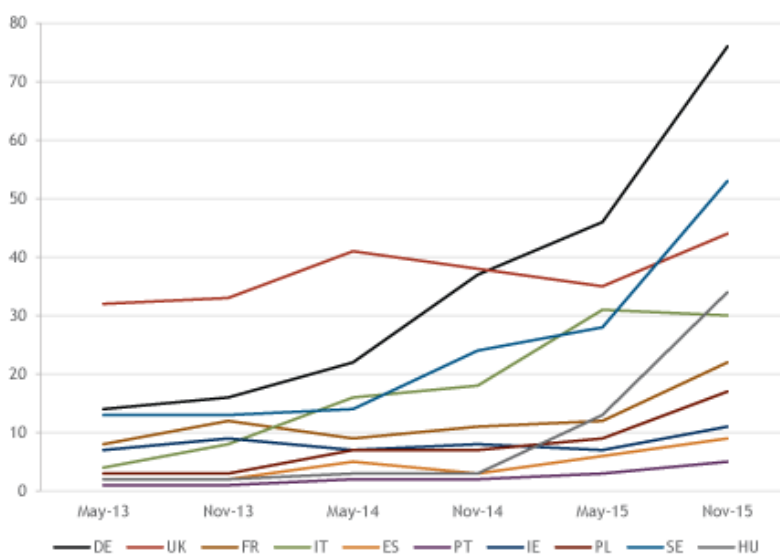


# How worried are Europeans about immigration?

Blog post by Associate Adviser Roberto Robles, 25 February 2016

Europe is in the midst of a crisis over migration. But how worried are Europeans about immigration? The answer depends on whether you look at Europe as a whole, or individual countries. And it may matter is thinking about the impact in the EU of a Brexit in June.

National differences in concern over migration in the EU are striking. The last big set of Eurobarometer data from December shows huge spikes on in the number of voters describing immigration as their first or second greatest concern: from 14% to 76% in Germany between November 2013 and November 2015; from 13% to 53% in Sweden; from 2% to 34% in Hungary, and from 4% to 30% in Italy. In all these countries, anti-immigration parties are gaining ground and the EU is often the target of the consequent frustration.



**What do you think are the two most important issues facing (your country) at the moment?**

% selecting 'immigration'

Source: Eurobarometer

countries for migrants on their way to destinations like Sweden and Germany. Spain, Portugal and Ireland are neither and despite welcoming large number of immigrants in the early 2000s, they are now net exporters of people, in part because of the economic battering of the last few years.

This is likely to matter if the UK votes to leave the EU in June. Because this sensitivity to migration - and the perceived loss to the EU of the power to control it - is a good predictor of where a UK

However, there is also a cluster of countries - including Portugal, Ireland, Spain, and Poland - where concern about immigration has barely increased and remains below 20%. These countries have all had elections in the last 6 months, and as we set out in a recent note, anti-immigration parties failed to make an impact. Even where anti-immigration rhetoric did feature in some parties' nationalist platforms as in Poland, this not the main reason for their success - something that can't be said for the AfD's recent surge in German regional elections.

A few things will be going on here. Italy and Hungary are transit

choice to leave might prompt domestic demand for a similar choice. If Brexit is catching - this is where it may be most contagious.