



# **A Threatening Horizon? Social Concerns, The Welfare State and Public Opinion Towards Europe**

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## **Abstract**

European integration challenges the social boundaries of nation states and this phenomenon is not without consequences for individual attitudes. Within public debate, the impact of European integration on the welfare states has been extensively discussed, but we still lack conclusive analysis of the consequences for individual support for Europe.

This thesis is an attempt to complement our knowledge on the logics of support for European integration. It investigates how individuals account for the economic and social consequences of integration and documents the logic underlying one of the most salient issues in the present debate on Europe: redistribution. It investigates the individual and structural effects of redistribution on attitudes towards Europe, with a particular emphasis on how these effects develop across time and across different national contexts. Specifically, this study determines under what conditions European integration is perceived by citizens as a threat to national welfare regimes, and what are the consequences in terms of political allegiance. The causal mechanism is tested at three levels and over three different periods: at the European level (public opinion in Europe Twelve) and from 1986 to 2010, at the national level (public opinion in the Member states of Europe Fifteen), from 1996 to 2006, at the individual level, in 2009, in the twenty seven Member states of the European Union.

Findings show that social protection has both structural and individual level effects on support for Europe, providing a narrative for changes in the level of support for Europe over time and explaining a large share of between-country differences, at the aggregate level. At the individual level, both welfare regimes and welfare issues have a strong impact on support for Europe. When it comes to social protection, the European Union works like a distant, yet strong, threat for individuals.

**Jury:**

Prof Stefano Bartolini (EUI), Laurie Beaudonnet (EUI), Prof Mark Franklin (Supervisor, formerly EUI), Bruno Cautrès (SciencePo, Paris), Prof Russel J. Dalton (University of California at Irvine – by videoconference).

**Bio:**

Laurie Beaudonnet holds a B.A. in History (University of Lyon, 2006) and a Master's degree in European Comparative Politics from Sciences-Po Paris (2008).

Her current research focuses on how political values, redistribution mechanisms and the perceptions of public policies affect political support in multilevel systems. In her dissertation, she investigated the link that citizens make between social policy in their country and European integration. Her research and teaching interests include public opinion, comparative political behaviour, European integration, European identity, welfare regimes and quantitative methods.