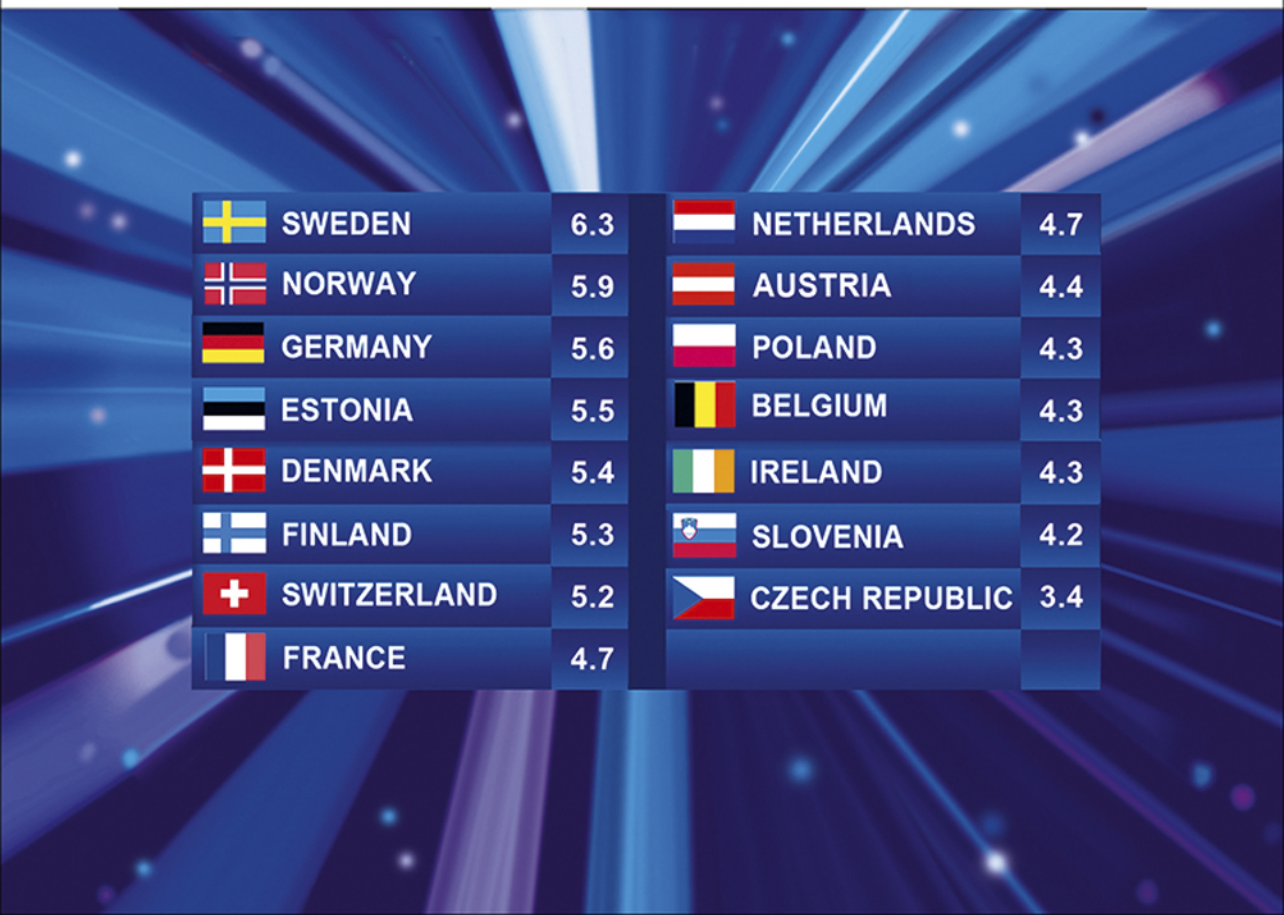
The Netherlands Institute for Social Research

Trust, life satisfaction and opinions on immigration in 15 European countries



Trust, life satisfaction and opinions on immigration in 15 European countries

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The Netherlands Institute for Social Research | SCP
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a to carry out research designed to produce a coherent picture of the state of social and cultural welfare in the Netherlands and likely developments in this area;
b to contribute to the appropriate selection of policy objectives and to provide an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the various means of achieving those ends;
c to seek information on the way in which interdepartmental policy on social and cultural welfare is implemented with a view to assessing its implementation.

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Preface

2015 was an eventful year in Europe. The budget deficit in Greece and the large number of refugees trying to enter Europe gave rise to much debate. Recent events, such as the terrorist attacks in Paris and the threat of attacks in Brussels, have – once again – made European citizens aware of the delicate balance between civil liberties, such as privacy and freedom of movement, and national security. These events weighed heavily on cooperation and solidarity in Europe, and sparked off heated discussions among politicians and opinion leaders, as well as on social media.

Research on the preferences, attitudes and opinions of the European citizens is relatively scarce. The focus in this publication is on the opinions of the general public. How do Dutch and other European citizens feel about politics and politicians? Do they trust institutions and one another? Are they satisfied with their lives? And what do they think about immigration and its consequences?

Earlier this year the Netherlands Institute for Social Research|SCP published a report entitled *Nederland in Europees perspectief* ('The Netherlands in a European perspective'), which was based mainly on data from the first six rounds (2002-2013) of the biennial European Social Survey (ESS). The present publication can be seen as a short update of that earlier report. It now also includes data from the 2014/'15 round of the ESS. This, the most recent round, included a detailed question module on immigration. That module also was part of the first round of the ESS in 2002/'03. This means that we can now report on trends in attitudes on immigration over the period from 2002 to 2015, and can look in depth at developments in those attitudes over a longer period. The drawback is that, at present, data is only available for 15 countries.

This publication can be seen as part of the long-standing tradition of SCP publications on attitudes and opinions, such as the quarterly Citizens' *Outlooks Barometer* (COB), studies on Quality of Life, and the more general *Social State of the Netherlands*.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Gerbert Kraaykamp, Professor Marcel Lubbers, and Dr Roza Meuleman from Radboud University Nijmegen for their dedicated cooperation in this collaborative effort.

Professor Kim Putters
Director, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research|SCP

1 Trust, life satisfaction and opinions on immigration in 15 European countries

Ineke Stoop, Jeroen Boelhouwer, Gerbert Kraaykamp

1.1 Opinions in a changing Europe

The European landscape has been changing rapidly in recent decades. The internal market of the European Union (EU) is now a single market in which the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons is assured, and in which citizens are free to live, work, study and do business. National social policies increasingly operate within the framework of various European policies. Furthermore, the introduction of the euro has had a significant impact on national economies. More recently, Europe has experienced a deep financial and economic crisis, with serious consequences for countries and their inhabitants.
Being part of Europe (or the EU) influences our lives in other ways, too. Increasing labour market mobility has changed the social and economic landscape all over Europe. Additionally, a large number of migrants are entering Europe, and this is having a considerable impact on social conditions, and presumably on attitudes, opinions and beliefs. Recent events, such as the terrorist attacks in Paris, the Greek debt crisis and the threat of attacks in Brussels, have – once again – made European citizens aware of the delicate balance between aspects such as freedom of movement, privacy and national security.
Information on how people live and how they cope, the degree to which they trust institutions and one another, and how they feel about their society, is of key importance in assessing the impact of social, economic and cultural changes.
Civil liberties and basic human values are at the core of Europe's major institutions. The Council of Europe advocates freedom of expression and of the media, freedom of assembly, equality, and the protection of minorities. According to Article 2 of the EU Lisbon Treaty, "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities." Increasingly, politicians and scientists have become aware of the impact of the values, attitudes, norms and beliefs of European citizens on the social fabric of our societies, on the way we live, and on the cooperation of individuals and countries.
Meaningful key questions when analysing values, attitudes and beliefs are: What values do people pursue? Do they trust one another, and their national institutions? Are they satisfied with their lives? And what are their attitudes towards immigrants and refugees?
At European level, such questions refer to differences and similarities between countries: Are European countries becoming more similar over time as regards attitudes and values? And to what extent are inhabitants of other European countries similar to Dutch citizens, and to each other? Can individual European countries be characterised by shared values

and beliefs, or is the variation in opinions and attitudes within countries as great as the variation between countries?
In October 2015 The Netherlands Institute for Social Research|SCP published a report entitled *Nederland in Europees perspectief* ('The Netherlands in a European perspective') (Boelhouwer, Kraaykamp & Stoop 2015) in collaboration with researchers from Radboud University Nijmegen. The report compared the opinions on democracy and migration, trust in institutions, social trust and life satisfaction of the Dutch to those of other Europeans. It also included more in-depth studies on longitudinal trends in life satisfaction, political trust in times of economic crisis, gender roles and the relationship between attitudes towards migrants and the EU. The analyses in the report were based mainly on data from the European Social Survey (ESS) covering the period from 2002 to 2013. More recent ESS data have now become available for 15 countries, extending the time span to 2015 and also including detailed new information on attitudes in European countries towards immigrants. The availability of this data prompted the production of this short English-language report, which includes an update of a comparison of Dutch citizens with other Europeans on issues of trust and life satisfaction (chapter 2), followed by a new chapter with an analysis of trends in attitudes of European citizens towards immigration (chapter 3). The results presented in chapters 2 and 3 should be seen as descriptive rather than explanatory.

1.2 Data: The European Social Survey

The European Social Survey (ESS[1]) is an academically driven cross-national survey that has been conducted every two years across Europe since 2002. The ESS measures attitudes, beliefs and behavioural patterns of citizens in more than thirty nations. The main aims of the ESS are:

- To chart stability and change in social structure, conditions and attitudes in Europe and to interpret how Europe's social, political and moral fabric is changing.
- To achieve and spread higher standards of rigour in cross-national research in the social sciences, including in areas such as questionnaire design and pre-testing, sampling, data collection, reduction of bias and reliability of questions.

The topics covered in each round of the ESS are as follows:

- Moral and social values
- Social capital and social trust
- Political values and engagement
- Citizen involvement and democracy
- Trust in institutions
- Health and well-being
- Immigration
- Crime
- Household circumstances
- Socio-demographic characteristics
- Education and occupation
- Social exclusion

In addition to these general topics, each round focuses on a specific theme, enabling the survey to cover a wide range of topics and to adapt to changing circumstances. So-called 'rotating modules', selected following a Europe-wide competition, are designed by leading academic specialists in association with questionnaire design specialists from the ESS team.

A specific module dealing extensively with the issue of immigration was fielded in both Round 1 (2002/'03) and Round 7 (2014/'15).[2] The complete questionnaires are available in each language on the ESS website. An average of 1,881 respondents were interviewed in each country, ranging from 1,224 in Slovenia to 3,045 in Germany.
One drawback of the ESS is that the data collection period differs somewhat across countries. Ideally, data should be collected in the period September-December in each round. In some countries, however, the necessary funding is not yet available at that time, while in others fieldwork may take longer than expected in a bid to enhance response rates. For this reason, at present information is only available from 15 countries.[3] A second complete release is expected in May 2016.[4] The present data cover the following countries:

• Austria	• Belgium	• Czech Republic	• Denmark	• Estonia
• Finland	• France	• Germany	• Ireland	• The Netherlands
• Norway	• Poland	• Slovenia	• Sweden	• Switzerland

1.3 Comparing countries and measuring trends

Comparing countries is complicated because different sampling frames are used in different countries, response rates – and possibly nonresponse bias – vary, concepts may be more or less relevant depending on the country, questionnaires are fielded in different languages, and interviewers in some countries may have received better training than in others. In addition, making comparisons at a country level may hide potentially large variations within countries. This publication largely ignores these methodological caveats, and simply aims to provide an up-to-date snapshot of trust, life satisfaction and attitudes towards immigrants in 15 European countries.
The ESS was set up to compare countries and to measure trends over time. According to O'Shea, Bryson and Jowell (2003), the aim is to measure changes in climate, i.e. underlying shifts in values over time, rather than changes in the weather. It was thus never the aim of the ESS to deliver rapid measurements of public responses to topical issues. Political scientists have shown that traumatic events, such as the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in the U.S. or the filmmaker Theo van Gogh in The Netherlands, 9/11, or the MH17 plane crash, can have an impact on the opinions of the general public. The direction of the change in opinions is however hard to predict, and in many cases any effects die out fairly quickly (SCP/ WODC/ CBS 2005: 202; Stoop 2007; Dekker 2015). The fleeting effects of high-impact events have also been pointed out by media analysts. Greenslade (2015) describes how the images of a drowned boy in Turkey drastically increased positive humanitarian newspaper stories on migration immediately after the photographs were published in some European countries but not in others. In all countries, these effects vanished from the newspapers within two weeks.
The fairly long duration of the fieldwork in the ESS may therefore mitigate the impact of sudden events on opinions. Moreover, the fieldwork period differs across countries and the data were collected before the most recent influx of refugees into the EU and before the

terrorist attacks in Paris. The results presented in this publication are not intended as a means of closely monitoring attitudes and opinions on a daily basis, but instead focus on general trends over time, observable differences between countries, and background characteristics of respondents that are related to their attitudes and opinions.

Notes

1 www.europeansocialsurvey.org

2 www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round1/questionnaire/ESS1_preston_proposal.pdf www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round7/questionnaire/ESS7_immigration_final_module_template.pdf

3 This also means that no 'population weights' are currently available for Round 7. These weights are calculated to adjust for nonresponse. In this report, for all rounds, only 'design weights' are used. These adjust for the sample designs implemented each country.

4 The following additional countries will most likely be included in this second release: Hungary, Israel, Latvia, Portugal, Spain and the UK.

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ESS Round 2: European Social Survey Round 2 Data (2004). Data file edition 3.4. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

ESS Round 3: European Social Survey Round 3 Data (2006). Data file edition 3.5. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

ESS Round 4: European Social Survey Round 4 Data (2008). Data file edition 4.3. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

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ESS Round 6: European Social Survey Round 6 Data (2012). Data file edition 2.1. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.
ESS Round 7: European Social Survey Round 6 Data (2014). Data file edition 1.0. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

2 The mood in Europe: opinions on democracy, trust, migrants and life satisfaction

Jeroen Boelhouwer

- Whether we look at views on democracy, trust, tolerance of migrants or life satisfaction, the Nordic countries and Switzerland score highest on average, whilst the countries of Central and Eastern Europe score the lowest.
- Of all 15 countries studied, the Swiss are the most satisfied with the way democracy functions in their country (giving an average score of 7.4 on a scale from 0 to 10). Citizens of Slovenia bring up the rear by some distance, with a score of 2.9.
- The scores for trust in politicians, political parties and parliament are not high anywhere. The Danish show most trust in these institutions, with an average score of 5.8.
- Trust in the legal system is higher than trust in politics in all countries.
- Inhabitants of the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Switzerland have the most trust in other people. This social trust is positively associated with political and institutional trust.
- The population in most countries believe that a limited number of migrants should be admitted. Swedes are the most tolerant and Czechs the least. The percentage of Dutch citizens who believe either that many or no migrants at all should be allowed in is relatively small. The Netherlands resembles Denmark and Switzerland in this regard.
- All in all, Danes are the happiest and Estonians the least happy. According to the most recent figures, their scores are 8.4 and 6.4, respectively. The Dutch are at the upper end of the middle segment, with a score of 7.7.

2.1 The mood in Europe

In this chapter we give an overall impression of the mood in Europe based on opinions and attitudes, and examine differences and correspondences across the 15 European countries which took part in the most recent round of the ESS and for which data are available (see chapter 1). To present this general picture we use key figures from the ESS relating to issues that are important for the public and political debate; they can be divided into four blocks: opinions on democracy; trust in each other and in institutions; opinions on migrants; and life satisfaction.

First, therefore, we look at opinions on democracy: how satisfied are citizens with the functioning of democracy in their country? This tells us something about people's opinions on the functioning of politics, not about support for the democratic system itself – though research has shown that the majority of citizens do support that system (see Curtice et al. 2012; Den Ridder & Dekker 2015; Ferrin & Kriesi (forthcoming); Canache et al. 2001 for a discussion of the significance of the question).

The second block is concerned with trust. We look not only at trust in institutions (such as parliament or the judicial system), but also at trust in other people. The trend in trust differs depending on the institution, ranging from very variable figures for trust in politicians and politics to reasonably stable figures for trust in constitutional democracy.
The third block focuses on opinions on migrants. In this chapter we present only the figures for the most recent years; in the next chapter we also describe trends for those same figures and explore substantive differences between countries. Research has shown that the relationship between different population groups is important for citizens. In the Netherlands, when people are asked about friction between different sections of the population, the friction between migrants and natives is found to be close to the surface (Vrooman et al. 2014). Views on migrants are associated among other things with tensions in society relating to the free movement of people within the European Union. This leads to questioning of concepts such as 'citizenship' and 'national identity'.
In the final block we investigate people's life satisfaction. This is now a widely accepted measure of subjective quality of life, with an ever-increasing focus on the role that policy can play. Political initiatives have been developed in the United Kingdom (APPG 2014) and Germany (Bundesregierung 2014). to give form to this relationship, and international initiatives by the OECD and Eurostat also call for subjective well-being to be included as a criterion when comparing countries: 'Subjective well-being data can provide an important complement to other indicators already used for monitoring and benchmarking countries' performance, for guiding people's choices, and for designing and delivering policies' (OECD 2013: 3).

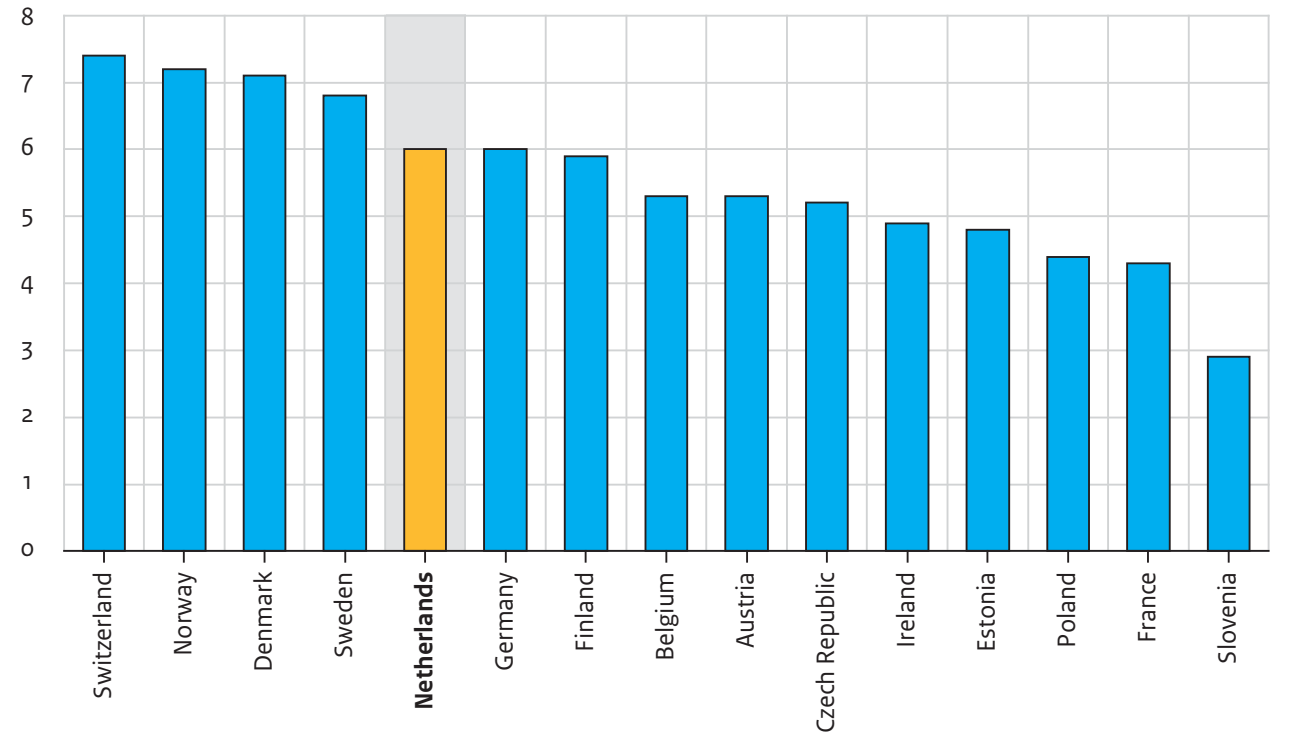
We thus use these four blocks of key figures to describe aspects that are both important for the public and political debate and that also provide a good impression of the mood in Europe. We describe the most recent situation in the countries for which data are available from Round 7 of the ESS. The description of the differences in key indicators between countries will be brief and will occasionally home in on the position occupied by the Netherlands among the other countries. A figure is presented for each key indicator, followed by a short description of the findings. To put the descriptions into context, in many cases a link is made between the values and opinions expressed in the ESS and more objective country characteristics drawn from the ESS Multilevel Database or other sources containing more recent data.

2.2 Opinions on democracy

We first look at opinions on democracy within individual countries. This is an important topic in discussions about European unification: a country that is not sufficiently democratic in the opinion of the present EU Member States will first need to improve on this front before being allowed to join the EU.[1] There is a broad consensus that a democratic system is a worthwhile goal: most people think democracy is a better system for taking decisions than a system that is run by a strong leader, a group of experts or the military.

That is certainly the case in the Netherlands (92% agree that a democratic system is preferable), but also in other European countries (89% on average agree). Support is greatest in Denmark (99%). Among the countries considered here, support is lowest in the Czech Republic, but is still 84% (Den Ridder & Dekker 2015).
On the other hand, the concept 'democracy' does not have the same meaning for everyone; for some, it is about freedom (e.g. of expression or thought), while for others it is about equality (see Den Ridder & Dekker 2015 for a detailed discussion of this and of opinions about democracy and politics in the Netherlands). Despite these differences, there is a strong correlation between opinions on the perceived degree of democracy in a country and public satisfaction with the way democracy functions (see Figure 2.2 in Boelhouwer et al. 2015). Generally speaking, Central and Eastern Europeans, followed at some distance by Southern Europeans, not only believe that their countries are less democratic, but are also less satisfied with the way democracy functions (see Boelhouwer et al. 2015).

Figure 2.1
Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy (in scores 0-10)



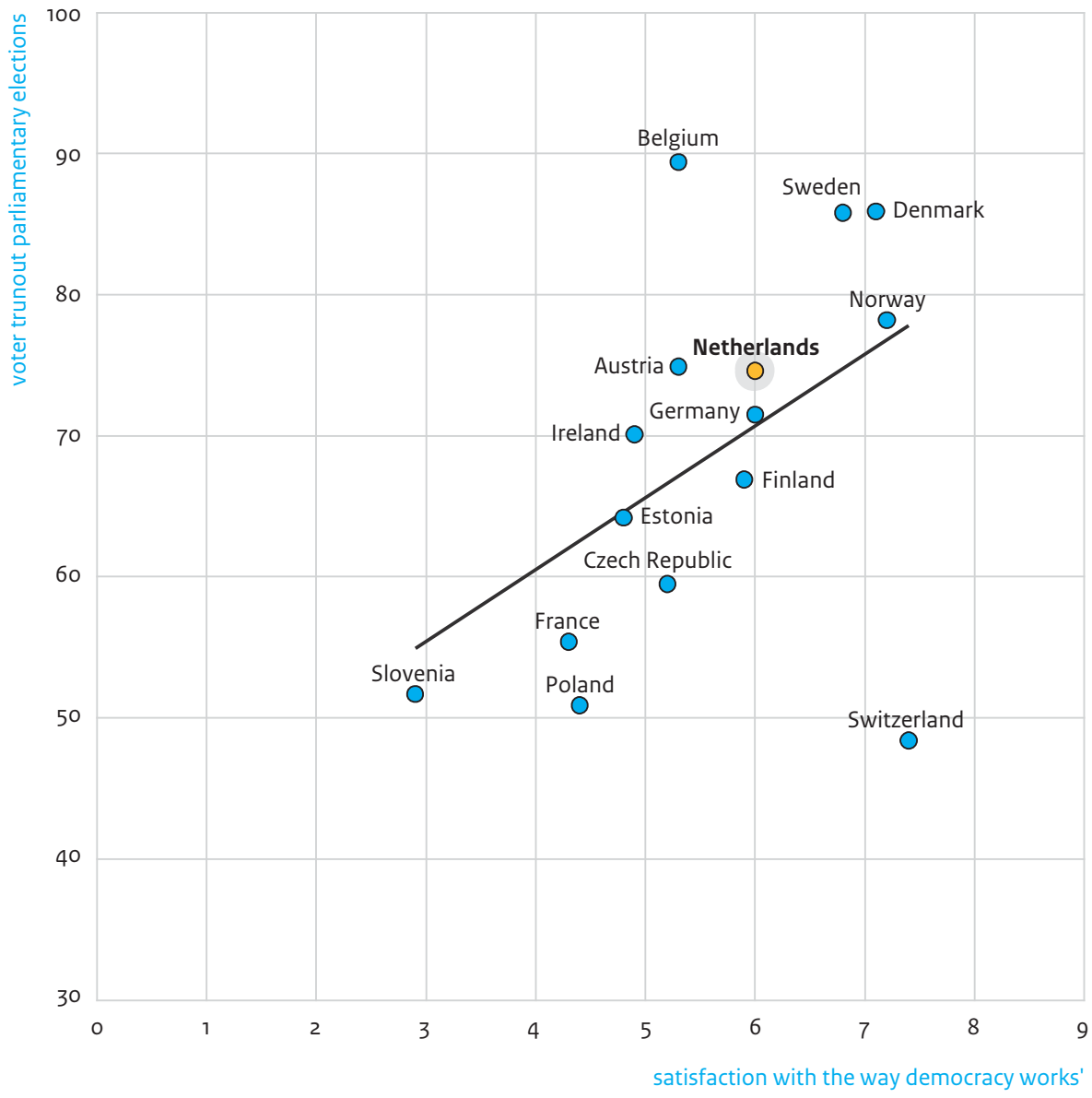
The question was: And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? Use this card, where 0 = Extremely dissatisfied and 10 = Extremely satisfied.

Source: ESS'14/'15

The Netherlands, Germany and Finland closely resemble each other as regards opinions on the functioning of democracy, with each country showing relatively high levels of satisfaction (see Figure 2.1). Satisfaction levels in Scandinavia and Switzerland are slightly higher.[2] Slovenians take the least positive view on the functioning of democracy in their country.

Figure 2.2

Relationship between satisfaction with the way democracy works[a] and turnout at the most recent national elections (in scores 0-10 and percentages) 2014/'15



a The question was: And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? Use this card where 0 = Extremely dissatisfied and 10 = Extremely satisfied.

Source: ESS'14/'15 and IDEA (2015)

If satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is high, what does this tell us about the turnout at elections? Will it be high because satisfied citizens turn out to show their support, or low because satisfied citizens stay away from the polling booths as there is no reason to vote for change? We find a positive correlation between satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and turnout at elections: higher satisfaction is associated with higher turnout (Figure 2.2).

However, the association is not very strong – the correlation at country level is 0.48. It is notable that Switzerland and Belgium, in particular, are to some extent outliers. A contrib-

utory factor in Belgium is likely to be the compulsory voting system (though without sanctions). And although the Swiss are very satisfied with the way democracy functions in their country (the most satisfied of all countries studied, in fact), the turnout at (national) elections is relatively low (the second lowest of all countries studied). This is all the more striking given the regular referendums that are held there (three to four times a year on a diversity of topics) in which electors turn out to vote. It may be that this gives rise to a certain 'turnout fatigue'. On the other hand, the turnout at referendums is no higher than at national elections (FORS 2012).

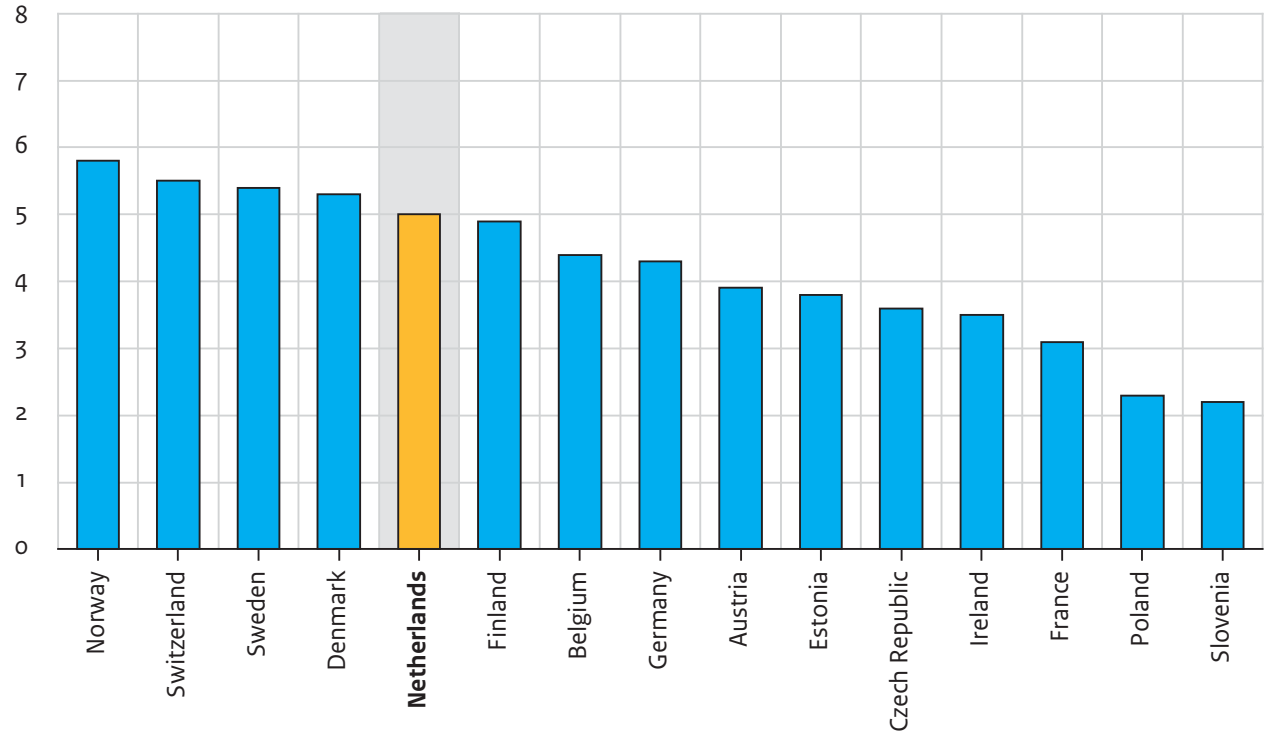
2.3 Trust in institutions and other people

Although the vast majority of people believe that democracy is the best system, by no means everyone is satisfied with the way it works: half the countries give a score of 5 or less (Figure 2.1). This begs the question of how much trust people have in politics. Here we look at trust in politicians, political parties and the national parliament and take the average of the scores given. This reveals that trust is not particularly high. Norwegians still have the most political trust, but even there the average score does not get above 6 (on a scale from 0-10); Figure 2.3). Political trust is especially low in the Central and Eastern European countries, but citizens of France and Ireland also have relatively little trust in politics. Trust is also not high in the Netherlands, but neither is it low compared with other countries. The figures presented in Figure 2.3 show the average of scores for trust in politicians, political parties and the national parliament. Trust in parliament is found to be higher in all countries than trust in politicians or political parties (not shown in figure).

Trust in politics depends not only on the quality of government, but also on political events, such as the accession of a new government or measures taken during a crisis. Fluctuations are caused among other things by economic developments or the amount of corruption. This contextual sensitivity means that political trust is very volatile, with peaks and troughs (see also Dekker & Gesthuizen 2015; Van Erkel & Van der Meer (forthcoming)).

Figure 2.3

Political trust[a] (in scores 0-10)



a Political trust is the average of scores for trust in politicians, political parties and the (national) parliament. The question was: Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust... [country]'s parliament? ...politicians? ... political parties?

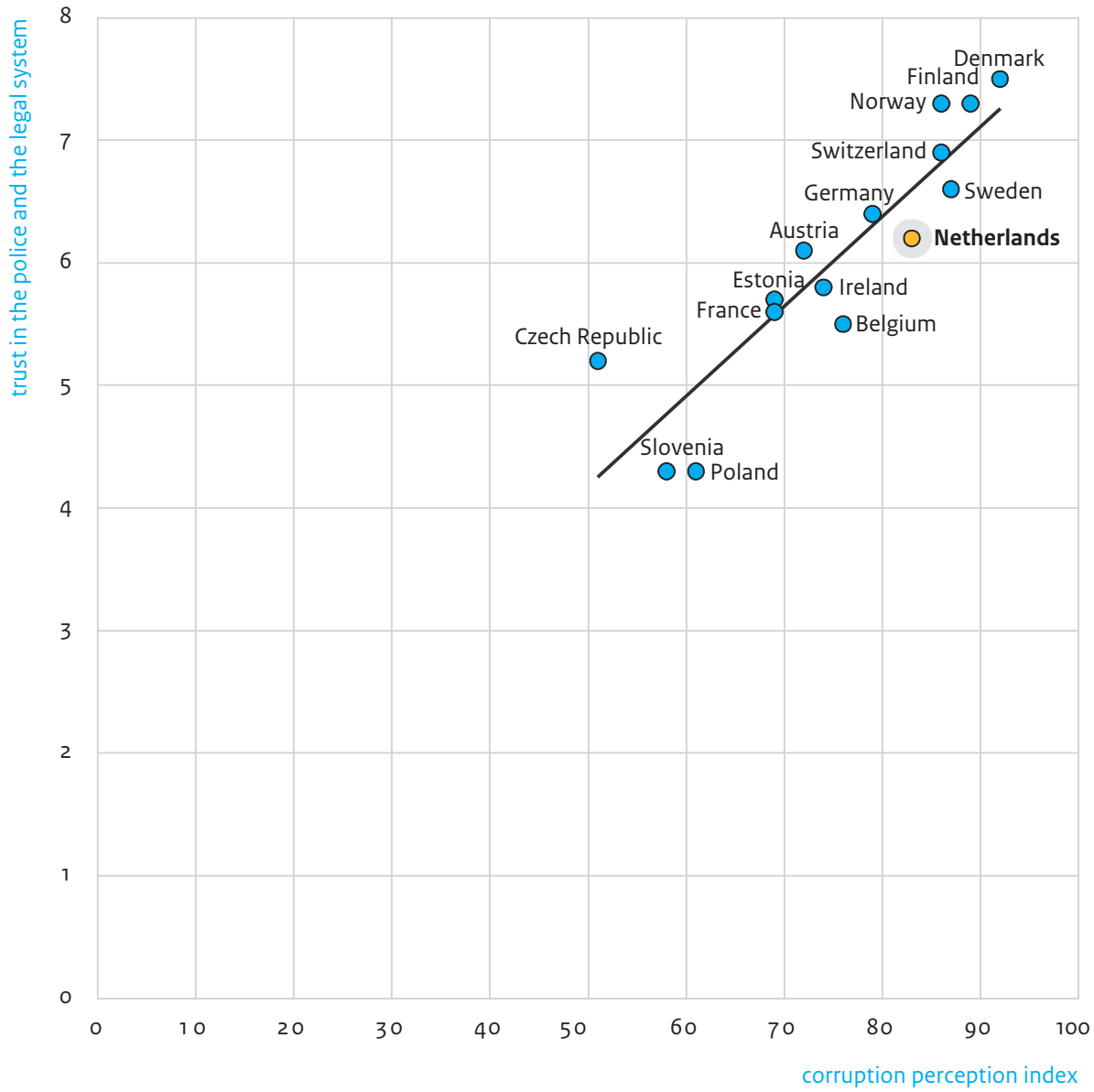
Source: ESS'14/'15

Trust in the legal system

The fluctuations in political trust are greater than the variation in trust in another pillar of democracy, namely the legal system. Trust in the legal system is not only higher, but also more stable. If trust in the legal system and the police is combined, wide differences emerge between the ESS countries. Trust in the legal system and the police is just as low as the trust in politics in Slovenia and Poland, whereas in the Nordic countries it is substantially higher (compare Figures 2.3 and 2.4).

Figure 2.4

Relationship between combined trust in the legal system and the police[a] and a 'corruption perception index'[b] (in scores and index figures)



a The figure presented shows the average of scores for trust in the legal system and the police. The question was: Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust. ... the legal system? ...the police?

b The corruption perception index scores countries on the basis of the perceived level of corruption in the public sector, where 0 = extremely corrupt and 100 = 'very clean'.

Source: ESS'14/'15 and Transparency International (2015).

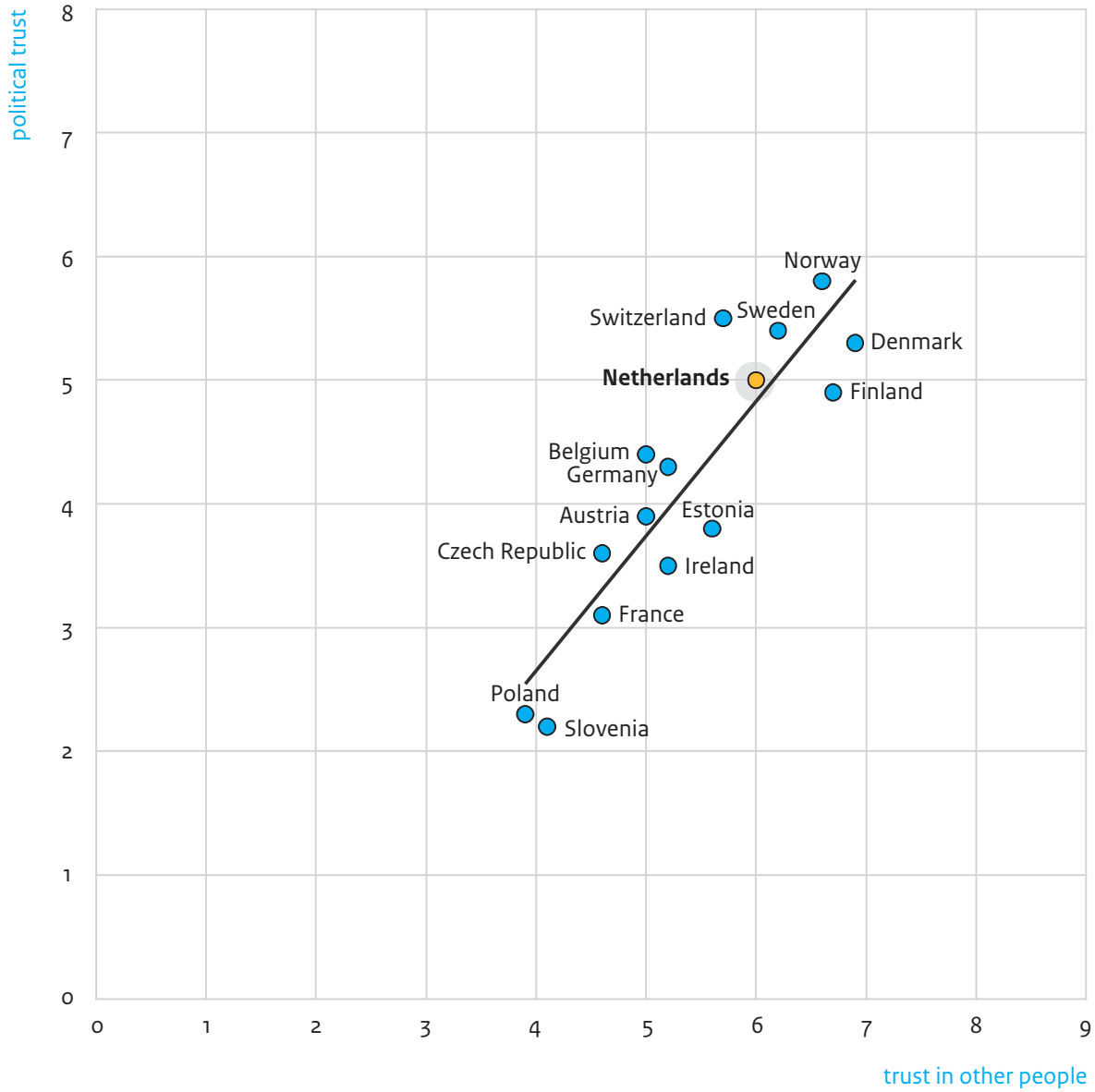
Trust in the legal system is also higher than trust in politics in the Netherlands, but the difference is not as marked as in the Nordic countries.
Trust in the legal system is found to be strongly associated with the degree of corruption in a given country: the less corrupt (or 'cleaner') a country is, the greater the trust in the legal system and the police (Figure 2.4; the correlation at country level is 0.90).[3]

Social trust

There is another form of trust that is important in a society in addition to institutional trust: social trust, or the trust that people have in others. Generally speaking, positive associations are found between these two forms of trust (Dekker & Den Ridder 2015a), and that is also reflected in the countries compared here, with a strong correlation between trust in politics and trust in other people[4] (Figure 2.5; at country level, the correlation is 0.90).[5]
A threefold distinction emerges here. There is a cluster of countries where high trust in other people is associated with a high degree of political trust (i.e. compared with other countries, because political trust is not truly high anywhere). Together with the Scandinavian countries, Finland and Switzerland, the Netherlands falls into this group. Then there is a cluster where trust is slightly lower. The third group is formed by Poland and Slovenia, where trust both in other people and in politics is relatively low.

Figure 2.5

Relationship between political trust[a] and trust in other people[b] (in scores 0-10)



a Political trust is the average of scores for trust in politicians, political parties and the (national) parliament. The question was: Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust... [country]'s parliament? ...politicians? ... political parties?

b The question was: Using this card, generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please tell me on a score of 0 to 10, where 0 means you can't be too careful and 10 means that most people can be trusted.

Source: ESS'14/'15

2.4 Opinions on migrants

When the Dutch are asked about political priorities or social issues, 'living together in harmony', healthcare, income and the economy top the list, along with concerns about immi-

gration and integration (Den Ridder & Dekker 2015). Migrants and integration are also much-discussed topics in the political debate. At the same time, the Dutch appear to have become milder in their views about migrants: although a high proportion of Dutch citizens express a negative view of the share of migrants in the Netherlands, that proportion has fallen since 2004, from around half in 2002 to roughly a third in 2014/'15. During the same period, support for issuing residence permits to refugees increased (Dekker & Den Ridder 2015b).

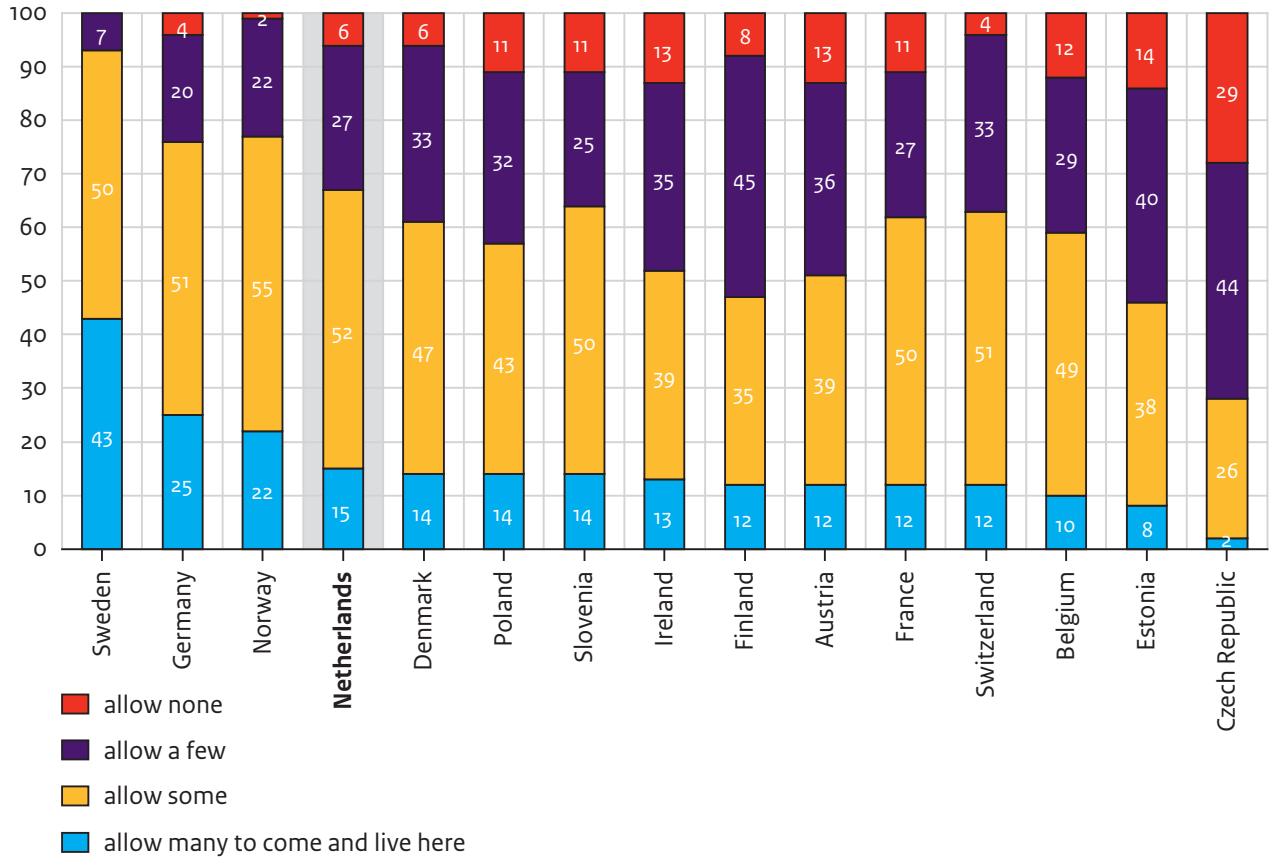
In the next chapter we view this topic through the lens of the literature and show how opinions have developed over time. Here, we outline the most recent situation. First, we look at the degree to which people think that people of a different race or ethnic group should be allowed to enter their country. Sweden has the highest proportion of people who think that 'many should be allowed to come and live here', followed by Germany and Norway (Figure 2.6).[6] Moreover, only a small proportion of people in these countries think that no people of a different race or ethnic group should be allowed in.

The Netherlands is in a large middle group in which the share of people who think that 'many should be allowed to come and live here' ranges between 12% and 15%. Unlike most other countries in this middle group, however, the share of Dutch citizens who think that no one should be allowed in is relatively small. Around 80% of Dutch citizens think that a few or some migrants should be allowed in. This puts the Netherlands on a par with Denmark and Switzerland.

In the Czech Republic, only a very small percentage of respondents think that 'many migrants should be allowed to come and live here', and almost a third of the population believe that no one of a different race or ethnic group should be admitted.

Figure 2.6

Extent to which people of a different race or ethnic group should be allowed to come and live 'here' (in percentages)



The question was: to what extent do you think [country] should allow people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people to come and live here?

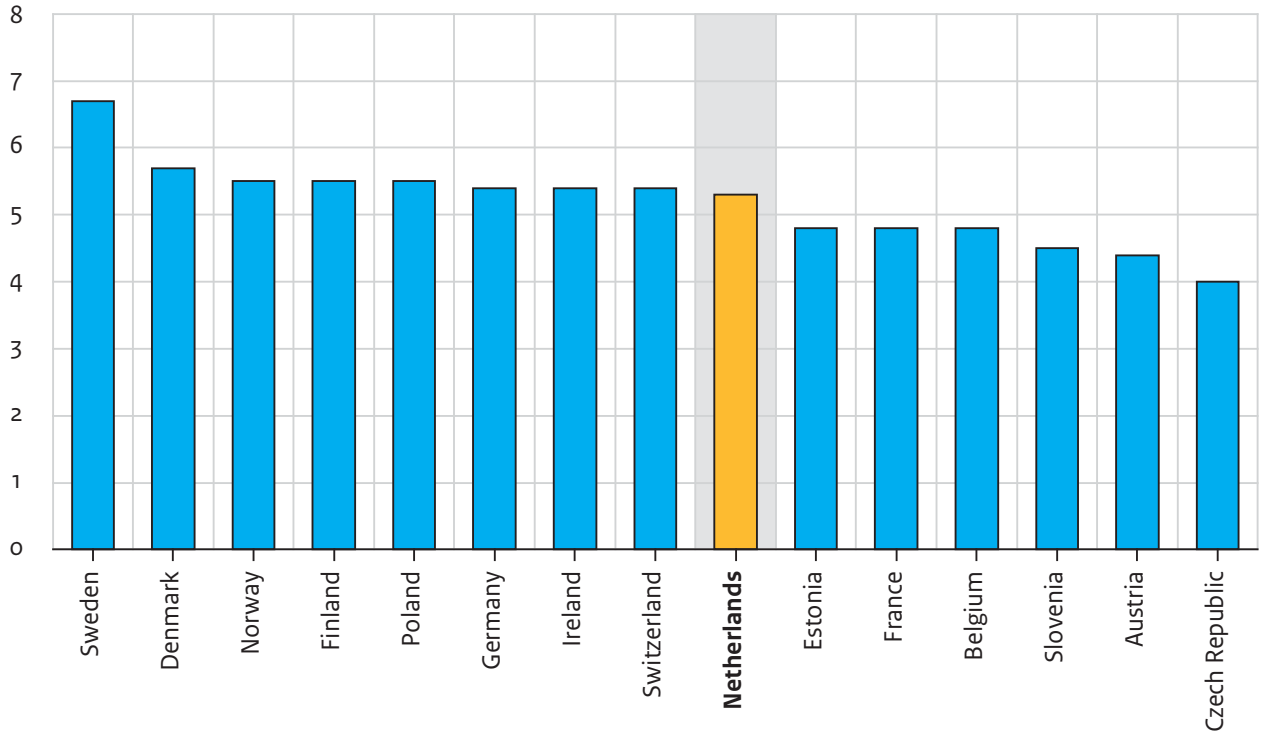
Source: ESS'14/'15

Has life after the arrival of immigrants improved or deteriorated?

Someone who is happy to allow lots of migrants into their country will not automatically be enthusiastic about having migrants living close by (a phenomenon known as ethnic distance). The ESS includes a question which measures more general opinions about the arrival of people from other countries, asking whether this has made life better or worse. The bulk of the scores are book-ended by Sweden, where a relatively high proportion of people believe that life has improved, and the Czech Republic, where a relatively large number of people feel that life has got worse; see Figure 2.7. Most of the scores are around the middle, which implies that people in most countries think that life has not got substantially better or worse.

Figure 2.7

Is the country better or worse off with immigrants (in scores 0-10)



The question was: Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries? 0 is a worse place; 10 is a better place to live.

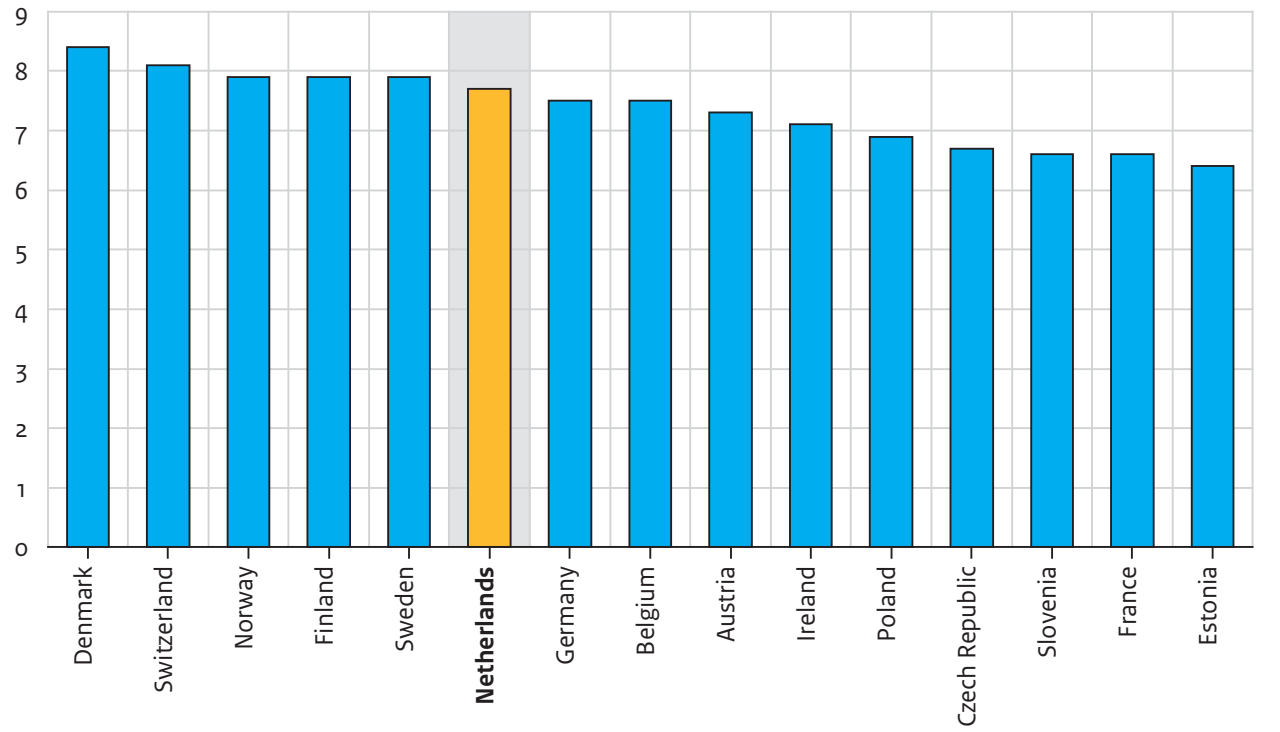
Source: ESS'14/'15

In general, people who feel that migrants have made their country a better place to live also think that lots of migrants should be allowed in (correlation at individual level = 0.53; at country level = 0.81). However, there is only a limited correlation with the actual percentage of migrants within a country. The ESS contextual database contains figures (taken from Eurostat) on the share of migrants in most countries. It is worth noting here that in the Eurostat definition 'migrants' are people who are not citizens of the country where they live.[7] No correlation is found between the number of foreigners and public opinion on whether life has got better or worse following the arrival of immigrants (correlation = -0.10). There are however wide differences between countries. The Czech Republic and Austria, for example, are among the countries with the most negative views about life since the arrival of immigrants, though the percentage of foreigners living in the Czech Republic is a good deal lower than in Austria (4% versus 13%).

2.5 Life satisfaction

A key aim of the ESS is to develop a series of social indicators to monitor trends in quality of life within and between European countries. The focus is not on *"the contrasting characteristics of European societies (demographic and behavioural profiles) [...]"*, but rather: *"Europe needs to know more about its own character (how its different peoples think and feel about their worlds and themselves)"*. (EC 2007: 13). With this in mind, in the concluding part of this chapter we use a more or less overarching question to explore happiness. Happiness is a popular topic, about which lots of rankings have been published. As happiness is measured in different ways, however, there is considerable variation in the results. For example, it matters whether one question is used or a combination of questions (for example including both positive and negative emotions). Generally speaking, however, the Netherlands is found in the upper regions of the rankings: the Dutch are among the happiest people in the world (although the Danes usually top the list). In a list of EU Member States, the Netherlands takes fifth place, and in the *World Happiness Report 2015* it occupies seventh place (Helliwell et al. 2015).

Figure 2.8
Life satisfaction



The question was: All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? Please answer using this card, where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied.

Source: ESS'14/'15

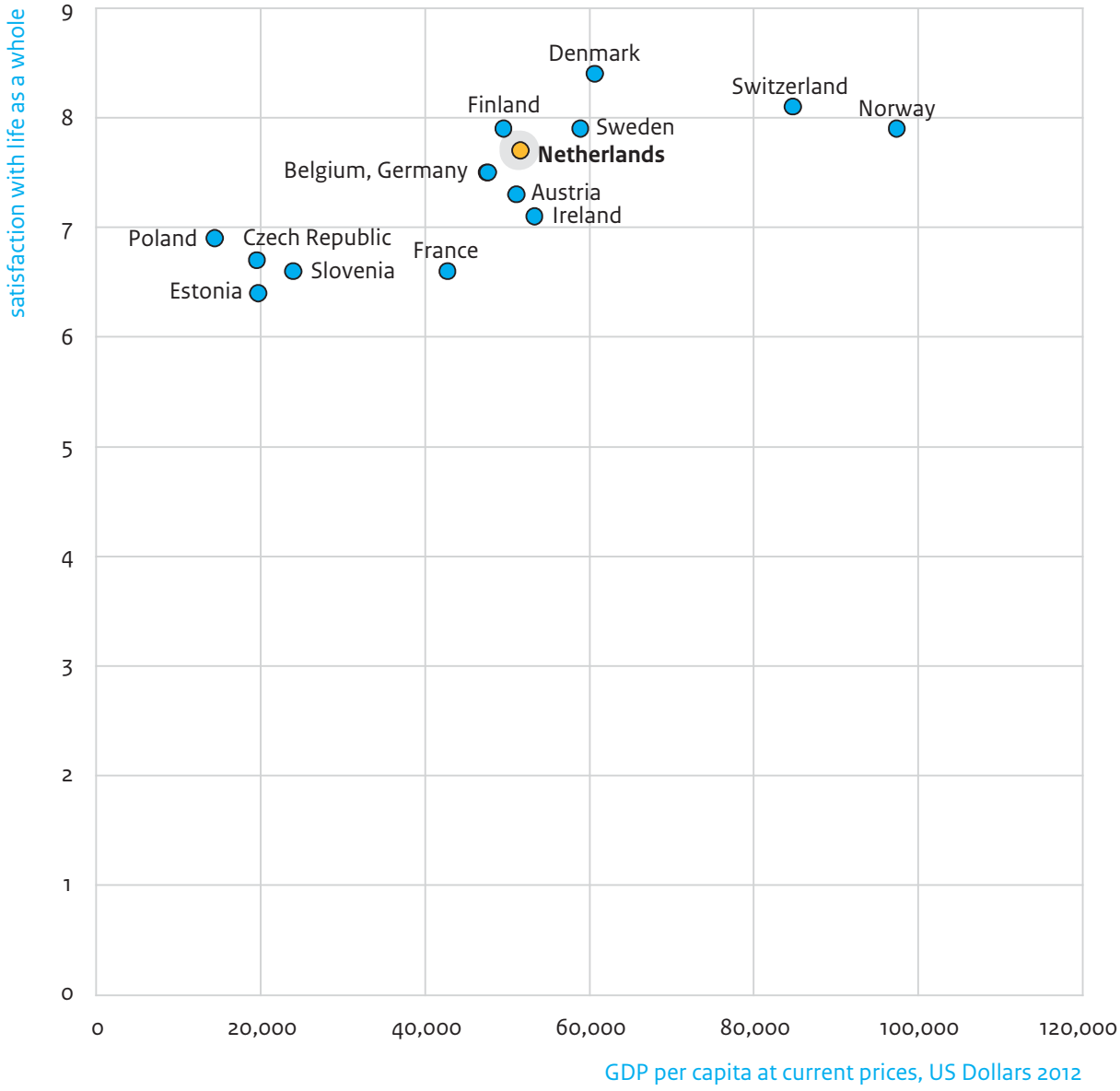
Here we use life satisfaction as a proxy for happiness. Research has shown that people regard satisfaction with their lives as important, and factor in many aspects of their lives over an extended period (see Helliwell et al. 2015). According to the ESS, too, the Dutch are fairly happy: according to the most recent figures, the Dutch score their life satisfaction at an average of 7.7 out of 10 (Figure 2.8). The Danes top this score, while the other Nordic countries plus Switzerland achieve comparable score to the Netherlands, as do Germany and Belgium. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe are the least happy, forming a group which interestingly also includes France.
How closely is life satisfaction associated with the other indicators considered in this chapter? In general, the correlation is reasonably high, especially as regards satisfaction with the functioning of democracy (correlation coefficient = 0.88); the correlation with the trust indicators is slightly lower (around 0.80), and lower again as regards opinions on migrants (around 0.65).

National income and happiness are related

There is much discussion in the scientific world about the relationship between happiness and income. At individual level, people with a higher income are generally happier than people with a low income. This also holds at country level (Figure 2.9: correlation = 0.78). The debate focuses on the question of whether people become increasingly happy as the national income of their country rises, or whether there are limits to this. Research by the economist Easterlin showed that a growing income does not by definition lead to greater happiness over the longer term (Easterlin 1974, 2005). Other researchers, including the Dutch sociologist Veenhoven, reached a different conclusion, namely that a higher national income does indeed lead to greater happiness (Hagerty & Veenhoven 2003). Much depends on the period and the selection of countries studied.
In this chapter we restrict ourselves to the situation as revealed in the most recent round of the ESS. This shows that people in countries with a higher income are happier on average (Figure 2.9). Norway and Switzerland stand out from the rest slightly, but this is mainly due to the particular nature of the national income in these countries, with Switzerland having a very strong banking sector and Norway deriving much of its revenue from its large reserves of gas and oil.

Figure 2.9

Relationship between life satisfaction[a] (in scores) and GDP per capita[b] (in US dollars), 2014/'15



a The question was: All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? Please answer using this card, where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied.

b GDP per capita at current prices, US Dollars (2014).

Source: ESS'14/'15; World Bank (2015)

2.6 Summary

This chapter describes how Europeans view democracy and migrants, how much trust they have in a number of institutions and in other people and how satisfied they are with the lives they lead. This picture is based on seven different indicators on which information was collected in 15 countries.

Can we arrive at a general picture based on this information? Although the topics discussed are all to some extent related to quality of life, they are also very different. Nonetheless, in general we find a fairly strong relationship between the different indicators. Countries where people have more political trust are generally also countries where people trust each other more, take a more positive view of migrants and are more satisfied with their lives.

Broadly speaking, the figures presented in this chapter show that the Scandinavian countries plus Switzerland consistently achieve the highest scores, while those in Central and Eastern Europe record the lowest scores. The Netherlands sits just below the top group.

Notes

1 As well as other criteria that a country has to meet in order to accede to the EU (the 'Copenhagen criteria'), they must also fulfil the requirement of having 'stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities' (http://www.europa-u.nl/id/vh7eg8yibqzt/criteria_van_kopenhagen).

2 We use the term 'Nordic countries' for Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The term 'Scandinavia' is used when referring only to the latter three countries.

3 The 'corruption perception index' is part of the ESS Multilevel Database. The figures are from Transparency International. It was decided to base our study on perceptions because illegal activities generally take place out of sight and there is no way of obtaining data on absolute levels (see also Transparency International website: http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/in_detail). The data are obtained from a survey of experts. The index was evaluated by the European Commission Joint Research Centre in 2012, with a positive outcome. In this chapter we use figures drawn directly from the website, because the 2014 figures have not yet been entered in the ESS Multilevel Database.

4 The figures on social trust presented in this chapter are based on a question that is widely used in research, in which one extreme is formed by the statement that 'most people can be trusted' and the other extreme by the statement that 'you can't be too careful in dealing with people'. This question formulation has come in for criticism because the two extremes are not true opposites ('can't be trusted' would be the true opposite of 'can be trusted'); in the present formulation, 'trust' is ranged against something akin to 'vulnerability'. Because of this, the ESS also includes two other questions that measure generalised trust. One is: 'Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?'. The correlation between the two measures of generalised trust is high (0.91), but the country rankings do change somewhat: Iceland rises from sixth to first place (for trust and taking advantage, respectively), while the Netherlands falls from fifth to ninth place.

5 At individual level, the correlation is 0.41. The fact that the correlation at country level is higher than at individual level is due in part to the greater spread at individual level (see also Clark & Avery 1976).

6 The figures in this chapter are based on the entire population of a country. We are concerned here with the mood among the population. In the chapter on (im)migration, a selection has been made and we look at the views of 'natives'; the aim is to pinpoint opinions about immigration (and other research suggests that recent migrants take a more positive stance on migration). The figures may therefore differ.

7 To clarify the difference: this statistic shows that 4% of the Dutch population are of foreign origin. According to the population statistics published by Statistics Netherlands (CBS), however, 20% of the Dutch population are of foreign origin (i.e. either they themselves or at least one of their parents was born abroad).

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3 Opinions on migration in a European perspective. Trends and differences

Roza Meuleman, Marcel Lubbers, Gerbert Kraaykamp

- The willingness to accept people of a different race and/or ethnic group has increased in many European countries. However, this willingness is declining in some countries, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.
- Differences in public opinion on the economic benefits or disadvantages of migration have widened between European countries. Opinions in the Netherlands and Central and Eastern Europe have recently (2012/'13-2014/'15) turned more negative regarding both the economic and cultural benefits of migration.
- People in all European countries believe that migration exacerbates criminality. Over time, however, people have come to associate migration with crime less.
- Between 2002/'03 and 2014/'15, just before the onset of the major refugee crisis, the view strengthened in virtually all countries that governments need to be generous in their asylum procedures. However, there are wide differences in these opinions across countries.
- Attitudes to admitting Muslim migrants vary greatly in the most recent period, 2014/'15. Countries such as Germany, France, Norway and Sweden are relatively open to Muslim migrants, while Central and Eastern European countries are more restrictive.
- In general, people with a higher education level and young people take a more positive view of the consequences of migration, generous asylum procedures and Muslim migration.
- Inhabitants of countries that are more prosperous (gross domestic product) and have more trust in other people take a more positive stance on the consequences of migration, generous treatment of asylum-seekers and Muslim migration.

3.1 Brief background. Migration and public opinion

In 2015, Europe was dominated by large refugee movements and the terrorist attacks in Paris, both related to the rise of the so-called Islamic State and the continuing conflict in Syria. Europe was also affected by the fact that there were young Muslims living in Europe who felt attracted to extremist jihadism, some of whom travelled to Syria and a few of whom actually sacrificed their lives in terrorist attacks. It is likely (and unsurprising) that these developments have changed public opinion towards Muslims, asylum-seekers and migrants negatively. This is evident among other things from the growing support for nationalist-populist parties in opinion polls and election results (e.g. Bremmer 2015). This is by no means an entirely new development; public opinion on migration and integration also turned more negative following the terrorist attacks in the United States, after

9/11, as well as after the bomb attacks in London and Madrid. In the Netherlands, the rise of the right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn, who was murdered just before the Dutch general elections in May 2002, and the murder of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh in November 2004, are also thought to have contributed to a less hospitable climate towards migrants and to demands from the Dutch public for greater integration efforts from newcomers than in the past (Coenders et al. 2008; Gijsberts & Lubbers 2009). After 2004, the consequences of the intra-EU migration from East to West added to the numbers of people travelling to many Western European countries. Many critics argued that these movements exceeded the capacity of the host countries to cope, partly because of displacement effects on the labour market, as reflected in the calls in 2013 by the Dutch Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, Lodewijk Asscher, and British Prime Minister David Cameron, to call a halt to labour migration from Eastern Europe (Reijner 2013).

In this chapter we explore the extent to which public opinion about migration in European countries has changed over the last 12 years: from 2002, the year after the terrorist attacks in New York, up to and including 2015, on the eve of the refugee and terrorism crisis in Europe. We do this by drawing on data from the European Social Survey (ESS). Meuleman, Davidov and Billiet (2009) have already used ESS data to show how attitudes towards migrants developed between 2002 and 2006. The ESS 2014/'15 round was recently released, containing data from European countries at the end of 2014 and early 2015 (see chapter 1). These data not only offer a good opportunity to study recent public opinions, but also to investigate trends in Europe in relation to migration, which is currently dominating the political and public agenda. We also examine a number of explanations for attitudes towards migration. The analyses are based on information on the countries for which ESS data recently became available. When discussing the changes over time, we select ten countries which have taken part in all or virtually all rounds of the ESS and which are also members of the EU: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Sweden. As people with a migration background have different views on migration, we only present the opinions of the native populations.[1]

3.2 Perceived negative consequences of migration

Why would the European public take a negative stance on migration? Earlier research has shown that perceived negative consequences of migration play a major role in resistance to migration in the host population (Scheepers, Gijsberts & Coenders 2002). This explanation of negative attitudes to migration and migrants assumes that natives and migrants compete for scarce goods in a society. In developing this theory, it was initially assumed that competition takes place mainly in the economic domain, for example for work, housing, income and prosperity. Migrants are then seen as potentially taking jobs away from natives, partly because of an assumed willingness to work for lower wages. Many nationalist-populist parties have referred to this in their programmes, with the statement by Jean-Marie Le Pen serving as an example for the programmes of other nationalist-populist

parties: 'a million unemployed is a million migrants too many'. During the enlargement of the European Union, it was also frequently suggested that migration from Central and Eastern Europe would undermine the position of natives on the labour market. This competition, it was argued, would lead to discontent if the economic situation deteriorated. It is consequently often assumed that in countries (and periods) where the economy is doing badly, the perceived economic threat from migrants increases.

Earlier research suggests that not everyone sees migrants as such a threat (Gijsberts 2005). This is understandable, given that not everyone faces equally strong economic competition from incoming migrants. It therefore seems likely that members of social groups that face more competition from migrants will perceive them as a greater economic threat. Non-Western migrants, as well as recent migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, are more often employed at the lower end of the labour market (Gijsberts & Lubbers 2013), and it is therefore likely that low-skilled natives who are employed at the lower end of the labour market and who are more often looking for homes in neighbourhoods where many non-Western and Central and Eastern European migrants also live, will perceive a greater economic threat. A similar reasoning may hold for young people who are new entrants to the labour and housing markets and who therefore would face more competition from newcomers than older persons.

Since the 1990s, attention has also been devoted to the 'cultural threat' posed by migrants (McLaren 2003; Lucassen & Lubbers 2012). Resistance by the native population to migration is then interpreted from the premise that they see on a day-to-day basis that migrants have different customs, or tend to have different views and ideas. The arrival of migrants causes natives to feel a sort of alienation from society and a reduced sense of community, and this makes them less sure about what their country stands for. Put differently, people feel that their cultural life or national identity is under threat (Hjerm & Nagayoshi 2011). In practical terms, this could mean that people feel threatened by migrants whom they perceive as having different views on issues such as democracy, homosexuality or women's emancipation. Research has shown that lower-educated people attach more importance to aspects of national identity, and we anticipate that older persons who have spent a long time living in a particular kind of society may have more difficulty in accepting change caused by migration processes. We therefore expect lower educated and older persons to be more likely to perceive cultural threat. We also expect that people in countries where generalised trust is lower will more readily perceive a cultural threat from newcomers than residents of countries where generalised trust is greater.

A final threat posed by migrants – though one which has received less attention in research – is that, due to both economic and cultural factors, migrants more often are associated with criminality (Palmer 1996; Cohrs & Stelzl 2010). People with foreign citizenship are overrepresented in the prison population in many European countries (Eurostat 2015), and as a result statistical discrimination (the phenomenon whereby (presumed) characteristics

of a group are attributed to individual members of that group) could lead to migrants being regarded as a threat to safety. Once again, we think the link between perceived lack of safety and migration is likely to be stronger among the low-educated and older persons. Exaggeration of the actual risks, vulnerability and prejudice are also likely to play a role here. In addition, migrants and lower-educated people are overrepresented in the crime figures (Groot & Van den Brink, 2010). This suggests that lower-educated people may not only be more likely to come into contact with crime, but also more likely to come into contact with crime perpetrated by migrants.

These different types of threat (economic, cultural, safety) have often been linked to public resistance to migration in general (Scheepers et al. 2002). More specifically, resistance to asylum-seekers can also be explained by this perceived threat. Although it is assumed that people are less resistant to refugees from political violence than to economic refugees, the resistance to asylum-seekers may also be based on perceived economic competition (Lubbers, Coenders & Scheepers 2006). Frequently heard arguments against the admission of asylum-seekers are problems on the housing market (preferential treatment for rented homes), the costs of supporting asylum-seekers and the idea that refugees become heavily dependent on benefits (Meloen et al. 1998). Here we will explore the extent to which Europeans feel that governments should be generous when assessing the status of asylum-seekers, and to what extent this view differed in 2014/'15 from 2002.

A number of Central and Eastern European countries (Hungary, Slovak Republic) have stated explicitly that they are not willing to take in any Muslim asylum-seekers (Minten 2015). The biggest factor here appears to be the perceived cultural threat, with fears concerning the radicalisation of new Muslim migrants undoubtedly playing a role. The argument is that Muslims have different norms and values, a stance which fuels 'Islamophobia' (Savelkoul et al. 2012). The question of whether European countries should admit Muslim migrants was only asked in ESS 2014/'15. Below we describe the extent of any differences in public opinion across Europe regarding resistance to Muslim migrants.

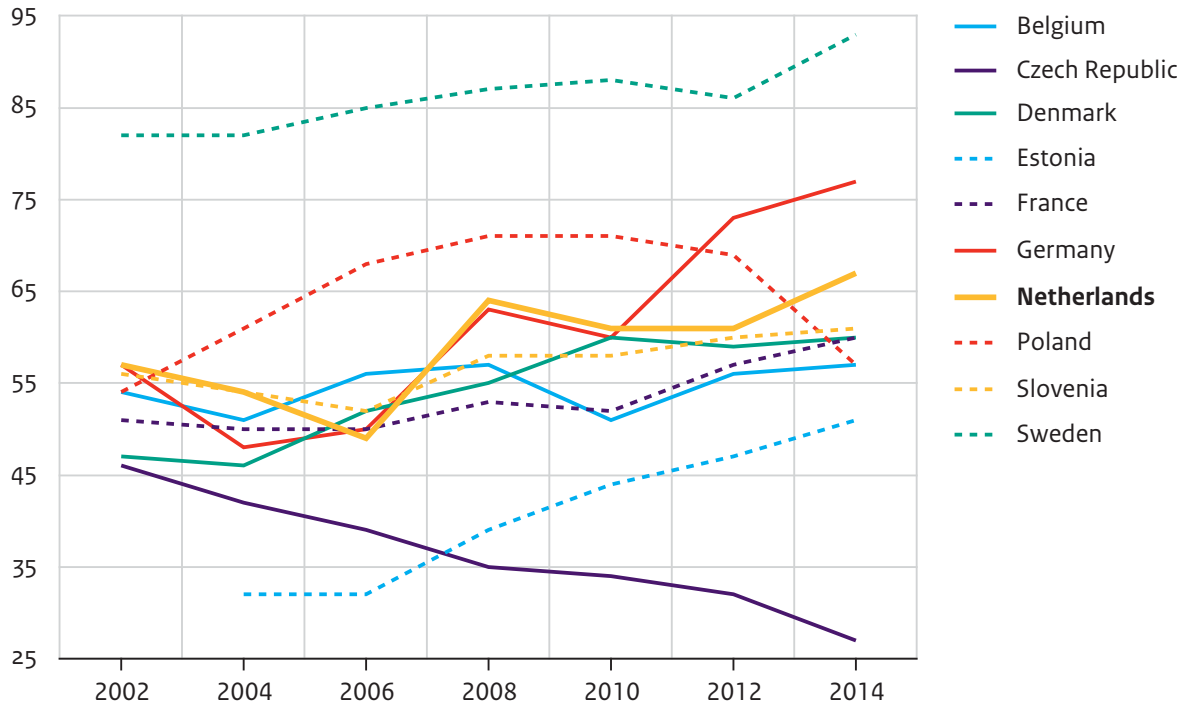
3.3 Resistance to the arrival of people of a different race/ethnic group

First we describe the extent to which changes have taken place in the resistance among Europeans to the arrival of people of a different race or ethnic group. Information was collected on this every two years between 2002/'03 and 2014/'15 by asking respondents to what extent they think people of a different race or ethnic group should be allowed to come and live in their country (see also Figure 2.6). Figure 3.1 shows the percentage of people stating that some or many should be allowed in (versus few or none). There are considerable differences between European countries. People in Sweden are the most welcoming: 93% of natives answered in 2014/'15 that some or many migrants of a different race or ethnic group should be admitted. The biggest contrast is with the Czech Republic, where people are the least receptive to ethnic migrants: in 2014/'15 only 27% thought that some

or many people of a different race or ethnic group should be allowed into their country. One striking feature in the figure is that the willingness to accept people of a different race and/or ethnic group has increased over time in virtually all countries, especially in Denmark, Estonia and Germany. The exceptions are Poland and particularly the Czech Republic, where the willingness to accept such migrants has fallen sharply.

Figure 3.1

Trends and country differences in support for admitting some or many migrants of a different race or ethnic group



The question was: To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people? % 'allow some - many to come and live here'.

Source: ESS'02/'03-'14/'15

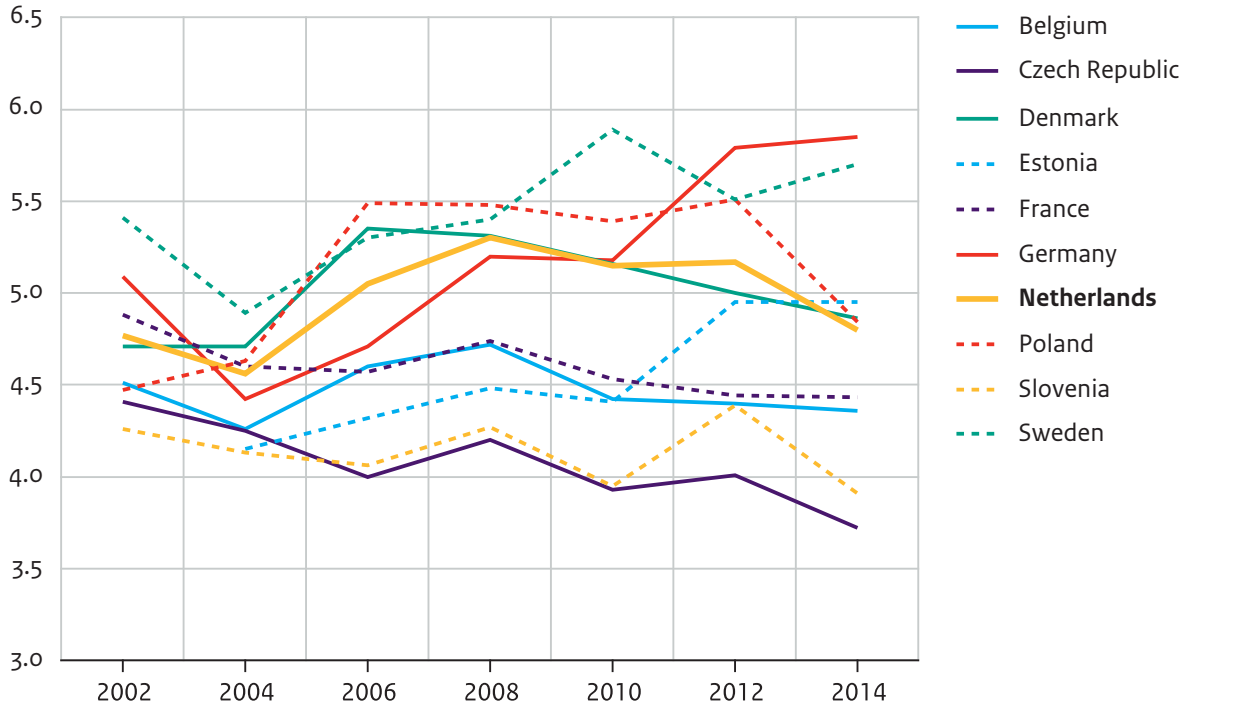
3.4 Perceived economic threat from migrants

We then investigate whether Europeans perceive different types of threats from migrants. We begin with the extent to which people perceive an economic threat due to the arrival of migrants, and the extent to which this perceived threat changed between 2002/'03 and 2014/'15. The responses to the question of whether migration is generally bad or good for a country's economy are not particularly extreme: as Figure 3.2 shows, most countries score around the middle on a scale from 0 (bad) to 10 (good). As regards trends in these opinions, we see that around 2002-2004 opinions on this statement were more or less the same across Europe, but have since become more diverse. People in Germany and Estonia, in particular, have taken an increasingly positive stance on the economic contribution by migrants, while views in the Czech Republic, especially, have become more negative. How-

ever, most notable is the recent development, between 2012/'13 and 2014/'15: in seven of the ten countries presented here, public opinion on the economic benefits of migration have turned more negative over the last two years. The biggest negative change is found in the Central and Eastern European countries and the Netherlands.

Figure 3.2

Trends and country differences in support for the statement that migration is good for the economy (trend)



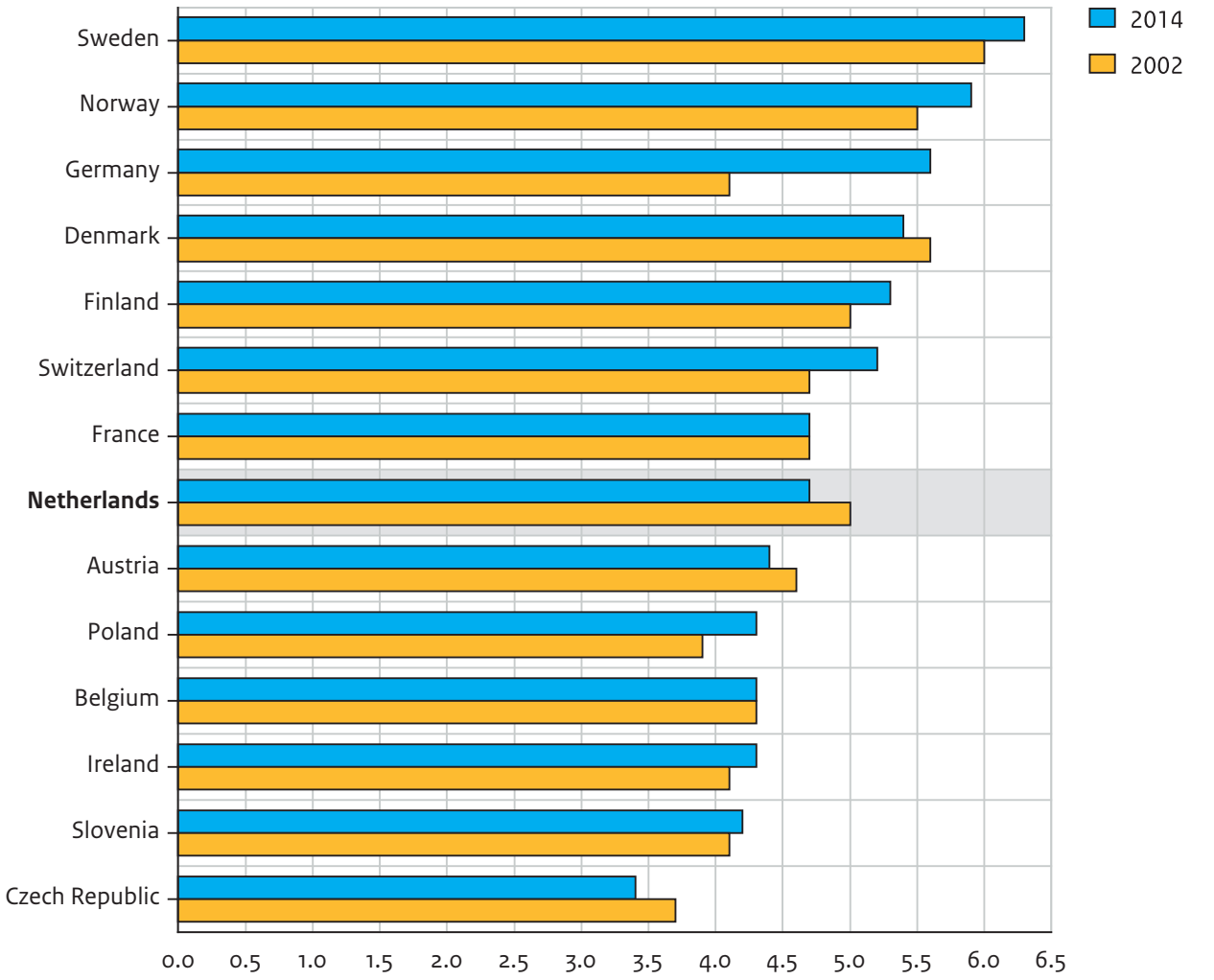
The question was: Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries? Mean scores, scale from 0 (bad) - 10 (good).

Source: ESS'02/'03-'14/'15

Round 1 (2002/'03) and Round 7 (2014/'15) of the ESS asked respondents whether migration tends to create new jobs or leads to competition for existing jobs (Figure 3.3). The figure shows clearly that people in the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) take a relatively positive view on the contribution of migrants to boosting new job opportunities. The populations of Poland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic are more sceptical towards migration and see it as more of a threat to existing employment.[2] A very mixed picture emerges if we look at the changes between 2002/'03 and 2014/'15. Support for the idea that migration creates new job opportunities rises especially sharply in Germany over this period, and opinions in Finland, Poland, Norway and Switzerland are also more positive in 2014/'15 than in 2002/'03. Support in the Netherlands declined somewhat.

Figure 3.3

Comparison of support in different countries for the statement that migration creates jobs, comparison 2002/'03-2014/'15



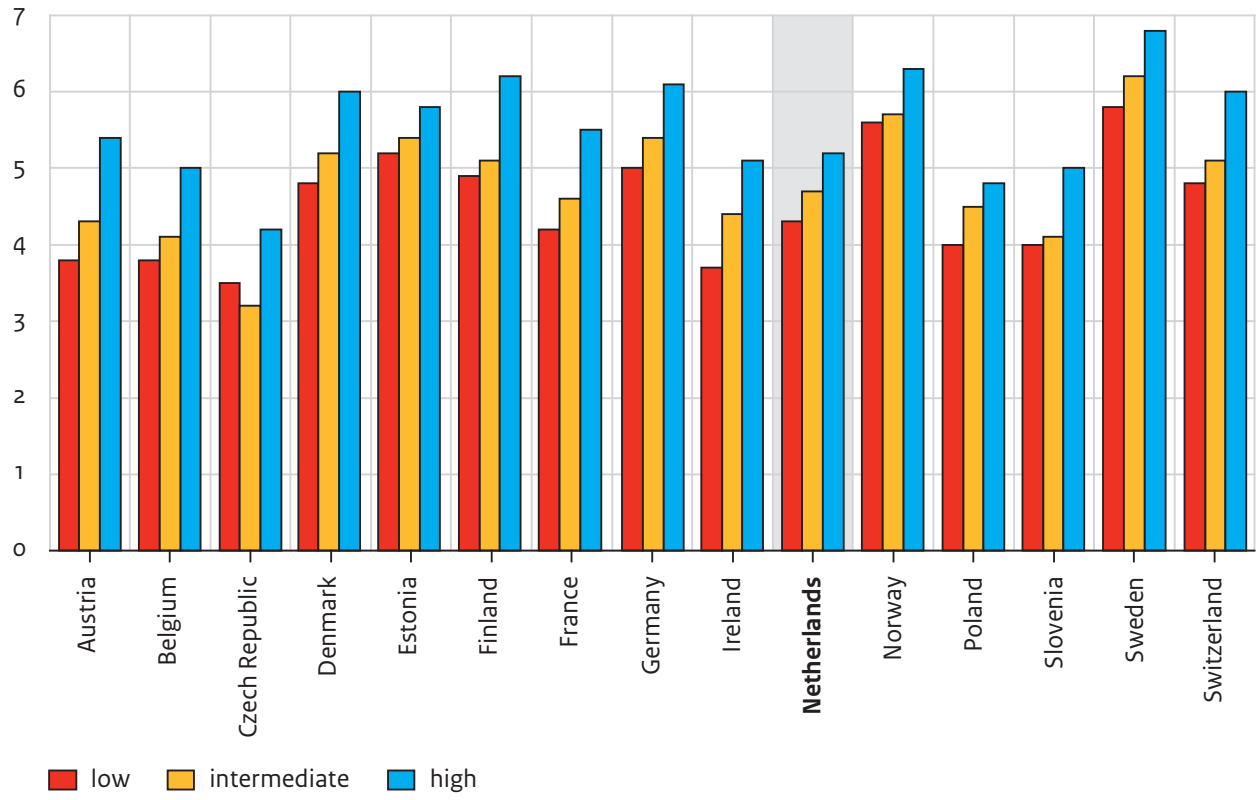
The question was: Would you say that people who come to live here generally take jobs away from workers in [country], or generally help to create new jobs? Mean scores, 0 (take jobs away) - 10 (create jobs).

Source: ESS'02/'03-'14/'15

Figure 3.4 shows a consistent relationship between education level and the perceived consequences of migration for employment. In all countries, highly educated people tend to take a relatively more positive view on the consequences of migration for job creation. People with a lower and intermediate education level in virtually all countries perceive an economic threat from labour migration to roughly the same extent, with scores generally below 5. Although there are some differences across countries, they are not particularly marked. The differences in the views of high and low-educated respondents is greatest in Ireland and Austria, while the educational differentiation is relatively low in Estonia, Norway and Sweden.

Figure 3.4

Country comparison of responses to statement that migration creates more jobs, by education level, 2014/'15



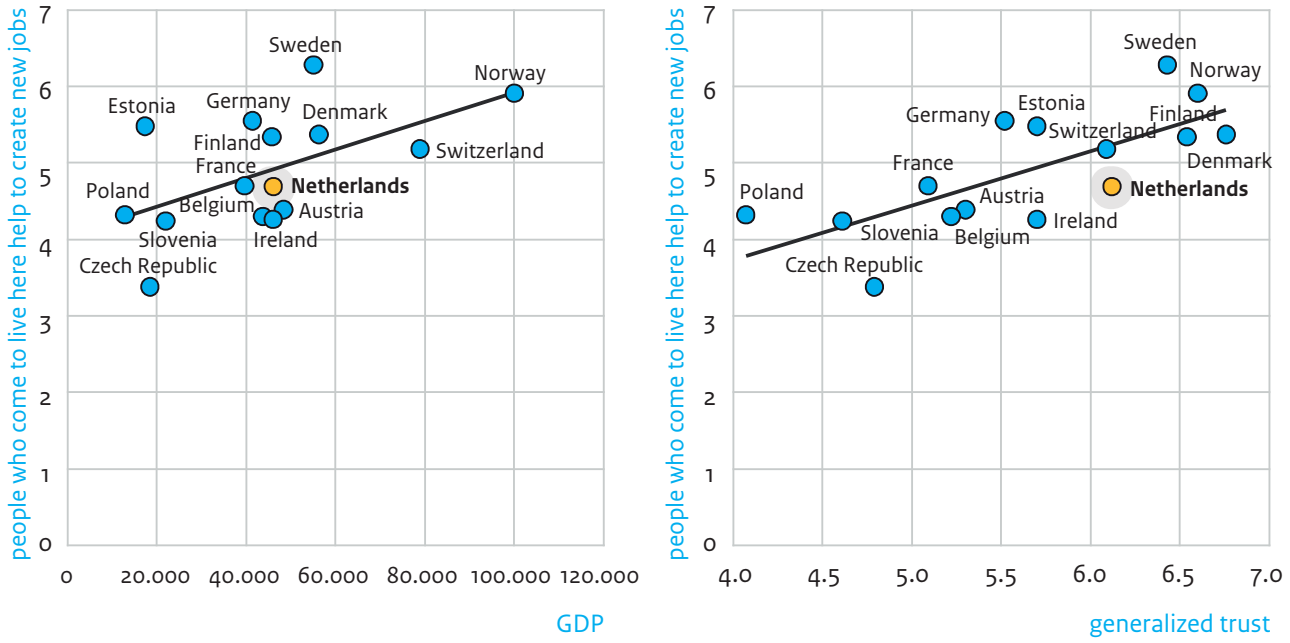
The question was: Would you say that people who come to live here generally take jobs away from workers in [country], or generally help to create new jobs? Mean score, 0 (take jobs away) - 10 (create jobs).

Source: ESS'14/'15

Figure 3.5 plots agreement that migration creates jobs against gross domestic product (at purchasing power parity) and the generalised trust in a country (aggregated, see Table 2.5). In the left-hand panel we find a positive relationship (r=0.56) between a country's prosperity and the perceived economic impact of labour migration. Put simply, inhabitants of rich European countries (such as Norway and Sweden) take a more positive view than people in less affluent countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia). There is also a positive relationship between the levels of trust in a country and a more positive attitude towards migration (r=0.73; right-hand panel). Countries whose population is characterised by more trust in 'arbitrary' other people take a relatively positive view of the consequences of labour migration.

Figure 3.5

Relationship between public opinion on the statement that migration creates jobs and GDP and social trust, 2014/'15



The question was: Would you say that people who come to live here generally take jobs away from workers in [country], or generally help to create new jobs? Mean scores, 0 (take jobs away) - 10 (create jobs).

Source: ESS'14/'15

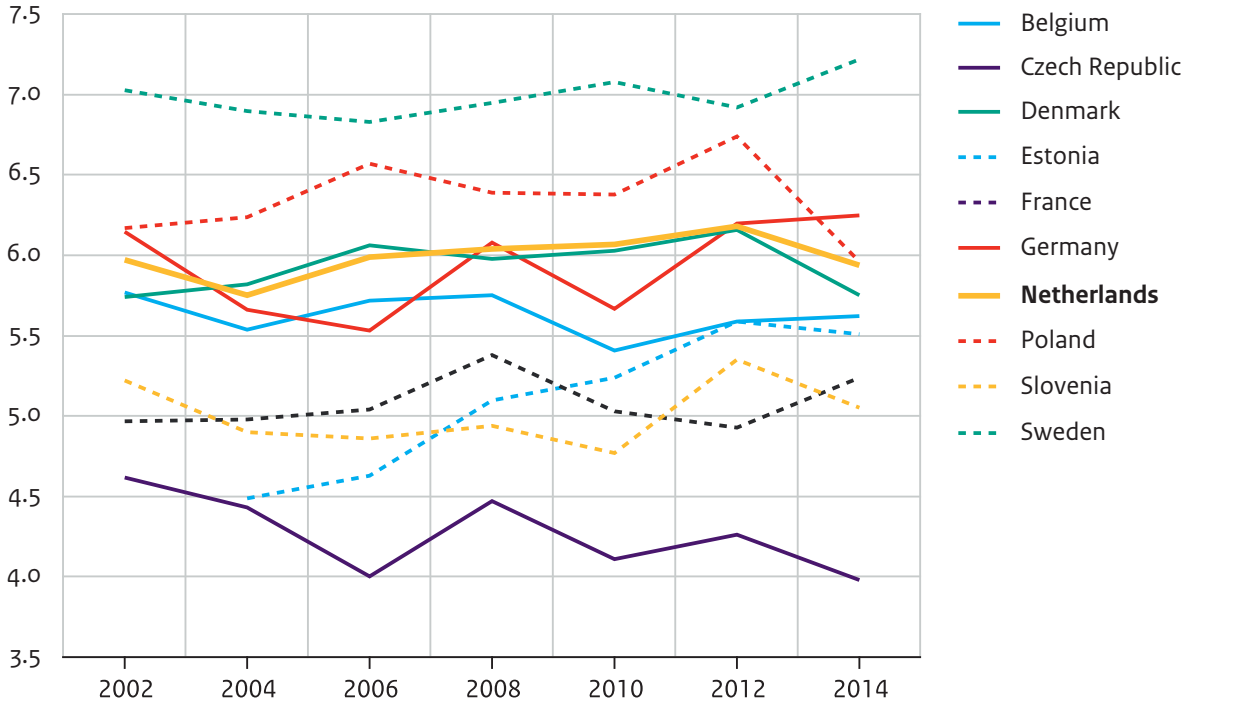
3.5 Perceived cultural threat from migration

A second aspect that is increasingly associated with the arrival of migrants concerns the consequences for the host country's cultural life and national identity. Here we examine whether people in European countries perceive a cultural threat from migration and to what extent that perception changed between 2002/'03 and 2014/'15. Opinions on the consequences of migration for cultural life are generally mildly positive, with responses to the

question of whether migration is generally bad or good for a country's cultural life broadly scoring above the scale mid-point of 5 (average score 5.8 on a scale from 0 (bad) to 10 (good)). However, Figure 3.6 does show a number of marked differences between countries. Where people in Sweden, for example, strongly agree with the idea that migration is enriching for the host country, this view receives much less support in the Czech Republic. As regards the trend between 2002/'03 and 2014/'15, we see relatively limited within-country changes in views on this issue. The ranking of countries also remains more or less intact over this period, though there are a number of notable climbers and fallers in the most recent period (2012/'13 -2014/'15), with people in Denmark, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Poland and the Czech Republic expressing more fears for their national cultural identity, while people in France and Sweden are more inclined to see migration as enriching for cultural life.

Figure 3.6

Country comparison of opinions on migration being good for cultural life (trend)



The question was: Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? Mean scores, scale from 0 ('undermined') - 10 ('enriched').

Source: ESS'02/'03-'14/'15

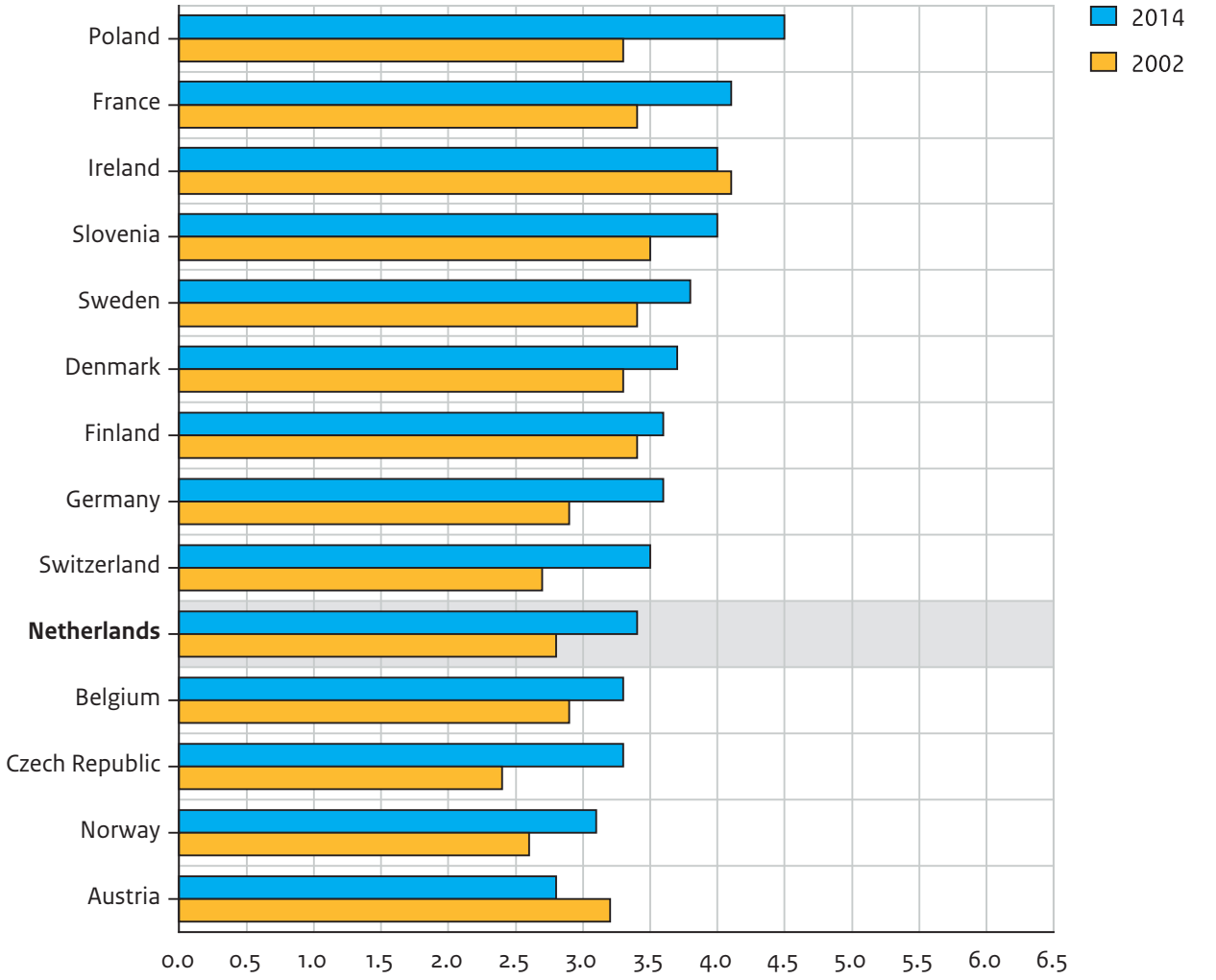
As with the perceived economic threat, we find a relationship between a country's economic situation (GDP) and average levels of social trust and the perceived cultural threat. Although the relationship here is weaker, there are similarities: the more prosperous a country is, the more positive public opinion is about the notion that migrants enrich cultural life (r=0.30). Inhabitants of more affluent countries are thus generally more positive on this point than people in poorer countries. The relationship with generalised trust is also comparable: the more social trust the population of a country has, the more likely people are to think that migrants enrich cultural life (r=0.53).

3.6 Perceptions about crime caused by migration

Thirdly, increased migration is often linked to aspects of criminality, not infrequently because statistics show that people with foreign citizenship are overrepresented in the prison population in many countries (Eurostat 2015). We also explore whether there were any changes in those views between 2002/'03 and 2014/'15. Figure 3.7 shows that there are no major differences across countries in these views; people generally associate migration with an increase in crime (average 3.13), and definitely not with a decrease in crime (the average score would then have to be above 5).[3] Austria scores the lowest in 2014/'15, indicating that Austrians associate criminality with migration most strongly. This view is least often held in Poland in 2014/'15. As regards changes in opinions between 2002/'03 and 2014/'15, a general downward trend can be observed in associating migration with crime; this trend is found in 12 of the 15 countries considered here. People in Poland (+1.2) and the Czech Republic (+0.9), in particular, associate crime problems with migration less in 2014/'15 than they did in 2002.

Figure 3.7

Differences between countries in the extent to which people reject an association between migration and crime (comparison 2002/'03-2014/'15)



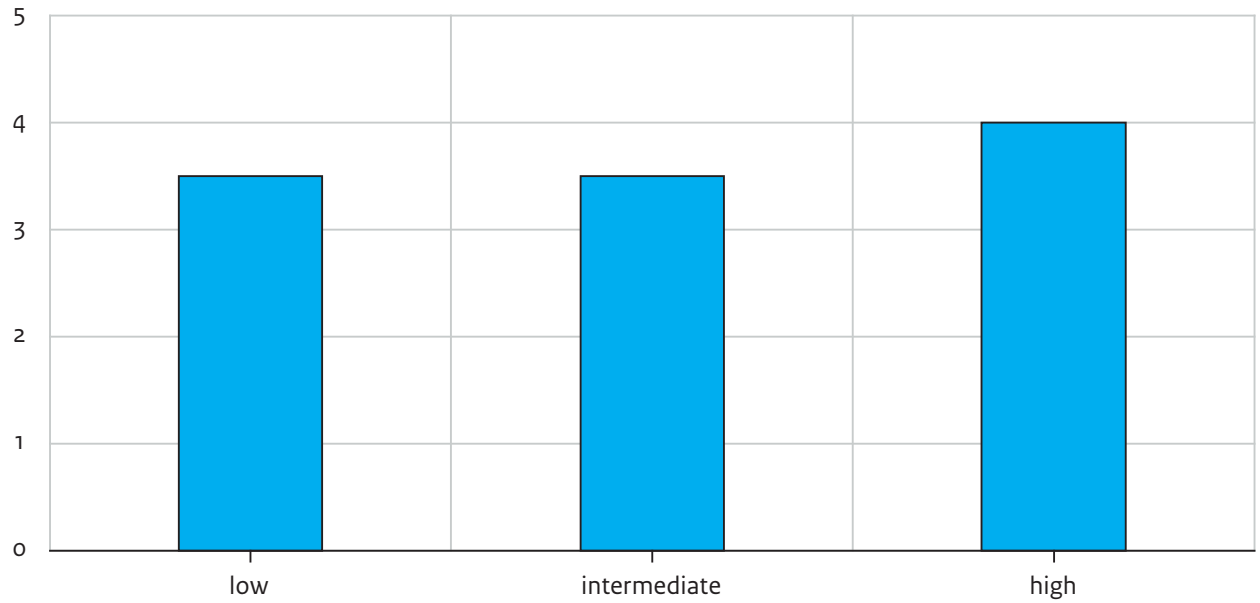
The question was: Are [country]'s crime problems made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries? Mean scores, 0 (made worse) - 10 (made better)

Source: ESS'02/'03-'14/'15

Our expectation was that people with a higher education level would less often endorse the view that there is a link between migration and crime. The information presented in Figure 3.8 supports this assumption, although the educational differences are limited. If we aggregate the results for the inhabitants of all 15 European countries for which data are available for 2014/'15, we do indeed see that people with a lower education level (3.52) have a slightly more negative opinion than highly educated people (4.04) on the impact of migration on crime problems. The difference between those with a low and intermediate education level is negligible. As with the perceived economic threat, the educational differentiation shows a similar pattern in all countries (not reported).

Figure 3.8

Rejection of a relationship between migration and crime, by education level, 2014/'15



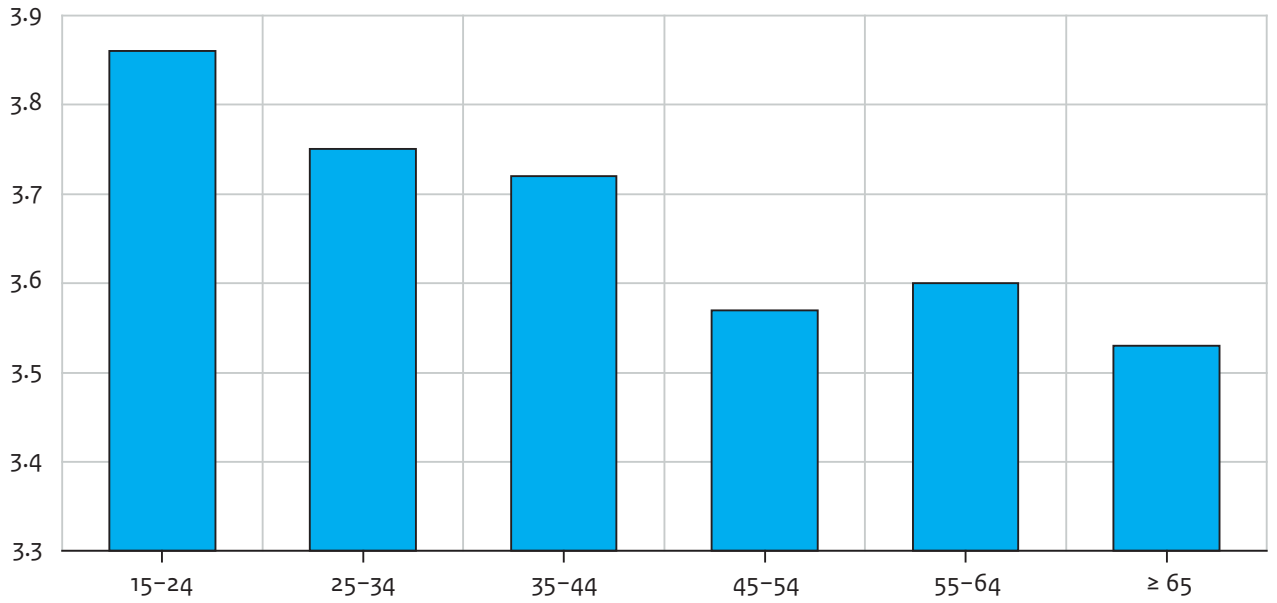
The question was: Are [country]'s crime problems made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries? Mean scores, 0 (made worse) – 10 (made better).

Source: ESS'14/'15

Average over 15 countries

We also assumed that the view that migration exacerbates crime problems would be supported mainly by older persons. Our thinking was that their relative lack of knowledge, vulnerability and preconceptions would make older people more likely to associate migration with increasing crime problems. Figure 3.9 confirms this: older people (3.55) do indeed less often reject a relationship between migration and crime than younger people (3.85).

Figure 3.9
Rejection of a relationship between migration and crime, by age, 2014/'15



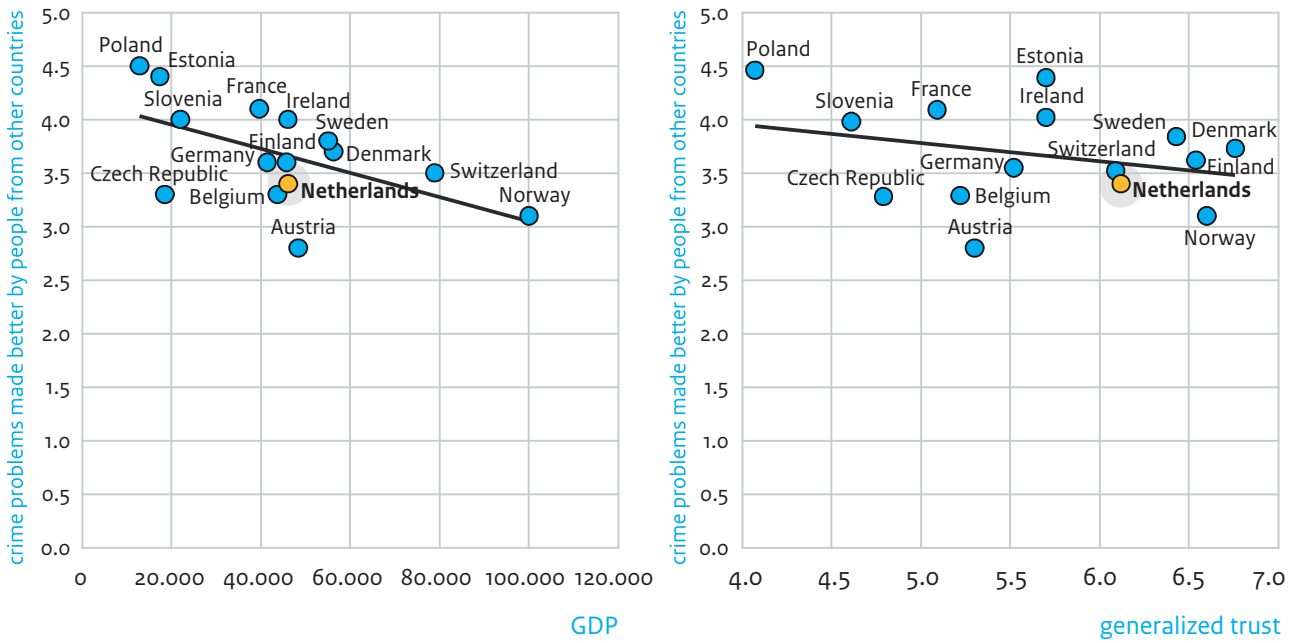
The question was: Are [country]'s crime problems made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries? Mean scores, 0 (made worse) - 10 (made better)

Source: ESS'14/'15

There is a negative correlation (left-hand panel of Figure 3.10) between national wealth and rejection of a link between migration and crime. In contrast to the findings on economic and cultural threat, therefore, here we find that people in wealthy countries are less likely to reject a relationship between migration and crime than in less affluent countries (r= -0.53). People in the relatively poorer Central and Eastern European countries, in particular, are less inclined to link migration to crime. Why we find this relationship is a matter of speculation. It may be that richer countries encounter more cross-border crime. There have been several negative media reports about Eastern European criminals in Western European countries, and the attention for the increased migration from Central and Eastern Europe may make people more likely to associate migration with crime. On the other hand, even in 2002, before the eastward enlargement of the EU, people in Western Europe associated migration strongly with crime, as shown in Figure 3.7. Another explanation could lie in the fact that the share of migrants is greater in wealthier countries than in poorer countries. Even if the proportion of migrants who come into contact with crime were the same in wealthy and less wealthy countries, it might be more visible in richer countries because the share of migrants is higher. This may have led to more media attention for crime and a stronger association between migration and crime. In the right-hand panel of Figure 3.10 we relate the generalised trust of a country's population to this view (see Table 2.5). We find only a weak relationship, and strikingly enough it is people in countries with more social trust who are less likely to reject the link between migration and crime (r = -0.29).

Figure 3.10

Country comparison: rejection of the relationship between migration and crime, by GDP and trust, 2014/'15



The question was: Are [country]'s crime problems made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries? Mean scores, 0 (made worse) - 10 (made better).

Source: ESS'14/'15

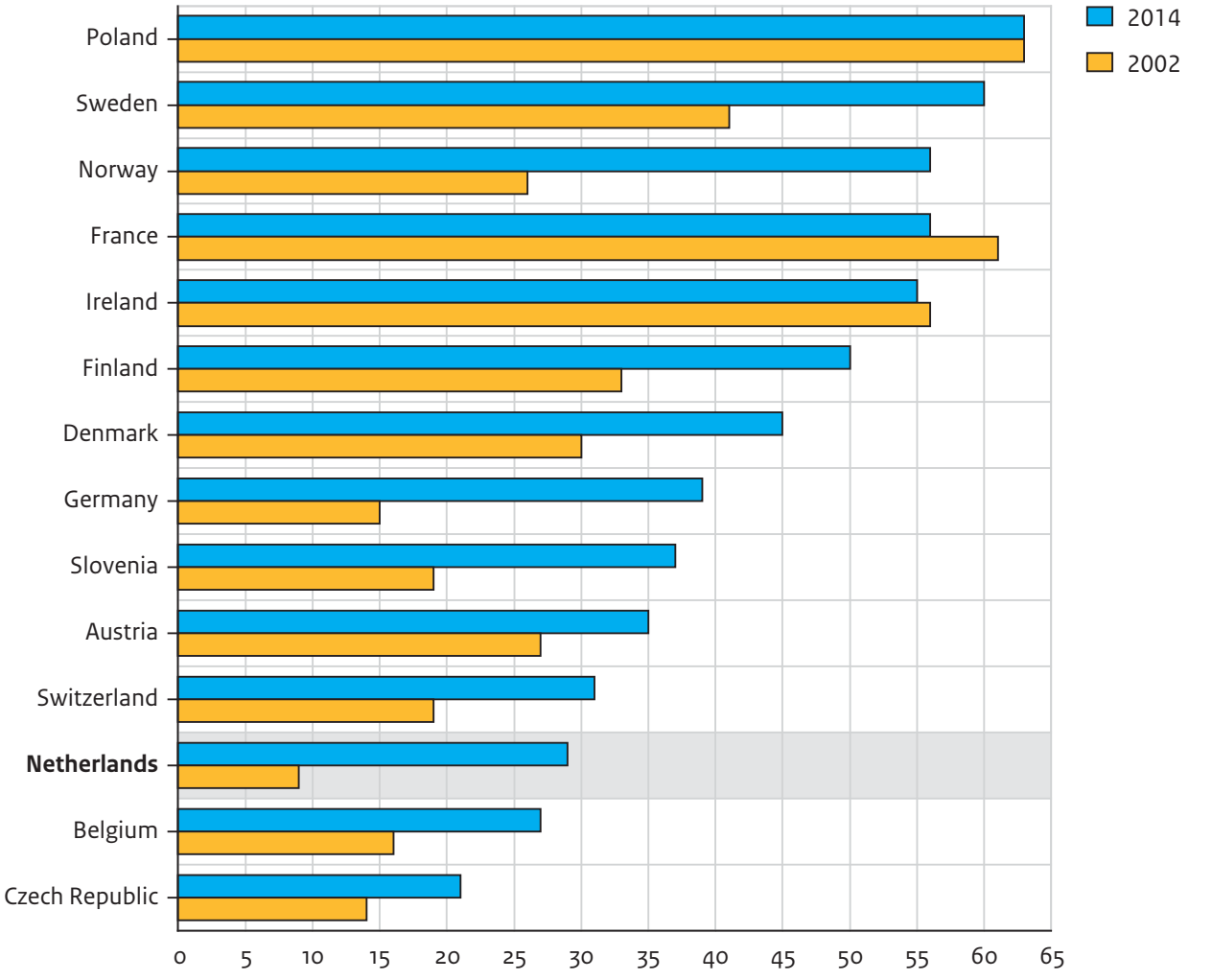
3.7 Opinions on admitting asylum-seekers

Following this overview of how far migration is perceived as a threat, we now turn to opinions of asylum-seekers. This is a highly topical theme for 2015, when large groups of asylum-seekers, especially from Syria, have sought to find safety in Europe. Round 1 (2002/'03) and Round 7 (2014/'15) of the ESS contained a question on this. Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement that the government should apply a generous admission policy for asylum-seekers. Figure 3.11 shows the percentage of people agreeing with this statement.[4] People in the Netherlands, Belgium, the Czech Republic and Switzerland least often think the government should apply generous asylum procedures; less than 30% of the Dutch population support this view. The picture is very different in Sweden, where 60% of the population felt in 2014/'15 that their government should be generous in dealing with asylum-seekers. The position of Poland is also striking: while Poles are not very willing to admit migrants, at least according to the 2014/'15 survey, they appear to be hospitable towards asylum-seekers (63% are in favour of generous treatment of asylum requests). The results presented in Figure 3.11 are also notable because of the increase between 2002 and 2014/'15 in the percentage of people in most countries who agree that the government should be generous in dealing with asylum requests: people in 12 of the 14 countries presented here feel more strongly or much more strongly in 2014/'15 that the government should judge asylum requests generously.

The increase is particularly marked in Norway and Germany. The exceptions here are France and Ireland, where the willingness to be generous has declined. One reason for the overall change could be that many reception centres for asylum-seekers were still full in 2002, and the problems in coping with asylum-seekers in the 1990s and early 2000s were still very fresh in people's minds. Many countries, following a long period of high numbers of asylum-seekers, introduced stricter asylum policies.

Figure 3.11

Country comparison on generous treatment of asylum requests by the government, comparison 2002/'03-2014/'15)



The question was: Please say how much you agree or disagree that: 'the government should be generous in judging people's applications for refugee status'. % Agree/Agree strongly.

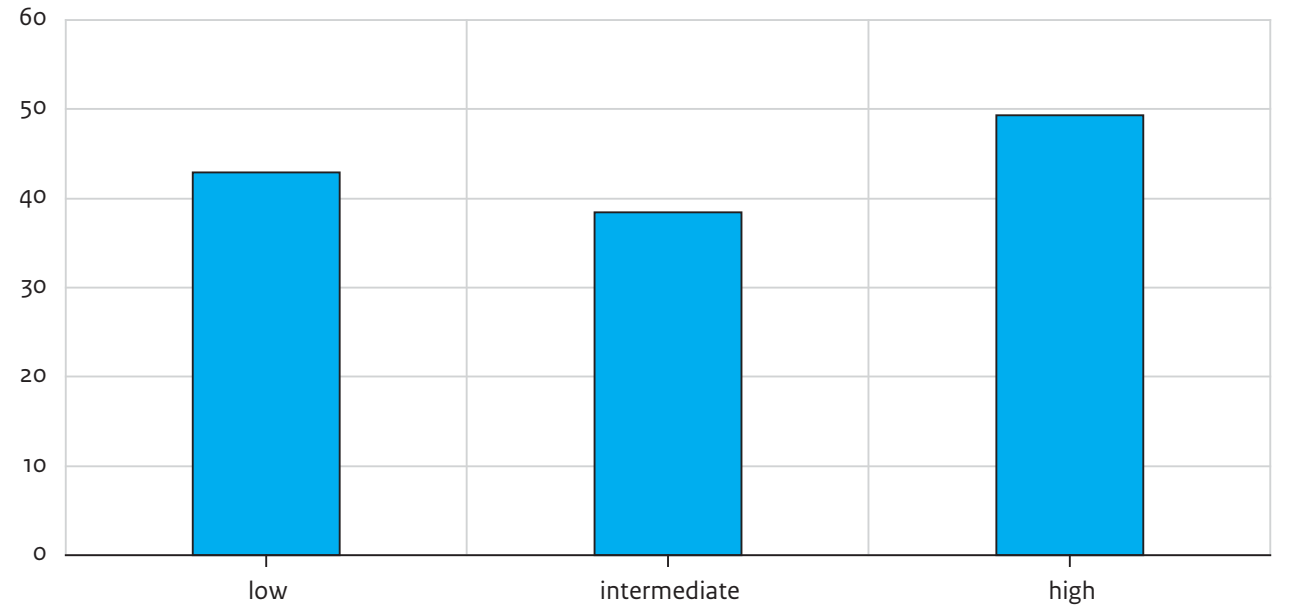
Source: ESS'02/'03-'14/'15

Until 2014, the number of asylum-seekers was substantially lower than in the 1990s. It was in 2015 that the numbers reached similar or higher proportions to those seen in the 1990s. It is therefore likely that support may have fallen again.

As expected, highly educated people in almost all countries are more receptive to asylum-seekers than lower-educated people (49% versus 43%). Strikingly, people with an intermediate education level are the least tolerant here: 38% believe that European governments should be generous in admitting asylum-seekers (Figure 3.12). We find a divergent pattern in Estonia, where those with the highest education level are the least hospitable (17% compared with 23% of lower-educated people).

Figure 3.12

Country comparison on generous treatment of asylum requests by the government, by education level, 2014/'15



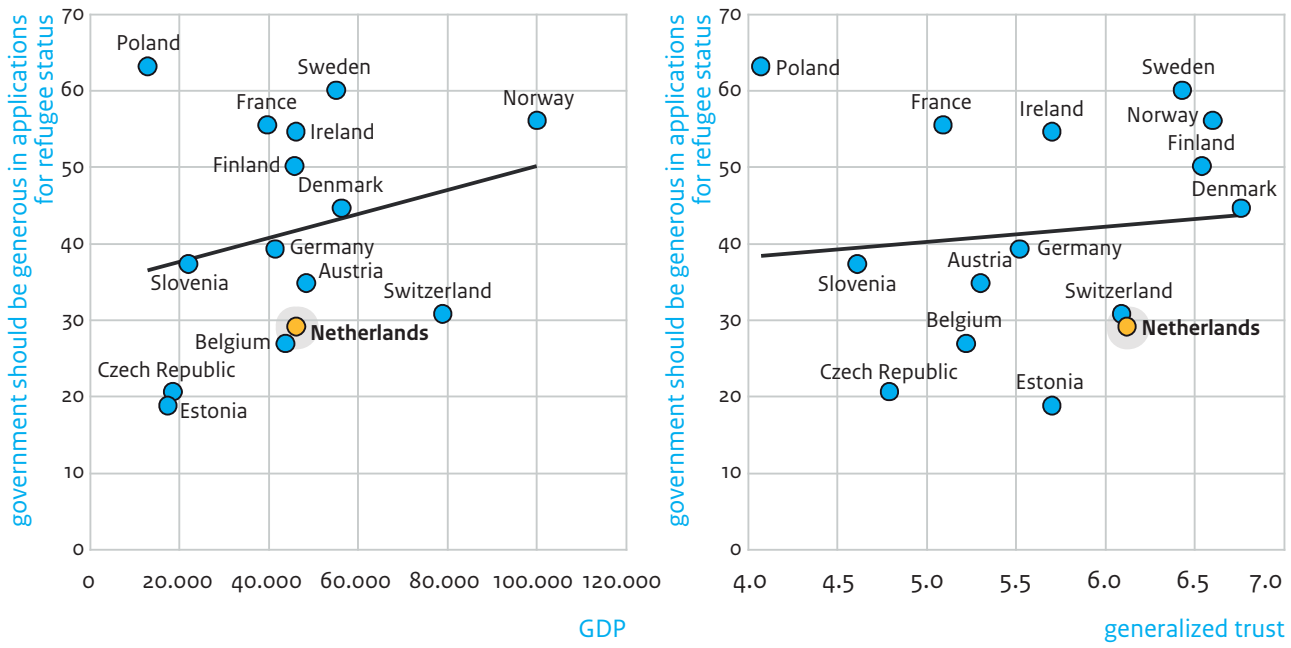
The question was: Please say how much you agree or disagree that: 'the government should be generous in judging people's applications for refugee status'. % Agree/Agree strongly.

Source: ESS'14/'15

We use a country comparison again to investigate to what extent a country's affluence and level of generalised trust is associated with the willingness to admit asylum-seekers. These associations are presented in Figure 3.13. There is a weak positive relationship (left-hand panel) between a country's affluence and agreement with the statement; people in wealthy countries are slightly more often willing to admit asylum-seekers (r= 0.25). A notable exception is Poland, where there is a strong willingness to facilitate asylum-seekers. The right-hand panel plots the generalised trust in a country's population against the statement. Virtually no relationship is found (r=0.11).

Figure 3.13

Country comparison on generous treatment of asylum requests by the government, by GDP and trust, 2014/'15



The question was: Please say how much you agree or disagree that: 'the government should be generous in judging people's applications for refugee status'. % Agree/Agree strongly.

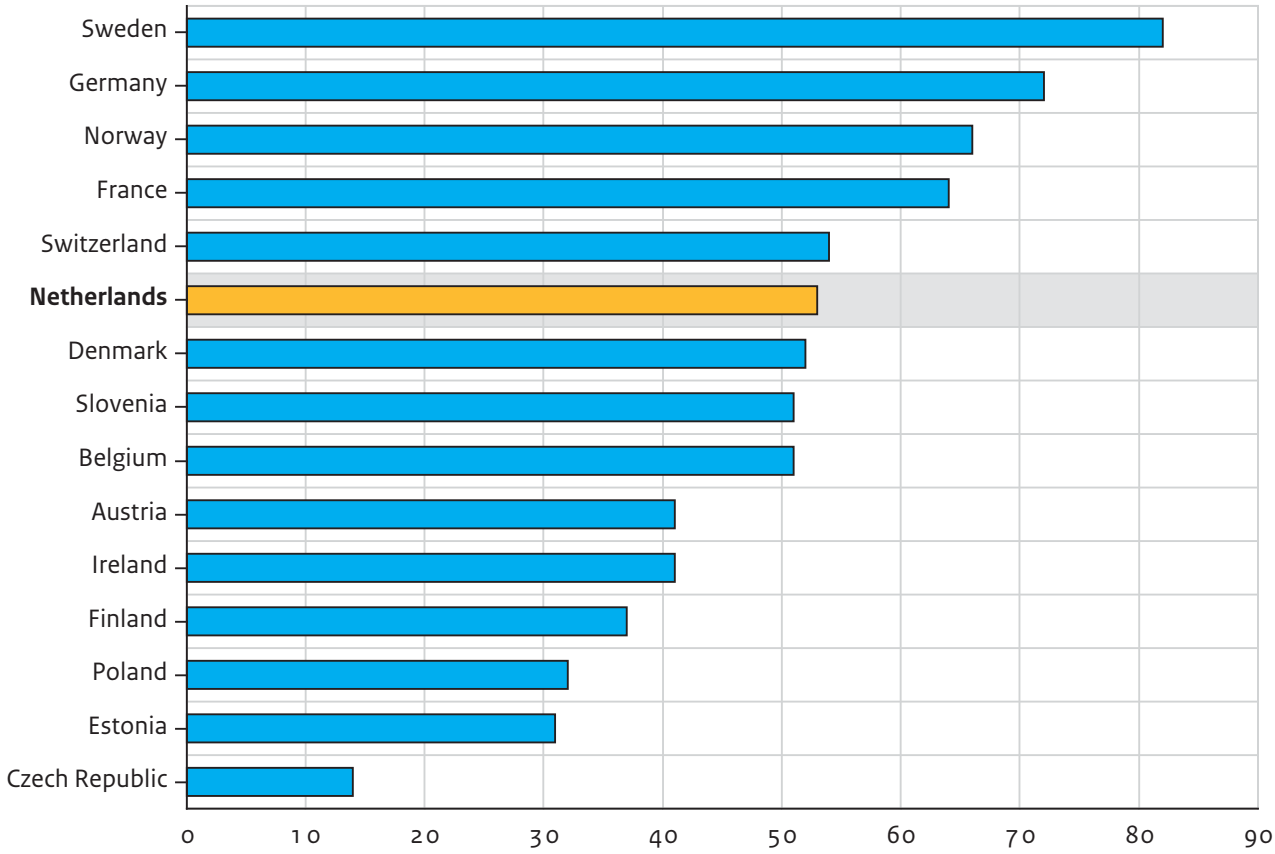
Source: ESS'14/'15

3.8 Opinions on Muslim immigrants

The 2014/'15 round of the European Social Survey explicitly sought opinions on Muslim immigration for the first time. The question was to what extent respondents felt that many or few Muslims should be allowed to come and live in their country. Figure 3.14 once again reveals wide cross-country differences, with support varying from 14% to 82%. Countries such as Germany, France, Norway and Sweden are relatively open to Muslim immigrants, while the inhabitants of Estonia, Poland and the Czech Republic favour a much more restrictive policy.

Figure 3.14

Country differences in support for admitting few or many Muslims, 2014/'15



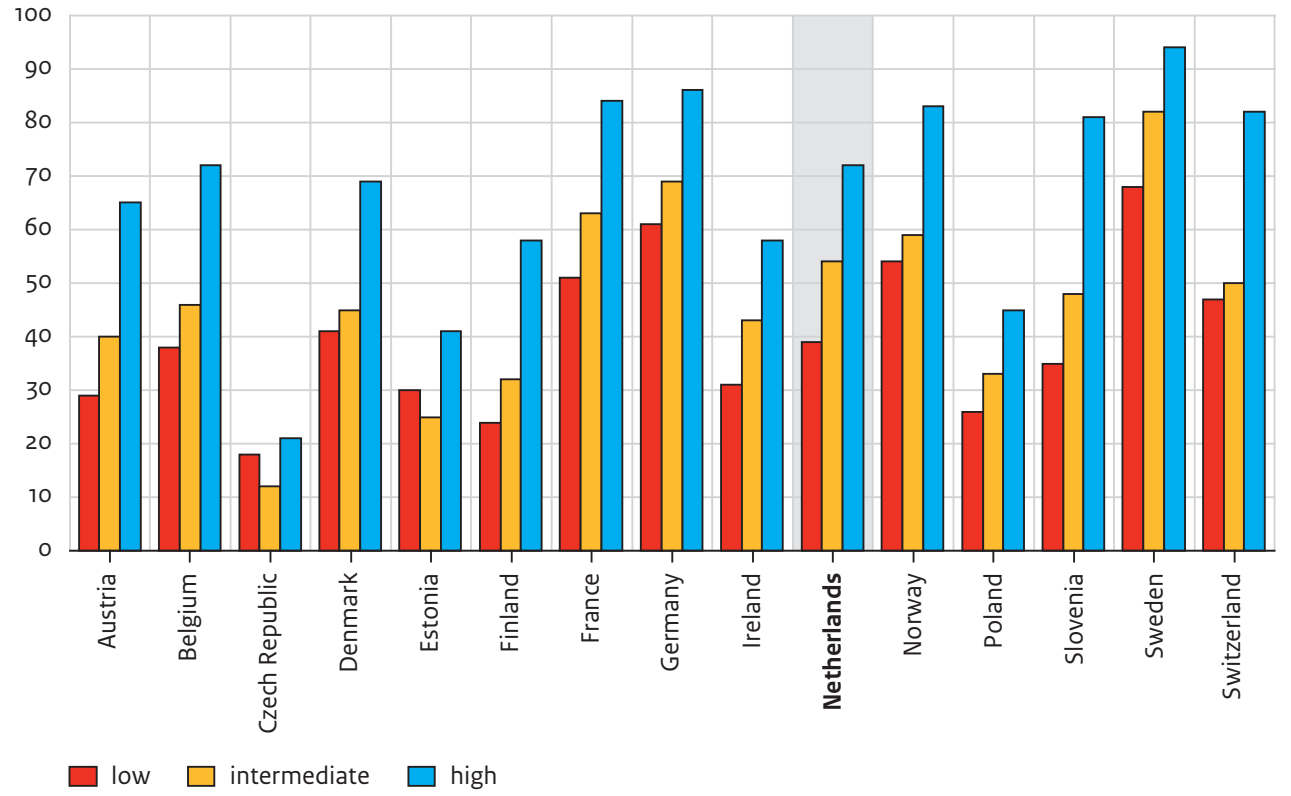
The question was: Please tell me to what extent you think [country] should allow Muslims from other countries to come and live in [country]? % 'Allow some - many to come and live here'.

Source: ESS'14/'15

If we analyse support for this statement by education level, we find that resistance to Muslim immigration is most widespread in all countries among those with a lower and intermediate education level. More highly educated people in all countries are the most open to migrants with a Muslim background. Further research would be needed to determine to what extent this is related to a lower perceived economic, cultural and religious threat. The gap between high and low-educated people is relatively wide in Belgium, Finland, Austria and Switzerland. By contrast, the educational differentiation in Estonia and the Czech Republic is small.

Figure 3.15

Country comparison in support for admitting few or many Muslims, by education level, 2014/'15



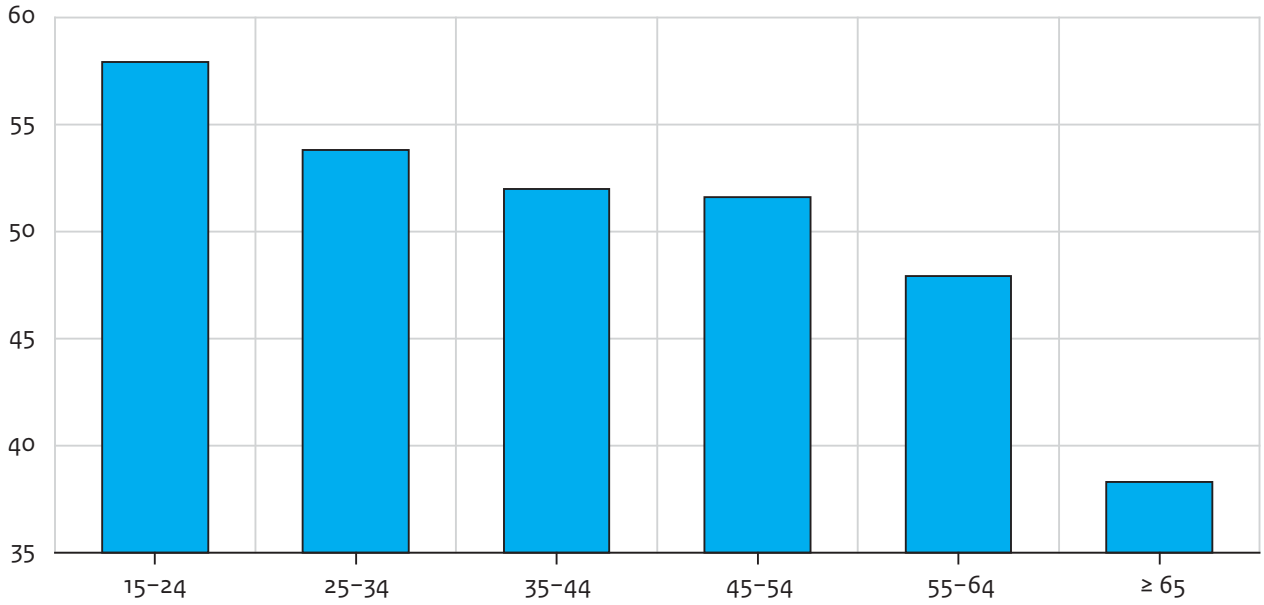
The question was: Please tell me to what extent you think [country] should allow Muslims from other countries to come and live in [country]? % 'Allow some - many to come and live here'.

Source: ESS'14/'15

A strong relationship is also found with age (Figure 3.16) in all countries (not shown). In line with our expectations, older people in particular have difficulty with the idea of admitting Muslim migrants: only 38% of the over-65s support the admission of some/many migrants with a Muslim background. The figure among young people is 58%. We suspect that cultural and religious perceptions, in particular, play a role here, because competition on the labour market will play only a limited role for older people.

Figure 3.16

Support for admitting few or many Muslims, by age, 2014/'15



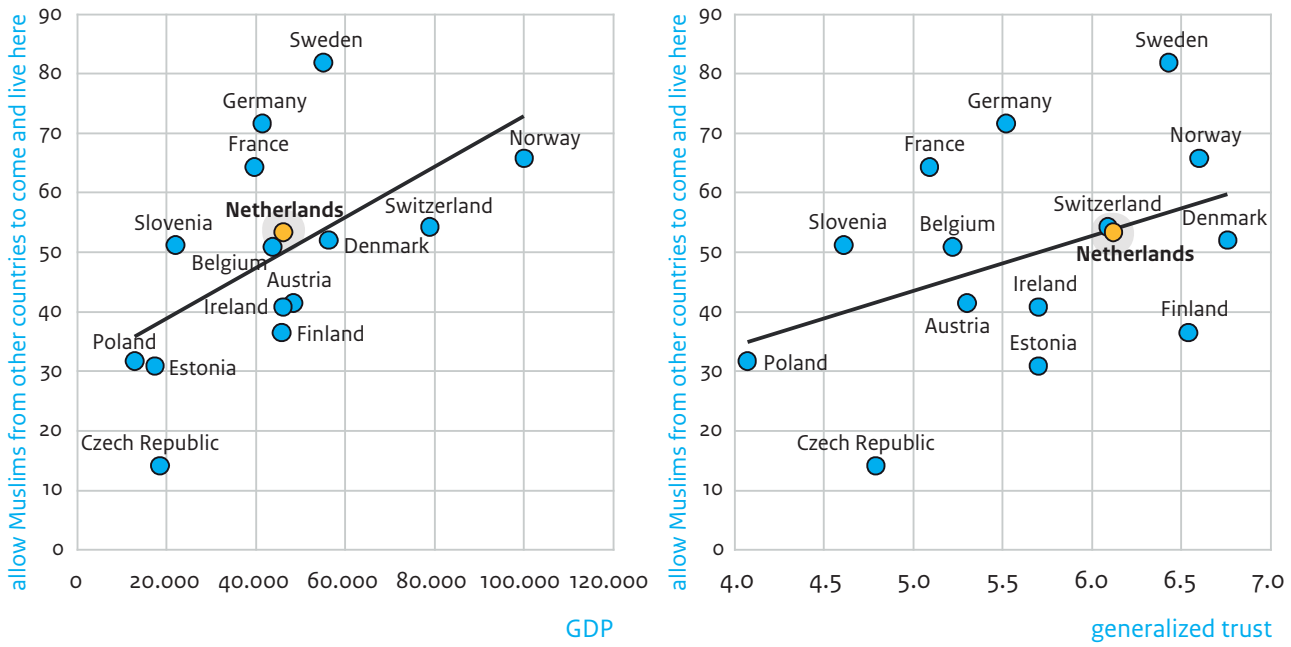
The question was: Please tell me to what extent you think [country] should allow Muslims from other countries to come and live in [country]? % 'Allow some - many to come and live here'.

Source: ESS'14/'15

Finally, in Figure 3.17 we once again examine the association between national wealth and social trust and opinions on Muslim immigrants. In the left-hand panel we see that there is a positive relationship (r=0.56) between a country's affluence and support for Muslim immigration. Inhabitants of wealthier countries such as Germany, Norway and Sweden take a much more positive stance on Muslim immigration than inhabitants of less affluent countries (Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic). The relationship between the degree of social trust in a country and a more positive attitude towards Muslims is also striking (right-hand panel of Figure 3.17). Although there is no concentration around the regression line, there is a relationship (r=0.42). Countries in which the population have more trust in 'arbitrary' other people take a more positive view on allowing Muslim migrants into their country.

Figure 3.17

Support for admitting few or many Muslims, by GDP and trust, 2014/'15



The question was: Please tell me to what extent you think [country] should allow Muslims from other countries to come and live in [country]? % 'Allow some - many to come and live here'.

Source: ESS'14/'15

3.9 Conclusion

Just before the sharp rise in the number of refugees seeking to enter Europe in 2015, and before Europe was hit by the terrorist attacks in Paris, we observe clear trends in opinions on migration and migrants. In 2002, the opinions of the European citizens studied here regarding the contribution made to the economy by migrants were very similar. Since that time, people in the Central and Eastern European countries, in particular, but also in the Netherlands, have become more pessimistic about this, whereas people in Sweden and Germany have by contrast become more positive. The trend in opinions in Central and Eastern European countries, where people more often think that migration has a negative impact on the economy, is also found in relation to the national cultural identity and the impact on crime.

In most of the countries studied, however, people have become more positive in their views on immigration. In most countries, the belief that the government should be generous in treating asylum-seekers also strengthened between 2002/'03 and 2014/'15. Nonetheless, there are wide inter-country differences, ranging from less than a third (the Netherlands, Belgium, Czech Republic and Switzerland) to almost two-thirds (Poland and Sweden) who believe that the government should adopt generous asylum procedures. In almost all countries, highly educated people are more willing to accept generous policies

to asylum-seekers than lower-educated people. Here again, we find that inhabitants of wealthier countries are more tolerant. It may be that both findings can be explained by a lower perceived economic threat. In the light of recent developments, we also explored public opinion on Muslim migrants. Countries such as Germany, France, Norway and Sweden were found to be relatively open to Muslim immigrants, whereas people in Estonia, Poland and the Czech Republic were much more restrictive. We found wide differences based on education level and age. Once again, highly educated people and young people, though also inhabitants of countries where social trust is generally higher, are more open to Muslim immigration. It may be that this can be explained by the fact that higher-educated and young people attach less importance to aspects of national identity and have less difficulty with social change.

Although public opinion in many countries – especially in Western Europe – is welcoming and moderately positive about migration, there is still a substantial proportion of the population who have reservations. There are also very wide differences between countries, with the position taken by the Central and Eastern European countries studied here standing out. Support for migrants in general, and asylum-seekers and Muslims in particular, is low across broad sections of the population. Support for generous treatment of asylum-seekers and for the admission of Muslim migrants was already low in many countries in 2014, and is likely to have sunk further following the events in 2015.

Notes

1 Natives are defined here as respondents whose parents were both born in the country where the respondent lives. Since this means that a large migrant population (mostly of Russian origin) in Estonia is left out of the analyses, they were studied separately. Attitudes towards migration in this group and the trends in those attitudes largely correspond with those of native Estonians, though the attitudes of the former group are generally slightly more positive.
2 Estonia did not take part in Round 1 of the ESS (2002), and is not shown in Figure 3.3.
3 Estonia did not take part in Round 1 of the ESS (2002) and is not shown in Figure 3.7.
4 Estonia did not take part in Round 1 of the ESS (2002) and is not shown in Figure 3.11.

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