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CRISIS AND COHESION IN THE EU: A TEN-YEAR REVIEW

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SUMMARY

- The EU Cohesion Monitor evaluates data from all 28 member states to measure levels of cohesion within Europe. Contrary to expectations, it found that the EU's overall cohesion increased between 2007 and 2017.
- The monitor analyses two kinds of cohesion: structural cohesion, which measures ties between member states such as trade flows, participation in common policies, and geographical proximity to other EU states; and individual cohesion, which measures citizens' engagement and experiences with, and views of, the EU.
- The data indicate that there has been substantial growth in structural cohesion in eastern central EU states, while individual cohesion has risen in most northern EU states. However, some countries – including France, Italy, and Spain – have experienced a decline in individual and structural cohesion.
- The financial crisis and the refugee crisis have affected Engagement indicator more than any of the other nine indicators. Along with a decline in the Resilience indicator, this trend reflects the political divide between east and west that continues to shape EU policy.
- Due to diverging trends in cohesion across the EU, cohesion-building strategies should be increasingly tailored to individual countries. Policymakers, institutions, and civil society organisations should make a particular effort to strengthen individual cohesion by encouraging citizens to interact with people from other EU countries.

Cohesion is the glue that holds Europe together. It is the sum of factors that make Europeans more willing to cooperate with one another – including economic and political interdependence, governments' and elites' experience of working together, and citizens' capabilities, experiences, attitudes, and insights. As an organisation that makes decisions through cooperation and consensus, the European Union requires cohesion among its citizens and member states to pursue effective policies. This study measures the strength of the EU's cohesion between 2007 and 2017, identifying areas in which a lack of internal unity has undermined, or risks undermining, its efforts to formulate and implement policy. The task is particularly important at a time when, across Europe, there is growing support for nationalist and populist political parties that reject pan-European cooperation, demanding that the supranational powers of the EU be returned to its member states.

The EU Cohesion Monitor analyses ten broad factors that improve cohesion between individuals and countries – or “indicators” of cohesion – for each of the 28 member states.¹ We classify six of these indicators as “structural” because they concern large-scale relationships between EU states and institutions. They are: Resilience, Economic Ties, Funding, Neighbourhood, Policy Integration, and Security. We classify four of the indicators as “individual” because they concern interpersonal relationships. They are: Experience, Engagement, Attitudes, and Approval.

¹ For a detailed analysis of the difficulties of measuring cohesion, see Josef Janning, “Keeping Europeans together”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 20 September 2016, available at http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/keeping_europeans_together7130.

The score for each indicator derives from a country’s performance in a range of areas. For example, Resilience, Economic Ties, and Funding measure factors including debt-to-GDP ratio, EU-related trade, and financial flows involving the EU budget respectively. Neighbourhood, Policy Integration, and Security measure factors including proximity to non-EU neighbours, opt-outs from EU policy, and military deployments in EU multinational missions respectively. Experience and Engagement measure factors including citizens’ interaction with other EU countries and the vote share of populist parties respectively, while Attitudes and Approval measure those such as citizens’ perceptions of the EU and support for common EU policy respectively. (For a full breakdown of the ten indicators and their component factors, see the table on the right.)

By assessing member states’ performance in these areas, this study analyses how severe crises – such as the financial crisis that began in 2007 and the refugee crisis that started in 2015 – have affected cohesion. The political debate about Europe has changed dramatically in response to these crises: political parties have altered their views on European integration, while new parties have emerged. Pressure from nationalist and populist parties, once on the fringes of European politics, has had an impact on the entire EU – as seen in the massive changes in the study’s Engagement indicator. These parties’ preference for international cooperation à la carte mirrors that of the current governments in Russia, China, and even the United States – but it is incompatible with the kind of structured integration the EU practises.² The United Kingdom’s decision to leave the EU is only the most visible expression of the power of these parties, which threatens the future of the organisation. In our analysis, we explore whether and how the other factors that shape cohesion changed through the crises. By identifying areas in which the 28 member states have lost and gained cohesion, this study aims to assist European policymakers, institutions, and non-governmental organisations working to strengthen the EU’s internal unity and thereby improve the coherence and effectiveness of EU policy.

The nationalist and populist challenge to EU cohesion is difficult to counter because it is not primarily based on the output of EU policymaking or fears of economic marginalisation. Disagreements about the allocation of resources undoubtedly play a role in the populist discourse. But the stronger narrative concerns “us and them”, as well as anxiety that perceived others – be it foreign governments, unelected officials in transnational bureaucracies, or international courts that overrule national institutions – are making important decisions about citizens’ lives. According to this narrative, the principal problem arises from pooling national sovereignty, because this sovereignty prevents “them” from making decisions about “us”. Disputes about the distribution of resources can be resolved with money; those about identity cannot. Identity politics seems largely immune to cost/benefit arguments. Warnings of economic risk cannot deter nationalists and populists from turning their backs on the European project: they believe that

Individual and Structural Cohesion 10 indicators, 32 factors

	<p>Individual Cohesion</p> <p>EXPERIENCE Citizens of other EU countries % of population Visited another EU country Socialised with people from other EU country Foreign language skills</p> <p>ENGAGEMENT Turnout in EP elections Anti-EU/populist share in EP elections Anti-EU/populist share in national elections</p> <p>ATTITUDES Trust in EU Positive image of EU National interest well taken into account Perception as European</p> <p>APPROVAL Support for economic and monetary union Support for common foreign policy Support for common defence and security policy Euro is positive results of EU Free movement is positive results of EU Peace in Europe is positive results of EU</p>
	<p>Structural Cohesion</p> <p>RESILIENCE Disposable income per capita Debt to GDP Social Justice Index</p> <p>ECONOMIC TIES EU trade to total trade EU trade to GDP ratio EU investments to total investments EU investments to GDP ratio</p> <p>FUNDING Inflow of EU funds as % of GDP Balance of payments to EU budget</p> <p>NEIGHBOURHOOD Population (share) living near borders Non-EU neighbours</p> <p>POLICY INTEGRATION Number of opt outs</p> <p>SECURITY Joint commands and cooperation Joint development and procurement Multinational deployments</p>

the advantages of national autonomy over international rules, resource sharing, and trade will eventually make up for any short-term losses their country incurs.

Will the integration process hold up against these growing nationalist and populist forces? Do Europeans still value the EU’s achievements enough to maintain their countries’ interdependence? Are there indications of a rebalancing between divisive and cohesive forces in the EU? The new edition of the EU Cohesion Monitor seeks to answer these questions using the latest available data as of autumn 2017. It complements the first edition, which covers the seven years following the onset of the financial crisis.³ The monitor’s matrix combines the six indicators of structural cohesion and the four indicators of individual cohesion into two scores, for ease of comparison between member states – and within member states over time (see table above).

² For more on nationalist and populist parties, see Susi Dennison and Dina Pardijs, “The world according to Europe’s insurgent parties: Putin, migration and people power”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 27 June 2016, available at http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_world_according_to_europes_insurgent_parties7055.

³ “EU Cohesion Monitor”, European Council on Foreign Relations and Stiftung Mercator, May 2016, available at http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR175_EU_COHESION_MONITOR_2016.pdf.

Methodology

The EU Cohesion Monitor is an index.¹ It aggregates the same data for all EU member states; converts these data into numbers on a scale of one to ten, for ease of comparison between countries; and displays the findings in a matrix, ranked tables, and country profiles. All of its data sources, rules, and results are published online alongside the interactive EU Cohesion Monitor tool.

We use the term “cohesion” in the sociological sense of the word, meaning individuals’ and social groups’ willingness to cooperate. Thus, the EU Cohesion Monitor focuses on European cohesion, defined as European countries’ and societies’ willingness to cooperate with one another. The EU is at the centre of the analysis because it is the primary system through which cooperation is organised in Europe.

The selection of data proceeds from the assumption that interdependence, close interaction, and mutual positive experiences will foster cohesion between Europeans. The stronger these cohesion-building factors, the higher the level of cohesion. We identify factors at the macro level of the state or the economy (such as trade and security cooperation) and at the micro level of citizens (such as closeness of contact with other Europeans and approval of EU integration). These 32 factors are structured into ten indicators: six on the macro level, reflecting structural cohesion; four on the micro level, reflecting individual cohesion. All data used in the index are publicly available and cover all EU member states. The sources of this data are official statistics, opinion research, and other indices.

We convert raw data into numbers on a scale of one to ten, for ease of comparison. We have defined scaling rules for each factor, setting the margins for their maximum and minimum levels. Because a multi-factor index needs rules for weighing factors against one another, the EU Cohesion Monitor treats all factors as equal. As a result, an indicator defined by three factors will give each factor a weight of one-third. Likewise, the cohesion index treats all indicators as being of equal weight. Thus, each structural indicator accounts for one-sixth of the total value of structural cohesion, while each individual indicator accounts for a quarter of the total value of individual cohesion. We have made all scaling and weighing rules publicly available.

The monitor’s visualisation tool – a publicly available interactive PDF file – helps users compare countries with one another and observe changes within countries over time. The tool does so using several types of graphic:

- a matrix that displays individual and structural cohesion along its vertical and horizontal axes respectively, using values of between one and ten to illustrate the absolute and relative positions of each country, as well as the broader picture across the EU;
- country radars, which provide a snapshot of all ten indicators that can be used to track changes within a state, and its position relative to other states, over time; and
- ranking tables and trend maps, which provide deeper insight into the relative positions of countries and the dynamics of change.

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Download the EU Cohesion Monitor at www.ecfr.eu/eucohesionmonitor.

Most EU citizens perceive, for example, trade and financial flows through their local effects, such as their impact on the jobs market or EU-funded construction projects. Yet most citizens likely have a weaker understanding of a cohesion indicator of this kind than EU elites, who regularly work on such issues. To avoid overemphasising the perceptions of elites, we measure how individuals’ experiences, actions, and beliefs contribute to EU cohesion. In this way, the monitor is designed to identify both the overarching and more granular trends in cohesion in the EU and its member states.

Drifting apart: a decade of change in EU cohesion

There has been a profound change in the landscape of cohesion in European societies in the past decade. Structural factors essential to any willingness to cooperate have pushed countries in different directions, while crises have affected citizens’ feelings about the EU and cooperation within its framework in varying ways. In some ways and for some countries, cohesion has grown; elsewhere and for others, it has declined. The

most obvious insight from the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix of individual and structural cohesion relates to the differences between member states. In 2007, many countries were placed around the halfway mark (5.5) on both axes. By 2017, they had drifted off in all directions. Despite this divergence, the overall level of cohesion has slightly increased. The median values for both forms of cohesion (dividing the EU’s 28 member states into two equally large groups) increased slightly – by 0.15 points for individual cohesion, and by 0.22 points for structural cohesion.

The lower left quadrant of the matrix, indicating weak structural and individual cohesion, included eight countries in 2007, compared with four a decade later. In 2007, the countries in this quadrant were the UK and the EU’s new eastern members; in 2017, they were the UK, Italy, France, and Greece. Over the same period, the number of countries in the lower right quadrant, indicating strong structural cohesion and weak individual cohesion, rose from one – Latvia – to five: the Visegrád group minus Slovakia (the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland), along with Romania and Bulgaria. In

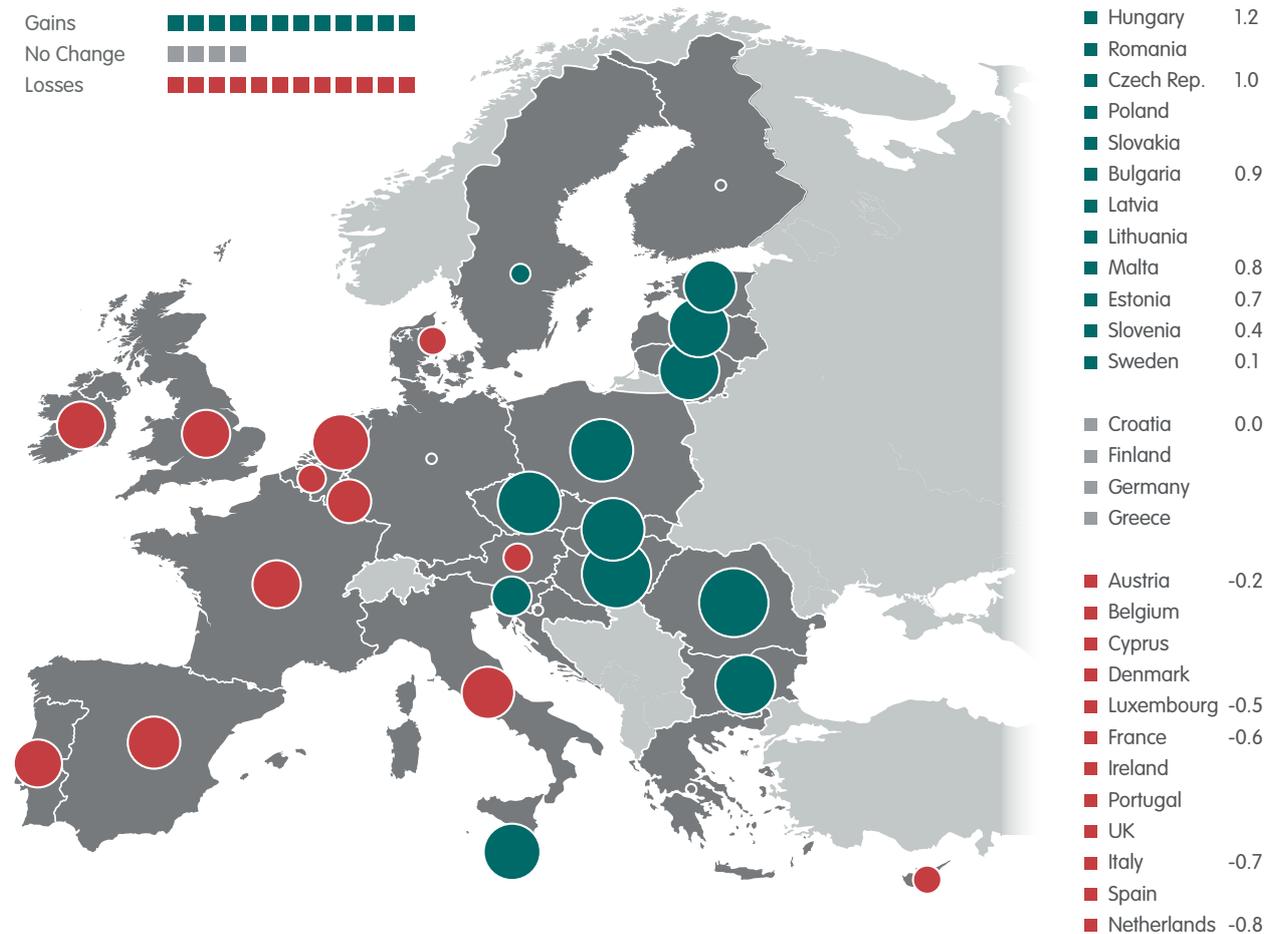
this quadrant, structural cohesion levels were well above the EU average, but individual cohesion was lower – far lower in the case of the three Visegrád members there. The number of countries in the two upper quadrants has remained fairly stable, but the composition of these quadrants has changed. The upper right quadrant, indicating strong structural and individual cohesion, was populated by the Benelux countries and Austria in 2007, along with Slovakia and Lithuania. Ten years later, Luxembourg and Belgium were the only remaining western European countries in the upper right quadrant, which also included all three Baltic states, along with Slovenia and Slovakia.

More broadly, there have emerged two divides that reflect broad political debates about the future of Europe. In structural cohesion, there is an east-west split in the EU. With the exception of Austria and Cyprus, every EU state east of Germany has gained in structural cohesion in the last decade (Germany’s level of structural cohesion has remained the same). Meanwhile, the structural cohesion of every EU state west of Germany – including Denmark and Italy – has declined.

Between 2007 and 2017, the largest increases in structural cohesion occurred in – in descending order – Hungary; Romania; Poland; Slovakia; Latvia; Lithuania and Bulgaria (by the same amount); Malta; and Estonia. In effect, these countries have closed the gap between east and west that was apparent in 2007, when many eastern and central European countries were in or near the left quadrants, indicating relatively weak structural cohesion. A decade later, they have moved into the right quadrants, albeit while maintaining relatively low levels of individual cohesion.

One important change is western EU states’ substantial loss of structural cohesion. Factors that drove cohesion in the east – such as large inflows of EU funding, progressive integration into the single market, and membership of mechanisms of deep integration such as Schengen area and the eurozone – underwent little change in the west. The potential for them to strengthen cohesion in the west had been realised in earlier periods. The financial crisis damaged the integration process by lowering European countries’ resilience and hampering economic activity – which, in turn, reduced the number of

Structural Cohesion Trend 2007 // 2017



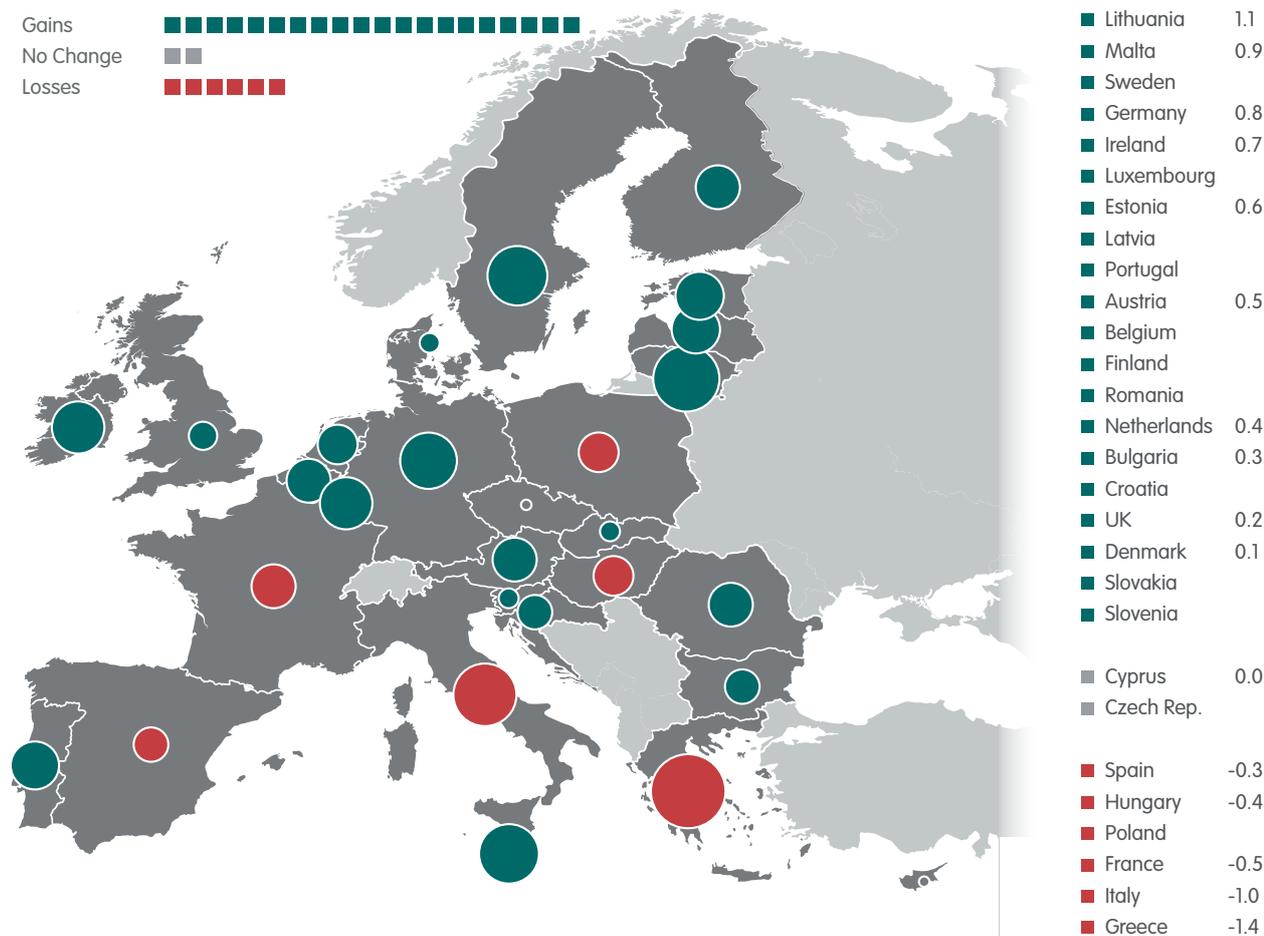
investments that the EU could co-fund in these countries. The largest declines in structural cohesion between 2007 and 2017 occurred in – in descending order – the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, the UK, Ireland, and Portugal. As there was also a decline in structural cohesion in France during the period, this means that four of the six largest EU member states experienced a trend directly opposed to that in eastern EU states. For example, Poland’s structural cohesion increased substantially during the period.

The other large-scale trend is a north-south divide in individual cohesion. This form of cohesion declined substantially in Europe’s south during the decade – most strongly in Greece and Italy, but also in France and Spain. The divide is particularly significant due to the fact that France, Italy, and Spain also experienced a decline in structural cohesion. Italy’s combined loss of structural and individual cohesion (-1.7 points) is the largest of any EU state. This is remarkable given that the country has traditionally been one of the most committed pro-integration actors in European policymaking.

However, the north-south divide is imperfect. The trend does not apply everywhere in the south, where the financial crisis arguably hit the hardest in heavily indebted countries that suffered from weak governance. Like Ireland, Portugal incurred serious economic damage during the crisis but its level of individual cohesion has risen in the past decade. For both countries, this rise related to successful management of the crisis. Individual cohesion rose by 0.1 point for both countries between 2007 and 2014, before increasing by 0.6 point for Ireland and 0.5 point for Portugal in the following three years.

Poland and Hungary also defied the broader trend. Both experienced a 0.4 point decline in individual cohesion during the decade – almost as much as France’s 0.5 point decline. This is in sharp contrast to the significant increase in Poland’s and Hungary’s levels of structural cohesion. In Hungary, the decline in individual cohesion came to a stop after 2014; in Poland, the decline has only been apparent since 2014.

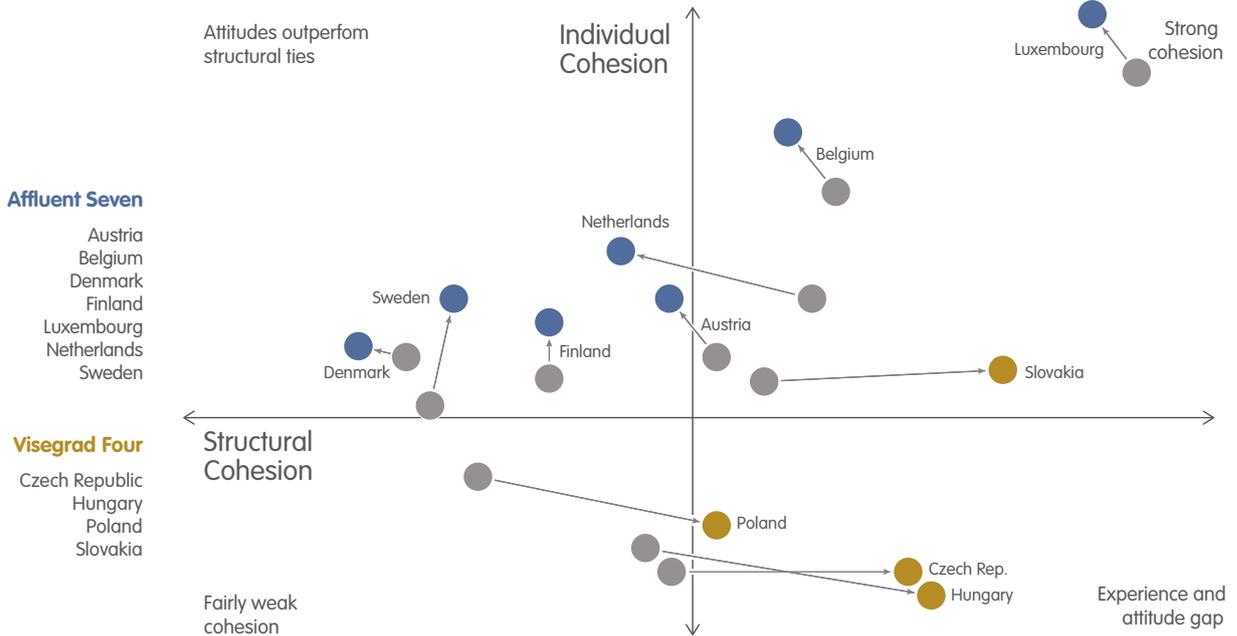
Individual Cohesion Trend 2007 // 2017



Cohesion trajectories 2007 // 2017

Affluent Seven // Visegrad Four

2017



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Events of the past decade have broken the cluster the founding six EU member states formed in the cohesion matrix in 2007. At the time, only Luxembourg had far higher levels of structural and individual cohesion than the other founding members. Since then, Italy and France have drifted close to the lower left quadrant of the matrix, while Belgium and Luxembourg have experienced a less dramatic decline in both types of cohesion. The Netherlands experienced a substantial loss of structural cohesion but, like Germany, an increase in individual cohesion. As a result, Italy's position on the matrix is now much closer to that of the UK, while Belgium's and the Netherlands' positions have moved closer to that of Germany.

All of the seven affluent small member states – highly developed and prosperous countries – have experienced a rise in individual cohesion, with the largest change among them occurring in Sweden (+0.9 point) and the smallest in Denmark (+0.1 point).⁴ Among the members of this group, only Sweden has seen an increase in structural cohesion, but all of them have moved up and away from the halfway mark for individual cohesion in the matrix.

In 2007-2017, the Visegrád countries – which in recent years have formed a coalition to veto some EU measures – largely experienced a significant rise in structural cohesion while their levels of individual cohesion stagnated. However, Slovakia's level of individual cohesion stagnated at a much higher level than those of the other three members of the group. Hungary, the political spearhead of the veto coalition, registered a larger increase in funding – as measured by the monitor's indicators – than any other EU country since 2007 (+7.3

points). Financial incentives appear to have had little effect on Budapest's willingness to cooperate with the wider EU.

The impact of the refugee crisis

The arrival of large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the EU since summer 2015 has created significant political tension among and within member states. The crisis has affected EU countries to widely varying degrees, as the majority of refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Greece and Italy, before continuing north – mostly through the Balkans and Hungary – into Austria, Germany, and (via Denmark) Sweden. A smaller number of these people journeyed to Belgium and the Netherlands. As a consequence, the crisis has affected these member states most. Other members of the Schengen area have also been affected, as the crisis led to the temporary reintroduction of border controls, the failure of the Dublin Regulation for asylum applications, and massive political conflict over the relocation of refugees and asylum seekers.

The crisis pushed migration to the top of the political agenda in EU institutions and many member states. It mobilised and divided electorates while boosting support for populist eurosceptic and anti-EU parties. The response to the proposed common EU policy on migration has shown a large gap in attitudes between eastern and western member states. According to Eurobarometer data for 2014 and 2017, the most significant changes in public opinion on this question occurred in the eight eastern central European countries shown in the chart on the page 7.

⁴ The affluent small member states are the Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, and Sweden; the Benelux countries Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg; and Austria.

Change in public approval of EU migration policy 2007-2017



in percentage points, source: Eurobarometer

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It follows that a crisis of such proportions, and with such an impact on the political debate, would affect levels of cohesion across the EU. Yet judging by data available as of autumn 2017, the migration crisis should have a relatively small impact on structural indicators of cohesion. Unlike the financial crisis, the migration crisis is unlikely to have a strong influence on trade and financial flows, security cooperation, or Resilience. There was little change in three out of six indicators of structural cohesion between 2014 and 2017. The largest change in Resilience, a rise of 1.3 points during the period, occurred in Ireland. This was probably an effect of attempts to overcome the financial crisis.

Across the EU, indicators of Economic Ties and Neighbourhood remained largely unchanged during 2014-2017. Several member states opted out of deeper integration, but for reasons unrelated to the refugee crisis. However, the crisis may affect integration if the Dublin Regulation system breaks down further or the Schengen acquis is called into question. Within the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework, which will apply from 2020 onwards, the migration crisis could have a stronger effect if the EU links member states' compliance with EU decisions to their eligibility for structural funds. Between 2014 and 2017, there was a greater change in Funding than in most other structural indicators. The Funding indicator rose by an average of 0.4 point across the EU, an average of 1.4 points in the Visegrád countries, 3.4 points in Romania, 2.9 points in Bulgaria, and 2.4 points in Croatia. Evidently, these countries' positions on the refugee crisis had no impact on the inflow of financial support from Brussels. By the same

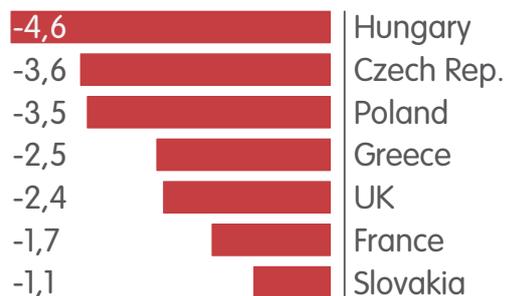
token, the cohesive effect of financial transfers did not appear to shift politics in these countries towards the majority position in the EU. The same can be said of countries that experienced a decline in financial support between 2014 and 2017 – most notably, Estonia (-2.4 points), Lithuania (-1.9 points), and Portugal (-1.4 points). Finally, between 2014 and 2017, there was an overall decline in security cooperation across the EU. The largest changes occurred in France (-1.9 points), Luxembourg (-1.1 points), and Italy (-1.0 points), followed by Belgium, Estonia, Portugal, and the UK. Again, there was no indication that the refugee crisis affected this shift.

Among the four indicators of individual cohesion, we expected the political disruption of the refugee crisis to affect Engagement, Attitudes, and Approval relatively quickly. Migration from outside the EU seemed unlikely to affect the Experience indicator, because this indicator measures factors that are specifically European (such as encounters with citizens from other EU countries). The crisis affected Approval less than Engagement and Attitudes. Across the EU, the Approval indicator rose by just 0.1 point between 2014 and 2017, compared to an increase of 1 point between 2007 and 2014. Interestingly, in the former period, Approval rates rose in Germany (+0.3 point) and Sweden (+0.4 point) despite the strain caused by the refugee crisis there, whereas they decreased by 0.4 point in Austria, Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania, and by 0.2 point in Italy, Denmark, and Hungary.

Across the EU, the Attitudes indicator increased by 0.3 point between 2014 and 2017, following a decline of 0.3 point between 2007 and 2014. The development of more positive attitudes

Brussels bashing at the ballot box?

Negative EU engagement in voting behaviour in European and national parliamentary elections 2014-2017



Deviations from 2017 EU28 average of 6.3 points

Bars show the six countries with the highest negative deviation from the EU28 average score of 6.3 / 10 points in the 2017 ENGAGEMENT indicator. In the EU Cohesion Monitor, ENGAGEMENT measures national turnout in elections to the European Parliament and performance of anti-EU parties in national as well as European Parliament elections.

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RETHINK: EUROPE

towards European integration was particularly apparent among large member states and affluent small countries. The Visegrád group, however, went against the trend, experiencing a decline of 0.5 point between 2014 and 2017 (Hungary saw a modest decline of 0.1 point), following an increase of 0.1 point between 2007 and 2014. Between 2014 and 2017, the steepest declines in attitudes towards integration were found in the Czech Republic (-0.9 point), Romania (-0.7 point), and Slovakia and Poland (both -0.6 point). During 2007-2014, there were more profound changes in attitudes towards integration in countries that the financial crisis affected deeply. Greece, Cyprus, and Spain experienced declines of 3.2 points, 2.4 points, and 2.0 points respectively.

Analysis in the previous edition of the EU Cohesion Monitor suggested that a crisis will have a stronger impact on Engagement than any other indicator, because Engagement primarily reflects the performance of eurosceptic and anti-EU parties in national and European elections. (Some caution is appropriate when looking at the 2014-2017 data, as not all countries held elections during this period following the onset of the refugee crisis.) Measured against the EU average for 2017, the largest negative deviations in the Engagement indicator were found in the Visegrád countries, along with Greece and the UK. For example, Engagement in Hungary was 4.6 points below the EU average, while Engagement in the UK was 2.4 points below the average. On a country-by-country basis, the UK experienced the largest decline in Engagement over time (-3.4 points during 2007-2017, including -2.6 points during 2014-2017). The EU Cohesion Monitor will require two or three more years of data to thoroughly judge the impact of the refugee crisis on the Engagement indicator. By 2020, all member states will have held elections since the refugee crisis began, and important new trends may have become apparent in the data as a result of policy changes or deepened divisions between countries.

Conclusion

The EU Cohesion Monitor focuses particularly on EU member states in which low or eroding levels of cohesion cause tears in the fabric of European integration. This dynamic is most obvious in individual cohesion. Countries that are marked in red in the graphic below because of their low levels of individual cohesion also happen to be Europe's problem zones in terms of EU policy: Britain as it leaves the EU, three Visegrád countries that deviate sharply from the EU consensus, and Greece and Italy, states that have not yet overcome their structural crises in the economy and the public sector. Individual cohesion is lower in these countries than elsewhere in the EU; accordingly, EU policy made both by and for these countries could meet with relatively intense difficulties or resentment among citizens. The map of structural cohesion carries a different message. The structural indicators of cohesion have risen most in eastern central Europe, where their effect is overwhelming. Yet this will change once there is a fall in the EU funding countries there receive – as they catch up economically with the rest of the EU and/or the EU budget shifts in priority – and east-west

economic integration peaks. Outside eastern central Europe – with the exception of Germany and the Benelux countries – indicators of structural cohesion suggest that major incentives such as EU funding do not increase citizens' willingness to cooperate with other Europeans. It seems that indicators of individual cohesion became more relevant to overall levels of cohesion outside eastern central Europe between 2014 and 2017. In 2017, 12 member states were found in the right quadrants of the monitor's matrix (indicating strong structural cohesion), while 20 member states were found in the upper quadrants of the matrix (indicating strong individual cohesion). Moreover, these relatively high levels of individual cohesion occurred in very different contexts across countries. If these indicators reflect reality, cohesion-building efforts will have to shift their emphasis away from financial transfers and other economic benefits towards incentives that citizens can relate to more directly. After all, one of the indicators of individual cohesion – Engagement – correlates closely with crises and other major political events.

We have drawn several lessons for cohesion-building in the EU from these observations. The findings of this study indicate that policymakers, institutions, and civil society organisations should:

- Tailor cohesion-building strategies to individual member states. Given the increasing differences between EU countries' cohesion-building factors during 2007-2017, these strategies will need to become more diverse. A "one size fits all" approach developed in Brussels cannot adequately address the challenge.
- Pay special attention to countries experiencing problematic trends, such as Hungary and the Czech Republic – which both have huge asymmetry between high structural cohesion and low individual cohesion. Although Ireland's significant imbalance between low structural cohesion and high individual cohesion seems of less concern, the country's lack of structural cohesion could become a burden if it is forced to choose between pursuing deeper EU integration and maintaining its traditional relationship with the UK. Italy should also receive special attention, because it experienced a significant loss of both kinds of cohesion between 2007 and 2017. With its ties to the rest of the EU weakening, the country could abandon its commitment to European integration, potentially causing enormous disruption.
- Prepare for potentially declining levels of structural cohesion in eastern central member states. In these countries, EU funding could play a smaller role in the next decade than it did in 2007-2017, due their increasing prosperity, changes to EU policy that reduce spending, or a shift in citizens' attitudes towards taking this funding for granted.
- Focus on individual cohesion, as it has greater potential for short-term growth than structural cohesion. Despite the diverging trends in cohesion across the EU between

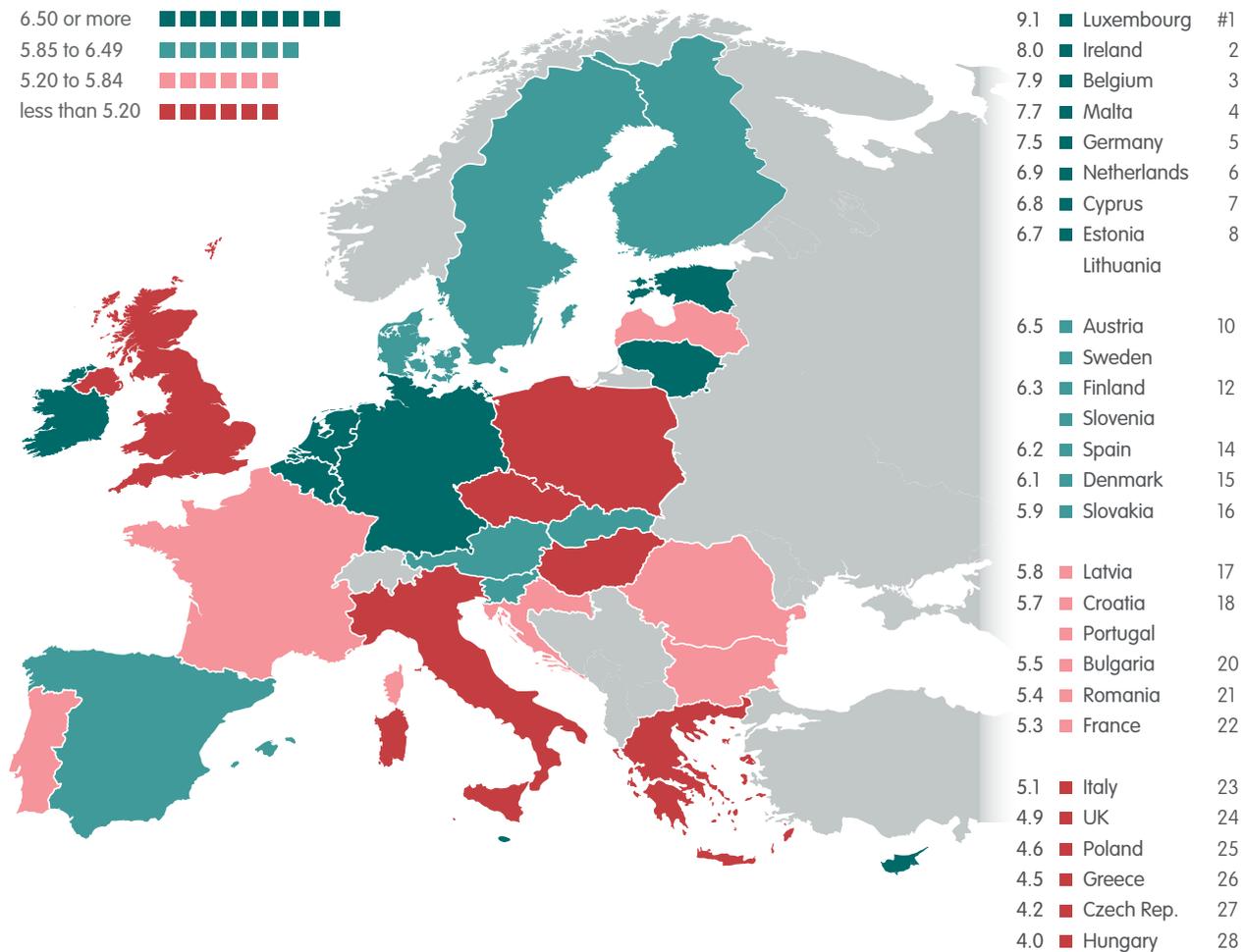
2007 and 2017, there was an overall rise in individual cohesion during this period – against a background of economic and political crises, as well as divisive public debates about the future of Europe. Although some indicators of individual cohesion (especially Engagement) seem to be highly volatile, others appear to be relatively stable. Citizens’ experiences and interactions with the rest of the EU, along with their improved understanding of the long-term effects of European integration, have offset much of the loss in individual cohesion reflected in growing support for populist and nationalist parties, as well as increasingly negative views of the EU generally. Member states can strengthen individual cohesion through initiatives, communication, and education that address these factors.

- The long-term effects of the refugee crisis – including its impact on EU policy and attempts to resolve related disputes within Europe – will test the wisdom of the recommendations listed above, particularly those designed to improve individual cohesion.

By 2017, the refugee crisis did not appear to have had the grave effects on EU cohesion that, at its peak, we anticipated. But the crisis did seem to have some effect – particularly, as discussed above, on Engagement. With the caveats noted above, there appears to be a clear relationship between the crisis and the surge in support for populist parties across Europe, which have all picked up the issue of immigration and its impact on linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity.

Although public attitudes towards the EU generally have become more negative, in many member states public approval of the EU’s achievements has remained stable or increased. This seeming contradiction likely stems from widespread public recognition that, if member states are to maintain an open market and freedom of movement, only a European approach can resolve the migration crisis. Here, the east-west divide on migration is especially clear. Countries in eastern central Europe lack western EU states’ positive experiences with migration and multiculturalism, and have not received large influxes of people from outside Europe. For most countries in eastern central Europe, experiences with migration for many years involved emigration and exile, forced migration,

Individual Cohesion 2017



and/or Soviet settlement policy. They emerged from the cold war with more ethnically and culturally homogeneous societies than those in the west. The influxes of people they received originated in eastern Europe rather than the Middle East, Asia, the Caribbean, or Africa.

The European Commission and Council of Ministers will hardly be able to overcome the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic perceptions of eastern central Europe with directives and qualified majority voting. Reducing the debate to this approach would risk damaging the entire EU if doing so undermined the integrity of organisation as a legal community. Therefore, the solution may be to accept the gap in attitudes and move ahead on a common policy on migration, asylum, border security, and fiscal solidarity within a smaller group of member states.

The significance of the divide on migration policy extends far beyond the issue itself – and even beyond EU policy. In a deeper sense, it is about building a conceptual barrier to “more Europe”. Across the EU, nationalists of various stripes claim national sovereignty as a public good that cannot be shared while maintaining the identity and integrity of the nation-state. In Poland, Hungary, and elsewhere, historical experiences with domination and expropriation by outside actors (including countries in the region) create fertile ground for this argument. As a consequence, some leaders in eastern central Europe refer to Brussels as the “new Moscow”.⁵ They are open to cooperation but oppose integration as a concept. For them, joining the EU was meant to consolidate and, in a way, ratify the transition to democracy and a market economy they had gone through. They saw acceptance of the EU’s regulatory framework as the price they had to pay. But now these leaders want their sovereignty back – just as Margaret Thatcher wanted Britain’s money back in 1984, 11 years after the country had joined the EU.

This attitude appears to be increasingly prevalent in the world outside the EU. Self-styled strong leaders – who favour sovereignty over the rules and regimes of global interdependence, pursuing economic nationalism and policies designed to enhance their countries’ status – are in the ascendant in Beijing, Ankara, Moscow, and Washington. The world is likely to see the emergence of more Trumps, Putins, and Erdogans in the coming years. Nationalists in Europe, particularly eastern central Europe, appreciate the fact that the US president’s foreign policy speeches engage with arguments about competition and cooperation among sovereign nations. This is the new narrative of global politics against which European integration must be defended. The ideological power of this narrative has the potential to negate the effects of cohesion-building factors we measure in this study. As practical concerns will often lose the argument against ideology, the EU’s next debate needs to focus on understanding what sovereignty really means for European nations in the contemporary world.

⁵ “Warum in Osteuropa Brüssel das neue Moskau ist”, *reformiert*, 11 February 2016, <http://reformiert.info/artikel/hintergrund/warum-osteuropa-br%C3%BCssel-das-neue-moskau-ist>.

EU COUNTRY PROFILES

AUSTRIA

In the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix, Austria fell from 5th place to 13th place in structural cohesion and rose from 12th place to 10th place in individual cohesion between 2007 and 2017. Austrians' approval of the European Union grew during this period, as did their experience with the rest of Europe and their support for eurosceptic parties. The largest changes in Austria's indicators of structural cohesion occurred in Resilience and Economic Ties.

BELGIUM

Between 2007 and 2017, Belgium fell from 2nd place to 3rd place in individual cohesion and from 2nd place to 7th place in structural cohesion in the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix. It seems that neither the financial crisis nor the refugee crisis had a strong effect on the country's cohesion. In indicators of structural cohesion, however, the country experienced a decline in Resilience, Security, and Economic Ties. In indicators of individual cohesion, the change was even more profound: Belgium's Engagement, Experience, and Approval indicators increased, while its citizens' attitudes towards European integration became more negative.

BULGARIA

Displaying weak structural and individual cohesion in 2007, Bulgaria had by 2017 experienced a major increase in its indicators of structural cohesion (rising from 16th place to 8th place in the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix), mostly because of a massive inflow of funding from EU sources. Yet, at the same time, the country's economic ties with the rest of the European Union decreased significantly. Bulgaria retained a relatively low level of individual cohesion, moving from 21st place to 20th place in the matrix. Bulgarians' experience with the rest of Europe remained among the lowest in the EU (comparable to that of Romanians and Hungarians). Bulgaria appears to have the greatest potential to improve its structural cohesion in Security, Economic Ties, and Policy Integration.

CROATIA

There was little evident increase in Croatia's structural cohesion between 2007 (six years before it joined the European Union) and 2017. Experiencing significant growth in the Funding and Security indicators, but declines in the Resilience and Economic Ties indicators, Croatia stands out from other relatively new member states by remaining well below the EU average in structural cohesion. Croatia moved from 22nd place to 23rd place in structural cohesion between 2007 and 2017; in comparison, Romania, jumped from 21st place to 11th place during this period. However, Croatia moved from 20th place to 18th place in individual cohesion between 2007 and 2017, while Romania moved from 25th place to 21st place during this period. The change in Croatia's individual cohesion indicators mostly stems from more positive public views of both the EU in general and the organisation's achievements.

CYPRUS

Cyprus, the Greek part of which is a member of the European Union, occupies a unique place in the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix. The country has the lowest level of structural cohesion of any member of the EU, but had the 4th and 7th highest levels of individual cohesion in 2007 and 2017 respectively. Cyprus's structural cohesion suffers from its geographical separation from mainland Europe and fairly small inflow of EU funds, along with its low levels of Resilience and Security. In individual cohesion, Cypriots have substantial experience with the rest of Europe and show high levels of Experience and Engagement. In contrast, they have relatively negative attitudes towards European integration in general.

CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic has the largest split between high levels of structural cohesion and low levels of individual cohesion of any EU state aside from Hungary. The Czech Republic experienced a significant increase in structural cohesion in both absolute and relative terms, moving from 8th place in 2007 (around the same level as France and Germany) to 5th place in 2017 (by which time Germany and France had dropped to 13th place and 18th place respectively). With the exception of Security and Policy Integration, all of the Czech Republic's indicators of structural cohesion were by 2017 higher than the EU average. Between 2007 and 2017, the largest change in these indicators occurred in the level of financial flows from the EU to Prague. However, all the Czech Republic's indicators of individual cohesion are below the EU average, with the Czech public becoming more critical of the European Union generally yet reducing their support for eurosceptic parties between 2007 and 2017.



DENMARK

While the other two Scandinavian members of the EU experienced little change in structural cohesion but a significant increase in individual cohesion between 2007 and 2017, Denmark's structural cohesion declined and its individual cohesion increased only marginally during this period. The decline in structural cohesion mostly stemmed from Denmark's weakening economic ties with the EU and its tendency to opt out from deeper EU integration. The rise in the country's individual cohesion primarily came from the Experience and Attitudes indicators, while the Engagement indicator (which measures voter behaviour) reflected rising scepticism about the European Union. In the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix, the country remained in 24th place in structural cohesion between 2007 and 2017, dropping from 12th place to 15th place in individual cohesion during this period.



ESTONIA

In 2017, Estonia matched or exceeded the EU average in every indicator of cohesion except for Security and Experience. During the preceding decade, the country moved from the upper left quadrant to the upper right quadrant in the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix, with its individual cohesion remaining stronger than its structural cohesion. Estonia's structural cohesion and individual cohesion have grown at roughly the same rate – a phenomenon common to all three Baltic states, and in marked contrast to members of the Visegrád group (whose structural cohesion grew much faster than their individual cohesion). With regards to changes in cohesion compared to other member states, Estonia rose from 14th place to 8th place in structural cohesion between 2007 and 2017, and from 10th place to 8th place in individual cohesion during this period. The country has the potential to increase its levels of cohesion in its areas of relatively low cohesion: Security and citizens' Experience with the rest of the EU.



FINLAND

At first sight, Finland appears to have a fairly stable cohesion profile: in 2017, its individual cohesion was higher, and its structural cohesion lower, than the EU average. In the preceding decade, the country's individual cohesion increased while its structural cohesion did not change. There has been little change in Finland's relative position in the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix: it has remained in 16th place in structural cohesion, and has risen from 15th place to 12th place in individual cohesion. Below the surface, the

changes are more profound. Between 2007 and 2017, Finns began to vote for eurosceptic parties more often but their positive attitudes towards the European Union generally and approval of the EU's achievements also grew strongly. Although Finland experienced a sharp decrease in the Resilience indicator, increases in the Funding and Security indicators offset the effect of this on overall structural cohesion.



FRANCE

Although it is key to the European integration process, France is below the EU average in most indicators of cohesion, with the noteworthy exceptions of Policy Integration, Security, and Resilience. Over the past decade, France's level of cohesion has declined as quickly as Italy's, albeit from a higher starting point. Funding was France's only structural indicator to increase between 2007 and 2017, with its Experience and Approval indicators of individual cohesion also rising during this period. France moved from the upper left quadrant to the lower left quadrant (reflecting weak structural and individual cohesion) in the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix. Between 2007 and 2017, France dropped from 8th place to 18th place in structural cohesion, and from 15th place to 22nd place in individual cohesion.



GERMANY

Displayed as radar charts, Germany's and France's cohesion profiles form similar shapes – although most of Germany's indicators are higher. With the exception of Funding, Economic Ties, and Neighbourhood, Germany's indicators are significantly higher than the EU average. Among these indicators, only Economic Ties and Engagement fell between 2007 and 2017 – the former due to the growing economic importance of non-EU countries and the latter due to the rise of explicitly anti-EU party Alternative für Deutschland. Overall, Germany's level of individual cohesion has grown while its level of structural cohesion has remained roughly the same (making it comparable to Finland, albeit with higher indicators of cohesion). In the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix, Germany was in the 5th place for individual cohesion in 2017, up from 6th place in 2007, in 13th place for structural cohesion in 2017, down from 8th place in 2007.



GREECE

Greece's cohesion profile is full of seeming contradictions: the country's Funding indicator is high but its Resilience indicator is very low. Greeks have negative attitudes towards the European Union generally, but they appreciate the EU's achievements in integration. Since 2007, there has been a sharp drop in Greece's Resilience, Engagement, and Attitudes indicators. While the country's structural cohesion remained stable mostly due to rising financial flows from the EU, its level of individual cohesion declined significantly. A substantial increase in interaction between Greeks and other Europeans, along with a rise in Greece's Approval indicator, failed to compensate for a fall in other indicators. In the EU Cohesion Monitor ranking, Greece remained in 16th place in structural cohesion between 2007 and 2017, and it dropped from 14th place to 26th place in individual cohesion in this period. During the financial crisis and the subsequent migration crisis, Greece's individual cohesion underwent a severe decline.



IRELAND

Ireland has the largest gap between high individual cohesion and low structural cohesion of any EU state. All of the country's indicators of individual cohesion are higher than the EU average, while all of its indicators of structural cohesion are lower than average. Ireland's structural cohesion declined between 2007 and 2017, despite experiencing increases in the Economic Ties and Security indicators. While Ireland's Resilience indicator fell by 2.1 points between the onset of the financial crisis and 2017, Irish citizens' attitudes towards the European Union generally and approval of EU's achievements increased in this period. Only the Benelux countries have followed a similar trajectory (although these states have much higher levels of structural cohesion). It seems that strong individual cohesion helped Ireland adjust to the burden of its sovereign debt crisis. In the EU Cohesion Monitor ranking, Ireland moved from 3rd place to 2nd place in individual cohesion between 2007 and 2017, and from 24th place to 26th place in structural cohesion in the period.



HUNGARY

Hungary has the largest split between high structural cohesion and low individual cohesion of any EU state – including the Czech Republic, which has a similar divide. While the country's Funding indicator increased by 7.3 points – on the EU Cohesion Monitor's scale of one to ten – between 2007 and 2017, its Engagement indicator (reflecting voter behaviour) began at a low level and fell by 1.2 points during the period. Thus, a massive increase in EU funding combined with Hungarians' limited interaction with other Europeans and preference for anti-EU parties to produce a significant gap between structural cohesion and individual cohesion. The trends in Hungary's indicators of cohesion are similar to those of the other three Visegrád countries, although Hungary's individual cohesion has generally been the lowest in the group (Poland's individual cohesion has also been low since its 2015 elections). In the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix, Hungary jumped from 13th place to 3rd place in structural cohesion between 2007 and 2017, and fell from 27th place to 28th place in individual cohesion during this period. In 2017, Hungary had a score of 4 points for individual cohesion (in comparison, Slovakia, with greater individual cohesion than any other Visegrád country, had a score of 5.9 points).



ITALY

Among the large and traditionally integrationist EU member states, Italy stands out even more than France for its declining levels of cohesion. In 2017, Italy's cohesion indicators were lower than the EU average in all but two areas: Policy Integration and Security. In indicators of structural cohesion, the country's Resilience declined by 1.6 points, and its Economic Ties by 2.4 points, between 2007 and 2017. In indicators of individual cohesion, Italy's Engagement (which reflects anti-EU parties' performance in elections) fell by 3.7 points during this period. In the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix, the country's position shifted from one similar to those of France and Germany in 2007 (albeit with lower structural cohesion than these states) to one similar to that of the United Kingdom. Italy fell from 19th place to 25th place in structural cohesion between 2007 and 2017. The change in individual cohesion was even more profound: the country dropped from 10th place to 23rd place during this period, widening its gap with Germany in individual cohesion from four places to 18 places.


LATVIA

In 2017, most of Latvia's indicators of cohesion were of similar strength. The country had higher structural cohesion than individual cohesion, but the latter was still near the EU average. Like most eastern EU countries, Latvia experienced a rise in structural cohesion between 2007 and 2017, with its largest increases occurring in the Funding indicator (+3.9 points) and the Policy Integration indicator (+2.0 points). During this period, Latvians' Experiences with the EU rose by 1 point and their Approval of the EU's achievements increased by 1.9 points. In the EU Cohesion Monitor ranking, Latvia moved from 5th place to 3rd place in structural cohesion, and from 21st place to 17th place in individual cohesion.


LITHUANIA

Aside from Security and Experience, Lithuania's indicators of cohesion all have a score of between 6 points and 8 points on the EU Cohesion Monitor's scale of one to ten. The country exceeds the EU average in every indicator except for these two. As with most other new members of the EU, Lithuania's structural cohesion has grown mostly due to increased EU funding. Deeper policy integration with the EU – through steps such as its decision to join the eurozone – and the rise in Lithuanians' approval of the EU's achievements have also had a significant impact on the country's cohesion. Lithuania's structural cohesion and individual cohesion were both higher in 2017 than in 2007. Structural cohesion declined slightly between 2014 and 2017, but individual cohesion continued to grow during this period. In the EU Cohesion Monitor ranking, Lithuania rose from 7th place to 5th place in structural cohesion, and from 18th place to 8th place in individual cohesion, between 2007 and 2017.


LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg is a thoroughly Europeanised country. It has the highest levels of structural cohesion and individual cohesion in the EU, placing it on the opposite side of the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix from the United Kingdom. However, Luxembourg still has some potential to increase its levels of cohesion, if only in security cooperation with, and economic ties to, other EU states. The country's Security indicator decreased by 1.6 points, and its Economic Ties indicator fell by 1.5 points, between 2007 and 2017. In contrast, Luxembourg's individual cohesion rose during this period.


MALTA

Malta's structural cohesion and individual cohesion both increased between 2007 and 2017. One of the two countries with the lowest structural cohesion in the EU in 2007, Malta climbed to 20th place in structural cohesion during this period (while Cyprus, the other one of these countries, remained in 28th place). Although Malta retained the 4th highest level of individual cohesion in the EU between 2007 and 2017, its individual cohesion score rose from 6.8 points to 7.7 points on the EU Cohesion Monitor's scale of one to ten during this period. Increased EU economic ties and funding have the potential to increase Malta's cohesion by fostering security cooperation, contact between the country's citizens and the rest of the Europe, and Resilience.


NETHERLANDS

Among the highly Europeanised Benelux countries, the Netherlands was the only state to move from the top right quadrant of the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix (indicating high individual and structural cohesion) to its top left quadrant (indicating high individual cohesion and low structural cohesion) between 2007 and 2017. The structural connections between the Netherlands and the rest of the European Union weakened considerably during this period – as reflected most in the country's Economic Ties indicator, which declined by 2.4 points. Despite the negative impact of growing support for anti-EU political parties on the Engagement indicator, rises in all other relevant indicators caused a net 0.4 point rise in individual cohesion. In contrast, structural cohesion decreased by 0.8 points. The change in the Netherlands' relative position occurred partly because many other EU countries' overall levels of cohesion increased. The Netherlands dropped from 3rd place to 15th place in structural cohesion, and rose from 7th place to 6th place in individual cohesion, between 2007 and 2017.



POLAND

In 2014, Poland was typical of a country that had benefited from European integration, having experienced a significant increase in structural cohesion and stable individual cohesion since 2007. Following the subsequent refugee crisis and the 2015 Polish general election, Poland's trajectory in the EU Cohesion Monitor resembled Hungary's. Until 2017, Poland's structural cohesion was still increasing but its individual cohesion was in decline. In the preceding decade, Poland's Engagement indicator decreased by 1.8 points (in comparison, those of Greece and Hungary declined by 4.2 points and 1.2 points respectively) and Poles' attitudes towards the European Union generally became slightly more negative. Meanwhile, all of Poland's other indicators of individual and structural cohesion increased during the period. As in many other countries in eastern central Europe, EU funding drove the increase in Poland's structural cohesion; the country's Funding indicator rose by 4.4 points between 2007 and 2017. Poland slipped from 24th place to 25th place in individual cohesion while rising from 20th place to 12th place in structural cohesion during this period. Despite this rise, Poland had the lowest level of structural cohesion among EU states in eastern central Europe in 2017, because the others' levels of structural cohesion increased even more.



PORTUGAL

Since 2007, Portugal's sovereign debt crisis and the resulting measures it introduced to qualify for EU financial assistance have reduced the country's cohesion with the rest of the European Union. However, Portugal's indicators of individual cohesion rose between 2014 and 2017, offsetting the decline in structural cohesion in the preceding decade. As a result, the country moved from the bottom left quadrant to the top left quadrant in the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix. By 2017, Portugal's levels of structural and individual cohesion were both weaker than the EU average. The country could improve its individual cohesion by addressing its citizens' relative lack of experience with the rest of Europe. Portugal could improve its structural cohesion by attracting increased EU funding, which would require further fiscal consolidation, or increasing its Resilience, which declined by 2.5 points during 2007-2017 and will take longer to rebuild. In the ranking, Portugal fell from 14th place to 21st place in structural cohesion, but rose from 23rd place to 18th place in individual cohesion during this period. Like Malta, Portugal stands out for going against the wider trend of declining individual cohesion among southern EU states.



ROMANIA

Although Romania's overall levels of cohesion have increased in the past decade, the majority of its indicators remain below the EU average. This is despite the massive inflow of EU funding – a rise of 6.4 points between 2007 and 2017 – that accounts for much of the increase measured by the EU Cohesion Monitor. Romania experienced only modest growth in its indicators of individual cohesion, the largest of which was a 1.3 point rise in Engagement. In the monitor's matrix, Romania moved from the lower left quadrant (indicating low individual and structural cohesion) to the lower right quadrant (indicating low individual cohesion and high structural cohesion) – although it came close to entering the upper right quadrant. Beginning from a much lower position than Bulgaria in 2007, Romania was by 2017 just one place beneath the country in both structural and individual cohesion.



SLOVAKIA

In 2017, Slovakia occupied a unique place in the upper right quadrant of the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix (indicating strong structural and individual cohesion). No other country gained so much in structural cohesion while performing moderately well in individual cohesion. Aside from Security, all of Slovakia's indicators of structural cohesion were higher than the EU average. But only one of its indicators of individual cohesion, Approval, was higher than average. Between 2007 and 2017, there was a significant increase in Slovakia's structural cohesion, due to financial support from Brussels and membership of deep integration mechanisms such as the euro. In structural cohesion, the country rose from 4th place in the 2007 ranking to 2nd place in 2017. In individual cohesion, the country fell from 15th place to 16th place during the period. Slovaks' behaviour in elections and broader attitudes indicated that their views of the European Union were becoming more negative, with the Engagement and Attitudes indicators declining by 1.3 points and 0.6 points respectively during the decade.



SLOVENIA

Like Slovakia, Slovenia has strong economic links with the rest of the Europe and a large proportion of its population living near another EU state. In the EU Cohesion Monitor, Slovenia exceeds the EU average in the Neighbourhood and Economic Ties indicators, while remaining near the EU average in most other indicators. Between 2007 and 2017, Slovenia moved into the upper right quadrant of the monitor's matrix, due to a significant increase in the Funding and Policy Integration indicators of structural cohesion, and a rise in the Approval indicator of individual cohesion. Meanwhile, the country's Resilience indicator fell by 1.9 points, while its Attitudes indicator declined by 1.8 points. Despite experiencing increased support for eurosceptic parties and the challenges created by the refugee crisis, Slovenia's position in the matrix did not change at all between 2014 and 2017; the growth in its level of cohesion occurred in 2007-2014. During the entire 2007-2017 period, the country remained in 8th place in structural cohesion, and moved from 9th place to 12th place in individual cohesion.



SPAIN

By 2017, Spain's indicators of individual cohesion were close to the EU average in all but Experience, which was low due to the Spanish public's relative lack of interaction with the rest of Europe. However, other than in Policy Integration and Security, Spain's indicators of structural cohesion were significantly below the EU average. Due to the effects of the financial crisis, Spain's Resilience, Funding, and Economic Ties indicators declined by 2.9 points, 1.2 points, and 0.4 points respectively between 2007 and 2017. In individual cohesion, Spanish support for eurosceptic parties increased considerably, even though the country had no openly anti-EU party. Spain's Attitudes indicator decreased by 1.0 points, but its Approval indicator – which reflects the public's views of EU integration – rose by 1.5 points in the period. In the EU Cohesion Monitor ranking, Spain fell from 8th place in structural cohesion in 2007 (the same level as Germany and France) to 19th place in 2017 (one place below France). In individual cohesion, Spain did not experience as steep a decline as Greece, Italy, or France, but nonetheless dropped from 7th place to 14th place during the decade.



SWEDEN

Sweden maintained remarkably stable levels of cohesion between 2007 and 2017, despite the effects of the financial crisis and its deep involvement in the refugee crisis (the country was one of the top three destinations for refugees). Its swift recovery from the financial crisis may have stemmed from its experience with a separate financial crisis in the 1990s. All of its indicators of individual cohesion increased between 2007 and 2017, although this trend lost some of its momentum following the onset of the refugee crisis. Sweden's rise in individual cohesion against a background of low structural cohesion was even more marked than that of Finland, but Sweden was the only affluent small EU member state in which structural cohesion increased, albeit marginally. In the EU Cohesion Monitor ranking, Sweden rose from 22nd place in 2007 to 21st place in 2017 in structural cohesion, and from 18th place to 10th place in individual cohesion.



UNITED KINGDOM

In 2007, the United Kingdom had the lowest levels of individual and structural cohesion of any large EU member state. Only Romania and Poland occupied a similar position in the EU Cohesion Monitor matrix. Between 2007 and 2017, the UK moved from 26th place to 24th place in individual cohesion, and from 24th place to 26th place in structural cohesion. (Meanwhile, Italy took up the place near the UK in the matrix that Romania and Poland occupied in 2007.) Much changed in the UK's indicators of cohesion during the decade: its Resilience, Economic Ties, and Policy Integration declined significantly. Although the country's Engagement indicator, reflecting voter behaviour, decreased by 3.4 points, all its other indicators of individual cohesion increased. Attitudes rose by 1.8 points, while Approval and Experience increased by 1.1 points each. Much of the change occurred between 2015 and 2017, a period in which Engagement fell by 2.6 points due to the Brexit referendum result of 2016 and the snap elections in 2017. In the same period, however, the Attitudes indicator increased by 1 point.

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