

Integration Policies: Who Benefits?

Policy Brief

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This paper has been published in the framework of the project “*Integration Policies: Who benefits? The development and use of indicators in integration debates*”. The project promotes the use of EU indicators in order to enhance governmental and non-governmental actors’ capacity to effectively act on societal integration in up to 28 states worldwide. It clarifies how different types of indicators can be developed and used, linking societal outcomes with policies and identifying potential and actual policy beneficiaries, including major vulnerable groups.

The main output of the project is the website of the “Migrant Integration Policy Index”: www.mipex.eu.

The project is directed by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs and the Migration Policy Group.



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General Key Findings

Within the EU, nearly 20 million residents (or 4% of total population) are non-EU citizens. The number of non-EU newcomers was relatively stable from 2008-2013, due to fewer labour migrants and more recognised beneficiaries of international protection. However, since the economic crisis and the implementation of austerity policies, immigrants' situation has become precarious. Non-EU citizens' employment rates (aged 20-64) dropped 6 points on average in the EU to 56.5% in 2014¹, while their risk of poverty or social exclusion increased 4 points to 49%, twice the level for EU citizens². Yet integration policies have not improved significantly in the last years. On the one hand, EU has well-established 1st generation legislation and growing jurisprudence on anti-discrimination, labour market rights, family reunion and long-term residence. 2nd generation legislation may be passed on anti-discrimination (under negotiation since 2008) and introduced on labour migration in 2015/6.

On the other hand, Member States only make a few small changes in these areas, usually when addressed directly in ECJ cases. A few countries' laws on the books may not comply with EU standards. Further investigation must be carried out in procedures and practices, where this project has identified clear problems and data gaps.

The current high-level debates on relocation and resettlement reiterate how important legal channels are for beneficiaries of international protection. Rapid family reunification is promoted by few countries, despite the benefits for the integration prospects of children and their parents. Nor are most countries strategically expanding family reunion as a protection tool in these times of humanitarian crisis in Europe's neighbourhood. 2/3 of successful asylum-seekers are men, with their wives, children and parents often unable to undertake the sometimes dangerous journey to access Europe. Furthermore, long-term residence is also out-of-reach of many long-settled non-EU

legal residents. Although 3/4 of non-EU citizens in most countries have lived there the 5+ years to qualify, only around half have acquired this secure status, with major differences between countries ($\geq 2/3$ in FR, IT, ES, SE, UK, Baltics but hardly any in BG, CY, DK, IE and MT). Just 40% of these are EU long-term residents (3/4 in IT, majorities only in 8 countries: IT, AT, mostly Central Europe). EU long-term residence is the only way to legally live and work in other EU countries for non-EU citizens who do not naturalise.

In addition to EU immigration and anti-discrimination law, the EU has had uneven effects on integration policies and outcomes across the Member States. Without the EU's 'soft standards' and funds, many new destination countries would not have accepted the integration agenda, developed a strategy document or had any funds or any staff/stakeholders working on integration. To date, several EU countries still lack a meaningful integration policy and instead spend EU integration funds on ad hoc projects. The Commission has also tried to make integration policies more ambitious and effective through recent European semester recommendations on raising immigrants' employment and education outcomes. These recommendations have been used to raise the integration agenda at national level. But the effects on changing policies and outcomes are unclear.

Democratic inclusion is one critical area where change is uneven and slow and Europe's influence is so far limited. European standards and other countries' practices clearly serve as sources of inspiration, but change requires a domestic path to reform and political will. Moreover citizenship and political participation are still not seen as important for integration in several new destination countries. For example, increases in naturalisation rates are not due to the integration of foreign residents, but to privileging certain ethnic or national groups, including co-ethnics outside the country, or to attempts to sell national (and thus EU) citizenship either directly through

¹ For more, see EU Migrant Integration Indicators on employment, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migrant_integration_statistics_-_employment

² For more, see EU Migrant Integration Indicators on social inclusion, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_integration_statistics_-_at_risk_of_poverty_and_social_exclusion

naturalisation or indirectly through long-term residence.

Countries face many challenges to make integration policies effective. First, immigrants are usually under-represented in the most effective employment and education programmes. Targeted integration support is usually not work-specific or extensive enough, meaning that few immigrants get training, recognition of qualifications, job-specific language courses, or domestic degrees, despite the long-term pay-offs for their labour market integration. Second, countries rarely develop their integration policies based on pilots, experiments or robust evaluations. Changes are based more often on political promises than on evidence. The few countries with robust evaluations have invested in good longitudinal administrative data (e.g. Nordics and DE) and focused mostly on labour market integration and education, where the impact of policies is less clear. Few evaluations examine more politically contested areas like residence and citizenship policies, where restrictions clearly have disproportionate impacts on vulnerable groups (e.g. young/elderly, low-educated/income, refugees). Third, integration policies are strongly linked to public opinion and political will. The public tends to see immigrants as a benefit in countries with inclusive integration policies according to MIPEX and as threats in countries with restrictive policies. Policies are both driving and driven by public opinion. Governments that reform policies and convince the public can help them to trust immigrants and see the benefits. But reforms are often blocked when far-right parties become an electoral force, while restrictive policies are more likely to reinforce than lessen the public's perceptions of threat and distrust of immigrants.

Key findings by areas of integration

Most labour market policies focus on helping immigrants to find jobs - and most do after 10+ years, but often lower quality jobs below their qualifications or below the poverty line. Policies tend to provide basic information and access to most types of jobs, self-employment

and trainings. Traditional countries of immigration and most Western European countries are increasingly investing in more effective general and targeted programmes, but many may be too new or small to reach the many non-EU men and women in need, who rarely access trainings or unemployment benefits.

For the small number of transnational families, family reunion policies are one major factor determining whether or not they reunite in the country. Non-EU families of all types are more likely to reunite in countries with inclusive family reunion policies, like Scandinavia, Spain and Portugal. However several countries are becoming more restrictive, given the influence of populist parties, and expecting transnational families to live up standards that many national families could not.

As countries become more diverse, schools and health services are slow to adapt to immigrants' specific needs. Few staff are trained, equipped or required to respond. Furthermore, immigrants' basic access to these services depends a lot on their legal status. Traditional countries of immigration and a few in Northern Europe are offering more personalised general and targeted support, which seems to reach larger number of immigrants in need and may help explain their progress over time.

Policies largely determine whether immigrants are settling down permanently, becoming voters and becoming equal citizens. Restricting permanent residence and citizenship (e.g. AT, CY, GR) leads to large numbers of 'permanently temporary' foreigners who are legally precarious and socially excluded. Facilitating permanent residence but restricting citizenship (e.g. DK, IT, CH, EE, LV) means most immigrants are secure in their status but treated like 'second-class citizens' in national politics and several areas of life. Equal rights are not guaranteed in practice in countries whose policies privilege certain national or ethnic groups over others (e.g. HU, JP, KR and ES). In contrast, confident countries of immigration like New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, Belgium and Portugal opened up these opportunities, so that most immigrants enjoy equal and secure rights that boost their integration outcomes in many areas.

Strong anti-discrimination laws have spread across Europe, thanks to the EU, but remain relatively new and under-resourced. Potential victims are often uninformed and poorly supported to access justice because equality policies, bodies and NGOs have few powers and little reach. Most victims are not coming forward with complaints, so countries still have to take the 1st steps in the long path to justice. Instead, complaints seem to be more common in the countries with stronger, longstanding and well-resourced anti-discrimination laws and bodies. The time has come for enforcement.

European-level recommendations based on the national results

The European Commission should better target its measures to encourage Member States to develop more ambitious integration policies and support these policies to become more effective. New destination countries, especially in Central and Southern Europe, need to use the new Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund to move from ad hoc project funding to develop an ongoing policy with long-term programmes and clear entitlements responding to non-EU citizens' needs. More established destinations could use support to identify the most effective policies and programmes and expand successful uptake among non-EU citizens.

Very few countries know about the cost-effectiveness of their integration policies. By updating this project's indicators (policies, outcomes and beneficiaries) and database of evaluations, the European Commission can communicate to Member States and the public about the benefits of investments in integration, signs of policy success and the need for more ambitious policies. Based on this project's findings, EU funds on integration should require or incentivise the use of pilots/experiments and causal evaluations, for example for setting multiannual priorities and granting access to long-term funding.

Across Europe, few potential discrimination victims know or use their rights, while few non-EU citizens are accessing lifelong learning, domestic degrees, recognition of foreign qualifications and skills and relevant benefits (e.g. unemployment, study, family, healthcare). Regular collection and analysis of this standardised data across Europe will enable the European Commission to propose common solutions through EU law, standards and modules. These solutions can remedy gaps in non-EU citizens' entitlements, which this project mapped in all 28 Member States plus 10 other countries.

National policies and practices are largely responsible for the wide discrepancies in family reunion, long-term residence, enfranchisement and naturalisation rates across Europe. These discrepancies can have many impacts on immigrants' legal status and long-term integration. Member States should guarantee that all separated families are identified and assisted to reunite as soon as possible and that all long-settled non-EU immigrants (5+ years' legal stay) have become citizens or long-term residents with voting rights. In particular, the European Commission should monitor family reunion and long-term residence rates (by age, gender, nationality) and increase them by better reviewing practices, statistics and evaluations and then challenging any legal or practical obstacles, especially integration-related requirements that are disproportionate for vulnerable groups and ineffective in practice.

Very few countries have a comprehensive integration strategy, nor does the EU. To achieve this goal, each Directorate-General should make commitments on how its policies and funds will be used and monitored to improve specific integration outcomes, as a collaborative effort to implement the European Agenda on Migration. The EU will also need a clearer structure for multilevel governance to address integration at European, national, regional and local level. The European institutions will need to exchange more regularly with national governments, regional/local authorities and civil society about enforcing EU immigration law and using EU funds for integration, going beyond the existing networks, committees and EU Migration Forum.