





No longer sidelined? Football fandom, belonging, and the boundaries of Europe

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ABSTRACT

In times of ‘polycrisis’, numerous challenges threaten unity and cohesion on the European continent. European identities can play an important part in navigating these challenges and fostering solidarity. One key to understanding European identities is analysing the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, as constructions of belonging form an essential component of individual and collective identities. Football fandom, a popular and highly Europeanised cultural phenomenon, has the potential to shape constructions of belonging to Europe. Given the diverse participation in European football, we posit that the identities of football fans are more inclusive than those of non-fans. Our analysis indicates that football fans are more likely to count countries outside of what is commonly associated with Europe as European. This points to a distinct effect of cultural integration through football and underscores the role football plays in fostering a sense of unity and shared identity across the continent. The findings highlight the importance of leveraging cultural avenues to strengthen European cohesion and unity in times of uncertainty.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, scholars and policymakers have emphasised the importance of nurturing a sense of European identity to address the ‘polycrisis’ (Zeitlin, Nicoli, and Laffan 2019) that poses a significant threat to the unity and cohesion of the European community (Ferrara and Kriesi 2022; Riddervold, Trondal, and Newsome 2021). A shared sense of being ‘European’ and bonds of trust, solidarity, and mutual understanding through the recognition of a fundamental sameness in the face of cultural, social, political, and historical diversity can raise support for communally coordinated action and increase the legitimacy of supranational decision-making. This applies to the European Union (EU) as well as broader Europe, as global challenges require action and cooperation beyond the confines of the EU’s membership area. Institutions like the Council of Europe and policies such as the Eastern Partnership, and the EU Neighbourhood Policy are instrumental in enhancing cooperation in a broader European context or beyond.

This shows that the terms ‘Europe’ or ‘European’ elude fixed definitions, with their interpretations fluidly shifting based on context, overlapping, or even contradicting each other (Andrén et al. 2019). Defining what it means to be European inevitably hinges on the formation of in-groups and out-groups based on certain criteria, distinguishing between those who fit within the defined parameters of belonging and those who do not (Eder 2006; Yuval-Davis 2010). Drawing boundaries between in-

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groups and out-groups is central to individual and collective identities (Tajfel and Turner 2001). Given the multiplicity of definitions of Europe, individuals construct their identities in relation to themselves and others based on different criteria. In facing multiple intersecting crises requiring coordinated action supported by shared identifications with a European community, the question of what or who belongs to Europe in the eyes of its citizens becomes an important matter.

How European citizens relate to, identify with, and, in this process, define 'the soft borders of Europe' (Eder 2006, 256) will vary between individuals and contexts. European identities are thought to be influenced by shared values and norms, exposure to information about and symbols of Europe, as well as experiences of and discourses and narratives about Europe and other Europeans. Existing educational, social, and cultural programmes aim to foster European identities – such as Erasmus, the Eurovision Song Contest, etc. – and tourism and economic interaction allow for regular exchange between Europeans. While successful, many are limited to the EU, thus excluding other Europeans, or have been found to benefit primarily those citizens with higher socio-economic resources (Gustafson 2009; Mitchell 2015; Salamonska and Recchi 2019). In contrast, the European Commission (2007) highlighted the potential of sports in 'forging identity and bringing people together' when it comes to Europe's socially diverse societies. Comparably, the Council of Europe (2021) asserted that sport 'encourages contacts between European countries and citizens, [...] reinforcing the bonds between peoples and developing awareness of a European cultural identity'.

In this context, football, one of the largest forms of collective behaviour in contemporary society, offers a unique lens to understand European belonging and non-belonging (Finger et al. 2023; Weber et al. 2022). Football fandom is a phenomenon that transcends national boundaries and traditional geographic and political delineations of Europe. It creates a shared cultural space where fans come together, interact, and engage in collective experiences. The intersection of football's sporting and economic development with the dynamics of European integration has given rise to a highly interconnected and transboundary football sphere, encompassing international matches, competitions, cross-border mobility of personnel, and broad media coverage. This Europeanised cultural space of football not only exposes fans to diverse European stimuli, symbols, narratives, and persons. It also fosters active practices of contact and exchange, that contribute to the formation of European identities. Through regular interactions and shared experiences, fans experience a habitual socialisation with Europe and other Europeans. Football serves as a platform for establishing social relations across borders and social cleavages, reaching citizens that formal political, social, and economic exchanges may not. Crucially, the European football sphere encompasses countries at the geographic and political periphery – or, in football terms: at the sidelines – of Europe.

In this paper, we analyse whether football fans hold broader, more inclusive understandings of Europe resulting from these football-based habitualisation processes. Using data from a representative survey among fans and non-fans, we explore how football fandom shapes whether countries with varying geographic, political, and football-related properties are categorised as European. The results indicate that football introduces an additional layer to identity constructions, particularly in relation to countries that might be perceived as peripheral within traditional understandings of Europe. This paper makes a two-fold contribution: firstly, it enriches the literature on the Europeanisation of football by providing a quantitative analysis based on novel data, complementing the existing largely qualitative and UK-centric studies (FREE 2015; King 2000, 2003; Millward 2006; Niemann, Brand, and Weber 2024; Niemann, García, and Grant 2011; Sandvoss 2003, 2012). Secondly, it advances the discourse on the dynamics of European belonging and the formation of European identities through everyday practices (T. Kuhn 2015; Mau 2012; Recchi and Favell 2019).

2. Habitual Europeanization through football

2.1. *Belonging and non-belonging to Europe*

The European continent encompasses a diverse tapestry of nations with distinct cultures, societies, and histories, connected through political treaties, economic interrelations, historical ties, and social exchanges. Definitions of what or who belongs to Europe are fluid, context-dependent, overlapping, and at times contradictory, as well as subject to regular processes of (re)negotiation (Andrén et al. 2019). Politically, the EU is the most prominent example of a defined European community, but its composition is itself subject to change and its extension, 'even after the 2004 enlargement, does not match the borders of a European culture and civilisation' (Bruter 2005, 7). Institutions like the Schengen Agreement and the European Economic Area (EEA) include non-EU member states, and broader organisations like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) create specific delineations of belonging or non-belonging to Europe that deviate from the EU. Beyond political definitions, European belonging can be demarcated through – among others – geographic location, historical ties, and socio-cultural factors (Andrén et al. 2019). Inevitably, any definition of European belonging hinges on the construction of in-groups and out-groups based on certain criteria: 'Belonging assumes boundaries of belonging and is thus exclusive as well as inclusive' (Yuval-Davis 2010, 266). Consequently, European constructions of belonging partly distinguish between those who fit within the defined parameters of 'being European' and those who do not.

Belonging and non-belonging, as well as delineations of in-groups and out-groups, are integral aspects of individual and collective identities. The multiplicity of definitions of Europe means that individuals can relate to and locate themselves and others within Europe based on different factors and construct their identities accordingly. Individual identification with Europe can be defined as 'citizens' self-categorisation as European together with their evaluations of their membership in the European collective and their affective attachment to Europe and other Europeans' (Bergbauer 2018, 6). This identification can be further subdivided into 'civic' and 'cultural' dimensions. The former describes the degree to which individuals 'feel that they are citizens of a European political system', while the latter 'is best described as individuals' perceptions that fellow Europeans are closer to them than non-Europeans' (Bruter 2003, 1155). Where civic identity construction requires tangible political institutions, cultural identifications with Europe can be built through a variety of factors, among them 'a certain culture, social similarities, values, religion, ethics or even ethnicity' (Bruter 2005, 12).

Both the more general as well as the civic and cultural understandings of identification with Europe comprise two crucial components: firstly, affective attachments, feelings of belonging or closeness, and evaluations exhibited by the respective individual, and, implicitly, their strength or polarity; secondly, a *European* object of identification, be it a political entity or a social, cultural, religious, value-based, or otherwise constructed community, requiring an at least implicit recognition of a mutual European-ness. Consequently, European identities are not only based on self-categorisations as European, but on categorisations of 'others', as exemplified by Bruter's explicit distinction between 'fellow Europeans' and 'non-Europeans'. When considering the fluidity and individual variation of definitions of Europe, how individuals delineate Europe, how they construct in-groups and out-groups, and which countries or other individuals are ultimately included or excluded from their conception of Europe becomes a pertinent question.

2.2. *Identity construction through habitualisation*

The progression of European integration has increased opportunities for identifying with Europe. European political institutions shape civic identifications, while shared narratives and cultural spaces, the adoption of unifying symbols, and increased communication and contact between citizens foster cultural European identifications. Research has highlighted how the political and social integration has opened pathways for stronger European identifications through the symbolic presence of

Europe (Calligaro 2021), educational (Mitchell 2015) and cultural initiatives (Baker 2017), as well as touristic and work mobility (Gustafson 2006, 2009). Their impact, however, is often limited to specific social groups or citizens with higher formal education and socio-economic status.

European identity formation is considered to be influenced by exposure to Europe-centric information, lived experiences within the European context (Bergbauer 2018; T. Kuhn 2015; Verhaegen and Hooghe 2015), and discursive constructions (Eder 2009; Mole 2007). European identities are, above all, underpinned by shared values, norms, and opinions (Bruter 2003; Kantner 2006), the EU as a political project with its institutions and symbols (Calligaro 2021; Mayer and Palmowski 2004), and the emergence of a European Public Sphere (Risse 2014, 2015). Research in political science and sociology often links (collective) identity formation to processes of socialisation through sustained and repeated contact, interactions, and messaging (Ceka and Sojka 2016; Recchi 2014; Risse 2005).

A key socialisation mechanism guiding identity formation is habituation. This describes a process by which individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and social behaviours are shaped by consistent (inter)actions and thereby become customary and routine – that is, habitual – over time (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis states that increased intergroup contact fosters mutual comprehension and curtails negative biases, while early European integration scholars posited that actors become more accustomed to a phenomenon through cross-border transactions, potentially enhancing 'we-feeling', trust, and mutual consideration' (Deutsch et al. 1957, 36) and resulting in loyalty or identity transfer (Risse 2005). Similarly, frequent interactions among national officials were thought to instil shared European community norms (Lindberg 1963). The concept of cognitive mobilisation (Inglehart 1970) suggests that heightened familiarity with Europe or the EU makes the entity appear less intimidating (Karp, Banducci, and Bowler 2003). More recent studies confirmed the impact of repeated transnational interactions on European identity, especially among residents of border regions (Diez Medrano 2003; T.; Kuhn 2011), frequent travellers (Gustafson 2009), Erasmus participants (T. Kuhn 2012), and people who consistently encounter European symbols (Bruter 2003; Cram and Patrikios 2015).

We assume that European identity construction via habituation proceeds on two levels. Firstly, it features a passive, 'subliminal' or 'subjective Europeanisation' of identities through permanent exposure to European stimuli (R. Weber 2022, 237). European symbols, such as flags, symbols, or anthems – examples of 'banal Europeanism' (Weber 2021) – as well as personal contacts, experiences or narratives induce subconscious identity work that alters perceptions, imaginations, and values. Moreover, media coverage in the emerging European Public Sphere can amplify shared identities by conveying information on and contact with Europe (Risse 2014, 2015). Secondly, we expect active, deliberate identity processes encompassing personal interactions, the generation and perpetuation of shared narratives, and engagement in European exchange networks. These practices reinforce and normalise interactions between Europeans, aid in the construction of Europe-inclusive in-groups, and foster mutual trust and solidarity, feelings of sameness, and a sense of belonging to a greater European collective – in short: identifications with Europe (Bergbauer 2018; Levermore and Millward 2007). While much of the European socialisation literature analyses respective processes from a political point of view (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Risse 2015), recent discourse highlights habituation through non-political, social, cultural, or educational pathways (T. Kuhn 2015; Mau 2012; Recchi and Favell 2019).

2.3. A Europeanised football sphere

Football fandom is a cultural phenomenon with substantial societal importance (Cashmore and Dixon 2016; Finger et al. 2023), transcending socio-economic and socio-cultural cleavages and uniting diverse individuals around a shared passion. Being a fan entails a high level of emotional engagement (Porat 2010) with the sport, teams, players, and the wider community of fans, transcending fan's dedication to their own club and resulting in connections with

other fans across the football spectrum. These connections can even bridge the often adversarial relationships to other fans. While they become salient in and around clashes between the particular clubs, a certain sense of belonging to the abovementioned wider community of fans also entails relating positively to fans from rival or simply different clubs on the shared basis of *being a football fan*. In this case, demarcations of in- and out-groups – a central element of identification and particularly fan identities – don't run along club allegiance but for example between fans and security forces or fans and associations. This further highlights breadth and depth of football fandom and the connected emotional involvement. Consequently, fandom structures individual's daily lives (Stone 2007), their social interactions (Cleland et al. 2018), and their experiences – an 'individual's [...] accumulated encounters, his selected memory stores and thus the modes by which he conceives and reacts to the social world' (Porat 2010). Consequently, it (among other factors) shapes fan's opinions, attitudes, values, and identities.

Fans forge connections with larger, imagined collectives (Mason 1989; Nash 2000) through the cultivation of bonding social capital (Grodecki 2019; Tucker 2016), where loyalty, unity, and common purpose emerge from a shared cultural pursuit (Patulny and Lind Haase Svendsen 2007; Putnam 2000). Football fandom entails strong in-group identification (Besta and Kossakowski 2018) and various types of collective identities, including local/sub-national (Llopis-Goig 2008; Shobe 2008) and national (Meier et al. 2019; Storey 2021), as well as religious/sectarian (Boyle 2017), political (Numerato 2018; Numerato and Giulianotti 2018), and ethnic (Özkan 2023). While these identities are complex and not solely constructed through football, fans' experiences and processing of the social setting of football contribute to the formation and perpetuation of these identities, including the extension of the object of identification.

Organised football in Europe has become increasingly Europeanised since its inception. Europeanisation describes the adaption and transformation of domestic structures, policies, and practices through processes of European integration, both regarding the establishment and development of the EU and broader integration dynamics. It encompasses various mechanisms: top-down adaptations driven by European directives (downloading), bottom-up influences where domestic actors shape European decisions (uploading), and transnational interactions, such as cross-border networks and initiatives (crossloading) (Niemann, Weber, and Brand 2021; Radaelli 2003; Schmidt 2002). An early example of Europeanisation in football is the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), whose founding in 1954 and subsequent expansion and professionalisation served to establish a 'united Europe of football' (Vonnard 2020). It comprises 55 member associations as the governing body of European football, overseeing its prestigious European competitions for both clubs and national teams. While national teams compete in the Nations League, European Qualifiers, and the EURO, clubs from all member associations participate in a de-facto European league system formed by the Champions League, Europa League, and Europa Conference League (Niemann and Brand 2020; Ramchandani et al. 2023).

Beyond UEFA's administrative and sporting structure, three key developments mark the intersection of football with processes of European integration: firstly, the Bosman ruling by the European Court of Justice asserted labour mobility and removed restrictions for EU nationals within football (Duval and van Rompuy 2016). Secondly, transnational stakeholder groups emerged at the European level, as exemplified by the European Club Association and Football Supporters Europe (Cleland et al. 2018; Mittag 2018). Thirdly, the European Commission's regulatory decisions carved out certain exceptions in EU competition law for football, as in the case of broadcast rights marketing (Andreff and Bourg 2006; Niemann, Weber, and Brand 2021).

These developments have resulted in the emergence of an overarching and interconnected 'European football sphere' (Finger et al. 2023) in which fans are continually exposed to Europe. Internationalised squads and staff broaden club affiliations beyond national or regional boundaries (Weber et al. 2022), and continental competitions have made international matches

between club teams and national teams commonplace. These games, attracting significant media attention, act as European 'campfires' (Meier and Hagenah 2016, 12) and transport the myth of the European community (Niemann and Brand 2020). European integration, encompassing benefits like free movement and a shared currency, has amplified transnational fan activities, such as travelling for away games (King 2000; Millward 2006), and fostered the emergence of broader networks, such as fan friendships or advocacy groups like Football Supporters Europe (Cleland et al. 2018; Doidge, Kossakowski, and Mintert 2020). Notably, due to UEFA's diverse membership, the European football sphere encompasses numerous countries outside of the boundaries of the EU, Schengen, or EEA, and even outside of cultural or geographic Europe. Examples include Turkey, with only a small part located geographically in Europe, and Israel and Kazakhstan, which joined UEFA for political and sporting reasons in 1994 and 2002 (Broda 2022; Nurmakov 2016; Vonnard 2020). These and other countries of similarly ambiguous status participate in UEFA club and national team competitions, host and send fans, and become part of the media sphere surrounding football. Accordingly, the European football sphere is a cultural space in which an especially broad representation of Europe competes and interacts.

2.4. Hypotheses

Against the backdrop of the Europeanisation of football, we posit that fans differ from non-fans in how they experience and interact with Europe. Fans are subject to a regular, habitual exposure to diverse European stimuli through football. This habitualisation with Europe expands fans' sense of belonging beyond local or national boundaries, normalises European contact and exchanges, and shapes their opinions, values, and patterns of identification, including underlying constructions of Europe's boundaries. An emerging strand of research shows how fans integrate Europe into their identity frameworks. This includes early, mostly qualitative, and UK-centric works (King 2000, 2003; Millward 2006, 2009; Sandvoss 2003), as well as more recent, both qualitative and quantitative literature that go beyond the UK context (Biel et al. 2023; Finger et al. 2023; FREE 2015; Niemann, Brand, and Weber 2024; Niemann, Weber, and Brand 2021). This research shows how fans encounter, interact with, and adapt their frames of reference and constructions of community to the Europeanisation of their life-worlds. In an as of yet unpublished analysis, we found that football fans exhibit stronger attachments to both Europe and the EU, and hold more positive views on European integration compared to non-fans, pointing towards a measurable identity effect of football regarding the strength of identifications.

In this analysis, we address the categorisation of the object of identification as European and the resulting construction of psychological boundaries that for part of European identifications. As the extension of the European football sphere is distinctly more expansive than definitions of European spaces based on political, geographical, or other cultural factors, we propose that, *ceteris paribus*, football fans hold broader, more inclusive, and more diverse understanding of Europe when compared to non-fans. While we expect no differences regarding countries commonly associated as being European (e.g. EU member states), as the football effect likely recedes when preexisting geographic, political, social, and/or cultural associations with Europe are dominant, football arguably becomes a bridge towards Europe where these underlying connections are absent. As fans are exposed to and interact with these more peripheral countries in a distinctly European football context, we expect that fans will be more likely to categorise these countries as European. Accordingly, we hypothesise:

H1: Fans and non-fans equally categorise countries commonly associated with Europe as European.

H2: Fans are more likely than non-fans to categorise countries not commonly associated with Europe as European.

3. Research design, case selection, and data

To analyse these hypotheses, we rely on data from an online survey conducted in March and April 2023. This survey combines football-specific questions with questions on values and political attitudes. It was deployed in four European countries with diverse characteristics: Germany, Spain, Norway, and Poland. They encompass a wide range of population sizes, income levels, geographic positions within Europe, and unique histories and languages. Crucially, in the realm of football, these countries showcase varied levels of sporting competitiveness, both for their domestic clubs and national teams. The selected countries further differ in their affiliations with Europe and the EU. Germany, Spain, and Poland are EU members, but with different accession dates. Norway, though not an EU member, is closely integrated through its membership in the EEA and the Schengen Agreement. Public perceptions about Europe and the EU also vary among these countries. The survey was conducted in cooperation with a commercial survey provider using an online panel selected to ensure representativeness for age, gender, and education in all four countries. In total, the dataset consists of 7,040 complete cases (1,760 per country).

The primary independent variable (see [Table A1](#) in the Appendix) is a binary indicator of whether the respondent is a football fan. Respondents are categorised as fans if they either self-identify as fans or score 7–10 on a 0–10 scale of football interest. We employ this twostep method to also include respondents who demonstrate a strong interest in football and subsequently engage with Europe via the sport even if they do not affiliate with a particular club (and thus might not self-categorise as fans in a club-centric understanding of the term). Following standard procedures in EU attitude research, we control for demographics like age, age squared, gender, education, and income (Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Kunst, Kuhn, and van de Werfhorst 2020), as well as cosmopolitan values and political ideology (Favell and Reimer 2021; Teperoglou and Maria Belchior 2020). Additionally, we control for the strength of European identifications using the reported attachment to Europe.

Our primary dependent variable is built on a survey item evaluating the perceived belonging of 12 countries to Europe¹ and presenting them in randomised order with a yes/no answer option. To avoid priming the respondents to think about Europe in a football context, these questions came within a series of items relating to Europe more generally (e.g. contact, communication, and travel in Europe), and before the main set of football-related items. While respondents were informed about the general nature of the survey and were asked about their personal football fandom at the beginning, the country-belonging questions were several steps removed from any football-related questions. This should minimise priming effects on respondents, and their responses should thus reflect their definitions of European belonging beyond a purely footballing sense. The countries in the survey item include the four study countries and eight additional countries selected for their varying association with Europe:

- **Core:** *Belgium, Germany, Spain, Poland* – EU members; geographically Central/Western European; UEFA members.
- **Transitional:** *United Kingdom, Serbia* – former or potential EU members; geographically European; UEFA members.
- **Affiliated:** *Norway, Switzerland* – Non-EU members, but closely integrated; geographically Central/Northern European; UEFA members.
- **Outliers:** *Turkey, Kazakhstan, Israel* – Non-EU members, and not closely integrated; at the border or outside of geographical Europe, UEFA members.
- **External:** *Morocco* – Non-EU member, and not closely integrated; outside of geographical Europe; non-UEFA member.

Here, *core* countries are those we assume to be most intimately tied to understandings of Europe, as they are geographically European, long-standing EU members, and encompass histories, cultures, and societies that are deeply integrated into Europe. The most interesting case in this group is Poland, as a former part of the Eastern Bloc and a relatively late accessor to the EU. Still, we argue that 30 years of deepening integration into Europe after the end of the Cold War and almost 20 years of EU membership put Poland squarely into the *core* group. *Transitional* countries are geographically European but are either queueing for accession to the EU or have left the community. Serbia was granted candidate status in 2012, while the UK, having left the EU, serves as an inverse transitional case. Similarly, while both Norway and Switzerland have engaged in internal discussions and preliminary processes towards EU accession, these *affiliated* countries remain deeply integrated yet are not EU members.

The *outlier* cases are of the greatest interest here, representing geographically rather peripheral (from a European point of view), lightly integrated countries whose national teams or clubs nevertheless compete in the European football sphere. Turkey's momentum towards EU accession has stalled, while Israel and Kazakhstan are unlikely to ever be considered for EU membership. While bilateral and multilateral relationships, and especially in the case of Israel, deep historical ties to Europe exist, we posit that these countries are not commonly associated with Europe from a political, economic, or social perspective. As for the *external* country, Morocco serves as a contrasting case, especially to the *outlier* countries. It applied for membership in the European Economic Community in 1987, but was rejected with the justification that it is not 'geographically part of Europe', and thus did not satisfy the then-applicable Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome (Ipek 2020, 3). As a former colony and due to its geographical proximity, Morocco has relevant political, cultural, and economic ties to Europe. Thus, it represents a similar case to Israel and Kazakhstan, but without UEFA membership it

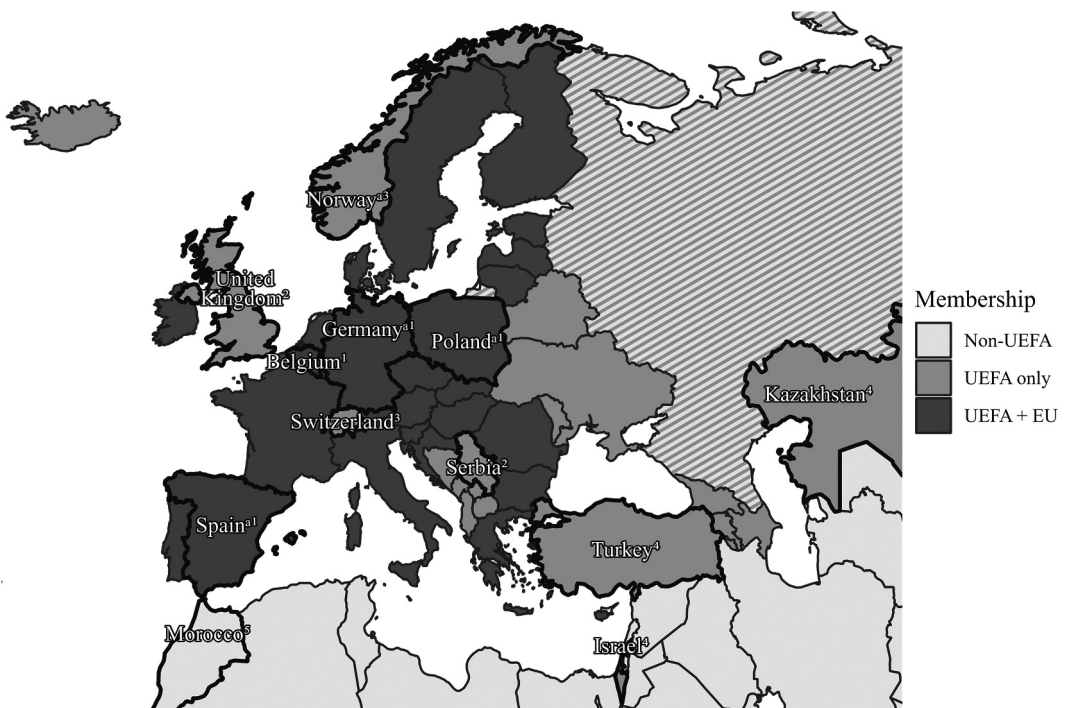


Figure 1. Map of Europe showing EU and UEFA membership status, country categorisation, and survey deployment. Note: a= Survey conducted; 1= Core countries, 2= Transitional countries, 3= Affiliated countries, 4= Outlier countries, 5= External countries; Russia's membership in UEFA was suspended in 2022"

lacks the football-based association with Europe. Additionally, Morocco has received significant attention as a footballing nation due to its success at the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Figure 1 shows the extension of UEFA’s member associations and its intersection with the EU.

In testing the hypotheses, we conduct multiple logistic regression analyses with the binary responses to the country-belonging questions as dependent variables. The fandom variable and a range of control variables, which account for socio-demographic and other potentially influential factors, serve as predictors. To control for unaccounted between-country variation, we also include country dummies, with Spain serving as the reference category. This ensures that any distinct country effects are appropriately captured and adjusted for in the models. Again, we exclude responses about respondents’ own countries. The full regression models are depicted in the Appendix (Tables A2–A4). To provide more interpretable results, we compute average marginal effects (AMEs) to illustrate the change in the probability of the outcome variable for a one-unit change in the fandom variable, with all other variables held constant. As such, they represent the *ceteris paribus* effect of football fandom on assessments of a country’s belonging to Europe. As a robustness check, we repeated the analysis using only the football interest scale. This supplemental analysis (Tables A5–A8 in the Appendix) supports the results from the models based on the binary fandom indicator, showing significant increases in the likelihood of categorising the selected countries as European with rising interest in football.

4. Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the response patterns to the country-belonging questions for fans and non-fans, along with the difference between both groups. For core countries, both fans and non-fans

Table 1. Overview of perceived European belonging.

Group	Does [X] belong to Europe?	%-Fans	%-Non-Fans	%-Diff.
Core	Belgium	92.79	92.45	0.35
Core	Germany	96.05	95.99	0.06
Core	Poland	89.54	89.14	0.40
Core	Spain	94.30	94.25	0.05
Transitional	Serbia	71.22	62.20	9.02
Transitional	United Kingdom	76.24	74.62	1.62
Affiliated	Norway	85.90	81.91	3.99
Affiliated	Switzerland	87.22	83.94	3.27
Outliers	Israel	14.84	10.95	3.89
Outliers	Kazakhstan	17.65	12.98	4.67
Outliers	Turkey	52.41	46.30	6.11
External	Morocco	12.88	11.94	0.95

Table 2. Average marginal effects of fandom on perceived European belonging in logistic regression models.

Group	Does [x] belong To Europe?	Est. %-Diff.	CI (low)	CI (high)	P	
Core	Belgium	-1.05	-2.39	0.29	0.12	
Core	Germany	-0.22	-1.38	0.94	0.71	
Core	Poland	1.00	-0.85	2.85	0.29	
Core	Spain	-1.10	-2.51	0.30	0.12	
Transitional	Serbia	7.15	4.73	9.56	0.00	***
Transitional	United Kingdom	3.02	0.84	5.21	0.01	**
Affiliated	Norway	1.16	-1.01	3.34	0.30	
Affiliated	Switzerland	2.49	0.66	4.31	0.01	**
Outliers	Israel	3.89	2.11	5.67	0.00	***
Outliers	Kazakhstan	5.00	3.09	6.91	0.00	***
Outliers	Turkey	6.23	3.55	8.90	0.00	***
External	Morocco	0.56	-1.20	2.32	0.53	

Average Marginal Effects (AME); Est. % Diff. = Estimated difference in percentage agreement between fans and non-fans; CI (low) = Lower bound of the confidence interval; CI (high) = Upper bound of the confidence interval; p = P-value significance level.

overwhelmingly recognise them as part of Europe, with minimal differences in their perceptions. *Affiliated* countries are recognised as European at a similarly high level, but with small differences between fans and non-fans. The transitional group shows more significant differences at lower levels of agreement. In the *outlier* countries, perceived European-ness varies greatly between Turkey and the others, but across all countries in this group fans demonstrate a markedly higher propensity to view these nations as belonging to Europe. Morocco as the *external* test case exhibits the lowest levels of agreement and only minimal differences between fans and non-fans.

The results of the multivariate logistic regression models (Table 2) show that, using conventional significance thresholds, no country in the *core* group (Belgium, Germany, Poland, and Spain) exhibits statistically significant differences between fans and non-fans in their assessments of these countries' belonging to Europe. In the *transitional* group, Serbia and the UK display significant positive AMEs of 7.15 and 3.02% points, respectively, for fans relative to non-fans. Among the affiliated countries, for Switzerland, there is a positively significant change of 2.49% points for football fans, while Norway exhibits no significant differences. In the *outliers* group, all countries have positive and statistically significant AMEs. Fandom corresponds to an increase of around 3.89% points for Israel, 5.00% points for Kazakhstan, and approximately 6.23% points for Turkey. Lastly, as regards Morocco as an *external* country, there is no significant difference between fans and non-fans.

The results of the analysis point to a confirmation of our hypotheses. While no significant differences exist between the assessments of countries commonly associated with Europe, fans and non-fans significantly differ in their categorisation of countries with weaker political, geographical, and/or cultural ties with Europe. Even when incorporating socio-demographic and political control variables, fans are more likely to include these countries in their definitions of Europe than non-fans. For *core* countries, the propensity of categorising them as European is high for both fans and non-fans, likely owing to their geographical position in Central or Western Europe, cultural and historical ties, and deep political-institutional integration as EU members. Here, due to the strength of these factors, football-based associations with Europe do not further increase the likelihood of being categorised as European.

For *transitional* and *affiliated* countries, levels of ascribed belonging to Europe are relatively high, and, interestingly, are higher for the non-EU members of Switzerland and Norway than for former and potential future EU members in the UK and Serbia. Here, perceptions of the UK as a long-standing EU member that voluntarily and under great public attention left the union likely play a role. Differences between fans and non-fans are significant, relatively weak for Norway, Switzerland, and the UK, while attitudes towards Serbia exhibit the strongest effect of football fandom among the countries included in the survey. Serbia's relatively more peripheral position and weaker ties to Europe are likely counterbalanced by a strong footballing presence, painting the country in a more European light in the eyes of fans.

Outlier countries with weak associations with Europe but which participate in the European football sphere show clear and consistent differences between fans and non-fans. Turkey stands out among these countries for its relatively high underlying propensity and its strong effect on fans, indicating both stronger pre-existing ties with Europe and a pronounced effect of its football. Its relatively successful sporting position both at the club and the national team level, the fact that it hosted several European Cup finals, and its strong involvement in the European transfer market are likely at play, as well as its comparatively large migrant communities in the study countries. Both fans and non-fans have a low propensity of categorising Israel and Kazakhstan as European. Still, the higher likelihood of fans indicates that the participation of these countries in UEFA increases their association with Europe. The fact that Morocco – the *external* control without UEFA membership – shows no significant increase in their affiliation with Europe among fans, again, points to an effect of football-based associations with Europe.

That effects, where significant, are relatively weak, was to be expected. Football-based associations with Europe likely form only a small part of citizens' understandings of belonging to Europe.

Definitions of Europe are highly individual, fluid, and shaped by a variety of factors. Still, the persistence of differences between fans and non-fans for some transitional and affiliated, but especially for the *outlier* countries, indicates that football-induced contact with and experiences of these countries under the European umbrella of UEFA can play a part in extending citizens' definitions of Europe.

Fostering these broader definitions of Europe on a cultural basis through sports can be instrumental in promoting further European integration, especially during times when political avenues are fraught with challenges (de Vries 2018; Ferrara and Kriesi 2022). By marking countries not commonly associated with being part of Europe as European, football has the potential to positively influence public perceptions of these peripheral countries. Such improved perceptions can, in turn, strengthen institutional cooperation and bolster public support for fostering closer relations with these countries. Additionally, for countries situated outside the European continent, engagement in sports provides a viable pathway to strengthening their ties with Europe, thus facilitating cultural and possibly, in the long run, political integration.

5. Conclusion

Our paper delves into football as a highly Europeanised sport that provides fans with frequent, low-level contacts with and experiences of a European football sphere. We ask how European belonging is constructed within this cultural space. Theories of identity formation through habituation point to the continuous (re)construction of the 'soft' (Eder 2006), psychological boundaries of Europe and the definitions of inclusion and exclusion they entail – who belongs to Europe and who does not – based on habitual interactions. A multitude of socio-political, cultural, and geographical factors shape perceptions of European belonging, which, in turn, play a small but significant part in the complex and multifaceted processes of European identity formation.

The European football sphere – a cultural space with intense exchanges, interactions, and collaborations between various stakeholders – encompasses a diverse set of members beyond traditional definitions of Europe, as exemplified by the UEFA membership of Turkey, Israel, and Kazakhstan. In this space, fans encounter and experience a broad, inclusive representation of Europe that transcends established constructions of Europe's boundaries based on geographical and political markers. We proposed that as a result of these, fans construct broader definitions of Europe, more regularly counting these countries at the European sidelines as belonging to Europe than non-fans.

Our findings based on a representative survey in four countries (Germany, Norway, Spain, Poland) show relatively weak but statistically significant and consistent effects for football fandom on the categorisation of countries not commonly associated with Europe as European, even when accounting for socio-demographic factors, political ideologies, and cosmopolitan values. Fans show modestly higher propensities to view selected countries with transitional relationships, affiliated status, or an outlier position with respect to Europe as belonging to Europe than those that are not football fans, and thus experience no socialisation with these countries in the context of Europeanised football. While the factors that determine how citizens perceive foreign countries are manifold, we show that football can play a part in opening definitions of Europe up beyond traditional geographic, political, cultural, and historical delineations.

These findings emerge in the face of an uncertain trajectory for the future of European football. The Europeanisation of this cultural space goes hand in hand with an intense commercialisation, which has resulted in and perpetuated great financial and sporting inequalities among its clubs and leagues (Menary 2016; Ramchandani et al. 2018, 2023). While general participation in competitions has been broadened, both at the club (e.g. the establishment of the Europa Conference League) and national team levels (e.g. increasing the number of teams participating in the EUROs), recent reforms of European football competitions – among them the highly segmented Nations League, changes to the qualification and competition formats of the Champions League (Csató 2022), and the prospect of a break-away Super League for its most prestigious clubs (Macedo, Dias, and Mourão 2022) – are

threatening to (further) stratify the European football landscape and decouple the sporting elite from broader footballing Europe. While these processes of adaption are ongoing and their outcome is still uncertain, including the effect of the recent European Court of Justice ruling pertaining to the Super League, they are likely to affect not only the sporting, but also the cultural, identity-shaping side of football.

The research design exhibits certain limitations. Primarily, our questions gauging country belonging, as opposed to other items in our survey, are not (yet) part of standardised European surveys and thus lack broad validation, potentially leading to ambiguities in respondents' understanding of belonging to Europe. These questions could be refined to distinctly delineate political, cultural, and geographical associations with Europe, instead of asking a simple yes-no question. An extension of the study would be to delve deeper into the nuances of fandom, exploring whether specific types or subsets of fans are more inclined to consider specific countries as 'European'. Additionally, shifting our analytical lens to the country level could unravel more granular effects, shedding light on specific relationships with other countries. Analysing feelings of belonging and views on Europe for fans and non-fans from the *transitional*, *affiliated*, and *outlier* countries would act as a counter-test to our current analysis, examining the influence of football fandom on respondents' self-categorisations. Moreover, employing qualitative data and methodologies could uncover the underlying causal mechanisms driving perceptions of European belonging, offering a deeper and more holistic understanding of our findings.

Our study reinforces the adage that 'football is more than just a game'. The findings show that it is a relevant, but – in the context of European integration – insufficiently appreciated phenomenon, that subtly yet persistently expands the horizons of what it means to be European. As a highly Europeanised mass leisure activity that reaches fans of all social strata across the continent, football fandom serves as a foundation for more inclusive understandings of Europe. Thus, it might strengthen political cooperation and European integration in times of an enduring 'polycrisis'.

Note

1. 'Please indicate, according to your personal opinion, whether the following countries belong to Europe or not'.

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Data availability statement

The data set for the study is available from the corresponding author upon request.

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Appendix

Table A1. Variables used in the analysis.

Type	Label	Values
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Belgium	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Germany	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Israel	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Kazakhstan	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Morocco	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Norway	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Poland	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Serbia	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Spain	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Switzerland	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - Turkey	0 - No, 1 - Yes
dependent	Does the following country belong to Europe. - United Kingdom	0 - No, 1 - Yes
independent	Age	16–86
independent	Country	ESP, GER, NOR, POL
independent	Do you consider yourself a football fan?	0 - No, 1 - Yes
independent	Gender	F – Female, M – Male, O – Other
independent	How attached do you feel to... - Europe?	"0 - not at all" to "10 - absolutely"
independent	How interested are you in football?	"0 - not at all" to "10 - absolutely"
independent	In politics people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right'. Where would you place yourself on this scale?	'0 – left' to '10 – right'
independent	It is important that people from different nations are in touch to better understand each other's lives and perspectives. Do you agree?	"0 - not at all" to "10 - absolutely"
independent	What is your household's total monthly income?	'1 - lowest decile' to 10 - highest decile

Table A2. Regression estimates for fandom on perceived European belonging (core countries).

Term	Belgium				Germany				Spain				Poland			
	Est.	Se	Stat.	P	Est.	Se	Stat.	P	Est.	Se	Stat.	P	Est.	Se	Stat.	P
(Intercept)	0.71	0.48	1.48	0.14	0.19	0.71	0.27	0.79	1.50	0.60	2.50	0.01	-0.48	0.49	-0.99	0.32
Fan	-0.17	0.11	-1.53	0.13	-0.06	0.17	-0.37	0.71	-0.21	0.14	-1.53	0.13	0.11	0.11	1.06	0.29
Country:	-0.17	0.13	-1.26	0.21									0.77	0.11	6.85	0.00
Germany	0.06	0.14	0.45	0.65	1.03	0.20	5.17	0.00	-0.30	0.16	-1.88	0.06	1.52	0.14	10.92	0.00
Norway																
Country:	0.44	0.16	2.83	0.00	0.80	0.20	4.01	0.00	-0.19	0.17	-1.12	0.26				
Poland																
Gender: Male	0.42	0.11	3.87	0.00	0.37	0.17	2.21	0.03	0.65	0.14	4.62	0.00	0.39	0.11	3.61	0.00
Gender: Other	-0.42	1.15	-0.37	0.71	10.88	307.84	0.04	0.97	11.61	263.34	0.04	0.96	11.74	263.55	0.04	0.96
Age	-0.03	0.02	-1.32	0.19	0.01	0.03	0.36	0.72	-0.04	0.03	-1.47	0.14	-0.02	0.02	-0.89	0.37
Age ²	0.00	0.00	2.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.75	0.45	0.00	0.00	2.55	0.01	0.00	0.00	2.29	0.02
Household Income	0.16	0.02	7.64	0.00	0.17	0.03	5.10	0.00	0.14	0.03	5.44	0.00	0.11	0.02	5.67	0.00
Cosmopolitanism	0.13	0.02	5.96	0.00	0.11	0.03	3.07	0.00	0.13	0.03	4.41	0.00	0.15	0.02	6.74	0.00
Left-Right Scale	-0.11	0.02	-5.15	0.00	-0.13	0.03	-4.24	0.00	-0.11	0.03	-3.65	0.00	-0.08	0.02	-3.83	0.00
Attachment to Europe	0.05	0.02	2.23	0.03	0.09	0.04	2.60	0.01	0.06	0.03	1.99	0.05	0.04	0.02	1.79	0.07

Logistic regression results.

Belgium: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.11$.

Germany: $n = 4840$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 4828, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.12$.

Poland: $n = 4823$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 4811, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.12$.

Spain: $n = 4804$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 4792, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.09$.

Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A3. Regression estimates for fandom on perceived European belonging (transitional/affiliated countries).

Term	UK			Serbia			Norway			Switzerland									
	Est.	Se	P	Est.	Se	Stat.	Est.	Se	Stat.	Est.	Se	Stat.	P						
(Intercept)	-1.09	0.31	0.00	***	-1.09	0.29	-3.80	0.00	***	0.56	0.41	1.36	0.17	0.90	0.38	2.38	0.02	*	
Fan	0.19	0.07	2.73	0.01	**	0.36	0.06	5.83	0.00	***	0.09	1.05	0.29	0.22	0.08	2.69	0.01	**	
Country:	0.04	0.08	0.53	0.60	0.22	0.08	2.79	0.01	**	0.20	0.10	2.01	0.04	*	-0.17	0.09	-1.87	0.06	
Germany	2.13	0.12	18.50	0.00	***	0.78	0.08	9.44	0.00	***									
Norway	0.96	0.09	10.91	0.00	***	0.58	0.08	7.10	0.00	***	0.50	0.11	4.67	0.00	0.57	0.11	5.28	0.00	***
Poland	0.44	0.07	6.59	0.00	***	0.68	0.06	11.30	0.00	***	0.64	0.09	7.18	0.00	0.53	0.08	6.54	0.00	***
Gender: Male	1.07	1.14	0.94	0.35	-1.34	1.13	-1.19	0.23	12.54	266.58	0.05	0.96	0.01	*	12.40	234.44	0.05	0.96	
Gender: Other	-0.01	0.01	-1.17	0.24	-0.03	0.01	-2.72	0.01	**	-0.04	0.02	-2.46	0.01	*	-0.05	0.02	-3.09	0.00	**
Age ²	0.00	0.00	3.08	0.00	**	0.00	0.00	4.83	0.00	***	0.00	0.00	3.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.39	0.00	***
Household Income	0.06	0.01	4.63	0.00	***	0.08	0.01	7.10	0.00	***	0.09	0.02	5.28	0.00	0.08	0.01	5.06	0.00	***
Cosmopolitanism	0.07	0.02	4.43	0.00	***	0.09	0.01	6.59	0.00	***	0.06	0.02	3.01	0.00	0.07	0.02	3.81	0.00	***
Left-Right Scale	-0.01	0.01	-0.77	0.44	-0.05	0.01	-4.26	0.00	***	-0.05	0.02	-3.04	0.00	**	-0.05	0.02	-2.93	0.00	**
Attachment to Europe	0.04	0.02	2.75	0.01	**	0.02	0.01	1.67	0.10	0.04	0.02	2.08	0.04	*	0.02	0.02	1.09	0.27	

Logistic regression results.

Serbia: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.09$.
 United Kingdom: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.13$.
 Norway: $n = 4937$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 4925, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.07$.
 Switzerland: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.08$.
 Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A4. Regression estimates for fandom on perceived European belonging (outlier/external countries).

Term	Israel				Kazakhstan				Turkey				Morocco						
	Est.	Se	Stat.	P	Est.	Se	Stat.	P	Est.	Se	Stat.	P	Est.	Se	Stat.	P			
(Intercept)	-3.07	0.38	-8.06	0.00	***	-3.42	0.36	-9.40	0.00	***	-0.70	0.26	-2.71	0.01	**	-0.62	0.37	-1.69	0.09
Fan	0.36	0.09	4.17	0.00	***	0.39	0.08	5.00	0.00	***	0.25	0.06	4.55	0.00	***	0.05	0.09	0.62	0.53
Country:	-0.17	0.11	-1.48	0.14		0.06	0.10	0.61	0.54		0.01	0.07	0.11	0.91		-0.58	0.12	-5.04	0.00
Germany	0.35	0.10	3.31	0.00	***	0.13	0.10	1.27	0.20		0.33	0.07	4.45	0.00	***	-0.32	0.11	-2.90	0.00
Norway	0.14	0.11	1.35	0.18		0.35	0.10	3.61	0.00	***	0.47	0.07	6.52	0.00	***	0.01	0.10	0.13	0.89
Poland	0.19	0.08	2.41	0.02	*	-0.12	0.07	-1.66	0.10		0.03	0.05	0.48	0.63		-0.24	0.08	-2.93	0.00
Gender: Male	-11.48	238.31	-0.05	0.96		0.47	1.12	0.42	0.67		1.52	1.12	1.35	0.18		-12.11	236.72	-0.05	0.96
Gender: Other	0.03	0.02	2.04	0.04	*	0.06	0.01	3.91	0.00	***	-0.01	0.01	-0.79	0.43		-0.02	0.02	-1.20	0.23
Age	-0.00	0.00	-2.71	0.01	**	-0.00	0.00	-4.02	0.00	***	0.00	0.00	0.91	0.36		-0.00	0.00	-0.61	0.54
Age ²	-0.03	0.01	-1.86	0.06		-0.03	0.01	-2.50	0.01	*	-0.00	0.01	-0.36	0.72		-0.08	0.02	-5.19	0.00
Household Income	0.01	0.02	0.70	0.49		0.01	0.02	0.71	0.48		0.04	0.01	3.18	0.00	**	-0.01	0.02	-0.47	0.64
Cosmopolitanism	0.06	0.02	3.55	0.00	***	0.05	0.01	3.32	0.00	***	-0.01	0.01	-1.25	0.21		0.06	0.02	3.90	0.00
Left-Right Scale	0.02	0.02	1.15	0.25		0.02	0.02	0.95	0.34		0.04	0.01	3.05	0.00	**	0.02	0.02	0.98	0.33
Attachment to Europe																			

Logistic regression results.

Israel: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.02$.
 Kazakhstan: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.01$.
 Turkey: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.02$.
 Morocco: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.05$.
 Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A5. Average marginal effects of football interest in logistic regression models.

Group	Does [x] belong To Europe?	Est. % Diff.	Conf. Low	Conf. High	P	
Core	Belgium	-0.07	-0.26	0.13	0.50	
Core	Germany	0.03	-0.14	0.21	0.69	
Core	Poland	0.20	-0.06	0.47	0.13	
Core	Spain	-0.03	-0.24	0.18	0.77	
Transitional	Serbia	1.10	0.76	1.44	0.00	***
Transitional	United Kingdom	0.55	0.24	0.86	0.00	***
Affiliated	Norway	0.31	-0.00	0.62	0.05	
Affiliated	Switzerland	0.45	0.19	0.71	0.00	***
Outliers	Israel	0.51	0.24	0.78	0.00	***
Outliers	Kazakhstan	0.79	0.50	1.07	0.00	***
Outliers	Turkey	1.12	0.74	1.50	0.00	***
External	Morocco	-0.03	-0.28	0.23	0.84	

Average Marginal Effects (AME); Est. % Diff. = Estimated difference in percentage agreement per point on the football interest scale; Conf. Low = Lower bound of the confidence interval; Conf. High = Upper bound of the confidence interval; p = P-value significance level.

Table A6. Regression estimates for football interest on perceived European belonging (core countries).

Term	Belgium					Germany					Spain					Poland				
	Est.	Se	Stat.	P		Est.	Se	Stat.	P		Est.	Se	Stat.	P		Est.	Se	Stat.	P	
(Intercept)	0.68	0.48	1.41	0.16		0.13	0.71	0.18	0.86		1.45	0.60	2.41	0.02	*	-0.51	0.49	-1.05	0.29	
Football interest	-0.01	0.02	-0.67	0.50		0.01	0.03	0.40	0.69		-0.01	0.02	-0.30	0.77		0.02	0.02	1.53	0.13	
Country: Germany	-0.15	0.13	-1.16	0.25												0.77	0.11	6.85	0.00	
Country: Norway	0.08	0.14	0.59	0.55												1.54	0.14	10.99	0.00	
Country: Poland	0.44	0.16	2.86	0.00	**	1.06	0.20	5.29	0.00	***	-0.28	0.16	-1.74	0.08						
Gender: Male	0.40	0.11	3.60	0.00	***	0.33	0.17	1.94	0.05	***	-0.20	0.17	-1.19	0.23						
Gender: Other	-0.43	1.15	-0.37	0.71		10.92	307.80	0.04	0.97		11.63	263.49	0.04	0.96						
Age	-0.03	0.02	-1.29	0.20		0.01	0.03	0.39	0.69		-0.04	0.03	-1.43	0.15		0.37	0.11	3.40	0.00	
Age ²	0.00	0.00	2.97	0.00	**	0.00	0.00	0.75	0.45		0.00	0.00	2.54	0.01	*	0.00	0.00	2.30	0.02	
Household Income	0.16	0.02	7.50	0.00	***	0.17	0.03	4.97	0.00	***	0.14	0.03	5.27	0.00	***	0.11	0.02	5.57	0.00	
Cosmopolitanism	0.13	0.02	5.96	0.00	***	0.10	0.03	3.03	0.00	**	0.13	0.03	4.37	0.00	***	0.15	0.02	6.68	0.00	
Left-Right Scale	-0.11	0.02	-5.20	0.00	***	-0.14	0.03	-4.29	0.00	***	-0.11	0.03	-3.76	0.00	***	-0.08	0.02	-3.86	0.00	
Attachment to Europe	0.05	0.02	2.19	0.03	*	0.09	0.04	2.53	0.01	*	0.06	0.03	1.92	0.06		0.04	0.02	1.72	0.09	

Logistic regression results.

Belgium: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.11$.

Germany: $n = 4840$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 4828, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.12$.

Poland: $n = 4823$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 4811, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.12$.

Spain: $n = 4804$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 4792, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.09$.

Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A7. Regression estimates for football interest on perceived European belonging (transitional/affiliated countries).

Term	UK					Serbia					Norway					Switzerland				
	Est.	Se	Stat.	P		Est.	Se	Stat.	P		Est.	Se	Stat.	P		Est.	Se	Stat.	P	
(Intercept)	-1.12	0.32	-3.55	0.00	***	-1.13	0.29	-3.94	0.00	***	0.53	0.41	1.29	0.20		0.86	0.38	2.28	0.02	*
Football interest	0.03	0.01	3.50	0.00	***	0.06	0.01	6.30	0.00	***	0.03	0.01	1.93	0.05		0.04	0.01	3.43	0.00	***
Country: Germany	0.03	0.08	0.41	0.68		0.19	0.08	2.52	0.01	*	0.19	0.10	2.01	0.04	*	-0.18	0.09	-1.98	0.05	*
Country: Norway	2.15	0.12	18.61	0.00	***	0.79	0.08	9.55	0.00	***	0.50	0.11	4.70	0.00	***	1.17	0.12	9.54	0.00	***
Country: Poland	0.96	0.09	10.93	0.00	***	0.57	0.08	7.07	0.00	***	0.50	0.11	4.70	0.00	***	0.57	0.11	5.29	0.00	***
Gender: Male	0.42	0.07	6.14	0.00	***	0.66	0.06	10.72	0.00	***	0.62	0.09	6.78	0.00	***	0.50	0.08	6.13	0.00	***
Gender: Other	1.11	1.14	0.97	0.33		-1.28	1.13	-1.14	0.26		12.56	266.74	0.05	0.96		12.43	234.78	0.05	0.96	***
Age	-0.02	0.01	-1.18	0.24	**	-0.03	0.01	-2.70	0.01	**	-0.04	0.02	-2.47	0.01	*	-0.05	0.02	-3.10	0.00	**
Age ²	0.00	0.00	3.13	0.00	**	0.00	0.00	4.84	0.00	***	0.00	0.00	3.86	0.00	***	0.00	0.00	4.42	0.00	***
Household Income	0.06	0.01	4.47	0.00	***	0.08	0.01	6.94	0.00	***	0.08	0.02	5.12	0.00	***	0.07	0.01	4.90	0.00	***
Cosmopolitanism	0.07	0.02	4.30	0.00	***	0.09	0.01	6.39	0.00	***	0.06	0.02	2.93	0.00	**	0.07	0.02	3.68	0.00	***
Left-Right Scale	-0.01	0.01	-0.88	0.38		-0.05	0.01	-4.40	0.00	***	-0.05	0.02	-3.12	0.00	**	-0.05	0.02	-3.03	0.00	**
Attachment to Europe	0.04	0.02	2.63	0.01	**	0.02	0.01	1.55	0.12		0.04	0.02	1.96	0.05		0.02	0.02	0.98	0.33	

Logistic regression results.

Serbia: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.1$.

United Kingdom: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.13$.

Norway: $n = 4937$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 4925, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.07$.

Switzerland: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.08$.

Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A8. Regression estimates for football interest on perceived European belonging (outlier/external countries).

Term	Israel					Kazakhstan					Turkey					Morocco				
	Est.	Se	Stat.	P		Est.	Se	Stat.	P		Est.	Se	Stat.	P		Est.	Se	Stat.	P	
(Intercept)	-3.08	0.38	-8.07	0.00	***	-3.47	0.37	-9.49	0.00	***	-0.76	0.26	-2.91	0.00	**	-0.60	0.37	-1.62	0.11	
Football Interest	0.05	0.01	3.76	0.00	***	0.06	0.01	5.33	0.00	***	0.05	0.01	5.73	0.00	***	-0.00	0.01	-0.20	0.84	
Country: Germany	-0.19	0.11	-1.70	0.09		0.04	0.10	0.36	0.72		-0.01	0.07	-0.08	0.93		-0.59	0.11	-5.11	0.00	
Country: Norway	0.34	0.10	3.22	0.00	**	0.14	0.10	1.34	0.18		0.34	0.07	4.67	0.00	***	-0.33	0.11	-3.05	0.00	
Country: Poland	0.14	0.11	1.30	0.19		0.35	0.10	3.59	0.00	***	0.47	0.07	6.53	0.00	***	0.01	0.10	0.10	0.92	
Gender: Male	0.18	0.08	2.25	0.02	*	-0.15	0.08	-2.04	0.04	*	-0.01	0.06	-0.15	0.88		-0.22	0.08	-2.64	0.01	
Gender: Other	-11.44	238.21	-0.05	0.96		0.53	1.13	0.47	0.64		1.57	1.12	1.40	0.16		-12.11	236.76	-0.05	0.96	
Age	0.03	0.02	2.06	0.04	*	0.06	0.01	3.94	0.00	***	-0.01	0.01	-0.74	0.46		-0.02	0.02	-1.21	0.23	
Age ²	-0.00	0.00	-2.73	0.01	**	-0.00	0.00	-4.03	0.00	***	0.00	0.00	0.90	0.37		-0.00	0.00	-0.63	0.53	
Household Income	-0.03	0.01	-1.85	0.06		-0.04	0.01	-2.62	0.01	**	-0.01	0.01	-0.61	0.54		-0.08	0.02	-5.05	0.00	
Cosmopolitanism	0.01	0.02	0.59	0.56		0.01	0.02	0.53	0.59		0.04	0.01	2.99	0.00	**	-0.01	0.02	-0.45	0.66	
Left-Right Scale	0.05	0.02	3.50	0.00	***	0.05	0.01	3.18	0.00	**	-0.02	0.01	-1.43	0.15		0.06	0.02	3.96	0.00	
Attachment to Europe	0.02	0.02	1.13	0.26		0.02	0.02	0.87	0.38		0.04	0.01	2.91	0.00	**	0.02	0.02	1.04	0.30	

Logistic regression results.

Israel: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.02$.

Kazakhstan: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.01$.

Turkey: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.02$.

Morocco: $n = 6468$, Degrees of Freedom (residual) = 6455, McFadden's Pseudo $R^2 = 0.05$.

Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.