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# Does a Southern European Model of Migrant Integration Exist? A Comparative Longitudinal Study across 15 European Countries (2010-2019)

by Giacomo Solano and Irene Ponzio

## DOES A SOUTHERN EUROPEAN MODEL OF MIGRANT INTEGRATION EXIST? A COMPARATIVE LONGITUDINAL STUDY ACROSS 15 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES (2010-2019)

When it comes to migrant integration and related policies, Southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) are generally portrayed as falling behind other EU traditional immigration countries. In this article, we challenge these assumptions by analysing whether Southern European countries have different and less developed migrant integration policies compared to the other EU15 countries, and how they reacted to the 2008 Great Recession and the so-called 2014-2016 European refugee crisis. To this end, we employ the MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) dataset on migrant integration policies, including data for EU15 over the period 2010-2019. Our findings show that Southern European countries do not share a common model of integration. Furthermore, their integration policies are not systematically less developed or more fragile than those of the older immigration countries. Only Greece performs significantly worse than the rest of EU15, while Portugal appears to be one of the European countries with the most advanced integration policies. These are long-standing trends, as the situation of the analysed countries has not changed dramatically over the last 10 years (2010-2019), despite the 2008 Great Recession and the European refugee crisis. Overall, our findings reveal that, despite the lack of distinctive policy models around integration, integration policies of the Southern European states are not penalised by the absence of a public philosophy concerning migrant integration.

**KEYWORDS** *European Union, migration integration, migrant integration policy, MIPEX, Southern Europe.*

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## 1. Introduction

When it comes to migrant integration and related policies, Southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) are generally portrayed as falling behind the other traditional European immigration countries (Baganha 1997; Baldwin-Edwards 1997; Baldwin-Edwards and Arango 1999; King and Black 1997; King 2000; King and DeBono 2013; Peixoto *et al.* 2012). In this article, we challenge this idea following up on a previous contribution published in *Politiche Sociali* (Ponzo *et al.* 2015). In doing so, we relate to a (still thin) line of research that tries to challenge the idea that Southern European countries perform systematically worse than Northern and Western countries in terms of migrant inclusion, and argues that they cannot be regarded as a homogeneous cluster of countries (Baldwin-Edwards 2012; Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli 2015; Finotelli 2009; Finotelli and Ponzo 2018; Fellini 2018; Ponzo 2019).

Specifically, this paper aims to contribute to this debate by answering two questions:

*a)* Do Southern European countries share similar and less developed integration policies compared to the EU15<sup>1</sup>?

*b)* Did their integration policies turn out to be less resilient to the Great Recession of 2008 and the so-called European refugee crisis, thus revealing a higher degree of weakness and immaturity compared the other EU15 countries?

In formulating these questions, the article is conceived as complementary to that by Ponzo (2019), which answers the same questions by comparing Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece with Western European older immigration countries (i.e., UK, France, The Netherlands and Germany) during the Great Recession. She concluded that Southern European countries could not be regarded as «lame ducks» when it comes to integration of migrants. Whereas Ponzo's article focused on integration processes completely disregarding policies, our contribution looks at the flipside of the coin: It deals with integration policies while leaving aside integration processes. Moreover, given the availability of new data, we also look at the changes that occurred during the European refugee crisis, which started in 2014 and continued until 2016.

To answer the research questions, we employ novel data produced by the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), which includes information on integration policies for all the EU15 countries for the period 2010-2019

<sup>1</sup> EU15 countries are the countries that joined the EU before the enlargement in 2004. See here: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:European\\_Union\\_\(EU\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:European_Union_(EU)).

(Solano and Huddleston 2020). The use of quantitative indicators to compare policies is common in cross-country research on policy frameworks (Bjerre *et al.* 2015; Helbling and Solano 2021; Goodman 2015; Solano and Huddleston 2021). Yet, systematic comparative analyses of EU countries' integration policies are scant (Bjerre *et al.* 2015; Solano and Huddleston 2021). MIPEX, besides being recognised as one of the most reliable sets of indicators in the field of integration policy (JRC 2017), offers the possibility of contrasting the Southern European countries with the other EU15 countries over 10 years.

In what follows, we first illustrate the theoretical approach of this paper and then the methodology at the base of MIPEX. We then show the results of a comparison between Southern European countries' and the other EU15 countries' integration policies. Subsequently, we repeat this comparison by analysing trends over time with a specific focus on two unique contingencies, i.e., the Great Recession and the European refugee crisis, with the aim of testing the resilience and maturity of their integration policies. Finally, we draw some concluding remarks on Southern European countries' integration policies compared to the other EU15 countries.

## 2. The Southern European integration policies in the literature

The Southern European migration model is a line of thinking which started to develop in the 1990s and re-emerged in the mid-2000s. This branch of literature has generally paid greater attention to flow regulation rather than to migrant integration, and has generally highlighted negative traits such as the lack of efficient recruitment schemes, the predominance of labour-led immigration flows with a high volume of undocumented migration, and the recurrent regularisation programmes (Baganha 1997; Baldwin-Edwards 1997; King and Black 1997; Baldwin-Edwards and Arango 1999; King 2000; Venturini 2001; Baldwin-Edwards and Kraler 2009; Gonzales Enriquez and Triandafyllidou 2009; Peixoto *et al.* 2012; King and DeBono 2013).

Finotelli (2009) was among the first scholars to offer a different perspective and contest the idea of a North-South divide. By comparing Germany and Italy, she maintains that differences are due to the fact that immigration policies cannot be disentangled from countries' system of controls, inclusion mechanisms, and socio-economic contexts. Specifically, she argues that asylum and non-refoulement rules in Germany and regularisation processes in Italy have acted as «functional equivalents»: They have allowed for the legal inclusion of formally unwanted migrants through different mechanisms. Hence, she calls for a revision of the «North-South myth».

When it comes to migrant integration policies, which are the specific focus of our contribution, the literature is less keen to identify a Southern European model like the one pointed out around immigration policies. Instead, Southern European countries have been implicitly blamed for the lack of clear rationales for their integration policies in the context of the long-standing dominance of the so-called «integration models». Traditionally literature has identified three main models in EU15 countries (Ambrosini 2020; Brubaker 1992; Bertossi 2011; Zanfrini 2007): France representing the ideal type of the «assimilationist model» based on abstract universalism and colour-blind approach to ethnicity and race (Schnapper 1998); The Netherlands and the UK exemplifying the «multiculturalist model» aimed at promoting group-based identities (Garbaye 2005; Giugni *et al.* 2005; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007); and Germany following an «ethnic model» based on an ethnocultural conception of national identity (Brubaker 1992; Haas *et al.* 2020). Against these ideal types, Southern European countries have been regarded as a sort of residual cluster with a dominant *laissez-faire* approach.

An effort to contrast this idea has been made by Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli (2015) who tried to empirically ground the theoretical debate on integration models and bring in Southern European countries where no explicit choice of integration models has been made and whose integration policies are thus not embedded in an established integration philosophy. According to their results, there is no relevant correlation between policy outcomes in terms of education performance and labour-market integration, on one hand, and different integration models, on the other hand. They argue that migrants' performance in «old» immigration countries with well-established integration models may be even worse than the migrants' performance in «new» immigration countries that lack a clear integration ideology to refer to.

Nevertheless, the different pieces of research that have tried to single out the characteristics of Southern Europe generally converged in identifying some common malfunctioning traits of its integration policies. The most investigated component in this literature is probably the labour segregation of migrants. This is mainly related to the poor regulation of the labour market and the consequent centrality of ethnic networks for jobseeking, and the sizable irregular economy that hampers foreign workers' access to non-manual jobs and protection of their rights (Ambrosini 2001; Ribas-Mateos 2004; Fullin and Reyneri 2011; Arango 2012; Ambrosini 2013a; Venturini and Villosio 2018). The migrants' role as cheap labour, partially supported by laws, seems to foster their social exclusion and racialization (Calavita 2005; Ambrosini 2013b). Social inequalities generated by the market are hardly mitigated by the Mediterranean welfare systems which offer weak provisions (Andreotti *et al.* 2001; Campomori and Caponio

2015; Ferrera 1996; Ribas-Mateos 2004; Peixoto *et al.* 2012), even though legal migrants are formally incorporated into the mainstream health, housing and welfare schemes on an equal footing with natives (Triandafyllidou 2009). Finally, the literature highlights how citizenship laws mirror the long history of emigration of Southern European countries so that they tend to provide easy access to nationality for ethnic descendants whereas they fall short in naturalising descendants of migrants (Zincone 2006; Triandafyllidou 2009). The difficult access to nationality has a direct impact on migrants' political participation and representation, which has traditionally been limited (Triandafyllidou 2009). Those traits of Southern European countries will be considered and assessed in our analysis as well. To do so, we will investigate both integration policies as a whole and the different key policy areas.

Against this backdrop, our aim is to contribute to this literature by providing fresh and updated empirical materials that allow us to check whether and how Southern European integration policies have evolved in the last decade and assess those policies from a comparative perspective.

### 3. Methodology: the MIPEX dataset

The data on which this article is based have been collected in the context of the 2020 edition of the long-standing Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) project (see Solano and Huddleston 2020 and [mipex.eu](http://mipex.eu))<sup>2</sup>. MIPEX is a tool which measures national-level integration policies, namely policies to integrate migrants defined as born abroad and not having citizenship in the country of immigration. The 2020 version scored policies to integrate migrants in 52 countries across five continents, including all EU Member States (and the UK).

In MIPEX, integration is conceived as equal opportunities for all, i.e., migrants should have equal opportunities compared to nationals (Niessen and Huddleston 2009). Following this approach, MIPEX indicators address the extent to which policies offer migrants equal access to rights and opportunities (e.g., equal rights to employment). At the same time, they consider the existence of targeted measures (for example, specific measures to favour migrants' integration into the labour market): When equality is hampered by additional and specific obstacles for migrants compared to the national population, the state can strive to remove obstacles with ad-hoc policies (Niessen and Huddleston 2009)<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The full data are available here: [https://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/pdf/Policy%20Indicators%20Scores%20\(2007-2019\)%20%E2%80%93%20core%20set%20of%20indicators.xlsx](https://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/pdf/Policy%20Indicators%20Scores%20(2007-2019)%20%E2%80%93%20core%20set%20of%20indicators.xlsx)

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.mipex.eu/methodology>.

Although MIPEX analyses the policies as formulated in laws and programmes rather than their implementation or their efficacy (their ability to achieve their goals), it offers a unique dataset of integration policies in terms of pool of countries and stability of indicators over time (Michalowski and van Oers 2012; JRC 2017). On this backdrop, our aim is to exploit the possibility of a wide cross-country comparison in order to test the supposed underdevelopment of Southern European countries' integration policies in comparison to older immigration countries.

MIPEX consists of a set of indicators on several policy areas that are then aggregated into a summary score for each area. Specifically, MIPEX scores are based on a set of 58 indicators covering the following policy areas (Solano and Huddleston 2020): Labour market mobility, family reunification, education, political participation, permanent residence, access to nationality, and antidiscrimination<sup>4</sup>. For each indicator, there is a set of options with associated values (from 0 to 100). The maximum of 100 is awarded when policies meet the highest standards for equal treatment. Within the policy areas, the indicator scores are averaged to result in a score for each of the policy areas per country which, averaged together one more time, result in the overall scores for each country.

To collect the data, the research team prepared a standardized questionnaire consisting of questions (indicators) on different policy areas. In each of the countries included, at least one expert completed the questionnaire for his/her country by carrying out desk research and, when necessary, conducting interviews with practitioners. The central research team of MIPEX checked all the scores against reports and other policy analyses, assessing the reliability of the answers and, when necessary, returned to the experts to ask for further information and clarifications. This process allowed for the collection of detailed and reliable information as well as comparable data on the considered countries.

In this article we limit the analysis to the decade 2010-2019 and to the EU15 countries, i.e., Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. We will focus on the EU15 since existing literature suggests that Southern European countries' integration policies are less developed than those of Western and Northern Europe, as illustrated above, rather than of Eastern European countries that belong to the EU28. This set of data allows us to answer to the article's research questions. First, we will be able to draw conclusions on the differences between Southern European countries and the other EU15 countries. Second, the analysis of the period 2010-2019

<sup>4</sup> MIPEX also covers health policy, but this is not included as data on this do not cover the years addressed.

will contribute not only to disentangling the trends over the last 10 years but also shed light on the effect of the 2008 economic crisis (the Great Recession) that affected Europe starting mainly in 2010 (European Commission 2014; Junankar 2011) and of the 2014-2016 European refugee crisis.

In the following sections, we illustrate the results of the analysis of integration policies in the EU15. We first compare Southern European countries with the other EU15 countries concerning the state of their integration policies in 2019. We then illustrate the development of these policies over the last 10 years (2010-2019), with a focus on the changes following the 2008 Great Recession and the refugee crisis.

#### 4. Do Southern European countries share similar and less developed integration policies?

This section addresses the first research question of this article, namely whether Southern European countries share similar and less developed integration policies compared to the other EU15 countries.

Our results show that Southern European countries' integration policies are far from being homogeneous. In fact, the scores of integration policies in the four southern European countries considered vary considerably (see Figure 1 and Chart 1). Portugal is the regional leader with the most inclusive policies (84/100), while Greece has the least developed policies for migrants (46). Policies in Italy (55) and Spain (57) have a similar degree of development.

Moreover, their policies, considered as a whole, do not appear worse than those adopted in the rest of Europe. By and large, policies in Southern European countries are as developed as in Northern and Western European countries (Figure 1). Italy (55/100) and Spain (57) have scores that are similar to those of France (55) and Germany (58), for example. Among Southern European countries, only Greece (46) has policies that are considerably less developed than the average EU15 country (average score: 57/100). Yet, Greece's score is higher than that of Austria (41) and similar to Denmark's score (48). In contrast, Portugal has highly developed integration policies (84), which are in line with the Scandinavian countries renowned for their advanced integration policies (Finland and Sweden, 87). The most advanced Western European country (Belgium) falls behind Portugal by 15 points. Paradoxically, Southern Europe encompasses one of the worst and one of the best EU15 countries with regard to migrant integration policies.

The investigation of the reasons for this surprising result goes beyond the scope of this article, especially when we consider that factors able to influence integration policies are many, e.g., nation-building dynamics; history





Fig. 1. MIPEX scores in 2019 (overall scores).

*Note: the darker the shade is, the higher the MIPEX score is.*

of immigration and emigration; welfare and economic patterns and developments; type, share and growth rate of migrants; politics; public opinion on migration (see for example: Brubaker 2002; De Conink *et al.* 2021; De Haas and Natter 2015; Koopmans *et al.* 2012; Koopmans and Michalowski 2017). Against this backdrop, the underdevelopment of integration policies in Greece has been generally understood as the result of a monocultural and monoreligious (prevailing Orthodox Church) national self-understanding (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2009) that dated back to Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire and persisted over time in Greek citizenship law and policy (Anagnostou 2011). By contrast, the literature has stressed the relatively inclusive and cosmopolitan concept of nationhood that prevails in Portugal (Joppke 2005), commonly thought to be the product of past history, from colonial and post-colonial experiences to the domination of the Moors

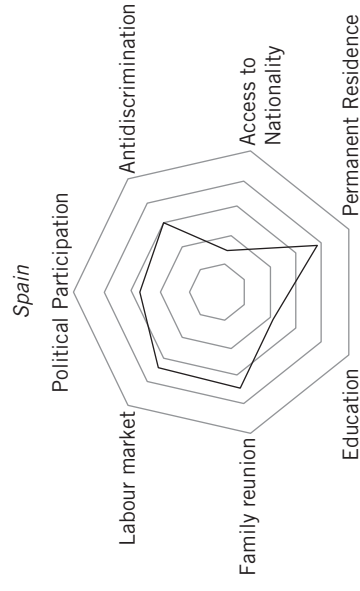
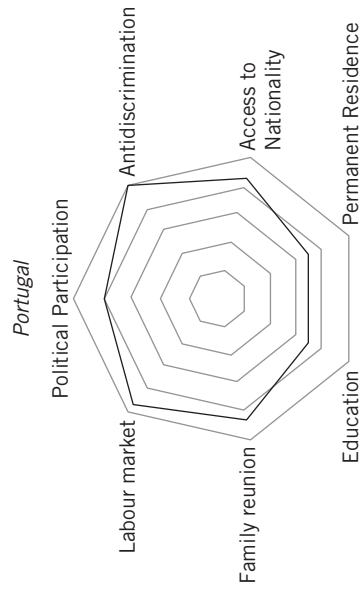
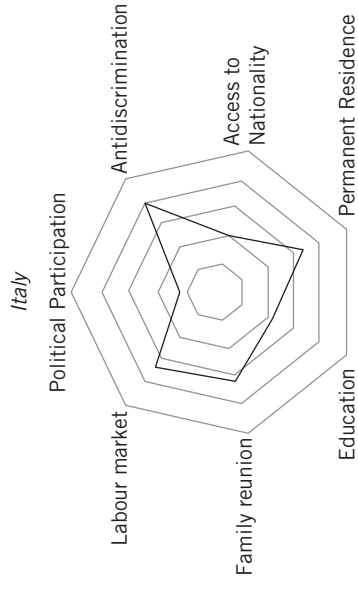
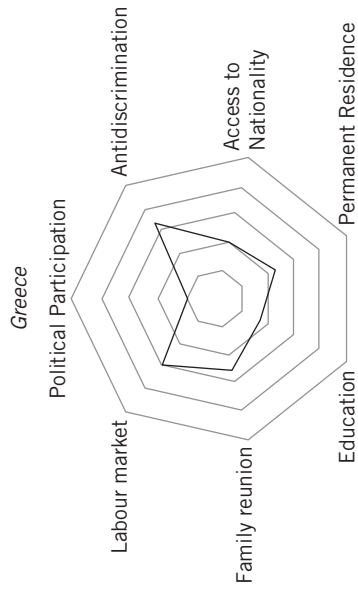


Fig. 2. MIPEx scores for each policy area in 2019: Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

Tab. 1. MIPEX scores in 2019

| Country | Political Participation | Antidiscrimination | Access to Nationality | Permanent Residence | Education | Family reunion | Labour market | Overall score |
|---------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| EU15    | 60                      | 85                 | 61                    | 58                  | 52        | 48             | 65            | 57            |
| GR      | 20                      | 67                 | 40                    | 46                  | 36        | 52             | 61            | 46            |
| IT      | 25                      | 78                 | 40                    | 67                  | 43        | 64             | 67            | 55            |
| PT      | 80                      | 100                | 86                    | 71                  | 69        | 87             | 94            | 84            |
| ES      | 55                      | 59                 | 30                    | 75                  | 43        | 69             | 67            | 57            |
| AT      | 20                      | 53                 | 13                    | 50                  | 52        | 36             | 59            | 41            |
| BE      | 65                      | 100                | 65                    | 75                  | 74        | 48             | 56            | 69            |
| FR      | 45                      | 79                 | 70                    | 58                  | 36        | 43             | 52            | 55            |
| DE      | 60                      | 70                 | 42                    | 54                  | 55        | 42             | 81            | 58            |
| IE      | 85                      | 94                 | 79                    | 50                  | 45        | 48             | 22            | 61            |
| LU      | 85                      | 89                 | 79                    | 58                  | 64        | 52             | 35            | 66            |
| NL      | 50                      | 85                 | 55                    | 52                  | 57        | 31             | 65            | 56            |
| UK      | 45                      | 94                 | 61                    | 58                  | 40        | 29             | 48            | 54            |
| DK      | 70                      | 51                 | 41                    | 42                  | 45        | 25             | 65            | 48            |
| FI      | 95                      | 100                | 74                    | 96                  | 88        | 67             | 91            | 87            |
| SE      | 80                      | 100                | 83                    | 90                  | 93        | 71             | 91            | 87            |

that brought about a different significance of the darkness of skin colour and more blurred «colour lines» (Shibutani and Kwan 1965). Still presently, public opinion towards migration and migrants in the Lusophone country has been much more positive and in the Hellenic country much more negative than any other Southern European country (European Commission 2018; Ponzo *et al.* 2015), generating different kinds of pressure on policy-making. Furthermore, recent exceptional political or economic circumstances may provide some explanation of their diverging trajectories with regard to integration policies. For instance, Portugal's inclusive agenda has been strongly pursued by the Social Democratic and Socialist governments that led the country in the last 20 years<sup>5</sup>. Greece's restrictive turn occurred during the Great Recession could be partially explained by the worst and fastest deterioration of the economic situation registered in Southern Europe that increased the perceived competition between natives and migrants over welfare and economic resources.

Going into more detail and analysing the different policy areas (Table 1 and Figure 2, see Appendix A for details), the data confirm that the integration policies of Southern Europe are far from being homogeneous and do not appear systematically worse than those of the rest of EU15.

The radar diagrams in Figure 2 highlight some of Southern Europe's key internal differences. Spain's and Italy's radars differ in the centre-top part, mainly due to the difference in the political participation score, and in the top-right part, because of different antidiscrimination policies. Contrary to Italy, migrants in Spain are regularly consulted and have the right to vote in local elections, although only those whose country has a reciprocity agreement with Spain. On the other hand, Italy has more developed and inclusive antidiscrimination policies since there victims of nationality-based discrimination are protected in all areas of life, whereas in Spain this applies to a limited extent. Although the shape of Greece's radar resembles the Italian one, it is much smaller than the latter, since the Hellenic country scores lower than Italy in all of the policy areas except for access to nationality where both countries show rather restrictive policies. On the contrary, Portugal's radar is the largest one among Southern European countries and has a round shape because of its advanced integration policies in almost all of the policy areas.

Table 1 allows us to compare Southern European countries with the rest of the EU15. The scores confirm the impressive performance of Portugal that has the most developed policies in the EU15 in four out of the seven policy areas considered (labour market, family reunion, antidiscrimination and

<sup>5</sup> More critical scholars read migrants' relatively extensive rights in Portugal as formal social compensation for the substantial importation of workers, mostly for supplying the unskilled labour market, largely involving irregular status and *de facto* exploitation (Malheiros 2012).

access to nationality). Leaving the Lusophone country aside, Table 1 shows both good and bad performances in the other Southern European states when compared to the EU15.

Specifically, in Southern European countries rather positive scores are registered in the area of employment. Migrants have equal access to employment, self-employment and general employment support. Only the Scandinavian countries (91) and Germany (81) perform better than Italy (67) and Spain (67), while Greece shows lower but nonetheless fairly good scores (61). This is consistent with the long-standing prevalence in Southern Europe of labour migration over rights-based migration and the legitimation of immigration through its economic contribution (Finotelli 2009; Finotelli and Sciortino 2009; Pastore 2014; Pastore and Villosio 2012).

In Southern European countries, migrants (and their children) have equal access to compulsory and non-compulsory school. However, they do not receive any support at school to access higher education and schools, and teachers are not supported in dealing with migrants' needs. As a result, Italy (43), Spain (43) and Greece (36) score worse than the EU15 average (52).

As suggested by the literature (Zincone 2006; Triandafyllidou 2009; Anagnostou 2011), Southern European countries' past history of emigration still has consequences on the nationality laws that continue to be rather restrictive compared to the other EU15 countries (average score: 61). For example, while in most EU countries migrants face a wait of a maximum of five years for naturalisation, in Greece, Italy and Spain migrants need to wait at least 10 years. Furthermore, those countries do not provide automatic (either unconditional or conditional) citizenship to the migrants' children born in the country.

Nevertheless, as suggested by previous research (Finotelli *et al.* 2018), in Italy and Spain those constraints are partially compensated by the rather developed policies on permanent residence which can provide a secure status even without citizenship. In those countries, five years' residence, with limited time abroad, is required to be eligible for permanent/long-term residence<sup>6</sup>. Long-term residents are relatively secure in their status since they have an unlimited or automatically renewed permit, whereas in many other EU15 countries the permit lasts only five years and needs to be renewed upon application. In this regard, Greece shows a less favourable situation than the other Mediterranean countries: Migrants are eligible after five years of residence, but they are likely deterred from becoming long-term residents by Greece's restrictive language and economic requirements.

<sup>6</sup> In many countries, permanent residence takes the form of a long-term permit, as the duration of status is limited to a certain number of years, rather than remaining indefinite.

Consistent with the outdated idea of «nation» mirrored in their nationality laws, political participation remains a poorly developed policy area in Italy (25) and Greece (20) where achievements appear particularly disappointing vis-à-vis the whole EU15 (average score: 60). Those countries' main weaknesses are the major restrictions (or no right) to (local) voting and weak support provided to migrants and migrant-led associations in order to participate in the country's political life. As already illustrated, in Spain (55) the situation is slightly better since migrants are regularly consulted and have the right to vote in local elections, although with the aforementioned limitations.

Concern about family unit, characterising the Catholic culture and mirrored in citizenship laws (Zincone and Basili 2010), partially explains the good scores on family reunification of Italy (64) and Spain (69) compared to the EU15 as a whole (average score: 48). In these countries, policies allow migrants to reunite with family members after a maximum of one year and reunited migrants enjoy a stable status with near-equal rights. Reunited migrants have the right to an autonomous residence permit after three years (or less). This is not the case in other EU15 countries. For example, many restrictive eligibility requirements (e.g., economic, accommodation and language requirements) make most families unable to reunite and integrate in Austria (36) and Denmark (25). In the Netherlands (31) families meeting the legal requirements are only slightly secure in their future in the country as the laws specify many grounds for withdrawing or refusing to renew status: few personal circumstances are considered and there is no automatic right to an autonomous residence permit after some years (reunited migrants need to pass a test).

Finally, Spain (59), Italy (78) and Greece (67) have fairly developed policies on antidiscrimination which nevertheless turn out to be less advanced than in the rest of the EU15 (average score: 85). This is probably because antidiscrimination legislation was introduced rather late in Southern Europe, mainly in response to EU legislation (Bilger *et al.* 2004). Southern European countries' main pitfalls concern citizenship as an unrecognised ground for discrimination (Greece and Spain), the limited power of their equality bodies (Italy and Spain) and poor positive action measures (Italy and, to a lesser extent, Greece and Spain).

All in all, although the key elements highlighted in the literature on Southern Europe are still there to a certain extent, they do not appear as extremely penalizing when compared to the rest of the EU15 so these group of countries cannot be regarded as «lame ducks» (see Ponzo 2019).

## 5. Did Southern European countries' integration policies perform worse during the Great Recession and the European refugee crisis?

This section focuses on the long-term trends by looking at policy variation over 10 years (2010-2019). It addresses the second research question of this article, namely whether Southern European countries' integration policies were less resilient to the Great Recession of 2008 and the European refugee crisis (2014-2016). In this analysis, we understand resilience as the ability to avoid shifting towards more restrictive integration policies to deal with the challenges posed by a crisis. This is a relevant question given that recent scholarly literature (e.g., Hollifield 2021) suggests that events such as economic crises and high inflows of refugees may have led not only to further stagnation in integration policies but also to an outright backlash towards a more restrictive direction.

As we will see in this section, this is not supported by our findings for the EU15 countries and, in particular, Southern European countries which were disproportionately hit by the two crises. Overall, the longitudinal data show that integration policies have been fluctuating in most of the countries (Figures 3 and 4, see also Appendix B for yearly scores and a graphical representation of each country's trends). At the same time, these changes have not dramatically modified the level of policies in the EU15. In the period 2010-2019, the average EU15 country improved its policies by +3 points (average of the EU15 countries, see Chart 2). In Southern Europe, Portugal (+3) and Spain (+4) followed the EU15 trend, whereas Italy kept almost the same policies (+1). Greece was the only Southern European country whose policies deteriorated in the last 10 years (-2 points). Among the other EU15 countries, Luxembourg (+12) and Finland (+7) are the countries that improved their policies the most, while Belgium (-5), the Netherlands (-11) and the UK (-12) were the only countries that made their policies less inclusive for migrants in the same timeframe.

The restrictive changes that occurred in the period 2010-2019 concerned different policy areas in Southern European and the other EU15 countries. In the Southern European countries, Greece (twice) and Italy introduced restrictive changes to access to nationality, while only Spain restricted its family reunion policies. By contrast, in the other EU15 countries, restrictive changes concerned mainly family reunion and, to a lesser extent, labour market mobility.

Inclusive changes were introduced in all the policy areas considered: More frequently on labour market integration and education and less frequently on permanent residence than on the other areas. Southern European

Tab. 2. Policy change: MIPEX scores in 2010, 2014 and 2019

| Country        | MIPEX<br>score<br>(2010) | MIPE<br>score<br>(2014) | MIPEX<br>score<br>(2019) | Change<br>(2010-2014) | Change<br>(2014-2019) | Change<br>(2010-2019) |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| EU15 (median)  | 55                       | 56                      | 57                       | 1                     | 0                     | 3                     |
| Greece         | 48                       | 46                      | 46                       | -2                    | 0                     | -2                    |
| Italy          | 54                       | 55                      | 55                       | 1                     | 0                     | 1                     |
| Portugal       | 81                       | 81                      | 84                       | 0                     | 3                     | 3                     |
| Spain          | 53                       | 55                      | 57                       | 2                     | 2                     | 4                     |
| Austria        | 40                       | 41                      | 41                       | 1                     | 0                     | 1                     |
| Belgium        | 74                       | 70                      | 69                       | -4                    |                       | -5                    |
| France         | 52                       | 52                      | 55                       | 0                     | 3                     | 3                     |
| Germany        | 55                       | 57                      | 58                       | 2                     | 1                     | 3                     |
| Ireland        | 57                       | 56                      | 61                       |                       | 5                     | 4                     |
| Luxembourg     | 54                       | 56                      | 66                       | 2                     | 10                    | 12                    |
| Netherlands    | 67                       | 56                      | 56                       | -11                   | 0                     | -11                   |
| United Kingdom | 66                       | 54                      | 54                       | -12                   | 0                     | -12                   |
| Denmark        | 43                       | 52                      | 48                       | 9                     | -4                    | 5                     |
| Finland        | 80                       | 84                      | 87                       | 4                     | 3                     | 7                     |
| Sweden         | 86                       | 87                      | 87                       | 1                     | 0                     | 1                     |

countries introduced changes mainly on labour market inclusion (Greece and Italy) and access to nationality (all the four countries), while changes in the other EU15 countries concerned mainly the labour market, education (almost all countries), family reunion and political participation. The fact that inclusive and restrictive changes occurred in all of the policy areas confirms the fluctuation of policies in most of the countries.

Since the 2008 Great Recession affected Southern European countries more than the other EU15 countries (European Commission 2014), one could expect that policies would have been restricted more in the former compared to the latter. Looking at its effect (Table 2, Figures 3 and 4), this is not fully confirmed. On the one hand, policies have become more restrictive in only four out of the 11 other EU15 countries (Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK), while policies deteriorated immediately after 2010 in all Southern European countries with the exception of Portugal: Policies initially deteriorated in Greece (between 2012 and 2013, -5), Italy (2010-2011, -1) and Spain (2011-2013, -3). On the other hand, Italy and Spain immediately compensated with their restrictive changes, and then made their policies more inclusive in 2014 compared to 2010 (by +1 and +2 points, respectively). In contrast, in the period immediately after the Great Recession, the Netherlands (-11) and the UK (-12) made their policies much more restrictive than Greece, Italy and Spain, and they never went back to their pre-crisis level. Indeed, if comparing 2010 and 2014 scores, only Greece's policies deteriorated in Southern Europe (1/4 countries, i.e., 25%), while four countries (Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands and the



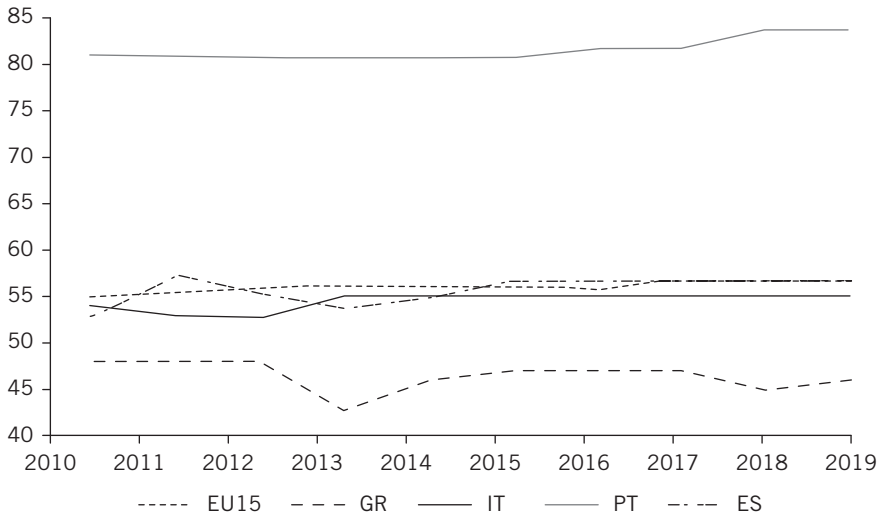


Fig. 3. Policy change (2010-2019): Southern European countries.

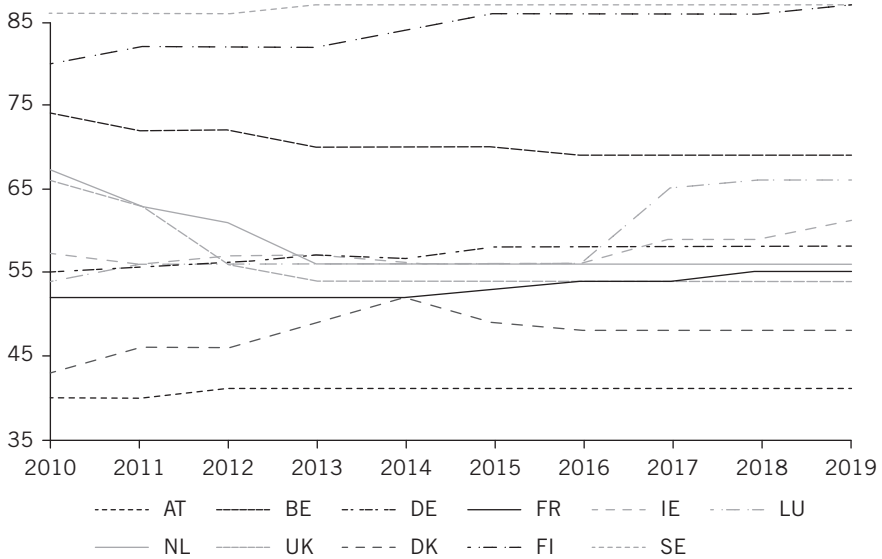


Fig. 4. Policy change (2010-2019): other EU15 countries.

UK) made their policies more restrictive among the other EU15 countries (4/11, i.e., 36%).

Shifting to the European refugee crisis, Eurostat data show that most of the countries experienced a peak in asylum applications in 2015. Looking at the

effect of the migration crisis (Table 2, Figures 3 and 4), it seems that, by and large, this influenced integration policies to a limited extent. The changes in the period 2014-2019 are spread rather homogeneously across the years, rather than being concentrated right after 2015. This holds true for both Southern European countries and the other EU15 countries. Moreover, those changes did not bring about a general deterioration of integration policies. On one hand, the increase in the asylum applications did not produce a restrictive turn in Europe, as only Belgium (-1) and Denmark (-4) adopted more restrictive policies in the period 2014-2019<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, many countries passed more inclusive policies in that period of time: Portugal (+3) and Spain (+2) in Southern Europe; among the other EU15 countries, Finland (+3), France (+3), Germany (+1), Ireland (+5) and Luxembourg (+10).

Looking at the yearly changes in Southern European countries (see also Appendix B), policies became slightly more inclusive in Greece in 2015 and then deteriorated in 2018. In 2019, Greece's policy score returned to the 2014 level. By contrast, Portugal introduced inclusive changes in policies in both 2016 and 2018. Spain did the same in 2015 and no other changes followed.

Overall, Southern European countries' integration policies have not all developed in the same way: Italy and Spain went through rather similar trajectories, while Portugal and Greece show opposite paths. Also, when reacting to the 2008 Great Recession, Southern European countries did not display fully homogeneous policy responses. Nevertheless, common trends emerge: On the short term their integration policies turned out to be less resilient compared to those of the other EU15 – or their reaction was commensurate to the harsher effects of the economic crisis – but they soon recovered. Furthermore, Southern European countries, like the other EU15 countries, have, by and large, not restricted their policies during the years following the refugee crisis.

More generally, the results reveal that similarities and differences among the EU15 countries date back at least 10 years, and the changes introduced in the last decade have not dramatically changed the policy situation of the EU15 countries. Southern European countries' historical paths of integration policy follow this same pattern and are not distinct from the other EU15 countries. This shared stability suggests that they do not have less mature integration policy frameworks.

<sup>7</sup> Belgium introduced restrictive changes in 2016, while Denmark did so in both 2015 and 2016.

## 6. Conclusions

This article contributes to the literature challenging the assumption that Southern European countries have rather homogeneous and worse modes of integration compared to traditional countries of immigration (other EU15 countries). By employing MIPEX data on integration policies (2010-2019), we compared Southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) with the other EU15 countries, including the older and traditional countries of immigration (e.g., France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK).

By looking at integration processes, Ponzo (2019) showed that Southern European countries differ substantially and are not systematically more fragile than those of Northern and Western Europe. We added a new piece of information to her analysis by looking at integration policies. In line with her results, this article's findings demonstrated that Southern European countries have neither similar nor worse integration policy compared to other EU15 countries. First, Southern European countries do not share a common model of integration. Second, Southern European countries do not have less developed integration policies, compared to the other EU15 countries.

Portugal's and Greece's integration policies are located at the two poles of the continuum. Portugal shows one of the most developed integration policy frameworks among EU15 countries, with highly inclusive policies on labour market, family reunion, access to nationality and antidiscrimination. By contrast, Greece has one of the most underdeveloped policy frameworks, in particular concerning education, access to nationality and political participation policies. The degree of development of integration policies in Spain and Italy is somewhat similar albeit with some differences. They both show advanced labour market and family reunion policies while having similarly restrictive policies on education. They differ with regard to political participation (with more inclusive measures in Spain) and antidiscrimination policies (more advanced in Italy). In general, integration policies in Italy and Spain do not appear less developed than those in the oldest immigration countries (i.e., France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK).

These are long-standing trends, as the situation of the analysed countries has not changed dramatically over the last 10 years (2010-2019), despite the 2008 Great Recession and the European refugee crisis. Greece, Italy and Spain – as well as Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK – went through a restrictive turn in integration policies in the years immediately after the outset of the economic crisis in 2008. However, Italy and Spain quickly introduced additional inclusive changes so that their overall policy frameworks did not deteriorate over the last decade. Furthermore, neither Southern European nor the other EU15 countries restricted their policies as a reaction to the European refugee crisis. This general stability in Southern

European countries, except for Greece, seems to suggest a relative maturity of their integration policies.

Overall, our findings complement the conclusions of Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli (2015): They argue that, despite the lack of distinctive policy models around integration, migrants' integration outcomes in «new» immigration countries, namely Southern European states, are not worse than those in «old» immigration countries. We add that integration policies of the those «new» immigration countries appear neither worse than in the rest of EU15 nor are they penalised by the absence of a public philosophy concerning migrant integration.

Our findings could be enriched by empirical comparative evidence on policy implementation which may greatly differ from the policies on paper. This would provide a deeper insight into European countries' strategies and practices around migrant integration. Furthermore, additional empirical comparative research is also needed to understand the relationship between integration policies and migrant integration outcomes. Although some works suggest that a relationship does exist, the evidence is still mixed (Bilgili, Huddleston and Joki 2015; Solano, Yilmaz, Huddleston 2022). Moreover, little is known about the specific weight of policies vis-à-vis the many other factors that impact integration dynamics.

In conclusion, this article provides new insights on the differences among European (EU15) countries concerning their policies on migrant integration. It puts into question the idea of a shared and weak Southern European model of migrant integration, by offering some evidence on integration policies which complement the line of argument of previous works on integration processes (Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli 2015; Finotelli and Ponzio 2018; Ponzio 2019). Despite some similarities – few weaknesses and strengths – by and large, Southern European countries do not perform worse or differently from the other EU15 countries.

## Appendix

### *A Comparison of policy areas in Southern European countries*

#### *– Labour market mobility*

- *Greece*: Migrants in Greece have legal access to the labour market (including self-employment) and general support measures, but no targeted support to improve their skills or work situation.
- *Italy*: Migrants have access to employment and self-employment as well as general employment support. A lack of targeted support may make it less likely that non-EU residents find secure jobs in line with their qualifications and skills.

- *Portugal*: Portugal has the most inclusive policies among the four Southern European countries. Migrants have access to employment and self-employment as well as general employment support. Portugal guarantees equal treatment and targeted support for migrants.

- *Spain*: Non-EU migrants have equal access to employment, self-employment, and general employment support. They receive no targeted support.

– *Family reunification*

- *Greece*: Migrants face much greater difficulty in reuniting with their families than in the other Southern European and EU15 countries. In addition to economic resource requirements, non-EU residents face delays and restrictions in determining their family's eligibility. If families are reunited, their status is as secure as their sponsor and their children have the right to an autonomous residence permit.

- *Italy*: Close family members can quickly apply to reunite with their sponsor and secure stable status with near-equal rights. Nevertheless, the country's restrictive language and economic requirements may keep families separated.

- *Portugal*: Portugal enjoys some of the most «family-friendly» policies in the developed world. Many non-EU families can reunite and are treated equally to Portuguese families. Reunited relatives enjoy secure status.

- *Spain*: Spain's inclusive policy allows many migrants to reunite with their children and spouse after one year of residence, although there are strict economic conditions. Reunited relatives enjoy secure status.

– *Education*

- *Greece*: The Greek education system guarantees equal access for migrant pupils to compulsory and non-compulsory education, but they receive no support to enroll in higher education. Further, very little action is taken to address the diverse needs of pupils, teachers, and schools.

- *Italy*: Even though migrants under the age of 18 have access to education in Italy, newcomer pupils receive little help in accessing all types of school (e.g., higher education). Italy still needs to invest in its growing diversity of pupils and make equal access and intercultural education a reality in schools across the country. Furthermore, there is a lack of support for teachers, which could create additional barriers for migrant pupils.

- *Portugal*: Pupils benefit from equal access to compulsory and non-compulsory education and support to access higher education. Compared with the other Southern European countries, greater attention is paid to supporting pupils and to cultural diversity at school.

- *Spain*: Pupils benefit from equal access to compulsory and non-compulsory education but receive no support to access higher education. Little

action is taken to address the diverse needs of pupils, teachers, and schools. Spain still needs to invest in its growing diversity of pupils and make equal access and intercultural education a reality in schools across the country.

– *Political participation*

- *Greece*: Migrants in Greece are not regularly informed of political opportunities, consulted, or allowed to vote in local elections.

- *Italy*: Migrants in Italy continue to face obstacles to their political participation, as they are neither allowed to vote nor supported to be politically engaged. In addition, they are consulted only through weak consultative bodies across Italy.

- *Portugal*: Portugal promotes non-EU migrants' political participation in policy and practice, and supports migrant civil society and consultative bodies. However, voting rights remain uneven and limited to Brazilian migrants and citizens of countries with which Portugal has a reciprocity agreement.

- *Spain*: Migrants in Spain continue to face obstacles to their political participation. Although they are regularly consulted, only migrants whose countries have a reciprocity agreement with Spain are allowed to vote in local elections.

– *Permanent residence*

- *Greece*: Migrants are eligible after 5 years of residence, but are likely deterred from becoming long-term or permanent residents by Greece's restrictive language and economic requirements and its relatively insecure status.

- *Italy*: 5 years' residence is required for temporary residents, and they face only restrictive language requirements. Long-term residents are relatively secure in their status in Italy, however they can still lose their status if they are absent from the EU for >1 year.

- *Portugal*: Migrants are eligible after 5 years of residence, and they face only restrictive language requirements. Long-term residents enjoy secure status.

- *Spain*: Spain has the most inclusive policies of the four Southern European countries. Migrants are eligible after 5 years of residence and they do not face particularly restrictive economic or language requirements. However, long-term residents can still lose their status if they are absent from the EU for more than 12 consecutive months.

– *Access to nationality*

- *Greece*: Migrants are eligible to become Greek citizens after 12 years, and face restrictive requirements. Dual citizenship is allowed. Children of migrants are eligible to become Greek citizens after first school grade if both

parents lived legally and continuously in Greece for at least five years before their birth.

- *Italy*: Migrants in Italy face a long procedure to become Italian citizens. The law requires 10 years of residence for eligibility, and particularly demanding language, economic and other requirements. Migrants' children born in Italy can become Italian citizens when they turn 18 only if they are able to prove that they have resided continuously in Italy since they were born. Dual citizenship is allowed.

- *Portugal*: Portugal has the most inclusive policies among the four Southern European countries. It continued to improve its citizenship model in 2018, with a clearer path to citizenship for first generation migrants after 5 years and no particularly restrictive requirements. Dual citizenship is allowed. Children of migrants become citizens at birth if one parent lived legally in the country for at least 2 years before their birth.

- *Spain*: The naturalisation process is Spain's main area of weakness. Migrants can become citizens only after 10 years of residence, and dual citizenship is only granted to those from certain countries. In 2015 naturalisation requirements were eased slightly (economic resources and language). Migrants' children born in Spain can opt for Spanish nationality at age 18 if they have been resident in the country since birth. This must be formalised by the age of 20.

– *Anti-discrimination*

- *Greece*: Victims of racial, ethnic and religious discrimination are protected by law in Spain. Migrants are not protected from nationality discrimination in all areas of life. Other gaps in Greece's legislation concern procedures and policies based on international trends and best practice (e.g., nationality discrimination, racial profiling, class actions and equality body powers).

- *Italy*: Victims of ethnic, racial, religious, and nationality-based discrimination are protected in all areas of life. Despite strong enforcement mechanisms, the weak equality body in Italy could prove to be a challenge for victims of discrimination.

- *Portugal*: Victims of ethnic, racial, religious, and nationality-based discrimination are protected in all areas of life. Portugal has strong enforcement mechanisms, equality bodies and positive action measures.

- *Spain*: Victims of racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination are protected by law in Spain. Migrants are not protected from nationality discrimination in all areas of life. Migrants who are discriminated against can benefit from strong enforcement mechanisms, but the country's equality body is weak.

*B Policy trends (yearly scores)*

Tab. B1. Policy trends

|      | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| GR   | 48   | 48   | 48   | 43   | 46   | 47   | 47   | 47   | 45   | 46   |
| IT   | 54   | 53   | 53   | 55   | 55   | 55   | 55   | 55   | 55   | 55   |
| PT   | 81   | 81   | 81   | 81   | 81   | 81   | 82   | 82   | 84   | 84   |
| ES   | 53   | 57   | 55   | 54   | 55   | 57   | 57   | 57   | 57   | 57   |
| AT   | 40   | 40   | 41   | 41   | 41   | 41   | 41   | 41   | 41   | 41   |
| BE   | 74   | 72   | 72   | 70   | 70   | 70   | 69   | 69   | 69   | 69   |
| DE   | 55   | 56   | 56   | 57   | 57   | 58   | 58   | 58   | 58   | 58   |
| FR   | 52   | 52   | 52   | 52   | 52   | 53   | 54   | 54   | 55   | 55   |
| IE   | 57   | 56   | 57   | 57   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 59   | 59   | 61   |
| LU   | 54   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 65   | 66   | 66   |
| NL   | 67   | 63   | 61   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   |
| UK   | 66   | 63   | 56   | 54   | 54   | 54   | 54   | 54   | 54   | 54   |
| DK   | 43   | 46   | 46   | 49   | 52   | 49   | 48   | 48   | 48   | 48   |
| FI   | 80   | 82   | 82   | 82   | 84   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 87   |
| SE   | 86   | 86   | 86   | 87   | 87   | 87   | 87   | 87   | 87   | 87   |
| EU15 | 55   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 56   | 57   | 57   | 57   |

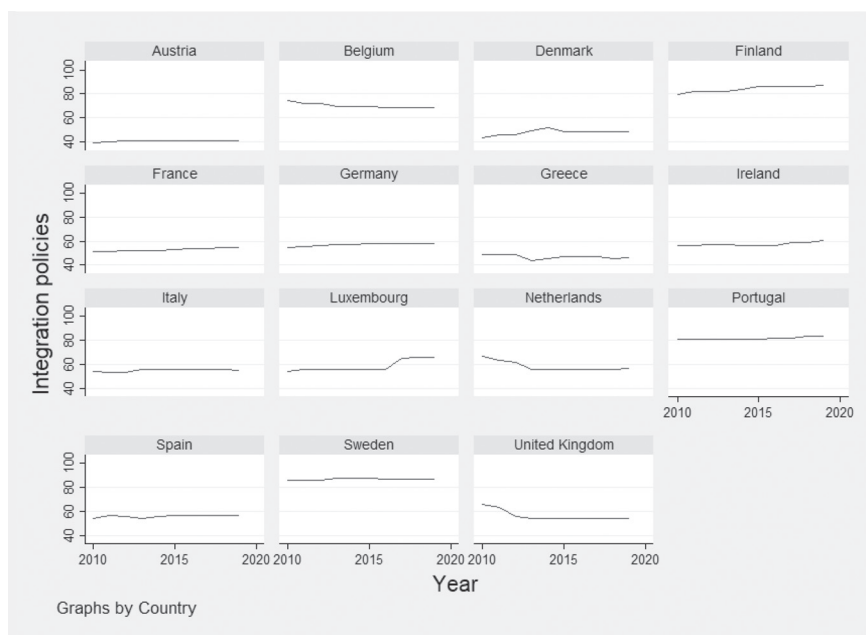


Fig. B1. Policy trends – by country.



*C Overview of inclusive and restrictive changes in the scores (country, year and policy area of change)*

Tab. C1. Inclusive changes in the scores

|                   | Labour market | Family reunion | Education    | Permanent Residence | Access to Nationality | Anti-discrim. | Political Part. |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| GR                | 2014<br>2019  | 2014           |              |                     | 2015                  |               |                 |
| IT                | 2013          |                |              |                     | 2013                  |               |                 |
| PT                |               |                | 2016         |                     | 2018                  |               |                 |
| ES                |               |                |              | 2011                | 2015                  | 2014          | 2011            |
| AT                | 2011          | 2012           |              |                     |                       |               |                 |
| BE                | 2016          |                |              |                     |                       |               |                 |
| DE                | 2012          |                | 2013<br>2015 |                     |                       |               | 2011            |
| FR                |               | 2016           | 2012<br>2015 |                     |                       |               | 2018            |
| IE                |               | 2012           | 2019         |                     |                       | 2017<br>2018  | 2017            |
| LU                |               | 2017           | 2018         |                     | 2017                  | 2017          | 2011            |
| NL                | 2019          |                |              |                     |                       |               |                 |
| UK                |               |                | 2013         |                     |                       |               |                 |
| DK                | 2011          | 2012<br>2013   | 2016         | 2011                | 2013<br>2014          |               | 2013<br>2014    |
| FI                | 2011<br>2019  | 2015           |              | 2014                | 2011                  | 2014<br>2015  | 2015            |
| SE                |               |                | 2013         |                     |                       |               |                 |
| Number of changes | 10            | 8              | 10           | 3                   | 8                     | 6             | 8               |

Tab. C2. Restrictive changes in the scores

|                   | Labour market | Family reunion       | Education            | Permanent Residence | Access to Nationality | Anti-discrim. | Political Part. |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| GR                |               |                      |                      |                     | 2013<br>2018          |               | 2013            |
| IT                |               | 2011                 |                      |                     | 2019                  |               |                 |
| PT                |               |                      |                      |                     |                       |               |                 |
| ES                |               |                      | 2013                 |                     |                       |               | 2012            |
| AT                |               | 2011<br>2017         |                      |                     | 2011                  |               |                 |
| BE                |               | 2011<br>2013<br>2016 |                      |                     | 2013                  |               |                 |
| DE                |               |                      |                      |                     |                       |               |                 |
| FR                |               |                      |                      |                     |                       |               |                 |
| IE                | 2014          |                      |                      |                     |                       |               | 2011            |
| LU                |               |                      |                      |                     |                       |               |                 |
| NL                | 2011<br>2013  | 2011<br>2012         | 2012                 |                     |                       |               | 2013            |
| UK                | 2012          | 2012<br>2013         | 2011<br>2012<br>2015 | 2012<br>2013        | 2013                  |               |                 |
| DK                | 2015          | 2018                 |                      | 2012<br>2015        | 2016                  |               |                 |
| FI                |               |                      |                      |                     |                       |               |                 |
| SE                |               | 2016                 |                      |                     |                       |               |                 |
| Number of changes | 5             | 12                   | 5                    | 4                   | 7                     | 0             | 4               |

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