4 Public support for social integration

In chapter 3 it was argued that less successful economic integration by migrants can be explained not only by factors relating to their origin or discernible individual characteristics, but possibly also by resistance among the indigenous population to ethnic minorities. This resistance could have consequences for the position of those minorities and their degree of integration into the host society. The most tangible form of this resistance, but also the most difficult to measure, is discrimination on the labour market. Recent studies by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) suggest that the degree of this discrimination varies between EU member states (Jandl et al. 2003). One determining factor for (intended) discrimination against minorities is the extent to which indigenous people distance themselves from ethnic minorities (‘ethnic distance’) and perceive the arrival and presence of immigrants as a threat. The current public debate in the EU appears to focus mainly on the question of how the integration of immigrants can be promoted. What seems to be ignored in this debate is how willing the indigenous population of the EU is to accept the social integration of immigrants, to what extent they are prepared to engage and interact with minorities. This chapter explores this public support and examines the degree of resistance shown by the indigenous population of the EU to social interaction with members of ethnic minorities: to what extent do Europeans avoid contact with members of ethnic minorities at work and in their personal lives? To answer this question, the chapter looks at the strength of this resistance in different population groups. It also focuses on the role played by the economic and cultural interests of the indigenous population and the extent to which people believe that migrants harm those interests. Attention then turns to the extent to which differences between member states in ethnic distance and perceived ethnic threat relate with differences in economic conditions and the presence of minorities. Finally, the issue discussed in chapter 1 is revisited, namely the level at which indigenous residents would like decisions on immigration to be taken; this is linked to the perceived threat from ethnic minorities to ascertain whether there is a relation between these feelings and whether indigenous residents wish to keep decisions on immigration within their national borders or would prefer a common European approach. To answer these questions data were analysed from the European Social Survey (ESS), gathered in the winter of 2002-2003.

4.1 Theory

Ethnic exclusion has often come to the surface as a reaction to the arrival of large groups of immigrants. In the early 1980s and 1990s strong growth in the number of immigrants, especially asylum-seekers, more than once caused commotion and unrest among a growing group of Europeans (Coenders and Scheepers 1998). However, reaction to the arrival of immigrants is only one of the many facets of ethnic exclusion. Research on this facet can largely be seen as a European tradition (Pettigrew 1998). On other aspects pioneering research has been carried out largely in the United States, where a strong research tradition has grown aimed at explaining ethnocentrism, a term that is used to describe a situation where positive prejudices about one’s own group are accompanied by negative prejudices about other groups (Sumner 1906; Jones 1997). Another tradition is concerned with research on resistance to the presence of immigrants and on the contacts between different groups in society. This aspect is often referred to as social or ethnic distance. It was first studied by Bogardus (1933). He expected that the more closely members of ethnic minorities approached
the majority, the more members of that majority would seek to maintain a distance and avoid actual contact (Hagendoorn 1995; Parillo and Donoghue 2002). This research approach is an interesting one for the recent situation in Europe, where the focus is mainly on the integration of migrants who are already present.

Differences between countries in the degree of ethnic distance can be explained among other things on the basis of the Ethnic Competition Theory (Blalock 1967; Olzak 1992). Briefly, this theory states that increased competition between ethnic groups puts interethnic relations under pressure. This occurs where people are competing for scarce (cultural or economic) goods, or where fewer such goods are available for distribution, something which the theory posits happens during immigration waves or at times of economic recession. As chapters 2 and 3 of this Outlook have already shown that there are differences between member states in the degree to which these circumstances occur, this could explain differences between those member states in the degree of resistance to minorities.

In addition to a European comparative perspective, differences between population groups within a given society are also key. Earlier research has shown that certain population groups exclude ethnic minorities to a greater extent than other groups (see e.g. Coenders 2001). This heightened degree of ethnic exclusionism is often assumed to relate with the extent to which these groups perceive ethnic minorities as a threat (Quillian 1995; Scheepers et al. 2002), with groups that have more contacts with ethnic minorities perceiving a greater threat from them.

4.2 Ethnic distance

The traditional method for measuring ethnic distance is to gauge the degree of resistance to social interaction with members of ethnic groups in various domains, such as within the residential neighbourhood, at work and in personal relationships. In the European Social Survey, respondents were asked how much they would object to having an immigrant as a boss at work. They were also asked how much they would object if a member of their family were to marry an immigrant. Roughly 20% of the population of the EU member states – in other words a substantial minority – exhibited ethnic distance in their working or private lives. Figure 4.1 shows the average scores on ethnic distance for 19 member states. All ‘old member states’ are represented in the study; the new member states included are Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. The results show that the indigenous Dutch are close to the European average in their resistance to social interaction with ethnic minorities.

1 The actual question put to respondents (in Dutch) was: ‘Thinking about people who have come to live in the Netherlands from another country and who are of a different race or ethnic group from the majority of Dutch people, to what extent do you object or not object to such a person being appointed as your boss, or to such a person marrying a close member of your family?’ Both questions were also put with respect to immigrants of the same race or ethnic group. Factor and LISREL analyses showed that all four items referred to the same concept of ethnic distance. Moreover, this measurement was found to exhibit cross-national equivalence, with the factor loadings being cross-nationally invariant.

2 The figures shown are the averages on the constructed scale, not percentages. The items that refer to ethnic distance were added together and the scale reduced to a scale ranging from 0 to 1.

3 Respondents have the nationality of the country studied. For a detailed report of the findings and an explanation of the methods used and comparison of the measurement models, see Coenders et al. (2004).
The position of the Scandinavian countries corresponds with the findings of previous research into ethnic exclusion. In Sweden and Denmark, in particular, the ethnic distance is smaller than the European average. The same applies in Western and Central European countries such as Luxembourg, France, Germany and Austria. The position of Austria is striking given its less positive position in earlier comparative research and given the strong support for the right-wing populist FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) led by Jörg Haider.⁴

Figure 4.1 Ethnic distance in 19 EU member states

The ethnic distance in Spain and Portugal is also below the European average. However, this smaller ethnic distance cannot be seen as a Mediterranean phenomenon, because ethnic distance is higher than average in Italy and especially in Greece. This exceptional position of Greece also emerges in other comparative research, where other aspects of ethnic exclusion are taken into account (Coenders et al. 2004). The fact that the immigrant population in Greece is proportionately many times greater than in the other three Mediterranean countries may be a factor here.⁵ A frequently posited post hoc explanation for the position of Greece is that the high proportion of illegal immigrants is related to the years of unrest in the Balkans in the 1990s. Comparative figures on percentages of illegal immigrants are however not available (or not reliable), so that this explanation cannot be investigated further.

Belgium is the only Western European member state where the ethnic distance is greater than average. The idea that the right-wing Vlaams Blok party spreads ideas

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⁴ Historical explanations may also play a role, but are difficult to test empirically and were therefore left out of consideration.

⁵ Although this is not shown in the Eurostat figures presented in chapter 2. Those figures are based on statistics from the 1990s; the higher percentage reported here is taken from the Greek census from 2001 (General Secretariat of National Statistical Services of Greece, 2004), in which the percentage of Albanians is considerably higher than in the earlier statistics.
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Bordering on racism appears plausible, but runs into problems when extrapolated to other member states with strong or strengthening anti-immigration parties, such as France, Denmark and Austria: the ethnic distance in these countries is no higher than average, even though their anti-immigration parties are comparable in size to the Vlaams Blok.

In the new member states studied, ethnic distance is stronger than average in the Czech Republic and Slovenia, and barely deviates from the average in Poland and Hungary. It is striking in this respect that the findings of the ILO on the level of discrimination in the four countries studied – the Netherlands, Germany, France and the UK – cannot simply be superimposed on the findings presented here. There is virtually no difference between the above four member states in the degree to which residents distance themselves from ethnic minorities.

4.3 Differences between population groups in ethnic distance

This section presents an impression of the ethnic distance shown by different population groups in the total group of EU member states studied. The differences in ethnic distance between population groups are also shown for the member state where these differences are most marked.\(^6\)

**Figure 4.2 Ethnic distance by education level\(^7\)**

\(^6\) Coefficients of association were used to investigate in which member state the correlation between a characteristic and ethnic distance was strongest; the member state concerned was then included in the figure.

\(^7\) The Dutch categories of secondary education MBO (senior secondary vocational education), HAVO (senior general secondary education) and VWO (pre-university education) were combined to facilitate a European comparison. If these categories are studied separately for the Netherlands, people with an MBO education display a greater ethnic distance than the Dutch average.
The relationship between education level and degree of resistance to ethnic minorities is as expected and corresponds with findings from earlier research: the lower the education level, the more strongly ethnic distance is endorsed (see figure 4.2). The difference between people with a high and low education level is a large one: twice as many people with a low education level support ethnic distance than university graduates. This difference is found in all member states, but is most pronounced in the Netherlands.

Differences in the degree of ethnic distance between people in different social positions – measured by the chief activity of respondents – lend themselves well to comparison between EU member states. As figure 4.3 illustrates, among the working population, higher and lower-level professionals exhibit less ethnic distance. Manual workers (skilled and unskilled) and self-employed persons, by contrast, show greater ethnic distance. As the differences between the categories are most marked in Belgium, the findings for that country are shown in the figure. Not only is the average higher in Belgium, but it also scores higher in almost every category shown. Despite this, the pattern is comparable with the picture for all member states. Exceptions within countries to the general pattern are found when the position of routine non-manual workers is taken into consideration. In Denmark, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia the ethnic distance among this group of workers is higher than the average for these countries.

Figure 4.3 Ethnic distance by social position
The general pattern suggests that in occupational groups containing relatively more immigrants (Kiehl and Werner 1999), the ethnic distance is actually stronger. This fits in with the fact that the proportion of immigrants is above average among (skilled and unskilled) manual workers and self-employed persons, and that the ethnic distance is greater in these groups. This finding is also in line with the expectation that a higher presence of ethnic groups poses a threat to those occupational groups which have more contacts with ethnic minorities in practice. In other words, it would seem that it is easy to profess little ethnic distance when one has few contacts with ethnic minorities, as is the case for (lower and higher-level) professionals. The earlier chapters showed that the labour market structure is not the same in all countries and that in Southern Europe in particular ethnic minorities perform relatively well in terms of labour market participation. According to Kiehl and Werner (1999), in these member states, too, minorities from outside the EU are also employed mainly in 'elementary occupations', and it is plausible that it is mainly indigenous manual workers who therefore perceive ethnic minorities as a threat.

When the groups who are not active on the labour market are considered, it is striking that pensioners and housewives/househusbands ('in household' in the figure) show more ethnic distance than average. Finally, the unemployed in the member states studied also show an above-average distance to ethnic minorities, though there are differences of degree. In the new member states studied, for example, the unemployed show a lower ethnic distance than average.

Figure 4.4 shows the relationship between income and ethnic distance. The fact that low-income groups show slightly more evidence of ethnic distance than the higher income categories fits in with the above findings with regard to education and social position. Yet the differences between the income categories are smaller than the differences found between different education categories or the groups distinguished by social position. In fact in many member states there is virtually no relationship to be found. This applies in particular for the Eastern and Southern European member states. The biggest differences between income categories are found in the UK, and are therefore included in the figure.

Older persons show much more ethnic distance than younger people (see figure 4.5). People aged over 70 have the least desire to have anything to do with members of ethnic minorities; this feeling is almost twice as strong as among those in their twenties. It is striking to note however that in many member states a change is taking place in the youngest age group: the ethnic distance among teenagers is greater than among people in their twenties and thirties. The UK serves as an example in the figure.

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8 Income was measured as net household income. As a relatively large number of respondents did not state their income, the missing value substitution technique was used, with income being estimated on the basis of education level, social position, age, sex, civil status and presence of a partner or children.
Figure 4.4 Ethnic distance by income quartile

Figure 4.5 Ethnic distance by age category

Figure 4.6 portrays the degree of ethnic distance according to degree of urbanisation. Interestingly, ethnic distance is found to be strongest in villages and rural areas. This applies particularly in Austria and Slovenia, but a similar pattern is also found in most
other member states. In contrast to the picture portrayed in the (West-European) media, namely that resistance to minorities is greatest in the large cities, these findings show that ethnic distance in the largest cities is actually the lowest. Although the ethnic competition theory suggested that the presence of minorities leads to a greater degree of competition, another mechanism may be at work here. Opportunities for contacts with ethnic minorities are greater in the towns and cities because of the concentration of immigrants in urban areas, especially in Western Europe. The ‘contact theory’ posits that actual contact can reduce the perceived threat from ethnic groups (Allport 1954; Gijsberts and Dagevos 2004). Distrust of the unfamiliar could then feature more strongly in rural areas than for people living in urban districts. In the countries of Eastern Europe, where ethnic groups including Roma are also relatively strongly represented outside the major cities, it is plausible that the competition theory does apply.

4.4 Explanations for ethnic distance

The next step in the analysis is to explain differences between countries in the degree of ethnic distance and to identify the determinants. This will indicate the extent to which ethnic distance can be explained on the basis of individual and national char-

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9 Italy forms an exception here, as the ethnic distance is slightly greater in the large cities. In Greece, the ethnic distance is greatest in villages, in line with the general finding, but after this is strongest in the large cities.
10 This multivariate analysis is a multilevel analysis in which the variance components are separated at individual and country level. For a description of the model structure and the goodness of fit, see Coenders et al. (2004).
acteristics. The analyses are based on data on 18 member states drawn from the European Social Survey.\(^{11}\)

The individual characteristics that explain ethnic distance are shown in Appendix 4.1 (table 4.1, first model). The effect of education is especially strong, with people with a higher education background showing less ethnic distance. The difference observed earlier between income categories disappears, however: the difference in ethnic distance shown by high and low income categories is attributable to differences in their education and social position. The differences between population groups are also virtually the same as the earlier findings. Variation in the population profile between countries gives an indication for differences in their degree of ethnic distance: countries with a higher proportion of indigenous people with a low education level show a higher degree of ethnic distance. These are referred to as composition effects.\(^{12}\)

Interestingly enough, virtually no relation is found between ethnic distance and low GDP or high unemployment.\(^{13}\) Even the percentage of ethnic minorities, the net migration in the second half of the 1990s and the influx of asylum-seekers tell us little – within this selection of member states – about the extent of differences in resistance to ethnic minorities between member states.

The extent to which people perceive ethnic minorities as a threat proves to be highly relevant in explaining ethnic distance. In model three in table 4.1 (Appendix 4.1) this explanation is included alongside other perceptions. The effect is very strong, with people who perceive a greater threat from ethnic minorities maintaining a greater distance to them. Interestingly, social and political distrust have no direct effect on ethnic distance.\(^{14}\) People who feel unsafe do however show greater ethnic distance.\(^{15}\) Finally, there is confirmation that people with a ‘right-wing’ political orientation have a stronger desire to keep ethnic minorities at a distance than people on the left of the political spectrum.

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\(^{11}\) It should be noted that France was left out of these multivariate analyses because the French data were published just before the appearance of this report. France is however included in the European average described earlier. In addition, the former East and West Germany were treated separately in the multivariate analysis.

\(^{12}\) At the bottom of table 4.1 in Appendix 4.1 it is stated that 20.7% of the variance in ethnic distance between member states is explained by including individual characteristics.

\(^{13}\) The measures used for the country characteristics are described in Appendix 4.2.

\(^{14}\) Social distrust was measured on the basis of three items, which together form a reliable scale (Cronbachs alpha = .77); ‘Generally speaking, do you think that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be careful enough in dealing with people?’; ‘Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they had the chance, or would they try to be honest?’; ‘Do you think that most people try to be helpful or do you think that they usually think only of themselves?’.

Political distrust was measured using four items, which together form a reliable scale (Cronbachs alpha = .76); ‘Generally speaking, do think that politicians are concerned about what people like you think?’; ‘Do you think that politicians are interested only in getting people’s votes, and less interested in people’s views?’; ‘On a scale of 0 to 10, can you indicate how much trust you have in the Dutch parliament?’; ‘On a scale of 0 to 10, can you indicate how much trust you have in politicians?’.

\(^{15}\) Perceived lack of personal safety was measured using the question: ‘How safe do you feel – or would you feel – if you (were to) walk around this neighbourhood in the dark?’. It should be noted that actual victimhood does not have a (direct) effect on ethnic distance; this effect is not included in the table. Actual victimhood was measured using the question: ‘Have you or has anyone in your household been a victim of a burglary or of physical violence during the last five years?’. 
As countries differ in the extent of perceived ethnic threat, this aspect also offers an explanation for differences between countries in the degree of ethnic distance. In other words, the ethnic distance in a given country is greater because people there perceive a greater threat from ethnic minorities. Time, then, to look in more depth at this perceived threat.

4.5 Perceived threat from ethnic minorities

The questions put to respondents refer both to economic and cultural ethnic threat. They explore whether people fear that immigrants ‘steal jobs’, ‘cost more than they contribute’ and ‘are bad for the economy’, or whether migrants ‘undermine their culture’ or ‘make the country a worse place to live’. One question looks at the relationship between immigrants and crime, and asks respondents whether the problem of crime has become worse due to the arrival of people from other countries. Despite these different domains in which perceived ethnic threat can be situated, the response patterns relate so strongly that it can confidently be said that all these aspects refer to the overarching concept of a ‘perceived threat from ethnic minorities’. More than half the population of the EU perceive some level of threat from the immigrants in their country. There are however wide differences between member states, with – once again – the position of the Greeks standing out (see figure 4.7); there is no other country where the perceived ethnic threat is as high as in Greece.

Apart from Greece, the new member states Hungary and the Czech Republic also stand out, with a perceived threat from ethnic minorities that is above the European average. The sensitive relations with the large Roma minority play a role in these countries, but evidently people also see the arrival and presence of immigrants in general as a threat. In Poland and Slovenia – the other new member states considered in this study – the perceived ethnic threat is close to the European average.

Figure 4.7 Perceived threat from ethnic minorities in 19 EU member states

16 The figures shown are the averages on the constructed scale, not percentages. The items that refer to ethnic threat were added together and the scale reduced to a scale ranging from 0 to 1.
In the West-European member states, the perceived ethnic threat is somewhat stronger in the UK and Belgium. In Denmark and Austria, two member states which occasionally recorded above-average scores in the 1990s for negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities (Quillian 1995), the perceived ethnic threat is in fact below the average. This is also the case in the other Scandinavian member states and in Luxembourg. It would seem that to some degree people in the wealthier member states see ethnic minorities as less of a threat than people in the less prosperous countries.

4.6 Explanations for perceived ethnic threat

Like ethnic distance, perceived ethnic threat is greater among people with a low education level and people with a low income (see Table 4.2 in Appendix 4.1). These groups are more afraid that ethnic minorities will harm the economy, ‘steal’ jobs and ‘undermine’ the culture of the host country. Self-employed persons and manual workers feel this threat to greater extent than people working in professions at the upper end of the social ladder. The unemployed, pensioners and people working in the household also see a greater threat from ethnic minorities. The rural population perceive a greater threat than people living in towns.

The perceived threat from ethnic minorities can be clearly linked to the national context. It is significantly smaller in countries with stronger economies, measured by the size of their GDP, though to some extent the influence of GDP is cancelled out by the presence and arrival of ethnic minorities; this is not surprising given that – as described in chapters 2 and 3 – the wealthier member states attract more immigrants. The analyses show that in member states where the percentage of ethnic minorities is higher and where net migration has been stronger, the perceived threat from ethnic minorities is also higher. The unemployment rate and number of asylum requests are found to have no influence on the perceived ethnic threat.

Finally, the study looked at the importance of individual perceptions for the perceived threat from ethnic minorities. People who regard themselves as being on the political right perceive a greater ethnic threat. In addition, a general distrust of others is accompanied by a higher perceived ethnic threat; people who feel unsafe also perceive a greater ethnic threat. As became clear for the Dutch situation in chapter 1 of this report, there is moreover a fairly strong correlation between distrust of politics and the perceived threat from ethnic minorities. There is a dilemma here, in that it will be difficult for the government and/or establishment politics to remove perceived ethnic threat, whereas the group who perceive this threat will readily respond to the messages of populist political leaders.

4.7 Perceived ethnic threat and allocation of responsibility for immigration policy

Finally, this chapter shows the extent to which perceived ethnic threat determines people’s preference as to where decisions on immigration policy are taken. Do Europeans want decisions on immigration to be taken by their own national governments or would they prefer a European or international approach, and to what extent does ethnic threat play a role in these preferences? One finding that can be stated straight away is that most people support a multinational approach to immigration; the degree of perceived ethnic threat has little influence on this. Differences are however found when preferences for the EU and for the national state are compared (see figure 4.8). It then emerges that people who perceive a threat from ethnic minorities are more in
favour of keeping decisions on immigration at the national level and are less inclined to favour a European approach.

The relation found between perceived ethnic threat and the preferred level of decision-making is particularly strong in France, but a comparable pattern is found in all member states included in the study, with the striking exception of Italy, Portugal and Spain, where such a relation is virtually absent. It may be that the specific experiences in these member states with overseas refugees mean that even people who perceive immigrants as a threat would like to see European or other international cooperation on immigration.

Figure 4.8 Preferred decision-making level on immigration

Preferred decision-making level on immigration by the population of the EU member states, subdivided into three sub-populations: those who perceive no threat from ethnic minorities, those who perceive an average threat and those who perceive a high threat.

4.8 Concluding remarks

The population of the EU member states perceive a fairly high level of economic and cultural threat from ethnic minorities. This perceived threat is in turn a major reason for keeping ethnic minorities at a distance in people’s day-to-day lives. This phenomenon is particularly strong in Greece, where people feel very threatened by the arrival and presence of ethnic minorities. The perceived threat in the Czech Republic and Hungary is also significantly greater than in the other member states. Among the West-European member states, only Belgium records both a higher than average perceived ethnic threat and ethnic distance.

The empirical findings for 2002-2003 suggest that the resistance to ethnic minorities in the Netherlands after the turbulent year 2002 is not exceptionally high compared with other member states. While the findings confirm that the Netherlands has no reason to congratulate itself on account of the tolerance for which it was once famed,
the figures do not support the idea that the Netherlands has 'swung too far the other way' and become especially intolerant. In a European perspective, the Netherlands occupies a solid middle position. People in the Scandinavian countries, Austria and Luxembourg are less troubled by ethnic distance. Moreover, people in the Scandinavian member states and in Luxembourg perceive an economic and cultural threat from ethnic minorities to a much lesser extent than in the other member states.

Differences in ethnic distance between the member states could not be explained in this study by the country characteristics included in the study. The degree to which residents of the different member states vary in the perceived threat from ethnic minorities does however offer an explanation for differences in ethnic distance. To some extent, this economic and cultural threat is determined directly by the context. In countries with a weaker economy (expressed as a lower GDP) and in countries where net migration has been higher and where the percentage of ethnic minorities living in the country is larger, there is a greater perceived ethnic threat. For Greece, which has a lower GDP and has seen a relatively large increase in its immigrant population, this could explain the high level of perceived threat from ethnic minorities.

If the findings in chapters 2 and 3 on unemployment and the activity rate of immigrants are extrapolated to this chapter, it becomes apparent that the perceived ethnic threat is lower in member states where ethnic minorities are doing less well on the labour market. International differences in the degree of ethnic distance and ethnic threat thus appear unable to explain why ethnic minorities perform less well on the labour market in these member states. It may be that a trend study could offer a more pertinent answer to this question. Based on the present findings it could be concluded that when ethnic minorities perform relatively well on the labour market in comparison to the indigenous population, and when new migrants enter the jobs market, the perceived threat from ethnic minorities will be high. Admitting immigrants in order to make up for the decline in the indigenous population brings the danger that tensions will arise between the two groups if native citizens have the idea that they are being passed over in favour of ethnic minorities. Finally, it should be noted that although there is wide variation between member states, the perceived threat from ethnic minorities is considerable in all countries studied, including in the Scandinavian member states.

The differences found between population groups are reasonably consistent: people with a limited education level are found to exhibit stronger resistance to ethnic minorities than people with a higher education background. The same applies for manual workers and self-employed persons. The explanation found for this is that these groups perceive a greater threat from ethnic minorities than other sections of the population. To some extent the same applies for people living in villages and in the countryside because – strikingly enough – the perceived threat from ethnic minorities was found to be higher precisely in these areas.

The importance of social and political distrust also became clear; both aspects relate strongly with perceived threat from ethnic minorities. This means that policymakers will have a difficult task in reaching people who perceive a threat from ethnic minorities. Finally, people who perceive a threat from ethnic minorities are more strongly in favour than people who perceive little ethnic threat of keeping immigration policy decisions at national level.