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### Reflections on European Values

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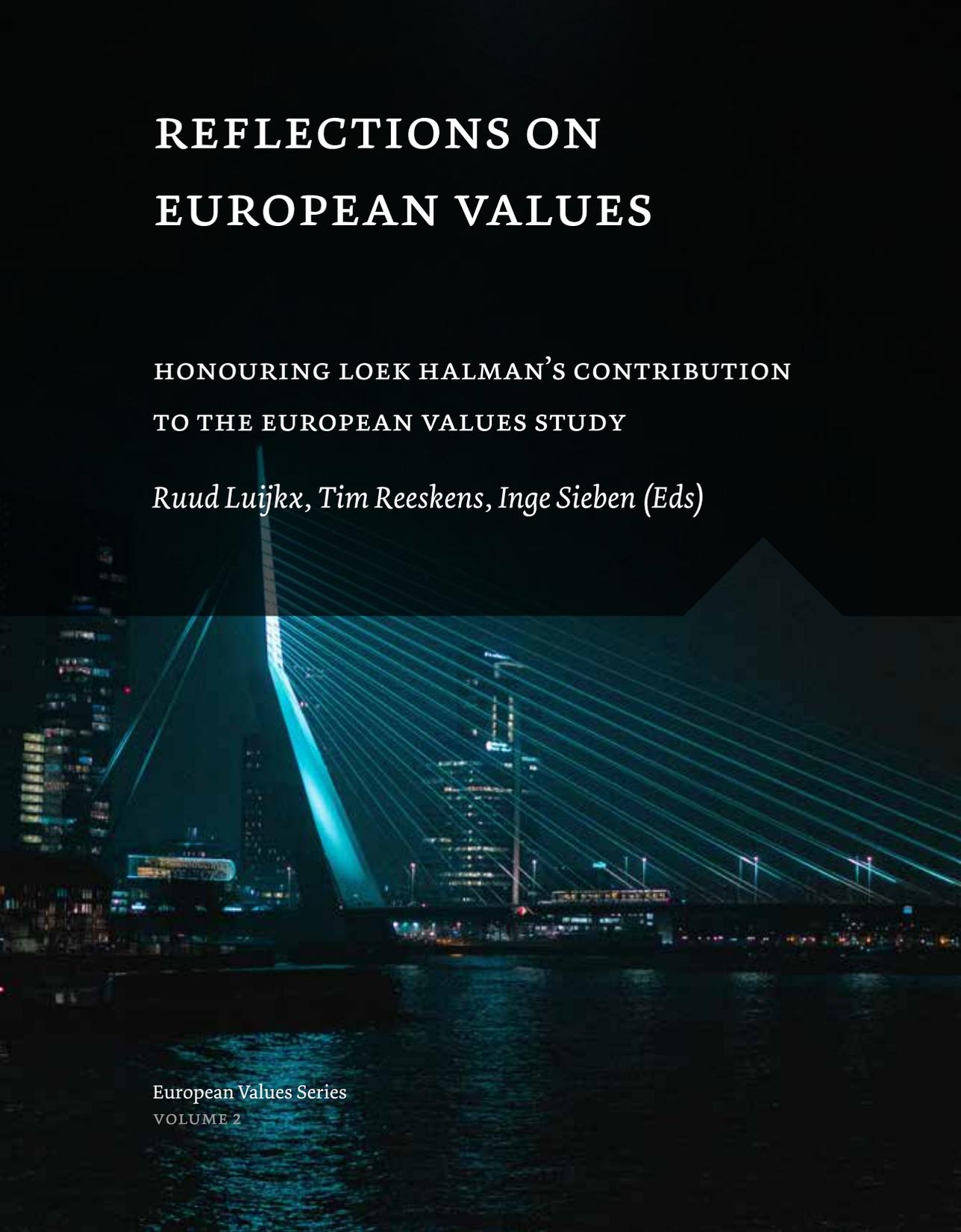
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# REFLECTIONS ON EUROPEAN VALUES

HONOURING LOEK HALMAN'S CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE EUROPEAN VALUES STUDY

*Ruud Luijkx, Tim Reeskens, Inge Sieben (Eds)*

European Values Series  
VOLUME 2



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# 19. GENDER EQUALITY VALUES AND CULTURAL ORIENTATIONS

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Vera Lomazzi

## **Abstract**

*This contribution offers a comparative analysis of attitudes towards gender roles (GRA) in the domestic and public domains and their relation to cultural orientations. Using the novel alignment method, the factor means of GRA have been estimated while assessing for their measurement equivalence across the whole set of 34 countries included in the final release of EVS 2017. The results address the necessity of considering the multidimensionality of this concept. The country ranking showed that several countries support egalitarian gender roles in the public and domestic domains differently. In some cases, support for gender equality in the public sphere was expressed alongside traditional views in the private sphere, displaying, therefore, ambivalence between attitudes in these two domains. The Pearson correlations between GRA and the cultural values scores (Schwartz 2006) show that societies that emphasize the importance of the collective and status quo tend to support more traditional gender roles, both in the public and in the domestic domain. However, this relationship is stronger and clearer in the public domain. These findings suggest that the shift towards more egalitarian societies risks being slowed down if policies favor female economic and political participation but neglect the promotion of equality in the household.*

## 19.1 Introduction

Since 2009, with the Treaty of Lisbon, equality between men and women has been included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and as such recognized among the values of the Union. However, the dawn of the long process of institutionalization of the gender equality principle can be dated back to the end of the fifties of the last century. In 1957 the Treaty of Rome, which stipulated the birth of the European Economic Community, affirmed equal pay for men and women. This process still continues nowadays, in the context of a unified strategy based on Gender Mainstreaming<sup>1</sup> as a guiding principle for European legislation and policies (Lomazzi & Crespi, 2019)

However, the implementation of these directives deals with different social structures and cultural contexts. The transition from formal norms to substantive practices and values change can take a long time, bringing to different outcomes, which are not always easily measurable (Moser & Moser, 2005). Gender equality progress is often monitored through indices built on objective statistics concerning structural aspects of equal rights; however, the cultural orientations of societies, which are in an interactive relationship with structural contexts, are often neglected. These cultural orientations refer to the prevailing complex of values, norms and beliefs in a society and have a relevant role in shaping individual beliefs and behaviours, also concerning gender role expectations.

The European Values Study (EVS), whose Executive Committee was chaired by Loek Halman until 2021, offers the scientific community an authoritative source of data covering many topics. This chapter presents the contribution of the EVS in the study of the cultural aspects of gender equality. After introducing the available survey instruments in EVS 2017, the study focuses on the revised scale measuring gender role attitudes and, by using comparable factor means obtained through the alignment method, it explores the relationship

<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, defined Gender Mainstreaming (GM) as a global strategy for gender equality. Article 79 of the Report (United Nations 1996, 27) states: "Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programs so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively". The European Union embraced the GM perspective in 1996.

between prevailing cultural orientations, measured according to the Schwartz theory of values (2006), and normative beliefs about gender roles in the public and domestic domains in 27 countries.

## 19.2 Measuring Gender Equality: The Contribution of the European Values Study

The multidimensional nature of gender equality makes the measurement of this concept particularly challenging. The unequal treatment of gender differences can take place, and therefore can be measured and studied, in several domains of life. Inequalities can concern the public sphere and regard dynamics and segregation phenomena in the labour market, educational system, politics. But they can take place in the private sphere as well, where deeper gender dynamics build on socialization processes and daily negotiations (Wharton, 2005).

Alongside to macro-indicators, providing information about structural aspects regarding gender inequalities, data collected via survey instruments can offer information on subjective gendered experiences, both concerning behaviour and, more interestingly, on values and attitudes, giving therefore hints about the cultural dimensions of gender equality.

Individual gender equality values motivate the pursue for equality in daily life and constitute the most relevant explanatory factor of the unequal distribution of paid work and unpaid care work between men and women (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). At the aggregate level, information on gender equality values and attitudes can contribute studying gender cultures and complement the figures given by macro-indicators (Lomazzi & Crespi, 2019; Pfau-Effinger, 1998).

With its last wave, the EVS offers the most recent and broader coverage of Europeans gender equality values through four survey instruments. The first one concerns the principle of gender equality as part of the idea of a democratic society. The respondents are asked to indicate to what extent they consider that

“women have the same rights as men” is an essential characteristic of democracy. The second question concerns equal rights in the labour market and asks the respondents whether they agree with the statement “When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women”. The third instrument belong to a broader battery on elements considered important for a successful marriage or partnership and concerns the item “share the household chores”. While these instruments grasp gender equality principles, the fourth instrument is a battery on gender role attitudes.

Gender role attitudes (GRA) refer to the beliefs concerning the perceived appropriateness of social roles for men and women, in particular about the division of paid labour, childcare, and housework, on the basis of a gendered separation of tasks and responsibilities (Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Grunow et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2010). Traditional GRA support the specialization of roles by gender. Historically, this means that social roles related to childcare and housework, and for extension job in caring activities, are considered the most proper social roles for women. Complementarily, roles in the public sphere connected to paid job, authority, and for an extension also power positions, are appropriate just for men. Progressive attitudes towards gender roles tend to go beyond this gendered separation and express support for women’s role in the public sphere as well as the men’s role in the private one (Albrecht et al., 2000; Lomazzi & Seddig, 2020). Whereas most of the other existing surveys cover gender beliefs only on domestic or public dimensions, the EVS 2017 is currently the only cross-national survey allowing for measuring gender role attitudes in both the domains.

### 19.3 Gender Role Attitudes in the EVS 2017

The EVS measures gender role attitudes GRA since its second wave in 1990. Compared to the previous editions, the measurement of GRA in EVS 2017 has been deeply revised to address some of the most relevant methodological concerns regarding validity and measurement equivalence (Braun, 1998; Constantin & Voicu, 2015; Grunow et al., 2018; Lomazzi, 2017, 2018; Voicu & Tufiş, 2012; Walter, 2018).

Table 19.1 lists the items surveyed in EVS 2017. From the past waves, only item b, performing better in previous assessments (Constantin & Voicu, 2015; Voicu & Tufiş, 2012), was preserved in the same form. The other items were replaced by items more positively evaluated in empirical literature (Braun, 1998; Constantin & Voicu, 2015; Walter, 2018). Items a, c, and d were borrowed from the ISSP. Items e, f, and g from the measurement included in the WVS since 1995 (for a broader discussion on the development of the GRA scale used in EVS 2017, see Lomazzi, 2022). Even if the current measurement still fails in covering the multidimensionality and complexity of GRA (the focus remains limited to female roles, for example), the current revision brings two main advantages: the extension of possibilities for worldwide comparative studies and the fact that both content validity of these items (Braun 1998; Constantin & Voicu 2015; Lomazzi 2017; Walter 2018), as well as the suitability for trustable cross-sectional comparison (Constantin & Voicu 2015; Lomazzi 2018; Lomazzi & Seddig 2020), have been already investigated. Furthermore, the inclusion of these three last items met the goal of improving the conceptualisation of gender role attitudes by focusing on female roles in the private and public spheres (Constantin & Voicu 2015).

Table 19.1 GRA scale in EVS 2017 (Answer categories: 1=agree strongly; 2=agree; 3=disagree; 4=disagree strongly)

a) When a mother works for pay, the children suffer. (in older edition: A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works)
b) A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children.
c) All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job.
d) A man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family.
e) Overall, men make better political leaders than women do.
f) A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.
g) Overall, men make better business executives than women do.

## 19.4 The Measurement Model of GRA and Its Cross-National Comparable Factor Means

In order to explore the relation between GRA and societal cultural orientation, the first step is to compute comparable means at the country level of GRA. Following the reflexive perspective in the measurement of attitudes (Coltman *et al.*, 2008), a factorial approach is used. First of all, an exploratory factor analysis is conducted to identify the configuration model, which is then assessed via confirmatory factor analysis country by country, considering the whole set of the 34 countries included in the final release of the fifth wave of the EVS (2020). Secondly, its measurement equivalence is evaluated by applying the alignment method. Finally, factor means obtained through the alignment method are compared.

The exploratory factor analysis conducted on the whole sample (Table 19.2), indicates a bidimensional structure with items a, b, c loading on factor 1 covering the “Domestic domain”, and items e, f, g loading on factor 2 tackling the “Public domain”. Item 5 loads about equally on both the factors. As this cross-loading is quite critical, the item is excluded by the model. The model fit of this hypothetical model (displayed in Figure 19.1) was assessed country by country (results not reported) and the model fit the data in each one of them.

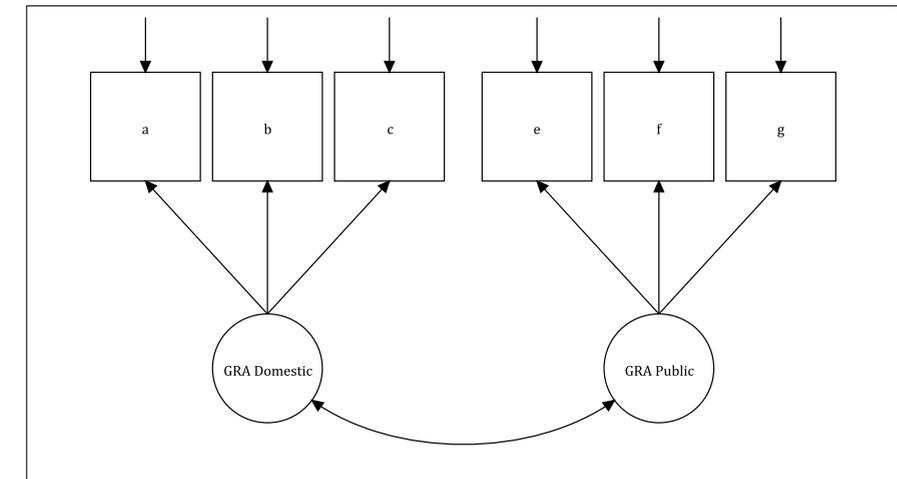
Table 19.2 Measurement of GRA: Exploratory Factor Analysis (MLR Estimation, GEOMIN rotation). For the full description of the items, please see Table 19.1

	F1 - Domestic Domain	F2 - Public Domain
Item a)	0.764*	0.003*
Item b)	0.585*	0.185*
Item c)	0.830*	-0.011*
Item d)	0.461*	0.411*
Item e)	0.009*	0.829*
Item f)	0.061*	0.607*
Item g)	-0.071*	0.893*

\*Significant at 5% level

Source: EVS 2017

Figure 19.1 Measurement model of GRA. For the full description of the items, please see Table 19.1



Because of the large number of groups included, the evaluation of whether the measurement model of GRA is suitable for meaningful country comparisons is conducted using the alignment method, a recently developed technique particularly suitable in these situations (Davidov *et al.*, 2018). It builds on the concept of approximate equivalence that, in contrast to the exact approach implemented in other statistical techniques, as the multigroup confirmatory factor analysis, allows for including cultural variability and uncertainty in the assessment (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014; Lomazzi, 2018; van de Schoot *et al.*, 2013). The alignment method estimates factor means and variances while considering the real differences in loadings and intercepts among groups and identify the most invariant pattern across the groups. As a complementary output, the alignment procedure provides elements to assess the degree of non-invariance, which is helpful in evaluating whether to trust and accept the alignment results. According to the empirical literature, the amount of non-invariant parameters should be lower than 25% (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014).

Following this approach, the GRA measurement results sufficiently equivalent across the 34 countries included in the assessment. The amount of noninvari-

ant parameter is 22.5% and a Monte Carlo study was carried out to evaluate the accuracy of the latent mean estimations and country ranking. To consider the alignment results trustworthy, the correlation of the estimated and generated mean factors should be higher than 0.98 (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014). In this study, which was performed carrying out 500 replications assuming sample sizes closer to the EVS ones, these correlations are extremely high (Domestic domain: 0.997; Public domain: 0.998). These results indicate that unbiased factor means comparison of GRA can be carried out across the 34 countries. The alignment method estimates factor means using a reference group, whose factor mean is fixed to be 0. Estimated factor means can therefore take positive or negative values. In this case, where no specific substantive research questions suggested to define a specific reference group, the default reference group is the first group listed in the data (Albania) in both the dimensions.

Table 19.3 reports the country ranking for each domain (higher scores indicates greater support for progressive values). While some countries showed similar positioning in the domestic and public domains, others showed relevant discrepancies. For example, the respondents in Albania expressed traditional attitudes regarding the consequences of female economic participation in family life (31<sup>st</sup> position) but displayed progressive attitudes regarding the role of women in the public sphere (7<sup>th</sup>). A similar gap was observed in the case of Italy (28<sup>th</sup> position in Domestic domain, 15<sup>th</sup> in Public domain). Other countries (e.g., Slovakia, Romania, Estonia, Belarus) showed higher ranking in the domestic sphere but lower in the public one. In the future, substantive studies could investigate these discrepancies between the dimensions of GRA as well as the differences between countries.

Table 19.3 Alignment results: Factor mean of GRA in the Domestic and Public Domains, country ranking

GRA -Domestic Domain		GRA -Public Domain		
Ranking	Value	Mean	Value	Mean
1	Norway	2.468	Norway	0.58
2	Denmark	2.325	Sweden	0.5

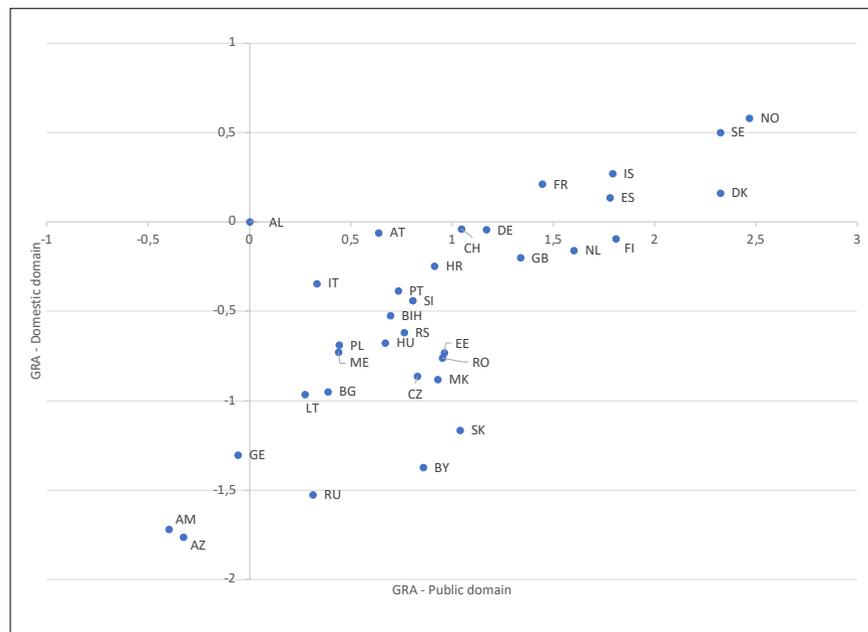
3	Sweden	2.324	Iceland	0.269
4	Finland	1.809	France	0.21
5	Iceland	1.793	Denmark	0.161
6	Spain	1.78	Spain	0.135
7	Netherlands	1.603	Albania	0
8	France	1.447	Switzerland	-0.041
9	Great Britain	1.338	Germany	-0.044
10	Germany	1.169	Austria	-0.06
11	Switzerland	1.047	Finland	-0.094
12	Slovakia	1.04	Netherlands	-0.158
13	Estonia	0.961	Great Britain	-0.2
14	Romania	0.952	Croatia	-0.246
15	North Macedonia	0.93	Italy	-0.344
16	Croatia	0.915	Portugal	-0.385
17	Belarus	0.858	Slovenia	-0.441
18	Czechia	0.828	Bosnia and Herzegovina	-0.525
19	Slovenia	0.806	Serbia	-0.62
20	Serbia	0.763	Hungary	-0.675
21	Portugal	0.734	Poland	-0.688
22	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.697	Montenegro	-0.728
23	Hungary	0.671	Estonia	-0.731
24	Austria	0.639	Romania	-0.761
25	Poland	0.443	Czechia	-0.864
26	Montenegro	0.44	North Macedonia	-0.882
27	Bulgaria	0.388	Bulgaria	-0.949
28	Italy	0.333	Lithuania	-0.965
29	Russia	0.314	Slovakia	-1.163
30	Lithuania	0.274	Georgia	-1.304
31	Albania	0	Belarus	-1.373
32	Georgia	-0.056	Russia	-1.527
33	Azerbaijan	-0.325	Armenia	-1.719
34	Armenia	-0.398	Azerbaijan	-1.761

Source: EVS 2017

The graph in Figure 19.2 displays the relationship between the two different domains ( $r=0.79$ ). It shows that only in a few countries progressive GRA are manifested in both domains while in most of the countries, despite progressive attitudes in the public sphere, GRA in the domestic sphere are more traditional.

The different positioning by domain and the ambivalence displayed offer therefore further insights about the importance of considering the multidimensionality of gender role attitudes also in more sophisticated analyses because, for example, the explaining factors of GRA could have different effects by domain.

Figure 19.2 Relationship of GRA in the Domestic domain and GRA in the Public domain (country - level data,  $N=34$ )



Source: EVS 2017

## 19.5 Gender Role Attitudes and Societal Values Orientations

Are gender role attitudes an imprint of deep-rooted societal values orientations? Building on Schwartz' theory of individual differences in value priorities (2006), a recent study by Lomazzi & Seddig (2020) used data from the ISSP to investigate the relation between GRA and the prevailing values system in 36 countries showing that GRA in the domestic sphere are connected with Embeddedness, Hierarchy, and Egalitarianism, but correlate strongly only with the cultural value of Embeddedness ( $r=0.7$ ). This orientation refers to societies in which people are seen as entities deeply embedded in the collectivity (Schwartz, 2006: 140) and wherein keeping the status quo is considered important: here, people tend to express traditional gender role attitudes, as part of a traditional system to be preserved. Here we use EVS data and aggregated scores of data on individual values provided by Schwartz (2008), whose cross-national comparability has been already assessed (Schwartz, 2006), to explore whether a similar relationship might differ when considering different GRA domains.<sup>2</sup>

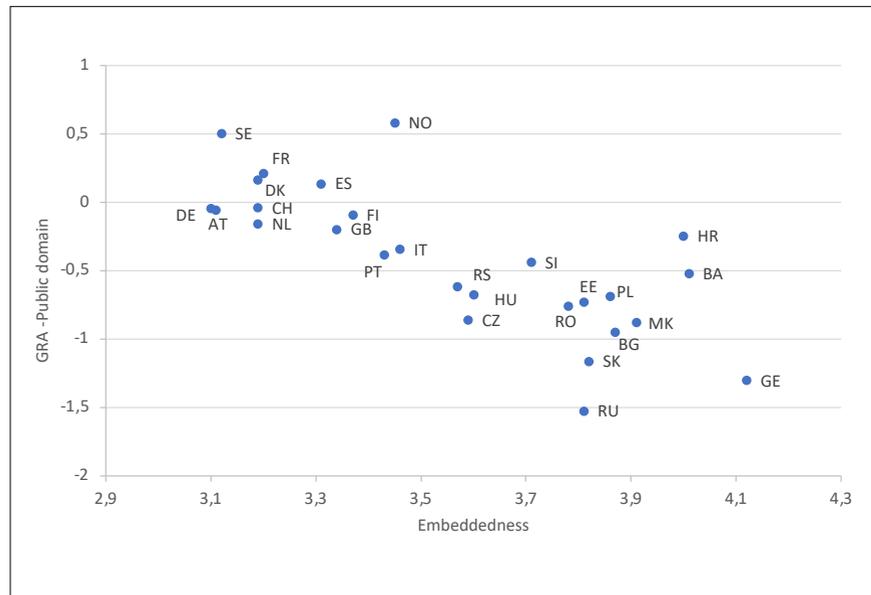
The association between GRA factor means and cultural values scores for Embeddedness is shown in Figure 19.3 (Public Domain) and Figure 19.4 (Domestic domain). In both the cases we observed a negative relationship (Public domain:  $r = -0.76$ ; Domestic domain:  $r = -0.61$ ) indicating that the more societies emphasize the importance of the collective and status quo, the less they support progressive gender role models. Some of the countries with the highest levels of Embeddedness (e.g., Georgia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Russia) are among those expressing more traditional views concerning gender roles in the public domain. On the other side, countries with the lowest scores on Embeddedness (e.g., Germany, Sweden, Austria, Denmark) support more progressive gender roles.

The association between Embeddedness and GRA in the Domestic domain is slightly weaker. Looking at the distribution displayed in Figure 19.4, we found that countries that shows high Embeddedness scores also endorse less pro-

<sup>2</sup> Among the countries included in EVS 2017 cultural values scores aren't available for Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Iceland, Lithuania, and Montenegro, so this relationship is investigated including 27

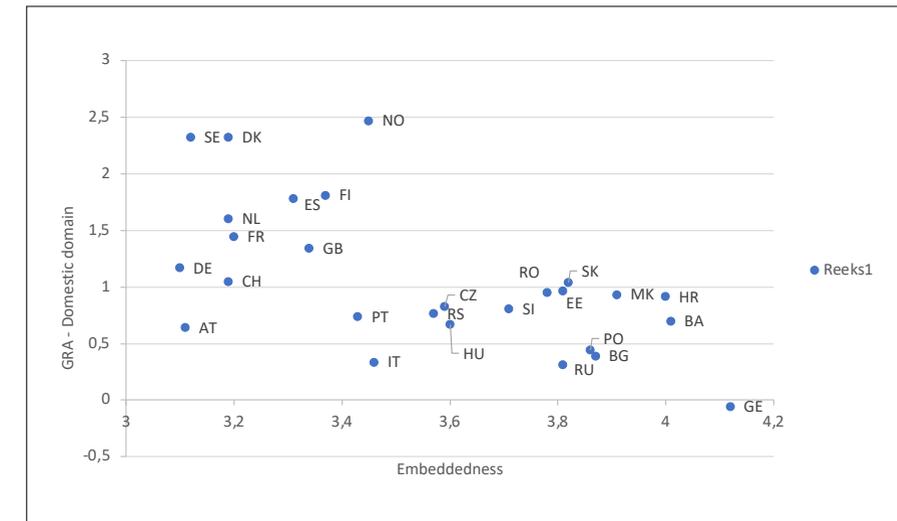
gressive GRA (e.g., Georgia, Bulgaria, Poland, Russia) whereas countries with the lowest scores on Embeddedness (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland) are among those with the least traditional gender role attitudes. However, this relationship appears less clear than the previous one and would require further investigation because of relevant exceptions to the expected relationship, such as in the case of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland (low embeddedness but also less progressive GRA).

Figure 19.3 Relationship of the cultural value embeddedness and GRA in the Public domain (country - level data, N=27)



Source: EVS 2017; Schwartz 2008

Figure 19.4 Relationship of the cultural value embeddedness and GRA in the Domestic domain (country - level data, N=27)



Source: EVS 2017; Schwartz 2008

## 19.6 Summary and Conclusions

Differently from other sources frequently used to monitor and compare structural aspects of gender equality, the EVS allows for grasping information about the cultural component of gender equality. Among the different measurement of gender equality values included in EVS 2017, this chapter focused on the revised scale of gender role attitudes (GRA), which tackles gender beliefs in the domestic and public domains. Using the novel alignment method, the factor means of GRA have been estimated while assessing for their measurement equivalence. The assessment, supported by Monte Carlo simulations, confirmed the comparability of the measurement model of GRA across the whole set of 34 countries included in the final release of EVS 2017. The country ranking showed that several countries support egalitarian gender roles differently in the public and domestic domains, reinforcing the necessity of considering the multidimensionality of this concept in future research. Furthermore, am-

bivalence in GRA has been detected: looking at the wider public scene –where people experience the increased female participation – Europeans tend to support equality, probably also as a reflection of a common European wide narrative on gender equality in this realm. But when issues of gender roles come closer to the private sphere, one might express opposite feelings, in line with their actual situation and/or affected by the implication for family life when women work and family policies are not generous (Sjöberg, 2010).

Assuming that gender beliefs are strictly connected with value orientations prevailing in each society, the relationship between the societal cultural value of Embeddedness (Schwartz, 2006) and GRA has been further investigated. The Pearson correlations between the GRA factor means estimated through the alignment method and the cultural values scores show that societies that emphasize the importance of the collective and status quo tend to support more traditional gender roles, both in the public and in the domestic domain. However, this relationship is stronger and clearer in the public domain.

With GRA in the domestic domain deeply rooted in long-lasting traditional cultures, the shift towards more egalitarian societies appears therefore slowed down if, for example, institutional measures supporting egalitarian gender roles in the household are weak while favoring only female economic and political participation (Lomazzi & Crespi, 2019). The risk is, in another words, achieving a sort of formal equality in the public domain, but still lacking substantial equality in the domestic domain, with consequences on the intergenerational transmission of gender role expectations as well (Farré & Vella, 2013).

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# COLOPHON

REFLECTIONS ON EUROPEAN VALUES:  
HONOURING LOEK HALMAN'S CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE EUROPEAN VALUES STUDY

European Values Series, volume 2

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*Ruud Luijkx, Tim Reeskens, Inge Sieben (Eds.)*

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European *Values* Study



This book on Reflections on European Values is a Liber Amicorum honouring Loek Halman's contribution to the European Values Study. For years, he has been a key figure in this longitudinal and cross-national research project on moral, social, and political values, dedicating his academic life to advancing the understanding of values in Europe. This Liber Amicorum is published at the occasion of Loek's retirement after a long career at the Department of Sociology at Tilburg University. It brings together essays on the study of European values, written by his academic friends. The 32 chapters in this volume are structured in five themes that reflect Loek's scholarly interest. A first group of contributions presents theoretical and

methodological reflections on the European Values Study. Second, essays on the sociology of religion reflect Loek's interest in this topic. Third, comparative studies using the European Values Study are presented. The fourth part focuses on a case most well-known : the Netherlands. The fifth and final section further deepens the understanding of values in several specific countries in Europe. Upon his retirement, this book will serve as an inspiration for scholars who want to walk in Loek Halman's footsteps in continuing research on values in Europe."



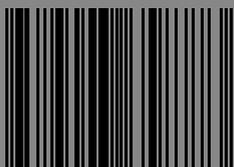
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