



MIGRATION POLICY GROUP



Public Opinion Towards Migration: Research and Good Practice

Alexander Wolffhardt , Migration Policy Group

Oxford, UK | September 19, 2019



Who is reshaping public opinion on the EU's migration policies?

Key drivers: What we know from current research

Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum

ReSOMA provides a platform for exchanging knowledge and practice in the field of Asylum, Migration and Integration. The project aims to ensure European policymakers and stakeholders access accurate and reliable evidence for policies. ReSOMA is funded under the Horizon2020 programme.

- Supporting a sustainable and mutually beneficial collaboration between EU researchers and stakeholder networks;
- Making EU's platforms for policy dialogue and consultation more evidence-based;
- Raising new evidence-based top priorities for the EU's policy agenda



ReSOMA topic: Public opinion on migrants

- Annual ReSOMA cycle: identification of 9 key policy topics in asylum, migration and integration based on the on-going policy debate; by looking at the current EU agenda (top-down) & policy needs at local and national level that are not currently addressed at EU level (bottom-up)
- Once topics are identified, partners gather evidence by involving researchers and practitioners & engage them in several cycles of stakeholder consultations & transnational feedback loops
- **2019/2020 topic - Public opinion on migrants: the effect of information and disinformation about EU policies**
Discussion Brief: Who is reshaping public opinion on the EU's migration policies?
Policy Options Brief: Effectively communicating on migration
Transnational Feedback Meeting: 4 November 2019
Task Force Meeting: 8 November 2019

Key drivers

- Values & socialization
- Political preferences
- Immediate context: Positive and close contact with immigrants
- Public debate: Salience and framing in the media
- The influence of social media

Values & socialisation

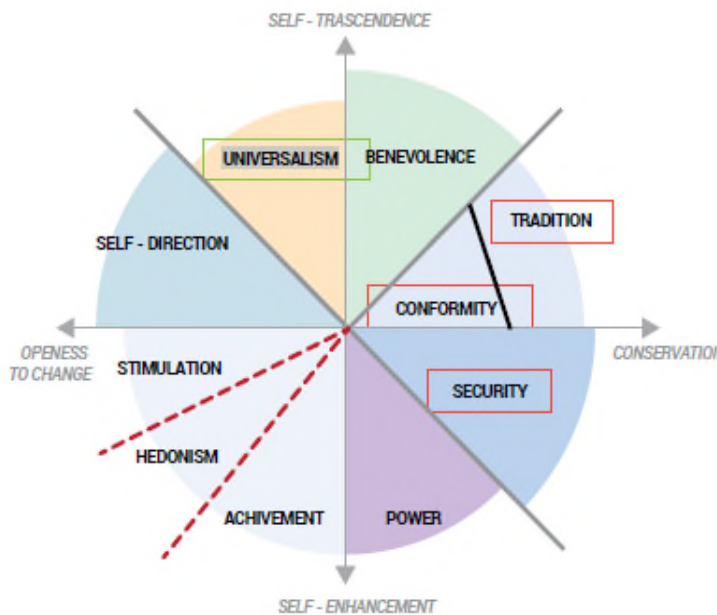


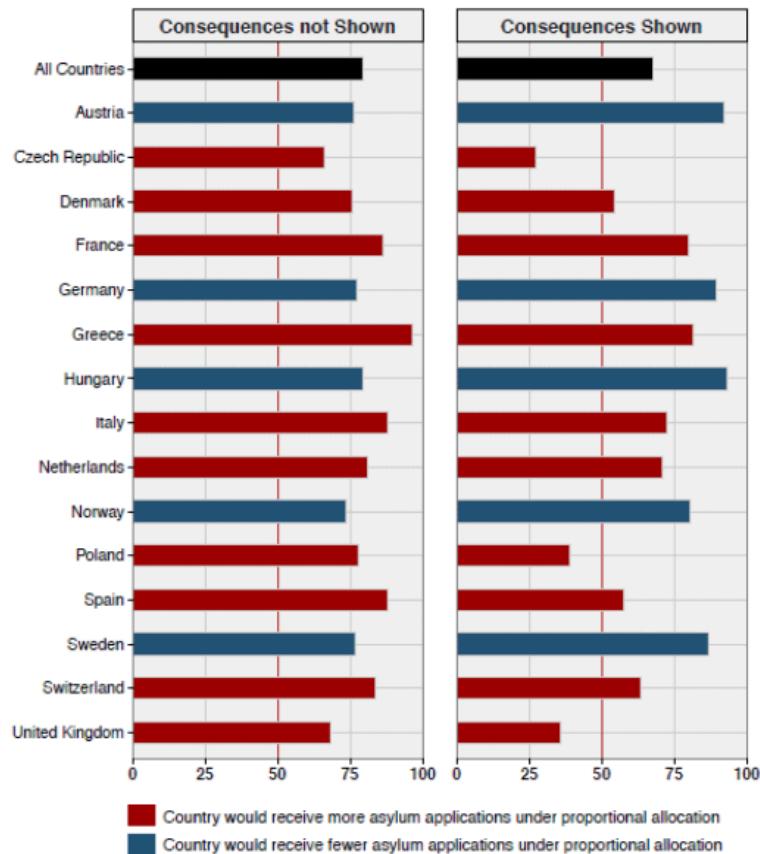
Figure 12. Schwarz's ten human values. Positive predictors of standardised attitudes to immigration in 2014 European Social Survey in green; negative predictors in red. Source: Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration

- Values, psychology, socialisation and education strongest determinants of attitudes towards immigration and most other social issues
- Strongest opinions on migration, human rights, social and global justice (for vs. against) seen where people driven by universalist values (empathy and care for people/nature) or by conservative values (tradition, conformity, security)
- 'Moveable middle' driven by more egocentric values, such as power, achievement and stimulation

Source: Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration

Values & socialisation

Preference for Proportional Allocation of Asylum Seeker Applications Over the Status Quo Allocation



- But moveable middle hard to move as value-attitude link is very strong
- Lesson for re-framing: speaking in a way that activates values shared by people not driven by universalist values – e.g. fairness

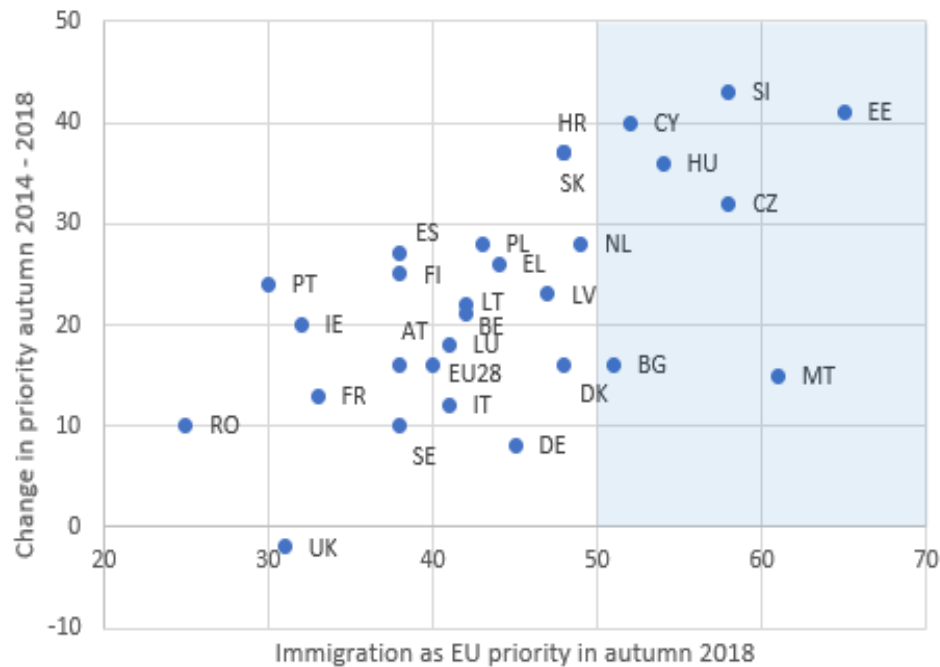
Source: *Europeans support a proportional allocation of asylum seekers: Bansak, Hainmueller & Hangartner, Nature Human Behaviour vol.1, 0133 (2017)*

Political preferences

- Higher salience of immigration in public debate shifts political preferences of people driven by universalist and conservative values, who are more likely to realign their party preference
- Frequent and negative media coverage mostly realigns political preferences of conservative voters with pre-existing values of security, conformity and tradition. Traditional parties in power face greater competition and adopt restrictive policies
- Reinforcing effect: strengthened far-right parties shape public opinion and discourse, and consequently increase salience even more
- Minor electoral shifts among voter segments can have major political repercussions

Political preferences

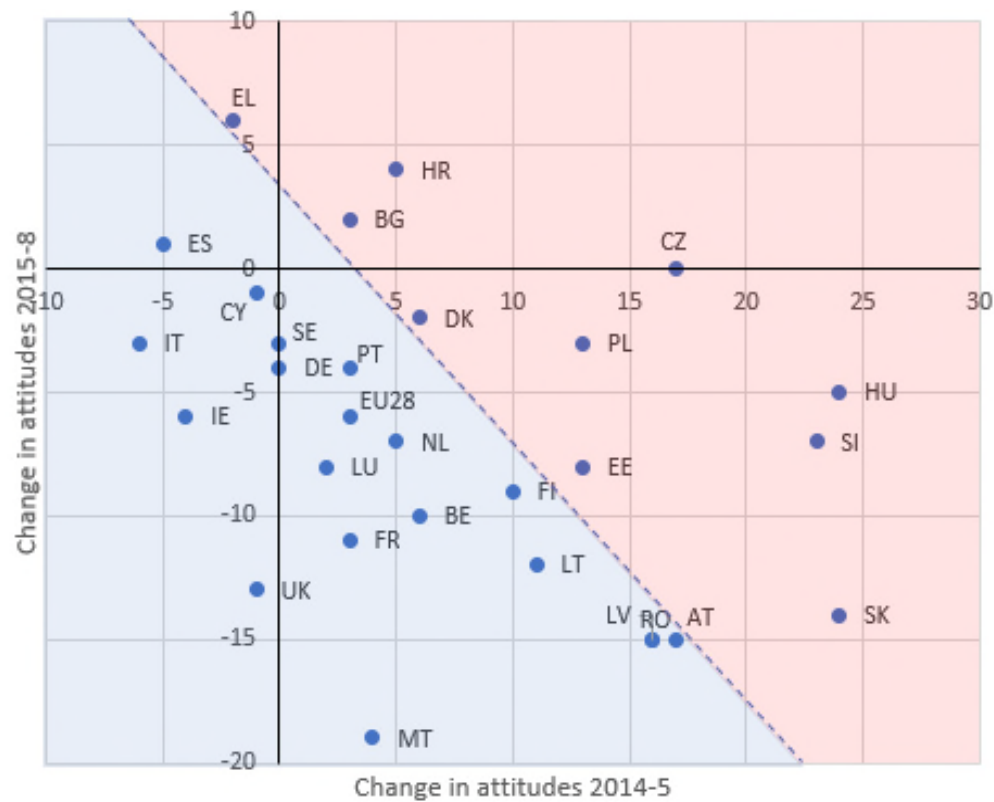
- But different across Europe as varying percentages of people driven by universalist and conservative values and in Central Europe parties not traditionally aligned along conservative vs. universalist values



Immigration as the most important issue facing the EU: autumn 2014 – 2018

Source: Authors' own calculations using Standard Eurobarometer surveys 82 (Autumn 2014) and 90 (Autumn 2018)

Political preferences

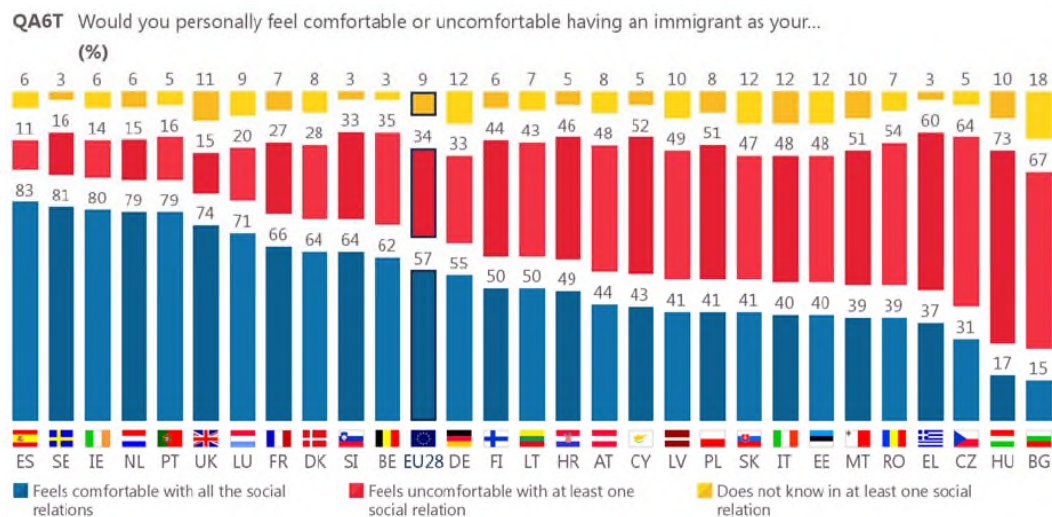


Change in very negative attitudes towards non-EU migration

Source: Authors' own calculations using Standard Eurobarometer surveys 82 (Autumn 2014), 84 (Autumn 2015) and 90 (Autumn 2018)

Immediate context: Positive and close contact with immigrants

Europeans' comfort with social interaction with immigrants



Source: Special Eurobarometer 469, 2017

- Contact theory: interaction with immigrants significantly improves public attitudes, so long as frequent, intimate and positive (friendship, work)
- But relatively small and short effect of people's experiences as attitudes to immigrants primarily driven by values and political preferences
- People in greater contact with immigrants do express greater solidarity with refugees and greater resistance to the far-right – opportunity for local level

Immediate context: Positive and close contact with immigrants

- Direct experiences (e.g. with 2015/6 large-scale arrivals) do not fundamentally change people's minds about immigrants and appear to have few long-term effects
- Germany: 'NIMBY' ('Not In My Back-Yard') effect concerning hosting a reception centre in their municipality only among one fifth of survey respondents, with opposition decreasing over time

Immediate context: Positive and close contact with immigrants

- Opposition to reception centres more related to the quality of the centre than to its size/distance or the origin/religion of its residents

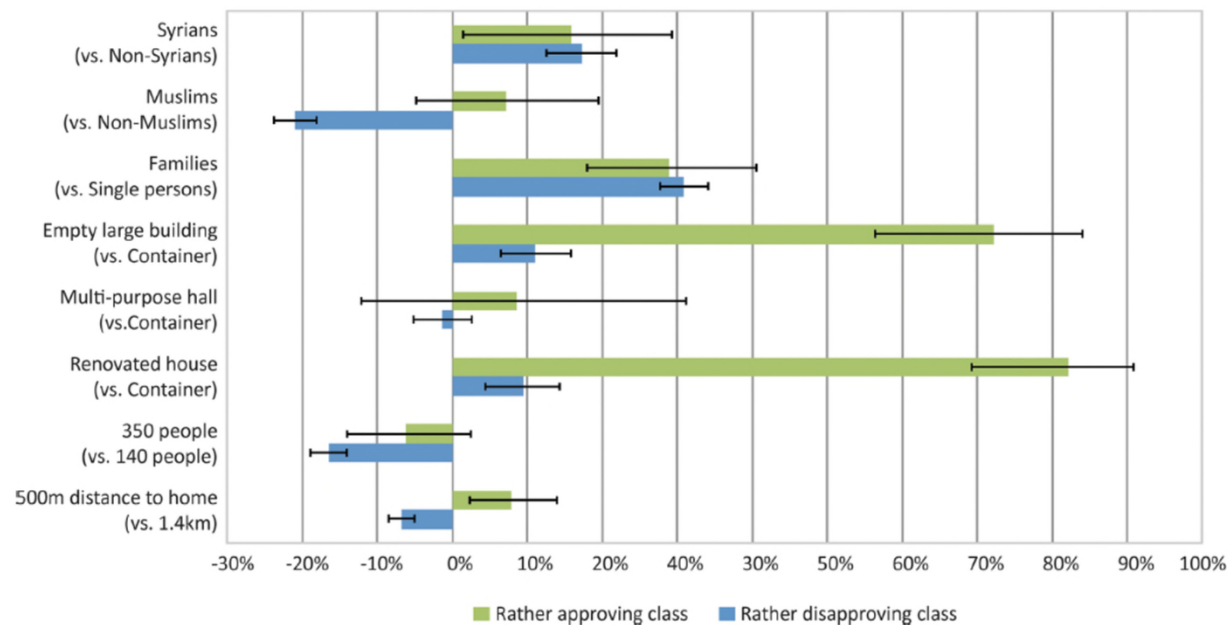


Fig 1. Influence of different characteristics of the refugee/migrant homes on the probability of accepting a home in the vicinity.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0199923.g001>

Source: Liebe, U. et al. (2018), "From welcome culture to welcome limits? Uncovering preference changes over time for sheltering refugees in Germany", PLoS ONE, Vol. 13, No. 8.

Public debate: Salience and framing in the media

- Media coverage is the main driver of the salience of immigration as a political priority for citizens: public debate influences the amount that people think about immigration
- Words and images highly changeable over time: in 2015/16 from humanitarian/‘careful tolerance’ frame to ‘ecstatic humanitarianism’ and defensive securitisation frame
- Missed opportunity: reassuring threat-sensitive citizens with storytelling by migrants expressing universalist values, instead of focus on numbers, how authorities ‘manage the crisis’ and presenting migrants as anonymous group – gap that can be filled by local news

Public debate: Salience and framing in the media

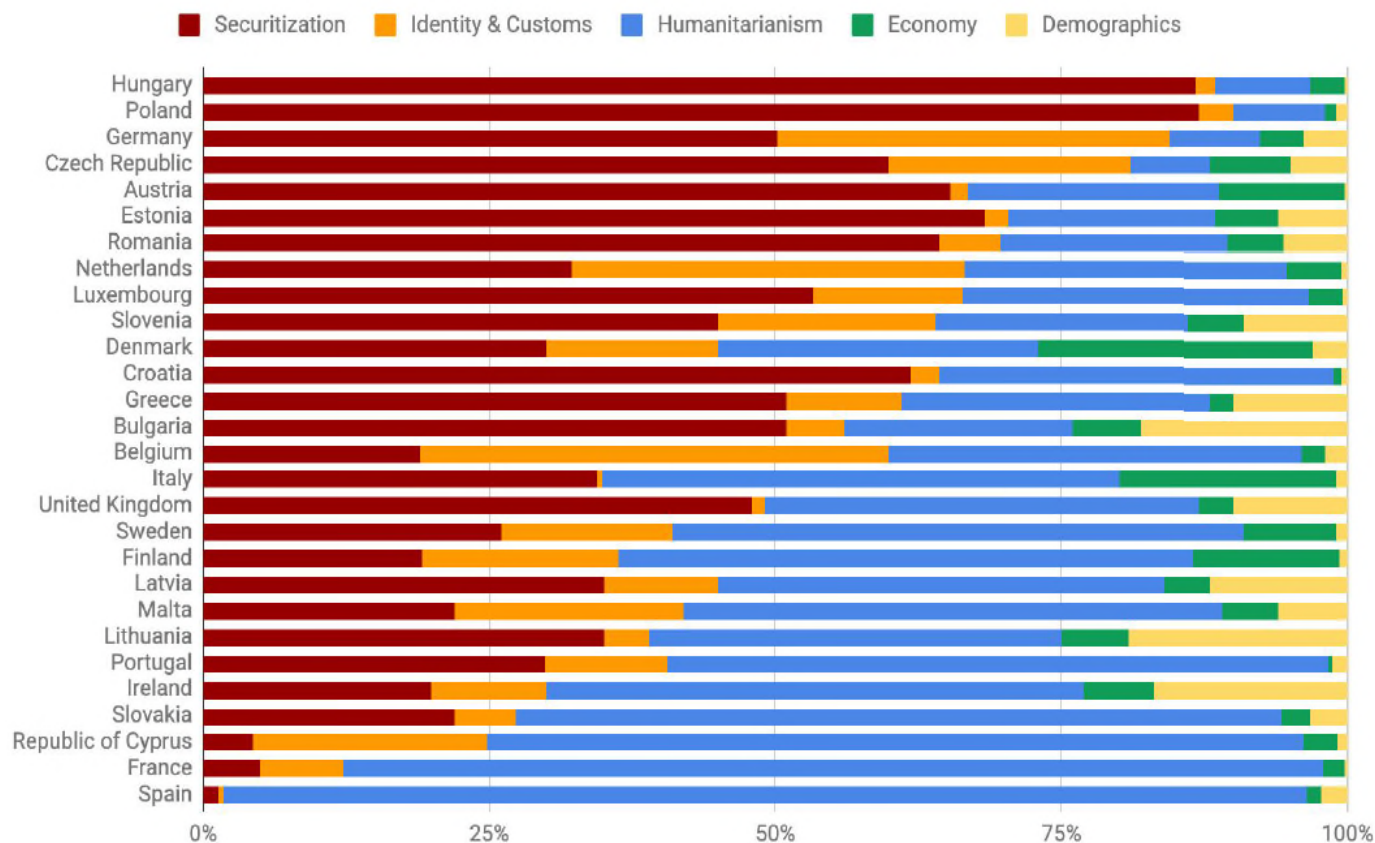
- But framing limitations: individuals' reactions depend more on their pre-existing values and political preferences than on the framing itself
- Mere frequency of news on immigration has negative impact regardless of the content
- Prolonged debates reinforce negative attitudes over the long-term & create pressure on migration policies and mainstream politicians
- Sustained salience of immigration in media and public debates despite decrease in arrivals, driven by politicians with mediatised events and political disagreements and thus perpetuating the narrative of chaos at Europe's borders

The influence of social media

- Overexposure and information overload: reinforcing effects for salience of migration in public opinion
- Polarisation effect as users selectively consume news that strengthen their biases and reinforces personal beliefs
- Cross-EU coordination of anti-immigrant actors to direct the conversation by using conspiratorial disinformation and negatively framed content
- Increasingly main source of news consumption (e.g. Greece 83%, Serbia 67%, Italy 61%, less than 50% in Western Europe)
- Media owners and political allies key drivers of anti-immigrant content esp. in Central European countries

The influence of social media

Social Media Migration Narratives: July 2017 to July 2018



Source: 2019 Bakamo Social

The influence of social media

- But: opportunities for improving public information and attitudes towards immigrants – e.g. respondents more likely to change their mind based on exposure to videos/photos evoking hardship or empathy, rather than based on news, direct contact with refugees or facts
- Refugee Welcome volunteers and activities organised through social media platforms, online campaigns and activities of migrant NGOs & petitions in support of migrants and refugees – potential role of local level
- E.g. “We Are a Welcoming Europe” European Citizens’ Initiative found that hopeful and positive stories of citizens being welcoming and compassionate achieved the best reach and engagement on social media

Thanks to Sarah for supporting the campaign and all those who are criminalised for acting in solidarity with migrants and refugees in Europe!
 It's time to ACT: sign the petition to tell our leaders #HelpIsNoCrime 🙌
https://www.wearawelcomingeurope.eu/en/sign_the_petition/



We are a welcoming Europe
 Published by Hootsuite [?] · January 18 · 🌐

Proactiva Open Arms: "If there are no more missions & no NGOs at sea, it doesn't mean that there will be no more deaths, but only that we will not know about them."
 !! Saving humans is our right & duty! 🙌 Sign the petition to demand our leaders to stop the criminalisation of solidarity 🇪🇺
https://www.wearawelcomingeurope.eu/en/sign_the_petition/

HELP! Published by Hind SH [?] · March 6 · 🌐

● Des bonnes nouvelles pour la solidarité ! Stéphan a finalement été relaxé en appel vendredi 1er mars 2019 par la cour d'appel de Patras !
 Malgré le soulagement intense, il est important de rappeler que ces poursuites ont fait perdre beaucoup de temps, d'énergie et parfois d'argent. Toutes ces procédures auraient pu être évitées si les autorités ne s'étaient pas lancées dans ces poursuites inutiles. Il est grand temps de mettre fin au délit de solidarité !



AFFECTED SPOKESPEOPLE



Initiative registered with European Commission

ABOUT NEWSLETTER CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES OUR PARTNERS

OUR VALUES ARE AT RISK:

LET'S RECLAIM A WELCOMING EUROPE

Spread the word, use the #WelcomingEurope

LET US HELP!

Sign this petition so we can get the 1 million signatures we need

welcoming Europe
 Hootsuite [?] · October 23, 2018 · 🌐

Mimmo Lucano signing our #WelcomingEurope Citizens' Initiative.

... a model of welcoming and integration, but now Mimmo is in jail in his hometown due to charges against his administration. ... solidarity with Mimmo and all the people who work and fight for human rights and humanity. Add your name to the Citizens' Initiative 🇪🇺 🙌
www.wearawelcomingeurope.eu/en/sign_the_petition/





How the Intercultural integration approach leads to a better quality of life in diverse cities

Migration Policy Group: Anne-Linde Joki and Alexander Wolffhardt with the support of Thomas Huddleston

Introduction

The Intercultural Cities Index (ICC) has been completed by 80+ cities and to what extent local authorities implement interculturalism. The full ICC questionnaire asks cities to learn from each other and to identify their strengths and weaknesses in their City Strategy. The impact of the ICC approach has also been positively seen in positive changes in the areas of education, culture, arts, sports and local participation. But how can ICC's local intercultural policies actually improve interculturalism? This key question, the Migration Policy Group has conducted a yearlong study on the reliability and usefulness of the ICC Index. This report identifies the links between national integration policies and local well-being.

Overall, this report confirms the reliability of a new core ICC Index for evaluating the links with local attitudes and well-being, improving local authorities' recommendations present the ICC secretariat and cities with new recommendations.

A new core ICC Index: the most reliable indicators of local integration. The Intercultural Cities network uses the full ICC questionnaire for the network. This long list of indicators allows for a thorough assessment of strategies for other ICC cities. But only the most reliable ICC indicators are needed for further work.

¹ Only a few studies have discussed the reliability of the ICC Index (Zapata-Barrero 2016) and several well-being outcomes (Balkbasel 2011 & Rubicondo 2016). However, these studies do not control for non-ICC cities and controls for the other factors.



n° 2015-02 October 2015

WORKING PAPERS

Integration policies and public opinion: in conflict or in harmony?

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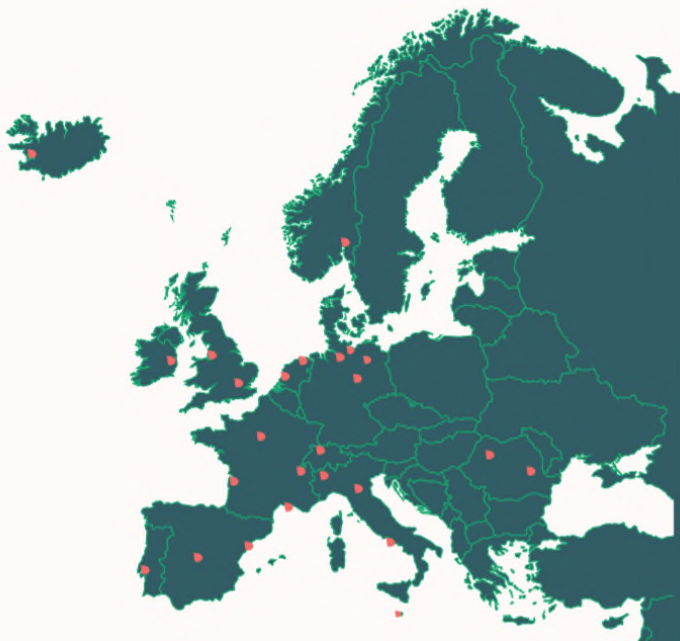
Is there a link between integration policies and public opinion?

Evidence from MIPEX & MPG's work for the Intercultural Cities Network



Local integration policies & public opinion

Multivariate analysis using 2015 EB Quality of Life in European Cities survey with 14 ICC cities & 11 non-ICC 'control' cities



CITIES COVERED BY THE STUDY:

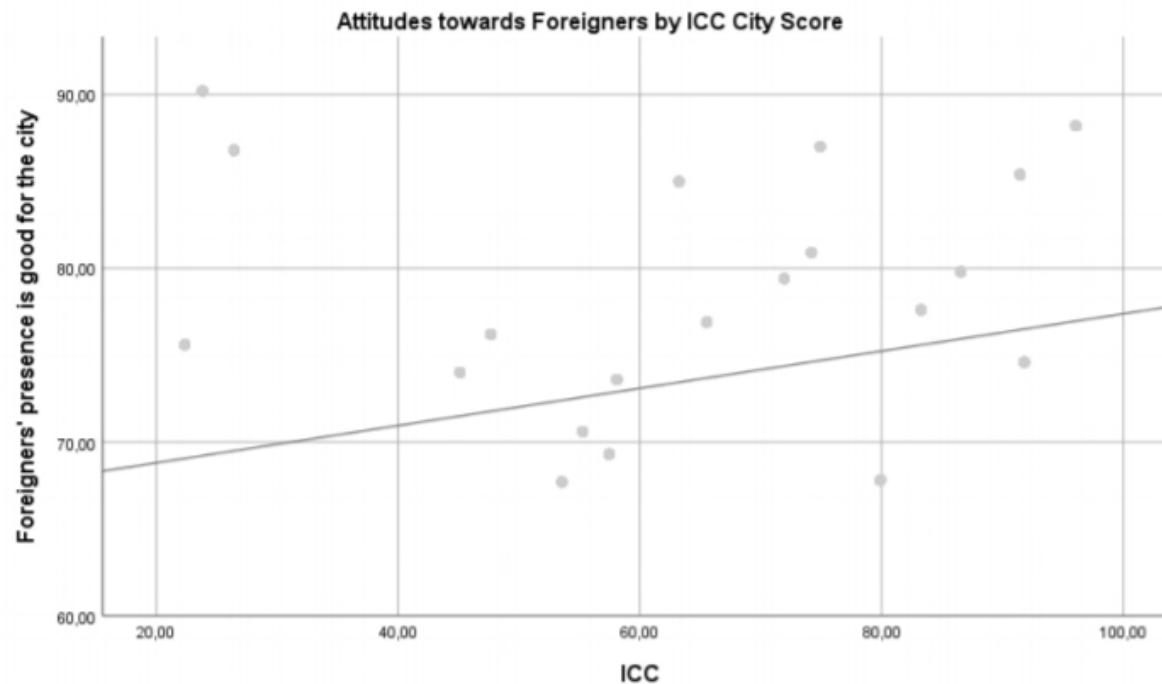
Barcelona, Bucharest, Dublin, Geneva, Hamburg, London Lewisham, Lisbon, Paris, Oslo, Reykjavik, Rotterdam, Turin, Valetta & Zurich, Amsterdam, Berlin, Bologna, Bordeaux, Cluj, Leipzig, Madrid, Manchester, Marseille, Naples & Rostock

14 reliable core ICC indicators under 5 dimensions:

- Mainstreaming interculturalism
- Public commitment to interculturalism
- Dedicated intercultural strategy and budget
- Intercultural competences
- The city as a catalyst for interculturalism and participation

Local integration policies & public opinion

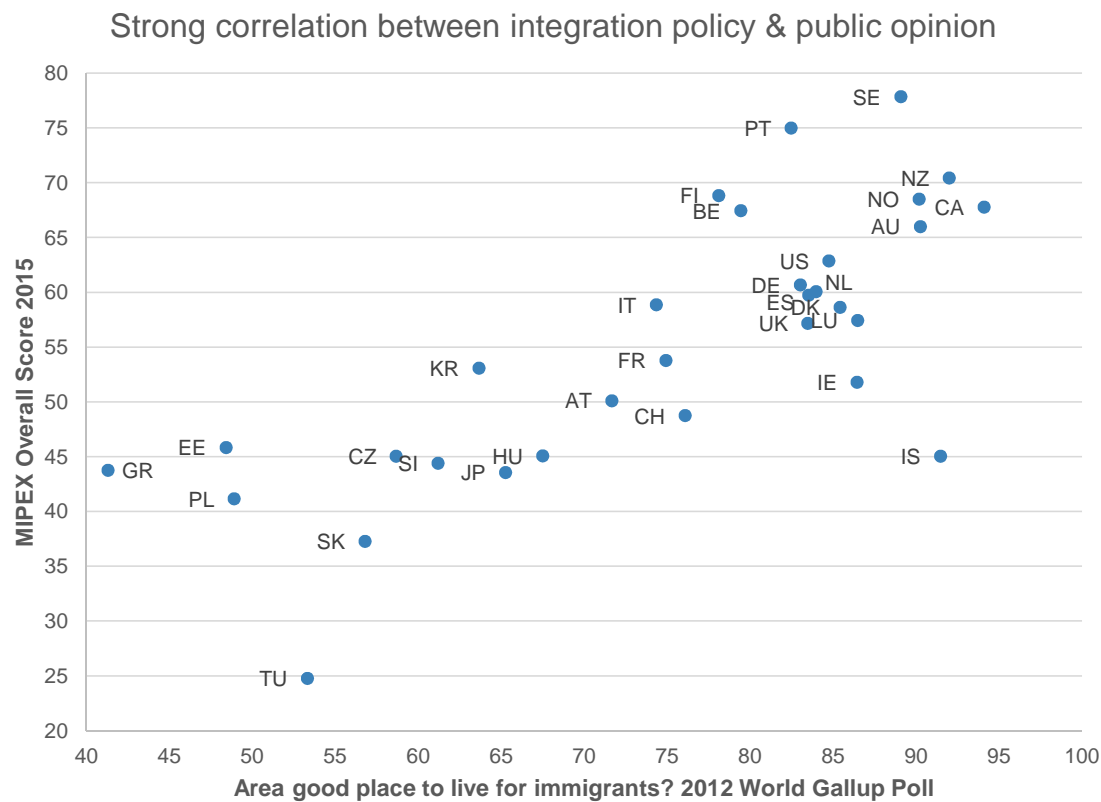
Chart 2: Correlation of core ICC Index & Attitudes to Foreigners



For example, a city scoring 100% on the core ICC Index could expect that around 80% of its residents will agree that immigrants' presence is good for the city

Local policies are a significant factors behind local well-being, even after controlling for key contextual & individual factors (*e.g. national integration policies, GDP, immigration, age, socio-economic status, family situation*)

National integration policies & public opinion



- National integration policies also strongly linked to public attitudes towards immigrants, even after controlling for other factors (Callens 2015)

- *Two-way dialectic*: policies & public opinion are inter-dependent

- Policies can shape **uninformed public opinion**, but **far-right's historic success** can reshape public opinion & policies for years to come



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