

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON IMMIGRANTS' INTEGRATION POLICIES IN ROMANIA AND SWEDEN

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*The immigration crisis in Europe has brought an intensive debate over EU nations' shared responsibility toward integrating foreigners fleeing insecurity. In this context, Eastern EU countries have shown a lot of anxiety and reluctance to opening their societies to immigrants. The nature of this fear, beside the emerging threat of terrorism, is strongly linked to prejudices, and maybe to a chronic lack of know-how on integrating people without historical (or any other) ties with the host nation.*

*This paper offers a comparative study between integration policies for immigrants in Sweden – a top ranking country in the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) 2015 – and Romania, with the aim to determine areas to improve the latter's approach toward this issue.*

**Key words:** *immigration, integration, mobility, discrimination, multiculturalism, Romania.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

International migration has recently affected the European Union (EU) at an unprecedented level and posed serious economic, social and demographic challenges to the EU states. The EU response to the migrants' crisis has been confused and divisive, characterized by squabbling over sharing responsibility, border closures and criticized measures. Many EU governments focused on preventing arrivals and deflecting responsibility to neighboring countries. What is more, even the Schengen space, if not the EU establishment itself,

were threatened by this crisis, as Donald Tusk, the European Council President, warned (Associated Press: 2016).

As immigration to wealthy European states has a long history, and the phenomenon was accepted (in its legal way) as contributing to EU's socio-economic development, a coherent approach to migration at European level has become more than ever necessary, in the form of a common policy.

The first multiannual program in the field of Justice and Home Affairs was agreed in Tampere, Finland, in 1999 for a five-year period. The following programs -

Hague, 2004 (Official Journal of the EU C 236:2005) and Stockholm, 2009 (Official Journal of the EU C 115:2010) - have promoted objectives for strengthening freedom, security and justice in the EU.

The European Pact on immigration and asylum was adopted in the October 2008 European Council, proposing five political commitments to be implemented through concrete measures: (1) *to organize legal immigration to take account of the priorities, needs and reception capacities determined by each Member State, and to encourage integration*; (2) *to control illegal immigration by ensuring that illegal immigrants return to their countries of origin or to a country of transit*; (3) *to make border controls more effective*; (4) *to construct a Europe of asylum*; and (5) *to create a comprehensive partnership with the countries of origin and transit in order to encourage synergy between migration and development* (EUR-Lex:2008a).

Further debate *integration* has often been fractious, pitting those who favor more assimilation-wise policies, in which the newcomer adopts dominant values and a perceived common identity, against those who argue for variations of multiculturalism, based on respect for the newcomer's cultural identity and protection of cultural diversity (Sunderland, 2016).

Starting from the ratings of the Migrant Integration Policy

Index - MIPEX, edition 2015 - (CIDOB&MPG:2015) and using comparative analysis tools, this essay investigates differences in migrant integration policies between Sweden, a top rated country in this respect, and Romania, a country with an emigration rate much greater than immigration. As the policy areas in the field are too broad to cover, for the purpose of this paper we will focus especially on a comparative study concerning *the participation of immigrants in the political life* of the receiving nation.

This subject draws special attention as marking the most significant difference on the analyzed countries' MIPEX 2015 rankings, where Sweden is standing for the 7<sup>th</sup> position out of 38, while Romania holds the last position.

## **2. THE EUROPEAN UNION IMMIGRATION RULES AS A COMMON DENOMINATOR. BASIC INTEGRATION PRINCIPLES**

Immigration rules are not the same in every EU country; most of them have both EU rules and their own national regulations.

The EU has been developing a common immigration policy for Europe since 1999, as the agreement that the EU should have common, EU-wide, immigration and visa rules, emerged. (1) The common European

immigration policy seeks to provide a flexible framework that takes into account EU countries' individual situations and is implemented in partnership between the EU countries and institutions.

It sees *integration* as the key to successful immigration, postulating a series of conditions to which EU countries should adhere in order to enhance the participation of immigrants in the economic life and improve a diversity-prone social cohesion, such as:

- consolidate the EU framework for integration;
- support the management of diversity and the evaluation of the outcomes of integration policies in EU countries;
- promote integration programs targeted at new immigrant arrivals;
- ensure equal advancement opportunities in the labor market for legal non-EU workers;
- apply social security schemes equally to immigrants and to EU nationals;
- develop means to increase the participation of immigrants in society;
- review Council Directive 2003/86/ EC on the right to family reunification;
- continue applying the EU asylum policy, while developing the measures further, in particular through the Policy Plan on Asylum (EUR-Lex:2008b).

A communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European

Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 1 September 2005 on the *Common framework for the integration of non-EU nationals* provides common basic principles for the creation of a coherent European framework for integration of non-EU nationals.

It was a first step in the establishment of a coherent framework for integration, proposing concrete measures at EU and national level for putting the Common Basic Principles (CBPs) in practice, together with a series of supportive EU mechanisms. In this respect, a first set of enablers have been underlined, aiming a strengthened ability of the host society to adjust to diversity, engaging private bodies, promoting trust and good relations within neighborhoods, and encouraging cooperation with the media. Thus, the reference principles for CBPs are: (EUR-Lex:2005)

1. *"Integration implies respect for the basic values of the EU"*. It emphasizes civic orientation in introduction programs at national level. At European level, the integration of non-EU nationals is included in programs of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

2. *"Employment is a key part of the integration process"*. It proposes that at national level: labor-market discrimination is prevented; social partners are involved in the elaboration and implementation of integration measures; the recruitment of migrants is encouraged and migrant

entrepreneurship is supported. At European level, the Commission proposes: monitoring the impact of national reform programs aimed at the integration of immigrants into the labor-market; encouraging EU countries to develop labor-market integration policies; monitoring the application of the directives on discrimination in employment and on non-EU nationals who are long-term residents.

3. *“Basic knowledge of the host society’s language, history and institutions is indispensable to integration”*. It proposes strengthening the integration component through introduction programs that offer courses at several levels. At EU level, transnational actions and innovative integration models should be supported.

4. *“Efforts in education are critical to integration”*. It proposes the reflection of diversity in the school curriculum and addresses the specific problems of young immigrants, such as participation in higher education, and being taken into account at national level. Actions at EU level should include the incorporation of integration objectives into educational programs (European Commission - Education and Training: 2017) and the facilitation of transparent recognition of qualifications - the European Qualifications Framework (European Commission - Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe: 2017).

5. *“Access for immigrants to institutions as well as to public and*

*private goods and services in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration”*. It proposes the following national actions: strengthening the capacity of public and private service providers to interact with non-EU nationals; introducing sustainable organizational structures for integration and schemes to gather and analyze information; engaging companies in debates on integration; integrating intercultural competence into recruitment and training policies. At EU level, the application of the directives on non-EU nationals who are long-term residents and on equal treatment should be monitored and studies and exchanges of best practices should be supported.

6. *“Frequent interaction between immigrants and EU citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration”*. At national level, it proposes that activities in which immigrants interact with the host society are promoted and that their living environment is improved. Simultaneously, at EU level: the integration dimension in social inclusion and social protection policies should be strengthened; the exchange of information and good practice should be encouraged; transnational cooperation at regional, local and municipal level between public authorities, private enterprises and civil society, including migrants’ associations, should be supported.

7. *“The practice of diverse cultures and religions must be*

*safeguarded*". It proposes developing constructive intercultural dialogue and public discourse and promoting inter- and intra-faith dialogue platforms at national level. At EU level, it proposes facilitating intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and further developing dialogue with religious, social and cultural organizations.

8. *"The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies supports their integration"*. At national level, the Commission proposes that: civic, cultural and political participation of non-EU nationals in the host society is increased; dialogue and consultation with non-EU nationals is encouraged; active citizenship is promoted; national preparatory citizenship and naturalization programs are drawn up. At EU level, it proposes that a study/mapping exercise of the rights and obligations of non-EU nationals in EU countries is initiated, the creation of a platform of migrants' organizations is fostered and the value of developing a concept of civic citizenship is explored.

### 3. REFERENCE ENVIRONMENTS FOR INTEGRATION FIGURES IN THE EU

The EU has targeted the promotion of immigrant integration and for this reason it has established actors, institutions and instruments to promote it: the Committee of the

Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, Ministerial Conferences, National Contact Points (NCPs) on Integration, the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs), the European Integration Forum, the European website on integration, handbooks on integration (such as the *Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners*) (Niessen and Huddleston: 2010), or European integration modules, all of them providing monitoring capabilities, tutorials, statistical tools and common indicators, etc.

A more coherent European approach towards integration is planned in the EU by mainstreaming integration in all relevant national policies and reinforcing the capacity to coordinate national integration strategies across different levels of government.

In this respect, an excellent example for the EU supportive integration framework is the creation of the European Migration Network (EMN), which aims to provide up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum to support policymaking in the EU. It also provides the general public with such information through its website ([http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/index_en.htm)); the products made available – like Policy Reports, statistics, or Country Factsheets – are useful for the purpose of comparative analysis.

Other references of interest are represented by the proceedings of the European Integration Forum, launched in April 2009 by the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) for consultation, exchange of expertise and drawing up recommendations on integration issues, or the EU website on Integration (<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/home>).

For measuring the parameters of migrants' integration, the Stockholm Programme (2010–2014), which replaces the Tampere and Hague Programmes (Hellenic Republic – Ministry of Foreign Affairs:2017), embraced the development of core indicators in a limited number of relevant policy areas (e.g. employment, education and social inclusion) for monitoring the results of the integration policies. Quantifying the integration process is an important step ahead

in increasing the ability to perform comparative analysis of national experiences in this matter and reinforce the European learning process.

The 2010 European Ministerial Conference on Integration, which took place in Zaragoza, resulted in the Zaragoza Declaration (Council of the European Union: 2010) that called upon the European Commission to undertake a pilot study examining proposals for common integration indicators and reporting on the availability and quality of the data from agreed harmonized sources necessary for the calculation of these indicators. The Zaragoza indicators, along with other indicators proposed to determine the level of immigrants' integration, are available in the Final Report for Directorate-General for Home Affairs, European Commission, *Using EU Indicators of Immigrant Integration (Table 1)* (Huddleston, Niessen, and Tjaden:2013, p.9).

**Table 1.** EU Indicators of Immigrant Integration Source: Huddleston, Niessen, Tjaden:2013, p.9

	Employment	Education	Social Inclusion	Active Citizenship	Welcoming Society
<b>Zaragoza Indicators</b>	Employment rate	Highest educational attainment	At-risk-of-poverty (and social exclusion)	Naturalisation rate	Perceived experience of discrimination (survey)
	Unemployment rate	Tertiary attainment	Income	Share of long term residence	Trust in public institutions (survey)*
	Activity rate	Early school leaving	Self-reported health status (controlling for age)	Share of elected representatives (research)*	Sense of belonging (survey)*
	Self-employment	Low-achievers (PISA)	Property ownership	Voter turnout (research)*	
	Over-qualification	Language skills of non-native speakers (LFS module)**			

Table 2. Proposed New Indicators

	Employment	Education	Social Inclusion	Active Citizenship	Welcoming Society
<b>Proposed New Indicators</b>	Public sector employment	Participation in early childhood education (SILC/PISA)**	Child poverty (SILC)	Participation in voluntary organisations (survey)*	Public perception of racial/ethnic discrimination (Eurobarometer)
	Temporary employment	Participation in life-long learning (LFS,AES)	Self-reported unmet need for medical care (SILC)	Membership in trade unions (survey)*	Public attitudes to political leader with ethnic minority background (Eurobarometer)
	Part-time employment	Not in education, employment or training (LFS)	Life expectancy (SILC)	Membership in political parties (survey)*	
	Long-term unemployment	Resilient students (PISA)**	Healthy life years (SILC)	Political activity (survey)*	
	Share of foreign diplomas recognized (survey)**	Concentration in low-performing schools (PISA)**	Housing cost overburden (SILC)**		
	Retention of international students (research)*		Overcrowding (SILC)**		
			In-work property-risk (SILC)		
			Persistent poverty-risk (SILC)		

A more sophisticated tool for assessing and comparing the integration marks, and ultimately supporting the improvement of the integration policy, is the Migrant Integration Policy Index - MIPEX. This is a unique tool which measures policies to integrate migrants in all EU Member States, and Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA,

based on 167 policy indicators developed to create a comprehensive picture of migrants' opportunities to participate in society.

The proven credibility of the MIPEX indicators and methodology made it the main data source for comparative analysis between the integration facts and figures defining Romania's performances vs. Sweden in this sector, as we will show later in this paper.

#### 4. BACKGROUND ON NATIONAL IMMIGRATION POLICIES. THE SWEDISH AND ROMANIAN CASES

Part of the national responsibility on migration policies (apart of the extraordinary measures taken by countries in the wake of the European migration crisis), was that each EU country alone decided:

- the total number of migrants that can be admitted to the country to look for work;
- all final decisions on migrant applications;
- rules on long-term visas – stays for periods longer than three months; and
- conditions to obtain residence and work permits when no EU-wide rules have been adopted. (European Commission - EU Immigration Portal:2017)

Once the residency is granted, a critical step – both for the receiving community and the immigrants – is represented by *integration*, in its multiple dimensions. As shown in the previous chapters, integration can be quantified and measured making use of a series of indicators encompassed by different areas of reference: employment, education, social inclusion, active citizenship, and welcoming society.

The MIPEX score positions Sweden in the top of the analyzed countries, while Romania hits the 23<sup>rd</sup> position amongst the 83 analyzed countries and is characterized as "halfway favorable".

Sweden's foreign-born population has been growing for many decades. In 2013, close to 16% of the Swedish population had been born abroad, placing Sweden among the OECD countries with the largest foreign-born population, while 5% of native-born Swedes had two foreign-born parents (OECD:2014). Integration of immigrants and their children is therefore of key importance for the Swedish economy and society as a whole.

Romania, though not a popular destination for immigrants, has recently experienced a growing wave of immigration, mostly from the Republic of Moldova, Turkey and China, but also from Africa, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union. In 2013, there were 198,839 immigrants living in Romania, of which 13,000 were refugees (NationMaster: 2016). Over half of the country's foreign-born residents originate from the Republic of Moldova. However, immigration is expected to increase in future, as large numbers of Romanian workers leave the country and are being replaced by foreigners. The predictions for 2008-2060 show for Romania a minimal rate of 18.4/1000 inhabitants net immigration (Alexe and Păunescu – coord: 2011).

The immigration policy is a direct answer to the emigration facts and a potential solution for the population decrease. The emerging requirements in economy (labor market), or an increased attractiveness of Romania's status within the EU,

can also contribute to positioning our country as a more interesting destination for immigrants.

In any case, the integration process is of paramount importance for a successful story, conditioned by an open society and a bivalent comprehensive approach, addressing in the same measure the receiving communities and the immigrants.

For an inclusive picture on these aspects, the European Migration Network country factsheets on immigration policy provide a factual overview of the main policy developments in migration and international protection in the analyzed countries during 2014, including the latest available statistics.

## **5. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTEGRATION INDICATORS. ROMANIA VS. SWEDEN**

Similarities and differences across political boundaries are at the heart of comparative politics. The study of comparative politics embraces cross-national and cross-regional research, as well as “within country” studies that evaluate differences and similarities among administrative territorial systems, or across policy spheres.

The comparative analysis makes use of many research methods, such as qualitative and quantitative analysis. The result of this approach is very important for accurate

description and for theory building and testing.

Comparison helps seeing causal relationships that an exclusive engagement in our own societies and cultures might lead us to ignore. It is the case of putting side by side the integration policies in Sweden and Romania, determining what stands behind their concrete results and looking forward to learning lessons or acquiring best practice in this matter.

For this purpose, we are going to use the Most Different Systems Design (Mill’s Method of Similarity), in the exercise of comparing the opposite experience of Romania and Sweden for immigrants’ political participation in the social life of these nations. It would be of interest to determine what is behind these two different experiences – political will, faulty approach or inadequate instruments?

The most accurate comparison will be supported by the means offered by the above mentioned analysis tool for assessing integration policies. MIPEX 2015 uses as points of reference eight policy areas, with a series of factual indicators (Huddleston et al.:2015):

1. *labour market mobility* (quantifying the access to the labour market, access to general support, the targeted support, workers’ rights);

2. *family reunion for foreigners* (investigating eligibility, conditions for acquisition of status, security of status, and rights associated with status);

3. *education* (focusing on access, targeting needs, new opportunities, intercultural education for all);

4. *political participation* (analyzing electoral rights, political liberties, consultative bodies, and implementation policies);

5. *permanent residence* (addressing eligibility, conditions for acquisition of status, security of status, and rights associated with status);

6. *access to nationality* (eligibility, conditions for acquisition of status, security of status, and dual nationality);

7. *anti-discrimination* (based on definitions and concepts, fields of application, enforcement mechanisms, equality policies);

8. *health* (entitlement to health services, policies to facilitate access, responsive health services, measures to achieve change).

The key common statistics for the analyzed countries take into account UN and Eurostat data for the balance between emigration and immigration, the percentage of non-EU citizens in the total population, the proportion of foreign-born (EU and non-EU), the amount of non-EU university educated immigrants or the share of immigrants from low or medium-developed countries (based on Human Development Index – HDI – ratings) (**Table 2** and **Table 3**).

**Table 3.** Key common statistics for Sweden Source: MIPEx 2015

Country of net migration since:	% Non-EU citizens	% Foreign-born	% Non-EU foreign-born	% Non-EU university-educated	% From low or medium developed (HDI) country
<1950s	3.9%	15.4%	66%	32%	68%
UN 2010 data in 2013	Eurostat 2013	Eurostat 2013	Eurostat 2013	Note: Adults aged 18-64, Eurostat 2013	Eurostat 2013

**Table 4.** Key common statistics for Romania Source: MIPEx 2015

Country of net migration since:	% Non-EU citizens	% Foreign-born	% Non-EU foreign-born	% Non-EU university-educated	% From low or medium developed (HDI) country
x	0.3%	0.9%	60%		75%
UN 2010 data in 2013	Eurostat 2013	Eurostat 2013	Eurostat 2013	Note: Adults aged 18-64, Eurostat 2013	Eurostat 2013

The charts in **Figures 1** and **2** depict the evolution in time (2010-2014) of the analyzed indicators at country level. Comparing the levels of performance

between the integration policies in different areas, there is a clear picture of similarities and differences between Sweden and Romania (**Figure 3**).

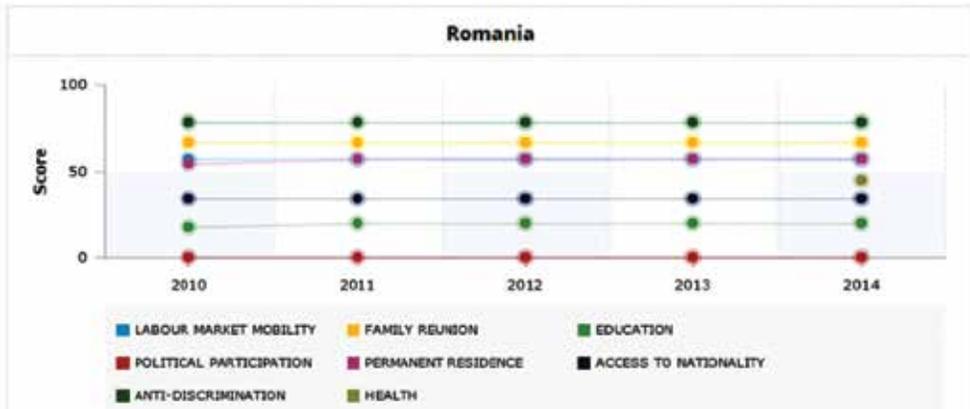


Fig. no. 1. Integration indicators evolution – Romania Source: MIPEX 2015

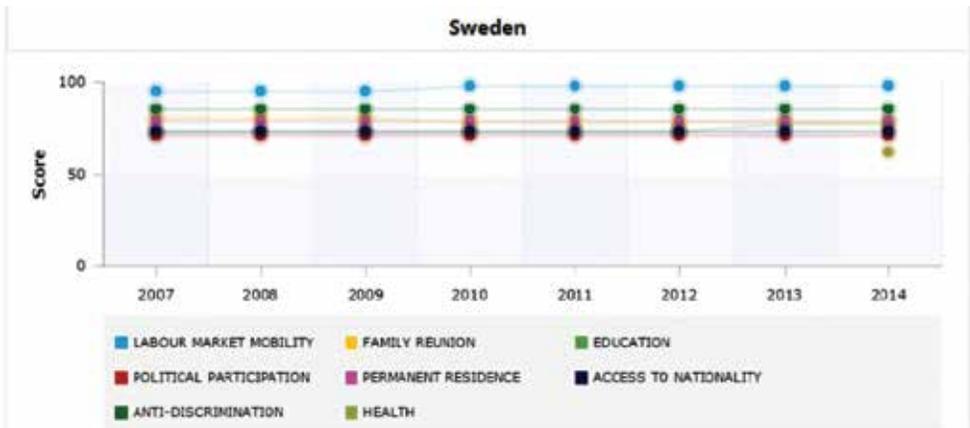


Fig. no. 2. Integration indicators evolution – Sweden Source: MIPEX 2015

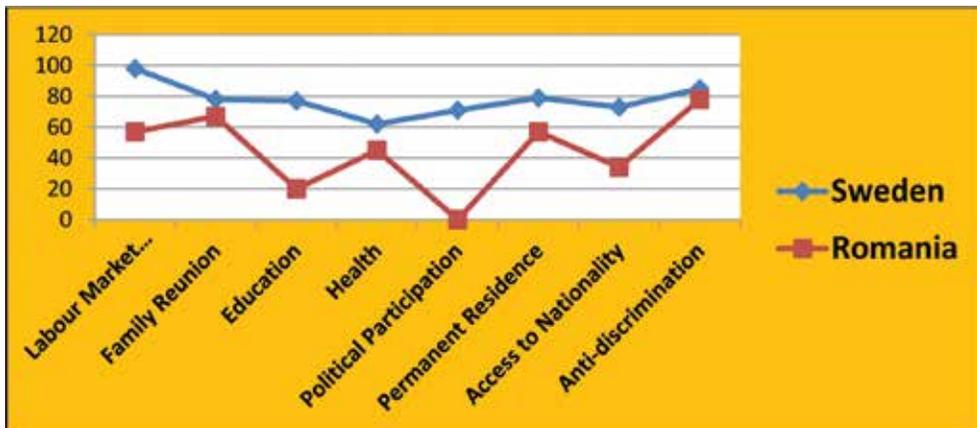


Fig. no. 3. Comparative charts on Sweden and Romania MIPEX 2015 scores for integration policies

If policies in integration areas such as Family Reunion, Health, or Anti-discrimination produce comparative effects, there are fields where differences in the outcomes are considerable (Education and Political Participation, notably).

MIPEX characterizes Sweden's integration policies as more responsive and evidence-based, more ambitious, better supported and more effective in many areas of life, relevant for immigrants. Newcomers and all residents of disadvantaged areas are enabled to use their rights and invest in their skills in order to take up equal opportunities in all areas of life. Policymakers are constantly looking for quicker and more cost effective solutions and include more hard-to-reach groups.

These high expectations are also shared by the public and a general political consensus in Sweden (as in the other top-scoring countries), where overwhelming majorities think that immigrants should benefit from the same rights as citizens. However, larger gaps may be expected between immigrants and the native-born in Sweden than in less developed or equitable societies, as the Swedish come to expect high standards of living, equality, education and active citizenship.

In spite of the backing policies, reality still proves that certain inequalities persist over time and

require greater attention, especially for women, early school leavers and disadvantaged areas with many newcomers.

In Sweden, nearly all non-EU immigrants are guaranteed the same economic, social, family and democratic life rights as Swedish citizens by law and in practice. Residents in Sweden are most likely to reunite together and become permanent residents, voters and citizens. More people in Sweden are informed on their rights as potential victims of discrimination, and how to use these rights to access justice.

As the immigration records dramatically increase in numbers, a real challenge for Sweden will be to expand access to the most effective programs for all newcomers and disadvantaged residents.

On the other hand, in Romania, newcomers benefit from intermediate favorable policies that even slightly create more obstacles than opportunities for non-EU immigrants to quickly and fully participate in host country's social life. However, MIPEX underlines that the balance between opportunities and obstacles is more favorable in Romania, Czech Republic, or Hungary than in the rest of Central Europe.

Romania's integration strategies provide basic opportunities for integration. As a result of the EU law, most non-EU newcomers can access

the labour market and training, reunite with family and secure EU long-term residence, though some gaps persist in these areas.

Going above-average for the region in terms of immigrant integration, Romanian authorities and civil society are taking steps to provide free language training and basic information on jobs, training, schooling for children, and healthcare. With the right resources and support, Romania's strong anti-discrimination laws can also be used to guarantee equal treatment for non-EU citizens when practice goes against the law.

According to MIPEX analysis, the major obstacles to integration in Romania are the common problems of the region, linked to a wide administrative discretion in solving different applications. Support for Romania's few immigrant pupils is weak, and largely limited to learning the Romanian language.

Romania's integration strategies lack political participation and a clear path to citizenship for ordinary immigrants and their Romanian-born or educated children.

Romania is seen as the most restrictive in denying all political rights to its small number of non-EU citizens. Even though MIPEX mentions an above-average majority of Romanian citizens in favor of

immigrants' rights and contributions, we rather rally the opinion that the Romanian society is still not prepared to face the intercultural issues that go along with increasing diversity, and that benevolent reactions on the part of the general public toward immigrants cannot be taken for granted (Horváth:2007).

## **6. THE POLITICAL INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN SWEDEN AND ROMANIA. A COMPARATIVE APPROACH**

This chapter goes into detail with the comparative analysis between the Swedish and Romanian policies on immigrants' integration process, in terms of their political participation, which is recorded by MIPEX as a sign of confidence regarding the newcomers. However, restrictive policies disenfranchise 10 million non-EU citizens from voting and engage few others through weak consultative bodies and funding for immigrant organizations.

In the MIPEX customized index for this indicator (**Figure 4**), Sweden ranks as one of the most inclusive developed democracies at both local and national level and long-settled non-EU immigrants are more likely to participate politically there than in most other European countries.

Ranking 2014	Country	Score	Ranking 2014	Country	Score	Ranking 2014	Country	Score
1	Norway	82	14	Belgium	57	27	Slovenia	23
2	Luxembourg	81	15	Spain	54	27	Hungary	23
3	Finland	79	15	South Korea	54	29	Estonia	21
4	Portugal	74	17	France	53	29	Czech Republic	21
4	New Zealand	74	18	Netherlands	52	31	Lithuania	16
6	Ireland	73	19	United Kingdom	51	31	Slovakia	16
7	Sweden	71	20	Canada	48	33	Bulgaria	13
8	Iceland	67	21	Austria	38	33	Latvia	13
9	Australia	64	22	USA	36	33	Croatia	13
9	Denmark	64	23	Japan	31	36	Turkey	11
11	Germany	63	24	Greece	30	37	Poland	6
12	Italy	58	25	Cyprus	25	38	Romania	0
12	Switzerland	58	25	Malta	25			

Fig. no. 4. MIPEX ranking for Political participation as integration indicator  
Source: MIPEX, 2015

Disenfranchised to this opportunity, similarly to other inclusive Nordic democracies, are the relatively few non-EU adults who do not meet the basic residence requirement for **local voting rights** (<20% according to 2011/2 estimates) (**Figure 5**).

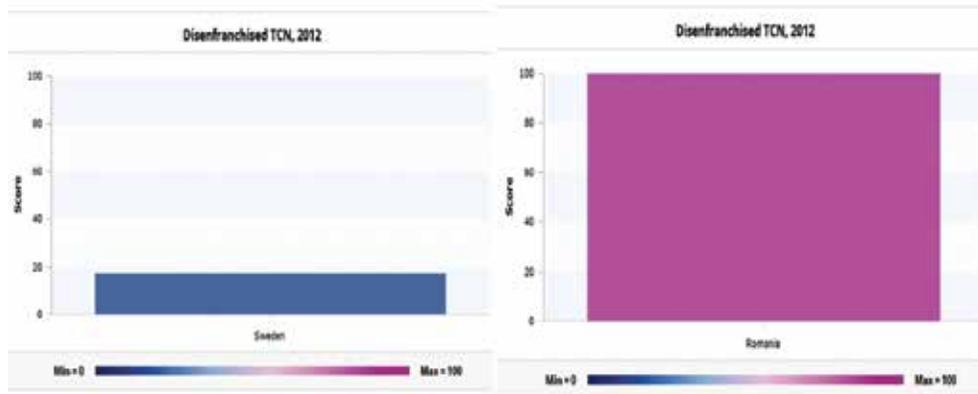


Fig. no. 5. Comparison on the ratio of immigrants disenfranchised from voting – Sweden vs. Romania. Source: MIPEX 2015

Opposite to Sweden, the small number of non-EU citizen adults is completely excluded from public life in Romania, while political participation is completely absent from the integration strategy (**Figure 6**). According to the 2014 Eurostat data, an estimated 48,453 number of non-EU adults (aged 15+) are disenfranchised without the local right to vote in our country. However, they represent a very small share of

the adult population (0.3%) (given the small size of Romania's immigrant population), which is one of the lowest in the EU and similar to Poland.

While political participation is a standing issue for the integration principles in Romania, voting rights have been adopted in countries with similarly small numbers (e.g. Slovakia in 2003) and raised as a priority for a new integration strategy in Poland. However, the challenges posed by the massive immigration and possible side effects may determine changes in this approach.

Regarding the **immigrants' rights and opportunities to participate in political life**, Sweden, by supporting formal immigrant consultative bodies, opens slightly favorable political opportunities for participations of residents in general politics. Immigrants can benefit from information, support and rights to participate in local/regional elections and civil society. All can vote in local/regional elections and can form or join associations, media and political parties. Newcomers are better able to use their rights because policies are implemented to inform them and include their associations in civic life, as in several Western European countries.

By contrast, Romania is the only country scoring 0 for political participation (just below Poland and Turkey). Non-EU citizens are excluded from democratic life, as political participation is still missing from Romania's integration strategy, with no action taken in these areas for the past years.

Several dimensions are analyzed by MIPEX within this indicator (**Figures 6 and 7**):

- *Electoral rights*: non-EU citizens in Sweden, after 3 years of legal stay, can stand as local candidates; in Romania, the Law 67/2004 (regarding the election of the local public administration) opened the local right to vote and stand in elections to EU citizens, but not to non-EU citizens or long-term residents;

- *Political liberties*: non-EU citizens in Sweden are guaranteed the same basic political liberties as citizens; in Romania, the Emergency Ordinance 194/2002 for the regime of foreigners in Romania confirms that non-EU citizens cannot set up their own political association or join political parties;

- *Consultative bodies*: Sweden does not provide immigrant associations any official structure for dialogue with state authorities or politicians. Instead, the government funds Cooperation Group for Ethnical Associations in Sweden (SIOS) and other immigrant organizations, NGOs, while municipalities and authorities have signed partnership agreements at local level in major cities, allowing national authorities to conduct a better dialogue with NGOs and municipalities about their work in disadvantaged urban areas.

Similarly, in Romania, the immigrants are not consulted in a formal manner so as to inform and improve the policies that affect them daily. There is no further action on

this aspect, to note the most recent National Immigration Strategy for the period 2015-2018, and the Action Plan for 2015, approved by the Romanian Government (Government of Romania:2015).

- *Implementation policies:*  
Immigrants can get funding for their civic activities in Sweden. They are also regularly informed of opportunities to participate in political life. In Romania, new communities cannot obtain State funds to organize themselves politically, except through occasional European Integration Fund projects (European Commission – Migration and Home Affairs:2017).

In matters of non-EU immigrants – real beneficiaries of the rights and

opportunities to participate in political life – Sweden ranks as one of the most inclusive Nordic democracy at both local and national level. The inclusive Nordic model of local democracy means that most non-naturalized citizens are eligible to vote in local elections in Sweden. According to national data cited by MIPEX, around 1/3 of non-EU citizens (108,000) were registered to vote in 2009. More importantly, non-EU citizens most interested and active in politics are likely to quickly naturalize as Swedish citizens. Nearly 3/4 of non-EU immigrant adults have been naturalized as Swedish citizens (Figure 8).

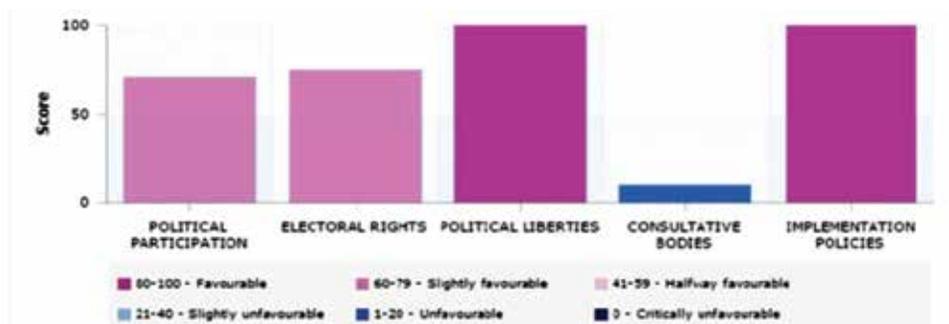


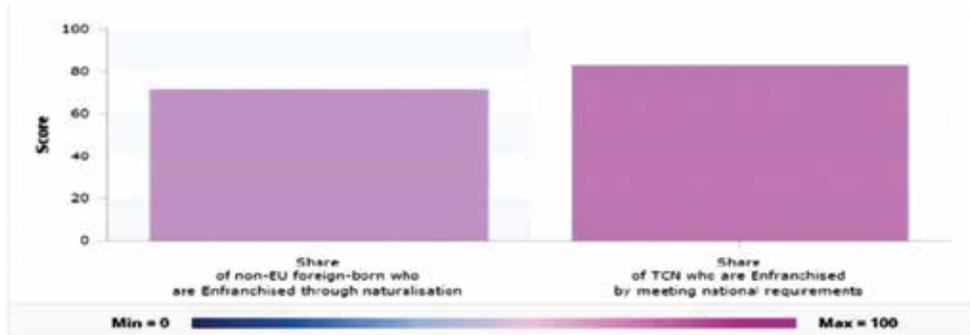
Fig. no. 6 Strand and four dimensions on political participation of immigrants in Sweden, 2014  
Source: MIPEX 2015



Fig. no. 7. Strand and four dimensions on political participation of immigrants in Romania, 2014. Source: MIPEX 2015

In Romania, political participation can be promoted through extension of political rights to third-country nationals and/or facilitation of access to nationality. Acquiring citizenship enables third country nationals to

gain not only political rights but also access to a set of privileges reserved to nationals. As in most of Eastern and Central Europe countries, Romanian citizenship law relies heavily on *jus sanguinis*.



**Fig. no. 8** Share of non-EU born who are enfranchised through naturalization and share of non-EU citizens who are enfranchised by meeting national requirements – Sweden, 2012  
Source: MIPEX 2015



**Fig. no. 9.** Share of non-EU born who are enfranchised through naturalization and share of non-EU citizens who are enfranchised by meeting national requirements – Romania, 2012  
Source: MIPEX 2015

Citizenship is acquired at birth if at least one of the parents is a Romanian citizen, regardless of whether the birth takes place on Romanian territory or abroad. Romania also accepts double citizenship. Naturalization is regulated in Romania through Law no 21/1991 for Romanian citizenship, amended and completed (**Figure 9**).

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

For a long period of time, migration management in Europe was an exclusive national responsibility, with effects on admission of foreigners on the national territory, the visa, asylum and residency regime, or citizenship granting.

The EU context has changed the rules, as the open borders, freedom of movement and labor mobility created the premises of a migration phenomenon perceived both as necessity and threat.

Even though a common EU legal corpus on immigration integration has increasingly developed in time, there is still a strong national autonomy in developing integration policies for third country nationals. It leaves room to acquiring disparities between different regions or countries within the EU, based on several factors considered as preserving the national security.

Since Romania has never experienced major inflows of foreign citizens, the authorities and society in general might have to face a genuine challenge in dealing with increased diversity and integrating a large number of newcomers. Even though other EU countries have different means of managing immigration and integration, none of which can be considered unequivocally as best practice, there are aspects of interest that can be further referenced in any national endeavor meant to support a better integration of immigrants.

In matters of political integration of the immigrants, the comparative analysis between the Swedish and Romanian policies on political participation as part of the immigrants' integration process is pertinent by revealing a mature way to deal with this issue in the Nordic state.

The Swedish policies regarding immigrants' rights and opportunities to participate in political life, expressed in: electoral rights, political

liberties, consultative bodies, or implementation policies, even if not perfect, can offer a model for a future Romanian Immigration Strategy, especially under the anticipated integration of an unusually large number of newcomers, as a result of the EU distribution policy.

In Romania, where citizenship is viewed as the prerequisite for full political participation, a population of permanent residents who are subject to the rule of law - but lacking access to legislative representation - may create a deficit in the democratic legitimacy of the country (Ghenea:2014).

As none of the sixteen EU member states that granted local voting rights to third country nationals have abolished this right because of its negative effects, presumed or real, this may be the right time for a serious debate on this topic - and comparison based efforts are the first step in this approach.

### **Note**

(1) The leaders of the EU set out at the October 1999 European Council in Tampere (Finland) the elements required for a EU immigration policy that: will be based on a comprehensive approach to the management of migratory flows so as to find a balance between humanitarian and economic admission; will promote a Common European Asylum System; will devote fair treatment for third-country nationals aiming as far as possible to give them rights and obligations comparable to those of the nationals of the Member State in which they live; and will enhance the development of partnerships with countries of origin, including policies of co-development.

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