

**Assessing the Impact of Intra-EU Mobility on National Welfare States:  
Who Receives Which Benefits? A Cross-Country Comparison**

**Abstract**

The scope of this paper is to explore the profiles of European citizens who access social benefits in host Member States, and try to highlight the patterns of their welfare use. Even though the accessibility of host welfare states by EU citizens have been in the public eye since the EU Eastern Enlargements and the 2008 economic crisis, still little is known about who exactly receives which benefits. This research aims to answer the subsequent questions: 1. Do the populations of European citizens vary across countries according to their demographic and socio-economic characteristics? 2. Are the EU citizens enjoying benefits in the same way of natives in the country of destination or different patterns can be identified? Firstly, a descriptive analysis is run to compare the population of EU citizens across five Member States of destination. Subsequently, their probability to access unemployment and family benefits on EU-LFS and EU-SILC databases, respectively. Finally, the share of benefits receipt is explored along years since arrival and across different EU origins (EU15, EU10 and EU3).

The first hypothesis tested is 'The populations of EU citizens present substantially different characteristics across host Member States'. Thus, the different composition of the European populations is described in each country according to the EU group of origin origin, years of residence, age, sex, education level, occupational skill level and the probability to be unemployed. Subsequently, whether 'The use of welfare by EU citizens is similar or different compared to natives' is tested by comparing the gaps between the share of benefit receipt among European citizens and the one among natives in each country. Therefore, different populations of natives represent the reference category time by time. For both unemployment and family benefits, two probit models are launched. The first one 'raw', with the dependent variable (dummy for receipt of the benefit) and the independent variable (dummy for EU citizens versus natives) only. The second one 'explained', with the introduction of several control variables related to the socio-economic characteristics of individuals. In the last step of the analysis, the rough probability to get benefits along years since arrival and across different EU origins is assessed. While the former model is run for both unemployment and family benefits, the latter one can be run on EU-LFS data only, since in EU-SILC the distinction between EU15, EU10 and EU3 is lacking. For both databases, the wave 2015 is been used, having 2014 as the income period of reference.

Differently from the previous contributions on the use of welfare by European citizens (Medgyesi and Poloskei, 2013; Zimmerman et al., 2012), this paper focusees on a restricted selection of both benefits and countries of destination, in order to allow a more in depth analysis, middle way through between broad cross-country comparisons and case studies. Five Member States are chosen (Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, and the UK), according to both the availability of data and the need to represent the whole variety of European welfare regimes. Similarly, the choice to focus on unemployment and family benefits is led by the findings emerged in the literature (Afonso and Devitt, 2016; Reyneri 2016; Rhus, 2015), and takes into account the comparability issues.

The findings confirm that the populations of European citizens present substantially different characteristics across host Member States, both in respect to the native populations and among themselves. On the one hand, they are more likely to be women, tertiary educated and at risk of unemployment compared to natives. Instead, the common expectations according to which they are generally younger are not meet here. On the other hand, EU citizens present important variations according to the group of origin: the share of high professionals among EU15 is significantly higher compared to natives, while among EU10 and EU3 it is considerably lower. Notwithstanding these premises, the use of welfare by mobile European does not seem to differ substantially from the one of natives across countries. Only in Austria they have been found to be statistically less likely to receive family benefits. Therefore, a broad narrative connecting European citizens' profiles with their welfare use cannot be built yet. However, if further research will follow, the approach suggested here might offer additional insights in respect to the theoretical framework built by Ruhs and Palme (2018), who adopted a political economy approach to assess the Member States attitudes' towards Free Movement.