

Our last article provided evidence in support of threat theories, which prove emergence of a new political conflict that has to do with the consequences of globalisation and the integration process ([Kriesi et al. 2008](#); [2012](#)). Losers of globalisation – individuals more economically and culturally vulnerable – feel threatened by a globalised economy, an integrated European Union (EU) and a heterogeneous society. Compared to winners, “Italian losers” tend to be more hostile towards the EU and vote for Eurosceptic parties.

However, a recent stream of literature argues that the socio-economic status of individuals, normally measured with occupational class, education and income, doesn't help in understanding their attitudes towards the consequences of the multifaceted crises Europe is experiencing ([Mewes and Mau 2012](#); [Teney et al. 2014](#)). In the wake of incisive social and economic transformations, situations perceived as contingent by individuals and the experiences they live and share with others may help to dilute fears and anxieties linked to phenomena such as increasing migration flows, the economic crisis, and fiscal austerity. According to transnationalist theories, for instance, people with a higher number of direct and indirect interactions with foreigners tend to express a greater support for European integration ([Kuhn 2011](#); [2015](#)). In the same way, the intergroup contact theory suggests that, contrary to common beliefs, the more people have contacts with foreigners living close to them, the higher their positive view of immigration ([Pettigrew 1998](#); [2016](#)).

Survey data suggests that the level of transnationalism has increased in Italy compared to previous analyses. This is mostly associated with a higher transnational human capital of Italian citizens. Moreover, a test of transnationalist theories on the Italian case confirms that a higher level of direct and indirect interactions with other Europeans as well as a greater awareness of the EU play a role in the definition of attitudes towards immigration and the EU

Building on these theories, this article illustrates the concept of “EU-politanism”, which refers not only to direct and indirect interactions with people and cultures

of other EU member states but also to their awareness and familiarity with the EU context. Applying it to the Italian context, we hypothesised that individuals with EU-politan traits and experiences are more prone to support the inclusion of foreigners and to positively evaluate Italy's membership in the EU and the Eurozone. We tested these hypotheses by using data taken from a pre-electoral national survey conducted by the Pastel2018 project of the [University of Milan](#) and [IPSOS](#) in collaboration with [ITANES](#), and [RESceEU](#). The survey was administered on a sample of 1,323 voters categorised by age, gender, and area of residence through the CAWI method between the 24th of January and 13th of February 2018.

Italy represents a particularly interesting case study for two main reasons. First, Eurosceptic arguments took the floor of political debates both before and after the last Italian election. The [first article of this series](#) has shown that immigration was one of the most salient issues during the electoral campaign. Furthermore, the [difficulties that have accompanied the bargaining for the formation of a "Eurosceptic" government](#) between League and Five Star Movement demonstrate how party's stances on the EU and the Euro are polarised. Second, [previous studies](#) have shown that Italians are among the least transnational people in Europe.

EU-politanism: A multidimensional concept

We conceptualise EU-politanism as a multidimensional phenomenon that entails four different components. The first three components pertain to the transnational dimension already identified by previous authors ([Mau et al. 2008](#); [Kuhn 2015](#); [Ciornei and Recchi 2017](#)). *Transnational background* refers to the traits of personal background, such as dual citizenship or family ties outside the country of residence. *Transnational practices* point to the direct contacts individuals have with people living in other EU member states. *Transnational human capital* refers to cognitive skills that should facilitate mobility across Europe, as well as indirect interactions with other European cultures. Besides the transnational dimensions, our concept of EU-politanism encompasses another dimension that refers to an individual's familiarity with the EU political and social context. *EU awareness* includes an individual's feeling towards Europe, the knowledge of their rights as a European citizen and their involvement in political debates on EU-related issues.

Table 1 presents the distribution for all variables measuring the four dimensions of EU-politanism. **As can be seen in all questions asked, less than half of the respondents reported participating in any form of transnational practice or having some indicator of a transnational background, human capital or EU awareness.** Still, these

distributions suggest that transnationalism has increased in Italy compared to previous analyses (Kuhn 2015). In particular, measures of human capital score particularly high (31.1% on average), followed by transnational practices (19.9% on average) and EU awareness (11.7%). Transnational background items (7.8% on average) are instead those more discriminating.

Dimension	Variable	% respondents
Transnational Background	Double citizenship	4.9%
	At least one parent born abroad	3.9%
	A member of the family or a parent lives in another EU MS	14.7%
Transnational Practices	Friends from other EU countries	26.0%
	Communicating frequently with people in other EU countries via the internet or email	15.6%
	Job involves contacts with organizations or people in other EU countries	13.4%
	Job involves regular contacts with people from other EU countries	20.3%
	Lived in another member state to work, study, or for family for 3 months or longer	10.5%
	Visited another EU country in past 12 months	34.0%
	Transnational Human capital	Speak a foreign language
Transnational Human capital	Often watch TV programmes, movies, series in foreign languages (even with subtitles)	26.2%
	Sometimes read websites in foreign languages	37.3%
	Read foreign books in their original language	14.2%
EU awareness	European identity	2.9%
	(Very) Well informed about EU citizens' rights	23%
	Talks about EU with family, friends or at work	9.3%

Number of respondents: 1323

Table 1 Distributions of EU-politanism items

Following previous analyses ([Kuhn 2015](#); [Ciornei and Recchi 2017](#)), we ran a factor analysis based on a matrix of polychoric correlations only on transnational variables. We did not include items capturing EU awareness to better evaluate their impact on attitudes toward immigration and the EU. The factor analysis reveals two underlying factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. A first factor mainly captured transnational human capital variables like speaking a foreign language, reading websites and books in foreign languages and communicating with foreigners via internet or email; and another factor captured transnational practices, meaning communicating and getting in contact with foreign organisations or people.

We computed scores for both indexes for each individual in our sample. The overall means for the two factors are respectively 0.39 for human capital and 0.31 for transnational practices on a scale of 0 to 1. These results express quite a good level of transnationalism, compared to previous analyses of transnationalism in Italy ([Kuhn 2015](#)). While this could be due to sample bias, it seems plausible to find relatively higher levels of transnational values given that in the last decade the human capital might have increased thanks to globalisation and the Internet.

Figure 1 reports the distribution for the two transnational indexes extracted for levels of age, education, and for winners and losers of globalisation ([see our previous focus](#) for more information).

Looking at age, we find that transnational human capital is much higher among younger individuals, who are more at ease with foreign languages. Transnational practices are captured in our sample by variables associated with contacts with foreign organisations and people at work, and thus we find higher levels among the middle-aged population, the bulk of the working force.

What's more, the distribution of education follows a reasonable pattern, with better educated Italians who tend to be more transnational than the lower educated ones. The last boxplots present distributions for the groups of winners and losers of globalisation. While the distribution for the first factor across the two categories is relatively similar, for the second we have evidence of the instrumental nature of transnational practices.

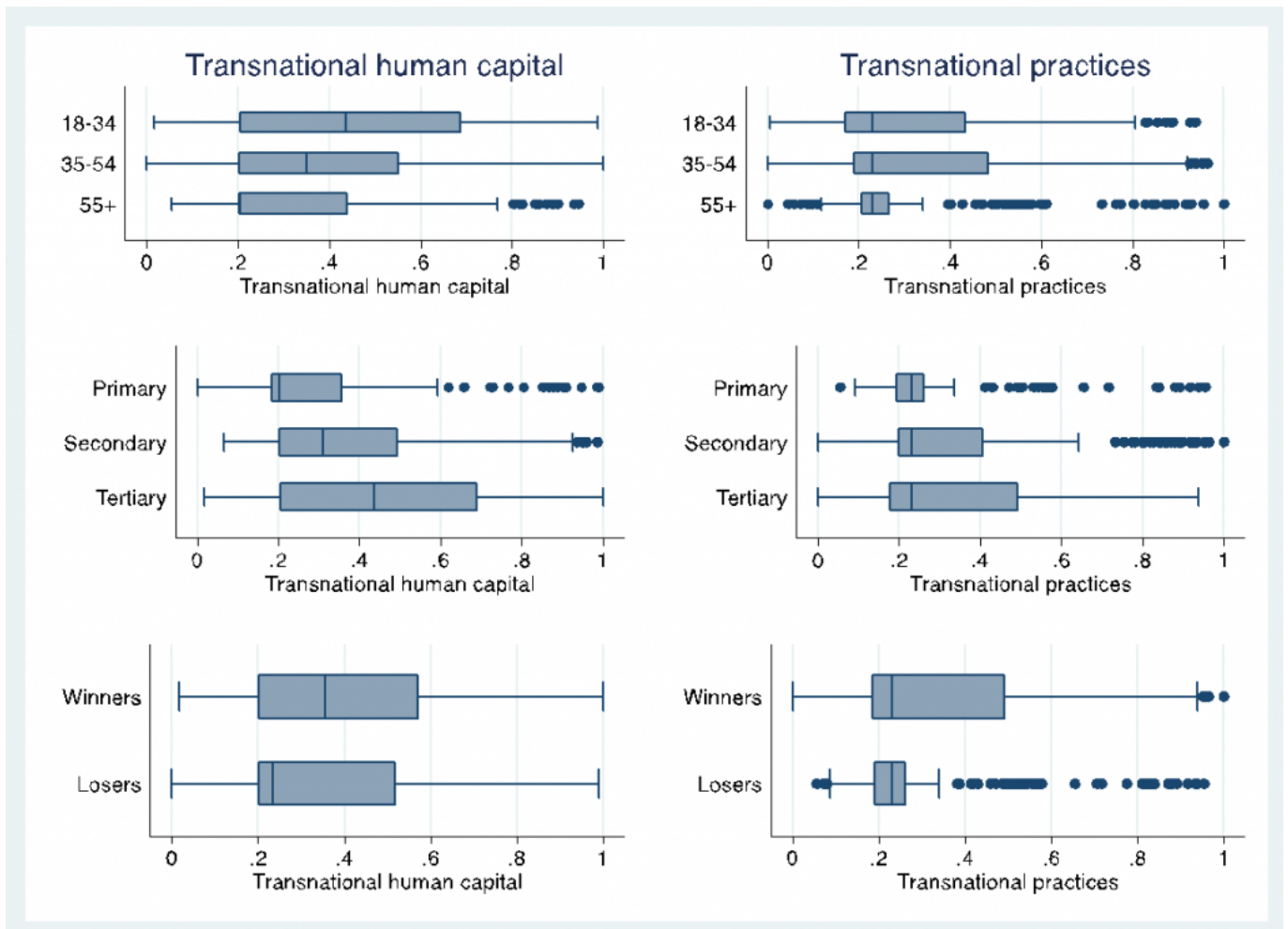


Figure 1 Distribution of two transnational factors by age, education, and losers of globalization

Support for immigration

Figure 2 reports coefficients with 95% confidence intervals from a regression analysis evaluating the association between the dependent variable - openness to immigration measured on a scale ranging from 1 “We receive too many immigrants” to 7 “We could easily receive more immigrants” - and the two transnational factors, the variables measuring EU-awareness, while controlling for socio-demographic variables. **Results suggest that individual preferences towards immigration are positively associated with some of the EU-politan dimensions: transnational practices, having a European identity and knowing EU citizens’ rights.**

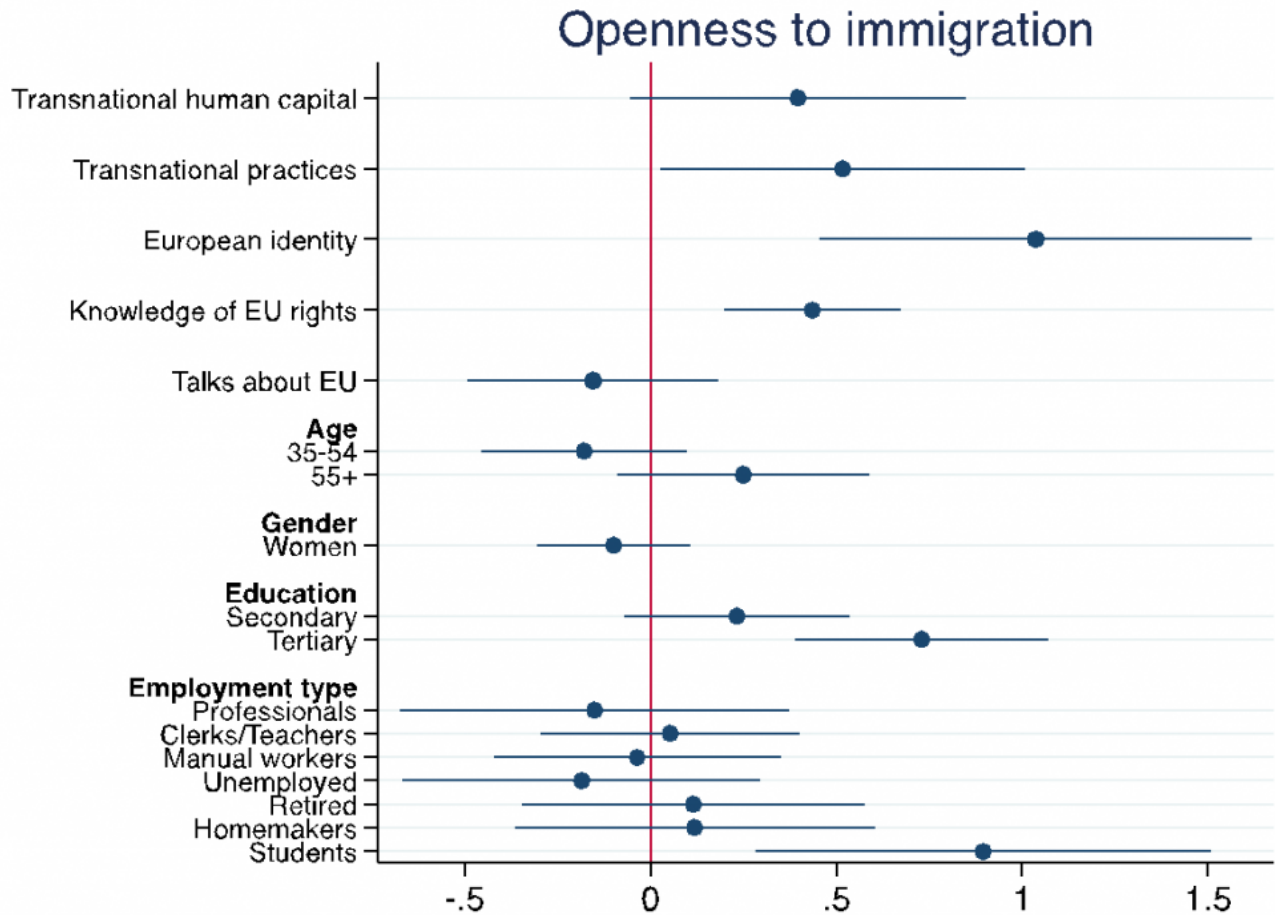


Figure 2 Effects from ordinary least squares regression. DV: openness to immigration

Note: baseline categories are 18-34 for Age, Men for Gender, Primary for Education, and Employers/Managers for Employment type.

Regime and specific support in the EU

Figure 3 reports instead predicted probabilities of positive attitudes towards the EU and the Euro (with 95% confidence intervals) from two ordinal logistic regressions with the same predictors used in the previous model. Results suggest a different impact of EU-politicism dimensions when we look at regime rather than policy specific policies. **Support for the European project as a whole is significantly associated only to the first transnational factor measuring human capital, while having a positive opinion of**

the Euro is also associated with transnational (mainly instrumental) practices. A sort of economic rationale - being pro-euro even if not pro EU - might be at work here. Of the EU-awareness items, only talking frequently with others about EU-related issues is significantly associated with opinions toward EU and Euro membership. Interestingly, the coefficient in both cases is negative, meaning that those who tend to be more vocal about the EU probably do so in order to complain or assign blame to Brussels, rather than praising it.

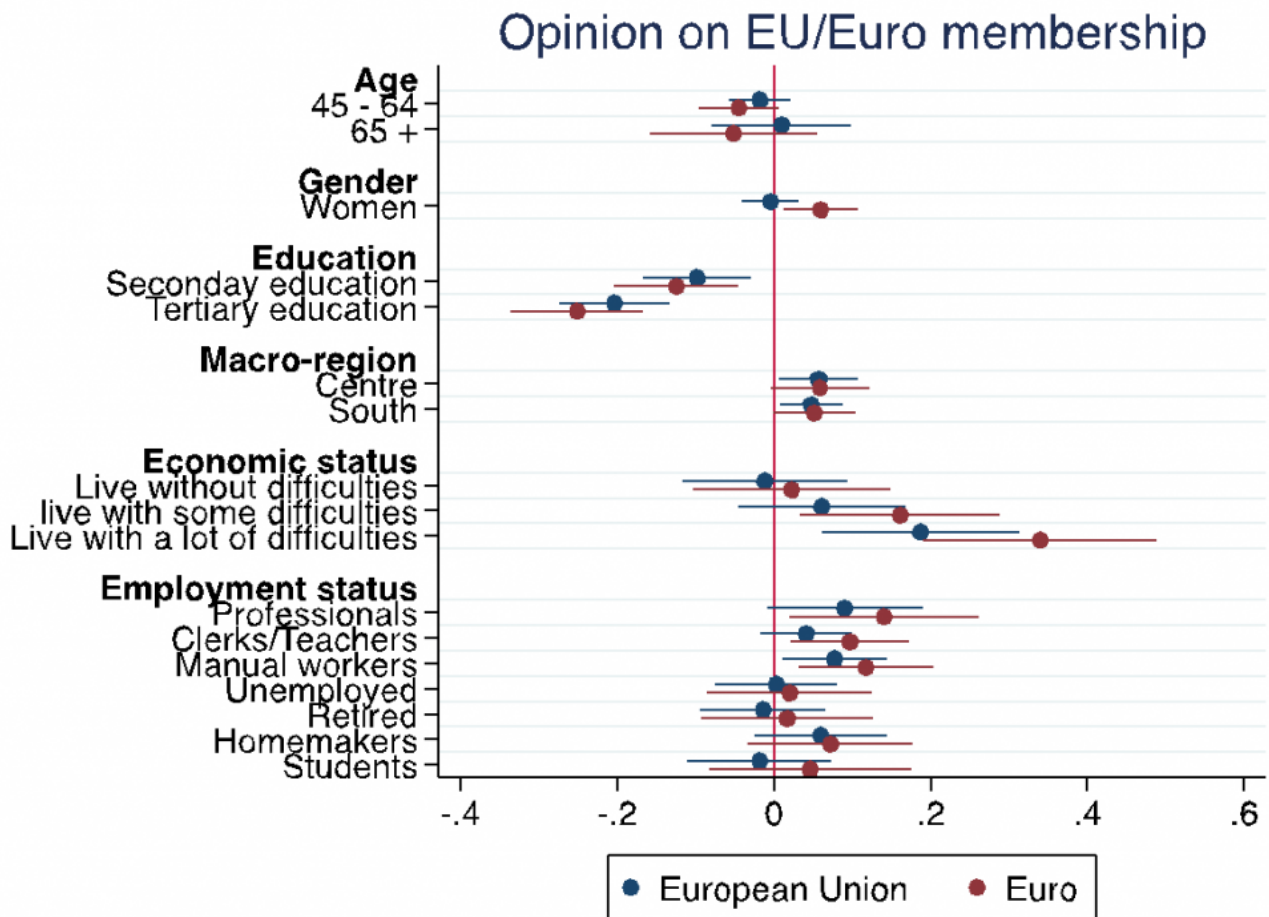


Figure 3 Predicted probabilities from ordinal logistic regression (outcome: "A positive thing")

Note: baseline categories are 18-34 for Age, Men for Gender, Primary for Education, and Employers/Managers for Employment type.

Being EU-politan to support the EU

To sum up, **survey data suggests that the level of transnationalism has increased in Italy compared to previous analyses. This is mostly associated with a higher transnational human capital of Italian citizens.** Moreover, a test of transnationalist theories on the Italian case confirms that a higher level of direct and indirect interactions with other Europeans as well as a greater awareness of the EU play a role in the definition of attitudes towards immigration and the EU.

This article is the part of the [series](#) "Understanding the Italian vote" which investigates the results of the past Italian elections.

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