

Citizens' views on (un)conditionality in the
activating welfare state:
What determines public attitudes towards
work obligations attached to social rights?

Federica ROSSETTI

Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de
graad van Doctor in de Sociale Wetenschappen

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INTRODUCTION

The welfare states were born with the explicit aim to protect citizens from the risks of the market associated with an interruption of income due to various factors, such as old age, sickness or unemployment. During the last decades, a process of restructuring of the welfare states has transformed the nature of the citizens' protection principle. Although some critical observers might argue that European welfare states have never been totally universal and unconditional, in the mid-90s quite a radical change occurred in the conception of the welfare state as a provider of 'unconditional rights'. From that period, European welfare states – although at different paces and in different ways – have shifted their main roles “from safety net to springboards” (World Bank, 2001), becoming *activating welfare states*. The welfare state still represents the most important redistribution system that covers the needs of those who do not have enough resources to live or cannot provide for themselves; and it also helps those who are transitorily in need, such as the unemployed. However, the activation shift that has taken place from the 1990s implied a change in the conception of the welfare recipients. Of course, even before this change welfare recipients have not always been considered deserving of unconditional support, but what the activation shift has brought about is the idea that the citizens – and not only benefit recipients – have to be active. More specifically, individuals have to be *economically* active, responsible for themselves, and they have to participate to the labour market. For this reason, individuals can be exempted from their responsibilities only if they have justifiable and specific reasons. This exemption, however, does not always equate to receiving a benefit without any conditions attached.

In this context of shift towards activating welfare states, public attitudes towards the welfare state have not remained impassive. According to welfare state attitudes research, there are two main intertwined elements that influence each other in multiple ways: public policy and public opinion (Brooks & Manza, 2006). On the one side, supporters of the policy feedback theory look at how public policy influences citizens' support for policies (Pierson, 1993). On the other side, looking at the relationship from a different direction, public opinion about social welfare policies inversely affects policy decisions taken by political actors. Hence, according to this policy responsiveness mechanism, in democratic contexts voters are able to influence policy spending via their electoral power to (re-)vote for those public officials deemed to bring forward their policy preferences (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Page & Shapiro, 1983).

These mechanisms are investigated in an increasing number of empirical studies on public support for activation policies and welfare conditionality¹, which reveal that these policies are highly supported across the European countries. However, in addition to studying how popular these policies are among the public, it is also equally relevant to understand and disentangle the mechanisms behind public support for these policies. Different interpretations might lead the public to support activation policies.

Activation policies would allow labour market outsiders – those without a paid job or with unstable jobs – to re-enter the labour market relatively quick, thus they are supported because they are seen as a positive instrument. On the other hand, activation policies could receive support because they are seen as a form of ‘punishment’ to those who are deemed to be workshy.

The different interpretations of activation policies are related to a long-standing question in welfare attitudes, namely what drives support for welfare policies: whether it is self-interest or ideological beliefs, or (a combination of) both. In the field of activation policies, this questions remains open (Knotz, 2021), not only at the individual level of explanation, but also at the country level. Concerning the individual level, theoretical mechanisms behind support for activation are intertwined, especially for some social groups that are more directly connected with welfare conditionality, such as the unemployed. Regarding the contextual explanations, cross-national differences might be related to several factors, ranging from the more traditional institutional differences – e.g. related to the economic situation or the specific national welfare system – to more cultural differences in terms of deservingness of the recipients. The relations between individual-level factors and support for activation policies, as well as the interconnections between macro-level factors, need to be further investigated.

Despite being built on the principle of activating the citizens, contemporary welfare states are facing a raise in public debates around a principle that – at least in theory – calls welfare conditionality into question. Economic and labour market risks coming from technological developments (such as digitalisation and automation) and from the crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to increase awareness on a policy proposal that is a potential solution to address these risks: a universal basic income (UBI). In fact, in its ideal-typical form², a UBI is based on the idea of *unconditionality*, namely that a fixed amount of money is paid to everyone, independently from their occupational status and the other sources of income. And – most importantly for this dissertation – independently from the behaviour of the recipient. This is where the idea of UBI ‘clashes’ with the pillar of activation policies, namely conditionality.

While the popularity of a basic income proposal is becoming a hot topic in welfare attitudes research, to the best of our knowledge there are no studies that relates support for unconditionality principles to support for welfare conditionality. Only a few studies have focused on the relation between support for social rights and welfare obligations of the welfare recipients, and these studies will be the starting point for the second part of the dissertation.

Taking into consideration this context of conditionality and unconditionality within contemporary welfare states, this dissertation has two main goals. First, it aims to contribute to the literature of policy support by investigating public attitudes towards demanding active labour market policies (throughout the text referred to as *demanding ALMPs*). Second, it broadens the spectrum of attitudes towards welfare obligations to explore how these relate to attitudes towards unconditional welfare rights.

To this end, the structure of the thesis is divided as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the research topic, the research goals, the data used in the empirical chapters and the methodology. The empirical chapters from 2 to 6 are dedicated to the analysis of public attitudes towards activation policies, and how people articulate and combine opinions on the two constitutive aspects of social policy: unconditionality and conditionality. In particular, Chapter 2 analyses the individual-level mechanisms behind support for ALMPs, in terms of self-interest and ideologies. Chapter 3 builds up on this more traditional division and adds to this research area new insights on the roles of policy paradigm and ideas on the cause of unemployment in explaining public attitudes for ALMPs. In Chapter 4, the concepts of self-interest, ideologies, and perceptions of the unemployed are investigated at the country-level, with a focus on the cross-national differences in support for ALMPs across European countries. Chapters 5 and 6 give a more encompassing view on how people combine support for welfare rights and obligations for the unemployed, as well as how people justify support for an unconditional basic income and support for welfare conditionality. To conclude, Chapter 7 provides an overview of the main findings and discusses the policy implications of the empirical results.

NOTES

¹ We need to keep in mind that here, when I refer to ‘activation’ and evidences about activation policies support, I mainly refer to demanding active labour market policies (ALMPs). There are little to no empirical studies on the social legitimacy of enabling policies.

² The term ‘ideal-typical’ here refers to the largely adopted definition of basic income given by the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), a network of academics, students, and other people active in different organisations interested in basic income (<https://basicincome.org/about-bien/>). Their definition of basic income is the following: “A Basic Income is a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement.” (<https://basicincome.org/about-basic-income/>).

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter defines the activating welfare states and their public support. Before jumping to the empirical analysis of individuals' attitudes towards activation policies, and their relation with attitudes towards welfare rights – the focus of the next five chapters – it is necessary to identify the context in which activation policies have originated, and why it is important to study public opinion on policy measures. In the first section, an overview of the recent history of European welfare states, from their golden age to their most recent trends, is provided. This part analyses in particular the development of active labour market policies, and the public debates around a basic income proposal. After introducing the historical review, the attention of this chapter shifts to public opinion with a section that covers the main theoretical perspectives explaining citizens' attitudes towards the activating welfare state, and that highlights the importance of studying these attitudes. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to the empirical strategies employed throughout the next chapters, giving a description of the datasets and methods used to answer to the research questions of the dissertation.

1.1 POLICY CONTEXT: THE ACTIVATING WELFARE STATES

Since their outset, European welfare states have witnessed alternating periods of expansion and curtailments. The time frame from the Second World War up to the 1970s – what is usually called the 'golden age' – was characterized by their development under favourable circumstances (Hemerijck, 2013; Taylor-Gooby, 2004; van der Veen, Yerkes, & Achterberg, 2012). The main goal of the welfare state, ensured through neo-Keynesian policies, was to provide for citizens' needs in case they were inadequately satisfied by the market (e.g., in case of unemployment, or pension) and in those scenarios where welfare provision was perceived to be desirable (Taylor-Gooby, 2004).

The 'golden age' was then gradually replaced by a 'silver age', where citizens' welfare continued to be the focus of policies, but the welfare states had to deal with manifold pressures (Taylor-Gooby, 2002). First, this period started with the economic crisis that followed the oil shocks of the 1970s, which contributed to the restructuring process of the Western – and later, of the Eastern – European welfare states and of their labour markets (Handler, 2009; van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017). Not only the fiscal crisis was responsible for the redefinition of the welfare states, but also a series of challenges, such as globalization, individualization (van der Veen et al., 2012), pressures from demographic changes, for example population ageing (Pierson, 2001) and increasing immigration. These challenges undermined

the social basis of the welfare state and questioned how to recalibrate the welfare resources according to the importance attached to specific welfare area or target group (van der Veen et al., 2012).

These broader societal, economic and cultural challenges have significantly transformed the social policy of European countries, causing major reforms in the field of pensions, unemployment compensation, and creating new policies such as childcare and parental leave (Bonoli & Natali, 2012). These new policies were designed to address *new social risks*, namely those situations resulting from the socio-economic changes of the post-industrial societies, such as the increasing participation of women in the labour market (Bonoli, 2006). The ‘silver age’ era, characterised by retrenchment measures to face the external pressures on the welfare system, paved the way for a new era of welfare settlement (Hemerijck, 2013; Taylor-Gooby, 2008).

From the 1990s onwards, European societies have witnessed a renovated strategy of social policy originated from an ideological shift in the conception of policies and welfare recipients: the social investment strategy – also called ‘flexicurity’, or ‘new social risks policy agenda’ (Bengtsson, de la Porte, & Jacobsson, 2017; Bonoli, 2013; Bonoli & Natali, 2012; Hemerijck, 2013; Taylor-Gooby, 2004, 2008). Regarding social policies, they have increasingly prioritised employment, with the main objectives of expanding labour market opportunities and promoting citizens’ labour market participation (Bonoli, 2013; Bonoli & Natali, 2012; Taylor-Gooby, 2008). Regarding the conception of welfare recipients, the new approach emphasises individual responsibilities and self-activity of citizens (Taylor-Gooby, 2008).

The adoption of an active type of social policy might be considered as “a true paradigm shift in social policy-making” (Bonoli, 2013, p. 1). Contrary to the post-industrial welfare state, in which the principal aim was to protect incomes in case of downturns – the “safety net” – the new paradigm is based on the idea that social policy needs to help people to proactively enter or re-enter the labour market – the “springboard” or “trampoline” (Bonoli, 2013; Cox, 1998; World Bank, 2001). According to this view, welfare support has to be guaranteed for those who are more vulnerable, thus not able to provide for themselves, but at the same time those who are able to be in the labour market need to be urged to do so. This does not mean that the welfare states abandoned their essential function of income protection, but that the promotion of the labour market participation has become a likewise – maybe even more – important responsibility of the advanced welfare state (Bonoli, 2013).

It is in this context that the term *activation* started to be used as a sort of ‘umbrella term’ to refer both to a large array of policy measures and strategies, and the policy paradigm behind these more concrete measures. These measures cross-cut multiple areas of welfare and labour market policies, including active labour market policies (ALMPs),¹ but also reforms and programmes in the field of, for instance, unemployment benefits, social assistance, pensions and childcare. According to Hvinden (2008), *activation* is frequently used with reference to three elements: (a) supplying resources to welfare

recipients to enhance their skills and knowledge; (b) establishing the conditions for benefits and services receipt; (c) cutting duration and level of benefits to some extent. The prevention of negative consequences of unemployment and social exclusion through enhancing personal skills, combined with the restoration of civic duties, gives to activation a “Janus-faced character” (Bengtsson, 2014, p. S66), which takes the form of two distinct types of policy measures. Despite diverse labels have been used, scholars mainly refer to these approaches as *demanding* and *enabling* activation (Dingeldey, 2007; Eichhorst, Kaufmann, Konle-Seidl, & Reinhard, 2008).

On the one hand, activation is conceived as a combination of recommodification and work conditionality, and it manifests itself through manifold measures, among which: benefit cuts, tighter definition criteria for the jobs that are suitable for the jobseeker, compulsory participation of the jobseekers to labour market programmes and enforcing sanctions on those who do not meet these obligations (Dingeldey, 2007). Under this approach, sanctions are intended to be repressive instruments (Eichhorst et al., 2008; Raffass, 2017), since they urge those individuals without a paid job to get back to the labour market as fast as possible, often at the expenses of job quality (Fervers, 2019) or of individual’s health (Williams, 2021).

On the other hand, activation is conceived as a form of improvement of the human capital, which is reached through the provision of work incentives, such as in-work benefits, and it enables job seekers to take an active role in the quest of a job, for instance by offering them training schemes and mobility grants. In this sense, activation emphasises the development of skills by the expansion of labour opportunities aiming at social re-inclusion, not only into the paid labour market, but in the society (Eichhorst et al., 2008). Under this approach, there are still sanctions, however they are conceived in the first place as behavioural incentives rather than measures to punish the recipients (Dingeldey, 2007).

Some welfare state scholars define the two approaches with different labels, such as ‘negative’ versus ‘positive’ (Kananen, Taylor-Gooby, & Larsen, 2006), or ‘liberal’ versus ‘universalistic activation’ (Barbier, 2004; Barbier & Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2004). Punitive measures of the demanding activation are devised as negative instruments for the beneficiaries, and the incentives of the enabling activation as positive means for the development of the individual. What it is widely recognised is the fact that the most adopted type of activation among the European countries has been the negative activation (Knotz, 2018a; Taylor-Gooby, 2008), mainly promoted by the centre-right parties (Taylor-Gooby, 2004). On the contrary, social democratic parties have fostered the extension of a positive activation, supporting skills’ development and labour market entry (Taylor-Gooby, 2004). It was in these countries, in fact, that the social investment strategy was firstly introduced, as it will be presented in the next section. Notwithstanding the attempts to identify two – diametrical – approaches, some authors highlight the existence of country-specific policies that cannot be classified either under one approach or the other

(Bonoli & Natali, 2012). What happens in reality is that every country mixes and matches active policy measures according to its own institutional, political and economic setting.

While the focus of the empirical chapters lies on public attitudes towards the so-called demanding active labour market policies for the unemployed, these attitudes cannot be understood without contextualising them in the framework of the activating welfare state. Building on the definition of Bonoli (2010, p. 435), “activation turn” is used in this dissertation to indicate a paradigm shift in social and labour market policy built on three main pillars. First, activation policies imply a renewed vision of the individual and citizenship. The individual is seen as an active citizen, responsible for his or her (financial) situation, who needs to take part to the labour market whenever is possible. Second, activation policies are built on a renewed vision of the state: not only providing passive benefits, but provider of practical instruments for citizens’ activation (Giddens, 1998), Third, the activation paradigm implies that social rights are not granted unconditionally, on the contrary welfare obligations are an essential feature of the active welfare state and they are coupled with welfare rights.

1.1.1 Origins of the activation policies

This section provides a brief overview of the origins of activation policies in the area of labour market (ALMPs). As previously mentioned, the term *activation policies* refers to a broader definition of policy measures addressing different welfare recipients, and given that the focus of the empirical chapters is placed on the unemployed, it is more plausible to follow the evolution of these policies rather than that of a general activation of all the welfare recipients. In what follow, I mainly draw on the work of Bonoli (2010, 2013) on the origins of ALMPs, and a more recent review by Knotz (2018) on the rising of conditionality in Europe.

Even if the welfare states have never been only providers of resources without conditions, the ‘activation turn’ has implied a quite radical vision of the paradigm at the basis of welfare provisions. In the context of public attitudes towards specific policies, it is crucial to reconstruct where these specific policies come from, for at least two reasons. First, an overview of the evolution of activation policies is helpful to understand how these policies were initially thought, and how they developed. As it will be illustrated, the origin of these policies dates back to the 50s, but the shape of the policies with which we are currently familiar is different from their first conception. Second, understanding the paradigm on which the policies are built is needed to understand the ideological roots of support for that specific policies (see Chapter 3), which seem to go beyond the traditional political cleavages (Häusermann, 2012).

According to many scholars, activation strategies trace back in Sweden, in the 1950s, as an idea originated in the trade unions and that became known as the ‘Rehn-Meidner model’, from the names of

the two economists who proposed it. One of the aims of this model was to reach a “sustainable full employment” – namely, full employment without inflationary pressures – mainly through a more egalitarian wage distribution (Bonoli, 2010, p. 444). In this pre-crisis period, characterised by a rapid economic growth, active policy was mainly oriented towards boosting productivity through investing in human capital.² These measures, according to Bonoli (2013), should be considered more as economic tools rather than social policy instruments.

Soon after the economic crisis of the 1970s, a second phase has been identified in the history of ALMPs. This period was characterised by a change of the focus of policy measures from the supply side to the demand-side, with the major aim of keeping “people busy”, namely to avoid human capital deterioration (Bonoli, 2010, p. 441). This aim of occupation was pursued through different measures, for instance via an expansion of public employment in the Nordic countries – with Sweden once again being the leader in this (Bonoli, 2010; Weishaupt, 2011).

It is between 1980 and 1999 that we witness a sharp increase in spending on activation policies across the European countries, although with some variations across the welfare state regimes (Taylor-Gooby, 2004, p. 19).³ Especially in the late 1990s, the “creation of a ‘social investment state’ through supportive social provision instead of compensatory transfer benefits” was called for by many welfare state scholars, together with welfare state reforms aimed at social inclusion principally through labour market integration (Larsen & Taylor-Gooby, 2004, p. 187).

This idea took a concrete form in the year 2000, which has marked an important step in the history of the European activating welfare states, as many countries started to officially adopt measures towards activation after the Lisbon strategy (Betzelt & Bothfeld, 2011). The strategy comprised a new political agenda for Europe’s future, with the balanced objectives of full employment, social cohesion, economic growth and competitiveness (Hemerijck, 2013, p. 314). It is in this phase that, as Bonoli (2013) concludes, labour market policy has actually “taken an active turn” (p. 32). Between 1985 and 2007, we observe a general increase in spending on ALMPs as percentage of GDP in some OECD countries, with those countries that in the previous period were lagging behind Sweden now taking the lead of this phase. This was the case of Denmark, the UK and the Netherlands.

The sign of an activation turn cannot be traceable only in the ALMPs spending. These figures can, in fact, only capture one part of the story – policy measures leading to more spending – while they disregard all those reforms that do not directly have tangible consequences on spending (Bonoli, 2013). This is the case of the work-incentives related measures, such as work obligations, or benefit conditionality: those measures that in this dissertation fall under the label *demanding ALMPs*. Claiming that there has been a strong increase in conditionality in the last decades is not sufficient to provide an idea of the actual strictness of the measures.

In his longitudinal and cross-national analysis of conditionality, Knotz (2018a) shows that the strictness of sanctions and conditions of unemployment benefits has increased from around 1990, but this increase needs to be contextualized. Specifically, he analyses three aspects of unemployment benefits: *availability requirements* (the definition of a suitable job for the jobseeker), *job-search and reporting requirements* (how often the job-search activity is checked) and *sanction rules* (under which conditions the benefits are cut). The analysis covers a three-decades period (from 1980 to 2012) and 21 OECD countries, concluding that the increase is undeniable, however considering the range of an overall indicator for these measures, the increase has not been so strong,⁴ since some measures were loosened and others were not tightened. More specifically, regarding availability requirements, countries are increasingly taking into account the needs of the jobseekers, such as caring responsibilities or having adequate skills.

In relation to the requirements for job search, these have become stricter but also more accurately defined. This is also what happened for sanctions, which during the decade 1990-2000 have been increasingly introduced in the analysed countries, with variations on the level of sanctioning depending on the number of refusals of employment (Knotz, 2018a). Looking at the average strictness of sanctions between 1980 and 2012, many countries have registered an increase in sanctions, especially after a period of decreasing unemployment (Knotz, 2018b). This was the case of Belgium and the Netherlands, the contexts of three of the empirical chapters, which represent well-suited examples of how the ‘road to activation’ has developed very differently according to the country’s specific welfare system and history.

While the activation turn was smoother in the Netherlands, Belgium had witnessed a more “reluctant and erratic” pathway to activation (Hemerijck & Marx, 2010, p. 139), with a fragmented policy reform incentive generated mostly by a high internal political and linguistic division (Hemerijck & Kersbergen, 2019). Only from the beginning of the 2000s, the organism that regulates the unemployment insurance system in Belgium – the National Employment Office – has intensified controls and sanctions for unemployed people, and eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits have been tightened (Van Lancker, Marchal, Schuerman, Van Mechelen, & Van Kerm, 2015). In the Netherlands, “activating sticks and carrots” were introduced at the beginning of the 1990s not only for the unemployed, but also for sickness and disability insurance, and social assistance (van Oorschot & Abrahamson, 2003, p. 290). In particular, the ‘Social Security Benefits (Fines and Recovery) Act’ (*Wet Boeten en Maatregelen*) introduced in 1996 intensified the enforcing of the sanctioning policies by the social security administrations, with the ultimate goal of activating the ‘unwilling unemployed’ (Laenen & Larsen, 2020; Van Gerven & Beckers, 2009; van Oorschot, 2004).

1.1.2 Basic income: An unconditional policy in times of conditionality?

In parallel to the rise and development of an activating welfare state, more recent public debates have been focused on different policy proposals, appealing to both policymakers and the public because of their potential to address new social risks, the consequences of technological changes, but also the effects of the economic and financial crisis following the spread of Coronavirus at the beginning of 2020. This is the case of universal basic income (UBI), which has long been on the tables of politicians, philosophers and governmental organizations (Groot & van der Veen, 2000).

The more recent debate on UBI has migrated from a quite ‘abstract’ to a more concrete level, in the sense that UBI experiments have been or are being implemented in a few countries with the goal of studying its feasibility, consequences and, not least, its social legitimacy. This alternative approach seems to be inspired by new behavioural insights to policymaking, as policymakers evaluate the more demanding measures such as sanctions to be not only costly, but also not always effective (Groot, Muffels, & Verlaat, 2019).

In its ideal-typical form defined as “an income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement” (Van Parijs, 2004, p. 8), a UBI could find its place on an ideal ‘continuum of work conditionality’ at the very opposite of workfare schemes (see Figure 6.1, Chapter 6). For this reason, debates around a policy proposal whose main principle is very distant from activation policies are expected to be highly unpopular within the political realm (Perkiö, 2020).

However, this was not the case, as in many OECD countries UBI received political attention going beyond the mere philosophical debates about its core features. Concrete proposals arose in different European contexts mainly during the period corresponding to the *activation turn* (OECD, 2017). This is what happened for instance in Finland, where UBI was framed from the early 1990s as a policy instrument to stimulate work (Perkiö, 2020), and where an experiment involving a group of 2,000 unemployed was carried out in 2017-2018 (De Wispelaere, Halmetoja, & Pulkka, 2018); or in the Netherlands, where policy experimentations of one of the articles of the Participation Act (2015) offered chances to ‘test’ a form of UBI on social assistance recipients in few selected municipalities (Groot et al., 2019). Or again, in Switzerland, where a referendum on UBI in 2016 drew policy (and media) attention on the social legitimacy of this proposal (De Wispelaere, 2016; Stadelmann-Steffen & Dermont, 2019).

In the context of activating welfare states, not only has the term ‘activation’ assumed a central role in the definition of citizens’ and state’s responsibilities, but this concept should be seen to go hand in hand with the concept of conditionality: benefits are conditional on certain requirements. While some scholars argue that there has never and nowhere been a fully unconditional individual right to social benefits (Clasen & Clegg, 2007), it is also recognised that conditionality has become increasingly

tighter, especially in the field of unemployment benefits (Knotz, 2018b). The fact that a theoretically unconditional policy such as UBI is taking up space in the public debate seems to be thus quite paradoxical, because an unconditional policy would clash in two regards with the strong conditional character of the demanding ALMPs.

On the one side, every citizen could receive ‘free money’ without any requirements or conditions. On the other side, welfare recipients have to give ‘something in return’ for their benefit, with the risk of being punished if they do not comply with their obligations. This apparent contrast between an unconditional provision of rights and policy schemes based on strict conditions for benefit receipt cannot be disregarded when analysing public attitudes towards the activating welfare state. While these policies fall into different areas, the principles on which they are built lie at the two extremes of a same continuum.

While public debates on UBI are not new in the Europe, systematic studies of its social legitimacy among the population are more difficult to find, especially at the comparative level. In this regard, the inclusion of one item on support for a UBI in the European Social Survey, wave 8 (2016) has paved the way for an extensive analysis of its legitimacy, as well as of the individual and country-level characteristics that might foster its support. A UBI proposal with specific characteristics, as listed in the text of the question (the government pays everyone a monthly income to cover essential living costs; it replaces many other social benefits; the purpose is to guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living; everyone receives the same amount regardless of whether or not they are working; people also keep the money they earn from work or other sources; this scheme is paid for by taxes) is found to receive relatively high support (Roosma & van Oorschot, 2020).

In the study by Roosma and van Oorschot (2020), 20 out of the 23 countries included in the ESS 2016 register, in fact, a support for UBI higher than 45%. This evidence poses several questions, among which one has a close relation with support for welfare conditionality. In the same survey wave, respondents were asked to express their opinions on demanding activation policies for the unemployed (see Chapter 4 for the specific questions regarding attitudes towards demanding ALMPs). The empirical analysis of those items leads to conclude that most of the Europeans are in favour of sanctioning the unemployed who do not comply with the obligations imposed for welfare receipt. If citizens are then very much in favour of imposing cuts on the unemployment benefits when the recipients do not show some form of reciprocity, one can question whether support for an unconditional basic income proposal really means, in the eye of the public, to give an income to everyone without any conditions attached.

In conclusion, despite the distinctiveness of European countries in their path towards the setting of an activating welfare state, among the OECD countries we can observe an increase in both spending on ALMPs and in benefit conditionality from the 1990s onwards. More recently, we are witnessing an increasing diversification of ALMPs, driven by a “tailored approach” that responds to particular

individual labour market needs (European Commission, 2017, p. 9). For instance, the active support to employment has been officially recognised as one of the European Pillar of Social Rights (Chapter 1), the guiding principles towards an inclusive social Europe announced in 2017: “Everyone has the right to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve employment or self-employment prospects. This includes the right to receive support for job search, training and re-qualification. Everyone has the right to transfer social protection and training entitlements during professional transitions. [...] People unemployed have the right to personalised, continuous and consistent support. The long-term unemployed have the right to an in-depth individual assessment at the latest at 18 months of unemployment” (European Commission, 2018, p. 12).

The different paths towards activation, and the specific shape of the policies, might have important repercussions on people’s attitudes and perceptions of the target groups, and this is the focus of the next section.

1.2 PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ACTIVATING WELFARE STATE

After giving an overview of the policy context, the focus now goes to the core theme of this dissertation: public attitudes towards conditionality and unconditionality in the activating welfare state. A large branch of the current welfare state literature is dedicated to the study of public attitudes towards the welfare state, both at the national and at the European level. What this research domain tells us is that, throughout the last century, European citizens have generally been supportive of government intervention and of generous welfare policies (Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Coughlin, 1980; Roosma, van Oorschot, & Gelissen, 2016). Given this over-time stability, “it might seem unlikely that Europeans’ welfare attitudes underwent dramatic changes between 2008/09 and 2016/17”, despite the Great Recession that happened meanwhile (Laenen & van Oorschot, 2020, p. 250).

This rosy picture of the welfare legitimacy (Ervasti, 1998) usually refers to support for the goal and the range of the welfare state, namely government responsibility in reducing income levels and providing for specific target groups (Roosma, Gelissen, & van Oorschot, 2013). However, citizens might combine different opinions on different aspects of the welfare state. This means that they can be very positive on one aspect and very critical about another (Roosma et al., 2013), a differentiation that can become even more visible with regard to the policy trends of the activating welfare state, particularly activation policies and basic income proposals. In fact, these policies might generate combinations of attitudes that have not been observed with other more established welfare policies, such as healthcare and pensions.

Activation policies are based on a redefinition of the equilibriums between social rights and obligations, individual responsibility and state responsibility, conditionality and unconditionality. For instance, welfare obligations, one of the central elements of activation policies, have the potential to be highly supported because they ultimately aim to discourage welfare dependency. According to Cook and Barrett (1992), welfare programs that are strongly forcing recipients to become dependent on welfare support tend to be rejected by the public, and the fact that demanding activation policies around Europe try to fight welfare dependency would explain why they are so strongly supported. At the same time, support for these policies is not homogeneous across social groups, and between countries. To explain these differences, it is necessary to investigate public attitudes towards new policy trends, not only in terms of how popular they are, but also in terms of the mechanisms underpinning these specific attitudes.

Before delving more specifically into the relevance of studying attitudes towards activation policies, it is necessary to explain why it is important to study policy attitudes. These opinions play a fundamental role in the policy design and implementation process. Despite it does not represent the only factor driving public policymaking, public opinion is yet an undeniable factor that might pressure public officials to take decisions on specific policy proposals and to enact them into law (Burstein, 2020). The importance of public opinion in policymaking process resonates with the policy responsiveness theory, according to which individuals' policy preferences have a substantive impact on policy output, mainly because of the electoral losses that might derive if politicians do not take into account these popular preferences (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Burstein, 2003; Page & Shapiro, 1983). Following this reasoning, public officials are more likely to implement generous policies targeted to those groups with more positive popular images, because it will be more favourable for their re-election (Laenen, 2020).

In the specific case of demanding activation policies, however, the link between policymaking and public support is not direct and self-evident. This is mainly related to the fact that the "electoral incentive" for the implementation of active social policy does not seem to come from their recipients, for two main reasons (Bonoli, 2013, p. 55). On the one hand, the target groups of active policies (the unemployed, in case of ALMPs) constitute only a small part of the electorate, hence they do not represent an attractive source of electoral votes. On the other hand, these recipients may not see the activation reforms as an advantage for them, from which they can benefit. Based on the content of the specific programme, beneficiaries are likely to oppose reforms that increase pressure on them, and to support measures offering them training and employment assistance (Bonoli, 2013). At the same time, demanding ALMPs may be welcomed and supported by middle-class members, inasmuch as these policies are presented as reducing inactivity and welfare dependency, thus reducing the economic burden of the welfare state on the taxpayers (Bonoli, 2013). The success of demanding policies among certain social groups might also be seen in connection with the specific vision of the unemployed, who are deemed the least deserving among the welfare recipient groups (van Oorschot, 2006; van Oorschot, Roosma, Meuleman, & Reeskens, 2017). According to the justification strategy (Green-Pedersen,

2001), governments can justify retrenchment measures by claiming that they address the “undeserving groups” (*ibid*, p. 967), thus by taking away benefits from those beneficiaries that are deemed not worthy of welfare help.

However, as previously mentioned, support for demanding activation policies is not homogeneous across social groups, and the potential social tensions and divisions between socio-economic groups that these policies create call for more in-depth research on activation policy attitudes. More specifically, we need to investigate the determinants for public support at the individual and contextual level, and how these determinants are interrelated. In his recent state-of-the-art review about political determinants of benefit conditionality, Knotz (2021) suggests that there is an apparent contradiction in the results of research on political support for demanding activation policies. On the one hand, a rational approach postulates that people with a high unemployment risk should be more suspicious about stricter criteria for the eligibility to unemployment benefits and sanctions in case of violations of such criteria. On the other hand, specific values orientations would make people more likely to support strict, punitive measures for the ‘deviants’. The fact lower socio-economic groups, which are the groups more at risk of unemployment, are also characterised by higher levels of *pro-obligations* values (firstly, authoritarian values) results in a paradox, which needs to be explained by disentangling these mechanisms behind support.

More generally, the relevance of investigating the determinants of public support for activation policies should be seen in connection with the broader debate about the cultural vis-à-vis economic factors in current politics (Knotz, 2021). If policy attitudes are mainly, or largely, driven by values, activation policies might collect support from groups that have traditionally different (economic) interests, such as the working class and the upper scale, right-wing oriented groups (Knotz, 2021). In this context, it becomes relevant to understand which socio-economic groups are more likely to support activation policies in the perspective of implementing policies that adequately fit citizens’ needs and preferences.

1.2.1 Explanatory mechanisms for support for activation policies

The study of public attitudes towards the specific policy area of activation builds largely upon the mechanisms identified in the broader domains of welfare attitudes and of political preferences. These mechanisms work at two different levels (individual and contextual), and they are not mutually exclusive, as each of them contributes in an exclusive way to understand social welfare support (Cook & Barrett, 1992, p. 56). This section provides an overview of these theoretical frameworks that are used throughout the empirical chapters to explain attitudes towards demanding ALMPs and the link between support for social rights and obligations.⁵ The dissertation aims not only to provide a more detailed account of the explanatory mechanisms behind support for the activating welfare states, such as how these frameworks can be measured with empirical indicators, but it also deepens the relation between

each of these theoretical frameworks and support for welfare obligations and welfare rights. By doing so, the empirical chapters aim to give an encompassing view of public attitudes towards the recent activation trend in social policy.

Throughout the years, scholars dealing with public support for the welfare state have generally divided explanations for support into two macro-categories: self-interest and ideologies (Fong, 2001; Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989; Jaeger, 2006b; Kangas, 1997; Kulin & Svallfors, 2013). These broad frameworks are not exclusively used in the field of social welfare, as they have been scrutinized also by scholars of political preferences (Cook & Barrett, 1992). While self-interest refers to explanations related to the *homo economicus*, based on the idea that individual's behaviour is oriented towards the maximization of personal gains, ideologies refer to the *homo sociologicus*, according to which individuals are driven by social norms (Kangas, 1997). Each of these explanations contributes in an exclusive way to understand social welfare support (Cook & Barrett, 1992, p. 56). In addition to these frameworks that operate at the individual level, a third explanatory framework includes contextual-level predictors.

Rational interest

A long-standing tradition of welfare state attitudes research identifies economic self-interest as a main driver of support for redistribution. Individuals are highly likely to support policies, or in general welfare state provisions, if they can benefit from them (Andreß & Heien, 2001; Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989; Jaeger, 2006b; Linos & West, 2003). The assumption behind the self-interest theory is that individuals make rational cost-benefit calculations, and thus it is more likely that they will support those policies providing them directly or indirectly (i.e., in case of household benefits or when a close relative is the welfare recipient) welfare support. The interpretation of self-interest is thus, in the first place, that of “material gain” (Cook & Barrett, 1992, p. 152). Self-interest explanations are generally straightforward in case of welfare policies such as unemployment benefits, where there is a clear target group that benefits from generous policies. In this case, actual and potential welfare beneficiaries – the unemployed, or people at risk of unemployment – are more likely to support these policies, because of their interest in receiving generous benefits. In case of demanding activation policies, the link between individuals self-interest and support for these policies might become less clear. There are at least two issues that contribute to make this link not as straightforward as one would expect.

The first issue is linked to the measurement of self-interest. The most used family of indicators for self-interest is socio-economic status: individuals with a lower socio-economic status, characterised by low income, lower educational level or with a less prestigious occupation, are more likely to support generous policies because they might benefit from them. A more direct measure of this form of self-interest is indicated by the question on whether the respondent receives welfare benefits. Receiving welfare benefit is a direct indicator of support for welfare policies. A strand of welfare attitudes studies

measures self-interest with individual's labour market risk, a measure that is closely linked to one's socio-economic status and based on the specific labour market position. A common distinction is made in terms of *outsiders* and *insiders* (e.g. Emmenegger, 2009). Compared to the insiders, the outsiders are more likely to support government's responsibility for providing job to everyone, and for spending more on unemployment benefits (Schwander & Häusermann, 2013).

In general, these objective indicators cannot be exempted from interpretation biases that might occur when looking at their effects on welfare attitudes. A typical example of such misinterpretation is the welfare populism typical of the working class (Houtman, Achterberg, & Derks, 2008). Empirical studies have shown that this socio-economic class is characterised by a specific combination of attitudes and ideologies: they are more likely to support the welfare state – because of their economic egalitarianism – but are at the same time more prone to develop anti-welfarism sentiments, fostered by stronger authoritarian values that are linked to a limited cultural capital (Houtman et al., 2008). The particular ideology behind demanding activation policies might contribute to make the interpretation of self-interest less straightforward, because of the mixture between economic benefits of such policies and their punitive aspect. To overcome the potential misinterpretation of the usual self-indicators, some scholars have resorted to a different measure of self-interest, one's perception of being at risk of job loss, which should be able to capture the material-gain-oriented behaviour of welfare supporter. This measure is recognised to have an impact on support for redistribution, as the future representation of getting into the need condition seems to drive people's action as if the event would be happening at the present moment (Rehm, 2009, 2016).

The second issue relates to the nature of demanding activation policies. Previous research has failed to demonstrate a clear effect of the self-interest theory in explaining support for demanding ALMPs. From a self-interest perspective, the beneficiaries of these policies should be among the main supporters, because these policies aim to favour their labour market (re-)insertion and are thus useful for them (Fossati, 2018). On the contrary, support for workfare policies, or demanding ALMPs, is recurrently found to be highest among those with higher income and with higher positions in the labour market, and lowest among the unemployed (Buss, 2018b; Fossati, 2018; Garritzmann, Busemeyer, & Neimanns, 2018). This contradiction suggests that the punitive aspect of these policies overcomes that of utility for labour market re-insertion among the potential or actual beneficiaries.

To summarise, while previous studies provide hints on the effect of specific individual socio-structural characteristics, it is still not clear whether these effects can be attributed to self-interest theory. The relationship between variables measuring socio-economic status and attitudes towards demanding activation needs to be further investigated, controlling for other explanatory mechanisms and disentangling the effects of these variables on policy support.

Normative beliefs: values and ideologies, deservingness and policy paradigm

A second theoretical framework used in welfare attitudes research to explain public support relates to individuals' values and ideological beliefs (Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989; Jaeger, 2006b; Staerklé, Likki, & Scheidegger, 2012). Under this category, different normative belief dimensions involved in policy support are included. Some beliefs concern the 'givers' – those who are contributing to the welfare system – while others have to do with the 'receivers' of welfare support, namely welfare recipients (Uunk & van Oorschot, 2019). In addition to this distinction, normative beliefs include another dimension, namely the ideology on which the activation paradigm is built. Sociological theory tells us that individuals are not rational subjects acting exclusively under thoughtful cost-benefit decisions, but they also build ideologies which are – at least partly – responsible for their actions and opinions. The political socialization literature assumes that party affiliation and political ideologies largely originate from early socialization, and they are likely to be maintained for the rest of the life (Cook & Barrett, 1992). These beliefs are, in turn, responsible for individuals' attitudes towards the welfare state in general, and towards welfare policies in particular. In this regard, the ideological component of demanding activation policies stimulates a higher support for these policies by politically right-wing oriented individuals, who are more prone to favour economic individualism than state responsibility (Fossati, 2018).

Political orientation is not the only ideological dimension that research on support for welfare obligations has 'borrowed' from welfare attitudes research. The more 'conventional beliefs' (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019, p. 456) are found to have an effect on obligations support that runs in the opposite direction compared to the effect they exert on support for social rights. For instance, individuals endorsing egalitarian values are more strongly supportive of welfare state (Feldman & Zaller, 1992) and less in favour of welfare obligations (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019). So far, less attention has been given to analysing the role of specific ideological beliefs that are directly linked to the ideological basis of demanding ALMPs, as they contain elements that are relatable to the activation principles. In fact, the activation turn did not happen in an ideological vacuum, but it has been driven by specific ideological origins regarding the conceptions of policies and welfare recipients. An example of an ideological belief that is closely linked to the principles behind demanding activation is authoritarianism, a disposition that brings individuals to nurture a strong need for social order and the willingness to punish the moral deviants (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). These aspects are connected with the idea that the welfare beneficiaries who do not comply with the obligations need to be punished with benefit cuts.

Another explanation that might fall under the normative beliefs framework is the deservingness theory, whose core idea is that individuals support for welfare policies is shaped by the beliefs on some characteristics of the welfare recipients. The deservingness perspective identifies some criteria – known

as ‘CARIN criteria’ from the initials of the five dimensions (van Oorschot et al., 2017) – according to which people judge a specific welfare recipient to be deserving of welfare support or not. If the target group of a social policy is deemed to have little or no control over the personal situation of neediness, a grateful and docile attitude, have contributed to the welfare system in the past or be able to reciprocate the help in the future, feel close to his or her own situation and to have material need of welfare support, this group will be considered deserving (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). These judgments, in turn, influence people’s support for a policy targeted to that specific groups.

Previous research has demonstrated that deservingness criteria are crucial not only to explain welfare support for a specific target group, but also support for welfare obligations and sanctions (Buss, 2018a; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019). In particular, displaying an ‘ungrateful’ behaviour is the characteristic that stimulates support for conditionality more strongly, compared to the other criteria. Despite the “deservingness framework sheds considerably more light on people’s opinions about social obligations than it does on attitudes towards social rights” (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019, p. 462), it remains unclear how these evaluative criteria are related to socio-structural characteristics, both of the individual and of the context. As for the latter, to date there is only one study investigating how deservingness criteria – identity in particular – operates between structural income inequality and support for conditional benefits (Carriero & Filandri, 2018). However, deservingness beliefs might play a crucial role in explaining how people combine opinions on welfare conditionality and unconditionality. The multiple criteria on the basis of which an individual evaluates the deservingness of a target group should be investigated in relation to these aspects of the current policy trends.

A last dimension of the normative beliefs that might influence support for activation policies is the ‘policy paradigm’, namely the core ideas and beliefs on which a policy community is built (Taylor-Gooby, 2004). This paradigm is an interpretative framework of ideas indicating the goals of policy, the suitable instruments to achieve these goals and the nature of the problems that are tackled in relation to these goals (Hall, 1993, p. 279). The activation shift in the social policy of contemporary welfare states has happened in a specific direction, which can be considered part of a broader change of policy paradigm. Many themes that are part of the discussion of active social policies evoke the Third Way debate typical of the end of the 1990s (Bonoli, 2013). The central principles of this Third Way re-orientation were the equality of opportunity – in opposition to the equality of outcomes typical of the first stage of the welfare states – and a rebalancing of rights and responsibilities (Giddens, 1998).

The policy paradigm is rarely operationalized in policy attitudes, but it should be taken into account especially in the case of activation policies, which are built on renewed concepts of the welfare state role and of the welfare recipients. This explanation should be kept separated from the broader contextual-level explanations for welfare attitudes, as its focus is more specific oriented towards the ideas behind policy institutions. This does not mean that the explanations are mutually exclusive, nor

that they are completely separated from each other. On the contrary, they are all needed to explain policy support, and if we want to get more insights on their relations, it is necessary to use specific analytical techniques.

Country-level explanations

Welfare state attitudes are related not only to individual-level characteristics, but also to the context in which citizens are embedded (Andreß & Heien, 2001; Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003). While an increasing number of studies are investigating the effect of the individual characteristics on support for demanding activation or welfare conditionality, empirical research on cross-national variations in these specific attitudes is still at the dawn. The main reason for the limited number of studies is the lack of cross-national data, a lack that has been recently overcome with the introduction of new items on policy attitudes in the welfare attitudes module of the European Social Survey 2016. Three broad families of country-level factors are usually studied in welfare attitudes research (e.g. van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014): economic, institutional (or policy) and cultural factors. While previous comparative studies on support for welfare conditionality have focused on the effects of the economic and institutional context to explain observed differences between countries, the effect of cultural factors has been less investigated. The comparative studies of this dissertation focus on different explanations, depending on the outcome analysed. Here, a brief introduction of the three families of contextual factors is provided.

First, national economic conditions seem to be linked to attitudes towards demanding activation. In times of economic decline – both in terms of high unemployment rate and low GDP – support for strict conditions for unemployment benefits is lower, which means that in this situation individuals might feel more at risk of unemployment and be worried about strict conditions for receiving benefits (Buss, Ebbinghaus, & Naumann, 2017). However, another explanation for an opposite effect seems plausible. When the unemployment is more widespread, refusing to accept a job – whichever this job is – can be perceived as a misconduct of the unemployed that needs to be punished (Naumann, De Tavernier, Naegele, & Hess, 2020). Another study assumes that unemployment rates might be indirectly related to support for benefit conditionality because they affect the deservingness criteria of control, however the authors do not empirically test this assumption (Carriero & Filandri, 2018).

Moving to the institutional context, differences in support for demanding ALMPs have been linked to different aspects of the welfare system. These studies base their assumptions on the policy feedback logic, according to which public policies create feedback effects on public opinion (Pierson, 1993), ultimately shaping welfare attitudes (Busemeyer, Abrassart, & Nezi, 2021; Kumlin, 2014; Svallfors, 2010). Fossati (2018), for instance, concludes that the country's legacy of demanding ALMPs matters for aggregate support, as people in countries with a more established workfare approach to activation,

such as the UK, are found to be more in favour of these policies (Fossati, 2018). However, this study does not allow to measure the impact of specific policies on public support for demanding ALMPs, because of the restricted number of countries included. Other studies have investigated the relation between attitudes towards welfare conditionality, benefit generosity and benefit conditionality, assuming that these aspects of the welfare system might shape citizens' attitudes towards welfare conditionality. In highly generous systems, and with stricter conditions for receiving benefit, individuals are found to be more supportive of strict conditions for the unemployed (Buss et al., 2017; Naumann et al., 2020). These results support the idea that the institutional design of welfare system might shape public attitudes towards specific policies.

There is a third family of country-level explanations in welfare attitudes research which is commonly defined as the cultural climate, namely those collectively shared images and norms, in this case regarding the issues concerning the policy, such as unemployment and the unemployed (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014, p. 249). Other factors normally fall under this family, such as the political context or the media framing of welfare recipients (Jeene, van Oorschot, & Uunk, 2014; Slothuus, 2007), which contribute to shape popular deservingness and, consequently, support for welfare policies or retrenchment programmes. To date, there are no empirical studies investigating the effect of cultural and political factors on attitudes towards ALMPs.

To conclude, several questions remain unexplained with regard to the effect of context, both the economic, institutional and the cultural context. The dissertation will focus on specific aspects of the context and it will further develop the theoretical mechanisms behind the contextual effects on public attitudes towards demanding ALMPs.

1.2.2 Research gaps

Despite a growing body of research investigating public support for activation policies and for the conditionality of welfare benefits, the overview of the explanatory mechanisms for attitudes towards the active welfare state has evidenced some research gaps that need to be investigated. This last section focuses on two of these lacunae and provides some hints on how these lacunae will be addressed in the empirical chapters.

First, despite having accounted for the fact that the classical explanatory mechanisms for welfare attitudes – self-interest and ideological beliefs – are valid also in case of support for demanding ALMPs (e.g. Fossati, 2018), an apparent contradiction remains (Knotz, 2021). Empirical evidences give credit to the rational interest theory, which postulates that those with high risk of being subject to stricter benefit conditions and harsh benefit cuts are the major opponents of demanding policies. However, specific ideological outlooks make individuals more likely to support these policies, resulting in an

‘overlapping’ between holding these specific ideologies and being among the categories with high risk of experience work conditionality. Thus, more research is needed to shed light on how these mechanisms work, in order to disentangle the self-interest mechanisms from the ideological ones, and to depict the social groups that are more likely to form the political support base for demanding policies (Knotz, 2021).

In relation to this point, another important aspect that we have highlighted when introducing the rational interest mechanisms is the ‘measurement problem’: that is, the variables that are frequently used as self-interest indicators might not be the ‘best candidates’ to represent a *pure* self-interest effect. The most noticeable indicator in this regard is education, which has been proved to be an indicator of something different – i.e., cultural capital – than (exclusively) individuals’ socio-economic position (Achterberg, van der Veen, & Raven, 2014). On the other hand, there are variables that might be equally valid representative of objective indicators for self-interest. A good example is the subjective risk of unemployment, which previous research has found to be as relevant in explaining policy attitudes as the objective risk (Rehm, 2009).

A second aspect that has received far less attention in welfare attitudes research is how the public combine attitudes towards the two interrelated aspects of the activating welfare state, namely welfare rights and work obligations. While the more ‘traditional’ welfare attitudes studies have always revolved around the question “more or less welfare support?” (Fossati, 2013, p. 218), in the activating welfare state this ‘one-way question’ cannot be studied separately from the question on whether people want more (stricter) or less (less strict) welfare obligations. Despite a few studies have covered both the questions, this has been done mainly in a linear way. What still remains to be investigated is how citizens can be supportive of welfare rights *and* supportive of welfare obligations, in apparently contradictory way. Jeene and van Oorschot (2015) have covered this topic by analysing support for welfare rights and obligations among the Dutch population. Nonetheless, some theoretical and empirical lacunae remain in the study of how support for unconditional rights relate to support for conditional rights, especially in lights of the more recent (or renovated) debates regarding proposals of an unconditional basic income. Current knowledge about how individuals combine support for rights and obligations for specific target groups is thus limited to a few national contexts. Therefore, it is important to study how citizens relate – and conciliate – these two aspects of the active welfare state.

To summarize, there are two main aspects on which we need to focus in the investigation of public attitudes towards the activating welfare state. From a theoretical perspective, there is a need to disentangle the mechanisms behind support and to understand whether there is one mechanism that ‘prevails’ over the others. Investigating these mechanisms would allow to raise awareness about the reasons why certain groups are more in favour of activation policies and what justifications people use for supporting policy principles that are built on opposing principles. From a methodological

perspective, the dissertation aims to extend previous research on policy support by including more accurate measures for the well-known theoretical mechanisms that explains welfare attitudes, especially at the individual level. Moreover, the availability of high-quality, cross-national survey data, allows to analyse the differences in policy attitudes across countries and how these differences can be attributed to the specific country circumstances.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL MODEL, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OVERVIEW OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

As illustrated in the first part of this chapter, the activating welfare states are characterised by a rebalancing of the rights and obligations of the welfare recipients, which concretely means that policymakers have implemented policies aimed at the re-insertion in the labour market of those who are not in paid employment. On the other hand, the activating welfare states have also faced debates about whether unconditional policies can be put in place as an answer to several issues, among which automation in work and the “material and psychological burdens” that recipients might suffer when dealing with labour market conditionality (Martinelli, 2019, p. 25). These basic income debates have not remained on an abstract level, with relevant implications not only at the policy level, but also at the level of attitudes.

In this dissertation, the close connection between unconditional and conditional rights is analysed from the perspective of public opinion: the overarching research objective is to shed light on the mechanisms behind public attitudes towards demanding active labour market policies and how attitudes towards work obligations are combined with attitudes towards welfare rights – two aspects of the contemporary active welfare states. In particular, the empirical studies dive into the analysis of individual and country-level explanatory mechanisms of these attitudes, and how these mechanisms are related, relations that are summarised in Figure 1.1. Each of the empirical chapters addresses specific research questions, and employs the most appropriate methodological approach to answer to this question, thus contributing to the literature on policy support not only theoretically, but also methodologically.

The first three empirical chapters are focused on the analysis of public support for demanding activation policies, and they are guided by the general research questions: What are the individual-level determinants of support for demanding activation policies, and how they are interrelated? What explains cross-country variations in the level of support for demanding activation policies?

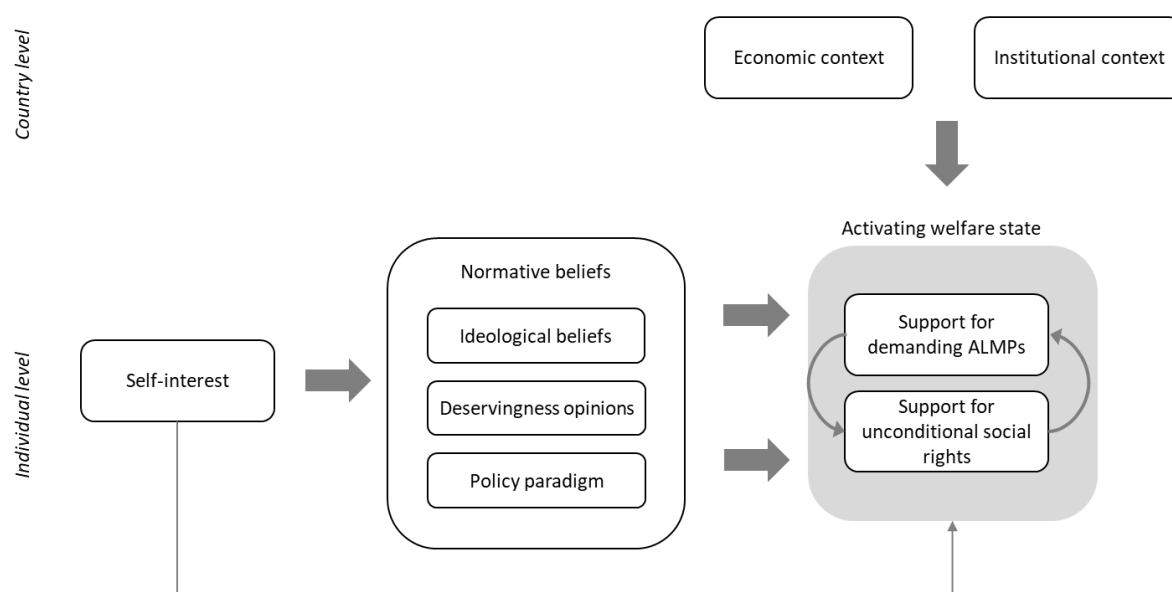


Figure 1.1 An integrated model for the analysis of support for the active welfare state

Chapter 2 analyses support for demanding active labour policies in Belgium, and it aims to unravel the effects behind this support at the individual level. Starting from the idea that demanding ALMPs cover different dimensions, support for these policies is measured by a multi-item instrument, which allows to detect the multidimensionality of these policies (Fossati, 2018). Not only does the chapter provides a methodological contribution to the study of public support for demanding ALMPs, but it also gives a twofold conceptual contribution to the study of activation policies attitudes, and to the field of welfare attitudes more in general. Concerning the first, the study includes a more exhaustive range of relevant ideological predictors of demanding activation policies, which allow to distinguish between economic and cultural dimensions of ideologies. Concerning the more general welfare attitudes, including the ideological factors as mediators between individual social-structural position and activation attitudes makes it possible to disentangle self-interest and ideological mechanisms.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the policy paradigm behind the activation turn, reconnecting the ideological pillars of this turn to the public attitudes towards demanding ALMPs and thus expanding the more ‘classical’ framework of ideological beliefs connected to welfare attitudes. Starting from the recognition that demanding ALMPs entail a particular vision on the desired organization of welfare state distribution and on the causes behind welfare dependency (Romano, 2018), the chapter builds on the idea that these visions need to be integrated when studying public support for these specific policies. On the one hand, it is argued that preferences for one of the three distributive justice principles (equality, equity and need) are important predictors for demanding ALMPs. The activation turn has implied a shift away from the principle of equality towards equity- or need-based distribution, thus prioritizing

the principle of equity or need would bring a person to be more supportive of demanding policies. On the other hand, policy paradigms integrate a specific view of the causes of social problems. Activation policies are built on the idea that unemployment is ascribable to an individual failure and a feeble work ethic, and in this chapter these specific views on the causes of unemployment are integrated in the explanatory mechanism for policy attitudes. More specifically, the chapter aims to understand how preferences for particular principles of distributive justice and ideas on the cause of unemployment are linked to support for demanding ALMPs.

The idea that specific views of the unemployed – the main target group of demanding ALMPs – are important predictors of support for demanding policies is also a major focus of Chapter 4, the first chapter that expands the analysis of public attitudes towards demanding ALMPs to a comparative level. This chapter aims to combine two theoretical frameworks in the analysis of support for demanding ALMPs across Europe, frameworks that are not only directly linked to policy attitudes, but also help to understand how other background characteristics – at the individual and contextual level – are linked to these attitudes. First, it is argued that not only does the current unemployment situation structure attitudes towards demanding ALMPs, but also the perceived risk of becoming unemployed in the future. Including this subjective perception contributes to widen the self-interest theory. The second framework that the chapter includes is linked to the views on the specific target group of the policies – the unemployed in this case. Following the deservingness theory, individuals' perceptions of unemployed people based on deservingness criteria are argued to be a relevant factor shaping support for the demanding activation of the unemployed. Both factors – risk perceptions and negative stereotypes of the unemployed – are included in the study of public support for demanding ALMPs as mediators between individual socio-structural variables (at the individual level) and unemployment rates (at the country level).

In the following two chapters, the focus shifts to the analysis of how public support for conditionality relates to support for social rights. This second part of the dissertation is guided by the general research questions: What are the preferred combinations of support for social rights and obligations for the unemployed in Europe? What are the arguments used to justify support for unconditional and conditional benefits?

In particular, Chapter 5 acts as a bridge between the two aspects of the active welfare state, by examining how Europeans combine opinions on government responsibility for the unemployed and attitudes towards conditionality of unemployment benefits. To investigate this preferred balance, a person-centred approach is used to discover which typologies of attitudes are present in the European countries. This chapter offers an important methodological contribution, as it provides a typology of attitudes which is not 'data-blinded', and it allows to go beyond the linearity between support for welfare rights and work obligations found in previous research. Existing studies on support for welfare rights and

obligations for the unemployed have, in fact, focused on the negative relation between these two aspects. In addition to a relevant methodological contribution, the chapter also contributes theoretically to the study of people's preferred combinations of support for rights and obligations, as it investigates the individual and institutional characteristics that brings people to opt for one combination versus the others. Each of the combinations is chosen by individuals with a specific ideological profile, defined by political orientation, egalitarian and conservation values. Moreover, the analysis allows to study the effect of the welfare system generosity and conditionality on individuals' choice for these combinations.

Chapter 6 describes how opinions on a new highly debated welfare proposal, the unconditional basic income, can be – and in fact are – reconciled with opinions towards welfare obligations for the recipients. It does so by zooming in on the core and controversial aspects of the newly welfare states: conditionality and unconditionality of welfare rights. This is done in a specific context, the Netherlands, where few municipalities have recently initiated their basic income experiments, thus providing a fruitful stage for investigating how citizens can reconcile opinions about the unconditional provision of rights, and about work obligations attached to welfare benefits. The analysis brings two main contributions to the literature on public attitudes towards welfare conditionality. First, it makes use of in-depth interviews to investigate people's opinions about these topics, allowing respondents to freely express their arguments supporting or rejecting these policy measures. Second, the findings evidence how deservingness theory and work ethic are important factors in explaining individuals' preferred combinations of support for certain aspects of unconditional rights and of conditional benefits.

The final chapter summarizes the main results of the empirical chapters, and concludes the dissertation by providing a few recommendations that I consider relevant for the future policymaking, as well as for the future research in this field of welfare state attitudes.

1.4 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: CONCEPTS AND DATA

This section provides an overview of the quantitative and qualitative data used to answer the research questions, and it illustrates how support for the activating welfare state, the focus of the dissertation, has been operationalised within each of these sources. The use of multiple data sources, which have been analysed by means of diverse methods, makes an important contribution to the field of welfare state attitudes, because it combines the advantages of survey data with the benefits of a deeper investigation of public attitudes by means of qualitative interviews.

1.4.1 Quantitative data

Most of the chapters make use of survey data to explore attitudes towards the activating welfare state. The advantage of surveys is that they reveal attitudinal and behaviour patterns in the population, through the collection of data among a representative sample. Administering the questionnaire to a representative sample of the population allows the researchers to collect a large number of information in a relatively short time and more easily compared to administering the survey to the whole population. Next to this great advantage, there are few issues that need to be taken into account by the researchers, especially when dealing with the measurement of the concepts. In the process of operationalisation, two types of validity are needed: conceptual validity – covering the operationalisation of the theoretical construct – and measurement validity – the extent to which the variables measure the operationalised concept (Billiet, 2016). In each of the two surveys, one national and one cross-national, the concept of ‘social legitimacy of activation policies’ has been operationalised differently, as explained in the following sections.

Belgian National Election Study

A first source of survey data is constituted by the Belgian National Election Study (BNES), a face-to-face interview carried after the general elections since 1991, among a sample of the Belgian residents entitled to vote for the national (federal) elections and with a thorough command of Dutch or French language (Abts, Swyngedouw, Meuleman, Baute, Galle, & Gaasendam, 2015). More specifically, two of the empirical studies (Chapters 2 and 3) are based on the BNES of 2014, collected in the three regions (Flanders, French speaking part in Wallonia and Brussels capital region) between October 2014 and June 2015.⁶ This survey was organised by the Institute for Social and Political Opinion (KU Leuven) and the Centre d’Étude de l’Opinion (Université de Liège). The study is based on a two-stage sampling design, stratified by both regions and municipalities, to limit the geographical distribution of the sample. First, the number of primary sampling units in each region and province was calculated according to their population size, with a probability of a municipality to be selected within a stratum that was proportional to its population aged 18 and older. Second, the individuals (secondary units) were randomly selected from the National Register – containing data of all the Belgian citizens – within each selected municipality. Given that some social groups are under- or overrepresented in the sample, sampling weights have been constructed (based on the composition of the population in terms of gender, age, education and region) and applied in all the analyses using the BNES.

The data have been collected via two methods: the majority of the questions was collected by means of computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), for an average length of 67 minutes in Flanders and 70 minutes in the Francophone Belgium. For reasons of time-constraint and available resources, not all the questions could be included in the face-to-face interviews, thus additional questions were asked in

a drop-off questionnaire that was left to the respondents after the interview to be completed by themselves and sent back to the university with a certain period following the interview. The response rate of the main questionnaire was 47.5%, of whom almost 74% completed and sent back the drop-off questionnaire.

In the 2014 survey, a set of ten questions aimed at capturing attitudes towards activation policies and control mechanisms for benefit recipients was included. The first six items were introduced by the following: “There are many opinions about the social benefits that people receive from the state when they lack an income. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”. The six statements were: (q114_1) Unemployment benefits should be limited to a maximum of two years; (q114_2) People with a leefloon [*minimum income*] should be obliged to do community work; (q114_3) Long-term unemployed should be obliged to accept any job, even if they earn much less than before by doing so; (q114_4) Long-term unemployed may refuse a job that is strongly below their educational skill level; (q114_5) Long-term unemployed should be obliged to re-educate themselves, otherwise they lose their social benefits; (q114_6) Unemployed who keep looking for a job actively should never lose their social benefits. Four more items, aimed at capturing support for government’s control over the welfare recipients, followed this introductory statement: “We would like to know how the government should treat people who receive social benefits. These people are henceforth referred to as social benefit recipients or social benefit beneficiaries. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”. (q115_1) The government is too strict towards social benefit recipients; (q115_2) The government should control more strictly whether the unemployed apply for jobs sufficiently; (q115_3) Social benefit beneficiaries who do not perform their duties should be punished more harshly; (q115_4) The government should control better whether the unemployed do additional illicit work. The answer categories for all the items ranged from 1-Completely disagree to 5-Completely agree.

A measurement model has been estimated step-by-step, following the *model generating* scenario (Byrne, 2012). This approach assumes that the researcher modifies the initially theoretically postulated model for its poor fit, proceeding in an exploratory way to re-estimate a model with a better fit. The confirmatory analysis performed in several steps led to a final measurement model including only five items (see Chapters 2 and 3 for the specific model). This multi-item instrument covers a set of obligations that social benefit beneficiaries – mainly the unemployed – need to do in order to maintain their benefits. In addition to this range of obligations, which may fall under the category of ‘sanctions’ as one of the main characteristics of demanding ALMPs (Fossati, 2018), one item refers to the distinctive feature of the Belgian unemployment system (q114_1). Unemployment benefits in Belgium are, in theory, unlimited in time, and asking the Belgians whether they agree to limit them to a certain period might be considered as part of the trend towards increasing conditionality.

European Social Survey

The European Social Survey (ESS) is a face-to-face interview collected every two years since 2001 that measures attitudes, beliefs and behaviours among representative samples of more than thirty countries. The ESS questionnaire is divided into two main parts: a core section and a rotating section. The core section (or ‘core module’) contains questions on media use, social trust, political orientations, well-being, religion, ethnicity and socio-demographic information, and these questions are for the large part stable in each round. The ‘rotating modules’ varies in each round – although in some cases have been repeated in later rounds – and contains questions on specific themes, such as welfare attitudes and policy preferences as it was the case in the 2008 and 2016 waves.

The sample sizes of the 2016 edition vary from 880 (Iceland) to 2,852 (Germany) and national response rates range from 30.6% (Germany) to 69.6% (Poland). Data have been collected between August 2016 and December 2017. More details, data and documentation according to the years and divided by countries can be found on the official website (<https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>).

In the welfare attitudes module of 2016, new items were added compared to previous version of this module of 2008. Among these new questions, a survey experiment was included to measure attitudes towards activation policies for the unemployed. The statement introducing the three items on work obligations of the unemployed was presented in a slightly different manner to four different sub-samples randomly selected among the respondents (according to their month of birthday). The text was the following: “Imagine [someone] who is unemployed and looking for work. This person was previously working but lost their job and is now receiving unemployment benefit. What you think should happen to this person’s unemployment benefit if this person... “ followed by the items: (1) Turns down a job because it pays a lot less than they earned previously? (2) Turns down a job because it needs a much lower level of education than the person has? (3) Refuses to regularly carry out unpaid work in the area where they live in return for unemployment benefit?”. The “[someone]” part of the statement was replaced by three different descriptions of unemployed: “someone in their 50s”, “someone aged 20-25”, “a single parent with a 3-year-old child”. Respondents could choose their answer among four categories: “This person should lose all their unemployment benefit”, “should lose about half”. “lose a small part” or “this person should be able to keep all their unemployment benefit” (plus two additional categories: “Refusal” and “Don’t know”). In Chapter 4, support for demanding activation policies is measured by a latent variable based on the three items that represent the conditions for keeping the unemployment benefits.

1.4.2 Qualitative data

Survey data have the advantage of studying attitudinal patterns among the population, but they also present few limitations with regard to the measurement of welfare state attitudes. These limitations can prevent the researchers from understanding the concrete meanings behind the more abstract concepts of welfare attitudes. Among the most important criticism that has been raised to survey research in relation to deservingness criteria is that surveys have a ‘top-down’ character, namely the fixed categories of deservingness are selected by the researchers based on a deductive process from previous literature (Laenen, Rossetti, & van Oorschot, 2019). These might bring the researchers to assume that “what people think closely corresponds with what academics believe people think” (Laenen et al., 2019, p. 193). To partly overcome these limitations, qualitative methods might be a fruitful resource to reveal more spontaneous reactions from the respondents (Taylor-Gooby & Leruth, 2018). The last chapter of the dissertation uses data from qualitative interviews, with the aim of letting people to express their opinions without being obliged to find themselves an answer between the range of answers presented to them.

In-depth interviews

Chapter 6 makes use of data from 49 in-depth interviews conducted among the citizens of the Dutch city of Tilburg. The sample was randomly selected from the population register of the municipality, stratified by neighbourhoods, including people in the age category 18-80 years old. The randomly selected people received a letter with information about the research, after which they were approached personally with an invitation to participate to the interview. The sample included in 28 women and 21 men with different educational levels and political preferences (for a more detailed description of the sample, see Chapter 6 and Appendix Table A6.2).

The interviews were conducted in Dutch by students of the Sociology course at Tilburg University in 2018 and 2019. The course was held by F. Roosma and K. Abts. The interview guide included questions about the Dutch Participation Act and about the basic income proposal. While the questions remained the same in the two interview years, the order of the topic addressed first changed – first the basic income in 2018, and in 2019 the first topic was the ‘Tegenprestatie’ scheme. Respondents were presented with a written definition of the universal basic income, including a list of characteristics similar to the features presented in the question on basic income support included in the rotating module of the ESS 2016 (see for instance Roosma & van Oorschot, 2020 for the wording of this question): a monthly income, paid by the government, from which you can live soberly; paid to all adult residents of the Netherlands and for everyone it is the same amount; without conditions: not dependent on income, assets or work situation; it partially replaces other benefits and allowances, such as social assistance. The average length of each interview was one hour.

1.4.3 Methodology

The diversity of data sources requires that different techniques are used to analyse the data. Starting from the quantitative data sources, two methods have been used. Chapters 2 and 3 make use of structural equation modelling (SEM) to analyse public attitudes towards demanding ALMPs in Belgium. The advantage of using SEM compared to linear regression is that SEM models have two components: a measurement model and a structural model (Brown, 2006). More specifically, the measurement model – or the confirmatory factor analysis model (CFA) – specifies the relationships between various indicators and the latent factors, the relationships between indicators errors, and the number of factors. The structural model, on the other hand, analyses the relation between the various latent factors, or between the latent factor and other manifest variables. There are at least two major benefits from using SEM. First, using SEM makes it possible to include one or more latent construct in the same model, and in case of Chapters 2 and 3, support for demanding ALMPs is measured by a latent variable. In addition to the dependent variable, Chapter 2 includes three more latent constructs that measure specific ideological beliefs. Second, thanks to the use of SEM, we are able to disentangle the effects of antecedent variables on the outcome variable – in this case, support for demanding ALMPs. The specification of the structural model allows to disentangle the mechanisms behind support. In the same way, Chapter 4 analyses support for demanding ALMPs by mean of structural equation modelling, however in this case the hierarchical nature of the data structure requires the use of multilevel structural equation modelling (MSEM; Meuleman, 2019). By means of this technique, it is possible to use latent variables that control for measurement error, as well as to disentangle the effects at the individual and country-level.

In Chapter 5, latent class analysis (LCA) is applied to study the combinations of attitudes that are present in the European population. LCA is a person-centred approach that has been rarely used in welfare attitudes research, compared to the more well-known variable-centred approach. In comparison with the latter, a person-centred approach tries to identifies subgroups (i.e., latent classes) of respondents by looking at the associations between the observed variables that are the indicators of the latent variable (i.e., the concept we are investigating) (Collins & Lanza, 2010). A major advantage of this technique is that it allows to go beyond the linear association between the variables, which is typically assumed in variable-centred approaches such as confirmatory factor analysis (Meeusen, Meuleman, Abts, & Bergh, 2018). After identifying four subgroups of support for welfare rights and obligations for the unemployed in the European population, a multilevel multinomial logistic regression model is performed, to identify which individual-level characteristics and institutional features of the welfare system significantly predicts the choice of one combination (i.e., latent class) over the other three.

Finally, Chapter 6 analyses in-depth interviews by means of an inductive approach, which allows to find the relevant topics that emerge from the interview raw data with no interferences ‘from above’; in other words, “without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (Thomas, 2003, p. 2).⁷ After recognising the research objectives, the researchers identify categories in the raw data that lead to the development of a framework that includes the main themes (Thomas, 2003). In the analysis of the Dutch interviews on basic income and the Tegenprestatie, the topics that have been originally identified can be reconnected to two frameworks. On the one hand, the arguments used to justify support for basic income and work conditionality fall under the deservingness theory, and in particular under the criteria of need, control and reciprocity. On the other hand, respondents’ arguments might be collected under the framework of the feasibility of the welfare schemes in financial and administrative terms. The fact that many respondents report that they never thought about topics such as a basic income proposals – as an unconditional and universal benefit – can be considered an ‘alarm bell’ for interpreting the results of opinion surveys, where normally participants’ knowledge about the topic investigated is not tested prior. This aspect will be further elaborated in the conclusions of the dissertation.

NOTES

¹ According to Bonoli (2013), active labour market policies represent the cornerstone of the active welfare state, because they aim to “remove obstacles to employment, upskill workers, or provide access to work experience”, rather than merely providing cash benefits to people who cannot work (Bonoli, 2013, p. 22).

² Following Bonoli’s overview of ALMPs (2013), based on seven European countries, four of them (Sweden, Germany, France and Italy) put in place policies oriented towards an upskilling objective.

³ The definition of welfare state regimes refers to the categorization of Esping-Andersen (1990) and following authors (for instance Arts & Gelissen, 2001) that built upon his pivotal work. In this case, Taylor-Gooby uses the fourfold categorization of welfare regimes to describe the evolution of activation policy spending: Nordic countries (with their social democratic welfare state); Continental corporatist welfare states; Mediterranean welfare states; and Liberal regime.

⁴ The overall indicator of conditionality of benefit is built by (1) rating the strictness of the sub-categories of availability- and job-search conditions and the different sorts of sanctions on common ordinal scales, and (2) combining these scores into an ‘indicator of the overall conditionality of unemployment benefits’ (Knotz, 2018a, p. 100).

⁵ It should be noted, however, that this section does not aim to be an exhaustive list of all the possible predictors of support for the activating welfare states. The choice of focusing on these specific theoretical explanations has to do with their close link to the principles of activation.

⁶ Despite being officially bilingual, the Brussels-Capital Region is for the vast majority French-speaking. For this reason, the sample design collects this region and Wallonia as one region, called “Francophone Belgium” (cfr. Baute, 2018).

⁷ The analysis of the interviews has been conducted by two of the co-authors of this chapter (F. Roosma and K. Abts), who then discussed the results with the other two co-authors (F. Rossetti and T. Laenen).

“FIRST THE GRUB, THEN THE MORALS”? DISENTANGLING THE SELF-INTEREST AND IDEOLOGICAL DRIVERS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEMANDING ACTIVATION POLICIES IN BELGIUM

Abstract

Following the shift towards an activating role of the European welfare states, there is increasing scholarly interest in public support for demanding activation policies that impose obligations on welfare recipients. Borrowing the classical theoretical frameworks used in welfare attitudes research, we aim to disentangle the effect of self-interest and ideological beliefs on support for demanding activation. Using data from the Belgian National Election Study (2014), we find that support for demanding activation is strongly related to authoritarian dispositions, work ethic and rejection of egalitarianism. For the social-structural variables, we find direct as well as indirect (that is, mediated by the ideological dimensions) effects. Controlling for ideology, social categories that are potentially most affected by welfare obligations – namely those currently unemployed, with a previous experience of unemployment and low-income individuals – are more likely to oppose demanding policies, which can be interpreted as a self-interest effect. The effects of educational level, conversely, are primarily mediated and should be understood in terms of ideological preferences rather than self-interest. The results indicate that, when analysing support for specific welfare policies, attention needs to be paid to the interplay between self-interest and ideological preferences.

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1990s, European welfare policies in the domain of unemployment have undergone a major transformation, from mainly providing income for the jobless to actively stimulating them to (re-)enter the paid labour market (Taylor-Gooby, 2008). These activation policies are considered to be part of the welfare state retrenchment trend that started in the late 1970s in western democracies (Seikel & Spannagel, 2018). The concept of ‘activation’ generally refers to a mix of enabling policy measures as well as demanding elements, and is grounded in the idea of enhancing individuals’ employability (Dingeldey, 2007; Eichhorst et al., 2008). Over the last decades the demanding approach has achieved greater popularity among the European policy makers, who have increasingly implemented cuts of benefit levels and obligations for welfare recipients in order to receive their benefits (Dingeldey, 2007; Dwyer, 2004; Eichhorst et al., 2008; Knotz, 2018b; Seikel & Spannagel, 2018). This rebalancing of rights and responsibilities for the benefit claimants (Giddens, 1998; Houtman, 1997) might be seen as a paradigm shift in the European welfare states.

Despite this overwhelming ‘activation turn’ (Bonoli, 2010, p. 435; see Chapter 1), only little scholarly attention has been given to the popularity of these policy reforms among the public at large (Kootstra & Roosma, 2018; Roosma & Jeene, 2017). The available research focuses on the ‘classical’ explanations used in the field of welfare support, namely self-interest and ideological beliefs (Achterberg et al., 2014; Buss, 2018b; Fossati, 2018; Kootstra & Roosma, 2018; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019). The first framework postulates that attitudes towards activation are rooted in self-interest motives (as indicated by social-structural characteristics). The second approach stresses that activation attitudes are informed by a broader ideological outlook, such as egalitarian values (Achterberg et al., 2014; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019). Empirical research on attitudes towards demanding activation policies, however, fails to demonstrate an unequivocal effect of self-interest variables (Fossati, 2018). Several explanations are conceivable for the lack of confirmation of the self-interest hypothesis. One possibility is that welfare recipients do not perceive that activation policies affect their life chances. However, the conclusion that self-interest is not a relevant factor driving activation attitudes could be premature and misleading, as much of the existing research does not take into account that self-interest variables and ideological drivers of support for activation are potentially intertwined. In this regard, controlling for a wide array of relevant ideological dimensions that could potentially confound the relation between socio-economic variables and activation attitudes may offer more solid conclusions on the genesis of policy attitudes. By disentangling the driving mechanisms, this study provides relevant insights into why people support demanding activation policies, which are useful for current policymaking. Despite the fact that European population is sceptic about welfare retrenchment, demanding activation policies might, indeed, attract broad support because they are perceived as effective to tackle welfare abuse (Kootstra & Roosma, 2018). The implementation of these policies might be hampered if the potential target groups are, at the same time, the major opponents of these policies.

Concretely, we answer the following research questions: (1) How are social-structural characteristics related to support for demanding activation policies? (2) How are relevant ideological factors – namely authoritarianism, work ethic, egalitarianism and left-right orientation – related to activation attitudes? (3) Are the effects of social-structural variables mediated through ideological factors or are they direct, as self-interest theory postulates? To answer these questions, we analyse data from the Belgian National Election Study (BNES) 2014 (Abts et al., 2015) by means of structural equation modelling. By doing so, we bring a threefold contribution to the field of public attitudes towards activation. First, we make use of an improved, multi-item instrument to measure support for the demanding side of activation policies. Second, compared to previous studies, we take a more comprehensive range of relevant ideological predictors into account, making it possible to distinguish between economic and cultural dimensions. Third, by including the ideological factors as mediators between individual social-structural position and activation attitudes, we can clearly disentangle self-interest and ideological mechanisms.

The chapter is organised as follows. In the next paragraph, a presentation of the policy context is provided. The second section presents some theoretical insights on attitudes towards demanding activation, followed by the formulation of a set of hypotheses regarding how ideological and self-interest mechanisms affect these attitudes. After introducing the data and the methodology used, we present the empirical findings of the structural equation model. The conclusion section discusses the implications for further research on welfare attitudes.

2.2 THE ‘ACTIVATING’ WELFARE STATE: BETWEEN ENABLING AND DEMANDING POLICIES

Despite tracing back to the 1950s, when they were introduced in Sweden, active labour market policies (ALMPs) started to be massively adopted by OECD countries in the mid-1990s (Bonoli, 2010; Fossati, 2018). Welfare states have been discursively framed as too passive and potentially promoting public benefit dependency (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994), whereby ALMPs represented a feasible solution to proactively help jobless people to re-enter the labour market (Eichhorst et al., 2008; Fossati, 2018; Seikel & Spannagel, 2018). This so-called ‘activation turn’ (Bonoli, 2010, p. 435) shifts away from providing passive welfare benefits in terms of cash transfers to unemployed people and focuses on instruments and policies aimed at their work (re-)insertion. The concept of activation spans an array of diverse policies, ranging from creating opportunities for work-experience jobs and job-seek support, to stronger work-record requirements for access to benefits, and an extension and intensification of job seeking obligations for benefit claimants (Dean, 2007; Gilbert, 2002; Jørgensen, 2004; Seikel & Spannagel, 2018). Activation refers, thus, to a mix of enabling policy measures and more demanding elements (conditionality of welfare benefits and recommodification of labour), grounded on the idea of

increasing individuals' employability (Dingeldey, 2007; Eichhorst et al., 2008). This 'Janus-faced character' of activation (Bengtsson, 2014, p. S66), combining a prevention of negative consequences of unemployment and social exclusion through enhancing personal skills, with the restoration of civic duties and discipline to reduce the dependency on social transfers, becomes visible in the concrete policy measures implemented. The enabling approach, on the one hand, starts from a social investment perspective (Hemerijck, 2013): activation policy intends to improve human capital by the provision of work incentives, such as in-work benefits, and enable people to take active part in the job searching, for instance through the expansion of training schemes and mobility grants. In this sense, it emphasises the development of skills by the expansion of labour opportunities aiming at social re-inclusion, not only into the paid labour market, but in the society (Eichhorst et al., 2008). From this point of view, sanctions are interpreted mainly as behavioural incentives (Dingeldey, 2007).

The demanding approach, on the other hand, combines conditionality and recommodification, through benefit cuts, tighter criteria for the definition of available jobs, compulsory participation to labour market programmes and enforcing sanctions on those who do not meet these obligations (Dingeldey, 2007). The restrictive entitlement prescriptions and sanctions are intended to be repressive instruments (Eichhorst et al., 2008). Despite variations in the level and severity of sanctions, the demanding approach has been brought forward in most of the European countries (Dingeldey, 2007; Knotz, 2018b). A shared feature of the different activation programmes is the presence of sanctions for those who fail to attend the work-for-benefits and non-work placements (Trickey, 2000).

2.2.1 Activation policies in Belgium

During the last decades, Belgium – the context of this study – has also witnessed an increase in demanding measures, although the path towards activation has been 'reluctant and erratic' (Hemerijck & Marx, 2010, p. 139) compared to other continental welfare states such as the Netherlands, in which activation measures had been implemented earlier (van Oorschot, 2002). Internal fragmentation, both political and linguistic, have contributed to a likewise fragmented policy reform momentum (Hemerijck & Kersbergen, 2019). From 2004 onwards the Belgian National Employment Office¹ has intensified controls and sanctions for unemployed people, and eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits have been tightened (IMF, 2015; Nicaise & Schepers, 2015). For instance, the "activation of job search" procedure, an evaluation of the jobseeker's behaviour through individual interviews, was introduced firstly for the young unemployed and gradually applied to the older ones (Van Lancker et al., 2015). Other concrete initiatives such as broadening the range for a suitable job (from 25 km to 60 km away) and a restriction on the period for finding the same kind of job (from six to five months – three for the younger unemployed) have been implemented during the period 2012-2015 (IMF, 2015), although these measures were still less strict compared to other European countries (Venn, 2012). In case of refusal of

a suitable job, sanctions might vary from a warning to an exclusion from the benefits of varying duration (between 4 and 52 weeks).

In addition to a relatively recent transformation to an active welfare state, regional differences between Flanders and Francophone Belgium in terms of ideologies, affluence and unemployment level (Billiet, Abts, & Swyngedouw, 2015), have contributed to create a potential cleavage in the support for these policies. The relatively recent policy evolutions combined with regional variation makes Belgium a suitable context for exploring individual-level mechanisms behind activation support.

2.3 EXPLAINING SUPPORT FOR DEMANDING ACTIVATION POLICIES: SELF-INTEREST AND IDEOLOGICAL DISPOSITIONS

Previous research on attitudes towards activation policies postulates that individuals' attitudes are driven by two principal mechanisms, which are derived from the welfare state attitudes literature: ideological beliefs and self-interest (Achterberg et al., 2014; Buss, 2018b; Fossati, 2018; Kootstra & Roosma, 2018). Below, we elaborate on both mechanisms and the linkage between them.

2.3.1 Ideological drivers of support for activation

The turn towards the demanding perspective has not happened in an ideological vacuum. Although activation policies were originally conceived as instruments to fight unemployment through boosting productivity (Weishaupt, 2011), the demanding side of activation policies is linked to the New Right perspective on social welfare citizenship (Dwyer, 2004) and is based on the idea of a new balance of 'rights and responsibilities' (Giddens, 1998). This perspective coincides with an ideological convergence toward exacerbating individual responsibility and increasing benefit conditionality (Dwyer, 2004; Seikel & Spannagel, 2018). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that support for demanding activation is embedded in particular ideological dispositions.

The first ideological dimension potentially underpinning demanding activation is authoritarianism – a disposition characterized by outspoken in-group attachment, a strong need for order and social conformity, an adherence to traditional norms and social roles, and support for punishment of moral deviants (Adorno et al., 1950; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009). In its New Right approach to social welfare citizenship, demanding activation combines the traditions of both libertarian liberalism and social conservatism (Dwyer, 2000). On the one hand, it emphasizes individual freedom, free market and a reduced role of government; on the other hand, it underlines the centrality of government in building and maintaining a “particular moral order (that emphasizes individual and familial duties)” (Dwyer, 2000, p. 62). The focus on moral discipline suggests an authoritarian backlash, with sanctions

for those who do not comply with these norms. Given that demanding activation stresses the punitive role of the welfare state towards those who are not self-responsible, we hypothesise that the authoritarian emphasis on conformity to the community norms and intolerance regarding deviants are directed towards the welfare beneficiaries, who are considered as not conforming to the predominant norms of autonomy and self-responsibility (van Oorschot & Roosma, 2017).

A second ideological foundation linked to the characterising aim of activation policies (that is, reducing the risk of welfare dependency through paid work) is work ethic. This concept captures the value people associate to work, conceived as a moral obligation and a reward for the individual and the society (Giorgi & Marsh, 1990; Stam, Verbakel, & de Graaf, 2014). With the dominance of the *activating* welfare state, considerations on who is entitled to benefits are increasingly guided by the principles of individual responsibility, instead of that of need and entitlement (Dwyer, 2004). Paid work is valued as guiding principle, presented as a moral duty and disciplinary instrument, and conceived as the best way to escape from poverty (Dwyer, 2000; Serrano Pascual, 2004). People are obliged to face risks actively: unemployment and poverty cannot be seen as external risks, consequently those in this situation cannot wait for someone else to handle their situation (Wetherly, 2001). In welfare attitudes research, a strong work ethic was found to be associated with lower levels of support for the welfare state (Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989), lower levels of sympathy with the unemployed (Furnham, 1982) and with stronger support for welfare obligations (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019).

A third relevant ideological dimension is egalitarianism. Welfare attitudes research has frequently found that egalitarian views are positively associated to support for the welfare state (Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Likki & Staerklé, 2015). Believing in equality of outcomes and in government intervention to reduce income inequalities, leads people to be more supportive of redistributive welfare policies (Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989). The imposition of obligations typical of demanding activation policies can be seen as a violation of the welfare principle that guarantees a subsistence level also for those who do not work (Houtman, 1997). The concept of conditionality implied in activation policy thus challenges an egalitarian notion of justice (Watts & Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Another well-established dimension in welfare attitudes research is left-right ideology: left-oriented people are generally more supportive of social rights and redistribution, while support for benefit obligations is higher among right-leaning people (Fossati, 2018; Kootstra & Roosma, 2018; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; Larsen, 2008; Roosma & Jeene, 2017; Saunders, 2002). Particularly, two core aspects of demanding activation policies, the centrality of individual responsibility and the priority given to economic achievement, are more strongly endorsed by right-wing supporters than by leftists (Fossati, 2018).

2.3.2 The self-interest approach

Self-interest theory postulates that support for welfare policies is stronger among people in disadvantaged socio-economic positions because of their higher risk to become welfare dependent and, thus, their interest in generous benefit systems (Andreß & Heien, 2001; Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989). In other words, rational actors are assumed to support policies if the personal gains of such policy outweigh the personal costs. This argumentation can be applied to explain attitudes towards social obligations for benefit claimants. Since the imposition of strict requirements for receiving benefits (such as obligations to accept any job) forms a restriction of social rights of the unemployed, people in unemployment or at risk of becoming unemployed are expected to oppose demanding ALMPs (Fossati, 2018; see Chapter 4). In addition to one's experience of unemployment, also low income (Kootstra & Roosma, 2018; Roosma & Jeene, 2017) is found to have a negative effect on support for demanding activation policies. Importantly, self-interest theory implies that the mechanism behind these socio-economic indicators is rational cost-benefit calculation. Therefore, the effects of socio-economic variables should be direct, namely independent from ideological motives.

2.3.3 The interplay between interest and ideology: Mediation effects

Social-structural positions and ideological dispositions – as well as their effects on welfare attitudes – are not independent of each other. Social-structural positions play a crucial role in organizing individuals' life chances and everyday experiences, by making certain experiences and outlooks more plausible than others (Svallfors, 1991, p. 611). Social-structural characteristics are linked to particular ideological worldviews, as belonging to a certain occupational class, income group, or educational background promotes socialization into specific ideological preferences (and/or vice versa: ideological dispositions lead people to choices that self-select them into certain social categories). These ideological dispositions, in turn, shape support for particular policies (Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989). The interpretation of the gross (or total) effects of socio-economic characteristics on policy support can be misleading if they are interpreted as pure self-interest mechanisms, since support might derive from a rational calculation of the policy benefits, but also from the ideological proximity of the policy to one's worldview. At the same time, people might select themselves in specific socio-economic categories, which contributes to add more complexity to the mechanisms for policy support. Regarding activation policies, Achterberg and colleagues (2014) argue that there may be different explanatory paths from socio-economic characteristics to demanding activation support. On the one hand, lower social classes – characterised by a lower income or insecure job positions – are more likely to hold egalitarian views, which in turn would lead them to be more supportive of a redistributive welfare state and less in favour of welfare state reforms that imposes benefit restrictions and sanctioning. On the other hand, those with lower educational levels may embrace authoritarian values (Lipset, 1959), which would make them

more supportive of demanding activation policies. In previous studies among the Dutch population, Achterberg and colleagues (2014; also Houtman, 1997) did not find a significant effect of education and income on support for activation and disciplining measures towards the unemployed when is controlled for authoritarian and economic egalitarian ideologies. If we want to investigate through which path socio-economic variables are related to attitudes, we need to introduce mediation mechanisms in studying this relation; particularly, we claim that occupational status and education are crucial in defining individuals' worldviews.

2.3.4 Hypotheses

Our theoretical arguments can be summarized into the following hypotheses. On the basis of the ideological frameworks, we expect that support for demanding activation is higher among people with higher levels of authoritarianism (H1), with stronger work ethic (H2) and right-wing oriented (H3). Individuals with strong egalitarian values are expected to be less supportive of demanding activation policies (H4).

Regarding the link between socio-economic characteristics, direct as well as indirect effects are expected. First, we hypothesise that, as a result of self-interest mechanisms, individuals' structural characteristics have a direct effect on activation attitudes (that is, net of one's ideological preferences). More specifically, people with low education (H5a), the unemployed (H5b) and with low income (H5c), as well as those having experienced unemployment (H5d) will oppose demanding activation policy measures. Second, besides these direct effects, we expect that the effect of socio-economic characteristics on demanding ALMPs attitudes is mediated by the adherence to specific ideologies. Specifically, we hypothesise that people in occupational statuses more at risk (i.e., the unemployed) and with lower educational levels have stronger authoritarian values, which bring them to be more in favour of activation (H6a). At the same time, they are expected to show less support for demanding activation because they have lower work ethic (H6b) and more egalitarian values (H6c).

2.4 DATA AND METHODS

2.4.1 Data

To test the hypotheses, we use data from the 2014 Belgian National Election Study (BNES), a post-electoral survey conducted among a probability sample of Belgian residents entitled to vote (Abts et al., 2015). The two-stage random probability sampling includes in total 1901 individuals (response rate: 47.5%), and data were collected by means of computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI). To correct

for non-response bias, post-stratification weight coefficients are applied, based on the population distribution regarding age, gender and educational level.

2.4.2 Indicators

Attitudes towards demanding activation are operationalized by a multi-item instrument consisting of six 5-point (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree) Likert-type items referring to obligations that the unemployed and social assistance beneficiaries should fulfil, and to the responsibility of the government in controlling these activities (see Table 2.1 for the exact question wording and frequency distributions). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) shows that a one-factor model does fit the data sufficiently, although the modification indices suggest to add an error correlation ($r = .334$) between two related items (strictness of government in relation to social benefit recipients who do not perform their duties and the unemployed who do not sufficiently apply for jobs).² The model has a good fit ($\chi^2 = 10.938$; $df = 8$; RMSEA = .015; CFI = .998; TLI = .996; SRMR = .012). The factor loadings are all sufficiently strong, namely above 0.50 (Harrington, 2009), indicating that the five items can be considered as sufficiently valid and reliable indicators of support for demanding activation policies.

Three of the ideological beliefs are operationalized as latent constructs measured by multiple items. Authoritarianism is measured by three Likert-type items asking respondents to express their agreement with the importance of obedience and respect for authority, implementing stricter laws and getting rid of the immoral people as a solution to social problems. Egalitarianism is also based on three items referring to opinions on income inequalities and social redistribution, and the role of government to reduce economic inequalities. To measure work ethic, four items form a latent factor capturing the importance individuals attribute to working hard and having a paid job as a moral duty (complete question wording is reported in Appendix Table A1.1). CFA demonstrates that a measurement model with three factors describes the correlations between the manifest items adequately ($\chi^2 = 113.625$; $df = 32$; RMSEA = .038 ; CFI = .958; TLI = .941; SRMR = .030; see Appendix Table A1.1 for factor loadings). Higher scores on the three factors represent, respectively, that respondents endorse more authoritarian, egalitarian and work ethic beliefs. As a fourth ideological factor, we also look at the effect of political orientation, measured by a single item consisting of an 11-point self-placement scale ranging from very left- (0) to very right-wing (10).

Table 2.1 Frequency distributions and measurement parameters for attitudes towards demanding activation

Code	Question wording	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	Mean	Factor Loadings (S. E.)
		%	%	%	%	%		
Q114_1	Unemployment benefits should be limited to a maximum of two years	6.2	28.0	19.0	38.4	8.3	3.11	.554 (.025)
Q114_2	People with a minimum income benefit should be obliged to do community work	2.4	11.0	16.2	52.7	17.7	3.72	.670 (.026)
Q114_3	Long-term unemployed should be obliged to accept any job, even if they earn much less than before by doing so	2.9	17.0	17.0	47.9	15.2	3.57	.715 (.022)
Q114_5	Long-term unemployed should be obliged to re-educate themselves, otherwise they lose their social benefits	0.9	9.7	15.4	59.7	14.4	3.77	.535 (.031)
Q115_2	The government should control more strictly whether the unemployed sufficiently apply for job	0.9	6.6	12.2	60.7	19.6	3.92	.579 (.026)
Q115_3	Social benefit beneficiaries who do not perform their duties should be punished more harshly	1.5	7.7	18.8	56.7	15.2	3.75	.570 (.027)

Note: N = 1737; Estimator = MLR; $\chi^2 = 10.938$; df = 8; RMSEA = .015; CFI = .998; TLI = .996; SRMR = .012. The model contains error correlation between Q115_3 and Q115_2 ($r = .334$).

To test the effect of self-interest, the model includes several individual socio-economic characteristics. Educational level is divided in three categories (lower secondary, higher secondary and tertiary education). Occupational status is categorized in six groups: white-collar workers, blue-collar, self-employed, pensioners, unemployed, others (including students, housewives and disabled). Income is measured as the net equivalised household income, divided into quartiles. Experience of unemployment measures whether the respondent has been unemployed in the last five year. We also control for age (in years), gender (ref. male) and respondent's region of residence (Flanders or Francophone Belgium). Table A2.2 in Appendix reports the descriptive information of these variables.

2.4.3 Statistical modelling

To test the mediation mechanism with latent variables, we make use of structural equation modelling (SEM). Based on the measurement models (CFA) shown in the previous section, we estimate a mediation model explaining support for demanding activation policies. In this structural equation model, ideological constructs are included as mediating variables between socio-economic individual position and support for activation. This approach allows to test the total, direct and indirect effects through mediators on the dependent variable (Cheong & MacKinnon, 2012).

The analysis is performed using Mplus Version 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). We make use of bootstrapping to estimate the standard errors. This approach does not rely on distributional assumptions (that are often violated when indirect effects are estimated) and therefore yields more accurate standard errors and unbiased statistical inference (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). All reported parameters below are standardised, apart from the effects of the dummy variables (for gender, education, occupational status, income, region and experience of unemployment), which are semi-standardised. As a result, the effects of dummy variables refer to the difference with the reference category in terms of standard deviations on the dependent variable. Cases with missing values on all the items forming the latent factor or on at least one independent variable are not included, resulting in a sample of 1,737 people.

2.5 RESULTS

2.5.1 Support for demanding activation among Belgians: descriptive findings

As Table 2.1 shows, imposing obligations and sanctions on welfare recipients is supported by a considerable majority of Belgians. Around 70% of respondents are in favour of obliging persons on social assistance to perform community service. A large majority of the respondents (strongly) agree

that long-term unemployed should be obliged to accept any job offer (63%) or to re-educate themselves (74%). Four out of five respondents furthermore call for a stricter control of unemployed persons' effort to apply for jobs and 72% favour harsher punishment of welfare recipients who do not fulfil the necessary requirements. This quite strong support for tough conditions confirms previous findings from research in other countries (Houtman, 1997; Larsen, 2008; Roosma & Jeene, 2017; Saunders, 2002). At the same time, however, the group supporting a limitation of the duration of unemployment benefits to two years is considerably smaller (46%): this might be a policy feedback effect (Pierson, 1993) linked to the peculiarity of the Belgian unemployment benefits, which are – in principle – unlimited in time (Van Lancker et al., 2015).

2.5.2 Explaining support for demanding activation: the role of self-interest and ideologies

The (semi-)standardised total, direct and indirect effects of the mediation SEM are presented in Table 2.2. The direct effects represent the effect of the independent variables (both socio-economic characteristics and ideological beliefs) on attitudes towards demanding activation, controlling for all the other variables in the model. The total effects of the structural variables represent the relation between the socio-economic variables and support for activation, without controlling for the mediators (authoritarianism, work ethic, egalitarianism, left-right self-placement). This total effect is the sum of the direct and the indirect effects (that is, the part of the effect that is mediated by the ideological variables). While direct effects of socio-economic characteristics point towards self-interest mechanisms, indirect effects reveal which ideological dispositions underlie the differences between social categories regarding the support for demanding activation, distinguishing the indirect effect for each of the mediators separately. In case of the ideological dimensions, there is no indirect effect, and the total effect equals the direct effect.

Firstly, our results confirm the importance of the hypothesised ideological roots of support for demanding activation. Among the ideological beliefs significantly linked to attitudes towards demanding activation, authoritarianism has the strongest effect. In line with hypothesis H1 and with previous findings (Achterberg et al., 2014), holding stronger authoritarian values leads people to be more in favour of tougher sanctions and punitive policy measures for welfare recipients. This effect derives from one of the ideological foundations of demanding activation: namely, that individuals failing to fulfil the conditions for receiving benefits need to be punished with sanctions and benefit cuts. Authoritarian values bring people to advocate this punitive aspect of activation policies. Moreover, adherence to a strong work ethic stimulates people to endorse demanding activation policies, in line with the expectation of hypothesis H2. Individuals who give priority to job in their life, see it as a mean to develop talent and as an obligation towards the society, are more in favour of measures that attempt

to prevent welfare dependency through enhancing individual responsibility. The effect of political self-placement, albeit small, indicates that the strongest support for demanding activation is found among right-wing oriented individuals, in line with previous studies (Fossati, 2018; Kootstra & Roosma, 2018) and with H3. This illustrates how demanding activation fits within the New Right perspective of social welfare citizenship. Finally, adherence to egalitarian values is negatively related to support for demanding activation, thereby confirming H4. Advocates of the principles of economic equality and government intervention to reduce income differentials are found to be more critical of demanding activation policies. Taken together, the effects of the four ideological dimensions indicate that support for demanding policies is rooted in a coherent ideological outlook that combines authoritarian values, a strong work ethic, anti-egalitarianism and rightist orientations.³

To fully understand the influence of socio-economic variables on support for activation, it is warranted to decompose the total effects into its direct and indirect components. First, we observe that individuals who completed tertiary education are significantly less supportive of demanding activation policies than those with a lower secondary degree at most (the difference between the two groups equals .244 standard deviations). However, because the direct effect is statistically insignificant (and even slightly positive), the opposition to demanding activation among the higher educated cannot be understood from a self-interest perspective (H5a is not confirmed), but it needs to be attributed to their ideological profile. The higher educated score lower on authoritarianism and work ethic, which results indirectly in lower levels of support for demanding activation (the indirect effects via egalitarianism and left-right placement are insignificant). This finding shows that education functions as an indicator of cultural preferences rather than of socio-economic position (Achterberg et al., 2014). We find confirmation for H6a, inasmuch as the lower educated have stronger authoritarian values, but not for H6b nor for H6c: the lower educated have stronger work ethic, contrary to what hypothesised, and there is no significant difference in their egalitarian values compared to the higher educated.

Table 2.2 Structural equation model explaining attitudes towards demanding activation policies

	Total effect	Direct effect	Total indirect effect	Specific indirect effects			
				Via authoritarianism	Via work ethic	Via egalitarianism	Via political orientation
Ideological beliefs							
Authoritarianism	.393***	.393***					
Work ethic	.277***	.277***					
Egalitarianism	-.202***	-.202***					
Left-right orientation	.076*	.076*					
Socio-economic variables							
Age	-.028	-.146***	.119***	.093***	.048**	-.020*	-.003
Gender (ref. male)	.201***	.190***	.011	.068**	-.020	-.037**	.000
Education (ref. low secondary)							
Higher secondary education	-.061	.036	-.098*	-.065*	-.057*	.021	.004
Tertiary education	-.244***	.137	-.381***	-.282***	-.123**	.023	.001
Occupational status (ref. blue collars)							
White collars	-.277***	-.089	-.188**	-.156**	-.054	.024	-.001
Self-employed	.308**	.093	.215*	.008	.017	.162**	.027
Retired	.028	.015	.013	-.043	.024	.022	.010
Unemployed	-.932***	-.717***	-.215*	-.154*	-.059	.001	-.003
Other	-.454***	-.353***	-.101	-.100*	.001	-.005	.005
Income (ref. 1st quartile)							
2nd quartile	.186*	.177*	.010	.014	-.001	-.008	.005
3rd quartile	.331***	.364***	-.033	-.019	-.028	.006	.008
4th quartile	.248**	.254**	-.006	-.091*	.013	.061*	.011
Missing	.318**	.304**	.014	-.068	-.013	.087**	.008
Region (ref. Flanders)	-.141*	-.235***	.094*	.117***	.031	-.033*	-.021*
Experience of unemployment	-.427***	-.380***	-.047	.021	-.021	-.033	-.014

Note: N = 1737; SRMR = .029; Explained variance (R²): .516; *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05. Since the bootstrap procedure does not calculate other fit indices, the following are taken from the model using MLR estimator: $\chi^2 = 841.158$; df = 289; RMSEA = .033; CFI = .905; TLI = .871. N. of bootstrap draws: 1,000.

Also the effect of occupational status provides support to the idea that individuals' social-structural positions and life experiences are linked to ideological preferences. Compared to blue-collar workers (reference category), white-collar workers and the unemployed show a relatively stronger opposition to demanding activation policies, while the self-employed are more supportive. This opposition, however, is driven by different mechanisms. In the case of white-collar workers, the negative effect is fully mediated by authoritarianism. Similarly as for the higher educated, the relatively low support for activation among white collars is mainly driven by the low level of authoritarianism among this group. The divergent policy preferences between blue and white collars are the results of the authoritarian outlook of these groups rather than self-interest, work ethic or egalitarian values. The strong support of demanding activation among the self-employed stems from ideological motives as well, yet here the effect is mediated by egalitarianism: the self-employed endorse demanding activation because they show greater opposition to egalitarianism.⁴ The strong negative effect of being unemployed, conversely, is in the first place a direct one. Controlling for their ideological profile, the unemployed are less in favour of demanding activation, which confirms the self-interest logic (H5b), and the recurrent finding in previous research that the jobless are against policies imposing severe restrictions on their benefits (Buss, 2018b; Carriero & Filandri, 2018; Fossati, 2018; Houtman, 1997). A small negative indirect effect of being unemployed runs via authoritarianism, meaning that this category scores lower on authoritarian values. Thus, H6a is partly confirmed (i.e., confirmed only for the lower educated), while the indirect effects through work ethic and egalitarianism are not significant (disconfirming H6b-c).

Income has a direct effect on attitudes towards activation. Consistent with H5c, those in the higher quartiles of the distribution express more enthusiasm for demanding activation (compared to those in the first income quartile). The overall indirect effects for the income categories are insignificant, which suggests that the relation between income and support for demanding activation is driven by self-interest. In line with the idea that people in more 'risky' position are driven by their self-interest (H5d), we also observe a negative and significant direct effect of unemployment experience, and this effect does not run through ideologies (the total indirect effect is insignificant).

The effects of the control variables give additional examples of the interplay between self-interest motives and ideological beliefs in shaping activation attitudes. Interestingly, the direct and indirect effects of age run in opposite directions – self-interest thus cancels out the ideological differences. Women are more supportive of demanding activation, confirming previous findings (Larsen, 2008; Saunders, 2002), however being somewhat at odds with the stronger welfare support found among women in traditional welfare attitudes research (Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989). Regarding regional differences, Flemish residents are more in favour of demanding activation, which might be linked to the more prosperous economic conditions of this region. However, there is also a small indirect effect, mainly driven by the fact that Francophone Belgians score higher on the authoritarian scale (Abts et al., 2015).

Previous investigation of attitudes towards social obligations had already suggested that the effect of socio-economic position on support for welfare rights and obligations might be mediated by ideological beliefs (Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019). The results of this study offer a more precise measure of the extent to which support for demanding activation is rooted in one's socio-economic position and ideological preferences. Moreover, the findings emphasize the importance of taking the mediating role of ideologies into account and reveal that not all the socio-economic characteristics can be considered as credible indicators of self-interest motives. While personal experience of unemployment, income and, to some extent, occupational status exert a direct effect on attitudes even controlling for ideological mediators, educational level is not directly related to the dependent variable. Education seems to be a significant predictor for individuals' development of specific ideological dispositions, and it is this socialization into certain worldviews that drives the process of attitudes formation.

2.6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The shift towards an 'activating' type of welfare state has raised the question to what extent people support activation policies that discourage welfare dependency through benefit cuts, restrictive eligibility criteria and sanctions in case of noncompliance. The recurrent finding that opposition against demanding ALMPs is strongest among the actual or potential targets of these policies is mainly interpreted in terms of self-interest (Fossati, 2018; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019). This study sheds new light on the explanatory mechanisms of public support for demanding activation by simultaneously analysing the social-structural and ideological drivers of support for demanding ALMPs in Belgium. We demonstrate the importance of a wide range of ideological beliefs that are linked to the principles underpinning the activation turn, and that lead individuals to be in favour or against these policies. Using a structural equation model, we uncover the pathways through which social-structural variables influence activation attitudes, and we disentangle self-interest and ideological mechanisms. The results confirm the role of socio-economic position in shaping attitudes towards demanding activation; however, the effects of social structure are the result of a mixture of self-interest and ideological considerations. On the one hand, those who are currently unemployed, or who have a previous experience of unemployment, as well as those with a lower income, are more likely to oppose demanding ALMPs and these effects are directly related to self-interest. On the other hand, the opposition to demanding activation among the higher educated and white-collar workers should be understood in terms of their particular ideological dispositions – namely being less authoritarian and less supporting traditional work ethic – rather than by their personal interest in not having obligations attached to welfare benefits.

These findings have relevant implications not merely for attitudinal research on support for activation policies, but also for the broader field of public opinion towards the welfare state. The interpretation of the effect of education and occupational status per se might be misleading if we do not take into account that these indicators capture socialization into or adherence to a particular ideological outlook. This should warn scholars to carefully consider the mechanisms underlying the effects of these social-structural variables on welfare attitudes. Our findings make clear to consider socio-economic variables not as univocal indicators of self-interest, and pinpoint the importance of including ideological dispositions as explicit mediators between socio-economic characteristics and policy attitudes. Support for demanding activation policies seems to follow the logic of ‘first the grub, then the morals’⁵: not in the sense that effects of self-interest (the grub) trump ideological motives (the morals), but rather in the sense that social-structural characteristics, and particularly education and occupation, precede and shape individuals’ worldviews, which in turn drive the development of people’s policy attitudes.

These conclusions give rise to new questions. First, the question arises to what extent our findings travel beyond the particular context of demanding activation in Belgium. Since ALMPs were, compared to some other European countries, implemented later and in a less strict manner, it is likely that the level of support for demanding activation in Belgium is relatively low. However, we see no apparent reason why the results concerning the link between ‘interests’ and ‘ideological dispositions’ – after all two important pillars of welfare attitudes research (Andreß & Heien, 2001; Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989) – on activation policy attitudes could not be generalized to other European countries. General mechanisms in regard to habitus construction and the socialization to particular ideologies through education and one’s occupation go beyond the particularities of the Belgian case, but are related to contemporary Western societies in general. The effect of institutional context – the third mainstay – however, should be investigated within a comparative approach. Further research is needed to test whether the effects of self-interest, ideological dispositions and their interrelation hold across contexts with different ALMPs legacies. Second, it is not known whether the mechanisms uncovered for demanding activation can be extended indistinctively to support for enabling ALMPs. In line with previous suggestions (Fossati, 2018), further insights on the theoretical mechanisms for welfare attitudes might derive from the analysis of public opinion towards enabling policies, such as tailor-made training programs or incentives to accept low-paid jobs. In this case, activation policies might be interpreted by their beneficiaries as positive instruments promoting their re-insertion in the labour market, instead of as punitive measures. It is conceivable that rational self-interest would bring unemployed people, or people more at risk of unemployment, to support this type of policies. The current non-availability of survey data on these activation measures, however, prevent welfare scholars from investigating the specific attitudinal support of this type of activation. Third, it is possible that, besides mediation, also interaction effects exist and that the various individual characteristics reinforce or temper each other’s influence on support for demanding ALMPs. It is not unlikely, for example, that the strength of the impact of

work ethics varies with political ideology. Our study was not able to answer these questions, but hopefully paves the way for future research in the field of policy attitudes.

NOTES

¹ The unemployment insurance system in Belgium is regulated by the National Employment Office; the follow-up of unemployment benefits, and the initiatives of ALMPs, are prevalently a task of the regions (VDAB in Flanders, FOREM in Wallonia and ACTIRIS in Brussels-Capital region) (Nicaise & Schepers, 2015; Van Lancker et al., 2015).

² The inclusion of this theoretically justified error correlation improves model fit, but has no consequences for the construction of the latent variable.

³ We additionally tested a CFA model in which all items of the four scales load on a single, overarching ideological dimension. This model yields a very bad model fit (CFI = .489; TLI = .361) and the loadings for two items of the egalitarianism scale are no longer significant. This indicates that the four scales constitute four dimensions that cannot be subsumed under a single latent factor.

⁴ The positive sign of the indirect effect via egalitarianism is the result of multiplication of the negative direct effect of egalitarianism on attitudes and of the negative effect of self-employment on egalitarianism.

⁵ Translation of a famous quote from Bertolt Brecht's 'The Threepenny Opera'.

THE IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE ACTIVATION PARADIGM. HOW DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE PREFERENCES AND UNEMPLOYMENT ATTRIBUTIONS SHAPE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR DEMANDING ACTIVATION POLICIES

Abstract

Existing empirical research has either focused on self-interest or generic ideological dimensions to explain attitudes towards demanding active labour market policies (ALMPs). Taking a novel approach, this chapter focuses on how public support for these policies is ideologically rooted in the underlying policy paradigm, that is the set of organizing principles and causes behind a specific policy. In particular, we link attitudes towards demanding ALMPs to two frameworks that correspond to the pillars of the activation paradigm: distributive justice and unemployment attributions. To test this relation, structural equation modelling is employed on data from the Belgian National Election Study 2014. Results indicate that individuals supporting the principles of need and equity and who blame the unemployed have higher support for demanding activation. The chapter concludes that distributive justice preferences and unemployment attributions have an important influence on top of self-interest and generic ideological dimensions, which points to the importance of including predictive factors that correspond to a particular policy paradigm.

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, European welfare states have moved from ‘passive’ social policies to more ‘activating’ measures (Cox, 1998; Graziano, 2012) that aim to increase labour participation among people who are dependent on social security or social assistance benefits (Boland, 2016; Bruttel & Sol, 2006; van Berkel & Borghi, 2008, p. 332). This ‘activation turn’ comprises a variety of policy measures that can be classified into two types of active labour market policies (ALMPs), namely enabling policies, focusing on investments in human capital, and demanding policies, which opt for negative incentives to push people into employment (Bonoli, 2010; Bruttel & Sol, 2006; Daguerre, 2004; Eichhorst et al., 2008). This article focuses on the latter, as demanding ALMPs have been more frequently adopted and heavily politicized. While this has drawn scholarly attention to their implementation, consequences and legitimacy (Fossati, 2018; Knotz, 2018b), far less is known about the ideological origins of their public support. As ALMPs are amongst the most prominent ‘new’ types of social policies that declare a break with traditional compensation policies and openly call into question deeply entrenched institutions that handle unemployment (Häusermann, 2012; Maron & Helman, 2017, p. 406), understanding their support base is primordial to grasp the legitimacy of contemporary welfare systems and political feasibility of future reforms.

To capture the ideological roots of support for demanding ALMPs, our study investigates how its underlying policy paradigm informs public preferences. We assume that the paradigmatic ideas on the organizing principles and the problems behind a specific policy (Béland, 2005, 2016; Daigneault, 2014a; Hall, 1993) are especially relevant to dissect ideological support for ALMPs, as the activation debate occurs on a more specific level that does not fully equate with traditional distributive and ideological conflicts. Instead, it elicits strong tensions on the fundamental “goals, rules, and resources of unemployment policies” by dealing with issues of how to get people into work who are in control of their situation in need and hence deemed undeserving of welfare support (Maron & Helman, 2017, p. 407). Previous research demonstrates that besides social-structural characteristics, ideological factors, such as right-wing orientations and anti-egalitarianism are strong predictors of support for demanding ALMPs (Fossati, 2018; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; Roosma & Jeene, 2017). However, simultaneously, the introduction of ALMPs is cross-cutting established cleavage structures, and is a relatively new reform with unknown modalities and consequences (Deeming, 2015; Häusermann, 2012; Maron & Helman, 2017), which makes these ideological dispositions in themselves potentially insufficient to fully understand their support base. Instead, policy paradigms may be better equipped to reveal the idiosyncratic ideological controversies surrounding contemporary activation debate as well as to unveil the ideological roots of public support for ALMPs.

After all, demanding ALMPs are not neutral policy measures, but entail a break with the traditional vision on the desired organization of welfare state distribution as well as on the causes behind welfare

dependency (Romano, 2018). On the one hand, the paradigm redesigns the blueprint of contemporary welfare states by changing their underlying conceptions of social justice (Sachweh, 2016, p. 309). ALMPs are part of a rethought social contract, which shifts the logic from “all-in-the-same-boat” to “give back to society” philosophy (Béland & Cox, 2016; Daguerre, 2004; Hacker, 2006, p. 34; Romano, 2018; Sachweh, 2016). This turn implies a shift away from the principle of equality towards equity- or need-based distribution. On the other hand, this paradigm encompasses a particular view on the causes behind social neediness and welfare dependency that emphasizes individual responsibility for dealing with the consequences of social risks and the punishment of groups who fail to comply with welfare requirements (Dwyer, 2000; Romano, 2018). This policy paradigm considers unemployment not as a transitory misfortune or as a result of structural injustice, but attributes unemployment to the behaviour and morality of the individual (Dwyer, 2000; Webster, 2019, p. 325).

This chapter investigates to what extent the core ideas of this policy paradigm shape citizens’ support for demanding ALMPs and in this way contributes in to the literature in important ways. First, analysing policy paradigms from an attitudinal perspective allows us to uncover to what extent the policy paradigms are echoed among the general public. As a result, we can determine the broader “acceptance and likely embedding of workfare values and principles in the collective psyche” (Deeming, 2015, p. 880). Second, the explanatory power of the policy paradigm approach is tested, which seems more suitable to grasp support for contemporary welfare reforms beyond the classic left-right divides. As ALMPs are being pursued by parties across the ideological spectrum and cut across traditional distributive conflicts between capital and labour that mark the left-right divide (Cronert, 2022; Deeming, 2015; Häusermann, 2012), the conventional ideological variables could be insufficient to fully grasp the reasons for supporting these policies.

Concretely, this chapter addresses the following research questions: (1) How are preferences for particular principles of distributive justice (equality, equity and need) related to support for demanding ALMPs? (2) How do attributions of unemployment (individual blame, individual fate, social blame and social fate) influence support for demanding ALMPs? To answer both research questions, structural equation modelling on data of the Belgian National Election Study 2014 is conducted. Before elaborating on the potential effects of distributive justice preferences and unemployment attributions, this chapter expands on the policy paradigm behind demanding activation.

3.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.2.1 The policy paradigm behind demanding activation

The recent history of the European welfare states has been characterized by a so-called ‘activation turn’ (Bonoli, 2010, p. 435; see Chapter 1) that aims to make citizens economically self-reliant by increasing

their labour market participation (van Berkel & Borghi, 2008). Activation of the jobless can take place through two distinct approaches. Enabling ALMPs focus on investments in human capital to promote the employability of the jobless, whereas demanding ALMPs emphasize coercive elements, such as benefit cuts, obligatory training programs and sanctions for those who do not comply with obligations (Bruttel & Sol, 2006; Daguerre, 2004; Dingeldey, 2007; Eichhorst et al., 2008; Seikel & Spannagel, 2018).

Despite cross-national variations in the use of specific policy instruments, especially the demanding variant of ALMPs have been implemented across European countries (Dingeldey, 2007; Knotz, 2018a). These policies are embedded in a specific policy paradigm, i.e. an interpretive framework consisting of a set of ideas about the organizing principles behind policies as well as about the nature and causes of the problems they address (Béland, 2005, 2016; Daguerre, 2007; Daigneault, 2014a; Hall, 1993). The broader policy paradigm of demanding activation emphasizes paid work and individual accountability (Daguerre, 2007). The two constituting elements are (1) a transformation in the balance between universality and conditionality, and (2) a shift in responsibility from the state to the individual.

Concerning the trade-off between universality and conditionality, the activation turn implies a renewed focus on selective distribution that aims to cut welfare benefits, or at least match welfare rights with obligations (Seikel & Spannagel, 2018). Demanding ALMPs reinsert the market principle into government policy and promote a re-commodification of labour (Boland, 2016, p. 335). This approach marks an end of the ‘something for nothing’ welfare state era and calls for welfare distribution only to those recipients that are willing to work (Béland & Cox, 2016; Daguerre, 2004, 2007, p. 12). As a result, the activation turn alters the organizing policy principles by shifting from universal towards reciprocal or residual forms of welfare that differentiate between various types of beneficiaries and restrict the scope of distribution.

With regard to the responsibility of state vs. individual, the paradigm of demanding activation entails a transformed outlook on the very nature and causes of social risks. The activation turn emphasizes individual responsibility and labels welfare dependency as a ‘personal failing’ (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018). Demanding ALMPs strongly problematize the presumed overuse of welfare benefits by attributing poverty and unemployment to individual characteristics, such as a poor work ethic (Daguerre, 2007; Fossati, 2018).

Given this paradigmatic background of demanding ALMPs, this study hypothesises that people’s support for these policies can be understood as a function of specific ideological dispositions. Individuals’ preferences for distributive justice principles as well as the causes to which they attribute unemployment, are crucial ideological factors shaping support for demanding forms of activation. Yet, these key dimensions of the activation paradigm have been largely overlooked and it hence remains unclear to what extent this programmatic discourse structures policy preferences towards ALMPs

(Deeming, 2015). Notwithstanding the predictive power of general ideological dispositions (e.g., left-right placement, authoritarianism or work ethic) (Fossati, 2018; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; see Chapter 2), the activation debate does not coincide with the traditional normative divides and is not a conventional redistributive issue. Instead of building on classical ideological discussions on how to compensate income losses in the welfare state or on how to mitigate the relationships between labour and capital, the activation debate resolves around how to increase labour market participation and distinguish deserving from underserving groups (Deeming, 2015; Gingrich & Häusermann, 2015). Empirical studies have shown that ALMPs are equally being pursued by left-wing parties, albeit often in distinct forms, and that the political space is restructured around these issues (Cronert, 2022; Deeming, 2015; Häusermann, 2012; Maron & Helman, 2017). As a result, to understand the conflicts that are at the forefront of the activation debate and to grasp the public controversies going beyond traditional ideological cleavages, we should concentrate on the more specific ideas connected to the underlying policy paradigm.

3.2.2 Balancing the rights and obligations of the unemployed: The role of distributive justice

Considerations of distributive justice are not only central to the question how social rights and obligations should be balanced, but these philosophical principles are also a defining element of policy paradigms (Daguerre, 2007; Daigneault, 2014b; Dingeldey, 2007; Romano, 2018). Distributive justice literature generally distinguishes three principles of distributive justice that refer to distinct ways of allocating benefits, goods and services (Deutsch, 1975). First, the principle of equality (of outcomes) distributes equally to all citizens who are confronted with a certain risk, irrespective of additional requirements. Second, the principle of equity makes distribution conditional on past contributions, which implies that benefits are proportional to previously paid taxes, welfare contributions and labour market participation. Last, the principle of need entails a selective concern for citizens highest in need only, with the goal of providing sufficient resources to alleviate their basic needs.

The activation turn implies a shift from more equal and universal distribution to more conditional (cf., equity) or selective (cf., need) welfare provision, boiling down to a fundamental alteration of the underlying conceptions of distributive justice (Buchanan, 1990; Ervik, Kildal, & Nilssen, 2015). Demanding ALMPs are rooted in the idea of ‘justice as reciprocity’, which legitimizes a new type of conditional contract between citizens and the welfare state (Béland & Cox, 2016; Buchanan, 1990; Daguerre, 2004; Dingeldey, 2007; Ervik et al., 2015). This reciprocity-based approach to social rights and quid-pro-quo welfare model is constructed on the logic of equity (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). Because equity constitutes a core component of the ideological paradigm of the activation turn, support for demanding activation is expected to be especially strong among individuals

who endorse the principle of equity. Empirically, this thesis is supported by recent findings (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019), where a positive relationship is reported between support for the deservingness criterion of reciprocity and the justification of stricter welfare conditionality.

Besides equity, also the principle of need is closely intertwined with the activation discourse that stresses the importance of returning to forms of informal solidarity and of prioritizing individual rather than governmental responsibility to tackle social risks (Eichhorst et al., 2008; Fossati, 2018; Romano, 2018). The principle of need similarly relies on the notion of self-reliance in the provision of a sufficient living standard (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). Moreover, ALMPs aim to cut welfare benefits by increasingly differentiating between deserving and undeserving recipients, of which the former are given access to benefits while the latter are punished for their prolonged neediness (Dwyer, 2000; Romano, 2018). This policy orientation is in line with need-based distribution that implies more selective and residual welfare state provision (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). Consequently, demanding ALMPs are likely to appeal to individuals in favour of need-based allocation of benefits.

Contrary to equity or need, the principle of equality disregards selective requirements for access to welfare and emphasizes unconditionality. This principle contrasts with ALMPs that are grafted onto a radical departure from universal and unconditional rights (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Hibbert, 2007). Making access to welfare dependent on strict behavioural requirements conflicts with a conception of rights as being absolute and universal (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018). As a result, a preference for equality-based distribution might go hand in hand with less support for demanding activation. Those who favour egalitarian distribution prioritize rights to welfare over work obligations, as the latter are affecting the principle of social equality itself (Houtman, 1997).

In sum, regarding the social justice orientations persons who prioritize the principles of equity (H1) or need (H2) over equality are expected to be more likely to support demanding ALMPs.

3.2.3 Blaming the unemployed? The role of unemployment attributions

According to the activation paradigm, control and individual responsibility are essential criteria to differentiate between categories of benefit claimants (Daguerre, 2007; Dwyer, 2000; Romano, 2018). Since a policy paradigm not only specifies the goals of a policy, but also incorporates worldviews that define the very nature and causes of social problems (Daigneault, 2014a; Hall, 1993, p. 279), individuals' beliefs regarding the main causes of unemployment may reinforce or temper support for demanding ALMPs. Based on the literature on attributions of poverty (Feagin, 1972; Lepianka, van Oorschot, & Gelissen, 2009; van Oorschot & Halman, 2000), individuals' explanations of why a person falls into unemployment can be articulated alongside two axes: (1) the individual-social axis, referring to the question whether factors internal or external to the individual cause the condition of

unemployment; and (2) the blame-fate axis, attributing unemployment to either controllable vs. inevitable events. Combining both axes yields four types of unemployment attributions: individual blame, individual fate, social blame and social fate (van Oorschot & Halman, 2000). While the individual blame type attributes unemployment to the laziness and the unwillingness of the unemployed to find a job, individual fate conceives unemployment as personal misfortune. The social blame type finds the cause of unemployment in social injustice and structural social exclusion. Attributions to social fate indicate that unemployment is believed to be caused by unavoidable and uncontrollable societal processes (Lepianka et al., 2009; van Oorschot & Halman, 2000).

According to the paradigm underlying the punitive approach to activation, individual failings and a weak work ethic are the main causes of unemployment (Boland, 2016; Daguerre, 2007), and sanctions and benefit cuts are seen as effective means to force passive welfare dependents back into employment (Dwyer, 2000). Support for demanding ALMPs can thus be understood in terms of a hardening of attitudes towards the unemployed that attributes unemployment to a lack of responsibility and moral hazard (Fossati, 2018). This argument fits with empirical research evidencing that unemployed persons are seen as less deserving when they are believed to be responsible for their own neediness. This higher perceived control and lower deservingness in turn reflect in higher support for the introduction of benefit obligations (Roosma & Jeene, 2017).

Although especially individual blame-attribution is expected to incite support for demanding activation, emphasizing individual fate might also go hand in hand with heightened support for work obligations. ALMPs are closely linked to a general shift towards individualism (Ervik & Kildal, 2015), as they assume that individuals are able to actively take up their personal responsibility by re-entering the labour market (Bonvin, 2008). Even though the individual fate type does not blame the unemployed, solutions are still sought in the realm of the individual.

Attributing unemployment to a lack of jobs (social blame) or to social transformations (social fate) is contrarily harder to reconcile with a preference for demanding ALMPs. Emphasizing high unemployment rates or the insufficient availability of jobs decreases victim-blaming and leads to a higher perceived deservingness of the unemployed (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). This might in turn reflect in stronger sympathy with the main target group of ALMPs and lower support for welfare conditionality (Dwyer, 2000). Similarly, when risks are considered to be ‘an accident of fate’, the take-up of collective responsibility tends to be strong (Giddens, 1999), which is in contrast to the turn towards individual responsibility in the activation paradigm (Bonvin, 2008; Ervik & Kildal, 2015). Furthermore, external attribution lowers the legitimacy of inequalities (Schneider & Castillo, 2015) and thus weakens the legitimacy of policies that imply a turn away from equality.

Concretely, we hypothesise that people who attribute unemployment to individual blame will show higher support for the activation of benefit claimants than those who attribute it to social fate or social

blame (H3). Also, those who ascribe unemployment to individual fate will have a stronger preference for demanding activation compared to people who attribute it to social fate or blame, but the difference will be smaller than for individual blame (H4).

3.2.4 Conventional explanatory mechanisms: Self-interest and ideology

Instead of concentrating on the ideological components of the policy paradigm, existing empirical research on support for ALMPs has focused on the role of two theoretical frameworks that are traditionally used to explain welfare state attitudes: self-interest and ideological beliefs (Fossati, 2018; Kootstra & Roosma, 2018). First, self-interest theory postulates that demanding ALMPs are opposed by disadvantaged individuals in precarious economic situations, who are generally beneficiaries of unemployment benefits (Fossati, 2018). Following a rational-choice logic that is based on cost-benefit calculations, actual or potential welfare beneficiaries might thus be more negative towards ALMPs that potentially limit benefit access or levels (Carriero & Filandri, 2018; Kootstra & Roosma, 2018). The explanatory framework of ideology, on the other hand, assumes that welfare preferences are especially embedded in a broader set of values and norms (Jaeger, 2006a).

Traditional ideological frameworks cannot be overlooked in the analysis of support for demanding ALMPs. However, these ideological dispositions are so encompassing that they struggle to grasp the politicization and ideological contestation specific to the activation debate. This is especially true because discussions on activation mainly resolve around issues of reciprocity as well as the deservingness of benefit claimants, instead of being centred around traditional themes and distributive conflicts that characterize the political divide between left and right (Deeming, 2015; Häusermann, 2012; Maron & Helman, 2017). As a result, in themselves these theoretical frameworks fall short on clarifying the specific ideological divides and roots of public support for demanding activation. The analysis of this chapter will take these traditional mechanisms into account to test whether the pillars of the activation paradigm should be included on top of the existing mechanisms.

3.3 DATA AND METHODS

3.3.1 Data

To answer our research questions, data of the Belgian National Election Study 2014, conducted among Belgians qualified to vote, is analysed. The National Register functioned as the sampling frame and two-stage random probability sampling was used. By means of Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), a sample of 1901 respondents (response rate: 47.5 percent) was realized. Post-stratification weights on the basis of age, gender and education are applied.

3.3.2 Indicators

Support for demanding ALMPs is measured by six Likert-type items (five-point disagree-agree answer scale). These items inquire whether respondents endorse the following series of demanding measures: limiting unemployment benefits to two years, imposing obligations to accept any job or to enrol in re-education programs, implementing stricter government control on job-seeking behaviour and harsher punishment if duties are not performed, and obliging people with a minimum income to do community work. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is conducted to test whether these items measure a single latent construct. Modification indices suggest an error correlation between the items on stricter government control on job-seeking activities and harsher punishment ($r = 0.33$), which can be explained by the fact that both items refer to the punitive strictness of government. Table 3.1 displays the percentages of respondents agreeing, the factor loadings and the questions wordings for each of the six items. The measurement model shows adequate fit and all items load strongly on the joint latent construct, which testifies to the measurement quality of our scale.

Table 3.1 Factor loadings, questions wordings and percentages of respondents agreeing for each item of demanding active labour market policies

Question wording	% (completely) agree	Factor loadings
Q114_1 - Unemployment benefits should be limited to a maximum of two years.	45.2	0.555
Q114_2 - People with a minimum income should be obliged to do community work.	70.4	0.666
Q114_3 - Long-term unemployed should be obliged to accept any job, even if they earn much less than before by doing so.	64.0	0.704
Q114_5 - Long-term unemployed should be obliged to re-educate themselves, otherwise they lose their social benefits.	73.8	0.522
Q115_2 - The government should control more strictly whether the unemployed sufficiently apply for jobs.	80.3	0.579
Q115_3 - Social benefit beneficiaries who do not perform their duties should be punished more harshly.	71.2	0.565
Error correlation between Q115_2 and Q115_3		0.329

Note: N=1900. Fit indices of the measurement model for support for demanding ALMPs: $\chi^2 = 12.731$; $df = 8$; CFI = 0.997; TLI = 0.994; RMSEA = 0.018; SRMR=0.013.

Distributive justice preferences are operationalized by a question gauging directly how government should organize the allocation of unemployment benefits. The answer categories (see Table 3.2) refer to preferences for the principles of equality, equity or need.¹ This measure thus applies the justice principles to unemployment benefits, which is important as justice preferences can be contingent on the welfare domain (Van Hootegem, Abts & Meuleman, 2020). Unemployment attributions are measured

by asking respondents what they think the most important reason is that people in our society are unemployed (van Oorschot & Halman, 2000). The answer categories refer to attributions of individual blame, individual fate, social blame or social fate. Table 3.2 displays the wordings of the answer categories for the distributive justice as well as the unemployment attribution item.

Besides these two ideological dimensions related to the policy paradigm, three more generic ideational beliefs are also included that were found to be relevant in previous research. First, political left-right placement is measured on an eleven-point scale (from 0=left to 10=right). Second, work ethic is measured by four statements (five-point disagree-agree answer scale) referring to work as a necessary condition to develop talents, the stigma of receiving money without working for it, and work as a duty towards society and a priority in life. Third, authoritarianism is operationalized by three items mentioning that obedience and respect for authority are important virtues, that laws should become stricter and that problems can be solved by getting rid of immoral people. A CFA model with both scales simultaneously included shows good fit and yields sufficiently large factor loadings (see Table A3.1 in Appendix for question wordings, factor loadings and fit indices). These findings evidence the reliability and validity of the work ethic and authoritarianism scales.

The social structural position of individuals is operationalized by their occupational class, income, education, welfare dependency and current unemployment status. Occupational class is divided into five categories on the basis of the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero class scheme (Ganzeboom & Treiman, 1996), which distinguishes between service class, blue collar workers (reference category), white collar workers, the self-employed and the inactive (including students). Income is measured as the net equalized household income and is divided into four quartiles. A missing category for income is added to limit the number of deleted cases due to non-response on this sensitive item. Educational level is divided in three categories: lower (secondary) education, higher secondary education (reference category) and tertiary education. Welfare dependency is operationalized by asking respondents whether someone in their household received a welfare benefit (such as income support, an unemployment benefit or a work disability allowance) in the last two years. The model also includes a dummy to indicate whether someone is currently unemployed. Gender, age and region (Flanders vs. Francophone Belgium) are included as additional control variables.

3.3.3 Statistical Modelling

To analyse support for demanding ALMPs, we use structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM allows to assess structural pathways between constructs, while taking random measurement error into account through the use of latent variables. The fit indices of the explanation model ($\chi^2 = 800.919$; $df = 271$; CFI = 0.904; TLI = 0.875; RMSEA = 0.032; SRMR = 0.026) illustrate that the model fits the data adequately. Only the TLI (0.875) is low, but the modification indices indicate no substantial local misfit

in the model. All analyses are conducted in Mplus version 8.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). To deal with the limited amount of item non-response, Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation is used (meaning that only cases with a missing on all items for the dependent variable or a missing on one of the exogenous variables are excluded from the model). The parameter estimates are based on standardization of the dependent variable and the metric independent variables. The dummy variables are not standardized, so that these coefficients refer to the number of standard deviations a particular category differs from the reference group.

3.4 RESULTS

3.4.1 Descriptive findings

Before discussing the results of the SEM, this chapter provides a descriptive overview of support for demanding ALMPs, distributive justice preferences and unemployment attributions. The proportions of respondents agreeing with each item, as displayed in Table 3.2, reveal that there is a high level of public support for demanding activation measures (see also Carriero & Filandri, 2018; Houtman, 1997; Kootstra & Roosma, 2018). Although agreement is slightly lower for limiting unemployment benefits over time, the other demanding ALMPs measures are supported by half to more than two thirds of the respondents. Apparently, welfare conditionality towards the unemployed is largely accepted among the respondents in our sample.

Table 3.2 Wording and percentage of respondents opting for each answer category of unemployment attributions and distributive justice preferences

Wording	Category	% of respondents
<i>Distributive justice</i>		
A reasonable benefit for all the unemployed, which is equal for everyone	Equality	52.2
A higher unemployment benefit for people who have earned and contributed more	Equity	29.0
A minimal unemployment benefit for the unemployed who are in real need	Need	18.8
<i>Unemployment attributions</i>		
Because they don't try hard enough to find a job	Individual blame	30.0
Because they have bad luck and misfortune in their lives	Individual fate	10.8
Because there is a lack of available jobs	Social blame	35.6
Because, in a modern society, this is simply unavoidable	Social fate	23.7

The percentages of respondents opting for each category of distributive justice and unemployment attributions are displayed in Table 3.2. Over half of the respondents prefer the equality principle for the allocation of unemployment benefits. The strong support for the principle of equality as well as for demanding ALMPs indicates that rights and obligations for the unemployed are overall both strongly supported, which is in line with previous findings (Houtman, 1997). The other two social justice principles are also preferred by a substantial proportion of respondents. While 29 percent prefers to distribute benefits in accordance with past contributions, about one fifth of the sample prefers a residual and selective benefit scheme that is solely targeted at those who are most in need. With regard to the unemployment attributions, most respondents identify a general lack of jobs (social blame) as the main cause of unemployment. About a third of the respondents attributes unemployment to individual blame, which illustrates that a relatively large proportion believes that unemployment is caused by laziness or a lack of willpower of individuals. The two fate attributions are least popular. These descriptive statistics show considerable variation in the ideological outlooks of the respondents: each of the categories of distributive justice preferences and unemployment attributions is preferred by a considerable proportion of respondents.

3.4.1 Explaining support for demanding activation

Table 3.3 displays the regression coefficients of the model predicting support for demanding ALMPs. First, in line with previous findings (Fossati, 2018; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019), the model indicates that structural characteristics are significantly related to support for demanding ALMPs. Some results are in line with self-interest theory. Persons in the highest two income quartiles score higher (0.15 and 0.12 standard deviations, respectively) on public support for ALMPs than those in the lowest quartile, which is in line with their more limited interest in unconditional welfare provisions. The lower support of older respondents and individuals living in Wallonia might be interpreted as a self-interest effect as well, as unemployment rates are higher among older individuals and in this region of Belgium (International Monetary Fund, 2019). In addition, the coefficients for unemployment and welfare dependency show that the unemployed and benefit recipients score much lower on support for demanding ALMPs than the employed and those not receiving benefits. However, the effects of other social structural predictors are insignificant or have a sign that contradicts self-interest theory. The higher support among women and the lowest support of individuals belonging to the service class, for instance, seems to run counter to what is assumed to be their welfare interest. The insignificance of the education parameters also indicates that not all groups who are more likely to become unemployed support ALMPs less than groups who experience less risk exposure. Clearly, social structural predictors that reflect self-interest can only explain a limited part of the puzzle of how support for demanding ALMPs takes shape.

Table 3.3 Structural equation model predicting support for demanding active labour market policies

Variables	Regression coefficient
Gender	
Woman (ref.)	
Man	-0.052*
Age	
	-0.093***
Education	
Lower (secondary)	-0.038
Higher secondary (ref.)	
Tertiary	0.052
Income	
Quartile 1 (ref.)	
Quartile 2	0.059*
Quartile 3	0.151***
Quartile 4	0.115***
Missing	0.088
Occupation	
Blue collar (ref.)	
Service class	-0.076*
White collar	0.002
Self-employed	0.043
Inactive	-0.031
Welfare dependency	
No benefit (ref.)	
Benefit	-0.126***
Unemployed	
Yes	-0.137***
No (ref.)	
Region	
French region (ref.)	
Flanders	0.126***
Left-right placement	
	0.117***
Work ethic	
	0.266***
Authoritarianism	
	0.317***
Distributive justice in unemployment	
Equity	0.096***
Need	0.142***
Equality (ref.)	
Unemployment attributions	
Individual blame	0.149***
Individual fate	-0.015
Social blame	-0.061
Social fate (ref.)	
R²	0.528

Note: N=1901; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$; Fit of the full structural equation model with support for demanding ALMPs as dependent variable: $\chi^2 = 800.919$; $df = 271$; CFI = 0.904; TLI = 0.875; RMSEA = 0.032; SRMR=0.026.

Second, the model uncovers that left-right self-placement, authoritarianism and work ethic have a significant positive impact. The higher support for activation of right-wing individuals might be related to their more conditional thinking about solidarity (van Oorschot, 2006), although it remains largely unclear what this relation with highly generic left-right placement exactly encompasses. The higher support of individuals who value a strong work ethic is in line with their strong focus on paid work as a moral duty, while the positive relationship with authoritarianism seems to be related to the preference for punitive roles of authorities towards those who do not comply with dominant norms, including welfare beneficiaries not conforming to the norms of self-reliance (Dwyer, 2000; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019). These results evidence that the ideological characteristics are strong predictors of support for the punishment of undeserving benefit claimants.

Third and most importantly, the analysis confirms that the two dimensions behind the policy paradigm – namely distributive justice preferences and unemployment attributions – are essential predictors of support for demanding ALMPs on top of social structural variables and generic ideological dispositions. Support for demanding ALMPs is significantly and substantially stronger among individuals who prefer equity-based instead of equality-based distribution (H1), confirming that the principle of equity is a key element in the reciprocal philosophy behind the activation paradigm (Buchanan, 1990; Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002; Ervik et al., 2015; Houtman, 1997). Moreover, also respondents who prefer the need principle favour demanding ALMPs more strongly than those who prefer equality-based distribution (thus confirming H2). The effect parameter for need is slightly, but significantly, larger than the one for the principle of equity ($b = 0.14$ versus $b = 0.10$; p -value difference test = 0.03). This demonstrates that besides attracting support from those who desire a conditional welfare contract, ALMPs gain also support among those who prefer selective distributions, means-tested policies and welfare cuts (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). This illustrates that support for demanding ALMPs also has firm roots in beliefs that the undeserving unemployed should be self-reliant (Romano, 2018). In this sense, they receive support across multiple distributive justice segments of the population, which might partly explain their wide popularity.

In addition, the results indicate that welfare conditionality relates to public images of the unemployed. Conform to H3, individual blame attribution significantly reinforces preferences for demanding activation: respondents who see laziness or a lack of motivation as the primary cause of unemployment are more likely to support ALMPs, confirming its close connection with moralizing unemployment and welfare sanctioning as measures to combat laziness and structural dependency (Dwyer, 2000; Fossati, 2018). Contrary to H4, however, respondents who attribute unemployment to the misfortune of individuals (individual fate) do not support ALMPs more than individuals who see social fate or social blame as its primary cause. Individual unemployment attributions thus only induce support for demanding activation when combined with a blaming perspective. Additionally, the social blame and social fate attributions do not differ significantly and connect to relatively low support for ALMPs.

3.5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter expands previous research on public support for demanding ALMPs by scrutinizing the ideological roots of support for activation. Instead of focusing exclusively on generic, often-used predictors to explain social policy attitudes – self-interest indicators and general ideological dimensions – two pillars of the policy paradigm of demanding activation are crucial to understand its legitimacy: distributive justice and unemployment attributions. These frameworks inherently connect to the shift in the balance between universality and conditionality and in the responsibility from the state to the individual.

The results indicate that support for the forced reintegration of the jobless in the labour market is embedded in preferences regarding distributive justice and views on the primary causes of unemployment. A preference for equal distribution is linked to reduced support for demanding ALMPs, while a preference for the need- or equity-based distribution brings about higher support. The effect of the principle of need is even slightly stronger than that of equity, which indicates that a focus on self-help, individual responsibility and minimal welfare distribution are central elements in the justification of the sanctioning of undeserving benefit claimants. Moreover, attitudes towards demanding policies are shown to be strongly rooted in the idea that the unemployed are to blame personally for their neediness. Among persons attributing unemployment to individual fate, social fate or social blame, support for demanding ALMPs is considerably lower. The representation of a moral hazard as the primary cause of unemployment is not only a key component of the activation paradigm, but also a constituent element of its public support (Fossati, 2018).

These findings evidence that the ideological paradigms on which social policies are grounded (Béland, 2005, 2016; Cox, 1998; Daigneault, 2014a; Hall, 1993) are crucial to understand their legitimacy and support base. While this approach appears to be particularly relevant for new types of reform that challenge existing institutional structures and are strongly politicized, such as demanding ALMPs (Maron & Helman, 2017), it could be extended to other social policy reforms. For instance Daigneault (2014b) identifies two other policy paradigms besides the workfare framework that structure the debate behind the allocation of social assistance, which could equally guide their ideological support. Our study thus offers the starting point for a new interpretation of the ideology framework that can also be extended to other forms of welfare provisions and help understand the ideological controversies surrounding public opinion on particular social policies.

Claims about causality can nevertheless not be made here, as it is well possible that policy makers appeal to already existing sentiments and feedback effects between institutions and public opinions might exist (Kumlin and Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014). Despite the inability to disentangle the link between policy paradigms and public sentiments, it seems most likely that interpretation effects are at play, whereby policies and political discourses – i.e., the demanding activation paradigm – provide the

public with ways to interpret the goals and problems of unemployment policies (Pierson, 1993). Indeed, we assume that ideological positions are shaped by policy paradigms and can change throughout interpretations and interactions with the government and policies (Kumlin, 2006). Yet, despite the uncertainty around the mechanisms at play, the results convincingly indicate that policy paradigms are crystalized in the ideological roots of policy support.

The strong connection of support for activation with the principle of need and individual blaming has important implications. As the principle of need justifies the replacement of universal and reciprocal welfare policies with means-tested programs, support for demanding ALMPs seems to be linked to the adherence to a liberal view on the welfare state (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). This indicates that the public might not consider demanding ALMPs to be complementary to more universal schemes, but rather as a way of replacing them. In addition, as attributions evoke and reinforce stereotypes about target groups, ALMPs are embedded in stereotypical images of the unemployed as being lazy and dependent. The reliance of both support for ALMPs and the activation paradigm itself (Daguerre, 2007) on these stereotypes may have important repercussions, as policies can restrict the opportunities and resources of stigmatized groups, and worsen stigma-related problems (Link & Hatzenbuehler, 2016).

Despite some peculiarities of its unemployment benefit system, Belgium is a well-suited context to examine support for demanding ALMPs. After a long period of reluctance and fragmented policy momentum (Hemerijck & Kersbergen, 2019), activation measures have been especially implemented since 2004 with a strong boost from 2012 onwards (Van Lancker et al., 2015). The finding that public support for demanding policies is embedded in the pillars of activation paradigm even in Belgium, a country characterized as a conservative welfare state regime with a rather recent history in activation policies, suggests that this link might be even stronger in countries with a longer tradition of activation or neoliberal policies. However, at the same time, the data was collected just after the federal and regional elections of 2014 where ALMPs constituted a controversial and important issue, which might have increased the saliency of the activation paradigm and socialized citizens stronger into these ideas and values. Future research would thus benefit from expanding these analyses to other countries and from adopting a comparative perspective.

NOTES

¹ Originally there was also a fourth answer category, which stated that the government should not provide unemployment benefits. However, this is converted to a missing value due to a very small proportion of respondents (0.8%) opting for this answer.

EXPLAINING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR DEMANDING ACTIVATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED: THE ROLE OF SUBJECTIVE RISK PERCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT THE UNEMPLOYED

Abstract

In recent decades, European welfare states have adopted demanding active labour market policies (ALMPs), aimed at increasing labour market participation through imposing stricter work-related obligations and benefit cuts in case of job offer rejection. This chapter investigates whether support for such demanding ALMPs is driven by risk perceptions of future unemployment and negative stereotypes about unemployed persons. Insights into the role of risk perceptions and stereotypes offer opportunities to gain a better understanding of the impact of structural variables. Drawing on data from the European Social Survey 2016 in 21 European countries, the analysis reveals that higher subjective risk of unemployment decreases support for these ALMPs substantially, whereas negative perceptions of the unemployed increase support. However, these factors play at the individual level only and do not explain country-level differences in support for demanding ALMPs. The notable cross-national variation in support for activation policies is found to be unrelated to economic factors and to the strictness of activation requirements for unemployment benefits.

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

One notable trend in European welfare policies is the introduction of active labour market policies (ALMPs). ALMPs aim to enhance individuals' responsibility for their own economic sustainability and to reduce welfare dependency, through the activation of those who are not active on the labour market (Bothfeld & Betzelt, 2011; Eichhorst et al., 2008). Among the broad realm of activation policies implemented, scholars usually distinguish two main approaches: enabling activation, designed for enhancing benefit recipients' skills and employability, and demanding activation, aimed at strengthening conditions attached to receiving social benefits (Bonoli, 2010; Dingeldey, 2007; Eichhorst et al., 2008; Kananen et al., 2006; Knotz, 2018a). With the goal of raising the 'cost-effectiveness' of the welfare systems (Knotz, 2018b), the majority of European countries have adopted strict measures belonging to this second approach in a field that is traditionally unpopular, namely that of unemployment benefits. Austerity-driven reforms (Bengtsson et al., 2017) and the current threat to employment due to the COVID-19 crisis call into question the popularity of such policies, leaving an open question on what brings individuals to support (or oppose) these measures.

To contribute to this debate, this article investigates the role of two frameworks – potentially operating at the individual as well as at the country level – that might explain this support among European citizens. First, if people's support for specific social policies is based on cost-benefit analysis, as self-interest theories postulate (Rehm, 2016), not only the current employment situation but also the perceived risk of becoming unemployed in the future may structure people's attitudes towards ALMPs. In this regard, we explore the role of the individual risk of being affected by the strict conditions attached to welfare benefits (Fossati, 2018; see Chapter 2). Second, support for these policies might be closely linked to moral and ideological considerations, and more specifically the stereotypical image that the unemployed fail to find a new job because of lack of effort (Danckert, 2017). Whether recipients of unemployment benefits are deemed to be deserving of help is embedded in societally shared images of this target group and in individual's deservingness perceptions (van Oorschot, et al., 2017). For these reasons, we argue that both the perceived risk of unemployment and public images of the unemployed are crucial factors shaping public attitudes towards demanding ALMPs.

Focusing on risk perceptions and stereotypes about the unemployed might also improve our understanding of the effects of structural factors – both at the individual and the country level – on support for activation. Individuals with a lower socio-economic status are more likely to feel at risk and to identify with the unemployed, leading to less stereotypical thinking (Furåker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Maassen & De Goede, 1989). In other words, subjective risk and stereotypes potentially mediate the well-established effects of social-structural characteristics on support for demanding policies. At the macro level, we similarly investigate whether the effect of country's unemployment rates on the

legitimacy of demanding ALMPs is mediated by shared risk perceptions and public images of the unemployed.

Hence, we address the following research questions: (1) To what extent can attitudes towards demanding ALMPs be explained by risk perceptions of future unemployment and negative stereotypes about unemployed persons? (2) To what extent do these factors mediate the effect of individual socio-structural variables (at the individual level) and unemployment rates (at the country level)? To answer these questions, we analyse a new multi-item instrument measuring activation support included in the European Social Survey wave 8 (2016) using multilevel structural equation modelling. By doing so, we introduce two novel and potentially relevant factors (that have received scholarly attention in other research areas) (Rehm, 2016; van Oorschot and Meuleman, 2014) in the emerging domain of support for activation policies.

4.2 DEMANDING ALMPS IN EUROPE

Activation builds on a policy paradigm that implies a transition from an “all-in-the-same-boat” logic to an individual responsibility in dealing with the jobless condition (Sachweh, 2016, p. 309). The objective of ALMPs is to (re-)integrate welfare recipients in the labour market as soon as possible, by giving them an active role in this process and thus making them no longer dependent on benefits (Daguerre, 2007). Two activation approaches have been identified in the literature: *enabling*, aimed at providing welfare recipients with resources for the development of their skills, and *demanding*, imposing stricter conditions on welfare benefit receipt and sanctions if their behaviour falls outside the conditions imposed by the policy at issue (Dingeldey, 2007; Eichhorst et al., 2008). These approaches originate from different traditions. The first experience with the enabling approach dates back to the 1950s in Sweden, where activation policies were introduced with the aim of upskilling the workers and promoting full employment (Bonoli, 2010; Fossati, 2018; Weishaupt, 2011). From the mid-1990s, gradually all the European welfare states migrated towards an approach to ALMPs based on the idea that there is no welfare without work, typical of the workfare tradition originated in the US in the 1970s (Handler, 2009). This demanding type of ALMPs was implemented through tightened criteria for receiving benefits, sanctions for those who do not comply with the obligations and other strict measures (Knotz, 2018a). The pioneer of this new activation trend was Denmark, starting from 1994 with a cut in unemployment benefit duration, mandatory participation in labour market programmes and strengthened job-availability requirements, followed by the New Deal programme introduced from 1998 in the UK (Bonoli, 2010; Dingeldey, 2007). In continental Europe, the shift towards an activation paradigm was slower and delayed. In Germany, for instance, a major step towards activation was taken in 2001, with the Job Aktiv Act, and the subsequent Hartz reforms, which have strengthened the conditions of unemployment benefits (Bonoli, 2010; Buss, 2018a). Notwithstanding country-specific

measures, a trend towards demanding activation policies is notable across European countries, with cuts on benefit levels and duration as well as harsher sanctions in case of non-acceptance being the major measures adopted (Dingeldey, 2007; Eichhorst et al., 2008; Knotz, 2018a).

4.3 PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEMANDING ALMPs

Demanding policies are considered to be part of the welfare state retrenchment reforms (Seikel & Spannagel, 2018), and have the potential of reducing public spending by scaling back expenditure on a specific group of claimants that are considered to be “undeserving” (Knotz, 2018b, p. 619). As such, this form of welfare conditionality, also called “negative approach to activation” (Kananen et al., 2006, p. 87), has the potential to create social tensions that are rooted in self-interest mechanisms as well as moral considerations. In what follows, we construct a theoretical account combining the role of subjective risks of unemployment and stereotypes about the unemployed, and explain how these two crucial factors can help to understand the relationship between structural variables at the micro- and macro-level and support for demanding ALMPs.

4.3.1 Subjective risk and stereotypes about the unemployed

One of the traditional approaches seeks the origins of support for particular policies in economic self-interest: people are more likely to endorse policies from which they can benefit, and oppose those that are against their advantage (Andreß & Heien, 2001; Jaeger, 2006b). These self-interest arguments assume that people make rational cost-benefit calculations when judging whether to support a policy or not.

In the specific case of demanding ALMPs, these policies impose additional conditions and sanctions on benefit recipients. By consequence, unemployed persons are likely to see these measures as running against their personal interest. Existing empirical research has indeed shown that (past) experience of unemployment makes people more likely to oppose strict conditions for job acceptance and sanctions, even after controlling for one’s ideological position (Buss, 2018a; Carriero and Filandri, 2018; Fossati, 2018; see Chapter 2). A broader interpretation of self-interest theory does not only focus on the current situation, but also takes the perceived probability of experiencing a “bad event” in the future (Rehm, 2016, p. 60). From this perspective, subjective expectations that one will become unemployed might be an important factor in shaping welfare policy preferences (Naumann, Buss, & Bähr, 2016; Rehm, 2016). Fossati (2018) has indeed evidenced that perceptions of higher levels of labour market risks are associated with a lower support for demanding ALMPs. This focus on subjective risks (rather than objective positions, such as education, occupational status or income) allows a more direct test of the self-interest argument. True, individual perceptions of unemployment risk are closely related to

objective economic position, as individuals with a higher objective exposure to job loss tend to have a higher subjective perception of risk (Cusack, Iversen, & Rehm, 2006; Rehm, 2016). However, subjectively perceived risks provide a more direct indicator of the process of cost-benefit calculation, compared to objective socio-economic positions.

Besides self-interested evaluations of one's own risk position, attitudes towards social policies are known to be driven by individuals' ideological outlook and feelings of moral obligations underlying social solidarity (van Oorschot, 2002). Various studies have pointed out that support for demanding ALMPs is strongly linked to ideological dimensions, such as egalitarianism and political left-right position (Houtman, 1997; Jaeger, 2006b; see Chapter 2). Our framework focuses on one ideological dimension that is particularly relevant to study activation support, namely negative stereotypes about the presumed lack of effort of the unemployed to find a job. The policy paradigm of demanding activation rests on the idea that unemployed people should take responsibility for their situation and for finding a new job. This assumption resonates with stereotypical imagery about unemployed people as an out-group with undesirable characteristics (Henkens, 2005; Reszke, 1996), namely as a group that is lazy, workshy, takes advantage of the system and is not willing to reciprocate the help they receive (Buffel & Van de Velde, 2018; Furåker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Furnham, 1983; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; van Oorschot et al., 2017). Persons who harbour negative stereotypes about the unemployed are more likely to support welfare sanctioning and demanding ALMPs. The relevance of negative stereotypes about the unemployed can also be understood from deservingness theory. According to this approach, people deem a target group as deserving of help on the basis of the so-called CARIN criteria, namely whether they think the beneficiaries have control over their needy situation, have a grateful and docile attitude, have contributed or be able to contribute to the system, are close to one's situation and are in real need (van Oorschot, 2006; van Oorschot et al., 2017). The content of popular stereotypes about the unemployed contains a mixture of control over their own predicament, failure to reciprocate and an ungrateful attitude (Meuleman, Roosma, & Abts, 2020). Hence, those who see the unemployed as undeserving are more likely to support demanding activation measures (Buss, 2018a; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019).

4.3.2 Linkages between structural characteristics, risk perceptions and stereotypes about the unemployed

Subjective risk perceptions and stereotypes about the unemployed are not only relevant predictors of activation support in their own right: these factors might additionally help us to gain deeper understanding of the relation between individual and contextual structural variables (such as individuals' socio-economic position or national labour market indicators) and support for demanding activation.

At the individual level, previous work has established a link between individuals' socio-economic position and perceptions whether people are personally responsible for becoming unemployed (Danckert, 2017). Individuals with a lower socio-economic status, who are at higher (perceived) risk of becoming unemployed, might have greater awareness of the difficult situation that the unemployed face, resulting in feelings of empathy and solidarity with the unemployed (Furåker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Maassen & De Goede, 1989). Moreover, when unemployment affects a person to whom they feel relatively close – their partner, for instance – people tend to attribute the causes of unemployment to structural circumstances. Subjective risk perceptions and (in)direct experiences with unemployment could thus temper negative stereotypes about the unemployed (Danckert, 2017) and incite the view that the unemployed are a deserving group (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). Thus, people's socio-economic position and risk perceptions are likely to influence support for activation, not only because of self-interest mechanisms, but also indirectly via the mediating effect of ideological dimensions (such as stereotypes about the unemployed).

At the country level, shared risk perceptions and a climate of stereotypical thinking about the unemployed might enhance our understanding between the economic context and public support for demanding policies.¹ Previous empirical studies have presented mixed findings regarding the relationship between the national unemployment levels and public attitudes towards conditional benefits (Buss et al., 2017; Carriero & Filandri, 2018; Naumann et al., 2020). Taking into account that this relationship might be mediated by risk perceptions and the climate of imagery about the unemployed could help solving this puzzle. On the one hand, a high unemployment rate could instil higher levels of subjective unemployment risk in the population. Yet at the same time, worse labour market conditions might also lead people to be more sympathetic towards the unemployed and to see them as more deserving (Uunk & van Oorschot, 2019). These higher levels of subjective risk and more positive attitude climate towards unemployed people would, in turn, undercut support for demanding ALMPs. In addition to the labour market situation, support for welfare policies might be shaped by the public policies in place in that specific context, according to policy feedback theory (Pierson, 1993; van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2014). Hence, one could expect that the strictness of activation requirements for the unemployed that prevails in a country influences public attitudes towards ALMPs. Despite not being the focus of this study, the potential effect of policy legacy on demanding ALMPs' attitudes will be taken into account, to rule out possible biases in the estimated effects of unemployment levels on support for demanding ALMPs.

4.3.3 Hypotheses

Our theoretical arguments clearly distinguish between micro- and macro-level processes. At the individual level, we expect that people with a high perceived risk of becoming unemployed in the near

future are less likely to support demanding ALMPs (H1). Based on the deservingness literature, we expect that individuals who hold negative stereotypes of the unemployed are more likely to support demanding ALMPs (H2). We additionally hypothesise that the effects of socio-economic characteristics on activation support are mediated by the stereotypes about the unemployed (H3). We also include two other ideological dimensions -left-right position and egalitarianism- as mediating factors, because they are linked to stereotypical thinking as well as attitudes towards demanding ALMPs (see, for example Fossati, 2018 and Chapter 2).

At the country level, we hypothesise that in countries with a higher share of people feeling at risk of becoming unemployed, support will be lower (H4), while there will be stronger support in countries with a stronger negative opinion climate towards the unemployed (H5). Regarding the effect of the labour market context, we formulate two hypotheses about the mediation effects: support for demanding activation is expected to be lower in contexts with higher unemployment levels, because people feel at risk of becoming unemployed (H6a) and because people develop more positive attitudes towards the unemployed (H6b).

4.4 DATA AND METHODS

4.4.1 Data

To investigate the hypothesised relations, we use data from the European Social Survey (ESS) round 8 (European Social Survey Round 8 Data, 2016). We include 21 countries in the analysis: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Czech Republic (CZ), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Hungary (HU), Iceland (IS), Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), Lithuania (LT), the Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Slovenia (SI), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), Switzerland (CH) and the United Kingdom (UK).² For each country, face-to-face interviews were conducted between August 2016 and December 2017 on probability-based samples of adult population aged 15 or older. National response rates range from 30.6% (Germany) to 69.6% (Poland).

4.4.2 Indicators

Attitudes towards the demanding activation of the unemployed are measured by a multi-item instrument: ‘Imagine [someone] who is unemployed and looking for work. This person was previously working but lost their job and is now receiving unemployment benefit. What you think should happen to this person’s unemployment benefit if this person...

(1) turns down a job because it pays a lot less than they earned previously?

(2) turns down a job because it needs a much lower level of education than the person has?

(3) refuses to regularly carry out unpaid work in the area where they live in return for unemployment benefit?’

This instrument furthermore included an experiment varying the characteristics of the unemployed person mentioned. Concretely, in the introductory part of the question ‘someone’ was replaced by other descriptions (‘someone in their 50s’, ‘someone aged 20-25’, ‘a single parent with a 3-year-old child’), and these four conditions were randomized across respondents. Since we are not interested in the differences in support for these categories, we treat the experimental conditions in the models as control variables (using the neutral group as reference category). Answers are registered on a scale from 1 (‘this person should lose all their benefit’) to 4 (‘should be able to keep all their unemployment benefit’) and recoded so that high scores indicate stronger support to cut benefits of non-compliant unemployed persons. We measure support for demanding activation as a latent variable based on these three items (a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis is reported in Appendix, Table A4.3).

Subjective risk is measured by asking respondents: ‘How likely it is that during the next 12 months you will be unemployed and looking for work for at least four consecutive weeks?’. Responses are categorised in three groups: likely or very likely, not at all or not very likely, and not working (this includes people who have never worked or are no longer working and not looking for job). To measure negative stereotypes towards the unemployed we use agreement with a statement tapping into a popular negative perception of the unemployed: ‘Most unemployed people do not really try to find a job’ (5-point scale ranging from 1- agree strongly to 5- disagree strongly and recoded so that higher values correspond to more negative perceptions).

A set of variables represents several socio-economic characteristics. Occupation is measured through a variable combining information on the main activity done for the last seven days and the name/title of their main job for those in paid job (recoded into the EGP occupational class scheme; Ganzeboom, de Graaf, & Treiman, 1992). This results in eight categories: higher service class, white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, self-employed, students, retired, unemployed, other (including those doing housework, military service, disabled). The dichotomous variable receiving benefits measures whether respondents’ main income is a social benefit, among which unemployment or redundancy benefits (and excluding pensions). Income is measured in quartiles, calculated (for each country separately) on the basis of the distribution of equivalised total net household income, using the OECD-modified scale (OECD, 2013). Educational level is measured by the highest level of education completed (lower secondary, upper secondary, tertiary). We also introduce the employment status of the partner (in paid job, unemployed, not in paid job, no partner) and we control for age and gender.

To account for additional ideological mechanisms, we include two variables as mediators: political orientation, measured by the scores given to the self-placement scale (0-left to 10-right); and egalitarian values, measured as a mean of the answers to the items (a) for a society to be fair, differences in people’s

standard of living should be small, and (b) large differences in people's incomes are acceptable to properly reward differences in talents and efforts.

At country level, to measure subjective 'at risk of unemployment' rate, we calculate the share of respondents who indicated that they felt likely or very likely to be unemployed in the following 12 months (using the same question employed at the individual level) on the economically active population (i.e., the sum of respondents indicating to be employed or unemployed as main activity). The annual unemployment rate, as a percentage of the labour force (15-64 years old), is taken from Eurostat, referred to 2016. We control for the real gross domestic product (GDP) *growth*, taken from Eurostat for 2016, to take into account the economic development of the country. Additionally, we control for the (potential) effect of policy legacy, including in the model an indicator that measures how strict the availability requirements, the job-search requirements and sanctions are for the jobseekers (OECD, 2020). This indicator (strictness of activation requirements for unemployment benefits) is based on benefit administrations and corresponding institutions in EU countries, and on consultations with national officials. An overview of the descriptive statistics of the variables is reported in Appendix Table A4.1 and A4.2.

4.4.3 Statistical modelling

To allow for the analysis of hierarchical data structure while using latent variables controlling for measurement error, we use multilevel structural equation modelling (MSEM; Meuleman, 2019). In contrast to standard multilevel regression, MSEM is able to disentangle the mediation mechanisms at the individual and country level (conflating the two can lead to biased results; see Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010). This is an essential feature, given that the research questions at hand distinguish between individual-level explanations and mechanisms at the societal level. The proportions of country-level variance equal 7.7% for the item on lower paid and the item on lower education job, and 5.8% for the item on unpaid work. This indicates that differences between individuals outweigh cross-national differences by far, but that there are nevertheless substantial differences between countries.

The modelling strategy proceeds in two steps. First, we conduct a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (MLCFA) to test the measurement properties of the latent variable measuring support for demanding activation. To test cross-level isomorphism (that is, the equality of the factor structure at both levels; see Ruelens, Meuleman, & Nicaise, 2018), we constrain the factor loadings to be equal across levels. Standardized factor loadings are quite strong both at the individual-level (above 0.7 for the first two items, above 0.5 for the unpaid work obligation) and country-level (all above 0.8), indicating that the items indeed measure a single underlying latent variable that can be compared across levels (factor loadings and fit parameters are reported in Appendix Table A4.3). Second, we test our

hypotheses by means of two-level mediation models. Figure 4.1 illustrates the hypothesised effects at individual and country level.

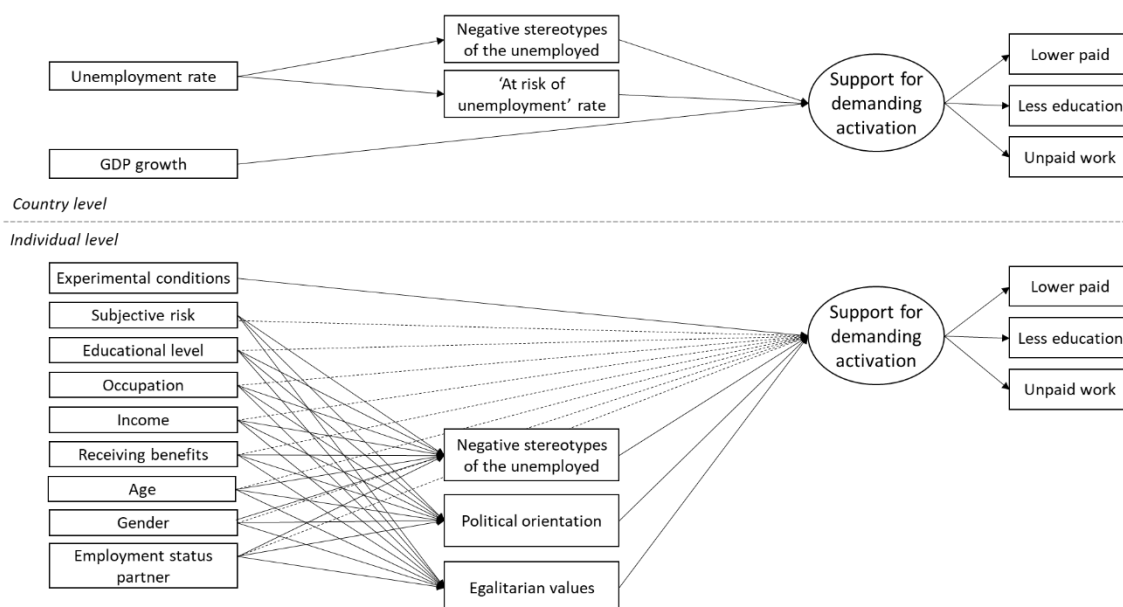


Figure 4.1 MSEM of support for demanding activation of the unemployed

Given the small number of countries included in the analysis, we use Bayesian estimation (with uninformative priors), which provides more accurate parameter estimates and credibility intervals with a better coverage compared to the maximum likelihood estimation (Hox, van de Schoot, & Matthijsse, 2012). We use two chains of the Gibbs sampler (10000 iterations) and the Gelman-Rubin criterion to check convergence, setting the cut-off value to 0.01. Since the Bayesian approach does not provide fit indices, we re-estimate the model using maximum likelihood estimation, and the indices show a good model fit ($\chi^2=642.922$; $df=75$; $CFI=0.955$; $SRMR_{within}=0.005$; $SRMR_{between}=0.044$; $RMSEA=0.014$). The analyses are performed using Mplus version 8.0 (Muthén and Muthén, 2017).

4.5 RESULTS

4.5.1 Descriptive findings

Figure 4.2 reports the country averages of support for demanding ALMPs (measured as the mean over the three items – lower paid job, lower education, unpaid work), separately for each of the experimental conditions. The countries are ranked according to the mean score on the control group (‘someone who is unemployed’ as target of the activation measures). In this condition, Italy scores the highest on support for demanding activation (3.08 on a scale from 1 to 4), followed by Slovenia, Poland and

Norway (2.94, 2.92 and 2.83 respectively). The lowest levels of support are found in Lithuania, Germany and Estonia (2.11, 2.09 and 2.03 respectively), where respondents are least inclined to cut the benefits of unemployed who do not comply with activation requirements. While we observe substantive cross-national variation in support for demanding ALMPs, these differences do not follow a clear-cut pattern in terms of geographical regions or welfare regime types. Among the countries with the highest level of demanding activation support, we mainly find Southern European countries, but also countries with a very different institutional set-up and labour market situation, such as Norway and Poland. Most Eastern European countries – with a shorter tradition of ALMPs compared to the Nordic countries – are situated among the lower end of the activation support ranking.

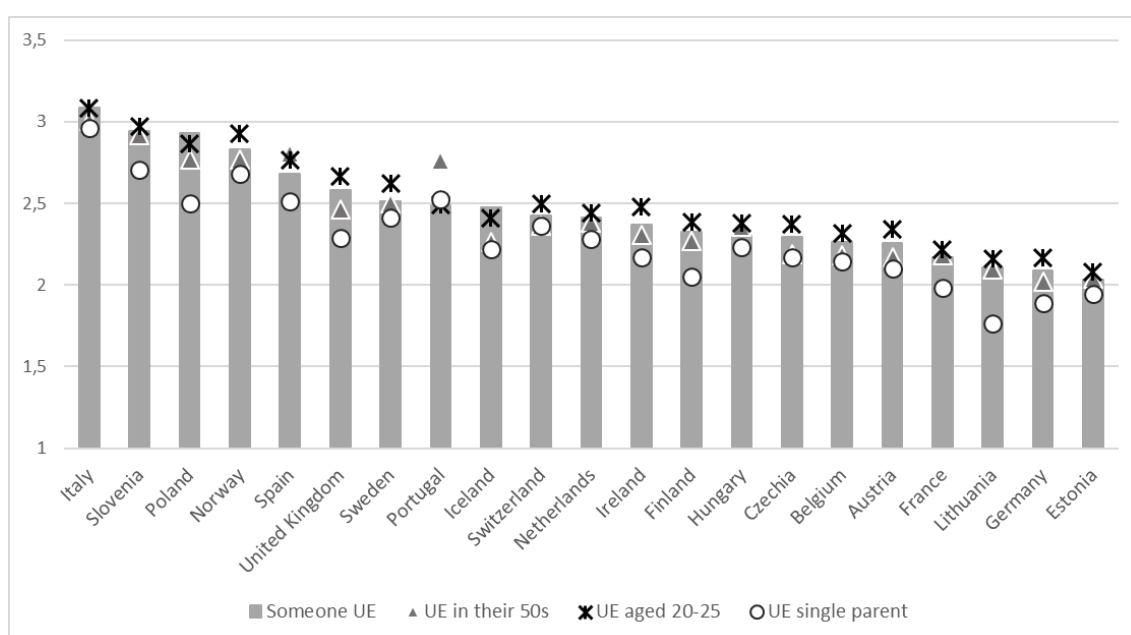


Figure 4.2 Country means of support for demanding activation, for each of the experimental conditions
Note: design weights are applied. Response categories are recoded 1 (‘The person should keep all the benefit’) to 4 (‘Should lose all the benefit’). UE = unemployed.

Although the differences across experimental conditions (that is, mentioning different groups of unemployed) are not the focus of our analysis, we briefly point to a couple of relevant observations. People are generally more lenient towards the unemployed who are in their 50s and unemployed single parents, whereas they are stricter towards younger unemployed people.³ These differences in support for obligations can be understood in terms of deservingness theory: people’s evaluations about whether an unemployed person should receive benefits are contingent on the deservingness-related personal characteristics and conditions. Previous research (Buss, 2018a; Larsen, 2008) shows that the young unemployed people are considered to have control over their situation (they can more easily find a new job) and to have contributed less to the system than older unemployed. Single parents, on the other

hand, are more likely to receive support and lenience because they are perceived to be more in need and to have less control over finding a new job (Buss, 2018a).

4.5.2 Individual- and country-level predictors of support for demanding activation

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the results of MSEM, respectively with within-level (individual) and between-level (country) predictors of the dependent variable support for demanding ALMPs. The model includes both direct and indirect effects of the socio-economic variables (that is, the part of the effects that runs through the mediators).⁴ By disentangling direct and indirect effects, we gain a detailed understanding of the mechanisms that explain socio-economic differences in support for ALMPs. For completeness, the total effects (the sum of direct and indirect effects) are reported in Appendix Table A4.4. The effect parameters reported are fully standardized estimates in the case of continuous variables, and semi-standardized estimates (i.e., difference with the reference category expressed in terms of standard deviations) for categorical variables predictors.

We start with the individual level effects (Table 4.1), referring to differences between individuals within societies. The direct effects show that both subjective risk perceptions and negative stereotypes about the unemployed are important predictors of individuals' support for demanding ALMPs, net of social-structural characteristics and ideological controls. Compared to working people who do not feel at risk, individuals who feel that they are (highly) at risk of losing their job are less in favour of sanctioning the unemployed who do not comply with the obligations ($\beta = -0.098$, second column of Table 4.1). This finding confirms H1, namely a broad interpretation of the self-interest theory: the feeling that they might fall into unemployment makes people more prone to reject strict conditions on the benefits they will potentially receive if they become unemployed.

Table 4.1 Multilevel structural equation model explaining attitudes towards demanding activation of the unemployed, individual-level variables

	Negative stereotypes of the unemployed			Support for demanding ALMPs (direct effect)			Indirect effect via stereotypes of the unemployed			Total indirect effect		
	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.
Conditions (ref. someone UE)												
UE in their 50s				-0.072	*	[-0.104; -0.044]						
UE aged 20-25				0.052	*	[0.020; 0.082]						
UE single parent with 3 years old child				-0.238	*	[-0.270; -0.211]						
Age	-0.046	*	[-0.062; -0.030]	0.040	*	[0.022; 0.059]	-0.011	*	[-0.001; 0.000]	-0.012	*	[-0.001; 0.000]
Gender (ref. male)	0.023	*	[0.001; 0.045]	0.034	*	[0.010; 0.057]	0.005	*	[0.000; 0.009]	-0.005		[-0.010; 0.000]
Educational level (ref. lower secondary)												
Upper secondary	-0.107	*	[-0.134; -0.080]	-0.024		[-0.054; 0.007]	-0.025	*	[-0.026; -0.015]	-0.023	*	[-0.025; -0.013]
Tertiary	-0.357	*	[-0.387; -0.325]	-0.079	*	[-0.115; -0.045]	-0.085	*	[-0.076; -0.062]	-0.088	*	[-0.080; -0.064]
Occupational status (ref. white-collar workers)												
High service class	-0.100	*	[-0.153; -0.045]	-0.017		[-0.076; 0.042]	-0.024	*	[-0.030; -0.009]	-0.016	*	[-0.025; -0.001]
Blue-collar workers	0.120	*	[0.085; 0.155]	-0.013		[-0.051; 0.025]	0.028	*	[0.016; 0.030]	0.025	*	[0.013; 0.029]
Self-employed	0.181	*	[0.140; 0.222]	0.014		[-0.032; 0.060]	0.043	*	[0.027; 0.043]	0.063	*	[0.042; 0.061]
Unemployed	-0.252	*	[-0.309; -0.194]	-0.113	*	[-0.175; -0.048]	-0.060	*	[-0.060; -0.038]	-0.071	*	[-0.072; -0.045]
Student	-0.159	*	[-0.210; -0.109]	-0.051		[-0.108; -0.005]	-0.038	*	[-0.041; -0.021]	-0.037	*	[-0.042; -0.019]
Retired	0.165	*	[0.123; 0.208]	0.005		[-0.042; 0.053]	0.039	*	[0.024; 0.041]	0.044	*	[0.027; -0.046]
Other	0.058	*	[0.015; 0.100]	-0.006		[-0.053; 0.042]	0.014	*	[0.003; 0.020]	0.012	*	[0.001; 0.020]
Equivalised income (ref. 1 st quartile)												
2 nd quartile	-0.063	*	[-0.095; -0.032]	-0.029		[-0.063; 0.007]	-0.015	*	[-0.018; -0.006]	-0.012	*	[-0.017; -0.003]
3 rd quartile	-0.086	*	[-0.119; -0.053]	-0.008		[-0.045; 0.029]	-0.020	*	[-0.023; -0.010]	-0.011	*	[-0.017; -0.002]
4 th quartile	-0.130	*	[-0.165; -0.096]	0.017		[-0.021; 0.054]	-0.031	*	[-0.032; -0.019]	-0.009		[-0.016; 0.001]
Missing	-0.086	*	[-0.122; -0.051]	0.007		[-0.034; 0.046]	-0.020	*	[-0.024; -0.010]	-0.001		[-0.009; 0.007]
Receiving benefits	-0.173	*	[-0.226; -0.121]	-0.170	*	[-0.228; -0.112]	-0.041	*	[-0.044; -0.023]	-0.046	*	[-0.050; -0.026]
Risk of being unemployed (ref. not likely)												
(Very) likely	-0.084	*	[-0.115; -0.053]	-0.098	*	[-0.133; -0.064]	-0.020	*	[-0.022; -0.010]	-0.028	*	[-0.030; -0.016]
Not working	-0.054	*	[-0.085; -0.022]	-0.032		[-0.067; 0.003]	-0.013	*	[-0.017; -0.004]	-0.014	*	[-0.019; -0.004]

Table 4.1 (continued).

	Negative stereotypes of the unemployed			Support for demanding ALMPs (direct effect)			Indirect effect via stereotypes of the unemployed			Total Indirect effect		
	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.
Employment status of partner (ref. in paid job)												
Partner not in paid job	-0.017		[-0.047; 0.015]	-0.005		[-0.041; 0.030]	-0.004		[-0.009; 0.003]	-0.010	*	[-0.015; -0.001]
Partner unemployed	-0.176	*	[-0.250; -0.104]	-0.087	*	[-0.167; -0.007]	-0.042	*	[-0.049; -0.020]	-0.054	*	[-0.060; -0.028]
No partner	-0.034	*	[-0.059; -0.008]	-0.063	*	[-0.091; -0.035]	-0.008	*	[-0.012; -0.002]	-0.013	*	[-0.016; -0.005]
Negative stereotypes of the unemployed				0.237	*	[0.226; 0.248]						
Left-right political orientation				0.081	*	[0.068; 0.093]						
Egalitarianism				-0.040	*	[-0.053; -0.029]						
<i>R</i> ² within-level				0.104								

Note: N = 37,199 in 21 countries. * = One-sided *p* < 0.025. Total indirect effect is the sum of the indirect effects through all the mediating variables (negative stereotypes, political orientation and egalitarianism).

Negative perceptions of the unemployed are also a decisive ideological factor to explain activation support ($\beta = 0.237$). People who believe that the unemployed do not try to find a job are significantly more in favour of cutting benefits of beneficiaries who reject job offers or are unwilling to perform unpaid community service. This supports H2 and illustrates that deservingness considerations regarding the unemployed inform support for conditions attached to unemployment benefits (Buss, 2018a; Laenen and Meuleman, 2018). In turn, stereotypes of the unemployed prove to be significantly influenced by socio-economic characteristics (first column of Table 4.1). Higher socio-economic status – namely those with a higher education, a higher income, and belonging to the service class – hold less negative perceptions of the unemployed. The same holds true for those who are unemployed themselves and benefit recipients.

These last two categories, who are at the same time direct targets of the conditionality of welfare benefits, show stronger opposition against demanding ALMPs, even when controlling for the negative stereotypes about the unemployed and the two other ideological dimensions (second column in Table 4.1). People whose partner is unemployed, compared to those with a partner in a paid job, are also less in favour of demanding policies. Furthermore, people with tertiary education are less in favour of demanding policies compared to the lower educated. Regarding the ideological dimensions, our findings corroborate previous research (Fossati, 2018; Kootstra and Roosma, 2018; see Chapter 2). Left-wing people, compared to those who are right-wing oriented, are less supportive of ALMPs, and holding stronger egalitarian beliefs raises opposition to demanding policies.

Besides these direct effects, social-structural characteristics have also an indirect effect on support for demanding activation, mediated by negative stereotypes of the unemployed (third column in Table 4.1). To a certain extent, individuals' perceptions of whether the unemployed really try to find a job are a linchpin between socio-economic characteristics and support for demanding policies (confirming H3). The mediation effects are strongest with respect to the occupational categories: blue-collar workers and the self-employed harbour more negative perceptions of the unemployed, which indirectly leads to stronger support for demanding activation. This indicates that it is their particular beliefs about the job-searching efforts of the unemployed that lead them to approve punitive measures for the unemployed. Being unemployed or receiving benefits has a significant indirect effect on attitudes towards ALMPs as well. Unemployed persons' and benefit recipients' opposition to demanding activation can thus be partly explained by the fact that they are less susceptible to negative stereotyping vis-à-vis the unemployed. However, these indirect effects are comparatively smaller than the direct effects. The finding that the higher educated are less in favour of demanding policies is largely explained by the fact that they are less inclined to hold negative stereotypes about the unemployed (the indirect effects via perceptions are quantitatively larger than the direct effect).

Table 4.2 reports the country-level effects, reflecting differences between countries. These effects should conceptually be distinguished from the individual effects (failing to do so might lead to an ‘individualistic fallacy’) (Diez-Roux, 1998). Rather than referring to the impact of individual positions and preferences, they capture how the labour market context and the nationally shared opinion climate relate to aggregate support for demanding activation.

To start, we do find that the unemployment rate systematically affects risk perceptions. In countries with a higher unemployment rate, the share of persons feeling at risk to lose their job is substantially higher ($\beta = 0.730$, see also Appendix Figure A4.6(a)), indicating that people’s perceptions of future job loss are rooted in the actual economic situation of the country. Contrary to H4, however, these aggregate perceptions of risk do not lead to stronger support for demanding policies – no clear-cut relationship is found between aggregate risk perceptions and average support for activation. Furthermore, we find no evidence that the opinion climate towards the unemployed is related to the average support for demanding ALMPs (thereby disconfirming H5) or to the unemployment rate. In sum, at the country level risk perceptions and negative stereotypes do not play the anticipated mediating role (disproving H6a and H6b).

Table 4.2 Multilevel structural equation model explaining attitudes towards demanding activation of the unemployed, country-level variables

	Negative stereotypes of the unemployed			'At risk' rate			Support for demanding ALMPs (direct effect)			Total indirect effect		
	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.
Unemployment rate	-0.055		[-0.520; 0.420]	0.730	*	[0.386; 0.889]	0.360		[-0.377; 0.984]	-0.018		[-0.063; 0.055]
Negative stereotypes of the unemployed							-0.141		[-0.579; 0.427]			
'At risk' rate							-0.035		[-0.757; 0.709]			
GDP growth							0.031		[-0.405; 0.457]			
<i>R</i> ² between-level							0.298					

Note: N = 37,199 in 21 countries. * = One-sided *p* < 0.025. The total indirect effect is the sum of the effects of unemployment rate on support for demanding ALMPs through negative stereotypes about the unemployed and 'at risk' rate.

These findings illustrate the relevance of distinguishing individual-level and country-level effects. Within a country, we find a significant influence of risk perceptions and negative stereotypes on attitudes towards demanding ALMPs. However, these effects cannot be generalized to the country level: between-country differences in activation support cannot be understood in terms of aggregate risk perceptions or shared stereotypical images. The effects of risk perceptions and negative stereotypes operate purely at the individual level.

The absence of effects of unemployment rates, aggregate risk perceptions or shared stereotypes, raises the question of which factors can explain the observed cross-national differences in support for demanding ALMPs. In countries where ALMPs are implemented more extensively, people would be more inclined to accept these policies (Fossati, 2018), in line with policy feedback mechanisms. To rule out that such mechanisms would affect our findings, we test a model that includes, in addition to the unemployment rate, the strictness of activation requirements for unemployment benefits (OECD, 2020). We find that attitudes towards ALMPs are not significantly affected by how strict activation requirements for the unemployed are (see Appendix Table A4.5), which contradicts a policy feedback effect.

To conclude, the model explains a small part of the individual (10%) and a larger proportion of the country-level variance (29.8%) of support for demanding ALMPs.

4.6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The large-scale adoption of demanding activation policies during the last decades, in combination with a steady threat of rising unemployment levels in the European context, has fostered questions on whether and why the public support these policies. The current study makes a theoretical and empirical contribution to the welfare attitudes research by investigating the role of subjective risk and stereotypes of the unemployed in shaping public support for demanding activation policies.

First, our findings indicate that the expectation of becoming part of the target group addressed by demanding ALMPs is an important indicator for explaining why individuals oppose these strict policies. The effect of subjective risk perceptions is somewhat smaller compared to objective indicators for economic risk, namely being unemployed and receiving social benefits. These socio-economic characteristics, traditionally used in welfare attitudes research as indicators for self-interest, have a direct, negative influence on activation attitudes. Second, we find that negative stereotypes about the job-searching behaviour of the unemployed stimulate support for sanctions. This resonates with the principle behind demanding ALMPs, as the unemployed are expected to be self-reliant and to quickly re-enter the labour market, as well as with deservingness considerations that people develop regarding the characteristics of this target group. At the individual level, negative stereotypes about the

unemployed have an effect that exceeds other ideological dimensions – egalitarianism and left-right position – considerably.

While risk perceptions and stereotypes about unemployed persons are relevant predictors in explaining differences between individuals, we do not find evidence that the share of individuals at risk of unemployment, nor collective negative images of the unemployed explain cross-national variations in attitudes towards demanding ALMPs. They also do not act as mediators between attitudes and countries' unemployment rates. A country's unemployment level affects aggregated fears of falling into unemployment, however these fears do not translate into specific policy preferences regarding activation. Furthermore, we do not find evidence that support for demanding ALMPs is higher in countries where activation requirements are stricter, which contradicts policy feedback theories.

The absence of substantial country-level effects might be due to the fact that activation policies targeted at the unemployed are relatively new, and they might not be well known among the population. Country-level differences in support for demanding ALMPs might be driven by other factors, such as the political context, rather than more tangible economic factors such as the unemployment levels. Activation has been framed differently by governments across Europe, thus we speculate that political parties – especially populist parties – might have mobilised the electorate in favour of strict rules and sanctions towards welfare recipients, depicted as 'welfare scroungers'. The different emphasis given to these policies in public debates, as well as the qualitatively different interpretation of work obligations in different countries (for example, southern versus northern European countries) might be responsible for the non-significant effect of national unemployment rates. Where there are fewer jobs available, people might be more inclined to see a job refusal as a form of disregard for work that the unemployed have. In such contexts, refusing any kind of job might translate into a willingness to punish even more these 'workshy' people, who are believed to misuse the welfare benefit system. This could cancel out the mechanism that high unemployment rates increase risk perceptions and lower support for demanding activation. Yet, the study of such more intricate mechanisms is hampered by a small-N problem, which could also explain the different results found by Naumann et al. (2020). When using multilevel analysis with a small number of countries, attention needs to be paid to the presence of possible outliers and leverage points that might distort the observed patterns at the country-level.

Whereas this chapter focused on demanding policies, future research should investigate public support for enabling ALMPs, such as personalised training, counselling and work incentives (Eichhorst et al., 2008). Given that the enabling approach to activation has not been as extensively adopted as the demanding approach, it might be difficult to study cross-national support for these policies: in some countries people do not have experience with these policies.

Our study thus confirms the high popularity of demanding ALMPs across European countries. Nevertheless, we also have to keep in mind that our study has been conducted in a period of increasing

unemployment rates since the economic crisis. It is possible that the current risk of another recession – even more dramatic than before – would change once again public support for demanding ALMPs, perhaps paving the way for a public support retreat.

NOTES

¹ In welfare attitudes literature, it is acknowledged that there are three contextual aspects that might influence people's attitudes: economic factors, cultural factors and institutional or policy context. The focus of the current study is on the first one, because we expect the mentioned mechanisms to explain the relation between unemployment rate and attitudes towards demanding activation.

² We limit our analysis to European countries, because of two main reasons. Theoretically, Israel and Russia are generally reckoned as non-European countries, given their geographical position and their particular welfare systems. From a methodological perspective, macro-level indicators of these two countries are not available.

³ For a more detailed analysis of the comparison between the experimental groups, see Naumann et al. (2020).

⁴ Subjective risk is a categorical variable, for this reason we do not include it as a mediating variable at the individual level. The calculation of mediation effects with categorical variables is, indeed, suboptimal, as we would need to calculate separate equations for each of the steps (Iacobucci, 2012).

HOW EUROPEANS COMBINE SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS AND WORK OBLIGATIONS OF THE UNEMPLOYED: EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUAL PREDICTORS AND INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

Abstract

A long tradition of welfare attitudes research acknowledges that a substantial share of European citizens are supportive of organizing social protection against unemployment, but less attention is given to how this support relates to support for the work obligations that characterize contemporary demanding activation policies. Analysing data from the European Social Survey (2016), we investigate how individuals combine support for welfare rights and work obligations of the unemployed. Subsequently, we determine whether the choice for a particular combination of rights and obligations is determined by individual characteristics and characteristics of a country's welfare system. We find that high support for welfare rights does not necessarily imply opposition against work obligations, and that a relevant group of citizens supports generous benefits and harsh sanctions at the same time. Preferences for combinations of rights and obligations are mainly driven by ideological values, and partly by self-interest variables as well. At the country level, significant effects of welfare generosity and conditionality lends plausibility to path dependency theory. In highly generous countries, as well as in the more conditional ones, individuals are less likely to want harsh sanctions combined with relatively high support for welfare rights.

This chapter is based on a manuscript that is submitted to a peer-reviewed journal:

Rossetti, F., and Meuleman, B. (submitted in 2022). How Europeans Combine Support for Social Rights and Work Obligations of the Unemployed: Effects of Individual Predictors and Institutional Design. *Under review*.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Since their expansion in the post-war period, European welfare states have received a fairly stable support from the population: citizens across different countries support a strong role of government in providing benefits (Jaeger, 2006b; Jakobsen, 2011; Roosma et al., 2016). The transformation ongoing since the 1990s towards a more activating type of social policy is most prominent in the field of unemployment. Activation policies, whose aim is to increase the employability of the jobless and favour their re-insertion in the paid labour market (Daguerre, 2007; Dingeldey, 2007; Seikel & Spannagel, 2018), have contributed to redefine the equilibrium between what citizens receive from the welfare state and what they are asked to do in return (Houtman, 1997). In particular, the demanding approach to activation—that was widely adopted in the European countries since the 1990s—has made the provision of welfare benefits increasingly conditional on certain strict requirements, exerting pressure on the beneficiaries to comply with these rules in order to keep their benefits (Dingeldey, 2007; Eichhorst et al., 2008; Knotz, 2018b). The introduction of these policies has raised questions not only about their efficiency in promoting employment, but also about their consequences for the target group (Fervers, 2019) and their legitimacy among the population of European countries (Carriero & Filandri, 2018).

In this chapter, we aim to explore how public support for imposing work obligations on the unemployed is related to support for the welfare rights of this target group. To date, this relationship has been investigated mainly in linear terms (e.g., Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; Roosma & Jeene, 2017). These previous studies provide evidence that the general relationship between support for social rights and for obligations of the welfare recipients is negative: higher support for social rights of the unemployed tends to go together with less support for imposing obligations; in other words, that support for rights and obligations are “two sides of the same coin” (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019). However, the relationship might be more complex and nuanced. In an attempt to go beyond the linearity, Jeene and van Oorschot (2015) construct a fourfold typology of preferred combinations for the Dutch population, and find that a relevant share of citizens combines high levels of support for unemployment benefits with a preference for welfare conditionality.

Following this line of research, we investigate how citizens across Europe combine attitudes towards these two dimensions of the contemporary activating welfare states. We build a typology of individuals’ preferred balance between social rights and obligations by means of latent class analysis (LCA). This person-centred approach is aimed at distinguishing latent configurations of patterns of attitudes in the population studied (Meeusen et al., 2018; for application in the field of welfare attitudes, see Roosma, (Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Cook & Barrett, 1992; Coughlin, 1980; Roosma, van Oorschot, & Gelissen, 2014). After discovering which attitudinal configurations are present in the data, we continue by exploring how these configurations are related to individuals’ socio-economic characteristics and ideological dispositions (Jaeger, 2006b). The comparative design furthermore allows us to analyse

whether the popularity of attitudinal configurations is linked to indicators of welfare generosity and conditionality at the country level. We thus aim to answer the following research questions: (1) How do Europeans combine support for social rights and work obligations of the unemployed? (2) What is the individual socio-economic and ideological profile of each of the configurations? (3) How are these configurations of preferred rights-obligations balance related to national levels of welfare generosity and welfare conditionality? For this purpose, we analyse data from the welfare attitudes module included in the European Social Survey 2016, round 8.

A main contribution of this approach is that this analysis links insights from the welfare attitudes literature, which is strongly focused on support for social rights, with emerging research on the legitimacy of benefit conditionality, a principle that has gained importance in the social and labour market policies of the European countries (Knotz, 2018a). Our analysis sheds light on how the public reacts to the introduction of these measures, and whether support for stricter obligations erodes the “too rosy picture of welfare state legitimacy” (Ervasti, 1998, p. 288), or can co-exist with support for social rights. Combining these two aspects of welfare legitimacy allows us to depict a more nuanced picture of citizens’ preferences regarding unemployment policies. In addition, contrary to previous studies on combinations of support for rights and obligations, we adopt a cross-national perspective. This allows us to investigate whether individual preferences are linked to country-level differences in institutional setting.

5.2 ACTIVATING WELFARE STATES: SOCIAL RIGHTS MEET WORK OBLIGATIONS

Since their establishment, welfare states have been responsible for providing citizens with a social security system that protects them from market risks, through services in the areas of education, housing, health and poor relief (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Jakobsen, 2011). Redistribution of resources is the way through which the welfare state reaches the goal of social protection and of lessening unjust inequalities (Roosma et al., 2013). The economic crisis that started in the early 1970s, however, opened a phase of welfare retrenchment. As a response to mass unemployment, activating labour market policies were developed and implemented, with the aim of avoiding human capital deterioration and keeping the jobless busy (Bonoli, 2010, p. 446). From the early and mid-1990s, welfare policies have been reoriented towards activation of the welfare beneficiaries (Bonoli, 2013). Beneficiaries can still rely on the welfare state when they do not have a sufficient income, but they are asked to be actively engaged in the search of a new job, with the ultimate goal of re-integration in the paid labour market and in the society (Betzelt & Bothfeld, 2011; Eichhorst et al., 2008; Seikel & Spannagel, 2018). This goal might be pursued through different paths. On the one hand, *enabling activation* refers to policies aimed at promoting human capital development through incentives and services that are offered to the

jobless. On the other hand, activation might take a more coercive or *demanding* nature, when it mainly imposes work and repressive sanctions in case the work obligations are unmet (Dingeldey, 2007; Eichhorst et al., 2008; Knotz, 2018b; Seikel & Spannagel, 2018).

Although the provision of welfare rights has always implied some form of conditionality –whether in the form of means-tested benefits, or contribution to the system to be eligible to benefits– the new reforms in the field of labour market policies have exacerbated benefit conditionality. In most of the European countries, stricter sanction rules for unemployment benefits have been introduced right after an increase in the budget deficit, and after a long-term increase in unemployment levels (Knotz, 2018b). Demanding activation policies are based on the idea that social rights need to be conditional upon the compliance with certain requirements, in a framework of rebalancing rights and responsibilities (Giddens, 1998; Houtman et al., 2008). Welfare beneficiaries are increasingly asked to meet obligations in order to keep receiving their benefits and to avoid incurring repressive sanctions (Eichhorst et al., 2008).

5.3 THE PREFERRED BALANCE OF RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS AMONG THE EUROPEANS

The policy trends described above raise the question to what extent the shift in balance between provision of benefits and benefit conditions is seen as legitimate among the population at large. Despite the phase of welfare retrenchment that started after the economic crisis of the 1970s, citizens of advanced welfare states have remained highly supportive of a strong role of government in providing services and benefits for those in need (Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Jakobsen, 2011; Roosma et al., 2016). The active welfare state, with its attempt to reach a new equilibrium between rights to social security and correspondent duties (Groot & van der Veen, 2000), puts the concept of benefit conditionality to the fore in the societal debate. Recent studies have shown that support for benefit conditionality has increased in Europe in the last decade (see for instance Carrero & Filandri, 2018). The question remains, however, how support for conditionality relates to support for social rights. Investigating the relation between preferences regarding rights and obligations offers opportunities to correct the “too rosy picture” of welfare state support that plagues welfare attitudes research (Ervasti, 1998, p. 288). To date, this relation has been mainly investigated by assuming that the rights-obligations nexus can be described by a single linear pattern. This research has shown that there is a moderate negative relation between individuals’ support for welfare rights and for obligations of the unemployed: the higher one supports social rights, the weaker one prefers imposing obligations (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; Roosma & Jeene, 2017).

Taking this linear approach might, however, veil more nuanced opinions on what benefit recipients should get and under which conditions. After all, people can combine preferences for social rights of the unemployed with support for work obligations in ways that cannot be captured by a linear pattern. Two studies conducted in the Netherlands provide useful insights in this respect. First, a study by Houtman (1997) indicates that the majority of the Dutch population prefers to keep both the social security right for unemployed people and their obligation to work, whereas a rejection of both policy principles is highly unusual. Jeene and van Oorschot (2015) elaborate this idea further and construct a theoretical typology of the preferred balance of social rights and work obligations among the Dutch population. On the one hand, they detect two configurations that reflect the negative relationship between support for rights and for obligations. One attitudinal profile, labelled *unconditional generosity*, shows strong support for social rights and opposition against obligations. The *work first* profile combines low support for rights and high for obligations. However, two other profiles fall outside the logic of a negative linear pattern, combining high support for both rights and obligations (*conditional generosity*) or low support for both (*laissez-faire*). These last two combinations are highly relevant in societal debates on activation and reflect specific ideological profiles. First, the combination of strong support for rights as well as obligations resembles the logic of welfare populism, that is, a combination of support for redistribution and a strong criticism towards the welfare state (Abts, Dalle Mulle, van Kessel, & Michel, 2021; de Koster, Achterberg, & van der Waal, 2013). A populist conception of redistribution, striving for equality, goes hand in hand with the idea that the welfare state is complex, non-transparent and it grants benefit to undeserving recipients (Derks, 2006). The imposition of strict obligations on the unemployed typical of the demanding activation is strongly rooted in the idea of punishing people that are dependent on the welfare state. Second, the *laissez-faire* option can be linked to a neoliberal view of the welfare state, in which the market has the primacy over government redistribution and the governmental provision of welfare should be kept at the minimum (McCluskey, 2003; Spicker, 2013). People opting for this combination believe that the state should not intervene too much in the lives of the unemployed, either by providing generous benefits or by obliging them to do something in return for their benefit.

As a working hypothesis for our latent class analysis, we use this theoretical typology as a point of departure: we expect to observe two groups that follow the linear relation of support (high support for rights combined with low support for obligations; and low support for rights combined with high support for obligations), and we expect to find at least two more combinations that deviate from this linear relationship.

5.4 WHAT DRIVES PEOPLE'S PREFERRED BALANCE BETWEEN SOCIAL RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS?

After identifying people's combinations of preferences for rights and obligations, we investigate how these combinations can be contingent on their individual characteristics as well as the institutional context at the national level.

5.4.1 Individual-level predictors: Interests and values

At the individual level, the preferred balance of rights and obligations could be affected by both socio-economic characteristics, as well as ideological beliefs (Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989; Jaeger, 2006b). First, it can be expected that the combination of strong support for rights and opposition against obligations (*unconditional generous*) will be preferred in the first place by individuals who benefit from generous welfare rights, and see strict obligations as an obstacle to the enjoyment of their benefit. According to this self-interest argument, the (currently or previously) unemployed are more likely to prefer the unconditionally generous profile. Also egalitarian values can be conducive to a preference for this combination. Previous research has shown that egalitarian dispositions lead to both stronger support for government intervention (Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Jaeger, 2008) and more outspoken opposition against obligations attached to welfare rights (Achterberg et al., 2014; Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; see Chapter 2).

Second, the profile combining strong support for welfare rights and for work obligations (*conditional generosity*), is more likely to be endorsed by individuals emphasizing conformity and traditional values. In the conceptualization of Schwartz' (1992) theory of basic human values, the values of conformity/tradition refer to the importance of preserving social order, obedience to authority, and compliance with the established rules. This value type, that is conceptually related to authoritarianism (Rohan & Zanna, 1996), resonates with the idea that solidarity should not be extended to work-shy unemployed who violate work obligations. Since such a welfare populist critique, combining intolerance of non-conformism with economic egalitarianism, is more prevalent among the lower socio-economic strata (Derks, 2006; Houtman et al., 2008; Van Hootegem, Abts & Meuleman, 2021), we expect a higher proportion of lower educated and working class (blue-collar workers) opting for this combination.

Third, we expect that *laissez-faire* combination –low support for both rights and obligations— is preferred by individuals opposing economic egalitarianism. Regarding the socio-economic characteristics of the *laissez-faire* profile, we expect that individuals in a more secure position (high income and high education) are more likely to be represented in this group, as they are found to be less supportive of egalitarianism (Houtman et al., 2008).

Fourth, among the *work-first supporters* –with a strong emphasis on work obligations and relatively lower support for welfare rights– we expect to find an overrepresentation of right-wing individuals, which previous research has found to be highly supportive of benefit conditionality (Fossati, 2018; see Chapter 2) and less supportive of government redistribution (Jaeger, 2008).

5.4.2 Country-level predictors: Institutional context

The idea that the preferred balance of rights and obligations might differ across countries resonates with theories stating that institutional contexts are systematically related to people’s attitudes towards the welfare state (Andreß & Heien, 2001; Svallfors, 1997). This logic implies that specific policies, such as those targeting the unemployed, might shape public support for that policy. In the context of the activating welfare states, the generosity as well as the conditionality of a welfare system might influence which balance of rights and obligations citizens prefer. Feedback effects of the institutional design of welfare states on people’s attitudes can operate through various mechanisms (Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2013a). On the one hand, social policy can have a *norm-shaping* function: the implemented policies convey certain norms to the general public and in effect shape individuals’ welfare preferences (Rothstein, 1998). Following this mechanism, also labelled ‘positive feedback’ (Busemeyer, et al., 2021), public opinion moves in the direction of the policies that are in place, creating path dependency mechanisms. Applied to our research question, this means that countries with more generous replacement rates are expected to have citizens that are more supportive of generous benefits and less supportive of sanctioning (Raven et al., 2011). On the other hand, *thermostatic model* assumes that the public evaluates the current policies and it adjusts its preferred levels of policy, acting as a thermostat for the policymakers’ choices (Soroka & Wlezien, 2010). According to this model, public opinion does not automatically grow more supportive of the implemented policies. Instead, policies that deviate from the public preferences will create dissatisfaction with the current institutions. Given that this mechanism is more concerned with short-term reactions of public opinion (Busemeyer et al., 2021), it is expected that especially welfare conditionality –which has more recently become tighter as a consequence of the activation turn– could trigger an adverse reaction among the public. This is likely to increase the size of the groups that oppose strong sanctions, such as the work-first supporters.

Testing these policy feedback hypotheses is challenging, given that generosity and conditionality are two aspects of ‘welfare stateness’ that are notoriously difficult to measure (Kunißen, 2019). Welfare generosity is often operationalised by expenditure-based measures (most commonly social expenditure), which are far from being a ‘perfect indicator’ (Kunißen, 2019). Welfare conditionality, on the other hand, comprises several aspects of strictness of unemployment benefits (Knotz, 2018a). Recent studies dealing with the dependent variable problem of welfare provision have contributed to define the measurement of these concepts. For welfare generosity, net replacement rates are suggested

to be a better indicator, because individuals are more likely to have a basic knowledge of the generosity of unemployment benefits rather than a broader measure of generosity such as social expenditure (Kunißen, 2019). For welfare conditionality, looking at the reciprocity data can overcome the limitation of not taking into account benefit schemes conditionality (Otto, 2018). An indicator of unemployment benefit access can thus address both welfare generosity and conditionality, by revealing the actual extent of welfare provision in a country rather than the legally or the financial planned extent (Otto, 2018).

5.5 DATA AND METHODS

5.5.1 Data

To investigate the preferred balance between social rights and obligations of the unemployed across the European population, we use data from the round 8 of European Social Survey (European Social Survey Round 8 Data, 2016). Face-to-face interviews were conducted between August 2016 and December 2017 in each country on the basis of probability-based samples of adult population aged 15 or older. National response rates range from 30.6% (Germany) to 69.6% (Poland). The total sample for the LCA –which uses a Full Information Maximum Likelihood as a strategy to deal with item non-response (Enders & Bandalos, 2009)– includes 38,942 individuals in 21 countries: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Czech Republic (CZ), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Hungary (HU), Iceland (IS), Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), Lithuania (LT), the Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Slovenia (SI), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), Switzerland (CH) and the United Kingdom (UK).¹

5.5.2 Indicators

To measure support for welfare rights of the unemployed, we use the question on the range dimension of the welfare state (Roosma et al., 2014). Respondents were asked to indicate, on a scale from 0 (“not be governments’ responsibility at all”) to 10 (“entirely governments’ responsibility”), how much responsibility they think governments should have to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed. To measure support for work obligations of the unemployed, we use respondents’ answers to three items: “Imagine [someone] who is unemployed and looking for work. This person was previously working but lost their job and is now receiving unemployment benefit. What you think should happen to this person’s unemployment benefit if this person (1) turns down a job because it pays a lot less than they earned previously? (2) Turns down a job because it needs a much lower level of education than the person has? (3) Refuses to regularly carry out unpaid work in the area where they live in return for unemployment benefit?”. Four possible answers were presented (here reversed): this person should (1) be able to keep all the unemployment benefit; (2) lose a small part; (3) lose about half; or (4) lose all the unemployment benefit. In the introductory part of the question, the condition

‘someone’ was randomly replaced by three other descriptions of the unemployed person: “someone in their 50s”, “someone aged 20-25”, “a single parent with a 3-year-old child”.

To investigate the effect of individual characteristics on the likelihood to choose one combination over the others, we include indicators for the socio-economic and ideological profile of individuals. We measure occupation by a variable combining information on the respondent’s main activity for the last seven days and the title of their main job for those in paid job (recoded into the EGP occupational class scheme; see Ganzeboom et al., 1992). Eight categories are obtained: service class, white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, self-employed, students, retired, unemployed and other. We calculate income (in quartiles) on the basis of the distribution of equivalised total net household income, using the OECD-modified scale (OECD, 2013). Education is indicated by the highest level of education completed (lower secondary, upper secondary, tertiary). We use a dummy variable to measure previous experience of unemployment (“Have you ever been unemployed and seeking work for a period of more than three months?”).

Conformity-tradition values are measured as mean of the answers (ranging from “not like me at all” to “very much like me”) to the following items: (a) “he believes that people should do what they’re told. He thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching”; (b) “it is important to him always to behave properly. He wants to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong”; (c) “it is important to him to be humble and modest. He tries not to draw attention to himself”; (d) “tradition is important to him. He tries to follow the customs handed down by his religion or his family”. Egalitarianism is included as mean of two items: (a) “for a society to be fair, differences in people’s standard of living should be small”; (b) “large differences in people’s incomes are acceptable to properly reward differences in talents and efforts” (responses were recoded to indicate stronger egalitarian values with higher values). Political orientation is measured by four categories (left, centre, right, missing) based on the 11-point self-placement scale (0=left to 10=right). We control for age and gender.

At the country level, we include two macro-level indicators for the institutional context. To measure generosity of unemployment benefit system we use the net replacement rate, as the proportion of income maintained after 60 months of unemployment (which accounts for the long-term unemployment). This indicator is retrieved from the OECD and calculated for a single person without children, with average earnings and excluding housing benefits and social assistance. As a measure that approximates conditionality of welfare benefits, we use the indicator unemployment benefit access rate constructed by Otto and van Oorschot (2019), which reveals the actual coverage of national welfare provisions. Specifically, it measures the “national proportion of the total working age population (16–64 years of age) that has actual access to unemployment benefits [...] divided by the respective yearly national unemployment rates” (Otto & van Oorschot, 2019, p. 312). Descriptive statistics of these indicators are included in Appendix Table A5.3.

5.5.3 Analytical strategy

To build a typology of preferred balance between support for rights and obligations of the unemployed, we employ latent class analysis (LCA) (Vermunt, 2010). Using a person-centred approach represents a major contribution to the field of welfare state attitudes, in which a variable-centred approach has been largely preferred (e.g., Meuleman et al., 2020). While the latter assumes that all the respondents of the sample are “drawn from a single population for which a single set of ‘averaged’ parameters can be estimated” (Morin, Meyer, Creusier, & Biétry, 2016, p. 232), the person-centred approach allows to distinguish subgroups of individuals with particular configurations of attitudes (Meeusen et al., 2018). Specifically, LCA makes use of the responses on multiple manifest indicators (that is, the survey items) to empirically construct a categorical latent variable classifying respondents into a typology. Jeene and van Oorschot (2015) work within the person-centred logic as well, but instead of using LCA they use a midpoint split strategy, which creates subgroups without taking the actual pattern of interrelations into account. This more ‘data-blinded’ approach allows to draw a priori hypotheses given that the groups are known in advance (Meyer et al., 2013, p. 197), but brings along the risks of (1) losing those combinations that might fall outside the arbitrary selection of the researchers and (2) creating categories that are not represented in the population. On the contrary, LCA has the advantage to distinguish particular combinations of support that are actually present in the population. After building the LCA model for the set of selected items and identifying the number of latent groups that best represent attitudinal configurations, respondents are assigned to the latent groups on the basis of their response pattern. Subsequently, we perform a series of multilevel binomial logistic regression models, using the membership of one of the latent classes –versus the other three latent classes–as dependent variable. In this way, we can account for the specific profile of individuals in one group. First, we test the effects of individual-level characteristics, followed by a one-by-one introduction of the country-level predictors in the model.

5.6 RESULTS

5.6.1 Descriptive findings

Comparing the means of our variables of interest across the 21 countries (see Appendix Table A5.1), we observe that the country averages of support for governments’ responsibility in providing for the standard of living of the unemployed are always above the midpoint (5). This in line with previous findings that the European public has rather positive attitudes towards governments’ intervention to guarantee minimum standards of living for all citizens, including the unemployed (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012). On the contrary, support for work obligations of the unemployed seems to be less strong and uniform across countries. Recoding the answer categories to a scale 0-3, we can see that, in the majority of the countries, support does not exceed the midpoint (1.5). In most countries, the

dominant opinion is against severe cuts in unemployment benefits when the beneficiaries do not comply with the obligations.

5.6.2 Latent class analysis: A typology of preferred balance between support for rights and obligations

LCA is employed to uncover clusters of respondents preferring distinct combinations of attitudes towards social rights of the unemployed and their work obligations. To identify the most suitable solution among models with different numbers of classes, we rely on the comparison of model fit indices allows (Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007). Given that the sample is quite large, looking at the lowest values of the Akaike information criterion (AIC), the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) and the sample size adjusted BIC (aBIC) would lead us to always increase the number of classes identified. A graphical representation of the reduction in these indices (Appendix Figure A5.4) shows however that the four-class solution performs better than the three-class solution (looking at the reduction in AIC and BIC), while the five-class solution does not improve the model fit. For these reasons, we choose the four-class solution as final model (see detailed conditional probabilities in Appendix Table A5.2). Figure 5.1 plots how these classes relate to the support for welfare rights and work obligations (whereby the size of the bubbles represents the class size).

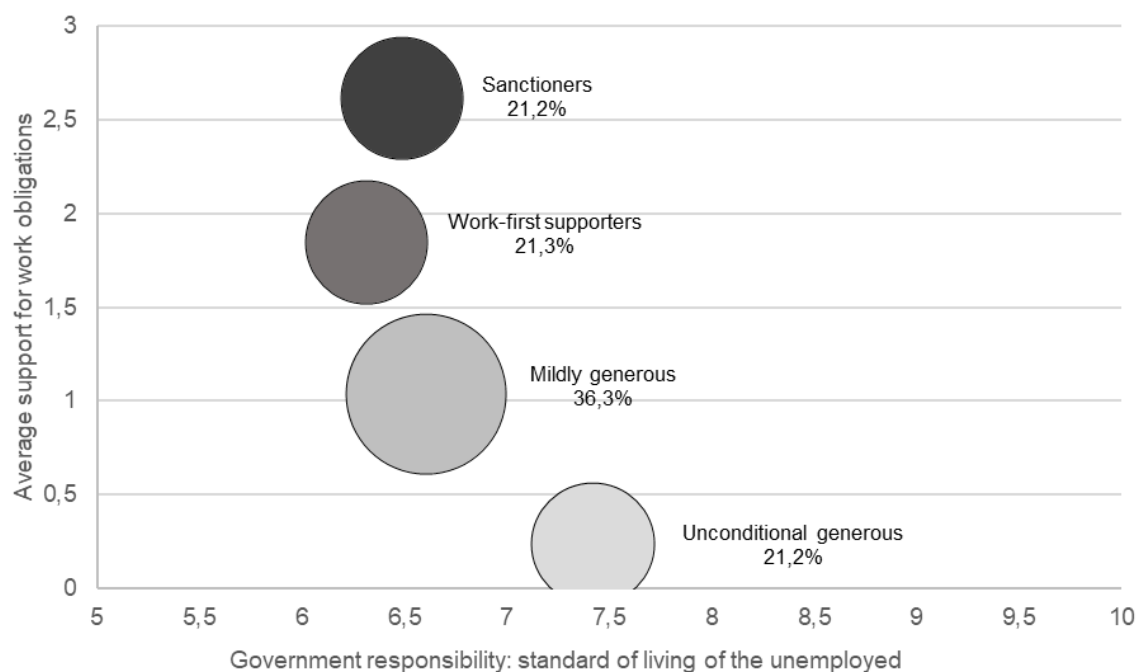


Figure 5.1 Four-class solution for the preferred balance of rights and obligations of the unemployed
Note: The figure shows per latent class the average support for rights on the x-axis (from 0-10) and support for obligations (average over the three obligation-items, on a scale from 0-3). Class sizes are represented by the size of the bubbles. Design weights are applied in the calculation of the averages.

Three classes are largely situated along a linear continuum from strong support for social rights combined with opposition against obligations (right bottom corner) to weak support for rights combined with strong support for obligations (upper left). This linear continuum captures the negative relationship between rights and obligations that was uncovered in previous research (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; Roosma & Jeene, 2017). At the extremes we find the unconditional generous (21.2%), which support high rights and no cuts on unemployment benefits, and the work-first supporters (21.3%), with the lowest support for government responsibility for the unemployed while being in favour of cutting about half of the benefits if the unemployed do not comply with the obligations. The largest class (36.3%) has an average support for welfare rights of the unemployed, and they want to cut unemployment benefits only to a small part if the unemployed do not fulfil their obligations; we label this group the mildly generous. One latent class, however, deviates from the linear pattern: the sanctioners (21.2% of the total sample) show an average support for welfare rights for the unemployed, but they endorse the harshest attitudes towards benefit cuts.

Figure 5.2 shows how these four classes are distributed across European countries. The mildly generous constitutes the largest group in most of the countries, with some exceptions. In Estonia, Hungary and Lithuania the largest group is the unconditional generous; in the Mediterranean countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia), plus Norway and Poland, the sanctioners is the largest latent class in the sample.

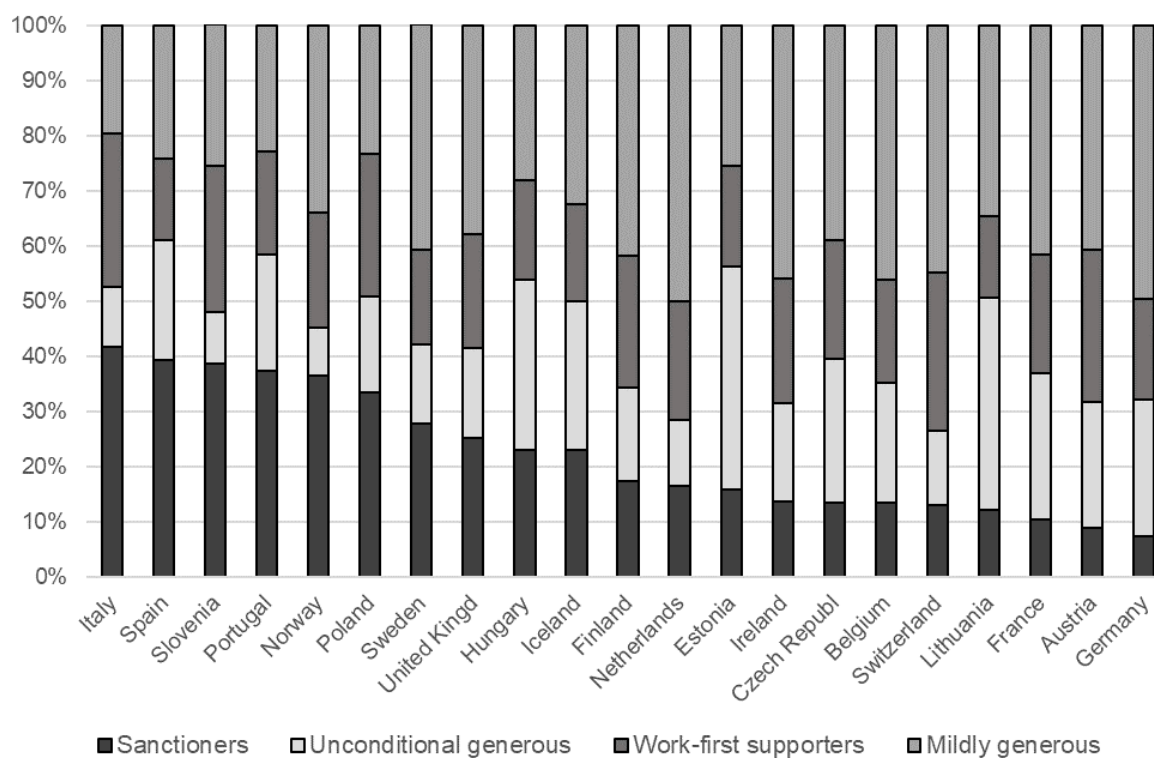


Figure 5.2 Distribution of the four classes across countries

Note: Design weights are applied.

5.6.3 Explaining the preferred balance of rights and obligations: Individual and contextual predictors

We use multilevel binomial logistic regressions to get insights into the profiles of individuals opting for one specific combinations. Concretely, we estimate the effects of individual-level and country-level variables on the probability of belonging to one of the latent classes (vs. belonging to one of the other three classes). Starting from the individual-level effects (Table 5.1), we observe significant differences regarding both structural characteristics and ideological values in the preferred balance of rights and obligations.

Firstly, the characteristics of the unconditional generous class can be understood in terms of self-interest theory. Compared to white-collar workers, being currently unemployed increases the odds of opting for the unconditional generous combination (instead of choosing one of the other combinations) with factor 1.559. Similarly, past experiences of unemployment increase the odds of belonging to the unconditional generous class with factor 1.378. Furthermore, among the unconditional generous we find individuals with stronger egalitarian values ($OR = 1.209$), confirming previous findings regarding both support for government redistribution and for demanding ALMPs for the unemployed (Jaeger, 2006b; Laenen &

Meuleman, 2019; see Chapter 2). Self-identifying with the political left increases the likelihood of preferring the unconditionally generous combination (OR = 1.490), while being right-oriented and scoring higher on the conformity/tradition values lower this likelihood (respectively, OR = 0.892 and 0.920).

Secondly, the socio-economic profile of the class of sanctioners fits partly the expectations. While we do not find a significant effect for blue-collar workers, we observe an overrepresentation of the lower educated among this attitude profile. Regarding ideological predictors, endorsing conformity/tradition values (OR = 1.108) and being right-wing oriented (OR = 1.205) increase the likelihood to belong to the sanctioning profile, while being left-wing oriented (OR = 0.878) and egalitarian (OR = 0.935) decreases the likelihood of opting for this combination.

Thirdly, the ideological profile of the work-first supporters is quite similar to that of the sanctioners. They are more likely characterised by stronger conformity values (although the difference is not so pronounced, as the odds ratio is very close to 1), however we do not observe a significant difference between right-wing oriented and individuals in the centre of the political scale. The egalitarian and the left-wing oriented are less likely to belong to this group. Regarding occupational status, being unemployed and having an experience of unemployment decrease the likelihood of opting for this combination.

Lastly, within the mildly generous class, right-wing people and those with stronger conservation values are underrepresented. However, it seems more difficult to grasp the socio-economic profile of those who opt for this combination. Individuals with previous experience of unemployment and the lower educated are also less likely to be in this group.

Table 5.1 Multilevel logistic models predicting unconditional generous, sanctioners, work first supporters and mildly generous – individual-level predictors

	Unconditional generous			Sanctioners			Work first supporters			Mildly generous		
	Coeff.	Std. Error	OR	Coeff.	Std. Error	OR	Coeff.	Std. Error	OR	Coeff.	Std. Error	OR
Intercept	-1.887***	.210	.151	-1.896 ***	.200	.150	-.987***	.116	.373	-.213	.113	.808
Age	-.000	.002	1.000	.003 *	.002	1.003	-.003	.002	.997	.000	.001	1.000
Female	.013	.036	1.013	.143 **	.041	1.154	-.046	.031	.955	-.068*	.030	.935
Education (ref. tertiary)												.900
Lower secondary	-.136	.073	.873	.143 **	.047	1.154	.119**	.045	1.127	-.106*	.045	.937
Upper secondary	-.109*	.049	.897	.125 **	.038	1.133	.089*	.034	1.093	-.065**	.025	
Occupation (ref. white-collar workers)												
High service class	-.012	.061	.988	-.117	.084	.889	.045	.068	1.046	.054	.074	1.055
Blue-collar workers	-.060	.063	.942	.052	.052	1.054	.082	.048	1.085	-.068	.041	.941
Self employed	-.121*	.055	.886	.087	.050	1.091	.007	.070	1.007	-.001	.042	.999
Unemployed	.444***	.084	1.559	-.253*	.108	.777	-.251*	.107	.778	-.025	.073	.975
Student	.006	.071	1.006	-.384**	.108	.681	-.007	.084	.993	.225***	.059	1.252
Retired	-.062	.080	.940	-.037	.052	.964	.039	.071	1.039	.044	.044	1.045
Other	.127*	.058	1.136	-.070	.070	.933	.059	.063	1.061	-.094*	.039	.910
Income (ref. 1 st quartile)												
2 nd quartile	.025	.054	1.026	-.087	.053	.917	-.019	.052	.981	.058	.039	1.059
3 rd quartile	-.059	.084	.943	.008	.071	1.008	-.059	.075	.942	.082	.042	1.085
4 th quartile	-.007	.107	.993	.050	.079	1.052	-.109	.075	.897	.055	.046	1.056
Missing	.080	.079	1.084	-.003	.069	.997	-.135*	.063	.874	.054	.041	1.055
Experience UE	.320***	.058	1.378	-.002	.044	.998	-.205***	.040	.815	-.087*	.038	.917
Political orientation (ref. centre)												
Left	.399***	.065	1.490	-.130 *	.059	.878	-.182***	.046	.834	-.100	.058	.905
Right	-.114*	.052	.892	.186 ***	.042	1.205	.076	.044	1.079	-.141**	.049	.869
Missing	.247***	.070	1.280	-.015	.108	.985	-.091	.076	.913	-.116*	.048	.891
Egalitarianism	.189***	.031	1.209	-.068 *	.030	.935	-.106***	.021	.899	-.011	.018	.989
Conformity-tradition	-.083*	.033	.920	.102**	.034	1.108	.063**	.021	1.065	-.052*	.03	.950
<i>Variance components</i>												
Intercept	.316	.101		.480 **	.153		.053**	.018		.175**	.056	

Note: N = 37,737. Design weights are applied; coefficients are unstandardized. OR = Odds ratio. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Table 5.2 shows the results of the institutional predictors on the likelihood of being in one latent group (versus the other three), controlling for the individual-level predictors. Here the purpose is not to grasp individual profiles of the latent classes, but to analyse the effect of contextual characteristics on the likelihood of choosing one latent class over the others.

Looking at the generosity of unemployment benefits, we find mixed evidence for our hypothesised mechanisms of norm-shaping and thermostatic function. In more generous countries, the group of sanctioners tends to be smaller (OR = 0.681), in line with the idea that there is a positive feedback effect of the institutional design. Clearly, generous unemployment benefits do not automatically lead to a greater willingness to sanction and punish the unemployed. At the same time, more generous replacement rates increase the likelihood of opting for the mildly generous combination (OR = 1.240). This finding, however, is harder to interpret, given that this group gathers people with an average support for government's responsibility, and has a less outspoken profile than the sanctioners group. It is hard to claim that the positive effect of benefit generosity should be understood as thermostatic effect, because the mildly generous are in favour of only limited sanctions for the non-compliant unemployed.

Table 5.2 Multilevel logistic models predicting unconditional generous, sanctioners, work first supporters and mildly generous – country-level predictors

	Unconditional generous			Sanctioners			Work first supporters			Mildly generous		
	Coeff.	Std. Error	OR	Coeff.	Std. Error	OR	Coeff.	Std. Error	OR	Coeff.	Std. Error	OR
Net replacement rate (60 months)	.070	.076	1.072	-.384***	.088	.681	.045	.052	1.046	.215**	.067	1.240
<i>Variance components</i>												
Intercept	.328**	.108		.351**	.115		.054**	.019		.136**	.045	
Access rate UE benefits	-.022	.0843	.978	-.376***	.094	.687	.070	.043	1.073	.231***	.065	1.259
<i>Variance components</i>												
Intercept	.332**	.109		.358**	.117		.050**	.018		.128**	.043	

Note: N = 37,737. Controlling for individual-level predictors. Design weights are applied; coefficients are standardized. OR = Odds ratio.

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Looking at the effect of unemployment benefit access rate, we observe that where conditionality is higher, people are less likely to opt for the sanctioners combination (OR = 0.687), and more likely to opt for the mildly generous one (OR = 1.259). While these effects have the same directions as those of replacement rates, they should be kept separated as the measures capture different aspects of the benefit system. Increased conditionality in benefit access does not bring people to be more willingness to sanction the unemployed harsher. The effect on this group can be interpreted as a thermostatic effect, as people seems to counter stricter conditionality with rejection of harsh welfare obligations. Thus, the expectation that a stronger conditionality would find opposition among the public is confirmed. Nonetheless, it is difficult to interpret the positive effect on the mildly generous, because this group takes a ‘middle position’ on the welfare rights item. There is a moderate support for the idea that increasing conditionality makes people more favourable to mild rather than harsh sanctioning of the unemployed unwilling to accept any kind of job.

5.7 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

While welfare attitudes research has demonstrated that support for welfare redistribution and social security provisions is stable in Europe (Jaeger, 2006b; Roosma et al., 2016), and more recent research has shown that conditional unemployment benefits are largely supported in Europe (Buss et al., 2017; Carriero & Filandri, 2018), still little is known about how Europeans combine support for welfare generosity and conditionality. Our contribution goes beyond the linearity assumed to link these two aspects of the welfare state (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; Roosma & Jeene, 2017). Analysing ESS data of 2016, we find that there are four possible combinations of support for welfare rights and obligations for non-compliant unemployed. Three major conclusions can be drawn from this analysis.

First, the findings suggest that support for welfare rights and for work obligations represents to a certain extent the logic of “two sides of the same coin” (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019), but also that there is an exception: the combination we labelled ‘sanctioners’. The use of latent class analysis allows to find the preferred combinations of support among the population, combinations that would not reflect the reality if constructed by the researchers. While the latent groups found in the sample do not distance themselves in their average support for government intervention for the standard of living of the unemployed, they stand apart on their opinions on work obligations.

Second, these groups are characterised at the individual level by specific ideological and socio-economic profiles. While people with a current or previous experience of unemployment are more likely to combine strong welfare support with no conditions attached (‘unconditional generosity’), they reject those combinations with even minimum levels of sanctioning. Right-wing oriented people, and individuals with conformity values, are more likely to choose for a combination with strong support for strict sanctioning.

Third, the proportions of sanctioners –that is, the combination that deviates from the linear pattern– and mildly generous in a country are linked to the institutional design. Strong conditionality brings individuals to be less supportive of harsh punishment measures for the unemployed suggesting that, whenever access to benefits is restricted, people will react against it and will oppose these measures, as expected from a thermostatic effect of policy feedback. This means that raising sanctions for the unemployed who do not comply with work obligations might not necessarily be a winning idea for the policymakers in terms of public acceptance. On the contrary, strong conditionality seems to increase the proportion of individuals that hold a ‘middle position’, namely that they combine high support for social rights with support for a cut on unemployment benefits only to a small extent. Despite being difficult to interpret, this result might suggest that the public is not completely against any form of punishment, but they want to keep the sanctions for the unemployed not too high.

An important issue raised by our analysis is the awareness on the use of macro-level indicators for welfare generosity. While it is a common practice to use single expenditure-based indicators as independent variables for measuring welfare state differences (Kunißen, 2019), this measure is not flawless, and more attention is needed when drawing conclusions on the relation between the institutional context and policy attitudes. Our choices of operationalising welfare generosity with unemployment benefit replacement rates, and welfare conditionality with access rates, relates to the idea that citizens might be more aware of these measures because they have been potentially in closer contact with the benefits and they know how generous or conditional they are.

The significant relation found between welfare system and people’s preferences for certain levels of rights and obligations has important implications for policymaking: allocating more or less resources to specific benefits might have important consequences on public demands for more or less obligations as well. In this regard, longitudinal data would help to clarify the link between individuals’ attitudes and the institutional design, allowing to understand whether a norm-shaping function of public policies prevails, or whether in some cases a thermostatic function might come into play, if the policies are deemed too strict.

NOTES

¹ The ESS wave 8 includes also Russia and Israel, but these countries are not included in the analyses because information on the contextual variables are not available.

AN UNCONDITIONAL BASIC INCOME? HOW DUTCH CITIZENS JUSTIFY THEIR OPINIONS ABOUT A BASIC INCOME AND WORK CONDITIONALITY

Abstract

The chapter focuses on one of the core but controversial features of a universal basic income (UBI): its unconditionality. Using qualitative in-depth interviews collected in the Dutch municipality of Tilburg in 2018–19, we examine the arguments underlying popular opinions about a UBI and work conditionality. The analysis suggests that these arguments can be interpreted from two theoretical perspectives. On the one hand, respondents make frequent use of deservingness criteria referring to the characteristics of welfare recipients, such as their need and work willingness. On the other hand, they justify their opinions using arguments related to the characteristics of welfare schemes, such as their administrative and financial feasibility. Our findings offer important insights concerning political actors who support (or oppose) the real-world implementation of a UBI.

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been growing interest in the old idea of a universal basic income (UBI). The idea of a guaranteed minimum income for all citizens, without having to do anything in return, has fascinated scientists and political philosophers for many years, but in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008 it has entered the public debate again and is increasingly being considered as a serious policy proposal (OECD, 2017). The chapter focuses on one of the defining features setting a UBI apart from most existing social security systems: its unconditionality (van Parijs, 2004). The fact that a UBI would not be conditional on work-related requirements directly opposes the trend of increasing conditionality that has characterized European social policy over the past decades (Knotz, 2018b). Whereas social rights were central in the design of social provisions during the golden era of the welfare state, nowadays welfare benefits – in particular unemployment and social assistance benefits – have become much more conditional on the fulfilment of work-related obligations; a trend that seems to count on high public support across Europe (Buss, 2018b; Fossati, 2018).

Our country case, the Netherlands, is no exception (perhaps even a frontrunner) in this regard: imposing work obligations on welfare recipients has been central to the ‘welfare-to-work’ strategy of successive Dutch governments and has become a widely implemented and well-supported policy paradigm (Hoogenboom, 2011). This culminated in 2015 with the introduction of the Participation Act, enabling municipalities to implement the so-called *Tegenprestatie*: a workfare-oriented instrument that forces social assistance recipients to perform unpaid activities in return for the benefits they receive. At the same time, however, the Netherlands has a long history of lively public debate about a UBI, spurred not only by a handful of passionate activists (as in many other countries), but also by established governmental organizations and political parties (Groot & van der Veen, 2000). Nevertheless, for various reasons, a UBI has never actually been implemented as a radical alternative to the Dutch welfare state (Vanderborgh, 2004). Most recently, some municipalities have initiated what are termed ‘trust experiments’, which relieve social assistance recipients from all work-related duties (Groot et al., 2019). Because these municipal experiments are unconditional, as a UBI would be, they are often also called ‘basic income experiments’, even though they are restricted to the recipients of means-tested social assistance (van der Veen, 2019; Widerquist, 2018). As a result, the Netherlands has become the scene of a fierce clash between two social policy measures that are diametrically opposed in terms of work conditionality: the workfare-based *Tegenprestatie* and the UBI-inspired trust experiments. This makes the Dutch case a particularly interesting context for an in-depth investigation into the social legitimacy of a UBI and work conditionality.¹

Evidence from quantitative surveys conducted in the Netherlands since the beginning of the 1990s shows that support for work conditionality has remained high and fairly stable across time, while support for a UBI seems to have fluctuated (see Appendix Table A6.1). However, most existing surveys

tell us little about the types of arguments people spontaneously use to support (or oppose) a UBI and work conditionality, and such knowledge is important for political actors trying to build (or erode) public support for concrete policy proposals. To overcome this issue, the current study makes use of qualitative in-depth interviews in order to examine the arguments underlying popular opinions about a UBI and work conditionality. The 49 semi-structured interviews were carried out in the city of Tilburg, one of the municipalities that have initiated a trust experiment. This makes Tilburg a unique context to enhance our understanding of people's underlying reasoning about a guaranteed basic income and the (un)conditionality of benefits.

In the remainder of the chapter, we start by giving an overview of the Dutch income benefits system and of the studies on the social legitimacy of a UBI and welfare conditionality among the Dutch population. We then introduce our data and methods, followed by the results of our inductive analysis that reveal the main argumentations respondents used to justify their opinions about a UBI and the *Tegenprestatie*. The last section concludes and discusses the empirical findings of our analysis, which show that the arguments used can be interpreted from two perspectives: on the one hand, deservingness theory – an approach that is used in welfare attitudes research to distinguish criteria that people apply to evaluate whether or not welfare recipients are deserving of benefits (van Oorschot, Roosma, Meuleman, & Reeskens, 2017). On the other hand, there are arguments that relate to the feasibility of welfare schemes.

6.2 BASIC INCOME AND WORK CONDITIONALITY IN THE DUTCH INCOME BENEFITS SYSTEM

With regard to the fulfilment of work-related obligations, all income benefit schemes can be located on a wide-ranging continuum (see Figure 6.1). At one extreme, there are income benefits that are granted as an unconditional and inalienable social right, completely relieving recipients of the duty to engage in work-related activities. The prototypical example of such a 'no-strings-attached approach' is a UBI, often defined as "in income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement" (van Parijs, 2004, p. 8). At the other extreme, we find income benefits paid on the strict condition that people work in return for the money they receive. Such workfare schemes typically make people "an offer they can't refuse" (Lodemel & Trickey, 2001), by severely punishing recipients with benefit cuts (or even full withdrawal) if they do not comply with the work requirements imposed on them, which often consist of demeaning types of community service (e.g. public road litter collection). In between the two extremes of the continuum, there are many other types of income benefit schemes. An example closer to the right-hand end of the scale is what Groot and van der Veen (2000, p. 19) term "conditional welfare". These income benefits are conditional on the fulfilment of some work-related obligations, such as job-seeking and training, but allow the

recipients some leeway in choosing a job that suits their educational, occupational and geographical background. An example closer to the left-hand end side of the continuum is Atkinson's (1996) much-discussed participation income, a type of basic income that is granted to all citizens on the condition that they engage in labour or other socially appreciated activities, such as caregiving, studying or volunteering.

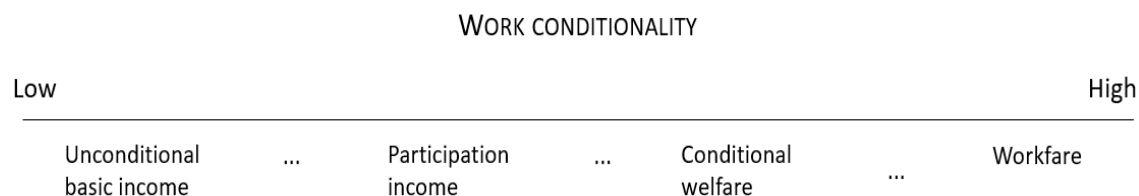


Figure 6.1 Income benefit schemes on the continuum of work conditionality

Note: The figure is based on Groot & van der Veen (2000).

Where does the Dutch income benefits system lie on this continuum of work conditionality? In the Netherlands, the idea of a UBI has been on the political agenda from as early as the mid-1970s, and has subsequently waxed and waned depending on the state of the economy, the level of unemployment and developments in social policy (Groot & van der Veen, 2000; Vanderborght, 2004). What sets the Netherlands apart from many other countries is that a (partial) basic income has not only been discussed by a few die-hard activists (usually scientists or politicians who are so convinced by the idea of a UBI that they disregard its administrative and financial feasibility), but has also been examined closely on multiple occasions in official reports issued by established governmental agencies.² Nevertheless, a UBI has never garnered sufficient political support to be actually implemented. Although the reasons for this are plentiful, most observers agree that “the radical unconditionality of basic income with regard to work requirements constitutes the feature that most contributes to making it impossible to sell” (Vanderborght, 2004, p. 31). This is especially true in the Dutch context, where a strong work ethos prevails, and where both citizens and politicians seem to loathe the idea of giving “free money” to “free riders” (Groot & van der Veen, 2000). Therefore, a UBI has never gone beyond the stage of public debate in the Netherlands.

Work conditionality, by contrast, has increasingly been an object of public policy. In light of the ‘activation turn’ (Bonoli, 2010) or ‘conditionality turn’ (Watts & Fitzpatrick, 2018), the Netherlands has moved considerably closer to the right-hand end of the work conditionality scale. The Dutch income benefits system – particularly unemployment insurance, social assistance and disability benefits – has become much more conditional over recent decades (Bruttel & Sol, 2006; Hoogenboom, 2011; Laenen & Larsen, 2018; van Oorschot & Engelfriet, 1999). The ongoing trend towards increased work conditionality culminated in 2015 with the introduction of the Participation Act, which gave municipalities the legal competence to implement a workfare-oriented instrument – the *Tegenprestatie*

– in local social assistance. In practice, social assistance recipients are now obliged to perform unpaid, socially useful activities in return for the benefits they receive, if their municipality requires them to do so. The political logic behind such a workfare policy is based on the *quid pro quo* principle: it is considered only fair that welfare recipients are required to ‘return the favour’.

Following the trend towards increased conditionality, the Netherlands has seen a revival of the UBI debate, mainly fuelled by Rutger Bregman’s high-impact book (“Free money for everyone”³ published in 2014), in which a UBI is proposed as a radical and utopian alternative for a better society. Inspired by the revival of the UBI concept and as a reaction to the strictness of the *Tegenprestatie*, a number of Dutch cities started to use the possibilities offered by the Participation Act to experiment with policy instruments doing the exact opposite; that is, freeing social assistance recipients from work-related duties. These municipalities implemented so-called ‘trust experiments’, with the explicit aim to study their effects on recipients’ labour market participation, health and well-being (Groot et al., 2019; van der Veen, 2019; Widerquist, 2018). The main idea behind these experiments is that trusting people is a much stronger stimulus to (re)integrate welfare recipients (and citizens more generally) into the broader society than the enforcement of reciprocal work duties. Although these municipal experiments are restricted to the recipients of means-tested social assistance, it is argued that they are the closest real-world approximation of a basic income scheme in the Netherlands, because they grant fully unconditional benefits to able-bodied people, irrespective of their work willingness (Groot et al., 2019; van der Veen, 2019).⁴ Further, a trust experiment was recently initiated in the city of Tilburg, where we carried out our in-depth interviews.

6.3 BASIC INCOME AND WORK CONDITIONALITY IN DUTCH PUBLIC OPINION

It is often argued that public opinion has blocked the implementation of a UBI in the Netherlands, acting to veto welfare reforms in this direction. However, with the exception of a few occasional surveys during the last decades (see Appendix Table A6.1 for an overview), relatively little is known about the social legitimacy of a UBI among the Dutch population. In 1993, a survey on public support for radical social security reforms conducted by the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP) revealed that only 19% of the respondents were in favour of a move towards a partial basic income scheme (Vrooman & De Kemp, 1995). A few years later, the Welfare Opinions Survey (WOS) revealed a similar proportion of people in agreement with the proposal of a full UBI (van Oorschot, 1998). In the 2001 Eurobarometer, support in the Dutch population for a UBI seemed to have increased to 70%, to then drop again to 47.3% in 2016 with the last public opinion data available from the European Social Survey (ESS). Such contrasting findings reveal that it is difficult to forecast what proportion of the electorate would support the implementation of a UBI scheme and why.

In contrast with the unknowns concerning the social legitimacy of a UBI, support for making income benefits conditional on the fulfilment of work-related obligations has been remarkably stable in the Netherlands. Data from the early 1990s show that more than half of the Dutch population supported the implementation of a fully-fledged workfare scheme (van Oorschot, 1998). Further, in the 2001 Eurobarometer, no fewer than 81.7% of the Dutch sample were in (slight or strong) agreement with the idea that the unemployed should be forced to take a job quickly. In the 2016 ESS, respondents were asked to indicate what should happen to a person's unemployment benefit if he or she turns down a job because it pays a lot less than their previous work. A minority (17.3%) responded that the unemployed should keep all the benefits, while the rest were in favour of reducing the benefits (albeit to different extents). It thus seems that there is a broad support base in the Netherlands for imposing work obligations on welfare recipients, reflecting the strong work ethic of its population (see also Houtman, 1997; Laenen & Larsen, 2018; Roosma & Jeene, 2017).

The evidence from quantitative surveys provides us with a first impression of how a UBI and work conditionality (concretely implemented for example in the *Tegenprestatie* scheme) could be supported among the Dutch public. However, the available surveys provide little information on what type of arguments underlie people's relevant opinions. A notable exception in this regard is the WOS of 1995, in which respondents were asked to choose between a number of arguments to justify their opinions in favour of or against a UBI and workfare (see van Oorschot, 1998). The answer categories revolved around three major topics: work ethic, the economic consequences of the policies and the deservingness of the recipients. For the first, one example was that if a UBI were to be implemented, 'the incentive to do paid work will become too low'. One of the work ethic arguments in favour of workfare was that 'presently too many people obtain a benefit while they could work if they wanted to'. An example of a deservingness-related reason for not implementing a UBI was that 'the basic income will also be given to people who do not need it at all'. To justify support for workfare, one of the deservingness arguments was 'it is OK if government demands something in return for a benefit'. With regard to the economic consequences, an argument for the opponents of a UBI was 'it would be too costly', while workfare opponents could argue that 'it will invoke false competition with regular jobs'. The Dutch seemed to largely opt for arguments related to deservingness and the work ethic, both in the case of opposition to a UBI and in support for a workfare scheme. However, these arguments only partially captured people's motivations, since they were predefined by the researchers. What is still needed is a 'bottom-up' approach, which would allow us to identify the arguments people freely use to justify their welfare opinions (Laenen et al., 2019).

6.4 DATA AND METHODS

To examine how Dutch citizens feel about a UBI and work conditionality, our qualitative study is based on 49 semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews with citizens of the city of Tilburg. The interviews were conducted by students of the Tilburg University sociology programme in 2018–19. A randomly selected sample of 450 people in the age category of 18 to 80 was taken from the population register of the Tilburg municipality. The sample was stratified along five different neighbourhoods (which differ in their proportions of social assistance beneficiaries). All the potential respondents received a letter with information about the research, after which they could be contacted in person with a request to participate. The resulting sample includes 28 women and 21 men, from different age groups and with different educational backgrounds, subjective incomes and political preferences (see Appendix Table A6.2 for an overview of the interviewees and their background characteristics).

The interviews each lasted approximately one hour, and the well-trained interviewers used the same semi-structured questionnaire with questions about both a UBI and the Participation Act (the *Tegenprestatie* scheme). In explaining the idea of a UBI, a specific definition was presented to the respondents on paper. The definition included the following aspects: it comprises a monthly income, paid by the government, on which you can live frugally; it is the same amount for everyone, paid to all adult residents of the Netherlands; the payment is without conditions and not dependent on income, assets or work situation; it partially replaces other benefits and allowances, such as social assistance.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed through an inductive approach, without imposing a pre-defined coding scheme, to identify relevant themes that were recurrent in interviewees' words. The coding process, performed using the software Atlas.ti, allowed us to define and develop these themes.

6.5 RESULTS

After discussing how the complex topics of UBI and welfare conditionality were understood by our respondents, we present their main ideas and arguments about UBI and the *Tegenprestatie*.

6.5.1 The complexity of social policy: Ambivalence and ambiguity

With a few exceptions, the respondents did not show well-developed attitudes towards a UBI or work conditionality. Many respondents indicated that they found these topics complicated or that they had never previously thought about the questions asked. Some even indicated that it was not up to them to decide about these types of issues.

Well you know, there is not only one right answer, and if you give an answer, it is quite a complex thing. If you really start talking about it seriously then you can go in any direction. (Interviewee 15).

The following quote is a typical example of how respondents struggled with the two concepts and had difficulties in forming a clear opinion about them. Although the respondent here was in favour of the *Tegenprestatie* (i.e. the obligation to do something in return for receiving a benefit), she did not want to impose too many obligations. At the same time, she indicated being in favour of a UBI, but neglected the fact that it is unconditional.

I think we should keep the *Tegenprestatie* and obligations. There, I am actually ... you should put that in place as little as possible and I think a basic income anyway ... yes, I think you should have that, I do not think you should go below the poverty line. (Interviewee 7).

While the policy proposal of the *Tegenprestatie* appears to be easier to understand intuitively, a UBI seems to be a very abstract and complex social policy proposal, with many different aspects and underlying assumptions. Moreover, the idea of a UBI seemed to be largely unknown among most of our respondents. Some of them were not familiar with the concept: when asked about their knowledge of basic income, they believed it referred to the minimum wage or ‘basic’ household income. Moreover, quite a few respondents had difficulty in understanding the idea of a UBI, even after its different dimensions had been explained in detail by the interviewer, who provided a clear definition on paper during the interview. In general, most respondents struggled with the universalistic aspect of a UBI, as they did not understand the advantages of giving it to all citizens, given that these same citizens will pay for it through taxes. “The basic income is simply the money you earn, what you work for” (Interviewee 11).

Because of the complexity of social policy proposals – a UBI in particular – and the fact that many respondents were unfamiliar with a UBI, respondents started forming their opinion about these issues during the interview, often resulting in ambiguous answers or ambivalent opinions. This leads to the first conclusion regarding the reasons why qualitative research is needed when studying welfare attitudes: the findings of the quantitative surveys presented above are sometimes hard to interpret, even when a definition of the policy at issue is provided (as is the case in the ESS 2016).

6.5.2 ‘Basic’ income: Providing a floor for the poor and making work pay

When discussing the concept of a UBI, there is one aspect that our respondents liked in particular: the fact that they (or others) would gain more income, or more specifically that a UBI provides basic security for everyone. Although respondents often mentioned that providing every citizen with a basic income would be unaffordable or unnecessary, many nevertheless expressed enthusiasm for this feature. This is in line with Roosma and van Oorschot (2019), who concluded that people are likely to support a UBI because it provides income protection for the poor. In our interviews we find two lines of reasoning that substantiate this claim.

The first focuses on poverty relief and improving the situation for the poor, those with a low income or those dependent on (social assistance) benefits. It is argued that a UBI can provide people with basic security, which not only prevents them from falling below the poverty line, but also relieves them of the (some suggest ‘humiliating’) obligation to prove that they are in real need of benefits through all forms of bureaucratic rules. Basic security provides dignity. At the same time, this line of argumentation points out that people with the lowest income have difficulties making ends meet or are forced to become indebted. Many respondents considered the current level of social assistance benefit is too low, and that people are forced to live in poverty. A UBI can – or should, according to these respondents – improve the economic situation of people on a low income. It would relieve them of the stress of not having enough to pay for necessities. In addition, respondents who did not follow this line of argumentation believe that no one should fall below the poverty line and that people should be able to pay their expenses.

The person who works may be better off. But the person who does not work should not be short of anything to be able to function as an ordinary Dutch citizen. And I miss that in this country. They say it is all taken care of, but it is all just on the edge of it. It is too much to die of and not enough to live on. It could have been a bit more generous. (Interviewee 13).

The second line of argumentation concerns the unfairness of having similar standards of living for people on benefits and for the working population. There is a strong sense of agreement that people in low-paid jobs do not earn enough and that it is barely beneficial to work. Working often does not pay off. Respondents believed that people who work, and especially those working more hours or in more intensive jobs, should have higher incomes. Within this reasoning, the interviewees advocated the idea that working people could also receive a UBI, as their situation should be improved as well and they should be rewarded for their efforts. Some respondents who misunderstood that UBI means the same income for all – referring to it as a socialist reform in terms of “communism” (Interviewee 43) or “what they have in China” (Interviewee 3) – strongly rejected the idea that effort is not rewarded. However, at the same time people believe that income differences are too high. The general feeling is that the rich get richer while those on lower incomes do not progress, so there is less support for the idea of ‘the rich’ also benefitting from a UBI.

The lines of argument in favour of a ‘basic’ level of income can explain the high level of support for a UBI in some of the surveys mentioned above. Respondents might simply respond to the ‘basic’ in basic income, making a decent standard of living possible, and give less importance to – or remain unaware of – the aspects of unconditionality and universalism (see also Roosma & van Oorschot, 2020).

6.5.3 'Basic' income, but not universal and not unconditional

When the idea of a UBI was further discussed, our respondents articulated two main objections. First, they objected to the idea of it being provided to all citizens, regardless of their assessed financial need, arguing that it is not necessary to provide an additional income to people who have a decent income and are able to make money themselves. In this logic, a UBI potentially turns out to be an unnecessary luxury. Respondents argued that the rich or people with higher incomes (sometimes respondents referred to themselves) are not in need of benefits and therefore do not deserve support from a UBI. This relates to the above-mentioned argument that hard-working people on a low income are considered to be deserving of a higher standard of living. Only a few respondents mentioned, however, that the rich have worked for their own wealth and for that reason they would also be deserving of a UBI. According to this logic, it would be unfair to exclude those who have put in more effort to get ahead in society. Here, praising effort triumphs over the importance of need considerations.

I think they are all deserving, but not the very rich ones. (Interviewee 3).

Well, maybe not someone who is a millionaire, but you know, those people have probably also worked hard for their money, so yes, I think it's a shame to say, gosh they are not entitled to it. (Interviewee 11).

The second, and even stronger, objection lies in the fact that a UBI is unconditional in terms of a person's willingness to work and in their performance of work. There were very few respondents who supported this type of 'something for nothing' unconditionality (see left-hand extreme of Figure 6.1). Although they had different opinions about what should be done in return, and the reasons why people should reciprocate, it was broadly agreed that all those who are capable should do at least 'something useful in return'. It is almost considered self-evident that there should be some reciprocity in benefiting from government support. There is no such thing as a free lunch; that would be considered too easy and unrealistic. It is also considered undignified and unfair if someone puts effort into doing something in return, while others are lazy and irresponsible. Thus, even if respondents agreed with the universality aspect of a basic income, they envisioned it more as a form of participation income (Atkinson, 1996).

I find it too easy. If you want to achieve something, you have to do something for it. That's how I was raised. (Interviewee 10)

The moment you give something away without having to get anything in return, that money has no value. But if you, as is the case now, have to do something in return, however small, then it gives a sense of value. Because then it matters what you do. If it doesn't matter what you do, then one person starts applying for jobs a lot but doesn't get a job, does their utmost and gets a certain amount. While someone else who sits on their lazy backside, and does nothing, will also receive the same amount. Yes, if you look at it carefully, I don't think anyone would think that is fair. (Interviewee 43).

6.5.4 Work is good for everybody: Prevent inactivity

In the rejection of the unconditionality of a UBI, we find a clear link with support for the *Tegenprestatie*. The unconditionality aspect is an important barrier to support for a full UBI. ‘Doing something in return for your benefits’ was generally supported among our respondents, as has also been shown in previous quantitative work (see Appendix Table A6.1). Embedded in a strong work ethic, there is a broadly shared view that inactivity should be avoided. In principle, all those who are able should work or be supported to (get back to) work. Further, if paid work is impossible, other substitute activities should be provided by the government. However, respondents differed in their specific arguments in support of the *Tegenprestatie* scheme, expressed by two distinguished lines of reasoning.

The first is characterized by scepticism about people’s willingness to work. Respondents believe that if people are not in some way ‘forced’ to work, they will prefer laziness instead of contributing to society, resulting in a culture of dependency and high unemployment. The way people should be ‘forced’ is by attaching strict obligations to benefit receipt. Sanctions (namely, cutting benefits) should be prevented, but if necessary they should be applied to those who cannot be motivated in another way. Respondents following this line of reasoning believe that there are people who are really not able to work; however, they are more concerned about those who take advantage of the system. Participation is necessary, because there are many areas where additional help is needed (especially the care system) and if people are not skilled enough, they can be trained to perform specific jobs.

Of course you will always have people who can’t work for medical reasons, so you shouldn’t bother those people. But people who are able to work and who simply don’t do anything, and think ‘with this money, oh well, I don’t have to do anything’... you should make them work, through mandatory voluntary work, or something similar. I think that is a condition that can be applied to it, because so many volunteers are also needed everywhere in healthcare. (Interviewee 11).

In the Netherlands it is pretty well cared for. If you can’t figure it out, there is always somewhere where you can knock on the door and where you can get help. And if you refuse to do anything further with them, let’s say, and do not keep your promises, there will also be a point where they can say: ‘now you are on your own, find your own way’. (Interviewee 47).

The second line of reasoning is also in favour of reciprocating for income support, but tries to ‘soften’ this reciprocity. In this line of reasoning, people on benefits are generally willing to participate but not always (mentally) capable of doing so. Therefore, they should be motivated in the right way to discover their talents; their unique way to contribute to society. Beneficiaries capable of doing something useful in return should, however, be able to choose – among a wide range of possibilities – the way in which they want to be active. Respondents using this line of reasoning emphasized the importance of empowerment, free choice and trust in people. Municipalities should help people to participate, especially those with disabilities, and try to find different ways to engage isolated people in social life.

Sanctioning is considered neither necessary nor effective, and definitely not the right way to motivate people. Instead, the government should trust them (cf. trust experiments). In this line of reasoning, people aim to avoid humiliation and being instructed what to do by the government. Some of the obligations that are currently in place are considered unfair and too demanding. Real jobs with real wages are replaced by ‘voluntary’ activities of beneficiaries who fulfil their obligation to reciprocate by performing socially useful activities. According to this view, the goal of participation lies in obtaining better health and well-being for the beneficiaries. This may lead to work, but it is not the primary focus.

If people are not going to do it, then I would look at what people want to do, and why they are not doing it now. I think that would be more efficient than immediately imposing sanctions. There is always a story behind it, I think. Otherwise you will not be able to get the right approach and will be less likely to look at what really suits someone. (Interviewee 46)

If there are people who may be fully capable of doing something in return, but simply do not want to because they can't be bothered, something must be done to ensure that those people do it anyway. But I think sanctions and penalties sound very harsh. That sounds like you're going to cut people's benefits You have to offer people opportunities, but I don't think you should impose obligations. Those possibilities may sound a little bit like obligations though. (Interviewee 8)

6.5.5 Feasibility: Affordability and bureaucracy

When respondents formed their opinions about the two policy proposals presented, they generally took into account their feasibility. Whereas the radical proposal of a UBI is considered problematic in terms of financial feasibility, the *Tegenprestatie* suffers from administrative and bureaucratic feasibility issues.

The idea that a UBI would prevent poverty and improve the living conditions of those in lower socio-economic positions had broad support among our respondents. However, many doubted that a UBI is the most efficient way to reach this policy goal. Some feared that it could disadvantage those actually dependent on social benefits, as they receive potentially larger transfers under the existing systems of means-tested benefits. Others argued that it is probably much easier to increase the level of benefits and wages. Including those on middle and higher incomes seems not to be effective. Respondents further believed that a UBI is simply too costly, or that spending resources on the rich is a waste. A significant group of respondents raised the issue of financial feasibility almost immediately: they wanted to know who is going to pay for a UBI and feared it would be likely to require tax increases. Providing an additional income to people who are able to make money themselves, which is then clawed back in

terms of taxes, makes a UBI an instrument that is simply ‘moving cash around’. Although people were relatively positive about the fact that bureaucracy could potentially be reduced, and that the social security system would become more transparent, most respondents did not perceive a UBI as a worthy alternative to existing means-tested and contributory benefits, or as an adequate instrument for income redistribution. Most respondents generally did not see how income inequality would be reduced by a UBI.

Me too? So even if I go to work, would I also get this basic income? So I would be very well off? That sounds nice, I want to participate. Who will pay for it? (Interviewee 9).

In the end, people look at what is the bottom line, what do they get at the end of the month, and whether that is via 1000 euros unemployment benefit, or via a 1000 euros basic income, they know what they have to pay. That’s how I have to make ends meet. So for me it doesn’t matter much what the bottom line is. Only it might become easier or harder to get it. You need to visit fewer agencies to get to that net income. (Interviewee 47).

In the context of the *Tegenprestatie*, the administrative feasibility in particular was discussed. Almost all respondents mentioned being to some extent in favour of a tailor-made arrangement for the *Tegenprestatie*. They argued that people in different circumstances should be treated differently and that the rules should be flexible. Civil servants should be trusted to exercise their best judgement and not follow rules to the last detail. Even those who argued that the government should draw clear lines, struggled with the fact that there are always personal reasons to provide exemptions for obligations. However, there was some doubt expressed as to whether the government or civil servants are capable of providing these tailor-made arrangements. The government was perceived as bureaucratic and inflexible and not capable of providing good guidance to those in need of a job.

Doing something in return? I don’t think that is wrong. Only, you have to dare to think about tailor-made approaches. That is something we also find difficult in this country, we are very much like ... everything must be the same for everyone. (Interviewee 41).

You should not say, ‘yes, but those are the rules!’ No, you must look at what is ... why do you have those rules, what is the purpose? The goal is to get people to work. And as before, at that moment ... you see, okay, this rule makes no sense for this person, but actually it does make sense for another person, because it helps them positively. Yes, please omit that rule ... And that makes it so difficult, because you live in a country with so many differences. For one, this rule is relevant, and for the other, the rule is not relevant. You can’t ... of course I also understand that you can’t say yes, yes for you, not for you, not for you. You have to have a framework there, but if, as ... as a municipality there, as a government, you have to ensure that, yes, the rules do help. And don’t work against it. (Interviewee 43).

6.6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In light of the ongoing debates about the Dutch social policy system, our analysis aimed at identifying which types of arguments Dutch citizens spontaneously use to support (or oppose) a UBI and work conditionality. Our findings suggest that the arguments articulated in our in-depth interviews can be interpreted from two theoretical perspectives. First, we find that respondents make frequent use of some of the deservingness criteria recognized in relevant literature (van Oorschot et al., 2017; see Chapter 4). Deservingness theory argues that people express solidarity with those they consider to be deserving, while the undeserving are excluded from help, benefits or support. People consider five basic deservingness criteria, namely: control, attitude, reciprocity, identity and need (the so-called CARIN criteria, see van Oorschot, et al., 2017; Laenen, 2020). The criterion of control refers to someone's personal responsibility for getting into or out of the situation in which help or support is needed. Attitude refers to the behaviour of the potential beneficiary, who should be grateful and docile. Reciprocity entails people having to 'do something in return', which could be in the past or in the future. The identity criterion refers to how close we feel to others and to what extent we can identify with them. Lastly, the criterion of need refers to the extent to which the beneficiary is in (financial) need of support.

In our in-depth interviews, explicit references were mostly made to the deservingness criteria of control, need and reciprocity. With regard to the first, many respondents distinguished between those who are considered 'unable' to reciprocate, and those who are 'able' to get out of their situation. The latter are judged undeserving and should – to a certain extent – be 'forced' to participate. The criterion of need was mostly used by our respondents to defend their support for a UBI. They consider beneficiaries are in need of more support, as they regard the level of benefits as too low or because they want to provide the need for basic security. Many respondents felt that beneficiaries lack societal recognition and respect, as they are 'in way over their head'. This argument also includes those with 'junk jobs' or jobs that are not worthwhile and who are struggling to make ends meet. In these terms, a UBI could be a substitute for gainful employment in which citizens can find social recognition and dignity. Excluding 'the rich' from help, support or solidarity seems a logical consequence of this reasoning, as they are not needy and are already appreciated by society. The criterion of reciprocity is used to argue that a UBI violates the principle of contribution, since those who put more effort into their work should be better off than those who do not contribute through work. Respondents often indicated that people – if they are able – should do something (useful) in return. The value attached to work, the strong work ethic (see Chapter 2), can be considered as part of this argument: people cannot get 'something for nothing' and they have a duty to engage in work. In this way, support for conditionality in terms of job seeking, training and social obligations triumphs over the unconditionality of a UBI. In their strong reliance on the deservingness criteria, it seems that our respondents generally reject the idea of equal redistribution, in the sense that everybody should receive the same. In this way, they also reject an important

foundation of a UBI as unconditional in terms of assessed financial need, a person's present or past contributions, and/or their willingness to work.

While deservingness arguments relate to the characteristics of welfare recipients (e.g. their contributions, needs and work willingness), the second group of arguments refers to the characteristics of welfare schemes in terms of their administrative and financial feasibility (see also Laenen et al., 2019). In the case of a UBI, most respondents seemed to agree that its implementation would be too costly; a luxury that Dutch society cannot afford. People are not very keen on the tax increases a UBI would most probably require. Some respondents even argued that it is a somewhat pointless exercise: why should we go through the administrative hassle of levying taxes on citizens, just to give it back to them in the form of a UBI? In addition, the universality of a basic income is considered problematic from an administrative and financial perspective, as spending scarce public resources on the (very) rich is seen as wasteful. With regard to the workfare-oriented *Tegenprestatie* scheme, the arguments revolve more around the administrative feasibility of the scheme. Even respondents who applauded the strict enforcement of work-related obligations in the welfare system often questioned its feasibility in policy practice, as it requires a hugely complex and expensive control apparatus.

To conclude, by revealing the popular arguments used by citizens, our analysis will be valuable for political actors who seek to mobilize support for (or opposition to) the real-world implementation of a UBI. In addition, the findings represent a useful starting point for future survey researchers to examine the arguments underlying opinions about a UBI and work conditionality in the broader Dutch population, as was carried out in the 1995 WOS. However, in future the answer categories could be based on the arguments raised 'bottom-up' in our in-depth interviews. Survey research could therefore benefit from the richness of the arguments given by the respondents in our study, and could use the results of our analysis to further investigate whether background characteristics – such as education level, subjective income or political affiliation – influence people's arguments for supporting a UBI.

We need to bear in mind, however, that as shown by Zimmermann and colleagues (2020), the types of argumentation people use to defend their positions towards social policies such as a UBI are country specific. Therefore, our warning to (comparative) survey researchers is that the arguments we found should not be copied blindly, as they might be specific to the Netherlands. More qualitative research in this field is needed across multiple countries.

NOTES

¹ Most of our respondents were, however, not aware of the ongoing experiment – probably because it was not reported much in Dutch popular media. Therefore, the experiment itself has had little impact on respondents' opinions and their underlying arguments.

² CPB (1992). *Nederland in drievoud: een scenariostudie van de Nederlandse economie 1990-2015*; WRR (1981). *Vernieuwingen in het arbeidsbestel*; and WRR (1985). *Waarborgen voor zekerheid: een nieuw stelsel van sociale zekerheid in hoofdlijnen*.

³ Originally written as a collection of articles for the online journalism platform *De Correspondent*, it was published in English in 2016 with the title: *Utopia for Realists: The Case for a Universal Basic Income, Open Borders, and a 15-hour Workweek* (source: <https://thecorrespondent.com/utopia-for-realists>).

⁴ Some also argue, however, that the Dutch state pension (*Algemene Ouderdomswet, AOW*) can be seen as a group-targeted form of basic income, because it grants pension rights to all Dutch residents on reaching the age of 65, regardless of their work history (Groot & van der Veen, 2000; Vanderborght, 2004).

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The study of public attitudes towards the welfare state, and towards welfare policies more specifically, has grown considerably during the last decades. Despite the increasing scholarly attention in these areas, there are still some research gaps that need to be addressed, as illustrated in Chapter 1.

This final chapter presents the main contributions of the dissertation, bringing together the findings of the empirical chapters and illustrating how they offer both a conceptual and a methodological contribution to the field of policy attitudes and, more in general, to welfare state attitudes research. At the same time, the chapter brings in a reflection on the limitations of the studies included in the dissertation, and proposes some insights for future research that can be done in this field. Finally, the chapter also reflects on the policy implications of the study of public attitudes towards activation policies, particularly in a context of global crisis that we are experiencing since the COVID-19 outbreak.

7.1 DISENTANGLING THE EXPLANATORY MECHANISMS FOR ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEMANDING ACTIVATION

A first area of contribution of the dissertation covers the explanatory mechanisms behind public attitudes towards demanding activation policies and how to disentangle them. An important research gap, illustrated in Chapter 1 and previously pointed out earlier by Knotz (2021), relates to the apparent contradiction regarding the explanations behind public support for activation policies. The contradiction refers to how self-interest and ideological drivers of support for these specific policies are closely related.

Much of the welfare attitudes research states that individuals should be in favour of policies that protect them from several social risks, whether they are ‘old risks’ (i.e., typical of the industrial era) such as income or job loss, or ‘new social risks’, typical of the post-industrial period, such as having obsolete skills (Bonoli, 2006; Häusermann, 2012; Taylor-Gooby, 2004). Policy support is explained by motivations of rational interest, which makes individuals more prone to support welfare policies when they are in a disadvantaged position on the labour market, such as being unemployed or pensioner. In addition to this rational-oriented, self-interest explanations, traditional welfare attitudes research identifies as mechanism of support for welfare policies individuals’ ideological beliefs, which coherently guide personal opinions about state responsibility for welfare provisions (Jaeger, 2006b).

Demanding activation policies are a good example of policies that challenge the relation between rational self-interest and ideological beliefs, given that individuals with a higher likelihood of benefitting from these policies have, at the same time, a specific ideological background that make them strong supporters of benefit conditionality (Knotz, 2021). It is pivotal to disentangle these mechanisms to understand what drives people to support demanding activation policies.

The empirical analysis of the theoretical mechanisms underlying demanding activation policies at the individual level has highlighted that self-interest and ideological beliefs are interconnected. An observation can be made here: many empirical studies had already pointed out that if we control for ideologies in a model explaining welfare attitudes, the effect of some socio-economic variables (such as income or education) on attitudes towards a certain policy, or set of policies, is reduced or even cancelled out (see for instance Achterberg et al., 2014). What previous research has largely failed to address is to discern these effects and to quantify them. The methodology used in Chapter 2 provides a valuable resource to pursue the aim of disentangling self-interest mechanisms from ideological beliefs, and to study the effect of each of the background variables on support for demanding ALMPs.

Controlling for the most relevant ideologies connected to the ideological roots of demanding activation policies allows to determine which individual's socio-economic characteristics have a direct effect on policy support, meaning that these effects can be considered as 'pure' self-interest effects. Those who are currently unemployed are the largest group against demanding activation, a finding that it is not per se innovative, however the empirical analyses (especially Chapter 2 and 4) have demonstrated that this is a self-interest effect, as including ideological mechanisms still leaves the effect of being out of the labour market significant. Obligations that need to be respected in order to receive unemployment benefit, and strict penalties for non-compliance with these obligations are definitely seen as going against the interest of the unemployed.

From the analysis of Chapter 2, we can derive some general expectations on the composition of supporters and opponents of demanding ALMPs. The former will be most likely composed by individuals with a specific ideological profile, that is, with strong authoritarian values, work ethic values, anti-egalitarians and right-wing oriented. While these values are more represented among people with lower levels of education, it is also true that being less educated does not automatically lead to be in favour of these demanding activation policies. On the other hand, higher income groups seem to be very much in favour of severe punishments for the non-compliant welfare beneficiaries. Regarding the opponents of demanding ALMPs, a large share of them is formed by people who are currently or have been formerly unemployed, and who feel at risk of being out from the labour market. Next to these group, the highly educated people with anti-authoritarian ideologies are expected to line up with the contestant of demanding policies.

The Belgian context has thus contributed to build the answer to the question raised by Knotz (2020, p. 3): “Is it the better-off and securely employed [*that form the support base of welfare conditionality*], or is it rather parts of the already disadvantaged working class that seem to be going against their own economic self-interest?”. The first, immediate, answer we could give to this question is: the financially better-off definitely constitute a large part of the advocates of demanding activation, which can be flanked by those from the less educated working class with strong authoritarian values. Those who feel to be at risk of unemployment – even if they are not unemployed now – are likely to oppose welfare conditionality.

What has been observed among the Belgian population opens up the doors to new questions that future research could address: for example, do self-interest and ideological beliefs mechanisms work also in a cross-national setting? Currently, a rich cross-national dataset on public attitudes towards these specific policies, which investigates individuals’ characteristics in depth, is missing in the field of welfare attitudes research. Using European data, Chapter 4 has tried to address this point by including some of the relevant ideological predictors as mediators between socio-economic characteristics and support for demanding activation. While the results partly confirm what found at the national level, as the effect of education on demanding ALMPs support is mostly mediated by ideological factors, an important limitation of this comparative analysis needs to be acknowledged. In this study, it was not possible to include a set of well-defined ideological values (such as authoritarianism, or work ethic values) because European Social Survey data did not allow for that. For this reason, different direct effects of socio-economic variables on attitudes are observed compared to the analysis in the Belgian context.

Future research should pay more attention in this direction, starting from the need to collect more data on ideologies and welfare attitudes on a European scale.

7.1.1 Self-interest: How to measure it?

In addition to the ‘self-interest versus ideologies’ paradox, another intrinsic contradiction related to demanding activation policies refers to how these policies are interpreted by their beneficiaries. The self-interest explanation postulates that the groups at risk of being out of the labour market should be in favour of policies that help them to get back to paid employment as quickly as possible, because these measures would provide them with useful instruments to be economically independent. However, the particular nature of demanding activation policies, which attach strict conditions to benefits, makes it difficult for the beneficiaries to see the advantages that these policies could bring them. While the benefit of enabling activation measures, which in many cases are tailored to each person’s needs, is clearer for recipients, possible or actual beneficiaries of demanding policies – here, in particular, we refer to the unemployed – should be more sceptical about attaching strict conditions to be eligible for

unemployment benefits, and about severe punishment measures in case of noncompliance (Fossati, 2018; Knotz, 2021).

Both Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 have offered some insights regarding the measurement of self-interest, providing a major methodological contribution to the field of welfare attitudes, and that should be further developed in future research. As raised by Roosma (2016), research on welfare attitudes has sometimes seen the effect of education as a self-interest issue and sometimes as something that determines ideological values (see for instance Andreß & Heien, 2001; Calzada, Gómez-Garrido, Moreno, & Moreno-Fuentes, 2014). What has been shown in Chapter 2 is that education, but also occupational status, need to be conceived as factors that mostly act as socialization factors, namely that they socialize individuals into specific ideological worldviews which are in turn responsible for shaping egalitarian or authoritarian values. In the case of attitudes towards demanding policies, our research suggests that the only occupational status that ‘matters’ in terms of self-interest is unemployment status, namely, being among those that are in close contact with such measures.

As a matter of fact, if more traditional interpretations of the self-interest theory builds on objective indicators such as being a current welfare recipient, a less-investigated interpretation of self-interest is that based on subjective perceptions. Individuals’ perceptions regarding their labour market situation, more specifically the perceptions of being at risk of unemployment,¹ are closely linked to the ‘real’ risk of unemployment – something that Rehm (2016) measures with the occupational unemployment rates, which are the national unemployment rates calculated for each occupation. Chapter 4 provides support for the fact that these perceptions exert an effect on policy attitudes independently from the objective indicators of risk.

In sum, the empirical research of this dissertation stresses that we need to be careful when interpreting the effects of variables that are widely considered as self-interest factors on policy support. It is possible that a ‘pure’ self-interest effect is observed when looking at indicators that are linked to the nature of the policies analysed (for instance, in this case, unemployment status when looking at policies regarding the unemployed). When individuals do not have at first-hand experience with those policies on which they are asked to express support, socio-economic characteristics are likely to shape individuals’ attitudes, acting thus as ideological socializer.

An issue still remains. The question on how citizens – and particularly, the recipients – interpret policy measures cannot be solved, however, only by means of quantitative analysis. Despite the relevant distinctions made throughout the chapters, more research is needed on how demanding activation policies are interpreted by recipients, and confront them with the interpretations given by those who are not expected to benefit from these policies. This type of qualitative research would be even more fruitful if carried out in several countries, to also compare the possible different interpretations given in contexts with different policy legacy, such as the Nordic countries versus Mediterranean countries.

7.1.2 Specify the ideological frameworks: Policy paradigm and stereotypes of welfare recipients

Despite their strong, well-proven explanatory power, self-interest and ideological motivations are not the unique frameworks to unfold the ideological base of policy support. In this regard, two further steps have been taken to integrate previous research on the role of deservingness perceptions and to expand on the meaning of policy paradigm for welfare attitudes research.

On the one hand, the idea that individuals' support for welfare policies targeted to a specific needy group is connected to deservingness opinions about this specific group – in addition to self-interest and ideological beliefs – is now consolidated in welfare attitudes. A few studies have recently demonstrated that attaching importance to one or more of the CARIN criteria (namely, control, attitude, reciprocity, identity and need) leads individuals to support policies targeted to that specific group of reference (see, for instance, Laenen, 2018).

On the other hand, despite being a relevant factor for explaining welfare support, deservingness reasoning cannot entirely unfold public support (Laenen, 2020). Other explanations should be found when analysing support for welfare policies, which go beyond the ideologies linked to socio-economic factors (see Chapter 2 and, partly, Chapter 4). Chapter 3 throws light on the embeddedness of attitudes towards demanding ALMPs in the policy paradigm on which they were built, bringing a novel approach into the field of welfare attitudes. Demanding activation policies, as relatively new reforms, have different impacts on different social groups, because they draw cross-cutting lines dividing opponents and supporters of these reforms and the 'old' ones (Häusermann, 2012). Moreover, these policies are built on specific policy discourses that tightly link social rights with social obligations, and that depict the category of welfare recipients (the unemployed, in this case), with a specific shape.

In light of these considerations, it is necessary to look at other ideological frameworks that explain support for demanding ALMPs. Chapter 3 has provided useful insights on how specific beliefs regarding the cause of unemployment, and distributive justice beliefs are significant determinants of people's support for demanding ALMPs. While these beliefs should be kept separated from the other more traditional ideological beliefs and from deservingness considerations regarding the benefit recipients, it is also true that these three frameworks – in addition to self-interest mechanisms – are interconnected. These links between the different ideological mechanisms should be further investigated when studying welfare attitudes, ideally using advanced methodologies (such as structural equation modelling) that are able to estimate the separate and the mediated effects of these explanations on the outcome of interest.

7.1.3 Support for demanding activation policies: How to measure it?

The strand of welfare attitudes research dedicated to the study of specific policy attitudes is increasingly growing and earlier research has remarkably highlighted the multidimensionality of activation policies in general (of which demanding and enabling are only two ‘ideal-typical’ sides) and of demanding ALMPs more specifically (Bonoli, 2013; Fossati, 2018). From the policy side, demanding ALMPs have different characterising elements: Knotz (2018a) for instance, measures how conditional unemployment benefits are on the basis of the availability requisites, job-search requisites and sanction rules. From the public opinion side, to fully grasp support for these policies, we would need a large set of questions covering all these aspects. The study by Fossati (2018) is a leading example of how multidimensionality of attitudes towards demanding ALMPs can be operationalised. She uses an index constructed with four items that cover opinions on sanctions, self-reliance of the unemployed and individuals’ willingness to make concessions.

Both the national (BNES) and the European surveys (ESS) provided multiple questions on support for demanding ALMPs, which allowed to develop a multi-item instrument covering different measures of welfare conditionality. In the Belgian dataset, the items cover opinions on a range of obligations recipients should do in order to keep their benefits, and on the sanctions and control by the government. In the European Social Survey dataset, the multi-item indicator measures support for demanding ALMPs by asking to what extent people would cut unemployment benefits if the unemployed do not accept a job (*availability requirement*) and do not accept to perform unpaid job in return for the benefit.

This multidimensional measurement constitutes a more solid tool for the analysis of public opinion compared to a single-item indicator, and should be taken as a starting point for future research in the field of policy support. Given the complexity of activation policies (see Chapter 1), it is important to have a detailed view on what people think about the specific aspects of these policies. Moreover, the data used in the dissertation did not allow to measure support for enabling activation policies, a limitation that researchers should take into serious consideration when developing new surveys.

7.2 COMBINATION OF ATTITUDES: SUPPORT FOR WELFARE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

A second area of contribution in which the dissertation provides more insights is on how and why the public combines attitudes towards demanding activation policies and support for welfare rights. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 were able, by means of two different approaches (quantitative and qualitative respectively), to provide a comprehensive framework for the analysis of diverse aspects of the welfare states which have been largely studied independently from each other. The study of these aspects – support for welfare rights and for work obligations – is particularly relevant nowadays, where proposals

of a universal basic income occupy a large role in public debates on the future of the welfare states. A basic income given to everyone would mean to remove any conditions attached to benefits, something that might be seen as equal to give “free money to everyone” (Bregman, 2013). The UBI would allow, among other things, to face the risk of generalised unemployment due to work automation (Busemeyer & Sahm, 2021) and it can be administratively less costly than means-tested schemes (Van Parijs, 2004).

Regardless the objectives that a UBI would achieve (not the focus here), UBI proposals build on the idea that a benefit would be given to everyone unconditionally, an idea that stands at the opposite of the conditionality principle, on which demanding ALMPs are founded. The widespread support for basic income that emerges from recent European studies (Roosma & van Oorschot, 2020; Vlandas, 2021) casts a few doubts on the possibility that people would want a completely unconditional benefit while at the same time being enthusiast about having highly conditional benefits in place. These doubts have been more recently translated into empirical questions on the relationship between individuals’ opinions on welfare rights and on welfare obligations (Laenen & Meuleman, 2019; Roosma & Jeene, 2017), which have been tested in specific European contexts.

The findings of these studies have demonstrated that there is a negative relation between opinions on rights and obligations, that is, higher support for welfare rights correlates with lower support for welfare obligations. However, other empirical evidence from the same contexts has also brought to the forefront the idea that there might be other associations that are hidden ‘below the surface’ of a linear approach. This is the starting point of Chapter 5, in which the relation between support for rights and obligations for a specific group of welfare recipients, the unemployed, is studied with an innovative approach – latent class analysis – which allows to reveal how Europeans articulate their opinions on these two aspects of the welfare states. Innovative because, compared to previous studies, the profiles that appear from the analysis are not defined a priori by the researchers, but they emerge from the data.

Yet, this approach should not be considered exclusively *data driven*, as it draws on specific streams of literature that have been only seldom linked: one on policy attitudes and one on populist criticism towards the welfare state. Bringing together these two lines of research makes it possible to understand the support base of demanding ALMPs, as support for conditional unemployment benefits does not necessarily mean to be against welfare rights for the unemployed.

While the analysis of Chapter 5 highlights how people combine opinions on rights and obligations for the unemployed, Chapter 6 investigates the reasons people might use to justify their combinations of opinions. Despite being based on opinions on a broader policy proposal (namely, a UBI), the findings can contribute to both quantitative and qualitative researchers dealing with welfare attitudes under several aspects. First, these argumentations might help welfare scholars to build theoretical expectations about the potential combinations of preferred support one could expect to find in a population. Knowing that support for basic income does not mean that individuals support *all* the dimensions that basic

income entails is particularly relevant for the emerging area of quantitative studies on the multidimensionality of basic income support (see, for instance, Rincon, 2021; Stadelmann-Steffen & Dermont, 2019), because it could anticipate what aspects people will like more and what will like less or will reject altogether.

Second, investigating the argumentations used by respondents sheds lights on the meanings respondents give to the items asked in surveys. A noteworthy constraint when analysing survey items is that there is always the possibility that respondent gives a particular meaning to that question, even unique. As much as this shortcoming can be overcome by means of statistical techniques – such as measurement equivalence, which ensures that the concept of interest is equally measured across the groups of analysis – there could always be a margin of error. In the first place, the interpretation of the questions given by the researcher who developed the survey cannot always coincide with all the respondents' interpretations.

While some argumentations used by the Dutch citizens might be context specific – such as the strong work ethic, typical of the Dutch population – it might be well possible that some of them are generalizable to the population of other European countries. The idea that citizens like some aspects of a policy and not others is being increasingly investigated using vignette experiments, which allow the researchers to manipulate the characteristics of a policy (for instance, a complex policy such the basic income) and see what kind of reactions generate among the respondents. These new techniques should be used even more in the field of welfare attitudes.

Chapter 6 constitutes in this regard an important methodological contribution to the world of welfare and policy attitudes, by analysing public attitudes in a qualitative perspective. Qualitative research is still underdeveloped in the field of welfare attitudes, for multiple reasons: among others, researchers should invest much time and resources to collect a reasonable number of interviews, or to reach many citizens willing to be interviewed. As already mentioned, the limited use of qualitative analysis in welfare attitudes prevent researchers from understanding more in depth what citizens think about complex issues such as labour market policies, or whether they understood the question correctly, and so on. Something that is difficult to grasp with large-scale surveys. The interviews collected in the Netherlands have suggested us that people give different arguments to support their opinions: thus, even if in a survey two respondents show the same response pattern, this does not mean that they have interpreted the question exactly in the same way.

7.3 THE ROLE OF THE CONTEXT: A FOCUS ON INSTITUTIONS

Policy attitudes are shaped not only by individual characteristics, but also by contextual factors, categorised into three main families: economic-related factors, cultural factors and institutional design.

The empirical chapters have provided pieces of evidence regarding how these context-related characteristics are linked (or not) to support for the activating welfare state, although they did not analyse their effects on policy support all at once.

In particular, Chapter 4 has found no evidence for a link between support for demanding activation and the economic context – in terms of unemployment – or with the cultural climate – in terms of public perceptions of the unemployed. These findings do not necessarily mean that country-level characteristics do not play an important part in explaining cross-national variations in support for demanding policies. First, it might be that these factors act in combination and thus it is more complex to understand and explain patterns of attitudes. For instance, the institutional design of policies might be relevant in countries where it receives more public attention, and/or it has received attention at the time of the survey. In this respect, it could be fruitful to explore in the future the role of additional contextual factors that might influence support for demanding ALMPs. One important aspect on which current research has not focused in particular is the role of political orientation of the government at the moment when the surveys were carried out, and the relevance given to these policies in public debates, for instance on social media. A particular case has been, for instance, that of Italy, in which the debate on the so-called *basic income* (reddito di cittadinanza²) was more about whether it was legitimate for some ‘undeserving’ recipients – mainly, the unemployed – to have money without working and not searching for a job.

Second, it is also true that demanding activation measures are relatively new in the panorama of European welfare states, thus they are not yet institutionalised as other policy areas, such as unemployment policies. The fact that they are less established might explain why we do not observe an effect of the national level of strictness of unemployment policies on support for demanding ALMPs in Europe (see Chapter 4). While this finding confirms previous research stating that relatively new policies do not influence public opinion (Raven, Achterberg, van der Veen, & Yerkes, 2011), we have observed that a more direct measure of conditionality does explain individuals’ choice for a preferred combination of rights and obligations (Chapter 5). This finding suggests that researchers need to cautiously measure *welfare institutions* in case of these new policies, because citizens might be less aware of how strict the general system is, but more familiar with how accessible unemployment benefits are (or how difficult is to access them).

The fact that the institutional design is a relevant factor explaining differences in policy support is also evident at the national level. The Belgian welfare state has only very recently been through an intensification of sanctions and controls for the unemployed, and a tightening of criteria for receiving unemployment benefits. The fact these measures have been in the eye of the news, might have contributed to give more visibility to the reforms, with the consequence that public opinion has had the time to reflect on these issues. An internal regional division – also in terms of controls by the

government – indicates that the institutional design cannot be ignored even when studying new policies that do not have a long legacy.

7.4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS: THE FUTURE OF THE ACTIVATING WELFARE STATE FROM A PUBLIC OPINION PERSPECTIVE

The adoption of tough measures for the unemployed over the last three decades in the majority of European countries has provided political parties with an opportunity for potential credit-claiming that might be less costly than for other policies (Bonoli, 2013). However, as already seen in Chapter 1, the larger part of public support does not come from the actual recipients, but from that part of the electorate that is well-protected against potential labour market risks. In this context, an analysis of the micro-level mechanisms of support for this type of policies is very much needed to shed light on whether other characteristics are relevant in determining individual support for demanding activation, but also to understand under which conditions this support might change.

Despite the fact that only an apparently small part of the electorate is clearly against demanding policies, and this part might not be a source of concern for political parties seeking popular support, we cannot ignore that there are some major divides within the population; divides that might lead to social tensions and make it more difficult for policymakers to build activation strategies that are widely accepted, and at the same time that are effective in achieving their aims.

European policymakers should pay particular attention to the fact that support for demanding activation policies is highly eradicated in ideological worldviews that are specifically associated with structural characteristics. Given that demanding activation policies are based on a specific conception of individual as self-responsible, they will be supported by those part of the electorate with strong believes in authority, law, work ethic and individual responsibility, values that are likely to envision the unemployed as lazy and unwilling to reciprocate the support. By tightening the rules to be eligible for unemployment benefits, and the sanctions for noncompliance, policymakers risk to strengthen negative stereotypes about the unemployed, and consequentially putting this group in jeopardy of stigmatization.

A national case that has recently raised public debates on this potential stigmatization is the Flemish government's proposal of obliging the long-term unemployed (i.e., unemployed for more than two years) to do community service for a maximum of two days per week, with a remuneration of 1.30 euros for each hour worked.³ Some scholars have raised concerns about both the effectiveness of this proposal for the employability of the unemployed, as well as argued that it prevents the unemployed to choose the job they want to do (Marx, 2021; Nicaise, 2021).

Debates about the (dis)advantages of this proposal go hand in hand with public opinion debates. In countries with a fragmented political landscape, where governments are based on coalitions – as in the

case of Belgium – it is crucial to study from which social groups support is more likely to come, because these groups represent the support base of the welfare state altogether. Chapter 2 offers a glimpse of how the public will welcome the mentioned proposal: more than half of the Belgian population (in 2014) agrees that community service should be mandatory for people with a minimum income benefit. This might mean that a large part of the electorate is likely to support the recent ‘activation’ proposal, despite all the concerns regarding whether it is really helpful for the unemployed. An important task for those involved in policymaking decisions is to analyse both the effectiveness of such policies, and how these policies are seen by the public, the beneficiaries in particular. Measures such as imposing community service as a form of ‘pay back’ for the goodwill of the welfare state may (even unwittingly) reinforce the idea the unemployed are ungrateful, and if they do not want to accept a proper job they need to at least do something useful for the community.

Another important finding of the empirical analysis of the dissertation should warn policy makers about the (im)possibility to cut unemployment benefits, and to impose too strict sanctions without raising popular discontent. European population might be largely in favour of benefit conditionality and sanctions, without necessarily believing that the unemployed should not be helped at all. At the same time, only in a few countries citizens express agreement with punishing the unemployed very strongly. The findings that public opinion towards these complex policy issues are more articulated than imagined should call for an attentive analysis of the pros and cons of adopting a certain measure.

Thus, even if demanding activation policies are widely supported by a wealthy majority, this does not mean that increasing the amount of sanctions, or imposing more rules – as in the case of community work – will surely lead to increasing policy support. The public might find these sanctions and rules too harsh, and by consequence, they will withdraw their support. These dynamics can be explored with more detailed analyses, for instance by means of survey experiments, in which support for varying policy characteristics can be measured while controlling for a set of other variables.

The outbreak of Coronavirus at the beginning of 2020 has started to question both the usefulness of such demanding policies, as well as the potential of a proposal such as a UBI to overcome the devastating economic effects of the crisis (De Wispelaere & Morales, 2021; Weisstanner, 2022). A very relevant question recently raised by Lehweß-Litzmann is: “How could it be justified to activate the unemployed if job-losses were unforeseeable and random and new jobs remain unavailable for the time being?” (Lehweß-Litzmann, 2020). Given that the dissertation situates in the field of welfare attitudes, the interest here falls more on how we could expect the public to react to such unexpected phenomenon: will individuals be less supportive of demanding policies if there are no (or less) jobs available? Will they be more in favour of an unconditional basic income given with no conditions attached? Or will they react more defensively and try to ‘protect’ what they have by raising more deservingness arguments

in favour of punishment? To provide an answer to all these questions goes beyond the scope of the dissertation, which could only suggest some hypotheses worthy of investigation in future research.

Despite the comparative analysis of Chapter 4 seems to suggest no significant effect of national unemployment level on support for demanding policies, it cannot be excluded that a sudden and very steep increase in unemployment, in combination with a financial crisis due to imposed activity closures, might trigger a radical change of opinion regarding benefit sanctions. For instance, a person who used to have a job and, from one day to the next, is left at home by the employer, might be reluctant to accept any other type of job because of a risk to incur in benefit sanctions if she or he does not accept a job after a certain period.

On the same line of reasoning, most of the survey questions ask respondents to imagine a hypothetical, very general situation, in which an *unemployed person* should accept a job or do something to avoid sanctions. Yet, it has not been investigated whether respondents' opinion would change if they are 'forced' to think about themselves in the situation of accepting a job that they would not want to do. In this direction, some evidence has been found regarding the differential support for demanding policies for those that are considered more deserving of welfare support (see Chapter 4 and 5). What emerges from the European Social Survey is that respondents' support for demanding measures significantly changes if asked about an unemployed person with specific characteristics. This means that if a person is considered in need of help, public support for demanding policies is likely to decrease, and this might decrease dramatically in times of crisis.

Finally, recent studies have demonstrated that support for UBI has increased during the pandemic, but maintaining underlying divides between support groups (Nettle, Johnson, Johnson, & Saxe, 2021; Weisstanner, 2022). It remains an open question on whether support for UBI will remain high in the next months, and whether supporting coalitions are likely to change also based on the current development of the pandemic.

Surely, public opinion studies should continue to investigate the question of support for demanding ALMPs, how this support relates to support for basic income, and how support for all these policies might have changed or will change in a situation that is largely different from that before the outbreak.

NOTES

¹ Since the focus of the dissertation is on attitudes towards specific labour market policies, here perceptions of risk refer to the labour market risk particularly, namely the risk of unemployment.

² The Italian 'reddito di cittadinanza' does not actually have the characteristics of an ideal-typical basic income, for at least three characteristics: first, it is not universal, but only individuals with certain characteristics can apply for it; second, it is not given on individual basis, but on the basis of the household income; second, it is not unconditional, given that it requires the recipients to be actively looking for job, or in any case to comply with some obligations.

³ The proposal comes into effect in 2023.

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Appendix Chapter 2

Table A2.1 Measurement model for authoritarianism, egalitarianism and work ethic (standardised parameters)

Code	Label	Factor loadings			Item intercepts
		Authoritarianism Par. Est. (S.E.)	Egalitarianism Par. Est. (S.E.)	Work ethic Par. Est. (S.E.)	Par. Est. (S.E.)
Q64_4	Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked people	.446 (.029)			3.678 (.076)
Q64_5	Obedience and respect for authority are the two most important virtues children have to learn	.682 (.025)			3.960 (.090)
Q64_6	Laws should become stricter because too much freedom is not good for people	.667 (.026)			2.682 (.038)
Q52_1	The differences between classes ought to be smaller than they are at present		.633 (.030)		4.421 (.106)
Q52_2	The differences between the high and the low incomes should stay as they are		-.576 (.035)		2.309 (.034)
Q52_3	The government should reduce income differentials		.673 (.030)		3.508 (.072)
Q58_1	To completely develop your talents, you need a job			.404 (.032)	4.048 (.095)
Q58_2	It is embarrassing to receive money without having had to work for it			.400 (.031)	3.088 (.053)
Q58_3	Work is a duty towards society			.628 (.027)	4.612 (.121)
Q58_4	Work should always come first, even if it means less leisure time			.688 (.025)	2.928 (.047)

Note. N = 1737. Results are weighted; this model does not include political self-orientation scale (Q77). $\chi^2 = 113.625$; df = 32; RMSEA = .038 ; CFI = .958; TLI = .941; SRMR = .030; estimator = MLR.

Table A2.2 Descriptive statistics of the independent variables used in the model (unweighted)

	Min	Max	Mean – %	S.D.	N ^a
<i>Socio-economic variables</i>					
Age	18	93	50.0	18.2	1737
Female	0	1	50.9		1737
Educational level					
Low secondary	0	1	28.3		1737
Higher secondary	0	1	33.4		1737
Tertiary education	0	1	38.3		1737
Occupational status					
White collar	0	1	35.8		1737
Blue collar	0	1	17.4		1737
Self-employed	0	1	4.9		1737
Retired	0	1	22.5		1737
Unemployed	0	1	4.7		1737
Other	0	1	14.7		1737
Income					
1st quartile	0	1	21.0		1737
2nd quartile	0	1	23.3		1737
3rd quartile	0	1	23.6		1737
4th quartile	0	1	21.7		1737
Missing	0	1	10.4		1737
Region (Francophone Belgium)	0	1	37.0		1737
Experience of unemployment	0	1	19.3		1737
<i>Ideological beliefs</i>					
Q64_4: Get rid of the immoral people to solve social problems	1	5	3.62	1.00	1726
Q64_5: Children learn obedience and respect for authority	1	5	3.83	0.99	1734
Q64_6: Laws should become stricter	1	5	2.94	1.10	1728
Q52_1: Differences between classes ought to be smaller	1	5	3.90	0.88	1733
Q52_2: Maintain income differentials	1	5	2.27	0.97	1727
Q52_3: Government should reduce income differentials	1	5	3.60	1.03	1725
Q58_1: You need a job to develop your talents	1	5	3.93	0.97	1737
Q58_2: Embarrassing to receive money without having worked for it	1	5	3.41	1.11	1731
Q58_3: Work is a duty towards society	1	5	4.01	0.87	1735
Q58_4: Work should always come first	1	5	3.27	1.12	1734
Q77: Left-right scale	0	10	5.10	2.10	1682

^a N is based on the individuals included in the model for which information on the specific indicators is available. Note that the total N for the model is higher because Mplus uses Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) when dealing with missing cases.

Appendix Chapter 3

Table A3.1 Question wordings and standardized factor loadings for work ethic and authoritarianism

	Work ethic	Authoritarianism
Q58_1 - To completely develop your talents, you need a job	0.413	
Q58_2 - It is embarrassing to receive money without having had to work for it	0.406	
Q58_3 - Work is a duty towards society	0.633	
Q58_4 - Work should always come first, even if it means less leisure time	0.685	
Q64_4 - Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked people.		0.460
Q64_5 - Obedience and respect for authority are the two most important virtues children have to learn.		0.679
Q64_6 - Laws should become stricter because too much freedom is not good for people.		0.668
Correlation	0.577	

Note: N=1900. Fit of the measurement model for work ethic and authoritarianism: $\chi^2=46.218$; df= 13; CFI= 0.977; TLI= 0.962; RMSEA= 0.037; SRMR= 0.023.

Appendix Chapter 4

Table A4.1 Descriptive statistics of individual-level variables (unweighted)

	ESS code main questionnaire	Min	Max	Mean (S.D.) /Proportion
Experimental conditions	E20			
Someone UE		0	1	25.5
UE in their 50s		0	1	24.5
UE aged 20-25		0	1	25.0
UE single parent, 3 years old child		0	1	25.0
Age	F3			49.72 (18.59)
Gender (female)	F2	0	1	52.4
Educational level	F15			
Lower secondary		0	1	27.0
Upper secondary		0	1	42.8
Tertiary		0	1	30.2
Occupational status	F17			
Higher service class		0	1	4.2
White-collar workers		0	1	23.6
Blue-collar workers		0	1	15.8
Self-employed		0	1	8.1
Unemployed		0	1	4.9
Student		0	1	7.7
Retired		0	1	25.6
Other		0	1	10.1
Equivalentised income	F41			
1 st quartile				20.4
2 nd quartile				21.9
3 rd quartile				21.1
4 th quartile				21.3
Missing				15.3
Receiving benefits (yes)	F40	0	1	5.1
Risk of being unemployed	E39			
Not (very) likely		0	1	62.5
(Very) likely		0	1	16.2
Not working				21.3
Employment status of partner	F45			
Partner in paid job		0	1	
Partner not in paid job		0	1	21.9
Partner unemployed		0	1	2.1
No partner		0	1	40.8
Negative perceptions about the unemployed	E16	1	5	3.01 (1.1)
Left-right political orientation	B26	0	10	5.10 (2.19)
Egalitarianism	Mean of E1 and E2	1	5	3.73 (0.82)

Table A4.2 Descriptive statistics of country-level variables

Country	Unemployment rate	'At risk' of unemployment rate	Negative stereotypes of the unemployed	Real GDP growth rate	Strictness of activation requirements
	Source: Eurostat	Source: ESS	Source: ESS	Source: Eurostat	Source: OECD
AT	6,1	0.177	2.221	2.0	2,89
BE	7,9	0.248	2.228	1.3	2,92
CH	5,1	0.204	2.41	2.0	3,53
CZ	4	0.337	2.258	2.5	2,33
DE	4,2	0.168	2.037	2.2	3,14
EE	7	0.358	2.026	3.2	4,14
ES	19,7	0.497	2.685	3.0	2,67
FI	9	0.253	2.259	2.8	2,72
FR	10,1	0.387	2.138	1.1	3,18
GB	4,9	0.234	2.496	1.7	3,61
HU	5,1	0.173	2.317	2.1	2,06
IE	8,6	0.323	2.331	2.0	2,78
IS	3,1	0.152	2.342	6.3	3,06
IT	11,9	0.385	3.035	1.3	2,94
LT	8,1	0.404	2.030	2.5	3
NL	6,1	0.261	2.3775	2.2	3,43
NO	4,8	0.181	2.804	1.1	3,06
PL	6,2	0.266	2.776	3.1	3,08
PT	11,5	0.301	2.583	2.0	4,08
SE	7,1	0.169	2.512	2.1	3,36
SI	8,1	0.403	2.886	3.2	4

Table A4.3 Measurement parameters for the latent factor 'Support for demanding activation' (multilevel confirmatory factor analysis)

	Factor loading	95% C.I.	Residual variance	95% C.I.
Within level				
Lower paid	0.786	[0.779; 0.794]	0.382	[0.369; 0.394]
Less education	0.828	[0.819; 0.835]	0.315	[0.302; 0.330]
Unpaid job	0.537	[0.529; 0.545]	0.711	[0.702; 0.720]
Between level				
Lower paid	0.986	[0.925; 1.000]	0.027	[0.000; 0.143]
Less education	0.969	[0.892; 0.996]	0.060	[0.008; 0.199]
Unpaid job	0.819	[0.581; 0.933]	0.328	[0.130; 0.657]

Note: N = 38,067; fully standardized parameters. Estimator = Bayes; Posterior predictive p-value = 0.366; 95% confidence interval = [-15.995; 19.787]. The following model fit indices are obtained with MLR estimator: Chi²= 2.534; RMSEA = 0.003; CFI = 1.000; TLI = 0.999.

Table A4.4 Multilevel structural equation model explaining attitudes towards demanding activation of the unemployed (N = 37,199 in 21 countries).

	Total effect		
	Std. Est.	<i>p</i>	95% CI
<i>Individual-level variables</i>			
Conditions (ref. someone UE)			
UE in their 50s			
UE aged 20-25			
UE single parent with 3 yr old child			
Age	0.028	*	[0.000; 0.002]
Gender (ref. male)	0.028	*	[0.004; 0.043]
Educational level (ref. lower secondary)			
Upper secondary	-0.047	*	[-0.064; -0.013]
Tertiary	-0.167	*	[-0.167; -0.108]
Occupational status (ref. white-collar workers)			
High service class	-0.033		[-0.076; 0.023]
Blue-collar workers	0.012		[-0.023; 0.042]
Self-employed	0.077	*	[0.024; 0.102]
Unemployed	-0.184	*	[-0.203; -0.096]
Student	-0.088	*	[-0.120; -0.025]
Retired	0.049	*	[0.000; 0.080]
Other	0.006		[-0.034; 0.045]
Equivalised income (ref. 1 st quartile)			
2 nd quartile	-0.041	*	[-0.062; -0.004]
3 rd quartile	-0.019		[-0.047; 0.014]
4 th quartile	0.008		[-0.025; 0.038]
Missing	0.006		[-0.029; 0.038]
Receiving benefits	-0.216	*	[-0.226; -0.129]
Risk of being unemployed (ref. not likely)			
(Very) likely	-0.126	*	[-0.133; -0.075]
Not working	-0.046	*	[-0.067; -0.008]
Employment status of partner (ref. in paid job)			
Partner not in paid job	-0.015		[-0.042; 0.017]
Partner unemployed	-0.141	*	[-0.183; -0.048]
No partner	-0.076	*	[-0.086; -0.039]
<i>Country-level variable</i>			
Unemployment rate	0.342		[-0.015; 0.079]

Note: * = One-sided $p < 0.025$. Total effects are the sum of direct effects and the indirect effects running through the mediators (negative stereotypes of the unemployed, political orientation and egalitarianism at the at the within-level; negative stereotypes about the unemployed and 'at risk' rate at the between-level).

Table A4.5 Multilevel structural equation model explaining attitudes towards demanding activation of the unemployed, between-level variables (N = 37,199 in 21 countries).

	Negative stereotypes of the unemployed			'At risk' rate			Support for demanding ALMPs (direct effect)			Total indirect effect		
	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.	St. Est.	<i>p</i>	C.I.
Unemployment rate	-0.076		[-0.632; 0.530]	0.801	*	[0.456; 0.944]	0.412		[-0.508; 1.161]	-0.003		[-0.067; 0.066]
Strictness of activation requirements							0.121		[-0.319; 0.537]			
Negative stereotypes of the unemployed							-0.120		[-0.668; 0.370]			
'At risk' rate							-0.049		[-0.862; 0.803]			
GDP growth							0.017		[-0.421; 0.478]			
<i>R</i> ² between-level							0.402					

Note: * = One-sided $p < 0.025$. The total indirect effect is the sum of the effects of unemployment rate on support for demanding ALMPs through negative stereotypes about the unemployed and 'at risk' rate.

Appendix Chapter 5

Table A5.1 Country means of the items.

	Government responsibility: standard of living unemployed	Obligations: less paid job	Obligations: lower education job	Obligations: perform unpaid work
Austria	6.66	1.14	1.19	1.33
Belgium	6.31	1.18	1.17	1.32
Switzerland	6.15	1.31	1.36	1.52
Czech Republic	6.57	1.20	1.15	1.40
Germany	6.03	0.93	1.07	1.11
Estonia	6.59	1.02	1.10	0.97
Spain	7.74	1.63	1.72	1.68
Finland	7.19	1.30	1.53	0.93
France	6.17	1.13	1.09	1.18
United Kingdom	5.87	1.31	1.51	1.66
Hungary	6.14	1.37	1.32	1.23
Ireland	6.54	1.21	1.29	1.48
Iceland	7.58	1.25	1.39	1.40
Italy	7.66	2.02	2.13	1.91
Lithuania	7.16	0.92	1.00	1.12
Netherlands	6.38	1.26	1.41	1.44
Norway	7.35	1.72	1.87	1.82
Poland	6.05	1.72	1.69	1.85
Portugal	7.14	1.52	1.65	1.60
Sweden	6.96	1.46	1.64	1.46
Slovenia	6.87	1.96	1.91	1.78

Note: Design weights are applied.

Table A5.2 Class sizes, means, thresholds and conditional probabilities of the four-class solution (N = 38,959; no clusters specified).

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Class size	0.36300	0.21277	0.21188	0.21235
Welfare rights UE	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	6.629	6.336	6.511	7.374
Obligations: less paid job	Probabilities	Probabilities	Probabilities	Probabilities
Keep all their benefit	0.145	0.039	0.043	0.875
Lose a small part	0.773	0.217	0.078	0.091
Lose about half	0.069	0.652	0.093	0.018
Lose all their benefit	0.014	0.092	0.786	0.016
Obligations: lower education	Probabilities	Probabilities	Probabilities	Probabilities
Keep all their benefit	0.129	0.049	0.029	0.838
Lose a small part	0.779	0.144	0.034	0.107
Lose about half	0.066	0.708	0.052	0.028
Lose all their benefit	0.026	0.099	0.885	0.027
Obligations: unpaid work	Probabilities	Probabilities	Probabilities	Probabilities
Keep all their benefit	0.205	0.128	0.139	0.704
Lose a small part	0.489	0.188	0.086	0.190
Lose about half	0.202	0.431	0.100	0.057
Lose all their benefit	0.104	0.253	0.675	0.049

Table A5.3 Descriptive statistics of country-level variables.

Country	Net replacement rate (60 months)	Unemployment benefits access rate
Source	OECD	Otto & van Oorschot
Year	2016	2013
Austria	51	2.76
Belgium	43	1.69
Switzerland	-5	1.31
Czech Republic	0	0.51
Germany	17	2.00
Estonia	0	0.76
Spain	0	0.87
Finland	23	2.19
France	24	1.35
United Kingdom	13	0.48
Hungary	0	0.68
Ireland	29	1.48
Iceland	0	1.31
Italy	0	1.15
Lithuania	0	0.66
Netherlands	0	1.04
Norway	0	1.23
Poland	0	0.25
Portugal	0	0.44
Sweden	0	0.96
Slovenia	0	0.58

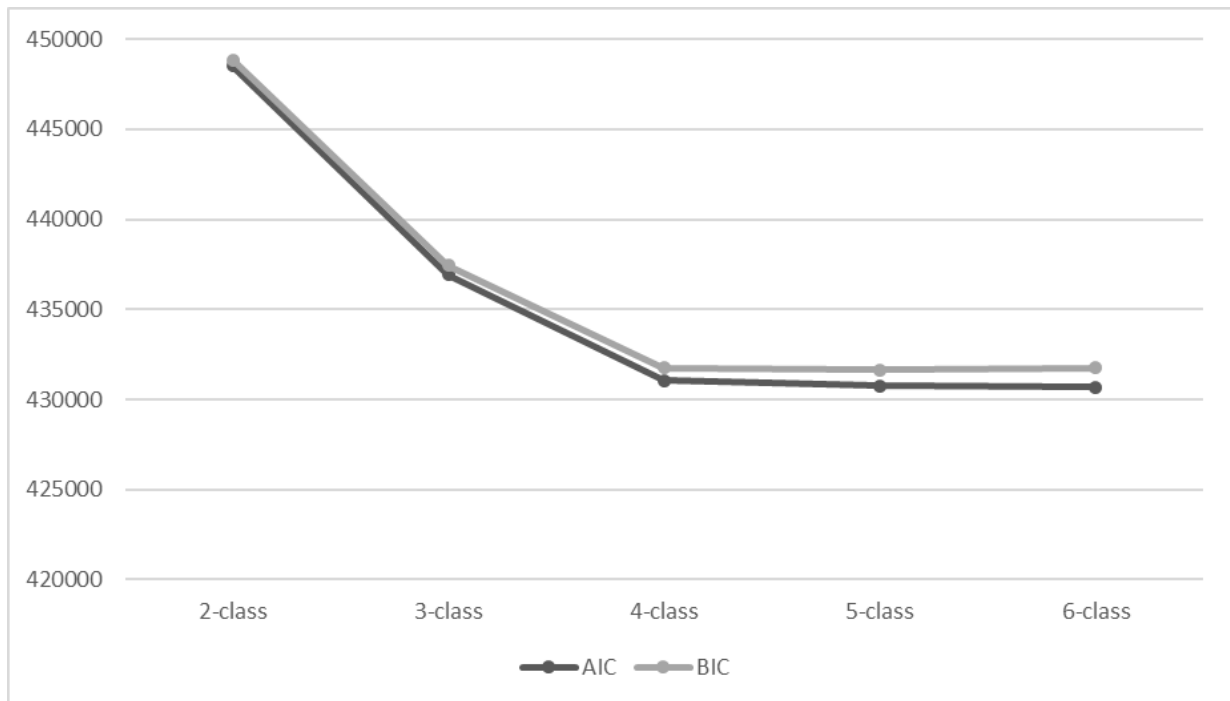


Figure A5.4 Elbow plot for the latent class solutions

Note: AIC = Akaike Information Criterion; BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion.

Appendix Chapter 6

Table A6.1 Public support for UBI and work-related conditionality in the Netherlands, 1993 - 2016.

Data source	Support for UBI	Support for work-related conditionality
Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (1993)	In the newspapers and on television, there is talk of the implementation of a basic income. This means that in the future all working and non-working individuals receive a fixed amount (of 600 Dutch guilder per month) from the government. Someone without work is not obliged to search for a paid job, and because of the basic income many of the existing social security schemes can be abolished.	Another possibility is that all Dutch adults younger than 65 are forced to work. Someone who is unemployed or disabled and cannot find a job on its own will get a job from the government in which he or she performs work that is useful for society. In return, he or she receives the minimum wage. People who refuse the job offer, do not get any benefits from the government. Only severely sick people are not forced to work.
Welfare Opinions Survey (1995)	In the newspapers and on television there is talk of the implementation of a basic income. This means that in the future all Dutch people, workers and non-workers, will receive a fixed amount from the government, which is just enough to get by. Those who work complement this amount with a salary. Those who do not work are not obliged to search for paid work. Because of the basic income many of the existing social security schemes will become obsolete.	Another possibility is that all Dutch adults younger than 65 are forced to work. Someone who is unemployed or disabled and cannot find a job on its own will get a job from the government in which he or she performs work that is useful for society. In return, he or she receives the minimum wage. People who refuse the job offer, do not get any benefits from the government. Only severely sick people are not forced to work.
Eurobarometer 56.1 (2001)	The government should provide everyone with a guaranteed basic income.	The unemployed should be forced to take a job quickly, even if it is not as good as their previous job.
	(strongly) in favour 19.0%	(strongly) in favour 59.0%
	no opinion 31.0%	no opinion 20.4%
	(strongly) against 49.9%	strongly against 23.9%
	(strongly) agree 70.1%	(strongly) agree 81.7%
	neither agree, nor disagree 14.7%	neither agree, nor disagree 8.8%
	(strongly) disagree 15.1%	(strongly) disagree 9.5%

Table A6.1 (continued).

Data source	Support for UBI	Support for work-related conditionality
European Social Survey (2016)	Some countries are currently talking about (strongly) in favour 46.7% introducing a basic income scheme. A basic no opinion 4.9% income scheme includes all of the following: (1) (strongly) against 48.4% the government pays everyone a monthly income to cover essential living costs; (2) it replaces many other social benefits; (3) the purpose is to guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living; (4) everyone receives the same amount regardless of whether or not they are working; (5) people also keep the money they earn from work or other sources; and (6) this scheme is paid for by taxes.	Imagine someone who is unemployed and lose all UB 16.1% looking for work. This person was previously lose about half of 21.6% working but lost their job and is now receiving UB unemployment benefit. What should happen to a lose small part of 45.0% person's unemployment benefit (UB) if this UB person turns down a job because it pays a lot less keep all UB 17.3% than what they earned previously?

Table A6.2 Overview of respondents' characteristics.

Interviewee ID	Year of Interview	Neighbourhood	Age	Gender	Political left-right self-placement (0 – 10)*	Subjective income (4 cat.)**	Education (3 cat.)***
1	2018	De Blaak	66	Male	6	Enough	High
2	2018	De Blaak	39	Female	7	Enough	High (univ)
3	2018	De Blaak	65	Female	5	More than enough	High
4	2018	Wandelbos Noord	44	Female	4	Enough	High
5	2018	Wandelbos Noord	45	Female	3	Not enough	Low
6	2018	Wandelbos Noord	56	Female	6	Just enough	Middle
7	2018	Bouwmeester	25	Male	4	More than enough	Middle
8	2018	Bouwmeester	23	Female	4	Just enough	Middle
9	2018	Wandelbos Noord	56	Male	5	More than enough	Middle
10	2018	Wandelbos Noord	41	Male	7	Enough	Middle
11	2018	Wandelbos Noord	37	Female	7	More than enough	High
12	2018	Wandelbos Noord	50	Male	6	More than enough	Low
13	2018	Wandelbos Noord	56	Male	5	Not enough	Middle
14	2018	Wandelbos Noord	70	Female	5	Enough	Low
15	2018	Wandelbos Noord	32	Male	4	More than enough	Middle
16	2018	Wandelbos Noord	59	Male	5	More than enough	Low
17	2018	Wandelbos Noord	67	Male	5	More than enough	Middle
18	2018	Wandelbos Noord	48	Male	4	Just enough	High (univ)
19	2018	Wandelbos Noord	74	Female	5	Refuse to answer	Middle
20	2018	Wandelbos Noord	78	Female	5	Enough	Middle
21	2018	De Blaak	51	Female	5	Just enough	High
22	2018	De Blaak	55	Female	5	More than enough	Middle
23	2018	De Blaak	68	Male	4	More than enough	High
24	2018	De Blaak	64	Male	4	Enough	High (univ)
25	2018	De Blaak	35	Female	3	Just enough	Middle
26	2018	De Blaak	68	Female	5	More than enough	High
27	2018	Bouwmeester	54	Female	5	More than enough	Low
28	2018	Bouwmeester	39	Female	3	Enough	High
29	2018	Bouwmeester	63	Female	2	Just enough	Middle

Table A6.2 (continued)

Interviewee ID	Year of Interview	Neighbourhood	Age	Gender	Political left-right self-placement (0 – 10)*	Subjective income (4 cat.)**	Education (3 cat.)***
30	2018	Bouwmeester	57	Female	Don't know	More than enough	Middle
31	2018	Bouwmeester	53	Female	7	More than enough	Middle
32	2018	De Blaak	53	Male	NA	NA	NA
33	2018	De Blaak	64	Female	NA	NA	NA
34	2018	De Blaak	76	Female	NA	NA	NA
35	2018	Bouwmeester	63	Female	5	More than enough	High (univ)
36	2018	Bouwmeester	48	Male	7	More than enough	Middle
37	2018	Bouwmeester	68	Female	3	More than enough	Middle
38	2019	Jeruzalem	59	Female	2	More than enough	High
39	2019	Jeruzalem	39	Female	3	Enough	High (univ)
40	2019	Jeruzalem	64	Male	3	More than enough	High (univ)
41	2019	Tivoli	68	Male	1	More than enough	High (univ)
42	2019	Tivoli	55	Male	4	More than enough	High
43	2019	Tivoli	40	Male	5	Enough	High
44	2019	Tivoli	39	Male	7	More than enough	High (univ)
45	2019	Tivoli	63	Female	NA	NA	NA
46	2019	Tivoli	56	Female	3	More than enough	High (univ)
47	2019	Jeruzalem	41	Male	7	Enough	High
48	2019	Jeruzalem	31	Male	7	More than enough	High (univ)
49	2019	Jeruzalem	50	Female	4	Enough	High

Note: Background characteristics questions were surveyed at the end of the interview and were stated as follows:

* Political affiliation: We would like to know what your political position is. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is far left and 10 is far right: where would you place yourself?

** Subjective income: Which of the following statements best describes your current situation, taking into account the total income you currently have? We have / I have 1) More than enough, we can easily save; 2) Enough and live without difficulties; 3) Just enough to make ends meet; 4) Not have enough and regularly have difficulties to make ends meet

*** Education: What is your highest completed education? The answers were categorized in three categories: 1) Lower education (primary education, lower vocational education, high school - middle level) 2) Middle level education (high school – higher level, secondary vocational education), 3) Higher level education (higher professional education and university education (separately indicated)).

Doctoraten in de Sociale Wetenschappen en in de Sociale en
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DUTCH SUMMARY

Tijdens hun ‘gouden eeuw’, van de Tweede Wereldoorlog tot de jaren ‘70, fungeerden verzorgingsstaten als vangnetten: hun primaire taak was om tegemoet te komen aan de behoeften van individuen in het geval dat ze onvoldoende werden bevredigd door de markt, zoals in geval van werkloosheid. De economische en maatschappelijke druk die volgde op deze periode leidde geleidelijk tot een transformatie van het sociale beleid van Europese landen, wat resulteerde in een verschuiving naar de conceptualisatie van de verzorgingsstaat als een trampoline in plaats van als een vangnet. De analogie verwijst naar het feit dat het hoofddoel van de verzorgingsstaten (ook wel activerende verzorgingsstaten genoemd) is om de arbeidsparticipatie van individuen te bevorderen: hoewel ze hun functie van bescherming tegen inkomensverlies niet hebben opgegeven, wordt bescherming alleen onder bepaalde voorwaarden gegarandeerd. Als een persoon kan werken en momenteel niet deelneemt aan de arbeidsmarkt, grijpt de staat in om deze persoon te ondersteunen bij de zo snel mogelijke herintreding op de arbeidsmarkt.

Wetenschappers op het gebied van sociaal beleid noemen deze transformatie vaak de activeringsdraai of –verschuiving, die wordt gekenmerkt door de implementatie van het zogenaamde actief arbeidsmarktbeleid (AAMB). Twee hoofdbenaderingen vallen onder de noemer van AAMB: *faciliterend*, dat maatregelen omvat die gericht zijn op de verbetering van de inzetbaarheid van de werkloze (zoals opleidingsprogramma’s en mobiliteitsbeurzen); en *sanctionerend*, wat voortbouwt op de idee dat sociale uitkeringen afhankelijk zijn van bepaalde (meestal strikte) criteria. Sancties zijn in dit geval voorzien als uitkeringsgerechtigden bepaalde verplichtingen niet nakomen, zoals solliciteren of een jobaanbieding aanvaarden. Ondanks verschillen in het niveau en de ernst van de sancties, is de sanctionerend aanpak in de meeste Europese landen geïmplementeerd.

Er wordt meer dan ooit onderzoek gedaan naar de houding van de verzorgingsstaat om inzicht te krijgen in de mate waarin Europese burgers een sanctionerend activeringsbeleid steunen, maar er zijn nog enkele lacunes die moeten worden opgevuld. Huidig onderzoek levert bijvoorbeeld geen duidelijk bewijs waarom bepaalde sociale klassen sanctionerend AAMB ondersteunen, of het is omdat ze geen voorwaarden willen verbinden aan hun uitkeringen, of omdat ze er specifieke ideologieën op na houden die aansluiten bij de principes achter dit beleid.

In deze context van activering, heeft de opkomst van publieke debatten rond het beleidsvoorstel van een universeel basisinkomen (UBI) het voorwaardelijkheidsbeginsel waarop sanctionerend AAMB is gebaseerd, op de een of andere manier in vraag gesteld. Zoals getheoretiseerd door bepaalde academici zou een UBI alle burgers eenzelfde bedrag garanderen, zonder enige

voorwaarden. De laatste jaren wordt dit idee van “gratis geld” steeds concreter, versterkt door de potentiële economische risico’s die voortvloeien uit technologische ontwikkelingen (zoals de automatisering van werk) en de COVID-19 pandemie.

In dit scenario situeert dit doctoraatsproject zich met twee hoofddoelstellingen. Het eerste doel is inzicht te krijgen in de achterliggende mechanismen van steun voor sanctionerend AAMB in Europa: wat zorgt ervoor dat mensen dit beleid meer steunen? In hoeverre beïnvloedt de economische en institutionele context waarin mensen leven het draagvlak? De tweede doelstelling is om te bestuderen hoe burgers houdingen combineren ten opzichte van de twee onderling samenhangende aspecten van de activerende verzorgingsstaat, namelijk sociale rechten (onvoorwaardelijkheid) en werkverplichtingen (voorwaardelijkheid). Is het mogelijk om zeer voorwaardelijke uitkeringen en onvoorwaardelijke rechten tegelijk te ondersteunen? Door gebruik te maken van zowel kwantitatieve als kwalitatieve databronnen en onderzoekstechnieken, wil dit project antwoorden bieden op deze vragen en een meer omvattende beschouwing geven van publieke steun voor voorwaardelijkheid en onvoorwaardelijkheid in hedendaagse Europese samenlevingen.

Uit verschillende bevindingen blijkt dat steun voor sanctionerend AAMB sterk verband houdt met specifieke ideologieën waarop dit beleid is gebaseerd, ideologieën die individuen ontwikkelen wanneer zij in bepaalde sociale omgevingen worden opgenomen. Potentiële of daadwerkelijke begunstigen van het beleid zullen zich echter waarschijnlijk verzetten tegen sanctionerend activeringsbeleid, omdat ze dit zien als een vorm van beperking van hun sociale rechten.

Wat betreft de combinatie van steun, gaat het proefschrift uit van de idee dat publieke attitudes complex en genuanceerd zijn: grote steun voor sociale rechten gaat niet noodzakelijk hand in hand met verzet tegen werkverplichtingen, en vice versa. Verschillende argumenten worden door mensen gebruikt om combinaties van steun voor voorwaardelijkheid en onvoorwaardelijkheid te rechtvaardigen.

Deze bevindingen zijn met name relevant in de huidige tijd, waarin de studie van de sociale legitimiteit van bepaald beleid centraal staat in publieke debatten over beleidsimplementatie.

