual features differ importantly across our five countries.

From a cultural perspective, religion seems most important in Italy and Croatia, less so in Spain, and much less in Denmark and the Netherlands. By contrast, the diffusion of post-materialistic values, the prevalence of cohabitation and a sense of freedom and autonomy in developing one's own life are highest/high in Denmark and the Netherlands, lower in Spain and Croatia, and the lowest in Italy. Denmark and the Netherlands are also wealthier countries in terms of GDP per capita, followed by Spain and Italy, while Croatia has the lowest GDP per

capita. From an institutional perspective, Denmark and the Netherlands offer those features that have been identified in the literature as promoting less traditional attitudes: they have higher levels of gender equality and they legally recognize rights to marriage, adoption and assisted reproductive technology for homosexuals/lesbian couples and/or single women. Spain occupies a middle position: levels of gender equality are lower than in Nordic countries, looking more similar to those in Italy and Croatia. Yet, unlike in Croatia and Italy, Spain has permissive laws concerning partnership and parenthood rights for diverse family forms. Overall, based on this information we can then expect the following cross-country differences in student's attitudes towards social and civil rights for individuals living in diverse family forms: the share of students in favour of such rights is expected to be higher in Denmark and the Netherlands, the lowest in Italy and Croatia, with Spain in the middle.

Support for European integration is shaped differently than support for family diversity. Existing research has shown that the desire for a stronger role of the EU is driven by low levels of trust in national institutions and the economy and low levels of welfare state spending. In contrast, it is inhibited by strong national identities, especially in those countries with greater divisions among political parties. As the second part of Table 1 shows, countries with less developed social protection and less control over corruption are also those with higher distrust in national governments: namely, Spain, Italy and Croatia. In these countries, negative perceptions of the quality of the national economy and of the quality of life in general are also more widespread. According to an instrumental view, compared to Denmark and the Netherlands, in Spain, Italy and Croatia we should then expect higher support for a stronger role of the EU in harmonizing social and civil rights, since the opportunity cost of transferring sovereignty to Europe is relatively low.

If one looks instead at more cultural dimensions, differences across countries go in another direction: exclusive national identities and the absence of feeling like a European citizen are more widespread in Italy, followed by Croatia and the Netherlands. Spain and Denmark appear less "nationalist". Yet, data on support for a stronger role of the EU seem to confirm the role of economic calculus over community identities: support is higher in Spain and Italy, in the middle in Croatia, yet lower in the Netherlands and especially in Denmark. We expect to find the same ranking of countries in the support of having more uniform civil and social rights across the EU: that is, we expect support to be higher in Spain, Italy and Croatia, but lower in Denmark and the Netherlands.

## **Our study**

As mentioned in the introduction, to study national attitudes towards family rights across diverse family forms, we conducted a pilot study in five countries: Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Italy, and the Netherlands. The pilot study included Israel as well but it was excluded here given the focus on the EU. The questionnaire we developed aimed at capturing the attitudes towards

individuals in different *family forms*, and, specifically, whether individuals in certain types of families are considered more entitled to certain rights than other types of families. To this end, throughout the survey we systematically compared the attitudes towards heterosexuals vis-à-vis homosexuals; married vis-à-vis cohabitating couples.

The questionnaire was distributed to students in one university in each country between December 2014 and March 2015. Questionnaires were distributed to students by class instructors and were filled in and returned immediately. The one exception is Aalborg University in Denmark, where the questionnaire was distributed through an online survey. Throughout the section on family rights, subjects were asked whether, on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 stood for completely disagree and 10 for completely agree, they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements. For example, respondents were asked whether they agreed with statements such as: Homosexual couples should have just as much right to get married as heterosexual couples.

In relation to the role of the EU, all respondents were asked a preliminary question regarding whether respondents found EU membership to be a good or bad thing for their country. Following, they were asked to indicate whether they thought certain areas of legislation or policy should be determined at the national level or should be decided by the European Union (EU) as a whole. Possible answers ranged from 0, completely at the national level to 10, completely at the EU level. For example, regarding civil rights, respondents were asked whether laws on marriage, civil partnership, adoption and use of assisted reproductive technology, should be decided at the EU or the national level. The same statements were posed regarding social rights, such as laws on housing benefits and tax reductions. In a similar fashion, a subsequent battery of questions inquires whether the civil and social rights of individuals in different family forms should be decided at the EU level or the national level. For example, the subjects were asked to what extent they agree (where 0 is disagree completely and 10 is agree completely) with the following statements regarding civil and social rights: Each member state of the EU should be able to determine whether *homosexual couples* have the right to get married; or EU member states should try and reach a common legal framework to define whether *cohabitating heterosexual couples* should have a right to childcare benefits if they have children.

In addition, we collected information on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, including the country of residence, age, gender, field of education, current living situation, whether the respondent has children, employment status, the parents' level of education and employment status, how many times the respondent has been to a foreign country and whether he/she has lived abroad.

Our sample consists of 991 respondents: Denmark (N 148); Spain (N 220); Croatia (N 208); Italy (N 202); the Netherlands (N 193). It should be noted that our sample is composed in large part of women (74%). This overrepresentation

was to be expected given the known predominance of women in the Humanities and Social Sciences and is found in all six countries, albeit less pronounced in Denmark (66%) and Croatia (68%). Moreover, the large majority of the sample was born after 1990 (78%) with a large minority born before 1990 (22%). Denmark stands out for being the country with the oldest students, with 31% born prior to 1990, while the figure is below 20% in the remaining countries. More than 90% of students were born in the same country in which they attend university. As anticipated, the majority of respondents are enrolled in a program within the “soft sciences”. For example, 44% are found in the Social and Behavioral sciences, 18% in Social Services and 12% in Education.

On average, 42% of respondents live with their parents. This figure, however, shows high country variability. As to be expected with a student population, a vast majority of the respondents does not have children (93%), mostly because of their low age. Some 41% of the subjects report some form of employment, with a peak of 71% in the Netherlands, and lows of 15% and 17% in Spain and Italy. As far as parental education is concerned, only a minority of respondents has mothers who have only completed primary education (15%) compared to 39% that has a secondary and 46% with a tertiary degree. Well known country differences emerge, as the percentage of lower educated mothers in Italy (22%) and in Spain (24%) is higher than in countries such as Croatia (6%), where the amount of highly educated mothers is extremely high (83%). On average, respondents' fathers appear to be somewhat less educated than mothers, with 16% of fathers having primary education as opposed to 41% with secondary and 43% with tertiary education. Well known country differences also emerge for fathers, as the highest percentage of lower educated fathers is found in Italy (26%) and in Spain (31%). Moving to parental employment, we find the same percentage of employed mothers and fathers (69% of the overall sample). However, maternal employment rates are higher in Denmark (77%) and the Netherlands (72%) and lower in Spain (52%) where the paternal employment rate is also lower than in other countries (60%), likely due to the recent economic crisis. Finally, looking at the mobility of respondents, we find that the vast majority has been abroad at least once (more than 95%), and almost 40% has been abroad ten times or more.

To sum up, we conducted our pilot study on a selected sample made of youth, all within tertiary humanistic education, mostly without children, and mostly from higher-level socio-economic family backgrounds. This relatively homogeneous sample provides an opportunity to focus on cross-national differences among this group and how these can be explained by understanding the ways in which these attitudes are embedded in institutional and socio-cultural contexts.

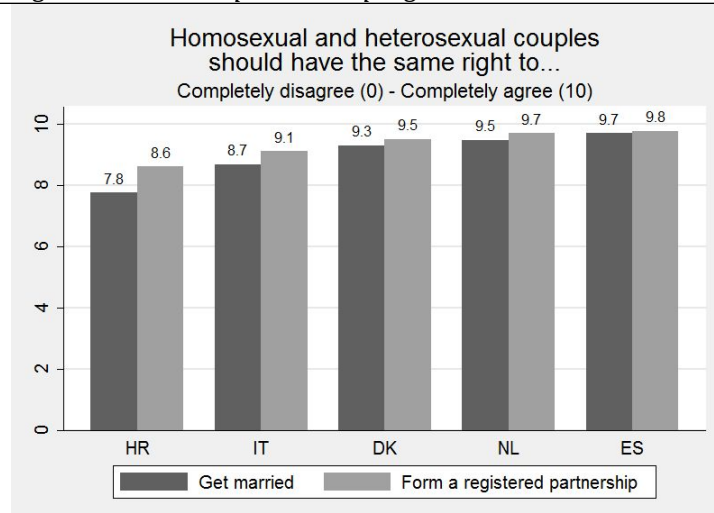
### **In Favour of What Rights and for Whom?**

In presenting our results, we focus separately on “civil rights”, such as the right to get married or to adopt a child, as opposed to “social rights”, such as the right to access public childcare or the right to housing benefits. The first indicators

regarded whether heterosexual and homosexual couples should have the same right to a) get married, or b) enter a registered partnership. As can be seen from Figure 1, most respondents were inclined to agree strongly with the statement that heterosexual and homosexual couples should have the same right to marry and/or to form a registered partnership. On a scale from 0 to 10, average values are well above 7 in all countries and for both types of partnership. The very high values for these variables can be accounted for by the young age of the sample (about 80% of the respondents were born after 1990) and by their level and type of education, as they are all university students from the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Figure 1 indicates some clear cross-national differences, however, with Spain being the country with most favorable attitudes towards equality for hetero and homosexual couples in terms of both forms of family formation, closely followed by the Netherlands and Denmark. In contrast, average values are lower in Italy and Croatia. Moreover, in all countries, there appears to be greater support for equality in access to registered partnerships as opposed to marriage, especially in some countries. Interestingly, the countries with higher values on both indicators are also the ones where the difference between the two is the smallest. For example, Spanish students support equality in marriage with a score of 9.7 and registered partnerships with an almost identical score. In contrast, in Croatia the average score for equality in registered partnerships is considerably higher (8.6) than the one for marriage (7.8). The results are not surprising, considering that Spain, the Netherlands and Denmark are the three countries in our sample where marriage among homosexuals is regulated by law. By contrast, Italian law does not allow same-sex marriage nor any form of civil union between homosexuals. Croatia, instead, has a law allowing homosexual couples to unite in what are called “Life Partnerships”.

*Figure 1 Access to partnership rights*



As a second set of “civil rights”, we focus on the right to adopt a child and to use assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs). In this case, respondents were asked whether they agreed that different types of couples, namely married heterosexual, married homosexual, cohabitating heterosexual and cohabitating homosexual couples, should be allowed to adopt and/or use ARTs. We have defined both of these rights in our conceptual framework as a subset of civil rights, termed ‘parenthood rights’. To ensure that the two indicators measure the same underlying concept, we have conducted a factor analysis, the results of which are reported in Table 2 below. The Eigenvalues indicate the two factors. However, the factor loadings show that the results are not uniform across countries. Note that while a factor loading is generally considered sufficiently high if it exceeds 0.3, in Table 2 and following we have used a higher threshold (0.6), considering that the loadings are very high overall.

*Table 2: Factor analysis for parenthood rights by country. 2 retained factors. Rotation: orthogonal varimax.*

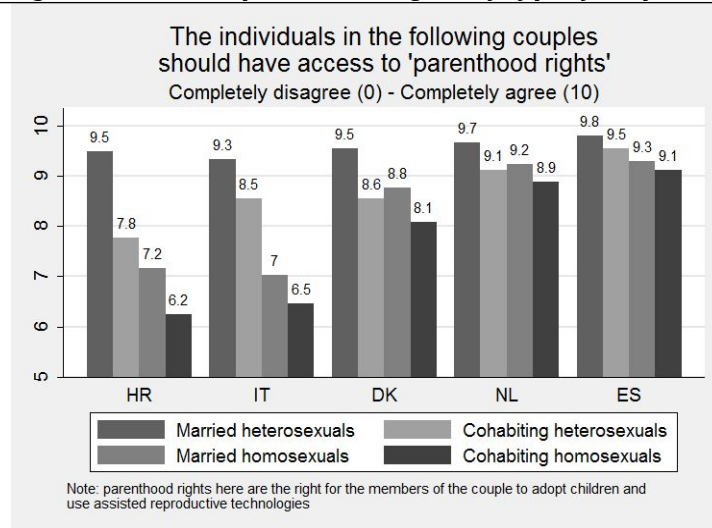
|                                 | HR              |     | IT   |      | DK  |      | NL  |      | ES  |     |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|-----|
|                                 | Fa1             | Fa2 | Fa1  | Fa2  | Fa1 | Fa2  | Fa1 | Fa2  | Fa1 | Fa2 |
| Eigenvalue                      | 4               | 1.5 | 3.4  | 2.1  | 2.8 | 2.8  | 3.2 | 3.1  | 3.5 | 2.8 |
|                                 | Factor loadings |     |      |      |     |      |     |      |     |     |
| Adopt married heterosexual      | .15             | .32 | .087 | .39  | .22 | .37  | .15 | .5   | .13 | .72 |
| Adopt married homosexual        | .92             | .19 | .9   | .076 | .28 | .68  | .41 | .8   | .88 | .17 |
| Adopt cohabitating heterosexual | .49             | .66 | .21  | .55  | .24 | .79  | .22 | .88  | .26 | .8  |
| Adopt cohabitating homosexual   | .89             | .33 | .9   | .2   | .29 | .92  | .35 | .91  | .78 | .44 |
| ART married heterosexual        | .25             | .43 | .25  | .81  | .87 | .028 | .91 | .098 | .33 | .8  |
| ART married homosexual          | .93             | .21 | .88  | .24  | .77 | .43  | .79 | .44  | .96 | .16 |
| ART cohabitating heterosexual   | .54             | .72 | .26  | .89  | .78 | .44  | .87 | .34  | .31 | .85 |
| ART cohabitating homosexual     | .91             | .32 | .9   | .29  | .74 | .56  | .8  | .53  | .93 | .3  |
| N                               | 182             |     | 183  |      | 141 |      | 185 |      | 215 |     |

Notes: Fa1: factor 1. Fa2: factor 2. Shaded cells indicate a factor loading larger than 0.6

First of all, it should be noticed that the item on adoption for married heterosexual couples does not load highly on either of the two factors except in Spain. In other words, while the right to adopt for married couples stands on its own in the other four countries, Spanish respondents place adoption among the other rights of heterosexual couples, married or not. Moreover, while in Croatia, Italy and Spain, the items seem to load along the lines of sexual orientation and marital status, which justifies the aggregation of adoption and use of ARTs into one indicator of ‘parenthood rights’, the results for Denmark and the Netherlands indicate exactly the opposite, with the items loading onto adoption and use of ARTs separately but without discriminating among the type of couple.

This is an interesting result considering that Denmark and the Netherlands are the two countries that are more advanced in terms of the civil rights considered here. Given the cross-country variation evident here, it is not fully justifiable to consider adoption and use of ARTs as a joint set of parenthood rights. Nonetheless, for the sake of parsimony, we have built an average measure of parenthood rights for the four types of couples and have plotted the results in Figure 2 to provide a simplified overview of the data.

*Figure 2: Access to parenthood rights, by type of couple*



As can be seen in this figure, virtually all respondents agree that the rights being considered should be granted to married heterosexual couples. By contrast, the lowest levels of agreement are found for cohabitating homosexual couples. Here, however, cross-national differences are larger, with Spain showing a very high level of agreement (9.1), closely followed by the Netherlands (8.9), as opposed to Italy and Croatia where the values drop to 6.5 and 6.2 respectively. These results indicate that in these two countries, the idea that cohabitating homosexuals should be granted parenthood rights does not have as much support as in other types of couples. For example, in Croatia, the average level of agreement for the access to parenthood rights for cohabitating heterosexual couples is 7.8 as opposed to about 8.5 in Italy, 8.6 in Denmark, 9.1 in the Netherlands and 9.5 in Spain. Similar cross-national differences also emerge for married homosexual couples. Overall, it appears that in some countries – mostly Spain and the Netherlands – respondents agree that parenthood rights should be granted to all types of couples, regardless of sexual orientation and marital status. By contrast, respondents in Croatia and in Italy appear to believe that married heterosexual couples are more entitled to parenthood rights than other couples.

As far as “social rights” are concerned, respondents in the five countries were asked whether they believed that certain couples should be “privileged” and others “discriminated against”. Specifically, the question asked whether, in times of economic crisis, married and heterosexual couples should be granted greater social rights than cohabitating and homosexual couples respectively. These



social rights included state-funded housing subsidies, economic support for a dependent partner, economic support for dependent children, access to public childcare and entitlement to paid parental leave after the birth or adoption of a child.

Table 3: Factor analysis for social rights by country. 2 retained factors. Rotation: orthogonal varimax.

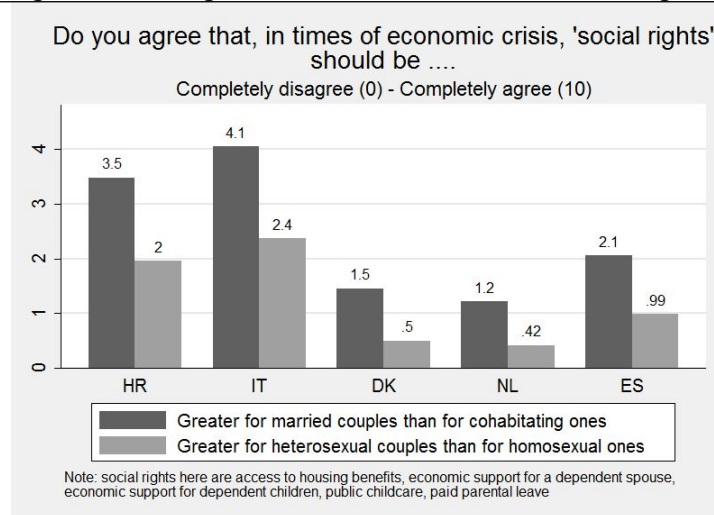
|                              |                               | HR  |     | IT  |     | DK  |     | NL  |     | ES  |     |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                              |                               | Fa1 | Fa2 | Fa1 | Fa2 | Fa1 | Fa2 | Fa1 | Fa2 | Fa1 | Fa2 |
| Eigenvalue                   |                               | 4.4 | 3.8 | 4.5 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 3.9 | 4.7 | 4.2 | 4.6 | 4.6 |
| Factor loadings              |                               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Married vs. cohabitating:    | Access to housing subsidies   | .26 | .77 | .24 | .89 | .22 | .79 | .27 | .86 | .36 | .83 |
|                              | Economic support for partner  | .23 | .78 | .26 | .88 | .21 | .72 | .14 | .85 | .35 | .91 |
|                              | Economic support for children | .32 | .84 | .26 | .92 | .27 | .85 | .26 | .91 | .33 | .92 |
|                              | Public childcare              | .35 | .85 | .29 | .9  | .25 | .91 | .33 | .89 | .35 | .9  |
|                              | Paid parental leave           | .34 | .84 | .3  | .89 | .24 | .9  | .36 | .88 | .3  | .92 |
| Heterosexual vs. homosexual: | Access to housing subsidies   | .87 | .28 | .88 | .32 | .87 | .35 | .94 | .27 | .86 | .37 |
|                              | Economic support for partner  | .87 | .28 | .86 | .3  | .87 | .37 | .96 | .27 | .92 | .33 |
|                              | Economic support for children | .91 | .34 | .95 | .24 | .95 | .23 | .96 | .26 | .93 | .32 |
|                              | Public childcare              | .91 | .35 | .94 | .25 | .94 | .22 | .92 | .3  | .91 | .31 |
|                              | Paid parental leave           | .88 | .34 | .93 | .26 | .87 | .18 | .86 | .27 | .86 | .35 |
| N                            |                               | 183 |     | 175 |     | 134 |     | 183 |     | 208 |     |

Notes: Fa1: factor 1. Fa2: factor 2. Shaded cells indicate a factor loading larger than 0.6

To start, we used factor analysis to test whether an underlying latent variable identifying social rights exists and whether it varies along the lines of marital status or sexual orientation. The results from the factor analysis are reported in Table 3. These results indicate that in all five countries, the items for social rights load onto two factors, one for the contrast between married and cohabitating couples and one for the contrast between heterosexual vs. homosexual couples. Hence, an argument can be made in favor of evaluating this set of items together while separating along the lines of marital status and sexual orientation.

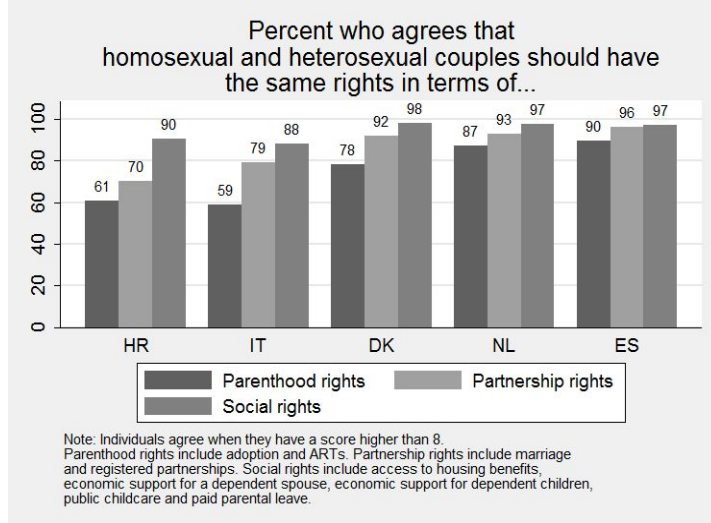
Accordingly, two average scores are calculated and plotted in Figure 3. As can be seen, the values are rather low overall, indicating that, in general, respondents disagree with the notion that certain couples should have more rights than others. This is especially evident in Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain. However, respondents seem to discriminate by type of union more so than by sexual orientation. In other words, in all countries, the mean values for the statement contrasting married vs. cohabitating couples are higher than the ones contrasting heterosexual vs. homosexual couples. Indeed, particularly in Italy and Croatia being married vs. cohabiting seems to matter the most.

*Figure 3: Privilege or discrimination towards social rights, by couple type*



Based on these results, we have built a measure tapping into how “traditional” individuals in the considered countries are overall. Specifically, we have used the variables discussed up to now and constructed three dichotomous variables that take the value 1 if the subject agrees, i.e. scores higher than 8, that both heterosexual and homosexual couples should have, respectively, the same parenthood, partnership and social rights. These three variables take the value 0 if the respondent scores less than 8. The results are plotted in Figure 4 in terms of percentages rather than proportions. In all countries, a very large majority agrees that social rights should be the same, with values ranging from 88% in Italy, the most “traditional” country, closely followed by Croatia (90%), to 97% in the Netherlands and in Spain, and 98% in Denmark. Support for partnership rights is overall somewhat lower, but is still remarkably high in Spain (96%), the Netherlands (93%) and Denmark (92%). In contrast, agreement on equality in parenthood rights is much lower in Croatia (70%) and Italy (79%). Yet, the area in which the least agreement arises is parenthood, where, especially in the most “traditional” countries, respondents seem to believe that heterosexual couples should be granted more rights than homosexual couples. Indeed, agreement here is as low as 59% in Italy and 61% in Croatia; it is somewhat higher in Denmark (78%) and definitely higher in Spain (90%), and the Netherlands (87%).

Figure 4: Attitudes towards social and civil rights, by country



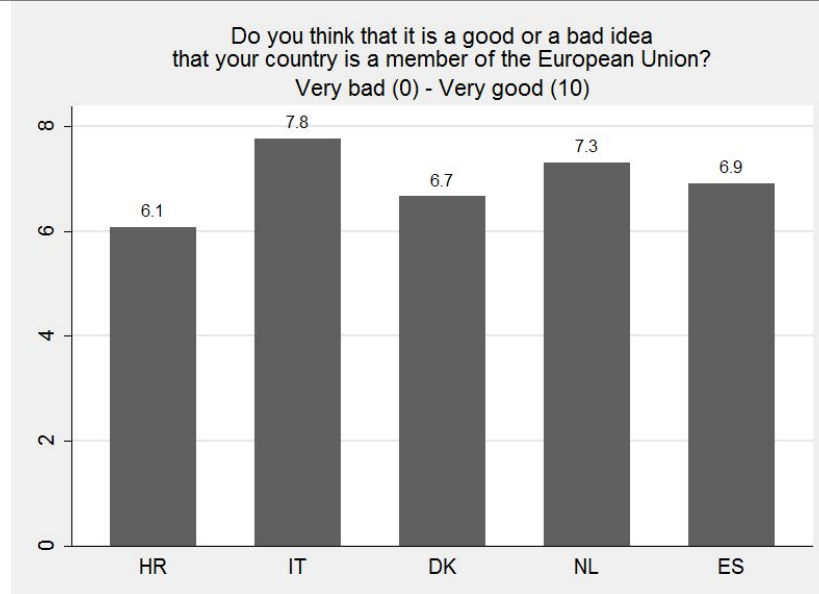
To summarize, three results emerge from this section. First of all, countries tend to polarize between those being more traditional (i.e. Italy and Croatia) and less traditional (Spain and the Netherlands) in terms of the convergence of rights between heterosexual and homosexual couples. That is, more traditional countries tend to privilege the rights of married heterosexual couples over the rest to a larger extent than non-traditional countries. Second, within each country, there seems to be greater acceptance towards equality in social rights rather than civil rights (i.e. partnerships and especially parenthood). In other words, in all countries there is general agreement on guaranteeing social rights, such as housing benefits and economic support for a dependent partner, to both heterosexual and homosexual couples. In contrast, in traditional countries, subjects are less inclined to agree on equality in civil rights and particularly regarding parenthood rights. Third, the results from the preliminary factor analyses reported here suggest that respondents distinguish between parenthood, partnership and social rights and that the items considered can be used to form scales tapping individuals' attitudes toward them. Nonetheless, the important cross-national differences that have emerged call for more in-depth studies, such as multi-level analyses that can account for important institutional and cultural factors described earlier. Furthermore, multi-group confirmatory factor analyses should be run to further test the comparability of the results between countries.

### Attitudes Towards the Role of the European Union

What role should the European Union play in developing more uniform "civil and social rights" across member states? As Figure 5 shows, "anti-European" orientations do not appear to be very widespread among our sample: in all countries, on average, students feel that being part of the European Union is a good thing. Yet, consensus on this topic is higher in Italy (7.8) and lower in

Croatia (6.1), with Spain (6.5), Denmark (6.7) and the Netherlands in the middle (7.3).

Figure 5: Attitudes towards EU membership, by country



When we move to attitudes towards the role of the EU on specific issues, countries also differ. A battery of questions was asked to investigate whether respondents thought that certain civil and social rights should be determined at the national level or at the EU level. The rights included in the analyses are marriage, civil partnerships, divorce, abortion, adoption, ARTs, inheritance, tax benefits, housing benefits, family allowances, childcare benefits, childcare services and paid parental leave. Again, before comparing the results for the two groups of rights, we briefly discuss the results from a factor analysis testing whether the considered items do indeed load onto two factors, one for each set of rights. The results, reported in Table 4 indicate that, in all five countries, the items load onto two factors, one for civil rights and one for social rights. Interestingly, partnership and parenthood rights appear to belong to the same factor, a fact that could not be tested in the previous section given the way the questions were asked (a copy of the questionnaire is available from the authors). The results for the inheritance item are ambivalent and have been included into the package of social rights as the factor loadings are slightly higher on this factor than on the civil rights factor. Considering these results, we have calculated and displayed the average scores on civil and social rights in each country in Figure 6. As can be seen, Italian students appear to be more in favor of EU interventions in determining rules regarding civil (6.4) and social rights (5.1) compared to students in other countries, especially compared to Denmark (3.0 and 2.1 respectively), with other countries falling in between. In all countries, students seem more in favor of EU regulation in the field of civil rights in comparison to social rights.

Table 4: Factor analysis for civil and social rights. 2 retained factors. Rotation: orthogonal varimax.

|                |                                  | HR              |     | IT  |      | DK  |     | NL  |     | ES  |     |
|----------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                |                                  | Fa1             | Fa2 | Fa1 | Fa2  | Fa1 | Fa2 | Fa1 | Fa2 | Fa1 | Fa2 |
| Eigenvalues    |                                  | 4.8             | 4.5 | 3.6 | 4.2  | 5.1 | 4.7 | 4.1 | 4.7 | 4.9 | 5.1 |
|                |                                  | Factor loadings |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Civil rights:  | Marriage                         | .8              | .22 | .77 | .23  | .83 | .36 | .79 | .22 | .82 | .26 |
|                | Civil partnerships               | .84             | .28 | .67 | .3   | .84 | .31 | .86 | .25 | .84 | .28 |
|                | Divorce                          | .8              | .25 | .8  | .27  | .77 | .47 | .8  | .27 | .85 | .32 |
|                | Abortion                         | .83             | .23 | .69 | .25  | .82 | .31 | .77 | .24 | .8  | .33 |
|                | Adoption                         | .85             | .31 | .71 | .14  | .75 | .33 | .67 | .24 | .77 | .33 |
|                | Assisted reproductive technology | .81             | .29 | .75 | .066 | .73 | .4  | .65 | .26 | .78 | .4  |
| Social rights: | Inheritance                      | .54             | .57 | .4  | .53  | .65 | .48 | .32 | .71 | .53 | .61 |
|                | Tax benefits                     | .15             | .8  | .23 | .64  | .41 | .53 | .13 | .79 | .44 | .64 |
|                | Housing benefits                 | .23             | .74 | .14 | .8   | .37 | .8  | .16 | .85 | .24 | .86 |
|                | Family allowances                | .34             | .78 | .17 | .79  | .35 | .82 | .3  | .84 | .31 | .85 |
|                | Childcare benefits               | .23             | .84 | .16 | .83  | .33 | .89 | .34 | .83 | .3  | .88 |
|                | Childcare services               | .29             | .82 | .19 | .83  | .35 | .86 | .38 | .74 | .33 | .88 |
|                | Paid parental leave              | .33             | .78 | .32 | .73  | .49 | .72 | .37 | .76 | .39 | .8  |
|                | N                                | 183             |     | 181 |      | 130 |     | 155 |     | 175 |     |

Notes: Fa1: factor 1. Fa2: factor 2. Shaded cells indicate a factor loading larger than 0.6

Figure 6: Preferred governance for social and civil rights, by country

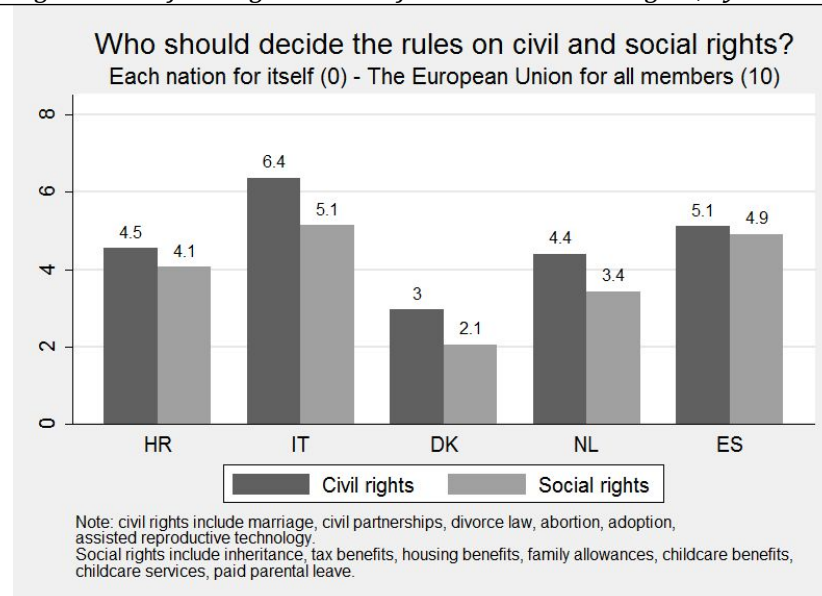


Table 5: Factor analysis for civil and social rights, by type of couple. 6 retained factors.  
Rotation: orthogonal varimax.

|   | Fa1             | Fa2    | Fa3   | Fa4    | Fa5   | Fa6    |
|---|-----------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| Eigenvalue                                    | 7.4             | 5.6    | 3.9   | 3.6    | 3     | 1.5    |
|   | Factor loadings |        |       |        |       |        |
| Marriage homosexuals                          | -.015           | .73    | .25   | -.068  | .2    | .21    |
| Marriage heterosexuals                        | -.014           | .73    | .23   | -.058  | .18   | .2     |
| Partnership homosexuals                       | .37             | .059   | -.015 | .38    | .017  | .78    |
| Partnership heterosexuals                     | .37             | .069   | .0082 | .39    | .023  | .77    |
| Adopt married homosexuals                     | -.027           | .87    | .23   | .083   | .25   | -.079  |
| Adopt married heterosexuals                   | .017            | .9     | .21   | .039   | .21   | -.039  |
| Adopt cohabitating homosexuals                | -.019           | .89    | .2    | .079   | .22   | -.059  |
| Adopt cohabitating heterosexuals              | .039            | .9     | .19   | .043   | .2    | -.038  |
| ART married homosexuals                       | .42             | .027   | .011  | .83    | -.021 | .17    |
| ART married heterosexuals                     | .36             | .02    | .062  | .87    | .017  | .14    |
| ART cohabitating homosexuals                  | .42             | .032   | .022  | .85    | -.025 | .16    |
| ART cohabitating heterosexuals                | .35             | .018   | .058  | .88    | .03   | .14    |
| Inherit married homosexuals                   | -.0026          | .49    | .31   | .017   | .78   | -.0088 |
| Inherit married heterosexuals                 | .0094           | .49    | .31   | -.0075 | .78   | .0085  |
| Inherit cohabitating homosexuals              | .0077           | .47    | .29   | .0083  | .8    | .016   |
| Inherit cohabitating heterosexuals            | .025            | .47    | .28   | -.011  | .8    | .038   |
| Housing married homosexuals                   | .9              | -.014  | .073  | .18    | -.054 | .16    |
| Housing married heterosexuals                 | .9              | -.0025 | .063  | .2     | -.063 | .17    |
| Housing cohabitating homosexuals              | .89             | .01    | .081  | .18    | -.074 | .16    |
| Housing cohabitating heterosexuals            | .89             | .015   | .08   | .2     | -.082 | .16    |
| Childcare benefits married homosexuals        | .91             | -.016  | .0087 | .2     | .084  | .037   |
| Childcare benefits married heterosexuals      | .9              | -.0073 | .0026 | .23    | .084  | .034   |
| Childcare benefits cohabitating homosexuals   | .91             | .005   | .017  | .21    | .072  | .025   |
| Childcare benefits cohabitating heterosexuals | .9              | .0069  | .015  | .23    | .081  | .019   |
| Parental leave married homosexuals            | .063            | .33    | .89   | .052   | .23   | -.0019 |
| Parental leave married heterosexuals          | .071            | .33    | .9    | .025   | .19   | .0001  |
| Parental leave cohabitating homosexuals       | .071            | .32    | .89   | .052   | .24   | .0073  |
| Parental leave cohabitating heterosexuals     | .083            | .32    | .9    | .031   | .19   | .0099  |
| N   | 740             |        |       |        |       |        |

Notes: Fa1-Fa6: factor 1 to factor 6. Shaded cells indicate a factor loading larger than 0.6.

ART=Assisted reproductive technologies.

Housing refers to state -funded housing subsidies.

What happens if we attempt to break down the results by type of couple? In other words, are respondents more incline to delegate responsibility to the EU

when it comes to certain people but not to others? To answer this question, we ran a factor analysis on a list of items including partnership, parenthood and social rights for four types of couples: married heterosexuals, married homosexuals, cohabitating heterosexuals and cohabitating homosexuals. The items included in the analyses are marriage, registered partnerships, adoption, use of ARTs, inheritance, access to state funded housing subsidies, childcare benefits and parental leave schemes. The results are presented in Table 5.

The results that emerge are intriguing. Apparently, when asked about whether the EU should develop a common framework to define the civil and social rights for different types of couples, the answers are polarized not along the type of couple but along the single set of rights. As can be seen from the shaded cells of Table 5, each right forms a factor on its own comprising all types of couples. Based on the results from the factor analysis and on the substantial meaning of the factors, seven average scores were calculated and plotted in Figures 7, 8 and 9. Figure 7 plots the average scores for marriage and partnership. As can be seen, in all countries citizens are more inclined to believe that the regulation of marriage for both heterosexual *and* homosexual couples should remain at the state level as compared to the regulation of registered partnerships, which could be regulated at the European level to a greater extent. The difference between the two values tends to be larger in Italy, Croatia and Spain than in the Netherlands and in Denmark.

A rather similar result emerges for parenthood rights, that is adoption and the use of assisted reproductive technologies, where on average citizens prefer to retain national control over adoption more so than over ARTs. This could be due to the fact that both ARTs and registered partnerships are rather “new” phenomena for which, especially in some countries, norms and laws might still not be well defined. On the other hand, respondents in these more “traditional” countries might find it harder to outsource to the EU the responsibility of well-established institutions such as marriage and adoption.

Figure 7: EU involvement in partnership rights, by country

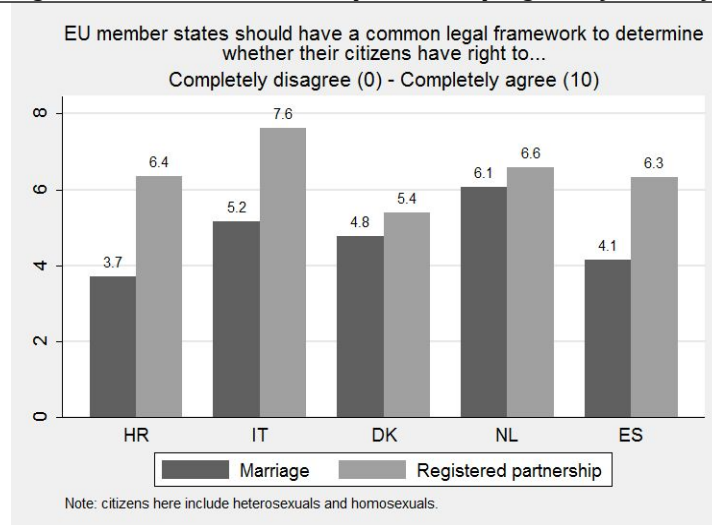
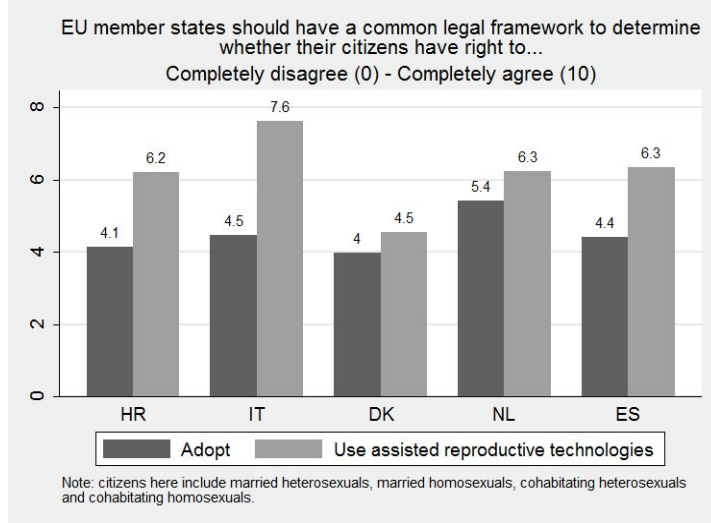
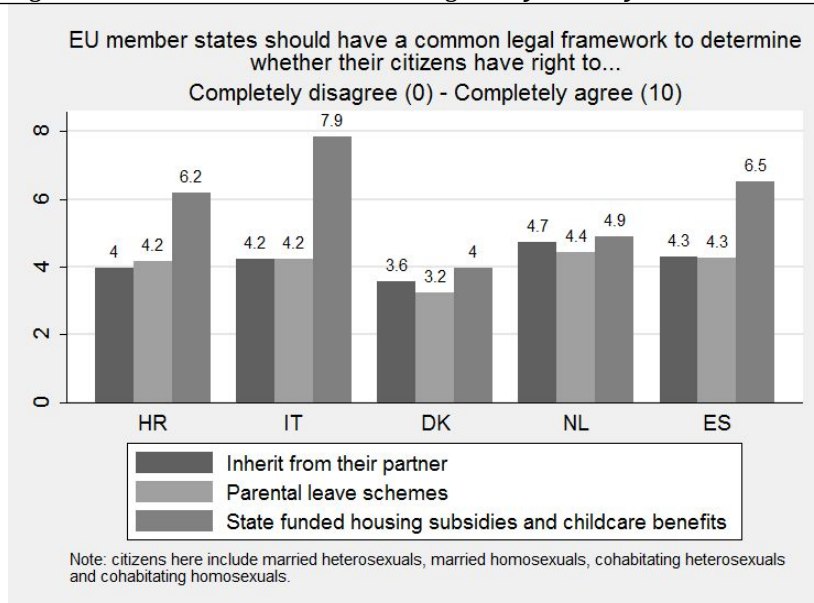


Figure 8: EU involvement in parenthood rights, by country



When it comes to social rights, overall, respondents do not appear very inclined to shift responsibility to the EU, at least in relation to inheritance laws and parental leave schemes. In contrast, in Croatia, Italy and Spain there appears to be greater agreement on developing more uniform housing benefits and childcare benefits across the EU. Perhaps this might be the case because both of these benefits require a more universal and generous welfare state, and therefore respondents in countries such as Spain and Italy, where welfare expenditures in these areas is quite limited, might favor a common framework to a larger extent than citizens in other countries.

Figure 9: EU involvement in social rights, by country



To conclude, respondents do not seem very interested in having more uniform civil and social rights across the EU. Overall scores are rather low, hovering



between the values of 4 and 5 when it comes to well-established institutions such as marriage and adoption but also regulations on inheritance and parental leave schemes. Higher values indicating greater acceptance of possible EU involvement emerge for registered partnerships, ARTs, housing benefits and childcare benefits but they are concentrated in certain countries, namely Croatia, Italy and Spain. As far as measurement is concerned, the results indicate that when asked about the role of the EU in regulating certain rights for different types of couples respondents tend to polarize their responses along the lines of the type of right involved rather than of the characteristics of the couple. In other words, if a respondent warrants greater EU intervention on a given area, he/she does so in large part regardless of the marital status and sexual orientation of the subject.

## Conclusion and discussion

This paper attempts to address two shortcomings in current attitudinal research: a more thorough exploration of cross-national differences in attitudes towards social and civil rights for individuals living in diverse family forms and attitudes towards the role of the EU in the possible development of a common framework for these rights. Evidence from our five-country pilot study among students demonstrates a number of important findings.

First, we find that respondents in our study show a polarization between countries that appear more traditional (*as expected*, Italy and Croatia) and less traditional (Spain, Denmark and the Netherlands) in terms of the convergence of rights between heterosexual and homosexual couples. Respondents from more traditional countries tend to privilege the rights of married heterosexual couples over other family forms to a larger extent than respondents in non-traditional countries. Second, we also find differences within each country, namely that there appears to be greater acceptance of equality in social rather than civil rights (i.e. partnership and especially parenthood rights). We find this for all countries, demonstrating there is general agreement on guaranteeing *social rights*, such as housing benefits and economic support for a dependent partner, to both heterosexual and homosexual couples. However, in more traditional countries, respondents were less likely to agree on that equality on civil rights, in particular parenthood rights, is necessary. Third, the results from the preliminary factor analyses conducted suggest a distinction should be made between parenthood, civil and social rights for measuring individual attitudes. In line with previous research, our traditional countries are those where a diffusion of new types of families (such as cohabitation) or post-materialistic and secularized values is lower, and where, at the same time, laws do not allow homosexuals access to partnership and parenthood rights. When economic wellbeing, overall gender equality and new forms of families are still relatively infrequent, but institutions support them, as is the case in Spain, attitudes seem more similar to the well-known Nordic “progressive” countries, at least among students. Clearly, however, further empirical analysis is needed to investigate the role of important contextual variables to explain these cross-national differences

and further verification of the comparability of the results between countries and between different groups of the population.

While attitudes towards social and civil rights for individuals living in diverse family forms vary across countries, respondents generally are not very interested in having the EU develop more uniform rights. Some EU governance would be considered acceptable for issues such as registered partnerships, ARTs, housing benefits and childcare benefits, but such involvement from the EU is only desired by respondents from less universal and generous welfare states and from respondents living in countries with poorer economies and inefficient national institutions, namely Croatia, Italy and Spain. EU involvement in fundamental issues such as marriage and adoption does not receive much support. Interestingly, we find that individual attitudes are demarcated along *types of rights* more so than *types of couples*. This means that individuals assess the desirability of EU involvement largely along the lines of what types of rights are involved, regardless of the marital status and sexual orientation of the subject.

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