

# Dimension-specific party and public opinion responsiveness in the EU immigration acquis

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## ABSTRACT

How are national party positions and national public opinion balanced when voting on the multi-dimensional immigration policies of the EU, which encompass both immigration and EU integration dimensions? The study applies the Wordscores algorithm on 1990–2018 EU immigration policies' texts and examines the voting behaviour of national parties in the European Parliament (EP). It incorporates roll-call votes, CHES, and Eurobarometer data covering over 350 parties to test the influence of (a) parties' programmatic positions; (b) national public opinion on parties' level of support for EU immigration dossiers' contents. The study provides the first comprehensive evidence that the EU immigration acquis has become increasingly restrictive and that restrictive and liberal provisions frequently co-occur with, respectively, pro-EU integration and pro-sovereignty provisions. Parties adhere more closely to party positions on the immigration dimension but are more responsive to short-term changes in public opinion on the EU integration dimension instead.

**KEYWORDS** EU immigration policy; European Parliament; legislative voting; responsiveness; Euroscepticism

How do national parties in the European Parliament (EP) balance their party positions and national public opinion positions when voting on the multi-dimensional immigration policies of the EU, which encompass both immigration regulation and European integration dimensions? To the best of our knowledge, no study of EP voting behaviour on the EU immigration acquis examines both the immigration restrictiveness and the EU integration contents of EU immigration dossiers. Although a few studies have examined immigration and EU integration attitudes of EP legislators (Lahav 1997, 2004) as well as EP roll call votes on immigration dossiers (Hix and Noury 2007; Lopatin 2013; Ripoll Servent 2012), we still do not

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know how national parties juggle both party pledges and public opinion pressures when voting on this domain; and what they prioritise when the immigration regulation and the EU integration dimensions create conflicting pressures for the party. In other words: are responsiveness to public opinion (Sorace 2018, 2023) and loyalty to the party constituency (Hix 2002; Hix *et al.* 2007; Lawrence *et al.* 2006) dimension-specific?

In addressing these questions, we make two sets of contributions. The first contribution is descriptive and provides an assessment of the openness–restrictiveness of the level of EU integration of all dossiers of the EU immigration acquis from 1990 until 2018; as well as the average level of support for the dossiers’ immigration and EU integration contents by national parties in the EP. To date, there is only limited research that on the one hand systematically measures the restrictiveness or openness of EU immigration policies – i.e. how many rights are conferred to immigrants (the immigration regulation dimension); and on the other hand, how much power is given to the EU as compared to member States (the supranational or EU integration dimension). The EU integration dimension of immigration policies, in particular, has received little scholarly attention.

The second contribution is explanatory: we study legislative voting behaviour on the EU immigration acquis by exploring the *differential* role of public opinion and of parties’ programmatic positions in the immigration regulation and European integration dimensions. We are chiefly interested in describing how *national* party delegations in the EP vote on EU immigration legislation, and, particularly, what weight they place to (a) their national party programmatic positions; (b) short-term shifts in (national) public opinion on the immigration and EU integration dimensions; and how they decide to act when an EU dossier generates cross-pressure (i.e. blends the immigration regulation and supranational integration dimensions differently from their party programmatic positions). Do national parties always toe the party line (Hix 2002) or does (national) public opinion also matter (Sorace 2018, 2023) when voting on these policies? And do party and public opinion dynamics work differently for the two different dimensions (immigration regulation and supranational integration)?

The study combines quantitative text analysis of the entire EU immigration acquis from 1990 to 2018 with all available roll-call vote data on the final votes for these dossiers, covering 67 out of 111 total dossiers and over 350 European national parties. Our analysis integrates an original dataset of ideologically scaled texts from the EU immigration acquis with roll-call vote data (Hix and Høyland 2022), CHES data on party positions (Jolly *et al.* 2022), and public opinion data from the Eurobarometer. We test the effect of dossiers’ immigration and EU integration contents on the

proportion of national party members voting ‘yes.’ We then interact dossiers’ contents on immigration and EU integration with the relevant national party positions and the average national voter’s position. The analyses represent an in-depth examination of EP national delegations voting behaviour on immigration policy and explore whether different policy dimensions lead to different types of legislative behaviour.

Unlike most of the previous research, we do not focus solely on the *relative* openness–restrictiveness of EU immigration policy, i.e. whether it has become more liberal or restrictive over time (Ripoll Servent and Trauner 2014; Thielemann and Zaun 2018), or how it fares against the existing policy status quo of EU member States (Roos 2013; Zaun 2017). Instead, we examine absolute levels of liberalism–restrictiveness or EU integration–national sovereignty contents, assessing the immigration regulation and supranational integration dimensions purely on each dossier’s textual content. Our validity checks (Online Appendix, Section 3) demonstrate that our measures are valid. Existing scholarship, furthermore, backs our measurement choice: absolute and relative restrictiveness appear to correlate highly (Schmid and Helbling 2016), and recent longitudinal datasets of national immigration policies also use absolute, rather than relative, restrictiveness scores (Helbling *et al.* 2017; Peters *et al.* 2024). Focusing on absolute openness–restrictiveness and EU integration allows us to provide the first comprehensive analysis of the EU immigration acquis at large and over time, and to determine whether it can be classified as either overall restrictive or liberal, or transferring sovereignty to the EU. The focus on relative measures has mostly allowed scholars to only provide small-N case studies of EU immigration policies.

Through our description of the EU immigration acquis’ contents, we find that the acquis is neither particularly restrictive nor liberal, but rather centrist. While previous studies indicated a trend towards policy liberalisation in EU member states over time (Helbling and Kalkum 2018), we partly observe this pattern for the EU level from 2009 to 2014, but see more restrictiveness in the EU immigration acquis since 2015. On the integration dimension, we see a steady increase of pro-EU integration contents in the period after 2005, when supranational decision-making and competences on immigration policy (initially only on asylum, and, starting in 2009, on other immigration topics too) were strengthened. Regarding the positioning of the EP as a whole (average roll call vote support by dossier’s content), we find that the EP leans liberal across the entire period in the sample (1990–2018), confirming key inferences from Ripoll Servent and Trauner (2014) and Thielemann and Zaun (2018).

In terms of legislative behaviour dynamics, we find that national parties more faithfully toe the party line on the migration dimension, while they

are less faithful to the party line on EU integration and, instead, are more responsive to short-term shifts in the Euroscepticism of national public opinion. We find, in fact, that the odds of expected 'yes' vote proportions for restrictive dossiers are 44% higher for each unit increase in national party anti-immigration stance (CHES 0–10 variable), while party Euroscepticism does not have a statistically significant effect in supporting sovereignty transfers to the national level. Public opinion shifts in anti-immigration sentiment do not statistically significantly matter for supporting more restrictive dossiers, whereas Euroscepticism in national average voters doubles the odds of expected proportions supporting more pro-sovereignty dossiers. In our analysis of cross-pressure, party Euroscepticism has the same effect on dossiers' support across all types of dossiers, whereas anti-immigration positions are clearly associated with higher support for restrictive dossiers: while dossiers with more delegation to the nation states are always less likely to be supported (perhaps surprisingly), the restrictive version of each sovereignty-transfer type dossier always does better than the liberal version, the more anti-immigrant the party is.

Party programmatic positions on EU integration are thus less 'central' and, therefore (we speculate) more negotiable: our findings may help explain why the EU immigration *acquis* often combines immigration restrictiveness with greater EU integration, or pro-immigration measures with stronger delegation to member states – another key (descriptive) finding of our analysis. Significant numbers of dossiers, in fact, either combine greater EU integration and restrictions or liberal provisions with national discretion. This may come as a surprise, as scholars have previously suggested that immigration policy restrictiveness was a result of national discretion provisions (Barbou Des Places and Deffains 2003; Stetter 2000). Our results have important implications for future EU legislative politics in this area: whether the EP is going to support more restrictive immigration dossiers can largely be predicted by examining the manifestos of national parties represented in the EP, while voting on the balance of authority between the EU and member states is more likely to respond to public opinion preferences. We speculate that the supranational integration dimension of EU immigration policy, where parties are more flexible, is easily tradeable and can be helpful in cases of policy gridlock or when there is cross-pressure between the two core dimensions of immigration policy.

## **State of the art: contents of the EU immigration *acquis***

### ***The liberalism–restrictiveness debate***

Since the EU began adopting immigration policies, scholars have tried to understand whether this involvement has led to more liberal or restrictive

policies. Some have argued EU policies would likely become more restrictive than previous national policies (the ‘Fortress Europe’ notion) (Geddes 2008). The rationale behind this expectation is that interior ministers with restrictive preferences would cooperate in this area to compensate for the loss of national competence following the abolition of internal borders and the introduction of the Schengen Agreement (Hix and Høyland 2022), and for the rise of more liberal-minded parliamentarians (Bigo 1996; Guiraudon 2000).

Others have argued that policy harmonisation liberalised immigration policies for different types of migrants across the EU – at least on paper (Kaunert 2009; Kaunert and Léonard 2012; Roos 2013; Thielemann and Zaun 2018; Zaun 2017). Stetter (2000) and Barbou Des Places and Deffains (2003) postulated that the EU would adopt more liberal immigration standards to create a level-playing field, with a view of ending negative regulatory competition incentives on immigrant rights once internal borders were removed. The expected liberalisation is also attributed to juridification – expected to produce rights-focused, liberal policies (Kaunert and Léonard 2012) –, the involvement of non-majoritarian or technocratic institutions insulated from anti-immigrant pressures (Kaunert 2009; Thielemann and Zaun 2018), or the dominance of certain member States that sought standards alignment to ensure fair distribution of asylum seekers across the EU (Zaun 2017, 2022). Ripoll Servent and Trauner (2014), however, emphasise that this liberalisation has not significantly altered the restrictive ‘policy core’ of EU migration policy and consider changes merely cosmetic.

While most previous literature has classified EU immigration policy as liberal or restrictive in *relative* terms, i.e. compared to previous national (Zaun 2017) or EU (Ripoll Servent and Trauner 2014; Thielemann and Zaun 2018) policy, this article adds ‘absolute sentiment’ as another possible classification of the liberal/restrictive contents of immigration policy. Scholars have recently argued that absolute restrictiveness–liberalism of immigration policies is the superior measure, since it allows for comparison between countries/polities, as well as large-N over-time analyses (Helbling and Kalkum 2018; Peters *et al.* 2024). Schmid and Helbling (2016), furthermore, find that absolute and relative measures of restrictiveness correlate highly: we thus do not expect that our measurement choice would bias our comparisons of anti- vs. pro-immigration parties in their levels of support for different immigration contents.

Our study provides the first systematic analysis of the *entire* immigration acquis between 1990 and 2018 and thus the most comprehensive study of both the immigration regulation and EU integration dimensions of this policy area. Most of the existing scholarship focuses on individual

case studies in specific sub-dimensions of immigration (mostly asylum). A notable exception is Helbling *et al.* (2017)'s work, but they still cover only selected policies from the EU immigration acquis.

### ***The supranational integration dimension of immigration policy***

When it comes to EU sovereignty transfers in this policy area, expectations are muted: since regulating entry, stay and residence belongs to a state's 'core state power' member states should be reluctant to make sovereignty transfers (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2014, 2018). Since the Treaty of Amsterdam, however, significant steps towards further integration have been taken – such as the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in 2016 and the European Union Asylum Agency in 2021, both of which involved major transfers of sovereignty and capacity-building at the EU level (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018). These steps occurred even in the absence of treaty changes: this seems to be a new pattern of European integration, witnessed also in the context of the Eurozone and Covid crises (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018; Schelkle 2021; Schimmelfennig 2017, 2024).

Despite its salience, the EU integration dimension of immigration policy has received much less attention in the literature than the immigration regulation dimension. The existing scholarship mainly focuses on explaining why immigration policies were integrated at the supranational level in the first place, suggesting this was a result of restrictively-minded interior ministers engaging in venue-shopping (Guiraudon 2000; Hix and Høyland 2022), attempts to avoid regulatory competition (Stetter 2000; Barbou Des Places and Deffains 2003), or various spill-overs (functional, cultivated, political) from the Single European Act and the abolition of internal borders (Niemann 2006). Others look at the role of different EU institutions for pro-integration contents of this legislation. Roos (2013), for example, argues that EU actors, such as the Commission and the European Parliament, typically have a stronger interest in EU integration. Thus, when their influence increases – for example, through a shift from consultation to the co-decision procedure – more pro-integrative EU policies can be expected. However, we still know relatively little about how the integration of EU immigration policy has progressed over time and maybe even independently of changes in primary EU law (i.e. through Treaties). We furthermore know very little about how EP legislators position themselves on the EU integration dimension of EU immigration policy: Lahav and Messina (2005) have demonstrated that EP legislators from traditional immigrant-receiving countries have stronger preferences for legislating on immigration at the national rather than the EU level, and that, in general,

they don't have a strong stance in favour of immigration policies' communitarisation. This study will test their positioning vis-à-vis the communitarisation dimension in their roll call voting behaviour.

## Explaining legislative behaviour dynamics in EU immigration policy

The existing scholarship on the legislative politics of EU immigration policies mainly focused on inter-institutional dynamics, occasionally zooming in on intra-institutional processes within the Council of the EU (Roos 2013; Zaun 2017), the European Parliament (Ripoll Servent 2012, 2015), or the European Commission (Boswell 2008). Researchers have chiefly explored whether the introduction of the ordinary legislative procedure for immigration policies, introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon (and in some cases as early as 2005), led to liberalisation. Some argue that the increased power of the EP has resulted in more liberal outcomes, driven by non-majoritarian policy dynamics (Thielemann and Zaun 2018). Others suggest that the EP has become more pragmatic since becoming a co-legislator (Acosta 2009; Lopatin 2013; Ripoll Servent 2012, 2015). Still, Krotký and Kaniok (2021) demonstrate that parliamentarians of the eighth legislature of the EP utter more liberal than restrictive speech acts, which suggests that the EP overall leans more liberal than restrictive. What is largely missing is an analysis of intra-EP dynamics, and, in particular, an in-depth analysis of the impact of party manifestoes and of public opinion pressures when national parties vote on EU immigration policy.

Studying six pieces of legislation in the area of immigration and anti-discrimination, and focusing on the role of *individual* MEPs' characteristics, Hix and Noury (2007) demonstrate that MEPs follow their own individual attitudes and those of the national party voter when deciding on EU immigration policy, and suggest that MEPs prioritise personal and party programmatic positions rather than voting in national blocks. This supports work on MEPs' self-reported attitudes by Lahav (1997, 2004). However, the authors do not investigate how party positions interact with specific dossiers' contents to explain roll call voting in this area. Furthermore, we still lack insight into how national public opinion affects EP voting behaviour, or into how national delegations in the EP act when the two core dimensions of immigration policy (immigration regulation and supranational integration) generate cross-pressure for their party.

Research on legislative behaviour and political representation shows that both party platforms and public opinion are significant drivers of legislative actions (Miller and Stokes 1963; Page and Shapiro 1983), a finding that applies to the EP as well (Hix 2002; Lawrence *et al.* 2006; Sorace 2018).

Partisan ideology, in particular, has been proven to be a strong predictor of voting behaviour in the EP (Hix 2002; Hix *et al.* 2007). This suggests that national party core programmatic positions play a central role in how national parties decide to vote in the EP. Here, we aim to test whether this applies in the same way for the immigration regulation and for the supra-national integration dimension of the EU immigration acquis. We also aim to test how partisan *and* public opinion dynamics interact in the context of EU immigration legislation. Specifically, we are interested in the role that (national) public opinion plays in EP voting behaviour, and what happens when national parties in the EP have to vote on dossiers that trigger cross-pressure between their immigration and EU integration stances.

We focus our attention only on *national* party positions and on the *national* average voter position since the large literature on EP legislative organisation and behaviour extensively shows that the key ‘principal’ of MEPs is national delegations (Ringe 2009). While EPGs can distribute office perks like spokesperson positions, rapporteurships or committee chairmanships, these positions are usually assigned respecting national delegation shares (Corbett *et al.* 2011). And while EPGs consistently show high roll call voting cohesion, this is chiefly explained by national delegations appropriately clustering into EPGs by ideological affinity (Attiná 1990; Hix *et al.* 2007; McElroy and Benoit 2010). In a nutshell, national party position variables will largely capture EPG membership too. Our choice of the national party as the main unit of analysis is also justified by the fact that EP elections are still run nationally (Hix and Cunningham 2026): campaign strategy and candidatures are decided by *national* parties, who, as a result, are incentivised to exercise strong control over legislators in the EP, and who should be chiefly interested in responding to *national* public opinion.

If party manifestos were the primary influence, we would expect parties with anti-immigration positions in their manifestos to support more restrictive EU immigration dossiers in their final votes, and parties with liberal views on immigration to support more liberal EU dossiers. Concerning the EU integration dimension, the party politics hypothesis would lead us to expect that parties with anti-EU positions should favour dossiers that delegate more implementation powers to member states (pro-national sovereignty provisions), and conversely, that pro-EU parties should vote in greater numbers for immigration laws that grant more authority to EU institutions and agencies.

**H1 – party loyalty:** National parties vote in line with their party programmatic positions. The more a national party opposes immigration, the more it will support more restrictive immigration dossiers. Similarly, the more Eurosceptic a party is, the more the party will support dossiers promoting more national sovereignty.

We also expect that public opinion could influence voting behaviour in the EP (Sorace 2018). Previously, migration scholars have cautioned against the influence public opinion has on immigration policies. The ‘preference–policy gap’ hypothesis postulates that EU political elites hold more liberal preferences than the public and thus tend to be relatively unresponsive in translating public pressure into restrictive policies (Freeman 1995; Lahav 2004; Morales *et al.* 2015). If national public opinion matters for voting behaviour in the EP, we would expect that increased salience of the immigration issue (which often reflects heightened anti-immigration sentiment in the public (Benesch *et al.* 2019; Givens and Luedtke 2005; Hopkins 2010;)) should pressure vote-seeking political parties to increase their support for more restrictive policies across the board. Therefore, we would expect that national parties in the EP vote for restrictive measures whenever immigration is a particularly prominent issue in their national public discourse. For the supranational integration dimension, we would expect parties to favour greater national sovereignty if national public opinion is Eurosceptic. Our public opinion responsiveness hypothesis is, therefore:

**H2 – public opinion responsiveness:** National parties are responsive to the preferences of the average national voter. When public concern for immigration is high in the country, national parties will support more restrictive immigration policies. When public Euroscepticism is high in the country, national parties will support dossiers that contain more pro-national sovereignty provisions.

It is also worth exploring whether partisan dynamics and public opinion operate differently across the immigration regulation and supranational integration sub-dimensions of immigration policy, and whether this could help parties facing programmatic cross-pressure. For instance, Kirkizh *et al.* (2023) have shown that supporters of radical right parties strongly prioritise anti-immigrant positions and are willing to sacrifice other dimensions, including EU integration, to achieve this goal. Does behaviour in the EP follow a similar logic? Does short-term public opinion matter more for one policy dimension than the other, allowing party positions on that dimension to be more flexible and adaptable and to alleviate concerns around, or allowing for, cross-pressuring dossiers?

Given that we are examining the *immigration* acquis, we hypothesise that the immigration regulation dimension is more central to voting considerations in this area, whereas the supranational integration dimension is in comparison more peripheral. Immigration regulation, furthermore, is a *substantive* policy dimension, whereas the question of the balance of powers between EU institutions and agencies and member State ones is chiefly a *procedural* matter. Scholars have shown that procedural issues are

often considered secondary (Kitschelt 2010; Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). Landwehr and Harms (2020), for instance, have demonstrated that voters' preferences for procedural issues are often a function of the expected output that the procedures bring about on a given substantive issue: voters support direct democracy institutions if they believe that they will more likely produce the policies that they prefer. Hence, voters seem to have a very instrumental approach to procedural issues. Heinisch *et al.* (2021) specifically find that populist radical right parties, many of whom are Eurosceptic, adopt 'equivocal Euroscepticism', i.e. they soften or harden their Euroscepticism to remain open to cooperation with both other radical right or mainstream parties. All of these considerations suggests that Euroscepticism might be a more malleable dimension, which can be sacrificed strategically. In the immigration dimension, we expect parties to be less flexible, as this is a substantive dimension, where position changes are less tolerable and can hurt the party brand.

We expect, therefore, that:

**H3a** – *centrality I*: National parties' programmatic positions are more important in shaping roll call vote behaviour for the immigration regulation dimension than for the supranational integration dimension of EU immigration dossiers.

**H3b** – *centrality II*: National parties are more likely to align their roll call voting behaviour to national public opinion (irrespective of their party programmatic position) for the EU integration dimension than for the immigration dimension.

**H3c** – *centrality III*: National parties facing potentially cross-pressuring types of legislation are more likely to vote following their programmatic position on immigration than their programmatic position on supranational integration.

## Data and research design

### ***Measuring immigration policies' restrictiveness and integration: wordscores***

Using both a quantitative dictionary approach and a qualitative selection approach, we winnowed the 1990–2018 sample of EU legislative acts down to 111 acts specifically related to immigration (see Section 1 in the [Online Appendix](#) for full details of the case selection procedure). The case selection results in some years not having any relevant legislation to analyse, and some other years in the series to have multiple items of legislation. The Directives and Regulations chosen are exhaustive of EU legislation in the area from 1990 until 2018 (when our data collection stopped). Due to financial and time constraints, it is not possible to

extend the data collection beyond 2018.<sup>1</sup> The sample, however, does offer extensive temporal, political and party variation to answer our research questions with sufficient statistical power.

The texts of the 111 Directives and Regulations on immigration were scaled using Wordscores on two dimensions: the immigration liberal–restrictiveness dimension, and the EU integration–national sovereignty dimension. The Wordscores algorithm is based on the Naive Bayes algorithm, and it works by learning from reference texts which are representative of the *extreme* end-points of an ideological dimension. Selecting extreme texts to train the algorithm is fundamental to find discriminating words and to calculate ideological scores for each word (the ‘word score’). After the word scores are calculated, the algorithm scores the remaining texts in the corpus – i.e. the ‘virgin texts’. The ideological score of a document is then the average word score of all its tokens. Words in the virgin documents that were not scored (as they did not appear in the reference texts) are ignored in the calculations (Benoit and Laver 2008; Laver *et al.* 2003). The method has been found to perform well when compared to expert coded analyses, to alternative text analysis methods, and validly replicates existing findings from alternative sources (Hjorth *et al.* 2015; Klemmensen *et al.* 2007; Klüver 2009).

In order to identify our *extremes*, or end-points, of each ideological dimension (in the reference texts), we first took a random sample of sentences (10% of the full sample, or a total of 1750 sentences) from our full corpus of the EU immigration policy texts from 1990 to 2018. We instructed three MSc students in EU politics to manually code all of these 1750 sentences twice, on the basis of relevant and pre-tested codebooks on immigration regulation and supranational integration sentiment (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2 of the [Online Appendix](#) for the full codebooks). Sentences coded by the majority of coders as belonging to either the immigration liberalism (category: 0) or restrictive category (category: 2), or to the EU integration–national sovereignty (0–2) category, were concatenated into the relevant reference text (e.g. all sentences coded as restrictive on immigration became part of the immigration restriction reference text), and provided the extreme reference points fed to the Wordscores algorithm. Sentences classified as neutral (category: 1), technical/procedural, or where the coders were all in disagreement were discarded. As mentioned above, using extreme texts only helps the Wordscores algorithm to more accurately find discriminating words, improving classification accuracy (Benoit and Laver 2008; Laver *et al.* 2003). The reliability of the coders was high on both dimensions, and the sentences used to train the Wordscores algorithm were found to validly capture the different sentiments (for details on the hand-coding procedure and reliability tests see [Online Appendix](#), Sections 2.3 and 2.4). The reference texts have

sufficient number of types (approx. 1,800 on average) to make Wordscores work appropriately, as class-overlapping words are needed for the method to work (Lowe 2008). We run the Wordscores algorithm using the text-model wordscores function from the *quanteda* package, and using Martin and Vanberg's rescaling (Martin and Vanberg 2008).

Figures 1 and 2 below plot the legislative acts and their immigration and EU integration scores over-time.

Figure 1 shows that between 2002 and 2008 EU laws became on average a bit more restrictive on the immigration regulation dimension, while the 2009–2014 period was characterised – on average – by more liberal immigration stances (average below the centrist ideological position (1)). Arguably, this could be a result of further communitarisation with the Lisbon Treaty, as scholars have previously suggested that further EU integration would entail more liberalisations (Kaunert 2009; Kaunert and Léonard 2012; Thielemann and Zaun 2018). After 2015 and through to 2018 there is a rapid shift to more restrictiveness in EU immigration acquis legislation, likely triggered by the 2015 crisis. We confirm expectations in the literature (Atac and Rosenberger 2019; Jakulevičiune 2017; Pijenburg *et al.* 2018) on the effects of the 2015 migration crisis on the overall restrictiveness of EU immigration policies, and on the

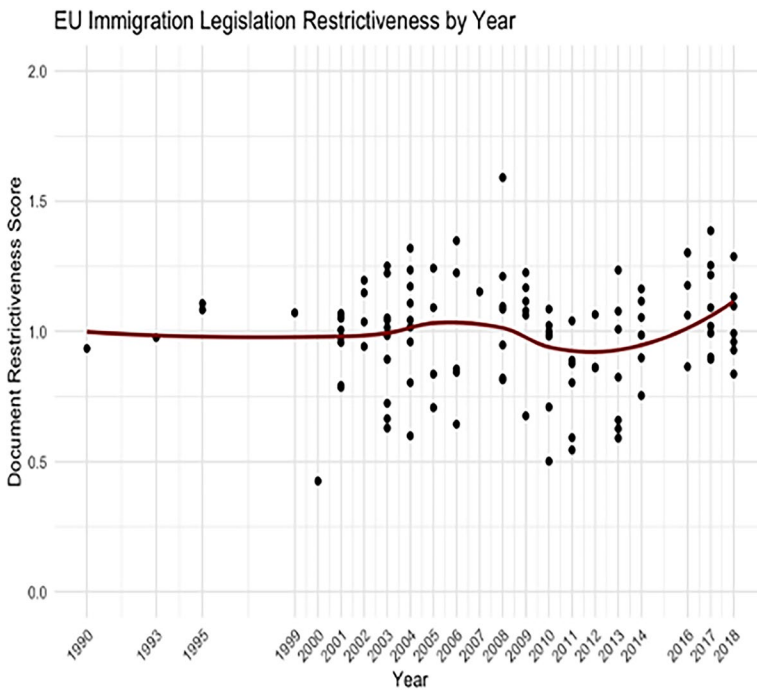
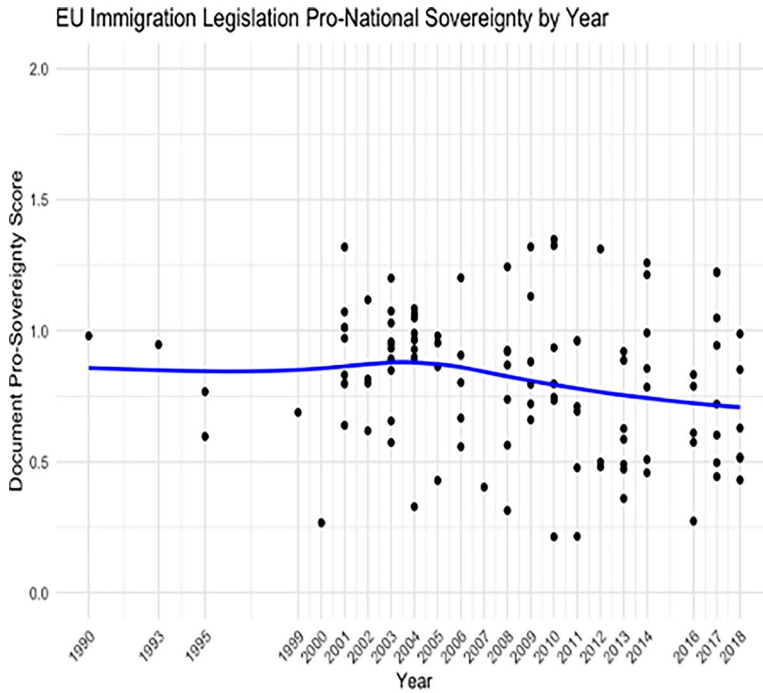


Figure 1. Wordscores results – immigration restrictiveness over time. Note: Loess Line



**Figure 2.** Wordscores results – European integration sentiment over time. *Note:* Loess Line

restrictiveness of visas and illegal immigration sub-topics and the relative liberal nature of the human rights sub-topic (Helbling and Kalkum 2018) (see Section 3 of the [Online Appendix](#)). However, the notion that EU immigration legislation would usher a ‘liberal’ immigration regime does not seem likely from our data, as, on average, the EU immigration acquis attests itself on the centre ground of the restrictive–liberal spectrum. The contradiction with previous findings might indeed result from the different focus on relative restrictiveness (other research) and absolute restrictiveness (this article) and the fact that most previous research focused on individual case studies rather than the full EU immigration acquis.

In terms of the EU integration dimension, we see broad stability around the 0.8 mark for the period up to 2007 ([Figure 2](#)). After 2007 there is a marked decrease in pro-national sovereignty and member state delegation language, meaning that the EU immigration acquis is increasingly more likely to mention EU agencies and institutions and to upload responsibilities to the EU level. This can be explained by the full communitarisation of EU immigration policy, which, in the case of asylum policy, was already introduced in 2005, and then strengthened with the Lisbon Treaty (Hellmann *et al.* 2005).

Section 3 in the [Online Appendix](#) offers additional descriptive overviews and validation analyses of the scores assigned to all 111 EU policies on both dimensions. We have further validated the immigration and EU integration sentiment scores of the legislative acts in the sample *via* qualitative case studies, analysis by topic and an analysis of matching cases in the IMPIC dataset (Helbling *et al.* 2017).

### ***Legislative behaviour, parties and public opinion data***

In order to study the legislative dynamics on EU immigration policies within the European Parliament, we augmented the dataset on legislation contents with data on political parties, on roll call votes and on country-level public opinion. A detailed explanation of the variables and data merges required by this analysis is offered in Section 5 of the [Online Appendix](#). Taking our dataset of 111 legislative acts as the starting point, we first merged Hix and Høyland (2022) roll call votes (RCV) dataset, by filtering only for roll call votes on the topic of immigration (using the RCV title or description). We then manually searched for the *final votes*<sup>2</sup> relevant to the dossiers in our sample, on the basis of the EurLex date of the final vote in the European Parliament, and of the rapporteur's name. We found a match in the roll call voting data for 67 out of 111 dossiers in our sample. As roll call votes are not called for every dossier (Hix *et al.* 2007) this is quite a good proportion. The RCV dataset contained MEPs' national party identifiers and EPG membership of each MEP at the time of voting. We aggregate the dataset by national party – calculating the proportion of MEPs voting 'yes' in the legislation's final vote, relative to the total number of that party's MEPs. Unique party identifiers were generated in the process. Using these unique party identifiers (and the year of the final vote) we then merged CHES data (Jolly *et al.* 2022), to add the ideological/programmatic position of political parties on immigration and EU integration. We finally merged Eurobarometer data on domestic levels of public opinion Euroscepticism and immigration salience.<sup>3</sup>

As we're interested in the role of *national parties'* programmatic variation on the immigration and EU immigration dimensions, the dependent variable in all our regression models is the percentage of a *national party's* MEPs voting 'yes' in the relevant dossier's final vote. The unit of analysis in all our models is therefore the dossier-national party dyad. We leverage fractional regression models (following the specification recommended by Papke and Wooldridge (1996)) with country and year fixed effects, since national parties and dossiers are clustered by country and year, and there might be country-specific and year-specific trends in overall rates of

support for EU laws.<sup>4</sup> In the baseline dossier contents' models, we also add EPG fixed effects as an additional robustness check. All coefficients in the below models are exponentiated (expressed as odd ratios): so values above 1 represent an increase in the proportion voting yes – i.e. a positive association –, while values below 1 represent a decrease, or a negative association.

Our baseline descriptive model (see Table 1 below) simply tests the effect of legislation's contents on each core sub-dimension of immigration policy on the national parties' shares of yes votes. In the second column we add country fixed effects, and in the third we also control for European Party Group (EPG).

These baseline descriptive results, demonstrate that over the time period under consideration (1990–2018) the pro/anti-EU integration contents do not statistically significantly shape the voting behaviour of national parties in the EP. Overall, national parties in the EP support anti- and pro-EU empowerment provisions at similar rates. The integration–sovereignty (or centralisation–decentralisation) divide does appear secondary/peripheral in explaining vote choice in the immigration acquis.

In contrast, dossiers with more restrictive provisions are statistically significantly *less* likely to be supported by national parties in the EP on average, with an estimated 49% drop in the odds of a party's yes vote shares when legislation moves by 1 unit (i.e. from extremely liberal to centrist, or from centrist to extremely restrictive). The notion that the EP leans liberal (Acosta Arcarazo 2009; Lopatin 2013; Ripoll Servent and Trauner 2014; Thielemann and Zaun 2018) is therefore supported by these *aggregate* voting trends from all the 67 immigration acquis roll call votes studied here. These initial descriptive findings also support the core assumption underlying the centrality hypotheses: the immigration regulation dimension of EU dossiers' contents has the expected effect on roll

**Table 1.** Fractional regression: National party % support for a legislation by dossier's immigration and integration contents (*dependent variable: % yes votes*).

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dossier sovereigntism	0.955 (0.068)	0.873 (0.086)	0.880 (0.087)
Dossier restrictiveness	0.505*** (0.106)	0.526*** (0.136)	0.514*** (0.137)
Constant	0.650** (0.213)	1.010 (0.242)	1.893*** (0.314)
Country FE	N	N	Y
EPG FE	N	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Observations	11362	7811	7811
AIC	15306.69	9523.03	9411.67
BIC	15438.77	9704.07	9780.72

Note: Fit by GLM with quasibinomial logit link and robust standard errors. \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

call voting behaviour, but the supranational integration dimension does not have a statistically significant effect and appears to ‘cancel out’ despite the predominance of Europhile parties in the EP in the period under consideration.

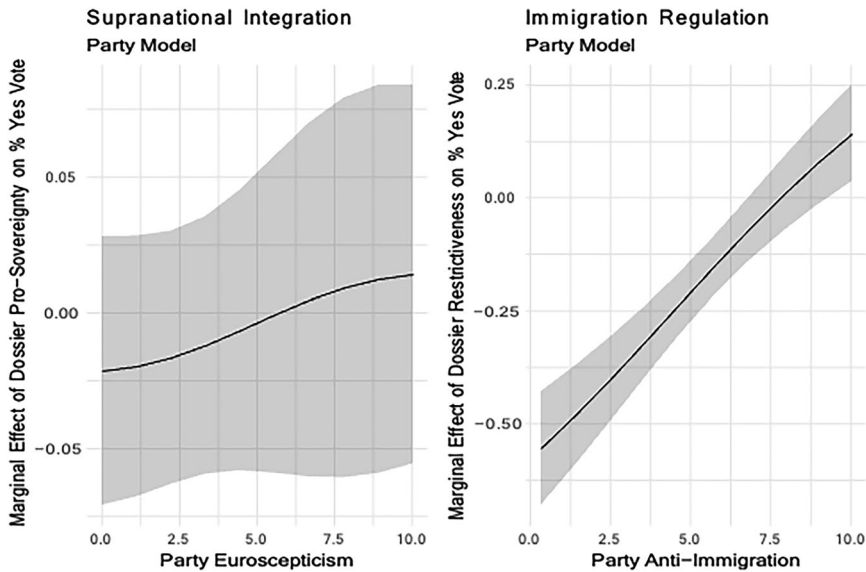
## Results: partisan and public opinion dynamics

We here turn to testing our hypotheses on the role of party programmatic positions, public opinion and cross-pressuring dossiers for national parties’ roll call voting behaviour on EU immigration policies. A list of all the covariates used in this analysis and their measurement level is provided in the [Online Appendix](#) (see [Online Appendix, Section 5](#)). The role of national parties’ programmatic positions (on the immigration and EU integration dimensions) is tested via the interaction of the party’s position with the respective immigration and EU integration contents of the dossiers. If the interaction between the party’s position and the relevant score on a particular dossier does *not* matter for supporting the legislation, this will be evidence that the dimension tested has low centrality for national parties when voting on the EU immigration acquis.

In our models, we also test the role of national public opinion, chiefly by interacting public opinion positions on immigration and Euroscepticism with the respective legislative dossiers’ contents.<sup>5</sup> If the interaction between public opinion on immigration and EU integration shapes national parties’ likelihood of supporting more restrictive or more pro-sovereignty dossiers, respectively, this will be evidence that national parties in the EP flexibly respond to public opinion demands when voting on the EU immigration acquis in the relevant dimension.

When it comes to the effect of parties’ programmatic positions on levels of support for dossiers with specific immigration and EU integration contents, only the interaction between the dossier’s restrictiveness and the party anti-immigration stance is statistically significant and positive (exponentiated coefficient above 1). The party programmatic position on immigration regulation, therefore, statistically significantly matters for legislative voting in the EU immigration acquis: more restrictive dossiers are more likely to be supported the more anti-immigrant the political party is.

For each unit increase in party anti-immigration, the effect of dossier restrictiveness on the odds of expected yes vote proportions increases by 44%. The level of party Euroscepticism, however, does not make more pro-national sovereignty dossiers more likely to be supported in a statistically significant way. The marginal effects [Figure 3](#) below (from model 1 of [Table 2](#)) shows how the effect of parties’ programmatic position on the European dimension has wide confidence intervals and appears only



**Figure 3.** Marginal effects plot – party effects (model 1, Table 2).

marginally positive. The immigration dimension of parties' programmes appears to have a clear positive and linear effect on legislators' voting behaviour, while their EU integration stances do not. Hypothesis 1 is only partly confirmed and is true for the immigration dimension: this confirms the differential centrality of the two sub-dimensions of EU immigration policy, and thus the expectations outlined in Hypothesis 3a (centrality I).

In terms of the role of national public opinion preferences, our model shows that public opinion *does* matter in shaping voting behaviour in the European Parliament. And it matters in particular for the supranational integration dimension: pro-sovereignty dossiers are more likely to be supported if national electorates are Eurosceptic. In particular, for each 1-unit increase in national Euroscepticism, the effect of sovereigntist dossiers on the odds of yes vote proportions more than doubles (OR = 2.144). In the case of the immigration regulation dimension the effect is not statistically significantly different from zero and marginal effects go in the negative direction instead.<sup>6</sup> Figure 4 (from model 1 of Table 2) graphically depicts the differential findings on the role of public opinion for the two dimensions. The slightly negative coefficient of the interaction between anti-immigration contents and public opinion immigration salience might be driven by more liberal parties on immigration: the triple-interaction effect (see the second column of Table 2) helps in making sense of this finding. The triple interaction, in fact, shows that it is only the more anti-immigrant parties that further increase their likelihood to vote for

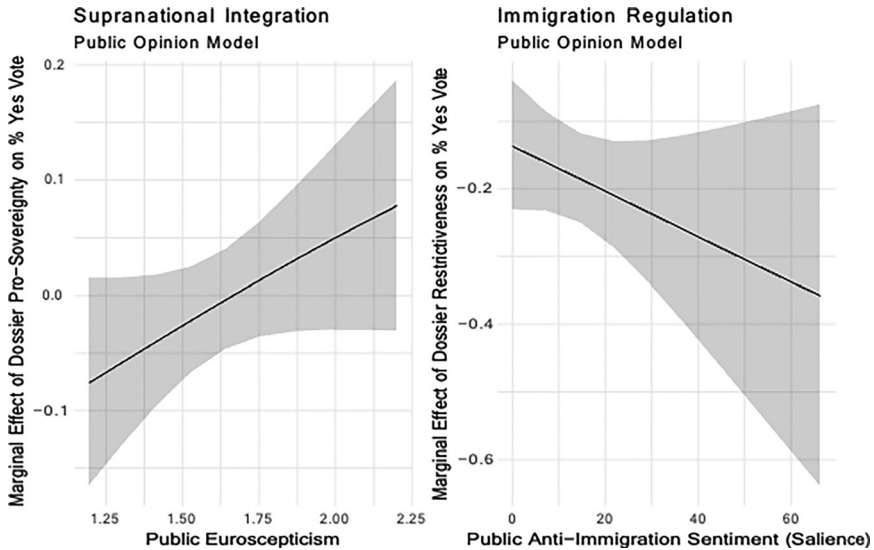
**Table 2.** Fractional regression: Party % support for a legislation by dossier's content, party ideology and public opinion politicisation (*dependent variable*: % yes votes).

	(1)	(2)
Dossier sovereignty	0.261** (0.597)	0.114** (0.890)
Dossier restrictiveness	0.071*** (0.335)	0.438* (0.498)
PO Eurosc. (lag)	0.976 (0.366)	0.820 (0.507)
PO Anti-Immig. (lag)	1.009 (0.012)	1.193*** (0.031)
Pty Euroscepticism	0.734*** (0.023)	0.671** (0.188)
Pty Anti-Immig.	0.783*** (0.052)	1.177* (0.087)
Dossier Sov.: PO Eurosc. (lag)	2.144** (0.367)	3.544** (0.549)
Dossier Restr.: PO Anti-Immig. (lag)	0.984 (0.010)	0.859*** (0.028)
Dossier Sov.: Pty Euroscepticism	1.023 (0.027)	1.278 (0.222)
Dossier Restr.: Pty Anti-Immig.	1.444*** (0.050)	1.037 (0.084)
PO Eurosc. (lag): Pty Euroscepticism		1.055 (0.114)
PO Anti-Immig. (lag): Pty Anti-Immig.		0.970*** (0.005)
Dossier Sov.: PO Eurosc. (lag): Pty Euroscepticism		0.876 (0.134)
Dossier Restr.: PO Anti-Immig. (lag): Pty Anti-Immig.		1.025*** (0.005)
Constant	40.142*** (0.742)	5.582* (1.003)
Country FE	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y
Observations	7378	7378
AIC	8619.82	8591.21
BIC	8972.04	8971.05

Note: Fit by GLM with quasibinomial logit link and robust standard errors. \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

restrictive legislation when national public opinion is concerned about immigration. As public opinion immigration salience is only relevant when channelled by parties' programmatic positions, liberal parties are expected to still keep their strong liberal stances when immigration public opinion salience is high, leading to a slightly negative coefficient on the immigration public opinion-dossier restrictiveness interaction due to the predominance of liberal national delegations in the EP in the 1990–2018 period.

Our data shows that *all* parties move towards supporting more Eurosceptic legislation as public Euroscepticism goes up, but that public immigration concerns at most influences voting *through pre-existing party immigration stances*. All in all, national parties in the EP are more readily adaptable and responsive to national average voter's preferences for the supranational integration dimension. To summarise: the EU dimension of dossiers becomes more salient in explaining voting behaviour when public opinion is Eurosceptic. The immigration dimension, instead, appears largely insulated from public opinion, with parties prioritising their own party platforms above the national average elector. Hypothesis 2 is thus fully confirmed for the Euroscepticism dimension, whilst public opinion at most works *through* political parties' programmatic positions for the immigration dimension. This confirms the centrality expectations from Hypothesis 3b and further nuances the preference–policy gap argument (see also: Morales *et al.* (2015)): while



**Figure 4.** Marginal effects plot – public opinion effects (model 1, Table 2).

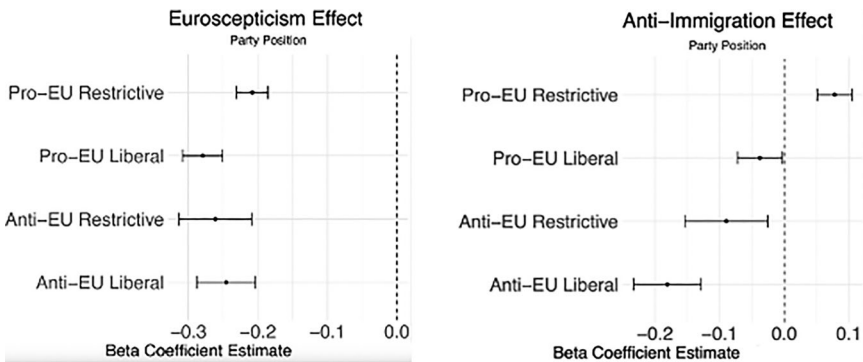
parties are insulated from anti-immigration public sentiment, they do leverage it strategically to double down on the party line on immigration, while they are unconditionally responsive to anti-EU public sentiment instead.

We present several robustness tests in the [Online Appendix](#) (see Section 7). We re-run the party and public opinion models shown in [Table 2](#) with ESS public opinion data on immigration preferences, without country fixed effects, using contemporaneous public opinion, excluding extremely lopsided roll call votes, only using co-decision dossiers, and only for human rights and labour migration topics (to check that the predominance of border and visa dossiers is not skewing the results). The specific interaction coefficients change only slightly, and the general inferences drawn above hold when using these different model specifications.

These results are, of course, aggregated across all dossiers (i.e. those where immigration and EU integration are cross-cutting together with those that are not) and across different national parties: we thus decided to probe the predominant role of parties' programmatic positions on the immigration dimension further, and in particular by examining different dossier types separately (Pro-EU & Restrictive, Anti-EU & Liberal, Anti-EU & Restrictive, Pro-EU & Liberal). The analyses below test whether party positions impact the likelihood of voting 'yes' differently for different dossier types separately. Dossiers have been grouped into Pro-EU & Restrictive, Anti-EU & Liberal, Anti-EU & Restrictive, Pro-EU

& Liberal by using the theoretical mid-point (1, in the 0–2 scale) as the threshold: for example, Anti-EU and Liberal dossiers are those with a score above 1 on the sovereignty dimension, and below 1 on the restrictiveness dimension. For a description on cross-pressuring policies and their numbers in each of the four quadrants please see Section 4 of the [Online Appendix](#). We have run two separate models on each of these four samples: (1) a model with party Euroscepticism as the main covariate; (2) a model with party anti-immigration as the main covariate. [Figure 5](#) below depicts the main results from these models. For the full regression tables see [Tables A15](#) and [A16](#) in the [Online Appendix](#).

When analysing these plots, it is clear that parties' Eurosceptic stance is not differently related to support for different legislative dossier types. Parties' level of Euroscepticism is, in fact, related in the same way to the likelihood to support a particular EU immigration acquis dossier across all dossier categories: both anti- and pro-EU. In particular, party Euroscepticism is always negatively correlated with voting 'yes' to EU immigration acquis dossiers, and anti-EU dossiers are not more likely to be supported by Eurosceptic parties (and, conversely, Europhile parties are not more likely to support pro-EU dossiers). Anti-immigration positions, instead, are clearly associated with higher support for restrictive dossiers (and lower support for liberal dossiers) especially in cross-pressuring dossiers (we find effects in the expected direction for both liberal cross-pressuring and radical-right cross-pressuring dossiers). Parties' anti-immigration stance, therefore, relates differently to different pieces of legislation, and in the expected direction: while dossiers with more delegation to the nation states are always *less* likely to be supported (perhaps surprisingly), the restrictive version of each sovereignty-transfer type dossier always does better than the liberal version, the more anti-immigrant the party is. Anti-immigration parties mostly vote in favour of *restrictive*



**Figure 5.** Beta coefficients of party programmatic positions (Euroscepticism & anti-immigration stance) by Dossier category.

pro-EU integration dossiers. The statistically significant positive effect for the pro-EU restrictive dossiers suggests that anti-immigrant parties may be sacrificing their EU integration position to get what they want on immigration regulation. Party immigration stances are therefore a guiding light for MEPs who – even when potentially cross-pressured (as many anti-immigrant parties tend to be Eurosceptic) – chiefly use their immigration position to decide whether to support a piece of legislation or not. The third expectation from the centrality hypothesis (Hypothesis 3c) is therefore confirmed.

## Conclusion

In this study, we make two important contributions. Firstly, we leverage machine-learning sentiment analysis to describe the EU's immigration acquis from 1990 to 2018 on two core dimensions: the immigration regulation and the supranational integration dimensions. Previous research only covers a few exemplary pieces of EU legislation, and the EU integration dimension of the immigration acquis has only received scant attention. Secondly, we explain how EP legislators decide on immigration policies: and, specifically, how they balance party and national voter positions when facing multi-dimensional dossiers that contain both immigration and EU integration contents. We tested national parties priorities when the immigration regulation and the EU integration dimensions create conflicting pressures and discovered that responsiveness to public opinion (Sorace 2018, 2023) and party loyalty (Hix 2002; Hix *et al.* 2007; Lawrence *et al.* 2006) are dimension-specific.

The analysis leverages an original dataset of 111 pieces of legislation covering nearly 30 years' worth of legislative data on the EU immigration acquis, ideologically scaled on two dimensions. To explain legislative voting, we augmented our ideologically scaled dataset with all the available roll-call vote data on *final votes* on these dossiers, covering 67 out of 111 total dossiers and over 350 European national parties, as well as with CHES data, and public opinion data from the Eurobarometer.

The study does not track the full negotiation cycle of EU immigration dossiers as it only focuses on final pieces of legislation. While political contestation might have been resolved in earlier stages (e.g. through package deals), our data shows significant variation in roll call voting behaviour across the time period and the over 350 national parties studied. This suggests that political contestation was not fully resolved in earlier decision-making stages for the 67 dossiers we study. Our focus on final votes still yields, therefore, substantial analytical leverage.

Whereas previous literature has usually suggested a liberalisation of EU immigration policy over time (Kaunert and Léonard 2012;

Thielemann and Zaun 2018; Zaun 2017) (albeit one that did not change the restrictive, control-focused ‘policy core’ of European migration policy (Ripoll Servent and Trauner 2014)), we demonstrate that, taken by itself, the EU immigration *acquis* is rather centrist, i.e. neither particularly liberal nor restrictive. We do find some evidence confirming liberalising EU immigration policies in the 2009–2014 period (Kauert and Léonard 2012; Thielemann and Zaun 2018), although this trend is not particularly strong. Whereas scholars have described a gradual liberalisation of EU immigration policies over time, but do not have data for post-2015, we find that this trend has reversed after the EU asylum crisis, making the *acquis* now increasingly restrictive. We thus confirm expectations in the literature (Atac and Rosenberger 2019; Jakulevičiene 2017; Pijnenburg *et al.* 2018) on the effects of the 2015 crisis on the restrictiveness of EU immigration policies. We speculate that the increased politicisation of the topic has made it more and more difficult for the EU to adopt liberal policies which are hard to sell domestically to the publics. We also confirm previous findings on variation in restrictiveness regarding the different sub-dimensions of immigration in the validity analysis, with the human rights related issues being generally more liberal than, e.g. labour migration or borders. This is arguably because states have more discretion on the latter than on the former, as human rights related issues are usually governed by international treaties (Roos and Zaun 2014).

Concerning the supranational integration dimension, we find a significant increase in pro-supranational integration sentiment in the EU immigration *acquis* since at least 2007 and particularly since 2015. While further studies would be necessary to study the substantive legal impact of such provisions, this finding suggests that assessments that the EU did not expand integration since the asylum crisis might need to be nuanced (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018; Kriesi *et al.* 2024; Scipioni 2018), as also suggested by Schimmelfennig (2024). Whilst Treaty change has not occurred, EU agencies have clearly been empowered, which is what our study manages to capture.

The study advances the literature on EU legislative behaviour by originally focusing on the interplay of national parties’ positions, national public opinion, and the contents of EU legislative dossiers across two dimensions: immigration regulation and EU integration. It confirms the strong influence of national party programmatic positions on legislative behaviour in the EP, as suggested by Hix (2002) (Hix *et al.* 2007; Lawrence *et al.* 2006). Additionally, it presents evidence of the (conditional) role of national public opinion shifts for legislative behaviour in the EP (Sorace 2018, 2023). We find that party ideology matters most when it comes to

immigration regulation contents, while responsiveness to public opinion plays a larger role in the supranational integration dimension of EU policies. This suggests that different topics or dimensions of EP voting follow different logics, which further research could assess systematically across policy areas. We nuance the preference-policy gap in migration scholarship (Freeman 1995) as we find that public opinion matters for the supranational integration dimension, and is channelled through party programmes in the immigration dimension. Additionally, when confronted with cross-pressuring dossiers (e.g. pro-EU but restrictive or anti-EU but liberal policies for radical right parties), national parties primarily base their voting decisions on their party's stance on immigration. The central dimension of a policy area – here, immigration regulation – is where national parties exercise the strongest control. In contrast, quicker and more direct responsiveness to public opinion is more likely in the more peripheral dimension: in our case, supranational integration.

Our findings allow us to speculate about future EU legislative activity in this area: there is reason to believe that whether the EP is going to support more restrictive immigration dossiers can largely be predicted by examining the manifestos of national parties represented in the EP, while voting on the balance of authority between the EU and member states is more likely to shift in response to changes in public opinion. We further speculate that the supranational integration dimension of EU immigration policy, where parties are more flexible, could be used as a bargaining chip in cases of policy gridlock or when there is cross-pressure between dimensions. Previous research shows that radical right voters are willing to sacrifice their preferred outcome on EU integration if it allows them to achieve their preferred outcome on immigration (Kirkizh *et al.* 2023). It seems that national delegations in the EP follow a similar logic. These findings may also help explain why we find quite a number of dossiers that, contrary to what scholars have expected (cf. Barbou Des Places and Deffains 2003; Stetter 2000), combine restrictiveness with greater EU integration or pro-immigration measures with stronger delegation to member states. Gridlock may not necessarily be more likely in an EP with increased anti-immigrant Eurosceptic contingents: parties may leverage their flexibility on the supranational integration dimension to see through dossiers that contain their preferred position on the immigration regulation dimension. The EU can thus still be a productive regulator on immigration under the new EP. Yet, the increased presence of radical right parties in the current legislature also suggests that the EP will lose its role as a liberal counterweight to the Council in this policy area, progressively promoting 'Fortress Europe'-type policies (Geddes 2008).

## Notes

1. Adding the more recent items of legislation in the area would entail substantial costs, as it would mean re-doing the entire supervised quantitative text analysis from scratch. The training set of texts would, in fact, need to be re-coded by the human coders to appropriately train the Wordscores algorithm on a fully representative random sample of the entire corpus.
2. We focus on final votes only since our content analysis captured the ideological substance of the *final* adopted policies only. Earlier votes may pertain to substantially different versions of the text, making them less suitable for our models. The final dossiers do offer enough ideological content variation and enough national party variation in shares of yes votes to make them meaningful for analysis. Even in dossiers passed with extremely high majorities, in fact, the share of yes voters from the various national delegation offered important variation (see [Figure 11 in the Online Appendix](#)), since we group national party's no-voters, abstainers and absentees in the denominator of our % 'yes' dependent variable.
3. We are aware of the criticism by [Hatton \(2021\)](#) that immigration salience and immigration preference may differ. However, public opinion *position* on immigration is not regularly asked in the Eurobarometer and the European Social Survey (used by [Hatton \(2021\)](#)) only has data points every two years and does not cover all EU countries. We thus decided to use immigration *salience* instead, as it has been more consistently fielded. Immigration salience has been shown to capture public concern for levels of immigration as it has been found to proxy anti-immigrant sentiment ([Benesch et al. 2019](#); [Hopkins 2010](#); [Lahav 2004](#)). In the ([Online Appendix Section 6](#)) we add a correlation validity analysis for the only Eurobarometer from the 1990–2018 period that field both an immigration rights' restrictiveness question and the most important issue question. We also correlate ESS anti-immigration positions with Eurobarometer salience data. We find that mentioning immigration as a salient issue is positively correlated with supporting more restrictiveness, and that in a sizeable proportion of countries the ESS and Eurobarometer time series trend similarly. Leveraging European Social Survey (ESS) data, rather than Eurobarometer data, was not a solution as the ESS data is significantly less granular (it is only collected at 2-year intervals) and does not cover all EU member states, but we carried out a robustness check nonetheless (see [Online Appendix, Table A9](#)). Key inferences are unchanged.
4. We also run the main models without the country fixed effects (see below), and inferences remain unchanged.
5. We use the (weighted) average public opinion in the country of each party, lagged by one year from the year the roll call vote took place. [Table A11 in the Online Appendix](#) reports some robustness tests which look at the effect of *contemporaneous* public opinion as well.
6. As mentioned above, we ran the model also using public opinion measured in the same year of the legislative vote. When using this contemporaneous public opinion measure, more pro-national sovereignty dossiers no longer register a statistically significant higher share of support when public opinion Euroscepticism is higher. The coefficient is still in the expected direction and of similar magnitude. All other inferences remain unchanged. As Eurobarometer measures are averaged by year in our data, these contemporaneous measurements might, in some cases, measure public sentiment *af-*

ter the roll call vote took place. It is likely asking too much, therefore, of national parties to accurately track this contemporaneous measure of public opinion: this is why we prefer lagged measures, where accurate assessment from political representatives is more likely.

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