“Social Canada Revisited”
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DO EUROPEANS LOVE THEIR WELFARE STATE?

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University of Leuven
Belgium
(with Femke Roosma)
PROJECT “The Social Legitimacy of the European Welfare State”

Popular support for the welfare state in European countries

a multi-dimensional perspective

27 EU countries
North, West, South, East
DO EUROPEANS LOVE THEIR WELFARE STATE?

Comparative surveys before 2008

Very much

But, too rosy a picture?
DO EUROPEANS LOVE THEIR WELFARE STATE?

Comparative surveys before 2008

Very much

But, too rosy a picture?

European Social Survey 2008: Welfare Attitudes module

Yes and no: it depends
DO EUROPEANS LOVE THEIR WELFARE STATE?

For now

• the multidimensional perspective
• the rosy picture
• the nuances
• some general conclusions
A multi-dimensional perspective on the welfare state and its social legitimacy.
The *rosy picture* of welfare state support
“The government should take measures to reduce income differences” 71%

“It should be government’s responsibility to provide ...”

- an adequate standard of living for the elderly 92%
- health care for the sick 94%
- child care 82%
- paid care leave 82%
- an adequate standard of living for the unemployed 66%
- a job for everyone who wants one 64%
“The government should take measures to reduce income differences”

“It should be government’s responsibility to provide …”

“Positively perceived performance re. …”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>an adequate standard of living for the elderly</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health care for the sick</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child care</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paid care leave</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an adequate standard of living for the unemployed</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a job for everyone who wants one</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EU-wide
(data ESS 2008)

PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE

Positive | Negative
--- | ---
41% | 29%

PREFERRED ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Positive | Negative
--- | ---
19% | 11%
EU-regions

(data ESS 2008)

PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE

Positive

Negative

PREFERRED ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Positive

Negative

North 48%

West 41%

South 39%

North 17%

West 25%

South 4%

East 3%

West 13%

North 9%

East 6%

South 6%
Interim conclusion 1

Welfare state support is a matter of preferences and evaluations, which do not necessarily coincide.

Europeans very much like the idea of a welfare state, but for being loved it has to do a good job.
What about the other dimensions?
REDISTRIBUTION DESIGN

- PAYING IN
- DOLING OUT
Paying in (data NL, BE: various years)

“Paying contributions for social security benefits is obligatory, but I also do it, because...

- ... it secures me of a benefit when I am in need myself % self-interest
- ... it is a moral duty towards the less well off in society ? moral duty
- ... I personally feel pity for claimants ? empathy
### Paying in (data NL, BE: various years)

"Paying contributions for social security benefits is obligatory, but I also do it, because...

<table>
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<th>Reason</th>
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**Paying in** (data NL, BE: various years)

“Paying contributions for social security benefits is obligatory, but I also do it, because...

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<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
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<td>... it secures me of a benefit when I am in need myself</td>
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**Benefit recipiency** (unemployment, disability, sick pay, social assistance) %

- Respondent: in the past, now, expected in future  
- Respondent and/or family and friends now
**Paying in** (data NL, BE: various years)

“Paying contributions for social security benefits is obligatory, but I also do it, because...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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**Benefit recipiency** (unemployment, disability, sick pay, social assistance)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent: in the past, now, expected in future</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent and/or family and friends now</td>
<td>90</td>
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</table>
Interim conclusion 2

Willingness to contribute to the welfare state may be largely a matter of self-interest (‘what is in it for me?’)

A broad welfare state generates its own support

(as it may be challenging to extend a residual welfare state)
Doling out

CARIN deservingness criteria
- Control
- Attitude
- Reciprocity
- Identity
- Need

Popular deservingness of needy groups
- Elderly
- Sick/disabled
- Unemployed
- Immigrants

REDISTRIBUTION DESIGN
- PAYING IN
- DOLING OUT
Doling out (data European Values Survey 1999)

Deservingness rank order by country
(national averages)

REDISTRIBUTION DESIGN
• PAYING IN
• DOLING OUT

[Bar chart showing deservingness rank order by country for different groups: Elderly, Sick/disabled, Unemployed, Immigrants.]
Interim conclusion 3

Europeans do make a difference

Welfare provision (or retrenchment) for some groups is more easily justified, than for other groups

“The poor” tend to be seen as undeserving: less so in a broad welfare state
IMPLEMENTATION

MISTARGETING
• OVERUSE
• UNDERUSE
IMPLEMENTATION

MISTARGETING
• OVERUSE
• UNDERUSE

Overuse
(data ESS 2008)

**Overuse**

- Not entitled recipiency
- Not trying to find a job
- Pretend to be sick
(data ESS 2008)

**IMPLEMENTATION**
- MISTARGETING
  - OVERUSE
  - UNDERUSE

**Overuse**

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**Underuse**
(data ESS 2008)

**IMPLEMENTATION**

MISTARGETING
- OVERUSE
- UNDERUSE

**Overuse**

- Not entitled recipiency
- Not trying to find a job
- Pretend to be sick

**Underuse**

- Insufficient benefits
- Less benefit than entitled to
IMPLEMENTATION

MISTARGETING
• OVERUSE
• UNDERUSE

(data ESS 2008)
Interim conclusion 4

Europeans perceive quite a bit of welfare fraud, but non-take-up as well

There is more trust in effective targeting in the more developed welfare states of Europe

Welfare quality a condition for institutional trust?
OUTCOMES

PERCEIVED CONSEQUENCES
• ECONOMIC
• MORAL
• SOCIAL
Economic
• welfare is strain on economy
• costs business too much in taxes

Moral
• welfare makes people lazy
• less willing to care for each other
• less responsible for family

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(data ESS 2008)
**Economic**
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**Moral**
- welfare makes people lazy
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**Social**
- welfare leads to a more equal society
- to less poverty
- easier to combine work and family life

(data ESS 2008)
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(data ESS 2008)
Interim conclusion 5

On balance, Europeans perceive the positive social consequences of welfare provision more strongly than the negative economic and moral consequences.

More and better performing welfare state gets more praise, not more critique.
GENERAL CONCLUSIONS 1

• All Europeans very much like the idea of a welfare state

• But ‘love’ requires good performance (North, West)
GENERAL CONCLUSIONS 2

Critical aspects of welfare state legitimacy

• ideological acceptance of the idea of a welfare state?

• convincing actual performance?

• what’s in it for the broad middle class?

• deserving target groups?

• trust in effective targeting?

• positive social consequences well-perceived?