

Using cross-national general population surveys to investigate migrant, non national and ethnic minorities: pitfalls and opportunities

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Markus Quandt (GESIS, markus.quandt@gesis.org)

Mónica Méndez (CIS, monica.mendez@cis.es)

****Provisional analyses, please do not quote without contacting the authors****

Goals

- Reflect about some challenges around measuring ethnic/migrant status (EMMs) cross-nationally in comparative general population surveys
- In preparation for more in-depth analyses...we start by an empirical assessment of the way cross national surveys:
 - 1) Define their target population;
 - 2) Include or not questions that allow to identify non-national, foreign bornðnic minority status;
 - 3) We also look at whether the achieved samples of these survey project adequately represent these groups.
 - 4) Reflect about some challenges around measuring ethnic/migrant status cross-nationally in comparative general population surveys



Projects

Work related to two projects:

COST action [ETHMIGSURVEYDATA – The International Ethnic and Immigrant Minorities' Survey Data Network](#)



[OnBound](#) project (GESIS, Germany)



Why this topic? Why focus on cross national comparative surveys?

- Interest in the topic stems from both methodological and substantive reasons
- Researchers working on topics related to migrant/foreign/ethnic minorities (life chances, behaviour, attitudes and preferences) often use survey data, either from specific, or from general population surveys
- When doing cross national comparisons, if there are no specific surveys on EMMs, one possibility is to use (general population) cross-national surveys

Pros and cons of using comparative cross national surveys to investigate EMMs

- Pros for comparative surveys:
 - Questions are (should be) designed for comparability
 - Wide coverage of countries, often time series
 - Data and documentation is free and easy to access
- Cons for comparative surveys:
 - Samples may include too few EMM respondents (and sometimes grouped due to anonymization)
 - Coverage/representation biases for EMM populations in final/achieved samples

Definition and identification of EMMs in cross-national survey projects

Comparative overview: target populations

	ISSP	ESS	EVS	Eurobarometer
Age limit	Adult population (no specific age)	15+	18+	+15
Target population	Not specified (“a national representative probability sample of the adult population”)	Resident population	Resident population	Nationals of any EU member country, resident in country

Source: authors' own elaboration with information from each survey's webpage/technical documentation

Target Population ISSP Religion (2018)

	Countries	N
Only adult citizens of country	Chile, Denmark, Georgia, Israel, Italy, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey	9 countries
Adults of any nationality (resident population)	Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Rep., Finland, France, Germany, UK, Hungary, Island, Japan, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Surinam, Sweden, Switzerland, United States	24 countries

[Source: authors' own elaboration with information from the 2018 ISSP Religion Monitoring Report](#)

Comparative Overview: Questionnaire Contents

	ISSP	ESS	EVS	Eurobarometer
R's Nationality		X	X	X (yes/no, of survey country)
R's Country of Birth	(x)	X	X	
Years living in country		X	X	
Parents' country of birth	X (F&M)	X (F&M)		
Ethnic self identification	X (2) Country specific	X (2) Country specific/ common coding scheme		

Source: authors' own elaboration with information from each survey's webpage/technical documentation

Challenges for representation of EMMs Among Respondents

- Undercoverage/difficulties in the sampling frames/contact data problems
- Higher unit non-response (hard to reach, language barriers, lack of trust/familiarity)
- Questions/topics might be designed for “majority” groups (item refusal, break off)

Coverage of 'migrants': a first attempt to measure it
across surveys

Data and Approach

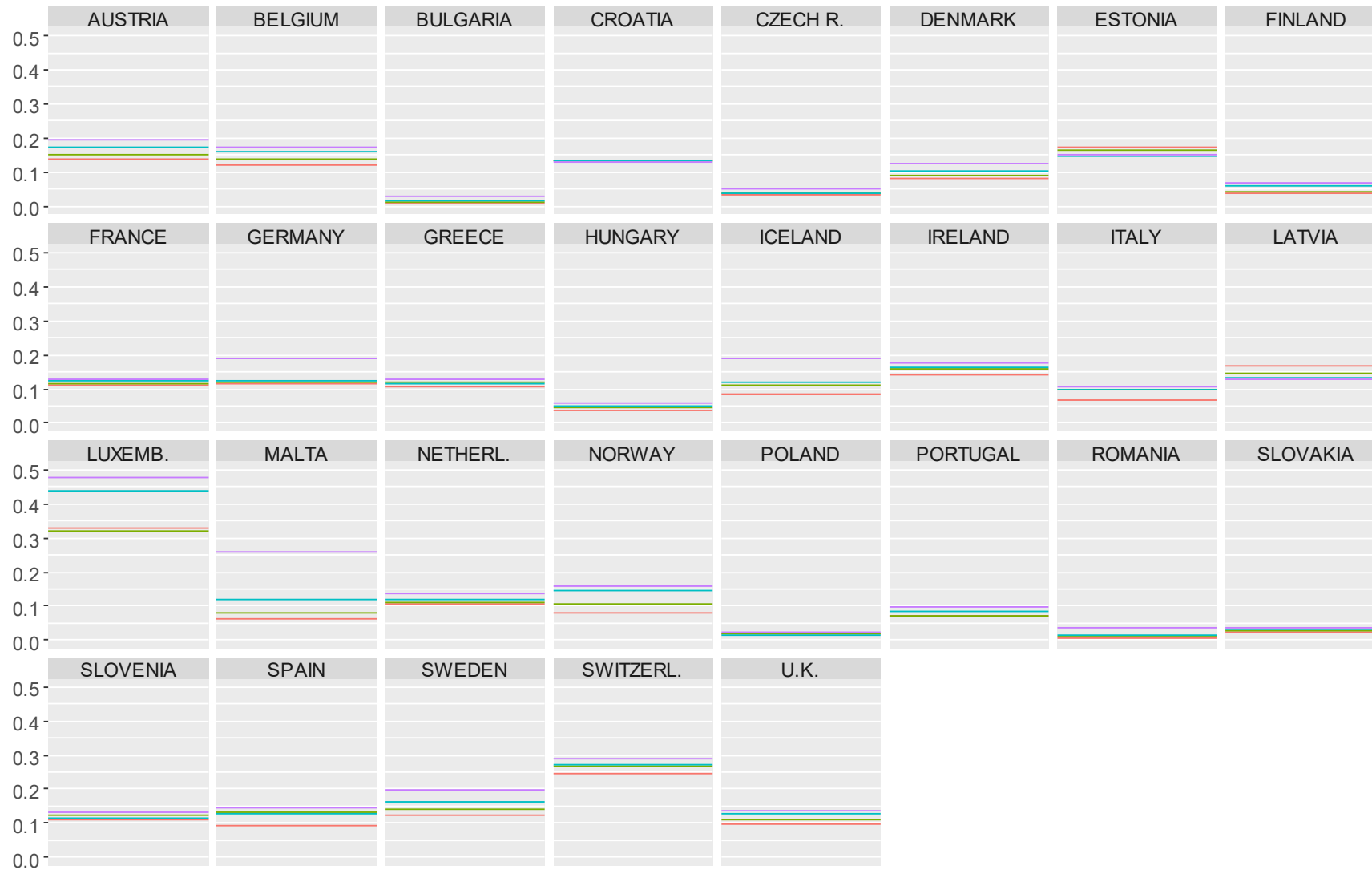
- Used pre-harmonized survey data from the “ONBound” project
- Selected 29 European countries with good data availability (re. surveys *and* official statistics)
- *All* country samples collected between 2000 and 2020 in publicly available comparative surveys that contained questions on respondents’ **citizenship** or **country of birth**
 - 9 different survey programs (ESS, EVS, EB [plus ACEB and CCEB], IntUne, ISSP, Pew Global Attitudes)
 - 1584 country*time*survey program observations for ‘non-citizenship’
 - 731 country*time*survey program observations for ‘not born in country’
- Pooled into four time brackets (2000-2005, 2006-2010, 2011-2015, 2016-2020) before computing shares of non-citizens and foreign-born.

Reference: UNDESA estimates of 'migrant stock'

- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020). International Migrant Stock 2020.
- Reported in 5-year intervals
- Built mostly from national census data, where censuses either ask for **country of birth** or for **citizenship status** (in our country set, only the Czech Republic uses citizenship!)

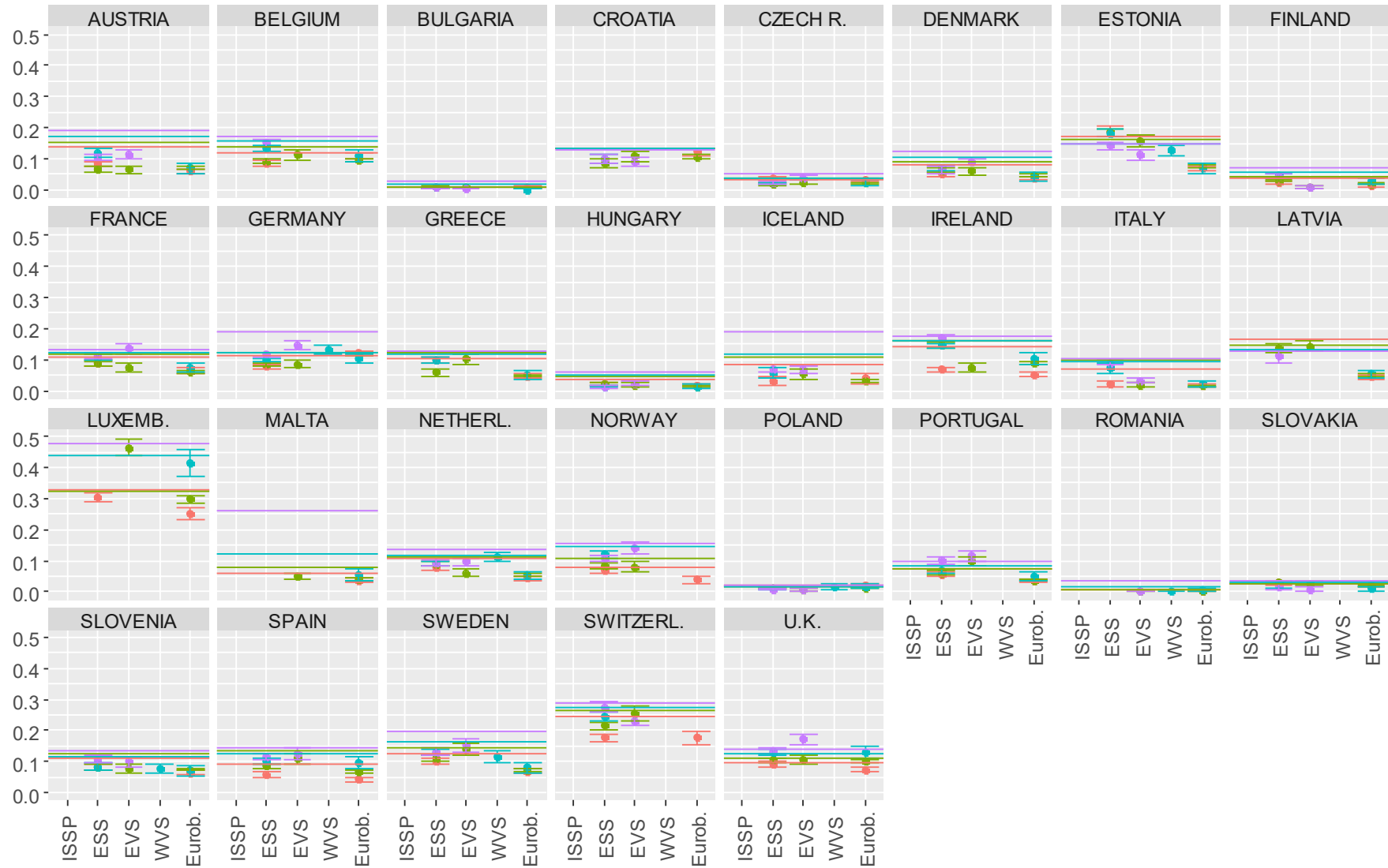
(Note: for simplification, we only show survey estimates from the five largest comparative programs, out of nine)

UNDESA, Fraction of Foreign Born (mostly), by Period



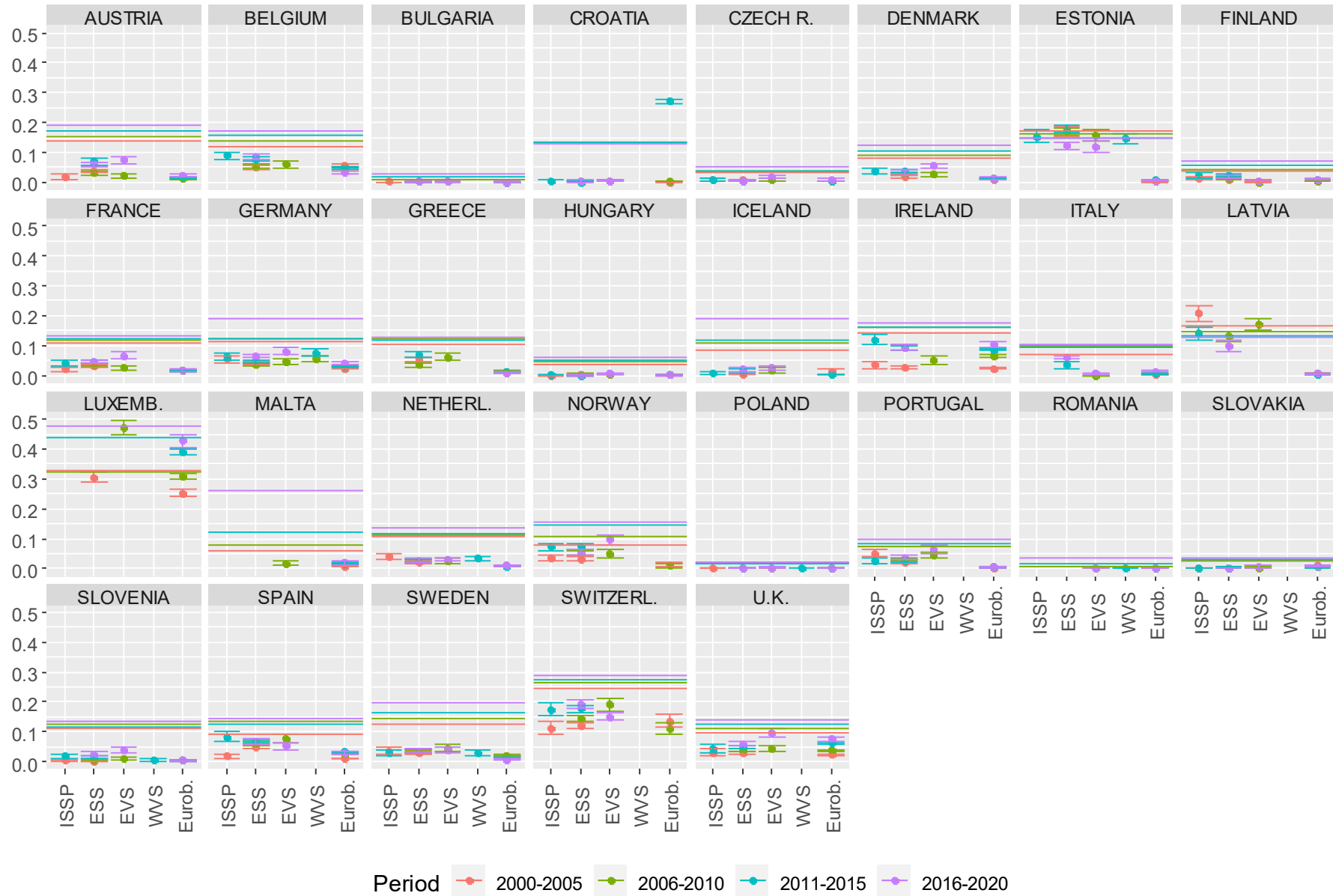
Period 2000-2005 2006-2010 2011-2015 2016-2020

Surveys vs. UNDESA, Share of Foreign Born

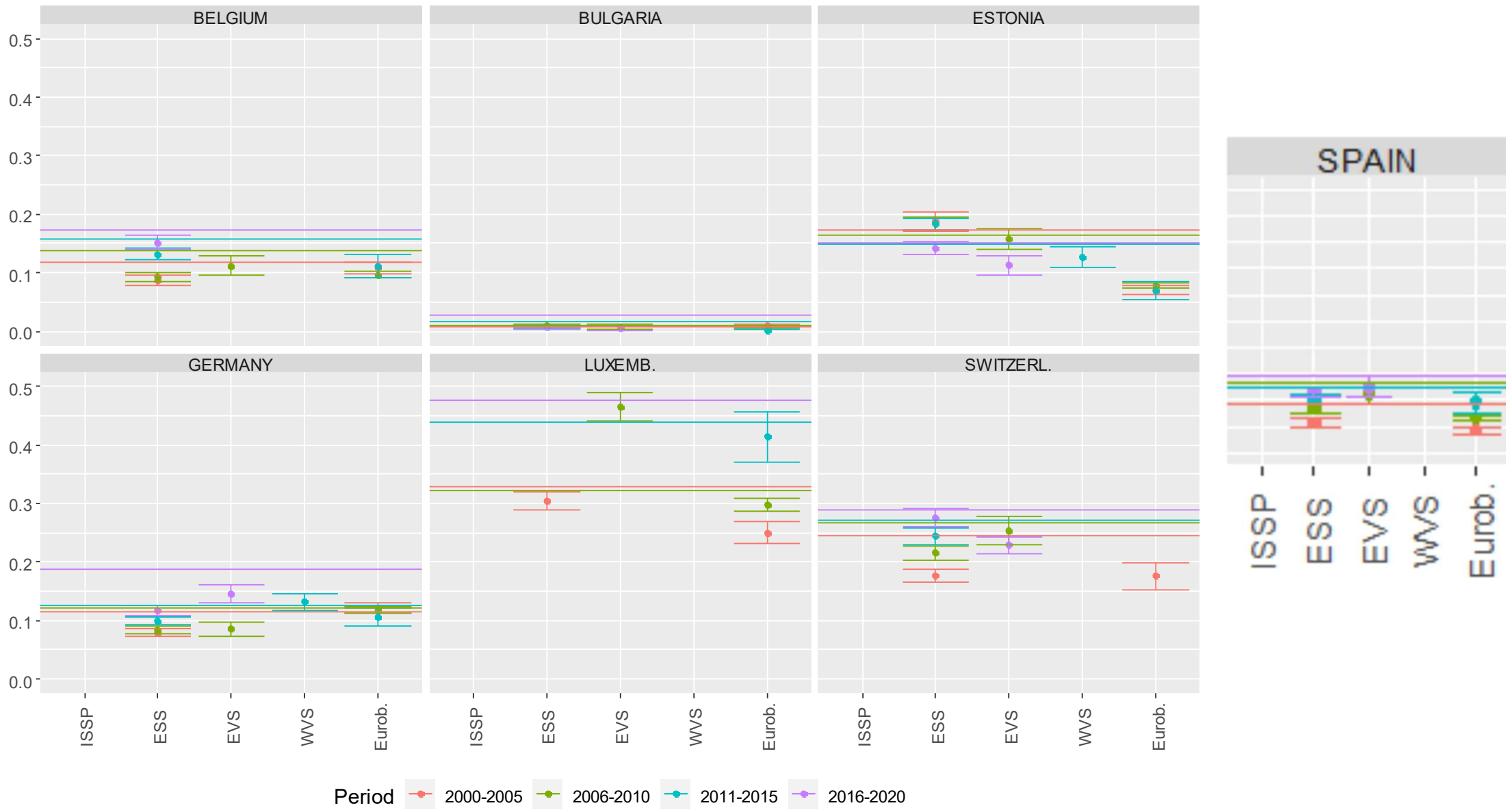


Period ● 2000-2005 ● 2006-2010 ● 2011-2015 ● 2016-2020

Surveys vs. UNDESA, Share of Non-Citizens



Surveys vs. UNDESA, Share of Foreign Born



Lessons learned so far...

- The expectation is confirmed: under-coverage of EMM in surveys **IS** a prevalent problem
- ...but maybe less prevalent than expected:
 - For most countries, survey estimates of foreign-born
 - ...are in the ballpark of the official statistics figures
 - ...reproduce cross-country differences well
 - ...follow the time trend of the official statistics figures
- No obvious difference in magnitude of bias between survey programs...but we want to analyze this further

Next steps

- Further investigate possible explanations for differences across countries/survey projects
 - Size of non national/foreign born population?
 - Characteristics of non-national/foreign born population (% that speaks majority language)
 - Mode of administration: do some modes make it easier to access non-national/foreign-born population? Expectations?
 - Individual name sample vs other designs: does it matter?
 - Variation in question design across and within survey programs
- Move on to looking at country of origin information – which origins are most easily ‘lost’, by how much?
- Ideas? Comments and suggestions welcome!

Thank you!