

SIX MONTHS AFTER : EUROPEANS FACING THE MIGRANT CRISIS

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In September 2015, when the migrant crisis was the focus of international headlines, the IFOP, together with the Jean-Jaurès Foundation and the FEPS, carried out a large-scale survey of European public opinion to get their view regarding this major challenge. At that time, we did our work in seven countries: France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Denmark. Over the ensuing six months, many initiatives were taken. The problem remains, nonetheless, in its entirety. Whereas the European authorities were counting on winter weather conditions to make navigation more difficult between the Turkish coast and Greek islands, the flow of migrants did not let up, far from it. In fact, more than 100,000 people arrived in Greece and Italy in January and February alone. This is a significantly greater number than during the same period in 2015, when it wasn't until July that the number of arrivals reached 100,000. The continuing massive arrivals (on average, 2,000 new migrants are registered each day in Greece) are placing very substantial pressure on European governments. Since last September, gradually, several countries have enacted border controls or even closings along the Balkan route linking the Greek islands, gateway to Europe, to Germany which is the destination sought by most migrants. Recent months also saw very complex and tense negotiations among European partners and also between the European Union and Turkey. At the same time these initiatives were ongoing, significant events took place that were more or less closely linked to the migrant question. The Paris attacks come to mind as well as the international police investigation which revealed not only the involvement of jihadists, who had infiltrated Europe through the migrant flow, but also the scale of their networks in Europe. Events in Cologne on New Year's Eve also come to mind, as well as the deterioration of the situation in Greece, where tens of thousands of migrants are stranded due to the closure of borders in countries such as Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. We also mention the tension in the region of Calais around the "jungle".

Considering these events, furthermore, at a time when governments are highly divided about the draft agreement between the European Union and Turkey (brokered by the German Chancellor and the President of Turkey) and while the migrant issue is exerting ever growing pressure on European cohesion, the Jean Jaurès Foundation and the FEPS wanted to have available an updated overview of European opinion. This is why, six months after the first poll, the IFOP carried out a new survey in three countries: France, Germany and Italy.



AVERTISSEMENT : La mission de la Fondation Jean-Jaurès est de faire vivre le débat public et de concourir ainsi à la rénovation de la pensée socialiste. Elle publie donc les analyses et les propositions dont l'intérêt du thème, l'originalité de la problématique ou la qualité de l'argumentation contribuent à atteindre cet objectif, sans pour autant nécessairement reprendre à son compte chacune d'entre elles.

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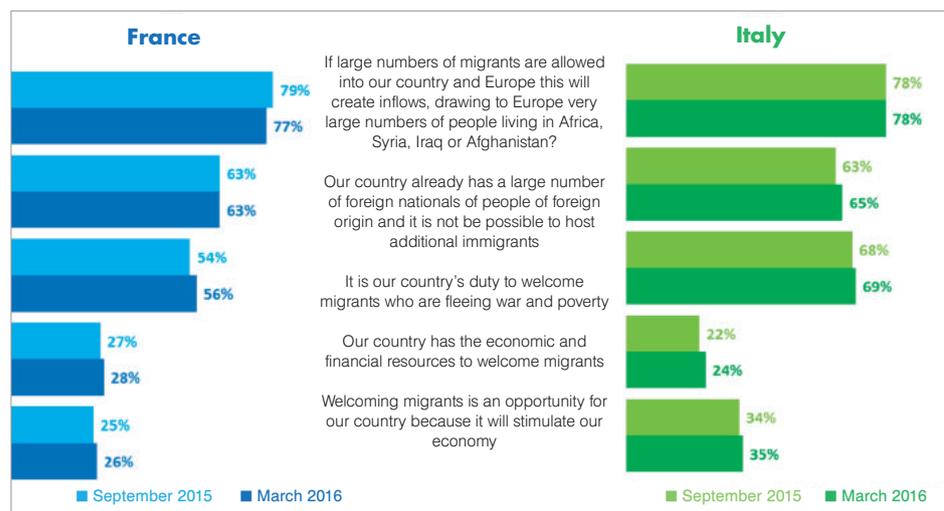
In spite of the many other items in the news, French and Italian public opinion on this issue remain almost unchanged

On questions about the risk of creating a further influx, the ability to receive migrants, the economic impact of the arrival of migrants or the duty to receive migrants, French and Italian public opinion has remained very stable from one survey to the next, as we can see on the following graph.

Opinions on the migrant crisis

Question: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following views?

- Summary of "TOTAL agrees" -



At a time when this issue is very much in the headlines, it would actually appear that people's representations and opinions on migrants took form and became stable as early as last September, during "the worst of the crisis" and that since then, when events took place, there was only a minimal impact on these opinions. We observe this phenomenon both in France, a country experiencing little inflow of migrants, and in Italy, a country that is much more exposed.

In spite of their different situations, not only do both countries feature the same stability, but equally striking is the very strong convergence and similarity of opinion on both sides of the Alps. For example, exactly the same proportion of the French (77%) and Italians (78%) fear the phenomenon of creating further influx. A view that their countries already have many foreigners and people of foreign origin, making it impossible to receive additional immigrants, is held in similar proportions in France (63%) and Italy (65%). There is also a consensus that France (72%) and Italy (76%) do not have the economic resources to receive migrants.

However, as the previous survey also showed, many more Italians than French (69% versus 56%) think it is their country's duty to receive migrants fleeing war and poverty. We also

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observe that the Italians, although a minority opinion, are more likely to view the arrival of migrants as an economic opportunity with 35% favorable responses versus only 26% in France. This difference is probably, to some degree, a reflection of more widespread economic pessimism, currently, in France than in Italy.

A hardening of German public opinion continues

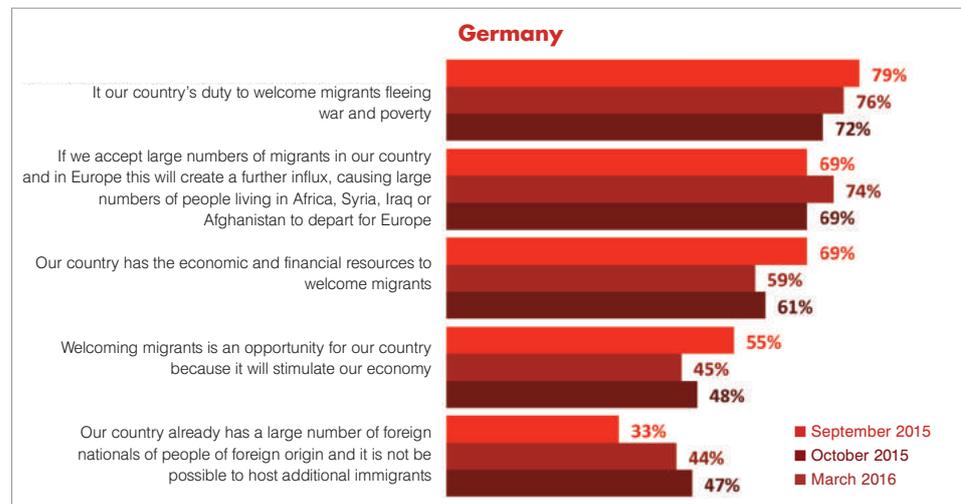
In view of the very strong migratory pressure on Germany and the very fast change in the German political climate over recent months, the IFOP conducted a second series of surveys in that country last October. Although only a few weeks elapsed between the two field surveys, the second poll registered significant shifts toward a hardening of German public opinion.

Our new poll (which is now the third series of surveys in Germany) has, for the most part, confirmed and displayed an amplification of this trend.

Acceptance of several opinions about the migrant crisis

Question: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following views?

- Summary of "TOTAL agrees" -



The most striking finding is that, whereas in September only one third of Germans felt that due to the presence of large numbers of foreigners or persons of foreign origin it is not possible to receive additional immigrants, now one out of two Germans (47%) hold this view. This very substantial change in the climate of public opinion, which must be viewed in the context that Germany received 1.1 million migrants in 2015, did not affect all electorates.

As shown in the following table, this opinion has grown regularly since September 2015 among supporters of the left, gaining 18 points among supporters of the SPD and 20 points among Grünen supporters whereas, during the same period, this idea, initially more prevalent among the conservative electorate, did not grow among CDU/CSU supporters.

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Changes in holding the following view: " Our country already has a large number of foreign nationals or people of foreign origin and it is not be possible to receive additional immigrants"

	September 2015	October 2015	March 2016	Change Sept. 2015/ March 2016
All Germans	33%	44%	47%	+ 14 pts
Die Linke Supporters	23%	31%	35%	+ 12 pts
SPD Supporters	19%	29%	37%	+ 18 pts
Grünen Supporters	7%	17%	27%	+ 20 pts
CDU/CSU Supporters	36%	35%	37%	+ 1 pt

However, we note that although this view has gained so much ground in Germany that it is now held by almost one person in two, in Italy and France, countries which have received substantially, even far substantially fewer migrants than Germany, this view is held by two out of three people.

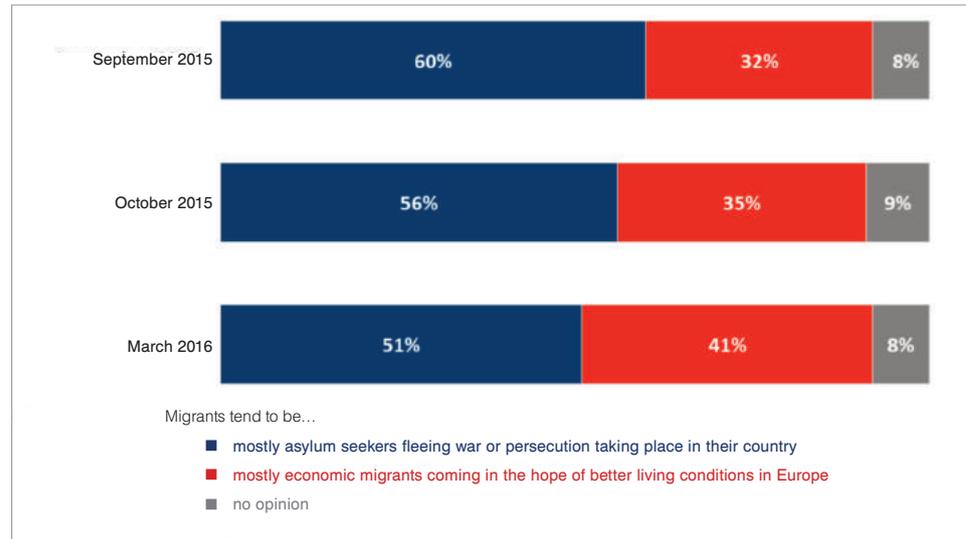
If German opinion is hardening, willingness to accept migrants remains greater there than in Italy and, especially, France. We also observe this when comparing other findings for these countries. Hence, it is in Germany that the sense of a duty to receive migrants is more widespread with 72% of responses in agreement with this point versus 69% in Italy and only 56% in France. A partial explanation of this is due to the fact that the German population continues to be much more confident (even though a downward movement was observed) in their country's ability to cope with the economic and financial costs of receiving migrants: 61% positive responses versus only, as we have seen, 28% in France and 24% in Italy.

Although a majority of Germans remain confident in the ability of their economy to cope with this major challenge, they are more divided than in September 2015 on whether the arrival and reception of hundreds of thousands of people provides an opportunity for economic stimulus: 48% today versus 55% in September 2015.

Another element that may partly explain (or reflect) the hardening of German public opinion is that more and more Germans feel that they are dealing with economic migrants rather than asylum seekers. In September 2015 only 32% viewed them as predominantly economic migrants. This proportion rose to 35% in October and now stands at 41% versus 51% who view the migrants as predominantly asylum seekers.

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Germany: the perceived status of migrants arriving in Europe



This change in perception is very decisive because it is highly correlated with views regarding the reception of migrants. Thus, among Germans in favor of receiving migrants, the response ratio of those viewing migrants as asylum seekers is 65% versus 28% who see them as economic migrants whereas the ratio is very different among opponents to reception where it is 18% versus 72%.

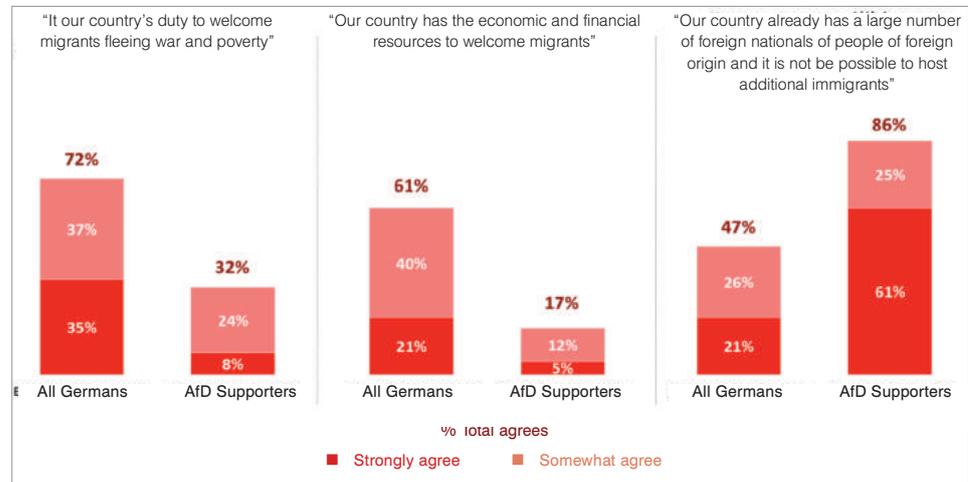
Once again, it is among voters who support the left that opinion has hardened most while Christian-Democrat supporters' opinion remains stable.

**Change in the perceived status of migrants.
% Of responses "are more likely asylum seekers fleeing war or persecution"**

	September 2015	October 2015	March 2016	Change Sept. 2015/ March 2016
All Germans	60%	56%	51%	- 9 pts
Die Linke Supporters	63%	60%	53%	- 10 pts
SPD Supporters	79%	70%	69%	- 10 pts
Grünen Supporters	88%	86%	78%	- 10 pts
CDU/CSU Supporters	64%	62%	65%	+ 1 pt

Although we are seeing an undeniable hardening of opinion on migrants among the left-wing electorates in Germany, we must also emphasize another important point: Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) supporters are extremely sensitive to this issue. As demonstrated in the following graph, these voters are particularly hostile to migrants and appear to be very much out of step with the rest of German society.

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It would seem to be the case that when the migrant crisis occurred a populist party, whose discourse focuses mainly on immigration, managed to achieve a significant breakthrough into the German political landscape, which had previously been preserved. We observe that the AfD, which had initially taken a stance against the euro, only had moderate success during the 2014 legislative elections, gaining 4.9 % of the vote. In view of the influx of migrants, the new party leadership decided to focus the movement on this topic, which has had much greater effect. On March 6th, the AfD won an average of 13.2% of votes during municipal elections in the Land of Hessen and won 10.2% in Frankfurt, 12.2% in Kassel and 16,2% in Wiesbaden. One week later, regional elections in three other Länder were a spectacular confirmation of this breakthrough both in the east with 24.2% of votes in Saxony-Anhalt and in the west with an outcome of 12.6% in Rhineland-Palatinate and 15.1% in the very affluent Baden-Württemberg.

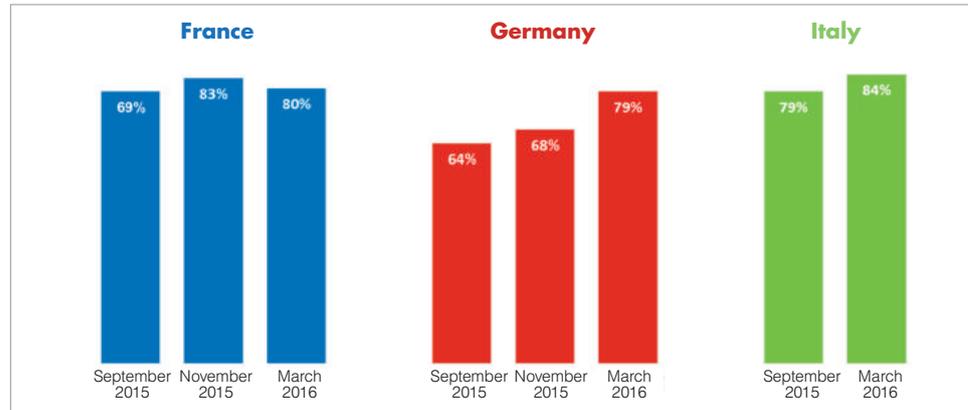
The Paris attacks then strengthened the "Trojan horse syndrome"

As early as September 2015, the scale of population movements underway and the fact that many migrants were coming from areas where Daesh (ISIS) is established, seemed to lend plausibility to a hypothesis according to which potential terrorists were entering Europe by blending in with migrants¹. Sixty-four percent of Germans, 69 % of French and an even greater proportion of Italians (79%) endorsed this hypothesis. This anxiety was probably reinforced by the fact that Italy had had early exposure to the large-scale arrival of migrants having transited through Libya—both a close country and a hub of jihadism. As shown in the following graph, in France and Germany, it was the Paris attacks the lent credibility to this hypothesis.

1. Note that the field of this survey was conducted before the Brussels bombings of March 22, 2016.

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Changes in the following view: "Among the great number of migrants currently arriving in Europe there are also potential terrorists"



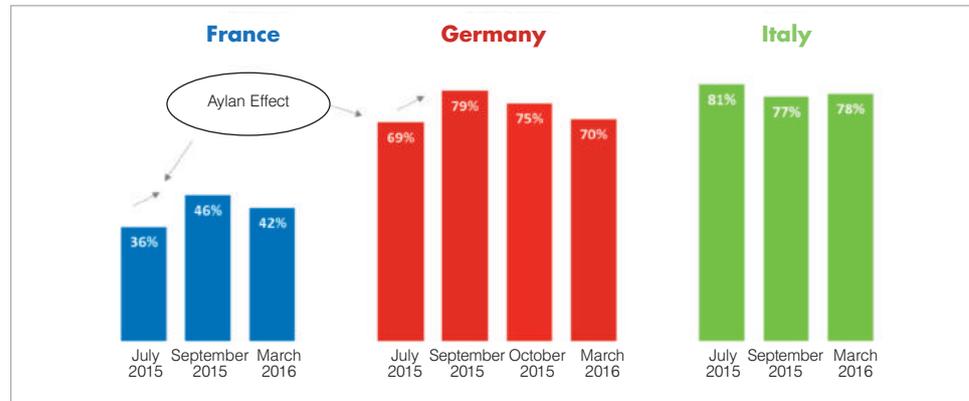
The discovery of Syrian passports on two suicide bombers at the Stade de France provided tangible evidence, along with the subsequent identification and arrest in several European countries (France, Belgium, Germany, Spain and Austria) of members of jihadist networks who had used the migrant crisis as an opportunity to gain entry into Europe. After the attacks, the belief in this idea of infiltration rose suddenly reaching 83% in France (in a poll conducted on November 16) stabilizing at 80% in this survey. A similar shift also seems to have occurred in Germany, since most of the increase took place between October (68%) and March (79%) and not between September and October. In Italy the impact was lower (up from 79% to 84%) but, as we have seen, a fear of this type of scenario was already very present in Italy as early as September 2015.

After the "Aylan effect", a "Stade de France effect" and a "Cologne effect"

In early September the publication of photographs of young Aylan lying dead on a beach in Turkey caused shock in European public opinion. At that time in France and Germany there was a 10- point jump in acceptance of the principle to redistribute migrants among EU Member States and, within this framework, for both countries to accept a share of them. Italian public opinion, which had already had to cope with a large number of humanitarian tragedies leading to hundreds of drowned people off its coast, was already the most in favor of this principle. The Aylan effect did not have the same impact on them, as shown in the following graph.

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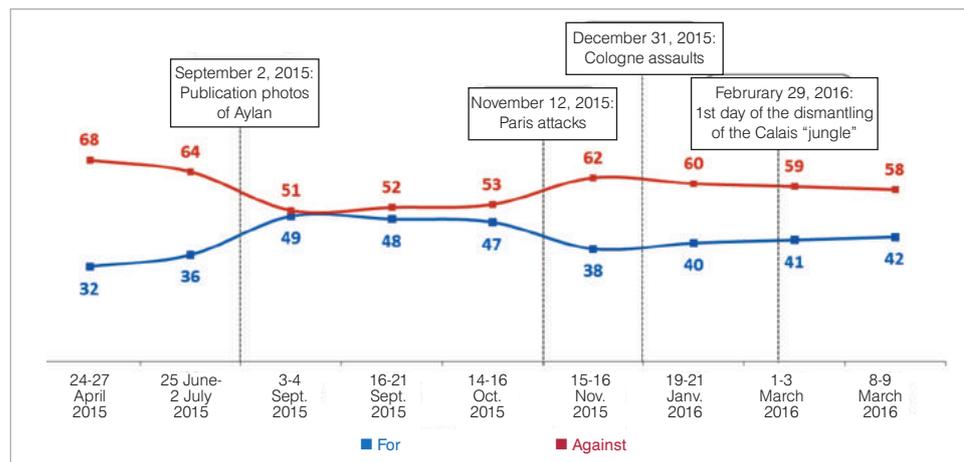
Acceptance of distributing migrant flows among Member States and accepting a share of them in your country



However, this graph also shows that the increased acceptance of this idea in the aftermath of the publication of these photos has since disappeared completely in Germany and partially in France. For France, we have a whole series of measurements making it possible to put precise dates and list specific events after which the decreasing acceptance took place. As we can see on the following curves, the drop took place after the November 13th attacks. In the view of French public opinion, the participation of infiltrated jihadists in the attacks established a very close link between the issues of migrants and terrorism.

Acceptance of migrant arrival for various European countries and France

Question: Are you for or against the redistribution to various European countries of the tens of thousands of migrants currently arriving on the coasts of Greece and Italy with France receiving a share of them?



The involvement of migrants in the Cologne assaults, which shocked the French, did not produce the same effects in France as the November attacks, since acceptance of the principle of migrant distribution and accepting a share of them did not decline further. On the other hand, we may infer that in Germany these two elements, in conjunction with the continuing, large-scale arrivals and the absence of European solidarity, explain the observed decline.

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The completely different situation in France and Germany, the latter receiving most of the migrant flows to Europe whereas France sees very little inflows, must be borne in mind when analyzing and comparing responses to this question. For the French, who have very few migrants on their soil, responding positively is mainly an expression of a willingness to receive migrants. For the Germans responding positively means especially that the flow of arrivals should be distributed more fairly among Member States. Once we account for this contextual difference, there is nevertheless a 28-point difference between the two countries (and a 16-point difference regarding the statement “It is our country’s duty to receive migrants fleeing war and poverty”). This reflects a profound difference within the Franco-German relationship. Manuel Valls expressed this difference, in particular, in his statement in Munich on February 13.

The idea of a temporary crisis is gradually giving way to a scenario of a long-lasting crisis

As the flow of migrants did not dwindle nor even slow during the winter months, a growing share of Germans and French begin to recognize that the arrivals will continue at the same level of intensity for several years.

Between September and March, the percentage of people thinking that the phenomenon would only last a few weeks or months dropped from 20% to 7% in France and from 21% to 11% in Germany. At the same time, people who predicted that arrivals would continue at the same pace for more than three years grew, in France from 38% to 48%, in Germany from 34% to 42% and in Italy from 55% to 60%².

Predictions about how long migrant flows will last at the same pace



2. Once again we observe Italian public opinion differs. The population has been coping with large-scale arrivals of migrants for a longer time and in September they had already understood it would be a long-term process. This feeling has increased since then but less than in France and Germany.

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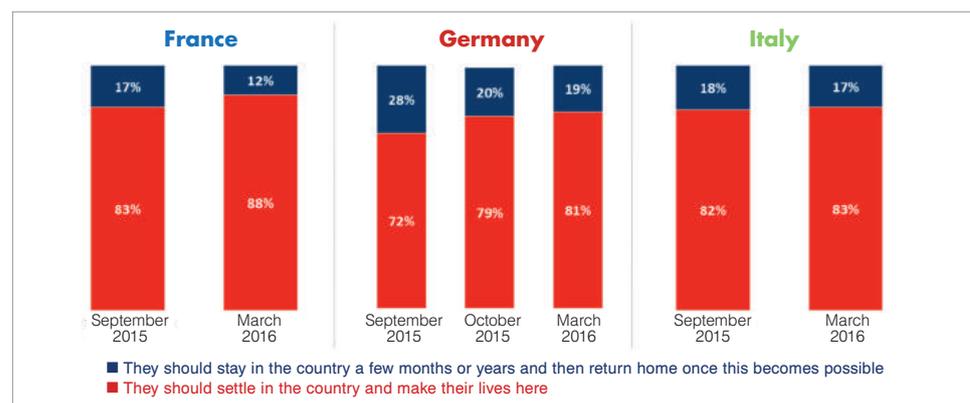
Although we see the expression of differences of approach and opinion between the countries, we do, however, begin to see an ever-greater proportion of Europeans sharing the view that the migration crisis is not cyclical but structural. This changed perception of the nature of the crisis is fundamental because reactions and expectations in the event of a temporary crisis are very different from those encountered when facing a long-lasting challenge. As this expectation becomes more widespread we see, in particular, an increased refusal to receive migrants because there is a very high correlation between, on the one hand the attitude to receiving migrants and their redistribution to all Member States, and, on the other hand, the expectation that arrivals will continue, as shown in the following table:

% Responses "Arrivals will continue at this pace for longer than 4 years."

	Among people in favor of reception	Among people in against reception	Difference
France	20%	47%	+ 27 pts
Germany	23%	48%	+ 25 pts
Italy	39%	52%	+ 13 pts

Another point on which there is sweeping agreement in the three countries: the future for these migrants. An overwhelming majority (88% in France, 83% in Italy and 81% in Germany) wants them to stay in the host country for only a few months or years and then return home, once this becomes possible.

What the future for migrants should be

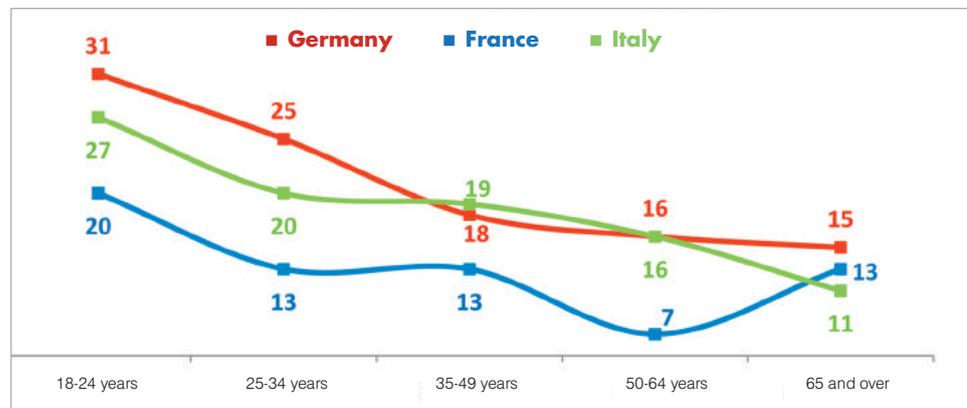


In September 2015 there was already an overwhelming majority in the three countries surveyed rejecting the notion of long-term settlement. This majority has grown further since then, increasing by 9 points in Germany, 5 points in France and one point in Italy. Even in the socialist and social democratic electorates, a desire to see migrants establish roots and make their lives in the host country is extremely infrequent. It follows that 23% of SPD supporters, 18% of French Socialist Party (PS) supporters and 16% of Partito-Democratico supporters share this view.

Similarly, although the wish to see migrants make their lives in Europe declines with age, senior citizens being the most opposed to this scenario, we observe that even among the young this wish remains in the extreme minority.

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% Of people who want migrants to settle and make their lives in the country



The Schengen Agreement under scrutiny.

As we have seen, the migrant crisis has led to substantial disagreement within the Franco-German relationship, a foundation of the European construction. What is more, the crisis also increasingly jeopardizes one of the main achievements of the European construction, the Schengen Agreement. The prevailing sentiment we have described is affected by:

- The idea that migrant flows will continue at the same level of intensity for several years and that the migrant reception policies enacted will contribute to maintaining these flows, according to the idea of “fostering further influxes”,
- The widely held fear that terrorists are using the flow of migrants to Europe as a Trojan Horse,
- The very prevalent sentiment in France and Italy, now practically a majority view in Germany, that the capacity to receive and integrate immigrant populations has been reached,
- The wish expressed by 8 out of 10 Europeans that migrants should return home fairly quickly,

In this climate of opinion, a very large majority is emerging in the three countries in favor of rescinding the Schengen Agreement and reestablishing, at least temporarily, border checkpoints between each country and its neighboring European Union members. Today, this is the position held by 72% of the French, 66% of Germans and 60% of Italians.

Under pressure from the migratory flows and aware of this demand emerging from their respective populations, many governments have already brought back border controls or even closed their borders within the Schengen area. Over the past year, more and more of these initiatives have been taken, leading to knock on effects in neighboring countries. Thus demonstrating to European public opinion that the scenario of dismantling Schengen, an inconceivable scenario just two years ago (and was then only being called for by populist groups), carrying with it very considerable political and symbolic consequences for the European ideal, could be set in motion by completely responsible and respectable governments.

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2015-2016 the return of border controls within the Schengen Area

- 14 June 2015: France implements border controls at the French Italian border in Ventimiglia.
- 13 September 2015: Austria announces it is going to build a metal fence on its border with Slovenia, the first barrier within the Schengen Area, Hungary already having built one on its border with Serbia, which is not a member of the Schengen Area.
- 13 September 2015: Germany, overwhelmed by the influx of migrants, sets up border controls along its border with Austria and the Czech Republic.
- 13 September 2015: as a result of this decision by Germany, the Czech Republic does the same with Hungary.
- 14 September 2015: Slovakia, fearing migrant flows will shift to its territory, then also adopts border control measures with Austria and Hungary.
- 14 November 2015: in the aftermath of the Paris attacks, the French government announces controls at all of its borders.
- 4 January 2016: Sweden, the second destination for migrants after Germany, sets up border controls on the bridge linking it to Denmark.
- 4 January 2016: Denmark sets up border controls at the German border as a result of the Swedish decision.
- 16 January 2016: Austria reestablishes its borders with Italy, Hungary and Slovenia and limits to 80 per day the number of asylum seekers entering its territory.
- 23 February 2016: fearing migrant flows resulting from the dismantlement of part of the Calais “jungle”, Belgium sets up temporary controls on its border with France in the Calais region.

The increasing number of these unilateral initiatives, several of which are simply reactions to similar initiatives taken by a neighboring country, serves to undermine, symbolically and very tangibly, one of the founding principles of the European idea: the freedom of movement of people. The elimination of the Schengen Agreement would simply confirm and officialize a situation that already exists, de facto, on the ground, which, as we have seen, would be favored by a large majority of European public opinion. Hence, when we analyze the results in detail, we see very few electorates would have a great majority opposing the dismantlement of one of the main achievements of the European construction. The staunchest supporters of Schengen are to be found among Partito Democratico supporters (64% oppose dismantlement), FDP supporters (51%) in Germany and ecologists in Germany (49%) and in France (46%). These political groups have fairly little influence and are not powerful enough to constitute an effective barrier to resist the rise of Euro-scepticism.

As a sign of the depth of the crisis, we observe large majorities in favor of rescinding the Schengen Agreement in electorates that have historically supported and promoted the European ideal. Thus, in France, we see approval rates in favor of rescinding Schengen stand at 73% for the Modem and at 68% for the UDI centrist parties with a rate of 60% among PS supporters. Approval rates in Germany stand at 61% for SPD voters and reach the same level among CDU/CSU voters (62%). Less unexpectedly, consistent with their traditionally anti-European or Eurosceptic stance, supporters of far right-wing groups register the highest scores in favor of eliminating the Schengen Agreement. We observe identical and massive support in all three countries: 85% among supporters of

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the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), 84% for Front National (FN) supporters and 83% for Lega Nord supporters. In the latter two countries, we would point out that the results observed in the ranks of the conventional right-wing are similar (85% among les Républicains) or very close (76% among supporters of Fratelli d'Italia and 72% among supporters of Forza Italia) to the results observed for the extreme right, as though we were witnessing a hardening and a sovereigntist shift in the traditional right-wing when it comes to the European construction.