



press release

“Changes in government and far-right emergence: hard times for integration policies”

**The MIPEX 2015 reveals a difficult context for integration
in which things are changing very slowly**

June 30, 2015

According to the new **Integration Policies: Who Benefits? (MIPEX 2015)**, a project led by the [Barcelona Centre for International Affairs \(CIDOB\)](#) and the [Migration Policy Group \(MPG\)](#), several countries have lost positions due to restrictions and cuts: Greece on citizenship and voting rights, and the Netherlands and the United Kingdom on residence restrictions and targeted support cuts, both experiencing major drops in nearly all policy areas. With Sweden ranking 1st, Portugal continues to climb ahead on MIPEX despite the crisis and austerity, maintaining its investment in integration and working to increase its reach and effectiveness.

However, **“political will may matter more than a country’s tradition of immigration**, since more inclusive integration policies may both encourage more immigrants to settle permanently and the public to trust immigrants more” says **Thomas Huddleston (MPG)**, co-director of the MIPEX 2015, who reminds us that integration policies differ significantly between Germany and Austria, Denmark and Sweden, or Portugal and Spain.

A demanding agenda at a time of major government changes and far-right emergence

According to the increasing number of EU residents, immigration should be a top item on the EU agenda, a demand that comes at a time of major government changes and close elections in several major destinations (between 2010 and 2014 in Australia, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom and the Nordics).

In this context, far-right parties have never done better in recent European history, threatened mainstream parties and even entered into government positions, while public opinion on immigration is divergent across the EU and generally uninformed. This trend is reflected through a drop in the MIPEX score in those countries experiencing a rise in anti-immigrant attitudes and the success of far-right parties.

In this sense, **Elena Sánchez-Montijano (CIDOB)**, co-director of the MIPEX 2015, emphasises the **strong link between integration policies and public opinion**, as they help the public to trust migrants and see benefits, while restrictive policies harden distrust and perceptions of threat.



In this particularly sensitive time for migration issues, the fourth edition of the MIPEX has focused on what governments are actually doing to promote the integration of migrants and whether their policies are effective in practice and who is benefiting from them. These are the main key findings on integration policies and their beneficiaries:

- 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.
- Policies largely determine whether immigrants are settling down permanently, becoming voters and equal citizens. **Restricting permanent residence and citizenship (as it happens in Austria, Cyprus and Greece) leads to large numbers of 'permanently temporary' foreigners who are legally precarious and socially excluded.** Facilitating permanent residence but restricting citizenship (which is the case for Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, Estonia and Latvia) means most immigrants are secure in their status but treated like 'second-class citizens' in national politics and several areas of life.
- 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. **The time has come for enforcement: most victims are not coming forward with complaints, so countries still have to take the 1st steps in the long path to justice.**
- Traditional countries of immigration and most Western European countries are increasingly investing in more effective general and targeted programmes related to labour market, but these may be too new or small to reach the many non-EU men and women in need, who rarely access trainings or unemployment benefits.
- As countries become more diverse, schools and health services are slow to adapt to immigrants' specific needs. Immigrants' basic access to these services depends a lot on their legal status.

Within the EU, national policies are stronger in areas covered by EU law and weaker in areas of national policy

At a European level, the greatest areas of strength are that migrant workers, reunited families and permanent residents enjoy basic security, rights and protection from discrimination. On the other hand, the greatest obstacles are for foreign citizens to become citizens or politically active and for mainstream services to guarantee equal access and opportunities for immigrants (targeted employment, education and health support).



"Migration has become a highly contentious topic in Europe, with debates often grounded more in perceptions than in facts. The data published by **MIPEX** are very useful for all those who want to approach migration from a factual standpoint, and show that the integration of migrants is not only possible, but also beneficial for our society. This is recommended reading for all policy and decision makers." **Nils Muižnieks, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe** and former Latvian Minister responsible for Integration

"**MIPEX 2015** delivers facts and inspiration from worst and best practice integration policies in EU member states and abroad. Moreover, **MIPEX** shows that immigrants in most of the countries are in danger to stay in legally precarious and socially excluded circumstances, being treated like second-class citizens in national politics and in daily life". **Ulrike Lunacek, Vice-President and Member of the European Parliament**, The Greens/EFA, Austria

"I believe that diversity is a huge asset to our continent, economically, socially and culturally. Immigration has helped to change our economy boosting productivity and supporting growth. Europe's strength as a multicultural centre was driven by the acknowledgement that our continent was open to new ideas, to new people and to new products." **Cécile Kashetu Kyenge, Member of the European Parliament**, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and former Italian Minister responsible for Integration

Today, the www.mipex.eu site will publish full data and reports on 38 countries (28 EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, Japan, Korea, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and United States). On the occasion of this release, the [Migration Policy Group \(MPG\)](#) and the [Barcelona Centre for International Affairs \(CIDOB\)](#) are organising an [event](#) to discuss the MIPEX 2015 final results, share the results of the national reflections and ask what the European institutions can do concretely to improve integration in practice through European law, enforcement, recommendations, funding and transfer of best practice.

Date and time: 30 June 2015 - 2:30 pm

Location: Maastricht University Brussels Campus, Avenue de l'Armée 10, Brussels

Organised by: CIDOB and MPG

For further information and/or in order to attend the event, please contact:

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