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Brexit, division and individual solidarity: what future for Europe?

Evidence from eight European countries

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For the Special Issue of American Behavioral Scientist Guest Edited by Maria Grasso and Christian Lahusen on “European Solidarity at a Crossroads? Altruistic Attitudes and Political Behaviours in Comparative European Perspective”

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Abstract

Solidarity amongst member states, one of the European Union's fundamental values, has recently been put to the test by numerous and diverse challenges that have led to a "crisis of solidarity". In the UK, the decision in June 2016 by the electorate to vote to leave the European Union revealed the British dimension of this crisis. However, little is known about the perceptions of other European citizens on this decision, even though it has contributed towards shaping the present and future of the European Union. In this paper, using a representative survey conducted in eight European Countries including the UK, we aim to explore and contrast cross-country evidence on individual perceptions on Brexit. We then aim to establish if an association exists between opinions on Brexit and individual solidaristic attitudes and concrete behaviours of survey respondents. The complex relationship between opinions on this event and expressions of solidarity at different levels (local, national, European and beyond) will be explored using multivariate regression techniques as well as the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of survey respondents.

Keywords: Brexit, solidarity, free movement, globalisation

Short author biographies

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Introduction

The decision by the British electorate for their country to leave the European Union has made the 23rd June 2016 an historic day for the EU and its citizens. The resistance of the UK in devolving its authority to supranational European institutions has however for some time led to the relationship between the UK and Europe being characterised as an ‘awkward’ one (Buller, 1995, 2000; Wilks, 1996; George, 1995, 1998). More broadly, the departure of a key-economic, financial and political partner might suggest a failure in the capacity of the EU to maintain the cohesion of its members.

Of course, the decision by the UK to leave the European Union can be understood through the prism of a range of factors. For example, those economic factors that have impacted a section of the population that has experienced labour market fragility and factors that shape the broader European context where fears over immigration have created opportunities for populist and reactionary political forces, movements and parties. Nevertheless, amidst the context of the UK leaving the EU we should also recognise that cohesion among member states was a key ingredient in the new, post-national, federalist polity that the founding fathers of what is today the European Union advocated for in the aftermath of the Second World War (Spinelli and Rossi, [1944] 2006) and underpinned the deepening and widening of the EU-making process (Nugent, 2017). This bi-dimensional path of European Union development, that is its widening borders (expanding the membership to new countries and peoples) and its deepening competences (through overtaking authority on new policy fields) was crucial for the Union’s aim to promote solidarity among states as provided for by its founding treaty (cfr. Art. 3 TEU). The vote in favour of Brexit (as the United Kingdom’s exit from the EU has been popularly labelled), thus presents a potentially seismic effect on this bi-dimensional development of transnational solidarity. Nevertheless so far, most of the analyses of the (soon to become abundant) literature on Brexit has neglected solidarity, and has omitted investigation of the motivations for Brexit outside of the UK. Therefore, the insights offered by this paper could not be more relevant for contemporary political analysis and are intended to broaden the scope of the current literature on Brexit by illuminating those factors which catalyse hostility towards the European Union across different European contexts, while shedding light on the status of individual solidaristic attitudes and practices among the peoples that form the European demos.

Although Brexit could be seen to represent a deep wound for the European project, it is surprising that most of the political science literature on Brexit has not shown much interest in discussing Brexit from a comparative perspective across Europe. Neither have scholars developed studies to examine whether the same dynamics that have driven a pro-Brexit decision among UK citizens are to be found among other European citizens/voters. In this paper we shall contribute towards closing this gap by focusing on the perception of Brexit across the European demos, and by discussing the types of attitudes and practices that connect European citizens.

Just as the EU referendum in the UK was characterised by polarisation, our analysis of survey data across eight countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Switzerland,

and the United Kingdom) confirms a similar degree of polarisation across European countries. Furthermore, our multivariate analysis reveals that the likelihood of a person to vote for Brexit depends on a very similar set of factors scholars have pointed to when seeking explanations for the pro-Brexit vote in the UK (Clarke et al, 2017). Essentially, pro-Brexiters share the same set of socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics across Europe: they are likely to be citizens with lower levels of education and less stable jobs, they fear immigrants, who are perceived as competitors in the labour market and challengers to their ‘established’ (group and individual) identity. Therefore, they oppose the EU for its freedom of movement policies that are considered as opening the door to foreigners as intruders.

However, our analysis also considers two additional aspects that were not included in earlier studies: the role that solidarity as altruistic behaviours and values play in the Brexit issue and the role of the economic context in determining the willingness of respondents to support Brexit or to oppose it. Thus, our findings offer a unique and empirically based analysis that builds upon a recognition in recent research that Brexit, although embedded within the idiosyncrasies of the British context, is reflective of a broader phenomenon, one of polarisation that can be identified across a Europe where there is a intensifying opposition between those who have benefitted from globalisation and those who feel it has left them behind (Kriesi et al, 2006, Hobolt, 2016). In fact, we argue that there is a salient segment of society, across a number of member states who perceive the European Union as a threat to their well-being rather than an asset.

The paper unfolds as follows: we first introduce our hypotheses, we then discuss the data and methods, we illustrate the findings, and we then discuss the most salient implications of them. Finally, we present our concluding remarks.

Hypotheses

Given the watershed nature of the event, Brexit has attracted scholars’ attention and a growing literature is emerging that has scrutinized the reasons for the decision by the British people to vote to leave the European Union (Hobolt, 2016; Antonucci et al, 2017; Curtice, 2017; Henderson et al, 2017; Hopkin, 2017; Thompson, 2017; Goodwin et al, 2018). The evidence thus far suggests that pro-Brexit voters have been motivated by a mixture of identity and utilitarian-based fears provoked by the cornerstone no-border policy of the EU. British people felt their identity was being threatened by the increased immigration which was a natural by-product of the free movement of people, one of the ‘four freedoms’ of the EU single market that sits alongside the freedoms of capital, goods and services. On the other hand, people in the UK felt that increased immigration not only represented a threat for their identity but also for their pocket, as immigrants would compete for their jobs. Hence, the literature points to fear of immigration and more clearly xenophobic attitudes as the most salient predictor of the Brexit vote, along with specific individual features that usually make people more exposed to fear of diversity than others (such as a lower level of education, or insecure employment) (McLaren, 2002; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005; Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017; Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 2017). Furthermore, extant studies have shown

that those sections of society with a disposition of support towards European integration express a strong sense of attachment towards the European Union as a community and polity.

We assume that similar patterns of perception vis-à-vis immigrants and the European Union will apply across Europe, and therefore we form our first hypothesis (H1) *that respondents that will likely opt for Brexit will belong to those social classes that pay the highest costs of globalization (the so called 'losers' from globalization)*. Therefore those who fear the potential competition emanating from the opening up of countries and markets, usually people with lower educational resources and a precarious employment history, would likely support Brexit. Furthermore, we add the hypothesis (H2) *that populations within countries with a poor economic outlook or whose country has suffered from the 2008 economic and financial crisis are more likely to support Brexit as they feel even more exposed to the risk of competition coming from immigrants and the open EU market*. This macro-contextual economic uncertainty would increase their own perceived economic fragility. Hence, we shall control for the countries macro-economic outlook and form the further hypothesis (H3) *that the weaker the macro-economic outlook, the stronger the likelihood of its citizens to support Brexit*. Moreover, we add the hypothesis (H4) *that people with a stronger sense of attachment to the EU will likely support the UK to stay in Europe*.

Finally, given the saliency that solidarity plays in sustaining the cohesion of the European union, we shall control for it and form the hypothesis (H5) *that people that are engaged in any form of solidarity (either with their own country or with a wider focus) will likely be more inclusive and would not fear immigration*.

Data and Methodology

We use data from a nationally representative survey conducted in 2016 for the Horizon 2020 TransSOL (Transnational Solidarity at Times of Crisis) project which was undertaken in eight European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and United Kingdom). The survey, conducted by a survey organization, used demographic and geographical criteria to establish quota sampling methods (age, gender, education level and region). The unemployment rate, expressed as a percentage of the labour force, in 2016 is derived from the Labour market statistics of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The GDP growth as an annual percentage for 2016 is calculated in each country by the World Bank. Table A1 presents the descriptive statistics by country and Table A2 (see Appendix) provides further information on the variables. The final sample has 11865 observations in total.

The dependent variable, Brexit, is derived from responses to the survey question: 'Should the UK remain a member or leave the EU?' It is a binary variable and indicates if the individual supports the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. The independent variables included in the model have been identified in the literature as relevant in shaping attitudes towards EU integration and division (see, for example, Hobolt, 2016 and Clarke et al., 2017). These are: (a) individual sociodemographic characteristics (age, gender, education, being born in the country, employment status, and occupation); (b) Political values and knowledge (left-right self-placement in the political scale, political interest, and political knowledge); (c) Attitudes

and practices: attachment to the EU, solidarity practices, and attitudes towards immigration. The three solidarity practice variables are binary and indicate if survey participants have supported, in the last 12 months, the rights of other people/groups in their own country, other EU countries or third countries/non-EU countries through various forms of political actions including more contentious as well as more conventional types: attendance at a march, protest or demonstration; donated money; donated time; bought or refused to buy products; passive (paycheck) membership; active membership (volunteering). The attitudes towards immigration were proxied by two variables. Firstly, individual responses to the question: ‘Would you mind having immigrant foreign workers as neighbours?’ (Yes/No). Secondly, a ten-point bad-good scale on the perceived effect on the economy of the foreigners who had come to live in the country was used. These variables are described in detail in the Table A3 (see Appendix).

We estimate a logistic multilevel random effects model as the individual data have a hierarchical structure; the individuals are nested within eight different countries and, therefore, likely not to be independent within-country (intra-class correlation) due to macroeconomic factors. To further understand the importance of these contextual factors we include the GDP growth rate (model 5) and the national unemployment rate (model 6) as proxy indicators for the impact of the economic crisis in the different European countries (Grasso and Giugni, 2016).

Findings

We begin the findings’ section with descriptive analyses showing how the different countries score regarding the question of whether the UK should leave or remain in the EU, in other words, we consider how countries differ vis-à-vis Brexit. Table 1 shows that ‘pro-Brexiteers’ largely outweigh ‘remainers’ in Switzerland, France and Greece, while in Poland, Germany, and Denmark the vast majority of respondents would have preferred the UK to stay in the EU. In Italy and in the UK respondents are split in two, with half supporting the UK remaining in the EU and the other supporting the decision to leave. This initial descriptive overview tells us that there are various shades of perception regarding Brexit across the eight countries but which can be identified as three possible clusters: one that is clearly in favour of the idea that the UK should leave the Union, another that is clearly opposed, and a third cluster made by the UK itself and Italy in which people are evenly split between the two scenarios.

Table 1 shows also the percentage of respondents that have a strong or relatively strong attachment to the European Union. We have introduced this aspect because we believe that the perception of Brexit across Europe could also be understood by the sense of belonging that people have towards Europe: in other words, we assumed that people that supported Brexit would likely show a lack of interest or attachment to the European Union in general. In fact, Table 1 reveals a degree of consistency between those countries that host large Brexit-supporting respondents and those who host respondents with a low degree of attachment to Europe, such as Greece and Switzerland. However, the results in Table 1 unveil also an inconsistency with our assumption: France, whose respondents largely favoured

Brexit, show indeed a strong attachment to Europe (one in every two respondents feels a strong attachment to Europe), and Denmark, where respondents preferred the UK to remain in the EU, reveal a lower level of attachment to the EU.

Such a variety of positions in both the Brexit issue and the attachment to the EU as a political and social community, and the only partial consistency between them, provide some preliminary evidence encouraging our assumption that when looking for possible explanatory paths to Brexit one would need to consider not only individual (micro) variables, but also some context (macro) indicators. In fact, the varied positions in the countries vis-à-vis Brexit suggests that different contexts might lead to different perceptions of Brexit.

In this sense, Table 1 also shows some possible directions for our explanatory analysis to unfold. Firstly, apart from Switzerland (the only non-EU member country in our sample, and where preferences for Brexit could be interpreted as a logical consequence of the decision of that country not to join the EU), the other two countries that are largely pro-Brexit are France and Greece which share some relevant characteristics (along with Italy, where voters are almost equally split in two). In fact, *mutatis mutandis*, these pro-Brexit countries and the quasi-Brexit Italy, have experienced a long-lasting political institutional deadlock provoked by economic stagnation (which, in the case of Greece, has reached a stage of quasi-bankruptcy status), and, in the case of Greece and Italy, the suffering caused by uncontrollable international events such as the massive influx of refugees escaping Syria which have heavily impacted on the already strained public and private resources of the countries. While countries clearly favouring the UK to remain, that is Poland, Germany, and Denmark, did not experience anything similar to what Greece, France and Italy had to undergo: their economies did not suffer from the economic and financial crisis, hence, they benefited from cohesive societies and political-institutional stability. Therefore, we have developed an explanatory model controlling for macro-economic contextual dimensions.

Table 1

We now move to the findings from our explanatory analyses. To investigate the socio-demographic characteristics, political attitudes and behaviours that determine preferences regarding Brexit, we estimate five different models which are shown in Table A4 (see Appendix). Firstly, we estimate an ‘empty’ model (model 1), which includes only a random intercept, to observe if a contextual dimension exists. After concluding that the macroeconomic context of the country is relevant, we then include the individual and country-level characteristics. Model 2 includes socio-demographic characteristics and in model 3 we add political values, interest and knowledge. Model 4 presents our results including our main variables of interest which are EU attachment, solidarity practices and attitudes towards immigration. Models 5 and 6 include different country-level variables to account for the economic context.

Our findings are generally in line with the literature that has explored the determinants of individual preferences on Brexit using UK data (Clarke et al, 2017; Goodwin and Heath, 2016). When considering socio-demographic variables, the association between age, having a

lower level of education, being unemployed and support for Brexit is positive and significant across models (2-6). On the contrary, being female significantly reduces the likelihood of having a preference for Brexit (models 2-6). Other determinants such as being a native of the country and having a manual occupation are, as anticipated, positively and significantly associated to support for Brexit (models 2 and 3) but both factors lose their significance when attachment to the EU, solidarity practices and especially, attitudes towards immigration are introduced into the model specification (models 4-6). In consonance with similar studies on preferences towards integration, individuals that place themselves at the right end of the political spectrum (models 3-6) and are both politically interested and savvy (models 4-6) are more likely to support the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. Similarly to other scholarly studies, individual attachment to the EU is one of the main factors that shape attitudes towards European integration (Hobolt, 2016). Models 4-6 show that individuals feeling attached to the EU are significantly less likely to support the UK leaving the EU.

The connection between solidarity practices and attitudes towards European integration has not yet been explored in the literature and our results show (models 4-6) that solidarity practices towards disadvantaged groups are only significantly associated with Brexit preferences if these are undertaken within the country. Contrary to expectations, our results suggest that individuals who practice solidarity to support groups in their own country are more likely to support Brexit.

Moreover, echoing the literature (Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017), the role of attitudes towards immigration as key predictors for supporting Brexit in the UK is also confirmed in models 4, 5, and 6 across the eight European countries in our study. Our findings suggest that support for the UK leaving the EU is particular to a socially distinctive group and seems to be associated with an anti-immigration populist movement across Europe.

Finally, when including the GDP growth rate for 2016 as a country-level variable in model 5, we observe a negative and significant effect of this macroeconomic variable on support for Brexit. This indicates that populations within countries that are in a better economic situation are less likely to support Brexit. Whilst the unemployment rate variable included in model 6 has the positive expected sign, the association is not significant.

Discussion

When analysing our data what became clear across the different contexts of our study was that a favourable disposition towards voting for Brexit could be mapped on to the issue of immigration. The policy discourses surrounding the immigration in the UK have for some time been shaped by restriction and border control (Statham and Geddes, 2006; Squire, 2008; Mulvey, 2010) and more broadly capitalising on xenophobia and the fear of immigration has been a longstanding tactic of the radical right which in turn has been the subject of extant research for decades (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt and McGann, 1997; Norris, 2005; Semyonov et al, 2006). Therefore, our findings on relating to immigration not only speak to this body of

work but contribute fresh empirical data and analysis that cuts across the recently re-energised borders of Europe. Our findings indicate that immigration is a significant variable when understanding support from across Europe for the decision taken in the UK to leave the European Union. And solidarity, as an action of support for country nationals, is positively correlated with a vote for Brexit. These findings are consistent across the countries of our study and they therefore broaden the scope of existing research into the causes of Brexit and are reflective of those studies conducted in the UK that highlight the importance of immigration in understanding the Brexit vote (Goodwin and Milazzo 2017).

When we turn to the socio-demographic factors that influence support for Brexit, we can see that age, gender and education all have a clear impact on the decision of the UK to leave the European Union. Our findings suggest that age is an important factor and indeed extant research analysing the recent rise in support for right wing populist causes in the USA and Europe has suggested that support for policies, parties and issues that embody xenophobic and/or populist attitudes skew towards the older age range in society (Inglehart and Norris, 2017). In the UK more specifically, recent analysis (Ford and Goodwin, 2017) has indicated that support for Brexit has at least part of its roots in a sentiment within that section of the UK population which rejects the changes that took place in society across the last few decades, resulting in older voters, many of whom are white, nationalist and conservative and who have chosen to articulate their rejection of the more socially liberal society in which they find themselves through a vote to leave the European Union. Therefore, our findings suggest that this generational schism may be apparent across different European contexts and given the right political conditions and opportunities could manifest itself in similar ways.

Another socio-demographic factor that emerges from our findings is gender: across the countries of our study, those who support the decision to leave the European Union are predominantly male. This finding chimes with existing research that suggests support for the authoritarian or populist right trends to be concentrated among male voters (Lubbers et al, 2002). Indeed there is a growing literature which attempts to explain the gender gap in the support for what are populist and xenophobic parties and positions ranging from socio-economic explanations to explanations focused upon populist attitudes (Immerzeel et al, 2015; Harteveld et al, 2015; Spierings and Zaslove, 2015, 2017).

At the outset of this paper we outlined the broader context which forms the background to our survey, a United Kingdom specifically and a Europe more broadly that have been shaped by the global financial crisis of 2008 and the austerity policies which followed. However this contemporary economic context needs to be grounded in processes that precede the crash of 2008, processes of globalisation (Scholte, 2005) that have transformed the industrial bases of various developed countries, have resulted in a major expansion of the global labour supply (Freeman, 2015) and has created both ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ (Kriesi et al, 2006, Essletzbichler et al, 2018). What these conditions have contributed towards in some communities across Europe and beyond is a growing sense of insecurity regarding living standards, a reversal of fortune from the post-war decades of growth and security that many

had enjoyed and as a consequence what this produces is the type of support for anti-immigration campaigns and xenophobia (Inglehart and Norris, 2017).

In the analysis of our data we indeed found that poorer levels of growth in GDP were a contributing factor to increased levels of support for leaving the European Union, with those in favour of Brexit located within countries with the most sluggish growth. Moreover, in the course of our analysis we observed that the findings from Greece were at the forefront of this support and thus chime with and also contribute to existing research that has scrutinised the impact of the Eurozone crisis on the growth of Euroscepticism in Greece (Clements et al, 2014). Furthermore, our findings offer a comparative and empirical substantiation of the view that support for leaving the European Union is correlated with lower levels of education – i.e. those who are more vulnerable in labour markets (Hobolt, 2016). These findings also resonate with existing research focused upon the UK which has revealed that support for Brexit was concentrated in geographies and sections of society with high levels of poverty and low levels of skills.

Conclusion

Although the UK could often be regarded as ‘reluctant Europeans’ (Gowland and Turner, 2014), the decision by a majority of British voters to leave the EU marks the end to a long period of European integration. Such a relationship, initially binding the UK to eight other countries, had expanded over five decades to include 27 other states and hundreds of millions of people. The European Community, as it was known for many years, progressed by means of widening its geo-spatial scope and by a deepening its authority, incrementally increasing its decision-making power to the detriment of national governments. All of this stemmed from the idea that Europe would benefit from countries pooling their resources and facing common risks, and that the European demos would support such a project by developing solidarities that span across national boundaries.

What the Brexit vote, along with the electoral success of anti-European parties across Europe, tell us about the European project is that the development of the transnational solidarity necessary to entrench and accelerate political and economic infra-state solidarity remains, after many decades, a largely unlocked potential. This potential has been jeopardized by globalization and by the 2008 global financial crisis and its consequences including the approach of the EU in addressing the challenges it presented. Moreover, European solidarity has been undermined by the reluctance of European leaders to progress towards a more integrated Europe.

Our survey of citizens’ positions concerning Brexit across eight countries has revealed that there are large sections of the European population that are ready to be lured by the arguments deployed in the Leave campaign in the UK (in some countries, including an EU founding state France, this section of the population outnumbers those who oppose Brexit) and that pro-Brexit individuals are more likely to be found among those who fear Europe for its open-border policies, and consider immigrants as a threat to their economic stability and to

the integrity of their identity. Paradoxically, what is, for many, the greatest asset of the European Union, the free movement of people and transnational connections and collaborations, appears to represent to many people its most dangerous and 'dark side'. That among this latter section of populations are those with fewer educational resources and more fragile economic positions in the labour market, or those who live in countries suffering from economic stagnation, should perhaps sound as a warning to those who believe in the value of the EU as reflective of a social-democratic model of society.

Table 1. Percentages of respondents supporting Brexit; percentages of respondents expressing strong attachment to the EU

	Denmark	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Switzerland	United Kingdom	All
% of respondents supporting Brexit	41.7	60.1	41.4	59.1	50.6	24.3	67.4	50.6	49.5
% of respondents with strong attachment to the EU	41.9	53.9	57.6	37.6	53.1	73.7	29.4	45.3	48.7
N	1498	1340	1606	1507	1439	1394	1591	1490	11865

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Appendix

Table A1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Brexit supporter	11865	0.495	0.500	0	1
Age	11865	48.900	15.966	18	96
Female	11865	0.461	0.498	0	1
Education level (lower education)	11865	0.312	0.463	0	1
Unemployed	11865	0.088	0.283	0	1
Born in UK	11865	0.927	0.259	0	1
Manual	11865	0.180	0.384	0	1
Attachment towards EU	11865	0.487	0.500	0	1
Support rights inside UK	11865	0.564	0.496	0	1
Support rights in EU	11865	0.326	0.469	0	1
Support rights outside EU	11865	0.391	0.488	0	1
Bad-good effect of foreigners in home country (0-10)	11865	4.987	2.845	0	10
Would mind having immigrants/foreign workers as neighbours	11865	0.312	0.463	0	1
Left-right scale (0-10)	11865	5.138	2.601	0	10

Political knowledge	11865	0.532	0.499	0	1
Political interest	11865	0.747	0.435	0	1
Unemployment rate (%)	11865	8.821	6.067	4.1	23.5
GDP growth (%)	11865	1.487	0.842	-0.2	2.9

Table A2: Variable distributions by country

	Denmark	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Switzerland	UK	All
Brexit supporter (%)	41.7	60.1	41.4	59.1	50.6	24.3	67.4	50.6	49.5
Age	50.5	49.3	49.0	49.0	49.4	47.2	47.7	49.1	48.9
Female	42.9	45.4	46.9	46.9	48.0	47.8	45.3	45.3	46.1
Education level (Lower education)	27.8	32.1	21.5	42.7	48.3	20.6	24.7	33.1	31.2
Unemployed	7.0	5.4	3.3	24.4	11.8	8.6	6.9	3.7	8.8
Born in country	94.7	95.8	92.6	92.5	96.9	99.3	81.6	90.3	92.7
Manual	26.7	16.0	13.6	13.4	15.8	23.7	15.1	20.5	18.0
Left-right scale	5.1	5.3	4.7	5.2	5.0	5.1	5.5	5.3	5.1
Political knowledge	42.3	41.7	65.2	86.1	56.0	31.3	53.3	46.2	53.2
Political interest	76.3	70.3	82.8	65.0	71.2	82.8	71.1	77.6	74.7
Attachment towards EU	41.9	53.9	57.6	37.6	53.1	73.7	29.4	45.3	48.7
Support rights inside UK	52.4	52.9	54.0	65.2	52.3	67.6	63.5	43.6	56.4
Support rights in EU	26.7	28.6	33.2	37.1	36.6	40.1	36.5	21.8	32.6
Support rights outside EU	39.9	34.4	42.9	36.4	37.1	43.4	48.3	29.6	39.1
Bad-good effect of foreigners in the economy	5.35	4.5	5.9	3.6	4.7	4.2	5.8	5.6	5.0
Would mind having immigrants/ foreign workers as neighbours	24.5	39.6	23.9	35.5	35.2	34.6	24.1	34.7	31.2
Unemployment rate 2016	6.2	10.1	4.1	23.5	11.7	6.2	4.9	4.8	8.8

GDP growth 2016	2.0	1.2	1.9	-0.2	0.9	2.9	1.4	1.8	1.5
N	1,498	1,340	1,606	1,507	1,439	1,394	1,591	1,490	11,865

Notes: All means are reported in percentages with the exception of age, scale of effect of foreigners in the economy of the host country and left-right political scale.

Table A3: Variables

Variable	Survey question	Coding
Brexit supporter	Should the UK remain a member or leave the EU?	1=UK should leave the EU 0=Remain a member of EU
Age	How old are you?	Measured in years
Female	Are you male or female?	1=Female 0=Male
Education level (lower education)	Highest education level	1=Lower education 0=Intermediate / higher education
Unemployed	What you have been doing for the past 7 days?	1=Unemployed 0=Employed, in education, permanently sick, retired, housework, military service
Born in country	Were you born in *country*?	1=Yes 0=No
Manual occupation	Which option best describes the sort of paid work you do?	1=Manual 0=Professional, technical, manager, sales, clerical, supervisor, not employed,
Attachment towards EU	How attached do you feel to the EU?	1=Very attached / Fairly attached 0=Not very attached / Not at all attached
Support rights inside own country	Have you ever done one of the following to support the rights of people/groups in your own country?	1=Yes, at least one 0=No
Support rights in EU	Have you ever done one of the following to support the rights of people/groups in other countries within the EU?	1=Yes, at least one 0=No
Support rights outside EU	Have you ever done one of the following to support the rights of people/groups in countries outside the EU?	1=Yes, at least one 0=No

Effect of foreigners in home country	Effect on the economy that foreigners come to live here	Scale from 0 (Bad) to 10 (Good)
Would mind having immigrants/ foreign workers as neighbours	Would you mind having immigrants and foreign workers as neighbours?	1=Yes 0=No
Left-right scale	Left and right in politics	Scale from 0 (Left) to 10 (Right)
Political knowledge	Can you tell who the person in this picture is? (Jean Claude Juncker, current President)	1=Yes 0=No / Don't know
Political interest	How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics?	1=Quite interested / Very interested 0=Not at all interested / Not very interested

Table A4. Multilevel logistic random intercept model of Brexit preferences in eight European countries

Models	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>Individual level</i>						
Age		0.054*** (0.008)	0.053*** (0.008)	0.041*** (0.009)	0.041*** (0.009)	0.041*** (0.009)
Age squared		-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)
Female		-0.191*** (0.039)	-0.152*** (0.040)	-0.227*** (0.045)	-0.227*** (0.045)	-0.227*** (0.045)
Lower education		0.357*** (0.046)	0.338*** (0.047)	0.188*** (0.053)	0.189*** (0.053)	0.188*** (0.053)
Unemployed		0.232*** (0.071)	0.234*** (0.072)	0.184** (0.080)	0.180** (0.080)	0.183** (0.080)
Born in country		0.366*** (0.075)	0.369*** (0.076)	0.058 (0.084)	0.057 (0.084)	0.058 (0.084)
Manual occupation		0.225*** (0.053)	0.241*** (0.054)	0.080 (0.060)	0.081 (0.060)	0.080 (0.060)
Left-right political scale			0.109*** (0.008)	0.045*** (0.009)	0.045*** (0.009)	0.045*** (0.009)
Political knowledge			0.064 (0.044)	0.158*** (0.049)	0.154*** (0.049)	0.157*** (0.049)

Political interest			-0.062 (0.046)	0.179*** (0.052)	0.181*** (0.052)	0.179*** (0.052)
Attachment towards EU				-1.762*** (0.046)	-1.762*** (0.046)	-1.762*** (0.046)
Support rights inside UK				0.114** (0.051)	0.114** (0.051)	0.114** (0.051)
Support rights in EU				0.006 (0.057)	0.005 (0.057)	0.006 (0.057)
Support rights outside EU				0.065 (0.056)	0.066 (0.056)	0.066 (0.056)
Effect of foreigners in economy				-0.133*** (0.009)	-0.133*** (0.009)	-0.133*** (0.009)
Mind having immigrant neighbours				0.290*** (0.052)	0.291*** (0.053)	0.290*** (0.053)
<i>Country level</i>						
GDP growth (%)					-0.361** (0.166)	
Unemployment rate (%)						0.013 (0.029)
Constant	-0.036 (0.188)	-1.705*** (0.271)	-2.237*** (0.276)	-0.160 (0.291)	0.379 (0.366)	-0.277 (0.388)
Standard deviation of random coef.	-0.636** (0.253)	-0.592** (0.253)	-0.602** (0.253)	-0.694*** (0.255)	-0.931*** (0.257)	-0.707*** (0.255)
<i>N</i>	11865	11865	11865	11865	11865	11865

Notes: Standard deviations are in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The age squared term has been added to capture the non-linear effect of age on the dependent variable Brexit. Variables have been introduced sequentially as robustness check.