# Appendix: Extended information on the focus group data collection and coding analysis

The focus group data were gathered as part of the NORFACE-funded WelfSOC project focusing on citizens’ attitudes to the welfare state, particularly their aspirations for the welfare state’s future in their individual country. Led by the coordinator Peter Taylor-Gooby (University of Kent), national teams in five European countries (UK, Slovenia, Denmark, Norway and Germany) conducted two different types of group discussions in each country: deliberative forums and focus groups. Due to two different methodological approaches and content focuses being used, the data relied on in the paper are based on the focus groups.

Focus group discussions in the respective countries had the same set-up with regard to each group’s composition, duration, structure and moderation. Participants in all five countries discussed the same topics following the same order and recruitment procedures, moderation guidelines, and organisational set-up agreed upon by the five national research teams. Based on the agreed structure and in close cooperation with the national research teams, professional research agencies organized the recruitment and moderated the discussions. They provided audio- and video-recording as well as transcripts and English translations of all group discussions. In the paper, we use data from four countries: the UK, Germany, Norway and Slovenia. Denmark was not chosen as a country case because only one country per welfare regime was selected. The Danish focus groups also slightly differed in methodological approach and had fewer participants.

The focus groups took place in autumn 2016 in the countries’ capitals London, Berlin, Oslo and Ljubljana. In all countries, the focus groups were carried out by research agencies and conducted in professional focus group studios with audio/video-recording facilities. Each focus group was supposed to represent a distinct social group regarding status and stage of life: the middle class (determined via income, education and occupation), the working class (ditto), young people (below 35 years of age), retirees (aged 60 years or above) and women with care responsibilities managing work and family life. All participants received a small financial reward for their participation.

Each focus group contained 8–10 participants and each session lasted around two hours and followed the same structure in all countries. After an introduction and brainstorming on ‘the welfare state’, the moderator presented six vignettes to the participants. These were always in the same order:

* An unemployed person in good health
* An elderly person in good health; not working anymore
* A family with roughly the median income and two children under three years
* A low-income earner on the minimum wage
* A well-off earner
* An immigrant

The moderators asked the participants which social benefits and services the person(s) shown on the vignettes should receive and what should be demanded from them – and why. When participants expressed their views, the moderators asked for specifications, and why certain aspects mattered to the participants. Each vignette was discussed for 15–20 minutes. At the end, the focus groups were asked to rank the vignettes regarding whom the welfare state should care the most/least and to discuss the resulting rank order and justify their ranking decisions.

English translations of transcripts of the focus group discussions were coded in NVivo using a comparative and commonly agreed coding scheme, relying on a combination of deductive and inductive approaches to the coding. In the first round of coding, we used a rough deductive set of codes such as vignettes, representing the six different target groups, followed by a set of codes derived from the deservingness theory applying a wide range of conditionalities like need, control, reciprocity, attitude (gratefulness), behaviour (conduct, ongoing benefit), identity (coded for nationality), category (coded for different groups single mothers, refugees, women, older people etc.). We also applied more inductive codes such as a moral/normative rationale (it is the right thing to do), self-interest rationale, utilitarian/fiscal (institutional/structural/efficiency) rationale and others. Afterwards, we performed a second round of coding based on the deductive coding categories derived from the theoretical background of the article, as well as inductive codes that arose in the first-round data analysis. The coding scheme was as follows. First, we looked at a statement’s rationale and whether it is based on social rights or social investment justifications (with the subcodes “economic rationale” (labour market) and “social rationale”). Second, we distinguished child-centred from parent-centred arguments and unconditional/universal from conditional statements (where we divided subcodes into “income related” (means test, only for the poor), “need” (number of children, e.g. large families, single parents) and “reciprocity” (employment as a condition, they pay taxes, the children will pay back when they grow up). Based on these systematic two rounds of coding, which were also double-checked by different co-authors, we performed a systematic comparative analysis of the participants’ attitudes to family policy in the four case countries.