

# Do Immigrants Trust Trade Unions? A Study of 18 European Countries

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## Abstract

*Migrants form growing proportions of national workforces in advanced capitalist societies. Yet little is known about their attitudes towards the principal agents of worker representation in their host countries, the trade unions, much less via cross-national research. Using European Values Survey data, we redress this imbalance by examining migrants' levels of trust in unions, compared to native-born. We find higher levels of trust in unions by migrants (compared to native-born) in general and especially by migrants during their first decades after arrival and whose countries of origin are characterized by poor quality institutions. These findings have significant implications for unionization strategies towards migrants, especially given received wisdom portraying migrants as indifferent or distrustful towards unions.*

## 1. Introduction

Migrants now form a growing proportion of national workforces of contemporary advanced capitalist societies, yet relatively little is known about their attitudes towards the principal agents of worker representation in their host countries, the trade unions, much less by way of large-scale cross-national comparative research. In fact, the phenomenon of major waves of immigration into Europe and North America and the future fate of trade unionism are strongly intertwined. Union movements have, over the last four decades, lost considerable power. In general, levels of union membership and rates of unionization have declined everywhere (albeit at varying speeds and to different degrees) at the same time as migrants form an ever-increasing component of national workforces. As such, migrants represent — at least potentially — a powerful new constituency with which unions might be able to arrest and reverse their own decline. Yet the relationship, historically, between unions and migrant workers has been complicated and difficult — unions have

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often either been unable or unwilling to organize migrant workers or defend their interests.

Nonetheless, it is also true that unions since the late twentieth century have been *attempting* (with varying results, for sure) to do more to address the concerns of migrant workers (Tapia and Holgate 2018: 189–204). One key issue that has arisen is whether unions have been able to gain the trust of migrants, given that such trust is a necessary condition for joining the trade unions' ranks. In this article, we examine this issue via a systematic analysis of migrants' attitudes towards — or more specifically, expressed levels of trust in — trade unions in 18 European countries.

## 2. Unions and migrants

Nothing reflects the problematic nature of the relationship between unions and migrants more than the simple, and highly significant, fact that unionization rates for the latter consistently lag behind those of native-born (Gorodzeisky and Richards 2013). At the same time, many recent empirical studies support the argument that unions are increasingly attempting to close this representation gap, albeit with varying degrees of success. For example, Greer *et al.* (2013) present the case of the European Migrant Workers Union (EMWU), created by the German union IG BAU, as an important shift away from traditional national protectionism towards genuinely transnational organizing as a means of incorporating migrants into the ranks of organized labour. For sure, the EMWU was directing its strategy towards the specific constituency of highly mobile posted workers (rather than migrants in general), thereby explaining its emphasis on transnational organizing. Nevertheless, the initiative largely failed as a result of other unions' opposition to such an approach and their defence of existing institutional arrangements. Tapia *et al.* (2014) reached somewhat more positive conclusions in their analysis of union strategies towards immigrant workers in Germany, France, Britain and the USA. Via case studies including a carwash organizing campaign in the USA, a *sans papier* movement in France, 'Justice for Cleaners' in Britain, and integration approaches by IG Metall in Germany, these authors emphasize the promise inherent in the adoption of more dynamic strategies towards the recruitment of migrant workers. Likewise, in their comparison of multinational factories in Belgium and Germany, Pulignano *et al.* (2015) conclude that unions in Europe are increasingly trying to defend the interests of temporary agency workers — among whom migrants are over-represented. In addition, several case studies also support the thesis of increasing attempts by unions to organize migrant workers. For example, Connolly and Marino (2017) found that certain Dutch unions that developed strategies inspired by the US 'organizing model' have been relatively successful in recruiting and mobilizing workers in such sectors as cleaning, in which migrants are, again, very prominent. In contrast, Alberti (2014) describes the ultimate failure of the British union Unite,

together with the community organization 'London Citizens', to unionize the heavily migrant workforces of two London hotels. In this case, the highly fragmented and precarious nature of the target proved to be too formidable an obstacle.

Notwithstanding the relative success or failure of these shifts in union strategies, the representation gap between native-born and migrant workers persists, and a long-standing debate exists as to why this should be so. Some authors have focused on the behaviour and incentives of unions themselves (Marino *et al.* 2015; Penninx and Roosblad 2002; Quinlan and Lever-Tracy 1990). For example, in his study of trade union policies and actions towards minority workers in Italy and the Netherlands, Marino (2012) found an inverse relationship between unions' institutional embeddedness and their perception of migrant workers as a 'power resource'. In a very similar vein, Gorodzeisky and Richards (2013) showed that the institutional position of unions affects migrant workers' unionization rates relative to those of local workers. More specifically, the organizational security<sup>1</sup> of unions in a given country is associated with lower relative rates of migrant worker unionization; conversely, the absence of such security is associated with higher relative rates. The absence (or presence) of organizational security seems to affect unions' incentives to reach out to migrant workers.<sup>2</sup> Other authors point to possible internal constraints, such as the hostility of unionized workers' attitudes towards migrants and immigration in general, thereby limiting the willingness of union leaders to engage the migrant workforce (Jefferys 2007; Quinlan 1979).<sup>3</sup>

Other studies have pointed to the generally marginalized and precarious location of migrants in the labour market, where the presence of unions themselves is either weak or non-existent (Alberti 2014; Alberti and Danaj 2017; Stirling 2005; Tapia and Holgate 2018; Waddington and Whitson 1997). As such, migrants are deemed to be a difficult and costly target for union affiliation (Danaj *et al.* 2018: 207, 210). For these reasons, something of a received wisdom regarding migrant workers has emerged over time, which portrays them as being a difficult target to organize. Yet this is problematic as it fails to incorporate, rigorously, the behaviour and attitudes of migrant workers themselves.

There are, of course, grounds for assuming that migrants might be indifferent or distrustful towards unions. This is largely based on unions' historical behaviour and responses towards immigration and the arrival of migrants themselves. The latter tended to be viewed as a threat to existing wage levels and working conditions (Tapia and Holgate 2018: 193). Reviewing the effects of major immigration into Western Europe during the mid-twentieth century, Castles (1990: 6) notes that the 'unions found themselves in a dilemma. In view of the potential problems, it seemed logical to some to oppose immigration. But once there were migrant workers in the country, it was essential to organise them, to prevent divisions in the workforce. If unions opposed immigration, they were likely to find that migrants did not trust them and were unwilling to join. In such cases, the unions had the

worst of both worlds: not strong enough to prevent immigration, their efforts to do so only served to alienate the new workers from them'. More recent studies indicate that the potentially alienating effects of union behaviour on migrants' attitudes have persisted into the twenty-first century (Foster *et al.* 2015; Marino *et al.* 2015).

The way in which unions' historical opposition to immigration has affected the attitudes of migrants and ethnic minorities has been documented dramatically in the British case (Connolly *et al.* 2014; Modood 1997). For example, Perrett and Martínez Lucio (2009) describe the generally very weak links between unions and black and minority-ethnic (BME) communities, and the voluntary-sector and support groups that exist within such communities. They report that unions were largely seen as old-fashioned relics of the 1970s that still focused primarily on explicitly workplace-related issues at the expense of constructing a broader community-based profile more attractive and relevant to the specific needs of ethnic minorities: 'the lack of contact, communication and engagement with either BME communities or support groups has resulted in a subsequent lack of understanding of trade union functions or the benefits they can generate [...] trade unions themselves appear locked into a vision of being hard-to-reach bodies' (2009: 1305–6).

Nevertheless, several recent case studies have cast doubt on the assumption that migrants are somehow inherently indifferent, distrustful or hostile to trade unionism. To the extent that unions face real difficulties in organizing migrants, this is not a function of the latter's hostility. For example, in their analysis of relations between unions and migrants in Sweden, Mulinari and Neergaard (2005) show that while migrants were critical of the unions' operating practices (episodes of racism, alleged collusion with employers and their perceived lack of responsiveness to migrants' specific concerns), they were not hostile to trade unionism *per se*. Indeed, the authors, citing one migrant activist, emphasize that many migrants, despite their dissatisfaction, are union members: 'One wonders what needs to happen to make them understand that we [the migrants] are the Swedish unions' (2005: 65). In their study of hyper-mobile migrant workers in the Dutch construction industry, Berntsen and Lillie (2014) argue that what diminished the likelihood of these transnationally mobile migrants joining unions was their precarious situation in the labour market and their fear of, and vulnerability to, victimization by employers and losing their jobs. That is, the adverse characteristics of their labour market situation determined their reluctance to join a union, rather than any innate hostility towards the latter. Indeed, these authors found that even unions with significant resources were constrained in their organizing efforts by the complex interaction of subcontracting, transnational mobility and employer anti-unionism that characterizes the construction industry (see also Berntsen 2015; Danaj *et al.* 2018: 215). Furthermore, Holgate (2005), studying union efforts to organize black and ethnic minority workers (most of whom were migrants) in a London sandwich factory, shows that if migrants were generally passive about trade unionism, this was often the result of a lack

of effective communication (above all, in terms of language) by union officials, rather than indifference to the unions themselves.<sup>4</sup>

These studies question the idea that the difficulties surrounding the unionization of migrants are a function of the latter's negative attitudes towards, or distrust of, trade unions. They are, nonetheless, case studies which often focus on only one, or very few, sectors of the labour market. What is lacking, and what we present here, is a systematic cross-national analysis of migrants' attitudes towards unions in Western Europe, paying special attention to the extent to which such attitudes differ from those of the native-born and the degree of variation in attitudes among migrants coming from different countries. By doing so, we contribute to the relatively small body of large-scale cross-national research on the relationship between unions and migrant workers.

### **3. Immigrants' attitudes towards host country institutions and theoretical considerations: the issue of trust**

A review of the existing body of broader studies of migrants' attitudes towards, and trust in, a whole range of host country institutions lends further support to our argument that the expectation, or assumption, that migrants should *necessarily* be hostile to, or distrustful of, unions is misplaced. We note that none of these studies examined migrants' levels of trust in trade unions across European countries. Yet several recent studies of Europe and North America have shown that in many cases, migrants' levels of trust in host country institutions are, in general, either higher than or at least not significantly different from those of native-born. For example, in their study of migrants to Canada from non-democratic countries, Bilodeau and Nevitte (2003) found that they demonstrated high levels of confidence in the host country's political institutions — higher, actually, than Canadians themselves, even after controlling for evaluations of institutional performance. In his comparison of Mexican Americans' and non-Hispanic Whites' levels of confidence in 13 major US institutions, Weaver (2003) found that in many cases the former were *more* confident than the latter. Incidentally, this was also true for levels of confidence in organized labour. In their review of national and pan-European survey research, Röder and Mühlau (2011) show how this indicates that migrants have no less confidence in public institutions than native-born.

A prominent explanation for why this should be the case is that migrants arrive in their host countries with lower expectations than those of native-born. Maxwell (2008) develops this argument by comparing the attitudes towards mainstream British society of Caribbean and South Asian migrants. Conventional wisdom, he argues, predicts that Caribbean migrants will have more positive attitudes because they are more socially and culturally assimilated than South Asians. But in fact, the data indicate the reverse, precisely because of the higher expectations of Caribbean migrants (and lower expectations of South Asians). He concludes (2008: 387): 'When migrants with

high expectations face incorporation difficulties, they will be more likely to develop pessimistic attitudes. In comparison, cultural and social segregation [of South Asians] lowers expectations for incorporation prospects'. In a subsequent cross-national analysis of 24 European countries, Maxwell (2010) reaches a similar conclusion, finding that 'first-generation migrants, who have gone through the disruptive process of changing countries, have lower expectations and are more likely to have positive evaluations of the host society'.

In another study of migrants to Europe, Röder and Mühlau (2012) also show that they have higher levels of trust in public institutions than native-born, but stress the poor institutional performance in the country of origin as the main source of the relatively low *expectations* of migrants as compared to native-born Europeans. The lower expectations and higher evaluation of public institutions are explained by the 'dual frame of reference' theoretical tenet suggesting that negative past experiences with institutions lead migrants to overestimate any favourable conditions in the host countries (Maxwell 2010; Röder and Mühlau 2011, 2012). Because migrants compare the quality of host country institutions with the institutions in their country of origin (as a reference point), migrants' trust in public and political institutions of the host country is higher, the poorer the quality is of their home-country institutions (Nannestad *et al.* 2014; Röder and Mühlau 2012).

For the purposes of our analysis, the results of these studies demonstrate above all that, among migrants, there is no notable and integral hostility towards, or lack of trust in, a host country's institutions. Indeed, recently arrived migrants with lower expectations are likely to have — perfectly logically — higher levels of trust. And what holds for institutions in general should hold for trade unions in particular. Following this line of argumentation and previous studies, we therefore expect migrants to express higher levels of trust in trade unions, especially in the first years after their arrival. Moreover, in line with the 'dual frame of reference' theoretical tenet, we expect migrants from countries of origin characterized by the poor quality of institutions to express higher levels of trust in trade unions in comparison to migrants from countries of origin characterized by the relatively high quality of institutions.

Nevertheless, migrants from the former socialist countries may express generally higher levels of distrust in trade unions which, in the case of their countries of origin, formed part of the socialist state apparatus. Imposed solidarity by the state apparatus and the perception of trade unions as a part of such an apparatus may push migrants from these countries towards individualism and an overall objection to collective ideology, solidarity and trade unionism, as being associated with communist ideology and the Soviet past (Danaj *et al.* 2018). Thus, we expect migrants from the post-Soviet countries of origin to express lower levels of trust in trade unions as compared to migrants from other countries.<sup>5</sup>

The question of the possible *convergence* between migrants' and native-born' levels of trust in the host country institutions needs to be addressed.

Several studies point out that this convergence takes place over time and is a function of the increasing acculturation of migrants into host societies (in terms of adaptation to the receiving societies' values and norms) (Maxwell 2010; Röder and Mühlau 2012). Röder and Mühlau (2012) argue that the 'frame of reference effect' formed by the relatively lower expectations of recently arrived migrants weakens over time. In his cross-national study, Maxwell (2010) identifies a similar process in which native-born and second-generation migrants who have been raised in the host society — in comparison to recently arrived first generation migrants — are likely to share similar perspectives towards that society's political institutions. Another possible explanation of the decline in the level of trust among migrants can be rooted in the discrimination and social exclusion that migrants face over time in the host countries (Röder and Mühlau 2012). With time spent in the host country, migrants have more chances of encountering discrimination towards them (André and Dronkers 2017); such an experience is likely to have a negative effect on their levels of trust, thereby suppressing the 'frame of reference effect' which originally shapes their levels of trust in host country institutions. Following these theoretical considerations, we expect that the differences in the level of trust in trade unions between migrants and the native-born will decline with time spent in the country.

In general, migrants' attitudes towards host country institutions can be influenced by the prevailing climate of reception and by public attitudes towards migrants themselves. Hostile public opinion towards migrants may make them feel unwelcomed (Kranendonk and de Beer 2016) and, hence, may suppress their level of trust in the host country's institutions. Thus, migrants in countries of destination characterized by relatively high levels of anti-immigrant attitudes are expected to express lower levels of trust in trade unions in comparison to migrants in countries of destination characterized by lower levels of anti-immigrant attitudes.

#### **4. Methodological strategy, data and variables**

*As the first step in our empirical analysis*, we examine the differences in levels of trust in trade unions between the native-born and migrants across European countries of destination: (a) by estimating separate linear regression equations for each country and (b) by estimating bi-level hierarchical regression model for a pooled dataset. We estimate a bi-level hierarchical linear model (HLM) in which individuals (first-level units) are nested in countries (second-level units) in order to test accurately whether the variation of the effect of migrant status across countries is statistically significant. HLM is a statistical procedure that allows for the estimation of country level effects while variations in individual-level characteristics are controlled, and vice versa (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). The bi-level hierarchical model with one individual-level and one country-level variable can be expressed by the following equations:

$$\text{Level 1 : } Y_{ij} = B_{0j} + B_{1j} X_{ij} + e_{ij},$$

where  $Y_{ij}$  is the level of trust in trade unions for individual  $i$  in country  $j$ .  $B_{0j}$  is the intercept for country  $j$ ,  $X$  is a vector of individual characteristic,  $B_{1j}$  is a vector of its coefficient and  $e_{ij}$  is the error term. The slope of an individual characteristic can be allowed to vary across countries.

The intercept from Level 1 equations serves as the dependent variable in the country-level equation:

$$\text{Level 2 : } B_{0j} = Y_{00} + C_{01}Z_j + u_{0j},$$

where  $Y_{00}$  is the grand across-country intercept,  $Z$  is a vector of country-level characteristic,  $C_{01}$  is a vector of its coefficient and  $u_{0j}$  is an error term referring to country differences. Level 1 and 2 equations are estimated simultaneously, producing estimates of the variance components.

*In the second step of the empirical analysis*, we focus only on the migrant population and examine the differences in migrants' levels of trust across both countries of origin and countries of destination. Since the composition of migration flows in countries of destination vary by country of origin, it is important to examine the effect of destination and origin countries simultaneously in order to obtain accurate estimations of the effect of country of origin. To do so, we estimate a hierarchical cross-classified model using HCM2 software. In the model, migrants (first-level units) are nested in two types of second-level units: country of destination and country of origin. The two types of second-level units are cross-classified, because migrants from a specific country of origin arrive in different countries of destination and migrants from different countries of origin arrive in a specific country of destination. The model can be expressed by the following equations:

$$\text{Level 1 : } Y_{ijk} = B_{0jk} + B_1 X_{ijk} + e_{ijk},$$

where  $Y_{ijk}$  is the level of trust in trade unions for migrant  $i$  within country of destination  $j$  and from country of origin  $k$ .  $B_{0jk}$  is the intercept, that is, the mean score for migrants within country of destination  $j$  and from country of origin  $k$ .  $X$  is a vector of individual-level characteristics.

$$\text{Level 2 : } B_{0jk} = Y_0 + R_{01}Z_j + K_{01}T_k + w_{0j} + v_{0k},$$

where  $Y_0$  is the grand intercept,  $Z$  is a vector of destination country characteristics,  $R_{01}$  is a vector of its coefficients;  $T$  is a vector of country of origin characteristics and  $K_{01}$  is a vector of its coefficients.  $w_{0j}$  is the residual random effect of destination country  $j$ , that is, the contribution of country of destination  $j$  averaged over all countries of origin and  $v_{0k}$  is the residual random effect of country of origin  $k$ , that is, the contribution of country of origin  $k$  averaged over all destination countries.

Individual-level data for the present analysis were obtained from the fourth round of the European Values Survey (EVS) conducted in 2008–2009; these are the most recent data released by the EVS. We used information provided by the EVS on 18 Western and Southern European countries (a list of the



countries is presented in Figure 1).<sup>6</sup> In each country, information was gathered from a random probability national sample of the eligible resident populations aged 18 and over. The total sample includes 20,988 native-born residents and 2,265 migrants.<sup>7</sup> In *the second step* of the analysis that focuses only on the migrant population and takes into account migrants' country of origin, we included only countries of origin with at least 10 respondents in the sample. The sample for the second step of the analysis includes, therefore, 1,936 migrants who are nested in 18 countries of destination and 51 countries of origin.<sup>8</sup>

*(a) The dependent variable*

The dependent variable — the level of trust in trade unions — was measured by the following question: 'How much confidence do you have in trade unions: is it a great deal (4), quite a lot (3), not very much (2) or none at all (1)?'

*(b) Individual-level independent variables*

The key independent variable — migrant status — is a dummy variable that distinguishes between native-born respondents (or citizens who were born abroad but both of whose parents were native-born) and respondents who were born abroad. We also include in the analysis a 'years since migration' variable.

Age, gender, union membership, level of education (low, medium and high) and household income (low, medium and high) were introduced into the analysis as control variables. Unfortunately, there is no information on industrial sector in the ESV dataset; as such, we cannot include this important control in the multivariate analysis.

*(c) Country-level independent variables*

As a proxy for the quality of the political and civic institutions in the country, we used two indicators. We first introduced the Democracy Index Rank provided by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2008) at both country of destination and country of origin levels. The Democracy Index is based on an evaluation of the electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, political culture and civil liberties. In order to test the robustness of the results, we then substituted the Democracy Index Rank with the composite index of the Worldwide Governance Indicators published by the World Bank (Kaufmann *et al.* 2010). Here, we followed Röder and Mührlau's (2011, 2012) approach (implemented in previous research on the topic) to measure the quality of a country's institutions. The composite index incorporated six indicators: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption, and was calculated as an average score for 2006–2008. Each indicator ranges from –2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance. One of the advantages of

both the Democracy Index Rank and the Worldwide Governance Indicators is that they cover all destination and origin countries included in our dataset.

A dummy variable that distinguishes between the former socialist countries and others was introduced at the country of origin level.

Anti-immigrant attitudes were introduced at the destination country level. The score for each country was calculated as an average score of native-born citizens' levels of agreement with the following statements: 'Immigrants take away jobs from [nationality]', 'Immigrants undermine the country's cultural life', 'Immigrants increase crime problems', 'Immigrants are a strain on the welfare system', 'Immigrants will become a threat to society'. The index scale ranges from 1 (lowest level of anti-immigrant attitudes) to 10 (highest level of anti-immigrant attitudes).<sup>9</sup>

In addition, unionization rates (averaged for 2006–2008 and obtained from the ICTWSS database) (Visser 2013) and the rate of trust in trade unions among the native-born were introduced at the destination country level for control purposes.<sup>10</sup>

The individual-level variables are included in all regression models (presented in Tables 1–3) while country-level variables are included only in bi-level hierarchical and hierarchical cross-classified models (presented in Tables 2 and 3).

## 5. Descriptive overview

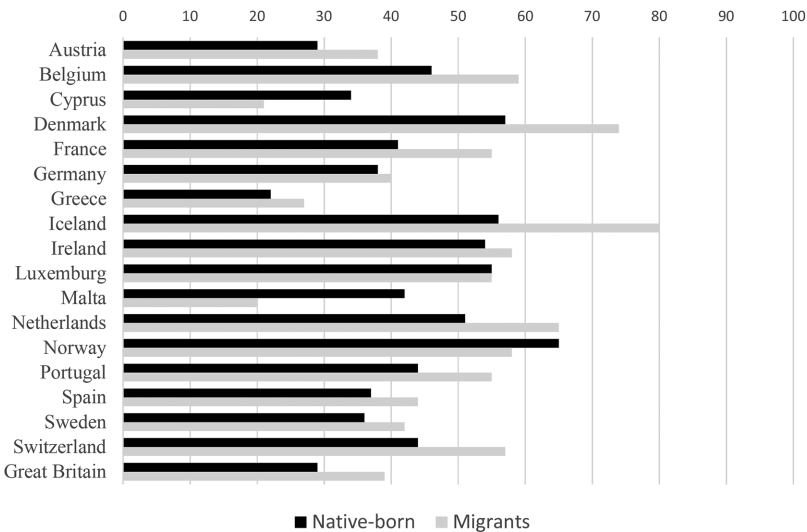
In Figure 1, we present the percentage of the native-born and migrants who trust trade unions (those who responded that they have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in trade unions) by country of destination. The descriptive statistics demonstrate quite clearly that there is no justification for assuming, *a priori*, that migrants (as compared to native-born) lack trust in trade unions; indeed, the opposite seems to be true. The data show that the percentage of respondents who trust trade unions is higher among migrants than among locals in most of the countries, but that the differences vary notably across countries. In addition, there are several countries in which migrants trust trade unions to the same degree, or even to a lower degree, than the native-born.

Specifically, in the 'old immigration' countries such as Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland, the share of migrants who trust trade unions is considerably higher than that of the native-born (59 vs 46, 74 vs 57, 55 vs 41, 65 vs 51 and 57 vs 44, respectively); in Austria and Great Britain, the differences are somewhat smaller (in Austria the difference is also on the border of acceptable levels of statistical significance). Germany and Luxembourg are the only traditional 'old-immigration' countries in which there is almost no difference between the percentages of the native-born and migrants who trust trade unions.

In relatively 'new-immigration' countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland, the differences between the percentage of migrants and the

FIGURE 1

Per Cent of Respondents Who Have Confidence in Trade Unions (Great Deal and Quite a Lot).



Note: The differences in favour of migrants are statistically significant in Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Great Britain at  $p < 0.05$  and in Austria and Portugal at  $p < 0.1$ . The differences in favour of native-born are statistically significant in Cyprus and Malta at  $p < 0.05$ .

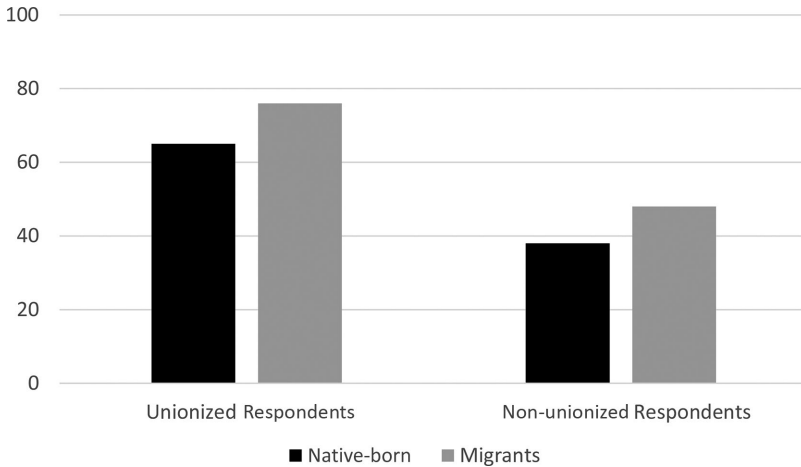
native-born who trust trade unions are much smaller, although still in favour of migrants (in Greece, Spain and Ireland the differences are also insignificant statistically). However, in Cyprus and Malta, the percentage of migrants who have confidence in trade unions is lower than that of the native-born (21 vs 34, 20 vs 42, respectively).

Figure 2 presents the percentage of the native-born and migrants who trust trade unions by their union membership status in a pooled dataset. The findings show quite clearly that migrants' levels of trust in trade unions are higher than those of the native-born among both unionized and non-unionized respondents. Not surprisingly, the unionized respondents, whether native-born or migrants, express higher levels of trust in trade unions than non-unionized respondents.

## 6. Multivariate analysis: destination countries

While the data provided in the descriptive overview are interesting, they do not provide accurate estimates of the extent to which migrant status affects the level of trust in trade unions and to what extent this effect can be attributed to the differences in the sociodemographic composition of the migrant and native-born populations in each country. Thus, in the analyses that follow, we estimate the effect of migrant status on the level of trust in trade unions net

FIGURE 2  
Per Cent of Respondents Who Have Confidence in Trade Unions (Great Deal and Quite a Lot),  
by Union Membership.



Note: The differences are statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

of individual-level attributes. Although the dependent variable was measured on an ordinal scale, in the multivariate analysis presented here we treated the variable as an interval and use linear regression models. We replicated the analysis using an ordinal logistic regression model. The results obtained from the ordinal logistic regression models are quite similar to the results obtained by the linear regression. Since the interpretation of the results obtained from linear models are more intuitive, for the sake of parsimony we present them here.

We first discuss the results of the linear regressions predicting the level of trust in trade unions for each country separately. Model 1 predicts the level of trust in trade unions as a function of migrant status only and Model 2 predicts the level of trust in trade unions as a function of migrant status, union membership, demographic characteristics (age, gender) and indicators of socioeconomic position (education level and income level as a series of dummy variables distinguishing between low, medium and high level). We estimate Model 2 also for countries in which no differences between migrants and the native-born were found in the level of trust in Model 1, since dissimilarities in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics between the two groups may not only activate but also suppress the effect of migrant status.

In Table 1, we present *only* the coefficients for the *migrant status* variable from the regression equations described above. The results of Model 2 demonstrate that migrant status exerts a statistically significant and positive *net* effect on the level of trust in trade unions in such traditional immigration countries as Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland, but also in Greece and Iceland. In these countries,

TABLE 1

Migrant Coefficients (SE) from Linear Regression Equations Predicting Level of Trust in Trade Unions (1–4), by Country: Model 1 without Control Variables, Model 2 Controlling for Age, Gender, Education, Income and Union Membership

	1	2	N
Austria	0.14 (0.09)	0.13 (0.09)	1,385
Belgium	0.23* (0.07)	0.19* (0.07)	1,477
Cyprus	-0.34* (0.12)	-0.34* (0.12)	863
Denmark	0.35* (0.09)	0.34* (0.08)	1,438
France	0.21* (0.08)	0.22* (0.08)	1,462
Germany	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)	1,912
Greece	0.25* (0.08)	0.27* (0.08)	1,428
Iceland	0.41* (0.14)	0.38* (0.14)	794
Ireland	0.10 (0.12)	0.11 (0.12)	843
Luxembourg	-0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	1,490
Malta	-0.22 (0.16)	-0.20 (0.15)	1,346
Netherlands	0.16 (0.08) <sup>a</sup>	0.18* (0.08)	1,460
Norway	-0.001 (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)	1,070
Portugal	0.13 (0.09)	0.12 (0.09)	1,356
Spain	0.09 (0.08)	0.02 (0.07)	1,324
Sweden	0.10 (0.07)	0.07 (0.07)	1,037
Switzerland	0.22* (0.05)	0.18* (0.05)	1,117
Great Britain	0.15* (0.08)	0.12 (0.07)	1,381

\*  $p < 0.05$ ;

<sup>a</sup>  $p = 0.058$ .

migrants tend to express higher levels of confidence in trade unions (as compared to native-born residents) also after controlling for demographic characteristics, socioeconomic position and union membership (as evidenced by the statistically significant and positive coefficients). As compared to the size of the union membership coefficient, the size of the *migrant status* coefficients in the above-mentioned countries ranges from about a third of the size of the union membership coefficient in Switzerland and France to 1.3 and 3.6 times the size of the union membership coefficients in Denmark and Iceland, respectively (as mentioned above the coefficients of the union membership are not presented). Cyprus is the only country in which migrants express lower levels of trust in trade unions (as compared to the native-born), once basic demographic and socioeconomic characteristics as well as union membership are taken into account (as evidenced by the statistically significant negative coefficient).

In the remaining countries, the differences between migrants and the comparable native-born (in terms of the sociodemographic characteristics included in the study) in their levels of confidence in trade unions are statistically insignificant (and in most of the cases much smaller in size).

To summarize the results presented in the by-country regressions (Table 1), we present the results of bi-level hierarchical models (individuals nested in countries) in Table 2. In Model 1 (Table 2), in addition to individual-level predictors (which were included in previous by-country models) we added

TABLE 2  
Coefficients (SE) from Bi-Level Regression Equation Predicting Level of Trust in Trade Unions<sup>a</sup>

	1	2
Intercept	2.32* (0.005)	2.32* (0.05)
<b>Individual-level variables</b>		
Migrant	0.108* (0.033)	0.176* (0.045)
Year since migration (acculturation)	—	-0.003* (0.001)
Age	-0.003* (0.001)	-0.003* (0.001)
Male	-0.026 (0.014)	-0.026 (0.014)
Trade union member	0.390* (0.037)	0.390* (0.037)
Low level of education <sup>b</sup>	0.004 (0.020)	0.004 (0.020)
High level of education <sup>b</sup>	-0.016 (0.013)	-0.018 (0.013)
Low income <sup>c</sup>	0.021 (0.021)	0.021 (0.021)
High income <sup>c</sup>	-0.070* (0.021)	-0.070* (0.021)
<b>Country-level variable</b>		
Union density <sup>d</sup>	0.005* (0.001)	0.005* (0.001)
<b>Variance component</b>		
Individual level	0.60*	0.59*
Country level	0.04*	0.04*
Migrant slope	0.015*	0.017*
<b>N</b>		
Individual level	23,183	23,136
Country level	18	18

<sup>a</sup>Slopes of 'migrant' and 'income' vary across countries. Slopes of age (centred around the grand mean), education and union membership are constrained to be identical across countries. Variance components from the fully unconditional model are 0.62 (individual level) and 0.04 (country level).

<sup>b</sup>Comparison category: medium level of education.

<sup>c</sup>Comparison category: medium income; missing cases are added as additional category (not presented).

<sup>d</sup>Source: ICTWSS database, 2006–2008 mean score, variable is grand centred.

\* $p < 0.05$ ,

union density as a control country-level variable. In this model, the intercept is random and the slope of migrant status (as well as the slope of income) is allowed to vary across countries. The results demonstrate that the level of trust in trade unions tends to decrease with age and to be lower among respondents who belong to high-income households. Quite reasonably, union members express higher levels of confidence in trade unions in comparison to non-unionized people. Residents of countries with higher rates of union density tend to express higher levels of confidence in trade unions. Yet controlling for the individual- and country-level characteristics described above, migrant status exerts a positive and statistically significant *net* effect on levels of trust in trade unions ( $b = 0.108$ ). Thus, migrants tend to express higher levels of confidence in trade unions than the native-born. The size of the migrant status coefficient is slightly more than a quarter of the size of union membership coefficient, and 1.5 times the size of the high-income household coefficient. The statistically significant variance component of the migrant status slope implies that the effect of migrant status does vary significantly across countries.

One may suggest that the results are driven only (or mostly) by migrants who recently arrived in the host country, or in other words, that the positive effect of migrant status is relevant only for the first years after migration. To ensure that this is not the case, we included in Model 2 (Table 2) a 'year since migration' variable. By doing so, we also test the second hypothesis derived from the theoretical argument relating to acculturation. The coefficient of 'year since migration' variable pertains to the interactive effect of migrant status and years since migration, since value zero in this variable is assigned to the native-born. Thus, the coefficient of migrant status (main effect) in Model 2 refers to migrants who have just arrived in the host country ( $b = 0.176$ ). The negative and statistically significant coefficient of the 'year since migration' variable ( $b = -0.003$ ) demonstrates that with time spent in the host country the effect of migrant status on the level of trust diminishes.<sup>11</sup> However, the size of the coefficients is so small that almost 30 years spent in the host country are needed to reduce the effect of migrant status just by half (from its size in the first year after migration). It seems that the acculturation process related to the confidence of migrants in trade unions takes place only very slowly.

## **7. Multivariate analysis: countries of origin and countries of destination**

Further analysis focuses exclusively on the *migrant population* in an attempt to disentangle the effect of country of origin and the effect of country of destination on migrants' levels of trust in trade unions.

Table 3 displays the findings of a series of hierarchical cross-classified models predicting levels of trust in trade unions among migrants. Preliminary analysis showed that when introduced separately into the models, neither education nor income exert statistically significant effects on levels of trust among migrants once the country of origin and country of destination are considered. We therefore include only gender, age and union membership (variables that exert a statistically significant effect when introduced separately into the models) as control variables at the individual level in subsequent models.

The variance components of the unconditional model (Model 1 in Table 3) reveal statistically significant variance in migrants' level of trust in trade unions across countries of destination and across countries of origin. Ten per cent of overall variance in the variable 'trust in trade unions' can be explained by countries of destination and about 4 per cent by countries of origin.

The results of Model 2 (Table 3) suggest that migrant' levels of trust in trade unions decline with age and tend to be higher among union members. Inclusion of age, gender and union membership in the Model 2 reduces not only individual-level variance but also variance in the level of trust across countries of destination and countries of origin (Table 3). It seems that part of the differences in migrant levels of trust in trade unions among countries of destination and among countries of origin is explained by differences in the

TABLE 3  
 Hierarchical Cross-Classified Model Coefficients Predicting Levels of Trust in Trade Unions  
 among Migrants<sup>a</sup>

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Intercept	2.47*	2.38*	2.39*	2.47*	2.14*	2.79*
Age	–	–0.004*	–0.004*	–0.004*	–0.004*	–0.004*
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Male	–	0.008	0.004	0.006	0.004	0.006
		(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.036)
Union member	–	0.524*	0.525*	0.523*	0.530*	0.520*
		(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
<b>Destination country level</b>						
Trust rate in unions	–	–	0.017*	0.013*	0.014*	0.015*
			(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Union density	–	–	–0.003	–0.004*	–0.003*	–0.003
			(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Democracy Rank (1 = highest quality of democracy)				–0.011*	–	–
				(0.004)		
Governance Indicator Index (lowest score = lowest quality of governance)	–	–	–	–	0.194	–
					(0.115)	
Anti-Immigrant attitudes	–	–	–	–	–	–0.064
						(0.049)
<b>Origin country level</b>						
Democracy Rank (1 = highest quality of democracy)	–	–	–	0.0014*	–	–
				(0.0007)		
Governance Indicator Index (lowest score = lowest quality of governance)	–	–	–	–	–0.069*	–
					(0.031)	
Former Socialist Countries			–0.022	–0.054	–0.059	–0.019
			(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.066)
<b>Variance components:</b>						
Individual level	0.621*	0.598*	0.599*	0.599*	0.600*	0.599*
Destination country level	0.073*	0.050*	0.009*	0.007*	0.006*	0.009*
Origin country level	0.025*	0.017*	0.016*	0.013*	0.011*	0.015*
Model comparison <sup>b</sup>	–	$\chi^2 = 86,$ ( $df = 3$ )	$\chi^2 = 16,$ ( $df = 3$ )	$\chi^2 = 9,$ ( $df = 2$ )	$\chi^2 = 6,$ ( $df = 2$ )	$\chi^2 = 1.7,$ ( $df = 1$ )
		$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$	$p = 0.009$	$p = 0.037$	$p = 0.189$

<sup>a</sup> Age, union density and trust rate in unions are centred around the grand mean. *N* at individual level = 1,936, *N* at origin country level = 51, *N* at destination country level = 18.

<sup>b</sup> Model 2 is compared to unconditional Model 1, Model 3 is compared to Model 2, Models 4, 5 and 6 are compared to Model 3.

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ .

age composition of migration flows and in the migrant unionization rate in the destination country.

Model 3 includes, in addition to individual-level variables, two destination-country variables: the percentage of the native-born who trust trade unions and union density in the country, and one origin-country variable: former socialist countries (as compared to others). Not surprisingly, the level of trust in trade unions among migrants tends to be higher in destination countries



where the native-born express higher levels of trust. Model 3 explains most of the variance in the level of migrants' trust in unions across destination countries ( $(0.073 - 0.009)/0.073 \times 100 = 87.6$  per cent). As to the country of origin, the findings do not provide support for the hypothesis that migrants from the former socialist countries are likely to express lower levels of trust in trade unions as compared to migrants from other countries. The effect of the 'former socialist country' variable is statistically insignificant and rather small. The variance component at country of origin level in Model 3 remains quite similar to that in Model 2, which included individual-level variables. Once native-born levels of trust in trade unions and unionization rates in the destination countries are taken into account, the variance in migrants' trust in trade unions across countries of origin seems to be bigger than the remaining variance across destination countries.

Model 4 includes also the Democracy Index Ranks of country of destination and country of origin (as a proxy for the quality of political and civic institutions). The model tests the hypothesis that stressed the importance of the reference point according to which lower levels of expectations may lead migrants to evaluate more positively the destination country's institutions. Since countries of destination also vary in the quality of their institutions, in order to test such a hypothesis, we also include in Model 4 the Democracy Index Rank of the destination country (mostly as a control variable).

The results of Model 4 demonstrate that the quality of political and civic institutions (as measured by the Democracy Index) in the country of origin tends to exert an effect on migrants' levels of trust in trade unions over and above the quality of institutions in the destination country. The lower the Democracy Index Rank (in other words, the lower the quality of political and civic institutions) of migrants' countries of origin, the higher is the level of migrants' trust in trade unions in the destination country. On the other hand, the higher the Democracy Index Rank of the destination country (in other words, the higher the quality of its political and civic institutions) the higher is the level of migrants' trust in trade unions (controlling for the quality of democracy in the country of origin). These findings seem to be in line with the hypothesis that the poorer the quality of institutions (including trade unions) in the country of origin is, the more trust migrants tend to express in the institutions of the country of destination.

To test the robustness of the results, in Model 5 we replaced the Democracy Index Rank of both countries of origin and countries of destination with the Worldwide Governance Indicator Index. The results of Model 5 demonstrate that the quality of the institutions in the country of origin (controlling for the quality of institutions in the country of destination) exerts a negative and statistically significant effect on the level of trust of migrants in trade unions. In other words, migrants coming from countries with higher quality of political and civic institutions tend to express lower levels of trust in trade unions, while migrants coming from countries with lower quality of political and civic institutions tend to express higher levels of trust. Again, the findings provide additional support for the hypothesis that the poorer the quality of

institutions in the country of origin is, the more trust migrants tend to express in the institutions of the country of destination.

To interpret the substantial size of the Democracy Index Rank and Worldwide Governance Indicator Index coefficients one can compare, for example, the level of trust between migrants from countries of origin at the 25th and 75th percentiles (among the 51 countries included in the sample) according to the Democracy Rank and Governance Indicator Indexes. The Democracy Index Rank of countries of origin at the 25th and 75th percentiles is 21 and 86, respectively. The Governance Indicator Index of countries of origin at the 25th and 75th percentiles is  $-0.42$  and  $1.26$ , respectively. Consequently, the difference in the level of trust between migrants from origin countries at the 25th and 75th percentiles according to the Democracy Rank and Governance Indicator Index is about  $0.091$  and  $0.116$  points (on a 1–4 scale), respectively, when all other variables (included in the models) are held constant.

Comparison between Model 4/Model 5 and Model 3 (Table 3) demonstrates that inclusion of Democracy Rank and Governance Indicator Index explains, respectively, 18.7 per cent  $((0.016 - 0.013)/0.016*100 = 18.7$  per cent) and 31.2 per cent  $((0.016 - 0.011)/0.015*100 = 31.2$  per cent) of the variance in the level of migrants' trust in unions across countries of origin.

One might suggest that the quality of democracy and governance is strongly correlated with the economic conditions of the country and, thus, the effect that we found is largely confounded with the effect of economic conditions. We examined this possibility by replacing the Worldwide Governance Indicator Index of country of origin with GDP per capita in the models (not shown). The results reveal that GDP does not exert a statistically significant effect on trust in trade unions.

Model 6 examines the hypothesis according to which migrants in countries of destination characterized by relatively high levels of anti-immigrant attitudes are expected to express lower levels of trust in trade unions in comparison to migrants in countries of destination characterized by lower levels of anti-immigrant attitudes. The findings do not provide sufficient support for such a hypothesis. Although the coefficient of anti-immigrant sentiment is negative (suggesting that the higher the negative attitudes, the lower the level of trust), it is statistically insignificant.

## 8. Conclusions

The present study demonstrates that in Europe, in general, migrants seem to trust trade unions more than locals do. The results of our multivariate by-country analysis show that migrants' levels of trust in trade unions is not lower than locals' levels of trust in all 18 countries in the study, with the exception of Cyprus. In 40 per cent of the countries, migrants' level of trust in trade unions is significantly higher than that of locals even after considering differences in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics,

as well as rates of unionization, between the groups. This finding is in line with those of the relatively few studies that have examined migrants' level of trust in host countries' public and political institutions (e.g. Bilodeau and Nevitte 2003; Weaver 2003). Our article has further demonstrated that in Europe in general with time spent in the country, migrants' level of trust decreases. This finding confirms the argument about the role played by the acculturation of migrants into host societies over time (Maxwell 2010; Röder and Mühlau 2012). However, we find that this occurs only very slowly — even 30 years after arrival in the destination country, migrants in Europe in general tend to express higher levels of trust in trade unions than the native-born. When situated in the framework of the acculturation theoretical tenet our findings are also in line with the study of Kranendonk and de Beer (2016) that demonstrates that the longer migrants are in the country, the more likely they are to become a union member; even though the overall unionization rate of migrants remains lower than that of native-born (Gorodzeisky and Richards 2013). According to the theoretical argument of acculturation, with time spent in the country, migrants adopt the norms, values and behaviour of the host country population. Thus, with time spent in the country, the level of migrants' trust in trade unions becomes lower, that is closer to that of the host country population (as our findings suggest), while the rate of migrants' unionization becomes higher and, thus, also closer to that of the host country population (as Kranendonk and de Beer (2016) demonstrate). Here, it is important to note that cross-sectional data from a single point in time used in our study limits the possibilities of disentangling the effect of time spent in a country from the effect of year of arrival, in other words, the specific migration cohort.

In addition, we found some evidence that migrants coming from countries with lower quality political and civic systems tend to express higher levels of trust than migrants coming from countries with higher quality institutions. The findings are in keeping with the 'dual frame of reference' theoretical argument which links migrants' negative experiences with the institutions in their country of origin to lower expectations, and hence, more positive evaluations of the institutions in the country of destination. On the other hand, the findings did not provide sufficient support for the hypothesis according to which high levels of anti-immigrant attitudes in the host country will be associated with low levels of trust in trade unions (as a host country institution) on the part of migrants.<sup>12</sup> The findings also do not support the hypothesis according to which migrants from former socialist countries are less likely to trust trade unions. It is reasonable to suggest that the skepticism towards trade unionism (as a part of the state apparatus) formed within the socialist regime context has changed and become less relevant in 2008–2009, almost two decades after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Our findings have significant implications for the future strength and profile of trade unions in the advanced European democracies. As we stated at the outset, given a background of declining union membership levels and union density rates over the last four decades, the growing presence of migrants within national workforces means that they represent, potentially,

an extremely valuable new constituency for the union movement. Many of the recent studies we cited earlier in our review of the literature have demonstrated that trade union movements in general in Western Europe and North America have increasingly recognized this. What our findings imply, however, is that any difficulties associated with recruiting migrant workers lie to a significant extent on the supply side — that is, in the sphere of unions' behaviour and strategy — rather than on the demand side, in the sphere of migrants' attitudes towards, and levels of trust in, the unions themselves.<sup>13</sup>

To be sure, the incorporation of migrants into their ranks remains a formidable challenge for unions, especially given the tendency of migrants to be over-represented in sectors of the labour market where the presence and traditions of trade unionism have been weak (Gorodzeisky and Richards 2013). Moreover, while it may be true that umbrella labour organizations or confederations at the national level 'are becoming more open and welcoming towards migrant workers ... specific union strategies towards migrant works differ substantially' (Tapia and Holgate 2018: 189). In other words, it is unions at the local and/or sectoral levels that invariably bear the brunt of meeting and overcoming the various challenges associated with recruitment drives. After all, strategies to unionize migrant workers involve the explicit commitment of scarce resources (in terms of money, time, personnel, improved communication, etc.). The growing body of recent empirical research to which we have referred in our article points to the unions' mixed record of success in organizing migrant workers, suggesting that resources have been more effectively deployed in some cases than in others. However, what our findings imply clearly is that, in general, episodes of failure cannot necessarily be attributed to the alleged hostility or distrust of migrants towards trade unions and trade unionism. On the contrary, the *higher* levels of trust in trade unions shown by migrants in general and especially by migrants during their first decades after arrival in the host country and those whose countries of origin are characterized by the poor quality of their institutions, show that they are a constituency eminently suited to being incorporated into the ranks of organized labour.

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### **Notes**

1. By organizational security, these authors referred to institutional supports such as state funding for the union movement (e.g. the case of Spain) or a virtual monopoly position with respect to the organization of trade unionism in a given country (e.g. the cases of the German DGB or British TUC).

2. In positing this relationship between unions' organizational security and their propensity to organize migrant workers, we do not deny the equally important role of union ideology and traditions of solidarity. After all, IG Metall, whose commitment to recruiting migrant workers we have mentioned in the text, is a clear example of a powerful and organizationally secure union. In addition, we note the recent study of Refslund (2018) of institutionally embedded unions in Denmark which, precisely *because* of their strength, are in a good position to incorporate migrant workers into their ranks.
3. However, a recent study (Gorodzeisky and Richards 2016) demonstrates that unionized workers are not more hostile and in many countries are *less* hostile towards migrants than non-unionized workers.
4. Moreover, when communication was made more effective, Holgate found that migrant workers were *responsive* to union organizing efforts. In a similar vein, Milkman's important (2006) study of migrant workers in Los Angeles challenges explicitly the assumption that they are difficult for unions to organize by showing, empirically, the reverse. The four labour market sectors studied — building maintenance, trucking, construction and garment production — were all notorious for their precarious and dangerous working conditions and heavily populated by migrant workers. The latter, though, proved to be *extremely* responsive to effective union organizing efforts.
5. On the other hand, because unions were part of the state apparatus in the former socialist countries, it may be the case that those distrustful of such unions could be over-represented among migrants as compared to the general population of the former socialist countries. This could bias the results related to the level of trust among migrants from the former socialist countries downwards.
6. From the countries that took part in the EVS we selected only those Western and Southern European countries in whose samples the number of migrants exceeded 30. We did so in order to reach reliable estimations. We excluded Eastern European countries because of the particular historical context in which unions in these countries operated during the socialist era.
7. The numbers exclude those who did not report their level of trust in trade unions; these accounted for 7 per cent of the total sample. The percentage of those who did not answer the question was higher among migrants (11) than among native-born (6). Average time spent in a country among those who did not answer the question was shorter than among those who did provide an answer. It means that the possible bias because of the missing values works against our argument and could make the estimations more conservative, since our argument suggests that migrants will express the highest levels of trust in the first years after arrival.
8. We implemented the appropriate weighting procedure recommended by the EVS for the whole analysis except for the hierarchical cross-classified models for the subsample of the migrant population.
9. The average scores across the 18 destination countries range from 5.24 in Sweden to 8.13 in Malta.
10. All models were also re-estimated including the measure of bargaining coverage in the country of destination, obtained from the ICTWSS database (Visser 2013). The results demonstrated that bargaining coverage does not affect levels of trust in trade unions. (The inclusion of the measure has not changed any of the results).
11. Because we use cross-sectional data from a single point in time, it is impossible to separate the effect of 'time spent in the country' from the effect of 'year of arrival' as a migration cohort effect. The unions themselves and, as a result, the

general population's attitudes towards unions may have changed over time and thus migrants arriving in different years may have encountered different social contexts in this regard. We compared the level of trust in trade unions among the general population using all available data for countries studied in previous waves of the EVS (from 1981 onwards). Such a comparison revealed no systematic time trends in changes in the levels of trust in trade unions among the general population across countries. Because previous waves of the EVS (until 2008–2009) have no information on migration status we cannot restrict this time-trends analysis to native-born' attitudes only.

12. The lack of empirical support for this hypothesis could be the result of the limited degrees of freedom at the country of destination level of analysis.
13. We are grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for framing the issue in these terms.

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