

The Role of Higher and Further Education

The Integration of Migrants in Europe

Migration is a key feature of population change in Europe, shaping the continent's economy, labour markets and demography. In 2013 there were 20 million non-EU nationals living in the European Union, representing around 4% of the total population, up from 3.4% in 2005 (OECD /EU 2015, p. 300). The EU's core principle of free movement, globalization and the stability and relative prosperity of EU Member States mean that this trend is set to continue. To date Europe's migrant integration policies have been a necessary but insufficient response to the needs of this rapidly diversifying population and of their hosts. Divergent employment outcomes between migrants and natives, segregated neighbourhoods and, in some cases, social unrest reflect this reality (Collett / Petrovic 2014, p. 3).

This has moved migrant integration to the top of the policy agenda. As the current migrant crisis in Europe continues, the long-term integration of those coming to the EU and the need to manage their numbers adds urgency. Over recent decades European governments have responded at national and EU-levels with sophisticated and wide-reaching policies. The potential of higher and further education has been reflected in these, although not always to its fullest.

There is no consensus on a single definition of 'migrant' or 'immigrant'. These have different definitions in policy, law and discourse across EU member states (Anderson /Blinder 2015, p. 3). To be as comparative as possible, we have adopted the definition applied in the EU's "Zaragoza" indicators, by which migrants are understood to be non-EU, or third-country, nationals who reside in the European Union legally. Their reasons for migrating usually differ from those of EU nationals and often include asylum or family reunification. That said, many of the arguments regarding the role of higher education in supporting integration in Europe apply to all immigrant populations if to varying degrees.

Integration: a complex and two-way process

The issue of how to integrate migrants is one of the priority concerns of the EU. Integration as an idea

implies a dilution of certain differences – with the result that, for example, educational and employment disadvantages narrow or disappear over time (Saggar 2012, p. 18). In EU policy it is accepted that migrant integration encompasses a variety of social, cultural, political and economic processes that occur when immigrants arrive in a new society. It is also seen as a dynamic and two-way process of mutual accommodation by both immigrants and the native population (European Commission 2005). It is sometimes forgotten that a political consensus is necessary to this.

Labour market performance

The European Commission has begun collecting comparative data on migrant integration, using a diverse set of indicators on employment, health, social inclusion and active citizenship. As of 2013, the most recent year for which full data is available, two important characteristics of migrant populations stand out – migrants are on average less likely to be fully employed or to have higher education qualifications (OECD /EU 2015). We consider these characteristics in more detail, their implications for migrant integration, and specifically the role of higher education in addressing this imbalance.

The labour market dimension of integration is of particular importance as it conditions other aspects of



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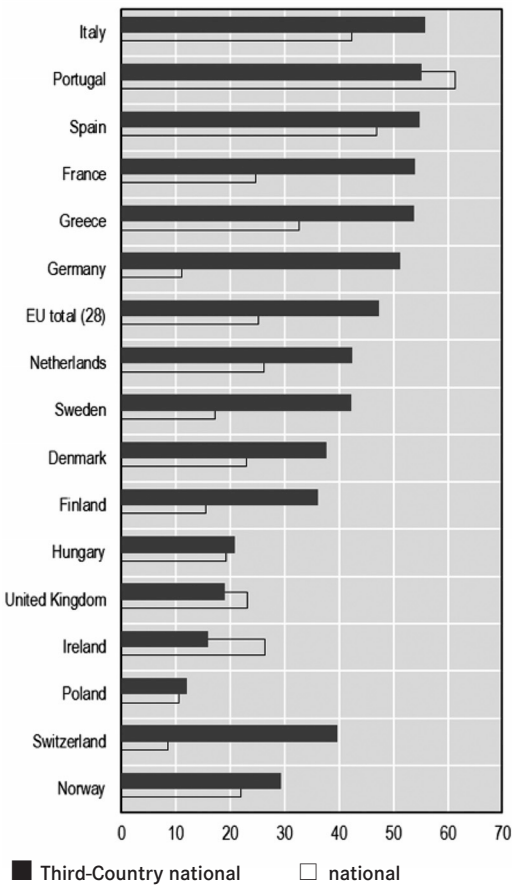
integration and is a determinant of broader economic consequences (Jean 2007, p. 16). Defined narrowly, labour market integration is the “convergence of migrants’ wages or (un)employment rates towards those of natives” (ibid). In Europe immigrants tend to have significantly higher unemployment rates than the native-born populations – 10% higher on average. However, at lower levels of educational attainment the gap in unemployment narrows considerably or even disappears, while migrants with higher education degrees have greater problems finding a job than do their EU peers (OECD /EU 2015, p. 301). Similarly, the average rate of over-qualification, a phenomenon limited to the highly-educated, is 44% among immigrants, compared with 20% among host-country nationals (ibid). This is a problem as protracted periods of unemployment, underemployment, or inactivity put migrants and their families at risk of marginalization (Desiderio/Hooper 2015, p. 3). This is detrimental to the health of the economy as migrants fill skills shortages and labour gaps created by Europe's ageing domestic population.

Educational attainment

In acquiring skills and qualifications immigrants shape how they find their place in society and give their children a better chance of high-quality education and secure employment. In Europe the level of educational attainment is generally lower for migrants than for the native populations. An average of 18% of migrants have completed no more than primary schooling, compared with 4% of host-country nationals. Only one in five have a higher education degree against an average of more than one in four of host-country peers (OECD /EU 2015, p. 318). There is, however, wide variation across the EU. For example, the migrant populations in countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom are, on average, better qualified than the native population (ibid, p. 133).

Further and higher education play a major role in addressing gaps in achieving educational qualifications, job training, and access to the labour market. They contribute also to other aspects of integration. For instance improving multicultural mediation, strengthening intercultural learning activities and providing additional support to migrants through tutoring, mentoring or guidance (European Commission 2011, p. 20). In

Fig. 1: Shares of 15-64 year-olds with low levels of educational attainment by citizenship, not including those still in education, 2012-13



Source: OECD /EU 2015, p. 319

terms of output, the research data educational institutions provide, often drawing on a highly diverse student and professional staff population, informs integration policy.

Migrants are more likely than natives to identify that they need training or further education, but nevertheless often do not take up a degree or other courses. The most common reasons for this are financial or that they are unable to meet the required entry standards, with language a major obstacle (OECD /EU 2015, p. 131). In seeking to remove such barriers governments should balance budgetary restraints with the need to provide equitable access to institutions and to training as quickly as possible. This is important as

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measures which may inhibit migrants' can have a negative effect on their integration into their new country of residence. For instance, regulations based on residence for funding for skills and language courses often impede migrants' entry to and performance in education and the labour market and may limit social participation. Women who migrate because of marriage in particular can miss a crucial 'window of opportunity' – the time immediately following migration and before having children – and thus risk longer-term barriers to their participation in work and in society (Oliver 2013, p. 4).

Action at the EU level

The 2004 Hague Programme was the first coherent European framework for migrant integration. This five-year blueprint for asylum and migration policies was agreed by the European Council, the grouping of the heads of government of the 25 EU Member States. While its predecessor, the 1999 Tampere Programme, dealt with issues of migration, the EU now agreed to aim for migrants' full integration in European society.

A set of 11 non-binding Common Basic Principles (CBPs) was agreed subsequently, together with an associated Common Agenda for Integration. CBP Five recognized that: "...efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society", with improving participation in higher education defined as a key national-level outcome. CBP Six acknowledged the importance of access: "...to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services".

The five-year Stockholm Programme, which succeeded the Hague Programme in 2009, provided few new measures on integration, but built on completed work. By then the Lisbon Treaty had been signed by Member States, providing for the first time a legal basis to develop European cooperation on integration (European Commission 2010, p. 2). The EU began a range of initiatives to support its integration goals, including a €825 million fund for implementing strategies in Member States. In 2010 common indicators to monitor integration were adopted, making concrete comparison across EU Member States possible.

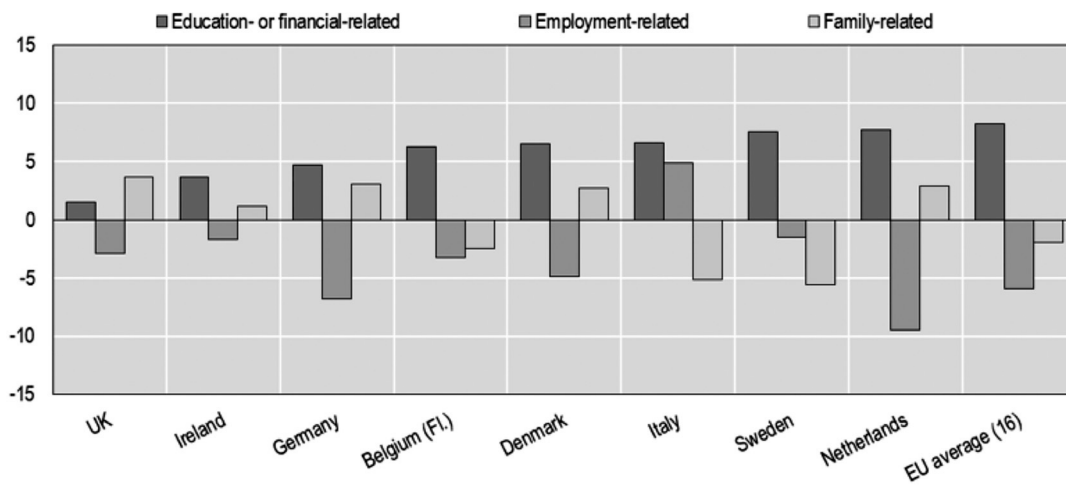
Each EU Member State is responsible for its education and training systems, however there is considerable cooperation at the EU level. A major development was the Education and Training Strategy 2020 (ET2020), adopted in 2009, which defines the strategic objectives of EU education and training policies and sets out seven high-level goals to be achieved by 2020. The goals on further and higher education specify: at least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education; and at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning (European Council 2009). The education of migrants is identified as something which must be addressed if these goals are to be reached.

Country policy – the case of the UK

There is no national policy framework on integration in the UK, where different government departments lead on relevant policy areas. Education policy, including higher education, is also devolved to Scotland, Wales and to Northern Ireland. A lack of consensus on the objectives of policy interventions towards integration, and a lack of clarity about the demarcation between policy aimed at migrants and that towards British-born ethnic minorities has contributed to this fragmented responsibility (Spencer 2011, p. 3). Since 2010 the government has stepped back from a national integration strategy, emphasizing instead five key principles – shared values, social responsibility, active participation, social mobility and the rejection of extremism. These were outlined in a Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) report in 2012 which did not, however, present a specific strategy or identify significant funding (Ali/Gidley 2014, p. 5). While DCLG has led on migrant integration since then, the Departments for Business, Innovation and Skills and for Work and Pensions continue their leads on higher education and on skills.

The devolved nature of government should again be noted, with policy and provision differing significantly as a consequence. The United Kingdom has one of the most highly-educated migrant populations in the EU, with immigrants as a group surpassing the educational levels of the native-born population. In 2012-13, of the foreign born population, 47% had a tertiary education, compared with less than 35% of the native

Fig.2: Main reasons advanced by immigrants for unmet training needs, 2012 Difference percentage points with native-born 25-64 year-olds



Source: OECD /EU 2015, p. 139

population (OECD/EU 2015, p. 132-33). In order to sharpen this focus on highly-skilled migrants and to achieve the aim of reducing annual net migration to tens of thousands, the government has tightened both the requirements for migrant entry to the UK and the support they can access upon arrival.

Most citizens of non-EEA countries who come to live in the UK have 'no recourse to public funds' such as housing benefit, disability allowance or tax credits in the initial years. There are some exceptions, such as people who have been granted humanitarian protection or asylum but do not have permanent residence. Support for participation in post-compulsory education, such as fee assistance or resident rather than international student fee levels are included in such restrictions. They may use public services such as the National Health Service (NHS) and access compulsory education (Sumption 2015).

Conclusion

The active participation of immigrants in education, the labour market, and in public life more generally, is vital for ensuring social cohesion and the ability of migrants to function as autonomous, productive, self-realized citizens (OECD /EU 2015, p. 9). Higher and further education have played a role in furthering this aim,

long before official integration policies moved on this agenda. In Germany, for instance, universities have shown themselves, in a recent survey, to be conscious of the need to make provision for the growing number of refugees in the country (German Rectors' Conference, 2015).

As immigration to Europe continues, both through voluntary migration and through those seeking refuge from conflict and persecution, this potential should be better recognized in EU and national integration policies. It is, however, essential that such policy is made according to a rational and measured assessment of the long term needs of both native populations and immigrants and their harmonious integration; and according to respect for European social and political agreements made democratically and consensually by governments; and not by European or national officials according to ad hoc and ill-considered responses to circumstances, however urgent.

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