Quantitative research on Atheism is close to non-existent. Our aim is to redress this absence of knowledge and understanding. In this paper we focus on attitudes, namely the relation between Atheism and homophobia in Europe. Applying three-level multi-level-analysis to the longitudinal European Values Study (1981-2008) we test whether Atheism exhibits an own effect on homophobia after controlling for individual and societal factors. Our results are twofold. Firstly, yes, Atheism matters. Atheists are significantly less homophobe than non-Atheists. Secondly, this result can only be found for Western Europe. In addition we find a divide between former communist and older democratic countries for the influence of the societal share of Atheists. These east/west patterns might be empirical traces of the only theoretically described two different types of Atheism postulated by Zuckerman (2007), where ‘organic’ Atheism prevails in Western Europe and mainly ‘coercive’ Atheism in Eastern Europe.

Preliminary analysis of the 17 countries (Germany is split into East and West) in the pre-released 5th wave of the EVS, shows that the described pattern seems to dissolve. In most of the Eastern European countries Atheists are now also significantly less homophobe than non-Atheists.

Keywords: Atheism, Europe, Homophobia