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***Is there a European solidarity?***  
***Attitudes towards fiscal assistance for debt-ridden***  
***European Union member states***

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## **Abstract**

This paper analyses if European citizens are willing to show solidarity with debt-ridden EU member states during the recent crisis. Based on a theoretical concept comprehending four dimensions of solidarity - generalised willingness to support, existence of social cleavages, reasons of supporting others, acceptance of conditions a crisis country has to meet to receive assistance - we derived hypotheses stating that the existence of a European wide solidarity is rather unlikely. We analysed data from two Eurobarometer surveys 2010 and 2011 and a unique survey conducted in Germany and Portugal in 2012. Descriptive and multilevel analyses indicated that in 2010 and 2011, a narrow majority of all EU citizens supported fiscal assistance for crisis countries, and socio-economic and cultural cleavages in attitudes regarding financial assistance for crisis countries were rather low. Findings from the two country comparison showed that the willingness to show solidarity was predominantly guided by moral reasoning instead of the respondent's self-interest. However, German and Portuguese respondents disagree on austerity measures, with the exception of social spending cuts. Taken all together, we come to the conclusion that recent years have brought a new legitimacy to the use of EU bailout measures which are now a given European practice.

## **Keywords**

Attitudes towards solidarity, bail-outs, Eurobarometer, legitimacy, sovereign debt crisis, survey research

With the Euro and sovereign debt crises, the European Union (EU) has experienced one of the worst crisis since its inception. Whereas some observers criticised political measures taken by the EU to address the crisis as being cautiously insufficient (e.g. Giddens, 2014; Streeck, 2014), others argue that they demonstrate another step towards a deeper integration of the European Union (i.e. Gerhards and Lengfeld 2015). Within only three years, the interdiction of “bailout” for individual member states’ sovereign debts was de facto overturned. Since then, the wealthier Eurozone members have made enormous financial resources available to the debt-ridden member states, with these loans and guarantees leading to a hitherto unseen degree of intra-European wealth redistribution. Additionally, national economic, labour and social policies are to a large extent no longer determined by national governments, but by European and international institutions. One could assume that the crisis has pushed a previously unseen extent of solidarity and thus has strengthened the social dimension of the European integration.

There is little doubt that the different measures adopted by the EU follow the principle of self-serving assistance (Gerhards/Lengfeld 2015: 2): in order to protect the Eurozone, the affluent EU core countries support the crisis countries. However, the fact that self-interest plays an important role in the willingness to help the economically struggling countries and their citizens does not necessarily mean these are not acts of solidarity. Assisting others out of self-interest is also a form of solidarity (cf. Mau, 2006) and represents presumably the most important one in the European context. The affluent EU countries consent to assist the other EU countries with their deficits, for which they otherwise have no direct responsibility to pay.

In this paper, we assume that financial assistance for crisis countries organised and forced by EU and IMF can be only sustainable if it is also supported by the citizens of Europe. Their beliefs in the legitimacy of financial assistance may influence whether the EU and its member states will be able to cope with the crisis by further integration, or whether sovereign debt crisis will destabilise some of the member countries (i.e. the “donor” ones) or the EU as a whole. Therefore, we raise the question whether Europeans are willing to show solidarity with heavily indebted EU member states.<sup>1</sup> Relying on the distinction between system and social integration we formulated a broader solidarity concept which we used to formulate testable hypotheses. The analysed data stem from two Eurobarometer waves and from a unique survey we conducted in Germany and Portugal in 2012. Findings reveal that in 2010 and 2011, a narrow majority of

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<sup>1</sup> Recently published studies explained differences in attitudes toward specific policy-related instruments like Eurobonds (Daniele and Geys, 2012; Kuhn and Stoeckel, 2014) or focussed on citizens’ views toward bail-outs relying on data from one EU country (Bechtel et al., 2014). However, to our knowledge, there is no comprehensive study investigating the different dimensions of solidarity beliefs based on a theoretically derived concept we aimed at.

all surveyed EU citizens supported fiscal assistance for crisis countries. In lieu of this, we identified some socio-economic cleavages regarding bailouts, but they were rather small. Furthermore, persons showing solidarity were predominantly motivated by moral instead of utilitarian reasoning. Finally, citizens of donor and crisis states did not strongly disagree on austerity measures regarding social spending, but rather on public sector expenditure cuts. To sum up, findings by and large indicate that, according to our theoretical concept, the normative foundations of a European solidarity seem to already be established, and the crises unexpectedly may have strengthened the social dimension of the European integration.

### **A brief concept of European solidarity beliefs**

Although solidarity is seen as one of the core pillars of a well-organised society, there is no common understanding of the phenomenon due to different theoretical traditions, varying social and spatial contexts (social networks and classes, local communities, regions and states) and different institutions like welfare state regimes, regional federations or military alliances (Mau, 2006). For our purposes, David Lockwood's (1971) seminal distinction between system integration and social integration is an appropriate starting point for developing a concept of European solidarity beliefs. Whereas system integration refers to the act of combining or adding different parts of a social system to make an institutional compatible unit, social integration is linked to individual perspectives of cooperation and conflict in a social system. When applying this distinction to the sovereign debt crisis, solidarity is linked to both dimensions of societal integration. In a systemic perspective, solidarity is practiced with financial means - providing grants, loans or debt guarantees - in order to avoid bankruptcy of crisis countries, and is implemented and enforced by EU institutions, member state governments and the IMF. Regarding social integration, solidarity "means a sharing of feelings, interests, risks and responsibilities" (Schuyt 1998: 297). These common ideas of mutual risks and perceived responsibilities can function as a stabiliser for the institutional mechanisms of providing help at the systemic level. Applied to the crisis, European solidarity would be existent if the citizens of the territory of the European Union are willing to support member states facing severe economic troubles and thus back the EU's redistributive policies.

Interestingly, the opinions and attitudes of the European citizens hardly played a decisive role in the management of the European crisis. They are only indirectly involved in the decision-making processes, via the national governments they have elected and the members of the European parliament (which played a rather insignificant role during the crisis). Thus, citizens' impacts on the decision-making process is minimal, despite these decisions being made over billions of Euros that, in the worst case, will be transferred from some countries of the EU to others, and that eventually must be paid with their own productive capacities (i.e. taxes). Likewise, they were not consulted and included in the decisions regarding austerity measures (i.e. reductions in what their governments provide). In the following we suggest a multidimensional concept of solidarity beliefs aimed at measuring attitudes being resilient in terms of European political decision making processes. This concept consists of four dimensions: generalised willingness to support, existence of social cleavages, reasons of support, and acceptance of conditions a crisis country has to meet for receiving assistance.

#### *Generalised willingness*

Political elites have to act in compliance with their national citizens' attitudes and needs. Although public opinion may have little direct effect on concrete policy making in Brussels (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Toshkov, 2011), in the long run people's beliefs may influence whether the EU and its member states will be able to cope with crisis by further integration, or whether the sovereign debt crisis will destabilise some of the member countries (i.e. the "donor" ones) or the EU as a whole (Cabral, 2013; Gerodimos, 2013; Kriesi, 2012). Therefore, sustainable measures of European solidarity must not only rely upon a consensus between national governments at the EU level, but also on the support of the majority of all EU citizens. Thus, we assume majoritarian acceptance of the general idea of assisting member states facing tremendous economic troubles as a first and necessary condition of European solidarity.

#### *Cleavages*

It is not sufficient, however, to indicate solidarity only by majoritarian approval. Even then, minorities objecting to Europeanised solidarity may form socio-economical or cultural homogeneous groups which may become powerful forces in politics. Following Lipset and Rokkan (1967), cleavages pooling the most dissatisfied citizens can be picked up by political groups and parties and thus transmitted into the decision-making process. If strong cleavages emerge,

political efforts to strengthen mechanisms of financial support may run into a strong opposition. As previous research showed, two conflict lines toward processes of Europeanisation are likely to occur: cleavages linked to the socio-economic status of citizens, and cleavages based on value orientations (Ferrera, 2005; Kriesi et al., 2008; Fligstein, 2008; Gerhards and Lengfeld, 2013, 2015). Therefore, a politically resilient concept of European solidarity has to account for those cleavages. Accordingly, European solidarity is conditional on socio-economic and cultural cleavages being weak or even absent.

### *Reasons*

People may assign different motives for supporting others (i.e. Schwartz and Howard, 1982; Hechter, 1987). In the case of European solidarity beliefs, two contrasting rationales can be distinguished (Mau, 2006; Hooghe and Marks, 2005; de Vries and van Kersbergen, 2007). On the one hand, providing help may meet self-seeking interests. Citizens may approve of EU rescue funds under the assumption that they will ensure the prosperity of the individual or his country, regardless of belonging to a assisting or receiving country. We name this motive “utilitarian”. In contrast, individuals’ judgements may be motivated by morality. Here, two subtypes have to be distinguished. The first “civic” type was recently mentioned by Jürgen Habermas. He assumes that European solidarity has to be based on equal rights, allowing all Europeans to participate in resources covered by the European nation-states and take part in a non-coercive discourse of free and equal citizens (Habermas, 2012: 46). The second moral motive stems from the principle of “reciprocity” usually known from social policy schemes. Here, the giver expects that in the future, others will treat him with similar benevolence. We call this type “reciprocal”. Following Max Weber’s well-known idea of political legitimation, we assume European solidarity to be more resilient if citizens’ believe in moral, “wertrational” than in utilitarian, “zweckrational” reasons. If help becomes costly over time, i.e. due to loan default or by reason that austerity measures give rise to unemployment in crisis countries, utilitarians may be more likely to change their minds than persons relying on moral convictions. Thus, the more supporters refer to civic or reciprocal as opposed to utilitarian reasoning, the more durable is the political legitimacy of the EU’s institutionalized help.

### *Conditions of assistance*

This last dimension of solidarity does not refer to the legitimacy of solidarity in general, but focuses on the conditions under which financial assistance to a crisis country would be provided. These conditions can be considered a political minefield on which the expectations of citizens' from assistance providing and receiving countries may clash. Citizens of assisting countries may explicitly want the EU to negotiate far-reaching measures to ensure that the crisis country does everything in its power to overcome sovereign debt. This could be done by executing structural economic, fiscal and social welfare reforms to strengthen the countries' prospective economic performance, and/or by taking responsibility for keeping down costs (i.e. Rogers and Vasilopoulou, 2012; Hardiman and Reagan, 2013). Citizens from crisis countries, however, may tend to reject fiscal restrictions which are considered as a threat to individuals' purses as well as national wealth, as recently happened in Greece and Portugal (Gerodimos, 2013; Kriesi, 2012: 521). Thus, the more givers and receivers are divided over conditions of assistance, the more complicated political negotiations on financial rescue packages between the EU and governments of member states will be in the future.

### **Hypotheses**

To what degree does empirical reality correspond to this concept of European solidarity? According to recent developments, it is questionable if the conditions described above are fulfilled. By using our concept as a yardstick, we formulate four hypotheses which, in sum, suggest a rather sceptical picture of solidarity.

### *Generalised willingness*

Since 1986, after enacting the Single European Act, the EU's redistributive policy was mainly focused on territorial cohesion measures (Mau, 2006), using regional and structural funds in order to economically aid underdeveloped NUTS-II regions. EU rescue funds EFSF and ESM, in contrast, basically reallocate between national budgets. Thus they constituted a breach, with the interdiction of no bailout from the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, by infringing upon the principle of national budget sovereignty. Additionally, solidarity between citizens typically relies on strong cultural bonds like common social values or a shared history (Bayertz, 1999; Faist, 2001). These cultural bonds are predominantly anchored at the regional and the national levels but not at the European level. However, rescue funds would come into conflict with the



organically evolved symbolic codes, moral bindings and collective identity definitions prevailing in the respective nations. Thus, a strong European identity seems to be needed as a prerequisite for the willingness of transnational solidarity. As survey research shows, such identity does not seem to exist (Fligstein, 2009). Thus, the existence of strong transnational ties is not very likely.

H1: A majority of EU citizens reject provision of financial help to European crisis countries.

### *Cleavages*

It is a matter of fact that European integration has changed the distribution of wealth between citizens holding different socio-economic positions (Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Ferrera, 2005; Fligstein, 2008). In North-western EU countries, the opening of borders for goods, services and labour has given rise to economic competition, which in turn put pressure on workers disposing of low human capital. Due to the fact that their dependencies on welfare state service has increased over time (Edlund, 2007), they will expect their government to enhance employment and fight against poverty at home and not abroad. Likewise, social spending curbs, reduction of jobs and the capping of salaries notably in the public sector all threatened the most economically vulnerable living in the crisis countries. Thus, in both donor and crisis countries, particularly the economically most vulnerable citizens may have good reasons for opposing bailouts. Accordingly, the low educated, the low skilled, and the unemployed are assumed to be more likely to reject the idea of European solidarity.

H2a: Citizens lower in socio-economic status are more opposed to the idea of Europeanised solidarity.

Willingness to show solidarity may also vary with a country's economic performance. The less affluent a country is, the more its citizens will refuse fiscal transfers, by arguing that scarce resources should be used for national purposes first. Here, a recent incident is instructive. In 2011 European leaders wanted to expand size and powers of the EFSF rescue fund, but the parliament of Eurozone member Slovakia refused to participate in the loan facility. According to newspaper reports, Mr. Sulik, the speaker of the Slovak parliament, stated that it is unfair to ask Slovakia, the second-poorest country of the Eurozone, to guarantee loans for relatively

wealthier Greece and Portugal.<sup>2</sup> This example shows that for citizens from poorer countries, providing financial assistance to wealthier countries may contradict the very idea of solidarity.

H2b: The lower a country's wealth, the less likely its individuals support European solidarity.

An individuals' fundamental political orientation may influence whether or not European integration is supported (De Vries and Edwards, 2009). For the right-wing oriented, the nation-state is the only legitimate entity to provide solidarity to nationals. Thus, EU bailouts will be seen as a threat to national sovereignty (Bechtel et al., 2014). Persons with leftist orientations will also object to rescue funds, but for reasons of blaming the EU for ransoming banks instead of directly supporting citizens.

H2c: People with strong rightist and leftist political opinions refuse European solidarity, compared to citizens ascribing themselves to the political centre.

### *Reasons*

As a matter of fact, European integration predominantly has been a project of mutual material interest to increase the wealth of member states by establishing a common market and reducing trade barriers. The same applies to EU policies carried out during the crisis. Foremost, rescue funds have been established to prevent Eurozone member states from banking collapses that threaten the use of a common currency. When individual beliefs of citizens are supposed to be in line with EU policy rationales, the utilitarian motive is to be considered as the deciding motive, well beyond civic or reciprocity solidarity motives.

H3: Individual support of EU fiscal assistance is predominantly driven by utilitarian reasoning as opposed to moral motives of civic and of reciprocal solidarity.

### *Conditions*

As assumed above, the more citizens from assistance providing and receiving countries diverge on austerity measures, the more political bargaining on rescue funds may become conflictual. Thus, great discrepancies indicate a lack of European solidarity. To identify the extent of discrepancies, we have to look at different policy fields affected most by these measures. These

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<sup>2</sup> "Slovakia Rejects Euro Bailout" New York Times, 11.10.2011; [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/12/world/europe/slovak-leader-vows-to-resign-if-bailout-vote-fails.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/12/world/europe/slovak-leader-vows-to-resign-if-bailout-vote-fails.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

may be reduction of public expenditures by decreasing employment in the public sector, privatisation of state property, reducing the social welfare system's generosity (through benefit cuts or raising the retirement age), imposing tax increases or other structural reforms (i.e. reducing expenditures for public infrastructure).

Due to virulent political conflicts in some of the crisis countries, we assume attitudinal divergences between assisting and receiving countries to be greatest regarding social welfare cuts. Citizens of receiving countries are directly affected by these measures, while citizens from assisting countries may estimate these measures as effective means to fight sovereign debt. A somewhat smaller difference may occur regarding a cost reduction in the public sector, because this does not directly affect all citizens of crisis countries (e.g. by a reduced number of public servants). In contrast, cuts in infrastructural development may be most tolerable for citizens of both donor and receiving countries, because this aims at reducing public deficit, but may not be seen as affecting the individual budgets of citizens.

H4: Divergences in attitudes towards austerity measures between citizens of donor and crisis states are greatest regarding cuts in social welfare, in contrast to less polarization over cuts to public sector expenditures and infrastructure.

## **Data, Variables, and Methods**

### *Data*

We used data from three surveys. The first two are from the Eurobarometer EB 74.1 carried out in November 2010 and the EB 76.1 (September 2011). Based on representative national samples, random route design and face-to-face questioning technique, in 2011 26,856 Europeans (in 2010: 26,635) aged 15 or older were interviewed (European Commission, 2011; European Parliament, 2012).<sup>3</sup> Both surveys contained a question on general willingness to show solidarity. We used this item for testing hypothesis H1. To prove cleavage related hypotheses (H2a-c), we merged both data sets and analysed the multivariate impact of several variables indicating socio-economic and cultural cleavages (see details below).

However, Eurobarometer surveys do not contain specific questions on solidarity motives (H3) and austerity measures (H4). Thus, in 2012 we carried out a unique survey called "Fiscal Soli-

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<sup>3</sup> In our Eurobarometer analyses we include persons aged 18 or older only in order to ensure comparability with the FSEU survey (see below).

arity in the European Union” (FSEU). For financial reasons, the FSEU survey has been restricted to two Eurozone members. Germany was chosen because of its fiscal strength and central economic position for the whole Eurozone and its relative share of contributions to EFSF and ESM. Portugal was selected as a representative of a loans receiving country which widely complied with the fiscal consolidation measures negotiated with the IMF and EU, and there has been no serious public insurrection at the date of data collection 2012.

After translating the German master questionnaire into Portuguese and an additional check by a translating bureau, questionnaires were inserted into two omnibus surveys carried out by TNS infratest dimap and TNS Portugal. Respondents eligible to vote and aged 18 or over have been chosen from national standard list-assisted random digit dialling (RDD) and interviewed using CATI technique. The survey has been carried out in July 2012. In each country, 1,000 interviews were completed.<sup>4</sup>

### *Core Variables*

The following item of EB 74.1/76.1 was used to test hypotheses H1 and H2a-c: “In times of crisis, it is desirable for [Country name] to give financial help to another EU Member State facing severe financial and economic difficulties” (totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, totally disagree, don’t know).<sup>5</sup>

In order to measure solidarity motives according to hypothesis H3, the FSEU survey asked respondents to rate the following three items on the same scale used by Eurobarometer: “There are many reasons to state for or against fiscal help for EU member countries in trouble. What do you think about the following statements?” [rotating order]. “Financial help also is economically beneficial for our country” [utilitarian solidarity] / “It is our moral duty to help other member states that are in need” [civic solidarity] / “The European Union member states should help each other, as somewhere along the way every country may require help” [reciprocal solidarity].

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<sup>4</sup> Net response rates were 45.4 per cent in Germany and 21.0 per cent in Portugal. The lower response rate in Portugal may be explained by the higher degree of individual shocks the crisis evoked in Portugal, especially by the lower educated and those of low socio-economic position, meaning that these people have been stressed out by answering questions about the crisis. Thus, data have been weighted according to age groups, sex, region, urbanisation and educational degree.

<sup>5</sup> In the FSEU survey we replicated this question, with a slight difference in wording, using the same rating scale: In times of crisis, [Germany/Portugal] shall give financial help to other EU member states facing severe financial and economic problems”.

Linked to hypothesis H4, preferences toward austerity measures were surveyed using a list of suggested reasons to provide financial help. “Generally, countries in fiscal trouble are demanded to tackle their national budget in order to receive help. To what extent do you agree with the following proposals? If the EU country wants to receive financial assistance, then it should ... [rotating order] “cut social spending” / “cut pensions” / “reduce expenditures for public infrastructure, i.e. road construction” / “cut wages for federal employees” / “raise taxes” / “fire federal employees” / “increase working hours and age of retirement” / “pass state property into private hands”.

#### *Independent variables, related to cleavage hypotheses<sup>6</sup>*

As done in other studies, the respondent’s socio-economic status (H2a) is operationalised by education and labour market position (Bechtel et al., 2014; Kuhn and Stoeckel, 2014). In Eurobarometer surveys, educational attainment is measured by the respondent’s age when leaving full time education, recoded to low (0-15 years), medium (16-19 years) and high education (20 years and more), and to persons still studying. The labour market position is operationalised by workforce status (employed, unemployed not in labour force) and occupational position, according to Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992).

To test country level hypothesis H2b on the impact of wealth, we included the gross domestic product (2010) per capita (in PPP) to the merged EB 74.1/76.1 dataset. Additionally, we inserted another two macro variables, controlling for the extent to which a country is hit by sovereign debt. According to the self-interest of citizens from heavily indebted countries to cope with a bad fiscal situation, we assume approval of solidarity is higher in countries already receiving loans or in those with a high debt ratio. We thus inserted three dummy variables to the regression saying whether in 2010 a country was receiving loans, contributing to loans, or neither. Additionally, the ratio of total central government debt (as percentage of GDP 2010) was included. Accounting for debt leads to a net effect of wealth, to determine if citizens from affluent countries are more generous. Finally, a dummy indicates the wave of the data to account for unexplained changes of approval in solidarity from 2010 to 2011.

To identify potential cultural cleavages (H2c), Eurobarometer asked for the respondent’s political orientation, operationalised by self-placement on the left-right scale (1 = far left, 10 = far

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<sup>6</sup> For variable descriptions see table A2 in appendix.

right). To test for a non-linear U-curved effect, we additionally inserted a squared term to the regression.

Additionally, age and gender as control variables are included in the analysis.

### *Methods*

In order to test H1, we displayed relative frequencies of EB 76.1 (2011) interviewees' willingness to show solidarity and compared them with data from EB 74.1 (2010) to identify changes over time. To detect cleavages (H2a-c), we ran random intercept regressions accounting for contextual effects and nesting of individuals at the country level (Snijders and Bosker, 2012). As the dependent variable of generalised willingness to show solidarity is discrete, we performed ordered probit models, carried out by the Stata command "gllamm". Due to the fact that multilevel ordinal proportional odds models are difficult to fit, we followed the advice of Snijders and Bosker (2012: 312) and compared the outcomes for (1) versus (2 3 4), (1 2) versus (3 4), and (1 2 3) versus (4). Additionally, total explained and unexplained variances at both levels are shown (ibid: 305ff.).

According to H3, we displayed approval rates on reasons of solidarity included in the FSEU survey, sorted by country. In order to indicate to what degree motives are linked to the generalised indicator of European solidarity (see above), we grouped respondents depending on whether they show solidarity in general, and how they approve of different motives. We additionally carried out tests of proportions to examine significant group differences. To account for the problem of multiple comparisons, we adjusted the group-related significance levels following the Holm-Bonferroni method (Holm 1979).

To validate H4, we calculated relative frequencies of surveyed austerity measures, sorted by country, and tested for significant country differences as described above.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> We also ran a principal component factor analysis to account for latent variables. We found a three factor solution (see Table A.1 in the appendix) which we then used to sort the single items for presenting the descriptive findings. We also calculated comparisons of means based on the factor scores. Results confirmed findings from frequency analysis. Factorised means though are hard to compare according to different lengths of scale. Thus we did not display them but they are available on request.

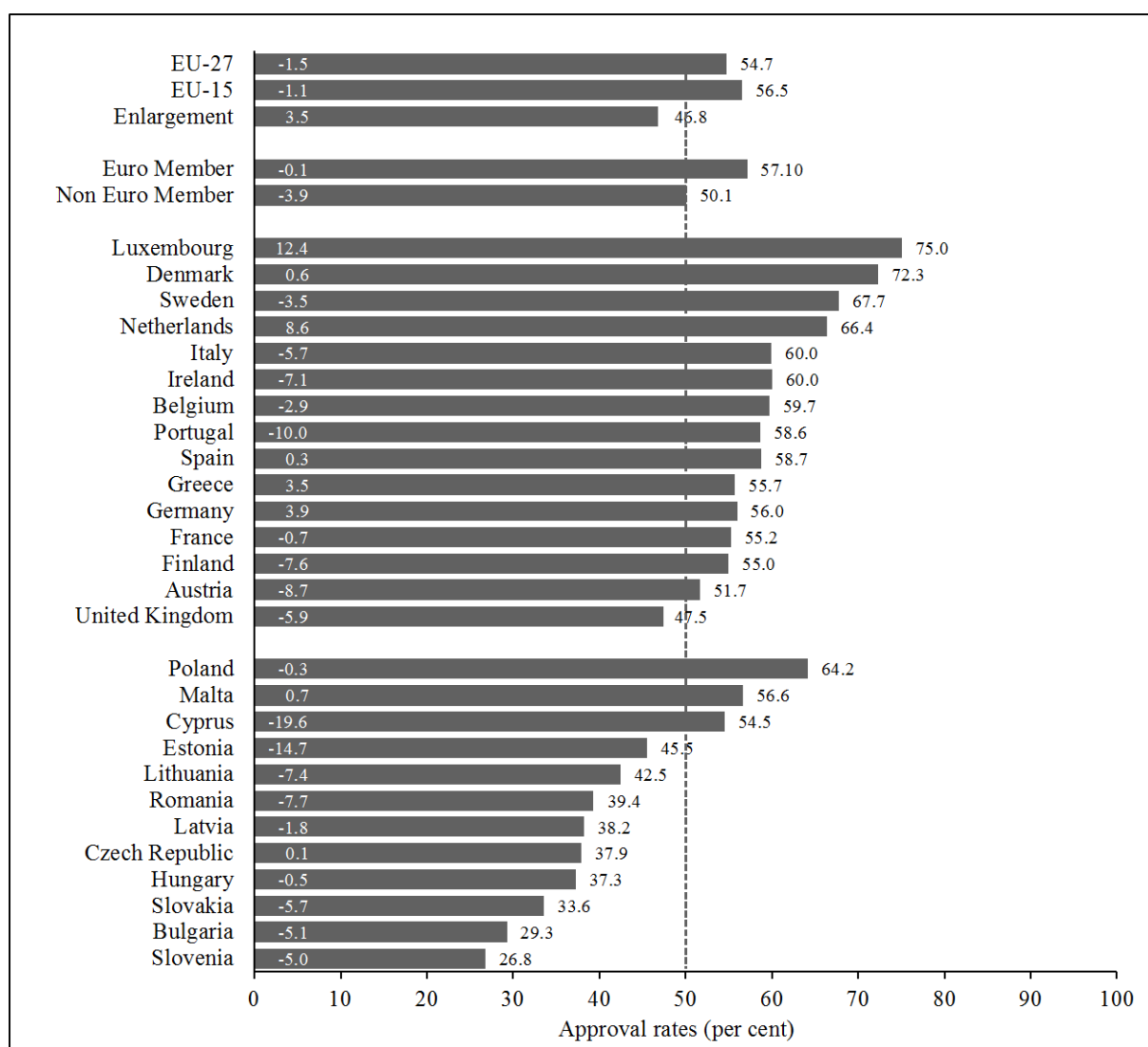
## Results

According to hypothesis H1, Figure 1 shows the general willingness of respondents to express solidarity. The length of the bars signals approval rates from 2011. On the left of each bar, the relative change from 2010 to 2011 is indicated. Data show that in 2011 a narrow majority of 54.7 per cent of EU-27 citizens supported financial assistance for crisis countries, and in 17 out of 27 countries supporters were in the majority. However, remarkable country differences in support emerged, ranging from 75 per cent in Luxembourg and 26.8 per cent in Slovenia. When grouping countries by duration of EU membership, findings demonstrate that nine out of ten countries refusing the idea of fiscal solidarity joined the Union in 2004 or later. Thus, findings suggest a cleavage between the older and the newer member states which may be explained by wealth differences.

Figure 1 further reveals that from 2010 to 2011 the number of EU-27 citizens showing solidarity only slightly decreased (-1.5). This change is mainly caused by a decrease in the EU-15 countries (-1.1), whereas in the enlargement countries support even grew (+3.5). Besides this, it is hard to identify a coherent change pattern. When comparing Eurozone member states, there was no clear change at the aggregated level. In some of the wealthier countries support increased (Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany) whereas it decreased in others (Italy, Austria, Finland). The same pattern is observed for loan receiving countries (increase in Greece, decrease in Portugal, Ireland and Cyprus).

Thus, although the crisis got worse from 2010 to 2011, a narrow majority was still willing to support financial assistance in 2011. Additionally, the gap between citizens from old and new member states diminished over time. Taken all together, H1, which denied majoritarian support for European solidarity, has to be rejected.

**Figure 1** Generalised willingness to show solidarity (relative frequencies)



Notes: Source: EB 74.1 (N = 18,430) and EB 76.1 (N = 19,837), adults only, own calculations, relative frequencies of 2011 approval rates are displayed (both approval categories have been merged; without d.k.-answers). In the left of the bars, relative change from 2010 to 2011 is shown; weighted, rounded.

In order to detect potential cleavages (H2a-c), Table 1 displays step-wise extended ordered probit random intercept regressions. Displayed odds ratios (OR) indicate a negative (positive) effect if  $OR < 1$  ( $OR > 1$ ). Model 1 shows that support for heavily indebted member states slightly fell from 2010 to 2011. Furthermore, probability to show solidarity increased with duration of attending school, but people still studying or serving apprenticeships were more supportive than the high-educated. This effect can be traced back to the opportunities to study abroad the EU offers to trainees and university students. Despite this, concealed cohort effects are unlikely, as we controlled for the respondent's age.



Findings further reveal a solidarity gap between the professional classes and all other occupational positions, including the unemployed and the inactive. This finding is in line with results from other research (Fligstein, 2008; Ferrera, 2005), saying that persons who do not benefit from opening borders and whose dependence on the welfare state has increased over time are more opposing of the general idea of European integration. Taken together both educational and class effects findings confirm H2a which stated that the economically most vulnerable people oppose European solidarity. In contrast to H2c, there is no significant effect of political attitudes, meaning that neither citizens with a strong rightist or leftist orientation tended to deny financial support, compared to those at the political centre.

However, the explained variance of Model 1 is very low. Individual level variables only account for 2.8 per cent of the total variance, and 84.1 per cent of the total unexplained variance is located at the individual level. This indicates that the potential for political cleavages according to socio-economic status and political attitudes of the individuals was rather low.

When accounting for differences in the socio-economic composition of the countries, Model 2 indicates that respondents living in a loan receiving country (2010: Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal) were more likely to show solidarity, compared to countries either contributing to EU funds or doing neither. Model 3 indicates a negative impact of the debt ratio (as a percentage of GDP), and model 4 reveals a positive effect of GDP. However, when simultaneously taking all macro variables into account, debt ratio turned to a slightly positive impact on solidarity, with GDP and crisis dummies remaining constant. According to bivariate calculations, interaction of GDP and debt ratio does not indicate strong multi-collinearity ( $b=.179$ ;  $R^2=.03$ ). This means that the debt ratio did not only vary between the wealthier EU-15 and the poorer EU-12 countries, but also within the group of the affluent EU countries to a remarkable degree. Thus, when controlling for debt, there was a clear effect of wealth on European solidarity as stated by H2b.

**Table 1** Determinants of attitudes towards fiscal solidarity (ordered probit random intercept regressions)

	<b>M0</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>M2</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>M4</b>	<b>M5</b>
	<i>OR/(se)</i>	<i>OR/(se)</i>	<i>OR/(se)</i>	<i>OR/(se)</i>	<i>OR/(se)</i>	<i>OR/(se)</i>
Wave (1 = 2011)		0.919*** (0.012)	0.922*** (0.012)	0.922*** (0.012)	0.921*** (0.012)	0.926*** (0.012)
Age (in years)		1.001 (0.001)	1.001 (0.001)	1.001 (0.001)	1.001 (0.001)	1.001 (0.001)
Gender (Ref.: male)		0.925** (0.012)	0.925*** (0.012)	0.924*** (0.012)	0.925*** (0.012)	0.924*** (0.012)
Education (Ref.: over 20 years)						
In apprenticeship/ study at university		1.122** (0.045)	1.133** (0.046)	1.131*** (0.046)	1.132** (0.046)	1.136** (0.046)
0-15 years		0.690*** (0.015)	0.705*** (0.015)	0.712*** (0.015)	0.713*** (0.016)	0.710*** (0.015)
16-19 years		0.778*** (0.012)	0.803*** (0.013)	0.808*** (0.013)	0.799*** (0.013)	0.806*** (0.013)
Socio-economic status (Ref.: Professionals)						
Intermediate class		0.929** (0.022)	0.922*** (0.022)	0.923** (0.022)	0.92*** (0.021)	0.918*** (0.021)
Petty Bourgeoisie		0.869*** (0.022)	0.841*** (0.032)	0.850*** (0.032)	0.853*** (0.032)	0.851*** (0.032)
Working class		0.847*** (0.023)	0.829*** (0.022)	0.827*** (0.022)	0.831*** (0.023)	0.827*** (0.022)
Unemployed		0.872*** (0.026)	0.855*** (0.026)	0.854*** (0.026)	0.861*** (0.026)	0.856*** (0.026)
Not in workforce		0.879*** (0.021)	0.866*** (0.021)	0.868*** (0.021)	0.864*** (0.021)	0.864*** (0.021)
Left right placement (1=far left, 10=far right)		1.0003 (0.011)	1.004 (0.121)	1.007 (0.012)	1.01 (0.012)	1.003 (0.012)
Left right placement squared		0.999 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)	0.998* (0.001)	0.998 (0.001)
Country group (Ref.: Receiver)						
Donor			0.823*** (0.02)	0.783*** (0.021)	0.724*** (0.019)	0.871*** (0.024)
Neutral			0.845*** (0.02)	0.813*** (0.019)	0.755*** (0.018)	0.816*** (0.021)
Debt ratio				0.999*** (0.0002)		1.001*** (0.0002)
GDP (per head)					1.003*** (0.0002)	1.003*** (0.0002)
-2LL	53598.2	53056.5	52912	52897.7	52896.8	52874.8
Explained variance		2.8 %	3 %	3.1 %	5.2 %	4.7 %
Unexplained variance at individual level		84.1 %	93.4 %	93.1 %	90.6 %	91.8 %
Unexplained variance at country level		13.1 %	3.5 %	3.8 %	4.2 %	3.5 %

Notes: Source: merged Eurobarometer 74.1/76.1, Eurostat 2010/2011, N = 38,267, adults only, own calculations; odds ratios are displayed (standard errors in parentheses), \*  $p_t < .05$ , \*\*  $p_t < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p_t < .001$ .

In sum, the more affluent a country, the more citizens supported generosity toward countries in need. Moreover, macro level effects do not indicate strong potentials for political conflicts. Although unexplained between-country variance was relatively low, insertion of macro variables gave a considerable decrease to it. However, it contributed to overall explained variance to a small extent only. This brings us to the conclusion that in the beginning of 2010, the probability of cleavages concerning European solidarity was rather low.

Table 2 depicts specific reasons for solidarity among German and Portuguese respondents, according to FSEU data. More than 81 per cent of Germans and almost 90 per cent of Portuguese agreed with reciprocity whereby member states “should help each other, as somewhere along the way every country may require help”. A smaller majority supported the other two motives with 63 per cent of the Germans and 73.4 per cent of the Portuguese endorsing the civic solidarity motive, whereas 64.8 per cent in Germany and 70.6 per cent in Portugal indicated utilitarian reasoning. When looking at differences between the proponents and opponents of generalised solidarity, approval rates of the former were significantly higher than those of the latter, and approval to the reciprocity item exceed 90 per cent in Germany and reached almost 100 per cent in Portugal. Even among citizens opposing the general idea of European solidarity, a majority of respondents supported this motive. All group differences between proponents and opponents are significant ( $p_z < .0001$ ).

Although the utilitarian argument has more followers in Germany than in Portugal, differences between both countries are relatively small. Thus, willingness to show solidarity predominantly seemed to rely on moral motives. Although both countries were affected differently by the crisis, we could not obtain significant differences in reasoning. Thus, hypothesis H3 which assumed that European solidarity will be mainly driven by a utilitarian motive is disconfirmed.

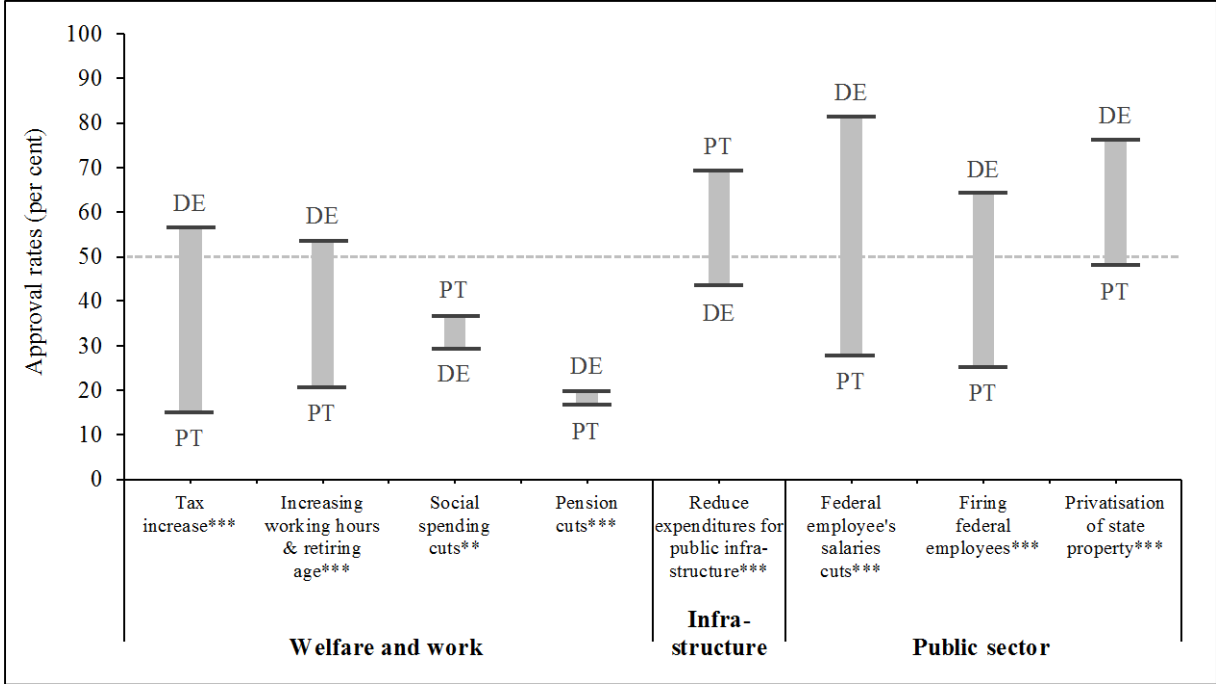
**Table 2** Solidarity motives (relative frequencies, approval rates only)

		N	Utilitarian solidarity	Reciprocal solidarity	Civic solidarity
<i>Portugal</i>	All respondents	843	70.6	89.7	73.4
	Proponents of generalised solidarity	374	86.8	97.7	92.5
	Opponents of generalised solidarity	469	57.8	83.3	58.2
			$z = -9.61^{***}$	$z = -10.33^{***}$	$z = -10.93^{***}$
<i>Germany</i>	All respondents	806	64.8	81.5	63.0
	Proponents of generalised solidarity	453	83.6	96.6	80.6
	Opponents of generalised solidarity	353	45.6	66.1	44.9
			$z = -12.71^{***}$	$z = -12.06^{***}$	$z = -11.69^{***}$

Source: FSEU 2012; own calculations; both approval categories have been merged; without d.k.-answers; weighted, rounded. z-tests (proponents vs. opponents) with individually adjusted alpha errors following the Holm-Bonferroni correction, \*\*\*  $p_z < .0001$ .

Figure 3 displays austerity preferences according to hypothesis H4. Relative frequencies show that German respondents foremost wanted the crisis country to reduce expenditures in the public sector. Consequently, 81.3 per cent spoke out for cuts of federal employee’s salaries, 64.1 per cent favoured lay-offs of civil servants, and 76.2 per cent called for privatisation. In contrast, there was no German majority for cutting social benefits (29.6) and pensions (20.3) in the crisis country, and only a narrow one for raising taxes (56.5) and increasing working hours and retiring age (53.6). Moreover, Germans by majority did not accept cuts in public infrastructure which they might consider as a precondition for economic growth.

**Figure 2** Acceptance of austerity measures (relative frequencies, means, approval rates only)



Source: FSEU Survey 2012; N<sub>Germany</sub> = 806; N<sub>Portugal</sub> = 843; own calculations, both approval categories have been merged; without d.k.-answers; weighted, rounded. z-tests with individually adjusted alpha errors following the Holm-Bonferroni correction, \*\*  $p_z < .001$ , \*\*\*  $p_z < .0001$ .

In Portugal, most approval rates remained much lower than in Germany, obviously due to the countries’ situation as receiving loans from rescue funds. The Portuguese rather accepted cuts in infrastructure (69.2) and enforcement of privatisation (48.1), both being measures not directly threatening their household incomes. Yet they strongly refused an increase of taxes (15.2), working hours or retiring age (20.7), firing public employees (25.3) and salary cuts for clerks (27.8).

Most important, citizens from both countries agreed to avoid social benefits and pensions cuts. This finding supports the notion that the most vulnerable people in a crisis country should not be burdened by additional austerities. Contrastingly, both nations were substantially divided

over tax increase and public sector cuts, as the length of the bars indicate. This may evolve into an explosive political issue at the national or European level, as it did in 2012 and 2013 in Portugal and Greece where several general strikes were targeted to withdraw belt-tightening measures in public employment.<sup>8</sup> Although significant, mean differences regarding infrastructure cuts may not evoke massive conflicts, inasmuch the Portuguese accepted it to a higher degree than the Germans. All country differences were highly significant with  $p_z < .001$ . In sum, hypothesis H4 is not confirmed as not social welfare cuts but costs reductions in the public sector divided attitudes regarding austerity measures of citizens of a donor and receiving country.

## Conclusion

In this paper we raised the question to what extent European citizens are willing to support debt-ridden EU member states. Based on a concept consisting of four solidarity dimensions - generalised willingness to support, existence of social cleavages, reasons for support, and acceptance of conditions a crisis country has to meet for receiving help - we derived hypotheses stating that the existence of a European wide solidarity is rather unlikely. Using data from two Eurobarometer waves and from FSEU survey carried out in Germany and Portugal in 2012, analyses summarily did not support our sceptical view. 1) In 2010 a narrow majority of all EU citizens and of all EU countries supported financial help for crisis countries. Whilst the crisis deepened from 2010 to 2011, public support did not shrank to a high degree. 2) Although we observed some cleavages related to financial assistance at the individual level, findings indicated that a strong mobilisation against European solidarity measures is unlikely. Additionally, citizens from the affluent core of the EU were willing to support the poorer ones. This finding notably underlines the existence of European solidarity by demonstrating evidence of one of its crucial preconditions: the economically strongest backs the weakest. 3) Findings from FSEU survey reveal that when Germans and Portuguese supported financial assistance, they predominately relied on “wertrational” instead of “zweckrational” motives. Thus, we expect support of rescue funds to be more durable, according to political legitimacy. 4) In both countries a majority disagreed on cutting social spending and pensions in the crisis countries, which again supports the notion that the givers wanted to avoid the worsening of the economic situation of the poorest.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/27/us-portugal-strike-transport-idUSBRE95Q09N20130627>.

In sum, results show that in the years 2010-2012, European solidarity was relatively high, at least higher than hypothesised. Thus, within the crisis European integration was not only deepened by building up new institutions of intra-European redistribution and by setting rules of regulating the banking sector to avoid future bailouts (systemic integration), but also by the legitimacy beliefs of the citizens (social integration). Insofar the crisis has pushed a previously unseen extent of solidarity and thus has strengthened the social dimension of the European integration.

Findings nevertheless denoted at least two severe obstacles to European solidarity. 1) At the country level, citizens from almost all former socialist countries refused financial assistance for crisis countries. This observation may be due to the fact that in all these countries the standard of living is lower than in the Southern European crisis countries. This does not compellingly mean that Middle Eastern Europeans would refuse solidarity in principle. It rather showed that citizens from the economically weakest countries do not consider themselves responsible to back the stronger ones – even if they were faced by the crisis. 2) The second obstacle lays in the dissent between givers and receivers about acceptability of austerity measures, especially salary cuts and lay-offs of federal employees, increase of taxes and working hours or retiring age. Some of these measures provoked massive political conflicts in the troubled countries, so in 2011 and 2012 as in Greece, unions called national strikes to force the Greek government to withdraw pension and wage cuts for public service workers, and riots paralysed much of public life (Gerodimos 2013). Whereas citizens of receiving countries strongly rejected these restrictions, citizens of assisting countries might explicitly consider them as appropriate to overcome the crisis. Here, the conflicting positions of the national governments are strongly backed up by their peoples' beliefs.

However, two serious limitations of these findings must be noted. First, it remains unclear how stable solidarity attitudes are over a period of time longer than two years, something which was not measurable here due to restrictions of Eurobarometer data. Therefore, if the crisis does not pass as expected by the citizens, i.e. due to increasing financial burdens of the citizens, acceptance rates may decline and discrepancies between donor and receiving countries may increase. Second, our evidence on specific solidarity motives and austerity preferences was based only on a two country comparison. Thus, we have to interpret respective results as being explorative rather than representative for the entire EU.

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## Anhang

**Table A1** Austerity measures: latent variables structure

	<b>Public Sector</b>	<b>Work and Income</b>	<b>Infra- structure</b>	<b>H<sup>2</sup></b>
Privatisation of state property	.69	.11	.17	.51
Federal employee's salaries cuts	.78	.12	.15	.65
Firing federal employees	.80	.08	.03	.64
Social spending cuts	-.04	.69	.32	.58
Pension cuts	.08	.77	.01	.60
Increase of working hours & retiring age	.35	.59	-.21	.52
Tax increase	.38	.59	-.21	.53
Reduce expenditures for public infra- structure	.00	.02	.92	.84
Eigenvalue	2.62	1.24	1.03	

Note: Source: FSEU 2012, N = 1649, own calculations, principal component analysis with varimax rotation.

**Table A2:** Merged Eurobarometer dataset 74.1/76.1: description of variables (N=38,267)\*

Variable	Range	Definition	Mean (SD)/ Rel. Freq.
Willingness to show solidarity	1-4	“In times of crisis, it is desirable for [Country name] to give financial help to another EU Member State facing severe financial and economic difficulties” totally disagree tend to disagree tend to agree totally agree	19.96 % 26.54 % 41.49 % 12.01 %
Age	18-95	Age in years	49.53 (17.31)
Education	1-4	Fulltime education in years: 0-15 years 16-19 years more than 20 years still studying	17.25 % 44.11 % 33.46 % 5.18 %
Occupational status	1-6	professional /managerial intermediate class petty bourgeoisie working class unemployed not in workforce (incl. student, retired)	14.79 % 19.84 % 3.85 % 11.84 % 7.77 % 41.91 %
Left/right scale	1-10	far left - far right	5.31 (2.15)
Country group	1-3	Receiver (CY, GR, IRE, PT) Donor (AT, BE, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IT, LU, NL, MT, SI, SK) neutral (other) <i>Source: EFSF (<a href="http://www.efsf.europa.eu/attachments/EFSSF%20FAQ%202013-12-09.pdf">http://www.efsf.europa.eu/attachments/EFSSF%20FAQ%202013-12-09.pdf</a>)</i>	11.45 % 49.71 % 38.84 %
GDP	44-262	GDP per capita in PPS, 2010 <i>Source: Eurostat (<a href="http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&amp;init=1&amp;plugin=1&amp;language=en&amp;pcode=tec00114">http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&amp;init=1&amp;plugin=1&amp;language=en&amp;pcode=tec00114</a>)</i>	99.46 (34.57)
Total central government debt	6.5-146	total central government debt (% of GDP), 2010. <i>Source: Eurostat (<a href="http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&amp;language=en&amp;pcode=teina225">http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&amp;language=en&amp;pcode=teina225</a>)</i>	62.46 (30.51)

\* For a description of FSEU 2012 variables see ‘Data, Variables, and Methods’ section.

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Informationen und Bezugsmöglichkeiten:

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