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Attitudes Towards the Welfare State in Europe:
Starting Point or Obstacle on the Road to a Social Union?


(Preliminary version, do not cite!)
Introduction

Europe is growing together, meanwhile, 15 countries belong to the European Union (EU) and many other countries, especially from Middle and East Europe, want to follow. Without any doubt, the common market needs a social component to succeed. Since there are many obstacles to a social union like institutional constraints, limited fiscal resources, and contrary interests, the question is whether we are really moving towards an European welfare state and how this will look like. Until now, research did not pay attention to variations in people’s attitudes towards the welfare state in this respect. Attitude variations of that kind imply a potential conflict since different expectations and claims of the Europeans could seriously disturb the integration in the social policy domain.

Why should attitudes towards the welfare state differ between European countries at all? In this respect, research usually refers to the socialization in different welfare states (see, e.g., Gelissen 1999, Kluegel & Miyano 1995, Svalfors 1997). It is assumed that the different institutional characteristics and distributive outcomes of welfare states across Europe will be reflected in people’s attitudes, i.e., each welfare state is related with a specific pattern of attitudes. To simplify the discussion, it makes sense to classify welfare states with similar institutions and outcomes into groups resp. categories of welfare states and not to treat each (European) welfare state on its own. The most influential typology of welfare states was provided by Esping-Andersen (1990) in his study “Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism”, distinguishing between social democratic, conservative and liberal welfare regimes. Attitudinal research assumes, e.g., that people in liberal regimes support at most statutory interventions by the state in cases of illness or old age while people in social democratic regimes support far reaching governmental interventions like full employment policies or interventions for income equality (see, e.g., Gelissen 1999, Roller 1999, Svalfors 1997).

An alternative source of attitude differences between welfare regimes is the economic situation of the countries considered. In general, literature suggests that there is an increased need for governmental interventions in times of economic hardship in order to protect people from the negative effects of a decreased economic growth and increasing unemployment (see, e.g., Sihvo & Usitalo 1995b). However, exclusively referring to aggregate level explanations, as done in most of previous research, means falling short since attitude differences between welfare states can also result from variations at the individual level. People in social democratic regimes do not have to be in general more favourable towards governmental interventions than people in conservative or liberal regimes. Differences at the aggregate level may also occur because some groups in social democratic regimes, identified by various individual characteristics, show a higher (lower) degree of support than the equivalent groups.

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in conservative and liberal regimes. This implies the interaction of aggregate level (welfare regime) and individual level (individual characteristics) determinants of welfare state attitudes. But generally speaking, which individual characteristics affect attitudes towards the welfare state? Basically, current research refers to specific economic interests connected with the structural position of individuals ("self-interest") and different socialization patterns resulting in specific values and norms, especially justice beliefs (see, e.g., Cnaan et al. 1993; Hasenfeld and Rafferty 1989, Svaflors 1997). Finally, attitudinal variations at the aggregate level can also result from compositional effects of individual level determinants: given a specific group being more favourable towards governmental interventions than other people, a higher percentage of this group in social democratic regimes compared to conservative or liberal regimes might explain a higher support for governmental interventions in social democratic regimes. Therefore, we have to control for different distributions of the relevant individual characteristics, too.

The paper contributes to the debate about European integration and social policy by discussing the variation of welfare state attitudes across Europe as one precondition of a future social union. In other words, the paper doesn’t try to give an answer to the question whether a social union is useful or desirable. Instead, it empirically describes and explains attitudinal variations between different European welfare states. Great Britain, (West and East) Germany, Italy, Norway, Hungary, and Bulgaria are chosen representing different welfare regimes. This selection implies that the analysis is not restricted to EU countries but also considers membership candidates like Norway, Hungary, or Bulgaria. With respect to the latter two “transitional” countries as well as to East Germany we have to keep in mind their communist past as well as their different institutional developments since the collapse of the old welfare regime.1 Since the typology of Esping-Andersen is originally limited to capitalist welfare states, we have to extend it to former communist welfare states in the theoretical part of this paper. Furthermore, it is sometimes questioned whether the British welfare state, like any other European welfare state, can be labelled “liberal”. Therefore, we will additionally analyze data from the United States, the “archetypical” example of a liberal welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990: 27).

The first empirical question to be answered in this paper is how the countries considered differ in aggregate levels of welfare state attitudes. In other words, is it possible to distinguish different “worlds of welfare state attitudes” (Andreß & Heien 1999) across Europe, implying a potential conflict for an European integration in the social policy domain? In this respect, the consideration of three time points (1985, 1990, 1996) allows an evaluation of attitudinal convergences resp. divergences. The next part of the analysis is concerned with the explanation of possible attitude differences between countries: do they result from overall variations ac-

1 Therefore, in the following analysis, East Germany is treated as a separate “country” regardless of the (political) unification with West Germany.
According to regime-specific socialization and the economic situation, from compositional effects of individual level interest and socialization variables, or from regime resp. country effects in structuring the effects of interest and socialization variables? Finally, the regime-specific patterns of attitude determination are examined. The question is how individual characteristics like economic interests and socialization experiences in detail influence people’s attitudes towards the welfare state.

European Integration in the social policy domain and public attitudes

The question of a social union or an European welfare state seems to be of minor importance for the process of European integration. The milestones of integration like the European Community for coal and steel of 1951, the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community of 1957 (“Rome Treaty”) or the EU Treaties of 1992 (“Maastricht Treaty”) and 1997 (“Amsterdam Treaty”) are much more results of initiatives to build up a single market by guaranteeing the mobility of goods, services, labour and capital (Schmidt 1998). Therefore, it doesn’t surprise that welfare states are usually interpreted as national states, leaving only a minimal social policy role for the EU: “There is no EC welfare law granting individual entitlements against Brussels; there are no direct taxes or contributions funding a ‘social budget’ which would back such entitlements; there is no Brussels welfare bureaucracy to speak of. ‘Territorial sovereignty’ in social policy, so conventional wisdom holds, is alive and well (Leibfried & Pierson 1999: 5).” Nevertheless, European integration has lead to a considerable erosion of the sovereignty and autonomy of national social policies (Leibfried 1997, Schmidt 1999a). Not as a result of an activist role of the Council, the Commission, the Parliament, or the European Court of Justice but as “spillovers” from the single market initiative the sovereign welfare states transformed into “parts of a multi-tiered system of social policy” (Leibfried & Pierson 1999: 6).

Disregarding the exact degree of European integration in the social policy domain, the question remains which factors have generally proved as obstacles on the road to a social union. According to Leibfried and Pierson (1999: 9), e.g., the institutional design of the EC, social policy prerogatives of the member states, the relative weakness of unions and social democratic parties until the mid-1990s, and last not least the diversity of national social policies have to be considered in this respect. Variations in people’s attitudes towards the welfare state are usually neglected when discussing factors disturbing the integration in the social policy domain (Heien 2000: 4). Like any other national welfare state, a future European welfare state would require a minimal correspondence of people’s social policy attitudes since “institutions cannot exist without a value foundation” (Wegener et al. 2000: 3). However, if, e.g., the regime-specific socialization hypothesis is true we have to expect an other scenario with people socialized in liberal regimes showing different expectations and claims towards the welfare state than people socialized in conservative, social democratic, or socialist re-
gimes. In the face of such a diversity of attitudes, it is questionable whether a social union in the form of common European welfare state institutions is a realistic perspective.

In view of their importance we have to ask what welfare state attitudes actually are? Since the welfare state is a complex phenomenon, it does not surprise that many typologies have been developed differentiating between alternative attitudinal aspects and dimensions (see, e.g., Roller 1992, Sihto and Usitalo 1995a, Svalfors 1991). But which dimensions have to be considered in our analysis? Since the primary function of the welfare state can be seen in ensuring socio-economic security and equality (Flora et al. 1977), an important aspect is whether people see a governmental responsibility for doing this. Roller (1999a: 24) calls this dimension the “range of governmental action”. In some ways, it can be labelled fundamental compared to other dimensions: questions concerning the means, the effects, or the financing of the welfare state, to name other possible dimensions of welfare state attitudes (Heien 1998), can be neglected if people see no governmental responsibility for ensuring socio-economic security and equality at all. Another advantage of using the range dimension is its comparability across welfare states whereas questions concerning other dimensions are often nation-specific. Therefore, it doesn’t surprise that large scale comparative data-sets usually concentrate on this aspect of welfare state attitudes (Gelissen 1999).

**Regime-specific socialization**

The first explanation of welfare state attitudes considered in this paper hypothesizes that people’s claims and expectations concerning the welfare state result from their socialization in a specific welfare regime type. Through everyday confrontation with regime’s institutions and structures as well as with its “dominant welfare state ideology” (Andreß & Heien 1999: 7) people are assumed to adopt the latter ideology. This doesn’t imply a strictly uniform socialization (Wegner & Liebig 1995a), nevertheless, on average people should show attitudes significantly differing from attitudes of people being socialized in a different welfare regime type. Furthermore, regime-specific attitudes are assumed to be relatively stable, “almost like personality traits” (Wegener et al. 2000: 3).

As mentioned above, a popular typology of welfare states can be found in Esping-Andersen’s (1990) work.\(^2\) With respect to the interplay of public and private actors in welfare provision, the protection of individuals against the market, and the kind of stratification that is promoted by social policy, the author distinguishes between *liberal*, *conservative* and *social democratic* welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990: 21). The indicators of his classification, referring to specific configurations of institutions and distributive outcomes, are shown in Table 1. It should be noted, that Esping-Andersen assumes no single pure cases of liberal, conservative, or social democratic welfare regimes in reality. Each existing welfare regime contains

\(^{2}\) For a discussion of alternative welfare state typologies see, e.g., Arts & Gelissen 1998.
elements of the other regimes types: “The degree to which clearly defined regime-clusters exist depends [...] on the extent to which regime-specific features are exclusively present only in one type” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 69).

The liberal regime comprises Anglo-Saxon welfare states such as the United States, Canada, or Great Britain. In these countries, the market plays the dominant role in the distribution of resources. Welfare provisions by the state are minimal and restricted to those who have proven need (means-tested programs), while the extent of social insurance programs and universal transfers is only modest. Consequently, the degree of de-commodification is quite low and the order of stratification is characterized by a strict social dualism between the majority of citizens which are (market-differentiated) rewarded for their frugality, entrepreneurship and self-reliance and the stigmatized recipients of social-assistance.

Table 1: Extended typology of welfare regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant aspect of the welfare mix</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Social democratic</th>
<th>Latin Rim</th>
<th>Socialist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De-commodification</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low/medium</td>
<td>very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic of stratification</td>
<td>exclusion</td>
<td>segmentation</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
<td>segmentation</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The conservative regime is typical for most Continental European countries like Germany, Austria, or France. Although state activity is clearly higher than in the liberal type it is restricted to situations when the family fails to ensure social security (compare the subsidiarity principle in Catholicism). Welfare provisions depend on work performance resp. previous earnings and preserve former status with negligible redistributive impacts. Therefore, the protection against the market depends primarily on the labour market position with (male) employees and their families being de-commodified to a high degree and others being insufficiently de-commodified. As a consequence, conservative welfare states are marked by a strict hierarchical segmentation.

Finally, the social democratic regime, which is the smallest of the three clusters, can be found in Scandinavian countries like Sweden, Norway, or Denmark. In these countries the state plays a dominant role in the distribution of resources with the aim of promoting “an equality of highest standards, not an equality of minimal needs” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 28). Individuals are emancipated from market dependence by means of universal benefits result-
In accordance with Popenoe, “familialism” shall be understood as “the belief in a strong sense of family identification and loyalty, mutual assistance among family members, and a concern for the perpetuation of the family unit” (Popenoe 1988: 212).
nant role in the distribution of resources, it was even the one and only distributor (Delhey 1998). Because of the absence of market elements, de-commodification was nearly perfect in socialist regimes (Deacon 1993, Schmidt 1999b). Finally, social inequality was minimal, because differences in income and living conditions were rather small.

Although according to the discussion above "socialized" attitudes are assumed to be relatively stable, it is worth to look at the different developments of former socialist (welfare) states during the process of transition. Research usually distinguishes three cases of transitional countries (Deacon 1992, 1993, Liebig & Verwiebe 2000). There's at first the special case of East Germany, successfully joining the "ready made" conservative welfare regime of West Germany (Deacon 1993, Wegener et al. 2000). Therefore, one can expect East Germans to have (at least slightly) adjusted their attitudes to the conservative regime, what implies an attitudinal convergence between East and West Germany. Concerning the remaining East European countries, we can roughly distinguish between countries like Hungary or the Czech Republic, distinctly reforming their social policies and developing toward the liberal regime (Deacon 1993, Gedeon 1995), and countries like Bulgaria, Romania or Russia, which seem to mainly "continue the pattern of the old regime" (Götting 1993: 24) and introduce only some conservative elements in the sense of a "post-communist conservative corporatism" (Deacon 1993: 195).

The question remains how attitudes towards the welfare state resp. the range of governmental action differ between the countries considered. Since the public-private interplay is an key indicator of Esping-Andersen's classification (see Table 1), attitudes can be easily connected with regime types. In general, support for governmental action should be lowest in regimes with a weak state activity in welfare provision and highest in regimes where the state plays an important role in welfare provision. With respect to the empirical examples used in our analysis we expect Italians to show higher support for governmental action than Germans since Italy is going through an earlier stage of welfare state development. People in these "young welfare states" will favour a higher governmental responsibility since they "have much more to gain from increased welfare state efforts than the citizens of the other European states" (Gelissen 1999: 13). Concerning the three former socialist welfare regimes East Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria, we expect no attitudinal differences right after the collapse of the old welfare regime (1990)4 but a formation of minor differences during the process of transition according to the chosen path of welfare state reform. Therefore, concerning people's support for governmental action we hypothesize the following ranking of the eight countries considered in our analysis (from highest to lowest): 1. Bulgaria, 2. East Germany, 3. Hungary, 4. Norway, 5. Italy, 6. West Germany, 7. Great Britain, 8. United States. Next to this general ranking of countries we have to differentiate between attitudes towards the range

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4 Attitudinal data prior to 1990 are not available (see below).
of governmental action in specific social policy domains. Since, e.g., at least statutory interventions in the case of illness or old age are compatible with the liberal welfare regime, we expect attitudinal differences between Great Britain resp. United States and the remaining countries to be smaller than for far reaching governmental actions like full employment policies or the reduction of income differences.

**Alternative explanations of welfare state attitudes**

Next to the socialization in different welfare regimes, the empirical literature refers to three other determinants of welfare state attitudes: a) country’s economic situation, b) self interest, and c) individual socialization experiences. These three modes of explanation as well as the interaction of aggregate and individual level attitude determinants in the sense of regime-specific interest and socialization effects will be discussed in the following.\(^5\)

**Economic situation**

Starting at the aggregate level, it is plausible to assume that attitudes towards the welfare state are influenced by the present economic situation of a country. Following Sihvo and Uusitalo (1995b), in times of economic recession, “the need for social policy becomes more obvious, and in periods of prosperity it could be seen to be declining” (Sihvo and Uusitalo 1995b: 252). Therefore, we should expect people living in a country with a bad economic situation to show a stronger support for governmental actions than people living in country with a better economic situation. Theoretically, this is not the only possible causal mechanism relating welfare state attitudes to the country’s economic situation, we can even imagine an inverse relationship between both variables. With respect to the financing of the welfare state, people might think that they can “afford” the welfare state only in prosperous times (Gangl 1997: 173). Therefore, we could also expect a bad economic situation to result in a weak support for governmental actions, vice versa.

In contrast to the regime-specific socialization hypothesis, which is assumed to primarily work as an explanation of welfare state attitudes at a certain point of time, the economic situation of a country can explain the development of attitudes over time, too. Thereby, we assume the same causal mechanisms. Correspondingly, e.g., an improvement of the economic situation might result either in a weaker (“need for social policy hypothesis”) or stronger (“financing hypothesis”) support for governmental action.

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\(^5\) Possible compositional effects of individual level determinants will be discussed in the methodical part of this paper.
The following abbreviations are used: USA = United States; GB = Great Britain; W-GER = West Germany; E-GER = East Germany; ITA = Italy; NOR = Norway; HUN = Hungary; BG = Bulgaria. Concerning Hungary and Bulgaria, data prior to 1989 (East Germany: 1992) are not available resp. not comparable to the data for the other countries (United Nations 1994, 1997).

Unemployment rates refer to the following age groups: United States, Great Britain, and Norway: persons aged 16 years and over; West and East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria: persons aged 15 years and over; Italy: persons aged 15 years and over (prior to 1993: persons aged 14 years and over). Concerning Hungary and Bulgaria, data prior to 1990 (East Germany: 1991) are not available (International Labour Office 1993, 1999).
An important methodological problem is how to measure the economic situation for it can be described by a great number of different indicators. We decide to rely on two approved indicators: the annual growth rate of the gross domestic product (GDP) and the rate of unemployment. Compared to the pure numerical value of the national GDP, the growth rate supplies us with a direct measure of the economic development of a country compared to the preceding year and therefore provides us with a measure of the “economic atmosphere” of the country. The unemployment rate can additionally be seen as a measure of the fiscal pressure on the welfare state.

So far as the data are available, Figure 1 and 2 report the GDP growth rate and the unemployment rate for the analyzed countries from 1984 to 1996. Although the trends are generally very irregular, one can for example see, that Bulgaria, Hungary, but also - to name at least one non-transitional country - Italy are characterized by a comparably low rate of economic growth combined with a fairly high level of unemployment.\(^8\) Contrarily, the United States and Norway are characterized by high rates of economic growth combined with low levels of unemployment.

**Self interest**

Turning to the individual level, the first mode of explanation focuses on the egoistic self interests of the citizens of the welfare state. Using rational choice arguments, it is hypothesized that individuals will evaluate those aspects of the welfare state positively from which they gain personally (i.e., which “maximize utility”), and disapprove those aspects that do not appear advantageous for their own interests. The literature usually concentrates on three types of interests, which all are determined by the individual’s position in the social structure.

Firstly, *consumers* of services and transfers relying on the welfare state for material support, like women, old age pensioners, young families with children, persons with low income or low level of education, or the unemployed (the so-called “transfer classes” or “underdogs”), will show a much higher degree of support than those who consume less (Cnaan et al. 1993, Cook & Barrett 1992, Robinson & Bell 1978). It is worth noting that this should not only be true for present but also for future consumers: e.g., while old-age pensions are supported by older and younger age cohorts since the latter expect to need these programs in future, children’s day-care institutions are only supported by the younger age cohorts since the older age cohorts do not profit by these institutions (Goul Andersen 1992: 42).

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\(^8\) Concerning the high rates of economic growth in East Germany from 1992 to 1994, we have to keep in mind that the starting point of this growth was a rather small GDP in 1991. However, since East Germany achieved massive financial transfers from West Germany, support for governmental action should be lower than in the other two transitional countries, Bulgaria and Hungary.
Secondly, those contributing to the welfare state as taxpayers are likely to have negative attitudes towards the welfare state (Siivola & Uusitalo 1995b). Difficulties arise because people do not only pay taxes, but also benefit from the welfare state. Some authors, e.g., assume that middle class people despite their tax burdens strongly support the welfare state because they “benefit disproportionately as consumers of health and education services” (Papadakis & Bean 1993: 258). Others, especially supporters of the “welfare backlash” (Wilensky 1975) and the “working-class anger” hypothesis (Taylor-Gooby 1983), claim in contrast that members of the middle and the working class despite benefiting from programs will oppose to the welfare state “because they resent having to pay taxes [...] and channel their anger against the poor” (Cnaan et al. 1993: 125). Besides that, a subjective element has to be considered: the individual’s perception of its own social position possibly influences its views about the welfare state. Perceived risks of unemployment or other life events, for example, make it even for well-off citizens rational to support “benefits not meeting their acute needs” (Forma 1997: 239; see also Pöntinen & Uusitalo 1988).

Thirdly, apart from the question of benefits and burdens, some people have interests in the welfare state as its producers. Those employed in the public sector - according to Papadakis and Bean (1993), especially those employed in the welfare bureaucracies in reproduction and education as doctors, nurses, teachers or social workers - are more likely to be favourable towards the welfare state than others, because their employment, but also their careers, working conditions and economic rewards depend on the welfare state’s prosperity (Forma 1997, Pöntinen & Uusitalo 1988, Svallfors 1991, 1995).

**Differential socialization**

Another type of explanation assumes that individual socialization processes will lead to different attitudes towards the welfare state. Several individual characteristics are used as indicators of different socialization processes: among them age (i.e., generation), gender, education, and employment sector. A differentiation with respect to age can be found in Inglehart’s (1977) work on materialistic and post-materialistic values. According to this theory, the younger age cohorts should be characterized by rather post-materialistic values, i.e., they should favour values such as solidarity and community instead of pure self-interest. Therefore, we expect the younger age cohorts to show a stronger support for a broad range of governmental action than the older ones. Since Inglehart’s hypothesis dates back to the 1970s and postmaterialism should have penetrated across age groups, we expect to observe this strong support not only for the young but also for the middle aged.

Similarly, a rich literature exists on different socialization patterns of men and women. According to Svallfors (1997: 290), “the specific experiences of women may make them more inclined to embrace a ‘rationality of caring’ in which concern, consideration, and devotion to others are more prominent [...]. The institutionalization of caring services bring into the public
realm what was previously a private matter, thus transforming a ‘moral economy of domesticity’ into support for state welfare’. Correspondingly, we expect women to show higher preferences towards governmental action than men.

The effects of education are not as clear as the previous two variables. On the one hand, education is supposed to “enlighten” people on general values of civilization: “with enlightenment [...] comes a greater commitment to the idea of equality as a positive value” (Robinson and Bell 1978: 129). If this is true, the better educated will show greater preferences for a broad range of governmental action. On the other hand, the longer a person remains successful in the educational system, the more she will be convinced that individual achievement is rewarding and should be rewarded. Therefore, one could also hypothesize that individual “success” ideologies prevail among the better educated; i.e., people with higher education will tend to show lower levels of support for governmental action than people with lower education.

Finally, employment in the public sector is connected with specific socialization experiences, too. As different authors argue, working conditions in the public sector “may create bonds of sympathy and solidarity with fellow public-sector employees and their clients, patients, and other welfare dependants” (Svallfors 1995: 55). Therefore, public sector employees should show generally greater preferences for governmental interventions than other people.

**Interaction of aggregate and individual level attitude determinants**

In the last two sections we have discussed how individual economic interests and socialization experiences affect welfare state attitudes. Thereby, we hypothesized the individual characteristics to have an identical effect independently of the regime resp. country considered. Since interaction effects of aggregate and individual level attitude determinants in the sense of regime-specific interest and socialization effects might explain attitude differences between countries, we have to think about the correctness of this hypothesis. According to Svallfors, there is an obvious link between aggregate and individual level determinants of welfare state attitudes: “The identities and interests of social actors are not pre-determined from their structural positions. They are created in a process where the institutional framework within which people act, and the historical traditions through which events and processes are interpreted, have a decisive impact. The weight of exposure to different institutional regimes creates diverging world-views even between people in similar structural locations” (Svallfors 1997: 291).

The work of Esping-Andersen gives some indications for regime-specific interest effects. According to him, the different regime-types are connected with specific social cleavages and conflict structures in the transition from industrial to post-industrial societies. The liberal welfare state tends to create a class cleavage, especially within sexes and races: “As women
and Blacks are becoming more fully integrated into the prevailing class structure, the likelihood is that class differences will crystallize sharply within the various minority groups. As some women become yuppies and Blacks become bourgeois, the women and Blacks left behind will experience much more keenly the phenomenon of relative deprivation” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 228). For the conservative welfare state, we have to expect conflicts between the insiders and outsiders of the labour market because the highly productive workforce supports a growing but unproductive outsider population (Esping-Andersen 1990: 227). Finally, in the social democratic regime gender and sector (private vs. public sector) will emerge as the most important cleavages because of their different welfare state benefits: “In this sense, one might easily imagine a war between (largely) male workers in the private sector and (largely) female workers in the welfare state” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 227).

Because Esping-Andersen concentrates on typical representatives of the liberal, conservative, and social democratic welfare regime, we have to think about regime-specific interest effects for Great Britain, Italy, East Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria. As Schmid (1996: 95) points out, the British system of welfare can be labelled by three typical characteristics: First, it is centred on wage work as the central source of a person’s income. Secondly, it is following a policy of full employment. And thirdly, full employment actually means “male full employment”, i.e. it presupposes a traditional understanding of family. Accordingly, we may expect two central cleavage lines for the British case. As in conservative regimes, we may be faced with an insider-outsider phenomenon, i.e., a cleavage between those inside and outside the official labour market. Due to the change in traditional family norms (that, for example, become visible in growing divorce rates), we can also expect an attitudinal cleavage between men and women where the latter are not as well cared for by the welfare system.

For the Italian case of a “Latin Rim” welfare regime, we can expect the dominant cleavage to run between the core sectors of the labour force and those employed in the so-called irregular or non-institutional market. As Mingione (1994) points out, there is a high degree of protection for those working in large or medium-sized enterprises which is contrasted by a scarcity of protection for those unemployed. E.g., there are only rudimentary security programs for the young unemployed. Furthermore, the labour market position of women is characterized by a low participation rate and a high and growing level of unemployment. These conditions force many people into the irregular economic sector which is of course not covered by welfare state activities. In accordance with a classification by Ferrera (1996), we therefore expect differences in welfare state attitudes between the “hyper-protected beneficiaries” (public employees, white-collar workers and private wage earners of medium and large enterprises) and the “under-protected workers and citizens” (those working in weak economic sectors or the informal economy resp. those affected by youth and long-time unemployment).
Concerning East Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria, we expect social cleavages resulting from the more or less rigid transitions of the socialist welfare regime to be more important than possible conflict structures of the socialist welfare regime itself. With women and unemployed people we can identify two main “losers” of the transition process. Because in the socialist welfare regime full-time employment (outside the home) was an element of both male and female ideal life biographies, labour force participation of women was much higher than it is in East Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria today (Liebig & Verwiebe 2000, Wegener & Liebig 1995b). Additionally, due to the tremendous increase in unemployment rates (see Figure 2), more and more East Germans, Hungarians, and Bulgarians are exposed to the risk of being unemployed and therefore depend on welfare state benefits. In the transitional countries, we therefore expect strong attitudinal cleavages between the sexes and between the employed and the unemployed. Concerning Bulgaria, we can also imagine an age cleavage since the social position of older people worsened dramatically during transition (Liebig & Verwiebe 2000). Furthermore, we expect a specific generational socialization effect in the transitional countries to counteract the assumed higher preferences for governmental action of younger people. Since the older age cohorts have built up the socialist state, they can be assumed to be the ones that show the highest identification with the egalitarian socialist model of society (Wegener & Liebig 1995b). Furthermore, because of selective migration processes to the West - especially in East Germany, but also in Hungary - the older age cohorts remaining should build a relatively homogenous group. In contrast, the younger age cohorts born „into“ the socialist state took its achievements as granted, realized its deficiencies, and were infected with Western capitalist ideologies by modern mass media. Therefore, if the hypothesized age effect for Great Britain, West Germany, Italy, Norway, and the United States is true, it should work the other way round in East Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

Data, measurement, and method

Data

The data used in this study are from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), which in 1985, 1990, and 1996 launched its three “Role of government” surveys (Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung 1985, 1990, 1996). 23,911 interviews from people from West and East Germany, Norway, Italy, Great Britain, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the United States aged 18 to 74 were gathered altogether. The nineteen sample sizes, East Germany, Norway, and Hungary did not take part in the 1985 survey, Bulgaria took part only in the 1996 survey, vary between 632 (United States 1985) and 2,617 (West Germany 1990).

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9 We confine our analysis to this age group because of corresponding restrictions of the Italian and Norwegian data (Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung 1985, 1990, 1996).
**Measurement**

The “Role of government” surveys 1985, 1990, and 1996 offer numerous indicators of our dependent attitude construct. Unfortunately, some of them were not asked at every time and in every country. Therefore, we restrict our analysis to five items measuring in various ways whether the state should be responsible for ensuring socio-economic security and/or socio-economic equality. More specifically, the respondent’s opinion about the statements shown in Table 2 was asked for (abbreviations of items in parentheses).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The government should provide a job for everyone who wants one.” (EX_JOBS)</td>
<td>1 = definitely should not be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The government should provide health care for the sick.” (EX_HEALT)</td>
<td>4 = definitely should be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The government should provide a decent standard of living for the old.” (EX_RETIR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The government should provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed.” (EX_UNEMP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The government should reduce income differences between the rich and poor.” (EX_INCOM)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The question remains whether these five items really measure the same thing. In other words, is there a single underlying dimension or do we have to differentiate several attitudinal sub-dimensions? The results of a series of confirmatory factor analyses (not documented here) indicate that a model with three latent constructs resp. factors, differentiating between attitudes towards a governmental responsibility for “social security” (EX_RETIR, EX_HEALT), “social equality” (EX_INCOM), and “labour market” (EX_UNEMP, EX_JOBS), shows the best fit to the data.\(^{10}\)

Compared to our dependent construct „range of governmental action“, the selection of indicators for our independent constructs was even more difficult with the ISSP data. Some aspects were measured with different indicators across countries and some indicators were not consistently collected.\(^{11}\) Our independent variables include eight interest and socialization indicators. To evaluate the impact of *regime-specific socialization* and the *economic situation* of the countries considered, we estimate separate models for West and East Germany, Nor-

---

\(^{10}\) Data were analysed with LISREL (Jöreskog & Sörbom 1993) using maximum likelihood (ML) estimation. List-wise deletion was used for missing values to get consistent estimators. Because of possible differences in factor loadings and error variances between countries (see below), we did multi-group analyses (i.e., each sample is treated as a separate group) without any between-group restrictions except for the same factor structure, i.e., items loaded on the same factors across groups.

\(^{11}\) In view of the attitude determinants discussed in the theoretical part of this paper, especially the absence of indicators of employment in the public sector is deplorable.
way, Italy, Great Britain, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the United States for any possible point of time (see below). Implicitly, these models estimate attitude differences between countries.

Different interest groups of welfare state provisions are identified by two age dummies (35 to 54 years; 55 to 74 years; reference group: 18 to 34 years), which were used to control for non-linear age effects, a dummy for women, a standardized education score\(^\text{12}\), a standardized household equivalent income score\(^\text{13}\), two employment dummies (unemployed; not in labour force, i.e., old age pensioners, helping family members, housewives resp. housemen and students; reference group: employed), a dummy for the self employed, and the subjective class position.\(^\text{14}\)

Since the first three self-interest variables - age, sex, and education - are also used as indicators of different socialization patterns, they are called socio-demographic factors, measuring effects of both determinants. Of course, this somewhat pragmatic but unavoidable procedure has the disadvantage of not being able to distinguish statistically between effects of self-interest and differential socialization. Unfortunately, no genuine socialization indicators are available in the "Role of government" surveys.

According to the means of the interest and socialization variables (not documented here), in some cases remarkable differences exist between the eight countries considered: e.g., in 1996, in East Germany (.144) or Bulgaria (.143) many more people (in the ISSP samples used) are unemployed than in Great Britain (.047), West Germany (.040), Norway (.025), or the United States (.024). Since, among others, compositional effects of interest and socialization variables might explain attitudinal variations between countries, we have to take into account these mean differences. With respect to the example of the employment status, a strong support for governmental action in East Germany and Bulgaria might result from the higher unemployment rates of East Germans and Bulgarians compared to the British, West Germans, Norwegians, and Americans.

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\(^{12}\) To get an international comparable measure of education, in a first step country specific educational classifications were transformed to formal length of schooling in years (Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung 1995). In a second step, the ratio of a respondent’s schooling in years to the mean schooling in years for a given country (and point of time) was calculated.

\(^{13}\) The income score results from a multi-stage procedure. Because the extent of missing data for household income was in some cases very high (especially in West Germany), we used stochastic regression methods to impute missing values (Little & Schenker 1995: 60) with the respondent’s individual income, age, sex, education, employment status, and household size as predictors of household income. To calculate household equivalent income, household income was divided through household size \(^{15}\) (see Buhmann et al. 1988: 120). Finally, to get an international comparable measure of income, the ratio of a respondent’s household equivalent income to the mean household equivalent income for a given country (and point of time) was calculated.

\(^{14}\) Subjective social class is measured on a 6-point scale: 1 “lower class”; 2 “working class”; 3 “lower middle class”; 4 “middle class”; 5 “upper middle class”; 6 “upper class”.

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Method

Structural equation models (SEM) are used to examine cross-country variations in welfare state attitudes and to evaluate the importance of the proposed attitude determinants. By means of multi-group SEM we are able to control for construct comparability resp. measurement equivalence which is of special interest when doing comparative research. Multi-group SEM allow to analyze data from several samples simultaneously with the parameters constrained to be equal between groups as specified by the researcher (Bollen 1989, Jöreskog & Sörbom 1993). In the previous section, we already analyzed the underlying dimensions of attitudes towards the range of governmental action by means of multi-group confirmatory factor analyses. In the next step of our analysis, we control whether the resulting factors, “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market”, are comparable across countries.

However, construct comparability is not an all-or-none concern. Comparative research literature distinguishes three degrees of construct comparability: factorial similarity, strong factorial invariance, and strict factorial invariance (Little 1997, Singh 1995). Factorial similarity means that the scale items load on the same factors across groups. This is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for doing between-group comparisons. Strong factorial invariance represents a higher degree of construct comparability because it implies that the factor loadings and measurement intercepts are identical for each scale item across groups. An even higher degree of construct comparability is represented by strict factorial invariance which means that the factor loadings, measurement intercepts, and measurement error variances are identical for each scale item across groups. Although many authors regard only strict factorial invariance as a sufficient condition for between-group comparisons (see e.g. Meredith 1993, Singh 1995) we agree with Little’s note that assuming “sources of bias and error are negligible [...] they should be represented as unconstrained residual variance terms across groups in order to examine the theoretically meaningful common-variance components as unbiasedly as possible” (Little 1995: 55). Therefore, we already consider strong factorial invariance as a sufficient condition for between-group comparisons.

We control for construct comparability between countries and points of time (1985, 1990, 1996) by means of two additional multi-group confirmatory factor analyses compared to the model discussed above (see Footnote 10). In the first model, factor loadings and measurement intercepts of our three latent constructs are set to be equal across the nineteen groups because construct comparability is interpreted as strong factorial invariance. In the second model, construct comparability is interpreted as strict factorial invariance by additionally equalizing constructs’ error variances across groups.

To examine aggregate level variations in welfare state attitudes from 1985 to 1996, we use a structured means test, i.e., we compare countries’ means of “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” (Model I in Table 3). In multi-group SEM, mean differences between
groups are given by the difference between the intercepts of the latent attitude constructs ($\alpha$). Because intercepts are not identified for all groups in case of multi-indicator latent constructs, one sample (United States 1985) is used as the reference group with intercepts fixed to 0.

Table 3: Independent variables used in structural models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Regime</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II (A, B, C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household equivalent income</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective social class</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>USA, GB, W-GER, E-GER, ITA, NOR, HUN, BG</td>
<td>USA, GB, W-GER, E-GER, ITA, NOR, HUN, BG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a) only 1990 and 1996; b) only 1996.

In the next step of our analysis (Model II in Table 3), we examine whether in 1996 attitudinal differences between the countries considered result from overall variations according to regime-specific socialization and the economic situation, from compositional effects of individual level interest and socialization variables, or from country effects in structuring the effects of interest and socialization variables. To differentiate these effects in multi-group SEM, a three step procedure is used. In a first step we again analyze whether there are any attitude differences at all by comparing the means of “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” (Model II a). In terms of our research question, we only control for the effect of regime-specific socialization resp. economic situation. In a second step we additionally control for regime-specific differences in the mean values of the independent variables, i.e. compositional effects of individual level interest and socialization variables, by allowing structural effects of the independent variables (which are equalized across countries) on attitudes towards the range of governmental action (Model B). Finally, we additionally control for regime-specific coefficients of the independent variables, i.e. interaction effects of regime and individual level interest and socialization variables (Model C). In contrast to the previous step, structural effects of the independent variables on “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” are allowed to vary across countries.

---

15 A detailed discussion of the decomposition of effects can be found in Andreß & Heien 1999.
The structural model tested for each of our eight groups in Model II is shown in Figure 3. To simplify the model, for age and employment status only one variable is displayed instead of the two dummies actually used in the analysis. As mentioned above, for our independent constructs only single indicators are available. The resulting identification problem is solved by fixing the common ($\lambda_1$) and unique ($\delta_i$) factor loadings as well as the measurement intercepts ($\tau_i$) at predetermined values ($\lambda_{1i} = 1; \delta_i = 0; \tau_i = 0$) and to estimate only the variances of the latent constructs ($\phi_i$). Similar restrictions are applied for the dependent construct “social equality”, fixing factor loadings ($\lambda_{ij}$ resp. $\epsilon_i$) and measurement intercepts ($\tau_{ij}$). Furthermore, it is assumed that “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” are not independent what is controlled by correlated errors ($\psi_{ij}$). Since the three factors are sub-dimensions of attitudes towards the range of governmental action, the correlations between their errors should be positive. Finally, concerning the intercepts in the structural equations for “social security” ($\alpha_1$), “social equality” ($\alpha_2$), and “labour market” ($\alpha_3$), the same identification problem exists as in the structured means test. Because intercepts are not identified for all groups in case of multi-indicator latent constructs, one sample (United States 1996) is used as the reference group with intercepts fixed to 0.

Note: Free estimated variances and covariances of exogenous constructs ($\phi_i$ resp. $\phi_i$) are not displayed. Except for error covariances between endogenous constructs ($\psi_{ij}$), disturbance terms of the structural model ($\zeta$) and errors of measurement ($\delta_i$ resp. $\epsilon_i$) are assumed to be uncorrelated.
Results

Measurement equivalence

To control whether the latent attitude constructs of our analysis are comparable between countries and time points, we have to look for differences in factor loadings, measurement intercepts, and measurement error variances. As mentioned above, when only assuming factorial similarity, i.e., scale items load on the same factors across groups, a 3-factor model, differentiating between attitudes towards “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market”, shows the best fit to the data. Therefore, we use this measurement model as our baseline model (H_form; see Table 4) when testing for construct comparability.

Table 4: Testing for construct comparability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$L^2$ (df)</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H_form</td>
<td>208.845 (57)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H_\text{lt}</td>
<td>1,772.765 (129)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>.933</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H_\text{ltde}</td>
<td>4,243.425 (201)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.948</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The $L^2$ statistic for the model with equal factor loadings and equal measurement intercepts across groups ($H_{lt}$) is 1,772.765 (df = 129). Since the first and the second model are nested, a likelihood ratio test can determine whether $H_{lt}$ is an appropriate assumption. The resulting test statistic is 1,563.920 (=1,772.765 - 208.845) with 72 (= 129 - 57) degrees of freedom. This $L^2$ value is statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the equality constraints have to be rejected. Nevertheless, most of the other goodness-of-fit measures reported are still satisfactory.\(^{16}\) In contrast, the third measurement model, additionally assuming equal measurement error variances across groups ($H_{ltde}$), shows a nonacceptable fit to the data. Given this result, we conclude that at least the second model with equal factor loadings and equal measurement intercepts has sufficient measurement equivalence.

Concerning the reliability and validity of the indicators used, the standardized factor loadings of the indicator variables (not documented here) range from critical .287 (EX_UNEMP in Hungary 1990) to excellent .842 (EX RETIR in the United States 1985). In general, standardized factor loadings of the “labour market” indicators are low, i.e. much of the variation in these two indicators is not explained by the underlying construct. Therefore, at least for the “labour market” construct looking for additional indicators would be a useful job in future research. Finally, the $t$ values of the standardized factor loadings indicate that all factor loadings are highly significant ($p < .001$). Correspondingly, all indicators are effectively measuring the respective construct implying a high level of convergent validity (Hatcher 1994).

\(^{16}\) According to the literature, the following fit values indicate a good (reasonable) fit: GFI (“Goodness-of-Fit Index”) ≥ .95 (.90); CFI (“Comparative Fit Index”) ≥ .95 (.90); RMSEA (“Root-Mean-Square-Error-of-Approximation”) ≤ .05 (.08); SRMR (“Standardized Root-Mean-Square-Residual”) ≤ .05 (Bollen 1989, Hatcher 1994).
Are there any differences in welfare state attitudes across Europe?

Our next empirical question is concerned with the existence of aggregate level attitude differences between European countries (and the United States) and the development of possible differences from 1985 to 1996. To answer this question, we take a look at the results of our nineteen-group structured means test (see Model I in Table 3). To allow for an easier interpretation of results, means of the three factors “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” are rescaled with a value of 100 for our reference group United States in 1985.17

Figure 4: Attitudes towards range of governmental action: means of “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” 1985-1996 (United States 1985 = 100)

According to the results shown in Figure 4, support for governmental action concerning “social security” is consistently lowest in the United States. West Germans show a clearly higher support, while the remaining countries seem to cluster in the relatively small range between 144.22 (East Germany 1996) and 166.71 (Norway 1996). Obviously, except for West Germany, there is something like a consensus about a governmental responsibility in cases of illness and age across Europe. Furthermore, welfare state attitudes seem to be quite stable over time. Although, except for Norway, all countries are marked by a decreasing support for governmental action, a remarkable change of attitudes over time can only be observed in East Germany: from 1990 to 1996 the level of support goes down from 163.64 to 140.49.

17 Therefore, e.g., a value of 200 equals a 1-point-difference on the original scale of the manifest indicators use compared to the reference group United States in 1985.
With respect to the second factor, “labour market”, we are confronted with a different picture (see Figure 4). In the first instance, the gap between the United States and Europe is much larger than it was for the “social security” factor. People from West Germany seem to move nearer to the rest of Europe, now showing similar attitudes than British people. Nevertheless, European attitudes are more heterogenous than in the previous case with the former cluster of countries being decomposed in a kind of ranking of support for a governmental responsibility for the labour market. Thereby, East Germans show the highest degree of support, followed by Norwegians and Bulgarians. Hungarians and Italians constitute the next group while Germans and the British bring up the rear. Concerning the development of attitudes over time, we can observe a general decline of support for governmental action. However, while countries like Italy (1985: 190.34; 1996: 165.14) or East Germany (1990: 207.77; 1996: 196.84) are marked by a considerable decline, attitudes remain relatively stable in Norway.

Finally, concerning the “social equality” factor the pattern of attitudes looks similar to the pattern for the “labour market” factor although there are some differences regarding the ranking of countries. Again, Americans clearly defend their status as welfare state opponents with consistently low values of support. In contrast to the “labour market” factor, people from West Germany and Great Britain can be differentiated with respect to their level of support for a governmental responsibility for the reduction of income differences since the British score much higher than before. Italians, Bulgarians, and, at least in 1996, Norwegians show a slightly higher level of support, while Hungarians and especially East Germans rank highest on this factor with maximum values of 206.89 (East Germany 1990) resp. 198.79 (Hungary 1990). Except for Norway, all European countries are marked by a decrease of support over time. This is especially true for Italy (1985: 203.90; 1996: 181.81) and Great Britain (1985: 190.08; 1996: 168.05).

The question remains whether the observed attitude differences can be interpreted as an obstacle or starting point for a future European welfare state? Of course, a definite answer to this question is not possible since we don not know how large resp. small these differences have to be to disturb resp. foster the European integration in the social policy domain. However, what we can say is that attitude differences with respect to a governmental responsibility for social security are smaller than those concerning a governmental responsibility for social equality or the labour market. Furthermore, confining to the development of welfare state attitudes between 1990 and 1996, there is a slight convergence of attitudes towards a governmental responsibility for the labour market but a likewise slight divergence of attitudes towards a governmental responsibility for social security. In contrast, attitudes towards a governmental responsibility for social equality did not converge or diverge in the considered period. Nonetheless, since changes of attitudes over time are rather small and even opposed, the “attitudinal preconditions” of an European welfare state neither improved nor worsened between 1990 and 1996.
How to explain differences in welfare state attitudes across Europe?

Judging from the results discussed, there is some evidence for regime-specific attitudes. The “liberal” United States consistently show the lowest level of support for governmental action. The staggering British attitudes confirm the country’s status of a “hybrid” regime while the level of support in “conservative” West Germany corresponds with our expectations. Concerning the remaining five countries, Italy, Norway, East Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria, their ranking with respect to welfare state attitudes depends on the aspect of governmental action considered. Furthermore, since attitude differences between these countries are not as sharp as expected, they cannot be clearly differentiated.

An alternative interpretation of our results is to treat them as a consequence of the economic situation of the countries considered. We can find some support for the “need for social policy hypothesis”, i.e. the assumption that people in countries with a lower economic level will show a higher level of support for welfare state activities, vice versa. Countries providing us with support for this hypothesis are the United States and West Germany as examples of “prosperous” countries and Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, and - at least compared to the United States and West Germany - Italy as examples of countries with economic problems. On the other hand, the case of Norway is not compatible with this hypothesis. Being characterized by the comparably lowest rate of unemployment and a considerably high rate of economic growth, it shows high levels of support for all three areas of welfare state activities.

If we consider a longitudinal perspective, attitudes towards the welfare state not only depend on the economic situation at a certain point of time but also on its development over time. However, our results neither reveal much support for the “need for social policy hypothesis” nor for the “financing hypothesis”. While in some cases an improvement of the economic situation results in a weaker support for governmental action, in other cases the relationship works the other way round. Furthermore, many cases indicate that there is no relationship between the economic development and welfare state attitudes at all because a changed economic situation is accompanied by no change in welfare state attitudes, vice versa. To sum up, there seems to be only very few evidence for an effect of the economic development on general support for governmental action, while there are some results indicating a regime effect as well as an effect of the economic situation at a given point of time on specific welfare state responsibilities.

However, according to the discussion in the theoretical part of this paper, the observed cross-country attitude differences may have other reasons than regime specific socialization experiences or different economic situations of countries, namely compositional effects of individual level interest and socialization variables and/or country-specific interest and socialization effects. Therefore, we compare the means of attitudes towards “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” estimated in an eight-group structured means test
(Model A) with the intercepts of the corresponding structural equations estimated in two structural models with equal (Model B) resp. unequal (Model C) individual level effects across countries (see Model II in Table 3). This analysis is restricted to the year 1996 and the United States are used as the reference group, i.e., for this sample the re-scored means and intercepts are set to 100.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Figure 5:} ML-estimates of structural equation intercepts for attitudes towards “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” in 1996 in various structural models (United States = 100)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.png}
\caption{ML-estimates of structural equation intercepts for attitudes towards “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” in 1996 in various structural models (United States = 100).}
\end{figure}

Source: ISSP 1996 (own calculations).

According to Figure 5, the additional consideration of compositional effects of individual level interest and socialization variables seems to be of minor importance for cross-country attitude differences. Compared with Model A, the influence of overall differences between countries stay more or less the same in Model B with nearly the same ranking of countries. In contrast, the consideration of country-specific interest and socialization effects in Model C dramatically changes the pattern of welfare state attitudes. The variation across countries is shrinking for all three attitude constructs. Furthermore, the ranking of countries estimated in the structured means test is totally mixed up in Model C. This is especially true for attitudes towards “social security”. Except for the British, people from all other countries considered are less supportive towards a governmental responsibility in cases of illness and old age than Americans when controlling for country-specific interest and socialization effects. To sum up, the results of our analysis indicate that the cross-country differences in welfare state attitudes shown in the structured means test have to be explained both with an overall coun-

\textsuperscript{18} Of course, the restriction to the year 1996 implies different measurement models compared to our previous analyses. Concerning the comparability of constructs across countries and the reliability and validity of the indicators used, our results (not documented here) indicate no problems. The overall fit of all three models is also acceptable. Model A: $\chi^2 = 1,060.540$ (df = 196); GFI = .993; CFI = .964; RMSEA = .062; SRMR = .020; Model B: $\chi^2 = 1,516.087$ (df = 385); GFI = .993; CFI = .964; RMSEA = .048; SRMR = .024; Model C: $\chi^2 = 1,060.540$ (df = 196); GFI = .993; CFI = .964; RMSEA = .062; SRMR = .020.
try effect and with the influence of country-specific economic interests and socialization experiences. However, there is some evidence that individual level effects are even more important than aggregate level effects for cross-country attitude differences.

**Regime-specific interest and socialization effects**

In view of the importance of country-specific individual level effects, we want to have at least a short look on them to get an impression how individual characteristics like economic interests and socialization experiences in detail influence people’s welfare state attitudes and to test our interaction hypotheses formulated in the theoretical part of this paper. Therefore, we compare the unstandardized effects of individual level interest and socialization variables on attitudes towards “social security”, “social equality”, and “labour market” as estimated in Model C (see Tables 5-7).

**Table 5: ML-estimates of unstandardized structural effects on “social security” (t values)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>W-GER</th>
<th>E-GER</th>
<th>ITA</th>
<th>NOR</th>
<th>HUN</th>
<th>BG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age: 35-54 years</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.079*</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.078***</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>-.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 55-74 years</td>
<td>-.145*</td>
<td>.089*</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.172***</td>
<td>.082*</td>
<td>.139***</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (women = 1)</td>
<td>.170***</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.085***</td>
<td>.075*</td>
<td>.093*</td>
<td>.081***</td>
<td>.109***</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.538***</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.047**</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>-.059</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>-.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household equivalent income</td>
<td>-.055</td>
<td>-.058*</td>
<td>-.062*</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-.063*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status: unemployed</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status: not in labour force</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.022</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employment</td>
<td>-.055</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-.096</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective social class</td>
<td>-.039*</td>
<td>-.103***</td>
<td>-.069***</td>
<td>-.048**</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>-.027**</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-.025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[R^2 = .099\]
\[N = 1,014\]

Significance level: * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

Source: ISSP 1996 (own calculations).

Concerning the direction of the estimated effects, we can observe a fairly homogenous pattern. In most countries, men, people with higher education, people from high income households, the self-employed, and people who count themselves among the higher social classes prove as opponents of governmental action. In contrast, effects of age and employment status on welfare state attitudes are not that clear. Although there seems to be a tendency, that older people show more preferences towards governmental action than younger people, with respect to attitudes towards “social security” and “labour market”, the relationship works
the other way round in the United States and in Bulgaria. The employment status seems to be of minor importance for people’s welfare state attitudes. Only support for a governmental responsibility in questions of the labour market is significantly influenced by this variable with the unemployed showing stronger support than employed people.

Table 6: ML-estimates of unstandardized structural effects on “social equality” (t values)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>W-GER</th>
<th>E-GER</th>
<th>ITA</th>
<th>NOR</th>
<th>HUN</th>
<th>BG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age: 35-54 years</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.200**</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>.215***</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-1.131)</td>
<td>(1.206)</td>
<td>(-.381)</td>
<td>(3.124)</td>
<td>(-.279)</td>
<td>(3.336)</td>
<td>(1.942)</td>
<td>(1.750)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 55-74 years</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.334***</td>
<td>.250**</td>
<td>.422***</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.478)</td>
<td>(1.775)</td>
<td>(1.904)</td>
<td>(4.385)</td>
<td>(2.926)</td>
<td>(5.480)</td>
<td>(5.434)</td>
<td>(1.158)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (women = 1)</td>
<td>.221***</td>
<td>.195**</td>
<td>.148***</td>
<td>.184***</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.203***</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.203**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.474)</td>
<td>(2.858)</td>
<td>(3.332)</td>
<td>(3.537)</td>
<td>(.728)</td>
<td>(3.588)</td>
<td>(1.591)</td>
<td>(2.898)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.697***</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>-.215*</td>
<td>-.753***</td>
<td>-.226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-3.360)</td>
<td>(-.547)</td>
<td>(-.231)</td>
<td>(1.414)</td>
<td>(-.629)</td>
<td>(-2.213)</td>
<td>(-6.462)</td>
<td>(-1.645)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household equivalent income</td>
<td>-.177***</td>
<td>-.271***</td>
<td>-.199***</td>
<td>-.177***</td>
<td>-.223***</td>
<td>-.307***</td>
<td>-.087*</td>
<td>-.236***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-3.394)</td>
<td>(-4.588)</td>
<td>(-4.639)</td>
<td>(-2.697)</td>
<td>(-3.035)</td>
<td>(-5.279)</td>
<td>(-2.308)</td>
<td>(-4.424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status: unemployed</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.475)</td>
<td>(1.218)</td>
<td>(-.500)</td>
<td>(.399)</td>
<td>(-.262)</td>
<td>(.550)</td>
<td>(.882)</td>
<td>(.393)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status: not in labour force</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>-.073</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.231)</td>
<td>(-.580)</td>
<td>(-.762)</td>
<td>(-.013)</td>
<td>(-.885)</td>
<td>(.721)</td>
<td>(.574)</td>
<td>(.679)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employment</td>
<td>-.203*</td>
<td>-.231*</td>
<td>-.216*</td>
<td>-.125</td>
<td>-.223*</td>
<td>-.263*</td>
<td>-.394***</td>
<td>-.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-2.022)</td>
<td>(-1.986)</td>
<td>(-2.554)</td>
<td>(-1.045)</td>
<td>(-2.233)</td>
<td>(-2.570)</td>
<td>(-3.514)</td>
<td>(-1.653)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective social class</td>
<td>-.101***</td>
<td>-.190***</td>
<td>-.180***</td>
<td>-.144***</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>-.184***</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>-.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-3.518)</td>
<td>(-4.823)</td>
<td>(-8.636)</td>
<td>(-5.574)</td>
<td>(-.678)</td>
<td>(-6.353)</td>
<td>(-1.393)</td>
<td>(-1.653)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**R²** | .106 | .144 | .091 | .106 | .036 | .180 | .111 | .088

| N     | 1,014 | 782  | 1,807 | 904  | 983  | 1,001 | 1,311 | 776 |

Significance level: * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

Source: ISSP 1996 (own calculations).

What about the hypothesized interaction effects? The consistently strong effects of education in the United States might be interpreted as an evidence for the class cleavage in the United States hypothesized by Esping-Andersen. Nevertheless, with respect to other relevant indicators like income or subjective class position attitude differences within the United States are smaller than within other countries. Strong conflicts between the insiders and outsiders of the labour market have been assumed for Great Britain, West and East Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Concerning the only aspect influenced by the employment status to a considerable degree, support for a governmental responsibility in questions of the labour market, attitude differences are relatively large within West Germany, Great Britain, and Hungary, but relatively small within East Germany, Bulgaria, and Italy. Another interaction effect hypothesized referred to welfare state attitudes of men and women, assuming large gender differences in Great Britain, Norway, East Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria. While gender differences in Norway, East Germany, and, except for attitudes towards a governmental responsibility in cases of illness and age, Great Britain are indeed comparably large,
gender differences in Hungary and Bulgaria are comparably small. Finally, there is only little evidence for the assumed differences in age effects between transitional countries and non-transitional countries since in most countries older people show more preferences towards governmental action than younger people (see above).

Table 7: ML-estimates of unstandardized structural effects on “labour market” (t values)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>W-GER</th>
<th>E-GER</th>
<th>ITA</th>
<th>NOR</th>
<th>HUN</th>
<th>BG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age: 35-54 years</td>
<td>-.137*</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>.129**</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.109**</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2658)</td>
<td>(.810)</td>
<td>(.1380)</td>
<td>(3.156)</td>
<td>(.135)</td>
<td>(2.874)</td>
<td>(1.564)</td>
<td>(.054)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 55-74 years</td>
<td>-.181*</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.268***</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.232**</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>-.273***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2546)</td>
<td>(1.817)</td>
<td>(.868)</td>
<td>(5.507)</td>
<td>(1.108)</td>
<td>(5.121)</td>
<td>(.1386)</td>
<td>(-3.383)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.103*</td>
<td>.108*</td>
<td>.131***</td>
<td>.109**</td>
<td>.114*</td>
<td>.097**</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(women = 1)</td>
<td>(.2241)</td>
<td>(.2240)</td>
<td>(4.936)</td>
<td>(3.279)</td>
<td>(2.445)</td>
<td>(2.912)</td>
<td>(1.591)</td>
<td>(1.091)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.718***</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>-.246***</td>
<td>-.490***</td>
<td>-.375***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.769)</td>
<td>(-.669)</td>
<td>(1.294)</td>
<td>(1.782)</td>
<td>(-1.366)</td>
<td>(-4.297)</td>
<td>(-6.648)</td>
<td>(-4.141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household equivalent income</td>
<td>-.085*</td>
<td>-.125**</td>
<td>-.078**</td>
<td>-.136**</td>
<td>-.247***</td>
<td>-.085*</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>-.135***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.2255)</td>
<td>(-.3014)</td>
<td>(-.3068)</td>
<td>(-.3242)</td>
<td>(-4.803)</td>
<td>(-2.476)</td>
<td>(-1.379)</td>
<td>(-3.827)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status: unemployment</td>
<td>.310*</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>.244***</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.176**</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2071)</td>
<td>(.1875)</td>
<td>(3.668)</td>
<td>(1.941)</td>
<td>(.586)</td>
<td>(1.576)</td>
<td>(3.167)</td>
<td>(1.067)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status: not in labour force</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.198*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.674)</td>
<td>(.181)</td>
<td>(.589)</td>
<td>(.1109)</td>
<td>(-.602)</td>
<td>(-.155)</td>
<td>(.523)</td>
<td>(2.523)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employment: social class</td>
<td>-.148*</td>
<td>-.102</td>
<td>-.059</td>
<td>-.157*</td>
<td>-.170*</td>
<td>-.225***</td>
<td>-.332***</td>
<td>-.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.2027)</td>
<td>(-.1246)</td>
<td>(-1.172)</td>
<td>(-2.044)</td>
<td>(-2.444)</td>
<td>(-3.743)</td>
<td>(-4.694)</td>
<td>(-.636)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>-.123***</td>
<td>-.094***</td>
<td>-.072***</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>-.219**</td>
<td>-.044*</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>(-.862)</td>
<td>(-.4417)</td>
<td>(-.7586)</td>
<td>(-.4378)</td>
<td>(.582)</td>
<td>(-3.108)</td>
<td>(-2.545)</td>
<td>(.286)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.269</td>
<td>.469</td>
<td>.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,014</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>1,807</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>1,001</td>
<td>1,311</td>
<td>776</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level: * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

Source: ISSP 1996 (own calculations).

According to the discussion in the previous section, cross-country differences in welfare state attitudes have to be explained to a considerable degree with the influence of country-specific economic interests and socialization experiences. The question remains, which country-specific effects are responsible for these findings. Hence, we have to look for the strongest interaction effects. Because units of measurement are different, a direct comparison of the interest and socialization effects shown in Tables 5 to 7 is not possible. Therefore, we estimate a series of structural models with across-country equality constraints on parameters of interest. The strength of an interaction effect can be concluded from the L²-difference between the non-restricted baseline structural model (L² = 1060.550; df = 196) and the relevant structural model with equality constraints. Furthermore, a likelihood ratio test can determine whether this difference is significant since models are nested.

19 Concerning age and employment status, the effects of all dummies are equalized across countries.

20 Since we test multiple hypotheses with the same data (with just varying the equality constraints), we have to consider the impact of sequential testing on statistical significance levels (Bollen 1989: 369). To take into account the reciprocal dependency of our L² test statistics, we will concentrate on highly significant effects.
Table 8: Testing for interaction effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social security</th>
<th></th>
<th>Social equality</th>
<th></th>
<th>Labour market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( L^2 ) (df)</td>
<td>( L^2_{\text{diff}} ) (df)</td>
<td>( L^2 ) (df)</td>
<td>( L^2_{\text{diff}} ) (df)</td>
<td>( L^2 ) (df)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1090.935</td>
<td>30.395**</td>
<td>1094.967</td>
<td>34.427**</td>
<td>1143.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(210)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(210)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>1070.920</td>
<td>10.380</td>
<td>1069.199</td>
<td>8.659</td>
<td>1066.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1086.767</td>
<td>26.227***</td>
<td>1119.618</td>
<td>59.078***</td>
<td>1165.794</td>
</tr>
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<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>1069.390</td>
<td>8.850</td>
<td>1074.986</td>
<td>14.446*</td>
<td>1079.382</td>
</tr>
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<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
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<td>1068.266</td>
<td>7.726</td>
<td>1076.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(210)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(210)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
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<td>4.071</td>
<td>1068.399</td>
<td>7.859</td>
<td>1073.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective social class</td>
<td>1085.646</td>
<td>25.106***</td>
<td>1091.170</td>
<td>30.630***</td>
<td>1090.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(203)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level: * \( p \leq .05 \); ** \( p \leq .01 \); *** \( p \leq .001 \).
Source: ISSP 1996 (own calculations).

The results of the likelihood ratio tests shown in Table 8 indicate that especially the influence of age, education, and subjective social class varies systematically across countries. Furthermore, although restricted to attitudes towards a governmental responsibility for the labour market, the interaction effect for income achieves statistical significance. Given these results, we can specify our statements concerning the explanation of aggregate level attitude differences: a large part of the variation in welfare state attitudes shown in the structured means test does not exist between countries, but between different age groups, educational groups, and people counting themselves among different social classes within the countries considered. With respect to attitudes towards the “labour market” factor, we additionally have to take into account attitudinal variations between different income groups.

Summary and discussion

In our preceding analyses, we have tried to find an answer to the question whether attitudes towards the welfare state differ across Europe and how possible differences have to be explained. Our results reveal that one can in fact observe differences with respect to the range of governmental action in the countries considered. To a certain extent, these differences can be explained by using the idea of different welfare regimes: People in liberal welfare regimes (United States, Great Britain) show comparably low levels of support for governmental action. While we find medium levels of support in conservative regimes (West Germany), governmental actions seem to have a high legitimacy in social democratic regimes (Norway), so-called “Latin Rim” countries (Italy), and transitional countries (East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria) where the socialist ideal of social policy obviously did not disappear with the end of
the regime. Nevertheless, some problems have to be emphasized: The British show higher levels of support than we initially expected. The labelling of Great Britain as a “hybrid” case of all welfare regimes is therefore not only reflected in its institutional but also in the attitudinal structure of its population. Furthermore, we originally expected attitude differences between social democratic regimes, “Latin Rim” countries, and transitional countries due to their different institutional settings. However, attitude differences between these countries are not as sharp as expected and their ranking concerning the level of support depends on the aspect of governmental action considered.

The economic situation seems to have an influence on public opinion towards the welfare state, too. In general, people in countries with a higher economic level show a lower level of support for welfare state activities. The only exception from this rule is Norway. In this country, low rates of unemployment and high rates of economic growth are accompanied by high levels of support for all three areas of welfare state activities. In contrast, our results do not reveal much support for an effect of the economic development on welfare state attitudes.

Including regime-specific effects of self-interest and differential socialization reduces the influence of originating from a specific regime resp. country on welfare state attitudes, especially for attitudes concerning social security, while compositional effects of individual level variables seem to be of minor importance in this respect. We therefore conclude that cross-country differences in welfare state attitudes have to be explained both with overall country effects and with the influence of regime-specific economic interests and socialization experiences. There is even some evidence that regime-specific individual level effects are more important for the explanation of cross-country attitude differences. In other words, originating from a specific regime resp. country appears to have strong influences in structuring the effects of other (self interest and socialization) variables but weak effects in overall variations between different welfare regimes. Hence, looking for aggregate level effects only, as done in most of previous research, means asking the wrong question. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the regime-specific interest and socialization effects observed not necessarily correspond with the effects hypothesized. In other words, we found only limited support for a distinct class cleavage in the United States, conflicts between the insiders and outsiders of the labour market in Great Britain, West and East Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria, gender differences in Great Britain, Norway, East Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria, and a unique age effect in transitional countries with respect to welfare state attitudes. In general, age, education, and subjective social class emerge as the individual level attitude predictors with the strongest cross-country variation. Therefore, we have to conclude that a large part of the variation in welfare state attitudes exists between different age groups, educational groups, and people counting themselves among different social classes within countries.
Although our study reveals many interesting results on the determination of attitude differences between welfare states, it is restricted in some ways. Firstly, limited by data availability, the evaluation of the influence of country-specific interest and socialization effects was limited to the indicators used. Several interaction hypotheses could not be tested at all. Second, the measurement model of our dependent attitude construct was generally satisfactory. Nevertheless, future research should look for additional indicators to cover all aspects of governmental action. Thirdly, with respect to the explanation of differences in welfare state attitudes between countries, it might be useful to think about methodical extensions resp. alternatives to the SEM used: e.g., multi-level models allow an exact evaluation of the influence of aggregate level effects, compositional effects of individual level variables, and interaction effects of aggregate and individual level variables (Gelissen 1999). These latter remarks show that further research within the framework of this study is needed to highlight the way how welfare regimes influence attitudes.

References


