



# PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION, WELL-BEING, AND IDENTIFICATION WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION AMONG UKRAINIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

## The UkraStud Research: Methods and Findings Across Four Host Countries

 <https://ukrastud.eu/>

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# Aims of the UkraStud project

- 1. To assess the satisfaction of Ukrainian University students regarding the inclusion policies of the host University.**
- 2. To assess the psychological and social well-being of Ukrainian students and their predictors.**
- 3. To assess the attitudes of Ukrainian students towards the host population. These attitudes can influence their evaluation of other European Union countries and their identification with the European Union.**
- 4. To identify factors that lead to a positive evaluation of the host population.**

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## Objective 1

# Satisfaction of Ukrainian University students regarding the inclusion policies of the host University

**Items measuring satisfaction with inclusion policies of the host University for non-ucranian partners:**

- I am satisfied with the inclusion policies for Ukrainian students adopted by the [Italian] University I am attending
- I am satisfied with the support I am receiving from the tutor buddy
- I am satisfied with the support I am receiving from the administrative staff of the [Italian] University I am attending

# Objective 2: Psychological and Social Well-being

## Psychological well-being

Flourishing scale  
(Diener et al. 2010)

Measures overall psychological well-being: feeling fulfilled, optimistic, and able to handle life competently.

*"I lead a purposeful and meaningful life."*

## Social well-being

Self expansion  
(Paolini et al., 2011)

Indicates how social relationships enrich the self, offering new perspectives, experiences, and opportunities for personal growth.

*"Having social relationships makes me learn new things."*

## Social well-being

Social self efficacy  
(Fan & Mak, 1998)

the student's expectancy that they can successfully perform or complete a target behavior in academic or everyday situation, involving social interaction

*"I generally feel confident talking to my lecturers"*

## Predictors of well-being

- Satisfaction with the inclusion policies
- Positive intergroup contact with the local University students
- Positive intergroup contact with the host population

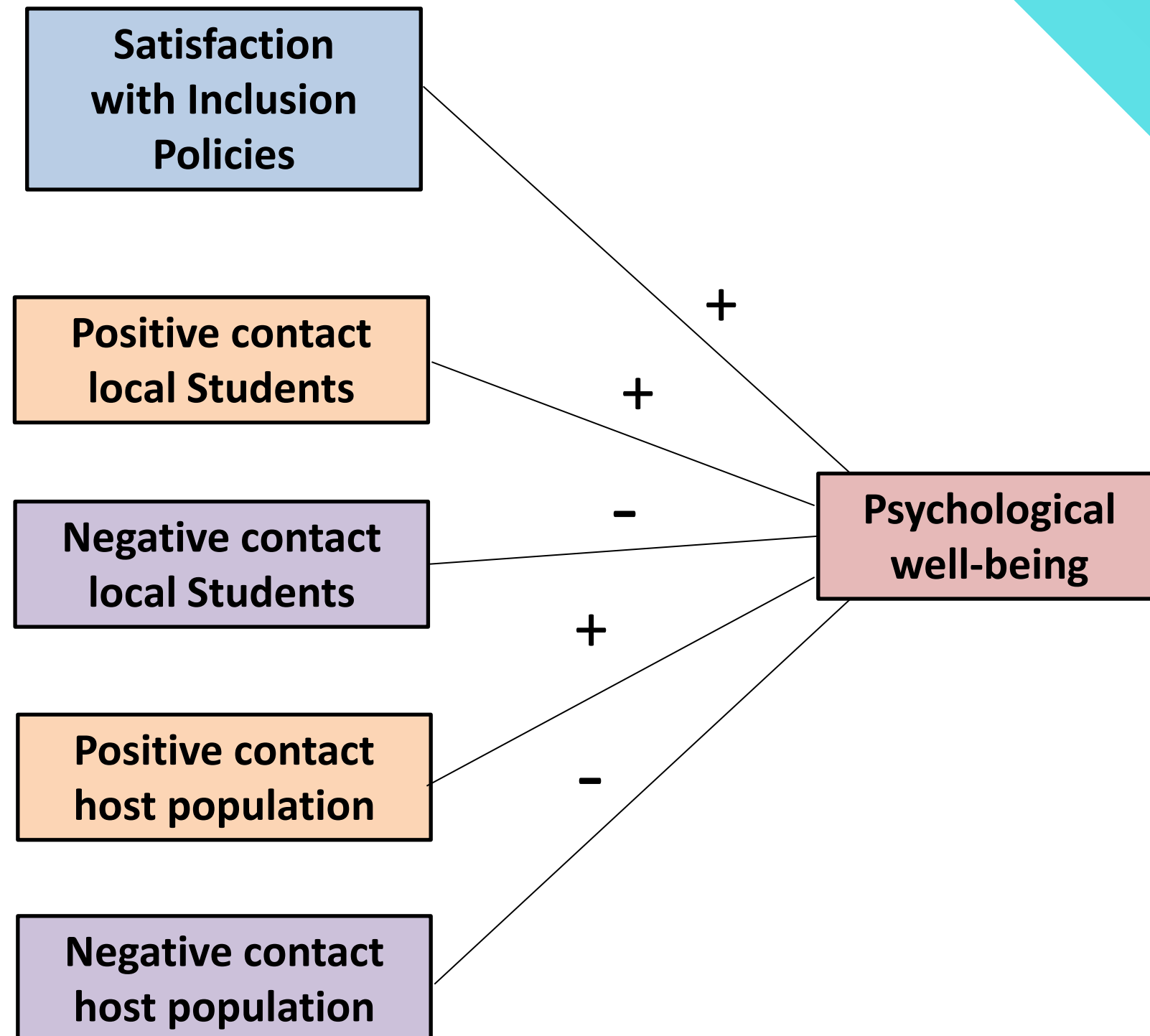
## Objective 2: Antecedents of well-being – Intergroup contact

**Intergroup contact theory** → positive interactions between members of clearly distinguishable groups can improve attitudes and relations (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

**Positive intergroup contact** (measured with items such as: “How often do you have pleasant interactions with [Italian] students?”) → less prejudice

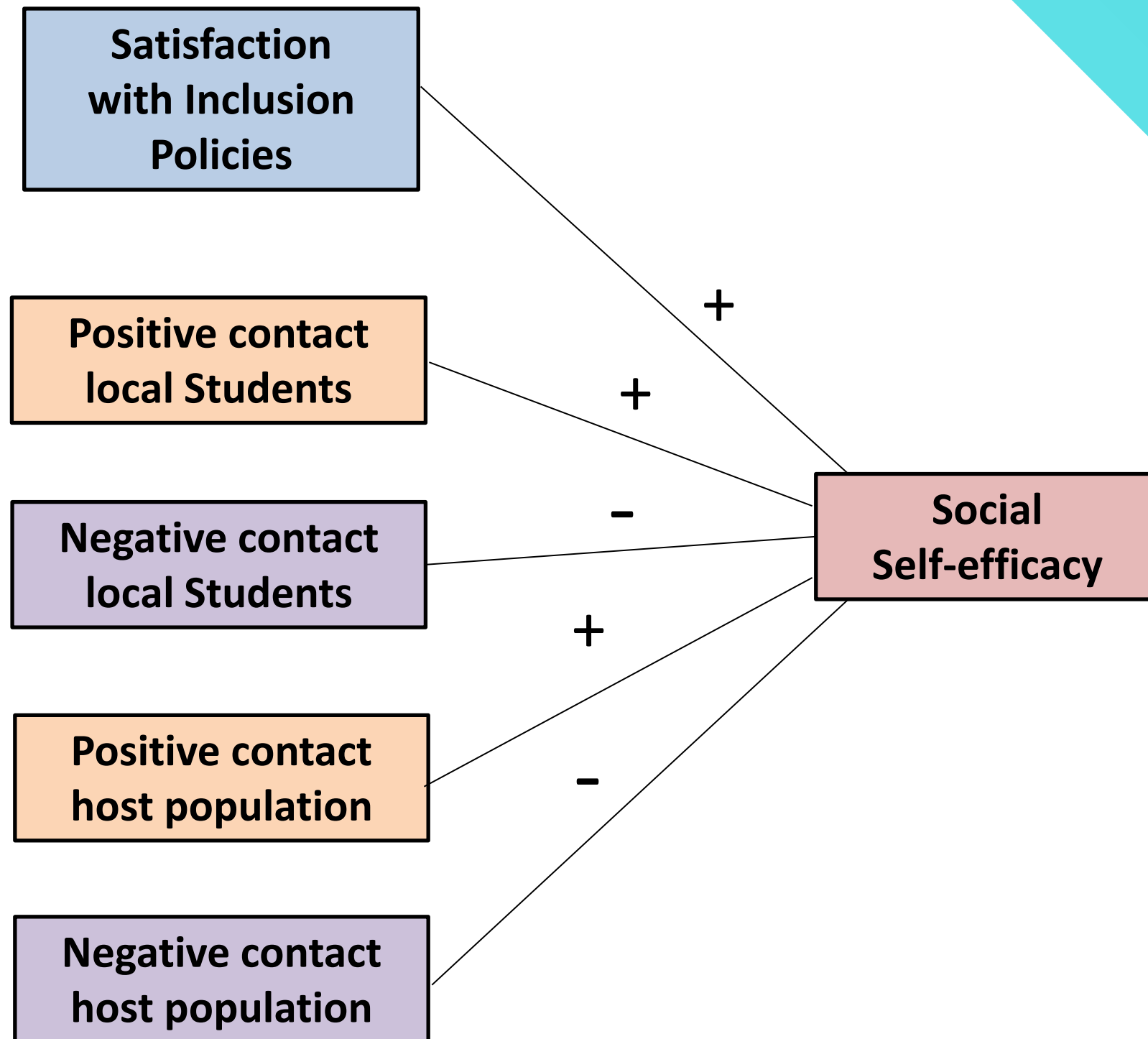
**Negative intergroup contact** (measured with items such as: : “How often do you have unpleasant interactions with [Italian] students?”) → more prejudice

## Objective 2: Antecedents of well-being – Psychological well-being



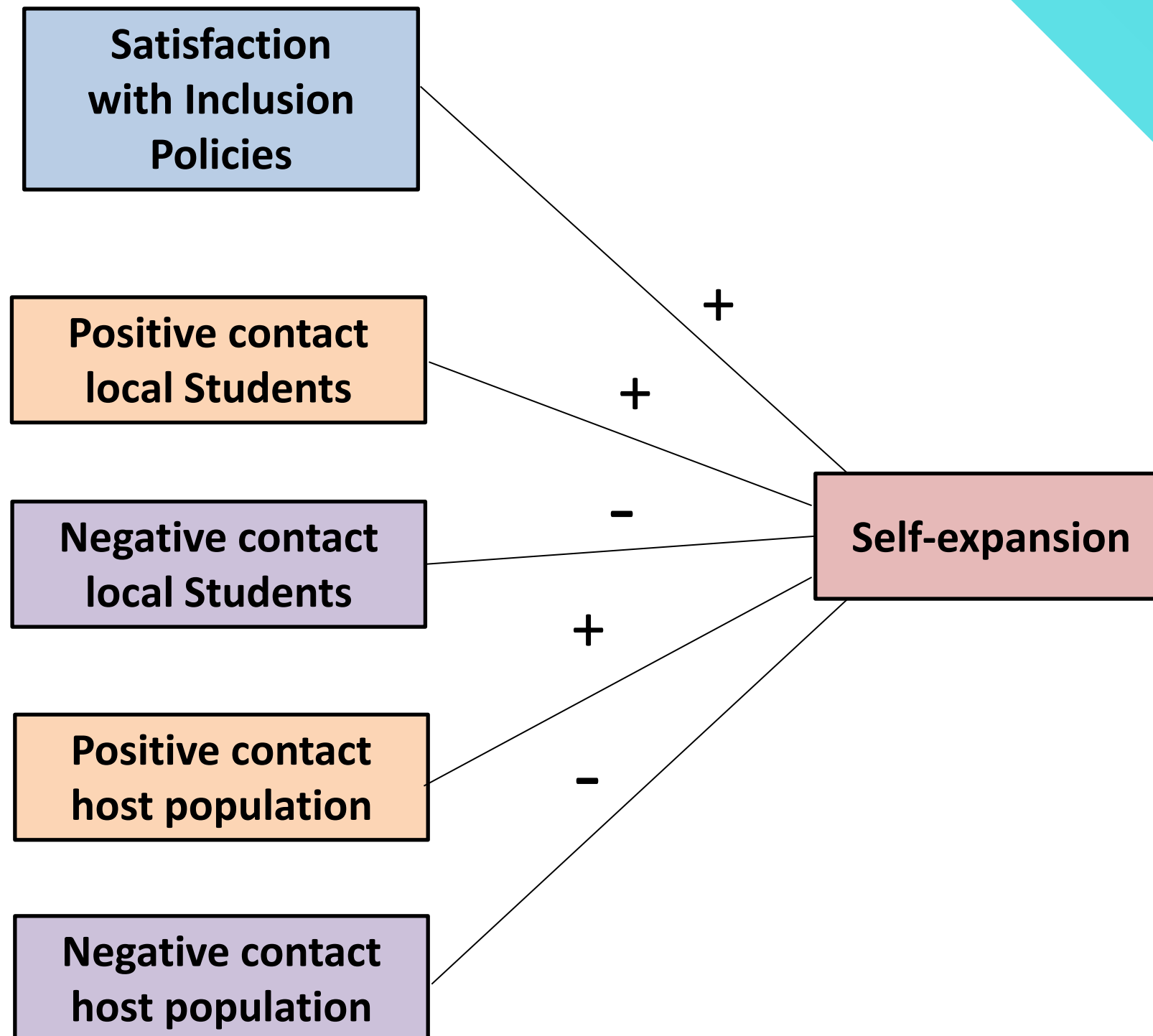
We expect that **psychological and social well-being** will be **positively** related to **satisfaction with the inclusion** process, and to **positive contact** with the local students and the host population.

## Objective 2: Antecedents of well-being – Social well-being



We expect that **psychological and social well-being** will be **positively** related to **satisfaction with the inclusion** process, and to **positive contact** with the local students and the host population.

## Objective 2: Antecedents of well-being – Social well-being



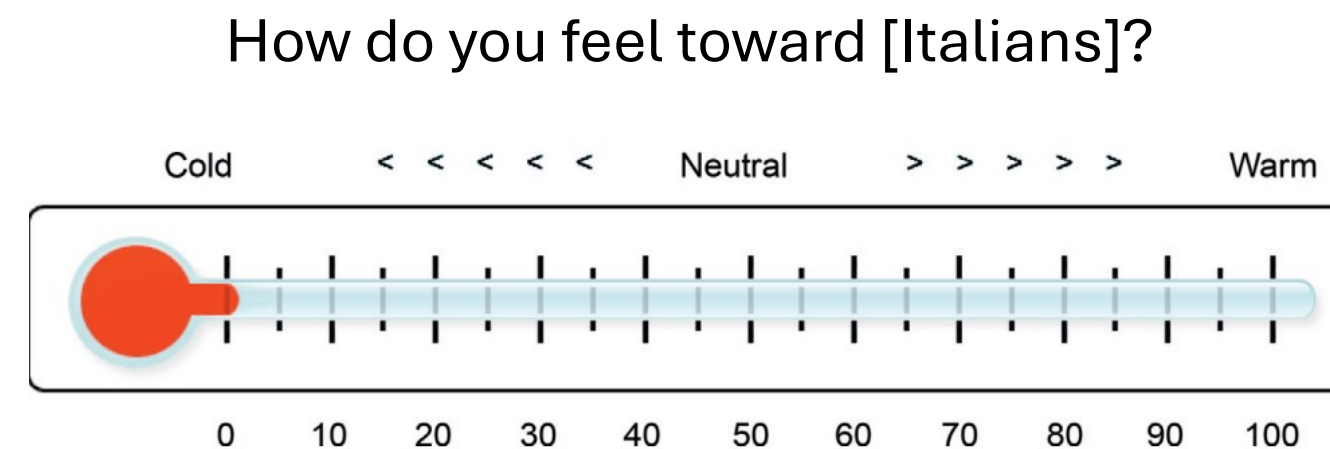
We expect that **psychological and social well-being** will be **positively** related to **satisfaction with the inclusion** process, and to **positive contact** with the local students and the host population.

## Objective 3

# Attitudes of Ukrainian students toward the host population and other EU countries

To measure attitudes, we used the **feeling thermometer** (Converse et al., 1980), a widely used measure in the field of intergroup relationships.

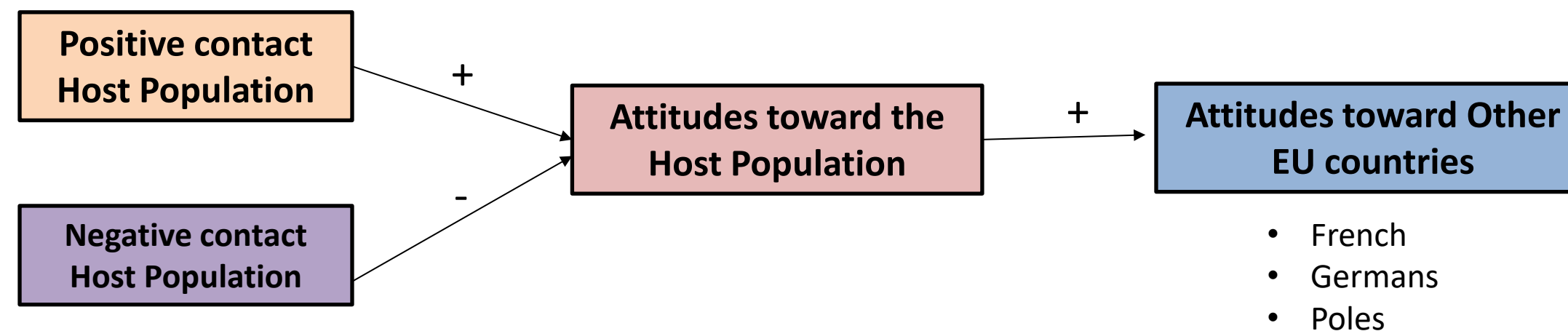
We measured **attitudes towards the host population** (e.g., Italians)



The same measure was used to assess **attitudes towards other European countries**:  
French, Germans, Poles

## Objectives 3 and 4: Attitudes toward EU countries, European identification

Positive intergroup contact not only can influence attitudes toward the contacted group but it can also impact attitudes toward other groups not involved in the initial contact situation (“secondary outgroup”) → **Secondary Transfer Effect** (Pettigrew, 1997).



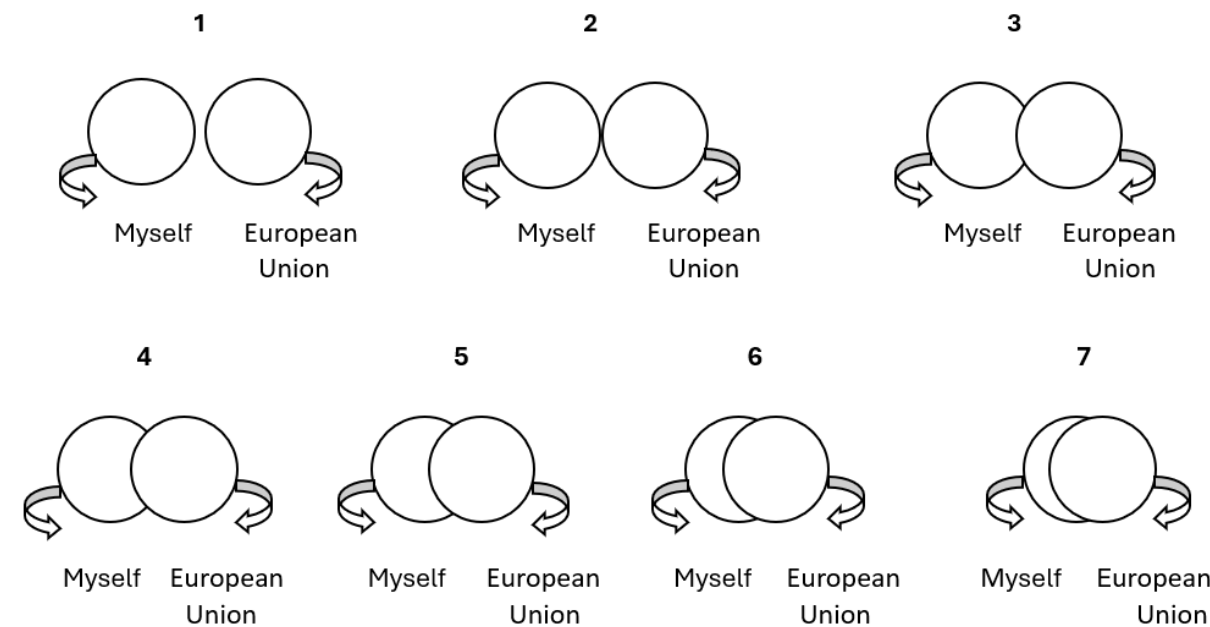
We expected a stronger effect of the positive than the negative contact on attitudes toward the host population, this positive attitude will be transferred to other European countries

# Objectives 3 and 4:

## Attitudes toward EU countries, European identification

### Measures of identification with the European Union

- Graphical measure IOS (Inclusion of Other in the Self scale; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

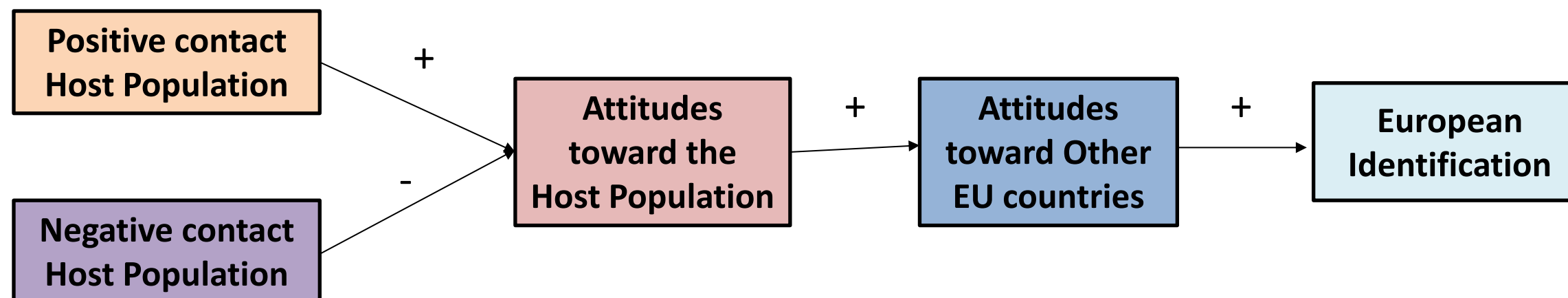


- Measure adapted from Meyer, Allen, and Smith's (1993) scale:  
E.g. "I would be proud to be a member of the European Union"

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## Objectives 3 and 4: Attitudes toward EU countries, European identification

We expect that – among Ukrainian students – the positive contact with the host population will be related to a stronger desire to be included in the EU



# RESULTS



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# Participants

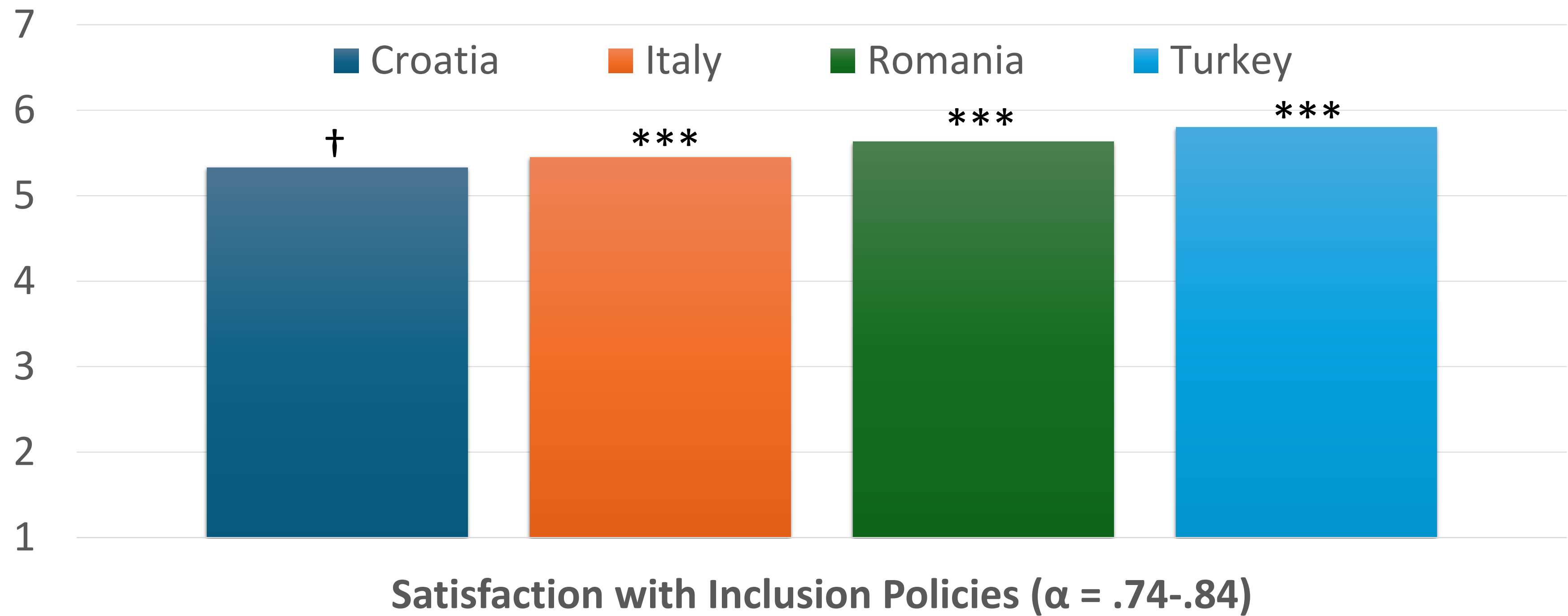
$N = 172$  Ukrainian University students enrolled in **Croatian, Italian, Romanian, and Turkish Universities**

Age:  $M = 21.86$  ( $SD = 4.78$ )

Gender: Men = 47; Women = 119; Other = 6

# Descriptive Statistics

Figure 1. Differences in **Satisfaction with Inclusion Policies** adopted by the Host University among Ukrainian International Students in the four host countries ( $N = 172$ ).

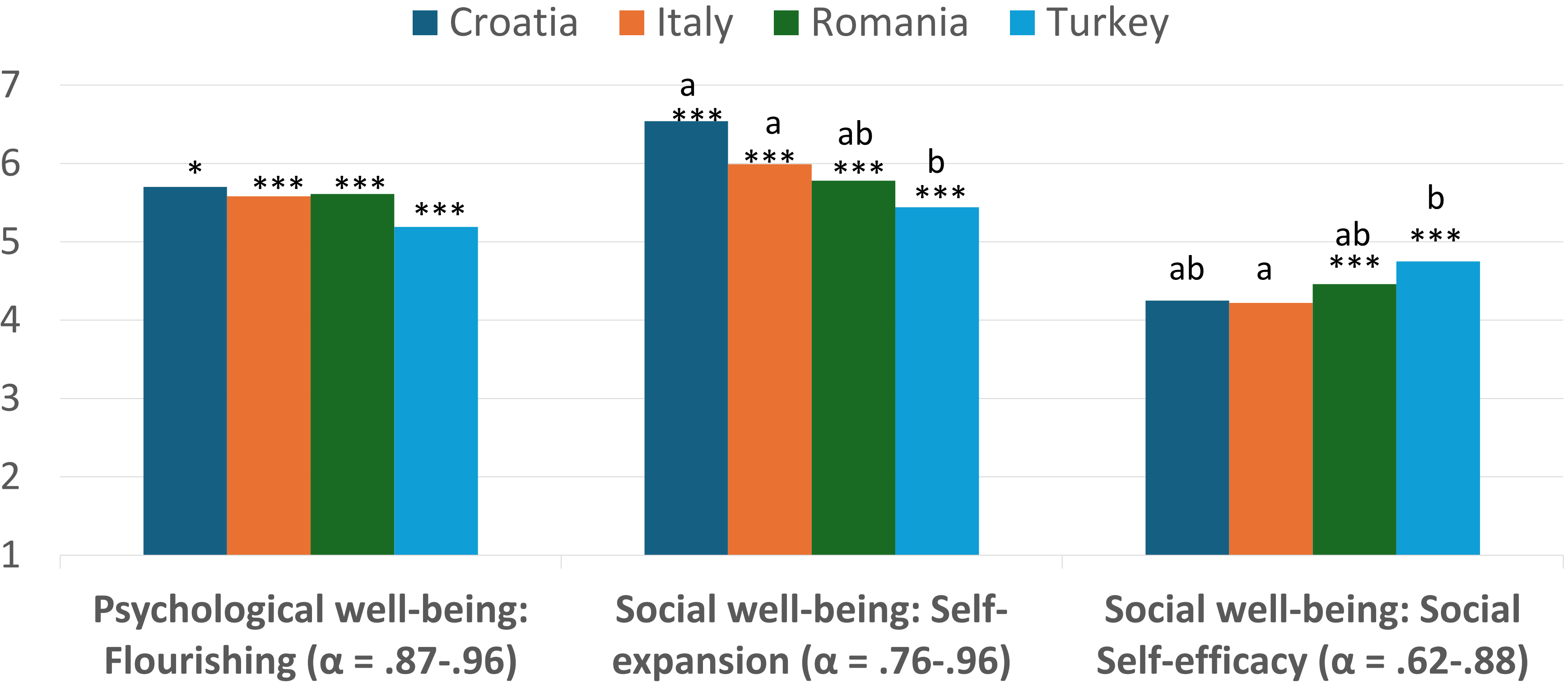


*Note.* The asterisks indicate that the mean is significantly different from the midpoint of the response scale (4). † $p = .063$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

- Ukrainian students report **high satisfaction** with inclusion policies across all four countries
- Mean scores are **significantly above the midpoint (4)** (marginally significant for Croatia)
- **No significant differences** between countries

One-way ANOVA:  $F(3, 168) = 1.02, p = .386, \eta p^2 = .02$

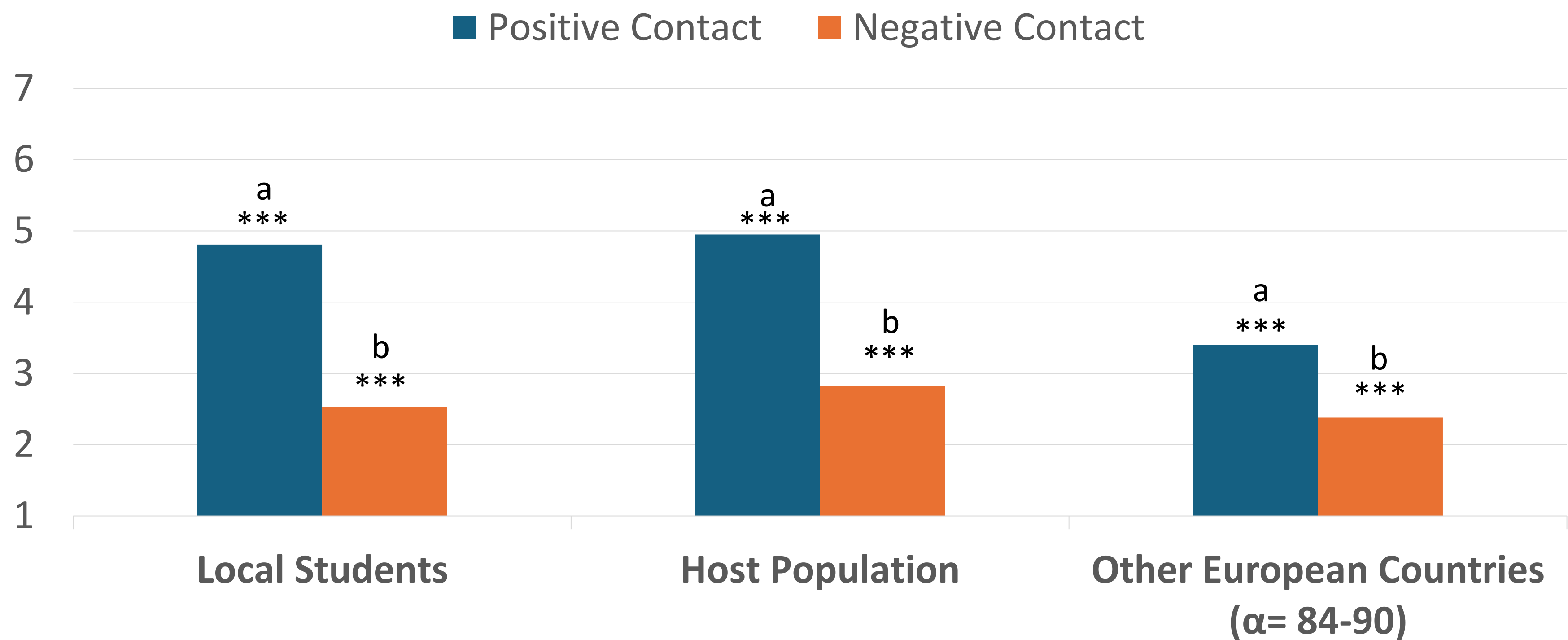
Figure 2. Differences in **Psychological and Social Well-being** among Ukrainian International Students in the four host countries ( $N = 172$ ).



*Note.* The asterisks indicate that the mean is significantly different from the midpoint of the response scale (4).  
\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Different letters indicate that the respective means are significantly different,  $p \leq .01$ .

- **Flourishing** (psychological well-being): high in all four countries, no significant differences  
One-way ANOVA:  $F(3, 168) = 1.99, p = .117, \eta p^2 = .03$
- **Self-expansion** (social well-being): high in all countries, but lower in Turkey  
One-way ANOVA:  $F(3, 168) = 4.36, p < .01, \eta p^2 = .07$
- **Social Self-efficacy** (social well-being): slightly lower for Italy compared to Turkey  
One-way ANOVA:  $F(3, 168) = 2.36, p = .073, \eta p^2 = .04$

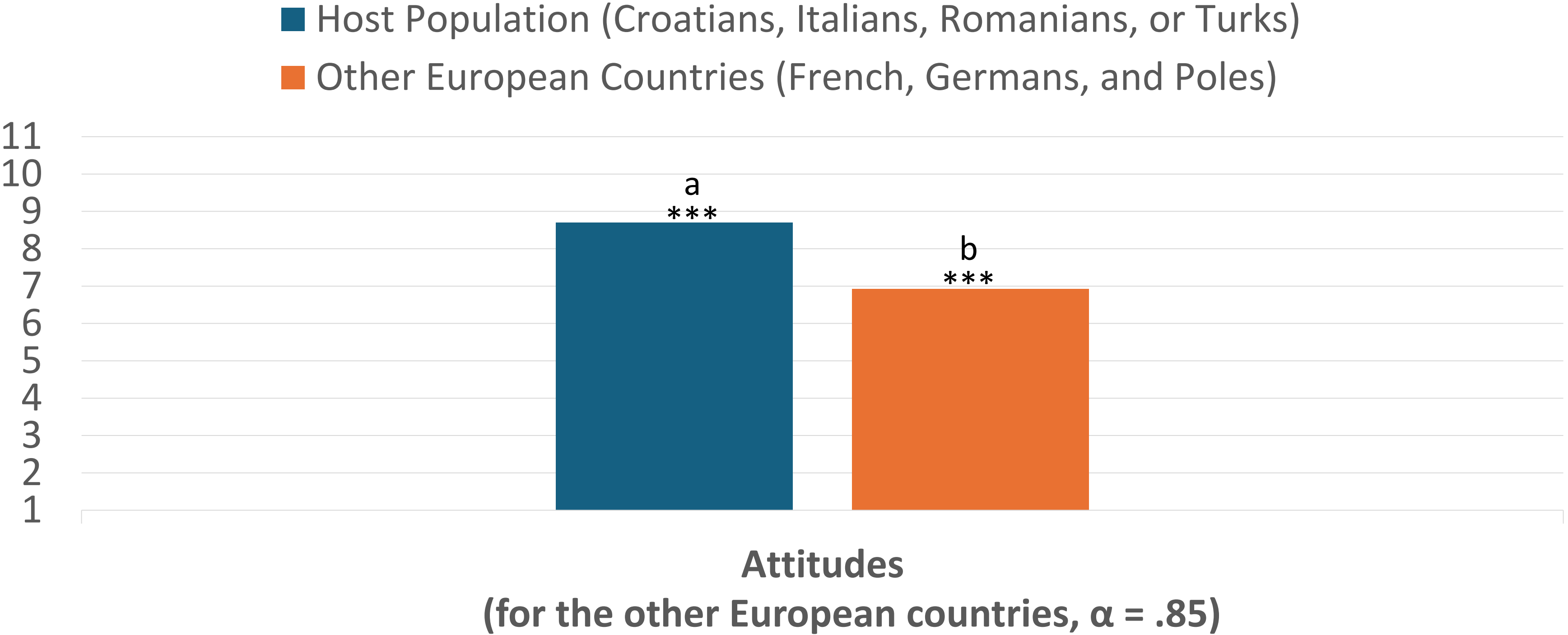
Figure 3. Difference between **Quantity (Frequency) of Positive and Negative contact** with Local Students, with the Host Population (Croatians, Italians, Romanians, or Turks), and with other European Countries (French, Germans, and Poles) ( $N = 172$ ).



*Note.* The asterisks indicate that the mean is significantly different from the midpoint of the response scale (4). \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Different letters indicate that the respective means are significantly different,  $p < .001$ .

- **Positive contact is more frequent** than negative contact with all three target groups.
- An ANOVA analysis, 2 (contact: positive vs. negative) x 2 (target: host population vs. other European countries) with both factors as within factors, shows that:
  - a) **positive contact with both host and other European countries is higher than negative contact** (main effect of contact,  $F[1, 171] = 168.02, p < .001$ );
  - b) **both positive and negative contact are more frequent with the host population than with other European countries** (main effect of target,  $F[1, 171] = 72.42, p < .001$ );
  - c) the gap between positive and negative contact is **greater with the host population** (interaction between the two factors,  $F[1, 171] = 47.47, p < .001$ ).

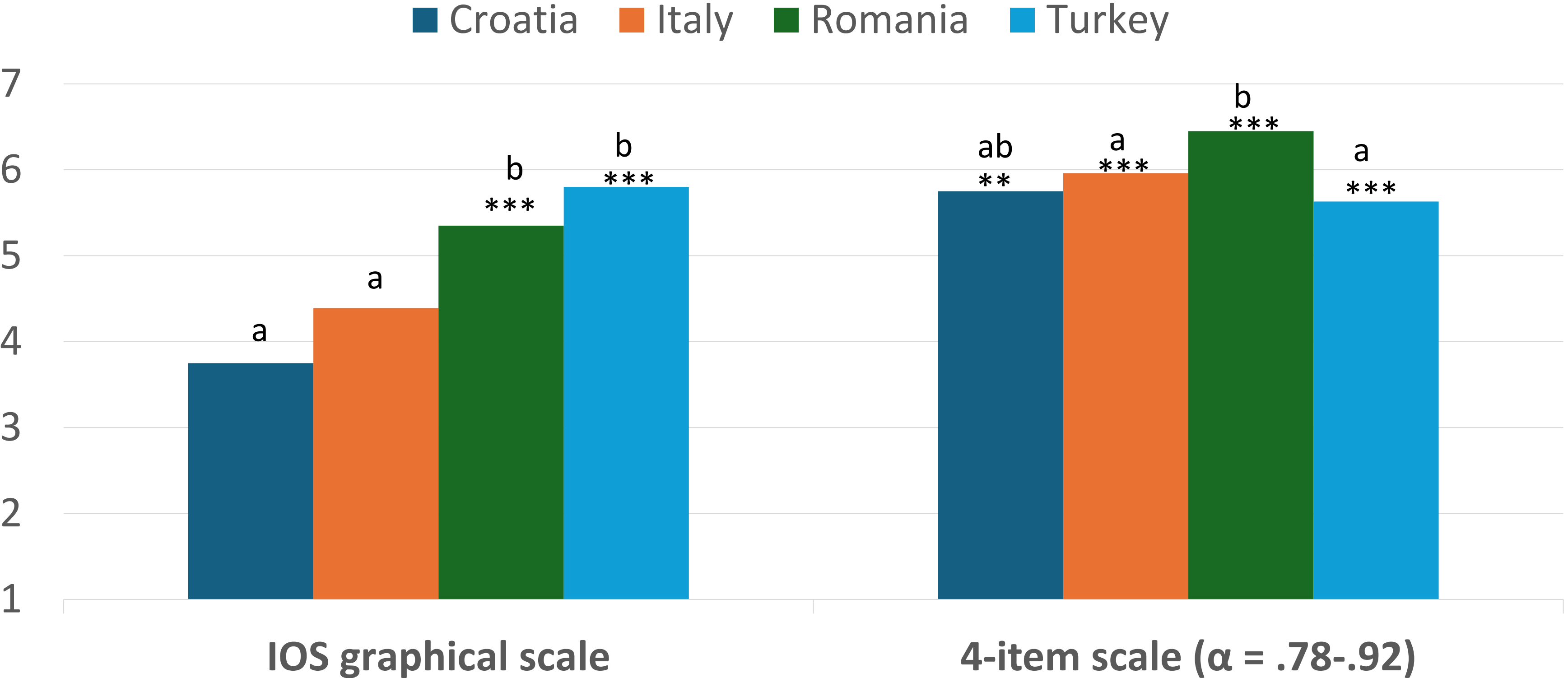
Figure 4. Difference between **Attitudes toward the Host Population** (Croatsians, Italians, Romanians, or Turks) and toward **other European Countries** (French, Germans, and Poles) ( $N = 172$ ).



*Note.* The asterisks indicate that the mean is significantly different from the midpoint of the response scale (6).  
\*\*\* $p < .001$ . Different letters indicate that the respective means are significantly different,  $p < .001$ .

- Attitudes toward **both targets** are positive.
- Attitudes toward the **host population** – Croatians, Italians, Romanians, or Turks - are significantly **more favorable** than toward other European countries - French, Germans, and Poles.  
 $t(171) = 10.08, p < .001, d = 0.77$

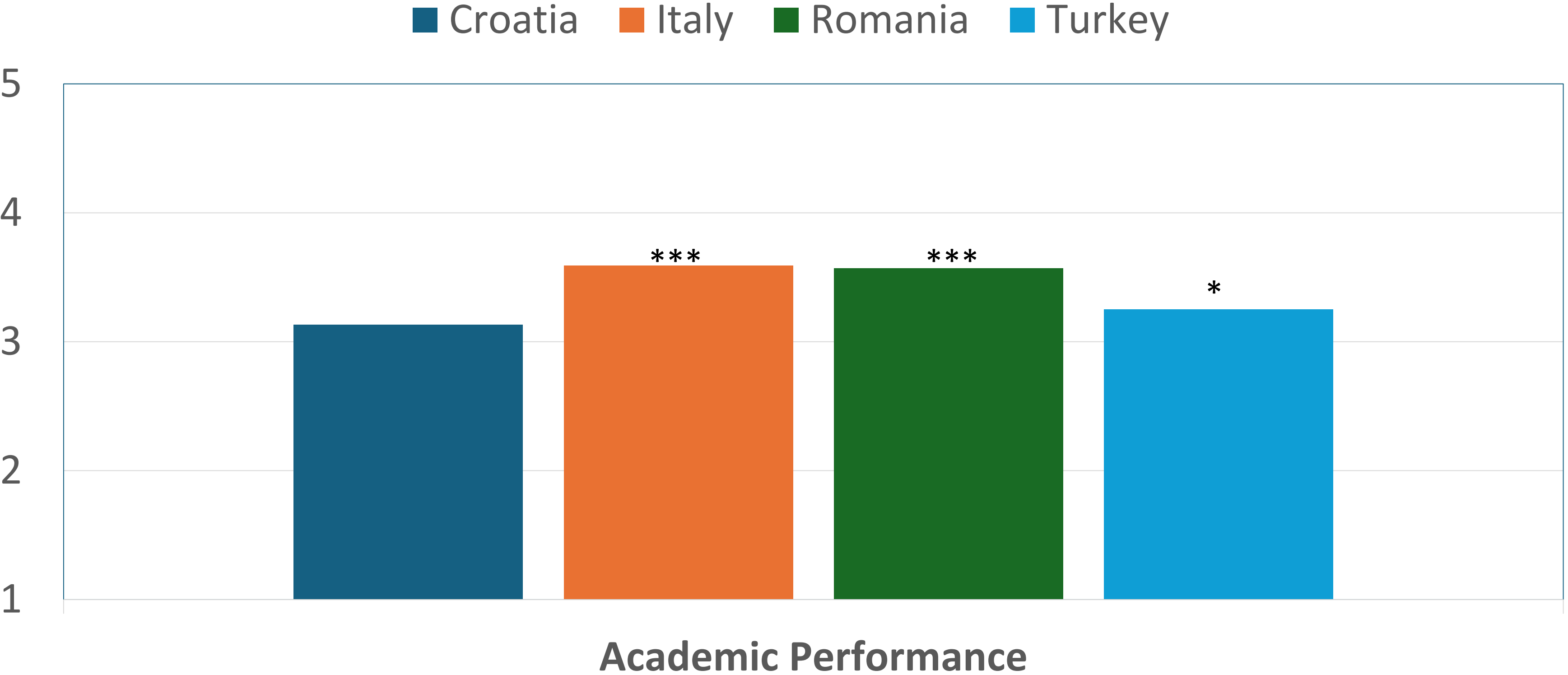
Figure 5. Differences in **European Identification** among Ukrainian International Students in the four host countries ( $N = 172$ ).



*Note.* The asterisks indicate that the mean is significantly different from the midpoint of the response scale (4).  
\*\* $p = .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Different letters indicate that the respective means are significantly different,  $p \leq .033$ .

- On the 4-item scale, European identification is **high** across all four countries.
- However, it is higher for students in Romania compared to those in Italy and Turkey.  
One-way ANOVA:  $F(3, 168) = 4.11, p = .008, \eta p^2 = .07$
- Using the IOS graphical scale, students in Romania and Turkey show higher identification than those in Italy and Croatia.  
One-way ANOVA:  $F(3, 168) = 8.53, p < .001, \eta p^2 = .13$

Figure 6. Differences in **Academic Performance** among Ukrainian International Students in the four host countries ( $N = 172$ ).

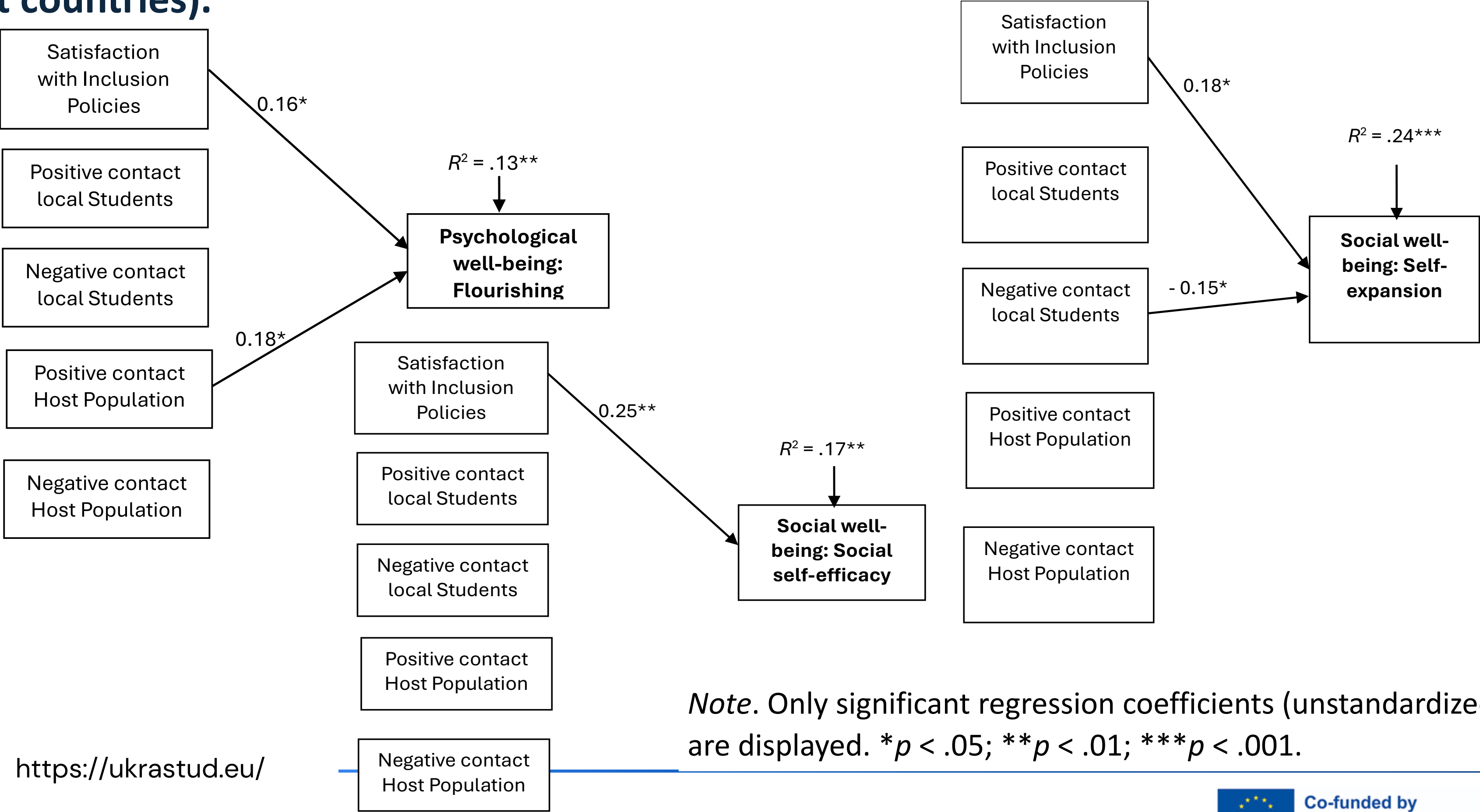


*Note.* The asterisks indicate that the mean is significantly different from the midpoint of the response scale (3).  
\* $p = .041$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

- Academic performance is **above the midpoint** (*quite good*) in Italy, Romania, and Turkey; it is *quite good* in Croatia.
- **No significant differences** between countries  
One-way ANOVA:  $F(3, 168), p = ns$

# Test of the models

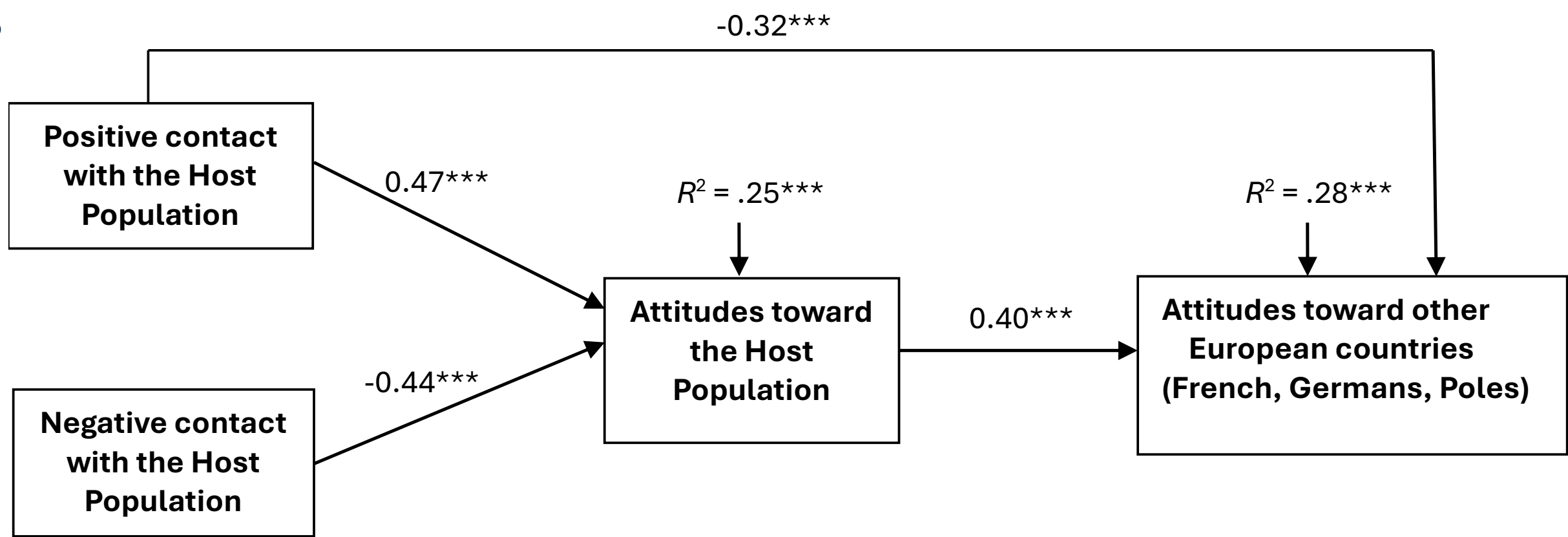
Figure 7. **The Antecedents of Well-being** (*N* = 172 Ukrainian University students in the four host countries).



Note. Only significant regression coefficients (unstandardized) are displayed. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

- **Satisfaction with inclusion policies** predicts all three forms of well-being.
- **Intergroup contact (positive and negative) is also influential.**
- Both inclusion policies and intergroup contact, with the host population and local students, have **unique effects**.
- These effects are **general across the four countries** (ancillary analyses).

**Figure 8. Secondary Transfer Effect: Contact with the host country as a predictor of positive attitudes toward its members and the extension of these favorable attitudes from the host country to other European countries (N = 172 Ukrainian University students in the four host countries).**



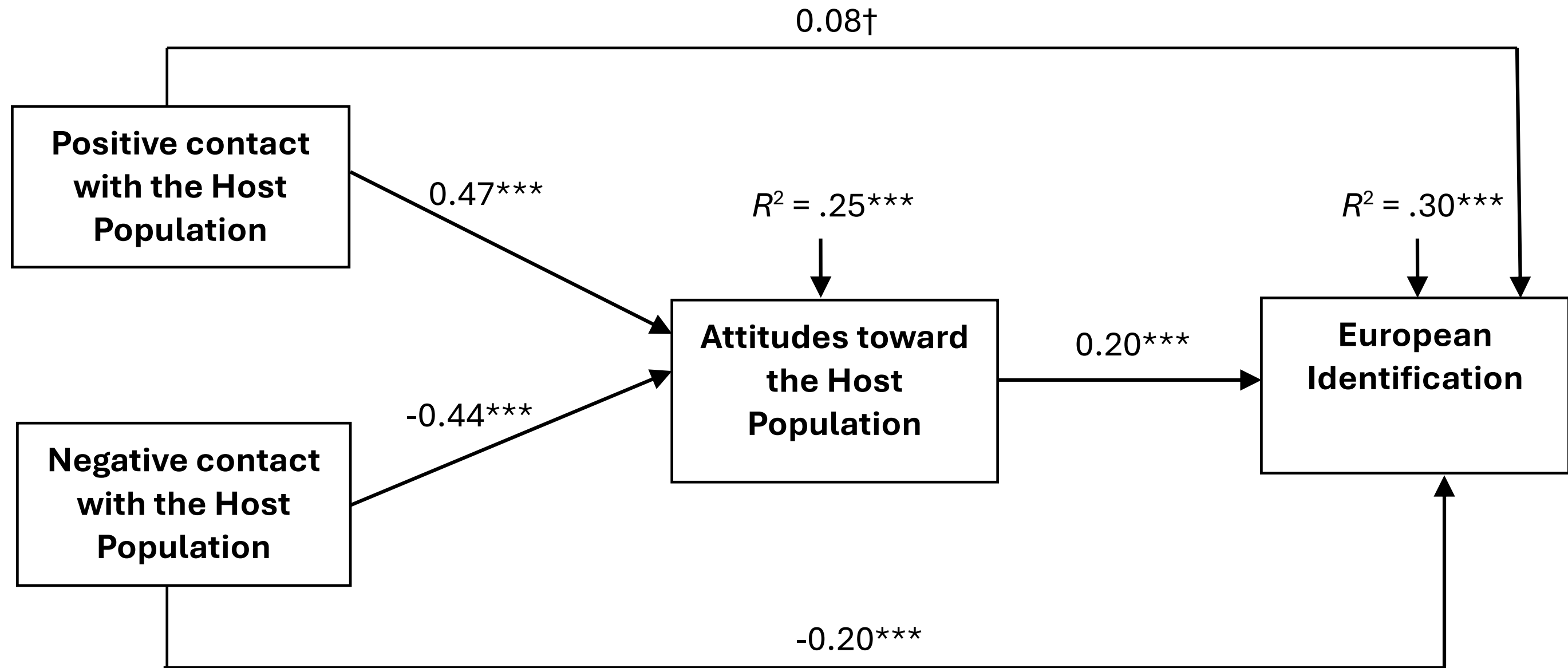
Covariates:

- Positive contact with members of other European countries (French, Germans, Poles)
- Negative contact with members of other European countries (French, Germans, Poles)

*Note.* Only significant regression coefficients (unstandardized) are displayed. \*\*\* $p < .001$ . The two *indirect* effects of positive and negative contact on the outcome variable are significant,  $p < .001$ . Regarding the effects of the two covariates (data not reported), only positive contact with members of other European countries (French, Germans, Poles) is influential, showing a significant effect on attitudes toward these countries ( $b = 0.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

- **Positive contact** predicts more favorable attitudes toward the host population.
- **Negative contact** predicts less favorable attitudes.
- The hypothesis of a **secondary transfer effect** is confirmed:  
**Attitudes toward host population are transferred to other EU countries.**  
Both indirect effects are significant.

**Figure 9. Effects of Contact on Identification with the European Union** among Ukrainian students in the four host countries (*N* = 172 Ukrainian University students in the four host countries).



*Note.* Only significant regression coefficients (unstandardized) are displayed. †*p* = .086; \*\*\**p* < .001. The two *indirect* effects of positive and negative contact on the outcome variable are significant, *p* < .001.

- **Positive contact predicts stronger EU identification**, both directly and indirectly, through more favorable attitudes toward the host population.
- Therefore, the more Ukrainian students experience positive interactions with members of the host country, the stronger their desire to be part of the European Union.
- The pattern is consistent across all four host countries (ancillary analyses).

# CONCLUSIONS

- Ukrainian students are **satisfied** with host universities' inclusion policies.
- They show good **psychological and social well-being**.
- **Satisfaction with inclusion policies** as well as **contact** with local students and host population are linked to well-being.
- Ukrainian students hold **favorable attitudes** toward the host population and other EU countries.
- **Positive effects of contact generalize to other groups:** favorable attitudes toward the host population are **transferred to other EU countries**.
- **Positive contact** predicts stronger **EU identification**, directly and through favorable attitudes.
- These effects are consistent across all four host countries.

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➤ **Take home message:**

- Overall, fostering **positive intergroup contact** and **inclusive university policies** are essential to support Ukrainian students' well being, integration, and European identity.

A brief note: we have recently reached our target of 300 participants planned in the project and are currently rerunning the analyses.

Preliminary results ( $N = 310$ ) show a very consistent pattern with today's findings.

# THANKS for your participation!

**University of Padova Team:**

**Jessica Boin**

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**Rossella Falvo**



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