

Citizenship and Integration in the UK

Aims and Objectives

The project aims to better understand the nature of the process of integration and acquisition of citizenship, focusing on newly arrived third country migrants – that is, people from outside the European Union. More specifically, we aim to increase the capacity of the UK to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate policies and measures for the integration of third country nationals through the provision of a substantial body of new data and analysis. To meet this aim, the project has the following objectives:

- to examine the experience of recent arrivals who have taken the ‘Life in the UK test’ or an alternative route of studying English with a citizenship context;
- to review the academic and policy literature that provides evidence on integration processes and the outcomes of initiatives to promote integration; and
- to develop through a process of research and dialogue on the development of further indicators to assess progress of integration policies and inform government debates on future measures.

Background

The project is funded by the European Integration Fund, managed in Britain by a team in the UK Border Agency. The Fund aims to support the successful integration of migrants into European society. Our project is one of the few research projects in the programme.

The citizenship test and debates that inform citizenship policy in the UK have become an increasingly significant element of integration policy in Britain. However, there is relatively little evidence that analyses the experiences of those that have taken the test or the considerations of those that have preferred not to take the test at all. Moreover, while there is anecdotal evidence that suggests both differential success rates between different minorities taking the test, there has been little work that considers in depth the qualitative reasoning and experiences behind this. Partly because of this lack of data, there is also a need for more thorough measures of the success of integration policies.

Methods

In 2008, 156,015 applications for British citizenship were made, with 129,375 applications granted (Home Office, 2009). At the heart of the project, therefore, is a major survey of the experiences of those recent arrivals to the UK who have applied to become British citizens either through the 'Life in the UK' test route or through the ESOL with Citizenship course route. We are interested in how different routes to citizenship might promote civic, cultural and economic integration, and whether it facilitates meaningful contact with other citizens. This will be complemented by an in-depth qualitative study of a smaller number of specific categories of the recently arrived (including those who have chosen not to become citizens) to drill down into the issues. Alongside this generation of new data, a thorough policy and literature review will seek to understand the processes of integration, as well as interrogate the ways in which policies have developed to promote it. We are particularly interested in how this literature might relate to the associated but separate policy debates around cohesion.

Outputs

The results of our literature review will be a stand-alone document published early in the life of the project. We will also produce a peer-reviewed report of the data from the survey and interviews. Finally, we will produce a discussion paper on indicators for integration, which we will present at two round-table workshops, one with UK-based policy-makers and practitioners, and one in Brussels with European policy-makers and practitioners before producing a final report.

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