

EVALUATING IMMIGRANTS' INTEGRATION BY COMPARING EXPECTATIONS TO REALIZATIONS OF SOME POLICY-ORIENTED EVENTS ACROSS SELECTED COUNTRIES

Stefania Maria Lorenza Rimoldi, Gian Carlo Blangiardo

1. Introduction

It is well known that integration of immigrants is a thorny subject, requiring definitions of both the target population and the concept of integration. Relative to these issues, the huge variety of experiences offered by the European panorama are mostly incomparable, primarily depending on differences among countries in terms of migration history and characteristics of migrants, and on the adopted theoretical approach to integration (Riedel, 2016). These differences reflect on the availability of information that is usually not homogeneously collected in different countries. Therefore, the bulk of research on integration refers to just one country at a time (see Bijl & Verweij 2012, for an almost exhaustive review). Studies rarely compare integration outcomes across countries, and they mostly limit their attention to selected groups (e.g. Ersanilli & Koopmans, 2010) and/or selected dimensions of integration (e.g. Cebolla-Boado & Finotelli, 2015).

This paper aims to contribute to filling this research gap by comparing immigrants' integration outcomes among countries:

- 1) by comparing 'expected' to 'realised' integration in each of the following countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Spain;
- 2) by comparing expected and realised integration among countries, taking into account the contextual conditions.

More precisely, this study aims to examine the extent to which some crucial events in migrants' history (i.e. access to citizenship, long-term residence, and family reunion) are expected to or can actually facilitate (according to immigrants' experiences and opinions) the integration outcomes into the following four domains: job opportunity, education, and involvement and settlement in the host society.

In this paper, we also highlight the importance of using primary data to evaluate the integration outcomes of subpopulations that intervene differently in composing the universe of immigrants in each country.

The paper is structured as follows: in the background session, we resume the major challenges that scholars and practitioners face in dealing with the subject of integration; in the data and methods section, we describe the data used and the technical tool chosen to calculate the integration outcomes; in the results section, we show the results of the analyses; and in the conclusions section, we discuss some relevant implications derived from the results.

2. Background

Some basic features form the basis of the evaluation of immigrants' integration.

Firstly, it is generally assumed that integration holds for three specific characteristics: it is a process, it is multi-dimensional and it is bi-directional. The process necessarily develops over time, in subsequent phases (Phillimore, 2012). It is always a multi-dimensional process since it concerns different aspects of a migrant's life: economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions (Portes & Zhou, 1996). The relationships among these dimensions are grounded on the theoretical framework chosen: some authors emphasise the immigrants' socioeconomic outcomes (Alba & Nee, 1997) or the importance of the cultural dimension (Waters & Jimenez, 2005). This debate reflects on the integration measurement. Integration is a bi-directional process, even when it is not immediately visible or is rejected (Ager & Strang, 2004, 2008; Council of the European Union, 2004a).

Secondly, immigrants' integration process is basically influenced by the contextual conditions of both the host country and the local level where it is realised – that is, the places where people live, work, and develop social relations with other people and institutions.

Finally, the development of the process needs to be monitored. According to EU recommendations “[...] clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and to make the exchange of information more effective. [...]. Sets of integration indicators, goals, evaluation mechanisms and benchmarking can assist in measuring and comparing progress, monitoring trends and developments” (Council of the European Union 2004b).

In order to find an operative definition of immigrant integration, scholars and practitioners have been working for a long time to identify specific areas and basic dimensions for integration: employment, education, housing, health and others not recognised as basic but assumed as priority and strategic areas promoting social cohesion. The Zaragoza Declaration (15–16 April 2010, Zaragoza) is considered a milestone in the identification of the basic lines for monitoring integration in the European Union: the four major dimensions of employment, education, social

inclusion, and active citizenship have been consensually identified in order to measure integration. The related indicators are coherently defined and are temporally and spatially consistent across countries.

Despite the availability of this framework, the measurement of integration ends to depend mainly on the availability of the data and on the methodological tool used.

As for the data, among the three kinds of sources available, (administrative data, general surveys and ad hoc surveys specifically addressed to the foreign population), only ad hoc surveys are representative of the relative population and offer a huge amount of information available at the individual level. Notable exceptions are the cases of Denmark and Norway (Bijl & Verweij, 2012), where full information on individuals is available by record linkage of administrative archives.

According to the data source, two approaches can be used to measure integration: one based on secondary data (macro-approach) and one on primary data (micro-approach). By the macro-approach, subpopulations are defined according to profiles based on the average/frequency of the variables associated with the concept of integration, and comparisons between different groups are based on just one dimension at a time. Conversely, the micro-approach leads to composite measurements of integration based on individual profiles. Most of the existing literature in this field is devoted to devising synthetic indices by considering just one dimension of integration at a time, and usually referring to just one country. This is principally due to the difficulty of assigning objective weights to the variables and/or dimensions, as well as to the problem of the mutual interference among variables. The most common strategy makes use of principal component analysis to reduce the number of variables to uncorrelated factors and to assign objective weights (factor scores) to single indicators in composite indices (Di Bartolomeo & Strozza, 2014; Di Bartolomeo, Kalantaryan & Bonfanti, 2015; Ravanera, Esses & Fernando, 2013). This procedure, however, is constrained in time and space, given that the factor scores are supposed to vary, both in time and across countries, according to the phase of the integration process and to the structural characteristics of the immigrant population in each country. In the following, we suggest an alternative method that allows for comparing the integration outcomes of immigrants in different countries and for reducing (at least partially) the subjective component in the choice of weights.

3. Data and Methods

In this paper, we use two different sources: the Immigrant Citizens Survey, ICS hereafter, carried out in seven countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Spain) in 2011–2012 through a sample of 7473 immigrants born outside the EU (Huddleston & Tjaden, 2012), and the MIPEX III Survey, focused on measuring policies and their implementation (Huddleston *et al.*, 2011).

Through the ICS survey, we focus on three policy-oriented events: access to nationality, long-term residence (hereafter LTR), and family reunion. For each of these events, we proceed to calculate the integration score, for both expectations and realisations, in the four domains of integration covered by the ICS survey: (1) to get a job; (2) to get more education; (3) to get more involved in the host society; (4) to feel more settled in the host society. We take advantage of the Immigrants Citizens Survey to bypass the definition of integration, using the subjective perception of the expected and realised integration of surveyed people. For instance, as regards to access to nationality, we refer to the self-evaluation of integration by the following questions. In terms of realisation, it is asked “Do you think that becoming a citizen helped you personally to ...?” In terms of expectation, it is asked “To what extent do you think that becoming a citizen will help you to ...?”

To calculate the integration score, we adopt the following tool, introduced by Blangiardo (2013). Accordingly, referring to the micro-approach recalled in the background section, each unit is provided by a vector of scores, one for each of the four ordered categorical variables assumed as constituents of integration. Each variable-score (ranging -1 = worst score; 1 = best score) is assigned to each unit according to the category the unit assumes. The category-score is computed as the difference between the cumulated relative frequencies (in the overall sample) of the previous category and the counter-cumulative relative frequencies of the following, being the categories ordered in the sense of integration. This method is based on metrics reflecting the criterion that the top and bottom categories of an ordinal variable are more rewarding (or penalising) the less (or more) they are frequent. The individual vector of scores is then averaged by the simple mean: this choice is not immune from critics because it implicitly assumes that the variables have the same weight in building the integration score (Caselli, 2015). However, it is worth noting that according to the metrics adopted, less frequent categories of certain variables contribute to the score more than less frequent categories of other variables, allowing for a partial self-weighting of all the variables. Moreover, given that the role of each variable varies across countries, the choice of adopting the same weight seems to be the most neutral.

Finally, the individual integration scores (ranging $[-1; +1]$) are summed up to obtain subpopulation scores, as well as the overall population score. Note that, according to the method, the score of the entire population (the sample of the seven countries) is zero (with the score of each variable being equal to zero): this represents the reference point for the evaluation of individual and subpopulation integration outcomes.

4. Results

The integration outcomes for the seven countries included in the Survey (average scores per 1000) are presented in Table 1.

Results allow us to state that in terms of the four dimensions of integration considered, immigrants living in Germany, France and Belgium seem to associate access to nationality, LTR, and family reunion as having both higher expectations and higher realisations of integration than immigrants living in the other four countries.

Table 1 – *Expected and realised integration scores (ICS Survey) – Scores $\times 1000$; (-1000 =very low; $+1000$ =very high)*.*

Country	Access to Nationality	Long-term Residence	Family Reunion
<i>Expected integration</i>			
Belgium	7	22	0
France	26	20	3
Germany	22	10	0
Hungary	-18	4	0
Italy	-45	-35	3
Portugal	-8	-8	-2
Spain	-28	-15	-6
<i>Realised integration</i>			
Belgium	46	29	-1
France	9	26	-1
Germany	12	40	18
Hungary	-58	-12	-2
Italy	0	-52	-1
Portugal	6	19	-14
Spain	-40	-63	-25

*In any column, the average score in the whole ICS sample is equal to 0.

In greater detail, it emerges that realised integration for access to nationality in Italy and Belgium is significantly higher than expected, as is the case in Germany and Portugal for LTR. Considering family reunion, expectations of integration are higher than realisations in all the countries, with the sole exception of Germany, where realisations are considerably higher.

Given that integration outcomes depend on contextual conditions characterising each country, we employ the corresponding MIPEX III index (shown in Table 2), ranging from 0 = “not favourable” to 1 = “very favourable”, as a synthetic measure of the context of the three observed events. According to MIPEX III, Portugal records the highest scores in access to nationality (82) and in family reunion (91); Spain also records a high score in family reunion (85) but a very low score in access to nationality (39).

Table 2 – *MIPEX III scores for policy-related events – Scores $\times 100$; (0=very bad; +100=very good).*

Country	Access to Nationality	Long-term Residence	Family Reunion
Belgium	69	79	68
France	59	46	52
Germany	59	50	60
Hungary	31	60	61
Italy	63	66	74
Portugal	82	69	91
Spain	39	78	85

The correlation analysis between ICS and MIPEX scores (Table 3) highlights the intensity and direction of the linear relationship for each of the events considered, between the expected/realised integration and the contextual conditions of the host country.

Table 3 – *Correlation coefficients between ICS survey scores and MIPEX III scores.*

Access to nationality	Expected integration	0.25
	Realised integration	0.83
Long-term Residence	Expected integration	-0.32
	Realised integration	-0.45
Family Reunion	Expected integration	-0.62
	Realised integration	-0.72

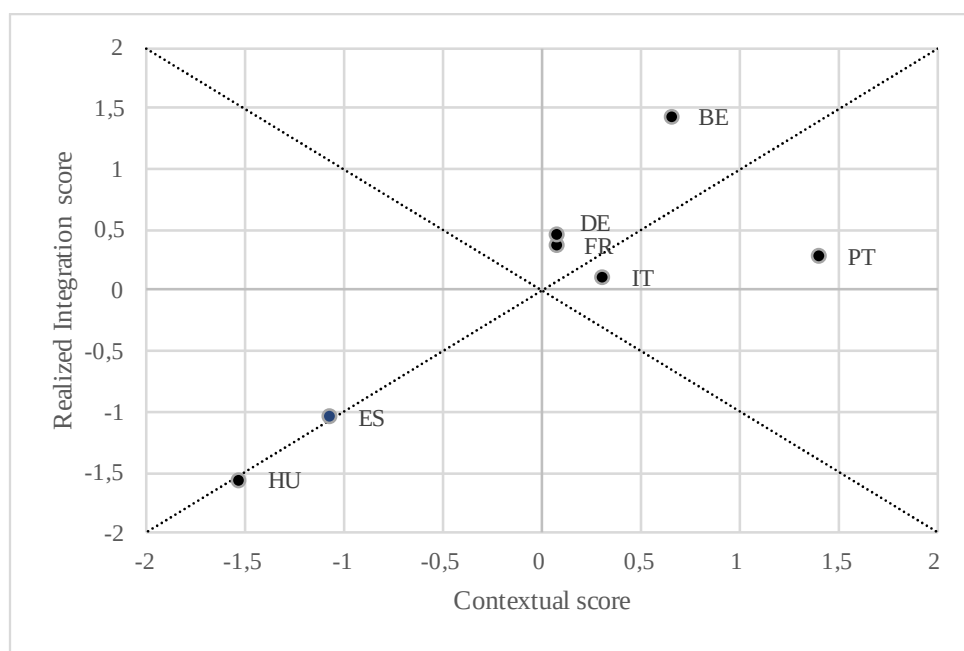
Overall, only access to nationality realised (primarily) and expected integration are positively correlated with contextual conditions. Facilities for granting family reunion and LTR do not produce gains in expected/realised integration outcomes. Rather, they act in the opposite direction: the more favourable the context, the more both expected and realised integration outcomes decrease.

When the correlation is positive, it is interesting to investigate the role played by the context in promoting higher integration outcomes.

Then, if we consider access to nationality, for which realised integration is strongly positively correlated with context, after conveniently standardising the

scores for both the ICS and MIPEX in order to obtain a graph with the same scales (Figure 1), we can observe different situations.

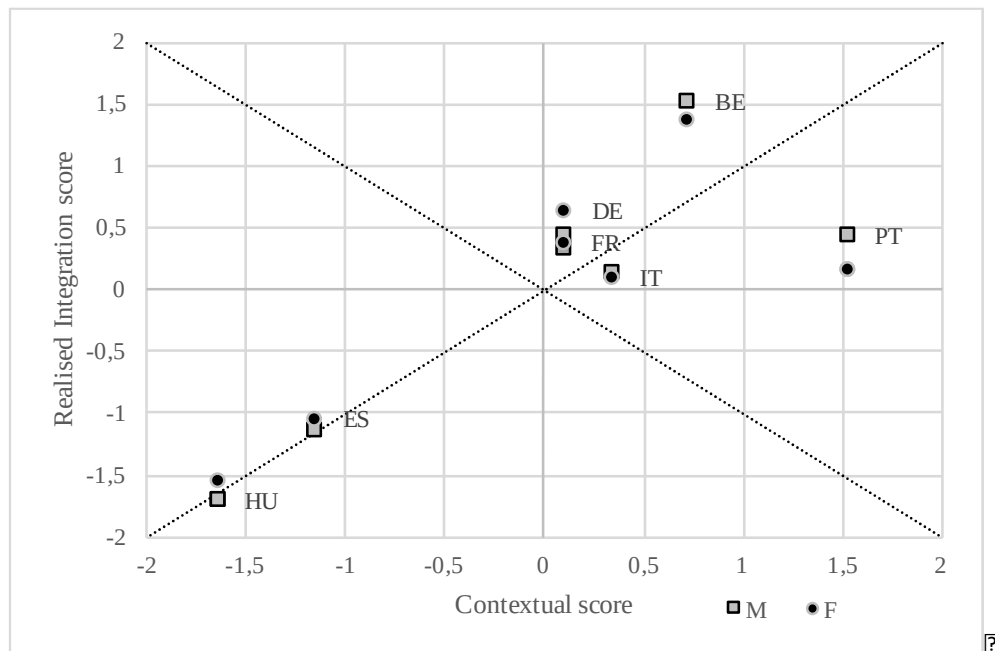
Figure 1 – *Realised integration scores from access to nationality (ICS) and contextual conditions (MIPEX III) – Standardised values through the Z-scores*.*



* ICS and MIPEX scores have been conveniently standardised to give both mean=0 and variance=1; countries legend: BE=Belgium; DE=Germany; ES=Spain; FR=France; HU=Hungary; IT=Italy; PT=Portugal.

In the graph, the main bisector distinguishes the countries where the integration score net of the context is negative (below) from those where it is positive (above), relative to the average of the seven countries considered. Germany, Belgium, and France are characterised by both integration and context higher than the average, and moreover, net integration is positive; Italy and Portugal, conversely, are characterised by negative net integration; Hungary and Spain, finally, report lower integration and context than the average: their net integration is about zero. In summary, realised integration in Germany, France, and Belgium is higher than what the context would allow, while in Italy and Portugal the integration outcome is lower. Hungary and Spain share a low level of context and a coherent level of integration.

Figure 2 – *Realised integration scores from access to nationality (ICS) and contextual conditions (MIPEX III) by gender – Standardised values through the Z-scores*.*



* ICS and MIPEX scores have been conveniently standardised to give both mean=0 and variance=1; for countries legend see Figure 1.

Finally, the micro-approach adopted in this study allows the conducting of subpopulation analyses. Taking as an example the population by gender, in Figure 2 emerges a moderate advantage for the male component in those countries, Portugal and Belgium, where context is more favourable. Overall, with respect to access to nationality, males show a higher positive correlation than females between realised integration and context.

5. Conclusions

This work contributes to the study of immigrants' integration in a cross-country comparative perspective. It compares expected and realised integration outcomes related to three crucial policy-oriented events in an individual's migration history: access to nationality, long-term residence, and family reunion. Differences between expected and realised integration

outcomes account for mismatched interests between immigrants and the host society, and differences attributable to factors (individual and collective characteristics of immigration in each country) not considered in this paper but surely deserving of deeper investigation. This paper also examines the relations between integration and contextual conditions across countries. Integration net of contextual conditions allows us to foresee that improvements in context cannot substantially help integration outcomes in Italy and Portugal: here, improvements are to be gained in measures that actually put in practice integration, such as intercultural support and administrative measures, mainly to be implemented at the local level. The analysis by gender, to be taken as an example, suggests the need for the adoption of a micro-approach in integration studies, since it allows for subpopulation analyses. These essential results can be useful to address more adequate and focused policy measures to increase immigrants' effectively realised integration.

References

- AGER A., STRANG A. 2004. Indicators of integration. London: Home Office, Research, Development and Statistics Directorate (Development and Practice Report Number 28).
- AGER A., STRANG A. 2008. Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 21(2), pp. 166–191.
- ALBA R., NEE N. 1997. Rethinking assimilation theory for a new era of immigration, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, pp. 826–874.
- BIJL R., VERWEIJ A. 2012. Measuring and monitoring immigrant integration in Europe. Integration policies and monitoring efforts in 17 European countries. The Hague: The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP).
- BLANGIARDO, G.C. 2013. Jobs and opportunity – Income and poverty. Paper presented at Eurostat-Istat-Ministero dell'Interno International Conference on Integration, Rome, Italy, June 17–18.
- CASELLI, M. 2015. Measuring the Integration of Immigrants: Critical notes from an Italian experience, *International Migration*, Vol. 53(4), pp. 107–119.
- CEBOLLA-BOADO H., FINOTELLI C. 2015. Is There a North–South Divide in Integration Outcomes? A Comparison of the Integration Outcomes of Immigrants in Southern and Northern Europe, *European Journal of Population*, Vol. 31, pp. 77–102.

- COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. 2004a. Press Release, 2618th Council Meeting Justice and Home Affairs. Brussels, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>
- COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. 2004b. EU Common basic principles for immigrant integration policy, Council of the European Union, Brussels, https://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/common-basic-principles_en.pdf.
- DI BARTOLOMEO A., STROZZA S. 2014. L'integrazione degli immigrati nei paesi dell'UE15: riscontri empirici per istruzione e mercato del lavoro. In Donadio, P., Gabrielli, G., and Massari, M. (Eds.) *Uno come te. Europei e nuovi europei nei percorsi di integrazione*. Milan: Franco Angeli, pp. 37–49.
- DI BARTOLOMEO A., KALANTARYAN S., BONFANTI S. 2015. Measuring Integration of Migrants. A Multivariate Approach, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI), Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.
- ERSANILLI E., KOOPMANS R. 2010. Rewarding integration? Citizenship regulations and the socio-cultural integration of immigrants in the Netherlands, France and Germany, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 36(5), pp. 773–791.
- HUDDLESTON T., NIESSEN J., NI CHAOIMH E., WHITE E. 2011. Migrant Integration Policy Index III, Brussels, British Council and Migration Policy Group.
- HUDDLESTON T., TJADEN J. D. 2012. Immigrant Citizens Survey. How immigrants experience integration in 15 European cities, Brussels, King Baudouin Foundation and Migration Policy Group, www.immigrantsurvey.org
- PHILLIMORE, J. 2012. Implementing integration in the UK: lessons for integration theory, policy and practice, *Policy & Politics*, Vol. 40(4), pp. 525–45.
- PORTES A., ZHOU M. 1996. Self-employment and the earnings of immigrants, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61(2), pp. 219–230.
- RAVANERA Z. R., ESSES V., FERNANDO R. 2013. Integration and “Welcomeability” indexes: Measures of community capacity to integrate immigrants. Population Change and Lifecourse Strategic Knowledge Cluster, *Discussion Paper Series*, Vol. 1(1), No 6.
- RIEDEL, S. 2016. Measuring Immigrants' Integration [PhD thesis]: University of Cologne, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences.
- WATERS M. C., JIMÉNEZ T. R. 2005. Assessing immigrant assimilation: New empirical and theoretical challenges, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 31, pp. 105–125.

SUMMARY

Immigrants' integration is a process that develops differently across countries, depending on the characteristics of the target population and on the context. Integration can be measured with micro- or macro-approaches. There is a scarcity of literature based on a micro-approach devoted to comparing integration outcomes across countries. This paper contributes to this research field.

This study aims to evaluate immigrants' integration in relation to access to nationality, long-term residence, and family reunion. The evaluation concerns the gap between expected and realised integration and the role of context across seven European countries.

Analyses are based on the Immigrant Citizens Survey (2011–2012) and the MIPEx III indicators (2011). Through a micro-approach, an integration score at the individual level, then summarised as an overall score, is suggested. MIPEx III scores are compared to integration scores to evaluate the more- or less-favourable context.

Both expected and realised integration outcomes for the three events are higher in Germany, France, and Belgium than in the other countries. Only for the access to nationality the expected and realised integrations are positively correlated with context. Moreover, Germany, France, and Belgium are characterised by integration and context higher than the average, and positive net integration.

Differences between expected and realised integration outcomes account for mismatched interests between immigrants and the host society. Negative net integration, in Italy and Portugal, allows us to foresee that improvements in context cannot substantially help integration outcomes here. Analyses by gender support the need for the adoption of a micro-approach in integration studies.

Stefania Maria Lorenza RIMOLDI, Department of Statistic and Quantitative Methods, University of Milan-Bicocca, stefania.rimoldi@unimib.it

Gian Carlo BLANGIARDO, Department of Statistic and Quantitative Methods, University of Milan-Bicocca, giancarlo.blangiardo@unimib.it