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*Published in:*  
Journal of European Social Policy

*DOI (link to publication from Publisher):*  
[10.1177/0958928719868443](https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928719868443)

*Publication date:*  
2020

*Document Version*  
Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Larsen, C. A. (2020). The institutional logic of giving migrants access to social benefits and services. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 30(1), 48-62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928719868443>

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# **The institutional logic of giving migrants access to social benefits and services**

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**\*Pre-print. Forthcoming in Journal of European Social Policy 2019**

Abstract:

The article analyses how the programmatic structure of welfare schemes in Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany shape public perceptions of and preferences for migrants' entitlement to social benefits and services. Firstly, the article finds that despite high complexity and the presence of some severe misperceptions, the entitlement criteria of migrants within existing social benefits and services do shape public perceptions of reality. Secondly, the article finds that these institutional shaped perceptions of reality strongly influence preferences for how migrants' entitlement criteria should be. This status quo effect is more moderate among populist right-wing voters, in general, and in the critical case of attitudes to non-EU-migrants' entitlement to social assistance in Denmark. However, in all segments, one finds strong correlations between "are" and "should be", which is taken as indications of clear and sizeable institutional effects.

## Introduction

The social rights of migrants have become a salient political issue in Northern Western European countries. The context is the increased level of migration, in general, and the right to free movement of labour within the EU, in particular. The underlying unresolved question is whether generous welfare states can coexist with high levels of migration (Freeman, 1986). One of the early predictions, largely derived from the American case, was that the public would redraw support for welfare schemes in a more ethnically diverse society (Alesina and Glaeser, 2004). A number of studies have tried to verify or falsify this prediction by connecting stocks or flows of migrants to welfare state support in Europe. The results have been rather inconclusive (Schaeffer, 2013). The overall pattern is (still) that Europeans display widespread support for their welfare states (Svallfors, 2012).

The overall stability in support for the welfare state might hide a tendency to what has been labeled welfare chauvinism. Goul Andersen and Bjørklund (1990) denominated the term in their study of how the Norwegian and Danish populist right-wing parties in the 1980s, the so-called Progress Parties, wanted to restrict welfare rights to “natives” and exclude migrants. The article uses the term welfare nationalism as it is believed to be more neutral (welfare restrictiveness is an alternative). More formally, one can define welfare nationalism as the exclusion of non-citizens (living permanently within the state boundaries) from collective social benefits and services and welfare nationalist attitudes as a preference for such policies. Working on party manifesto data, Eger & Valdez (2014) show that welfare nationalism has become a pivotal element among contemporary populist-right-parties throughout Europe. National parliaments are free to exclude non-EU-migrants from welfare benefits and services, while some of the social rights of EU-migrants are protected by EU-treaties and their interpretation by the EU-court. Thus, rather than general retrenchment, one could expect a dynamic towards a generous welfare state for the citizens,

a less generous for EU-migrants and a residual for non-EU-migrants (Emmenegger, 2012). Whether welfare nationalist attitudes have increased over time is difficult to tell, as historical survey data are unavailable. Recent studies indicate stability from 2008 to 2016 in European countries except for an increase in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic (Eger, M. A. et al., forthcoming; Heizmann et al., 2018).

The article contributes to the literature on welfare nationalist attitudes by studying the effect of the programmatic structure of existing welfare schemes. The two first sections present theory, previous research, and a revised institutional argument. The third introduces data and the applied method. The fourth describes how institutions shape perceptions of migrants' entitlement criteria. The fifth describes how these perceptions shape preferences. The sixth formally model the relationship between "are" and "should be". The last section concludes and discusses the implications.

## **Theory and previous research**

One of the fundamental divides in opinion research is whether attitudes are seen as exogenous or endogenous to institutions. The article starts from the assumption that both perceptions of reality and preferences are endogenously given. The existing welfare schemes and their entitlement rules are examples of political institutions, which historical institutionalists broadly define "*as the formal and informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy*" (Hall and Taylor, 1996:938). Following the formulation of sociological institutionalism by March and Olsen such institutions install a logic of appropriateness. Thus, institutions do not only shape incentive structures, as argued by rational choice institutionalism, but also limits the choices that can be imagined and found acceptable

(1989). The combination of historical and sociological institutionalism has strongly influenced the study of general public attitudes to the welfare states. In Svallfors' formulation, "*institutions also [besides incentive structures] affect perceptions and norms in a more direct way: (a) they affect the visibility of social phenomena; (b) they affect what is considered politically possible to achieve in a given setting, and (c) they embody, and hence create, norms about what is fair and just*" (Svallfors, 2007:10, with reference to Rothstein 1998 , Svallfors 2003, Mau 2003, Mettler and Soss 2004).

The institutional perspective has been puzzling absent in studies of welfare nationalism. Most of the previous studies perceive welfare nationalist attitudes as exogenously given. The self-interest of various groups is largely derived from their labour market positions, absence of solidarity with migrants is largely derived from prejudices or larger narratives about national belonging, and sociotropic concern is largely derived from perceptions of macro-economic burden, level of crime, mass media content or populist right-wing rhetoric. These factors are all exogenous to the welfare schemes actually in place. It is indeed a stable finding that lower socioeconomic groups (whether defined as low-educated, low-income households or those with precariat work conditions) are more welfare nationalistic (Gerhards and Lengfeld, 2013; Mewes and Mau, 2012; Mewes and Mau, 2013; Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012). It is a stable finding that "natives" are seen as more deserving to social benefits than are migrants; even in vignette studies where work ethic and other characteristics of recipients are kept constant (Ford, 2016; Kootstra, 2016; Reeskens and van der Meer, 2018). It is also a stable finding that those who perceive migrants as an economic and cultural burden for the nation-state are more welfare nationalistic than are those that perceive migrants as an economic and cultural gain to the country (Gerhards and Lengfeld, 2013; Mewes and Mau, 2012; Mewes and Mau, 2013; Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012). Finally, it is a stable finding that voters of the populist right-wing parties hold more welfare nationalistic attitudes than other groups (Eger, Maureen A. and Valdez, 2018). Hence, these

previous studies are successful in explaining why some segments indicate high levels of welfare nationalism. However, they provide little guidance as to why citizens in the first place would give migrants entitlement to benefits and services.

The limited number of studies that perceive (absence of) welfare nationalism as endogenous to the institutional structure of the welfare state have been more inconclusive. They often start from the somewhat puzzling finding, at least for rational choice institutionalism, that welfare nationalist attitudes seem *less* and not more prevalent in more generous welfare states. This e.g. led Crepaz and Damron to conclude that “*comprehensive welfare systems reduce welfare chauvinism and experience fewer conflicts in the area of politics of identity than in liberal regimes*” (2009:457). Their theoretical backbone is Titmuss’s classic argument about universal entitlement criteria dismantling the distinction between “them” (the receivers) and “us” (the contributors) (Larsen, 2008; Rothstein, 1998; Titmuss, 1974). The counter-argument is that welfare states originate from a nation-building project with a hard distinction between citizen/non-citizen; including those with the largest number of universal schemes (Miller, 1993). Furthermore, the idea of giving migrants entitlement to tax-financed benefits and services based on a residence can easily be seen as a “magnet” for migrants with low human capital, who do not even need to contribute before they are entitled, in contrast to an insurance system (Ruhs and Palme, 2018). It is telling that welfare nationalism as a populist right-wing discourse originates from Denmark and Norway.

The classic empirical approach to study institutional effects have relied on Esping-Andersen’s distinction between three different regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Esping-Andersen, 1990). Using the item made available by the European Social Survey in 2008 (ESS, see below), Sweden, Denmark and Norway had the largest share willing to give migrants access “immediate” or without work-requirement (respectively 36, 30 and 26 percent); only surpassed by Israel with a very special immigration history (44 percent). This gives the Crepaz and Damron’s institutional

argument some support. However, the pattern is not clear-cut. The general pattern in the ESS-data is that all European publics, the Scandinavians included, opt for conditional entitlement criteria (Mewes and Mau, 2012; Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012). Furthermore, van Der Waal, De Koster and Van Oorschot (2013) found no effect when they more directly studied whether the level selectivity of the welfare state influenced welfare nationalism. Therefore, previous research leaves us with no clear answer to whether and how institutions influence welfare nationalist attitudes.

### **A revised institutional argument**

The focus on the effects of universalism and its application in the Nordic countries has left a more trivial, but potential much more important, institutional effect unexplored. One of the most basic arguments from historical sociological institutionalism is that existing institutions shape perceptions about what is normal. It is this institutional embodiment of normality, which according to Svallfors creates norms about what is fair and just. Applied to the case of welfare nationalism, one should expect that the entitlement criteria of migrants in existing welfare schemes establish perceptions of normality, which again are used as guidelines for what is fair and just. That perceptions of what “are” are used as a guideline for what “should be” is backed by a comprehensive literature in the field between sociology and social psychology. In George Homan often cited formulation *“the rule of distribute justice is a statement of what ought to be, and what people say ought to be is determined in the long run with some lag by what they find in fact to be the case”* (1974: 249-250). The same prediction is made by the just world theory. It suggests that individuals have a need to believe that they live in a just world, which led participants in Lerner’s classic experiments to infer from how rewards (randomly) were distributed to how they ought to be distributed (Furnham, 2003; Lerner, 1980). A somewhat different theoretical argument is found in Kahner, Knetsch and Thaler but the implications are very similar *“any stable state of affairs tends to become accepted*

*eventually, at least in the sense that alternatives to it no longer readily come to mind*” (1986:730-31). These experimental results have in particular been verified by the International Social Survey Program’s module that measured perceptions of and preferences for wage differences (e.g. Gordon Marshall et al., 1999; Kjærsgård, 2012). Rooted in this literature, the article seeks to advance the institutional line of reasoning by describing how the public perceives the entitlement criteria of migrants and how these perceptions of reality shape preferences. The article sets out to test the following two interlinked theses:

*I) Existing entitlement criteria of migrants shape public perceptions about reality.*

*II) The public perceptions about how the entitlement criteria for migrants “are” shape preferences for how they “should be”.*

## **Data and method**

The comparative studies of welfare nationalism are dominated by studies using the following item from ESS: *“Thinking of people coming to live in [country] from other countries, when do you think they should obtain the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens already living here?”* (Mewes and Mau, 2012; Mewes and Mau, 2013; Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012; Van Der Waal et al., 2013). One limitation of this item is that we do not know what kind of services and benefits respondents have in mind. Therefore institutional effects can only be studied at aggregated regime level, which has left us unclear results (see previous section). The national studies of welfare nationalism have primarily focused on social assistance (Bay et al., 2013; Careja et al., 2016; De Koster et al., 2013; Marx and Naumann, 2018; however, see Hjorth, 2015 for child-benefits; and



Kootstra, 2016 for housing and disability benefits). This has also made it difficult to see institutional effects as close to all social assistance schemes are organized as a targeted means-tested benefit of last resort. The strategy of this article is to study welfare nationalism across five different areas, health care, public pension, unemployment benefit, social assistance and childcare, across three countries and across EU- and non-EU-migrants.

The article uses MIFARE-data collected in Denmark, the Netherlands and West Germany in 2015. The added value is the possibility to directly test the link between “are” and “should be” (see below). The country and area selection is limited by the data. However, the countries represent a social democratic welfare regime (Denmark), a conservative welfare regime (Germany), and a mix between these two (the Netherlands). The theoretical expectation is that the two theses hold true in all three contexts. However, Denmark is believed to be a critical case as welfare nationalist ideas have been promoted by highly successful populist rights-wing parties since the late 1980s, as already mentioned. The main message has been that existing entitlement rules for migrants need to be changed. In the Netherlands and Germany, welfare nationalist ideas are more recent, which e.g. is reflected in less mass media coverage of the issue than in Denmark (Blauberger et al., 2018). Furthermore, social assistance is believed to be a critical case, as the rules are complex (which makes Thesis I less likely), and as populist-right wing parties especially have questioned migrants’ access to this benefit (which makes Thesis II less likely). How the political actors through both direct and indirect policies reduce non-EU-migrants’ access to social assistance is well described in the previous literature (Andersen, 2007; Bay et al., 2013; Breidahl, 2017; Careja et al., 2016; Schumacher and van Kersbergen, 2014). This has especially been the case in Denmark, where the welfare nationalist policy materialized in the form of reduced social assistance benefit levels for non-EU-migrants (Andersen, 2007, Breidahl 2017). This so-called “Start help” was

introduced in 2002, abolished in 2012, and reintroduced in 2015. Thus, migrants' access to social assistance in Denmark is believed to a critical case for testing Thesis II.

In each country, 900 citizens (adult, not foreign born) were sampled in 2015 respectively in national registers by Statistics Denmark, Statistics Netherlands and in regional registers by the German survey team (cluster sampling stratified on the size of cities). Data was collected between December 2015 and April 2016 by postal surveys with a CAWI option included. The response rate was 47 percent in the Netherlands, 44 percent in Denmark and 27 percent in Germany. Despite modest dropout-bias judged by background variables, the scale of dropout in Germany could indicate problems. Thus, in the German case, the data are best suited to analyze correlations within the net-sample (see Bekhuis et al., 2018 for data collection details).

The perceptions of the entitlement criteria of migrants were measured by asking; *“The following questions are about your KNOWLEDGE of the rights of migrants from [countries within the European Union] / [outside the European Union] living in [Denmark] / [the Netherlands] / [Germany]. If you do not know the answer, please just provide us with your best guess. At which point after arrival do migrants from [countries within the European Union] / [outside the European Union] have the same rights as natives of [Denmark] / [the Netherlands] / [Germany] to .... “.*

1) *“...use the public health care system?”*

2) *“... receive public pension from Denmark/the Netherlands/Germany?”*

3) *“... receive unemployment benefits from Denmark/the Netherlands/Germany?”*

4) *“... receive social assistance benefits?”*

The response-categories were adopted from the ESS-item with small modifications. The wording was:

- 1) *“After registering as resident in Denmark / the Netherlands / Germany”.*
- 2) *“After residing in Denmark / the Netherlands / Germany for an extended period of time, whether or not they have worked”.*
- 3) *“Only after they have worked and paid taxes and insurances for an extended period of time”.*
- 4) *“Once they have become Danish/Dutch/German citizens (obtained nationality)”.*
- 5) *“They never get the same rights”.*

The preferences for entitlement criteria were measured by asking: *“The following questions are about what social rights you think migrants from [countries within the European Union] / [outside the European Union] living in [Denmark] / [the Netherlands] / [Germany] SHOULD have in Denmark/ the Netherlands / Germany. At which point, after arrival, should migrants from [countries within the European Union] / [outside the European Union] have the same rights as natives of [Denmark] / [the Netherlands] / [Germany] to .... “.* Followed by the same response categories (don’t know added).

The first analytical step is to establish the relationship between actual and perceived entitlement. This is difficult to do with accuracy, as the actual entitlement rules of migrations are

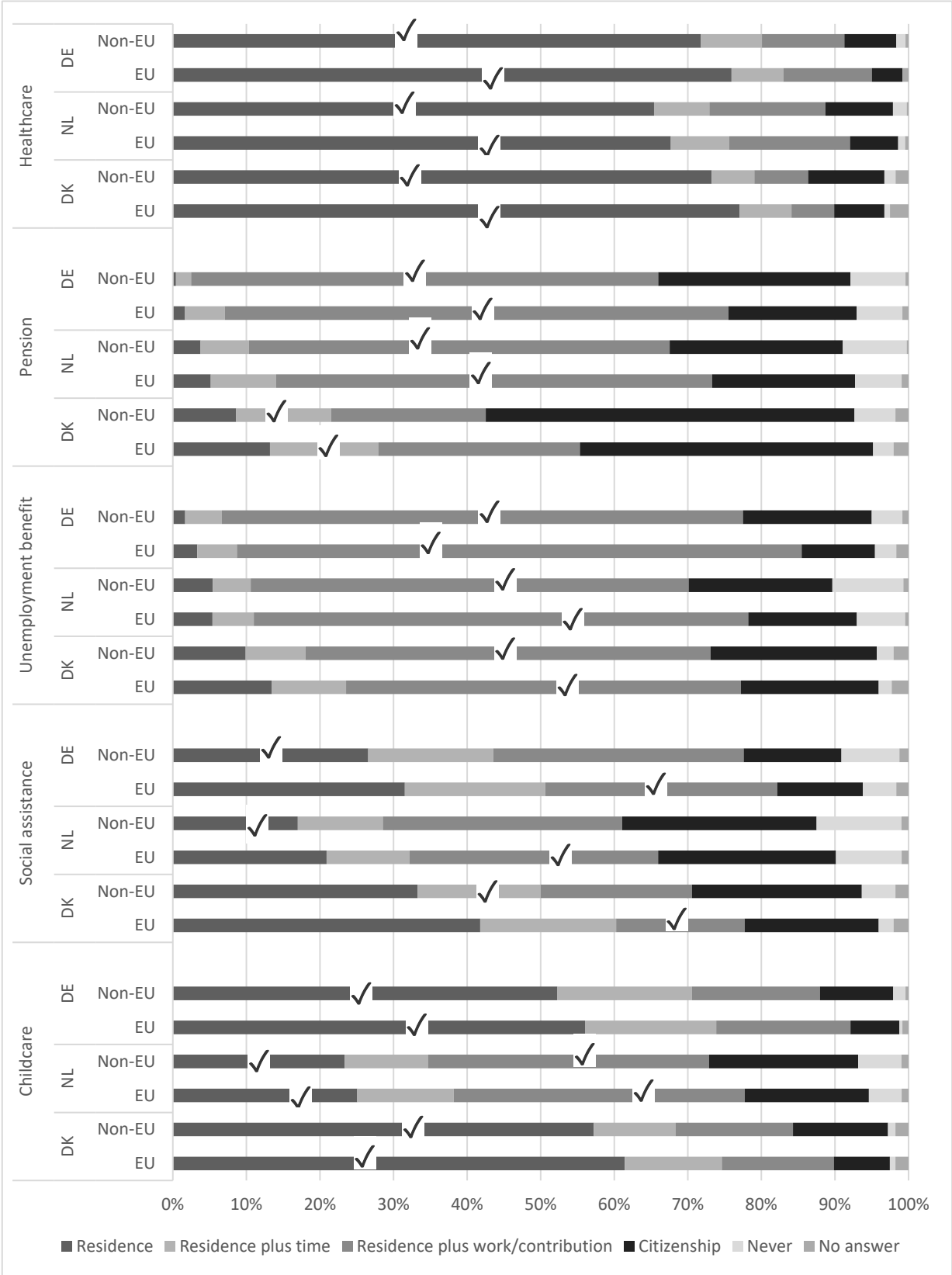
complicated. However, the aim of the article is not to explain who understand and who do not understand the current entitlement rules. The aim is to establish that existing institutions actually shape perceptions of reality. The second analytical step is to establish the relationship between perceptions and preferences. This is formally modeled by means of multinomial logistic regressions. They estimate the odds-ratio of pointing to an entitlement criterion different from the base, which for both the dependent (preference) and independent (perception) variables are “*only after they have worked and paid taxes and insurances for an extended period of time*”(3). Those giving no answer on the dependent variable were treated as missing.<sup>i</sup> As control variables, we included country dummies (the Netherlands used as base), sex, age, age squared, education in seven levels (ISCED-coded, with non-responses coded as no formal education) and seven dummies for household income after tax per month (don’t know /no answer as a separate dummy). In order to establish a conservative test, the models also include two attitudinal dimensions proved to be important in previous studies. The first is a measure of the feeling of shared identity with migrants. The wording was “*We are also interested in your sense of belonging to different groups living in [Denmark]/[the Netherlands]/[Germany]. How strong, would you say, is your sense of belonging to the following groups... [...the people who migrated from countries of the European Union]/[... migrants in general]*”.<sup>ii</sup> The two variations are used in models of attitudes to respectively the entitlement of EU- and non-EU-migrants. The second attitudinal dimension is the perception of migrants’ net contribution/gain from the welfare state. The wording was “*Some people think that immigrants in [Denmark]/[the Netherlands]/[Germany] contribute more in taxes than they benefit from social benefits and services. Other people think they benefit more from the social benefits and services than they contribute in taxes. When you think about the following groups, what comes closest to your point of view?*”. 1) Migrants from countries of the Western European Union, 2) migrants from countries of the Eastern European Union, 3) migrants from poor countries outside

*Europe and 4) migrants from rich countries outside Europe*”. Item 1) and 2) are used in models of EU-migrants, while 3) and 4) are used in models of non-EU-migrants.<sup>iii</sup>

## **Reality and perceptions of reality**

Migrants’ entitlement to social benefits and services is a complicated matter that has developed into an independent research topic (e.g. Pennings and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2018). As for EU-migrants, the EU-treaties guarantee free movement of EU-workers and their access to social benefits and services on the same conditions as citizens, i.e. for questions about EU-migrants the “right” answer is the same criteria as for citizens. There is a number of exceptions in the EU-legislation and in practice, the social rights of EU-citizens are established in a complex interaction between the EU-court, the EU-commission and the member states (Blauberger et al., 2018). As for non-EU-migrants, national parliaments are free to control the entitlement criteria. However, with some notable exceptions (see below), non-EU-migrants with a residence permit in Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany have the same entitlement criteria as citizens, at least formally. Figure 1 shows how the public think the entitlement criteria of migrants “are”.

Figure 1: Perceptions of current rules (“are”). Across areas, countries and migrant category. Percent. N<sup>min</sup> Denmark 394, Netherlands 424, Germany (West) 241. “Right” answer ticked.



For healthcare, the most common perception is that both EU- and non-EU-migrants have equal access after registering as residents. This is in line with reality. A simple residence criterion is used in Denmark. Germany and the Netherlands use compulsory insurance. However, as all residents are insured, the system is in practice open to both EU- and non-EU-migrants “after registering as a resident”. Around 70 percent gives this answer in all three countries. Those answering “only after worked and paid tax/insurances for an extended period of time” are not necessarily wrong. Especially, the German and Dutch system has better coverage for better-insured workers and their families than what is provided as a minimum. Even the universal Danish system has a (minor) occupational/private supplement. The minorities answering “never” or “citizenship” clearly got the entitlement criteria wrong. However, the overall pattern is that reality is reflected in perceptions.

For pensions, perceptions also reflect reality. In Germany and the Netherlands, the most common answer is that migrants get the same rights as citizens after they have worked and paid taxes/ insurances; given by around 60 percent. This is overall in line with the reality of the Dutch and German compulsory pension insurance system. However, again the rules are complex as the Dutch pension system also has a residence-based minimum allowance. A migrant living legally 50 years in the Netherlands without tax/contribution payment would receive the same basic flat-rate pension as a Dutch citizen with the same work history. In Germany, old-aged migrants without any insurance payment can only claim a means-tested social pension. The Danish Peoples pension cause larger problems as respectively 40 and 50 percent (EU/non-EU-migrants) have the misperception that it based on citizenship. The right answer is residence plus time. Full People’s pension is given after residing for 40 years in Denmark. Again the system is complex as Denmark also has a (minor) insurance system combined with a large number of occupational pensions.

For unemployment benefits, a majority in all three countries rightly indicate that entitlement of both EU- and non-EU migrants is conditioned on tax/insurance payment. This answer is given by between 54 (EU-migrants Denmark) to 77 percent (EU-migrants Germany). Thus, the largest misperceptions are found in Denmark, where 19 and 13 percent indicate respectively “citizenship” and “residency” for EU-migrants. All three countries have an insurance-based unemployment benefits system.

For social assistance, the confusion is larger. This is understandable as the systems are less straightforward. For EU-migrants, social assistance is conditioned on having worked in the host-country, in general. For non-EU-migrants, the simple residence criterion applies in the Netherlands and Germany (Pennings, 2012). In Denmark, non-EU-migrants face a seven years time-criterion before they obtain the same rights as citizens (Andersen, 2007). The work requirement for EU-migrants is not strongly reflected in public perceptions. It is the most typical answer in the Netherlands and the second most typical in Germany. However, in Denmark, this answer was only given by 17 percent, while 42 percent incorrectly point to a residence criterion. At the same time, a sizeable share in all three countries has the misperception that a work requirement applies to non-EU-migrants, which is not the case. It is also a widespread misperception in Denmark and in the Netherlands that social assistance entitlement is depended on citizenship. Thus, one could argue the Thesis I does not hold true. However, the system is complex as municipalities might choose to give social assistance based on residence. In Germany, the right to exclude non-working EU-migrants from social assistance has even resulted in a long court dispute. Thus, the rules are not clear.

Finally, it is the dominant perception in Denmark and Germany that both EU- and non-EU-migrants have the same rights to public childcare as citizens, which is in line with reality. In the Netherlands, childcare is dominated by non-public facilities, which does require a



contribution. However, the specific allowance given to parents in order to pay for these services is based on residence (*kinderopvangtoeslag*). This somewhat confusing public/private mix is probably what causes around 40 percent of the Dutch to indicate that both EU- and non-EU migrants access is dependent on having worked and paid taxes and insurances for an extended period of time.

Based on these survey results one *cannot* conclude that the existing programmatic structure of welfare schemes have left the Danish, Dutch and German publics with clear perceptions of when and how EU- and non-EU migrants have the same social rights as citizens. The confusion and misperceptions are particularly severe when it comes to social assistance, the Danish Peoples' pension and Dutch childcare. However, at an overall level, the public was able to pinpoint the universal entitlement criterion within healthcare and the insurance criterion within unemployment benefits and Dutch and German pensions. Thus, one can partly confirm Thesis I. The next question is whether perceptions of entitlement criteria go together with preferences.

### **Perceptions of reality and preferences**

Table 1 shows the share of respondents who picked the exact same "*should be*" and "*are*" entitlement criterion, i.e. a perfect match at the individual level. If the "*should-be*" preferences and "*are perceptions*" were randomly distributed, one should expect four percent with a perfect match. The finding is very different. Above 60 percent in Germany and the Netherlands think that the entitlements rules "*should be*" exactly as they think they "*are*" for both EU- and non-EU-migrants. The preferences of Danes are in all five areas less structured by "*are perceptions*", which is in line with the argument of Denmark being a critical case. However, there is still a majority a perfect match in four areas; the exception is social assistance. Thus, the overall pattern is a sizeable overlap

between “*should-be*” and “*are perceptions*” at the individual level, which supports Thesis II. The aggregated “*should be*” preferences are shown in Appendix Figure A1.

Table 1: Share choosing the same criterion for “*should be*” and “*are*”. Across areas, countries and migrant category. Percentage. N<sup>min</sup> Denmark 394, Netherlands 424, Germany 241

	Healthcare		Pension		Unemployment benefits		Social assistance		Childcare	
	EU	Non- EU	EU	Non - EU	EU	Non - EU	EU	Non - EU	EU	Non- EU
DK	68	67	56	59	63	62	42	45	61	62
NL	78	76	70	71	72	73	62	64	69	71
DE	84	79	77	81	79	78	60	63	72	73

As for Danes preferences for migrants’ access to social assistance, the share in favor of (perceived) status quo is 42 and 45 percent respectively for EU- and non-EU-migrants. This is caused by nine and 11 percent respectively opting for softer entitlement criteria (EU/non-EU-migrants) and 49 and 42 percent opting for harsher entitlement criteria. Thus, preferences for more restrictive criteria are as widespread as the status quo preferences. Whether “*are*” perceptions still significantly shape attitude formation in this critical case is formally tested below.

### The controlled “*are*” and “*should be*” correlations

The next question is whether the relationships between “*should be*” and “*are*” are statistically significant and stable after control for other variables, which previous studies have shown to be of importance. Table A0 in online appendix summarizes the relationships between “*are*” and “*should be*” by means of odd-ratios controlled for potential effect from country characteristics, socioeconomic differences, feeling of shared identity with EU-migrants/migrants in general and

perceived economic gain/loss for the Danish, Dutch and German welfare state (effects from control variables shown in online appendix Table A1 to A10). The overall finding is that in all ten multinomial logistic regression models there is a strong and significant status quo effect. Thus, Thesis II is confirmed. The relationship between “*are*” and “*should be*” is stronger than any other relationship found. As for the control variables, low shared identity increases the likelihood of answering “never” (significant in eight models) and perceptions of migrants being a net gain increase the likelihood of answering “immediately access” (significant in eight models). In line with previous research, one also finds a direct negative effect of low education on the likelihood of answering “never”. With these variables in the models, plus “*are-perceptions*”, there is no direct gender- or age-effect. The country-effects are also modest (with the exceptions of Germans being more willing to give immediate access to childcare (compared to Dutch) and Danes more likely to answer “citizenship” within pension and “never” for non-EU-migrants access to social assistance (compared to Dutch). Thus, the country-differences seen in Table 1 are largely explained by the variables included in the models.

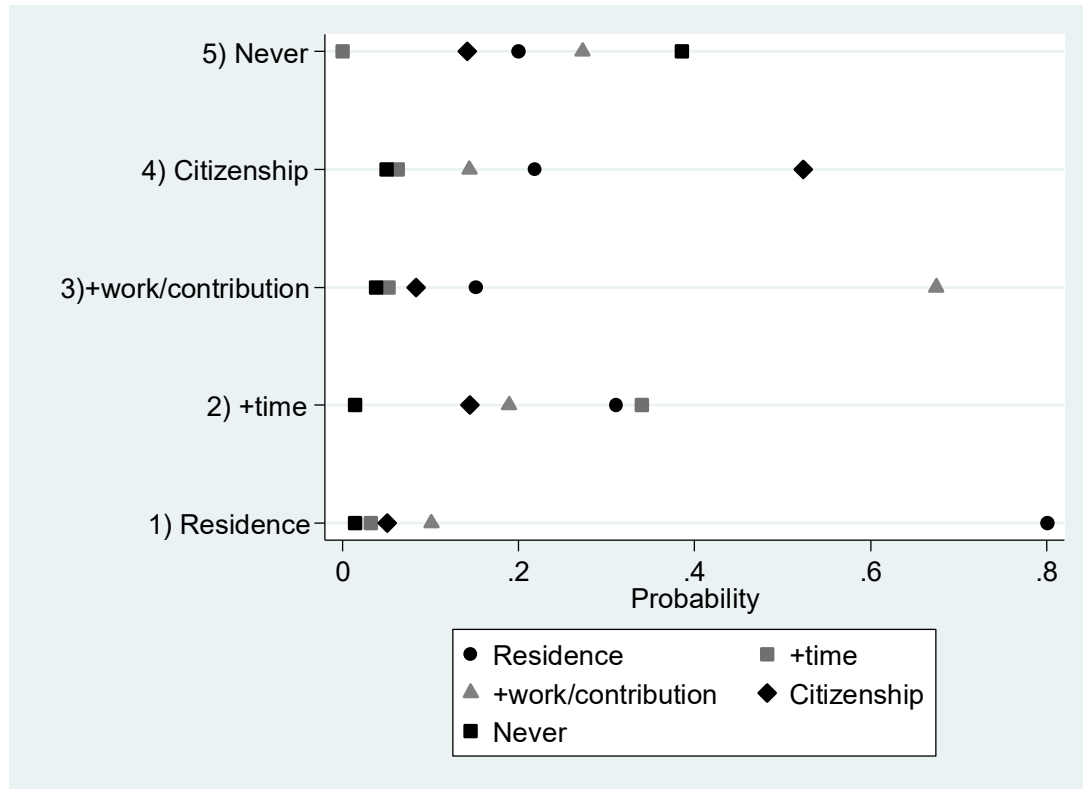
The case of non-EU-migrants’ access to healthcare can be used as an example of the estimates of the status quo effect. A person who thinks that similar rights as natives are granted to non-EU-migrants immediately after registering as resident has higher odds of answering that this is also how it should be (probability that she picks this answer over the probability that she does not pick this answer) compared to the odds of a person who thinks similar rights are dependent on tax/insurance payment (reference category). The ratio between the two odds are 54.9; controlled for differences caused by sex, age, education, income, feeling of shared identity and assessment of economic gain/loss of migration. If a person thinks that healthcare rights of non-EU-migrants are conditioned on time lived in the country, this increases the odds of answering that this is how it “*should be*”. The odds-ratio is 30.0. If a person thinks that equal rights are depended on citizenship,

this again increases the odds of answering that this is how it “*should be*”. The odds-ratio is 32.7.

Finally, if a person thinks that non-EU-migrants never get the same healthcare rights as natives, this increases the odds of answering that this is also how it should be “*should be*”. The odds-ratio is 48.3.

The odds ratios provide a condensed measure of the relationship between “*are*” and “*should be*” but they can be hard to give a substantive interpretation. Therefore, as an example, Figure 2 shows the predicted probability of “*should be*” answers for persons with different “*are*” perceptions controlled for background factors. For those believing that a residence criterion applies to non-EU-migrants (the lower horizontal line in Figure 2), the predicted probability of answering this is how it “*should be*” is 80 percent (the black dot). Their probability of given one of the other four answers is ten percent or below (the other markers in the lower horizontal line). For those with other “*are*” perceptions (the other horizontal lines in Figure 2), it also holds true that they are more inclined to opt for that particular “*should be*” answer. It is clear for the case of believing that non-EU-migrant never have access, only have access after citizenship and only after tax/contribution payment. It is less clear-cut for those believing that EU-migrants get the same rights after just residing in the country a year. They have a 34 percent probability of giving the same “*should-be*” answer (the highest) but also have 31 percent probability of preferring immediate access. However, still the status quo effect dominates.

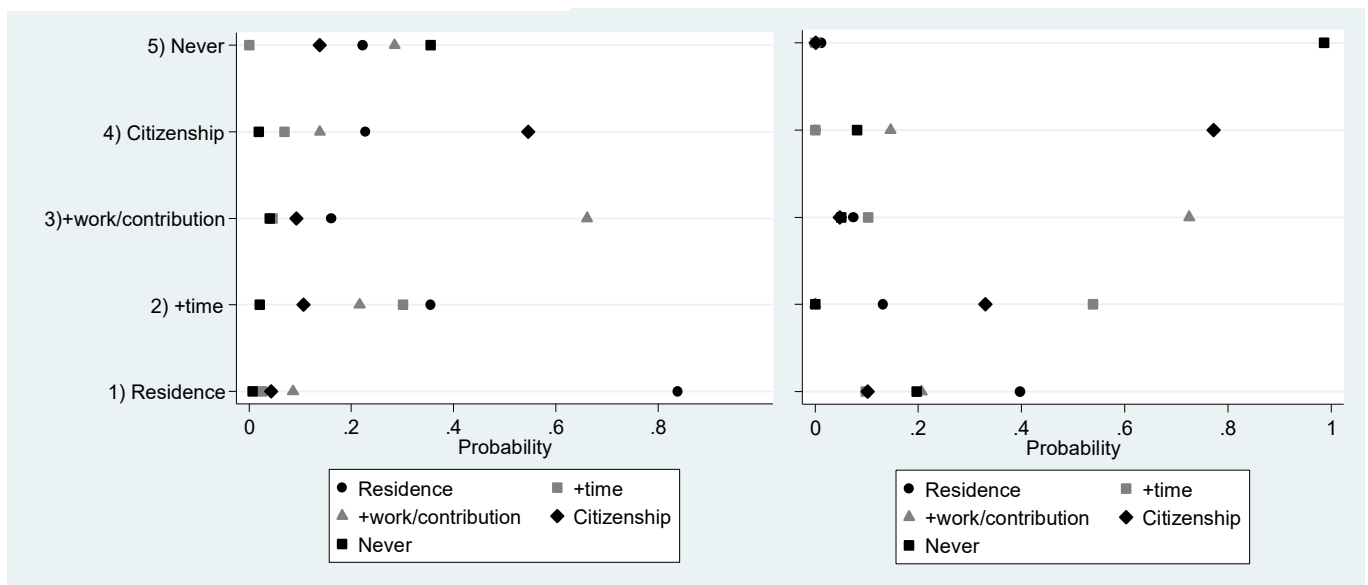
Figure 2: Predicted probability for “*should-be*” answers for non-EU-migrants access to health care by “*are*” perceptions. Controlled for country-effects, socio-economic differences, feeling of shared identity and perception of economic gain/loss on EU-/non-EU-migrants.



The sizeable main effects of perceived entitlement rules are stable across different segments of respondents. Additional analyses show that the effects are not (consistently) stronger among those who think that migrants contribute more than they take out of the welfare states (which could be expected from a rational choice perspective) or among the sizeable group that answer that they do not know if migrants take more out than they put into the welfare state (which could be expected from mental short-cut perspective). The effects are nor found to be stronger among the less educated (again to be expected from a mental-short-cut perspective) or consistently weaker among low-income groups (which could be expected from a rational choice perspective). The effects were

neither (consistently) conditioned on perceptions of corruption among civil servants (which could be expected as a preference for status quo could go together with the perception of low-corruption).

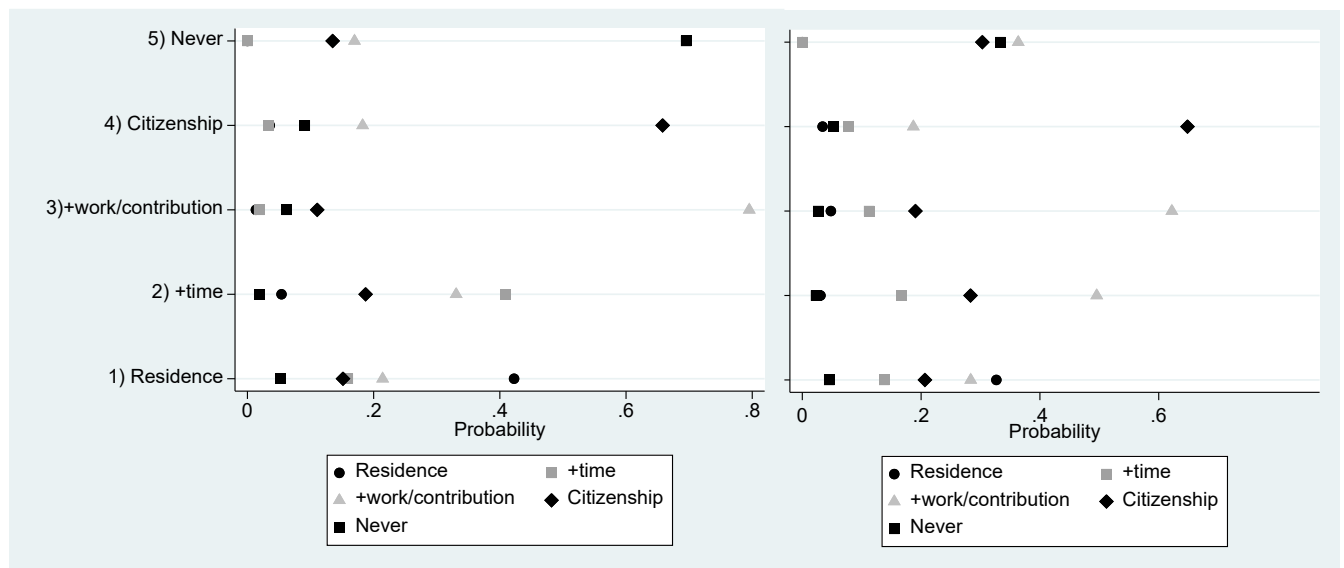
Figure 3: Predicted probability for “*should-be*” for non-EU-migrants’ access to healthcare by “*are*” perceptions. Controlled socio-economic differences, feeling of shared identity and perception of economic gain/loss on EU/non-EU-migrants. Left figure non-populist right wing-voters. Right figure populist right-wing voters



The only consistent interaction effect is that the status quo effect is more moderate among populist right-wing voters. These are operationalized as those voting for the Danish People Party (n=58), the Dutch Party for Freedom (n=53) and the German AFD (n=3). The models show that this particular segment, as expected, is a little more inclined than non-populist right-wing voters to opt for a stricter entitlement criterion and not for the (perceived) current rule. As an example, the predicted probability of preferring different entitlement criteria for non-EU-migrants’ access to healthcare are shown in Figure 3; respectively for the non-populist (left) and populist right-wing voters (right).<sup>iv</sup> As expected, the predicted probability of answering “residence” or “residence plus time” is higher

among non-populist right-wing voters while the predicted probability of answering “never” or “citizenship” is higher among populist right-wing voters (see Figure 3). However, it is also clear that one still finds the status quo effect among populist right-wing voters. Populist right-wing voters believing that non-EU-migrants have immediate access to healthcare have 39 percent probability of answering that this is how “*should be*”, while the predicted probability of answering “never” is 20 percent; still controlled for other relevant variables (see Figure 3).

Figure 4: Predicted probability for “*should-be*” for non-EU-migrants’ access to social assistance by “*are*” perceptions. Controlled socio-economic differences, feeling of shared identity and perception of economic gain/loss on EU/non-EU-migrants. Left figure the Netherlands/Germany. Right figure Denmark



Finally, the models show that Thesis II also holds true in the critical case of Danes’ attitudes to migrants’ entitlement to social assistance. Figure 4 shows the predicted probabilities of choosing entitlement criteria for non-EU-migrants, respectively for Dutch/Germans (left-panel) and Danes

(right-panel). The left-panel shows the general result that perceptions of existing social assistance rules strongly correlates with preferences; a German/Dutch e.g. believing that access is given with the combination of residence and time has a 41 percent probability of giving the same should-be-answer. As expected, the status quo effect is less prominent for Danish attitudes to social assistance. Danes believing that access is given by the combination of residence and time (the right answer) only has a 17 percent probability of having this “should-be” preference. The same person has a 50 percent probability of choosing the work and contribution criterion, everything else equal. However, even in this most critical case, it holds true that having a given “are-perception” increases the likelihood of choosing this specific criterion. The 17 percent probability should be compared with the probability of choosing this criterion (the grey-squares) holding one of the other “are-perceptions”. Thus, even though holding a given “are-perception” does not go together with the highest probability of choosing this criterion, as it is the case in the Netherlands and Germany, it holds true that a given are-perception makes the should-be perception *more* likely; even in the cases of Danes’ attitudes to migrants’ access to social assistance.

## **Conclusion**

The article finds support for the institutional argument that the entitlement criteria of existing welfare schemes shape perceptions of what is (Thesis I), which again shape preferences for what ought to be (Thesis II). In the case of migrants’ entitlements, there is not a one to one match between reality and perceptions. The public was bewildered by migrants’ entitlement to social assistance, the Danish Peoples’ pension and Dutch childcare, while entitlement criteria of healthcare, unemployment protection, Dutch and German public pension and Danish and German childcare were better recognized. Thus, Thesis I was only partly confirmed. The relationship



between the perceived entitlement criteria and preferences was clear-cut. Thesis II holds true across the three countries, across EU- and non-EU-migrants and across all five areas. Thesis II even holds true within the segment of populist right-wing voters (though more moderate) and in the critical case of Danes' attitudes to migrants' entitlement to social assistance (though more moderate). This is taken as an indication of clear institutional effects though aggregate studies of regime-effects have been inclusive.

The study comes with limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits the possibility to make causal inferences. Public preferences could influence migrants' entitlement criteria (reverse causality). The article assumed this was not the case. Secondly, the article has only shown that the status quo effect is present in three well-functioning welfare states with thriving economies, a well-informed electorate and an absence of ethnic nationalism (Larsen, 2017). The status quo effect could be weaker in other contexts; despite the argument of Denmark being a critical case due to political mobilization on this issue. Thirdly, it is a limitation that e.g. the pension area consists of differences schemes. Had the public been asked even more specifically, there might have been a better match between actual and perceived entitlement criteria.

The overall conclusion is that the strongest bulwark against welfare nationalist attitudes is the presence of historically given welfare schemes that actually give migrants entitlement. This does clearly not mean that migrants' entitlements cannot be questioned and restricted. However, it does support the proposition that, under the condition of ethnic diversity, building support for new welfare schemes and maintaining support for old welfare schemes is two very different things. In the latter, Northern European context, existing institutions set standards for what is normal, possible and just.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> No answer on how entitlement rules “*are*” is included as dummy.

<sup>ii</sup> The response categories were, “not at all”, “weak”, “moderate”, “close” and “very close”. No answer was coded as “moderate”.

<sup>iii</sup> The response categories were “*contribute more in taxes than they benefit from social benefits and services*”, “*benefit more from social benefits and services than they contribute in taxes*”, “*it’s equal*” and “*do not know*”. Included as a scale from 1) contribute more 2) equal/don’t know / no answer to 3) benefit more.

<sup>iv</sup> These models are run without country dummies due to the very few populist right-wing voters in the German sample. The models cannot be estimated with country dummies included.

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