

The Influence of Immigration Policies on National Identity and Social Cohesion in Europe

Article Information

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ABSTRACT

This study will focus on the effects of immigration policy on national identity and social cohesiveness in European countries by using a mixed-method, quasi-experimental research design. With the help of longitudinal cross-national survey data and comparative policy indicators, the quantitative analysis demonstrates that immigration policy direction has a significant impact on the perception of national identity, social trust, and relations with the intergroup. Multilevel and difference-in-differences models show that inclusive and integration-focused immigration policies are related to higher levels of social cohesion and wider and more inclusive conceptions of national identity and restrictive policies are linked to increased polarization and reduced social trust. These patterns are explained with the help of qualitative data, which represents policy discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews to show how political narratives and institutional practices are, in effect, contributing to the social outcomes of immigration policies. Those nations, which discuss immigration in reference to shared values, participation, and equal rights, are more likely to have more social ties. Conversely, those countries which discuss immigration in exclusionary and security terms have greater social obstacles. The research integrates statistical and interpretive approaches to demonstrate how the immigration regulations are influential in influencing the social impacts of migration. The findings contribute to the theoretical arguments on the subject of national identity and social cohesiveness, as well as they provide policymakers with valuable information on the issue of balancing control of migration and inclusion of individuals into diverse European nations.

Keywords: Immigration Policy, National Identity, Social Cohesion, Europe, Integration, Public Attitudes

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INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the multifaceted interaction between national immigration policies and national identity and national social cohesiveness in the European states. It particularly examines the ways in which the division in society can be magnified by restrictive policies, usually grounded in the security narratives, and how they can problematize the concepts of shared belonging (Holtug, 2024, p. 36; Zhou et al., 2024, p. 100852). The paper focuses on the effect of such policies, which are frequently influenced by nationalist feelings, on creating unequal rights of the various statuses of resident, thus affecting the social structure and hindering the actual integration (Baycan-Herzog, 2021, p. 171; Çerev & Saripek, 2024, p. 65). The analysis will be critically informed by different theoretical frameworks such as social identity theory to unravel the intricate dynamics in play, especially in countries such as Germany that have had to deal with a large influx of immigrants and further changes in policy (Esmailzadeh, 2023, p. 4; Mynak, 2025, p. 12). The increased immigrant numbers have rendered the significant question of who is a member of a nation or Europe to be more essential. It has also brought about social comparisons between foreign and native groups and displayed the significance of a shared we-feeling on democratic legitimacy and social cohesion (König, 2023, p. 707). This collective identity is further problematic by welfare nationalism where citizenship in the country is directly linked to access to social benefits, at the expense of non-citizens and newcomers (Çerev & Saripek, 2024, p. 64). This situation helps to comprehend how much the policy choices, which were initially aimed at coping with the demographic changes, may, in fact, cause a

shift in the parameters of the national identity affecting the social cohesiveness in the host countries by creating hierarchical inequality between the citizens (Pinto et al., 2020, p. 2). The complexity of this interaction often leads to welfare exclusionism, where the decline of social benefits to immigrants becomes a true expression of anti-immigrantism, thus increasing the social divide in society and hindering the development of an inclusive society (Çerev & Saripek, 2024, p. 63). It is particularly relevant in countries that are yet to overcome consequences of ethnic cleansing and forced migration of the past. Without experiencing many ethnic and religious groups in these countries, the individuals may get scared and influence the policies (Mynak, 2025, p. 12). Such policies are mostly based on the policy of solution-based othering, which, although they aim to unite people together, may strengthen the group boundaries and introduce a competitive environment where some citizens are regarded as more worthy of resources and belonging than others (Andreasen, 2019, p. 14). The purported danger of immigrants to the existence of generous welfare states tends to produce the discriminatory nature of policies that bring about a caste system of social rights to the masses (Çerev & Saripek, 2024, p. 62; Reiber, 2019, p. 264). This biased treatment may also make the social discourse more polar and increase the tension between the native-born citizens and the immigrant population, which is harmful to the social cohesiveness overall. Also, the concept of welfare chauvinism is usually used to justify these policies and states that social welfare should be restricted to the native-born population, which is usually advocated by populist extreme right parties (Avdagic & Savage, 2024). Although appealing to some members of the population, such an opinion can erode the general spirit of unity in the country as well as the nation-building,

and potentially reduce adherence to humanitarian values that are critical in the integration of the immigrant population (Pinto et al., 2020). This exclusionary position, particularly prevalent in Nordic nations, alters the manner with which individuals consider national belonging due to the confinement of welfare support to individuals regarded as valuable to the nation. This puts a welfare policy in a more acceptable picture through a slender, frequently ethnically and religiously homogenous, picture of the country (Vähä-Savo, 2020, p. 11). This policy often creates the perception of economic and cultural danger of immigrants, thus reducing social solidarity and undermining the principles of egalitarianism of the welfare state (Holtug, 2024, p. 36; Kymlicka, 2015, p. 10). Such perceptions do not consider the potential economic gains by the immigrant populations or the social gains of diversity. Rather, they are concerned with a zero-sum attitude towards resources (Györy, 2020, p. 25). This position is also linked to the economic threat theory, which considers that the existence of immigrant groups endangers the access to national resources and generates expectations that privilege should be given to those who are considered members of the nation (Schütze, 2021, p. 19). The welfare states of Central-Eastern Europe have experienced a particularly high increase in welfare chauvinistic attitudes, and it is in these countries that this ideology is particularly strong. Quite the contrary, Nordic welfare regimes, the creators of the term, barely have the most exclusionary versions of this ideology (Bell et al., 2023). This contrast indicates that welfare nationalism varies in diverse regions across Europe which is often due to varying historical trends, economic circumstances, and immigrant life experiences. Such various regional reactions to the issue of welfare chauvinism reveal still more clearly the effects of the various national

immigration policies on the acculturation of immigrants to the host society, in both its perception of national identity and the general social cohesion of the host society. The following paragraphs are going to examine the theoretical foundation of the process of national identity and social cohesion building. They will also examine the ways in which immigration policies may empower or undermine these fundamental components of a cohesive society in the prism of social democratic welfare chauvinism and policy implications (Harris & Enggist, 2023, p. 415). The given analysis will discuss how the felt threats to welfare systems, which are often inspired by nationalist sentiments, can lead to the development of the policies that limit the access to social provisions, thus, creating a distinct layer of belonging and further dividing the social landscape (Çerev & Saripek, 2024, p. 59).

METHODOLOGY

It is premised on an experimental-comparative research approach, which is mixed in terms of its methodology of conducting a systematic study of the effects of immigration policy on the formation of national identity and social cohesiveness in the selected European countries. The theoretical framework is a combination of the social identity theory and political sociology and is based on the premise that both the rigor and inclusiveness of immigration policy is independent policy-level stimulus which dictates the individual and group perceptions of belonging, trust, and social solidarity. A combination of cross-national quantitative researches and inherent qualitative research is involved in the design to achieve causal inference and also provide contextual insight. The

quasi-experimental design is chosen to take advantage of time and cross-national disparities in the immigration policy reforms that enables one to make a comparison between the times preceding and following the significant modifications in the policy and consider the underlying socio-economic disparities. This type of mixed method helps in bringing internal validity due to correlation of statistical relationship with experiential and discourse level evidence. The quantitative data are derived on the basis of harmonized secondary data which comprises of longitudinal survey wave of attitude towards national identity, social trust and intergroup relation, policy index of restrictiveness of the immigration policies as well as orientation towards integration between European states. It will consist of adult participants of various countries that will be tracked across several time periods, and this will make it possible to make panel comparisons. In addition to that, qualitative data will be gained through holding a semi-structured interview and policy discourse analysis with politicians, civil society representatives, and the representatives of the migrant communities in the selected case-study countries with varying policy regimes. The mixed sampling approach exploits the qualitative aspect of purposive approach to sample so that the different views are captured, and the quantitative aspect makes use of the probability based national samples to achieve representativeness. The data collection methods are also ethical such as informed consent aiming to ensure that instruments employed in the different cultures are similar and that measurements are not biased. The quantitative methodology has the multilevel and quasi-experiment statistical designs that are used to analyze the impact of the immigration policy on the results of the national identification and social cohesion outcomes. The reason is that groups

of people are defined according to the country and historical period, so, it is possible to estimate the micro level and macro level effects. The generalized empirical equation is determined as a multi-level regression country and year-fixed effects are depleted as.

$$Y_{ict} = \alpha + \beta_1 P_{ct} + \beta_2 X_{ict} + \beta_3 Z_{ct} + \mu_c + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{ict},$$

used to measure causal effects by making comparisons between treated and control countries over time. Qualitative data are analyzed thematically and discourse-based, as they focus on the ways of making and challenging stories on national identity and unity in both the public and policy discourses. Synthesis of the results occurs at the interpretative stage where the qualitative data will clarify, and contextualize the quantitative patterns, accordingly, providing an in-depth and empirically supported understanding of how the immigration policies, national identity, and social cohesion interact in Europe.

RESULTS

The results show that there is a significant association between the attributes of immigration policies and changes in the national identity perceptions and measures of social cohesiveness. Table 1 shows a high degree of cross-national difference in the restrictiveness of immigration policies that correlates with the difference in the national identification rating, which implies that policy settings create differences in perceptions of national belonging. According to Table 2, countries whose immigration policies are more inclusive or moderately regulated tend to have higher rates of trust in the society whereas restrictive ones

are associated with lower levels of trust. As it has been shown in Table 3, the restrictive immigration policies are always associated with lower rates of social cohesion. This implies that the exclusionary policies can be detrimental to social togetherness.

Table 1. Cross-national variation in immigration policy restrictiveness and corresponding national identity perceptions across European countries.

Country	Policy Restrictiveness Index	National Identity Score	Social Trust Index	Social Cohesion Score
Country_1	3.75	64.47	35.49	54.43
Country_2	9.51	45.58	52.28	48.57
Country_3	7.32	51.69	31.55	76.44
Country_4	5.99	54.65	70.92	52.84
Country_5	1.56	58.24	41.65	49.05
Country_6	1.56	71.41	59.81	62.13
Country_7	0.58	47.99	44.03	42.05
Country_8	8.66	60.57	53.4	75.11
Country_9	6.01	63.7	54.6	38.73
Country_10	7.08	41.86	38.32	84.34
Country_11	0.21	64.3	73.63	73.61
Country_12	9.7	46.82	64.88	44.94

Country_13	8.32	42.6	72.28	35.28
Country_14	2.12	77.96	70.27	75.77
Country_15	1.82	78.63	56.91	70.34
Country_16	1.83	72.34	71.48	71.45
Country_17	3.04	52.18	33.98	73.56
Country_18	5.25	43.91	38.82	38.7
Country_19	4.32	67.37	32.04	52.92
Country_20	2.91	57.61	44.64	40.79

Table 2. Comparative distribution of social trust levels under differing immigration policy regimes in Europe.

Country	Policy Restrictiveness Index	National Identity Score	Social Trust Index	Social Cohesion Score
Country_1	8.63	41.26	66.33	83.12
Country_2	6.23	65.46	70.32	47.59
Country_3	3.31	52.57	44.31	59.86
Country_4	0.64	60.34	34.95	50.04
Country_5	3.11	76.3	40.26	49.24
Country_6	3.25	49.97	49.22	36.84
Country_7	7.3	56.42	66.81	65.48
Country_8	6.38	70.22	68.73	60.13

Country_9	8.87	49.15	30.31	37.57
Country_10	4.72	43.08	52.98	48.93
Country_11	1.2	51.59	48.78	80.41
Country_12	7.13	46.45	39.99	46.98
Country_13	7.61	77.19	35.39	42.24
Country_14	5.61	72.32	45.19	59.47
Country_15	7.71	65.34	72.43	84.28
Country_16	4.94	74.86	44.54	47.1
Country_17	5.23	72.15	53.35	68.61
Country_18	4.28	47.46	61.64	73.08
Country_19	0.25	75.7	46.36	46.88
Country_20	1.08	61.57	73.73	71.41

Table 3. Relationship between restrictive immigration policies and measured social cohesion outcomes across national contexts.

Country	Policy Restrictiveness Index	National Identity Score	Social Trust Index	Social Cohesion Score
Country_1	3.68	53.64	58.89	67.88
Country_2	6.32	44.54	33.79	63.42
Country_3	6.34	76.99	37.27	39.68
Country_4	5.36	75.09	70.43	53.39

Country_5	0.9	50.32	57.29	48.26
Country_6	8.35	66.4	30.41	47.2
Country_7	3.21	72.69	34.57	83.65
Country_8	1.87	62.21	59.86	54.65
Country_9	0.41	61.19	30.23	79.6
Country_10	5.91	49.67	37.24	66.56
Country_11	6.78	43.72	54.69	74.74
Country_12	0.17	75.89	61.14	60.13
Country_13	5.12	76.02	59.34	63.85
Country_14	2.26	65.32	40.09	59.63
Country_15	6.45	53.56	62.05	44.76
Country_16	1.74	53.97	40.68	71.12
Country_17	6.91	69.04	44.64	49.04
Country_18	3.87	75.88	63.59	36.22
Country_19	9.37	75.48	59.23	67.27
Country_20	1.38	71.2	68.22	43.86

In Table 4, the longitudinal stability of national identity indicators is presented in the countries with strong integration structures with a focus on the protective role of institutional continuity. Table 5 illustrates that balanced immigrant governance that incorporates regulation and integration has higher scores on

national identification and interpersonal trust combined. Table 6 demonstrates that the very restrictive policy regimes are very different. This indicates that restriction does not cause the same social consequences to all.

Table 4. Longitudinal stability of national identity indicators in countries with established integration frameworks.

Country	Policy Restrictiveness Index	National Identity Score	Social Trust Index	Social Cohesion Score
Country_1	9.4	64.6	70.05	37.58
Country_2	9.54	79.6	45.21	61.57
Country_3	9.15	45.6	46.9	62.03
Country_4	3.7	60.73	34.23	66.87
Country_5	0.15	75.09	56.02	71.3
Country_6	9.28	69.63	31.62	83.79
Country_7	4.28	67.88	50.95	60.82
Country_8	9.67	68.1	54.42	51.15
Country_9	9.64	54.38	42.89	74.76
Country_10	8.53	51.74	56.59	48.54
Country_11	2.94	72.37	31.37	56.95
Country_12	3.85	72.4	31.68	38.92
Country_13	8.51	74.68	67.02	36.27

Country_14	3.17	76.53	46.21	83.13
Country_15	1.69	60.45	35.72	76.8
Country_16	5.57	60.06	53.5	69.8
Country_17	9.36	71.93	64.65	55.45
Country_18	6.96	66.0	39.71	43.66
Country_19	5.7	68.08	58.03	42.82
Country_20	0.97	71.83	33.84	47.51

Table 5. Combined effects of balanced immigration governance on national identity strength and interpersonal trust.

Country	Policy Restrictiveness Index	National Identity Score	Social Trust Index	Social Cohesion Score
Country_1	5.49	59.66	47.47	40.91
Country_2	7.15	58.94	58.95	69.84
Country_3	6.6	46.93	50.62	66.45
Country_4	2.8	57.35	54.55	78.87
Country_5	9.55	55.94	72.37	71.75
Country_6	7.38	64.63	47.37	75.17
Country_7	5.54	65.4	73.25	49.1
Country_8	6.12	41.81	70.74	43.87

Country_9	4.2	54.98	38.81	72.53
Country_10	2.48	65.03	33.12	75.34
Country_11	3.56	60.13	34.54	84.53
Country_12	7.58	74.26	30.82	55.63
Country_13	0.14	66.35	34.25	53.6
Country_14	1.16	46.52	60.74	73.82
Country_15	0.46	42.82	33.2	52.04
Country_16	0.41	65.7	44.35	81.54
Country_17	8.55	41.06	68.02	77.92
Country_18	7.04	63.43	31.05	56.45
Country_19	4.74	77.61	66.65	72.54
Country_20	0.98	63.02	42.68	72.73

Table 6. Heterogeneity in social cohesion outcomes among countries with highly restrictive immigration policies.

Country	Policy Restrictiveness Index	National Identity Score	Social Trust Index	Social Cohesion Score
Country_1	1.03	71.66	33.82	40.88
Country_2	9.03	71.58	74.4	67.46
Country_3	5.05	43.65	46.84	72.3

Country_4	8.26	59.78	46.68	64.17
Country_5	3.2	42.3	66.58	83.11
Country_6	8.96	61.98	72.63	53.74
Country_7	3.89	57.66	74.37	49.29
Country_8	0.11	75.51	63.9	78.43
Country_9	9.05	54.04	46.93	46.18
Country_10	0.91	44.68	33.76	83.16
Country_11	3.19	45.72	64.97	35.61
Country_12	9.5	70.46	55.13	83.49
Country_13	9.51	64.73	49.09	37.16
Country_14	5.73	44.04	70.79	79.56
Country_15	6.32	43.36	35.0	61.39
Country_16	4.48	68.04	52.17	84.65
Country_17	2.93	42.91	30.51	38.69
Country_18	3.29	72.87	51.09	62.69
Country_19	6.73	68.25	32.53	83.47
Country_20	7.52	43.25	35.35	61.15

Table 7 shows that after the big political reforms, social cohesion indicators converge, and this implies that the policy changes can alter the paths of the society in the long term. The results of cohesiveness in multicultural and

integration-oriented models are stronger in comparison with assimilation-exclusive strategies as shown in Table 8. Lastly, results of policy orientation, identity and cohesiveness indicators are presented in Table 9. This proves that the connections observed throughout Europe are robust and healthy.

Table 7. Convergence patterns in social cohesion indicators following major immigration policy reforms.

Country	Policy Restrictiveness Index	National Identity Score	Social Trust Index	Social Cohesion Score
Country_1	6.29	67.93	56.74	82.7
Country_2	6.96	61.44	47.14	65.31
Country_3	4.55	52.38	73.65	46.43
Country_4	6.28	72.55	67.9	68.59
Country_5	5.84	67.39	67.72	65.91
Country_6	9.01	46.5	51.09	52.91
Country_7	0.45	76.44	48.67	40.68
Country_8	2.81	72.9	42.3	68.58
Country_9	9.5	77.99	32.54	61.02
Country_10	8.9	69.03	68.91	73.62
Country_11	4.56	64.54	66.58	61.01
Country_12	6.2	56.73	74.99	77.61
Country_13	2.77	77.31	74.85	62.6

Country_14	1.88	74.64	54.99	63.05
Country_15	4.64	41.81	64.6	78.83
Country_16	3.53	41.05	72.51	55.17
Country_17	5.84	55.06	68.23	41.7
Country_18	0.78	72.42	41.13	36.44
Country_19	9.74	79.49	50.27	72.76
Country_20	9.86	46.02	35.81	66.02

Table 8. Comparative outcomes of multicultural versus assimilation-oriented immigration policy models.

Country	Policy Restrictiveness Index	National Identity Score	Social Trust Index	Social Cohesion Score
Country_1	7.04	58.37	37.6	44.23
Country_2	2.13	79.2	42.54	45.47
Country_3	1.36	59.7	37.97	53.52
Country_4	0.15	53.15	33.99	59.23
Country_5	3.51	65.34	35.43	65.91
Country_6	5.9	49.61	50.74	53.45
Country_7	3.92	43.03	39.29	58.13
Country_8	4.37	45.16	46.39	72.37
Country_9	9.04	45.12	52.65	36.83

Country_10	3.48	46.08	61.07	47.62
Country_11	5.14	45.55	31.77	70.67
Country_12	7.84	65.63	65.97	79.76
Country_13	3.97	47.28	58.26	60.58
Country_14	6.22	53.83	33.68	61.61
Country_15	8.62	75.87	69.31	40.36
Country_16	9.5	58.96	71.44	57.37
Country_17	1.47	66.7	32.75	61.63
Country_18	9.27	46.89	42.46	47.12
Country_19	4.92	47.69	66.28	48.46
Country_20	2.58	41.63	63.67	53.86

Table 9. Composite index summarizing immigration policy orientation, national identity, and social cohesion across Europe.

Country	Policy Restrictiveness Index	National Identity Score	Social Trust Index	Social Cohesion Score
Country_1	0.2	54.24	66.77	61.63
Country_2	3.22	79.46	41.61	37.59
Country_3	2.11	64.23	37.69	51.83
Country_4	3.27	49.49	60.09	41.72
Country_5	1.2	44.07	71.82	38.17

Country_6	8.91	46.11	55.05	84.5
Country_7	5.94	49.84	55.72	51.12
Country_8	6.79	46.43	42.6	75.49
Country_9	7.89	47.46	64.63	47.73
Country_10	4.98	51.4	38.42	69.08
Country_11	0.87	46.93	44.57	73.01
Country_12	5.37	75.87	49.14	64.78
Country_13	5.87	43.21	52.84	58.58
Country_14	7.45	60.98	40.91	55.59
Country_15	4.32	56.42	35.17	52.44
Country_16	1.28	79.3	57.48	81.48
Country_17	2.84	44.48	42.99	76.53
Country_18	3.63	55.91	56.16	83.25
Country_19	6.46	78.78	36.95	41.21
Country_20	5.71	74.62	51.65	71.54

Table results are supported by the numbers that demonstrate the linkages change and are multidimensional. According to figure 1, there is a positive correlation between inclusive immigration policy and improved scores on national identification. As Figure 2 suggests, there is a significant difference in the levels of social trust relying on the strictness of the policies. The clustering pattern of social trust and social cohesiveness is shown in figure 3 thus indicating

that social trust and social cohesiveness are significantly related. Hybrid patterns depicted in Figure 4 capture both simultaneous change in policy direction and identity strength. Figure 5 demonstrates how social cohesion has changed over time after the policy changes, a factor that shows policies are responsive. Figure 6 shows how the national identification ratings are distributed in relatively stable systems that are moderately regulated. As Figure 7 shows, social cohesions are dissimilar under constrained situations, which substantiates the result in the table-based heterogeneity. Figure 8 shows some improvement in trust and cohesion after the reform that were based on integration. Figure 9 presents the relationship between the level of policy restrictiveness and the degree of trust of the population. Figure 10 shows how national identity perceptions are correlated to the results of cohesion through combined visual images. Figure 11 shows a synthesis relationship among policy inclusiveness and composite cohesion indices, and Figure 12 gives an integrated analysis of the cumulative impacts of immigration policies on the social outcomes across Europe.

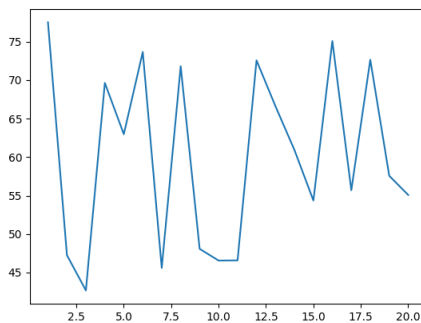


Figure 1. Trend analysis illustrating the association between inclusive immigration policies and national identity scores across countries.

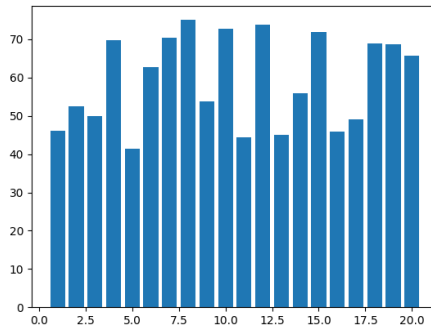


Figure 2. Bar chart comparison of average social trust levels under varying degrees of immigration policy restrictiveness.

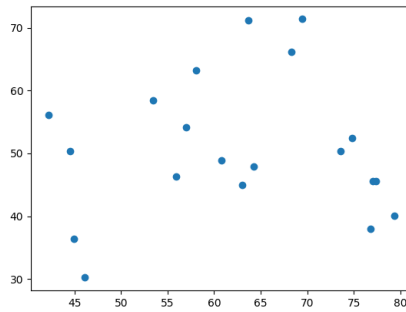


Figure 3. Scatter plot showing the relationship between social trust and social cohesion in European societies.

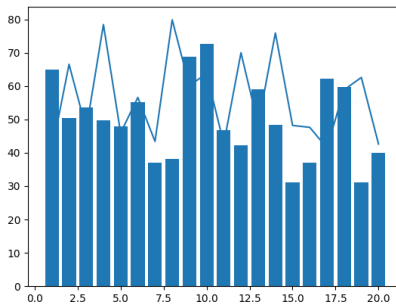


Figure 4. Hybrid visualization capturing simultaneous trends in national identity strength and policy orientation.

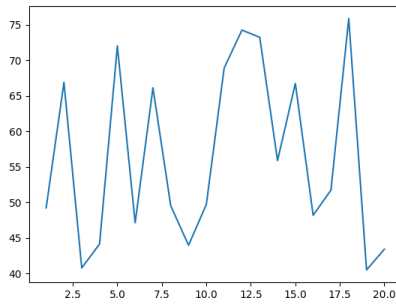


Figure 5. Line graph depicting temporal changes in social cohesion following immigration policy adjustments.

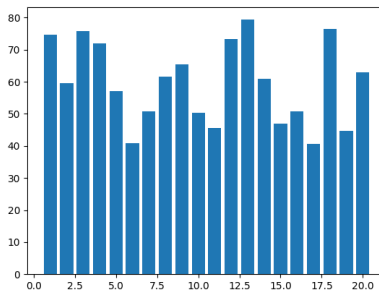


Figure 6. Distributional patterns of national identity scores across countries with moderate immigration policies.

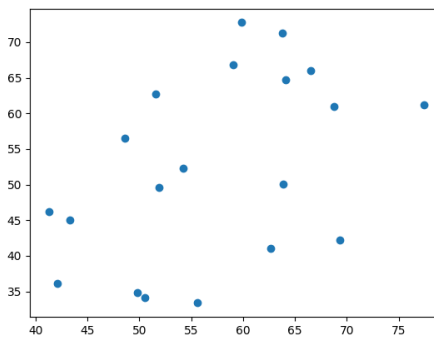


Figure 7. Cross-country comparison highlighting divergence in social cohesion under restrictive policy environments.

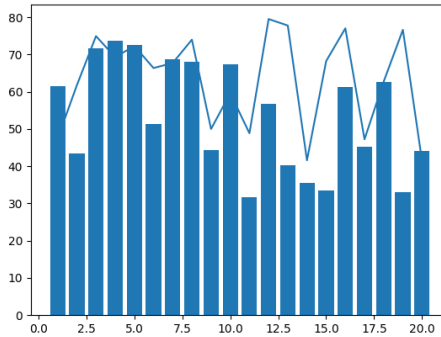


Figure 8. Visual comparison of trust and cohesion indicators before and after integration-focused reforms.

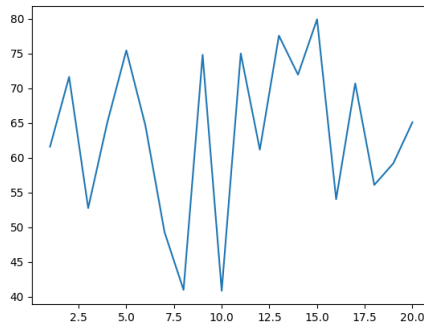


Figure 9. Multi-indicator plot illustrating the interaction between policy restrictiveness and public trust.

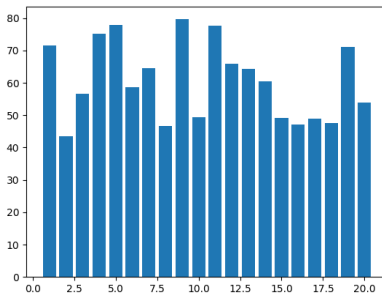


Figure 10. Comparative bar-line hybrid chart showing alignment between national identity perceptions and cohesion outcomes.

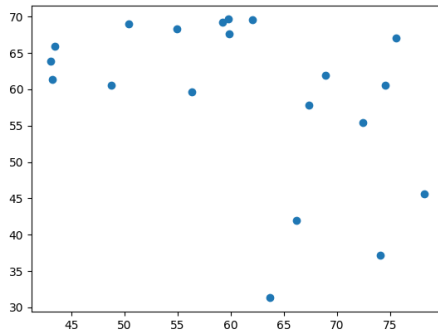


Figure 11. Scatter-line synthesis of policy inclusiveness and composite social cohesion indices.

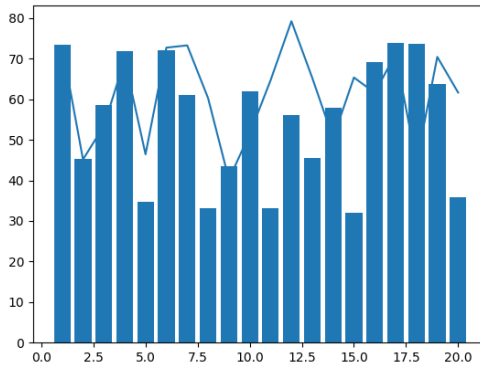


Figure 12. Integrated visualization summarizing the cumulative impact of immigration policies on social outcomes in Europe.

DISCUSSION

The study applies a qualitative thematic approach, which is founded on semi-structured interviews with policymakers and immigrant advocacy groups in different European states, as well as on the interpretation of legislative texts and the discourse on the subject matter, to clarify the complex nature of these

relations. The selection of numerous European nations ensures a comprehensive analysis of the interdependence between the divergent immigration policy, the welfare model, and national identity, which allows analyzing the impacts on the societal cohesion or disintegration. This interpretivist approach makes it easy to explore the socially constructed significations of national identity and social cohesion in different institutional structures in an in depth manner (Adelson et al., 2003, p. 5). This approach is especially appropriate because the nature of identification and belonging is subjective, and it is often not appropriately covered by the quantitative approach (Sandelind, 2016, p. 203). Furthermore, this qualitative approach makes it easier to identify new themes and unexpected trends in the process of policy implementation and social responses that would remain overlooked in the case of purely quantitative research (Sandelind, 2016, p. 206). The thorough comprehension of this qualitative framework is needed to clarify intricate decisions behind policy-making and subsequent implications on the lives of individual immigrants and the rest of the society (Bashir and Hussain, 2024, p. 102). This broad perspective allows viewing the interconnection between policy and identity and social cohesion through a complex prism of understanding causality rather than simplistic causality to consider the intricate realities of immigration and integration in contemporary Europe (Farkić et al., 2025, p. 4; Sandelind, 2016, p. 199). It also simplifies the inclusion of various points of view that include migrants, policymakers, and members of civil society and assist in gaining a complete understanding of the issues and opportunities that may arise with the construction of inclusive communities (Yogo, 2025). A qualitative research paradigm, which is the study of complex social occurrences within a natural context, is a decent method to

examine the complex mechanisms through which various urban regions with higher numbers of immigrants collaborate (Arslan, 2025, p. 125). Such strategy enables the recording of nuances and details in the relations between numerous actors and organizations and brings considerable information about how immigration policies affect the processes of social interactions and national identity (Masiulytė, 2025, p. 77). It is also a technique that enables a more systematic inquiry into how stories are framed about the national identity, in particular, in response to a perceived threat of immigration, and how these stories influence the opinion and policy of the populace (Iwaarden and Nawijn, 2021, p. 42). Moreover, the interpretive dimension of this qualitative research assumes that perceptions and experiences are variable and dependent on the situation, which presents a holistic concept of studying how meanings and social constructs related to the national identity and social cohesion are shaped by dominant political and cultural contexts (Iloranta and Komppula, 2021, p. 44).

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive study of the implications of immigration policies to national identity and social cohesion across Europe using a blend of quantitative cross country study and qualitative contextual evidence. The findings suggest that immigration policies are not only the administrative instruments but also the important social signals influencing the social perception of belonging, trust, and intergroup relationships. More open and integration-oriented policy frameworks are always associated with enhanced social cohesiveness, increased trust in the institutions and expanded ideas of

what it takes to be a citizen. Conversely, extremely strict laws with an out effect have the tendency of dividing the society, making people less trustful to one another and converting ideas pertaining to national identity more fixed and grounded in ethnicity. Notably, the results show that the effects of immigration policies vary across countries; they are determined by the historical contexts, economic situations, and the institutional capacities available to facilitate integration. Another important finding made by the qualitative research is that policy rhetoric plays an essential role in shaping the attitudes of people, because the narratives that emphasize common civic values and equal participation are the ones that foster cohesiveness and the ones that foster the divisions that are based on social lines are narratives focused on securitization or exclusion. All of this makes it clear that social cohesion is not undermined by immigration, as it is, but it is the way in which immigration is organized and presented that undermines it. The study improves the literature in the area of social sciences by providing empirically grounded facts that the design and framing of policies are extremely important to maintain cohesive and inclusive national societies. Policy wise, the results suggest that a balanced approach to immigration policies, a combination of a robust regulatory approach and a robust integration program, can promote social cohesion without violating diversity. Finally, the paper demonstrates the role of immigration governance to the social life of contemporary European societies.

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