

Fair protection: public perceptions of fairness in asylum decision-making

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Abstract

Asylum decision-making is a highly salient policy area in many European (and other) countries. It has, however, been largely neglected in existing research on public fairness perceptions in policy-making. This study aims to “unpack” and identify key features of public conceptions of fairness in asylum decision-making in Europe. The study asks two questions: First, to what extent are Europeans’ conceptions of fairness in this policy area based on notions of procedural fairness vis-à-vis asylum seekers and/or distributive fairness vis-à-vis the host country’s population? Second, does the perceived importance of procedural versus distributive notions of fairness in asylum processes depend on the characteristics (specifically the country of origin) of asylum seekers? To address these questions, we conduct original conjoint survey experiments with nationally representative samples of respondents across two European countries – Germany and Italy. The study finds that the public in these countries considers both procedural and distributive fairness when assessing the fairness of asylum decision-making processes. In contrast to research on public attitudes and policy preferences vis-à-vis asylum seekers and other migrants, we find that public fairness considerations are not influenced by the identity (national origin) of asylum seekers. The study contributes to research on public perceptions of fairness in policymaking, and to research and policy debates on the governance of asylum and refugee protection in Europe.

Biography

Lenka Drazanova is a Research Fellow at the Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute. She received her PhD in political science from the Berlin Graduate School of Social Sciences at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2016. Lenka’s primary research agenda focuses on comparative political behaviour and political/social attitudes and their interdependence with policy, institutions, political actors and cultures. She published in international peer-reviewed journals such as *Political Studies*, *Acta Politica* and *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Her book “Education and Tolerance” analyzes quantitatively cross-national variations in the effect of education on social and political tolerance based on a large-scale survey.