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The Role of Integration of Immigrants and the European Political Attitudes

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Abstract

Migration is one of the main factors that shape the social-economic structures and political tools of a nation, but it also accelerates the development of urban areas. Europe has experienced a number of waves of migratory movements in the last decades, and issues relating to integration of immigrants have been becoming even more important for the political platform as well. The dynamics and combined effects of migratory movements, national policies and the roles of local authorities still present a mixed picture in Europe. Integration policies are mostly defined from the aspect of a regime. Some countries have restrictive immigration and integration policies, other nations provide easier access to their political and welfare systems. However, information sheets on language courses, cultural events and on the preconditions for the citizenship are the most-known tools of integration of newcomers. But based on diverse theories and also on a cross-country comparison of integration policies, this study shows that the scale of possibilities, goals and measures are wide. The meaning and structure of integration and particularly of political inclusion can be thereby analysed on the base of differentiated aspects or some chosen tools considered as best practices.

Keywords: Europe, inclusion, integration policy, immigration, subsidiarity

INTRODUCTION

Migrants make significant contributions to development at national or local level: with their workforce, experiences and knowledge, but with their cultural characteristics or international connections as well. On the other side, mobility brings negative effects with: expenditure of the welfare system, conflicts in the society, discrepancies regarding values and goals of the host community, and, of course, deprivation. A part of the migrants arrives without a detailed plan, they do not gather enough information regarding the future possibilities or hardships they could endure in the host country. However, some migrants aim to stay for a long time, want to work, establish security and take part in the civic life

too – while others might only hope to get involved into the social and political system. National and local governments have been learning for decades how to manage migration and its consequences. One of the most interesting themes of the migration research is how public policies can promote the active engagement and participation of immigrants in the political and civic life besides the labour market challenges, and how legal rules have influence on these issues. From the point of view of newcomers, the weight of inclusion is determined through a combination of the – often mentioned – push- and pull factors. The economic prosperity and political situation of a country, thus the participating possibilities of an individual can also be thought as pull effects.

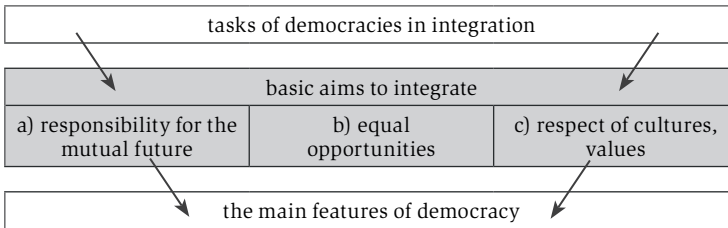
The aim of my study is to introduce the theoretical background and the European lessons on integration of immigrants, summarizing the mainstream solutions and the controversies as well. Thus the first part analyses the importance of integration and the main factors of inclusion. In the second part this paper presents the outcomes of a cross-country comparison with particular attention to the experiences of the classical host countries.

THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS

Since the 1980s European states have been facing the challenge, how to include immigrants on different stages. Like Fassmann and Münz in their book also present (1996), the illusion of temporary or circular migration has disappeared, guest workers stayed in their new homeland, new migratory groups have been arriving: new labour force, more family members, students, refugees and illegal migrants as well. Information sheets on language courses, cultural events and on the preconditions for the citizenship are the well-known tools of integration of newcomers. But based on diverse theories and also on a cross-country comparison of integration policies and legal systems I have made, it can be observed that the scale of possibilities, goals and measures are wide. Firstly, because the effects of exclusion or marginalisation also vary. Marginalisation of migrants could have negative effects on the democratic politics, since it undermines the process of democratic representation and accountability (Jones-Correa 1998). Further, segregation has not only effects on the labour market and on our everyday life, but it can also undervalue the role of active participation. The negative consequences of exclusion could therefore scatter further as social and economic integration, just as the backwash-effect from Myrdal (1960). Thus, national strategies and solutions regarding the integration of immigrants should cover the key areas of growth and well-being: labour market, education, welfare system, civic and political life, and these are only the main points.

After summarising the areas of inclusion of immigrants, the role of integration can be, however, also derived from the aspect of the theories in connection with democracy:

Figure 1: The role of integration in democracies



Source: own illustration

- a. one of the basic element of democracy is that all members of a community have a share in the decision-making processes regarding the future of this community
- b. second element of a democracy is the equality of opportunity in the social, economic and politic area - these two cases are also defined as main features of the democracy e.g. according to the Democracy Reporting International (2011).
- c. Entzinger (1999) adds to this, that another characteristic of modern democracies in the western countries is the respect for cultural differences, identities and values.

As a category of immigrants' integration, the issue "participation" would mean for migrants and their descendants to be involved in political processes and in the political representation, not only directly as a person but as a member of the civil society as well. Further, the political inclusion begins with the requirements for entering the country and goes on with the limited rights of legal residents. According to studies, state governments should make more efforts to identify the conditions and possibilities of integration of immigrants and their way to participation. On the other hand, it is also necessary to research its effects on the whole society. This leads us to the question what integration means, however, the outcomes of the scholarly and public debates vary. Not only the potential benefits or shortcomings of reforms but also the importance of dealing with this question are currently often discussed. It can be interesting to examine the participation of immigrants at the level of government and the role of this in the success of social integration and thus in relation with the fight against marginalisation (segregation).

In summary, the definitions of social, economic or political integration of a newcomer vary (Angenedt 2000, Treibel 2011). We find in the political issues - but also in the literature - different type of notions as assimilation, incorporation, integration and inclusion. Some emphasizes the responsibility of the receiving

community, some the importance of the willingness of the immigrants and there can be found theories that say that the success depends on the cooperation of all the actors: governments, immigrants, natives, employers, organisations and other communities – e.g. how the Council promotes it (Council of the European Union, 2004). It means, we can hardly find a consensus, not even on the political platform of one country (Verba et al. 1995).

THE LEVELS OF INCLUSION

The literature approaches to the participation of migrants from different aspects. American studies on political issues have been focusing on economic and social integration, and the political incorporation has only been considered as an issue of local election category (Ramakrishnan, Bloemraad 2008). In Europe researchers focus rather on institutional and organisational factors (Fieldhouse, Cutts 2008). According to the theory of Morales and Giuni (2011) the meaning inclusion of immigrants can be defined on 4 levels: macro, mezzo, micro level and the level of individual.

From the practical point of view, however, the most experts have privileged the national context in their studies. This is maybe because the range of citizenship and immigration policies is always defined at national level. However, in my opinion, at local level policies have more direct effects. Penninx also emphasizes the role of local governments since they have the power to strengthen the linkage between migrants and natives (2004). Local governments experience first challenges brought by ethnic, cultural and social diversity that immigration causes (Rogers, Tillie 2001). Comparing the migratory politics and strategies in Europe, it is mainly the local policy that can manage and accelerate the intensity of migrants' incorporation into the community. It is also at the local level that migrants usually have greater opportunities to become involved in political and civic life. It means, migrants are more likely to be able to mobilize successfully their ethnic communities at the local level.

It is also essential to emphasize the civil level, it means, the importance and role of civil organisations. After Koopmans et al. (2005), on the local level civil society organisations open opportunities for migrants, motivating them for collective action. The same origin or ethnical background leads migrants to favour the development of common identities. A shared fate can also mobilize the group consciousness.

Regarding the individual level, I agree with the definition, that integration means not only discrimination-free work circumstances and the acceptance of cultures, but the migrants' engagement in the civic and political communities. The relationship between the grade of integration and the characteristics of migrants can also be proved but as regards of the basic motivation of mobility there can be found obvious explanations too. Treibel (2011) also emphasises that the success and need of integration depends on interests of the migrants, the duration of stay

in the country of residence, the strength of the home country ties of individual migrants, and of course on the goal of migration. Tillie (2004) studied the individual and group determinants for the likelihood of inclusion into the host society. On the individual level gender, ethnic membership, cross-ethnic membership and social activities in the network of the respondent are of relevance while on the group level the amount of social capital in the ethnic community is important, particularly regarding political inclusion.

THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Taking the promotion of migrants into consideration, there can be found several ideas on how and under what conditions to grant them political participation and political rights. There are six fields of political participation according to an interesting but not well-known study on the integration of immigrants in Western Europe (Layton-Henry 1990): civil rights, industrial rights, immigrant associations, consultative institutions, voting rights and citizenship. Comparing the migration policies and integration tools of European states (see European experiences below), the countries make differences in their goals regarding these 6 main factors, but citizenship (naturalisation) is overall the first element of forming the opportunities of participation. The scale is wide and expands from the first steps of integration of newcomers to the acquisition of citizenship. Just as for the citizenship – so writes Brubaker (1992) – some conceptions highlight the importance of cultural or ethnic connections, whilst it is only the time spent within the country that counts for the other ones. However Bauböck (1994) points out that certain entitlements are linked to legal residual status of the migrants, it is obvious that citizenship is the most common entitlement for a migrant to get full membership rights – and thus to take part in political life, too. Based on the legal systems of the European countries important differences can be observed among the countries in their policies and procedures. These are e.g. the country of origin, the duration of stay, the original goal of stay, income or special contribution to the competitiveness of the country. Consequently, countries with easier procedures have fewer foreigners in the community and more members who are fully entitled to take part in the political life.

The ethnic and cultural diversity plays an important role in the discussions both at political and private level. Some experts would promote it, but others think that ethnic and cultural features belong to the private life and thus it has nothing to do with the equal treatment and political participation. Some, however, view this practice as negative and disturbing circumstances (Taylor 1992). By analysing the political issues and communications of the European countries it can be pointed out that not the migrant itself but the ethnic groups are considered as an actor of the political ground or as the main target of incorporation. Immigrants develop communities in society, often new ones. It means that communities – which are important for the authorities too – exist not only along the ethnical background

but on the basis of the common cultural values as well. These communities are firstly important from the point of view of the political participation when the government takes steps – or introduce new legal rules – with special attention to the existence of such communities of either ethnical or cultural groups (Bauböck 2011). On the other hand, communities can function as a relevant channel of communication with the political area, developing consultation structures or lobbying actions.

THE OUTCOMES OF A CROSS-COUNTRY COMPARISON

According to the statistics of the Eurostat 3.4 million people immigrated, beyond the amount of Syrian, Lybian refugees, in 2015 to one of the EU-28 Member States, and approximately 2,8 million emigrants have left an EU-Member State. There were ca. 1,4 million citizens of non-member (third-country-nationals) countries, 1,2 million people with citizenship of an EU-Member State, 830 thousand people who migrated to their home country (returning or born abroad) and 6,1 thousand stateless persons.

Analysing the migratory history and the relevant legal rules of the European countries I have come to a conclusion that, beside social issues, naturalisation (obtaining a citizenship after fulfilling the requirements) is the most contentious issue of migration politics. Some states are more liberal, offering the newcomers an easy process to become a citizen (e.g. Italy, Portugal, Spain) while in other countries only a restrictive and hard way can lead an immigrant to obtain the citizenship (e.g. Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland). Between 2010 and 2016, according to the data of the Eurostat, the number of immigrants with obtained citizenship was the highest in Romania (highest in 2013 with 90 % of all immigrants), Lithuania (86 % in 2015), Portugal (in average of 69 %), Estonia, Poland (in average 60 %), then Latvia and Slovakia. Regarding Hungary, persons acquiring citizenship were almost exclusively from the Hungarian minority in Romania or from returning diasporas.

In general, the effective integration of immigrants is one of the key factors for success regarding the European convergence targets. The elements of the European migration policy aim to harmonize the legislation and the administrative instruments, to maximize the positive effects of migratory flows while finding solutions for migratory challenges. After a cross-country comparison it is obvious, that these instruments and solutions are still divergent: there are European countries with restrictive policies; other states are, in contrary, open for multiculturalism providing easier access to equal rights (incl. political and welfare system). Analysing the strategies of the classic host countries, there can be found several factors underlying the differences between immigrants' integration and the labour market performance of these countries. These are – in summary – the historical background of the host country, the national streamline in the policies relating

migration management, the labour market and the welfare system of the host country, including the incomplete recognition of qualifications, discrimination and lack of information flow. Besides the country of origin, the skills, experiences and qualifications of immigrants and the purpose and circumstances of the stay can also be considered as important elements.

As for the residence permit, criteria for obtaining or losing it can vary from country to country, though the spirit of the European Union requires harmonized legal background. Austria and Germany have strict rules. If we look at the legislative and administrative practice in these countries, immigrants have to face difficulties getting and holding their permits or later upgrading them into a secure one or into citizenship. Granted access to the social welfare, marginalized life periods, crime issues or just administrative problems can undermine these upgrading goals. Political rights can be fully obtained after having obtained citizenship. At the same time, in the Netherlands and in Sweden or in France, the legal rules are not so strict; the probability of losing a residence permit or the citizenship is low. An important issue of the national or regional development is the socio-economic situation of immigrants – which also depends on the migration policy of the host country, and at the same time, on the national or regional welfare characteristics. Comparing the European welfare structures, immigrants (just like non-migrants) have basically easy access to the welfare services in northern Europe, such as Sweden, besides Belgium or the Netherlands. The United Kingdom offers the least protection against market forces for immigrants. In Austria, Germany and even Switzerland welfare benefits are only granted for immigrants if the strict requirements are fulfilled.

Beyond analysing the migration policies and legal issues regarding, the achievements of the MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) can also be useful for us. The MIPEX is a European tool to compare different indices regarding integration of immigrants. As for the period of 2007-2015, Sweden has in average the highest score, offering the easiest access to equal rights. The next ones are the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The German-speaking countries (Germany, Switzerland and Austria) have lower scores. It illustrates their strict legal practices, reflecting the difficulties in the realization of equal rights.

Highlighting the political inclusion of immigrants, these fields are the followings: electoral rights, political liberty, consultative bodies, implementation policies (information-flow).

Figure 2: The 10 top-countries that offer an easier way to political participation (2015)
 80-100: favourable - 60-79: slightly favourable - 41-59: halfway favourable -
 21-40: slightly unfavourable - 1-20: unfavourable - 0: critically unfavourable

Ranking Country		Score
1	Norway	82
2	Luxembourg	81
3	Finnland	79
4	Portugal	74
5	Ireland	73
6	Sweden	71
7	Iceland	67
8	Denmark	64
9	Germany	63
10	Italy	58

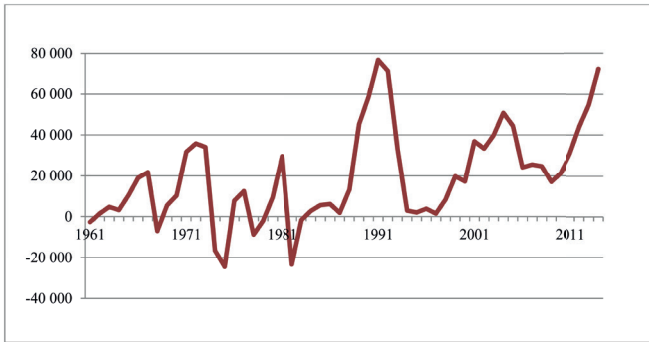
Source: own illustration on the base of MIPEX

Generally in Western Europe immigrants have greater voting rights, stronger consultative bodies, more support for organisations and better cooperation with authorities. Persons with foreign citizenship in Central Europe and the Baltic states must be generally first naturalised, since the political participation is still missing from these integration strategies. In addition, a reform concerning migration needs greater political cooperation (such as in the UK) or constitutional reforms (e.g. in Austria or Germany). However, as I can see, political participation is becoming even more important as countries realize the worth of voting rights and consultative bodies.

THE CASE OF AUSTRIA

After the breakdown of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy the history of migration has also developed in the successive states in different ways. By now Austria has become a nation with a mixed population, which means, that approximately 12% of the inhabitants are foreign residents and 20,4% has a migratory background (the person or both of the parents arrived from abroad). Thus Austria is now a country of immigration.

Figure 3: Net migration rate in Austria, 1961-2015



Source: own illustration based on the data of Statistik Austria

Since the first labour migration program of the 1960 's the migration policy and integration tools have been severely revised and reworked. At the same time, new measures were introduced that should ensure better integration of foreigners in Austria – and so as “integration before immigration”. Regarding exclusion of immigrants, the Austrian anti-discriminative laws were to be harmonised with the EU law. The 2010 National Action Plan and its organ, the Integration Fund announced many new initiatives, although these are mostly soft-solutions – without legal consequences. Compared with the legal rules of other countries, immigrants have less equal rights and opportunities in Austria than in the other “classical” host-countries. Highlighting the political integration of immigrants again, it should play the same role on the political and social platform as the labour market or social welfare, since the political exclusion can also have negative consequences.

Despite of the efforts the Austrian state makes to find an optimal non-legacy-solution for the integration of immigrants – or despite of the communication the Austrian government interpreteates its activities and goals – according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index of the EU the country only reaches yearly the following achievements:

Figure 4: Evaluation on the base of MIPEX-data as for Austria (2015)

Rank	20 (of 38)
Score	50
Labour market mobility level	64
Family reunion level	50
Integration in educational issues	47
Integration in health issues	63
Political participation level	38
Permanent residence level	57
Access to citizenship	26
Anti-discrimination level	57

Source: own illustration based on the data of MIPEX

Almost 120 thousand of immigrants arrive yearly to Austria – not including the new asylum seekers – thus it is obvious, that immigration has effects on the public service at state and local level as well, e.g. in the fields of education, social care, health care, unemployment, housing, business environment and – in connection with all of these – the command of the German language became more important. The government therefore tries to manage migration and direct the integration of migrants with different methods. One of the main barriers to integration (and successful cooperation with immigrants) is the limited German knowledge of migrants and the lack of knowledge regarding the history and culture of the country. The state makes thus efforts to communicate the importance of these not only in Austria (with the help of different channels) but abroad, through the embassies and institutions too. The Austrian government made, however, no progress on political participation and can be found behind other reform trends as other countries extend citizenship entitlements for the 2nd generation and dual nationality for all. On the base of the development of the Austrian legal rules in the last century we can say, that this issue has not even changed since the Monarchy, only along the impacts of the EU-rules. The policy in connection with permanent residence and naturalisation is one of the most restrictive in Europe, and do not still take into account immigrants' efforts, their individual abilities and circumstances. However, the Austrian subnational authorities have also recognized the importance of immigrants' integration. Different integration instruments have been developed – in Graz even since the appearance of the first guest-workers. We can still only talk about a countrywide intensive integration activity from 2000. Today, a cooperative attitude of the regional or local government regarding integration of immigrants and the priority of information-transfer among the actors (local community, immigrants, institutions, authorities, entrepreneurs, civil groups, media) profoundly affect the outcomes of the labour market and thus both the social and economic development of the region.

SUMMARY

Today each European state, including Hungary, faces different migratory challenges. One of the most interesting questions is how the government can make advantages of it, how the political level can promote the active engagement and participation of immigrants. Integration is the process by which immigrants become accepted into the society, getting a range of entitlements depending on their legal status. In conclusion, naturalisation is a common way in Europe to integrate immigrants – with the requirements and with its achievements such as citizenship, access to domestic politics, economic and social advantages. We have seen that the strategies, instruments and solutions in the host countries can vary, despite of the Convergence objective of the EU.

The circumstances and effects of the inclusion can be observed in local context as well. It is the local level that directly shapes the attitudes of the native population towards migrants and the immigrants' contribution to the development. The characteristics of the individual level, of the migrants themselves, can also help us to find further solutions for this topic, but the local civil communities have also an impact on the opportunities and willingness of migrants for the participations. Therefore, comparative analyses could be conducted either on regions of a country or on European metropolitan cities. Thus, the focusing on the local level can give us additional materials when studying migrants' incorporation, giving us the possibility to learn from the lessons of the European host countries.

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