

Is legislation of medically assisted reproduction related to attitudes in Europe?

Marie-Caroline Compans¹, Hannah Zagel²

¹ University of Vienna - Wittgenstein Centre (IIASA, OeAW, University of Vienna), marie-caroline.compans@univie.ac.at; ² WZB Berlin Social Science Center, hannah.zagel@wzb.eu

BACKGROUND

Since the 1980s, high-income countries have experienced a rapid expansion of **medically assisted reproduction (MAR)**.

Because these technologies can contribute to the pluralization of family forms, part of the current social and political controversy concerns **who is given legal access**.

In some European countries, legislation has moved away from **repronormativity** - i.e., a dominant norm that legitimizes reproduction within different-sex married couples - within various time frames and magnitudes.

Cultural change may be one of the drivers of such a shift.

QUESTIONS

- When and to what extent have European countries adopted more permissive legislation regarding who can access infertility treatments?
- What is the relationship between individual attitudes and legislation?

DATA & METHOD

Data

Attitudes are measured from the *European Values Study* (EVS):

- Solo motherhood**: approval of “*If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent, but she does not want to have a stable relationship with a man*” - waves 2 to 4 (1990, 1999, 2008).
- Medically assisted reproduction**: continuous scale (“*Whether you think it can always be justified* (10), *never be justified* (1), *or something in between*”) - waves 4 (2008–10) & 5 (2017–20).
- Same-sex parenthood/ing**: “*Homosexual couples should be able to adopt children*” - wave 4 / “*Homosexual couples are as good parents as other couples*” - wave 5, 5-point Likert scale.

Data on the timing of MAR legislation is collected from various sources for 36 countries.



Details here:

Method

The relationship between attitudes and legislation is tested **descriptively** and with **multilevel mixed-effect models** (controlling for sex, age, education, marital status and employment, religiosity, perception of assisted reproduction, political views).

THE SEQUENCE AND TIMING OF LEGISLATION IN EUROPE

Over time, there has been a decline in restrictive legislation (Figure 1a), but regional differences persist (Figure 1b).

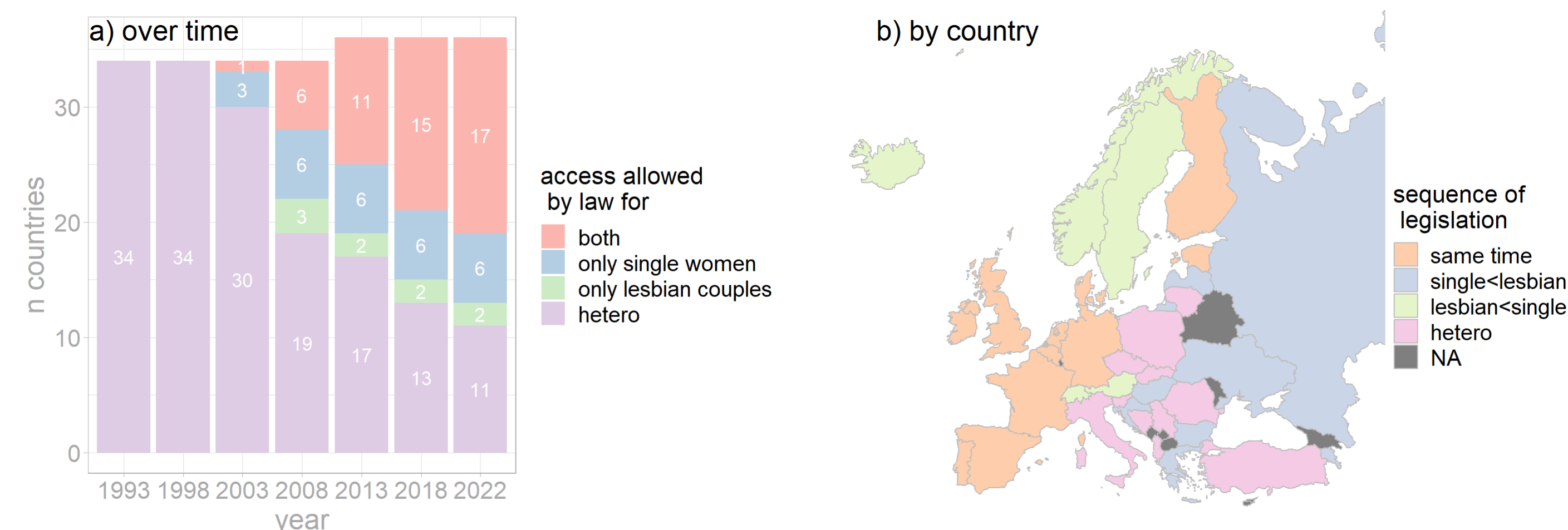


Figure 1: MAR legislation in Europe

IS LEGISLATION CONSISTENT WITH ATTITUDES?

Solo motherhood

Cross-sectionally, the level of approval of solo motherhood is inconsistent with the legal access of single women to sperm donation (Figure 2).

Over time, public approval of solo motherhood has increased in most countries, but with inconsistent timings of legal shifts (Figure 3).

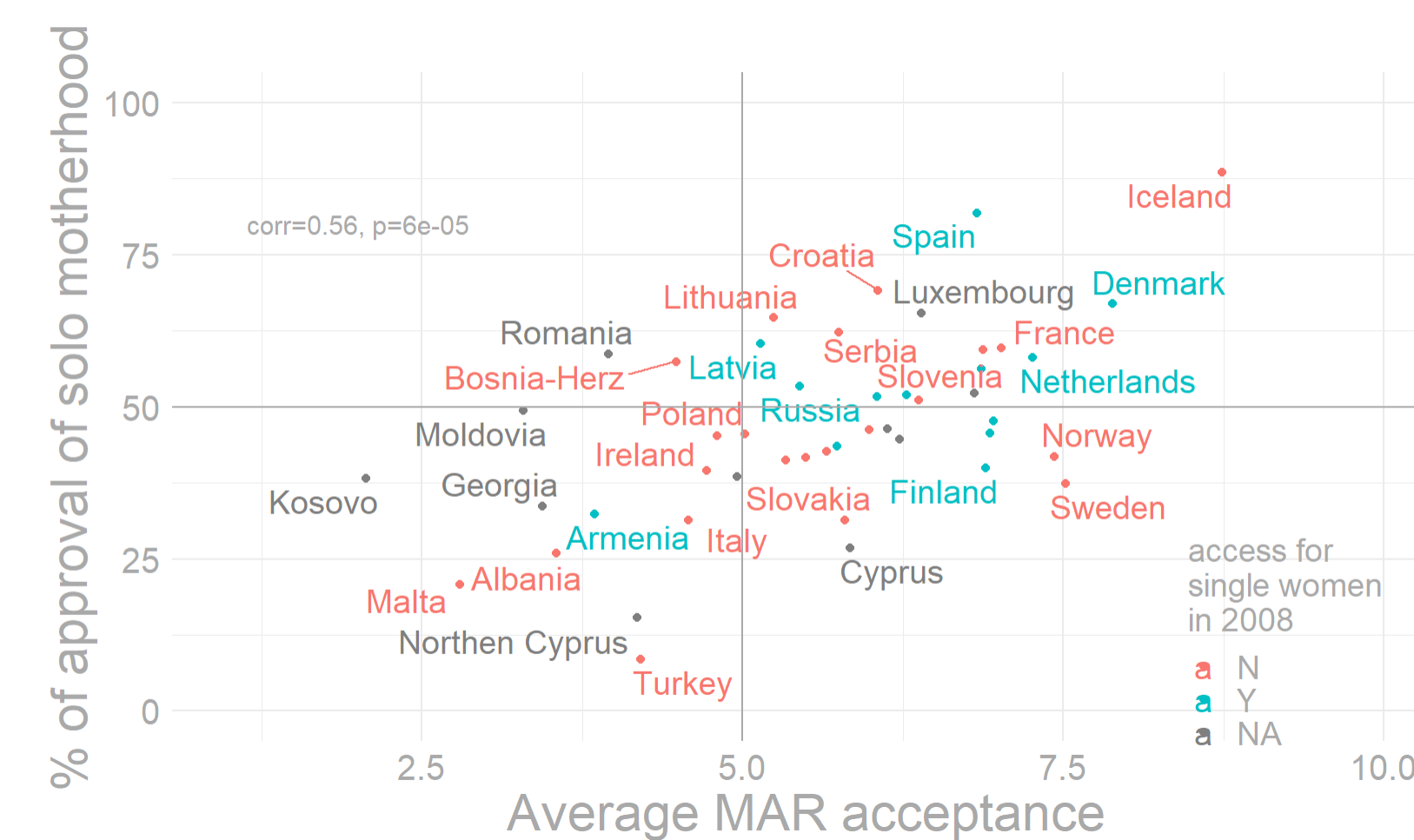


Figure 2: Approval of solo motherhood, assisted reproduction and legislation in 2008-10

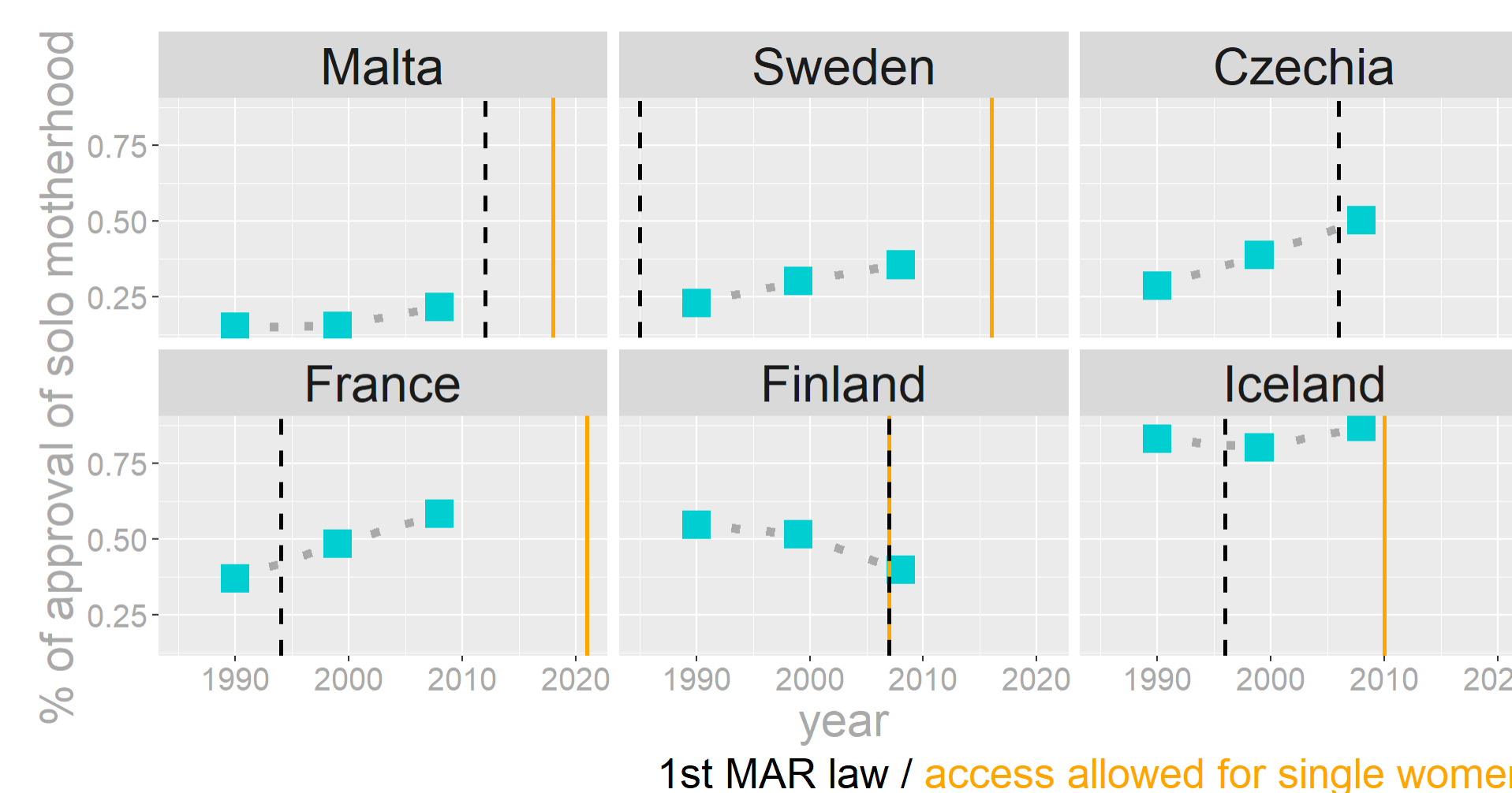


Figure 3: Approval of solo motherhood over time in selected countries and timing of legislation

Same-sex parenthood

There is consistency between the acceptance of same-sex parenthood and laws regulating access for lesbian couples.

In ten years, more countries have allowed them to access infertility treatments. This seems associated with a shift in attitudes (Figure 4).

Attitudes are the least favorable to same-sex parenting in countries where access to MAR treatments is allowed for different-sex couples *and* single women (Table 1).

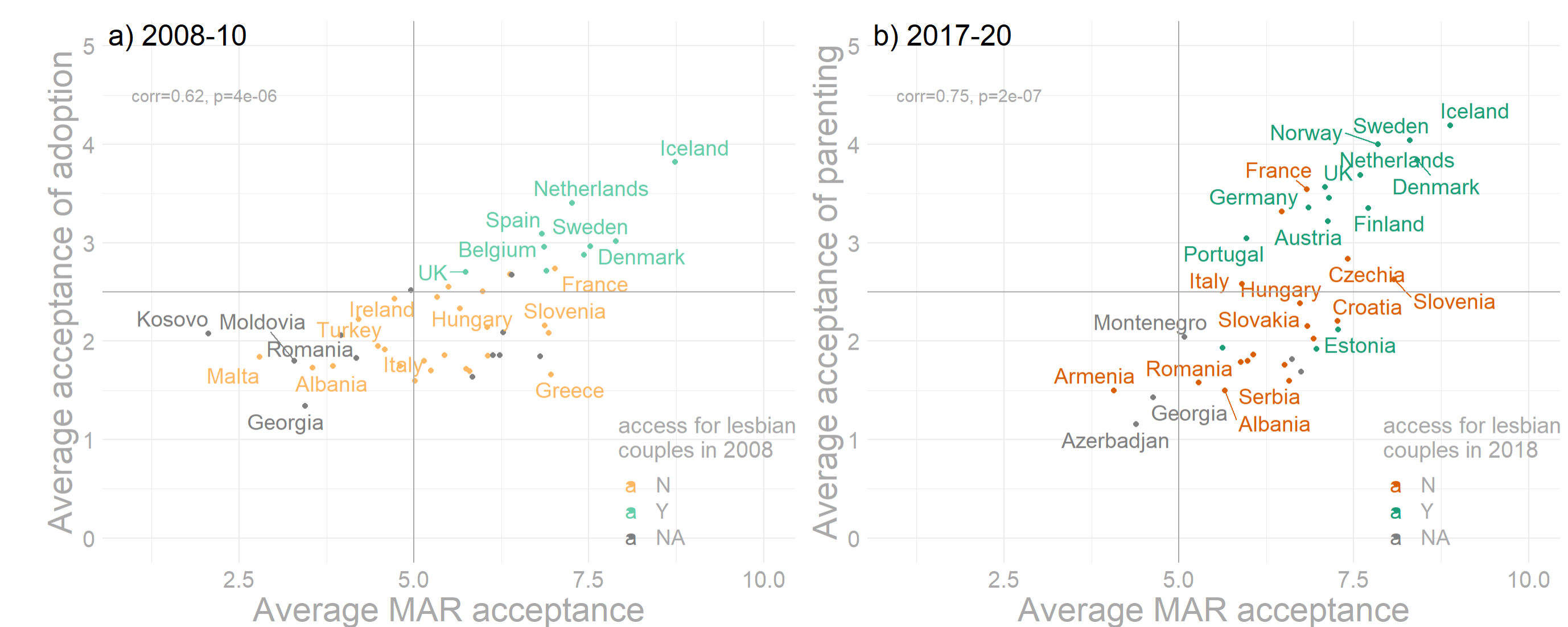


Figure 4: Acceptance of same-sex parents, assisted reproduction and legislation

Table 1: Estimated relationship between attitudes towards same-sex parenting in 2017-20 and legislation in 2018

Access for (<i>ref=single women and lesbian couples</i>):	Estimates
only lesbian couples	0.327
none	-0.405**
only single women	-1.048**

***p<.0001, **p<.01. Multilevel regressions controlling for individual char.

CONCLUSION

- The link between public opinion and MAR legislation is **stronger in the case of same-sex parenthood** than of solo motherhood.
- Cross-country differences in attitudes and legislation regarding same-sex parenthood delineate a **regional divide in Europe**.

Acknowledgements

Marie-Caroline Compans is part of the BIC.Late project, which receives funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant Agreement No 101001410). Hannah Zagel is funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) - grant no. 461709920.