# Public Opinion on Emigration in Europe: The Role of National Identity

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## Abstract

The paper examines the link between national identity and an under-researched side of migration attitudes – attitudes toward emigration. We investigate the role of the strength of national identification and conceptions of nationhood in public opinion on emigration, adopting a comparative multi-country perspective. Based on structural equation models on nationwide samples from six European countries (N = 7,810), we found little evidence for the hypothesized positive link between national identification and anti-emigration sentiment, as well as for the moderating role of conceptions of nationhood, highlighting the need to further study the drivers of emigration attitudes.

**Key words:** attitudes toward emigration, national identity, national identification, identity content, conceptions of nationhood

## Introduction

Despite its pervasive character, human migration faces high levels of public opposition (Kustov, 2022). Measuring levels of negativity toward migration and human mobility in general, as well as understanding factors underlying it, remains critical, especially considering the centrality of this issue to the current rise of right-wing populism in Europe and beyond. The Brexit referendum has exemplified how playing on anti-migration sentiments can produce profound side-effects, involving political transformations going beyond regulations or reforms specific to migration.

It is immigration that has been highly politicized and consequently attracted most attention among public opinion scholars (see Dražanová et al., 2024, for a recent meta-analysis). The other side of the coin – emigration attitudes, understood as attitudes toward emigration of co-nationals – has been relatively neglected (for exceptions, see e.g. Shapira and Etzioni, 1970; Sirgedaite and Schuck, 2012; Kustov, 2022; Kyriazi and Visconti, 2025; Theiss-Morse and Wals, 2014; George and Reardon, 2013; Perényi-Harka and Martinović, 2025; Visconti and Kyriazi, 2026; Riggan, 2013; Erdmans, 1992; Lerner and Stephenson, 2024; Lu and Zeng, 2026)[1]. Meanwhile the role of these attitudes in bringing social change is not negligible, which makes it important to understand their determinants. Emigration attitudes condition emigration's potential to transform sending-country social and political life via social remittances (understood as a conscious or unconscious cross-border transfer of ideas, practices, skills, and know-how, acquired by emigrants through a learning process, Levitt, 1998; Pinkow-Läpple and Möllers, 2025; White, 2016). If positive, social remittances can bring "deprovincialization", that is, contribute to the development of a more open worldview among members of the sending community, which is linked to improved inter-group relations and has a social cohesion- and peace-eliciting potential (Pettigrew, 2011; Verkuyten et al., 2022). The transformative force of social remittances depends on how they are received, that is, whether they are accepted by members of sending communities in emigrants' countries of origin, which in turn depends on emigration attitudes (Nevinskaitė, 2016). These attitudes can also influence emigrants' wellbeing, by providing or depriving them of social support from their social network back home, as well as influence potential return intentions.

National identity has been one of the most studied predictors of immigration attitudes. Since anti-immigration and anti-emigration attitudes often go hand in hand – represented as the belief that people ought to live in "their own" countries, that is, countries in which they were born (Kustov, 2022) – and have been shown to have similar individual-level predictors (Kustov, 2022; Kyriazi and Visconti, 2025), one may expect that emigration attitudes can also be linked to national identity. Immigration attitudes research has provided inconsistent findings on the

[1] While immigration and emigration attitudes have at times been studied together under the umbrella of attitudes toward freedom of movement (see e.g. Karstens, 2020; Lutz, 2021; Theorin et al., 2021; Vasilopoulou and Talving, 2019), this research usually did not disentangle attitudes toward inward from attitudes toward outward movement.

role of national identity in migration attitudes. This inconsistency can be attributed to the role of identity content. Past studies, forming two parallel research strands with different disciplinary origins, generally found that national identity predicts more negative immigration attitudes only when 1) identification is coupled with a sense of ingroup superiority (e.g., nationalism, Blank and Schmidt, 2003; Grigoryan and Ponizovskiy, 2018; Jeong, 2013) or 2) the way national group members demarcate their symbolic group boundaries excludes immigrants (e.g., ethnic conceptions of nationhood, Bartasevičius and Trunov, 2024). It remains unknown, however, whether these findings on anti-immigration sentiment hold true for anti-emigration sentiment. Among the few works that included national identity among predictors of emigration attitudes, only a few informed the discussion on the role of identity content, focusing on concepts such as national superiority or collective psychological ownership (Theiss-Morse and Wals, 2014; Perényi-Harka and Martinović, 2025; Kyriazi and Visconti, 2025). None of them, however, investigated the moderating role of different conceptions of nationhood.

Our study advances the existing knowledge on the understudied link between national identity and attitudes toward emigration by looking at the role of both the strength of national identification (conceptualized as the feeling of closeness to one's country) and conceptions of nationhood endorsed by an individual, and by adopting a comparative multi-country perspective. In addressing the role of conceptions of nationhood, we test the moderating role of support for a conception of nationhood based on country of birth, and conduct further exploratory analyses for conceptions of nationhood based on language and country's customs and traditions. We utilize survey data from the *REMINDER: Online-Panel Study on Migration and Mobility Attitudes 2017-2018* (Meltzer et al., 2019), which included nationwide samples from six European countries: Germany, Hungary, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. This enabled us to look at the heterogeneity in the observed pattern of results across European countries differing in migration histories, and content and longevity of national identity (Ariely, 2024). In light of the ongoing population decline and population aging in Europe, and the growing popularity of nationalist movements and the far-right, which promote strong national identity with a highly outgroup-derogatory content, public opinion on emigration of co-nationals and its relation to national identity have become increasingly relevant questions.

## The strength of national identification and attitudes toward emigration

In the logic of group interest and group threat, emigration may be viewed as being against national interest, and posing both realistic and symbolic threats (Stephan et al., 2009). Emigration of co-nationals can be considered a realistic threat as it can be seen as threatening to the survival of the nation in a physical sense – both with regard to its size (depopulation concerns, decreasing political and economic power) and structure (through changes to its socio-demographic composition). The structural concerns may relate, for example, to the changing

ethnonational structure, such as worries about a decreasing share of "natives" in the country, or about the deteriorating structure of human capital due to brain drain. Emigration-induced changes to the ethnic composition of the nation can also be perceived as a symbolic threat, if they are seen as threatening the homogeneity of the nation's culture and its "way of life". Naturally, in contexts where emigration is a salient issue, the level of perceived threat is expected to be higher. In such contexts, emigration discourse is often related to moral concerns, where staying put is portrayed as a national obligation, as being loyal to the country and morally responsible (Kustov, 2022; Kyriazi et al., 2023; Kyriazi and Visconti, 2025; Sirgedaite and Schuck, 2012; Erdmans, 1992). It can be expected that stronger national identification, conceptualized as the importance of being a member of the nation or feeling of closeness to the nation or country, makes people more protective toward the ingroup and more likely to hold such a moralizing viewpoint on emigration of co-nationals. These expectations can be derived from several social science theories, the most fundamental being the social identity theory (SIT, Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

According to SIT, a core point of theoretical reference in social science research on national identity, people strive for a positive self-image and derive it from their membership in social groups. If, in their view, their social identity is negative or threatened, they can use various identity management strategies, with two extremes corresponding to two distinct belief systems: the belief system of social mobility and the belief system of social change. The former allows the possibility of individually changing groups to improve personal circumstances (individual mobility strategy). The latter involves a preference for acting as a member of a group rather than as an individual, where a preferable strategy is to compete with outgroups to improve the standing of the ingroup (social competition strategy, Tajfel and Turner, 1979)[2]. Within the belief system of social change, moving to another group may be considered as a betrayal, an act that strengthens the outgroup's position and weakens the ingroup by damaging ingroup solidarity and social cohesion. Importantly, ingroup identification has been shown to affect identity management strategies: people who identify strongly with the ingroup, who to a larger extent derive their self-concept from group membership, are less inclined to choose individual mobility (Blair and Jost, 2003; Spears et al., 1997). While high identifiers tend to be more concerned with group interest (Turner et al., 1987) and more sensitive to group identity threat (Spears et al., 1997; Riek et al. 2006; Caricati 2018) than low identifiers, they have been found to have a weaker desire for individual mobility even in the absence of an identity threat (Ellemers et al., 1997).

The individual mobility–social competition distinction of SIT relates to Hirschman's (1970) exit–voice framework, which was developed in parallel to SIT in economics and is widely used in sociology and migration studies (see Tajfel, 1976 for a discussion on how SIT

[2] Apart from individual mobility and social competition strategies, Tajfel and Turner also distinguished social creativity strategy, which boils down to 'redefining or altering the elements of the comparative situation' (1979: 43).

and Hirschman's model relate to each other). In Hirschman's model, leaving the organization (e.g. a firm or a state), or expressing dissatisfaction to facilitate improvements in that organization, are two opposing ideal-typical ways in which people may respond to dissatisfaction with their membership in social institutions. Additionally, Hirschman introduced the notion of loyalty, defined as attachment to an organization. Similar to how the studies drawing on SIT viewed ingroup identification, he viewed loyalty as a factor decreasing the likelihood of reaching for exit[3].

Both SIT and Hirschman's theory thus predict that identification/loyalty reduces a preference for individual strategies (individual mobility/exit). While it has not been directly implied by either of the theories, it is plausible that the individuals' preference for one or the other strategy would be linked to their view of what strategy other members of their ingroup should choose (Perényi-Harka and Martinović, 2025). High identifiers should thus be more likely to interpret other members' leaving in negative terms – as a disloyal behavior, harmful for the group. This expectation can be drawn from the group socialization model (Levine and Moreland, 2002) and subjective group dynamics theory (Marques et al., 1998). Both of these models would predict that leaving the group can be viewed as disloyalty, a deviance from the non-abandonment norm, which weakens the ingroup's ability to compete with outgroups and decreases its perceived value (Branscombe et al., 1993; Levine and Moreland, 2002; Travaglino et al., 2014). These expectations can also be indirectly derived from the theories of nations and nationalism pointing to notions such as commitment, solidarity, sacrifice, collective power, territorial boundedness and unity as defining features of the nation (Miller, 1995; Tamir, 1993; Kohn, 1944; Smith, 1991; Renan, 1882/1990; Breuilly, 1996). Against this backdrop, we hypothesized that stronger national identification is associated with more negative attitudes toward emigration of fellow citizens (H1).

**The moderating role of conceptions of nationhood**

Emigration attitudes are likely to be shaped not only by the strength of national identity but also conceptions of nationhood, as is the case for immigration attitudes. A number of authors in the immigration attitudes literature have argued that the strength of national identification by itself (as a neutral identity not implying intergroup comparisons, i.e. an identity devoid of content, Huddy, 2015) should not drive anti-migration sentiment. Instead, its effect on migration attitudes should depend on how the nation is conceptualized in people's minds (Billiet et al., 2003; Breton, 2015; Meeus et al., 2010; Pehrson, Vignoles, et al., 2009; Reicher and Hopkins, 2001; Vanbeselaere et al., 2006). Past evidence on the strength of national identification as a predictor of immigration attitudes has indeed been mixed: some studies found a positive link with anti-immigrant sentiment (Huddy and Del Ponte 2019; Konings et al., 2023; Curtis, 2014);

[3] Identification and loyalty are related – social identity has been shown to act as a 'social glue', fostering group loyalty (Van Vugt and Hart, 2004; see also Zdaniuk and Levine, 2001).

some found a negative link (Górska et al, 2022; Citrin et al., 2012); some reported null findings (Jeong, 2013), and a recent meta-analysis revealed a non-significant overall effect (Bartasevičius and Trunov, 2024). Most of these studies, however, have disregarded the role that conceptions of nationhood play in driving the relationship between national identification and outgroup attitudes. Those that have accounted for it, have mostly discussed the role of conceptions of nationhood endorsed at the group (national) level (e.g. Citrin et al., 2012; Pehrson, Vignoles, et al., 2009; Weldon, 2006; Maddens et al., 2000), while the role of individual-level conceptions of nationhood has rarely been examined (for exceptions, see Meeus et al., 2010; Pehrson, Brown, et al., 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, et al., 2009).

Literature has traditionally distinguished two broad conceptions of nationhood, or criteria for being considered a true national (Kohn, 1944; Hjerm, 1998; Jones and Smith, 2001; Pehrson, Brown, et al., 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, et al., 2009; Pehrson and Green, 2010): ethnic (also referred to as ascriptive, ascribed, objectivist, objective or essentialist) and civic (also referred to as achieved, elective, acquired, or voluntarist). The former stands for innate criteria, referring to such traits as ancestry, birthplace, or blood. The latter refers to characteristics that are not inborn and can be acquired by outgroup members.

There is a strong theoretical rationale to expect conceptions of nationhood to moderate the link between national identification and immigration attitudes. Ethnic conceptions of nationhood indefinitely exclude immigrants from the nation, by not letting them shed the outgroup label. Endorsement of these conceptions should thus make national identity more exclusive, yielding a more negative effect of national identification on attitudes (see Pehrson, Brown, Zagefka, 2009, for empirical evidence supporting this contention on the individual level). Civic conceptions, in turn, allow immigrants to become part of the nation. Support for these conceptions should thus make national identity more inclusive, diminishing the negative effect of national identification on attitudes. While this categorization has been used extensively, not all conceptions of nationhood are unequivocally classifiable into either of the two broad types. This includes, in particular, cultural conceptions of nationhood (Shulman, 2002) based on such criteria as the ability to speak the national language or following national customs and traditions (Hjerm, 1998; Reijerse et al., 2013; Pehrson, Vignoles, Brown, 2009; Simonsen and Bonikowski, 2020; Taniguchi, 2021; König, 2024). Depending on the interpretation, they may be considered as either inclusive of immigrants (assuming that they can become part of the nation by acquiring their receiving country's language, customs, and traditions) or exclusive (assuming that it may be hard or undesirable for adult immigrants to acquire new or abandon their native language, customs, and traditions).

Conceptions of nationhood may also be relevant to emigration attitudes. People who highly identify with their nation are more likely to perceive emigrants' departure as a threat to national interests if they consider emigrants (or their descendants) no longer part of the nation. The general rule is thus the same as for immigration: the more exclusive the conception of nationhood, the stronger the negative link between national identification and migration

attitudes. The ethnic–civic distinction is however not that useful in case of emigration attitudes: both most unequivocally ethnic conceptions referring to traits such as ancestry or blood (König, 2024; Kunovich, 2009; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010) and civic conceptions referring to criteria such as citizenship (cf. Breuilly, 1996) may be considered inclusive of emigrants and their descendants. Civic conceptions involving a commitment to living together under shared institutions (Renan, 1882/1990; Miller, 1995; Tamir, 1993; Smith, 1991) are, in turn, exclusive of emigrants and their descendants. This is why we do not refer to the two broad types of conceptions of nationhood, focusing on specific conceptions instead.

If a conception of nationhood is based on the country of birth, emigrants can still be viewed as part of the nation, but their born-abroad children will no longer be considered part of it. Thus, support for this conception can reinforce the negative link between national identification and emigration attitudes by excluding emigrants' descendants from the national ingroup. In line with this argument, we hypothesized that the more people endorse the conception of nationhood based on the country of birth, the stronger the negative link between national identification and emigration attitudes (H2).

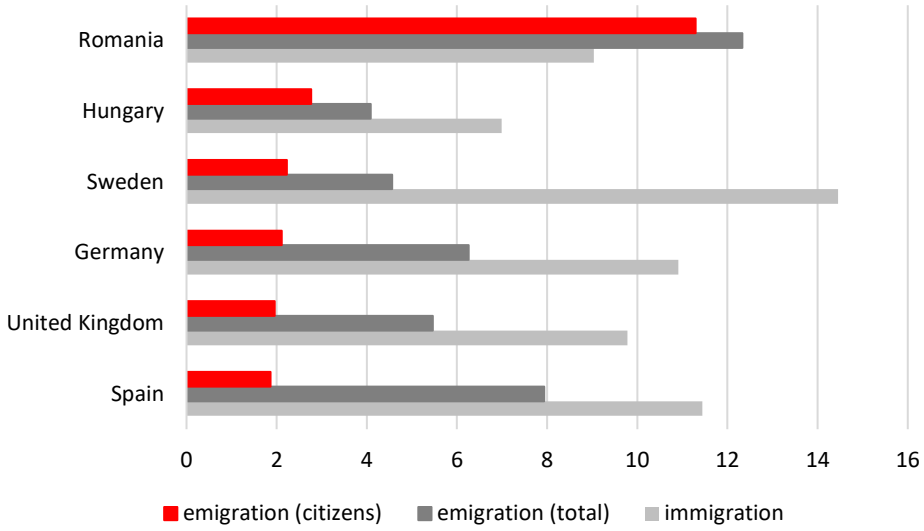
The ambiguity of criteria such as the ability to speak the national language and following national customs and traditions noted previously in relation to immigrants, also holds for emigrants, who may not be able to fully retain their country of origin's language or customs and traditions. This is why we refrained from posing any hypotheses regarding these borderline cases and instead treat our analyses regarding them as exploratory.

We expect our research hypotheses to hold across countries. To test this expectation and to account for a potential variation in the strength of the hypothesized relationships, we empirically explore inter-country differences in these relationships, which could arise from the different historical and geographical context of the countries studied.

**Historical-geographical context**

Our study covered European countries differing in their migration experiences and the resultant low (Germany, Sweden, UK) or high (Spain, Hungary, and Romania) salience of emigration. At the time of the survey, out of the six countries studied, only Romania noted negative net migration (see Figure 1). The remaining countries had a positive migration balance, yet they differed in the structure of their outflow – with Hungary having the highest while Spain having the lowest share of their own citizens among emigrants. While it is reasonable to assume that, in assessing the consequences of emigration, people react to the current situation in their country, they are also undeniably influenced by the ongoing and past public discourse, which in turn is a product of the country's longer migration history.

Figure 1. Emigration and immigration per 1,000 population in the studied countries in 2017




Source: Eurostat Database, retrieved 18/03/2026

Over the course of the 20th century, a considerable part of Europe transitioned from negative to positive net migration (Okólski, 2012; Thränhardt, 1997), yet these processes unfolded at a different pace across the European states. From the countries studied here, Germany and Sweden were among the first to experience the migration transition. Since the mid-20th century, they have both noted an almost constantly positive migration balance, first due to recruitment of foreign laborers (and the inflow of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe in the German case), and then due to arrivals of economic migrants (to a large extent via family reunification) and refugees (Bade, 1995; Thränhardt, 1997; Sandelind et al., 2017).

The UK entered the take-off phase of the migration cycle in 1960s, also earning itself a label of an 'old' immigration country (Fassman and Reeger, 2008). Its migration balance, however, turned positive only in mid-1980s. Until then, UK citizens were departing for Canada, Australia, and the US at greater rates than people were arriving from what remained of the British Empire and countries such as Poland and Italy (Fassman and Reeger, 2008). Despite a positive migration balance overall, net migration of British nationals was constantly negative throughout the first decades of the 21st century (Kirk-Wade, 2025), with a large proportion of professionals among those leaving the country (Murray et al., 2012). The negative migration balance among its citizens concerned also Germany in recent decades (Ette and Erlinghagen, 2021) but with little evidence for brain drain (Ette and Witte, 2021).

Spain is considered a late-comer to the import of labor. Until mid-1980s, the country noted a significant excess of emigration over immigration (Arango, 2000), with many Spaniards heading first for South America and then for Western Europe. This trend stopped with positive economic developments and the country's accession to the EU, when a notable inflow of return migrants and then labor migrants began. This net immigration trend was suspended by the 2008 financial crisis, which triggered mass out-migration flows of both foreign and Spanish nationals

(Izquierdo et al., 2015), resulting in a return to negative migration balance in 2010-2015 (González-Ferrer and Moreno-Fuentes, 2017). This reversal of the previous trend increased the salience of emigration both in the media and, also due to widespread media coverage, in society. Importantly, public concerns about emigration and the resultant brain drain were exacerbated by the pervasive media-driven misconception that young and highly-skilled Spaniards accounted for the majority of those leaving (González-Ferrer and Moreno-Fuentes, 2017). At the same time, the new Spanish emigrant community was visibly politically engaged in domestic issues and perceived as 'economic exiles' forced into emigration by detrimental economic circumstances (López-Sala, 2017).

In Hungary, the democratic transition marked the beginning of a migration transition, with the overwhelmingly ethnic immigration in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hárs et al., 2009). Despite being considered one of the 'immigration leaders' in the Central and Eastern European region (Górny and Kaczmarczyk, 2020), the issue of emigration was increasingly present in the Hungarian public discourse. The salience of the topic increased following a surge in out-migration in the first decade of the 21st century, especially after the country's accession to the EU (Gödri et al., 2014), and the shift in diaspora policies from engaging mostly ethnic Hungarians in the neighboring countries to involving also the broader global Hungarian diaspora (Waterbury, 2025).

Finally, Romania clearly remains a country of emigration. Outflows from the country and consequently the salience of emigration as an issue have increased considerably in the first decade of the 21st century, first with the introduction of a visa-free regime for Romanian citizens and then the country's accession to the EU (Anghel et al., 2016).

## Data and methods

### *Data*

We use secondary data from the first two waves of the *REMINDER: Online-Panel Study on Migration and Mobility Attitudes 2017–2018* (Meltzer et al., 2019). This data was collected between December 2017 and July 2018 within the Horizon 2020 REMINDER project (https://www.reminder-project.eu/). The survey was carried out via online panels among the adult general population in seven European countries: Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the UK, with quotas based on gender, age, and region of residence. Poland was excluded from the current analysis due to lack of configural invariance for the outcome measure (see preregistration for details). The survey polled over 3,200 respondents in each country in wave 1 and ca. 1,300–1,800 per country in wave 2. The questionnaire included questions on respondents' attitudes toward emigration as a phenomenon, as well as on the strength of their national identification and their conceptions of nationhood. Questions on conceptions of nationhood were only included in wave 1 of the survey, while questions on attitudes toward emigration and strength of identification were only included in wave 2. We

therefore pooled the data from the two waves, dropping wave 1 respondents who had not participated in wave 2. Our predictor (strength of national identification) and outcome (anti-emigration attitudes) thus came from wave 2 of the survey, while the moderator (conceptions of nationhood) came from wave 1. We assume, however, that conceptions of nationhood are relatively stable in time (Mader and Schoen, 2023), especially in the short and medium term, which corresponds to the 6-month interval between the two waves of the REMINDER survey. We ran all our analyses on the subsample of wave 2 respondents who are citizens of the country. We excluded participants based on the quality control criteria recommended by the authors of the data. We used listwise deletion in our analysis, thereby excluding by default all observations with missing data on any of the variables. The exclusion criteria are documented in detail in the preregistration (doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/RSAUX). The final estimation sample was N = 7,810.

### *Measures*

*Anti-emigration attitudes* were measured by a set of questions about the consequences of citizens' leaving the country for various aspects of the country's functioning. The instruction read: "Now, we'd like to ask you about the issue of emigration, that is citizen[s] leaving [country]. Generally speaking, would you say that emigration …", followed by a list of specific issues. Respondents were asked to assess on a 1–10 response scale whether emigration is bad or good for their country's economy, burdens or benefits their country's labor market, threatens or ensures the survival of their country's nation, undermines or enriches their county's culture and identity, and burdens or benefits their country's welfare system. We recoded the variables so that higher scores indicated more negative attitudes toward emigration.

While all five questions captured emigration attitudes, three of them (concerning the economy, labor market, and welfare system) may be considered as reflecting realistic threats, while the remaining two (concerning survival of a nation, and culture and identity) – symbolic threats (Stephan et al., 2009). To see if the five observed variables load on one or two latent factors, we ran a multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) with country as a grouping variable. The results of invariance testing (see the preregistration for details) allowed us to model our dependent variable as one latent factor measured by five items, imposing metric invariance on the measurement part of the model.

*Strength of national identification* was captured by a single question on the feeling of closeness to one's country ("How close do you feel to your country?"), with a 4-point response scale, where 1 = not close at all and 4 = very close. This item captures the cognitive (self-categorization) and affective (emotional bond with the country/nation) components of national identification and is often treated as a measure of national attachment (Mader and Mußotter, 2026; Ellemers et al., 1999; Quandt and Schmidt, 2024).

*Conceptions of nationhood* were captured by the matrix question "How important or not do you think each of the following is for being truly [nationality]?", with the following items: "to have been born in [country]", "to be able to speak [country national languages]" and "to

follow [country] customs and traditions", each measured on a 1–5 response scale, where 1 = not at all important and 5 = very important. We used the first item in confirmatory analyses, and the second and third in further exploratory analyses.

We included the following control variables that have frequently been shown to be linked to migration attitudes (Dražanová et al., 2024; Kyriazi and Visconti, 2025; Theiss-Morse and Wals, 2014): gender, age, education, difficulty paying bills, political orientation, personal migration experience, migration background (having at least one parent born abroad), and place of residence (city, suburbs, town, countryside). For definitions and descriptive statistics for all variables, both for the whole sample and for each country subsample, see Table S1 in the online supplement.

### *Data analysis*

To account for potential cross-country differences in the effects of national identity, we ran multigroup structural equation models (MGSEM), with a latent factor capturing anti-emigration attitudes as a DV and country as a grouping variable. We used the *lavaan* package (Rosseel, 2012) in R version 4.5.1. To test H1, we included the strength of national identification as a predictor. To test H2, we added a measure of support for a conception of nationhood based on birthplace and its interaction with the strength of national identification. We first estimated our models without controls and then added the controls in the second step. We did not use weights in our analyses, as we did not aim to estimate population means and the inclusion of basic socio-demographic variables as covariates in our models adjusts for differential selection probabilities, reducing the likelihood of bias. In each case, we compared a model with parameters of interest constrained to be equal across countries to an unconstrained model.

In addition to the confirmatory analyses described above, in line with our preregistration, we also explored the role of support for the conceptions of nationhood based on the ability to speak the country's language and based on following country's customs and traditions as potential moderators. We followed the same analytical procedure as in our confirmatory analyses.

## Results

### *Confirmatory analyses*

Table 1 presents the MGSEM results with parameters of interest constrained to be equal across countries. It shows that overall, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the strength of national identification (the feeling of closeness to one's country) and anti-emigration sentiment in the six countries when no controls were included (model 1.1). This effect, however, became non-significant when control variables were accounted for (model 1.2). Moreover, contrary to H2, we found no evidence for the moderating effect of the

conception of nationhood based on birthplace, regardless of whether controls were included or not (models 1.3 and 1.4).

Table 1. National identity and anti-emigration attitudes, constrained MGSEM model

| | model 1.1 | model 1.2 | model 1.3 | model 1.4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| national identification | 0.083 (0.028)** | 0.035 (0.030) | 0.132 (0.075) | 0.073 (0.080) |
| conception of nationhood based on country of birth | | | 0.354 (0.070)*** | 0.284 (0.073)*** |
| national identification X conception of nationhood based on country of birth | | | -0.033 (0.021) | -0.024 (0.022) |
| Controls | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| CFI | 0.972 | 0.968 | 0.969 | 0.966 |
| TLI | 0.968 | 0.961 | 0.966 | 0.959 |
| RMSEA | 0.084 | 0.045 | 0.067 | 0.042 |
| SRMR | 0.038 | 0.019 | 0.039 | 0.020 |
| BIC | 165220.881 | 152321.866 | 164612.573 | 151944.106 |

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, standard errors in parentheses. For complete output, see the knitted file from the R markdown available at OSF (doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/7ZWPV).

Table 2 shows the results of the corresponding MGSEM models with unconstrained parameters of interest. For H1, it demonstrates that when the model included no control variables, national identification was positively related to anti-emigration attitudes only in Hungary and Spain (model 2.1). When control variables were included, this positive association was present only in Hungary (model 2.2). In the remaining countries, H1 was not confirmed.

For H2, we found no evidence for the moderating role of the conception of nationhood based on country of birth in any country, either without (model 2.3) or with controls (model 2.4).

Table 2. National identity and anti-emigration attitudes, unconstrained MGSEM model

| | model 2.1 | model 2.2 | model 2.3 | model 2.4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| national identification | | | | |
| Germany | 0.075 (0.059) | 0.028 (0.063) | 0.171 (0.154) | 0.068 (0.163) |
| Hungary | 0.228 (0.068)*** | 0.159 (0.072)* | 0.445 (0.192)* | 0.420 (0.197)* |
| Romania | 0.071 (0.083) | 0.032 (0.090) | 0.038 (0.237) | -0.013 (0.255) |
| Spain | 0.125 (0.063)* | 0.078 (0.068) | -0.168 (0.180) | -0.169 (0.185) |
| Sweden | -0.080 (0.076) | -0.087 (0.087) | -0.029 (0.182) | 0.029 (0.199) |
| UK | 0.046 (0.065) | -0.043 (0.073) | 0.294 (0.207) | 0.067 (0.230) |
| conception of nationhood based on country of birth | | | | |
| Germany | | | 0.511 (0.148)*** | 0.345 (0.154)* |
| Hungary | | | 0.303 (0.176) | 0.306 (0.179) |
| Romania | | | 0.051 (0.216) | 0.036 (0.230) |
| Spain | | | 0.052 (0.162) | 0.030 (0.165) |
| Sweden | | | 0.325 (0.197) | 0.416 (0.211)* |
| UK | | | 0.700 (0.167)*** | 0.520 (0.185)** |
| national identification X conception of nationhood based on country of birth | | | | |
| Germany | | | -0.059 (0.045) | -0.029 (0.046) |
| Hungary | | | -0.065 (0.052) | -0.076 (0.053) |
| Romania | | | 0.003 (0.063) | 0.007 (0.067) |
| Spain | | | 0.056 (0.049) | 0.053 (0.050) |
| Sweden | | | -0.018 (0.057) | -0.043 (0.061) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UK | | | -0.089 (0.052) | -0.044 (0.056) |
| Controls | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| CFI | 0.972 | 0.968 | 0.971 | 0.967 |
| TLI | 0.966 | 0.960 | 0.964 | 0.959 |
| RMSEA | 0.086 | 0.045 | 0.069 | 0.043 |
| SRMR | 0.036 | 0.018 | 0.030 | 0.017 |
| BIC | 165256.134 | 152360.246 | 164689.949 | 152036.653 |
| Comparison with the constrained model | | | | |
| ΔCFI | < 0.001 | < 0.001 | -0.002 | -0.001 |
| ΔTLI | 0.002 | 0.001 | 0.002 | < 0.001 |
| ΔRMSEA | -0.003 | < 0.001 | -0.002 | < 0.001 |
| ΔSRMR | 0.002 | < 0.001 | 0.009 | 0.003 |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$, standard errors in parentheses. For complete output, see the knitted file from the R markdown available on OSF (doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/7ZWPV).

A comparison of the goodness of fit indices between the constrained and the corresponding unconstrained models (1.1 vs. 2.1; 1.2 vs. 2.2; 1.3 vs. 2.3; 1.4 vs. 2.4) suggests that for each of the four comparisons, the two models fit the data equally well (see the bottom of Table 2 for differences in model fit). This indicates that the effect of the strength of national identification can be considered invariant but small and not robust, thus providing only weak support for H1. Moreover, we found no evidence for the moderating role of the endorsement of a conception of nationhood based on birthplace, thus finding no support for H2.

### *Exploratory analyses*

Our exploratory analyses suggest that overall, the more people supported the language-based conception of nationhood, the weaker the positive effect of the strength of national identification on anti-emigration attitudes. This interaction effect, however, though statistically significant in the constrained model and invariant across countries, should be considered weak since it was not detected in any of the countries in the unconstrained model (see Table S2 and Figure S1 for details). The moderating effect of support for the conception of nationhood based on following customs and traditions should also be considered weak or non-existent across countries (no effect in a constrained model and invariance across countries; see Table S3 for details).

## Discussion

Migration is by definition linked to territorial boundaries. It is also linked to the related symbolic intergroup boundaries and group identities tied to the resultant "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1985). Nations and the sense of attachment people feel toward them are a natural reference point for international migration. Our study contributes to the sociological and socio-psychological literature on the role of national identity in predicting migration-related attitudes by examining the relationship between national identity and attitudes toward emigration. It is among the first to investigate the role of national identity in

predicting this less researched side of public opinion on migration. Meanwhile, existing knowledge on the formation of attitudes toward migration as a social phenomenon and the social identity–migration attitudes nexus is incomplete without consideration of what happens on the emigration side of the migration coin.

Drawing on several theories, we expected to find a positive association between the strength of national identification and anti-emigration attitudes. We found only weak support for this prediction: the association was present when no control variables were included, but was no longer significant when they were accounted for. This means that a feeling of closeness to one's country does not necessarily translate into negative attitudes toward emigration from that country, once factors such as political orientation are controlled for. This finding corroborates previous claims, formulated with regard to immigration, that the mere strength of national identification is insufficient to drive anti-migration sentiment (Billiet et al., 2003; Breton, 2015; Meeus et al., 2010; Pehrson, Vignoles, et al., 2009; Reicher and Hopkins, 2001). It is in line with the results of Theiss-Morse and Wals (2014), who did not find a positive relationship between national identity (captured by a favorable view of Mexico) and emigration concerns, but contradicts the results of Shapira and Etzioni (1970), who did find such a link (whose focus was, however, narrower – attitudes of students toward emigration of scientists).

Contrary to our second hypothesis, we did not find evidence for the moderating role of support for the conception of nationhood based on birthplace in the identity-attitude relationship. Specifically, greater importance assigned to having been born in the country for being truly national was not associated with a stronger link between a feeling of closeness to the country and negative attitudes toward fellow nationals leaving the country. We attribute this result to the fact that the conception of nationhood based on country of birth is not unequivocally exclusive: while it excludes emigrants' descendants from the nation, it is inclusive of first-generation emigrants. The question is whether, when assessing the consequences of emigration for various aspects of the country's functioning and assessing the importance of criteria for being truly 'national', people think of both emigrants and their descendants. Should they account for both, the mixed emigrants-inclusive-descendants-exclusive nature of this conception of nationhood may drive the null finding.

Regarding the linguistic conception of nationhood, our study revealed that higher endorsement of this conception weakened the positive association between national identification and anti-emigration sentiment. This result may be explained by the fact that stronger supporters for a linguistic conception of nationhood still consider emigrants as part of the nation and thus to a lesser extent perceive their departure as threatening when they highly identify with the nation. It has to be noted, however, that our effect for linguistic conception of nationhood was weak and did not emerge in any of the country subsamples. As for the support for a conception of nationhood based on following customs and traditions, we did not find evidence for its moderating effect across countries.

Our study has some limitations to be addressed in future research. First, both the strength of identification and support for different conceptions of nationhood were measured by single items. This made it impossible to test the reliability of the measures and forced us to adopt a simplistic rather than a more nuanced, multidimensional conceptualization of each construct (see Ashmore et al., 2004; Leach et al., 2008, for examples of multidimensional models of social identity). We cannot rule out the possibility that the narrow operationalization of these concepts may have contributed to the observed weak effects. Given data limitations, we were also only able to examine the role of three different conceptions of nationhood. As demonstrated by past research on immigration attitudes, different conceptions and operationalizations yielded different results (Pehrson, Brown, et al., 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, et al., 2009). While we did not find much evidence for the moderating role of conceptions of nationhood, it is possible that alternative conceptions, better tailored to emigration, could yield significant results. It would be worth including conceptions that could hypothetically prove more relevant for emigration attitudes, especially those that are either more unequivocally exclusive of emigrants and their descendants (e.g., based on the current place of residence) or inclusive (e.g., based on ancestry).

Second, the study was cross-sectional: although there was a time lag between the measurement of the moderator and the other variables, the predictor and the outcome were measured in the same wave, which prevents making claims about causality. To effectively capture the temporal dynamics and detect meaningful within-individual variation, future longitudinal studies should allow sufficiently long intervals between measurements of the predictor and the outcome, ideally measuring both of them repeatedly to be able to disentangle within-participant from between-participant variance (with at least three measuring points for cross-lagged models to be valid). The former is especially important for capturing a within-individual change in psychological states such as identification and attitudes, which generally tend to be stable over time, particularly in the absence of major contextual disruptions. The most effective design would thus be to run a longitudinal study in a society experiencing significant shifts affecting both identity and attitudes, or an experimental study manipulating national identity. Relatedly, future longitudinal studies may find it worthwhile to test the proposition that national identity representation mediates rather than moderates the effect of national identification on migration attitudes, as it has been shown by Meeus et al. (2010) and Finell et al. (2013) for immigration attitudes. Meeus et al.'s (2010) theoretical argument that strong identifiers are more likely to adopt identity content dominant in the public discourse, which in turn influences their attitudes, along with Pehrson, Vignoles, and Brown's (2009) argument on the relevance of national-level identity content, call for further research on emigration attitudes that would account for identity content prevailing in a given context or promoted in a dominant public discourse.

Our study covered six European countries with different migration histories that are considered to be at different stages of the migration cycle (Okólski, 2012) and differ in the degree to which emigration is a salient issue. Residents of countries that have not yet or have

relatively recently undergone a transition from an emigration to an immigration country or temporarily experienced an increased migration outflow tend to be more concerned with emigration than immigration. From among the countries covered by our study, those most concerned with emigration were Hungary and Romania, and according to some studies, also Spain (Kyriazi and Visconti, 2025; Zerka, 2019). We assumed that these countries may differ from old immigration countries in our sample (Germany, Sweden, and the UK) not only with regard to levels of anti-emigration attitudes but potentially also their determinants. While we found some evidence for the role of national identification in Hungary and Spain, we did not observe any association between the feeling of closeness to one's country and emigration attitudes in Romania, which suggests it is not the salience of emigration that play a decisive role. Surprisingly, most inter-country differences with regard to the role of national identification and conceptions of nationhood we observed were negligible. The question remains whether this is specific to the studied context, with (out)migration having been legally facilitated through freedom of movement between EU member states, and between the EU and the UK. It would be worthwhile to test our hypotheses in a context where freedom of movement is less normalized and where emigration is more likely to be framed as a violation of national unity and betrayal of national interests in the public discourse (which is unlikely to concern contexts highly dependent on remittances, where these may be viewed as '"loyalty" in spite of "exit"', Hoffmann, 2010).

While we find it worthwhile to conduct further studies on the role of national identity in determining attitudes toward emigration, it cannot be ruled out that, despite strong theoretical premises, national identification does not constitute an important predictor of emigration attitudes or that it does but only under specific circumstances. Therefore, one potential direction for further inquiry would be to seek factors that could better predict people's views on emigration or moderate the identification-attitudes link. A promising avenue for future research in this respect, apart from the already mentioned role of public discourse, could be to investigate the role of the country's economic or demographic situation or political (including military) power, both relative to other countries and to the country's past, and their public perception.

Although further research that would overcome the limitations of the current study is needed, the study advances the academic debate on the national identity–migration attitudes nexus by shedding some light on the under-researched side of it – the link between national identity and anti-emigration sentiments. By focusing on people's viewpoint on emigration of co-nationals, it goes beyond previous attitudinal studies that were largely limited to how national identity relates either to attitudes toward immigration and immigrants or to personal migration aspirations. It is also the first study examining this topic from a multi-country European perspective and the first one extending beyond the role of the mere strength of national identity, by considering the moderating role of different conceptions of nationhood. It advances the theory linking social identity and migration attitudes by pointing to the relevance of conceptions of nationhood that are unequivocally inclusive or exclusive of both migrants and

their descendants, and advocates for the use of such an inclusive-exclusive distinction instead of the classic ethnic-civic dichotomy to facilitate future theorizing on this topic.

## Author contributions

CRediT: **Zuzanna Brunarska**: Conceptualization (leading), Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Lusine Grigoryan**: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Writing – review & editing

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## Statements and Declarations

### Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was not required by the lead institution (University of Warsaw) due to the secondary nature of the data.

### Consent to participate

Not applicable

### Consent for publication

Not applicable

### Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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## Data availability

The survey data that support the findings of this study are available from the AUSSDA Dataverse under https://doi.org/10.11587/LBSMPQ (Meltzer et al., 2019). The R Markdown file, with reproducible code is available on OSF (doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/7ZWPV). For the purpose of open access, a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license is applied to any Author Accepted Manuscript version arising from this submission.

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Supplementary Material for

# Public Opinion on Emigration in Europe: The Role of National Identity

(Online only)

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**Table S1. The definitions and summary statistics of all variables included in the analyses (for model 1.4 of Table 1 estimation sample, N = 7,810)**

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation | Min | Max | Survey question used |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitudes to emigration | 6.25 | 2.01 | 1 | 10 | Mean of the five items below: *Now, we'd like to ask you about the issue of emigration, that is citizen leaving [country]. Generally speaking, would you say that emigration …* |
| Germany | 6.05 | 1.79 | 1 | 10 | |
| Hungary | 7.14 | 1.95 | 1 | 10 | |
| Romania | 6.13 | 2.11 | 1 | 10 | |
| Spain | 6.00 | 2.03 | 1 | 10 | |
| Sweden | 6.05 | 1.97 | 1 | 10 | |
| UK | 6.16 | 2.00 | 1 | 10 | |
| economy | 6.44 | 2.40 | 1 | 10 | *… is bad for [country]'s economy* |
| Germany | 6.34 | 2.09 | 1 | 10 | |
| Hungary | 7.47 | 2.34 | 1 | 10 | |
| Romania | 6.06 | 2.69 | 1 | 10 | |
| Spain | 6.17 | 2.42 | 1 | 10 | |
| Sweden | 6.35 | 2.37 | 1 | 10 | |
| UK | 6.22 | 2.25 | 1 | 10 | |
| labor market | 6.11 | 2.38 | 1 | 10 | *… burdens [country]'s labour market* |
| Germany | 5.79 | 2.16 | 1 | 10 | |
| Hungary | 7.19 | 2.41 | 1 | 10 | |
| Romania | 6.14 | 2.52 | 1 | 10 | |
| Spain | 5.83 | 2.31 | 1 | 10 | |
| Sweden | 5.77 | 2.29 | 1 | 10 | |
| UK | 5.96 | 2.30 | 1 | 10 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| survival of the nation | 6.33 | 2.29 | 1 | 10 | *... threatens the survival of the [country]'s nation* |
| Germany | 6.10 | 2.09 | 1 | 10 | |
| Hungary | 7.35 | 2.23 | 1 | 10 | |
| Romania | 6.20 | 2.55 | 1 | 10 | |
| Spain | 6.04 | 2.23 | 1 | 10 | |
| Sweden | 5.98 | 2.22 | 1 | 10 | |
| UK | 6.32 | 2.19 | 1 | 10 | |
| culture and identity | 6.18 | 2.25 | 1 | 10 | *... undermines [country]'s culture and identity* |
| Germany | 6.07 | 2.04 | 1 | 10 | |
| Hungary | 6.74 | 2.23 | 1 | 10 | |
| Romania | 6.05 | 2.34 | 1 | 10 | |
| Spain | 5.90 | 2.34 | 1 | 10 | |
| Sweden | 5.99 | 2.21 | 1 | 10 | |
| UK | 6.35 | 2.23 | 1 | 10 | |
| welfare system | 6.21 | 2.40 | 1 | 10 | *... burdens the [country]'s welfare system* |
| Germany | 5.98 | 2.30 | 1 | 10 | |
| Hungary | 6.94 | 2.39 | 1 | 10 | |
| Romania | 6.19 | 2.46 | 1 | 10 | |
| Spain | 6.05 | 2.27 | 1 | 10 | |
| Sweden | 6.15 | 2.34 | 1 | 10 | |
| UK | 5.98 | 2.51 | 1 | 10 | |
| strength of national identification | 3.28 | 0.79 | 1 | 4 | *How close do you feel to your country?* |
| Germany | 3.22 | 0.77 | 1 | 4 | |
| Hungary | 3.27 | 0.80 | 1 | 4 | |
| Romania | 3.41 | 0.74 | 1 | 4 | |
| Spain | 3.25 | 0.84 | 1 | 4 | |
| Sweden | 3.35 | 0.73 | 1 | 4 | |
| UK | 3.23 | 0.82 | 1 | 4 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identity content | | | | | *How important or not do you think each of the following is for being truly [nationality]?* |
| support for the conception of nationhood based on country of birth | 3.47 | 1.25 | 1 | 5 | *To have been born in [country]* |
| Germany | 3.26 | 1.21 | 1 | 5 | |
| Hungary | 3.57 | 1.24 | 1 | 5 | |
| Romania | 3.72 | 1.16 | 1 | 5 | |
| Spain | 3.69 | 1.15 | 1 | 5 | |
| Sweden | 2.75 | 1.26 | 1 | 5 | |
| UK | 3.81 | 1.19 | 1 | 5 | |
| support for the conception of nationhood based on language | 4.33 | 0.95 | 1 | 5 | *To be able to speak [country national languages]* |
| Germany | 4.56 | 0.73 | 1 | 5 | |
| Hungary | 4.49 | 0.82 | 1 | 5 | |
| Romania | 4.46 | 0.83 | 1 | 5 | |
| Spain | 3.47 | 1.15 | 1 | 5 | |
| Sweden | 4.46 | 0.80 | 1 | 5 | |
| UK | 4.63 | 0.70 | 1 | 5 | |
| support for the conception of nationhood based on customs and traditions | 3.92 | 1.06 | 1 | 5 | *To follow [country] customs and traditions* |
| Germany | 3.63 | 1.04 | 1 | 5 | |
| Hungary | 4.05 | 0.96 | 1 | 5 | |
| Romania | 4.26 | 0.91 | 1 | 5 | |
| Spain | 3.65 | 1.11 | 1 | 5 | |
| Sweden | 3.79 | 1.14 | 1 | 5 | |
| UK | 4.28 | 0.93 | 1 | 5 | |
| Control variables | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| gender (female) | 0.47 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | *Are you…?* A man; A woman (0 = male, 1 = female) |
| Germany | 0.47 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | |
| Hungary | 0.47 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | |
| Romania | 0.48 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | |
| Spain | 0.45 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | |
| Sweden | 0.47 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | |
| UK | 0.47 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | |
| age | 49.91 | 15.21 | 18 | 81 | in years[4], Based on: *What year were you born?* |
| Germany | 53.60 | 14.60 | 18 | 81 | |
| Hungary | 45.60 | 14.70 | 18 | 81 | |
| Romania | 43.80 | 13.00 | 18 | 74 | |
| Spain | 48.00 | 14.40 | 18 | 81 | |
| Sweden | 52.60 | 16.10 | 18 | 81 | |
| UK | 55.50 | 14.60 | 18 | 81 | |
| education | 4.34 | 1.75 | 0 | 8 | *What is the highest level of education you have successfully completed?* (0 = ISCED 0, 8 = ISCED 8)[5] |
| Germany | 3.93 | 1.75 | 1 | 8 | |
| Hungary | 4.28 | 1.76 | 0 | 8 | |
| Romania | 5.04 | 1.66 | 1 | 8 | |
| Spain | 4.97 | 1.45 | 0 | 8 | |
| Sweden | 4.09 | 1.62 | 1 | 8 | |
| UK | 3.72 | 1.81 | 0 | 8 | |

[4] People older than 80 (0.45% of the sample) were all coded as 81 in the original dataset.

[5] ISCED stands for International Standard Classification of Education developed by UNESCO to allow cross-national comparisons of education systems and qualifications, with ISCED 0 = less than primary, ISCED 8 = doctoral or equivalent level (https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/international-standard-classification-education-isced).

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| difficulty paying bills | 1.45 | 0.64 | 1 | 3 | *During the last twelve months, would you say you had difficulties to pay your bills at the end of the month…?* (1 = almost never/never, 3 = most of the time) |
| Germany | 1.41 | 0.61 | 1 | 3 | |
| Hungary | 1.62 | 0.72 | 1 | 3 | |
| Romania | 1.51 | 0.62 | 1 | 3 | |
| Spain | 1.44 | 0.64 | 1 | 3 | |
| Sweden | 1.28 | 0.56 | 1 | 3 | |
| UK | 1.40 | 0.61 | 1 | 3 | |
| political orientation | 5.10 | 2.26 | 0 | 10 | *In politics people often talk about "left" and "right. Where would you place yourself on the following scale?* (0 = left, 10 = right) |
| Germany | 4.73 | 1.91 | 0 | 10 | |
| Hungary | 5.25 | 2.22 | 0 | 10 | |
| Romania | 5.72 | 2.28 | 0 | 10 | |
| Spain | 4.53 | 2.38 | 0 | 10 | |
| Sweden | 5.26 | 2.51 | 0 | 10 | |
| UK | 5.36 | 2.07 | 0 | 10 | |
| migration experience | 0.23 | 0.42 | 0 | 1 | based on the questions: *Have you ever lived or worked in a country other than [country]*? and *And were you born in [country]?* (0 = no, 1 = yes) |
| Germany | 0.17 | 0.38 | 0 | 1 | |
| Hungary | 0.25 | 0.43 | 0 | 1 | |
| Romania | 0.28 | 0.45 | 0 | 1 | |
| Spain | 0.22 | 0.42 | 0 | 1 | |
| Sweden | 0.28 | 0.45 | 0 | 1 | |
| UK | 0.21 | 0.41 | 0 | 1 | |
| migration background | 0.06 | 0.24 | 0 | 1 | having at least one parent born abroad, based on the questions: *In which country was your father born?* and *In which country was your mother born?* (having at least one parent born abroad; 0 = no, 1 = yes) |
| Germany | 0.05 | 0.22 | 0 | 1 | |
| Hungary | 0.08 | 0.28 | 0 | 1 | |
| Romania | 0.03 | 0.18 | 0 | 1 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spain | 0.03 | 0.16 | 0 | 1 | |
| Sweden | 0.11 | 0.32 | 0 | 1 | |
| UK | 0.05 | 0.22 | 0 | 1 | |
| place of residence (ref: big city) | | | | | *Would you say you live in a...?* |
| *suburbs* | 0.13 | 0.33 | 0 | 1 | |
| *town* | 0.38 | 0.48 | 0 | 1 | |
| *countryside* | 0.16 | 0.37 | 0 | 1 | |
| Germany | | | | | |
| *suburbs* | 0.14 | 0.35 | 0 | 1 | |
| *town* | 0.37 | 0.48 | 0 | 1 | |
| *countryside* | 0.21 | 0.41 | 0 | 1 | |
| Hungary | | | | | |
| *suburbs* | 0.08 | 0.27 | 0 | 1 | |
| *town* | 0.37 | 0.48 | 0 | 1 | |
| *countryside* | 0.17 | 0.37 | 0 | 1 | |
| Romania | | | | | |
| *suburbs* | 0.05 | 0.22 | 0 | 1 | |
| *town* | 0.34 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 | |
| *countryside* | 0.06 | 0.24 | 0 | 1 | |
| Spain | | | | | |
| *suburbs* | 0.09 | 0.28 | 0 | 1 | |
| *town* | 0.37 | 0.48 | 0 | 1 | |
| *countryside* | 0.08 | 0.28 | 0 | 1 | |
| Sweden | | | | | |
| *suburbs* | 0.20 | 0.40 | 0 | 1 | |
| *town* | 0.36 | 0.48 | 0 | 1 | |
| *countryside* | 0.23 | 0.42 | 0 | 1 | |
| UK | | | | | |
| *suburbs* | 0.22 | 0.41 | 0 | 1 | |
| *town* | 0.46 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *countryside* | 0.22 | 0.41 | 0 | 1 |

**Table S2. National identity and anti-emigration attitudes, conception of nationhood based on language**

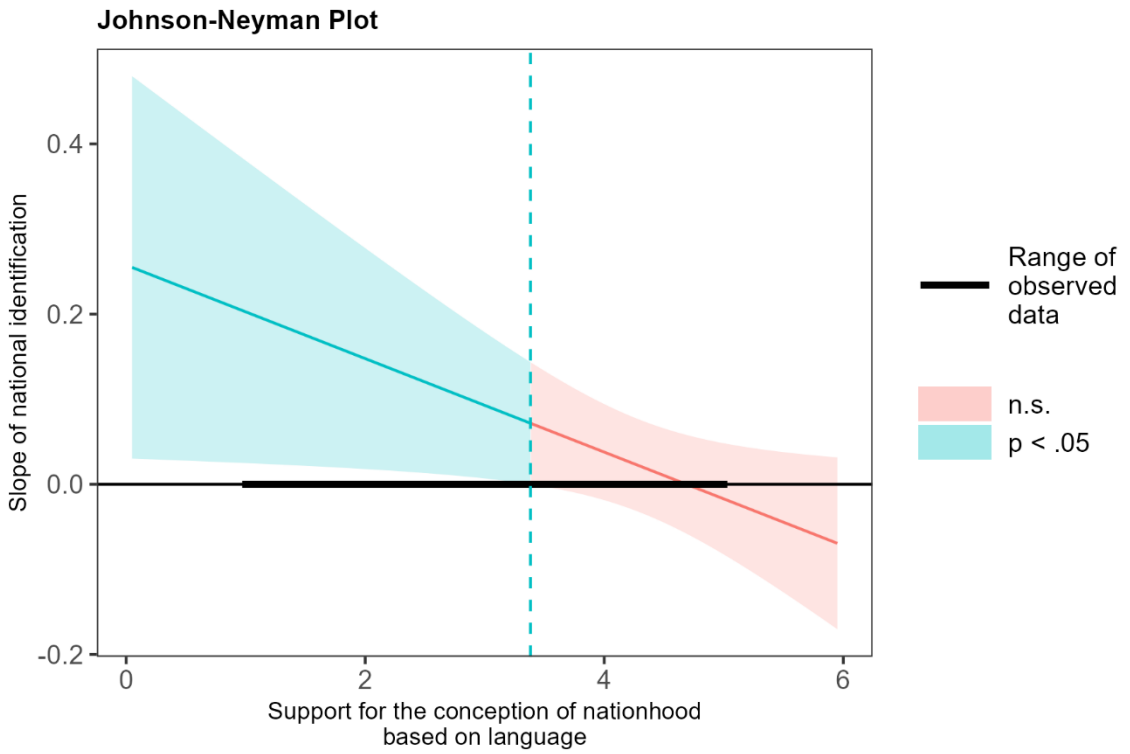
| | No controls | With controls |
|---|---|---|
| Constrained MGSEM model | model S2.1 | model S2.2 |
| national identification | 0.338 (0.121)** | 0.304 (0.129)* |
| conception of nationhood based on language | 0.415 (0.090)*** | 0.385 (0.096)*** |
| national identification X conception of nationhood based on language | -0.067 (0.027)* | -0.067 (0.029)* |
| CFI | 0.968 | 0.965 |
| TLI | 0.965 | 0.958 |
| RMSEA | 0.068 | 0.043 |
| SRMR | 0.043 | 0.022 |
| BIC | 164645.588 | 151848.565 |
| Unconstrained MGSEM model | model S2.3 | model S2.4 |
| national identification | | |
| Germany | 0.230 (0.313) | 0.158 (0.337) |
| Hungary | 0.439 (0.336) | 0.482 (0.344) |
| Romania | -0.147 (0.360) | -0.184 (0.401) |
| Spain | 0.403 (0.201)* | 0.363 (0.207) |
| Sweden | 0.061 (0.405) | -0.120 (0.469) |
| UK | -0.242 (0.409) | -0.321 (0.451) |
| conception of nationhood based on language | | |
| Germany | 0.488 (0.211)* | 0.438 (0.226) |
| Hungary | 0.373 (0.237) | 0.430 (0.243) |
| Romania | -0.068 (0.269) | -0.106 (0.301) |
| Spain | 0.188 (0.181) | 0.196 (0.185) |
| Sweden | 0.542 (0.290) | 0.377 (0.333) |
| UK | 0.482 (0.273) | 0.435 (0.302) |
| national identification X conception of nationhood based on language | | |
| Germany | -0.047 (0.068) | -0.036 (0.073) |
| Hungary | -0.054 (0.074) | -0.078 (0.076) |
| Romania | 0.046 (0.081) | 0.047 (0.090) |
| Spain | -0.078 (0.054) | -0.079 (0.055) |
| Sweden | -0.047 (0.089) | -0.003 (0.101) |
| UK | 0.039 (0.088) | 0.046 (0.097) |
| CFI | 0.971 | 0.967 |
| TLI | 0.964 | 0.959 |
| RMSEA | 0.069 | 0.043 |
| SRMR | 0.029 | 0.017 |
| BIC | 164695.045 | 151916.084 |
| Constrained vs unconstrained model | | |
| ΔCFI | -0.003 | -0.002 |
| ΔTLI | 0.001 | -0.001 |
| ΔRMSEA | -0.001 | < 0.001 |
| ΔSRMR | 0.013 | 0.005 |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, standard errors in parentheses. Models S2.2 and S2.4 control for gender, age, education, difficulty paying bills, political orientation, migration experience, migration background, and place of residence. For complete output, see the knitted file from the R markdown available at OSF (doi:

10.17605/OSF.IO/7ZWPV). We used the interactions package in R (Long, 2024) to facilitate interpretation of significant interactions.

For the conception of nationhood based on the ability to speak the national language, in a constrained model, its endorsement weakens the positive effect of national identification on anti-emigration attitudes (both in a model without and with control variables, models S2.1 and S2.2). In models where parameters of interest were estimated freely (models S2.3 and S2.4), the interaction term was not significant in any of the countries. The comparison of goodness of fit indices between the constrained and unconstrained models showed, however, that the unconstrained model did not fit the data significantly better than the constrained one.

**Figure S1. The effect of the interaction between national identification and support for the conception of nationhood based on language on attitudes toward emigration**




Note: For the sake of plotting the interaction, we estimated a simpler model equivalent to Model S2.2 of Table S2. It took the form of a linear regression model run on a pooled sample with predicted factor scores from the metric multi-group SEM model as a DV. It included the same set of control variables (gender, age, education, difficulty paying bills, political orientation, migration experience, migration background, place of residence) and additionally country dummies. For complete output, see the knitted file from the R markdown available at OSF (doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/7ZWPV).

The figure shows that the positive association between national identification and anti-emigration attitudes observed in the pooled sample at lower levels of support for the conception of nationhood based on language is no longer significant at higher levels of support for this conception of nationhood (losing significance at a level of support equal to 3.38).

**Table S3. National identity and anti-emigration attitudes, conception of nationhood based on customs and traditions**

| | No controls | With controls |
|---|---|---|
| Constrained MGSEM model | model S3.1 | model S3.2 |
| national identification | -0.092 (0.095) | -0.120 (0.100) |
| conception of nationhood based on customs and traditions | 0.257 (0.077)*** | 0.198 (0.081)* |
| national identification X conception of nationhood based on customs and traditions | 0.019 (0.024) | 0.023 (0.025) |
| CFI | 0.968 | 0.965 |
| TLI | 0.965 | 0.958 |
| RMSEA | 0.068 | 0.043 |
| SRMR | 0.036 | 0.019 |
| BIC | 164648.448 | 151909.461 |
| Unconstrained MGSEM model | model S3.3 | model S3.4 |
| national identification | | |
| Germany | 0.047 (0.197) | -0.014 (0.207) |
| Hungary | -0.086 (0.271) | -0.077 (0.274) |
| Romania | -0.023 (0.324) | -0.022 (0.361) |
| Spain | -0.148 (0.185) | -0.162 (0.187) |
| Sweden | 0.049 (0.252) | 0.024 (0.275) |
| UK | -0.633 (0.273)* | -0.758 (0.302)* |
| conception of nationhood based on customs and traditions | | |
| Germany | 0.440 (0.169)** | 0.350 (0.176)* |
| Hungary | 0.018 (0.216) | 0.001 (0.218) |
| Romania | 0.100 (0.258) | 0.072 (0.287) |
| Spain | 0.089 (0.166) | 0.060 (0.169) |
| Sweden | 0.518 (0.208)* | 0.464 (0.225)* |
| UK | 0.127 (0.194) | 0.007 (0.214) |
| national identification X conception of nationhood based on customs and traditions | | |
| Germany | -0.021 (0.052) | -0.009 (0.054) |
| Hungary | 0.064 (0.067) | 0.051 (0.067) |
| Romania | 0.013 (0.077) | 0.008 (0.085) |
| Spain | 0.047 (0.051) | 0.048 (0.052) |
| Sweden | -0.053 (0.062) | -0.042 (0.067) |
| UK | 0.124 (0.063)* | 0.145 (0.069)* |
| CFI | 0.969 | 0.965 |
| TLI | 0.962 | 0.957 |
| RMSEA | 0.071 | 0.044 |
| SRMR | 0.031 | 0.018 |
| BIC | 164746.839 | 152014.315 |
| Constrained vs unconstrained model | | |
| ΔCFI | -0.001 | -0.001 |
| ΔTLI | 0.003 | 0.001 |
| ΔRMSEA | -0.003 | -0.001 |
| ΔSRMR | 0.005 | 0.001 |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, standard errors in parentheses. Models S3.2 and S3.4 control for gender, age, education, difficulty paying bills, political orientation, migration experience, migration background, and place of residence. For complete output, see the knitted file from the R markdown available at OSF (doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/7ZWPV).

For the conception of nationhood based on following customs and traditions, when we constrained the parameters of interest to be equal across countries (models S3.1 and S3.2), we found no evidence for the moderating effect of support for this conception of nationhood on the relationship between the strength of national identification and anti-emigration attitudes. Meanwhile, when we allowed the parameters of interest to be estimated freely across countries, we found a significant interaction in the UK (models S3.3 and S3.4). The comparison of the constrained vs. unconstrained models suggests, however, that the unconstrained models did not fit the data significantly better than the constrained models, pointing to invariance of effects across countries.