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From landing to arrival

The subtle integration of immigrants across Western Europe

Summary of main findings

The aim of this report is to map the present state, as well as the process, of subjective integration among immigrants in Western Europe. Structural characteristics of socioeconomic integration – such as employment, education, housing and income – are widely discussed in research on migrant integration. But in this report, we focus on subtler features of immigrants’ adaptation to their host country’s society, and analyse a subjective side of integration: namely, how immigrants’ values, norms and attitudes adapt to those of the local population. **In the analysis, we use the aggregated dataset from the European Social Survey (ESS) (Round 1 in 2002 to Round 8 in 2016/17); this provides a sample size of close to 20,000 immigrants in 13 countries of Western Europe (40% are from EU/EEA countries and 60% are third-country nationals (TCN)).** In accordance with European data principles, people are considered to be immigrants if they were born in a country different from the one in which they now live.

The analysis is based on three aspects of subjective integration and related indicators: (1) **institutional attitude convergence** (measured by the Institutional Attitude Index, which represents an assessment of major societal institutions, including the economy, education, health care, democracy and its institutions); (2) **perceived integration**

(measured by the Perceived Exclusion Index, which reflects the extent to which immigrants feel integrated into, or excluded from and discriminated against by, wider society); and (3) **acculturation**, which is assessed using three independent variables: language used in private (at home), emotional attachment to the host

COUNTRIES COVERED IN THE REPORT



country and tolerance of 'othered' groups (here we take the case of tolerance towards sexual minorities).

MAIN FINDINGS

Overall, **we found a very clear and remarkable adaptation of immigrants to the values, norms and attitudes of the mainstream societies in which they live. All of the indicators of subjective integration applied show that, although they possess attitudes and values that differ somewhat from those of the local population, nevertheless immigrants are closer in this respect to the host country's population than to the population in their country of origin.** In terms of values, attitudes and norms, they are in-betweeners: slowly approaching the population of the host country, while moving away from the cultural norms and attitudes characteristic of the population of the country where they were born.

In general, **immigrants are more positive about, and have higher levels of trust in, the major societal, economic and political institutions** of the country where they reside than do native-born residents, but they feel more excluded from society. Also, in general, **they set greater store by tradition and security, but also personal achievement.** Thus, immigrants – depending, of course, on their cultural origins – are more conservative in terms of traditions and religion than is the general population of Western Europe. They also ascribe greater significance to values that support success and independence (such as competition, striving, self-direction and achievement).

There are **significant differences in subjective characteristics, depending on country of destination and country of origin.** Institutional attitudes seem to depend more on where immigrants have settled, while the perception of inclusion in the new environment seems to be more dependent on the region of origin (or visibility of migrant origin).

While considering **acculturation** – i.e. the process by which individuals moving from one cultural context to another develop new patterns of behaviours and identities shaped by the dominant norms of the new cultural context – we examined the language used in private (at home) and emotional attachment to the host country. We show that **adaptation to the host country's language varies greatly across countries:** TCN immigrants in Austria (32%), Switzerland (39%) and Sweden (39%) are the least likely to speak the host country's language at home. Of course, much hinges on whether the host country's language is a global one or is an official language in those countries that are the most significant sources of immigration (i.e. Latin and South America for Spain; Brazil for Portugal; or the Maghreb countries for France). But it is not a decisive factor: in the UK and Ireland, English is spoken at home by a smaller share of TCN migrants (63% and 61%) than speak Dutch (which is not a global language) in the Netherlands (69%). In terms of **emotional attachment to the host country, the host environment matters more than the region of origin:** in some countries, emotional attachment is less explicit (Belgium), whereas in others it is very strong (e.g. France or Portugal), and this pattern applies to all groups, including natives and immigrants from various backgrounds. However, **there are some countries – Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, the Netherlands and Portugal – where the gap between TCN immigrants and natives in terms of the share of those who feel a strong emotional attachment to the country is negligible – or even negative** (meaning that TCN immigrants report a stronger attachment to the country than do natives). **And there are countries where TCN immigrants feel significantly less attached to their host country: Austria, Switzerland, Finland and Norway.**

The complex model, which takes into account all the significant **factors** that are likely to **influence the process of acculturation and convergence with mainstream values and attitudes, found that region of origin, Muslim religion, time spent in the**

country and labour market status all matter. The level of perceived discrimination is above average among immigrants from Sub-Saharan African and Arabic countries, Muslims, recent immigrants, and those on the periphery of the labour market.

Analysing numerous aspects of the subtle integration of immigrants in Western European societies, **we discern a very clear and unequivocal trend of convergence of immigrants' attitudes and values with those of the mainstream host society. This convergence takes place in all immigrant groups, in all destination countries and on all aspects of the analysis** (institutional attitudes, perception of integration and acculturation). **However, subjective integration requires time – sometimes a really long time in the context of a human life.** The speed of convergence is not the same in all destination countries. And furthermore, it would appear that it takes significantly longer for migrants of colour arriving from poorer regions to adapt to the new environment.

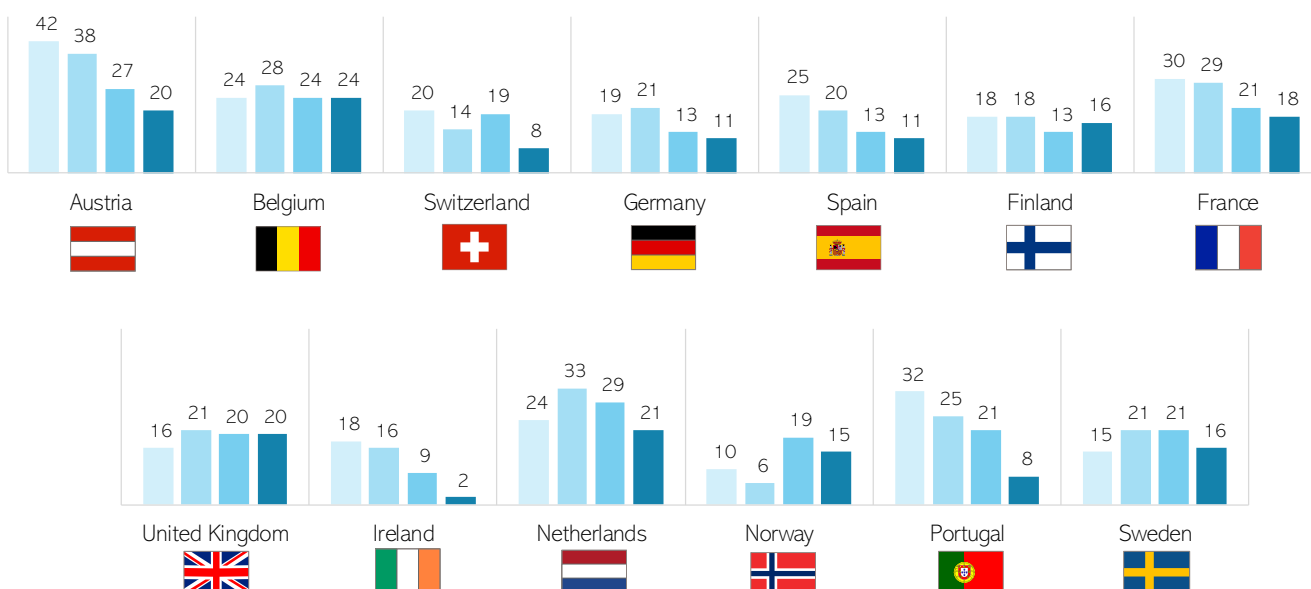
The index representing the subjective perception of social exclusion is a good example of this process: the longer immigrants spend **in the host society, the better integrated they feel and the less origin-based discrimination they sense.**

However, there are some countries where this trend is less explicit and smooth: there are several countries where immigrants who have stayed for more than 5 years but for less than 10 years sense greater exclusion than newcomers (the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden), which suggests that this kind of integration takes place only after 10 years or so of residence. Immigrants who are visibly different from natives (e.g. their colour or clothing) are not only more likely to experience greater discrimination, but are also more likely to need longer to feel integrated.

Convergence with the host society continues beyond the first generation: second-generation migrants' values and attitudes are very similar to those of the natives in the host society, but still differ in some countries and among certain origin groups. With the exception of Spain, the differences in the evaluation of and trust in institutions between second-generation TCN immigrants and natives are only minor. However, **perceived exclusion remains significant in the**

PERCEIVED EXCLUSION INDEX (PEI) BY TIME SPENT IN THE COUNTRY OF DESTINATION

■ Less than 5 years ■ 6-10 years ■ 11-20 years ■ More than 20 years

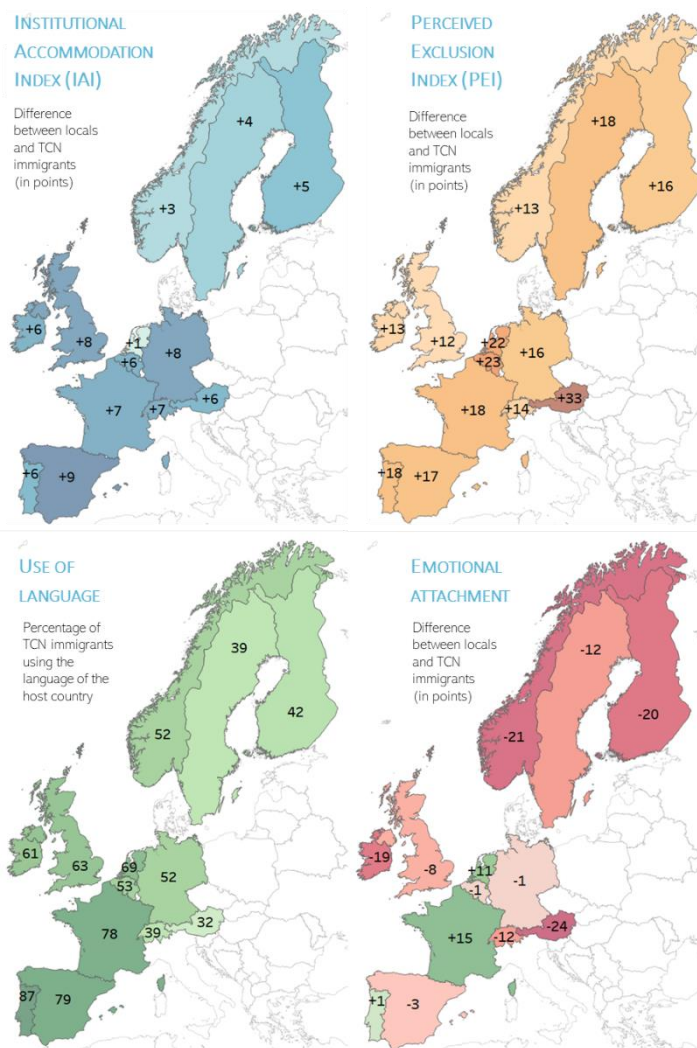


Netherlands and the UK: in those two countries, there is almost no difference between how included the first and the second generations feel. If many of those who were born and bred in the country, and who identify with it, feel excluded and discriminated against, that could be a source of social tension.

Perhaps the most important takeaway from the analysis is that a well-functioning institutional setting is a prerequisite, as well as a safeguard, allowing immigrants to integrate not only in objective terms, but also in their attitudes and values.

Although the existence of well-functioning institutions that offer access to high-quality public services to all those eligible has to be seen as the most efficient tool for the integration of immigrants, the language of the host country, the general attitude toward immigrants of the host population and the origins of the immigrants themselves all have very important roles to play in terms of both the depth of immigrants' subjective integration and how long it takes. **Those who arrive from poor countries outside Europe face a more difficult task of integrating into mainstream society – especially if they have visible (either racial or cultural) traits.** These groups need special attention and more support than the non-visible immigrants arriving from wealthier parts of the world.

If we look more broadly at how different countries are performing in terms of immigrants' subjective integration, it is hard to pinpoint any countries that are doing particularly well or particularly badly. However, Germany – which has a large and diverse immigrant population – is not only performing relatively well on most of the indicators of immigrants' subjective integration, but also provides an example of a country where the process of adaptation is very explicit and significant, and where this process continues beyond the first generation. The acquisition of language plays an unequivocally important role, as



does a generally welcoming environment and strong institutional support for immigrants' social integration. Austria may be seen as the antithesis of this: immigrants in Austria rank low on all indicators of subjective integration. However, the picture is more rosy if we consider the length of time spent in the country and how the adaptation process continues in the second generation: leaving aside the language use of the second generation, all the indicators show an unequivocal trend toward adaptation. The Netherlands is a rather puzzling case: while immigrants do relatively well on all the indicators of subjective integration, the duration of time spent in the country appears to have little effect. It is somewhat alarming that even second-generation immigrants feel a relatively high level of exclusion in the Netherlands.